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Status of Perceived Social Support and Related Factors in the Elderly in Neyshabour City in 2023

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Old age is an increasingly prevalent phenomenon. According to statistics, the elderly population, which was 12% in 2015, is projected to rise to 22% in 2050, exceeding two billion individuals. At this age of life, social isolation is widespread. Social support is a crucial factor that influences the quality of interpersonal communication and fosters feelings of inner peace and life satisfaction. Research has demonstrated that social support plays a significant role in mitigating the physically detrimental effects of ageing and alleviating feelings of loneliness. This study aimed to determine the status of perceived social support and related factors in older people in Neyshabour City.

Methods and Materials: This cross-sectional analytical study was conducted in 2023 on 479 older adults referring to the comprehensive health services centers in Neyshabour City. The random sampling method was performed on a floor proportional to the class size and was used to collect information from three questionnaires (checklist of demographic factors, Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support Zimet, and Beck Anxiety Questionnaire. The researchers conducted interviews with elderly individuals visiting health centers to complete the questionnairs. Participants were selected based on specific entry criteria: they had to be 60 years or older and free from debilitating diseases. The data from the study was analyzed using SPSS version 16. Descriptive statistics were presented for quantitative variables using average and standard deviation and for qualitative variables in abundance and percentage. The normalization of the data was assessed using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test. This test was employed to investigate the relationship between quantitative variables through the Pearson correlation test at a significant level of 0.05.

Results: The mean and standard deviation of the participant's age and perceived social support were 68.89 ± 7.32 and 54.35 ± 20.68, respectively. Most participants (44.9%) had moderate perceived social support. For every one-hour (60 minutes) increase in physical activity per week, the average perceived social support score increased by 0.6 (B = 0.006; p = 0.024). Also, for each unit increase in the Beck Depression Index score, the average perceived social support score decreased by 0.4 (B = -0.411; p = 0.001).

Conclusion and Discussion: The findings of the present study showed that perceived social support in older people was moderate. As physical activity increases and depression enhances, their social support status improves. Training programs should be carried out with health personnel to pay more attention to the elderly to reduce depression and increase their physical activity.

Keywords: Depression, Elderly, Social support

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