
The Social Support Systems and Needs of Private SHS Teachers in Writing Research

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Abstract

Research is among the least mastered areas of teachers in the Philippines. This phenomenological study explores teachers' social support systems and needs in writing research. Seventeen private SHS English teachers were purposefully selected from five private schools in Legazpi City, Philippines, who participated through group interviews using constructed questionnaires and video recordings. The thematic analysis used pattern recognition within the data and emerging themes as categories. The study discussed the social support and needs of the teachers along emotional, informational, and instrumental lines and suggested a faculty research support program based on the critical findings. Consequently, the study validates varied findings from previous research and may serve as a valuable reference for private institutions seeking to address their teachers' research needs.

Keywords:

Emotional support, informational support, instrumental support, mentoring, research writing

Introduction

The role of research is crucial in advancing the United Nations' (UN) sustainable development goals (SDGs) by providing necessary insights, evidence, and innovative solutions needed to address complex global challenges (UN, 2019). Research is a foundation for informed decision-making, policy formulation, and effective implementation strategies across various sectors. For teacher education, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) emphasized teacher education reform to align with evolving expectations, acknowledging the collaborative nature of teaching, and stressing the need to equip teachers for a crucial role in knowledge production and educational research (UNESCO, 2022). In addition, teachers need to be more involved in systematic academic research to maintain appropriate scrutiny and to influence policy (Tatto, 2022).

In the Philippines, teachers' research skills are among the least acquired competencies (Basilio & Bueno, 2019). Although funds are insufficient, the Department of Education (DepEd) has implemented various memorandums and policies that align with research management guidelines and a research agenda (DepEd, 2016; DepEd, 2017). These initiatives provide support to public school teachers in writing research. According to DepEd (2015), teachers should conduct action research to observe their actions and their students' activities accurately, receive feedback on the effectiveness of their methods, customize teaching to fit learners and settings, enhance knowledge of learning and teaching, reduce dependence on distant decision-makers, and prevent boredom with teaching. The support provided by DepEd reinforced public school teachers' ability to conduct research.

In the case of private schools in the country, by chance, only the Private School Assistance Committee

(PEAC) and institutional funding provide faculty research grants for private school teachers (Rapatan et al., 2022). Moreover, due to varying institutional research policies, private school teachers often encounter distinct support systems and have unique needs. In addition, no research has explored the support systems and needs of teachers in private schools in the Philippines. Understanding the social support received and the needs of these teachers is crucial for establishing a faculty research support program.

Recent studies indicate that three critical social support systems - emotional support, instrumental support, and informational support - significantly enhance research writing efficiency (Curby et al., 2013; Eskandari & Baratzadeh Ghahramanloo, 2020). Thus, this present study explores the social support systems and needs of private school teachers through the following questions: (1) what social support systems are received by the private senior high school English teachers in writing research? And (2) what social support systems, besides those existing ones, do private senior high school English teachers need in writing research? The output of this study is beneficial to private institutions as it is the basis for bolstering the research capabilities of their faculty and facilitating the production of high-quality research that benefits the wider community.

Theoretical Framework

The study on social support theory draws upon the works of Don Drennon-Gala and Francis Cullen, integrating insights from various theoretical traditions (Kort-Butler, 2017). Over time, this theory has been applied and developed across diverse disciplines, such as psychology, medicine, sociology, nursing, public health, education, rehabilitation, and social work (Eskandari & Baratzadeh Ghahramanloo, 2020). A substantial body of empirical evidence supports this perspective, indicating that socially integrated individuals who experience supportive and rewarding relationships and environments tend to have better mental health and perform effectively in their work (Feeney & Collins, 2015). Therefore, the need for emotional support is crucial. Previous research conducted by scholars has demonstrated that being immersed in a socially supported environment during research activities is a strong predictor of producing high-quality and timely work (Hyland, 2015; Tuasikal & Patria, 2019; Strobl et al., 2019).

The application of social support theory extends to research writing, particularly as the demands and technological advancements in the field progress (Strobl et al., 2019). Research support can manifest through emotional, instrumental, and informational means. Emotional support in academic institutions may be encouragement, sympathy, and appreciation. Instrumental support encompasses aspects such as research funding, incentives, and the provision of school facilities.

Social support theory suggests that individuals derive emotional, instrumental, and informational assistance from their social networks (Kort-Butler, 2017). Thus, this study states that the reinforcement of social support systems positively enhances the research writing skills of the teachers. Lastly, the study posits that the more social support teachers receive in writing research, the higher their research skills.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The study employed a phenomenological approach to investigate the social support systems and needs of private senior high school (SHS) English teachers in writing research. By utilizing the phenomenological approach outlined by Schutz (1972), this study explores the essence and structure of human experiences within a specific context. It aims to better comprehend how teachers perceive and interpret the social support they receive, along with their needs in writing research. The data were gathered through group interviews and video recordings.

Context of the Study

The research was conducted in five private schools in the Legazpi City Division, Philippines. These schools were considered big private academic institutions, known for their credibility by maintaining quality instruction and research productivity based on institutional leveling through accreditation. The selected schools also hired teachers based on their teaching ability and research skills. Moreover, each institution has a different research policy and support for its faculty to maintain research productivity.

For this research, 17 senior high school

English teachers from five private schools were selected based on the specific criteria, including being a bachelor of secondary education graduate specializing in English, having teaching experience in research-related subjects, and demonstrating research experience through publications. The study occurred in November 2022 during the pandemic lockdown, which necessitated using an online media platform, specifically Zoom meetings, for data collection (Table 1).

Table 1

Participants' Demographic

	<i>N</i>	<i>(%)</i>
Gender		
Male	4	23.5
Female	13	76.5
Age		
20-25	3	17.7
25-30	9	52.9
Above 30	5	29.4
Years in Teaching Service		
1-5	8	47.0
6-10	7	41.2
Above 10	2	11.8
Research Publication		
1-2 research publications	6	35.3
3-4 research publications	9	52.9
Above 5 research publications	2	11.8
Private Schools		
School 1 (Sectarian School)	4	23.5
School 2 (Sectarian School)	4	23.5
School 3 (Sectarian School)	4	23.5
School 4 (Non-sectarian school)	3	17.7
School 5 (Non-sectarian school)	2	11.8

Research Instrument

The study used a researcher-developed interview guide, validated by experts in research writing and policy creation, consisting of four open-ended guided interviews to explore participants' subjective experiences and perspectives in writing research. The

following are sample interview questions:

1. *How did your institution provide emotional support in writing research? Can you share some experiences?*
2. *How did your institution provide instrumental support in writing research? Can you share some experiences?*

Data Gathering Procedure

The study obtained permission from the school president/rector after submitting a letter of research undertakings to the respective offices. Research governance requirements were met to conduct the study. Additionally, participants provided informed consent by signing a form that detailed the study background, confidentiality, benefits of participation, voluntary participation, and consent.

The researchers coordinated with the schools to schedule group interviews at the participants' convenience. The researchers began by explaining the meaning of each support system based on the social support theory to ensure participants' accurate and deeper responses. The group interviews ranged from 40 minutes to 1.5 hours using video recordings with consent from the participants. The study started from November 2022 to February 2023.

Data Analysis

Following the interviews, the video recordings were transcribed verbatim, and thematic analysis was employed for data analysis. Thematic analysis, as described by Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006), involves recognizing patterns within the data and using emerging themes as categories for analysis. The researchers identified similar responses through thematic analysis, categorized them into major themes, and labeled them accordingly. Table 2 shows the abstraction process done to deduce the emerging themes.

Table 2

Sample Thematic Analysis Procedure

Sample Verbatim Transcripts	Number of Similar Responses	Categories	Theme
<p>“Our school administrators have been really sympathetic to the challenges we face as teachers. They understand that time and resources are limited, but they still encourage us to pursue research and offer help wherever they can.”</p>	3	Encouragement	Emotional Support Received

Results

Social Support Needs in Writing Research

Common themes emerged anchored on social support systems from participants’ interview sharing. A similar thematic analysis was conducted to deduce emerging themes from the complete abstraction process (see Appendix) comprised of emotional, instrumental, and informational support needs. The social support needs of the participants were anchored on emotional, instrumental, and informational as shown in Table 3. Three categories based on the coded transcripts were generated: the need for the mentoring program as emotional support, the need for research software applications and professional accounts as instrumental support, and exposure to seminars and training from national and international research experts as informational support.

Regarding emotional support needs, one of the participants stated: “We need a faculty research mentoring program, particularly for newly hired teachers, as a means of reducing research-related

Table 3.

Social Support Systems Received and Needs in Writing Research

Categories	Themes	Inputs to Research Support Program
The need for a mentoring program	Emotional Support Needs	Implementation of faculty research mentoring program
The need for research software applications and professional accounts	Instrumental Support Needs	Provisions of research software professional accounts and the needed relevant training and seminars
The need to invite national and international research experts to seminars and training	Informational Support Needs	Faculty research training and retraining program with national and international experts
Encouragement, sympathy, and recognition	Emotional Support Received	Conduct of call for papers for schools’ research agenda. Faculty mental health seminars on research management. Provisions of awards and recognitions on teachers’ distinct research achievement and involvement in research.
Funding, incentives, and provision of research materials and use of school facilities	Instrumental Support Received	Research policy on grants, incentives, and use of school facilities.
Training on research proposal writing, colloquium, and Access to a wide source of information	Informational Support Received	Research policy on the conduct of research proposal workshops, colloquium, and access to wide source of information.

stress and fostering an interest in research writing.” In line with instrumental support needs, another participant mentioned: “My school may consider providing us with licensed software accounts and

training for qualitative and quantitative data analysis and plagiarism detection applications.” A participant emphasized the informational support needs: “Our school should invite national or international experts to share new updates and approaches to research, which can enhance their research competencies and knowledge of current trends in the field.”

Participants expressed distinct needs in their research writing engagements. For emotional support, a participant proposed a faculty research mentoring program to combat stress and improve an interest in research writing. Instrumental support needs were highlighted, with a participant suggesting the school provide licensed software accounts and training in data analysis and plagiarism detection tools. Furthermore, a participant emphasized inviting experts to share updates and approaches.

Social Support Systems Received

Themes were composed of emotional, instrumental, and informational support received (see Appendix). Emotional support generates three categories such as encouragement, sympathy, and recognition. In line with encouragement, one participant responded: *“Our school administrators have been sympathetic to the challenges we face as teachers. They understand that time and resources are limited, but they still encourage us to pursue research and offer help wherever they can.”* Moreover, in terms of sympathy, a participant mentioned: *“I’ve been touched by the empathy and understanding shown by our school administrators. They know that life can be tough sometimes, and they’ve clarified that our well-being comes first. At the same time, they still encourage us to pursue our research goals however we can.”* A participant highlighted while in line with recognition: *“It was touching to see my name and research project featured on the school’s social media account and banner. Our school administrators went above and beyond to show their support and appreciation for our work.”*

Administrators expressed encouragement by understanding teachers’ challenges and motivating teachers despite limitations. Sympathy was shown by prioritizing teachers’ well-being. Recognition took a tangible form by featuring teachers’ names and projects on school platforms, showcasing an effort to acknowledge and support their work.

Furthermore, funding, incentives, and the provisions of materials and use of facilities were focused on instrumental support received. In line with funding, one participant stated: *“I’m grateful to our school administrators for providing funding for my research project. It allowed me to gather data and materials that I wouldn’t have been able to access otherwise, and it’s elevated the quality of my work.”* In terms of incentives, another participant mentioned: *“I appreciate that our school administrators have created a system where we earn research credits to lighten our teaching load. It’s a great way to incentivize research and make it more feasible for busy teachers like us.”* While in line with the provisions of materials and use of facilities, a participant emphasized: *“The fact that our school provides us with the materials and resources we need for our research projects is a testament to their commitment to our success as teachers. It made the research process much more efficient and has allowed us to focus on producing high-quality work.”*

Participants appreciate research funding, recognizing its impact on research projects by providing access to essential data and materials. Incentives, like earning research credits to lighten teaching loads, were acknowledged as valuable help for teachers. Providing materials and access to facilities signifies commitment to teacher’s success and streamlining the research process.

Training on research proposals, research colloquium, and access to wide information were the three emerging categories focused on informational support received. In terms of training on research proposals, a participant mentioned: *“The school administrators have made an effort to provide us with training and seminars in research writing proposals. It allowed us to produce better quality research proposals and has given us more confidence in our abilities as researchers.”* In connection to the research colloquium, a participant stated: *“The research colloquium organized by our school administrators was a good opportunity to get feedback on our completed research papers. The feedback we received was invaluable in preparing our papers for publication and external presentations.”* While in line with the access to wide information, a participant mentioned:

Our school administrators have made it a priority to provide us with access to a

wide range of information resources by providing us free internet connectivity and the use of our school electronic and physical library. It is easy to navigate relevant studies that may help our research.

Participants highlighted the significance of training on research proposals, crediting administrators for enhancing the quality of their proposals and instilling confidence in their research abilities. The research colloquium was acknowledged as a valuable platform for receiving feedback on completed research papers, contributing immensely to the preparation for publication and external presentations. Access to a wide source of information, facilitated by free internet connectivity and the school library, was emphasized as a priority by administrators for easy navigation of relevant studies to support and enrich participants' research endeavors.

Discussion

Social Support Systems Received in Writing Research

Social support significantly affects teachers' effectiveness (Li et al., 2022). In writing research, social support made teachers engage effectively in the process. In addition, the quality of research mostly depends on the support received (Sari & Fakhruddiana, 2019). Teachers excel in a supportive environment that improves their research engagement and the quality of their work. Based on the participants' responses, this study generated three themes: emotional support, instrumental support, and informational support in writing research.

Emotional Support Received

Emotional support improves the retention of information and activities that promote brain health and preparing to face the most varied situations in life (Curby et al., 2013). In writing research, emotional support was among the social support received by the participants through encouragement, sympathy, and recognition.

Encouragement

Receiving encouragement as emotional support signifies schools' efforts to motivate and inspire

teachers to maintain a positive and determined mindset throughout the research writing process. It was supported by Ryan and Deci (2022), who claim that encouragement significantly impacts on emotional well-being and quality of life. The role of schools is important in facilitating research and nurturing the teachers' intrinsic motivation. Encouragement supports researchers, providing a positive motivation that influences their engagement, perseverance, and, ultimately, the quality of their work (Orange, 2016).

Sympathy

Administrators' sympathy towards teachers implies that teachers are more likely to engage in continuous learning and stay committed to their tasks when their schools prioritize their well-being. According to Scheler (2017), sympathy leads to action and gives the desire to help an individual improve a certain situation. In addition, sympathy from the school creates a supportive atmosphere for researchers (Herr & Anderson, 2014). A research support program is necessary since well-being and outdated research practices are among the problems teachers face.

Recognition

Through recognition and reward in research engagement, faculty may achieve a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction. Wilder (2014) found that recognition uplifts the researcher's motivation and morale, reinforcing a sense of accomplishment and value in their contributions to the academic community. It influences other members to strive to work hard to achieve the same recognition. Furthermore, Settles et al. (2019) assert that acknowledging faculty accomplishments is a form of recognition and contributes to their professional development.

The emotional support received by the participants in writing research through encouragement, sympathy, recognition, and appreciation positively influenced the participants' behavior toward research writing. It implies that the administrators show positive attitudes in teachers' research engagement. Many scholars support the importance and necessity of emotional support in writing research (Kumar & Cavallaro, 2018; Zina, 2021).

Instrumental Support Received

Instrumental support is positively associated with achievement and well-being (Granziera et al., 2022). In this study, funding, incentives, and the provision of research materials, and the use of school facilities are the mentioned instrumental support in writing research by the participants.

Funding

Research funding received signifies that school administrators are committed to supporting faculty research aimed at improving instructional quality and student performance in the school through funding, focusing on innovative and research-based solutions. Research funding provides researchers with essential resources and helps advance their careers (Neema & Chandrashekar, 2021). Literature also suggests that research funding has a positive change in schools, promoting evidence-based decision-making, continuous improvement, and the professional development of teachers (Jung et al., 2017; Reiser et al., 2015; Slavin, 2020).

Incentives

To promote an environment of continuous improvement, intellectual curiosity, and excellence, incentivizing research involvement, and achievement ensures that faculty benefit from a significant educational experience. Incentivizing research achievements increases the research outputs of faculty (Fraser et al., 2020). In addition, the faculty research performance influences the reputation of the school. Funding research motivates researchers to produce quality work (Edwards & Roy, 2017). Therefore, including research funding in institutional policies is important (Garland & Tadeja, 2013).

Provision of research materials and use of school facilities

The conduct of research within the school setting fosters collaboration, as teachers can share insights and innovative instructional strategies that benefit the whole institution. Access to research materials and school facilities simplifies the research process, saves time, and affects the quality of research (Denscombe, 2017). Aside from being a problem-based approach, the effort of the school to allow its faculty researchers

to conduct on-campus research is economical (Herr & Anderson, 2014; Slavin, 2020).

The instrumental support through funding, incentives, and provisions of materials and facilities influenced research management and motivation. Schools may maintain the provision of the mentioned instrumental support to improve the institutions' research culture. Instrumental support in the school setting influences the school's performance (Schenke et al., 2015).

Informational Support Received

Informational support is crucial in knowledge acquisition, which improves the capabilities of individuals in the learning process. In this study, the mentioned informational support was anchored on training in research proposal writing, colloquium, and access to a wide source of information.

Training on research proposal writing

The training on research proposal writing ensures that the faculty may gain essential skills in designing impactful and meaningful research outcomes. It also serves as an opportunity for the faculty to explain the significance of their idea to the institution (Black et al., 2015). For schools, training on research writing proposals can generate research projects anchored on institutional agenda. In addition, schools' training can be viewed as a strategic investment, yielding returns through faculty effectiveness, improved student outcomes, and a positive impact on school performance (Saraiva, 2022).

Colloquium

Colloquium and in-house review ensure research alignment with institutional standards, maintaining academic integrity and reputation while supporting teachers in refining methodologies and enhancing scholarly impact. Moreover, a research colloquium allows researchers to share significant information and findings relative to their studies with the academic community. In addition, a research colloquium is an academic discussion where completed research is enhanced through comments and suggestions to produce an impactful paper (Bean & Melzer, 2021).

Access to a Wide Source of Information

The schools recognize the importance of access to reliable and credible information relevant to their faculty's research engagement. Access to the library and the internet enables researchers to collect relevant information, such as literature and journal publications (Abbott, 2014). Scholars also assert that schools should provide updated technological resources, including online information, to enhance researchers' capabilities and access to recent scientific discoveries (Abubakar & Diyoshak, 2015; Gubbi et al., 2013).

The informational support the participants receive in writing research provides essential knowledge to learn and complete research projects. This support from the school allows them to update skills relevant to teaching and research. According to Gay (2018), informational support is part of the school's duty to keep teachers and students updated on global trends and practices.

Social Support Needs in Writing Research

Researchers who receive comprehensive support demonstrate higher levels of productivity, satisfaction, and overall well-being (Zina, 2021). Support systems such as emotional, informational, and instrumental contribute to producing high-quality research outputs and facilitate the career development of researchers.

Emotional Support Needs

Emotional support is among the needs of researchers for their well-being and motivation as it contributes to resilience, stress management, and the demanding process of research (Yin, 2018). The shared emotional support needs imply that schools may consider faculty research mentoring programs to enhance the research culture within the school. The participant's responses indicate that mentoring programs can create opportunities for collaboration, knowledge sharing, and professional networking among faculty members. It was supported by Abbott-Anderson et al. (2016), who suggest that mentoring can foster an environment where faculty members can develop their research interests.

Instrumental Support Needs

The need for instrumental support in educational settings such as tangible resources, tools, and practical assistance, allows optimal functioning of educational initiatives. In writing research, the provisions of research software tools and training as needed by the participants may impact the accuracy of results, integrity, quality, and duration of projects conducted by the teachers. The impact of research tools on research quality and management is substantial as it enhances accuracy and efficiency (Molléri et al., 2018). Merriam and Tisdell (2015) emphasized the importance of mastering research data analysis software for accurate results. Moreover, proficiency in data analysis facilitates efficient time management without compromising teaching responsibilities (Nguyen et al., 2014).

Informational Support Needs

A major role of informational support for researchers is to acquire necessary and updated knowledge and practices. In this study, participants' statements underscore the need for knowledge exchange and collaboration among local faculty members. Research training from international and national experts improves individuals' research skills (Staley et al., 2019). Schools may collaborate with national and international experts to share their research experiences, discuss challenges encountered, and exchange best practices. By providing faculty members with exposure to diverse perspectives, methodologies, and approaches in research, schools may provide support that will broaden their understanding, stimulate critical thinking, and enhance their overall research competencies (Albareda-Tiana et al., 2018; Willegems et al., 2017).

Addressing research needs is important for school leaders to improve education and the culture of continuous learning. Schools may consider creating a faculty research mentoring program as emotional support to enhance the research culture within the institution. Schools may also consider providing licensed professional accounts, comprehensive training, and support for research software applications, as instrumental support is important in producing quality and timely research. The schools may also consider providing the participants with exposure to seminars and training from national and international experts

to foster knowledge exchange, inspire excellence, and provide a global outlook to enrich their research pursuits. The schools may consider the mentioned needs of the participants to create a faculty research support program.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study examines the support received by private senior high school English teachers, specifically how it corresponds to their emotional, instrumental, and informational support needs. This study corroborates prior research findings and can be a basis for private institutions aiming to meet the teachers' research needs.

The private schools provide emotional, instrumental, and informational support for the teachers in writing research. The emotional support received by the participants, such as encouragement, sympathy, and recognition, positively influenced their behavior toward writing research. The instrumental support through funding, incentives, and provisions of materials and facilities influenced their research management and motivation. Furthermore, the informational support received by the participants offers essential knowledge to learn and complete research projects. It verifies the theoretical framework of social support, which stresses its positive influence on research behavior and emphasizes the theory's relevance in sustaining a favorable environment for effective research engagement.

Identified needs include faculty mentoring, research software access, and expert collaboration, emphasizing the need for targeted support to enhance the teachers' research skills. It aligns with the theoretical underpinnings of social support theory. It implies the potential creation of a research support program that may strategically address the specific needs, further reinforcing the theory's application in establishing a comprehensive and support system to enhance teachers' research capabilities.

The holistic perspective in developing a research support program may be integrated into existing educational theories, emphasizing the interdependent relationship between a supportive environment and the professional growth of teachers. The study also anchored on developing future educational theories, emphasizing on the

role of social support in fostering effective teaching practices. Schools may use this study to enhance their support structures for teachers, creating avenues for collaboration, providing necessary resources, and improving a culture that values and recognizes research efforts. Policymakers, educators, and administrators can collectively work towards creating an environment that acknowledges the nature of teacher support and actively addresses its dimensions to promote a conducive atmosphere for research and professional development.

The limitation of this study can be found in the choice of participants. The researchers should also consider administrators and students to explore further the research culture of private schools in the region. Participants may provide valuable data for extensive theoretical saturation for theory creation.

Future research could focus on the comparative analysis between private and public school teachers, exploration of specific institutional interventions, investigation into the role of technology in research, and the benefits of interdisciplinary collaboration, which would provide valuable insights for enhancing targeted support and refining strategies to bolster research capabilities among these educators.

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