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Perceived social support among primi-mothers attending well baby clinic in Tertiary Care Hospital in South India- A cross-sectional study

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Abstract

Introduction: Motherhood is an astonishing but stressful experience for a new mother. She is expected to adapt the physical as well as psychological changes. Physical aid is needed to achieve the same. Social support refers to receiving voluntary assistance from other people, promoting a positive response. The aim of this study is to assess the social support perceived by the primi-mothers who bears a child up to 1 year of age.

Methodology: A descriptive cross-sectional research design with convenient sampling technique is used in the study. 161 primi-gravida mothers were selected from well-baby clinic, WCH, JIPMER who has a healthy child up-to one year of age. A formal permission from the Institutional Ethical Committee has obtained prior to the data collection. A formal consent has been taken from the participants in the language they understand. A modified multi-dimensional of perceived social support is used which was validated by experts in JIPMER. The collected data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

Results: The result showed that out of the 161 primi-mothers, majority of the participants are in the age group between 22-25 years and they live in joint family (54.7%). 90.7% of the primi-mothers has Good social support whereas 8.7% and 0.6% had Fair and Poor perceived social support respectively.

Conclusion: The study concluded 90.7% primi-mothers has experienced good social support by their families and relatives. Thus, we can say in our society new mothers are aided by her family and friends in baby care.

Keywords: Perceived social support, modified multi-dimensional scale, primi-mothers, WCH, JIPMER

Introduction

Early motherhood presents a series of unique challenges for women entering this phase of life. From the moment of childbirth, new mothers must navigate a whirlwind of responsibilities, adjustments, and emotional changes. The abrupt shift from pregnancy to caring for a newborn can be physically demanding and emotionally overwhelming. Sleepless nights, round-the-clock feeding, and the constant need to attend to the baby's needs can leave mothers exhausted and stretched thin. Balancing these newfound duties with personal well-being, work, and relationships can lead to feelings of isolation and stress. Moreover, the process of developing a strong bond with the baby and gaining confidence in parenting skills often comes with its share of uncertainties and self-doubt. The challenges of early motherhood, while formidable, are also an opportunity for personal growth and the cultivation of strong maternal instincts. It's a period where support from her social surroundings like family, friends, and the community can make a significant difference in helping mothers navigate these initial hurdles.

Social support is a multidimensional concept. It allows the interaction between humans and their social environment, to fight with new challenges, fulfil social needs, and current personal requirements to go through an uncertain period of life (pregnancy) safely without any adverse impacts. Social support has three dimensions; emotional, instrumental, and assistance to cope with challenges such as assistance in the household and providing economic help and informational, which means providing guidance and pieces of advice from the supported person.

In simple terms, social support refers to receiving assistance from other people to foster a positive response which can be achieved from family, friends, or community. It can be shown in various forms of physical, emotional, verbal, and financial assistance. The quality of care and support received by pregnant women during pregnancy decides the quality of delivery and health of mother and the baby.

Statement of the problem

Perceived social support among primi-mothers attending well baby clinic in Tertiary Care Hospital in South India- A cross-sectional study.

Objectives

- To assess the perceived social support among primi-mothers.
- To find the association between perceived social support with selected socio-demographic variables.

Need for the study

New mothers need more care and support from their family members which is the important factor in the care of the baby and its development. Thus, the purpose of the study is to evaluate the amount of perceived social support among the new /primi-mother and it's vitality in care and development of the baby.

Less social support, negative or hate comments, and inconsistent help can anticipate postpartum depression and dissatisfaction with society. A meta-analysis done in 2018 by Upadhyay. R.P, on the incidence of post-partum depression showed 22% of the Indian mothers suffers from post-partum depression. Giving adequate and proper social support can be a preventive measure for post-partum depression and psychosis.

Importance of this study is also to find out how much the family members care about the new mother and her baby. It aids to enquire about how the family members help the mother in daily living activity and baby care and gives psychological support. This will give us an idea about the reduction in complications like post-partum blues, depression, etc.

Review of literature

Backstrom cin 2018, in a explorative, prospective and longitudinal study showed that professional and social support for the first time mothers and partner during the childbearing is important. The result shows that similarities and differences between expectant first time mothers and partners perception of professional support and associated factors with perceived quality of couple relationship the similarities where both partner and mother perceive that professional support could facilitate partner environment influence couple relationship and facilitate contact with other expected partner according to research result the quality of couple relationship decrease and sense of coherence increase six month after the childbirth.

A cross sectional study was conducted by Peter J P *et al* with a sample of 871 pregnant women, to evaluate the association between perceived social support and anxiety disorder using a questionnaire. The result showed that 13.6% women with anxiety disorder reported less perceived social support and also women with low socio-economic status and who do not live with their partners.

Taylor ZE, Conger RD, Robins RW, Kelth F, Widaman, in 2015 ^[10], conducted a longitudinal study to assess parenting practices and perceived social support; longitudinal relation with the social competence of Mexican origin children. The result shows that perceived social support correlated with parental monitoring, parental warmth and children's social competence both concurrently and across time for both mother and fathers. Factor loading for manifest indicators on latent variable were all statistically significant ($p=,0.01$) and relatively large. For mother statistical index of fit was $X(319, N= 676) p<0.05$. For father statistical index of fit was $X(240, N= 430), p< 0.053$.

Sacieh S E, Rahimzadeh M, Yazdkhast M, Tarkashvand S in 2017, in a longitudinal study conducted on 100 mothers in a health center. The result shoes that maternal competency significantly reduce during study ($p= 0.008$), whereas perceived social support did not show any significant reduction ($p=0.286$). A direct relationship found between social support & maternal competent six week after children ($r=0.19, p=0.049$)

Leahy P, Macarrhy G & Corcoran P, in 2009, conducted a study on social support, maternal parental self-efficacy and postnatal depression among first time mothers. The result shows that there is significant relationship between functional social support & postnatal depression, informal social support & postnatal depression; maternal parental self- efficacy and postnatal depression & informal social support & maternal parental self- efficacy at 6 weeks post-delivery.

Methodology

Research Approach and Design: For this study, quantitative approach and cross-sectional descriptive design.

Variables

- **Independent variables:** Age, Education, Occupation, Type of family
- **Outcome variables:** perceived social support
- **Confounding & interacting variable:** Nil

Setting of study: The study was conducted in Well baby clinic, WCH, JIPMER. Jawaharlal Institute of Postgraduate Medical Education and Research (JIPMER) is a tertiary level hospital providing services to the population of Puducherry and its neighbourhood states. It is an institute of national importance with separate women and children hospital block (WCH). Everyday around 20-30 mothers come to well-baby clinic, WCH, JIPMER.

Population

- **Target Population:** In this study target population refers to all primi mothers.
- **Study population:** Primi-mothers who attend the well-baby clinic and having a child up to 1 year of age
- **Sample:** Single group-Primi mothers having children up to 1 year of age and attending well baby clinic
- **Sampling technique:** The sampling technique used for this study was Convenient sampling
- **Sample size calculation:** The sample size was calculated to be 161 using Open Epi Version3

Criteria for sample collection

Inclusion criteria

- Primi-mothers who are having children up to 1 year of age
- Primi-mothers who are willing to participate in this study

Exclusion criteria

- Primi-mothers who are suffering from any psychiatric disorders

Development and description of data collection instrument: After attaining the validity and reliability of the tool, it has been used to collect data under the following headings,

Part I – Socio demographic variables: This socio-demographic data includes – age, occupation, type of family, monthly income, residence.

Part II- Social support perceived by mother for care of baby by multi- dimensional scale: One structured scale which consist of twelve questions in which mother had to agree or disagree. According to this scale, the score given as: very strongly disagree-1, strongly disagree-2, mildly disagree-3, neutral-4, mildly agree-5, strongly agree-6, very strongly agree-7. For this scale minimum score is-12 and maximum score is-84.

Ethical consideration

This study was approved by Nursing research monitoring committee; JIPMER & the Institute Ethical Committee, Human studies (IEC), JIPMER. Data collection period was six weeks. Less than minimal risk was there during the study. Informed written consent from participants were obtained after an explanation by the investigators. Confidentiality was maintained during the whole research study period and data collection.

Procedure for data collection

Primi-mothers who attended the well-baby clinic were selected as samples by convenient sampling method. After obtaining written consent from the study participants, the researcher collected socio-demographic data with demographic Performa. Perceived social support was assessed by using standardized scale namely, Multi-dimensional scale of perceived social support.

Results

The table 3 depicts that the demographic variable age in years and Occupation had shown statistically significant association level of Perceived social support among primi-mothers with chi-square value of ($\chi^2=16.6$, d.f=6) and ($\chi^2=14.3$, d.f=4) at $p<0.05$ level.

The other demographic variables had not shown statistically significant association with level of Perceived social support among primi-mothers.

Table 1: Socio-demographic variables among primi-mothers. N=161)

Sl. No	Demographic Variables	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
1	Age (in years)		
	18-21	34	21.2
	22-25	86	53.4
	26-29	39	24.2
	30 and above	2	1.2
2	Education		
	Illiterate	15	9.3
	Primary education	54	33.5
	Secondary education	53	32.9
	Graduate	39	24.3
3	Occupation		
	Employed	34	21.1
	Unemployed	127	78.9
4	Income		
	<5000	11	6.8
	5000-10000	82	50.9
	>10000	68	42.3
5	Type of family		
	Nuclear family	73	45.3
	Joint family	88	54.7

Table 2: Level of Perceived social support among primi-mothers. (N = 161)

Level of perceived social support	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Poor perceived social support (12-30)	1	0.6
Fair perceived social support (31-60)	14	8.7
Good perceived social support (61-90)	146	90.7
Mean +SD	76.81±10.82	

Table 3: Association between the level of Perceived social support among primi-mothers with their selected socio-demographic variables (N=161)

Sl. No	Demographic variables	Level of perceived social support						X ²	df	p-value
		Poor		Fair		Good				
		N	%	N	%	N	%			
1	Age (in years)									
	18-21	0	0	8	57.1	26	17.8	16.6	6	0.011*
	22-25	0	0	6	42.9	80	54.8			
	26-29	1	100	0	0	38	26			
	30 and above	0	0	0	0	2	1.4			
2	Education							8.85	6	0.182
	Illiterate	0	0	4	28.6	11	7.5			
	Primary education	1	100	4	28.6	49	33.6			
	Secondary education	0	0	3	21.4	50	34.2			
	Graduate	0	0	3	21.4	36	24.7			
3	Occupation							14.3	4	0.006*
	Employed	1	100	3	21.5	30	20.5			
	Unemployed	0	0	11	78.5	116	79.5			
4	Income							3.49	4	0.478
	<5000	0	0	0	0	11	7.5			
	5000-10000	0	0	6	42.9	76	52.1			
	>10000	1	100	8	57.1	59	40.4			
5	Type of family							0.953	2	0.621
	Nuclear family	0	0	7	50	66	45.2			
	Joint family	1	100	7	50	80	54.8			

Discussion

The main objective is to assess the level of Perceived social support among primi-mothers.

The level of perceived social support among primi-mothers attending well baby clinic was carried out by using multi-dimensional scale of perceived social support. Frequency and percentage wise distribution of level of Perceived social support among primi-mothers shown Majority of the primi-mothers 146 (90.7%) had Good perceived social support, 14 (8.7%) had Fair perceived social support and 1(0.6%) had Poor perceived social support in their study about Perceived social support in primi mothers during pregnancy and childbirth stated, 54.8±8.43% mothers have received good social support in 16 weeks post-delivery and 14% primi-mothers did not receive any social support.

Machado *et al* (2020) [16] conducted a meta-analysis study on first time mothers' perceptions of social support and perceived barriers and they give some recommendations for best practice. This research concluded that although it is well established that appropriately provided social support can make the effects of postpartum stress and it will make the mother to overcome stress and it gave practical and emotional assistance.

Another objective was to find the association between perceived social support with selected socio-demographic variables.

The study showed demographic variable age and occupation had shown statistically significant association with level of Perceived social support among primi-mothers attending well baby clinic.

Ahmed N. M. *et al*, conducted a descriptive study at which aimed at assessing the stressors and social support among pregnant women using the tool such as stress scale, Interview questionnaire, and social support questionnaire. The researcher found statistically significant association between Perceived Social support with educational status and high income in the participants.

Interpretation: The present study showed that Majority of the primi-mothers 146 (90.7%) had Good perceived social support who are attending well baby clinic & able to take care of her newborn and accept transition to motherhood with support of the husband and family members.

Recommendation

1. Study can be conducted for the immediate family member (husband) regarding support they give to the mother.
2. Identify factors affecting the maternal support through further studies.
3. Randomised sampling technique can be used to select the samples.
4. Educational interventional study can be conducted among family members or mother to improve level of social support.

Implication

The implication of the present study in different areas in nursing are discussed below. It includes education, practice, administration and research.

Nursing Practice

The present study revealed that majority of the mothers had good perceived social support. So, the nurses who are working in well baby clinic can use the multi-dimensional scale of perceived social support to assess the level of support that the primi mothers are getting from their family. The results can be used to counsel the family (husband and other members) and friends to provide social support to the new mother.

Nursing education

The undergraduate, diploma and post-graduate students must learn the physical and psychological changes occurring in the puerperium. Awareness regarding social support help the students to utilize it in clinical settings to educate new mothers. They can use the standardized multi-dimensional

scale to assess the perceived social support in routine clinical exposure and give counselling to the family members and friends.

Nursing administration

Appropriate level of social support is crucial for the primiparous mother to adopt the changes and enjoy motherhood. Thus, hospital administration must distribute pamphlets which create awareness regarding changes in post-partum period and maternal social support. It is recommended to involve local staffs on duty to improve their skill of communication and make mothers aware of the complications and changes.

Nursing Research

The nurse researcher should conduct more studies on perceived social support among mothers. The study result should be explained and can be implemented in ethical setting in order to improve level of social support.

Conclusion

This study concluded that majority of the primiparous mothers had good perceived social support (90.7%). Socio-demographical variables like age and occupation had shown statistically significant association with the social support.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interest or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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