

**IMPACT OF SOCIAL SUPPORT ON STUDENTS' ACADEMIC  
ACHIEVEMENT IN SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE FEDERAL  
CAPITAL TERRITORY, ABUJA NIGERIA**

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**Abstract**

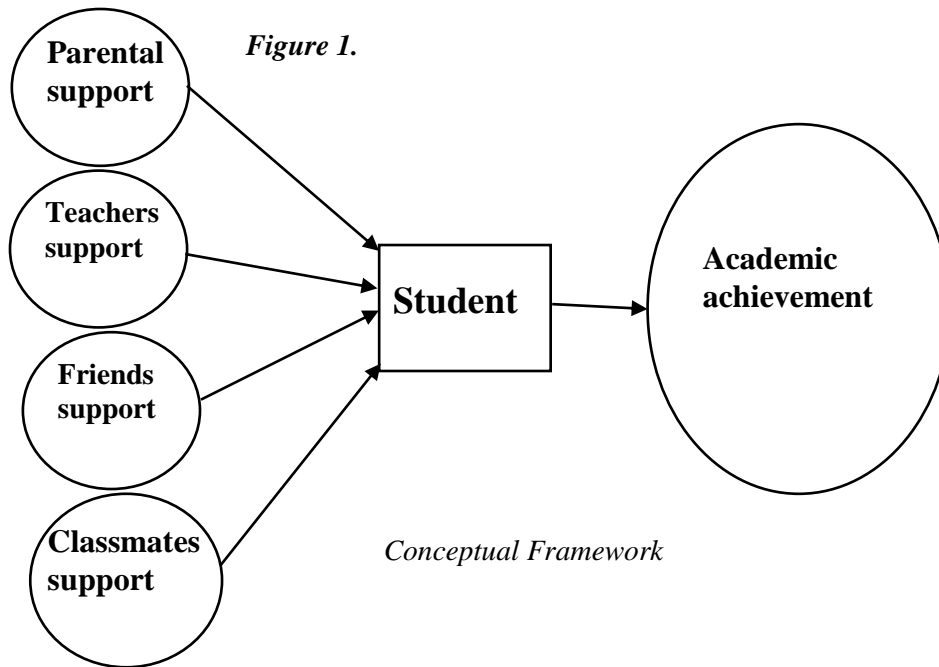
*This study investigated the impact of social support on Students' Academic Achievement in Senior Secondary Schools in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja Nigeria. The research design for the study was descriptive survey. The population of the study was 24,430 senior secondary school students as at 2018/2019 academic session. A sample of 377 respondents were selected for this study using proportionate sampling procedure because population is composed of several subgroups that are vastly different in number. The instrument for data collection was the Social Support Questionnaire (SSQ) which was adapted from Social Support Scale for Healthy Behaviours of Demaray & Malecki (2002). The SSQ is a 40-item instrument designed along a four-point Likert scale. The questionnaire was validated by a team of experts in Measurement and Evaluation in the Faculty of Education, University of Abuja. In order to test for the reliability of the instrument, a pilot test was conducted using the split-half method (odd and even numbered items) of reliability, which yielded the reliability (r) value of 0.85 implying a high reliability of the instrument. The data collected were analysed using mean and regression statistics. The findings showed that parents, teachers, classmates and friends provide support to students; social support significantly influenced students' academic achievement. It was recommended that parents, teachers, classmates and friends should be encouraged to sustain and improve on their supports for students through seminars, workshops and distribution of educative materials like posters and pamphlets.*

**Keywords:** Academic Achievement, Secondary School Students, Social Support

**Introduction**

Socialization can be seen as a process in which an individual acquires the behaviours and knowledge needed to successfully participate as an organizational member. Every society is faced with the need to make a responsible member out of each child born into it. Through socialization, social rules become internal to the individual, in the sense that they are self-imposed rather than imposed by means of external regulation and are thus part of an individual's own personality (Williams, 2014). It therefore becomes important that all agents of socialization provide needed support to ensure that the process continues uninterrupted.

Social support is a catch-all term for many different activities including good parenting, helping with homework, being able to talk to teachers, being allowed to attend school functions, discussing with students, being allowed to take part in school governance (Egheosase & Ugwu, 2016). Figure 1 depicts the relationship.



Social support is an expansive construct that describes the physical and emotional support given to individuals by their family, friends, teachers, classmates and other important persons in their lives. Social support is purported to have beneficial effects on the health and academic achievement of students and it can be generally defined as the assistance one gets through interaction with other people in the society.

Broadly, social support refers to one's social relationships as buffering life's stressors, and thus promoting one's general development. An important aspect of support is that a message or communicative experience does not constitute support unless the receiver views it as such, a phenomenon the research has identified as perceived social support (Haber, Cohen, Lucas & Baltes, 2007). With regards to sources of support, this research has primarily focused on parents, teachers, friends and classmates.

Parental support is the provision of the facilities needed and the supervision and guidance required for effective learning by the parent to their children. In the opinion of Shahzad, Abdullah, Sammer, Farhan and Shazia (2015), emotional support in the form of encouragement and assistance in the homework of the child is also a part of parental support. Furthermore, Iqbal and Khan (2010) opined that parents' contribution to their

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children's education has a consistent and positive effect on their academic achievement and self-concept. Similarly, Akomolafe and Adesua (2016) argued that students who receive social support are expected to perform better compared to those who receives little or no social support.

The teacher on the other hand could encourage a student to put in his/her best effort in life and also allow feedback from the student even if it is out of academic context (such as relationships and health matters). Furthermore, support from teachers may be particularly salient for learners who display early academic or behavioural problems. The social support from the teacher such as free interaction with students would go a long way to encourage students and provide extrinsic motivation for academic excellence.

Classmates and friends could provide information, companionship to give sense of belonging to the student and all these would in turn boost the morale of the student to put in his/her best in all endeavours including academic pursuit. Close friends and classmates could give mutual assistance that could also encourage young adolescents to put more efforts in their academic pursuit. The support from classmates and close friends may give a sense of belonging to a student as this may occur in information sharing, provision of gifts especially in some important days like birthday, winning in a contest and even forming reading groups that may aid better understanding of concept taught in the class by their teacher which may not be well understood probably because of higher level of sentence construction.

Academic achievement is very important to a child's outcomes in life, as it governs how successful one could be later in life, such as in higher institutions and future career opportunities (Egheosase & Ugwu, 2016). In order to find out why students perform poorly, it is important to look at the factors that affect academic achievement of students. A thorough understanding of these factors would go a long to provide information on ways to increase academic achievement. Academic achievement can be influenced by so many factors apart from cognition and it is therefore not merely based on the educational processes within school, it may depend also on the encouragement and support students receive. This study investigated the contributory role of social support to students' academic achievement in secondary schools in FCT, Abuja, Nigeria.

#### **Statement of the Problem**

Academic achievement of students has become a recurring issue in the Nigerian educational sector discourse. It has become popular to hear the phrase 'fallen standard of education' at many points of discussions to the point that even the uneducated also discuss the falling standard of what they know little or nothing about. Academics, parents, the government and other stakeholders have repeatedly expressed passionate concern and legitimate fears about the future generation in view of this dwindling academic achievement. For instance, according to WAEC (2018) ranking of students' performance, the Federal Capital Territory is the number 14<sup>th</sup> in rank order.

A number of factors may be contributing to poor academic achievement of students. Social support had been described as a buffer against life stressors as well as an agent promoting health and wellness (Steese, Dollette, Phillips, Hossfeld, Matthews & Taormina, 2006). In this present study, the researchers explored the impact of social support on students' academic achievement. This is because academic activities could be promoted via social engagements including interaction with parents, teachers, classmates and friends. The researchers wonder whether students are getting the necessary social support from parents, teachers, classmates and friends and to what extent their academic achievement is influenced by available social support.

The following questions were raised to guide the research:

1. What social support is available to secondary school students in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja?
2. What is the academic achievement of secondary school students in Federal Capital territory, Abuja?
3. What is the relationship between social support and students' academic achievement in secondary schools in Federal Capital territory, Abuja?

The third research question was translated to null hypothesis thus: there is no significant relationship between social support and academic achievement of senior secondary school students in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

### **Methodology**

The research design for the study was descriptive survey research design. The population of 24,430 senior secondary school students as at 2018/2019 academic session was used. A sample of 377 respondents was selected for this study. This sample was considered appropriate for an approximate population of 24,430 using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table for determining sample size from a given population. Proportionate sampling procedure was used in selecting the students from the different Area Councils so as to cut across relatively all the population. The instrument for data collection was entitled: Social Support Questionnaire (SSQ). The SSQ is a 40-item instrument designed along a four-point Likert-type rating scale. The SSQ was adapted from the Social Support Scale for Healthy Behaviours of Demaray & Malecki (2002). The questionnaire was validated by a team of experts in Measurement and Evaluation in the Faculty of Education, University of Abuja to ensure face and content validity. In order to establish the reliability of the instrument, a pilot test was conducted using the split-half method of reliability, the two set of scores obtained from the pilot test were correlated using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). The reliability (r) value of 0.85 was obtained for the instrument which implied a high reliability of the instrument. The questionnaire was administered directly on the respondents by the researchers. The assessment of students' academic achievement involved the compilation of students' continuous assessment and the student achievement in the end-of-term examinations. The Students' Academic Records in Mathematics, English Language, Civic and Biology was

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collected from the school authority for analysis. The statistical tools that were used in analysing the collected data include mean and multiple regression. To answer the research questions, any item mean that was greater or equal to 2.50 was considered as 'agree', while item mean below 2.50 was considered as 'disagree'. This is because, 2.50 is the midpoint of the 4-point Likert scale. For the academic achievement, the average score is determined by the midpoint of 50 where scores range from 1-100. Values above 50 are therefore above average while scores below the 50 mark are below average.

**Results**

Research Question One: What social support is available to secondary school students in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja?

**Table 1: Social Support in Senior Secondary Schools in FCT, Abuja**  
N = 377

S/No.	Statements	Parents	Teachers	Classmates	Friends
		Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
1.	Show they care about my health.	3.43	3.37	3.24	3.28
2.	Encourage me to eat healthily or be	3.34	3.39	3.19	3.24
3.	active.	3.15	3.29	3.32	3.36
4.	Listen to me when I ask questions	3.24	3.30	3.25	3.36
5.	about relationships.	3.27	3.32	3.27	3.46
6.	Make suggestions about how to eat	3.22	3.36	3.16	3.30
7.	healthily.	3.41	3.38	3.21	3.28
8.	Give me good advice about how to	3.28	3.27	3.14	3.27
9.	care about my body.	3.40	3.31	3.00	3.16
10.	Give me information about foods that	3.30	3.24	3.37	3.42
	are good for me.	<b>3.30</b>	<b>3.32</b>	<b>3.22</b>	<b>3.31</b>
	Tell me I did a good job when I make				
	good grades.				
	Nicely tell me when I make poor				
	choices about my life.				
	Reward me when I behave well.				
	Allow me to discuss with them freely.				
	<b>Sectional Mean</b>				

Table 1 shows the social support available to senior secondary school students in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. The mean for available social support from parents for secondary school students in the FCT was 3.30 depicting strong parental support to students. The mean for available social support from teachers for secondary school students in the FCT was 3.32 which also depicts strong teacher support to students. The mean for available social support from classmates for secondary school students in the FCT was 3.22 which also depicts strong classmates support to students. Finally, on support from close friends, the mean for available social support for secondary school students in the FCT was 3.31 which also depicts strong close friends support to students.

This implies that all four kinds of social support are available to students in the study area.

Research Question Two: What is the Academic Achievement of the senior secondary students in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja?

**Table 2: Academic Achievement of Senior Secondary School Students in FCT**  
N = 377

	Minimum	Maximum	Average Score
Mathematics	5.00	98.00	60.32
English Language	23.00	93.00	59.54
Biology	4.00	93.00	60.08
Civic Education	4.00	98.00	60.17
Academic Achievement	37.50	81.00	60.03

Table 2 shows that the minimum score in Mathematics is 5.00, while the maximum score is 98.00 with the average score of 60.32. The students' score in English Language has the minimum of 23.00, maximum of 93.00 and average score of 59.54. The minimum students' score in Biology is 4.00, the maximum score 93.00 with average score of 60.08. The students' score in Civic Education, is minimum of 4.00, maximum of 98.00 and average score of 60.17. The overall academic achievement of senior secondary school students in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja is minimum of 37.50, maximum of 81.00 and average of 60.03. The average score of 60.03 is above 50 midpoint which implies that overall academic achievement of students is above average.

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between social supports and academic achievement of senior secondary school students in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

**Table 3: Model Summary for Test of Relationship between Parents, Teachers, Classmates, Friends Support and Academic Achievement of Senior Secondary School Students**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.886a	.785	.783	4.035

From Table 3, the R value, the multiple correlation coefficient is a measure of the quality of the prediction of the dependent variable. An R- value of .886 indicates high level of influence of social supports on academic achievement.

The R Square called the coefficient of determination shows the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that can be explained by the independent variables. The R square value of .785 indicates that 78.5% of the variability of dependent variable

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(academic achievement) can be explained on the basis of the independent variables (Parents, Teachers, Classmates and Friends Support).

In order to determine the statistical significance of dominance of influence of the four kinds of social supports on academic achievement, further analysis was carried out and results presented on Table 4.

**Table 4: ANOVA Table for Test of Dominant Influence of Parents, Teachers, Classmates, Friends Support on Academic Achievement**

<b>Model</b>		<b>Sum of Squares</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>Decision</b>
1	Regression	22162.064	4	5540.516	340.296	.000	Significant
	Residual	6056.697	372	16.281			
	Total	28218.761	376				

a. Dependent Variable: Academic Achievement

b. Predictors: (Constant), Friends Support, Parental Support, Classmate Support, Teacher Support

Table 4 shows whether the independent variables significantly influence the dependent variable. A significant value of .000 (less than the 0.05 level of significance) shows that the independent variables significantly influenced the dependent variable. The hypothesis is therefore rejected. This implies that social supports significantly influenced academic achievement of secondary school students in FCT.

To further show the statistical significance of each of the independent variables, analysis was further carried out and results presented on Table 5.

**Table 5: Table of Coefficients for Test of Influence of Parents, Teachers, Classmates, and Friends Support on Academic Achievement**

<b>Model</b>		<b>Unstandardized Coefficients</b>		<b>Standardized Coefficients</b>		<b>t</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
		<b>B</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>	<b>Beta</b>			
1	(Constant)	1.053	2.844			.370	.711
	Parental Support	49.248	2.486	1.858		19.812	.000
	Teacher Support	-7.424	.484	-.380		-15.349	.000
	Classmate Support	-20.437	2.303	-.903		-8.873	.000
	Friend Support	-4.125	.861	-.242		-4.789	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Academic Achievement

Table 5 shows the statistical significance of each independent variable. Results for parental, teacher, classmate and friend support indicate that the p-value or significant value is .000 which is less than .05 level hence the conclusion that all four kinds of social support significantly influenced academic achievement students in FCT secondary schools.

In conclusion, a multiple regression was run to determine the influence of social supports on academic achievement. Social supports statistically showed significant influence on academic achievement,  $F(340.396) = 5540.516$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $R^2 = .785$ . The hypothesis was therefore rejected.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The findings in this study revealed that social support is provided to students in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. With the mean rating for all four kinds of social support well above the midpoint of 2.50, the study was able to establish the students enjoyed social support from teachers, parents, classmates and friends. This finding which reveals that social support is available to students in the study area is important because it shows that these critical stakeholders provide support to the students. Teacher support enjoys the highest mean rating showing that the teachers are highly supportive of students in the study area. This was followed by parents, friends, and classmates. When comparing perceived support from each source – parents, teachers, classmates and friend, there is hardly any agreement in available literature. Iglesia, Stover, and Liporace (2014) reported more support from best friend, while teachers were perceived as less supportive. Rueger et al. (2008) also stated that friends were the more supportive source for adolescent girls while for males, friends were the source identified as less supportive. On the other hand, the assertions of Elias and Haynes (2008) indicate that students do not perceive their classmates as an important source of support. Bordes-Edgar et al. (2011) argued that the supportive role of mentors (teachers) becomes more relevant than peers' support.

The academic achievement of students was also found to be above average. This indicates that students were in good academic standing which differs from popular commentaries about dwindling academic achievement among students. According to WAEC (2018) ranking of students' performance, the Federal Capital Territory is the number 14<sup>th</sup> in ranking order. This may be explained based on the fact that students' achievement in teacher-made, end-of-term examinations may differ from achievement in external examinations. The study went on to find possible impact of social support on students' academic achievement.

The finding of this study further indicates high level of influence of social supports on academic achievement. As a matter of fact, only 78.5% of the variability of academic achievement of the students can be explained on the basis of social support. The hypothesis was rejected which implies that social supports significantly influenced academic achievement of secondary school students in FCT. This finding agrees with Shahzad et al (2015) who found that students who showed higher academic achievement are those whose parents were more supportive and involved in academic activities as compared to those whose parents were less supportive. Similarly, Iqbal, and Khan (2010) found that parents' contribution to their children's education has a consistent and positive effect on academic achievement and on the self-concept. The higher the social support, the higher the academic performance of students (Yasin & Dzulkipli, 2010). In general,



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different studies found that a high perception of support favours academic achievement. Academic performance is better when perceived support from parents, teachers, friends and social support in general was higher (Jun-Li Chen, 2005; Domagała-Zyśk, 2006; Elias & Haynes, 2008; Konishi et al., 2010; Perry, Liu, & Pabian, 2010; Murray & Zvoch, 2011).

#### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The academic scene has been widely and repeatedly identified as a source of stress. Social support is a commonly employed coping strategy. The researcher concludes that social support exists among secondary school students in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. These social supports were provided by parents, teachers, classmates and friends. Furthermore, the available social support had significant influence on academic achievement of the students.

In view of the above findings and conclusion, the following recommendations are made:

1. Parents, teachers, classmates and friends should be encouraged to sustain and improve on their supports for students through seminars, workshops and distribution of educative materials like posters and pamphlets.
2. The academic achievement of students which was found to be above average can be further sustained through the supportive role of this social group.
3. Social supports should be encouraged in schools through the activities of Parents' Teachers' Associations, Students' Friendship Clubs, Debating Societies, and other such groups within the secondary schools.

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