

Examination of the Relationship Between Fear of Growing up and Identity Styles in Emerging Adulthood

Esat Şanlı¹, Ahmet Alperen Yılmaz²

Article History:

Received 17.02.2023

Received in revised form

29.05.2023

Accepted

Available online 01.07.2023

The aim of this research is to examine the relationship between the fear of growth and identity styles of individuals in emerging adulthood. The study group of the research is between the ages of 18-30, 219 women, 194 men, including 413 people. "Demographic Information Form", "Fear of Growth Scale" and "Identity Styles Scale - 5" were used in the research. Data were analysed by stepwise regression analysis. Results of study showed that diffuse avoidance-oriented identity style are significantly higher in males and in non-working individuals. Fear of growing up was a significant predictor for identity styles. Results showed that the fear of growing up explains the avoidant identity style the most. Suggestions were made in line with the findings of the study.

© IJERE. All rights reserved

Keywords: Emerging adulthood, growth fear, fear of growth, identity styles

INTRODUCTION

Of the many definitions of identity which have been put forward, Erikson's definition is among the most widely accepted, with an emphasis on psychosocial development theory and 'identity', describing identity as an individual's biological characteristics, psychological needs, interests and defences. It is the collective shaping of the lived culture by its tools (Erikson, 1968). The concept of identity, in its most general form, is the question of the individual's 'who am I?' and is defined as the answer given to that question (Marcia, 1993). It is one of the important concepts for the development of the individual in terms of shaping and directing his/her life (Morsünbül & Tümen, 2008).

After Erikson (1968) laid the foundations of the concept of identity with his Psychosocial Personality Development theory, many subsequent researchers added new dimensions to the concept with different theories: Marcia (1980) on identity status; Berzonsky (1992a) on the social-cognitive processes on identity, followed by Crocetti et al. (2008), and Adams and Marshall (1996) on the functions of identity (Şanlı & Ersanlı, 2021).

Erikson (1968) defined personality as a life-long changing process in his psycho-social personality theory. According to that theory, each developmental period has a critical acquisition focus, and 'identity perception' was defined as the critical focus for adolescence. Marcia, who attracted attention with his research on the concept of identity after Erikson, put forward the theory of 'Identity statuses' in order to make the concept of identity more operational and to examine it in detail. He identified four different identity statuses, suggesting that identity discovery ends with a specific status and there might be transitions between statuses: the four identity statuses were identity diffusion, foreclosure identity, identity achievement and moratorium.

Marcia's (1966) theory of identity statuses became the most common model used in long-term identity studies. Berzonsky (1990) then expressed identity status as a process model rather than personality outcomes. Berzonsky's Identity Styles Approach focused on the discovery phase and defined the differences in the way that individuals examine, process and use information about their identity (Soenens & Berzonsky, 2005). Berzonsky (1992b) proposed a process-oriented and dynamic model of identity formation which can be represented or related by different ways of a decision-making and problem-solving to the four different identity statuses classified by Marcia.

Berzonsky (1999) suggested three different identity styles: how individuals express issues related to the self-concept, how they reach agreement on issues related to the identity concept, and what kinds of decision-making style they use on these issues. These were information-oriented, norm-oriented and avoidance-oriented identity styles. Individuals with an information-oriented identity style actively seek and evaluate information about their self-concept before deciding on the configuration of their sense of identity and shaping their attachments. Norm-oriented individuals consider the expectations and wishes of family members and social reference groups when faced with identity-related problems. On the other hand, individuals with

¹ Ondokuz Mayıs University, esat.sanli@omu.edu.tr, orcid.org/0000-0001-8227-8097

² Ondokuz Mayıs University (Postgraduate student), alpvlmazm@gmail.com, orcid.org/0000-0002-1830-0605

avoidance orientation avoid facing individual inconsistencies and problems with the concept of identity (Berzonsky, 1992; 1999; Morsünbül & Çok, 2013).

The problem of when and how the perception of identity is shaped is also one of the important issues on which identity theories focus. Arnett (2000; 2004) showed that the search for identity and acquisition continues in the period of emerging adulthood, which is defined as the age from 18 to 29, and extends the boundaries of the adolescence period. On the other hand, the moratorium, which Marcia (1980) listed as the fourth identity status, was postponed and suspended during adolescence. This points to an unresolved identity problem in emerging adulthood. Although individuals in this period might state that they have completed adolescence, they do not define themselves as adults yet (Doğan & Cebioğlu, 2011). These researches and evaluations (Arnett, 2004) form the basis for using the lens of identity research to examine emerging adulthood.

The period which Arnett (2000) defined as emerging adulthood has five characteristic features, the search for identity, instability, self-focus, in-between, and endless possibilities. People in emerging adulthood are in a period of identity-seeking during which they try to discover who they are and what they want to be, their expectations from life, their own skills and limitations (Arnett, 2004).

Identity acquisition is not the only critical achievement in emerging adulthood. The same period has a critical importance in terms of people assuming new responsibilities and roles in different fields. In this context, in terms of the basic factors which enable someone to grow and develop psychosocially, such as taking responsibility, willpower and being active, which are important components of identity formation, the period includes many experiences in which the individual should take action (Katsiaficas, 2017). Lack of action or anxiety about all these components evokes fear and anxiety about growth. In this sense, when the factors which could hinder the development of a healthy identity are evaluated, Ateş and Özden Yıldırım (2018) stated that although a person completes the 18-25 age period, or even to 28-29, the concept of the fear of growth, which is defined as the inability to see things as an adult, suggests that it could be an important component which affects the process of a person's identity formation.

Another concept which is similar to the fear of growth is Dan Kiley's (1983) Peter Pan Syndrome (PPS), described as cases of people who always act like children and do not grow up. Kiley (1983) did not consider PPS as a disease or a simple disorder, but as a severe psychological phenomenon which threatens the mental health of the person.

In this context, individuals who are more inclined and willing to know themselves and the environment and are more willing to interact are expected to build healthier identity processes, whereas individuals who approach this process with anxiety will experience various disruptions in their identity construction processes, and individuals who are anxious about becoming an adult and are experiencing the fear of growth will face these setbacks.

A review of the relevant literature showed that domestic and international studies of the fear of growth are quite limited and it has not been the subject of empirical research into identity styles. It is therefore thought that the current study will contribute to the literature. It will be useful first to consider some of the important findings of the limited number of previous studies on this subject.

Ateş and Özden-Yıldırım (2020) examined the relationship between fear of growth and psychological symptoms and found that although psychological disorders in their respondents were associated with the fear of growth, they developed that fear of growth only because of anxiety and depression. Özen Yıldırım and Ateş (2020) also examined fear of growth and early maladaptive schemata and perceived parenting styles. Their findings showed that the parental attitudes perceived by emerging adults in general had an effect on their fear of growth, and also showed the effect of early maladaptive schemata on growth fear, particularly 'self-sacrifice' and 'punishment'. (Fan, 2020) similarly examined the relationship between fear of growth and early-stage schemata and found that early maladaptive schemata significantly predicted each of the sub-dimensions of the fear of growth. Early maladaptive schemata were found, for example, to represent 22% of the change in the difficulty in maintaining a romantic relationship.

Considering the limited empirical studies reported in the literature, it was thought that the relationship between the fear of growing up in emerging adulthood and identity styles would be a subject worth investigating further. In the light of all these evaluations, the main purpose of this current study is to examine the effect of fear of growth on identity styles. In addition, the effects of gender, age, employment status, romantic relationship status and birth order variables, all of which are thought to have a significant effect on identity styles, were examined.

The study was designed to investigate the relationship between the fear of growth and identity styles in emerging adulthood by addressing the following research questions:

1. Do individuals' identity styles subscale scores differ significantly according to gender?
2. Do individuals' identity styles subscale scores differ significantly according to their employment status?
3. Do individuals' growth fears predict their identity styles?

METHOD

Model of the Research

This research was a descriptive and relational study examining the relationship between fear of growth and identity styles.

The Research Sample

A total of 413 people, comprising 219 (53%) females and 194 (47%) males, participated in the research through convenient sampling on a voluntary basis. The age range of the participants was from 18 to 28 years and their average age was 22.85. In terms of their education level, 70% of them were university graduates. The romantic relationship status of the participants was 30.5% not having a relationship and 69.5% having a relationship. In terms of their employment status, 32% were working and 68% were not. When birth order was examined, first-born children (regardless of gender) made up 45.3%, second children formed 30% and the rest were third or later children.

Data Collection Tools

The Fear of Growth Scale, Identity Styles Scale-5 and a personal information form were used to collect data for this study.

Fear of Growth Scale

The Fear of Growth Scale was developed by Ateş and Özden Yıldırım (2018) in order to measure the fears of people aged 18-35 about growing up within their normal development process and becoming adult. It comprises a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 5: 'I totally agree' to 1: 'I totally disagree' and it consists of a total of fourteen items. As a result of EFA, five dimensions were obtained: Social-Emotional Loneliness, Difficulty in Maintaining Romantic Relationships, Negative Attitudes towards Marriage, Preparation for Independent Living and Difficulty in Internalizing Responsibility. According to the CFA result, the factor loads of the items ranged from .51 to .87. The 7th, 9th and 11th items of the scale are scored in the opposite direction. In the original study, the internal consistency coefficient for the whole scale was .75 (Ateş & Özden Yıldırım, 2018). In the current study, the Cronbach Alpha coefficient was found to be .59 for the social emotional loneliness sub-dimension, .74 for the maintaining romantic relationships sub-dimension, .78 for the negative attitudes towards marriage sub-dimension, .46 for the independent life sub-dimension, and .76 for the whole scale.

Identity Styles Scale-5

The Identity Styles Scale was revised by Berzonsky et al. (2013). A Turkish adaptation of the study was carried out by Morsünbül et al. (2020). It is a five-point Likert-type scale consisting of 27 items in total. It has three sub-dimensions. In a test development study, Berzonsky et al. (2013) used confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to determine the factor structure of the test, and the results showed that the three-factor structure was confirmed (SBSX2/ df = 2.70; RMSEA = .06; SRMR = .08). In a reliability study of the scale, Berzonsky et al. (2013) used the test-retest method and the Cronbach's alpha values for the sub-dimensions of the ISI-5 were .87 for the avoidance-oriented identity style, .80 for the information-oriented identity style and .85 for the norm-oriented identity style. In the current study, the Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficients were calculated as .74 for the avoidance-oriented identity style, .79 for the information-oriented identity style, and .73 for the norm-oriented identity style.

Demographic Information Form

The demographic information form prepared for the study sought data on the age, gender, birth order, education level, employment status and romantic relationship status of the participants.

Analysis of the Data

SPSS software was used for data analysis. The reverse items on the Fear of Growth Scale were reversed. The analyses showed that there were no missing data, that the categorical data were not normally distributed and that the numerical data were normally distributed. Since the categorical data did not show a normal distribution, non-parametric tests were applied. In addition, stepwise regression analysis was carried out to

understand which dimensions of fear of growth, which was the independent variable, were more effective on identity style, which is the dependent variable of the research.

FINDINGS

In this section, the statistical analyses carried out to test the hypotheses of the research and the findings obtained as a result of the analyses are set out. First, in order to see the relationships between the growth fears and identity styles of individuals with dependent and independent variables in more detail, the correlation results between the sub-dimensions of the scales are given in Table 1.

Table 1: Pearson Correlation Analysis of the Relationship Between Fear of Growth and Identity Styles Results (N=413)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1-Fear of Growth Total	1							
2-Social Emotional Loneliness	.471**	1						
3-Difficulty in maintaining a romantic relationship	.833**	.137**	1					
4-Negative attitudes towards marriage	.768**	.169**	.538**	1				
5-Preparation for independent life and difficulty in internalizing responsibility	.623**	.188**	.369**	.311**	1			
6-Avoidance Identity Style	.423**	.233**	.317**	.260**	.377**	1		
7-Informative Identity Style	-.044	-.027	-.049	.071	-.142**	-.019	1	
8-Normative Identity Style	-.011	.010	-.020	-.187**	.239**	.238**	-.088	1

** $p < .01$

As Table 1 shows, there was a moderately significant positive correlation between fear of growth and the avoidance-oriented identity style ($r=.423, p<.01$). There was no significant relationship between the fear of growth and the information-oriented ($r=-.044, p<.01$) and norm-oriented ($r=-.011, p<.01$) identity styles.

When we look at the relationship between the fear of growth sub-dimensions and identity styles, the avoidance-oriented identity style and preparation for life independent of fear of growth sub-dimensions and internalizing responsibility was ($r=.377, p<.01$), difficulty in maintaining a romantic relationship was ($r=.317, p<.01$) and social emotional loneliness was ($r=.233, p<.01$). When the information-oriented identity style and fear of growth sub-dimensions were examined, a significant relationship was observed between the preparation for independent life and the difficulty to internalize responsibility ($r=-.142, p<.01$). When the relationship between norm-oriented identity style and fear of growth sub-dimensions was examined, negative attitudes towards marriage ($r=-.187, p<.01$) and preparation for independent life and difficulty in internalizing responsibility ($r=.239, p<.01$) were found to be in a significant relationship with the sub-dimensions. The second research question of the study was that 'Individuals' scores on subscales of identity styles differ significantly according to gender'. In order to answer this question Mann Whitney U test was used and the results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Mann Whitney U Test Analysis of Identity Styles by Gender and Fear of Growth in Emerging Adults

Identity Styles	Gender	N	S.O.	S.T.	U	p
Avoidance	Female	219	193.77	42436	18346.5	0.017
	Male	194	221.93	43054.50		
Informative	Female	219	223.50	48947	17629	0.003
	Male	194	188.37	36544		
Normative	Female	219	201.69	44170	20080	0.336
	Male	194	212.99	41321		

$p < .05, N=413$

The data in Table 2 show that identity styles according to gender and avoidance-oriented identity style were significantly higher in males ($U=18346.5, p<0.05$). The information-oriented identity style was found to be significantly higher in females ($U=17629, p<0.05$). There was no significant difference between genders in norm-oriented identity style ($U=20080, p>0.05$).

The fourth hypothesis of the study was 'The scores of individuals' identity styles subscales differ significantly according to their working status'. This hypothesis was analysed using the Mann Whitney U test and the results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Mann Whitney U Test Analysis of Identity Styles of Emerging Adults according to their Working Status

Identity Styles	Working Status	N	S.O.	S.T.	U	p
Avoidance	Working	132	188,25	24849	16071	0,028
	Non-Working	281	215,81	60642		
Informative	Working	132	205,77	27161,5	18383,5	0,886
	Non-Working	281	207,58	58329,5		
Normative	Working	132	224,70	29660	16210	0,039
	Non-Working	281	198,69	55831		

$p < .05$

The data in Table 3 show that the state of having an avoidance-oriented identity style was significantly higher in non-working individuals ($U=16071, p < 0.05$). There was no significant difference between the working status of individuals and information-oriented identity style ($U=18383.5, p > 0.05$). It was observed that individuals with norm-oriented identity style were significantly higher in employees according to their working status ($U=16210, p < 0.05$).

Table 4: Hierarchical Regression Analysis Results for Predictors of Identity Styles

Dependent Model	Independent	B	S.E	β	t	R	R ²	Adj. R ²	F	p	
Avoidance	Model 1	Constant	17.39	.80		21.85	.38	.14	.14	68.25	.000
		Prep. independ.	.84	.10	.38	8.26					
		Constant	15.50	.90		17.32					
	Model 2	Prep. independ.	.57	.12	.30	6.26	.42	.18	.18	44.71	.000
		Romantic relation	.25	.06	.21	4.28					
		Constant	13.66	1.4		13.20					
	Model 3	Prep. independ.	.62	.11	.28	5.76	.45	.20	.20	34.52	.000
		Romantic relation	.24	.06	.19	4.07					
		Loneliness	.32	.09	.16	3.43					
Informative	Model 1	Constant	38.10	.84		45.24	.14	.02	.02	8.51	.004
		Prep. independ.	-.31	.11	-.14	-2.92					
	Model 2	Constant	36.90	.97		38.24	.19	.04	.03	7.42	.001
		N. marriage	.21	.08	.13	2.49					
Normative	Model 1	Constant	16.59	.87		19.02	.24	.06	.06	24.97	.000
		Prep. independ.	.56	.11	.24	5.00					
	Model 2	Constant	19.47	.97		20.16	.37	.13	.13	31.44	.000
		Prep. independ.	.77	.11	.33	6.81					
		N. marriage	-.50	.08	-.29	-2.9					

$p < .05$

As can be seen in Table 4, hierarchical regression was performed in order to determine the fear of growth sub-dimensions, which were assumed to have a predictive effect on the avoidance identity style. First, the model assumptions were examined. There was no autocorrelation in the model (Durbin Watson=2.0) and there was no multicollinearity problem among the explanatory variables ($VIF < 5$). Standardized residuals and Cooks values were examined and it was decided that outlier observations and influential observations were not included in the model. The multiple correlation coefficient for the model was $R = .45$ and the adjusted $R^2 = 20.2\%$. The estimated regression model was generally significant ($P = 0.000 < 0.001$). These pre-analyses showed that the data were appropriate for regression analysis.

In the first stage of the regression analysis, only the independent living sub-dimension was included in the model and it was found that independent living explained 14% of the avoidant identity style ($\beta = .38, p < .001$). In the second stage, romantic relationships was added to the model and it was observed that the explanatory power of the model increased to 18% ($\beta = .21, p < .001$). Finally, the social emotional loneliness dimension was

included in the model and it was observed that the model had the power to explain 20% of the avoidant identity ($\beta=.16, p<.001$). In the first model for the information-oriented identity style, the independent living variable was included in the analysis and it was found that independent living explained 2% of the information-oriented identity style ($\beta=-.14, p<.001$). In the second stage, attitude towards marriage was added to the model and the explanatory power of the model was found to be 3% ($\beta=.13, p<.001$).

In the first stage of the analysis for the norm-oriented identity style, the independent living sub-dimension was included. The predictive level of the independent living norm-oriented identity style was found to be 6% ($\beta=.24, p<.01$). In the second stage, attitude towards marriage was included in the model and it was found that the attitude towards marriage had 13% explanatory power for the norm identity style ($\beta=-.29, p<.001$).

CONCLUSION and DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to determine how much fear of growing up predicts identity styles in individuals in emerging adulthood. The results of the analysis showed that the frequency of the avoidance-oriented identity style increased as the fear of growth increased.

The most significant finding of this study is the correlation and regression relationship between the fear of growth the various identity styles. Accordingly, it is understood that the fear of growing up explains the avoidant identity style the most. This finding is in line with the literature and was the expected result. Berzonsky (2011) stated that individuals with an information-oriented identity style are more open to discovery and change when it is necessary, and that they apply more flexible thinking in the face of problems. On the other hand, it has been reported that individuals with an avoidant identity style show a pattern based on relatively weak, variable commitments and hedonistic pursuits, social concerns including reputation, popularity and approval by others, and are more distant in their sense of responsibility. In addition, previous studies have shown that individuals with an avoidant identity style are at increased risk of low self-esteem, poor peer relationships, academic difficulties, drug and alcohol abuse, various personal and behavioural problems, depressive reactions and neuroticism. All these findings can be considered as an obstacle to the tendency of such individuals to take responsibility for their developmental period (Adams et al., 2001; Berzonsky & Kuk, 2005; Jones, Ross & Hartmann, 1992; Nurmi et al., 1997; Wheeler, Adams & Keating, 2001).

One of the findings of this study is that the avoidant identity style scores of non-working individuals were significantly higher than those of working individuals. It is understood that working individuals have more information-oriented or norm-oriented identity styles. Arnett (2000; 2004) pointed out that spending time exploring alternative education, employment and lifestyle roles in emerging adulthood is among the developmental responsibilities which facilitate the transition to adulthood. Ateş (2020) reported that unemployed people have higher negative self-related symptoms than those who work.

According to the findings of the current study, the identity styles of individuals in adulthood differed significantly according to gender. It was found that the avoidance-oriented identity style was higher in males and the information-oriented identity style was higher in females. When previous studies are examined, it can be seen that the avoidance-oriented identity style is more common in males, similar to the finding of the current study (Berzonsky, 1992b; Lacombe & Gay, 1998; Morsümbül, 2005; Keybolahi et al., 2012; Topal, 2019; Uçar, 2020).

In studies conducted to explain the difference in identity style according to gender, it has been reported that one of the most striking variables is perceived parental attitude (Özyürek & Özkan, 2015; Soenens, Berzonsky, Dunkel & Papini, 2011). Özyürek and Özkan (2015) found that female adolescents perceived parental behaviour to be more democratic than males. This suggests that parental attitudes are effective in the development of identity according to gender. In support of this idea, Soenens, Berzonsky, Dunkel and Papini (2011) examined the effect of perceived parenting on identity formation and found that perceived parental attitudes significantly affect identity formation. The findings of those studies showed that the probability of forming a norm-oriented identity style is higher in cases in which the family does not display supportive and reactive attitudes. On the other hand, it has been reported that the avoidant identity style is more common as a result in parental behaviours which restrict freedom. Of course, parental attitude is not the only factor in changing the perception of identity according to gender. In general, the socio-cultural structure of the individual and the differentiation of gender roles can be among the factors affecting the situation in question (Örnek, 1995).

The findings of the current study show that the incidence of the avoidance-oriented identity style increases as individuals in emerging adulthood have difficulty in preparing for independent life and internalizing responsibility, maintaining a romantic relationship, and their social emotional loneliness increases. Berzonsky (2011) stated that individuals with an avoidance-oriented identity style are those with an external focus of control, limited self-control and poor ability to take responsibility and who engage in self-defeating behaviours and have problematic behaviours. Individuals with an external locus of control have difficulty in controlling their own lives and do not have the skills to take responsibility and make decisions (Durna & Şentürk, 2012). This may be one of the variables which explain the difficulty experienced in preparing for independent living, which is the focus of the current research. Harman and Kırdök (2017) observed that the career decision-making skills of students with an internal focus of control are at a higher level than those of students with an external focus of control. Looking at other related sub-dimensions of the fear of growth, Berzonsky, Nurmi, Kinney and Tammi (1999) found that university students with a pervasive avoidant identity style displayed more avoidance and sought less support in social contexts than those with information-oriented and normative ones. In another study conducted with university students, the avoidant identity style level of students with romantic relationships was found to be significantly lower than those without a relationship (Uçar, 2020). In another study, it was observed that adolescents who do not have a romantic relationship have a higher level of negative identity perceptions than those who have a relationship (Doğru-Çabuker & Balcı-Çelik, 2019). In the light of all these evaluations, it is understood that individuals with an avoidance-oriented identity style generally refrain from taking responsibility and seeking an independent life, and therefore experience difficulties in romantic relationships. This shows that the three sub-dimensions of fear of growth, apart from the negative attitude towards marriage, are significantly affected by the avoidant identity style.

When the relationship between the information-oriented identity style and the fear of growth sub-dimensions was examined, a significant negative relationship was observed with the preparation for independent life and the internalization of responsibility, whereas a positive significant relationship was observed with a negative attitude towards marriage. Problem-focused coping, prudent decision making, open-mindedness and cognitive complexity are seen in individuals with an information-oriented style (Berzonsky, 2011). They are people who are sceptical about their self-perceptions and open to new information (Berzonsky, 2007). It was found that individuals who have this style consider the most reasonable course when making decisions about themselves and their future. For this reason, they may be aware of their responsibilities and be more suitable for independent living than other identity styles. This finding is consistent with those of studies in the literature (Uçar, 2016; Morsünbül & Uçar, 2017; Uçar, 2020). Berzonsky (2013) stated that the information-oriented identity style is a style that matches the successful and moratorium identity status. It has been found that individuals with identity achievement status are ready for independent living and responsibilities (Ergin, 2015). When the negative attitude towards marriage was examined, an unexpected result was seen from the identity achievement status. An important reason for this is that information-oriented individuals tend to be more cautious and to analyse options in the decisions which they make about their lives (Berzonsky, 2011). Such a tendency distracts information-oriented individuals from building an important developmental task such as marriage on instant, hedonistic and impulsive decisions. Thus, it may seem normal for them to consider marriage as a phenomenon that should be viewed cautiously and of concern. Previous research suggests that in most cases, the informative style leads to an acquired identity with strong commitments. However, it has been stated that the information-oriented style can sometimes lead to a moratorium characterized by high exploration and low commitment (Berman et al., 2001, Berzonsky & Kuk, 2000, Berzonsky & Neimeyer, 1994). In this context, it can be thought that the relationship between the information-oriented identity style and the moratorium identity style is more prominent in this variable. Although the information-oriented person can make more regular decisions when determining his/her life plan and responsibilities, it is thought that the responsibilities of marriage and the thoughts of these people can bring about a distant approach to marriage.

When the norm-oriented identity style was examined with the fear of growing up, it was observed that there was difficulty in internalizing independent life and responsibilities, whilst a positive attitude towards marriage was observed. The norm-oriented person achieves identity satisfaction by acting according to the values of the society in which s/he lives (Berzonsky, 2008). When previous studies are examined, this result reflects what was expected (Berzonsky & Sullivan, 1992; Dollinger, 1995). Normative people also seem to have less need for cognition because society reduces this need (Uçar, 2017). Therefore, norm-oriented people are

also authoritarian people (Demir & Derelioğlu, 2010). Marriage is a norm for most societies and for norm-oriented people it is like a dependent lifestyle after the family (Örnek, 1995). Based on this, it can be thought that being norm-based is an escape from responsibility, independent living and even the responsibility of living independently, like taking refuge in norms.

As a result, according to the findings reported above, whereas the fear of growth was found to be related to identity styles, it was seen that the most explanatory sub-dimension was preparation for independent life and difficulty in internalizing responsibilities. People with norm and avoidance orientation showed a positive relationship with this sub-dimension, whilst people with information orientation showed a negative relationship. In other words, information-oriented individuals are more ready for independent living than other styles.

Limitations and Future Directions

Some limitations should be taken into account when evaluating the findings of this study. The sample of the study consisted of emerging adults aged between 18 and 30. If this age range is evaluated from other perspectives, it would correspond to a wide scale and include many different developmental tasks. It could therefore be meaningful to focus on a more specific age group within the same developmental period in order to investigate similar dynamics and to compare the findings with those of the current research. In addition, the relationship between fear of growth and identity styles was examined in this study but no evaluation was made of potential mediating variables which might affect the quality and quantity of the relationship in question. It is suggested that determining the psycho-social dynamics which can mediate these relations could make a valuable contribution to the field. Finally, the significant effect of the concept of 'growth fear' on identity styles suggests that it can affect many different developmental processes. On the other hand, it is noteworthy that the number of studies which have examined this particular concept is quite low. It is therefore thought that different studies on the subject of 'growth fear' will contribute significantly to the field.

Declarations

Conflict of Interest

No potential conflicts of interest were disclosed by the author(s) with respect to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

Ethics Approval

The formal ethics approval was granted by the Social and Human Sciences Research and Publication Ethics Committee of Ondokuz Mayıs University. We conducted the study in accordance with the Helsinki Declaration in 1975.

Funding

No specific grant was given to this research by funding organizations in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Research and Publication Ethics Statement

The study was approved by the research team's university ethics committee of the Ondokuz Mayıs University (Approval Number/ID: 2021/423) Hereby, we as the authors consciously assure that for the manuscript " Examination of the Relationship Between Fear of Growing up and Identity Styles in Emerging Adulthood" the following is fulfilled:

- This material is the authors' own original work, which has not been previously published elsewhere.
- The paper reflects the authors' own research and analysis in a truthful and complete manner.
- The results are appropriately placed in the context of prior and existing research.
- All sources used are properly disclosed.

Contribution Rates of Authors to the Article

The authors provide equal contribution to this work.

REFERENCES

- Adams, G. R., & Marshall, S. K. (1996). A developmental social psychology of identity: Understanding the person-in-context. *Journal of Adolescence*, 19(5), 429-442. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jado.1996.0041>
- Adams, G. R., Munro, B., Doherty-Poirer, M., Munro, G., Petersen, A. M. R., & Edwards, J. (2001). Diffuse-avoidance, normative, and informational identity styles: Using identity theory to predict maladjustment.

- Identity: *An International Journal of Theory and Research*, 1(4), 307-320. https://doi.org/10.1207/S1532706XID0104_01
- Arnett, J. J. (2000). Emerging adulthood: A theory of development from the late teens through the twenties. *American Psychologist*, 55, 469-480. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.5.469>
- Arnett, J. J. (2004). *Emerging adulthood: The winding road from the late teens through the twenties*. New York: *Oxford University Press*.
- Ateş, N. ve Özden-Yıldırım, M. S. (2018) Developing growth fear scale (gfs): validity and reliability study. *Mehmet Akif Ersoy University Journal of Social Sciences Institute*, 10(24), 158-175. <https://doi.org/10.20875/makusobed.380022>
- Ateş, N., & Yıldırım, M. S. Ö. (2020). The Investigation of the relationship between growth fear and psychological symptoms. *MANAS Journal of Social Studies*, 9(1), 402-410. <https://doi.org/10.33206/mjss.559423>
- Ateş, A. (2020). *The role of students 'sense of self-confidence and responsibility on academic success* [Master's thesis]. Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University.
- Berman, A. M., Schwartz, S. J., Kurtines, W. M., & Berman, S. L. (2001). The process of exploration in identity formation: The role of style and competence. *Journal of adolescence*, 24(4), 513-528. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jado.2001.0386>
- Berzonsky, M. D. (1989). Identity style: Conceptualization and measurement. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 4, 268-282. <https://doi.org/10.1177/074355488943002>
- Berzonsky, M. D. (1990). Self-construction over the life-span: A process perspective on identity formation. *Advances in personal construct psychology: A research annual*, Vol. 1, pp. 155-186). Elsevier Science/JAI Press.
- Berzonsky, M. D., & Sullivan, C. (1992a). Social-cognitive aspects of identity style: Need for cognition, experiential openness, and introspection. *Journal of adolescent research*, 7(2), 140-155. <https://doi.org/10.1177/074355489272002>
- Berzonsky, M. D. (1992b). Identity style and coping strategies. *Journal of Personality*, 60(4), 771- 788. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6494.1992.tb00273.x>
- Berzonsky, M. D., & Neimeyer, G. J. (1994). Ego identity status and identity processing orientation: The moderating role of commitment. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 28(4), 425-435. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jrpe.1994.1030>
- Berzonsky, M. D. (1999). Identity styles and hypothesis-testing strategies. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 139(6), 784-789. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224549909598257>
- Berzonsky, M. D., Nurmi, J. E., Kinney, A., & Tammi, K. (1999). Identity processing style and cognitive attributional strategies: Similarities and difference across different contexts. *European Journal of Personality*, 13(2), 105-120. [https://doi.org/10.1002/\(SICI\)1099-0984\(199903/04\)13:2<105::AID-PER325>3.0.CO;2-H](https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1099-0984(199903/04)13:2<105::AID-PER325>3.0.CO;2-H)
- Berzonsky, M. D., & Kuk, L. S. (2000). Identity status, identity processing style, and the transition to university. *Journal of adolescent research*, 15(1), 81-98. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0743558400151005>
- Berzonsky, M. D., & Kuk, L. S. (2005). Identity style, psychosocial maturity, and academic performance. *Personality and individual differences*, 39(1), 235-247. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2005.01.010>
- Berzonsky, M. D. (2007). Identity processing style, self-construction, and personal epistemic assumptions: A social cognitive perspective, *European Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 1, 303-315. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17405620444000120>
- Berzonsky, M. D. (2008). Identity formation: The role of identity processing style and cognitive processes. *Personality and individual differences*, 44(3), 645-655. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2007.09.024>
- Berzonsky, M. D. (2011). A social-cognitive perspective on identity construction. In *Handbook of identity theory and research* (pp. 55-76). Springer, New York, NY.
- Berzonsky, M. D., Soenens, B., Luyckx, K., Smits, I., Papini, D. R., & Goossens, L. (2013). Development and validation of the revised Identity Style Inventory (ISI-5): Factor structure, reliability, and validity. *Psychological assessment*, 25(3), 893. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0032642>
- Demir, İ., & Derelioğlu, Y. (2010). Identity statuses and identity styles as predictors of authoritarianism among young people. *Journal of Uludag University Faculty of Education*, 23(1), 99-119. Retrieved from <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/uefad/issue/16691/173476>

- Doğan, A., & Cebioğlu, S. (2011). Emerging adulthood: A period between adolescence and adulthood. *Turkish Psychological Articles*, 14(28), 11–21. Retrieved from <https://asosindex.com.tr/index.jsp?modul=articles-page&journal-id=1429&article-id=75772>
- Doğru-Çabuker, N., ve Balcı-Çelik, S. (2019). Investigation of relationship between university students' perceptions of the separation, individuation and identity. *Ondokuz Mayıs University Journal of Education Faculty*, 38(1), 53-72. Retrieved from <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/omuefd/issue/46119/461862>
- Dollinger, S. M. C. (1995). Identity styles and the five-factor model of personality. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 29(4), 475-479. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jrpe.1995.1028>
- Durna, U., & Şentürk, K. (2012). Investigation of relations between locus of control and social activities among university students: a state universite case. *Suleyman Demirel University the Journal of Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences*, 17(2), 187-202. Retrieved from <https://iibfdergi.sdu.edu.tr/en/published-issues/year-2012-vol-17-no-2-5292s.html>
- Ergin, E. (2015). *The relationship between identity status and coping strategies among emerging adulthood* [Master's thesis]. Ufuk University.
- Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity: Youth and Crisis*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Harman, E., & Kırdök, O. (2017). The predictive strength of career decision making difficulties on high school students' career maturity according to their levels of focus of control. *Journal of Human Sciences*, 15(3), 1530–1540. Retrieved from <https://www.j-humansciences.com/ojs/index.php/IJHS/article/view/5221>
- Hayran, Ş. (2020). *Investigation of the relationship between fear of growth in emerging adulthood and early maladaptive schemas* [Master's thesis]. Kırıkkale University.
- Jones, R. M., Ross, C. N., & Hartmann, B. R. (1992). An Investigation of Cognitive Style and Alcohol/Work-Related Problems among Naval Personnel. *Journal of Drug Education*, 22(3), 241–251. <https://doi.org/10.2190/3HE9-TCAE-2P3Y-BN5H>
- Katsiaficas, D. (2017). "I Know I'm an Adult When... I Can Care for Myself and Others" The role of social responsibilities in emerging adulthood for community college students. *Emerging Adulthood*, 5(6), 392-405. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2167696817698>
- Keybollahi, T., Mansoobifar, M., & Mujembari, A. K. (2012). The relationship between identity statuses and attitudes toward intimately relations considering the gender factor. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 46, 899-903. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.05.220>
- Kiley, D. (1983). *The Peter Pan syndrome: Men who have never grown up*. New York: Dodd Mead.
- Lacombe, A. C., & Gay, J. (1998). The role of gender in adolescent identity and intimacy decisions. *Journal of youth and adolescence*, 27(6), 795-802. Retrieved from <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1023/A:1022818017385>
- Marcia, J. E. (1966). Development and validation of ego-identity status. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 3(5), 551. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0023281>
- Marcia, J. E. (1980). Identity in adolescence. *Handbook of Adolescent Psychology*, 9(11), 159-187.
- Marcia J. E. (1993). The relational roots of identity. In *Discussions on Ego Identity* (Ed J Kroger):34-65. NJ, England, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates,
- Morsünbül, Ü. ve Tümen, B. (2008). The relationship between identity and attachment in adolescence: an investigation through identity status and attachment styles. *Turkish Journal of Child and Adolescent Mental Health*, 15(1), 25-31. Retrieved from <https://asosindex.com.tr/index.jsp?modul=articles-page&journal-id=1722&article-id=264738>
- Morsünbül, Ü., & Çok, F. (2013). A new dimension in identity development: ruminative exploration. *Turkish Psychological Counseling and Guidance Journal*, 4(40), 232-244. Retrieved from <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/tpdrd/issue/21460/229904>
- Morsünbül, Ü., & Uçar, E. (2017). The relations of identity styles, processes and statuses with functions of identity. *Mersin University Journal of the Faculty of Education*, 13(1), 25-35. <https://doi.org/10.17860/mersinefd.305751>
- Morsünbül, Ü., Uçar, M. E., & Konal, B. (2020). Adaptation of identity styles scale-5 to turkish: validity and reliability study. *Journal of Human Sciences*, 17(1), 142-153. <https://doi.org/10.14687/jhs.v17i1.5898>
- Nurmi, J. E., Berzonsky, M. D., Tammi, K., & Kinney, A. (1997). Identity processing orientation, cognitive and behavioural strategies and well-being. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 21(3), 555-570. <https://doi.org/10.1080/016502597384785>

- Örnek, S. V. (1995). *Türk Halk Bilimi*. Türkiye İş Bank Cultural Publications
- Özyürek, A., & Özkan, İ. (2015). A study on the relationship between adolescents' perception the parental attitudes and their social competence level. *International Journal of Science Culture and Sport*, 3 (1) , 73-88 . <https://doi.org/10.14486/IJSCS259>
- Pehlivan, R., & Şener, T. (2021). The relationship of identity statuses with marriage and having children in adolescence and emerging adulthood. *Turkish Journal of Child and Adolescent Mental Health*. <https://doi.org/10.4274/tjcamh.galenos.2021.70883>
- Şanlı, E., & Ersanli, K. (2021). The effects of psycho-education program based on logotherapy for the development of a healthy sense of identity in emerging adulthoods. *Current Psychology*, 40(9), 4173-4188. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-020-01009-3>
- Soenens, B., Berzonsky, M. D., Vansteenkiste, M., Beyers, W., & Goossens, L. (2005). Identity styles and causality orientations: In search of the motivational underpinnings of the identity exploration process. *European Journal of Personality*, 19(5), 427-442. <https://doi.org/10.1002/per.551>
- Soenens, B., Berzonsky, M. D., Dunkel, C. S., Papini, D. R., & Vansteenkiste, M. (2011). Are all identity commitments created equally? The importance of motives for commitment for late adolescents' personal adjustment. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 35(4), 358-369. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0165025411405954>
- Topal, F. (2019). *Relation between attachment and identity styles in emerging adulthood* [Master's thesis]. Akdeniz University.
- Uçar, M. E. (2016). Relationship between need for closure self-type and identity styles in emerging adulthood. *Journal of Human Sciences*, 13(1), 2170-2185. Retrieved from <https://www.j-humansciences.com/ojs/index.php/IJHS/article/view/3686>
- Uçar, M. E. (2017). Relationship between need for cognition self-esteem and identity styles. *Bartın University Journal of Faculty of Education*, 6(2), 640. <https://doi.org/10.14686/buefad.313258>
- Uçar, M. S. (2020). *An investigation of identity styles and interpersonal relationships in university students* [Master's thesis]. Gazi Üniversitesi.
- Wheeler, H. A., Adams, G. R., & Keating, L. (2001). Binge eating as a means for evading identity issues: The association between an avoidance identity style and bulimic behavior. *Identity: An International Journal of Theory and Research*, 1(2), 161-178. https://doi.org/10.1207/S1532706XID0102_04