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Perceived social support among teachers working in higher education institutions

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Abstract

Over the years, there is an unprecedented increase in the threat to human psyche due to diminishing family bonds, reduced family size, unsteady nature of interpersonal interactions, fierce competition among peers, disintegration of societal values, crime and violence, global and the degree to which specialists give social help to each other in the work environment can have a critical effect upon individuals' understanding of work and social health inside the working environment. It is necessary to measure perceived social support, especially in higher education institutions, which has been given relatively less importance by the researchers. This study was conducted to investigate the perceived social support of university teachers. The present study was conducted on a sample of 120 university teachers. Social support was assessed by interpersonal support evaluation list given by Cohen *et al.* Out of total sample more than half of the university teachers reported moderate level of social support followed by high and low level. More than one third of total respondents perceived higher social support. The results of the study concluded that male university teacher have better perceived social support as compared with their significant others.

Keywords: Perceived social support, teachers working, higher education institutions

Introduction

Social support is the perception and actuality that one is cared for, has assistance available from other people, and most popularly, that one is part of a supportive social network. These supportive resources can be emotional (e.g., nurturance), informational (e.g., advice), or companionship (e.g., sense of belonging); tangible (e.g., financial assistance) or intangible (e.g., personal advice). Social support can be measured as the perception that one has assistance available, the actual received assistance, or the degree to which a person is integrated in a social network. Support can come from many sources, such as family, friends etc.

Perceived social support is a crucial aspect of individuals' well-being, particularly for university teachers who face numerous challenges in their academic and personal lives. Interpersonal Support Evaluation List (ISEL) is a widely used tool to measure perceived social support. It is a self-report questionnaire that assesses the perceived availability and adequacy of social support in different domains, including tangible, appraisal, and emotional support. University teachers, like any other individuals, require social support to cope with the stress and demands of their work. The support may come from colleagues, family, friends, or other sources. However, the nature and quality of the social support they receive may vary, and it can impact their well-being and job satisfaction.

Objectives

1. Levels of perceived social support among university teachers
2. Mean difference in social support and personal & socioeconomic variables of university teachers

Methodology

Research methodology is important part of any research study. It starts with the genesis of the problem to be undertaken, identification of problems and research designs. The most objective of this chapter is to explain the sampling procedure adopted, operational definitions of variables – independent and dependent, tools used for their measurement followed by the locale of the study, procedure for data collection and analyses undertaken to draw the interpretation.

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Different methodological steps followed in the study along with the relevant details are described under following sub heads:

1. Locale of the study: The current study was conducted in the District Hisar of Haryana state.

2. Selection of area: The following three universities of Hisar District were selected as research area for the study

- Chaudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural University, Hisar
- Lala Lajpat Rai University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences, Hisar
- Guru Jambheshwar University of Science and Technology, Hisar

Selection of respondents: The present study was conducted on a sample of 120 university teachers i.e. 40 from each university which further comprised of 20 male and 20 female

university teachers. Thus, the total sample for the present study constituted of 60 male and 60 female university teachers.

Data collection

The data were collected personally on individual basis with the help of self prepared questionnaire for personal and socio-economic information of the respondents. Standardized tests were used for the collection of data regarding social support, psychological well-being and life satisfaction of university teachers. The importance and objective of the study were explicitly explained to the respondents. The data were collected in a friendly and in formal manner. The respondents were asked to read the questionnaire carefully before filling it.

Results

The data collected in accordance with the research methodology to achieve the specific objectives of the study.

Table 1: Personal profile of university teachers

Sr. No.	Personal Variables	Sex	Male (n=60) f (%)	Female (n=60) f (%)	Total (n=120) f (%)
1.	Age(years)				
	25 to 30 years		09(15.0)	05(08.3)	14(11.7)
	30+ to 35 years		26(43.3)	26(43.3)	52(43.3)
	35+ to 40 years		25(41.7)	29(48.3)	54(45.0)
2.	Education				
	Master		14(23.3)	11(18.3)	25(20.8)
	Doctoral		46(76.7)	49(81.7)	95(79.2)
3.	Designation				
	Assistant professor or equivalent		56(93.3)	57(95.0)	113(94.2)
	Associate professor or equivalent		04(06.7)	03(05.0)	007(05.8)
4.	Length of service (years)				
	Upto 5 years		32(53.3)	26(43.3)	58(48.3)
	5+ to 10 years		19(31.7)	27(45.0)	46(38.3)
	More than 10 years		09(15.0)	07(11.7)	16(13.3)
5.	Number of years in marriage				
	Unmarried		06(10.0)	01(01.7)	07(05.8)
	1 to 5 years		24(40.0)	15(25.0)	39(32.5)
	5+ to 10 years		19(31.7)	30(50.0)	49(40.8)
	More than 10 years		11(18.3)	14(23.3)	25(20.8)
6.	Number of children				
	No child		17(28.3)	08(13.3)	25(20.8)
	1		20(33.3)	23(38.3)	43(35.8)
	2		22(36.7)	27(45.0)	49(40.8)
	3		01(01.7)	02(03.3)	03(02.5)

Table 1 represents the personal profile of 120 university teachers from three universities GJU, HAU and LUVAS. The data indicates that 45 percent teachers were in the age group 35+ to 40 years followed by 31 to 35 years (43.3%) and 26 to 30 years (11.7%). From female sample 48.3 percent respondents were in the age group 35+ to 40 years as compared to male sample who had 41.7 percent in this age group. Data related to educational qualifications of the university teachers indicated that maximum respondents in both male (76.7%) and female (81.7%) sample were having education upto doctoral. Regarding designation of university teachers it was found that out of total 120 samples 113 working as assistant professor or equivalent and only 7 were working as associate professors or equivalent. Data related to length of service in years of respondents

depicted that nearly half (48.3 %) of university teachers were in Upto 5 years age group followed by 38.3 percent in 5+ to 10 years and rest 13.3 percent in more than 10 years of their service period. Results further revealed that out of total sample maximum (40.8%) completed 5+ to 10 years of marriage span, followed by 1 to 5 years (32.5%) and rest (20.8%) university teachers have completed more than 10 years in their conjugal life. On the other hand only 07 respondents were unmarried at the time of data collection. Regarding number of children, total data revealed that 40.8 percent university teachers had 2 children followed by 35.8 percent had Only one child. A very meager percentage (2.5%) of respondents had 3 children in their family. In the total sample 20.8 percent reported no child at the time of data collection.

Table 2: Socio-economic profile of university teachers

Sr. No.	Socioeconomic Variables	Sex	Male (n=60) f (%)	Female (n=60) f (%)	Total (n=120) f (%)
1.	Caste category				
	SC		15(25.0)	10(16.7)	25(20.8)
	OBC		16(26.7)	14(23.3)	30(25.0)
	General		29(48.3)	36(60.0)	65(54.2)
2.	Family type				
	Nuclear		30(50.0)	41(68.3)	71(59.2)
	Joint		30(50.0)	19(31.7)	49(40.8)
3.	Family size				
	Small (1-4 members)		23(38.3)	26(43.3)	49(40.8)
	Medium (5-8 members)		30(50.0)	27(45.0)	57(47.5)
	Large (>8 members)		07(11.7)	07(11.7)	14(11.7)
4.	Monthly income of respondent ₹				
	Upto 50,000 ₹		03(05.0)	01(01.7)	04(03.3)
	50,001 to 1,00,000 ₹		36(60.0)	49(81.7)	85(70.8)
	1,00,001 to 2,50,000 ₹		21(35.0)	10(16.7)	31(25.8)
5.	Monthly income of spouse				
	Unemployed		35(58.3)	00(00.0)	35(29.2)
	1 to 50,000 ₹		11(18.3)	01(01.7)	12(10.0)
	50,001 to 1,00,000 ₹		10(16.7)	33(55.0)	43(35.8)
	1,00,001 to 2,50,000 ₹		04(06.7)	26(43.3)	30(25.0)
6.	Family income ₹				
	Upto 1,00,000 ₹		21(35.0)	01(01.7)	22(18.3)
	1,00,001 to 2,00,000 ₹		30(50.0)	32(53.3)	62(51.7)
	2,00,001 to 4,00,000		09(15.0)	27(45.0)	36(30.0)
7.	Area of residence				
	Rural		08(13.3)	06(10.0)	14(11.7)
	Urban		52(86.7)	54(90.0)	106(88.3)

The main variables considered under the socio-economic profile of the respondents were caste, family type, and family size, monthly income of respondent and spouse, total family income and area of residence. Data in table 2 regarding caste of the total sample revealed that more than half of university teachers (54.2%) were from general caste followed by OBC (one fourth i.e.25%) and schedule caste category (20.8%).

Results revealed that 59.2 percent belonged to nuclear family system and rest 40.8 percent resided in joint family system, pointing towards re-growth of joint family system in the society. Regarding family size, results indicated that maximum (47.5%) respondents belonged to medium size families (5 to 8 members), followed by (40.8%) of the respondents belonged to small size families (1 to 4 members) and 11.7 percent of respondents had large size families (more than 8 members).

As far as monthly income of respondents concerned, data indicated that majority 70.8 percent of university teachers were getting monthly salary between 50,000 to 1,00,000. Nearly one-fourth (25.8%) of university teachers were receiving monthly income of 1,00,001 to 2,50,000. Regarding the monthly income of spouse in case of female university teachers, the table further revealed that almost 60.8 percent spouse monthly income was above 50,000₹. Whereas in case of male university teachers, data indicated that more than half (58.3%) of the spouse were not in job or unemployed. On the other hand out of 60 male respondents 11 had spousal income up to 50,000 ₹ followed by 10 whose spouse were earning between 50,001 to 1, 00,000 ₹ per month and only 4 spouse of male university teachers were earning between 1,00,001 to 2,50,000 ₹ per month.

Results further highlighted that half of male university teachers had family income between 1,00,001 to 2,00,000 ₹

and for female university teachers 53.3 percent had family income between 1,00,001 to 2,00,000 ₹ per month. Information on area of residence revealed that majority (88.3%) university teachers were residing in urban localities and only 11.7 percent of university teachers had residence in rural areas.

The data in table 3 portrays the results related to the levels of social support among university teachers. The social support in the respondents was evaluated by using interpersonal support evaluation list shortened version (ISEL) developed by Cohen *et al.* (1985) [3]. The social support scale has three different subscales designed to measure three dimensions of perceived support. These dimensions are; appraisal support, belonging support and tangible support.

The distribution of the respondents for social support has been given against on the basis of their achieved scores. The data demonstrates that more than one third (34.2%) of total respondents perceived higher social support.. Rest 40.8 percent reported moderate social support. On the other hand, exactly one fourth of university teachers reported low social support which is a matter of concern for overall well-being of university teachers. On the basis of gender for overall social support 45 percent male and 36.7 percent female university teachers had moderate level of social support. Similarly for components of social support for tangible support half male university teachers had moderate tangible support and rest half had high tangible support in case of female university teachers half of females had moderate tangible support. For belonging support 45 male and 60 female university teachers had moderate social support and for appraisal support 50 percent male university teachers and 56.7 percent female university teachers fall in the category of moderate level of appraisal support.

Table 3: Levels of social support among university teachers

Sr. No.	Sex	Male n=60 f (%)	Female n=60 f (%)	Total n=120 f (%)	
I.	Overall social support				
	Low (25-32)	10(16.7)	20(33.3)	30(25.0)	
	Moderate (33-40)	27(45.0)	22(36.7)	49(40.8)	
	High (41-48)	23(38.3)	18(30.0)	41(34.2)	
II	Components of social support				
	1.	Tangible support			
		Low (5-8)	00(00.0)	04(06.7)	04(03.3)
		Moderate (9-12)	30(50.0)	30(50.0)	60(50.0)
		High (13-16)	30(50.0)	26(43.3)	56(46.7)
	2.	Belonging support			
		Low (5-8)	06(10.0)	07(11.7)	13(10.8)
		Moderate (9-12)	27(45.0)	36(60.0)	63(52.5)
	3.	Appraisal support			
		Low (5-8)	08(13.3)	06(10.0)	14(11.7)
		Moderate (9-12)	30(50.0)	34(56.7)	64(53.3)
		High (13-16)	22(36.7)	20(33.3)	42(35.0)

As far as the status of respondents on different components of social support is concerned the table 11 confirmed that more than half of the respondents had moderate level of tangible (50%), belonging (52.5%) and appraisal support (53.3%). Comparison of respondents from male and female sample speaks that male university teachers scored more percentages in high tangible support (50%), belonging support (45%) and appraisal support (36.7%) against female university teachers

who scored lower percentages in high tangible support (43.3%), belonging support (28.3%) and appraisal support (33.3%). This reflects that these male respondents does not provision or material aid such as a loan, have high social companionship which includes having someone with whom one can go out within any activity like movies, trips and they do not need informed advice in characterizing and adapting to the issues.

Table 4: Mean difference in social support on the basis of sex of university teachers

Sr. No.	Sex	Male Mean ± SD n = 60	Female Mean ± SD n = 60	Z value	
I.	Overall social support	39.48±6.42	35.90±6.55	2.01*	
II	Components of social support				
	1.	Tangible support	12.97±2.10	12.17±2.45	0.78
	2.	Belonging support	12.07±2.51	11.63±2.59	0.93
	3.	Appraisal support	13.55±2.39	11.10±2.49	1.96*

Table 4 portrays mean difference in social on the basis of sex of university teachers. Results depicted that significant differences were observed for overall social support (z=2.01*, p<0.05) and appraisal support (z=1.96*, p<0.05). Male university teachers scored significantly higher on appraisal support which means they do not need informed advice in characterizing and adapting to issues. On the other hand female need informed advice in characterizing and adapting to

issues. On the other hand observations of mean scores depicted that male university teachers had better mean scores for overall social support M=39.48 and all of its components tangible support M=12.97, belonging support M=12.07 and appraisal support M=13.55 which shows that male university teachers had better perceived social support as compared with their female counterparts.

Table 5: Mean difference in social support on the basis of length of service of university teachers

Sr. No.	Length of service (in years)	Upto 5 Mean ± SD n = 58	5+ to 10 Mean ± SD n = 46	More than 10 Mean ± SD n = 16	F value	
I.	Overall social support	36.71±6.74	35.46±6.09	40.19±5.86	3.25*	
II	Components of social support					
	1.	Tangible support	12.47±2.44	12.15±1.98	14.12±2.15	4.71*
	2.	Belonging support	11.88±2.43	11.48±2.85	12.81±1.83	1.64
	3.	Appraisal support	12.36±2.52	11.83±2.23	13.25±2.54	2.13

* Significant at 5% level of significance

Table 5 depicted mean difference in social support on the basis of length of service of university teachers. Results revealed that significant differences were observed overall social support (F=3.25*, p<0.05) and tangible support (F=4.71*, p<0.05) which means that university teachers who belonged to the category more than 10 years had better social

support as compared with upto 5 years and 5+ to 10 years. Observations of mean scores depicted those university teachers who belonged to the category more than 10 years for length of service had better mean scores for belonging support M=12.81 and appraisal support M=13.25 as compared with two other groups respectively

Table 6: Mean difference in social support on the basis of family type of university teachers

Sr. No.	Family type	Nuclear Mean \pm SD n = 71	Joint Mean \pm SD n = 49	Z value
I.	Overall social support	38.25 \pm 6.81	34.92 \pm 6.03	2.08*
II	Components of social support			
1.	Tangible support	12.63 \pm 2.41	12.47 \pm 2.17	1.26
2.	Belonging support	12.08 \pm 2.66	11.51 \pm 2.37	1.21
3.	Appraisal support	12.51 \pm 2.44	11.94 \pm 2.41	0.39

*Significant at 5% level

Table 6 showed mean difference in social support on the basis of income of university teachers. Results disclosed that significant differences were observed for overall social support ($F=3.94^*$, $p<0.05$) which means that university teachers who were earning more than 50,000₹ had better social support as compared with university teachers earning upto 50,000 ₹.

Mean scores achieved by university teachers depicted that teachers who were earning between 1,00,001 to 2,50,000 ₹ had better mean score for tangible support $M=12.68$ and university teachers earning between 50,001 to 1,00,000₹ had better mean scores for belonging support $M=12.09$ and appraisal support $M= 12.44$ which showed that university teachers who were earning more than 50,000 ₹ had better perceived social support as compared with university teachers who were earning only up to 50,000 ₹.

Major Findings

- More than one third (34.2%) of total university teachers perceived higher social support. On the other hand, exactly one fourth of respondents reported low social support. Rest 40.8 percent reported moderate social support. More than half of the respondents had moderate level of tangible (50%), belonging (52.5%) and appraisal support (53.3%).
- Statistically significant differences were observed in overall social support and appraisal support component.
- Teachers having more than 10 years of service span were statistically significantly scored higher on overall social support and tangible support than teachers with short service periods.
- Significant differences were observed in mean scores of overall social support when compared between teachers living in nuclear family setup and joint family system
- Overall male university teachers have better perceived social support as compared with female university teachers.

Recommendations

- University must conduct survey at regular intervals to know about psychological well-being, social support and life satisfaction of university teachers.
- Universities must organize mental health intervention or yoga programmes time to time for good mental well-being of university teachers.
- University should periodically announce appreciations and rewards to the dedicated teachers and researchers.

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