

Stress, Psychological Well-being, Coping, and Self-construal among Adolescents in Turkey and Germany

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List of manuscripts

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1 Introduction

1.1 Stress, Coping, and Psychological Well-being among Adolescents

The word adolescence originates from the Latin verb “adolescere,” which means “to grow up, to mature”. In line with this meaning, adolescence is defined as a transitional period between childhood and adulthood, which describes the teenage years between 10 and 19 (World Health Organization [WHO], 2014). In this transitional stage, many changes can be observed, such as psychosocial (e.g., independence and self-identity), cognitive (e.g., abstract thinking) and physiological changes (e.g., sexual maturation). During this life period, youth start to be more autonomous, which affects their relationships with their parents. They start to be more independent from their parents while also beginning to build intimate relationships with their peers. In addition to these relational changes, their academic environment changes as well. They move from primary to high school, which requires them to act more responsibly for their future, such as, planning their future career and deciding on their occupation. In addition to these changes, adolescents deal with identity formation as well, which is a salient issue during this stage (Erikson, 1968). All these transitional changes can induce increased levels of stress. Lazarus and Folkman (1984, p. 19) defined stress as a “a particular relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being.” Stress has important effects on the physiological as well as psychological well-being of humans. Many studies have shown that stress can lead to physiological and psychological problems, such as depression, heart disease, a weakened immune system, and substance abuse (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Vaughn & Roesch, 2003). Having good mental health plays a crucial role in the overall health development of adolescents. It is the key factor for feeling well and having positive thoughts, developing healthy relations with peers and parents, connecting within a social life, and developing a feeling of belonging, as well as having good physical health and healthy

nutritional habits (Anuradha, Yagnik & Sherma, 2012; Braddick, Carral, Jenkins, & Janeuopis, 2009). Long-term consequences of mental health problems have shown that many individuals who experience mental health problems during adolescents carry those through adulthood. Additionally, it causes other problems, such as unhealthy relationships, fluctuating occupational history, and social alienation (Anuradha et al., 2012). Adolescents need to develop appropriate coping mechanisms in order to experience healthy psychological well-being and to be able to adapt to all the changes of adolescence that were mentioned above, as well as to balance stress experiences (Braddick et al., 2009; Patterson & McCubbin, 1987).

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) defined coping as a set of responses that include cognitive and behavioral efforts that one uses to overcome particular demands in daily life or in particular conditions. They emphasized that there are mainly two functions of coping. One of them is focusing on solving the problem, which aims to reduce or remove the cause of the stress, and the other one includes focusing on the emotional aspect of the situation and aims to decrease the tension and reduce negative emotional responses related with the stressor. Because of lack of experiences dealing with several life stressors (struggling with unfamiliar issues) and experiencing them for the first time, many adolescents have not yet developed a set of appropriate coping skills (Patterson & McCubbin, 1987; Petersen & Hamburg, 1986). Several researchers have indicated that especially during the period of adolescence, interpersonal problems are one of the most important sources of stress (Hankin et al., 2007; Mezulis et al., 2010; Petit et al., 2010). Studies have shown that problems in the family and disagreement with their peers are the primary sources of interpersonal problems for adolescents (Van Oort, Verhulst, Ormel & Huizink, 2010; Jose & Killburg, 2007). Although relations with family and friends are one of the most cited reasons of stress, the support that is received from family members and peers are also the most effective way to overcome stressors. And the emotional support that is received from family and friends is more helpful than other types of support,

such as instrumental and informational support (Griffiths, Crisp, Barney & Reid, 2011). In addition, social support may be very important for well-being because social support comprise active involvement of significant people in one's life to overcome stressful demands (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Thoits, 1986). It is especially important during adolescence because of the many changes experienced during this period. Conger and colleagues (2009) indicated that adolescents are more willing to listen to the recommends of their parents when they are more supportive. Solving family problems is another coping strategy that is important during adolescence. This strategy could help youth to prevent stress by having information from their parents before the appearance of the strain, and thus decrease the negative effects of stressors on family life (McCubbin, Joy, Cauble, Comeau, Patterson, & Needle, 1980). In addition, Patterson and McCubbin (1987) indicated that this strategy leads to having active communication with parents and siblings which is associated with more familial control. As a consequence, this may increase the chance to prevent adolescents from experiencing substance abuse. Both of these strategies (i.e., seeking social support and solving family problems) – which have important roles especially during adolescence – comprise help of other people to find solutions. In general, understanding the coping styles of youth that they develop during adolescence play a crucial role because it roughly determines the coping styles used during adulthood (Patterson & McCubbin, 1987).

1.2 Cultural Context

When the development of adolescents is considered, in addition to the psychological and physiological changes, it is important to consider the social and cultural context. Adolescence is a period of life in which the sense of self develops profoundly. Adapting to a new social environment and to new interpersonal relations leads to changes in the definition of self (Sebastian, Burnett & Blakemore, 2008). These changes, and the definition of self, are affected by the cultural context. When the differences between Western and non-Western

cultures are considered, the members of Western cultures are more likely to construe the self as independent from their social context, and they stress autonomy and uniqueness as a part of self, which is defined as an independent self-construal. Alternatively, members of non-Western cultures tend to construe the self as a part of a broader social context, and they emphasize group relationships and harmony with others as a part of self, which is defined as an interdependent self-construal (Kitayama & Markus, 2000; Singelis, 1994). Although there are mainly two types of self-construal, additionally another type of self-construal is defined by Brewer and Gardner (1996) that is called relational interdependent self-construal. It is derived from an interdependent self-construal and it stresses dyadic relationships as a part of the self. The harmony between one's perceived self-construal and the valued norms in the culture relate positively with psychological well-being (Cross, Gore, & Moris, 2003). Research has shown that in some non-Western cultures, sustaining consistent relations with others are an important component of well-being (Kitayama & Markus, 2000; Heine, Lehman, Markus & Kitayama, 1999). Furthermore, there is also a relation between self-construal and coping strategies. Preferred coping strategies may differ according to one's way of construing self. Bond and his colleagues (1985) found that individuals from Western cultures who emphasize independent self-construal try to change the stressful situation in order to cope with it, while individuals from non-Western cultures who emphasize interdependent self-construal favor changing themselves instead of changing the situation because taking direct action to change the situation could endanger their social relationships (Cross, 1995).

1.2.1 Rural and Urban Areas

Differences regarding stress, well-being, and coping may also be observed within countries when the rural and urban distinction is considered (Marotz-Baden & Colvin, 1986). Regarding socioeconomic status, availability of services, different geographical conditions, and density of the population, stress experiences, well-being, and coping may differ between

rural and urban regions. The differences regarding stress, well-being, and coping are expected to be larger, especially in developing countries, because of the larger gap across rural and urban areas (Preston, 1979).

It has been recognized that the distinction among interdependent and independent self-construal is made between non-Western and Western countries (Kitayama & Markus, 2000). However this distinction also may be seen within the countries. Previous research indicated that people living in rural areas construe themselves more interdependent than people living in urban areas (Kagitcibasi, 2005).

1.2.2 Minority and Majority Status

The differences within the countries regarding stress and well-being are not restricted to the rural and urban distinction. Belonging to majority or minority groups could also have an impact on psychological well-being and stress experiences. Although the mental health of adolescents belonging to a minority group is influenced by general stressors typically experienced by adolescents, their psychological well-being is also likely to be affected by additional stressors, such as prejudice, discrimination, and racism. In general, during adolescence, ethnic identity development is a salient issue for mental health (Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, & Vedder, 2001; Smith & Silva, 2011). The lack of identity development may lead to role confusion, which could threaten one's psychological well-being later on (Bromley, 1988; Erikson, 1968; Lee, 1988). This task is even more challenging for youth who belong to minority groups. Ethnic identity development is more critical for them because of the necessity of dealing with their ethnicity within the mainstream culture. Roberts and colleagues (1999) found that having a strong ethnic identity is related to higher self-esteem, optimism, and effective coping strategies. On the other hand, their results also indicated that having a weak ethnic identity leads to depression and feelings of loneliness.

1.2.3 The Concept of Acculturation

To understand how individuals relate to their ethnic groups, and, as well, to the dominant groups, it is important to mention the term *acculturation*. Acculturation arises as a consequence of the contact between two or more cultures. As a result of acculturation cultural and psychological changes may occur. At a group level, it includes changes in social structures, foundations, and in social practices. On the other hand, at the individual level, it includes changes in the behavior of individuals which is also known as psychological acculturation (Berry, 1997). In this manuscript, because of the focus on individual level differences, the term acculturation refers to psychological acculturation. Psychological acculturation is a multidimensional process, which explains how strongly individuals maintain their heritage and culture, and how strongly they adapt to the host culture (Arends-Toth & Van de Viver, 2003; Berry, 1997). During the acculturation process, some cultural and psychological factors may lead to the experience of stress which affects one's psychological well-being (Berry & Kim, 1988). To deal with acculturative stress, Berry's model differentiates four types of acculturation strategies—assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization (Berry, 1980; Berry & Kim, 1988; Berry & Sam, 1997). The strategy of integration refers to maintenance of the heritage ethnic culture and, additionally, having contact with the host culture. Conversely, when individuals do not want to have contact with the host culture and prefer exclusive maintenance toward their heritage culture, this is comprised by the strategy of separation. The opposite strategy of separation, called assimilation, emphasizes exclusive adaptation toward the dominant culture. The fourth strategy, marginalization, describes minimal interest in one's heritage culture as well as the host culture.

The preferences for these strategies vary among individuals. Studies have shown that integration may be the most adaptive strategy because individuals experience fewer conflicts

with both their culture of origin and the host culture. Having positive orientations toward two groups leads to having more social support, which positively contributes to psychological well-being. By contrast, the strategy of marginalization leads to the worst mental health outcomes because of having a negative orientation toward one's own ethnic group as well as toward the dominant group, which leads to minimal social support and higher levels of prejudice, racism, and discrimination in comparison to the other acculturation strategies (Berry, 1997; Bowskill, Lyons, & Coyle, 2007).

1.3 Relations between the Constructs

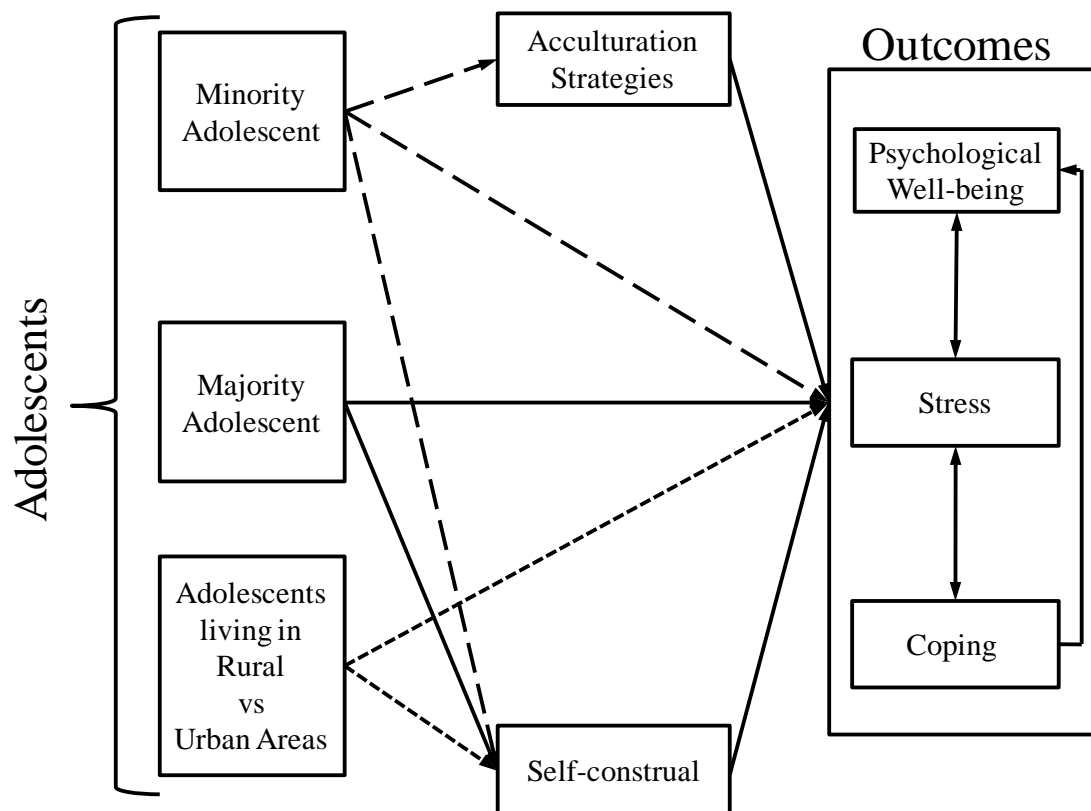


Figure 1. Relations between the constructs

The relations between the constructs that were explained in the previous sections are shown in Figure 1. In general, the Figure shows that there are relations between the outcome variables psychological well-being, stress experiences and coping. According to these relations, the

preferences of coping strategies influence psychological well-being as well as stress experiences (and vice versa). The Figure also emphasizes that belonging to different subgroups (namely belonging to minority versus majority groups or living in rural versus urban areas) may have an effect on psychological well-being, stress, and coping responses. When the minority group youth are considered, their preferences of acculturation strategies affect their psychological well-being as well as their stress experiences. In addition, how one construes oneself play an important role on the outcomes for each subgroup of adolescents included in the Figure.

The current dissertation is compiled by three articles. The focused cultural groups in these articles are Turkish and German adolescents. One of the reasons of choosing these countries is to understand the differences between Western and non-Western cultures. It is important to mention that, although the geographical location makes Turkey a bridge between East and West, different cultural and traditional features like family structure, education and gender stereotypes still set Turkey apart from Europe. To understand differences between Turkey and Germany, the first manuscript (Yeresyan & Lohaus, 2014a) focuses on differences between adolescents living in rural and urban areas of Turkey and Germany regarding their stress experiences, well-being and the prediction of these constructs by coping and self-construal. In total 1850 adolescents with the mean age of 15.9 ($SD = 1.27$) participated to the study. The sample recruited from secondary schools in rural and urban areas of Turkey and Germany.

The second reason of choosing these countries is that the largest immigrant group in Germany is constituted by people with a Turkish background (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2012). Therefore, the main minority groups addressed in the following sections are adolescents with Turkish background living in Germany and adolescents with Armenian background living in Turkey who are officially recognized to be the largest minority group in Turkey (Hofmann, 2002). The second (Yeresyan & Lohaus, 2013a) and third manuscripts (Yeresyan & Lohaus,

2013b) focus on minority and majority group differences in Turkey and Germany regarding the constructs explained above. The sample of both manuscripts consisted of secondary school students. The participants from Turkey were selected from Istanbul and participants from Germany were recruited from North Rhine Westphalia state of Germany. In the second manuscript the sample consisted of a total of 901 Turkish, Turkish-German and German adolescents. The participants in the study had a mean age of 15.5 (SD = 1.37) years. The third manuscript consisted of Turkish, Armenian-Turkish, German and Turkish-German adolescents. In total 1192 adolescent with the mean age of 17 (SD = 1.38) participated in this study.

2 Hypotheses and Results

In the following section, based on the background of the existing literature, the hypotheses and the findings of the three studies, which constitute this dissertation, will be outlined. First of all, the results regarding the general differences within and between Turkey and Germany will be explained by discussing stress experiences and psychological well-being of adolescents, and how they are affected by coping responses and self-construal (Manuscript 1 Yeresyan & Lohaus, 2014a). It will be continued with the findings focusing on minority and majority group differences in the mentioned countries (Manuscript 2, Yeresyan & Lohaus, 2013a; Manuscript 3, Yeresyan & Lohaus, 2013b).

2.1 Differences Within and Between Turkey and Germany

2.1.1 Stress and Psychological Well-being: Prediction by Self-construal and Coping

Looking at differences within and between these countries may lead to a better understanding of stress experiences and psychological well-being of adolescents. Adolescence is a period in which a sense of the self develops profoundly (Erikson, 1968). To understand the youths living in different nations it is important to mention different kinds of self-construal, which

have an important effect on one's self-definition (Sebastian et al., 2008). According to Kitayama and Markus (2000), Western cultures tend to construe the self as independent, which emphasizes uniqueness, while non-Western cultures tend to construe the self as interdependent, which emphasizes social relations. The match between one's perceived self-construal and the valued standards in the society have positive effects on psychological well-being (Cross et al., 2003). The first manuscript ("Stress and Well-Being among Turkish and German Adolescents Living in Rural and Urban Areas"; Manuscript 1, Yeresyan & Lohaus, 2014a) which is part of this dissertation is related to the effect of self-construal on stress and well-being among Turkish and German youths. In the manuscript it is predicted that construing oneself as independent will decrease the stress level and enhance psychological well-being in the German sample. By contrast, construing oneself as interdependent will show the same effect on stress and well-being in the Turkish sample. According to the results of regression analysis and in line with the expectation, an independent self-construal has more of a buffering effect on stress for German adolescents compared to Turkish adolescents. In addition, the regression analysis showed that construing oneself as independent was related to increased psychological well-being of German youth. However, no significant interactions were found in the Turkish sample regarding interdependent self-construal, stress, and well-being. Additionally, when the results about relational interdependent self-construal were taken into account, the results revealed that regardless of national differences, it affects the psychological well-being of youth in a positive way.

As previous research has shown, there is a positive impact of social support and solving problems within the family on psychological well-being, which have been shown to decrease stress levels (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Thoits, 1986; McCubbin et al., 1980). Considering these findings, it was hypothesized that developing social support as well as solving family problems will affect the well-being of adolescent groups in Turkey and Germany in a positive

way and their stress experiences in a negative way (Manuscript 1, Yeresyan & Lohaus, 2014a). This hypothesis was confirmed for solving family problems. However, interestingly, the results showed a positive relation between social support and stress. This result will be interpreted later in the discussion section.

2.1.2 Stress and Psychological Well-being in Rural and Urban Areas

According to the theoretical review, because of accessibility of different facilities in rural and urban areas, more salient differences regarding stress experiences are expected for developing countries (Marotz-Baden & Colvin, 1986, Preston, 1979). To understand these differences, the first manuscript “Stress and Well-Being among Turkish and German Adolescents Living in Rural and Urban Areas,” (Yeresyan & Lohaus, 2014a) as the title suggests, focused on adolescents who live in rural and urban areas. In this study, it was expected that stress experiences and well-being will differ in rural and urban regions in general, and these differences were expected to be higher in Turkey. The results indicated that, in general, Turkish adolescents – regardless of the rural or urban distinction – experience more stress. When the distinction between rural and urban areas is considered, in Germany as well as in Turkey adolescents living in rural areas experience more stress compared to adolescents living in urban areas. In addition, the results indicated that there are differences between rural and urban areas regarding psychological well-being that is significant for Turkish adolescents. According to this finding, the well-being of adolescents living in urban parts of Turkey is higher than for their counterparts living in rural areas of the country.

2.2 Minority and Majority Youth living in Turkey and Germany

The other two articles that comprise my dissertation focused on cross-cultural comparisons of minority and majority groups in Turkey and Germany (Manuscript 2, Yeresyan & Lohaus, 2013a; Manuscript 3, Yeresyan & Lohaus, 2013b). The mentioned minority groups are

Turkish youth who were born in Germany, and Armenian youth who were born in Turkey. Because of the focus on similar topics, the hypotheses and results of the two articles will be outlined together. However, before introducing the hypothesis and the results, it is important to have knowledge about the roots of these two cultural groups in order to understand the situation of these adolescents.

Historical information has indicated that the roots of the Armenian people come from Anatolia, and as an indigenous ethnical group in Turkey, Armenians have been living with Turkish people for about one thousand years. Approximately 60 thousand Armenian people out of 75 million Turkish people live in Turkey (Hofmann, 2002; Turkish Statistical institute, 2013). According to the Treaty of Lausanne, Armenian people are one of the three officially recognized minority groups in Turkey (besides Greeks and Jews). Around 45 thousand of them are settled in certain districts in Istanbul. When their religious beliefs are considered, most of the Armenian people believe in Christianity (Hofmann, 2002). In Turkey, in total, there are 16 Armenian schools where approximately 3 thousand Armenian students get their education.

When we look at the history of Turkish people in Western Europe, their immigration started at the beginning of the 1960s. The reason for immigration was the need for labor in Europe and a low demand for work in Turkey. When the number of Turkish immigrants in Europe is considered, most of them were settled in Germany (Vedder, Sam, & Liebkind, 2007). According to the Federal Office of Statistics (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2012), Turkish people constitute the largest immigrant group in Germany, followed by Polish and Russian immigrants. More than half of the Turkish immigrants migrated from the rural parts of central and northern Turkey (Vedder, Sam, & Liebkind, 2007). When their religious beliefs are considered, most of the Turkish people have Islamic faith (Levinson, 1998). Nowadays, most Turkish youth who are living in Germany belong to the third generation of immigrants.

2.2.1 Stress, Psychological Well-being, and Coping

As Phinney and colleagues emphasized (2001), the development of an ethnic identity is one of the most important issues during adolescence. Reactions of the dominant group toward the minority group especially may lead minority youth to focus more on their ethnic identity (Phinney, 1989). When the dominant group has negative stereotypes and beliefs about the minority groups, this may lead to a negative self-image of members of the minority group (Cokley, McClain, Enciso, & Martinez, 2013). Through these findings, in the second article (“Stress, Well-Being and Coping among Turkish, German and Turkish-German Adolescents: Results of a cross-cultural comparison”; Yeresyan & Lohaus, 2013a) and in the third article (“Stress and Well-being among Minorities: Turkish-Armenian and Turkish-German Adolescents”; Yeresyan & Lohaus, 2013b) it was predicted that minority youth perceived more stress and have less psychological well-being than their majority counterparts. The two articles showed that minority adolescents and Turkish adolescents experience more stress than their German peers. In the second article, it was shown that Turkish-German and Turkish adolescents experience more stress than German adolescents. In the third article, the results revealed that in addition to the Turkish-German and Turkish youth, Armenian-Turkish youth also experience more stress than their German counterparts. According to the psychological well-being results, the third article did not show any significant differences between the minority and majority groups. However, when we looked at the results of the second article, it showed that the well-being of Turkish-German adolescents and German adolescents was lower than the psychological well-being of Turkish adolescents.

According to previous research, closer relations within the family could be observed when one belongs to a minority group (Harrison, Wilson, Pine, Chan, & Buriel, 1990). When the coping strategies were considered, in both articles, it was hypothesized that minority group

adolescents would develop more social support compared to the majority group. This hypothesis is confirmed in both studies.

Based on the brief summary of the history of the Turkish-German immigrants, most of them migrated from the rural regions of Turkey, where the people value traditions, close family ties, and social relations. The results of the second article (Manuscript 2, Yeresyan & Lohaus, 2013a) revealed that Turkish-German adolescents try to develop more social support compared to Turkish and German adolescents. In addition, Turkish adolescents in Turkey and Germany prefer to solve family problems to cope with stress more so than their German peers. In the third article (Manuscript 3, Yeresyan & Lohaus, 2013b), similar results were found, which indicated that both groups of minority adolescents (Turkish-German and Armenian-Turkish) develop more social support than majority adolescents (German and Turkish). For solving family problems, in addition to the results of the second article, Armenian-Turkish adolescents also were shown to have higher preferences of using “solving family problems” as a coping strategy compared to German adolescents.

2.2.2 Acculturation Strategies and Self-construal

a. Acculturation Strategies

Since Turkish people do not have such a long-standing immigration history, gaining understanding of the ethnic cultural maintenance of Turkish adolescents living in Germany and their adaptation to the host society may provide more information about their psychological well-being. According to Berry and Kim (1988), maintenance of one’s own culture and good relations with the dominant culture leads to better psychological well-being. Based on this explanation, in the manuscript by Yeresyan & Lohaus (2013a) it was hypothesized that immigrant youth who prefer the strategy of integration compared to the other three acculturation strategies, namely assimilation, separation and marginalization,

would be expected to have better psychological well-being and lower stress levels. According to the results of regression analysis, the variables maintenance and adaptation were positively related to psychological well-being. Moreover, the results revealed that higher maintenance and adaptation values, which comprise the strategy of integration, resulted in higher well-being. By contrast, lower values on both variables, which comprise the strategy of marginalization, resulted in lower psychological well-being. Similar results were expected for stress level. However, the results showed no significant associations to the level of experienced stress.

b. Self-construal

As was mentioned in the manuscript by Yeresyan and Lohaus (2013b), in addition to stress, well-being, and coping differences between majority and minority groups due to their different cultural backgrounds, it was intended to understand whether they construe themselves differently. An additional aim was to learn how self-construal as well as coping strategies related with psychological well-being and stress. Singelis (1994) and Kitayama and Markus (2000) emphasized that non-Western cultures tend to construe themselves as interdependent and Western cultures as independent. According to this, it was hypothesized that Armenian-Turkish, Turkish-German, and Turkish youth would construe themselves more interdependently than would their German counterparts. The results confirmed the prediction. According to the Tukey post-hoc test, Turkish youth and youth belonging to the minority groups reported higher levels of interdependent self-construal than did German youth. In addition, a post-hoc test revealed that participants from Turkey (Armenian-Turkish and Turkish youth) had higher scores of relational interdependent self-construal compared to their counterparts living in Germany (Turkish-German and German youth). Finally, in this article, it was expected that the predictability of stress and well-being would vary through coping strategies and self-construal. A regression analysis indicated that the level of stress

experienced by adolescents in Turkey and Germany decreased by using family problem solving as a coping strategy, and construing oneself as independent. On the other hand, developing social support as a coping strategy and construing oneself as interdependent was associated with increased stress. In addition, regression analysis showed that family problem solving as a coping strategy buffers the effect of stress only for adolescents from Turkey. Whereas stress was negatively related with solving family problems and independent self-construal, these variables were related to increased psychological well-being. Moreover, it was found that the relation between independent self-construal and well-being was moderated by nation (Turkey and Germany). This relation was found to be more positive for adolescents from Germany compared to adolescents from Turkey. Another positive relation was found between relational interdependent self-construal and well-being, which is moderated by belonging to a minority versus a majority group. The results indicated that relational interdependent self-construal related more positively with psychological well-being for the minority group's youth than for the majority group's youth. Finally, the regression analysis showed that only one variable was related to decreased psychological well-being, which is interdependent self-construal.

3 General Discussion and Implications

The general changes during adolescence, such as biological, cognitive, and psychological changes, may lead to stress experiences. Additionally, there are other risk factors that could also be related to poor adaptation outcomes. Studies showed that possible risk factors could be minority group membership and living in underdeveloped parts of the country namely in rural areas (Elgar, Arlett, & Groves, 2003; Montemayor, Adams, Gullotta, 1999).

Specifically, this dissertation focuses on stress and psychological well-being of adolescents in Turkey and Germany. It investigates the differences within and between countries by

addressing the differences between rural and urban areas regarding stress, psychological well-being, coping and self-construal. Furthermore, it addresses whether having a minority or majority status in these countries differs from each other with respect to these same constructs. The sequence of the previous section was constructed by addressing the hypotheses and the results of each manuscript. In the following section the results of the three manuscripts will be discussed through the main constructs.

3.1 Stress and Its Relation with Self-construal

With adolescence, individuals want to be more autonomous in order to reach maturity (Muuss, 1968). Therefore, it is important for parents to support their offspring's growth by allowing them more freedom and responsibilities. Although close relations with the family are favorable, for individuation parents should leave space for their child/children. Restrictive behaviors prohibiting autonomy are related to increased levels of stress within the family (Seiffge-Krenke, 1995). Especially, dispute occurs when an adolescent and his/her parents must overcome a difference of opinion (Zimmermann, Mohr, & Spangler, 2009). When the three manuscripts are considered (Yeresyan & Lohaus, 2013a, 2013b, 2014a), they showed that adolescents living in Turkey experience higher stress levels than their German peers. The experienced stress level may be explained by cultural differences. Güngör and colleagues (2014) emphasized the interdependent agency of Turkish culture, which is also confirmed with the manuscripts that constructed this dissertation (Manuscript 3, Yeresyan & Lohaus, 2013b; Manuscript 1, Yeresyan & Lohaus, 2014), which could help to explain one of the reasons of stress experiences of Turkish, Turkish-Armenian, and Turkish-German participants. In non-Western cultures, where self is construed as interdependent, close family relations and harmony with significant others are highlighted and parents are seen as authority figures. When children reach adolescence, they are willing to release from parental control and assert their own freedom. Conflict could arise when parents show excessive control over

their child/children to maintain their authority and to keep close relations within the family. In addition, as previous research emphasized, in the cultures with interdependent orientation, the success of an individual is seen as a success of the family and significant others, and a failure is seen as a failure of them that damages their honor, which is the case in Turkey (Uskul, Cross, Sunbay, Gercek-Swing, & Ataca, 2012). The expectations of parents and significant others, as well as the pressure on their children to fulfill their expectations, could trigger stress.

3.2 Minority Group Youth: Stress, Well-being and Acculturation

The results of two manuscripts (Manuscript 2, Yeresyan & Lohaus, 2013a; Manuscript 3, Yeresyan & Lohaus, 2013b) emphasized that in addition to Turkish adolescents, both minority groups also experience more stress than their German counterparts. As was explained above and as was found in the third manuscript (Yeresyan & Lohaus, 2013b), construing oneself as interdependent could be one of the reasons for experiencing stress for Turkish-German and Armenian-Turkish adolescents. In addition to this, belonging to a minority group is associated with non-development related risk factors (e.g., racism, discrimination; Romero, Roberts, 2003), which could be another reason for more stress experiences of those minority youth.

Phinney and colleagues (2001) emphasized that immigrant adolescents experience additional burdens, such as a new social environment, language, traditions, and beliefs, in comparison to the adolescents from the host culture. One's willingness to maintain one's own culture and adaptation to the host culture have a strong influence on determining stress and psychological well-being (Berry & Kim, 1988). The results of the second manuscript (Yeresyan & Lohaus, 2013a) showed that Turkish adolescents who are able to operate in two cultural contexts while maintaining one's own cultural origin report better well-being than youth who prefer either

maintaining one's own culture (separation) or adapting to the host culture (assimilation) and youth who refused to have contact with both cultures (marginalization) – who had the lowest well-being. Understanding the acculturation process of youth – in this research the focus was only on the acculturation orientation of immigrant youth – plays an important role in predicting adolescents' psychological well-being. Findings suggested that in order to improve well-being, it is important to bridge the gap between one's ethnic culture and the mainstream culture. An adolescent who has bicultural competences or – in other words – youth choosing integration as an acculturation strategy have better psychological health than his/her peers with preferences for alternative strategies, namely marginalization, assimilation, and separation.

3.3 Psychological Well-being and Its Relation with Self-construal

When the psychological well-being of adolescents is concerned, the results of the second manuscript showed that the well-being of Turkish youth is better compared to the Turkish-German and German youth (Manuscript 2, Yeresyan & Lohaus, 2013a). The lower level of well-being reported by German as well as Turkish-German adolescents showed that there could be factors that affect psychological health other than having an immigrant status. It may be assumed that the differences of weather conditions between Germany and Turkey could be one of the reasons for well-being differences. Previous research has indicated that high levels of sunlight (Cunningham, 1979; Parrott & Sabini, 1990) and warmer temperatures (Howarth & Hoffman, 1984) were related to better mental and emotional states. Landsdowne and Provost (1998) emphasized the importance of Vitamin D on serotonin levels that affect the mood of people. The production of Vitamin D is, however, supported by sunlight. As a consequence, the lack of sunlight in Western societies could affect the well-being of people in a negative way.

However, when the differences within the countries regarding psychological well-being are taken into account, it could be shown that there are more fluctuations within Turkey (Manuscript 1, Yeresyan & Lohaus, 2014a). According to this study, adolescents living in rural parts of Turkey have lower psychological well-being than their counterparts in urban regions. Today's world may be described as a world of competition, and this may be seen in every field of life. Therefore, it is not surprising also to see the effects of competition in education. Academic success plays a crucial role for adolescents' future because education is one of the most important factors to determine occupational opportunities. When the education system in Turkey is considered, although with modernization the gap between rural and urban areas are not as large as before, the differences still stand out. Poorer education could be associated with lower psychological well-being because it creates an obstacle to adolescents' future. As a consequence, it is necessary to provide increased educational opportunities for adolescents living in rural Turkish areas. It is also important to promote the well-being of adolescents because this is associated with better learning skills and could lead them to accomplish their education successfully (Kaplan & Maehr, 1999; El Ansari & Stock, 2010).

In addition, the current study emphasized that an independent self-construal is related to increased well-being and decreased levels of stress (Manuscript 3, Yeresyan & Lohaus, 2013b; Manuscript 1, Yeresyan & Lohaus, 2014a). Although the impact of an independent self-construal is more positive for participants from Germany, which is in line with the Western cultural orientation, the effect is also positive for other non-Western participants. It may be predicted that making decisions and having their own duties might give adolescents with an interdependent orientation more confidence to rely on themselves, and it thus may have a positive impact on their self-esteem.

Although an independent self-construal could influence psychological well-being in a positive way, intimate relations also play an important role to promote the psychological health of youth. Previous research has found that maintenance of close relations affects psychological health in a positive way (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Myers & Diener, 1995). In line with the previous findings, the current study emphasized that the psychological well-being of youth in Turkey and in Germany increases when the importance of intimate relationships in one's self-definition is considered, which is defined as a relational interdependent self-construal (Manuscript 3, Yeresyan & Lohaus, 2013b; Manuscript 1, Yeresyan & Lohaus, 2014a). Moreover, the effect of relational interdependent self-construal is found to be more positive for minority youth than for their majority peers (Manuscript 3, Yeresyan & Lohaus, 2013b). Learning better communication skills could create opportunities to share personal thoughts and feelings with others in a way that enhances intimate relations, which is closely linked to better mental health.

3.4 Coping Strategies and Self-construal

Much research regarding social support as a coping strategy emphasizes its buffering effect on stress (Aro, Hanninen, & Paronen, 1989; Nunez, Plancherel, Bolognini, & Bettschart, 1992; Smith, Smoll, & Ptacek, 1990). However, when the results of the current research is considered (Manuscript 1, Yeresyan & Lohaus, 2014a), it showed that the relation between social support and stress is positive. However, the research does not imply any causal relations. Therefore, this result may indicate that youth who experience more stress search for more social support. Such results may be useful for the development of intervention programs that encourages youth to search for more social support during stressful situations.

Copeland and Robyn (1995) found that the preference of coping strategies may differ among different cultural groups (see also Seiffge-Krenke & Schulman, 1990; Yeresyan & Lohaus,

2014b). In the current studies regarding social support, the results of the second and third manuscripts (Yeresyan & Lohaus, 2013a; Yeresyan & Lohaus, 2013b) showed that both minority groups try to develop more social support to deal with stressful situations compared to their majority counterparts. Vaux (1985) emphasized that there are cross-cultural differences regarding the sources of social support. According to the results of the third manuscript (Yeresyan & Lohaus, 2013b), Armenian-Turkish and Turkish-German adolescence construe themselves more interdependently. Therefore, it is reasonable to predict that the traditional norms of interdependence could lead those youth to search for more social support from their family members and friends. Although the sources could differ, one of the major findings of the current research emphasizes that minority youth search for the help of others to deal with the strains in their life more so than compared to their majority counterparts. Construing oneself as interdependent emphasized another important point for Turkish-German adolescents, which is the effect of their culture of origin on them. Although they were born and grew up in Germany, which emphasized more of an individualistic view, Turkish-German youth still consider their ethnic culture as an important part of themselves.

In sum, regarding our results about minority adolescents, it could be suggested to be mindful of ethnocultural issues. It is important to treat adolescents who belong to minority groups as a special group with additional needs. As the current manuscript has shown, the cultural background of adolescents could give information about their self-construction, coping strategies, and acculturation orientation, which has an impact on their psychological well-being.

Furthermore, it is important for mental health care professionals to be mindful of the region where youth are growing up, and the ethnicity of adolescents with whom they are working. This dissertation has shown that those factors have an impact on adolescents' self-presentations and their coping strategies, which also play an important role in predicting stress

levels and psychological well-being. Being aware of these issues could help professionals to choose appropriate interventions for youth.

4 Limitations

It should be noted that there are some weaknesses of the three articles included in the current dissertation. One of the limitations could be about the sampling. In the first manuscript (Yeresyan & Lohaus, 2014a) a comparison was made between rural and urban regions of Turkey and Germany. In this case one of the limitations could be related to the community context (rural vs. urban). Despite the fact that the samples were gathered from rural and urban districts, living conditions in the rural parts of Germany and Turkey are not equivalent. As well as when the urban regions are considered, the Turkish sample was recruited from Istanbul and the German sample was recruited from Bielefeld. In this case it ought to be noticed that the extent of urban regions in Turkey and Germany may not be practically identical. These differences could be seen as a limitation with regard to the impact of the context on stress and psychological well-being. When the second manuscript (Yeresyan & Lohaus, 2013a) is considered the comparison was made between Turkish, German and Turkish-German adolescents. The sample of Turkish adolescents was recruited in Istanbul which is one of the metropolitan cities in Turkey. Although the population living in Istanbul has different cultural backgrounds, the sample from the rural cities in Turkey could affect the results. In this case the results regarding Turkish and German adolescents might have been larger. In the third manuscript (Yeresyan & Lohaus, 2013b) the selected sample consisted of Armenian-Turkish, German and, Turkish-German youth. In this case, the Armenian-Turkish sample was recruited from Armenian high schools that consist of only Armenian students. On the other hand there are not any schools in Germany that consist of only Turkish students. Therefore the sample of Turkish-German students was obtained from general schools in Germany. These differences

with respect to schooling (and sampling) could have had impact on the results. More limitations regarding statistics are addressed in the attached articles.

5 Summary

The current dissertation compiles three manuscripts that focus on stress experiences, coping strategies, psychological well-being, and the self-construal of adolescents in Turkey and Germany. It gives a general view about how these constructs differ among adolescents who are living in rural and urban parts of these countries and how they vary among adolescents who belong to the minority or majority population.

The aim of the first manuscript “Stress and Well-Being among Turkish and German Adolescents Living in Rural and Urban Areas” (Yeresyan & Lohaus, 2014a) was to predict the effect of coping strategies and self-construal on stress and psychological well-being of adolescents. In this manuscript, the aim was to understand whether there are any differences within Germany and Turkey regarding experienced stress and psychological well-being. To predict this, the focus was on different regions; namely, rural and urban regions within the two countries. The results showed that, in general, youth living in urban regions experience lower levels of stress in comparison to their counterparts living in rural regions. The main differences between rural and urban regions were found in Turkey regarding psychological well-being. The results indicated that youth living in rural regions have significantly lower psychological well-being than their counterparts living in urban regions of Turkey. Moreover, regarding rural and urban differences, it was found that self-construal has no significant effect on stress and well-being. However, the results showed that independent self-construal was related to an increased level of well-being while buffering the effect of stress for German adolescents. Moreover, the results indicated that relational interdependent self-construal leads to increased levels of psychological well-being for adolescents regardless of cultural and

regional differences. The results for these coping strategies showed that social support related positively with stress. However, solving family problems related negatively with stress and positively with psychological well-being for all participants.

The focus of the second manuscript “Stress, Well-Being and Coping among Turkish, German and Turkish-German Adolescents: Results of a cross-cultural comparison” (Yeresyan & Lohaus, 2013a) was on stress perceptions, social support and family-related coping strategies, and psychological well-being of a majority group and a minority group of adolescents. In addition, the influences of acculturation strategies on these constructs were observed. In this research, it was found that Turkish-German adolescents as a minority group experience higher levels of stress than do German adolescents, and lower levels of well-being than do their Turkish counterparts. Especially, the study has indicated that marginalization as an acculturation strategy leads to the lowest level of psychological well-being, whereas the integration strategy leads to better psychological well-being. Additionally, when the coping strategies were examined, Turkish-German adolescents were shown to develop more social support to get over stressful experiences. The results showed that Turkish-German adolescents as well as Turkish adolescents, as a majority group, prefer to solve problems in the family in order to cope with stressful experiences.

In addition to stress, coping, and well-being, the third manuscript “Stress and Well-being among Minorities: Turkish-Armenian and Turkish-German Adolescents” (Yeresyan & Lohaus, 2013b) focused additionally on self-construal among minority and majority adolescents in Turkey and Germany. In this research, the main aim was to predict stress experiences and well-being by self-construal as well as by social support and family problems solving as coping strategies. The results indicated that adolescents who belong to minority groups, and – as a majority group – Turkish adolescents experienced higher level of stress than do German adolescents. When self-construal was taken into account, the results revealed

that youth who have an eastern cultural background reported higher levels of interdependent self-construal. Moreover, relational interdependent self-construal was rated higher by Turkish and Turkish-Armenian youth than by their German and Turkish-German counterparts. According to the coping responses, in line with the results of the first study, minority adolescents search for more social support than do majority adolescents.

Taken together, the three manuscripts led to a broader understanding of cultural differences in stress experiences, coping strategies and the psychological well-being of adolescents living in Turkey and Germany.

6 References

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