



Identity Statuses and Well-Being among University Students in Türkiye*

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Article Information	ABSTRACT
Received: 13.01.2023	Emerging adulthood is a critical life stage in which identity development is a prominent task. The main purpose of this study is to find out whether the psychological and social well-being of university students vary depending on their identity statuses. 801 university students from different Turkish universities participated in the study. The Dimensions of Identity Development Scale (DIDS), Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWB) and Social Well-being Scale were used to gather data. For data analysis, one-way ANOVA and Tamhane tests were used. The data analysis revealed that psychological and social well-being of university students differ significantly based on their identity statuses. Students with diffused diffusion have the lowest scores of psychological and social well-being among all groups whereas their achieved peers score the highest. Another finding shows that achieved emerging adults manifest higher levels of psychological and social well-being compared to their foreclosed peers despite having similar levels of commitment. Based on the findings on diffusion, one can conclude that carefree diffusion is a more adaptive identity status than diffused diffusion in terms of well-being. The findings are discussed in terms of their implications for experts working at university settings.
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1. INTRODUCTION

Even though identity development is commonly associated with adolescence, it is also a critical process in emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000). Erikson (1968) referred to forming a coherent identity after an active exploration process as the leading developmental task for transition to adulthood. The young people have various alternatives to choose among, concerning their career goals, occupation, political ideology, romantic partner, etc. According to Marcia's (1980) model of identity development, the individual goes through an *exploration* process, which ideally results in a *commitment*. Whereas exploration refers to a wide variety of choices at hand, commitment signifies deciding on one of them and engaging in activities aimed at implementing it.

Four different identity statuses are derived based on Marcia's (2002) identity status model including dimensions of exploration and commitment. While individuals with *achieved* status make a firm choice in a specific domain after exploring numerous options, those with *foreclosure* status do so without any exploration. People with *moratorium* status actively explore identity alternatives without arriving at a stable end whereas those with a *diffusion* status abstain from both exploring the identity-related choices and making a commitment.

Subsequently a great deal of research was carried out depending on this model developed specifically for adolescence, which verified these identity statuses and provided evidence for the correlation between them and a number of psychological variables such as psychological well-being (Cakir, 2014), personal characteristics (Klimstra et al., 2013), and many more. The findings (Skhirtladze et al., 2016) manifest that making an identity commitment is a contributor to well-being as it provides a solid ground and a feeling of success upon completing a task. On the other hand, continuous exploration, which do not bring about a decision for an identity-related process, lead the way to negative psychological outcomes which can exemplified as low well-being, depression and anxiety (Schwartz et al., 2009). Such findings suggest an understanding of healthy identity development

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strongly correlated with high-level psychological well-being to include dimensions of both exploration and commitment, stressing the need for an ultimate decision-making.

Based on Marcia's paradigm, a significant model of identity development was developed by Crocetti et al. (2008) which centers around the continuous nature of identity development. Three basic processes include commitment, in-depth exploration and reconsideration of commitment, which represents making a choice, evaluating the positive and negative facets of the current choice, and reconsidering the pros and cons of the alternative comparing it with the other possible choices, respectively. This model clearly fits the period of adolescence as it denotes to the transient nature of decisions and constant search for new ones. Also, studies based on this model derived an additional identity status called searching moratorium, which indicates recurrently revising the commitments already made.

Another prominent model was developed by Luyckx et al. (2008) who specified identity development processes as exploration in breadth, exploration in depth, commitment making, identification with commitment and ruminative exploration. The formation of commitments begins with trying a number of alternatives, referred to as exploration in breadth- a process which is expected to lead to making a commitment. After doing so, young people evaluate these commitments and analyze the positive and negative sides of a certain commitment. This information-gathering process is called in-depth exploration, which possibly culminate in identification with commitment. If the individual evades making a choice while trying to choose the best option, it means that he/she is in a state of ruminative exploration.

The identity statuses that originate from this model are achievement, foreclosure, ruminative moratorium, carefree diffusion and diffused diffusion (Luyckx et al., 2008). Although moratorium was hypothesized to appear as a separate identity status, a certain group of participants in that study of Luyckx et al. (2008) was classified as undifferentiated as they scored intermediate on all dimensions of identity development. The identity statuses and the scores of identity dimensions acquired in that study is listed below:

Table 1.

Identity Statuses Model (Luyckx et al., 2008)

Identity Dimension	Achievement	Foreclosure	Ruminative Moratorium	Carefree Diffusion	Diffused diffusion	Undifferentiated
Commitment Making	High	High	Low to Moderate	Low	Low	Low to Moderate
Identification with Commitment	High	High	Low to Moderate	Low	Low	Low to Moderate
Exploration in breadth	High	Low	High	Low to Moderate	Low to Moderate	Low to Moderate
Exploration in depth	High	Low	Moderate to high	Low to Moderate	Low to Moderate	Low to Moderate
Ruminative exploration	Low	Low	High	Low to Moderate	High	Low to Moderate

Table 1 shows that the achieved individuals score highly on all aspects of identity formation, with the exception of ruminative exploration. Foreclosed individuals exhibit lower exploration in depth and breadth scores compared to their achieved counterparts. People with ruminative moratorium are distinguished with their high scores in identity processes such as exploration in breadth and ruminative exploration. Diffused status is evident in two ways: carefree diffusion, characterized by low levels of not only commitment making but also identification with commitment, and diffused diffusion, remarkable with exceptionally high scores of ruminative exploration. Lastly, a group of people might get intermediate scores on all identity processes, leading to an undifferentiated cluster.

Identity development and well-being are closely related, especially in emerging adulthood as it is a period of transition into adulthood. If young people do not manage to form personally meaningful commitments during emerging adulthood, they are likely to fail in their attempts to function effectively in terms of career, life goals, political and religious beliefs (Arnett, 2000), which is most likely to have a negative effect on their well-being. Studies handle well-being from different perspectives, subjective well-being stressing the hedonic aspects (Diener et al., 2010), and psychological well-being, accentuating the several dimensions of the concept, such as self-acceptance, environmental mastery, positive relations, purpose in life, personal growth and autonomy (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). The Ryff & Keyes (1995) model of psychological well-being takes psychological well-being both from an angle of personal growth and of his/her relations with the others. Therefore, this model underlines the individual's functioning affected by the environment and the ability to further one's potentials.

A complementary term is social well-being, which can be regarded as the social reflection of psychological well-being, prioritizing one's positive attitude to the community and a feeling of bonding with it. Keyes' (1998) description of social well-being consists of dimensions such as social acceptance, social actualization, social contribution, social coherence and social integration. The more the individual has a positive attitude to the people in his/her community, to the collaboration with them, and the more he/she believes the society intends to foster the well-being of its members, he/she is expected to manifest a higher

level of social well-being. Also, as the person believes to be contributing to the community and that the community is supportive, social well-being is likely to increase.

Research (Karaş et al., 2015; Morsunbul et al., 2016) highlights that both psychological and social well-being is correlated with identity processes and therefore statuses. There is empirical evidence that establishing identity commitments after fully exploring the available alternatives provides a solid ground which enables the individual to enjoy a higher level of psychological and social well-being. The underlying mechanism of such an achieved status might be that, for example, as the person explores various career options, this process might reveal pros and cons of the job, and help the person to evaluate the probable outcomes, finally bringing about a clarity for deciding to be a software developer. As he/she becomes more successful at making a preference for more sophisticated software training or tries internship options at different software companies, this is likely to bring in a higher level of well-being. Like achievement, foreclosure has been linked to high-level psychological well-being, as foreclosed individuals make a commitment and do not ruminate in their search for identity choices. Another explanation might be that those with foreclosure status might feel higher levels of social well-being as their commitments are approved by the people around them.

The moratorium status has generally been linked to feelings of anxiety (Morsunbul et al., 2016; Ryeng et al., 2013) as numerous possibilities are explored without making a commitment at the end. Constant searching might evoke a feeling of doubt about whether the person will manage to find the right path or not. As for the identity diffusion, the relationship with well-being is clear. Those with diffused identity status generally manifest the lowest levels of psychological well-being (Karaş et al., 2015) due to the fact that they score high on exploring alternatives ruminatively and fail to make an identity choice. Young people with carefree diffusion and diffused diffusion statuses are found to score low on negative psychological concepts such as internalizing disorders, aggression and low self-esteem (Crocetti et al., 2008; Schwartz et al., 2011). The implication of such studies conducted to test the relationship between identity statuses and well-being is that the identity processes in which commitment making is available provide a secure base in life whereas ruminatively seeking for different possibilities in life would reduce well-being.

1.1. Problem

The relationship between identity statuses and well-being has been subject to a number of studies (Crocetti et al., 2012). The common point of all of these is that achieved and foreclosed individuals show a higher level of psychological and social well-being, due to their greater levels of commitment making and in-depth exploration. On the other hand, identity statuses such as moratorium and diffusion are negatively correlated to well-being, which underlines the unfavorable reflections of exploration in breadth and ruminative exploration. Although such studies have demonstrated that there is a close link between identity statuses and well-being, the relationship has been commonly studied in adolescent populations as identity formation is generally associated with adolescence. However, emerging adulthood can be regarded as the apex of identity development since the individual makes enduring choices regarding career path, romantic life, political ideas, etc. (Arnett, 2000). Additionally, studies covering the lifespan between 19 to 29 ages focusing on identity statuses which were conducted in Turkey are limited and there is need for more to get a more detailed understanding of the identity-related dynamics of emerging adults.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

Based on the current literature, it is hypothesized that well-being will differ according to the identity status of the emerging adult. Therefore, the main purpose of the study is to analyze whether their psychological and social well-being levels vary depending on the identity statuses (namely achievement, foreclosure, moratorium, carefree diffusion, diffused diffusion and undifferentiated category).

In accordance with current literature on identity statuses, these hypotheses are formulated:

H1. Psychological well-being of emerging adults vary among different identity statuses.

H2. Achieved individuals show the highest level of psychological well-being whereas those with diffused diffusion score the lowest.

H3. Social well-being of emerging adults vary among different identity statuses.

H4. Achieved individuals show the highest level of social well-being whereas those with diffused diffusion score the lowest.

H5. While foreclosure and achievement share comparable degrees of commitment, achieved participants are likely to exhibit greater levels of social and psychological well-being.

H6. Emerging adults with diffused diffusion identity status show a lower level of psychological and social well-being compared to those with carefree diffusion.

By evaluating the combination of identity processes, we hypothesize to derive six distinct identity status clusters in parallel with the model (Luyckx et al., 2008). This would enable us to conclude that Marcia's paradigm could be verified in a non-western culture like Turkey's, with individualist and collectivist elements co-existing.

2. METHODOLOGY

This is survey research with a correlational design, which is a quantitative research method. The process of gathering data via questionnaire replies from a sample of people is known as survey research (Check & Schutt, 2012) and this kind of research enables the researchers to describe the current state as far as a particular situation is concerned. With the correlational design, the main purpose is to discover the relationship between the variables (Karasar, 2018).

2.1. Participants

Participants were 801 university students (aged between 17-23 years) attending different universities in Turkey (Mage = 19.65 years, SD = 1.26). All the participants of the study are emerging adults. With a view to choose the participants, the convenience sampling method was applied. Researchers using convenience sampling collect data from participants who volunteer to be a part of the study and who are easily accessible (Cohen et al., 2007). As the data for this study was collected during Covid-19- a period in which education started to be performed online and students had to stay at home to eliminate any risk of contamination- the convenience sampling method was preferred. The distribution of students based on gender, year at university, GPA and living arrangement is shown in Table 2.

Table 2.

Distribution of University Students by Gender, Year at University, GPA and Living Arrangement

Gender	
Female	467 (58.3%)
Male	334 (41.7%)
Year at University	
1 th	245 (30.6%)
2 nd	146 (18.2%)
3 th	174 (21.7%)
4 th	189 (23.6%)
5 th and above	47 (5.9%)
GPA	
AA/ 90-100/ 4	100 (12.5%)
BA/ 85-89/ 3.5	178 (22.2%)
BB/ 80-84/ 3	190 (23.7%)
CB/ 75-79/ 2.5	171 (21.3%)
CC/ 70-74/ 2	115 (14.4%)
DC/ 65-69/ 1.5	43 (5.4%)
DD/ 60-64/ 1	2 (0.2%)
FD/50-59/ 0.5	2 (0.2%)
Living Arrangement	
Dormitory	567 (70.8%)
Lives alone at home	46 (5.7%)
Lives with a home mate at home	58 (7.2%)
Lives with family at home	234 (29.2%)

2.2. Measures

So as to gather data, ethical approval was taken from Ankara University (ID: 56786525-050.04.04/49458) and the following scales were given to the students who provided consent to take part in the study.

2.2.1. Dimensions of Identity Development Scale (DIDS)

Participants completed the Dimensions of Identity Development Scale (DIDS) developed by Luyckx et al. (2008). The adaptation of the scale in Turkish culture was carried out by Morsünbül & Çok (2014), who examined the validity of the scale in a sample of university students, aged 18-23. It consists of 25 items, which fall into 5 identity processes, including 5 items for each (in-depth exploration, exploration in breadth, ruminative exploration, commitment making and identification with commitment). The items of this 5-point Likert type rating scale range from "strongly agree" (5 points) to "strongly disagree" (1 point).

The construct validity of the scale was tested with confirmatory factor analysis and RMSEA was found to be 0.07 and CFI was 0.92. Reliability was tested with Cronbach alpha values, which were 0.88 for commitment making, 0.84 for exploration in breadth, 0.87 for identification with commitment, 0.78 for exploration in depth and 0.79 for ruminative exploration.

2.2.2. Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWB)

Developed by Diener et al. (2010), the scale (PWB) is a 12-item brief scale, which was later renamed as “Flourishing Scale”. This 7-point Likert type rating scale range from “strongly disagree” (1 points) to “strongly agree” (7 point). The more points the participant obtains point to a higher level of psychological well-being. The scale was adapted to Turkish culture by Telef (2013), who, in support of the construct validity, found out a RMSEA score of 0.08, SRMR= 0.04 and CFI= 0.95. Reliability scores (Cronbach alpha) also proved to be good, with .80.

2.2.3. Social Well-Being Scale

Developed by Keyes (1998), the scale includes 33 items ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree. It measures 5 dimensions of social well-being in line with Keyes’ model. The scale was adapted into Turkish by Akın et al. (2013), who found one factor instead of five. It was proved to be a reliable measurement tool in Turkish culture with a Cronbach alpha value of .64. The construct validity of the Turkish version was confirmed with the following scores: RMSEA= .054, GFI= .93, AGFI= .90 and SRMR= .065.

2.3. Data Analysis

Before starting data analysis, the reversely-coded items in the scales were determined to be coded in SPSS. In order to determine the analytical method, the data was analyzed to see if the normality assumption was met. The kurtosis and skewness values were reviewed. As Tabachnick & Fidell (2013) suggested, the kurtosis-skewness value should fall within the range of ± 1.5 for a normal distribution. When each scale was analyzed, the data was found to be within an acceptable range. This confirmed that the data set met the normality assumption. Therefore, there was a preference of parametric tests.

The next step included gathering validity and reliability evidence for the scales used in this study, which was possible with confirmatory factor analysis. The CFA indicated a good fit for DIDS ($\chi^2/df= 2.90$; RMSEA=.062; CFI=.92; TLI=.90; AGFI = .98 and SRMR=.05), for PWB ($\chi^2/df= 4.22$; RMSEA=.07; CFI=.92; TLI=.91; AGFI= .99 and SRMR=.03), and for Social Well-Being Scale ($\chi^2/df= 2.94$; RMSEA=.04; CFI=.94; TLI=.95; AGFI= .99 and SRMR=.07). The CFA indices confirmed that the scores obtained from each scale were validated for the group of participants who took part in this study. As for reliability scores, Cronbach Alpha coefficients were .81 for DIDS, .89 for PWB and .90 for Social Well-Being Scale, which proved that they had high levels of reliability as it is commonly agreed that a Cronbach's alpha coefficient higher than .70 hints at good reliability. Evaluating the scales utilized within the scope of this study, it can be concluded that these measurement tools are reliable.

In order to derive identity profiles of the participants, cluster analysis was performed. Scores obtained for each identity process were considered calculating the total score of each one. After the points were standardized, the clustering was applied and the results were evaluated in accordance with the available theoretical framework to obtain different identity statuses. After the identity status of each participant was determined, one-way ANOVA was performed to find out whether the psychological and social well-being of university students varied depending on the identity statuses.

The results of the clustering analysis performed with 801 participants based on the scores derived from the DIDS are shown in Table 3. In line with expectations, six different groups emerged.

Table 3.

Identity Statuses

<i>Identity Status</i>	Frequency	Percent
Diffused Diffusion	124	15.48
Undifferentiated	43	5.37
Carefree Diffusion	203	25.34
Achievement	234	29.21
Moratorium	166	20.73
Foreclosure	31	3.87

Table 3 shows that 15.48% of the participants (f=124) were classified as diffused diffusion, 5.37% (f=43) as undifferentiated, 25.34% as carefree diffusion (f=203), 29.21% (f=234) as achievement, 20.73% (f=166) as moratorium, 3.87% (f=31) as foreclosure.

3. FINDINGS

3.1. Identity Statuses and Psychological Well-being

Table 4 shows the findings of one-way ANOVA performed to determine whether the psychological well-being of university students varied significantly based on identity statuses. Post hoc comparisons were conducted using Tamhane’s because the variances were non-equal.

Table 4.

Psychological Well-Being According to Identity Statuses

	Identity Status	N	X	sd	F	p	Significant Difference
1	Diffused Diffusion	124	21,98	9,29	116,64	0,00	1-2, 1-3, 1-4, 1-5, 1-6, 2-4, 2-5, 2-6, 3-4, 3-5, 4-5,
2	Undifferentiated	43	30,25	11,94			
3	Carefree Diffusion	203	34,19	8,54			
4	Achievement	234	43,67	7,07			
5	Moratorium	166	40,76	9,15			
6	Foreclosure	31	39,51	10,65			

As can be inferred from Table 4, psychological well-being of university students differs significantly based on their identity statuses ($p < 0.05$). The analysis showed that university students with diffused diffusion had the lowest scores of psychological well-being among all groups. Also, those with undifferentiated status had a significantly lower level of psychological well-being compared to those with achievement, moratorium and foreclosure. A noteworthy finding revealed that individuals with carefree diffusion exhibited reduced psychological well-being in contrast to achieved emerging adults and those with moratorium. Another finding was that achieved students had significantly higher levels of psychological well-being as opposed to those with moratorium status, diffused and carefree diffusion, and the undifferentiated cluster.

3. 2. Identity Statuses and Social Well-being

Table 5 shows the findings of one-way ANOVA performed to determine whether the social well-being of university students varied significantly based on identity statuses. Due to the unequal variance between groups, Tamhane's was used.

Table 5.

Social Well-Being According to Identity Statuses

	Identity Status	N	x	sd	F	p	Significant Difference
1	Diffused Diffusion	124	45,79	18,03	23,58	0,00	1-3, 1-4, 1-5, 1-6, 4-2 4-3, 4-5, 4-6
2	Undifferentiated	43	52,11	21,96			
3	Carefree Diffusion	203	60,13	16,94			
4	Achievement	234	64,98	14,75			
5	Moratorium	166	62,35	18,21			
6	Foreclosure	31	59,64	14,27			

As can be inferred from Table 5, social well-being differed significantly based on identity statuses ($p < 0.05$). The analysis demonstrated that emerging adults with diffused diffusion had significantly lower scores as opposed to those with carefree diffusion, achievement, moratorium and foreclosure. Additionally, compared to individuals with undifferentiated, carefree diffusion, moratorium, and foreclosure identity statuses, achieved participants demonstrated significantly better levels of social well-being.

4. RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

With regard to both the first and second research questions, the findings indicate a significant variance among identity statuses based on psychological and social well-being. Therefore, H1 and H3 have been confirmed. It was also hypothesized (H2 and H4) that achieved individuals would show the highest level of psychological and social well-being whereas those with diffused diffusion would score the lowest on these dimensions, which was also confirmed. The finding that achieved emerging adults had the highest psychological and social well-being scores is in line with Marcia's paradigm (1980) and some studies (Waterman, 2007) which were also conducted with a group of university students. According to Marcia (2002), the way an adult develops a balance in terms of autonomy and intimacy in a relationship is the result of an achieved identity. In other words, achievement identity status denotes a higher level of psychological well-being because of its connection to strong commitments in a variety of spheres of life, including job, relationships and ideology. The fact that identifying with a commitment after a period of active exploration brings about positive outcomes has been confirmed by a range of studies (Mancini et al., 2015; Rodrigues & Deuskar, 2018; Ryeng et al., 2013). As for studies (Cakir, 2014; Liao et al., 2015) focusing on identity statuses rather than identity processes, they provided proof to connect the achieved identity with an increased level of psychological well-being.

H5 presupposed that achieved emerging adults have an advantage over their foreclosed peers in terms of psychological and social well-being in spite of similar levels of commitment, which was also substantiated with the current results. Taking into account the studies (Eryilmaz & Aypay, 2011) indicating that foreclosure is negatively correlated to well-being, one can conclude that it is a better idea for the researchers to bear in mind the dark side of foreclosure in terms of well-being. As far as this study is concerned, those with achievement status having a higher level of psychological and social well-being compared to their foreclosed peers is a reflection of their open style and information-oriented nature, which is closely related to their active exploration processes, both in-depth and in-breadth.

The underlying mechanism of the strong correlation between well-being and achieved identity status might be that achieved students are more open to experience, which certainly enables them to get more experienced in the face of various alternatives, becoming more competent at analyzing the pros and cons. The research (Berzonsky, 1992, 2003) especially stresses the role of commitment making process, representing a clear advantage for psychological well-being due to its association with problem-focused coping. University students with strong commitments keep gathering more information about themselves and revise the commitment if it makes them feel better, which stresses the adaptive nature of the achievement status. As achieved individuals have high levels of commitment making, this seems to bring about a lower level of stress as well as security and stability, which ultimately leads to a better functioning in both personal and social domain in life. Besides, university students leave behind adolescence, which might include more ups and downs compared to emerging adulthood for certain people. Individuals who struggle hard to make a commitment, especially in terms of career options, might find their true calling during university years, which seem to promote their well-being.

The finding that diffused diffusion presents the most disadvantageous identity status in terms of both psychological and social well-being is concordant with studies (Mannerström, 2016; Sica et al., 2014; Waterman, 2007) underlining its dysfunctional role in emerging adults' lives. Diffusion may be considerably more difficult in emerging adulthood than it is in adolescence (Karaś et al., 2015) because of the high level of reconsideration of commitment is this makes it harder to adapt to different life domains such as career or romantic relationships as one gets closer to 30 years of age. Young people who neither explore, nor make commitments in terms of critical life choices seem to lack the necessary resources to flourish in life and have satisfying social interactions. Besides, identity diffusion has been found to be correlated to a less adaptive personality with characteristics such as low levels of emotional stability or openness to experiences (Kroger & Marcia, 2011). Although emerging adulthood is marked with instability and change (Arnett, 2005), constant exploration which does not ultimately lead to commitment causes stress as the individual lacks a certain direction in life. Having a purpose, which is an inseparable component of psychological well-being, and doing one's best to attain it may help the emerging adult to develop his/her skills and try different ways to overcome the obstacles, which boosts personal growth and autonomy. These are all important for preparing the emerging adult for adulthood and if there is no concern for commitment or if there is a failure in reaching a decision regarding values and beliefs, this transition seem to have negative effects on psychological well-being.

As for social well-being of university students, the findings from ANOVA indicate that individuals with different identity statuses have significantly different levels of social well-being. Post-hoc analyses provide insight into the relationship between identity statuses and social well-being, underlining the significantly low scores among those with diffused diffusion. As studies center on the psychological aspect of well-being, mostly disregarding the social dimension, this study is important in that it provides insight about the mutual link between social well-being and identity development. However, the finding pointing to the lowest level of social well-being among those with diffused diffusion is not only in line with expectations but it also conforms with a limited number of studies (Karaś & Ciecuch, 2019) pointing to the maladaptive nature of diffusion in terms of family relationships or those with friends. The finding supports the idea that identity diffusion prevents social integration in the community and hinders the process of becoming an integral member of the society. In the terms of Keyes's theory, it can be conferred that diffused identity is associated with a lower level of social well-being as the emerging adult does not get involved in an exploration process and does not make a commitment, which results in a poor functioning in society. The underlying mechanism might be that the social challenges and hardships the emerging adult encounters in finding a job or an ideal romantic partner might result in an assessment of the quality of their lives as unsatisfactory, which has a detrimental effect on social well-being.

Finally, it was anticipated that the psychological and social well-being levels of emerging adults would differ among those with diffused diffusion and those with carefree diffusion. The findings of the study confirmed H6 which presupposed that carefree diffusion was also correlated to higher levels of psychological and social well-being compared to diffused diffusion. Whereas individuals with carefree diffusion do not have any interest in getting involved in exploring an identity alternative, lacking strong commitments at the same time, those with diffused identity take some steps to form identity, which ultimately prove to be nonproductive (Schwartz et al., 2011). As a number of studies (Zimmermann et al., 2015) put forward, the main difference between these two clusters of identity development is that carefree diffusion is marked with the lowest scores on exploration and diffused diffusion is marked with the lowest scores on commitment. This study confirms that commitment's role in identity formation is more closely related to psychological and social well-being than exploration. As carefree emerging adults' level of commitment exceeds that of exploration, this is likely to help them feel more secure in life, having positive reflections both on functioning in society and furthering one's potentials.

The findings have implications for the experts working with university students. It can be advisable for professionals working at university settings to take into consideration the identity statuses while dealing with problems of lower levels of well-being. The "twists and turns" (Arnett, 2015) at university years represent a turbulent transition, which is usually associated with times of stress and anxiety. In order to eliminate negative psychological indicators and help university students to flourish in society, experts such as educational psychologists can work on the identity processes and statuses and assist young people in their search for ideal identity commitments.

The present study has some limitations. First of all, because of the cross-sectional design, it is not possible to arrive at conclusions about developmental changes in identity statuses. More longitudinal studies are required to discover the

underpinnings of the nature of identity development in emerging adulthood. Secondly, all of the information obtained within this study is derived from the participants' self-reports. To have a better insight into identity statuses and their relationship to well-being, alternative methods could be used, including but not limited to interviews. Lastly, due to a crisis period, the study group was restricted to 801 students at different universities. The future studies could focus on a more representative student populations to reach at more validated and reliable conclusions.

Research and Publication Ethics Statement

The article was written considering the principles of research and publication ethics. Ethics committee approval was obtained for this study from Ankara University, dated 12.02.2021 and numbered 56786525-050.04.04/49458.

Contribution Rates of Authors to the Article

The first author performed this study and worked at each step, including data gathering and analysis. The second author is responsible for supervision of the study from the beginning to the end.

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This research is based on secondary data analysis. The data was collected during the COVID-19 pandemic, as a part of the PhD dissertation of the first author. This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public or commercial sectors.

Statement of Interest

There is no conflict of interest.

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