

ALS Learners' Social Support and Self-Esteem

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ABSTRACT: This study investigated the levels of social support based on family, peer, and community supports and self-esteem among ALS learners. It also identified the dimensions of the social supports best influence the respondents' self-esteem. Employing correlational and causal research designs, a modified questionnaire was conducted to 124 ALS learners who were selected through simple random sampling with the aid of a Raosoft calculator. Data gathered were interpreted and analyzed with the aid of the statistical tools like mean, standard deviation, Pearson product moment correlation coefficient, simple and multiple linear regression. Results revealed that ALS learners' social support is strong. Their self-esteem is high. There is a strong positive correlation between social support and ALS learners' self-esteem. All dimensions of social support like family, peer and community supports significantly influence ALS learners' self-esteem. Thus, ALS implementers may act as the avenue for social support to ALS learners in order to sustain their self-esteem since, social supports boosts ALS learners' self-esteem.

KEYWORDS: ALS learners, community, family, peer, self-esteem, social support

I. INTRODUCTION

A weapon that can never be taken away from a person is education. Given this idea, humans strive to attain at least any of the education systems. The Alternative Learning System (ALS) in the country is a flexible, modular non-formal education program for elementary and high school dropouts, out-of-school youth, non-readers, working adults, and senior citizens. The Alternative Learning System is integrated in the Philippine education system. It provides an alternative to traditional classroom-based instruction. Learners in the ALS program may select their schedules to their preferences and availability. ALS also targets young people and adults who need basic functional literacy skills, knowledge, and values. These individuals are often found in remote communities with limited or no access to formal schools (Lompon, 2020).

Self-esteem, a fundamental component of psychological well-being, is influenced by various factors, including social interactions and perceptions of self-worth. The omnipresent nature of social support introduces new dynamics to these interactions, offering both opportunities and challenges. On one hand, social support can enhance self-esteem by fostering connections, enabling self-expression, and providing access to supportive communities. Constant exposure to idealized portrayals of others' lives can create unrealistic expectations and comparisons, making individuals feel inadequate or less accomplished (Mehra et al., 2021).

The Governance Act for Basic Education, also known as Republic Act 9155, mandates the establishment of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) to offer basic education to out-of-school children, youth, and adults. The Department of Education (DepEd) spearheads the "second chance" program aimed at enhancing the human capital of out-of-school youth and adults through the implementation of the Alternative Learning System (ALS). The educational system in the Philippines is fast changing to meet the different requirements of students, especially in underprivileged areas. In this environment, the Alternative Learning System (ALS) was developed as a critical initiative for providing flexible and accessible educational possibilities to those who may not benefit from standard schooling approaches. Bacal and Ormilla (2021) claimed that the Alternative Learning System (ALS) main purpose is to eradicate illiteracy among out of school children, youths and adults who are school dropouts and to those who are deprived of education in order to complete elementary and secondary education outside the formal school system.

Additionally, there is diverse array of individuals seeking a fresh start or a chance to catch up on their education. Many of them had failed or struggled in traditional schools, often due to various reasons such as bullying, lack of interest, or personal

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circumstances, low support from families that made it difficult for them to attend regular classes as they feel low on their self-esteem. Despite these challenges, they chose to take a different path and join Alternative Learning System (Tura, 2022).

Some were forced to drop out of school due to financial constraints, others were dealing with health issues or family crises that made it impossible to attend regular classes. Many had lost interest in formal education and saw no relevance between what they were learning in school and their future goals. Others had been failed or expelled from traditional schools, leaving them feeling ashamed and unmotivated (Salait, 2022).

Thus, this study aimed to determine if social support can influence learners' self-esteem in the locality. The researcher has minimally come across a study similar to the presently undertaken at this target locality. It was in this context, that the researcher has conducted the study to evaluate the social support acquired by the learners. The researchers further wanted to provide data and bases that would help school administrators and even parents in making sure that ALS learners receive the attention and support they need as they try to build their future. Thus, there was an urgency to conduct the study.

This study was anchored on the Sociocultural theory that came out of the work of psychologist Lev Vygotsky. According to Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, learning occurs through social interaction and guidance from more knowledgeable individuals. A recent study by Shaddad and Jember (2024) highlighted that collaborative and feedback-supported learning environments positively influenced learners' engagement and self-esteem, supporting the idea that social support contributes to personal development. In this regard, the child's immediate environment and family members form a crucial social atmosphere for the child's growth and development. Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory complements Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory by emphasizing that learners' development is shaped by interactions within their social environment, such as family, peers, and school contexts (Tong & An, 2024). Bronfenbrenner believed that learners' diverse development cannot be understood without considering the learners' more significant socio-cultural factors. He established four layers of environmental impacts on children within the ecological theory of development: Microsystems (family, schools, peers, and community), Mesosystems (many Microsystems acting together), Exosystems (the larger environment), and Macrosystems (education, religion, social system). Society's perceptions regarding children development influence raising children's practices and probably reflect the unique outcomes recognized in society at the exosystem stage. Catyong et al. (2023) identified Middle childhood development is concerned about social-emotional development, school experiences, social connectedness, physical health and wellness, and after school time use.

Social ties and social support are generally recognized as essential for psychological health and wellbeing. Several types of social support all represent various aspects of the construct. It is believed that belief in social experiences has aided in fulfilling emotional or instrumental needs, including motivation to adopt healthily and reduce risky behaviors; feelings of being understood; assessment of potentially stressful events as less threatening; enhanced sense of control or mastery; increased self-esteem; use of active coping strategies; and the impact of social influence and social comparison (Calabit, 2022).

II. METHODOLOGY

This research utilized descriptive correlational and causal research designs. Correlational research aims to evaluate connections between multiple variables, enabling the testing of anticipated relationships and predictions without inferring causation (Walters, 2020). In the context of investigating the substantial relationship between the social support and self-esteem among ALS learners, this study employed a descriptive correlational. Through correlational research, the aim was to assess the connections between the two variables, facilitating the examination of expected relationships and predictions without implying causation. This design was allowed for the identification of potential associations between these variables (Steiner & Kim, 2024).

Also, causal research design identified the extent and nature of cause-and-effect relationship between social support and self-esteem among ALS learners. Thus, causal research design highlighted the significance of classroom environment in influencing learning outcomes by offering greater insights about which of the social supports influence the self-esteem among ALS learners.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Problem 1. What is the ALS learners' level of social support based on:

- 1.1 family;
- 1.2 peer; and
- 1.3 community?

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Table 1. Summary of ALS Learners' Social Support

Dimensions	Mean	SD	Qualitative Description
Family	3.74	0.81	High
Peer	3.76	0.70	High
Community	3.96	0.64	High
Overall	3.82	0.72	High

Note: 4.21 – 5.00 Very Strong; 3.41 – 4.20 Strong; 2.61 – 3.40 Moderately Strong; 1.81 – 2.60 Weak; 1.00 – 1.80 Very Weak

Table 1 showcases the Summary of Learners' Social Support. It registered an overall Mean of 3.82 with SD=0.72, qualitatively described as Strong. The data imply that the learners feel that the support they received from family, peer and the community is enough for them to be inspired and motivated in continuing their studies. They feel that they are given importance and opportunity to finish their studies. They feel that they are not alone, so whatever challenges they will encounter they have somebody to guide and assist them. According to Catyong et al. (2023), the social support that learners get in their studies and in things that they do make them feel secure and confident. It makes them feel stronger that even if they face failure they do not easily give up. Social support from various sector is essential for the learners as they need validation that they are doing the right thing for themselves and their family.

In the same table, the variable, Community, is rated the highest with the Mean of 3.96 with SD=0.64, qualitatively described as Strong. The data imply that the community is showing the biggest support for the ALS learners. This is important as it will make the learners feel that they are love and well taken cared of by people who are not really related to them who show compassion. It makes them feel that they are not negatively judged by the people around them. According to Lopez-Cobar (2022), the rule of the community is important for the learners. At home, the learners are well protected by their parents and family. They also need to feel it when they are outside of their houses. The community is the field where the real battle and struggles that need to be independently face is present. But when the community is safe and supportive to the learners, they become at ease and at peace that they become comfortable and strong to face the challenges.

Meanwhile, the variable, Family, is rated the lowest with the Mean of 3.74 with SD=0.81, qualitatively described as Strong. The data imply that the family members are also providing social support to the learners. Although it is considered the lowest among the three dimensions, it is still strong. Its presence is felt as it is strong. Family members do not get easily give up when one made mistake. The more they provide their full support the moment that individual decides to go back to school and finish their studies. According to UNESCO (2023) family possesses the strongest bonds that cannot be easily dismantled. Parents always hope that their children will find its way back and bounce back whenever they make wrong decisions. They always support their children specially when they see that it is for the betterment of their lives.

Problem 2. What is the ALS learners' level of self-esteem?

Table 2 indicates the ALS Learners' Self-esteem. The data present that ALS learners possess a High level of Self-esteem, reflected by an overall Mean of 3.86 with SD=0.77. This supplies that the respondents generally maintain a positive self-concept and a healthy sense of personal worth despite the unique challenges associated with non-traditional learning pathways. The data further indicate that the ALS learners have the belief and confidence on themselves that they can do it. This is important because with high level of positive outlook towards their goals and objectives, they will always find ways to survive and finish it. According to Lim et al. (2021), self-esteem is important as it helps the learners to be at ease in the activities that they do. They are not afraid to try and make the necessary moves because they know to themselves that they can fulfill it. They are confident that when they make the wrong moves, they can always make ways to return and be on track.

Table 2. ALS Learners' Self Esteem

Indicators	Mean	SD	Qualitative Description
1. I like to share updates of myself to remember special times in my life.	3.99	0.78	High
2. Interacting with friends and keep up with their lives makes me happy.	3.81	0.58	High
3. I find myself and my life same to others which occasionally makes me feel worthy.	3.76	0.78	High
4. Getting comments and praises makes me feel proud.	3.74	0.67	High
5. Seeing others succeed inspires me to work harder and accomplish more.	4.19	0.76	High
6. I can speak my ideas to my classmates without hesitations.	3.72	0.79	High

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7. I can assist my classmates in performing our tasks.	3.65	0.92	High
8. I am okay to be in different groups during group activities.	3.81	0.67	High
9. When people appreciate the things that I do, I feel more confident about who I am.	3.98	0.89	High
10. I can manage the pressures from my studies.	3.95	0.88	High
Overall	3.86	0.77	High
Note: 4.21 – 5.00 Very High; 3.41 – 4.20: High; 2.61 – 3.40 Moderate; 1.81 – 2.60 Low; 1.00 – 1.80 Very Low			

With the highest Mean of 4.19 with SD=0.76, with the qualitative description of High, indicator 5, *Seeing others succeed inspires me to work harder and accomplish more*, shows that learners possess a “growth mindset” viewing the success of peers as a motivator rather than a threat to their own self-worth. The learners believed that if others were able to do it and succeed, they too can make it happen. They do not care if they are a bit behind by others as what matters to them the most is the opportunity to finish their studies.

Lompon (2020) argued that individuals who believe intelligence can be developed see others' success as an inspiration rather than a reflection of their own failure. Also, external validation remains a key driver for internal confidence as evidenced in the it suggested that self-esteem acts as an internal driver of social acceptance. The reliance on appreciation and sharing updates indicates that these learners use social feedback to regulate their internal confidence.

Meanwhile, indicator 7, *I can assist my classmates in performing our tasks*, was rated the lowest with the Mean of 3.65 with SD=0.92, with the qualitative description of High. The data imply that the learners showed the capacity to help and assist their peers that are having difficulties in their studies. They feel the need to help each other as they want that all of them will succeed in their endeavors. They want that they will all achieve their goals and objectives in their studies. According to Tipon et al. (2021) the collaborative efforts of the learners among themselves is advantageous. It promotes camaraderie and shared vision and mission. It makes them feel that they have a support system to rely on aside from their family. It also helps them to easily bond with each other as they are on the same situations.

Problem 3. Is there a significant relationship between the ALS learners' social support and self-esteem?

Table 3 illustrates the Test of Correlation Between Social Support and Self-Esteem. Overall correlation revealed a computed r-value of 0.832 with the computed p-value of 0.001. The computed p-value is less than the p-critical value at 0.05 level of significance. The data imply that strong positive correlation was registered between social support and the learners' self-esteem. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. Social support is connected to the students' self-esteem. This is because the support that learners get boosts their feelings and confidence towards their studies and outlook in life. They became confident and has the strength to face challenges and failures in life. According to Caingoy (2021) when the students receive supports from various sector, they feel safe, love and supported. It also helps them feel positive towards their life and their goals and objectives. It makes them realized that they are not alone in their battles.

Table 3. Test of Correlation Between Social Support and Self-Esteem

Dimensions	r-value	p-value	Level of Correlation	Description	Interpretation
Family	0.606	0.001	Moderate Positive Correlation	Reject Ho1	Significant
Peer	0.781	0.001	Strong Positive Correlation	Reject Ho1	Significant
Community	0.815	0.001	Strong Positive Correlation	Reject Ho1	Significant
Overall	0.832	0.001	Strong Positive Correlation	Reject Ho1	Significant
Note:	1.00 Perfect Positive Correlation		0.70 – 0.99	Strong Positive Correlation	
	0.50 – 0.69 Moderate Positive Correlation		0.10 – 0.49	Weak Positive Correlation	
	0.00 – 0.09 No Positive Correlation		<i>Significant when computed p-value <0.05.</i>		

Family revealed a computed r-value of 0.606 with the computed p-value of 0.001. The computed p-value is less than the p-critical value at 0.05 level of significance. The data imply that moderate positive correlation is registered between social support and the learners' self-esteem when family support is taken into account. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. Family support is linked with the learners' self-esteem. It makes them feel that the persons they look up to are with them in their journey. Thus, it inspires them to do and perform better because they want them to feel that their sacrifices are all worth it. According to Lloyd-

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Fox et al. (2024) the presence and support of the parents and family to the learners' study help them to feel more confident and stronger. It provides them with the necessary strength to continue no matter what. It motivates them to achieve something not just for themselves but for them as well.

Peer revealed a computed r-value of 0.781 with the computed p-value of 0.001. The computed p-value is less than the p-critical value at 0.05 level of significance. The data imply that strong positive correlation is registered between social support and the learners' self-esteem when peer support is taken into consideration. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Peers are usually easy to get along with as they can relate with them with ease considering their age and even their situations. They can also talk to them easily without inhibitions. According to Acoba (2024) the bond with peers among learners is strong considering their generation sameness. They feel easy to mingle with. They feel that they share the same sentiments and even the same struggles.

Community Support revealed a computed r-value of 0.815 with the computed p-value of 0.001. The computed p-value is less than the p-critical value at 0.05 level of significance. The data imply that strong positive correlation is registered between social support based on community support and the learners' self-esteem. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. Community is connected to the learners' self-esteem. In the community, the learners meet individuals of different personality and background. It will test their capacity to make adjustments as well as on socializing with them. The community is always supportive and welcoming avenue for the learners that they can fully developed positively. According to De los Santos et al. (2023) it is in the community where the students learn more and be exposed to the realities of life. They should be guided by parents and teachers so that they can fully understand situations and be able to make decisions on whether to embrace it or not at all.

Problem 4. Which of the independent variables singly or in combination influenced ALS learners' self-esteem?

Table 4 illustrates the Simple Regression Analysis Between Social Support and Self-Esteem. It analyzes if social support influence learners' self-esteem. It is hypothesized that the social support is positively associated with self-esteem. Results show that the 54% of the variance is explained by the predictor, $F = 11.647$, $p < .001$. It can be inferred that if the social support is able to increase by 1% it will also increase the learners' self-esteem by 55.1%. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 4. Simple Regression Analysis Between Social Support and Self-Esteem

Variable	UC		SC	t-value	Sig. (P-value)	Decision	Interpretation
	B	SE	B				
Constant	0.7658	0.7863	0.7746				
Social Support	0.9863	0.9715	0.9184	10.445	0.001	Reject Ho2	Significant
Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	f-value	Sig. (P-value)	Decision	Interpretation
	0.558	0.551	0.542	11.647	0.001	Reject Ho2	Significant

Note: UC = Unstandardized Coefficients

SC = Standardized Coefficients

Dependent Variable = Students' Motivation

Significant when computed p-value <0.05.

The learners' sense of self-worth is tied to the social support they receive. The reason for this is that the support that students receive helps them feel more confident and positive about their academic pursuits as well as their attitude on life. They developed self-assurance and the resilience to deal with the difficulties and setbacks that came their way in life. They are under the impression that no matter what occurs, there will always be someone who will encourage and direct them to get back on their feet. According to Keles et al. (2020) in situations where pupils receive support from a variety of sectors, they experience feelings of love, safety, and support. It also makes individuals feel more optimistic about their life and the aims and ambitions they have set for themselves. As a result, they come to the realization that they are not fighting their fights alone. Because of this, they are able to draw into a greater reservoir of strength and vitality, as well as confidence in their actions and choices.

Table 5. Multiple Regression Analysis Between Social Support and Self-Esteem

Dimensions	UC		SC	t-value	Sig. (P-value)	Decision	Interpretation
	B	SE	B				
Constant	0.7658	0.7863	0.7746				
Family	0.6942	0.6771	0.6876	10.259	0.001	Reject Ho2	Significant
Peer	0.6548	0.6756	0.6548	8.289	0.001	Reject Ho2	Significant

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Community	0.8643	0.8815	0.8891	10.358	0.001	Reject Ho2	Significant
Model	R	R²	Adjusted R²	f-value	Sig. (P-value)	Decision	Interpretation
	0.549	0.543	0.535	10.748	0.001	Reject Ho2	Significant

Note: UC = Unstandardized Coefficients

SC = Standardized Coefficients

Dependent Variable = Students' Motivation

Significant when computed p-value < 0.05.

Table 5 showcases the multiple linear regression analysis if independent variable social support like family, peer, and community influence learners' self-esteem. It is hypothesized that the three (3) predictors will be positively associated with self-esteem. Results show that the 54.3% of the variance is explained by the three (3) predictors, $F = 10.748$, $p < .001$. Specifically, family ($\beta = 0.688$, $t\text{-value} = 10.259$, $p\text{-value} < .001$), peer ($\beta = 0.655$, $t\text{-value} = 8.289$, $p\text{-value} < .001$), and community ($\beta = 0.889$, $t\text{-value} = 10.358$, $p\text{-value} < .001$) are positively associated with learners' self-esteem. It can be inferred that if the social support in terms of family, peer, and community by 1% it will also increase the learners' self-esteem from 65% to 68% respectively. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected.

The learners' development of self-esteem is significantly aided by the presence of social support. When learners have the perception that the support they receive from their family, peers, and the community is sufficient, it serves as a source of inspiration and motivation for them to continue their studies and to face the problems and struggles they face. They believe that they are given the opportunity to complete their education and that they are given importance. Because they have the perception that they are not alone, they are certain that they will have someone to guide and aid them through any difficulties that may arise.

According to Scapim (2022) the learners experience a sense of security and confidence as a result of the social support they receive in their studies and in the activities that they participate in. Even if they are unsuccessful, they will not give up easy since it gives them the confidence that they are stronger. Since the learners require affirmation that they are acting in a manner that is beneficial to both themselves and their families, it is necessary for them to receive social support from a variety of organizations.

Model:

$$y = 0.6942x_1 + 0.6548x_2 + 0.8643x_3 + 0.7658$$

where 0.7658 = constant

y = self-esteem

x_1 = family

x_2 = peer

x_3 = community

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Family, peer and community are happy when anybody who lack education will go back to school.
2. ALS program is well-integrated that boosts ALS learners' morale and self-esteem.
3. ALS learners' self-esteem is enhanced by the social support.
4. ALS learners are well supported by family, peer and community that boost their self-esteem.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and the conclusions, the following recommendations are hereby presented:

1. Social support may always be practiced to ALS learners as a way to encourage them to continue their education.
2. ALS learners may continue their studies in order to sustain their self-esteem.
3. ALS implementers may act as the avenue for social support to ALS learners in order to sustain their self-esteem.
4. ALS implementers may emphasize to the ALS learners that they are supported by their family, peer and community.

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