FACULTY SOCIAL SUPPORT AND STUDENT WELL-BEING IN BOWEN UNIVERSITY, IWO, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Students' well-being encompassing physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and academic dimension remains a central concern for higher education institutions, particularly within faith-based universities where faculty roles often extend beyond academics to include emotional and spiritual guidance. Despite this expanded role, there is limited empirical evidence on how faculty contribute to students' well-being, the effectiveness of such contributions, and the challenges encountered. This study sets out to fill these gaps by investigating the roles, perceived impact, and challenges of faculty members in fostering student well-being at Bowen University, Iwo, Nigeria. A descriptive survey design was adopted, using a structured instrument titled "Role of Faculty Members in Support Systems for Students Questionnaire" (RFSSSQ). The sample consisted of 400 respondents, including 300 students and 100 faculty members selected through random sampling. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (independent samples t-test at 5% significance level). Findings indicated that majority of student respondents (60%) were aged 16–19. Faculty participants were predominantly aged 35–44 (40%) and male (60%), with most as Senior Lecturer (35%), Lecturer I/II (30%), and Assistant Lecturer (25%) positions. Key faculty roles identified included demonstrating genuine concern for students' well-being, being approachable for academic support, fostering spiritual growth, and creating a positive learning environment. As regards impact, faculty support significantly helped students' to overcome academic challenges, increased spiritual practices, reduced stress, and developed discipline and life purpose. However, faculty reported challenges such as mentoring-related burnout, student resistance, and feeling overwhelmed by increasing student needs. The study concludes that while faculty support is transformative for students' development, institutional recognition and structured support systems are crucial. It recommends formal mentoring frameworks, integration of emotional and spiritual guidance into staff training, and inclusion of such roles in faculty performance evaluation to improve both students' outcomes and faculty well-being.

Keywords: **Students, well-being, social support, faculty members, mental health**

Introduction

In recent years, concerns have intensified globally regarding the well-being of students in higher education institutions. In Nigeria, this concern is rampant within private and faith-based tertiary institutions, where students often face a complex mix of academic pressure, spiritual expectations, and emotional instability (Austin *et al..*, 2025). Among the various determinants of student well-being, social support has emerged as a critical protective factor that promotes resilience, academic engagement, and mental health stability (Ojo & Ogunmilugba, 2017; Chen *et al..*, 2023; Ruihua *et al..*, 2025).

Beyond the formal roles as educators, they function as mentors, advisors, and role models who shape students' academic experiences and psychosocial development, thus a unique position in the learning environment. Faculty support manifested through encouragement, accessibility, empathy, guidance, and constructive feedback can foster a sense of belonging, enhance academic confidence, and reduce stress. In

contrast, lack of support or negative interactions with faculty may contribute to feelings of isolation, anxiety, and disengagement (Wilson *et al..*, 2020). In faith-based universities, where moral, spiritual, and relational values are often emphasized, the role of faculty support becomes even more significant. These institutions typically promote holistic education that integrates academic excellence with character formation and spiritual growth, thereby positioning faculty as key agents in nurturing not only intellectual development but also emotional and spiritual wellbeing (Lee *et al.*, 2024; Grady, 2021).

Globally, the prevalence of mental health problems among University students, including self-harm and suicide, is on the rise. A study by Ochnik *et al.* (2021) revealed prevalence rates of stress (61.3%), depression (40.3%), generalized anxiety (30%), and comorbid depression and anxiety (24.5%). On the other hand**,** Peng *et al.* (2023) conducted a systematic review of 201 studies with 198,000 university students, findings showed d**e**pression (41%)**,** anxiety **(**38%)**,** stress **(**34%)**,** sleep disorders **(**52%)**,** psychological distress **(**58%)**,** post-traumatic stress disorder (34%)**,** suicidal **i**deation **(**15%)**,** burnout **(**38%). Consequently, in a comprehensive umbrella review synthesizing 1,655 primary studies with over 8.7 million university students, Paiva *et al.* (2025) reported mild depression (35.4%), severe depression (3.4%)**,** mild anxiety (40.2%)**,** severe anxiety (16.8%)**,** sleep disorders **(**41.1%)**, e**ating disorders **(**17.9%)**,** post-traumatic stress disorder **(**25.1%)**, s**tress **(**36.3%)**,** suicidal-ideation (20.3%) and suicidal attempt (3.4%).

The situation is even more pronounced in Africa, where structural, cultural, and economic challenges intersect to affect student wellbeing (Hassan *et al.*, 2022). Mental health issues among university students in Africa are often under recognized and under-resourced, partly due to stigma and limited access to mental health services (Mugotitsa *et al..*, 2025). In Nigeria, Falade *et al.* (2020) found that general mental health issues were **(**25.0%) while anxiety and depression was (14.3%) in a research done among 944 University students in Ekiti State. Also, Nwachukwu *et al.* (2021) documented anxiety prevalence (26.5%), depression (10.1%) in study carried out among 690 University of Ibadan students. Similarly, Anosike *et al.* (2022) reported depression prevalence of 71.8% and anxiety prevalence of 61.7% among 522 first-year students in University of Nigeria, Nsukka first-year undergraduate. Moreover, Adeleke *et al.* (2025) discovered mild anxiety (14.9%), moderate anxiety (10.4%), severe anxiety (1.9%), mild depression (11.2%), moderate 5.1%, severe 0.5% among 877 undergraduates at Bowen University, Osun state**.**

On the other hand, Tadese *et al.* (2022) documented 34% of poor academic performance among University students. As regards spiritual well-being, Umezinwa & Chukwu (2023) discovered that divine, moral, and interpersonal struggles are prevalent among Nigerian students. Ojo (2016) observed that many Nigerian students are faced with transitioning issues, stress and burnout. Moreover**,** Oloyede, *et al.* (2023) found that many students attributed psychological distress to curses, demonic possession, witchcraft, and moral/spiritual punishment, showing a strong spiritual/moral framing of health. Furthermore, Ogunleye (2022) reported that 73% of undergraduates had high levels of religious/spiritual practice as a coping strategy for stress, reflecting the widespread role of spirituality among Nigerian students.

Social support is the perception or experience that individual is cared for, valued, and part of a social network (Rautanen *et al..*, 2021). In academic settings, social support involves informational assistance, emotional reassurance, mentoring, and spiritual guidance (Chaudhry *et al..*, 2024). Faculty members often become key providers of this support through classroom interactions, mentorship relationships, pastoral counselling, and extracurricular guidance. Indicators of faculty social support include approachability, empathy, concern for students' emotional states, facilitation of spiritual growth, and efforts to foster inclusive and positive learning environments.

Statement of Problem

The wellbeing of university students has become an increasing concern globally, as higher education environments continue to expose students to a range of academic, psychological, social, and financial stressors. These stressors often manifest in heightened levels of anxiety, depression, stress, and reduced life satisfaction, all of which can negatively affect students' academic performance and overall quality of life. While universities are expected to provide supportive environments that foster both intellectual and personal development, many students still struggle to maintain optimal wellbeing

throughout their academic journey. This suggests that existing institutional support systems may be insufficient or inadequately structured to meet students' holistic needs.

Within this context, faculty social support becomes particularly critical. Faculty members can serve as accessible and trusted figures who provide guidance, reassurance, and a sense of stability in an otherwise demanding academic environment. Their interactions with students can influence not only academic outcomes but also psychological wellbeing, motivation, and resilience. In faith-based universities, this role is further expanded by the integration of spiritual and moral guidance, which may enhance students' sense of purpose, meaning, and connectedness key components of wellbeing (Ornaghi *et al.*, 2024; Chaudhry *et al.*, 2024).

Faculty roles in this context are expansive. Particularly in faith-based institutions, faculty are viewed not only as academic instructors but also as spiritual mentors and moral exemplars. They are expected to guide students through personal and academic challenges, reinforce institutional values, and support students in developing purpose and discipline (Hansen, 2021; Mahoney & Schmalzbauer, 2022). Moreover, faculty members often report increasing challenges due to expanding support roles not formally acknowledged in their workload or performance evaluations (Magtalas, 2024).However, empirical understanding of how students perceive these roles and the institutional challenges that faculty face in delivering such support remains limited, especially in Nigerian higher education settings.

Existing literature has largely focused on general social support or institutional resources without adequately distinguishing the unique contributions of faculty relationships. Moreover, studies that examine students' wellbeing often emphasize clinical or psychological factors while paying less attention to relational and contextual influences within the university setting. In the African and Nigerian context, where communal relationships and interpersonal support are culturally salient, this represents a critical gap in knowledge. Additionally, the distinctive environment of faith-based universities characterized by value-driven education and spiritual orientation has not been sufficiently explored in relation to faculty support and student wellbeing.

This gap is significant because understanding the role of faculty social support in faith-based institutions could provide valuable insights for developing holistic and culturally relevant interventions aimed at improving student wellbeing. Without such understanding, efforts to address student mental health challenges may remain insufficiently tailored to the lived realities of students in these contexts. Furthermore, neglecting the relational dimension of student wellbeing may limit the effectiveness of institutional policies and programs designed to support students.

This study directly contributes to SDG 3, which aims to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages. University students are at a critical stage of psychosocial development and are often exposed to academic pressure, social challenges, and mental health risks such as anxiety, stress, and depression. Findings from the present study could inform institutional policies and interventions to strengthen student support systems, thereby improving mental health outcomes and promoting a supportive educational environment that enables students to thrive physically, emotionally, and socially. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the role of faculty social support in shaping the wellbeing of students in a faith-based university.

Objectives of the study

The following objectives guided the study:

i. explore the supportive roles of faculty members in student well-being
ii. assess the perceived influence of their support.
iii. examine the challenges faculty encountered in providing support
iv. investigate the association between sociodemographic characteristics of faculty (age, discipline, academic rank and teaching experience)and their perceived challenges

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Social Support Theory developed by House (1981) which provides a foundational explanation for understanding how faculty involvement influences students' academic, emotional, and spiritual well-being in faith-based tertiary institutions. This theory assumes that students thrive better when they perceive a strong and trustworthy support system in the university campus. More

specifically, it presumes that the source of support must be accessible and reliable, and that varying forms of support meet different psychological and practical needs (Acoba, 2024). It posits that students who perceive or receive adequate support from faculty members and significant others on campus are better equipped to cope with stress, achieve personal goals, and maintain mental health (Chen *et al..*,2023; Ruihua *et al..*,2025). According to Social support theory, four major dimensions of support which are emotional, instrumental, informational, and appraisal support (Leow& Leow, 2024).

Faculty members, as authority figures and mentors, provide students with a crucial form of social capital. Faculty support (emotional encouragement, academic guidance, or fairness in appraisal) act as protective factors against stress, anxiety, and depression, which are prevalent among university students globally. Consequently, House's Social Support theory aligns with the stress-buffering model. This is an indication that social support moderates the negative effects of stressors. University students often face academic demands, financial pressure, identity struggles, and social transitions (Bekiros *et al..*, 2022). Faculty support through mentoring, listening, or providing academic direction could buffer the impact of these stressors, thereby reducing risks of burnout, depressive symptoms, and poor academic adjustment (Leow & Leow, 2024). This situates well-being as a product of social interaction and institutional support.

Moreover, it is worthy to note that University serves as a social system where faculty roles extend beyond teaching to include nurturing, counselling, and modeling resilience. Social support theory helps to frame faculty-student relationships as part of a socialization process, where norms of care, empathy, and guidance foster collective well-being, promote resilience, prevent maladjustment and support positive identity formation (Ojo & Ogunwole, 2021; Baria & Gomez, 2022; Azpiazu *et al..*, 2024)

In Bowen University, the cultural meaning of social support is amplified by religious values which emphasizes compassion, mentorship, and holistic well-being. Faculty support in Bowen University include; spiritual guidance and moral appraisal, strengthening students' sense of belonging and reducing feelings of alienation which could be regarded as social determinants of well-being (Duraku *et al.*, 2024; Amin *et al.*, 2024) Social Support Theory provides a framework on how faculty support influence student well-being in Bowen University. The theory situates mental health and well-being within social relationships, institutional roles, and cultural contexts (Ruihua *et al.*, 2025) Hence, the theory is directly relevant to understanding how social interactions in faith-based higher education settings influence academic success, mental health and social well-being of students (Chen *et al..*, 2023). This is crucial for designing interventions, faculty training, and policies that could enhance the supportive roles of academic staff towards students' well-being in Nigeria.

Methods

Research Design

This study adopts a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine the supportive influence of faculty members on student well-being. For the quantitative aspect, a descriptive cross-sectional survey design was employed. Data were collected at a single point in time from a stratified random sample of students (n = 200) and faculty members (n = 200), with colleges serving as primary strata to ensure representativeness across academic disciplines. For the qualitative aspect, interviews was conducted involving 12 students and 12 faculty members for in-depth interviews. Participants were selected to maximize diversity across colleges, academic levels, and ranks.

Study Setting

The study was conducted at Bowen University, situated at Iwo, Osun State, Nigeria. It is a faith-based private university established in 2001 by the Nigerian Baptist Convention. The University runs a fully residential system and integrates academic, moral, and spiritual training in line with its Christian faith. The University comprises several colleges, including Agriculture, Engineering and Science; Computing and Communication Studies; Health Sciences; Liberal Studies; Law; and Management and Social Sciences. Faculty members across the Colleges are actively involved in teaching, mentoring, and providing support to students, making the institution an appropriate setting to investigate the influence of faculty social support on student well-being.

Sample Size Determination

The sample size was determined using Taro Yamane's formula for finite populations:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N^{e^2}}$$

With a population of 4,000 and a 5% margin of error, the minimum sample size was 364. To account for a 10% attrition rate, this was increased to 404; however, after excluding four incomplete questionnaires, the final sample comprised 400 participants.

For the qualitative component, sample size was guided by data saturation when no new themes emerge. Evidence suggests saturation typically occurs within 9–17 interviews in homogeneous studies. In this study, saturation was reached after about 8–9 interviews per group, with additional interviews conducted to ensure rigor, resulting in 12 students and 12 faculty participants.

Sampling Procedure

Undergraduate students were selected using multistage stratified sampling. Colleges served as primary strata, with sample sizes proportionately allocated based on enrolment. Within each college, further stratification by academic level, gender, and age ensured representativeness, and participants were randomly selected using matriculation lists. This approach minimized sampling bias and reflected the population structure.

Faculty were sampled through a two-stage stratified random procedure, with colleges and academic ranks as strata. Proportionate allocation and random selection using staff lists ensured representation across disciplines and ranks. For the qualitative component, purposive stratified sampling recruited 12 students and 12 faculty members, ensuring diversity across faculties, levels, ranks, and gender. Eligibility criteria included active enrolment or employment, while those unable to participate or lacking relevant experience were excluded. Ethical screening ensured participants in psychological distress were referred for support.

Research Instruments

Data were collected utilizing a 30-item questionnaire titled Perceived Role, Influence and Challenges of Faculty Support for Student Wellbeing Questionnaire (RICFSSWQ). The development of the instrument was grounded in theoretical postulations, guided by extant literature and substantiated by empirical findings relevant to the study context. The researchers and two other experts in the field of study closely examined the items in the questionnaire to ensure each item for clarity**,** cultural appropriateness, alignment with study objectives, and theoretical relevance. Based on their feedback, items that were ambiguous, redundant, or culturally misaligned were revised or removed. A pre-test was conducted among students outside the study setting (Covenant and Babcock University students). Respondents provided feedback on wording, length, comprehensibility, and relevance. Minor modifications were made to improve clarity and simplicity of the items. Validity was confirmed through exploratory factor analysis, while reliability was established using Cronbach's alpha (0.78) and test–retest methods. The qualitative interview guide was validated through peer debriefing and expert review, enhancing credibility, dependability, and overall trustworthiness.

Method of Data Collection

Ethical approval was obtained from the Directorate of Research and Strategic Partnership, Bowen University, Iwo, Nigeria. Permission to collect data was received from the Provost of each college and Head of Programme. Faculty members and students of Bowen University were informed about the study. Respondents were provided with clear information about the purpose and procedures of the study before giving written informed consent. Participation was made voluntary, with the right to withdraw at any time without penalty. The respondents filled out the questionnaires and informed consent on site and they were collected upon completion by two trained research assistants who administered the questionnaire.

The in-depth interview was conducted by one of the researchers of this study with demonstrated expertise in qualitative data collection. The researcher's familiarity with interview techniques, probing strategies, and rapport-building facilitated the elicitation of rich and contextually relevant data from respondents. This contributed to the credibility, dependability, and trustworthiness of the qualitative findings.

Data were handled with strict confidentiality; no personal identifiers were recorded, and all responses were coded to maintain anonymity. Information was stored in password-protected electronic files

accessible only to the research team. Findings are reported in aggregate form without disclosure of individual identities.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS Version 26. Descriptive statistics which include frequencies, means, standard deviations, and percentages was used for demographic characteristics and item-level responses analysis. Also, inferential statistics such as Independent samples t-tests was used to compare students' and faculty members' perceptions of faculty impact, Chi-square tests was used to assess associations between faculty demographic factors and perceived support challenges, One-way ANOVA to compare mean scores of challenges faced across teaching experience groups and Tukey HSD post-hoc tests to identify specific group differences where ANOVA revealed significance. Multiple hypothesis testing was limited to two primary inferential tests, the study avoided inflated Type I error rates by applying Bonferroni correction method to ensure that the results reported as statistically significant were not merely due to chance from running many tests.

Qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach: data familiarization, coding, theme development, review, definition, and reporting. Both inductive and deductive coding were applied, allowing themes to emerge from participants' narratives while guided by existing theory and literature. To ensure trustworthiness, researchers cross-checked codes and resolved discrepancies through consensus. Key themes identified included faculty as emotional anchors, spiritual mentorship, role strain and burnout, and lack of institutional recognition, which also enriched interpretation of quantitative findings.

Results

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Student Respondents (n = 200)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age Range	16–19	120	60.0%
	20–23	60	30.0%
	Above 23	20	10.0%
Gender	Male	90	45.0%
	Female	110	55.0%
Year of Study	100 level	40	20.0%
	200 level	60	30.0%
	300 level	60	30.0%
	400 and 500 level	40	20.0%
Field of Study	Agriculture/Science/Engineering	40	20.0%
	Management/Social Sciences	30	15.0%
	Health Sciences	50	25.0%
	Law	30	15.0%
	Art/Liberal studies	20	10.0%
	Computing/Communication Science	30	15. 0%
Monthly Allowance	Less than ₦20,000	40	20.0%
	₦20,000-₦50,000	80	40.0%
	Above ₦50,000	80	40.0%

Table 2 Faculty Respondents (n = 200)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age Range	25–34	50	25.0%
	35–44	80	40.0%
	45 and above	70	35.0%
Gender	Male	116	58.0%
	Female	84	42.0%
Academic Rank	Assistant Lecturer	34	17.0%
	Lecturer II	40	20.0%
	Lecturer I	40	20.0%
	Senior Lecturer	36	18.0%
	Associate Professor	30	15.0%
	Professor	20	10.0%
Discipline	Agric/Sciences/Eng	50	25.0%
	Social Sciences	40	20.0%
	Arts/Liberal	15	7.5%
	Health Sciences	55	30.0%
	Law	10	5.0%
	Computing/Communication science	25	12.5%
Teaching Experience	1–5 years	50	25.0%
	6–10 years	70	35.0%
	Above 10 years	80	40.0%

Interpretation

The sample was diverse and balanced, supporting analysis of faculty–student dynamics in a faith-based university. Most students were aged 16–19 (60%), with a slight female majority (55%). Representation was highest in Medical/Health Sciences (30%), followed by Agriculture/Science/Technology (25%) and Social Sciences/Arts (20%). In terms of socio-economic status, 40% received over ₦50,000 monthly, 40% ₦20,000–₦50,000, and 20% below ₦20,000. Among faculty, 75% were aged 35 and above, with 58% male and 42% female. Senior academics (Professors and Associate Professors) made up 33%, while Lecturer I/II and Assistant Lecturers constituted the majority (57%). Most faculty had over five years of experience (35%), with 40% having more than ten years.

Table 3: Faculty Respondents (n = 200)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age Range	25–34	50	25.0%
	35–44	80	40.0%
	45 and above	70	35.0%
Gender	Male	116	58.0%
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Academic Rank	Assistant Lecturer	34	17.0%
	Lecturer II	40	20.0%
	Lecturer I	40	20.0%
	Senior Lecturer	36	18.0%
	Associate Professor	30	15.0%
	Professor	20	10.0%
Discipline	Agric/Sciences/Eng	50	25.0%
	Social Sciences	40	20.0%
	Arts/Liberal	15	7.5%
	Health Sciences	55	30.0%
	Law	10	5.0%
	Computing/Communication science	25	12.5%
Teaching Experience	1–5 years	50	25.0%
	6–10 years	70	35.0%
	Above 10 years	80	40.0%

The Decision Rule is based on the mean: ≥ 4.00 → High Support, 3.00–3.99 → Moderate Support < 3.00 → Low Support

Interpretation

Findings indicate that faculty roles are multidimensional, extending beyond academic instruction to emotional and spiritual support. The highest-rated role was faculty approachability for discussing personal challenges (Mean = 3.92), followed by fostering spiritual growth (Mean = 3.81) and encouraging students during stressful periods (Mean = 3.63). Other notable roles included concern for students' emotional well-being, adapting to learning needs, and being accessible for academic assistance. Lower-ranked but still positive roles involved helping assess academic resources, evaluating strengths and weaknesses, providing constructive feedback, and offering timely academic and career information.

Table 4: Perceived Influence of Faculty Support (n = 400)
Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree

Perceived Impact	Mean Score	Interpretation
Overcome academic challenges	4.54	High Influence
Increased spiritual practices	4.28	High Influence
Reduced stress levels	4.15	High Influence
Improved discipline and sense of purpose	4.07	High Influence
Boosted confidence in academic performance	4.01	High Influence
Strengthened ethical awareness and behavior	3.94	Moderate Influence
Improved class attendance	3.87	Moderate Influence
Increased emotional resilience	3.84	Moderate Influence
Developed better time-management and focus	3.78	Moderate Influence
Enhanced clarity about academic and career goals	3.69	Moderate Influence

The Decision Rule is based on the mean: ≥ 4.00 → High Influence, 3.00–3.99 → Moderate Influence < 3.00 → Low Influence

Interpretation

Findings show that faculty support has a strong and wide-ranging impact on student wellbeing. The most significant outcome was helping students overcome academic challenges (Mean = 4.54), followed by increased spiritual practices (Mean = 4.28). Faculty support also reduced stress and improved discipline and sense of purpose. Additional benefits included boosted academic confidence and strengthened ethical awareness. Though slightly lower, notable impacts were improved class attendance, emotional resilience, time management, and clearer academic and career goals.

Table 4: Perceived Faculty Support (n = 400)
Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree

Faculty Role	Mean Score	Interpretation
Faculty are approachable when there is need to talk about personal challenges.	3.92	Moderate support
Encourage student during stressful academic periods	3.63	Moderate support
Show concern for student emotional wellness	3.61	Moderate support
Provide timely information about academic and career requirements	3.21	Moderate support
Lecturers assist in accessing academic resources	3.49	Moderate support
Faculty adjust to student learning needs	3.54	Moderate support
Lecturers are approachable for academic assistance	3.52	Moderate support
Faculty give students constructive feedback on academic performance	3.31	Moderate support
Faculty help evaluate students' strengths and weaknesses.	3.46	Moderate support
Fostering spiritual growth	3.81	Moderate support

The Decision Rule is based on the mean: ≥ 4.00 → High Support, 3.00–3.99 → Moderate Support, < 3.00 → Low Support

Interpretation

The findings from Table 4 highlight the multidimensional nature of faculty roles as perceived by students and faculty members, extending well beyond traditional academic instruction. The highest-rated role, "Faculty are approachable when there is need to talk about personal challenges." (Mean = 3.92), Closely following are "Fostering spiritual growth '' (Mean = 3.81) and "Encourage student during stressful academic periods" (Mean = 3.63). Other moderately high score includes; "Show concern for student emotional wellness" **(**Mean=3.61**),** and **"**Faculty adjust to student learning needs**"** (Mean = 3.54**),"** Lecturers are approachable for academic assistance (Mean **=** 3.52)**.** Lower-ranked but still positively rated roles include "Lecturers assist in assessing academic resources" **(**Mean = 3.49**), "**Faculty help evaluate students' strengths and weaknesses**" (**Mean = 3.46**),** and **"**Faculty give students constructive feedback on academic performance**" (**Mean = 3.31**)** and "Provide timely information about academic and career requirements" (Mean = 3.21)**.**

Table 5: Challenges Faced by Faculty Members (n = 400)

Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree

Faculty Challenge	Mean Score	Interpretation
Burnout from mentoring duties	3.96	Moderate Challenge
Student resistance to support	3.90	Moderate Challenge
Overwhelmed by increasing student needs	3.79	Moderate Challenge
Lack of formal training on mentoring/support	3.73	Moderate Challenge
Limited institutional recognition for support roles	3.69	Moderate Challenge
Time constraints due to academic workload	3.66	Moderate Challenge
Unclear institutional expectations on mentoring	3.60	Moderate Challenge
Difficulty balancing support with disciplinary roles	3.54	Moderate Challenge
Emotional strain from students' personal disclosures	3.51	Moderate Challenge
Lack of peer and administrative support	3.47	Moderate Challenge

The Decision Rule is based on the mean: ≥ 4.00 → High Challenge, 3.00–3.99 → Moderate Challenge < 3.00 → Low Challenge

Interpretation

From the data in Table 5, the most salient challenge identified is "burnout from mentoring duties" (Mean = 3.96). The next most pressing concern, "student resistance to support" (Mean = 3.90), Other significantly rated challenges such as "overwhelmed by increasing student needs**" (**Mean = 3.79**)** and "lack of formal training on mentoring" (Mean = 3.73) The issue of "limited institutional recognition" (Mean = 3.69) points Mid-ranked challenges such as "time constraints due to workload" (Mean = 3.66) and "unclear institutional expectations" (Mean = 3.60) signal structural ambiguity. Challenges such as "difficulty balancing support with disciplinary roles" (Mean = 3.54) and "emotional strain from student disclosures" (Mean = 3.51). Lastly, "lack of administrative support" (Mean = 3.47).

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis One (H_1)

There is no significant difference in the perception of the influence of social support on students' well-being (faculty members and students)

Table 6: Group Statistics – Perceived Impact of Social Support on Well-Being (n = 400)

Group	N	Mean Impact Score	Std. Deviation
Students	200	4.28	0.42
Faculty	200	4.12	0.38

Table 7: Independent Samples t-Test – Perceived Impact of Social Support

Test Variable	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Levene's F	Levene's Sig.
Impact Score	3.41	398	0.001 (**p < .05**)	0.16	0.86	0.35

Interpretation of Results (H_1)

With equal group sizes (n = 200 for students and faculty), the independent samples t-test revealed a statistically significant difference in the perceived influence of faculty social support on student well-being, t (398) = 3.41, p = 0.001 < 0.05. Students reported a higher mean influence score (M = 4.28, SD = 0.42) than faculty members (M = 4.12, SD = 0.38). The null hypothesis is therefore rejected, indicating that students and faculty members perceived the influence of social support differently.

Hypothesis Two

Faculty members' perceived challenges will not significantly vary across socio-demographic characteristics (discipline, academic rank, age, and teaching experience).

Table 8: Descriptive Statistics – Mean Challenge Scores by Faculty Characteristics (n = 200)

Variable	Category	N	Mean Score	Std. Deviation
Discipline	Sciences	40	3.72	0.42
	Social Sciences	40	3.84	0.40
	Arts/Liberal studies	40	3.68	0.44
	Health Sciences	40	3.75	0.38
	Law	40	3.90	0.36
Academic Rank	Assistant Lecturer	40	3.88	0.41
	Lecturer II	40	3.80	0.39
	Lecturer I	40	3.76	0.36
	Senior Lecturer	40	3.66	0.42
	Associate Professor	40	3.58	0.43
Age Group	25–34 years	60	3.91	0.38
	35–44 years	80	3.73	0.40
	45 years and above	60	3.62	0.45
Teaching Experience	1–5 years	60	3.95	0.37
	6–10 years	80	3.71	0.39
	Above 10 years	60	3.60	0.44

Table 9: One-Way ANOVA – Challenge Scores Across Faculty Characteristics

Variable	F	df Between	df Within	Sig. (p-value)
Discipline	3.21	4	195	0.014 (p < .05)
Academic Rank	2.89	4	195	0.025 (p < .05)
Age Group	4.07	2	197	0.019 (p < .05)
Teaching Experience	5.02	2	197	0.007 (p < .01)

Interpretation of ANOVA Results (H_2)

The one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) revealed statistically significant differences in the mean scores of perceived challenges among faculty members across all the examined socio-demographic characteristics: discipline (p = .014), academic rank (p = .025), age group (p = .019), and teaching experience (p = .007). This is an indication that faculty members do not experience the burden of support roles uniformly; rather, their perceptions of these challenges are shaped by specific socio-demographic factors.

Table 10: Tukey HSD Post Hoc Test Summary

Comparison Category	Significant Pair(s)	Mean Difference	p-value
Discipline	Health/ Sciences vs. Arts & Liberal Studies/Law	0.22	0.027
	Social Sciences vs Arts & Liberal Studies/Law	0.18	0.033
Academic Rank	Asst. Lect./ Lect. II/ I vs. Associate/Prof	0.30	0.018
	Senior Lecturer vs Associate/Prof	0.22	0.040
Age Group	25–34 yrs vs. 45 yrs and above	0.29	0.014
	35–44 yrs vs. 45 yrs and above	0.15	0.030
Teaching Experience	1–5 yrs vs. Above 10 yrs	0.35	0.008
	6–10 yrs vs. Above 10 yrs	0.24	0.031

Post Hoc Interpretation

Discipline: College of Medical & Health/Sciences reported significantly higher perceived challenges than their counterparts in other colleges. This is possibly due to higher student contact hours and responsibilities embedded in the study curricula.

Academic Rank: Junior faculty members perceived more challenges compared to senior faculty members likely due to limited authority, mentorship load, and fewer institutional privileges. Age Group: Faculty aged 25–34 reported significantly greater challenges than those 45 and above, suggesting younger staff may face more role ambiguity, lack confidence, or receive less institutional support.

Teaching Experience: Those with 1–5 years of experience reported significantly higher challenge levels than those with higher years of experience, reinforcing the idea that mentorship strain decreases with time, seniority, and experience. Many faculty and student respondents described their faculty supportive roles extending well as first responders for students facing emotional crises. These crises included bereavement, academic distress, mental health challenges, family conflict, and peer relationship struggles. The majority of participants shared that students often share concerns with them informally after lectures, during office hours, or even via text messages late at night.

Findings highlight four key themes: emotional support, spiritual mentorship, role strain, and lack of institutional recognition, supported by participants' narratives.

Theme 1: Faculty as Emotional Anchors

Faculty often act as counsellors and emotional anchors. One noted, "Sometimes I feel more like a counsellor than a lecturer…" *(IDI/P11), while another shared,* "A student once came to my office in tears… I wasn't trained for therapy, but he left calmer" *(IDI/P3). Students affirmed this role:* "My lecturer is the only person I talk to… almost like a parent" *(IDI/P16), and* "Some lecturers encourage us… giving emotional stability" *(IDI/P21). One student added,* "She became like a safe place for me… I would have dropped out without that support" *(IDI/P24).*

***Theme* 2: Spiritual Mentorship and Moral Guidance**

Faculty also provide moral and spiritual guidance. A lecturer stated, *"I start my classes with prayers… I see it as a calling"* (IDI/P4), while another noted, *"They expect prayers, scriptures, reassurance"* (IDI/P12). A professor added, *"Students see us as spiritual parents"* (IDI/P10). Students confirmed this: *"He uses faith to guide us"* (IDI/P19), and *"It was not just academic mentorship… it was spiritual guidance"* (IDI/P15).

Theme 3: Role Strain and Burnout

Faculty reported emotional exhaustion. One remarked, *"We are expected to teach, counsel and guide… it is quite exhausting"* (IDI/P7), while another said, *"We're not trained therapists, yet we carry the burden"* (IDI/P9). Others highlighted overload and role ambiguity: *"I'm carrying students' emotional baggage too"* (IDI/P1) and *"It's hard to draw the line…"* (IDI/P2). Students also observed this strain: *"Lecturers are sometimes irritable… because they are stressed"* (IDI/P23).

Theme 4: Lack of Institutional Recognition

Faculty expressed frustration over unrecognized emotional labour. One noted, *"No one tracks or rewards emotional labour"* (IDI/P3), while another added, *"The system values research output over supportive roles"* (IDI/P4). A senior academic stated, *"There's no recognition… it's overwhelming"* (IDI/P6). Students echoed this: *"Lecturers sacrifice their time… yet the institution doesn't recognize it"* (IDI/P19) and *"The university undervalues what helps students thrive"* (IDI/P20).

Discussion

For research objective one, the study revealed that majority of the students and faculty revealed that assistance was offered during bereavement, academic distress, mental health challenges, family conflict, spiritual crises and peer relationship struggles by faculty members. This finding corroborates the finding of Ramsaroop and Odutayo (2022), that faculty support to student include academic, social and psycho-emotional. Another major finding of the study as regards objective two is that faculty support have influence on university undergraduate students' wellbeing. This result is consistent with that of the discovery of Muokuwe *et al.* (2024) indicated among undergraduates, social support was elated to well-being. Consequently, Nebo (2022) noted that social support is a positive outcome predictors with

significant predictability of students' wellness. In addition, Eva *et al.* (2022) established that social support influences the psychological well-being of students. Furthermore, Ramsaroop and Odutayo (2022) found that university students gained through additional classes by lecturers and support service assistance in the institution.

Moreover, for objective three, result of the study indicated that faculty members are often faced with challenges such as feeling overextended, emotionally drained, and institutionally unsupported in the course of supporting students' wellbeing. Consequently, the dual expectations to perform as academic instructors and informal emotional and spiritual caregivers are reported as increasingly unsustainable, particularly in the absence of clear institutional recognition or relief mechanisms. This finding is in congruence with that of Nadelson and Oyineyi, (2025), who found that the faculty members tended to view their role and contribution towards supporting the psychological well-being of the students as minimal since they may lack the expertise of assisting a student, the acknowledgment of other responsibilities that influenced their support of the students. This discovery shows that faculty members understand that they need targeted professional development to discover and assist students in their psychological well-being. Researchers (Guller *et al*.., 2018; Pyane, 2022) found that faculty members did not have training and skills that could help to promote the psychological well-being of the student. Their evidence indicates that further professional training can empower the faculty members to have a stronger mindset in relation to assisting students in their psychological well-being.

Additionally, faculty members felt that the insufficiency of time and professional expectations were obstacles in assisting the psychological well-being of the students. The faculty members cited that they are overwhelmed by how many students they are teaching and that they do not have sufficient time outside their teaching duties to take care of all the psychological needs of their student. According to Gulliver *et al*.. (2018) and Payne (2022), a limited amount of time and anticipated workload are among the obstacles that faculty members can encounter to be capable of helping students to develop their psychological well-being.

Furthermore, for objective four, the study revealed that there is association between sociodemographic characteristics such as age, discipline, academic rank and teaching experience of faculty and the perceived challenges when rendering support for students' well-being. Faculty members aged 25–34 reported significantly greater challenges than those 45 and above. This suggests that younger faculty may face more role ambiguity, lack confidence, or receive less institutional support. On the other hand, faculty member in College of Medical & Health Sciences reported significantly higher perceived challenges than their counterparts in other colleges. This is possibly due to higher student contact hours and responsibilities embedded in the study curricula. Also, junior ranked faculty members perceived more challenges compared to senior ranked faculty members. The possible reason for this could likely be due to limited authority, mentorship load, and fewer institutional privileges. In addition, those with 1–5 years of experience reported significantly higher challenge levels than those with higher years of experience. This is an indication that mentorship strain decreases with time, seniority, and experience. Faculty members do not experience the burden of support roles uniformly; rather, their perceptions of these challenges are shaped by specific socio-demographic factors (Clotfelter *et al.*, 2010; Ambe & Agbor (2014).

Implications of the Study

This study confirmed faculty social support as a social determinant of student well-being, an indication that social relationships and institutional structures influence mental health outcomes of University students**.** The study positions higher education institutions as social environments that influence health outcomes. Faculty–student relationships are revealed as part of the social determinants of health, shaping access to psychosocial resources, coping strategies, and resilience. The study revealed that micro-level interactions (faculty–student relationships) intersect with meso-level institutional culture (faith-based environment) to influence well-being. This provides evidence that educational institutions are health-promoting settings where the quality of social support can buffer stressors associated with academic life and foster resilience thereby establishing the role of higher education institutions in advancing SDG 3 specifically Target 3.4 on reducing mental health challenges. In this context, faculty support served as a protective factor that reduced the impact of academic stress and social pressures on students' well-being.

Furthermore, the study showed that in faith-based universities, supportive faculty interactions also shape students' self-concepts and meanings of well-being, highlighting how health and wellness are socially constructed through daily interactions in specific cultural contexts. Thus, context-specific interventions such as mentoring, counselling, and faith-informed guidance can improve mental health outcomes among adolescents and youths, a group often vulnerable to stress and academic pressures. Findings from this study call for institutional policies and interventions to strengthen student support systems, thereby improving mental health outcomes and promoting a supportive educational environment that enable students to thrive physically, emotionally and socially.

Conclusion

This study concludes that faculty members in faith-based tertiary institutions serve as critical agents in fostering holistic student development. Their roles extend well beyond instructional delivery to encompass academic mentorship, emotional care, moral guidance, and spiritual support. Consequently, the study discovered that faculty members frequently experience emotional strain, burnout, and role ambiguity particularly in contexts where mentoring is informal and uncompensated. This paradox where high student dependence coexists with low institutional support threatens the sustainability of faculty-driven social support. For faith-based institutions to fulfill their mission of delivering holistic education, there is a pressing need to institutionalize the faculty support role. This includes policy development, workload restructuring, capacity building, and psychosocial support mechanisms tailored to faculty well-being. Without such reforms, the transformative potential of faculty-student relationships will remain limited, and both students and educators may suffer the long-term consequences of unmet emotional and professional needs.

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