# WCES-2010

# The effect of perceived social support on subjective well-being

Fikret Gülaçtı[a] *

[a]Erzincan Education Faculty, Erzincan University, Erzincan, 24030, Turkey

## Abstract

The aim of this study is to determine whether perceived social support is a meaningful predictor of subjective well-being. 87 students registered to primary classroom teacher training department joined to this survey. In the phase of data collection, "Subjective Well-Being Scale" and "Multi-Dimensional Perceived Social Support Scale" were used. It was discovered that perceived social support predicted 43 per cent of subjective well-being. In addition to this, it was determined that perceived family support predicted subjective well-being, and on the other hand the support which was perceived towards a special person and perceived friend support did not predicted subjective well-being.
© 2010 Elsevier Ltd. Open access under CC BY-NC-ND license.

*Keywords:* Subjective well being; perceived social support; university students; psychological counseling; guidance.

## 1. Introduction

The most important function of modern education is to help the individuals to develop as a whole from the aspects of physical, social, sexual and psychological ways and to assist them as being raised effectively as harmonious with society, happy and also productive individual. On ensuring this assistance, the role of teacher is important. Also teachers' subjective well-being levels will contribute to making this assistance more effectively. When perceived social support is thought as a situation which influences the individual's feeling him well, at the same time it may affect subjective well-being positively.

Subjective well-being has two components as affective and cognitive component. Affective components (Diener and Emmons, 1985) consist of positive and negative emotion. Cognitive components (Andrews and Withey 1974) are also about the individuals' satisfaction on life (Diener and Larsen, 1993; Diener and Suh, 1997; Pavot et al., 1991; Schimmack, et al., 2002). "Life satisfaction refers to tendency to report satisfaction with various aspects of one's life" (Robinson et al, 2003).

When examined the satisfaction field of subjective well-being, it was discovered that there are components such as "work, family, leisure, health, finances, self, one's group" (Diener et al, 1999), ego groups that the individual,

---

* Fikret Gülaçti. Tel.: +90 446 2240089; fax: +90 446 2231901
*E-mail address*: fgulacti@erzincan.edu.tr

belongs to. On discussed with the fields of subjective well-being, it was observed that probable experiences have a very large space in the individuals' groups. (Vocation, Family, The groups in which the people involves, etc.).

Groups are already indispensable parts of social life. "Each person living in the community, beginning from the smallest group, the family unit is the members of different social, economic, religious and occupational groups" (Cüceloğlu, 1997). One of the concepts on which the theories about social change have a consensus is social interaction. "Social interaction forms the basis of social structure" (Kongar, 2002). From the perspective of the individual, the place in which the social interaction begins is family. With growth and development, the individual's social interaction expands towards his near environment. In the youth period, in addition to family interaction, the individual's interaction with his school environment and social environment created in that place begins to gain importance.

The individual's interactions within the family, his social support which he can gain from the peer environment and other people can not only motivate him positively but, it can also create negative effects. However, social support can be defined as the support which is taken from family, friends, neighbors and institutions which enhance the psychological dynamics, and help the individual in the aspects of affective, physical, cognitive contribution. "In general, the power means a social support in the view of physical and psychological aid to the individual in a special situation, and also it provides basic social needs of the individuals such as love, loyalty, self-esteem and the sense of being a part of a group" (Aksüllü, 2004, Tan and Karabulut, 2005). Also Cobb (1976) "social support is defined as information leading the subject to believe that he or she is loved, esteemed, and belongs to a network of mutual obligation". Briefly social support can be defined as a social and psychological support obtained from the individual's environment (Yıldırım, 1997).

When the literature about social support is examined, it is seen that two types of social support as perceived and received social support are mentioned in the literature. Perceived social support is the existence of support resources when they are need, and it can be identified in subjective qualitative perspectives and be measured and also it is reported that perceived social support is more determinative than received social support on mental health. "Individual differences may influence one's perception of a situation; people differ in the degree to which they feel unsupported, not cared for, and lonely in response to a given social state" (Stokes, 1985).

In recent years, researches in the social support area, it has been seen that there is a tendency of mentioning the subject, one's own impression, in other words "perceived support in the point of whether social relations on the subject is sufficient or not" (Eker et al., 2001). "Perceived social support is defined as one's overall impressions on whether social network is supportive enough or not" (Sorias 1988b). In other words, "the perceived social support is the value of a person's self-estimation" (Sorias 1988a). It is claimed that the person who is loved in various fields of life, is popular, valued and also who finds the need when necessary has the thought of being supported by the others and has gained more satisfaction from close individual interaction (Özgür 1993, Sorias 1988b).

"While the social support has a significant role in the lives of children and adolescents, it is stated that insufficient or inaccurate support presented by their social environments is an important predictor of different adaptation problems, the use of harmful substances, crime-oriented behaviors, anxiety and especially the negative emotions. Social support was claimed to give the individual the ability of overcoming with health, decreasing the depression, increasing the personal competence in stressful periods, having an overall positive effect and emotional balance, perception of his own values, life satisfaction and psychological well-being". (Sorias 1988a).

*1.1. Importance of the Study*

The levels of teachers' subjective well-beings will contribute to performing assistance which is to the individual whole development in a healthier way. If the perceived positive social support is thought as a situation which helps the individual to feel good, at the same time it will be able to affect the subjective well-being positively. In this regard, it is thought that this study will be meaningful for determining the pre-service teachers' subjective well-being levels and their social support perceptions. In addition, it is thought that this study will be a beneficial guide and a contribution to the field literature from the view of social services presented to university students and pre-service teachers.

*1.2. The Aim of the Study*

The aim of this research is to determine the relation between the pre service teachers' subjective well-being levels and perceived social support. In addition, the participants' subjective well-being levels are whether good predictors of what they perceived from the social support (family support, private individual support, friends support).

## 2. Method

The senior students studying at Erzincan University Faculty of Education Primary Teacher Training Department in the academic year 2009-2010 have participated in the survey. The data have been obtained from 33 male and 54 female students (n = 87) who participate as volunteers from a 200 people group.

For the data collection tools, "Subjective Well-Being Scale" (Tuzgöl-Dost, 2004) and "Multi-dimensional Perceived Social Support Scale" (Zimet et al. 1988) were used. Subjective Well-Being Scale was developed by Tuzgöl Dost (2004) and it consists of 46 items. The purpose of the scale is to determine the levels of subjective well being by determining the participants' cognitive evaluations on their lives and their frequency and intensity of positive and negative thoughts. In the scale prepared as quintet liker type, it is required that 20 items should be scored by being turned upside down the items.

While the maximum score which can be taken from the scale is 230 points, the minimum score is 46 points. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of the Subjective Well Being Scale was found as .93 (Tuzgöl Dost, 2004, Gülaçtı, 2009). Reliability coefficients which were determined for the applied scale are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Reliability Coefficient of the Subjective Well-Being

| Subjective Well-Being Scale | Tuzgöl-Dost (2004) (n=209) | Gülaçtı (2009) (n=555) | Present Number Application (n=87) |
|---|---|---|---|
| | .93 | .93 | .93 |

The original form of Multidimensional Perceived Social Support Scale was developed by Zimet and Friends (1988) in USA, and its Turkish adaptation, its reliability and validity studies were constructed by Eker, Arkar, Yaldız (2001). The sufficiency of social support taken from the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support and three different sources is evaluated subjectively. The sub-dimension scores of the liker type of scale scored from 1 to 7 points are between 4 and 28, and the scale's total scores vary between 12 and 84. Being high the obtained scores means higher perceived social support. At the end of the factor analysis which was done for the construct validity, 3 factors have been seen. The scale's internal consistency Cronbach alpha coefficients are shown for the sections and subsections of the scale.

Table 2. Reliability Coefficients of the Perceived Multidimensional Social Scale

| Scale | Original Scale (Eker, Arkar and Yaldız 2001) (n=150) | Present Number Application (n=87) |
|---|---|---|
| Total | .89 | .84 |
| Family | .85 | .86 |
| Friend | .88 | .71 |
| Special person | .92 | .96 |

In order to answer the research question, multiple regression analysis technique has been used. Descriptive statistics on the participant students are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics on the Participant Students

| Variance | N | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|
| Perceived Social Support - Special | 87 | 19.5977 | 9,16320 |
| Perceived Social Support - Family | 87 | 24.1264 | 4.03993 |
| Perceived Social Support - Friend | 87 | 39.8506 | 22.95320 |
| Subjective Well-Being | 87 | 184.57 | 24.03613 |

## 3. Findings

Multiple regression analysis results relating to prediction of subjective well being are shown in Table 4. It was found that perceived social support predicted 43 per cent of subjective well-being. However, social support received from the family received explains 18 per cent of subjective well-being variance (R:.428, R2: .18). On the other hand, it was discovered that perceived social support towards a special person and a friend (PSS) has not any impact on subjective well-being.

The results of Durbin Watson test (1.953) related to regression analysis showed that there is no autocorrelation in the model (Büyüköztürk, 2002, Köklü, 2002). When looked at the results of Anova test, it is seen that the regression model as a whole is significant ($F_{(3-83)}$: 6.214).

Table 4. Multiple Regression Analysis Results Relating to Prediction of Subjective Well Being

| Variance | B | Standard Error$_B$ | β | t | P | Dual r | Partial r |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Fixed | 128.248 | 14.537 | | 8.822 | .000[*] | - | - |
| PSS-Special | 0.552 | 0.297 | 0.210 | 1.857 | .067 | 0.304 | 0.200 |
| PSS-Family | 1.820 | 0.613 | 0.306 | 2.971 | .004[**] | 0.366 | 0.310 |
| PSS-Friend | 0.040 | 0.118 | 0.038 | .341 | .734 | 0.198 | 0.037 |

| DW:1.953 | R: .428 | R$^2$: 0.18 | $F_{(3-83)}$: 6.214 | [*]$p < .001$ | [**]$p < .01$ | [***]$p < .05$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

When the analysis of Table 4 is continued, it is examined that the correlation between subjective well-being and independent variables are not too much.

According to standardized regression coefficient (β), predictive variances relative importance order in subjective well-being means that social support received from family is equal with the social support is received from a person. But social the social support is received from a friend has not an impact on the social support received from the subjective well-being.

When t-test results relating to the significance of regression coefficients were analyzed, it is understood that social support received from family has a significant predictive impact on the level of subjective well-being. It was determined that the social support received from a special person and a friend has not any important effect on the level of subjective well-being.

## 4. Conclusion and Discussion

While the perceived social support received from family is a significant predictor of subjective well-being, the perceived social support received from a special person and perceived social support received from a friend are not the predictors of subjective well-being.

The variance having the maximum ability of predicting subjective well-being is the perceived social support received from family. This result relating to family support and subjective well-being is consistent with the results of some researches (Cheng and Furnham 2003; Diener and Fujita 1995; Diener and Seligman 2002). The first models for the individuals' behaviors are their mothers and fathers. Especially in terms of cognitive development, the individuals' cognitive schemas about the persons' being opposite sex and other people are developed in childhood. Hereby they can benefit also in their relations from these schemas. Being positive relations between parent causes for the aspects of their children emotional, social and cognitive positive developments, and this positivity is resulted in portraying their lives more positive and satisfactory. But when grown in an uneasy family atmosphere, it results in being lack of confidence, having unsociable character, negative life thoughts and also causes not being satisfied with life. The underlying cause of prediction about the subjective well-being of family received social support can be explained that the family can affect individual's subjective well-being schema as well.

When the finding about a special person's prediction on the subjective well-being is discussed, the individual's being perceived as a girl / boyfriend rather than general friend can be defined as the type being not a predictive factor of subjective well-being as a result of not entering the interactions which affects subjective well-beings. Because the university students in our country give a very special meaning to the concept "a special man" and also other studies which state that the students understand this concept as girl / boyfriend were seen (Eker et al, 2001).

In the structures explaining subjective well-being, the person in the social comparison theory uses the others as the criteria for caparisoning his own status. If the individual' status is better than the others, the individual's satisfaction and happiness begin to increase. According to the social comparison approach, "if a person is better off than others that person will be satisfied or happy" (Diener et al, 1999). Close friend circle has taken its place as the most important resources for social comparison, and the individual behaves fort he determination of the level subjective well-being. Therefore, especially in his university life, the individual may perceive that the close friends situations which he can compare with his status are better than his. Although in studies, it is highlighted that friendship and social effectiveness are important factors of subjective well-being (Harlow and Cantor, 1996), the findings of this survey do not support this view.

When the studies were examined, it is expressed that in spite of existing studies pointing out the positive relations between satisfaction received from friends and subjective well-being, there is no relation between subjective well-being and social contact (Yetim, 2001). By taking importance to these results, it can be said that the relation among subjective well-being, social contact and social support is more complex than it is thought. Although especially it is accepted that there is a two way relationship between subjective well-being and social acceptance, any experimental study on its causality has not been done yet. On this matter, it should be uncovered that whether the subjective well-being causes social relationship / support / contact or just the opposite way, social relationship / support / contact leads the subjective well-being.

When thought that subjective well-being derives from pleasant or unpleasant emotions and life satisfaction, for a high level of subjective well-being, it is required that the individual should have positive affective judgment on the quality of life, and live more pleasant emotions than the unpleasant ones. From the perspective of the findings being too much spent time with family in our country, and its direct influence on subjective well-being, and on the other hand experiences with girl / boyfriends perceived as a special person and support received from the friends are indirectly effect the subjective well-being, the studies for the development of the quality of these interaction processes can be done especially in university experiences.

## References

Aksüllü N. (2004). Huzurevinde ve evde yaşayan yaşlılarda algılanan sosyal destek etkenleri ile depresyon arasındaki ilişki. *Anadolu Psikiyatri Dergisi*, 5, 76-85.

Andrews, F.M. & Withey, P.B., (1974). Developing measures of perceived life quality. *Social Indicator Research*, 1, 1-26

Büyüköztürk, Ş., (2002). *Sosyal bilimler için veri analizi el kitabı*. Pegem-a yayıncılık, Ankara

Cheng, H. & Furnham, A., (2003). Personality, self-esteem, and demographic predictions of happiness and depression. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 34, 6, 921-942.

Cobb, S., (1976). Social support as a moderator of life stress. *Psychosom Med*, 38, 300-314.

Cüceloğlu, D., (1997). *İnsan ve davranışı*. Remzi Kitapevi, İstanbul

Diener, E. & Emmons, R.A., (1985). The independence of positive and negative affects. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 47, 1105-1117.

Diener, E. & Fujita, F., (1995). Resources, personal strivings, and subjective well-being: a nomothetic and idiographic approach. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 68, 5, 926-935.

Diener, E. & Larsen, R. J., (1993). The experience of emotional well-being, (Ed. I. M. Lewis, J. M. Haviland), *Handbook of emotions.* New York: Guildford, 405-415.

Diener, E. & Seligman, M.E.P., (2002). Very happy people. *American Psychological Society*, 13, 1, 81-84

Diener, E. & Suh, E., (1997). Measuring quality of life: economic, social, and subjective indicators. *Social Indicators Research*, 40, 1-2, 189-216.

Diener, E., Suh, E. M., Lucas, R. E. & Smith, H. E., (1999). Subjective well-being: three decades of progress. *Psychological Bulletin*, 125, 276-302.

Eker, D., Arkar, H. & Yaldız, H., (2001). Çok boyutlu algılanan sosyal destek ölçeğinin gözden geçirilmiş formunun faktör yapısı geçerlik ve güvenirliği. *Türk Psikiyatri Dergisi*, 12, 1, 17-25.

Gülaçtı, F., (2009). Sosyal Beceri Eğitimine Yönelik Bir Grup Rehberliği Programının Öğrencilerin, Öznel ve Psikolojik İyi Olma Düzeylerine Etkisi. Atatürk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Eğitim Bilimleri Anabilim Dalı. Yayınlanmamış Doktora Tezi

Harlow, R. E. & Cantor, N., (1996). Still participating after all these years: a study of life task participation in later life. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 71, 6, 1235-1249.

Kongar, E., (2002), *Toplumsal değişme kuramlari ve türkiye gerçeği.* Remzi Kitabevi, İstanbul

Köklü, N., (2002). *Açıklamalı istatistik terimleri sözlüğü.* Nobel Yayınları, Ankara

Özgür G., (1993). Sosyal destek ve sağlık. *Türk Hemşireler Dergisi*, 43, 2, 25-26.

Pavot, W. G., Diener, E., Colvin, C. R. & Sandvik, E., (1991). Further validation of the satisfaction with life scale: evidence for the cross-method convergence of well-being measures. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 57, 1, 149-161

Robinson, M. D., Solberg, E. C., Vargas, R. T. & Tamir, M., (2003). Trait as default, subjective well-being and the distinction between neutral and positive events. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 85, 3, 517-527

Schimmack, U., Radhakrishnan, P., Oishi, P., Dzokoto V. & Ahadi, P., (2002). Culture, personality and subjective well-being: integrating process models of life satisfaction. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 82, 4, 582-593

Sorias O., (1988a). Sosyal desteklerin ruhsal sağlığı koruyucu etkisinin depresyonlu ve sağlıklı kontrollerde araştırılması. *Ege Üniversitesi Tıp Fakültesi Dergisi*, 27, 3, 1033-1039.

Sorias O., (1988b). Yaşam stresine karşı koruyucu olarak sosyal destekler*, Edebiyat Fakültesi Yayınları*, Seminer Psikoloji (Özel sayı), 805-811.

Stokes, J. P., (1985). The relation of social network and individual difference variables to loneliness. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 48, 981–990.

Tan M. & Karabulutlu E., (2005). Social support and hopelessness in turkish patients with cancer. *Cancer Nursing*, 28, 236-240.

Tuzgöl Dost, M., (2004). Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Öznel İyi Oluş Düzeyleri, Hacettepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Yayınlanmamış Doktora Tezi, Ankara

Yetim, Ü., (2001). *Toplumdan Bireye Mutluluk Resimleri.* Bağlam Yayınları, İstanbul

Yıldırım, İ., (1997). Algılanan sosyal destek ölçeğinin geliştirilmesi güvenirliği, ve geçerliği. *Hacettepe Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 13, 81-87

Zimet G.D., Dahlem N.W. & Zimet, S. G., (1988). The multi-dimensional scale of perceived social support. *J Personality Assessment*, 52, 30-41.