



A system approach to the self: Interpretive phenomenological analysis

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to determine the life experiences that affect the formation of permanent identity features that form the self during adolescence and to determine the importance of these identity features for adolescents. For this purpose, in-depth interviews were conducted with 8 participants, 4 of whom were women and 4 of whom were men, between the ages of 22–24, to understand the life experiences that affect their self-development during childhood and adolescence. Four of the participants are university students, and 4 of them are high school graduates. Interviews and analyses were carried out within the Interpretive phenomenological analysis principles framework. According to the results of the analysis obtained from the interviews, it was found that the most influential factor on self-development was family communication orientation in childhood, and the participants who grew up in families with a conversation orientation had more positive emotions during childhood, saw themselves as part of the family more, and established more successful friendships. On the other hand, participants from families with a conformity orientation had more negative feelings in childhood, had a lower sense of belonging to the family, and were found to be less successful in friendships.

1. Introduction

The self, which many philosophers have thought about and tried making sense of for centuries, has been critical to the studies of philosophers dealing with the problem of human consciousness since Descartes (1637/1970) [1]. Since the beginning of the 20th century, the self has become an important topic that both sociologists and psychologists work on to understand the individual and the individual's social role. Although we generally start with James (1890), whose modern explanation in psychology foreshadows much of how we perceive the self today, Cooley's (1902) emphasis on the role of others in the development of the self with the concept of the "mirror self" has shed light on many studies [2,3]. The interest in the field increased significantly when Mead (1934), Faris (1937), and Blumer (1937) revealed that the self is a mental and adaptive structure that develops through symbolic interaction in the social network, the reactions of significant others, and the person's interpretive of these interactions [4–6].

Despite thousands of studies in different fields of science, there is not yet a single universally accepted definition of "self", and many definitions refer to distinctly different phenomena, and it is unfortunately difficult to grasp some uses of the term no matter which definition is applied. Nevertheless, there is a consensus on two key features of the self that provides a basis for developing an explanatory approach that can explain these complexities and clear inconsistencies: 1. The self is an organized, dynamic, cognitive-emotionally motivated action system. 2. The self is an interpersonal self-constructing system. According to the first feature, the self

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is an action system to the extent that it produces behavior in terms of adapting to the social world in which it is contextualized and assimilating the information coming from it by interacting coherently, as the output of cognitive-emotional representations [1]. The second feature, which is based on the idea that culture and the social network in which the individual exists, play a critical role in the construction of the self [7,8], is based on the idea that it will be difficult, if not impossible, to understand a self detached from its social context [9–12]. Thus, the self-system encompasses executive functions such as planning, interpreting, monitoring behavior, and selectively processing information about the person and the social world. In performing these functions, it is not simply passively reacting to the social world; rather, it operates as a self-control system that is motivated, goal-oriented, proactive, and instrumental [1].

2. Self-identity

Although the concepts of self and identity are sometimes used interchangeably [13], they are sometimes used to mean different things. What self and identity represent differ both between and within publications. The uncertainty regarding the meaning of the concepts of self and identity is partly due to the inability to adequately determine the complex similar and different meanings of the concepts. Both concepts are higher-order abstractions of myriad psychological and social processes, so no single definitions can be identified, operational or theoretical. In turn, these psychological and social processes can be identified at different levels of analysis and have different properties related to their rates and types of potential change [14]. At one extreme, self-concept and identity are used synonymously with how we define and present ourselves. At the other extreme, self-concept, and identity in particular are sometimes used to represent alternative uses of words that come from deep-rooted social science concepts such as culture, ethnicity, or group – and vice versa [15]. The central quality that distinguishes the self from identity is that the self is a process and organization born of self-reflection, whereas identity can be seen as a tool by which individuals or groups categorize themselves and present themselves to the World [16–18].

That is, the existence of the self necessitates an "I" that can think of an object that is "me". The term self includes both the actor who thinks ("I am thinking") and the object of thinking ("about me"). Moreover, the actor can think and is aware of doing so. As the philosopher Descartes famously asserted, "I think, therefore I am." Awareness of having thoughts matters [19]. Because from the moment we think of "me" as an object, we refer to several features that define that object, and these references enable us to perceive the object as a whole. Naturally, every feature that stands out about the object is related to our current perspective on the object [20–23], but all of the features we mentioned are within the object and are parts of a system. As stated by Oyserman, Elmore, and Smith, 2012 I propose to consider these features that make up the whole as a structure of self-concept [19]. These are not heterogeneous structures, they are subsystem elements that make up a whole, and become evident with awareness of the fluid mental process. Based on this, Oyserman and Markus, 1998 defined the content of self-concept as cognitive structures that can include attitudes or evaluative judgments and are used to make sense of the world, focus attention on one's goals, and protect one's basic sense of value [24]. Therefore, the mental processes that make up these structures turn into paths that connect as nodes in the brain, and as Markus, 1977 states, the self-concept transforms life into a meaningful and coherent world as cognitive schemes in which all the information that the individual has about himself/herself is organized and linked [25]. These cognitive schemas include abstract concepts representing the most important values, aspirations, and beliefs for the individual, as well as behavioral patterns related to the past that are at the center of these characteristics.

Unlike the self, the etymology and definition of identity are intrinsically relational. Identity can be defined as the categories people use to indicate who they are and position themselves relative to other people [26]. Erikson (1970), who made the pioneering studies of identity literature, states that identity has a function that is rooted in childhood and connects the past to the future in order for the individual to fulfill his later life tasks [27]. According to the social-cognitive process model approach, identity serves as a personal frame of reference to interpret experience and self-knowledge, and to answer questions about the meaning, importance, and purpose of life [28]. The characteristics and qualities that define who a person is, social relations, roles, and multiple identities that express social group memberships [29,30] come together to form an individual's self-concept [31,32]. That is, the term identity can also be conceptualized as a way of making sense of some subsystem or part of the self-system in which the individual is currently mentally processing [33–38]. In this way, identity features serve to be a part of the social world by making connections with others, implying both a distinctiveness (I am not like them or a "not-me") and sameness (I am like them or a "me-too") with others [39]. Although Erikson (1968) said that to gain a stable identity, the adolescent should test different identities, on the one hand, the adolescent should acquire identity features that will represent his/her self in the outside world, on the other hand, he/she should meet the needs of the self in this new world that he/she does not know [40].

3. The role of others in the development of the self

As a product of mental construction, the self is not present at birth and arises from interaction, and numerous social factors contribute to its formation. The self, which is a product of culture, not only includes the individual's position in the social structure but is also shaped by being influenced by it. The self is thus a social creation shaped by one's interactions with others, past and ongoing relationships, experiences within and between social contexts and institutional connections, and position in culture and social structure [18]. The fact that Üwens, 2006 defined the self as an organized and interactive system of thought, emotion, and motivation that arises from self-reflexivity and language, that people attribute to themselves and that characterizes certain people, also indicates that the self is constructed as a social output [17].

The self and identity theories, which converge on the fact that self and identity are products of culture, recognize that self and

identity are social products in at least three ways. The first is related to the fact that the self does not come into existence spontaneously in a vacuum but observes and learns what is important and desirable for the social network in which it is located, to survive. These learnings enable the individual to internalize himself/herself by transforming them into identity traits that are more or less important depending on what is valued in the person's culture and place in the social hierarchy, such as group memberships (for example, religion, race or gender), family roles, appearance, school achievement, sporting or artistic skill. Second, it requires others who affirm and reinforce one's self, who support the sense that one's self is important and that one's efforts can produce results. This means that people feel better about themselves and are more capable of achieving their goals, which reinforces the idea of being a part of the social network and supports psychological well-being by serving survival. Third, aspects of the self and identity of the person who is important at that moment are determined by the current issues [19].

Unlike personal development, self-development is defined in six different stages in parallel with social and cognitive development: Very early childhood (2–4 years), early-middle childhood (5–7), middle-late childhood (8–10), early adolescence (11–13), middle adolescence (14–16), and late adolescence (17–19). The self is both a cognitive and a social construct. Therefore, as cognitive processes undergo normative developmental change and enter different social environments, the structure and organization of self-representations will likewise change and evolve. Therefore, the particular progressions and limitations of each developmental period determine the characteristics of the self-portrait that can be produced. Normative developmental cognitive changes lead to similarities in self-representations at all levels and the formation of a coherent system [41]. From a historical perspective, symbolic interactionists [3,4,42] see the self as socially constructed through linguistic exchanges (symbolic interactions) with others. Thus, the opinions of significant others about themselves are internalized as self-evaluations. Whether self-representations are positive or negative depends on the differences in their child-rearing and socialization histories, which predict individual differences at a particular developmental level. In this process, the most important tool in which the child learns the symbolic language and the self exists is the family in which he/she grows up.

4. The effect of family communication patterns on child development

Social psychologists have defined significant others as “people who have a great influence on individuals' attitudes” [43]. The development of self and personality traits in children is based on a social learning process in which children become socialized and acquire stable behavioral patterns [44]. Thus, among the five dominant mediators of socialization (family, school, peer, environment, and mass media), the family is the primary context in which children initially develop a sense of self and form their main motivation, values, identity, and beliefs by interacting with their parents and siblings [45–48]. Sedgwick (1981), defined family communication as the organization and use of words, gestures, expressions, sounds, and actions to create expectations, portray images, describe emotions, and share meaning [49]. Therefore, modeling and developing behavior that is valued in a particular family shape the development of attitudes toward the child's communication and thus the child's special communication behavior [50]. In this context, family communication patterns explain the relationship between families' predictable communication tendencies and certain outcomes by providing family members with value and belief systems [51]. Simply, family communication patterns represent a family's communication environment. This environment affects self-development and shapes the behavior of an individual long after leaving home [48,52].

According to the family communication patterns approach, which is based on the simultaneous relationship between interpersonal and internal communication [53], there are two socialization mechanisms: conversation orientation and conformity orientation [48]. Conversation orientation refers to the degree to which families create a climate in which all family members are encouraged to participate in unrestricted interactions on a wide variety of issues, while conformity orientation refers to the degree to which family communication emphasizes a climate of homogeneity of attitudes, values, and beliefs [51]. In particular, families with a high level of conversation orientation emphasize open interaction without limiting topics, while families with a high conformity orientation restrict interactions around thoughts and feelings [48]. Families with a high conversation orientation perceive open interaction as rewarding, and family members generally can maintain relationships [54,55]. The interactions of families with high conformity orientation typically focus on adjustment, conflict avoidance, and interdependence of family members [48,56]. Additionally, in intergenerational interactions in these families, communication reflects children's obedience to their parents and other adults.

In the formation of permanent self-schemas during adolescence, interactions with peers, teachers, and adult counselors are as important [57] as family communication patterns. Positive relationships to be established with these people not only ensure the stability of the self but also increase self-esteem and support it to increase resilience and protective factors [58–61]. When the self is considered a system, the identity features that make it up are also built through relationships [62–64]. Therefore, interaction and communication with the social environment are critical in terms of meaning that enables adolescents to engage in interpreting the world around them and their place in it [65]. The spheres of life in which decision-making and subsequent commitment to the identity characteristics that make up the self-take place during adolescence include occupation, religious, political and social beliefs, and interpersonal and sexual values. These characteristics determine the cognitive, emotional and behavioral route of the individual throughout his/her whole life. For this reason, we can see the mentioned features as subsystems of the self-system. In this context, the main purpose of the study is to understand the effects of childhood and adolescence life experiences on the formation of these subsystems through life experiences. This study will seek answers to the following questions.

1. How do communication and interactions between family members during childhood affect self-development in adolescence?
2. How do adolescence life experiences affect self-development?
3. How does the level of meeting the needs of the self in adolescence affect the development of the self?

5. Method

5.1. Qualitative research design

In the framework of social constructivist epistemology, the use of qualitative research method was adopted to discover how important the question "Who am I?" is for adolescents and how it is affected by childhood and adolescence experiences. Qualitative research is a research strategy used to discover and understand the meaning that individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem [66–68]. Interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA), which is one of the qualitative research approaches that focus on the meaning and quality of an experience, rather than establishing a cause-effect relationship, has been used in the research. Developed by Jonathan Smith, IPA is a qualitative research method that explores in detail how participants make sense of their personal and social worlds [69,70]. IPA researchers are interested in examining in detail how one makes sense of a major transition in one's life, not a single reality, but multiple realities that arise from one's subjective experiences. Since adolescence is a life period in which important future decisions are made and the self is largely shaped by the adolescent, IPA is appropriate to explore the meaning of these emerging changes in adolescents.

Some life experiences are the result of one's proactive agency, while others are unexpected and unwanted life experiences. Some are discrete and limited, while others persist for a considerable time. Some are experienced positively, while others are strictly negative. What they all have in common is that they are of great importance to the person who will then engage in a significant amount of reflection, thinking, and feeling while working on what it means [71]. Therefore, the unit of analysis in IPA is the individual and the findings are based on a few cross-sectional, semi-structured interviews [67,72]. The IPA also relies on the assumption that access to experience always depends on what participants tell us about that experience, and then the researcher must interpret the participant's description to understand their experience. That is, IPA includes a two-stage interpretation process, or double hermeneutics, as the researcher actively tries to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their own experiences [70].

5.2. Sampling and recruitment

IPA studies are reasonably homogeneous and conducted on relatively small sample sizes [68]. For this reason, this study was studied with a homogeneous small group as much as possible by using the qualitative paradigm in general and the 'purposive sampling method' by the orientation of IPA in particular. The study group was formed based on two criteria for the determined purpose: gender and education (Table 1). The study was conducted with 8 participants, 4 women (2 university students, 2 high school graduates) and 4 men (2 university students, 2 high school graduates) aged between 22 and 24. All the participants spent their childhood and adolescence with their families and had at least one sibling. The participants were determined from among the volunteers who met the appropriate criteria after the researcher announced the purpose of the study to the students whose classes she attended. While generally 3 to 6 participants are included in the study in IPA exploration [73], it was thought that it would be more appropriate to work with 8 participants in the planned study to explore the effects of gender and education.

A total of 8 participants, 4 men, and 4 women, participated in the study. 5 of the participants were 22 years old, 1 was 23 years old, and 2 were 24 years old. While the mothers of 4 of the participants were at primary school, 2 of them was at secondary school and 2 of them were at high school, the fathers of 2 of the participants were at primary school, 1 of them was at secondary school, 3 of them were

Table 1
Demographic information of participants.

		Gender				Total
		N	Female	N	Male	
Education	High school	2	P(F)-2/P(F)-7	2	P(M)-1/P(M)-5	4
	University	2	P(F)-3/P(F)-4	2	P(M)-6/P(M)-8	4
Age	22	3	P(F)-2/P(F)-3/P(F)-7	2	P(M)-1/P(M)-8	5
	23	0	–	1	P(M)-6	1
	24	1	P(F)-4	1	P(M)-5	2
Mother Education Level	Primary school	3	P(F)-2/P(F)-3/P(F)-4	1	P(M)-1	4
	Middle school	1	P(F)-7	1	P(M)-5	2
	High school	0	–	2	P(M)-6/P(M)-8	2
Father Education Level	Primary school	1	P(F)-3	1	P(M)-5	2
	Middle school	1	P(F)-7	0	–	1
	High school	2	P(F)-2/P(F)-4	1	P(M)-1	3
	University	0	–	2	P(M)-6/P(M)-8	2
Number of siblings	2	1	P(F)-4	2	P(M)-6/P(M)-8	3
	3	1	P(F)-2	1	P(M)-5	2
	4	2	P(F)-3/P(F)-7	1	P(M)-1	3
living place	Village	0	–	1	P(M)-1	1
	County	3	P(F)-2/P(F)-3/P(F)-7	0	–	3
	City	1	P(F)-4	3	P(M)-5/P(M)-6/P(M)-8	4
Total	4	P(F)-2/P(F)-3/P(F)-4/P(F)-7	4	P(M)-1/P(M)-5/P(M)-6/P(M)-8	8	

*P(F): Female participant.

**P(M): Male participant.

high school and 2 of them were university. 3 participants have 2 siblings, 2 participants have 3 and 3 participants have 4 siblings. While 1 of the participants lived their childhood and adolescence in the village, 3 of them lived in the county and 4 of them lived in the city.

5.3. Procedure

Approval for the study was given by the Social and Human Sciences Research and Publication Ethics Committee at Kastamonu University (September 7, 2022/15). Interviews were held in the interview room of Kastamonu University Psychological Counseling Unit, on the day and time determined, starting with the review of the information form and obtaining informed consent. The average interview duration was 58 min, varying between 45 and 90 min. The interview started with a general discussion aimed at reassuring the participant before moving on to the three basic and basic questions that were expressed in unbiased, open-ended, non-directive language.

To understand the self-development in childhood, after the interview for the relief of the participant the demographic information; The first basic question to understand family communication orientation, parental value judgments, and expectations, the general emotional state of the family, and the participant’s experiences of childhood relationships with family members, general mood, and interaction with the social environment were addressed. First fundamental question: “Can you tell about your life experiences with your parents, siblings and, if any, other people sharing the same house with you, thinking about your childhood, and your relationships at school and with friends at that time?” was in the form. The next basic question includes life experiences about what changes in the communication and interactions of the participant with family members, friends at school, and social environment during adolescence, and what matters are important to her in this period. Finally, the basic question of how important professional, religious, political, and sexual orientation is for the participants during adolescence was questioned. All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. Pseudonyms have been used and descriptive features have been omitted to preserve anonymity.

5.4. Analysis

After the interviews were completed, transcriptions were made for analysis. Data were analyzed using the steps identified in the IPA research process [70]; its purpose is to report findings as themes based on interview excerpts, with descriptive and interpretive comments. Given the idiographic commitment of the IPA, the analysis began with a description of the analysis process for a single case, and after the first interview was analyzed in detail, it was followed by the second case, followed by further interviews. Later, relations were established between the interviews [67].

In the first step, before each interview was started to be read repeatedly by the researcher, the audio recording was listened to once to imagine the voice of the participant during the interview process and to grasp his feelings again. At this stage, the researcher took notes and labeled everything that interested him in the left corner of the transcript. Generally, keywords, phrases, or descriptions used by the participant were recorded. Next, the researcher analyzed the exploratory comments to identify emerging themes based on the exploratory notes, sorted the transcript fragments in the order in which they appeared, and developed a mapping to see how the themes fit together. This allows us to explore spatial representations of how emerging themes relate to each other. After this stage, the same procedure was applied to the other participants. The next stage of the analysis discovering commonalities among the participants. The results obtained at this stage are presented in the form of diagrams.

6. Results

The results of the analysis aimed at discovering the self-development process and the affecting factors showed that the participants lived in different family and social environments, and therefore they talked about different experiences. Despite these different life patterns, three main themes emerged in the life cycles of adolescents approaching young adulthood: (a) My childhood experiences and

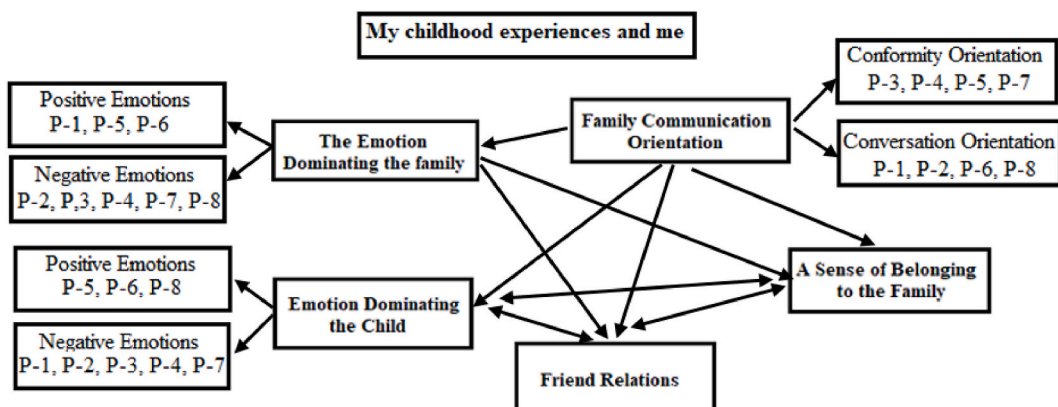


Fig. 1. The relationship of the sub-themes under the main theme " My Childhood and Me".

me, (b) My adolescent experiences and me, (c) Who am I? Although the main themes are presented separately, they are closely related and self-development was formed by the interaction of three main themes. Additionally, each of these main themes had sub-themes within themselves. First, by bringing together the common points about childhood experiences, under the main theme of my childhood experiences and me: (1) Family communication systems, (2) the general mood of the family, (3) the mood prevailing during childhood, (4) Participant's perception of belonging to the family during childhood, (5) friendship relations were determined as sub-themes (Fig. 1). Excerpts from the participants' interviews were used to explain each of the three main themes and sub-theme.

My Childhood and Me: With an ecological approach [74–77], the self develops within the family, a social system built through communication. This system, whose borders are permeable, both affects and is affected by the child. Particularly, considering that the family exists through the communication orientation it has established with its members and the environment [78], it is seen in the statements of the participants that the communication style used in the family has a significant impact on the development of the child's self.

As the first sub-theme, the communication orientations of families were examined. The family orientation of the participants, the way decisions are made in the family, and the thoughts of the participants about expressing themselves in the communication they established with the adults during their childhood were based on [78]. According to this, While 4 of the participants (P(F)-3, P(F)-4, P(M)-5, P(F)-7) are in the conformity orientation family, 4 of them (P(M)-1, P(F)-2, P(M)-6, P(M)-8) are in the dialogue-oriented family. When the expressions of the participants who grew up in families with a dialogue orientation are examined, it is seen that they participate in the decisions taken in the family and they are also given the right to have a say in matters related to themselves and the family. Additionally, participants who grew up in families with a dialogue orientation are supported not only by family members to express themselves to their parents but also to express and defend themselves to elders outside the family members. For example, regarding this, participants made comments such as:

P(M)-1: *"When a decision was made in the family, my father would ask everyone's opinion first. First, he gets my mother's opinion, he gets my opinion, how we can do it, where we can go. When we buy any item, it will be like this, for example, it will be bought, it asks my mother's opinion, "Is it okay if we buy this?" He comes and asks my opinion ... I could express myself to my mother, father, and others. When I expressed myself to others, my parents would be happy too, they wouldn't get too involved just because they were trying something and learning about life."*

P(F)-2: *"In the decisions taken in the family, everyone's decision was made equally, from the youngest to the mother and father. If the decisions made are only for that person, if they are private, if they are not shared, the last thought and opinion would be left to that person."*

P(M)-6: *"Decisions regarding the family were taken in a completely democratic way, let's say, will change a car, family members gather in the evening, my father says "we will change the car. I found a car like this, do you think we should change it, what do you think," he would ask. We would take the opinions of all of us, we would try determining a common opinion, my mother would say something, I would state my own opinion, I would say father, you can do this, you can do that. My sister expressed her opinion. My father also tells me what is right for him. It tells them the wrong side. Then we would generally try making a common decision ... Since my mother taught me to stand up for myself, I would usually express myself without hesitation on issues that we disagreed with. But to my mother, as my father was a little angry, I could sometimes soften what will say and say it that way. In other words, I speak my thoughts quite comfortably and confidently. I can say it without any hesitation."* have used their expressions.

In contrast, it is seen that the participants who grew up in families with a conformity orientation do not have any say in the decisions taken in the family, and they are not consulted much in the decisions regarding themselves. Additionally, the participants who grew up in families with a conformity orientation stated that they were warned not to talk too much, not to argue with their elders, and not to interrupt their words. For example, regarding this, participants made comments such as:

P(F)-3: *"We have a traditional family structure, so we had the understanding that the pillar of the house is the father. Therefore, first, the father says something while the decision is taken, and then the mother's opinion is taken, but the last word is always with the father, both now and in the past ... Grown-ups would talk, and we would listen. We wouldn't get involved, so how can I say, we were always out of the loop? Even if we had an opinion on the subject, we could not say it because we were afraid of this."*

P(F)-4: *"I thought my opinion didn't matter to my parents, it was as if I didn't think I had any control over my own life. You know, when we were children, we used to have babies, we dressed them according to your taste, we made them talk according to our taste, I thought they had such an effect on me ... If I do not accept the opinions of the other person, they would say that you are a child, she is a grown-up, her experience is more adaptable to her."*

P(M)-5: *"It was always our father who made the decisions in the family, that is, my father. Whatever my father said would be done. We would also try to explain our opinion, but after all, what my father would say was what I said ... No matter what I said, my answer, thoughts, and opinions were uncritical of my father. His truth, his views, and his thoughts are always important to him. There is a saying that the child does not know the truth yet."* have used their expressions.

The expressions in which the emotional state that dominates the family members and the participant during childhood were handled as sub-themes were examined together. Accordingly, 3 of the participants stated that the dominant emotion of the family was positive (P(F)-2, P(M)-6, P(M)-8), while three stated that the family's emotional state was negative (P(F)-3, P(M)-5, P(F)-7). However, 2 participants stated that the feeling that dominates the family is sometimes positive and sometimes negative (P(M)-1, P(F)-4). All 3 participants, who stated that the dominant emotion in the family was positive, were in the dialogue-oriented family, while all 3

participants who stated that they had negative emotions were in the conformity-oriented family. For example, regarding this, participants made comments such as:

P(F)-2: *“We were a happy family. We were happy every moment we spent together, and even when we argued, it was sweetened in the end.”*

P(M)-8: *“Generally, I can say that we are a happy family. You know, I don't remember my parents ever being in such a conflict, or I don't remember conflicting with us. But I remember very well that my father went through such a stressful period because of some mischief I did in my childhood.”*

P(F)-3: *“My mother is a very fussy and anxious person, so I think she passed on this trait to all of us. In other words, if something is to be done in our house, it should be done immediately, otherwise, a state of anxiety would start stressing everyone.”*

P(F)-7: *“So, if I were to look back on my childhood, I would not describe our family as a happy family. I would describe the family in my childhood as an unhappy family, which is how to put it, something that is not talked about or expressed.”* have used their expressions.

While 3 of the participants stated that they lived their childhood with positive emotions (P(F)-2, P(M)-6, P(M)-8), 5 participants (P(M)-1, P(F)-3, P(F)-4, P(M)-5, P(F)-7) reported that the dominant emotion was negative. While 3 participants who used positive expressions about their mood were in families with a dialogic orientation, all 4 participants who stated negative moods were in families with a conformity orientation. For example, regarding this, participants made comments such as:

P(F)-2: *“The first emotion that comes to my mind about my childhood is happiness.”*

P(M)-6: *“I would say excitement and confidence. As I said, I was doing many active things because I was a very naughty child. I was doing things my parents didn't allow. The feeling of excitement came into play there, but simultaneously, the feeling of trust was dominant as I knew that my family was always protecting and watching me.”*

P(F)-4: *“I was alone in my childhood, and I love solitude. I am a self-sufficient person, even though I do not have too many people around me, I would not like it, I would say one or two is enough. How can I say? I was subjected to psychological violence by my classmates at that time. I had glasses, everyone called me four eyes ... They would say ugly, they would say you had a mustache, there is still introversion and insecurity from that period.”*

P(F)-7: *“I may be shy, yes, I was afraid, I was afraid, I was nervous, I was afraid and nervous.”* have used their expressions.

When looking at the statements about whether the participants felt part of the family during their childhood and to what extent they felt valued in the family: Participants from families with a dialogic orientation stated (P(M)-1, P(F)-2, P(M)-6, P(M)-8) that they see themselves as a part of the family and feel valued because of the attention shown by their parents. For example, regarding this, participants made comments such as:

P(M)-1: *“I sometimes wonder whether they loved me or not. For example, I was thinking, as a child, they do this to my brother, why don't they do this to me? But I never said I wish I was in this family or like that kid. Because my family never made me say that I never thought twice about what I said. I have value because I was a part of that family during my childhood ... They always made me feel that I was a part of that family.”*

P(F)-2: *“I have always said that I am a member of this family. I mean, I never said if I was a child of another family, luckily my family. Because I know that only my family can be happy. Although I went through such a sad and aggressive period, they are merely my parents, I can only be happy with them.”*

P(M)-8: *“Definitely proud to be a member of my family. My family is very precious to me and I know that I am very precious to them. Simultaneously, I feel this, and I try to make them feel the same, I have tried so far.”* have used their expressions.

It was found that the participants (P(F)-3, P(F)-4, P(M)-5, P(F)-7) from families with a conformity orientation had concerns about being accepted by the family and being valued by their parents. For example, regarding this, participants made comments such as:

P(F)-3: *“I wish I was in another family. But there was a reason for it. As I said, we have a quarrelsome in the family environment, I had a complaint about that. Here's how to put it, in childhood, every child wants to play games with his father or, I don't know, go to the park or go for a walk, every child wants to do such things. I mean, we were missing it, it wasn't there.”*

P(F)-4: *“I don't think I was valuable to my family. So, I think so not only for myself but also for all family members. I had never felt valued at that time. So, I can say that the worthlessness permeated me a lot. So I felt unhappy because I was part of that family. And so the urge to run away was formed in me, even then.”*

P(F)-7: *“I think, like any child, when my parents argued, quarreled, or there was any minor uneasiness, I wished I wasn't here, I wished these parents weren't mine. But I was precious to my mother and father. No matter how many things we go through, good or bad, it doesn't matter. I was always valuable in their eyes, I was the one who felt the most beautiful and the best in their eyes, and that has never changed.”* have used their expressions.

When the childhood friendship relations of the participants were examined as a sub-theme, the following results were obtained: Participants from the dialogic orientation (P(M)-1, P(F)-2, P(M)-6, P(M)-8) stated that they enjoyed interacting with their friends during their childhood and they liked to activities with their friends rather than their family members. For example, regarding this,

participants made comments such as:

P(M)-1: “I mostly had many friends in my childhood. I was more comfortable in the outside world. When will play a game, I always had my say, but when we were at home, let’s say, when we were playing a game with my family or siblings, I was always in the background. So I liked playing outside more.”

P(F)-2: “I think I was more comfortable playing with my friends than in the family environment. Because my circle of friends was wide in primary school, I was good with my classmates in general. In other words, I had more of a say in games and stuff, in a friend environment.”

P(M)-8: “I certainly can’t say that spending time with my family was more valuable. Because it’s more fun to play with my child and my friends, and next to my family, we are limited in the child’s mind, of course, it was not a good thing for me to be next to someone who always says don’t do that. That’s why I enjoyed the time I spent with my friends more.” have used their expressions.

Participants from families with a conformity orientation stated that they were not successful in their friendship relations and were anxious both at home and when they did activities with their friends. For example, regarding this, participants made comments such as:

P(F)-4: “Now, we didn’t have a say in the family at that time, you know, I was in the circle of friends, and I was not very successful in my relationships. In primary school, my friendship relations were not excellent.”

P(M)-5: “Friendships were not excellent in primary school. I mean, I didn’t have much of a say in the circle of friends. I don’t like being directed by others, I don’t like taking orders, and the games I played at home were always more enjoyable for me. Being a part of the friends’ group didn’t make me delighted.” have used their expressions.

My Adolescence and Me: When the participants’ narratives about their life experiences during adolescence were examined, it was found that the sub-themes: family interaction, friendship relations, important issues for the adolescent, changes in value judgments and thoughts, and the dominant mood of the adolescent were effective in self-development (Fig. 2).

When the adolescent life experiences of the participants were examined, it was observed that negative emotions were dominant in all participants. It is seen that the source of negative emotions stems from the conflicts experienced in the interactions of the adolescent with the social environment (P(M)-1, P(F)-4, P(M)-5, P(M)-6) and the changes in the body (P(F)-3, P(F)-7, P(M)-8). Particularly, it is seen that the participants, who belonged to families with conformity orientation during childhood and who had negative emotions, could not cope with the conflicts experienced during adolescence. They became more withdrawn (P(F)-3, P(F)-4, P(M)-5). Even if the childhood period was good, the participants were found to have problems with communication in the new social environment they joined. For example, regarding this, participants made comments such as:

P(M)-1: “I was torn between two feelings and thoughts. This has happened all my life, at every stage of my life. I wanted to make close friends, but the friend I brought from middle school was very upset and depressed. That’s why I couldn’t leave him, and my new friends didn’t want him with them. Then I gave up on both. I continued with my friend, who was depressed for a year. I was in a depressed mood for a year, but then I gave up on both. Therefore, this period was a pessimistic and depressive period for me.”

P(F)-3: “I started getting my periods at the age of 10. I went through puberty a little too fast. Ages 12, and 13 were a little easier, for I was already a teenager, but at this time, when I got together with other adolescents, I thought that an emotional breakdown started gradually. It was a difficult process for me, was it as difficult as childhood, yes, it was as difficult as my childhood.”

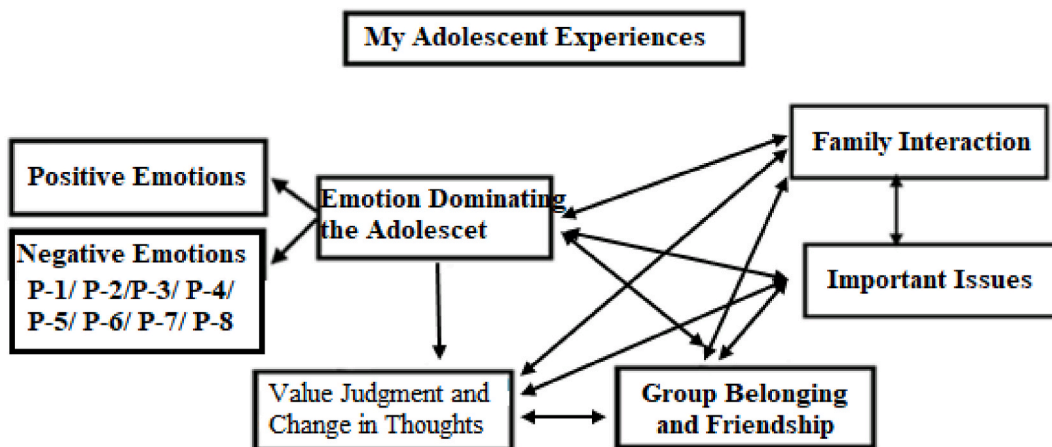


Fig. 2. The relationship of the sub-themes under the main theme "My Adolescence and Me".

P(M)-5: “After middle school, we moved to a different city. Different province, my new environment was anxious because of the new school. I couldn’t adapt to the environment there, and because I couldn’t adapt to the environment there, I couldn’t give myself to the lessons. When I couldn’t give my lessons myself, this caused my grades to drop and I started to be more anxious. Because I heard good things from my mother and father when my grades were always good, but when it was bad, I guess it was fear.”

P(F)-7: “I would state the feeling of being liked. Because at that time, I was wearing it more on my own body at school. Here’s my body, like my hair, like the will to do make-up because when someone likes you, you like it, but when you don’t, I get upset.”

P(M)-8: “One of the first things that come to my mind in adolescence is naturally sexual desires, sexual feelings. Generally, a situation where a teenager does not know what to do with his own body. So something’s going on in your body, it’s already a problem, an unspoken problem. Something is going on in our bodies. No one is telling you what will happen. Therefore, I can say that I have an immense problem with myself, related to sexual feelings or changes in myself. This effect lasted for a very long time. So here’s an introvert, a little obsessed with sexual problems and changes in his body, who doesn’t understand what’s going on.” have used their expressions.

Considering the changes in their experiences with the family during adolescence, it is seen that the expectations of the parents have changed in the majority of the participants. While the family from the adolescents expects that they take more responsibility (P(M)-1, P(F)-2), it is seen that the adolescents exhibit more assertive behaviors in making their own decisions (P(F)-3, P(F)-4, P(M)-5). Additionally, another change observed in adolescents and their families during this period was that adolescents became more distant from their parents and began to communicate less (P(F)-7, P(M)-8). Particularly, it is seen that the participants from families with a conformity orientation make more efforts to make their own decisions during adolescence. In the participants coming from families with a dialogue orientation, it was observed that the expectations of the family increased during this period and the adolescent was supported to take more responsibility. For example, regarding this, participants made comments such as:

P(F)-2: “During adolescence, they had more expectations in terms of success in lessons and the help we provided at home. Here, you must help us with the housework, as you have grown up now. Additionally, during this period, they complained that I was always angry and aggressive, and sometimes I raised my voice and shouted too much. We were having problems because of this, but we did not experience such a problem in childhood.”

P(F)-3: “More so in my life with my family, now that I’ve moved from childhood to adolescence, my word was taken more seriously because I was seen as a slightly older person. I was asked for more opinions, so they started to think of me as an adult, but before puberty, I was seen as a more child.”

P(M)-5: “The city we used to live in when I was little was more of a thing, it wasn’t full of good people, so my parents wanted us to stay at home more. After realizing that as I got older, I could make the decisions myself, I started to disconnect and make my own decisions. In the past, we were told to be home directly at the evening prayer. I realized that I could go outside until morning, not evening prayer. It happened suddenly, I guess, there was something given by puberty.”

P(M)-8: “What has changed in my life, in general, is that I started to distance myself a little more from my family, especially in high school. The reason for this is that I started to stay in the dormitory. Some congregations have dormitories such as Quran courses, I stayed in such a dormitory. Staying in this dormitory was a bit more like a continuation of that family atmosphere. It was as if that dormitory environment was a slightly larger family as if there were different fathers there all the time and under constant supervision.” have used their expressions.

When we look at the statements about what is the most important issue for the participants during adolescence, it is seen that the most important issue is the relationship established with the social environment. Almost all the participants stated that the subject they thought about and made the most effort for this period was the relationship they established with their friends. Particularly, it is seen that the participants from families with a conformity orientation have problems establishing friendly relations. Additionally, it is seen that the lack of self-confidence (P(F)-3, P(F)-4, P(F)-7) is challenging for them and they experience anxiety about their physical changes (P(F)-2). It is seen that the participants from families with a dialogue orientation attach importance to friendly relations, but they cannot manage it easily (P(M)-1, P(M)-6, P(M)-8). For example, regarding this, participants made comments such as:

P(M)-1: “During adolescence, when we met in a friendly environment when we laughed and had fun, they were precious days for me, but now I can’t display those days. For example, I want to go back to those days, but you can’t, it’s not the same way.”

P(F)-2: “I think the most important issue for me during this period was the changes in my body and I couldn’t talk to my mother comfortably. I couldn’t express myself to her and I was trying to understand myself, which caused me to distance myself from them. It was also important for me to spend time with my friends, sit with them and chat, that is, to engage in activities suitable for our age when appropriate.”

P(F)-3: “One of the most important issues in adolescence was self-confidence for me. The thing I feared most was the thought that the person in front of me would misunderstand me, but I overcame this in time.”

P(M)-5: “For example, from my adolescence, before I started that high school, friends and I used to have picnics in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades at regular intervals, and now I want to do that very much. We liked the setup before the picnic and we could talk about it for hours, so we enjoyed it. After that, one of the important subjects in high school is watching game videos with my friends. Discussing things in the game after that, that sort of thing can happen.”

P(F)-7: “The most important issues are, of course, the people I bring into my life, as always. Whether it was my circle of friends or anyone I talked to the most important thing was the behavior and actions of the people I brought into my life.”

P(M)-8: “I think the subject of such close friendship was important. For example, I will always have a best friend, I will always spend time with her. So I was looking for friendship. I am an introvert, but simultaneously, I was looking for a close, reliable person to share my thoughts and feelings with, and this was critical to me.” have used their expressions.

When the friendship relations and group belongings of the participants during adolescence are examined, it is seen that the participants from families with a conformity orientation maintain their childhood friendships instead of forming a new circle of friends during adolescence. However, participants from families with a dialogue orientation developed new friendships during adolescence. Additionally, participants from families with a conformity orientation (P(F)-4, P(M)-5, P(F)-7) did not perceive themselves as a member of a group during adolescence, while participants from families with a dialogue orientation (P(M)-1, P(M)-6) stated that they had a group they felt belonged to. For example, regarding this, participants made comments such as:

P(M)-1: “I entered a new social environment during adolescence, I also met my primary school friends, but I did not see them as much as I used to, so I socialized, I entered the phase of meeting new people in adolescence, I tried to get to know more people. As I got to know them, I learned about life. During this period, I had a group of friends with whom I felt that I belonged. I felt like a member of a group. We were all hanging out together.”

P(F)-4: “Since I grew up in the neighborhood during primary school, I had friends in the neighborhood. We went to secondary school with my school friends, so we studied together. There was no such change in them. It changed when I got to high school. I also have different friends. In other words, the things you share change, your ideas change, and you choose a friend environment accordingly. I don’t see any of my primary school friends.”

P(M)-5: “Yes, my circle of friends has changed immensely, I miss my old friends very much. It cannot be said that I am very friendly with my new friends. So I’m looking for my old friends. I made several efforts to see myself as a part of a group during this period, but I don’t think I could ever experience this feeling.”

P(M)-6: “After going to high school, I stopped seeing most of my primary school friends and made new friends from high school and since we moved from my neighborhood to another house during adolescence, my neighborhood friends have changed, so I can say that my environment has changed. I stopped seeing people I met in my childhood in adolescence. In my neighborhood, I had a group of friends on the site where I lived, and I felt like I was a part of it. Four or five very close friendships, I spent almost all of my adolescence with them.”

P(F)-7: “During this period, my friends did not change too much, but I did not feel like I was part of a group.” have used their expressions.

When we look at the statements of the participants about their parents’ questioning of their thoughts and value judgments during adolescence, it is seen that there are some changes in lifestyle and religious approach. While a significant part of the participants stated that they questioned the religious values given to them during their childhood and they went for restructuring in this regard (P(M)-5, P(M)-6, P(F)-7, P(M)-8), some participants (P(M)-1, P(F)-2, P(F)-3) stated that they continued without questioning the religious values given to them during childhood. Some participants stated that they questioned their parents about their child-rearing and lifestyles and that they moved away from the pattern they adopted (P(F)-2, P(F)-3, P(F)-4). For example, regarding this, participants made comments such as:

P(M)-1: “There is no problem in terms of religion or politics, what they taught me was always true for me, I always agreed with them, but about life, for example, as I always say, there was a rebellion. Because you are just coming out of childhood, you are entering puberty. Your family doesn’t realize it, you are still a child, but at least you are aware of something more.”

P(F)-3: “There was no change in religious matters, but I did criticize my parents for raising children. I do not understand that they want us to live as they did in their times.”

P(M)-5: “Yes, definitely, there have been changes in my thoughts and value judgments. In our philosophy class, I don’t remember which philosopher it was, but the understanding of benevolence and ethics there differed from century to century. It varies from life to life. I realized that everything can change in different cultures and periods, then it took me away from religion a little bit. Because religion had more definite lines than mine. This is good, this is bad, this is good, this is bad. I started to question how we decided this.”

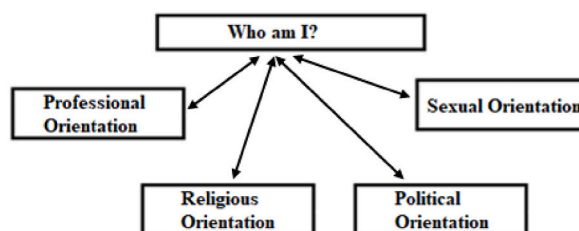


Fig. 3. The relationship of the sub-themes under the main theme "Who am I?"

P(M)-8: “There were times when I judged my father’s conservatism in general after some books I read in high school. Yes, I can say that there are some situations, but this is something I heard against my mother and father, not my mother, but rather my father. And I even remember times when I felt like I was an authority on certain points, especially on certain issues, and it constantly put me under pressure.” have used their expressions.

Who am I?: During the adolescence of the participants, “Who am I?” explanations of the question; occupational orientation, religious orientation, political orientation, and sexual orientation sub-themes (Fig. 3).

When we look at the statements of the participants about vocational orientation, it is seen that some participants think about the subject, and for others, the subject of vocational orientation is not a priority issue. It is seen that the priority of the participants who have interaction problems, especially in childhood and adolescence, is not choosing a profession. For example, regarding this, participants made comments such as:

P(M)-1: “I have always had the desire to be an engineer. Ever since I was little, I said, “I’m going to be an engineer.” My father wanted me to go to health high school, I said no, I said I wanted to go to vocational high school. I said I will be an electrical engineer, I will study engineering. I always continued this, I studied high school for 4 years in the electrical department. After studying, I went to the internship, I could show myself in the internship, so they liked me, it was on electricity, it was the department I wanted.”

P(F)-3: “The age of 14–15 was not a year determined by my professional orientation and I didn’t think about it at all. What kind of career do I want to have? What kind of job do I want? I did not go into question that. But I needed to determine my career more, especially when we were 17–18, especially when we were getting closer to the university. As a professional orientation, I thought a lot about the department I am currently studying, I always had a profession in my language, but I did not question whether this profession was suitable for me or not.”

P(F)-4: “At that time, I was not a person who was very satisfied with her own life due to the psychological violence I experienced. Back then, I always wanted to be an actress. When I went to high school, I didn’t set up a specific profession in my mind, I just wanted to work in a company, get dressed, and put on my heels, so the same thing, I wish I was beautiful. As I said, I didn’t think much, so at some point, I would be nice and have a job where I would feel good.”

P(M)-6: “I have probably never thought about what I wanted to be in the future. Because of the excitement of adolescence, I did not think too much about serious issues for the future. At that time, I wanted to be a veterinarian, at the beginning of adolescence, but I realized that numerical intelligence is required to be a veterinarian in our country’s conditions, I realized that I do not have it. I loved doing sports, and I thought maybe I would do something right from sports, but that didn’t work well. But I guess I did not sit down and think about what my skills are, what I do well, where I lack, which profession I am more inclined to, in which profession I will be more successful.”

P(M)-8: “I was very undecided about my career choice. I guess it usually started in middle school as I have a problem with school in general. I generally dropped out of school and continued that way in high school. Generally, I saw myself as a future software learner or programmer. I had a persistent hesitation about studying it at a university. Honestly, I can’t picture a university education in my head. And I didn’t know what to do and the lessons at school were getting worse and worse. I couldn’t attend school for very long. I have taken the exam, but I couldn’t get to the places I wanted. I don’t know exactly where I want it or how much I want it. In that respect, I was in a constantly turbulent situation regarding the profession in general.” have used their expressions.

When the expressions of the participants about their religious orientation are examined, it is seen that they go to questioning during adolescence and there are changes in the religious thoughts and attitudes of some participants. For example, regarding this, participants made comments such as:

P(M)-1: “I think that my family influenced me a lot in religious matters during adolescence. I was getting warnings all the time. My son, do not do this, if you do this, you will become a beloved servant of Allah. My family has always guided me to religion, fortunately, they did. I’ve always accepted what you taught me, and I agree today. I continue in the same direction as my family told me.”

P(F)-2: “I learned about religious subjects mostly from my family, there were times when I questioned what was taught to me. For example, should I believe? After my interrogations, I believed that I was on the right path, and I live my religion in this way.”

P(F)-4: “I questioned religious issues, I think my changing environment affected this. At first, I was angry with myself about some issues. For example, when I befriend someone who drinks alcohol, I learned in childhood that it is religiously forbidden, so I shouldn’t be friends with that person. Another example is that I told a female friend who did not cover her head that it was religiously appropriate to cover it up. But later on, I adapted myself to these with the logic that there is no compulsion in religion. So, even though I didn’t want to, I accepted.”

P(M)-5: “Certainly, my thoughts on religion have changed, very obviously. For example, when I was little, I thought that my family always knew the truth and always did something. For example, my mother used to put evil eye beads or burn incense everywhere to protect the house from evil. When I was a kid, I used to think of it as a fact, but now I didn’t believe it is. Again, during my childhood summer holidays, my father sent me to the mosque so that we could learn the Quran. I used to think that the imam there knew the best, but now it doesn’t seem like that to me.”

P(M)-6: “My views on religious matters have changed a lot. When I was a child, I put religion as an important part of my life like my family. Then, if everything they told me was true, I began to wonder why religion was so important in their lives. Then I started doing research. You know, I researched the Quran, I researched the Bible, I researched other religions. I did some research on philosophy. Then,

because of my research, the influence of religion on me began to weaken a little more. I used to read the Quran lot in primary school, I prayed, and I left them. So, I can say that religion has no place in my life right now.”

P(M)-8: “In this process, I think that I have experienced some changes in religious practices, although not intellectually. In other words, to start drinking alcohol or to engage in some sexual behavior even though it is haram ... I don't know exactly. I can say that some of my attitudes changed during adolescence.” have used their expressions.

When we look at the political and lifestyle statements of the participants during adolescence: it is seen that male participants (P(M)-5, P(M)-6, P(M)-8) engage in a political inquiry and move away from the political thoughts they have in their families, especially during childhood. However, it is seen that female participants (P(F)-3, P(F)-4, P(F)-7) from families with a conformity orientation did not engage in a political inquiry and it was not an important issue for them at that time. For example, regarding this, participants made comments such as:

P(M)-5: “For example, my family has long voted for Party X. When the election period came, the party was distributing pasta and coffee, especially to the poor. I saw this as nonsense and cheating, and when I told my parents about the situation, they said they were very poorly managed before you were born. Before this party, we suffered a lot of poverty, we suffered a lot. I mean, I challenged them somewhere and said that I didn't think like them. Even now, we are constantly arguing with them on these issues. I think people should be free. I see myself as a person in the world.”

P(M)-6: “Yes, there was a change in my political outlook, especially in late adolescence. My family's view has been conservative for as long as I can remember. Before puberty, my political thoughts began taking shape only on what I saw on television. You know, when the country said the country is excellent on TV, they said something like that, I believed it and I thought it was. Then, I started high school. The interrogations started again, everything was fine at first. Then, I suddenly thought about what he said on TV and saw that the reality in my life was not like that. Then I started thinking to myself. I said either my life is going wrong or there is something wrong with what I was taught and shown, and I started researching. As I said, I took care to read all of the political views, I tried to research. However, as a result, the influence of family and the media in primary school is very different. Because of his political views, I believed whatever was said on television, I thought my political views were the same. He changed a lot after he started questioning because of research done after high school.”

P(M)-8: “Toward the end of adolescence, I can say that some things change, both practically and ideologically. Especially after the books I read, I interacted with a political environment that my family was not in. The foundation I went to during this period was nationalist and I defined myself as a nationalist because of the books I read in that library. I mean, this life went on until a certain time, but after that, it didn't last long either. I have read different books and had different thoughts that my family did not have. I don't think this is a finished process for me yet.”

P(F)-4: “There was not much of a political questioning or change, I mean, I always had a parallel thought with my family. There was never any contrary thinking to their thoughts.”

P(M)-8: “Since I have never been interested in political issues, what my parents said about it has always been true for me. I have never had an interest in thinking about these issues. It didn't interest me too much.” have used their expressions.

When we look at the statements of the participants about their sexual orientation during adolescence, they stated that they generally defined themselves as heterosexual and they did not have any problems in this regard, while 2 participants (P(M)-5, P(M)-8) stated that they had confusion on this issue and that they had not yet determined their sexual orientation. For example, regarding this, participants made comments such as:

P(M)-5: “As an asocial person during adolescence, I couldn't connect with the environment much because I spent time in my room and my friends were disconnected. Because of the inequality between men and women and violence against women in the country, I wondered if I was heterosexual and I don't know yet because I haven't experienced this yet, and because I don't have a girlfriend, I thinking if I can be homosexual sometimes, for example. And I'm wondering if my coldness to people may have developed due to the connection with my circle of friends. And it's not entirely clear to me right now.”

P(M)-8: “The fact that the environment did not tell me anything about this and that I was in conflict about the correctness and falsity of this remained a contradiction within myself. I'm confused because I've felt for my boyfriends a few times the same way I feel for my girlfriends. There was no relationship, but I remember thinking. There were times that I blamed myself for this, but I thought I should give it time.”

P(F)-2: “I mean, I'm a woman, I like men. In that way, the idea that yes, a woman likes a woman, never occurred. If I'm a woman, I like men.”

P(F)-3: “In this, I can say that I have not been a person who is very interested in sexual orientation or these issues. In adolescence, yes, we experience certain changes both physically and psychologically, but this is the only thing. This can be suppressed thought or suppressed emotion. I don't know if there is such a desire or orientation in the subconscious, but I choose to suppress it. You know, these are the things that should have been at the forefront at that time, but I decided to suppress them in adolescence at that time, just what are the things I must know about it.”

P(F)-4: *“Thoughts about my sexual orientation did not affect my life much. After all, I knew I was heterosexual. It’s just that before, for example, I was against homosexuality, I was against it purely for religious reasons. When I met someone who was gay in high school, I realized that this thought was very wrong. I even started to empathize with a person I did not want to be in the same environment. Right According to whom, right or wrong, wrong according to whom, I looked at them as more difficult than they experienced, and I became empathic. But I have never had such a hard time on my own. The sexual orientations I thought about in adolescence did not affect my life in that way.”*

P(F)-7: *“Since I approached sexuality and religious dimensions in this way, I always matched such things with the perception of sin and generally avoided thinking about it. For example, when my friends were talking at work, I used to say it was a sin, I don’t want to listen. I was always ignored. I was ignoring, I ignored it when something happened or I felt something.”* have used their expressions.

7. Discussion

By associating the two concepts (self and identity) that social and developmental psychologists frequently use in their research, accepting the self as a system and identity features as subsystems [16] that make up the self, and integrating the findings of the study with the existing theory and previous empirical findings, a final interpretation stage has been passed. The self is a system that is mentally constructed through symbolic language, which goes through certain organism-like developmental stages and tries to survive in the social network in which it finds its main purpose. The survival of the self, that is, psychological well-being, depends on interaction and communication with others. Meeting the needs of the self of others depends on the quality of the identifying characteristics of the self. The findings show that people without the opportunity to develop a healthy mini-culture (family) in general have problems in forming their identity characteristics that they will define themselves in the social environment, especially during adolescence [79–83]. Since growth and development do not occur in a vacuum, but occur in contexts ranging from parents, families, and peers to a complex and multi-layered social level, the self-concept, which is the product of mental processes, is also shaped by being influenced by them. Developmental diversity for individuals includes interactive changes in the biological, cognitive, and social/emotional domains associated with environmental quality. Considering the character of the context, each period of human development offers opportunities for variations in the construction of the self and the relevant adaptation processes in which the individual is involved [84, p.751]. Piaget’s, 1932 theory of cognitive development states that depriving children of opportunities to interact in their environmental and social worlds can endanger their transition to the next stage of development and their constructed selves [84]. Therefore, when the basic support necessary for optimal growth is missing, they cannot take full advantage of the opportunities presented to them in the next stage of development. Especially at the beginning of adolescence, with more versatile self-construction changes, self-related processes become more problematic [84, p.752].

Research on how self-development is affected by family characteristics has focused on parenting styles and the extent to which parents give their children psychological autonomy [14,85–89]. The results of the current study show that, similar to previous research, parental attitudes and communication orientation of the family have a critical impact on personal development, primarily through childhood experiences. The family communication orientations of the participants were determined based on two basic criteria: the way they made decisions within the family and the level of participants’ ability to express themselves to their parents and outside family members and to protect their rights. Based on these criteria, four participants are in conversation-oriented families (P(M)-1, P(F)-2, P(F)-3, P(F)-4) and four participants are in conformity-oriented families (P(F)-3, P(F)-4, P(M)-5, P(M)-6). Similarly, Waterman, 1982 stated that children from authoritarian families may go through a rather severe identity crisis during adolescence and that both protective and liberal parenting styles may result in outcomes characterized by either relative insecurity (identity diffusion) or docile adaptation (prevention) [90].

When we look at the participants’ statements, it is seen that the dominant emotion in families with a conversation orientation is positive, the decisions are taken more democratically, and the children are included in the decision processes (*For example, When a decision was made in the family, my father would ask everyone’s opinion first (P(M)-1); Decisions regarding the family were taken in a completely democratic way (P(M)-6); We were a happy family (P(F)-2); Generally, I can say that we are a happy family (P(M)-8)*). Additionally, it was seen that the children in these families have a higher sense of belonging, are more successful in expressing themselves and protecting their rights, and establish more successful friendships (*For example, I have always said that I am a member of this family (P(F)-2); Definitely proud to be a member of my family (P(M)-8); I mostly had many friends in my childhood (P(M)-1); I think I was more comfortable playing with my friends than in the family environment. (P(F)-2)*). These families are mostly pluralist (democratic) families. According to Waterman 1982, parents in democratic families are relatively helpful in evaluating identity alternatives and forming personal commitments (identity achievement) [90]. Similarly, Hess and McDevitt (1984) stated that authoritative parents encourage independent problem-solving and critical thinking [91]. This parenting style includes a form of communication that contributes to the development of more mature forms of identity, as it provides adolescents with the opportunity to actively explore ideas [92]. Therefore, parents in democratic families make the most important contribution to the shaping of identity characteristics by providing adolescent guidance as well as giving their children more psychological autonomy [14,87]. The results of another study showed that parental warmth and support [93,94], as well as parental encouragement and close relationship with their children [95, 96], were positively associated with moratorium and success. Enright, Lapsley, Drivas, and Fehr (1980) compared autocratic, democratic, and sensual parenting styles in their study and found that the democratic parenting style encouraged adolescents’ mature identity exploration [97].

Especially in middle and late childhood, the concept of self-esteem and acceptance of negative self-evaluations, as well as the acquisition of new cognitive development skills such as social comparison and taking an enhanced perspective [39, p.692], are of great

importance in terms of forming the core of advanced life skills. Especially children who grow up in families with a high level of conformity orientation are highly likely to develop a contingent or false self during this period, largely due to external approval. These people think they can exist in society by striving to achieve goals dictated by others and by constantly seeking approval [98–101]. On the other hand, children raised in families with a conversation orientation develop optimal self-esteem based on a balanced perspective of their strengths and weaknesses. This reflects their inner sense of self as valuable [102] and is relatively stable [41, p.692]. The opportunities that parents will create for children in taking responsibility, making decisions, and problem-solving during this period will contribute to the development of positive coping mechanisms [103]. When the expressions of the participants who grew up in families with a conformity orientation are examined, it is seen that their parents' communication approaches do not support them in developing positive coping strategies; in contrast, these participants develop inefficient coping strategies (*For example, I thought my opinion didn't matter to my parents, it was as if I didn't think I had any control over my own life. (P(F)-4); No matter what I said, my answers, thoughts, and opinions were uncritical of my father. His truth, his views, and his thoughts are always important to him. (P(M)-5)*). Additionally, the results of the study are thought to increase the possibility of the emergence of unhealthy false self-behavior levels, similar to the results of the Harter, Marold, Whitesell, and Cobbs' (1996) study, as the results of the study create the parents' appreciation and acceptance of their children within the framework of a number of criteria that the child cannot overcome (especially in families with conformity orientation) [104]. According to them, this suppresses their true self-characteristics in an attempt to gain desired parental approval and causes them not only to display high levels of false self-behavior but also to report low self-esteem and hopelessness in pleasing their parents.

The study's results showed that childhood experiences and parental attitudes affect self-development in adolescence, similar to the effects of other studies. The most important result of this effect is that these people who have negative experiences in their childhood focus on how to meet their self-needs in the context they live in rather than their efforts to create the subsystems that make up the self in adolescence (*For example, Whether it was my circle of friends or anyone I talked to the most important thing was the behavior and actions of the people I brought into my life (P(F)-7)*). According to Erikson (1968), the first stage in which successful development is more dependent on the actions of the individual rather than the actions of others is the adolescence period [40]. Self-evaluation processes that emerge more clearly during this period provide a basic link between personal identity development and the individual's relationship to the social world. These processes integrate various aspects of an individual's life and thus support cognitive, emotional and social development. Self-evaluation is also at the center of self-esteem and feelings of competence during childhood and adolescence [105]. In particular, early adolescence marks the onset of intense self-awareness and an increased concern with the reflections of others [106,107]. Social awareness increases significantly and leads to a greater self-awareness of how one's qualities are viewed by others. There is variability in self-concept across relational contexts, as others have different views about the young adolescent [41, p.693]. As the results of the study support this, almost all the participants emphasized that the evaluation and acceptance of peers are precious for them in this period, regardless of their family communication orientation. In addition to their friends' critical thoughts and behaviors toward themselves, self-acceptance indicators are considered to be the main sources of anxiety at the beginning of adolescence (*For example, I think the subject of such close friendship was important (P(M)-8); I may be shy, yes, I was afraid, I was afraid, I was nervous, I was afraid and nervous (P(F)-7)*).

According to Harter, 2012, there is a proliferation of self that changes as a function of the relational context (for example, father, mother, close friends, romantic partners, classmates) in early adolescence. The main reason for this is that a young adolescent has found the possibility of encountering more others with the second socialization and this has contradictions with the self-structures largely built by the parents during childhood. If the adolescent who comes out of the secure attachment environment provided by the first socialization is not equipped enough to adapt to this new social environment (which is closely related to the parental attitude), the level of anxiety will increase [41, p.694]. Harter stated that the adolescent's constant intellectual leaps between these different contexts and the lack of holistic self-creation causes anxiety. As Selman (2003) stated, this has an important role in the formation of permanent self-structures, and it can be said that the internalization of permanent identity features is the first stage in the transition to adulthood [108].

The results obtained through life experiences clearly show that the important thing for the adolescent during adolescence is the needs of the self. The main reason why all the participants in adolescence have negative feelings is the problems related to their relations with the social environment. Almost all the participants stated that the most important issue for this period was the relationship they established with their friends and that they were in search of a group that would accept them. Especially in the early stages of adolescence, it is seen that friendship relations are much more effective and adolescents are in search (*For example, The most important issues are, of course, the people I bring into my life, as always. (P(F)-7); I think the subject of such close friendship was important. (P(M)-8)*). The most important issue that determines the difference between the participants regarding these findings is the statements that the participants in the families with a conversation orientation during childhood manage the process more successfully. While these participants were more assertive about friendships and adapted more quickly, the participants from families who had negative experiences in childhood and stated that they had low self-confidence were less successful and experienced more anxiety. This shows that the effect of family communication orientation continues during the transition to adulthood (*For example, I entered a new social environment during adolescence, I also met my primary school friends, but I did not see them as much as I used to, so I socialized, I entered the phase of meeting new people in adolescence, I tried to get to know more people. As I got to know them, I learned about life. During this period, I had a group of friends with whom I felt that I belonged. I felt like a member of a group (P(M)-1)*). Poor love ties with parents and poor levels of communication, reflected by rejection or psychological withdrawal, provide an insecure or restricted psychological basis for self-discovery. Additionally, it is seen that those who must completely change their social environment, especially by changing their living space and school, have more difficulties. Another important finding is that despite the weakening of family ties in this period, the expectation of loyalty and a sense of belonging to friend groups was strengthened. It has been observed that adolescents who do not feel

like they belong to a group of friends return to the family environment as a safe space, but they experience more loneliness and anxiety due to the weakening of ties there. According to Côté (2005), excessive love (intimacy) and limited family tolerance for individuality between adolescents and their parents can hide adolescents and discourage identity exploration [109].

The value judgments and belief systems given to children by parents during childhood have an important place in the formation of identity characteristics that make up the self. Adolescence, on the other hand, is a time when a critical reassessment and reconstruction of previously held customs is formulated, where genuine personal principles, values, and philosophy of life are formulated [110]. The findings show that these values and beliefs begin to be questioned, especially in the last period of adolescence, and the person tries to determine his/her identity characteristics by making differentiations. This emerging effort turns into more permanent identity features that will form the subsystems of the self. Erikson (1968) has noted that adolescence is the least "stormy" among youth who are skilled and well-trained in pursuing expanding technological trends and can thus identify with new roles of competence and invention, and accept a more implicit ideological perspective [40]. The findings show that in this period, the questions of adolescents about childhood attributions do not cause a big storm in them. According to Kroger (2000), the new balance between self and other in adolescence involves reorganizing the means of self-identification [111]. In adolescence, the childhood self that derives from identification with significant others must be replaced by a self that transcends these foundations, a new whole greater than the sum of its parts. Others no longer become important merely as potential sources of identification, but rather as independent mediators helping identify the 'real self.

Erikson has identified several mental problems that can become the focus of an identity crisis [40]. These include a career choice that is both socially recognized and personally expressed, the development of an ideological worldview worthy of personal commitment, and gender role-appropriate behavior and sexual orientation. The task here is to find forms of expression that reflect internal tendencies and that adequate resources of social support are available in the individual's cultural environment [103]. Although Côté (2005) has explained this as three defining aspects of identity architecture, we argue that it can be seen as subsystems of the architecture of the self [109]. According to Côté (2005), this architecture is a sense of continuity in operation and behavioral representation over time and across contexts; social roles (self-constructed or based on others' expectations), personal identities, and shared values (including personal variables in beliefs and attitudes) that form the basis of enduring commitments internalized as "part" of the person; It involves the organization of roles, identities, and values into stable configurations (that is, how content is organized by and for the person) [109]. Erikson (1968) stated that among these tasks, the most disturbing thing for adolescents is the inability to settle into a professional identity [40].

Marcia (1966) stated that during adolescence, an individual can be placed in one of four situations, depending on whether he or she experiences a "crisis" whether it depends on the period of questioning about career choice and ideology, and whether it depends on the choice of profession and ideology [112]. To determine the status of the individual, a semi-structured interview form was created to determine where the adolescent's job choice, religious and political beliefs, and sexual orientation are in the bipolar dimensions of crisis and commitment. According to the results of these studies, if a person has not dedicated himself/herself to a profession or an ideology and is not in a period of questioning about these fields, it has been accepted that the person is in diffusion. "Diffusion" is a state of confusion involving the failure to resolve an individual's different perceptions of himself; lack of clear goals or beliefs about the world and inability to be close to others because being close threatens the individual's weak sense of self. Additionally, these individuals may lack the resources to result from the successful resolution of previous stages; they experience a sense of confidence, a sense of autonomy, the ability to take initiative without self-conscious guilt, and a sense of ability bestowed by the successful fulfillment of tasks. According to him/her, if the person is attached to a profession or an ideological position, but has not reached such a commitment after a period of inquiry, the area(s) where this unquestioned commitment is true is also considered to have *lien* status. If a person is not committed in one or both areas but is in a period of inquiry, he or she is considered *moratorium* status. Finally, if a person has gone through a period of questioning and is attached to a profession or an ideological position, he or she is considered to have a status of achievement in one or both areas. With identity success, identity formation problems disappear. The individual has a secure sense of self that allows close relationships to be formed. The choice of a profession and the development of a social ideology (often based on religious or political beliefs) allow the individual to interact with society and pursue goals consistently.

Similar to the path followed by Marcia (1966) in this study, participants were asked to share their life experiences related to professional, religious, political, and sexual orientation in the last period of adolescence [112]. When the findings are examined, it is seen that the participants go to questions about these identity characteristics that make up the permanent self. Particularly, it is seen that most of the participants spent more time on vocational orientation. When we look at the narratives about their religious orientation, it was seen that some participants stated that they continued their childhood teachings in the same way without changing them, while some participants went through some changes. In terms of politics and lifestyle, it was seen that the participants moved away from their parents and formed a new political identity. Regarding sexual orientation, although they were interested in sexual issues due to bodily and hormonal changes during adolescence, it was found that there was no confusion regarding sexual orientation, except for two participants. Despite these findings, the statements of the participants show that this questioning process is not a source of anxiety for them, but it is important for them to have a profession in which they can continue their lives in the future. This questioning process was found to be independent of family communication orientation. However, it was found that participants from conversation-oriented families spent more time identifying their identity characteristics. Particularly, the participants from families with a conformity orientation could not spare time to think and construct their identity characteristics because of the problems of adaptation and interaction with the social environment.

Social psychologists have defined significant others as "individuals who have a major influence on individuals' attitudes" [43]. Based on this, Phinney (2006) stated that self-construction develops based on the individual's attitudes and feelings towards their cultural background, ethnic heritage, and racial phenotype. He pointed out that their culture is the reference point in self-development

[113]. Therefore, throughout life, messages that require adaptation or reframing become a part of culture and affect self-development [114]. Accepting the great importance of culture in self-development, Nurmi (1991) stated that the essential identity characteristics important for individuals in different cultures in self-construction do not vary much (career choice, religious orientation, sexual orientation, and political orientation) [115]. As Erikson (1968) stated, in almost all cultures, adolescents strive to acquire the same identity characteristics [40]. In addition to the fact that the essential identity characteristics are similar in all cultures, the requirements for the survival of the self and psychological well-being are also the same (love, belonging, production and achievement, etc.) [103]. Although the needs are similar here, the quality and quantity of effort required to achieve them differ depending on culture. For example, while some Western and individualistic cultures, such as Germany and the US, encourage independence and competition, children growing up in more collectivistic cultures, such as Japan, traditionally spend more time with their mothers, encouraging cooperative behavior and compliance with group decisions. Considering that the culture in which the current study was conducted is a society in which collectivist attitudes are supported, the value judgments placed on children, especially during childhood, demand their members to comply with group values and to exhibit cooperative behaviors rather than individual competition. The findings indicate that parents educate children to acquire religious values, especially during childhood. While some participants maintain these values in adolescence and see value in adapting to their social environment, others stated that they experience conflicts with their family members and other social settings because they move away from these religious values.

When all these results are evaluated together, it is seen that the self that is mentally constructed through symbolic language consists of many subsystems. The formation of these subsystems is initiated by the parents during childhood and becomes permanent by being rearranged by the individual during adolescence. The most effective situation in making this regulation during adolescence comes to the fore is the communication orientation of the family in which the individual grows up. In particular, children who grow up in families with conflicts, where children are not given the right to participate in the decisions taken and where the right to speak is not given to children, besides experiencing anxiety and fear at that time, feel themselves at a lower level of belonging to the family. These children carry their fear and anxiety into adolescence and cannot establish healthy relationships with the social environment. The acceptance and appreciation of the self in the social environment during adolescence are seen as a more important issue for the adolescent than self-regulation. The most important result of the study is the finding that the concept of the crisis put forward in developmental theories is not related to identity characteristics, but to the relationship that the adolescents experience with the social environment. The main reason for this is that the "we" in which the self exists is bigger and stronger than the "I". While the "we" to be reached in childhood is the family, the social environment in adolescence creates the new "we" for the adolescent and develops within the framework of the effort to reach this "we" in all efforts. For the adolescent, it is the quality of the "we" that he tries to be involved in, even if it is pathological rather than the quality of his/her identity characteristics. Adolescents act within this framework while determining their identity characteristics. Therefore, all adolescents define subsystems of identity traits that make up the self, but the fact that these traits lead to psychological well-being depends on the acceptance of the created traits by the included 'we'. Adolescents who feel like they belong to a group during adolescence make much more effort to develop positive relationships with the social environment and to determine their identity characteristics.

It should be noted that the study has some limitations since it was conducted in a specific culture and with a small group. For this reason, it is thought that in future studies, revealing the role of group belonging and group characteristics in the development of the self-system and studying its effect on self-esteem and psychological well-being will contribute to our understanding of the self-system that develops mentally in the social network and forms the reality of the individual.

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CRedit authorship contribution statement

Ömer Erdoğan: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Resources, Software, Supervision, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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