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Values as predictors of teacher trainees' self-esteem and perceived social support

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate whether the values of an individual can significantly predict the individual's self-esteem and social support or not. The study has a general survey design. The population of the research consists of 547 teacher trainees. Teacher trainees, 304 (%55.6) were female while 243 (%44.4) were male. Data collection instruments included Self-esteem Scale developed by Arıcak (1999), Schwartz's Values Inventory and Perceived Social Support Scale developed in 1988 by Zimet et al. Data was analysed using stepwise regression analysis. The results indicated that dimensions of the values inventory predict both self-esteem and the dimensions of the perceived social support scale.

Keywords: Values, Self-esteem, Social Support, Teacher trainees

JEL classification: A2

INTRODUCTION

Human beings have strived to comprehend the human self and behaviours for thousands of years (Bacanlı, 1997), and they have defined both themselves and the outside world in terms of the relationship with their surroundings. The concept of self, which includes all definitions in relation to the individual, is the most fundamental structure that distinguishes man existentially and makes us unique (Arıcak, 1999). The development of the concept of self is a dynamic process that proceeds in line with the ways in which an individual perceives his experiences with his surroundings, and the development of a healthy concept of self depends on the harmony between the individual and his experiences. The attitudes of the people who are close to the individual, in particular, are highly significant (Geçtan, 1993). The fundamental elements of the individual's perception of the self also include his values system on self-affection and basic sufficiency (Eisenberg and Patterson, 1979). Through various satisfying or disappointing experiences the feeling of self-esteem develops (Geçtan, 1993). Coopersmith (1967; 1974) and Rosenberg (1965) defined self-esteem as the individual's appraisal of his worth and explained it as an expression of the individual's belief in self-sufficiency, importance, success and values as well as his attitude of self-approval or disapproval. On the other hand, Demo and Saving-Williams (1992) regard self-esteem as the individuals' complete set of appraisals of themselves. These appraisals indicate self-judgements such as personal worth, approval and disapproval. Human beings need the care and attention of others when they come into the world. Therefore, the child interacts with others from the very first moments. During this period, the quality of parental care and attention is an important contributor to the development of child's both physical and psychological attributes. Research emphasises that the most important factor in the development of self-esteem is family (Coopersmith, 1974; Kulaksızoğlu, 2004; Yörükoğlu, 1978; 1986; Calhoun and Acocella, 1990; Yavuzer, 1991). People with high self-esteem take risks of failure in order to realise their aims, have self-confidence and are more ambitious. People with low self-esteem and who are characterised with their tendency to protect their self tend to avoid rejection and stressful and embarrassing situations (Baumeister, Tice and Hutton, 1989; Tice, 1993).

Individuals' development of the self, along with their moral development levels, significantly contributes to the acquisition of value judgements of the relevant society and to become a harmonious member of that society (Özden, 1997). Thus, values play an important role in human life (Bacanlı, 1999; 2002; Doğanay, 2006 and Agle & Caldwell, 1999). Values can also be regarded as the individuals' beliefs in

terms of what is right and what is wrong in their lives and our desirable and undesirable judgements. In one sense, values are also the judgements developed in order to make life respectful (Robbins, 1993; Özbay, 2004; Halstead & Taylor, 2000). Values, for thousands of years, have been the most important humanistic elements of being human. These elements shape the individuals' paradigms, hold the society together and ensure the continuity of culture (Siğri, Tabak and Ercan, 2009). Values influence individuals' existing attitudes, their behaviours and all perceptive and behavioural patterns (Ayral, 1992), Moreover; values have an important function in identifying and directing existing attitudes and behaviours of the people (Kulaksızoğlu and Dilmaç, 2000; Dilmaç, Kulaksızoğlu and Ekşi, 2007).

Values are individually or socially possessed beliefs that guide our decisions conscious or unconsciously, linguistic or symbolically; and that represent criteria for our cognitive, emotional and behavioural judgements. Whilst values influence societies, societies also have the power to influence values (Shearman, 2008). Individuals' upbringing and their personality structures play an important role in the generation of values. Especially in terms of individual differences, structures of personality show parallels to structures of values (Bilsky and Schwartz, 1994). The concept of self as a critical component of personality, social support and individual's relevant judgement of worthiness, i.e. self-esteem, have been the focus of researchers who study values and personal characteristics (Eccles, Wigfield, Flanagan, Miller, Reuman and Yee, 1989; Goodwin, Costa and Adonu, 2004). According to Feather (1991) a strong relationship exists between values and self-esteem. Achievement, competence and self-direction, in particular, are major substances of self-esteem. Such values that are emphasised within the culture also impact the progress of selfesteem. Thus, power, achievement and self-direction were identified as the main value dimensions of Schwartz's model of values (Bilsky and Schwartz, 1994; Sagiv and Schwartz, 1995; Schwartz and Boehnke, 2004). Specifically, values categorised under power and achievement such as "to have social power", "to be able to sustain social image", "to be competent", "to be successful", "to be an influential person" are the ones frequently emphasised in literature in relation to self-esteem (See Coopersmith, 1967; Heatherton and Wyland, 2003; Humphrey, 2004; Wigfield and Eccles, 1994). Another important element that affects the process of the development of personality is social support. Schwartz (1992) and Goodwin et al. (2004) reported strong relationships between an individual's values and perceived social support. Values are important contributors to the development of personality. Loss or damage of values results in personality and identity disorders and feelings of distrust (Öner, 1999). Value is defined as a social actor, which is employed in the

selection of behaviours and actions, the appraisal of events and people and the explanation of behaviours and actions (Schwartz, 1999).

Social support, on the other hand, according to Yıldırım (1997), can be defined as social and psychological support the individual receives from his surroundings. Researchers elaborate on the significance of social support in dealing with stress. Therefore, the family, the bigger family, friends, partners, teachers, colleagues, and neighbours of the individual, ideological, religious or ethnic groups and the society in which the individual lives constitute the social support resources of the individual. Due to changes in the individual himself or in his support resources, his level of social support may vary. For instance, situations such as conflict among the family members or between spouses, one of the parents' being made redundant at work or the death of one of the spouses, lack of social skills or sexual deviation, lack of individual's knowledge on formal and informal support resources, immigration, illnesses, or marrying someone of the religion or ethnicity which is not approved by the family may decrease the individual's level of social support.

Social support has two categories; structural and functional. The people who provide support, the number of these people and their degree of affinity are important elements of structural support. Functional support, however, involves the importance of the support for the individual and what it means, as well as how much the support can and cannot meet the needs (Yıldırım, 2005). Cohen and Wills (1985) defined two models that explain the aspects of social support and its role. The first of these is the main-effect model. Social support in this model generates positive effects on the individual regardless of stress levels. The model advocates that social support is beneficial both in times of stress and no stress. Accordingly, wide social networks provide positive experiences and this kind of support is related to the individual's health. The second is the buffering model. This model suggests that sufficient social support diminishes and stabilizes the influence of stress on health. The model argues that social support protects the individual from the harmful effects of stress on health and well-being. Both models emphasise that social support has a positive influence on individual's health. Lee and Robbins (1995), based on their studies on the psychology of self, stated that people meet their needs to have a sense of belonging by participating in and identifying with the social world. They define these social experiences as the cognitive representation of the self in relations with others. Social connectedness reflects the internal sense of belonging and is defined as the subjective awareness of being in close relationship with the social world. People with high levels of social connectedness can manage their own emotions and needs better through cognitive processes such as self-evaluation and social comparison.

These suggest that values of the individuals might potentially be an important variable in predicting the individuals' self-esteem and perceived social support. Hence, the aim of this research is to investigate whether values of the individual can significantly predict individual's self-esteem and social support.

2 METHOD

2.1 Participants

This study has a relational survey design. The population includes teacher trainees studying at the Education Faculty, Technical Education Faculty and Vocational Education Faculty of Selçuk University in Konya, Turkey. The participants were selected using convenience sampling among the voluntary teacher trainees. Among a total of 547 participating teacher trainees, 304 (55.6 %) were female while 243 (44.4 %) were male.

2.2 Data Collection Tools

Self-esteem Scale: Self-esteem scale developed by Aricak (1999) consists of 32 items. It is a five-point Likert type scale with options of "strongly agree", "agree", "undecided", "disagree" and "totally disagree". Reliability tests of the scale were conducted using Cronbach Alfa internal consistency coefficient and test-retest techniques. Internal consistency of the scale was .90 (n=152, p<.001) and test re-test reliability coefficient was .70 (n=92, p<.001). To ensure the validity of the scale, 34 expert views were gathered from nine different universities and scale items were revised accordingly. In order to identify the validity coefficient of the scale in relation to a similar scale Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale was used and the relationship between the scales were found to be .69 (n=92, p<.001). The scale scores are between 32 and 160 where higher scores mean increased self-esteem.

Schwartz's Values Inventory: Developed by Schwartz in 1992, Schwartz Values Inventory consists of 57 value expressions and ten dimensions (Schwartz and Boehnke, 2004). Turkish translations of main dimension and value types as well as of the values in each value type by Kuşdil and Kağıtçıbaşı (2000) were adopted. Three social psychology experts translated the values from English to Turkish. After reading a total of 57 values and the relevant explanations provided next to them in parenthesis, the participants evaluated each value in terms of their importance as a principle that guides their life on a scale from 1 (contradicts my principles) to 7 (most important). In the study by Kuşdil and Kağıtçıbaşı (2000) reliability coefficients of value types were between .51 - .77, and of value groups were between

.77 - .83, and these coefficients were .77 for universalism, .76 for benevolence, .54 for hedonism, .75 for power, .66 for achievement, .70 for stimulation, .69 for self-direction, .63 for tradition, .51 for conformity and .59 for security. Moreover, internal consistency results of the main value groups were as follows; .80 for conservation, .81 for openness to change, .81 for self-transcendence, and .84 for self-enhancement.

Social Support Scale: Zimet et al. developed the scale in 1988. Eker and Arkar (1995) and Eker et all., (2001) conducted its validity and reliability studies, and the Cronbach Alpha coefficients of the scale were found to be between .80 and .95. The scale consists of 12 items within three sub-scales of family, friend and a special person. Each item is scored between 1 and 7. Each sub-scale consists of four items and the aggregate scores of these items constitute sub-scale scores, while the aggregate score of all sub-scales constitutes the total score of the scale. The lowest score of the scale is 12 and the highest score is 84. High scores indicate high perceived social support (Zimet et al., 1998; Cited in, Eker and Arkar, 1995; Eker, Arkar and Yaldız, 2001).

Procedures

The scales were administered in November 2010 with teacher trainees studying at Selçuk University. Voluntary participation and accessibility were essential. Following data collection, data was input into SPSS 15 (2006) program by the researcher. All analyses were conducted in SPSS 15 for Windows (2006). Stepwise regression analysis was conducted.

RESULTS Table 1. Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Values as Predictor of Self-

Variable	В	SE B	ß	Adjusted R2
Step 1				0,090
Achievement	1.351	0.182	0.303*	
Step 2				0.099
Achievement	1,720	0.233	0.386*	
Power	-0.594	0.236	-0.132*	
Step 3				0.112
Achievement	1,364	0.260	0.306*	
Power	-0.783	0.243	-0.174*	
Security	0.592	0.199	0.164*	

esteem

For Step 1 R² = 0.092; for Step 2 Δ R² = .103; for Step 3 Δ R² = 0.117 *p<.01, B = Non-standard regression coefficient, SE B = Standard Error of

 β = Standard regression coefficient

В,

In order to investigate the power of the dimensions of the values scale to predict self-esteem, stepwise regression analysis was conducted. In Table 1, self-esteem is the dependent variable and dimensions of the values scale are independent variables. The analysis revealed three models. In the first step in Table 1, achievement (β =-0.303) was the first variable that predicted self-esteem (R^2 =.090, F=55.18, p=.000). In the second step, achievement (β =-0.386) and power (β =--0.132) significantly predicted self-esteem (R^2 =.099, F=31.04, p=.000). In the third step, achievement (β =0.306), power (β =-0.174) and security (β =0.164) predicted self-esteem (R^2 =.0.112, F=23.94, p=.000).

Table 2. Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Values as Predictor of Family Support

Variable	В	SE B	ß	Adjusted R2
Step 1				0,136
Achievement	0.409	0.044	0.371*	
Step 2				0.143
Achievement	0.0442	0.046	0.401*	
Stimulation	-0.114	0.049	-0.098*	
Step 3				0.154
Achievement	0,367	0.056	0.333*	
Stimulation	-0.131	0.049	-0.112*	
Tradition	0.118	0.051	0.118*	

In order to explore the power of the dimensions of the values scale to predict family social support, stepwise regression analysis was conducted using SPSS 15 package program. In Table 2, family social support is the dependent variable and the dimensions of the values scale are independent variables. In Table 2 in the first step, achievement (β =-0.371) was the first variable to predict family support (R^2 =.0.136, F=86.703, p=.000). In the second step, achievement (β =--0.401) and stimulation (β =--0.098) significantly predicted self-esteem (R^2 =.0.143, F=46.44, p=.000). In the

third step, achievement (β =0.333), stimulation (-0.112) and tradition (β =0.118) predicted family social support (R^2 =.0.154, F=33.00, p=.000).

Table 3. Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Values as Predictor of Friend Support

Variable	В	SE B	ß	Adjusted R ²
Step 1				0,170
Benevolence	0.294	0.028	0.415*	
Step 2				0.177
Benevolence	0.234	0.038	0.199*	
Tradition	133	0.057	-0.125*	

In order to explore the power of the dimensions of the values scale to predict friend social support, stepwise regression analysis was conducted using SPSS 15 package program. In Table 3, friend social support is the dependent variable and the dimensions of the values scale are independent variables. In Table 3 in the first step, benevolence (β =-0.415) was the first variable to predict friend support (R^2 =.0.170, F=112.97, p=.000). In the second step, benevolence (β = 0.330) and tradition (β =-0.124) significantly predicted friend social support (R^2 =.0.177, F=59.66, p=.000).

Table 4. Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Values as Predictor of Perceived Social Support Received from a Special Person

Variable	В	SE B	ß	Adjusted R ²
Step 1				0,069
Benevolence	0.232	0.036	0.266*	
Step 2				0.074
Benevolence	0.254	0.038	0.291*	
Stimulation	-0.135	0.067	-0.087*	

In order to explore the power of dimensions of the values scale to predict perceived social support received from a special person, stepwise regression analysis was conducted using SPSS 15 package program. In Table 4, perceived social support received from a special person is the dependent variable and the dimensions of the values scale are independent variables. In Table 4 in the first step, benevolence (β =-0.266) was the first variable to predict perceived social support received from a

special person (R^2 =.0.069, F=41.33, p=.000). In the second step, benevolence (β = 0.291) and stimulation (β =--0.087) significantly predicted perceived social support received from a special person (R^2 =.-0.087, F=22.82, p=.000).

DISCUSSION

The main aim of this study was to investigate whether individual values significantly predict individual's self-esteem and social support. First result revealed three models. The achievement dimension of the values scale was the first variable that predicted self-esteem. In the second step, the achievement and power dimensions of the values scale significantly predicted self-esteem. In the third step, achievement and security dimensions of the values scale predicted self-esteem. According to Sagiv and Schwartz (2000) and Goodwin, Costa and Adonu (2004) low levels of traditional values is an indicator of low levels of both self-esteem and social support. As a critical component of personality structure, the concept of self and self-esteem, which is the individual's judgement of worthiness of the self, have been the focus of researchers exploring especially values and personal characteristics (Eccles, Wigfield, Flanagan, Miller, Reuman and Yee, 1989). Raghavan (2006) researched the relationship between values and self-esteem, the results of which indicated the existence of a relationship between values and self-esteem. This finding by Raghavan (2006) is parallel to the finding presented here which suggested a relationship between values and self-esteem. According to Feather (1991) values and self-esteem are strongly related. Achievement, competence and self-direction, in particular are important sources of self-esteem. These values, which are emphasised within the culture, stimulate positive progress in self-esteem. Hence, Schwartz's theory of values also acknowledges power, success and self-direction as main value dimensions (Bilsky and Schwartz, 1994; Sagiv and Schwartz, 1995; Schwartz and Boehnke, 2004).

The findings of Yiğit, Dilmaç, Arıcak and Deniz (2010) are also parallel to that of the current study. They revealed a relationship between the values and self-esteem levels of adult participants. Lönnovist, Verkasalo, Helkama, Andreyeva, Bezmenova, Rattazzi, Nitt & Stetsenko (2009) also found a relationship between self-esteem and values among high school student and adult participants from five different countries. Goodwin, Costa, Adonu (2004) investigated the relationship between individual values, self-esteem and social support in their study conducted in four different countries. Values categorised under the dimensions of power and achievement, in particular, such as "to have social power", "to be able to sustain one's

social image", "to be competent", "to be successful", "to be an influential person" are values frequently emphasised in literature in relation to self-esteem (See Coopersmith, 1967; Heatherton and Wyland, 2003; Humphrey, 2004; Wigfield and Eccles, 1994). Kinnunen, Feldt, Kinnunen and Pulkkinen (2008) stated that people with high self-esteem have healthy and plenty of relationships with other people. Values are part of the basic beliefs system in the development of social relations and problem solving (Dönmezer, 1994). Another finding of Yiğit, Dilmaç, Arıcak and Deniz (2010) was that the most important value that predicted self-esteem was "universalism". In other words, as the level of self-esteem increases, also does the awareness of having universal values. Brase and Guy (2004) revealed a relationship between self-esteem and values among spouses and that values predict self-esteem. Moreover, Gürşimşek and Göregenli (2009) observed a relationship between teachers' values and beliefs. In addition to being a belief and behaviour style, values also function as a guide for the acceptable and unacceptable. This is an indication that values play a role in guiding our decision and behaviours and directing the individual in situations composed of various factors (Leenders &Veugelers, 2009; Naagarazan, 2006, cited in; Oruç, 2010).

Another finding of the present study is related to the analysis in which family social support dimension of the social support scale was the dependent variable and the dimensions of the values scale were independent variables. In the first step, achievement dimension of the values scale was the first variable to predict family support dimension of the social support scale. In the second step, the achievement and stimulation dimensions of the values scale significantly predicted self-esteem. In the third step, achievement, stimulation and tradition dimensions of the values scale predicted self-esteem. In another analysis, friend social support dimension of the social support scale was the dependent variable and the dimensions of the values scale were independent variables.

In the first step, benevolence dimension of the values scale was the first variable to predict friend support dimension of the social support scale. In the second step, benevolence and tradition dimensions of the values scale significantly predicted self-esteem. One of the findings of Goodwin, Costa and Adonu (2004) also indicated that values predicted perceived social support. In the present study, the dimension of the values scale which predicted family support dimension of the perceived social support scale was achievement and which predicted friend support of the perceived social support scale was benevolence. Schwartz (1992) identified the relationship between values and perceived social support. Moreover, social support can be defined as the attention, love, respect, appreciation and trust received from the surroundings,

as well as receiving information and financial help as social, psychological and economical support (Budak, 1999).

The concepts of social support can also be acknowledged as a component of values. Hence, the findings demonstrate that perceived social support could be theoretically explained by values, too. Robbins (1995), based on the studies on the psychology of self, stated that people satisfy their needs of belonging through participation in and identification with the social world. These social experiences are defined as the cognitive representation of the self in relationships with others. In a final analysis in the current research, perceived social support received from a special person dimension of the social support scale was the dependent variable and the subscales of the values scale were independent variables. In the first step, benevolence dimension of the values scale was the first variable to predict perceived social support received from a special person. In the second step, benevolence and stimulation dimensions of the values scale significantly predicted perceived social support received from a special person. While values influence all human attitudes and behaviour as well as all perception and behavioural patterns (Ayral, 1992), they also have an important role in identifying and directing individuals' attitudes and actions (Kulaksızoğlu and Dilmaç, 2000; Dilmaç, Kulaksızoğlu and Ekşi, 2007). Therefore, values do not represent a structure that aims to define an action, but an active mechanism for search, preference and yearning for that action (Grünberg, 2000, cited in; Oruç, 2010). We believe that similar studies conducted with students and adults in various learning contexts would have significant contributions to the field.

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