

## PARENTAL SATISFACTION WITH LIFE AND PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT OF PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

*Hina Ayaz Habib, Alia Asmat, and Sabahat Naseem*

Institute of Clinical Psychology, University of Karachi, Pakistan

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**ABSTRACT:** The aim of the study was to investigate the relationship between satisfaction with life and perceived social support of parents having children with Intellectual Disabilities. For this purpose, 66 parents were approached. The present study was conducted in different special schools located in Karachi. Initially, permission was taken from the authorities of the organizations, further, participants were informed about the consent containing information regarding the purpose of the research including confidentiality and their right to withdraw from the research at any time. Subsequently, the researcher asked them to fill the Demographic Sheet followed by Satisfaction With Life Scale and Multidimensional Social Support Scale. Results indicate that satisfaction which is person's personal evaluation of self is related to the support that they perceive from others. Support gives us relief and work as an asset when someone is in a stipulation of dissatisfaction. Furthermore, supplementary results reflect that social support is a predictor of satisfaction among parents. When parents perceive that they are getting support from society, they would be satisfied with their lives and when they perceive that they are not supported by the society, they would be dissatisfied. The identification of underlying factors generates the findings to bring the fact to light that ample attention should be paid to the aspect of parents' emotional and social life so that they might be able to control their emotional weakness and which will help them to provide a healthier atmosphere at home to their children and family as well.

**KEYWORDS:** Parents, Intellectual Disability, Life satisfaction, Social Support.

### 1 INTRODUCTION

Satisfaction is explained as the accomplishment of desires, needs, and wishes whereas satisfaction of life is distinguished as a broad sense of contentment (Diener and Diener, 1995; Veenhoven, 1996). The essential guess in all judgmental theories of life satisfaction is the degree of comparison of life between ordinary and tangible circumstances. Social comparison theory hypothesized that the individuals who judge themselves better than others are satisfied but those who judge themselves worse than others would be dissatisfied (Michalos, 1980; Carp and Carp, 1982; Emmon et al., 1983). However, satisfaction with life enhances when support is provided in an adequate manner (Kaner, 2003).

Societal support is a relief given to us from our family, friends, and significant others. The comfort provided to us through these resources is support for us. Social support can be significant, materialistic, informational, and emotional (Zimet et al., 1988; Edwards, 2004). The concept of social support was initially given by a sociologist Emile Durkheim in 1894 as social ties which was further divided into two aspects; perceived and received social support (Eureling et al., 1995). Perceived support is getting unconditional acceptance from society, being positive and satisfied about one's life and living a meaningful life. Support works as a buffer in the life of an individual and permits constructive sense that predicts well being, positive growth, and development (Walen and Lachman, 2000; Sarason et al., 1994; Ho et al., 2008).

Assets of support could be helpful in coping with varying life challenges (Karus, 2004). Most people turn their social assets in an effort to control stressful life events. Moreover, supportive channels or set of connections in the society is an indication of integration and the more it is integrated, the more one can cope with effects of challenges in life. Support is linked with well-being, which is a component of satisfaction (Heady and Wearing, 1992; Young, 2004). Giving birth to a child is a stressor

in the life of a family. Gradually, stress decreases with growing age and talent of the child in case of normally developing children (Gladding, 2007). However, with parents of disabled children, there are many sources of stress such as bearing their needs accordingly, family's financial resources, and uncertainty to the well-being in the long run (Baily and Smith, 2000; Sucouglu et al., 2001; Paster et al., 2009).

Researches have shown that parents of those children having disorder have significantly low levels of satisfaction when they were compared with the parents of having normal children (Allen et al., 2010). However, well-being and satisfaction is increased with social support where as low social support decreases the satisfaction with life.

The present study evaluated that there is a positive relationship between social support and level of satisfaction with life of parents. Parents who have ample perceived social support in their environment are more satisfied as compared to those who have less perceived support of their surroundings. In this developing country, there is the need to fill the gap in the knowledge in the field of psychology. Moreover, there is a great need to work on the life of children with cognitive decline and efforts should be put on giving them a proper environment by giving psychological and emotional support to their parents and families.

## **2 METHOD**

### **2.1 PARTICIPANTS**

A sample of 66 parents who had children with intellectual disability were approached. Participation of the parents was totally dependent on their willingness to participate in the present research. The age range of the parents was between 36 to 70 years for fathers whereas 22 to 50 years for mothers.

### **2.2 MEASURES**

#### **2.2.1 DEMOGRAPHIC SHEET**

Demographic Sheet comprised of information regarding age, education, number of children, and family's socioeconomic status.

#### **2.2.2 SATISFACTION WITH LIFE SCALE (SWLS; DIENER ET AL., 1985)**

The scale was developed in 1985 by Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin to measure the satisfaction with life. It consists of 5 items using the Likert-Scale ranging from 1-7 which indicates Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. In total scores of 35, a score between 5 to 9 indicates extreme dissatisfaction, 10 to 14 shows dissatisfaction, 15 to 19 point toward slightly below average satisfaction, 20 to 24 shows average satisfaction, 25 to 29 point to high satisfaction, and 30 to 35 signify very high satisfaction.

#### **2.2.3 MULTIDIMENSIONAL SCALE OF PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT (MSPSS; ZIMET, DAHLEM, ZIMET, & FARLEY, 1988)**

Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) was developed by Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet and Farley in 1988. It is a 12 item self-report tool to measure how one perceives his or her support system with respect to three sources of social support: family, friends, and a significant other. These three sources are divided into three subscales with 4 items to measure each source. The scale used to assess perceived social support is a Likert-scale with ranges from 1 (Very Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Very Strongly Agree). The scores are summed up to obtain a total score with 12 being the lowest possible score whereas 84 being the highest possible score. Higher the score, higher will be the perceived social support. MSPSS is a valid tool to assess the perceived social support. It is a valid and reliable measure and is widely used in various researches.

### **INCLUDING/EXCLUDING CRITERIA**

## **3 PROCEDURE**

The present study was conducted in different special schools located in Karachi. Initially, permission letter and consent form were provided to the authorities of the selected organizations along with scales. After getting permission, all the participants fulfilling the predetermined criteria for inclusion and exclusion, were approached on parents' meeting day in the schools. Participants were informed regarding the consent containing information about the purpose of the research

including confidentiality and their right to withdraw from the research at any time. Subsequently, the researcher asked them to fill the Demographic Sheet, Satisfaction With Life Scale and Multidimensional Social Support Scale. After volunteering, cooperation of institutions and participants was acknowledged and appreciated.

#### 4 SCORING AND STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Manual scoring was done and data was analyzed through correlation method to find out relationship between social support and life satisfaction. Moreover, regression analysis was run to find out the predictive relationship between these two variables. Significant level of p-value is 0.05 and less.

#### 5 RESULTS

**Table 1. The relationship between Life Satisfaction and Perceived Social Support among Parents of Children with Intellectual Disability**

(N=66)

Variables	Life Satisfaction	Perceived Social Support
Life Satisfaction	1	.491**
Perceived Social support		1

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Correlation analysis was applied to examine the relationship between life satisfaction & perceived social support. A significant positive correlation was observed between life satisfaction & perceived social support. ( $r=.41^{**}$ ).

**Table 2. Effects of Social Support on life Satisfaction**

Dependent variable	B	S.E	t-value	Sig.
<b>Life Satisfaction</b>				
Contant	4.350	3.937	1.105	.273
Social Suppor	.281	.062	4.505	.000

In above mentioned table regression analysis shows that social support significantly predicting life satisfaction ( $p<.001$ ). further B value represented that as the of scores social support increases it will increase life satisfaction in return.

#### 6 DISCUSSION

In this study, we attempted to find out the level of satisfaction by using Satisfaction With Life Scale and also investigated the aspect of social support by using Multidimensional Social Support Scale among parents of children with intellectual disability. We found that the parents who have an adequate amount of perceived social support are satisfied with their life and this is not limited to age and other demographics. However, those who perceived that they have no social support from any one are not satisfied with their lives.

Findings from present study suggested that there is a significant positive relationship between life satisfaction and perceived social support in the parents of children with cognitive deficits. Our results are consistent with Strachan (2005) who found that the fathers of disabled children were less satisfied with their life as compared to the fathers of children without any disability, however, social support plays a major role in managing stressful life circumstances. Furthermore, support available for parents from their families, neighbors, and friends can minimize stress and its negative effects and can have positive effects on parents' level of distress (Besikci, 2000; Sencar, 2007; White and Hustings, 2004; Malinauskas, 2010; Onyishi et al., 2012).

Regression analysis revealed that social support is a predictive factor of satisfaction among parents i.e. if there is social support, parents would be more satisfied with their life. A review from previous researches also pinpoints that social support

is an indicator of positive growth in the life of mentally disturbed persons and that social support works as a resource in the life of sufferers (Heady and Wearing, 1992; Young, 2004).

The study generated the findings to bring the fact to light that ample attention should be paid on the aspects of parents' emotional and social life so that they might be able to manage their emotional weaknesses which will help them in providing a healthier atmosphere at home to their children and family as well. Furthermore, there is also a need to evaluate or differentiate the fact, whether parents are just dissatisfied with their lives or they have other mental or physical illnesses, for instance, cognitive or neurological deficits, that play their role as a genetic factor to make the child a difficult one to deal with.

There should be some policies on marriages of cognitively declined people or who have more serious problems for instance intellectual disability. By giving consideration to all these vital facts which affect the level of satisfaction with one's life in general, the process of support to the parents can be enhanced. However, such an effort requires quality assessment, making laws, and providing better psychological aid and awareness to the parents of such children. Furthermore, this study also has its limitations, for instance, sample size is too small to generalize the findings but it has guided us for further findings and research in our culture and community to make better policies regarding the parents and children's psychological well-being.

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