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# Investigation of the Mediator Role of Authenticity Between Emotional Intelligence and Resilience Levels of University Students

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## Abstract

This study examined the mediating effect of authenticity on the relationship between emotional intelligence and university students' resilience levels. While the concept of emotional intelligence is explained as the ability to control and manage emotions, resilience is defined as coping with negative situations and staying psychologically sound, and authenticity is the state of being original. The sample of the study consists of a total of 419 university students, 317 girls and 102 boys, aged between 18 and 25. Emotional Intelligence Trait Scale-Short Form, Short Psychological Resilience Scale, and Authenticity Scale were used as data collection tools. Data were analyzed with Pearson product-moment correlation, Confirmatory factor analysis, and Structural equation modeling. The results obtained from the study showed that there were positive significant relationships between emotional intelligence and resilience, emotional intelligence and authenticity, and authenticity. After this analysis, the mediating effect of authenticity between emotional intelligence and psychological resilience was examined. In addition, it was concluded that authenticity has a partial mediating effect between emotional intelligence and psychological resilience.

## Key Words

Authenticity • Emotional intelligence • Resilience

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## Introduction

For university students, one of the critical periods in their lives is the initiation stage and adaptation process to university. It goes through very difficult processes in the process of adapting to this new environment. There are many problems experienced in this process, such as leaving family and friends, adapting to university, overcoming responsibilities in daily life, meeting new friends and entering new social environments, managing the budget, having emotional problems, anxiety about academic success, dormitory life, etc. In this period, while trying to cope with the situation given by adolescence, on the other hand, there is a state of preparation for adulthood. At the same time, they are faced with physiological, emotional, academic, and social needs specific to the university environment (Hudd et al., 2000). While some students overcome the difficulties experienced appropriately and constructively, some students go through this process with difficulties. Psychological resilience, which is defined as the state of being resistant to difficulties, is stated as the ability of a person to adapt to changing situations (Karairmak, 2006). Psychological resilience is stated as the protective factors that an individual uses to improve themselves and regulate their mood in crises (Smith et al., 2008). While trying to balance students' developmental tasks, needs, and academic responsibilities, they are faced with intense tension and this tension can sometimes turn into adjustment problems.

Individuals with a high level of authenticity; low self-handicapping behaviors (Sarıçalı, 2014), are more hopeful toward life (Davis & Hicks, 2013), are committed to their values, and focused on leading a meaningful life (Smallenbroek et al., 2016), self-respect (Boyras et al., 2014), they are said to have properties such as. In the context of all these studies; It is said that the concept of authenticity is a helpful element in the psychological resilience of individuals. Authenticity means that the person acts within the framework of their true self and these behaviors are consistent (Harter, 2002; Kernis, 2003). Authenticity refers to the behavior of the individual by themselves and truth, not according to external criteria or expectations (Maslow, 2011). In other words, it is the state of being able to know oneself and be loyal to oneself (Harter, 2002; Wood et al., 2008). It is stated that the more an individual can lead a life by their real self, the more authentic they are. The opposite signifies the false self. The real self is characterized by phenomena such as "speaking your true thoughts and beliefs," "honestly voicing your opinions," and "expressing how you truly feel," while the false self is "false," "hide your true thoughts and feelings," and "hide your true thoughts and feelings, but not the true thoughts and feelings of others. characterized by phenomena such as "saying what they want to hear" (Harter, 2005). Rogers (2020) defines a psychologically healthy person as "a person who uses his/her full potential". Accordingly, for an individual to be psychologically healthy, they must lead an authentic life as they desire, not according to the expectations and wishes of others. In addition, Rogers emphasizes that the individual's acceptance of themselves as they are, embracing their feelings in all aspects, and being self-aware are the factors that point to psychological health. "Awareness" relates to a person's knowledge of their motivations, desires, emotions, and themselves, and their desire to increase their knowledge (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). It is a dimension associated with knowing the positive and negative aspects of the individual's self (İmamoğlu et al., 2011). Rogers (2020) states that people who wear masks and exhibit artificial behaviors in public cannot be themselves. According to this, for the individual to lead a good life, they should get rid of the expectations of others, stop escaping from their self, embrace themselves in all aspects and behave like themselves.

It is stated that many people avoid being self-aware as a result of their fear of the negative emotions they will bring with them. It is emphasized that it is not possible for an individual who does not have self-awareness to lead a meaningful life (Martens, 2004). On the other hand, it is stated that even if the individual is aware of themselves, it is not an easy process to reflect their real self in action in a social structure that works like a wheel (Guignon, 2008). In this context, authenticity can have negative consequences, up to the isolation of the individual from society. On the other hand, it is stated that the individual who does not live authentically will experience existential guilt because they betray their essence and hinder their potential. Therefore, an inauthentic life will cause deep uneasiness in the person. However, the individual will be able to experience their existence in a qualified way by discovering their essence and living an authentic life accordingly (Dökmen, 2003).

In this period, in which university students shape their identities and assume various roles in many systems, being authentic supports finding one's true self and acting accordingly. To have an authentic self, one must first have self-awareness. It is stated that a person who has such an awareness can provide psychological adaptation to the environment they live in more easily and this awareness will positively affect the individual's psychological well-being (Kernis, 2003). It is stated that authentic people have higher self-awareness and are more free than non-authentic people. In addition, it is stated that authentic people live by bringing their real selves to the fore, while non-authentic people live by highlighting their false selves because they act according to the expectations, criteria, and wishes of others. It is emphasized that people living with their fake selves do not accept their selves and therefore they can experience destructive shame about their real selves (Martens, 2004). In this context, it is stated that the self-esteem of people living with their false selves is lower than those who live a life by their real selves. As a result, it is stated that these people are more prone to depression and more hopeless than people who live a life by their true selves (Harter, 2005).

Emotional intelligence provides self-awareness; It is defined as the subset of social intelligence that includes the ability to monitor one's own and others' emotions, perceive them correctly, distinguish between them, and use this information to direct and reflect one's thoughts and actions (Mayer et al., 2004; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). In addition, Kernis & Goldman (2006) found that authenticity was positively associated with various variables such as feeling valued, developing coping strategies, self-worth, self-awareness, identity integration, well-being, low verbal defensiveness, and high relationship satisfaction. specified. In a study, it was found that there is a positive and significant relationship between emotional intelligence and authenticity (Kocaoğlu & Çekiç, 2012). Individuals with high emotional intelligence can communicate more easily and closely with other individuals (Erdoğan, 2008), have better social skills (Doğan & Demiral, 2007), have higher levels of expressing their emotions and giving appropriate emotional reactions (İşmen, 2004). It is seen that they can adjust their emotions more consistently against changes (İkiz & Kırtıl-Görmez, 2010) and that they can regulate the emotions of the people they interact with (Akçay & Çoruk, 2012). On the other hand, studies have shown that individuals with social anxiety have low levels of authenticity (Plasencia et al., 2011). In another study, it was concluded that the increase in authenticity in bilateral relations led to positive changes in the emotional and thought states of individuals with social anxiety (Plasencia et al., 2016). When examining the studies investigating authenticity among university students, it was concluded that as the level of authenticity decreased, the levels of stress, anxiety (Wood et al., 2008), and depression (Lopez & Rice,

2006) increased. Malak (2011) found in his study with university students that emotional intelligence is an important predictor of self-awareness, interpersonal relationships, adaptation to conditions and environment, stress management, and general mood scores.

One of the most important parts of the human experience of emotion is the ability to regulate emotions in the best possible way, both in their own experiences and in their interactions with other people. Emotion regulation is defined as the processes that determine how long people will have which emotions in which situations, how they will experience these emotions, and how they will express them (Gross, 1998). It has been determined that there is a positive relationship between the mental, emotional, and behavioral communication skills of individuals with a high ability to regulate their emotions (Çetinkaya & Alparslan, 2011).

In all this conceptual framework, no study was found in which the specificity between emotional intelligence and psychological resilience was determined. The research examines the effect of being authentic in terms of the effect of emotional intelligence on psychological resilience. In this respect, it is important that emotional intelligence is not an authentic research in the literature and that it further increases psychological resilience. For this reason, the research first aimed to examine whether emotional intelligence positively predicts resilience, and then the mediator role of originality between university students' emotional intelligence and resilience levels.

## Method

### Research Design

This study is a survey in the relational survey model that examines the mediating effect of authenticity level on the relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological resilience of university students with the structural equation model. The relational survey model is a “research model that aims to determine the existence and/or degree of change between two or more variables” (Karasar, 2011).

### Research Sample/Study Group/Participants

The study group the research consisted of 419 undergraduate students, 317 (76%) females, and 102 (24%) males, studying at Yıldız Technical University Faculty of Education in Istanbul in the 2022-2023 academic year. In the study, in which a convenient sampling method was used, the ages of the students were between 18 and 25, and the mean age was 21.08 (sd=2.24).

### Measures

#### *The Brief Resilience Scale (BRS)*

The short resilience scale (BRS), adapted into Turkish by Doğan (2015), was developed by Smith, et al. (2008) developed by. It consists of 6 items in a 5-point Likert type. Answer keys are “Not at all appropriate” (1), “Not suitable” (2), “Slightly Appropriate” (3), “Appropriate” (4), “Totally Appropriate” (5). An adaptation study was conducted with 295 university students. The psychometric properties of the scale show that it is a valid measurement tool. As a result of the analysis since all output values were within the desired value range, no improvement was required. When we examine the CFA results for BRS, in terms of fit indices, it is seen that the structure of the

measurement tool for this study was confirmed. ( $\chi^2 = 13.423$ ,  $sd = 8$ ,  $\chi^2 / sd = 1.505$ ,  $GFI = .98$ ,  $AGFI = .96$ ,  $RMSEA = .02$ ,  $CFI = .98$ ,  $SRMR = .03$ ,  $TLI = .98$ ). The Cronbach alpha value was .79.

#### *The Authenticity Scale*

The Authenticity Scale, adapted into Turkish by İlhan and Özdemir (2012), was developed by Wood, Linley, Maltby, Baliousis, and Joseph (2008). It is a 7-point Likert type with 12 statements. There are no reverse-scored statements in the scale. It consists of three sub-dimensions, "Self-estrangement", "Acceptance of External Effects" and "Authentic Life". The factor structure was also confirmed for the Turkish form. Internal consistency ranged between .62 and .79. In the adaptation study of the scale, Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficients were found  $\alpha = .79$  for Alienation,  $\alpha = .67$  for Acceptance of External Effects, and  $\alpha = .62$  for Authentic Living, respectively. As a result of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis conducted within the scope of this research, it is seen that the factor loads vary between .68 and .72. As a result of the analysis since all output values were within the desired value range, no improvement was required. When we examine the CFA results for the authenticity scale in terms of fit indices, it is seen that the structure of the measurement tool for this study was confirmed ( $\chi^2 = 8.052$ ,  $sd = 3$ ,  $\chi^2 / sd = 1.67$ ,  $GFI = .98$ ,  $AGFI = .97$ ,  $RMSEA = .053$ ,  $CFI = .97$ ,  $SRMR = .03$ ,  $TLI = .98$ ). The Cronbach alpha value was .81.

#### *Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire–Short Form*

The Emotional Intelligence Trait Scale-Short Form (TEIQUE-SF), adapted into Turkish by Deniz, Özer, and Işık (2013), was developed by Petrides and Furnham (2000a, 2001). Consisting of 30 statements, the scale is a 7-point Likert-type measurement tool. It consists of four factors. The scale consists of sub-factors, which are "Subjective well-being", "Self-control", "Emotionalism" and "Sociability". As a result of the Explanatory Factor Analysis performed to examine the construct validity of the scale, a four-factor structure consisting of 20 items was obtained. The results of the Confirmatory Factor analysis carried out to understand whether this structure fits well with the sample data, on the other hand, showed that the fit to the sample to which the scale was applied was good. In the analyzes for reliability, Cronbach's alpha coefficients of TEIQUE-SF were found as .72 for the Well-Being factor, .70 for Self-Control, .66 for Emotionalism, .70 for Sociability, and .81 for the whole scale. The test-retest reliability coefficient was found to be .86. As a result of the confirmatory factor analysis conducted within the scope of this research, it is seen that the factor loads vary between .55 and .69. In this way, it was seen that the model's goodness of fit values came to acceptable limits. When we examine the CFA results for the Emotional Intelligence Trait Scale-Short Form in terms of fit indices, it is seen that the structure of the measurement tool for this study was confirmed. ( $\chi^2 = 21.15$ ,  $sd = 7$ ,  $\chi^2 / sd = 3.65$ ,  $GFI = .94$ ,  $AGFI = .86$ ,  $RMSEA = .06$ ,  $CFI = .95$ ,  $SRMR = .04$ ,  $TLI = .89$ ). The Cronbach alpha value was .84.

#### **Data Analysis**

SPSS 26.0 and AMOS (Analysis of Moment Structures) programs were used for statistical analysis of the data. The Structural Equation Model (SEM) was used to analyze the mediating effect of authenticity on the relationship between emotional intelligence and resilience.

In this study, which aims to reveal the relationship networks between university students' emotional intelligence, resilience, and authenticity levels, firstly correlation analysis and descriptive statistics were carried out. This process was done with SPSS 26.0 program. Then, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was carried out. SEM is stated as a more powerful quantitative analysis method because it provides the opportunity to make decisions according to more than one parameter (Kline, 2011). Therefore, in the study, the relationship between emotional intelligence and resilience was examined, and then the mediating effect of authenticity between emotional intelligence and resilience was examined. To evaluate the results of SEM, the goodness of fit indices recommended by Hu and Bentler (1999) were considered. In this context, besides chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) and degrees of freedom, CFI, NFI, TLI, SRMR, and RMSEA values were calculated. As critical values, the ratio of  $\chi^2$  to degrees of freedom is less than 5, CFI, NFI, and TLI values are higher than .90, and SRMR and RMSEA values are lower than .08 (Hu ve Bentler 1999; Tabachnick ve Fidell, 2001).

### Results

The mean, standard deviation calculated according to the scores the students got from the data collection tools used in the research are given in Table 1.

Table 1

*Descriptive Values of Students' Total Scores from the Emotional Intelligence Scale, Brief Psychological Resilience Scale, and Authenticity Scale*

	N	Mean	SD
TEIQue-SF	419	22.14	5.40
BRS	419	17.81	3.87
AS	419	25.02	7.03

TEIQue-SF=The Emotional Intelligence Trait Scale-Short Form, BRS= The Brief Resilience Scale, AS= The Authenticity Scale

As seen in Table 1, the arithmetic mean of emotional intelligence scores is Mean= 22.14, the arithmetic mean of resilience scores is Mean = 17.81, and the arithmetic mean of authenticity scores is Mean = 25.02.

#### *Correlations Between Variables*

As a result of the analysis of the normality of the distribution for the scales used in the research, it was determined that the distribution showed a normal distribution, and the findings of the relationships between emotional intelligence, psychological resilience, and authenticity were obtained by Pearson product-moment correlation. The result of the correlation analysis is shown in Table 2.

Table 2  
*Correlations of Emotional Intelligence, Resilience, and Authenticity Levels*

	1	2	3
1.TEIQue-SF	1		
2.BRS	.37**	1	
3.AS	.38**	.58**	1

\*\*p<.01

It is seen in Table 2 that the highest relationship is between resilience and authenticity (r: .58, p<.01), followed by the relationship between emotional intelligence and authenticity (r:.38, p<.01), and the relationship between emotional intelligence and resilience is also significant (r: .37, p<.01. [Baron and Kenny \(1986\)](#) agree with their explanation of the prerequisite for correlation required for mediation. Therefore, in this study, the analyzes were tested with the structural mediation model.

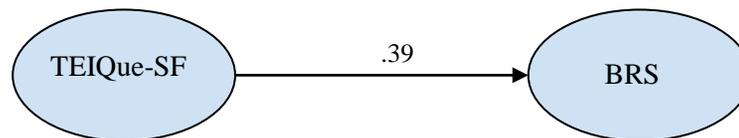
**Model Tests**

Structural Equation Model analysis results of Model 1 and Model 2, which were established to examine the mediating role of authenticity in the relationship between emotional intelligence and resilience of university students, are presented below.

Model 1

The Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence and Resilience

In Model 1,the relationship between emotional intelligence and the psychological resilience of university students was examined. According to [Baron and Kenny \(1986\)](#), if there is a significant relationship between the dependent and independent variables, there may be a mediation relationship. For this reason, first of all, the predictive power of the emotional intelligence status of university students on psychological resilience was examined.



**Figure 1.** The predictive power of emotional intelligence on resilience through structural equation modelling

Figure 1 shows the predictive power of emotional intelligence on resilience through structural equation modeling. In Table 3, fit values and fit indicators of Model 1 are given. When Table 3 is examined, it is seen that the model is significant according to  $\chi^2$  (51.481) and  $\chi^2/df$  (12) values. Model fit indices show that the model is within acceptable limits/ GFI=.97, AGFI=.97, RMSEA=.04, CFI=.98, SRMR=.02, and TLI=.98). Accordingly, it is seen that emotional intelligence predicts resilience at the level of .39.

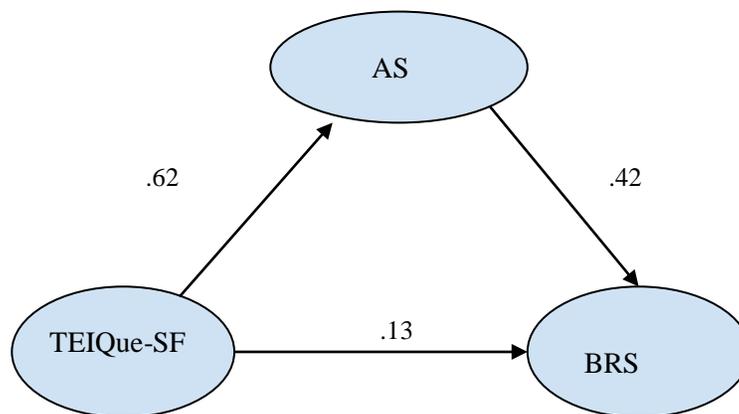
Table 3

*Indicators of Fit for Model 1*

Compliance Values Tokens	Compatibility indicators
$\chi^2$	51.481
sd	12
$\chi^2$ /sd	4.29
GFI	.97
AGFI	.95
RMSEA	.04
CFI	.98
SUMMER	.02
TAG	.98

Model 2

Examining the Mediator Role of Authenticity in the Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Psychological Resilience



**Figure 2.** The mediating role of authenticity in the relationship between emotional intelligence and resilience through structural equation modeling

The fit values and fit indicators of Model 2 are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

*Indicators of Fit for Model 2*

Compliance Values Tokens	Compatibility indicators
$\chi^2$	545.58
sd	267
$\chi^2$ /sd	2.04
GFI	.88
AGFI	.87
RMSEA	.04
CFI	.96
SRMR	.04
TLI	.94

When Table 4 of Model 2 is examined, it is seen that the model is significant according to  $\chi^2$  (545.58) and  $\chi^2/df$  (2.04) values. When the model fit indices are examined, the GFI value is .88; The AGFI value is .87; The RMSEA value is .04; The CFI value is .96; The SRMR value is .04 and the TLI value is .94, indicating that the model is within acceptable limits.

According to Model 2, in the structural equation modeling in which the mediating effect of authenticity in the relationship between emotional intelligence and resilience is tested, it is seen that the predictive power of emotional intelligence on resilience decreased from .39 to .13. According to this; it can be said that authenticity has a partial mediation effect on the relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological resilience.

### **Discussion, Conclusion & Suggestions**

In the research analysis processes, the relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological resilience was analyzed first, and according to the analysis, it was found that the relationship was weak but positively predicted. It supports that the result is one of the important steps for the use of structural equation modeling. The other examined situation is the relationship between emotional intelligence and authenticity in terms of the correlation value. A weak positive correlation was found between these two variables. In the last stage, the relationship between resilience and authenticity was moderately positive. After reaching positive significant relationships between all these variables, the process was started with structural equation modeling.

Significant relationships were found between emotional intelligence and psychological resilience. Considering these results, we can say that people with high emotional intelligence levels also increase their psychological resilience. When the literature is examined, in the research conducted by [Özer and Deniz \(2014\)](#) on university students, it was determined that students with high emotional intelligence also have high psychological resilience.

In the analysis phase, it was found that authenticity had a partial mediating effect on the relationship between emotional intelligence and resilience in university students, according to the structural equation model. Since it has the potential to treat one or more conditions encountered in the field of psychology, it has been stated as a realistic target to have a mediator variable that reduces the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. It was stated that there was a strong effect ([Baron & Kenny; 1986](#)). In this respect, the importance of the fact that authenticity has an effect that reduces the relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological resilience has emerged.

In the descriptions made for psychological resilience, it is expressed as the individuals who have experienced a problem and can cope with negative situations ([Masten, 2014; Smith et al., 2008](#)). It can be said that the individual is related in terms of accepting external influences, one of the sub-dimensions of authenticity. In their study, [Öksüz & Huzur \(2019\)](#) found that authenticity is more effective from the feedback it receives from the communication it establishes with its surroundings than family harmony; It has been determined that the support received from family, friends, and social environment positively affects the authenticity of individuals. It has been revealed that psychological resilience is not affected by the level of acceptance of external effects ([Demirci et al., 2019](#)).

Accepting external influence and controlling it emotionally at the same time supports the findings that resilience is affected in terms of both authenticity and emotional intelligence.

In a study on emotional intelligence and resilience, [Özer and Deniz \(2014\)](#) found positive and significant relationships between personality sub-dimensions such as extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and responsibility. In another study, the relationships between emotional intelligence and interpersonal emotion regulation, and resilience were examined. It has been determined that there is a moderate positive relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological resilience levels of university students participating in the research. This finding shows that as the level of emotional intelligence increases in university students, the level of resilience also increases ([Yüksel et al., 2021](#)). These findings support the research in terms of emotional intelligence exhausting psychological resilience. The research shows that people who show skills such as regulating emotions and managing emotions in terms of emotional intelligence have high levels of psychological resilience. In addition, with the partial mediating effect of authenticity, an important factor in increasing the psychological resilience levels of individuals has been noticed.

As a result, the findings obtained from the structural equation model in the analyzed variables revealed that authenticity has a partial mediating effect on the relationship between emotional intelligence and resilience of university students. From another point of view, it can be said that authenticity also has an effect on the relationship between emotional intelligence and resilience, but it is not entirely due to authenticity. Accordingly, it shows that it is not possible to directly interfere with the emotional intelligence levels of university youth to contribute to their level of resilience, and in cases where facts and events are difficult, intervening in the authenticity levels will be an alternative way.

In light of the findings, it is recommended that researchers who want to conduct research in the future should look at the mediating effect of other variables between emotional intelligence and psychological resilience. It is suggested that programs to increase the level of authenticity can be designed, as well as group guidance and group psychological counseling. Studies can be conducted with different age groups or different samples in terms of demographic variables.

### **Limitations**

There are some limitations of the study. It would be beneficial to express these limitations and to make suggestions for future studies in this direction. First of all, it is necessary to express a limitation arising from the collection of the variables of the research with measurement tools based on personal reports. In measurement tools based on self-reports, the level related to the measured variable is only in question within the scope of that measurement tool.

Another limitation is the cross-sectional data collected. Although alternative models are tested, since the data are not longitudinal, it is necessary to be cautious in characterizing the variables in the model as antecedent and concluding. As a result, the data evaluate individuals quantitatively.

**Ethic**

Ethical permission was received by the Yıldız Technical University social sciences research ethics committee dated 05.11.2022.

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I declare that I comply with the research ethics rules.

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