

SELF-ESTEEM AND FEAR OF NEGATIVE EVALUATION AS  
PREDICTORS OF SELF-HANDICAPPING AMONG UNIVERSITY  
STUDENTS

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STUDENTS**

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**I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.**

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **SELF-ESTEEM AND FEAR OF NEGATIVE EVALUATION AS PREDICTORS OF SELF-HANDICAPPING AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

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The present study aimed to investigate the predictive roles of fear of negative evaluation and self-esteem on self-handicapping among university students. The participants of the study consists of 440 university students recruited through convenience sampling. Demographic information form, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale and Self-Handicapping Scale were administered to the participants via an online form. In order to answer the research question, a multiple regression analysis was run. Multiple regression analysis revealed that self-esteem and fear of negative evaluation are significant predictors of self-handicapping with an explained variance of 34% of the prediction model [ $F_{(2, 437)} = 112.754, p < .01, R^2 = .34$ ]. Additionally, a significant negative relationship was found between predictor variables, which suggests that individuals with higher levels of self-esteem are more likely to have lower tendency to have fear of negative evaluation. The findings will contribute to the understanding of self-handicapping and provide an evidence base for counselors working with university students.

**Keywords:** self-handicapping, self-esteem, fear of negative evaluation, university students.

## ÖZ

# ÜNİVERSİTE ÖĞRENCİLERİİNDE KENDİNİ ENGELLEMENİN YORDAYICILARI OLARAK ÖZSAYGI VE OLUMSUZ DEĞERLENDİRİLME KORKUSU

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Bu çalışmanın amacı, üniversite öğrencilerinde olumsuz değerlendirme korkusu ve benlik saygısının kendini engelleme üzerindeki yordayıcı rolünü incelemektir. Araştırmanın örneklemi kolayda örneklemeye yoluyla seçilen 440 üniversite öğrencisinden oluşmaktadır. Demografik bilgi formu, Rosenberg Özsayıgı Ölçeği, Olumsuz Değerlendirilme Korkusu Ölçeği Kısa Formu ve Kendini Sabotaj Ölçeği katılımcılara çevrimiçi form aracılığıyla uygulanmıştır. Araştırma sorusuna yanıt bulmak için yapılan çoklu regresyon analizi özsayıgı ve olumsuz değerlendirme korkusunun kendini engellemenin anlamlı birer yordayıcısı olduğunu ve regresyon modelinde varyansın %34'ünü açıkladığını ortaya koymuştur [ $F_{(2, 437)} = 112.754, p < .01, R^2 = .34$ ]. Bunun yanında, yordayıcı değişkenler arasında anlamlı bir negatif ilişki bulunmuş, daha yüksek özsayıgı düzeyinde daha düşük olumsuz değerlendirme korkusuna sahip olma eğilimin arttığını göstermiştir. Bu bulgular kendini engellemenin anlaşılmasına katkıda bulunacağı ve üniversite öğrencileriyle çalışan psikolojik danışmanlara kanıtsal bir dayanak sağlayacağı düşünülmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** kendini engelleme, özsayıgı, olumsuz değerlendirilme korkusu, üniversite öğrencileri

*To my mom...*

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1. Background to the Study**

Human beings have an innate tendency to seek information about themselves. The notion of one's pursuit of self-knowledge dates back to the earliest history of humanity, as well as it has been paid attention by scientists, philosophers, and many civilizations. In ancient Greece, "Know thyself!" was written over the door of the Temple of Oracle three thousand years ago. In academia, the "Self" concept has become an interest of psychology that can be traced back to William James (1890).

Individuals use different sources to improve their self-knowledge. Bollich et al. (2011) propose a classification of these sources as being intrapersonal and interpersonal approaches. Among intrapersonal approaches, introspection, which refers to one's reflection on themselves, was offered as a reliable source of self-knowledge (Sedikides et al., 2007). Sedikides et al.'s (2007) study indicates that the self-ratings of individuals who introspect were lower than those who were not engaged in introspection. Although the result of this study reflects that introspection is effective in diminishing personal bias, the accuracy of self-reflection has also been argued by many studies (e.g., Silvia & Gendolla, 2001; Wilson, 2002; Wilson & Dunn, 2004).

Self-observation is also another intrapersonal source proposed to enhance the efficacy of self-reflection. However, paying attention to behaviors is not free from personal bias as observation was made from subjective perspectives (Bollich et al., 2011). On the other hand, interpersonal approaches suggest that learning from others about

ourselves is also possible. Festinger (1954) initially developed the social comparison theory offering a way of acquiring self-knowledge. In that theory, Festinger (1954) proposed that individuals are prone to accurately perform their self-evaluation.

Sedikides (1993) addresses the need for achieving accurate self-knowledge as “self-assessment” motive. In the self-assessment, individuals are driven to strive to collect objective information about themselves that makes them seek diagnostic evidence regarding themselves. Besides self-assessment, Sedikides (1993) outlines two additional self-evaluation motivations which are namely self-enhancement and self-verification. The former refers to the motivation of filtering out negative self-information and keeping the positive ones, with an aim to enhance and protect positive self-concept. On the other hand, the latter refers to the motivation of gathering self-relevant information that validates the pre-existed self-conception.

However, it has been a controversial topic of whether all people pursue accurate self-information. In addition to the debate over the objectivity of self-evaluations, it has also been argued which direction those evaluations are biased. Much of the literature provides evidence that individuals are prone to evaluate themselves in a positively distorted way (Alicke & Sedikides, 2011; Dunning, 2005). For example, it was found that college students’ self-ratings consist of a higher number of desirable traits compared to their ratings for others (Alicke et al., 1995). A number of studies have reported that individuals tend to rate themselves more positively than they do others (Alicke, 1985; Brown, 1986; Hoorens, 1995; Sedikides et al., 2014). The tendency to interpret self-knowledge in such a manner that conforms to the favorable self-concept refers to self-serving bias (Blaine & Crocker, 1993). Self-serving biases help individuals to keep a favorable self-image and absolve personal responsibility in the event of adverse outcomes (Bradley, 1978).

Self-handicapping can be associated with self-serving bias since self-handicapping fulfills the same function. The term self-handicapping refers to the act of creating obstacles and impediments that jeopardize the likelihood of success with an aim to protect their perceived competency (Jones & Berglas, 1978). Researchers highlighted the self-serving function of using excuses, such as physical illness and symptoms

(Smith et al., 1983), test anxiety (Smith et al., 1982) and shyness (Snyder et al., 1985) as a self-handicapping strategy.

Theoretical roots of self-handicapping can be found in Goffman's (1959)'s impression management theory, Heider's (1958) attribution theory, and Kelley's (1972) discounting and augmentation principle (Higgins, 1990). Heider's (1958) attribution theory asserts that humans are naturally driven to bring causal explanations to the circumstances around them. Drawing from Goffman's (1959) impression management theory and Heider's (1958) attribution theory, it was asserted that self-handicapping mainly serves the purpose of managing self-presentational concerns in light of the attributional process of individuals. According to Kelley's (1972) discounting and augmentation principle, poor performance is attributed to external factors aiming to discount the role of lack of ability, whereas success is attributed to ability aiming to augment the role of high competency. Hence, creating impediments allows individuals to externalize the failure by accounting for the obstacles in the event of facing an undesired outcome. On the other hand, it helps them to internalize success by taking more credit for ability in the case of achieving the desired outcome.

The crucial need for feeling valuable may prompt individuals to engage in some maladaptive strategies to cope with a possible failure. This is not surprising considering the fact that a sense of worthiness often equates with the outcome of the performance in a world where people always be under constant evaluation by being measured for their performances. Since a negative performance outcome may jeopardize one's self-esteem, they may create an impediment that allows them to shift the focus from their abilities to the handicap in order to handle the undesired consequences of a potentially poor performance, which refers to the self-handicapping (Arkin & Baumgardner, 1985). A large body of literature asserted that self-handicapping is primarily driven by the desire to protect self-esteem (e.g., Jones & Berglas, 1978; Rhodewalt, 1990; Snyder & Smith, 1982).

Self-esteem protection was not the only motivation offered for explaining self-handicapping. It was also suggested that self-handicapping could serve as a function for self-enhancement. If the desired outcome was produced in spite of the handicap, it might make self-handicapper take extra credit for their success (Sedikides & Strube,

1995). Some suggest that individuals who have low self-esteem benefit from the self-protective role of self-handicapping, as regards individuals with high self-esteem; benefit from the self-enhancement role (Baumeister et al., 1989). Berglas and Jones (1978), who coined the term self-handicapping, suggest that self-handicapping is in service of both functions.

In addition to using self-handicapping with the aim of protective and enhancement roles, the audience's presence was also offered as an underlying motivation. Although Berglas and Jones (1978) provide evidence that self-handicapping occurs in private conditions, Kolditz and Arkin (1982) suggested that self-handicapping is adopted with the purpose of influencing external evaluations in the presence of an audience.

Some binary classification has been brought to self-handicapping. Such as claimed and acquired self-handicapping (Arkin & Baumgardner, 1985) as well as self-reported and behavioral self-handicapping (Leary & Shepperd, 1986). The latter, behavioral self-handicapping, refers to creating tangible impediments on the way to success (e.g., performance-diminishing substance use, lack of adequate preparation). In contrast, the former, self-reported type of self-handicapping, indicates the claiming the presence of unfavorable conditions (e.g., reporting to feel ill, claiming to experience anxiety) (Brown et al., 2012).

What can be deduced from the self-handicapping literature is that the association between self-esteem and self-handicapping has drawn much research attention. It is not an unexpected outcome, considering that self-handicapping mainly serves to self-esteem, either preserving or enhancing, regardless of whether it originated from private or public concerns or the characteristics of the handicap.

Drawing upon the Terror Management Theory (Greenberg et al., 1986), the motivation behind the need to hold a positive self-image stems from the anxiety-buffering function of self-esteem against social anxiety (Greenberg et al., 1992; Pyszczynski et al., 2004). With respect to social anxiety, fear of negative evaluation is recognized as one of the main components of social anxiety (APA, 2013).

Low self-esteem levels are related to higher responsiveness to signals of negative evaluation (Rosenberg, 1962) due to a fragile sense of self that is contingent upon

external evaluations. In line with that, low-esteem individuals may employ strategies to alleviate their fear of negative evaluation (Covington, 1992; Martin et al., 2001). Self-handicapping is one of the strategies that serve to protect the self. In the presence of an evaluative task, one may erect a handicap that may function as a plausible excuse for a possible failure, which may guard them against negative evaluations in this case. Since such an attempt intends to manage other people's perceptions, it agrees with the researchers who suggest that self-handicapping is driven by concerns regarding impression management (e.g., Rhodewalt & Vohs, 2005).

In the reviewed literature, only one research conducted in Turkey (i.e., Çelik & Atilla, 2019) and one conducted in other countries (i.e., Sultan & Kanwal, 2014) examined those three variables at once. Investigating those variables and their associations with each other may further clarify the role of fear of negative evaluation and self-esteem in self-handicapping among university students. Furthermore, as the data collection will occur under the COVID-19 pandemic conditions, it is also expected that examination of those variables would contribute valuable information to the understanding of self-handicapping tendencies of Turkish university students during the unprecedented changes stemming from the pandemic, such as school closures, transition to distance education, stay-at-home orders, et cetera.

## **1.2. Purpose of the Study**

The present study was designed to explore the predictive relationships between self-handicapping, self-esteem and fear of negative evaluation among undergraduate university students. Drawing upon these purposes, the present study seeks answers to the following research question:

1. To what extent do self-esteem and fear of negative evaluation predict self-handicapping among university students?

### **1.3. Significance of the Study**

As the direct recipients of the outcome of this study are university students, clarifying the self-handicapping tendency of university students in relation to fear of negative evaluation and self-esteem can help students protect from those detrimental effects of self-handicapping; besides promoting their well-being. Evidence shows that negative impacts of self-handicapping can be observed in varied domains.

To begin with, much of the available literature on self-handicapping provides evidence of its adverse effects on academic context. Such as lower math achievement (Babu & Selvamari, 2018); poorer academic achievement (Košir & Šimek, 2015; Urdan, 2004); lower CGPA (Adil et al., 2020), reduced exam performance among secondary school students (Putwain, 2019), academic burnout (Zhang et al., 2021) and negative course experiences among university students (Cano et al., 2018). As educators and policymakers are concerned about removing barriers that prevent student success, the study's result will also benefit educators and policymakers.

Although self-handicapping may lead to beneficial mental health outcomes in the short term, the same does not apply in the long term. Evidence shows that negative impacts of self-handicapping vary, such as depression and anxiety (Sahranç, 2011), less engagement with health-promoting behaviors and increased depressive mood (Chen & Kao, 2018), lack of sense of fulfillment, higher trait anxiety, increased substance use and decreased well-being, negative mood (Zuckerman & Tsai, 2005). The findings of this study may provide valuable information for mental health practitioners, especially those working with university students, by shedding light on their self-handicapping and its related factors. Thereby, university counseling centers can develop and implement preventative programs that address students' self-handicapping tendencies in an attempt to reduce resultant outcomes.

According to WHO (World Health Organization, 1946), health does not merely mean a state lacking sickness; rather, it also encompasses both social and mental well-being. Therefore, cultivating one's well-being would benefit their overall state of complete health, as well as help individuals to fulfill their potential so that they contribute to their community in many ways. As university students are part of our society,

promoting their well-being and taking preventative measures to protect them from adverse effects of maladaptive strategies would benefit society.

Furthermore, it was also suggested that low self-esteem and failure occur as a consequence of self-handicapping; it drags individuals to engage in self-handicapping repeatedly (Schwinger et al., 2014). Therefore, examining self-handicapping along with self-esteem is crucial to preventing the cycle between self-handicapping and its negative outcomes for university students.

Additionally, Rosenberg (1962) asserts that low self-esteem levels accompany a higher sensitivity to cues of negative evaluation. Accordingly, individuals with low self-esteem may adopt strategies to reduce their fear of negative evaluation, such as self-handicapping. When facing an evaluative task, they may create an obstacle that serves as a valid excuse in the case of failure. Thus, they would be protected from negative evaluations. On the ground of that, examination of self-handicapping together with the fear of negative evaluation would provide a better understanding of self-handicapping. However, to the best of our knowledge, only one study in the international literature (i.e., Sultan & Kanwal, 2014) and one study conducted in Turkey (Çelik & Atilla, 2019) were found to examine self-handicapping and fear of negative evaluation altogether. It is expected that this study will contribute to the literature by providing more evidence on the relationship between fear of negative evaluation and self-handicapping. Moreover, this finding may help practitioners shape their therapeutic intervention programs to deal with self-handicapping.

Although first studies of self-handicapping can be dated back to its first conceptualization by Berglas and Jones (1978), self-handicapping studies in Turkey appeared only a decade ago, starting with the Turkish adaptation of the Self-handicapping Scale (SHS) by Akin (2012). Accordingly, the studies related to self-handicapping conducted in Turkey are still limited in number. It is expected that the findings of the study would contribute to the literature with a more nationally representative sample of Turkish university students, as data were collected via an online survey, which encompasses participants from various universities in different cities without being restricted by geographic distances.

Lastly, the COVID-19 pandemic has been a source of unprecedented changes in the lives of numerous people globally. University students were among the groups most affected by those changes, which can be listed as a transition from face-to-face education to distance education following school closures, mandatory stay-at-home orders, quarantine, isolation, and other public health measures taken in order to control the COVID-19 pandemic. Not surprisingly, studies reported that university students were mentally negatively affected by those drastic changes, such as experiencing increased levels of depression, anxiety, and stress (e.g., Alnıaçık et al., 2021; Browning et al., 2021). Those negative mental health outcomes might leave vulnerable university students to engage in some maladaptive strategies, such as self-handicapping. Although self-handicapping tendencies of university students during pandemic have been drawn attention by researchers abroad (e.g., Jia et al., 2021) in the reviewed literature, there is a limited number of studies conducted in Turkey. Examining the self-handicapping tendencies of university students in Turkey might further clarify the negative mental health outcomes of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the results might be beneficial in developing group programs for post-pandemic mental health interventions.

In addition to university students and mental health professionals working with university students, educators, and society, it is also anticipated that the results of this study will provide an insight for future researchers and a basis for further research.

#### **1.4. Definition of the Terms**

**Self-handicapping:** Act of creating obstacles and impediments that allow to externalize failure and internalize success (Berglas & Jones, 1978).

**Self-esteem:** One's overall judgment toward their worthiness and valueness (Rosenberg, 1965).

**Fear of Negative Evaluation:** Apprehension regarding external evaluations, worrying about others' negative evaluations accompanied with being avoided situations that require evaluation with an expectation of being evaluated negatively (Watson & Friend, 1969).

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter consists of 3 subsections for each of the study variables: 1) conceptualization, 2) research, 3) research in Turkey. In the first section, the roots, developments, and major debates about the concepts are introduced for each of the variables. In the second section, studies involving the variable were presented based on samples and relevant variables. Lastly, studies conducted in Turkey on the examined variable were provided.

#### **2.1. Conceptualization of Self-Handicapping**

The term self-handicapping was first coined by Jones and Berglas (1978) as creating obstacles and impediments that jeopardize the likelihood of success with an aim to protect their sense of competence. Arkin and Baumgardner (1985) also define self-handicapping as adopting or actively seeking a performance-debilitating impediment in order to maintain self-esteem and reduce ego threats by providing a convincing excuse for a possible failure. Arkin and Baumgardner (1985)'s definition is consistent with Jones and Berglas's (1978) as well as other scholarly definitions by sharing common elements, including decreasing the chance of success with the purpose of protecting self-concept (Harris & Snyder, 1986; Leary & Shepperd, 1986; Rhodewalt et al., 1984).

While it can be drawn that there is a consensus on definitions of self-handicapping in the literature, findings from the attempts to demystify the antecedents, consequences,

and functions of self-handicapping as well as the motivation that underlies it provides varying explanations as will be discussed in this review.

Historical roots of the self-handicapping concept can be found in early theoreticians of psychoanalysis. Freud (1964) asserted that people involve in unconscious defensive behaviors by displaying psycho-neurotic symptoms. Similarly, Adler (1956) introduced the concept of “safeguarding” as a tendency that people acquire in order to protect and maintain their sense of self-esteem from social threats by decreasing their chance of success, which is guided by the inherent inclination to overcoming inferiority and striving for superiority. Although two views are compatible with each other based on the utility of neurotic symptoms, they differ from each other in terms of the intended purposes for which such symptoms are used. Freud (1964) suggests that the aim of engaging in such defensive behaviors is to protect the ego from libidinal impulses, while Adler’s (1956) notion of safeguard shields self-esteem from threats originating from public concerns.

Higgins (1990) hypothesize that the concept of self-handicapping is influenced by Goffman (1959)’s impression management theory and Heider’s (1958) attribution theory. The theory of impression management set forth that people present themselves in a way they aspire to be perceived by others so as to reach their self-presentational objectives (Goffman, 1959). Attribution theory assumes that humans are naïve scientists who need to test the hypothesis they make about the actions or behaviors they observe, as well as bring an explanation of by what means and for what purposes individuals make such inferences (Heider, 1958). Individuals who employ self-handicapping strategies try to achieve impression management goals they set by considering the attributions process that people undergo (Higgins, 1990).

Another attribution theory that explains one’s tendency to self-handicap is Kelley’s (1972) discounting and augmentation principle (Higgins, 1990; Murray & Warden, 1992). According to Kelley (1972), in the event of failure, poor performance is attributed to external factors such as chance and difficulty level of the task with an attempt to discount the potential role of low ability. On the other hand, in the case of achieving positive outcomes, it is attributed to personal ability with the intention of augmenting credit for one’s own competence (Kelley, 1972). At that point, a question

is raised if self-handicapping is more in service of protecting self-esteem by discounting the part of internal factors than enhancing positive self-image.

It has been suggested that self-handicapping mainly fulfills the function of self-protection on behalf of self-enhancement (Isleib et al., 1988; Mayerson & Rhodewalt, 1988; Snyder & Smith, 1982). On the other hand, a number of researchers indicated self-enhancement motivation (Rhodewalt et al., 1991; Tice, 1991). Nevertheless, Berglas and Jones (1978) claimed that self-handicapping serves both roles in their original conceptualization of self-handicapping. Hence, research attention has been paid to investigating what functions are prevailingly served by adopting self-handicapping strategies.

Rhodewalt et al. (1991) carried out two-fold studies to further investigate the attributional process in self-handicapping. They split the study sample into a binary way, either high or low in self-handicapping and self-esteem. In the first study, participants with high self-handicapping tendencies discounted ability without being influenced by their self-esteem levels in the case of failure. In contrast, only participants with high self-handicapping tendencies and self-esteem levels augmented their ability following success. In alignment with this, Rhodewalt and Hill (1995) found that high self-handicapper individuals attribute their failure to the handicap in service of maintaining their self-esteem. Nevertheless, their second study only confirmed the presence of discounting role, not the augmentation, contrary to the first study.

Isleib et al. (1988) found that among the failure-feedback receiver participants, who were told the beverage they were given was containing alcohol prior to performing a task, found to be more inclined to ascribe failure to the alcohol consumption, which is a plausible excuse, than those who success-feedback receiver ones do success to their ability. Consequently, it can be concluded that in the presence of an easily obtainable excuse, it is used with the aim of self-esteem protection with a higher level than enhancement. Furthermore, all participants, who thought they drank an alcoholic beverage, have noted greater self-esteem in comparison to the group who had not drunk an alcoholic beverage, without being affected by whether they received success or failure feedback. This finding is broadly supported by Feick and Rhodewalt's

(1997) study which indicated that high self-handicapping participants had higher self-esteem than non-self-handicappers, whether performance results in success or not, independent of pre-performance self-esteem levels. As such, it can be concluded that self-esteem takes advantage of self-handicapping by all manner of means. In addition, however, it is worth noting that Greenlees et al. (2006) point out that the role of alcohol is controversial in that study since the participants themselves did not erect the handicap; rather, it was provided as an experimental intervention by the researchers.

An alternative explanation of the motivation underlying self-handicapping is also self-esteem related, however, not with the purpose of preserving it. Rather, it is proposed that individuals use self-handicapping strategies to enhance their self-esteem. If a performance successfully results, it shows that one succeeded even though the existence of a handicap, which leads self-handicapper to take further credit for their achievement (Sedikides & Strube, 1995). The self-protection role of the self-handicapping allows ascribing failure to the factors beyond their control (e.g., luck, chance, circumstances, task difficulty) (Rhodewalt & Vohs, 2005), while the self-enhancement role helps to make internal attributions of positive outcomes, by doing so, enhance self-esteem (Sedikides & Gregg, 2008). The issue of on what basis individuals pursue a specific motivation has also been investigated. The level of self-esteem was offered as an explanation for the choice of employing motives of self-protection or self-enhancement. Baumeister et al. (1989) compared the self-protection and self-enhancement motives and argued that the former is preferred by individuals with low self-esteem and vice versa. Tice's (1991) study further supports this suggestion by providing evidence that those who are high in self-esteem have a higher tendency towards self-handicapping, which is motivated by maximizing others' attributions regarding their competence in the situation of success.

Jones and Berglas (1978) present an inclusive view by proposing that people do not mainly and explicitly strive for self-enhancement goals for self-handicapping; rather, it occurs as an additional benefit of self-protection driven motives that may be utilized if a task accomplishes successfully in spite of the handicap. Further supports this idea, Feick and Rhodewalt's (1997) study provided a valuable contribution as being the first study in the literature to have provided evidence on both augmenting and discounting principles in a real-life setting; on the other hand, they did not detect any evidence for

augmenting effect occurs only with participants with high self-esteem, on the contrary to previous studies (e.g., Rhodewalt et al., 1991).

Feick and Rhodewalt (1997) suggest the discrepancy between results from the current study and previous one may be related to the nature of the setting where the experiment was conducted since self-presentational concerns may tend to be reduced in a natural setting when compared to laboratory studies (Feick & Rhodewalt, 1997). Furthermore, these findings were confirmed by McCrea and Hirt (2001) by duplicating the study. A similar investigation was conducted by Finez et al. (2012) during the recent decade, which consisting of two subsequent studies designed in the same fashion as Rhodewalt et al.'s (1991) study. The result of the first study indicated that individuals who have low physical self-esteem have a higher tendency to employ self-handicapping independent of their motives, which are self-protection and self-enhancement, namely. This finding is also supported by the second study. Thus, these results suggest that self-handicappers do not differ significantly based on their motives, both in low and high physical self-esteem conditions. It is worth noting that the findings of those three studies were restricted to the claimed form of self-handicapping.

Aside from the self-serving strategies (i.e., self-protection, self-enhancement), the target audience was also proposed as one of the motives for self-handicapping. Since self-handicapping takes place in evaluative conditions (e.g., tests, exams, sports competitions) and the existence of an audience is almost inevitable in such tasks, it can be reasonably suggested that self-handicapping might occur with an aim to manage those external evaluations (Rhodewalt & Vohs, 2005).

Kolditz and Arkin (1982) first put forward the idea that people may adopt self-handicapping strategies in an attempt to shape others' evaluations of themselves. On the other hand, Berglas and Jones' (1978) experiment indicated that self-handicapping might emerge even though the task was performed in private conditions. Nevertheless, these alleged "private conditions" has been questioned. Kolditz and Arkin (1982) challenged Berglas and Jones's (1978) claims on the grounds that participants' perceived absence of audience can never be truly measured in experimental settings, while it is apparent that a process of evaluation is being carried out. Furthermore, they also criticized Jones and Berglas's (1978) research design for not being unbiased due

to the inclusion of an experimental assistant, which may prompt the self-presentational concerns of participants. Therefore, a revised version of Jones and Berglas' (1978) study was replicated by Kolditz and Arkin (1982) in an attempt to address these limitations. Expectedly, the findings revealed that individuals had shown a greater proneness to employ self-handicapping in public settings compared to private settings.

Self-handicapping has been divided into two main categories on the basis of characteristics of the handicap (Snyder, 1990). Firstly, Arkin and Baumgardner (1985) propose a classification for self-handicapping, which they named "acquired" and "claimed" obstacles. Further, Leary and Shepperd (1986) categorize self-handicapping under two headings in a similar fashion: "behavioral" and "self-reported." Behavioral self-handicapping involves purposely setting up obstacles in an active manner on the way to success (Leary & Shepperd, 1986), including performance-diminishing substance use (Zuckerman & Tsai, 2005), abandoned effort, or lack of adequate preparation (Brown & Kimble, 2009; Smith et al., 2009), absence of proper sleep (Feick & Rhodewalt, 1997), procrastination (Ferrari & Tice, 2000; Lay et al., 1992), establishing goals beyond their capacities (Greenberg, 1985) and choosing unfavorable environments that undermine the performance (Rhodewalt & Davison, 1986; Snyder et al., 2014).

Contrarily, self-reported self-handicapping refers to merely claiming the presence of impeding circumstances verbally (Leary & Shepperd, 1986). Commonly known examples can be listed as reporting feeling sick (Smith et al., 1983; Snyder et al., 1985) or suffering from physiological symptoms (Mayerson & Rhodewalt, 1988) as well as PMS (premenstrual syndrome) symptoms (Mello-Goldner & Jackson, 1999), claiming to experience social or test anxiety (Snyder & Higgins, 1988; Snyder & Smith, 1982), negative emotional state (Baumgardner et al., 1985), shyness (Arkin, 1987; Snyder & Smith, 1986), being exposed to distressing life circumstances (DeGree & Snyder, 1985).

Notwithstanding that behavioral and self-reported self-handicapping meet on common ground as regards their underlying motivations, they are distinct from each other in some respects. Behavioral self-handicapping is more convincing and believable when compared to self-reported handicaps due to its observable characteristics (Hirt et al.,

2000). However, behavioral self-handicapping requires more sacrifice by decreasing the chance of success and leaving a negative impression (Hirt et al., 2000) that may lead to not being chosen to work together by others (Luginbuhl & Palmer, 1991). Hirt et al.'s (1991) study reveals that when people are offered to choose between claimed or behavioral self-handicapping, they prefer the former to the latter, which is an unsurprising finding given the costly nature of behavioral self-handicapping strategies.

One of the individual factors that have been examined with regard to self-handicapping is gender differences. Moreover, Rhodewalt (1990) put that results of the studies on gender differences in self-handicapping provide the “most stable findings” in the related literature. To date, studies have reported that despite claimed self-handicapping was employed by both genders (Arkin & Oleson, 1998), behavioral self-handicapping was only employed by males (Berglas & Jones, 1978; Hirt et al., 1991, 2000). In an attempt to clarify this difference, various explanations were offered.

It has been suggested that men may be more concerned regarding how their ability appears to others than women. Supporting this view, men were found to be with a higher level of external evaluation concerns stimulated through public self-focus, which resulted in a higher tendency to behavioral self-handicap than women (Hirt et al., 2000). Nonetheless, this result conflicts with Koch et al.'s (2003) study, which reports that an increasing level of external evaluation concerns accompanied by an elevated level of claimed self-handicapping under the circumstances of public self-focus applies to both genders. Together, these results indicate that it is not the existence of a public self-focus behind this gender difference but rather the type of handicap.

Another explanation was made on the basis of self-esteem. Since a number of studies reported a significant gender gap in favor of men in terms of self-esteem (Orth et al., 2012; Shaw et al., 2010), it was believed that men have a greater proneness toward self-handicapping, as they have more self-esteem to protect. However, this claim was refuted by the studies, which revealed that self-esteem level was not found to be to explain gender differences (e.g., McCrea & Hirt, 2001).

Bearing in mind that the presence of self-presentational concerns was also another variable that was found associated with self-handicapping (Kolditz & Arkin, 1982). As such, the gender difference in impression management may also clarify the gender

differences in self-handicapping. The motivation for avoiding behavioral self-handicapping for women may stem from the reason that the attributions made for men do not apply to women. Expectedly, a meta-analysis study carried out by Swim and Sanna (1996) revealed that whereas the absence of effort was attributed to failure in men, inability was attributed to failure in women. The same is applied to vice versa in the event of success, as men were believed to be more competent in the tasks compatible with traditional masculine gender roles, whereas women's success was ascribed to being lucky instead of ability. Thus, women may reasonably not opt for self-handicapping as they do not benefit from its self-protection functions, moreover, since they are being perceived as incompetent.

Due to audience reactions being positioned on the other side of impression management, Hirt et al.'s (2003) study examined how reactions toward behavioral self-handicapping differ by gender. Their results demonstrated that effort is more valued by women than men, which leads women to adopt a negative attitude toward someone who decreases their own chance of success. Furthermore, women were found to be more tolerant if they offer a socially-acceptable excuse for their self-handicapping behavior, such as helping someone out (McCrea et al., 2007). Taken together, women may not opt to adopt behavioral self-handicapping not only due to avoiding to create a negative image but also because they do not approve of any attempt that reduces the likelihood of success.

In spite of the fact that self-handicapping is beneficial in the short term, the same cannot be stated for the long term, considering the studies that have documented adverse outcomes such as depression, stress and anxiety (Sahranç, 2011), lower academic achievement (Urdan, 2004), lower level of adjustment, a higher tendency to engage in withdrawal strategies as well as rumination (Zuckerman et al., 1998), lack of sense of fulfillment, higher trait anxiety, increased substance use, bad mood, reduced psychological well-being (Zuckerman & Tsai, 2005). Moreover, negative consequences of self-handicapping, in particular failure and low self-esteem, are likely to have a reciprocal association, thus creating a vicious cycle of self-handicapping (Schwinger et al., 2014).

## **2.2. Research on Self-Handicapping**

The existing literature on self-handicapping is largely conducted in academic settings at different educational stages. Considering the schools' competitive climate, it is not surprising why the self-handicapping tendency of students attracts researchers' attention, as such conditions may foster the use of maladaptive strategies. Babu and Selvamari (2018) reported an inverse correlation between self-handicapping and achievement in math among adolescents between 13-15 years of age. This finding was also reported by Košir and Šimek (2015), who also conducted a study with high school students and reported an inverse association between academic self-handicapping and academic achievement.

A study conducted with senior students at a secondary education school indicated that examination performance decreases when self-handicapping increases via the mediating effect of a higher level of worry and lower level of control (Putwain, 2019). Academic procrastination and negative perfectionism were found to be mediated by self-handicapping, together with self-efficacy among high school students (Raoof et al., 2019). These results are similar to those reported by Firoozi et al. (2016), as higher self-handicapping levels appeared to be associated with a higher level of both positive and negative perfectionism, in addition to the test anxiety, which was revealed as the strongest predictor of self-handicapping.

Adverse impacts of self-handicapping on academic performance are not limited to high school students. In Cano et al.'s (2018) study with freshmen university students, a deep approach to learning was found to be negatively associated with self-handicapping, while the opposite was applied to the surface approach to learning, besides reporting that negative course experience was related to greater self-handicapping. Similarly, Adil et al.'s (2020) study revealed the mediating role of the self-handicapping between academic achievement as operationalized with cumulative grade point average (CGPA) of undergraduate students and academic psychological capital. It means that higher level of academic psychological capital reduces self-handicapping behavior, thereby leading to enhanced academic achievement. Mansournia and Karimi (2020) also reported an inverse association between academic self-handicapping and achievement motivation via the mediation of academic burnout, in addition to the

positive relationship between academic burnout and academic self-handicapping. It has also been shown that fear of failure (Chen et al., 2009), perfectionism, and locus of control (Arazzini-Stewart & De George-Walker, 2014) are significant predictors of self-handicapping among undergraduate students.

Preservice teachers are also another subgroup of undergraduate students. Ganda and Boruchovitch (2015)'s study on teacher candidates did not find a significant difference between age, gender, course year and the participants' use of self-handicapping. Although findings do not provide a link between age and self-handicapping, younger students are found to be more prone to engage in behavioral self-handicapping. Živković (2020) investigated procrastination, one of the most commonly reported behaviors of academic self-handicapping, and reported that procrastination is best predicted by gender and claimed form of self-handicapping among preservice teachers.

Graduate students were also examined in terms of academic self-handicapping behaviors. However, Falconer and Djokic (2019) have not been able to provide evidence for the link between academic self-handicapping, academic self-efficacy, and demographic variables, namely race, socioeconomic status, gender, and age. This rather contradictory result may be due to age differences. Since doctoral students are relatively older than undergraduate students, their use of cognitive strategies may be different from theirs (Falconer, 2017).

Achievement - goal orientation also appears to be one of the most studied variables with self-handicapping. Those studies can be divided into two categories based on developmental stages which are young adults and adolescents.

Chen and Kao (2018)'s study not only revealed that self-esteem and mastery goals have a negative association with self-handicapping, whereas the opposite is observed in performance-avoidance goals, but also the relationship between self-esteem and self-handicapping is partially mediated by both mastery and performance-avoidance goals. Furthermore, Ferradás et al. (2016) provide evidence that ego-oriented goals foster self-handicapping, regardless of type. Findings of their study also suggested that mastery-approach goals are negatively linked to claimed and behavioral types of self-handicapping, while work-avoidance goals are only linked to the behavioral type of self-handicapping.

In the studies with adolescents, Zhang et al. (2021) conducted a study with the purpose of exploring the relationship between math-gender stereotypes, academic burnout, self-handicapping, and achievement-goal orientation among Chinese adolescents. The result of this study indicates that the relationship between academic burnout and math-gender stereotypes is mediated by self-handicapping, and both self-handicapping and performance-avoidance goals have a mediating chain effect on the same relationship. Self-handicapping is found to be a strong predictor of mastery - avoidance goals among adolescents with chronic pain (Molenaar et al., 2021), and along with the same lines, mastery goals were observed as a negative predictor of self-handicapping through self-efficacy beliefs among 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grader adolescents (Hatzikyriakou et al., 2019).

Taken together, the studies presented so far provide evidence that performance-avoidance goal orientation is found to be positively related to self-handicapping, whereas mastery goals have a negative relationship with self-handicapping. Previous studies are also in congruence with those recent findings (e.g., Elliot & McGregor, 2001; Lovejoy & Durik, 2010). It is expected considering that self-handicapping may be a tempting strategy to adopt for those with avoidance-goal orientation to protect themselves from the negative effects of a potential failure.

Nevertheless, it has also been suggested that the employment of a self-handicapping strategy is subject to individual differences in personality traits. Accordingly, personality traits are also another variable that has been investigated to elucidate its relationship with self-handicapping. Prpa (2017) has shown that self-handicapping is positively related to neuroticism and extraversion and negatively to conscientiousness among 183 students of athletes and non-athletes.

Bobo et al. (2013) reported that neuroticism and conscientiousness are significant predictors of self-handicapping, which are positive and negative, respectively. Furthermore, their study demonstrated the stability of the relationship between personality traits, in particular, conscientiousness and neuroticism, and self-handicapping over time through cross-validated regression analysis. This finding is consistent with that of Litvinova et al.'s (2015), and Nosenko et al.'s (2016). Moreover, Nosenko et al. (2016) also reported that self-handicapping tendency was

positively related to emotion-focused avoidance strategies, whereas it was negatively related to self-evolution. Overall, the consistency of these findings was referred to in a recent meta-analysis of 159 studies involving over 80.000 participants by Schwingen et al. (2021), as conscientiousness and neuroticism personality traits were observed to have the strongest relationships with self-handicapping in the academic context.

In addition to the studies investigating personality traits with Big Five Personality Inventory, narcissism as a malevolent personality trait was also taken into account in terms of its relationship with self-handicapping. Individuals who demonstrate a high level of grandiose or vulnerable narcissism were found to be more inclined to self-handicapping in the event of failure (Alhinai, 2019). Also, the pessimistic trait was linked positively to self-handicapping, which results in less engagement with health-promoting behaviors and increased depressive mood (Chen & Kao, 2018). This finding, together with other personality-related studies, can be helpful for determining high-risk groups in self-handicapping for developing prevention programs.

In recent years, researchers have shown an increased interest in how and at what frequency contextual factors contribute to self-handicapping. Drawing from this perspective, Pulford et al. (2005) conducted a cross-cultural study to determine the predictors of self-handicapping in an individualistic culture, United Kingdom, and in a collectivistic culture, Lebanese. Perfectionism and self-esteem are found to be negative predictors of self-handicapping in both cultures. Consequently, self-handicapping did not show a significant variation between cultures. From these findings, it may be inferred that self-handicapping is a more self-oriented strategy rather than other-oriented (i.e., impression management).

In regard to the studies conducted with racially marginalized groups, the relation of subject achievements with self-handicapping among a sample of racially diverse middle-school students is examined (Lee et al., 2021). Results have shown that literacy achievement with self-handicapping was moderated by being a member of an ethnic minority group, but the same pattern was not observed in math achievement. Another study conducted with African-American male secondary school students (Tyler et al., 2017) indicated that internalized racist stereotypes predict academic self-handicapping. Along with ethnic status, perception of socioeconomic status (SES) may

also be another contributing factor related to self-handicapping. Wondra and McCrea's (2021) study provided evidence that low perceived SES is linked to a higher level of behavioral self-handicapping. These findings support the hypothesis that social identity threats prompt self-handicapping.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused unprecedented changes in the lives of countless people around the world, which pave the way for maladaptive strategies such as self-handicapping. Accordingly, medical students in China were examined in terms of several variables during the COVID-19 pandemic (Jia et al., 2021). Results indicated that academic anxiety and procrastination were positively associated with self-handicapping, whereas a negative association was observed with hardiness (Jia et al., 2021). Furthermore, the positive relationship between self-handicapping and academic anxiety was mediated by hardiness and procrastination. These results can be explained by the dramatic changes that have occurred to students' lives due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which leads to not only adverse mental health outcomes but also maladaptive proactive coping strategies among students with the aim of protecting their self-image.

### **2.3. Research on Self-Handicapping in Turkey**

Although first studies of self-handicapping can be dated back to its first conceptualization by Berglas and Jones (1978), self-handicapping studies in Turkey appeared only one decade ago, starting with the Turkish adaptation of the Self-handicapping Scale (SHS) by Akin (2012). When reviewing the studies conducted in Turkey, associations of self-handicapping are mostly examined with personality-related variables among student samples.

Akar et al. (2018) reported that self-handicapping is inversely related to positive perfectionism whereas positively related to negative perfectionism. In line with that, Özlü and Topkaya (2020) confirmed the same results. Moreover, Alaloğlu and Bahtiyar (2020) also found that self-handicapping positively correlates with perfectionism among university students. Those results are not unexpected considering that perfectionism may prompt individuals to create excuses in the event that perfectionistic goals do not seem achievable.

Additionally, Alaloğlu and Bahtiyar (2020) also reported that self-handicapping is negatively associated with self-compassion. Self-compassion is another variable that is paid attention to in self-handicapping research. Akın and Akın (2015)'s study revealed that self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness subdimensions of self-compassion were negatively associated with self-handicapping. Among them, only common humanity was revealed as a negative predictor of self-handicapping. Furthermore, self-judgment, isolation and over-identification subdimensions were found to be positively related to self-handicapping, as well as positive predictors of self-handicapping among university students. Barutçu-Yıldırım and Demir (2017, 2020)'s studies provide more evidence of the same outcome by reporting a negative association between self-compassion and self-handicapping. The consistency of the inverse relationship between self-handicapping and self-compassion is not surprising. Self-compassionate individuals do not in a position to seek benefit from attributing a possible failure to external causes, neither self-enhancement nor self-protective motives (Barutçu-Yıldırım, 2015).

Negative mental health outcomes of self-handicapping have also been investigated. It was found that self-handicapping is a positive predictor of depression, anxiety and stress (Sahranç, 2011); test anxiety (Barutçu-Yıldırım & Demir, 2020), anxiety sensitivity (Kalyon et al., 2016), cognitive distortions (i.e., hopelessness, self-blame, self-criticism, and preoccupation with danger) (Yavuzer, 2015), emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (Topal et al., 2018) as well as lower level of well-being (Anlı et al., 2015).

In addition to the negative mental health outcomes, studies also reveal the negative effects of self-handicapping on academic context. Akça (2012) concludes that self-handicapping is positively related to an external locus of control and academic procrastination and negatively related to academic success. Other studies further confirmed these results. Barutçu-Yıldırım and Demir (2020) also reported that self-handicapping has a significant relationship with procrastination, and Kalyon et al. (2016) reported that self-handicapping is negatively related to academic achievement among university students. Self-handicapping was found to be negatively related to academic self-efficacy (Barutçu-Yıldırım & Demir, 2017); negative school climate

(Sertel, 2019); school alienation (Kaya & Tümkaya, 2017); fear of failure (Gözmen-Elmas & Aşçı, 2017).

Many researchers have long documented negative effects of self-handicapping in various ways. The aforementioned results provide further evidence to the studies conducted with non-Turkish samples. Such as higher trait anxiety, bad mood, reduced psychological well-being (Zuckerman & Tsai, 2005), a decline in academic performance (Urdan, 2004), and increased level of procrastination (Beck et al., 2000). Therefore, it can be concluded that self-handicapping has similar adverse effects on individuals across the nation and abroad.

Aside from university students, different developmental groups have also been investigated in terms of self-handicapping tendencies. Albayrak and Birol (2021) reported that self-handicapping is negatively associated with high school students' psychological well-being and self-efficacy. Moreover, they also reported that depression levels of high school students were found to be correlated with their self-handicapping tendencies.

Şahin and Çoban (2020) reported that high school students with a positive school climate are less likely to have self-handicapping behaviors. Also, students with higher CGPA are less likely to adopt self-handicapping tendencies. Furthermore, self-handicapping is found to be a mediator in explaining the relationship between school climate and CGPA. Also, school attachment was negatively associated with self-handicapping among secondary school students between 5-8 grades (Anlı, 2019).

Based on the results of studies examining self-handicapping tendencies in high school students, it can be concluded that self-handicapping also has similar effects on high school students as on university students.

#### **2.4. Conceptualization of Self-Esteem**

It was nearly one and a quarter-century ago when the “self-esteem” term was first introduced in the pioneering work of William James (1890). Self-esteem is also found to be the third most commonly emerged concept in the psychology literature (Rodewalt

& Tragakis, 2003). When considering its deeply-rooted and broad background, it is not unexpected to encounter varied definitions offered for self-esteem in related literature. Since the definition of self-esteem diverges among researchers, it is crucial to clarify the common components those definitions were drawn based on. Mruk (2006) identifies three major themes that occurred under the definitions of the term “self-esteem” as competence-based, worth-based, and finally, a combination of both: competence-and-worth-based.

In his seminal study, William James (1890) makes the first attempt to conceptualize self-esteem by defining it as “the ratio of one’s achievement to their pretensions”. Given the apparent emphasis on success, hence, it can be concluded that it is a competence-based definition. On the other hand, Rosenberg (1965) defines self-esteem in a wholly unprecedented way, which can be simply put as one’s overall judgment toward their worthiness and valueness. His novel approach paved the way for a shift in self-esteem to become a measurable psychological construct (Mrak, 2006) by means of the development of Rosenberg’s Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965), which is the most commonly used instrument for measuring self-esteem (Blascovich & Tomaka, 1991; Demo, 1985).

A definition that incorporates both aspects of self-esteem comes from Nathaniel Branden, who is also known as “the father of the self-esteem movement”. In his definition, Branden (1969) defines self-esteem as including two dimensions: being confident in the inner strengths to overcome the difficulties that can be faced in life and holding the belief that being worthy of love and happiness, which are referred as “self-efficacy” and “self-respect,” respectively.

Apart from various definitions offered for self-esteem, the presence of levels and different types was also suggested by researchers, such as global self-esteem (Coopersmith, 1967; Rosenberg, 1965), state self-esteem (Heatherton & Polivy, 1991; Leary et al., 1995; Pyszczynski & Cox, 2004), domain-specific self-esteem (Harter, 1985; Kirkpatrick & Ellis, 2006), stable and unstable self-esteem (Kernis, 2006, 1993; Kernis et al., 1989), contingent and true self-esteem (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001), implicit and explicit self-esteem (Epstein & Morling, 1995; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995).

Global (or trait) self-esteem, state self-esteem, and domain-specific self-esteem (or self-evaluations) are proposed as subsets of self-esteem (Brown & Marshall, 2006). First, global self-esteem or trait self-esteem, which refers to one's general attitude toward themselves (Coopersmith, 1967; Rosenberg, 1965); second, state self-esteem, which reflects one's emotions that arise from particular circumstances for their self-worth (Heatherton & Polivy, 1991; Pyszczynski & Cox, 2004); third, domain-specific self-esteem which is also known as "self-evaluations" that indicates how individuals gauge their varying skills and attributes (Harter, 1985; Kirkpatrick & Ellis, 2006).

Contingent self-esteem is how a person views their worth as determined by the extent to which they fulfilled the external norms or expectations, whereas true self-esteem arises from authenticity instead of external standards (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001). Differences between contingent self-esteem and true self-esteem are widely argued in self-determination theory (e.g., Deci & Ryan, 1991; Ryan, 1993).

The role of levels of self-esteem, such as whether higher self-esteem is more beneficial for one's well-being, is yet another controversial topic. At that point, Kernis (2003) distinguishes two types of high self-esteem, which are namely secure high self-esteem, and fragile high self-esteem, on the basis of well-being outcomes. Secure high self-esteem indicates a positive attitude towards self-worth that is steady and has been shown to correlate with positive mental health outcomes; on the other hand, fragile high self-esteem indicates a positive attitude towards self-worth, yet, sensitivity to the external influences that result in adapting some malicious strategies with the aim of protecting self-esteem (Kernis, 2003; Kernis & Paradise, 2002).

Apart from levels of self-esteem, another distinction of self-esteem was drawn involving the consideration of stability or instability of self-esteem. The stability of self-esteem indicates to what degree a person's self-esteem fluctuates in the short run (Kernis, 2006; Kernis et al., 1989). The narrower the fluctuation extent, the more stable a person's self-esteem becomes, and vice versa.

Another distinction for self-esteem was brought by Epstein and Morling (1995) based on whether one is cognizant or incognizant of their evaluations toward self, which they named explicit and implicit self-esteem. The main distinction between explicit and implicit self-esteem lies in the way of accessibility, as the former can be

obtained by means of self-reported measures while the latter can only be achieved through drawing inferences since it (Greenwald & Farnham, 2000). Thus, explicit self-esteem can be assessed by Rosenberg's Self Esteem Scale (1965); however, this does not apply to implicit self-esteem due to a lack of empirically measurable characteristics of unconscious processes. Research shows that the greater the incompatibility between explicit and implicit self-esteem, the more inclination to self-protection strategies are adopted (e.g., Kernis, 2003; Kernis et al., 2000) in the same manner with other differentiations made for self-esteem.

Although numerous concepts have been investigated in an effort to demystify self-handicapping, self-esteem appears to be one of the most closely related constructs. It is not surprising when considering the fact that the entire process of self-handicapping is mainly aimed at preventing self-esteem from potential negative effects that may arise from public or private evaluative concerns. Moreover, self-esteem is central to the main motivations behind self-handicapping, namely, self-protection and self-enhancement. Nevertheless, the relatedness between self-esteem and self-handicapping is dependent upon individual characteristics. The level of self-esteem is one of those characteristics which is believed to be associated with the extent of propensity to adopt self-handicapping. Yet, there is no consensus on whether self-handicapping tendency is more prevalent among individuals with low or high self-esteem. To begin with, distinctive features of both low and high self-esteem must be considered.

Individuals with low self-esteem are characterized by a fragile self-view (Leary et al., 1995) and a sense of incompetency regarding their abilities in the way to succeed (Baumeister et al., 1989; Overholser et al., 1995), which is accompanied by a growing tendency to being triggered by negative outcomes (Campbell & Lavallee, 1993). Low self-esteem leaves individuals vulnerable to external threats, hence, some coping strategies are adopted when self-esteem is threatened. Self-handicapping is one of those strategies (Tice, 1991). Hence, low self-esteem individuals may be more inclined to employ self-handicapping strategies with a self-protection motivation to guard themselves against the detrimental effects of a potential failure, even if it is at the cost of risking success. Similarly, Snyder and Smith (1982) assert that self-handicapping originated from the desire to ward off the sense of inferiority, which suggests lower

self-esteem is a factor leading to more prevalent self-handicapping compared to high self-esteem.

On the other hand, self-protection motives are not the exclusive province of individuals with low self-esteem. Furthermore, it is also asserted that individuals with high self-esteem are more prone to self-handicapping. This assumption is quite reasonable considering that being failed may be more devastating for a high self-esteem person as they are unaccustomed to failure. Rhodewalt (1990) claims that since self-handicapping occurs as an attempt to maintain a positive self-concept, therefore, a positive self-image should have existed to be protected in the first place. In addition to that, individuals who have low self-esteem may not be confident in their abilities to maintain a favorable self-image (Tice, 1991). Supporting this notion, Jones and Berglas (1978) claim that one must possess self-esteem to some extent to perceive a threat. From that perspective, it can be drawn that holding high self-esteem fosters a greater tendency to self-handicapping due to a positive self-image is more unlikely to be accompanied by low self-esteem.

According to Snyder and Higgins (1988), people with low self-esteem are facing more circumstances in that they are uncertain of achieving the desired result than high self-esteem people are. This view is also complemented by the suggestion that low self-esteem clarity may lead to self-handicapping (Rhodewalt & Vohs, 2005; Tice & Baumeister, 1990). Due to the ambiguity of their ability, low self-esteem individuals may need to pursue self-protection and self-enhancement strategies to handle self-esteem-threatening situations. As a matter of fact, the earliest conceptualization of self-handicapping (i.e., Jones & Berglas, 1978) also asserts that self-handicapping aims to maintain positive yet unstable self-esteem, as it is more sensitive to negative feedback. Given that individuals who have unstable self-esteem invent excuses followed by a failure in order to accuse external factors (Kernis et al., 1993) and individuals with unstable high self-esteem have a higher tendency to self-handicapping than do stable high self-esteem counterparts (Newman & Wadas, 1997) it can be concluded that instability of self-esteem also paves the way to self-handicapping.

Apart from the presented attempts to explain the self-esteem and self-handicapping relationship, Urdan and Midgley (2001) also suggested that a link between self-esteem

and self-handicapping cannot be proven due to the ambiguous description of “failure.” They draw attention to the point that while not being the most successful one among other competitors may mean failure for a high-self-esteem individual, performing below par may have the same meaning for a low-self-esteem individual. In the same vein, Tice (1991) asserts that although individuals use self-handicapping regardless of their level of self-esteem, nevertheless, low and high self-esteem individuals differ from each other in terms of the main motivation. Individuals with low self-esteem engage in self-handicapping with a self-protection motive, whereas high self-esteem individuals opt for self-handicapping, which is driven by self-enhancement motivation.

## **2.5. Research on Self-Esteem**

Self-esteem is one of the most commonly examined constructs in psychology across a broad range of domains. Studies demonstrated that having high levels of self-esteem is associated with positive mental health outcomes, such as improved social relationships (Harris & Orth, 2020); greater life satisfaction (Du et al., 2017; Hawi & Samaha, 2017; Szcześniak et al., 2021), well-being, happiness and positive affect (Du et al., 2017). On the other hand, having a low level of self-esteem is found to be related to anxiety and depression (Nguyen et al., 2019; Sowislo & Orth, 2013), academic stress, and burnout (Jiang et al., 2021; Méndez et al., 2020), poor quality of life (Tavares et al., 2016), as well as health-risk behaviors (Arsandaux et al., 2020).

The meta-analysis conducted by Sowislo and Orth (2013) on anxiety and depression revealed that both of them are significant predictors of low self-esteem, regardless of age and gender. Recent studies are also consistent with this result. Such as, Nguyen et al. (2019) reported that self-esteem is inversely associated with academic stress, anxiety, and depression which is linked to secondary school students’ suicidal ideation. In line with that, Jiang et al. (2021)’s study not only shows a link between school burnout and depression among high school students but also reported that lower levels of self-esteem moderate this link. Therefore, it can be concluded that low self-esteem has adverse effects on mental health. Moreover, the link between burnout and self-esteem was also found in teachers (Fu et al., 2021; Ho, 2016; Méndez et al., 2020).

Thus, it is clear that those adverse mental health outcomes also affect educators, in addition to students.

Aside from mental health, the relationship between physical health and self-esteem has also been investigated among students. A systematic analysis of the studies on substance use, sexual behavior, physical activity, and nutritional habits shows that a higher level of self-esteem is related to a higher level of health behavior among college students (Arsandaux et al., 2020). However, the relationship between the level of self-esteem and alcohol consumption, as well as risky sexual behavior, was found to be inconsistent as an exception to this result.

Higher relational self-esteem has been shown to be related to greater life satisfaction, positive mood, besides well-being among college students (Du et al., 2017) and vice versa, low level of quality of life is reported to be associated with a low level of self-esteem among elderly (Tavares et al., 2016). At that point, it is evident that low self-esteem has a negative impact on individuals' overall perception of their life, which can be observed both in young adults and the elderly. Not surprisingly, age differences have been paid attention to by researchers to clarify how it relates to self-esteem.

Orth et al. (2018) examined the development of self-esteem over the life course from the age of 4 to 94 through a meta-analysis that consists of 331 independent samples. Self-esteem showed an increasing trend by the age of 11, and remained steady between 11-15, then showed a tendency to increase again until at the age of 30, and hit the peak at age 60 and remained stable till age 70, and declined until the age of 90.

Bleidorn et al. (2016) conducted the first large-scale systematic investigation of age and gender differences across 48 nations with a large internet sample of nearly one million participants. Results indicate that women have higher self-esteem than men, and self-esteem tends to increase from late adolescence to middle adulthood regardless of gender. Also, significant differences were reported across cultures.

The COVID-19 lockdown has also raised questions about how individuals' self-esteem was affected in such an unprecedented time. Higher levels of self-esteem were found to be related to lower levels of psychological distress during the COVID-19 pandemic (Arima et al., 2020), and overweight women reported lower levels of self-

esteem during COVID-19 quarantine (Lofrano-Prado et al., 2021) as well as higher frequency to use social networking sites that are associated with lower levels of self-esteem via increased body dissatisfaction (Vall-Roqué et al., 2021).

Aside from the studies presented above, existing literature also provides evidence on self-esteem and its associations with both fears of negative evaluation and self-handicapping.

In regard to studies that investigated the relationship between self-esteem and self-handicapping, Chen and Kao (2018) not only found that self-esteem is negatively related to self-handicapping but also demonstrated that performance-avoidance and mastery goals are partial mediators of the relationship between self-esteem and self-handicapping. Hence, it can be concluded that self-esteem improvement and fostering mastery goals while simultaneously reducing performance-avoidance goals may help alleviate self-handicapping. Similarly, an indirect relationship was found between self-esteem and claimed type of self-handicapping via self-confidence (Coudeville et al., 2011), which suggests that individuals with low self-esteem are more prone to adopt self-handicapping due to having a lower level of self-confidence.

A recent meta-analysis aimed to examine the antecedents of academic self-handicapping (Schwinger et al., 2021) revealed that self-esteem is one of the constructs that have the strongest associations with self-handicapping. Although self-esteem was found to be a significant predictor of self-handicapping (Rotairo et al., 2015), no significant associations were also reported (Nosenko et al., 2016).

Self-esteem and fear of negative evaluation have also been examined in the social context, and lower family socioeconomic status was linked with a lower level of self-esteem, resulting in an elevated level of fear of negative evaluation (Cheng et al., 2014). Moreover, a higher level of fear of negative evaluation was also related to having a lower level of self-esteem among college students with and without asthma (Junghans-Rutelonis et al., 2015). Also, an indirect effect of contingent self-esteem and compulsive buying behaviors are explained via fear of negative evaluation (Biolcati, 2017).

Only a limited number of studies simultaneously investigated self-esteem, fear of negative evaluation, and self-handicapping. Sultan and Kanwal (2014) reported that those three constructs are significantly related to each other; moreover, male students with a high level of self-esteem and fear of negative evaluation are found to be more inclined to self-handicap themselves compared to female students who are low in the level of self-esteem and fear of negative evaluation. Also, fear of negative evaluation and self-esteem instability was shown to have a significant relationship with academic self-handicapping (Abdali & Moshtaghi, 2020). Similarly, FNE was revealed as a mediator in the association between self-esteem instability and self-handicapping (Arab-Mohebi-Shahrabi et al., 2017). A psychoeducational program aimed at fostering self-esteem stability and reducing fear of negative evaluation has also been reported as effective in lowering self-handicapping tendencies (Arab-Mohebi-Shahrabi et al., 2018).

## **2.6. Research on Self-Esteem in Turkey**

Self-esteem has been examined through various variables in studies conducted in Turkey. In terms of social relationships, it has been reported that self-esteem has a negative relationship with loneliness and dissatisfaction in social relationships (Yöyen, 2017), low social support (Kök & Demir, 2018), as well as perceived social support (Koç & Arslan, 2019). It can be explained as social relations have beneficial effects on one's sense of self; a decrease in self-esteem may have a negative effect on one's social relationships, which is not a surprising consequence.

Adverse mental health outcomes of low self-esteem are also well-documented by research carried out with Turkish samples, in addition to international studies. Self-esteem is revealed as a negative predictor of social phobia (Haspolat & Kağan, 2017) and negatively related to social anxiety (Kurtyılmaz et al., 2017), test anxiety (Çakmak et al., 2017) as well as depression among university students (Tekir et al., 2018) and high school students (Altan & Şahin-Baltacı, 2016). In addition to that, social appearance anxiety was reported to have an inverse relationship with self-esteem among adolescents (Çelik & Şenay-Güzel, 2018) and adults (Korkmaz & Uslu, 2020). Therefore, it can be concluded that low self-esteem negatively influences individuals' mental health, which can be observed in different developmental stages.

As regards positive mental health outcomes, self-esteem is found to be positively related to subjective happiness (Bektaş & Arslan, 2020; Demir & Duman, 2019), mindfulness (Bektaş & Arslan, 2020), self-efficacy (Yıldırım & Atilla, 2020), resilience (Öner, 2019). These results are also reasonable, taking into account that one's overall positive evaluation of themselves has expectedly desirable effects on their well-being which lead to a wide range of positive outcomes.

Studies regarding self-esteem and self-handicapping mainly suggest that self-handicapping has a negative relationship with self-esteem (Barutçu-Yıldırım & Demir, 2017, 2020; Elmas & Akfirat, 2015; Gözmen-Elmas & Aşçı, 2017; Özgüngör & Duantepe-Paksu, 2017; Türesin-Tetik et al., 2019). As individuals with low self-esteem are more vulnerable to ego threats, it is reasonable why they need to adopt some maladaptive strategies when facing self-esteem threats. On the other hand, Yavuzer (2015) reported that self-handicapping is positively related to self-esteem. It can be explained that high self-esteem may boost the inclination to self-handicapping, as failure may be more devastating for individuals holding high self-esteem since they have more to protect than those with low self-esteem, which is also supported by studies conducted with non-Turkish samples (e.g., Lupien et al., 2010; Sultan & Kanwal, 2014).

There are also studies examining self-esteem and fear of negative evaluation. Şimşek and Kaya (2019) reported that self-esteem plays a full mediator role in the relationship between procrastination and fear of negative evaluation. Koydemir (2006)'s study indicated that fear of negative evaluation was negatively predicted by self-esteem; moreover, fear of negative evaluation appeared as a partial mediator in the relationship between shyness and self-esteem. On the other hand, Cankardaş (2019)'s study revealed that self-esteem was a negative predictor of fear of negative evaluation among females, which does not apply to males. Taking a domain-specific approach, Ümmet et al. (2020) found that fear of negative evaluation is a significant negative predictor of decisional self-esteem among adolescents. This finding was also reported by Çelik and Atilla (2019).

## **2.7. Conceptualization of Fear of Negative Evaluation**

The use of the term “fear of negative evaluation” can be traced back to nearly 50 years ago, in the fundamental work of Watson and Friend (1969). In that study, it is assumed that social anxiety consists of two dimensions as follows: Suffering from distress in social settings that lead to social avoidance and concerns about being negatively evaluated by others. On the basis of that, “Fear of Negative Evaluation” (FNE) and the “Social Avoidance and Distress Scale” (SAD) were developed accordingly. Nevertheless, this hypothesis was proposed before the publication of the third edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) in 1980, in which those constructs were covered within the scope of diagnosis of social phobia, currently known as a social anxiety disorder.

What is known about the Fear of Negative Evaluation is largely derived from studies investigating how social anxiety occurs. Therefore, it is not surprising that the term Fear of Negative Evaluation first appeared as a construct of social anxiety. This view is supported by Rapee (1995), who identifies the fear of negative evaluation as one of the major cognitive elements of social anxiety disorder. Moreover, compared to mentally unwell and mentally healthy populations, social phobics reported a higher level of fear of negative evaluation (Heimberg et al., 1988). Consequently, it is necessary to conduct a thorough review of social anxiety disorder in order to better understand the concept of Fear of Negative Evaluation.

Whilst the presence of phobic conditions was acknowledged in the first two editions of DSM (APA, 1952, 1968) nevertheless; it was not specialized for social fear before its official recognition in DSM-III (APA, 1980). On the other hand, the formal diagnosis scope was insufficient to cover all people suffering from this disorder (Hyett & McEvoy, 2018). Therefore, the diagnostic criteria of social phobia have transformed into an expansive way, and even its name was changed until the most recent edition of DSM-V (APA, 2013).

Heimberg et al. (2014) discuss and reviews these changes as follows: 1) The change in the primary name of the diagnosis from “social phobia” to “social anxiety disorder,” 2) The greater focus given on fear of negative evaluation, 3) A shift was taken into consideration the social and cultural context in clinical decision-making about whether

a reaction towards a social condition is excessive given the extent of the real threat, 4) A revision on the diagnosis of social anxiety disorder in the presence of medical disorders, like social anxiety symptoms accompanied with medical conditions may now fulfill the criteria of social anxiety disorder diagnosis, as long as those symptoms are not related to relevant medical conditions, 5) Restriction of the fear by replacement of “generalized” social situations with the “performance-only” distinguisher. Among these changes, the increasingly recognized role of fear of negative evaluation is noteworthy. In particular, being subject to humiliation and embarrassment was at the center of the fear of social anxiety disorder in the previous versions of DSM (Heimberg et al., 2014). However, after the publication of DSM-5 (APA, 2013), the scope of this diagnostic criteria has been extended to a general fear of being negatively evaluated.

The growing focus on the fear of negative evaluation on social anxiety disorder is not surprising, considering the wide emphasis on fear of negative evaluation given in the cognitive models of social phobias, such as Clark and Wells (1995) and Rapee and Heimberg (1997). Clark and Wells (1995) highlight the role of fear of negative evaluation on social phobia in some aspects. First of all, they argue that persons with social phobia direct their focus of attention on and carefully monitor themselves when they feel threatened to be negatively evaluated to obtain information on what impressions they create on other people. Nevertheless, it is controversial how presentative of reality individuals with social phobia perception regarding their performance, as well as others' evaluations.

Several studies revealed that people suffering from social phobia are more inclined to make distorted inferences about social situations in a more negative way than they actually are (Amin et al., 1998; Hirsch et al., 2006). Consistently, studies showed that people with social phobia underrate their performance in comparison with the scores given by independent observers (Norton & Hope, 2001; Rapee & Lim, 1992). The results of Rapee and Lim (1992)'s study revealed that fear of negative evaluation was found to be the only significant predictor of the difference between the self-report ratings and independent observer scores, besides being positively associated with a greater discrepancy between the raters. Furthermore, this perceptual bias is not limited to their self-evaluation of social performances. Winton et al. (1995)'s experimental study showed that individuals who are high in fear of negative evaluation are more

prone to make negatively distorted interpretations of neutral facial expressions than those low in fear of negative evaluation. In view of all that has been mentioned so far, it can be concluded that fear of negative evaluation does not rely on a rational basis and cannot be said that it reflects reality.

Recent evidence suggests that the global fear of evaluation is integral to social anxiety, which involves not merely fear of negative evaluation, but also positive evaluation (Rodebaugh et al., 2012; Weeks et al., 2008). Although “positive evaluation” and “negative evaluation” appear to be opposite concepts, as a matter of fact, the fear of positive and negative evaluation is not differing greatly from each other, given that both of them require evaluations from others and serve the same purpose. According to the psycho-evolutionary hypothesis of social anxiety (Gilbert, 2001), social anxiety functions as a protective mechanism against the risks of imbalance in the hierarchy in elevating too speedily or dropping to the bottom. The former is likely to be positively evaluated since it increases the possibility of being perceived as a threat to others, whilst the latter may lead to social exclusion (Weeks et al., 2009). Taken together, fear of positive evaluation is related but a different concept from fear of negative evaluation (Rodebaugh et al., 2012; Weeks et al., 2010).

Cognitive models of social anxiety disorder suggest that one’s negative evaluation of self has a significant role in the development of SAD (*see*: Heimberg et al., 2010). Anticipatedly, a number of studies have reported an inverse correlation between self-esteem and social anxiety disorder (e.g., de Jong et al., 2012; van Tuijl et al., 2014).

Given that individuals’ overall evaluation hold about themselves refers to self-esteem (Brown et al., 2001; Mann et al., 2004), negative self-evaluation indicates low self-esteem and vice versa. As noted before, social anxiety disorder consists of fear of negative evaluation as one of the core components (APA, 2013; Stopa & Clark, 1993). Relying on that, it might be expected that self-esteem is negatively associated with fear of negative evaluation, which is reported by several studies (e.g., Doğan, 2009; Eriş & İkiz, 2013). In parallel with this, Acarturk et al. (2009)’s study indicates that low self-esteem is a risk factor for social anxiety disorder; therefore, people with low self-esteem identified as a high-risk group. Hence, individuals with a high level of self-

esteem may cope with the fear of negative evaluation better than those with a low level of self-esteem.

Individuals with low self-esteem are more likely to be responsive to cues of negative evaluation as they are highly concerned with how others perceive them, which leads them to employ impression management strategies (Leary et al., 1995). Accordingly, they may have an increased degree of fear of being negatively evaluated. As poor self-esteem is characterized by holding negative beliefs and views regarding oneself (Baumeister et al., 1989), it is not unexpected that their perceptions have had their shares. Students with high self-esteem evaluated their performance more positively and estimated they are evaluated more positively by teachers compared to those with low self-esteem (Jussim, 1989), whereas people with social phobia have negatively biased perception toward their evaluation and self-evaluation (e.g., Amin et al., 1998; Hirsch et al., 2006). This tendency also may increase the expectancy of being negatively evaluated, in turn, as fear.

Low self-esteem has been linked to the high level of anxiety that induces susceptibility toward evaluative situations stemming from a fragile self-image (Rosenberg, 1962). In accord with that, studies revealed that fear of negative evaluation prompts low-self-esteem individuals to adopt self-protective strategies with the purpose of reducing threats to self-esteem, as well as regulating evaluation anxiety (Covington, 1992; Garcia & Pintrich, 1994; Martin et al., 2001). Self-handicapping is one of those self-protective strategies. When encountering an ego-threatening task, one may engage in self-handicapping, which may provide them a readily-available excuse in the event of failure, thus, protecting them from being negatively evaluated by others. This is consistent with the other researchers who asserted that self-handicapping originates from self-presentational concerns and aims at managing external evaluations (e.g., Rhodewalt & Vohs, 2005). In agreement with this idea, results from recent studies demonstrate a consistent relationship between fear of negative evaluation and self-handicapping (e.g., Abdali & Moshtaghi, 2020; Arab-Mohebi-Shahrabi et al., 2017; Azadi & Fathabadi, 2013; Çelik & Atilla, 2019; Sultan & Kanwal, 2014).

## **2.8. Research on Fear of Negative Evaluation**

Previous research has provided evidence that fear of negative evaluation has adverse effects on various domains and is related to negative mental health outcomes. It was reported that FNE has a mediator role in the relationship between depression, anxiety, and academic stress (Nonterah et al., 2015) and a moderator role between interpersonal stress coping on loneliness and depression (Taniguchi, 2018) as well as a positive association with social-evaluative workplace anxiety and interview anxiety (Zhang et al., 2021). Furthermore, FNE is significantly positively linked with suicidal ideation among college students (Preston et al., 2021).

In terms of negative health consequences, fear of negative evaluation is also demonstrated to be associated with problematic drinking behavior (Villarosa-Hurlocker et al., 2018) with the purpose of coping with social anxiety symptoms. It seems evident that chronic diseases have a propelling effect on patients to increase their fear of negative evaluation, which is associated with negative health outcomes. FNE is not only found to be related to negative health outcomes but also reduced sports performance (Geukes et al., 2017; Molina et al., 2017).

Some personality characteristics have also been investigated within the FNE context. Such as, a lower level of FNE has been associated with one's creative self-efficacy (Bonetto et al., 2020) and one's perceived power, along with manipulating power levels via personal control belief (Cai & Wu, 2017). In addition, the increasing use of social media, smartphones, and the internet have prompted research on how FNE relate to these variables. Correspondingly, studies have demonstrated that FNE is positively associated with problematic smartphone use (Wolniewicz et al., 2018) and negatively associated with the number of social media friends/followers, as well as a tendency to block a friend/follower on social media (Kelly et al., 2020). FNE is also revealed as a predictor of social media anxiety (Shabahang et al., 2022). It can be inferred that high-FNE individuals' increased impression management concern is reflected in their online life, which was also previously reported by Kamalou et al. (2019).

Adopting a gender-sensitive approach, Villanueva-Moya and Expósito (2020) have shown that feminine traits were associated with fear of negative evaluation, and fear of negative evaluation is inversely related to social risk-taking among women. Women

may be urged to fulfill gender-role expectations to avoid negative evaluations of society. Also, a low level of family socioeconomic status (SES) has been linked to an increased level of fear of negative evaluation (Cheng et al., 2014). Thus, intervention programs that aim to reduce the fear of negative evaluation should focus primarily on individuals coming from low-SES families.

FNE's relation to self-handicapping has also been examined. FNE has been found to be positively related to self-handicapping (Sultan & Kanwal, 2014) and academic self-handicapping (Abdali & Moshtaghi, 2020). Moreover, findings report that males with a higher level of fear of negative evaluation are more likely to engage in self-handicapping than their female counterparts (Sultan & Kanwal, 2014). Also, FNE has appeared as a mediator between unstable self-esteem and self-handicapping (Arab-Mohebi-Shahrabi et al., 2017). Lastly, an experimental intervention aimed at reducing FNE and promoting stable self-esteem has been observed to effectively decrease the self-handicapping tendency (Arab-Mohebi-Shahrabi et al., 2018).

## **2.9. Research on Fear of Negative Evaluation in Turkey**

Numerous studies have been conducted in Turkey examining the fear of negative evaluation in various aspects. In the academic context, procrastination has been found to be indirectly related to the fear of negative evaluation through self-esteem among high school students (Şimşek & Kaya, 2019). However, FNE was positively related to medical students' academic success (Özdemir et al., 2021).

Several studies have also reported undesired mental health outcomes of FNE. FNE is revealed as a mediator in the relationship between psychological inflexibility and psychological vulnerability (Uğur et al., 2021). Fear of negative evaluation has also been found to be associated with cognitive distortions. It was revealed that high schoolers' FNE levels are related to catastrophizing and external attribution cognitive distortions (Pamuk, 2021). Moreover, fear of negative evaluation was found to be negatively associated with perceived autonomy and academic risk-taking behavior (Üztemur, 2020). High levels of fear of negative evaluation may play a triggering role by initiating unhelpful thinking styles, making individuals avoid taking risks in

academic environments, and decreasing their autonomous motivation, due to increased sensitivity to external feedback.

In addition to that, a low-level association was found between the FNE scores and academic dishonesty tendencies of preservice teachers (Ömür et al., 2014). Bozdağ (2021) confirmed those results among university students. Students may have engaged in dishonest acts in academic settings with an aim to avoid negative evaluations in the event of a possible failure.

FNE was found to be a partial mediator in the relationship between unconditional self-acceptance and codependency; besides, results indicated that individuals low in unconditional self-acceptance have greater FNE levels which lead them to have higher levels of codependency among emerging and young adults (Turgut & Yücel, 2020). Thus, it can be concluded that when young adults accept themselves unconditionally, it alleviates their fear of negative evaluation as well as codependency tendencies.

In terms of parental-related variables, FNE was also positively predicted by perceived parental strictness/supervision (Koydemir, 2006). In the same vein, Cankardaş (2019) provided further evidence by demonstrating that overprotective parental attitudes positively related to and a positive predictor of male participants' fear of negative evaluation. While males thrive for independence, exposing authoritative and overprotective attitudes might cause concern about being negatively evaluated. Moreover, FNE appeared as a positive predictor of shyness (Koydemir, 2006).

A strong positive relationship between social appearance anxiety and FNE was reported (Karacan-Doğan, 2018). The experience of the folk dancers was also asked, and it appeared that the higher the experience of folk dancing, the lower the social appearance anxiety and FNE levels. Hence, a long experience may have been helpful for overcoming the evaluative concerns. Moreover, it was reported that females have statistically higher levels of social appearance anxiety and fear of negative evaluation than males. This can be attributed to the external expectations of physical appearance based on gender stereotypes. In contrast to Karacan-Doğan (2018), no significant difference was found in taekwondo players' FNE scores in terms of experience and

gender, as reported by Atasoy et al. (2018). They also reported that athletes on the national team reported higher levels of FNE than those who were not a part of the national team.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHOD**

In this part, methodology of the present study was provided. This chapter contains the following subsections: research design, participants of the study, data collection instruments, data collection procedure, description of variables, data analysis procedure, and limitations of the study.

#### **3.1. Research Design**

According to Fraenkel et al. (2012), the association among two or multiple quantitative variables is explored in correlational research design, without intending to manipulate them. This study was aimed to investigate the predictive roles of fear of negative evaluation and self-esteem relating to university students' self-handicapping. Therefore, a correlational research design was utilized in this regard. Correlational designs can be classified into two groups based on the purpose of the study, which are the explanatory and the prediction design (Creswell, 2012). Prediction design is used to determine the predictive association between the predictor and criterion variables (Creswell, 2012). As data will be collected at a single time, a cross-sectional quantitative research method will be employed. In respect to variables, self-handicapping was the criterion variable whereas self-esteem and fear of negative evaluation were the predictor variables.

### **3.2. Participants of the Study**

The target population of the proposed study was the undergraduate students who enrolled in the 2021 - 2022 Fall semester in both state and private universities in Turkey. The accessible population of the study was 440 undergraduate students from 64 university, which are consisted of 46 state and 18 private universities. Students of preparation schools, associate degree programs, and graduate schools were excluded from the study.

In terms of the sample size, a sample of 440 participants is adequate according to Green (1991)'s rule-of-thumb. According to rule-of-thumb, an adequate sample size for multiple regression analysis is determined as follow:  $N \geq 50 + 8m$  (where m is stand for the number of predictors). For the current study, this criterion was met ( $440 \geq 50 + 8 \times 2$ ).

Data were collected using an online survey. Since the sample will be derived from an online survey without a restriction regarding who will be given permission to participate in and are based on the availability of the participants, the sampling method of the proposed study corresponds to convenience sampling (Fricker, 2008). Demographics of participants were depicted in Table 1 below. *[Age ( $M = 21.28$ ,  $SD = 2.55$ ) was collected as a continuous variable; but it is preferred to display with four-year intervals from the age of the youngest participant to the oldest participant for easier readability.]*

Table 1. *Demographics of Participants (N = 440)*

Group		n	%
Age	18-22	358	81.4
	23-27	63	14.3
	28-32	19	4.3
Gender	Female	347	78.9
	Male	93	21.1

Table 1. (cont'd)

Group		n	%
Grade Level	1	88	20.0
	2	159	36.1
	3	74	16.8
	4	119	27.0
University Type	State	88	20
	Private	352	80

Demographics of the current study participants are provided in Table 1 above, including age, gender, grade level and university type. Ages of the participants are ranged from 18 to 32, with a mean of 21.28 ( $SD = 2.55$ ). Ages are presented as 3 groups, which are 18-22, 23-27, and 28-32. A large majority of participants, 358 of 440, are between 18-22 age interval (81.4%) followed by 63 participants in 23-27 age group (14.3%), and lastly, only 19 of them in 28-32 age interval. Also, the table reflects a preponderance of female participants ( $n= 347$ , 78.9%) to males ( $n= 93$ , 21.1%). Grade levels of students ranged from 1 to 4, as 88 of them were 1<sup>st</sup> grade (20%), 159 of them were 2<sup>nd</sup> grade (36.1%), 74 of them 3<sup>rd</sup> grade (16.8%), and 119 of them 4<sup>th</sup> grade students (27%). In terms of the university type where participants attend, 352 of them private university students whereas 88 of them state university students.

### 3.3. Data Collection Instruments

Four instruments, namely demographic information form, Self-Handicapping Scale (SHS), Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), and Brief Form of Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale (BFNE) were administered to the participants of the study.

### **3.3.1. Demographic Information Form**

Demographic information form was developed by the researcher with a purpose of obtain information regarding age, gender, grade level, enrolled university and program.

### **3.3.2. Self-Handicapping Scale (SHS)**

Self-Handicapping Scale (Jones & Rhodewalt, 1982) was developed to measure the self-handicapping. It comprises 25 items such as "*I tend to put things off until the last moment.*", and "*When I do something wrong, my first impulse is to blame circumstances.*". Seventeen of the 25 items are positively stated and keyed positively (1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 24, 25) whereas eight of them stated and keyed negatively (3, 5, 6, 10, 13, 20, 22, and 23). Respondents are asked to rate their agreement or disagreement on the items on a 6-point Likert scale (0 = disagree very much, 1 = disagree pretty much, 2 = disagree a little, 3 = agree a little, 4 = agree pretty much, 5 = agree very much). For the original scale, Cronbach's alpha coefficient ( $\alpha$ ) of the scale was reported as .79, and .74 for the test-retest reliability.

In the present study, Turkish adaptation of the SHS (Akın, 2012) was used. A total score that can be obtained from the scale vary from 25 to 125, and higher scores imply higher level of self-handicapping. For Turkish version, Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) and test-retest coefficients were found as .90 and .94, respectively.

Although single-factor structure of SHS was confirmed both in original (Jones & Rhodewalt, 1982) and Turkish adaptation (Akın, 2012), Confirmatory Factor Analysis was conducted to examine its single-factor structure by the data collected from the sample of the present study. Results of CFA for the Self-Handicapping Scale showed a low, but acceptable model fit  $\chi^2(275) = 1056.11$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 3.84$ , GFI = .83, AGFI = .79, NFI = .51, CFI = .59, and RMSEA = .08. It has been reported that a RMSEA value below 0.8 indicates a good fit, and a value below 0.5 indicates a very good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). In addition, the ratio of chi-square to degrees of freedom should be less than 5.00 (Kline, 2011). In line with that, it can be concluded that the one-dimensional

structure of the SHS has been tested and verified with CFA. Since a model modification would contribute max. 2% chi-square difference, which would be insufficient to improve the model, model modification was not conducted. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated to test internal consistency and found as .56. According to Perry et al. (2004), Cronbach's alpha values fall between the range of 0.5 and 0.70 indicate moderate reliability.

### **3.3.3. Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES)**

Self-esteem was assessed using a Turkish adaptation of the original Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (1965) conducted by Çuhadaroğlu (1985). The scale consists of 10 items and responses were made on a 4-point scale ranging from (1) "strongly disagree" to (4) "strongly agree". Half of the items are reverse coded (i.e. 3, 5, 8, 9, 10) and half of them are normal coded (i.e. 1, 2, 4, 6, 7). An example of positively worded items is "*I feel that I have a number of good qualities.*", and "*I wish I could have more respect for myself.*" as regards negatively worded items.

Although RSES was originally developed as a Guttman-type scale, it was mostly used as a Likert-type scale by many of researchers (e.g., Hensley & Roberts, 1976; Reynolds et al., 1980). Moreover, Kahle (1976) suggested that RSES works better as a Likert-scale. Accordingly, the total score is calculated by summing the 10 items, which range from 10 to 40.

Confirmatory factor analysis revealed a single-factor structure for the original Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (1965) and the same result obtained in the Turkish adapted version as well (Çuhadaroğlu, 1985). For the original scale, test-retest reliability coefficients vary from .82 to .88, while Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) are found to be between .77 and .88 (Rosenberg, 1965). These values were found to be as .75 for test-retest reliability, and .71 for Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) in the Turkish adaptation of RSES (Çuhadaroğlu, 1985). Therefore, RSES is suitable for using with university students.

Although single-factor structure of RSES was confirmed both in original (Rosenberg, 1965) and Turkish adaptation (Çuhadaroğlu, 1985), Confirmatory Factor Analysis was conducted to examine its single-factor structure by the data collected from the sample of the present study. Results of CFA for the RSES showed an inadequate model fit,  $\chi^2(35) = 894.72$ ,  $\chi^2/\text{df} = 25.56$ , GFI = .71, AGFI = .54 NFI = .89, CFI = .90, and RMSEA = .24. Therefore, with an aim to improve the model, modification indices of errors were examined and the highest values among them were identified (Arbuckle, 1999). Pairs with highest error covariances were found as follow:  $\varepsilon_9-\varepsilon_{10}$ ,  $\varepsilon_6-\varepsilon_7$ ,  $\varepsilon_1-\varepsilon_2$ , then, those pairs were checked based on similarities. After related error pairs were connected, analysis was performed again. Second model showed a fair fit for single-factor structure,  $\chi^2(32) = 245.69$ ,  $\chi^2/\text{df} = 7.68$ , GFI = .90, AGFI = .83, NFI = .96, CFI = .97, and RMSEA = .12. In the present study, internal consistency coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) was calculated and found as .91.

### **3.3.4. Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale (BFNE)**

Leary (1983) developed the Brief Form of Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale (BFNE) by shortening the 30-item Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale to 12-item with an aim to measure to what extent apprehension about being negatively evaluated by others experienced. In terms of psychometric properties, BFNE was found to be almost identical with the long form, due to a high correlation between brief and original form was reported ( $r = .96$ ) by (Leary, 1983). Only three items are reverse-coded, which are namely 2, 7, and 10. Respondents rate How much statements on the items reflect their characteristics by marking a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from "Not at all characteristics of me" to "Extremely characteristics of me". Items include statements such as "*I worry about what kind of impression I make on people.*" and "*I am concerned about other people's opinions of me.*". The total score of the BFNE is calculated by summing each of the item scores; accordingly, the total score that can be obtained from the scale range from 12 to 60.

As regards BFNE, Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) value were found as .90, in addition to 4-week test-retest reliability value as reported .75. In the current study, Turkish version of the BFNE, which is adapted by Çetin et al. (2010) was used. They reported the test-retest and split-half reliability coefficients as .82 and .83, respectively. Both original and

adapted version of the BFNE demonstrate sufficient psychometric properties to be used.

Single factor structure of BFNE was confirmed both in original (Leary, 1983) and Turkish adaptation (Çetin et al., 2010). Confirmatory Factor Analysis was conducted to examine its single-factor structure by the data collected from the sample of the present study. Results of CFA for the BFNE showed an inadequate model fit,  $\chi^2(44) = 657.27$ ,  $\chi^2/\text{df} = 14.94$ , GFI = .77, AGFI = .66, NFI = .92, CFI = .93, and RMSEA = .19. Therefore, with an aim to improve the model, modification indices of errors were examined and the highest values among them were identified (Arbuckle, 1999). Pairs with highest error covariances were found as follow:  $\epsilon_4-\epsilon_5$ ,  $\epsilon_2-\epsilon_6$ ,  $\epsilon_3-\epsilon_5$ ,  $\epsilon_7-\epsilon_8$ ,  $\epsilon_3-\epsilon_4$ , then, those pairs were checked based on similarities. After related error pairs were connected, analysis was performed again. Second model showed an acceptable fit for single-factor structure,  $\chi^2 (39) = 197.50$ ,  $\chi^2/\text{df} = 5.06$ , GFI = .92, AGFI = .86, NFI = .97, CFI = .98, and RMSEA = .10. In the present study, internal consistency coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) was calculated and found as .69.

### **3.4. Data Collection Procedure**

In advance of collecting data, all instruments used in the study were submitted to Human Research Ethics Committee at Middle East Technical University (METU), and approval was obtained. Permission to utilize data collection instruments requested from the authors of the scale. The data collection procedure had started upon receiving approvals. Participants were recruited through an online survey. Through online surveys, a higher number of participants can be reached in a shorter period of time compared to the paper-pencil data collection method, without being restricted by geographic distances (Wright, 2005). Aside from those benefits of web-based data collection, online surveys were also preferred due to the inconvenience of administering traditional paper-pencil data surveys in classroom settings because of prevailing pandemic restrictions (e.g., social distancing rules) at the time of data collection, which is during 2021-2022 Fall semester. Besides, in that way, data was gathered from the students who attend classes virtually, which is otherwise impossible by using traditional data collection methods due to face-to-face education suspended and replaced with distance education during the pandemic period.

The online survey was created via Google Forms, then shared in social media pages and groups that are believed mainly consist of undergraduate students, such as Facebook and Instagram pages of university clubs and societies. So as to ensure ethical standards and procedures which will be for participants' benefit, some measures were taken. Firstly, when the link to the online survey was clicked, informed consent for proceeding with the study appeared. It was set that survey was only available for those who give their consent by ticking the box next to the "*I participate in the study voluntarily by knowing that I am allowed to drop out of the study any time I wish.*" sentence. The informed consent also includes the information on confidentiality, stating that the anonymity of the participants will be protected.

### **3.5. Description of Variables**

**Self-Handicapping:** Overall mean of total scores as measured via SHS.

**Fear of Negative Evaluation:** Overall mean of total scores as measured via BFNE.

**Self-Esteem:** Overall mean of total scores as measured via RSES.

**Gender:** Sexes of participants as represented with (1) Female and (2) Male.

### **3.6. Data Analysis Procedure**

In the data analysis procedure of the study, a variety of analyses were employed which are consistent with targeted objectives. Descriptive statistics of study variables and demographic information of participants were analyzed in terms of minimum and maximum scores, mean, and standard deviation. As such, the characteristics of the participants of the study were presented. Data screening and assumption checking were performed prior to proceeding to further analyses. Afterwards, bivariate correlations were tested with Pearson's correlation coefficient to determine the associations among criterion and predictor variables. Lastly, in order to answer the research question, multiple regression analysis was conducted after ensuring that the required assumptions were met. Besides, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used for data collection instruments (Self-Handicapping Scale, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, Brief

Form of Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale). These analyses were completed using LISREL 8.8. Additionally, Cronbach's alpha was calculated as a reliability measure.

### **3.7. Limitations of the Study**

The study is not without limitations. A limitation of the study may be stemmed from the research design, sampling method, data collection instruments, and data collection procedures of the study.

First of all, the employed sampling method, which is convenience sampling, raises significant limitations on generalizability, as it is not possible to generalize data to the population. Another limitation of the study that stemmed from the research design, as the correlational design does not provide a causal relationship; rather, it describes association among variables (Fraenkel et al., 2012).

As regards data collection instruments, the present study was subjected to bias due to reliance on self-report measures. Participants' perceptions regarding examined constructs may not be in accord with their actual behavior. Also, although data collection took place through online forms that minimize the participants' privacy and anonymity concerns, responses might be given in a socially favorable way. In other words, the presence of social desirability bias might have had an impact on responses.

In addition to that, although in the demographic information form included grade level, enrolled university and program, "educational level" was not included. During data screening, researcher excluded the responses of participants with associate and graduate program names. However, undergraduate programs having as same names as other educational level degrees might have been ignored. Therefore, data collection instruments might have been filled by students of associate or graduate level degrees, which might pose a threat to the external validity of the study.

In the present study, data collection was performed during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Covid-19 global pandemic has affected not only university students, but also the all levels of education. The drastic changes that pandemic has brought can vary from school closures to transition to the distance education. Hence, it is not an unexpected

outcome that many of university students affected adversely. Recent studies provide evidence that university students experienced negative mental health consequences, such as depression, anxiety, and stress related to Covid-19 pandemic (Alnıaçık et al., 2021; Browning et al., 2021). Under such circumstances, the self-handicapping tendency of students might be affected by the surrounding pandemic conditions. Specifically, the uncertainty caused by the Covid-19 pandemic may have been served as a plausible explanation for an anticipated poor performance by students, which may lead an increased proneness to self-handicapping.

The final limitation of this study can be attributed to gender distribution of participants, which limits the representativeness of the findings due to participants of the study was predominantly female (79%) compared to male (21%).

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

In this chapter, descriptive statistics for study variables, assumption checks prior to statistical analyses, bivariate correlations, and lastly the results of multiple regression analysis were presented.

#### 4.1. Missing Data Analysis

No missing values were observed due to the response rate of the data collection instruments was 100%. Thus, all data were available to statistically analyze.

#### 4.2. Descriptive Statistics

Table 2. *Self-Handicapping Scores Regarding Demographic Variables (N = 440)*

Group		n	M	SD
Gender	Female	347	85.29	12.22
	Male	93	81.60	12.67
Grade Level	1	88	85.39	12.12
	2	159	83.28	11.52
	3	74	83.86	13.31
	4	119	85.90	13.07

Table 2. (cont'd)

Group		<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
University Type	State	88	90.32	12.39
	Private	352	83.06	11.98

Table 2 above shows the descriptive statistics based on the scores obtained from Self-handicapping Scale (SHS) separated by gender, grade level, and university type.

As can be seen from the Table 2, female students have higher mean scores of self-handicapping ( $M = 85.29, SD = 12.22$ ) than male students ( $M = 81.60, SD = 12.67$ ). In terms of the grade level, the highest scores of self-handicapping were reported by 4<sup>th</sup> grade undergraduate students ( $M = 85.90, SD = 13.07$ ), followed by 1<sup>st</sup> grade students with a slight difference than 4<sup>th</sup> graders ( $M = 85.39, SD = 12.12$ ), and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students ( $M = 83.86, SD = 13.31$ ). The lowest self-handicapping scores were reported by 2<sup>nd</sup> graders ( $M = 83.28, SD = 11.52$ ) which are slightly lower than 3<sup>rd</sup> graders. In the case of university type, undergraduate students of state universities scored higher mean of self-handicapping ( $M = 90.32, SD = 12.39$ ) than undergraduate students of private universities did ( $M = 83.06, SD = 11.98$ ).

Table 3. *Descriptives of the Criterion and Predictor Variables (N = 440)*

Group	<i>min.</i>	<i>max.</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Self-handicapping	49	128	84.51	12.40
Self-esteem	11	40	28.54	6.08
Fear of negative evaluation	11	55	33.70	9.38

Descriptive statistics of criterion and predictor variables, which are self-handicapping, self-esteem, and fear of negative evaluation were given above in Table 3. As depicted in Table 3 above, the overall Self-handicapping Scale scores were ranged from 49 (min.) to 128 (max.) with a mean of 84.52 ( $SD = 12.40$ ), whereas total scores obtained from Self-esteem Scale was between 11 (min.) and 40 (max.) with a mean of 28.54 ( $SD = 6.08$ ). Lastly, total scores of Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale were reported in the range of 11 (min.) to 55 (max.) with a mean of 33.70 ( $SD = 9.38$ ).

### **4.3. Assumption Checks for the Multiple Regression Analysis**

Prior to the data analysis, required assumptions of multiple regression analysis, which are namely stated as “multivariate outliers, normally distributed errors, homoscedasticity, independence of errors, linearity, multicollinearity, multivariate normality” by Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) were checked.

#### **4.3.1. Multivariate Outliers**

In order to detect the multivariate outliers, Mahalanobis and Cook's Distance, besides Standardized DFBETA Intercepts were calculated. According to Field (2009), Cook's Distance and Standardized DFBETA Intercept values must be less than 1, and values exceed 1 may raise concern. Both of these values are found to be well under the point at which may cause concern.

Mahalanobis Distances were calculated using the criterion with two degrees of freedom at the significance level of .001, which is equal to chi-square critical values of 13.82 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). The data set has also been met the Mahalanobis Distance criteria for this sample. Therefore, any values were not excluded from the data set due to no influential observations and outliers were detected.

In terms of the sample size, an approach has been put forward by Green (1991) with an aim to determine adequate sample size for multiple regression analysis as follow:

$N \geq 50 + 8m$  (where m is stand for the number of predictors). Drawing from Green (1991)'s rule-of-thumb, a sample of 440 participants should be adequate, as  $440 \geq 50 + 8 \times 2$ .

#### 4.3.2. Normally Distributed Errors

Normal distribution of regression standardized residuals were examined by means of histogram and Normal P-P plot. In Figure 1, it can be seen that the histogram has bell-shaped curve and a slightly positive skewness from normal distribution can be observed. In Figure 2, P-P plot residuals follow almost a straight line without any deviation from the line.

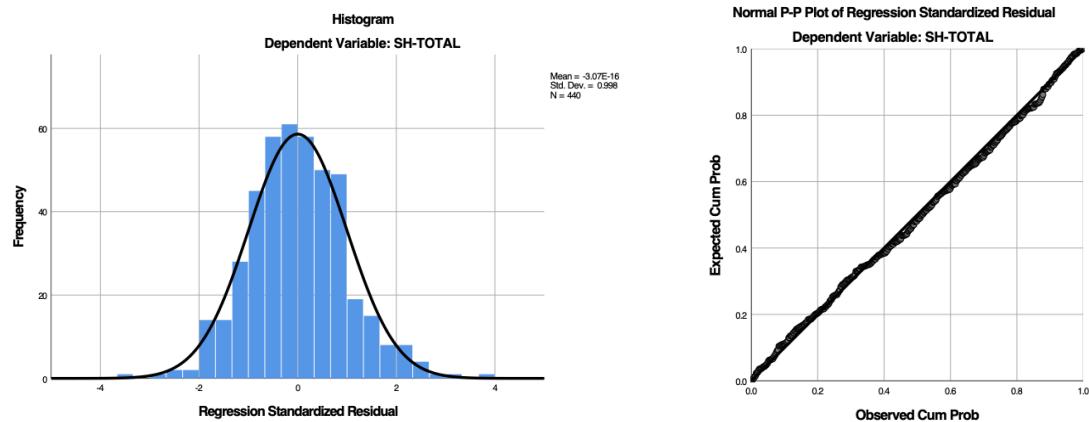


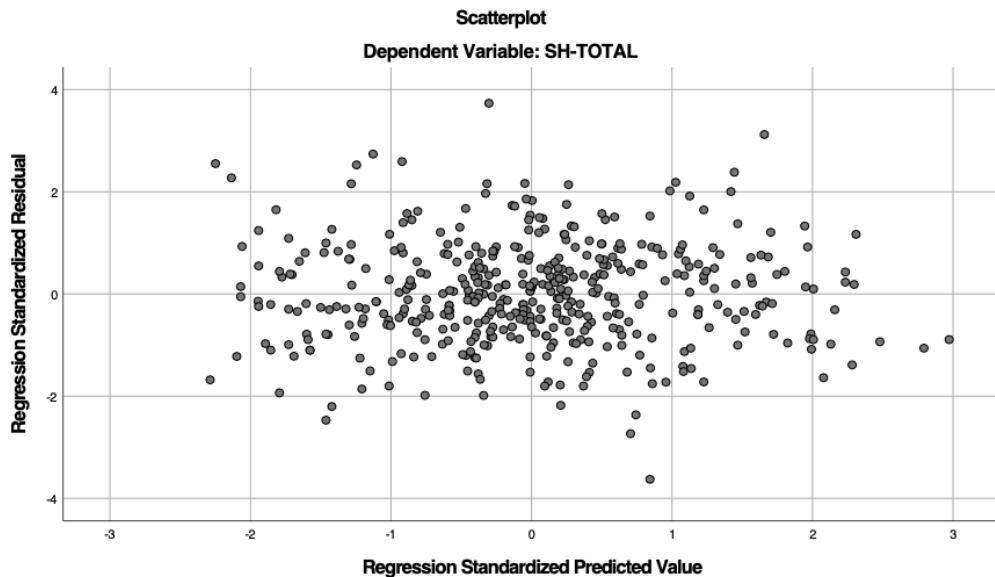
Figure 1. Histograms of standardized residuals.

Figure 2. Normal P-P plot of normality of residuals

#### 4.3.3. Homoscedasticity

Homoscedasticity assumption indicates that the variance of errors are consant across the scores of the dependent variable (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). This assumption is

tested with scatter plot of residuals of the regression versus predicted values was analyzed.



*Figure 3.* Scatter plot of residuals versus predicted values, independent variables: Fear of Negative Evaluation and Self-Esteem

As presented in Figure 3, residuals spread evenly across the chart, hence, homoscedasticity assumption was fulfilled. Although no heterogeneous residuals were found, Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) reported that presence of a slight heteroscedasticity can be negligible as it is not crucial for multiple regression analysis.

#### 4.3.4. Independence of Errors

The Durbin-Watson statistic was computed to check assumption of independence of errors and was found as 2.29. According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) the value of the Durbin-Watson statistic should be bounded between 1.50 and 2.50. Since the value, 2.29, is within the acceptable range, it can be concluded that independence of errors assumption has been met.

#### 4.3.5. Linearity

In order to screen for linearity, partial regression scatterplots were examined. Scatterplots of residuals demonstrate a linear relationship between observed scores on self-handicapping and values of self-esteem and fear of negative evaluation.

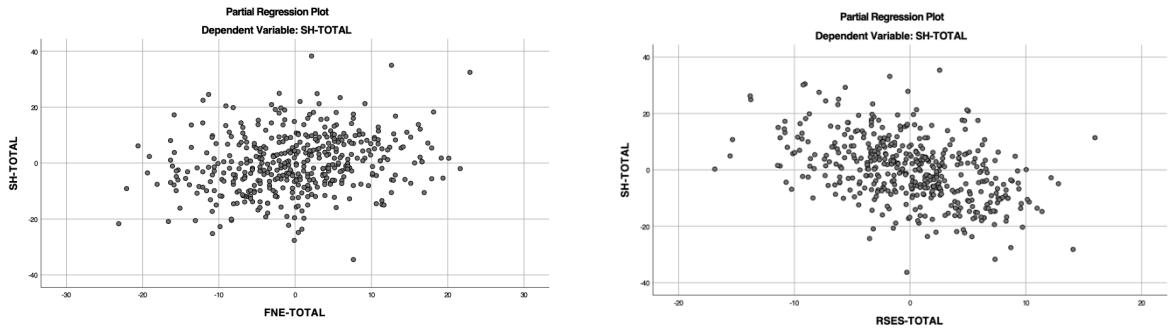


Figure 4. Scatterplots of residuals

#### 4.3.6. Multicollinearity

Multicollinearity occurs in the presence of a strong correlation ( $r > .90$ ) between the predictor variables. Multicollinearity assumption was evaluated by examining variance influence factor (VIF) and tolerance statistics values. VIF values higher than 4 and tolerance values less than .20 may cause concern (Menard, 2001). Moreover, Johnson et al. (2018) suggest that  $VIF \geq 2.5$  reveals considerable collinearity. In that study, VIF and tolerance values were reported as 1.31 and .76, respectively. Therefore, multicollinearity assumption was met.

#### 4.3.7. Multivariate Normality

Skewness and kurtosis statistics, histograms, and Q-Q plots are also examined with a purpose of screening univariate normality tests for each variables.

Table 4. Skewness and Kurtosis Values

Variable	Skewness	S.E	Kurtosis	S.E
Self-Handicapping	.07	.12	.15	.23
Self-Esteem	-.22	.12	-.23	.23
Fear of Negative Evaluation	.01	.12	-.25	.23

Acceptable values of skewness and kurtosis range between  $\pm 3$  and  $\pm 10$ , respectively (Kline, 2011). As presented in Table 4 above, skewness and kurtosis values fall between suggested values. Moreover, histograms and Q-Q plots were also visually inspected for each variables and found to be did not deviate substantially from normality. Hence, assumptions of normality is satisfactory for conducting further analysis.

#### 4.4. Bivariate Correlations

Bivariate correlations was performed to investigate the interrelationships between criterion and predictor variables. Bivariate correlations calculated by Pearson's correlation coefficients ( $r$ ) were presented Table 5 below.

Table 5. Pearson Correlation Coefficients ( $r$ ) for Interrelationships Between Variables

( $N = 440$ )

Variables	1	2	3
1. Self-Handicapping	-	-.55*	.43*
2. Self-Esteem	-.55*	-	-.49*
3. Fear of Negative Evaluation	.43*	-.49*	-

\* $p < .01$  (two-tailed)

According to Evans (1996)'s guideline for interpreting the strength of correlation, absolute values of Pearson's correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) between .40 to .59 indicates moderate correlation. As depicted in Table 4 above, all correlation coefficient absolute values fall within the range of .40 to .59. Therefore, it can be concluded that identified interrelations between variables of study were of moderate strength.

First, a moderate statistically significant positive relationship between self-handicapping and fear of negative evaluation was revealed ( $r = .43, p < .01$ ) which means higher scores obtained from self-handicapping scale related to higher fear of negative evaluation scores obtained from FNE scale. Another moderate statistically significant relation can be observed between self-handicapping and self-esteem negatively, ( $r = -.55, p < .01$ ), indicating that the higher the self-handicapping scores, the lower the level of self-esteem. Finally, an inverse significant association between self-esteem and fear of negative evaluation was found ( $r = -.49, p < .01$ ) which shows that as level of self-esteem increase, fear of negative evaluation scores decrease.

#### **4.5. Results of Multiple Regression Analysis**

After testing the required assumptions, multiple regression analysis was performed in order to examine fear of negative evaluation and self-esteem as predictors of self-handicapping. Results of the multiple regression analysis were presented in Table 6 below.

Table 6. *Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Self-handicapping (N = 440)*

Variables	Coefficients		
	B	SE B	$\beta$
Constant	101.62	3.98	
Self-esteem	-.92	.09	-.45*
FNE	.27	.06	.21*
$R^2$	.34		

\* $p < .01$  (two-tailed)

As can be seen from Table 6 above, the percentage of total variances accounted for by prediction model is 34% [ $F_{(2, 437)} = 112.754, p < .01, R^2 = .34$ ]. Students' predicted self-handicapping is equal to  $101.62 - .92$  (Self-esteem) +  $.27$  (FNE), where self-esteem and fear of negative evaluation are measured by Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and Brief Form of Fear of Negative Evaluation, respectively. Students' self-handicapping scores were decreased to  $.92$  for each point of self-esteem and increased to  $.27$  for each point of FNE. Both self-esteem ( $\beta = -.45, p < .01$ ) and FNE ( $\beta = .21, p < .01$ ) were found to be statistically significant predictors of self-handicapping. Self-esteem appears to be a stronger predictor than FNE.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSION**

In this final chapter, the findings of the study were discussed by drawing upon the previous research. Also, this chapter includes conclusion, possible the implication of the findings as well as recommendation for future research.

#### **5.1. Discussion of the Results**

In order to answer the research question, multiple regression was conducted among study variables. To begin with, self-esteem was examined. Bivariate correlations revealed that higher self-handicapping scores are related to lower self-esteem. In line with that, self-esteem was found to be a significant negative predictor of self-handicapping. This finding is consistent with a large volume of research both in studies conducted in Turkey (e.g., Barutçu-Yıldırım & Demir, 2020; Elmas & Akfirat, 2015; Gözmen-Elmas & Aşçı, 2017; Özgüngör & Duantepe-Paksu, 2017; Türesin-Tetik et al., 2019) and out of Turkey (e.g., Alesi et al., 2012; Chen & Kao, 2018; Coudeville et al., 2011; Pulford et al., 2005; Rotairo et al., 2015; Warner & Moore, 2004).

This finding is not only consistent with previous research, but also entirely reasonable considering the function of self-handicapping. As individuals with low self-esteem are more sensitive to the ego threats, hence, it is understandable why they apply for some maladaptive strategies when they are facing self-esteem threats. Self-handicapping is one of those strategies (Tice, 1991). Accordingly, it is asserted that individuals with low self-esteem have a higher tendency to adopt self-handicapping strategies with the purpose of protecting themselves from adverse consequences of a possible failure at

the expense of putting the chance of success in jeopardy. In the same vein, Snyder and Smith (1982) suggest that self-handicapping arouse a motivation to compensate the sense of inferiority, which further indicates that self-handicapping is more likely to prevalent among those who with low self-esteem.

However, this finding is not consistent with some studies (e.g., Lupien et al., 2010; Sultan & Kanwal, 2014; Yavuzer, 2015) which have revealed higher self-esteem is related to higher level of self-handicapping. It can be explained that high self-esteem may boost the inclination to self-handicapping, as failure may be more devastating for individuals holding a high self-esteem since they have more to protect than those who with low self-esteem. Similarly, in their original conceptualization of self-handicapping, Jones and Berglas (1978) asserted that a certain degree of self-esteem must have possessed to being threatened. Moreover, Rhodewalt (1990) claims that as self-handicapping attempts to protect a positive self-image, there must be a positive self-image to protect in the first place.

This finding is also not in line with the studies that have not reported any significant differences between self-esteem and self-handicapping (e.g., Nosenko et al., 2016; Raoof et al., 2019). In a similar vein, Urdan and Midgley (2001) suggested that the association between self-esteem and self-handicapping cannot be fully explored as what “failure” mean might change for an individual with low self-esteem and high self-esteem. Furthermore, it was proposed that self-handicapping is employed from both low and high self-esteem individuals with different motivations (Tice, 1991). Accordingly, low self-esteem individuals adopt self-handicapping with a purpose of benefit from self-protection motive, high self-esteem individuals benefit from self-enhancement motivation.

Another important finding emerged from the regression analysis was that self-handicapping is positively predicted by fear of negative evaluation. Moreover, bivariate correlations indicated a positive association between self-handicapping and fear of negative evaluation. This finding is consistent with the existing body of research on self-handicapping and fear of negative evaluation (e.g., Abdali & Moshtaghi, 2020; Azadi & Fathabadi, 2013; Çelik & Atilla, 2019; Arab-Mohebi-Shahrabi et al., 2017; Sultan & Kanwal, 2014).

This finding is not unexpected, moreover, well fits for the purpose of self-handicapping. Individuals with high level of fear of negative evaluation may engage in self-handicapping when they face an ego-threatening task to take advantage of a readily-available excuse in the case of failure. The motivation of managing external evaluations triggered by self-presentational concerns might explain why high levels of fear of negative evaluation are more likely to be accompanied by a higher inclination toward self-handicapping (Kolditz & Arkin, 1982; Rhodewalt & Vohs, 2005).

Furthermore, the results of bivariate correlations provide evidence of a negative relationship between self-esteem and fear of negative evaluation. That is to say, individuals with lower self-esteem are more prone to have a higher level of fear of negative evaluation. This finding is also expected as well as align with previous research. As low self-esteem has been linked to the elevated anxiety levels, which leads to the vulnerability in evaluative situations due to a fragile sense of self (Rosenberg, 1962), it is reasonable that individuals with low self-esteem may be motivated to employ some strategies to eliminate threats toward self-esteem besides reducing social-evaluative anxiety, namely, self-handicapping (Covington, 1992; Garcia & Pintrich, 1994; Martin et al., 2001).

## **5.2. Conclusion**

The results of the presents study indicated that both self-esteem and fear of negative evaluation are significant predictors of self-handicapping among university students.

## **5.3. Implications of the Findings for Practice**

The result of the current study can provide beneficial implication for students, educators, stakeholders, policymakers, and mental health professionals.

Initially, as the direct recipients of this study are university students, they can benefit from the various findings that emerged from the study. The present study will be informed students about the antecedent and consequences of self-handicapping, which will be helpful for them to gain awareness of the impediments they created. Students reduce their chance of success and increase their likelihood of confronting adverse

effects in the long-run by excuse-making or actively creating obstacles. As long as students be recognizant of such behaviors, it is expected that they will be less likely to employ self-handicapping to avoid those detrimental impacts. Moreover, it may prompt them to consider the factors which lead them to self-handicapping, and replace it with functional strategies.

Secondly, the present study also provides valuable implications for educators. Educators can understand in which ways students set up barriers against their own success, as such, they can refer students to counselling center of the university when they notice the presence of self-handicapping behaviors in the educational settings. Additionally, both students and educators can benefit from how self-esteem and fear of negative evaluation impact on self-handicapping tendencies.

The findings of the study have important implications within the practical setting for mental health professionals, especially those who working with university students. As self-esteem was found to be the strongest predictor of self-handicapping, practitioners may opt to examine the self-esteem levels of the students prior to implementing any interventions to reduce self-handicapping. Based on this finding, practitioners may consider developing interventions that target an increase in self-esteem, which might be effective in decreasing and preventing self-handicapping.

Another major finding emerging from this study was the statistically significant predictor of fear of negative evaluation for self-handicapping. Therefore, in addition to the self-esteem, mental health professionals may also consider the students' fear of negative evaluation before any therapeutic interventions are undertaken. It is anticipated that reducing students' fear of negative evaluation levels could also be helpful in decreasing self-handicapping tendencies.

Lastly, as results of the study reported a negative relationship between self-esteem and fear of negative evaluation, students, mental health professional and educators can also benefit from this finding when dealing with negative consequences of fear of negative evaluation.

#### **5.4. Recommendations for Future Research**

In spite of the fact that the current study makes important contributions to the literature and provides valuable implication for practice, there is a need of further investigation due to aforementioned limitations of the study. Drawing from those limitations, some recommendations can be put forward to develop a greater degree of accuracy for future research.

First of all, the findings of the current study cannot be generalized to the population of the study due to sampling method, namely, convenience sampling. Therefore, it is recommended to replicate this study by employing random sampling for the sake of generalizability and representativeness of the research.

Another limitation of the study that stemmed from the research design, which is correlational design. Correlational design does not provide a causal relationship, merely describes association among variables (Fraenkel et al., 2012). Researchers should take into account to conduct studies providing experimental evidence on the question of cause-and-effect relationships among self-handicapping, self-esteem, and fear of negative evaluation. Also, expanding the study by including a qualitative components would be recommended to develop a better understanding of self-handicapping by means of the benefit from both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Moreover, data was collected at a single time, in a cross-sectional way, during the distance education semester of the Covid-19 pandemic. Hence, future replications of the present study are also crucial to add the reliability of the findings and provide information to compare pandemic and post-pandemic results of university students' self-handicapping tendencies.

As regard data collection method, the present study employed self-report measures. However, participants' perceptions regarding examined constructs may not be in accord with their actual behavior, and responses might be given in a socially favorable way (i.e., social desirability bias). For future studies, it is recommended to improve self-reported data by combining other data collection tools, such as observational data.

Additionally, although confirmatory factor analysis for Self-Handicapping Scale indicated an acceptable fit, scale does not demonstrate good or high fit indexes. In that point, researchers can develop a valid and reliable Self-Handicapping Scale with a higher level of fit for Turkish samples.

Among the study variables, although self-esteem has been consistently reported as a negative predictor of self-handicapping (e.g., Barutçu-Yıldırım & Demir, 2020; Elmas & Akfirat, 2015; Gözmen-Elmas & Aşçı, 2017; Özgür & Duantepe-Paksu, 2017), only one study has been found which examines self-handicapping and fear of negative at the same time in the reviewed literature (i.e., Çelik & Atilla, 2019). For that reason, further studies need to be carried out in order to clarify the role of fear of negative evaluation on self-handicapping.

Lastly, in the reviewed literature, it has been observed that most of the self-handicapping studies solely conducted with university students. Hence, examination of self-handicapping tendencies of students from different educational levels is also strongly recommended.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: APPROVAL OF THE MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE

UYGULAMALI ETİK ARAŞTIRMA MERKEZİ  
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23 Haziran 2021

Konu : Değerlendirme Sonucu

Gönderen: ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (İAEK)

İlgı : İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başvurusu

#### Sayın Prof. Dr. Ayhan DEMİR

Danışmanlığını yürüttüğünüz Melisa BOZKURT'un "Kendini Engellemenin Yordayıcıları: Öz Saygı ve Olumsuz Değerlendirilme Korkusunun Rolü" başlıklı araştırmanız İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülmüş ve 280-ODTU-2021 protokol numarası ile onaylanmıştır.

Saygılarımızla bilgilerinize sunarız.

A handwritten signature consisting of the letters 'A.', 'C.', and a cursive line.

Dr.Öğretim Üyesi Ali Emre TURGUT  
İAEK Başkan Vekili

## **APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT**

### **Araştırmaya Gönüllü Katılım Formu**

Bu çalışma, ODTÜ Eğitim Bilimleri Bölümü Rehberlik ve Psikolojik Danışmanlık Anabilim Dalı yüksek lisans öğrencisi Melisa Bozkurt ve öğretim üyesi Prof. Dr. Ayhan Demir tarafından yürütülmektedir. Bu araştırmanın amacı, üniversite öğrencilerinin kendilerini engellemelerini yordayan değişkenleri (öz saygı ve olumsuz değerlendirmeye korkusu) incelemektir. Ankette sizden hiçbir kimlik belirleyici bilgi istenmemektedir. Cevaplarınız tamamen gizli tutulacak ve yalnızca araştırmacılar tarafından incelenecaktır. Elde edilecek bilgiler bilimsel yaynlarda kullanılacaktır. Anket, genel olarak kişisel rahatsızlık verecek sorular içermemektedir. Ancak, katılım sırasında sorulardan ya da herhangi başka bir nedenden ötürü kendinizi rahatsız hissederseniz cevaplamayı yarıda bırakmakta serbestsiniz. Çalışma hakkında daha fazla bilgi almak için Arş. Gör. Melisa Bozkurt ile iletişim kurabilirsiniz. ([melisa.bozkurt@medipol.edu.tr](mailto:melisa.bozkurt@medipol.edu.tr))

**Bu çalışmaya tamamen gönüllü olarak katılıyorum ve istediğim zaman yarıda kesip çıkabileceğimi biliyorum. Verdiğim bilgilerin bilimsel amaçlı yayılarda kullanılmasını kabul ediyorum.**

Bu çalışmaya katılmayı onaylıyorum.

## **APPENDIX C: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION FORM**

### **Demografik Bilgi Formu**

Sayın katılımcı,

Katıldığınız bu araştırma, üniversite öğrencilerinin kendi engellemelerini yordayan değişkenleri incelemeyi amaçlayan bir akademik çalışmanın verilerini toplamak üzere tasarlanmıştır. Vereceğiniz cevaplar sadece bilimsel amaca hizmet etmek üzere kullanılacak ve gizli tutulacaktır. Sorulara eksiksiz ve içtenlikle yanıt vermeniz elde edilecek sonuçlar açısından son derece önemlidir. Araştırmaya sağladığınız değerli katkılardan dolayı şimdiden teşekkür ederiz.

**Yaşınız:**

**Cinsiyet:**  Kadın  Erkek

**Üniversitenizin adr:**

**Kayıtlı olduğunuz program:**

**Fakülteniz:**

**Sınıfinız:**

#### **APPENDIX D: SAMPLE ITEMS FROM SELF-HANDICAPPING SCALE**

Her bir maddede yer alan ifadenin karşısında bulunan; (1) hiç katılmıyorum (2) katılmıyorum (3) kısmen katılmıyorum (4) kısmen katılıyorum (5) katılıyorum ve (6) tamamen katılıyorum anlamına gelmektedir. Sizden istenilen bu ifadeleri okuduktan sonra kendinizi değerlendirmeniz ve sizin için en uygun seçeneği seçmenizdir.

		Tamamen Katılıyorum	Katılıyorum	Kısmen Katılıyorum	Kısmen Katılmıyorum	Hic Katılmıyorum
<b>2</b>	İşlerimi son ana kadar ertelerim.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>9</b>	Yarışmaya dayanan aktivitelerden kaçınmaya çalışırım, böylece kaybettığımde veya kötü performans sergilediğimde çok fazla incinmemiş olacağım.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>18</b>	Kabul ediyorum ki, diğerlerinin bekentisini karşılayamadığında bu sonucu mantıklı hale getirmeye çalışırım.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>22</b>	Sınav veya iş görüşmesi gibi önemli anlardan önceki geceler mümkün olduğunca uykumu almaya çalışırım.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>23</b>	Şu anda yaşadığım duygusal problemlerin, yaşamımın başka bir anını etkilemesine asla izin vermem.	1	2	3	4	5

## APPENDIX E: SAMPLE ITEMS FROM BRIEF FEAR OF NEGATIVE EVALUATION SCALE

Her bir maddede yer alan ifadenin karşısında bulunan; (1) hiç uygun değil (2) uygun değil (3) biraz uygun (4) uygun (5) tamamen uygun anlamına gelmektedir. Sizden istenilen bu ifadeleri okuduktan sonra kendinizi değerlendirmeniz ve sizin için en uygun seçeneği seçmenizdir.

		Tamamen uygun	Uygun	Biraz uygun	Hiç uygun değil	
1	Önemli olmadığını bilsem de başkalarının hakkında ne düşündüğü beni endişelendirir.	1	2	3	4	5
2	İnsanların benimle ilgili olumsuz izlenimleri olduğunu bilsem bile bunu umursamam.	1	2	3	4	5
6	Diğer insanların hakkında düşünceleri beni rahatsız etmez.	1	2	3	4	5
8	Genellikle başkaları üzerinde nasıl bir izlenim bıraktığımıla ilgili olarak endişe duyarım.	1	2	3	4	5

## APPENDIX F: SAMPLE ITEMS FROM ROSENBERG SELF-ESTEEM SCALE

Her bir maddede yer alan ifadenin karşısında bulunan; (1) çok doğru (2) doğru (3) yanlış (4) çok yanlış anlamına gelmektedir. Sizden istenilen bu ifadeleri okuduktan sonra kendinizi değerlendirmeniz ve sizin için en uygun seçeneği seçmenizdir.

		Cok Yanlış	Yanlış	Doğru	Cok Doğru
1	Kendimi en az diğer insanlar kadar değerli buluyorum.	1	2	3	4
2	Bazı olumlu özelliklerim olduğunu düşünüyorum.	1	2	3	4
6	Kendime karşı olumlu bir tutum içindeyim.	1	2	3	4
8	Kendime karşı daha fazla saygı duyabilmeyi isterdim.	1	2	3	4

## **APPENDIX G: TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET**

### **ÜNİVERSİTE ÖĞRENCİLERİİNDE KENDİNİ ENGELLEMENİN YORDAYICILARI OLARAK ÖZSAYGI, OLUMSUZ DEĞERLENDİRİLME KORKUSU VE CİNSİYET**

#### **GİRİŞ**

İnsanoğlunun kendine dair bilgi edinmeye yönelik doğuştan gelen bir eğilimi vardır. İnsanın kendine yönelik bilgi arayışı insanlık tarihinin en eski dönemlerine dayanır. Ayrıca bu konu bilim insanları, filozoflar ve pek çok medeniyet tarafından da büyük ilgi odağı haline gelmiştir. Üç bin yıl önce Antik Yunan'da bulunan Apollon Tapınağı'nın girişinde “Kendini bil!” yazmaktadır. Benlik kavramının psikoloji alanının araştırmalarına girişi ise William James (1890)'in çalışmasıyla başladığı söylenebilir.

Bireyler kendilerine dair bilgi edinirken farklı kaynaklara başvururlar. Bollich vd. (2011) bu kaynakları içsel ve kişilerarası yaklaşım olmak üzere iki şekilde sınıflandırır. İçsel yaklaşılarda iç gözlem, yani bireyin içsel olarak kendi kendini incelemesi, benliğe dair bilgi edinmede güvenilir bir kaynak olarak görülmektedir (Sedikides vd., 2007). Sedikides vd. (2007)'nin çalışması iç gözlem yapan bireylerin kendini değerlendirme puanlarının iç gözlem yapmayanlara kıyasla daha düşük olduğunu ortaya koydu. Bu çalışma iç gözlemin kişisel yanılığı azaltmada etkili olduğunu gösterse de, iç gözlemin doğruluğu pek çok çalışma tarafından tartışılmıştır (ör. Silvia ve Gendolla, 2001; Wilson, 2002; Wilson ve Dunn, 2004).

Öz gözlem de bireyin yaptığı içedönükle incelemenin etkililiğini arttıran bir diğer içsel bilgi edinme kaynağı olarak ileri sürülmüştür. Ancak gözlem bireyin kendi öznel bakış açısından yapıldığından, insanın kendi davranışlarını gözlemlemesi de kişisel yanlışlıktan arınık değildir (Bollich vd., 2011). Öte yandan kişilerarası yaklaşım, kendimize dair bilgimizi başkaları aracılığıyla da artıtabileceğimizi öne sürer. Festinger (1954) ortaya attığı Sosyal Karşılaştırma Kuramı'nda bireyin kendisine dair bilgi edinme yolu olarak sosyal karşılaştırmayı işaret eder.

Sedikides (1993) insanın kendine dair doğru ve isabetli özbilgi edinmeye yönelik ihtiyacını “öz değerlendirmeye motivasyonu” olarak açıklar. Özdeğerlendirme motivasyonunda, bireyler kendilerine dair objektif bilgi sunabilecek tanılayıcı kanıtlar arayışındadırlar. Öz değerlendirmenin yanında, Sedikides (1993) iki ayrı kendini değerlendirmeye motivasyonunu daha öne sürer: Öz yükseltme ve öz doğrulama motivasyonları. İlkî, bireyin pozitif benlik algısını koruyacak ve artıracak şekilde benliğe yönelik istenmeyen bilgilerin filtrelenmesine; diğeri ise halihazırda var olan benlik algısını doğrulamaya dönük bilgi toplamaya işaret eder.

Öte yandan, her insanın kendisine dair gerçek bilgiye ulaşma amacında olup olmadığı da tartışmalı bir konudur. Alanyazındaki araştırmalar insanların benliklerine dair değerlendirmeye yaparken kendilerini kayıracak şekilde çarpıtma yaptıklarını göstermektedir (Alicke ve Sedikides, 2011; Dunning, 2005). Örneğin, üniversite öğrencilerinin kendilerine yönelik değerlendirmelerinin başkalarına yönelik değerlendirmelerine kıyasla daha çok olumlu özellikler barındırdığını rastlanmıştır (Alicke vd., 1995). Benliğe dair bilgileri olumlu benlik algısını pekiştirecek şekilde yorumlamak kendine hizmet eden yanlışlık olarak tanımlanmıştır (Blaine ve Crocker, 1993). Kendine hizmet eden yanlışlık bireylerin arzu edilen benlik imajını korumalarını ve istenmedik sonuçlar karşısında sorumluluklarını dışlamalarını sağlar (Bradley, 1978).

Kendini engelleme davranışsı da kendine hizmet eden yanlışlık ile aynı işlevi göstermektedir. Kendini engelleme davranışsı bireyin yeterlilik hissini koruma amacıyla kendi başarı olasılığını düşürecek engeller oluşturmamasına işaret eder (Jones ve Berglas, 1978). Araştırmacılar mazeret bulma eğiliminin fiziksel rahatsızlıklar ve semptomlarının (Smith vd., 1983), sınav kaygısının (Smith vd., 1982), ve utangaçlığın

(Snyder vd., 1985) bir kendini engelleme stratejisi olarak benliğe hizmet edecek şekilde kullanımına degenmişlerdir.

Kendini değerli hissetme ihtiyacı, insanların olası bir başarısızlıkla başa çıkmak için bazı uyumsuz stratejiler geliştirmesine sebep olabilir. Bireylerin sürekli performanslarının ölçüлerek devamlı bir değerlendirilme içerisinde oldukları günümüzde, değerlilik duygusunun performans sonuçlarıyla denk tutulması şaşırtıcı değildir. Olumsuz bir performans özsayıgıyı tehlikeye atabileceğinden, insanlar olumsuz performansın getireceği istenmeyen sonuçlarla baş edebilmek için odağı kendi becerilerinden alıp bir engele yüklemek amacıyla kendi başarılarına mâni olabilecek eylemlerde bulunabilirler. Bu durum kendini engelleme olarak tanımlanır (Arkin ve Baumgardner, 1985). Çok sayıda bilimsel çalışma kendini engellemenin öncelikli olarak özsayıgıyı korumak amacından kaynaklandığını öne sürmektedir (Jones ve Berglas, 1978; Mayerson ve Rhodewalt, 1988; Rhodewalt vd., 1984; Rhodewalt, 1990; Snyder ve Smith, 1982).

Öte yandan, kendini engellemenin özsayıgıyı koruması dışında da motivasyonları olduğu öne sürülmüştür. Kendini engellemenin öz yüceltme rolünü gerçekleştirdiği de önerilmiştir. Eğer yaratılan engele rağmen istenen performans çıktısına erişilirse, bu kendini engelleme davranışında bulunan kişinin kendi başarısından daha da çok pay almasını sağlar (Sedikides ve Strube, 1995). Kimileri düşük özsayıguya sahip bireylerin kendini engelleme davranışının benliği koruma işlevinden yararlanırken, yüksek özsayıguya sahip kişilerin ise benliği yüceltme işlevinden faydalandıklarını öne sürmektedir (Baumeister vd., 1989). Kendini engelleme kavramını ortaya atan bilim insanları Berglas ve Jones (1978) ise kendini engellemenin her iki işlevi de karşıladığı savunmaktadır.

Kendini engellemenin benliği koruyucu ve yüceltici işlevlerinin yanında, bir seyirci kitlesinin varlığı da kendini engellemenin altında yatan bir motivasyon olduğu öne sürülmüştür. Berglas ve Jones (1978) çalışmasında kendini engellemenin çevreye açık olmayan durumlarda gerçekleştiğine dair kanıt sağlamış olsa da, Kolditz ve Arkin (1982), kendini engellemenin seyirci bir kitle varlığı halinde dışsal değerlendirmeleri etkileme amacıyla gerçekleştirildiğini öne sürer.

Kendini engelleme, engelin varlığının iddia edildiği ve engelin yaratıldığı kendini engelleme (Arkin ve Baumgardner, 1985) ve davranışsal ile sözel kendini engelleme olmak üzere ikili kategorilere ayrılmıştır (Leary ve Shepperd, 1986). Davranışsal kendini engelleme başarıya yönelik engelin aktif olarak yaratılması iken (örneğin performans düşürücü madde kullanımı, yeterli hazırlık yapmamak), sözel kendini engelleme uygun olmayan koşulların varlığının öne sürülmESİNE (örneğin hasta olduğunu ya da kaygı yaşadığını bildirmek) işaret eder (Brown vd., 2012).

Kendini engelleme alanyazında kendini engelleme ile özsaygının fazla sayıda araştırmaya konu olduğu görülmüştür. Kendini engellemenin temelde özsayıya hizmet ettiği düşünülünce bu da beklendik bir sonuçtur.

Greenberg vd. (1986) tarafından ortaya atılan Dehşet Yönetimi Kuramı'na göre olumlu bir benlik imajına sahip olmaya yönelik ihtiyacın temelinde özsaygının sosyal anksiyeteye karşı bir tampon işlevi görmesi yatmaktadır (Greenberg vd., 1992; Pyszczynski vd., 2004). Sosyal anksiyete açısından da, olumsuz değerlendirilme korkusunun sosyal anksiyetenin temel bileşenlerinden biri olduğu kabul edilmiştir (APA, 2013).

Düşük özsayı olumsuz değerlendirme işaretlerine karşı yüksek hassasiyete sahip olmakla ilişkilendirilmiştir (Rosenberg, 1962). Bu nedenle, düşük özsayıya sahip olan bireyler olumsuz değerlendirme korkularını yattırmak amacıyla bazı stratejilere başvurabilirler (Covington, 1992; Martin vd., 2001). Kendini engelleme de benliği korumaya hizmet eden bu stratejilerden biridir. Değerlendirilme gerektiren bir durumun varlığında, birey olası bir başarısızlık halinde kendisini olumsuz değerlendirmelerden koruyabilecek bir engel ortaya koyabilir. Böyle bir çaba başkalarının değerlendirmelerini yönetme amacı taşıdığından, bu durum kendini engellemenin izlenim yönetimi kaygisından kaynaklandığını öne süren araştırmalarla aynı doğrultudadır (Kolditz ve Arkin, 1982; Rhodewalt ve Vohs, 2005).

Alanyazın taramasında Türkiye'de yürütülen bir (Çelik ve Atilla, 2019) ve yurtdışında yürütülen bir (Sultan ve Kanwal, 2014) olmak üzere bu değişkenlerin üçünü bir arada inceleyen sadece iki araştırmaya rastlanmıştır. Bu değişkenleri ve birbirleriyle olan ilişkilerini incelemek üniversite öğrencilerinde özsayı ve olumsuz değerlendirme korkusunun kendini engelleme üzerindeki rolünün netleşmesine katkıda bulunacaktır.

Ayrıca, veri toplama COVID-19 pandemisi sürecinde gerçekleşeceğini, bu değişkenlerin incelenmesinin pandemi döneminde Türkiye'deki üniversite öğrencilerinin kendini engellemeye eğilimlerine dair önemli bilgiler sunacağı beklenmektedir.

### **Çalışmanın Amacı**

Bu araştırma özsayıgı ve olumsuz değerlendirme korkusunun kendini engellemektedeki yordayıcı rolünü inceleme amacıyla tasarlanmıştır. Bu amaçlardan yola çıkarak, bu araştırmanın yanıt aradığı soru şu şekildedir:

1. Üniversite öğrencileri örnekleminde olumsuz değerlendirme korkusu ve özsayıgını kendini engellemeyi ne ölçüde yordamaktadır?

### **Çalışmanın Önemi**

Bu araştırmanın örneklemi üniversite öğrencileri olduğundan, üniversite öğrencilerinin kendilerini engellemeye davranışlarını özsayıgı ve olumsuz değerlendirme korkusuyla ilişkilerini ortaya koyacak şekilde incelemek öğrencilerinin kendini engellemenin olumsuz sonuçlarından korunmalarına yardımcı olabilir, ve iyi oluşlarını artıtabilir. Araştırmalar kendini engellemenin olumsuz etkilerine dair pek çok kanıt sunmuştur.

Akademik açıdan kendini engellemenin olumsuz etkileri pek çok araştırma tarafından ortaya konmuştur. Kendini engelme matematik başarısında düşüş (Babu ve Selvamari, 2018); genel akademik başarıda düşüş (Koşir ve Şimek, 2015; Urdan, 2004); daha düşük genel ağırlıklı not ortalaması (GANO) (Adil vd., 2020); ve lise öğrencilerinde daha düşük sınav performansı (Putwain, 2019); akademik tükenmişlik (Zhang vd., 2021), ve üniversite öğrencilerinde olumsuz ders deneyimleri ile (Cano vd., 2018) ilişkili bulunmuştur. Eğitimde öğrenci başarısına yönelik engelleri kaldırmak hem eğitimciler hem de politika yapıcları ilgilendiren bir konu olduğundan, bu araştırmanın sonuçlarının hem eğitimciler hem politika yapıclarara fayda sağlayacağı umulmaktadır.

Kendini engelleme kısa vadede ruh sağlığı için faydalı olsa da, uzun vadede aynısını söylemek mümkün olamamaktadır. Araştırmalar kendini engellemenin farklı türlerdeki olumsuz etkilerini ortaya koymuştur. Örneğin depresyon ve kaygı (Sahranç, 2011); sağlığa yararı olan davranışlara daha az vakit ayırmak ve artan depresif duygular (Chen ve Kao, 2018); azalan tatmin duygusu, artan yüksek kaygı, madde kullanımı ve olumsuz ruh hali, ve iyi olma halinde düşüş (Zuckerman ve Tsai, 2005). Bu araştırmmanın bulguları üniversite öğrencilerindeki kendini engelleme ve ilgili faktörlere açıklık getirerek özellikle de üniversite öğrencileriyle çalışan ruh sağlığı uzmanları için yol gösterici olabilir. Böylece üniversite psikolojik danışmanlık merkezlerinde öğrencileri kendini engellemenin olumsuz sonuçlarından korumaya yönelik önleyici müdahale programları geliştirilip uygulanabilir.

Dünya Sağlık Örgütü'ne göre (DSÖ, 1948) sağlıklı olmak yalnızca hasta olmamak değildir, bilakis hem sosyal hem ruhsal açıdan iyi oluş halinde olmaktadır. Bu nedenle birinin iyi oluş halini artttırmak o kişinin genel sağlık halinin de artmasında etkili olacak, ve bireyin potansiyelini tam anlamıyla sergileyerek topluma katkıda bulunmasını sağlayacaktır. Üniversite öğrencileri de toplumun bir parçası olduğu için, üniversite öğrencilerinin iyi oluşunu artttırmak ve uyumsuz stratejilerden uzak durmalarını sağlamak dolaylı olarak toplumun da faydasına olacaktır.

Dahası, düşük özsayıgının ve başarısızlığın kendini engellemenin neticesinde meydana geldiği, böylelikle bireyleri tekrar kendini engellemeye sürüklediği belirtilmiştir (Schwinger vd., 2014; Zuckerman vd., 1998). Bu nedenle, kendini engellemeyi özsayııyla ilişkili olarak incelemek kendini engellemenin yol açtığı olumsuz sonuçların yarattığı döngüyü de önlemek bakımından önem arz etmektedir.

Bunun yanında, Rosenberg (1962) düşük özsayıgının yüksek düzeyde olumsuz değerlendirme hassasiyetine eşlik ettiğini bildirmiştir. Bu nedenle, düşük özsayıga sahip bireyler olumsuz değerlendirme korkularını azaltmak için bazı stratejilere başvurma yolunu seçebilirler, örneğin, kendini engelleme. Değerlendirme gerektiren bir işe karşı karşıya kaldıklarında, başarısızlık halinde kendilerine geçerli bir mazeret sunabilecek bir engel yaratabilirler. Böylece, olumsuz değerlendirmelerden korunmuş olurlar. Bu nedenle, kendini engellemenin olumsuz değerlendirme korkusuyla birlikte incelenmesinin kendini engellemenin daha iyi anlaşılmasına imkân tanıyacağı

düşünülmektedir. Yapılan alanyazın taramasında, yurtdışında yalnızca bir araştırma (Sultan ve Kanwal, 2014) ve Türkiye'de yalnızca bir araştırmancın (Çelik ve Atilla, 2019) olumsuz değerlendirilme korkusu ve kendini engellemeyi bir arada incelediğine rastlanmıştır. Bu araştırmancın kendini engellemeyi olumsuz değerlendirdilme korkusuyla beraber inceleyerek alanyazına katkıda bulunacağı düşünülmektedir. Böylece, elde edilecek bulgular uygulayıcıların kendini engellemeye yönelik müdahale programlarını ona göre şekillendirmelerine yardımcı olacaktır.

Kendini engellemeye dair ilk çalışmalar Berglas ve Jones (1978) ile başlamış da olsa, Türkiye'de kendini engelleme Akin (2012)'ın Kendini Sabotaj Ölçeği'ni Türk kültürüne uyarlamasıyla başlamış kabul edilebilir. Bu nedenle, Türkiye'de kendini engellemeye ile ilgili çalışmalar halen sınırlı sayıdadır.

Son olarak, COVID-19 pandemisiyle üniversite öğrencilerinin hayatlarında gerçekleşen köklü değişiklikler (universitelerin eğitime ara vermesi, uzaktan eğitime geçiş, sokağa çıkma yasağı, karantina, izolasyon ve benzeri pandemiye yönelik önlemler) neticesinde beklenildiği gibi üniversite öğrencilerinde depresyon, anksiyete ve streste artış görülmüştür (Alnaciağ vd., 2021; Browning vd., 2021). Bu durum üniversite öğrencilerinde uyumlu olmayan başa çıkma stratejilerine başvurulmasına, örneğin kendini engelleme eğiliminin artmasına zemin hazırlayabilir. Üniversite öğrencilerinin kendini engelleme davranışlarının incelenmesi pandeminin ruh sağlığına olumsuz etkilerinin ortaya konmasında ve pandemi sonrası ruh sağlığı müdahalelerinin geliştirilmesinde katkıda bulunabilir.

Üniversite öğrencilerinin ve üniversite öğrencileriyle çalışan ruh sağlığı uzmanları, eğitimciler ve toplumla beraber, bu araştırmancın sonraki araştırmalar için bir temel oluşturacağı ve araştırmacılar için yol gösterici olacağı umulmaktadır.

## **YÖNTEM**

### **Araştırma Deseni**

Fraenkel vd. (2012)'e göre iki ya da daha fazla sayıdaki nicel değişkenler arasındaki ilişkinin incelenmesi ilişkisel araştırma olarak adlandırılır. Bu araştırma üniversite öğrencilerindeki olumsuz değerlendirme korkusu ve özsayıgının kendini engellemeye

üzerinde yordayıcı etkilerini incelemeyi amaçladığından bu çalışmada ilişkisel araştırma deseni kullanılmıştır.

## **Örneklem**

Bu araştırmanın örneklemi Türkiye'de bir üniversitede lisans düzeyinde öğrenim gören 440 öğrenciden meydana gelmektedir. Bu 440 öğrenci 64 farklı üniversitede öğrenim görmekte, ve bu 64 üniversitenin 46'sını devlet, 18'ini ise vakıf üniversiteleri oluşturmaktadır. Hazırlık okulu, ön lisans ve lisansüstü programlarda öğrenim gören öğrenciler bu araştırmaya dahil edilmemiştir. Katılımcıların %81.4'ü 18-22 yaş aralığında iken, %14.3'ü 23-27, %4.3'ü ise 28-32 yaş grubunda yer almaktadır. Araştırmaya katılan öğrencilerin 347'si kadın iken (%78.9), 93'ü erkektir (%21.1). Katılımcılardan 1. sınıf öğrencileri tüm katılımcıların %20'sini, 2. sınıf öğrencileri %36.1'ini, 3. sınıf öğrencileri %16.8'ini, 4. sınıf öğrencileri ise %27'sini oluşturmaktadır. Devlet üniversitesinde öğrenim gören öğrenciler örneklemenin %20'sini oluştururken, vakıf üniversitesinde öğrenim gören öğrenciler ise bu araştırma örneklemesinin %80'ini oluşturmaktadır.

## **Veri Toplama Araçları**

Bu çalışmada demografik bilgi formu, Kendini Sabotaj Ölçeği, Rosenberg Özsayıgı Ölçeği ve Olumsuz Değerlendirilme Korkusu Ölçeği Kısa Formu katılımcılara uygulanmıştır.

Kendini Sabotaj Ölçeği Jones ve Rhodewalt (1982) tarafından geliştirilmiş, Akın (2012) tarafından Türk kültürüne uyarlanmıştır. Ölçek 25 maddeden oluşmakta ve 6'lı Likert şeklinde (0 = Kesinlikle katılmıyorum, 5 = Tamamen katılıyorum) şeklinde puanlanmaktadır. Ölçeğin iç tutarlılığı .90, test-tekrar güvenirlik katsayısı ise .94 olarak bildirilmiştir. Bu araştırmada ise iç tutarlık değeri olarak Cronbach Alfa katsayısı .56 olarak bulunmuştur.

Rosenberg Özsayıgı Ölçeği, Rosenberg (1965) tarafından geliştirilmiş; bu araştırmada ise ölçeğin Çuhadaroğlu (1985) tarafından gerçekleştirilen Türkçe uyarlaması kullanılmıştır. Ölçek maddeleri en düşük (1) "kesinlikle katılmıyorum" ve en yüksek (4) "kesinlikle katılıyorum" olmak üzere 4'lü Likert skalasında puanlanmaktadır.

Ölçeğin iç tutarlılığı .71, test tekrar güvenirliği ise .75 olarak raporlanmıştır. Bu araştırmada ise iç tutarlılık değeri olarak Cronbach Alfa katsayı .91 olarak bulunmuştur.

Olumsuz Değerlendirilme Korkusu Ölçeği Kısa Formu Leary (1983) tarafından geliştirilmiş, bu araştırmada ise katılımcılara ölçeğin Çetin vd. (2010) tarafından gerçekleştirilen Türkçe adaptasyonu uygulanmıştır. Ölçek 12 maddeden oluşmakta ve ölçek maddeleri 1'den ("Beni hiç yansıtıyor") 5'e ("Beni tamamen yansıtıyor") kadar kadar puanlanmaktadır. Ölçeğin test tekrar ve eşdeğer formlar güvenirlik katsayıları .82 ve .83 olarak hesaplanmıştır. Bu araştırmada ise iç tutarlılık değeri olarak Cronbach Alfa katsayı .69 olarak bulunmuştur.

Bu araştırmada yapılan Doğrulayıcı Faktör Analizi'nde ölçeklerin uygulanan örneklem için geçerli olduğu görülmüştür.

Katılımcıların cinsiyet, yaş, sınıf düzeyi, öğrenim gördükleri üniversite ve program bilgileri araştırmacı tarafından geliştirilen demografik bilgi aracılığıyla toplanmıştır.

### **Veri Toplama Süreci**

Veriler Google Form yardımıyla oluşturulan çevrimiçi form yoluyla toplanmıştır. Form, sosyal medyada yer alan lisans öğrencilerinin sayıca çok olacağının düşünüldüğü mecralarda, üniversite topluluk sayfalarında ve gruplarında paylaşılmıştır. Çevrimiçi form sayfası açıldığında, veri toplama araçları yalnızca "*Bu çalışmaya tamamen gönüllü olarak katılıyorum ve istediğim zaman yarida kesip çıkabileceğimi biliyorum. Verdiğim bilgilerin bilimsel amaçlı yayılarda kullanılmasını kabul ediyorum.*" ifadesinin altında yer alan onay kutusunu işaretleyerek araştırmaya katıldığına onam veren katılımcılara görünür olmaktadır. Çevrimiçi form aracılığıyla coğrafi mesafeler tarafından sınırlanılmaksızın kısa sürede yüksek sayıda katılımcıya ulaşılabilir (Wright, 2005). Bunun yanında, araştırma verileri 2021-2022 Güz döneminde, pandemi kısıtlamaları hukum sürerken ve üniversiteler uzaktan eğitimle öğretime devam ederken toplandığı için, çevrimiçi form elverişliliği sebebiyle veri yöntemi olarak tercih edildi.

## **Verilerin Analizi**

Araştırmada katılımcıların demografik bilgilerini incelemek için betimsel istatistiklere (mod, medyan, minimum ve maksimum değerler, ortalama ve standart sapma) başvurulmuştur. Ardından, ileri analizler için varsayımlar kontrol edilmiştir. Ayrıca, araştırma değişkenleri arasındaki ikili ilişkilerin varlığı Pearson korelasyon katsayısı ile incelenmiştir. Son olarak, varsayımların sağlanmasının ardından araştırma sorusuna yanıt bulmak amacıyla çoklu regresyon analizi yapılmıştır. Bunun yanında, LISREL 8.8 ile Doğrulayıcı Faktör Analizi (DFA) yapılarak ölçeklerin araştırma örneklemine model uyumuna bakılmıştır. Bunun yanında, iç tutarlılık katsayısı olarak Cronbach Alfa değeri hesaplanmıştır.

## **Araştırmmanın Kısıtlılıkları**

Bu araştırmada araştırma deseninden, örnekleme yönteminden, veri toplama araçlarından ve veri toplama işlemlerinden kaynaklı kısıtlılıklar bulunmaktadır.

İlk olarak, bu araştırmada kolayda örnekleme yöntemi kullanıldığından araştırma sonuçlarının genellenebilirliği sınırlı olmaktadır. Ayrıca, bu araştırmmanın deseni ilişkisel araştırma olduğu için, bu araştırmadan elde edilecek sonuçlarla yalnızca değişkenler arasındaki ilişkiler incelenebilir, ancak neden-sonuç ilişkisi kurulamaz (Fraenkel vd., 2012). Bunun yanında, bu araştırmada öz bildirime dayalı ölçekler kullanıldığından, katılımcıların bu maddeleri sosyal beğenilirlik kaygısıyla yanıtlamaları veya yanıtırken subjektif davranışları gibi durumların varlığı da bu araştırmmanın bir kısıtlığıdır.

Öte yandan, demografik bilgi formunda “Sınıf düzeyi”, “Öğrenim görülen üniversite ve program”a yer verilmesine rağmen, öğrenim görülen eğitim düzeyi sorulmamıştır. Veriler toplandıktan sonra incelenirken, yüksek lisans ve önlisans programlarında öğrenim görmekte olan katılımcıların yanıtları program isimleri incelenerek lisans programlarına ait olmayanlar çıkarılmıştır. Ancak önlisans ve yüksek lisans programıyla aynı isimde olan lisans programları bunun dışında kalmış olabilir. Bu durum, araştırmmanın dış geçerliliğine yönelik bir tehdit oluşturabilir.

Bu araştırmanın veri toplama süreci COVID-19 pandemisi esnasında gerçekleştirilmiştir. Pandemi tüm eğitim düzeylerinde öğrenim gören öğrencileri etkilemiş, okulların eğitime ara verip bir süre uzaktan eğitime geçilmesine sebebiyet vermiştir. Güncel çalışmalar üniversite öğrencilerinin ruh sağlıklarının Covid-19 pandemisinden olumsuz etkilendiğini; depresyon, kaygı ve anksiyete yaşadıklarını ortaya koymuştur (Alnıaçık vd., 2021; Browning vd., 2021). Bu nedenle, bu pandemi süreci içerisinde öğrencilerin kendini engelleme davranışları artmış olabilir.

Bu araştırmanın bir diğer kısıtlılığı da öğrencilerin çoğunluğunun kadın (%79) olması bu araştırmanın popülasyonu temsil gücünü azaltmaktadır.

## **BULGULAR**

Pearson korelasyon katsayısı aracılığıyla incelenen değişkenler arası ikili korelasyon sonuçlarına göre kendini engelleme ile özsayıgı arasında negatif yönde orta düzeyde anlamlı bir ilişki ( $r = -.55, p < .01$ ), kendini engelleme ile olumsuz değerlendirme korkusu arasında orta düzeyde pozitif bir ilişki ( $r = .43, p < .01$ ), olumsuz değerlendirme korkusu ile özsayıgı arasında ise orta düzeyde negatif bir ilişki ( $r = -.49, p < .01$ ) bulunmuştur.

Yapılan çoklu regresyon analizinin sonuçlarına göre hem özsayıgı ( $\beta = -.45, p < .01$ ), hem olumsuz değerlendirme korkusu ( $\beta = .21, p < .01$ ), kendini engellemenin anlamlı birer yordayıcısıdır. Bulunan istatistiksel olarak anlamlı regresyon denklemi varyansın %34’ünü açıklamıştır [ $F_{(2, 437)} = 112.754, p < .01, R^2 = .34$ ].

## **TARTIŞMA**

### **Bulguların Tartışılması**

Araştırma sorusuna yanıt bulmak amacıyla çoklu regresyon analizi gerçekleştirilmiştir. Yapılan çoklu regresyon analizinde ise özsayıgının, kendini engellemenin anlamlı bir negatif yordayıcısı olduğu görülmüştür. Alanyazında çok

sayıda araştırmancın bu bulgu ile paralel olduğu görülmüştür (Barutçu-Yıldırım ve Demir, 2020; Elmas ve Akfirat, 2015; Gözmen-Elmas ve Aşçı; Rotairo vd., 2015; Türesin-Tetik vd., 2019). Bu bulgu alanyazınla tutarlı olmanın ötesinde, kendini engellemenin gerçekleştiği fonksiyon göz önünde bulundurulunca makul gözükmektedir. Düşük öz saygıya sahip bireyler egoya yönelik tehditlere karşı daha hassas olduklarından, benliğe yönelik tehdit edici durumlarda bireyler kendini engellemeye başvurmayı tercih edebilirler (Tice, 1991). Böylece, olası bir başarısızlığın getireceği olumsuz sonuçlardan kendilerini korumuş olurlar.

Öte yandan, alanyazında bu bulguya uyumlu olmayan çalışmalara da rastlanmıştır. Kendini engellemenin yüksek özsayıyla ilişkili olduğunu bildiren araştırmalar da mevcuttur (Lupien vd., 2010; Sultan ve Kanwal, 2014; Yavuzer, 2015). Bu durum, yüksek özsayıya sahip bireyler için başarısızlık daha yıkıcı olabileceğinden; düşük özsayıya sahip bireylere kıyasla kendini engellemeye daha yatkın olmalarıyla açıklanabilir. Kendini engelleme kavramını ortaya atan Jones ve Berglas (1978) da, bireyde benliğe tehdit hissedebilecek düzeyde bir özsayı düzeyinin bulunması gerektiğini vurgulamıştır.

Bunların yanı sıra, özsayı ile kendini engelleme arasında anlamlı bir ilişkiye ulaşamayan araştırmalar da mevcuttur (Nosenko vd., 2016; Raoof vd., 2019). Bu konuda Urdan ve Midgley (2001) özsayı ve kendini engelleme arasında ilişkinin tam anlamıyla incelenmesinin mümkün olamayacağını, çünkü özsayısı yüksek ve özsayısı düşük bireyler için “başarısızlık” tanımının farklılaşabileceğini öne sürmüştür.

Yapılan regresyon analizinde olumsuz değerlendirme korkusunun, kendini engellemenin pozitif yordayıcısı olduğu görülmüştür. Bu bulgu alanyazında rastlanan araştırmalarla uyuşmaktadır (Abdali ve Moshtaghi, 2020; Arab-Mohebi-Shahrabi vd., 2017; Azadi ve Fathabadi, 2013; Çelik ve Atilla, 2019; Sultan ve Kanwal, 2014). Bu bulgu da kendini engellemenin amaçları göz önünde bulundurulduğunda makuldür. Olumsuz değerlendirme korkusu yüksek olan bireyler, benliği tehdit eden bir görevle karşı karşıya kaldıklarında, başarısızlık durumunda kendilerine fayda sağlama için bir mazeret yaratarak kendini engellemeye başvurabilirler. Bununla birlikte, benlik sunumu kaygılarından kaynaklanan dış değerlendirme motivasyonu da

yüksek olumsuz değerlendirme korkusunun yüksek kendini engelleme puanlarıyla olan ilişkisini açıklayabilir (Kolditz ve Arkin, 1982).

### **Uygulamaya Yönelik Öneriler**

Bu araştırmanın bulgularının öğrenciler, eğitimciler, paydaşlar, politika yapıcılar ve ruh sağlığı uzmanları için önemli katkıları sağladığı düşünülmektedir.

Bu araştırmanın öznesi üniversite öğrencileri olduğundan, bu araştırmanın ortaya koyduğu sonuçlardan ilk basamakta fayda sağlayacak kişilerin üniversite öğrencileri olacağı umulmaktadır. Bu çalışma kendini engellemenin olası nedenleri ve sonuçları hakkında bilgi sağladığı için, üniversite öğrencilerinin bu konuda farkındalık kazanmalarına yardımcı olabilir. Mazeret ya da engel yaratarak kendi başarılarını baltalayan öğrenciler bu davranışları hakkında bilgi sahibi olursa kendini engellemeye daha az başvuracakları ve böylelikle kendini engellemenin de olumsuz sonuçlarından kaçınmış olacakları düşünülmektedir.

Bunun yanında, bu araştırma eğitimciler için de önemli katkılar sunmaktadır. Eğitimciler öğrencilerin kendi başarılarını baltalamak amacıyla başvurdukları stratejiler hakkında bilgi sahibi olursa, sınıf içinde bu özellikleri gözlemledikleri öğrencileri üniversitelerin psikolojik danışma merkezlerine yönlendirebilirler. Bu araştırmanın aynı zamanda özellikle de üniversite öğrencileriyle çalışan ruh sağlığı profesyonelleri için katkı sağlayacağı umulmaktadır. Bu araştırmada özsayı kendini engellemenin en güçlü yordayıcısı olarak bulunduğundan, ruh sağlığı uzmanları kendini engellemeye yönelik herhangi bir müdahalede bulunmadan önce danışanların özsayı düzeylerini ölçmeyi tercih edebilir. Ayrıca, bu araştırmanın bulgularından yola çıkarak geliştirilecek özsayıyı yükseltmeyi amaçlayan terapötik müdahale programları kendini engellemenin azaltılmasında etkili olabilir.

Bu araştırmanın bir diğer ana bulusu olumsuz değerlendirme korkusunun kendini engellemenin anlamlı bir yordayıcısı olduğundan, ruh sağlığı uzmanlarını özsayıının yanında olumsuz değerlendirme korkusunu da hazırlayacakları terapötik müdahale programlarına dahil edebilirler.

## **Gelecek Araştırmalar için Öneriler**

Bu araştırmada kolayda örneklemeye kullanıldığı için sonuçların popülasyona genellenmesi mümkün olmamaktadır. Bu nedenle bu araştırma, genellenebilirliğin mümkün olduğu seçkisiz örneklemeye metodu kullanarak tekrarlanabilir. Bu araştırmada kullanılan araştırma deseni olan ilişkisel araştırma, neden - sonuç ilişkisi çıkarımı yapılmasına imkân tanımadığı için, sonraki araştırmalar kendini engelleme, özsayı ve olumsuz değerlendirilme korkusu arasında neden - sonuç ilişkisi kurulabilecek bir araştırma deseni olan deneysel araştırma deseniley bir araştırma tasarlayabilirler. Ayrıca, kendini engelleme kavramının daha iyi derinlemesine incelenmesi için nice yöntemlerin yanında nitel yöntemlerle toplanan veriler birlikte değerlendirilebilir. Bununla birlikte, bu araştırmada veriler Covid-19 pandemisi esnasında, üniversite öğrencilerinin uzaktan eğitime devam ettikleri bir dönemde tek seferde toplandığı için, bu araştırma bulgularının güvenirliğini artıracak kanıtlar sunması için üniversite öğrencilerinin kendini engelleme davranışlarının pandemi sonrasında da inceleyen araştırmalar yapılması önerilmektedir.

Veri toplama aracı olarak öz bildirime dayalı ölçekler kullanıldığı için, yanıtlar gerçeği yansıtmayacak şekilde ya da sosyal istenirliğe göre verilmiş olabilir. Sonraki çalışmalar için, öz bildirime dayalı ölçeklerin başka türdeki veri toplama araçlarıyla, örneğin gözlemsel verilerle desteklenmesi önerilmektedir. Bununla birlikte, yapılan doğrulayıcı faktör analizinde Kendini Sabotaj Ölçeği düşük ama kabul edilebilir bir uyum göstermiş de olsa, sonraki araştırmacılarla Türkiye örneklemine daha uygun ve daha yüksek bir uyum gösteren bir ölçek geliştirmeleri tavsiye edilmektedir.

İlgili alanyazına bakıldığından, özsayıının tutarlı olarak kendini engellemenin negatif bir yordayıcısı olarak bildirildiği görülmüşken, kendini engelleme ile olumsuz değerlendirilme korkusunu inceleyen yalnızca bir araştırmaya (Çelik ve Atilla, 2019) rastlanmıştır. Bu nedenle, olumsuz değerlendirme korkusunun kendini engelleme üzerindeki rolünü netleştirmesi için bu konuda daha fazla araştırma yapılması önerilmektedir.

## APPENDIX H: THESIS PERMISSION FORM / TEZ İZİN FORMU

### ENSTİTÜ / INSTITUTE

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- Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü / Graduate School of Social Sciences
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- Enformatik Enstitüsü / Graduate School of Informatics
- Deniz Bilimleri Enstitüsü / Graduate School of Marine Sciences

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Educational Sciences, Guidance and Psychological Counselling

TEZİN ADI / TITLE OF THE THESIS (İngilizce / English): SELF-ESTEEM AND FEAR OF NEGATIVE  
EVALUATION AS PREDICTORS OF SELF-HANDICAPPING AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

TEZİN TÜRÜ / DEGREE: Yüksek Lisans / Master  Doktora / PhD

1. **Tezin tamamı dünya çapında erişime açılacaktır.** / Release the entire work immediately for access worldwide.
2. **Tez iki yıl süreyle erişime kapalı olacaktır.** / Secure the entire work for patent and/or proprietary purposes for a period of two years. \*
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\* Enstitü Yönetim Kurulu kararının basılı kopyası tezle birlikte kütüphaneye teslim edilecektir. / A copy of the decision of the Institute Administrative Committee will be delivered to the library together with the printed thesis.

Yazarın imzası / Signature ..... Tarih / Date .....

Tezin son sayfasıdır. / This is the last page of the thesis/dissertation.