Identity statuses and psychosocial functioning in Turkish youth: A person-centered approach

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ABSTRACT

In the present study, we tested whether the five identity statuses of the original Meeus—Crocetti model could be extracted in a Turkish sample. Their three-factor model of identity was used to examine identity formation. Participants were 1201 (59.6% females) youth aged between 12 and 24 years (M_{age} = 17.53 years, SD_{age} = 3.25). Findings revealed that the five identity statuses extracted in previous studies (Crocetti, Rubini, Luyckx, & Meeus, 2008; Crocetti, Schwartz, Fermani, Klimstra, & Meeus, 2012) also emerged in a sample of Turkish adolescents and emerging adults. Findings indicated that gender and age affected the distribution of the individuals among the five identity statuses. Furthermore, individuals in the five identity statuses represented distinct profiles according to personality and self characteristics, problem behaviors and well-being, and interpersonal and group relationships. Finally, the status × age interactions indicated that the searching moratorium status became more problematic with age. Implications and suggestions for future research are also discussed.

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Introduction

The central task for adolescents and emerging adults is establishing a coherent sense of identity (Arnett, 2000; Erikson, 1968). Individuals who have synthesized a clear sense of identity experience positive social relationships with others and are less likely to show internalizing and externalizing problems (Crocetti, Rubini & Meeus, 2008; Schwartz et al., 2011). Furthermore, these individuals are likely to take adult roles and responsibilities more easily (Luyckx, Schwartz, Goossens & Pollock, 2008; Schwartz, Cote, & Arnett, 2005).

Marcia (1966) proposed the identity status model based on Erikson's (1950) writings on identity formation. Marcia defined four identity statuses by using the dimensions of exploration and commitment. Briefly, *achievement* represents enactment of commitments after exploration process. *Foreclosure* refers to strong commitments without exploration process. *Moratorium* is characterized by active exploration with weak commitments. Finally, *diffusion* represents lack of commitment and haphazard exploration process. The identity status model has inspired a large amount of studies (see Kroger & Marcia,

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2011 for a review), but it has also received its share of criticism. Generally, it has been criticized as misrepresenting Erikson's main ideas (Cote & Levine, 1988; van Hoof, 1999) and focusing on classification of individuals more than on the process of identity formation (Bosma, 1985).

In recent years, some new process models of identity (Crocetti, Rubini, & Meeus, 2008; Luyckx, Schwartz, Goossens et al., 2008) have been proposed in order to further revise and extend Marcia's identity status paradigm. In this context, Meeus, Crocetti and colleagues (Crocetti, Rubini, & Meeus, 2008; Meeus, van de Schoot, Keijsers, Schwartz, & Branje, 2010) proposed a three-dimensional model comprising the identity processes of commitment, in-depth exploration, and reconsideration of commitment. *Commitment* refers to firm choices that individuals have made with regard to various identity domains and to the self-confidence they derive from these choices. *In-depth exploration* represents the extent to which individuals think actively about their existing commitments and search for additional information about them. *Reconsideration of commitment* refers to the possibility of discarding or revising one's existing commitments when they are no longer satisfactory.

From the combination of these three identity processes five identity statuses that resemble and expand on Marcia's (1966) conceptualization can be empirically extracted (Crocetti, Rubini, Luyckx, & Meeus, 2008). Specifically, individuals in the *achievement* status are characterized by high commitment and in-depth exploration, combined with low reconsideration of commitment. Individuals in the *closure* status have moderate commitments, low in-depth exploration, and low reconsideration of commitment. Individuals in the *moratorium* status strive to find more satisfying identity related commitments and they display low commitment, a medium level of in-depth exploration and high reconsideration of commitment. Individuals in the *searching moratorium* have high levels of commitments, in-depth exploration, and also reconsideration of commitment. Thus, these adolescents are in the process of searching for more satisfying commitments. Finally, individuals in the *diffusion* status have low commitment, in-depth exploration, and also reconsideration of commitment. Thus, they seem not to care about their lack of fulfilling commitments.

Correlates of the identity statuses

A priority in the identity research is to investigate how identity statuses are related to youth psychosocial functioning. In this respect, three groups of correlates have been taking into account: personality and self dimensions, problem behaviors and well-being, and quality of interpersonal relationships (e.g., Crocetti, Rubini, Luyckx et al., 2008; Luyckx, Goossens, & Soenens, 2006). A growing literature has shown that each of the identity status present a distinct profile on these dimensions.

Personality and self

A consistent literature has examined associations between identity statuses and the Big Five personality dimensions (Crocetti, Rubini, Luyckx et al., 2008; Crocetti, Schwartz, Fermani, & Meeus, 2010; Crocetti, Schwartz, Fermani, Klimstra, & Meeus, 2012). Individuals in the achievement status displayed highest scores on extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience. Individuals in the closure status, as compared to individuals in the achievement status, reported less extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience. Individuals in the searching moratorium status, compared to individuals in the moratorium status, displayed higher personality profiles. Finally, individual in the diffusion status reported poorly-defined personality profiles (Crocetti, Rubini, Luyckx et al., 2008, Crocetti et al., 2012; Schwartz et al., 2011).

Problem behaviors and well-being

Studies examining the profile of identity statuses in terms of problem behaviors and well-being have focused on internalizing (e.g., anxiety and depressive symptomatology) and externalizing (e.g., aggressive and delinquent behaviors) problems, and positive facets of well-being (e.g., satisfaction with life, psychological well-being). Previous studies revealed that individuals in the achievement and closure statuses reported low levels of problem behaviors and higher levels of well-being compared to individual classified into other statuses. Individuals in the searching moratorium status have lower problem behaviors and higher well-being compared to individuals in the moratorium and diffusion statuses (Crocetti, Rubini, Luyckx et al., 2008, Crocetti et al., 2012; Karaś, Cieciuch, Negru, & Crocetti, 2015; Luyckx, Schwartz, Berzonsky et al., 2008; Schwartz et al., 2011). Additionally, previous studies, by using a variable-centred approach, found positive association between dimensions of exploration and commitment and well-being, and negative association between ruminative exploration and well-being (Ritchie et al. 2013; Schwartz et al., 2011).

Interpersonal and group relationships

Literature on identity statuses and interpersonal and group relationships has been largely focused on parental relationships, whereas less attention has been devoted to peer relationships and to the identification with various social groups. With respect to family relationships, prior studies found that individuals in the achievement and closure statuses reported higher levels of parental trust compared to individual classified into other statuses. Individuals in the searching moratorium status displayed higher levels of parental trust compared to individual in the moratorium and diffusion statuses (Crocetti, Rubini, Luyckx et al., 2008, Crocetti et al., 2012).