

## The Relationship Between Social Support and Depression Among Senior High School Students in the Midst of Online Learning Modality

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### Abstract

Online learning is one of the solutions that schools around the Philippines are using to lessen the impact of COVID-19 on education. It is in line with the health protocol of the government, but students have a hard time coping with this new way of learning that has caused some effect on their mental health and social skills. Some students have a problem getting the support they need, which has resulted in their having mild to severe depressive symptoms. Social support has the effect of weakening the effect of depressive symptoms on students. This study aims to investigate the relationship between social support and depression among the senior high school students. Based on the statistical analysis, it indicates that social support and depression have a significant relationship ( $r=0.129$ ).

**Keywords:** Depression, Social Support, Online Learning, Covid-19 Pandemic, Senior High School Students

### Introduction

COVID-19 pandemic had such a huge impact on the school system that all the governments around the globe came up with different responses to lighten the impact of this pandemic on the education of many people (Barrot et al., 2021). Some of the things they do are to have the curriculum and academic calendar adjusted, add more technical resources and buildings and regulations on instructional teaching, and evaluation on these new approaches. Barrot et al. said that the result of all of these adjustments is to have educational institutions adopt online learning programs until the time when face-to-face instruction is approved again. He also said that the citation is unique because it has the tendency to have difficulties during online learning worsen because of the restriction in health protocols. The group of Barrot et al., discovered that their study has some consequences. The first one is how secondary higher education will respond if there are other problems. The policies of the nation and educational institutions, resources needed, how the instructors will deliver and how will the parents, students, teachers, school leaders, industry, government education agencies, and the community cooperate. Second is the obstacles that students need to face in the midst of online learning in some places they will be having a problem with the internet connection, countries with low educational resources and lastly is bad home environment. Schools with similar environments should make use of the study of Barrot et al., to come up with different solutions that can help their students overcome those obstacles of the

pandemic. Third is to have instructors find the findings helpful in developing appropriate interventions to address the issues raised, particularly in the most crucial areas.

In the study of Huang and Zhang (2021), social support has been an important coping factor to fight psychological problems and maintaining some people's mental health well-being. It is said to be instrumental, informational, or emotional assistance to some people's feeling of being supported and having belongingness. This study of social support is based on the awareness of accessibility of perceived social support from family, friends, and significant others, and the psychological advantages that may help college students develop successful mental health strategies.

Supportive social ties, good parental function, and coping strategies, according to Ruyue et al. (2020), have a major influence in minimizing the likelihood of students developing mental health problems. These findings are critical for both students and academics. Depression and anxiety symptoms among students may be prevented or at least reduced by extending social contacts and adopting more positive coping skills and fewer negative coping abilities.. According to Ghafari et al., (2021), more than half of kids may have a mental illness, emphasizing the significance of evaluating and providing reasonable solutions in this area. Given the adverse relationship between social support and mental health found in this study, it is proposed that increased amounts of social support be provided to students to improve their mental health,

especially during the difficult COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, according to Li et al., (2020), the findings reveal that the quantity of stressors has a positive relationship with psychological symptoms, whereas social support has a negative relationship. Furthermore, social support protects against the detrimental effects of stressors.

Additionally, Zhang et al. (2020) stated that because of the unique combination of the public health crisis, social isolation, and economic collapse, the COVID-19 pandemic may worsen the existing mental health problems among children and adolescents. Furthermore, in order to slow the spread of a pandemic, China decided to close all schools for more than three months. During the years they were learning, they were accustomed to studying at school. They haven't done any kind of web research before. Changes in the studying environment may have an effect on students' mental health. Many of them struggle to cope with the new learning style and are not satisfied with the results or grades they get. So, according to Zhang et al., the study effect has a relationship with the students' psychological state.

In the study of Ioannou et al. (2019), it was stated that the separate assessment of the impact of various sources of perceived social support reported that the social support from family and friends has a correlation to depressive symptoms and the social support from significant others does not have a relationship. They stated that support from family and friends has various effects on depression. While Guo et al. stated that there is a negative relationship between social support and anxiety, depression, and stress symptoms, they also said that, based on the results of their study, females receive more social support from the people around them than males.

Moreover, this study investigates the relationship between social support and depression in the midst of online learning. Additionally, it would provide enough knowledge and understanding of how social support affects depression, especially in senior high school students in online learning.

### Research Question:

This study investigates the relationship between social support and depression among senior high school students amidst the online learning modality. Specifically, it answers the following question:

1. Is there a significant relationship between the social support and depression of senior high school students?

## Literature Review

### Social Support

Students at the University of Jordan had a moderate view of perceived social support (Alorani & Alrahdayde, 2017). The study findings matched those of earlier national and international investigations. Students from university received adequate social support from their families, friends and significant others. Moreover, families have provided more social support than friends and significant others that are in line with the Jordan culture that the family is the vital point, where they can get guidance, closeness, affection and wisdom. Researchers also find that females receive more social support than men that can also connect in their culture, which allows female students to seek help from others that is opposite to the male students because they are expected to be more independent, which results in them to reject support from others.

According to the study by Ye et al. (2020), resilience, social support, and adaptive coping strategies have a significant protective barrier that weaken the symptoms of ASD in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. Resilient people are better at coping in problematic situations because they have positive emotions and ideas and enough social support from family, friends, and significant others which helps them manage stress and lessen or weaken the ASD symptoms.

The study of Tinajero et al., have given different hypotheses to look into the impact of social support on academic achievement of Spanish university students. Only contentment with support, perceived familial acceptance, and assurance of value were shown to be substantially connected with GPA. The findings are in line with past research and the notion that different types of social assistance address different needs and have varied consequences. When creating the SSQ, they wanted to differentiate between two essential parts. Availability is a quantitative, descriptive assessment that is more akin to social network metrics than satisfaction, which is the perception of support sufficiency. Their findings imply that this dimension has a distinct bearing on academic accomplishment throughout the transition to university, which is consistent with earlier research on this dimension's relationship with academic adjustment. According to studies, university students in Spain who have their abilities recognized are less stressed. They also discovered that parental social support was not a

strong predictor of academic success. Their findings were interpreted in light of social support's both buffering and boosting effects.

According to the study by Zhou and Yu (2021), during the COVID-19 pandemic, social support was a key predictor of the well-being of Chinese college students who were confined at home. This conclusion is in agreement with the previous study that found the link between social support and students' psychological and physical health in both everyday and academic settings. This result focused on the critical significance of social support as a social and environmental resource in impacting the well-being of home-confined pupils. In their research, they looked at the effects of characteristics specific to online learning environments. Social support improves online learning self-efficacy in home-confined students first, which is beneficial to the students' psychological and physical well-being. A partial mediation effect suggests that social support may add to the academic and psychological benefits for online learners.

According to Mclean et al. (2022), students reported that there was no significant variation in the source of social support recognized by the students. They found that the support from family and significant others was slightly higher than that from peers. Peer assistance has always been essential for students. They stated that their findings imply that instructors must find ways to improve social support from peers for first-year students. They also stated that there were differences in gender in receiving social support for the students. They said that 42 percent of the female population of their respondents reported that they received high levels of social support, while only 27 percent of the male population did. They stated that this result is consistent with studies that suggest that men and women have specific social support needs and different ways of receiving assistance.

Mai et al. stated that those individuals who received a high level of social support were more emotionally stable and had better physical and mental status. Those who have a low level of social support have a bad physical and mental state. The result of their study suggests that people with a good coping disposition scored lower than people with negative coping tendencies in the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. They said that when facing a difficult situation, a person who has received aid and support from others has fewer worries and less terror. They stated that an individual with constant social support also improves their self-esteem when faced with bad events.

## Depression

According to Magklara et al., (2015) that even before the crisis and its consequences were visible, they found that the biggest burden of depression for Greek teenagers is the financial problem. They said that there is a strong connection between depression and financial problems. They also said that only a few teenagers seek professional assistance.

Based on the study by Zhu et al., (2020) millions of teenagers were cooped up in their houses, resulting in fewer social interactions and fewer outside activities during the COVID-19 epidemic. Existing research revealed that the link between insufficient sleep and depression was bidirectional. For teenagers aged 13–17 years, physical exercise was demonstrated to be an effective antidepressant therapy. Senior high school students in China had a greater risk of depression. Female adolescents were more likely to experience severe depression symptoms. The majority of pupils in China attend secondary schools after graduating from junior secondary schools. These teenagers were under a lot of academic pressure because of college admissions exams, which were compared to a stampede of "thousands of troops and tens of thousands of horses over a single log bridge."

According to Fawaz and Samaha (2020), many of the students did not report having any psychological symptoms, but the level of anxiety and depressive symptoms had risen to a moderate level among the students. A correlation is found between students' satisfaction in online learning and depression, anxiety, and stress symptoms. They stated that in recent reports, students said that they always receive a large number of emails containing loads of assignments and requirements to be done in daily life, which results in a stressful day. Some reports also stated that during the COVID-19 pandemic, we have to highlight the need for students to have psychological counseling because of the stress and moral distress caused by the drastic changes in their learning environment and for their future plans. Fawaz and Samaha also mentioned a recent article that looked at the stress students have while trying to access school platforms owing to heavy traffic, and found that such a load made e-learning difficult, producing dissatisfaction among students who were unable to complete assignments on time due to system breakdowns, adding to the stress.

According to Gcek and Krzywoszanski (2021) there are one-third of females that had mild to severe anxiety and depressive symptoms. While 15 percent of boys had anxiety symptoms and 20 percent had

depressive symptoms. They stated that gender differences in depression are common in the population and in individuals with intellectual disabilities. The amount of challenges that comes with the lockdown have a big influence on the mental health of most girls. Their findings found that girls with developmental difficulties are especially vulnerable to the problems that arise in unexpected situations.

According to Chen et al., up to 43.7 percent of Grade 3T children experienced moderate-to-severe depression in the current study, compared to just 18.8 percent of their Grade 3S counterparts. This suggests that many of the students were suffering from reversible depression symptoms and that academic stress was one of the key risk factors. The findings imply that students who are under a lot of academic pressure should pay greater attention to their mood, exhaustion, and sleep issues.

### Social Support and Depression

According to Li et al., (2021), there is a negative significant relationship between social support and depression among overseas students in China. That is, individuals will be less prone to developing depression if they have greater social support. Students with limited social support, on the other hand, may experience more depressive symptoms and may feel uneasy in their new setting. Furthermore, a recent study found a link between social support and depression during a particular period, namely when a person with less social support is more likely to experience negative emotions such as anxiety and despair. Their research found a link between social support and depression, and their goal is to reduce depression among international students. Because these kids live far away from home, they have less access to social assistance.

While, Wang et al., (2014) explained that social support has an impact on the link between stress and depression. People with little social support have a stronger link between stress and depression. They stated that people with strong social support enable for them to build self esteem and self efficiency, reducing the probability of them feeling negative emotions such as depression. They also said that when a person is feeling stressed, social support can help them to minimize the risk and stress by leveling up their coping ability skills.

In a study by Wenjun Chen (2018), he discovered that depression was substantially connected with perceived

social support for both IB and Key school students in a negative manner. This study finds that perceived social support has a negative correlation in workload, pressure, and overall academic stress in key school students. While support from significant others also have negative correlations with pressure and overall academic stress, and support from friends was found to be negatively associated with pressure only. Support from family and significant others is important for IB students. Others are linked to depression in a negative way. The findings highlighted the relevance of good social support for Chinese senior high students' mental health.

According to Ren et al. (2018), peer and teacher support are connected to each other and mutually influential. Their study found that depression has a large impact on peer support. They said that peer support is easier to obtain for adolescents with fewer depressive symptoms. They stated that there are two ways to explain the interpersonal theory of depression. The first is that depressed people may reject and have negative responses from other people because of self-disclosure and self-criticism. The second one is that support erosion may be more prominent for peer support than adult support, such as from teachers and parents.

According to Liu et al., (2020) depression can be alleviated by a high level of social engagement. They said that in their study social support was linked to fewer serious depressive symptoms. It is indicated in their study that social support has the effect of reducing the risk of depression that is caused by stressful life. Lui et al., stated that the effect of social support is to be seen by knowing how often someone received it. They said that the frequency of receiving social support represents the real assistance that an individual receives and it is connected to depressive symptoms in a negative way. While the perceived significance of social support represents a person's subjective desire for social support, that is positively correlated with depressive symptoms. Lui et al., found out that adolescents from china that have serious depressive symptoms are someone who expects more for social support.

According to the research described above, there is a link between social support and depression. It demonstrates that social support can have an impact on depression when online learning, and it varies in different ways. In summary, the related literature and research collated and presented in this chapter show the numerous gaps between social support and depression.



## Methodology

### Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-correlational design to investigate the relationship between social support and depression among senior high students.

### Respondents

The respondents of this study were 167 senior high school students in private schools during the school year 2021-2022. Thus, the study employed a convenience sampling method.

### Instrument of the Study

The researchers adopted two standardized instruments to determine the senior high school students' social support and depression. The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support developed by Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, and Farley (1988) was used to evaluate the social support students received from others. The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support is a 12-item measure of the perceived adequacy of social support from three sources: family, friends, and significant other; each item is rated on a seven-point Likert-type response format (1 = very strongly disagree; 7 = very strongly agree). A total score is generated by multiplying the items' ratings on a seven-point Likert-type response format (1 = very strongly disagree; 7 = very strongly agree) adding the results of all items. The potential score range is 12 to 84, with higher scores indicating greater felt social support.

The Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale, or DASS21, was used in this study to measure the emotional state of depression among high school seniors. Each of the three DASS-21 scales contains 7 items, divided into subscales with similar content. The depression scale assesses dysphoria, hopelessness, devaluation of life, self-deprecation, lack of interest or involvement, anhedonia, and inertia. The recommended cut-off scores for conventional severity labels (normal, moderate, and severe) are as follows: (NB) Scores on the DASS-21 will need to be multiplied by 2 to calculate the final score. The severity levels are Normal (0–9), Mild (10–13), Moderate (14–20), Severe (21–27), and Extremely Severe (28+). Thus, the study utilized the depression subscale only to measure the level of the respondents' depression.

### Procedure

The respondents were given informed consent before answering the online survey form that consisted of questions from the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support and the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS21). They were asked to fill in the pertinent information needed, follow the stated instructions, and answer statements honestly. Furthermore, the respondents were assured of privacy and confidentiality. Their responses will be kept with strict confidentiality and protected under the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (R.A. 10173), which is all about the protection of the privacy of the respondents. After the participants completed the questionnaires, the data was sorted and empirical references were included. The data that has been gathered will be used as the basis for the factual interpretation and analysis in creating the findings of the study.

### Ethical Considerations

Considering the health protocols in the COVID-19 pandemic, the researchers gathered data using Google forms made with questions that were based on standardized instruments. The instrument and collection methods are overseen by the research professor. At the beginning of the survey, respondents need to make sure that they give their full consent before answering the questions given. They have full control over whether they want to continue and stop answering the questionnaire. The researchers made sure to comply with the ethical standard. The data gathered will be protected and only be used in the study alone.

## Result

This part of the research reveals the statistical findings with use of SPSS.

### *The Relationship Between Social Support and Depression*

The main focus of the study is to find the relationship between social support and depression. Results of the statistical analysis in Table 1 reveal that social support and depression have a significant relationship ( $r=0.129$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 1

*Relationship between Stress and Happiness*

CORRELATION		
	<i>Social Support</i>	<i>Depression</i>
<i>Social Support</i>	-	.129*
<i>Depression</i>	.129*	-

Figure 1.

Lui et al. (2020), social support has the effect of lowering the risk of depression that is caused by stressful events in life. They said that the real assistance is how often someone receives social support in a negative way. While the perceived significance of social support represents a person's subjective desire for social support, that is positively correlated with depressive symptoms. Lui et al., found out that adolescents from china that have serious depressive symptoms are someone who expects more for social support.

Additionally in the study of Li et al., (2021) social support and depression have negative significant correlation with Chinese overseas students. They mean that, someone will become less prone to having depression if they will be receiving more social support. While students with low or limited social support can have more depressive symptoms.

## Discussion

Various studies and results have revealed a link between social support and depression. Some of these studies overlooked the correlation between the two variables. The participants' responses are the measure of the result of the study about the students' social support and depression. The conclusion of these findings is that social support and depression are correlated with each other. The study found that the increase and decrease in social support have an effect on the depressive symptoms of students. Additionally, pandemics are found to have a special effect on the social support and depression of students. This study revealed that schools, parents, teachers, and peers should monitor the mental state of every student.

Schools, parents, teachers, and peers should be aware if the student is receiving the right amount of social support that may help them adapt to the new normal in terms of education. It should be noted that low social support may result in depressive symptoms. This study

promotes the monitoring of students' mental states thoroughly, and with the help of those around them, will enable them to receive the proper amount of support they need.

## Conclusion

With the restriction of COVID-19, students have the problem of socializing with other people who have an effect on their social life, especially when seeking support from others. Thus, this study especially promotes the monitoring of the students' perceived social support and depressive symptoms. The study suggests that students should have an environment that gives them social support and makes them feel comfortable. In conclusion, developing various solutions for improving the social support students receive in the context of online learning will help them maintain a positive mental state and prevent them from experiencing negative emotions such as depression.

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