

The Mediator Role of Emotion Regulation Difficulties in the Association between Basic Needs Satisfaction and Self-Concealment

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Keywords

Basic needs satisfaction, emotion regulation, self-concealment, Self-Determination Theory

Abstract

Despite accumulated knowledge of the role of self-concealment on various personal and relational problems, there are limited empirical attempts to highlight the possible precursors of this pattern. The current study investigated the mediator role of emotion regulation (ER) difficulties in the association between psychological needs satisfaction and self-concealment. The data was collected from 480 volunteer university students aged between 18 and 30 ($M = 21.55$, $SD = 2.00$). Self-report questionnaires were administered online, including The Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale-Brief Form, Self-Concealment Scale, and Basic Psychological Needs Scale-Revised Form. The correlation analysis revealed that basic need dissatisfaction was positively correlated with ER difficulties and a tendency to keep oneself in the dark. Then, regression analysis confirmed that ER difficulties had a full mediator role in the association between unmet needs and self-concealment. Accordingly, decreased need satisfaction contributed to the tendency to keep secrets through greater difficulty in regulating emotions. Current findings suggest an explanation for developing the motivation to hide personal information from others within the Self-Determination Theory framework. The role of difficulty in emotion regulation contributes to conceptualizations of psychological and relational problems, highlighting the significance of considering emotion regulation skills in prevention and treatment practices.

Anahtar kelimeler

Temel ihtiyaç doyumu, duygu düzenleme, kendini gizleme, Kendini Belirleme Kuramı

Temel İhtiyaç Doyumu ile Kendini Gizleme Arasındaki İlişkide Duygu Düzenleme Güçlüğü'nün Aracı Rolü Öz

Kendini gizleme eğilimi hem bireysel hem de ilişkisel çeşitli sorunlar için bir yatkınlık faktörü olarak değerlendirilmektedir. Bununla birlikte bu örüntünün gelişiminde rol oynayabilecek olası faktörlere dair bilgi ihtiyacı devam etmektedir. Bu bağlamda, mevcut çalışmada temel psikolojik ihtiyaçlar ile kendini gizleme eğilimi arasında duygu düzenleme güçlüğü'nün aracı rolü incelenmiştir. Araştırmaya, kolay ulaşılabilir örneklem yöntemi kullanılarak, bir yükseköğretim kurumuna devam etmekte olan ve yaşları 18 ile 30 arasında değişen ($Ort. = 21.55$, $SS = 2.00$) toplam 480 gönüllü yetişkin dâhil edilmiştir. Araştırmanın verisi Duygu Düzenleme Güçlükleri Ölçeği – Kısa Formu, Kendini Gizleme Ölçeği ve Temel Psikolojik İhtiyaçlar Ölçeği – Revize Formu kullanılarak çevrimiçi uygulama ile elde edilmiştir. Korelasyon analizi sonuçlarına göre temel ihtiyaç doyumundaki azalma, duygu düzenleme güçlüğü ve kendini gizleme eğilimindeki artışla pozitif yönde ilişkilidir. Regresyon analizinde de psikolojik ihtiyaçlar ile kendini gizleme eğilimi arasında duygu düzenleme güçlüğü'nün tam aracı rolü olduğu belirlenmiştir. Bu sonuca göre, ihtiyaç doyumundaki azalma duygu düzenleme güçlüğü'nü arttırması yoluyla kendini gizleme eğilimindeki artışı açıklamaktadır. Söz konusu bulgular, bireyin kendisi ile ilgili olumsuz olarak değerlendirdiği bilgileri başkalarından saklama eğiliminin gelişimine Kendini Belirleme Kuramı çerçevesinde bir açıklama getirmektedir. Bu eğilimin sürekliliğinde rol oynayan duygu düzenleme güçlüğü, ilişkili psikolojik ve ilişkisel sorunların kavramsallaştırılmasına katkı sunmakta; duygu düzenleme becerilerinin önleme ve tedavi etme amaçlı uygulamalarda göz önünde bulundurulmasının önemine işaret etmektedir.

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Self-concealment is described by persistent and deliberate attempts to hide personal information that is perceived as unpleasant or negative from other people (Larson & Chastain, 1990). This goes beyond the mere lack of self-disclosure, involving active efforts to withhold private information that is consciously available and negative in nature (Larson & Chastain, 1990). Self-concealment is considered a personality trait characterized by interpersonal behaviors, such as lying or keeping secrets, as well as intrapersonal efforts, like dysfunctional emotion regulation strategies motivated by self-protection (Larson et al., 2015). Contemporary studies agree that this stable pattern is associated with negative health-related consequences such as disordered eating (Masuda et al., 2018), alcohol-related problems (Hartman et al., 2015), suicidal tendencies (Hogge & Blankenship, 2020), and lower romantic relationship satisfaction (Uysal, Lin, Knee et al., 2012). On the other hand, the information regarding the development of this pattern is very limited. Larson et al. (2015) proposed insecure attachment, traumatic experiences, and oversensitivity to rejection or criticism as the potential underlying factors, but empirical evidence for these factors is still lacking. Therefore, the current study propounded psychological needs satisfaction and ER difficulties as the antecedents of self-concealment.

As conceptualized by Self-Determination Theory (SDT, Deci & Ryan, 2000), basic psychological needs offer insights into developing a predisposition for self-concealment. As a metatheory, SDT adopts a perspective for the individual as a proactive and growth-oriented entity. This growing process depends on fulfilling three psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness, all of which are innate and universal (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Autonomy refers to the individual's actions displayed based on their preferences, values, and beliefs. The need for competence indicates the sense of efficacy and competence that fosters an individual's capacity and motivation to face challenges, explore, and be an active agent in the environment (Ryan & Deci, 2002). Finally, relatedness represents the feelings of connectedness and belonging to others (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The gratification of this need is essential for the individual's motivation to approach meaningful interpersonal relationships, care for other people, and achieve a sense of being secure and cared for by others (Ryan & Deci, 2002). SDT emphasizes satisfying all three needs for psychological growth, optimal functioning, and healthy development. On the other hand, when any of these needs are precluded or overshadowed, individuals become more prone to be defensive, hostile and experience psychological problems (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Ryan et al., 2016; Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013).

The current study posits basic needs dissatisfaction as the antecedent of self-concealment. Early adverse experiences, such as growing up in a controlling, punishing, or neglectful environment, are highlighted in preventing fulfillment of needs that result in long-term maladaptive outcomes (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Soenens et al., 2017). In this respect, a sense of self as being unloved, insignificant, and inadequate, rooted in unmet needs, may trigger the tendency to evaluate personal experiences and features as distressing or embarrassing and hide them from others to avoid negative evaluation, criticism and rejection. In other words, dissatisfaction with psychological needs may create a susceptibility to the predisposition of keeping secrets. Prior knowledge about the association between psychological needs satisfaction and self-concealment is limited. Uysal et al. (2010) proposed that an individual's intentional and persistent efforts to hide negative private information from others obstruct the fulfillment of needs for a close relationship, independence, and authenticity. The role of self-concealment on needs dissatisfaction has been formulated to explain lower relationship satisfaction (Uysal, Lin, Knee et al., 2012), decreased well-being (Uysal et al., 2010), and self-reported pain (Uysal & Lu, 2011). On the other hand, considering the importance of childhood experience on need satisfaction (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Soenens et al., 2017), it is reasonable to suggest a reciprocal relationship between needs satisfaction and self-concealment. Accordingly, unmet needs contribute to the individual's motivation to hide

personal information, and this tendency may inhibit the later attempts to fulfill these needs. Besides, this association may be explained by ER difficulties.

ER is defined as the process employed to generate, modify, and express emotional experiences (Gross, 2002). Gratz and Roemer (2004) emphasized the multi-structured nature of this concept, which includes the ability to be aware and differentiate emotions, accept emotional responses, attain flexible and appropriate regulatory strategies, and control impulsive responses for pursuing long-term goals. Since all these skills appear to be essential for adaptive regulation, the impairment of any of them represents ER difficulties (Gratz & Roemer, 2004). It is reasonable to suggest a link between basic needs and emotion dysregulation, as dissatisfaction with these needs follows intense negative emotions (Ryan et al., 2010). Furthermore, similar to psychological needs, the child's ability to manage their emotions originates from early family interactions and tends to continue later in life, influencing personal and social well-being (Diamond & Aspinwall, 2003). Previous research has established the presence of psychological needs dissatisfaction and problems in regulating emotions among individuals who engage in non-suicidal self-injury (Heath & Mills, 2016). A serial mediation model further revealed that insecure attachment predicts lower psychological needs satisfaction, leading to difficulties in emotion regulation and, subsequently, an increase in binge eating behaviors (Han & Lee, 2017). On the other hand, the relationship between emotion regulation and self-concealment is very limited. Sease et al. (2022) pointed to the predictive role of emotion dysregulation on self-concealment. This investigation is a promising area for future research with the potential to significantly impact our understanding of developmental influences that bring about self-concealment.

In summary, the negative consequences of self-concealment on psychological and relational well-being have been widely established. However, further knowledge is needed to achieve a comprehensive framework highlighting the precursors of this disposition. Therefore, the current study aimed to examine the mediator role of ER difficulties in the association between need satisfaction and self-concealment. Although withholding personal information from others is conceptualized as a maladaptive behavioral or ER strategy (Larson et al., 2015; Masuda et al., 2011); empirical support is still limited. Prior research illustrated that self-concealment is positively correlated with suppression (Uysal & Lu, 2011), decreased emotional flexibility (Masuda et al., 2011), and lower levels of mindfulness (Masuda et al., 2017). Nevertheless, the predictive role of ER on the tendency to conceal self remains unclear. In this vein, it is hypothesized that a lower level of psychological needs satisfaction through difficulty in ER would explain self-concealment.

Method

Participants

The sample consisted of 480 university students (377 females, 103 males) between the ages of 18 and 30 ($M = 21.55$, $SD = 2.00$). The volunteered participants were recruited from different universities in Turkey by using the convenience sampling method. The majority of participants (91.5%) were undergraduate students, but others (8.5%) were enrolled in a higher education or graduate program. Most participants stated their socioeconomic status as medium level (80.8%).

Measurements

Demographic Information Form: The form was developed by the authors to obtain information about the characteristics of the participants including age, gender, education level and socioeconomic status.

The Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale-Brief Form (DERS-16): The scale was originally developed by Gratz and Roemer (2004) to assess difficulties regulating emotions along with six domains, named as lack of emotional awareness, lack of emotional clarity, non-acceptance of emotional responses, limited access to effective ER strategies, inability to engage in goal-directed behavior, and impulse control difficulty. Higher scores from total scale represent higher difficulty in ER. Bjureberg et al. (2016) developed its brief version with 16 items rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale. This version has good construct, convergent, and discriminant validity along with satisfactory test-retest reliability (.85) and internal consistency (.92). The Turkish version of the scale has 16 items with the same factor structure (Yiğit & Guzey Yiğit, 2019). The internal consistency was calculated as .92 for the Turkish version (Yiğit & Guzey Yiğit, 2019) and .93 for the current study.

Self-Concealment Scale: The scale has 10 items rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale assessing the overall tendency to hide personal information perceived as unpleasant or negative from others (Larson & Chastain, 1990). The scale has a one-dimensional structure measuring self-concealment as a distinct construct from self-disclosure with predictive validity (i.e., physical symptoms and psychological distress), high test-retest reliability (.81), and internal consistency (.83). Turkish version of the scale is also one-dimensional structure and consists of 10 items indicating satisfactory internal consistency (.86, Deniz & Çok, 2010). Higher scores point to a greater self-concealment tendency. For the current study, Cronbach's alpha was calculated as .89.

Basic Psychological Needs Scale-Revised Form: This scale was developed by Yıldırım (2024) to measure the level of satisfaction of basic psychological needs (i.e., autonomy, competence, and relatedness; Deci & Ryan, 2000) based on different measures of need satisfaction (Gagné, 2003; Sheldon & Hilpert, 2012) by including culture-specific items. The scale consists of 26 items (6 items for autonomy, 9 items for competence, and 11 items for relatedness) rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale. Higher scores indicate increased basic needs fulfillment. Yıldırım (2024) reported that this scale has a three-factor structure and criterion-related validity as well as satisfactory internal consistency (.91) and split-half reliability (.83). Cronbach's alpha was calculated as .93 for the current study.

Process

Before data collection, the approval of the Ethical Committee in a Turkish University was obtained. Self-report questionnaires were administered to participants via an online survey platform. All participants were informed about the aim and scope of the study, as well as confidentiality through informed consent. Data analyses were performed by using the IBM SPSS 25 software program. Before hypothesis testing, missing cases, normality assumptions, and outliers were checked. After eliminating 25 cases, the primary analyses were executed with the remaining 480 cases.

Results

Initially, gender differences (377 females, 103 males) in mean scores for need satisfaction, emotion regulation difficulties, and self-concealment were examined using independent samples T-tests. The results yielded significant differences for only self-concealment [$t(478) = -2.52, p < .05$]. Accordingly, males ($M = 26.52, SD = 9.44$) tended to conceal themselves from others more than females ($M = 23.90, SD = 9.35$).

Next, descriptive statistics and correlations between variables were presented in Table 1. Accordingly, psychological needs satisfaction was negatively correlated with ER difficulties ($r = -.36, p < .001$) and self-concealment ($r = -.24, p < .001$). Furthermore, the correlation coefficient between difficulty in regulating emotions and self-concealment was also significant ($r = .48, p < .001$).

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics and Correlations among Study Variables

	1	2	3	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Basic need satisfaction	-	-.36*	-.24*	142.20	18.75
2. Difficulty in ER		-	.48*	42.33	13.64
3. Self-concealment			-	24.46	9.42

* $p < .001$

Finally, the mediator role of emotion dysregulation on the association between need satisfaction and self-concealment was examined (Table 2). For this examination, regression analysis was performed by using the bootstrapping method through the PROCESS macro for SPSS. In this procedure, the sampling distribution of indirect effects was bootstrapped 5000 times, and 95% confidence intervals (CI) were taken into consideration in which no zero “0” value between these intervals indicates a significant indirect effect (Hayes, 2022). The model also included gender as a covariate. The findings revealed that the total effect of psychological need satisfaction on self-concealment was significant [$\beta = -.24, t(477) = -5.47, SE = .02, p < .001$]. Accordingly, need satisfaction significantly and negatively predicted difficulty in ER [$\beta = -.36, t(477) = -8.37, SE = .03, p < .001$], and ER difficulty was the positive predictor of self-concealment [$\beta = .45, t(476) = 10.46, SE = .03, p < .001$]. Gender had only significant association with self-concealment [$\beta = .12, t(476) = 2.97, SE = .91, p < .01$]. In addition, the indirect effect of emotion dysregulation was significant, $\beta = -.16, SE = .02, \%95\text{ CI} [-.21, -.12]$, while the direct of need satisfaction on self-concealment was not significant [$\beta = -.04, t(477) = -1.92, SE = .02, p > .05$]. According to these findings, ER difficulty fully mediated the relationship between need satisfaction and self-concealment (Figure 1). This model explained 24% of the total variance, $F(3,476) = 51.43, p < .001$.

Table 2
The Results of Simple Mediation Analysis

Predictor	Difficulty in ER			
	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	%95CI
Gender	.01	1.42	0.16	-2.57 – 3.01
Basic need satisfaction	-.36	0.03	-8.37**	-0.32 – -0.20
	Self-concealment			
	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	%95CI
Gender	.12	0.91	2.97*	0.92 – 4.50
Difficulty in ER	.45	0.03	10.46**	0.25 – 0.37
Basic need satisfaction (Total effect)	-.24	0.02	-5.47**	-0.16 – -0.08
	<i>Effect</i>	<i>SE</i>		%95CI
Basic need satisfaction (Direct effect)	-.04	0.02		-0.08 – 0.00
Basic need satisfaction (Indirect effect)	-.16	0.02		-0.21 – -0.12

* $p < .01$, ** $p < .001$

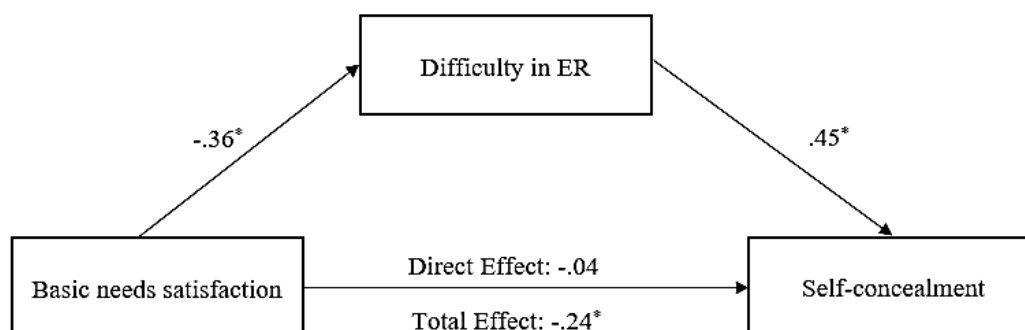


Figure 1. Standardized beta coefficients were presented for the relationship between basic needs satisfaction and self-concealment as mediated by difficulty in ER. $p < .001$.

Discussion

While substantial evidence highlights the adverse consequences of self-concealment on psychological and relational functioning, knowledge about its antecedents is limited. The current study aimed to investigate the explanatory role of ER difficulty in the association between psychological needs satisfaction and self-concealment. As expected, dissatisfaction with needs was positively related to keeping secrets, and ER difficulty appeared to have a full mediational effect in this association. Accordingly, individuals with unmet psychological needs are more likely to experience difficulty regulating emotions; subsequently, they tend to hide personal information from others.

Only a few studies have focused on the relationship between basic needs satisfaction and self-concealment. These studies have indicated that consistent efforts to withhold personal information prevent an individual from establishing an intimate relationship that offers validation, acceptance, and support, thereby thwarting the fulfillment of needs (Hogge & Blankenship, 2020; Uysal et al., 2010). The current study extends this conceptualization by suggesting that unmet needs may also build a context for the tendency to keep secrets. In other words, dissatisfaction with psychological needs may have an incremental role in self-concealment. Consistently, SDT stresses the costs of family and school environments, including conditional regard, punishment, or neglect, on fragile self-esteem, lack of autonomy, shame tendency, defensive functioning, and controlling regulatory process (Assor et al., 2004; Deci & Ryan, 2000). Moreover, persistent need frustration elicits maladaptive coping strategies that serve as need substitution and compensation, perpetuating a cycle of thwarting need and impairment in functioning (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013). From the SDT perspective, self-concealment may function as one of these maladaptive strategies. In other words, an individual with a sense of self not being loved, competent, or autonomous may appraise personal experiences and qualities as unpleasant or embarrassing, and correspondingly try to hold them back from others to avoid criticism, rejection, or to seek approval and affection. As support, Sease et al. (2021) revealed that psychological maltreatment in childhood was associated with self-concealment through increased negative automatic thoughts. Wismeijer (2011) also stated that self-concealed information includes beliefs about personal inadequacy, worries, and negative emotions rather than general secrets. Supporting findings have

demonstrated that the authoritarian parenting style, characterized by high levels of demand and control but low levels of emotional warmth and responsiveness (Baumrind, 2012), is associated with increased self-concealment, while the authoritative parenting style that provides flexible control along with warmth and responsiveness (Baumrind, 2012), reduces this tendency (Almas et al., 2011; Hartman et al., 2015). Therefore, current findings are consistent with prior studies, designating that unmet needs rooted in earlier development may predispose to negative self-evaluation and hide self-relevant information. Nevertheless, further investigation is recommended to gain insight into the nature of this relation, which can be bidirectional, reciprocal, or both.

The findings regarding the positive association between unfulfilled needs and ER difficulty corroborate the earlier research (e.g., Han & Lee, 2017; Heath & Mills, 2016). Within the SDT framework, three regulatory processes, integrative ER, suppressive ER and emotion dysregulation, have been formulated. Integrative ER consists of awareness of emotional experience without judgment, an interest in exploring meanings and employing deliberate regulatory strategies following intrinsic values and authentic long-term goals rather than immediate responses (Ryan & Deci, 2008; Ryan et al., 2006). Suppressive ER contains negative judgments towards emotions and forced efforts to ignore, avoid, or conceal them. Finally, emotion dysregulation refers to intolerance and the inability to manage emotional experiences (Roth et al., 2019; Ryan et al., 2006). Integrative ER is emphasized for healthy functioning, while suppression and emotion dysregulation are connected to various psychological and relational problems (Benita et al., 2020; Roth et al., 2019). Therefore, underlying factors for these processes are paid attention to in theoretical and empirical explanations from the SDT perspective. Satisfaction of psychological needs, especially autonomy, is essential for developing integrative ER (Roth et al., 2019). Accordingly, the caregiver's acceptance and support towards the child's negative emotions are internalized. They help the child construct positive emotional appraisals and self, approach feelings, and modulate them to fulfill one's potential. On the other hand, the thwarted needs increase negative emotions and decrease the capacity to regulate them (Ryan, 2005; Ryan et al., 2010). Roth and Assor (2012) also indicated that autonomy-supportive parenting promoted the adolescents' integrative ER, while conditional parental regard is linked to emotional dysregulation and suppression. Although the ER difficulties characterized by a lack of various emotional processes such as awareness, clarity, goal pursuit, and impulse control (Gratz & Roemer, 2004) corroborate maladaptive regulatory processes as described by SDT, further investigation is warranted to explore both the shared and distinctive aspects of these ER models. Gaining a deeper understanding of these models could facilitate the integration of different ER-related frameworks in the development of prevention and intervention programs.

According to SDT, basic psychological needs have an innate and universal nature, nevertheless the variety in expression and fulfillment of these needs should be addressed in a cross-cultural context (Lynch, 2023). As a strength, the scale involving culture-specific items to assess basic need satisfaction was used, and the findings provided support for the negative consequences of unmet needs in terms of emotional and relational functioning from Turkish culture. Another contribution of the study is to indicate the incremental role of unmet basic needs in self-concealment through the proximal effects on the difficulty in regulating emotions. This explanatory mechanism corresponds to social psychology literature emphasizing optimal functioning in SDT, focusing on individual differences, emotional and motivational processes (Deci & Ryan, 2000). To understand the role of need satisfaction and self-concealment in relational functioning (e.g., Deci et al., 2006; La Guardia et al., 2007; Uysal, Lin & Bush, 2012; Uysal, Lin, Knee, et al., 2012), this model can be further explored in the context of close relationship experiences, such as trust, intimacy, and satisfaction in future studies. Moreover, the findings of this study propose that self-related concepts from the SDT perspective can be expanded to gain more profound knowledge. This expansion could include acquiring and processing

self-knowledge, regulating self-related emotions, and the motivation to conceal oneself and self-disclosure. It is crucial that future studies from the field of social psychology address cognitive, emotional, and motivational aspects of self on SDT concerning intra and interpersonal functioning, as these are key areas that require further exploration.

Current findings also have significant implications for clinical practice, providing a deeper understanding of the processes that follow the efforts to keep oneself in the dark. Since the tendency to hide self-relevant information is associated with various psychological and relational problems, highlighting its precursors can guide clinicians in developing comprehensive case conceptualizations and planning effective treatment procedures. Self-concealment is theoretically described as a maladaptive regulatory process that includes suppression and rumination (Larson et al., 2015; Masuda et al., 2011, 2017). Wismeijer et al. (2009) provided empirical support to this conceptualization by revealing that self-concealers were more likely to engage in mood monitoring without the ability to identify. The present findings suggest that self-concealment can be deployed to direct perceived deficits in accepting and managing intense emotions associated with unmet basic needs. Preventive programs may benefit from parental or school education designed to highlight the importance of satisfying psychological needs and developing emotion regulation skills in children and teens. Health professionals may consider applying psychotherapeutic strategies to fulfill basic needs along with traditional intervention programs. Consistently, Ryan and Deci (2008) posit that the SDT approach to psychotherapy may enhance the client's motivation for change and attainment of therapeutic outcomes while implementing other evidence-based protocols.

This study has several limitations. First, the demographic features of the sample, mainly young and female participants with higher education, restrict the generalizability of the results. The result demonstrating that males reported higher self-concealment than females is in line with the prior research (Wismeijer et al., 2009) and the proposition that men are less likely to seek help than women (Addis & Mahalik, 2003). On the other hand, some empirical evidence shows that this tendency does not differ according to gender (Hartman et al., 2015; Larson & Chastain, 1990). Self-concealment and help-seeking attitudes can be influenced by cultural values (Wallace et al., 2005), and gender differences in this tendency can be associated with cultural norms, gender roles, and gender stereotypes (Addis & Mahalik, 2003). Therefore, it may be beneficial to examine the role of both cultural characteristics and personal developmental stories on the development of self-concealment in the future. In addition, future investigations with greater diversity in sample characteristics are also recommended to explore the possible individual differences and validate the established associations among variables. Second, the cross-sectional design prevents causal interpretations and elucidates the direction of the relationship between variables. Further studies with longitudinal design might offer broader knowledge regarding how satisfaction with each psychological need is related to the development of self-concealment and self-disclosure patterns. In addition, experimental studies eliciting self-evaluative emotions, such as shame and guilt, might be beneficial in observing to what extent the regulatory processes are involved in these associations. With this, it is possible to attain a more definitive conclusion for the reciprocal relationships among unmet needs, maladaptive regulatory processes, and self-concealment. Using self-report measures is another limitation. Hence, future studies with implicit techniques, particularly to assess self-concealment, are warranted. Moreover, alternative measures can be utilized to assess psychological needs or emotion regulation to validate current findings. Finally, integrating this model with different psychological problems is valuable for clinical practice since all of these study variables are assumed to directly or indirectly account for psychological well-being. Therefore, the absence of a clinical sample can be considered another limitation. Testing this model on participants with different psychological problems may provide detailed information about these mechanisms and contribute to effective case conceptualizations.

Despite limitations, the current study offers an intriguing explanatory model for the possible precursors of self-concealment within the SDT perspective, which is a metatheory presenting valuable explanations on personality development, motivational processes, and well-being. The results convey that unfulfilled psychological needs cultivate deficits in regulating emotions and, in turn, the tendency to keep the self in the dark. SDT posits that the satisfaction of basic psychological needs, which are innate and universal, is essential for well-being and optimal functioning (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2002). This assumption has been empirically validated by various research in different cultures (Chen et al., 2015; Church et al., 2013). Although the relationship between need satisfaction and well-being has not been directly tested in this model, a possible explanatory mechanism that sheds light on this link is underlined and supports existing literature from Turkish culture. These findings also emphasize the integration of the SDT approach, which stresses the client's focused process along with the therapist using a psychological need-supportive style (Ryan & Deci, 2008) with interventions targeting psychological flexibility and mindfulness (Masuda et al., 2017) in clinical practice while working with self-concealers. Future research to explore the emotional aspects of the association between need satisfaction and self-concealment with different samples has a solid potential to attain a more definitive conclusion regarding the development and maintenance of this tendency and related therapeutic outcomes.

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