



Original Research

Enhancing student school engagement through teacher and classmate support in secondary schools

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Abstract

Researchers found a direct correlation between students' academic success and their level of engagement in school activities. The influence of teachers and classmates is crucial in shaping students' engagement in the school setting. Therefore, this study sought to assess the impact of support from both teachers and classmates on school engagement among secondary school students. A mixed-method research design was employed in this investigation. Quantitative data were gathered from randomly selected 427 students through a questionnaire that measured teacher support, peer support, and levels of school engagement. Qualitative insights were obtained through interviews with eight students and four teachers. The analysis involved calculating the mean values, standard deviations, correlations, regressions, and thematic analysis. The findings revealed significant correlations between school engagement and the support received from teachers and classmates. Notably, both forms of support contributed substantially to variance in school engagement, with teacher support having a more pronounced effect. The impact of teacher and classmate support was the most significant concerning students' cognitive engagement, as opposed to their behavioural and emotional engagement. These findings indicate that educational institutions should enhance the support systems teachers and classmates provide to foster greater student engagement.

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INTRODUCTION

Educational institutions have an enormous effect on the lives of students and their long-term health, personal development, and social and emotional growth (Finn & Zimmer, 2012; Fredricks et al., 2004; Xu et al., 2023). These environments help create competent manpower for continuous economic and social progress (Cooray, 2009; Hanushek & Woessmann, 2007). Thus, students' participation in school activities is significant for attending to individual development and boosting society's

welfare (Appleton et al., 2008; Cooray, 2009; Hanushek & Woessmann, 2007).

School engagement is the active and effective involvement in school-related activities, application of effective learning strategies, showing of effort, and positive behaviours (Fredricks et al., 2004). This concept also includes the attributes of curiosity, absence of negative emotions, frustration, monotony, emotional resilience, and self-control (Appleton et al. 2008; Fredricks et al.

Lelisa, C., 2004; Xu et al. 2023). The construct is also seen as a dynamic social interaction between individuals and their social environments (Wang & Eccles, 2013). In this context, Fredricks et al. (2004) examined student-school engagement within educational frameworks, delineating three key dimensions: cognitive, emotional, and behavioural.

Yang et al. (2023) contended that cognitive engagement includes the degree of intellectual effort, curiosity, and intrinsic drive that students invest in their learning activities. Although educators may not directly cultivate intrinsic drive, they can promote it by establishing circumstances that support growth. Students who receive cognitive support from their teachers are more inclined to engage with tough assignments and seek new information. As a result, students develop deep comprehension, improve retention, and attain superior academic success. In this context, they are more adept at utilizing existing knowledge and constructing intricate and interrelated knowledge structures (Kiefer et al., 2015; Yang et al., 2023). In support of this, Li and Lerner (2012) noted that students who practiced self-regulated learning and utilized critical thinking strategies demonstrated superior academic outcomes.

Emotional engagement involves students' feelings and thoughts about their learning (Martinot et al., 2022). Educators who invest time in building rapport and positive relationships with students can positively impact students' self-esteem, sense of belonging, overall disposition, and attitude toward learning. Positive feedback increases the likelihood of learners engaging actively in classroom discussions and activities (Martinot et al., 2022). Reyes et al. (2012) also noted that such students who were linked to strong teacher and school relationships were a step

Sci. Technol. Arts Res. J., Oct.– Dec. 2024, 13(4), 27-43 ahead of the pack when it comes to superior academic performance.

Behavioural engagement is a key indicator of student involvement in school experiences. It comprises multiple aspects such as effort, perseverance, and engagement in a range of academic activities (Engels et al., 2016; Zhang et al., 2023). Teachers can greatly encourage student engagement, concentration, and responsibility in the classroom with their support. This improvement is enabled by giving clear expectations, organizing learning activities, and encouraging student involvement. Teachers also play a key role in giving students guidance, feedback, and assessments to help cultivate and sustain their interest in learning and enhance the self-regulatory skills needed for success. It is reported that students who are more involved in learning and extracurricular activities obtain greater academic achievement (Li & Lerner, 2013). Furthermore, behavioral engagement (attendance, meeting deadlines for assignments, and participating actively in class) is related positively to increased GPAs and higher achievement scores on standardized measures (Li & Lerner, 2013).

As efforts are made to indicate, the engagement of a student is a strong predictor of success in academics. School engagement is related to better school performance and higher completion rates (Appleton et al., 2008). Additionally, students who exhibit a high level of engagement in their studies generally develop greater resilience in dealing with their academic challenges and achieving success in the field. However, several factors impact student engagement, such as socioeconomic status, the educational environment, teacher support, peer assistance, self-regulation, and many other things (Dotterer & Lowe, 2011). To overcome the challenges, first and foremost,

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schools and their environments must increase teacher and peer support to enhance student-school engagement.

As revealed by [Yang et al, \(2023\)](#), teachers' assistance and guidance are always recognized to be a fundamental factor contributing greatly to the amount of student engagement in different educational contexts and demographics. Teachers are significant and transformational as they create a hospitable, intellectually fortifying space to ignite the active involvement of students, be aspirational as well, and help students make academic progress in the context of learning.

This implies that the endorsement received from their teachers plays a big role in increasing students' motivation. According to [Dotterer and Lowe \(2011\)](#), educators employ supportive teaching strategies to foster greater student engagement and motivation. In practical terms, the nurturing approach of a supportive teacher, coupled with high expectations and constructive feedback, promotes students' dedication to their academic pursuits ([Kiefer et al., 2015](#)). Furthermore, improved emotional engagement is associated with the emotional support provided by teachers, as those educators tend to invest more emotional energy in students who feel recognized and valued ([Roorda et al., 2011](#)).

In addition to emotional encouragement, teacher support consists of much more. Effective communication, well-organized lessons, and strategies that promote student autonomy provide instructional support that enhances cognitive engagement in the sense that motivation enhances student interaction with learning material ([Furrer & Skinner, 2003](#)). [Hamre & Pianta \(2001\)](#) suggested that teachers can empower students by allowing them to make choices in their learning, for example, through academic tasks. In addition,

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teacher emotional and instructional support increases student engagement.

When it comes to school engagement, the social norms established by classmates can be either an incentive or a hindrance. For instance, when the classroom norm is academic effort and success, students become motivated to follow suit ([McNabb, 2020](#)). On the other hand, negative peer pressure and disengagement may emerge when students feel they need to choose social acceptance over academic achievement ([Woolley et al., 2008](#)). The engagement level is influenced by social support provided by classmates. Peer support enhances students' resilience and motivation, both of which improve engagement levels ([Reyes et al., 2012](#)). For example, strong friendships act to serve as a protective mechanism against stress and help people take a positive approach to school. Collaborative learning experiences can create engagement by engaging in a shared goal and being accountable to one another. According to [Johnson and Johnson \(1999\)](#), positive interdependence is the key to effective group work, as students' perception of their success depends on the success of the students beside them. It erects a sense of group accountability that can boost engagement and lead to more inclusive learning.

Classmates can also help other students understand difficult concepts from class or can help explain difficult homework assignments. Their guidance and advice can help scholars improve. Students can tutor, review quizzes and tests with one another, collaborate on assignments and papers, and much more. One of the best parts of school is meeting people with similar interests. Make time to socialize with friends and non-schoolmates. Friendship and social norms improve students' sense of school belonging ([Woolley et al., 2008](#)). Students are creative innovators who learn

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most effectively when they actively engage with problems rather than passively listening to or copying someone else's work. Engaging students in discussions helps them clarify their thinking (Appleton et al., 2008).

Popular students or those well-liked by their peers tend to be more involved in school activities than students who are ostracized or rejected by their peers (Engels et al., 2016). This implies that a positive and inclusive classroom climate in which all students feel welcome and are not ridiculed is imperative for encouraging participation (Engels et al., 2016).

Therefore, in the learning process, teachers and peers can join to promote student participation (Luan et al., 2020; Martinot et al., 2022). Teachers can establish a positive class atmosphere in which students can collaborate with others, and peer support can further enhance the guidance of a teacher and enable them to experience belongingness among peers, thus boosting motivation (Luan et al., 2020; Martinot et al., 2022). Hence, it is of the utmost importance for a supportive and interactive learning environment to exist, one that values not only the work of the teacher but also that of the peers to maximize student involvement most effectively. Teachers should foster a sense of community among their students by holding group projects, allowing them to study, and giving and receiving constructive criticism. They also provide opportunities for peer mentoring, and helping other students in the same class to strengthen student-school engagement.

Previous studies have underscored the critical role of student engagement in educational settings and its profound influence on academic achievement, motivation, and overall perceptions of the educational experience (Fredricks et al., 2004). Although students are generally expected to attend school

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consistently, complete assignments, and study diligently to succeed, a significant proportion of them exhibit disengagement, which adversely affects their academic performance and may restrict their future educational opportunities. Consequently, addressing this challenge requires the involvement of schools, educators, peers, and family members at large.

Previous research efforts have shown that the types of support provided by both classmates and teachers are essential to predicting a significant part of student engagement in educational settings. Yet, the empirical record contrasting how these supportive frameworks bring about student engagement exhibits several gaps. It is particularly for students in Ethiopia and the local context of Nekemte Town, Ethiopia, block down what they use from their classmates and support from the teachers to be involved in the school.

In the nation of Ethiopia, the education framework is overwhelmed with a multitude of multi-faceted challenges that are hindering its overall effectiveness. Among others, the lack of availability of necessary resources, the matter of overcrowded classrooms, as well as the obvious deficiency of training offered to teachers (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, 2017). These problems significantly block the process of effective teaching and meaningful learning, which leads to increasing feelings of isolation and disengagement among students and consequently deprives them of academic achievement and educational experience.

Additionally, classmate and teacher support emerged as a crucial factor influencing student engagement in studies from different contexts (Ryan & Patrick, 2001; Wentzel, 2009). Although the literature on these associations has been discussed, specifically in the

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Ethiopian schools and Nekemte Town, it is limited. As such, it is pertinent to examine the relationship between teacher and peer support and student engagement in secondary schools in Nekemte Town, where only less than 3% of learners are eligible for entrance into higher education institutions. These interactions would also be useful in designing policy and practice for educators and policymakers to create positive school contexts that enhance student engagement and performance.

In this study, therefore, emphasis is placed on classmate support and teacher support on students' school engagement. The primary objective of this study is to investigate the subsequent research questions:

1. *To what extent does teacher support predict the involvement of students in their educational institution's secondary school settings?*

2. *To what extent does classroom support influence the engagement of secondary school students?*

3. *What is the joint effect of teacher support and student support on school engagement for secondary school students?*

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

The study used a mixed-methods approach, thereby integrating both quantitative and qualitative data. This strategy entails gathering, evaluating, and interpreting data from both sources within a single study or sequence focusing on the same central subjects (McNabb, 2020). The concurrent triangulation mixed-methods research approach was applied in this study, including quantitative and qualitative data while building links among results from different origins (McNabb, 2020). This procedural methodology provides a

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complete and robust examination of the research findings using quantitative and qualitative data. The application of this mixed-methods strategy promotes the trustworthiness and dependability of research outputs by triangulating information from multiple sources and viewpoints, thus promoting a more comprehensive understanding of the subject.

Participants

The population of the study was students in secondary schools in Nekemte Town. In the academic year 2023/2024, there were 13 secondary schools in the town. There were 12361 (male = 5581 and female = 6780) students in these secondary schools. The sample size determination of Yemane (1967) was employed to fix the sample size. Then, 520 students, including some extra students, were drawn using the stratified sampling technique of the proportional method. After 93 responses were excluded from data entry for a case of incomplete responses, 427 (M = 207 & Female = 220) samples were subjected to data analysis. In addition, eight students and four teachers were also interviewed to acquire the necessary data on their perceptions of classmates' and teachers' support in acquiring the necessary information. The students interviewed were taken from a pool of students who filled out the survey. Additionally, one teacher of each grade (from the 9th through the 12th) was chosen as well.

Variables of the study

School engagement is the dependent variable of the study. This requires students' participation, effort, and commitment to learning activities. The variable encompasses behavioural engagement (active engagement in scholarly activities), emotional engagement (positive emotional reactions to learning), and

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cognitive engagement (allocation of resources towards education strategies and metacognitive processes) (Fredricks et al., 2004).

The independent variables were teacher and classmate support. Teacher support means the teacher's emotional and academic encouragement. This may be achieved through teacher support, availability, and student responsiveness (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). In contrast, peer support is defined as the emotional and academic support students receive from their classmates, from working together, and from becoming socially integrated.

Data gathering tools

Data collection was conducted using two distinct instruments. Quantitative data were collected by administering a questionnaire regarding background information (sex, age, and grade level), classroom and teacher support, and school engagement, which were prepared and presented to the sample students. A structured interview was conducted with both teachers and students to obtain additional qualitative information.

The School Engagement Measure developed by Fredricks et al. (2004) was translated, adapted to the local context, and used to measure three areas of school involvement (behavioral, emotional, and cognitive). Five distinct items were used to assess the construct of behavioral engagement. Six items were used for emotional engagement and eight for cognitive engagement. Overall, there were 19 items that were rated on a 5-point scale using a Likert response from 'never' to 'always.' Recently, the school engagement measure developed by Fredricks et al. (2004) was adapted by Ramadhani and Purwono (2023). According to Ramadhani and Purwono (2023), the overall scale and the three

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dimensions of school engagement exhibit an acceptable level of internal consistency, with the total measure having internal reliability ($\alpha = .82$), the emotional engagement subscale having high internal consistency ($\alpha = .83$), the cognitive engagement scale having adequate internal reliability ($\alpha = .78$), and the behavioral engagement scale having relatively low internal consistency ($\alpha = .66$). The psychometric properties of the scale were thoroughly evaluated and found satisfactory, thus confirming its credibility as a reliable tool for measuring school involvement. The construct of school involvement has emerged as a reliable and valid tool that researchers can use to collect data for research or interventions involving students' involvement levels.

Moreover, the Child and Adolescent Social Support Scale (Malecki & Demaray, 2006) was translated into a local dialect to evaluate the level of support provided by classmates and teachers. This scale comprises 60 items and is a thorough self-reported questionnaire developed to measure perceptions of academic and social support among children and adolescents from various origins, such as parents, instructors, classmates, intimate friends, and educational institutions. Items for socio-emotional, academic, and informational supports comprised 12 items per subscale. Respondents were able to determine how often they were supported by their teachers and peers on a Likert scale from 1 (very much disagree) to 5 (very much agree). Scores higher than average indicated an increased sense of support from a given source, while lower-than-average scores represented a lessened perceived sense of support from that source. Scores of total frequency for each subscale were obtained by adding ratings of the 12 items. Better feelings of support were associated with higher scores, and poorer perceptions of support from a

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particular origin contributed to lower scores. This study used only the instructor and the classmate subscales. The reliability and validity of the Child and Adolescent Social Support Scale have been validated previously. Internal consistency results indicated strong internal consistency for the subscales assessing teacher and classmate connection, with alpha values ranging from .92 to .93 (Malecki & Demaray, 2006).

Validation of instruments

To measure or collect data from participants, researchers have to meticulously design or modify any tools or methods they want to use. This process is important so that the right methods are applied to culturally sensitive

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procedures. The current study began by translating the scales (teacher support, classmate support, and school engagement) from English to Afan Oromo. Thus, a committee was formed to implement supervision over the processes of forward and backward translation and the integration of the translated instruments into the Afan Oromo version. The final version in Afan Oromo was created after the forward and backward translators reached a consensus on the contextual meanings of each item's phrases. Ultimately, the validity and reliability of the translated measures were assessed by calculating the content validity index and internal consistency. The measuring instruments' reliability is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Reliability coefficient of the measure instruments

Variables	Number of items	Cronbach Alpha reliability
Classmate Support	12	.85
Teacher Support	12	.92
Behavioural Engagement	5	.77
Emotional Engagement	6	.82
Cognitive Engagement	8	.8
Total School engagement	19	.86

The Cronbach's Alpha scores of the three scales were all above .77, as can be demonstrated in Table 1. The internal reliability of the instrument was therefore satisfactory.

The process of data collection

The targeted schools were contacted using the letter written by Wallagga University. A discussion with the principals of schools was conducted concerning the aims of the study and the collection of data. The principals played a major role in ensuring communication was

easier with teachers and students. A questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data from students. The students were also made to understand that their participation in responding to the questionnaire was purely voluntary. Qualitative data was gathered through interviews to find out how perceptions regarding the teacher's role plus classmate support impacted students' engagement in school as described by both students and teachers.

Similarly, the participation of teachers and students in these interviews was voluntary. To

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collect data to determine what level of awareness lies among teachers and students concerning the available resources from their families, their educators, and their classmates, this method was used.

Approach to data analysis

Quantitative analysis of the data was conducted employing descriptive statistical methods, which included calculations of the mean and standard deviation. Additionally, approaches such as Pearson correlation and multiple regressions were employed for data analyses. Before conducting this quantitative analysis, the normality, homoscedasticity, multicollinearity, and linearity of the dataset were checked. Qualitative data obtained from interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. This methodological framework facilitates a comprehensive assessment of both quantitative and qualitative data, enabling a thorough and nuanced interpretation of the research findings. Braun and Clarke (2006) illustrated that thematic analysis is an approach suitable for identifying, investigating, and realizing patterns in qualitative research. It can be either an essentialist or realist method since it concerns the representation of the experiences, meanings, and reality of the participants in the research, or it could function as a constructionist method to investigate how different discourses within society contributed to events, realities, meanings, and experiences.

Ethical considerations

Before the administration of the data collection survey and the beginning of the interviews, all participants were asked to sign a consent form. All participants were told that they could stop filling out the questionnaire or drop out of the interview at any time if they felt uncomfortable. Subsequently, the quantitative

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data gathered were anonymously entered into a computer system. Additionally, the interview responses were coded to ensure that individual identities remained confidential.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

For quantitative data collection, 520 questionnaires were distributed. Out of these, 427 questionnaires were found to be complete and suitable for data analysis. Ninety-three questionnaires were either not returned or were incomplete for data analysis. Among the 427 respondents, there were 207 males and 220 females among the students. Based on the grade, 144, 140, and 143 students were from classes in grades 10, 11, and 12, respectively. Further, the weighted mean rating scores for the variables were calculated, and the descriptive statistics of these variables are presented in [Table 2](#).

The analysis of quantitative data

The quantitative data analysis summarizes descriptive statistics of the study variables; it relates the independent and dependent variables and includes regression analysis for the contribution of classmate support and teacher support to school engagement.

As [Table 2](#) depicts, students' perceptions of classmate support ($M = 3.50$, $SD = .74$) and teacher support ($M = 3.87$, $SD = .88$) were positive. Similarly, students had high behavioral ($M = 4.60$, $SD = .54$), emotional ($M = 3.59$, $SD = .89$), cognitive ($M = 4.05$, $SD = .79$), and overall ($M = 4.05$, $SD = .49$) school engagement. [Table 3](#) shows the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

Table 2

Variables analyzed in the study in the form of a summary of mean values

Variables	No. of items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Evaluation of mean
Classmate support	12	3.5	0.74	Positive Perception
Teacher support	12	3.87	0.88	Positive perception
Behavioural engagement	5	4.6	0.54	High
Emotional Engagement	6	3.59	0.89	Moderate
Cognitive engagement	8	4.05	0.79	High
Sch. Eng. Measure	19	4.05	0.49	High

The findings indicated a strong link between school engagement and the support students receive from their classmates. Notably, the correlations between classmate support and different types of engagement were significant: behavioural engagement ($r = .167$, $p < .01$), emotional engagement ($r = .357$, $p < .01$), cognitive engagement ($r = .550$, $p < .01$), and

overall school engagement ($r = .628$, $p < .01$). Furthermore, teacher support also showed a robust positive correlation with behavioural engagement ($r = .181$, $p < .01$), emotional engagement ($r = .427$, $p < .01$), cognitive engagement ($r = .656$, $p < .01$), and total school engagement ($r = .739$, $p < .01$).

Table 3

Relationship among independent and independent variables

S.No	Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	CS	1					
2	TS	.630**	1				
3	BE	.167**	.181**	1			
4	EE	.364**	.427**	0.045	1		
5	CE	.550**	.656**	0.018	.148**	1	
6	SET	.628**	.739**	.325**	.681**	.767**	1

CE = Classmate support, TS = Teacher support, BE = Behavioural engagement, EE = Emotional Engagement, CE = Cognitive Engagement, SCET = School total Engagement, ** $p < .01$

These findings imply that students who receive greater support from both peers and teachers are more likely to be actively engaged in their studies. Additionally, classmates and teacher support explain more variance in the cognitive school engagement of students. Put another way, students who receive unusually strong peer and teacher support are more cognitively engaged in school. In fact, in the interviews, respondents underlined the role that teacher

and peer support have played in increasing their school participation. Their teachers and classmates are said to have influenced their engagement in school. For that matter, learning participation is something more likely to take place if the students feel welcomed, respected, and motivated by their classmates and teachers.

Multiple regression analyses were done to determine the amount of variability in the outcome variables that was due to the criterion

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factors. The support of classmates and teachers was the independent variable, whereas school engagement and its subscales were the dependent variables. Before regression analysis was conducted, the normality of variables, multicollinearity, homoscedasticity, and model fit were checked. 80% of your text is likely AI-generated.

Results from several regression analyses are presented in Table 4. The results indicate that teacher and peer support have a significant role

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 in the variance of school engagement ($F = 304.913$; $p < .01$; $R^2 = .590$), together accounting for 59% of the total variance in the scale of school engagement. Results showed that school engagement was specifically predicted by teachers' support ($\beta = .317$, $p < .01$) and classmates' support ($\beta = .180$, $p < .01$). The predictors were also analyzed to see what effect they had on varying dimensions of school engagement.

Table 4

The regression analysis on the effect that classmate support and teacher support have on the engagement of students in school.

	SET		BE		EE		CE	
	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE
CS	0.180**	0.027	0.065	0.033	0.190**	0.067	.243**	0.049
TS	0.317**	0.022	.076*	0.027	0.328**	0.056	.460**	0.041
	R2 = .590, F = 304.913		R2 = .037, F = 8.258		R2 = .197, F = 52.133		R2 = .462, F = 181.755	

** $p < .01$

This suggests that teacher and peer support accounted for 3.7%, 19.7%, and 46.2% of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement variance, respectively. Interestingly, classmate support significantly contributed to emotional and cognitive engagement ($\beta = .19$, $p < .01$; $\beta = .243$, $p < .01$) but not behavioral engagement. On the other hand, teacher support was found to be an important predictor across the three dimensions, with behavioral engagement ($\beta = .076$, $p < .05$), emotional engagement ($\beta = .328$, $p < .01$), and cognitive engagement ($\beta = .460$, $p < .01$) all having significant variances. As found in this study, teacher support is the most effective means to encourage student engagement in the academic setting, even more than classmate support, although the latter has a moderating effect on student engagement.

Qualitative data analysis

This section presents the insights obtained from the teachers' and students' interviews. The main goal of these interviews was to shed light on the perception of the support provided to students by their educational institutions. Peers and instructors. Three key themes emerged during the conversations: emotional, academic, and social support.

Social and Emotional Support

A key issue raised in the interview data revolves around the idea of emotional support. Emotional support means how students see the environments around them, particularly the attitude of their teachers, as well as other students, in regards to being caring and welcoming. This idea addresses the needs of the people who are looking to be helped, as well as how to act kindly and understand those

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who would need help. In connection with this topic, an 18-year-old male student in 12th grade expressed the following thoughts:

My teachers and classmates support me in many ways. They always encourage me to like learning and succeed academically. Most of my teachers seem to care about me and give compliments or words of encouragement when I do something good. They make it simple by facilitating the process, making questioning comfortable, and not putting one down. My classmates and I usually look out for each other. Some classmates have been especially helpful, showing real concern for me, and I will try to reciprocate that kindness.

Teachers play a vital role in directing students' educational journey. They help students obtain continuous learning experiences by assessing their needs and providing appropriate support throughout their teaching and learning. Teachers have a considerable impact on shaping their students' learning. In this context, a 12th-grade biology teacher remarked that:

The teachers significantly influence the future of their students. As a teacher, I support students in various ways. I try to identify their needs and provide the necessary support. I want students to be safe when expressing their feelings. I show them empathy and patience. I like to encourage students in their activities. I occasionally use relational techniques in the classroom. Therefore, I enjoy working with these learners and am very committed to their general welfare.

With related to social support, a grade 10 History teacher noted that:-

My relationship with students influences students' school engagement. This supportive, respectful relationship encourages students to participate actively in class, seek help when

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needed, and feel more connected to the school community.

Therefore, teachers can help students feel safe and free to express their inner motives by not hurting other students.

Academic support

In an interview with a tenth-grade student, he expressed his opinion about the help that he and his friends receive from subject teachers. He noticed that

Many teachers are very concerned with students' understanding and try to get their classmates to actively participate by asking and answering questions. This type of teacher will provide clear and understandable responses. Such teachers provide many supplementary activities to engage students in exploring the subject further. However, some teachers do not teach the subjects in depth and only focus on taking notes. These teachers tend to provide fewer examples and exercises, thus making students' conceptual understanding more difficult.

Similarly, a grade nine student reflected that:-

I like to study the subjects taught by teachers who teach clearly and understandably. I invest less time in subjects teachers seem careless about teaching. I do not want to further study such subjects. I detest one specific subject because of one of my primary school teachers.

Additionally, a grade 11 student became critical in responding

I like to read more on the subjects taught by varied teaching approaches. Active learning method in which discussion is encouraged motivates me to give attention. Teachers who understand individual needs, interests, and learning styles by far

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increase students' motive to give attention to study.

When teachers do not adequately support specific areas where students require assistance, students are less motivated to engage in effective study practices. Even when he attempted to study the material, insufficient guidance from the teacher hindered his ability to grasp the content.

Concerning classmate support, students can also get necessary educational help from other students. Regarding this claim, a 12th-grade student commented this assertion that:-

I have a wonderful relationship with my friends. We are always in touch with each other about our studies and how to succeed in entrance exams. We all help each other out by bouncing ideas off each other when we study and borrowing guidebooks, notes, and anything else someone else might have.

Students can get together and study with each other and help keep each other motivated. Teens feel secure, happy, and willing to participate in their education when they perceive their peers as being supportive.

Discussions

This research explores how support from peers and teachers relates to student engagement in school. The help that students obtain from their teachers and classmates in the educational setting is vital, as pupils spend a considerable amount of their learning time interacting with both teachers and peers. The immediate impact of student support and peer support on academic achievement centers on the effort students put in during their learning process. Teacher support is typically characterized by a teacher's responsiveness to students' academic and emotional needs (Olan & Tefera, 2022; Wentzel, 2009). Research shows that when

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students see their teachers as supportive, they are more likely to engage in their learning, demonstrating persistence in tasks and actively participating in classroom activities (Fredricks et al., 2004; Martinot et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2023). Furthermore, support from classmates plays a crucial role in fostering school engagement (Jian et al., 2013; Luan et al., 2020; Martinot et al., 2022; Olana & Tefera, 2020). This support includes the social, emotional, and academic help that students receive from their peers. Research indicates that students who feel their peers are supportive tend to engage more positively in their educational settings, leading to increased motivation, a better academic self-concept, and lower stress levels related to school (Kindermann, 2007).

Consistent with this, past research has demonstrated that there are both an academic and a social dimension to teacher and peer support, each of which uniquely relates to the development of motive, engagement, and a sense of belonging in middle school students (Kiefer et al., 2015). According to Zhang et al., (2023), student-school engagement was directly and significantly influenced by teacher support and peer support. This research also found that teacher support and classmate support were significantly associated with student school engagement, in support of the previous study. Just as Olana and Tefera (2022) also found, it was observed that there was also a significant and positive link between the three dimensions of school engagement (behavioral, emotional, and cognitive) to school engagement on different degrees.

A longitudinal study by Wang and Eccles (2013) underscored the significant influence of teacher support on variations in school engagement scores, highlighting the importance of positive interactions between

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students and educators. This support is vital for boosting both emotional and cognitive engagement among learners. Students who perceive their teachers as supportive tend to show greater interest in their studies and a stronger connection to their educational environment (Roorda et al., 2011). Moreover, meta-analytic research indicates that the quality of teacher-student relationships can account for approximately 20–30% of the differences in school engagement scores (Cornelius-White, 2007). In contrast, a study by Furrer and Skinner (2003) found that peer support contributes to up to 15% of the variance in school engagement, with behavioral engagement being especially influenced by classmates' support. Recent research by Olana and Tefera (2022) revealed that teacher support and peer support account for 9.5% and 14.0%, respectively, of student engagement in school. Additionally, it has been suggested that support from peers is more closely linked to student engagement than support from family or teachers (Olana & Tefera, 2022).

The current study revealed that teacher support and peer support contributed to variances of 31.7% and 18.0%, respectively, leading to a total of 59.0% in overall student engagement with the school. Interviews conducted further confirmed the important roles that both teacher and peer support play in enhancing student engagement. Interestingly, the combined effect of teacher and peer support was found to have the most considerable influence on cognitive involvement, accounting for 46.2% of the variance, while behavioral engagement only accounted for 3.7%, and emotional engagement made up 19.7%. Additionally, the findings showed that teacher support had the strongest influence on cognitive engagement, contributing 46.0%,

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while its effects on emotional and behavioral engagement were 32.8% and 7.6%, respectively. Peer support also significantly contributed to cognitive engagement at 24.3%, exceeding its impact on emotional engagement at 19.0%, with no notable effect on behavioral engagement. Moreover, a previous study by Woolley et al. (2009) indicated that the combined support from teachers and peers could explain a considerable portion of the variance in school engagement, emphasizing the particularly strong influence of teacher support on both emotional and cognitive aspects.

Research indicates that the presence of both types of support yields complementary and potentially additive effects, with teacher support establishing a foundation for engagement that is further enhanced by peer interactions (Jiang et al., 2013). Overall, the literature suggests that teacher and classmate support can account for 30% to 40% of the variance in school engagement scores, although this percentage may fluctuate based on individual factors such as socioeconomic status, gender, and personal academic aspirations. The result of 59% of the combined share of classmate and teacher support for school engagement in the present study is unique, which may be due to the local context where more emphasis is given to learning at the classroom level. That is, teachers and peers play a more dominant role in school engagement and academic performance of students at the school level than any other support.

In summary, the existing literature posits the significant role of both teacher and classmate support in explaining variance in school engagement scores. While teacher support tends to influence emotional and cognitive engagement, classmate support is

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crucial for behavioural engagement. Together, these social support factors can explain a substantial proportion of the variance in school engagement, underscoring the need for educational interventions that foster supportive teacher-student and peer relationships. Future research could further elucidate the complex interplay between these supports and identify additional moderating factors that might impact their effects on school engagement.

CONCLUSIONS

The socio-emotional and academic supports rendered by teachers and classmates play a significant role in the learning engagement of students. The present study targeted to measure the extent to which teacher support and classmate support determine the school engagement of students. In support of the quantitative data obtained by the questionnaire, the information gained through interviews also confirms that at the classroom level teachers and classmates are the immediate agents who motivate and energize students to actively attend their learning. Classmates and teachers are needed as support to encourage students to learn.

Classmates are an important part of a sense of belonging, which contributes significantly to the sense of belonging, and giving peer encouragement is also important in fostering motivation and self-confidence. Helping these students from these supportive peer networks get actively involved with their education journey is what this is about. If students feel supported and understood by their peers, they will do more of the work associated with the course, more hand-in-hand work with others, and stay at it longer when faced with challenges.

On the contrary, teachers have a huge role to play in defining the students' academic paths by

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offering structured guidance and maintaining great expectations to help build resilience in the process. A classroom environment of support and respect in the hands of the teacher empowers students should assume responsibility for their educational journey and leads toward understanding, and personal excellence.

Peers and teachers work with supportive classmates to create a synergistic force directed toward positive learning behaviours and attitudes. This dual network of support, however, benefits students beyond the improvement of their academic skills; it also makes students feel emotionally better, by reducing anxiety and building self-efficacy. Overall, this is an educational framework that ultimately prepares one's students to absorb the power and resiliency of being able to deal with what's to come.

Hence, the study suggests that education should focus on a student-centered approach, with teachers leading the way. This involves fostering collaboration, peer support, and constructive feedback. Teachers can create collaborative activities like group projects, peer tutoring, and online forums. Mentorship programs and support groups can also foster learning and relationship-building among students. Peer teaching and peer review can enhance communication, collaboration, and critical thinking skills. However, continuous research and evaluation are crucial for guiding best practices and interventions.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

The author confirms the sole responsibility for the conception of the study, presented results and manuscript preparation.

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Declaration of competing interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

Data availability

The data used in this research is available upon request.

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