

## **Investigation of Parents' Authenticity Levels in terms of Need for Social Approval, Self-Liking, Self-Competence and Some Variables**

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### **Abstract**

In the study, it was aimed to examine whether the levels of authenticity of the parents are predicted by the need for social approval, self-liking, and self-competence. 308 parents (223 females, 85 males), whose children attend kindergarten and primary schools, participated in the study. Research data were collected by researcher applying the measurement tools (Authenticity Scale, Need for Social Approval Scale, Two-Dimensional Self-Esteem Scale). Pearson correlation and independent samples t-test were used to data analyse. It was concluded that the authenticity levels of the parents were predicted by the need for social approval, self-liking and self-competence. In addition, it was found that the authenticity levels of the parents did not differ significantly according to gender, education level and the state of sharing their child's photo on social media.

**Keywords:** Authenticity levels, Self liking, Self- Competence, Social Approval Needs

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### **Introduction**

What we call authenticity, or personal autonomy is the fact that the person behaves honestly towards herself and her environment, and is also significant because it is one of the determinants of psychological well-being (İmamoğlu et al., 2011). Besides, while Maslow (1968) defined authenticity as the fulfillment of needs, Deci and Ryan (2000) specified it as the way the organism engages in specific behaviors consistent with its internal demands. Barrett-Lennard (1998) bases authenticity on the model of the harmony of individual's physiological states, emotions and deep cognitive experiences with symbolic awareness and outward-looking behavior and communication. It is stated by Wood et al. (2008) that for authenticity, the difference between the individual's real experiences and conscious awareness must first be reduced, and then the individual's internal experiences and behaviors must be consistent. Besides, according to Wood et al. (2008), people's tendency to accept the opinions of others and comply with expectations as a result of being social creatures and being influenced by environmental factors also affects authenticity. Studies in the literature showed that authenticity is positively associated with life satisfaction, self-esteem, positive emotion, subjective well-being and autonomy satisfaction (İlhan & Özdemir, 2013), psychological well-being (Kernis & Goldman, 2005; Lenton et al., 2016; Neff & Suizzo, 2006), and peace (Öksüz & Karalar, 2019). However, decreasing of authenticity in the person is associated with negative emotion (İlhan & Özdemir, 2013), weak character pattern, and psychosocial disorders (Martens, 2005). Besides these variables, since a person is a social being, his / her emotions, thoughts, perspective on life, perception of events and lifestyle can be influenced by other people. Hence, the need for social approval may also be related to authenticity.

The need for social approval represents social desirability, or the tendency of a person to gain approval for her actions by "others" (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960). It is stated that the need for social approval is connected with attachment status to mother and father (Baytemir et al., 2017; Sümer & Şendağ, 2009). Karaşar and Ögmiş (2016) emphasize that the psychological symptoms of people who need social approval highly have also increased. It has also been found that negative affect and depression are associated with a high need for social approval (Huta & Hawley, 2010; Twenge & Campbell, 2008). These people often cannot act independently, accept popular opinions, and do not take risks. Such a tendency shows itself in a vulnerable self-concept, self-protective and conflict-avoiding behavior (Crowl, 2001). At the same time, while they experience more problems in their social relationships, they are sensitive to negative evaluation by seeing other people's statements as a threat to them (Rosenberg, 1965). In the

face of the need for social appreciation and approval, individuals' reflection of their positive personality traits on their environment may be related to the level of authenticity. As a result of the need for social appreciation and approval, individuals' reflection of their positive personality characteristics on their environment may be related to the individuals' level of authenticity. When examined from this perspective, it can be thought that as a result of the need for social approval, the situation of authenticity, which is built by fake identities in social media, is avoided.

Tafarodi and Swann (2001) discussed self-esteem under two headings as self-liking and self-competence. While self-competence is mostly a cognitive process that represents the objective beliefs of the person about herself (Bandura, 1997), self-liking is an emotionally-based process in which how one feels about herself is evaluated (Leary, 2004). Self-competence is defined as the beliefs of people about their ability to produce specified performance levels that are effective on experiences that affect their lives, and these beliefs determine how they feel, think, motivate and act. Cognitive, motivational, affective and selection processes provides causing of such beliefs to different effects in this way (Bandura, 1994). While self-competence is a judgment about a person's ability to achieve desired results, self-liking is a self-worth judgment based on a positive sense of respect internalized by others (Bosson & Swann, 1999). As one's positive self-worth judgments increase, it decreases the effectiveness of others about self-liking (Tafarodi & Swann, 2001). However, it is known that individuals who feel belonging to a group of friends have higher self-esteem as a result of social support (Eriş & İkiz, 2013; Kahrıman & Polat, 2003).

In the light of the research studies, it has been argued that the reason for the high authenticity levels of the girls is due to the increase in their self-esteem by acquiring positive feelings in themselves and their empowerment as people who can express their feelings openly and implement them by taking their own decisions (Ekşi et al., 2016; Öksüz & Karalar, 2019). Besides, it is thought that the educational process and quality of education not only provides the development of individuals but also affects the acquisition of authentic identity (Fleischer, 2005). On the other hand, there is no research on whether the level of education affects authenticity or not. For this reason, in this study, it is examined whether authenticity differs according to education level.

When we look at authenticity from another point of view, social media is a mechanism that serve as masks to gain the approval and appreciation of others (Gündüz et al., 2018). Kietzmann et al. (2011) linked? the use of social media to a honeycomb and placed "identity" at the center, and they predicted position, relationships, reputation, groups, chat and sharing as building blocks. The people builds an identity in social media as well as in her real life. However, since the identity here reflects only the good and beautiful sides of the people contradicts with authenticity, it is stated that the level of self-reflection in social media is closely related to authenticity (İzci, 2019). When the research results conducted by the Turkey

Statistical Institute examined, it is seen that the internet usage rate has increased from %45 in 2011 to %79 in 2020 and the rate of creating profiles, sending text messages, photos, etc. on social media is %80.2 according to 2020 data (Tüik, 2020). With the increase in the use of social media, individuals take initiatives to increase their liking. It is stated that people try to meet the needs of belonging, approval and being liked by sharing their work, vacation, food, etc. via their social networks (Karahisar, 2017). People who are dissatisfied with their own identity and position try to create an ideal identity for themselves in these environments by sharing on social media and it is stated that this situation makes it difficult for them to approve and accept the real identity and causes people to have conflicts about revealing themselves in real life (Şalom, 2011). Walther (2007) also states that people present themselves happier and more admirable than they actually are in social networks. Gil-Or et al. (2015) also emphasize that presenting a social media identity about counterfeit personality is about low self-esteem and authenticity. It is stated that as the difference between the real personality and conscious awareness of the individual increases, she starts to become alienated from herself (Wood et al., 2008). Besides, Postman (1995) emphasizes that there is no clear boundary between adults and children due to the developing technology and children are seen as a consumption tool and commodified (cited in Alver, 2004). In the light of these observations, it is important to investigate the needs for social approval of parents who consciously or unconsciously reveal their children's privacy.

In this context, considering the literature review (Crowl, 2001; Ekşi et al., 2016; Eriş & İkiz, 2013; Gündüz et al., 2018; İlhan & Özdemir, 2013; İzci, 2019; Kahriman & Polat, 2003; Öksüz & Karalar, 2019; Tafarodi & Swann, 2001; Wood et al., 2008), it can be concluded that the level of parents' authenticity may be related to the need for social approval, self-liking, self-competence, gender, education level and social media use (sharing images and other content belonging to the themselves and their family members). Therefore, in this study, it is aimed to investigate whether the levels of authenticity of the parents are predicted by the variables of need for social approval, self-liking, and self-competence. Besides, it was examined whether the authenticity levels of the parents differ according to gender, education level, and the status of sharing their child's photo on social media.

## Method

This study was conducted in accordance with the relational survey model which is one of the quantitative research methods.

## Participants

The research data were collected from 308 parents 223 of them were (72.4%) women and 85 of them were (27.6%) men, by applying the measurement tools to parents who have children in kindergarten and primary school. Considering the data on the education levels of the parents included in the study, primary school graduates were 54 (17.5%), secondary school

graduates are 63 (20.5%), high school graduates are 96 (31.2%), associate degree graduates are 17 (5.5%), graduates of bachelor degree are 74 (24%) and master's and doctoral degree graduates are 4 (1.3%).

## Data Collection Tools

### *Authenticity Scale*

The scale was developed by Wood et al. (2008) to test the three-factor structure (self-alienation, authentic living and acceptance of external influence) based on humanist approach and adapted to Turkish by İlhan and Özdemir (2013). It is a 7 point Likert type measuring instrument with 12 items. The total authenticity score is obtained by subtracting the scores related to sub dimensions of self-alienation and acceptance of external Influence from the authentic living score. The fit index calculated as a result of the confirmatory factor analysis applied during the construct validity studies of the scale was found as ( $\chi^2/df = [74.39 / 50] 1.49$ , RMSEA = .055, CFI = .95, IFI = .95, GFI = .92). The factor loads of the items in the scale are between .70 and .89. As a result of the analysis performed to determine the reliability of the scale, Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficients were found as .79 for self-alienation, .67 for acceptance of external influence, and .62 for authentic living.

### *Need for Social Approval Scale*

Need for Social Approval Scale was developed by Karaşar and Ögmiş (2016) and consists of "sensitivity to others' judgments", "leaving a good impression" and "social withdrawal" subscales. There are a total of 25 items in the scale. Test-retest reliability of the scale was found to be .90. It was found that the fit indices (for the first group:  $\chi^2/df = 2.11$ , RMSEA = .06, NNFI = .94, CFI = .95, RMR = .06, NFI = .90, IFI = .95; for the second group:  $\chi^2/df = 2.23$ , RMSEA = .06, NNFI = .95, CFI = .96, RMR = .06, NFI = .92, IFI = .96) of the model obtained as a result of the confirmatory factor analysis performed for the construct validity of the scale were at an acceptable level. The internal consistency coefficients of the three sub-dimensions were found as .83 for "sensitivity to others' judgments", .80 for "social withdrawal", and .80 for "leaving a good impression". The overall internal consistency coefficient of the scale is .90.

### *Two-Dimensional Self-Esteem Scale*

Self-Liking/Self-Competence Scale: It was developed by Tafarodi and Swann (2001) and adapted to Turkish by Doğan (2011), the scale is a 5-point Likert-type 16-item scale. The scale measures self-esteem in two dimensions called "self-liking" and "self-competence". Confirmatory factor analysis results for the first group to determine the construct validity of the scale are as  $\chi^2 / sd = .99$ , RMSEA = .083, NNFI = .84, CFI = .88, RMR = .062, NFI = .84, IFI = .89. while found; for the second group;  $\chi^2 / sd = 0.98$ , RMSEA = .049, NNFI = .95, CFI = .97, RMR = .049, NFI = .95, IFI = .97. Within the scope of the reliability analysis results for

the Turkish version of the scale, the reliability coefficients of the sub-dimensions of the scale were found as .83 for "self-liking" and .74 for " self-competence". Items 1, 6, 7, 8, 10, 13, 15 and 16 in the scale are scored in reverse coded.

## Data Analysis

The research data were examined in terms of regression assumptions and normal distribution before being analyzed and the 4 extremes that damaged the normal distribution were deleted from the data set. Regression assumptions and results regarding normality are presented in Table 1. Later on, while the relationship between authenticity, need for social approval, self-liking and self-competence was examined with correlation analysis, it was examined with regression analysis whether authenticity was predicted by the need for social approval, self-liking and self-competence. The unrelated sample t-test to determine whether authenticity shows a significant difference in terms of gender and sharing the photo of the child; whether the level of authenticity significantly differentiates according to the graduation level was tried to be determined by one-way analysis of variance.

**Table 1**

*Regression Analysis Assumptions and Findings Related to Normal Distribution*

| Dimension                | Min    | Max    | Skewness | Kurtosis | VIF   | CI     |
|--------------------------|--------|--------|----------|----------|-------|--------|
| Authenticity             | -22.00 | 20.00  | -.292    | -.439    |       | 1.000  |
| Need for Social Approval | 25.00  | 117.00 | .246     | .011     | 1.094 | 7.833  |
| Self-liking              | 17.00  | 40.00  | -.727    | .471     | 1.527 | 18.780 |
| Self-competence          | 16.00  | 40.00  | .313     | -.215    | 1.455 | 24.301 |

When the results in Table 1 are examined, it is seen that the data have a normal distribution and meet the assumptions required for regression analysis.

## Findings

The relationship between authenticity, need for social approval, self-liking, and self-competence levels of parents using social media is examined with the Pearson correlation coefficient and presented in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*Correlation Analysis Result*

|                          | 1       | 2       | 3      | 4      |
|--------------------------|---------|---------|--------|--------|
| Authenticity             | 1       |         |        |        |
| Need for Social Approval | -.518** | 1       |        |        |
| Self-competence          | .428**  | -.197** | 1      |        |
| Self-liking              | .590**  | -.290** | .558** | 1      |
| $\bar{x}$                | 3.609   | 69.115  | 28.651 | 32.885 |
| SS                       | 9.580   | 17.543  | 4.672  | 4.560  |

\*\* $p < 0.01$

When Table 2 is examined, it is seen that there is a negative relationship between authenticity and the need for social approval ( $r = -.518$ ) but there is a positive relationship between self-competence ( $r = .428$ ) and self-liking ( $r = .590$ ). As seen in Table 2, a significant negative ( $r = -.290$ ) relationship was found between the need for social approval and the variables of self-competence ( $r = -.197$ ) and self-liking ( $r = -.290$ ) ( $p < 0.01$ ).

**Findings of Regression Analysis**

Considering the results of the correlation analysis, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine whether the perception of self-liking, self-competence and the need for social approval predict authenticity and the findings are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.**

*Findings Related to Regression Analysis*

| Dependent Variable | Predictor                | <i>B</i> | SE   | $\beta$ | <i>t</i> | <i>p</i> | Correlation |              | $R^2$ |
|--------------------|--------------------------|----------|------|---------|----------|----------|-------------|--------------|-------|
|                    |                          |          |      |         |          |          | Partial     | Semi partial |       |
| Authenticity       | Constant                 | -18.08   | 3.96 |         | -4.56    | .000     |             |              | .49   |
|                    | Need for Social Approval | -.204    | .024 | -.374   | -8.66    | .000     | -.447       | -.357        |       |
|                    | Self-liking              | .866     | .107 | .412    | 8.09     | .000     | .423        | .333         |       |
|                    | Self-competence          | .255     | .102 | .125    | 2.51     | .013     | .143        | .103         |       |

$p < 0.01$

According to the regression analysis model created, it was found that the need for social approval, self-liking level and self-competence explain 49% of authenticity ( $[R^2 = 0.700]$ ;  $[R^2$

= 0.485];  $p = 0.000$ ). In addition, when the findings in Table 3 are examined, the authenticity levels of the parents are determined by the need for social approval ( $\beta = -.374$ ;  $t = -8.66$ ), self-liking ( $\beta = .412$ ;  $t = 8.09$ ) and self-competence ( $\beta = .125$ ;  $t = 2.51$ ), in a statistically significant level.

## **Findings Regarding Whether Authenticity Levels of the Parents Change in terms of Gender, Sharing Their Children's Photos on Social Media, and Education Level Variables**

In the study, t-test and one-way analysis of variance were applied to examine whether authenticity level of the parents using social media significantly change according to gender, sharing of their child's photo, and education level. As a result of the analysis, it was seen that authenticity levels of the parents did not differ according to gender (Female  $N = 221$ ,  $\bar{X} = 3.55$ ; Male  $N = 83$ ,  $\bar{X} = 3.77$ ,  $p > .05$ ), sharing their children's photos on social media (I will share  $N = 183$ ,  $\bar{X} = 3.88$ ; I do not share  $N = 121$ ),  $\bar{X} = 3.20$ ,  $p > .05$ ) and education level ( $F(4, 299) = 1.55$ ,  $p = .186$ ).

## **Discussion**

In the study, a positive relationship was found between the level of parents' authenticity and their perceptions of self-liking and self-competence, and a negative relationship was found between the level of parents' authenticity and the need for social approval. When the literature is examined, it is seen that the results of the research examining the relationship between authenticity and self-competence (Seller et al., 2013; Zhang et al., 2019) and the result of this research are consistent. Besides, while self-competence perception weakens in negative evaluations, it gets stronger as a result of positive evaluations (Bandura, 1986; Pajares, 2002). Social approval is a criterion at this stage as one of the factors affecting the perception of self-competence (Bandura, 1986, 1995). At this stage, considering the aspects of self-competence related to both the authenticity and social approval, it can be expected that as the individuals' self-competence perception increases, individualisation and the need for the approval of others decrease and their behave more like herself.

In the literature, it is seen that studies on self-liking are conducted on social media (Balci et al., 2020; Kircaburun, 2017; Orman et al., 2019). When self-competence and self-liking are considered as sub-dimensions of self-esteem (Tafarodi & Swan, 2001), it is seen that there are studies supporting the findings of this research in the literature (Goldman & Kernis, 2002; İlhan & Özdemir, 2013; Lopez & Rice, 2006; Neff & Harter, 2002). Besides, while Taşcıoğlu and Tosun (2018) were observing the relationship between authenticity and self-presentations in their studies, they also observed a negative relationship between deceptive self-presentations and self-esteem. At this stage, the level of self-liking, which is one of the sub-dimensions of self-esteem, may be closely related to self-presentations. As the level of self-liking of the person increases, it can be expected that the level of authenticity, also called the true self, will increase by moving away from the deceptive self-presentation.



When the literature was researched, it was seen that there was no study examining the relationship between authenticity and social approval. On the other hand, there are studies in which self-presentations, which are closely connected with authenticity, related to the need for social approval (Tripathi & Tripathi, 1978; cited in: Karaşar & Ögmiş, 2016). In addition, Cankardaş (2019) drew attention to the relationship between fear of negative evaluation and self-esteem, which is related to the need for social approval. İlhan and Özdemir (2013) stated that autonomy is related to authenticity that is why individuals with high levels of autonomy have a high level of authentic life, and a low level of self-alienation and being influenced by others. According to “Self-Determination Theory” (Deci & Ryan, 1995, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000), authenticity is expected when the person can express herself freely and the need for autonomy is met. In the light of research, it can be thought that as the level of self-liking and self-competence increases, the need for social approval will decrease, and thus the level of authenticity will increase by reflecting oneself as she is.

The research shows that authenticity can be predicted by the need for social approval, self-liking and self-competence. In their study with university students, Saticı et al. (2013) observed that social self-competence is a predictor of authenticity. In the context of social media, it is stated in the literature that individuals display their positive identities to gain appreciation and approval (Gündüz et al., 2018; Hepekiz & Gökalliler, 2019). When examined from this perspective, it can be expected that the level of self-liking of the person increases and affects authenticity as a result of self-competence perception, which is sub-dimension of self-esteem. It is also possible for the individual to behave more authentically with the affirmation of their true self as a result of the tendency to be related to others in a balance. In this study, it was found that the level of authenticity did not differ significantly according to gender. There are studies (Boz & Akarçay Ulutaş, 2019; Ekşi et al., 2016; Erickson & Ritter, 2001; Kuyumcu & Kabasakaloğlu, 2018; Neff & Harter, 2002; Sümer & Anafarta-Şendağ, 2009) that support this finding, as well as studies (İmamoğlu et al., 2011; Neff & Suizzo, 2006; Öksüz & Karalar, 2019; Theran, 2011) showing that women tend to be more authentic than men. Besides the level of authenticity varies according to the culture (Kuyumcu & Kabasakaloğlu, 2018) and the education level (Boz & Akarçay Ulutaş, 2019) of the parents, its changing situation according to parental attachment (Baytemir et al., 2017; Sümer & Şendağ, 2009) considering its relationship with social approval, it can be said that the authenticity is due to individual characteristics rather than to a general situation. As a matter of fact, İmamoğlu et al. (2011) stated that although being a woman predicts authenticity, when they included variable of the self-dimensions in the study, the significance of gender disappeared, which proves this view.

In the study, it was found that the authenticity levels did not differ according to whether the parents shared their children's photographs or not. In the literature, there are studies (Dewar et al., 2019; Hepekiz & Gökalliler, 2019) that show that people give more opportunities to the powerful sides they want to show while using social media, and avoid exhibiting the features

they do not like. İzci (2019) stated that people are reluctant to share what they want to share on social media with the attitudes of other individuals and concern for cultural pressure. Since being rejected and ignored is hurtful for the people, they adopt an attitude on social media as in normal life. Because the close environments of people are the majority on social media, they can't get away from reality in an exaggerated way (Taşcıoğlu & Tosun, 2018). In addition to all these, it is known that people try to achieve ideal accessibility by addressing various criteria (filter, sharing time, photo applications, etc.) during self-presentations (Gündüz et al., 2018). There are studies showing that the identities of mothers on social media and their self-presentations are different, and there are inconsistencies between their daily lives and their attitudes and behaviors (Mutluer, 2019). At this stage, it can be said that the authenticity of the individual's social media use in terms of a single variable, does not change depending on whether they share their children's photos or not.

Considering the graduation status of the parents, the authenticity status does not show a significant difference. Supporting the finding of this research, there are studies showing that authenticity does not change according to socio-economic strata (Boz & Akarçay Ulutaş, 2019; Öksüz & Karalar, 2019). However, in the study conducted by Boz and Akarçay Ulutaş (2019), the effect of the graduation levels of the parents on the individual's authenticity was examined separately and it was observed that the graduation status of the mother affected the authenticity of the person. In this case, it can be said that the authenticity of the person is affected more by the parental attitudes than the education level. Therefore, it can be thought that authenticity occurs in the early stages of an individual's life, and education and subsequent experiences will have less impact on that.

The study is limited to parents who have students attending kindergarten and primary school in Sakarya province, in 2018-2019 academic year. In order to increase the generalizability of the research, the sample can be enlarged and people with different socio-cultural characteristics can be included. The results of the research reveal the relationship between authenticity, need for social approval, self-liking and self-competence, and do not contain a cause-effect relationship. Besides, since the data are collected by self-declaration method, it can be thought that social desirability concern may be reflected in the answers. Studies using different methods can be conducted to clarify this situation and to reveal possible cause-effect relationships.

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