

## Family Support and Student Engagement: Understanding Gender and Locale Differences in Secondary Education

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### Abstract

This study investigates the interplay between family support and student engagement in Secondary education, focusing on cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. Utilizing a quantitative research design, the study involved a sample of 200 students and aimed to examine how family support influences student engagement while considering gender and locale as background variables. Utilizing the Student Engagement Scale by Kamat, Vasudha, and Fallerio (2013) and the Family Support Subscale by Dull and Godara (2016), the study analysed the correlation between these variables while considering the impact of gender and locale. Our findings aim to illuminate how family support contribute to academic success and inform strategies for enhancing student engagement through collaborative efforts between families and educational institutions

### Introduction:

In the educational landscape, social support plays a crucial role in fostering student engagement, a multifaceted construct encompassing cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. Research has consistently highlighted the significant influence of family support on students' academic experiences and outcomes (Kenny et al., 2003). Emotional support from families can enhance student engagement indirectly by facilitating organizational and instructional support (Virtanen et al., 2015). Furthermore, positive relationships between parents and children have been linked to academic success, highlighting the pivotal role families play in educational attainment (McNeal, 1999).

Family dynamics serve as critical predictors of both academic success and the risk of school dropout (Alexander et al., 2001; Gleason & Dynarski, 2002). Estell and Perdue (2013) noted that family support is particularly associated with students' behavioral involvement in school, whereas peer support correlates more strongly with emotional engagement. This suggests that while various support sources contribute to student engagement, family support remains a cornerstone of academic motivation and commitment.

Despite a tendency for secondary school students to seek peer support, family involvement continues to be essential throughout all educational stages (Spera, 2006). Empirical studies underscore the impact of family members who provide both academic and motivational support, as these contributions significantly enhance student performance (Dull & Godara, 2016). While much research has focused on university students, this study aims to extend these findings to the

younger students' context, asserting that family support also influences secondary students' engagement.

In this study, we explore that the family support relates to student engagement. By employing validated scales, we aim to clarify the relationships between external support, the degree of student involvement in the learning process. This investigation seeks to answer the critical question: How can families support foster greater student engagement and enjoyment in learning? This study focuses on government school students in Amritsar, aiming to uncover how family support correlates with student engagement and whether these relationships differ across gender and locale.

### Research Design

The present study employed a quantitative research design, using a cross-sectional approach to collect data from a sample of 200 senior secondary students from five government schools in Amritsar. The participants were selected from government schools in Amritsar through stratified random sampling to ensure representation of various demographic backgrounds particularly focusing on gender and locale with the following objectives:

- To study the correlation between family support and student engagement
- To study the significant difference in student engagement with respect to gender and locale.
- To study the significant difference in family support with respect to gender and locale

### Hypotheses

- There is a significant positive correlation between family support and student engagement with its three dimensions among senior secondary students.
- Female students will demonstrate higher levels of student engagement, and family support compared to male students.
- Students from urban locales will exhibit higher levels of student engagement and family support than those from rural locales.

### Instruments:

Student Engagement Scale by Kamat, Vasudha, and Fallerio (2013)

Family Support Subscale by Dull and Godara (2016),

**Analysis and Interpretation of Data:** The data has been analysed under the following headings

VARIABLES	N	Mean	Median	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
STUDENT ENGAGEMENT	200	36.03	36	5.203	0.5379	1.083
FAMILY SUPPORT	200	15.42	15	3.227	0.292	0.319

**Table-1.1: Description of variables' Mean, Median, SD, Skewness and Kurtosis**

Table 1.1 presents a comprehensive overview of the descriptive statistics for student engagement and family support among the sampled population of 200 students. The mean score for student engagement is 36.03, with a median of 36, indicating that students generally perceive themselves

as moderately engaged in their educational activities. The standard deviation (SD) of 5.203 reflects a moderate level of variability in engagement scores among students. The skewness value of 0.5379 suggests a slight positive skew, indicating that a portion of students may experience higher engagement levels. Additionally, the kurtosis value of 1.083 points to a moderately peaked distribution, suggesting that while most students cluster around the mean, there are some outliers with higher engagement levels. For family support, the mean score is 15.42, with a median of 15, indicating that students perceive their family support to be at a moderate level. The SD of 3.227 suggests some variability in how support is perceived among students, although it is less pronounced than in the engagement scores. The skewness of 0.292 indicates a slight positive skew, showing a tendency towards higher family support perceptions among some students. The kurtosis value of 0.319 suggests a relatively flat distribution, indicating that perceptions of family support are more evenly spread out across the range of scores.

**H<sub>01</sub> There is a significant positive correlation between family support and student engagement with its three dimensions among senior secondary students.**

		AFFECTIV E	BEHAVIOURA L	COGNITIV E	STUDEN T ENGAGE MENT	FAMILY SUPPORT
AFFECTIVE	Pearson' s r	—				
	P value	—				
BEHAVIOURA L	Pearson' s r	-0.085	—			
	p-value	0.229	—			
COGNITIVE	Pearson' s r	0.114	0.133	—		
	p-value	0.106	0.06	—		
STUDENT ENGAGEMENT	Pearson' s r	0.596	0.535	0.691	—	
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	—	
FAMILY SUPPORT	Pearson' s r	0.563	0.691	0.681	0.612	—
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	—

Note. \*  $p < .05$     \*\*  $p < .01$     \*\*\*  $p < .001$

**TABLE: 1.2: Correlation matrixes**

The correlation analysis highlights significant relationships between the dimensions of student engagement and family support. Affective engagement shows a strong positive correlation with overall student engagement (Pearson's  $r = 0.596$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating that higher emotional engagement is closely linked to greater overall student involvement. Cognitive engagement correlates even more strongly with student engagement ( $r = 0.690$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), suggesting that students who are cognitively engaged are likely to experience higher levels of overall

engagement. Behavioral engagement also has a positive correlation with student engagement ( $r = 0.535$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), reinforcing the idea that active participation is vital for enhancing engagement. Further, family support exhibits a positive correlation with all forms of engagement: affective ( $r = 0.563$ ), behavioral ( $r = 0.691$ ), cognitive ( $r = 0.681$ ), and overall student engagement ( $r = 0.612$ ), all with  $p$ -values less than 0.001. This indicates that as family support increases, so does engagement across these dimensions, suggesting that supportive family environments may play a critical role in fostering student engagement. Overall, these findings underscore the importance of emotional and cognitive dimensions in student engagement while highlighting the beneficial influence of family support on these areas.

**H0<sub>2</sub> Female students will demonstrate higher levels of student engagement, and family support compared to male students.**

	Group	N	Mean	Median	SD	SE	Mean difference	SE difference	p
<b>STUDENT ENGAGEMENT</b>	M	83	34.4	34	4.7	0.516	-2.81104	0.721	< .001
	F	117	37.2	37	5.25	0.485			
<b>FAMILY SUPPORT</b>	M	83	15.4	15	3.27	0.359	-0.0795	0.464	0.864
	F	117	15.5	15	3.21	0.297			

**Table: 1.3: Gender Differences**

Table 1.3 depicts that, female students exhibited significantly higher levels of overall student engagement, with a mean score of 37.2 compared to males, who scored an average of 34.4 ( $p < 0.001$ ). So, the hypothesis **Female students will demonstrate higher levels of student engagement compared to male students** is accepted. This substantial difference underscores the tendency for female students to be more actively involved in their educational experiences, which aligns with existing literature that suggests females often demonstrate higher levels of motivation and engagement in academic settings.

In terms of family support, however, the findings indicate no significant differences between male and female students. The mean family support scores for males (15.4) and females (15.5) were nearly identical, with a  $p$ -value of 0.864, suggesting that both genders perceive family support similarly. So, these results indicate that the hypotheses, **Female students will demonstrate higher levels of family support compared to male students, is rejected**. This uniformity in family support levels indicates that while female students may be more engaged academically, the level of familial backing they receive does not significantly differ from that of their male counterparts.

**HO<sub>3</sub> Students from urban locales will exhibit higher levels of student engagement and family support than those from rural locales.**

	Group	N	Mean	Median	SD	SE	Mean difference	SE difference	p
<b>STUDENT</b>	1	93	35.9	36	5.4	0.56	-0.237	0.739	0.749

ENGAGEMENT									
	2	107	36.1	36	5.05	0.488			
<b>FAMILY SUPPORT</b>	1	93	15.3	15	2.92	0.302	-0.3027	0.458	0.51
	2	107	15.6	15	3.48	0.337			

**Table: 1.4: locale (rural and urban student) Differences**

In terms of student engagement, the mean scores for rural students (35.9) and urban students (36.1) were nearly identical, resulting in a negligible mean difference of -0.237 ( $p = 0.749$ ). This indicates no significant difference in engagement levels between the two groups, suggesting that both urban and rural students are similarly involved in their educational experiences. Such findings are noteworthy as they imply that factors contributing to engagement may be more uniform across different locales than previously assumed.

Regarding family support, the scores also reflected a similar trend, with rural students averaging 15.3 and urban students at 15.6 ( $p = 0.51$ ). Again, the lack of a significant difference suggests that family support is perceived similarly by students in both settings. This finding challenges the notion that urban locales inherently provide greater family support, emphasizing that rural families may also offer substantial support systems for their children.

#### Discussion:

The findings of this study underscore the significant role of family support in enhancing student engagement among secondary school students, with implications for educational practice. Females consistently outperformed males, suggesting that emotional and cognitive support systems are more effectively utilized or recognized by female students. This gap indicates a potential area for intervention, encouraging educational stakeholders to devise strategies that better engage male students emotionally and cognitively. In terms of locale, while rural and urban students exhibited similar levels of overall engagement. Furthermore, the data indicates a strong correlation between family support and all dimensions of student engagement, reinforcing the necessity of fostering supportive family environments to enhance academic outcomes. By addressing these dynamics, educational institutions can develop more holistic approaches that integrate family involvement and gender-sensitive strategies, ultimately contributing to improved student engagement and academic success.

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