

The impact of perceived social support on academic motivation: A comparative study of single parented and both parented children

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of perceived social support on a student's academic motivation, comparing students from both single-parent and both-parent households. A comparative study was conducted on 127 Indian participants, and the findings of an independent T-test analysis reveal no significant differences between the two groups in either academic motivation, $t(124) = 0.619$, $p = 0.537$, or perceived social support, $t(124) = -0.124$, $p = 0.902$. These findings suggest that parental structure does not solely or meaningfully impact a student's academic drive or their perception of social support. The study highlights the need to consider broader influences such as socio-cultural factors, socio economic status and external support systems. Further implications also suggest that interventions aimed at improving academic motivation should focus on fostering a supportive environment both within and outside the home, rather than solely focusing on one's family structure. Future studies may be conducted to explore additional factors that contribute to a student's academic and social well-being, and offer insight for educators and support systems.

Keywords: Academic Motivation; Perceived Social Support; Single-Parent Households; Both-Parent Households; Parental Structure; Student Well- Being

1. Introduction

Motivation is a crucial factor in initiating and maintaining the learning process in education. It is defined as a process that is instrumental in the introduction and continuation of activities intended for a specific purpose. Academic achievement is influenced by the objectives of the students or their reasons for going to college. Motivation is a key factor in initiating and maintaining the learning process of students in education.

Motivation, according to Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943), is a process that drives individuals to fulfill their needs in a hierarchical order, starting from basic physiological needs to self-actualization. Maslow stressed the idea that people can only start the pursuit of higher-level needs after the satisfaction of lower-level needs. According to this perspective, the social and emotional support is of great significance as it helps the students to reach the higher level of motivation. Within the context of academic motivation, Maslow's theory pointed the fact that social support is the great method to fulfill one's psychological needs such as relationships, and personal growth. College students, particularly those from diverse family (single parented and both parented) status, have different levels of perceived social support that are correlated with the academic motivation. The love and belonging needs are satisfied through supportive relationships from family, friends, and mentors. Such relationships make students feel attached and motivated. In addition, esteem needs, like confidence and acknowledgement, are very important in the motivation process, as students will be more likely to perform better if they receive positive feedback from teachers and parents. A lack of social support is one of the primary reasons for self-doubt, stress, and decreased academic drive, thus students

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face difficulties to achieve their full potential. When on the other hand, students enjoy high levels of perceived social support, intrinsic motivation towards academic and personal goals becomes the driving force behind their consistent progress. It is Maslow's theory that is the basis for the understanding of choosing different extents of social support, that affect the students' academic motivation in single-parented and both-parented families, which shape their education experiences and accomplishments (Maslow, 1943).

The family is usually the source of emotional, financial, as well as academic support for students. While, in a general sense, social support at college is usually connected with family, but sometimes referring to family as the most common and the prime source of college social support is also a quite correct approach at least in most cases. Both single and married parented students can find help and encouragement at home although in the case of one-parent families, it might be harder especially in the case of the lack of financial support. According to research conducted by Humphrey et al. (2000), the results of the study indicates that college students have a better chance of academic success, higher levels of academic motivation, good health, and better coping mechanisms if they have more family support. Social support plays a crucial role in unlocking individual potential and influencing motivation. According to a study by Cohen and Wills (1985), individuals who perceive higher levels of social support are more likely to experience increased motivation and achieve their goals. In fact, research by Barrera et al. (2002) showed that individuals with strong social support systems were 3 times more likely to stay motivated and resilient in the face of challenges compared to those with limited support.

This study investigates the correlation between academic motivation and perceived social support among single parented and both parented college students, focusing on the effects of social support provided by students' families, friends, and other important people on their motivations. The research involved 126 students, where 30 students out of 126 students are single parented, and used the "Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support" to measure the level of perceived social support and the "Short Academic Motivation Scale" to measure motivation.

2. Literature review

The study examines the degree to which perceived social support influences achievement motivation in rural youth, considering differences in educational level and gender. Using a 2×2 factorial design, 120 students employed the Achievement Motivation Scale and Perceived Social Support Scale to assess these relationships. Results generally confirmed hypotheses, suggesting that social support significantly contributes to academic motivation. Certain new trends, namely motivation for autonomy and perceived moral support, are differentiated by gender and education level, nonetheless. These findings highlight the need for interventions targeting rural students more effectively (Ahmed et al., 2008)

This research assesses the role of perceived social support in psychological well-being with academic motivation as a mediator. The research involved 371 female high school students in Tehran, who were recruited through multi-stage cluster sampling. The participants were given three standardized questionnaires measuring psychological well-being, social support, and academic motivation. Results showed that perceived social support directly improves psychological well-being and academic motivation. Path analysis indicated that social support indirectly promotes well-being through academic motivation. These findings highlight the considerable contribution of social support to students' well-being (Emadpoor et al., 2016)

This research investigates the relation among family and peer academic social support, academic motivation, and first-semester GPA. Using a correlational design, 468 first-semester college students completed an online survey, with high school and first-semester GPAs from institutional records. Regression analyses suggested that family and peer support are positively associated with academic motivation and GPA, with effects ranging from small to moderate. These findings show that college academic social support is responsible for student success and underscores the importance of expanding support systems further to continue challenging motivation and performance at the collegiate level. (Marley et al., 2021)

This research examines the influence of perceived social support on academic motivation, where emotional intelligence serves as a mediator. A descriptive-correlational, cross-sectional study was conducted among Shahrood University of Technology students majoring in physical education (2021-2022). Of 230 students, 210 completed a confirmed questionnaire. It was found that perceived social support significantly boosts emotional intelligence and academic motivation. Emotional intelligence also boosts academic motivation, indicating that it plays a mediating role ($P \leq 0.05$). Family and community strong support can boost emotional intelligence and academic motivation to achieve students' development and societal advancement. (Shaheb et al., 2023)

This research carried out on the comprehension of Imposter Syndrome: A Correlational Analysis Of Achievement Motivation, Parental Bonding, And Perceived Social Support This article examines IP associations with Achievement Motivation, Parental Bonding, and Perceived Social Support among 251 Indians (108 men, 143 women) using Pearson correlations. Results show a significant positive correlation of IP with Achievement Motivation ($r = 0.549$, $p < 0.01$), which implies that highly motivated people are likely to experience imposter syndrome. Parental bonding ($r = -0.017$) and perceived social support ($r = -0.105$) did not have significant correlations with IP. Personal, cultural, and organizational variables need to be investigated in further research in order to counteract imposter syndrome more powerfully. (Kollath & Singh, 2024)

This study examines the role of self-efficacy, motivation, and perceived support of students' basic psychological needs in academic achievement where 2,359 German middle school students were studied through Hierarchical Linear Modeling to determine teacher support, BPN, self-efficacy, and motivation's impact on achievement in German and math. Findings indicated that the highest correlation was with self-efficacy and that it mediated the influence of autonomous motivation on grades. Controlled motivation had a negative effect on achievement, whereas BPN support had a positive effect on autonomous motivation. Results underscore the importance of self-efficacy for student motivation and academic achievement. (Basileo et al., 2024)

The research investigated the effects of perceived parental, peer, and teacher social support on academic motivation and achievement based on data from the Korean Educational Longitudinal Study (2005), which followed students from Grade 7 to Grade 9. Findings indicated that parental support had the greatest effect, with emotional support generating increased motivation, decreased test anxiety, and improved achievement. Academic support from parents had mixed results, increasing motivation but also raising anxiety. Teacher support was beneficial but less effective than parental support. Peer support eliminated test anxiety and maladaptive motivation. Mastery goals facilitated academic achievement, whereas performance goals associated with test anxiety. These patterns persisted over three years. (Song et al., 2014)

This study on Perceived Social Support and Early Adolescents' Achievement: The Mediation Roles of Motivational Beliefs and Emotions tested how motivational beliefs (competence beliefs, subjective value) and emotions (anxiety, enjoyment) mediate the relationship between PSS (from parents, peers, teachers) and mathematical achievement. Although research demonstrates that perceived social support (PSS) impacts academic performance, the mechanisms behind this influence remain less understood. With 238 seventh-graders (mean age 13.2), a bootstrap analysis determined that motivation and affect partially mediated PSS's effect on achievement, with mediation effects of 55% to 75%. Results affirm that supportive relationships increase achievement by increasing motivation and positive affect. (Ahmed et al., 2010)

A study on College Student Success: Overcoming Stereotyped Expectations in Perceived Social Support and Academic Motivation investigates how academic achievement is connected to fundamental psychological needs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness) and perceived social support from family, friends, and teachers. It contrasts historically underrepresented college students (by generational status, ethnicity, and gender) with majority-group students. Results indicate that motivation is tied to group identity, and teacher support has the most significant influence on academic achievement. Colleges tend to neglect student-faculty relationships, so strengthening instructor support and resources is needed. (Smith et al., 2017)

This research investigates the relationship between student motivation and perceived social support. Based on data from 716 student teachers, it measures social support on the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support and motivation on the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire. Results indicate that there is a positive relationship between social support (family, friends, and others) and the employment of motivational strategies. Those students who had received adequate social support were found to have higher scores on external motivation, internal motivation, and subject value-related motivation. (Tezci et al. 2015)

The study investigates the impact of single parenthood on the academic performance of secondary school students in Bitereko sub-county. It examines factors influencing academic achievement, including institutional, socioeconomic, motivational, and family-related aspects. The study utilizes a sample of students from selected secondary schools and analyzes their academic performance concerning family structure. Findings indicate that students from single-parent families face greater academic challenges, including lower grades, higher dropout rates, and limited progression to higher education, despite having similar intellectual abilities. The study highlights the need for interventions to improve academic outcomes and prevent a cycle of poverty, illiteracy, and early marriages. (Bago, 2022)

This research examines the association between parent involvement and children's academic achievement, with two potential explanations: children's knowledge of their own cognitive ability and student-teacher relationship quality. In a sample of 158 seven-year-olds and their mothers and teachers, the researchers determined that parent involvement was significantly positively associated with achievement after controlling for child intelligence. The findings indicated that children's view of their own cognitive skills completely mediated the relationship between parent involvement and standardized achievement, whereas the quality of relationships between teachers and students completely mediated the relationship between parent involvement and teacher-assessed classroom performance. (Topor et al. 2010)

This research analyzes how parenting styles influence academic attainment and career trajectories among Shiraz University of Medical Sciences students. Based on a random sample of 310 students, researchers compared correlations among parenting styles, career choices, and academic performance. Findings indicated significant associations between authoritarian parenting and academic success, as well as between strict and authoritarian parenting styles and career trajectories among students. The research stressed parental influence to identify talents in children and suggested strengthening parent-child relationships, encouraging career awareness, and proper parenting through educational programs and media. (Zahedani et al., 2016)

This research investigated the effect of single parenting on students' academic performance, taking into account the effect of personal achievement motivation and support from the community. Based on data from 379 Nigerian secondary students, it was found through analysis that single parenting does not have a negative effect on academic performance directly. Personal achievement motivation mediates the relationship, and community support serves as a moderator. Single parenting had the strongest impact on academic performance compared to two-parent households. The results affirm the Self-Determination Theory and highlight the crucial role of community support and motivation. (Hiko et al., 2023)

The research "Personal and Social Resources Interplay Synergistically to Enhance Academic Motivation" investigates how self-efficacy and perceived social support affect different forms of academic motivation of university undergraduates aged 18-23 individually and in an interactive manner. According to the self-determination theory, researchers established that both self-efficacy and the social support of friends and significant others had a positive influence on intrinsic academic motivation. Additionally, social support from friends independently predicts extrinsic academic motivation, whereas neither self-efficacy nor social support significantly influence motivation. (Doménech-Betoret et al., 2019)

This research examined the correlation between academic stress, adjustment, and social support among international students in India. A quantitative, correlational research approach was used, where data from a sample of international students from different colleges and universities were compared. The results showed that improved adjustment and greater social support systems served to alleviate academic stress. Academic lifestyle was also found to be a significant predictor of academic stress, whereas academic motivation was positively associated with higher stress. Moreover, academic motivation differed significantly between genders. The research suggests that there should be a comprehensive approach towards assisting international students in minimizing academic stress and enhancing their adjustment by means of social support. (Joseph & S., 2023)

3. Methodology

The following study is a correlational research design which is quantitative in nature that assesses the impact of perceived social support on academic motivation among children raised by a single parent as well as both the parents. The correlational design measures all the data at a single point in time so that it can shed light on the interactions among these variables without experimental manipulation. Upon conducting a thorough research, 2 scales were finalised out of which 1 measured perceived social support while the other measured academic motivation. The 2 scales that were used are 1. Multidimensional scale of perceived social support and 2. Short academic motivation scale. After the selection of the scales, an online survey organized through Google Forms was used for data collection and disseminated over digital platforms. A total of 126 people filled the google form out of which 30 responses were of single parented children while the rest of them were of children raised by both the parents. Since the study was qualitative in nature, analysis was done through the use of JANOVA 2.6.44 version.

3.1. Ethical considerations

Respect for autonomy: Informed consent was obtained from the participants prior to the study, to respect their autonomy.

Beneficence and Non-maleficence: No harm was done to the participant and welfare of the participants was promoted by ensuring that the research process was free from coercion, manipulation, and deception.

Justice: Participants were treated fairly and equitably. It ensured that the selection of research participants is not biased or discriminatory.

Respect for privacy: Privacy of the participants were respected by ensuring that their personal details were kept confidential and not shared.

Conflicts of interest: Conflict of interest were avoided which may have arisen from personal biases as the data collected was from online medium and there was no data manipulation.

4. Results

Results Analysis was done through the use of JANOVA 2.6.44 version. An independent t-test samples test was carried out to look into differences in social support and academic motivation among single-parented students and those coming from both-parented homes.

Table 1 Independent Samples T-Test

		Statistic	df	p	Mean difference	SE difference		Effect Size
academic motivation	Student's t	0.619	124	0.537	1.590	2.57	Cohen's d	0.1294
social support	Student's t	-0.124	124	0.902	-0.273	2.21	Cohen's d	-0.0258
<i>Note.</i> $H_a: \mu_1 \neq \mu_2$								

As seen in Table 1, the analysis reveals no statistical difference in academic motivation between both samples, $t(124) = 0.619$, $p = 0.537$, with the difference in mean standing at 1.59 ($SE = 2.57$). Cohen's d effect size = 0.1294 implies negligible effect. In the same vein, for social support, no difference was seen, $t(124) = -0.124$, $p = 0.902$, with a mean difference of -0.273 ($SE = 2.21$) and an effect size of Cohen's d = -0.0258, yet again supporting the fact that parental structure does not meaningfully contribute to social support levels.

Table 2 Normality Test (Shapiro-Wilk)

	W	p
academic motivation	0.945	<0.001
social support	0.953	<0.001
<i>Note.</i> A low p-value suggests a violation of the assumption of normality		

As seen in Table 2, a Shapiro-Wilk test was used to determine the normality of the data distribution. The findings show a violation of the normality assumption for both social support ($W = 0.953$, $p < 0.001$) and academic motivation ($W = 0.945$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that the data distribution is significantly not normal.

Table 3 Homogeneity of Variances Test (Levene's)

	F	df	df2	p
academic motivation	0.00197	1	124	0.965
social support	0.12629	1	124	0.723
<i>Note.</i> A low p-value suggests a violation of the assumption of equal variances				

But Table 3, Levene's test of homogeneity of variances revealed that the equal variances assumption was satisfied for both academic motivation ($F(1,124) = 0.00197, p = 0.965$) and social support ($F(1,124) = 0.12629, p = 0.723$), revealing similar variance between groups.

Table 4 Group Descriptives

	Group	N	Mean	Median	SD	SE
academic motivation	1	30	67.6	69.0	11.5	2.10
	2	96	66.0	67.0	12.5	1.28
social support	1	30	44.6	47.0	10.1	1.84
	2	96	44.9	45.0	10.7	1.09

Descriptive statistics were also calculated for both variables. As seen in Table 4 Academic motivation, for students growing up in single-parented families ($N = 30$), was mean scored as 67.6 ($SD = 11.5, SE = 2.10$), and for students in both-parented families ($N = 96$) as 66.0 ($SD = 12.5, SE = 1.28$). The median scores for both were 69.0 and 67.0, respectively. For social support, single-parented student participants ($N = 30$) reported a mean of 44.6 ($SD = 10.1, SE = 1.84$), while both-parented student participants ($N = 96$) reported a mean of 44.9 ($SD = 10.7, SE = 1.09$), with median scores of 47.0 and 45.0, respectively. These findings suggest that students' academic motivation and social support levels do not significantly differ based on parental structure. The small effect sizes also imply that any differences, if present, are trivial in practical terms. Even though the normality assumption was violated, the equal variances assumption was satisfied, enabling valid interpretation of the t-test outcomes. This implies that variables other than parental structure, like socioeconomic status or parental involvement, could be more important in determining academic motivation and social support among students. Future studies should investigate other contributing factors to understand their influence on students' academic and social lives better.

5. Discussion

The results of this research offer essential understanding regarding the influence of perceived social support on academic motivation, especially when contrasting students from single-parent families with those from two-parent families. In contrast to typical beliefs that kids from single-parent households show decreased academic motivation, the statistical analysis in the study indicated no notable differences between the two groups. The independent T-test specifically showed that the average academic motivation score for students from single-parent families was 67.6 (standard deviation [SD] = 11.5), whereas it was 66.0 ($SD = 12.5$) for students from families with both parents. The t-value was determined to be 0.619, with a p-value of 0.537, indicating that the motivational differences between these groups were not statistically significant.

Furthermore, the findings about perceived social support were just as revealing. The average score for perceived social support in single-parent students was 44.6 ($SD = 10.1$), whereas it was 44.9 ($SD = 10.7$) for students from both-parent homes. The T-test produced a t-value of -0.124 and a p-value of 0.902, further suggesting there are no significant differences in perceived social support among the groups. These results emphasize that family structure by itself might not be a significant factor influencing academic motivation or social support.

These findings contest the common assumption that children from single-parent households naturally have less academic motivation or reduced access to social support resources. Rather, the data indicates that elements like socio-economic status, community assets, and peer connections might have a more significant impact on students' academic achievements than parental structure by itself. The small effect sizes—Cohen's $d = 0.1294$ for academic motivation and Cohen's $d = -0.0258$ for social support—further strengthen the conclusion that any differences, if they exist, are minimal and lack practical implications.

Additionally, this research highlights the crucial importance of external support networks, which include connections with peers, teachers, and mentors. Additionally, this research highlights the crucial importance of external support systems, which include connections with peers, teachers, and mentors. Studies have consistently demonstrated that robust social support networks are associated with higher motivation levels in students. For example, research conducted by Cohen and Wills (1985) shows that people who recognize greater levels of social support tend to establish and chase academic objectives successfully. Barrera et al. (2002) observed that students with strong support systems demonstrate higher resilience, emphasizing that social environments—beyond family dynamics—play a vital role in

influencing academic results. Socio-cultural influences play a crucial role in shaping academic motivation. In societies that place a strong emphasis on education, like Indian culture, the pressure to perform well academically is often experienced consistently across different family dynamics. Placing importance on education could inspire students from single-parent and two-parent families alike, as each cohort aims for academic success in the face of cultural demands. This cultural context likely clarifies the comparable motivation levels noted in the results of this study. Moreover, the results of the study necessitate a reconsideration of the conventional storyline about single-parent families. The absence of notable differences in perceived social support implies that students from these backgrounds might create compensatory methods or proactively seek different sources of support. This adaptability and resilience probably help them sustain strong academic motivation, acting as a counterweight to any perceived drawbacks associated with their family histories. A study conducted by Hiko et al. (2023) indicates that personal achievement motivation and community support may influence the impact of parental structure, highlighting the importance of emphasizing external resources in conversations regarding academic success.

6. Conclusion

In summary, this research contests the stereotype that children from single-parent households are naturally less driven in their academic pursuits. The analyzed findings suggest that academic motivation is a complex phenomenon shaped by social, economic, and cultural elements instead of merely being determined by family dynamics. The study promotes a wider comprehension of the factors influencing academic achievement, urging educators and policymakers to prioritize nurturing environments that improve social connections among students. By concentrating on these elements, instead of just family structures, interventions can be better customized to enhance academic motivation in every student. Future research should persist in examining the connections among these variables, utilizing mixed-method approaches to deepen the comprehension of the elements affecting academic motivation and performance.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

Statement of informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from the participants prior to the study, to respect their autonomy.

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