

CHAPTER 2

An Investigation of the Relationship between the Level of Social Support and the Attitudes of Teamwork among Teachers Working in Special Education Schools*

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INTRODUCTION

In today's world, education is the most important to human rights and is statutory guaranteed by legislative regulations. With these legal regulations, each individual's right to education is guaranteed, but it has also made it mandatory to provide the conditions that will enable using this right (Sarı & Gülsöz, 2020). In this direction, it is aimed to provide a qualified special education service to meet the needs of individuals with special education needs in our country, and many regulations and practices have been implemented following the purpose of "law, regulation, institutions, programs and practitioners" (Görgün & Melekoğlu, 2019).

These arrangements, special education services are evaluated within the general education system according to the 8th article of the Basic Law of National Education, and the duties and

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responsibilities of special education services are given to the “Guidance and Research Center” and “Special Education Schools” in the Ministry of National Education. Since the special education teachers in these institutions are the individuals who carry out the practice, they have essential duties and responsibilities. In addition, special education teachers must have performance and positive personality traits in this context. Because teachers’ emotional states and the stress they experience can directly affect teachers’ behaviors and attitudes toward their students (Dalkılıç, 2014).

Given that teachers working in special education schools take on duties and responsibilities in an intense and stressful environment, it is necessary to establish healthy relationships and interactions among teachers with the institution and environment in which they work within the special education system. Teachers working in the special education system can be more effective and active than their families in terms of providing the skills that individuals with special needs need to acquire. However, the problems teachers face in the education system can negatively affect special education teachers in fulfilling their duties and responsibilities. In this context, “the social support levels of teachers working in special education schools and their behaviors and attitudes towards teamwork” are essential. Because the problems and stress sources faced by special education teachers in the institutions they work in can directly affect the success of the teachers in the system (Ronfelt, Farmer, Mcqueen & Grissom, 2015).

While the development and change experienced in recent years have redefined the education system, it has also redefined the teachers, who are accepted as the fundamental element of education within the system (Boyacı, 2017). In this redefinition, teachers’ “social support levels and attitudes towards teamwork” emerge as an essential issue discussed within the system. Because teachers’ “social support levels and attitudes towards teamwork”

concern and affect both the education system and all areas of life as a result of the education system. Especially when this field is “special education,” the issue becomes more critical (Gül, 2004).

In today’s education system, teachers’ professional solidarity, democratic prestige, and willingness for new practices have become dependent on their social support and teamwork. This issue is more critical in special education, a particular field (Özmen, Aküzüm, & Sünkür, 2012). Social support for teachers; It means the support provided by the environment in a busy and stressful working environment. The way to provide, develop and organize this support is to work as a team (Kozacıoğlu & Gördürür, 1995; Yıldırım, 1997).

The study aimed to determine the relationship between the social support levels of teachers working in special education schools and their attitudes toward teamwork. For this purpose, answers to the following questions were sought.

- Is there a relationship between the social support levels of teachers working in special education schools and their attitudes toward teamwork?
- Do teachers’ perceptions of social support in special education schools significantly predict their attitudes toward teamwork?

METHOD

In this chapter, the design of the research, the study group, data collection, and data analysis are included.

Research Model

The research, which aims to determine the relationship between the social support levels of teachers working in special education schools and their attitudes toward teamwork, has been designed as a quantitative study. The research is a descriptive study in the

context of relational screening and research design. Relational studies in the screening model are research models that attempt to reflect a social situation or phenomenon naturally by two or more variables (Karasar, 2008).

Participants

The research scope consists of teachers working in special education schools affiliated with the Ministry of National Education in the 2021-2022 academic year. The research sample group consists of teachers working in special education schools in the provinces of Uşak and Denizli. The data for this study were collected from voluntary online responses to data collection tools through participation information and consent forms. Within the scope of the research, 226 forms that were entirely returned from the teachers were evaluated.

Data Collection Tools

In order to collect data in the study, Personal Information Form, Professional Social Support Scale, and Teamwork Attitude Scale were used. The necessary permissions for the research application were obtained from the researchers who developed the scales and from the Ege University Publication Ethics Board and the General Directorate of Special Education and Guidance Services affiliated with the Ministry of National Education for the application.

Personal Information Form

The personal information form contains questions for obtaining information about the gender, age, professional work period of the participants, the department they graduated from, and the type of institution where the participant works.

Professional Social Support Scale

The Professional Social Support Scale developed by Kaner in 2007 was used to evaluate teachers' perceived professional social support. The scale consists of 44 items and five sub-dimensions. These are "colleague support, student support, management support, effective teaching support and family support". Items in the scale are scored with a Likerttype scale. These are "not at all true: 1 and very true: 5". The Cronbach's alpha coefficients were determined to be 0.95 for the whole scale and between 0.69 and 0.95 for the subscales (Deveci & Ergin, 2018).

Teamwork Attitude Scale

In order to determine the teamwork perceived by teachers, the Teamwork Attitude Scale developed by Gülbahar in 2020 was used. The scale consists of 13 items and is a Likert type scale. Each item is scored as "I strongly disagree: 1 and I strongly agree: 5". The KMO compliance measure value of the scale is 0.92, and the reliability coefficient is 0.90 (Gülbahar, 2020).

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using the SPSS 24 program. As a result of the normality tests performed, it was determined that the kurtosis: 1.16 and skewness:1.65 values of the data were among the values accepted in the literature and showed a normal distribution (Kalaycı, 2019). In addition, the data showed a normal distribution according to the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (.16, $p > .05$) has been confirmed. In this context, it was found appropriate to perform parametric tests on the data. In the analyses, independent tests and One way ANOVA tests were applied from

parametric tests. The relationship between the total scores from the scales was examined by Pearson correlation analysis. Multiple linear regression analysis “Enter method” was used for the effect analysis.

Findings

The research was conducted with teachers working in special education schools, 96 teachers are women, and 130 are men. 54 teachers working in special education schools are between one and five years, 32 are between six and ten years, 43 are between eleven and fifteen years, 46 are between sixteen and twenty years, and 51 are over twenty-one years has a term of service. In addition, 96 of the teachers are special education teachers graduate, and 130 have different undergraduate degrees (15 guidance and counseling, 73 classroom teachers, 22 preschool, 20 other branches; painting, music, and physical education teachers) and have a special education certificate and works as a special education teacher.

In the study, the Professional Social Support Scale and the Teamwork Attitude Scale were applied to the teachers. Table 1, shows the mean scores of the scale.

Table 1. Mean Scores of Teachers’ Perceptions of Social Support and Teamwork Attitudes

Variables	Mean	SD
Management Support	2.86	.84
Colleague Support	3.14	.61
Family Support	3.16	.69
Student Support	3.96	.79
Effective Teaching Support	2.44	.94
General Professional Support	3.14	.61
Teamwork Attitude	4.35	.56

When the averages of teachers’ views on professional social support were examined in Table 1, Effective teaching support

(2.44±.94) and the average of opinions about management support (2.86±.84) at a low level, colleague support (3.14±.61), family support (3.16±.69) at the intermediate level, while student support (3.96±.79) has been determined to be at a high level. It is seen that teachers receive more positive support from student support. The average of teachers' opinions about teamwork attitude (4.35±.56) was at a high level. It can be stated that the attitudes of teachers working in special education schools towards teamwork are positive, and they support teamwork.

The results of the Pearson correlation analysis applied to the relationship between social support and teamwork of teachers are included in Table 2.

Table 2. Correlation of the Relationship Between Social Support and Teamwork						
Variables	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Management Support	.93**	.44**	.14*	.70**	.93**	.22**
2. Colleague Support	1	.59**	.38**	.59**	.95**	.34**
3. Family Support		1	.39**	.044	.59**	.20**
4. Student Support			1	-.093	.38**	.42**
5. Effective Teaching Support				1	.59**	.56
6. General Professional Social Support					1	.34**
7. Team Work						1

In Table 2, in terms of the opinions of the teachers in the research group; between professional social support and teamwork attitude ($r=.034$; $p<.001$), Decoupling between management support and teamwork attitude ($r=.022$; $p<.001$), between professional social support and teamwork attitude ($r=.034$; $p<.001$), between family support and teamwork attitude ($r=.020$; $p<.001$), between student support and teamwork attitude ($r=.042$; $p<.001$), between adequate

teaching support and teamwork attitude ($r=.056$; $p<.001$) it was found that there was a significant positive relationship. Among the dimensions of the social support scale, there is a significant, positive relationship between management support and effective teaching support ($r=.070$; $p<.001$). This situation reveals that the support of the school administration is considered very important by teachers for effective teaching. Between management support and student support ($r=.014$; $p<.001$), it was observed that there is a low level of association in a positive direction.

The results of multiple linear regression analysis on the effect of teachers' social support on teamwork attitude are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of the Effect of Social Support on Teamwork Attitude

Predictive Variables	Team Work	
	Model	
	B	t
Model		
Management Support	.432	-1.943*
Colleague Supprt	.861	3.476**
Family Supprt	.215	-2.540*
Student Support	.225	2.710**
General Professional Social Support	-.123	-1.324
R ²	.249	
ΔR ²	.232	
F	14.61*	

* $p<.001$, ** $p<.05$

In Table 3, in the multiple linear regression model, there are professional social support and management support, effective

teaching support, colleague support, student support, family support and sub-dimension variables. The common predictive effect of the variables in the model is statistically significant and explains 24.9% of the variance in the dependent variable ($F: 14.61, p < .001, R^2: .249$).

When the effects of the variables are examined one by one, it is seen that the sub-dimension of colleague support on teamwork attitude ($\beta: .861, t: 3.476, p < .001$), management support on teamwork attitude ($\beta: .432, t: -1.943, p < .001$) was determined to have a significant effect. Student support is also an effective variable in teachers' teamwork attitude. The lowest effect on teamwork ($\beta: -.123, t: -1.324, p > .05$) belongs to the dimension of effective teaching support.

It was observed that professional social support and its sub-dimensions have an explanatory effect of approximately 25% on the attitudes of teachers working in private education institutions towards teamwork. This situation can be considered vital as it shows that teachers' performance in private education institutions in teamwork may differ depending on whether the social support is sufficient.

Conclusion, Discussion, and Suggestions

Considering the relationship between the social support levels of teachers working in special education schools and their attitudes toward teamwork, there is a significant relationship between professional social support and teamwork attitudes regarding the opinions of teachers working in special education institutions. It was determined that there was a positive relationship between management support and family support dimensions and teamwork attitude, a positive relationship between professional support, student support, effective teaching support, and teamwork attitude, and a positive relationship between management support

and effective teaching support dimensions. It was determined that there was a positive and significant relationship between management support and student support dimensions. It can be said that there is a generally positive relationship between professional social support and teachers' teamwork attitude, and the tendency to teamwork increases as professional social support increases. In the literature, Deveci and Engin determined a positive relationship between teachers' perceptions of professional social support and their ability to communicate with the environment (Deveci & Engin, 2018). In the research, it is seen that professional social support is supportive of the effective communication and cooperation competencies of teachers working in special education institutions. Chinomona et al. (2013) and Sokoll (2014) determined a positive relationship between trust and commitment to the work environment of employees who receive support from their managers. The available findings in the literature coincide with the finding in this study that there is a significant and positive relationship between professional social support and teamwork attitude in terms of the opinions of teachers working in private education institutions. It can be said that management and environmental social support contributes positively to teachers' cooperation skills.

When the results about whether the teachers working in special education schools significantly predict their social support levels and attitudes towards teamwork, there are professional social support and sub-dimension variables in the multiple linear regression model. The common predictive effect of the variables in the model is statistically significant and explains 24.9% of the variance in the dependent variable. It was determined that the colleague support sub-dimension significantly affected the teamwork attitude. After that, it was determined that the management support affected the teamwork attitude. Third, student

support is an effective variable in teachers' teamwork attitude. It has been determined that professional social support and its sub-dimensions have an explanatory effect of approximately 25% on the attitudes of teachers working in special education institutions towards teamwork. This shows that professional social support is a highly determinant variable in the teamwork performance of teachers working in these institutions. Similar to the results of our study in the literature, it has been determined that the institutional and environmental support of special education teachers positively affects the occupational health of the employees (Sucuoğlu, Dilken, Demir, Ünlü & Şen, 2010). In another study, Karakuş (2017) noted that the professional solidarity and professional resilience levels of teachers working in special education institutions differ depending on social support. Sokoll (2014) also reported that employees' commitment to the work environment differs depending on social support.

As a result, it was seen that teachers working in special education attach great importance to colleague and management support elements and that these social support dimensions have a high-level, significant effect on their attitudes towards teamwork. In addition, the social support provided to the teachers will contribute to the strengthening of the teachers' optimistic perspective, the positive change in their ability to cooperate with the work and social environment, and teamwork skills.

SUGGESTIONS

- A mixed-method research with quantitative and qualitative support can be conducted to determine the implicit factors underlying teachers' current perceptions. By selecting sample groups from different regions of the research, new research can determine the general status of teachers working in private education institutions in Turkey regarding professional social support.

- On the subject of professional social support, research can be conducted with a face-to-face focus group interview with teachers by creating a sample group from private education institutions from different regions.

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