SOCIAL SUPPORT QUESTIONNAIRE

Reference:

Sarason, I.G., Levine, H.M., Basham, R.B., et al. (1983). Assessing social support: The Social Support Questionnaire. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 44*, 127-139.

Description of Measure:

A 27-item questionnaire designed to measure perceptions of social support and satisfaction with that social support. Each item is a question that solicits a two-part answer: Part 1 asks participants to list all the people that fit the description of the question, and Part 2 asks participants to indicate how satisfied they are, in general, with these people.

Abstracts of Selected Related Articles:

Sarason, I. G., Sarason, B. R., Shearin, E. N., Pierce, G. R. (1987). A brief measure of social support: Practical and theoretical implications. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 4*, 497-510.

Two studies leading to the development of a short form of the Social Support Questionnaire (SSQ) are reported. In Study 1 three items selected for high correlations with the total score (SSQ3) were administered to 182 university students together with several personality measures. SSQ3 had acceptable test-retest reliability and correlations with personality variables similar to those of the SSQ. Internal reliability was marginal although acceptable for an instrument with so few items. Study 2 employed three sets of data in developing a six-item instrument (SSQ6). The SSQ6 had high internal reliability and correlated highly with the SSQ and similarly to it with personality variables. The research findings accompanying the development of the short form social support measure suggest that perceived social support in adults may be a reflection of early attachment experience.

Schaefer, C., Coyne, J. C., Lazarus, R. S. (1981). The health related functions of social support. *Journal of Behavioral Medicine, 4*, 381-406.

Social support research has been hampered by a lack of clarity both in the definitions of social support and in the conceptualization of its effects on health outcomes. The present study compared social network size and three types of perceived social support—tangible, emotional, and informational —in relation to stressful life events, psychological symptoms and morale, and physical health status in a sample of 100 persons 45–64 years old. Social network size was empirically separable from, though correlated with, perceived social support and had a weaker overall relationship to outcomes than did support. Low tangible support and emotional support, in addition to certain life events, were independently related to depression and negative morale; informational support was associated with positive morale. Neither social support nor stressful life events were associated with physical

health. It was concluded that social support research would benefit from attention to the multidimensionality of support and greater specificity in hypotheses about the relationship between types of support and adaptational outcomes.

Pierce, G. R., Sarason, I. G., & Sarason, B. R. (1991). General and relationship-based perceptions of social support: are two constructs better than one? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 61*, 1028-1039.

Two hypotheses derived from a theory of perceived social support were investigated: (a) relationship-based perceptions of social support are distinct from general perceptions of support, and (b) measures of each construct contribute uniquely to the prediction of loneliness. Ninety-four male and 116 female undergraduates completed measures of loneliness and general perceived social support and the Quality of Relationships Inventory, a new instrument to assess relationship-based perceptions of social support, conflict, and depth in specific relationships. General and relationship-based perceptions of social support were found to be related, but empirically distinct, constructs. Relationship-based perceptions of support and conflict from mothers and friends each added to the prediction of loneliness after considering the contribution of general perceived social support. Implications of these findings for understanding the perceived social support construct are discussed.

Scale:

The SSQ instructions, Questionnaire Items, and Scoring Information is available at http://web.psych.washington.edu/research/sarason/files/SocialSupportQuestionnaire.pdf

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SOCIAL SUPPORT QUESTIONNAIRE— shortened version

Reference:

Sarason, I. G., Sarason, B. R., Shearin, E. N., Pierce, G. R. (1987). A brief measure of social support: Practical and theoretical implications. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 4*, 497-510.

Description of Measure:

A 6-item questionnaire designed to measure social support. Each item is a question that solicits a two-part answer: Part 1 asks participants to list all the people that fit the description of the question, and Part 2 asks participants to indicate how satisfied they are, in general, with these people. This questionnaire is a shortened version of the original Social Support Questionnaire (Sarason et al., 1983).
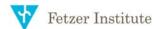
Abstracts of Selected Related Articles:

Sarason, I.G., Levine, H.M., Basham, R.B., et al. (1983). Assessing social support: The Social Support Questionnaire. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 44*, 127-139.

A measure of social support, the Social Support Questionnaire (SSQ), is described and four empirical studies employing it are described. The SSQ yields scores for (a) number of social supports, and (b) satisfaction with social support that is available. Three of the studies deal with the SSQ's psychometric properties, its correations with measures of personality and adjustment, and the relationship of the SSQ to positive and negative life changes. The fourth study was an experimental investigation of the relationship between social support and persistence in working on a complex, frustrating task. The research reported suggests that the SSQ is a reliable instrument, and that social support is (1) more strongly related to positive than negative life changes, (2) more related in a negative direction to psychological discomfort among women than men, and (3) an asset in enabling a person to persist at a task under frustrating conditions. Research and clinical implications are discussed.

Leserman, J., Petitto, J. M., Golden, R. N., et al. (2000). Impact of stressful life events, depression, social support, coping, and cortisol on progression to AIDS. *The American Journal of Psychiatry, 157*, 1221-1228.

OBJECTIVE: This study examined prospectively the effects of stressful events, depressive symptoms, social support, coping methods, and cortisol levels on progression of HIV-1 infection. METHOD: Eighty-two homosexual men with HIV type-1 infection without AIDS or symptoms at baseline were studied every 6 months for up to 7.5 years. Men were recruited from rural and urban areas in North Carolina, and none was using antiretroviral medications at entry. Disease

progression was defined as CD4[+] lymphocyte count <200/µl or the presence of an AIDS indicator condition. RESULTS: Cox regression models with time-dependent covariates were used adjusting for race, baseline CD4[+] count and viral load, and cumulative average antiretroviral medications. Faster progression to AIDS was associated with higher cumulative average stressful life events, coping by means of denial, and higher serum cortisol as well as with lower cumulative average satisfaction with social support. Other background (e.g., age, education) and health habit variables (e.g., tobacco use, risky sexual behavior) did not significantly predict disease progression. The risk of AIDS was approximately doubled for every 1.5-unit decrease in cumulative average support satisfaction and for every cumulative average increase of one severe stressor, one unit of denial, and 5 mg/dl of cortisol. CONCLUSIONS: Further research is needed to determine if treatments based on these findings might alter the clinical course of HIV-1 infection.

Dumont, M. & Provost, M. A. (1999). Resilience in adolescents: Protective role of social support, coping strategies, self-esteem, and social activities on experience of stress and depression. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 28*, 343-363.

In this study, 297 adolescents (141 eighth graders and 156 eleventh graders) were classified into 3 groups created from crossing scores of depressive symptoms and frequency of daily hassles: well adjusted, resilient, and vulnerable. A discriminant function analysis was performed to investigate group differences on self-esteem, social support, different strategies of coping, and different aspects of social life. The analysis revealed that self-esteem, problem-solving coping strategies, and antisocial and illegal activities with peers helped to discriminate groups: Well-adjusted adolescents had higher self-esteem than adolescents in the 2 other groups; in addition, resilient adolescents had higher self-esteem than vulnerable adolescents. For the second significant discriminating variables, antisocial and illegal activities with peers, both resilient and vulnerable adolescents had higher scores than well-adjusted adolescents. Finally, resilient adolescents had higher scores on problem-solving coping strategies than adolescents in the 2 other groups.

Scale:

The SSQ-shortened version's instructions, items, and scoring information are available at

http://web.psych.washington.edu/research/sarason/files/SocialSupportQuestionnaireShort.pdf

INTERPERSONAL SUPPORT EVALUATION LIST
shortened version -12 items

Reference:

Cohen S., Mermelstein R., Kamarck T., & Hoberman, H.M. (1985). Measuring the functional components of social support. In Sarason, I.G. & Sarason, B.R. (Eds), *Social support: theory, research, and applications*. The Hague, Netherlands: Martinus Niijhoff.

Description of Measure:

A 12-item measure of perceptions of social support. This measure is a shortened version of the original ISEL (40 items; Cohen & Hoberman, 1983). This questionnaire has three different subscales designed to measure three dimensions of perceived social support. These dimensions are:
1.) Appraisal Support
2.) Belonging Support
3.) Tangible Support

Each dimension is measured by 4 items on a 4-point scale ranging from "Definitely True" to "Definitely False".

Abstracts of Selected Related Articles:

Cohen, S., & Hoberman, H. (1983). Positive events and social supports as buffers of life change stress. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 13*, 99-125.

50-70 college students were administered a test battery that included a newly developed measure of perceived availability of support (the Interpersonal Support Evaluation List) and measures of life events, depression, and physical symptoms. Both perceived availability of social support (SS) and number of positive events (PEs) moderated the relationship between negative life stress and depressive and physical symptomatology. In the case of depressive symptoms, the data fit a "buffering" hypothesis pattern, suggesting that both SS and PEs protect one from the pathogenic effects of high levels of life stress but are relatively unimportant for those with low levels of stress. In the case of physical symptoms, the data only partially support the buffering hypothesis, suggesting that both SS and PEs protect one from the pathogenic effects of high levels of stress but harm those (i.e., are associated with increased symptomatology) with low levels of stress. Further analyses suggest that self-esteem and appraisal support were primarily responsible for the reported interactions between negative life stress and SS.

Pantelidou, S. & Craig, T. K. J. (2006). Culture shock and social support. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology, 41*, 777-781.

Background Culture shock is a form of psychological distress associated with migration. Social support has been identified as significantly related to the onset,

course and outcome of many psychological disorders. Aim The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between culture shock and social support, in terms of size, diversity of the social network and quality of support received, in Greek students, in the UK. Method A total of 133 students completed 3 self-administered questionnaires: Culture Shock Questionnaire, Social Support Questionnaire and General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12). Results Gender and the quality of support received were found to be strongly associated with culture shock. Furthermore, culture shock was significantly positively related to the level of current dysphoria and diminished with time. Conclusion Social support is an important factor associated with the degree of culture shock and should be taken into consideration in order to protect against or help to overcome this kind of psychological distress experienced by migrants.

Minnebo, J. (2005). Psychological distress, perceived social support, and television viewing for reasons of companionship: A test of the compensation hypothesis in a population of crime victims. *Communications, 30*, 233-250.

Becoming a crime victim is often associated with the development of psychological distress symptoms. In turn, these symptoms have been found to be related to a decrease in perceived social support by the victim. From a uses and gratifications point of view, the increase in distress and the decrease in perceived social support could well affect a victim's television use. Furthermore, the compensation hypothesis (Davis & Kraus, 1989) proposes that people with little social contact use mass media to compensate for social isolation. It could therefore be hypothesized that increased use of television for reasons of companionship is related to higher levels of psychological distress and lower levels of perceived social support. The present study used a structural equation model to test this hypothesis. The sample consisted of 212 Flemish victims of crime. The results confirm the proposed relationships and hypotheses. Directions for future research are discussed.

Scale:

Instructions: This scale is made up of a list of statements each of which may or may not be true about you. For each statement circle "definitely true" if you are sure it is true about you and "probably true" if you think it is true but are not absolutely certain. Similarly, you should circle "definitely false" if you are sure the statement is false and "probably false" if you think it is false but are not absolutely certain.

1. If I wanted to go on a trip for a day (for example, to the country or mountains), I would have a hard time finding someone to go with me.

  1. definitely false   2. probably false   3. probably true   4. definitely true

2. I feel that there is no one I can share my most private worries and fears with.

  1. definitely false   2. probably false   3. probably true   4. definitely true

3. If I were sick, I could easily find someone to help me with my daily chores.

1. definitely false   2. probably false   3. probably true   4. definitely true

4. There is someone I can turn to for advice about handling problems with my family.

1. definitely false   2. probably false   3. probably true   4. definitely true

5. If I decide one afternoon that I would like to go to a movie that evening, I could easily find someone to go with me.

1. definitely false   2. probably false   3. probably true   4. definitely true

6. When I need suggestions on how to deal with a personal problem, I know someone I can turn to.

1. definitely false   2. probably false   3. probably true   4. definitely true

7. I don't often get invited to do things with others.

1. definitely false   2. probably false   3. probably true   4. definitely true

8. If I had to go out of town for a few weeks, it would be difficult to find someone who would look after my house or apartment (the plants, pets, garden, etc.).

1. definitely false   2. probably false   3. probably true   4. definitely true

9. If I wanted to have lunch with someone, I could easily find someone to join me.

1. definitely false   2. probably false   3. probably true   4. definitely true

10. If I was stranded 10 miles from home, there is someone I could call who could come and get me.

1. definitely false   2. probably false   3. probably true   4. definitely true

11. If a family crisis arose, it would be difficult to find someone who could give me good advice about how to handle it.

1. definitely false   2. probably false   3. probably true   4. definitely true

12. If I needed some help in moving to a new house or apartment, I would have a hard time finding someone to help me.

1. definitely false   2. probably false   3. probably true   4. definitely true

Scoring:

Items 1, 2, 7, 8, 11, 12 are reverse scored.
Items 2, 4, 6, 11 make up the Appraisal Support subscale
Items 1, 5, 7, 9 make up the Belonging Support subscale
Items, 3, 8, 10, 12 make up the Tangible Support subscale.

All scores are kept continuous.

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INTERPERSONAL SUPPORT EVALUATION LIST (ISEL)

Reference:

Cohen, S., & Hoberman, H. (1983). Positive events and social supports as buffers of life
    change stress. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 13*, 99-125.

Description of Measure:

    A 40-item scale made up of four subscales. The subscales are:
        1.) Tangible Support
        2.) Belonging Support
        3.) Self-esteem Support
        4.) Appraisal Support.

Participants rate each item's statement on how true or false they believe it is for
themselves. All answers are given on a 4-point scale ranging from "Definitely True" to
"Definitely False".

Abstracts of Selected Related Articles:

Dunkel-Schetter, C., Folkman, S., & Lazarus, R. S. (1987) Correlates of social support
receipt. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 53, 71-80

    Psychological correlates of social support receipt were examined in an investigation
of stress and coping among 150 middle-aged community residents. Subjects were
interviewed monthly for 6 months, each time concerning a specific stressful situation
in the previous month. Social support received and methods of coping were assessed
each time, as well as other variables. Factors hypothesized to be associated with
support receipt were person predispositions, appraisal patterns with regard to
specific stressful encounters, and coping strategies used. Each was most strongly
associated with a particular type of social support. Person predispositions related
most strongly to emotional support received, appraisal factors related most strongly
to aid, and coping strategies related most to informational support received.
Furthermore, of the three sets of variables, the individual's ways of coping appeared
to be most strongly associated with all types of social support received. Two
implications are explored. First, we suggest that the three types of social support
studied represent different constructs with different antecedents and consequences.
Second, we argue that coping behavior provides interpersonal cues regarding what is
wanted or needed in a stressful situation and that the members of the social
environment respond accordingly.

Taylor, S. E. & Brown, J. D. (1988). Illusion and well-being: A social psychological
    perspective on mental health. *Psychological Bulletin, 103*, 193-210

    Many prominent theorists have argued that accurate perceptions of the self, the
world, and the future are essential for mental health. Yet considerable research

evidence suggests that overly positive self-evaluations, exaggerated perceptions of control or mastery, and unrealistic optimism are characteristic of normal human thought. Moreover, these illusions appear to promote other criteria of mental health, including the ability to care about others, the ability to be happy or contented, and the ability to engage in productive and creative work. These strategies may succeed, in large part, because both the social world and cognitive-processing mechanisms impose filters on incoming information that distort it in a positive direction; negative information may be isolated and represented in as unthreatening a manner as possible. These positive illusions may be especially useful when an individual receives negative feedback or is otherwise threatened and may be especially adaptive under these circumstances.

Cohen S., Mermelstein R., Kamarck T., & Hoberman, H.M. (1985). Measuring the functional components of social support. In Sarason, I.G. & Sarason, B.R. (Eds), *Social support: theory, research, and applications.* The Hague, Netherlands: Martinus Niijhoff.

In the last several years, we have been interested in the role social supports play in protecting people from the pathogenic effects of stress. By social supports, we mean the resources that are provided by other persons (cf. Coehn & Syme, 1985). Although others have investigated and in some cases found evidence for a "buffering" hypothesis—that social support protects persons from the pathogenic effects of stress but is relatively unimportant for unexposed individuals, there are difficulties in interpreting this literature. First, there are almost as many measures of social support as there are studies. Hence it is difficult to compare studies and to determine why support operates as a stress buffer in some cases, but no in others. Second, in the vast majority of work, support measures are used without regard to their psychometric properties or their appropriateness for the question under study. For example, studies using measures assessing the structure of social networks (e.g., how many friends do you have?) are seldom distinguished form those addressing the functions that networks might serve (e.g., do you have someone you can talk to about personal problems?). In fact, in many cases, structural and functional items are thrown together into single support indices resulting in scores that have little conceptual meaning. In the context of the limitations of earlier work, we developed our own social support instrument to study the support buffering process. This chapter describes the questions we wanted to address, the assumptions we needed to make in order to develop an instrument that addressed these questions, the instrument itself, its psychometric properties, and data on the relationship between support and well-being that has been collected by ourselves and others with this instrument.

Scale:

INSTRUCTIONS: This scale is made up of a list of statements each of which may or may not be true about you. For each statement check "definitely true" if you are sure it is true about you and "probably true" if you think it is true but are not absolutely certain.

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Similarly, you should check "definitely false" if you are sure the statement is false and "probably false" is you think it is false but are not absolutely certain.

1. There are several people that I trust to help solve my problems.
____definitely true (3) ____definitely false (0)
____probably true (2) ____probably false (1)

2. If I needed help fixing an appliance or repairing my car, there is someone who would help me.
____definitely true (3) ____definitely false (0)
____probably true (2) ____probably false (1)

3. Most of my friends are more interesting than I am.
____definitely true (3) ____definitely false (0)
____probably true (2) ____probably false (1)

4. There is someone who takes pride in my accomplishments.
____definitely true (3) ____definitely false (0)
____probably true (2) ____probably false (1)

5. When I feel lonely, there are several people I can talk to.
____definitely true (3) ____definitely false (0)
____probably true (2) ____probably false (1)

6. There is no one that I feel comfortable to talking about intimate personal problems.
____definitely true (3) ____definitely false (0)
____probably true (2) ____probably false (1)

7. I often meet or talk with family or friends.
____definitely true (3) ____definitely false (0)
____probably true (2) ____probably false (1)

8. Most people I know think highly of me.
____definitely true (3) ____definitely false (0)
____probably true (2) ____probably false (1)

9. If I needed a ride to the airport very early in the morning, I would have a hard time finding someone to take me.
____definitely true (3) ____definitely false (0)
____probably true (2) ____probably false (1)

10. I feel like I'm not always included by my circle of friends.
____definitely true (3) ____definitely false (0)
____probably true (2) ____probably false (1)

11. There really is no one who can give me an objective view of how I'm handling my problems.

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____definitely true (3) ____definitely false (0)
____probably true (2) ____probably false (1)

12. There are several different people I enjoy spending time with.
____definitely true (3) ____definitely false (0)
____probably true (2) ____probably false (1)

13. I think that my friends feel that I'm not very good at helping them solve their problems.
____definitely true (3) ____definitely false (0)
____probably true (2) ____probably false (1)

14. If I were sick and needed someone (friend, family member, or acquaintance) to take me to the doctor, I would have trouble finding someone.
____definitely true (3) ____definitely false (0)
____probably true (2) ____probably false (1)

15. If I wanted to go on a trip for a day (e.g., to the mountains, beach, or country), I would have a hard time finding someone to go with me.
____definitely true (3) ____definitely false (0)
____probably true (2) ____probably false (1)

16. If I needed a place to stay for a week because of an emergency (for example, water or electricity out in my apartment or house), I could easily find someone who would put me up.
____definitely true (3) ____definitely false (0)
____probably true (2) ____probably false (1)

17. I feel that there is no one I can share my most private worries and fears with.
____definitely true (3) ____definitely false (0)
____probably true (2) ____probably false (1)

18. If I were sick, I could easily find someone to help me with my daily chores.
____definitely true (3) ____definitely false (0)
____probably true (2) ____probably false (1)

19. There is someone I can turn to for advice about handling problems with my family.
____definitely true (3) ____definitely false (0)
____probably true (2) ____probably false (1)

20. I am as good at doing things as most other people are.
____definitely true (3) ____definitely false (0)
____probably true (2) ____probably false (1)

21. If I decide one afternoon that I would like to go to a movie that evening, I could easily find someone to go with me.
____definitely true (3) ____definitely false (0)
____probably true (2) ____probably false (1)

22. When I need suggestions on how to deal with a personal problem, I know someone I can turn to.
____definitely true (3) ____definitely false (0)
____probably true (2) ____probably false (1)

23. If I needed an emergency loan of $100, there is someone (friend, relative, or acquaintance) I could get it from.
____definitely true (3) ____definitely false (0)
____probably true (2) ____probably false (1)

24. In general, people do not have much confidence in me.
____definitely true (3) ____definitely false (0)
____probably true (2) ____probably false (1)

25. Most people I know do not enjoy the same things that I do.
____definitely true (3) ____definitely false (0)
____probably true (2) ____probably false (1)

26. There is someone I could turn to for advice about making career plans or changing my job.
____definitely true (3) ____definitely false (0)
____probably true (2) ____probably false (1)

27. I don't often get invited to do things with others.
____definitely true (3) ____definitely false (0)
____probably true (2) ____probably false (1)

28. Most of my friends are more successful at making changes in their lives than I am.
____definitely true (3) ____definitely false (0)
____probably true (2) ____probably false (1)

29. If I had to go out of town for a few weeks, it would be difficult to find someone who would look after my house or apartment (the plants, pets, garden, etc.).
____definitely true (3) ____definitely false (0)
____probably true (2) ____probably false (1)

30. There really is no one I can trust to give me good financial advice.
____definitely true (3) ____definitely false (0)
____probably true (2) ____probably false (1)

31. If I wanted to have lunch with someone, I could easily find someone to join me.
____definitely true (3) ____definitely false (0)
____probably true (2) ____probably false (1)

32. I am more satisfied with my life than most people are with theirs.
____definitely true (3) ____definitely false (0)
____probably true (2) ____probably false (1)

33. If I was stranded 10 miles from home, there is someone I could call who would come and get me.
____definitely true (3) ____definitely false (0)
____probably true (2) ____probably false (1)

34. No one I know would throw a birthday party for me.
____definitely true (3) ____definitely false (0)
____probably true (2) ____probably false (1)

35. It would me difficult to find someone who would lend me their car for a few hours.
____definitely true (3) ____definitely false (0)
____probably true (2) ____probably false (1)

36. If a family crisis arose, it would be difficult to find someone who could give me good advice about how to handle it.
____definitely true (3) ____definitely false (0)
____probably true (2) ____probably false (1)

37. I am closer to my friends than most other people are to theirs.
____definitely true (3) ____definitely false (0)
____probably true (2) ____probably false (1)

38. There is at least one person I know whose advice I really trust.
____definitely true (3) ____definitely false (0)
____probably true (2) ____probably false (1)

39. If I needed some help in moving to a new house or apartment, I would have a hard time finding someone to help me.
____definitely true (3) ____definitely false (0)
____probably true (2) ____probably false (1)

40. I have a hard time keeping pace with my friends.
____definitely true (3) ____definitely false (0)
____probably true (2) ____probably false (1)

Scoring:

Items 3, 6, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 17, 24, 25, 27, 28, 29, 30, 34, 35, 36, 39, and 40 are reverse scored.

Items 1, 6, 11, 17, 19, 22, 26, 30, 36, and 38 make up the Appraisal Support Subscale

Items 2, 9, 14, 16, 18, 23, 29, 33, 35, and 39 make up the Tangible Support Subscale

Items 3, 4, 8, 13, 20, 24, 28, 32, 37, and 40 make up the Self-Esteem Support Subscale

Items 5, 7, 10, 12, 15, 21, 25, 27, 31, and 34 make up the Belonging Support Subscale.

All scores are kept continuous.