

# Assessment of the Level of Perceived Social Support Among Nursing Students

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## Abstract

Nurses play a vital role in the healthcare delivery system; quality care and patient satisfaction are quality indicators. Preparing healthcare professionals like nurses plays a critical role. The budding professionals must be prepared to cope with stress by handling the emotions of patients, patients' families, and other health team members. During this process, nursing students undergo mental health vulnerability, and social support plays a vital role in mental health. Keeping this in view, the researchers felt the need to assess the level of perceived social support among nursing students. The objectives of the study were to assess the level of perceived social support among nursing students and associate the findings with selected demographic variables. The research approach was quantitative, and the research design, a non-experimental exploratory descriptive survey method, was adopted for this study. Data was collected from 200 samples that met the sampling criteria using the non-probability convenience sampling method from selected nursing colleges. Ethical considerations like informed written consent and confidentiality are maintained. The significant findings of this study reveal that 62% of the sample moderately perceived social support, 67% of the sample moderately perceived social support in family, 66.5% moderately perceived social support in friends, and 51% moderately perceived social support in others. Demographic variables, age, gender, education, or living arrangements, showed a statistically insignificant association. The study findings revealed that nursing students moderately perceived social support in family, friends, and others.

**Keywords:** Assessment, perceived social support, nursing students, mental health vulnerability

## INTRODUCTION

In healthcare, the nursing profession is an indispensable component. The nursing students are prepared to meet individuals' and society's healthcare needs. During training, nursing students care for different age groups with health problems. The preparedness during training helps the nursing students to face these situations will be helpful to cope positively with elevated stress levels, culminating in cases of mental health vulnerability and even prejudice to the academic performance and well-being of nursing students [1]. A study on the stress level among nursing students who experience high-stress levels from government and private nursing revealed that 60% and 62% of nursing students were stressed for various reasons [2].

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Nationally and globally, nursing is also one of the most stressful and challenging professions, according to research findings. It also reveals that nursing students undergo various types of stress, personal and professional, like academic and clinical, financial, etc. Clinical training is the most stressful experience for many nursing students; the determinants of the stress level are educational training, depending on their ability to cope with stress and other factors [3, 4].

Positive personality development plays a vital role in personal and professional development. The determinants of personality development are the intrinsic and extrinsic factors, the intrinsic factors individual self-control, attitude, perception about stress etc. and extrinsic factors like family, friends and others like school, teachers, and their influence. The positive intrinsic and extrinsic factors will be helpful to develop an individual to a responsible citizen. The nursing students' transition into nurses capable of handling the profession by the educational environment will be conducive to learning who have support perceive and understand their emotions and positive perception [5, 6].

## METHODS

A quantitative research approach was adopted, and a non-experimental exploratory, descriptive survey method was used as the research design [7].

The data was collected from 200 samples who met the sampling criteria using the non-probability convenience sampling method from selected nursing colleges. The tool has two parts: part 1, demographic data, and part 2, assessing perceived social support by the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support. This scale comprises the subdimensions of family, friends, and others [8, 9]. Ethical considerations like informed written consent and confidentiality were maintained.

## RESULTS

The collected data were coded and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics per the present research objectives.

### Section 1: Distribution of Demographic Data

Table 1 reveals that in demographic data, the majority of the sample, 83.5%, was in the age group of 17 to 21 years. As nursing students, 85.5% were female, 68.5% had basic B.Sc. (Nursing), 94.5% were unmarried, 96.5% were from a nuclear family, 54.5% had a monthly income from INR 20,001 to 40,000, 42% were living with friends in a flat, and 60.5% use mobile phones as leisure time activity with, 64.6% using them for more than 60 minutes.

### Section 2: Level of Perceived Social Support Among Nursing Students ( $N = 200$ )

Figures 1 and 2 reveal the significant findings of this study: 62% of the sample moderately perceived social support, 67% of the sample moderately perceived social support in family, 66.5% moderate perceived social support in friends, and 51% moderate perceived social support in others.

### Section 3: Findings with Selected Demographic Variables

Table 2 shows demographic variables, age, gender, education, or living arrangements, showing that the  $P$  value is more than 0.05 with no statistically significant association. However, reviews support that family, friends, teachers, and others, like living arrangements and leisure time, help improve social support [8, 10].

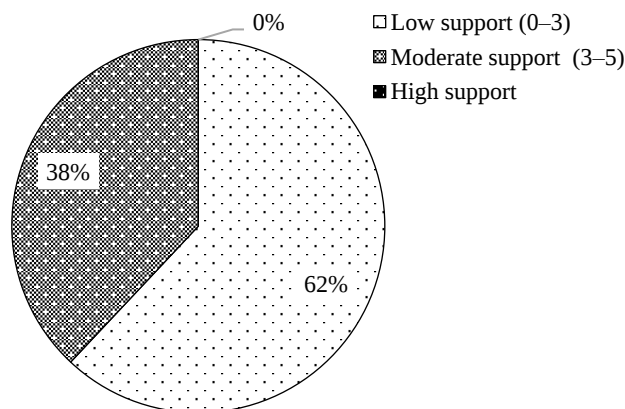
## DISCUSSION

The findings of the present research study show that moderate social support is perceived by family, friends, and others among participants in the sample. The stress and coping transactional theory states that an individual perceives the stress appraisees to detect the stressor, and when the stressor is detected, generates emotions that motivate the initiation of coping strategies. The individual adopts the coping strategies when unsuccessful, leading to distress [3, 4].

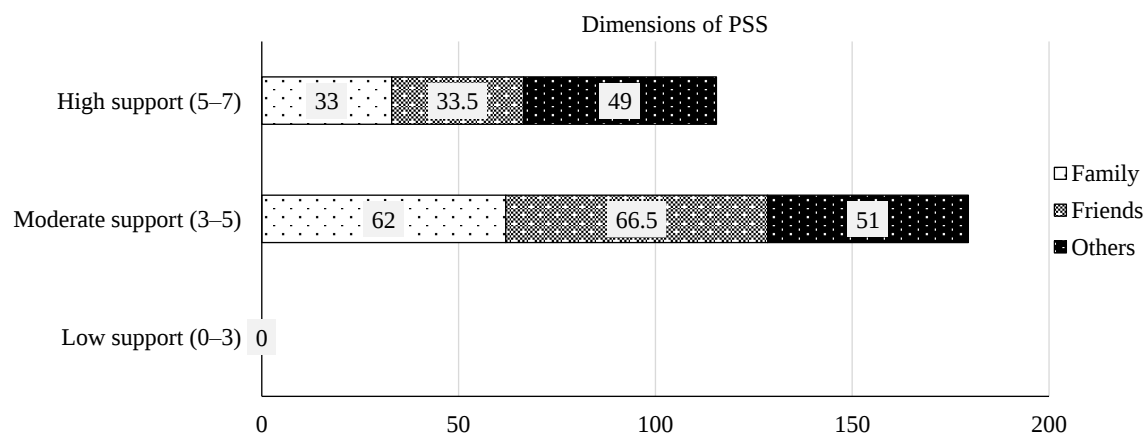
Coping effectively with stress can help people for their psychological well-being. According to Connor-Smith (2010), "importance is engagement vs. disengagement." The "engagement" category of coping reflects coping strategies in which "a person takes positive responsibility by facing the stressor and its related emotions. The "disengagement" is diverting from the stressor and its related emotions of coping [11].

**Table 1.** Distribution of demographic data of sample according to frequency and percentage ( $N = 200$ )

| Demographic data                                                                        | <i>f</i> | %    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|------|
| <b>1. Age in years</b>                                                                  |          |      |
| 17–21                                                                                   | 167      | 83.5 |
| 21–25                                                                                   | 19       | 9.5  |
| >25                                                                                     | 14       | 7    |
| <b>2. Gender</b>                                                                        |          |      |
| Male                                                                                    | 29       | 14.5 |
| Female                                                                                  | 171      | 85.5 |
| <b>3. Nursing education</b>                                                             |          |      |
| General nursing and midwifery (GNM)                                                     | 45       | 22.5 |
| Basic B.Sc. Nursing                                                                     | 137      | 68.5 |
| Post Basic B.Sc. Nursing                                                                | 9        | 4.5  |
| M.Sc. Nursing                                                                           | 9        | 4.5  |
| <b>4. Marital status</b>                                                                |          |      |
| Married                                                                                 | 8        | 4    |
| Unmarried                                                                               | 189      | 94.5 |
| Divorced                                                                                | 2        | 1    |
| Widow/widower                                                                           | 1        | 0.5  |
| <b>5. Type of family</b>                                                                |          |      |
| Nuclear family                                                                          | 193      | 96.5 |
| Joint family                                                                            | 5        | 2.5  |
| Extended family                                                                         | 2        | 1    |
| <b>6. Monthly income of the family (INR)</b>                                            |          |      |
| <20,000                                                                                 | 6        | 3    |
| 20,001–40,000                                                                           | 109      | 54.5 |
| 40,001–60,000                                                                           | 62       | 31   |
| >60,000                                                                                 | 23       | 11.5 |
| <b>7. Living arrangements</b>                                                           |          |      |
| Living alone                                                                            | 7        | 3.5  |
| Living with family                                                                      | 51       | 25.5 |
| Living with friends in flat                                                             | 84       | 42   |
| Living with friends in hostel                                                           | 44       | 22   |
| Living with relatives                                                                   | 14       | 7    |
| <b>8. How do you spend your leisure time?<br/>Please specify what activities you do</b> |          |      |
| Talking with friends/family members                                                     | 27       | 13.5 |
| Hobbies (drawing, sports, etc.)                                                         | 19       | 9.5  |
| Listening to music                                                                      | 15       | 7.5  |
| Watching TV                                                                             | 13       | 6.5  |
| Use of mobile                                                                           | 121      | 60.5 |
| Sleeping                                                                                | 5        | 2.5  |
| <b>9. How many hours---/day</b>                                                         |          |      |
| >30 minutes                                                                             | 8        | 4    |
| 30–60 minutes                                                                           | 63       | 31.5 |
| >60 minutes                                                                             | 129      | 64.5 |



**Figure 1.** Level of perceived social support among participants in the sample ( $N = 200$ ).



**Figure 2.** Dimensions of perceived social support among participants in the sample.

**Table 2.** Association of the findings with selected demographic variables ( $N = 200$ ).

| S.N. | Demographic Data                                                             | Chi-square | df | P    |
|------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|----|------|
| 1.   | Age in years                                                                 | 1.964      | 2  | 0.37 |
| 2.   | Gender                                                                       | 2.766      | 1  | 0.09 |
| 3.   | Education                                                                    | 2.564      | 3  | 0.46 |
| 4.   | Marital status                                                               | 1.239      | 3  | 0.74 |
| 5.   | Type of family                                                               | 1.189      | 2  | 0.55 |
| 6.   | Monthly income of the family                                                 | 3.267      | 3  | 0.35 |
| 7.   | Living arrangements                                                          | 5.791      | 4  | 0.21 |
| 8.   | How do you spend your leisure time?<br>Please specify what activities you do | 5.468      | 5  | 0.36 |
| 9.   | How many hours---/day                                                        | 4.554      | 2  | 0.10 |

The research findings reveal that positive stress management and coping strategies are identifying stress, acceptance, yoga, meditation, communicating with others about stressful experiences, and thinking about golden life movements, which help reduce stress and enhance well-being and psychological stability. Peers are found to be a preferred source of social support [12–14]. However, nursing students communicate with their families, spouses, and instructors, and sharing their problems and learning experiences helps them cope with stress positively. Reassurance, comfort, and validation of their feelings and expressing their frustrations through informal conversations facilitate the opportunity to cope with stress effectively. Coping is self-controlling one's emotions. Self-controlling

refers to regulating one's feelings and actions in a situation. The results of the present study suggest that nursing students had perceived moderate social support from family, peers, and others [3].

Social support plays a crucial role in students' personal and professional development. In the well-being of students' families, friends, and the academic community, their support impacts student education and personality development. Positive personality development will be helpful later in life. Social support is associated with student well-being and academic achievement [14].

### **Implication**

#### ***Nursing Education***

The present study findings will be helpful for nursing educational institutes to enhance student mentoring services like mentor-mentee programs, which will be beneficial in improving social support.

#### ***Nursing Administration***

The findings may encourage nursing administrators to expand social support for nursing students through planning and conducting student support during the clinical posting of nursing students, which will enhance the student's teaching-learning experience and motivate the nursing students to correlate theory with clinical experiences, which ultimately enhance the skills and better professional preparation will improve the quality care and patient satisfaction.

#### ***Nursing Research***

In nursing research, it extends the scope for more research on the same topic and plans for intervention programs like peer and family support,

#### ***Mental Health Nursing***

The mental health (psychiatric) nursing department can enhance its activities through guidance and counseling, which will be helpful for the students.

### **Limitations**

The study is limited to assessing the perceived social support among nursing students.

### **Recommendations**

Further research may be conducted in the following areas:

- Assessment of the effectiveness of interventions like guidance and counseling stress management on social support.
- Evaluation of the efficacy of in-service education, like workshops on educators to facilitate student support services.
- Effectiveness of stress-reduction programs for nursing students.
- Effectiveness of peer support programs for nursing students.
- Effectiveness of self-motivation techniques for nursing students.

### **CONCLUSION**

The present study findings revealed moderately perceived social support from family, friends, and others by nursing students. Enhancing student welfare activities, guidance, and counseling, etc. may help nursing students develop highly perceived social support to improve their learning and psychological well-being.

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