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The Mediating Role of Self-Forgiveness in the Relationship Between Social Exclusion and Psychological Symptoms in University Students

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Abstract

Social exclusion is a risk factor for the psychological well-being of university students. Because they pass through emerging adulthood characterized by pressure and uncertainty, interpersonal resources are more significant for them. However, social exclusion limits these resources. It also causes negative emotional states, such as guilt and sadness. At this point, self-forgiveness may play a significant role as an emotion-focused coping strategy. Thus, the present study aimed to investigate the mediating role of self-forgiveness on the relationship between social exclusion and psychological symptoms in university students. Data were analyzed through regression-based mediation analysis using the PROCESS macro (Model 4) with 5,000 bootstrap resamples. This study included 725 university students aged 18-24 years, with a mean age of 21.01 years. Of these university students, 481 (66.3%) were female, and 244 (33.7%) were male. The participants completed the Social Exclusion Scale, Self-Forgiveness Scale, and Depression Anxiety Stress Scale-21. The findings revealed that social exclusion was significantly associated with psychological symptoms. Furthermore, self-forgiveness mediated the relationship between social exclusion and psychological symptoms. Therefore, psychological symptoms can be prevented by focusing on the self-forgiveness of university students experiencing social exclusion.

Keywords: Social exclusion, self-forgiveness, psychological symptoms, mediating role.

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Introduction

The state of being in full health is defined by the World Health Organization (2022a) as a state of complete physical, social and mental well-being. Addressing prevalent health issues is essential for promoting the overall well-being of individuals. In terms of mental health, depression, anxiety, and stress are the leading conditions that negatively affect individuals worldwide. Proving this situation, the World Health Organization (2022b) reported that approximately 280 million people in the world have depression. In a large-scale study conducted in China, 31.6% of the participants reported anxiety symptoms, while 27.9% of them had symptoms of depression (Wang et al., 2021). A recent multinational study from 35 countries found that 26.7% of the participants had depression symptoms. It also showed that 28.2% had anxiety symptoms, and 18.3% had stress symptoms (Chen et al., 2021). Depression, anxiety, and stress have a profound impact on individuals' psychological functioning. For example, Lew et al. (2019) found that psychological symptoms pose a significant risk for negative behaviors, such as suicide, in university students. However, these kinds of behaviors are rarely caused by a single factor. In the background of the effect of psychological symptoms on undesirable processes, these individuals feel intensely excluded (Martínez-Monteagudo et al., 2020). Exclusion causes social pain, leading to significant psychological and physical suffering for individuals, making it a key predictor of mental health issues (Kim et al., 2022). The increased prevalence of pain resulting from social exclusion is an issue that needs to be addressed for the general population, like university students (Allen et al., 2020). This situation reveals the importance of a person's belonging to a group for optimal mental health.

From birth onward, individuals inherently strive to be accepted within social groups. Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) sees this effort as a universal and basic psychological need. Therefore, not meeting this basic need leads to undesirable consequences on the mental health of the individual (Arslan & Yıldırım, 2021;

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Ladd & Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2016). A key principle of self-determination theory is that fulfilling three fundamental psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—is essential for optimal functioning (González-Cutre et al., 2016). The need for relatedness cannot be met for individuals whose interpersonal relationships are disrupted as a result of social exclusion (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Yu et al., 2023). Since forgiveness is an important psychological construct for emotional competence (Devassy & Raj, 2014), it becomes more critical for meeting the basic needs in the state of social exclusion. Its disruption with social exclusion may lead to more negative outcomes for the individual. Therefore, exploring self-forgiveness in the context of social exclusion may yield important insights into the psychological symptoms experienced by university students.

The significance of social connection becomes particularly pronounced during the university years. University life is considered the transition period before adulthood in which young people need to develop personally, socially, and academically. Young people in this period have limited social support due to staying away from their families for university education. This situation highlights the need for the socialization of human beings (Kasikci, 2020). Failure to meet this need for social contact is seen as an important source of stress. This situation is defined as social exclusion in the literature.

Williams and Sommer (1997) define social exclusion as the rejection or disregard of individuals by the groups around them. This situation is based on the individuals' perception that they are not accepted or supported by others (Arslan, 2018a). In this context, social exclusion, loneliness (Allen et al., 2020; Arslan & Yıldırım, 2021), low self-esteem (Tunçel & Kavak, 2022), low academic achievement (Raabe, 2019), negative perceptions towards school (Satici, 2020), psychological symptoms such as depression, anxiety, and stress (Li et al., 2021; Lin et al., 2021) have been associated with mental health (Arslan, 2018b). According to belongingness theory, developing relationships with others shapes the daily lives of individuals (Pang et al., 2024). These relationships affect the well-being of individuals (Couvillion, 2022). From this point of view, it is possible for an individual whose well-being is negatively affected as a result of social exclusion to experience psychological symptoms. Although terms like ostracism, social outcast, and rejection are often used interchangeably with social exclusion, ostracism specifically refers to being deliberately ignored. (Kavakli, 2021). According to Yaakobi (2021), individuals experience ostracism in varying degrees and ways. The fact that these concepts referring to exclusion are experienced differently by each individual suggests that internal resources such as self-forgiveness may play an important role. Individuals who are excluded in the social context produce negative perceptions about themselves, which negatively affects the well-being of individuals and leads to mental health problems. Previous researchers have found that socially excluded individuals report more symptoms that negatively affect psychological health, such as depression, anxiety, and stress. For example, in a study by Li et al. (2021), they found that the exclusion of university students by a social environment was a significant predictor of depression. These symptoms can create serious personal and societal costs for students, such as alcohol use (Balestrieri et al., 2018) or suicide (Longobardi et al., 2020). Despite the strong relationship between social exclusion and psychological symptoms, studies examining the factors of this strong relationship are quite limited in the literature (Arslan, 2019; Li et al., 2021; Niu et al., 2022). In other words, the mediators in this strong relationship need to be revealed.

In some cultures, social stigma and the fear of judgment can significantly delay university students from seeking mental health services due to social exclusion (Sakız & Jencius, 2024). This exclusion may create a powerful hesitation to seek help since individuals may struggle to forgive themselves and instead continue to punish themselves with negative attitudes. According to Niu et al. (2022), social exclusion affects psychological symptoms through rejection sensitivity. Considering the existence of studies showing a negative correlation between self-forgiveness and rejection sensitivity (Hui & Tian, 2021; Sakız & Sarıçam, 2015), it would be helpful to examine the mediating role of self-forgiveness between social exclusion and psychological symptoms for university students. Moreover, psychological constructs related to self-forgiveness, like self-esteem and social competence (Yao et al., 2017), negatively correlate with ostracism (Sakız et al., 2021). Taken all together, whether social exclusion affects psychological symptoms through self-forgiveness is a topic that needs to be investigated for university students.

This study aims to explore the mediating role of self-forgiveness on the relationship between social exclusion and psychological symptoms, which are depression, anxiety, and stress.

The Mediator Role of Self-Forgiveness

Self-forgiveness is a process of regulating emotions and involves gradually changing one's feelings, thoughts, and behaviors towards oneself (Hall & Fincham, 2005; Li et al., 2020). Self-forgiveness, which is an important

structure in coping with stress in case of any crime or mistake, is a basic feature of social life (Costa et al., 2021). When someone struggles with emotional regulation, it becomes challenging for them to practice self-forgiveness (Ayseli & Yıldırım, 2023). Considering that individuals facing social exclusion experience impaired emotion regulation, a decrease in self-forgiveness may occur in these individuals (Jankowski et al., 2018). As mentioned above, socially excluded individuals often experience factors that negatively affect their psychological health, such as anger, depression, anxiety, and stress. Numerous studies document the relationship between self-forgiveness and psychological health. For example, the study by Fincham and May (2020) shows that self-forgiveness is negatively associated with depression. Increasingly, studies support that self-forgiveness significantly and positively contributes to interpersonal relationships (Cheavens et al., 2016; Fincham & May, 2020; Yao et al., 2017). In addition, socially excluded individuals tend to blame themselves through low self-esteem (Yao et al., 2017). This situation leads to negative feelings about oneself and has psychological or physical effects. At this point, self-forgiveness is considered an important coping strategy and helps to turn negative emotions into positive ones (Hall & Fincham, 2005). Moreover, considering the negative emotional state of individuals with psychological symptoms, self-forgiveness, a coping mechanism, may be necessary at this point. In other words, the feeling of guilt of the socially excluded individuals or the development of thoughts that they deserve this situation may lead to a negative emotional state. In this relationship, how the mechanism of self-forgiveness functions is important. There is a dearth of studies (Arslan & Coskun, 2021) examining the relationships between social exclusion and self-forgiveness. Also, there is no study examining the mediating role of self-forgiveness in undesirable situations such as depression, anxiety, and stress resulting from social exclusion.

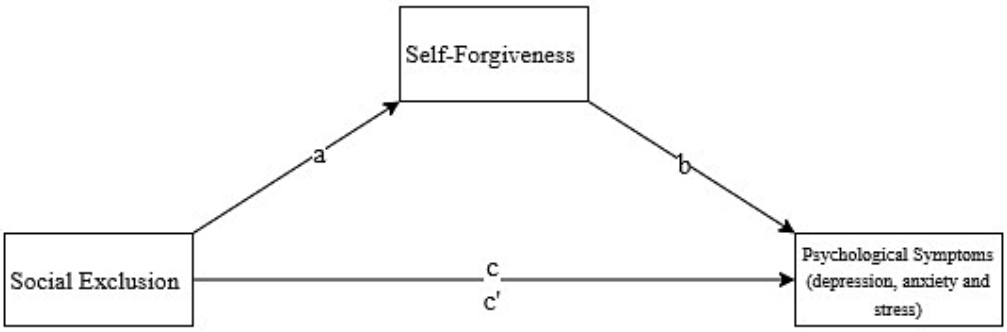
On the other hand, instead of focusing on the shortcomings and weaknesses of individuals, the positive psychology approach focuses on their strengths, positive aspects, happiness, and positive emotions. In this context, it is important to identify factors that enable individuals to develop positive coping strategies in stressful situations. One of these potentially significant factors is self-forgiveness. Self-forgiveness is a skill that can be cultivated and developed over time. For this reason, it is thought that self-forgiveness would be a significant factor for socially excluded individuals to cope with negative consequences.

The Purpose of the Present Study

In this study, it was aimed to investigate the role of self-forgiveness in the relationship between social exclusion and psychological symptoms (depression, anxiety, and stress). As it is known, social exclusion is defined as social death by Williams (2007), and it brings many undesirable situations. In this context, it can be expressed as a more economical situation to focus on the structures that mediate these undesirable situations. The mediating factor in this study was self-forgiveness: *(H_1)* self-forgiveness would mediate the association between social exclusion and psychological symptoms. The model tested in this study is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

The Conceptual Model



Method

Research Design

In this study, the role of self-forgiveness in the relationship between social exclusion and psychological symptoms (depression, anxiety and stress) was examined. The research was conducted with a correlation design. Correlation design is a quantitative research design that examines the relationship between at least two variables in depth

(McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). In this context, the independent variable in the research was social exclusion, the dependent variable was psychological symptoms (depression, anxiety and stress) and the mediator variable was self-forgiveness.

Participants

The present study recruited 725 undergraduate students from a state university in Turkey as participants. The mean age of the participants was 21.01 years, with a range of 18 to 24 years (*SD* = 2.01). The sample was composed of 481 female participants (66.3%) and 244 male participants (33.7%). Recruitment was conducted by sending an electronic link to eligible students, resulting in a total of 750 students who expressed interest in participating. However, during the data analysis phase, 25 participants' responses were excluded from the dataset due to non-normality.

During the data collection process of the study, data was collected online in accordance with legal procedures. For this purpose, the data collection link generated via Google Form was sent to the students' academic advisors. Academic advisors shared it via WhatsApp groups of the classes they were responsible for. The data collection process was completed within 17 days. Participation in the research process was voluntary. Participants were also informed that their identities would be kept confidential and no material or moral incentives were offered.

Measures

Social Exclusion Scale (SES)

In order to assess the perceptions of social exclusion among the university students participating in the study, the Social Exclusion Scale (SES) was utilized. The SES is a sub-dimension of the General Belonging Scale developed by Malone et al. (2012) and is a valid measurement tool for Turkish youth, as reported by Duru (2015). The scale consists of 6 items rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale. The results of the study revealed that the scale demonstrated sufficient reliability, with an alpha coefficient of .82. In this study, the Cronbach alpha coefficient of the scale was calculated as .80.

Self-Forgiveness Scale (SFS)

The study utilized the Self-Forgiveness Scale (SFS) to measure the self-forgiveness levels of university students. The SFS is a sub-dimension of the Heartland Forgiveness Scale (Thompson et al., 2005), and it is a valid measurement tool for Turkish youth, as reported by Bugay and Demir (2010). The scale consists of 6 items rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale. Results of the study showed that the scale demonstrated sufficient reliability, with an alpha coefficient of .83. In this study, the Cronbach alpha coefficient of the scale was calculated as .78.

Depression Anxiety Stress Scale-21 (DASS-21)

In order to gather information about the psychological symptoms of the students participating in the research, the Psychological Symptoms Scale developed by Lovibond and Lovibond (1995) was utilized. The scale consists of 21 items and three sub-dimensions (depression, anxiety, and stress), and it is a valid measurement tool for Turkish youth, as reported by Sarıçam (2018). Results of the study indicated that the scale demonstrated sufficient reliability, with alpha coefficients of .81 for depression, .79 for anxiety, and .80 for stress sub-dimensions. In this study, Cronbach alpha coefficients for depression, anxiety and stress sub-dimensions were calculated as .78, .81 and .80, respectively.

Data Analysis

The present study aimed to investigate the potential mediating role of self-forgiveness (M) in the relationship between social exclusion (X) and psychological symptoms (Y) among university students. Data analysis was conducted in a multi-step process. In the first stage, the normality of the data was assessed using various statistical tests, including extreme value analyses (kurtosis, skewness, Z-score, Mahalanobis, Cooks, Leverage). As a result of the calculated z-points, the data of 25 participants whose data fell outside the ±3 z-score limits (Kline, 2015) and whose data disrupted the normal distribution were removed from the data set. In the second step, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between the study variables. In the final stage, a mediation model was tested using the PROCESS macro (Model 4) developed by Hayes (2018)

in SPSS. The hypothesis was supported if the values within the 95% confidence interval (CI) did not include zero (MacKinnon et al., 2004). In addition, bootstrapping, which is frequently used to test the indirect and direct effects in the mediation model, was performed (Preacher and Hayes, 2008). In this context, the obtained data is randomly selected n numbers and reanalyzed. In this study, the resampling number is determined as 5000 and confidence intervals are calculated. According to Hayes (2013), in order to decide on the significance of the direct and indirect effects obtained in the mediation model, the confidence intervals attached should not cover zero. Moderating analyses were carried out using the PROCESS macro, and the SPSS-22 program was used to determine the relationship among variables in the study.

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations

The descriptive results revealed that the kurtosis and skewness values of the scores obtained from the participants ranged from -.46 to .69. It was found that the kurtosis and skewness values fell within the criteria of -2 to +2, as proposed by Finney and DiStefano (2006) for the assumption of normality, indicating that all variables had a normal distribution. Additionally, the correlation analysis conducted to test the relationships between the variables revealed positive and statistically significant associations between social exclusion and depression, anxiety, and stress. Conversely, there were negative and statistically significant associations between social exclusion and self-forgiveness. The descriptive statistics and correlation analysis results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Correlations and Descriptive Statistics

	Descriptive statistics				Correlations				
	M	*SD*	Skew.	Kurt.	1	2	3	4	5
1. SE	24.03	5.94	-.09	-.46	1				
2. SF	27.96	5.88	-.02	-.45	-.32**	1			
3. Dep.	8.09	6.37	-.14	-.15	.41**	-.30**	1		
4. Ank.	5.03	6.79	.04	-.39	.30**	-.46**	.28**	1	
5. Str.	7.09	6.79	-.08	-.40	.25**	-.32**	.44**	.41**	1

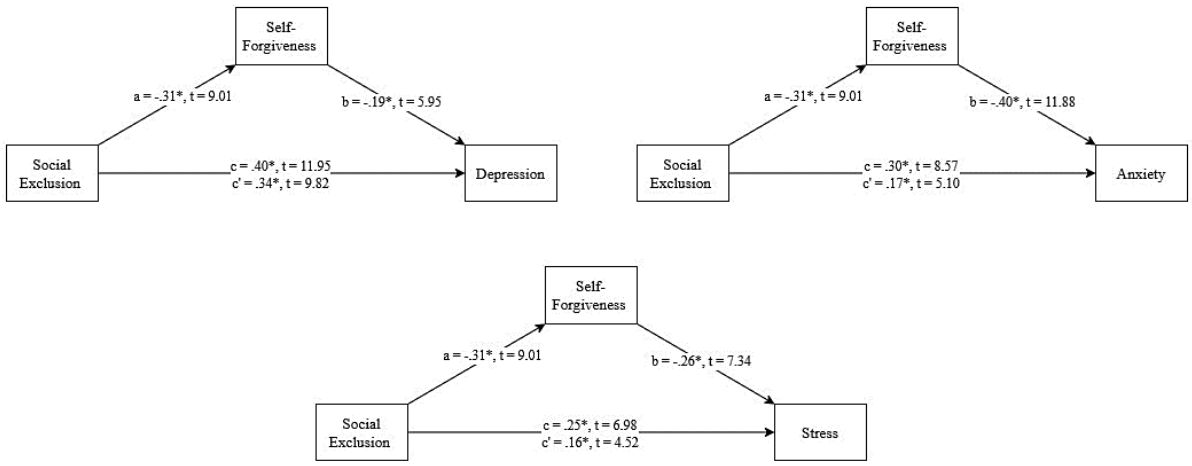
Note. SE= Social Exclusion; SF= Self-Forgiveness

Mediation Analyses

The results of the analysis revealed that social exclusion and self-forgiveness accounted for 19% of the variance in depression, 24% of the variance in anxiety, and 12% of the variance in stress. Additionally, social exclusion was found to have a positive and statistically significant effect on psychological symptoms (depression: $\beta = .37$, $t = 11.95$, $p < .05$; anxiety: $\beta = .29$, $t = 8.57$, $p < .05$; and stress: $\beta = .24$, $t = 6.98$, $p < .05$). Furthermore, social exclusion was found to have a negative and statistically significant effect on self-forgiveness ($\beta = -.31$, $t = 9.01$, $p < .05$). Similarly, self-forgiveness was found to have a negative and statistically significant effect on psychological symptoms (depression: $\beta = -.19$, $t = 5.95$, $p < .05$; anxiety: $\beta = -.40$, $t = 11.88$, $p < .05$; and stress: $\beta = -.26$, $t = 7.34$, $p < .05$). These results indicate that the model is suitable for testing the mediating relationship. Based on these findings, this study examined the mediating role of self-forgiveness in the relationship between social exclusion and psychological symptoms (depression, anxiety, and stress). The results showed that the relationship between social exclusion and psychological symptoms decreased when self-forgiveness was included in the model (as shown in Figure 2).

Figure 2

*Mediation Role of Self-Forgiveness Variable (*p < .05).*



Note. Path coefficients in parentheses are the values (belonging to the direct effect) after the mediator variables are included in the model.

To determine the significance of the mediating role of self-forgiveness in the relationship between social exclusion and psychological symptoms (depression, anxiety, and stress) for a sample of 5000 individuals, as well as to reveal the direct and indirect effects between the variables, a bootstrap analysis was conducted as per the method proposed by Preacher and Hayes (2008). The results of the analysis, including the indirect effect and corresponding confidence intervals, are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Bootstrapping Process for the Mediating Model

Indirect Effect		%95 CI		
	Estimated	Lower	Upper	SE
Social Exclusion → Self-Forgiveness → Depression	.05	.03	.07	.01
Social Exclusion → Self-Forgiveness → Anxiety	.12	.09	.16	.01
Social Exclusion → Self-Forgiveness → Stress	.08	.05	.11	.01

Discussion

The current study examined the relationship between social exclusion and psychological symptoms (depression, anxiety, and stress) by elucidating the mediating role of self-forgiveness in university students. The findings of this study are in line with previous research that demonstrates a positive association between social exclusion and psychological symptoms (Arslan & Coskun, 2021). Furthermore, the results suggest that greater social exclusion is associated with less self-forgiveness. A negative correlation is also found between self-forgiveness and psychological symptoms. Thus, socially excluded university students show less self-forgiveness, and this results in psychological symptoms.

The need for belonging is present at every stage of life, but this is especially important for university students. After leaving the family home for university education, university students do not have the chance to meet with their families frequently. In addition to being alone, social and emotional expectations increase due to the unique nature of the emerging adulthood period. Social support and belonging are of paramount importance to university students. That is why they want to be included in a social group (Kasikci, 2020). The emergence of psychological symptoms as a result of social exclusion can be explained by the decrease in social support and

belonging. Individuals with limited external resources are likely to turn to internal resources. Just as social exclusion is a barrier to the use of external resources, low self-forgiveness can play a similar role in the use of internal resources. Because self-forgiveness is an emotion-focused coping strategy, low self-forgiveness can make it difficult to access and use internal resources. Based on self-determination theory, social exclusion disrupts individuals' need for relatedness and affects their interpersonal relationships (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Yu et al., 2023). Forgiveness is a key component of emotional competence (Devassy & Raj, 2014) and is vital for meeting the basic psychological needs of socially excluded individuals. Low self-forgiveness can result in psychological symptoms for socially excluded university students. Therefore, reduced resources resulting from social exclusion can dramatically decrease with low self-forgiveness, which may result in leaving the individual helpless.

Moreover, fundamental needs are threatened by social exclusion. Failure to meet needs such as control, belonging, meaningful existence, and self-esteem can lead to problems (Timeo et al., 2019a). Even if limited resources do not create a psychological effect on the individual at first, the fundamental needs at risk due to social exclusion may directly affect the individual's psychological symptoms. In the process of social exclusion, which is characterized by losses in many respects, feelings similar to the mourning process may arise. The feelings of self-pity, resentment, envy, and guilt are dominant in the unhealed mourning process (Lijtmaer, 2022). Similarly, individuals tend to blame themselves in the social exclusion process (Yao et al., 2017). The individuals may question why they are socially excluded and why it happens to them. At this point, it is likely that there are changes in self-forgiveness due to social exclusion. Self-forgiveness, which is effective in reducing negative emotions, becomes ineffective when social exclusion occurs. When the feelings such as guilt, anger, and sadness arise and self-forgiveness decreases, the effect of these feelings may substantially increase. At the same time, cognitive performance declines due to social exclusion (Lincoln et al., 2021). Therefore, when self-forgiveness declines, negative feelings and thoughts may persist, as if in an endless mourning process.

Depression

The findings suggest that social exclusion leads to depression with the mediating role of self-forgiveness. Similarly, previous studies demonstrate that self-forgiveness reduces the risk of depression. However, forgiveness to others does not show the same effect (Gençoğlu et al., 2018; Toussaint, 2022). The significant effect of self-forgiveness on depression may be more meaningful if it is evaluated in terms of factors that trigger depression. Self-blame resulting from social exclusion can trigger rumination. Rumination gradually increases in people who constantly make negative evaluations of themselves. Individuals should distance themselves from repetitive thinking that drags them down. Resolving unfinished business after freeing themselves from trapped emotions through self-forgiveness may be beneficial. In this sense, self-forgiveness may be an important strategy for the individual to get out of rumination and, therefore, depression. Socially excluded university students may show high rumination because university students, many of whom are far from their family homes, are likely to feel a lack of social support. The existing negative perceptions of university students may start to grow and be proven in their minds due to the lack of social support. At this point, self-forgiveness can affect negative perceptions by regulating emotions and thoughts (Li et al., 2020). Thus, self-forgiveness emerges as a factor that prevents depression.

Along with rumination, cognitive problems often occur in depression, and these are mostly associated with increased self-focused. Fossati (2019) claims that self-focused increases after social exclusion because socially excluded people find the external world risky and direct attention resources to the internal world. Due to the lack of social support, social exclusion adversely affects the external world of the individual. Similarly, social exclusion may prevent the regulation of emotions and thoughts by causing a decrease in self-forgiveness, and this affects the internal world of the individual. For example, individuals with high self-forgiveness experience less negative affect, which reduces their risk of depression (Gençoğlu et al., 2018). Thus, socially excluded university students are likely to experience depression due to low self-forgiveness.

Anxiety

The present study revealed a significant effect of social exclusion on anxiety through self-forgiveness. According to evolutionary psychologists, even if anxiety is not a pleasant experience, it protects the individual from social threats (Karasewich & Kuhlmeier, 2020). Social exclusion is considered one of the most powerful forms of social threats (Timeo et al., 2019b). Even if self-forgiveness keeps anxiety at a certain level, this is not possible when social exclusion occurs. Today, university students are in a competitive environment and are exposed to many social experiences due to their increasing responsibilities. This increased social encounter can lead to exposure to humiliation and rejection many times when social exclusion occurs (Gilboa-Schechtman, 2020). As a result,

maintaining a high level of self-forgiveness can become even more difficult when today's university students face social exclusion, and this results in anxiety.

Stress

The finding on stress is remarkable for university students. Similar to other psychological symptoms, social exclusion adversely affects stress with the mediating role of self-forgiveness. Stress emerges similarly at first in individuals exposed to social exclusion but then changes to a large extent (Lincoln et al., 2021). This change can be explained by a coping strategy that acts consistently over time rather than an external stimulus. Correspondingly, O'Beirne et al. (2020) found that decreased tolerance for pain is associated with a low level of self-forgiveness. Similar to the mechanism for pain, self-forgiveness can produce changes in stress over time. Thus, decreased self-forgiveness leads to stress in university students whose social exclusion levels increase.

Limitations and Implications

The study had a number of limitations. First, although the reliability and validity of the scales used in the research proved suitable, the findings were based on self-declaration measures. Therefore, other evaluation methods (for example, peer and parental reports) should be used in later studies. Second, the cross-sectional nature of this study is a significant limitation. In this respect, researchers can conduct longitudinal studies. Third, the findings of the current study can only be generalized to Turkish university students. Thus, these findings need to be tested among other populations. This study was conducted via an online scale because, given the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic at the time of writing, students were studying online. Therefore, participants may be a possibility of not being able to express themselves correctly. A larger sampling can be applied to ensure the reliability and validity of the results of the study.

Psychological services can implement interventions focused on self-forgiveness for the prevention of psychological symptoms. Although developing external resources is critical in situations such as social exclusion and loneliness, it may be more beneficial to develop self-forgiveness at first due to the intensity of guilt and sadness. Moreover, this is important for the social exclusion situation to be handled as a manageable issue without being personalized. Therefore, self-forgiveness can be used as a powerful instrument for social exclusion in psychological services.

Conclusion

The findings of this study made a significant contribution to the literature on the association of social exclusion, self-forgiveness, and psychological symptoms because there have been very few studies on the relationship between these factors, especially regarding the mediating effect of self-forgiveness. The current study, thus, reveals important implications for the function of self-forgiveness in university students experiencing social exclusion. University students with high self-forgiveness can cultivate positive emotional skills, and this can be beneficial to optimize psychological well-being. However, while psychological symptoms occur in university students who face social exclusion, self-forgiveness decreases at the same time. Therefore, this study demonstrated the mediating role of self-forgiveness on the relationship between social exclusion and psychological symptoms in university students.

Code of Ethics

Ethical approval and permission were obtained from Atatürk University Social and Human Sciences Ethics Board (Atatürk Üniversitesi Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Etik Kurulu) (Meeting No: 02/11, Approval Date: 03.02.2022)

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Üniversite Öğrencilerinde Sosyal Dışlanma ile Psikolojik Semptomlar Arasındaki İlişkide Kendini Affetmenin Aracılık Rolü

Öz

Sosyal dışlanma, üniversite öğrencilerinin psikolojik iyi oluşları için bir risk faktörüdür. Beliren yetişkinlik döneminde bulunan üniversite öğrencileri için kişilerarası ilişkiler çok önemlidir. Fakat sosyal dışlanma bu ilişkileri baltalar. Ayrıca suçluluk ve üzüntü gibi olumsuz duygusal durumlara sebebiyet verir. Bu noktada, kendini affetme, duygu odaklı bir başa çıkma stratejisi olarak önemli bir rol oynayabilir. Bu nedenle, mevcut çalışma üniversite öğrencilerinde sosyal dışlanma ile psikolojik semptomlar arasındaki ilişkide kendini affetmenin aracılık rolünü araştırmayı amaçlamıştır. Veriler, SPSS ortamında Hayes PROCESS Makrosu (Model 4) kullanılarak 5.000 Bootstrap örneklemesiyle aracılık analizi kapsamında incelenmiştir. Çalışmaya 18-24 yaş aralığında, yaş ortalaması 21,01 olan 725 üniversite öğrencisi katılmıştır. Bu üniversite öğrencilerinin 481'i (%66,3) kadın, 244'ü (%33,7) erkektir. Katılımcılar Sosyal Dışlanma Ölçeği, Kendini Affetme Ölçeği ve Depresyon Anksiyete Stres Ölçeği-21'i doldurmuştur. Bulgular sosyal dışlanmanın psikolojik semptomlarla anlamlı şekilde ilişkili olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Ayrıca, kendini affetme sosyal dışlanma ile psikolojik semptomlar arasındaki ilişkiye aracılık etmiştir. Bu nedenle, sosyal dışlanma yaşayan üniversite öğrencilerinin kendini affetmesine odaklanılarak psikolojik semptomlar önlenebilir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Sosyal dışlanma, kendini affetme, psikolojik semptomlar, aracı rol.