

Perceived Social Support Levels of Elementary School Students*

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Abstract

In this study, frequency and importance level of perceived social support types from fifth through eighth graders were investigated to find out if they are significant differences according to social support sources. The study was carried out with the survey model. The sample consists of 2148 students (1068 girls, 1080 boys) attending fifth through eighth grades from 19 elementary schools in Istanbul. Child and Adolescent Social Support Scale (CASSS) was used to collect data. The data was analyzed with Anova for Repeated Measures. It was found that students' perceived frequency and importance level of social support types differed significantly according to the sources (parents, teachers, classmates, close friends, other people in school) of support ($p < .05$). This finding showed that students prefer different support types according to characteristics (emotional relationship, attitude, role, status) of the source.

Keywords: Social support, support sources, support types, elementary education and instruction

Introduction

Students gain positive acquisitions through their interactions with social support networks. Therefore, the stakeholders involved in the learning process (family, teachers, administrators, counselors, peer, etc.) should cooperatively contribute to the development of students. On the other hand, the level of productivity of the contribution provided is in direct proportion to the level of productivity of the social support offered to students.

Social support is defined by Richman, Rosenfeld, and Bowen (1998) as the communication between the support provider and the recipient who feel good by means of this support; by Pearson (1986) as the acceptance of the individual by a person or group; and by Caplan (1974) as the network of interactions establishing the level of interpersonal relationships. In light of the given definitions, social support may be described as individuals finding solutions to their problems through interaction. However whether the solutions generated would serve the purpose depends on the provision of support from the proper source (Finch et al., 1997; Jung, 1987).

Sources of social support refer to people or organizations that provide support to the individual. Within this framework, family, friends, neighbors, teachers, counselors, and ideological, religious, or ethnic groups and the community in which the individual lives constitute sources of social support to the individual (Dunn, Putallaz, Sheppard, & Lindstrom, 1987; Shumaker & Brownell, 1984; Yıldırım, 1997). The diversity of support providers elicits the question of which one is effective and efficient in regards to the type of support. Cohen and Wills (1985) argue that appropriate sources

* This study was derived from İlker Cırık's doctoral dissertation, which was counseled by Ayla Oktay and Seval Fer at Marmara University in 2010.

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of support lead to positive outcomes in terms of the sense of security and self-efficacy. As Jung (1987) and Vaux (1985) stated, the type of the support required by the individual should correspond to the source of support so that impacts of and satisfaction from the support will be at desired level.

According to Winemiller, Mitchell, Sutliff, and Cline (1993), different types of social support should be taken into consideration, to examine all dimensions of support. Elliott, Malecki, and Demaray (2001) indicated that House (1981) organized the types of social support into four groups. These types of support include emotional support, which involves caring, confidence, love, esteem, and empathy; informational support, which involves providing information, advice, explanation of complicated problems, and academic assistance during learning processes; appraisal support, which involves providing feedback about the performance of the individual during the learning process; and instrumental support, which is the provision of money, time, and materials. Birch (1998) emphasized that the types of social support may be studied in these four groups, as well.

Overseas studies provide a wide coverage to questions, such as what types of support there are or from which sources (parents, teachers, classmates, close friends, and other people in school) students provide those types of support, in spite of an overall assessment of the concept (Fezer, 2008; Malecki & Demaray, 2003; Richman et al., 1998). Research findings indicate that students should be supported by multiple sources with a perspective of contributing to their academic and social development (Chambers, Hylan, & Schreiber, 2006; Friedlander, Reid, Shupak, & Gribbie, 2007; Rushi, 2007). On the other hand, there are also studies on the frequency of students' perception of the types of support; the degree of importance they attach to the perceived types of support; and the extent of their knowledge on the importance of the support provided (Cheng & Chan, 2004; Malecki & Demaray, 2006).

The studies carried out dealt with the contributions of social support to the development of students from different perspectives. For instance, Johnson and Johnson (1983) found out that social support was positively associated with students' academic achievements. Another remarkable research finding is that the school adjustment of the students provided by social support increases (Bell, 2006; Lidy & Kahn, 2006; Vaux & Wood, 1987) and students have lower stress levels (Coffman & Gilligan, 2002; Hamdan-Mansour & Dawani, 2008; Negga, Applewhite, & Livingston, 2007; Smith & Renk, 2007). Furthermore, research findings highlight that the social support leads to decrease in students' tendency to violence and its negative influences (Davidson & Demaray, 2007; Holt & Espelage, 2007; Meadows, 2007).

Among the findings are also the fact that students receiving social support appear to be more successful with anger management (Dahlen & Martin, 2005), and social support helps students to avoid a potential depression (Gaylord-Harden et al., 2007; Young, Berenson, Cohen, & Garcia, 2005). In addition, Meehan, Durlak, and Bryant (1993) provided evidence showing that social support contributed to students' sense of physical, mental, and emotional well-being. As seen, the findings of overseas studies converge on the argument that social support has positive impacts on students' development. Therefore, it is important to review social support studies in Turkey.

In the literature review, it was observed that the social support studies in Turkey were associated with the level of perceived general social support. However, studies on the level of perceived social support, which types of support that the providers use, the degree of importance attached to such support by students or the utility of the sources of social support are limited (Ak & Sayıl, 2006; Duru, 2008; Duyan et al., 2008; Eldeleklioğlu, 2006; Elmacı, 2006; Koçkar & Gençöz, 2004; Kutsal & Bilge, 2012; Siyez, 2008; Yıldırım, 2007; Yıldırım, Gençtanırım, Yalçın, & Baydan, 2008). Elementary school curricula stress the need to promote family involvement in the learning process, creating interactive learning environments, and enabling students to support each other in achieving their goals. However, Tomul (2009) concluded that social support activities were not conducted in a systematic and institutional manner in elementary schools.

An integrated assessment on the findings from the national studies on social support shows that further studies are required, particularly at the elementary school level. Establishing the level of frequency and importance of the social support perceived by elementary school students and revealing the types of support that are affected by the sources of support are suggested to contribute to the researchers' and implementers' ability to establish social support networks appropriate for the learning environments. Based on this perspective, the present study aims to analyze whether the frequency and importance scores of the types of support (emotional, informational, appraisal, and instrumental) perceived by the fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade elementary school students show a significant difference according to the sources of support (parents, teachers, classmates, close friends, and other people in school).

Method

Research Model

In this research, levels of perceived social support of elementary school students were identified through quantitative analyses of the data collected with the CASSS. This study adopted a cross-sectional survey model within general survey models. As Karasar (2002) stated, the probability of generalizing of the data obtained through the cross sectional technique is higher due to the opportunity and obligation to study on larger samples.

Population and Sampling

The population of the research consisted of fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students from public and private elementary schools on the European side of Istanbul. The research adopted a random sampling methodology. For the sampling, the fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students were selected from the 13 public and 6 private elementary schools in several districts of the European side of Istanbul including: Avcılar, Bağcılar, Bahçelievler, Bakırköy, Başakşehir, Beşiktaş, Esenler, Güngören, Kağıthane, Küçükçekmece, Sarıyer, and Zeytinburnu. A total of 2148 students participated in the study. 1068 (49.7%) of the participants were females and 1080 (50.3%) were males. 546 students (25.4%) were in fifth grade, whereas 531 (24.7%) were in sixth grade, 524 (24.4%) in seventh grade, and 547 (25.5%) were in eighth grade. 1637 students (76.2%) attended a public school while the remaining 511 (23.8%) attended a private school.

Data Collection Tool

The research data were collected by CASSS, which was developed by Malecki, Demaray, and Elliott (2004) and adapted into Turkish by Cırık, Oktay, and Fer (2011). Scale items are categorized in four groups (emotional, informational, appraisal, and instrumental) for each factor (parents, teachers, classmates, close friends, and other people in school). Each of the five factors consists of 12 positive items. The frequency of perception and importance of the support are scored for scale ratings. Frequency ratings were designed as a 6-point scale including never (1), almost never (2), some of the time (3), most of the time (4), almost always (5), and always (6). Importance ratings consist of a 3-point scale as not important (1), important (2) and very important (3). In regards to the frequency rating of the support, a minimum of 12 and a maximum of 72 points may be scored for each factor of the scale and a minimum of 60 and a maximum of 360 points for the whole scale. Regarding the importance rating of support, a minimum of 12 and a maximum of 36 points may be scored for each factor of the scale and a minimum of 60 and a maximum of 180 points for the whole scale.

Factor loading for the items of the original scale was found to range from 0.60 to 0.84 for fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students. Dual-loading items were not included. The eigenvalues of the factors ranged from 2.65 to 22.14. The reliability coefficient for the factors was reported to range from 0.93 to 0.96. The total reliability coefficient was calculated as 0.97. Test-retest reliability results (8-10 weeks) were found to range from 0.58 to 0.74 for the factors and from 0.75 to 0.78 for the total scale. The findings revealed that the scale had a valid and reliable factor structure.

The Turkish adaptation of the scale was created through the participation of the fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students ($n=1517$). A linguistic equivalence analysis revealed a significant correlation value ($p=.00$, $p<.01$). The construct validation of the scale was tested through the exploratory (EFA) and confirmatory (CFA) factor analyses. Items of the scale were found to have a factor loading between 0.48 and 0.83 through the EFA and between 0.50 and 0.86 through the CFA. Dual-loading items were not included. The eigenvalues of the factors ranged from 2.16 to 20.40. Scale items were classified, similarly to the original scale, in a total of five groups, each of which consisted of 12 items. Internal consistency and alpha coefficients of the scale if item deleted was calculated as 0.96. Corrected item-total correlation values of the scale were found to be between 0.35 and 0.67. The test-retest analyses (3 weeks) resulted in a significant ($p=.00$, $p<.01$) correlation value on the basis of item, factor, and total score levels. The findings reported that the Turkish adaptation had a valid factor structure, similar to the original scale; the internal consistency was sufficiently reliable; items were able to distinguish between the indicators in terms of the characteristics to be measured; and the external consistency was high on the basis of items, factor, and total score levels.

Data Collection and Analysis

Permission was obtained from the Istanbul Provincial Directorate of National Education for the application of CASSS to the sample group. Participants volunteered to participate in the study without providing written consent. The CASSS was applied to the sample group by the researcher. Before the application, explanations were made about the purpose, importance, and characteristics of the scale. Students were instructed on how to score the items through a sample item. The duration for the completion of the scale ranged from 30 to 40 minutes.

The fit of the research data to a normal distribution was analyzed using Q-Q graphics. The frequency and importance scores for the types of perceived social support by the fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students (emotional, informational, appraisal, and instrumental) showed a significant difference regarding the sources of social support (parents, teachers, classmates, close friends, and other people in school), and was analyzed through ANOVA for Repeated Measures. The Bonferroni test was applied to determine the sources of difference.

Results

The results of the ANOVA for repeated measures were analyzed to determine whether the frequency and importance scores for the types of perceived social support by fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students showed a significant difference according the sources of social support. The results are provided in Table 1 and Table 2, respectively.

Table 1.

ANOVA Test Results on the Frequency Scores of the Types of Perceived Social Support

Sources of Support	Sources of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	Sig. Difference
Parents	Between-Subjects	7880.01	2134	3.69	162.58	.00	A-B, C-B, D-B, A-D, C-D, C-A
	Measure	169.36	3	56.45			
	Error	2223.02	6402	.34			
	Total	10272.39	8539				
Teachers	Between-Subjects	10203.88	2130	4.79	366.53	.00	A-B, C-B, D-B, A-C, D-C, A-D
	Measure	427.08	3	142.36			
	Error	2481.83	6390	.38			
	Total	13112.79	8535				
Classmates	Between-Subjects	13357.64	2136	6.25	42.49	.00	C-A, C-B, C-A
	Measure	69.34	3	23.11			
	Error	3485.62	6408	.54			
	Total	16912.60	8547				
Close Friends	Between-Subjects	8736.85	2141	4.08	124.20	.00	B-A, C-A, D-A, C-B, B-D, C-D
	Measure	102.09	3	34.03			
	Error	1760.01	6423	.27			
	Total	10598.95	8567				
Other People in School	Between-Subjects	19412.92	2133	9.10	25.19	.00	B-A, D-A, A-C, B-C, D-C
	Measure	32.39	3	10.79			
	Error	2741.77	6399	.42			
	Total	22187.08	8535				

$p < .05$, A=emotional, B=informational, C=appraisal, D=instrumental

As seen in Table 1, the ANOVA for repeated measures test resulted in a significant difference between 95% ($p < .05$) confidence interval among the frequency scores of the types of social support that students perceived from their parents [$F_{(3-2134)}=162.58$, $p=.00$, $p < .05$]. According to the results of the Bonferroni correction, which was applied to determine the sources of social support from which this difference results, a significant difference was found from the frequency scores of the types of perceived social support from the parents in favor of informational support ($p=.00$, $p < .05$) among the informational ($X=5.10$), instrumental ($X=4.98$), emotional ($X=4.82$), and appraisal ($X=4.74$) types of support; in favor of instrumental support ($p=.00$, $p < .05$) among the instrumental, emotional, and appraisal types of support; and in favor of emotional support ($p=.00$, $p < .05$) between the emotional and appraisal types of support.

The findings revealed that the difference was significant among the frequency scores of the types of support that students perceived from their teachers [$F_{(3-2130)}=366.53$, $p=.00$, $p < .05$]. The frequency scores of the types of support that students perceived from their teachers was found to differ significantly in favor of the informational support ($p=.00$, $p < .05$) among the informational ($X=5.14$), appraisal ($X=4.72$), instrumental ($X=4.67$), and emotional ($X=4.54$) types of support; in favor of appraisal support ($p=.00$, $p < .05$) between the appraisal and emotional types of support and between the appraisal and instrumental ($p=.01$, $p < .05$) types of support; and in favor of instrumental support ($p=.00$, $p < .05$) between the instrumental and emotional types of support.

A significant difference was observed among the frequency scores of the types of support that students perceived from their classmates [$F_{(3-2136)}=42.49$, $p=.00$, $p < .05$]. The difference was reported significant in favor of emotional support ($p=.00$, $p < .05$) between the emotional ($X=4.22$) and appraisal types of support ($X=4.03$); in favor of informational support ($p=.00$, $p < .05$) between informational ($X=4.25$) and appraisal types of support; and in favor of instrumental support ($p=.00$, $p < .05$) between the instrumental ($X=4.24$) and appraisal types of support. However, no significant difference was

recorded between the informational and emotional types of support ($p=1.00$, $p>.05$); between the instrumental and emotional types of support ($p=1.00$, $p>.05$) and between the informational and appraisal types of support ($p=1.00$, $p>.05$).

The difference among the frequency scores of the types of support that students perceived from their close friends was found to be significant [$F_{(3-2141)}=124.20$, $p=.00$, $p<.05$]. Frequency scores of the types of support that students perceived from their close friends appeared to show a significant difference in favor of emotional support ($p=.00$, $p<.05$) among the emotional ($X=5.29$), instrumental ($X=5.23$), informational ($X=5.11$), and appraisal ($X=5.00$) types of support; in favor of informational support ($p=.00$, $p<.05$) between informational and appraisal types of support; and in favor of the instrumental support ($p=.00$, $p<.05$) among the instrumental, informational, and appraisal types of support.

A significant difference was observed among the frequency scores of the types of support that students perceived from the other people in school [$F_{(3-2133)}=25.19$, $p=.00$, $p<.05$]. This difference was significant in favor of the emotional support between emotional ($X=3.68$) and informational ($X=3.61$) ($p=.00$, $p<.05$) types of support and between emotional and instrumental ($X=3.62$) ($p=.03$, $p<.05$) types of support; in favor of appraisal support ($X=3.76$) among the appraisal, emotional, instrumental and informational types of support. On the other hand a significant difference was not reported between the instrumental and informational types of support ($p=1.00$, $p>.05$).

Table 2.

ANOVA Test Results on the Importance Scores of the Types of Perceived Social Support

Sources of Support	Sources of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	Sig. Difference
Parents	Between-Subjects	1289.19	2139				
	Measure	20.72	3	.60			B-A, C-A,
	Error	500.19	6417	6.90	88.62	.00	D-A, C-B,
	Total	1810.10	8559	.07			C-D
Teachers	Between-Subjects	1405.78	2132				
	Measure	17.02	3	.65			A-B, C-B,
	Error	406.97	6396	5.67	89.20	.00	D-B, C-A,
	Total	1829.77	8531	.06			D-A, C-D
Classmates	Between-Subjects	2154.54	2137				
	Measure	8.39	3	1.00			B-A, C-A,
	Error	556.15	6411	2.80	32.27	.00	D-A, C-B,
	Total	2719.08	8551	.08			C-D
Close Friends	Between-Subjects	1439.17	2145				
	Measure	18.91	3	.67			B-A, C-A,
	Error	395.24	6435	6.30	102.67	.00	D-A, C-B,
	Total	1853.32	8583	.06			B-D, C-D
Other People in School	Between-Subjects	3890.78	2138				
	Measure	1.42	3	1.82			B-A, B-C
	Error	480.54	6414	.47	6.34	.00	
	Total	4372.74	8555	.07			

$p<.05$, A=emotional, B=informational, C=appraisal, D=instrumental

As seen in Table 2, the ANOVA for repeated measures test resulted in a significant difference between 95% ($p<.05$) confidence interval among the importance scores of the types of social support that the students perceived from their parents [$F_{(3-2139)}=88.62$, $p=.00$, $p<.05$]. According to the results of the Bonferroni correction, which was applied to determine the sources of social support from which this difference resulted; a significant difference was determined for the importance scores of the types of perceived social support from the parents in favor of emotional support ($p=.00$, $p<.05$) among the emotional ($X=2.67$), instrumental ($X=2.60$), informational ($X=2.60$), and appraisal ($X=2.53$) types of

support; in favor of informational support ($p=.00, p<.05$) between the informational and appraisal types of support; and in favor of instrumental support ($p=.00, p<.05$) between the instrumental and appraisal types of support. However a significant difference was not reported between the instrumental and informational types of support ($p=1.00, p>.05$).

The findings revealed that the difference was significant among the importance scores of the types of support that students perceived from their teachers [$F_{(3-2132)}=89.20, p=.00, p<.05$]. The importance scores of the types of support that students perceived from their teachers was found to differ significantly in favor of informational support ($p=.00, p<.05$) among the informational ($X=2.71$), emotional ($X=2.62$), instrumental ($X=2.62$), and appraisal ($X=2.59$) types of support; in favor of emotional support ($p=.00, p<.05$) among the emotional, instrumental and appraisal types of support; and in favor of instrumental support ($p=.00, p<.05$) between the instrumental and appraisal types of support.

A significant difference was observed among the importance scores of the types of support that students perceived from their classmates [$F_{(3-2137)}=32.27, p=.00, p<.05$]. The difference was reported significant in favor of the emotional support ($p=.00, p<.05$) among the emotional ($X=2.52$), instrumental ($X=2.47$), informational ($X=2.46$), and appraisal ($X=2.43$) types of support; in favor of the informational support ($p=.00, p<.05$) between the informational and appraisal types of support; and in favor of the instrumental support ($p=.00, p<.05$) between the instrumental and appraisal types of support. On the other hand, a significant difference was not reported between the instrumental and informational types of support ($p=1.00, p>.05$).

The difference among the importance scores of the types of support that students perceived from their close friends was found to be significant [$F_{(3-2145)}=102.67, p=.00, p<.05$]. Importance scores of the types of support that students perceived from their close friends appeared to show a significant difference in favor of emotional support ($p=.00, p<.05$) among the emotional ($X=2.75$), instrumental ($X=2.70$), informational ($X=2.65$), and appraisal ($X=2.63$) types of support; in favor of the informational support ($p=.01, p<.05$) between the informational and appraisal types of support; and in favor of instrumental support ($p=.00, p<.05$) among the instrumental, informational, and appraisal types of support.

A significant difference was observed among the importance scores of the types of support that students perceived from the other people in school [$F_{(3-2138)}=6.34, p=.00, p<.05$]. This difference was reported significant in favor of the emotional support ($p=.00, p<.05$) between the emotional ($X=2.25$) and informational ($X=2.22$) types of support; and in favor of appraisal support ($p=.00, p<.05$) between the appraisal ($X=2.25$) and informational types of support. However, a significant difference was not reported between the emotional and appraisal ($p=1.00, p<.05$) types of support; between the emotional and instrumental ($X=2.23$) ($p=0.93, p>.05$) types of support; between the instrumental and informational ($p=0.24, p>.05$) types of support; and between the appraisal and instrumental types of support ($p=0.24, p>.05$).

Discussion

The studies on the subject focus on the sources (Fezer, 2008; Malecki & Demaray, 2003; Richman et al., 1998) and the frequency of the students' perception of social support and the level of importance they attach to the types of support (Cheng & Chan, 2004; Malecki & Demaray, 2006). As a result of the present study, which examined similar aspects, the frequency and importance scores of the types of perceived social support by fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students were found to show a significant difference regarding the sources of social support.

The frequency scores of the types of perceived parental social support of students were placed in order as informational, instrumental, emotional, and appraisal support, whereas the importance scores were ranked as emotional, instrumental, informational, and appraisal. This finding revealed that the students perceived the most informational support (information, advice, assistance in classes)

from their parents, whereas they attached more importance to perceiving their emotional support (love, esteem, and confidence). As Yildirim (2006) also stated, efforts of the parents to raise the academic achievements of their children, depending on the exam-focused learning process, are thought to have implications on this result. From this perspective, it may be assumed that the support of the parents through trusting their children and trying to understand them, helping them to solve their problems, avoiding judgmental behaviors, highlighting their strengths, appreciating their achievements or adopting an attitude based on love and esteem would likely to contribute to children's development. Helsen, Vollebergh, and Meeus (2000) discovered that the level of perceived parental support was positively associated with solving emotional problems. Furthermore, Malecki and Demaray (2003) revealed that the parents were effective at providing emotional and informational support. Richman et al. (1998) noted that parents provided emotional support in particular. Unlike those studies, Bauman et al. (2004) observed that the parents provided instrumental support.

The frequency scores of the types of social support perceived by the students from their teachers ranked as informational, appraisal, instrumental, and emotional support, whereas the importance scores were ranked as informational, emotional, instrumental, and appraisal types of support. One of the factors affecting this result is considered to be that teachers provide informational support, in particular, associated with their professions and the students attach more importance to informational support due to success anxiety. The fact that the interaction between the students and teachers is limited to teaching activities appears as another factor. This finding indicates that teacher and student tasks are performed in the traditional sense. The findings revealing that the teachers mainly provide informational support correspond to other research findings (Fezer, 2008; Malecki & Demaray, 2003; Ramsay, Jones, & Barker, 2007; Suldo et al., 2009). It is observed from the findings, that the students disregard the appraisal support and they perceive evaluations or feedback as negative criticisms. Therefore, it is correct to infer that teachers should avoid negative criticism while providing appraisal support.

The frequency scores of the types of social support by the students from their classmates ranked as informational, instrumental, emotional, and appraisal support, whereas the ranking of the importance scores was emotional, instrumental, informational, and appraisal. Similar to the perceived parental support, students perceive the most, informational support from their classmates, although they attach more importance to emotional support. Fezer (2008) also found that the frequency scores of perceived informational support from friends are higher compared to other types of support. The reason may be the participation of students in cooperative learning activities in class. In cooperative learning environments, students learn to achieve a specific purpose by studying in teams. Such an environment may contribute to the students' academic development, because in interactive environments, students also help their fellow peers to learn, while learning themselves (Fer & Cırık, 2007). However, students noted, in this research, that they expected assistance from their friends to overcome their emotional problems, as well as informational support. For the sake of the claimed assistance and support, it is important that the teachers educate students about social skills and team work. Moreover, during the cooperative learning process, teachers should take on the role of facilitator by encouraging students to support each other both socially and emotionally. Thus they might contribute to the multifaceted development of students.

Both the frequency and importance scores of the types of social support that students perceived from their close friends ranked as emotional, instrumental, informational, and appraisal support. This finding supports the argument of Jung (1987) and Vaux (1985) that "the type of support required by the individual should correspond to the source of support for the degree of satisfaction with the support to be at the desired level." On the other hand, this finding revealed that the students perceived emotional support the most from their best friends and attached importance to it. This finding was not surprising, because it is a well-recognized fact that the close friends primarily establish emotional bonds. There is consistency between the findings on close friend support and the findings of the research of Malecki and Demaray (2003) and Ramsay et al. (2007). However, conflicting

findings are also present in the literature. For instance Bauman et al. (2004) and Richman et al. (1998) noted that the students perceived mostly appraisal support from their friends.

Both the frequency and importance scores of the types of social support that students perceived from the other people in school ranked as appraisal, emotional, instrumental, and informational support. This finding indicated that the type of the social support provided by other people in school corresponded to students' expectations. Additionally, it revealed that the students perceived appraisal support is manifested mostly as feedback from the other people employed in the school, and that they attached importance to it. This is thought to result from the fact that the other school staff that the students come across after school hours appreciate the behaviors of the students and provide feedback. On the other hand, the ranking of emotional support in second place gave rise to the thought that the other school staff dealt with the students' emotional problems, as well. This finding is parallel to the research findings of Fezer (2008).

Conclusion

The integrated assessment of the obtained findings led to the conclusion that the types of support preferred by elementary school students vary according to the characteristics of the source of support. Based on this result, it seems to be important that the appropriate sources of support should be established, and that these sources work in collaboration within the scope required by the students. In that case, it is correct to assert that enabling individuals to select the appropriate source of support would serve their problem solving process. Thus, the support provided would satisfy them in terms of both quality and quantity.

In the present study, data were collected by means of a scale consisting of students' subjective assessments. To identify the degree of perceived social support of students, using paper-and-pencil tests might not be sufficient. Therefore, in future studies, collecting data through observation and/or interviews with parents, teachers, students, and the other school staff may increase the degree of validity, reliability, and generalizability of the research findings. Furthermore, this research does not involve the comparison of the sources of social support. Hence, a study covering a comparative analysis of the sources of social support regarding the types of support they provide may be recommended to researchers. Finally, through the collaboration of the stakeholders involved in the learning process, design of programs to build social support networks can be useful, especially for the elementary school students.

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