

Research Paper

Impact of Perceived Social Support on Stress and General Health

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ABSTRACT

Using a quantitative approach combined with a cross-sectional design, this research study focused on the effect of social support on stress and health among a non-clinical population. Data was collected from a sample comprising of 100 respondents who filled the MSPSS, PSS-10, and GHQ-12. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, normality checks, Pearson's correlation analysis, and regression analysis. The results indicated an inverse correlation between perceived social support and stress level which means that increased support is associated with decreased stress. However, no significant association was established between support and health in general. Regression analysis further revealed that social support is a predictor of stress but not of general health. Social support and its effectiveness on stress were highlighted by the results.

Keywords: *Perceived social support, stress, general health, mental health, MSPSS, PSS-10, GHQ-12, correlation, regression, non-clinical population*

Keeping up with the fast-paced, ever-increasing expectations of today's world can be difficult for many young adults. The pressure to perform, achieve, and maintain one's physical and emotional well-being has evolved into a balancing act that frequently leaves people feeling overwhelmed. Social support is one of the many factors that influence how we respond to these stressors. It's not just the support we perceive, even if it's not always visible. Quietly, the awareness that someone is there for us and that we can depend on them can make all the difference. The extent to which an individual feels supported by friends, family, or others in their life is referred to in studies as perceived social support. It matters more if we feel understood and backed than if someone genuinely offers help. Notably, this feeling often impacts our mental and physical health more than any actual support we may receive. The sense that someone has "got our back" can make us feel more resilient and better prepared to cope with challenges, even during tough times.

However, stress is now practically a part of everyone's life, particularly for young adults. Stress appears to permeate all aspect of life, whether it is due to social expectations, financial concerns, or academic obligations. Furthermore, excessive stress, particularly when it appears unmanageable, can deplete us, even while a small amount of stress can motivate us to develop and perform. Not only can prolonged or severe stress impact our emotions and

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sleep, but it may also have a major negative impact on our health, sometimes in ways we aren't even aware of until much later.

An intriguing picture now begins to take shape when we compare stress and perceived social support side by side. According to a number of studies, people are more able to manage stress when they feel supported. Even while they still have difficulties, they don't feel as overwhelmed by them. They may recover more quickly. Support can actually serve as a cushion, taking some of the blows that come from the stresses of life. Some people remain healthier and more resilient even under trying conditions, which may be explained by this buffering effect.

This leads us to the third component: overall health. In this sense, being healthy is feeling good about your body, mind, and relationships, not just being disease-free. What it means to be "healthy" includes having a sense of emotional balance, managing stress, and feeling connected to others. And our sense of support and stress levels are closely related to this type of health. People are more likely to struggle emotionally and even have physical symptoms when they feel alone. However, their general well-being increases when they experience less stress and assistance.

These relationships are particularly significant for young individuals, particularly students. Moving out from home, creating new identities, dealing with pressures from school and the workplace, and managing complicated relationships are all part of this phase of life. During this period, social assistance can seem both immensely valuable and oddly unattainable. Many people continue to feel alone while being "connected" thanks to the growth of digital communication. The discrepancy between our emotional needs and experiences might affect not just our level of stress but also our ability to carry out daily tasks.

The aim of this project is to explore how perceived social support relates to stress levels and overall health in real-life settings. It seeks to answer questions like: Does feeling supported truly help in lowering stress? And does better mental and physical health result from that support? These central questions formed the basis of the research.

Since more and more young people are reporting high levels of stress and emotional burnout, this topic is both personally meaningful and relevant. It's increasingly evident that families, mental health providers, and educational institutions all need to learn more about what makes young adults successful. Even self-care, therapy, and medicine are all useful tools; sometimes, all it takes is feeling acknowledged and appreciated.

The goal of this research is not to provide a universally applicable answer. Rather, it's about expanding our knowledge of the nuanced yet significant influence that human connection has on our ability to manage stress and look after ourselves. This research aims to provide insights that may be applied not just to psychological theory but also to real-world situations by examining perceived social support as a key component of this conundrum. One of the most significant steps we can take toward happier, healthier lives may be figuring out how to strengthen the sense of support in our peer groups, homes, and classrooms.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Castarlenas, M., Galán, S., et al. (2025). Examined the roles of perceived stress and social support on global physical and mental health outcomes in individuals with chronic pain. Analyzing data from 165 adults, the study found that perceived stress was a significant

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predictor of both physical and mental health. Although social support did not moderate the relationship between stress and health, it had a significant and independent positive impact on mental health, supporting the direct-effects model of social support.

Yılmaz, M., & Çıtak, S. (2025). Explored the influence of perceived social support and psychological distress on work-related quality of life among 401 teachers. Findings revealed that psychological distress mediated the relationship between social support and occupational well-being. While most variables showed no gender differences, the negative effect of distress on quality of life was more pronounced in women, suggesting the importance of gender-sensitive approaches to occupational mental health.

Xin, F., Yang, Y., et al. (2024). Investigated the interplay of online social support, perceived life stress, and mental health among 1,180 university students in Northwest China after the COVID-19 pandemic. Approximately 25% of students reported psychological symptoms, with gender differences emerging in stress sources. Females reported more academic stress, while males faced greater interpersonal and punitive stress. Online social support was found to buffer the adverse effects of life stress on mental health.

Asgarabad, A. A., & Vahabi, M. (2024). Assessed the structural validity of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) among 328 hospitalized COVID-19 patients in Tehran. Confirmatory factor analysis supported its three-factor structure with high internal consistency. The study found negative correlations between perceived support and stress, sleep disturbances, and poor sleep quality, supporting MSPSS as a reliable tool in health crises.

Liu, Y., & Li, Y. (2024). Examined the indirect role of social support on sleep quality through anxiety and depression among 1,107 individuals with schizophrenia in Chengdu, China. Social support did not directly improve sleep quality but significantly reduced anxiety and depression, which in turn enhanced sleep. The study emphasized the necessity of integrating social support strategies into community mental health services.

Cai, R., & Xu, H. (2024). Analyzed sleep quality and its relationship with perceived social support, anxiety, and depression using data from over 10,000 psychiatric outpatients in Hangzhou, China. Anxiety and depression mediated 88% of the relationship between social support and sleep. These findings highlight the critical role of psychological well-being in improving sleep outcomes in clinical populations.

Zhao, Q., & Liu, L. (2024). Explored the moderating effect of perceived social support on the relationship between sleep quality and mental health among 1,219 frontline nurses post-COVID-19. Higher social support reduced the negative impact of poor sleep on anxiety and depression, emphasizing its protective role, especially for healthcare workers under chronic stress.

Ahmed, N., & Walsh, S. (2024). Conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis across 182 studies to investigate the effects of social media use on youth mental health and sleep quality. While effect sizes were small, results indicated consistent associations between high social media use and elevated anxiety, depression, and sleep disturbances. The authors emphasized the importance of longitudinal studies to clarify causality and directionality.

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Koirala, R., Thapa, B., et al. (2024). Assessed perceived stress and coping mechanisms among 317 nursing students in Nepal who had returned to college following COVID-19 lockdowns. Moderate to high stress levels were reported by most participants. Maternal employment status was significantly correlated with students' coping abilities. The study highlighted the need for campus support systems to aid students' psychosocial adjustment.

Saini, S., & Arora, R. (2024). Investigated the role of eustress—positive stress—on the mental and physical health of 400 adolescents in Haryana, India. Results showed that eustress was positively correlated with improved mental health outcomes. Male students reported significantly higher levels of eustress than female students, suggesting the importance of promoting positive stress perception during adolescence.

Azizah, N., Aziz, R. A., et al. (2023). Examined the relationship between stress and perceived social support among 290 undergraduate health sciences students during the COVID-19 pandemic. Findings showed an inverse relationship between stress and perceived support, with family support emerging as the strongest predictor of lower stress levels. The study underscores the role of familial bonds in protecting student mental health during crises.

Cahuas, M., & Marenus, A. (2023). Investigated how different sources of social support affected the quality of life during the COVID-19 pandemic in a sample of 1,296 university students in the U.S. Family support was most predictive of improved COVID-related quality of life. Interestingly, while women perceived more social support than men, they reported lower quality of life, highlighting complex gender dynamics in the experience of support.

McLean, M., & Gaul, J. (2022). Studied perceived social support and stress levels among 315 first-year university students. Higher social support was associated with lower perceived stress. Female students reported higher support and stress levels, suggesting that the transition to university may be especially emotionally taxing for women.

Answer, M., & Siddique, M. (2021). Examined the effects of perceived social support and resilience on psychological distress among 389 Pakistani university students. Increased support and resilience were associated with decreased distress levels. Female students experienced higher levels of psychological distress than male counterparts, calling for gender-responsive mental health initiatives in academic institutions.

Ganjoo, S., & Farhadi, R. (2021). Investigated the relationship between perceived stress and health locus of control in 250 students during the COVID-19 pandemic. A negative correlation was observed between internal locus of control and stress, while a positive correlation was found with chance locus of control. These findings indicate that fostering internal control beliefs may reduce stress in students.

Awoke, M., & Mamo, H. (2021). Conducted an online survey among 337 health sciences students in Ethiopia to evaluate perceived stress and coping strategies during the pandemic. Approximately 36% experienced high stress, influenced by reduced social interaction and financial concerns. Common coping mechanisms included religious practices, planning, and seeking support, indicating reliance on both personal and social resources.

Marcén-Román, Y., & Gasch-Gallen, M. (2021). Assessed anxiety and depression symptoms among 252 Health Sciences students in Spain, one year post-COVID-19

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outbreak. A significant proportion reported elevated symptoms, particularly female and third-year students. The findings stress the prolonged psychological impact of the pandemic on students in health-related fields.

Bedaso, A., & Adams, J. (2021). Performed a meta-analysis of 67 studies encompassing over 64,000 pregnant women to examine the impact of social support on prenatal mental health. Low perceived support was associated with higher risks of depression and anxiety, emphasizing the importance of integrating support systems into maternal healthcare services.

Samson, K. (2020). Studied perceived social support and its relationship to stress, anxiety, and depression among 680 female nursing students in Kathmandu. While most students reported high support levels, nearly half experienced moderate to severe stress. Perceived support had the strongest effect on depression levels, indicating its critical role in emotional regulation.

Baykara, Z. G., & Demir, M. (2020). Explored perceived social support, family functioning, and stoma adaptation in 75 Turkish patients. Better family functioning was associated with higher social support and improved adaptation outcomes. Factors such as marital status and type of surgery also influenced patients' psychosocial adjustment, highlighting the role of familial and medical variables in recovery.

AlAteeq, D. A., & Aljhani, S. A. (2020). Assessed psychological symptoms among 502 Saudi healthcare workers during the early COVID-19 pandemic. Over half experienced anxiety or depression, with nurses and female staff most affected. The study underscores the mental health burden on healthcare professionals during pandemics and the urgent need for supportive workplace policies.

Kang, L., Ma, S., et al. (2020). Examined the mental health status of 994 healthcare workers in Wuhan during the initial COVID-19 outbreak. High levels of anxiety, depression, and insomnia were reported, especially among younger female nurses. Most did not seek formal psychological help, indicating barriers to accessing mental health services.

Aslan, I., Ochnik, D., et al. (2020). Assessed depression, anxiety, and stress levels among 358 Turkish university students during the COVID-19 pandemic. Results revealed significant psychological distress, with female students and those with lower physical activity reporting higher stress levels. These findings underscore the need for structured mental health interventions in academic settings.

Bøg, M., & Filges, T. (2018). Synthesized evidence from 40 studies on the psychological effects of military deployment. Veterans were at higher risk of PTSD, depression, and substance use disorders, particularly in long-term follow-ups. The findings call for comprehensive, long-term psychological support systems for military personnel.

Topaktaş, A., & Dündar, C. (2017). Analyzed the impact of perceived social support on psychological symptoms and future expectations among 688 Turkish adolescents. Family support had the strongest protective influence against psychological distress and was positively associated with future optimism. Adolescents with higher perceived support also exhibited healthier lifestyle behaviors such as regular physical activity and avoidance of substance use.

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Patel, R., & Saxena, S. (2017). Studied stress and social support among 300 Indian undergraduate students. Findings indicated that students with higher levels of perceived social support reported significantly lower levels of academic stress. The study suggests the critical importance of integrating peer and family support into student counseling frameworks to mitigate stress.

METHODOLOGY

Aim:

To investigate how perceived social support influences stress levels and general health.

Objectives:

- Examine the relationship between perceived social support and stress.
- Assess the connection between perceived support and general health.
- Determine if higher perceived support predicts lower stress and better health outcomes.

Rationale:

Grounded in the stress-buffering hypothesis, this study explores how perceived social support may protect against stress and enhance well-being, particularly relevant as stress increases among younger populations.

Hypotheses:

- **H₁:** Higher perceived support is associated with lower stress and better health.
- **H₀:** No significant relationship exists between perceived support, stress, or health.

Research Design: A quantitative, cross-sectional study using self-report surveys and statistical analysis to assess relationships among variables.

Sample: Participants were adults who voluntarily completed an online survey in English. The final sample was diverse in age and background.

Tools Used:

1. **MSPSS:** 12-item scale measuring perceived support from family, friends, and significant others (7-point scale; high reliability, $\alpha = .85-.91$).
2. **PSS-10:** 10-item scale assessing perceived stress (5-point scale; $\alpha = .78-.91$).
3. **GHQ-12:** 12-item questionnaire evaluating general psychological health (4-point scale; $\alpha = .82-.88$).

Procedure: Participants gave informed consent and completed an online survey via Google Forms. Data were anonymized, cleaned, and analyzed using correlation and regression to test relationships between perceived support, stress, and health.

Statistical Analysis

Statistical Analysis: Social Support, Stress, and Health

Step 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	SD	Min	Max
MSPSS Total	63.87	13.92	21	84
PSS Total	19.66	6.72	4	36
GHQ12 Total	26.93	4.94	12	48

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Interpretation: Participants reported moderate levels of stress and support. GHQ scores indicated moderate distress.

Step 2: Normality Check (Shapiro-Wilk)

Variable	W-Statistic	p-value	Normal?
MSPSS Total	0.952	0.000	No
PSS Total	0.990	0.357	Yes
GHQ12 Total	0.969	0.002	No

Interpretation: Only Perceived Stress was normally distributed. Pearson's correlation was used due to large sample size.

Step 3: Correlation Analysis (Pearson)

Variables	r	p-value	Significant?	Direction
MSPSS ↔ PSS	-0.216	0.007	Yes	Negative
MSPSS ↔ GHQ12	-0.097	0.233	No	Negative

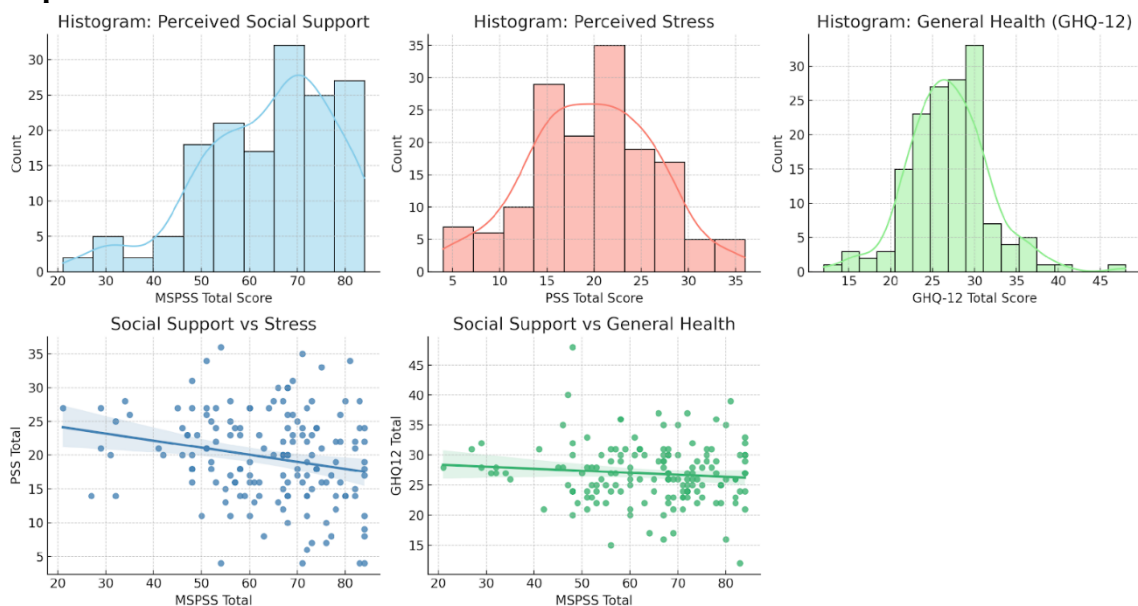
Interpretation: Higher perceived social support is significantly associated with lower stress, but not with general health.

Step 4: Regression Analysis

Predictor	Outcome	β (slope)	R ²	p-value	Significant?
MSPSS	PSS	-0.104	0.047	0.007	Yes
MSPSS	GHQ12	-0.034	0.009	0.233	No

Interpretation: Social support significantly predicts lower stress but does not significantly predict better general health.

Step 5: Visualizations



Graphs include histograms of each variable and regression plots showing relationships between social support and both stress and health.

DISCUSSION

Using the standardized measurements of MSPSS, PSS, and GHQ-12, the current research evaluated the linkage of social support, stress, and general health of individuals. The results only verified the hypothesis to some extent. It was discovered that there was a significant negative correlation between social support and perceived stress, which means that individuals with more social support reported lower stress. Nonetheless, as social support did not considerably predict general health which was assessed using GHQ-12.

The extensive literature that examines the robust relationship between social support and level of stress corroborates the strong negative correlation with social support and stress. For example, Taylor (2011) noted that individuals who perceive strong emotional and instrumental support from others tend to manage stress more effectively due to enhanced coping resources. Even more recently, Ozbay et al. (2020) conducted a study that corroborated these results that perceived support buffers against psychological distress, especially during acute crises like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Nevertheless, the correlation between social support and general health was not significant in this study. It may be due to several reasons, including that the general health is multifactorial, involving both physical and psychological elements. Some researchers, like Smith et al. (2019), suggest that the impact of perceived support on physical health is mediated by other actions such as exercising, sleep, and accessing healthcare services, which are not included.

Regardless of the lack of significant correlation with health, it is important to mention that the relationship, though negative, aligns with expectations. This suggests that providing social support may yield some advantages, albeit subtle and long-term, for health without being apparent in cross-sectional assessments.

These findings make the point regarding the psychological dimension of social support, especially as a protective factor against stressful situations. From a theoretical stance, the outcomes support the stress-buffering hypothesis, which emphasizes that social support may reduce the harmful impact of stressors on a person's well-being (Cohen and Wills, 1985). Thus, the endeavor to sustain social networks may assist in managing stress and enhancing resilience and emotional well-being over time.

CONCLUSION

This study looked at the effects of social support on stress and health within a given population. Supported individuals reported lower levels of stress, which confirms the usefulness of social support in the psychological health of an individual. There was none too significant relationship between support and general health which may point to other moderating or mediating factors.

The findings illustrate that fostering supportive relationships can be an effective approach in stress alleviation. Even though general health may not be directly affected, as perceived support is important, social perception relief strengthens existing coping strategies, which improve day-to-day well-being and life quality. Such understanding is important for formulating intervention strategies and wellness programs, mentally and in educational environments.

Limitations

- Using a cross-sectional design, one cannot determine causal relationships between these variables.
- This study was based entirely on self-reporting, which is prone to bias and inaccurate personal perception.
- The population sample lacks representativeness, which makes outcome generalization difficult.
- Health affecting factors (nutrition, physical activity, medical history), alongside other controls, were ignored.
- The research did not specify from which source the support was coming (family, friends, important others), as they might affect stress and health in varying ways.

Future Directions

- Perceived support, stress, and health need to be studied in longitudinal designs for over periods to establish an enduring relationship between these factors and consider causation.
- Future studies may consider subjective measures in conjunction with objective ones like sleep, heart rate, and medical records.
- More research is needed on the level of influence family support and peer support have individually.
- The effectiveness of social support interventions on stress alleviation and health improvement should be tested.
- Further studies might include other psychological factors such coping style, emotional intelligence, and resilience as possible mediators.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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