

## Perceived Social Support and Anxiety of Farmers of Dharwad and Uttara Kannada Districts

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### ABSTRACT

The present study aims to understand the perceived social support and anxiety of farmers of Dharwad and Uttara Kannada Districts. Two samples of 50 farmers randomly selected from each district were administered with Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) and Anxiety scale. The formulated hypotheses were tested with the application of 't' test. Results revealed that Uttara Kannada farmers had significantly higher overall perceived social support ( $t=6.48$ ;  $P < 0.001$ ) in terms of family ( $t=5.01$ ), friends ( $t=6.32$ ) and significant other ( $t=3.61$ ) compared to farmers of Dharwad district. Further, farmers of Dharwad district have shown significantly higher anxiety compared to Uttara Kannada farmers ( $t=3.37$ ;  $P < 0.01$ ). Even comparison of male with male and female with female farmers of two districts revealed significant difference in perceived social support. However, though male farmers of both the districts differed significantly in their anxiety, the female farmers did not differ.

*Keywords:* Farmers, Perceived social support, Anxiety

THE perceived social support is a social mechanism taken into consideration in recent years, and it refers to the importance of the social dimension of the individual (Matsuda *et al.*, 2014). The perceived social support refers to people's belief about the level and quality of support available to them (Shahry *et al.*, 2016). Mattson and Gibb (2011) defined perceived social support as 'an individual's belief that social support is available, is generally considered positive or negative and provides what is considered as needed by that individual'.

Anxiety is often accompanied by muscular tension. Anxiety is not same as fear, which is a response to a real or perceived immediate threat; anxiety involves the expectation of future threat. Most of the time anxiety occurs along with depression. High anxiety significantly influences one's physiological, psychological and behavioral processes. In other words, these aspects get disturbed with high anxiety experience.

The American Psychological Association defined anxiety as 'an emotion characterized by worried thoughts, feelings of tension and physical changes like increased blood pressure'. Seligman *et al.* (2013)

defined anxiety as 'an emotional response to the panicking situation, characterized by an unpleasant state of inner turmoil, often accompanied by nervous behavior such as pacing back and forth, rumination and somatic complaints'.

Torske *et al.* (2016) studied the level of anxiety and depression symptoms among Norwegian farmers by comparing with other occupational groups. Both male and female farmers had higher level of depression symptoms than the common working population, but the level of anxiety symptoms did not differ. The difference in depression symptom level between farmers and the general working population increased with age. It is revealed that farmers had high level of depression symptoms and average level of anxiety symptoms compared with other occupational groups.

Jones Bitton *et al.* (2019) estimated the prevalence of stress, anxiety, depression, and resilience amongst 1132 Canadian farmers. They found that more number of farmers were having higher level of anxiety, depression and stress but lower resilience. Female farmers showed less favourable scores on all mental health outcomes studied compared to their male counterparts. Authors of the study stated that there is

a need for public health concern for farmers and interventions to improve their mental health. Further, highlighted the importance of their study findings for policy makers, mental health service providers and plan for proper development and delivery of training programmes for farmers.

#### METHODOLOGY

Random sample in the present study consisted of 100 farmers from the villages of Dharwad and Uttara Kannada districts of Karnataka state. From each district, 25 male and 25 female farmers constituted the sample. The age of the sample ranged from 20 to 60 years. Male and female farmers of two different districts were matched in terms of their age, education, marital status, etc.

Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) developed by Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet and Farley was used to assess the perceived social support. It has a total of twelve items with three dimensions namely 'Family', 'Friends' and 'Significant Other' (anyone who is special to them). Each item has seven responses ranging from 'Very Strongly Disagree (1)', to 'Very Strongly Agree (7)', The authors reported that the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for the whole scale is 0.88. Further, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for support from Family, Friends and Significant Other were 0.87, 0.85 and 0.91, respectively. MSPSS scale has been validated on different population across the world and the scale has demonstrated psychometrically sound validity, including factorial validity.

However, the scale was translated to local language (Kannada) to make the farmers to understand. The translated scale was once again checked for its reliability. The reliability obtained for the scale are in terms of Cronbach's Alpha-0.89, Split-half-0.75, Spearman Brown coefficient-0.86 and Guttman-0.93.

The Anxiety scale developed by Beck was used to assess anxiety of farmers which had 21 items. Each item had four response categories such as 'Not at all', 'Mildly but it didn't bother me much', 'Moderately - it wasn't pleasant at times' and 'Severely - it bothered

me a lot'. A scoring method of 0, 1, 2 and 3 was followed for the above responses.

According to Beck, reliability coefficients found out by the split-half and Test-Retest methods were 0.82 and 0.79, respectively. The reported concurrent validity coefficient is 0.61. The translated scale was once again checked for its reliability. The obtained reliability for the scale is Cronbach's Alpha-0.72, Split-half-0.60, Spearman Brown coefficient-0.75 and Guttman-0.79.

Socio-demographic details of the subject were obtained by designing a personal data sheet. To test the significance of difference between the two district farmers as well as gender difference as far as their perceived social support and anxiety are concerned, 't' test was applied.

An inspection of Table 1 shows a noticeable difference in the mean scores of perceived social support (in terms of dimensions and overall) scores of Dharwad and Uttara Kannada farmers. Within group difference is not much in all dimensions and overall score of perceived social support (which is presented by SD values).

An inspection of Table 2 reveals that the farmers of Dharwad and Uttara Kannada districts differ significantly very high ( $P < 0.001$ ) in getting social support from family ( $t=5.01$ ), friends ( $t=6.32$ ) as well as overall perceived social support ( $t=6.48$ ). Further, the differences between the groups is significantly high ( $P < 0.01$ ) in getting support from significant other ( $t=3.61$ ).

In other words, Uttara Kannada farmers have shown significantly higher perceived social support from family, friends and significant other compared to Dharwad District farmers. As a result of this, Uttara Kannada farmers have also shown significantly very high overall perceived social support than their counterparts.

The observed significantly higher perceived social support of Uttara Kannada farmers may be due to their style of living and prevailing geographical conditions at their place. Most of Uttara Kannada farmers are cultivating their land on hilly area which

TABLE 1  
Mean and SD for Perceived Social Support (Dimension wise and overall) scores of farmers belonging to Dharwad (DWD) and Uttara Kannada (UK) Districts (n=50 in each group)

Variable	Dimensions	Groups	Mean	SD
Perceived Social Support	Family	Farmers (DWD)	45.50	9.81
		Farmers (UK)	54.49	8.02
	Friends	Farmers (DWD)	44.64	8.98
		Farmers (UK)	55.35	7.91
	Significant Other	Farmers (DWD)	46.58	9.31
		Farmers (UK)	53.41	9.56
	Overall Perceived Social Support	Farmers (DWD)	44.54	8.37
		Farmers (UK)	55.45	8.44

TABLE 2  
MD, SEM and 't' Value for Perceived Social Support (Dimension wise and Overall) Scores of farmers belong to Dharwad (DWD) and Uttara Kannada (UK) District (n=50 in each group)

Dimensions	MD	SEM	't' value
Family	8.99	1.79	5.01 ***
Friends	10.71	1.69	6.32 ***
significant other	6.82	1.88	3.61 **
Overall Perceived Social Support	10.90	1.68	6.48 ***

\*\*\* P < 0.001; Very Highly Significant

\*\* P < 0.01; Highly Significant

is for away from cities. In such conditions, these farmers as they live away from main cities, they have positive attitude of helping mutually. In contrast to this, at Dharwad District most of the farmers are working independently as there is no need of others due to easy availability of required services to them and their family. In case of Uttara Kannada farmers their conditions of living necessitate to go for social support. Hence, they are observed to be getting good social support.

An inspection of Table 3 reveals that mean scores of Dharwad (53.20) and Uttara Kannada (46.79) farmers are differing to a greater extent in their anxiety. It can also be noticed that within group, difference is not much (based on SD).

TABLE 3  
Mean and SD for Anxiety scores of farmers Belong to Dharwad (DWD) and Uttara Kannada (UK) Districts (n=50 in each group)

Variable	Groups	Mean	SD
Anxiety	Farmers (DWD)	53.20	9.25
	Farmers (UK)	46.79	9.76

However, the noticed mean differences are further subject to 't' test to check the significance of the difference.

An inspection of Table 4 reveals that the difference between farmers of Dharwad and Uttara Kannada district is significantly high (t= 3.37: P< 0.01) in their anxiety. In other words, the anxiety of Dharwad district farmers is significantly high compared to Uttara Kannada farmers.

The observed significantly high anxiety of Dharwad district farmers may be attributed to the fact of depending on only few crops throughout the year that

TABLE 4  
MD, SEM and 't' value for Anxiety scores of farmers belong to Dharwad (DWD) and Uttara Kannada (UK) District (n=50 in each group)

Variable	MD	SEM	't' value
Anxiety	6.41	1.90	3.37 **

\*\* P < 0.01; Highly Significant

too without any irrigation support. On the contrary to this, Uttara Kannada farmers are getting engaged in some other activities for their livelihood, when their agriculture work is not in progress and profit. These farmers also have multiple livelihood tasks such as going for fishing and supplying some construction materials as they are nearer to seashore. In fact, the guaranteed income to their family with multiple activities throughout the year makes them to have less anxiety.

One can also reason out that the significantly lesser perceived social support observed in Dharwad District farmers might have contributed to their high anxiety.

The finding supports the finding of Bjornestad *et al.* (2019) study, in which they highlighted the importance of social support from friends and family members in the prevention of depressive symptoms among farmers. The study also falls in line with Furey *et al.* (2016), who revealed the reduction of distress with social support among farmers. This study also supports the findings of McLaren and Challis (2009) which suggested increasing social support and sense of belonging may benefit the mental health of men farmers. Similarly, Chaudhary and Shourie (2019) also had earlier reported that social support is positively related to resilience of farmers.

An inspection of Table 5 reveals that the difference between Dharwad and Uttara Kannada district male farmers is significantly very high ( $P < 0.001$ ) in perceived social support in terms of family ( $t=4.32$ ), friends ( $t=5.62$ ) and overall ( $t=5.27$ ) as well as in anxiety ( $t=4.31$ ). The difference between the two groups is just significant ( $P < 0.05$ ) in getting support from significant other ( $t=2.58$ ).

More specifically, Uttara Kannada male farmers have shown significantly higher overall perceived social support from family, friends and significant other, whereas, Dharwad District male farmers have shown significantly very high anxiety compared to Uttara Kannada male farmers. The obtained results may be attributed to the same reasons as stated earlier under Table 2 and 4.

One can notice from Table 6 that the difference between Dharwad and Uttara Kannada district female farmers is significantly very high ( $P < 0.001$ ) in over all social support ( $t=3.88$ ) and significantly high ( $P < 0.01$ ) in getting support from family ( $t=2.80$ ) and friends ( $t=3.38$ ). Further, the difference between two groups is just significant in ( $P < 0.05$ ) in getting support from significant other ( $t=2.49$ ). However no significant difference ( $P > 0.05$ ) is found between Dharwad and Uttara Kannada District female farmers as far as their anxiety is concerned.

TABLE 5

Mean, SD and 't' Value for Perceived Social Support (Dimension wise and Overall) and Anxiety Scores of Dharwad and Uttara Kannada District Male Farmers (n=25 in each group)

Variables	Dimensions	Groups	Mean	SD	't' value
Perceived Social Support	Family	DWD	44.76	9.73	4.32 ***
		UK	55.23	7.23	
	Friends	DWD	43.76	9.20	5.62 ***
		UK	56.23	6.18	
	Significant Other	DWD	46.54	9.57	2.58 *
		UK	53.45	9.36	
Overall Perceived	DWD	44.00	8.64	5.27 ***	
	UK	55.99	7.38		
Anxiety		DWD	55.23	8.38	4.31 ***

\*\*\*  $P < 0.001$ ; Very Highly Significant ; \*  $P < 0.05$ ; Significant

TABLE 6  
Mean, SD and 't' value for Perceived Social Support (Dimension wise and overall) and Anxiety Scores of Dharwad and Uttara Kannada District female Farmers (n=25 in each group)

Variables	Dimensions	Groups	Mean	SD	't' value
Perceived Social Support	Family	DWD	46.28	9.69	2.80 **
		UK	53.71	9.02	
	Friends	DWD	45.65	8.72	3.38 **
		UK	54.34	9.41	
	Significant Other	DWD	46.65	9.19	2.49 *
		UK	53.34	9.81	
Overall Perceived Social Support	DWD	45.15	8.01	3.88 ***	
	UK	54.84	9.53		
Anxiety		DWD	51.03	10.15	0.72
		UK	48.97	9.94	

\*\*\* P < 0.001; Very Highly Significant ; \*\* P < 0.01; Highly Significant ; \* P < 0.01; Significant

More specifically, Uttara Kannada female farmers have shown significantly higher overall perceived social support from family, friends and significant other.

The above stated results with regard to perceived social support may be again interpreted as stated under Table 2. It is interesting to observe that male farmers of two districts differ significantly in their anxiety but female do not differ. This may be due to the fact of female farmers (or female in general) having naturally higher coping ability with any uncertainties.

The above discussed results conclude that Dharwad District farmers have significantly lesser overall perceived social support due to less support from their Family, Friends and Significant other compared to Uttara Kannada District farmers. Further, Dharwad District farmers have significantly higher anxiety compared to Uttara Kannada District farmers.

Uttar Kannada district male farmers have significantly higher perceived social support from their family, friends and significant other as well as overall compared to Dharwad district male farmers. Further, Dharwad district male farmers have significantly higher anxiety compared to their counterparts. Similarly, Uttar Kannada female farmers have significantly higher perceived social support from their

family, friends and significant other. However, female farmers of both the districts did not differ significantly from each other in their anxiety.

Results of the study implied the need for providing social support to the Dharwad District farmers through awareness and counseling programmes to boost up their motivation and morale so that, their anxiety will get reduced and help them to have better mental health. These results may help the agricultural and behavioral scientists as well as policy makers to plan different strategies in order to enhance the well-being of farmers by introducing some interventions.

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