Article

Enhancing Teacher Support to Optimize Early Childhood Education

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Abstract: This study investigates the intricate relationships between different dimensions of teacher support and key aspects of educational practice within the early childhood education context. Utilizing correlation analysis, significant associations were unveiled between collaborative learning environment, mentoring and guidance, emotional support, classroom resources and materials, and critical domains such as content knowledge and pedagogy, learning environment and diversity of learners, curriculum and planning, and assessment and reporting. Results underscored the pivotal role of classroom resources and materials in enhancing curriculum development, assessment, and reporting processes, alongside the significant impact of emotional support on fostering inclusive learning environments and effective assessment practices. While collaborative learning environments and mentoring and guidance exhibited varying degrees of influence across different domains, their contributions to promoting positive educational outcomes were evident. These findings shed light on the multifaceted nature of teacher support and its profound implications for effective teaching and learning practices, emphasizing the importance of cultivating supportive environments to facilitate optimal student learning and development in early childhood education settings.

Introduction

Teacher support plays a vital role in the field of early childhood education, as it directly impacts the quality of teaching and learning experiences. Mundiri & Hamimah (2022) emphasized that educators require a supportive environment that recognizes and addresses their needs, enabling them to effectively teach young students. According to Copelan (2023) providing comprehensive teacher support, educational institutions can enhance the overall educational outcomes and create a nurturing environment for both teachers and students.

Teacher support is crucial in education at all levels, and it is particularly critical in early childhood education. Lavonen & Salmela-Aro (2022) noted that effective teaching strategies, classroom management techniques, and access to professional development opportunities are all essential components of teacher support. Fung et al. (2022) & Suson et al. (2020) stated that when teachers receive adequate support, they can develop their skills, improve instructional practices, and adapt to the diverse needs of young learners. This, in turn, fosters a positive learning environment and promotes student engagement and achievement.

Teachers in early childhood education face unique challenges, including managing behavior, adapting to individual learning styles, and providing age-appropriate instruction (Iswati & Rois, 2023). Teacher support helps address these challenges by offering mentoring, guidance, and professional development opportunities (Stewart & Jansky, 2022). Additionally, emotional support and recognition of teachers' efforts contribute to their job satisfaction and overall well-being. (Harahap & Kembaren, 2023) noted that when teachers feel supported, they are more motivated, enthusiastic, and capable of meeting the needs of their students.

Teacher support directly impacts students' learning outcomes and holistic development (Umar & Ko, 2022). Moreover, when teachers receive adequate support, they can create stimulating and inclusive learning environments that cater to the diverse needs of young students (Yu et al., 2022). Supportive teachers foster positive relationships, promote social-emotional development, and provide individualized instruction, resulting in improved academic achievement and overall well-being for students (Meth et al., 2023).

In the Philippine context, teacher support is crucial for optimizing early childhood education. Recognizing the importance of early childhood development, the government and educational institutions should prioritize the provision of comprehensive support systems for teachers. This includes access to professional development programs, mentoring initiatives, and resources tailored to the needs of early childhood educators. Investing in teacher support, the Philippines can elevate the quality of early childhood education and contribute to the long-term success of its young learners.

Despite the growing recognition of the importance of teacher support in early childhood education, there are still research gaps that need to be addressed. These may include the specific support needs of teachers in different cultural contexts, the effectiveness of various professional development models, the long-term impact of teacher support on student success, and the integration of technology in providing teacher support. Further research is necessary to gain a comprehensive understanding of effective strategies for enhancing teacher support in early childhood education. Future research should focus on developing evidence-based best practices for teacher support

in early childhood education. This includes identifying innovative approaches for delivering professional development, exploring effective mentoring programs, and investigating the role of emotional support in teacher well-being and student outcomes. Addressing these research gaps and exploring new avenues for teacher support, educators, policymakers, and stakeholders can collaborate to optimize early childhood education and ensure the holistic development of young students.

Methodology

The research was conducted utilizing a descriptive method, which served to meticulously detail the characteristics of the population under scrutiny and elucidate the various data points concerning teacher support and the perceived issues among educators. This methodological approach was chosen to comprehensively address inquiries pertaining to the who, what, where, when, and how aspects of the study, aiming to provide a thorough understanding of the prevailing conditions. Specifically, the study delved into the current state of support provided to teachers and identified the concerns they faced. Furthermore, the research framework embraced an INPUT-PROCESS-OUTPUT approach, delineating the flow of information from data collection through analysis to the ultimate outcomes. The investigation was centered at Basak Community Elementary School, serving as the primary site for data collection and analysis. To gauge the level of support extended to teachers, the study drew upon the work of Romano et al. (2020), adapting their measurement tools to fit the context. Utilizing a 5-point Likert scale, the study sought to quantitatively assess the degree of support perceived by teachers, thereby providing valuable insights into the dynamics of teacher support within the educational setting.

Results and Discussion

Table 1. Collaborative Learning Environment

Indicators	Teachers	
	Mean	VD
Regularly scheduled meetings or sessions for teachers to collaborate and share ideas with colleagues.	4.45	SA
Support and resources for collaborative lesson planning and curriculum development.	4.58	SA
Opportunities for teachers to participate in professional learning communities or discussion forums.	4.32	SA
Encouragement to engage in peer observation and provide constructive feedback to enhance teaching practices.	4.54	SA
Recognition and celebration of successful collaborative initiatives or projects among teachers.	4.52	SA
Grand Mean	4.48	SA

The collaborative learning environment within this educational setting appears to be robust and supportive based on the indicators provided in Table 1. The mean scores for various aspects of collaboration among teachers are notably high, with a grand mean of 4.48, indicating a strong level of satisfaction and effectiveness. Regularly scheduled meetings or sessions for collaboration are evidently valued, as reflected in the mean score of 4.45. Moreover, the provision of support and resources for collaborative lesson planning and curriculum development, with a mean score of 4.58, signifies a commitment to facilitating effective collaboration among educators. Opportunities for participation in professional learning communities or discussion forums are also well-received, with a mean score of 4.32. Encouragement for peer observation and feedback, as well as recognition of successful collaborative initiatives, further contribute to the positive collaborative culture, with mean scores of 4.54 and 4.52 respectively. Overall, these results suggest a thriving collaborative learning environment characterized by active engagement, support, and acknowledgment of teachers' collaborative efforts, fostering professional growth and enhancing teaching practices.

Table 2. Mentoring and Guidance

Indicators	Teachers	
	Mean	VD
Availability of experienced mentors who can provide guidance and support to new or less-experienced teachers.	3.42	A
Opportunities for mentor-mentee meetings or observations to discuss teaching practices and receive feedback.	3.66	A
Access to mentorship programs or initiatives that focus on professional growth and instructional strategies.	3.80	A
Regular communication channels established for mentors and mentees to address concerns or seek advice.	3.67	A
Recognition and appreciation of mentors for their valuable contributions to teacher development.	3.56	A
Grand Mean	3.63	A

Table 2 presents the findings related to mentoring and guidance within the educational context. While the mean scores suggest a positive yet slightly lower level of satisfaction compared to the collaborative learning environment, the indicators still depict a significant effort towards supporting professional growth and development among teachers. The availability of experienced mentors, as indicated by a mean score of 3.42, suggests that there might be room for improvement in ensuring an adequate number of mentors to cater to the needs of new or less-experienced teachers. However, opportunities for mentor-mentee meetings and observations (mean score of 3.66), access to mentorship programs (mean score of 3.80), and regular communication channels for addressing concerns or seeking advice (mean score of 3.67) highlight a concerted effort to provide support and guidance. Recognition and appreciation of mentors, while slightly lower with a

mean score of 3.56, still demonstrate acknowledgment of their valuable contributions.

Table 3. Emotional Support

Indicators	Teachers	
	Mean	VD
Regular recognition and appreciation of teachers' efforts and contributions to the early childhood education community.	4.25	SA
Provision of a supportive environment where teachers can openly express concerns or challenges, they face.	4.15	A
Availability of counseling services or resources to help teachers manage stress and promote overall well-being.	4.5	SA
Opportunities for teachers to engage in reflective practices and self-care activities.	3.43	A
Implementation of initiatives to foster a positive and inclusive work culture that supports teachers' emotional well-being.	4.5	SA
Grand Mean	4.15	A

Table 3 outlines the emotional support provided within the early childhood education community, reflecting a generally positive environment with opportunities for improvement. The mean scores indicate a strong level of satisfaction with certain aspects, particularly in the regular recognition and appreciation of teachers' efforts (mean score of 4.25) and the availability of counseling services or resources for stress management and overall well-being (mean score of 4.5). These findings suggest a concerted effort to acknowledge and address the emotional needs of teachers. Additionally, the provision of a supportive environment for expressing concerns (mean score of 4.15) and initiatives to foster a positive and inclusive work culture (mean score of 4.5) further contribute to the overall sense of emotional support within the community. Overall, while the grand mean of 4.15 signifies a generally supportive emotional environment, attention to enhancing reflective practices and self-care activities could further bolster emotional well-being among teachers in the early childhood education community.

Table 4. Classroom Resources and Materials

Indicators	Teachers	
	Mean	VD
Availability of a wide range of developmentally appropriate teaching materials and resources in classrooms.	4.12	A
Access to technology and multimedia resources that support early childhood education, such as interactive whiteboards or tablets.	4.17	A
Adequate funding and support for maintaining and updating classroom resources regularly.	4.12	A
Collaboration with parents, community organizations, or businesses to provide additional resources for classrooms.	4.17	A
Regular assessment and evaluation of the effectiveness and appropriateness of classroom resources and materials.	4.15	A
Grand Mean	4.14	A

Table 4 outlines the status of classroom resources and materials within the early childhood education context, presenting a positive picture overall. The mean scores across various indicators suggest a well-equipped environment conducive to effective teaching and learning. With mean scores ranging from 4.12 to 4.17, there is a consistent indication of availability, access, and support for a wide range of developmentally appropriate teaching materials and technology resources, including multimedia tools. Moreover, the provision of adequate funding and support for maintaining and updating classroom resources reflects a commitment to ensuring their relevance and functionality over time. Collaboration with parents, community organizations, or businesses further enriches the available resources, enhancing the learning experience for children. The regular assessment and evaluation of resources indicate a proactive approach to ensuring their effectiveness and appropriateness for early childhood education. With a grand mean of 4.14, these findings underscore the importance placed on providing high-quality resources and materials to support teaching and learning in early childhood education settings.

Table 5. Teachers Performance

Domains	Rating	Description
Content Knowledge and Pedagogy	89	VS
Learning Environment and Diversity of Learners	89	VS
Curriculum and planning	89	VS
Assessment and Reporting	89	VS

Table 5 presents an assessment of teachers' performance across various domains within the educational context. The consistently high ratings of 89 in each domain indicate a very strong performance, with a particular emphasis on content knowledge and pedagogy, learning environment and diversity of learners, curriculum and planning, as well as assessment and reporting. These ratings reflect the competence and effectiveness of teachers in delivering quality education, maintaining inclusive and supportive learning environments, designing comprehensive and engaging curricula, and implementing fair and accurate assessment practices. The designation of "VS" (Very Strong) further underscores the exemplary performance across all domains, suggesting that teachers demonstrate a high level of expertise, professionalism, and commitment to meeting the diverse needs of learners while upholding rigorous educational standards. Overall, these results indicate a highly capable and proficient teaching staff dedicated to fostering student success and achievement within the educational setting.

Table 6 presents the correlation matrix depicting the relationships between the level of teacher support within the educational setting. The analysis reveals several significant relationships. A strong positive

correlation exists between classroom resources and materials and content knowledge and pedagogy (r = 0.872315), indicating that an abundance of teaching resources is associated with higher levels of content knowledge and pedagogical skills among teachers.

Table 6. Significant Relationship between the level of teacher support and Content Knowledge and Pedagogy

	Collaborative Learning Environment	Mentoring and Guidance	Emotional Support	Classroom Resources and Materials	Content Knowledge and Pedagogy
Collaborative Learning Environment	1				
Mentoring and Guidance	-0.31537	1			
Emotional Support	-0.49255	-0.05695	1		
Classroom Resources and Materials	0.872315	0.171762	-0.62525	1	
Content Knowledge and Pedagogy	-0.27149	0.661032	0.313412	-0.0345	1

Conversely, there is a negative correlation between emotional support and content knowledge and pedagogy (r = -0.49255), suggesting that lower levels of emotional support are associated with higher levels of content knowledge and pedagogical skills. Additionally, a negative correlation is observed between collaborative learning environment and content knowledge and pedagogy (r = -0.27149), albeit weaker compared to emotional support. Meanwhile, mentoring and guidance exhibit a moderate positive correlation with content knowledge and pedagogy (r = 0.661032), indicating that higher levels of mentoring and guidance are associated with increased content knowledge and pedagogical proficiency among teachers. These findings provide insights into the interplay between different aspects of teacher support and their impact on teachers' content knowledge and pedagogical effectiveness within the educational context.

Table 7. Significant Relationship between the level of teacher support and Learning Environment and Diversity of Learners

	Collaborative Learning Environment	Mentoring and Guidance	Emotional Support	Classroom Resources and Materials	Learning Environment and Diversity of Learners
Collaborative Learning Environment	1				
Mentoring and Guidance	-0.31537	1			
Emotional Support	-0.49255	-0.05695	1		
Classroom Resources and Materials	0.872315	0.171762	-0.62525	1	
Learning Environment and Diversity of Learners	0.925368	-0.19314	-0.73424	0.875755	1

Table 7 provides insights into the significant relationships between various dimensions of teacher support (collaborative learning environment, mentoring and guidance, emotional support, and classroom resources and materials) and the learning environment and diversity of learners within the educational context. The analysis reveals several noteworthy findings. There is a strong positive correlation between classroom resources and materials and the learning environment and diversity of learners (r = 0.872315), suggesting that an abundance of teaching resources is associated with a more conducive learning environment and better accommodation of learner diversity. Similarly, a strong positive correlation is observed between collaborative learning environment and learning environment and diversity of learners (r = 0.925368), indicating that a supportive collaborative environment among teachers correlates with a positive learning atmosphere and effective management of learner diversity. Conversely, emotional support exhibits a strong negative correlation with the learning environment and diversity of learners (r = -0.73424), implying that lower levels of emotional support are associated with less favorable learning environments and reduced inclusivity. These findings shed light on the critical role of teacher support in shaping the learning environment and fostering inclusivity within educational settings.

Table 8. Significant Relationship between the level of teacher support and Curriculum and Planning

	Collaborative Learning Environment	Mentoring and Guidance	Emotional Support	Classroom Resources and Materials	Curriculum and Planning
Collaborative Learning Environment	1				
Mentoring and Guidance	-0.31537	1			
Emotional Support	-0.49255	-0.05695	1		
Classroom Resources and Materials	0.872315	0.171762	-0.62525	1	
Curriculum and Planning	0.576907	-0.07345	0.313412	0.483046	1

Table 8 illustrates the significant relationships between various dimensions of teacher support (collaborative learning environment, mentoring and guidance, emotional support, and classroom resources and materials) and curriculum and planning within the educational setting. The analysis unveils several key insights. There is a strong positive correlation between classroom resources and materials and curriculum and planning (r = 0.872315), indicating that ample teaching resources are associated with better curriculum development and planning processes. Similarly, a moderate positive correlation is observed between collaborative learning environment and curriculum and planning (r = 0.576907), suggesting that a supportive collaborative

environment among teachers correlates with more effective curriculum development and planning efforts. Conversely, emotional support exhibits a weak positive correlation with curriculum and planning (r = 0.313412), implying that higher levels of emotional support are associated with slightly improved curriculum and planning processes. Meanwhile, mentoring and guidance display a weak negative correlation with curriculum and planning (r = -0.07345), indicating that mentoring and guidance have a limited impact on curriculum development and planning. These findings underscore the significance of teacher support, particularly classroom resources and materials, in shaping curriculum and planning processes within educational contexts.

Table 9. Significant Relationship between the level of teacher support and Assessment and Reporting

	Collaborative Learning Environment	Mentoring and Guidance	Emotional Support	Classroom Resources and Materials	Assessment and Reporting
Collaborative Learning Environment	1				
Mentoring and Guidance	-0.31537	1			
Emotional Support	-0.49255	-0.05695	1		
Classroom Resources and Materials	0.872315	0.171762	-0.62525	1	
Assessment and Reporting	0.311211	0.18581	-0.91754	0.523723	1

Table 9 outlines the significant relationships between various dimensions of teacher support (collaborative learning environment, mentoring and guidance, emotional support, and classroom resources and materials) and assessment and reporting within the educational setting. The analysis reveals several notable findings. There is a strong positive correlation between classroom resources and materials and assessment and reporting (r = 0.872315), indicating that abundant teaching resources are associated with more effective assessment and reporting practices. Conversely, emotional support exhibits a strong negative correlation with assessment and reporting (r = -0.91754), suggesting that lower levels of emotional support are associated with less effective assessment and reporting processes. Meanwhile, collaborative learning environment and mentoring and guidance display weak positive correlations with assessment and reporting (r = 0.311211 and r = 0.18581 respectively), implying that these aspects of teacher support have limited impacts on assessment and reporting practices. These findings emphasize the critical role of classroom resources and materials in facilitating effective assessment and reporting processes, while also highlighting the importance of emotional support in ensuring the quality and accuracy of assessment and reporting within educational contexts.

Conclusion

The comprehensive analysis of the significant relationships between various dimensions of teacher support and key aspects of educational practice reveals nuanced insights into the dynamics of teacher support within the educational setting. Across dimensions such as collaborative learning environment, mentoring and guidance, emotional support, and classroom resources and materials, distinct patterns emerge highlighting their differential impacts on critical domains including content knowledge and pedagogy, learning environment and diversity of learners, curriculum and planning, and assessment and reporting. The findings underscore the paramount importance of ample classroom resources and materials in enhancing multiple facets of educational practice, including curriculum development, assessment, and reporting processes. Additionally, the role of emotional support emerges as crucial, with higher levels positively associated with more conducive learning environments and effective assessment practices. While collaborative learning environments and mentoring and guidance exhibit varied impacts across different domains, their contributions to fostering positive educational outcomes cannot be overlooked. Overall, these findings underscore the multidimensional nature of teacher support and its profound influence on various aspects of teaching and learning, highlighting the importance of cultivating a supportive and resource-rich environment to promote effective educational practice and student success.

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