



Examination Of The Levels Of Altruism And Perceived Social Support In University Students ¹

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ABSTRACT

In this study, the relationship between the level of perceived social support and the level of altruism in university students was examined. Moreover, the study also investigated whether the total and subscale scores of perceived social support differ according to gender and whether the total and subscale scores of altruism differ according to gender and status of taking part in social responsibility projects. The correlational screening model was used in the research. The study group consisted of a total of 593 university students: 385 female and 208 male. A Personal Information Form, the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support, and the Altruism Scale were used for data collection. The analysis was performed in the SPSS 25.0 package program. As a result of the research, a weak, positive correlation was determined between university students' level of perceived social support and their level of altruism. There was no significant difference in university students' total and subscale scores of perceived social support in terms of gender whereas there was a significant difference in total and subscale scores of altruism. It was determined that university students' total and subscale scores of altruism differed significantly according to the status of taking part in social responsibility projects. As a result of multiple linear regression analysis, it was concluded that family support, friend support, and specific support were significant predictors of altruism.

Key Words: Perceived Social Support, Altruism

INTRODUCTION

From past to present, prosocial behaviors and altruism have been covered in studies conducted in different fields such as morality, religion, and psychology. Given its historical development, altruism was a research subject as a moral and religious term. It was then discussed within the scope of virtues and personality traits and finally, it was covered in the field of positive psychology (Kaynak, 2017, p. 379). Comte defined altruism for the first time in the 19th century and played an important role in developing the concept by distinguishing the idea of altruism from religious terminology. Comte argued that altruism is the opposite of egoism (as cited in Onatır, 2008). There are some difficulties in defining and classifying the concept of altruism and determining its motivations. However, according to the general definitions, altruistic behaviors include characteristics such as having the motive to help others, making some self-sacrifices to exhibit the behavior, and not expecting a reward in return for the helping behavior (Karadağ and Mutaftçılar, 2009b).

Social interaction is of great importance for people living in a community. Many factors, such as benevolence and cooperation, that are important for human life are formed by social interactions (Atkinson, Smith, Bem, and Nolen-Hoeksema, 2010, p. 649). Benevolent behaviors provide some benefits to both those who receive help and those who engage in benevolent behaviors. Studies showed that those who engage in benevolent behaviors have a higher level of well-being compared to those who do not (Mellor, Hayashi, Stokes, Firth, Lake, Staples, and Cummins, 2009). Increasing altruistic behaviors contributes to psychological well-being. Individuals who are sensitive to others' needs and endeavor to make others happy can get long-term and repetitive satisfaction from their lives. Altruistic behaviors that are exhibited without any self-interest and are included in the scope of prosocial behaviors make life more meaningful, ensure more satisfaction from life, and eliminate psychological problems (Bal and Topuz, 2015). Social support and altruistic behaviors are among the factors that have important effects on the lives and adaptation processes of university students.

The concepts of egoism and altruism are discussed along with the most fundamental problems related to social relations, the organization of society, and our evolutionary origins. Human altruism is a powerful trait and

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unique among all living things (Fehr and Fischbacher, 2003). Altruistic behaviors, which are the opposite of egoism, require behaving in favor of others without expecting any material or moral benefit and thinking about others' benefits as much as their own (Karadağ and Mutafoğlu, 2009a). Similarly, Toppes (2012) defined altruistic behaviors as taking actions for the benefit of others without thinking of oneself and stated that it is also called altruism. The source of altruistic motivation, which aims to help others, is empathetic feelings (Carr, 2016, p. 85). Sometimes, egoist motives can also lead to helping behaviors due to reasons such as avoidance of seeing others in distress, shame, regret, fear of being punished by society, and desire to feel proud and be praised. However, altruistic motives differ from egoist motives. In order to activate altruistic motives, it is necessary to see a person who has a problem and needs something and to have empathetic feelings. Thus, helping individuals feel emotions such as sympathy, sensitivity, and compassion (Carr, 2016, p. 340).

Various altruistic actions are observed at different developmental stages. Children exhibit altruistic behaviors even in the first years of their lives. In this period, sharing is the most common type of altruistic behavior in children. As they get older, their tendency to engage in altruistic behaviors also increases naturally (Sunar and Fidancı, 2016). In adulthood, altruistic behaviors increase as individuals feel responsible for others and better understand that others are valuable as well as themselves (Khalimbaylı and Besra, 2018).

Humans interact with other people from birth to death. Social relations are the basis of human life (Demirtaş, 2007). Humans are psycho-social creatures; interacting with other people helps one overcome different difficulties that are encountered throughout life. It is important for individuals to be able to overcome these difficulties in order to adapt to life. Individuals want to see their families, relatives, and friends, who provide the biggest help, by their side when they are trying to cope with the difficulties they experience. These sources of help around individuals create the concept of social support, which is of great importance for individuals. Social support is defined as sources provided to individuals by other individuals (Cohen and Syme, 1985). Social support can be received from one or more sources. However, what is important here is how social support is perceived by the individual (Deveci and Ahmetoğlu, 2018). Perceived social support is individuals' cognitive perception that they can get support from people around them and that the relationships between them are reliable. The received/provided social support is the helping behavior that other people exhibit. In other words, the realization of the helping behavior expresses the social support received whereas one's belief that the helping behavior will occur points out the concept of perceived social support (Lepore, Evans, and Schneider, 1991). Individuals' personal opinions regarding the sufficiency of their social support functions constitute the concept of perceived social support (Procidano and Heller, 1983). Perceived social support is defined as individuals' beliefs that they are cared for and valued in the relationships they have established throughout their lives and that they have people in their lives they can receive help from when they need it.

The presence of individual and social sources, from which one can get help when needed, may have direct health-developing effects and may reduce the negative effects on health that occur due to exposure to stressors. When people are exposed to stressors, if they have enhanced individual or community sources, both the short- and long-term negative health consequences of the stressors may decrease and the likelihood of coping with these stressors may increase (Glanz, Rimer, and Viswanath, 2008, p. 194). Social support is an important source of coping as well as a protector against diseases. Along with the emphasis made on these functions of social support in recent years, mental health experts also focus on the importance of social support that individuals receive from their close circles, families, and friends. Social support provided by family, friends, and close circles are natural support systems that have a great impact on the solution of individuals' psychological problems (Eker, Arkar, and Yaldız, 2001). Family and friends are the primary sources of social support (Bulut, 2017).

The functional aspect of social support includes close relationships with others whom the person appreciates, can talk to, trust, and share their feelings and thoughts with. At the same time, this functional aspect of social support is also associated with the individual's perception of the usefulness and satisfaction of the support received from the environment. Having someone with whom one can communicate and trust fulfills the function of increasing psychological resilience as well (Cohen and Wills, 1985). Self-esteem, health, prosocial behaviors, and compliance increase as social support increases. Moreover, psychological symptoms of stress and depression decrease. Thus, social support affects physical and mental health positively (Doğan, 2008).

Social support is necessary for university students, as in many groups in society, to develop their mutual relationships, solve the problems they encounter in these relationships, achieve social adaptation, and be in harmony with university life, which is new for them. It is important for university students to have a source of support that will help them for all these issues (Erzen, 2018).

The level of perceived social support is important in terms of one's cognitive perception that one has reliable relations with the people around and that he/she will receive support from them. The psychological health of an individual who experiences a stressful event and negative emotions gets better and the one feels better thanks to social support sources. Likewise, the concept of altruism is involved in positive social behaviors, and increasing the level of altruism is important to support psychological health. In this context, altruism and social support appear as important concepts for university students, who are in the young adulthood period, to adapt to a new environment and the changes brought by university life. Furthermore, it is thought that one's belief that he/she has reliable relations with the people around him/her and will receive support from them affects helping behaviors. It is thought that this study, which examines the concepts of altruism and social support and aims to determine the relationship between these two concepts, is important and will contribute to the relevant literature.

Research Aim

The research primarily aims to examine the levels of perceived social support and altruism in university students. In line with this purpose, answers to the following questions were sought.

- ✓ Is there a significant correlation between the level of altruism and the level of perceived social support in university students?
- ✓ Does the level of perceived social support of university students predict their level of altruism?
- ✓ Does the level of altruism of university students differ significantly by gender?
- ✓ Does the level of altruism of university students differ significantly according to their level of active participation in social responsibility projects?
- ✓ Does the level of perceived social support of university students differ significantly by gender?

METHOD

Research Model

The correlational survey model was used in this study, which examines the levels of altruism and perceived social support in university students. The correlational survey method aims to determine the presence or degree of change between two or more variables (Karasar, 2006).

Study Group

The study group of the research consisted of university students in Ankara. The study group was determined with the convenience sampling method. Convenience sampling is made with voluntary individuals who are easy to reach and available in the environment and who are willing to participate in the research (Erkuş, 2017). Data collection was carried out during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Measurement Tools Used in Data Collection

A Personal Information Form, the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support, and the Altruism Scale were used in the research. Information on these scales is given below.

✓ Personal Information Form

The form includes questions about gender and the status of taking part in social responsibility projects.

✓ Altruism Scale (AS)

The scale was developed by Ümmet Ekşi and Otrar (2013) to measure individuals' altruistic behaviors. It consists of 38 items and seven subdimensions: participation in voluntary activities, financial assistance, assistance in traumatic situations, assistance to elderly/patients, assistance based on physical strength, assistance in the education process, and assistance based on the sense of intimacy. The Cronbach alpha coefficients of the scale were .815 for the 1st factor, .776 for the 2nd factor, .757 for the 3rd factor, .760 for the 4th factor, .743 for the 5th factor, .696 for the 6th factor, and .659 for the 7th factor. The total Cronbach alpha value was .931. The scale is evaluated with a 5-point rating scale from "strongly disagree" (1 point) to "strongly agree" (5 points) (Ümmet et al., 2013). In the reliability analysis of this study, the Cronbach alpha coefficient calculated for the total AS score was .93.

✓ Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS)

MSPSS was developed by Eker and Arkar (1995) and adapted to Turkish by Zimet et al. in 1988. The validity and reliability study of the revised version of MSPSS was conducted by Eker, Arkar, and Yıldız in 2001. The scale consists of 12 items. The items subjectively evaluate the adequacy of perceived social support from three different sources that are family, friends, and significant other. There are 3 groups on the scale, family, friend,

and significant other, and there are 4 items for each group. In the evaluation of the scale, each item is ranked on a 7-point Likert-type rating scale. The Cronbach alpha method was used to test the reliability of the scale. The values were between .80 and .85 and the scale and subscales had acceptable levels of internal consistency (Eker et al., 2001). In the reliability analysis of this study, the Cronbach alpha coefficient for the total MSPSS score was calculated as .87.

Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 25.00 was used in order to analyze the research data. In the analysis of the research data, the independent samples t-test was used to determine whether the levels of altruism and perceived social support change according to the variables of gender and participation in social responsibility projects. Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation was used to determine the correlation between altruism and perceived social support. A regression analysis was performed to determine whether university students' level of perceived social support predicts their level of altruism. In the study, statistical analyses were performed at a significance level of .05.

RESULTS

This section includes findings related to the correlation between altruism and perceived social support, the degree to which the level of perceived social support predicts the level of altruism, whether the level of altruism differs by the variables of gender and participation in social responsibility projects, and whether the level of perceived social support differs by the variable of gender.

Table 1. Correlations Between Total and Subdimension Scores of Altruism and Perceived Social Support

Variables	Asst. based on the Sense of Intimacy	Asst. in the Education Process	Asst. based on Physical Strength	Asst. to Elderly/Patients	Asst. in Traumatic Situations	Financial Asst.	Participation in Voluntary Activities	AS Total	Significant Other Support	Friend Support	Family Support	MSPSS Total
Asst. based on the Sense of Intimacy	1											
Asst. in the Education Process	.547**	1										
Asst. based on Physical Strength	.538**	.489**	1									
Asst. to Elderly/Patients	.480**	.496**	.606**	1								
Asst. in Traumatic Situations	.533**	.457**	.423**	.566**	1							
Financial Asst.	.424**	.350**	.467**	.514**	.526**	1						
Participation in Voluntary Activities	.476**	.515**	.445**	.535**	.490**	.602**	1					
AS Total	.732**	.709**	.739**	.777**	.744**	.758**	.811**	1				
Significant Other Support		.125**	.176**	.110**	.096**		.122**	.143**	1			
Friend Support	.243**	.240**	.211**	.136**	.120**	.144**	.158**	.232**	.272**	1		
Family Support	.122**	.147**	.105*	.116**	.122**	.167**	.126**	.171**	.264**	.433**	1	
MSPSS Total	.178**	.217**	.222**	.159**	.147**	.143**	.178**	.234**	.811**	.681**	.693**	1

**p<.01

According to Table 1, there was a weak, positive, and significant correlation between the total scores of perceived social support and altruism ($r=.234$, $p<.01$). Accordingly, the level of altruism of university students increased as their level of perceived social support increased.

In terms of the correlation between the variables and subdimensions, there was a weak, positive, and significant correlation between the total scores of perceived social support and the assistance based on physical strength ($r=.222$, $p<.01$) subdimension of altruism. There was a weak, positive, and significant correlation between the total altruism score and the friend support subdimension ($r=.232$, $p<.01$) of perceived social support.

Table 2. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis regarding How Significant Other Support, Friend Support, and Family Support Predicted Altruism Scores

Variable	B	<i>SHB</i>	β	t	p	R	R ²
Coefficient	3.340	.103		32.368	.000**		
Significant Other Support	.017	.009	.074	1.764	.078	.072	.005
Friend Support	.071	.018	.179	3.994	.000**	.162	.026
Family Support	.027	.016	.074	1.655	.099	.068	.004

Dependent Variable: Altruism

*p<.05 **p<.01

R= .255 R²= .060

According to Table 2, family support, friend support, and significant other support scores significantly predicted altruism scores ($R=.255$, $R^2=.060$, $F(13,621)$, $p<.01$).

The variables of family support, friend support, and significant other support together showed a weak but significant correlation with altruism scores ($R=0.255$, $R^2 = 0.060$, $p<.01$). Together, these three variables explained 6% of the total variance observed for the altruism variable.

According to the standardized regression coefficient (β), the relative rank of importance of the perceived social support subdimensions on the altruism score was as follows: friend support ($\beta=.179$, $p<.01$), significant other support ($\beta=.074$, $p>.05$), and family support ($\beta=.074$, $p>.05$).

Table 3. T-Test Results on Total and Subdimension Scores of Altruism and Perceived Social Support by Gender

Variable	Gender	N	\bar{x}	Ss	Sd	t	p
Asst. based on the Sense of Intimacy	Female	385	4.19	.54	593	4.75	.000*
	Male	208	3.94	.63			
Asst. in the Education Process	Female	385	4.05	.54	593	3.08	.002*
	Male	208	3.88	.67			
Asst. based on Physical Strength	Female	385	3.92	.67	593	3.13	.002*
	Male	208	3.72	.76			
Asst. to Elderly/Patients	Female	385	4.01	.70	593	1.11	.266
	Male	208	3.94	.76			
Asst. in Traumatic Situations	Female	385	4.26	.54	593	.95	.338
	Male	208	4.22	.56			
Financial Asst.	Female	385	4.11	.54	593	5.05	.000*
	Male	208	3.80	.79			
Participation in Voluntary Activities	Female	385	3.73	.68	593	4.34	.000*
	Male	208	3.44	.82			
AS Total	Female	385	4.03	.45	593	4.49	.000*
	Male	208	3.83	.54			
Significant Other Support	Female	385	4.39	2.19	593	1.25	.211
	Male	208	4.15	2.20			
Friend Support	Female	385	5.74	1.23	593	1.65	.099
	Male	208	5.57	1.28			
Family Support	Female	385	5.51	1.40	593	.57	.566
	Male	208	5.44	1.27			
MSPSS Total	Female	385	5.21	1.17	593	1.56	.118
	Male	208	5.05	1.23			

$p<.05$

According to Table 3, the level of altruism of female students ($\bar{x}=4.03$) was significantly higher than that of male students ($\bar{x}=3.83$) (.000; $p<.05$). There was a significant difference in the scores of subdimensions of AS, assistance based on the sense of intimacy (.000; $p<.05$), assistance in the education process (.002; $p<.05$), assistance based on physical strength (.002; $p<.05$), financial assistance (.000; $p<.05$), participation in voluntary activities (.000; $p<.05$), according to gender. The mean scores of female students were higher than the mean scores of male students on all five subdimensions.

The level of perceived social support of university students did not significantly differ by gender (.118; $p>.05$).

Table 4. T-Test Results of Total and Subdimension Scores of Altruism according to the Status of Participation in Social Responsibility Projects

Variable	Social Responsibility	N	\bar{x}	Ss	Sd	t	p
Asst. based on the Sense of Intimacy	Yes	353	4.20	.56	593	5.28	.000*
	No	240	3.95	.59			
Asst. in the Education Process	Yes	353	4.11	.51	593	5.87	.000*
	No	240	3.81	.66			
Asst. based on Physical Strength	Yes	353	3.95	.68	593	4.03	.000*
	No	240	3.71	.73			
Asst. to Elderly/Patients	Yes	353	4.08	.65	593	3.74	.000*
	No	240	3.85	.79			
Asst. in Traumatic Situations	Yes	353	4.32	.52	593	3.78	.000*
	No	240	4.14	.58			
Financial Asst.	Yes	353	4.13	.56	593	5.42	.000*
	No	240	3.82	.75			
Participation in Voluntary Activities	Yes	353	3.88	.62	593	10.18	.000*
	No	240	3.27	.77			
AS Total	Yes	353	4.09	.43	593	7.74	.000*
	No	240	3.77	.52			

$p<.05$

According to Table 4, the level of altruism of students who took part in social responsibility projects ($\bar{x}=4.09$) was significantly higher than those who did not take part in social responsibility projects ($\bar{x}=3.77$) (.000; $p<.05$). There was a significant difference in the scores of all subdimensions of AS according to the status of

participating in social responsibility projects. The mean score of the students who took part in social responsibility projects was higher than the mean score of the students who did not.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

As a result of the research, it was seen that there was a positive and significant correlation between university students' total scores of altruism and perceived social support. Moreover, it was concluded that there was a weak, positive, and significant correlation between all subdimensions of altruism and the subdimensions of perceived social support. The concepts of social support and altruism are based on social interaction. In this research, the data collection was carried out during the COVID-19 outbreak. It is thought that the relative decrease in interpersonal relations in this process, more difficulties in accessing social support sources, the decrease in face-to-face interactions, and the limited participation in charity organizations and social responsibility projects may have affected the current research results. For example, Timurtaş and Gemlik (2021) conducted a study with adults who had and had not been diagnosed with COVID-19 and concluded that 30% of the individuals who participated in the study who had not been diagnosed with COVID-19 reduced their benevolent behaviors due to the pandemic, the fear of contamination, and their distance from people. In the literature, studies on the relationship between altruistic behaviors and family belongingness, friendships, kinships, family relations, and perceived child-rearing attitudes support the research findings. For example, in their study, Özdemir, Daşbaşı, and Kesen (2020) concluded that university students who spent time with their families, who felt understood by their families, and who could share their problems with them, had higher levels of altruism. Çelik and Avcı (2019) discussed the issues of family relations and benevolence in their research and obtained results similar to those obtained in this research. Wong, Ma, and Chan (2017) concluded in their research that altruism is significantly associated with online social support. Avcı, Aydın, and Özbaşaran (2013) conducted a study with nursing students and found that the mean altruism score of students who did not have close friends whom they could ask for help was significantly lower than students who had close friends. In conclusion, it is seen that the concepts of perceived social support and altruism support each other and are positively correlated.

According to another finding of the study, it was seen that the variables of Family Support, Friend Support, and Significant Other Support explained 6% of altruism. Studies in the literature examining the relationships between family relations and friendships and the level of altruism (Çelik and Avcı, 2019; Kandır and Alpan, 2008; Ma, 1993; Özdemir et al., 2020) support the results of this research. As a result, it was observed that individuals who grew up in families with democratic parental attitudes, who have high family belonging, who are not compared with others by their families, and who have friends and relatives from whom they can get help when they need it, tend to be more helpful. Sarason, Levine, Basham, and Sarason (1983) stated that the presence of social support in childhood has a positive effect on personality development. According to Doğan (2008), social support from family and friends positively affects physical and mental health. Young individuals who have a supportive and positive relationship with their parents can also establish better supportive relationships with their friends and have higher psychological well-being. On contrary, young individuals who do not receive adequate social support in their relationships with their parents may be less successful in establishing supportive friendships (Helsen, Vollebergh, and Meeus, 2000). Perceived friend support contributes positively to the level of social competence (Traş and Aslan, 2013). Individuals with a high level of social support feel less lonely (Yılmaz, Yılmaz and Karaca, 2008). Social support helps individuals overcome difficulties, solve problems, and easily establish social relations with others (Çivilidağ, 2003). Thus, positive social behaviors such as empathy, cooperation, and benevolence can be more observed in individuals with a high level of perceived social support.

As a result of the research, it was determined that the level of altruism of female students was significantly higher compared to male students. This result supports the current research findings. In the literature, studies in which the levels of altruism differ significantly by gender reported that the levels of female students are significantly higher than those of male students (Acar and Apak, 2017; Boylu, 2020; Duman, 2021; Ekşi, Sayın, and Çelebi 2016; Mert and Gülmez, 2018; Oktar, 2018; Topuz, 2013; Ümmet, 2012; Weinstein and Ryan, 2010). In our society, women take part in voluntary activities more than men, indicating that women engage in more altruistic behaviors (Özdin, 2019). In terms of the roles attributed to the genders by society, women are assumed to be maternal, emotional, and more likely to help. Brody (1997) stated that women tend to have more personal relationships, whereas men attach more importance to power and status. Eagly and Crowley (1986), on the other hand, stated that women provide more social support to others and are more willing to make suggestions so that they can find solutions to their problems. Moreover, the socialization processes are different in women and men. Competition comes to the fore in men's social relations whereas empathy, interest, and concern for others are dominant in women's relationships (Seefeldt, 2008). In general,

studies reporting that women are more altruistic than men explain this situation with gender roles, child-rearing attitudes, and maternal instinct. Furthermore, there is a study in the literature in which a significant difference was reported in favor of men in terms of the levels of altruism (Eagly and Crowley, 1986).

Some studies concluded that the level of altruism does not differ significantly by gender (Akbaba, 1994; Canale, White and Kelly, 1996; Çelik and Avcı, 2019; Huber and MacDonald, 2012; İşmen and Yıldız, 2005; Kasapoğlu, 2013; Kee-Lee, 1998; Mutaçlılar, 2008; Onatır, 2008; Şakar, 2018; Yıldırım-Keskin and Berk-Özcan, 2018; Yıldırım and Topcuoğlu, 2016). When the sample groups in these studies were examined, it was seen that the studies were generally conducted with teachers, therapists, prospective psychological counselors, nursing students, and adolescents. The differences between the results of previous studies and the findings of our study might be due to the difference in the study groups. As a result, when the literature is examined, it was seen that the results of the studies on altruism vary according to the gender variable. As mentioned above, the level of altruism differs according to gender in some studies; however, some studies reported no significant difference. In studies in which the levels of altruism differ by gender, it was concluded that women's level of altruism is generally higher than men's.

When the levels of perceived social support of university students were analyzed according to gender, it was found that the total perceived social support scores and the scores on friend support, significant other support, and family support subdimensions did not differ significantly by gender. When the studies conducted on the relationship between the total Perceived Social Support score and the gender variable were examined, it was seen that some of the studies do not support this research and some research findings are consistent with the finding obtained in this research. Among the studies on the subject (Çeçen 2008; Demirtaş, 2007; Ham, Hayes and Hope, 2005; Sağlam, 2007; Sürücü, 2005; Şahin, 2011; Yıldırım, 2011; Yılmaz et al., 2008), some reported that the level of perceived social support does not differ according to gender. These results support our research results. The fact that the level of perceived social support did not differ by gender may be due to the fact that the family relations and friendships of the university students in the study group were similar between genders. In other words, it can be suggested that families, friends, and social circles of university students provide similar social support without any gender discrimination. On the other hand, some studies in the literature reported that the level of perceived social support differs by gender (Aliyev and Tunç, 2017; Aydın, 2021; Jones, Freeman and Goswick, 1981; Özdemir, 2021; Özdemir- Kurt, 2017; Soylu, 2002; Yıldırım, 2019). These studies do not support the current research results. However, in this study, although no significant difference was found between the gender variable and the level of perceived social support, male university students' mean perceived social support scores were found to be lower compared to female students. This finding is consistent with the results of the studies which reported that there is a significant difference in favor of women between gender and the level of perceived social support (Akdoğan, 2012; Bayın, 2020; Erçevik, 2014; Erdeğer, 2001; Güngör, 1996; Gürül, 2021; Kozaklı, 2006; Turgut, 2015; Ustabaş, 2011; Yağcı, 2010). Girls have characteristics such as the ability to easily talk about their problems with others, being sharing and sensitive whereas characteristics such as independence and self-confidence are dominant in the socialization processes of boys. For this reason, girls perceive and benefit from social support sources more easily than boys (Sorias, 1989). Social support behaviors related can be shown to women more easily from childhood in our society. Thus, women can express their social support needs more easily than men. Women have high communication skills and a high tendency to deal with others' problems and help them; they express their expectations more in their relationships and they are supportive and emotional. These may have an impact on their high level of perceived social support.

When it was examined whether the altruism scores of university students differed according to the status of participating in social responsibility projects, it was seen that the students who took part in social responsibility projects had significantly higher scores regarding altruism and all its subdimensions compared to the students who did not participate in social responsibility projects. In studies in which a significant difference was determined in terms of the status of taking part in social responsibility projects, it was reported that the level of altruism of students who took part in social responsibility projects and participated in voluntary activities was significantly higher than that of the students who did not (Chou, 1998; Ekşi et al., 2016; Eubanks, 2008; Pratt, Hunsberger, Pancer and Rehberg, 2005; Serow, 1991; Tam and Yeung 1999; Yöntem and İlhan, 2013). These findings support the research results. However, there are also research findings that are not consistent with the results of this study (For example: Boylu, 2020; Karadağ and Mutaçlılar, 2009b).

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to increase the levels of altruism and perceived social support of students in university life, cooperative behaviors among students can be encouraged. Upper-grade students can participate in orientation

programs for students who have just started university. The activities of student clubs that aim to help and the participation of students in these clubs can be supported. In this research, the strength of perceived social support to predict altruism was revealed. In practices that aim to increase altruism, activities to increase students' perception of social support sources can be included. Considering that the level of altruism of male students was lower compared to female students, activities can be organized to increase the level of altruism in male students. As a result of the research, it was seen that the students who took part in social responsibility projects had higher levels of altruism than those who did not. Benevolent behaviors of students can be encouraged during the university education process and students can be supported to organize and participate in voluntary activities.

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