Close relationships and university-level factors of perceived support for university students' personal goals

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Perceived support

- Considering significant others to be helpful in life (e.g., Heppner et al., 1994; Pratt, 2007)

- Perceived support is among factors, forming the background for individual socialization and goal-setting (e.g., Nurmi, 2004)

Support at different levels

- Entering social systems at different levels (from micro to macro) opens new horizons for social interaction (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006)
- Different sources of social support could be available:
  - family, friends, and romantic partners (Zimet et al., 1988)
  - the educational system (e.g., Lei et al., 2019)
  - medical services (e.g., Claassens, 2016)

Educational support and goals

- Positive effects of perceived educational support were observed in studies on students':
  - entrepreneurial intentions (e.g., Saeed et al., 2015)
  - growth-oriented goals (e.g., Kolesovs, 2019)
- What is the structure of perceived support for students' personal goals?

Sources of support and research participants

- Two levels of social systems were explored:
  - Meso-level (parents, relatives, friends, siblings)
  - The level of university (academics, groupmates, students' organizations, university)
- Research participants were 223 university students
  - aged 18 to 48 (M = 24.35, SD = 6.04)
  - 70% females, 23% graduated, 66% working, 14% married

Exploratory factor analysis

- KMO = .74, Bartlett's test $\chi^2(21)$ = 449.63, p < .001
- Two factors of perceived social support explained 48% of variance:
  - Meso-system support (28%)
  - University support (20%)

Factor loadings

|	Factor	
	Meso-system	University
Relatives	.734	
Parents	.645	
Siblings	.599	
Friends	.574	
Academics		.819
University		.589
Groupmates	.528	.553

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Students' organizations excluded because of a strong asymmetry.

Confirmatory factor analysis

- Two-factor model with cross-loaded groupmates demonstrated model fit, which is close to acceptable:

  $\chi^2(12) = 47.62$, $p < .001$, CFI = 0.91, RMSEA = .11, SRMR = .06.
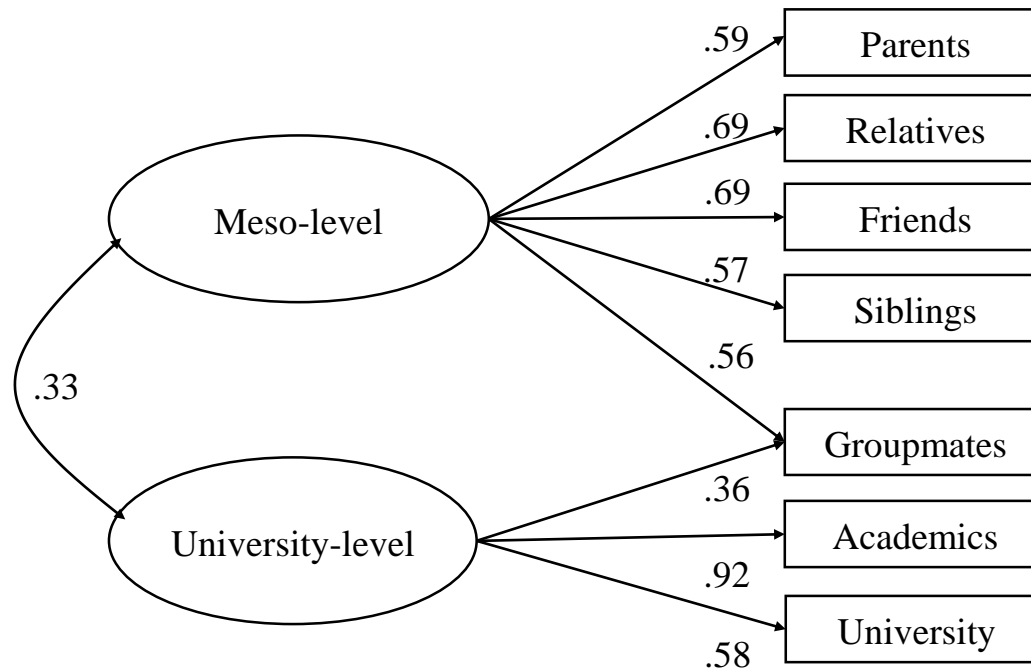
Conclusions

- Groupmates form a specific mesosystem at the university level
- Academics are the most loaded item within the university system

- Interpersonal relations remain the main source of students' perceived support for personal goals