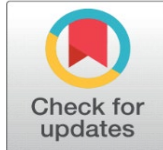
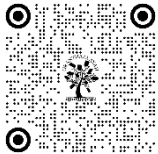


# EXPLORING THE ROLE OF PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT AS A PREDICTOR OF QUALITY OF LIFE AMONG FARMERS

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## ABSTRACT

Agriculture continues to be the primary source of livelihood for a large section of India's rural population. Despite its importance, farmers face a range of challenges such as climate change, debt, crop failure, and poor irrigation. These ongoing stressors significantly impact their quality of life. This study examines whether perceived social support can predict the quality of life among farmers. A sample of 100 farmers between the ages of 25 and 50 years was selected from Western Uttar Pradesh using purposive sampling. Standardized tools including the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support and the WHOQOL BREF were used to assess perceived social support and quality of life respectively. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and linear regression. Results showed a significant positive correlation between perceived social support and quality of life ( $r = .743, p < .01$ ). Regression analysis further confirmed that perceived social support is a significant predictor of quality of life ( $B = 0.73, \beta = 0.74, p < .001$ ). The findings emphasize the importance of strong social support in improving farmers' living conditions. Strengthening social networks through community-based interventions could be a valuable strategy for enhancing the overall quality of life in agrarian populations.

**Keywords:** Perceived Social Support, Quality of Life, Farmers, Rural Stress, Mental Health, Social Resources

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The economy of India still relies extensively on agriculture, which sustains rural livelihoods and employs over 50 percent of the labour force (Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, 2020). Despite this, farmers experience a variety of stresses, including land fragmentation, crop failure, debt, climate variability, and inadequate irrigation. These underlying problems impair not just financial sustainability but also psychological well-being and quality of life (QoL) Singh et al., (2020). According to NCRB (2022), there were over 11,000 farmer suicides in 2022, which represents a significant increase over prior years. Farmer rates of suicide in India are still extremely high. The psychological impact of rural suffering is shown by the significantly high suicide rates reported in areas encountering extended drought.

Perceived Social Support (PSS) has emerged as a crucial psychological factor in this regard. PSS is a reliable indicator of mental resilience, stress buffering, and well-being. It is defined as one's belief in the accessibility of emotional, informational, and instrumental support Wilson et al., (2020). The buffering theory was put forth by Cohen and Wills

(1985), who claimed that PSS improves coping and emotional control, hence mitigating the negative effects of stress. Individuals who sense more resources (social in particular) are better equipped to perceive stressors as manageable. Indian rural society has always depended on community relationships, extended families and shared standards to offer both practical and psychological support. However, these networks have been undermined by trends like youth migration and mechanization, making people more susceptible to social alienation (Sai et al., 2024).

Physical health, psychological condition, social interactions, and environmental context are all components of quality of life (QoL), which goes beyond material measurements (WHO, 1997). In addition to agricultural revenue or output, mental health, social connections, and access to institutional and community resources all influence farmers' quality of life (QoL).

PSS and QoL are positively correlated, according to empirical data from both India and around the world. Persons who felt more supported had better levels of life satisfaction. More emotional support was linked to fewer depressed symptoms. Research on rural women and older populations in India has demonstrated psychological advantages associated with perceived support from family and the community. This link is also supported by research conducted in agricultural settings (Meira et al., 2023). In a Kerala-wide survey (n = 580), Devassy et al. (2024) discovered that social support and interpersonal interactions were important predictors of farmers' life happiness, independent of land size or income. Peer networks, family inclusion, and social engagement were found to be important protective elements that improve farmers' mental resilience in another qualitative study conducted. Poor QoL was linked to low social-emotional support, particularly among women and elderly persons, according to a population-based study conducted by Wang et al., (2020) and this study highlighted demographic and gender differences in rural well-being. A holistic perspective is provided by Calhoun et al., (2022) which positions PSS as a social determinant essential to mental equilibrium and recovery by arguing that health and quality of life are the outcome of interactions between biological, psychological, and social systems.

## 2. METHOD

### 2.1. OBJECTIVES

- 1) To examine the relationship between perceived social support and quality of life among farmers.
- 2) To assess whether perceived social support significantly predicts the quality of life among farmers.

### 2.2. HYPOTHESES

- 1) H1: There is a significant positive correlation between perceived social support and quality of life among farmers.
- 2) H2: Perceived social support significantly predicts the quality of life among farmers.

### 2.3. SAMPLE

The sample consisted of **100 farmers** from western Uttar Pradesh, aged between 25 and 50 years. Purposive sampling was used to collect data.

### 2.4. TOOLS USED

- Multi-Dimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS-Hindi)- The Indian adaptation of MSPSS was developed by Verma and Singh (2020). The scale has 12 items. The scale is 7 point rating scale where 1 stands for strongly disagree and 7 stands for strongly agree. Psychometric properties of the scale are good. The Cronbach alpha of the scale was obtained to insure the internal consistency. The reliability of the scale is 0.927.
- WHOQOL-BREF- The Indian adaptation of WHOQOL was developed by Saxena (1996). The scale has 26 items and four domains physical, psychological health, social relationship and environment. The scale is 5 point rating scale where 1 stands for not at all and 5 stands for completely. Test-retest reliability of the scale is 0.84.

## 2.5. INCLUSION CRITERIA

- Individuals those are into farming profession since more than two years.
- Farmers of age range 25 to 50 years will be included in the study.
- Only male farmers will be included in the study.

## 2.6. EXCLUSION CRITERIA

- Individuals having any psychiatric history.
- Individuals being in other profession along with farming will be excluded.

## 2.7. PROCEDURE OF THE DATA COLLECTION

For the purpose of collecting data, the researcher will visit different areas of the Western Uttar Pradesh state. The permission will be sought from the participants for data collection. A rapport will be established with the farmers and the purpose of the study will be explained to them. After giving them instructions, the participants will be assured of the confidentiality of the responses.

## 2.8. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Descriptive statistical analysis, correlation, and simple linear regression were used to analysis of data.

## 3. RESULTS

**Table 1 Descriptive Statistics**

Variables	Mean	SD
Perceived Social Support	39.35	16.16
Quality of Life	57.74	15.85

Table 1 The mean score for perceived social support (PSS) was 39.35 (SD = 16.16), and the mean score for quality of life (QoL) was 57.74 (SD = 15.85), indicating moderate levels of both variables among the participants.

Pearson Correlation between Perceived Social Support and Quality of Life

**Table 2 Correlation Analysis**

Variables	1	2
Perceived Social support	—	
Quality of life	.743**	—

$p < .01$  is significant at the 0.01 level.

Regression Coefficients Predicting Quality of Life from Perceived Social Support

**Table 3 Regression Analysis**

Predictor	B	SE B	$\beta$	T	P
Constant	29.07	2.82	—	10.32	0.001
PSS	0.73	0.07	0.74	10.99	0.001

Perceived social support significantly predicted quality of life,  $B = 0.73$ ,  $SE = 0.07$ ,  $\beta = .74$ ,  $t = 10.99$ ,  $p = .001$ .

Note. B = Unstandardized regression coefficient; SE B = standard error of B;

$\beta$  = standardized beta coefficient; t = t-value; p = significance level; PSS = Perceived Social Support.

## 4. DISCUSSION

The findings of the present study indicate a significant positive relationship between perceived social support and quality of life among farmers. This suggests that farmers who perceive higher levels of emotional, social, or practical support tend to experience a better quality of life. The strong correlation value demonstrates that social support plays a crucial role in shaping how farmers assess their lives, particularly when facing rural challenges such as financial strain, health issues, and social isolation. The regression analysis further confirms that perceived social support is a significant predictor of quality of life. An increase in perceived social support is likely to result in a meaningful improvement in various dimensions of life, including psychological and social domains. These results are in line with the study by Adejoh et al., (2024) which found that smallholder farmers who perceived higher levels of support reported greater life satisfaction and lower levels of distress. Similarly, Devassy et al., (2024) concluded that social support and interpersonal relationships significantly contributed to farmers' quality of life in Kerala, regardless of their income level or land ownership. The present study reinforces the idea that psychological and social dimensions are as important as economic factors in determining quality of life. In rural areas where farmers may face multiple hardships, strong support systems can buffer the impact of stress and contribute positively to life satisfaction and emotional balance. Therefore, strategies aimed at improving the quality of life among farmers should focus not only on financial and infrastructural development but also on strengthening family bonds, peer connections, and community-level engagement. Even in challenging circumstances, the perception of available support can serve as a key protective factor that enhances the overall quality of life.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The present study highlights the significant role of perceived social support in predicting the quality of life among farmers. The findings clearly indicate that farmers who perceive stronger emotional and social support report better outcomes across various dimensions of life, including physical health, psychological well-being, social relationships, and environmental satisfaction. In rural settings where agricultural challenges and stressors are frequent, perceived social support emerges as a vital psychological resource that enhances resilience and overall life satisfaction. This research underscores the importance of fostering social connections within farming communities through family involvement, peer networks, and accessible support systems. As India continues to face agrarian distress, focusing on psychosocial interventions alongside economic policies can provide a more comprehensive approach to improving farmers' quality of life. Strengthening social support networks can not only help in managing stress but also serve as a preventive measure against mental health issues and deteriorating living conditions in rural populations

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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