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# Ostracism and Life Satisfaction among Turkish Adolescents: The Role of Self-Efficacy as Mediator\*

Çare Sertelin Mercan<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hasan Ali Yücel Faculty of Education, Istanbul University-Cerrahpasa, Türkiye.  
E-mail: sertelin@iuc.edu.tr

## Abstract

Purpose of the study is to examine the predictive role of ostracism on life satisfaction of Turkish adolescents. Secondly, it is aimed to examine the mediator role of self-efficacy on this relationship. Participants of the study are 659 adolescents between the ages of 15-18 ( $\bar{x} = 16.45$ ;  $SD = 1.08$ ). Mediation model was established to explain relationships between ostracism, self-efficacy, and life satisfaction. A mediation model was designed for ignorance and the other one is designed for exclusion as independent variables. First hypothesis is, ostracism negatively predicts life satisfaction. Additionally, another hypothesis of the study is self-efficacy will act as a mediator in the relationship between ostracism and life satisfaction. Data collection was realized via self-report scales to measure ostracism experience, self-efficacy levels, and life satisfaction levels of Turkish adolescents. Results exhibit correlation between life satisfaction and self-efficacy. And also, life satisfaction and self-efficacy exhibit negative correlation with ignorance and exclusion. Self-efficacy significantly predicted life satisfaction. Self-efficacy partially mediated the relationship between ignorance-exclusion and life satisfaction.

**Keywords:** Life Satisfaction, Ostracism, Ignorance, Exclusion, Self-Efficacy, Keywords, Introduction

## 1. Introduction

Life satisfaction (LS) is an essential construct in positive psychology (Gilman and Huebner, 2003), and is the most frequently studied aspect of subjective well-being (Diener, 2009). LS refers to cognitive evaluation of subjective well-being. LS is defined as “a global judgment that people make when they consider their life as a whole” (Diener, 1994:107, which refers to a conscious global judgment of one’s life (Diener, 1994). Huebner (1991) realized a study on correlations of life satisfaction with pre-adolescents. Subjects who reported high LS had also get higher points on measures of self-esteem, internal locus of control, and extraversion. Findings of Huebner (1991) reveal that, LS was influenced by personality characteristics. Subjects who feels higher LS had positive views of themselves, and are more extraverted, and show higher internal locus of control; as well as subjects who reported lower degrees of LS had negative views of themselves, and had external locus of control. These results give rise to the thought that perceptions of life predict global LS more than, the objective circumstances. Huebner (1991) stresses the importance of to study the relationship between positive involvement with others and LS with children and adolescents.

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Having satisfying social relationships determines LS. Veenhoven (1996) stresses the importance of, existence and quality of close ties, and social participation for life satisfaction. Individuals affiliated with volunteer organizations are more satisfied than non-affiliated individuals (Veenhoven, 1996). Higher levels of LS are correlated with social assertiveness and good empathy attributes (Veenhoven, 1996). Therefore, having good relationships and being in close social ties are important to experience a satisfied life. Diener and Larsen (1993) emphasizes that positive and negative affect are correlated respectively, with social versus alone situations. Researches underline that positive relationships with peers is associated with LS (Man, 1991; Suldo and Huebner, 2006). Regarding to developmental theories, social trajectories are crucial for adolescents' self-esteem, self-worth, academic achievement and healthy identity development.

Present study is realized on adolescent population. Adolescents need to develop satisfying relationships with peers and need to have more autonomy from parents (Hartup, 1996). Experiencing satisfaction in social relationships is crucial for mental, physical health, and well-being of adolescents. Satisfying peer relations are essential for normal social development in adolescence. On the contrary, negative experiences such as under satisfied social relations, poor peer interactions, feeling of not belonging to a group or being ostracized by peers may cause negative outcomes on mental health. Ostracism is defined as being ignored or excluded by others (Williams, 1997). Sense of belonging, self-esteem, control and meaningful existence deteriorate in the presence of social ostracism (Williams, 2007).

Research findings reveal that being ostracized is correlated with depression (Rudert, Janke & Greifeneder 2021; Niu, Sun, Tian, Fan, & Zhou, 2016; Jiang & Chen 2020; Gilman, Carter-Sowell, DeWall, Adams, & Carboni, 2013), loneliness (Witvliet, Brendgen, Van Lier, Koot, & Vitaro, 2010), distress (Masten, Eisenberger, Borofsky, Pfeifer, McNealy, Mazziotta, & Dapretto, 2009), unhappiness (Leary, Springer, Negel, Ansell, & Evans, 1998), and physical health problems (McGraw, 2016; Smart Richman, & Leary, 2009). Being ostracized is correlated negatively with high self-esteem (Nesdale, 2008) and well-being (Chernyak and Zayas, 2010). Ostracism can be experienced either as being excluded or being ignored by others (Williams & Zadro, 2007). When a person is ostracized he /she can't receive any response from others. Ostracized person loses his/ her sense of belonging, experiences decrease in self-esteem, self-worth and existential needs are threatened (Case & Williams, 2004).

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) emphasizes that consequences of a stressful experience is mediated by the individual's judgement and coping skills. Subsequently, adolescents' reactions to social ostracism are manifested quite differently from each other. Ostracized targets' judgements and coping with ostracism exhibit individual differences. Some of them are influenced less, while others show severe symptoms of ostracism. The present study is intended to examine role of self-efficacy (SE) in relationship between exposure to social ostracism and LS. Generalized SE may act such intervening variable. This is the focus of this study. SE has been broadly studied by social cognitive researchers (Bandura, 1997; Bandura, 2001; Lent, Singley, Sheu, Gainor, Brenner, Treistman, & Ades, 2005). Bandura (1994) defines self-efficacy as "one's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives" (p. 71). Subjective well-being research revealed that one's feeling good about his/her life and circumstances, is correlated with belief in his/her capabilities (McGregor & Little, 1998; Carver & Scheier, 1999; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Caprara & Steca, 2005; Lent, Singley, Sheu, Gainor, Brenner, Treistman, & Ades, 2005). Feeling higher levels of SE persuade to significantly greater perseverance when faced with challenges. Thus, individuals with strong SE beliefs achieve much more than individuals with lower SE beliefs. People who are confident in their problem-solving abilities use their cognitive skills more effectively than people who doubt their abilities (Bandura & Wood, 1989; Shunk and Zimmerman, 2006). Such a potency often leads to better solutions, people with high SE are more likely to continue to seek solutions to problems in the presence of difficulties.

The research purpose is to examine the relationship between ostracism and LS and role of SE as mediator in this relationship. Research has some hypothesis to test the mediation relationship. First it is hypothesized that ostracism (both subscales ignorance and exclusion) will predict LS. Second hypothesis is ostracism (both subscales) will predict SE. Third hypothesis is SE will predict LS. Fourth SE is a mediator in the relationship between ignorance and LS, and finally SE is a mediator in the relationship between exclusion and LS.

## 2. Method

The research design is relational survey model, which is realized to investigate the predictive role of ostracism on LS of adolescents and the role of SE as a mediator variable in this relationship.

### 2.1 Participants

The sample of the study consisted 659 high school students. Participants are 314 males (47,6%) and 345 females (52,4%). Study is conducted in 6 high schools from 3 different zones of Istanbul. 25,3% of the sample ( $n = 167$ ) are 9<sup>th</sup> grade students, 26,3% are ( $n = 173$ ) 10<sup>th</sup> grade students, 33,7% of the sample ( $n=222$ ) are 11<sup>th</sup> grade students and, 14,7% ( $n = 97$ ) of them are from 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Participants average age was 16.45 ( $SD = 1.08$ ), the ages ranged between 15 and 18.

Data forms were applied under the permission of National Education Istanbul Directorate. After on, parents' signed consent was requested, subsequently all participants are given informed consent. Participants did not write down identity information on the data forms. Data forms were completed in the course hours, it took 15-20 minutes to complete.

### 2.3.2 Measures

Data was collected via scales of ostracism experience, self-efficacy, satisfaction with life, and a few demographic questions. All the tools are introduced briefly below.

Ostracism Experience Scale for Adolescents (Gilman, et al. 2013). Ostracism experience scale for adolescents (OES-A) is an 11 item, 5-point Likert type measure that assesses ostracism subtypes: Excluded and Ignored. Exclusion subscale keeps 6 items, and Ignorance subscale keeps 5 items. The alpha coefficients of the two scales in OES-A are reported as .94 for ignorance, .93 for exclusion in the original study. Turkish adaptation of the scale and validity, reliability studies were realized by Sertelin-Mercan (2016) with 462 adolescents. For the present study Cronbach  $\alpha$  is calculated .83 for ignorance and .82 for exclusion.

Self-Efficacy Scale was used to assess the SE levels of participants. Scale was developed by Aysan (2002). There are 7 items for assessing the degree of perceived SE. This is a self-report 3-point Likert type scale. Higher scores indicate high perception of SE. Siyez and Aysan (2007) used the scale in a study with late adolescents and demonstrated adequate reliability. For the sample of the present study Cronbach  $\alpha$  is calculated as.56.

Satisfaction with life scale was developed by Diener, Emmons, Lorse ve Giffin (1985). Turkish adaptaton was realized by Aysan (2001). There are 5 items. This is a self -report 7- point Likert type scale. Higher scores indicate perceiving higher LS. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient for the original study was 0.84 (Aysan, 2001). For the present study Cronbach  $\alpha$  is calculated .88.

Demographic Information Form: An information form used for demographic variables as age, sex and socioeconomic status.

### 2.3.3 Analyses

Initially the normality and variances of the data was examined. Kurtosis ve Skewness values were ranged between -1.5 and +1.5 as suggested by Tabachnick and Fidell (2013). The homogeneity of variances assumption was controlled via Levene's test. Means, standard deviations and bivariate correlations among the measures and subscales are calculated. T-test analyses for gender differences are calculated. Then separate linear regression analyses are realized with ostracism subscales (ignored and excluded) as predictor variables, and LS as criterion variable. SE is examined as mediator variable using criteria offered by Baron and Kenny (1986). Baron and Kenny (1986) highlight the need for existence of significant relationships between variables, furthermore, for partial mediation to be established, the beta coefficients have to be reduced, and for full mediation the beta coefficients

have to be zero. Additionally, a Sobel test, is conducted when results indicated partial mediation (MacKinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West, & Sheets, 2002).

### 3. Results

#### 3.1 Analyses of demographic variables

T-test was calculated to explore if there is any difference according to gender and socio-economic status. There is no significant difference in ostracism and SE points among boys and girls. Significant gender differences emerged for only LS. Boys LS points found to be higher than girls [  $t(657) = -1,58, p < .05$ ]. The scores obtained from the three scales did not differ according to the socio-economic level.

#### 3.2 Correlation Analyses

To address the first hypothesis, correlations are calculated for the ostracism subscales (ignorance and exclusion) and LS. Pearson product-moment correlations are calculated. Means, standard deviations and bivariate correlations among the measures can be seen in table 1.

Table 1: Intercorrelations and Descriptive Statistics for Measures

	1	2	3	4	M	SD
<b>1.Ign</b>	-	.353**	-.228**	-.291**	6.91	2.59
<b>2.Exc</b>	.353**	-	-.107**	-.189**	20.12	4.84
<b>3.SE</b>	-.228**	-.107**	-	.241**	16.60	2.43
<b>4.LS</b>	-.291**	-.189**	.241**	-	22.24	6.99

Ign: Ignorance, Exc: Exclusion, SE: Self Efficacy, LS: Life Satisfaction N=659 \*\*  
p<.01

Results of the correlation analyses, show that ignorance ( $r = -.228; p < .01$ ) and exclusion ( $r = -.107; p < .01$ ) were negatively associated with SE and ignorance ( $r = -.291, p < .01$ ) and exclusion ( $r = -.189; p < .01$ ) were significantly related to low LS. Finally, SE was correlated with LS, ( $r = .241, p < .01$ ) indicating that adolescents who have obtained higher points in SE also get higher points in LS. All results put significant but weak correlations. As predicted the results revealed that ignorance and exclusion, correlated significantly and negatively with adolescent LS, and there are negative significant correlations between ostracism subscales and SE. The results reveal significant correlation between SE and LS.

#### 3.3 Regression Analyses

Table 2: Simple Linear Regression Analysis Coefficients for Life Satisfaction

Measure	B	SE(B)	$\beta$	t	Sig. (p)
<b>LS (constant)</b>					
<b>Ign</b>	-.785	.101	-.291	-7.801	.000
<b>Exc</b>	-.273	.055	-.189	-4.942	.000
<b>SE</b>	.693	.109	.241	6.363	.000

Ign: Ignorance, Exc: Exclusion, SE: Self Efficacy, LS: Life Satisfaction

Constant: LS (IGN independent v.)

R= -.291 R<sup>2</sup>=0.85 F (1,657) = 60.852 p=000

Constant: LS (EXC independent v.)

R= -.189 R<sup>2</sup>=0.36 F (1,657) = 24.42 p=000

Constant: LS (SE independent v.)

R= .241 R<sup>2</sup>=.058 F (1, 657) = 40.48 p=.000

Results of the linear regression analysis indicated that ignorance [  $F(1, 657) = -.60,852, p < .000, R^2 = .085, \beta = -.291$  ] and exclusion [  $F(1, 657) = -.24,42, p < .000, R^2 = .036, \beta = -.189$  ] were significant negative predictors and SE [  $F(1,657) = 40.48, p < .000, R^2 = .058, \beta = .241$  ] was a significant and positive predictor of LS (Table.2).

Table 3: Simple Linear Regression Analysis Results For Self-efficacy

Measure	B	SE(B)	$\beta$	t	Sig. (p)
<b>SE (constant)</b>					
IGN	-.214	.036	-.228	-6.013	.000
EXC	-.054	.019	-.107	-2.769	.006

Ign: Ignorance, Exc: Exclusion, SE: Self Efficacy

Constant: SE (IGN independent v.)  
 $R = .228$        $R^2 = 0.52$        $F(1,657) = 36.155$   $p = 000$

Constant: SE (EXC independent v.)  
 $R = .107$        $R^2 = 0.12$        $F(1,657) = 7.667$   $p = 006$

Results of the linear regression analysis indicated that ignorance [  $F(1, 657) = -.36,155 p < .000, R^2 = -.052, \beta = -.228$  ] and exclusion [  $F(1, 657) = -.2,769, p < .006, R^2 = .012, \beta = -.054$  ] were significant negative predictors of SE (Table.3).

### 3.4 Multiple Regression Analysis

Table 4a: Multiple Regression Analysis for Life Satisfaction (IGN/SE)

Measure	B	SE(B)	$\beta$	t	Sig. (p)
<b>LS (constant)</b>					
SE	.529	.108	-.184	4.883	.000
IGN	-.672	.102	-.249	-6.610	.000

IGN: Ignored, SE: Self Efficacy, LS: Life Satisfaction

Constant: LS IGN, SE (independent v.)  
 $R = .342$        $R^2_{adj} = .114$        $F(2,656) = 43.405$        $p = 000$

Table 4b: Multiple Regression Analysis Results For Life Satisfaction (ECL/SE)

Measure	B	SE(B)	$\beta$	t	Sig. (p)
<b>LS (constant)</b>					
EXC	-.238	.054	-.223	-6.013	.000
SE	-.642	.108	-.165	-4.942	.006

EXC: Excluded, SE: Self Efficacy, LS: Life Satisfaction

Constant: LS EXC, SE (independent v.)  
 $R = .292$        $R^2_{adj} = .082$        $F(2,656) = 30.495$   $p = 000$

Results of the linear regression analysis indicated that ignorance [  $F(2, 656) = .43,405 p < .000, R^2 = -.114, \beta = -.184$  ] (Table.4a) and exclusion [  $F(2, 656) = -.30,495, p < .000, R^2 = .082, \beta = .165$  ] were significant negative predictors of SE (Table.4b).

Later on, ignorance and SE have been put together in a multiple regression analysis (Table 4a & Table 4b). For the mediation model to be approved, the beta coefficient for ignorance, in the presence of SE, have to be reduced. The results of the regression analysis show that ignorance remains as a significant predictor of LS in the existence of SE  $F(2, 656) = 43.405, p < .000, R^2 = .114, \beta = .184$ . However, the beta for LS was reduced from  $\beta = -.249$  to  $\beta = .184$ . The analysis continued with, exclusion and SE have been put together in another multiple regression analysis. For the mediation model to be approved, the beta coefficient for exclusion, in the presence of SE, have to be reduced. Results of the regression analysis reveal that exclusion is still a significant predictor of LS in the

existence of SE  $F(2, 656) = 30.495, p < .000, R^2 = .082, \beta = .165$ . Accordingly, the beta for LS was reduced from  $\beta = .223$  to  $\beta = .165$ .

### 3.5 Mediation Analysis

The two-mediation hypothesis are examined by the procedures recommended by Baron and Kenny (1986). To investigate if, SE mediates the relationship between ignorance-exclusion and LS, a set of regression analyses are realized. First requirement of a mediation is the existence of a significant relationship between ignorance and SE and, a significant relationship between exclusion and SE. Results point out that ignorance is a significant negative predictor of SE,  $F(1, 658) = 36.15, p < .000, R^2 = .05, \beta = -.22$ . Subsequently multiple regression analysis is realized. Results reveal that SE significantly predicted LS,  $F(1, 657) = 40.48, p < .000, R^2 = .058, \beta = .24$ . After all, a multiple regression analysis is realized to examine whether ignorance and SE together predict LS. It is required the beta coefficients for ignorance (in the existence of SE) to be reduced for a mediational relationship. Results of the regression analyses demonstrate, ignorance remained a significant predictor of LS in the existence of SE  $F(2, 656) = 43.40, p < .000, R^2 = .11, \beta = .18$ . The beta for LS was reduced from  $-.24$  to  $.18$ . Then, a Sobel test was also conducted (MacKinnon et al., 2002). The Sobel test  $z = -3.78, p < .001$ , demonstrated the reduction in the beta coefficient of ignorance. These findings suggest existence of partial mediation. An illustration of this relationship can be seen in Fig.1.

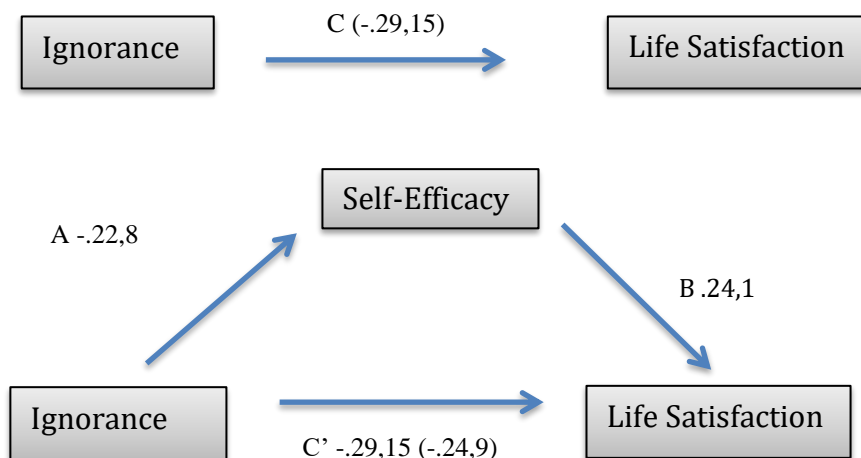


Figure 1: Path model for the mediator role of SE in the relation between being ignorance and LS. (\* $p < 0.01$ .)

This time, to examine if SE mediate the relationship between exclusion and LS, a set of multiple regression analyses were realized as suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986). First requirement of a mediation is the existence of a significant relationship between exclusion and SE. Results reveal that exclusion is a significant negative predictor of SE,  $F(1, 658) = 7.66, p < .000, R^2 = .01, \beta = -.11$ . Later on, multiple regression analysis is realized for analyzing if SE is predicting LS. Outcome of the analysis, point out that SE significantly predicted LS,  $F(1, 657) = 40.48, p < .000, R^2 = .058, \beta = .241$ . After all, a multiple regression analysis is realized to examine whether exclusion and SE together predicting LS. It is required the beta coefficients for exclusion (in the existence of SE) to be reduced for a mediational relationship. Results of the regression analyses demonstrate, exclusion remained a significant predictor of LS in the existence of SE  $F(2, 656) = 30.49, p < .000, R^2 = .08, \beta = .22$ . The beta for LS was reduced from  $-.24$  to  $.18$ . Then, a Sobel test was also conducted (MacKinnon et al., 2002). The Sobel test  $z = 2.56, p < .05$ , demonstrated the reduction in the beta coefficient of exclusion reveal existence of partial mediation. An illustration of this relationship can be seen in Fig.2.

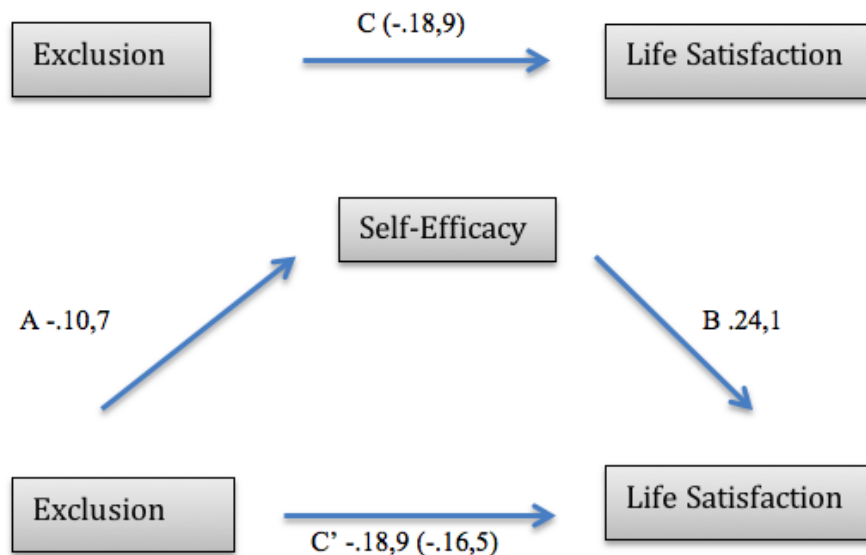


Figure 2: Path model for the mediator role of SE in the relation between being exclusion and LS. (\* $p < 0.01$ .)

#### 4. Discussion

Purpose of the study was to examine the predictive role of ostracism on LS and the mediator role of SE on the relationship between ostracism and LS. Participants of the study are 659 adolescents between the ages of 15-18, living in Istanbul. Two models were established to explain relationships between ostracism, SE and LS, one model was designed for ignorance and the other one is designed for exclusion as independent variables.

Results of the intercorrelations revealed that social ostracism in both forms, exclusion and ignorance, was negatively and SE was positively correlated with LS. Beeri and Lev-Wiesel (2012) emphasizes that peer rejection is a traumatic experience, however, some resources on personal or social bases may diminish the stress level of rejected individual. These personal and social resources are self-confidence, self-control and societal hope which are together defined as potency Beeri and Lev-Wiesel (2012). Research (Sandstrom, 2004; Kupersmidt & DeRosier 2004) reveal that to have potency helps to overcome the distress of traumatic experiences. In the present study SE can be considered as a potency to diminish the negative effect of social ostracism on LS. Results demonstrated that, SE plays predictive role in adolescents' LS. Higher levels of SE were associated with higher levels of LS. These results are coherent with a body of research that has linked SE with other well-being outcomes (Tagay, Karatas, Bayar, & Savi-Cakar, 2016; Marcionetti & Rossier, 2016; Masaud Ansari, & Khan, 2015; Wright, & Perrone, 2010). Regression analyzes showed that, both ignorance and exclusion by peers, predicted LS negatively. Ostracized adolescents feel lower levels of LS, than adolescents who experience lower levels of ostracism. SE was hypnotized to be a mediator variable in the predictive relationship between ostracism and LS. Results of the mediation analyzes supported this hypothesis. SE has a mediator role on the predictive relationship between ostracism subscales and LS. Individuals, who do not have a strong sense of SE perceive problems or obstacles more difficult than they seem, individuals with a higher level of SE are more comfortable in difficult tasks, difficult goals or difficult events (Bandura, 1994). Individuals who believe in his/her competencies can stand calm, confident and strong. It can be thought that perceiving higher levels of SE may reduce negative consequences of being ignored or being excluded by peers, on LS of adolescents. Research reveal that low SE is related to depression (ZimmerGembeck, Hunter, & Pronk, 2007; Maddux & Meier (1995), anxiety problems (Williams, 1995), and suicide intention (ZimmerGembeck, Hunter, & Pronk, 2007). The SE approach, highlights that for



psychological adjustment it is essential to have, a sense of self-competence or self-control (Maddux, 1995). Our evidence confirms that to support LS of adolescents, it's prior to enhancement of social skills, peer relationships and SE.

**Limitations and Suggestions for Researchers:** There are some limitations of the study. An important limitation involves the homogeneity of the sample, the study is conducted in Istanbul although three different districts are included the study, it would be much better to extend the findings geographically diverse samples and different adolescence stages to explore developmental considerations in the associations between ostracism, SE and LS. Another limitation is the correlational nature of the research, the variables should be examined deeply by using experimental studies aiming to develop sense of SE in adolescents, also via experimental studies research should address the factors leading to ostracism. Additionally, longitudinal studies examining consequences of ostracism on LS in different stages of childhood and adolescence. In addition, all the measures used in the study were self-report scales. Multiple methods of assessment of variables (e.g., parent, friend, teacher reports) would enhance the worthiness of the findings.

**Suggestions for School Counselors:** In accordance with the results of the study, several suggestions can be made for school counselors. This study, along with previous studies, suggests that low SE and weak social relationships are risk factors for adolescent dissatisfaction. Moreover, experiencing ostracism appears to predict lower LS. SE mediates ostracism and LS association. Such findings help to put forth probable pathways to the enhancement of LS of adolescents. The presence and quality of social relationships are important for development of LS. Lack of social skills and poor communication abilities are the main obstacles to the establishment of satisfying social skills. These are the topics that can be easily targeted in school settings. As the evidence confirms that SE has a significant role in establishing LS. Psycho-educational programs can be provided in schools for students which show lower levels of SE. Since social inclusion and SE are important variables in establishing LS, an appropriate environment, supporting to develop SE and social acceptance of students will contribute to their SE.

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