PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT AMONG PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS IN SAGAING UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION

Khin Khin Thant [1] and Bay Lar [2]

Abstract

The main purpose of this study was to study perceived social support of pre-service teachers in Sagaing University of Education. The study conducted descriptive research design and quantitative survey method. The participants in this study were 360 pre-service teachers including 180 males and 180 females from Sagaing University of Education. In this study, the student's perceived social support was assessed by using Interpersonal Support Evaluation List (ISEL) Questionnaire including 4 subscales: appraisal support, tangible support, self -esteem support and belonging support. The whole scale of Interpersonal Support Evaluation List (ISEL) Questionnaire indicated satisfactory internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha = 0.88. And data analysis, descriptive statistics, independent sample *t*-test were used in this study. Concerning dimensions of perceived social support, there was significant difference only in tangible support and self-esteem support by gender at $p<0.01$ and $p<0.05$ levels. It was found that males had higher tangible support than females whereas females had higher self-esteem support than males. Afterwards, fifth-year students had higher perceived social support than first-year students. The result highlighted that the more matured the students were, the more perceived social support they had. The *t*-test result showed that there was significant difference in tangible support and belonging support by grade at $p<0.01$ and $p<0.05$ levels. It may be due to the fact that as fifth-year students were aged, they can communicate with the people well and have more experiences on the social activities.

Keywords: social support, perceived social support, pre-service teachers

Introduction

Man takes birth in society and performs all activities in society. Therefore, man has been called a social culture. Man progresses and grows with operation of other persons. Thus, social operation, integration, and support are very much important for individual in their life. Social support can lead to improvement in several area of health and well- being. Social support can be described as providing of assistance or comfort to other people to help cope with a variety of problem. Social support develops strong interpersonal relationship among the people, which play significant role in practical life (Mahanta & Aggarwal, 2013; cited in Khan, 2015).

Social support such as advice and encouragement may increase the probability for students to become more prone play an active role in handing stress and problem solving, leading to high levels of life satisfaction among students. Perceived support is the subjective judgment that family and friends would provide quality assistance with future stressor. People with high perceived support believe that they can count on their family and friends to provide quality assistance during times of trouble (Gordon, 2011).

Social support is an important element in student's life. It may come from different sources such as family, friends, teachers, community, or any social groups to which one is affiliated. In early childhood, parent support seems to be most salient to develop.

[1] Associate Professor, Department of Educational Psychology, Sagaing University of Education
[2] Senior Assistant Teacher, BEHS (Branch) Naung Hlaing, Pyin Oo Lwin Township

However, as children transition into middle and high school, perceptions of peer and teacher support tend to gain relative importance over parental support. Social support can come in the form of the tangible assistance provided by others when needed which includes appraisal of different situations, effective coping strategies, and emotional support (Dzulkifli & Yasin, 2009). Social support is an integral aspect of the environment and a well-known widely recognized concept associated with positive health practices that influence a person's physical and psychological well- being (Roth, 2004). In thinking more broadly, social support is an essential component of many people lives and all of the students participated in giving and receiving social support interaction every day.

Aim of the study

The main aim of the study is to investigate perceived social support of pre-service teachers in Sagaing University of Education.

The specific objectives are as follows:

1. To examine the levels of perceived social support of pre-service teachers in Sagaing University of Education.

2. To analyze perceived social support of pre-service teachers by gender.

3. To investigate perceived social support of pre-service teachers by grade.

Definitions of the Key Terms

Social Support	:	The specific actual transaction which took place between two or more people in which emotional concern, instrumental aid, information, or appraisal occurred (House & Khan, 1985).
Perceived Social Support	:	It is defined as a person's beliefs he will get support when he needs it (Day & Livingstone, 2003; cited in Barusman & Mihdar, 2014).

Review of Related Literature

Nature of Social Support

Social support is the physical and emotional comfort given to us by our family, friends, co-workers and others. Social support consists of acceptance, belonging, appraisal and coping, assistance, behavioral and cognitive guidance, modeling, tangible assistance and material aid. Social support help when coping with life stress, crisis, mental illness, physical illness, feeling of loss, loneliness, adolescent depressing, and performance related to academics. The term social supports, and related terms such as social integration and social networks, are often used interchangeably to refer to three distinct aspects of social relationships their existence or quantity, their formal structure, and their functional content or the degree to which they involve flows of affect or emotional concern, instrumental or tangible aid, information, and the like (House & Khan, 1985).

Theoretical Perspective of Social Support

Social support research should have a basis in theories about how social relationships influence our cognitions, emotions, behaviors and biology. The relationship perspective predicts that the effects of social support cannot be separated from relationship processes that often co-occur with support, such as companionship, intimacy, and low social conflict. One possibility is that cognitions about social environment are strongly interrelated and overlapping and that measures of support cannot be discriminated from closely associated concepts such as low conflict, companionship, intimacy, and social skills. Relationship satisfaction is defined as global, subjective evaluations of relationships and intimacy as the "bonded, connected, and close feelings people have toward each other" (Barerra, 1986). The mechanisms that have been proposed tend to be the same as those hypothesized to link social support concepts and include evaluating self–esteem contributing to positive appraisals, and promoting active coping with stressful events (Sarason, Sarason & Pierce, 1990).

Tardy's Model of Social Support

Tardy (1985) proposed a comprehensive and multidimensional model of social support. In his view, social support may be conceptualized in terms of direction (i.e., given or received), disposition (i.e., available or actually utilized), description and evaluation (where description refers to qualitative aspects of support and evaluation refers to satisfaction with support), content (i.e., type of support), and in terms of social network, which addresses the specific individuals who either give or receive support, such as family or friends.

Types of Social Support

Tardy (1992) conceptualized four types of support. These include emotional, instrumental, informational, and appraisal support.

Emotional Support (Belonging Support)

This consists of comfort and security from others leading the affected person to believe that he/she is cared for by others (Sarason, et.al., 1990). Emotional support conveys the idea that a person is valued for his or her own worth and is accepted. This kind of support may result in the enhancement of self- esteem (Wan, Jaccard& Ramey, 1996).

Instrumental support (Tangible Support)

This refers to acts such as loaning money or giving of one's time. It is also called tangible support because it involves the giving of material resources or services (Wan, Jaccard& Ramey, 1996).

Informational support (Self-esteem Support)

This consists of mainly of advice and counsel. While this might be helpful, it is the experience that often times people ask for advice when all they want is for someone to listen to them. If you are a good listener, the persons may believe that you have given them good advice, when what actually the case is that they feel understood (Barbour,1990).

Appraisal support

This refers to evaluative feedback. Every person needs feedback whether they want it or not. Sometimes, the person who provides this is a 'reality check' who confronts rationalizations

or other escape mechanisms. Sometimes this takes the form of encouragement (Safree & Yasin, 2009).

Measuring the Components of Perceived Social Support

Dzulkifli & Yasin (2009) developed interpersonal support evaluation list (ISEL) questionnaire to assess perceived social support of students. This questionnaire included 4 subscales: appraisal support, tangible support, and belonging support. The "tangible" subscale is intended to measure perceived availability of material aid; the "appraisal" subscale, perceived availability of someone to talk to about one's problems; the "self-esteem" subscale, the perceived availability of positive comparing one's self to others; and the "belonging" subscale, the perceived availability of people one can do things with (Zimet, et. al., 1988).

Methods

Research Design

In this study, descriptive research design and quantitative survey method were used. Interpersonal support evaluation list questionnaire was used to assess perceived social support of pre-service teachers.

Participants

This study comprises of 180 first-year students (90 males and 90 females) and 180 fifth-years students (90 males and 90 females) in Sagaing University of Education.

Instrumentation

In this study, interpersonal support evaluation list (ISEL) Questionnaire developed by Dzulkifli & Yasin (2009) was used to assess perceived social support of pre-service teachers. There are 40 items in this questionnaire including 4 subscales: appraisal support, tangible support, self-esteem support and belonging support. The instrument is 4 point Likert scale which ranges strongly disagree = 1, disagree = 2, agree = 3, strongly agree =4. The whole scale of Perceived Social Support Questionnaire indicated satisfactory internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha of 0.88.

Data Analysis

After collecting the required data, data entry was computed by using the SPSS 16.0 software (Statistical Package for Social Science). Finally, results from SPSS were carefully interpreted and prepared the findings and conclusions. To find out more detailed information, independent sample *t*-test was conducted.

Findings

The Levels of Perceived Social Support of Pre-service Teachers

In term of descriptive statistics, mean score and standard deviation of pre-service teachers' perceived social support were presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics for Perceived Social Support of Pre-service Teachers

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Perceived Social support	360	74	147	113.77	11.38

The mean and standard deviation of the whole sample were (113.77) and (11.38) respectively. According to the result, perceived social support of pre-service teachers was satisfactory because the total mean score (113.77) was greater than theoretical mean score (100). Therefore, it can be concluded that pre-service teachers have enough perceived social support.

The participants in this study were classified into three groups of perceived social support such as high, moderate and low. Based on descriptive analysis of perceived social support, participants with score above the (+1) standard deviation from the sample mean were identified as high group and participants with score below the (-1) standard deviation were identified as the low group. And then, participants with score between (+1) and (-1) standard deviation were identified as the moderate group.

Table 2 Perceived Social Support of Pre-service Teachers by Three Levels

Level	Frequency	Percent (%)
Low group	51	14%
Moderate group	262	73%
High group	47	13%

Therefore, it can be easily seen that most of pre-service teachers in Sagaing University of Education had moderate perceived social support.

Comparison for Perceived Social Support of Pre-Service Teachers by Gender

According to the mean scores in Table 3, males were higher than those of females in perceived social support.

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics and Independent Samples *t* test Results for Perceived Social Support of Pre-Service Teachers by Gender

Variable	Gender	Mean	Mean Difference	*t*	*df*	*p*
Perceived Social Support	Male	114.24	.939	.782	358	.435
	Female	113.31				

To find out more detailed information, independent sample *t*-test was conducted. The result mentioned that there was no significant difference in perceived social support of pre-service teachers by gender.

Comparison for Dimensions of Perceived Social Support of Pre-service Teachers by Gender

According to Table 4, mean scores of males were higher than females in appraisal support and tangible support. Then, mean scores of females were higher than that of males at self-esteem support.

Table 4 Descriptive Statistics and Independent Sample *t*-test Results for Dimensions of Perceived Social Support of Pre-service Teachers by Gender

Perceived Social Support	Gender	Mean	Mean Difference	*t*	*df*	*p*
Appraisal Support	Male	28.90	.317	.841	358	.401
	Female	28.58				
Tangible Support	Male	29.67	1.256	3.256**	358	.001
	Female	28.41				
Self-esteem Support	Male	27.26	-.639	-2.279*	358	.023
	Female	27.89				
Belonging Support	Male	28.42	.006	.014	358	.989
	Female	28.42				

*$p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Table 4 revealed that there was significant difference only in tangible support and self-esteem support, among four dimensions of perceived social support by gender at $p<0.01$ and $p<0.05$ levels. It was found that males had higher tangible support than females. However, females had higher self-esteem support than males.

Comparison for Perceived Social Support of Pre-service Teachers by Grade

According to the mean scores in Table 5, perceived social support of fifth-year students were higher than those of first-year students.

Table 5 Descriptive Statistics and Independent Sample *t*-test Results for Perceived Social Support of Pre- service Teachers by Grade

Variable	Grade	Mean	Mean Difference	*t*	*df*	*p*
Perceived Social Support	First Year	112.13	-3.283	-2.762**	358	.006
	Fifth Year	115.42				

** $p<0.01$

The result revealed that there was significant difference in perceived social support by grade at $p<0.01$ level. So, it can be said that fifth-year students had higher perceived social support than first-year students. The result highlighted that the more matured the students were, the more perceived social support they had.

Comparison for Dimensions of Perceived Social Support of Pre-service Teachers by Grade

According to the result in Table 6, mean scores of fifth-year students were greater than that of first-year students in all subscales of perceived social support.

Table 6 Descriptive Statistics and Independent Sample *t*-test Results for Dimensions of Perceived Social Support of Pre-service Teachers by Grade

Perceived Social Support	Gender	Mean	Mean Difference	t	df	p
Appraisal Support	First Year	28.52	-.439	-1.167	358	.244
	Fifth Year	28.96				
Tangible Support	First Year	28.29	-1.500	-3.915**	358	.000
	Fifth Year	29.79				
Self-esteem Support	First Year	27.38	-.394	-1.400	358	.162
	Fifth Year	27.77				
Belonging Support	First Year	27.94	-.950	-2.472*	358	.014
	Fifth Year	28.89				

*$p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

In Table 6, it revealed that among four dimensions of perceived social support, there was significant difference in tangible support and belonging support by grade at $p < 0.01$ and $p < 0.05$ levels. It may be due to the fact that as fifth-year students were aged, they can communicate with the people well and have more experiences on the social activities.

Conclusion and Discussion

Conclusion

Social support can come in the form of tangible assistance provided by others by needed which include appraisal of different situations, effective coping strategies, and emotional support. Social support is an element that can help individuals to reduce the amount of stress experienced as well as to help individuals cope better in dealing with stressful situations. It has been recognized that the characteristic and quality of social support are central to the individual's adjustment (Lakey & Chohen, 2000).

Khan (2015) defined social support "the interpersonal interactions that include one or more of the following: the expression of positive affect of one person toward another; the endorsement of another person's behaviors, perceptions, or expressed views; and/ or the giving of symbolic of material aid to another. Gurung (2006) defined social support: "the experience of being valued, respected, cared about, and loved by others who are present in one's life" (Khan, 2015; Gurung, 2006; cited in Barbour, 1990).

Social support is critical because it provides interpersonal connectedness, fosters expressions of emotions, and offers encouragement, improved health, and reduced stress, increase likelihood of recovery, greater self-efficacy, better stress management skills, decreases anxiety and increases adherence (Lakey & Chohen, 2000).

Discussion

This study investigated the perceived social support of pre-service teachers in Sagaing University of Education. The instrument used in this study was the interpersonal support evaluation list (ISEL). The whole scale of perceived social support questionnaire indicated satisfactory internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha of 0.88. It is evident that this questionnaire has high reliability to access perceived social support.

According to the result, perceived social support of pre-service teachers was satisfactory because the total mean score (113.77) was greater than theoretical mean score (100). So it can be concluded that pre-service teachers have enough perceived social support. In this study, pre-service teachers were classified into three groups of perceived social support such as high, moderate and low. It can be seen that most of pre-service teachers in Sagaing University of Education had moderate perceived social support.

There was significant difference only in tangible support and self-esteem support by gender. It was found that males had higher tangible support than females while females had higher self-esteem support than males. It can be said that pre-service teachers' social support was influenced by gender. The result revealed that there was significant difference in perceived social support by grade. So, it can be said that fifth- year students had higher perceived social support than first-year students. The result highlighted that the more matured the students were, the more perceived social support they had. There was significant difference in tangible support and belonging support by grade. It may be due to the fact that as fifth-year students were aged, they can communicate with the people well and have more experiences on the social activities.

In order to live in our society successfully and to be effective in learning, human beings may need to develop perceived social support. Moreover, prospective teachers should become good leaders for our country. If a prospective teacher or pre-service teacher is good in perceived social support, he can lead for future which can give him knowledge and information. So he can create his life to be successful and he can increase his control over his own behavior and environment. Besides, he can take advantage to his environment. In this way, he will get satisfaction in his life. So, pre-service teachers need to become more perceived social support persons. If so, pre-service teachers will become successful persons in world affairs as well as in the way of gaining the ultimate life goal.

The future study needs to investigate perceived social support across university students, college students and other grades to encompass all adolescents. More research should be conducted on perceived social support and other variables such as adjustment, self-esteem and well-being and so on.

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