

# Perceived Social Support and Marital Quality: A Comparative Study Among Dual and Single Earner Couples

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## Abstract:

Present study examines the relationship between perceived social support and marital quality among dual and single-earner couples. Using a descriptive design, 130 married individuals completed online questionnaires on perceived social support and marital quality. Results revealed a strong negative correlation, suggesting that couples seeking more external support may experience underlying marital distress. Nevertheless, there were no discernible variations between couples with dual and single earners, suggesting that work status by itself had no direct bearing on these variables. The findings emphasize the importance of coping skills and communication over financial and occupational structures, aligning with theories like Social Exchange and Spillover. They provide insights for mental health practitioners and policymakers to develop targeted support interventions. Future research should explore cultural, psychological, and longitudinal influences on marital quality.

**Keywords:** Marital quality, Perceived Social Support, Single Earner Couples and Dual Earner Couples.

## Introduction:

The evolving dynamics of marital relationships have been significantly influenced by shifts in employment structures, particularly with the rise of dual-earner households. While dual-earner couples face challenges in balancing work and family responsibilities, single-earner couples experience financial dependency and traditional role expectations (Haddock et al., 2001). These differences influence marital quality and perceived social support, which play a crucial role in emotional well-being. Research suggests that strong social support enhances marital satisfaction (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Karney & Bradbury, 2005), whereas work-life balance issues and financial strain can contribute to stress (Voydanoff, 2005; Umberson et al., 2006). However, the extent to which these factors affect relationship quality varies across different family structures (Proulx et al., 2007).

This research investigates the connection between marital quality and perceived social support among dual- and single-earner couples, investigating whether employment status significantly impacts these variables. It explores whether dual-earner couples experience lower marital satisfaction due to role strain (Moen, 2003) or whether single-earner couples face different pressures from financial dependence (Rogers & Amato, 2000). Grounded in theories such as Social Exchange Theory (Bradbury et al., 2000) and Spillover Theory (Bolger et al., 1989; Hill, 2005). The aim of the study is to shed light on the complexities

of modern relationships. Understanding these dynamics can inform policies and interventions that support marital stability across different earning structures.

**Need and Significance of the study:**

Analysing how marital quality and perceived social support differ between both couples is crucial in the context of contemporary family dynamics. As societal norms shift and the prevalence of dual-income households increases, understanding the specific ways in which these structures impact marital satisfaction and the role of social support becomes essential. Insights from this research will help identify tailored support mechanisms that can improve relationship outcomes for both types of couples. Furthermore, the findings will have practical implications for developing targeted interventions and policies that address the specific challenges faced by dual and single-income families. By contributing to a deeper understanding of these dynamics, the study will enhance theoretical frameworks related to social support and marital quality, ultimately guiding future research and informing strategies to foster healthier and more satisfying relationships in various family contexts.

**Review Of Literature**

Beegam et al. (2017) conducted research on "Marital Adjustment among Single and Dual Working Couples". The research aims to uncover differences in how these two groups adjust emotionally, socially, and sexually within their marriages. Using a survey-based methodology, the study distributed questionnaires to married couples and analyzed the data statistically. The findings reveal significant gender differences, with men and women experiencing marital adjustment differently in emotional, social, and sexual dimensions. Interestingly, dual-working couples exhibited better overall marital adjustment compared to single-working couples, suggesting that shared economic responsibilities may positively influence relationship dynamics. Ethnicity, however, was found to have little to no impact on these marital dimensions.

Faisal and Sari (2017) conducted a study on "Comparison of marital satisfaction between dual-earner and single-earner couples". This study analyzed marital satisfaction among dual- and single-earner couples in Indonesia, considering the increasing participation of women in the workforce. 368 husbands and wives participated in their study, which found no discernible difference in the two groups' levels of marital satisfaction. They suggested that factors such as shared decision-making and demographic similarities might contribute to this outcome. Additionally, the findings indicated that neither husbands nor wives from dual- or single-earner households exhibited significant differences in their levels of marital satisfaction, reinforcing the notion that a wife's employment status does not necessarily impact relationship quality.

Obradović and Čudina-Obradović (2013) Conducted a study on "Work Stress and Marital Quality in Dual Earner Couples: A Test of Three Mediation Models". By evaluating three mediation models, this study examines the relationship between work stress and marital quality in couples with two earners. After surveying 340 couples, the researchers examined how work-related stress affected marital happiness by looking at things like depression, marital strain, and negative work-related spillover. The results demonstrate that marital quality is considerably lowered by work stress, and that this detrimental effect is exacerbated by mediating factors. Negative work spillover, in particular, was found to have a strong correlation with marital strain, highlighting the complexity of balancing work and personal life in dual-earner households.

Wider et al. (2019) Conducted a study on "Perceived Social Support and Romantic Relationship Quality: Better Wingman, Parent or Friend? ". This study used a cross-sectional survey approach to look into how emerging adults in Malaysia view their parents' and friends' social support and how it affects the quality of romantic relationships. The updated Social Support Index (SSI) and the Investment Model Scale—Short Version (IMS-S) were given to a sample of young adults in order to collect data. The quality of romantic relationships was evaluated by the IMS-S, whereas the SSI gauged perceived social support from a variety of sources. This design made it possible to compare how much parental versus friend support affected early adult love relationships.

## Method

### Objectives

- To study the significant relationship between marital quality and perceived social support among dual and single earner couples.
- To study if there is any significant difference in perceived social support among dual and single earner couples.
- To study if there is any significant difference in marital quality among dual and single earner couples.

### Variables and Operational definitions

**Marital quality** is the overall assessment of a marriage along a number of dimensions, including both its positive and bad features, is known as marital quality.

**Perceived social support** A person's assessment of the amount of emotional, practical, and informational support they can get from their social network is known as perceived social support.

**Single earner couples** can be defined as a home where only one partner makes money and the other may concentrate on unpaid duties like housework or caregiving is known as a single-earner couple.

**Dual earner couple** can be defined as a married or cohabiting pair in which both partners are engaged in paid employment, contributing to the household's financial well-being.

### Hypotheses

H01: There is no significant relationship between perceived social support and marital quality among dual and single earner couples.

H02: There is no significant difference in level of perceived social support among dual and single earner couple.

H03: There is no significant difference in marital quality among dual and single earner couples.

### Sample

This study employed a simple random sampling method and selected a total of 130 participants. Among them, 47.7% were from dual-income couples, while 52.3% belonged to single-income couples. This sampling approach ensured that participants were selected without bias, allowing for a representative comparison between the two groups. Google form was circulated via online platforms to collect data considering inclusion and exclusion criteria.

### Inclusion Criteria

- Should be Dual-earning or single-earning couples.

- Participants should be married or legally recognized as partners.

## Exclusion Criteria

- Couples who are separated, divorced, or in non-romantic relationships (e.g., roommates or family members) are excluded.
- Couples where the employment status of one or both partners is unclear or fluctuates frequently.

## Tools for the study

Marital Quality Scale (1995) developed by Anisha Shah. The Marital Quality Scale (1995) consists of fifty items. Affection, decision-making, despair, dissolution potential, discontent, dominance, rejection, role function, satisfaction, self-disclosure, trust, and understanding can all be measured by this scale. Moreover, this measure exhibits strong test-retest reliability ( $r=0.83$  over a 6-week period) and great internal consistency (coefficient alpha=0.91). It also has construct validity and content that are well-established.

In 1988, Gregory D. Zimet created the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS). The MSPSS measures three aspects of support—family, friends, and significant others—using a 12-item questionnaire with a 7-point rating system, where 1 represents strongly disagree and 7 represents strongly agree.

## Research Design and Statistical Technique

A descriptive study design combined with a quantitative research methodology was employed. The data were gathered using the simple sampling method. SPSS was used to run correlation and independent sample T test.

**Table 1 Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation Between Perceived Support (PS) and Marital Quality (MQ)**

Variables		1	2
1. Perceived Social Support	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.439**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	130	130
2. Marital Quality	Correlation Coefficient	-.439**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	130	130

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Values indicates that there is a significant negative correlation between variables. This shows that marital quality tends to decline as perceived social support rises.

**Table 2 Independent Samples t-Test for Perceived Social Support based on couples, sample size, mean, std. Deviation, t value, significance.**

Variable	Couples	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
PS	1	68	63.69	17.107	-1.525	.130
	2	62	67.70	12.038		

Table 2 presents the results of an independent samples t-test that is to compare perceived social support (PS) among two groups of couples. Group 1 consists of 68 participants with a mean perceived social support score of 63.69 and a standard deviation of 17.107, while Group 2 consists of 62 participants with a mean score of 67.70 and a standard deviation of 12.038. The t-value obtained from the analysis is -1.525, with a significance level (Sig. 2-tailed) of .130. There is no significant difference in the two groups perceived social support because the p-value is higher than 0.05.

**Table 3 Independent Samples t-Test for Marital Quality based on couples, sample size, mean, std. Deviation, t value, significance.**

Variable	Couples	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
MQ	1	68	73.12	15.405	-0.735	.464
	2	62	75.11	15.399		

Table 3 displays the results of an independent samples t-test conducted to compare marital quality (MQ) between two groups of couples. Group 1 consists of 68 participants with a mean marital quality score of 73.12 and a standard deviation of 15.405, while Group 2 consists of 62 participants with a mean score of 75.11 and a standard deviation of 15.399. The t-value for the comparison is -0.735, with a significance level (Sig. 2-tailed) of .464. The two groups' differences in marital quality are not statistically significant because the p-value is higher than .05.

## Interpretation Of Findings

This study aimed to examine the relationship between perceived social support and marital quality among dual-earner and single-earner couples. Additionally, it sought to determine whether significant differences exist between these two groups regarding these variables.

The correlation analysis revealed a significant negative correlation between the variables. This finding indicates that as perceived social support increases, marital quality tends to decrease, suggesting a complex interaction between these factors. Although previous studies suggest that social support generally enhances relationship satisfaction (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Proulx et al., 2007), the negative correlation found in this study suggests that couples receiving higher social support might be seeking external validation due to underlying marital distress. Furthermore, excessive reliance on external support could interfere with direct problem-solving and communication between partners, leading to lower relationship satisfaction. This aligns with research suggesting that over-dependence on external support may hinder a couple's ability to resolve conflicts independently (Moen, 2003; Haddock et al., 2001). Consequently, H1, stated that there is no significant relationship between the variables.

To further explore differences among these couples, an independent samples t-test was conducted. Perceived social support did not significantly differ between dual-earner couples ( $M = 63.69$ ,  $SD = 17.11$ ) and single-earner couples ( $M = 67.70$ ,  $SD = 12.04$ ), according to the data ( $t(127) = -1.525$ ,  $p = .130$ ). Likewise, no significant difference was found in marital quality between dual-earner couples ( $M = 73.12$ ,  $SD = 15.41$ ) and single-earner couples ( $M = 75.11$ ,  $SD = 15.40$ ),  $t(127) = -0.735$ ,  $p = .464$ . These findings suggest that employment status alone does not significantly impact perceived social support or marital quality. Therefore, H2 and H3, which proposed no significant differences in perceived social support and marital quality between dual- and single-earner couples, are accepted.

Previous research has proposed that dual-earner couples may experience increased role strain and time constraints, potentially reducing marital satisfaction (Voydanoff, 2005). However, the findings in Table 2 indicate that dual-earner couples may develop effective coping mechanisms to balance work and personal life, minimizing any negative effects of employment status. On the other hand, single-earner couples may face challenges related to financial dependence and traditional role expectations, potentially offsetting any presumed advantage of having a stay-at-home partner (Haddock et al., 2001).

These results align with the equity theory (Walster, Berscheid, & Walster, 1973), which suggests that perceptions of fairness in relationship contributions—rather than employment status are more important in influencing the level of marital satisfaction. Regardless of whether both partners are employed, the way responsibilities and support systems are managed appears to be more important in determining the quality of a marriage.

## Summary and Conclusion

The aim of the study was to examine the relationship between perceived social support and marital quality among dual and single-earner couples. Findings indicated that negative correlation between variables, suggesting that higher external support may be linked to underlying relationship distress. However, no significant differences were found between the two groups, indicating that employment status alone does not determine these factors. The results highlight the importance of coping strategies, relationship management, and communication over financial or employment structures in marital quality, emphasizing the need for further research on work-life balance and social support utilization.

## Implications

The study highlights the need for workplace policies supporting work-life balance, flexible schedules, and childcare to ease marital strain, especially for dual-earner couples. Therapists can help couples foster internal coping mechanisms, while community programs can provide structured support to reduce financial and work-life stressors. Relationship programs focusing on communication and conflict resolution can enhance marital satisfaction. These findings contribute to theories like Social Exchange and Spillover, emphasizing how social support influences marital dynamics.

## Limitations

- The study was conducted with a sample of 130 participants, which may not be representative of broader populations across different socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds.
- Other important factors, such as financial stress, parenting responsibilities, and mental health, were not extensively analyzed.



- The study did not account for cultural variations in marital expectations and social support systems, which may influence results.

### Suggestions for Future Research

- Future research should track couples over time to understand how social support and marital quality evolve in response to life changes.
- Future research should integrate additional psychosocial factors such as financial stress, parenting duties, and communication styles to provide a more holistic understanding.
- Incorporating participants from a wider range of age groups, relationship lengths, and socioeconomic backgrounds would yield a more thorough knowledge of perceived support and marital quality.

### Ethics Followed

- The participants' personal information and responses were kept private.
- Participants' anonymity was protected during the study.
- Data were used only for research purposes.

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