

## Professional social support levels that physical education teachers perceive in educational institutions in Turkey

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### Abstract:

The aim of this study is to determine physical education teachers' perception of professional social support level in their educational institutions in Turkey. The sample group of the study consists of 220 physical education teachers from different educational institutions. To be able to obtain views of the sample group "Teacher Professional Social Support Scale" developed by Kaner (2007) was used. The data obtained was analyzed through the SPSS package programme. As a result of the analysis, some differences found with regard to variables of the service in the institution and number of the students at the "Management Support" sub-component. Some differences found in terms of variables of gender, education level and number of the students in the institutions at the "Colleague Support" sub-component. Some differences found with regard to variables of school, education level, and year of service in the institution at the "Family Support" sub-component. Also some differences found at the "Effective Teaching Support" sub-component in terms of variables of education level and year of service in the institution. No significant differences found in terms of variables at the "Student Support" sub-component. Finally, effects of physical education teachers' perception of the social support on their professional development shouldn't be ignored when planning their career development in educational institutions. Some studies that will increase physical education teachers' perception of social support should be done by educational institutions.

**Key Words:** educational institutions, physical education teachers, social support level, Turkey

### Introduction

Working conditions and social support given from organization have a significant impact on employees for working for a long time. Confidence of employees to their jobs is related to the things that they live. Autonomy of employees in the organization affects the level of social support perceived by employees (Eisenberger and etc., 1999: 1026-1040).

While the concept of social support had been a defined and measured concept until the 1980s, the concept of organizational support has been a topic of discussion for nearly 70 years (Zagenczyk, 2006: 8). Social support can be defined as a perception that is related to supporting level of behaviors of individuals provided by social networks like school, close-friend, classmates, teacher, father and mother for increasing functions of individuals and/or providing a buffer zone against negative consequences (House & Kahn, 1985: 83, 108; Malecki & Demaray, 2006: 375-395). It is also regarded as social and psychological support (Yıldırım, 1997: 81-87) that an individual gets from his/her environment. Social support can be said to be indispensable because it helps people to dissolve their problems, helps people to reduce stress, helps people to adopt to environment and make people to feel better psychologically.

Social support is the primary determinant of one's own characteristic. A family member can perceive all of other family members as a supporter or an obstacle. The second determinant of the perceived support is the person whom support taken from. The person who provides social support doesn't get as much attention as the person who perceives social support in the literature. However, perceptions of support may reflect the characteristic of the person whom support taken from. The third determinant of the perceived support is interaction between the person who perceives support and the person whom support taken from. This special interaction reflects the special situation between two people (Yalçın, 2004: 45). Perceived social support can be evaluated as perceptions and expectations that can be taken from reliable individuals around him/her when needed.

The buffer effect model and the main effect model have been proposed as two basic models about in which situations social support is necessary. The buffer effect model based on idea of providing source from the individuals in the social support network in order to overcome problems when faced stressful events. According to the main affect model, social support sources are effective factors on the protection of individuals' psychological and physical health without considering whether the individual is under stress or not (Krespi, 1993; Cohen & Wills, 1985: 310-357).

When evaluated in terms of teachers, social support offers facilities for professional dialogue and cooperation between colleagues and offers solutions to understanding and solving problems at schools. In this cooperation and support process, teachers help and support each other more (Kroger, 1995: 545-551). Teachers are able to cooperate and support each other inside and outside the classroom through formal and informal ways. Systems that provide support for teachers can be classified as group directed by outside consultant, teacher support team and teacher support groups for individual teachers. Informal approach between colleagues may take place during coffee and tea breaks, in the corridor or in any social environment. This informal support is also important in the formation of collaborative environment in the school. The formal approaches for cooperation of colleagues are coaching and mentoring applications (Creese and etc., 1998: 109-114; Berardi & Hall, 2007; Taştan, 2008: 114).

Because teaching profession is a quite stressful profession, teachers' perception of professional social support is very important. When teachers face irrelevant and low-motivated students in classrooms and receive low supports for improving their working conditions they may feel lonely. This situation may lead to professional burnout syndrome for idealistic educators who want to monitor and control their students continuously (Pines & Aronson, 1988). In this respect, as in every organization, educational institutions should increase employees' commitment and loyalty level to their institutions in the context of total quality. In this study, determination of social support level that physical education teachers perceive in their educational institutions is aimed. Determination of effective learning support given by administration, colleague, family, student in and out of institutions and perception of this support by physical education teachers working in educational institutions will contribute to raising qualified people and to the literature.

## Method

The universe of this study consists of physical education teachers working in educational institutions in Turkey. Sampling frame of the study is limited with 220 physical education teachers that attended in-service trainings conducted by Ministry of Education.

To be able to determine the sample group's perception of professional support in their educational institutions the "*Teacher Professional Social Support Scale*" that developed by Kaner (2007) was used. The scale form consists of five sub-components as "*management support (19 items)*", "*colleague support (13 items)*", "*family support (4 items)*", "*student support (3 items)*" and "*effective teaching support (5 items)*".

SPSS 17.0 package program was used in the analysis of the data obtained. After the reliability analysis of the Teacher Professional Social Support Scale, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient values were found as; management support 0.95, colleague support 0.94, family support 0.79, student support 0.88, and effective teaching support 0.69. General Cronbach's Alpha value of the scale was 0.95 and total variance that scale shows was 60.78 %. Physical education teachers was given five points Likert-type response scale to explain social support level that they perceive about the items in the Teacher Professional Social Support Scale. Items belonging to the score ranges; "*Not true at all (1.00-1.79)*", "*Not quite right (1.80-2.59)*", "*Right (2.60-3.39)*", "*A little right (3.40-4.19)*" and "*Very accurate 4.20-5.0)*" was rated. Firstly by implementing compliance test to normal distribution homogeneity of variances was tested for comparison of the data with regard to gender, school and educational status. After regarding normal distribution, independent groups t-test was used. Also in comparisons related to the variances of the number of students and the years of service in the educational institutions that teachers work, homogeneity of variances was tested again by applying compliance test to the normal distribution. Normal distribution was observed and one way variance analysis was used. At the end of the one-way variance analysis, the LSD test was applied to reveal among which groups there were significant differences. The statistical significance level was regarded as Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) level of significance, which was  $p < 0.05$ .

## Results

For the purpose of the study, the findings obtained to reveal professional social support level that physical education teachers perceive in educational institutions are given in the following tables.

As a result of the t-test with regard to gender variable a significant difference was found at the "*Colleague Support*" sub-component. Differences were found in the favor of female teachers. In the analysis of the arithmetic mean it has been seen that female teachers ( $\bar{X}=4.06$ ) stated more opinions compared to male teachers ( $\bar{X}=2.42$ ). But no significant difference was found between groups in other sub-components (table 1).

Table 1. T-test results with regard to gender variable.

Scale	Gender	n	Mean	SD	t-Value	p-Value
Management Support	(a) Male	182	3.00	0.63	-1.082	0.280
	(b) Female	38	3.44	0.70		
Colleague Support	(a) Male	182	2.42	0.88	-1.376	0.006*
	(b) Female	38	4.06	0.80		
Family Support	(a) Male	182	3.36	0.79	-2.763	0.823
	(b) Female	38	3.00	0.63		
Student Support	(a) Male	182	3.44	0.70	0.166	0.170
	(b) Female	38	2.42	0.88		
Effective Teaching Support	(a) Male	182	4.06	0.80	-0.224	0.868
	(b) Female	38	3.36	0.79		

\*p&lt;0.05 SD=Standard Deviation

Table 2. T-test results with regard to school variable.

Scale	School	n	Mean	SD	t-Value	p-Value
Management Support	(a) State	212	3.01	0.62	-1.286	0.200
	(b) Private	8	3.30	0.59		
Colleague Support	(a) State	212	3.45	0.71	-1.465	0.144
	(b) Private	8	3.83	0.46		
Family Support	(a) State	212	2.47	0.90	-2.246	0.026*
	(b) Private	8	3.19	0.44		
Student Support	(a) State	212	4.05	0.80	-0.407	0.685
	(b) Private	8	4.17	0.40		
Effective Teaching Support	(a) State	212	3.37	0.78	0.419	0.675
	(b) Private	8	3.25	0.85		

\*p&lt;0.05 SD=Standard Deviation

As a result of the t-test with regard to school variable a significant difference was found at the “Colleague Support” sub-component. Differences were found in the favor of private school teachers. Teachers working in state schools expressed less opinions ( $\bar{X}=2.47$ ) compared to teachers working in private schools ( $\bar{X}=3.19$ ). But no significant difference was found statistically in other sub-components like “*Management Support*”, “*Colleague Support*”, “*Student Support*” and “*Effective Teaching Support*” (Table 2).

Table 3. T-test results with regard to educational status variable.

Scale	Educational Status	n	Mean	SD	t-Value	p-Value
Management Support	(a) Licence	156	3.05	0.60	1.066	0.288
	(b) Master	64	2.96	0.67		
Colleague Support	(a) Licence	156	3.36	0.68	-3.449	0.001*
	(b) Master	64	3.72	0.72		
Family Support	(a) Licence	156	2.38	0.90	-3.001	0.003*
	(b) Master	64	2.77	0.84		
Student Support	(a) Licence	156	4.04	0.73	-0.344	0.731
	(b) Master	64	4.08	0.93		
Effective Teaching Support	(a) Licence	156	3.53	0.72	5.170	0.000*
	(b) Master	64	2.96	0.79		

\*p&lt;0.05 SD=Standard Deviation

As a result of the t-test with regard to educational status variable significant difference was found at the sub-components of the “*Colleague Support*”, “*Family Support*”, “*Effective Teaching Support*”. A significant difference was found at the subcomponents of “*Colleague Support*” and “*Family Support*” in favor of master’s degree teachers but at “*Effective Teaching Support*” a significant difference found in favor of licence degree teachers. No significant difference was found statistically at “*Management Support*” and “*Student Support*” sub-components (table 3).

Table 4. Results of variance analysis with regard to years of service variable.

Scale	Years of Service	n	Mean	SD	F	p-Value	Different (LSD Test)
Management Support	(a) 1-3 years	90	3.04	0.55	2.900	0.036*	b-d
	(b) 4-6 years	78	2.89	0.66			
	(c) 7-9 years	24	3.12	0.56			
	(d) 10 years and more	28	3.26	0.70			
Levene=2.007	p=0.114						
Colleague Support	(a) 1-3 years	46	3.46	0.70	1.861	0.137	
	(b) 4-6 years	64	3.36	0.68			
	(c) 7-9 years	60	3.58	0.84			
	(d) 10 years and more	26	3.70	0.65			
Levene=0.255	p=0.858						
Family Support	(a) 1-3 years	46	2.37	0.90	6.167	0.000*	a-d b-d
	(b) 4-6 years	64	2.37	0.76			
	(c) 7-9 years	60	2.67	0.86			
	(d) 10 years and more	26	3.10	0.99			
Levene=1.175	p=0.320						
Student Support	(a) 1-3 years	46	4.04	0.77	0.646	0.586	
	(b) 4-6 years	64	4.00	0.81			
	(c) 7-9 years	60	4.25	0.80			
	(d) 10 years and more	26	4.10	0.83			
Levene=0.181	p=0.909						
Effective Teaching Support	(a) 1-3 years	46	3.49	0.71	3.975	0.009*	a-d c-d
	(b) 4-6 years	64	3.29	0.75			
	(c) 7-9 years	60	3.57	0.80			
	(d) 10 years and more	26	2.99	0.93			
Levene=0.871	p=0.457						
*p<0.05	SD=Standard Deviation						

As a result of variance analysis in terms of years of service, significant differences were found at the sub-components of “management support” (F=2.900, p=0.036), “family support” (F=6.167, p=0.000) and “effective teaching support” (F=3.975, p=0.009). As a result of the LSD test which was applied to find reasons of difference, it has been found that the difference was resulted from the group of teachers whose years of service is “10 years and more” at the sub-components of “management support” and “family support”. Teachers in this group stated more opinions. It has been also found that at the “effective teaching support” sub-component the difference resulted from the group of teachers whose years of service is “10 years and above”. The teachers in this group stated less opinions compared to the teachers in other groups. No significant difference was found statistically at the “colleague support” (F=1.861, p=0.137) and the “student support” (F=0.646, p=0.586) sub-components with regard to the findings.

Table 5. Results of variance analysis with regard to number of students at the educational institution.

Scale	Number of Students	n	Mean	SD	F	p-Value	Different (LSD Test)
Management Support	(a) 0-500	82	2.92	0.58	5.233	0.002*	a-d
	(b) 501-1000	72	3.08	0.60			b-d
	(c) 1001-1500	36	2.86	0.63			c-d
	(d) 1501 +	30	3.38	0.64			
Levene=0.786	p=0.503						
Colleague Support	(a) 0-500	82	3.36	0.74	2.782	0.042*	a-d
	(b) 501-1000	72	3.51	0.68			c-d
	(c) 1001-1500	36	3.39	0.70			
	(d) 1501 +	30	3.77	0.61			
Levene=0.224	p=0.880						
Family Support	(a) 0-500	82	2.44	0.96	0.963	0.411	-
	(b) 501-1000	72	2.54	0.86			
	(c) 1001-1500	36	2.36	0.72			
	(d) 1501 +	30	2.50	0.98			
Levene=2.024	p=0.112						
Student Support	(a) 0-500	82	4.05	0.82	1.316	0.270	-
	(b) 501-1000	72	3.98	0.83			
	(c) 1001-1500	36	4.00	0.76			
	(d) 1501 +	30	4.31	0.60			
Levene=2.244	p=0.166						
Effective Teaching Support	(a) 0-500	82	3.29	0.80	0.575	0.632	-
	(b) 501-1000	72	3.37	0.77			
	(c) 1001-1500	36	3.43	0.58			
	(d) 1501 +	30	3.36	0.97			
Levene=3.729	p=0.122						

\*p&lt;0.05

SD=StandardDeviation

As a result of variance analysis with regard to number of students in educational institution, some differences found in teachers' opinions at the sub-components of "management support" (F=5.233, p=0.002) and "colleague support" (F=2.782, p=0.042). As a result of the LSD test, it has been found that the difference resulted from the "1501 and above" group of students at the sub-components of "colleague support" and "management support". Physical education teachers in this group stated more opinions. No significant difference was found statistically at the "family support" (F=0.963, p=0.411), "student support" (F=1.316, p=0.270) and "effective teaching support" (F=0.575, p=0.632) sub-components with regard to number of students.

### Discussion and conclusions

The results and the evidences found in the study about determining professional social support levels that physical education teachers perceive in their educational institutions in Turkey are discussed.

In the answers of research group a significant difference found in gender variable at the "Colleague Support" sub-component. Male physical education teachers stated their opinions less than female physical education teachers. In the research no significant difference found statistically at the subcomponents of "Management Support", "Family Support", "Student Support" and "Effective Teaching Support" (Table 1). This statistically difference is thought to be resulted from differences among research groups. According to this findings it has been reached different results for the area. Şencan (2009: 68), Elbir (2000) and Ünlü (2001) didn't find significant differences between students' gender and the degree of social support that their parents give, in their researches. Budak (1999) in his research determine that there is no effect of social support that teachers give to high school students on problem solving skills. Wall and etc. (1999: 63-71) and Baştürk (2002) found difference between students' gender and social support that is perceived from parents, in their researches. According to Elmacı's research (2001) the adolescents that take high degree social support have higher points in personal adoption, social adoption, general adoption and depression than average and low degree adolescents

that perceive low level of social support. The research made by Dülger (2009) prove that there is an important relation between social support and decision making skills.

In the answers of physical education teachers composing the research group, there is a significant difference in school variance at the sub-component of “*Family Support*”. The teachers who work at state schools state less opinions than the teachers who work at private educational institutions. In the sub-components of “*Management Support*”, “*Colleague Support*”, “*Student Support*” and “*Effective Teaching Support*” no significant difference is found (Table 2). When it is thought that physical education teachers get high degree support they will show positive reaction to their institutions. Also it is thought that they will have positive relations in the institutions. In his study Taştan (2008: 223) couldn’t find differences between official and private schools’ professional and social support degree. In the sub-components of management and colleague support there is no difference in the comprehension of support degree in official and private schools. In the family and social sub-components, the degree of support that state school teachers have is higher than private school teachers. At sub-components of student and learning environment, teachers working at private schools perceive more support than teachers working at public schools. Venkatachalam (1995: 2328) and Taştan (2008: 206) give place to the following idea about the literature; “*If workers perceive a high social support they will show commitment for the organization. When the workers committed to organization struggle for the goals of the organization and see that their performances are rewarded they will feel themselves responsible for making the organizational goals come true.*”

Significant differences have been found at the sub-dimensions of “*colleague support*”, “*family support*” and “*effective teaching support*” that are related to educational status variable. In general, physical education teachers at post graduate level express more opinions about the items. However, any significant difference hasn’t been found statistically at the sub-dimensions of “*management support*” and “*student support*” (Table 3). In the direction of that results, the reason why physical education teachers that have a high educational level perceive more social support than the physical education teachers that have a low educational level is due to their sensibility to the issue. Similar findings were encountered in the surveys done by Baştürk (2002) and Elbir (2000). In spite of that results Erdeğer (2001) and Kahriman (2003) found out that social support perceived from family doesn’t make any difference.

According to the variable of years of service at the educational institution, statistical differences were seen related to the sub-dimensions of “*management support*”, “*family support*” and “*effective teaching support*”. That differences originate from the teachers working for ten or over ten years. According to the findings any significant difference hasn’t been found related to the sub-dimensions of “*colleague support*” and “*student support*” (Table 4). This results from the fact that physical education teachers working for over ten years have good relationships with the school management and the other workers and know their school well in all aspects.

Statistical differences have been found at the sub-dimensions of “*management support*” and “*colleague support*” in the variable of number of student in the educational institution. That differences originate from the physical education teachers working at the schools where number of student is 1501 and above and it has been found out that those teachers express more opinions. However, any significant difference hasn’t been found at the sub-dimensions of “*family support*”, “*student support*” and “*effective learning support*” (Table 5). The reason for this is the fact that at more crowded schools management works better and supports its workers and the relationships among the workers are at a very good level.

As the research results could be summarized in general, when female physical education teachers have professional or personal problems they stated more positive opinion about their colleagues to support them and appreciate their success. It is seen that physical education teachers who work at private educational institutions give much more importance to the support of family and society in the analysis of the problems encountered in the education of student and in the development of school. It is seen that master’s degree graduate physical education teachers approach positively to the support of colleagues and family. However, it is determined that licence degree graduate physical education teachers give much more importance to the number of students in class, the physical conditions of school, working with disabled students and the funds allocated. Physical education teachers with years of service is over 10 years approach more positively to the expressions like administrators offering opportunities to teachers for their professional development, being appreciated of teachers’ effort, establishing positive relationship based on accomodating and cooperative, valuing their opinions. When teachers have professional or personal problems, they reported positive opinion to the expressions about their colleagues to support them, appreciate their success. It is determined that they support positively the expressions related to the number of students in class, the physical conditions of school, working with disabled students, the funds allocated to school. Physical education teachers working in more crowded educational institutions (1501 and above) express opinions about the administrators offer opportunities to the teachers for their professional development, the efforts of teachers are appreciated, established positive relationship based on cooperation. Also, when teachers have professional or personal problems, they stated that their colleagues support them and their success are appreciated.

The level of social support perceived in organisations affects general relationship, job satisfacion and mood of employee at their work. Employees’ level of social support perceived from business environment has an

influence on their performances. Employees are required not to have some organisational fears to show extra role behaviour for organisation. Because of extra role behaviours of employees affect their performances, the power of social support can both increase and decrease their performances. (Rhoades & Elsenberge, 2002: 698-714). As the literature analysed, it is stated that teachers with professional support provide more satisfaction from their profession, their beliefs related to teaching skills increase and they cope more effectively with the problem behaviours of their students. As the professional social support perceived by teachers increase, the degree of being disturbed from the problem behaviours of their students decrease (Hardy, 1999: 108-126; Younghusband, 2006). In the research that is carried out by Somech & Ron (2007: 38-66), it is determined that there is a positive relationship perceived from headmaster and organisational citizenship behaviour. This result showed that the headmasters' support for teachers caused teachers to improve a bond of citizenship related to school. Consequently, the level of professional social support perceived from physical education teachers working in educational institutions in Turkey showed difference in terms sub-components. The level of professional social support emerges as a concept that needs new researches and in need of improvement in terms of both theoretical and application. As planning the career development in the educational institutions of physical education teachers, the effects of social support perceived in the institution on professional development should not be ignored. The topics for physical education teachers to increase the perception of their professional social support should be included by educational institutions. The results of this research should be evaluated in limitations in terms of generalizability of findings. Also, besides the sports field, this research could present guidance findings for researches to be carried out in other areas.

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