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**The effect of perceived social support  
On personal and social adjustment of  
orthopaedically and visually handicapped high  
school students**

Sholeh Livarjani. Ph.D

Roya.Rahmani.N. Ph.D

**Abstract**

The study deals with the effect of perceived social support on personal and social adjustment of orthopedically and visually handicapped students. The statistical population was 180 girls and 192 boys high -school students, out of which the sample size of 372 were randomly selected (182 orthopaedically & 190 visually handicapped).

Two standard questionnaires is namely Sarason et.al on social support, and California test of personality Thorp et.al on adjustment (personal & social) were used. A two- by- two factorial design was used. The ANOVA results showed a significant difference between orthopedically and visually handicapped. Regarding handicapped students personal and social adjustment, high and low perceived social support was indicated. The results have also been discussed in light of other investigations.

## INTRODUCTION

In a rapidly changing world of today, each change makes new demands on individual's ability to adjust and encounter with the complex task of adjustment. The well-adjusted individual is one who can cope up successfully and effectively with personal and situational demands (Worchel and Goethals, 1985). Since sources of frustration are many and diversified, one basic source, which lies within most of the individuals, is their personal disability. Evidences indicate that all psychological affects of disabilities are negative, disruptive, annoying, agonizing, and dissatisfying (Shontz, 1970).

In spite of great attention which recently is being given to the handicapped, the bulk of their problems is still unsolved. Although persons with disabilities suffer from a variety of problems, their adjustment can be facilitated if some attention is paid to their personality factors and environment, which significantly contribute to the their adjustment. An important factor related to the family relationship and environment is the social support an individual gets in the process of making adjustment. Having social support seems to benefit people's health (Berkman, 1986). According to Juntunen and Atkinson, (2002) a stable

well-functioning social support network contributes to an individual's sense of safety, coherence, stability, and meaning in life thereby, facilitating his adjustment. Need is therefore, imperative to understand various concepts involved in the study such as adjustment, perceived social support and handicap.

## **METHOD AND PROCEDURE**

The total sample consisted of 372 handicapped subjects. Out of these, 182 belong to orthopaedically and 190 to the visually handicapped girls and boys. All the subjects studying in various grades I-IV in the schools. The present study was advanced by employing a factorial design involving the two ways (2x2) analysis of variance. Firstly, the variable of type of handicap was divided into two categories of handicapped student, namely Orthopaedically and visually handicapped; subjects in each of these two groups were then divided into two groups on their perceived social support that is, high and low social support based on the top 27% and the lowest 27% criterion (Kelly, 1939).

## **QUESTIONNAIRES**

- (1) Measure of adjustment: Persian translated version by Khojaste Mehr (1992) of the original California Test of Personality – (CTP) by Thorpe et al. (1953).
- (2) Measure of social support: Social Support Questionnaire (SSQ) developed and standardized by Sarason et al. (1983).

In the present study the reliability coefficients for measures of California test of personality (CTP) as well as perceived social support, were computed on 372 orthopaedically and visually handicapped student using

Kuder-Richardson formula 20. Results have been placed in the table 1 below.

**Table 1. Reliability coefficients of CTP and SSQ**

Sub-scales of CTP and SSQ	Reliability
CTP (Personal adjustment)	.88
CTP (Social adjustment)	.79
Social support questionnaire (N)	.96
Social support questionnaire (S)	.95

The validity of standardized questionnaires used in this study is well established, these tools are popular and often used in Iran set-up.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

In accordance with the factorial design employed in the study, the main effects of two independent variables that is types of handicap and perceived social support and their interactional effects (of the second order) on the criterion variable of adjustment have been analyzed by using a two way (2x2) ANOVA. In order to locate the trend of differences, the F-test was followed by t-test for examining the significance of differences between two groups. The results of summary of ANOVA along with t-test have been presented bellow.

Table 2

Summary of ANOVA in respect of main effects of TH and PSS along with their interactional effect on PA have been presented below:

n Personal Adjustment (PA)	SS	df	MS	F
Main Effects of Type of Handicapped on Personal Adjustment	410.03	1	410.03	6.42*
	23623.29	370	63.85	-
	24033.32	371	-	-
Main Effects of Perceived Social Support on Personal Adjustment	255.09	1	255.09	4.10*
	12443.50	200	62.22	-
	12698.59	201	-	-
Interactional Effects of Type of Handicapped and Perceived Social Support (TH X PSS) on Social Adjustment	202.45	1	202.54	0.72
	265.10	1	265.10	0.46
Error	5.449	1	5.92	.89
Total	12235.32	198	61.79	-

Table 3

The t-ratio for the difference between means of Type of Handicap and Perceived Social Support in respect of Personal adjustment (PA)

Variable	Group	Mean	SD	t-ratio
Personal Adjustment (PA)	OH	51	8.4	2.53*
	VH	48.9	7.5	
Personal Adjustment (PA)	HSS	51.07	9.51	2.025*
	LSS	46.18	5.83	

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Table 4

Summary of ANOVA in respect of main effects of TH and PSS along with their interactional effect on SA have been presented below

Social Adjustment (SA)	SS	df	MS	F
Main Effects of Type of Handicapped on Social Adjustment	34.41	1	34.41	0.63
	20082.32	370	54.28	-
	20116.73	371	-	-
Main Effects of Perceived Social Support on Social Adjustment	2189.23	1	2189.23	47.68**
	9182.95	200	45.915	-
	11372.18	201	-	-
Interactional Effects of Type of Handicapped and Perceived Social Support (TH X CS) on Personal Adjustment	135.32	1	135.32	2.98
Error	8970.00	198	45.30	-
Total		201	-	-

**Table 5**  
**The t-ratio for the difference between means of Type of Handicap and Perceived Social Support in respect of Personal adjustment (PA)**

Variable	Group	Mean	SD	t-ratio
Social Adjustment (SA)	OH	49.45	8.75	.79
	VH	48.84	5.73	
Variable	HSS	50.75	7.62	6.905**
Social Adjustment (SA)	LSS	44.17	5.81	.79

\* Significant at the .05 level of confidence

\*\* Significant at the .01 level of confidence

The relevant portion of the main effect due to type Handicap (OH and VH) on the criterion variable of personal adjustment drawn from the table of summary of ANOVA (Table 2) along with the result pertaining to comparisons of means (Table 3) show that F-value equal to 6.43 and t-ratio of 2.53 were found to be significant. Whereas the F-ratio (Table 4) due to the effect of type Handicap (OH and VH) on social adjustment was not found significant. Explanation for the present finding may lie in the more severe losses suffered by VH persons than sighted OH. This loss makes him unable to lead full, free and an independent life. His dependence seems contribute to his perception of himself as an object of pity and charity, a life deprived of human dignity and self-respect. Perhaps this is the root of greater isolation and withdrawal tendencies and thus a more severe

feeling of not being at ease with oneself of visually handicapped persons (Rogow, 1972) when compared with orthopaedically handicapped. Moreover there is not much difference between social adjustment of VH and sighted including the OH.

F-values equal to 4.10 and 47.68 (Tables 2 and 4) due to effect of perceived social support (HSS and LSS) on personal and social adjustment was found to be significant. . An examination of their means (Tables 3 and 5) suggest that students in group with high degree of perceived social support (HSS) scored higher (M=51.07 and M=50.75) than group with low perceived social support (M=46.18 and M=44.17) on personal and social adjustment respectively. Therefore, it can be concluded that perceived social support emerges as an important factor of adjustment. The interactional effect of type of handicap and perceived social support both on personal (F=0.89) and social (F=2.98) as shown in (tables 2 and 4) were found to be non significant.

Being a handicapped person, one suffers many losses; starting from physical disorder losses may end to through a feeling of self-pity, loss of self-worth or self-reliance. However, appropriate social support promotes hope, provides guidance, recovers a sense of self-monitors the adequacy of one's functioning, ensures adequate rest, and enable the handicapped to enjoy stability of mood. Therefore, overall adjustment to particular stressful events is embedded in social ties. Results supported by findings of Morrow (1981); Schmaling (1984); Rounds (1986); Sarason, Sarason and Shearin (1986); Ishi-Kuntz (1987); Shisana and Calentano (1987); Richter (1987); Varni, Katz, Colegrore and Dolgin (1994); Jou and Fokada (1994); Kashani, Canfield, Burduin, Soltys and Reid (1994); Zandt, Pearl, Sally and Wang (1994); Furukawa et al. (1999), Reynolds (2001) and Horner (2002), who all revealed that there was a positive relationship

between social support and adjustment .and individuals with less supportive sources feel more isolated, more disturbed, and less cooperative with others.

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