The Relationship Between Social Support, Anxiety and Self-Perception in Adults

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Keywords
Family, social support, anxiety, self-perception, adulthood.

Abstract

Family is the fundamental unit, that composed of individuals mostly residing at the same house with a relation affinity, blood-tie, marriage and other legal ways, in which individuals' sexual, psychological, social and economic needs are met and social adaptation and participation are achieved and arranged.. In this study, the relation of social support perceived in family with self-perception was researched. According to the research results, women, single individuals and those who had communication problems within the family was found higher anxiety level than others. Both positive self-perception and level of social-support perceived from the family of married individuals were found higher than single ones. As level of social support perceived from the family rose and positive self-perception increased, severity of anxiety the individuals went through decreased. As the social support perceived from the family rose, positive self-perception of the individuals increased as well. The need for social support in every period of life is also significant in family. Therefore, consultation units in institutions that individuals can consult and mass-communication tools will be of great use in making individuals understand that it is a contemporary requirement for individuals within the family to behave more conscious in providing social support to each other.

Yetişkinlerde Sosyal Destek, Anksiyete ve Benlik Algısı Arasındaki İlişki

Keywords
Aile, sosyal destek, anksiyete, benlik algısı, yetişkinlik.

Abstract

Aile, kan bağlılığı, evlilik ve diğer yasal yollardan, aralarında akrabalık ilişkisi bulunan ve çoğunlukla aynı evde yaşayan bireylerden oluşan; bireylerin cinsel, psikolojik, sosyal ve ekonomik ihtiyaçlarının karşılandığı, topluma uyum ve katılımlarının sağlandığı ve düzenlendiği temel bir birimdir. Bu çalışmada da aileden algılanan sosyal desteğin anksiyete ve benlik saygısı ile ilişkisi incelenmiştir. Araştırma bulgularına göre, kadınların, aile içi iletişim problemleri yaşayan ve bekar bireylerin anksiyete düzeyleri daha yüksek bulunmuştur. Evli bireylerin bekarlara göre hem olumlu benlik şemaları, hem de aileden algılanan sosyal destek düzeyleri daha yüksektir. Aileden algılanan sosyal destek düzeyi yükseldikçe ve olumlu benlik şeması arttıkça bireylerin yaşadıkları anksiyete şiddeti azalmaktadır. Aileden algılanan sosyal destek yükseldikçe bireylerin olumlu benlik algıları da artmaktadır. Hayatın her döneminde sosyal desteğe duyulan ihtiyaç aile içinde ayrı bir anlam

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taşımaktadır. Bu sebeple aile içindeki bireylerin birbirlerine sosyal destek sunma konusunda daha bilinçli davranmalarının çağdaş bir zorunluluk olduğunu anlamalarını sağlamak üzere kurumlarda aile bireylerinin başvurabilecekleri danışmanlık birimlerinden ve kitle iletişim araçlarından yararlanılabilir.

1. Introduction

Family is a fundamental unit, where there are affinity relationship in terms of blood tie, marriage and other legal ways, which consists of individuals generally living in the same house, where the individuals' sexual, psychological, social, and economic needs are met, and where the social adaptation and participation are ensured and organized (Nazlı, 2012). In families, where the sense of trust arises, the individual believes in himself, respects himself and others, gains identity, develops personality and social skills, and becomes socialized (Cüceloğlu, 2002). These individuals have self-confidence about their capability of coping with situations, which make them stressful. These individuals utilize the method of seeking for support as an emotion regulation strategy for coping with the stressful conditions (Belsky, 2002). In other words, positive emotional lives and anxiety levels of individuals are affected from the social support they achieve from their family. From this aspect, increasing the level of social support, which people perceive from their families, is an important point. In this study, it was aimed to investigate the relationship of social support perceived from the family with the anxiety and self-respect.

2. Literature review

Anxiety is the sense of moping, reason of which is unknown, and which is experienced with the concern of uncertainty, fear, worry distress, and if there will occur something very bad. It is a reaction to the internal or external dangers or danger expectations. The ego attempts to cope with dangers by using protection settings and to protect itself. If the ego is strong enough, the problem would be solved (Özpoyraz, 2016).

The concept of ego is the way of person's recognition and understanding himself and is defined as the whole of perception, emotion, and thoughts underlying the human personality (Er, 2010). Demoulin (2000) defines the self as the formation of subjective value judgments based on the person's experiences and observations regarding the life, and focuses on the concepts of self-recognition, self-value and self-respect. Within the scope of this concept, there are thoughts regarding the physical, mental, and social self.

Self-respect is defined as feeling valuable in general and worth being appreciated (Rosenberg, 1965). Internal-oriented, completed, and incarnated sense of self motivates individuals for being successful and happy in life, while uncompleted sense of self, source of which is not internal world of the individual and which includes uncertainties, prepares the conditions for the unsuccessfulness and unhappiness of individuals (Bayat, 2003).

Considering that the real important place for the development of an individual is the family atmosphere, and that the personality is mainly shaped by the identification and relationships with parents, the family atmosphere and the attitudes of parents draw attention as the important factors playing role in

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formation of child's identity. Although the parents are the individuals meeting the initial needs of child and the first persons interacting with the child, they are also the individuals allowing the child to recognize his own and directing his developing personality. Thus, it can be understood that the attitudes of parents have significant effects on the child's sense of self and there are a strong relationship between these two concepts (Yavuzer, 2005).

Among individuals grown in a family atmosphere involving sufficient level of appreciation, care, trust, and social support, which have important role in formation of positive sense of self, the healthy personal characteristics are observed, while the lack of appreciation and social support may lead people to feel themselves invaluable and to be isolated from the society. Social support is an irreplaceable and fundamental factor for overcoming the problems in relationships with family, adapting to social environment, and sustaining the psychological health.

According to Perrine (1999), social support consists of two important components. First of them is the objective presence of other people, to whom the individual can appeal for help under difficult circumstances. Second one is the sense of social support. The sense of social support is largely independent from the real support, and this explains why some people are not really aware of the support that they may achieve from their environment. The support perceived in family atmosphere has four main determinants; the individual perceiving support, the individual from whom the support is perceived, the communication between these two individuals, and the family as a whole (Branje et al., 2002).

The family of individual is the leading source of social support. Social support contributes to the person's coping skills and offers significant contribution to recognizing the actual stressful condition, to the characteristics of reaction shown, and also to the coping strategy (Karacabey, 2012).

3. Methodology

The cross-sectional type study group consists of 239 individuals, who have applied to Kütahya Central Family Health Center between 02.16.2015 and 04.17.2015 and who accepted participating into the study. The participation is based on voluntariness. The participants were informed before the study, and written consent of volunteer participants were obtained. The illiterate individuals and individuals having any psychological disorder diagnosis were excluded since they might affect the results of our study. Data collection form consists of two sections. In first section of questionnaire form, there are 11 open-ended questions regarding the sociodemographic characteristics and familial relationships of participants, while Scale of Perceived Social Support from Family, Social Comparison Scale, and Beck's Anxiety Inventory are included in second section.

Scale of Perceived Social Support from Family: In our study, in order to determine the students' level of perceived social support from family, the Scale of Perceived Social Support from Family (SPSSF) developed by Procidano and Heler (1983) and adapted into Turkish language by Yıldırım (1997) was utilized. SPSSF consists of 20 items. Scale items are answered as "Yes", "No", "I don't know". Total score is calculated as the sum of points from all of the items. Higher scores from the scale

indicate higher level of perceived social support, while lower scores indicate low level of perceived social support. Test reliability of SPSSF was found to be .90, and internal consistency to be .76 (Yıldırım, 1997).

Social Comparison Scale: Social Comparison Scale (SCS) was developed by Gilbert and Trent with 5 items, and the number of items was arose firstly to 6 and then to 18 by Savaşır et al. SCS evaluates how individuals see themselves when compared to other people from various aspects. As well as the scale has 18 bipolar items, scoring is made as 1-6 point Likert scale in order to ensure the understandability. Bipolar items are evaluated over the scores obtained from 6-point dimension. Higher scores indicate positive schema of self, while lower scores indicate negative schema of self. Scale reliability; Cronbach Alpha coefficient was .79, and has been found to be .89 in another study; Validity of Turkish form; The correlation of Social Comparison Scale with Beck's Depression Inventory was found to be -.19, (p<.000) (Savaşır and Şahin, 1997).

Beck's Anxiety Inventory: Beck's Anxiety Inventory (BAI) developed by Beck and colleagues in year 1988 was prepared in order to measure the frequency of anxiety symptoms experienced by the individual. BAI is a Likert-type scale consisting of 21 items and scored between 0 and 3 points. Each of the items is answered as "Never", "Mildly", "Mid-level", and "Severe". The answers are scored between 0 and 3. The range of score is 0-63. Higher scores indicate the severity of anxiety experienced by the individual. Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient of this scale was found to be .93. Item-total score correlation coefficients vary between .45 and .72. Test-retest reliability coefficient of test was reported to be r=.57. Reliability of Turkish form; The correlation with Automatic Thoughts Scale was found to be .41, .34 with Beck Hopelessness Scale, .46 with Beck Depression Scale, .45 with Situational Anxiety Inventory, and .53 with Permanent Anxiety Inventory. As a result of performed analyses, it has been reported that the scale could significantly distinguish the anxiety group from other diagnosis groups (depression, mixed, and comparison groups) (Savaşır and Şahin, 1997).

Data Analysis: Data analyses were performed using IBM SPSS 21.0 statistical software. Normality tests of dataset were performed using Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro Wilk tests, and the significance level of data was determined to be .000 (See Table 1). Since this value is lower than 0.05, the non-parametric tests were used. Percentage, Mann Whitney-U, and Kruskall Wallis test and Spearman Correlation were used in data analyses.

Table 1: Scale's Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk Normality Test Results

Scales	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	d.f.	P	Statistic	d.f.	P
BAI	,130	239	.000	,913	239	.000
SCS	,089	239	.000	,937	239	.000
SPSSF	,171	239	.000	,852	239	.000

4. Results and Discussion

The mean age of 239 participants aged between 17 and 64 years was found to be 29.89±9.19 years, while 59.4% of participants were female and 40.6% were male.

69% of participants have university and higher graduation, and 79.5% were married.

According to the results, the women's scores from Beck Anxiety Inventory were higher than those of men (p=.003). The anxiety level of individuals experiencing intra-family communication problem (p=.014) and being single (p=.000) were found to be higher. Married individuals have more positive self-schema than single participants (p=.000), as well as they have higher perceived social support from family (p=.000) (Table 2).

Table 2: Comparison of Participants Scores from Scale by Certain Socio-demographic Characteristics

	Socio-demographic Characteristics	N	Mean Rank	U	P
BAI	*Gender*				
	Female	142	131,07	5315,5	.003
	Male	97	103,80		
	Do you usually have communication problems within the family?				
	Yes	34	146,84	2572,5	.014
	No	205	155,55		
	Marital Status				
	Married	190	98,66	600,5	.000
	Single	49	202,74		
SCS	Married	190	129,47	2855,0	.000
	Single	49	83,27		
SPSSF	Married	190	128,36	3067,5	.000
	Single	49	87,60		

As a result of Spearman correlation analysis performed in order to determine the relationships between BAI, SPSSF, and SCS, the relationships between the scores were found to be significant (Table 3).

Table 3: Results of Spearman Correlation analysis performed in order to determine the relationships between BAI, SPSSF, and SCS

Spearman		BAI	SPSSF
BAI	R	1,000	-,264
	P		.000
	N	239	239
		BAI	SCS
BAI	R	1,000	-,351
	P		.000
	N	239	239
		SCS	SPSSF
SCS	R	1,000	,501
	P		.000
	N	239	239

As the perceived social support from family increases, also the anxiety level of individuals decreases (r=-.264; p=.000). On the other hand, as the positive self-schema increases, then the severity of anxiety decreases (r=-.351; p=.000). As a result of analyses performed in order to determine the relationships between SPSSF and SCS, the relationships were found to be significantly positive. As the

perceived social support from family increases, then the positive sense of self also increases (r=.501; p=.000).

The need for social support, which is felt in every period of life, has a different in family atmosphere. The theory of social support emphasizes the importance of family support's preventive effects on stress and its role in maintaining the mental and physical health (Kenny, 1990). From this aspect, it is an important point to raise the level of perceived social support from family. One of the findings of our study, where the relationship of perceived social support from family with anxiety and self-respect, is the statistically significant higher anxiety levels of women when compared to those of men. It has been asserted that traditional roles and expectations of genders have psychological results such as sense of hopelessness and consequently women are more sensitive to depressive reactions than men are (Önen et al., 1994).

In general, women react to the stress more emotionally than men do. For this reason, the anxiety manifestations of women are expected to be stronger. In many studies, similar results with ours have been reported (Barnes and Farrier, 1985; Karakaya et al., 2006; Taşğın, 2006; Picakciefe et al., 2009). Besides that, in literature, there also are studies reporting that the anxiety levels of men are higher than those of women or there is non-significant different between them (Chappell and Martino, 2006; Tokuç et al., 2009). In our study, no relationship could be found between gender and sense of self. In literature, there are studies reporting that the women's sense of self is generally higher (Özkan, 1994; Kimter, 2012).

According to our findings, the anxiety levels of single individuals were found to be higher. In previous studies, it has been shown that being married is a risk factor for depression (Stefánsson et al., 1991; Kaya and Kaya, 2007). Some of the reasons for this are the sense of loneliness, the lack of spouse support, the social pressure for marrying again, the financial losses, and struggling with all the problems lonely. Moreover, these factors may explain the reasons of single, divorced or widow individuals' higher anxiety levels.

Social support protects the mental health of individuals from psychological damages created by the stressful life events (Sarason et al., 1991). Procidano et al. (1988) has stated that anxiety is related with life events, and that the social support from family has an important function in preventing the anxiety. Moreover, one of the factors decreasing the perceived social support from family has been reported to be conflictions between the family members or spouses (Karacabey, 2012). According to our study's results, as the level of perceived social support from family increases, then the severity of anxiety experienced by individuals decreases. Moreover, in our study, the anxiety levels of individuals having intra-family communication problems were found to be higher. In previous studies, it has been determined that, as the satisfaction in terms of social support decreases, then the depression and anxiety increases (Compas et al., 1986; Banaz, 1992; Özlale, 1999). There also are studies reporting significant relationship between the perceived family support and psychological health (Armsden and Grenenberg, 1987; Öntaş, 1998). In study of Gürkan (1998), it has been observed that there was a negative relationship between the mean permanent anxiety score of mothers and perceived social support, that the permanent anxiety scores

decreased as the perceived social support increased, and that psychological symptom averages of children decreased as the mothers' perceived social support level increased.

Self-respect is formed according to not only the self-assessments but also the perceptions about assessment of others (Neff and Vonk, 2009). From this aspect, feeling valuable, being able to represents one's skills, knowledge and abilities, success, being appreciated, being accepted, being loved, accepting and adopting one's character are very important in development and improvement of self-respect (Dilmaç and Ekşi, 2008). Hence, families, teachers, colleagues, classmates and environment continuously influence the individuals' sense of self through their assessments (Cevher and Buluş, 2007). In our study, it was concluded that there is a positive correlation between the perceived social support from family and the sense of self. In study of Dülger (2009), it has been reported that there was a positively significant relationship between social support from family and decision-making's sub-dimensions of self-respect and prudent selectivity. Moreover, in our study, it was observed that the severity of anxiety decreased as the positive self-schema increased.

Nowadays, in psychotherapies applied for treatment of anxiety disorders, there are topics such as damaging nature of anxiety, decreasing the environmental stress, trying to restore the problematic situations causing stress, psychological training, relaxing, breath control exercises, confrontation, and guiding identity training (Saatçioğlu, 2001). In study of Yıldırım (1997), it has been seen that the mean family support score of children of parents participating social support program significantly increased. The necessity of social support programs has been emphasized. Dökmen (1994) stated that inability of establishing effective communication is partially caused from the lack of establishing communication in family. Accordingly, training the people at only even how to feedback others would decrease the conflictions and lack of communication (Karacabey, 2012). In their study, Kaya and Saçkes (2004) have reported that training program applied in order to improve the self-respect of students having low level of sense of self was effective in increasing the students' sense of self.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

The need for social support, which is felt in all of the periods of life, has a special meaning within the family. Education and giving ethical sensitivity are very important for improving the individuals' self-respect by increasing the families' social support level and for decreasing the negative effects of anxiety levels. For this reason, in order to allow them to understand that more conscious behaviors of family members about providing social support within the family is a modern necessity, the counseling departments in institutions, where the families can apply to, and the mass-communication tools should be profited.

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