

Social Support as Predictor of Life Satisfaction in Older Adults

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Abstract

Social support plays an important role in the satisfaction with life in older adults. The purpose of present research was to find the social support as predictor of life satisfaction in older adults. Main hypothesis of the study was social support (significant others, family and friends) would be positive predictor of life satisfaction in older adults. Two more sub-hypotheses were also formulated. Correlational cross sectional research design was used with convenient sampling technique. Total 100 participants were selected which consisted of 50 couples from both nuclear and joint family system. The Multidimensional Social Support Scale (Zimet et al., 1988) and Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985) were used. The results revealed social support including, significant others, friends and family, had positive relationship as well as positive predictor of life satisfaction in older adults. Moreover, older adults from joint family system were found to be more satisfied as compared to the older adults from nuclear family. Findings have significant implications in Pakistani culture for the purpose of counselling.

Keywords: Life Satisfaction, Older Adults, Social Support

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Introduction

There is a big role of social support in the life of an individual in the collectivistic culture (Kong et al., 2019). It becomes more important when the individual is an older person. It means to provide you a sense of satisfaction with life. The individuals who are living alone needs it more, therefore, this issue needs an attention, especially about what kind of support is most important for health, especially in the old age (Gorman,

2017). The present research is an effort to study the relationship between social support and life satisfaction among older adults.

The term social support can be explained as psychological and material resources that are given by a social network which help an individual to cope with stressful situation (Cohen & McKay, 2020). Zimet et al. (1988) explained social support as the assistance or support received by family, friends and colleagues. In other words, it can also be explained social support as various types of help that is provided by members of one's social network.

This social support may involve like helping an individual in different daily tasks or his duties when he or she become ill or need any financial assistance, telling someone's about the right path or giving piece of advice to one's friend when he or she needs and moreover, it may be as providing caring attitude, empathy, and concern for loved ones in need (Cherry, 2020).

Social support can be explained as which enables a person to be certain of that he/she is loved, valued, cared by other close family

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members or friends (Peppe et al., 2018). Researchers indicate that people who have strong social support are good to cope or easily handle their stressful situations in their life (Felton, 2018) or even if they are facing different problems related to the behavior due to these psychological issues (Dindo et al., 2017; Spittel et al., 2019). Resilience as a protective factor found to be affected in individuals who have less social support as well, they are also observed as having depressive symptoms (Zhao et al., 2018).

Numerous studies found that there is direct relationship between social support, physical health, emotional adjustment, well-being, and overall survival of patients with cancer. Older adults who are patients are found to have social support and social connectedness that ultimately improved health and decreased mortality rate in them due to illness while those older adults who lack social support and social connectedness have inferior health condition like increased prevalence of any chronic illness and decrease in rate of survival (Kadambi et al., 2020).

Chen et al. (2022) examined gender's moderating role with role of pension, social support and self-care ability on life satisfaction of older adults in urban China. Findings were reported that the pension is important to older adults' life satisfaction regardless of gender. In men, strong relationship was found between family support and life satisfaction than for women. Interdependent social support was reported high in women than men. The interaction between self-care ability and gender reveals positive association with women's life satisfaction but a negative association with men's.

Satisfaction with life is considered as an important component or sub part of subjective well-being (SWB) that directly links with person's own cognitive judgments about his own life (Odacı & Cikrikci, 2019). Diener et al. (1985) explained the term life

satisfaction as a complete assessment of emotional state and attitudes about one's life at a certain point in time ranging from negative to positive position. Internal assessment or evaluation of an individual about his or her quality of life is referred to as life satisfaction. Boniwell, and Tunariu (2019) explained the relationship between life satisfaction and other positive behavioral tendencies like internal locus of control, self-concept, active coping, and pro-social behavior decreases if an individual is less satisfied from his life but on the other side, addictive and psychopathological behavior increase. Moreover, it was found that level of resilience is increased in individuals who have positive relationships with neighbors, friends and teachers except the family members (Telepova & Telepov, 2021).

Lee et al. (2022) conducted research on leisure and social supports in relation to positive affect in older adults. Results indicated significant association between leisure activity, social support, and positive affect.

Mahama (2021) explained the developmental reasons that what is the importance of maintaining SWB in older adults. It was revealed that in people with increased age, focus was shifted from their self towards their identity in regulating their emotions and due to this focus in the regulation of their emotion, older adults are very conscious in choosing members of their social networks. They are less likely to have tendencies in social exchanges as compared to the younger individuals. Aged people are found to be stronger in regulation their emotions as compared to younger adults (Zempelin et al., 2021).

Rationale of the Study

Rationale of current study was to assess the influence of family members, friends and other relationships in life of older adults. It has been observed from society that older people who live with their family are more satisfied with their life as compared to those

who live alone, that is, only husband and wife. There are many reasons due to which older people have to live alone, such as, children living out of city, some living out of country because of study, job, marriage, etc. Some people have no child that's why they are living alone. It has been observed that living alone is too difficult which make them feel lonely, sad and unsatisfied with their life.

Objectives

The main objective of this research was to study the relationship between social support and life satisfaction in older adults.

Hypotheses

Following hypotheses were formulated for the present research:

- Social support (significant others, family, friends) would positively related with life satisfaction in older adults.
- Social support (significant others, family, friends) would be a

significant predictor of life satisfaction in older adults.

- There is likely to be a significant difference between older adults living in nuclear and joint family system.

Method

Research Design

Correlational cross-sectional research design was used to find the social support as a predictor of life satisfaction in older adults.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample consisted of ($N=100$; 50 husbands & 50 wives) participants with mean age 54.97 ($M=54.81$; $SD= 6.97$). Couples who were living together with age 50 or above, having children, and were willing to participate voluntarily were included whereas unmarried, below 50 years, without children couples were excluded from the present research.

Table 1

Frequency of Demographic Variables ($N=100$)

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Age (M, SD)	54.81	6.97	Education		
Gender			F.A	20	20
Men	50	50	B.A	08	08
Women	50	50	Masters or above	14	14
Education			Family Structure		
Primary or below	07	07	Nuclear	50	50
Middle or below	13	13	Joint	50	50
Matric or below	27	27			

Measures

(i) Demographic Questionnaire

Self-report demographical form was developed in which gender, age, education, profession, job status, and family status were asked. This information is used in additional analysis in current study.

(ii) Multidimensional Social Support Scale

Zimet et al. (1988) developed multidimensional social support scale that is used to find the perception of emotional, informational, structural social support in three dimensions, that is, from family, friends and significant others. There are total 12 items that are measured on 7- point scale ranging from (1) Very strongly disagree to

7=very strongly agree. Cumulative score of this scale can also be used. Reported Cronbach alpha of the scale was .85.

(iii) Satisfaction with Life Scale

Satisfaction with life scale (SWLS; Diener, et al., 1985) was used to measure as the assessment of person's own subjective evaluation about their life. It has total 5 items with 7point Likert scale i.e., 1= strongly disagree to 7= strongly agree. Total or average both scores can be used for this scale in analysis. Reported Cronbach alpha of the scale was .74.

Ethical Considerations

- First of all, prior permission was taken from the head of the department and supervisor to initiate the study.
- Formal permission was sorted out from the original authors of scales.
- Consent form was taken from the participants in which they have clearly explained about their right to withdraw.
- The participants of the study were assured about the privacy and

confidentiality of the information that is asked from them.

Procedure

First of all, before starting formal data collection, all ethics concerning the permission of authors and institution were followed. Written consent was taken from the couples ($N=100$) before administering the scales and aim of the research was described to participants, and confidentiality and privacy was ensured. Multiple visits were paid at the residence of the participants in order to get firsthand information and for avoiding fake data. The participants were selected from different families and social status. There were only few couples who refused to give consent and to participate in research. The demographic information was recorded through demographic form. After collecting data, the researcher acknowledged the participation and help provided by the participants in completing the task.

Results

The Table 1 gives the frequency and percentage of demographic variables of the study.

Table 2

Relationship between the Social Support (significant others, family, friends) and Life Satisfaction in Older Adults ($N=100$)

Sr. #	Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Age	54.81	6.97	-	.13	-.44**	-.00	.05	.06	-.02
2	Number of Children				-	-.02	.03	-.09	.06	.03
3	Gender					-	-.13	-.13	-.22*	-.05
4	Significant Others	5.06	1.22				-	.56**	.49**	.45**
5	Family	5.35	1.83					-	.43**	.41**
6	Friends	4.72	1.38						-	.20*
7	Life Satisfaction	4.60	1.67							-

Note: ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Results reported in Table 2 showed that age has no relationship with social support (significant others, family and Friends) and life satisfaction in older adults. While gender is negatively related with only one subscale of social support i.e., Friends, which showed

that men have more friends as compared to the women. Moreover, results showed positive relationship between all three subscales of social support (significant others, family and Friends) and life satisfaction in older adults.

Table 3*Hierarchical Regression Results for Life-Satisfaction in Older Adults (N=100)*

Variables	B	95% CI for B		SE B	β	R^2	ΔR^2
		LL	UL				
Step 1						.002	.002
Constant	4.83***	2.13	7.52	1.36			
Age	-.01	-.05	.04	.02	-.03		
No. of Children	.04	-.18	.25	.11	.03		
Step 2						.247	.245***
Constant	1.67	-1.02	4.37	1.36			
Age	-.01	-.05	.03	.02	-.04		
No. of Children	.06	-.14	.25	.01	.05		
Significant Others	.48***	.17	.80	.16	.35***		
Family	.23**	.02	.43	.10	.25**		
Friends	-.09	-.35	.16	.13	-.08		

Results reported in Table 3 showed significant predictors of social support by using Hierarchical regression analysis. According to the results reported in Table 3, there is 25% combined role of age, No. of children, and social support (significant others, family, friends) as predictor of life satisfaction. In step 1, age and number of children are entered. There is only 2% contribution of age and number of children in contributing as predictor of life satisfaction in

older adults, while age and number of children are not found to be the significant predictors of life satisfaction. Moreover, there is 24% combined contribution of all subscales of social support as predictor of life satisfaction. In this block, age and number of children are controlled while significant others, family and friend's found to be the positive predictor of life satisfaction in older adults.

Table 4*Mean differences between family system and Life Satisfaction of Older Adults*

Variables	Joint family Nuclear family		$t(98)$ p		95% CI		Cohen's d
	M(SD)	M(SD)			LL	UL	
Life Satisfaction	5.34(1.64)	3.84(1.34)	4.97	.000	.89	2.09	1.00

In Table 4, significant differences in both groups revealed that older adults of joint family have more satisfied life as compared

to the older adults of nuclear family.

Discussion

The core aim of the current research was to find the social support as predictor of life satisfaction in older adults. This study was conducted to analyze many views regarding nuclear and joint family systems of older

adults. There were many plausible alternatives formulated. First intended was to check the significant relationship as well as to find social support as predictor of life satisfaction in older adults. Findings indicate positive association between social support

(significant others, family and friends) and life satisfaction in above stated sample. Findings of the current study support earlier findings of Cao and Lu (2021); Roh (2010); and Shen and Yeatts (2013) who also found social support as significant predictor of life satisfaction in older adults. Although it was observed from the aged people of society that those who receive social support from other family members lead very satisfied life and they all live a happy life. In current era, it is mostly observed that older adults who are living with their families found to be very satisfied as they are happy for sharing their problems and always found their family with them for their continuous support.

Second hypothesis was stated as the older adults of joint family are found more satisfied with their life as compared to those who live in nuclear families. It has been usually observed that when older adults receive more attention, love and care, they develop feelings of fulfillment and satisfaction (Lee & Waters, 2020; Leigh-Hunt et al., 2017). The researchers also suggested that social disconnectedness does not differ across age groups, but the older adults feel lonelier than the young or middle adults.

It has been concluded that living alone, without other family members might lead towards dissatisfaction with life that may cause psychological disturbance. People living with their children, friends and family have satisfied life because they receive support from these members that enhance their courage and happiness.

Conclusion

The finding of the current study suggests that older adults living without other family members are not satisfied with their life because they do not receive enough social support that may lead them towards satisfied life.

Limitation & Recommendations

Different limitations during the research were observed that are as follows.

- Sample was taken only from Lahore i.e., from one city of Pakistan which restricted the generalization of results. Further studies should be conducted by including large number of diverse samples to increase the generalizability of study.
- There was limited time for data collection. Further in-depth study should be conducted with increased time period.

Implications

Findings of current study can be used in respective manner.

- Present study is helpful in filling big gap of literature as maximum literature comes from Western countries, further researches should be conducted in Pakistan including diverse sample and different organizations like old home to find further approaches in this area.
- On the basis of these findings, this research gives an important direction to make the life of the older adults happier. For this purpose, some social groups can be established who support those older adults who are living alone. Although it cannot fulfill the place of their children, but it will provide to a great extent, feelings of satisfaction with their life.

Contribution of Authors

Amarah Qureshi: Conceptualization, Investigation, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Writing - Original draft

Shahnaila Tariq: Methodology, Writing-Reviewing & Editing, Supervision

Beenish Mubeen: Formal Analysis, Writing – Reviewing & Editing

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest declared by authors.

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Data Availability Statement

The datasets of the current study are not available publicly due to ethical reasons but are available from the corresponding author [A.Q.] upon the reasonable request.

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