

THE ROLE OF TEACHER SUPPORT AND SOCIAL SUPPORT IN PROMOTING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Student engagement is an important indicator of students' participation, involvement, and investment in educational activities. The present study examined the relationships of teacher and social support to student engagement among school-age school children through the teachers' perspectives. A quantitative cross-sectional correlational research design was utilized. The study sample consisted of 150 students chosen from educational agencies in Sargodha, Pakistan. The data on teacher support, social support, and student engagement were elicited through teacher's reports. Teacher Support Scale, Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support, and Student Engagement Instrument were administered in order to measure the study variables. Descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, Pearson product-moment correlation, and regression analysis were conducted to analyze the data. Teacher support was positively and significantly correlated with student engagement, $r = .210$, whereas social support was positively and significantly correlated with student engagement, $r = .290$, $p < .01$. Teacher support was significantly and positively related to social support, $r = .204$, $p < .01$. Regression analysis performed in the thesis demonstrated that teacher support could account for approximately 5% of variance in student engagement. Therefore, the findings indicate that social support might be a particularly significant factor that impacts student engagement in the present sample, teacher support effect student engagement.

I. INTRODUCTION

Student engagement refers to the degree of students' involvement and participation in learning and related activities in general. This concept usually encompasses behavioral, emotional, and cognitive aspects. Behavioral engagement reflects students' attendance, effort, attention, persistence, and involvement in educational activities. Emotional engagement incorporates students' feelings of interest, belonging, enjoyment, and connection with school, teachers, and peers. Cognitive engagement reflects students' mental investment in learning, effort, strategic thinking, and self-management (Appleton et al., 2006; 2008; Skinner et al., 2009). Since engagement reflects students' active involvement in the educational process, it has become an important concept for educational and psychological research. Student engagement does not only stem from internal characteristics but is also related to the interpersonal and social contexts in which children are educated. Teachers, parents, peers, and other individuals can provide emotional encouragement, academic guidance, feedback, and practical support.

Such resources might enhance children's sense of belonging, motivation, and participation in their educational environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Wang & Eccles, 2012).

Teacher Support and Student Engagement

Teacher support refers to the support, encouragement, guidance, care, feedback, and respect that teachers offer to students. In the present study, teacher support includes helping children with challenging content, explaining concepts clearly, encouraging questions and participation, listening to children's concerns, appreciating their efforts, providing feedback, and monitoring process. Such resources can establish positive teacher-student relationships and offer students' resources for engaging with difficult content. Teacher support has been discussed in terms of its effect on children's motivation and engagement. Wentzel (1998) emphasized that relationships with teachers, parents, and peers have significant social effects on students' motivation. From a Self-Determination Theory viewpoint, supportive interpersonal contexts might fulfill children's needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which are essential for their engagement (Ryan & Deci, 2020). It should also be noted that the relationships between teacher support and student engagement have been investigated in multiple empirical studies. Roorda et al. (2011) in their meta-analysis revealed significant links between affective relationships with teachers and students' school engagement and achievement. Similarly, Tao et al. (2022) studied perceived teacher support, student engagement, and achievement and found associations between all three concepts. More recently, Vargas-Madriz et al. (2024) analyzed the relationship between teacher support and school engagement with a focus on different aspects of engagement. However, not all previous research has indicated that teacher support would have comparable effects on school engagement in all populations and contexts. Hence, we investigated the relations between teacher support and student engagement in children in the selected educational settings in Sargodha.

Social Support and Student Engagement

Social support refers to the resources that individuals obtain from significant people in their social environments. Social support can entail emotional, informational, instrumental, and appraisal resources (House, 1981). For children, important sources of support can be parents, relatives, teachers, peers, friends, and other significant individuals. The concept of Social Support emphasizes the importance of interpersonal relationships as resources for coping with difficulties and maintaining psychological well-being. Cohen and Wills (1985) distinguished between the main-effect and the stress-buffering perspectives of social support. According to the main-effects hypothesis, social support might be generally beneficial for individuals' psychological states. On the other hand, the stress-buffering view suggests that support might be specifically helpful for individuals in stressful life situations. The role of social support in education can also be understood within Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory. Children operate within multiple interconnected social environments, namely the family, school, and peers. Supportive relationships within these settings can affect children's adaptation and involvement in education. Wang & Eccles (2012) explicitly focused their analyses on social support and different aspects of school engagement and pointed out the importance of social support for children's educational experiences. Social support resources can hence facilitate student engagement by providing children with encouragement, guidance, and a sense of belonging. Since children know that they can rely on the care of important people in their lives, they might have more psychological resources for being involved in the learning process.

Objectives

1. Investigate the relationship between teacher support and student engagement.
2. Examine the role of social support in student engagement.
3. Study the relationship between teacher support and social support.
4. Determine whether teacher support predicted student engagement.

II. METHOD

Participants

A quantitative, cross-sectional correlational research design was used. This was suitable for investigating the relationships among teacher support, social support, and student engagement without manipulating the study

variables. There were 150 students chosen from various special schools and centers in Sargodha, Faisalabad Pakistan. Both genders were included. The study adopted convenience sampling technique and the age range reported in the thesis was 3–15 years. The demographic information reported in the thesis noted that there were 74 participants (46.3%) male and 76 (47.5%) females. In family system, 74 participants (46.3%) were from extended family system and 76 (47.5%) were from nuclear family system. In regards to the residence, 73 participants (45.6%) were from urban areas and 77 (48.1%) were from rural areas. The thesis reported that 83 participants (51.9%) were in the 3–9-year age bracket and 67 (41.9%) were in the 9–15-year age bracket.

Measures

Teacher support was measured using the 12 items of Teacher Support Scale developed by Wither (1996). The items were aimed at assessing various types of teachers supports such as assistance with learning difficulties, clear explanations, encouragement, respectful interactions, feedback, guidance, and monitoring of students' progress. Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 for strongly disagree to 5 for strongly agree. Thus, higher scores implied higher levels of teacher support. The scale demonstrated acceptable internal consistency in the present study ($\alpha = .76$). Another measure used in the study was social support which was determined using the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS; Zimet et al., 1988). This is a 12-item measure of perceived support from family, friends, and significant others. The MSPSS showed good internal consistency in the present sample ($\alpha = .80$). Student engagement was measured using the Student Engagement Instrument (SEI; Appleton et al., 2006). The instrument covers cognitive and psychological aspects of students' engagement with school. It exhibited good internal consistency in the present study ($\alpha = .80$).

Procedure

Permission was sought from the relevant authorities before collecting the data from the participants. The participants were selected according to the inclusion criteria and information pertaining to the study variables was collected using the relevant measures. Confidentiality and voluntary participation were upheld throughout the procedure. Information collected was entered into a statistical software package for analysis. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha reliability analysis, Pearson product-moment correlation, and regression analysis. Pearson correlation was done to ascertain the direction and strength of the relationships among teacher support, social support, and student engagement. In addition, regression analysis was used to examine the predictive contribution of teacher support to student engagement. An independent t-test statistical analysis to determine the significance difference between these variables. Statistical version SPSS version-23 was used for data analysis with a significance level of less than 0.05 applied to all analyses.

III. RESULTS

Table I: Frequency and Percentage of Participants (N = 150)

Demographic Characteristics	<i>n</i>	%
Gender		
Male	74	46.3%
Female	76	47.5%
Birth Order		
First born	67	41.9%
Middle one	81	50.6%
Youngest	2	1.3%
Family System		
Extended	74	46.3%
Nuclear	76	47.5%
Residence		
Urban	73	45.6%
Rural	77	48.1%
Age		
3-9	83	51.9%

Table 2 presents the demographic characteristics of the participants included in the study. The total sample consisted of 150 participants. Regarding gender, 74 participants (46.3%) were male, whereas 76 participants (47.5%) were female. In terms of family system, 76 participants (47.5%) belonged to nuclear families, while 74 participants (46.3%) belonged to joint families. With respect to residence, 73 participants (45.6%) were from urban areas, whereas 77 participants (48.1%) were from rural areas. Regarding birth order, 67 participants (41.9%) were first-born children, 81 participants (50.6%) were middle children, and 2 participants (1.3%) were youngest children. In terms of age, 83 participants (51.9%) were between 3 and 9 years of age, whereas 67 participants (41.9%) were between 10 and 15 years of age.

Table II: Descriptive Statistics, Reliability, and Correlations Among Teacher Support, Social Support, and Student Engagement

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	α	1	2	3
1. Teacher support	39.30	3.78	.76	-	.204**	.210**
2. Social Support	38.50	4.63	.80		-	.290**
3. Student Engagement	19.66	2.93	.80			-

** $p < .01$

The results indicated that teacher support had a mean of 39.30 ($SD = 3.79$) and acceptable internal consistency ($\alpha = .76$). Social support had a mean of 38.50 ($SD = 4.63$) and good internal consistency ($\alpha = .80$). Student engagement had a mean of 19.66 ($SD = 2.93$) and good internal consistency ($\alpha = .80$). Pearson product-moment correlations were conducted to examine the relationships among teacher support, social support, and student engagement. Teacher support was significantly and positively associated with social support, $r = .204$, $p < .01$. Social support was significantly and positively associated with student engagement, $r = .290$, $p < .01$. The relationship between teacher support and student engagement was positively significant, $r = .21$.

IV. DISCUSSION

The present study was conducted to investigate the relationships among teacher support, social support, and student engagement among 150 participants. The findings demonstrated that teacher support was significantly positively associated with social support. Social support was significantly and positively associated with student engagement. In addition, teacher support was significantly positively related to student engagement. These findings indicate that supportive relationships in the educational environment are critical for students' active involvement in learning. Overall, the results suggest that both teacher support and social support can positively contribute to students' engagement in academic activities. The significant positive relationship between teacher support and social support suggests that students who perceive greater support from their teachers may also perceive stronger support in their social environment. Supportive teachers provide encouragement, guidance, respect, academic assistance, and reassurance, which can lead to students' perceptions of being valued and supported. This finding is in line with recent research that has shown that positive teacher–student relationships are associated with greater perceived social support. Liu (2024) found that teacher–student relationships were positively associated with perceived social support and that social support helped explain the relationship between teacher–student relationships and academic engagement. Similarly, Wang et al. (2024) reported that perceived social support played an important role in the relationship between teacher–student relationships and learning engagement.

The positive association between teacher support and social support can also be explained through the interpersonal nature of the school environment. When teachers listen to students, recognize their efforts, provide constructive feedback, and respond to their academic and emotional needs, students can develop a stronger sense of belonging and interpersonal security. Such experiences can encourage students to perceive their school environment as supportive more generally. From the perspective of Self-Determination Theory, supportive relationships can satisfy students' basic psychological need for relatedness, creating conditions that facilitate

motivation and engagement. Recent research similarly suggests that supportive teacher–student relationships provide important interpersonal resources that can facilitate students’ academic functioning (Liu, 2024; Wang et al., 2024). The second major finding was the significant positive relationship between social support and student engagement. This result indicates that students who perceive greater support from significant people in their social environment are more likely to become actively involved in learning activities. Social support may provide students with emotional encouragement, academic guidance, reassurance, and practical assistance, which can help them cope with academic demands and maintain their participation in school. This finding is in line with Wang et al. (2024), who found that perceived social support was associated with learning engagement and that social support was an important mechanism connecting teacher–student relationships with engagement.

The finding is also in line with Liu (2024), who demonstrated that perceived social support played a mediating role in the relationship between teacher–student relationships and academic engagement. This suggests that students may become more engaged when they feel that supportive individuals are available to help them deal with academic difficulties and challenges. Social support can therefore function as an interpersonal resource that encourages students to persist with academic tasks, participate in classroom activities, and maintain their involvement in learning. The significant positive relationship between teacher support and student engagement was another important finding of the present study. The result indicates that students who receive greater support from their teachers tend to demonstrate higher levels of engagement. Teacher support may promote engagement by helping students feel valued, understood, competent, and connected to their educational environment. Teachers can encourage engagement by providing clear explanations, constructive feedback, individual assistance, positive encouragement, and opportunities for students to participate in classroom activities. Recent research further indicates that the relationship between teacher support and engagement can involve multiple psychological pathways. Wang et al. (2024) found that perceived social support mediated the relationship between teacher–student relationships and learning engagement, while academic self-efficacy influenced part of this pathway. This suggests that supportive teachers may promote engagement not only by directly encouraging students but also by helping students feel socially supported and academically capable. (PubMed Central (PMC)) Therefore, the significant relationships observed in the present study may reflect the combined influence of interpersonal support and students’ psychological resources.

The findings can also be interpreted using Self-Determination Theory. According to this perspective, students are more likely to become motivated and engaged when their psychological needs for relatedness, competence, and autonomy are supported. Teacher support can contribute to these needs by creating respectful relationships, providing meaningful guidance, and encouraging students’ participation. Social support may further strengthen students’ sense of connection and belonging. The significant relationships among teacher support, social support, and student engagement in the present study are therefore consistent with the theoretical proposition that supportive interpersonal environments facilitate positive educational involvement. The demographic findings showed that the sample included both male and female participants and represented variation in family system, residence, birth order, and age. The sample contained participants from nuclear and extended families and from both urban and rural areas. The reliability findings also provide support for the measurement quality of the study. Teacher support demonstrated acceptable internal consistency ($\alpha = .76$), whereas social support and student engagement demonstrated good internal consistency ($\alpha = .80$ for both measures). These reliability coefficients indicate that the measures showed satisfactory internal consistency within the present sample and provide reasonable confidence in the interpretation of the correlations. Overall, the findings demonstrate that teacher support, social support, and student engagement are positively interconnected. The significant association between teacher support and social support suggests that supportive teacher behaviors may contribute to students’ broader perceptions of interpersonal support. The significant relationship between social support and engagement indicates that supportive social relationships are important for students’ involvement in learning. Finally, the significant relationship between teacher support and engagement reinforces the importance of positive teacher–student interactions in educational settings. These findings are in line with recent research emphasizing the importance of supportive interpersonal relationships for promoting student engagement (Jia & Cheng, 2024; Liu, 2024; Vargas-Madriz et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2024).

V. CONCLUSION

The present study investigated the relationships among teacher support, social support, and student engagement among 150 participants. The findings demonstrated that teacher support was significantly positively associated with social support. Social support was significantly and positively associated with student engagement. In addition, teacher support was significantly positively related to student engagement. These findings indicate that supportive interpersonal experiences in the educational environment are critical for promoting students' active involvement in learning. The significant relationship between teacher support and student engagement suggests that teachers play an important role in creating conditions that encourage students to participate in and remain involved in academic activities. Supportive teacher behaviors, including encouragement, guidance, respect, feedback, and assistance, may help students feel valued and connected to their educational environment. This conclusion is in line with recent meta-analytic evidence demonstrating a meaningful association between teacher support and school engagement (Vargas-Madriz et al., 2024). The significant relationship between social support and student engagement further indicates that students' engagement is not dependent solely on their interactions with teachers. Support from significant people within students' social environments may provide emotional and practical resources that encourage participation, persistence, and involvement in learning. Recent studies similarly indicate that perceived social support can play an important role in the development of academic engagement (Liu, 2024; Wang et al., 2024).

The significant relationship between teacher support and social support suggests that teachers may contribute to a wider supportive environment for students. When students experience caring and responsive interactions with teachers, they may develop stronger perceptions that support is available to them. Consequently, strengthening teacher–student relationships may be one component of a broader strategy for promoting student engagement. The findings have important implications for educational practice. Teachers should be encouraged to establish respectful and supportive relationships with students, provide constructive feedback, recognize students' efforts, respond to their academic needs, and create opportunities for active classroom participation. Schools should also recognize the importance of students' broader social networks by encouraging collaboration among teachers, families, peers, and school personnel. Such a comprehensive approach may provide students with the interpersonal resources necessary for sustained engagement. The findings support the view that engagement develops within a supportive interpersonal environment rather than in isolation. Recent research likewise emphasizes that teacher–student relationships and perceived social support are important pathways through which students' engagement can be strengthened (Jia & Cheng, 2024; Liu, 2024; Prananto et al., 2025; Wang et al., 2024).

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