CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

In recent years, with the rapid development of higher education and the continuous expansion of educational resources in China, the number of students in colleges and universities has increased significantly. According to the Ministry of Education, the number of students enrolled in China's colleges and universities will reach 47.63 million by 2023, and the quality of education and academic competition will become increasingly fierce. At the same time, the number of graduates from China's colleges and universities will exceed 10 million in 2022 and 2023, and the number of graduates will continue to reach a record high in the future. Thus, in the current higher education environment, the academic pressure and employment situation faced by college students are becoming increasingly severe, and in order to stand out in this highly competitive environment, students' academic performance is the most important basic support, which is closely related to their student learning engagement during the school period, and college students urgently need to improve their academic performance by increasing their student engagement in order to enhance their own competitiveness. Previous studies have shown that student learning engagement, as a positive academic behaviour and psychological state, is not only directly related to students psychological health and future career development,student learning engagement is not only a key factor in students' academic success, but also an important indicator of the quality of education (Yang Yingying & Chen Na, 2018; An et al, 2022; Chen Peng & Bai Jiaru, 2024).

However, students in higher education usually study away from home and away from family control, and often lack the necessary support and supervision in their studies, which may lead to problems such as a decline in academic performance and a lack of motivation to study, and the difficulty of higher education curricula is qualitatively higher than that of upper secondary school, which leads to the fact that a

number of students in higher education often feel lonely and helpless when they face difficulties in their studies (Chen, Chunping, 2023). On the other hand, higher education is a transition from academic to social roles for students, who not only have to complete their studies but also have to deal with more social relationships.This environment, which integrates academic, interpersonal and social adaptations, makes them face challenges in their emotional, behavioural and even cognitive development, which in turn affects their learning and development (Tong, Yangshuai, 2016). In addition, Peng Jie et al. (2022) also investigated that tertiary students are also more prone to tardiness, absenteeism and failure to submit assignments, which are problems that not only negatively affect students' learning effectiveness, but may also jeopardise their healthy development.

In this context, teacher support plays a key role in the academic life of students in higher education, both as educators and as important guides for students. A growing number of studies have shown that teacher support, including learning support, emotional support and competence support, which is specifically manifested in the professional guidance, emotional care and social help provided by teachers in the process of students' academic development, has an important impact on student learning engagement (Yu Qian, 2017). On the one hand, teachers' support can significantly enhance students' motivation and academic performance, as well as their psychological resilience and social adaptability. Teachers' active intervention can largely alleviate college students' educational and psychological problems, and through emotional care, study guidance and psychological support, teachers can enhance college students' motivation and academic performance, and promote their healthy development.

In addition, the American Association for Educational Communication and Technology (AECT) states that educational technology is more than the application of instructional tools; it is systematic research and practice aimed at enhancing the learning experience and improving learners' knowledge construction and skill development through strategic design, management, implementation, and evaluation (Jacobsen et al., 2011).In the higher education environment, teacher support should

incorporate the benefits of educational technology, using online learning platforms, data-driven learning analytics tools, intelligent feedback systems and blended teaching strategies to provide students with a more personalised and interactive learning experience. AECT also emphasises that the use of educational technology should follow the principles of scientific and ethical approaches to ensure the rational allocation of teaching resources and the optimisation of learning environments in order to genuinely promote student learning engagement and academic achievement.AECT also emphasises that the use of educational technology should follow the principles of scientific and ethical approaches to ensure the rational allocation of teaching resources and the optimisation of learning environments in order to genuinely promote student learning engagement and academic achievement. In this theoretical framework, teacher support is reflected not only in emotional and academic care, but also in the rational use of educational technology tools to build a more adaptive and interactive learning ecology for students to enhance their learning autonomy and sense of achievement (Banas & Polly, 2016).

On the other hand, China's National Medium and Long-Term Education Reform and Development Programme (2010-2020) also states that the role of the student should be emphasised as the main body, with the teacher's leadership as the core to motivate students to learn on their own, and that the promotion of students' all-round and healthy development should be made a core goal of school work and a criterion for measuring its actual effectiveness. Educational engagement reflects a positive, enthusiastic and sustained attitude to academic exploration, which is not only a key criterion for evaluating students' willingness and practice of active participation in learning, but also a core element in shaping their academic performance. In teacher-supported learning environments, students who are actively involved in their studies tend to have a better command of their theoretical knowledge, which in turn increases their self-confidence and sense of efficacy.

From the perspective of previous academic research, the research on teacher support, student learning engagement and academic self-efficacy and other variables has accumulated certain research results, but the research exploring the direct

relationship between teacher support and student learning engagement is relatively limited, and most of the existing research focuses on primary and secondary schools and high schools, and there are relatively few studies on students in colleges and universities as the research object, and there is a lack of systematic research on the specific influence mechanism of teacher support on student learning engagement. There is a lack of systematic research on the specific influence mechanism of teacher support on student learning engagement. Based on this, this paper will combine quantitative and qualitative research methods to systematically explore the relationship between teacher support and academic self-efficacy on student learning engagement in chinese colleges and universities, as well as the influence mechanism of academic self-efficacy in this relationship. This will not only help enrich the educational theory system and deepen the understanding of the relationship between student learning engagement and teacher support, but also provide practical and feasible guidance for educational administrators and teachers in colleges and universities to help them support students more effectively and improve the quality of education.

1.2 Problem statement

1.2.1 Problem identification

According to the problem background, the problem identification of this study, specifically

1.The lack of necessary study assistance and supervision for students in higher education after they are separated from their family environment, which leads to a decline in their academic performance and lack of motivation to study, a situation that is particularly evident in higher education, where students tend to feel lonely and helpless during the learning process due to the high level of difficulty of higher education programmes.

2.Students in higher education have to cope with the multiple challenges of academic, interpersonal communication and social adjustment, but the current educational environment fails to provide adequate support, leaving students with

many difficulties in their emotional, behavioural and cognitive development, which affects their overall academic performance.

3.The traditional mode of teaching in higher education does not effectively stimulate students' motivation for independent learning, and students' low participation in class and lack of drive for spontaneous learning leads to insufficient commitment to learning, which to some extent limits their academic self-efficacy.

4.Existing studies have less explored the relationship between teacher support and student learning engagement, especially in the context of Chinese higher education, and there is a lack of systematic research to reveal how teacher support specifically affects student learning engagement and academic self-efficacy. Therefore, it is necessary to explore this relationship in depth through quantitative and qualitative studies to provide scientific practical guidance for university administrators and teachers to improve the quality of education.

5.Whether teacher learning support positively affects student learning engagement by influencing student academic self-efficacy has not been fully explored. Teachers' support in academic counselling, curriculum guidance and provision of learning strategies may have a significant effect on student learning engagement, but how teacher learning support can promote student learning engagement by increasing their academic self-efficacy needs further empirical verification. However, further empirical validation is needed to verify this.

6.Teacher competence support can play a key role in increasing student learning engagement, especially when such support helps to increase students' motivation and initiative in the learning process by helping them to develop the necessary skills and competences to face learning challenges more confidently. However, research on the mechanism by which Teacher competence support affects student learning engagement by increasing their academic self-efficacy is not yet consistent across academic disciplines.

7.The potential impact of Teacher emotional support on student academic self-efficacy and student learning engagement is worth exploring further. Teachers can help students to develop a sense of security and belonging by providing emotional

care, understanding and encouragement, and how to effectively increase student academic self-efficacy and consequently their motivation and engagement through emotional support is particularly important for students facing emotional and psychological challenges in higher education. This is particularly important for students facing emotional and psychological challenges in higher education.

1.2.2 Research problem

On the basis of the above, the following research questions can be formulated around the three core variables to be investigated in this paper, namely 'teacher support', ' student learning engagement' and 'academic self-efficacy':

1.Does teacher support have a positive impact on student learning engagement?

2.Does teacher learning support have a positive impact on student learning engagement?

3.Does teacher competence support have a positive impact on student learning engagement?

4.Does teacher emotional support have a positive effect on student learning engagement?

5. Does teacher learning support positively influence student learning engagement by influencing their academic self-efficacy?

6. Does teacher competence support positively influence student learning engagement by influencing their academic self-efficacy?

7. Does teacher emotional support positively influence student learning engagement by influencing their academic self-efficacy?

1.3 Purpose of the study

Based on the above questions, the objectives of this study are to：

1.To verify the positive impact of teacher support on student learning engagement.

2.To verify the positive impact of teacher learning support on student learning engagement.

3.To verify the positive impact of Teacher competence support on student

learning engagement.

4.To verify the positive impact of Teacher emotional support on student learning engagement.

5.To verify that academic self-efficacy has a positive mediating effect on the impact of teacher learning support on student learning engagement.

6. To verify that academic self-efficacy has a positive mediating effect on the impact of Teacher competence support on student learning engagement.

7. To verify that academic self-efficacy has a positive mediating effect on the impact of Teacher emotional support on student learning engagement.

1.4 Significance of the study

In previous studies, scholars have investigated the impact of teacher support on student learning engagement. Wang Yanli (2023) showed that teacher support can improve students' motivation and academic performance, especially in the context of higher education, where the curriculum is difficult and teachers' care and support play a crucial role in students' learning development. Meanwhile, Wang Xin's (2022) study also pointed out that Teacher emotional support not only reduces students' academic stress, but also enhances their academic self-efficacy, which promotes a higher level of commitment to learning and is conducive to their overall development. However, An-Nan Zhang (2023) pointed out that there are still shortcomings in the existing studies in exploring the relationship between teacher support and student learning engagement in colleges and universities, and there is a lack of in-depth discussion on the specific mechanisms of academic self-efficacy and the effect pathways in this influential relationship.

Combined with the relevant studies of previous scholars, although there are studies that have initially explored the influence of teacher support on student learning engagement, the research on this group of college students is still not deep enough, especially in the lack of research on the mechanism of how the specific dimensions of teacher support (e.g., learning support, competence support, and emotional support) influence the path of student learning engagement through academic self-efficacy. Therefore, this study aims to explore in depth the relationship between the specific

effects of teacher support on student learning engagement in higher education, and divided teacher support into three dimensions: learning support, competence support, and emotional support, and explored the effects of each dimension of teacher support on student learning engagement, as well as the mechanism of how each dimension of teacher support affects student learning engagement through the mediating variable of academic self-efficacy, respectively. By investigating the complex relationship between teacher support, academic self-efficacy and student learning engagement, this study not only enriches theoretical research in the field of educational management and promotes the development of educational theories in colleges and universities, but also provides a more focused theoretical basis and practical references for educational administrators and teachers in colleges and universities.

1.5 Novelty of the research

This study provides important theoretical innovations in the area of the relationship between teacher support, academic self-efficacy and student learning engagement in higher education.

1.Although scholars have explored the relationship between teacher support and student learning engagement, there is a paucity of research on the mechanism of academic self-efficacy as a mediating variable. Through empirical analyses, this paper verifies the positive influence of teacher support and learning support, competence support and emotional support on student learning engagement, and further verifies the important mediating role of academic self-efficacy in the path of teacher support (including learning support, competence support and emotional support) on student learning engagement in colleges and universities, which enriches the theoretical framework between teacher support and student learning engagement, and further expands the mechanism of academic self-efficacy as a mediator, which enriches the relationship between teacher support and student learning engagement. This finding enriches the theoretical framework of the relationship between teacher support and student learning engagement, further extends the application of academic self-efficacy in educational psychology, and provides new perspectives and methods for

subsequent research.

2. This paper integrates the theoretical foundations of learning theory, educational relationship theory, social support theory, self-determination theory, expectancy-value theory, etc., and systematically explores how teacher support positively affects student learning engagement in various ways, and analyses how teacher support enhances student academic self-efficacy and then increases their learning motivation and engagement. Through theoretical analysis and empirical studies, this paper further confirms the key role of teachers in the process of students' learning, and provides theoretical support and operational guidance for educational practice.

3. By focusing on the specific group of students in higher education, this study is more targeted than previous studies, especially in the context of the rapid development of higher education in China, and it reveals the unique role and mechanism of teacher support in enhancing student learning engagement, which enriches the research results in this field. Through this focus and in-depth analysis, this paper not only contributes to the research on the mechanism of teacher support's influence on student learning engagement in the context of higher education, but also adds new content to the theoretical system of educational management and educational psychology, provides feasible practical guidance, lays a solid theoretical foundation for future research, and promotes a systematic understanding of the relationship between teacher support and students' learning behaviour in higher education.

1.6 Scope and limitation of the study

This study focuses on the impact of teacher support on student learning engagement in higher education and analyses in depth the role of academic self-efficacy, a mediating variable, in this relationship. Accordingly, the independent variable studied in this paper is teacher support, and this variable mainly includes three dimensions: learning support, competence support and emotional support, in which learning support involves the specific guidance, academic resources and learning strategies provided by

teachers during the teaching process to help students understand and master the course content more effectively; competence support refers to the teacher's efforts to enhance students' academic competence and self-confidence by setting challenging tasks, encouraging independent learning and providing positive feedback to enhance students' academic competence and self-confidence; and emotional support covers teachers' concern, encouragement, and psychological support for students during the learning process, which help students maintain a positive attitude towards learning and enhance their academic self-efficacy (Chong et al., 2018). The dependent variable studied in this paper is student learning engagement, which mainly refers to students' active participation in the learning process, motivation to learn, and commitment to deeper thinking, such as focusing on classroom learning, actively participating in extracurricular academic activities, and demonstrating persistence and student learning engagement. student learning engagement is an important prerequisite for students' academic success and is closely related to their future academic and professional development (Hussain et al., 2022). In addition, regarding the mediating variables examined in this paper, academic self-efficacy refers to students' beliefs about their confidence and ability to successfully accomplish their learning goals in academic tasks, specifically students' beliefs about their ability to get good grades, learn various subjects, and complete challenging tasks, which directly affects students' motivation and effort (Akomolafe et al., 2013) .

However, despite the high practical relevance of this study, which focuses on students in higher education, there are some limitations in its scope and sample selection. First, the study mainly focuses on a group of Chinese college students, and the sample may be mainly from colleges and universities in specific regions, which limits the generalisability of the findings to some extent. Second, although the dimension of teacher support includes learning support, competence support and emotional support, it does not explore in depth other external factors that may influence student learning engagement, such as family environment, peer influence and relational networks, which may lead to an incomplete understanding of the mechanisms that influence student learning engagement. In addition, the role of academic self-efficacy

as a mediating variable, although validated, may show different effects in different subject areas and different academic contexts. Therefore, future studies can further explore other possible influencing factors based on a larger sample in order to increase the generalisability of the findings and the completeness of the theory.