

Perceived Social Support in Recreational Activity Participation: A Study on Students

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine university students' perceived social support level in recreational activity participation. 536 students who were selected from 3 different universities using convenience sampling participated in the study voluntarily. As data collection form; Perceived Social Support Scale (PSSS-R) and Preference Factors of Recreation Areas (PFRA) scale were used. For the analyses of the data; descriptive statistics, Independent Samples T Test used for two groups depending on the number of the variables and One Way ANOVA used for groups more than two were used. In order to find out which group demonstrated the difference found as a result of variance analyses, Tukey test -one of the multiple comparison tests- was used. In terms of recreational activity participation, the most effective factor in students' average scores of perceived social support scale was peer support (2.690 ± 0.372) while the least effective factor was teacher support (2.033 ± 0.535). Total average score was found to be 2.441 ± 0.274 . The most effective factor in students' average scores of Recreation Area Preference Agents Scale was sporting diversity (4.448 ± 0.776) and staff (4.128 ± 0.681) and these factors were followed by physical facilities (3.736 ± 0.562), location (3.185 ± 0.647) and activity diversity (3.074 ± 0.586); respectively. Besides, there were significant differences in perceived social support levels of the study group in terms of gender and accommodation variables. It was concluded that the highest support for students' recreational activity participation came from their peers while the lowest support was obtained from teachers. It may be argued that students staying at public dormitories used recreational areas built by municipalities more than other students. It was identified that criterion that all the student groups put the biggest emphasis on while preferring recreation areas was sporting diversity offered by the recreation areas.

Keywords: social support, recreation, activity, leisure, student

1. Introduction

Humans as social beings develop their personality by continuously interacting with the environment by their very nature and thus lead their lives by integrating themselves into the environment (Terzi, 2008). Humans, with a need to be loved and cared by their environment, expect to meet this need—primarily— from their families and peers. On the other hand; humans -also wanting to be supported by the social groups that they belong to- support this need with social relations they form (Oksuz et al., 2011). Social support as a term refers to providing individuals with knowledge, recommendations, financial help that contribute to their feelings and behaviors positively or supporting them in their relations to the environment and others (Gottlieb, 1983). Knowing perceived social support level in individuals may be helpful in different ways. For Caplan, (1974) knowing social support systems assist individuals to activate their psychobiological sources, to meet their wishes and to access to financial and monetary resource by making them skilled. Also, social support systems help individuals by guiding them and providing them with knowledge. Social support systems help individuals in three different manners. First, social support systems eliminate or reduce some elements that affect their experiences negatively. Second, social support systems enhance individuals' endurance strength in case of negative experiences and improve their health status. Third, social support systems lessen environmental effects of stressors. Studies done for the last 20 years on the role of social support in every area have played a key role in understanding the

importance of social support (Guler & Turkmen, 2018; Zhang et al., 2016; Yildirim, 2016; Feeney & Collins, 2015; Avci & Yildirim, 2014; Peker & Eroglu, 2015; Gungor et al., 2018).

When humans as social beings face with a negative and unwanted situation, support systems felt nearby contribute them positively in coping with struggles. Humans always want to be included in social webs because they are born, grow up and develop in society. These social webs influence well-being of individuals (Karatat, 2012). Another factor that influences people's well-being is recreational activities. Recreation is defined as activities chosen for being engaged after spending the necessary time for work and physiological needs and is a multi-faceted term that includes social, physical and mental dynamics (Broadhurst, 2001). Recreation is any voluntarily performed activity in order to gain some social and emotional behaviors in person or in groups during their free time. This term is a feeling that is formed for satisfaction and well-being (Kilbas, 2010). Particularly, increased free time thanks to –particularly- technological advancements of the 21st century has resulted in serious demand for recreational activities (Kozak, Aydin C & Aydin Ç, 2017). Recreational activities, in which individuals participate so that they can get rid of stress, regain psychological and physical health and have fun (Kocuyigit & Yildiz, 2014) play a crucial role in developing social relations, too (Broadhurst, 2001; Buchecker & Degenhardt, 2015). However, the studies done indicate that “Family” and “Peer” subdimensions are significant barriers to recreational activity participation (Soyer et al., 2017; Sarol, 2017; Gurbuz & Henderson, 2014; Gumus, Ozgul & Karakilic, 2017; Aydin, Kahraman & Hi çdurmaz, 2017; Mumcu & Ozgul, 2018).

There are numerous studies that emphasize positive correlation of social support with physiological and psychological health (Iskender & Tas, 2018; Dokmen, 2017; Turgut & Capan, 2017; Cavus & Pekkan, 2017; Uygur, 2018) whereas there are almost no studies on recreational activity participation and social support. Therefore, this study focused on examining university students' perceived social support level in recreational activity participation.

2. Materials and Methods

This section includes the group, the data collection tool, analyses, methods, and techniques related to the data.

2.1 Participants

A total of 622 students -234 female students and 302 male students- who studied at 3 different public universities in Türkiye (Mersin University, Kirsehir Ahi Evran University, Kastamonu University), were aged between 19 and 30 years and were recruited using convenience sampling participated in the study. 86 forms filled in wrongly or incompletely were excluded from the study. Eventually, the study sample consisted of 536 students.

2.2 Collection of Data

“Information Request Form”, “Perceived Social Support Scale” and “Recreation Areas Preference Agencies Scale” were administered to the students who studied at Mersin University, Kirsehir Ahi Evran University and Kastamonu University during the 2017-2018 academic year with voluntariness principle. Participants were informed of the data collection tools before the administration of the scales and they have explained the importance of responding questions candidly. Administration of the tools took averagely 8 minutes.

2.3 Data Collection Tools

In collecting data; an Information Request Form designed by the researchers in order to get information on participants' age, gender, income level and accommodation status, “Perceived Social Support Scale” and “Recreation Area Preference Agents Scale” were employed.

Perceived Social Support Scale (PSSS): PSSS, designed by Yildirim (1997) for the Turkish society PSSS, was revised in 2004. PSSS-R includes three subdimensions of Family Support (FS), Peer Support (PS) and Teacher Support (TS) with 50 items. 47 items of the scale are direct worded while 3 items are reverse worded. Therefore, three items are reverse scored and total scores are calculated. PSSS supports a structure of 46 items and 3 factors in this study and its reliability coefficients are 0.92 for FS, 0.78 for PS, 0.93 for TS and 0.93 for total scale. After varimax rotation of three factors found in the principal components factor analysis, items account for 61.109% of the scale.

Preference Factors of Recreation Areas (PFRA): PFRA, developed by Gumus and Ozgul (2017), is a 5-point Likert scale consisted of 24 items with 5 subdimensions- Sporting Diversity (SD), Staff (S), Location (L), Physical Facilities (PF) and Activity (A) (1: Not important at all, 5: very important) [30]. There are no reverse scored items. Internal consistency coefficients are 0.84 for Sporting Diversity, 0.80 for Staff, 0.70 for Location, 0.82 for Physical facilities and 0.81 for Activity.

2.4 Analysis of Data

For the analyses of the data; descriptive statistics (percentages, frequencies etc.), explanatory factor analysis, Independent Samples T-Test used for two groups depending on the number of the variables and One Way ANOVA used for groups more than two were used. In order to find out which group demonstrated the difference obtained as a result of variance analyses, Tukey test -one of the multiple comparison tests- was used.

3. Results

In this section, findings of the variables of the study are included.

Table 1. PFRA and PSSS average scores

	Subdimension	N	\bar{x}	sd
PFRA	Sporting Diversity	536	4.24	.766
	Staff	536	4.24	.680
	Location	536	4.15	.699
	Physical Facilities	536	4.17	.562
	Activity	536	4.07	.708
PSSS	Family Support	536	2.60	.372
	Peer Support	536	2.69	.316
	Teacher Support	536	2.03	.535
	Total Perceived Social Support (PSS)	536	2.44	.274

Table 2. ANOVA results of PFRA according to Perceived Social Support Level

Subdimension	PSS Level	N	\bar{x}	sd	F	p
Sporting Diversity	Low	52	4.24	.96	1.594	.204
	Moderate	279	4.18	.79		
	High	205	4.31	.67		
Staff	Low	52	4.25	.71	2.668	.070
	Moderate	279	4.18	.69		
	High	205	4.33	.64		
Location	Low	52	4.26	.51	4.304	.014*
	Moderate	279	4.19	.68		
	High	205	4.11	.56		
Physical Facilities	Low	52	4.26	.67	1.95	.143
	Moderate	279	4.10	.74		
	High	205	4.20	.63		
Activity	Low	52	4.17	.77	.540	.583
	Moderate	279	4.06	.72		
	High	205	4.06	.67		

When participants' average scores of recreation areas preference agencies scale was investigated in terms of perceived social support level; it was noted that location subdimension produced a significant difference in individuals' perceived social support level. Individuals whose PSS (perceived social support) level was lower attached more importance to location subdimension in comparison with those individuals with moderate and high perceived social support level (Table 2).

Table 3. T-test results of PFRA and PSSS average scores in terms of gender

	Subdimension	Gender	N	\bar{x}	sd	t	p
PFRA	Sporting Diversity	Men	302	4.16	.78	-2.568	.011*
		Women	234	4.33	.72		
	Staff	Men	302	4.16	.66	-3.087	.002*
		Women	234	4.35	.69		
	Location	Men	302	4.10	.68	-2.073	.039*
		Women	234	4.23	.71		
	Physical Facilities	Men	302	4.06	.56	-5.409	.001*
		Women	234	4.32	.51		
	Activity	Men	302	3.99	.73	-3.315	.001*
		Women	234	4.19	.65		
PSSS	Family Support	Men	302	2.56	.39	-2.745	.006*
		Women	234	2.65	.33		
	Peer Support	Men	302	2.64	.34	-3.742	.001*
		Women	234	2.74	.26		
	Teacher Support	Men	302	2.03	.52	.094	.925
		Women	234	2.03	.55		
	Total Perceived Social Support	Men	302	2.41	.28	-2.605	.009*
		Women	234	2.47	.25		

When participants' average scores of recreation area preference agencies scale were examined in terms of gender, it was found that there were significant differences in all subdimensions. It may be argued that in perceived social support levels, gender was the variable that produced significant differences in all the subdimensions except Teacher support.

Table 4. ANOVA results of PFRA and PSSS according to accommodation

	Subdimension	Accommodation	N	\bar{x}	Sd	F	p
PFRA	Sporting Diversity	Dormitory	161	4.38	.68	3.927	.020*
		Home	94	4.19	.68		
		Family	281	4.17	.82		
	Staff	Dormitory	161	4.24	.72	.685	.505
		Home	94	4.31	.64		
		Family	281	4.22	.66		
	Location	Dormitory	161	4.19	.69	.289	.749
		Home	94	4.13	.69		
		Family	281	4.14	.70		
	Physical Facilities	Dormitory	161	4.30	.54	7.236	.001*
		Home	94	4.19	.50		
		Family	281	4.09	.57		
Activity	Dormitory	161	4.12	.71	.775	.461	
	Home	94	4.10	.66			
	Family	281	4.04	.72			
Family Support	Dormitory	161	2.64	.33	1.838	.160	
	Home	94	2.58	.43			
	Family	281	2.57	.37			
PSSS	Peer Support	Dormitory	161	2.71	.30	6.983	.001*
		Home	94	2.77	.27		
		Family	281	2.64	.33		
	Teacher Support	Dormitory	161	2.06	.52	1.202	.302
		Home	94	1.95	.58		
		Family	281	2.04	.52		
	Total Perceived Social Support	Dormitory	161	2.47	.25	2.071	.127
		Home	94	2.44	.26		
		Family	281	2.42	.28		

When participants' average scores of recreation area preference agencies scale were examined in terms of accommodation, it was found that there were significant differences in the subdimensions of sporting diversity and physical facilities. According to the Tukey test performed, the significant difference was created by those students who stayed at dormitories. In perceived social support scale scores, peer support subdimension produced a significant difference. This difference was caused by those individuals who stayed with families.

Table 5. Correlation coefficients between PFRA and PSSS

N:536		PSSS	SD	S	L	PF
SPORTING DIVERSITY (SD)	Pearson Correlation	.074				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.087				
STAFF (S)	Pearson Correlation	.071	.627**			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.101	.000			
LOCATION (L)	Pearson Correlation	.001	.450**	.451**		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.973	.000	.000		
PHYSICAL FACILITIES (PF)	Pearson Correlation	.064	.543**	.593**	.471**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.138	.000	.000	.000	
ACTIVITY (A)	Pearson Correlation	-.032	.454**	.469**	.321**	.662**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.459	.000	.000	.000	.000

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

When Table 5 was looked at, no significant correlation was found between the scores of Recreation Areas Preference Agencies Scale and Perceived Social Support Scale.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

In this study, where perceived social support was investigated in relation to recreational activities, it was concluded that participants perceived the highest social support from their peers (Table 1). The studies done emphasize that peer factor is one of the most important factor in recreational activity participation (Mumcu & Alay Ozgul, 2018; Uzun et al., 2017; Ayhan et al., 2018; Chick et al., 2015; Ayhan et al., 2017). We are of the opinion that in university years during which friendship and peer relations grow more important, social support level that individuals feel is maximized because they feel that they belong to a peer group and enter into close relations with their peers. Actually, the study of Yardimci & Basbakkal (2009) point out similar results and concur with this study. Peer factor is particularly an important motivation for participating in campus recreation areas and those built by municipalities (Brock et al., 2015; Henchy, 2011). It was found that factors to which study group attached the most importance while preferring recreation areas were "Sporting diversity" and "Staff" subdimensions. Therefore, it may be suggested that recreation areas that provide tools as well as auxiliary staff such as security staff, cleaning staff, sports counselors of different sportive branches play a key role in choosing recreation areas where individuals want to visit. According to Gumus (2016); presence of sports staff, cleaning staff and security staff and presence of sports counselors in a recreation area makes it more desirable than others. Similarly, a recreation area that provides walking trail and bicycle lane, offer facilities for different sports branches makes it possible for more individuals to benefit from it.

According to another finding of the study, when participants' scores of recreation areas preference agencies scale were investigated in terms of perceived social support level, it was seen that individuals' perceived social support level produced a significant difference in location subdimension. It may be suggested that individuals with lower PSS level cared more location subdimension as compared to those with moderate and high perceived social support level (Table 2). According to what this finding indicated, individuals with lower PSS level paid more attention to such factors as recreation areas being closer to their house and city center and being accessible by mass transportation –while choosing recreation areas-. Actually, studies done emphasize that lack of security and social support is a crucial factor in participating in recreation area (Coleman, 1993; Iso-Ahola & Park, 1996; Twenge et al., 2010).

Another finding of the study results demonstrated that gender created significant differences in all subdimensions while preferring a recreation area (Table 3). It may be argued that in perceived social support levels, gender was the variable that produced significant differences in all the subdimensions but teacher support. This finding emphasizes that gender is an important variable in recreation areas preference. The study of Aradahan & Yerlisu Lapa (2011) reports that men are more comfortable and active in recreation preference because they are supported by such social institutions as work, family, social responsibilities while women have

more restricted opportunities in recreational preferences due to the roles that they adopt. The study of Thapa, Confer & Mendelson (2004) tell that men join more activities in recreation areas than women. Since men's habits to use sportive free time are stronger than women's habits (Iskender et al., 2015), women are more restricted in having opportunities in recreational preferences than men; as a result of which women are bound to take more factors into consideration while choosing recreation areas. Similarly; perceived social support scale demonstrated that women perceived more support as compared to men. In literature, there are studies stating that women perceive more social support as compared to men (Allen & Stoltenberg, 1995; Antonucci, 1987; Stokes & Wilson, 1984).

When participants' scores of recreation area preference agencies scale were examined in terms of accommodation, it was found that there were significant differences in the subdimensions of sporting diversity and physical facilities. According to the Tukey test performed, the significant difference was created by those students who stayed at dormitories. According to this finding, students who stay at dormitories attach more importance to physical facilities than other students who stay with their families; upon which the fact that students who stay at dormitories have fewer and restricted physical facilities is effective. Similarly; since times to enter and to exit dormitories are predetermined, students with a limited time prefer those recreation areas that offer more range of sporting diversity. The study of Bedimo-Rung et al. (2005) reports that parks with different physical activity opportunities are preferred by those individuals with the bigger time problem.

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