

ORIGINAL ARTICLE



EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF TEACHER SUPPORT FOR STUDENT LEARNING IN DIVERSE EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS: A FOCUS ON STUDENTS' SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUSES

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Abstract

The educational landscape is an intricate ecosystem where students' growth is significantly influenced by their interactions with teachers and peers. In this context, teachers assume multifaceted roles as facilitators, mentors, and motivators, providing crucial support for students' learning. However, disparities in teacher support based on demographic factors, such as parental income and parental education, can contribute to educational inequalities. This research paper delves into the realm of teacher support for student learning, with a focus on its relationship with students' socio-economic backgrounds. The population of the study is senior secondary school children in Sri Lanka. A total of 1350 secondary school children from the North, South, East, West and Central parts of the country served as participants in this study. A stratified sampling technique was used to select the sample for this study. A survey research design and quantitative research approach were used to conduct the study. A self-administered questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale was used as the instrument for data collection from students. Data are analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 23. One-way MANOVA and Two-way MANOVA are used for data analysis. The study found no statistically significant differences based on the educational levels of both fathers and mothers. This indicates that teacher support remains consistent irrespective of variations in parental education. Similarly, the study examined the impact of parental income on teacher support and found no statistically significant differences among different income groups. However, students from families with incomes between Rs. 46,001 and Rs. 150,000 received the highest level of teacher support. In conclusion, this research highlights the pivotal role of teacher support in students' academic and socio-emotional development. It demonstrates that teacher support is generally consistent, regardless of parental educational levels or income. While these findings are encouraging, they also emphasise the need for further research and policy interventions to ensure equitable distribution of teacher support and reduce educational disparities. Ultimately, this research contributes valuable insights to foster a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for all students, regardless of their socio-economic background, parental education, or income level.

Keywords: Teacher Support, Parental Education, Parental Income, Student Learning

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Introduction

The educational landscape is a dynamic and intricate ecosystem where students interact with their teachers and peers, fostering a microsystem that significantly shapes their academic and personal development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979)¹. Within this microsystem, teachers play a pivotal role, assuming multifaceted responsibilities as facilitators, mentors, assessors, planners, role models, information providers, and resource developers. The essence of these roles is to support and encourage student learning in a myriad of ways, facilitating the growth of knowledge, skills, and a thirst for learning (Sidik et al., 2019)². The interactions that transpire in school environments are of paramount importance, as they form the foundation for students' educational journey. Teachers, as they impart knowledge and guidance, are expected to be not only proficient in their subjects but also fair, honest, and genuinely concerned about the views, ideas, and needs of their students. The quality of these interactions can profoundly influence the learning experiences and outcomes of diverse student populations.

In this research paper, the study delves into the crucial domain of teacher support for student learning, with a particular emphasis on the influence of students' socio-economic factors. While teacher support encompasses a wide array of activities and interventions, in this study, the focus is on those aspects that are directly relevant to students' needs and aspirations. This includes but is not limited to encouraging and motivating students, providing constructive feedback and comments, offering assistance and guidance, and supplying educational materials that facilitate children's learning journeys. The motivation for this research lies in the recognition that not all students have equal access to teacher support, and the quality and quantity of support they receive may vary significantly based on their demographic factors, such as socioeconomic background, gender, parental income and parental education. These demographic factors can create disparities in educational outcomes and opportunities. By evaluating the impact of teacher support across diverse educational settings, this study seeks to uncover the nuanced relationship between teacher support and the demographic factors of students.

The crucial aspect of this research is the examination of teacher support in the context of parental background. Parental educational level and parental income are two influential factors that can affect a student's educational outcomes. Teachers' support for students from varying socio-economic backgrounds and levels of parental educational attainment is an important area of inquiry. Understanding whether these factors influence the level of support students receive can guide policy decisions and interventions aimed at reducing educational inequalities. This research paper aims to shed light on the level of teacher support for student learning and its potential variations based on gender, parental educational level, and parental income. By exploring these dimensions, this study hopes to contribute valuable insights that can inform educational policies, practices, and teacher training programs, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for all students. Through this research, we aspire to move closer to the goal

of providing every student with the opportunity to thrive and reach their full educational potential, regardless of their gender, parental background, or socio-economic status.

Literature Review

Teacher Educational Support

In the realm of education, the role of teachers in supporting and nurturing students' growth and development cannot be overstated. Teacher support can be examined from two distinct perspectives: a narrow perspective and a broad perspective (Fraser, 1998)³. In the narrow perspective, teacher support is characterised by elements such as trust, friendship, help, and interest, primarily within the confines of a classroom environment. This perspective underscores the significance of the interpersonal relationship between a teacher and their students, emphasising qualities that foster a positive and productive learning atmosphere. Conversely, the broad perspective, as articulated by Tardy (1985)⁴, defines teacher support as extending beyond the classroom setting. In this broader view, teacher support encompasses various forms, including instrumental support, informational support, appraisal support, and emotional support (Lei et al., 2018; Malecki & Elliott, 1999)^{5,6}. Instrumental support involves the provision of resources, while informational support pertains to offering information or advice in specific content areas. Appraisal support entails providing evaluative feedback to students, and emotional support encompasses empathy, trust, and care. This comprehensive perspective emphasises the multifaceted roles teachers can play in shaping students' educational journeys. Effective teaching strategies play a pivotal role in students' engagement, interest, and learning behaviours (Awang et al., 2013)⁷. Teachers employ a range of strategies to capture students' attention and stimulate active participation. Activities such as "guessing the answer" and "question and answer" are commonly used to engage students at the start of lessons. Encouragement activities, such as asking questions to involve disruptive students, have a positive impact on classroom participation. Praise and reflective teaching practices also play a crucial role in reinforcing positive learning experiences.

Teacher Support and Parental Educational level

Parental educational levels, typically measured by the highest level of education attained by students' parents, have long been associated with students' academic performance (Davis-Kean, 2005)⁸. Parents with higher educational levels tend to provide a more enriched home learning environment. They are more likely to engage in educational activities with their children, promote a love for reading, and offer additional academic support. Parental educational levels can mediate the relationship between teacher support and academic achievement. Research suggests that students with highly educated parents may derive additional benefits from teacher support (Muller, 1993)⁹. These parents are often better equipped to reinforce the importance of education, support their children's learning at home, and establish effective communication with teachers. Despite the beneficial influence of teacher support, there is evidence to indicate that it is only sometimes distributed equitably among students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. Students from families with lower socioeconomic status (SES), which often coincide with lower parental educational levels, may receive comparatively less academic guidance and support (Kraft & Rogers, 2015)¹⁰.

These disparities in teacher support can contribute to educational inequalities. To address disparities related to parental educational levels, educators should consider the concept of differential support. While high-quality teaching practices are beneficial for all students, it is essential to tailor support to meet individual needs, particularly for students from families with lower parental educational levels (Tomlinson, 2014)¹¹. Teachers should be prepared to provide additional guidance and support as required. Efforts to bridge the gap in teacher support influenced by parental educational levels should encompass education policies and practices that aim for the equitable distribution of resources and teacher training. Teachers should be equipped with strategies to provide additional support to students who may lack such support at home, thereby helping to reduce socioeconomic gaps in education (Reeves, 2008)¹². Promoting effective collaboration between parents and teachers is another vital component in addressing the relationship between teacher support and parental educational levels. Encouraging parental involvement and support, regardless of their educational background, can have a positive impact on students' academic success (Epstein, 2011)¹³. It is essential to create an environment where teachers and parents work together to support the educational needs of students.

Teacher Support and Parental Income

Parental income, often considered a proxy for socioeconomic status (SES), significantly shapes students' educational opportunities. Children from families with higher incomes tend to have access to additional educational resources, such as tutoring, books, and extracurricular activities (Duncan & Murnane, 2011)¹⁴. Conversely, students from lower-income families may face economic barriers that can affect their educational experiences. Evidence suggests that students from lower-income families are more likely to attend schools with fewer resources and less experienced teachers (Reardon, 2011)¹⁵. These disparities can result in differences in the quality of teacher support received by students from varying income backgrounds, potentially contributing to educational inequalities. Research indicates that students from lower-income families may receive less teacher support than their more affluent peers (Ruzek et al., 2016)¹⁶. Teachers in high-poverty schools often face additional challenges, including larger class sizes, limited resources, and greater student needs, which can affect their ability to provide the same level of support as teachers in more affluent schools. Efforts to address the impact of parental income on teacher support should encompass systemic changes, including equitable resource allocation, teacher professional development, and targeted support for schools serving lower-income communities (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011)¹⁷. These strategies can help reduce the disparities in teacher support experienced by students from different socioeconomic backgrounds. Teachers must be trained to recognise the diverse needs of students from varying income levels. Professional development programs should equip educators with the skills and strategies necessary to provide effective support tailored to the unique challenges and strengths of their students, regardless of their parental income (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011)¹⁷. Promoting effective collaboration between parents and teachers is another vital component in addressing the relationship between teacher support and parental income. Encouraging parental involvement, regardless of their income level, can positively impact students' academic success and well-being (Henderson & Mapp, 2002)¹⁸.

Teacher support is a cornerstone of student success, impacting academic achievement and socioemotional development. However, this support can be influenced by students' parental income and Parental education, leading to disparities in educational opportunities and outcomes. To address these disparities, it is crucial to implement policies and practices that aim for the

equitable distribution of resources, improve teacher training, and promote collaboration between parents and teachers. By doing so, we can work towards a more inclusive and equitable educational system that ensures every student, regardless of their parental income, has the opportunity to excel academically and personally.

Objectives

01. Exploring the Relationship between Teacher Support and Parental Income.
02. Investigating the Relationship between Teacher Support and Parental Education.

Research Methodology

In this study, a quantitative research design was employed to investigate the perceptions of secondary school students in Sri Lanka regarding teacher support for student learning. The study targeted a population of secondary school students, and a sample of 1350 students was selected using a stratified random sampling technique. The questionnaire used in this research was customised to meet the specific requirements of the survey. It consisted of two main sections: the first section gathered demographic information from the students, while the second section focused on assessing students' perceptions of teacher support. Respondents were asked to rate their agreement on a five-point Likert Scale, ranging from "Never" (1) to "Always" (5). To ensure the questionnaire's validity and reliability, input from experts in the fields of sociology of education and educational technology was sought. The instrument's internal consistency was evaluated by calculating Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which yielded a strong value of 0.981.

Data Analysis:

The data analysis for this study encompassed inferential statistics. Specifically, this study utilised the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 23 to conduct the data analysis, allowing the assessment of the overall level of teacher support for student learning. This study applied an inferential statistical technique called Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA). The aim was to examine whether significant differences in teacher support existed based on two key factors, parental income and parental education, within the context of secondary school students in Sri Lanka.

Results of the Study

Teacher Support Based on Parental Education

Table 1 and Table 2 show the MANOVA analysis of the difference in mean scores for teacher support based on parental education level.

Table 2

MANOVA Difference Aspects of Teacher Support based on Parental Educational Level

Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Father’s Highest Educational Level	2.566	4	0.641	1.326	0.258
Mother’s Highest Educational Level	2.618	4	0.655	1.353	0.248
Father’s*Mother’s Highest Educational Level	6.374	15	0.425	0.878	0.589

Table 2

Mean Scores Difference Aspects of Teacher Support based on Parental Educational Level

	Father’s Highest Educational Level	Mother’s Highest Educational Level	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Teacher Support	No Schooling	No Schooling	4.32	1.00	21
		Primary	4.54	0.61	19
		G.C.E(O/L)	4.21	1.00	14
		G.C.E(A/L)	5.00	0.00	2
		Total	4.39	0.87	56
	Primary	No Schooling	4.29	0.57	17
		Primary	4.35	0.68	183
		G.C.E(O/L)	4.29	0.68	116
		G.C.E(A/L)	4.36	0.56	15
		Tertiary Education	5.00	0.00	1
	G.C.E(O/L)	Total	4.33	0.67	332
		No Schooling	4.11	0.73	5
		Primary	4.08	0.76	77
		G.C.E(O/L)	4.31	0.70	357
		G.C.E(A/L)	4.39	0.66	113
		Tertiary	4.13	0.77	13

	Education			
	Total	4.29	0.70	565
G.C.E(A/L)	No Schooling	4.35	0.90	2
	Primary	4.17	0.53	10
	G.C.E(O/L)	4.25	0.79	114
	G.C.E(A/L)	4.41	0.62	159
	Tertiary	4.25	0.68	22
	Education			
	Total	4.33	0.69	307
Tertiary	No Schooling	4.71	0.00	2
Education	Primary	4.19	0.08	3
	G.C.E(O/L)	4.22	0.82	12
	G.C.E(A/L)	4.48	0.53	31
	Tertiary	4.34	0.50	42
	Education			
	Total	4.38	0.55	90
Total	No Schooling	4.31	0.79	47
	Primary	4.29	0.70	292
	G.C.E(O/L)	4.29	0.72	613
	G.C.E(A/L)	4.41	0.62	320
	Tertiary	4.29	0.61	78
	Education			
	Total	4.32	0.69	1350

Table 1 provides a comprehensive overview of the research findings concerning the relationship between parental education levels (both fathers and mothers) and teacher support in the context of student learning. The analysis sought to determine if there were any statistically significant differences in teacher support based on these factors. The data revealed that there are no statistically significant differences in teacher support associated with the father's highest education level. The statistical analysis, as indicated by an F-value of 1.326 and a significance level (sig) of 0.258, suggests that father's education level does not exert a significant impact on teacher support for students' learning. Similar to the findings related to father's education, the analysis of mother's highest education level demonstrated no statistically significant differences in socio-environmental support concerning teacher support. The F-value of 1.353 and a significance level of 0.248 reinforce the conclusion that variations in mother's education level do not significantly influence the level of teacher support for students. Furthermore, when investigating the interaction between the educational levels of both fathers and mothers and its impact on teacher support, the data indicated that there is no significant interaction effect. The F-value of 0.878 and a significance level of 0.589 reinforce the absence of a statistically significant combined influence of father's and mother's education levels on

Teacher Support based on Parental Income

Table 3 shows the MANOVA analysis for the difference in mean scores for teacher support based on parental income.

Table 3

MANOVA Difference Aspects of Socio-Environmental Support based on Parental Income Level

Income Level	N	Mean	S. D	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Total Square	F	Sig.
>Rs. 15,000	48	4.32	0.74	0.151	3	0.50	0.10	0.95
	7	4	5				4	8
Rs.15,001-46,000	60	4.32	0.65					
	9	5	0					
Rs.46,001-150,00	21	4.33	0.67					
	5	4	4					
< Rs.151,001	39	4.26	0.87					
	7	2						
Rs.15,001-46,000	60	3.49	0.97					
	9	4	9					
Rs.46,001-150,00	21	3.75	0.90					
	5	6	9					
< Rs.151,001	39	3.85	0.82					
	7	2						

Table 3 presents an examination of the impact of parental income on teacher support, and the statistical analysis reveals that there are no statistically significant differences in teacher support among various income groups (F = 0.104, p = 0.958). Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that the highest level of teacher support is observed among students whose parental income falls within the range of Rs. 46,001 to Rs. 150,000. To gain a more nuanced understanding of the mean differences in teacher support concerning parental income, we conducted a post hoc analysis, as demonstrated in Table 5. This additional analysis enables a more detailed exploration of the variations in teacher support across different income brackets.

Table 4
 Post Hoc Analysis of the Different Aspects of Socio-Environmental Support based on Parental Income

Dependent Variable	(I)Parental Income	(J)Parental Income	Mean difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig	
Teacher Support	>15,000	15,001-46,000	-.00110	.04235	1.000	
		46,001-150,000	-.01016	.05704	.999	
		<151,001	.05733	.11594	.970	
	15,001-46,000	>15,000	.00110	.04235	1.000	
		46,001-150,000	-.00906	.05527	.999	
		<151,001	.05843	.11507	.968	
	46,001-150,000	>15,000	.01016	.05704	.999	
		15,001-46,000	.00906	.05527	.999	
		<151,001	.06748	.12125	.958	
	<151,001	>15,000	-.05733	.11594	.970	
		15,001-46,000	-.05843	.11507	.968	
		46,001-150,000	-.06748	.12125	.958	
			15,001-46,000	.05485	.13385	.983
			46,001-150,000	-.00518	.14104	1.000

Conclusion and Discussion

In summary, the findings of this analysis suggest that students benefit from a high level of educational support from their teachers, thus facilitating their active and engaged participation in the learning process. Results of the study shows that parental education levels, whether individually or in combination, do not yield significant differences in the level of teacher support provided to students. These findings suggest that teacher support remains relatively consistent regardless of variations in the educational background of the students' parents. Parental income does not appear to have a statistically significant influence on teacher support levels among students.

Research by Sirin (2005)¹⁸ demonstrated that students from lower SES backgrounds tend to perform less favorably in school. Teacher support can mitigate this gap by providing additional resources and tailored assistance to economically disadvantaged students. In diverse educational settings, teachers who offer personalized support to students from varying socio-economic backgrounds can make a significant difference. Gershenson, Holt, and Papageorge (2016)²⁰ found

that teachers who are empathetic and provide additional help to students from low-SES backgrounds positively impact their academic growth. Incorporating culturally responsive teaching practices is crucial when considering SES. Caring for students' cultural and socio-economic contexts is essential for providing effective teacher support. It promotes a sense of belonging and increases the chances of success, particularly among students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds (Gay, 2010)²¹. Policymakers and educators need to recognize the importance of teacher support in diverse educational settings and consider ways to address socio-economic disparities. Providing professional development for teachers on strategies to support students from lower SES backgrounds, such as inclusive practices and differentiated instruction, can be a step in the right direction.

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