

Failed Marriages: Psychological Well-Being and Perceived Social Support among Adults Experiencing Marital Dissolution

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Abstract: Marital dissolution is a significant life transition that may affect emotional routines, family roles, finances, social relationships, and personal identity. Individuals differ considerably in their responses to divorce or permanent separation, and perceived social support may be one resource relevant to adjustment. This study examined the relationship between perceived social support and psychological well-being among adults who had experienced marital dissolution. A quantitative, cross-sectional, correlational approach was used to analyse 50 participant records supplied for the project. Perceived social support was assessed using the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS), which measures support from family, friends, and significant others. Subjective well-being was assessed using the WHO-5 Well-Being Index. The mean MSPSS total score was 55.24 ($SD = 7.55$), while the mean WHO-5 score was 67.54 ($SD = 15.09$). Pearson's correlation between MSPSS total and WHO-5 total was small, negative, and not statistically significant, $r(48) = -.062$, $p = .671$. Correlations for family, friends, and significant-other support were also not statistically significant. A simple regression model did not significantly predict well-being. These findings are limited to the 50 records analysed and do not establish that social support is unimportant. Larger, well-documented studies are needed to examine how support, time since dissolution, and other contextual factors relate to adjustment.

Keywords: marital dissolution, divorce, psychological well-being, perceived social support, MSPSS, WHO-5

1. Introduction

Marriage can provide companionship, emotional intimacy, shared responsibilities, family roles, and a framework for planning the future. When a marriage ends through divorce or permanent separation, these structures may change. People may face new living arrangements, financial responsibilities, parenting demands, changes in relationships with extended family, and uncertainty about the future.

The experience can include grief, loneliness, anger, and reduced life satisfaction; for others, particularly those leaving highly conflictual or unsafe relationships, dissolution may also bring relief, autonomy, or opportunities for personal growth. Marital dissolution should therefore not be treated as a uniform psychological outcome. The effects depend on the circumstances of the relationship, resources available to the individual, the time elapsed since separation, and the person's interpretation of the transition. Longitudinal research has reported changes in life satisfaction around divorce, including declines before or near the transition and varying patterns of recovery afterward (Lucas, 2005). Research on marital breakdown has also examined associations with subsequent depression, while noting that the strength of these associations can change after accounting for other factors (Rotermann, 2007).

Perceived social support is a potentially relevant resource during this transition. It refers to a person's belief that emotional, informational, or practical help is available from other people. Family members may provide practical assistance, friends may offer companionship and understanding, and significant others may provide emotional closeness. However, having people around does not automatically mean that an individual experiences them as supportive. The perceived quality and availability of support

may be as important as the number of social contacts. The present study focuses on the association between perceived social support and positive psychological well-being among adults who have experienced marital dissolution. It does not assume that divorce necessarily leads to poor well-being, nor does it attempt to establish that social support causes a particular outcome. Instead, it examines whether scores on a standardized measure of perceived support are associated with subjective well-being in the available sample.

2. Review of Literature and Theoretical Background

Amato (2000) reviewed the consequences of divorce for adults and children and emphasized that outcomes vary according to pre-divorce conditions, post-divorce circumstances, social resources, and economic factors. This perspective cautions against interpreting marital dissolution as an event with identical effects on all individuals.

Lucas (2005), using longitudinal data, examined life satisfaction around divorce and reported that life satisfaction declined as individuals approached divorce and then gradually rebounded. The findings also highlighted that adjustment may not be complete for everyone and that people who later divorce may differ from those who remain married even before the transition. Rotermann (2007) examined marital breakdown and subsequent depression in Canadian population data and found an association that was weakened after accounting for possible confounding factors. Research has also explored the psychological adjustment process following relationship separation. Sweeper and Halford (2006) developed the Psychological Adjustment to Separation Test and described adjustment as multidimensional, including experiences such as loneliness,

attachment to a former partner, and co-parenting conflict. Rhoades et al. (2011), studying unmarried young adults, found that relationship dissolution was associated with increased psychological distress and reduced life satisfaction, although the magnitude of change varied across individuals. Social support has been examined as a resource that may help people manage stressful life events. Cohen and Wills (1985) described the stress-buffering hypothesis, proposing that support can reduce the impact of stress under some circumstances. Caldwell and Bloom (1982) directly examined social support in relation to marital disruption and identified family, friends, community resources, and social activity as relevant aspects of the support environment. Zimet et al. (1988, 1990) developed and evaluated the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS), which distinguishes perceived support from family, friends, and significant others. Bech et al. (2003) provided evidence supporting the WHO-5 as a brief measure of positive well-being. The transactional theory of stress and coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) also provides a useful framework. From this perspective, stress depends partly on how a person appraises a situation and on the resources perceived to be available. Marital dissolution may be appraised as threatening, relieving, challenging, or a mixture of these. Social support may form part of the coping resources available, but its role must be tested rather than assumed. Although the literature identifies social support and adjustment as important topics, studies differ in their samples, definitions of dissolution, cultural settings, measures, and time since separation. Findings from Western or non-marital breakup samples cannot automatically be generalized to all Indian adults. A focused study of perceived support and positive well-being can contribute descriptive evidence, provided that its sample-specific limits are clearly acknowledged.

3. Aim, Objectives and Hypotheses

The aim was to examine the relationship between perceived social support and psychological well-being among adults who had experienced marital dissolution. The objectives were to assess perceived social support and subjective well-being; examine the association between total perceived social support and well-being; and explore the associations between family, friend, and significant-other support and well-being. The principal hypothesis proposed a significant positive relationship between perceived social support and psychological well-being. Additional hypotheses proposed positive relationships between each MSPSS support source and WHO-5 well-being. A further proposed hypothesis was that perceived social support would predict well-being after accounting for selected background variables. The available analysis reported here includes a simple regression using MSPSS total only; it does not include an adjusted model with demographic covariates.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design and Participants

The project used a quantitative, cross-sectional, correlational framework. The dataset available for this article contained 50 participant records, labelled P001–P050. This is fewer

than the approximately 100 participants proposed in the initial project plan; the achieved sample of 50 is reported here transparently. Ages ranged from 28 to 54 years ($M = 42.16$, $SD = 8.19$), and time since marital dissolution ranged from 6 to 57 months ($M = 28.20$, $SD = 15.55$). The records included people with varied employment, living, parenting, and current relationship circumstances.

4.2 Measures

The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) assesses perceived support from three sources: family, friends, and significant others. In this dataset, family, friends, and significant-other subscale scores were available alongside a total score. The WHO-5 Well-Being Index is a brief measure of subjective positive well-being; higher scores represent greater well-being. The supplied WHO-5 totals were analysed on a 0–100 scale. The project also included demographic and marital-history information such as age, gender, employment, children, living arrangement, marital status, time since dissolution, current partnership status, and counselling history.

4.3 Procedure and Ethics

The project protocol specifies voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, the right to withdraw, and secure storage of data. Because marital experiences can be sensitive, participants should not be pressured to disclose traumatic or legally sensitive details and should be allowed to skip questions. The dataset used for this article was supplied as 50 records transcribed from screenshots; the original records should be checked before final academic submission. This article does not independently verify recruitment, consent, or institutional approval.

4.4 Statistical Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the primary variables. Normality indicators were reviewed, and Pearson product-moment correlations were calculated between WHO-5 total and MSPSS total and subscale scores. A simple linear regression examined whether MSPSS total predicted WHO-5 total. Statistical significance was evaluated using a two-tailed alpha level of .05. Because the design was cross-sectional, associations are not interpreted as causal effects.

5. Results

The 50 records had a mean MSPSS total score of 55.24 ($SD = 7.55$; range = 39–69) and a mean WHO-5 total score of 67.54 ($SD = 15.09$; range = 40–94). Mean family support was 16.96 ($SD = 4.39$), mean friend support was 17.66 ($SD = 4.96$), and mean significant-other support was 20.62 ($SD = 4.72$). These values describe this sample and should not be interpreted against population norms without an appropriate reference group. Shapiro–Wilk tests did not indicate statistically significant departures from normality for MSPSS total, $W = .966$, $p = .152$, or WHO-5 total, $W = .965$, $p = .144$. Such tests should be considered alongside graphical checks and the study context.

The association between MSPSS total and WHO-5 total was small, negative, and not statistically significant, $r(48) = -.062$, $p = .671$, 95% CI $[-.334, .221]$. The association between family support and WHO-5 was $r = -.054$, $p = .710$, 95% CI $[-.327, .228]$. Friend support was weakly positively associated with WHO-5, $r = .128$, $p = .377$, 95% CI $[-.156, .392]$. Significant-other support showed a small negative association, $r = -.183$, $p = .204$, 95% CI $[-.439, .101]$. None of these correlations reached statistical significance.

A simple linear regression model using MSPSS total to predict WHO-5 total was not statistically significant, $F(1, 48) = 0.182$, $p = .671$, $R^2 = .004$. The model explained approximately 0.4% of the variance in WHO-5 scores. The unstandardized slope was $B = -0.123$. This estimate should not be interpreted as evidence that support reduces well-being; the model was not statistically significant and the design cannot establish causal direction.

6. Discussion

The principal finding was that perceived social support was not significantly associated with psychological well-being in the 50 records analysed. The total MSPSS score had a very small negative correlation with WHO-5, while the subscale correlations were also non-significant. The simple regression model similarly did not show statistically significant prediction. Accordingly, the proposed hypotheses were not supported by the available data. These findings should be interpreted cautiously. A non-significant result does not demonstrate that social support is irrelevant to adjustment after marital dissolution. The sample was modest, participants differed in the time elapsed since dissolution and in their family and living circumstances, and the available analysis did not adjust for background variables. Other factors- such as financial stress, conflict history, parenting responsibilities, safety, current relationships, and individual coping strategies- may also relate to well-being. The study may not have had sufficient precision to detect small associations.

The result does not necessarily contradict previous research suggesting that social resources can be relevant to adjustment. Studies differ in the populations examined, the type of relationship loss, the timing of measurement, and the outcome assessed. Social support may also operate differently depending on its quality, source, and fit with the person's needs. A measure of perceived support at one time point may not capture changes in support across the adjustment process. The results have a practical implication for counselling and psychosocial services: support should be assessed individually rather than assumed to predict well-being in the same way for everyone. Practitioners may consider support from family, friends, and significant others alongside other relevant circumstances. The present findings do not justify dismissing support-building approaches, but neither do they establish that such approaches would improve well-being in this sample.

7. Limitations and Recommendations

Several limitations should be noted. First, the analysis included 50 records rather than the approximately 100

participants initially proposed. Second, the cross-sectional design cannot establish temporal order or causation. Third, the sampling method and representativeness cannot be confirmed from the supplied records. Fourth, the scores were transcribed from screenshots and should be checked against the original data sheet before submission. Fifth, item-level responses were not available for an independent reliability analysis. Finally, the reported regression was a simple model and did not adjust for demographic or marital-history variables.

Future studies should recruit a larger sample using a clearly documented sampling strategy, verify data entry, and report missing-data decisions. Researchers could examine whether time since dissolution, employment, parenting, living arrangement, or current partnership status helps explain differences in well-being, provided the sample size supports such analyses. Longitudinal research would help examine changes over time, while qualitative interviews could explore how individuals understand support and recovery in their own social and cultural contexts. Any further study should retain informed consent, confidentiality, appropriate instrument permissions, and transparent reporting.

8. Conclusion

This study examined perceived social support and psychological well-being among adults who had experienced marital dissolution. In the 50 records analysed, the mean MSPSS total was 55.24 and the mean WHO-5 total was 67.54. Neither total perceived social support nor support from family, friends, or significant others showed a statistically significant correlation with well-being. The simple regression model was also non-significant. These results are specific to the available sample and should not be interpreted as proof that social support has no role in adjustment. Larger and methodologically stronger studies are required to clarify how support and other life circumstances relate to psychological well-being following marital dissolution.

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