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<b>Principal Investigator</b>	<b>Co-Principal Investigator</b>	<b>Co- Principal Investigator</b>
<b>Prof N.K.Chadha</b> Head and Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Delhi	<b>Dr Jaswinder Singh (Principal) and Dr H.V.Jhamb, Associate Professor</b> SGTB Khalsa College University of Delhi	<b>Dr Vimal Rath</b> Assistant Professor, Department of Chemistry, Deputy Director center for e learning, SGTB Khalsa College, University of Delhi <i>Specialised in : e-Learning and Educational Technologies</i>
<b>Paper Coordinator</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Reviewer</b>
<b>Dr. Priya Bir</b> Associate Professor Department of Psychology Aditi Mahavidyalaya University of Delhi	<b>Dr. Priya Bir</b> Associate Professor Department of Psychology Aditi Mahavidyalaya University of Delhi	<b>Prof.A.K.Malik</b> Department of Psychology Jodhpur University
<b>Anchor Institute : SGTB Khalsa College, University of Delhi</b>		

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Learning Outcomes
2. Introduction
3. Social Support
  - 3.1 Social Support
  - 3.2 Support Group
4. Family
5. Summary

<b>PSYCHOLOGY</b>	<b>Paper no.16: Community Psychology</b>
	<b>Module No. 18: Social Support- Theory and Model of a Family</b>

## 1. Learning Outcomes

After studying this module, you shall be able to

- Know- The significance of Social Support in a Community.
- Learn- The different forms of Social Support available in a Community.
- Identify -The role of Family members in providing support to individual members.
- Evaluate- The benefits and cost of Social Support.
- Analyze- The degree to which the Families make a change in the community.

## 2. Introduction

### Social Support

Social Support in its basic sense means the ability or the sense and feeling to get aid in terms of emotional, moral and physical fulfillment of needs in terms of crisis. It is expected from significant others like friends, family members, peer groups, co-workers, government agencies, etc. Everyone needs support at some point of time or the other in life. It is very essential to get social support to be able to cope with problems or crisis situation and become resilient as the end result of it.

### Family

A family, is a group of people who are associated with each other by birth, by genotype i.e the genetic makeup, by marriage, by sharing the same residence or shared consumption. The immediate family members comprise of parents, siblings; brother and sister, spouse, son and daughter. The extended family members include grandparents, aunt, uncle, cousin, nephew and niece, or sibling-in-law.

Families play an important role in the community by extending their support and help to various members of the community, comprehend their problems, find a solution to them and increase the ability to cope or resilience. Social support is also very essential to deal with problems at the base level to prevent the problems from going on to the next level and becoming severe.

## 3. Social support

### 3.1 Social support

Social Support in its basic sense means the ability or the sense and feeling to get aid in terms of emotional, moral and physical fulfillment of needs in terms of crisis. It is expected from significant others like friends, family members, peer groups, co-workers, government agencies, etc. Everyone needs support at some point of time or the other in life. It is very essential to get

social support to be able to cope with problems or crisis situation and become resilient as the end result of it.

Social support is a person's perception of getting help, guidance and the degree or extent to which a person is a member of a support group or network. There are various forms of social support available. For example, family members, co-workers, government organizations, pets at home, siblings, etc. They can provide support in tangible or non-tangible form.

The models that have been proposed to describe the link between social support and health are: the buffering hypothesis and the direct effects hypothesis. Gender and cultural differences in social support have also been found.



Figure 1 Figure depicting Social Support

### *Sources*

Social support can emerge from a number of sources, which include: family, friends, romantic partners, pets, community ties, and coworkers. Sources of social support could be natural like, family and friends or they can be formal like, mental health specialists or community organizations. Support that comes via a romantic partner is linked with both mental and physical health benefits, specifically for men. The social support rendered by families at early stages has been proven to be essential in children's skills to form social competencies, and supportive parental relationships are beneficial for college going students.

### *Costs*

Despite the numerous benefits of social support, it is not always fruitful. It has been theorized that if the social support has to be effective, then the required social support by the provider must be in line with the support rendered to the person. This is precisely known as the matching hypothesis. If a deviating support is provided than what the person desires to get, for example, monetary support is given in place of educational support; this may lead to increased degrees of distress known as psychological stress. Heightened levels of assumed stress can impact the effectiveness of social support on outcomes related to a person's health.

There have been other costs linked with social support. Such as, received support has not been associated constantly with either physical or mental health. Further, if social support becomes extremely intrusive, then it could heighten stress levels in people.

### **3.2 Support group**

The social support groups are a source of informational support. They impart valuable educational information, and emotional support, which includes motivation from people who experience similar situations. There have been studies that have proven the significance of the effects of social support group interventions in various circumstances, including support groups via the internet.



Figure 2 Social Support

### *Providing Support*

Providing support to others, involves both pros and cons. To provide extended care and support for someone else is a chronic stressor which has been linked with various forms of anxiety, depression, problems in the immune system, and heightened rate of mortality. However, there are health benefits also associated with receiving support. In fact, giving instrumental support to peers, relatives, and neighbors, or emotional support to spouses has been associated to an important decrement in the risk for mortality. Also, a recent neuro imaging revealed that providing support to an important person during a distressful experience increased activity in reward areas of the brain.

### *Gender Differences*

Researches done on social support have also gender differences. The results of few researches showed that females are more inclined towards taking social support like talking to friends, community members, etc. On the other hand, males tend to stay little aloof. They generally do not go around sharing their problems with friends or co-workers. This difference could be due the changes in the hormonal make up of males and females. Females find a way to let out their emotions which is also known as catharsis while men mostly keep their emotions inside. Men who are single are comparatively more depressed than married men. Since married men, take out their emotions on their wives and feel relieved.

## **4. Family**

### **4.1 Family**

A family, is a group of people who are associated with each other by birth, by genotype i.e. The genetic makeup, by marriage, by sharing the same residence or shared consumption. The immediate family members comprise of parents, siblings; brother and sister, spouse, son and daughter. The extended family members include grandparents, aunt, uncle, cousin, nephew and niece, or sibling-in-law. People close to each other in a family generally share personal information with each other that they would not share with anyone else.



Figure 3 Showing a Family

### ***Theoretical Explanations***

The Environment of a family system is "seen as an open system and a component of the larger community and society, with the perception that families gain from and contribute to the network of relationships and resources in the community" (McCubbin & McCubbin, 1989). Harmony is needed for an equilibrium within the individual, family, and community (Sobralke, 1985). Attaining and maintaining harmony with oneself, family, and community are important social goals.

### ***Resiliency Model of Family Stress, Adjustment, and Adaptation***

This model was proposed by McCubbin in the year 1993. The model is comprised of two distinct parts: the Adjustment Phase and the Adaptation Phase. Each phase emphasizes the family's ability to cope up with illness, or stressors looking at family strengths, resources, and coping/problem-solving abilities.

The original model of family stress that was developed by Rueben Hill in 1949 had four basic assumptions. These were:

1. The events that are not anticipated or planned are generally perceived as stressful.
2. The events that occur within the family, for example death of father or some chronic illness is more disturbing and stressful in comparison to those stressors that take place in the external world. Like war, tsunami, earthquakes, etc.
3. When people don't have any experience with a stressor in past, this also leads to heightened perceptions of stress causing events.
4. Stressors that are ambiguous have more disruptive capacity in comparison to the non-ambiguous ones.

#### ***4.1.1 Importance of Families***

A family plays a very important role in every individual's life. It lays the platform for the overall development of an individual including social, emotional, physical, moral and mental. Family provides the environment of growth to its family members, a sense of belongingness and security.

## **5. Summary**

1. Social Support plays an indispensable role in a community. It helps the individuals living in the community as well as the community on the whole to deal with the problems efficiently at the grass root level.

2. Families play a very crucial role in helping its members face the problems and overcome them. When it comes to a family, no one better than the parents would be able to understand their siblings and give them the best advice to handle a problem.

3. Peer groups and friends are also of importance as the youngsters tend to share everything with them at a comfortable level. Sometimes just talking about the issues and problems also help relieve a lot of emotional and psychological stress.

