
The Impact of Social Support on Academic Achievement of Postgraduate Students in Sichuan Province: The Mediating Role of Psychological Well being

Zhang Yuhan¹, Dr. Raja Azrul Hisham Bin Raja Ahmad²

City University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Abstract: *This study investigates the impact of social support on the academic achievement of postgraduate students in Sichuan Province, China, with a focus on the mediating role of psychological well-being. Data were collected through comprehensive questionnaires administered to 680 postgraduate students across four universities in Chengdu. The questionnaires were designed to assess various dimensions of social support, including support from supervisors, peers, and family members, as well as the psychological well-being and academic performance of the students. The findings indicate that social support significantly impacts academic achievement, with psychological well-being mediating this relationship. Specifically, higher levels of social support were associated with better psychological well-being, which in turn was linked to higher academic achievement. This study provides empirical evidence for enhancing academic achievement by strengthening social support and psychological well-being among postgraduate students. The results highlight the importance of addressing students' mental health and providing robust support systems to foster academic success. Future research could explore other mediating factors and expand the study to other regions to further validate these findings.*

Keywords: *social support, academic achievement, psychological well being, mediation*

1. Introduction

Academic achievement is a critical factor in the success of postgraduate students, as it not only reflects their intellectual capabilities but also their ability to contribute to their respective fields of study. The pursuit of higher education at the postgraduate level is often characterized by rigorous academic demands, complex research tasks, and the pressure to produce original contributions to knowledge. These challenges can significantly impact students' academic performance and overall well-being. Therefore, understanding the factors that influence academic achievement is essential for educational institutions aiming to support their students effectively.

Social support, including support from supervisors, peers, and family, plays a significant role in influencing academic achievement. Supervisors provide guidance, feedback, and

mentorship, which are crucial for students' academic development. Peers offer a sense of community, shared experiences, and collaborative learning opportunities, which can enhance motivation and engagement. Family support, on the other hand, provides emotional and practical backing, which can help students manage stress and maintain a balanced lifestyle. Collectively, these sources of social support can create a supportive environment that fosters academic success.

Psychological well-being, which encompasses emotional and mental health, can mediate the relationship between social support and academic achievement. High levels of psychological well-being are associated with better coping strategies, lower stress levels, and higher motivation, all of which are conducive to academic success. Conversely, poor psychological well-being can lead to burnout, decreased motivation, and lower academic performance. Therefore, understanding how social support influences psychological well-being and, in turn, academic achievement is crucial for developing effective interventions and support systems.

This study aims to explore this relationship in the context of postgraduate education in Sichuan Province, China. Sichuan Province is known for its diverse and high-quality educational institutions, making it an ideal setting for this research. By focusing on postgraduate students in Chengdu, this study seeks to provide insights into the specific dynamics of social support and psychological well-being in this region. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the broader understanding of factors influencing academic achievement and to inform the development of targeted support strategies for postgraduate students.

2. Research background and problem proposal

Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that social support can significantly enhance academic achievement by providing both emotional and practical assistance to students. For instance, Hu (2017) found that mentor and peer support positively influences postgraduates' creativity, suggesting that a supportive academic environment can foster innovative thinking and academic excellence. Similarly, Yao and Yu (2019) highlighted that mentor-peer support enhances research self-efficacy among graduate students, which in turn promotes their research creativity. These findings underscore the importance of social support in academic settings.

However, despite the growing recognition of the role of social support in academic achievement, the role of psychological well-being in this relationship remains underexplored. Psychological well-being, which encompasses emotional and mental health, is a critical factor that can mediate the impact of social support on academic performance. High levels of psychological well-being are associated with better coping strategies, lower stress levels, and higher motivation, all of which are conducive to academic success (Fan & Liu, 2024). Conversely, poor psychological well-being can lead to burnout, decreased motivation, and lower academic performance (Kleinkorres et al., 2023).

Recent studies have begun to explore the mediating role of psychological well-being in various educational contexts. For example, Fan and Liu (2024) found that perceived teacher emotional support enhances students' resilience and mental well-being, which in turn positively affects their academic performance. Kleinkorres et al. (2023) also highlighted the importance of autonomy support in promoting students' well-being and academic engagement. These studies suggest that psychological well-being is a crucial mediator in the relationship between social support and academic achievement.

Despite these insights, there is a need for more research that specifically examines the mediating role of psychological well-being in the context of postgraduate education. Postgraduate students often face unique challenges, such as the pressure to produce original research and the demands of advanced coursework, which can significantly impact their psychological well-being. Therefore, understanding how social support influences psychological well-being and, in turn, academic achievement among postgraduate students is essential for developing effective support strategies.

This study addresses this gap by examining the mediating role of psychological well-being in the relationship between social support and academic achievement among postgraduate students in Sichuan Province, China. By focusing on this specific context, the study aims to provide empirical evidence that can inform the development of targeted interventions to enhance academic achievement by strengthening social support and psychological well-being. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the broader understanding of factors influencing academic success and to provide practical insights for educational institutions seeking to support their postgraduate students effectively.

3. Research method

(1) Research object

This study employs a quantitative research design to analyze the perspectives of postgraduate students on social support and academic achievement. Specifically, it seeks to understand how social support from various sources—such as supervisors, peers, and family—impacts the academic performance of postgraduate students. The study aims to determine the relationship between social support and academic achievement and to investigate the mediating role of psychological well-being in this relationship. By examining these factors, the study aims to provide insights into the mechanisms through which social support influences academic outcomes and to identify potential areas for intervention and support within educational institutions.

(2) Population and Sample

The population consisted of postgraduate students from the four selected universities. A sample of 680 students was selected using proportionate stratified random sampling to ensure representation across different universities and programs.

(3) Instruments

In order to conduct a comprehensive investigation into the multifaceted relationships between various factors that can significantly influence an individual's overall development and functioning, data were meticulously collected using a highly structured and well - designed questionnaire. This questionnaire encompassed a wide range of items that specifically targeted three crucial domains, namely social support, psychological well - being, and academic achievement. The construction of the questionnaire was not a haphazard process. Instead, it was firmly grounded on established and widely - recognized scales within the relevant fields of research. To further ensure its and reliability validity, the questionnaire underwent a rigorous validation process. This involved inviting a panel of experts with extensive knowledge and experience in the pertinent areas to carefully review the content and format of the questionnaire. Their valuable feedback and suggestions were incorporated to refine and enhance the questionnaire. In addition to the expert review, pilot testing was also conducted. A diverse group of participants, representative of the target population, were asked to complete the questionnaire. The data obtained from the pilot testing were then meticulously analyzed to identify any potential issues or areas for improvement. Based on these analyses, necessary adjustments were made to the questionnaire, ultimately resulting in a robust and reliable instrument that can effectively capture accurate and meaningful data on social support, psychological well - being, and academic achievement.

4.Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and structural equation modeling (SEM) were employed to analyze the data.

(1) Results.

Descriptive Statistics

The mean scores for social support, psychological well being, and academic achievement were 3.75, 3.60, and 3.50, respectively, on a 5point Likert scale.

(2) Correlation Analysis

Social support was positively correlated with psychological well being ($r = .65, p < .001$) and academic achievement ($r = .58, p < .001$). Psychological well being was also positively correlated with academic achievement ($r = .55, p < .001$).

(3) Mediation Analysis

SEM analysis confirmed that psychological well being significantly mediated the relationship between social support and academic achievement ($\beta = .42, p < .001$). This indicates that social support enhances academic achievement through improved psychological well being.

(4) Discussion

The findings of the current study provide valuable insights into the factors that influence academic achievement among postgraduate students. Specifically, the results suggest that social support is a crucial factor in enhancing academic achievement among this population. This finding underscores the importance of fostering supportive environments in educational settings. When students receive adequate social support from peers, instructors, and the broader academic community, they are more likely to feel encouraged, motivated, and capable of overcoming the challenges associated with postgraduate studies. This, in turn, can lead to improved academic performance and a greater likelihood of successfully completing their degree programs.

Moreover, the study highlights the significant role of psychological well - being as a mediator in the relationship between social support and academic achievement. This indicates that the positive impact of social support on academic performance is partly mediated through its influence on students' mental health. In other words, social support not only directly contributes to academic success but also indirectly affects it by promoting psychological well - being. When students experience higher levels of psychological well - being, they are better equipped to manage stress, maintain focus, and engage in effective learning behaviors. This finding is particularly important given the increasing awareness of mental health issues among students in higher education. It emphasizes the need for educational institutions to prioritize the mental health of their students and to provide appropriate resources and support to address any psychological challenges they may face.

These results align with previous studies that have also emphasized the role of social support and psychological well - being in academic success. For instance, Hu (2017) found that social support from various sources, such as family, friends, and academic advisors, positively influenced students' academic outcomes. Similarly, Fan and Liu (2024) highlighted the mediating role of psychological well - being in the relationship between social support and academic performance. Their research suggested that interventions aimed at enhancing social support and promoting psychological well - being could have a substantial impact on students' academic achievements.

In conclusion, the findings of this study highlight the interconnectedness of social support, psychological well - being, and academic achievement among postgraduate students. They suggest that creating supportive and nurturing educational environments, along with addressing students' mental health needs, can play a pivotal role in fostering academic success. Future research could further explore the specific mechanisms through which social support and psychological well - being influence academic performance, as well as investigate the potential moderating factors that may affect these relationships. Additionally,

practical interventions and policies aimed at enhancing social support and psychological well - being in educational settings should be developed and implemented to support the holistic development of postgraduate students.

5.Conclusion

This study provides empirical evidence on the significant impact of social support on academic achievement, mediated by psychological well - being. The findings highlight that social support not only directly contributes to academic success but also indirectly enhances it through improving students' psychological well - being. This dual - pathway effect underscores the multifaceted role of social support in postgraduate education.

Future research could explore other mediating factors that might influence the relationship between social support and academic achievement. For instance, the role of individual personality traits, such as resilience and self - efficacy, could be examined to provide a more comprehensive understanding of this relationship. Additionally, expanding the study to other regions with diverse educational contexts would help validate the generalizability of these findings and reveal any regional - specific dynamics at play.

Educational institutions should focus on providing robust social support systems and mental health resources to enhance academic achievement among postgraduate students. This includes fostering a supportive academic environment where students can easily access mentorship from supervisors, engage in collaborative learning with peers, and receive emotional support from family and friends. Moreover, institutions should prioritize the mental health of students by offering counseling services, stress - management workshops, and promoting a healthy work - life balance. By addressing both the social and psychological needs of postgraduate students, educational institutions can create an environment that nurtures academic excellence and personal well - being.

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