

Influence of Social Support on School-Work Outcomes and Goal Attainment Among University Graduates

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Abstract

Social support, for instance, has been pointed out as a variable related to students' achievement in every educational level. Therefore, it should be useful to describe the way students perceive social support, determine if it is related to academic achievement and if so, how. This research aimed at describing social support and its relation to school-work outcome and goal attainment in university students drawn from University of Lagos and Lagos State University. To ascertain the influence of social support on school-work outcomes and goal attainment among university graduates, a sample of 200 university students of 200 level drawn from University of Lagos and Lagos State University, the population study was drawn from 5 faculty using simple random sampling method. Social support was assessed in terms of four common functions of social support – emotional, instrumental, companionship and informational support; and the possible sources of support include: family/parents, teachers, classmates, and friend/peers. School-work outcome was measured via cognitive and affective domain; while goal attainment was measured using self-esteem and motivation scale. The SSOGA instrument was pilot tested on 20 respondents from Yaba College of Technology to determine the reliability co-efficient of the instrument and 0.72 was obtained. Multiple Regression analysis was used to test the four Hypotheses formulated for the study. Multiple Regression Analysis was employed to analyze the 4 formulated hypothesis and based on research findings the study found out that there is significant influence of companionship support and emotional support on self-esteem among university undergraduates ($p < 0.05$, $p = 0.000$, $r^2 = 0.117$) 34.3% of the total variance in self-esteem among university undergraduates is accounted for by the combination of companionship support and emotional support; there is no significant influence of tangible support and informational support on motivation among university graduates ($p < 0.05$, $p = 0.307$, $r^2 = 0.012$) 11.0% of the total variance in motivation among university undergraduates is accounted for by the combination Informational Support and Tangible Support; there is significant influence of tangible support, informational support on cognitive domain among university undergraduates ($p < 0.05$, $p = 0.004$, $r^2 = 0.056$) 23.6% of the total variance in cognitive domain among university undergraduates is accounted for by the combination of Informational Support and Tangible Support; there is significant influence of companionship support and emotional support on affective domain among university undergraduates ($p < 0.05$, $p = 0.005$, $r^2 = 0.054$) 23.2% of the total variance in affective domain among university undergraduates is accounted for by the combination of companionship support and emotional support.

Keywords: *Social support, School outcome, Goal attainment, Undergraduates*

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Background to the Study

First-year at the university is situated within the broad conception of student experience. Ideally early years' experience of university has featured strongly as a time for students to develop the attitudes, behaviour, skills and knowledge that subsequently determine their overall assimilation into higher education. Therefore, it is always emphasized that students must be inspired, supported and developed in their sense of belonging. This is because students' initial experiences have an impact on the long-term process of cultural, social and academic assimilation into the world of higher education (Reason et al., 2006; Yorke & Longden, 2008). In Nigerian universities, there are some inevitable problems that students encounter while studying. These may include stress, loneliness, career mismatch (when the given course of study does not match the choice of career), peer pressure, test anxiety, or when topic looks ambiguous to grasp, developing a new social network, keeping up with school work in an environment of much greater autonomy than high school, and negotiating the "temptations" of a college environment (such as alcohol, drugs, and sex) (Mattanah, Ayers, Brand and Brooks, 2010). A student faced with any of these problems may want to just keep it to him/her, or complain about it to his/her peer.

Furthermore, university students experience a variety of stress-related situations, which are daily hassles relating to lecturers, other students' colleagues and sometimes studying at home. They might experience high stress due to academic commitments, financial pressures and lack of time management skills. When stress is perceived negatively or becomes excessive, it can affect both health and academic performance of students. Students' anxiety is bound to increase when they are pressurized to make high scores in a test and this results in test anxiety. According to Jing (2007), test anxiety implies the debilitating experiences of anxiety during the preparation for a test or during the test itself. It is a variable related to academic performance. It is expected that students' levels of test anxiety will rise during the examination period as compared to other times of the school term (Ndirangu, Muola, Kithuka and Nassiuma, 2009). Similarly, Onyeizugbo (2010) posited that test anxiety makes it hard for students to concentrate on test and perform adequately. Findings indicate that many university students do not do well in terms of coping and adjusting to the demands and challenges of university life students who are stressed up show signs of emotional disabilities, aggressive behavior, shyness, social phobia and often lack interest in otherwise enjoyable activities. Stress has damaging effects on one's physical and psychological health. Similarly, loneliness among university students represents a significant societal problem and these kind of problems require the involvement of lecturers, parents or course mates who can help proffer solution, hence, the need for social support. Laursen, Thiry and Loshbau (2012).

Social support has been conceptualized as a component of adaptive behavior and an important function of a social support agent is to facilitate social connectivity. Social support can help reduce stress both quantitatively and qualitatively. Individuals who receive more frequent and stronger social support have less stress, less physical and psychological problems, and lower mortality rates than those with less frequent and weaker social support (Reblin & Uchino, 2008). Social support takes into account messages that make people feel esteemed and loved, not those that make people feel unworthy and unloved. (Dickens, Richards, Greaves and

Campbell, 2011). Social support is through the experience of being valued, respected, cared for, and loved by others. It supports is known to help individuals to reduce the amount of stress experienced and to cope better in dealing with stressful life situations. Social support can be defined as an exchange of resources between at least two individuals, the provider and the perceived recipient to be, intended to enhance the well-being of the recipient own view, Lin (2006) defined social support as perceived or actual instrumental and/or expressive provisions supplied by the community, social networks, and confiding partners. (Yasin & Dzulkifli, 2010).

Social support can emanate from various sources. Some of these sources include: family, friends, romantic partners, pets, community ties, and coworkers. While, sources of support can be natural (e.g., family and friends) or more formal e.g., mental health specialists or community organizations. The source of the social support determines its effectiveness as a coping strategy and especially, it has been found that support from a romantic partner is associated with health benefits, particularly for men ((Taylor, 2011; Kiecolt-Glaser and Newton, 2001). Familial social support has been shown to be important in the abilities to develop social competencies and supportive parental relationships have also had benefits for college-aged students. Likewise, according to Schwanz, Palm, Hill-Chapman & Broughton (2014), the presence of positive social support from parents, peers, and other significant individuals in a college student's life has been related to general adjustment to college, academic performance, retention, increased self-confidence and self-esteem, and overall well-being. Teacher and school personnel support have been shown to be stronger than other relationships of support. This is hypothesized because family and friend social relationships could be subject to conflicts whereas school relationships are more stable (Chu, Saucier & Hafner, 2010).

However, social support from lecturers showed statistically and practically significant correlations of medium effect with social support from friends. This indicates that, schools are important contexts that shape various outcomes for young adults. According to Social Bond Theory (Hirschi, 1969), school is a place to develop attachments, commitments, and beliefs, to further develop self-control, and to provide additional social control. Involvement and commitment to school, attendance, social bonds, school environment, and structural factors are variables that can be associated with student behavior. Thefour common functions of social support are: Emotional support, Tangible support, Information support and Companionship support.

Statement of Problem

In most cases when students are admitted into universities they are overwhelmed with joy and so are their families, but many a times after the convocation ceremony there are no further social support gotten. The student is left to grasp and move with the wave of how the university system functions. Undergraduates struggle and try to juggle a lot of activity at the same time. This can also lead to finding an alternative to the psychological trauma they begin to experience; these alternatives are usually that which to them relieves stress e.g. shunting classes, cultism, partying, and many other vices. These vices have a negative effect on school outcomes and goal attainment among universities undergraduates.

Many students fall victim of this vicious circle, thereby creating a poor academic performance, their set goals dwindling and an eventual contributor to an increasingly general and global problem in universities, families and the country as a whole. It is pertinent that, to avert or address this rising issues a more practical approach will be applied to help improve the possibilities of goal attainment set by students and the school. To help curb the rising joblessness due to drop-outs, half-baked graduates, frustrated and stressed students, psychologically affected students, and poor academic performance as well as non-attainment of goals by university students a mediator of stress such as social support (emotional, informational, tangible and companionship support) would be the right approach.

Methodology

This study employed the use of descriptive survey design. The survey method was employed to collect data from participants through questionnaire. The dependent variables are school outcomes and goal attainment, while independent variable is social support: Emotional, companionship, Tangible and Informational. The study examined the relationships between types of social support leading to goal associated with school outcome and goal attainment?

A total number of 200 participants were involved in the study from two universities. They will include 200 undergraduates at 200 level, randomly selected from five faculties in the University of Lagos, Akoka and Lagos State University. To measure social support, this study used a revised version of Xu and Burleson's (2001), which was further amended by the researcher to appropriately measure the constructs. Four types of social support scale which is comprised of 24 items and four types of goal attainment and school outcomes scale which comprised of 24 items—namely, Social support has 6 items for tangible support, 6 for informational and 6 for emotional support and companionship support has 6 items while goal attainment and social outcomes has 6 items for self – esteem, 6 items for motivation, and 6 items for cognitive and affective domain. Which makes the items 48 altogether.

Validity and Reliability of SSSOGA Questionnaire

Hence the reliability of the SSSOGA instrument was enhanced through the use of unambiguous words and ensuring clarity of items in the questionnaire. The instrument was pilot-tested on twenty respondents drawn outside the sample area, specifically in Yaba College of Technology, Lagos state. Pilot test is meant to reveal deficiencies of the instrument and allowed the researcher to make meaningful modifications to the research instrument. The reliability coefficient of the SSSOGA was determined with Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient to ascertain the internal consistency, and was found to be 0.72.

Table 1: Reliability Analysis of Instruments used

SN	Variable	Number of Item	Reliability Coefficient (%)	GAI Reliability (%)
1	Emotional Support	6	0.59	0.72
2	Information Support	6	0.83	
3	Tangible Support	6	0.86	
4	Championship Support	6	0.66	
5	Self-Esteem	6	0.67	
6	Motivation	6	0.71	
7	Cognitive Domain	6	0.78	
8	Affective Domain	6	0.68	

The variables on emotional, information, tangible, championship support, self-esteem, motivation, cognitive and affective domain can be considered and used for the main study.

Result

Two hundred copies of the questionnaires were distributed by the researcher for data collection out of which Hundred and ninety seven (197) were finally used for analysis of the data. The remaining copies were not returned. This translated to a response rate of 98.5%. Thus, the response rate was considered adequate to provide reliable results

Hypothesis One: There is no significant influence of companionship support and emotional support on self-esteem among university undergraduates

Table 2: Multiple regression analysis result for joint contribution of companionship support and emotional support to self-esteem among university undergraduates.

Model	Variables	Beta	T	P	R	R ²	F	p
1	Companionship Support	.323	4.721	.000	0.343	0.117	12.891	0.000
	Emotional Support	.072	1.052	.294				

- a. Model 1 = hypothesis one
- b. Dependent Variable: Self-esteem
- c. Predictors: (Constant), Companionship support, Emotional support
p<0.05, df=2 &194, critical F=3.04.

Going by the result presented in Table 2, the two independent variables (companionship support and emotional support) when put together yielded a coefficient of multiple regression (R) of 0.343 and a multiple correlation square of 0.117. This shows that 34.3% of the total variance in self-esteem among university undergraduates is accounted for by the combination of the two independent variables (companionship support and emotional support). The table further indicates that the analysis of variance of the multiple regression data produced calculated F-value of 12.891 as the regression value for relationship between companionship support, emotional support and self-esteem among university undergraduates. This

calculated F-value is significant since it is greater than the critical F-value of 3.04 given 2 and 194 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significance; thereby the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant influence of companionship support and emotional support on self-esteem among University Undergraduates was rejected while the alternate hypothesis which states that there is significant influence of companionship support and emotional support on self-esteem among university undergraduates was accepted.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant influence of tangible support and informational support on motivation among university graduates

Table 3: Multiple regression analysis result for joint contribution of tangible support and informational support to motivation among university graduates.

Model	Variables	Beta	t	P	R	R ²	F	p
2	Tangible Support	.063	0.765	.445	0.110	0.012	1.190	0.307
	Informational Support	.065	0.786	.433				

a. Model 2 = hypothesis two

b. Dependent Variable: Motivation

c. Predictors: (Constant), Informational Support, Tangible Support

p<0.05, df=2 & 194, critical F=3.04

Going by the result presented in Table 3, the two independent variables (Informational Support and Tangible Support) when put together yielded a coefficient of multiple regression (R) of 0.110 and a multiple correlation square of 0.012. This shows that 11.0% of the total variance in motivation among university undergraduates is accounted for by the combination of the two independent variables (Informational Support and Tangible Support). The table further indicates that the analysis of variance of the multiple regression data produced calculated F-value of 1.190 as the regression value for relationship between informational support, tangible support and motivation among university undergraduates. This calculated F-value is not significant since it is less than the critical F-value of 3.04 given 2 and 194 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significance; thereby the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant influence of informational support and tangible support on motivation among university undergraduates was accepted while the alternate hypothesis which states that there is significant influence of informational support and tangible support on motivation among university undergraduates was rejected.

Hypothesis three: There is no significant influence of tangible support and informational support on cognitive domain among university undergraduates.

Table 4: Multiple regression analysis result for joint contribution of tangible support and informational support to cognitive domain among university graduates

Model	Variables	Beta	t	P	R	R ²	F	p
3	Tangible Support	.154	1.920	.056	0.236	0.056	5.740	0.004
	Informational Support	.119	1.477	.141				

- a. Model 3 = hypothesis three
- b. Dependent Variable: Cognitive domain
- c. Predictors: (Constant), Informational Support, Tangible Support
p<0.05, df=2 & 194, critical F=3.04.

Going by the result presented in Table 4, the two independent variables (Informational Support and Tangible Support) when put together yielded a coefficient of multiple regression (R) of 0.236 and a multiple correlation square of 0.056. This shows that 23.6% of the total variance in cognitive domain among university undergraduates is accounted for by the combination of the two independent variables (Informational Support and Tangible Support). The table further indicates that the analysis of variance of the multiple regression data produced calculated F-value of 5.740 as the regression value for relationship between informational support, tangible support and cognitive domain among university undergraduates. This calculated F-value is significant since it is greater than the critical F-value of 3.04 given 2 and 194 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significance; thereby the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant influence of informational support and tangible support on cognitive domain among university undergraduates was rejected while the alternate hypothesis which states that there is significant influence of informational support and tangible support on cognitive domain among university undergraduates was accepted.

Hypothesis Four: There is no significant influence of companionship support and emotional support on affective domain among university undergraduates.

Table 5: Multiple regression analysis result for joint contribution of companionship support and emotional support to affective domain among university undergraduates.

Model	Variables	Beta	t	P	R	R ²	F	p
4	Companionship Support	.231	3.261	.001	0.232	0.054	5.536	0.005
	Emotional Support	.007	0.106	.916				

- a. Model 4 = hypothesis four\
- b. Dependent Variable: Affective Domain
- c. Predictors: (Constant), Companionship support, Emotional support
p<0.05, df=2 & 194, critical F=3.04

Going by the result presented in Table 5, the two independent variables (companionship support and emotional support) when put together yielded a coefficient of multiple regression (R) of 0.232 and a multiple correlation square of 0.054. This shows that 23.2% of the total variance in affective domain among university undergraduates is accounted for by the combination of the two independent variables (companionship support and emotional

support). The table further indicates that the analysis of variance of the multiple regression data produced calculated F-value of 5.536 as the regression value for relationship between companionship support, emotional support and affective domain among university undergraduates. This calculated F-value is significant since it is greater than the critical F-value of 3.04 given 2 and 194 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significance; thereby the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant influence of companionship support and emotional support on affective domain among University Undergraduates was rejected while the alternate hypothesis which states that there is significant influence of companionship support and emotional support on affective domain among university undergraduates was accepted.

Discussion

The first hypothesis which states that there is no significant influence of companionship support and emotional support on self-esteem among University Undergraduates was rejected while the alternate hypothesis which states that there is significant influence of companionship support and emotional support on self-esteem among university undergraduates was accepted. This finding is consistent with the findings of Vogelzangs et al., (2007); Sharpley et al., (2015) who opined that emotional support is considered to be a powerful protective agent not only against depression but also against obesity. Individuals with high levels of social support tend to possess higher self-esteem (Rueger et al., 2010). In contrast, lack of support from social relations makes individuals feel devalued and rejected, leading to negative self-evaluations and resulting in low self-esteem. Thus, we suggest that social support is positively related to self-esteem.

Hypothesis two states that there is no significant influence of informational support and tangible support on motivation among university undergraduates was accepted while the alternate hypothesis which states that there is significant influence of informational support and tangible support on motivation among university undergraduates was rejected. Substantial research indicates that tangible rewards, such as money, prizes, and tokens, decrease response rates by undermining intrinsic motivation

Although social supports arise from members of the social network in which individuals belong, the mere existence of social network does not guarantee the provision of social support. This means that people who are more socially integrated are more likely to provide supports, but it does not necessarily translate into providing assistance to others in need. In addition, social integration has its associated costs and benefits. For instance, it increases dependency and decreases individual freedom. Instrumental social support was stress-inducing rather than stress alleviating. Perhaps the support recipients may perceive a very well-intended support provision negatively, for instance, as an invasion of their privacy. Research attempting to explain these negative findings indicates that the association between received social support and stress is occasionally confounded with the fact that individuals with high stress generally receive the most amount of support and also have the worst mental health (Lakey & Orehek, 2011).. However, the authors do stipulate that external motivations can be internalized. Hypothesis three states that there is no significant influence of informational

support and tangible support on cognitive domain among university undergraduates was rejected while the alternate hypothesis which states that there is significant influence of informational support and tangible support on cognitive domain among university undergraduates was accepted. This finding is consistent with the findings of [Sims et al. \(2011\)](#) who found that significant associations between belonging, self-esteem, and appraisal support and inhibition, and tangible support and cognitive set shifting among African Americans. Evidence suggests that greater emotional support is significantly associated with greater cognitive performance, and that the need to belong and have close friendships is essential for overall well-being. This finding is consistent with the findings of [Gow, Pattie, Whiteman, Whalley, & Deary \(2007\)](#) who found that feeling alone was associated with lower cognitive ability and may be an indicator of lack of support. Mattanah et al. (2012) proved that social support had positive effects on the performance of university students Therefore, the cognitive ability of students increase when they perceive themselves as competent and value what they learn (Ahmed et al. 2010). This finding is in line with the finding of Song et al. (2014) who emphasized that social support perceived by the middle school students predicted their achievement.

Hypothesis four states that there is no significant influence of companionship support and emotional support on affective domain among University Undergraduates was rejected while the alternate hypothesis which states that there is significant influence of companionship support and emotional support on affective domain among university undergraduates was accepted. This finding is corroborated by the findings of Adeyemo & Torubeli (2008) who argued that adolescents' ability to go above and beyond their self-esteem or self-worth is related to their peer relationship. Based on a growing body of observational evidence that greater social support is associated with greater physical activity, many intervention studies have employed strategies to increase social support among participants. Campus social life is the ability of the student to relate to and connect with other people in the world and not just the campus. It has to do with the student's ability to establish and maintain positive relationships with significant others - family, friends, co-students, faculty and staff. And when this is positively achieved by bringing overall development into the life of individual students, it could then be said that such student is psycho-sociologically balanced. This might be the reason Chobdee (2012) affirm that “The ability to acknowledge and share feelings of anger, fear, sadness or stress, hope, love, joy and happiness in a productive manner contributes to our wellness.” A student social life on the campus is intimately linked to his/her psychological well-being. This finding is consistent with the findings of Adenuga & Ayodele, 2010; Kapikirian 2012; which states that deficiency in social relationship in term of loneliness has been reported to have negative effect on young people.

Conclusion

From the findings of the study, it was concluded that when an undergraduate student experience or is being exposed to love and acceptance (companionship support and emotional support) then there is a boost in confidence (self-esteem) and affective domain; so also will an undergraduates' power of cognition improve if they experience tangible support (money, advice) and informational support (easy access to facilities). The findings also concluded that

there is no significant influence of tangible support and informational support on motivation domain among university graduates; in some cases financial support received by undergraduate student from parents can lead to one of the reasons why there's no motivation. The support is probably given without a reason or not attached with an academic achievement.

Recommendations

1. More enlightenment and campaigns should be organized by Non – governmental organizations on the importance of social group in development of students' self-esteem, cognitive domain and affective domain. Moreover, seminars and media can play an important role in making it more effective through jingles and short playtest
2. University governing councils should play a primary role in encouraging students' interpersonal skills; a continuous orientation program (at the beginning of each session) for students can be organized.
3. University governing council need to educate academic staffs on the need to adequately pass useful information to student without being so hostile or unapproachable; this can be done via seminars, workshops and trainings.
4. Information should be communicated to parents via educative programs in schools and media on how important it is to begin and continue social support towards their wards education.
5. Secondary schools and the PTA of schools could organize program where the parents of the soon to be university undergraduates can be well informed on how and why it is important to follow up their wards performance in the university. Counselling Intervention: counselling services will play good roles providing social support for university students is important, especially for students who have low grades or are struggling with emotional exhaustion. For example, providing empathy, company, and comfort for them when they are in bad mood; providing guidance, advice, and assistance for them when they encounter setbacks; providing love, trust, and encouragement for them when they doubt their capability and competence. Moreover, social activities and group work can help to foster a supportive environment for university students.
Stress encountered by students can be drastically minimized by providing a supportive environment, finding it difficult to access information by students can also increase the anxiety and emotional stress a student experiences.
6. Schools, governments and Ministry of education should encourage research on this problem to clarify its causes and promote preventative interventions.
7. The counselling department of schools should be very functional in such a way that troubled student can be helped in good time so as to overcome academic and emotional issues.

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