

Research Paper

Impact of Self-esteem and Perceived Social Support on Pre-retirement Anxiety among Teachers in Kerala

Nishana PT^{1*}, Dr. H. Sylaja², Dr. C. Jayan³

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of self-esteem and perceived social support on pre-retirement anxiety among teachers in Kerala. The sample comprised 100 government teachers (65 females and 35 males) expected to retire within the next five years. Measures used in the study included a self-esteem inventory, a multi-dimensional scale of perceived social support, a pre-retirement anxiety scale, and a personal data sheet. A descriptive research design was employed, utilizing statistical techniques such as the Kruskal-Wallis test, and non-parametric factorial ANOVA. Key findings indicated that pre-retirement anxiety varies significantly with different levels of self-esteem, with higher self-esteem linked to lower anxiety. However, there is no significant effect on pre-retirement anxiety across different levels of perceived social support. Additionally, while the interaction between self-esteem and perceived social support does not significantly impact pre-retirement anxiety, there is an indication that individuals with high self-esteem and moderate social support tend to experience the lowest anxiety. The study's implications suggest the need for interventions aimed at boosting self-esteem and fostering supportive social networks to help teachers manage pre-retirement anxiety.

Keywords: *Pre-retirement Anxiety, Perceived Social Support, self-esteem, Teachers*

Retirement is a transitional period in the life of an employee after serving with all his capacity for active productive years (Adegoke, 2002). Atchley (1982) states that retirement can have at least two basic meanings. For the individual, retirement means withdrawal from one's career or occupation to pursue leisure and personal freedom or to cope with health problems. For the employer, retirement involves the withdrawal from a position of employment of someone who has reached eligibility for retirement. Retirement has been conceptualized by Peterson (1989) as one of the major life crises. In some countries, such as India, there is a fixed retirement age for government jobs, which may vary depending on the position.

¹Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, PSG College of Arts and Science, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India

²Head of the Department, Department of Psychology, University of Kerala, Kariavattom Campus, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, India

³Visiting Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Kerala, Kariavattom Campus, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, India

*Corresponding Author

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Robert Atchley (1976) proposed that adults go through six phases as they make the transition from worker to retiree: pre-retirement phase, retirement phase, honeymoon phase, disenchantment phase, reorientation phase, and routine phase. In the pre-retirement Phase, people are near retirement and begin to think seriously about life after retirement. They gather information, talk about retirement, and decide when to retire. Planning for the future is an important part of this phase. Greater Psychological planning activities were associated with positive attitudes toward retirement and improved psychological well-being, whereas social life planning activities can lead to greater psychological distress (Yeung, 2013). Since retirement presents challenges related to finance, health issues, social isolation, and loss of identity, it can cause significant emotional distress (Wang & Shi, 2014). According to Adisa (2003), the income, status, responsibilities, activities, and social relationships associated with the work environment suddenly change, causing pre-retirement anxiety. Additionally, according to Ode (2004, as cited in Baba et al., 2015), the major causes of pre-retirement anxiety include difficulty in time management, total dependency on present salary, the problem of securing residential accommodation, ignorance of what to do with pension money, and attitude of friends and family.

Pre-retirement anxiety can have significant psycho-social effects, impacting the emotional and psychological well-being of retirees (Baba et al., 2015). According to Akinade (2006, as cited in Baba et al., 2015), retirees often undergo acute trauma characterized by confusion and difficulty in thinking, as they become demobilized and inactive. Other psycho-social effects include disbelief or denial, anger, anxiety, depression, and substance abuse.

House and Kahn (1985), define perceived social support as a psychological sensation of support received from feeling liked, appreciated, and a part of a network of stable and trusted social relationships. It is a person's perception of readily available assistance from friends, family, and others. Perceived Social support has generally been found to promote psychological well-being, as well as to buffer the effects of stress (Brissette & Scheier, 2002). Devika and Sahai (2023) and Ugwu et al. (2021) found that perceived social support is negatively correlated with pre-retirement anxiety. That is individuals perceiving high social support tend to experience lower levels of anxiety about retirement.

Self-esteem is a crucial determinant of mental well-being. Rosenberg (1965) defines self-esteem as a positive or negative attitude toward oneself and one's evaluation of one's thoughts and feelings overall about oneself. He added, that high self-esteem consists of an individual respecting himself and considering himself worthy. According to DeLamater and Myers (2010), family experience, performance feedback, and social comparisons are the three major sources of self-esteem. A person's psychological well-being, social adjustment, and quality of life are all positively correlated with their level of self-esteem (Boyd et al., 2014, as cited in Park & Park, 2019). Abidoye et al. (2020) found that there is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, self-concept, and self-esteem with pre-retirement anxiety.

Self-esteem and social support are intertwined, influencing each other over time (Harris & Orth, 2020, Kong et al., 2015). Therefore, there is a possibility that these variables jointly affect pre-retirement anxiety.

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Objective

To determine the combined influence of self-esteem and perceived social support on pre-retirement anxiety among government teachers in Kerala.

Hypothesis

There will be an interaction effect between self-esteem and perceived social support on pre-retirement anxiety among government teachers in Kerala.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The participants comprise of 100 government teachers in Kerala, including 65 females and 35 males, who are expected to retire within 5 years. Purposive sampling was used for the study.

Measures

- 1. Self-esteem inventory (Thomas & Sanandaraj, 1985):** The Self-Esteem Inventory is a five-point interval scale consisting of 20 self-evaluative or descriptive statements, with 10 positive and 10 negative statements covering a wide variety of behavioral domains. Higher scores on this scale indicate high self-esteem, while lower scores denote low self-esteem. The scale has a split-half reliability of 0.95 and a test-retest reliability of 0.90, both significant at the 0.01 level. The content validity correlation coefficient is 0.41, also significant at the 0.01 level. The maximum possible score on the scale is 100, and the minimum is 20.
- 2. Multi-dimensional scale of perceived social support (Zimet et al., 1988):** The multi-dimensional scale of perceived social support (MSPSS) was developed by Zimet and his colleagues in 1988. It has been applied to different populations to measure perceived social support from family, friends, and significant others. The scale consists of 12 items dedicated to each source of support. Respondents rate each item on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (very strongly disagree) to 7 (very strongly agree). The mean score of the total scale is calculated by summing all items and then dividing by 12. The MSPSS exhibits high internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values typically ranging from 0.84 to 0.92 for the overall scale. The scale possesses strong construct validity and concurrent validity.
- 3. Pre-retirement anxiety scale (Ugwu et al., 2021):** The Nigerian Pre-retirement Anxiety Scale (NPAS) was developed by Ugwu et al. (2021) to measure anxiety levels associated with the transition into retirement, specifically in the Nigerian context. The scale consists of 15 items focusing on various dimensions of anxiety: financial preparedness (items 8, 9, 10, 11, and 14), social obligation (items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6), and social alienation (items 7, 12, 13, and 15). It uses a 5-point Likert scale response format, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Items representing financial preparedness are negatively scored, and the total score is calculated by summing the item scores. The scale has been standardized for the Indian context and found that the 14th item was not significant. So it was deleted and the scale was scored accordingly. The overall reliability coefficients of the scale were 0.83 and 0.73, indicating a good degree of internal consistency. Additionally, the scale demonstrated strong construct validity, affirming its effectiveness in measuring the intended constructs.

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Procedure

Data was collected using both online and offline methods. For offline collection, the investigator distributed printed questionnaires and informed consent forms directly to participants through their institution, with responses collected later. For online collection, a Google Form was used to reach participants who were less accessible in person. The completed data was then scored and analysed using SPSS.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Kruskal-Wallis test was employed to examine how different levels of self-esteem and perceived social support affect pre-retirement anxiety. Additionally, a non-parametric two-way ANOVA was used to assess the interaction between self-esteem and perceived social support on pre-retirement anxiety.

Table 1. Kruskal-Wallis Test Results for the Effect of Self-Esteem Levels on Pre-Retirement Anxiety

Levels of Self-esteem	N	Mean rank	Df	Krusikal-Wallis H	Asymp. sig.
Low	18	62.86	2	6.535	0.038
Medium	61	50.78			
High	21	39.10			

Table 1 presents the results of the Kruskal-Wallis test conducted to explore the effect of self-esteem levels on pre-retirement anxiety. The test revealed a statistically significant difference in pre-retirement anxiety across different levels of self-esteem ($H = 6.535$, $p = 0.038$). Specifically, the mean ranks for pre-retirement anxiety are 62.86 for low self-esteem, 50.78 for medium self-esteem, and 39.10 for high self-esteem. This finding indicates that individuals with higher levels of self-esteem experience lower levels of pre-retirement anxiety, whereas those with lower self-esteem experience higher levels of anxiety as they approach retirement. This result supports the notion that self-esteem plays a crucial role in managing pre-retirement anxiety.

According to Orth and Robins (2022), self-esteem functions as an adaptive trait that influences a range of outcomes including social relationships, academic and work success, mental and physical health, and overall behavioral adjustment. Their research emphasizes that high self-esteem is associated with healthier adjustment processes and better emotional well-being, which aligns with the observed inverse relationship between self-esteem and pre-retirement anxiety in the current study.

Additionally, Li et al. (2023) found that low self-esteem and anxiety symptoms bidirectionally predict each other, which suggests that individuals with low self-esteem are more prone to experiencing higher levels of anxiety. This bidirectional relationship further reinforces the current study's findings by demonstrating that low self-esteem can exacerbate pre-retirement anxiety, whereas higher self-esteem can serve as a protective factor.

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Table 2. Kruskal-Wallis Test Results for the Effect of Perceived Social Support Levels on Pre-retirement Anxiety

Levels of perceived social support	N	Mean rank	df	Kruskal-Wallis H	Asymp. sig.
Low	14	66.50	2	5.052	0.080
Medium	36	48.99			
High	50	47.11			

Table 2 presents the results of the Kruskal-Wallis test, which was performed to investigate whether perceived social support levels have an impact on pre-retirement anxiety. The test statistic was $H = 5.052$ with a p-value of 0.080. Since the p-value is greater than the standard significance level of 0.05, the results indicate that there is no significant difference in pre-retirement anxiety across different levels of perceived social support. In other words, the findings suggest that variations in perceived social support do not have a statistically significant effect on pre-retirement anxiety among the participants.

Table 3. Interaction effect of self-esteem and perceived social support on pre-retirement anxiety

Levels of Self-esteem	Levels of Perceived Social Support	Mean	df	F	Sig	Partial Eta Squared
Low	Low	43.800	4	1.221	0.307	0.051
	Medium	36.875				
	High	36.400				
Medium	Low	35.833				
	Medium	35.087				
	High	34.938				
High	Low	44.333				
	Medium	28.000				
	high	32.904				

Table 3 illustrates the interaction effect between different levels (low, medium, high) of self-esteem and perceived social support on pre-retirement anxiety. The analysis yielded an F-statistic of 1.221 with a p-value of 0.307, suggesting that the interaction effect is not statistically significant at a 0.05 significant level. This implies that the combination of self-esteem and perceived social support levels does not significantly influence pre-retirement anxiety. However, the Partial Eta Squared value is 0.051, which suggests that despite the lack of statistical significance, the interaction between self-esteem and perceived social support still accounts for a meaningful portion of the variance in pre-retirement anxiety. Furthermore, while perceived social support levels alone do not show a significant difference in pre-retirement anxiety, their interaction with self-esteem plays an important role. Specifically, individuals with high self-esteem and medium levels of perceived social support tend to experience the lowest levels of pre-retirement anxiety.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings reveal that a statistically significant difference in pre-retirement anxiety across different levels of self-esteem. Conversely, there is no significant difference in pre-retirement anxiety across different levels of perceived social support. Additionally,

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while the interaction between self-esteem and perceived social support does not significantly impact pre-retirement anxiety, there is an indication that individuals with high self-esteem and moderate social support tend to experience the lowest anxiety. These results suggest that enhancing self-esteem and social support could be crucial in managing pre-retirement anxiety.

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Conflict of Interest

I hereby declare that there were no conflicts of interest in carrying out this research.

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