



Investigation of Psychological Flourishing and Ostracism Experience Levels of Ahiskan University Students in Turkey

Research Article

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ABSTRACT

The Turkish population which was expelled from Ahiska region after the end of the Ottoman rule has been scattered in many different countries due to the exiles and migrations. Many young Ahiskan Turks who live in various countries including Turkey prefer Turkey for university education. In this study, using a questionnaire-based survey design, data was collected from 211 Ahiskan students who are studying at 25 different state universities in Turkey, in order to investigate the flourishing and ostracism experience levels of Ahiskan students who are continuing their university education in Turkey. The Flourishing Scale (FS) and The Ostracism Experience Scale (OES) were used in the collection of data. Both scales were found valid and reliable for use in this group with their original item numbers and factor structures. Then, independent samples t-tests, analysis of variance, and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation were used for data analyses. Neither FS nor OES scores were significantly different in terms of gender. FS scores did not indicate a significant difference in the level at which education was started in Turkey and whether or not the family resided in Turkey. Those who started their education at university level in Turkey reported significantly higher ostracism experience than those who started their education at previous levels of education and those whose family did not reside in Turkey compared to those whose family did reside in Turkey. FS scores were negatively correlated with OES total, ignorance and exclusion scores. While the duration of residence in Turkey was not associated with FS scores, it was negatively associated with OES total and subscale scores.

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Keywords:

Ahiska Turks, University students, flourishing, ostracism

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Introduction

Ahiska is a territory located within the borders of Georgia, a northeastern neighbor of Turkey, was left to the Russians in 1828 as war reparations after hosting a dense Turkish population as part of the Ottoman Empire for 250 years. Turks living in this geography, experienced many emigrations and exiles for various reasons both during Tsarist Russia and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), (Ganiyeva, 2012; Zeyrek 2006). At first, Ahiska Turks took refuge in Erzurum in 1853-56 Ottoman Russian war because of being pro-Ottoman due to the treatment they received and then continued this migration in larger groups following the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in 1877-78 war (Zeyrek, 2001). In time, the Ahiska Turks who did not emigrate and remained in Russian territory were named by Stalin as “dangerous peoples” and 40000 of them were sent to the front in the Second World War, while about 138000 were deported to Central Asia on 14 November 1944 from Georgia, which was a member of the USSR at the time (Ganiyeva, 2012; Seferov & Akış, 2008; Zeyrek, 2001). During this exile, more than 100 thousand Ahiska Turks were forced to emigrate again (Agara, 2004; Seferov & Akış, 2008) as a result of the growth of events in Fergana in 1989 between Ahiska Turks and Uzbeks, the majority of whom were sent to Uzbekistan (Bayraktar, 1999). With this migration, the Ahiska Turks who lived in masses were scattered to different countries (Zeyrek, 2001).

Ahiska Turks, whose total population is estimated to be 600000, currently live in about 15 different countries, mainly the former USSR countries (Seferov & Akış, 2008). Turkey, Kazakhstan, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Ukraine are the countries where Ahiska Turks live extensively (Aydingün, 2002). Along with this, the Law No. 3835 on the adoption and settlement of Ahiska Turks to Turkey in July 1992 played an encouraging role in the migration of Ahiska Turks living in various countries of the world. With the adoption of the law, thousands of Ahiska Turks from different countries started to emigrate to Turkey. After the first migration to Iğdır after this law, many Ahiska Turks settled in major cities in Turkey, especially Bursa, Istanbul and Ankara (Yılmaz & Mustafa, 2014). As a result of these developments, many Ahiskan young people living in Turkey and other countries have preferred Turkey for university education.

Ahiskan Students in Higher Education in Turkey

Since the migration life of Ahiska Turks began many years ago as described above, the situation of Ahiskan students at higher education level in Turkey today is diverse in terms of their relationship to migration. While some of these students had the experience of emigrating to a different country with their families, some of them had not experienced emigration themselves, but were indirectly affected by this experience because they were the children of former immigrants. While some of them are individuals whose families have been in Turkey and who have become or have not yet become Turkish citizens through legal processes over time, others are students whose families have emigrated to countries other than Turkey and are still living there and who are continuing their higher education in Turkey as foreign students. In this case, it is likely that some of these students have problems or needs related to immigration and some of them are foreign students in higher education.

According to the literature, especially international migration brings multifaceted adaptation problems (Akıncı, Nergiz & Gedik, 2015). Social isolation (Victor, Scambler, Bond & Bowling, 2000) and cultural shock (İlgar & İlgar, 2015) of immigrants, the system of values they are accustomed to (Yıldırım, 2007) and the differences in language and religion that can be considered in connection with this system of values (Bingöl & Özdemir, 2014) are among the factors that complicate the process of adaptation to the migrated society. Accordingly, it seems inevitable that the years of exile, migration and distress will leave marks on the psychological lives of Ahiskan people.

There are numerous studies in the literature on the psychological needs and interventions to these needs of foreign students studying in higher education in Turkey (e.g., Çağlar, 1999; Ercan, 2001; Kiroğlu, Kesten, &

Elma, 2010; Otrar, Ekşi, Dilmaç, & Şirin, 2002). However, the number of studies that investigate Ahiskan students are very few among these. Psychological resilience, hardiness and life satisfaction of these students have been examined in the studies that have been conducted to determine the psychological situation and needs of Ahiskan students in higher education in Turkey. According to the results of the research, while no significant difference was found on happiness, psychological resilience (Kemal & Oğuz-Duran, 2019) and life satisfaction (Kazımoğlu & Oğuz-Duran, 2019) in terms of genders of Ahiskan students, there was a significant difference in hardiness in favor of men (Dursun & Oğuz-Duran, 2019). Additionally, although not aimed at Ahiskans, many studies in Turkey have reported that male students of foreign nationality show more signs of compliance than women (Kılıçlar, Sarı, & Seçilmiş, 2012; Paksoy, Paksoy, & Özçalıcı, 2012), and men being more comfortable and sociable in some areas and social activities in Turkey is shown as a possible reason for that (Sungur et al., 2016).

The duration of residence in Turkey was not significantly related to any of the variables in the aforementioned researches (Dursun & Oğuz-Duran, 2019; Kemal & Oğuz-Duran, 2019). However, research conducted with foreign students other than Ahiskans in Turkey has found that living in Turkey reduces students' problems (Ercan, 2001) and makes a difference in terms of their social cohesion (Sungur et al., 2016). On the other hand, studies examining the effects of which level of education they started in Turkey showed that the levels of happiness and psychological resilience of Ahiskan students did not make a significant difference (Kemal & Oğuz-Duran, 2019), but the hardiness scores of those who started their education at primary school level were significantly higher than those who started their education in higher education (Dursun & Oğuz-Duran, 2019). In addition, the life satisfaction scores of those who started their education at primary school level were significantly higher than those who started their education at secondary school-high school (Kazımoğlu & Oğuz-Duran, 2019).

Finally, a previous study (Kazımoğlu & Oğuz-Duran, 2019) investigated Ahiskan university students' preferences of whom to spend most of their time with, other than their families (Ahiskan, non-Ahiskan, both). This preference was found not to have a meaningful relationship with life satisfaction.

Ahiskan Students, flourishing and social isolation

In recent literature, various views have emerged that focus on human social-psychological properties and define well-being by arguing that humans have some universal needs, such as competence, relatedness, and self-acceptance (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Singer, 1998). Recently, a comprehensive well-being theory was created by Diener et al. (2010) based on the findings of studies highlighting the importance of social capital for societies well-being (Helliwell, Barrington-Leigh., Harris, & Huang, 2009; Putnam, 2000); flow, interest and engagement for human well-being which will be the basis for "psychological capital" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990); purpose and meaning for human functioning (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Singer, 1998; Seligman, 2002); supporting others as much as receiving other people's social support for individual's mental and physical health and optimism for human well-being (Brown, Nesse, Vinocur, & Smith, 2003); and the concept of "flourishing" was used to describe social-psychological functioning. Due to the lack of a Turkish equivalent of the word "Flourishing", this subject has continued to be used and measured as "Psychological well-being" in Turkish researches (Telef, 2013).

There are many contributions that psychological well-being brings to people's lives. In several studies it was reported that psychological well-being positively affects body health (Richman et al., 2005); increases quantity and quality in social relations (Lyubomirsky, King & Diener, 2005); contributes to productivity, success and the tendency of people to see themselves as more successful (Pelled, Eisenhardt & Xin, 1999). In contrast, it is stated that psychological well-being is associated with social anxiety, and that social anxiety causes a decrease in psychological well-being due to impairing the functionality in social relationships and causing difficulties in interpersonal relationships (Kashdan, Julian, Merritt & Uswatte, 2006).

For a human being, who is a social being, it is essential to be accepted by the groups he is in and to feel himself as a part of those groups. It negatively affects the life of the individual to think that they are ignored or excluded by the social environment (Tutar, Oruç & Gürsel, 2018). Such that social exclusion can make it difficult for individuals to participate in social activities, as well as prevent them from achieving the personal goals they set (Silver, 2007). Individuals subjected to social exclusion may be ignored by those with whom they share the same physical environment (Williams, 2001). This may cause some psychological and emotional problems in individuals. Although the results vary according to the severity and type, social exclusion can cause intense stress, depression and anxiety as well as affect the self-esteem negatively and cause a person to feel worthless (Robinson, O'Reilly & Wang, 2013).

Personal characteristics are an important factor in social exclusion. People with particularly high levels of compatibility were found to be less socially excluded (Camps, Stouten, & Euwema, 2016). Many factors affect the adaptation to the environment. Individuals undergoing adaptation in a foreign country may have some difficulties, especially at the beginning when communicating with other people. The fact that these people belong to a culture similar to the culture of the country they come from helps them to adapt to their environment more easily (Özçetin, 2013).

As a result, there are many Ahiskan students studying at universities in Turkey. Whether they are first- or second-generation immigrants or are in Turkey for higher education, it is important to examine the situation of Ahiskan students in Turkish universities and to apply the necessary measures and interventions related to them. The provision of the services required by Ahiskan students depends primarily on the determination of the problems and the variables with which they are related. For instance, determining the psychological status and needs of these students is important in terms of planning and implementation of Guidance and Psychological Counseling services in higher education. Based on the aforementioned research findings, well-being/flourishing and ostracism experience are among the concepts that can be studied in this context, because Ahiskan students in Turkish higher education institutions may be at risk for experiencing ostracism which may, in turn, cause decrease in their flourishing levels. Moreover, research shows that it is possible to achieve a large number of positive outcomes such as psychological, social, physical and academic given that psychological well-being is increased (Lyubomirsky, et al., 2005; Pelled, et al., 1999; Richman et al., 2005). However, increasing the level of social isolation brings many problems (Robinson et al., 2013; Silver, 2007; Williams, 2001). Therefore, counselors in Turkish higher education institutions should be aware of the possible risks of ostracism experience, risk groups or risk-factors that threatened both ostracism experience and flourishing levels of Ahiskan students in their institutions. However, the flourishing and ostracism experience levels of Ahiskan students, who have a similar cultural background with the population in Turkey due to their Turkish and Muslim origins, and the variables that affect these levels are unknown.

The present research

This research has two main objectives: (1) To shed light on possible psychological intervention studies by examining the flourishing and ostracism experience levels of Ahiskan university students in Turkey in terms of their relationships with various demographic variables (gender, the level at which they start their education in Turkey, the country in which the family resides, the nationality of people who spend time outside the family, the length of their stay in Turkey) and their relationships with each other; and (2) to provide measuring tools that can be used in studies with Ahiskan students on this subject by re-examining the validity and reliability of the Flourishing Scale (FS; Diener et al., 2009) and the Ostracism Experience Scale (OES; Gilman et al., 2013) which were examined for validity and reliability on Turkish university students before, for Ahiskan university students in Turkey.

Method

Participants

The study group consisted of 211 Ahiskan students studying at 25 different state universities in Turkey. Of these students, 42.7% (n=90) were female and 53.3% (n=121) were male. They range between the ages of 18 and 32 (\bar{X} =21.36 and SD =2.56). The frequency and percentage values for the demographic characteristics of the working group are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Data on Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Demographics		n	%
Gender	Female	90	42.7
	Male	121	53.3
Grade	1	78	37.0
	2	62	29.4
	3	32	15.2
	4	30	14.2
	5	5	2.4
	6	4	1.9
Faculty	Education	54	25.6
	Arts and Sciences	19	9
	Economics and Administrative Sciences	43	20.4
	Health Sciences	52	24.6
	Engineering	21	10
	Medicine	8	3.8
	Other	14	6.6
Starting Level of education in Turkey	Kindergarten	6	2.9
	Primary School	51	24.2
	Middle School	11	5.2
	High School	14	6.6
	Higher education	129	61.1
Country of residence of the family outside of Turkey	ABD	1	0.5
	Azerbaijan	34	16.1
	Kazakhstan	16	7.6
	Kyrgyzstan	12	5.7
	Uzbekistan	14	6.6
	Russia	22	10.4
Country of residence of the family	Turkey	105	49.8
	Outside of Turkey	106	50.2
Who the students spent the most time with except families	Ahiskans	23	10.9
	Non-Ahiskans	18	8.5
	Both	170	80.5
Total		211	100

As seen in Table 1, although the majority of the students were male (53.3%), the distribution by gender was balanced. In terms of class level, the most attendees are first-year students (37%), followed by second grade (29.4%), third grade (15.2%) and fourth class (14.2%), respectively. There are also few fifth (%2.4) and sixth (%1.9) graders. Students from the Faculties of Education (25.6%), Health Sciences (24.6%) and Economics

and Administrative Sciences (20.4%) make the most of the participants of the study. There was also participation from engineering (10%), science and literature (9%), Medicine (3.8%) and other (6.6%) faculties. The highest number of participants in terms of their starting level of education in Turkey reported that they started education at higher education level (61.1%), followed by those who reported that they started education at primary school (24.2%). Due to the small number of those who have announced that they started their education in Turkey in kindergarten, secondary school and high school, these three groups were combined with those who started in primary schools in order to be suitable for statistical analysis and a new group was created and is called as “pre-higher education starters”. Similarly, in terms of the country in which the family resides, these groups are combined to “outside of Turkey” due to the small number of residents in countries other than Turkey (USA, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Russia and Ukraine). After this grouping, it was observed that 49.8% of those whose family resided in Turkey and 50.2% of those residing outside Turkey. When we looked at who the students spent the most time with, except their families, it was observed that most (80.5%) spent time with both Ahiskans and non-Ahiskans. Mostly those who spend time with Ahiskans (10.9%) are more than those who spend time with non-Ahiskans (8.5%). Due to the high number of students in the first group (N=170) compared to the other two groups (N=23 and N=18), it was not appropriate to compare the psychological well-being and social exclusion levels among these groups.

Instruments

The Flourishing Scale (FS). The scale, first developed by Diener et al., (2009) under the name Psychological Well-Being Scale and later called Flourishing Scale (Diener et al., 2010), consists of 8 items and is one-dimensional. There is no reverse-coded items among the items. The answers to the 7-point Likert-type scale items are scored between strongly disagree (1) and strongly agree (7). The lowest possible score on the scale is 8 and the highest is 56. A high score indicates that a person has many psychological resources and powers. As a result of the validity study of the scale with university students, a single factor structure was obtained that explains 53% of the total variance. Factor loads were reported to range from .61 to .77. The Cronbach’s alpha internal consistency coefficient of the scale was calculated as .87 (Diener et al., 2009). The scale adapted by Telef (2013) into Turkish has been found to have a high level of positive and meaningful relationship between the Turkish form and the English form ($r = .97, p < .01$). It was found that the Turkish version of the scale has a single general factor in accordance with the original and this factor explains 42% of the total variance. In Turkish form the factor loads of scale items are found to be between .54 and .76. The scale is seen to have a good enough test-retest reliability ($r = .86, p < .01$) and internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha = .80).

The Ostracism Experience Scale (OES). The OES, which was developed by Gilman et al. (2013) in order to measure the perceptions of exclusion or ignorance in a social group, consists of 11 items. Responses to 5-point Likert-type scale items are scored between Never (1) and Always (5). The highest OES score is 55 and the lowest score is 11. High scores indicate a high level of ostracism perception. As a result of exploratory factor analysis, it was found that the OES had two sub-dimensions, Ignorance (items 1.2.3.4.5) and Exclusion (items 6.7.8.9.10.11), which explained 76.65% of the total variance. Factor loads ranged from .77 to .90. The items of the Exclusion sub-dimension were reverse coded. The Cronbach’s alpha internal consistency coefficient of the scale was found to be .94 for the Ignorance sub-dimension and .93 for the Exclusion sub-dimension. In the study of adaptation validity, positive relationships between ignorance and exclusion sub-dimensions and depression ($r = .34, r = .53$) and social stress ($r = .45, r = .66$) were found while a negative relationship between global satisfaction ($r = -.40, r = -.32$) emerged. The two-dimensional structure of the 11-item scale, which was in accordance with the original, was confirmed by the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) performed by Akin, Uysal & Akin (2016) in order to adapt the OES into Turkish ($\chi^2 = 80.64, df = 41,$

RMSEA= .056, NFI=.96, NNFI=.97, IFI=.98, RFI= .95, CFI= .98, GFI= .95, and SRMR= .04). In the same study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient calculated to examine the internal consistency of OES was .89 for the whole scale. In addition, as a result of the confirmatory factor analysis applied by Çelikkaleli and Tümtaş (2017), a similar structure was confirmed ($\chi^2/df=4.87$, RMSEA= .08, NFI=.93, IFI=.94, RFI= .91, CFI= .94, GFI= .93 and SRMR=.03) and the internal consistency coefficient of the scale was found to be .89.

The Personal Information Form. It was prepared by the researchers to determine the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants. The form contains questions regarding the genders, grades, faculties which they are enrolled in, starting level of education in Turkey, country of residence of the family outside of Turkey, country of residence of the family, most time spending preferences except families (Ahiskan, Non-Ahiskan and Both) of the participants.

Procedure

To examine the validity and reliability of the FS and the OES for use in Ahiskan university students in Turkey, permits were obtained from Telef (2013) and Akın et al. (2016), who adapted the scales to Turkish via e-mail. The measurement tools were then transferred to electronic environment and made ready for application via "Google Forms" and shared via social media and answered online in this way by 211 students who volunteered to participate in the research. All data were obtained from Ahiskan students who continued their studies in various faculties of 25 different state universities in Turkey during the spring semester of the 2018-2019 academic year.

Data Analyses

The study data were analyzed using the SPSS 22 package software. Descriptive statistics were primarily calculated. Construct validity of the FS and the OES was evaluated by Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and reliability by Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficient and item-total score correlations. T-test was used to compare two independent groups for continuous variables. Pearson Moments correlation coefficients were calculated to investigate the relationships between variables.

Results

Results regarding the validity and reliability evidence of the FS and the OES for Ahiskan Students

Results of EFA for the FS and the OES. To provide evidence of construct validity of the two scales used in the study, first the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy, and Barlett's test were applied to the data to examine the appropriateness for EFA. Results revealed the appropriateness of the data for EFA (Pallant, 2016) both for the FS (KMO = .91 and $\chi^2=1289.518$, $p<.01$) and for the OES (KMO = .85 and $\chi^2=1642.080$; $p<.01$). Then, Principal component analysis without any rotation was used to examine the factorial structure of the scales. The criterion of eigenvalue greater than "1.00" was used to determine the number of factors. Results for the FS revealed only one factor which accounted for 69.50% of the total variance. The factor loadings with regard to this structure ranged from .80 (Item 3) to .86 (Item 2). Results for the OES revealed two factors which accounted for 66.83% of the total variance. The factor loadings with regard to this structure ranged from .45 (Item 9) to .88 (Item 10). The factor loadings are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. EFA Results for the FS and for the OES (N=211)

FS		OES Total	OES Ignorance	OES Exclusion
Item	Factor loadings	Item	Factor loadings	Factor loadings
2	.86	10	.88	
6	.85	7	.87	
5	.84	11	.86	
1	.83	8	.85	
7	.83	6	.75	
8	.83	9	.45	
4	.81	4		.83
3	.80	3		.82
		5		.80
		2		.70
		1		.68
Eigenvalue	5.56	-	5.61	1.73
% Total variance	69.50	66.83	51.05	15.78
Cronbach α	.94	.89	.86	.88

Results of reliability analyses for the FS and the OES. Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficient was found to be $\alpha = .94$ for the FS, and $\alpha = .86$ for Ignorance sub-dimension, and $\alpha = .88$ for Exclusion sub-dimension of the OES (See Table 1). In addition, item-total score correlations were calculated for both scales and the results are given in Table 3 and Table 4. When item-total correlations are examined, it is seen that item-total score correlation values of all items are higher than .30. Since the Cronbach's α values above .60 (Yıldız & Uzunsakal, 2018) and the item-total score correlations above .30 (Büyüköztürk, 2004) are acceptable, both the FS and the OES were considered reliable measuring tools for use in Ahiskan students attending higher education in Turkey.

Table 3. Item-Total Score Correlations Calculated for the FS

Item	\bar{X} (SD)	Corrected Item- Total Correlation	Alpha if item deleted
1	5.15 (1.70)	.78	.93
2	5.26 (1.45)	.82	.92
3	5.09 (1.59)	.74	.93
4	5.78 (1.35)	.75	.93
5	5.59 (1.36)	.78	.93
6	5.47 (1.58)	.80	.93
7	5.54 (1.45)	.78	.93
8	5.83 (1.25)	.77	.93

Table 4. Item-Total Score correlations Calculated for the OES

Item	\bar{X} (SD)	Corrected Item- Total Correlation	Alpha if item deleted
1	1.40 (.72)	.48	.88
2	1.31 (.62)	.55	.88
3	1.36 (.70)	.57	.88
4	1.32 (.60)	.56	.88
5	1.50 (.78)	.60	.88
6	2.23 (1.19)	.63	.87
7	1.86 (1.01)	.79	.86
8	1.99 (1.12)	.84	.86
9	3.08 (1.42)	.35	.90
10	1.92 (.97)	.77	.86
11	1.92 (1.02)	.77	.86

Results of the examination of FS and OES scores according to demographic variables

Results on FS and OES scores by gender. Results of independent samples t-test for examining FS and OES (total and sub-scale) scores by gender are given in Table 5.

Table 5. Results of t-test for examining FS and OES scores by gender

Scale	Gender	n	\bar{X}	SD	t	p
FS	Male	121	44.09	10.06	.58	.558
	Female	90	43.28	9.50		
OES total	Male	121	19.61	6.87	.17	.464
	Female	90	20.35	7.64		
Ignorance	Male	121	6.78	2.59	-.76	.448
	Female	90	7.07	2.98		
Exclusion	Male	121	12.83	5.15	-.59	.555
	Female	90	13.27	5.69		

As shown in Table 5, no significant difference was found in either FS or OES scores by gender. Accordingly, Flourishing levels of the Ahiskan male (\bar{x} = 44.09, SD=10.06) and female (\bar{x} = 43.28, SD=9.50) students in higher education in Turkey are similar. Likewise, Ahiskan male (\bar{x} = 19.61, SD=6.87) and female (\bar{x} = 20.35, SD=7.64) university students who study in Turkey reported similar levels of ostracism experience. When the sub-dimensions of OES are considered, there is no significant difference in terms of gender by neither Ignorance ($p > .05$) nor Exclusion ($p > .05$).

Results on the examination of FS and OES scores according to the starting level of education in Turkey. Results of independent samples t-test for examining FS and OES (total and sub-scale) scores by the starting level of education in Turkey were given in Table 6.

Table 6. T-test results for the evaluation of FS and OES scores according to the starting level of education in Turkey

Scale	Starting level of education in Turkey	n	\bar{X}	SD	t	p
FS	Pre-Higher Education	82	44.47	9.14	.85	.392
	Higher Education	129	43.28	10.22		
OES total	Pre-Higher Education	82	17.26	6.03	4.68	.000*
	Higher Education	129	21.62	7.39		
Ignorance	Pre-Higher Education	82	6.01	2.09	4.19	.000*
	Higher Education	129	7.48	2.97		
Exclusion	Pre-Higher Education	82	11.25	4.86	4.02	.000*
	Higher Education	129	14.14	5.41		

* $p < .001$

As shown in Table 6, there was no significant difference in FS scores of Ahiskan students according to the levels in which they started their education in Turkey. Accordingly, the flourishing levels of Ahiskan students did not differ, whether they started their education in Turkey at the higher education level ($\bar{X}=43.28$; $SD=10.22$) or at the previous levels of education ($\bar{X}=44.47$; $SD=9.14$). On the other hand, in terms of OES scores, the results showed that there was a significant difference ($p < .001$) between those who started their education in Turkey in the pre-higher education ($\bar{X}=17.26$; $SD=6.03$) and higher education ($\bar{X}=21.62$; $SD=7.39$) levels in favor of the first group. Accordingly, it can be said that the ostracism experience levels of those who started their education in Turkey at the higher education level are significantly higher than the ostracism experience levels of Ahiskan students who started their education at the pre-higher education levels. Similarly, Ahiskan students who started their education at the higher education level in Turkey reported that they experienced more ignorance ($p < .001$) and exclusion ($p < .001$) than those who started at the pre-higher education level.

Results on the examination of FS and OES scores by country of residence of the family. Results of independent samples t-test for examining FS and OES (total and subscale) scores according to the country of residence of the students' families were given in Table 7.

Table 7. Results of t-test for examining FS and OES scores according to the country of residence of the students' families

Scale	Country of residence of the family	n	\bar{X}	SD	t	p
FS	Turkey	105	44.54	8.99	1.17	.243
	Outside of Turkey	106	42.96	10.54		
OES total	Turkey	105	17.81	6.01	4.43	.000*
	Outside of Turkey	106	22.02	7.68		
Ignorance	Turkey	105	6.19	2.34	-3.89	.000*
	Outside of Turkey	106	7.62	2.95		
Exclusion	Turkey	105	11.62	4.75	-3.87	.000*
	Outside of Turkey	106	14.40	5.62		

* $p < .001$

As shown in Table 7, there was no significant difference ($p=.243$) between the FS scores of Ahiskan students whether their parents lived in Turkey ($\bar{x} = 44.54$, $SD=8.99$) or not ($\bar{x} = 42.96$, $SD=10.54$). Accordingly,

the fact that their families reside in Turkey or in countries other than Turkey does not make a significant difference in the flourishing levels of Ahiskan students studying at universities in Turkey. On the other hand, those whose family did not live in Turkey (\bar{x} = 22.01, SD = 7.68) reported significantly higher ($p < .001$) ostracism experiences than those whose family lived in Turkey (\bar{x} = 17.81, SD = 6.01). In the sub-dimensions of ignorance and exclusion, the scores of those whose family does not live in Turkey are significantly higher than those whose family lives in Turkey ($p < .001$).

Results on the study of the relationship between FS and OES scores and length of residence in Turkey

Pearson moments correlation coefficients, calculated to examine the relationship between the FS and OES (total and subscale) scores of Ahiskan students studying at Turkish universities and their time of residence in Turkey, showed that the length (year) of Ahiskan students in Turkey had no significant relationship ($r = .06$; $p = .399$) with FS scores. However, OES total score ($r = -.32$; $p < .001$) and ignorance ($r = -.31$; $p < .001$) and exclusion ($r = -.26$; $p < .001$) were significantly correlated with subscale scores in the opposite direction. Accordingly, the flourishing levels of the students do not differ on account of the duration of their life in Turkey. However, students who stay in Turkey for a shorter period feel more ostracism experience and report ignorance and exclusion, which are sub-dimensions of the ostracism experience.

Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations

The aim of the study is to shed light on possible psychological intervention studies by examining the flourishing and ostracism experience levels of Ahiskan university students in Turkey in terms of their relationships with various demographic variables (gender, the starting level of education in Turkey, the country in which the family resides, the nationality of people who spend time outside the family, the length of their stay in Turkey) and their relationships with each other. To compare the flourishing levels of Ahiskan students according to demographic variables, firstly the flourishing levels of the students were examined according to gender. In this study, based on findings (Arıcı, 2011; Kuyumcu, 2012) highlighting the impact of gender and culture on individuals' flourishing levels, a difference in flourishing levels of Ahiskan university students in Turkey was expected but not determined by gender. However, consistent with this finding, there are also findings in the field that university students' flourishing levels do not differ by gender, both in Turkey (Kağan & Atalay, 2018) and abroad (Kirkcoldy, Furnham, & Siefen, 2010). Similarly, there was no significant difference between the groups when examining the students' ostracism experience levels by gender. This finding is also consistent with the findings of previous research that the feeling of social exclusion does not differ by gender (Adaman & Ardiç, 2008).

It was found that living with their families in or out of Turkey did not make a significant difference in the flourishing scores of Ahiskan students. However, the ostracism experience scores of Ahiskan students whose parents do not live in Turkey (total, ignorance, exclusion) are significantly higher than those whose parents live in Turkey. In the field, it is reported that individuals' presence with their families provides advantages in areas such as self-confidence (Bilge, Dost & Cetin, 2014) and academic achievement (Çalışkan & Ayık, 2015) etc. by creating moral support. However, it is seen that the target group of these studies is not composed of higher education students. In this study, it was found that whether or not they lived in the same country with their families did not make a significant difference on the flourishing level in the group of university students who were in developmental stage of young adulthood. It is understandable that the flourishing levels of Ahiskan students were not significantly affected by the absence of their families due to their developmental period. Consistent with this research, two separate studies conducted on university students from Ahıska in Turkey found that the resilience, happiness (Kemal & Oğuz-Duran, 2019) and life satisfaction (Kazımoğlu & Oğuz-Duran, 2019) of these students to live in countries outside Turkey or Turkey it did not make any significant difference in levels. On the other hand, in a previous study conducted by Ünsar et al. (2009) with university students, it was seen that students with high family support had better social

relations. It has also been reported in the literature that as the level of social support increases, individuals feel less lonely (Yılmaz, Yılmaz & Karaca, 2008y) and that the social support they receive from their family can help them cope with problems and have a more positive perspective by controlling the negativities more easily (Terzi, 2008). Based on the results of this study, it is possible to think that Ahiskan students whose parents live in Turkey benefit more from family support and feel less social exclusion due to this support.

According to the findings of this study, the majority of Ahiskan university students in Turkey (80.5%) identified the people they spend time with as a mixed group consisting of Ahiskan and non-Ahiskans. In a research conducted earlier by Authors (Kazımoğlu & Oğuz-Duran, 2019), a large majority of Ahiskan students were asked who they prefer to spend time with and the answer was "a mixed group of Ahiskan and non-Ahiskan" too. This consistency between the findings of both studies can be considered as a sign that Ahiskan students are well adapted to their peers in Turkey and can be explained by the historical and cultural commonalities of Ahiska Turks with Turks in Turkey. However, the fact that the participants were not asked in this study how many of the people they meant by "non-Ahiskans" were Turks in Turkey and who else the students were referring to, made it difficult to interpret this finding. However, it was found out that approximately 11% of the students who prefer to spend time together with Ahiskans like themselves, and it was seen useful to examine the reasons and results of this study in other studies.

Although it was aimed at the beginning of the study to examine the difference between flourishing and ostracism experience levels of the three groups in which participants preferred to spend their time outside family members, this analysis was not carried out due to the fact that the participants who spend time with non-Ahiskans and who spend time with Ahiskans are less than participants who spent time with both. The lack of this analysis can be overcome in future research where the number of students per group is more balanced.

The study also found that the flourishing levels of university students from Ahiska showed no significant difference in the level of education they started their education in Turkey, but that ostracism experience levels (Total, ignorance, exclusion) showed a significant difference, and students from Ahiska who started their education at the university level experienced more social exclusion than students starting from previous levels of education. In a study conducted earlier in the field by Dursun and Oguz-Duran (2019), the psychological endurance levels of university students from Ahiska in Turkey differed significantly from the level at which they started their education in Turkey and it has been observed that the psychological endurance scores of those who start educating in Turkey at primary school level are significantly higher than those who start at higher education level. This finding is explained by the fact that starting education in Turkey at primary school level has a facilitating effect on the adaptation of Ahiskan students to the living and education system there at an earlier level. Similarly, Ahiskan university students who started their education in Turkey during their middle school-high school years, which coincided with adolescence in a study conducted by Authors (Kazımoğlu & Oğuz-Duran, 2019), said that in terms of the life satisfaction compared to those started their education in Turkey in primary school level disadvantages and based on this finding, it has been pointed out the need for preventive psychological counseling and guidance services for students who started their education in Turkey during adolescence. According to the findings of this study, Ahiskan students who started their education at the university level in Turkey experience more ostracism experience (Total, ignorance, exclusion) than students who started their education at the previous levels. A study conducted earlier by Çöllü and Öztürk (2010) found that foreign students who had been studying in Turkey for a total of one year had more problems than students who had been in Turkey for three years, and this is explained by the researchers by the fact that the students have not yet adapted to a different education system in their first years away from their home and their families. According to the findings of this study, there is no difference in the flourishing levels of Ahiskan students who started their education at lower levels in Turkey

compared to those who started at higher education level. Both this finding and the finding that the Ahiskan students who started their education in Turkey at the higher level reported more ostracism (total, ignorance and exclusion) compared to those who started at the earlier levels are consistent with the findings of the study regarding the relationship between Flourishing and Ostracism scores in Turkey and its availability in Turkey and can be handled together. Indeed, the flourishing levels of the students according to the length of life in Turkey do not differ, but it is observed that students who stay in Turkey for a shorter period of time report more ostracism experience, ignorance and exclusion. In other words, living in Turkey for longer or shorter periods does not affect the flourishing levels of Ahiskan students. This finding can be explained by the fact that the flourishing level of Ahiskan students cannot be explained only by their life span in Turkey and may be affected by other factors (living conditions in this country, economy, etc.). On the other hand, the study found significant adverse relations between the total and sub-dimension of social exclusion (ignorance and exclusion) scores and the duration of life in Turkey. The findings on Ahiskan students starting their education in Turkey at higher education level and have a shorter length of residence in Turkey report more ostracism (total, ignorance and exclusion) compared to those who started at the previous levels and resided longer in Turkey, is also consistent with the findings of past studies. It has previously been reported that as the length of time foreign students stay in Turkey increases, their problems decrease and first-year students score more in terms of the problem (Ercan, 2001). However, it has also been reported in the field that the countries in which the students are educated are an important factor in their geographical or cultural proximity to their countries or feeling excluded or exposed to prejudices (Pedersen, 1991; Sadowsky & Plake, 1992). In their study, Ertürk, Beşirli and Dursun (2004) stated that the most important factor in the preference of students from different countries with Turkish roots for education is historical and cultural ties. In addition, a study conducted by Kiroğlu et al. (2010) reported that the majority of foreign students studying in Turkey do not feel excluded by Turkish students and that they have established friendship relations with the Turks after the people of their own country. On the basis of these, it was thought that Ahiskan students of Turkish ancestry and Turkish language could be more easily involved in the education system and social life in Turkey. However, the findings of this study appear to be important to those who plan and implement guidance and counselling services in higher education because it shows that despite the genealogy and linguistic unity, students who started education in Turkey at the university level experience more ostracism, ignorance and exclusion to those who start their education in Turkey earlier. The reasons why Ahiskan university students report ostracism experience should be discussed in detail in future research and efforts to eliminate it should be carried out in Turkish university campuses.

Finally, the study examined the validity and reliability of the FS and the OES, which were previously adapted to Turkish and conducted validity and reliability studies on Turkish university students (Diener et al., 2009; Gilman et al., 2013), for Ahiskan students studying at university in Turkey. Both measuring tools were found valid and reliable to use in this group with the original item counts and factor structures. In this regard, this research is thought to contribute to the literature by providing data on the psychometric characteristics of two separate measuring instruments that can be used in relational and experimental research with Ahiskan university students in Turkey.

To conclude, results of this study provide suggestions for counseling services in Turkish universities. Based on this study, Ahiskan students who started their education at university level, and who stay in Turkey for a shorter period of time report more ostracism experience, ignorance and exclusion. Therefore, these students emerge as a group that needs special attention in terms of the services that counseling professionals will provide to reduce ostracism. The causes of ostracism could be investigated in further studies and measures could be taken to eliminate them. Moreover, Ahiskan students whose families reside in countries other than Turkey could be considered as at risk in regard to ostracism experience. Social support services could be provided for those students to compensate for lack of family support. For examining the efficacy of

counseling and guidance services to reduce the ostracism experience and increase the flourishing levels of Ahiskan students, the FS and the OS, for which validity and reliability evidences were found in this study, could be used.

Despite the contributions of the findings of this study to the field, the results of the study should be evaluated within some limitations. First of all, one of the important limitations of the research is that the data was collected from a convenience sample and via the internet. The generalizability of the findings will be enhanced by similar research conducted by random sampling to better represent Ahiskan students attending higher education in Turkey. Furthermore, the generalizability of the findings of this study is limited to Ahiskans who are university students in Turkey and therefore cannot be generalized to other Ahiskan students in Turkey, nor can it be generalized to Ahiskan students living in countries other than Turkey. In this respect, research on the flourishing and ostracism experience levels of Ahiskan students at different levels of education in Turkey and Ahiskan students living in countries other than Turkey may be the subject of other studies.

In addition, in this study, flourishing and ostracism experience levels of students were examined only in light of the findings obtained from Ahiskan students. The studies in which Ahiskan students are compared with Turkish students will help to make further inferences on this subject. Finally, this study examined the effect of certain demographic characteristics on the flourishing and ostracism experience levels of Ahiskan university students in Turkey, but did not measure personal characteristics, which are an important factor in thinking and decision making. Focusing on these features in future research will provide wider information about the causes of the problem.

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