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The Relationship of Some Sociodemographics and Self-Reported English Knowledge/Skills with Social Self-Esteem[1]

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Abstract: This article deals with the impact of several sociodemographic factors (gender, family income per month, family size, and a number of social clubs of which participants were members and self-reported level of English knowledge/skills) on social-self esteem. 402 university and high school students participated this study (mean age = 18.24, *SD* = 1.89). There were 228 females and 174 males. The results revealed a positive, moderate relationship of family size, number of social clubs and self-reported level of English knowledge/skills with participants' levels of social self-esteem. Family size was the better predictor of social self-esteem compared to the number of social clubs. Lots of family members, a great number of social clubs and positive evaluation of one's own English knowledge/skills were related to high levels of social self-esteem. The possible implications of these results were discussed and directions for further research were stated.

Keywords: Social self-esteem, English knowledge/skills, Self-evaluation.

[1] This article is derived from and based on the subsample of the total sample of Hakan Aydoğan's doctoral thesis - the Relationships Among The Variables of Motivational Factors, Social Self-Esteem and Efficacy, Speaking Anxiety and Strategies For EFL In Turkey and Bosnia and Herzegovina - the supervisor of which is Prof. Dr. Azamat Akbarov. The variables and conclusions are also congruent with those from the PhD thesis of Hakan Aydoğan.

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Bazi Sosyo Demografik Faktörlerin Ve Kişinin Sahip Olduğunu Düşündüğü İngilizce Bilgi Ve Yetisinin Sosyal Benlik Saygisi İle Olan İlişkisi

Öz: Bu makale bazı sosyo demografik etmenlerin (cinsiyet, ailenin aylık geliri, aile büyüklüğü, katılımcıların sosyal kulüp üyelik sayıları ve katılımcıların kendileri hakkında beyan ettikleri İngilizce bilgisi yetileri) sosyal benlik saygısı üzerine olan etkilerini ele almıştır. Sosyal benlik saygısı, kişinin kendine verdiği değer duygusuyla ilgili alana özgü bir durumdur. Sosyal psikoloji ve kişilikle içiçe olsa da sosyoloji ve eğitim bilimleriyle de yakından ilgili bir kuramdır. Öğrencilerin kendileri ile ilgili beyan ettikleri İngilizce bilgileri yetileri özellikle kişisel değerlendirme ile ilgili olanlar onların üstbiliş fonksiyonlarının sonuçlarıdır. Bu çalışmaya 228'i kız ve 174'ü erkek olmak üzere toplamda 402 üniversite ve kolej öğrencisi katılmıştır (ortalama yaş=18.24, yaş standard sapması=1.80). Sonuçlar, katılımcıların sosyal benlik saygısı düzeyleri ile aile büyüklükleri, sosyal kulüp üyelikleri sayısı ve İngilizce bilgi düzeyleri ile ilgili kişisel düşünceleri arasında pozitif, makul ve istatistik olarak anlamlı bir ilişki olduğu yönündedir. Aile büyüklüğü, sosyal klüp üyeliği sayısına nazaran sosyal benlik saygısının daha iyi bir göstergesi olarak görülmüş ve regresyon modeli istatik olarak anlamlı çıkmıştır. Ailesinin büyüklüğü ve üye olunan sosyal kulüp sayıları ve katılımcıların İngilizce bilgi düzeyleri hakkındaki kişisel düşünceleri yüksek öz güven, cesaret ve yeterlik ile ilgilidir. Bu sonuçlar nezdinde tavsiyelerde bulunulmuş ve bu alanda ilerde çalışılabilecek konular belirtilmiş, çalışmaya olabilecek katkılar ve sınırlamalar yer almıştır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Sosyal benlik saygısı, İngilizce bilgi/yetisi, Kişisel değerlendirme.

INTRODUCTION

Humans are social beings and we do not live in separated "bubbles" preventing us from making relationships with others. Social networking is an evolutionary mechanism that increases our chances to survive by helping us to get support from society members, find resources and exchange them with others. Some of us are very successful while being with other people (collaborating with them, making intimate relationships, etc.). On the other hand, there are those who do not possess the adequate arsenal of social skills or who do not have a great social interest (e.g. introverts who are shy, less talkative and reserved vs extraverts who are communicative, outgoing and who seek for contacts with others).

The personality trait (or the aspect of personality) that explains these individual differences is called social self-esteem. In fact, it is a component of general self-esteem. In a broader sense, self-esteem is defined as one's sense of self-worth. It can also be considered and conceptualized as the result of the evaluation of self-image. One of the main contributors in this field, the author of the *Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (CSEI),* defined it in terms of one's beliefs about self-competence (Coopersmith, 1967). According to another renowned theorist and researcher in this discipline, self-esteem is self-worthiness which has two components – self-confidence and self-respect (Branden, 2001). If someone thinks that her/his self-image is poor and not so good, s/he has a low level of self-esteem. If someone evaluates her/his self-image as better and more important than that of others, s/he has a high level of self-esteem.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Self-esteem is slightly higher in boys than in girls, as obtained e.g. in the study conducted by Quatman and Watson in the USA(2001). Additionally, a cross-cultural study that included 48 nations also revealed a higher level of self-esteem in men (Bleidorn et al., 2016). It is also higher in those who earn

more money because family income and general self-esteem were in a mutually positive correlation, as was in an Indian study relevant to this field (Jahan, Tyagi, & Suri, 2015). Research findings from a large international study suggested that self-esteem level decreases during the adolescent period and it increases after this stage of human development (Orth, Trzensniewski, & Robins, 2010). Similar results were obtained by Bleidorn and his colleagues (2016), in the cross-cultural study that was mentioned before.

Social self-esteem includes the sense of self-worthiness in social relations and situations. The term closest in meaning to this concept is self-confidence. Self-confidence is related to personal motivation and interpersonal communication (e.g. Benabou & Tirole, 2002). Social skills, social intelligence and social competence are constructs that can be used while trying to define social self-esteem. By examining one of the rare operationalizations of social self-esteem (*Social Self-Esteem Inventory - SSES*, Lawson, Marshall, & McGrath, 1979), it is clear that this construct includes enjoyment in various social roles, popularity among peers, self-confidence in social situations, a great degree of friendliness, making friends easily, etc. Social intelligence is closely linked to social self-esteem aspects because perceived popularity, social skills, social awareness and social information processing are mutually connected in a positive and statistically significant way, as obtained in a study conducted in the Netherlands (Meijs, Cillessen, Scholte, Segers, and Spijkerman, 2010).

It should be mentioned that there is a scarcity of research into social self-esteem correlates. However, several authors investigated this kind of topic indirectly (by exploring the components of social intelligence, social competence and self-confidence). The findings of such studies are noted below.

Having at least one sibling had a beneficial impact on our social skills and competencies, as was demonstrated in a large longitudinal study carried out in the USA (Downey & Condron, 2004). Social club membership was in a positive relationship with participants' social competence levels in a

Turkish study conducted by Ahmetoglu and Acar (2016). Next, statistically significant gender differences in social skills/competencies (assertion, cooperation and responsibility) were found; to be more specific, these differences were in favor of girls (Abdi, 2010). The cited study was conducted in Iran and can reflect some charactetristics of a collectivist culture. Furthermore, some Turkish researchers found that females, compared to males, had higher levels of self-confidence (Şar, Avcu, and Işıklar, 2010). In contrast, there are those who did not find statistically significant gender differences in social acceptance which is one of the key aspects of social self-esteem (Gentile, Grabe, Dolan-Pascoe, Twenge, and Wells, 2009). The last study was a meta-analytical one and includes both types of cultures. That is, some individualist and some collectivist cultures.

Apart from that, the increment of social competence over the life course can be assumed (however, it was little investigated). It should be the logical consequence of the increase in general wisdom as confirmed by various studies (e.g. APA, 2012; Glück and Bluck, 2011; Glück et al., 2005).

It seems that social self-esteem plays an important role in learning English as a foreign/second language (EFL/ESL). Language is the main channel of communication and self-confidence in communicating and interacting with people of different cultural backgrounds and it could be influenced by one's own evaluation of his/her English knowledge and skills. The regular implementation of self-assessment regarding English competencies in English classes is one of the facilitators in building students' self-confidence (Butler and Lee, 2010). For instance, in an Iranian study was demonstrated that the group of self-confident students (i.e. students with high levels of social self-esteem) interacted more with English speakers and their English oral production was grater compared to those who were not self-confident (Kalanzadeh et al., 2013).

The present study attempts to examine the relationship of some sociodemographic variables (as listed above, in the

second hypothesis) and self-reported levels of English knowledge/skills with social self-esteem in a sample of high school and university students. Taking into account the findings emerged from prior research of the same or related variables, the two following hypotheses were defined:

1. The first hypothesis consists of three parts (subhypothesis). There are statistically significant gender differences in social self-esteem, in favor of girls/females. In addition, there are statistically significant differences due to educational level (high school and university attendance). In contrast, there are no statistically significant differences with regard to nationality (Turkish vs. Bosnian).
2. Participants' family income per month, their family sizes, the number of social clubs they are members of, and self-reported levels of English knowledge/skills are in statistically significant correlations with social self-esteem.
3. Sociodemographic variables entered in the multiple regression analysis explain a statistically significant portion of the social self-esteem variance.

METHODOLOGY

This study is a cross-sectional one because the relationships between variables of our main interest were analyzed at a particular point in time.

Participants

The sample of the present study (*N* = 402) consists of high school (N = 190, i.e. 47.3% of the total sample) and university students (N = 212, i.e. 52.7% of the whole sample), mostly from Turkey and Bosnia. They were recruited by using convenience sampling (i.e. including some available students who accepted to participate in this study).

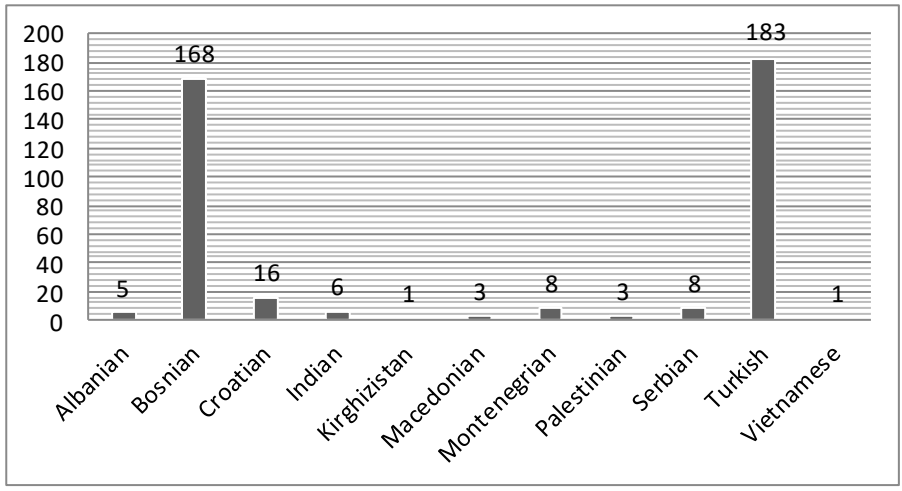

Figure 1. Number of participants who attended to high schools and universities in Turkey and Bosnia, by their nationality.

The most numerous nationality was Turkish (n = 183; i.e. 45.52% of the total sample), then Bosnian (n = 168; i.e. 41.79% of all participants in the research), Croatian (n = 16; 3.98%), Serbian and Montenegrian (both n = 8; 1.99% for each nationality group), Indian (n = 6; 1.49%) and Albanian (n = 5; 1.24%). In our sample, there were three Macedonians as well as Palestinians (each 0.75% of the total sample). There was also one participant who was from Kirghizistan and one subject who was Vietnamese (each 0.25% of all participants in our sample).

The mean age of participants was $M = 18.24$ ($SD = 1.89$). The youngest participant was 15 and the oldest one 23 years of age. As for the gender structure of our sample, 228 (56.7%) participants were females and 174 (43.3%) were males.

Participants were divided into five categories with regard to their family income per month, expressed in US dollars (Figure 2).

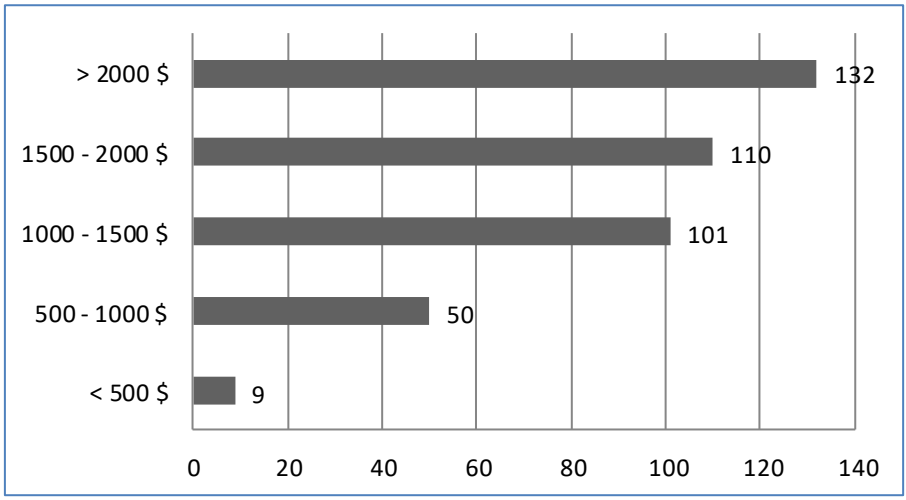

Figure 2. Frequency (number) of participants in each category of family income (per month)

As can be noticed from Figure 2, the majority of participants had a family income (per month) over 2000$ (*N* = 132, which is 32.8% of the total sample). On the other hand, families of the minority of participants earn 500$ or less per month (*N* = 9, or 2.2% of the total sample).

The highest reported number of family members was five. The greatest number of participants reported their families had four members (N = 196, 48.8% of the sample, see Figure 3).

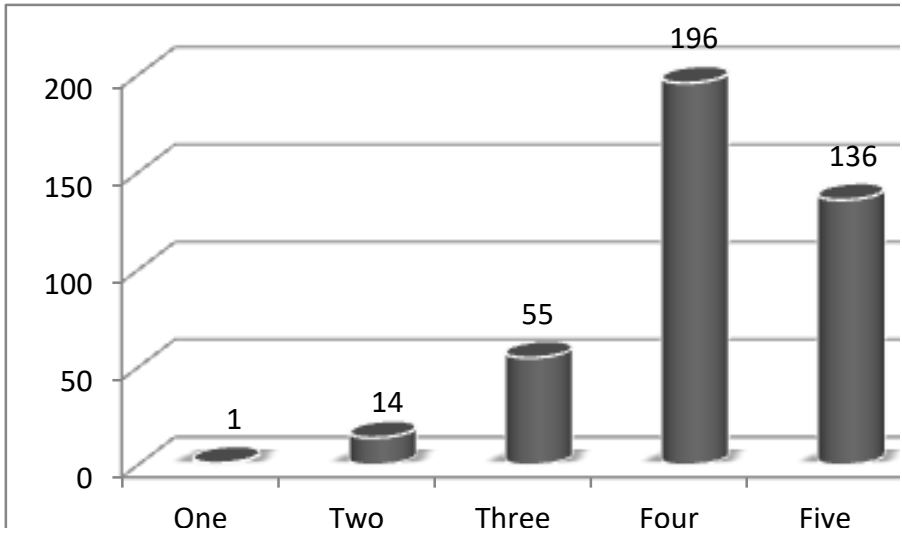

Figure 3. The sample structure by family size

Students were also asked to write the number of social clubs they were members of. These data were displayed in Figure 4 below.

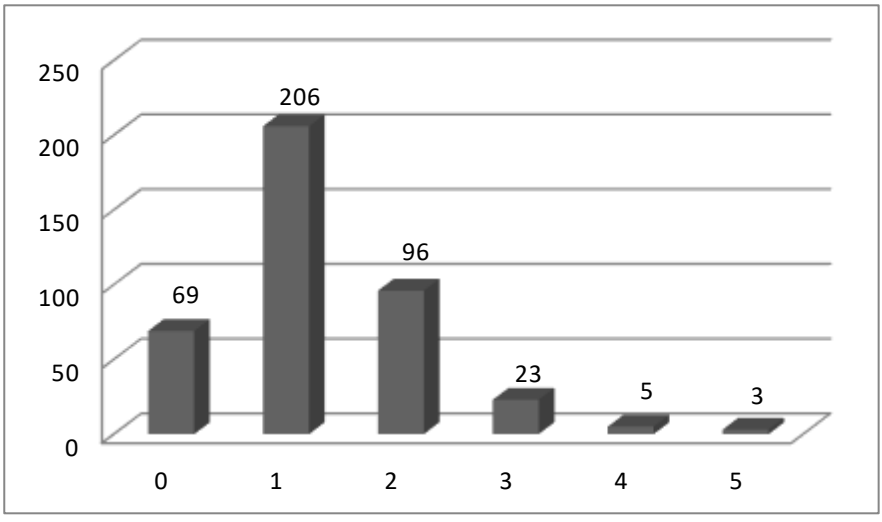

Figure 4. The frequencies regarding social clubs membership

The majority of participants were members of one social club (N = 206, 51.2% of them) and only three participants (0.7%) are members of five social clubs.

Instruments

The measurement toolkit used in this study included three parts: sociodemographic questions, Social Self-Esteem Scale (SSES) and a self-report measure of English knowledge/skills.

Sociodemographic questions encompassed participants' nationality (Turkish, Bosnian, etc.), educational institutions attended by our participants (high schools vs universities), age, gender (''male'' was coded as ''1'' and ''female'' as ''0''), family income per month (in US dollars, divided into five categories: (1) 0–500$, (2) 500–1000$, (3) 1000–1500$, (4) 1500–2000$, and (5) more than 2000$), family size (i.e. the number of members of students' families) and the number of social clubs where student registered their membership.

Social Self-Esteem Scale (SSES, Kerla & Repišti, 2013) consists of nine items related to confidence in social situations, social boldness and eagerness to participate in events in which lots of other people are present. The permission to use it in this study was obtained from the authors of this instrument. This is a five-point Likert scale, where 1 indicates strong disagreement with the content of an item and 5 indicates strong agreement with it. In order to obtain individual results on SSES, the average value of participants' answers was calculated (estimates). Hence, the range of their individual scores is from one to five. The reliability check of this instrument revealed a very high Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Therefore, SSES showed a very good internal consistency.

Self-report measure of English knowledge/skills levels was the following question: ''How would you estimate your English language skills and knowledge?'' Participants had to estimate it on a 7-point Likert scale (from 1 – poor English knowledge/skills to 7 – excellent English knowledge/skills).

Research procedure and data processing

The researcher administered the instruments to participants with directions (instructions) on how to fill them out properly. The whole procedure took approximately 15 minutes. During the course of the study, the ethical standards of educational sciences and psychology were taken into account.

The collected data were entered into SPSS for Windows (ver. 16) where their database was created. Within this software, descriptive and inferential statistical procedures were conducted.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

First, descriptive statistical values of *Social Self-Esteem Scale* were reported. Second, the results of t-test for gender differences in social self-esteem were reported. Third, the Pearson's coefficients of correlation were showed. In the end, the results of multiple regression analysis were displayed.

As noted in Table 1, the arithmetic mean of participants' social self-esteem (M = 4.22) indicated a high level of their social confidence and competence in social relations.

Table 1. Descriptive statistical values of social self-esteem

Variable	N	M	SD	Min	Max
Social self-esteem	402	4.22	0.69	1.33	4.89

This is due to the theoretical mean of this scale (which equals to 3). The lowest obtained score was 1.33 whereas the highest score was 4.89.

Table 2. Results of t-test for gender differences in social self-esteem

Variable	Gender	N	M	SD	ΔM	t	df	p
Social self-esteem	Males	174	4.26	0.64	0.06	0.848	400	.397
	Females	228	4.20	0.72				

The figures from Table 2 indicated a slightly greater mean of social self-esteem in males (M = 4.26), compared to females (M = 4.20). This difference (ΔM = 0.06) is small and, consequently, t-test statistic was not statistically significant ($t(400) = 0.848$, $p > .05$). Therefore, there were no gender differences in social self-esteem. In other words, males and females had similar levels of self-confidence, social skills and social competencies.

Table 3. Results of t-test for social self-esteem differences between high school and university students:

Variable	Institution	N	M	SD	ΔM	t	df	p
Social self-esteem	High school	190	4.25	0.64	0.05	0.856	400	.393
	University	212	4.20	0.73				

Next, high school students had somewhat higher level of social self-esteem (M = 4.25), in comparison with university students (M = 4.20). However, the difference between these mean scores was not statistically significant ($t(400) = 0.856$, $p > .05$, Table 3).

Table 4. Results of t-test for social self-esteem differences between Bosnian and Turkish students

Variable	Nationality	N	M	SD	ΔM	t	df	p
Social self-esteem	Bosnian	168	4.14	0.77	-0.13	-1.658	349	.098
	Turkish	183	4.27	0.63				

As shown in Table 4, Turkish students had higher levels of social self-esteem (M = 4.27) compared to Bosnian students (M = 4.14). As in the previous two cases, t-test for independent samples revealed that the mean difference was statistically insignificant ($t(349) = -1.658$, $p > .05$). Hence, the first hypothesis was partially confirmed.

The next two tables (Table 5 & 6) are the core part of this article because they depict the results of the association between sociodemographic factors, self-evaluated levels of English knowledge/skills and social self-esteem levels of our participants.

As can be noticed (Table 5), three coefficients of correlation were statistically significant. To be more specific,

participants' social self-esteem level was in a positive, moderate and statistically significant relationship with the size of their family ($r(400) = .524$, $p < .001$) and self-reported level of English knowledge/skills ($r(400) = .685$, $p < .001$).

Table 5. The correlation matrix of the four main variables with social self-esteem

Variables	SSES
Family income	.072
Family size	.524*
Social clubs membership	.300*
Self-reported level of English knowledge/skills	.685*

* $p < .001$

Additionally, social self-esteem was in a positive, small and statistically significant correlation with the reported number of social clubs ($r(400) = .300$, $p < .001$). These results have the following interpretation: those with larger families, a greater number of social clubs and a higher level of English knowledge/skills had higher levels of social self-esteem. In other words, students whose families are big and who are members of lots of social clubs (along with positively evaluated one's own English knowledge/skills) tend to have high levels of social confidence, social boldness and competence in various social situations. The second hypothesis was partially confirmed because family income was not in a statistically significant correlation with social self-esteem ($r(400) = .072$, $p > .05$).

Family size and a number of social clubs, as the only two statistically significant sociodemographic variables, were included in the multiple regression analysis (MRA). The outcome of this multivariate statistical procedure is displayed in Table 6.

As indicated in Table 6, the coefficient of multiple determination ($R^2 = .295$) was statistically significant ($F(2, 399) = 83.510$, $p < .001$). More precisely, the regression model that was proposed is statistically significant. Hence, the third hypothesis

(tested with two instead of three predictors because family income per month was excluded) was confirmed.

Table 6. The results of the multiple regression analysis (the criterion variable: social self-esteem – SSE; the predictors: family size and a number of social clubs)

	B	SE_B	ß	t	R	R^2	F
(Constant)	2.439	0.157	-	15.557**			
Family size (FS)	0.396	0.041	.453	9.684*	.543	.295	83.510**
Number of social clubs (NSC)	0.122	0.036	.160	3.416*			

* p < .01; ** p < .001

These two predictors explained 29.5% of the criterion's (that is, social self-esteem's) variance. In addition, the coefficent of multiple correlation was of a moderate size (R = .543). The influence of both predictors on the criterion was statistically significant, as determined by t-test. Family size was the better predictor of social self-esteem (ß = .453, $p < .001$) than a number of social clubs (ß = .160, $p < .01$).

One of the benefits of the multiple regression analysis is the opportunity to predict scores on a criterion variable based on participants' results on predictor variables. In our case, this can be done by using the following regression equation: $SSE = 2.439 + 0.396*FS + 0.122*NSC$.

If, for example, one's family has four members and s/he is a member of three social clubs, the corresponding social self-esteem score is $SSE = 4.39$. Hence, this individual has a high level of social self-esteem.

DISCUSSION

Gender differences in social self-esteem were not statistically significant. This finding could be explained by two phenomena which act in opposite directions. The first one is the higher level of general self-esteem in males (Quatman & Watson, 2001) and the second one is the higher level of social skills in females (Abdi, 2010). Social self-esteem includes not only the elements of general self-esteem but also social skills and competencies. Hence, these two effects interfered with each other and produced a nonsignificant final result (i.e. correlation

coefficient). This portion of our findings is in accordance with the results of the study conducted by Gentile, Grabe, Dolan-Pascoe, Twenge, and Wells (2009). In addition, high school students did not differ from university students in terms of social self-esteem. This is probably due to the similarity of the age groups they belong to. Finally, Turkish students had a similar level of social self-esteem to that of Bosnian students. Turkish and Bosnian cultures are mostly collectivist cultures and they are strongly connected with regard to their history and religion. Thus, the nonsignificant differences were not a surprising finding.

The check of the relationship between family income and social self-esteem did not yield a statistically significant result. Hence, higher family income did not produce higher levels of social self-esteem. Similarly, social self-esteem did not have impact on one's family income (those who are very self-confident in social situations do not earn more money or their families do not have better earnings compared to those with low levels of social self-esteem).

These results differ from the findings related to general self-esteem and family (or personal) income, where the two mentioned variables are positively correlated one to another (Jahan, Tyagi, & Suri, 2015). The main reason for this discrepancy between general and social self-esteem is the social/emotional component of social self-esteem. By using social skills (and reading others' emotions pretty accurately), some of us could compensate the lack of financial resources and build our social reputation. On the other hand, some number of people with high family income can, for instance, have high levels of self-esteem but poor social skills and competencies. It seems that some other factors (apart from family or personal financial situation) have a greater influence on (social) self-esteem. These are, for example, charisma (e.g. Bass & Avolio, 1994), leadership skills (e.g. House, 1977), physical appearance (Pop, 2016; Thornton & Ryckman, 1991), social/emotional intelligence, etc.

Family size was significantly correlated with social self-esteem. This finding is in line with that of Downey and Condron (2004). These authors highlighted the role of siblings in developing social confidence, competence and skills. Social clubs membership is also significantly correlated with social self-esteem, which is in accordance with findings from the study conducted by Ahmetoglu and Acar (2016).

Of course, there are two questions that we has to be asked: "Does social club membership increase social self-esteem levels in adolescents?" and "Does a high level of social self-esteem reinforce participants to be members of lots of social clubs?" Because correlation does not imply causation, the proper answer could not be provided in this article. Therefore, further research should be carried out in order to solve this issue and a kind of ambiguity.

As outlined above, family size and a number of social clubs fit for 29.5% of the social self-esteem variance. This means there was 70.5% of the unexplained variance. Future researchers in this area should take into account some other variables that can explain more variance (e.g. extraversion and agreeableness as personality traits, a number of close friends and acquaintances, etc.).

For EFL/ESL context, the crucial finding was that self-reported levels of English knowledge/skills were in positive and statistically significant correlations with social self-esteem. That is, one's own perception, evaluation and belief about his/her English competencies was closely linked to their self-confidence in interaction and communication with others. This result is in accordance with the results obtained by Aydoğan, et al. (2013). These authors explained the relationship between the two variables in the following way: by developing a feeling of social self-esteem in what students learn lexically, they build self-acceptance, self-confidence and trust through expanding their vocabulary knowledge and skills which are necessary for using it.

These variables are useful for contemporary language teaching and learning environments. For instance, learner-

centered approach to (English) language learning is a modern, communicative type of language teaching and learning (Spada, 2007). Hence, social-self esteem had a great impact on the outcome of this process because this approach is based on meaningful and purposeful socially involving activities.

There are two main limitations of this study. The first one is the existence of socially desirability bias (as in every research based on self-report measures). The second one is the specific population from which participants were sampled (adolescents only, without considering other developmental stages, such as childhood and adulthood).

Several practical implications could be listed:

1) parents, teachers and peers should encourage adolescents to be active members of various social clubs (which can improve their social competences and communication skills along with increasing the number of their social roles);

2) our brothers and sisters, as well as other family members, influence our social/emotional intelligence and self-confidence levels that can serve us later while solving life issues and making productive, adaptive social interactions;

3) low family income is not always a handicapping factor which disturbs our social reputation (it seems that other psychological and social characteristics have a greater impact on social self-esteem); and

4) despite the fact that males have higher self-esteem and females have better social skills, social self-esteem does not depend on gender (psychologists, psychiatrists, sociologists, specialists in pedagogy and educology, social workers and similar professionals can design programs of its successful enhancement without gender-specific measures that help males and females separately).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To conclude, the best predictor of social self-esteem (among sociodemographic variables) was the family size. Another statistically significant predictor was the number of social clubs of which participants were members. By using only

these two variables (predictors), 29.5% of social self-esteem variance can be explained. There was also a positive and significant relationship between self-reported English knowledge/skills levels and social self-esteem.

Through future research, the relationship of educational level, nationality, employment status, marital status and other sociodemographic variables with social self-esteem can be examined. Because this article dealt with a sample of adolescents, future studies could include different age groups (children, middle-aged and older people).

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