

Peer Support and Academic Adjustment among Stem-11 Students in a Faith-Based School

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ABSTRACT

This study looked at how peer support affects adjustment for Grade 11 STEM students at a faith-based school. The goal was to see how peer support these students get in terms of emotional help, information and practical assistance as well as how well they adjust to school in terms of staying engaged handling stress and managing their time. The researchers used a survey to collect data from 150 Grade 11 STEM students at Mindanao Mission Academy in the Philippines. They made sure every student had a chance of being selected. The survey questions were based on tested ones. The results showed that these students generally get moderate to levels of peer support especially when it comes to emotional and practical help. They also do moderately well in adjusting to school with most of them being engaged in their studies. The researchers found a connection between peer support and how well students adjust to school. They also found that getting information from peers helps students cope with stress and emotional support helps them manage their time better. These findings are important because they show how peer support can help students deal with the challenges of STEM education in a faith-based school. The study can help teachers and school administrators understand how to support their students. For example they can set up peer mentoring programs, group study sessions and wellness programs to help students stay motivated and do well in school. More research is needed to understand how things, like self-confidence and motivation affect how students adjust to school.

Keywords: Peer support, Academic adjustment, STEM students, Faith-based education, Senior high school

INTRODUCTION

Introduce the problem

Academic adjustment is a crucial aspect of student success, particularly for senior high school students enrolled in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) programs. The transition to higher academic demands often requires students to develop effective coping mechanisms and social support networks. Peer support, in particular, has been widely recognized as an essential factor that fosters motivation, enhances emotional resilience, and promotes collaborative learning (Camacho-Morles et al., 2021). Globally, studies have shown that students in rigorous STEM programs often struggle with stress, burnout, and decreased academic engagement when peer interaction and support are lacking. These findings emphasize the universal importance of social connectedness in educational performance and psychological well-being.

In the Philippines, STEM students face similar struggles. The Department of Education has repeatedly emphasized the importance of strengthening student support systems to help address issues like academic pressure, performance anxiety, and the challenges of adapting to rigorous curricula. Many Filipino students find it difficult to balance their academic responsibilities with their mental and emotional health, especially in competitive environments. This challenge becomes even more complex in faith-based schools, where learning goes beyond academics and also focuses on moral and spiritual growth. In these settings, faith-based values can shape peer relationships and influence how students cope with academic and emotional challenges.

At the local level, these realities are clearly seen among Grade 11 STEM students in faith-based schools. These students must manage demanding academic requirements while staying true to their school's spiritual values. Peers often become sources of both academic help and spiritual encouragement, but there is still limited understanding of how these peer interactions affect students' overall adjustment to school life. Shao et al. (2024) noted that most existing studies on peer support focus on college or general student populations, leaving a gap when it comes to senior high school students in religious settings. Likewise, Worley et al. (2023) called for more research on how faith-based values influence peer dynamics and their impact on students' motivation, hope, and coping strategies.

This study aims to fill that gap by exploring how peer support affects the academic adjustment of Grade 11 STEM students in a faith-based institution. It looks into how emotional, academic, and spiritual aspects of peer relationships help students adapt to the challenges of STEM education. By focusing on this unique setting, the study hopes to offer insights that can guide educators, counselors, and policymakers in designing culturally and spiritually sensitive peer support programs that enhance student engagement, resilience, and overall well-being. Ultimately, the findings aim to contribute to broader discussions both locally and globally on how social and spiritual support networks can enrich students' learning experiences in faith-centered environments.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of peer support among STEM 11 students in terms of:

1.1 Emotional support

1.2 Informational support

1.3 Instrumental support

2. What is the level of academic adjustment among STEM 11 students in terms of:

2.1 Academic engagement

2.2 Coping with academic stress

2.3 Time management and meeting academic requirements

3. Is there a significant relationship between peer support and academic adjustment among Grade 11 STEM students?

Research Hypothesis

H₀: There is no significant relationship between peer support and academic adjustment among Grade 11 STEM students in a faith-based school.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Peer Support

Shao et al. (2024) demonstrated that among junior high students, peer relationships exert both direct and indirect influences on academic achievement, with learning motivation and engagement acting as sequential mediators. These findings affirm the importance of motivational and engagement processes as conduits through which peer-related dynamics impact students' academic outcomes. Given our focus on peer support dimensions and academic adjustment—including engagement, coping, and time management—Shao et al.'s model provides a valuable theoretical and empirical framework that suggests possible pathways and mediators to examine within our own faith-based, senior high school context.

According to Bradley et al. (2021), support from peers and parents promotes adolescent relationships and psychological connections to school, which has a negative association with student engagement and a positive association with academic engagement. The findings provide evidence of the importance of adolescent relationships—peer and parental support—in academic engagement, especially in the faith-based, STEM-11 environment, which typically takes place during the adolescent period of students.

A key contribution to this discourse is provided by Tinajero et al. (2020), who examined Spanish university students and found that perceived social support strongly predicted academic success. Importantly, their findings revealed that both peer and family support enhanced academic adjustment by reinforcing students' sense of belonging and reducing stress in demanding learning environments. This aligns with the present study's emphasis on the multifaceted dimensions of peer support and suggests that in faith-based schools—where community and shared values are emphasized—social support may exert an even greater impact on students' adjustment.

While recent studies have highlighted the impact of peer support, Amalia and Latifah (2019) focused on parental support and found positive effects on first-year students in terms of academic emotions, learning strategies, and academic achievement. Their study revealed that emotional and instrumental support from parents was perceived as notably high by most students, with emotional support closely linked to positive academic emotions such as enjoyment, hope, and pride. Instrumental support was similarly rated highly, with more than half of the students acknowledging tangible assistance from their parents. Conversely, informational support, which includes guidance on college majors and career opportunities, received relatively low ratings, with only about 14.5% of students reporting high levels of this type of support.

Social support plays a crucial role in school adjustment during secondary education, significantly predicting students' school engagement, with perceived academic performance serving as a mediating factor. Among various sources of social support, teacher support exerts the strongest positive influence on school adjustment, followed by family support, whereas support from friends does not show a direct significant effect on school adjustment variables. The study emphasizes that both teachers and families should actively provide social support to reinforce students' perceived academic self-efficacy and enhance school engagement. This, in turn, promotes better school adjustment and helps reduce the risks of academic failure and dropout during secondary education (Fernández Lasarte et al., 2020). Significantly, social support plays a vital role in strengthening students' academic engagement because it contributes to greater life satisfaction and motivation. When students feel supported by their peers, teachers, and families, they are more likely to experience a positive outlook on their studies, even staying committed to their academic goals, and persisting even when faced with challenges (Chen et al., 2023).

Within the context of healthcare transitions and recovery, Schultz et al. (2022) emphasized the importance of understanding instrumental support, noting that it extends beyond emotional and informational assistance. They highlighted that instrumental support functions as a crucial component of care, providing practical help and support systems that contribute to improved health outcomes and patient well-being. Additionally, support can now be accessed almost anywhere, whether through face-to-face social interactions or virtual connections in online communities. Nick et al. (2018) developed the Online Social Support Scale (OSSS) to examine how various forms of support received through online platforms relate to positive outcomes during stress or adversity. Their study demonstrated that different online environments foster distinct types of support—such as emotional, informational, or instrumental—and that online social support can play a similar protective role to in-person support by helping individuals better cope with challenges and maintain psychological well-being.

Academic Engagement

Zhu et al. (2025) found that among higher vocational college students, perceived peer support had a direct and positive influence on academic adjustment. Their study further identified a chain-mediated mechanism in which peer support fostered academic hope, which in turn strengthened professional identity, ultimately enhancing academic adjustment. Grounded in Conservation of Resources and Social Support theories, their findings highlight psychological hope and identity as critical pathways through which peer support affects student outcomes. In the context of our study involving Grade 11 STEM students in a faith-based school, similar

mediating mechanisms may be present—suggesting that academic hope or identity (e.g., spiritual or self-efficacy) could serve as potential mediators between peer support and dimensions of academic adjustment such as engagement, stress coping, and time management.

Worley et al. (2023) demonstrated that peer support among college students enhanced academic competence while reducing academic anxiety, underscoring its role as both a coping mechanism and a confidence-building resource. Collectively, these studies establish that peer support significantly shapes academic outcomes by fostering motivation, engagement, hope, identity, competence, and stress management. These insights provide a strong theoretical foundation for the present study, which seeks to examine how different forms of peer support—emotional, informational, and instrumental—relate to the academic adjustment of Grade 11 STEM students in a faith-based school, particularly in terms of engagement, coping with stress, and time management.

Camacho-Morles et al. (2021) conducted a meta-analysis examining the relationship between achievement emotions and academic performance across multiple studies, revealing that students' emotional experiences—such as enjoyment, pride, anxiety, and boredom—were significantly associated with academic outcomes. Positive achievement emotions, including enjoyment and pride, were strongly linked to higher academic performance, while negative emotions such as anxiety and boredom tended to hinder achievement. The study emphasized that emotions play a critical role in motivating students, shaping their engagement, and influencing their persistence in academic tasks. This is relevant to the present research as it demonstrates how emotional experiences directly affect academic adjustment, with peer support contributing to the shaping of these emotions by reducing anxiety, providing encouragement, and fostering motivation. In the context of Grade 11 STEM students in a faith-based school, peer support may therefore function not only as an external academic resource but also as a source of positive achievement emotions that enhance resilience and performance, thereby supporting the study's focus on the link between peer support and academic adjustment.

Sengsouliya et al. (2020) explored how different factors such as motivation, learning environment, and social relationships—affect students' academic engagement. Their study found that positive peer interactions and emotional support play a vital role in helping students stay motivated and involved in their studies. When students feel supported by their classmates, they are more likely to participate actively, manage challenges effectively, and stay committed to their academic goals. This connection between peer support and academic engagement highlights how relationships within the classroom can influence students' ability to adjust academically. In the context of the present study, these findings emphasize the importance of fostering supportive peer relationships among STEM-11 students in a faith-based school, where a sense of community and shared values can further strengthen students' academic adjustment and overall well-being.

According to Sivagami and Samundeeswari (2023), college students often face significant academic stress that can affect their ability to perform and adapt effectively to academic demands. Their study found that students who developed healthy coping mechanisms—such as time management, emotional regulation, and seeking social support were better able to adjust to academic pressures and maintain positive learning outcomes. The researchers emphasized that academic adjustment involves not only managing academic workload but also maintaining psychological well-being and motivation in the learning process. In the context of the present study, these findings highlight the importance of helping STEM-11 students in a faith-based school develop effective coping strategies as part of their academic adjustment. By fostering resilience and adaptive responses to stress, students are more likely to remain engaged, perform well, and experience a smoother transition within the rigorous STEM academic environment. Building on the concept of student engagement, Davenport Huyer et al. (2020) found that an inclusive, inquiry-based program significantly enhanced both engagement and academic performance among senior high school students. Participants showed increased motivation, curiosity, and a stronger sense of ownership over their learning, displaying greater willingness to ask questions, engage with complex problems, and collaborate with their peers.

Iskandar et al. (2024) investigated how emotion regulation and gender influence academic stress among STEM students in Islamic universities. Their study revealed that students who are better able to manage their emotions tend to experience lower levels of academic stress and demonstrate stronger academic adjustment. Effective emotion regulation allows students to maintain focus, motivation, and self-control, even when facing challenging academic tasks. Moreover, the study noted subtle gender differences in stress response and adjustment patterns,

suggesting that emotional and social factors interact in shaping how students adapt to academic demands. These findings are particularly relevant to the present study, as they emphasize the importance of emotional stability and coping strategies in promoting academic adjustment among STEM-11 students in a faith-based school setting. By understanding how emotional regulation contributes to academic well-being, educators can better support students in managing stress and adapting successfully to the rigorous expectations of the STEM curriculum.

In addition to literature on time management and coping with stress, Gallardo-Lolandes et al. (2020) concludes that improving time management skills can effectively reduce academic stress among university students and suggests certain interventions to address this issue. Factors that contribute to time management behaviors—specifically procrastination, prioritizing, and planning—had a significant impact on task completion among the students. To complete schoolwork on time, students need to stay organized and attentive when working on projects and academic tasks, helping them avoid missed deadlines (Jayme et al., 2023). Most students reported that academic-related factors were their main source of stress, followed by interpersonal and intrapersonal challenges. Even within the college environment, they primarily managed stress through prayer, watching movies, and confiding in peers or parents, reflecting a lack of adequate support systems (Sailo and Varghese, 2024).

As students continue to face the challenges of academic stress within the curriculum, higher levels of stress lead to lower academic engagement in performing student requirements. According to Manzoor and Ahmed (2023), managing stress and promoting effective coping strategies are essential for enhancing students' academic engagement, as students who utilize more adaptive coping methods tend to demonstrate higher levels of engagement in their studies. A key to effective time management also requires a dynamic self-regulation process to continually monitor one's strategies, goals and behaviors to meet time management expertise (Yadav et al., 2023). The study highlights key strategies such as self-awareness, prioritization, adaptive planning, and progress monitoring, which enable students to make real-time adjustments to their work.

MATERIALS & METHODS

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to determine the relationship between peer support and academic adjustment among Grade 11 STEM students in a faith-based school. The descriptive aspect was used to assess the levels of peer support and academic adjustment, while the correlational approach was used to examine the relationship between the two variables.

Sampling Methods

The study population consists of 150 Grade 11 STEM students in a Faith-Based School, particularly at Mindanao Mission Academy. A Random Sampling method will be used to select participants, where each student has an equal chance of being chosen. This approach represents the entire population, reducing selection bias and allowing the results to be generalized more confidently. Random Sampling also enhances the statistical validity of the study by providing a fair and unbiased basis for analysis, making it an appropriate method for this research.

Data Collection

The data were collected through a structured survey questionnaire consisting of two parts. The Peer Support Scale in the first part measured emotional, informational, and instrumental peer support in the context of a faith school. The second part, Academic Adjustment Scale (looking into social engagement factors like academic engagement and coping with peers), covered academic engagement, academic stress coping, and time management. They were scored using a 5-point Likert scale with ratings from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). The questionnaire was derived from existing validated surveys and revised to suit the faith-based school context. Particularly, items were adapted and revised from the following instruments: The Online Social Support Scale (Nick et al., 2018), the Mental Health Peer Support Questionnaire, the Simple Student Engagement Survey Template, the Stress Coping Style Inventory, the Time Management Questionnaire, and the Social Support Questionnaire. Reliability tests also revealed high internal consistency across all subscales: Emotional Support (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.858$), Informational Support (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.852$), Instrumental Support

(Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.852$), Academic Engagement (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.893$), Coping with Academic Stress (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.892$), and Time Management (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.950$).

Prior to the administration of the survey, approval was obtained from the school administration. The study was explained to the participants by the researchers, highlighting confidentiality of the responses and voluntary participation. The questionnaires were administered outside of class hours to prevent interruption of classes and were collected immediately on completion. The data so collected were coded, arranged, and analyzed with the help of suitable statistical tools. Descriptive statistics like mean and standard deviation were calculated to arrive at the levels of peer support and academic adjustment. Pearson correlation was used to establish the significant relationship between the two variables.

Variable Measurement

Table 1 5-point Likert scale Interpretation Table

Scale	Range	Verbal Interpretation
5	4.21 – 5.00	Strongly Agree / Very High
4	3.41 – 4.20	Agree / High
3	2.61 – 3.40	Neutral / Moderate
2	1.81 – 2.60	Disagree / Low
1	1.00 – 1.80	Strongly Disagree / Very Low

The chart above illustrates the method for interpreting responses using a 5-point Likert scale. Each step is defined by a specific range and a clear designation. This facilitates understanding the degree of agreement or disagreement, as well as the intensity of respondents' feelings. Responses are categorized from "Strongly Disagree/Very Low" to "Strongly Agree/Very High." This provides an effective means of analyzing survey data. It ensures that we obtain clear and consistently meaningful information from forms and research instruments.

Table 2

Construct / Scale	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	Interpretation
Emotional Support	0.858	Very Good
Informal Support	0.852	Very Good
Instrumental Support	0.852	Very Good
Academic Engagement	0.893	Excellent
Coping Academic Strategy	0.892	Excellent
Time Management	0.950	Excellent

The table above shows how reliable each part of the questionnaire is based on Cronbach's Alpha (α), a measure of how consistently the items in each section reflect the same idea. In simpler terms, it tells us whether the questions under each category truly work well together in measuring what they are meant to measure. The results show alpha values ranging from **0.852 to 0.950**, which are considered **very good to excellent**. This means that the items on Emotional Support, Informal Support, Instrumental Support, Academic Engagement, Coping Academic Strategy, and Time Management are all highly consistent and reliable. In other words, the participants'

responses can be trusted to accurately represent their views and experiences, providing a strong and dependable foundation for the study’s analysis.

Data Analysis

The study employed both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics, such as mean and standard deviation, were used to determine the levels of peer support (emotional, informational, and instrumental) and academic adjustment (academic engagement, coping with stress, and time management) among STEM 11 students. To address the research question on the relationship between peer support and academic adjustment, inferential statistics were utilized, specifically Pearson’s r correlation coefficient, to test whether a significant relationship exists between the two variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this section is to present the findings of the study regarding the relationship between Peer Support and Academic Adjustment among Senior High School Students in faith-based STEM programs. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were employed to analyze the data collected from the survey instruments.

The level of peer support among senior high school students in terms of (*Emotional support, Informational support, Instrumental support*)

Table 3 Level of Emotional Support of Students

Emotional Support	Mean	SD	Remarks
1. There is a special person with whom you can share joys and sorrows.	3.83	1.25	High
2. Your friends really try to help you.	3.53	1.07	High
3. You can count on your friends when things go wrong.	3.36	1.13	Moderate
4. Your family is willing to help you make decisions.	3.66	1.09	High
5. You can really talk about your problems with your family.	3.07	1.26	Moderate
6. Your family really tries to help you.	3.61	1.17	High
7. You get the emotional help and support you need from your family.	3.63	1.25	High
Overall	3.53	1.17	High

The results in Table 3 reveal that students generally perceive a moderate to high level of emotional support, as reflected by the overall mean of 3.53 (“High”). They feel that there are significant people in their lives, such as friends and family, who try to help them and provide the support they need. Strongest agreement is shown in having a special person to share joys and sorrows (M = 3.83), while areas that received neutral responses include counting on friends during difficulties (M = 3.36) and discussing problems with family (M = 3.07). This suggests that while students appreciate support from both family and friends, there are still challenges in open communication within the family and in relying on peers during tough situations.

These results align with Worley et al. (2023), who found that peer support not only enhances academic competence but also reduces academic anxiety. Emotional support functions as both a coping mechanism and a confidence-building resource, allowing students to feel more secure in navigating academic and personal challenges. Similarly, Camacho-Morles et al. (2021) emphasized the role of achievement emotions such as anxiety and enjoyment in shaping academic performance. The presence of emotional support in this study can

be understood as contributing to positive emotions while buffering against negative ones, which in turn facilitates students’ academic adjustment.

In addition, Amalia & Latifah (2019) demonstrated that parental emotional support is significantly correlated with positive academic emotions, which in turn relate to better learning strategy use and higher achievement among first-year university students. Furthermore, “Can Perceived Social Support Influence Academic Achievement of Master’s Students?” (2019) revealed that emotional dimensions of social support (including encouragement and reassurance) directly predict academic achievement, mediated by academic emotions.

Table 4 Level of Informational Support of Students

Informational Support	Mean	SD	Remarks
1. I have people who give me useful advice when I need to make important decisions.	3.56	1.16	High
2. When I face a problem, someone provides me with helpful suggestions.	3.45	1.13	High
3. I know people who share information with me that helps me understand my situation better.	3.50	1.06	High
4. When I need to learn something new, I can find someone willing to explain it to me.	3.46	1.03	High
I receive clear and practical guidance that helps me handle challenges.	3.38	1.01	Moderate
6. People around me give me information that makes me feel more confident about what I’m doing.	3.41	1.13	High
7. I can easily find someone who explains things clearly when I don’t understand something.	3.39	1.00	Moderate
8. People provide me with resources or information that help me solve my problems.	3.34	0.98	Moderate

Table 4 shows that students generally perceive a moderate level of informational support, with an overall mean of 3.44 (“High”). The highest-rated item was having people who give useful advice when making important decisions (M = 3.56), indicating that students value guidance when faced with significant choices. Similarly, they agreed that peers and others provide helpful suggestions (M = 3.45) and share information that helps them understand situations better (M = 3.50). However, neutral responses appeared in areas such as receiving clear and practical guidance (M = 3.38), finding someone who explains things clearly (M = 3.39), and being provided with resources to solve problems (M = 3.34). These results suggest that while students have access to general advice and information, more concrete and practical forms of support (like resources and detailed explanations) are less consistently available.

This result is supported by the findings of Shao et al. (2024), who demonstrated that peer relationships influence academic achievement indirectly through motivation and engagement. Informational support by providing advice and suggestions can foster motivation and engagement by clarifying academic demands. Similarly, Zhu et al. (2025) highlighted that peer support fosters academic hope and identity, which mediate academic adjustment. Informational support, therefore, not only gives practical guidance but also strengthens students’ confidence and sense of purpose, leading to improved engagement and adjustment in their studies. In the same context, Worley et al. (2023) reported that consistent peer support significantly predicts later academic competence, indicating that such supportive relationships yield long-term academic benefits.

Table 5 Level of Instrumental Support of Students

Instrumental Support	Mean	SD	Remarks
1. I have someone who can provide me with a safe place to stay if needed.	3.6	1.14	Moderate
2. I have someone who can help me run errands when I am busy or unwell.	3.37	1.06	Moderate
3. I have someone who can help me prepare meals or provide food when I cannot do it myself.	3.48	1.21	High
4. I have someone who can give me a ride if I need transportation.	3.39	1.15	Moderate
5. I have someone who can lend me useful tools, equipment, or supplies when necessary.	3.47	1.05	High
6. I have someone who can provide me with money or things I need in an emergency.	3.55	1.14	High
7. I have someone who can take me to the doctor if I need it.	3.47	1.13	High
Overall	3.48	1.13	High

Table 5 presents the level of instrumental support received by students, with an overall mean of 3.48 (“High”), indicating that students moderately agree that they receive practical help from others. The highest-rated support was having someone provide money or necessary things in an emergency (M = 3.55), showing that students can rely on others in urgent situations. They also agreed on receiving help in preparing meals or food (M = 3.48), borrowing tools or supplies when needed (M = 3.47), and being taken to the doctor if necessary (M = 3.47). However, neutral responses appeared on support related to running errands (M = 3.37), getting a ride for transportation (M = 3.39), and having a safe place to stay if needed (M = 3.60). This suggests that while students perceive reliable help in emergencies and health-related matters, everyday instrumental needs such as errands and transportation are not as consistently supported.

The results correspond to Tinajero et al. (2020), who demonstrated that perceived social support from peers and family predicts academic achievement. This suggests that different dimensions of social support enhance the academic adjustment and persistence of the students. Likewise, Schultz (2022) emphasized that instrumental support, such as providing financial aid, transportation, or practical help, plays a vital role in reducing stress and improving one’s ability to concentrate on academic tasks. Similarly, Chen et al. (2023) found that perceived social support positively influences students’ academic engagement and performance, indicating that supportive relationships and tangible assistance foster both motivation and effective learning behaviors. Overall, these findings highlight that students who feel supported in their material and practical needs tend to demonstrate greater academic persistence and adjustment.

The level of academic adjustment among senior high school students in terms of (*Academic engagement, Coping with academic stress, Time management, and meeting academic requirements*)

Table 6 Level of Academic Engagement of Students

Academic Engagement	Mean	SD	Remarks
1. I made myself ready in all my subjects.	3.27	0.92	Moderate
2. I pay attention and listen during every discussion.	3.51	0.93	High

3. I want to get good grades in every subject.	3.97	1.09	High
4. I actively participate in every discussion.	3.43	0.91	High
5. I start papers and projects as soon as they are assigned.	3.37	0.98	Moderate
6. I enjoy homework and activities because they help me improve my skills in every subject.	3.31	1.04	Moderate
7. Solving problems is a useful hobby for me.	3.29	1.03	Moderate
Overall	3.45	0.98	High

Table 5 shows the level of academic engagement among STEM 11 students, with an overall mean of 3.45 (SD = 0.98) interpreted as “High,” which indicates that students are generally engaged in their academics. They expressed high motivation to earn good grades (M = 3.97) and attentiveness during discussions (M = 3.51), demonstrating a willingness to participate in classroom learning. However, neutral responses in areas such as starting projects early (M = 3.37) and enjoying homework for skill development (M = 3.31) suggest that some students may still struggle with consistency and intrinsic motivation.

While STEM-11 students in this study showed motivation to achieve good grades and attentiveness in class, their neutral responses toward starting tasks early and enjoying academic work suggest some inconsistency in engagement. Similar patterns were observed in the study of Sengsouliya et al. (2020), where students demonstrated strong behavioral and emotional engagement, but their level of cognitive engagement was comparatively lower. Both studies highlight that while internal motivation plays a key role, external factors such as supportive peer relationships and teacher encouragement are crucial in sustaining academic engagement. In addition to literature, students who used more coping strategies, especially problem-focused ones, were more engaged in school work, meaning students who face stress and actively try to manage it are better able to stay involved in learning. (Manzoor & Ahmed, 2023). Students become more engaged in their academics when an inquiry-based learning program is integrated into regular STEM classes, as such programs promote greater engagement, consistent attendance, active participation, increased motivation, and improved achievement in STEM education (Davenport Huyer et al., 2020).

Table 7 Level of Coping with Academic Stress of Students

Coping with Academic Stress	Mean	SD	Remarks
1. I've been concentrating my efforts on doing something about the situation I'm in.	3.42	0.93	High
2. I've been trying to come up with a strategy about what to do.	3.41	0.88	High
3. I've been trying to get advice or help from other people about what to do.	3.34	0.94	Moderate
4. I've been getting help and advice from other people.	3.33	0.97	Moderate
5. I've been learning to live with it.	3.51	0.96	High
6. I've been trying to see it in a different light, to make it seem more positive.	3.54	1.00	High
7. I've been getting comfort and understanding from someone.	3.41	1.04	High
Overall	3.42	0.96	High

Table 7 displays the level of managing academic stress among STEM 11 students. The average score of 3.42 (SD = 0.96) is classified in the "High" category, suggesting that students typically employ positive coping strategies when dealing with academic stress. The behavior with the highest rating was "I've been trying to see it in a different light, to make it seem more positive." (M = 3.54), indicating that numerous students employ reframing and optimism as strategies for handling stress. In the same way, students concurred that they are learning to live with stress in any circumstances (M = 3.51) and are making focused efforts to tackle difficulties (M = 3.42). Conversely, items concerning the direct pursuit of advice or assistance from others (M = 3.34 and M = 3.33) garnered neutral feedback, indicating that students are less willing to depend on outside help from others. Overall, the findings indicate that although students utilize adaptive coping strategies like problem-solving and positive reframing, they could still find it challenging to seek interpersonal support.

The findings of this research align with the existing body of literature that emphasizes how students manage academic stress through both internal and external methods. Sailo and Varghese (2024) indicated that college students frequently utilize coping strategies such as prayer, watching films, and discussing their issues with friends, parents, or educators, which illustrates a combination of emotion-focused and social coping techniques. Conversely, our study's results reveal that STEM-11 students predominantly depend on internal strategies such as positive reframing and problem-solving, while having that hesitance to seek interpersonal support. This difference suggests that while coping strategies are generally beneficial, the importance of peer support—especially within a faith-oriented educational setting—might be amplified to encourage students to pursue help, express their challenges, and develop resilience in managing academic stress. According to Sivagami and Samundeeswari (2023), some strategies the students would utilize are health-promoting, like time management, mindfulness, or seeking help from others. However, many of them refrain from seeking formal support or counseling and often try to handle stress independently, which may lead to ineffective or harmful coping strategies. Resilient students are able to manage academic stress more effectively by maintaining positive thinking and employing proactive coping strategies to navigate challenging situations (Iskandar et al., 2024).

Table 8 Level of Time management and meeting academic requirements of Students

Time management and meeting academic requirements	Mean	SD	Remarks
1. I accomplish what needs to be done during the day.	3.24	0.97	Moderate
2. I always get assignments done on time.	3.27	0.93	Moderate
3. I am able to meet deadlines without rushing at the last minute.	3.23	0.97	Moderate
4. I spend enough time on academic matters.	3.29	1.01	Moderate
5. I have a clear idea of what I want to accomplish during the coming semester.	3.36	0.98	Moderate
6. I prevent interruptions from distracting me from high priority tasks.	3.34	0.97	Moderate
7. I prepare a daily or weekly "to-do" list.	3.15	1.15	Moderate
8. I keep Up-to-date on my reading and homework assignments.	3.29	1.06	Moderate
Overall	3.27	1.00	Moderate

Table 8 displays the extent of time management and capacity to fulfill academic obligations among 11 STEM students. The average score of 3.27 (SD = 1.00) lies in the "Moderate" category, suggesting that students practice effective time management strategies to a moderate extent. In all areas, including completing daily activities, adhering to deadlines, organizing schedules, and remaining informed about academic obligations, the replies uniformly produced neutral comments. This indicates that although students show some understanding and

attempt in organizing their time, they may still find it challenging to maintain consistency and effectiveness in balancing their academic duties.

The findings of this research align with current literature emphasizing the significance of time management for students' academic achievement. Jayme et al. (2023) discovered that skills in time management, including planning, prioritizing, and minimizing procrastination, greatly affect STEM students' capacity to finish academic assignments punctually. In the context of our current research, the neutral replies concerning time management indicate that, although students acknowledge its importance, they face challenges in consistently applying it. This suggests that peer support could serve a reinforcing function by promoting accountability and motivation, assisting students in building better time management skills and, as a result, adapting more efficiently to academic pressures. In the study of Gallardo-Lolandes et al. (2020), the exhibition of better time management skills tended to report lower levels of academic stress, and since most students' remarks report moderate in the table, effective time management appeared to improve students' capacity to deal with stress in a healthier, more adaptive way. Survey results indicate that STEM students generally demonstrate a moderate ability to manage their time. Nevertheless, their flexibility, reflected in their capacity for adaptive planning and self-monitoring, enables them to handle demanding workloads more effectively (Yadav et al., 2023). Overall, those who exhibit stronger self-regulation tend to manage their time with greater success.

The significant relationship between peer support and academic adjustment among senior high school students

Table 9 Correlation Matrix

		Peer Support			
Academic Adjustment		Emotional Support	Informational Support	Instrumental Support	Peer Support
Academic Engagement	Pearson's r	0.54	0.6	0.585	0.661
	df	148	147	148	147
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001
Coping with Academic Stress	Pearson's r	0.501	0.739	0.657	0.716
	df	147	146	147	146
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001
Time Management	Pearson's r	0.441	0.475	0.446	0.515
	df	148	147	148	147
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001
Academic Adjustment	Pearson's r	0.556	0.678	0.632	0.708
	df	147	146	147	146
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001
<i>Sig. at *p-value < 0.05, **p-value < 0.01, ***p-value < 0.001</i>					

Based on the correlational analysis, a significant positive relationship exists between peer support and academic adjustment among STEM 11 senior students. The results of the Pearson correlation analysis indicate a strong, statistically significant correlation between overall peer support and overall academic adjustment, $r(146) = .708$, $p < .001$. This suggests that as the level of peer support increases, students' academic adjustment also tends to improve. Further examination of the sub-variables supports this finding, showing significant positive correlations between each type of peer support (emotional, informational, and instrumental) and each aspect of academic adjustment (academic engagement, coping with academic stress, and time management). For example, the relationship between informational support and coping with academic stress was the strongest, $r(146) = .739$, $p < .001$. Similarly, the weakest but still significant correlation was found between emotional support and time management, $r(148) = .441$, $p < .001$.

The consistent and highly significant p -values ($p < .001$) across all tested relationships confirm that the positive correlations are not due to chance. These findings collectively demonstrate that peer support is a vital factor in students' ability to successfully navigate the academic environment. The data show that the more supported students feel by their peers, the better they are at managing their academic responsibilities, engaging with their schoolwork, and handling academic stress. The results align with the initial research question and reject the null hypothesis: "There is no significant relationship between peer support and academic adjustment", providing strong evidence that there is a significant relationship between peer support and academic adjustment in this student population.

Concerning the current literature, the results of this research regarding Peer Support and Academic Adjustment in STEM-11 Students at a Faith-Based School are consistent with wider studies highlighting the significance of social support in helping students adapt to academic adjustments. emphasized that perceived social support, especially from teachers and families, is a strong predictor of school adjustments, whereas peer support tends to have weaker or indirect impacts. However, in our study, peer support showed a strong and meaningful positive correlation with academic adjustment, indicating that in a faith-based school environment, peers may have a more vital role in enhancing engagement, handling stress, and overseeing academic duties. This difference highlights the distinctive cultural and social setting of faith-based institutions, where peer connections might be more closely intertwined with academic and emotional growth, thus enhancing their impact on students' academic adjustments.

These results are consistent with previous research emphasizing the crucial role of peer relationships in students' academic success and overall well-being. Zhu et al. (2025) found that perceived peer support significantly promotes academic adjustment among higher vocational college students by fostering academic hope and professional identity, which in turn enhances students' confidence and optimism toward their studies. This suggests that supportive peers do more than simply assist; they strengthen students' sense of purpose and motivation to succeed. Similarly, Shao et al. (2024) revealed that positive peer relationships can improve academic achievement by enhancing students' motivation and engagement, a finding that aligns with the present study's results showing strong correlations between peer support, academic engagement, and coping with stress. When students feel supported by their peers, they are more involved in learning and better able to manage academic challenges. In addition, Worley et al. (2023) demonstrated that peer support contributes to greater academic competence and lower anxiety among college students, further highlighting how supportive peer networks can protect students' mental health while improving their academic performance.

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATION, AND CONCLUSION

Summary

This study gathered data from 150 STEM students at Mindanao Mission Academy using a survey that measured their levels of peer support and academic adjustment. Results showed that most students experienced moderate to high levels of support from their peers, especially in emotional and informational areas. They also demonstrated moderate levels of academic adjustment, with stronger engagement in class, but some challenges in time management.

The findings revealed a strong positive link between peer support and academic adjustment. In other words, students who felt encouraged and guided by their friends tended to manage stress better, stay more motivated, and perform well in their studies. Among the different types of support, informational support—such as giving advice or sharing useful insights—had the strongest influence on coping strategies. Overall, the study highlights how meaningful peer connections can help students thrive not only academically but also emotionally. It recommends that schools create more opportunities for collaboration, mentoring, and peer encouragement to help students build confidence, resilience, and a stronger sense of community within the classroom.

Recommendation

Future researchers are encouraged to further examine the relationship between peer support and academic adjustment by including other influential factors such as self-efficacy, motivation, and emotional resilience to gain a more comprehensive understanding of students' academic experiences. It is also suggested to conduct comparative studies among different strands or grade levels to determine whether variations in peer dynamics influence academic adjustment differently. Moreover, employing a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative data with qualitative insights, such as interviews or focus group discussions, could provide a deeper understanding of how peer relationships shape students' academic behaviors and coping mechanisms. Expanding the sample size and involving participants from various schools or learning environments may also enhance the reliability and generalizability of the findings. The results of this study emphasize the significant role of peer support in promoting academic adjustment among Grade 11 STEM students, suggesting that fostering positive peer relationships can lead to better academic and emotional outcomes. This implies that schools should design and implement programs that encourage collaboration, peer mentoring, and group learning activities to strengthen students' support systems within the academic setting. Educators and guidance counselors may also utilize the findings to develop strategies and interventions that nurture a supportive peer culture, which can help students manage academic challenges more effectively. Overall, the study underscores that peer support is a vital component of students' academic success and holistic development, highlighting its importance in creating a positive and inclusive learning environment.

Conclusion

The findings of this study revealed that peer support significantly influences the academic adjustment of Grade 11 STEM students in a faith-based school. Emotional, informational, and instrumental support were all found to have positive relationships with academic engagement, coping with stress, and time management. These results indicate that students who receive strong peer support in a Faith-based system are better able to manage the academic and personal demands of senior high school, particularly in a rigorous strand such as STEM.

While the study highlights the importance of peer support in shaping student adjustment, it also acknowledges certain limitations. The reliance on self-reported data and the focus on a single faith-based school limit the generalizability of the results. Future research may consider larger and more diverse populations, as well as qualitative methods to explore the lived experiences of students. Despite these limitations, the study provides evidence that strengthening peer support systems within schools can contribute to students' academic resilience, motivation, and overall well-being. Additionally, schools should actively foster programs and activities that support students' emotional and moral well-being, as these factors play a crucial role in their academic adjustment and overall school success. In faith-based institutions, such initiatives become even more meaningful, as they align with the values of holistic development, nurturing not only intellectual growth but also character, resilience, and interpersonal relationships. Although implementing these programs may be costly, the long-term benefits far outweigh the expenses. By prioritizing students' well-being, schools create environments where learners are more likely to thrive academically while also developing into well-rounded individuals prepared for future challenges.

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