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## The effect of mentoring roles displayed by teaching staff on emotional and social loneliness levels of teacher candidates

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### Abstract

In this study, it was aimed to determine the effect of mentoring roles in terms of integrity, relationship and guidance displayed by teaching staff on emotional and social loneliness levels of teacher candidates. Hierarchical multiple linear regression results showed that integrity and relationship dimensions of mentoring roles displayed by teaching staff have a significant effect on social loneliness levels of teacher candidates. However, none of the dimensions of mentoring roles have a significant effect on emotional loneliness levels of teacher candidates. Implications of findings for teacher training system are discussed.

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*Keywords:* Mentoring; emotional loneliness; social loneliness.

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### 1. Introduction

Loneliness recently became a major problem that stemmed from the change in the structure of family and the relationships amongst individuals depending on urbanization and global social transformation. According to Steptoe, Owen and Brydan (2004), the loneliness must be taken into consideration both for individuals and organizations because of its effect on stress, individual-society relation and the health of soul. Loneliness is a subjective matter that stems from the inconsistency between what kind of social relations an individual wants to have and in reality what an individual possesses (Peplau and Perlman, 1982; Jones and Hebb, 2003). The loneliness is the experience of the individual that he has as a result of his incompetence in communication with other people (Rokach, 2000). Loneliness is not a choice that an individual prefers to have when he is alone, but a negative situation that results from high stress and low social interactions (Hawkey, 2003). In relation to these definitions and according to Weiss's (1973) classification, the loneliness can be considered in two categories: emotional and social loneliness. Emotional Loneliness: It means that the individual doesn't feel any emotional things to anything and anybody. Social Loneliness: It stems from the absence of the people with whom the individual can share his feelings, ideas, dreams and interests.

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There are many social, psychological and environmental factors that effect on loneliness perceptions. The absence of self-esteem (Levin and Stokas, 1986), personal characteristics such as introversion and shyness (Wiseman, 2005), lack of social skills (Deniz, Hamarta and Ari, 2005), interpersonal problems in family (Wiseman, Mayses and Sharabany, 2005), the negative social factors in work life and a lack of social support (Wright, 2005) are the main factors that increase the loneliness perceptions.

There are many studies that focus on the effect of social and emotional support on the loneliness levels of individuals. Cohen (1994), in the research on university students, found that the individuals who were supported socially do not feel loneliness too much. Arkar and Sari (2004) found that there was a negative relation between the social support and loneliness levels of the university students who attend the research. According to the research of Schmit and Kurdek (1985), there was a negative relation between the loneliness levels of college students and their number of friends and the social support they receive. According to the research of Ponizovsky and Ritsner (2004) on 386 adults, there is a negative relation between the level of social support and the level of loneliness of the individuals. These researches stress the effect of social support on loneliness.

There are several factors that effect on loneliness perceptions and loneliness may arise in any part of the life. In order to decrease the level of loneliness the individuals must be supported socially and emotionally (Frank and Woodward, 1988). This notion gives rise to the types of social support such as mentoring. Mentoring is a kind of social support that decreases the social loneliness in work life, increases self reliance, socializes the employees and develops the special abilities that individuals possess (Sosik and Godshalk, 2002). Mentoring is a kind of guidance that takes into consideration the interpersonal sincerity, trust and honesty (Ayalon, 2007). Mentoring is a kind of counseling in which experienced people support and help inexperienced ones (Harrison, 2006) and share their experiences with them (Wulff and Fetham, 2005). To be a mentor, a person must be experienced in solving social and individual problems (Fullerton, 1998).

Mentoring services is getting importance especially in educational organizations that need human labor in every process. Mentoring needs devotion, so it requires the teachers to possess new roles depending on the change in student profiles. One of these new roles is teacher mentoring (Tilman, 2005). Mentoring services can be divided into 4 categories. These are: academic support services, career counseling, transfer of social experience and providing emotional support (Cox, 2005).

In this research, the mentoring scale that was developed by Rose (2003) is used and in this context, mentoring roles are taken up in three dimensions: integrity, relationship and guidance. Integrity means that mentoring is carried out in a friendly, supportively, encouraging and reliable manner. Relationship dimension means that mentor develops consistent relations with the individuals and solves their problems. Guidance means that mentor helps and guides the individuals (Rose, 2003).

This study aims to search the effect of mentoring roles displayed by teaching staff on emotional and social loneliness levels of teacher candidates. As Levin and Stokas (1986) claim, the loneliness stems from the perception type of individuals not from the incompetence in relationships. The perceptions related to the occurrence of mentoring roles are more important than the level of the actual mentoring roles displayed. So, the perceptions both related to loneliness levels of teacher candidates and the mentoring roles displayed by teaching staff are determined through the surveys based on self evaluations of teacher candidates who are at the focus of this research.

**2. Methodology**

The target population of this research, which is in a relational descriptive scanning model, consists of 250 teacher candidates and postgraduate students in Social Sciences Institute at Firat University in 2007-2008 academic year. The researchers tried to reach the whole population and surveys returned from 195 teacher candidates. The ideal mentoring scale of Rose and loneliness scale of U.C.L.A have been administered to the teacher candidates in the research. As a result of factor analysis it has been realized that loneliness scale consists of social and emotional loneliness. Ideal mentor scale consists of integrity, relationship and guidance dimensions.

Data were examined for normality assumptions. Outliers were deleted, skewness and kurtosis values were examined and necessary transformations were made for normality, and also there was no multicollinearity. Then it was decided that the data were appropriate for linear regression.

**3. Findings and Results**

In this part, the hierarchical multiple linear regression results are focused on. These results define the effect of mentoring roles displayed by teaching staff on emotional and social loneliness levels of teacher candidates.

Table 2. The effect of dimensions of mentoring roles of teaching staff on the social loneliness levels of teacher candidates

<i>Model 1</i>		<i>Dependent Variable; Social Loneliness</i>								
<i>Steps</i>	<i>Independent Variables</i>	B	St. error	$\beta$	t	p	Zero-order r	Partial r	$R^2_{change}$	$R^2_{model}$

1 (Enter Method)	(Constant)	1,630	,299		5,447	,000			
	Gender	-,037	,115	-,023	-,320	,749	-,021	-,023	
	Residence	,126	,115	,080	1,101	,272	,074	,079	,014
	Income	,077	,062	,090	1,244	,215	,080	,090	
2 (Enter Method)	(Constant)	2,187	,359		6,086	,000			
	Gender	-,075	,113	-,048	-,665	,507	-,021	-,048	
	Residence	,099	,111	,063	,894	,372	,074	,065	
	Income	,086	,060	,102	1,447	,150	,080	,105	,087**
	<b>Integrity</b>	-,288	,068	-,352***	-4,215	,000	-,250	-,294	,101**
	<b>Relationship</b>	-,155	,075	-,172*	-2,074	,039	-,180	-,150	
	<b>Guidance</b>	-,003	,024	-,010	-,140	,889	-,042	-,028	

\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

As seen in Table 1; at the first step, the demographics were entered as dependent variables but this model did not predict meaningfully the social loneliness ( $R^2_{model}=.014, p>.05$ ). In the second step, the dimensions of mentoring roles have been added to this model and the contribution of these dimensions has been realized ( $R^2_{change}=.087, p<.01$ ). While the effect of the demographics was controlled, the integrity and relationship dimensions of mentoring roles of teaching staff decrease the social loneliness levels of teacher candidates. When  $\beta$  values are evaluated, it is seen that the integrity of dimension of mentoring roles ( $\beta=-.352, p<.001$ ) is the most important predictor of social loneliness levels of teacher candidates. Whereas, the relationship dimension ( $\beta=-.172, p<.05$ ) is the second important predictor of social loneliness.

“Integrity” dimension which means that teaching staff is expected to give importance to and encourage teacher candidates decreases the social loneliness levels of teacher candidates. Also, “relationship” dimension which refers to developing positive relations between teaching staff and teacher candidates decreases the social loneliness levels of teacher candidates. The socially supportive behaviors of teaching staff have a meaningful effect on the social loneliness levels of teacher candidates in both dimensions. In this point, it can be said that teacher candidates’ perceptions on the social support they receive from teaching staff reduces their levels of social loneliness. The researches carried out by Schmit and Kurdek (1985), Cohen (1994), Kafetsios (2002), Arkar and Sari (2004), Ponizovsky and Ritsner (2004) and Wright (2005) corroborate these findings that the perceived social support decreases the social loneliness perception.

Table 2. The effect of dimensions of mentoring roles of teaching staff on the emotional loneliness levels of teacher candidates

Model 2		Dependent Variable; Emotional Loneliness								
Steps	Independent Variables	B	St. error	$\beta$	t	p	Zero-order r	Partial r	$R^2_{change}$	$R^2_{model}$
1 (Enter Method)	(Constant)	4,253	,311		13,678	,000				
	Gender	-,097	,119	-,059	-,812	,418	-,043	-,059		
	Residence	-,206	,119	-,125	-1,732	,085	-,122	-,124	,019	,019
	Income	,025	,064	,029	,396	,693	,033	,029		
2 (Enter Method)	(Constant)	3,959	,387		10,219	,000				
	Gender	-,076	,122	-,046	-,621	,535	-,043	-,045		
	Residence	-,194	,120	-,117	-1,615	,108	-,122	-,117		
	Income	,021	,064	,023	,321	,748	,033	,023	,019	,038
	<b>Integrity</b>	-,141	,074	-,165	-1,914	,057	-,140	-,138		
	<b>Relationship</b>	-,066	,081	-,070	-,819	,414	-,025	-,015		
	<b>Guidance</b>	-,003	,026	-,009	-,115	,908	-,044	-,038		

\*p<.05

As seen in Table 2, at the first step, the demographics were entered as dependent variables but this model did not predict meaningfully the emotional loneliness ( $R^2_{model}=.019, p>.05$ ). In the second step, the dimensions of mentoring roles have been added to this model and no contribution of these dimensions has been realized ( $R^2_{change}=.019, p>.05$ ). While the effect of the demographics was controlled at this step, none of the dimensions of the mentoring roles of teaching staff could predict the emotional loneliness levels of teacher candidates.

When we look generally at the findings, it can be said that the mentoring roles displayed by teaching staff significantly predict the teacher candidates' social loneliness levels which mostly have antecedents in social nature. On the other hand, the mentoring roles do not significantly predict the emotional loneliness levels which mostly have antecedents in emotional and intrinsic nature.

#### 4. Conclusions and Recommendations

In this research it was realized that the mentoring roles were inefficient to affect the emotional loneliness levels of the teacher candidates. At this point, the teaching staff is required to affect teacher candidates emotionally in order to decrease the level of emotional loneliness. The teaching staff is expected to pay attention to teacher candidates person to person and to be more sensitive to their emotional needs.

It was realized that “integrity” and “relationship” dimensions of mentoring roles of teaching staff have decreased the social loneliness levels of teacher candidates. Perceived loneliness has a negative effect on individuals' psychological well-being, their levels of performance and motivation. Also it damages socialization process of individuals in organizations. So, it is important for the effectiveness of teacher training system to decrease the loneliness perceptions of teacher candidates. Although the mentoring roles displayed by teaching staff decrease only the perception of social loneliness of teacher candidates, it is thought to be important for teacher candidates to be socialized and to be motivated to work harder. It would be helpful for our teacher training and in general our education system, if the benefits of mentoring will be taken into consideration in pre-service training of teachers and further in their organizational socialization and in-service training processes after employment.

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