

Perceived Social Support and Psychological Well-Being of Aged Kashmiri Migrants

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Abstract

Purpose of this study was to explore the differences in perceived social support and psychological well-being among aged Kashmiri migrants residing in camps and non-camps in Jammu. It also studied if there was any significant relationship between perceived social support and psychological well-being. Sample comprised of 280 Kashmiri migrants of 60-79 years of age (140 from camps and 140 from non-camps). Simple random sampling technique was employed for data collection. Social Support Inventory for Elderly and Psychological Well-being Scale were used to assess perceived social support and psychological well-being of the respondents respectively. Median value for perceived social support score was calculated and high and low groups were formed. The differences in the obtained data were analyzed using 't' test and the relationship was analyzed using Pearson's correlation. Significant difference emerged in perceived social support and psychological well-being of the aged migrants residing in camp and non-camp. Significant differences were revealed for high and low perceived social support on psychological well-being. Perceived social support was significantly related with psychological well-being. The ways in which social support is understood and perceived is important in ascertaining the role it may play in aged individual's psychological well-being.

Keywords: perceived social support, psychological well-being, aged, migrants

1. Introduction

Migration is any movement of people from the place of origin to another resulting into settlement in new place. Migrants are those individuals who change place of residence from one migrant defined area to another. Migration may be voluntary or involuntary. Forced migration occurs due to variety of reasons, such as persecution, occurrence of disasters, war and conflict, ethnic discrimination and so on. Conflict induced migration took place in the Kashmir valley (Jammu and Kashmir) and within a fortnight Kashmiri Pandit families moved out of their motherland (Zutshi 2003). They migrated across the country and many of them had settled in Jammu and also started earning bread for their families. Currently the displaced Kashmiri Pandits are residing in four camps situated at the periphery of Jammu City and at non-camp migrant areas within the city in large numbers.

Old age is an opportunity for a whole new chapter in life (Hioki & Tanoka 2004). There is no objective criterion for determining a person to be old. Indian census has adopted the age sixty for classifying a person as old. Old age brings various types of changes in physical structure, cognitive abilities, emotions and personality pattern. These changes give rise to various problems in old age. Activities of old people are reduced and the social relationships become lesser with immediate family support reduced. Presently there are 76 million people aged 60 years and over and it is projected to rise to whopping 180 million by the year 2025 (Registrar General of India 2006). As old age is associated with different problems—the increasing number of elderly people is alarming for the society and the nation as a whole. Well-being of elderly has

become one of the major concerns.

Social support plays critical role in the lives of aged individuals. It becomes extremely significant resource as they age. Social support also contributes toward well-being even in the presence of high level of stress. It generates the sense of self-worth and positive affect (Cohen & Syme 1985). Migration is a stressful event. Social support might moderate the effect of stress on the elderly Kashmiri migrants. As social support has buffering effect it helps in improving well-being (Antonucci, Sherman & Akiyama 1996). Buffering hypothesis is suggestive of that social support may perform function of coping against life stresses (Stolar, Mac Entee & Hill 1993). It may perform protective function. Social support is not only associated with coping but also helps in avoiding negative events as it provides a feeling of self-worth to an individual, thus contribute to well-being. As per Wethington & Kessler (1986), perceived social support is more important than received social support. Mere perception of social support can act as a buffer for individual facing stressful life situations (Cohen & Wills 1985). Perceived social support is subjective evaluation of resources received in a given situation and its felt appropriateness and satisfaction (Vaux 1990).

Several studies have provided strong evidence in support of the relationship between social support and psychological well-being. Yoon & Lee (2007) analyzed psychological well-being among rural elderly and found a significant association between dimension of social support and psychological well-being. In an attempt to examine effects of social support on psychological well-being among older Chinese and Korean immigrants Wong, Yoo & Stewart (2007) reported more social support significantly contributed to better overall psychological wellbeing. Also, it has been emphasized that inadequate social support is associated not only with an increase in mortality and morbidity but also a decrease in psychological well-being (WHO 2002). Skok, Harvey & Reddihough (2006) studied impact of perceived social support on well-being and confirmed that perceived social support significantly predicted well-being. Schulz & Decker (1985) found that persons who perceived themselves as having high levels of social support had high levels of well-being.

In the wake of the changing demographic structure with a sharp increase in number of aged it becomes necessary to look into the well-being of this population. The aged migrants need special attention as they are not only old but also are fighting with the stressful life conditions resulted from migration. Most of the studies conducted reflect an association between social support and well-being it becomes necessary to explore these variables further through empirical investigations.

1.1 Objectives

The present study was, hence, undertaken with the following objectives-

- i. To study perceived social support among aged Kashmiri migrants residing in camps and in non-camps.
- ii. To study psychological well-being among aged Kashmiri migrants residing in camps and in non-camps.
- iii. To study psychological well-being among aged Kashmiri migrants with respect to perceived social support.
- iv. To study the relationship between perceived social support and psychological well-being among aged Kashmiri migrants.

1.2 Hypotheses

Following hypotheses were framed in the light of above literature review-

- i. There will be significant difference among aged Kashmiri migrants residing in camps and in non-camps with regard to their perceived social support.

- ii. There will be significant difference among aged Kashmiri migrants residing in camps and in non-camps with regard to their psychological well-being.
- iii. There will be significant difference in high and low perceived social support among Kashmiri migrants on their psychological well-being.
- iv. Perceived social support of aged Kashmiri migrants will be significantly related with their psychological well-being.

2. Method

2.1 Sample

The present study was formulated with an intention to study the effect of perceived social support on the psychological well-being. A random sample of 280 aged Kashmiri Pandit migrants in the age group of 60-79 years were selected for the study of which 140 resided in camps and 140 resided in non-camps. Due to limited resources, the study covered only aged Kashmiri migrants living in Jammu division.

2.2 Tools

Following psychometric tools were employed to assess the extent level of the variables included in this study.

2.2.1 Social Support Inventory for Elderly (Ramamurti & Jamuna 1991)

The Social Support Inventory for Elderly measures the perceived social support in four major areas of daily life and transactions of the elderly, viz., family, finance, social, and emotional. The inventory has satisfactory context validity and temporal reliability. The inventory was administered to a group of 30 socially well-adjusted elderly and 30 poorly adjusted elderly persons on a basis of adjustment inventory (Ramamurthi 1969). The inventory discriminated between these 2 groups significantly at 0.01 level ($t=9.40$). The final lists of statements were administered to 30 elderly men and elderly women twice within an interval of 15 days. Pearson's r between the two set of scores was found to be 0.90.

Scoring: Each statement carries 6 points response scale varying from experience of good social support "almost all the time" to "no support". More the score better the perceived social support.

2.2.2 Psychological Well Being Scale (Bhogley & Prakash 1995)

A twenty eight item scale as a quick measure of Psychological well-being is comprehensive, factorially adequate, reliable and valid tool. The scale has internal consistency coefficient of 0.91. Retest using the same questionnaire after three months, yielded a correlation of 0.72. This scale has high correlation of 0.62 with subjective well-being questionnaire of Nagpal & Sell (1985) and 0.48 with Subjective well-being questionnaire of Verma & Verma (1989).

Scoring: The 28 items on the scale have two response options: "yes" and "no". There is no right or wrong answers. If the response matches the scoring key, score of 1 is given. Maximum possible score is 28 with lower score indicative of low psychological well-being.

2.3 Procedure: Camp and non-camp aged Kashmiri migrants were contacted and data were collected personally along with identified youth volunteers by visiting the residence of aged participants. At the outset the purpose of the study was explained to them. Respondents were informed of the confidentiality of all responses and were given opportunity to participate or refuse to participate. It was made clear to the prospective participants that should they consent to participate in the study they would be under no obligation to complete the study and answer all the questions and were free to withdraw anytime with no

explanation required. In the second phase rapport was established with the participants who agreed for participation in the study. Following this the questionnaires were administered. The elderly participants preferred to have the questions read to them. Therefore, the questions were read out loudly to them and doubts clarified. Only a few participants preferred to fill in the questionnaires on their own. They were allowed to fill these while giving them instructions as in manual of respective scale or questionnaire. In between a break of five minutes was given to the participants after completion of a given questionnaire if required. The questionnaires were taken back immediately after they were filled in. Following this scoring work was taken up. The scoring of the tools was done as per instructions given in the manuals for scoring. SPSS 19 was used for analyzing the data statistically as per demand of the study.

3. Results

Mean and standard deviation were calculated from the obtained data. For assessing the significance of difference between groups t-test was applied. Median value for perceived social support score was calculated and the respondents were divided into two groups i.e. high perceived social support and low perceived social support. Correlation between scores on perceived social support and psychological well-being were computed using product moment method and analysis was done.

Results related to scores on Social Support Inventory (A measure of perceived social support) have been presented in Table 1.

Table 1 about here

The results depicted in Table 1 for perceived social support make it apparent that aged Kashmiri migrants residing in areas other than camps set up for migrants are higher on perceived social support in comparison to those who are residing in camps. Similarly the results for psychological well-being reveal higher mean for non-camp residents.

Table 2 about here

The results depicted in Table 2 make it apparent that the respondents who scored high on the measure of perceived social support manifested better psychological well-being in comparison to those scoring low on perceived social support. The results suggest that the participants who perceived social support positively or perceived it even when there was none showed better psychological well-being.

Analysis by Pearson's correlation confirmed a significant positive correlation between scores on the perceived social support measure and psychological well-being scale ($r = .67, p < .01$). Results are consistent with previous studies of Schulz & Decker (1985), Helgeson (1993), Mc Dowell & Serovich (2007), Wong, Yoo & Stewart (2007).

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between perceived social support and psychological well being in aged migrants. Review of literature has shown that there is, indeed, a positive relationship between perceived social support and psychological well being. The data in the present study suggested that such a relationship is also found in aged Kashmiri migrants – perceived social support has an influence on psychological well-being of aged Kashmiri migrants. Perceived social support is related with

psychological well-being. The ways in which social support is understood and perceived is important in ascertaining the role it may play in aged individual's psychological well-being.

The results reveal that the camp residents are lower in level of perceived social support and the study suggests need for close attention to the perceived social support. This population in particular is vulnerable to have poor psychological well-being. It has been already established that perceived social support is related to psychological well-being (Schulz & Decker 1985; Helgeson 1993; Mc Dowell & Serovich 2007; Wong, Yoo & Stewart 2007). Further studies should be focused on determining the factors associated with perceived social support in aged migrants. The efforts should be made to identify the characteristics of aged that predispose them to perceive social support so that suitable interventions are devised and introduced to this population. Family members, caregivers, friends and other associates of aged people must understand the underlying causes reflected in psychological-wellbeing and the effect of perceived social support on it. Strong positive relationship between perceived social support and psychological well-being indicated that it is vital to quality of life of aged. Another future direction of research could be an exploration of perceived social support on other domains of quality of life such as physical well-being and environmental well-being.

Since this study has been carried out specifically on aged Kashmiri migrants its results can be generalized only on this population. To overcome this limitation a comparative study on culturally different aged people could be useful. The rapid transition in demographic structure certainly necessitates need for understanding the role that social support plays on well-being.

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Table 1. Means, SDs and t-value for perceived social support and psychological well-being among aged Kashmiri migrants

| Variables | Residence | N | Mean | Standard Deviation | t-value |
|--------------------------|-----------|-----|-------|--------------------|---------|
| Perceived Social Support | Camp | 140 | 39.81 | 16.41 | -9.210* |
| | Non-camp | 140 | 59.29 | 18.88 | |
| Psychological Well-being | Camp | 140 | 12.31 | 4.88 | -7.812* |
| | Non-camp | 140 | 17.13 | 5.42 | |

*Significant at 0.05 level

Table 2. Comparison of high and low groups on perceived social support with psychological well-being score

| Group | N | Psychological Well Being Scores | | |
|-------------------------------|-----|---------------------------------|--------------------|---------|
| | | Mean | Standard Deviation | t-value |
| High Perceived Social Support | 139 | 17.77 | 4.83 | 10.51* |
| Low Perceived Social Support | 141 | 11.72 | 4.80 | |

*Significant at 0.05 level

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