

FAMILY TYPE AND SOCIAL SUPPORT SEEKING AMONG NAZARBAYEV UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Introduction. Social support positively influences health and well-being across cultural groups [1]. However, culture influences attitudes towards social support seeking, especially in developing countries experiencing clashes of traditional and modern social norms [2]. Because university students who receive social support have better academic performance and are less likely to drop out [3], the purpose of this study was to examine social support from the perspectives of Nazarbayev University students.

Methods. We used a mixed methods approach by conducting an online survey and qualitative interviews. The participants of the survey (164 male, 201 female) completed a structured questionnaire containing the Distress Disclosure Scale, the scale for Perceived Social Support from family and friends, and a list of statements characterizing Kazakh traditional families. Participants then volunteered for an interview which we conducted at a later time.

Results and Discussion. As expected, NU students are less likely to seek social support when in distress than typical Western populations, and male students were even less likely than female students. However, there were no significant differences found across family type or region of Kazakhstan. A preliminary analysis of the qualitative interviews reveals a categorical understanding of social support from friends and from family. Students in general report they avoid seeking support from family because of hierarchical, generational and experiential differences causing, from their perspective, a lack of understanding and being approachable.

Conclusions. This study serves as a first-look into social support seeking behavior among university students in Kazakhstan. While the results challenge some stereotypes about family type and region, they also confirm expected cultural attributes such as hierarchy by differentiating peers and older family members. Further analysis should reveal more detailed descriptions of social support seeking behavior and yield recommendations for student support.

Acknowledgments. We would like to thank the students who participated in the survey and volunteered for the interviews whose participation hopefully will help their fellow students.

References.

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