# An Investigation of Perceived Spousal Support in **Meskhetian Turkic Married Women**

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**ABSTRACT:** The aim of our study is to examine the perceived spousal support in Meskhetian Turkish married women. We used qualitative research model that the study group of the research consisted of 10 married women living in Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan. In collecting the data, we used the Semi-Structured Interview technique, which consists of five questions in total, including the perceived support of the participants in the research, in housework, childcare, mutual communication, working and social relations, and the evaluation of time together. Research findings revealed that Meskhetian Turkic men support their wives in house cleaning, childcare and in various ways. It was among the results that they did not have problems in communicating, they supported their spouses in working and social relations, and they could spend time together. Even though Meskhetian Turks are a patriarchal society, it is thought that their perceived spousal support has a positive effect on the fact that they live as interdependent groups in the regions they live in, maintain their loyalty to their traditions and customs, and attribute marriage values to children from a young age.

**KEYWORDS:** Family, Perceived Spousal Support, Meskhetian Turkic Married Woman \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Submission: 17-01-2023

Date of Acceptance:02-02-2023 \_\_\_\_\_ 

#### **INTRODUCTION** I.

Marriage is the union of two adult individuals as stipulated by law to provide life partnership and share life. Marriage, which is the first step in creating the family structure, provides family cooperation in social, economic, and cultural terms. The members of the family are also responsible to each other. It is argued that the importance of solving the problems encountered in marriage and the way these problems are solved so that the spouses can provide satisfaction in marriage and the marriage relationship can continue, at this point, spousal support is the most effective resource in coping with the problems. It is known that the first sources of social support for married individuals in crisis situations are their spouses (Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Burke & Weir, 1977).

Yıldırım (2004) defined the concept of "Spousal Support" as "any kind of support that individuals receive from their spouses as a type of social support". Yıldırım (2004) discussed spousal support in four dimensions: appreciation support, emotional support, information and financial support, and social interest support. Emotional support, which is the first of these dimensions, is meeting the needs of the spouse such as feeling valuable, being loved, understanding, being protected, and being cared for. Couples who establish emotional bonds feel strong, valuable and important (Turan & Yalcın, 2015). Curun (2006) argued that the presence of spousal support in the marriage relationship contributes to a more problem-free and happy relationship, thus contributing to relationship satisfaction and increasing the quality of marriage. Spousal support provided is associated with the amount and frequency of support received from the individual's spouse (Schwarzer & Gutierrez-Dona, 2005).

Çağ (2011) concluded that women provide more support than men in terms of spousal support, and the reason for this is that men's needs are prioritized in marriage. In other words, while men take into account their own values and needs while providing support, women provide support by focusing on their husbands' expectations (Dehle & Landers, 2005).Koolaee, Adibrad and Sedgh (2009) emphasize that the concept of social support is a very sensitive concept and argue that not being understood by a woman by her husband makes her husband unfeeling in her eyes, but not being understood by his wife puts his wife in a rude disguise in her eyes, thus triggering this concept. Beckenbach, Patrick and Sells (2010) argue that a consistent, positive, and trustbased relationship positively affects the concepts of self-confidence and self-perception for everyone. Otherwise, individuals become defensive and resort to controlling (private messages, mailboxes, etc.) to a degree that harms each other. It is argued that sufficient support supports the psychological and spiritual wellbeing of everyone in the family, while insufficient support weakens individuals in stressful situations.

Ducanto (2012) states that marriages can fail more easily due to the increase in the age at marriage and life expectancy, individual changes, conflicts, cheating or being cheated on, routinization, life and personal changes, and limited marriage contracts. Thus, in cases where individuals perceive the spousal support from their spouses as insufficient, it triggers the marital satisfaction and well-being of the spouses, which leads to burnout (Çapri & Gökçakan, 2013). In conflicts that arise in marriages, spouses' individual evaluations about a certain emotion are similar and are related to the quality of communication (Soylu & Kağıncı, 2015). Pamuk and Durmuş (2015) and Çağ and Yıldırım (2013) determined that the concept of perceived spousal support is primarily effective in ensuring marital satisfaction and integrity between spouses.

Atzaba-Poria and Pike (2005) determined that the perceived and perceived well-being of spousal support by spouses positively affects both marital satisfaction and coping with children's problem behaviors. On the other hand, Cutrona, Russell and Gardner (2005) argued that in the relationship-development model they developed, the support of spouses to each other increases each other's relationship satisfaction and stability and reinforces their psychological and physiological well-being. Gardner and Cutrona (2004) focused on the adequacy for the partner, not the amount of spousal support. In this context, he suggested that individuals want to receive support from each other in line with their unique and preferences.Dehle, Larsen and Landers (2001) argued that adequate support supports marital satisfaction. As a result of the research, the amount of support for men does not affect the satisfaction in marriage, and for women, both the perceived support and the amount of support, because of the support they show to their spouses, indirectly feel more successful in marriage and get more pleasure from marriage because they think that their spouse is happy and satisfied. However, they argue that the amount and intensity of support is a more effective predictor, especially in women. Thus, since it is important for them to have more perceived support in terms of quantity and intensity, women can both experience loss of expectation and cause conflict by putting pressure on their spouses in marriage because they think that their husbands prefer it that way (Dehle, Larsen & Landers, 2001). The fact that married individuals do not support each other enough during the marriage is a problem that will lead to the unhappiness of both parties and the marriage to wear out more quickly. It has been seen in the literature studies that various studies supporting the family institution in all countries related to this problem have been carried out. Determination of spousal support in Meskhetian Turks is the problem of this research.

# II. METHOD

#### Model of the Research

In the research, we used the descriptive research model, one of the qualitative research methods. The qualitative research method enables the subjective opinions and experiences of the individuals researched to be systematically examined and scientific interpretations can be made with the obtained data (Ekiz, 2003; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). Descriptive methods are intended to reveal the current state of the problem that is of interest and to be investigated. It requires collecting data to test hypotheses about the current situation of the studied subject or to find answers to questions (Büyüköztürk, Akgün, Karadeniz, Demirel & Kılıç, 2016).

#### Study Group of the Research

The study group of this research consists of 10 married Meskhetian Turkic women between the ages of 30-40, living in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, who participated in the research voluntarily.

## **Data Collection Tool**

In the study, the researchers used semi-structured interview technique to collect the data. Interview is defined as the activity of expressing the feelings and thoughts of the individuals participating in the research on a certain subject. The main purpose of the interview is to enter the inner world of the individual and try to understand his point of view. It is hoped to reach unobservable information such as the experiences, attitudes, thoughts, intentions, comments, mental perceptions and reactions of the individual about the researched subject through the interview (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008: 120; Sönmez & G. Alacapınar, 2011: 108). Semi-structured interview, which is a widely used data collection method in qualitative research, is an interview method in which new questions can be asked according to the topics that are predetermined by the researcher or that arise during the interview (Aziz, 1994; Ekiz, 2017; Güler, Halıcıoğlu & Taşğın, 2015). The questions in the semi-structured interview were prepared as open-ended. In order to prepare the interview form, a literature review was conducted and other studies on the subject were scanned. The questions were presented to the expert opinion and the questions were finalized according to the feedback from the expert opinion.

## **Data Collection**

The researchers conducted a national and international literature review in the conceptual and theoretical framework of the study.

The researchers applied the interview form they created in the second part of data collection. They adhered to ethical principles while collecting the data. Before starting the data collection process, necessary permission documents were obtained for the measurement tools to be used. While collecting the data, they paid attention to the voluntary participation of the participants in the study. They prepared an explanation form for the participants and included the purpose of the study and how it would be carried out in a way that the participants could understand. They reassured people that the identities of the participants in the study would remain confidential. They recorded the voices of the participants, whose permission was taken, to obtain the data in a healthier way. Interviews were held between 30-40 minutes.

#### Data Analyses

In the analysis of the data, the researchers benefited from content analysis. Content analysis is done to determine the presence of certain words or concepts in a text or a set of texts. The researcher determines and analyzes the existence, meanings and relationships of these words and concepts and makes inferences about the message in the text. In content analysis, related data are organized as concepts and themes. Meanwhile, data are analyzed in categories and subcategories (Büyüköztürk, Kılıç-Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz & Demirel, 2008; Ekiz, 2017). In this study, the researchers followed the following processes in data analysis. First of all, they conducted interviews with married women, recorded these interviews on a voice recorder, after the interviews were over, they transferred the raw transcripts of the voice recordings to the computer, listened to the voice recordings of the participants again and again and transcribed them in Microsoft Word. In this process, they listened to the audio recordings repeatedly and checked the accuracy with the data in the written MS Word document.

#### III. FINDINGS

In this section, the findings and comments that emerged because of the analysis of the data obtained based on the data collection tools related to the sub-problems of the research are included.

Table 1 shows the analysis of the answers given by the participants to the first question of the research, "In what ways does your spouse help you with housework?".

Participants	Answers	Ν	%
P1,P2,P3,P4,P6,P8 P10	Shopping for home	7	23,8
P2,P3,P4,P6,P8,P10	Setting table	6	20,4
P2, P3,P4,P6,P8	Cooking	5	17
P8,P10,P4,P3,P2	Helping when guests arrive	5	17
P2,P3,P4,P8	Sweeping house	4	13,6
P9, P5	Helping never	2	6,8
Total		29	100

Table 1 reveals that husbands of women support their wives most in housework (N=7, 23,8%). "We do the house shopping together every weekend" P1.

Another intensity from the answers given by the participants revealed that husbands help their wives in setting the table (N=6, 20,4%). *"If necessary, he sets the table and gathers"* P6.

The answers given by the participants with the same intensity are the results that the husbands help their wives to cook (N=5, 17%) and help their guests when they come (N=5, 17%). "When guests come to our house, my husband helps me to set the table, especially he takes care of the table of our male guests" P3. "My husband loves to cook and sometimes cooks for us, and if he is at home, he helps me cook too" P4. It was among the results that husbands helped to vacuum the house with a vacuum cleaner (N=4, 13,6%). "If I am busy with another job, my husband will sweep the house" K8.

The answer given by the participants was that their husbands did not help in any matter in housework (N=2, 6,3%). "My husband does not do anything at home, he has never cooked, he never cleansthe house anyway" K9.

The analysis of the answers given by the participants to the second question of the research is given in Table 2: "What kind of support does your husband give you in childcare?"

Participants	Answers	Ν	%
P1,P2,P3,P4,P5,P6,P7,P8,P9,P10	Taking children for a walk	10	20,4
P1,P2,P3,P4,P5,P6,P7,P8,P10	Bringing children to school	9	18,3
P2,P3,P4,P6,P8,P9,P10	Providing support while educating children	7	14,2
P1,P2,P3,P4,P7,P10	Helping children in their lessons	6	12,2
P2,P3,P4,P7,P8,P10	Bathing the children	6	12,2
P2,P3,P4,P5,P7,P10	Taking care of children when mother is not at home	6	12,2
P2,P3,P4,P6,P10	Putting children to sleep	5	10,2
	Total	49	100

**Table 2.**Supports of Husbands in Childcare

Table 2 revealed that husbands mostly take their children to travel out of the support they give to their wives in childcare (N=10, 20.4%). "*He takes the children for a walk without me, and they have a lot of fun together*" P4. The answers given by the participants are that husbands support their wives by bringing their children to school (N=9, 18,3%). "*He takes them to school in the morning and he picks them up in the evening*" P7.

The answers given by the participants are the finding that husbands support their wives while educating their children (N =7, 14,2%). *"He supports me when I want to discipline the children and he always follows the rules I set while training the children"* P10.

According to the answers given by the participants at the same level, their husbands bath the children, help the children with their lessons, and take care of the children when their wives are not at home (N=6, 12,2%). "If I am not available, my husband will bath the children. Children love their fathers bathing them very much" P7. "He likes to teach with children and always follows their education" P2. "When I meet with my girlfriends or go to the wedding alone, my husband takes care of the children all day" P5.

The answers given by the participants are that husbands put children to sleep (N=5, 10,2%). "Some nights he puts the children to sleep, some nights I do not notice, whoever is available at that moment" P6.

The analysis of the answers given by the participants to the third question of the research is given in Table 3: "How does your husband evaluate your work and social relations?"

Participants	Answers	Ν	%
P1,P2,P3,P4,P6,P7,P8,P10	Not interfering in his wife's work	8	36,3
P3,P4,P5,P6,P8,P10	Behaving positively to spending time with her friends	6	27,2
		4	18,1
P2,P7,P9,P10	0 Meeting her social relations sometimes positively or negatively		
P1,P2	Finding social relationships unnecessary	2	9,09
P5,P9	Not letting his wife work	2	9,09
Total			22 100

#### Table 3. Husbands' Evaluations of Their Wives' Works and Social Relations

Table 3 revealed that most husbands do not interfere in their wives' work (N=8, 36,3%). "I was not working at the beginning of our marriage, I wanted to work when the children grew up a little, my husband supported this issue" P7.

One of the answers given by the participants was that their husbands viewed women's spending time with their friends positively (N=6, 27,2%). "Whenever I want, I meet with my friends or they come to us, it is never a problem" P6.

Another answer given by the participants was that social husbands sometimes found their wives' relationships positive, but sometimes they caused problems (N=4, 18,1%). "The current state of affairs is very important, if he does not want it, he will not allow it or he will not look positively" K9.

According to the answers given by the participants at the same level, husbands find their wives' social relations unnecessary and do not allow them to work (N=2, 9,09%). "He finds it unnecessary for me to meet with friends or do something with my colleagues, he says we socialize enough as a family" K1. "He definitely does not want me to work, he says that if I am not at home, the development of the children will be insufficient" K5.

The analysis of the answers given by the participants to the fourth question of the research is given in Table 4: "What kinds of topics do you talk about with your husband?"

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Participants	Answers	ľ	N	%
P1,P2,P3,P4,P5,P6,P7,P8,P9,P10	The future, children and their education, everyday issues	10	37	
P1,P2,P5,P6,P7,P9,P10	Financial, home economics	7	25,9	
P3,P4,P5,P6,P7,P8,P10	Sexuality	7	25,9	
P3,P4,P7	Policy	3	11,1	
Total		4'	7	100

Table 4. Topics That Wives and HusbandsCan Talk About
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Table 4 reveled that the participants talked about their future, daily ordinary issues and their children as findings showing the same level of intensity (N=10, 37%). "We usually talk about our future, how and where we will continue our life" K10. "We talk about what we did in the daily routine that day" K3. "We are talking about children's lessons, courses" K4.

Another of the answers given by the participants at the same level of intensity is the result that they talk about material, monetary, home economics and sexuality (N=7, 25.9%). "We are talking about bills, where and how much to pay, how much we have been able to save this month" K2. "We send each other sexually explicit messages; we can talk about these subjects comfortably when we are alone at home" K8.

Another intensity of the answers given by the participants is that they talk about politics (N=3, 11,1%). "We like to watch the news and we follow it all the time, we always talk about politics" K7.

The analysis of the answers given by the participants to the fifth question of the research is given in Table 5: "How do you spend time with your spouse?"

Participants	Answers		Ν	%
P1,P2,P3,P4,P5,P6,P7,P8,P9,P10	Visiting guests, gossiping, having tea, and chatting together at home at evening	10	31	
P1,P2,P3,P4,P7,P8,P10	Going to shopping	7	21,7	
P1,P2,P3,P4,P5	Watching Movies at Home	5	15,5	
P1,P3,P4,P7	Going on vacation	4	12,4	
P2,P3,P4	Going to cinema	3	9,3	
P3,P4,P6	Go out to dinner on special occasions	3	9,3	
	Total		32	100

 Table 5. Spouses Spending Time Together

When Table 5 was examined, it was concluded that the answers given by the participants showed the same level of intensity as they chatted, drank tea, and gossiped in the evenings at the house where they went to the guest house (N=10, 31%). "We go to visit our friends and relatives together" K4. "Even if we do not eat after work, we always drink tea, chat, talk about what we are doing" K1. "I am afraid to say this, but we love to gossip, if we come from any wedding, we will definitely sit down and gossip about everyone" K8.

It was also concluded that they went shopping (N=7, 21,7%). "Sometimes we go shopping for the kids, sometimes for the house" K2.

Another intensity of the answers given by the participants was that they watched movies together at home (N=5, 15.5%). "If there is a good movie or if there is a good movie on the internet, we watch it together after everyone is asleep" K5.

Another intensity of the answers given by the participants was that they went on vacation (N=4, 12,4%). *"Every summer we definitely take a one-week vacation"* K7.

Another result from the answers given by the participants was that they went to the movies and went out to dinner alone on special occasions (N=3, 9,3%). "After the children grew up a little, we started going to the movies alone, we go as soon as a good movie comes" K4. "We definitely want to make changes on our women's day, birthday, valentine's day and wedding anniversary and we are going somewhere together" K6.

# IV. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the conclusions reached in the direction of the findings obtained by the analysis of the data, the discussion of these results and suggestions in the direction of these results are given.

In the study, the findings revealed that husbands help their wives in housework showed that although they did not help at all in housework, they were helped in every matter at home, in shopping for the house, in cleaning the house, in setting the table, in cooking and when guests came. Other studies supporting the results of the study were found in the literature. Ayer (2016) concluded that the individual's perception of his marriage is positive as he receives support from his spouse in sharing the housework within the marital relationship. Frazier, Tix, and Barnett (2003) found that couples who are not satisfied with their relationships have less spousal support than couples who are satisfied with their relationships. Dehle (2001) revealed that adequate perceived support was inversely related to marital quality, perceived stress, and depressive symptoms.

The results of the study regarding the subjects that husbands help their wives in childcare revealed that fathers take children to and from school, take children for walks, help to baththem, support them while educating, put them to sleep, help them in their lessons, and take care of them when their wives not at home. Ayer (2016) concluded that the individual's perception of his marriage is positive as he receives support from his spouse about sharing in childcare within the marital relationship. A similar literature on the importance of childcare in spousal support was found in the study of Twenge et al. (2003). They found that the perception of a fair division of childcare among spouses within the home was more important than the equitable basis of perceived spousal support. Goldberg and Perry-Jenkins (2004) emphasized the importance of equal support of spouses in childcare for mental health, and they found that women's view of the distribution of duties in childcare as more unfair than the distribution of responsibilities in other household chores caused them to experience more stress.

The results of the study regarding husbands' evaluation of their wives' work and social relations showed that women do not interfere with their work, sometimes they find their social relations positive but sometimes they cause problems, they find social relations unnecessary and not allow them to work, despite the positive response to their spending time with their friends. It is obvious that the spouses' giving each other personal space and their existence in social life are very important for mental health. Lipovetsky (1999) argues that women want to work and rise because they think that it will make them have a say in both their business and social lives. Women want to show that they are talented in many fields like men and that they can be successful by using the qualities they have acquired. When women cannot reach their desires, they sometimes feel a sense of inadequacy and defeat. Dehle, Larsen, and Landers (2001) similarly argued that adequate support supports marital satisfaction. Diener and Ryan (2009) emphasized that individuals who have many friends and family members tend to have higher subjective well-being. Cohen and Wills (1985) also stated that individuals who are in a social support system can cope with problems and negative conditions more easily. Stolzenberg (2001) determined that spouses contribute to each other's physical and psychological well-being by reducing psychological stress and providing supportive social contact and financial support to each other. Diener and Ryan (2009) stated that social support provided by other family members and friends contributes significantly to the individual's psychological well-being. Lyons, Henly, and Schuerman (2005) think that social support acts as a buffer in reducing the stress experienced by women due to their multiple roles in the family and the accompanying burnout.

The results of the research regarding the topics revealed that spouses talked about our future, sexuality, everyday issues, children and their education, material, and monetary home economy. It has been learned that Meskhetian Turkic married couples communicate with each other on various issues. Ayer (2016) concluded that the individual's perception of his marriage is positive as he receives support from his spouse in meeting his emotional needs in the marital relationship. Sadeghi et. al. (2011) supported that mutual constructivist spouses reinforce individual development and mutual well-being by talking to each other, dwelling on problems, and bringing forward-looking solutions, while avoiding violence and irrational demands and expectations.

The results of the study spouses spend time together by going to the cinema, watching movies together at home, visiting guests, going shopping, drinking tea and chatting at home together in the evenings, going out to dinner alone on special days, going on vacation and gossiping. Our research shows that Meskhetian Turkic married individuals spend their time with their spouses in various ways. Schulz and Schwarzer (2004) argue that the closest source of social support for married individuals is the spouse, and spousal support has a special importance in marriage. As seen in the results of many studies emphasizing the importance of social support, the perceived spousal support of individuals positively affects their marital satisfaction and psychological wellbeing. Goldsmith (2004) states that when individuals experience stress, they can better evaluate this situation and cope with the stressful situation thanks to social support. Thus, it can be said that social support contributes to the psychological well-being of the individual. As the support of the spouse increases, the stress experienced in the difficulties encountered decreases. All these results can be interpreted as an indication that perceived

spousal support contributes to the individual's psychological well-being. Bryant and Conger (1999) revealed that the social support provided by spouses to each other has positive effects on marital success.

#### V. SUGGESTIONS

Married individuals should support each other by taking joint responsibility in housework, and it would be wearing out to impose the responsibility of housework on only one of the spouses. In this respect, it can be directed to marriage counseling programs that both spouses can realize these responsibilities and should support each other in this regard.

Married individuals should take the responsibility of children jointly while raising children, and educational seminars for married individuals can be beneficial in this regard.

We predict that the active involvement of women in the business life and socialization process has positive results both in terms of their mental health and supports the home economy. In this respect, supportive platforms and programs can be prepared to include women in business and social life and for the spouses to accept this as normal.

A healthy communication between married individuals paves the way for strong and long-lasting marriages. In this respect, various seminars can be organized to enable married individuals to communicate with each other.

Psychoeducational programs can be developed and implemented to improve spousal support for married individuals. Seminars can be given on marital satisfaction and supportive behaviors of spouses towards each other in marriage, and its effects can be evaluated with experimental studies. In addition, developments can be made to normalize spousal support in less developed societies.

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