

Perceived Social Support of the Adolescents from Rural and Urban Setting

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ABSTRACT

Adolescence (from Latin *adolescere*, meaning "to grow up") is a transitional stage of physical and psychological human development that generally occurs during the period from puberty to legal adulthood (age of majority). Social support is defined as the belief that others understand your needs and will try to help you. Social support is any type of communication that helps the individual feel more certain about the situation and therefore feel as if they have a control over it. The present study examines the perceived social support of the adolescents in an urban and a rural setting. Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) developed by Zimet, Dahlam, Zimet and Farley (1988) was used in the present study. Based on the statistical analysis the results are discussed and conclusions are arrived at.

Keywords: *Perceived Social Support, Adolescence, Kerala*

Adolescence (from Latin *adolescere*, meaning "to grow up") is defined as a transitional stage of physical and psychological human development that generally occurs during the period from puberty to legal adulthood (age of majority). The formal study of adolescent psychology began with the publication of G. Stanley Hall's "Adolescence in 1904." Hall, who was the first president of the American Psychological Association, viewed adolescence primarily as a period of "Sturm und Drang - storm and stress." He defined this period to begin at puberty at about 12 or 13 years, and end late, between 22 years to 25 years of age.

Freud believed that adolescence was a universal phenomenon and included behavioral, social and emotional changes; not to mention the relationships between the physiological and psychological changes, and the influences on the self-image. He also stated that the physiological changes are related to emotional changes, especially an increase in negative emotions, such as

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moodiness, anxiety, loathing, tension and other forms of adolescent behavior. Whereas Erikson described adolescence as the period during which the individual must establish a sense of personal identity and avoid the dangers of role diffusion and identity confusion (Erikson, 1950). Social support is a broad term encompassing a variety of more specific characteristics of an individual's social world that might promote well-being and/or increase resistance to health problems (Cohen, Gottlieb, & Underwood, 2000). Social support processes are strongly linked to mental and physical health (House, Landis, & Umberson, 1988).

In a qualitative study of adult individuals with developmental disabilities, King et al. (2006) found that social support played a significant role in reducing life strains facing individuals with disabilities. The participants experienced receiving emotional, instrumental, and cognitive (e.g., affirmation, confirmation, and coherence in self-concept) support, which fostered resiliency in them.

Luszczynska, Sarkar, and Knoll (2007) found in a sample of 104 HIV-positive heterosexual men and women that both social support and self-efficacy were related to better physical functioning among them. Knoll and Schwarzer (2002) illustrated that women who reported the highest social support had the lowest levels of negative affect and depression, and reported the fewest health complaints, whereas the social support levels of men were not linked to their depression and health complaints.

In an effort to better understand more specific social support mechanisms, scholars have described social support as a "meta-construct" consisting of several sub-constructs (Heller & Swindle, 1983; Vaux, Riedel, & Stewart, 1987). Two of these sub constructs are received social support and perceived social support. Measures of received social support are designed to assess the specific supportive behaviors that are provided to recipients by their support networks. Perceived social support measures assess recipients' perceptions concerning the general availability of support and/or global satisfaction with support provided (Sarason, Sarason, & Pierce, 1990).

Researches indicate that in general, perceived social support is associated with improved physical and mental health (House, Umberson, & Landis, 1988; Lakey & Cronin, 2008; Uchino, 2009), and that perceived support is more essential than received support in predicting adjustment to life stress (Wethington & Kessler, 1986).

A study conducted with thirty orphaned children in Trichy, Tamil Nadu found that there is more perceived social support rendered by significant others when they were not aware of the parents HIV status. They also found out that the children from scheduled caste experience less social support from the family when compared to the children from the other castes. (Elamurugu & Indiramma, 2015). Another study that was conducted with an aim to study the effect of social

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networking sites and perceived social support on the psychological well-being of the youth found out that a positive relationship existed between online perceived social support and psychological wellbeing. (Misra, Dangi & Patel, 2015).

The adolescents today, may they be from a rural or an urban background has a lot to work on and they need all the assistance they can get. But for that to happen one must know where each of them lack support and what can be done to help them evolve and lead a more wholesome life. The present study intends to examine if there is a difference in perceived social support among adolescents in an urban and rural setting. This studies aims to bridge in the gap between the way adolescents perceive social support which could help them lead a more satisfactory life.

Hypothesis

1. There is significant difference between the perceived social support among adolescent in an urban and rural setting.
2. There is significant difference between the perceived social support among adolescent boys and girls.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The data for the study was collected from adolescents using purposive sampling. 100 adolescents were selected for the study out of which 50 (25- boys, 25- girls) were from an urban region and the other 50 (25-boys, 25-girls) were from a rural region.

Materials

Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS): Social support was assessed through Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) developed by Zimet, Dahlam, Zimet and Farley (1988). This is a 12 item measure of subjectively assessed social support. It measures social support from three sources: (a) Family, (b) Friends and (c) Significant Others. Responses are rated on a 7-point Likert-type response format (1- very strongly disagree; 7- very strongly agree) and range between low point of strongly disagree to a high point of strongly agree. The score are summed up to get the total score on the three dimensions.

Statistical analysis

Mean, Standard deviation and t- test was used to assess the difference in the perceived social support among adolescents in an urban and rural setting.

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RESULTS

Table 1 - Descriptive statistics and t test results of perceived social support of adolescence residing in an urban and rural setting

	Locations	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Family	U	50	12.44	3.233	-10.578	98	*
	R	50	19.28	3.233			
Friends	U	50	19.24	2.932	-.731	98	N.S
	R	50	19.70	3.346			
Significant Others	U	50	16.22	5.242	1.263	98	N.S
	R	50	15.04	4.020			
Total	U	50	47.90	6.361	-5.127	98	*
	R	50	54.02	5.549			

The data indicates that the adolescents from urban feel that the social support that they receive from their family is less as compared to their rural counterparts. However there is no significant difference in the way adolescent's judge support from their friends or significant others. The data also illustrates that there is a significance difference in the way adolescents perceive social support with rural teenagers having a more positive social support then the urban teenagers.

Table 2 - Descriptive statistics and t test results of perceived social support among adolescent boys and girls

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Family	F	50	16.22	4.377	.763	98	N.S
	M	50	15.50	5.036			
Friends	F	50	18.12	2.592	-4.747	98	*
	M	50	20.82	3.075			
Significant others	F	50	17.72	4.664	4.965	98	*
	M	50	13.54	3.699			
Total	F	50	52.06	6.195	1.659	98	N.S
	M	50	49.86	7.036			

* - Significant at 0.05 level

N.S – Not significant

The data obtained indicates that adolescent boys feel they get more social support from their friends than their female counterparts. However the females feel their significant others provide more support to them than what the boys get from their significant others.

CONCLUSIONS

Man is a social animal and cannot survive in this world alone. Researches over the years have highlighted the importance of social support in the life of an individual. Social support has a very positive effect on a person's psychological wellbeing and therefore must be encouraged.

One of the reasons for a low score among urban adolescents may be due to the hectic lifestyle of the kids as well as the parents. It may also be because nowadays people have a nuclear family structure unlike before where people used to stay in joint families. The overall results indicated that the adolescents living in rural settings have scored higher in perceived social support. This could be due to a stronger sense of community and familiarity prevailing in small villages. Another reason may be that even today, people in rural India still live in joint families and that could lead to a stronger sense of belonging among the teenagers.

The data also indicated that boys when compared to girls scored more in the friend's dimension of perceived social support. This maybe because boys have more independence and can spend more time with each other. Girls on the other hand may not be able to do so because of the various restrictions placed on them. Girls in rural as well as urban areas are still discouraged to mingle with the opposite sex or to have many friends in general. A girl who is an extrovert and has many friends is still judged and frowned upon even in this age and era.

According to the analyzed data adolescent girls get more support from their significant others, this could be due to the fact that girls form more meaningful relationship with people and get more emotionally attached. This leads to a better sense of bonding which in turn is relayed during the time of crisis.

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