

## **Perceived Social Support and Psychological Well-Being in Mothers of Learning-Disabled Children: A Comparative Study**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This comparative study explores the psychological wellbeing and perceived social support among mothers of children with learning disabilities (LD) in comparison to mothers of typically developing children. The study involves 80 mothers, with 40 having children with LD and 40 having typically developing children. Psychological wellbeing is measured using Ryff's Psychological Wellbeing Scales, while perceived social support is assessed using the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS). The results indicate a significant difference in psychological wellbeing between the two groups, with mothers of typically developing children reporting higher wellbeing scores. However, there is no significant difference in perceived social support between the two groups. Furthermore, a positive correlation is found between psychological wellbeing and perceived social support among mothers of children with LD, highlighting the importance of social support in enhancing their mental health. This study provides valuable insights into the challenges faced by mothers of children with LD and underscores the significance of social support in promoting their psychological wellbeing.

**Keywords:** *Learning disabilities, psychological wellbeing, perceived social support, Psychological Wellbeing Scales*

**L**earning Disability is not meant to be used for children with minor or temporary difficulties in learning but with a severe discrepancy between abilities and achievements in educational performance and such severe discrepancies described as learning difficulties with significant learning problems that cannot be explained by mental retardation, sensory impairment, emotional disturbance or lack of opportunity to learn. There is evidence that learning disabilities are not a single syndrome and that the learning disabilities population falls within a number of subtypes. During the past decade, terms, classification and causative factors have been identified. However, the subtypes of learning as described in Teaching Students with reading difficulties and disabilities: A guide for educators (2004) are shown as under:

- Reading Disability (Dyslexia)
- Writing Disability (Dysgraphia)
- Mathematics Disability (Dyscalculia)
- Nonverbal learning disability (Visual spatial-social Difficulties)

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Despite being more vulnerable to developmental risks, young children with disabilities are often overlooked in mainstream programmes and services designed to ensure child development. There is every possibility that each classroom has some learning-disabled students. These students come to school regularly but they are likely to become dropouts if their educational needs are not adequately met. Such type of students should be identified as early as possible.

Perceived social support refers to an individual's subjective assessment or belief regarding the availability and adequacy of support from their social network. It is essentially the person's perception of the level of assistance, understanding, and care they believe they can receive it.

In the context of perceived social support, the term "social network" refers to the interpersonal connections and relationships that an individual maintains within their social environment. These connections form a web of potential sources of support, including family members, friends, colleagues, neighbors, and other significant relationships. Understanding the social network is essential for comprehending the dynamics of perceived social support, as it is from these connections that individuals may seek assistance, understanding, and encouragement.

Boromand, N., Narimani, M., & Mosazadeh, T. (2014) found that there is a significant difference between the parents of the normal children and those of the mentally retarded children with regards to the psychological wellbeing factors. One study of mothers with child with mental retardation have higher levels of anxiety in comparison to normal controls since they need to be extra vigilant and take more care of the mentally retarded child which was cause of additional concern and burden for them. They also have higher level of depression compared to normal controls which may be due to the fact that they have lower quality of life due to higher burden, impaired social life of the mother, lower academic performance of the child and lack of ability of the child to take his own care adequately compared to the mothers of normal controls. Self-control is higher in mothers of mentally retarded children due to their prolonged exposure to handle the challenges in managing the child with mental retardation which takes a lot of tolerance and patience in the part of the mother. Bumin et al (2008) reported that mother with disabled children have more anxious and depressed and increase of depression and anxiety level will worsen life quality. Another study done by Kuwari (2007), reported that Mothers of disabled children have poorer psychological health than mothers of non-disabled children. Like other disability mothers of children with learning disability also decrease their psychological wellbeing. Social support has a significant role in maintaining psychological wellbeing. But very less studies conducted among the psychological health of mothers of learning-disabled children. This study focuses on psychological well-being and perceived social support in mother of learning-disabled children: a comparative study.

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

#### *Objectives*

- To find out the difference in psychological wellbeing among mothers with learning disabled children and mothers with normal children.
- To find out the difference in perceived social support among mothers with learning disabled children and mothers with normal children

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- To find out the relationship between psychological wellbeing and perceived social support among mothers with learning disabled children.

### ***Hypotheses***

- There will be a difference in psychological wellbeing among mothers with learning disabled children and mothers with normal children.
- There will be a difference in perceived social support among mothers with learning disabled children and mothers with normal children
- There will be a relationship between psychological wellbeing and perceived social support among mothers with learning disabled children.

### ***Research Design***

- This study Quantitative cross- sectional study. Survey method used to collect data.
- comparative correlational research design will be used in this study.

### ***Sample and procedure***

- 80 mothers will be selected for this study using simple random method.
- 40 mothers with learning disabled children and 40 mothers with normal children will be taken from Alappuzha district, Kerala.
- Purpose will be explained. Informed consent from mother will be collected and datas will be kept confidential. If they feel uncomfortable during the data collection they can withdraw from the study.

### ***Tools***

#### **The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, and Farley (1988).**

The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) was developed by Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, and Farley (1988) to assess both perceived availability and adequacy of emotional and instrumental social support from three specific sources - family, friends, and significant others. This 12-item measure is a self- report inventory that is easy to use, self-explanatory and time effective. This scale was developed based on the research findings that perceived social support is a better predictor of psychological status than objective dimensions of social support like network size or embeddedness (Barrera, 1981; Wilcox, 1981). The 12 items of the MSPSS is responded on a 7-point Likert scale of “Very strongly disagree=1; Disagree=2; Slightly disagree=3; Neutral=4; Slightly agree=5; Agree=6; and Very strongly agree=7”. There are three subscales with four items each that are designed to measure perceived social support from the three sources. The sum of each subscale gives the subscale scores and the sum of all the subscales gives the total MSPSS score. Higher scores indicate greater levels of perceived social support.

### ***Reliability and validity***

The internal reliability (coefficient alpha) of the family subscale was .87, of the friends subscale was .85, the significant others subscale was .91 and for the scale as a whole was .88. The test - retest reliability over a 2 to 3 month period had correlations ranging between .72 and .88 (Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet & Farley,1988). In terms of validity, the MSPSS correlated positively with another social support scale and a self-concept measure (Kazarian & McCabe, 1991) Their 36 study demonstrated good internal reliability (alpha ranged from .84 to.92) and adequate validity.

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**Ryff’s Psychological Well-Being Scales (Ryff et.al, 2007)**

Developed by psychologist Carol D. Ryff, the 42-item Psychological Wellbeing (PWB) Scale measures six aspects of wellbeing and happiness: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance (Ryff et al., 2007; adapted from Ryff, 1989). Respondents rate how strongly they agree or disagree with 42 statements using a 7-point scale (1 = strongly agree; 7 = strongly disagree).

*Reliability and Validity*

Comparable internal consistency average alphas were .71, .78, and .77, respectively, for the three groups. The scales performed with reasonable, factorial validity for the 6-factor model; NFI= .777, CFI= .836, RMSE= .063, PClose= .000, CMIN/DF= 3.089.

*Statistical Analysis*

By using SPSS Pearson correlation and student t test used analyse the data.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

*Table 1 psychological wellbeing among mothers with autistic children and normal children*

		Statistic	df	P	Mean difference	SE difference
PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING	Student's t	2.20	77.0	0.031	4.63	2.11

*Table 2 psychological wellbeing among mothers with autistic children and normal children*

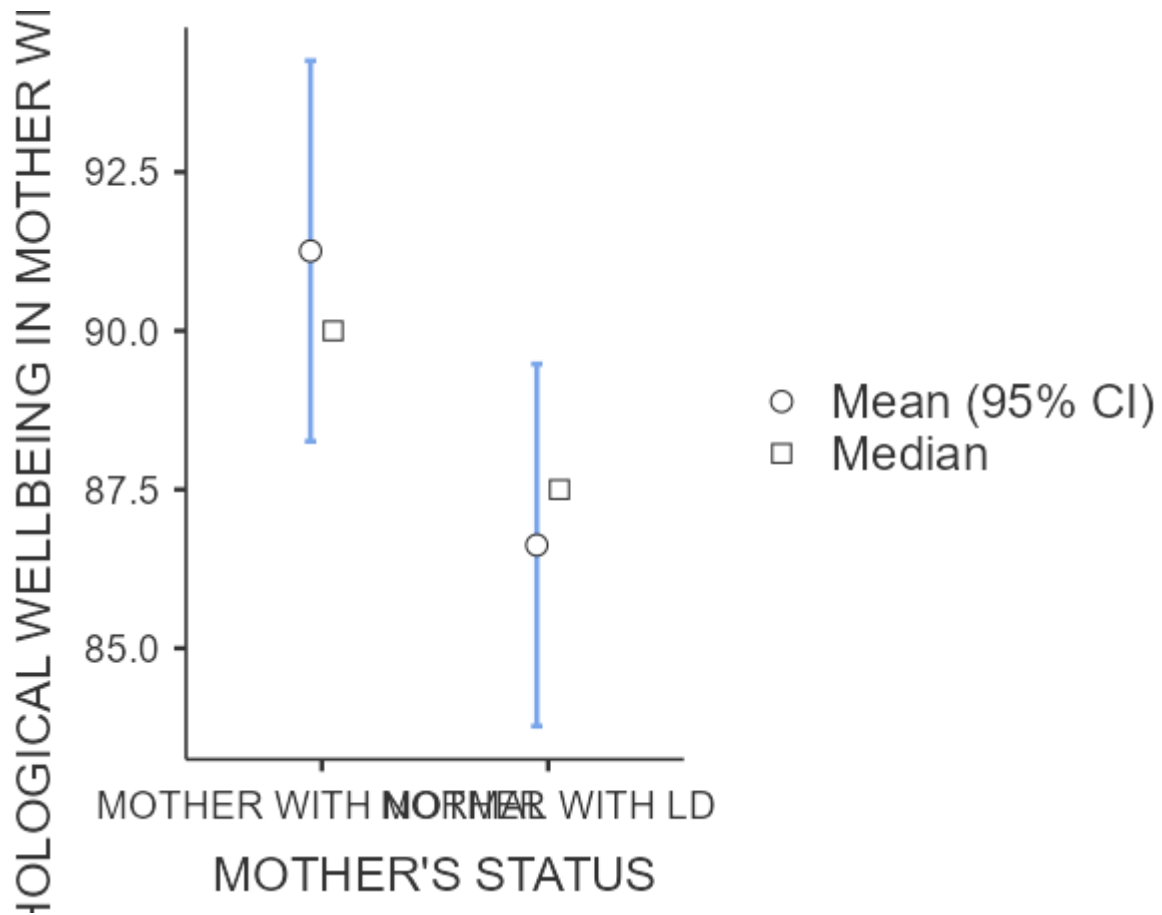
**Group Descriptives**

	Group	N	Mean	Median	SD	SE
PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING	MOTHER WITH NORMAL	39	91.3	90.0	9.55	1.53
	MOTHER WITH LD	40	86.6	87.5	9.20	1.45

**HYPOTHES 1 ACCEPTED**

Psychological Wellbeing in Mothers with Normal vs. Mothers with Learning Disabilities: The independent samples t-test for psychological wellbeing between mothers with normal children and mothers with learning-disabled (LD) children yielded a statistically significant result ( $t = 2.20$ ,  $df = 77.0$ ,  $p = 0.031$ ). The mean psychological wellbeing score for mothers with normal children ( $M = 91.3$ ,  $SD = 9.55$ ) was higher than that for mothers with LD children ( $M = 86.6$ ,  $SD = 9.20$ ). Thus, Hypothesis 1 is accepted, indicating that there is a significant difference in psychological wellbeing between mothers with normal children and mothers with LD children.

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**Table 3** *perceived social support among mothers with autistic children and normal children*

**Independent Samples T-Test**

		Statistic	df	p	Mean difference	SE difference
PERCIVE SOCIAL SUPPORT	Student's t	0.143	77.0	0.887	0.163	1.14

**Table 4** *perceived social support among mothers with autistic children and normal children*

**Group Descriptives**

	Group	N	Mean	Median	SD	SE
PERCIVE SOCIAL SUPPORT	MOTHER WITH NORMAL	39	42.5	44.0	5.05	0.809
	MOTHER WITH LD	40	42.4	44.0	5.09	0.805

Perceived Social Support in Mothers with Normal vs. Mothers with Learning Disabilities: The independent samples t-test for perceived social support between mothers with normal children and mothers with LD children did not yield a statistically significant result ( $t = 0.143$ ,  $df = 77.0$ ,  $p = 0.887$ ). The mean perceived social support scores for mothers with normal children ( $M = 42.5$ ,  $SD = 5.05$ ) and mothers with LD children ( $M = 42.4$ ,  $SD = 5.09$ )

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were very similar. Thus, Hypothesis 2 is rejected, suggesting that there is no significant difference in perceived social support between the two groups.

**Table 5 Relationship between psychological wellbeing and social support  
Correlation**

		<b>PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING IN MOTHER WITH LD</b>	<b>PERCIVE SOCIAL SUPPORT IN MOTHER WITH LD</b>
<b>PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING IN MOTHER WITH LD</b>	Pearson's r	—	
	p-value	—	
<b>PERCIVE SOCIAL SUPPORT IN MOTHER WITH LD</b>	Pearson's r	0.251	—
	p-value	0.026	—

Correlation between Psychological Wellbeing and Perceived Social Support in Mothers with Learning Disabilities: The correlation analysis between psychological wellbeing and perceived social support in mothers with learning-disabled children revealed a statistically significant positive correlation ( $r = 0.251$ ,  $p = 0.026$ ). This indicates that there is a modest positive relationship between psychological wellbeing and perceived social support in mothers with learning-disabled children. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 is accepted, suggesting that higher perceived social support is associated with better psychological wellbeing in mothers of children with learning disabilities.

Mothers of children with learning disabilities (LD) face unique challenges that can impact their psychological wellbeing. These challenges include navigating complex educational systems, dealing with societal stigma and isolation, facing financial strain, and constantly advocating for their child's needs. Despite these challenges, there is no significant difference in perceived social support between mothers of children with normal development and those with LD. However, the quality and nature of support may vary, influenced by cultural factors and individual coping mechanisms. Perceived social support positively correlates with psychological wellbeing in mothers of children with LD, providing emotional resilience, stress mitigation, coping strategies, validation, and improved mental health outcomes. Fostering a strong support network is crucial for mothers in this caregiving context, facilitating their ability to navigate the complexities of raising a child with LD.

**CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, this study contributes valuable insights into the psychological wellbeing of mothers with LD children is high and the positive correlation between psychological wellbeing and perceived social support reinforces the interconnected nature of these two variables. Recognizing the integral role of social support in promoting the mental health of mothers of children with learning disabilities is essential for the development of comprehensive and effective interventions.

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***Conflict of Interest***

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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