

INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL SUPPORT ON TEACHER SELF-EFFICACY AND SKILL ENHANCEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigates the influence of social support on teacher self-efficacy and skill enhancement in higher education institutions in Nigeria. The study explores how different types of social support-emotional, informational, and instrumental - affect teachers' confidence in their abilities and their capacity to enhance their teaching skills. Using a quantitative research design, data were collected through surveys distributed to lecturers from various universities across Nigeria. A total of 300 lecturers participated, providing responses on their perceived levels of emotional, informational, and instrumental support, as well as their self-efficacy and skill development. Multiple regression analysis was employed to test the hypotheses and determine the significance of the relationships between social support and teacher self-efficacy. The findings indicate that all three forms of social support-emotional ($\beta = 0.182$, $p < 0.01$), informational ($\beta = 0.231$, $p < 0.01$), and instrumental ($\beta = 0.153$, $p < 0.05$) have a significant positive impact on teacher self-efficacy and skill enhancement. Among these, informational support was found to have the most substantial influence, followed by emotional support, with instrumental support showing a weaker, yet still significant, effect. These results suggest that providing teachers with a supportive work environment, access to relevant resources, and emotional encouragement is crucial for boosting their confidence and teaching effectiveness. The study concludes that social support plays a pivotal role in enhancing teacher self-efficacy and professional growth in Nigerian higher education. The findings imply that universities should prioritize the development of supportive structures, including emotional, informational, and instrumental support systems, to improve teaching quality. Recommendations for practice include promoting collaborative networks, enhancing professional development opportunities, and ensuring adequate resource allocation to foster a positive and effective teaching environment.

Keywords: Social Support, Teacher Self-Efficacy, Skill Enhancement, Higher Education,

Introduction

The role of education in societal development cannot be overemphasized, and at the heart of any educational system is the teacher. In higher education, teachers not only impart knowledge but also shape students' skills, attitudes, and behaviors, thereby playing a critical role in shaping the future workforce. However, effective teaching is dependent on the teacher's ability to manage classroom dynamics, adopt innovative instructional strategies, and maintain personal and professional growth. One key psychological factor that influences a teacher's ability to perform these duties is self-efficacy. Teacher self-efficacy refers to the belief in one's ability to plan, organize, and execute the necessary courses of action to accomplish specific teaching tasks (Bandura, 1997). High self-efficacy is often linked with effective teaching, positive student outcomes, and a teacher's willingness to adopt new instructional practices. However, self-efficacy is not solely an internal trait but is also influenced by external factors, one of the most significant being social support.

Social support refers to the assistance and encouragement teachers receive from colleagues, administrators, students, and the broader educational community (Visser, 2006). In the context of

Nigerian higher education, where teachers often face large class sizes, underfunded institutions, and inadequate resources, social support becomes even more critical for enhancing teacher self-efficacy and fostering skill development. Social support can come in various forms: emotional support (empathy, understanding), informational support (advice, feedback), and instrumental support (physical resources, mentorship) (Cohen & Wills, 1985).

In Nigerian universities, social support can significantly influence how teachers navigate challenges, adapt to new teaching methods, and foster a conducive learning environment. As such, understanding the relationship between social support, teacher self-efficacy, and skill enhancement is crucial for improving the quality of education in higher institutions. Despite this, research on the specific influence of social support on teachers' self-efficacy and skill enhancement in Nigeria remains limited. Nigerian higher education institutions face numerous challenges that impact teaching quality, including overcrowded classrooms, insufficient teaching materials, and inadequate infrastructure. Teachers, often burdened with large class sizes and limited resources, may experience decreased self-efficacy, which negatively impacts their teaching effectiveness. Social support from colleagues, administrators, and students may play a crucial role in alleviating the pressure and enhancing teachers' self-efficacy and skill development. However, the nature and extent of social support in Nigerian universities and its effects on teachers' professional growth remain under-researched.

Teacher self-efficacy has been described as an individual's belief in their capacity to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage educational tasks (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy is central to a teacher's motivation and behavior in the classroom. Teachers with high self-efficacy are more likely to take on challenging tasks, engage in proactive teaching strategies, and persist in the face of challenges (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010). Conversely, teachers with low self-efficacy may struggle with classroom management, teaching tasks, and adopting new teaching practices.

In higher education, the concept of self-efficacy extends beyond just classroom management and lesson delivery. It also encompasses confidence in handling large classes, engaging with diverse student populations, and managing the pressures associated with academic research and institutional responsibilities (Guskey, 2002). In Nigeria, where universities often grapple with large class sizes and limited resources, the role of self-efficacy becomes even more critical for the success of teachers.

Recent studies have demonstrated that teachers' self-efficacy positively impacts their teaching practices and students' academic achievements (Henson, 2001). Moreover, teacher self-efficacy has been linked to various factors such as years of teaching experience, training, and the institutional environment (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007). In Nigerian higher education, where teachers face challenges such as limited access to professional development and teaching resources, the influence of self-efficacy is particularly significant.

Social support refers to the various forms of help or resources teachers receive from colleagues, administrators, and students (Cohen & Wills, 1985). Social support is essential in buffering stress and promoting positive outcomes in teaching. For teachers, especially in challenging environments like those found in Nigerian universities, social support can significantly impact their self-efficacy and ability to maintain or enhance their teaching skills (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011).

Despite the importance of social support, there are several challenges in its provision and receipt within Nigerian higher education institutions. One major barrier is the hierarchical nature of academic institutions, where junior faculty members may feel reluctant to seek support from senior colleagues due to fear of being judged or criticized (Oluwole & Adegoke, 2015). Additionally, the lack of structured mentorship programs and professional development opportunities in many Nigerian universities can limit teachers' access to essential support.

Another challenge is the large class sizes and limited resources in Nigerian higher education, which often result in teachers being overburdened with teaching responsibilities, leaving little time for collaboration or seeking support (Ogunyemi & Adeyemi, 2020). These factors contribute to stress and burnout, which further undermine teachers' ability to enhance their skills and maintain high self-efficacy.

This study seeks to address the gap in the literature by examining how social support influences teacher

self-efficacy and skill enhancement in Nigerian higher education institutions. The findings will provide insights into how social support can be leveraged to enhance teachers' professional development and improve teaching outcomes.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1 (H_1): Emotional support dose not influences teacher self-efficacy and skill enhancement.

Hypothesis 2 (H_2): Informational support dose not influences teacher self-efficacy and skill enhancement.

Hypothesis 3 (H_3): Instrumental support dose not influences teacher self-efficacy and skill enhancement.

Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative research design to examine the influence of social support on teacher self-efficacy and skill enhancement in higher education in Nigeria. The research will use a survey method to collect data from lecturers in Nigerian universities. The target population includes lecturers from both public and private universities across different regions in Nigeria. A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure representation across various academic disciplines, levels of experience, and gender. The sample size consists of approximately 500 lecturers from a mix of urban and rural institutions. This sample size is large enough to provide reliable and generalizable results. The primary data collection instrument was a structured questionnaire.

The questionnaires were distributed electronically to the selected lecturers through email or university platforms. In cases where digital distribution is not feasible, hard copies were provided. Respondents will be informed about the voluntary nature of their participation, and their confidentiality will be ensured. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) to summarize the responses., multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the extent to which different types of social support (emotional, informational, and instrumental) predict teachers' self-efficacy and skill enhancement. Data analysis was performed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences).

Data Analysis and Presentation

Table 1.1 Multiple Regression Analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Standardized Coefficients (β)	t-value	p-value	95% Confidence Interval for B
Constant	1.235		3.871	<0.001	[0.876, 1.594]
Emotional Support	0.248	0.182	2.689	0.008	[0.078, 0.418]
Informational Support	0.310	0.231	3.118	0.002	[0.135, 0.485]
Instrumental Support	0.185	0.153	2.430	0.015	[0.041, 0.329]
R ² (Coefficient of Determination)		0.361			
F-statistic		45.872		<0.001	

Interpretation of Results

Constant: The constant (intercept) value is 1.235, which represents the baseline teacher self-efficacy and skill enhancement score when all types of social support are at zero. Emotional Support: The coefficient for emotional support is 0.248 ($p = 0.008$), indicating that for every unit increase in emotional support, teachers' self-efficacy and skill enhancement scores increase by 0.248 units. This effect is statistically significant at the 0.01 level ($p < 0.01$), confirming that emotional support positively influences teacher self-efficacy and skill enhancement. The standardized coefficient (β) is 0.182, suggesting that emotional support has a moderate effect on the outcome variable compared to other types of support. Informational Support: The coefficient for informational support is 0.310 ($p = 0.002$), meaning that an increase in informational support is associated with a 0.310 unit increase in teacher self-efficacy and skill enhancement. This effect is also statistically significant at the 0.01 level ($p < 0.01$). The standardized coefficient (β) of 0.231 suggests that informational support has a stronger effect on self-efficacy and skill enhancement than emotional support. Instrumental Support: The

coefficient for instrumental support is 0.185 ($p = 0.015$), indicating that an increase in instrumental support results in a 0.185 unit increase in teacher self-efficacy and skill enhancement. This result is statistically significant at the 0.05 level ($p < 0.05$). The standardized coefficient (β) is 0.153, showing that while instrumental support has a positive impact, it has the weakest effect on teacher self-efficacy compared to emotional and informational support. R^2 and F-statistic: The R^2 value of 0.361 indicates that approximately 36.1% of the variation in teacher self-efficacy and skill enhancement can be explained by the independent variables (emotional, informational, and instrumental support). The F-statistic value of 45.872 ($p < 0.001$) indicates that the overall regression model is highly significant, meaning the combined effect of emotional, informational, and instrumental support significantly predicts teacher self-efficacy and skill enhancement.

Testing the Hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1 (H_1): Emotional support positively influences teacher self-efficacy and skill enhancement. Result: The coefficient for emotional support (0.248) is statistically significant ($p = 0.008$), supporting H_1 . Therefore, emotional support has a positive influence on teacher self-efficacy and skill enhancement. Hypothesis 2 (H_2): Informational support positively influences teacher self-efficacy and skill enhancement. Result: The coefficient for informational support (0.310) is statistically significant ($p = 0.002$), supporting H_2 . Thus, informational support has a significant positive effect on teacher self-efficacy and skill enhancement. Hypothesis 3 (H_3): Instrumental support positively influences teacher self-efficacy and skill enhancement. Result: The coefficient for instrumental support (0.185) is statistically significant ($p = 0.015$), supporting H_3 . Therefore, instrumental support positively influences teacher self-efficacy and skill enhancement, though the effect is weaker compared to emotional and informational support.

Discussion of Findings

Emotional Support and Teacher Self-Efficacy (H_1)

The first hypothesis postulated that emotional support would positively influence teacher self-efficacy and skill enhancement. The results showed that emotional support had a significant positive effect on self-efficacy and skill enhancement, with a regression coefficient of 0.248 ($p = 0.008$), supporting this hypothesis. This suggests that when lecturers receive emotional support, whether from peers, students, or administrators, they feel more confident in their teaching abilities, leading to improved performance and skill development.

Previous studies support these findings, emphasizing the crucial role of emotional support in boosting teachers' psychological well-being and confidence. For instance, Buchanan et al. (2014) found that teachers who received strong emotional support from colleagues and administrators exhibited higher levels of job satisfaction, better coping strategies, and enhanced professional growth. Similarly, Friedman and Farber (1992) argued that emotional support can serve as a buffer against the stressors associated with teaching, fostering a positive outlook on teaching effectiveness and professional development.

Informational Support and Teacher Self-Efficacy (H_2)

The second hypothesis proposed that informational support would positively affect teacher self-efficacy and skill enhancement. The results indicated that informational support had the strongest effect, with a regression coefficient of 0.310 ($p = 0.002$). This finding suggests that when lecturers have access to relevant information, resources, and guidance, they are more likely to improve their teaching practices and enhance their skills.

This aligns with Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory, which highlights the importance of vicarious learning and the acquisition of new knowledge in enhancing self-efficacy. In the context of Nigerian higher education, where teachers often face challenges related to curriculum delivery and access to teaching resources, informational support can provide essential tools and strategies for improving teaching quality. The findings are also consistent with Hargreaves (1994), who noted that teachers who have access to professional development opportunities and pedagogical resources tend to exhibit higher levels of self-efficacy and more effective teaching practices.

Instrumental Support and Teacher Self-Efficacy (H_3)

The third hypothesis posited that instrumental support would positively influence teacher self-efficacy and skill enhancement. The regression analysis showed that instrumental support had a positive but weaker effect (coefficient of 0.185, $p = 0.015$) compared to emotional and informational support. This suggests that the provision of tangible resources such as teaching materials, professional development programs, and mentorship also contributes to teachers' self-efficacy and skill enhancement, but to a lesser extent than emotional and informational support.

This result supports findings from Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2010), who found that teachers' self-efficacy was positively influenced by the availability of instructional materials, professional development opportunities, and administrative support. However, the comparatively weaker effect of instrumental support in this study could be explained by the fact that, while resources and mentoring are critical, they may be less immediately impactful on teachers' confidence and skills than emotional and informational support, which directly influence teachers' day-to-day interactions and experiences.

Conclusion

This study investigated the influence of social support (emotional, informational, and instrumental) on teacher self-efficacy and skill enhancement in higher education institutions in Nigeria. The findings confirmed that all three types of social support have a significant positive impact on teacher self-efficacy and skill enhancement, supporting the proposed hypotheses.

Emotional support was found to have a significant positive effect on teachers' self-efficacy and their ability to enhance their teaching skills. This suggests that emotional support from colleagues, administrators, and students is crucial for teachers' confidence and professional development.

Informational support, which includes access to relevant resources, guidance, and professional development opportunities, emerged as the strongest predictor of teacher self-efficacy and skill enhancement. This highlights the importance of providing teachers with continuous learning opportunities and the knowledge necessary to improve their teaching practices.

Instrumental support, which refers to tangible resources such as teaching materials, mentorship, and administrative assistance, also had a significant, though slightly weaker, effect on teachers' self-efficacy and skill enhancement.

The findings underscore the importance of social support in fostering a positive teaching environment and enhancing the effectiveness of teachers in Nigerian higher education. The data suggests that when teachers feel supported, they are more likely to develop their skills, improve their self-efficacy, and consequently perform better in their teaching roles.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made to enhance teacher self-efficacy and skill development in Nigerian higher education:

1. Higher education institutions should prioritize the creation of supportive and collegial environments that foster emotional support among faculty members. Peer mentoring, team teaching, and faculty support groups can help build a sense of community and encourage positive relationships between colleagues. Emotional support contributes significantly to teacher well-being and self-efficacy. By strengthening these support networks, universities can create a more resilient and motivated teaching staff, which in turn leads to improved teaching quality and skill enhancement.
2. Institutions should invest in professional development programs that provide teachers with continuous access to updated teaching methodologies, research findings, and technology. Workshops, seminars, online courses, and teaching conferences should be made accessible to all teachers. Informational support emerged as the most influential factor in enhancing teacher self-efficacy. By ensuring that teachers are well-equipped with the latest teaching strategies and resources, universities can directly improve the quality of education and foster an environment of lifelong learning.
3. Universities should allocate sufficient resources for teaching materials, technological tools, and mentorship programs. Regular updates to curriculum resources and ensuring that teachers have access to necessary teaching tools are essential for their effectiveness. Although instrumental support had a weaker effect compared to emotional and informational support, it remains crucial for teachers'

performance. Instrumental support provides the tangible resources needed to deliver effective lessons and helps reduce the stress and challenges teachers face in the classroom.

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