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From authenticity to fear of growing up: the mediating role of social interest

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Abstract
This study examined the mediating role of social interest in predicting the effect of authenticity on fear of growing up in emerging adulthood university students, which is proposed as a new developmental concept. Data were collected from 355 students (291 female, 64 male) studying at universities in Ankara. The study method was a relational survey, and the mediation model to be developed was tested. Personal information form, Authenticity Scale, Fear of Growth Scale, and Social Interest Scale were used to collect data. SPSS 28 program was used in data analysis, and Hayes macro was used in the mediation analysis of social interest in the effect of authenticity levels on fear of growth. The data of the study were collected online via Google Forms. According to the results, as authenticity increases, fear of growth decreases. There is a good and positive relationship between authenticity and social interest, and social interest hurts fear of growth. The mediation analysis of social interest in predicting the effect of authenticity on fear of growth was conducted, and partial mediation was found.

Keywords Social interest · Authenticity · Fear of growing up · University students

Introduction

Developmental tasks in young adulthood focus on the skills, abilities, and tasks that individuals need to perform, with biological, psychological, mental, social, and cultural aspects and behavioral definitions of success and failure (Havighurst, 1953). In addition to tasks such as choosing a spouse, starting a family, and raising children, tasks in the "psychosocial" domain, such as occupational and civic responsibilities like holding a job and joining an appropriate social group, are also emphasized. After a coherent and successful search for identity, according to Erikson, individuals must resolve the conflict between isolation and closeness to develop the capacity for full emotional, moral, and sexual connection with other people (Erikson, 2018). Individuals who successfully resolve this crisis may find themselves compromising their preferences, accepting some responsibilities, and dissolving their own identity in another person. In addition to establishing crucial relationships with the opposite sex, friendships with people of the same sex and access to their own sincere feelings and thoughts happen in this stage. Individuals who experience isolation in this stage are afraid of opposite-sex relationships and attachment (Erikson, 2018; Gerrig & Zimbardo, 2012; Santrock, 2011; Onur, 2008; Miller, 2008). In modern industrialized societies, young people face freedom and challenges as they transition into adult roles (Sharon, 2016). Recently, the emphasis on these challenges has been conceptualized as the "fear of growing up" in emerging adulthood. This period, proposed as a relatively new understanding of development, encompasses ages 18–25. This period, distinct from adolescence and young adulthood, is evaluated in a cultural context and refers to the process in which individuals try to discover their roles independently (Arnett, 2000).

The concept of fear of growth was introduced by Kiley (1983) in the form of the Peter Pan Syndrome and was described as a phenomenon that threatens the individual's mental health. The Peter Pan Syndrome was defined by characteristics such as in-betweenness and instability, irresponsibility, and self-focus. In this study, the fear of growing up was addressed with the subdimensions of social-emotional loneliness, difficulty in maintaining a romantic relationship,

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negative attitude toward marriage, preparation for independent living, and difficulty in internalizing responsibility (Ateş & ÖzdenYıldırım, 2020).

In this process, individuals may have difficulty fulfilling the duties and responsibilities required by their developmental stage and may reject the responsibilities of growing up while being afraid of growing up. The period during which the fear of growing up is experienced and the search for identity continues is called "emerging adulthood. During this period, behaviors that most societies try to discourage in individuals, such as overeating, drinking, drug use, and risky sexual behaviors, can be seen. However, it is emphasized that with the end of the emerging adulthood period, self-esteem increases and depressive syndromes decrease. In addition, although it is stressed that most individuals experience emerging adulthood positively, it is also stated that developmental changes and problems can be difficult (Arnett, 2007). This is because individuals who experience fear of growing up cannot face the feelings and responsibilities of adulthood and experience difficulties in their social and professional relationships due to their irresponsible behaviors and narcissistic characteristics. However, with psychotherapy, unlike Peter Pan, individuals can take on the responsibilities of adult work and love (Kalkan et al., 2021; Groh & Lane, 1988).

In emerging adulthood, when fear of growing up is experienced, individuals' social interest is related to some variables in the development process. Social interactions that start in the family where the child is born have permanent effects on the child's personality. Social interest, seen as an innate ability, manifests itself in the interaction processes with the mother, father, and siblings, where individuals experience their first social interactions. As age and interactions increase, social interest becomes more prosperous and more complex with the increase in sharing. Social sharing meets the social-emotional needs of individuals while protecting mental health and, in Adler's concepts, reduces situations such as feelings of inferiority and alienation. Individuals' happiness and success are related to social interest. Since the need for belonging will be met in the family and society where individuals feel safe and valuable, anxiety will decrease, and individuals will gain the courage to face and cope with their problems (Adler, 1964, 2002, 2005, 2006; Geçtan, 1995; Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1964).

Authenticity, which refers to individuals being who they truly are, is generally based on individuals knowing themselves and remaining true to themselves despite external influences and reliable, accurate representation (Varga & Guignon, 2014; Harter, 2002). Existence, being oneself, and existing as oneself are among the topics philosophy and psychology have emphasized from the past to the present. Authenticity (Hardt, 2009), which is stated as a historically based intellectual interest, has started to be studied more, especially with cultural transitions in societies (Erickson, 1995). The 13th-century Anatolian Sufi mystic, theologian, and Sufi mystic poet Mevlana's advice, "Either appear as you are or be as you appear," emphasizes authenticity. Along with Heidegger's school of thought, thinkers in the existentialist school of thought emphasize the problem of the individual being themself. At the same time, existential psychology is based on basic assumptions such as the uniqueness and singularity of human beings, the individual's understanding of their existence, and making and managing plans for their life (Adler, 2011). Existentialism (Yalom, 1980), humanistic theory (Rogers, 1980), positive psychology (Ryan & Deci, 2000), and personality psychology perspectives address authenticity (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). In addition, it is emphasized that authenticity is closely related to autonomy and that basic psychological needs must be met to be authentic (Deci & Ryan, 2009). The hierarchical model of authenticity developed by Kernis and Goldman identified consciousness, impartiality, relational authenticity, and authentic behavior. In addition, Kernis and Goldman present findings from several studies conducted to examine how authenticity is related to healthy psychological and interpersonal functioning. The authenticity scale developed by Wood et al. (2008) was used in this study. This scale is designed to measure a tripartite understanding of authenticity that includes "authentic living," "acceptance of external influence", and "self-alienation." Self-alienation refers to the gap between an individual's true self (physiological state, emotions, and deeper cognitions) and conscious awareness. The greater the gap, the greater the individual's self-alienation. Authentic life, the second subdimension of authenticity, represents the harmony between an individual's conscious awareness and behaviors. In a sense, authentic living is the individual being himself in many environments and being in harmony with others and his beliefs. The final dimension of authenticity, acceptance of external influence, refers to the individual's beliefs about accepting the influence of others and living by their expectations. Each subscale was strongly related to self-esteem and aspects of subjective and psychological well-being.

In particular, the transition from industrial to postindustrial society and postmodern culture has led to an increased interest in authenticity. The results of studies on the relationship between authenticity, self, and society suggest that these structures influence each other (Erickson, 1995). Studies showing that authenticity positively predicts self-susceptibility (Uzdil & Albayrak, 2023; Özdemir, 2020), that self-sabotage decreases as authenticity increases (Demir, 2023), and that peace increases (Öksüz & Karalar, 2019) indicate that authenticity positively affects the psychological processes of individuals. In addition, the positive relationship

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between the negative attitude toward marriage subdimension of fear of growing up and depression and the average of general symptoms (Ateş & ÖzdenYıldırım, 2020), the negative relationship between social concern and the level of intimacy avoidance (Erginsoy, 2010), the negative relationship between social concern and blaming oneself and others, the facialization subdimension, and the findings that social concern predicts the subdimensions of focusing on thoughts, positive refocusing, and positive reassessment.

As stated above, authenticity, fear of growing up, and social interest are found to be effective in the developmental processes of university students. Since studies on the relationship between these variables are extremely limited, it can be stated that examining the predictive roles of authenticity, fear of growing up, and social interest will contribute to a better understanding of emerging adulthood. The relationship between healthy development and authenticity (Holden & Schrock, 2009) and the psychological benefits of authenticity (Harter, 2002) suggest that there will be an inverse relationship between authenticity and fear of growing up. In addition, it is emphasized that social interest can contribute to the development of individuals, and as İmamoğlu (1998) states, a balanced self-system can be integrated with different variables. In this context, it was predicted that the authentic self would reduce fear of growing up and social interest would partially mediate this process (İmamoğlu et al., 2011).

The relationship between authenticity and fear of growing up

When authenticity and fear of growing up are considered in a developmental context, it can be said that individuals need to construct a positive self-story beginning in childhood. If individuals accept accurate versions of their life story, realized when the stimuli presented to them during childhood support their authentic selves, they do not distort their experiences with realistic perceptions and can plant the seeds of the authentic self. If the child is exposed to accurate and realistic interpretations later in life, possible distortions of the self will be prevented, whereas if unrealistic views are supported by the social environment, e.g., excessive fictitious praise from parents, they contribute to distortions that support a false self-concept. During adolescence, individuals become more concerned with what others think of them, and it may be difficult for them to develop a sense of which self is real and consistent with others' ideas about their authentic selves. As the realistic and accurate stimuli provided to individuals by the social environment enhance their perceptions of authenticity, the roles that require the formation of multiple selves, which cause confusion and conflict in adolescents, will decrease, and it will be easier for the individual to be authentic. As a result, it can be said that when individuals rely on their autonomous intuitions to achieve, authenticity will increase because they will be their true selves more (Harter, 2019). Considering authenticity and the psychological benefits associated with authenticity (Harter, 2002), it can be said that the fear of growing up will decrease as authenticity increases. As one of the psychological benefits, taking on adult responsibilities, discovering themselves, experiencing different opportunities personally, socially and professionally can be counted as processes that reduce the fear of growing up. In addition, individuals are also influenced by the culture they are in while performing these behaviors (Atak & Çok, 2010). As Holden and Schrock (2009) state, the more authentic individuals are, the more they develop, and the more they develop, the more authentic they can be. Only an authentic self can find personal development and be in healthy relationships. In addition, the sociocultural atmosphere in which individuals live and whether this atmosphere is individualistic or collectivistic has a significant impact on the self-formation process and the authenticity of individuals (İmamoğlu et al., 2011; Harter, 2019). A study conducted on the relationship between fear of growing up, adult separation anxiety, and defense mechanisms found that individuals with separation anxiety also had a high fear of growing up and that there was a positive and significant relationship between immature defenses, fear of growing up, and social-emotional loneliness (Gümüş Demir, 2022). According to the results of the study, there is a negative significant relationship between fear of growing up, self-compassion, and cognitive flexibility, while a positive significant relationship is found between fear of growing up and self-concealment (Daşcı, 2022). As mentioned, there is a relationship between authenticity and fear of growing up.

The relationship between authenticity and social interest

According to Adler, all behaviors have a social meaning, and the socio-cultural context of a person has a driving influence on their mental health and life experiences (Carlson & Englar-Carlson, 2017). Family, environment, society, culture, civilization, in short, external factors play a key role in the formation of the self. Authenticity, in its simplest form as "being unique to oneself" or "being true to oneself" (Carman, 2006), can be stated as a structure formed as a result of social stimuli directed towards the individual in the socialization process. In existentialist philosophy, Sartre emphasizes that the "I" forms itself in its life, experiences, and daily practices (Sartre, 2005). When it is accepted that the self is in a dynamic and continuous process of construction/formation, it is emphasized that it is possible to reveal the

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authentic self. However, Bergson and Heidegger state that selves are covered by an external (social) layer that individuals can reach their essence by experiencing the external-inner tension, and that the individual who is taken over by everyone has lost their inner self. Similarly, Freud emphasizes the view that people are constantly oppressed by the demands imposed by society, culture, and civilization that do not suit them (Çifteci, 2021). As the opposite of these statements, it is stated that self-identified individuals, on the one hand, can perform as happy individuals when they achieve a balance between integration on the other hand (Karaırmak et al., 2014). In the Balance Model developed by İmamoğlu (1998, 2011), self-identification and relatedness are considered as two independent complementary orientations rather than being opposite to each other, as often assumed in the Western literature. At the heart of the Equilibrium Model is the assumption that the natural order constitutes a balanced system that "emerges from the integration of disparate elements in a relationship of interdependence." It is stated that the orientations of individuals to pursue self-development with intrinsic motivation to distinguish the self and to be related to others constitute different complementary subprocesses of a balanced self-system. In this context, it can be stated that social interest will not prevent individuals from being authentic, and having a balanced self-system, as stated in the balance model, will not prevent "seeing with someone else's eyes, hearing with someone else's ears, and feeling with someone else's heart." In the case of the development of the mentioned skills for understanding others, it is emphasized that the sense of inferiority and alienation will decrease according to Adler's point of view (Corey, 2005). In this way, the individual can become authentic and develop their social interest. Studies on altruistic authenticity (McCormack & Bamforth, 2019), authenticity becoming a part of culture, institutions, and individual self (Erickson, 1995), and the concept of authenticity in communication research (Hardt, 2009) are among the publications that address authenticity and social processes.

The relationship between social interest and fear of growing up

Adler envisioned a psychology of growth in which people could strive to overcome difficulties and transform their lives through their own agency. The potential for social concern, manifested in the individual's contribution to society, is innate, and social concern is nurtured and supported in the process of socialization (Adler, 1956, 2015). The "sociality of human life," described as the most important contribution of individual psychology, occurs in a developmental process and is shaped by the attitudes to which individuals are exposed. In healthy development, individuals are encouraged to contribute to society and empathize with others, whereas if their development is not healthily supported by their parents, individuals may have distorted attitudes in their social relationships (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1964, as cited in Murdock, 2012: Adler, 2015). For this reason, individual psychology, counseling, and psychotherapy approaches should encourage clients to master the basic tasks of life, such as work, friendship, love, and intimacy (Murdock, 2012). However, today, individuals who experience fear of growing up in emerging adulthood may have difficulty in accomplishing the essential tasks of life and may reject the responsibilities of growing up (Arnett, 2007).

Since individuals' success in both romantic and social relationships and sharing with other people, and their interest in the well-being of others, is also reported as a measure of their mental health, it will play a role in reducing negative symptoms related to fear of growing up. The theoretical information (Adler, 1964; Corey, 2005) that feelings of inferiority and alienation decrease with the development of social interest emphasizes the inverse relationship between social interest and fear of growing up. In addition, it can be said that individuals with underdeveloped social interests are discouraged and structure their lives in an unproductive and inefficient way, just like individuals who experience fear of growing up (Corey, 2005). It can be argued that social interest, which includes processes, such as identification with others, empathy, cooperation, and altruism (Crandall, 1981), may play a role in reducing fear of growing up due to its "taught, learned, and used" characteristics (Corey, 2005).

Studies such as Crandall (1984), the negative relationship between social interest and the number of stressful experiences encountered, the use of social support in the "Peter Pan" syndrome, and the practice of allergy facilitation (Patterson & McGrath, 2000) show that social interest is effective in eliminating various problems similar to the symptoms of an individual's fear of growing up.

A positive and significant relationship was found between fear of growing up and psychological symptoms of hostility, somatization, negative self, and depression (Ateş & Özden Yıldırım, 2020). In the study on the relationship between fear of growing up and early maladaptive schemas and perceived parenting styles, positive and significant relationships were found between fear of growing up and emotional deprivation, failure, pessimism, social isolation/insecurity, suppression of emotions, embeddedness/dependence, privilege/insufficient self-control, abandonment, defectiveness, vulnerability to threats, and high standards schemas. In addition, the same study found that perceived parenting affects fear of growing up (Özden Yıldırım & Ateş, 2020). In studies conducted with different variables, there are

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relationships between the processes formed by social interaction and fear of growing up.

The main expectation of this study is that social interest will have a partial mediating role in predicting the effect of authenticity on the fear of growing up in university students. In line with this purpose, answers to the following questions will be sought.

H. (1) There is a negative relationship between authenticity and fear of growing up.
H. (2) There is a positive correlation between authenticity and social interest.
H. (3) Social interest is expected to be negatively correlated with fear of growing up.
H. (4) There is a mediating role of social interest in predicting the effect of authenticity on fear of growing up.

Method

The study was conducted using a quantitative research method. The participants were determined using the convenience sampling method (Büyüköztürk, 2018). The total number of participants was 355, of which, 291 were female and 64 were male. The majority of the participants were undergraduate university students studying in Ankara.

Data collection tools

Fear of Growing Up Scale (FGS) The scale developed by Ateş and Özden Yıldırım aims to measure anxiety about becoming an adult and assuming responsibilities within the normal developmental processes between the ages of 18 and 35. In the study, concepts such as Arnet's "Emerging Adulthood", Levinson's "Novice Phase", and Erikson's "Role Trials" were used to determine the characteristics that would determine the level of fear of growing up. The items were reduced to 14 using exploratory factor analysis. After the construct validity analysis, the Fear of Growing Up Scale, reduced to 14 items after the construct validity analysis, was administered to participants simultaneously with the Relationship Commitment Scale, the Loneliness in Social Relationships sub-dimension of the Social Emotional Loneliness Scale-Short Form, the Introversion-Dependency sub-dimension of the Young Schema Scale-Short Form, and the General Attitudes Towards Marriage Scale.

In the four-factor scale, the first factor explains 24.75% of the total variance, the second factor explains 13.56%, the third factor explains 11.07%, and the fourth factor explains 8.76%. The total variance explained by the four factors was determined to be 58.16%. These factors are social-emotional loneliness consisting of 3 items; difficulty in maintaining romantic relationships consisting of 5 items; negative attitudes towards marriage consisting of 3 items; preparation for independent living and difficulty in internalizing responsibility consisting of 3 items. The highest score that can be obtained from the five-point Likert-type scale called the "Fear of Growing Up Scale" is 70, and the lowest score is 14. This scale is answered as strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, or strongly disagree. Of the 14 items in the scale, items 7, 9, and 11 are reverse scored. The item "In my circle of friends, I usually feel different from them" belongs to the Social-Emotional Loneliness sub-dimension of the scale; the item "In romantic relationships, my initial desire and feelings for my partner usually do not last very long, my enthusiasm fades quickly" belongs to the Difficulty in Maintaining Romantic Relationships sub-dimension; the item "Having children and getting married is difficult and overwhelming for me to realize" belongs to the sub-dimension "Negative attitude towards marriage"; and the item "I usually try to stay away from responsibilities because I believe that taking on too much responsibility prevents me from enjoying life belongs to the sub-dimension "Preparation for independent living/difficulty internalizing responsibility". According to the CFA results, the factor loadings of the scale ranged between 0.51 and 0.87, and the Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient was determined to be 0.75. In its subdimensions, this value varies between 0.52 and 0.75 (Özden Yıldırım & Ateş, 2018). The Cronbach alpha coefficient of the scale in this study was 0.84.

Authenticity Scale The Authenticity Scale developed by Wood et al. (2008), based on the humanistic approach, consists of three sub-dimensions and 12 items. These sub-dimensions are "Self Alienation", "Acceptance of External Influence", and "Authentic Life". İlhan and Özdemir (2013), who examined the psychometric properties of the Turkish form of the Authenticity Scale, conducted confirmatory factor analysis by applying the scale to 165 university students. In the second stage of the study, the scale was applied to 240 university students between the ages of 17–25, and the convergent and predictive validity of the scale was examined. Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficients of the scale were found to be 0.79 for Alienation, 0.67 for Acceptance of External Influences, and 0.62 for Authentic Life. Within the scope of the development of the original form, Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficients of the scale were found to be $\alpha = 0.78$ for Alienation, $\alpha = 0.78$ for Acceptance of External Influences, and $\alpha = 0.69$ for Authentic Life. In this study, Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficients of the scale were 0.77 for Alienation, 0.80 for Acceptance of External Effects, and 0.66 for Authentic Life. The item

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"I don't know what I really feel inside." is an example of the Self Alienation sub-dimension, the item "Other people (others) affect me a lot." is an example of the Acceptance of External Influences sub-dimension, and the item "I act as I am in many environments." is an example of the Authenticity sub-dimension.

"Subjective Well-Being Scale", "Satisfaction with Life Scale", "Positive-Negative Affect Scale", Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale", and "Need Satisfaction Scale" were used to test the convergent validity in the study and the fact that the relationships between these scales and the Authenticity Scale were significant as expected can be expressed as an indicator that this study supports Wood et al.'s model. The predictive validity of the Authenticity Scale was examined by stepwise regression analysis, and it was determined that authenticity explained 45% of the variance of subjective well-being together with autonomy satisfaction. Psychometric studies of the Turkish form showed that it has the same structure as the original form of the scale.

The Authenticity Scale is a seven-point Likert-type scale in which participants rate themselves on a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 does not define me at all, and 7 defines me completely. Each dimension is scored separately by summing the items belonging to it, and a pure authenticity score is obtained by subtracting the scores of the other two dimensions from authentic life. A high score in authentic life and low scores in the other dimensions indicate that the individual is authentic (İlhan & Özdemir, 2013). The Cronbach alpha coefficient of the scale in this study was 0.66.

Social Interest Scale The scale developed by Sarıcı Bulut (2021) is based on Adler's concept of "Social Interest". The scale developed to measure social interest, which is innate in individuals but emerges spontaneously in the social environment, is a five-point Likert-type scale consisting of 46 items. Exploratory (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analyses (CFA) were applied to the scale for validity. The scale was applied to 383 students studying at Gazi University Faculty of Education teaching departments. As a result of the exploratory factor analysis, a structure consisting of 46 items with four factors was obtained. These factors are "Social Order Tendency" with 13 items, "Identification with Society" with 12 items, "Social Sensitivity" with 9 items, and "Social Interaction" with 12 items. The scale explains 39.3% of the total variance. For the reliability of the overall scale and its sub-dimensions, Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient was determined as 0.92. In terms of sub-dimensions, the reliability coefficient was determined as 0.81 for Social Order Tendency, 0.83 for Identification with Society, 0.84 for Social Sensitivity, and 0.82 for Social Interaction. The item "Participating in activities that benefit people makes me feel good." is an example of the Social Order Tendency sub-dimension; the item "Thinking that society will continue forever gives me confidence." is an example for the Identification with Society sub-dimension; the item "I would like to take part in voluntary organizations that operate for the benefit of people." is an example for the Social Sensitivity sub-dimension; and the item "I adapt quickly when I enter a foreign environment." is an example for the Social Interaction sub-dimension.

The scale is scored as "Not at all appropriate", "Not appropriate", "Undecided", "Generally appropriate", and "Completely appropriate". The scale, which does not have reverse-scored items, can be scored separately by summing the items belonging to each sub-dimension, or a general social interest score can be obtained. The Cronbach alpha coefficient of the scale in this study was 0.92.

Process

The study data were collected online in the fall semester of the academic year 2023 after obtaining permission from the Ethics Committee of Gazi University. In the online form, the participants were informed about the research before they started answering the questions and answered the scales according to their consent. No information about the identity of the participants was collected in the online form.

Data analysis

SPSS 28 was used for data analysis. The kurtosis and skewness values were checked for normality of the scale scores, and if these values are between ± 1, the score distribution is normal (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). The Pearson correlation method was used for the relationship between the scale subdimensions, and the Hayes macro method model 4 was used for the mediation analysis. For statistical analyses, $p < .05$ level of significance was examined.

Results

This section presents the results of the research questions (Table 1).

Fear of growing up, social interest, and authenticity scale scores were obtained by summing the items. Fear of growing up scores ranged from 14 to 70 with a mean of 46.96, social interest scores ranged from 46 to 149 with a mean of 84.11, and authenticity scores ranged from 30 to 79 with a mean of 54.61. Skewness and kurtosis values were between ± 1, and the distribution of scores was found to be normal (Table 2).

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Table 1 Descriptive statistics table of scale scores

Scale Scores	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	sd	Skewness	Kurtosis
Fear of Growing Up	14	70	46,96	9,58	-0,248	0,066
Social Interest	46	149	84,11	18,01	0,371	0,427
Authenticity	30	79	54,61	9,87	-0,104	-0,426

Table 2 Pearson correlation table between scale subscales

	1	2	3
1.Fear of Growing Up	1		
2.Social Interest	-,294**	1	
3.Authenticity	-,446**	,106*	1

**$p < .01$; $p < .05$

A negative and significant relationship was found between Fear of Growing Up and Social Interest (r=-.294, $p < .01$) and Authenticity (r=-.446, $p < 01$). As fear of growing up scores increase, social interest and authenticity scores decrease. There is a positive and significant relationship between Social Interest and Authenticity scores ($r = .106$, $p < .01$). As social interest scores increase, so do authenticity scores.

Mediation results

In the mediation analysis of social interest in the effect of authenticity levels on fear of growing up, Hayes macro analysis was conducted and evaluated according to the three regression model proposed by Baron and Kenny (1986).

The regression model established between the dependent and independent variables without the mediator variable, i.e., Model 1, should be significant; otherwise, there is no mediation. Model 2, which shows the effect of the independent variable on the mediator variable, should be significant. Model 3, which adds the mediator variable to Model 1, should be significant. The non-standard regression coefficient (c') between the independent and the dependent in Model 3, to which the mediator variable is added, is compared to the non-standard regression coefficient (c) between the independent and the dependent in Model 1. In this equation, c = c'+a*b, where a*b indicates mediation. If the coefficient c' is not statistically significant, there is full mediation, and if it is statistically significant and its magnitude decreases according to the value of c, there is partial mediation (Şimşek, 2007; Baron & Kenny, 1986).

According to Model 1, the regression model for the effect of general levels of authenticity on fear of growing up is significant (F = 87.882, $p < .001$). Authenticity scores explained 19.9% of the variability in fear of growing up scores. General levels of authenticity positively and negatively affect fear of growing up levels (B=-0.433, t=-9.375, $p < .001$). When there is an increase of 1 unit in the general levels of authenticity, there is a decrease of 0.433 units in the general scores of fear of growing up. The non-standard regression coefficient of -0.433 units obtained for Model 1 indicates the total effect (c), and the total effect is significant (Table 3).

According to Model 2, the regression model for the effect of general authenticity levels on social interest scores is significant (F = 4.023, $p < .05$). General authenticity scores explain 10.6% of the variability in social interest scores. General authenticity scores have a positive and significant effect on social interest scores (B = 0.194, t = 2.006, $p < .05$). When there is an increase of 1 unit in the general level of authenticity, there is an increase of 0.194 units in the social interest scores.

The regression model (model 3) tested after the mediator variable social interest was added to model 1 was statistically significant (F = 62.172, $p < .001$). Authenticity and social interest scores explained 26.1% of the variability in fear of growing up scores. Authenticity (B=-0.408, t=-9.114, $p < .001$) and social interest (B=-0.133, t=-5.422, $p < .001$) positively and negatively affect participants' fear of growing up.

There is no full mediation because the nonstandard regression coefficient (c'=-0.408) between authenticity and fear of growing up in Model 3 is statistically significant but smaller than the coefficient (c) in Model 1. Thus, there is partial mediation. In other words, there is partial mediation of social interest in the effect of authenticity on fear of growing up (Fig. 1 and Table 4).

Table 3 Mediation analysis results between authenticity and fear of growing up through social interest

Model		B	t	p	R^2	Statistics
Model 1	O–> BK	-0,433	-9,375	,000	0,199	F = 87.882; $p < .001$
Model 2	O–>İlgi	0,194	2,006	0,046	0,106	F = 4.023; $p < .05$
Model 3	O–> BK	-0,408	-9,114	,000	0,261	F = 62.172; $p < .001$
	İlgi–> BK	-0,133	-5,422	,000		

A Authenticity, *FG* Fear of Growing Up, *Interest* Social Interest

**$p < .001$

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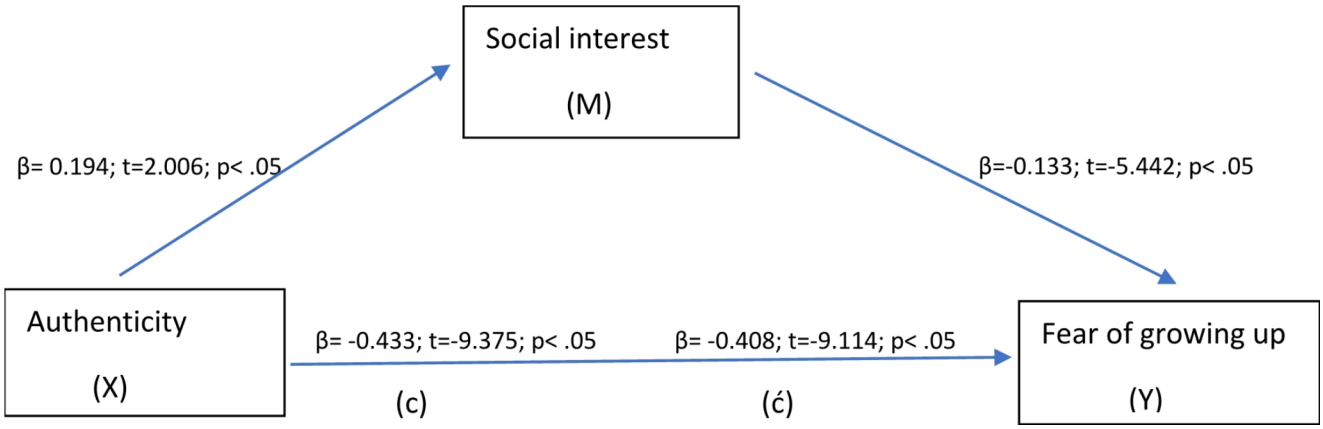


Fig. 1 Mediation model

Table 4 Indirect effects in the mediation model

Ways	Effect	Boot SH	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
Authenticity → Social Interest → Fear of Growing Up	-0.183	0.165	-1.15	-0.506
Authenticity → Fear of Growing Up	-0.375	0.142	-0.655	-0.095

Description: Describes bootstrap results from 355 samples

SE Standard Error, *LLCI* Lower Limit Confidence Interval, *ULCI* Upper Limit Confidence Interval

Discussion

When the results are analyzed, it is seen that fear of growing up decreases as authenticity increases, there is a positive relationship between authenticity and social interest, and social interest negatively affects fear of growing up. Per the hypotheses of the study, the relationships between the variables of the study were first examined, and it was found that the variables had significant relationships with each other. These results supported *H1*, *H2*, and *H3*. Then the mediation analysis of social interest in predicting the effect of authenticity on fear of growing up was conducted, and the results supported *H4*. According to this result, there is a partial mediation. As a result, the hypotheses were supported by the findings that fear of growing up decreases as authenticity increases, there is a positive and positive relationship between authenticity and social interest, and social interest negatively affects fear of growing up.

The results that fear of growing up decreases as authenticity increases have shown that the fact that individuals' true selves are who they are is effective in reducing developmental deficits such as in-betweenness, irresponsibility, and self-focus in young adults (Holden & Schrock, 2009). The ability of individuals to be themselves despite external influences can lead to the development of self-regulation, self-control, and the cognitive adoption of other people's perspectives in their behavior, the assumption of adult responsibilities, and a shift away from narcissistic traits. On the contrary, although the strategies exhibited in this process may seem to solve some of life's problems, such as distancing from authenticity, highly self-centered attitudes toward life, viewing the world as self-centered, and seeking self-validation (Leary, 2004), these unrealistic approaches may cause problems such as preparation for independent living and difficulty in internalizing responsibility, which are mentioned in fear of growing up. When individuals consider the original and accurate information about themselves that serves the self, they can make better decisions about their lives and move away from the fear of growing up syndromes. In addition, given the relationship between authenticity and increased positive emotions and decreased negative emotions (Ito & Kodama, 2007), the result that fear of growing up decreases as authenticity increases is consistent with other research. Since individuals gain the courage to face and cope with their problems with increased social interest (Geçtan, 1995), the interpretation that negative symptoms of fear of growing up decrease is consistent with the results of this study. The results that increased social interest decreases the number of stressful experiences (Crandall, 1984) and increases adjustment (Patterson & McGrath, 2000) are also consistent with the results of this study.

It can be stated that when individuals in young adulthood reach a compromise between their own identities (authentic approaches) and their social roles and develop their social interests when there is harmony between their feelings about who they are and the expectations and desires of society, the fear of growing up, which includes alienation (Onur, 2008), will decrease. The study states that as the level of self-alienation and the level of acceptance of external influence, which are subdimensions of authenticity, increase, the level of responsibility, which is one of the important dimensions of fear of growing up, decreases (Çeltekligil, 2021).

Egocentric and selfish attitudes inherent in the self can undermine individuals' relationships with others and distract

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individuals from perceiving themselves realistically (Leary, 2004). Authenticity and the psychological benefits associated with authenticity (Harter, 2002) will play a regulating role in social relationships by making individuals more realistic about themselves. On the other hand, as Leary (2004) points out, excessive self-focus will both distract individuals from a realistic perception of themselves, i.e., from authenticity, and intense internal monologues and dialogues will cause them to be distracted from processes of social interest. As a result, there will be little cognitive and affective space left for mental processes such as caring for others, and individuals may move away from authentic approaches.

As individuals' social interest increases, even introverted individuals feel more authentic when they act more extroverted (Wilt et al., 2023). Because extroverted individuals have developed more social interest, they will behave in a way consistent with their own temperament. In addition, social psychological teachings emphasize that the self reflects society, and society reflects the self; in fact, authenticity has become a common part of culture and social institutions (Erickson, 1995). This is because authenticity is socially constructed and emerges in many areas of social life, such as social concerns (Carroll, 2015). These relationships are similar to the results of the study that social interest increases with an increase in authenticity.

Interpretation of the results that social interest has a negative effect on fear of growing up.

according to Adler, the lack or absence of social interest is seen as the main determinant of abnormal behavior (Geçtan, 1995). While Freud emphasized the pathological superiority striving and selfishness of individuals towards each other as a biological fact, Adler considered this situation as a social developmental defect. The inability or refusal to assume the responsibilities of life, irresponsible behavior, and narcissistic traits mentioned in the fear of growing up may also be due to the inadequate development of social interest in the socialization process of individuals. It can be assumed that an increase in social interest will reduce psychological symptoms, and there will be a test-directional relationship in all dimensions of fear of growing up, such as social-emotional loneliness and inability to internalize responsibility. One study reported a positive relationship between fear of growing up and psychological symptoms such as hostility, somatization, negative self, depression, and general symptom average (Ateş & Özden Yıldırım, 2020). It can be stated that experiences and focus on self and others, which are the indicators of social interest in emerging adulthood, strengthen personal development (Negru, 2012) and distract individuals from the negative symptoms of fear of growing up. The results that securely attached individuals have low social anxiety and symptoms such as early maladaptive schemas and disconnection, which are also observed in fear of growing up (Bintaş Zörer, 2015), refers to the negative relationship between social interest and fear of growing up. This is because healthy social interest leads to outcomes such as secure attachment and low social anxiety in individuals. Moreover, considering the effect of social interest in improving and eliminating problems that arise in relationships and reducing the effects of life stress on psychological symptoms (Crandall, 1984), the negative relationship between social interest and fear of growing up is supported by different publications. Considering the relationship between social interest and fear of growing up in a developmental context, the results that social interest supports many developmental areas, such as the professional development of individuals in childhood and adolescence and that individuals who perform well in developmental areas also have high social interest (Stoykova, 2013) support the conclusion that high social interest reduces fear of growing up. Another study conducted on adolescents also indicates that high social interest increases individuals' satisfaction with their friends and family and supports participation in extracurricular activities and school satisfaction, which contribute to the fulfillment of developmental tasks (Gilman, 2001).

Conclusion

In the context of the results of this study, it can be suggested that fear of growing up decreases as authenticity increases, there is a significant and positive relationship between authenticity and social interest, social interest has a negative effect on fear of growing up, and social interest partially mediates the effect of authenticity on fear of growing up. Given that development is a process, an individual's authentic feelings, thoughts, and behaviors must be supported by family, school, and society. In the context of the positive relationship between authenticity and social interest, it may be useful to provide courses and various trainings that create and develop awareness in individuals. In addition, it has been observed that the more individuals act as themselves, the less fear they have of growing up. Approaches that support individuals in fulfilling their developmental tasks will reduce the fear of growing up and increase authenticity. Adding authenticity and social interest-enhancing content to the instructional and guidance programs of schools that support students' development can positively contribute to individuals' fulfillment of their developmental tasks.

Limitations

The first limitation of the study is that the data were collected only from university students and specific universities. It can be suggested to study the variables of authenticity, fear

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of growing up, and social interest in different sample groups with different demographic structures. This is a quantitative study. Studying the variables in the study with different methods, such as qualitative and phenomenology, will contribute to the field. This study was conducted in a sample group that is believed to have a more collectivist understanding. It may be recommended to study these variables in individualistic Western cultures. Since this study has a correlational structure, it does not show a cause-and-effect relationship.

Data availability The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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