

## Ebeveynler Dinleyici Olduğunda Gençlerin Algıladığı Anı Paylaşım İşlevlerinin Olay Merkeziliği ve Öz-Şefkat İlişkisindeki Aracılık Etkilerinin Araştırılması

Sarah ZANETİ\*\*  
İnci BOYACIOĞLU\*\*\*

### Araştırma Makalesi

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\*\*Doktora Öğrencisi, Sarah Zaneti, Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi, Psikoloji Bölümü

ORCID: 0000-0002-3919-4063  
E-posta: sarra.znati@ogr.deu.edu.tr

\*\*\*Prof. Dr. İnci Boyacıoğlu, Psikoloji Bölümü, Edebiyat Fakültesi, Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi

ORCID: 0000-0002-1863-3792  
E-posta: inci.boyacioğlu@deu.edu.tr

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### ÖZET

Bu çalışma, Türkiye örnekleminde, beliren yetişkinlikte suçluluk anılarının ebeveynler ile paylaşımının öz-şefkat seviyelerini nasıl etkilediğinin altında yatan örüntüleri, özellikle ebeveyn dinlemesine odaklanarak incelemektedir. Bu araştırmanın temel amaçlarından biri cinsiyet temelli bir analiz gerçekleştirerek, anne ve babaların çocukların anlatıları üzerindeki farklı etkilerini karşılaştırmaktır. Bu araştırma beliren yetişkinlik döneminde suçluluk temalı anıların merkeziliği ile öz-şefkat arasındaki ilişkiyi ebeveynler ile paylaşılan anıların algılanan işlevleri (yönlendirici, duygu düzenleme, benlik ve sosyal) aracılığıyla incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Aracı analizlerin yanı sıra, dinleyicinin cinsiyetine göre t-testleri yürütülmüştür. Türkiye'deki farklı şehirlerden 308 erkek ve kadın katılımcı çevrimiçi anketleri doldurmuş. Sonuçlar, anı paylaşımında algılanan sosyal işlevinin, beliren yetişkinlikte olay merkeziliği ile öz-şefkat arasındaki olumsuz ilişkiyi tamponlama eğilimindeyken, benlik işlevinin bu olumsuz ilişkiyi yoğunlaştırdığını ortaya koymuştur. Dahası, çoğu katılımcının olumsuz anılarını paylaşırken annelerini dinleyici olarak tercih ettiği gözlenmiştir. Ayrıca, katılımcıların tercih edilen dinleyici baba olduğunda benlik ve yönlendirici anı paylaşım işlevlerini algılama olasılıklarının yükseldiği de elde edilen bulgular arasındadır. Buna karşılık, dinleyici anne olduğunda katılımcıların anı paylaşırken ağırlıklı olarak sosyal işlevi algıladıkları ortaya konmuştur. Sonuçlar literatür ışığında tartışılmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Otobiyografik bellek, olumsuz anı paylaşımı işlevleri, dinleyici, olayın merkeziliği, öz-şefkat.

## Investigating the Mediating Effects of Perceived Memory-Sharing Functions on Event Centrality and Self-Compassion Relationship Among Turkish Children When Parents Are the Listeners

Sarah ZANETİ\*\*  
İnci BOYACIOĞLU\*\*\*

### Research Article

\*The present article is an extract from an ongoing Phd thesis in social psychology conducted by Sarah Zaneti and under the supervision of Prof. Dr. İnci Boyacioglu at Dokuz Eylül University.

\*\* PhD student, Sarah Zaneti,  
Department of Psychology, Faculty of  
Literature, Dokuz Eylul University

ORCID: 0000-0002-3919-4063  
E-mail: sarra.znati@ogr.deu.edu.tr

\*\*\* Prof. Dr. İnci Boyacioglu,  
Department of Psychology, Faculty of  
Literature, Dokuz Eylul University

ORCID: 0000-0002-1863-3792  
E-mail: inci.boyacioglu@deu.edu.tr

### ABSTRACT

This study examines patterns underlying how Turkish emerging adults sharing memories of guilt with their parents impacts their self-compassion, with a focus on parental listening. One main objective of this paper is to conduct gender-based analyses comparing the influence of parents, separately mothers' and fathers' impacts as listeners, on their children's outcomes as narrators. This research aimed to investigate the relationship between emerging adult children's event centrality of their guilt memories and their self-compassion scores through perceived functions of memory-sharing with their parents (directive, emotion regulation, self, and social). Besides mediational analyses, t-tests were conducted based on the listener's gender. 308 Turkish male and female participants from different cities filled online surveys. The results revealed that while the perceived social function of memory-sharing tends to buffer the negative relationship between emerging adults' event centrality and self-compassion, the self-function appears to intensify this negative relationship. Moreover, most participants preferred their mothers as listeners when sharing their negative memories. Furthermore, participants were more likely to perceive self and directive memory-sharing functions when the preferred listener was the father. In contrast, participants predominantly opted for the social function when the listener was the mother. Results are discussed in light of the literature.

**Keywords:** Autobiographical memory, negative memory-sharing functions, listener, event centrality, self-compassion.

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## Introduction

Since the early 20th century, scholars in psychology have emphasized the critical role of parents in child development. In recent decades, researchers have increasingly focused on how families share stories and autobiographical memories, due to their ubiquity in daily life (Bohanek et al., 2009). Studies show that parents support children's storytelling by co-narrating family stories and discussing past events and ancestors (Bakir-Demir et al., 2020; Bohanek et al., 2009; Şahin-Acar & Leichtman, 2015). Sharing autobiographical memories with children has been shown to enhance their storytelling abilities, social skills, self-awareness, and sense of identity (Öz & Gürsoy, 2023).

Since the early 2000s, researchers have increasingly examined the role of listeners in autobiographical memory sharing (Alea & Bluck, 2003; Bavelas et al., 2000; Pasupathi, 2001). Studies indicate that listeners can significantly influence both the structure of narratives (e.g., Grysman, 2020; Jennings et al., 2014) and the narrators themselves (Pasupathi et al., 2015). For instance, empathetic listeners have been shown to enhance narrators' self-perception and identity (e.g., Grysman, 2020; Pasupathi & Rich, 2005), as well as their well-being and life satisfaction (Fioretti et al., 2017). Consequently, not all memories are shared with others (Nils & Rimé, 2012); individuals tend to choose specific listeners over others when sharing personal stories (Pasupathi et al., 2015). These choices of preferred listeners are based on various factors such as familiarity and expected memory-sharing functions (Alea et al., 2003).

Although listeners can influence a narrator's self-concept, research has not yet explored their impact on the narrator's self-compassion, a positive self-attitude rooted in positive psychology. Additionally, while it's established that narrators choose specific preferred listeners over others, no studies have examined how these choices affect self-views. In particular, how preferred listeners may influence a narrator's self-compassion after sharing negative memories is underexplored in the literature. Furthermore, in family narratives, the role of the listener, especially parents, is often overlooked. Most studies focus on parents as narrators or co-narrators with their children, rather than as listeners in the context of autobiographical memory. Consequently, the influence of parents as listeners on their children's self-perceptions, such as self-compassion, remains under-researched. Research shows that negative memories perceived as central to one's identity can negatively affect psychological well-being (e.g., Berntsen & Rubin, 2007; Berntsen & Thomsen, 2005). Therefore, studying how parents, as listeners, may influence their children's self-compassion when these memories are shared is an important area that deserves further research.

This study addressed the gaps discussed above by examining how Turkish parents, mothers and fathers affect their children's self-compassion when listening to their negative autobiographical memories. Specifically, it explored how the centrality of these negative events to the child's identity relates to their self-compassion after sharing these memories with their parents. The study also investigated whether the reasons children perceive for sharing memories with a specific parent (social, self, directive and emotion regulation memory functions) mediate this relationship. Understanding these mediating effects may help identify which memory-sharing functions with specific preferred listeners strengthen or weaken the link between event centrality and self-compassion.

### **Autobiographical memory and family narratives**

Autobiographical memory stores positive and negative personal experiences, including specific events and self-related information (Conway & Pleydell-Pearce, 2000). These memories are essential for developing and understanding one's self-identity (McAdams, 2008). Transforming these memories into narratives helps organize personal experiences into coherent stories, facilitating the understanding and communication of one's life events (Smorti, 2011). Beyond fostering self-identity, sharing autobiographical narratives with others also serves important social functions (Alea & Bluck, 2003; Smorti, 2011).

Developmental research emphasizes the importance of family narratives and parent-child reminiscing in helping children build and express personal memories (e.g., Sabourin-Guardo et al., 2024; Şahin-Acar et al., 2015). Studies from various cultures, including Turkey, show that family interactions like co-narration and discussing shared or ancestral experiences enhance children's memory development and storytelling skills (Bakir-Demir et al., 2020; Farrant & Reese, 2000; Şahin-Acar et al., 2015). Beyond improving narrative abilities, these interactions play a key role in shaping children's self-concepts (Çeviker, 2015; Fivush et al., 2024) and supporting their psychological well-being (Fivush, 2023; Öz et al., 2023).

Research indicates that mothers and fathers influence their children's storytelling and autobiographical memories in distinct ways. Compared to fathers, mothers often use more detailed and emotionally rich narratives, which enhance children's narrative skills and emotional understanding (e.g., Coban & Küntay, 2014; Fivush et al., 2009). However, gender-based studies specifically comparing the distinct impacts of each parent remain limited. Most research focuses on mother-child interactions (e.g., Çeviker, 2015; Şahin-Acar & Leichtman, 2015; McDonnell et al., 2016), focusing less on father-child dynamics. This research gap may be influenced by traditional gender roles, especially in Eastern cultures, affecting paternal involvement in such studies (Çelik & Bulut, 2019).

### **Event centrality of autobiographical memory**

Autobiographical memories include specific positive and negative events from a person's life. Some of these memories are especially important and are called central events to one's identity (Berntsen & Rubin, 2007). These central events can act as

turning points, shape how people see later experiences, and help build their sense of self (Pociunaite et al., 2023). McAdams et al. (2006) explain that event centrality means some life events become important parts of who we are and our life story.

Berntsen and Rubin (2006) suggest that vivid and easily recalled memories play a key role in shaping our personal stories and stabilizing our self-identity. In particular, negative events, especially traumatic ones, can significantly impact psychological health due to their central role in an individual's life narrative. These memories' emotional intensity and vividness contribute to their centrality to one's identity and the frequency with which they are recalled (Pociunaite & Zimprich, 2023). Research indicates that the centrality of negative events is strongly associated with negative psychological outcomes, including depression and anxiety (Berntsen & Rubin, 2007; Berntsen & Thomsen, 2005). Furthermore, a high centrality of negative memory is linked to increased emotional intensity and negative physiological outcomes (Boals, 2010).

### **Functions of autobiographical memory**

Autobiographical memory serves important roles in daily life. Research highlights three main functions of these memories across the lifespan: self, social, and directive (Bluck & Alea, 2002; Pillemer, 1992). The self-function helps people maintain a stable sense of identity. It involves remembering personal experiences to understand and adapt the self over time (Bluck, 2003; Conway, 2005). The social function supports relationships. Sharing memories helps form, maintain, and strengthen social bonds (Alea & Bluck, 2003; Pillemer, 1998). Some researchers suggest that social purposes represent the most important function of autobiographical memory (Neisser, 1978; Nelson, 1993). The directive function helps people use past experiences to solve current problems. It also helps guide future choices and behavior (Baddeley, 1988; Bluck & Alea, 2002; Pillemer, 1998).

Autobiographical memories often serve multiple functions at once, making the distinction between self, social, and directive functions more theoretical than practical (Pillemer, 2003). These functions are interconnected and influenced by factors such as the memory's content, emotional impact, and how easily it is recalled (Bluck & Alea, 2002; Rasmussen & Berntsen, 2009). For instance, research indicates that the emotional valence of a memory affects its function. Positive memories are more likely to serve self and social functions, helping individuals maintain their identity and build relationships. In contrast, negative memories often serve directive and emotion regulation functions, guiding future behavior and helping individuals cope with adverse experiences (Rasmussen & Berntsen, 2009; Aydın et al., 2021).

Recent research has begun to focus on listener characteristics that influence the narrator's expectations (Grysmann, 2020). Pasupathi and Oldroyd (2015) propose that

sharing autobiographical memories is guided by expected functions, such as making sense of experiences or achieving mutual understanding with the listener. This highlights the importance of considering the listener's role when studying memory-sharing functions. People's expectations often vary depending on who the listener is (Jennings et al., 2014).

### **The listener's role in the autobiographical memory context**

Recent research indicates that individuals often select specific listeners for sharing autobiographical memories based on certain preferred characteristics. Conversely, they may refrain from sharing with others due to particular traits perceived in those listeners (Pasupathi, 2003). Evidence demonstrates that narrators consider their listeners' presence when recounting both positive and negative personal experiences within the context of memory-sharing (Pasupathi, 2001; Pasupathi & Billitteri, 2015). For instance, scholars showed that narrators adjust their storytelling based on the perceived responsiveness of their listeners (Pasupathi & Oldroyd, 2015). Furthermore, research underscores the importance of the listener in influencing the narrator's expectations and the functions served by autobiographical memory sharing (Jennings et al., 2014).

Moreover, research indicates the fundamental role of listeners in the context of autobiographical memory, highlighting that listeners directly influence the narratives' content and thus impact the formation of the narrator's identity in myriad ways (Pasupathi & Billitteri, 2015). Beyond impacting the narrator's identity, listeners have been found to affect the narrator's emotional well-being and self-views in various ways (Pasupathi & Oldroyd, 2015). For example, Kross and Ayduk's (2008) work demonstrates that emotional narratives, especially those involving negative experiences shared with a listener, exhibit greater linguistic distancing, a more substantial differentiation from the current self, and lower emotional distress compared to negative experiences not shared with any listener.

### **Self-Compassion**

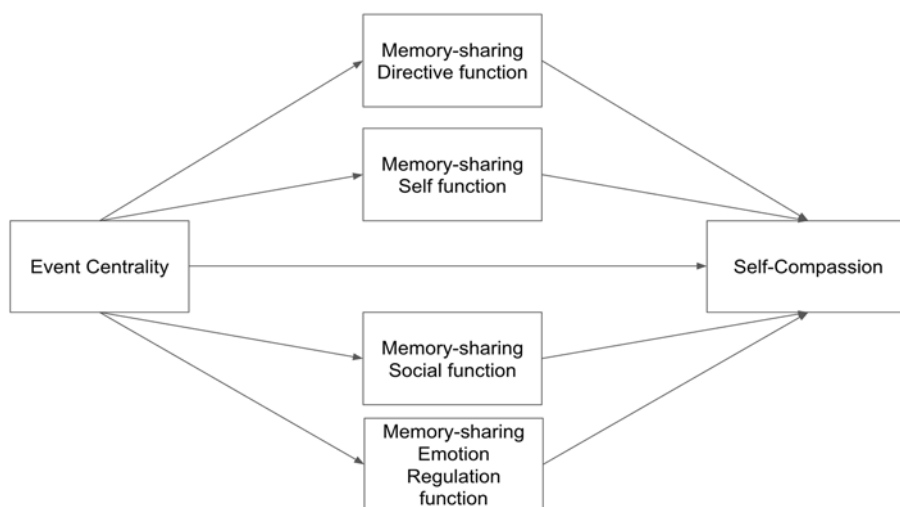
In the last twenty years, self-compassion, a concept rooted in positive psychology, has gained increasing scholarly attention across various disciplines, including educational sciences, clinical and non-clinical psychology, and social developmental psychology. Kristin Neff (2003a, 2003b) conceptualizes self-compassion as an adaptive and positive approach to dealing with personal shortcomings, negative life events, and challenges. It comprises three core components: self-kindness (being understanding toward oneself), common humanity (recognizing one's experiences as part of the larger human experience), and mindfulness (maintaining balanced awareness of one's emotions) (Neff, 2003a).

Empirical research highlights the positive correlation between self-compassion and psychological well-being (e.g., Aldemir, et al., 2022; Ferrari et al., 2022; Lyubomirsky, 2001; sarı et al., 2019). However, investigations into self-compassion's beneficial impacts remain limited, particularly concerning its role in autobiographical memory.

Despite the established interconnection between autobiographical memory and self-concept (e.g., McAdams, 2008), studies have yet to explore self-compassion within the context of autobiographical memory, especially regarding negative memories. Furthermore, while research has demonstrated that listeners influence narrators' self-views (e.g., Pasupathi et al., 2015), there is a notable gap in examining how listener characteristics affect narrators' self-compassion during the sharing of negative memories. Addressing this gap could provide valuable insights into the interplay between narrator-listener dyadic dynamics and positive self-attitude in the context of negative autobiographical memory.

### Objectives and hypotheses of the study

This study addresses several gaps identified in the literature. First, it explores the concept of self-compassion within the context of autobiographical memory sharing. Second, it examines the role of parents as listeners in family narratives, specifically comparing the distinct impacts of mothers and fathers. Third, it investigates the perceived functions of sharing negative memories with parents. The primary aim is to examine the relationship between Turkish emerging adults' perceptions of the centrality of negative events to their identity and their levels of self-compassion after sharing these memories with their parents. This relationship is analyzed through the mediating effects of perceived memory-sharing functions namely, social, self, emotion regulation, and directive functions (see Figure 1). Additionally, the study seeks to understand parent-child dyad dynamics by comparing mothers' and fathers' distinct impacts on children's: (1) perceived memory-sharing functions, (2) event centrality, and (3) self-compassion.



**Figure 1.** The impact of event centrality on the self-compassion levels of Turkish emerging adults, mediated by negative memory-sharing functions (directive, self, social, and emotion regulation), with mothers and fathers as listeners.

This study is mainly exploratory, addressing a notable gap in the literature concerning autobiographical guilt memories within family contexts, particularly focusing on parents as listeners. While direct prior research is limited, existing findings allow for the formulation of several hypotheses. Firstly, prior studies have linked the centrality of negative events to negative psychological outcomes (Berntsen & Rubin, 2006). Therefore, it is hypothesized that higher centrality scores for negative memories would correlate with lower levels of self-compassion. Secondly, research indicates that listener characteristics can significantly influence narrators' self-perceptions (Pasupathi & Billitteri, 2015). Consequently, it is posited that the perceived functions of sharing memories with specific parents may differentially affect self-compassion. In this context, the negative association between event centrality and self-compassion is hypothesized to be buffered or intensified by the functions attributed to memory-sharing. This aligns with the understanding that narrators often share memories with particular listeners to achieve specific goals (Alea & Bluck, 2003). Lastly, Turkish literature suggests that mothers predominantly fulfill social functions in parent-child interactions, whereas fathers are more associated with self-related functions (Sümer & Şendağ, 2009). Accordingly, it is expected that children would perceive more social functions when sharing memories with their mothers, and more self functions when sharing them with their fathers."

## **Method**

### **Participants**

The study included 318 male and female participants from various cities across Türkiye. Participants were aged between 19 and 22 years, aligning with the developmental stage known as emerging adulthood, a period characterized by transformations and life challenges (Arnett, 2000). Convenience sampling was employed to recruit participants. An online advertisement detailing the study's inclusion criteria and emphasizing participant anonymity was disseminated through multiple social media platforms to reach a broad demographic across different regions. Initially, 318 individuals responded to the survey. However, 10 participants were excluded due to the criterion of having a deceased parent, resulting in a final sample size of 308 participants. The average age of the final sample was 21.6 years ( $SD = 3.2$ ). The participants predominantly comprised women (75.6%), while men constituted 24.4%. In terms of academic department, psychology students represented the largest segment (60.7%). Regarding residence, 46.8% of the participants resided in dormitories. Concerning the marital status of the participants' parents, 76.6% indicated that their parents were living together (see Table 1).



**Table 1.** Socio-demographic characteristics of the sample.

	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	233	75.6
Male	75	24.4
<b>Department</b>		
Psychology	187	60.7
Engineering	27	8.8
Business	22	7.1
Administration		
Sociology	20	6.5
History	15	4.9
Chemistry	14	4.5
Architecture	14	4.5
Literature	9	2.9
<b>Residence Place</b>		
With my family	54	17.5
In a student house with my friends	47	15.3
Other	3	1
Alone	60	19.5
Dormitory	144	46.8
<b>Parents Marital Status</b>		
Living together	236	76.6
Divorced	61	19.8
Other	11	3.6

## **Measures**

### **Self-compassion (SCS)**

This study explores self-compassion after participants share a guilt-related negative memory with their parents. To measure self-compassion, the Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) by Neff (2003) was used. The SCS has 26 items that assess six key aspects: self-kindness, self-judgment, common humanity, isolation, mindfulness, and overidentification. Each item is rated on a 5-point Likert scale, from 1 ("Almost never") to 5 ("Almost always"). The Turkish version of the SCS, adapted by Deniz, Kesici, and Sümer (2008), was used in this study. This version has strong reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of .89 and a test-retest reliability of .83.

### **Event Centrality: The Centrality of Events Scale (CES)**

The Centrality of Events Scale (CES), developed by Berntsen and Rubin (2006), measures how much a specific event is part of a person's daily thoughts, life story, and identity. It has 20 items, with a shorter version of 7 items for quick assessments. Participants rate each item on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). In this study, the Turkish version of the CES, adapted by Boyacıoğlu and Aktaş (2018), was used. It measured how central participants' guilt-related negative memories shared with parents were to their identity. This version showed good reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of .82.

### **Perceived functions of negative memory-sharing**

We created a 12-item scale to measure how participants perceive the functions of sharing negative memories with their parents. The scale was designed to assess the reasons why emerging adults choose to share such memories. It includes four categories: self, social, directive, and emotion regulation. Each category is represented by three items. Participants rated each item on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The overall scale showed robust internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of .807. The subscales also showed strong reliability, with alpha values ranging from .779 to .899.

## **Procedure**

Data collection for this study took place between October 2024 and January 2025. An online advertisement was disseminated across Türkiye's most frequented digital platforms, providing both a hyperlink and a QR code for direct access to the survey. The survey's introduction detailed the study's objectives, estimated completion time, and assured participants of their anonymity. Following this, participants provided essential demographic information.

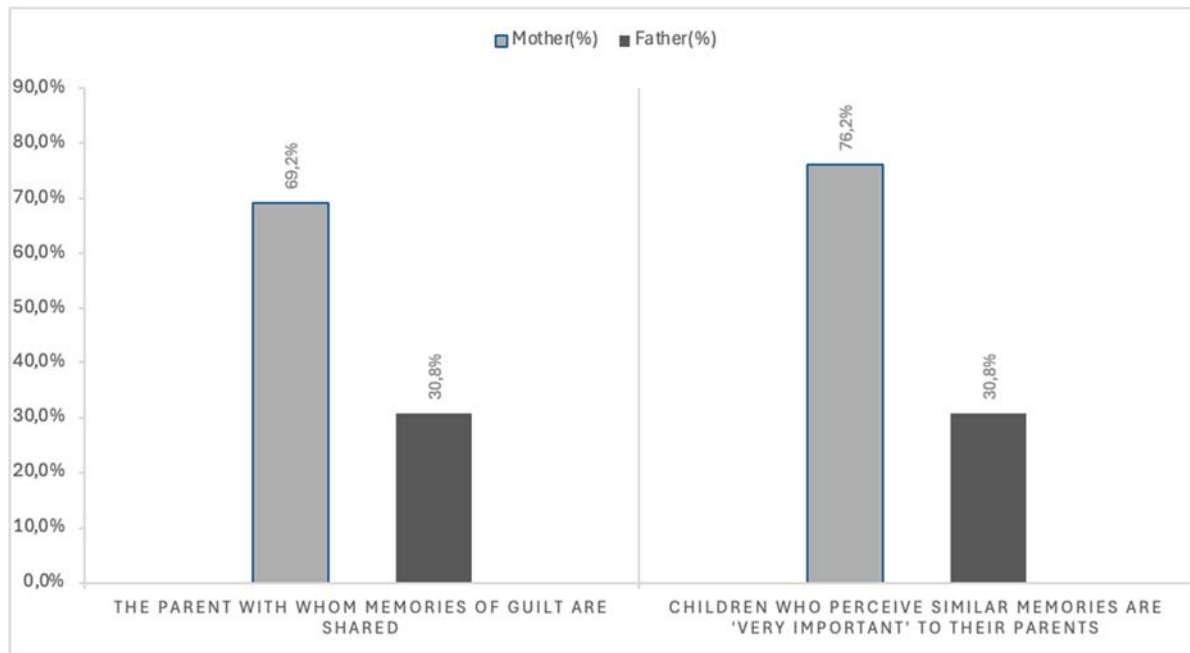
To ensure homogeneity in the memories analyzed, participants were instructed to recall a negative event from the past six months in which they perceived themselves as the perpetrator rather than the victim. This event had to have occurred within a school context and must have been shared with one parent of their choice. Participants were

asked to briefly summarize the memory, ensuring it aligned with the study's criteria. Subsequently, participants specified which parent they shared the memory with and indicated whether they typically share similar memories with the same parent. This question was asked to determine whether children consistently and intentionally choose one specific parent over the other when sharing similar memories. They also rated, on a 3-point Likert scale (1 = Very little or not at all; 3 = Very much), how important they believed such memories were to their mothers and fathers, respectively. The main section of the survey then followed, incorporating the measurement scales previously described.

## Results

### Descriptive analyses

Descriptive analyses indicated that 69.2% of participants predominantly preferred to share their negative memories with their mothers, while 30.8% shared such experiences with their fathers. Notably, 98.1% of participants reported consistently sharing their negative memories with the same parent. Regarding the perceived importance of guilt-related memories to parents, 76.2% of participants believed these experiences were "very important" to their mothers. In contrast, only 30.8% perceived these experiences as "very important" to their fathers (see Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** The percentage of parents with whom the negative memories are shared and the percentage of participants who perceive these memories as very important to their parents

### **T-tests for independent groups analyses of the study's variables**

Independent t-tests were conducted to explore differences in participants' scores on self-compassion, perceived memory-sharing functions, and event centrality based on the listener's gender (mother vs. father). The results showed significant gender-based differences in self-compassion. Participants reported significantly higher self-compassion when they shared their memory with their father ( $M = 23.38$ ,  $SD = 3.46$ ) than with their mother ( $M = 19.01$ ,  $SD = 5.52$ ),  $p < .001$ .

Participants rated the directive function of memory-sharing significantly higher when the listener was the father ( $M = 4.52$ ,  $SD = 0.47$ ) than when it was the mother ( $M = 3.48$ ,  $SD = 0.73$ ),  $p < .001$ . In contrast, the social function was rated significantly higher when the listener was the mother ( $M = 3.80$ ,  $SD = 0.74$ ) compared to the father ( $M = 1.29$ ,  $SD = 0.61$ ),  $p < .001$ . Similarly, participants reported higher scores for the self-function when the listener was the father ( $M = 4.28$ ,  $SD = 0.57$ ) than when it was the mother ( $M = 1.98$ ,  $SD = 0.65$ ),  $p < .001$ . However, there was no significant difference in the emotion regulation function based on the listener's gender,  $p = .491$ . Additionally, event centrality scores were significantly higher when the listener was the mother ( $M = 2.08$ ,  $SD = 0.72$ ) compared to the father ( $M = 1.65$ ,  $SD = 0.58$ ),  $p < .001$ .

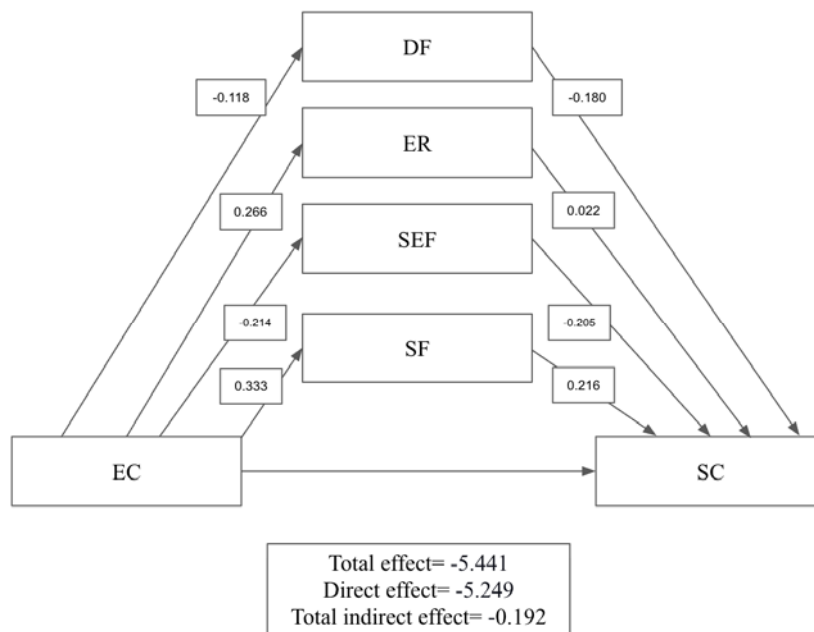
### **Mediation analysis**

This study examined whether the impact of event centrality on self-compassion is mediated by perceived memory-sharing functions (self, social, directive, and emotion regulation). Using Hayes's PROCESS Model 4 with multiple mediators, we analyzed data from Turkish emerging adults, combining responses for both mothers and fathers.

Regression analyses revealed that event centrality positively predicted the social function ( $B = 0.333$ ,  $SE = 0.106$ ,  $p = .001$ ) and the emotion regulation function ( $B = 0.266$ ,  $SE = 0.080$ ,  $p = .001$ ). Conversely, event centrality negatively predicted the self function ( $B = -0.214$ ,  $SE = 0.097$ ,  $p = .028$ ) and showed a marginally significant negative association with the directive function ( $B = -0.118$ ,  $SE = 0.064$ ,  $p = .067$ ). These findings suggest that individuals who perceive negative events as central to their identity are likelier to engage in memory-sharing for social connection and emotion regulation, but less likely for self-reflection or guidance.

The analysis showed a significant negative relationship between Event Centrality and Self-Compassion. The total effect was strong and negative ( $B = -5.441$ ,  $SE = 0.295$ ,  $p < .001$ ), as was the direct effect ( $B = -5.249$ ,  $SE = 0.274$ ,  $p < .001$ ). These results highlight the important role of event centrality in predicting self-compassion levels. Even after including mediator variables, the direct negative effect remained significant ( $B = -5.249$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This indicates that event centrality continues to affect self-compassion independently of the mediators. The model explained a large portion of the variance in self-compassion ( $R^2 = 0.526$ ). When both direct and indirect effects were tested together in a multiple regression model, the overall model was highly significant ( $F = 101.854$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and accounted for 62.7% of the variance ( $R^2 = 0.627$ ).

Further analyses were carried out to examine how different functions mediate the relationship between Event Centrality and Self-Compassion. These analyses included bootstrap confidence intervals to assess the statistical significance of indirect effects. The total effect of event centrality on self-compassion was significantly negative ( $B = -5.441$ ,  $SE = 0.295$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI  $[-6.022, -4.860]$ ). This pattern remained in the direct effect ( $B = -5.249$ ,  $SE = 0.274$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI  $[-5.789, -4.708]$ ). The mediation analysis showed that the indirect effects of event centrality on self-compassion through the directive function were not significant ( $B = -0.180$ ,  $SE = 0.098$ , 95% CI  $[-0.386, 0.004]$ ). Similarly, emotional regulation did not show a significant indirect effect ( $B = 0.022$ ,  $SE = 0.064$ , 95% CI  $[-0.158, 0.105]$ ). Meanwhile, the social function showed a significant positive indirect effect ( $B = 0.216$ ,  $SE = 0.120$ , 95% CI  $[0.015, 0.483]$ ). This suggests that social function may buffer the negative impact of event centrality and self-compassion. However, a significant negative indirect effect was found through the self-function ( $B = -0.205$ ,  $SE = 0.116$ , 95% CI  $[-0.467, -0.024]$ ), indicating that self-function may strengthen the negative link between event centrality and self-function (See Figure 3).



**Notes.** EC: Event centrality; SC: Self-compassion; DF: Directive function; ER: Emotion regulation function; SEF: Self function; SF: Social function

**Figure 3.** Conceptual model of the mediating role of perceived negative memory-sharing functions on the relationship between event centrality and self-compassion with effect sizes

Overall, the mediation analyses suggest that for negative guilt-related memories, the centrality of these events to emerging adults' identities reduces their self-compassion. The impact of perceived functions in sharing memories with parents varied across functions. The social function showed a possible protective role, helping to

reduce the negative effect of event centrality on self-compassion. In contrast, the self-function appeared to worsen this negative relationship.

## **Discussion and conclusion**

Based on the literature gaps identified earlier, this study aimed to address several underexplored areas. Specifically, it examined self-compassion in the context of autobiographical memory-sharing, focusing on the listener's role. The research considered how narrators perceive the functions of sharing negative memories with a preferred parent. The study focused on negative events to assess self-compassion through autobiographical memory, as self-compassion involves a positive attitude toward life's challenges (Neff, 2003a). For homogeneity, participants were asked to recall guilt-related negative memories, excluding victim experiences.

Moreover, to compare the distinct impacts of mothers and fathers on children's psychological outcomes, participants were instructed to write about memories shared with only one parent. Allowing participants to choose which parent they deliberately preferred to share the memory with enabled an in-depth understanding of preferred listeners in autobiographical memory-sharing. This approach was informed by existing literature demonstrating gender differences in autobiographical memory narration (e.g., Fivush et al., 2012; Boyacıoğlu, 2015). Accordingly, participants were instructed to recall a memory shared with a parent of their choice to investigate whether gender differences observed in narrators' autobiographical memory-sharing also appear among listeners. In addition, participants were asked if they consistently shared such memories with the same parent to determine if narrators consistently preferred the same listener, thereby enhancing the reliability of comparisons between maternal and paternal influences in children's outcomes in this study.

Operationally, this study explores the relationship between event centrality and self-compassion in Turkish emerging adults. The focus is on negative memories of guilt shared with parents. The research examines how perceived memory-sharing functions, social, self, emotion regulation, and directive mediate this relationship. In addition to this main aim, the study has several complementary goals. It compares the different effects of mothers and fathers as listeners on memory-sharing functions, event centrality, and self-compassion in their children.

Based on the literature, it was expected that higher event centrality in negative memories would be linked to lower self-compassion. This negative relationship may be influenced, either weakened or strengthened, by the mediating role of perceived functions of memory-sharing. It was also anticipated that fathers would be more strongly associated with the self function, while mothers would be more associated with the social function in the context of sharing negative memories.

Descriptive analysis showed that most participants shared their negative memories with their mothers rather than their fathers. They also believed these memories were more important to their mothers. These two findings support each other, suggesting that

participants preferred to share with someone they felt was interested in them. This pattern aligns with Pasupathi et al. (2015), who found that people choose engaged listeners over indifferent ones. One explanation for this preference may be the stronger emotional bond and availability of mothers in Türkiye. Imamoğlu (1991) noted that mother-child relationships in Türkiye are generally more intense than those with fathers, regardless of the child's gender.

Additionally, over 90% of participants reported they always disclosed negative memories to the same parent. This supports the literature on the key role of the listener in autobiographical memory-sharing. Our findings not only support existing literature showing that individuals choose listeners based on factors such as familiarity, gender (Alea et al., 2003), and listener characteristics (Pasupathi et al., 2015), but also offer a new insight into the tendency of narrators to remain loyal to the same listener. This contributes to a deeper understanding of the dynamics within listener–narrator dyads.

Although the functions of memory-sharing have been widely theorized, this study is, to our knowledge, the first to empirically examine how children perceive the functions of sharing negative memories with their parents in everyday life. As expected, participants reported higher scores in the social function when their preferred listener was their mother. In contrast, they reported higher directive and self-functions when they preferred their father. These findings align with Turkish literature. Children's self-perceptions are often shaped more through interactions with fathers, while mother-child interactions are typically more socially oriented (Sümer & Şendağ, 2009). The association of directive functions with fathers may reflect traditional paternal roles in Türkiye, where fathers are seen as sources of moral guidance, discipline, financial support, and protection (Metindogan, 2015).

Participants who shared memories with their fathers reported higher self-compassion than those who shared with their mothers. On the other hand, those who preferred mothers as listeners showed higher event centrality in negative memories. This is consistent with literature suggesting that fathers are more associated with self-oriented goals, which may explain their greater role in fostering children's self-compassion through memory-sharing. The association between children's higher event centrality of negative memories and mothers as listeners aligns with existing literature. Research shows that females are more likely to absorb and recall negative emotional events more intensely (Pasupathi, 2003). They also tend to see these events as central to their identity (Boals, 2010). This may explain why participants who shared their memories with their mothers reported higher event centrality scores than those who shared them with their fathers.

As hypothesized, event centrality showed a strong negative correlation with self-compassion. This supports earlier research linking highly central negative events with depression, anxiety (Berntsen & Rubin, 2006; Berntsen & Thomsen, 2005), and stronger negative emotional reactions (Boals, 2010). Mediation analyses also confirmed our hypothesis that memory functions play different roles in this relationship. Sharing negative memories with parents for social functions buffered the negative relationship between event centrality and self-compassion. In contrast, sharing for self-focused functions strengthened this link. One explanation is that when people view painful memories as central to their identity and feel low self-compassion, they may seek social connection to reduce feelings of isolation. This aligns with Neff's (2003a) concept of "common humanity," a core component of self-compassion. This component involves recognizing that life challenges are a shared human experience, rather than viewing them as personal failures or resorting to isolation.

By contrast, the results showed that sharing negative memories perceived as central to one's identity for self functions may reduce self-compassion. This finding aligns with previous research suggesting that such memories can lead to rumination or over-identification rather than mindfulness, which weakens self-compassion (Neff, 2003). The intensified negative link between event centrality and self-compassion through the self-function may also reflect a threat to the moral self. Memories that conflict with moral identity are less likely to be integrated into a coherent self-narrative and less susceptible to serving self-regulatory purposes (Pizarro et al., 2006).

This study bridges family narratives, developmental psychology, and positive psychology by exploring self-compassion through autobiographical memory-sharing. It highlights the importance of parents as listeners during emerging adulthood, a phase marked by identity exploration and emotional challenges (Arnett, 2000). Findings reveal that individuals often choose specific listeners based on the perceived functions of memory-sharing and consistently turn to the same parent as a preferred listener, emphasizing the significance of listener roles in shaping emotional processing and self-attitudes. Furthermore, adopting an ecological perspective, the study underscores the complexity of narrator-listener dynamics in daily life. It also highlights the importance of examining these dynamics in family narratives across different cultural contexts. Focusing on Turkey, a collectivistic society with strong family bonds (Markus & Kitayama, 1991), the study encourages future research to explore whether similar patterns exist in individualistic societies, where perceptions of family may differ significantly.

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