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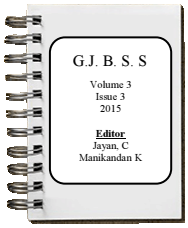

Perceived Social Support as a Predictor of School Engagement of Secondary School Students

Vijayakumari, K
Associate Professor, Farook Training College, Calicut, Kerala, India.

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Abstract

Education cannot happen in a vacuum and the support of parents and societ is needed for functioning of a school. To be successful programmes of a school must be accepted by the learners. School engagement is an important criterion for better performance. The study attempts to find out the relationship of Perceived Social Support with School Engagement and the efficiency of its components to predict School Engagement. The participants of the study are 370 secondary school students and the variables were measured using School Engagement Scale and Social Support Scale. Pearson's r and multiple regression analysis revealed that the variables are significantly positively related and Teacher and Peer supports are good predictors of School engagement.

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The resources of a nation determine its development, the resources being human and material. Human resources are more crucial as it is needed for constructing, manipulating and using the material resources efficiently. The system of education is expected to be for the development of such a powerful human power. It is not sufficient to pass examination or hold a degree certificate. True education contributes committed, active and engaged individuals who can make the nation more and more prosperous. Hence itself education is a long term investment which is different from the economic investment. The worthiness or worseness of economic investment can be assessed immediately but that of education is not so immediate. The impact will be reveal only after a long period and the rectification will be very difficult, if possible.

Schools are the formal organizations of education, but the first school of a child is the family. Education cannot happen in a vacuum and the school cannot make the process of educating a child successfully without the support of parents and society. The programmes of a school aim at bringing out the abilities of the child to the level of excellence. In order to be fruitful, these programmes must be accepted by the learners, and they are expected to be actively participating in such programmes. As the Chinese proverb says, 'the teacher can only open the door, but the learner must enter by himself', students are expected to bear an attitude of schooling as essential for their long term well being. But some students lack this type of belongingness and school is a place of hatred. They gradually withdraw from school activities and involve in disruptive behaviours. Managing these children is a real challenging task for the teachers, if neglected they will become a burden for the society.

School Engagement, as Frederick, Blumenfeld and Paris (2004) suggest, is three dimensional, the three dimensions being behavioural, emotional and cognitive. Behavioural engagement means participation in school related activities, involvement in academic and learning related tasks, positive conduct and the absence of disruptive behaviour. That is, behavioral engagement includes doing home works regularly, participating in school club activities, maintaining school equipments and premises neatly, respecting teaching and non-teaching staff etc. The emotional engagement means relationship with teachers, peers and academics while cognitive engagement involves investment in learning and the readiness to

work hard to master difficult tasks. The emotional dimension involves sharing happiness and sorrows with friends, trusting teachers, encouraging the talents of friends etc and the cognitive dimension includes asking doubts to teachers, extra reading, active interest in studies, consulting experts to clarify doubts, working hard to excel in studies etc. The concept of school engagement by Willms (2003), is almost same as that of Frederick, Blumenfeld and Paris (2004). Here school engagement is taken as social, academic and intellectual Engagements; social engagement being a sense of participation in school life, academic engagement being the academic requirements of schooling while intellectual engagement, a serious emotional and cognitive investment in learning, using higher order thinking skill to increase understanding, to solve complex problems or to construct knowledge. In India a very few studies were conducted in this area (eg: Vijayakumari & Manikandan, 2013; Sujisha & Manikandan, 2014).

Another approach to school engagement by Nystrand and Gamoran (1991) is that student engagement involves the student's willingness to participate in routine school activities such as attending classes, submitting required work and following teacher's directions in class which is limited to the behavioural dimension only.

The teachers, students and the parents work together for effective learning to take place. The role of society cannot be neglected in the formal education of a child. For a student his influential members are his parents, teachers and peers. They can provide the students emotional, intellectual and practical assistance that is needed for the active participation in the school activities.

Social Support includes the support of parents, teachers, peers and other significant members of the society. Jung (1987) has opined that Social Support influences the cognitive functioning and emotional well- being of students. Robu (2013) had reported that social support influences the psychological and social adjustment, academic achievement and engagement with school of adolescents. Support from parents is found to reduce the chance of disruptive behaviour among adolescents (McCaskills& Lakey, 2000; Parker & Benson, 2004; Arslan, 2009).

Present study tries to find out the extent of relationship of the perceived parental, teacher and peer supports of secondary school students with their school engagement. It also tries to form a linear regression equation to predict the school engagement based on their perceived Parental Support, Teacher Support and Peer Support.

Objectives

1. To find out the extent of relationship of Perceived Social support and its components, viz., parental support, Teacher Support and Peer Support with the School Engagement of Secondary school students.
2. To form a regression equation to predict School Engagement from the Perceived Parental, Teacher and Peer Supports.

Hypotheses

1. There will be significant positive relationship between School Engagement and Perceived social support.
2. There will be significant positive relationship between School Engagement and the components of Perceived Parental, Teacher and Peer Supports.
3. School Engagement can be significantly predicted from Perceived Parental, Teacher and Peer Supports

Method

Participants

Population of the study is secondary school students of Kerala and the study was conducted on a sample of 370 secondary school students of three revenue districts of Kerala, viz., Calicut, Malappuram and Palakkad.

Instruments

1. School Engagement Scale developed by Mathai and Vijayakumari (2013) which is a Likert type five point scale with 45 items measuring three dimensions of school engagement viz, Cognitive, Emotional and Behavioural engagements was used to measure the variable School Engagement. The reliability coefficient, Cronbach alpha coefficient (α) was reported as 0.87 indicating that the scale is a reliable one. The face validity of the scale is ensured as the items were constructed based on the three components of School Engagement.
2. Perceived social support and its components were measured using Social Support Scale developed by Vijayakumari and Jijeesh(2014). It is a five point Likert type Scale with 30 items, the components included being Parent Support, Teacher Support and Peer Support. Cronbach alpha coefficient obtained is .85 indicating that the scale is a reliable one.

Results and discussion

The Pearson's Coefficient of Correlation was calculated for the variables Perceived Social Support and its components with School Engagement and the values are given as Table 1.

Table 1
Correlation coefficients for School Engagement with Perceived Social Support and its components

Variable	Parent Support	Teacher Support	Peer Support	Perceived Social Support
Parent Support	.			
Teacher Support	.44**	.		
Peer Support	.59**	.47**	.	
Perceived Social Support	.83**	.77**	.84**	.
School Engagement	.24**	.27**	.30**	.33**

** p≤ 0.01

The coefficients obtained reveal that significant positive relationships exist for the variable School Engagement with Parent Support, Teacher Support, Peer Support and the Perceived Social Support. The magnitude of the correlation coefficients suggests that though the relationship is significant the extent of relationship is low to substantial. Among the three components of Perceived Social Support, Peer Support is found to have more relationship with School Engagement than the other two components. The shared variance (r^2x100) shows that approximately 11 percent of the variation in School Engagement is explained by the variance in Perceived Social Support.

The relationship of the components of Perceived Social Support, Parent Support, Teacher Support and Peer Support are significant but not very high (< .8) and hence it can be assumed that there is no multicollinearity between the variables. All the variables are measured in the interval scale and are with non zero variance. The scores of the criterion variable are independent and its relation with the predictors are linear. The scatter plots of the relationship of each predictor variable with School Engagement are given as Figure 1, Figure 2 and Figure 3.

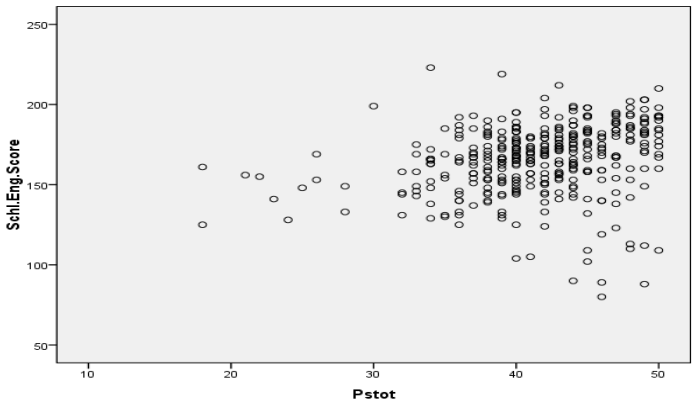

Figure 1: The scatter plot of the relationship of Parent Support with School Engagement

The two variables are linearly related as the points are plotted in a linear way and not as a curve.

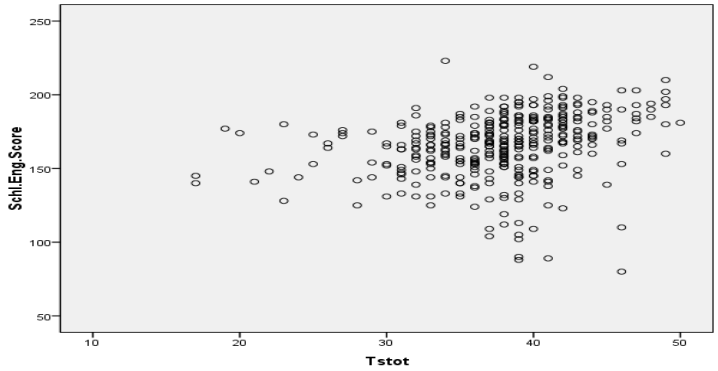

Figure 2: The scatter plot of the relationship of Teacher Support with School Engagement

As the points lie almost in a straight line, the variables are linearly related.

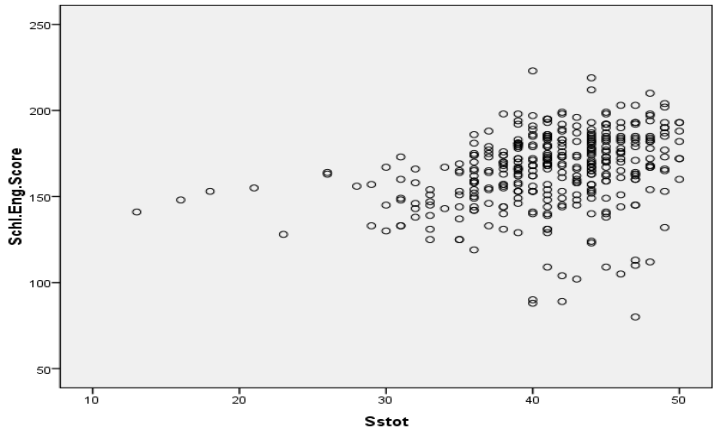

Figure 3: The scatter plot of the relationship of Peer Support with School Engagement

As the major assumptions are satisfied by the variables, Multiple Regression Model was used to find the predictability of School Engagement from the variables Parent Support, Teacher Support and Peer Support.

The details of regression analysis are given below.

As the first step the summary of the model is given as table 2, which describes the success of the model in predicting the criterion variable school engagement.

Table 2
Model Summary

Criterion Variable	Predictor variables	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2
School Engagement	Parent Support Teacher Support Peer Support	.339	.115	.107

The multiple correlation coefficients of the predictors, Parent Support, Teacher Support and Peer Support and the criterion variable school engagement is .339. the square of R (R_2) is .115 which means that 11 percentage of variation in school engagement is accounted for by the predictor variables Parent Support, Teacher Support and Peer Support. The adjusted R_2 is .107, which is an index of accuracy of the model. It indicates the loss of predictive power or shrinkage. Here the value of R_2 and adjusted R_2 are almost same the difference being negligible (.008). That is, if the model used were derived from the population instead of the sample it would account for approximately .008 or .8 percentage decrease in variance in the criterion variable school engagement.

Table 3 presents the details of ANOVA in which the sum of squares of the model (SS_M), sum of squares of residual (SS_R) and the total sum of squares (SS_T) are given. The F value to know whether the improvement due fitting the regression line formed is much greater than the inaccuracy within the model, is also given in table 3.

Table 3
Summary of ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Regression	20213.180	3	6737.727	15.79**
Residual	156090.401	366	426.477	
Total	176303.581	369		

**p≤ .01

The F value obtained is large enough so that the regression model derived is capable of better prediction of the criterion variable (F=15.79, p≤ .01). Thus the regression model is successful in predicting the criterion variable school engagement.
The parameters derived from the model are given as table 4.

Table 4
Regression coefficients

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	
Variables	B	Std. Error	Beta	t
(Constant)	100.790	9.762		10.325
Parent Support	.193	.248	.049	0.777
Teacher Support	.649	.235	.158	2.765**
Peer Support	.791	.253	.199	3.120**

**p≤ .01

The unstandardized regression coefficients obtained are .193, .649 and .791respectively of the variables, Parent Support, Teacher Support and Peer Support. This indicates that a unit change in the predictor variable Parent Support brings a variation of .193 in criterion variable; a

change of one unit in Teacher Support brings a change of .649 units in the school engagement; similarly a unit change in Peer Support will bring a change of .791 units in the school engagement.

The regression equation for predicting school engagement by the predictor variables Parent Support, Teacher Support and Peer Support is given below.

$Y=100.79 + .193X_1 + .649X_2 + .791X_3$

where Y the predicted school engagement score X_1- Parent Support, X_2 - Teacher Support and X_3 - Peer Support.

For given values of Parent Support, Teacher Support and Peer Support, this equation can be used for predicting the School Engagement of the individual.

The standardized regression coefficients (β) obtained are .049, .158 and .199 respectively for the variables Parent Support, Teacher Support and Peer Support. β weights show that for a change of one standard deviation in Parent Support, the change in the criterion variable will be .049 standard deviation provided that the other two variables are kept constant. But the t- value (.777) to test whether this β is significantly greater than zero shows that the difference of β from zero is not significant even at 0.05 level ($p > 0.05$). That is, a change in the standard score of the predictor variable Parent Support do not bring a significant change in the standard score of the criterion variable, School Engagement. A change of .193 standard deviation units in School Engagement is expected corresponding to a standard deviation change in the variable Teacher Support when Parent Support and Peer Support are taken as constants. The t-value (2.765) for significance of β shows that it is significantly different from zero. In the case of Peer Support the β obtained is .199 indicating that a change of one standard deviation in Peer Support will produce a change of .199 standard deviation in school engagement, considering Parent Support and Teacher Support as constant. The t value obtained is 3.12, indicating a significant difference of β from zero.

Conclusion

The variables Perceived Social Support and its components are found to be significantly, positively related to school engagement, the extent of relationship varying from low to moderate. It was found that 11 percentage of variance in school engagement is explained by Perceived Social Support. The regression equation found using Parent Support, Teacher Support and Peer Support is found to be effective for predicting School Engagement. Thus the study emphasizes the role of Social Support in the development of an individual. The behavioral, cognitive and emotional development of a child in the school is mainly associated with the support he/she perceives from the parent, teacher and the peers. A better parental support that the child perceives improves the behavior of the child in the school. But parental support alone will not enhance the school engagement as parental support is found as a poor predictor of school engagement. The teacher support and peer support increases student's engagement in the school. Many anti social behaviors of the students can be avoided if teachers take much care in the developmental process of the child. This must be done in a way that the children never feel the teachers are intruding in their personal matters. Proper and timely counseling must be given to parents and students and such programmes must be organized by the institutions. These programmes are to be organized continuously and individually instead of a general talk. For this professionally qualified experts must be appointed. Teachers have to update their knowledge and skills through professional development programmes. When it comes to the peer support, one can imagine the difference in the behavior of children who feel that they have friends in school to share ideas, to help each other and to depend, and those who lack this. A value based environment in the class must be created in which again parents and teachers have a role to play. A we feeling among students can be developed by teachers for which at first they are to the role models. The prediction equation formed will help the administrators, teachers and counselors to predict the school engagement of pupils using the

support they perceive from parents, teachers and peers. Based on this prediction necessary attempts can be made to change the perception the learner has with respect to parent teacher and peer support.

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