



RESEARCH ARTICLE

PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT AND SUBJECTIVE WELL BEING AMONG WORKING  
WOMEN WHO ARE LIVING AWAY FROM THEIR FAMILIES

\*Ramaprabou, V.

Assistant Professor of Psychology, Tagore Arts College, Puducherry

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present study was to study the effect of perceived social support on the subjective well being of the working women who are living away from their families. The role of educational attainment on the subjective well being of the participants was also investigated. The sample for the present study consisted of total of 80 working women who are living away from their families and living in the hostels. The perceived social support scale developed and standardized by Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, and Farley (1988) and subjective well being scale developed by Rup Nagpal and Helmut Sell (1985) were used to collect data from the respondents. Results indicated that there is a difference in the subjective well being of the working women on the basis of their perceived social support. Also, it was found that the respondents do differ in their subjective well being on the basis of their educational attainment

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INTRODUCTION

Women have many roles to do in their day to day life. Apart from the personal responsibilities and commitments they also give maximum contribution to their family and society. They go to job to earn for the livelihood of their families and compete with their counterparts. The situation often makes them drain and tired both mentally and physically. As women they also face lots of difficulties to ensure their safety. Nowadays due to the non availability of employment opportunities in their home town many of the women are moving to different parts of the world. They stay in working women's hostel or in private accommodations where they hardly have companions experience a kind of psychological drain or loneliness and become dejected as they find no proximal relation. This feeling of distress often affects their subjective well being as they result they become depressed and dejected. Hence an attempt was made to study the effect of perceived social support on subjective wellbeing of the women who are living away from their families for employment and economical reasons. Perceived social support refers to the beliefs people hold regarding the level and quality of support available to them. Perception of social support is very important because it shows how an individual thinks about the support available to him, and whether it can be called upon

when needed (Gallagher and Vella-Brodrick, 2008). Social support may be defined as the provision of psychological and material resources of a social network intended to enhance the ability of an individual to cope with life situations. The social supports one receive from others are identified as predictors of health and well-being (Cohen, Underwood, and Gottlieb, 2000). Perceived Social Support consists of social resources that individuals perceive as accessible and offered to them (Cronkite and Moos, 1995). Several research studies proved that perceived social support is associated with positive physical and mental health (Ben Ari, and Gil, 2004; Clara, Cox, Enns, Murray, and Torgrude, 2003; Cohen, 2004; Sarason, Sarason, and Gurung, 2001; Uchino, Cacioppo, and Kiecolt-Glaser, 1996). In turn, limited Perceived Social Support could have serious health deficits including physical and psychological health (Dennis *et al.*, 2005).

Subjective well-being is defined as 'a person's cognitive and affective evaluations of his or her life and (Denier Lucas, Oishi, 2002). The cognitive element refers to what one thinks about his or her life satisfaction in global terms and in domain terms. The affective element refers to emotions, moods and feelings. Affect is considered positive when the emotions, moods and feelings experienced are pleasant. Affect is deemed negative when the emotions, moods and feelings experienced are unpleasant. A person who has a high level of satisfaction with their life, and who experiences a greater positive affect and little or less negative effect, would be deemed to have a high

\*Corresponding author: Ramaprabou, V.,  
Assistant Professor of Psychology, Tagore Arts College, Puducherry

level of Subjective Well Being or in simpler terms, be very happy. The concept of Subjective Well Being falls within the 'hedonic' perspective that defines well-being or happiness as being fundamentally about maximizing pleasure and avoiding or minimizing pain.

### Objective

The present study examines the effect of perceived social support on the subjective well being of the working women who are living away from their families. The role of educational attainment on the subjective well being of the participants was also investigated.

### Hypothesis

- Working Women who are living away from their families do not differ in subjective well being on the basis of their perceived social support.
- Working Women who are living away from their families do not differ in subjective well being on the basis of their educational attainment.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Sample

The population of the study consist of 80 working women who are living away from their families for employment purpose to meet the economical requirements of their families. For this women who are working for different organisations functioning in and around Puducherry and staying in hostels were contacted personally and data were collected through questionnaire. Convenient sampling method was employed to select the respondents.

Rup Nagpal and Helmut Sell (1985). It is aimed at studying the feelings of well-being or ill-being as experienced by people in various day-to-day life situations. It is a 3 point scale consisting of 40 statements and eleven dimensions like General Wellbeing-Positive affect, Expectation-Achievement Congruence, Confidence in coping, Transcendence, Family group support, Social support, Primary group concern, Inadequate mental mastery, Perceived ill health, Deficiency in social contacts and General Wellbeing-Negative affect. High scores indicate good / positive subjective well being of the individual. The scale has the reliability coefficient of 0.82 and hence it was used in its original form.

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Social support often refers to the existence or availability of people on whom we can rely, people who let us know that they care about, value, and love us (Sarason *et al.* 1983). Social support is correlated with many positive indices of physical and mental health, such as wound healing (De Vries *et al.* 2007). The present study also in support of this finding and it has been observed from the above table (1) that working women who are living away from their families for employment and financial reasons and perceive high social support show very good / positive subjective well being (93.38) than those working women who perceive that they have medium social support (82.73) and those working women who perceive that they have low social support (73.36). The difference in the perception between groups was also found to have a significant effect on the subjective well being of the women. This was also statistically proved by the obtained F value (65.27) which is significant at 0.001 level. Hence it may be concluded that working women significantly differ in subjective well being on the basis of their perceived social support.

**Table No.1 showing the amount of Subjective well being of the Working Women who are living away from their families on the basis of their perceived Social Support**

Perceived Social Support	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
High	32	97.38	9.297	1.644	94.02	100.73	81	112
Medium	26	82.73	5.984	1.173	80.31	85.15	73	95
Low	22	73.36	7.248	1.545	70.15	76.58	59	90
Total	80	86.01	12.634	1.412	83.20	88.82	59	112

ANOVA					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	7931.281	2	3965.641	65.279	.001
Within Groups	4677.706	77	60.749		
Total	12608.988	79			

### Tools used

The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social support was developed by Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, and Farley (1988). It consists of 12 items to identify the social support factors perceived by the individuals. The scale captures multiple aspects of perceived social support, across three major sources of support (Family, Friends or Significant Others) and social desirability effects have been examined and were found to be insignificant (Dahlem, Zimet, and Walker, 1991). High scores reflect more perceived social support. The Scale has an excellent internal consistency, with an alpha of .90. The Subjective Wellbeing Scale constructed and standardized by

Many research studies are of in support of the present findings. Studies conducted by Edwards and Lopez (2006); Suldo and Huebner (2006) proved that perceptions of supportive family relationships have been linked with increase in indicators of wellness such as life satisfaction and subjective well being. It is observed from the above table that working women who are living away from their families for employment and financial reasons and studied Arts Degree show good / positive subjective well being (96.67) than those working women who studied Science Degree (92.00) and those working women who studied technical courses (86.21) and those who are studied professional degree (81.02).

**Table No.2 showing the amount of Subjective well being of the Working Women who are living away from their families on the basis of their Educational attainment**

Education	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Professional Degree	30	81.02	10.866	1.718	77.55	84.50	59	110
Technical Courses	19	86.21	11.910	2.732	80.47	91.95	68	107
Science Degree	16	92.00	7.321	2.989	84.32	99.68	83	105
Arts Degree	15	96.67	12.732	3.287	89.62	103.72	67	112
Total	80	86.01	12.634	1.412	83.20	88.82	59	112

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2913.521	3	971.174	7.613	.001
Within Groups	9695.466	76	127.572		
Total	12608.987	79			

The difference between educational groups of working women for subjective well being was also statistically established by the obtained F value (7.61) which is significant at 0.001 level. Hence it may be concluded that working women significantly differ in subjective well being on the basis of their educational attainment.

### Conclusion

The findings of the study reveals that working women who perceive high social support from their family, friends and significant others show good / positive subjective wellbeing than those who perceive lower social support. Further it was also resulted that those who graduated in arts and science courses have good subjective wellbeing than those who studied technical and professional courses.

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