

## **The Influence of Social Support on the Academic Performance/Self-Efficacy of Students in Methodist University College Students, Ghana**

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### **Abstract**

*The study examined the influence of social support on the academic performance/self-efficacy of students at Methodist University College, Ghana. The purpose is to examine whether social support influence academic performance, examine whether gender differences exist in social support students receives and their academic performance, explore how high resilience self-will predict academic performance. The research design employed was a survey. One hundred and twenty students were selected for the study from four faculties of the University using stratified proportional and simple random sampling methods. The standardized instrument of medical outcome social support survey scale, the academic self-efficacy scale, and the resilience scale were used. Four hypotheses were analyzed. The results indicate that a positive relationship between social support leads to good academic performance. There was no difference in terms of social support and academic performance by female and male students. Students with high resilience had high academic attainments. Social assistance does not influence the academic self-efficacy of students. It is recommended that Universities and higher institutions of learning should have well-functioning counselling centres.*

**Keywords:** *Academic self-efficacy, Depression, Emotional Support, Psychological distress, Stress, Social Support.*

### **Introduction**

According to [1], going through university education is stressful. There realization that this stressful nature of the university education may take a toll on the mental health of the students, which may have an effect on their academic performance/self-efficacy. Social support serves as an important role when it comes to academic performance. It is very important to review the role of social support serves as a cushion against the stresses of life, which in the long run serves to promote good mental health [2].

The transition to university education and environment could result in all forms of stress and shock to students due to the difference in secondary education and university education [3]. It is not clear whether most students in

tertiary institutions who experience stress and minor psychological distresses have access to or take advantage of the right type of social support as well as help-seeking environments such as the counseling centers in their various institutions or from their peers and family. As such, this study also aims at finding out whether the students take advantage of the social support from the counseling centers in their various institutions or from their peers and family when they experience minor psychological distress.

The study aims to examine the influence of this social support, psychological distress, on academic performance. It is assumed that the constant struggle by some students to excel academically may be due to lower social encouragement from family and friends and psychological distress. Recognized

internationally as an important public health issue is the mental health of university students. It was found that psychological distress was linked to mental disability and lower academic achievement [4], [1]. There is a special pattern of distress that adolescents experience [5]. It may also go unnoticed if the lack of social encouragement from family relations, friends, and psychological distress is a contributing factor to low academic performance. According to [6], parental support has a positive influence on the academic performance and self concept of students. According to [7], Low self-esteem is a behavioural disorder which tends to effect the learning and performance of children in schools. There is a need to conduct studies to understand the burden of mental health issues among university students in this part of our world. This will guide interventions that decrease the risk and improve psychological well-being and promote the desire for adequate social encouragement from family and friends. This may result in improved academic performance. According to [8] academic anxiety correlates with academic performance. The study supports the finding of Abomah [9] academic anxiety leads to examination malpractices.

The results of [10] states that university engagement measures were positively related to students' learning achievement indicators The results of [11] indicates that depressive symptom increases the risk for academic problems It also support the findings of [12] that economic effects, and the effects on daily life, as well as delays in academic activities, were positively associated with anxiety symptoms

This happens if the basic goals of humans as outlined by [13] are not met. The findings of [14] indicates that encouragement to achieve, the provision of care and support to deal with problems in a proactive manner and enabling relationship with significant others facilitated academic achievement dispute exposure to violence.

Even though some literature exists on the intervening variables between informal social support, psychological well-being, and academic performance, more extensive research should be conducted to get a broader idea of the ways in which social support from informal social networking between family and friends and how psychological distress relates to academic performance among university students. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to find out the kind of effect that social support from family and friends and psychological distress/resilience has on university students' academic performance. The objectives include to explore whether university students experience psychological distress, to examine gender differences that exist in the social encouragement students receive, to examine differences that exist in psychological distress There should be continuous research to improve tertiary education for knowledge society [15]. Hence the study indicates that students face, and to explore how psychological distress and social support influence academic performance/self-efficacy of students. The following hypotheses were tested. A significant correlation exists between social encouragement and academic self-efficacy. Females will report higher levels of social encouragement than their male counterparts. There will be a significant influence of social assistance and psychological distress on academic performance.

## **Methods**

The survey was the research design used because the research provided information about the distribution of a wide range of the characteristics that are being looked for in this study. The population of interest for the study was the undergraduate students from all the faculties at Methodist University College. These were students pursuing degree courses from level 200 to level 300 of the University. The sample frame involves the level 200 and 300 students because they were the stable

groups whilst the level 100 students were settling into the school, and the level 400 students were preparing to leave.

The sampling technique employed was simple random and stratified proportional method. Using the sampling technique, 120 undergraduate students were sampled for the study. There were four faculties at MUCG, which were the Business Administration faculty, the Informatics and Mathematical Sciences faculty, the Social Studies faculty, and the Arts and General Study's faculty. Thirty (30) students were selected from each faculty to reflect the numerical composition of four faculties within MUCG. This gave a total sample of one hundred and twenty (120) students.

The instrument was developed by [16]. A self-report tool made up of 19 items on a five-point Likert scale, thus how frequently they rely on others for support in various circumstances, was used. This survey used four distinct subscales of social assistance and a general functional social support index. The survey has Cronbach alphas greater than .91 for all factors and is fairly stable over time. An individual scale with the highest score or the overall support index indicates more social support. The academic self-efficacy scale was developed by [17] for measuring academic self-efficacy. This instrument is made up of 8 items on a 7-point Likert scale that ranged. The scale has a Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of 0.81 used for undergraduates. It also has high reliability. The item includes scores on the academic self-efficacy scale range from seven (7) to forty-nine. The RS measured psychological resilience and was created by

[18]. It consists of 25-items. This scale also comes in a short form which is termed (RS-14). Both the RS and RS-14 have Cronbach's  $\alpha$  range of 0.72–0.94. The instruments (RS and RS-14) have their scoring done on a Likert scale of 1-7.

The scores group the partakers into low, moderate, and high resilience scores. Scoring for Medical Outcomes Study Social Support Survey (MOS-SSS) was used. Scoring for each scale was done by finding the average of the scores for each and every item on that subscale. For the overall support index, one has to calculate the average of first the scores of 18 items in the four subscales and the score for the extra additional item. In scoring for the Academic Self-Efficacy, the higher the score is indicative of a higher level of academic self-efficacy, the lower the scores respectively. There was scoring for the Resilience Scale (RS).

The total score ranges between 25 and 175 points. Scores exceeding 161 indicate a very high degree of resilience, among 146-160 a high, 131-145 a moderate, 116-130 low, and scores below 100 indicate a very low degree of resilience capacity [19]. Students' data such as age, religion, gender, marital status, level of study, and live on campus or not were collected. In demographics data, the students were asked to state their CGPA (which was their Cumulative Grade Point Average at the time of collecting data).

## Result

Four hypotheses were analyzed, each with their appropriate statistical test.

**Table 1.** Representation of Respondents Gender, Age, Religion, Marital Status, Year/Level, Residential Status, and CGPA

| Groups        | Frequency | Percent | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---------------|-----------|---------|------|----------------|
| <b>Gender</b> |           |         |      |                |
| Missing Data  | 3         | 2.5     |      |                |
| Male          | 50        | 41.7    |      |                |
| Female        | 67        | 55.8    |      |                |

|                           |       |      |      |      |
|---------------------------|-------|------|------|------|
| Total                     | 120   | 100  |      |      |
| <b>Age (Mean, SD)</b>     | 24.63 | 7.08 |      |      |
| <b>Religion</b>           |       |      |      |      |
| Missing Data              | 2     | 1.7  |      |      |
| Christianity              | 115   | 95.8 |      |      |
| Islam                     | 2     | 1.7  |      |      |
| Other                     | 1     | 0.8  |      |      |
| Total                     | 120   | 100  |      |      |
| <b>Marital Status</b>     |       |      |      |      |
| Missing Data              | 1     | 0.8  |      |      |
| Single                    | 105   | 87.5 |      |      |
| Married                   | 13    | 10.8 |      |      |
| Separated                 | 1     | 0.8  |      |      |
| Total                     | 120   | 100  |      |      |
| <b>Year/Level</b>         |       |      |      |      |
| 200                       | 68    | 56.7 |      |      |
| <b>300</b>                | 52    | 43.3 |      |      |
| Total                     | 120   | 100  |      |      |
| <b>Residential Status</b> |       |      |      |      |
| Missing Data              | 3     | 2.5  |      |      |
| On Campus                 | 23    | 19.2 |      |      |
| Off Campus                | 94    | 78.3 |      |      |
| Total                     | 120   | 100  |      |      |
| <b>Cumulative GPA</b>     |       |      | 1.69 | 1.54 |

Table 1 indicates that 47% of respondents were males, while 53% were females. The mean age was 24.63 years, while the standard deviation was 7.08 years. 95.8% were Christians, 1.7% belonged to the Islamic religion, and 0.8% belonged to other religions. Again 87.5% were single, while 10.8% were

married, and 0.8% were separated. Also, 56.7% were in level 200, while 43.3% were in level 300. Under residential status, 19.2% lived on campus, while 78.3% lived off-campus. The mean for the cumulative grade point average was 1.69, and the standard deviation was 1.54.

**Table 2.** Mean and Standard Deviation for Social Support, Academic Self-efficacy, and Resilience

| <b>Variables</b>       | <b>M</b> | <b>SD</b> |
|------------------------|----------|-----------|
| Social Support         | 65.64    | 15.81     |
| Academic Self-Efficacy | 43.01    | 11.37     |
| Resilience             | 137.73   | 23.45     |

Table 2 indicates the mean and standard deviations of social support (Mean=65.64, SD=15.81), academic self-efficacy (Mean=43.01, SD=11.37), and resilience (Mean=137.73, SD=23.45)

**Testing of Hypotheses:** Hypothesis One; A significant positive correlation exists between social assistance and academic self-efficacy.

**Table 3.** Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Test Results on the Relationship between Social Support and Academic Self-Efficacy

| Variables               | M     | SD    | df | r    | P    |
|-------------------------|-------|-------|----|------|------|
| Social Support          | 65.64 | 15.81 |    |      |      |
| Academic Self -Efficacy | 43.01 | 11.37 |    |      |      |
|                         |       |       |    | .184 | .022 |

Table 3 indicates that the mean for social assistance (M=65.64, SD=15.81) and academic self-efficacy/performance (M=43.01, SD=11.37) were administered to the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient test to determine whether a significant positive relationship exists between social support and academic self-efficacy. Results (r=.184, p=.022)

indicated that the correlation between social support and academic self-efficacy/performance is significantly positive. This implies that social support predicts academic self-efficacy. Hypothesis one is supported. Hypothesis Two: Females will report higher levels of social assistance compared to their male counterparts. The results are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Independent T-Test Result between Females Social Assistance and Males Social Support

| Group                            | N  | M     | SD    | df  | t   | P   |
|----------------------------------|----|-------|-------|-----|-----|-----|
| Females Social Assistance Scores | 67 | 65.96 | 17.00 | 115 | -17 | .86 |
| Males Social- Assistance Scores  | 50 | 65.44 | 14.50 |     |     |     |
| * p <0.05                        |    |       |       |     |     |     |

Results indicate no significant difference in the amount of social assistance received by females (M=65.96, SD=17.00) and males (M=65.44, SD=14.50); (115) =-.17, p=.86. Therefore, the hypothesis that females will report higher levels of social assistance

compared to male counterparts was not supported. Hypothesis three: There will be a significant influence of social assistance and psychological distress on academic self-efficacy. The results are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Linear Regression on how Social Assistance and Psychological Distress (Resilience) can Predict Academic Self-efficacy

| Variables            | B     | SE   | $\beta$ | P    |
|----------------------|-------|------|---------|------|
| (Constant)           | 19.07 | 6.60 | -       | .005 |
| Social Assistance    | .090  | .065 | .12     | .170 |
| Resilience           | .131  | .044 | .271    | .003 |
| R <sup>2</sup> =.104 |       |      |         |      |

The analysis in Table 5 shows that social assistance does not influence academic self-efficacy but resilience (psychological distress) does influence academic performance/self-efficacy; social assistance (t = 1.381, p = .170), and resilience (t = 3.016, p = .003).

## Conclusion

It was found that high social assistance predicted high academic performance. No significant difference in the amount of social assistance and academic performance of female

and male's students. It was also found that high resilience (low level of psychological distress) predicted high academic self-efficacy.

## Discussion

The results from the data analysis revealed that there is no difference in the level of social support and academic performance by both men and women. A study conducted by [7] compared the academic performance of primary school children with behavioral disorders. More males than females had behavioral disorders in

this study. The result indicated that the relationship between social assistance and psychological problems was a negative one. This confirms the findings of [19-21] that parental school involvement improves the academic performance of children. The findings of this study indicated that social assistance was positively correlated to academic self-efficacy or performance. As such, the more social support students receive, the more their academic self-efficacy/performance increases. There is no significant difference in the amount of social assistance received by males and females. The study indicates that social support does not influence academic self-efficacy, but resilience (psychological distress) does influence academic performance. The study reveals that there might be more issues surrounding students' poor academic self-efficacy/performance. Therefore, different variables could be examined to ascertain their influence on the academic self-efficacy/performance on students. The study revealed that social assistance and resilience predict the academic performance of students. Good social assistance predicts good academic performance.

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## Conflict of Interest

Author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

## Implications and Recommendations

The existence of the counseling centers on university campuses and their benefits to the students should be explained to students during orientation programmes. Mental health professionals should place emphasis on being more empathetic in their practice to boost the social assistance they give to their clients. Also, the mental health professionals should also identify clients who have adequate psychological resilience and guide them in coping skills they could use.

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