

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Amidst the home-based instruction: The perceived social support and the learning anxiety of secondary school students

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### ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between the extent of the social support provided by parents and teachers among secondary school students during their home-based instruction and the learning anxiety they experience amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Social support was measured based on two constructs: parents and teachers. A descriptive-survey approach utilizing a proportional stratified random sampling was utilized to obtain the samples from a 75,542 total population of secondary students enrolled in school year 2020–2021. Data gathering was carried out during lockdown thus, printed and online surveys were administered. Three problems were investigated in the study: (1) the extent of the social support received by secondary school students from their parents and teachers; (2) the level of learning anxiety they experienced during home-based instruction; (3) whether there is a significant relationship between social support and the learning anxiety of secondary school students. Based on the findings obtained, teachers provided higher support to secondary school students as compared with parents; the learning anxiety experienced by the secondary school students during home-based instruction was moderate; and this study concluded that there is a strong positive relationship between social support and learning anxiety, however, this relationship is not significant.

**Keywords:** home-school learning; social support; educational needs; COVID-19

## 1. Introduction

The crisis caused by the COVID-19 outbreak last March, 2020 has affected education globally which caused temporary closure of schools. According to Francisco and Alieto<sup>[1]</sup>, the pandemic caused severe damage to the educational system which affected most number of students. Thus, in order to contain the spread of the virus, various efforts were carried out to ensure uninterrupted supply of educational services to students and the community<sup>[2]</sup>. These efforts, however, led to the temporary shutdown of schools resorting to a remote learning model delivery<sup>[3]</sup>. This abrupt and unprecedented changes had resulted in a significant shift in how kids learn, how parents participate in the educational process, and how teachers operate<sup>[4]</sup>.

### 1.1. Review of literature

Social support is the process of contact that enhances sense of belongingness, self-esteem, coping, and capability through imagined or actual exchanges of physical or psychosocial resources<sup>[5]</sup>. It describes the

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numerous forms of assistance that individuals acquire from the people around<sup>[6]</sup>. According to Leahy-Warren<sup>[7]</sup>, social support is generally used to describe any practice that could improve health and well-being by fostering social ties.

The network of social resources that a person sees is referred to as social support—a broad concept which is rooted in the key concepts of social assistance, validation, and guidance about one's life events<sup>[8]</sup>. Social support has been frequently linked to positive changes in times of stressful events<sup>[8]</sup>. According to CMHA BC and Anxiety Canada<sup>[9]</sup>, a person's physical and emotional health can greatly benefit from social support. It can aid in shielding individuals from the negative consequences brought about by stress. Individuals are less likely to report health and stress-related issues when they have feelings of support from others<sup>[9]</sup>. People are probably more prone to mental health or substance use issues like depression when they lack social support and feel lonely<sup>[9]</sup>. However, evidence indicates that interacting with others and receiving support might assist to relieve stress.

According to Albrecht and Adelman as cited by Ko et al.<sup>[10]</sup>, social support refers to verbal and nonverbal communication that decreases uncertainty about the circumstance, that an individual perceives.

Moreover, school-related social support has been linked to student's academic initiative<sup>[11]</sup>, academic well-being<sup>[12]</sup>, and valuation of school work, school adjustment, motivation, and academic self-efficacy. According to Demir and Leyendecker<sup>[13]</sup>, students' personal growth and wellbeing can also be influenced by how they perceive their social support in school.

In the previous study conducted by Bofah and Ntow<sup>[14]</sup>, their findings revealed that lower social support has been received by students from parents as compared with support from teachers.

Yasin and Dzulkifli<sup>[15]</sup>, also conducted a study to determine the social support provided for both students both in low and high-achievers in academic domains including mathematics and English using a sample of 120 undergraduate students. According to their findings, students with strong social support performed better academically than those with little social support. In a similar study made by Steinberg and Darling as cited by Yasin and Dzulkifli<sup>[15]</sup>, findings revealed that there was a substantial association between students' academic achievement and social support. Both the academic success of pupils and their long-term educational plans were influenced by the social support they received from both family and friends. According to other research on social support and academic results, emotional support is often associated positively with a range of academic characteristics, such as motivation and academic achievement<sup>[16,17]</sup>.

Whitney<sup>[18]</sup> discovered that among high school students, friends social support was related with reduced levels of anxiety whereas family social support was connected with lower levels of depression.

The study titled "Perceived social support and academic achievement in Argentinean College students" by Iglesia et al.<sup>[19]</sup> found that only female students' perceptions of social support were connected with their academic performance.

Similar findings were found in the study by Demir and Leyendecker<sup>[13]</sup> titled "School-related social support is associated with school engagement, self-competence and health-related quality of life in Turkish immigrant students", which found that higher teacher support was linked to higher levels of school engagement and self-competence.

Furthermore, according to a study by Demaray and Malecki as cited by Pappas<sup>[20]</sup>, emotional and informational support were the types of social support that high school students reported receiving from their parents the most. Informational support, on the other hand, was most frequently reported from teacher and school sources, while emotional and instrumental support scores were highest from peers and close friends.

Although several researchers have studied social support<sup>[13,15–20]</sup>, it should be noted that there has not been enough information on the level of social support received by high school relative to the learning anxiety they experience in school.

## **1.2. Research questions**

The study aimed to answer the following specific questions:

(1) What is the extent of social support received by the secondary school students during home-based instruction?

(2) What is the level of the learning anxiety experienced by the secondary students toward home-based instruction?

(3) Is there a significant relationship between the social support provided by teachers and parents and the learning anxiety experienced by the secondary school students?

## **1.3. The hypothesis of the study**

$H_0$ —There is no significant relationship between the social support provided by teachers and parents and the learning anxiety experienced by the secondary school students.

# **2. Methodology**

## **2.1. Design**

Since the purpose of this study was to gather data from a huge population regarding behaviors, characteristics, or opinions, a descriptive survey was utilized<sup>[21]</sup>. According to Johnson as cited by Perez and Alieto<sup>[22]</sup>, a study that aims to describe a certain phenomenon is classified as a descriptive study. In this study,  $N = 75,542$  high school students made up the study's whole student population, which was spread among 42 public high schools in Zamboanga City, the Philippines. It was held during a COVID-19 lockdown, which made it difficult to hold on-site classes and prevented pupils from leaving their homes<sup>[23]</sup>.

## **2.2. Procedure**

In this study, the procedure of how data collection was carried out had undergone a thorough review by the Ethics Review Committee. Upon getting an ethics clearance, a permission letter was submitted to the office of the school's division superintendent (SDS) of Zamboanga City Division to inform the office about the conduct of the study across 42 public secondary schools.

Upon approval from the SDS, the enrolment data for SY 2020–2021 was acquired from the planning office. A proportional stratified random sampling was utilized in order to determine the samples allocation per school across sex and grade level. Using a Slovin's formula, the sample size necessary to collect data from was  $N = 398$  from a total population of  $N = 75,542$ .

In order to protect the target respondents from the threat of COVID-19, a less severe criterion was used. According to Kelly<sup>[24]</sup> and A/Qotba et al.<sup>[25]</sup>, they state that the COVID-19 pandemic may “serve as an excuse for using less stringent criteria in choosing samples without assessing the extent of bias introduced during the survey process”.

Data collection was done in two ways because the study took place during a lockdown caused by the rising number of COVID-19 cases: online and offline using a social support instrument that was adapted from Malecki, Demaray, and Elliott, as mentioned by Pappas<sup>[20]</sup> and a 13-item Learning Anxiety Questionnaire adopted from Kara<sup>[26]</sup>. According to Singleton and Straits and Dillman, Smyth, and Christian as cited by Ponto<sup>[27]</sup>, “using a combination of methods of survey administration can help ensure better sample coverage

by giving all individuals an equal chance of inclusion in the sample, therefore can reduce coverage error". Thus, the printed and digital copy of the survey questionnaires were created in a similar manner. However, in order to avoid duplicate responses from the respondents, the Google form was restricted to only permit one response per respondent.

On the other hand, in order to ensure the validity of the questionnaires for the existing study, pilot testing was conducted among 16 high school students.

### 3. Results and discussion

#### 3.1. What is the extent of social support received by secondary students from parents and teachers during home-based instruction?

**Table 1** presents the result of the students' self-reported extent of social support measured based on two constructs—parents and teachers. The computed mean scores were interpreted by the scale adopted from EPRD as cited by Zakaria et al.<sup>[28]</sup> and Kitjaroonchai<sup>[29]</sup> which states 1.00–1.79 Very Low; 1.80–2.59 Low; 2.60–3.39 Moderate; 3.40–4.19 High; 4.20–5.00 Very High.

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics on social support from teachers and parents.

	<i>N</i>	Mean	Std. Deviation	Description
Parents	383	3.8803	0.95787	High
Teachers	383	4.0226	0.91740	High
Overall social support	383	3.9515	0.82857	High

It can be seen in **Table 1** that the overall social support as perceived by JHS students to have received from their parents and teachers is High with a mean = 3.9515. Data also show that the social support received from teachers is higher than the social support received from parents. This finding agrees with the finding obtained by Henderson et al. in Bofah and Ntow<sup>[14]</sup> that lower social support has been received by students as compared with support from teachers. This implies that parents have become less involved in students' learning as they are progressing.

#### 3.2. What is the level of learning anxiety of secondary students towards home-based instruction?

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics on the learning anxiety of secondary students toward home-based instruction.

	<i>N</i>	Mean	Std. deviation	Description
Learning anxiety	383	3.3095	0.63619	Moderate

**Table 2** shows the learning anxiety of secondary students with mean = 3.3095 which is described as Moderate. This implies that secondary students have experienced moderate level of learning anxiety such as boredom caused by the less interaction with classmates and teachers; fatigue due to the mounds of modules and homework that they need to accomplish at home; and the learning difficulty they experienced during HBI.

This result in **Table 2** can be further explained by the result shown in **Table 3** which shows that the anxiety of learning has a mean score that fall mostly in the Moderate level [2.60–3.39]. This This anxiety of learning being experienced by the secondary school students towards home-based instruction includes problems in concentrating, being fed up with continuously learning new things in the current setup, not benefitting from learning despite the feeling of learning a lot, forgetfulness, boredom while listening to new subjects, and other learning difficulties experienced during the conduct of the home-based instruction. These findings conform to the findings obtained by Sen<sup>[30]</sup> that anxiety for learning of students in the study is at the Medium or Moderate level.

**Table 3.** Per item self-reported students' attitude across four dimensions.

Learning anxiety	Mean	Interpretation
1. I have problems in concentrating while on home-based instruction.	3.2872	Moderate
2. I have been fed up with continuously learning new things in this current setup.	3.3969	Moderate
3. I have learned too many things so far but I have not benefited from them at all.	3.0862	Moderate
4. I experience difficulties while learning during home-based instruction.	3.8851	High
5. Forgetting what I learn in a short time makes me anxious.	3.6188	High
6. Learning during this home-based instruction is a difficult job.	3.7859	High
7. I experience difficulties while I learn.	3.3159	Moderate
8. Losing too much time while learning disheartens me.	2.5927	Low
9. I am bored while listening to new subjects.	3.0705	Moderate
10. I feel anxious when I start a new subject during HBI.	3.1958	Moderate
11. I am not anxious about learning.	3.0888	Moderate
12. I am anxious while being introduced a new subject.	3.6188	High
13. Failing in concentrating myself upsets me.	3.0809	Moderate

The above finding implies that high school students have experienced anxiety in learning during HBI which can be attributed to the number of adjustments that they need to make to be able to cope with their current learning. However, it is presumed that with the guidance and support provided to them by their parents and teachers, high school students were able to manage their learning routine, thereby lessening the negative impact of the sudden changes to them.

### 3.3. Is there a significant relationship between the extent of social support received by secondary students from parents and teachers and their learning anxiety towards home-based instruction?

The *r*-value obtained from the correlation analysis was interpreted using the Pearson correlation and absolute range of values below adopted from Knapp as cited by Carvalho et al.<sup>[31]</sup>.

**Table 4.** Class of Pearson correlation and absolute range of values.

Range	Class
<0.1	No relationship
0.10–0.20	Weak
0.21–0.5	Moderate
>0.5	Strong

It can be gleaned from **Table 5** that the *r*-value obtained for the correlation analysis between the overall social support received by secondary students and their learning anxiety towards home-based instruction indicate a strong relationship, however, this relationship is not significant at *p*-value 0.100 which is greater than *p*-value 0.05. This finding disagrees with the findings obtained by Basilio et.al<sup>[32]</sup> and Kugbey et al.<sup>[33]</sup> which concluded that there is a significant relationship between social support and anxiety experienced by high school students.

**Table 5.** Correlation between the overall social support received by secondary students and their learning anxiety towards home-based instruction.

		Anxiety	Description
Overall social support	Pearson correlation	0.084	Strongly positively correlated
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.100	Not significant
	N	383	–

Legend: <0.10 No Relationship; 0.10–0.2 Weak; 0.21–0.5 Moderate; >0.5 Strong Relationship.

## 4. Conclusion

This study concludes that both teachers and parents provided overall high social support to secondary school students toward their home-based instruction. Specifically, teachers provided higher social support

than parents indicating a higher involvement of teachers in the provision of social support to students than parents.

Further, this study also concludes the learning anxiety experienced by the secondary school students was Moderate indicating that students were able to handle their anxiety despite the sudden adjustments they need to make during home-based instruction. Furthermore, no significant relationship was found between social support and the learning anxiety experienced by high school students despite the strong correlation seen between the two variables. This finding opposes the previous studies which indicated that social support has a significant relationship with students' anxiety.

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## Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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