

## Determining of Self- Stigma and Self-Esteem of Social Work Department Students in Seeking Psychological Help

DOI: 10.26466/opus.661207

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### Abstract

*The main aim of this study is to determine the factors affecting social work students' attitudes towards seeking psychological help and their self-esteem; and to determine the relationship between self-stigma and self-esteem. In this study, quantitative research method was used. This descriptive and cross-sectional study was conducted with the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th-grade students of Ankara University, Faculty of Health Sciences, Department of Social Work. A total of 398 students volunteered to take part in the study. In this study, there were closed-ended questions with regard to the socio-demographic attributes of the students and the factors that may have an impact on seeking psychological help (14 questions). In addition to this, data were gathered by the "Self-Stigma of Seeking Psychological Help Scale" and the "Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale". In this study, a t-test was used in the data analysis, descriptive statistics were used in determining the percentages and frequencies and Pearson correlation was used to calculate the relationship between scale scores. It was found that there is a negative weak correlation between the scores of the self-stigma of seeking psychological help scale and the self-esteem scale. It is recommended to reinforce the self-esteem of the social work students, who participated in the study, during the education process, to determine the factors that hinder the psychological help-seeking behaviors of the students and to work on eliminating these barriers.*

**Keywords:** Self-esteem, psychological help-seeking, self-stigma, social work, student.

## Sosyal Hizmet Bölümü Öğrencilerinin Psikolojik Yardım Aramada Kendini Damgalama Durumunun ve Benlik Saygısının Belirlenmesi

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### Öz

Çalışmanın temel amacı, sosyal hizmet bölümü öğrencilerinin psikolojik yardım aramalarına ve benlik saygısına etki eden faktörlerin belirlenmesi; kendini damgalama ve benlik saygıları arasındaki ilişkinin belirlenmesidir. Araştırmada nicel araştırma yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Tanımlayıcı ve kesitsel nitelikteki bu çalışma Ankara Üniversitesi Sağlık Bilimleri Fakültesi Sosyal Hizmet bölümü 1., 2., 3. ve 4. sınıf öğrencileri ile yapılmıştır. Toplamda 398 öğrenci araştırmaya katılmaya gönüllü olmuştur. Çalışmada öğrencilerin sosyo-demografik özelliklerini içeren ve psikolojik yardım aramalarına etki edebilecek faktörlerin yer aldığı kapalı uçlu sorular yer almaktadır (14 soru). Ayrıca Psikolojik Yardım Aramada Kendini Damgalama Ölçeği ve Rosenberg Benlik Saygısı Ölçeği ile veriler toplanmıştır. Verilerin değerlendirilmesinde t testi, yüzdeler ve sıklıkların belirlenmesinde tanımlayıcı istatistikler, ölçek puanları arasındaki ilişkinin hesaplanmasında pearson korelasyon kullanılmıştır. Katılımcıların benlik saygısı ve psikolojik yardım aramada kendini damgalama ölçeği puanları arasında negatif yönde zayıf düzeyde bir ilişki olduğu saptanmıştır. Araştırmaya katılan sosyal hizmet bölümü öğrencilerinin eğitim sürecinde benlik saygısının desteklenmesi, psikolojik yardım arama davranışlarını engelleyen faktörlerin belirlenmesi ve bu engellerin ortadan kaldırılmasına yönelik çalışmaların yapılması önerilmektedir.

**Anahtar** Benlik saygısı; Psikolojik yardım arama, kendini damgalama, sosyal hizmet, öğrenci.

**Kelimeler:**

## Giriş

In Turkey where the young population ratio is relatively higher, problems of youth arising from “adolescence period” are gradually increasing also with the effect of psycho-social problems (Tuncay, 2011). In this context, it is highly important to understand the extent of the help-seeking behaviors of young people for their existing problems. Social work is a profession which requires direct contact with disadvantaged groups (Duyan, 2010). Therefore, in determining the needs and problems of the disadvantaged groups, the social worker can guide the practice in accordance with his/her personal characteristics besides his/her knowledge, skills and value basis. In this sense, it is necessary to understand the methods that social work students and social workers try to use in order to solve their own problems and whether they seek psychological help. Considering the practices that social work students will do after graduation, it is very important for them to make evaluations about their existence, to develop self-awareness on their problems and not to hesitate to seek help for their problems during their undergraduate education.

## University Students’ Self-Stigma Status in Psychological Help-Seeking

University life is a period in which the individuals step into young adulthood, gain new experiences and face with some problems (Karataş and Gizir, 2013). In a general way, university students may consult non-professional sources when they face with a problem (Koydemir, Erel, Yumurtacı and Şahin, 2010; Topkaya and Meydan, 2013). Individuals tend to seek professional help where the informal support mechanisms are ineffective. In some studies, it is stated that university students avoid getting professional help when they face with different problems despite the need for professional help (Stallman and Shochet, 2009; Koydemir Özden, 2010). Psychological help-seeking is “the assistance and support wanted by individuals aiming to get rid of the problems that they are unable to overcome, from professional or non-professional individuals who engage in this matter” (Husaini, Moore and Cain, 1994). Difficulties in understanding the barriers to help-seeking behavior may be related to the nature of the relationship between specific barriers and help-seeking behavior. Because the barriers

ers to help-seeking behavior are complex and may be internal and external (Peppin, Segal and Coolidge, 2009). Fischer and Turner (1970) stated that the inability of the internal sources of individuals to solve the problem leads them to external sources.

There are so many problems experienced by university students. These problems include developmental problems, situational problems, depression, academic problems, relationship problems, stress and anxiety, family problems, physical problems, suicidal thoughts, smoking and substance use, eating disorders, chronic mental problems, etc. (Benton, Robertson, Tseng, Newton and Benton, 2003). These problems of university students that are encountered in various areas lead them to seek help. University students may need professional help in solving the problems that they experienced. However, despite the need for professional psychological help, individuals may avoid seeking help. Labeling, stigmatization, and shame are among the most important reasons for avoiding psychological help-seeking (Kocabaşoğlu and Aliustaoğlu, 2003). However, there are many researchers who emphasize the cultural elements as the reason for avoiding help-seeking behavior of individuals (Egisdottor and Gerstein, 2009; Vogel, Wester, Wei and Boysen, 2005; Cheng et al., 2013). The attitudes of individuals for seeking professional psychological services are related to the perception of the need for psychological help and the stigmatization tolerance related to the search for such services (Fischer and Turner, 1970; Masuda, Anderson and Edmonds, 2012). Help-seeking behavior is structured by psycho-social and cultural factors (Rogler and Cortes, 1993). Andoh-Arthur, Asante and Osafo (2015) stated that the awareness that there is a problem and the decision that help is necessary does not comprehensively explain the intentions of university students to seek help. Considering the literature on this matter, it is seen that gender (Chang, 2007); desire or intention to seek psychological help (Vogel et al., 2005; Vogel et al., 2007); self-stigma (Topkaya, 2014) and social stigma (Heath et al., 2016; Topkaya, 2014) are among the factors that affect the students' psychological help-seeking behavior.

The fear of stigmatization, which is among the factors that affect university students' seeking or getting help behavior, can be considered as a reflection of society's intention or attitudes about getting professional help on individuals (Kakhnovets, 2011). In the context of the cultural characteristics of Turkish society, it is possible to say that any problems experienced by

individuals are tried to be solved in the family system or in the presence of social support systems such as the friends and the close environment of the individual. Therefore, in some communities getting professional help can be found bizarre and the individuals getting professional can be stigmatized. When the related literature is reviewed, it is seen that there are studies supporting this view stating that one of the most important variables that hinder the behavior of getting help is stigmatization (Vogel et al., 2007; Vogel et al., 2005; Corrigan, 2004; Chang, 2007). Self-stigmatization of the individual is one of the factors that can be considered as a reflection of social stigma and a barrier hindering the help-seeking behavior. The individual, who is affected by the socio-cultural characteristics of the society and who also affects society, can internalize the anxiety of social stigma and develop negative beliefs about getting help. Some authors state that one of the important factors affecting the help-seeking behavior of university students is self-stigmatization (Vogel et al., 2007; Vogel et al., 2005; Topkaya, 2014). It can be said that social stigma and self-stigma vary between genders. The main causes of this situation include the roles that society assigns to the gender and the internalization of these roles by women and men. It can be said that in particular, the concept of “being strong” attributed to men by the society resulting in solving problems without help and the concept of “being emotional” attributed to women resulting in being in need of help affect the help-seeking behavior of individuals. Thus, there are some studies supporting this view (Özbay, Terzi, Erkan and Çankaya, 2011; Topkaya, 2014; Masuda, Suzumura, Beauchamp, Howells, and Clay, 2005; Kalkan and Odacı, 2005; Chang, 2007). In Özbay et al. (2011)’s research, gender has emerged as an important factor affecting the help-seeking attitude. This finding obtained from the research shows that female students’ help-seeking attitude is more positive than male students. In Topkaya (2014)’s research, it was found that self-stigma and social stigma perception due to psychological help were higher in males than females.

However, some authors state that low self-esteem is among the factors affecting the help-seeking behavior of individuals (Andoh-Arthur, Asante and Osafo, 2015; Kroska and Harkness, 2008; Sezer and Gülleroğlu, 2016; Dwyer et al., 2013; Çakar and İkiz, 2016; Lysaker, Roe, Ringer, Gilmore and Yanos., 2012). In addition, there are studies reporting that being a woman

and the help-seeking tendency is related to the positive help-seeking attitude (Masuda et al., 2005; Masuda, Anderson and Edmonds, 2012).

### ***The Importance of Psychological Help-Seeking Behavior for Social Work Students***

As a result of the literature review, it was seen that there are many factors affecting the help-seeking behavior of university students such as demographic, individual and environmental factors (Vogel et al., 2005). However, it is very important to determine the level of getting professional help behavior of the university students studying social work which is a profession concerned with helping, and the factors affecting the seeking or getting help behavior. Additionally, determining the help-seeking behavior of social work students who have received social work training and who will give professional assistance to the clients after graduation is also important in terms of determining the positive outcomes of social work education in the social order in which the gender perspective is dominant.

Working with disadvantaged groups requires social workers to know themselves well, to make existential considerations, to be aware of their problems and not to hesitate to seek help. Even though the social work curriculum includes the courses based on information, skills and values about the needs and problems of disadvantaged groups, awareness of social work students on themselves and their problems and getting professional help where necessary is important as a priority. In this context, determining the relationship between self-stigma and self-esteem in professional help-seeking in social workers working directly with the client group is of great importance in terms of the quality of the helping relationship with the client.

***Objectives of the study:*** Proportion of young people in the total population in Turkey is 16.1. (TUIK, 2018). The needs and problems of young people are also differentiating in a society that is constantly changing and getting more complicated. In particular, university students who go from one place to another and live as an individual during their university education can avoid seeking professional help when they face with any problems. Therefore, students who primarily use social support systems may refuse to get professional help even when the problem starts to become complicated. It can be said that the values adopted by the society, cultural characteristics,

gender roles, personal characteristics and etc. are among the reasons for this situation (Vogel et al., 2007; Vogel, Bitman, Hammer, & Wade, 2013). Social work including micro, mezzo and macro level interventions is a profession that provides professional help to individuals who have problems and are in need of help and support. When it is considered that the university students studying in the social work department will work with disadvantaged individuals and groups after graduation, primarily they should not avoid from seeking professional help for their own problems and should be open to any professional support. Therefore, it is very important to evaluate the issues hindering the help-seeking behavior of social work department students. By recognizing these issues, necessary arrangements can be made in the social work education curriculum to eliminate the factors that hinder the professional help-seeking behavior of social work students.

#### *Research questions*

- What are the factors that affect the psychological help-seeking behavior of social work students?
- What are the factors that affect the self-esteem of social work students?
- Is there a relationship between social work students' self-stigmatization behavior and self-esteem in psychological help-seeking?
- Do all of these situations differ according to what grade are the social work students in?
- Is there a relationship between the demographic characteristics of the students of social work students and help-seeking behavior or self-esteem?

## **Methodology**

### *Design and Settings*

The participants of the research was comprised of social work students enrolled in Ankara University, Faculty of Health Sciences, Department of Social Work (N = 398). The main reason why this study is done with the social work students is that social work is a profession requiring to work directly with people and serve them. Within this scope, the main aim of this study is to determine the factors affecting the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>-grade social work

students' attitudes in psychological help-seeking and their self-esteem; and the relationship between self-stigma and self-esteem.

In this study, quantitative research method was used. This descriptive and cross-sectional study was conducted with the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>-grade students of Ankara University, Faculty of Health Sciences, Department of Social Work between 1-20 June 2018. A total of 398 students from the Department of Social Work volunteered to participate in the study. The permission of the institution and the written consent of the students who participated in the research were obtained.

### ***Data collection and measures***

The data were collected using the questionnaire form. The questionnaire form consists of three parts. These sections are closed-ended questions with regard to the socio-demographic attributes of the students, Self-Stigma of Seeking Psychological Help Scale and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale.

***Self-Stigma of Seeking Psychological Help Scale:*** Self-Stigma of Seeking Psychological Help Scale, which is a five-point Likert type developed by Vogel et al. (2006) consists of 10 items and has a single-factor structure.

The total score that can be obtained from the scale varies between 10 and 50. Turkish validity and reliability studies of the scale were carried out by Topkaya for the first time. Another adaptation study of the scale with Turkish students was carried out by Acun Kapıkıran and Kapıkıran (2013).

In this study, Cronbach's alpha value of "Self-Stigma of Seeking Psychological Help Scale" was found to be 0.749.

***Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale:*** Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale developed by Rosenberg (1965) is a 4-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree) with 10 items. A high score obtained from the scale implies a higher level of self esteem. Validity and reliability studies of Turkish version of Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale were carried out by Çuhadaroğlu (1986). Scale scores were between 0 and 30, with 30 representing the maximum level of self-esteem (Çuhadaroğlu 1986). The reliability coefficient of the tools was 0.71.



In this study, Cronbach's alpha value of "Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale" was found to be 0.85

### *Statistical analyses*

SPSS 16.0 Statistical Program was used to analyze the data. In the evaluation of research results  $p < 0.05$  and lower values were considered statistically significant.

Descriptive statistics were used to determine the number and percentage distributions, means and standard deviations in the evaluation of the descriptive data. Skewness and kurtosis values were used to determine if the data showed normal distribution. It was determined that the data had a normal distribution. Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) stated that the scale scores have favorable conditions for the normal distribution parameters when the skewness and kurtosis coefficients change between +1.5 and -1.5. Since the data are homogeneous, student's t test was used to compare two groups, and one-way ANOVA was used to compare multiple groups. In groups with three or more variables, the Tukey HSD test was used to find the group that made the difference when the data was homogeneous.

Pearson correlation was used to calculate the relationship between scale scores.

Cronbach's alpha value of "Self-Stigma of Seeking Psychological Help Scale" was found to be 0.749 and Cronbach's alpha value of "Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale" was found to be 0.85.

### *Limitations*

The results of this study may give a picture of the general characteristics of the sample group. However, the results cannot be generalized to all social work students.

### **Findings**

*Table.1. Distribution of scores related to Self-Stigma of Seeking Psychological Help Scale and self-esteem scales*

	N	Mean	SD	skewness	kurtosis
Self-Stigma of Seeking Psychological Help Scale	398	23.957	5.687	0.074	0.506
Self-Esteem Scale	398	31.115	5.200	-0.341	-0.221

The mean score of the “Self-Stigma of Seeking Psychological Help Scale” of the participants was found to be  $23.957 \pm 5.687$  (min:10, max:49). The mean score of the self-esteem scale of the participants was found to be  $31.115 \pm 5.200$  (min:14, max:40), (Table 1).

**Table 2. Descriptive properties**

Variable	N	%
<b>Sex</b>		
Female	287	72.1
Male	111	27.9
<b>Grade</b>		
1st Grade	139	34.9
2nd Grade	73	18.3
3rd Grade	118	29.6
4th Grade	68	17.2
<b>Place of birth</b>		
City	243	61.1
District	125	31.4
Village	30	7.5
<b>Place of longest residence</b>		
City	246	61.8
District	110	27.6
Village	42	10.6
<b>Income status</b>		
My Income is Less Than My Expense	136	34.3
My Income is Equal to My Expense	219	55.1
My Income is More Than My Expense	42	10.6
<b>Status of Getting Professional Psychological Help So Far</b>		
Yes	64	16.1
No	334	83.9
<b>Status of Getting Psychological Help in Family and Relatives</b>		
Yes	91	22.9
No	307	77.1
<b>Status of Getting Psychological Help When Needed</b>		
Yes	340	85.4
No	57	14.6
<b>The Person Whom is Preferred to Get Psychological Help When Needed</b>		
I get professional psychological help	283	71.1
I get psychological help from my close ones	115	28.9
<b>Member of Profession Whom is Preferred to Get Psychological Help When Needed</b>		
Social Worker	34	8.5
Psychologist	52	13.1
Psychiatrist	38	9.5
Psychiatric Nurse	23	5.77

The students participating in this study consisted of 72.1% women and 27.9% men. It was determined that 61.1% of the participants were born in the city and 7.5% were born in the village. It was found that 61.8% of the participants spent most of their lives in the city and 10.6% of them in the village. 18.3% of the students are in 2nd grade and 17.2% were in 4th grade. It was determined that 55.1% of the participants' incomes are equal to their expenses (Table 2).

It was determined that 83.9% of the participants did not get any professional help so far, and 22.9% of the participants have family members and relatives who get psychological help. It was determined that 14.6% of the participants do not want to get help even if they need help. And 8.5% of the participants stated that they want to get help from the social worker, 13.1% from the psychologist, 9.5% from the psychiatrist and 5.77% from the psychiatric nurse (Table 2).

It was determined that there was no significant difference between the factors such as the place of birth of the participants, the longest place of residence, income status, and "Self-Stigma of Seeking Psychological Help Scale" score of the participants. ( $p > 0.05$ ), (Table 3). It was determined that there is a significant difference between the "Self-Stigma of Seeking Psychological Help Scale" scores of women and men ( $t = -3.791$ ,  $p = 0.0001$ ). It was determined that this difference results from the fact that the self-stigmatization scale scores of women are lower compared to men ( $p < 0.05$ ), (Table 3).

It was determined that there is a significant difference between the "Self-Stigma of Seeking Psychological Help Scale" scores of the students who are in different grades ( $F = 5.757$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ). It was determined that this difference results from the fact that third-grade students' scores are higher than the second-grade students' scores ( $p < 0.05$ ), (Table 3).

It was determined that the participants, who do not have any family members or relatives getting psychological help, have higher scores in the "Self-Stigma of Seeking Psychological Help Scale" ( $t = -2.004$ ,  $p = 0.046$ ), (Table 3). It was determined that the participants, who think to get psychological help from a professional when they need, have lower scores in the "Self-Stigma of Seeking Psychological Help Scale" ( $t = 3.294$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ).

**Table 3. Comparison of the socio-demographic attributes and "Self-Stigma of Seeking Psychological Help Scale" scores of the participants**

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Evaluation
<b>Sex</b>				
Female	287	23.296	5.394	$t=-3.791$
Male	111	25.666	6.081	$p=0.0001$
<b>Grade</b>				
1st Grade	139	23.712	5.433	
2nd Grade	73	22.411	5.233	$F=5.757$
3rd Grade	118	25.610	5.871	$p=0.001$
4th Grade	68	23.250	5.759	
<b>Place of Birth</b>				
City	243	23.559	5.768	
District	125	24.464	5.451	$F=1.666$
Village	30	25.066	5.868	$p=0.190$
<b>Place of Longest Residence</b>				
City	246	23.739	5.691	
District	110	24.272	5.429	$F=0.478$
Village	42	24.404	6.367	$p=0.621$
<b>Income status</b>				
My Income is Less Than My Expense	136	24.029	5.551	
My Income is Equal to My Expense	219	24.164	5.642	$F=1.236$
My Income is More Than My Expense	42	22.666	6.365	$p=0.292$
<b>Status of Getting Professional Psychological Help So Far</b>				
Yes	64	22.687	5.497	$t=-1.957$
No	334	24.200	5.699	$p=0.051$
<b>Status of Getting Psychological Help in Family and Relatives</b>				
Yes	91	22.912	5.743	$t=-2.004$
No	307	24.267	5.643	$p=0.046$
<b>The Person Whom is Preferred to Get Psychological Help When Needed</b>				
I get professional psychological help	283	23.34	5.70	$t=-3.294$
I get psychological help from my close ones	115	25.38	5.34	$p=0.001$

**Table 4. Comparison of the Socio-demographic Attributes and "Self-Esteem Scale" Scores of the participants**

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Evaluation
<b>Sex</b>				
Female	287	31.324	5.229	$t=1.287$
Male	111	30.576	5.108	$p=0.199$
<b>Grade</b>				
1st Grade	139	30.906	5.421	
2nd Grade	73	32.219	4.845	$F=4.878$
3rd Grade	118	29.915	4.899	$p=0.002$
4th Grade	68	32.441	5.178	
<b>Place of Birth</b>				
City	243	31.353	5.211	
District	125	30.816	5.019	$F=0.720$
Village	30	30.433	5.870	$p=0.488$
<b>Place of longest residence</b>				
City	246	31.248	5.225	
District	110	31.045	4.799	$F=0.360$
Village	42	30.523	6.081	$p=0.698$
<b>Income status</b>				
My Income is Less Than My Expense	136	30.610	5.636	
My Income is Equal to My Expense	219	31.013	4.955	$F=4.489$
My Income is More Than My Expense	42	33.309	4.566	$p=0.012$
<b>Status of Getting Professional Psychological Help So Far</b>				
Yes	64	31.359	5.075	$t=0.409$
No	334	31.068	5.230	$p=0.683$
<b>Status of Getting Psychological Help in Family and Relatives</b>				
Yes	91	30.637	5.258	$t=-0.999$
No	307	31.257	5.183	$p=0.319$
<b>The Person Whom is Preferred to Get Psychological Help When Needed</b>				
I get professional psychological help	283	31.29	5.095	$t=1.121$
I get psychological help from my close ones	115	30.65	5.464	$p=0.263$

There is no significant difference between the participants' gender, place of birth, longest place of residence, professional psychological help so far, psychological help status in families and relatives, psychological help status when needed and "Self-Esteem Scale" scores ( $p > 0.05$ ), (Table 4).

and There is a significant difference between the self-esteem scores of the students who are in different grades ( $F= 4.878$ ,  $p= 0.002$ ). It was determined that this difference results from the fact that fourth-grade students' scores are higher than the third-grade students' scores ( $p < 0.05$ ), (Table 4).

A significant difference was found between the self-esteem scale scores of the students whose income status are different ( $F= 4.489$ ,  $p= 0.012$ ). It was

determined that this difference results from the fact that the self-esteem scale scores of the group whose incomes are less than their expenses are lower than the scores of the group whose incomes are higher than their expenses (Table 4).

*Table 5. The relationship between "Self-Stigma of Seeking Psychological Help Scale" and "Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale" scores*

		Self-Esteem Scale
	N	398
Self-Stigma of Seeking Psychological Help Scale	r	-0.360
	p	p=0.0001

A weak negative correlation was found between the "Self-Esteem Scale" and "Self-Stigma of Seeking Psychological Help Scale" scores of the participants ( $r = -0.360$ ,  $p = 0.0001$ ), (Table 5).

## Discussion

In this study, the factors affecting the psychological help-seeking behavior and self-esteem of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>-grade social work students were evaluated. It was also evaluated whether there is a relationship between self-stigma and self-esteem in psychological help-seeking. Social work is a profession doing micro, mezzo and macro level interventions to help individuals in order to improve their well-being and to determine and overcome their problems and to develop their coping skills. Although the theoretical knowledge is very important to be able to help or assist a person, first the social worker should be well aware of his/her life and should be able to get help from a professional when needed. Thus, it can be said that the quality of the service provided to the individuals will increase. Within this scope, determining the factors affecting the social work students' psychological help-seeking behavior and self-esteem, and the negative elements as well and carrying out studies for students accordingly will also increase the effectiveness of social work interventions.

When the findings of this study were examined, it was seen that a great majority of the students (83.9%) did not get any professional help. Similarly, it was seen that the majority of the families and relatives of the participants did not get professional help so far. Considering the status of getting psyc-

hological help when needed, it was seen that a great majority of the participants said "Yes" and stated that they want to get professional psychological help. In Turkish society especially within the context of gender roles, identification of seeking and getting professional help behavior with the concepts such as "weakness, insufficiency", may cause individuals to have reservations about getting professional help. However, according to the findings of this study, it is considered as a positive result that most of the social work students want "to seek professional help in case of need". In a study, it is stated that getting help is considered as an indicator of weakness and this situation hinders the help-seeking behavior (Vogel, Wade and Haake, 2006).

When the participants were asked which professional they primarily want to get help when they need, it was seen that the professionals that the students wanted to get help were a psychologist, a psychiatrist, a social worker and a psychiatric nurse, respectively. Even though social work is a profession doing micro, mezzo and macro level interventions and working in close contact with the individuals, it was seen that the social work students primarily want to get professional help from the psychologist.

It was determined that self-stigma scale score of women is lower than men's scores. According to this finding, it can be said that as the self-stigma level of men increases, their help-seeking behavior decreases. In this regard, traditional roles such as "being strong", "not being in need of help" that are attributed to men by society within the context of gender roles, may cause men to be less willing to get help than women. In other words, seeking help and getting help behaviors are perceived as "weakness". Avoidance of the help-seeking behavior of the social work department students, especially who will work with all disadvantaged groups, and their high self-stigma scores suggest that they may have internalized gender roles. This situation may be negatively reflected in the intervention process of the male students with the clients. In some studies, it was stated that gender is an important variable in help-seeking behavior and that women's thoughts and attitudes towards seeking psychological help are more positive than men (Johnson, 2001; Vogel et al., 2010; Topkaya, 2014; Erkan, Özbay, Cihangir-Çankaya and Terzi, 2012; Özbay et al., 2011; Pederson and Vogel, 2007; Türküm, 2005; Masuda et al., 2005; Masuda et al., 2012).

It was determined that there is a significant difference between the "Self-Stigma of Seeking Psychological Help Scale" scores of the students who are

in different grades. It was determined that this difference results from the fact that third-grade students' scores are higher than the second-grade students' scores. In contrast to the results of this study, it was determined in another study that the older students have more positive help-seeking behaviors compared to the younger students (Masuda et al., 2012).

It was determined that the participants, who do not have any family members or relatives getting psychological help, have higher scores in the "Self-Stigma of Seeking Psychological Help Scale". Psychological diseases are more exposed to social stigma than other diseases. This situation may affect the seeking and getting psychological help behavior of individuals.

Considering that individuals whose family members or relatives got psychological help before have a prediction and experience about the process of help-seeking, it may be said that their self-stigma attitude will be lower. In fact, in some studies, it was seen that the individuals who got psychological help before or witnessed the family members seeking psychological help, lean toward getting psychological help (Sezer and Gülleroğlu, 2016; Masuda et al., 2005; Erkan et al., 2012; Kakhnovets, 2011; Çebi, 2009; Masuda et al., 2012; Türküm, 2001). Contrary to this, in some studies, it has been stated that prejudices of the society about psychological disorders are internalized by individuals and this situation causes self-stigma of individuals (Kaplan, Vogel, Gentile, and Wade, 2011; Hackler et al., 2010; Vogel et al., 2013). Some authors have reported that individuals' experiences of getting psychological help and social stigma affect their attitudes of getting psychological help (Kakhnovets, 2011; Vogel et al., 2005).

It was determined that the participants, who think to get psychological help from a professional when they need, have lower scores in the "Self-Stigma of Seeking Psychological Help Scale" when needed were less likely to have a self-stamping scale score in seeking psychological help. Some authors stated that individuals do not want to get psychological help due to the reasons such as avoiding the exposure to society's negative attitudes and behaviors towards psychological disorders (Fischer and Turner, 1970; Masuda et al., 2012) and the risk of losing people in their social environment (Held and Qwens, 2013).

A weak negative correlation was found between the "Self-Esteem Scale" and "Self-Stigma of Seeking Psychological Help Scale" scores of the participants. In other words, it can be said that the self-stigma behavior in seeking



psychological help will decrease among the students who have high self-esteem. Some authors stated that there is a significant relationship between self-stigma and self-esteem (Corrigan and Watson, 2002; Lysaker et al., 2012). However, some authors stated that self-esteem was an important psychological barrier to seek help from non-professional sources such as family and friends. They also stated that high self-esteem is related to the positive self-image of the individual and therefore the individual does not tend to help-seeking behavior (Vogel et al., 2007).

It was determined that the grades of the students affect their self-esteem scores and there is a significant difference between the self-esteem scores of the students who are in different grades. It was determined that this difference results from the fact that fourth-grade students' scores are higher than the third-grade students' scores. According to this result, it can be said that having almost completed the social work education process has positive effects on students' self-esteem.

A significant difference was found between the self-esteem scale scores of the students whose income status are different. As a matter of fact, it is seen that the students whose incomes are higher than their expenses have higher self-esteem than the students whose incomes are less than their expenses. In this context, it can be said that the economic situation affects the psycho-social processes of individuals.

In accordance with the results of this study, it is very important to set up a curriculum that enables social work students to recognize themselves and determine the factors that may be a barrier to psychological help-seeking behavior during their education.

## **Conclusion**

According to the results of this study, it is seen that a great majority of the social work students do not get any professional help. One of the factors that are considered to be effective on this result is that most of the family members and relatives of these students did not get any professional help so far in their lives. Within the context of the cultural characteristics of Turkish society, it is seen that individuals primarily consult social support systems when they face with a problem and they try to solve the problem especially within the family.

It is seen that most of the students prefer to get help from psychiatrists and psychologists in case they want to get professional help. It may be thought that the social work students' satisfaction level of their education may affect which member of profession they will primarily consult to get psychological help when needed.

According to the results of this study, it is seen that gender affects the self-stigma score in help-seeking. According to this result, it is seen that female students have a more positive attitude towards help-seeking behavior compared to male students and their level of self-stigma is lower. This result can be considered as an indicator that participants may have internalized gender roles. Although there are courses on gender roles in social work education curriculum, it can be said that students internalize cultural values and social work education is not effective enough at this point.

It was seen that the grades of the students affect "Self-Stigma of Seeking Psychological Help Scale" scores and the self-stigma score of the third-grade students is higher. Another result is that the self-esteem of the fourth-grade students is higher than the self-esteem of the third-grade students and the self-stigma behavior of the students who have high self-esteem will decrease. It can be thought that the students are more qualified in terms of knowledge and experience when they graduate to the upper grade, and internalize the social work knowledge and values more. However, the outcomes of this study confirm the opposite of this opinion. In this regard, reviewing the social work education curriculum and editing the contents of the courses about gender, help-seeking behavior and the importance of help-seeking behavior for the person and preparing them in a more functional way is of great importance. In addition, awareness training on these issues can be carried out in cooperation with various associations, civil society, and related educational institutions. It can be thought that social workers, who are closed to help-seeking behavior, will have some problems in the process of assistance with clients who come to get professional help from them.

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#### **Kaynakça Bilgisi / Citation Information**

Akgül Gök, F., Yazgan, E. Ö., Altuntaş, T. ve Duyan, V. (2020) Determining of self-stigma and self-esteem of social work department students in seeking psychological help. *OPUS-Uluslararası Toplum Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 16(27), 94-115. DOI: 10.26466/opus.661207