



# Gender, Self-silencing, and Identity among School and out of School Emerging Adults\*

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## ARTICLE INFO

### Article History

Received 25.01.2023

Received in revised form  
15.03.2023

Accepted 03.04.2023

Article Type: Research  
Article

## ABSTRACT

Identity, as important focus of psychosocial development, are closely related to self silencing and gender roles. Identity development is different in two genders and studies on young women in terms of identity development is limited. Being a part of a formal education or not is also important in identity development as well. Therefore, in this study, it is aimed to investigate the effects of gender roles and self-silencing on identity functions in women. Another purpose of this study is to examine whether the identity functions of women with and without university education differ. 269 young women from vocational training courses and 234 young women from universities participated in the research. Functions of Identity Scale, Silencing the Self Scale, Bem Sex Role Inventory, and demographic information form were utilized to women in a both individual and group session. According to Structural Equation Modelling results, gender roles were found directly and indirectly effective through self silencing on functions of identity. Direct relationships have shown that feminine gender characteristics increase self-silence while masculine gender features decrease self silencing. Self silencing also reduces identity functions. Self silencing mediated the relations between gender roles and functions of identity in young women. In addition, according to MANOVA results, functions of identity didn't differ significantly according to education. Finally, the findings were discussed in the context of gender roles and self-silencing in raising the level of identity functions of women considering education context.

Keywords: Gender roles, identity, self-silencing, university education, young women

## 1. Introduction

Considering studies conducted recently, it is worth mentioning that the roles attributed to the individual by society influence identity formation (Bosma & Kunnen, 2001; Luyckx et al., 2008; Romm et al., 2018). Societies usually set rules for individuals to urge them to behave in compliance with their genders and thus form expectations regarding their identities. According to Erikson (1994), identity is formed on the basis of the cultural environment in which the individual exists. Due to the fact that society and the cultural values owned by society give messages to females and males regarding their positions in the world, who they are, and who they are supposed to be, social gender roles are determined by the culture (Jack & Ali, 2010; Wolfram et al., 2009). Therefore, it is considered that the alternatives regarding social gender typing are explored and that commitment influences identity formation (Kroger, 2000). Especially according to the functions of identity model, which deals with the active and passive formation of identity, identity formation could be influenced by the gender roles that the individual has. As for a passively constructed identity, the individual usually identifies with the expectations of their society or tends to imitate them. However, there are cognitive activities

\* This study is a part of the PhD titled 'Effect of Self-silencing and Gender Roles on Functions of Identity in Young Women'.

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**Citation:** Kılınç, E. (2023). Gender, self-silencing, and identity among school and out of school emerging adults. *International Journal of Psychology and Educational Studies*, 10(2), 561-574. <https://dx.doi.org/10.52380/ijpes.2023.10.2.1177>

involved in the active engagement of the identity. Hence, an integrated and actively constructed identity has autonomous agents with regard to gender roles (Adams & Marshall, 1996).

On the other hand, since individuals in adolescence experience a sense of identity vs. role confusion as a psychosocial development stage, researchers are tending to investigate the identity of the individuals in this period. However, identity was only considered, in the past, as the adolescent's developmental task (Erikson, 1987); in the present day, identity formation is an important developmental process that continues throughout the adolescent years and also in the emerging adulthood years (Arnett, 2000; Cookston & Remy, 2015; Çok et al., 2018). Therefore, in addition to the sense of intimacy as proposed by Erikson in later years, in emerging adulthood. In today's terminology, sense of identity is also an important task (Arnett, 2004; Ozer et al., 2019). However, it has been asserted that women experience these two developmental tasks simultaneously (Gilligan, 2017). In other words, due to the fact that identity for women is formed in compliance with relations set up with others, setting up intimate relations is experienced at the same time as identity. In addition, emerging adulthood is seen as a critical period in identity formation as it includes identity-related tasks such as career, completing education, leaving home, marriage, and becoming a parent (Cookston & Remy, 2015). According to Arnett (2004), university settings where tasks such as career development and the completion of education are fulfilled provide the individual with more opportunities for identity exploration. For this reason, it is thought that it is important whether women are in university settings or not for the formation of identity. In the related literature, gender roles' influence on the identities of women is highly emphatic (Jordan, 2010). In the study, self-silencing (SS) was considered the mediator, and it is known that SS appears in the scope of intimate relations and is usually experienced by women (Jack & Ali, 2010; Natsuaki et al., 2015). Internalization of socially approved gender roles has been considered a hindrance against the self-expression skills of women in their intimate relations (Jack, 1991), and besides, personal expressiveness determines whether the patterns regarding identity have been successfully constructed or not (Waterman, 2011). Due to this reason, it is a well-known fact that SS is associated with gender roles (Puzio, 2017) and it is also a predictor of identity (Neves & Nogueira, 2010). However, we could not come across any study that deals with the association between gender roles and identity, in line with SS.

### **1.1. Gender Roles**

While the socio-cultural environment is offering several opportunities to the lives of individuals, it could also lead to some classifications in terms of owned roles. Among the major concepts associated with these roles, we can count gender roles. Gender roles are defined as a structure that encompasses the stances ascribed to the genders by society and also divides the individual into two, in terms of their having masculine or feminine features (Dökmen, 2010). Due to this reason, gender roles are considered a cultural comment and a division of labor regarding gender (Zerzan, 2010).

There are several theories about social gender roles. Among them, the most remarkable one is the Gender Schema Theory. According to it, schemas regarding gender roles are divided into two categories: feminine and masculine (Bem, 1983). There are four different groups defined regarding the place of the individual in them: feminine (the feminine features are more displayed than masculine features), masculine (the masculine features are more displayed than feminine features), androgynous (experiencing both feminine and masculine features at the same high level), and undifferentiated (experiencing both feminine and masculine features at a low level). The ones who are closely bound to social gender-based schemas, are usually the ones who bear masculine and feminine gender features. Roles involving feminine and masculine gender typings are regarded as traditional roles (Woodhill & Samuels, 2004). The ones who have a more flexible stance towards these schemas have androgynous features (Bem, 1974). When we investigate the statements declared about the concept of gender roles, we realize that masculine features are usually associated with audacity, independence, and leadership qualities; while feminine features are associated with affection, dependence, sensitivity, keeping silent against the problems, and especially espousing everything coming from the opposite side in the process of relationship (Horwitz & White, 1987).

Individuals that are tightly connected with gender schemas usually abide by the stereotypes in cognitive schemas. Individuals with this tendency are considered in the classification of feminine and masculine gender types. They behave in line with schemas formed by the culture in which they exist by drawing certain lines for themselves. As for the androgynous individuals; it has been considered that they have a higher capacity

for adaptation. Whenever they encounter a situation, they flexibly exhibit the necessary gender typing that that situation requires (Bem, 1983). Moreover, individuals bearing androgynous qualities actively investigate their gender typing and exhibit a decisive attitude. Therefore, these individuals are also successful in identity formation (Kroger, 2000). However, it is considered that gender roles pave the way for a formation of perception regarding the identities of individuals in their lives.

### **1.2. Association Between Gender Roles and Functions of Identity**

The relationship between gender roles and an individual's self-perceptions draws the attention of many researchers. According to studies conducted in this direction, gender roles are associated with many variables related to the self-definition of the individual, such as self-concept (Martínez-Marín et al., 2021), self-esteem (Kargin et al., 2021), and self-efficacy (Yu & Jen, 2021). In addition, the relationship between identity, which is considered a response to who the individual is, and gender roles is frequently examined (Davis, 2002; Ey, 2016; McLean et al., 2017; Romm et al., 2018; Syed & McLean, 2015).

Studies regarding identity formation stemmed from Erikson's Psychosocial Developmental and also from Marcia's Identity Status Approaches, which were formed in line with Erikson's theory. Erikson (1994) considers that identity is a product of the biological process, the environment, and the ego process. The individual determines who he or she is in these three fields and constructs his or her own identity. In this sense, Erikson attaches great importance to the social environment and also asserts that identity is influenced by society and by the roles determined by society. Therefore, Erikson holds the view that identity reflects gender roles on of both personal and group level (Marcia, 1966). However, Marcia (1993) asserts that the thoughts of the individual regarding relations in interpersonal areas reflect gender roles and concepts of sexuality. Hence, during the interviews he conducted to determine identity statuses, Marcia (1966) investigated interpersonal relations like family and friendships, together with gender roles. In this regard, it has been considered that qualities regarding gender roles have played a major role in identity formation (Saunders & Kashubeck West, 2006).

Within the theoretical framework formed by Erikson and Marcia regarding identity formation, models focusing on the results of identity studies have been remarkable. In this regard, the asserted Identity Functions Model has stood out (Serafini & Adams, 2002). In this model, the active or passive construction of identity is the subject matter. The passive construction of identity is oriented toward obedience, identification, and imitation, while the active construction of the identity is oriented to autonomy, free will, and conducting cognitive activities. An actively constructed identity has some psychological functions such as structure, goal, harmony, control, and the future (Serafini & Maitland, 2013). From this point of view, it is possible to say that these individuals construct their identities passively, since individuals who are tightly attached to the roles attributed by society (namely, the individuals who adopted masculine and feminine gender roles) tend to head towards obedience and imitation. On the other hand, individuals with androgynous gender qualities can have the functions of identity by expressing themselves autonomously and by actively constructing their identities in this direction (Serafini & Adams, 2002). However, the construction of the identity is influenced by the culture and society that the individual exists in (Bosma & Kunnen, 2001; Luyckx et al., 2008). Due to this reason, sometimes some groups in society can find themselves with an already existing identity, and the identity crisis is easily solved (Çelen, 2011). So that the individual can make commitments without conspicuous questioning. This passive way might provide satisfaction to the individual in the construction of identity and might be helpful in exhibiting positive mental health features. Considering that there are positive relationships between positive mental health features and functions of identity (Adams & Marshall, 1996), people will display functions of identity in the scope of the environment that they exist in. In some cases, traditional gender roles may contribute to functions of identity. In this regard, there is an assumption that functions of identity might be influenced by gender roles.

### **1.3. Self-silencing as Mediator**

SS is a concept that is discussed in an intercultural context and is frequently investigated in women's studies (Jack, 1991). SS, which focuses on women's thoughts about their intimate relationships and themselves, means perceiving others as more important than themselves in relationships (Jack & Ali, 2010; Jack & Dill, 1992). Women usually silence themselves in order to maintain an intimate relationship, feel a sense of physical or psychological security, or avoid conflict (Jack, 2003). It is known that women who feel under pressure to fit

the feminine ideals and norms defined by the culture silence themselves more (Jack & Ali, 2010, Jack & Dill, 1992; Kurtiş, 2010, Worell, 2010). Therefore, the culture that determines gender roles can have an effect on SS. Within the scope of the study, the relationship between gender roles and SS was re-evaluated, and these relationships were examined in the context of identity formation in women.

Studies on identity development and SS (Miller, 1996; Zoellner & Hedlund, 2010) have shown that these two variables are associated. SS is closely related to gender roles. Puzio (2017) argues that women with traditional gender roles are more SS. In addition, SS stems from gender norms that emphasize the submissive aspect of women (Maji & Dixit, 2018). For example, Miller (1996) argues that women learn to suppress their own voices in their relationships and format their identities through these relational struggles. Neves and Nogueira (2010) also think that SS is important in preserving women's identity. In addition, some societies impose on women who they are or who they should be and don't allow women to answer the question "Who am I". Thus, women form their identity by not listening to their own voice (Jack & Ali, 2010). In this study, in line with the models that explain identity formation, the functions of identity model is discussed. According to the functions of the identity are model, active engagement of identity allows individuals to have autonomy, an independent structure, and self-expression; passive engagement of identity is the result of obedience, imitation, and silence (Serafini & Adams, 2002). With the active engagement of identity, individuals make a cognitive effort by making various attempts to identify who they are (Adams & Marshall, 1996). In other words, with active structuring, the individual actively explores alternatives for identity. In this process, the individuals' formation of an independent structure, their own voice, and autonomous actions are at the forefront. Therefore, SS can be considered an important factor in the process that requires an internal questioning of who the individual is.

#### **1.4. University Setting**

Relational processes in university settings affect identity formation (Laney et al., 2013). Moreover, formal education, which includes primary education, high school, and universities, aims to introduce new learning contents and activities to students and plays an important role in the identity development of emerging adults (Verhoeven et al., 2019). For this reason, school settings, where a lot of time is spent, help emerging adults develop professional and educational goals while creating an image of who they are and what they want to be. The new situations and thoughts that these individuals face in educational settings may contribute to their identity exploration process (Rich & Schachter, 2012). In other words, the fact that the exploratory learning experiences offered by the school settings are meaningful for emerging adults and that they take place in supportive classroom climates makes positive contributions to identity development. Providing exploratory learning experiences encourages these individuals to make connections between what they are taught in school settings and who they are and want to be (Verhoeven et al., 2019).

Although there are a lot of researches on formal education and school being an important factor in identity formation (Lannegrand Willems & Bosma, 2006) and identity studies, whose participants are generally university students (Luyckx et al., 2007; Mannerström et al., 2021), there are limited studies on the identity development of individuals who are not in the university setting (Demir Kaya & Çok, 2022; Rekosiewicz, 2015). Therefore, this study can be important for the relevant literature by reaching young women with and without university education, comparing their identity development and providing data from Turkey on this subject.

As a result, in this study, how SS in women with and without university education is correlated with gender roles and identity functions was investigated. In this respect, it is assumed that the indirect effect of gender roles on identity functions through SS is significant. The investigation of SS in the relationship between gender roles and functions of identity in the study represents the originality of the study. In addition, in this study, both the direct and indirect effects of gender roles and SS on functions of identity were evaluated. In this context, the aim of this study is to examine the relationship between functions of identity, gender roles, and SS variables, test the mediating role of SS, and investigate whether identity functions differ significantly according to education status in the study.

## **2.Method**

### **2.1.Research Design**

This study has a correlational pattern based on quantitative research approaches. According to Fraenkel et al. (2012), correlational patterns are research types that determine the existence and degree of relationships among two or more variables. It was aimed at determining the role of the independent variable (gender roles) and the mediating variable (self-silencing) in predicting the dependent variable (functions of identity).

## 2.2. Participants

503 women between the ages of 18 and 28 participated in the study. Participants consisted of women who continue their university education in different provinces of Turkey and who have not received university education in similar age groups. The reason why the study group was chosen from two different provinces and universities is to create a heterogeneous sample. In the research, the 'convenience sampling' method was used, universities and vocational training courses were determined, and attention was paid to the status of receiving or not receiving university education in line with the purposes of the study. Convenience sampling is the type of sampling used when random or non-random sampling is difficult. Having a ready-made group for the study through convenient sampling can sometimes be seen as a disadvantage of this method. In order to prevent this situation, it is useful to repeat the study several times with a similar sample (Fraenkel et al., 2012). The education status of the women was university education for 47% (234 women) and not university education for 53% (269 women). In addition, 48% of women (243 women) were in a romantic relationship (dating, engaged, or married), while 52% of them (260 women) were not in a romantic relationship (no previous romantic relationship, divorced, or widowed).

## 2.3. Measures

*Sociodemographic Data Form:* The form recorded women's age, education, and romantic relationship status.

*Bem Sex Role Inventory:* Bem Sex Role Inventory was developed by Bem (1974) and included 20 items each for a total of 60 items to measure femininity, masculinity, and social desirability. However, the main evaluations of the scale are made according to masculine and feminine dimensions. On the scale, the items are ordered from 1 to 7, and two separate scores are obtained for masculinity and femininity. Four groups of gender roles are determined from the medians of these scores. The original scale's Cronbach's alpha values were .86 for masculinity and .82 for femininity in the Foothill participants; in Stanford participants, it was found to be .86 for masculinity and .80 for femininity (Bem, 1974). Dökmen (1991) adapted the scale into Turkish. Cronbach's alpha values were .75 for masculinity and .73 for femininity; the split-half reliability coefficients were determined as .75 for masculinity and .76 for femininity (Dökmen, 1991). Within the scope of the current study of young women, Cronbach's alpha values were .78 for masculinity and .80 for femininity. According to the confirmatory factor analysis results, single-level CFA values had a good fit ( $\chi^2= 2974.77$ ,  $Sd= 741$ ,  $\chi^2/Sd= 4.01$ ,  $CFI= .90$ ,  $NFI= .90$ ,  $RMSEA= .076$ ,  $SRMR= .060$ ).

*Silencing the Self Scale:* The 31-item scale developed by Jack (1991) was used as a determinant of SS of women's feelings and thoughts in their intimate relationships. The scale is 5-point Likert type and has 4 subscales: care as self-sacrifice (9 items), divided self (7), silencing the self (9), and externalized self-perception (6). The scores that can be obtained from the scale are between 31 and 155; higher scores mean more SS. The reliability of the scale was calculated for three different sample groups: pregnant women, undergraduate women, and battered women in shelters. The Cronbach's alpha values of each sample group were calculated, respectively; .79, .75, and .83 for the externalized self-perception; .60, .65, and .81 for the care as self-sacrifice; .81, .78, and .90 for the silencing the self; .83, .74, and .78 for the divided-self; .89, .86, and .94 for the total scale. The test-retest reliability coefficients were .88 for undergraduate women, .93 for battered women in shelters, and .89 for pregnant women (Jack & Dill, 1992). Kurtiş (2010) adapted the scale into Turkish, and the test-retest reliability was calculated as 0.70. DFA results were:  $\chi^2 (428) = 957.729$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $CFI = .909$ ,  $TLI = .901$ ,  $AIC = 1105.531$ ,  $RMSEA = 0.065$  (0.059, 0.070) showed moderate model fit (Kurtiş, 2010). In the current study conducted in young women, Cronbach's alpha values were calculated as .63 for care as self-sacrifice, .78 for externalized self-perception, .73 for divided-self, .73 for SS, and .88 for the total of the scale. The confirmatory factor analysis results showed single-level CFA values had a good fit ( $\chi^2= 1159.37$ ,  $Sd= 380$ ,  $\chi^2/Sd= 3.05$ ,  $CFI= .94$ ,  $NFI= .91$ ,  $RMSEA= .063$ ,  $SRMR= .06$ ).

*Functions of Identity Scale:* The Functions of Identity Scale was developed by Serafini et al. (2006) and has 15-items with five subscales. It is a 5-point Likert-type scale. The Cronbach's alpha values of the original scale

were obtained as .80 for structure, .80 for goal, .77 for harmony, .65 for control, and .82 for the future (Serafini et al., 2006). Demir (2011) adapted the scale into Turkish. The validity was evaluated with the CFA and the model was determined to have good fit ( $df=80$ ,  $CFI=0.93$ ,  $GFI=0.91$ ,  $NNFI=0.90$ ,  $RMSEA=0.06$ ). In addition, the Cronbach's alpha values were found to be .70 for the structure, .80 for the goal, .76 for the harmony, .77 for the control, and .75 for the future (Demir, 2011). In the study conducted on young women, Cronbach's alpha values were calculated as .76 for the structure, .82 for the goal, .83 for the harmony, .75 for the control, and .74 for the future. In the current study, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) results of the scale also had good fit ( $\chi^2=310.06$ ,  $Sd=80$ ,  $\chi^2/Sd=3.87$ ,  $CFI=.98$ ,  $NFI=.98$ ,  $RMSEA=.074$ ,  $SRMR=.036$ ).

**2.4.Procedure**

Permission was obtained from the researchers, who adapted the Turkish versions for the scales to be used in the study. Later, the ethics committees of two universities in Turkey and the directorates for vocational training courses granted the required approval. The data was collected with the consent of each participant. An informed consent form was presented, and voluntary participation was requested.

**2.5.Statistical Analysis**

First, descriptive statistics were calculated for all variables. In the research, it was taken as a basis that the missing values exhibited a random distribution and that these values should be less than 5% of all data by looking at whether there were wrong or missing data within the scope of the preliminary analysis and examination of the assumptions. In addition, the condition of not having a certain pattern in the scatter plot of the scattering of covariance and multicollinearity and thus providing the supposition of covariance was taken into account (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2014). Confirmatory Factor Analysis was performed regarding the scale items. Later, mediation analysis was performed. The significance of the indirect effect was determined by the bootstrap method presented by Preacher and Hayes (2008). The sample size of 503 women was restructured as 10,000, thereby forming the 95% confidence interval, by means of the Bootstrap method. At this stage, direct and indirect effects were calculated. SPSS 23.0 program for MANOVA and descriptive analysis, AMOS 23.0 program for structural equation modeling (SEM), and Lisrell 8.71 program for confirmatory factor analysis were used in the research.

**3.Findings**

Firstly, correlation analysis was conducted to search for relationships between gender roles, SS, and functions of identity. Table 1 shows the correlations and descriptive statistics.

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics of measures and correlations among variables

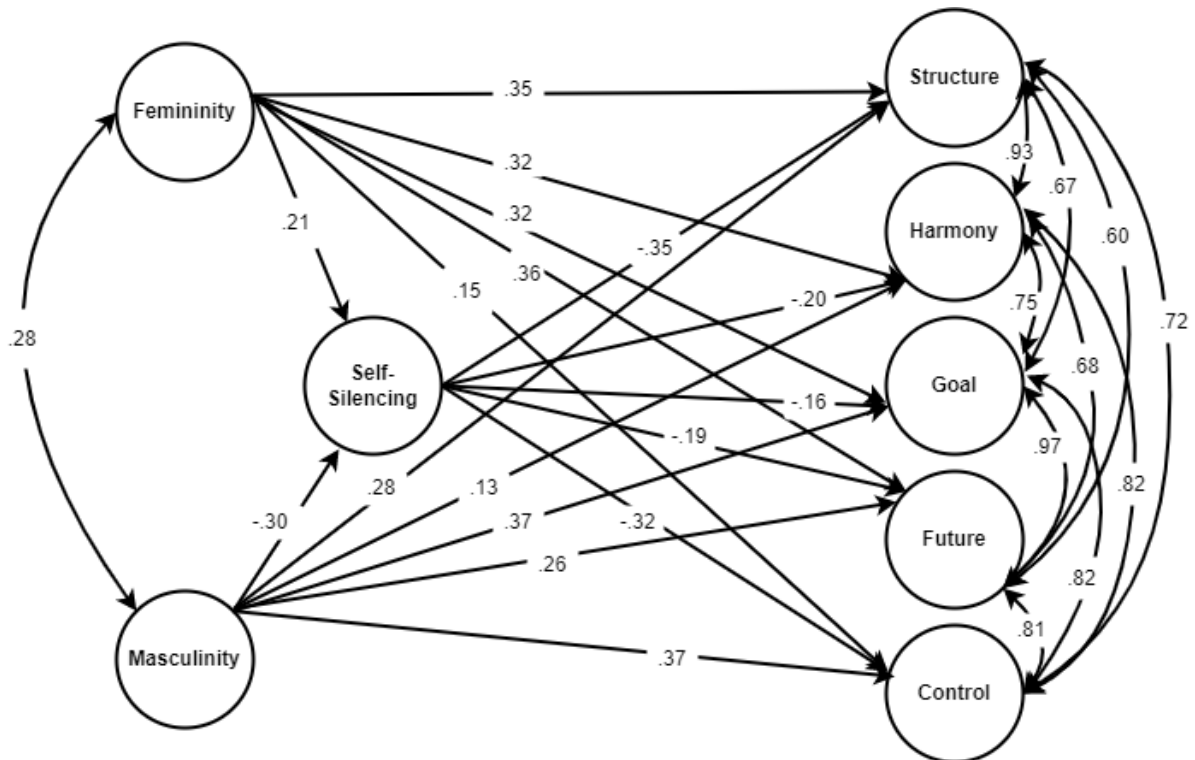
| Variable    | 1      | 2      | 3      | 4     | 5     | 6     | 7     | 8     |
|-------------|--------|--------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Femininity  | 1      |        |        |       |       |       |       |       |
| Masculinity | .24**  | 1      |        |       |       |       |       |       |
| SS          | .16*   | -.12*  | 1      |       |       |       |       |       |
| Structure   | .27**  | .34**  | -.22** | 1     |       |       |       |       |
| Harmony     | .23**  | .21**  | -.12*  | .68** | 1     |       |       |       |
| Goal        | .29**  | .40**  | -.13** | .58** | .61** | 1     |       |       |
| Future      | .28**  | .30**  | -.14** | .53** | .55** | .73** | 1     |       |
| Control     | .16**  | .38**  | -.26** | .60** | .62** | .67** | .61** | 1     |
| Mean        | 115.14 | 103.04 | 73.96  | 12.08 | 12.59 | 12.06 | 11.12 | 12.27 |
| SD          | 12.48  | 15.96  | 16.14  | 2.37  | 2.28  | 2.39  | 2.49  | 2.19  |
| Skewness    | -.84   | -.10   | .26    | -1.14 | -1.67 | -1.14 | -.75  | -1.29 |
| Kurtosis    | 1.69   | .18    | -.14   | 1.65  | 1.92  | 1.98  | .75   | 1.75  |

Note. \* p < .05, \*\* p < .01

When the relationships between these variables are examined, SS is negatively related to masculinity, positively to femininity, and negatively to the five functions of identity. Femininity and masculinity are positively related to the functions of identity.

**3.1. Structural Equation Modeling**

In the study, first of all, fit indices of the measurement model were determined ( $\chi^2= 695.44$ ,  $df= 246$ ,  $\chi^2/df= 2.82$ ,  $NFI= .88$ ,  $CFI= .92$ ,  $RMSEA= .060$  and  $SRMR= .055$ ). According to these values, the measurement model had a good fit with the data. The structural model between femininity, masculinity, SS, and functions of identity was tested by examining values of goodness of fit. The standardized path coefficients calculated for the model are presented in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** Standardized Path Coefficients Calculated for the Structural Model

When the fit indices of the model are examined ( $\chi^2= 745.71$ ,  $df= 247$ ,  $\chi^2/df= 3.02$ ,  $NFI= .89$ ,  $CFI= .91$ ,  $RMSEA= .063$  and  $SRMR= .057$ ), it is seen that the model has a good fit. According to the results of the analysis, SS played a mediating role between feminine and masculine features and functions of identity. In addition to the indirect effect of SS between femininity and masculinity and functions of identity, it has been determined that all paths were significant in this model. Parameter estimates, including bootstrap confidence intervals, direct and indirect effect values, and unstandardized and standardized regression coefficients obtained for the structural model, are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Direct and Indirect Effects and Bootstrap Analysis Results

| Path                    | B    | B      | SE  | 95 % BCa |       |
|-------------------------|------|--------|-----|----------|-------|
|                         |      |        |     | Lower    | Upper |
| <i>Direct Effects</i>   |      |        |     |          |       |
| SS ← Masculinity        | -.25 | -.30** | .05 |          |       |
| SS ← Femininity         | .23  | .21**  | .07 |          |       |
| Structure ← Masculinity | .04  | .28**  | .01 |          |       |
| Harmony ← Masculinity   | .02  | .13*   | .01 |          |       |
| Goal ← Masculinity      | .06  | .37**  | .01 |          |       |
| Future ← Masculinity    | .04  | .26**  | .01 |          |       |
| Control ← Masculinity   | .05  | .37**  | .01 |          |       |
| Structure ← Femininity  | .07  | .35**  | .01 |          |       |
| Harmony ← Femininity    | .07  | .32**  | .01 |          |       |
| Goal ← Femininity       | .07  | .32**  | .01 |          |       |
| Future ← Femininity     | .07  | .36**  | .01 |          |       |
| Control ← Femininity    | .03  | .15*   | .01 |          |       |
| Structure ← SS          | -.06 | -.35** | .01 |          |       |
| Harmony ← SS            | -.04 | -.20** | .01 |          |       |

|                              |      |        |      |      |
|------------------------------|------|--------|------|------|
| Goal ← SS                    | -.03 | -.16** | .01  |      |
| Future ← SS                  | -.03 | -.19** | .01  |      |
| Control ← SS                 | -.05 | -.32** | .01  |      |
| <i>Indirect Effects</i>      |      |        |      |      |
| Structure ← SS ← Masculinity | .02  | .10    | .08  | .17  |
| Harmony ← SS ← Masculinity   | .01  | .06    | .03  | .12  |
| Goal ← SS ← Masculinity      | .01  | .05    | .02  | .09  |
| Future ← SS ← Masculinity    | .01  | .06    | .02  | .10  |
| Control ← SS ← Masculinity   | .01  | .09    | .06  | .17  |
| Structure ← SS ← Femininity  | -.01 | -.07   | -.16 | -.03 |
| Harmony ← SS ← Femininity    | -.01 | -.04   | -.12 | -.01 |
| Goal ← SS ← Femininity       | -.01 | -.05   | -.08 | -.01 |
| Future ← SS ← Femininity     | -.01 | -.04   | -.09 | -.01 |
| Control ← SS ← Femininity    | -.01 | -.07   | -.16 | -.03 |

Note. \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$

According to the model results of the study, femininity ( $\lambda = .21, p < .01$ ) had a low level, and masculinity ( $\lambda = -.30, p < .01$ ) had a moderate effect on SS. Considering other direct effects in the study, it was found that femininity has moderate effects on structure ( $\lambda = .35, p < .01$ ), harmony ( $\lambda = .32, p < .01$ ), goal ( $\lambda = .32, p < .01$ ), and future ( $\lambda = .36, p < .01$ ); but a low effect on control ( $\lambda = .15, p < .05$ ). Masculinity had moderate effects on structure ( $\lambda = .28, p < .01$ ), goal ( $\lambda = .37, p < .01$ ), future ( $\lambda = .26, p < .01$ ), and control ( $\lambda = .37, p < .01$ ); but it had a low-level direct effect on harmony ( $\lambda = .13, p < .05$ ). According to other direct effects in the study, SS had moderate effects on structure ( $\lambda = -.35, p < .01$ ) and control ( $\lambda = -.32, p < .01$ ); it had low-level effects on harmony ( $\lambda = -.20, p < .01$ ), goal ( $\lambda = -.16, p < .01$ ) and future ( $\lambda = -.19, p < .01$ ). Having high levels of masculinity and femininity and a low level of SS provides higher levels of structure, harmony, goal, future, and control. In other words, women's high level of gender roles and low level of SS cause their functions of identity to be higher.

According to the bootstrap analysis, indirect effects are significant in the model because it does not include the zero value. The fact that the confidence intervals include zero as a result of the bootstrap indicates that the mediation is not significant (Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

### 3.2. Examination of Functions of Identity According to University Education Status

The MANOVA results, which were conducted to determine whether functions of identity differ according to whether or not they have university education, are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Mean, Standard Deviation, F and P values of functions of identity by university education status

| Functions of Identity | University Education | N   | Mean  | SD   | df    | F    | P   | $\eta^2$ |
|-----------------------|----------------------|-----|-------|------|-------|------|-----|----------|
| Structure             | Yes                  | 234 | 12.09 | 2.22 | 1-503 | .05  | .94 | .00      |
|                       | No                   | 269 | 12.07 | 2.49 |       |      |     |          |
| Harmony               | Yes                  | 234 | 12.66 | 2.23 | 1-503 | .41  | .52 | .00      |
|                       | No                   | 269 | 12.53 | 2.33 |       |      |     |          |
| Goal                  | Yes                  | 234 | 12.22 | 2.41 | 1-503 | 1.93 | .17 | .00      |
|                       | No                   | 269 | 11.93 | 2.36 |       |      |     |          |
| Future                | Yes                  | 234 | 12.30 | 2.47 | 1-503 | 2.17 | .14 | .00      |
|                       | No                   | 269 | 10.97 | 2.51 |       |      |     |          |
| Control               | Yes                  | 234 | 12.51 | 2.08 | 1-503 | 5.63 | .03 | .01      |
|                       | No                   | 269 | 12.05 | 2.27 |       |      |     |          |

MANOVA results revealed that functions of identity did not differ significantly according to educational status (Pillai's Trace = .017,  $F_{(15, 497)} = 1.77, p > .05, \eta^2 = .02$ ). In other words, it has been observed that structure, harmony, goal, future, and control do not differ in terms of whether or not to have a university education. Educational status explains 2% ( $\eta^2 = .02$ ) of the variance in the dependent variables and expresses a very low effect size. In other words, educational status has a low effect, explaining 2% of the variance of functions of identity.



#### 4. Conclusion and Discussion

In this study, the relationship between gender roles, which could be considered a cultural concept, and identity has been investigated. As for SS in women, which emphasizes intimate relations; investigation of its relationship between gender roles and identity functions forms the authentic side of this study. The basic problem in the study is to examine the correlations between gender roles, SS, and functions of identity. Besides investigating the relationships between variables, SS was assessed as a mediating variable. The study is first to quantitatively investigate the relationships among gender roles, SS, and functions of identity. Another problem in the study is examining whether functions of identity differ according to school and out of school emerging adults.

According to the study, there is a positive relationship between gender roles and functions of identity. Gender roles are an important explanatory variable for identity functions. This indicates that with the increase in women's femininity and masculinity characteristics, functions of identity may also increase. This finding is similar to other identity studies. Erikson (1994) and Marcia (1966) asserted that identity and gender roles were interrelated and also stated that identity reflected gender roles. Marcia (1993) states that identity is constructed through considerations in the interpersonal field, and these considerations are reflections of gender roles. In this context, it is considerable that the influence of gender roles on identity stems from cultural features. Investigating the relevant studies, it is seen that gender roles and culture are related structures (Woodhill & Samuels, 2004; Wolfram et al., 2009; Zerzan, 2010). According to the other studies in the literature, culture and identity are also related; identity is a process shaped on the basis of culture, and environmental and cultural factors affect identity formation (Erikson, 1994; Luyckx et al., 2008; Bosma & Kunnen).

The direct and significant effect of gender roles on functions of identity obtained in the current study is in line with previous studies (Saunders & Kashubeck West, 2006). Studies in the literature have shown that gender roles predict commitment to identity (Davis, 2002; Romm et al., 2018). According to the functions of identity model, identification of the individual with the society that it exists in and with the roles determined by that society hinders the active construction of the identity, and this situation hinders the functions of identity (Adams & Marshall, 1996). However, another study asserts that identification with the gender roles determined by society increases socialization and social acceptance and also asserts that this situation is advantageous, especially when there isn't enough time for the active construction of the identities of young women (Natsuaki et al., 2015). In this way, it is stated that women strongly construct their identities through the gender role, which is presented by society and readily found for women. Arnett (2004) states that because individuals in emerging adulthood are far from the long-term responsibilities of adulthood, they construct their identities more quickly through ready gender roles presented to them by the society, and they can also cope with depression. Therefore, it is observed that gender roles determined in accordance with social norms sometimes contribute to identity formation. These findings in the literature support the result of the study. Identity formation and feminine and masculine characteristics in the identity are complicated, and they refer to different features. However, the study exhibits the clear effect of gender characteristics regarding their connection with identity.

A significant negative relationship between SS and functions of identity was found, and SS is a significant predictor of functions of identity. Women with high SS may form their identities more passively, as they do not have the opportunity to express themselves. This finding is in line with other studies (Harper, 2004; Jack & Ali, 2010; Neves & Nogueira, 2010; Witte & Sherman, 2002). As Jack et al. (2010) explained, women generally silence themselves by giving priority to the wishes of others and shaping their identities accordingly. According to other explanatory views regarding the current finding, SS in women affects identity adaptation to a great extent (Sormanti, 2010). In this regard, women's construction of their identities in the context of intimate relations and also their frequent exhibition of SS behavior with the purpose of keeping their intimate relations have been regarded as the reason for the relationship between SS and identity. Considering that intimate relationships are very important for women's identity development in studies (Gilligan, 2017; Jordan, 1997; Marcia, 2014) and that SS basically aims to maintain intimate relationships (Jack & Ali, 2010; Miller, 1996); the effect of SS experienced in intimate relationships can be explained on identity. In this direction, the result that SS significantly predicts functions of identity is in line with the studies mentioned above.

Another reason for the relationship between SS and functions of identity may be the effect of the individual's actions on identity formation. Adams and Marshall (1996) assert that an individual's ability to use its free will, its autonomous actions, and its self-expression are characteristics that are observed in the active construction of their identity. Moreover, because identity development in the adaptation and control functions of identity depends on agentship, autonomy, and integrity (Serafini & Maitland, 2013), activeness of the individual and its self-expression are also emphasized here. Thus, it is observed that there is a positive correlation between self-expression and functions of identity. As it was also stated in Fivush's model (2002), since it is known that SS is contrary to the skill of self-expression, it can be said that the negative correlation between SS and functions of identity is an expected result of this study.

According to the findings of the study, there is a significant relationship between gender roles and SS, and gender roles are significant predictor of SS. According to the finding, women with a high level of femininity gender trait silence themselves more, while women with a high level of masculinity gender trait silence themselves at a lower level. This finding is in line with other studies (Gilligan, 2017; Maji & Dixit, 2018). For example, according to Brazaitis (1997), women whose femininity points are higher self-silence themselves with a view to keeping their intimate relationships. In previous studies, it has been stated that this is caused by the fact that femininity is associated with attractiveness, dependency, and compassion, while masculinity is associated with the characteristics of strength, independence and enterprise (Gilligan, 2017; Horwitz & White, 1987). However, in some of the studies, together with femininity, masculinity also has a positive effect on SS (Puzio, 2017). Witte and Sherman (2002) set forth that this situation stems from the fact that both masculine and feminine gender features are being evaluated in the scope of traditional roles, and SS is accepted as a style of coping in traditional roles. At this point, the effect of culture is remarkable. According to Jack and Ali (2010), SS is generally more common among relational societies where limits are drawn for women in their positions in intimate relations. Also, it is considerable that there is an influence of culture, which women exist in, on the results obtained in this study.

According to the findings, SS has a mediating role in the relationship between gender roles and identity functions. With the rise of femininity and masculinity traits, women's functions of identity increase, and with the decrease of SS, their identity functions decrease. In addition, it was found that the direct effect of gender roles on functions of identity was positive, while the indirect effect of femininity through SS was negative and masculinity was positive. According to Gilligan (2017), because feminine characteristics usually emphasize relationality and dependency; while masculine characteristics emphasize autonomy and independence, it has been observed that femininity increases SS and, in this direction, reduces functions of identity; moreover, masculinity decreases SS and, thus increases the level of functions of identity. This situation shows that SS is an important variable that should be investigated in enhancing women's functions of identity who have feminine gender characteristics.

Finally, it was found that functions of identity did not differ according to university education or not. The results obtained show similarities with some studies (Atak, 2010; Eryüksel, 1987). This finding suggests that the options offered by university life may also be offered in non-school settings (Atak, 2010). In other words, offering different options regarding love, work, and worldview, which are sub-areas of identity, can be an opportunity not only offered by university settings but also by any workplace. The reason why identity functions do not differ according to university education may be that not only universities but also vocational training courses provide individuals with the opportunity to actively construct their identities. Since educational activities are carried out in these courses, it can be said that out-of-school participants engage in various cognitive activities. So much so that the cognitive activities of the individuals about themselves enable the active construction of the identity, and the active construction of the identity provides the functions of identity (Serafini & Maitland, 2013). Therefore, in this study, it was concluded that women with university education did not have higher levels of functions of identity than women who did not have a university education, and no differentiation was observed.

## **5. Limitations and Recommendations**

There are some limitations to the study. The study sample consisted of a general population, not a clinical setting. Considering that SS emerged conceptually through the narrations of women in the clinical medium (Jack, 1991; Jack & Dill, 1992), in the future, women in the clinical medium may be included in the studies.

Secondly, the pattern of the research is limited to the determination of the existence and degree of relationships among the variables. Because the concept of SS has emerged through women's narrations of their own experiences, together with being in the clinical medium, SS can be re-investigated within the scope of the narrative identity approach, which is based on life stories. Through SS, a different point of view can be used in identity studies. The study has been conducted by a quantitative research approach, accordingly; however, in future studies, if the same study can be investigated within the scope of a qualitative research approach, namely, by referring to the narrations of women, then it may be important for the literature. Thirdly, the study was limited to women in emerging adulthood. Considering that identity formation begins in adolescence and continues in emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000; Çok et al., 2018; Manago, 2015), we can say that testing this model on adolescents, which was utilized in this study, could be useful for prospective studies. Another limitation is that the data that was collected from other cities only reflects the urban culture. Although we came across research conducted in different cities (Ali, 2015; Jack & Ali, 2010), we could not find any study that investigated the relationship among SS, gender roles, and identity formation comparatively, within the context of rural-urban or east-west differences. Due to this reason, it may be suggested that these variables, each of which is related to cultural factors, can be analyzed in different cultures. The other limitation of this study was that the non-university sample had no vocational course experience. In future studies, attention can be paid to the fact that participants who are out of school are individuals with various career and lifestyle experiences. Finally, with a view to determining if connections among gender roles, SS, and functions of identity differ as the individual grows up, it is recommendable that a study be conducted among middle-aged women and longitudinal studies be performed.

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