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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT AND CREATIVE THINKING SKILLS IN NURSING STUDENTS

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Abstract

This study was conducted in order to examine the relationship between perceived social support and creative thinking skills in nursing students. The descriptive and corelational study was carried out with 306 nursing students. Data were collected using a multidimensional scale of perceived social support and a creative thinking skills scale. The average perceived social support score of the students was the highest in the second year, and lowest in the fourth year. No significant difference was determined in the average score obtained from the creative thinking skill scale according to the grade level, and because the average score of all classes was between 40-64 points, all the students were classified as "above average level of creativity". The highest average scores were seen in fourth-grade students. There was no statistically significant relationship between the multidimensional perceived social support scale total score, sub-dimension scores, and creative thinking skills scale mean scores of the nursing students ($p>0.05$). These results can be considered important in terms of showing the positive effect of nursing education on creativity, as the students were seen to be classified as above-average creativity and their creativity levels increased with increasing education.

Keywords: Creativity, Nursing Student, Social Support.

HEMŞİRELİK ÖĞRENCİLERİNDE ALGILANAN SOSYAL DESTEK İLE YARATICI DÜŞÜNME BECERİLERİ ARASINDAKİ İLİŞKİ

Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı, hemşirelik öğrencilerinde algılanan sosyal destek düzeyleri ile yaratıcı düşünme becerileri arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemektir. Tanımlayıcı ve korelasyonel nitelikteki araştırma 306 hemşirelik öğrencisi ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. Veriler çok boyutlu algılanan sosyal destek ölçeği ve yaratıcı düşünme becerileri ölçeği kullanılarak toplanmıştır. Öğrencilerin algıladıkları sosyal destek puan ortalamalarının en yüksek ikinci sınıf öğrencilerinde, en düşük dördüncü sınıf öğrencilerinde olduğu bulunmuştur. Yaratıcı düşünme becerisi ölçeğinden alınan ortalama puanda sınıf düzeyine göre anlamlı bir farklılık saptanmamış, tüm sınıfların ortalama puanı 40-64 puan arasında olduğu için tüm öğrenciler "ortalamanın üstünde yaratıcılık düzeyi" olarak sınıflandırılmıştır. En yüksek ortalama puanlar dördüncü sınıf öğrencilerinde saptanmıştır. Hemşirelik öğrencilerinin çok boyutlu algılanan sosyal destek ölçeği toplam puanı, alt boyut puanları ve yaratıcı düşünme becerileri ölçeği puan ortalamaları arasında istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bir ilişki bulunmamaktadır ($p>0.05$). Bu sonuçlar hemşirelik eğitiminin yaratıcılık üzerindeki olumlu etkisini göstermesi açısından önemli kabul edilebilir, öğrencilerin ortalama üstü yaratıcılıkta sınıflandırıldığı ve eğitim arttıkça yaratıcılık düzeylerinin arttığı görülmüştür. Öğrencilerin sınıf düzeyi yükseldikçe algılanan sosyal destek düzeyindeki düşüşün araştırılacağı çalışmalar yapılması önerilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yaratıcılık, Sosyal Destek, Hemşirelik Öğrencileri.

1. INTRODUCTION

All people have a need to relate to, interact with, and receive support from others throughout the whole of life. Social support plays a major role in holding on to life and coping with stressful life events (1,2). Social support can be defined as the individual's perception that the social network created by themselves and their immediate environment is sufficiently supportive. Social network is the term used to describe the connections between an individual and other people in his or her environment, as well as the relationships among these people (2,3). Social support facilitates healthy behaviours by enabling individuals to cope with stressful life events (3-6). One of the most important life stages in terms of social support is the period of study that begins with the transition to university. This transition to university is generally a period in which relationships and interactions with others increase and the first step toward realising ideals occurs on the way to a new environment, friendships, and a career away from the family environment (2,3). During this time, individuals may have an increased need for help from people they care about (4). Social support is not only a quantitative but also a qualitative concept . This situation has brought to the fore the need to study the perceived social support of individuals rather than the number of sources of social support. Previous studies of university students which have evaluated perceived social support have shown that the level of perceived support influences the stress coping strategies, academic performance, and psychological resilience of the students (4-6). University students with high perceived social support have been found to have a high level of life satisfaction and lower levels of loneliness and hopelessness (2-7).

Creativity or creative thinking is stated as a way of seeing things differently from everyone else despite looking at the same things, and is defined as a new and acceptable behavioural style, thought process, or ability to produce a product that is the exact opposite of what is known, common, and stereotypical (8,9). Societies composed of individuals with advanced creative thinking skills and creative abilities play an important role in adapting to rapidly changing conditions in the world, determining the direction and force of change, and participating in existing change (10,11). This contributes to the formation of individuals who can think independently, solve problems, acquire decision-making skills, and think creatively, which is expected from educatio (11-14). To the best of our knowledge,there are no studies in literature on the effect of social support on the creative thinking of nursing students. There is a need to determine the perceived level of social support and creative thinking skills of nursing students and to plan and develop initiatives for these areas. Based on this need, this study was conducted in order to examine the relationship between perceived social support and creative thinking skills in nursing students.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Type of Study

The study was carried out in descriptive and relationship seeking type.

2.2. Study Population and Sample

This descriptive and relationship seeking type study was conducted to examine the perceived social support and creative thinking skills of nursing students. The study was conducted from November 2022 to March 2023 in the state university in Turkey. Thirteen students were excluded from the sample because they left survey items incomplete (%4). The study sample consisted of a total of 306 students who voluntarily agreed to participate in the research. The questionnaire conducted by the researcher took about 10 minutes.

2.3. Data Collection

2.3.1. Personal Information Form

This form consists of three questions: age, gender, and class of the students.

2.3.2. Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS)

The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS), used in this study was developed by Zimet et al. (15) to determine the elements of social support perceived by individuals, and validity and reliability of the Turkish version were verified by Eker and Akar (16). The scale consists of a total of 12 items, with 7-point likert-type responses (1-7 points) ranging from absolutely no -1 to definitely yes-7. The scale has three sub-dimensions, each with four items to determine support from family (items 3,4,8,11), friends (items 6,7,9,12) and other individuals (items 1,2,5,10). The internal consistency coefficients of the scale were 0.85, 0.88, and 0.92, respectively, and the overall coefficient for internal consistency of the scale was determined to be 0.89. The subscale value is obtained by adding the values of the four items in each subscale, and the total scale value is obtained by adding all the subscale values. The lowest score that can be obtained from the subscales is 4, and the highest score is 28, to give a total score ranging from 12 to 84. Higher scores indicate a higher level of perceived social support. In this study, the internal consistency coefficients of the scale were found to be 0.98, 0.98, and 0.96, respectively. The overall internal consistency coefficient of the scale was determined to be 0.93.

2.3.3. Creative Thinking Skills Scale

This scale, developed by Whetton and Cameron (2002) [17] to determine the creativity level of individuals, was translated into Turkish by Aksoy (2004) [18] as the “Creative Thinking Skills Scale”. There are 40 items with a Likert-type response scale with the alternatives “I agree”," “I disagree,” and “I am undecided”. The items in the scale are scored from a minimum of -2 to a maximum of 4 points [18]. Scores between 0-9 are defined as non-creative, 10-19 as below average creative, 20-39 as average creative, 40-64 points as above average creative, 65-94 points as very creative, and 95-116 points as exceptionally creative. The higher the total score, the higher the level of creativity. The reported alpha coefficient for the Creative Thinking Skills Scale was found as .94 in Turkish population.[18] In this study, the reliability coefficient of the scale was determined as $\alpha = .75$.

2.3.4. Statistical Analysis

For data analysis, SPSS 22.0 software (SPSS, Inc., Chicago, IL, USA) was used. Descriptive statistics were used in the evaluation of patient characteristics. Pearson correlation analysis was used for the relationship between perceived social support and creative thinking skills. For all analyses, a value of $p < 0.05$ was considered statistically significant.

2.3.5. Compliance with Ethical Statement

This study was approved by the Burdur Mehmet Akif Ersoy University Non-Interventional Clinical Research Ethics Committee dated 03/04/2019 decision number GO 2019/64. The objective of the research was explained to the participants and written permission was received from those agreeing to participate in the research. Data was collected through face-to-face interviews.

3. RESULTS

The students participating in the study comprised 60.8% females and 39.2% males with a mean age of 20.92 ± 1.59 years, and 35% were second-year students.

The mean MSPSS score of the nursing students was 47.30 ± 15.62, as mean 23.56 ± 6.92 score on the family subscale, 13.43 ± 7.80 on the friends subscale, and the mean score of social support perceived by people other than family and friends was 10.29 ± 6.20. The mean score of the total creative thinking scale was 44.94 ± 15.44 (Table 1).

Table 1. Scores of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) and Creative Thinking Skills Scale (n=306)

Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) and Creative Thinking Skills Scale	Range of scores	X ± SD*
MSPSS Family	4-28	23.56±6.92
MSPSS Friends	4-28	13.43±7.80
MSPSS Significant others	4-28	10.29±6.20
MSPSS Total	12-78	47.30±15.62
Creative Thinking Skills	13-84	44.94±15.44

*X ± SD: Mean ± standard deviation

The mean scores of female students were determined to be higher than those of male students in the overall mean scores of the MSPSS, and the difference was highly statistically significant ($p < 0.01$). The mean scores of perceived social support from family, friends, and people other than family and friends, which are sub-dimensions of the multidimensional scale of social support, were statistically significantly higher for female students than for male students in all dimensions. The overall mean score of the creative thinking scale was determined to be statistically significantly higher for female students than for male students ($p<0.01$). No statistically significant relationship was found between the overall mean score of the multidimensional perceived social support scale of female nursing students and the scores of the sub-dimensions and the mean score of the creative thinking skills scale ($p<0.01$). (Table 2).

The mean scores of the MSPSS and the students' creative thinking skills scale were compared according to year of study using one-way analysis of variance. The difference between the years of study was statistically significant in terms of peer support and total social support scores in the subdimensions of the MSPSS ($p<0.05$) (Table 2). The Tukey test was used to determine which group caused the difference, and it was seen that the perceived social support of fourth-year students was significantly lower than that of first, second, and third-year students.

The difference between the scores according to years of study was due to the average score of the fourth-year students. The fourth-year students had the highest mean score for creative thinking, while first-year students had the lowest mean score, but the difference was not statistically significant ($p \geq 0.05$).

Table 2. Comparison of Nursing Students' Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) and Creative Thinking Skills Scores According to Sociodemographic Characteristics

Sociodemographic Characteristics		MSPSS Family	MSPSS Friends	MSPSS Significant others	MSPSS Total	Creative Thinking Skills
	n	X±SD	X±SD	X±SD	X±SD	X±SD
Gender						
Female	186	24.33±5.77	14.70±7.98	11.25±6.44	50.30±15.98	46.82±16.31
Male	120	22.37±8.27	11.46±7.10	8.81±5.52	42.65±13.87	42.04±13.54
	t**	2.443	3.620	3.412	4.296	2.671
	p	0.015*	0.000*	0.001*	0.000*	0.008*
Level of class						
1st year	56	22.91 ± 7.04	14.46 ±6.35	11.12 ± 6.25	48.50 ± 14.18	43.85 ±15.84
2nd year	107	24.22 ±6.66	13.78 ±8.48	11.14 ±6.07	49.15 ±15.98	44.44 ±15.57
3rd year	78	24.00 ±6.30	13.93 ± 8.58	10.05 ±6.46	47.98 ± 16.66	45.32 ±15.38
4th year	65	22.53 ±7.86	11.38 ±6.46	8.47 ±5.73	42.40 ± 14.17	46.26 ±15.17
	F***	1.070	2.021	2.969	2.848	0.300
	p	0.362	0.111	0.032*	0.038*	0.825

*p<0.05, **Student t-test, ***Oneway Anova

No statistically significant correlation was found between the MSPSS total and sub-dimension scores and the creative thinking skill scale mean scores of the nursing students (p ≥0.05) (Table 3).

Table 3. Relationship Between the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) and Creative Thinking Skills Scale Scores

	MSPSS		MSPSS Family		MSPSS Friends		MSPSS Significant others	
Creative Thinking Skills Scale	**r**	**p**	**r**	**p**	**r**	**p**	**r**	**p**
	0.013	0.821	0.057	0.324	0.050	0.380	0.032	0.572

4. DISCUSSION

The results of this study of nursing students showed that second-year students had the highest average score for perceived social support, and fourth-year students had the lowest score. The decrease in perceived social support with increasing years of study could be due to the student not seeking social support, or that perceived social support might have decreased due to increasing age and the fact that the student has gained experience of university life. In contrast to these results, a study conducted by Aydın et al. to determine the perceived social support and psychological well-being of nursing students found that the perceived social support was better among students in higher years of study (7). Ustundag et al. investigated the relationship between the level of stress coping and perceived social support of nursing students, and reported that the students' perception of social support was high (6). The reason why the results of this study differ from those in the literature is believed to be because it was conducted with a different sample group. The mean scores of female students in the total score averages of the MSPSS were determined to be statistically significantly higher than those of male students. The mean scores of perceived social support from family, friends, and people other than family and friends, which are sub-dimensions of the MSPSS were also determined to be statistically significantly higher than those of male students. The mean score of female students in the overall mean score of the creative thinking scale was statistically significantly higher than that of th male students. The reason for this was assumed to be that female students were more willing to share and talk than male students.

When the mean scores of students on the creative thinking skills scale were evaluated by gender, it was found that the mean scores of female students were higher than those of male students and the difference between them was statistically highly significant in the category of “those who have”. The average score of the students on the creative thinking skills scale did not differ according to the year of study, and since the average score of all years was between 40and 64 points, they were all included in the class of "creative above average". The highest average score among the classes was determined for fourth-year students, and it was seen that the creativity level of the students increased as the grade level increased. In this sense, it is believed that education has a positive effect on creative thinking. The literature indicates that there are few studies on creativity in nursing (19,20). In a systematic review examining creativity in nursing education, Chan stated that some people are more creative than others, but that creative skills can be improved through education. He stated that instructors should direct students to the areas and activities they are interested in so that students can think creatively in nursing education. He also stated that instructors should direct students towards artistic activities such as poetry, role-playing, music, and sculpture to improve nursing students' creative abilities (20). Other studies have concluded that providing diversity in education, supporting independent learning, and learning through reliance on others in group work improved creativity (21-23). In a study by Tayhan et al. to compare the level of creative thinking and cognitive flexibility of nursing students as a function of their academic performance, it was found that the cognitive flexibility and creativity of the students were above average (9). Moreover, in a study by Karataş and

Ozcan, which investigated the effects of creative thinking activities on students' creative thinking and project development, it was found that the use of methods such as brainstorming and concept mapping in the classroom had a positive effect on students' creative thinking (24). Creativity has been shown to be an individual process and many different methods can be tried to develop creative thinking. For example, going beyond existing rules, bringing in opinions different from those assumed by everyone, sharing ideas with other individuals or groups, and breaking away from stereotypes can increase an individual's perspective and creativity (8). In a study by Erkin and Gol, which aimed to determine the relationship between health science students' cognitive flexibility and creativity level, it was found that the tendency to think creatively was high in health science students (14). In contrast, Uludağ and Uzun examined the creative thinking skills of nursing students, and reported that the creativity level of the students was low (12). To develop creativity in nursing education, it is necessary to create an environment where creativity is encouraged and rewarded. In order to think creatively, individuals must first be aware of creativity and then be encouraged to think creatively. Success in developing creativity in education depends largely on the subject of creativity being adequately addressed (25). As in all educational systems, educators, who are one of the basic building blocks of education, bear a great responsibility for developing creativity in nursing education. Certain behaviors and attitudes of educators who take an active role in the educational process play an important role in the emergence and development of creativity in the students (25). For nurses who provide services in a rapidly changing, evolving, and complex structure, it is imperative that they adapt to changes and innovations in their environment, solve problems through creative thinking and questioning, contribute to the profession by being influenced by different disciplines, and think critically (26). Therefore, it is very important for nursing to use creative thinking and reveal creative action as the essence of professionalism to see possible outcomes and find valid answers (26). The current study results showed no statistically significant relationship between the total score and sub-dimensions of the MSPSS of student nurses and the mean score of the creative thinking skills scale. Since no previous study could be found in the literature which has examined the relationship between creative thinking and perceived social support of nursing students, this aspect could not be discussed.

Limitations

Since the study was conducted in a single center, the findings are limited to the sample group and cannot be generalized.

5. CONCLUSION

It was found that as the years of study of the students increased, creative thinking skill scores increased and perceived social support scores decreased. However, all the students were found to be more creative than average. Nurses should be aware of, develop, and demonstrate their creativity to find scientific solutions to the problems they encounter while fulfilling their roles and responsibilities in the delivery of healthcare services, contribute to professional development as a health discipline, facilitate adaptation to changing and evolving technologies, facilitate care, and enhance the quality of care. Students' creative thinking skills can be enhanced by incorporating practices that promote creativity into nursing schools. It is important to know that nursing students, who have the important responsibility of human health, perceive social support during their education and acquire the necessary resources. Education, counselling and cultural activities, extracurricular activities, etc., will undoubtedly improve the level of social support of students during their education.

Conflict of Interest

The author have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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