

# Social Support and Psychological Well-being of Public Secondary Schools Teachers in Edo State, Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines how social support from family and colleagues relates to the psychological well-being of public school teachers in Edo State, Nigeria. Using a survey, 292 teachers from 10 secondary schools in Oredo Local Government Area participated, with data collected via questionnaires and analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics. Results revealed a significant positive relationship between social support and teachers' psychological well-being, with both family and colleague support identified as key predictors. The findings highlight the importance of fostering supportive social environments in schools to enhance teacher well-being. Recommendations include creating collaborative school cultures through team-building activities and regular staff meetings, implementing colleague support programs, promoting work-life balance through family-friendly policies, and offering training and resources on stress management, mindfulness, and self-care, along with access to counseling and wellness programs. These measures can guide policymakers, educators, and mental health professionals in improving teachers' psychological health and overall job satisfaction.

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## Introduction

Globally, social support is recognized as a crucial factor in promoting the wellbeing of individuals, including teachers. Social support from family, colleagues, and friends can provide emotional, informational, and instrumental assistance, which can help mitigate the negative effects of stress and burnout (Saeed & Hussain, 2021; Shafqat, Kiss, Aiman, & Malik, 2024). Research has consistently shown that social support is positively linked to psychological well-being, job satisfaction, and teacher effectiveness (Mabekoje, 2013; Ngaru & Kagema, 2017). For instance, a study by Glozah (2013) found that perceived social support from family and

friends buffered the effects of academic stress on psychological wellbeing among Ghanaian adolescents.

Teachers, in particular, require social support due to the high demands and stressors associated with their profession (Saeed & Hussain, 2021; Wu, Wang, Gao, & Wei, 2020). This is because teaching is a highly emotional and demanding job that requires teachers to manage their own emotions, as well as those of their students. Without adequate social support, teachers may experience burnout, decreased job satisfaction, and reduced psychological wellbeing. Teachers frequently conceal their true feelings and assume a character that complies with the norms of their profession because of their lofty demands (Wu, et al., 2020).

Nigeria, as Africa's most populous country, faces systemic challenges in its education sector, including underfunding, overcrowded classrooms, infrastructural deficits, and low teacher morale (Mabekoje, 2013). Edo State, located in the South-South geopolitical zone, reflects many of these national realities but also has distinctive features of interest to an international readership. The state is ethnically and linguistically diverse, with English as the official language of instruction, and has a reputation for its emphasis on educational reform, including the *EdoBEST* (Edo Basic Education Sector Transformation) initiative, which leverages digital tools to improve teaching and learning. Unlike some northern states where security challenges disrupt schooling, Edo State's challenges are primarily linked to resource allocation, teacher workload, and socio-cultural expectations of teachers. This blend of shared national issues and unique local innovations provides a relevant context for examining the role of social support in teacher well-being.

In Nigeria, teachers in public schools face unique challenges that necessitate social support from their colleagues and family members. Public schools in Nigeria are often characterised by inadequate resources, poor infrastructure, and high student-teacher ratios. These challenges can lead to increased stress, burnout, and decreased job satisfaction among teachers. Furthermore, the cultural and societal expectations placed on teachers in Nigeria can be overwhelming, making it essential for them to receive support from their colleagues and family members.

Despite the importance of social support for teachers, there is a dearth of research on this topic in Nigeria, particularly in Edo State. While some studies have investigated the relationship between social support and teacher wellbeing in Nigeria (Mabekoje, 2013; Obikeze, Obi & Okoli, 2024), none have focused specifically on public schools in Edo State.

This research gap highlights the need for a study that explores the impact of social support on teacher wellbeing in Edo State public schools.

### **Social Support Theory**

The Social Support Theory, proposed by Cohen, Gottlieb, and Underwood, (2015) posit that social support can provide emotional, informational, and instrumental assistance, which can help individuals cope with stress, adversity, and trauma. The theory is based on several propositions, including the idea that social support is a critical factor in maintaining physical and mental health (Cohen et al., 2015). The theory also proposes that social support can be provided through formal channels, such as counseling or support groups, or informal channels, such as social networks or community relationships.

The social support theory has several applications to this study. For instance, the theory suggests that teachers who receive social support from their colleagues and family members may experience improved psychological wellbeing and reduced stress (Shafqat et al., 2024). The theory also implies that schools and educational institutions can play a critical role in providing social support to teachers, through initiatives such as peer mentoring programs, staff support groups, and employee assistance programs (Wu et al., 2020).

### **Social Support**

Social support is widely recognized as one of the most important psychosocial resources that sustain individuals in times of stress, uncertainty, and everyday functioning. It is commonly defined as the perceived or actual resources provided by significant others, which enable people to cope more effectively and function optimally in their personal and professional lives. House (1981) provided one of the earliest comprehensive typologies of social support, distinguishing between emotional support (expressions of empathy, love, trust, and care), informational support (advice, guidance, or feedback), instrumental support (tangible aid and services), and appraisal support (affirmation and constructive evaluation). This framework has been foundational in social and health psychology. Building on this, Cohen and Wills (1985) advanced the influential stress-buffering hypothesis, which argues that social support not only has a direct positive effect on well-being but also moderates the impact of stressors by cushioning individuals against their harmful effects. In addition, Ryff (1989) linked supportive relationships to her multidimensional model of psychological well-being (PWB), showing that close social ties are central to eudaimonic functioning, which emphasizes meaning, growth, and purpose beyond the absence of illness.

Within the broader category of social support, family support plays a distinctive role. Family support is often conceptualized as emotional, informational, and instrumental assistance provided by immediate and extended family members such as spouses, parents, siblings, and children. It has been shown to foster resilience, promote stress recovery, and enhance life satisfaction. For instance, Glozah (2013) found that perceived family and friend support buffered the effects of academic stress on Ghanaian adolescents, highlighting the protective role of family relationships during periods of developmental strain. Similarly, Ngaru and Kagema (2017) reported that parental support was a significant predictor of psychological well-being among Kenyan university students, underscoring the enduring influence of family even in young adulthood. In the Nigerian context, Mabekoje (2013) observed that family support significantly predicted teachers' psychological well-being, suggesting that family relationships remain a critical coping resource for professionals managing occupational stressors in educational settings. Taken together, these studies illustrate that family support is not only vital in early developmental stages but also remains crucial for adult populations, including teachers, by providing a reliable base for emotional regulation and adaptive coping.

Colleague support, by contrast, operates primarily within the professional sphere and refers to the encouragement, collaboration, and assistance teachers receive from their coworkers. This form of support is particularly important for teachers because of the inherently social and demanding nature of the profession. Empirical studies across diverse contexts confirm its value. For example, Väisänen et al. (2017) found that Finnish student teachers experienced both empowering and burdening aspects of collegial support, illustrating that workplace support can function as a double-edged sword—enhancing well-being when it is positive and increasing stress when it is perceived as controlling or excessive. In Portugal, Ferreira et al. (2015) demonstrated that colleague support was positively associated with teacher engagement, consistent with the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model, which views social support as a crucial job resource that fosters motivation and buffers the impact of job demands. Similarly, Klassen and Chiu (2010), in their Canadian study, reported that supportive collegial environments enhanced teacher job satisfaction and organizational commitment, reducing the likelihood of turnover intentions. These findings collectively underscore the idea that collegial relationships are not merely a matter of workplace harmony but are structurally tied to teachers' professional well-being, motivation, and effectiveness.

## **Psychological Well-Being**

Psychological well-being (PWB) is widely regarded as a multidimensional construct that reflects more than the absence of psychological distress. It encompasses positive mental health attributes such as autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relationships, purpose in life, and self-acceptance (Ryff, 1989). This conceptualisation captures the eudaimonic perspective of well-being, which emphasises optimal functioning and personal fulfilment rather than mere hedonic happiness.

For teachers, PWB is a critical professional resource that underpins effective classroom management, resilience in the face of challenges, and sustained professional satisfaction. Teachers who report higher levels of well-being are more likely to display positive emotions in the classroom, maintain constructive relationships with students, and adapt effectively to changing educational demands (Mabekoje, 2013). Moreover, teacher well-being has been linked not only to personal outcomes such as reduced stress and burnout but also to improved student engagement and achievement (Klassen & Chiu, 2010).

A growing body of empirical evidence highlights the factors that shape PWB, with social support consistently emerging as one of the strongest predictors across cultures. For example, Glozah (2013) showed that social support buffered the effects of academic stress on adolescents' well-being in Ghana, while Shafqat et al. (2024) demonstrated that international students in Hungary with higher perceived social support reported greater psychological well-being. These findings suggest that the benefits of supportive relationships are robust across diverse contexts and populations. In the case of teachers, support from both family and colleagues not only enhances resilience but also sustains long-term motivation and job satisfaction.

Taken together, these insights indicate that PWB is a dynamic, multifaceted construct that is deeply shaped by the availability and quality of supportive relationships. In high-demand professions such as teaching, where stressors are frequent and resources often limited, understanding how social support contributes to psychological well-being is particularly crucial.

## **Social Support and Psychological Well-Being**

International evidence consistently demonstrates a positive association between social support and psychological well-being. For instance, Shafqat et al. (2024) reported that perceived social support significantly predicted well-being among international students in

Hungary, highlighting the universal role of supportive networks in adaptation and resilience. In the Asian context, Wang, Hall, and Rahimi (2015) found that Chinese teachers who perceived high levels of support reported lower burnout and greater job satisfaction, indicating that social support not only protects against negative outcomes but also enhances positive professional experiences. Similarly, Klassen and Chiu (2010) observed that Canadian teachers with supportive collegial environments reported reduced stress and higher job satisfaction, further reinforcing the role of workplace social support in sustaining professional well-being.

The protective role of social support has been well established across cultural contexts and theoretical perspectives. Cohen and Wills (1985), in their classic stress-buffering model, argued that social support moderates the relationship between stress and well-being by reducing the negative psychological impact of stressors. Complementing this, Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of Resources (COR) theory explains that social support serves as a key resource that not only prevents the depletion of psychological energy but also helps individuals acquire and maintain other valued resources, thereby promoting resilience. These mechanisms are particularly relevant in the teaching profession, where constant exposure to high job demands, classroom pressures, and systemic constraints can undermine well-being if not mitigated by strong social networks.

Taken together, these findings underscore that both family support and colleague support are critical predictors of psychological well-being across diverse educational and cultural contexts. While family support provides a foundation of emotional stability and recovery outside the workplace, colleague support operates within the school environment to facilitate collaboration, reduce professional isolation, and enhance job satisfaction. Recognizing the complementary roles of these two support systems is essential for understanding teacher well-being and for designing interventions that foster resilience in the education sector.

This study aims to investigate the relationship between social support (family and colleague support) and psychological wellbeing among teachers in public schools in Edo State, Nigeria. The study seeks to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on teacher wellbeing and social support, while also providing insights into the specific challenges faced by teachers in Edo State public schools.

## **Objectives of the Study**

The broad objective of the study is to examine the link that exists between social support and the psychological well-being of teachers. The specific objectives are to examine the relationship between family support and psychological well-being of teachers; examine the relationship between colleague support and psychological well-being of teachers; determine the predictive effect of family support on teachers' psychological well-being; determine the predictive effect of colleague support on teachers' psychological well-being.

## **Method**

The study adopted a survey research design. The population comprised 1,081 public secondary school teachers in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State. The sample size was determined using Yamane's (1964) formula, yielding 292 respondents. To minimize the risk of a low response rate, the sample was increased by 20 percent, giving a total sampling frame of 350.

Purposive sampling was applied to select 10 public secondary schools within Oredo Local Government. The selection criteria included: (i) schools with large teacher populations to facilitate adequate representation, (ii) a spread across both urban and semi-urban settings to capture variation in school contexts, and (iii) accessibility for data collection. After identifying these schools, a quota of 35 teachers was allocated to each, making up the adjusted sample size. Within the schools, teachers were recruited based on their availability and willingness to participate, ensuring a balance across gender, teaching experience, and subject specialization.

Ethical considerations were observed in line with the local research context. Permission was obtained from the Edo State Ministry of Education and school principals before approaching teachers. Respondents were briefed on the purpose of the study, assured of confidentiality, and participation was strictly voluntary, with informed consent secured.

In terms of representativeness, while the purposive selection of schools limits full generalizability, efforts were made to ensure that the demographics of the sample—such as gender ratio, teaching experience, and subject areas—approximated those of the wider teacher population in Edo State. For instance, the predominance of female teachers in the sample reflects the gender distribution among public secondary school teachers in the state, while the inclusion of teachers from different subject areas mirrors the professional composition of the wider teaching force.

Questionnaire was the main research instrument, and comprised two sections, namely Section A and B, While section A was the demographic data, section B was for the main variables of the study. Section B was in the order of 5-point Likert scale that ranged from strongly disagreed (1) to strongly agreed (5). To ascertain the validity of the instrument, it was reviewed by three research experts. Two are senior lecturers in Educational Psychology with over 15 years of teaching and research experience in teacher well-being and stress management, and the third is a professor of Counselling Psychology specializing in teacher support systems. Their feedback ensured the instrument measured social support and psychological well-being appropriately for the Nigerian teacher population. To determine the reliability of the research instrument, 35 copies of the questionnaire were initially distributed to teachers. Their responses were tested using the Cronbach alpha test. The results were greater than 0.7 for all the variables. Purposive sampling technique was further used to administer the questionnaire. The collected data were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of SPSS (version 25). Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to summarise the demographic characteristics of respondents and key study variables. The study was conducted in English, which is Nigeria's official language of instruction and administration. Since both the researcher and the respondents were proficient in English, no translation was required. To ensure clarity, however, the questionnaire was piloted with teachers in a nearby school, and minor adjustments were made to adapt wording to the local educational context.

For the inferential analysis, the study employed multiple regression analysis, with family support and colleague support entered simultaneously as the independent variables and psychological well-being as the dependent variable. This approach was chosen because it provides a more parsimonious and comprehensive test of the relationships of interest.

## **Findings and Discussion**

### ***Findings***

Out of the 350 copies of questionnaire that were administered, 292 were retrieved and utilised for the analysis.

### **Description of Respondents' Demographic Characteristics**

The different background information of the respondents who were teachers in secondary schools include gender, age, teaching experience, educational qualification, and subject type. The results are presented in Table 1 below:

**Table 1. Demographic profile of respondents**

S/N	Variable	Attribute	Frequency	Percent%
1	Gender	Male	109	37.3
		Female	183	62.7
		Total	292	100.0
2	Age	20 years and below	-	-
		21 -30	15	5.1
		31 -40	69	23.6
		41 – 50	165	56.5
		51 and above	43	14.7
	Total	292	100.0%	
3	Education	NCE	162	55.5
		B.Ed./PGDE.	113	38.7
		M.Ed./Ph.D.	13	4.5
		Others	4	1.4
		Total	292	100.0
4	Teaching Experience	Less than 5 years	-	-
		5 to 10 years	9	3.1
		11 to 15 years	219	75.0
		16 years and above	64	21.9
		Total	292	100.0
5	Subject area	Arts	22	7.5
		Commercial	86	29.5
		Language	109	37.3
		Science	31	10.6
		Social science	44	15.1
	Total	292	100.0	

Source: Fieldwork 2025

From Table 1 above, it can be deduced that the respondents are predominantly female (62.7%), between the ages of 41-50 (56.5%), and hold a teaching qualification of NCE (55.5%). They have extensive teaching experience, with 75% having taught for 11-15 years. The majority of respondents teach Language (37.3%). These demographics imply that the respondents are mature, experienced educators who have spent a significant amount of time in the teaching profession, with a strong foundation in language education. It further suggests that the study's findings on social support and psychological wellbeing may be influenced by the maturity, experience, and teaching specialisation of the respondents. Specifically, the prevalence of experienced language teachers may highlight the importance of social support in managing the unique stresses associated with teaching language subjects.

**Objective 1:** To determine the relationship between family support and psychological well-being

**Table 2. Correlation of family support and psychological well-being**

		Family support	Psychological wellbeing
Family support	Pearson Correlation	1	.362**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	292	292
Psychological wellbeing	Pearson Correlation	.362**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	292	292

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The results in Table 2 indicate a significant positive correlation ( $r = 0.362$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) between family support and psychological wellbeing among teachers. This suggests that teachers who receive higher levels of support from their families tend to have better psychological wellbeing, implying that family support plays a crucial role in enhancing the mental health and overall wellbeing of teachers.

**Objective 2:** To examine the connection between colleague support and psychological well-being

**Table 3. Correlation of colleague support and psychological well-being**

		Colleague support	Psychological wellbeing
Colleague support	Pearson Correlation	1	.643**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	292	292
Psychological wellbeing	Pearson Correlation	.643**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	292	292

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The results in Table 3 reveal a strong significant positive correlation ( $r = 0.643$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) between colleague support and psychological wellbeing among teachers. This indicates that teachers who receive higher levels of support from their colleagues tend to have

significantly better psychological wellbeing, suggesting that colleague support is a vital factor in promoting the mental health and overall wellbeing of teachers.

**Objective 3:** To ascertain the effect of family support on psychological well-being

**Table 4. Effect of family support on psychological well-being**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficient	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	9.844	.703		13.995	.000
Family support	.342	.052	.362	6.618	.000

R = .362<sup>a</sup> R-square = 0.131, Adjusted R-square = .128, F = 43.792 Sig. = .000<sup>b</sup>

a. Dependent Variable: psychological wellbeing

The results in Table 4 indicate that family support has a significant positive effect on psychological wellbeing among teachers ( $\beta = 0.342$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ). This suggests that for every unit increase in family support, psychological wellbeing increases by 0.342 units. The model explains 13.1% of the variance in psychological wellbeing, indicating that family support is a significant predictor of psychological wellbeing among teachers.

**Objective 4:** To ascertain the effect of colleague support on psychological well-being

**Table 5. Effect of colleague support on psychological well-being**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficient	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	5.660	.626		9.039	.000
Colleague support	.610	.043	.643	14.281	.000

R = .643<sup>a</sup> R-square = .413, Adjusted R-square = .128, F = 203.941 Sig. = .000<sup>b</sup>

a. Dependent Variable: psychological wellbeing

The results in Table 5 indicate that colleague support has a significant positive effect on psychological wellbeing among teachers ( $\beta = 0.610$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This suggests that for every unit increase in colleague support, psychological wellbeing increases by 0.610 units. The model explains 41.3% of the variance in psychological wellbeing, indicating that colleague support is a strong predictor of psychological wellbeing among teachers.

## **Hypotheses Testing**

### ***Hypothesis one: There is no significant effect of family support on psychological well-being***

Based on the results in Table 4, since the p-value (Sig.) is 0.000, which is less than the significance level of 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis. Therefore, we conclude that there is a significant effect of family support on psychological well-being among teachers.

### ***Hypothesis Two: There is no significant effect of colleague support on psychological well-being***

Based on the results in Table 5, since the p-value (Sig.) is 0.000, which is less than the significance level of 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis. Therefore, we conclude that there is a significant effect of colleague support on psychological well-being among teachers.

## **Discussion**

The study's findings revealed a significant positive correlation between family support and psychological wellbeing among teachers, indicating that teachers who receive higher levels of support from their families tend to have better psychological wellbeing. The study's results also showed that family support has a significant positive effect on psychological wellbeing, explaining 13.1% of the variance. This finding is consistent with existing studies that highlight the importance of family support in enhancing the mental health and wellbeing of individuals, including teachers (Glozah, 2013).

The study also found a strong significant positive correlation between colleague support and psychological wellbeing, indicating that teachers who receive higher levels of support from their colleagues tend to have significantly better psychological wellbeing. The study's results also showed that colleague support has a significant positive effect on psychological wellbeing, explaining 41.3% of the variance. This suggests that colleague support is a stronger predictor of psychological wellbeing among teachers compared to family support.

This finding is consistent with existing studies that emphasise the importance of colleague support in promoting teacher wellbeing and reducing stress (Wu et al., 2020; Ngaru & Kagema, 2017; Vaisanen, et al., 2017). The findings of this study are also consistent with the social support theory, which posits that social support is a key resource that can mitigate the negative effects of job demands on employee wellbeing. The study's results suggest that

family and colleague support are essential resources that can enhance teacher wellbeing and reduce stress.

Overall, the study's findings highlight the importance of social support in promoting teacher wellbeing and reducing stress. The results suggest that school administrators and policymakers should prioritise the development of supportive school environments that foster positive relationships among teachers and between teachers and their families. This can involve providing training and resources to promote colleague support, as well as implementing policies that support work-life balance and family involvement.

### **Limitations**

1. The use of purposive sampling limits generalisability beyond Oredo LGA.
2. Reliance on self-report measures may introduce social desirability bias.
3. Cross-sectional design prevents causal inference.
4. The study focused only on public secondary schools, excluding private institutions.

### **Significance**

1. Fills a gap in Nigerian and Edo State-specific literature on teacher well-being.
2. Provides evidence for integrating social support mechanisms into teacher welfare and school policy.
3. Offers a comparative lens for international readers to understand how teacher well-being is shaped in low-resource, high-demand contexts.

### **Conclusion**

This study investigated the relationship between social support (family and colleague) and psychological wellbeing among teachers. The findings revealed significant positive correlations between family support, colleague support, and psychological wellbeing. Additionally, the results showed that both family and colleague support have significant positive effects on psychological wellbeing, with colleague support being a stronger predictor. The study's findings highlight the importance of social support in promoting teacher wellbeing and reducing stress. This suggests that school administrators and policymakers should prioritize the development of supportive school environments that foster positive relationships among teachers and between teachers and their families. By doing so, schools can promote teacher wellbeing, reduce stress, and ultimately enhance teacher effectiveness.

The study's results have implications for teacher education, school administration, and educational policy. Teachers, school administrators, and policymakers can use the findings to

inform strategies that promote social support and reduce stress among teachers. Furthermore, the study's findings can be used to inform the development of interventions aimed at promoting teacher wellbeing and reducing teacher burnout.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Develop supportive school environments: School administrators should prioritize the development of supportive school environments that foster positive relationships among teachers and between teachers and their families. This can be achieved through team-building activities, regular staff meetings, and open communication channels.
2. Implement colleague support programmes: Schools should implement colleague support programs that encourage teachers to support one another. This can include peer mentoring, teacher buddy systems, financial assistance and collaborative planning time.
3. Promote work-life balance: Schools should promote work-life balance by implementing policies that support teachers' personal and family needs. This can include flexible scheduling, family leave policies, income budgeting and management and employee assistance programs.
4. Provide counselling and training on stress management and wellbeing: Schools should provide counselling which could include using Cognitive Behavioural therapy to change their mind set about prioritizing their well-being and also provide training and resources to help teachers manage stress and promote their wellbeing. This can include workshops on mindfulness, stress management, and self-care, as well as access to counseling services and employee wellness programmes.

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