

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

**TEACHER SUPPORT FOR STUDENT LEARNING:
GENDER AS A FACTOR****MJSSH**
Muallim Journal of
Social Science and Humanities**Jalal Deen Careemdeen**Faculty of Education, The Open University of Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka. Email: jdc@ou.ac.lkDOI: <https://doi.org/10.33306/mjssh/232>**Abstract**

The teacher's role is expected as that of facilitator, mentor, assessor, planner, role model, information provider and resource developer who can support and encourage student learning in various ways. This study aims at identifying the level of teacher support for student learning and differences in teacher support for student learning based on Gender among secondary school children in Sri Lanka. A survey research design was used for this study, and a questionnaire with a Likert scale was provided among secondary school children to collect data. Descriptive analysis such as mean, standard deviation and MANOVA was used for data analysis. In order to select 1350 secondary school children, a stratified random sampling technique was used. The results of the study revealed teacher support for student learning with a mean score of 4.325 and a standard deviation of 0.695, while the interpretation is high. The analysis of MANOVA revealed that significant gender-wise difference in teacher support for student learning as the teacher support for girls' children's learning is significantly higher than male children. The results of the study suggested that teachers can increase their educational support and teaching styles for boys, such as practical sessions. It was recommended that teachers can design their teaching-learning processes based on student-centred methods in line with the challenges of the 21st century, where students can interact with teachers and peers and enhance their soft, hard, generic and life skills. Teachers should create a digital environment where the teaching-learning process can be delivered.

Keywords: Teacher support, Student learning, Gender

This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial 4.0 International License

Received 26th December 2022, revised 21th January 2023, accepted 19th February 2023**Introduction**

The teacher support could be seen in two perspectives, such as a narrow perspective and a broad perspective. According to Fraser (1998)¹ "The narrow perspective views teacher support in the

form of trust, friendship, help and interest only in a classroom environment". In line with Tardy (1985)²'s definition, the broad viewpoint is "teacher support in any environment, as a teacher giving instrumental, informational, appraisal, or emotional support to a student". According to Malecki and Elliott (1999)³ and Lei, Cui et al. (2018)⁴ instrumental support is the provision of resources, informational support is the provision of information or advice in a specific content area, appraisal support is the provision of evaluative feedback to each student, and emotional support is empathy, trust, and love. From a different perspective, teacher support can be expressed as caring, allowing for age-appropriate independence in decision-making, and enforcing rules that are perceived to be fair and transparent (Klem and Connell 2004)⁵.

Several studies have found that successful or practical teachers are warm, enthusiastic, generous with praise, and have high status. Also, successful teachers communicate well with and are responsive to students. In order to ensure successful student learning, teachers should extend his/her support, encouragement, and motivation towards students, especially by implementing student-centred teaching methods. The concept of a democratic classroom enhances student ownership of the activities and recognizes student achievement. Besides, the choice of teaching materials and teacher discourse in the classroom dramatically influences students' motivation. Valuable teaching materials and relevant to real-life students and student-centred teaching methods can encourage students to acquire life skills and competencies needed in the 21st century. In a school, the teacher role should be that of a facilitator, mentor, assessor, planner, role model, information provider, and resource developer, influencing students' active involvement in their lesson activities and school activities rather than being an instructor.

Various reasons affect children's education and lead to school dropouts in Sri Lanka. Weak teachers, poor teaching, inadequate school facilities (Little, Indika et al. 2011, Rasmy 2018)^{6,7} teachers' negative behaviours such as lack of attention, discrimination, humiliating treatment and harsh punishment (National Education Commission 2016)⁸ create an environment in which pursuing education becomes easily de-prioritised in certain places in Sri Lanka. In addition, Department of Census and Statistics (2017)⁹ showed that boys have a higher drop-out rate than girls. So, this study was carried out in order to determine the level of teacher support for student learning and elaborate on whether there are significant differences in teacher support among male and female students.

Literature Review

Notably, teachers' teaching strategies create students' engagement and interest in the learning process, support them with effective learning skills, and enhance learning behaviours. Teachers utilized many teaching strategies to attract students' attention at the start of the lesson, the teacher frequently used encouragement activities consisting of "guessing the answer activities" and "question and answer" to attract student attention, encouragement activities influence students' attentive behaviour; whenever students tend to disrupt their friends, teachers tend to ask questions to encourage them to be involved in learning, whenever more encouragement happened, higher student participation took place in lesson activities (Awang, Ahmad et al. 2013)¹⁰.

Teachers' methods and strategies make students feel engaged and encouraged to participate in the learning process, students who have in their minds that a positive relationship with their teachers positively impacts their interest and motivation in school, which contributes to the

enhancement of the learning process (Luz 2015)¹¹. Moreover, Teachers need to be more creative and innovative to make the delivery system more effective, engaging, and fun to stimulate student interest in the learning (Arbaa, Jamil et al. 2017)¹².

Teachers as managers and leaders in the classroom, need to know students better. Teachers need to identify students' educational needs to build positive relationships and encourage positive and constructive interactions. To determine inactive students, teachers should understand learners' behaviour, and can encourage them to participate in the classroom learning process (Abdullah, Bakar et al. 2012)¹³. Teachers could convey the content, knowledge, ideas, information, instruction, advice, and support of students more clearly without causing confusion, ambiguity, and misunderstanding through effective interaction, students who regularly interact with teachers will be more motivated and able to learn through experience.

Emotional support by the teacher for student learning brings several positive behaviours among students. For example, Teachers' prosocial classroom behaviour and social-emotional support behaviours were the strongest predictors of students' views of high-quality relationships with their teachers; both prosocial classroom behaviours and social-emotional support (Prewett, Bergin et al. 2018)¹⁴. Teachers who were perceived by students concerning provisions of emotional support tended to have students who reported a high degree of student consensus concerning their teacher's value for the subject matter and high levels of internalized value was related positively to their internalized value and effort (Wentzel, Muenks et al. 2017)¹⁵.

Teacher educational support cultivates students' school adjustment and school belonging. Teacher support leads to students' school adjustment in terms of academic achievement and school belonging (Murdock and Bolch 2005)¹⁶. Lei, Cui et al. (2018)¹⁷ showed a strong correlation between teacher support and students' academic emotions. Furthermore, they demonstrated that the link between teacher support and positive academic emotions was higher for American and Western European adolescent students than for students from East Asia. Besides, Meunier (2015)¹⁸ showed that teachers' educational support reduces tension between teachers and students in the learning environment.

Good interpersonal relationships between teachers and students create an effective and meaningful learning environment. Student-teacher relationship is positively associated with student interest in the class and is strongly associated with students' class participation while students' felt optimistic about their relationship with their teachers (Brinkworth, McIntyre et al. 2018)¹⁹. Teachers and students value a supportive and caring relationship between them and that interaction is essential to the teacher-student relationship, this sense of caring and supporting from teachers motivates students to become more interested learner, students benefit and are encouraged when their teachers create a safe and trustful environment (Luz, 2015)¹¹. Good interpersonal relationships between teachers and students create effective and meaningful learning (Musa and Abd Halim 2015)²⁰. Students need to be optimistic about teachers and make teachers a vital resource to enhance academic excellence, intellectual potential, and student engagement.

Teacher-students relationship confirms that positive teacher-student relationships influence students' learning, the essence emerges from a connected relationship (caring, support, trust and respect) that supports students' self-confidence, fosters students' self-trust, and increases students' motivation to learn, influencing their professional development towards future career pathway (Al Nasser, Renganathan et al. 2014)²¹. There are five themes within the student-teacher

relationship throughout the interviews: care, support, trust, approachability and expectation, academic motivation is fostered when teachers demonstrate genuine care for students, provide continuous support to students, build trust in the relationship, are approachable to students, and have a reasonably high expectation for students' achievement (Jasmi and Hin 2014)²². Continuous support from teachers to learn and function with long-term goals is critical for enhancing adolescent well-being (MacDonald, Bottrell et al. 2018)²³.

The student's participation level in learning was high, while more frequently, teachers support them, the association between teacher support and student achievement is positive due to the indirect relationship with the mediating effect of student participation (Ing, Webb et al. 2015)²⁴. There are significant relationship between teacher commitment and student involvement due to teachers' competence and confidence that their ability in the classroom will produce knowledgeable, skilled, virtuous, responsible and responsible students capable of achieving personal wellbeing (Zakaria, Ahmad et al. 2012)²⁵. Teacher credibility, teaching strategies, teacher expectations, and teacher immediacy factors are identified, which causes student involvement in learning. Teachers and the school need to increase their efforts, programmes, and activities to improve student academic achievement. (Sidik, Awang et al. 2018)²⁶.

Since classrooms are social contexts improving the relationship between teachers and students seems like an optimistic approach to improving student outcomes. Suppose the student has a positive relationship with teachers. In that case, it may encourage the student to learn, engage in another academic achievement, or participate in more in-class activities, leading to students' wellbein. Whenever teacher and students participate and cooperate in the teaching and learning activities, effective learning takes place. Teachers who work closely with each child and are knowledgeable about group dynamics are more likely to provide a successful and rewarding learning environment. Chohan and Khan (2010)²⁷ emphasized that in a situation where parents are uneducated and economically affected, school teachers' responsibilities towards supporting their children for learning increase more than in a normal situation.

Objectives of the Study

To determine the level of teacher support for student learning.

To find out differences in teacher support for student learning based on gender.

Methodology

This study used a survey and quantitative research design. The population of the survey includes of secondary schoolchildren in Sri Lanka. A total of 1350 secondary schoolchildren were selected for the study using a stratified random sampling technique to select the study sample. The questionnaire tool was developed in line with the needs of the survey. It included two sections as one section to identify student's demographic backgrounds and the next section to measure student's perception of teacher support for student learning. The respondents were given five choices for the teacher support construct based on the Likert Scale (1–5): Never (1), Rarely (2), Occasionally (3), Often (4) and Always (5). The opinions of experts from the sociology of education were used to establish the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. The internal consistency of the instrument was based on the report of Cronbach's alpha coefficient values

(0.953). Descriptive and inferential statistics were used in analysing the data. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 23 was used for the data analysis. Descriptive analysis was used to obtain the mean and standard deviations, to determine the overall level of teacher support for student learning. MANOVA analysis is used to determine any significant differences in teacher support based on gender amongst Sri Lankan secondary school children.

Results

a. Level of Teacher Support for Student Learning

The descriptive analysis, which provides values such as mean and standard deviation, is used to determine the level of teacher support. Seven items were constructed to determine the respondents’ level from the aspect of teacher support as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1
Level of Socio-Environmental Support in terms of Teacher Support

No.	Item	Mean	S. D	Interpretation
My teachers				
1	encourage me to express my opinions in the classroom	4.354	0.961	High
2	encourage me to participate in lesson activities	4.529	0.830	High
3	encourages me to share opinions and ideas with my classmates to enhance my ability to interact with group members	4.171	1.012	High
4	provide me written and verbal comments and positive feedback in every task I do which enables me to improve my performance in the certain educational tasks	4.188	0.983	High
5	gives me educational advices which motivate me to involve myself in learning	4.437	0.861	High
6	praise me for my educational performances which encourage me to involve myself further in learning	4.246	0.962	High
7	responds to my questions, concerns and needs which enable me to continue my learning	4.348	0.951	High
Overall		4.325	0.695	High

Table 1 shows the comprehensive data related to teacher support for students’ learning with a mean score of 4.325 and standard deviation of 0.695, while the interpretation is high. The highest level of teacher support encourages students to participate in lesson activities with a higher mean score of 4.529, and standard deviation of 0.830. The second-highest level of teacher support is related to giving educational advice to students, thereby motivating them to involve themselves in learning more deeply. This pushes up the mean score to 4.437, standard deviation to 0.861 and the

interpretation to high. The lowest item in the teacher support category is encouraging students to share their opinions and ideas with classmates to enhance their ability to interact with other group members. The mean score is 4.171 and standard deviation is 1.012 for this category, with this item being interpreted as high. The results show that students have a high level of educational support from their teachers for their learning involvement.

b. Teacher support for student learning based on Gender

Table 2 shows the MANOVA analysis for the difference in mean scores obtained for teacher support based on gender.

Table 2

MANOVA Difference Aspects of t Support based on Gender

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	S. D	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Total Square	F	Sig.
Teacher Support	Male	675	4.274	0.706	3.498	1	3.498	7.254	0.007
	Female	675	4.376	0.682					

Table 2 shows there are significant gender-wise differences in teacher support [$F = 7.254$ and $\text{sig} = 0.007$].

Moreover, Table 2 shows that socio-environmental support in terms of the teacher support for female students (Mean = 4.376 and S.D. = 0.682) is greater than for male students (Mean 4.274 and S.D. = 0.706). Thus, the results of the study show that teacher support is higher for female students than for male students among secondary school children in Sri Lanka.

Conclusion and Discussion

Teacher support for student learning is at a high level. This finding supports Ing, Webb et al. (2015)²⁴, who demonstrated that student participation is high when teacher support is more frequent. However, Sidik, Awang et al. (2019)²⁶ found that teachers' support for student learning is moderate. The lowest mean value in terms of teacher support is for the statement, 'My teachers encourage me to share opinions and ideas with my classmates to enhance my ability to interact with group members'. Hurst, Wallace et al. (2013)²⁸ found that social interaction among students improves their problem-solving skills and critical thinking, and recommended that teachers implement social interaction in their classroom to enhance performance. In school, the teacher should also be a facilitator, mentor, assessor, planner, role model, information provider and resource developer. Teachers must be committed, show their credibility, use innovative teaching strategies and modern educational technologies (Zakaria, Ahmad et al. 2012)²⁵. As a continuous supporter (MacDonald, Bottrell et al. 2018)²³ rather than as a knowledge provider, teachers can better influence students' active participation in their lessons. Teachers should have a good relationship with their children, which leads to enhanced students' wellbeing (Al Nasser, Renganathan et al. 2014)²¹. In addition, teachers can cultivate a good relationship with parents on student learning which would bring several positive consequences. In addition, Zakaria, Ahmad et al. (2012)²⁵ demonstrated a significant relationship between teacher commitment and student

learning. Teachers are competent and confident that their ability in the classroom can produce students who are knowledgeable, skilled, virtuous, responsible and capable of achieving personal wellbeing. Moreover, teacher credibility, strategies, expectations and immediacy factors that cause student involvement in learning are identified. Continuous support by teachers to learn and function with long-term goals is the core for enhancing wellbeing among adolescents (MacDonald, Bottrell et al. 2018)²³.

The finding of the study revealed that shows that teacher support for female students is greater than for male students. In Ireland, the percentage of girls that are encouraged by teachers to express their opinions in the classroom is higher than that of the boys (Simovska, de Róiste et al. 2012)²⁹. Perceived peer support levels are the same for male and female students (Bursal 2017). By contrast, Aziz, Quraishi et al. (2018)³⁰, revealed that socio-environmental factors such as teachers, parents and peers, and the curriculum are significant support for classroom participation among boys more than girls, who are more influenced by the classroom environment.

Recommendations

Teachers can design their teaching–learning processes based on student-centred methods in line with the challenges of the 21st century, where students can interact with teachers and peers and enhance their soft, hard, generic and life skills. Teachers should create a digital environment where the teaching-learning process can be delivered. The teacher should support boys children as well girls children for their learning. The teacher can prepare teaching and learning activities catering for boys' nature and can incorporate more practical sessions.

References

1. Fraser, B. J. (1998). "Classroom environment instruments: Development, validity and applications." *Learning environments research* **1**(1): 7-34.
2. Tardy, C. H. (1985). "Social support measurement." *American journal of community psychology* **13**(2): 187-202.
3. Malecki, C. K. and S. N. Elliott (1999). "Adolescents' ratings of perceived social support and its importance: Validation of the Student Social Support Scale." *Psychology in the Schools* **36**(6): 473-483.
4. Lei, H., et al. (2018). "Relationships between student engagement and academic achievement: A meta-analysis." *Social Behavior and Personality: an international journal* **46**(3): 517-528.
5. Klem, A. M. and J. P. Connell (2004). "Relationships matter: Linking teacher support to student engagement and achievement." *Journal of school health* **74**: 262-273.
6. Little, A., et al. (2011). Access, Attendance and Achievement in Rural Schools in Sri Lanka, CREATE: Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions
7. Rasmy, M. I. (2018). Social Environmental Determinants of Student Dropout in the Plantation Settlement in Sri Lanka: A Case Study of a Lower Secondary School in Labookellie Area. Faculty of Social Science and Humanities. Bangi, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. Master of Philosophy.

8. National Education Commission (2016). Proposals for a National Policy on General Education in Sri Lanka, , National Education Commission Sri Lanka, 126, Nawala Road, Nugegoda Sri Lanka.
9. Department of Census and Statistics (2017). REPORT ON CHILD ACTIVITY SURVEY SRI LANKA, Department of Census and Statistics,“Sankyana Mandiraya”,No. 306/71, Polduwa road, Battaramulla.
10. Awang, M. M., et al. (2013). "Effective teaching strategies to encourage learning behaviour." *IOSR Journal* 8(2): 35-40.
11. Luz, F. S. d. R. d. (2015). The relationship between teachers and students in the classroom: Communicative language teaching approach and cooperative learning strategy to improve learning.
12. Arbaa, R., et al. (2017). "Model Bersepadu Penerapan Kemahiran Abad Ke-21 dalam Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran (Integrated Model of Infusing 21st Century Skills in Teaching and Learning)." *Jurnal Pendidikan Malaysia (Malaysian Journal of Education)* 42(1): 1-11.
13. Abdullah, M. Y., et al. (2012). "The dynamics of student participation in classroom: observation on level and forms of participation." *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 59: 61-70.
14. Prewett, S. L., et al. (2018). "Student and teacher perceptions on student-teacher relationship quality: A middle school perspective." *School Psychology International* 40(1): 66-87.
15. Wentzel, K. R., et al. (2017). "Peer and teacher supports in relation to motivation and effort: A multi-level study." *Contemporary Educational Psychology* 49: 32-45.
16. Murdock, T. B. and M. B. Bolch (2005). "Risk and protective factors for poor school adjustment in lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) high school youth: Variable and person-centered analyses." *Psychology in the Schools* 42(2): 159-172.
17. Lei, H., et al. (2018). "The Relationship between Teacher Support and Students' Academic Emotions: A Meta-Analysis." *Frontiers in psychology* 8: 2288.
18. Meunier, O. (2015). "Issues of educational support in primary school and secondary education in disadvantaged suburbs in France." *International Review of Sociology* 25(3): 518-533.
19. Brinkworth, M. E., et al. (2018). "Teacher-student relationships: The positives and negatives of assessing both perspectives." *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology* 55: 24-38.
20. Musa, K. and H. Abd Halim (2015). "Kemahiran interpersonal guru dan hubungan dengan pencapaian akademik pelajar (Interpersonal teacher skill and it's relationship with students' academic achievement)." *Jurnal Pendidikan Malaysia (Malaysian Journal of Education)* 40(2): 89-99.
21. Al Nasser, Y. S., et al. (2014). "Impact of Students-Teacher Relationship on Student's Learning: A Review of Literature." *International Journal of Nursing Education* 6(1): 167-172.
22. Jasmi, A. N. and L. C. Hin (2014). "Student-teacher relationship and student academic motivation." *Journal of Interdisciplinary Research in Education (JIRE)* 4(1): 75-82.
23. MacDonald, F. J., et al. (2018). "Socially transformative wellbeing practices in flexible learning environments: Invoking an education of hope." *Health Education Journal* 78(4): 377-387.

-
24. Ing, M., et al. (2015). "Student participation in elementary mathematics classrooms: the missing link between teacher practices and student achievement?" *Educational Studies in Mathematics* 90(3): 341-356.
 25. Zakaria, S., et al. (2012). " Faktor persekitaran sosial dan hubungannya dengan pembentukan jati diri. ." *Hadhari Special Edition*: 155–172.
 26. Sidik, I. F., et al. (2019). "Teacher's Support and Student Involvement in Learning Activities on Enhancing Student Academic Achievement." *The Journal of Social Sciences Research* 5(7): 1167-1175.
 27. Chohan, B. I. and R. M. Khan (2010). "Impact of parental support on the academic performance and self concept of the student." *Journal of Research and Reflections in Education* 4(1): 14-26.
 28. Hurst, B., et al. (2013). "The impact of social interaction on student learning." *Reading Horizons*.
 29. Simovska, V., De Róiste, A., Kelly, C., Molcho, M., Gavin, A. & Gabhainn, S. N. 2012. Is School Participation Good for Children? Associations with Health and Wellbeing. *Health Education*
 30. Aziz, F., et al. (2018). "Factors behind Classroom Participation of Secondary School Students (A Gender Based Analysis)." *Universal Journal of Educational Research* 6(2): 211-217.