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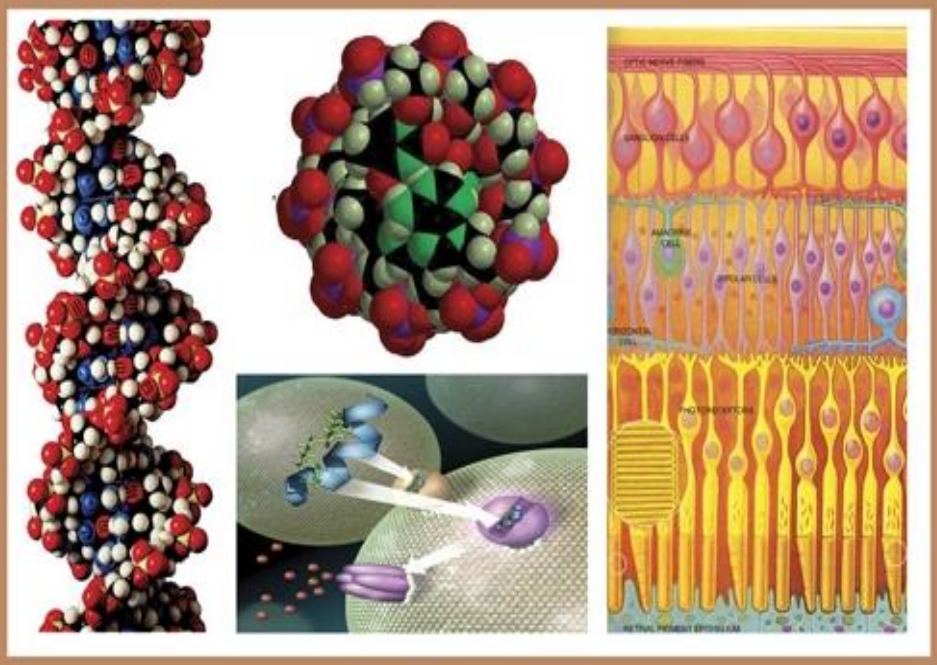

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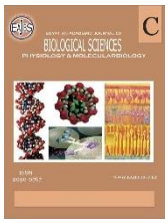

Examining the Role of Social Support in Promoting Psychological Well-Being and Reducing Stress Among International Students

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to learn how social support can help international pupils feel less lonely and stressed out. The study relied on secondary sources to summarize and evaluate prior research. One study done at Buea's university began with the assumption that students' already-complicated lives are rife with academic stressors, many of which can also trigger a mental health crisis. It was argued that students' mental health and resilience could be greatly aided by having a strong social support system in place. We postulated that the mental health of academically stressed students might improve if they had access to social support systems like loving parents and siblings, a friendly social group, encouraging instructors, and adequate learning materials. In this study, 374 students who reported experiencing scholastic stress were randomly selected from a larger population using the purposive sampling method. Data was gathered with the help of questionnaires. The information was analyzed using Spearman's association. The findings indicated that college students' mental health was affected by their parents' and families' acceptance of them (r=0.160; P=0.000), their peers' acceptance of them (r=0.140; P=0.000), their teachers' involvement in their education (r=0.205; P=0.000), and their access to learning tools (r=0.417; P=0.000). It was discovered that students' social networks account for a large portion of the variance in their psychological well-being when they are academically anxious. It is important for parents and significant others to listen to their children's concerns and provide them with emotional support and counseling when necessary. Because it fosters a feeling of belonging and aids in promoting and decreasing stress, social support is crucial for students. There are many various kinds of social support, both material and immaterial. Emotional assistance is helpful in managing stress.

INTRODUCTION

One's sense of social support is based on their belief that those around them appreciate, respect, care about, and adore them (Gurung, 2006). One's family, friends, teachers, society, and other social groups to which one belongs are all possible sources. Help from friends and family members can come in many forms, from an objective assessment of a given circumstance to the recommendation of helpful coping strategies or even just a sympathetic ear when things get rough. People's ability to deal with and even lessen the effects of stress is aided by the presence of social support systems. Many studies found an inverse relationship between having social support and experiencing stress, melancholy, and other psychiatric conditions, and a positive relationship between having such support and overall mental and physical health.

For instance, research by (Nahid and Sarkis,1994) found that having social support shields individuals from experiencing a significant decline in mental health after experiencing a major life stressor such as a death in the family, a serious disease, or any other major life crisis. It's been known for a long time that the people around an individual have a significant impact on how well they adapt. A number of studies have found that the effectiveness of welfare protection, rather than its quantity, is positively associated with psychological well-being (Holahan *et al.*, 1995). Perceived social support is the knowledge that help is there if needed, while lived social support is the real provision of such aid. Family and friends can help in three ways: by being warm, by keeping them in check, and by giving them psychological freedom. Students who work in these three areas tend to have fewer mental health issues because they have healthy self-concepts, strong social skills, and a strong willingness to follow the norms. Research also shows that this assistance is crucial for normal development (Oswald & Suss, 1994). The degree to which an individual has societal support from their family and peers, for instance, can be an indicator of that person's psychological well-being. Students from all socioeconomic backgrounds benefit from the mix of family and friend support with inclusion and emotional kindness, as it leads to better academic performance, reduced disruptive behavior, less psychological anguish, and lower rates of crime. The impact on adolescents' scholastic performance would be substantial (Silbereisen & Todt, 1994).

The intensity of pupils' mental health issues is inversely proportional to the amount of social support they receive (Calvete & Connor-Smith, 2006). Students may find it simpler to focus on their studies and manage the pressures of daily living if they have social assistance.

They are in danger and susceptible to melancholy, tension, and worry, without adequate help from family and peers. All the time away from home means that international pupils must adjust to a new society and language. In addition to scholastic success, receiving social and mental assistance helps students adjust to their new surroundings and deal with the many challenges they face.

1-Problem statement:

In order to maintain positive emotional and bodily well-being, social assistance is indispensable. Social assistance has been shown to aid in navigating challenging conditions and adjusting to new circumstances. Negative mental health outcomes like melancholy and worry have been related to isolated living. International pupils have a rising incidence of melancholy. This mental health problem is a major obstacle to learning for many college students, a leading cause of death among young people, and a potential danger to the aim of improving adolescent intellectual resources through higher learning. Suicidal thoughts are a worry for all parties, including the students themselves, their parents, the university, and the country as a whole. They should think about how to make sure the kids have social assistance while they are abroad. Suicidal inclinations due to a dearth of social support have been observed in the past, even though an increasing body of literature and actual studies have demonstrated a connection between psychiatric difficulties and social support among students (Fan *et al.*, 2001). As was mentioned previously in the analysis, the issue appears to be ongoing at the current time and may continue to do so unless it is resolved urgently. The purpose of this research is to better understand how social assistance can improve the mental health of foreign pupils and lessen their stress levels.

2-Literature review

Being appreciated, respected, cared for, and cherished by those around you is a key component of social support, as defined by (Gurung,2006). Family, friends, instructors, the community, and other social groups that one is a part of can all be sources of ever-changing social support. In addition to

providing practical help in times of crisis, friends and family can also offer moral and emotional support, as well as advice on how to deal with challenging circumstances (Suldo, 2009). Social support is an important factor in lowering stress and improving coping mechanisms when dealing with stressful circumstances (Teoh *et al.*,2021). A number of studies have found a positive correlation between having a network of people who care about you and your well-being and a lower risk of experiencing stress, melancholy, and other mental health issues (Deci *et al.*, 2000). Abraham Maslow proposed a hierarchy of requirements, labeling the stages of this hierarchy as follows: Physiological, safety, belonging, transcendence, esteem, self-actualization, and love. Therefore, Maslow concentrated on "exemplary" individuals like Jane Addams, Frederick Douglass, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Albert Einstein because "the study of disabled, underdeveloped, juvenile, and sickly examples can generate only a hobble psychology and a cripple philosophy." Maslow studied the 1% of undergraduates who were deemed physically and mentally fit.

In his work entitled "Motivation and Personality" published in 1954, Maslow elaborated on his theory. Though the hierarchy is still widely used in secondary and tertiary psychology courses, attachment theory, management seminars, and sociology studies it has largely replaced it in clinical and postgraduate psychology and psychiatry. According to the Social Support Theory, social relationships play an essential role in an individual's social, psychological, and behavioral development at all stages of their existence. Importantly, there is a strong correlation between the quantity and quality of one's social connections and health and mortality rates (Blazer, 1982). People provide social support primarily through material help, informational help, and emotional support. According to this theory, one's mental health can benefit greatly from being part of a close-knit group because doing so allows one to share problems with trusted friends and family members, rather than carrying around burdens that others may be able to help with or at least make more bearable.

According to Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory, most direct interactions with social agents like parents, classmates, and instructors take place in the Microsystems. In such contexts, the person is seen not merely as a recipient of events, but also as a contributor to the formation of the context (Barnes, 1994) That is to say, the beneficiary (the pupil) should make adequate use of the provided resources. However, according to Vygotosky's social constructivism theory, children's cognitive growth takes place in the context of their interactions with others and their formal schooling. Children's abilities to perceive, focus their attention, and remember are profoundly shaped by the cognitive resources given by their cultures' histories, social contexts, traditions, languages, and religious beliefs. The child must interact with others in the social setting before he or she can internalize the lessons learned from that experience (Teoh *et al.*, 2001). According to Richard Lazarus's cognitive theory of stress, the stressor is not what actually causes the individual to feel stressed out, but rather the individual's interpretation of the stressor. People, he argues, undergo a two-step cognitive process consisting of a primary and secondary appraisal when faced with a possibly stressful event. The first step in appraising a circumstance is deciding whether it is positive, neutral, or negative in terms of its impact on one's well-being. In the secondary evaluation, individuals assess the resources at their disposal based on whether or not they believe the situation is within their control.

3-Methodology:

Secondary data collected from previously conducted research was used for this analysis. Secondary data contains a wealth of information culled from primary sources like reputable publications like periodicals, academic journals, government reports, and financial markets. The study questions and aims can also be answered by

secondary data. The data for this research comes from a variety of sources, including academic journals, reports from various government agencies, minutes from various committee meetings, official documents from various international organizations, and the websites of relevant governmental and non-governmental bodies (Gottlieb *et al.*, 2010). A survey was performed as part of a larger study at the University of Buea, with 374 students serving as participants. These students were both randomly and purposefully chosen. The researcher was able to include people who were experiencing different types of scholastic stress because of the use of purposeful sampling, and they used random sampling to ensure that their sample was large enough and statistically representative of the population (Li. *et al.*, 2011) A questionnaire was used because of its efficiency in gathering information on scholastic pressure, social support, and mental health. The students individually developed the survey, which was titled University Students' Social Assistance and Psychological Well-Being in Times of Academic Stress. We operationalized "peer acceptance," "teacher engagement," and "learning resource availability" as parts of "social support" because parental/family participation was the independent variable ($X2=0.17$, $P=0.982$). Parental participation in recreational activities and regular school attendance were also indicators of strong family support, as were parents' encouragement of their children to do well on tests and their overall demeanor toward their children's schoolwork. As a factor of social support that influences academic success, belonging to a group, having friends who support you when you're struggling academically, having classmates who accept you for who you are and having friends with whom you can share ideas and decompress from school-related stress are all measures of peer acceptance (Eskin, 2003). Participants rated their perceptions of teachers' functions as social supports in relation to the following aspects: assisting students with academic assignments, providing feedback to promote learning and reduce stress, encouraging them and assisting them in managing academic stress, gently correcting the student when they make mistakes, and boosting the student's self-esteem, among others. Indicators of societal support also included the accessibility of resources like books, libraries, the internet, and well-equipped classes and lecture spaces (Eschenmann, 1991). One's level of emotional health serves as the dependent variable and is influenced by a person's feelings toward their studies, including how they feel about their grades, how they feel about their academic standing, how they feel about their friends, whether they can always overcome challenges or not, how well they can adapt to their surroundings, how proud they are of themselves, and so on. By categorizing answers to free-form inquiries according to common themes, the researchers were able to draw conclusions about the respondents' thoughts and feelings. EpiData Version 3.1 (EpiData Association, Odense, Denmark, 2008) was used to hold numerical data, and it has 111 in-built coherence and validation tests. Data range and validation checks in SPSS version 21.0 (IBM Inc., 2012) were also performed to detect erroneous numbers and ensure uniformity (Gurung, 2005). Frequency and MRA were used for analysis because categorical factors made up the bulk of the data.

The results of a reliability test using the Cronbach Alpha reliability analysis were analyzed to establish that the responses had a Cronbach Alpha value of 0.719, which allowed for an evaluation of the responses' degree of internal consistency. In the context of this discussion, indicators of social support were evaluated as follows: support from parents or other family members (0.652), acceptance by peers (0.258), participation of teachers (0.470), availability of learning materials (0.701), and a test of psychological well being (0.686). The entirety of the statistical data was represented by using a confidence interval of 95% and an alpha value of 0.05. To show the predictive potential of social support over the mental health of highly anxious pupils, a study of numbers was

performed using the Spearman rho correlation test. The title of the exam was used to achieve this.

4-Results:

The research found that pupils who had access to social and emotional resources did better academically than those who did not. The results revealed that the mental health of academically stressed pupils was affected by factors such as parental/family support (r=0.160; P=0.000), peer acceptance (r=0.140; p=0.000), and teachers' involvement (r=0.205; p=0.000). students' social and emotional health in the face of scholastic pressure at the university level. Students value the support they receive from their peers in the classroom highly because it helps them feel welcomed and at home in their new community. They all agreed that having someone to talk to about their problems and receive guidance and assistance from in times of need makes it much easier to handle stressful situations. Therefore, students are less likely to feel unimportant and are more likely to take an involved role in all scholastic endeavors. This result is consistent with the observation that researchers typically look at two dimensions of the growth of a child's mind and character when studying peer acceptance among students. The child's level of social approval by the group, usually peers, and the child's sense of belonging in the group is the first element. The number and quality of the child's individual friendships constitute the second domain. This research also showed that these students have a strong sense of belonging because their peers are there for them when they're struggling academically, whether that means offering advice, suggesting solutions, or even helping them work through the issue on their own. The incentive viewpoint, which supports this view, states that good peer relations increase the need for belonging and connection, fostering positive emotions that are necessary for optimal functioning both globally and in school. Academic success, social adjustment, and study drive all appear to be influenced by how much students feel they are supported by their peers. Negative friend relationships, on the other hand, are linked to a lack of interest and potentially harmful actions.

5-Conclusion:

It is clear from the results of this research that students' perceptions of social support play a crucial role in determining how they respond to academic pressure. The results showed that pupils who had the resources they needed at school did better than those who did not. However, some children who lacked some of these educational necessities still managed to excel academically. Certain infants are endowed with a high Intelligence from the start (IQ). Students' academic outcomes can be improved through the provision of social support during the learning process, as evidenced by the correlation between the timely provision of school necessities and higher academic achievement. When we attempt to compare the fundamental responsibilities of parents and educators, we find that they are complementary. Both must function properly for maximum effectiveness. Without the help of the school, parents can't provide their children with all the life skills they'll need. Similarly, institutions can't do their jobs effectively without parental involvement. Therefore, parents and teachers must work together to support students' learning at home and provide them with the required financial, human, and material tools for schools to be effective. According to the findings, the presence of social support from family and peers is a significant factor in overcoming psychological difficulties, as the presence of such support has been shown to reduce the prevalence of psychological difficulties among students. This suggests that the level of societal support has a direct correlation with the prevalence of mental health issues. Without a strong social network, coping with mental health issues becomes increasingly difficult. This research offers hard data on the helpful effects of social support for students dealing with mental health issues. In particular, the results indicated that a decrease in psychological issues among students may result from an

increase in social support. It is unnecessary to restate the findings here, as the connection between perceived social support and the mental health of highly pressured college students has already been given. Therefore, the researcher finds that a student's level of perceived social support is a factor in his or her ability to cope with the emotional and psychological strain associated with university coursework. With the proper resources, international students can succeed. Having people you can lean on is essential.

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