Effects of Social Inclusionary Status on Self-evaluations: The Moderating Role of Social Anxiety

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Abstract
Social inclusionary status might have diverse effects on self-perception. We conducted an online experiment (N=170) to examine the effects of social inclusionary status and social anxiety on self-evaluation. Our hypothesis was that the social exclusion experience will negatively affect self-evaluations in the competence dimension and social anxiety is expected to moderate this relationship. Participants filled out the Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale and wrote a short autobiographical essay about an experience from their lives when they felt excluded/rejected (exclusion condition) or included (inclusion condition). Self-evaluation was approached with the two dimensions - warmth and competence- as proposed in the Stereotype Content Model. Results had shown that participants' warmth judgments about themselves were not affected by neither inclusionary status nor social anxiety. On the other hand, inclusionary status had an effect on self-competence evaluations as a function of participants' social anxiety levels. Accordingly, remembering an inclusive experience (from their past) was related with higher self-competence only among low social anxiety participants. The positive effect of remembering social inclusion experience was not observed among high social anxiety individuals. In conclusion, the effect of social inclusionary status on self-competence assessments was moderated by social anxiety.

Sosyal Dahil Olma Durumunun Benlik Değerlendirmeleri Üzerindeki Etkileri: Sosyal Kaygının Düzenleyici Rolü
Öz
Sosyal dahil olma durumu benlik algısı üzerinde çeşitli etkilere yol açabilir. Bu çalışmada sosyal dahil olma durumunun ve sosyal kaygının benlik değerlendirmeleri üzerindeki etkilerini incelemek üzere çevrimiçi bir deney (N=170) yürütülmüştür. Sosyal dışlanma deneyiminin benlik değerlendirmelerinde yetkinlik boyutunu olumsuz yönde etkileyeceği ve sosyal kaygının bu etki üzerinde düzenleyici rol alacağı hipotez edilmiştir. Katılımcılar Liebowitz Sosyal Kaygı Ölçeği'ni doldurmuş ve sosyal açıdan dışlandıkları (dışlanma koşulu) veya dahil edildikleri (dahil edilme koşulu) bir otobiyografik anılarına ilişkin kısa bir paragraf yazmıştır. Benlik değerlendirmeleri ise Kalıpyargı İçeriği Modeli'nde önerildiği gibi yetkinlik ve sevecenlik boyutları altında incelenmiştir. Sonuçlara göre, katılımcıların benliklerine ilişkin sevecenlik değerlendirmeleri sosyal dahil olma durumlarından veya sosyal kaygı düzeylerinden etkilenmemektedir. Öte yandan, sosyal dahil olma durumunun yetkinlik değerlendirmelerine etkisinin sosyal kaygı düzeyine bağlı olduğu gözlenmiştir. Sosyal dahil edilme içeren bir otobiyografik anı hatırlamanın yalnızca sosyal kaygı düzeyi düşük bireylerde daha yüksek yetkinlik değerlendirmelerine yol açtığı görülmüştür. Sosyal kaygı düzeyi yüksek bireylerde ise sosyal dahil edilme deneyimini hatırlamanın yetkinlik değerlendirmeleri üzerindeki olumlu etkisi gözlenmemiştir. Sonuç olarak, dahil edilme durmunun yetkinlik değerlendirmeleri üzerindeki etkisi sosyal kaygı tarafından düzenlenmiştir.

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Given what is known about the importance of social interactions, belonging to social groups or getting along with others is crucial for survival (Baumeister & Tice, 1990; Buss, 1990). One widely accepted view is that social exclusion has been functional to maintain group harmony in the ancestral environment since humans' evolutionary past. However, it serves as a barrier to access benefits provided by social groups for victims subjected to ostracism, resulting inevitably in deprivation from social interactions, resources (i.e., collectively hunting), protection (i.e., defense collectively against predators), and reproductive opportunities. In other words, social exclusion indirectly causes social death (Baumeister & Tice, 1990; Buss, 1990).

Once after social exclusion, people are motivated to compensate for their damaged fundamental psychological needs. Individual differences and contextual conditions play an important role in this stage (Williams, 2007). With regard to the relationship between social exclusion and social anxiety, Zadro and colleagues (2006) examined the immediate and delayed (45 minutes after Cyberball) effects of ostracism on psychological need satisfaction in participants with high and low social anxiety. In the ostracism condition, socially anxious participants reported lower psychological need satisfaction both immediately and 45 minutes after Cyberball than non-socially anxious ones. Likewise, in the re-inclusion after ostracism condition, there was more activation in the socially anxious participants' inferior frontal lobe that engages during social exclusion. They were influenced longer compared to non-anxious ones. That is to say, effects of ostracism are more powerful and permanent for socially anxious individuals (Heeren et al., 2017). It was claimed that they face difficulty in attenuating the negative impacts of it on account of their poor social-regulation ability.

Concerning the relationship between social anxiety and self-evaluation, previous research revealed that social anxiety disrupts self-images that are comprised of subjective evaluations of themselves (Blasi et al., 2015). Similarly, social phobics tend to evaluate themselves lower on their cognitive (arithmetic test) and social performance (speech task) than non-phobics despite the fact that they do not differ from each other on their actual performance in both tasks (Krämer et al., 2011). Moreover, individuals clinically diagnosed with social anxiety disorder evaluate themselves lower in social rank (power, dominance, competence) and affiliation (friendliness, warmth) traits than non-anxious ones (Gilboa-Schechtman et al., 2017). Finally, social anxiety is negatively correlated with self-evaluations of scholastic competence (academic success) and social acceptance (Uhrlass et al., 2009).

Stereotype Content Model

Many researchers in the history of social psychology have repeatedly argued that there are two distinct dimensions that govern social perception and impressions of others. For instance, Rosenberg and colleagues (1968) suggested the conception of "intellectual" versus "social desirability" whereas Wojciszke (1994; 2005) proposed "agency" versus "communion"; which, in fact, both conceptualizations had highly similar connotations. Today these concepts greatly correspond to the warmth and competence dimensions that form the basis of social judgments suggested by Fiske (2018): communion and social desirability overlap warmth, whereas agency and intellectual desirability overlap competence. The Stereotype Content Model (SCM) embodies this all historical development and has been widely gaining increasing acceptance in contemporary literature.

Cross-cultural studies demonstrated that these dimensions, warmth and competence, are universal (Cuddy et al., 2008), albeit some differences across cultures, such as in-group favoritism between collectivist and individualistic cultures (Cuddy et al., 2009), or differences due to the nation's degree of peace, conflict,

and income equality on mixed (ambivalent) quadrants (Durante et al., 2017). The study of Aktan and colleagues (2019) verified the validity of these dimensions in Turkey.

Despite the fact that warmth judgments matter more when perceiving others (Fiske et al., 2006), this follows the exact opposite pattern from the perspective of self or close friends: competence (agency) is predominant. It is because competence attributed to self predicts stronger one's own self-esteem than warmth attributed to self does (Wojciszke et al., 2011). For instance, Phalet and Poppe (1997) showed that people are more likely to emphasize competence-related traits while evaluating their own in-group members. On the other hand, they have an emphasis on warmth-related traits outweigh competence-related traits when judging members of out-groups. In summary, competence-related traits are more weighted within the actor's (self) perspective while warmth-related traits weigh more within the observer's (others) perspective.

Social Exclusion, Social Anxiety, and Self-Evaluation within Stereotype Content Model

The theoretical basis for our study lies in sociometer theory, which posits that self-esteem functions as a sociometer that monitors the environment to assess the level of current inclusionary status (Leary, 2005; Leary et al. 1995). According to Leary and colleagues' study (1995), excluded participants reported themselves as less smart, competent, and efficient along with lowered self-worth feelings. However, the effects of social exclusion on their own warmth and competence evaluations are unclear.

As regards the relationship between individuals' inclusionary status and warmth-competence dimensions, there has been little research so far. Germane to the relationship between ostracism and competence judgments, players who throw the ball slowly (8 or 16 sec.) during the Cyberball game are more likely to be a target to be excluded than players with normal speed (4 sec.). In this sense, incompetence leads to being perceived as burdensome and impedes being included (Wesselmann et al., 2015). In addition, the relationship between the extent to which a person is perceived on these dimensions and being excluded might be two-edged. From the perspective of the witnesses of social interactions in the workplace, ostracized individuals are perceived as less moral, sociable, and competent than included ones (Orsouw, 2017).

From the perspective of sources of ostracism, feelings of guilt for one's own actions are lower when victims are perceived as warm but incompetent than when victims subjected to ostracism are viewed as warm and competent (Frick, 2017). Subsequently, one study aimed to discover the effects of manipulated facial appearance varying on warmth and competence dimensions on bystanders' moral judgments about social exclusion (Rudert et al., 2017). The most and the least morally acceptable are to exclude incompetent and cold and warm but incompetent individuals, respectively. To wit, it implies that incompetent and cold groups are perceived as though they were deserving of social rejection.

Regarding people's evaluations of themselves after ostracism, Jones and colleagues (2009) examined the effect of partial exclusion on participants' perceptions of competence. They developed an "out-of-the-loop" paradigm that simulates being uninformed by the group. Their results have shown that being out-of-the-loop causes feelings of less competence than being in-the-loop. Considering that having knowledge is an important determinant of the competence feelings (Cuddy et al., 2008), the decline in competence found by Jones and colleagues (2009) might also be partially arose from being basically uninformed. Indeed, in the second experiment, it was not reported that whether there was a significant difference (in self-competence) between the conditions in which the information was provided via the computer and provided by the group.

In sum, research on the relationship between social exclusion, anxiety, and warmth-competence judgments is scant in the literature. Although the relationship between ostracism and warmth-competence

dimensions in terms of impression formation about ostracized individuals (Orsouw, 2017) and moral acceptance (Rudert et al., 2017) was examined, the effects of social exclusion and social anxiety on warmth and competence evaluations of one's self have been lacking in the literature.

The aim of the study and hypotheses

The aim of the study is to bridge the gap in the literature by examining empirically the effects of inclusionary status and social anxiety on warmth and competence evaluations of one's self. Our hypothesis is that the social exclusion experience will negatively affect self-evaluations in the competence dimension. However, social anxiety is expected to moderate this relationship.

Although past research showed that ostracism affected socially anxious individuals' psychological need satisfaction and mood more negatively (Zadro et al., 2006), they did not take into account the effects of social exclusion on self-evaluation along with SCM. Keeping in mind that high social anxiety individuals make more negative self-evaluations in general (Blasi et al., 2015), their self-evaluations are expected to depend less on inclusionary status. This is because, according to sociometer theory, as soon as self-esteem as a sociometer detects reactions connoting social situations, it alerts individuals about their inclusionary status, leads to approval-seeking behavior, and helps avoid rejection (Leary et al., 1995). Decrements in self-esteem following ostracism reflect an early warning system about individuals' inclusionary status. From this point, because social anxiety is characterized by avoidance of social interactions (Liebowitz, 1987), we assume that the sociometer of socially anxious individuals does not function as an early warning system to lead approval-seeking behavior. For example, Karlen and Daniels (2011) argued that social anxiety might relate to deficiencies in social monitoring abilities characterized by sensitivity to social cues. Since self-evaluations along with SCM, particularly competence, are parts of self-esteem (Abele & Wojciszke, 2007), social exclusion might not result in decrements in SCM dimensions in high anxiety individuals. So, we hypothesized that non-anxious individuals' self-evaluations as a component of self-esteem (sociometer) are more susceptible to inclusionary status. Furthermore, as aforementioned, warmth is predominant when evaluating others, whereas competence is predominant when evaluating oneself (Wojciszke, 1994; 2005). In this respect, we hypothesized that the effects of inclusionary status and social anxiety on self-evaluations would be stronger on competence than warmth.

The autobiographical recall paradigm (Twenge & Campbell, 2003; Zhong & Leonardelli, 2008) was used to manipulate inclusionary status in this study for several reasons. Though remembering past exclusion episodes is less controllable in terms of content and intensity compared to the Cyberball paradigm, this method surpasses artificially created exclusion incidents in laboratory settings in terms of ecological validity. Past research revealed that the results of studies using the autobiographical recall paradigm were comparable to those of studies using the ball-tossing game (Godwin et al., 2013). Social exclusion induced by the autobiographical recall task thwarts primary needs (control, self-esteem, meaningful existence, and belonging) as much as exclusion induced by the Cyberball task.

Method

Participants

We were not able to base on a past research compatible with our hypothesis, therefore we aimed to observe low effect size 95% power which is typical and widely accepted in social psychology (Richard et al.,

2003). Power analysis using G*Power 3.1 (Faul et al., 2007) suggested that the required sample size is at least 132 participants for low effect size (.10) and .95 power.

The online experiment was announced through social media. The number of participants who completed the online experiment was 195. All of our participants were from Turkey. Twenty-five participants were excluded from the analyses due to not following the manipulation instructions. We had 170 participants (73% women) to analyze. The mean age of our participants was 23.09 (*SD* = 5.95) ranging from 18 to 50. Ethical approval was obtained from the Ege University Ethics Committee (Approval No: 1198).

Measurements

Socio-demographic form: Participants completed a socio-demographic form including questions about their gender and age.

Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale (LSAS): This 24-item scale was developed by Liebowitz (1987). This scale aims to assess the degree of fear/anxiety and avoidance in a range of interaction and performance situations. The items were rated on a four-point scale ranging from 0 (no fear/never avoid) to 3 (severe fear/usually avoid). The validity and reliability of the Turkish version have been previously demonstrated by Soykan and colleagues (2003). In the present study, Cronbach's alpha values were .89 for fear and .87 for avoidance.

Warmth & Competence Evaluation Form (WCEF): Fiske and colleagues (1999; 2002) developed a scale including 10 items for warmth and 10 items for competence. The scale was rated on a 7-point Likert scale. The Turkish adaptation was done by Demirel (2009). It consisted of 7 items for warmth and 12 items for competence in the last version. For the present study 7 items with the highest factor loading items were selected for each subscale in order to prevent any priming effect. Cronbach's alpha values were .89 for competence and .90 for warmth subscale in the adaptation study and .78 for competence and .82 for warmth subscales in our study.

Need Satisfaction Scale (NSS): This scale was developed by Williams (2009) for the purpose of measuring the satisfaction level of four fundamental needs: belonging, self-esteem, control, and meaningful existence. It has four subscales, respectively. Being adapted to the manipulation technique, this scale has been used in numerous studies (Eisenberger et al., 2003; Williams & Sommer, 1997). In the present study, items were translated by authors and Cronbach's alpha values were .93 for belonging, .89 for meaningful existence, .88 for self-esteem, and .79 for control. This scale was used as a manipulation check.

Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS): This 20-item scale was developed by Watson and colleagues (1988). PANAS is a widely used and successful measurement for positive and negative affect subscales with 10 items each and rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale. In the Turkish adaptation, Cronbach's alpha values were .83 for positive affect and .86 for negative affect (Gençöz, 2000). In the present study, Cronbach alpha values were .90 for positive affect and .88 for negative affect. This scale was used as a manipulation check.

Manipulation check questions: Two questions were used for participants to rate the degree of feeling excluded ("I felt excluded") and neglected ("I felt neglected") by others related to the memory they wrote on a 5-point Likert scale (Bernstein et al., 2008; Williams et al., 2000).

Procedure

We used an autobiographical writing task to manipulate inclusionary status. Participants were randomly assigned to either exclusion or inclusion conditions. They wrote a short essay about an experience from their lives when they felt excluded/rejected (exclusion condition) or included (inclusion condition). They

were asked to indicate as much detail as possible. Our instruction was adapted from Twenge and Campbell's (2003) study. This task was a successful manipulation of ostracism (Bernstein et al., 2008; Claypool & Bernstein, 2014).

After accepting the consent form and socio-demographic form, the LSAS was filled out. Then participants wrote an autobiographical memory. Following, participants were asked to answer WCEF, NSS, and PANAS. The order of scales was fixed and the items within the scales were randomized. Lastly, participants answered the manipulation check questions. They were debriefed in detail before being thanked.

Results

Manipulation checks

The Man Whitney-U test was used to analyze the effect of manipulation on participants' feelings related to the written memory. Participants in the exclusion condition rated higher ($X = 4.26$, $SD = .94$) on feelings of exclusion than participants in the inclusion condition ($X = 1.7$ $SD = .74$), $U = 178$, $p < .001$. Also, participants in the exclusion condition rated higher ($X = 3.81$, $SD = 1.28$) on feelings of being neglected than participants in the inclusion condition ($X = 1.33$, $SD = .88$), $U = 574$, $p < .001$.

We performed t-tests in order to examine the effects of social exclusion on psychological need satisfaction. Results demonstrated that all four needs were threatened in the social exclusion condition (all p's $< .001$). Similarly, t-tests have shown that participants in the social exclusion condition indicated more negative affect and less positive affect. Positive effect scores was lower within exclusion condition ($X = 24$, $SD = 9.58$) than inclusion condition ($X = 37.2$, $SD = 7.72$), $t (142.78) = 9.73$, $p < .001$. Similarly, negative affect scores was higher within exclusion condition ($X = 28.47$, $SD = 8.23$) than inclusion condition ($X = 13.79$, $SD = 5.14$), $t (126.98) = 11.94$, $p < .001$.

In light of these 3 measurements, social exclusion manipulation seemed to work properly.

Effects of Inclusionary Status on Warmth and Competence Evaluations

We conducted a moderation analysis via PROCESS macro (Model 1 with 5000 bootstraps; (48)) considering inclusionary status (1= inclusion, 2 = exclusion) as the predictor, social anxiety level as the moderator, and competence evaluations as the dependent measure. The model was significant, $F (3,166) = 16.06$, $R^2 = .23$, $p < .001$. The analysis revealed a significant main effect of the inclusionary status ($B = -11.55$, $SE = 4.08$, $t = -2.83$, $p = .005$, 95% CI[-19.61,-3.49]), as well as a main effect of the social anxiety ($B = -.57$, $SE = .12$, $t = -4.61$, $p < .001$, 95% CI[-.81,-.33]). The analysis further revealed an interaction between inclusionary status and social anxiety ($B = .22$, $SE = .08$, $t = 2.76$, $p = .006$, 95% CI[.06,.37]). We examined the conditional effects of inclusionary status on competence evaluations among participants with different levels of social anxiety (see Figure 1). Among the participants with low social anxiety, the exclusion condition caused a lower level of competence evaluations in comparison with the inclusion condition ($B = -3.38$, $SE = 1.38$, $t = -2.45$, $p = .01$, 95% CI[-6.12,-.66]). Among the participants with mid-level of social anxiety ($B = -.63$, $SE = .93$, $t = -.67$, $p = .5$) and high level of social anxiety ($B = 2.21$, $SE = 1.36$, $t = 1.62$, $p = .11$), inclusionary status didn't have a statistically significant effect.

We run the same analysis to examine the effects of inclusionary status and social anxiety on warmth evaluations. Results have shown that neither the main effect of inclusionary status ($B = -4.42$, $SE = 3.83$, $t = -1.15$, $p = .25$) nor the main effect of social anxiety ($B = -.2$, $SE = .11$, $t = -1.7$, $p = .09$) was significant. Further,

the interaction between social anxiety and inclusionary status didn't have an effect on participants' warmth evaluations ($B = -.08$, $SE = .07$, $t = 1.03$, $p = .30$).
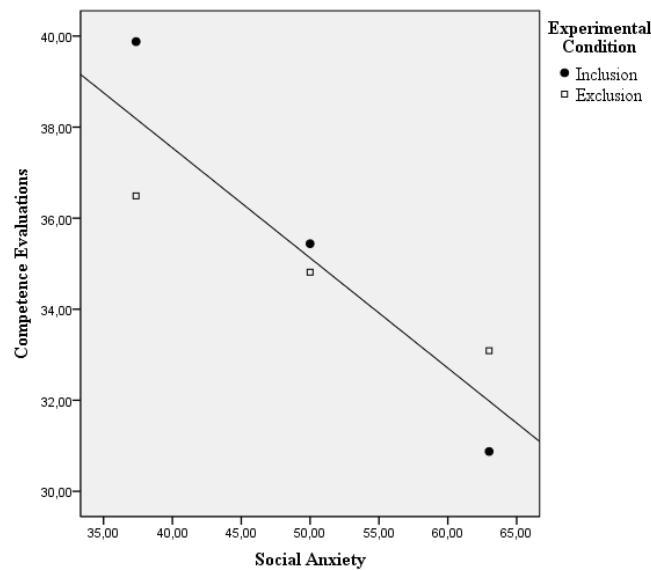
Figure 1. Participants' competence evaluations as function of inclusionary status and social anxiety

Discussion

As is known, social exclusion has striking effects on a wide range of psychological variables (e.g., cognitive abilities, self-regulation, political extremism, etc.) (Williams, 2007). However, despite the considerable interest that social exclusion has received (Williams, 2007; 2009), its effects on warmth and competence dimensions have been neglected for decades. The current study's most important contribution was to examine the moderating role of social anxiety on the effects of inclusionary status on warmth and competence evaluations of one's self.

Our results provided support for our hypothesis. Social inclusion resulted in higher competence (but not warmth) evaluations of one's self, but, as hypothesized, the effect of inclusionary status manipulation on competence depended on individual's social anxiety level. Namely, social inclusion caused more positive self-evaluation about one's own competence for individuals low in social anxiety, while it did not affect individuals high in social anxiety. High anxiety participants, regardless of whether they were subjected to social exclusion or not, perceived themselves as less competent. This finding might be explained by the sociometer theory (Leary, 2005; Leary et al. 1995). As aforementioned, self-esteem as a sociometer is responsible for monitoring the environment to detect reactions connoting social situations, alerting individuals about their inclusionary status, leading to approval-seeking behavior, and avoiding rejection. Because high anxiety individuals avoid social interactions, their competence ratings as a component of self-esteem did not function as a sociometer to alert their inclusionary status and lead to approval-seeking behavior. In other words, their self-evaluations are independent of their inclusionary status. On the other hand, decrements in the competence sense of non-anxious individuals alert them about their inclusionary status and lead them to behaviors that facilitate social reconnection.

The differences in self-reported competence ratings between included and excluded participants who were low in social anxiety despite the lack of a difference in warmth ratings might result from the primacy of competence within the self-perspective. Given that competence carries more weight within the actor perspective (Abele & Wojciszke, 2007), it is reasonable that only self-described competence was negatively affected when individuals encounter social exclusion. Furthermore, this finding highlights the stability and situational malleability of self-evaluations about warmth and competence following social exclusion. Agency might become malleable subsequent to some events, such as performance feedback as in the study of Abele and colleagues (2008). The current study's findings supported the assumption that self-ascribed agency is labile and responsive to others' reactions. On the other hand, warmth judgments followed stable patterns regardless of social exclusion condition or social anxiety level. On the whole, since human's evolutionary past, communion traits have constituted the cornerstone of maintaining social relationships and avoiding rejection, which in turn ensures survival (Cottrell et al., 2007). Numerous studies have also proved that communion resists situational changes and remains stable over time (Abele et al., 2008; Ybarra et al., 2012).

As expected, there was a main effect of social anxiety in competence ratings, but not in warmth. This is in line with the previous studies (Blasi et al., 2015; Uhrlass et al., 2009). However, there are also contradictory findings in the literature. Gilboa-Schechtman and colleagues (2017) found that individuals with high social anxiety rated themselves lower on self-evaluation about both social rank (i.e., power, dominance) and affiliation (i.e., warmth, communality) than individuals with low social anxiety. Our results did not support the expectation that social anxiety affects warmth ratings. A potential reason for the inconsistence might be that our sample were not clinically diagnosed for social anxiety disorder. Although participants' psychiatric history wasn't controlled in our study, we expect that the ratio of social anxiety disorder was not high.

Past research has demonstrated the inhibitory effects of ostracism on self-competence evaluations (Leary et al., 1995). Notwithstanding, according to our results, there was no main effect of social exclusion on one's competence judgments of one's self. This difference might originate from the different techniques for manipulating exclusion. There is also research in the literature that is consistent with this result. For instance, self-evaluation about one's own competence at work was not related to feelings of belonging that encompass the perception of being accepted by peers (Nislin & Personen, 2019). Future research might replicate the present study's findings by using different manipulation techniques.

The current study has several limitations. Although the autobiographical recall task was used in a substantial amount of research and was shown to be a reliable social inclusionary status manipulation tool (Godwin et al., 2013), it does not enable researchers to determine the type or severity of their exclusion experience. That is, exclusion enacted by an intimate friend, a romantic partner, or a foreign person might evoke different responses. In a similar vein, social exclusion may happen in an active way (social rejection) or in a passive way (ignorance) (Leary, 1990). It is also worth noting that mostly women (73%) comprised our sample. Given that women are more likely to be socially anxious than men (Asher & Aderka, 2017), it is therefore probable that the results of this study should be inspected in the aspect of generalizability. Future research can focus on the effects of social inclusionary status and social anxiety on self-evaluation in a more representative sample.

Future research is needed for a more far-reaching understanding of why ostracism affects only competence ratings. Still, this study might provide a starting point for future research to investigate the effects of social exclusion on self-described competence.

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