



Determination Of Social Support Perception Levels Of Hotel Employees During Covid-19 Process

Covid-19 Sürecinde Otel Çalışanlarının Sosyal Destek Algı Düzeylerinin Belirlenmesi

Handan ÖZÇELİK BOZKURT¹

¹ Assistant Prof. Dr. Sinop University School of Tourism and Hotel Management, Department of Gastronomy and Culinary Arts, Sinop, Turkey

ABSTRACT

During the Covid-19 pandemic, many sectors have reached the stage of organizational downsizing or organizational bankruptcies. In particular, the tourism sector is among the sectors most affected by the pandemic. In this challenging process, employees' perceptions of social support are important in terms of their mental health and happiness levels. With this in mind, social support perception levels of employees of 5-star hotels in Antalya were measured. A three-dimensional social support perception scale was used to measure the perception level. In the study, whose sample consisted of 165 participants, it was determined that the employees perceived a high level of social support from the "family" group. Then, it was observed that the participants perceived social support from the "friends" group at a high level and the "significant other" group at a moderate level, respectively. In line with the findings obtained within the scope of the research, various inferences were made and suggestions were given.

Keywords: Social Support Perception, Tourism, Covid-19

ÖZET

Covid-19 pandemi sürecinde birçok sektör organizasyonel küçülme veya iflas aşamasına gelmiştir. Özellikle turizm sektörü pandemiden en çok etkilenen sektörler arasında yer almaktadır. Bu zorlu süreçte çalışanların sosyal destek algıları ruh sağlıkları ve mutluluk düzeyleri açısından önemlidir. Bu düşünceden hareketle Antalya ilindeki 5 yıldızlı otel çalışanlarının sosyal destek algı düzeyleri ölçülmüştür. Algı düzeylerini ölçmek için üç boyutlu sosyal destek algı ölçeği kullanılmıştır. Örneklemi 165 katılımcının oluşturduğu çalışmada, çalışanların "aile" grubundan yüksek düzeyde sosyal destek algıladıkları belirlenmiştir. Ardından, katılımcıların sosyal desteği sırasıyla "arkadaş" grubundan yüksek düzeyde ve "önemli diğer" grubundan orta düzeyde algıladıkları görülmüştür. Araştırma kapsamında elde edilen bulgular doğrultusunda çeşitli çıkarımlar yapılmış ve önerilerde bulunulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sosyal Destek Algısı, Turizm, Covid-19.

1. INTRODUCTION

In addition to affecting human health, the Covid-19 pandemic has deeply affected many sectors, especially in economic terms. Tourism is one of the sectors that have been adversely affected by this pandemic. Tourism revenues decreased significantly in this process (UNWTO, 2019). Travel bans, especially during full closure periods, brought the tourism industry to a standstill. In periods other than the full closure application, rules for working with half-capacity customers have been introduced. These practices naturally affect the direct or indirect stakeholders of the tourism sector negatively.

In this period of organizational downsizing and bankruptcies, it is quite normal for tourism sector employees to experience job insecurity. The psychology of the tourism sector employees affected by the said negativities may also be negatively affected. Because uncertainty affects human psychology negatively and cause anxiety (Li et al., 2020). In this case, auxiliary factors are needed to positively support the psychology of tourism employees. One of these factors is the perception of social support. Because it is sometimes possible to reduce the effects of the problems experienced in the workplace with the social environment.

Some studies have been done on the perception of social support before, but it has been observed that these are generally aimed at employees from different sectors (eg. Swanson & Power, 2001; Kossek et al., 2011; Halis & Demirel, 2016; Usman, et al., 2021). In the national and international literature on this subject, studies on tourism are limited (eg. Lin, Wong & Ho, 2013; Lin et al., 2014; Güldü, 2019; Kautish, Walia & Kour, 2021). Based on existing reasons, this study aims to determine the social support perception levels of accommodation business employees during the Covid-19 pandemic process. Thus, it will be determined whether the employees who are in a difficult period in terms of physiological, economic, and psychological conditions receive support from their social environment. In addition, it is aimed to present concrete data to the macro and micro level managers of the sector and to make recommendations if necessary. Because a healthy individual means a healthy society.

2. PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT

In the context of both formal support groups and informal helping relationships, social support is defined as social resources that individuals consider appropriate or actually provided to them by non-professionals. Therefore, social support is based on interpersonal relationships. These relationships significantly support people's actions. On the other hand, supported behaviors add relational meanings to interactions (Gottlieb & Bergen, 2010). Although the concept of social support is perceived as a concept outside of work, individuals generally perceive social support from their colleagues, subordinates, and superiors and studies have shown that perceived social support in one's life has a significant effect on work stress (Lindorff, 2001). The factors affecting perceived social support were examined by the researchers. An individual's family (spouse, mother, father, siblings, children, relatives...) is of great importance in the perception of social support. On the other hand, as a result of the research, it has been determined that the personality traits of the individual have a significant effect on the perception of social support (Bowling, et al., 2004; Bowling, et al., 2005).

Perceived social support has important effects both in the private and business life of the individual. In general, since the perception of social support is effective in meeting the need for belonging (social needs), which is the third step of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, it is of vital importance for the individual to get used to the new social environment and to develop self-confidence (Polatçı, 2015). Caplan (1974) analyzed the types of social support under five different factors. These; emotional support, appreciation support, financial (instrumental) support, information support, and togetherness support.

It was proposed by Cohen and Wills (1985) that there are two basic effects, the basic effect model and the buffer effect model, which help to explain how and why social support affects the individual against stress, its negative consequences and diseases, and which are related to examining the relationships between social support and health theory exists. According to the basic effect model, social support always has positive effects on the physical health and well-being of the person. It is argued that in any case, the person will be adversely affected when social support is deprived. According to the buffer effect model, unless there is a situation that will cause stress, the lack of social support does not have a negative effect on the physical health and well-being of the person (Cohen ve Wills, 1985).

3. METHOD

The main purpose of this research is to reveal the social support perception levels of the employees in the 5-star hotel businesses operating in Antalya/Turkey. In this context, the questionnaire technique was used to measure the perceptions of the employees.

Zimet et al.'s (1988) The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) with 12 items including "family", "friends", and "significant other" dimensions were used to explain the social support variable. The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support MSPSS is an easy-to-use and short scale that subjectively evaluates the adequacy of perceived social support from three different sources (Zimet et al., 1988). The scale was translated into Turkish by Eker and Arkar (1995). Sample items from this measure are "*There is a special person who is around when I am in need*", "*My family is willing to help me make decisions*". The scale is Likert type and is graded as "(1) Strongly Disagree – (5) Totally Agree". In order to reveal the social support perception levels of the employees, the means of the answers given to the scale expressions will be revealed.

In the first part of the questionnaire, there is demographic information for employees and descriptive information for hotel businesses. In the second part of the questionnaire, there is the scale of perception of social support. When the reliability coefficient of the scale used in the questionnaire was examined, it was determined that the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient (α) = 0.88. Therefore, it is seen that the scale is at a reliable level (Büyüköztürk, 2008).

The universe of the research consists of employees working in 5-star hotel businesses in Antalya. Since it is not possible to reach all employees, the obligation to use the sampling technique has arisen. Kline (1994) states that the sample size should be 10 times the number of items in the scale. There are 12 items in the scale and the number of questionnaires obtained within the scope of the research is 165. The survey application of the research was carried out in July and August 2021.

Due to time, cost, and pandemic conditions, it was decided to obtain the survey online. The survey link was shared with the human resources department manager of 6 hotels in Kemer and Kundu region. A total of 165 questionnaires were filled in completely. Therefore, a total of 165 survey data obtained from the employee were analyzed in the computer environment. In order to determine the demographic information of the employees, the frequency distributions were examined and the average values for the scale expressions were calculated.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

The findings obtained from the analysis of the data in the research are included in this section. The frequency distributions of the demographic variables of the employees working in the hotel enterprises are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable (n=165)		N	P
Age	18–25 years	122	73,93
	26–33 years	25	15,15
	34–41 years	12	7,22
	42–49 years	5	3,03
	Missing	1	0,60
Gender	Female	109	66,06
	Male	54	32,72
	Missing	2	1,21
Marital Status	Married	23	13,19
	Single	140	84,84
	Missing	2	1,21
Education	Secondary education and lower	3	1,81
	High school	16	9,69
	Associate degree	27	16,36
	Bachelor's degree	113	68,48
	Postgraduate	4	2,42
	Missing	2	1,21
Department	Food & Beverage (Service/Kitchen)	84	50,90
	Front office	23	13,93
	Sales and marketing	9	5,45
	Human resources	7	4,24
	Housekeeping	4	2,42
	Other	36	21,81
	Missing	2	1,21
Working duration in tourism sector	less than 1 year	63	38,18
	1–5 years	62	37,57
	6–10 years	17	10,30
	11–15 years	15	9,09
	16–20 years	3	1,81
	Missing	5	3,03
Working duration at the current organization	less than 1 year	99	59,99
	1–5 years	54	32,72
	6–10 years	6	3,63
	Missing	6	3,63

When the distribution is examined, it is noteworthy that the participants are mostly young (n=18-25; 73,93%). Similarly, it is seen that the participants are predominantly women. It is seen that 66.06% of the participants are women (n= 109). Participants are mostly single (n=140; 84,84 % and their education is at the bachelor's degree (n=113; 68,48%). The unit they work in is the Food & Beverage (Service/Kitchen) department (n=84; 50,90%). The working duration of the participants in the sector is mainly less than one year (n=63; 38,18%) and 1-5 years (n=62; 37,57%). The working duration at the current organization of the participants is mostly less than one year (n=99; 59,99%).

Table 2: Arithmetic Mean and Standard Deviation Values for "Family", a Sub-Dimension of the Perception of Social Support Variable

Items	Mean	s.d
My family (for example, my mother, father, wife, children, siblings) really try to help me.	4,29	0,98
I get the emotional help and support I need from my family (for example, from my mother, father, spouse, children, siblings).	4,15	1,16
I can talk about my problems with my family (for example, with my mother, father, wife, children, siblings).	3,94	1,30
My family (for example, my mother, father, wife, children, siblings) is willing to help me make my decisions.	4,18	1,09
GENERAL MEAN	4,14	0,92

Table 2 shows the arithmetic mean and standard deviation values of the "family" dimension, which is a sub-dimension of the social support perception level of the employees participating in the research. Accordingly, with an average of 4,29 in the related scale dimension, the statement "My family (for example, my mother, father, wife, children, siblings) really try to help me" has the highest score. On the other hand, the statement "I can talk about my problems with my family (for example, with my mother, father, wife, children, siblings)" has the lowest score with

an average of 3,94. It is seen that the general average of the answers given to the items in the sub-dimension of the scale is high with 4.14.

Table 3: Arithmetic Mean and Standard Deviation Values for "Friends", a Sub-Dimension of the Perception of Social Support Variable

Items	Mean	s.d
My friends really try to help me.	3,87	1,16
I can trust my friends when things go wrong.	3,74	1,28
I have friends with whom I can share my joys and sorrows.	4,23	1,07
I can talk about my problems with my friends.	4,06	1,13
GENERAL MEAN	3,97	1,02

Table 3 shows the arithmetic mean and standard deviation values of the "friends" dimension, which is a sub-dimension of the social support perception level of the employees participating in the research. Accordingly, with an average of 4,23 in the related scale dimension, the statement "I have friends with whom I can share my joys and sorrows" has the highest score. The item "I can trust my friends when things go wrong" has the lowest average. When the general average is examined, it can be said that the social support perceptions of the participants to their friends are in the high-level range of 3.97.

Table 4: Arithmetic Mean and Standard Deviation Values for "Significant Other", a Sub-Dimension of the Perception of Social Support Variable

Items	Mean	s.d
Apart from my family and friends, there is someone (for example, dating, engaged, verbal, relative, neighbor, doctor) who is there for me when I need it.	3,38	1,56
There is one person (for example, dating, engaged, verbal, relative, neighbor, doctor) with whom I can share joys and sorrows, other than my family and friends.	3,59	1,50
There is one person (for example, dating, engaged, verbal, relative, neighbor, doctor) who cares about my feelings other than my family and friends.	3,49	1,51
Apart from my family and friends, there is one person (eg. dating, engaged, verbal, relative, neighbor, doctor) who really comforts me.	3,46	1,52
GENERAL MEAN	3,48	1,37

Table 4 shows the arithmetic mean and standard deviation values of the "significant other" dimension, which is a sub-dimension of the social support perception level of the employees participating in the research. Accordingly, with an average of 3,59 in the related scale dimension, the statement "There is a person (for example, a date, fiancée, verbal, relative, neighbor, doctor) with whom I can share my joys and sorrows, apart from my family and friends" has the highest score. On the other hand, the statement "There is a person who is there for me when I need other than my family and friends (for example, dating, engaged, verbal, relative, neighbor, doctor)" has the lowest score with an average of 3,38. It is seen that the general arithmetic mean of the "significant other" dimension is at a moderate level with 3,48.

5. CONCLUSION

The sample of this study, which was carried out to determine the social support perception levels of hotel management employees, consists of 165 5-star participants in Antalya. When the responses of the employees to the scale statements are examined, it is seen that the "family" dimension has the highest average. Based on this result, it can be said that the group that employees see as the closest and most supportive to them is family members. The high level of this general mean (general mean=4.14) can be supportive in increasing the happiness levels of hotel employees, especially in the current pandemic conditions. In addition, it can be expected that the said average is at a very high level and it is the desired result. The expression " My family (for example, my mother, father, wife, children, siblings) really try to help me " with the highest average indicates that employees can generally receive support from family members.

When the general average of the answers given to the sub-dimensions of the scale is evaluated, the second group that employees receive social support from is the "friends" group. When the general average of the answers given to this sub-dimension is examined, it is seen that it is in the high level (general mean: 3.97) range. This result reveals that employees receive support primarily from their families and then from their friend groups.

The "significant other" group has the lowest average (general mean = 348) among the groups that employees receive social support from. This group includes individuals such as dating, engaged, verbal, relative, neighbor, doctor. This result may suggest that this group is not close enough and reliable. From another point of view, individuals do not expose their weak or needy aspects to this group. While the person may be clearer towards his/her spouse with whom he/she shares everything, he/she may try to appear stronger towards his/her fiancée or flirt. It is understood by the low average of the answers (3.38) given that the participants do not get enough support when they need help with the expression "Apart from my family and friends, there is someone (for example, dating engaged, verbal, relative, neighbor, doctor) who is there for me when I need it".

In the study conducted by Kautish, Walia & Kour (2021) on tourism and hospitality students, the scale was sized as family, friends and teacher groups. In this study, while the family group had the highest average, it was followed by the teacher and the friend group, respectively. In other studies on the subject related to the tourism sector, the average values of the scale could not be found. Therefore, it was not possible to compare the results.

Tourism, which is one of the sector groups that has the most concern about job loss and uncertainty during the pandemic process, is likely to cause problems such as anxiety, stress, depression, etc. on employees. In the light of the findings, it can be said that hotel employees have overcome their uncertainty concerns during the covid-19 pandemic period, especially with the support they receive from "family" members. The existence of this support is important for the understanding of a healthy individual and a healthy society. In addition, when the average of the participants' perception of social support is examined, it is seen that they are in the high-level range.

REFERENCES

- Bowling, N. A., Beehr, T. A., Johnson, A. L., Semmer, N. K., Hendricks, E. A. & Webster, H. A. (2004), "Explaining Potential Antecedents Of Workplace Social Support: Reciprocity or Attractiveness?", *Journal Of Occupational Health Psychology*, 9(4): 339-350.
- Bowling, N. A., Beehr, T. A. & Swader, W. M. (2005), "Giving and Receiving Social Support at Work: The Roles of Personality and Reciprocity", *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 67(3):476-489.
- Büyüköztürk, S. (2008). *Sosyal Bilimler İçin Veri Analizi El Kitabı. İstatistik, Araştırma Deseni SPSS Uygulamaları ve Yorum* (6. baskı). Ankara: Pegem A.
- Caplan G. (1974). *Support Systems and Community Mental Health: Lectures on Conceptual Development*. Behav Public, New York.
- Cohen, S. & Wills T. A. (1985). "Stress, Social Support and Buffering Hypothesis", *Psychological Bulletin*, 98(2): 310-357.
- Eker, D. & Arkar, H. (1995). "Perceived Social Support: Psychometric Properties of the MSPSS in Normal and Pathological Groups in A Developing Country." *Soc Psychiatry Psychiatric Epidemiol*, 30:121-126.
- Gottlieb, B. H., & Bergen, A. E. (2010). "Social Support Concepts and Measures." *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 69(5): 511-520.
- Güldü, Ö. (2019). "Konaklama İşletmesi Çalışanlarının Algıladıkları Sosyal Desteğin İşe Bağlılık Düzeylerine Etkisi: Uzlaşabilirlik Kişilik Özelliğinin Aracılık Rolü." *Turizm Çalışmaları Dergisi*, 1 (1): 17-28.
- Halis, M. & Demirel, Y. (2016). "Sosyal Desteğin Örgütsel Soyutlama (Dışlanma) Üzerine Etkisi." *Kastamonu Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi*, 11 (1): 318-335.
- Kautish, P., Walia, S., & Kour, P. (2021). "The Moderating Influence of Social Support on Career Anxiety and Career Commitment: An Empirical Investigation from India." *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 38(8): 782-801.
- Kline, P. (1994). *An Easy Guide to Factor Analysis*. New York: Routledge.
- Kossek, E. E., Pichler, S., Bodner, T., & Hammer, L. B. (2011). "Workplace Social Support and Work-Family Conflict: A Meta-Analysis Clarifying the Influence of General and Work-Family-Specific Supervisor and Organizational Support." *Personnel Psychology*, 64(2): 289-313.
- Li J, Xia Y, Cheng X & Li S (2020). "Fear of Uncertainty Makes You More Anxious? Effect of Intolerance of Uncertainty on College Students' Social Anxiety: A Moderated Mediation Model." *Front. Psychol.* 11:565107. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2020.565107.
- Lin, J. H., Wong, J. Y., & Ho, C. H. (2014). "Beyond the Work-to-Leisure Conflict: A High Road Through Social Support for Tourism Employees." *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 16(6): 614-624.
- Lin, Y. S., Huang, W. S., Yang, C. T., & Chiang, M. J. (2014). "Work-Leisure Conflict and Its Associations with Well-Being: The Roles of Social Support, Leisure Participation and Job Burnout." *Tourism Management*, (45): 244-252.
- Lindorff, M. (2001). "Are They Lonely at the Top? Social Relationships and Social Support Among Australian Managers". *Work & Stress*, 15: 274-282.
- Polatçı, S. (2015). "The Effects of Perceived Organizational and Social Support on Life Satisfaction: The Mediation Role of Job And Marriage Satisfaction." *The International Journal of Economic and Social Research*, 11(2): 25-44.

Swanson, V. & Power, K., (2001). Employees' Perceptions of Organizational Restructuring: The Role of Social Support. *Work & Stress* (15): 161-178.

UNWTO (World Tourism Organization) (2019). *Global Report on Women in Tourism – Second Edition*, Madrid. *World Tourism Barometer*, 18(2), May.

Usman, M., Cheng, J., Ghani, U., Gul, H. & Shah, W.U. (2021). "Social Support and Perceived Uncertainties During COVID-19: Consequences For Employees' Wellbeing." *Current Psychology*. (23): 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-021-02293-3>

Zimet, G. D., Dahlem, N. W., Zimet, S. G., & Farley, G. K. (1988). "The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support." *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 52(1), 30-41.