THE SENSE of COMMUNITY at UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOL STUDENTS (Mugla Sıtkı Kocman University)[1]

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Abstract

As social beings, humans are involved in different communities throughout their lives. These communities meet the need of socialization for human beings and make them get united around common values. The most effective one of these communities is the school community within which each individual takes part in one way or another. Each individual takes part in the school community in a certain period of his/her life and the experiences he/she has got there affect his/her life. Students are an important part of the school community. At school sense of community (SOC) is defined as a student's feeling of being known by, accepted by, valued by, and having influence with their teachers and classmates (Schaps, Lewis & Watson, 1997). It is also described as feeling connected to, engaged to, belonging to, and committed to school. The quality of students' social relations with each other, with teachers and with administrators contributes to an enhanced school environment. The benefits of community building in schools depend on the school's efforts (Sheers, 2010). The main purpose of this study is to reveal the sense of community of the university students by making the Turkish adaptation of the 'Sense of Community' scale developed by Chavis, Lee and Acosta (2008). The study examined the university students' perception of the sense of community and it was determined that students' perceptions of the sense of community were at medium and higher levels. When the results of the analysis made according to the variable of the department are taken into account, it is observed that the students' opinions show significant differences in all dimensions. When the arithmetic averages related to the sense of community are examined, it is observed that the students of the department of psychological Counselling and guidance have the lowest scores. In this study, only the opinions of students studying at a single university were examined. It is thought that examination of other universities in the future studies could be useful.

Keywords: School sense of community, Undergraduate School Students, the Sense of Community scale

1-Introduction

As social beings, humans are involved in different communities throughout their lives. These communities meet the need of socialization for human beings and make them get united around common values. The most effective one of these communities is the school community within which each individual takes part in one way or another. Each individual takes part in the

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school community in a certain period of his/her life and the experiences he/she has got there affect his/her life. Students are an important part of the school community. Especially for university students, the university community is becoming a part of their lives. For the socialization, it is very important to create a common set of values for the students coming from different locations and from different cultural backgrounds, by living together, to trust each other and to feel themselves part of the group. In addition to that, the facts that the sense of community is effective in pushing the individualism into the background and that it provides support to the solution of problems stemming from individualism increase the importance of the formation of a sense of community. For this reason, it is considered that the revelation of the perception of a sense of community for the college students is important in terms of both the establishment of an education environment by the University and for shedding light on the problems faced by the students.

Before the sense of community is defined, it is necessary to concentrate on the concepts of the community and the society which are the main elements of the sense of community. While the Community defines a limited, sincere and humanitarian shared ownership, the society emphasizes differentiation, disintegration and cooperation, as well as individualism (Maclver and Page, 1994). According to Crow (2007), the community is a structure composed of people who come together around common interests, values and identities; while society is a heterogeneous and intensive structure made up of various groups of people. Ozankaya (1977) described the concept of society as a specific geographic location with continuity, which is composed of persons cooperating among themselves in order to protect themselves, to maintain their existence and to realize their basic interests and as a totality of complex relations which have common components. Cevizci (2010), on the other hand, defines the society as a whole, where groups of people live together, which is composed of institutions, different types/styles of relationships and modes of organizations and norms; a whole among whose elements exist mutual relationships. Therefore, the way how the society is to be understood and defined largely depends on how the relationship between the society and the individual is understood (Cevizci, 2010). Based on these definitions, the concept of the society can be defined as the totality which has common values and norms and there are cooperation and mutual relations among its elements. In order to form this cooperation and mutual relations, the individuals should have a sense of community.

Although there is no common definition of the sense of community, some researchers like Rovai (2001) adopt the definition developed by McMillan and Chavis. Accordingly, the sense of community is the members' sense of belonging, their feelings about caring for each other and for the group and a common belief in the dependence of their necessities on their commitment to be together. The sense of community can be defined as the individual's involvement in group's

activities and decisions by feeling as belonging to that group which shares common norms, purposes and values and behaviours of the individuals against each other in a protective and supportive way.

When the literature related to this subject is reviewed, it is observed that there are different elements forming the sense of community. Lickona and Davidson (2000) indicated that in order to create a sense of community, there should be three subcomponents: (1) perceptions of student respect- students' perception of respect towards their friends, teachers, and school in general and towards school personnel ; (2) perceptions of student friendship and belonging - students' feelings towards friendship and being part of the school –; (3) Perception of students' shaping of their environment – behaviours related to the happenings surrounding the school environment. Sheers (2010), on the other hand, stated that there were six dimensions of the sense of community in the school: a) respect; trust and kindness; b) the sense of belonging; c) regular communication; d) protection; e) sharing the authority and f) order and discipline. (Sheers, 2010). Since it is necessary to have the geographical and relational dimensions for the formation of the society (Gusfield, 1975), based on this, according to Mc Millan and Chavis (1986) the sense of community is made up of four main components: "Reinforcement of Needs", "Membership", "influence" and "Shared Emotional Connection". This study is based on the components mentioned by McMillan and Chavis. According to this (McMillan and Chavis, 1986):
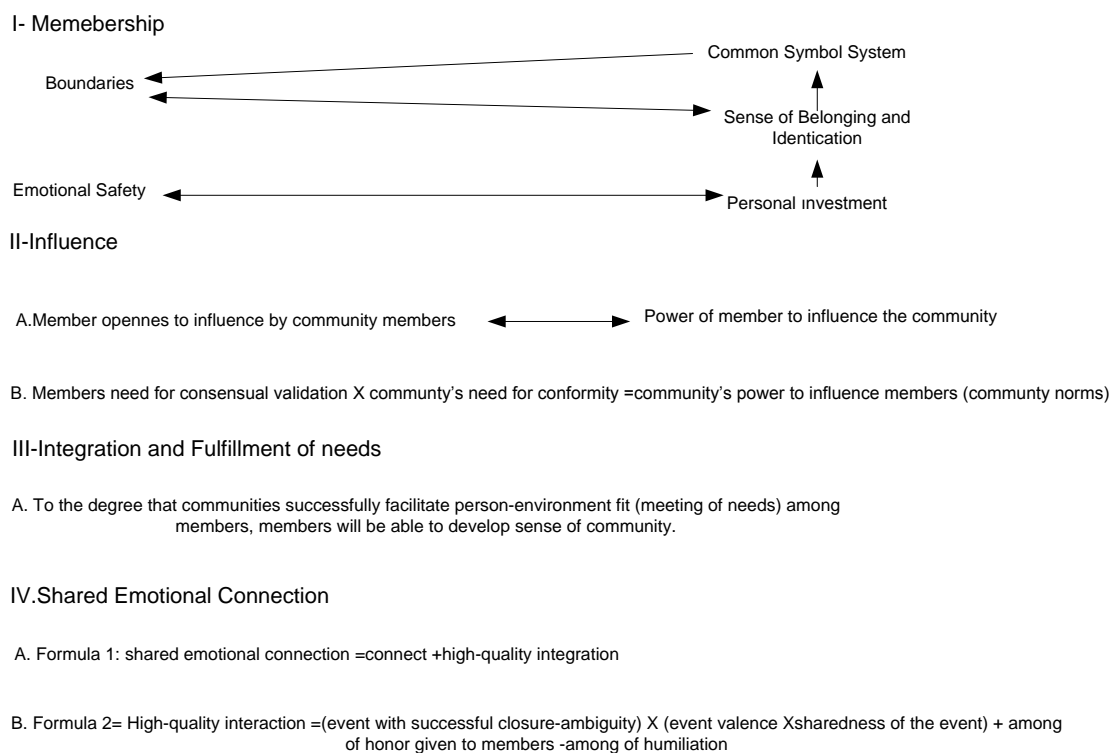
(i) The component of "Membership" is based on the sense of belonging. With this sense, the possibility of being a part of a community and the fact of being involved in the community are defined. The member who becomes part of the group in this dimension makes a distinction of "we" and "they", which makes it possible to create a safe area. The feeling of being safe in the group strengthens the mutual relations of the members of the community and ensures the development of affinity between the members. People feel at home within the social environment of the community with which they establish a sense of attachment they think that they are making a personal investment by taking part in there. In this way, they think they form an emotional connection with the group. If we assume that this organization is a school, the sense of belonging to the school is possible when the student feels being a member of the group; there is a common emotional communication and she feels to be willing to make a sacrifice for the group.

(ii) The power (relation) between the members and the community is important in Influence dimension. The main reason for this is the mutual relationship between the individual and the structure. In this sense, while it is possible to talk about a level of effectiveness established by the community over the members of the group, it is also accepted that members could also have a community-wide influence.

(iii) Reinforcement of Needs, this dimension which can be mentioned as being a key element for the sense of community generally emphasizes the concept of common values. When people who share common values come together, they find people who have similar needs, priorities and objectives. In some communities, being just a member of the community makes them positively motivated. As individuals gain social prestige and status for being part of the community, they become part of a network and gain positive commercial positions, this will enhance their sense of belonging to the community, and its members become closer and establish harmonious relations among themselves.

(iv) Shared emotional connection: this dimension, which can be defined as a common past, does not necessarily mean a historical past but can be described as a collective memory that can be identified with it. The events, the stories which were experienced and have a certain meaning and value, struggles, disasters or joys etc., which are stored in the shared memory, all have a function of keeping people united under the umbrella of a community or around a common identity. In this sense, it establishes the emotional bond which is very important for the community.

McMillan and Chavis (1986), demonstrated the components of the sense of community that are described above, their relationships with each other; how the sub-dimensions of the sense of community function together; how the sense of community perseveres and how its dynamics are being formed as shown in Figure 1.

I- Memebership

Common Symbol System

Boundaries

Sense of Belonging and Identication

Emotional Safety   ⟷   Personal ınvestment

II-Influence

A.Member opennes to influence by community members   ⟷   Power of member to influence the community

B. Members need for consensual validation X communty's need for conformity =community's power to influence members (communty norms)

III-Integration and Fulfillment of needs

A. To the degree that communities successfully facilitate person-environment fit (meeting of needs) among members, members will be able to develop sense of community.

IV.Shared Emotional Connection

A. Formula 1: shared emotional connection =connect +high-quality integration

B. Formula 2= High-quality interaction =(event with successful closure-ambiguity) X (event valence Xsharedness of the event) + among of honor given to members -among of humiliation

Referances Mcmillan, D.W., & Chavis, D.M. (1986). Sense of Community: A Definition and Theory. Journal of Psychology, 14, 6-23. http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/1520-6629(198601)14:13.0.co;2-i

Figure 1. Element of sense of Community and Their Hypothesized Relationship

As we have seen, for the formation of the sense of community, the individual should feel belonging to a group; an area of mutual interaction should be established between the community and the individual; the individual should be able to meet his/her needs within the group; there should be shared emotions. When the sense of community is evaluated from the perspective of educational institutions; interaction of the person, for education purposes, with others making up the society creates a social fabric, which is peculiar to the education. This social fabric is called as an educational institution. The creation of an educational institution in the community gives the members of society a right to fulfil their educational needs. The state establishes schools to meet the needs created by the educational institution. In this way, the education system of the community is being formed. While the society is affected by the problems of the school, the school is also affected by the problems of the society (Başaran, 2000). For this reason, students' participation in the school activities with a sense of belonging to the school around common values and norms. Their supportive and protective behaviors towards each other in other words, the formation of a sense of community in their minds are important in terms of socialization. Another reason for the need for a sense of community in the schools is that students also need to belong, to be connected and to have friendships (Schaps, 1998). A student is more committed to the norms, values and goals of a school when the school meets his/her psychological needs (Schaps, 2003). According to Sergiovanni (1994), the sense of community creates shared values and ideas by connecting teachers and students to each other. For a student, the sense of community at the school is to feel that he/she is valued, acknowledged and recognized by her teachers and classmates (Schaps, Lewis and Watson, 1997). Dewey (1958) stated that schools should become a society by creating common experiences, while Sergiovanni (1994) indicated that people need to become a part of the group and feel themselves belonging to this group, by working around a common purpose. As it is seen, people's desire to see themselves as a part of a group, in other words, the sense of belonging to the group is a very basic necessity. There are some studies which concluded that If schools created a sense of belonging and established a sense of community, students felt better at the school and their academic success and school attendance increased (Siskos, Papaioannou and Proios, 2011; Sheers, 2010; Schaps, 2003).

The social function of the school is to make contribution to the social culture, to teach people to live together and to share, and therefore to make individuals get socialized. For the formation o a social culture, it is important that schools create a sense of community. In schools with a sense of community, students are respectful towards each other, they are

protective and sharing. The studies have shown that students with a sense of community have higher academic achievement, their behavioral problems are reduced and that students stay away from violence (Shamps. 2003; Resnick et al., 1997). For this reason, it is important to create a sense of community in the schools.

When the literature in Turkey is examined, it is seen that studies on the sense of community in the field of education are limited. These are generally scale-adaptation studies made over students at secondary and high schools. Çınkır, Nayır and Kuru Çetin (2016) made the Turkish adaptation, over the students at secondary school, of the Scale of School as a Caring Community Profile developed by Lickona and Davidson (2003). Akın, Usta and Eroglu (2013), on the other hand, made the Turkish adaptation, over the students at high schools, of the scale of Sense of Community in adolescents developed by Chiessi, Cicognani, and Sonn (2010). However, in the literature review, no study, which uses, over university students, the scale developed by Vhavis, Lee and Acosta (2008) made of components which McMillan and Chavis (1986) stated as laying the basis for the definition of the sense of community, has been encountered. The main purpose of this study is to reveal the sense of community of the university students by making the Turkish adaptation of the 'Sense of Community' scale developed by Chavis, Lee and Acosta (2008). For this purpose, the answers to the following questions were sought for.

1. How is the sense of community among the university students participating in the survey?

2. Is there a meaningful relationship between the gender of the university students participating in the research and whether they want to be a member of the institution or not?

3. Does the perception of the sense of community of university students participating in the research show a significant difference in accordance with the variables of the gender of the student and the department being studied?

2. The Method

2.1. The Population and The Sample

The population of this study is composed of 22.748 students studying in different departments at Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University at 2016-2017 education year (www.sp.mu.edu.tr). As the population of the study was too large for the researchers to cover, the method of convenience sampling was applied. Convenience sampling is a type of nonprobability or nonrandom sampling where members of the target population that meet certain practical criteria, such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity, availability at a

given time, or the willingness to participate are included for the purpose of the study (Dörnyei, 2007). For this purpose it was calculated that 377 students were serve the purpose of the study (Cochran, 1962: Akt. Balcı, 2006). 400 questionnaires were delivered to students and 309 questionnaires were returned, giving a return rate 77%. Of the students who participated in the study, 27 students were studying at the Faculty of Physical Training and Sports Sciences, 76 students at the Faculty of Literature, 32 students at the Faculty of Health Sciences and the remaining 174 students at the Faculty of Education.

2.2. Data Collection Tool

In this study, the sense of community scale developed by Chavis, D.M., Lee, K.S., & Acosta J.D. (2008) was used after the validity and reliability assessments were made. For this purpose, first of all, the necessary permissions were obtained the scale was translated into Turkish and the then sent to the area professionals who have a good command of Turkish and English languages. According to opinions of the field experts, the items were evaluated one by one, the most appropriate expressions were determined and translated into English again in order to check the similarities between the translations. Finally, the last corrections were made and the scale was applied to the participants.

The Sense of Community Index (Scale) is composed of 24 Likert-Type items which are to be answered by the following: 1-Not at all, I disagree; 2- Somewhat, I agree; 3- Mostly, I agree; 4-Completely, I agree. The last question of the scale was asked as follows: "How important is it for you to feel that you are a member of this Institution along with its other members?" The multiple-choice answer of this question is as following: 1- I'd rather not be a member of this institution; 2- It does not matter; 3-not so important; 4-somewhat important; 5-important; 6-very important.

The Index is composed of four factors: "Reinforcement of Needs", "Membership", "influence", "Shared Emotional Connection" and 24 items. Reinforcement of Needs comprises the living the sense of community by sharing resources/opportunities within the group. The dimension of "Membership" can be defined as the sense of belonging to the group. The dimension of "Influence" is the feeling of being important by making a difference for the group and by being a member of the group. Finally, "Shared Emotional Connection" contains members' common pasts, common locations and the comments and beliefs about their similar experiences. The high scores obtained by the participants of the survey indicate that their sense of community for their institution is high.

DFA Analysis was conducted in order to determine whether the factor structure of the sense of community is appropriate or not. The results of the analysis are given in Table 1.

Table 1. The Results of DFA Analysis for the Sense of Community Index

Fit Index Type	Observed value	Acceptable Value
X^2	743,61	$2df < X^2 \leq 3df$
P value	0,00	$0,01 \leq p \leq 0,05$
X^2/df	3	$2 < X^2/df \leq 3$
RMSEA	0,08	$0,05 < RMSEA \leq 0,08$
NNFI	0,95	$0,95 \leq NNFI < 0,97$
CFI	0,96	$0,95 \leq CFI < 0,97$
GFI	0,83	$0,90 \leq GFI < 0,95$
AGFI	0,79	$0,85 \leq AGFI < 0,90$

The Analysis results in Table 1 show the following fit indices: (x 2 = 743,61; P = 0.000 df = 245) CFI = 0.96, NNFI = 0.95, GFI = 0.83, AGFI = 0.79 and RMSEA = 0.08. As the main indicator of the fitness between the expected and observed models, the ratio of X^2/df was found to be 3. The fact that the results of the analysis were within the boundaries of the admissible fitness levels indicates that the model shows a good level of fitness (Schermelleh-Engel and Moosbrugger, 2003).

A reliability analysis was also carried out on the scale. Accordingly, there are six questions on the "reinforcement" dimension. Alpha reliability coefficient for the measurements made in this sub-dimension of this measurement tool, Cronbach's α =.79. There are six questions on the "Membership" dimension. Alpha reliability coefficient for the measurements made in membership dimension of this measurement tool, Cronbach's α =.70. There are six questions on the "influence" dimension. Alpha reliability coefficient for the measurements made in influence sub-dimension of this measurement tool, Cronbach's α =.80. Alpha reliability for the last dimension of the scale, "shared emotional connection", cronbach-α =is 84. Cronbach's Alpha (cronbach- α) for all measurements obtained from the measurement tool in general equals to.92. Reliability coefficients of the scale in the work carried out by Chavi, Lee & Acosta were between 0.79 and 0.86 while the overall reliability coefficient of the scale was 0.94. Accordingly, the reliability coefficients of both scales were very close to each other. In light of all these findings and discussion, it is shown that the factor structure of the Sense of Community Scale was appropriate for the sampling. In this context, it is possible to claim that, the Turkish version of the Scale is valid and has a reliable structure.

2.3. Data Analysis

During the analysis phase, primarily, it was examined whether there were outliers in

each of items in the data set (univariate) and in their combination (multivariate) and whether there existed any multicollinearity. There were no participants exceeding the level of $Z_{.001}=-3; +3$ ' (Tabaknik and Fidell, 2008). This data was removed from the data set. Mahalonobis distance was controlled and no outlier was observed. During the adaptation of the scale, the DFA and Cronbach's Alpha reliability analyses were made. In addition to that, each of the subproblems under the study was analysed in terms of normality with Kolmogorow – Sea (K-S) test. During the data analysis, the descriptive statistical techniques, frequency, percentage, and arithmetic average were used when the participants' responses were analysed. Moreover, in order to determine whether students ' perception of the sense of community differed according to their gender and the department in which they study, t-test and ANOVA tests were carried out. Research data was collected by researchers. During the analysis of the study data, in order to determine the students' sense of community towards the institution, descriptive statistics, such as the arithmetic mean and standard deviation, were calculated for their responses with regard to the Sense of Community Scale. While making the analysis, in order to eliminate the possibility for a Type-1 error, the level of significance was taken as 0.0125. Because from our observation of this formula: α = 1-(1-α) ((1-α1) (1-α2) (1-α3). …... (1-αp) we saw that the error level increased. That's why, in order to reduce Type-1 error, alpha was calculated as 0.0125. (αi = 0.05/4) based on the formula: αi = αfw/p by using Bonferroni method (Tabaknik and Fidel, 2007, 270).

3. **Findings**

The results of descriptive statistics (median, mode, and the highest and lowest values) showing the level of perceptions of the sense of community of the students participating in the study according to their departments are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. The Descriptive Statistical Results for the Perception of the Sense Of Community According To The Departments Of The Students Participating İn The Survey

	N	$\overline{X}$	S	Mod	Median	Minimum	Maximum
Department of physical Education and Sport Teacher	27	65,11	15,38	60	63	38,33	120
Department of Contemporary Turkish Languages and Literatures	76	54	11,87	51	53	27	81
Nursing	32	51,66	12,1	48	51,63	25	79
Turkish Teacher	75	55,59	11,72	55	55	31	85
Psychological Counseling and	59	51,76	9,1	58	52	29	72

Guidance Teacher							
Science Teacher	40	66,68	12,55	61	68,5	24	86

The highest score that can be obtained from the sense of community scale is $\overline{X} = 96$, while the lowest score is $\overline{X} = 24$. When the scores that the students obtained from the sense of community scale, were examined in terms of their departments, it is observed that the highest score $\overline{X} = 66.68$ points was obtained by students of the Department of Science Teaching, which were followed respectively by the students of the Department of Physical Education and Sports with a score of $\overline{X} = 65.11$ points; by the students of the Department of Turkish Language Education with a score of $\overline{X} = 55.59$ points and then by the students of the Department of Contemporary Turkish Languages and Literatures with a score of $\overline{X} = 54$ points. In the last rows, there were nursing students with a score of $\overline{X} = 51.66$ points and students of the Department of psychological Counselling and guidance with a score of $\overline{X} = 51.76$ points. According to the results, it is concluded that the responses given by the students to questions in the Sense of Community Scale were above average in general and that their perception of the sense of community towards their institution was positive. The descriptive statistical results for the students' level of perception of the sense of the community according to its sub-dimensions are provided in Table 3.

Table 3. The Descriptive Statistical Results For The Level Of Perception Of The Sense Of Community, According To The Its Sub-Dimensions, Of The Students Participating In The Survey

	N	$\overline{X}$	S	Mod	Median	Minimum	Maximum
Reinforcement	309	14,5819	3,49540	16	14,27	6,00	24,00
Memebership	309	13,4829	3,32688	14	13	6,00	23,00
Influence	309	14,3881	4,33669	13	14	6,00	53,00
Emotional_connection	309	13,9195	3,98334	12	14	6,00	24,00

As it is seen in Table 3, while the students have an average level of perception in terms of sub-dimensions of Reinforcement, Membership and Emotional Connection; their level of perception is lower in terms of the sub-dimension of influence.

The last item of the scale was asked as follows: "How important is it for you to feel that you are a member of this Institution along with its other members?" Chavis, D.M., Lee, K.S., & Acosta J.D. (2008) indicated that they asked this question on purpose and that the response to this question would provide a general overview of the sense of community felt towards the institution. Accordingly, in this study as well, it was attempted to reveal the general perception of the students towards their institutions. Hence, the responses given to this question were provided in terms of the departments of the students in Table 4.

Table 4. The Analysis Of The Responses By The Students Related To Being A Member Of Their Institution.

	1.Prefer Not to be Part of This Community		2.Not Important at All		3.Not very Important		4.Somewhat Important		5.Important		6.Very Important	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Department of physical Education and Sport Teacher	3	11,1	3	11,1	4	14,8	6	22,2	8	29,6	3	11,1
Department of Contemporary Turkish Languages and Literatures	4	5,3	3	3,9	15	19,7	23	30,3	25	32,9	6	7,9
Nursing	3	9,4	2	6,3	7	21,6	9	28,1	10	31,3	1	3,1
Turkish Teacher	2	2,4	7	9,3	9	12	28	37,3	24	32	5	6,7
Psychological Counseling and Guidance Teacher	5	8,5	11	18,6	8	13,6	15	24,5	17	28,8	3	5,1
Science Teacher	2	5	1	2,5	0	0	11	27,5	18	45	8	20

As it is seen in Table 4, with this question, it was intended to ask the students how important it was to be a member of their university. Accordingly, 29.6% of the students of the Department of Physical Education and Sports stated that it was important for them to be a member of their institution, while 32.9% of the students of the Department of Contemporary Turkish Languages and Literatures stated that it was important for them to be a member of their institution. 19 students of Nursing Education (31.6%), 17 students of the Department of Psychological Counselling and Mentoring students, (28.8%) and 18 students of the Department of Science Teaching (45%) stated that it was important for them to be a member of their institution. However, 28 students from the Department of Turkish Language Education (37.3%) indicated that it was somewhat important for them to be a member of their institution. The results of the chi-square tests showing whether the importance of being a member of an institution differs according to the variable of gender are given in Table 5.

Table 5. The Results of Chi-Square Tests According to the Variable of Gender.

			gender		total
			male	female	
"How important is it to you to feel a sense of community with other community members?"	1.Prefer Not to be Part of This Community	n	6	13	19
		%	31,6%	68,4%	100,0%
	2.Not Important at All	n	14	13	27
		%	51,9%	48,1%	100,0%
	3.Not very Important	n	17	26	43
		%	39,5%	60,5%	100,0%
	4.Somewhat Important	n	24	68	92
		%	26,1%	73,9%	100,0%
	5.Important	n	23	79	102
		%	22,5%	77,5%	100,0%
	6.Very Important	n	10	16	26
		%	38,5%	61,5%	100,0%
	total	n	94	215	309
		%	30,4%	69,6%	100,0%

χ^2=12,15   df=5   p=0,033

The results of the chi-square tests showing whether students' views on the importance of being a member of an institution in accordance with the variable of gender are shown in Table 4. Accordingly, 24 male students (24%) indicated that being a member of the institution was somewhat important, while 68 female students (73,9%) said being a member of their institution was somewhat important. While 79 female students (77.5%) stated that being a member of the institution was important, 23 male students (22.5%) indicated the same opinion. Only 6 male students (31.6%) replied that "they would rather not be a member of this institution" while 13 female students (68.4%) gave the same response.

T-test results, showing whether the scores that the students get from the Sense of Community Scale differ according to the gender, are given in Table 6.

Table 6. The Results the Analysis of the Scores from The Sense Of Community Scale According To The Variable of Gender

	Gender	N	$\overline{X}$	Std. deviation	Std. Error mean	t	df	P
Reinforcement of Needs	Female	215	14,3398	4,10562	0,42346	-0,84	307	0,422
	Male	94	14,6877	3,19723	0,21805			
Membership	Female	215	13,7498	3,82693	0,39472	,932	307	0,352
	Male	94	13,3662	3,08549	0,21043			
Influence	Female	215	14,4622	5,52841	0,57021	,198	307	0,843
	Male	94	14,3558	3,71243	0,25319			
Shared Emotional Connection	Female	215	13,4848	4,33980	0,44762	-1,27	307	0,205
	Male	94	14,1096	3,81216	0,25999			

According to table 6, it is concluded that there is a significant difference between scores obtained from according to the variable of gender in terms of the sub-dimensions of the scale:

Reinforcement of Needs (t (307) =-0.84, p >.05), Membership (t (307) = 0,932 p >.05), Influence (t (307) = 0,198 p >.05), and Shared Emotional Connection (t (307) =-1.27 p >.05).

Whether the scores obtained by the participants from the sense of community scale differed or not according to their departments are given in Table 7.

Table 7. The Results of the Analysis Of The Scores From The Sense Of Community Scale According To the Variable Of Department

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Bonferroni
Reinforcement of Needs	Between Groups	437,828	5	87,566	7,979	0,000	2-6; 3-6; 4-6;5-6
	Within Groups	3325,271	303	10,974			
	Total	3763,099	308				
Membership	Between Groups	770,711	5	154,142	17,703	0,000	2-1;2-5;2-6 3-1;3-4;3-6 4-1;4-3;4-5;4-6 5-1;5-6
	Within Groups	2638,271	303	8,707			
	Total	3408,982	308				
Influence	Between Groups	616,504	5	123,301	7,218	0,000	1-2;1-3;1-4;1-5 2-6; 3-6; 5-6
	Within Groups	5176,013	303	17,083			
	Total	5792,517	308				
Shared Emotional Connection	Between Groups	608,473	5	121,695	8,618	0,000	1-3;1-4;1-5 2-6; 3-6; 4-6;5-6
	Within Groups	4278,571	303	14,121			
	Total	4887,044	308				

1 = Department of physical education teaching; 2 = Department of Contemporary Turkish Languages and Literatures 3 = Nursing; 4 = Turkish Language Education; 5 = Psychological Counseling and Guidance Teacher; 6 = Science Teaching

According to Table 7, there is a significant difference in the scores the students get from the Sense of Community Scale according to sub-dimensions: Reinforcement of Needs (F (5, 308) = 7,979, p <.0125), membership (F (5, 308) = 17,703, p <.0125), influence (F(5, 308)=7,218, p<.0125) and the last one being shared emotional connection (F(5, 308)=8,618, p<.0125) Bonferroni test was applied in order to find out among which groups the differences were. This test had to be applied since the samples were not equal and the distributions did not satisfy the assumptions of normality.

According to the results of Bonferroni test; it was found that there are differences in the scores of the Sense of Community Scale in terms of the sub-dimension of reinforcement between the following groups: students of science teaching vs students of Contemporary Turkish Languages and Literatures and students of nursing; students of Turkish language education and students of psychological counselling and guidance. Accordingly, the students of the department of science teaching have a more positive perception of the sense of

community with a score of $\overline{X}$ = 17.47 average points compared to the students of Contemporary Turkish Languages and Literatures with a score of $\overline{X}$ = 14.04 points, nursing students with an average score of $\overline{X}$ = 13.71, students of Turkish language education with a score of $\overline{X}$ = 14.33 points and students of the department of psychological counselling and guidance with a score of $\overline{X}$ = 13.77.

It was concluded that in terms of membership sub-dimension, the students of contemporary Turkish dialects had a more negative perception of the sense of community ($\overline{X}$ = 13.21) compared to students of the physical education teaching ($\overline{X}$ = 16.41) and student of the Department of Science Teaching ($\overline{X}$ = 15.82); while they had a more positive perception of the sense of community towards their institution compared to Psychological Counseling And Guidance Teacher students ($\overline{X}$ = 11.55). Nursing students' perception of the sense of community, in terms of membership sub-dimension ($\overline{X}$ = 11.79) was more negative compared to the perceptions of physical education teaching ($\overline{X}$ = 16.41), students of Turkish language education ($\overline{X}$ = 13.68) and students of science teaching ($\overline{X}$ = 15.82) while their perceptions were more positive compared to the perceptions of Psychological Counseling and Guidance Teacher teaching students ($\overline{X}$ = 11.55). While the students of Turkish Language Education had a more negative perception of sense of community in terms of the same sub-dimension ($\overline{X}$ = 13.68) compared to the perceptions of the students of physical education teaching ($\overline{X}$ = 16.41) and students of science teaching ($\overline{X}$ = 15.82); they had more positive perception compared to students of nursing ($\overline{X}$ = 11.79) and Teaching ($\overline{X}$ = 11.55) departments. The students of the Department of Psychological Counselling and Guidance had a more negative perception ($\overline{X}$ = 11.55) compared to the perceptions of the students of the physical education teaching ($\overline{X}$ = 16.41) and the students of science teaching ($\overline{X}$ = 15.82).

According to the results of the Bonferroni test; it was found that there are differences of perception of the sense of community in terms of influence sub-dimension between the students of the department of physical education teaching ($\overline{X}$ = 17.35), the students of Department of Contemporary Turkish Languages and Literatures ($\overline{X}$ = 13.12), students of the nursing department ($\overline{X}$ = 13.37), students of the department of Turkish language education ($\overline{X}$ = 14.26) and students of the Department of Psychological Counseling And Guidance Teacher teaching ($\overline{X}$ = 13.82). As seen from the average scores, the difference is in favors of the students of the Department of Physical Education and Sports. In the analysis, the students

of the department of physical education indicated more favorable opinions compared to students from other departments.

In the same analysis, the students of the department of science teaching had a more positive sense of community with a score of $\overline{X}$ = 16.65 compared to the students of the Contemporary Turkish Languages and Literatures with a score of $\overline{X}$ = 13.12, nursing department students with a score of $\overline{X}$ = 13.37 and students of Psychological Counseling And Guidance Teacher department with a score of $\overline{X}$ =13.82.

The results in terms of the last sub-dimension of the sense of community scale, that is, shared emotional connection, are as following: Accordingly, in this sub-section, the students of the department of physical education reported more positive results ($\overline{X}$ = 16.03) compared to the students of the department of Contemporary Turkish Languages and Literatures ($\overline{X}$ = 13.78), students of the department of the Turkish Language Education ($\overline{X}$ = 13.31) and the students of the department of the psychological counselling and guidance ($\overline{X}$ = 12.60). On the other hand, the students of the department of science teaching have a more positive perception of the sense of the community towards their institution with an average of $\overline{X}$ = 16.73 points, compared to the students of the department of Contemporary Turkish Languages and Literatures ($\overline{X}$ = 13.78) students of the department of nursing ($\overline{X}$ = 12.78), students of the department of Turkish language ($\overline{X}$ = 13.31) and students of the department of psychological Counselling and guidance ($\overline{X}$ = 12.60).

4. Conclusions

In this study, the sense of community scale developed by Chavis, Lee and Acosta (2008) was adopted into Turkish and the university students' perception of the sense of community was analyzed. Primarily, the Scale was translated from English into the Turkish language by the experts without any intervention, then the translated text was examined by researchers and the most appropriate expressions were determined for the items in the Scale. The final expressions, determined by the researchers, were translated into English again and then the conformity between the two texts was ensured, and then, the scale was applied to the participant in its final form. In its original form, the scale is composed of four dimensions (reinforcement, membership, influence and shared emotional connection) and 24 items. When the results of DFA were analyzed, it was observed that fit indices were within the acceptable ranges. In the analysis carried out to measure the reliability of the scale, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was found as 0.70 and above for all factors and for the scale as a whole.

Büyüköztürk (2005, 171) also stated that it was enough if the calculated reliability coefficients were over 0,70. Therefore, it can be stated that the Turkish form of the sense of community scale, which is composed of 24 items and four factors is a valid and reliable scale.

The study examined the university students' perception of the sense of community and it was determined that students' perceptions of the sense of community were at medium and higher levels. Karakuş (2017) in his study reached to similar findings and manifested that 74% of the university students participating in the research had a sense of community at medium or higher levels. The sense of community is a feeling where individual sees himself/ herself as belonging to the group of which he/she is a part, he/she cares for other members, as a result of which and, consequently, a bond between the members of the Group is formed (McMillan and Chavis, 1986); due to this bond established between members, the individuals feel less lonely, selfish and in despair and they feel that other members of the group will help when he/ she needs it (Sarason, 1974, Akt. Akın, Usta and Eroğlu, 2013). This situation creates an environment in which individuals mutually trust each other, have common values and express themselves freely (Pretty, Bishop, Fisher, & Sonn, 2006). In order to achieve the sense of a community, the individuals should feel themselves as part of the group, their needs should be met within the society in which they live, there should be mutual influence/interaction and the individuals should have common values, feelings, and lives. (McMillan and Chavis, 1986). When it is evaluated from this perspective, the fact that university students have a high level of the sense of community could be interpreted as meaning that they have a high sense of belonging to the school, they can express themselves and meet their needs and also they have shared values and lives.

When descriptive analysis results for the sub-dimensions of the scale are examined, it is seen that, while there is an average level of perception in Reinforcement, Membership and Emotional Connection sub-dimension, the level of perception is low in the sub-dimension of perception. Based on this, it can be concluded that the students participating in the study think that their institutions have a problem in terms of mutually affecting them. Because, within the dimension of Influence, the power (relation) existing between the members and the community is very important. The main reason for this is the mutual relationship between the individual and the structure. In this sense, while it is possible to talk about a level of effectiveness established by the community over the members of the group, it is also accepted that members could also have a community-wide influence.

When the result of the analysis made over the variable of gender is examined, it is seen that there is no significant difference between the opinions of the university students in

any of the sub-dimensions. When the literature on this subject is reviewed, it is seen that different results emerged from the studies based on the variable of gender. While in their studies, Wiseman, Gonzales and Salyar (2004) and Krafona (2014) stated that perception of the sense of community did not show any significant change depending on the gender variable, according to Chiessi, Cicognani and Sonn (2010) and Çınkır, Nayir and Kuru-Çetin (2016) male students had a higher sense of community compared to females. However, Rovai (2001) and Graff (2003) in their works, stated that females had a higher sense of community compared to males. While Graff (2003) claimed that the cause of this difference could stem from the fact that males had a more independent and self-managing character; Çınkır, Nayir and Kuru-Çetin stated that the gender roles adopted by different cultures were effective as the causes of this difference. In addition, as the studies that showed differences by gender were carried out over the students at secondary schools and high schools it can be claimed that variable of age had an impact on the sense of community.

When the results of the analysis made according to the variable of the department are taken into account, it is observed that the students' opinions show significant differences in all dimensions. When the arithmetic averages related to the sense of community are examined, it is observed that the students of the department of Psychological Counselling and Guidance have the lowest scores. Likewise, Krafona (2014), in his study on the students of the department of psychology, manifested that these students had lower perception of the sense of community. Since Krafona (2014) carried out his study on third-grade students, he linked his finding that they had a lower perception of the sense of community to the fact that after first-year, students moved out of the university campus and therefore, they did not feel belonging to the university. However, Yokuş, Ayçiçek and Yanpar-Yelken (2017), found out that the students of the department of psychological Counselling and guidance, had a higher sense of belonging compared to the students of the department of preschool teaching and the students of the department of primary school teaching and that, in general, third-grade students had a higher sense of belonging. If we assume that the sense of belonging is the first step in the formation of the sense of community, it can be concluded that the students of the department of psychological Counselling and guidance, and the third-grade students studying in the same faculty have a higher sense of community.

When the opinions of the students related to the importance of feeling themselves as a member of their institution is observed, it is seen that females place more importance upon the being a member of their institution compared to the males. However, what is interesting here is that, while there is no significant difference between the views on the sense of community

in terms of the gender variable, female students' care more about being a member of their organization/institution compared to males. In other words, female students have a higher sense of belonging towards their groups. In a similar way, Sarı and Özgök, in their study on secondary school students, found out that (2014) female students had a higher sense of belonging towards their school compared to male students Yokuş, Ayçiçek ve Yanpar-Yelken (2017) explored the sense of belonging of the students of the faculty of education students and found out that female students were more satisfied with being in their current university compared to male students.

In conclusion, this study, in which sense of community of the university students was examined, revealed that their perception of the sense of community was at a moderate and higher levels. Although there was not a significant difference among the opinions of students in terms of their gender when the studies carried out in this area are examined, it is seen that there is no consensus in the literature and that there is a need to carry out more studies based on the variable of gender. In addition to that, the examination of the views of the students at different levels of education in the studies based on gender variable and the fact that no significant difference was found out in higher levels of education based on the gender of the students suggest that there could be a relationship between the variable of age and the perception of the sense of community. In a similar fashion, since there are a limited number of studies with regard to the variable of the department being studied, it is also necessary to explore the sense of community in terms of that variable. Also, the finding that female students care more about being a member of their organization/institution, shows that there is a need for further study about the membership dimension of the sense of community. In this study, only the opinions of students studying at a single university were examined. It is thought that examination of other universities in the future studies could be useful.

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