

Artículo original. The influence of teacher emotional support on academic engagement of university students: Examining the mediating role of academic motivation through the lens of Self-determination theory

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The influence of teacher emotional support on academic engagement of university students: Examining the mediating role of academic motivation through the lens of Self-determination theory

La influencia del apoyo emocional del profesor en el compromiso académico de los estudiantes universitarios: Examinando el papel de la motivación académica a través de la teoría de la autodeterminación.

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Abstract

Despite substantial studies on the influence of emotional support from teachers on student engagement, there is a dearth of research regarding how academic motivation improves the effectiveness of teacher support in improving college student engagement. This study investigates the mediating role of academic motivation in the relationship between teacher emotional support and student engagement. Utilizing Self-Determination Theory (SDT), we examine how intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, as well as amotivation, influence engagement. This study employs a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to examine the mediating role of academic motivation in the link between teacher emotional support and student engagement. A total of 1,250 university students participated, responding to validated scales measuring teacher emotional support, academic motivation, and engagement. The results revealed that teacher emotional support significantly predicts both academic motivation and student engagement. Furthermore, academic motivation partially mediates this relationship, with intrinsic and extrinsic motivation enhancing engagement, while amotivation negatively impacts it. These findings underscore the importance of emotional support in fostering motivation, leading to greater academic engagement. The study highlights the psychological mechanisms underlying student engagement, contributing to research on higher education strategies. The results emphasize the need for educators to create emotionally supportive environments to maximize student motivation and engagement. Future research should explore correlational design to establish causality and examine additional factors such as peer support and learning environments.

Keywords: emotional support, engagement, self-determination, motivation, educational setting

Resumen

A pesar de los numerosos estudios sobre la influencia del apoyo emocional de los docentes en el compromiso estudiantil, hay una escasez de investigaciones sobre cómo la motivación académica mejora la efectividad del apoyo docente en la participación de los estudiantes universitarios. Este estudio investiga el papel mediador de la motivación académica en la relación entre el apoyo emocional del docente y el compromiso estudiantil. Utilizando la Teoría de la Autodeterminación (SDT), examinamos cómo la motivación intrínseca, extrínseca y la desmotivación influyen en el compromiso

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académico. Este estudio emplea un diseño de investigación cuantitativo y transversal para analizar el papel mediador de la motivación académica en la relación entre el apoyo emocional del docente y el compromiso estudiantil. Un total de 1,250 estudiantes universitarios participaron en la investigación, respondiendo a escalas validadas que miden el apoyo emocional del docente, la motivación académica y el compromiso. Los resultados revelaron que el apoyo emocional del docente predice significativamente tanto la motivación académica como el compromiso estudiantil. Además, la motivación académica media parcialmente esta relación, donde la motivación intrínseca y extrínseca mejoran el compromiso, mientras que la desmotivación lo afecta negativamente. Estos hallazgos resaltan la importancia del apoyo emocional en el fomento de la motivación, lo que conduce a un mayor compromiso académico. El estudio destaca los mecanismos psicológicos subyacentes en el compromiso estudiantil, contribuyendo a la investigación sobre estrategias en la educación superior. Los resultados enfatizan la necesidad de que los educadores creen entornos emocionalmente solidarios para maximizar la motivación y el compromiso de los estudiantes. Las investigaciones futuras deberían explorar diseños correlacionales para establecer causalidad y examinar factores adicionales como el apoyo de los compañeros y los entornos de aprendizaje.

Palabras clave: apoyo emocional, compromiso, autodeterminación, motivación, entorno educativo

Introduction

The investigation of factors influencing college students' engagement has become a significant interest in educational research. The engagement factor is multifaceted, comprising vigor, defined by elevated energy levels and resilience in confronting challenges (Anokye Effah & Nkwantabisa, 2021), dedication, which signifies a sense of pride, motivation, and value, and absorption, which refers to the state of being fully immersed in the study-related activity and the condition of being comfortably focused (Tayama et al., 2018; Cao et al., 2024). Consequently, creating an environment that fosters both academic excellence and social-emotional development is essential for sustaining student engagement (Cayubit, 2021). Student school engagement has been linked to enhanced academic achievement and success (Dimitriadou et al., 2021), increased student resiliency (Cabrera-Aguilar et al., 2023), and the promotion of overall personal and academic development (Gülşen & Şahin, 2023). Additionally, student engagement is a useful model for evaluating higher education students' academic experiences (Sadoughi & Hejazi, 2021). Engaged students

Artículo original. The influence of teacher emotional support on academic engagement of university students: Examining the mediating role of academic motivation through the lens of Self-determination theory

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pay attention, participate in class discussions, work hard, and are curious and ready to learn (Tayama et al., 2018; Dimitriadou, 2021). High-engagement classrooms have enhanced energy levels, with students offering more vitality to peers and teachers (Gülşen & Şahin, 2023). The significant influence of student engagement in educational settings, coupled with the recognition that it can be cultivated and enhanced, has resulted in a heightened interest in understanding the mechanisms that facilitate its development in educational institutions. Despite extensive study on student engagement and its influence on educational setting, a scant amount of literature comprehends how academic motivation can effectively augment teacher emotional support in promoting student engagement across varied student groups. This study posits that, through the lens of Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1985), the provision of emotional support by teachers is likely to enhance academic motivation, thereby leading to increased engagement within the educational setting.

Academic Motivation from the Perspective of Self-Determination Theory

Multiple research studies have demonstrated associations between academic motivation and various advantageous outcomes, such as student achievement (Zaccoletti et al., 2020), improved resilience under stress (Trigueros et al., 2020), the application of self-regulated learning strategies (Berestova et al., 2021), and the development of academic perseverance (Trigueros et al., 2020). Researchers have found that students who are academically motivated see their educational experiences as important, enjoy learning, and look forward to undertaking things that contribute to academic achievement (Datu & Yang, 2019; Trigueros et al., 2020; Ryan & Deci, 2020). Conversely, studies demonstrate that inadequate motivation significantly contributes to poor performance (Trigueros et al., 2020). One of the most popular motivational theories is the Self-determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985; 2000). Academic motivation has three levels: intrinsic (sought for personal fulfillment), extrinsic (driven by the desire to achieve an external goal or reward), and amotivation (lack of perceived motivations). According to SDT, nurturing children' core psychological needs for autonomy, relatedness, and competence in school boosts

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academic motivation. Autonomy means controlled and choice-based learning till completion (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Students who are given the chance to make decisions in the classroom are more inclined to work harder (Ryan & Deci, 2000; 2020). Thus, belongingness is the desire to be part of an environment, receive diversity and inclusion, experience care, and interact with teachers and peers (Ryan & Deci, 2020). If students feel valued in an educational environment, their engagement, participation in discussions, and collaborative learning will improve, as may their skills and confidence. Finally, competence is overcoming academic obstacles. Feedback that helps students succeed in school boosts confidence and perseverance (Koenka, 2020). When these three demands are met, college students' intrinsic motivation increases, improving their academic engagement, effort, and persistence (Deci et al., 2001; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Extrinsic and intrinsic motivation increases learning, performance, personal adjustment, and school engagement (Huéscar Hernández et al., 2020; Ryan & Deci, 2020). On the other hand, studies also show that restricted settings and prohibitions that limit the students' autonomy leads to negative consequences for motivation as well as the overall well-being of the students (Liu et al., 2019). Self-determined students are stronger in dealing with academic setbacks and exhibit more perseverance, ultimately resulting in sustained success, engagement, and well-being in their academic pursuits (Deci et al., 2001; Reeve & Shin, 2019). The academic motivation of university students can be explained through the lens of Self-Determination Theory. By fostering autonomy, building competence, and developing relatedness to create an environment that does not only motivate a student but instills passion for lifelong learning. Consequently, it is essential to meet all these psychological needs when assisting students in overcoming challenges in higher education to attain their personal and professional goals.

Emotional Support and Engagement of students

A teacher's ability to build positive interactions with students and help them grow psychologically constitutes emotional support (Romano, 2021). Teacher emotional support identifies three dimensions; positive climate, teacher sensitivity, and consideration of adult perspective (Romano, Tang, et al., 2020). Positive climate is

Artículo original. The influence of teacher emotional support on academic engagement of university students: Examining the mediating role of academic motivation through the lens of Self-determination theory

Vol. 11, n.º 2; p. 1-25, Abril 2025. <https://doi.org/10.17979/sportis.2025.11.2.11328>

defined as a teacher's intention to foster constructive student relationships. Conversely, teacher sensitivity denotes a teacher's capacity to address the intellectual and emotional requirements of students. Ultimately, consideration of the adolescence perspective evaluates the extent to which a teacher fosters student autonomy, peer interaction, and social requirements (Romano et al., 2021; Romano, Tang, et al., 2020). These supportive factors encourage students to actively and proactively participate in their studies. Emotionally supportive teachers boost student performance, motivation, and engagement (Lobo, 2023; He et al., 2024). Previous studies have shown that college student engagement is frequently dependent on various factors including teacher support (Brink et al., 2020; Lobo, 2023). Research indicates that students exhibit higher levels of engagement when they perceive greater support from their teachers (Sadoughi & Hejazi, 2021; Zhao et al., 2018). Similarly, Shen et al. (2024) found that both students and teachers acknowledged the significance of teacher support for social-emotional development. Students who view teachers as fostering nurturing, well-organized educational settings with transparent and equitable high standards are more inclined to report social-emotional well-being (Huang & Zhang, 2022). Moreover, elevated student engagement correlates with increased attendance and improved test scores, suggesting an indirect relationship between students' views of teacher support and academic achievement through student engagement (Brink et al., 2020). Furthermore, teacher support has been shown to increase students' motivation (Fan & Lu, 2020), academic resilience and achievement (Romano et al., 2021; Tao et al., 2022), decrease academic stress and pressure (Romano, Tang, et al., 2020), and increase students' engagement in the classroom (Reeve & Shin, 2019). Support from teachers refers to the perception that students are valued and accompanied by their instructors (Fan & Lu, 2020). Meeting the basic psychological needs of students enhances their satisfaction with the learning environment, resulting in a greater involvement in the process of learning (Chiu, 2022). Support from teachers encompasses both emotional and academic factors (Sadoughi & Hejazi, 2021). Emotional support refers to students' perception that teachers are concerned about their feelings as unique individuals (Romano et al., 2021). Conversely, academic support refers to students' perception of

Artículo original. The influence of teacher emotional support on academic engagement of university students: Examining the mediating role of academic motivation through the lens of Self-determination theory

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teachers' concern regarding their learning progress and outcomes (Quin et al., 2018). Moreover, other studies have also shown that teachers' positive emotional support with students may be more important than other forms of support for learning (King et al., 2024). The emotional support offered by teachers corresponds with the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), suggesting that students are more inclined to learn and engage when their emotional needs are addressed by teachers, resulting in favorable outcomes in their academic pursuits (Ryan & Deci, 2020; Guay, 2021; Chiu, 2022). Studies indicate that students in emotionally supportive classrooms exhibit elevated intrinsic motivation, resulting in enhanced engagement in learning activities (King et al., 2024; Deci & Ryan, 1985). Moreover, the emotional support provided by teachers plays an integral part in fostering positive relationships between students and their teachers, which are vital for the development of interpersonal abilities and academic proficiency within the classroom setting (Reeve & Shin, 2019; Romano, Buonomo, et al., 2020). Consequently, previous study data indicates an association between positive feelings in a classroom setting and academic engagement (Carmona-Halty et al., 2019). Thus, students who feel good about school are more engaged in learning (Shen et al., 2024). Despite extensive research on the impact of emotional support from teachers on student engagement in school, limited research exists regarding the influence of academic motivation factors on the efficacy of teacher support in enhancing college student engagement.

Aims and hypotheses formulation

This study sought to examine the mediating effect of academic motivation on the link between teacher emotional support and student academic engagement. Specifically, the following hypothesis will be tested for this investigation.

H₁: Teacher emotional support, academic motivation, and student school engagement are significantly correlated

H₂: Teacher-emotional support has a positive effect on academic motivation and student school engagement

Artículo original. The influence of teacher emotional support on academic engagement of university students: Examining the mediating role of academic motivation through the lens of Self-determination theory

Vol. 11, n.º 2; p. 1-25, Abril 2025. <https://doi.org/10.17979/sportis.2025.11.2.11328>

H3: Academic motivation serves as a mediator in the interaction between teacher emotional support and student engagement in school.

Methods

Participants and Sampling Technique

The participants in the study were first-year and second-year college students enrolled in different basic Physical Education courses during the first semester of the Academic Year 2024-2025. These courses are exclusively available in the students' first and second years, designating this group as the target population. *Purposeful sampling* was utilized, and participants were chosen from existing enrollment lists without bias. This guaranteed that the sample precisely reflected the actual student demographic in these courses throughout the data collection period. Moreover, it is a participant selection strategy that does not depend on statistical likelihood but instead on the researchers' subjective evaluation of which volunteers will yield the most valuable data. Consequently, a selection criterion was devised to ensure the highest quality responses. (1) officially enrolled in any Physical education courses during the 1st semester Academic year 2024-2025.

The study was carried out from a sample of 1,250 university students of 32.4% (n= 405) male, 60.64% (n = 758) female, and 6.96% (87) part of LGBTQIA+ students. A total of 739 (59.12%) freshmen and 511 (40.88%) sophomore students took PATHFIT 1 and 3 courses at the MSU-Iligan Institute of Technology, Iligan City, Philippines.

Artículo original. The influence of teacher emotional support on academic engagement of university students: Examining the mediating role of academic motivation through the lens of Self-determination theory

Vol. 11, n.º 2; p. 1-25, Abril 2025. <https://doi.org/10.17979/sportis.2025.11.2.11328>

Table 1. Socio-demographic information of college students

Variable		n	%	Mean	SD	Range
Gender	Male	405	32.4			
	Female	758	60.64			
	Part of LGTBQIA+	87	6.96			
Age				18.96	1.557	17-28
Year Level	Freshmen (PATHFIT 1)	739	59.12			
PE course	Sophomore (PATHFIT 3)	511	40.88			

Instruments

The students' perception of their teacher's emotional support was measured using The Italian validated version of Romano et al. (2020). This scale has 15 items and three subscales: positive climate (e.g., "Our teachers want students in this class to respect each other's ideas"), teacher sensitivity (e.g., "Our teachers care about how we feel."), and regard for adult perspective (e.g., "Our teachers allow us to discuss our work with classmates."). All items were evaluated using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = "Not at all true," 5 = "Very true"), with a higher score reflecting a greater amount of support from teachers. The TES has demonstrated robust internal consistency and validity across several populations (e.g., Romano et al., 2021). The overall scale exhibits a Cronbach's alpha of 0.94, while its subscales range from 0.84 to 0.89.

The Academic Motivation Scale (AMS; Vallerand et al., 1992) was employed to assess students' motivation toward their academic pursuits. This scale comprises 28 items and assesses three characteristics of motivation: intrinsic motivation (i.e., "Because I experience pleasure and satisfaction"), extrinsic motivation (i.e., "To prove to myself that I am capable of completing my college degree while learning new things"), and amotivation (i.e., "Honestly, I don't know; I really feel that I am wasting my time in school."). The participants evaluated each item using a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from (1) Does not correspond at all to (7) Corresponds exactly. A greater total score signifies elevated levels of academic enthusiasm. This scale has been proven to have good psychometric properties (Reyes et al., 2022; Berestova et al., 2021). The

Artículo original. The influence of teacher emotional support on academic engagement of university students: Examining the mediating role of academic motivation through the lens of Self-determination theory

Vol. 11, n.º 2; p. 1-25, Abril 2025. <https://doi.org/10.17979/sportis.2025.11.2.11328>

AMS demonstrated substantial internal reliability of .94, with all dimensions exhibiting strong Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.93 (intrinsic) to 0.85 (amotivation).

The school engagement of college students was measured using Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9; Schaufeli et al., 2006). This is a 9-item tool that was established to ascertain engagement level of students and has three factors: vigor (e.g., "When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to class), dedication (e.g., "My studies inspire me"), and absorption (e.g., "I am immersed in my studies"). On a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (never) to 6 (always/every day), respondents were asked to indicate their level of engagement. A higher score indicates greater work engagement. This scale has been used in several studies and has proven to be a reliable and valid instrument (Domínguez-Salas et al., 2022). The overall UWES-9 demonstrates a Cronbach's alpha of 0.91, with its subscales varying between 0.75 and 0.84.

Data Collection Procedure

The researchers employed a standardized questionnaire that effectively addresses the target respondents and fulfills the study objectives. The cross-sectional survey is structured to incorporate relevant questions from associated studies, including the teacher emotional support, academic motivation scale, and school engagement scale. Prior to data collection, permission was obtained from the school officials, and the test administration commenced following the approval of the higher authorities from the institution. Consent forms were obtained from the participants. The questionnaires clearly defined the research goal and guaranteed the anonymity of participants' responses. Highest Ethical considerations were strictly followed in the conduct of the study. The data gathering was conducted through an online survey using Google Forms. In the Google Forms, the purpose of the study, inclusion criteria, instruments to be used, and the components/variables which will only be measured in the entire conduct of the study are presented. Additionally, the researchers provided the benefits of the study to the institution, community, and its contribution to scientific knowledge. The online survey underlined that participating in the study is voluntary, and respondents can choose to withdraw at any moment. The respondents were similarly advised of the

Artículo original. The influence of teacher emotional support on academic engagement of university students: Examining the mediating role of academic motivation through the lens of Self-determination theory

Vol. 11, n.º 2; p. 1-25, Abril 2025. <https://doi.org/10.17979/sportis.2025.11.2.11328>

potential minor hazards associated with their involvement in the research, including the experience of unease when responding to personal and/or sensitive survey inquiries. In addition, respondents were informed that there is no monetary compensation associated with providing information for the study. The respondents were additionally informed regarding the information that would be gathered via Google Forms and transferred to an Excel file for evaluation. Additionally, respondents were notified that the data that were obtained would no longer be used in any subsequent or secondary research. Withdrawal of respondents' participation in the study will not have any adverse effects on their relationships with the involved researchers or research organizations, nor will it affect their contributions to any future services or current programs. In order to maintain the anonymity and confidentiality of the respondents, their identities and names were withheld throughout the data collection, analysis, and reporting of the study's findings. Due to the aforementioned conditions, respondents were at any moment permitted to withdraw from the study or request a debriefing. All respondents' information were securely protected in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

Statistical Analysis

A normality test, reliability testing, and bivariate correlation analysis for inter-variable relationships were conducted. Table 2 exemplifies the outcomes of the normality test across several subscales. Most of the variables being studied met the threshold (-2, 2), which shows that the data are normally distributed. Moreover, multiple regression was employed to assess the impact of teacher emotional support, academic motivation, and school engagement. The data obtained for this study were analyzed utilizing the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 20. Lastly, prior to performing the mediation analysis, we resolved the missing values by the application of an expectation-maximization technique. This method presumes that the missing values are unintentional and randomly distributed. Parallel mediation analyses were conducted to investigate the association between teacher emotional support, identified as predictors, and school engagement, mediated by academic motivation (i.e., intrinsic, extrinsic, and amotivation), which were included as parallel

Artículo original. The influence of teacher emotional support on academic engagement of university students: Examining the mediating role of academic motivation through the lens of Self-determination theory

Vol. 11, n.º 2; p. 1-25, Abril 2025. <https://doi.org/10.17979/sportis.2025.11.2.11328>

mediators. The process macro for SPSS was utilized to perform the analysis. The indirect effects of the parallel mediators were examined via a nonparametric bootstrapping method with 5,000 resamples.

Results

Table 2 presents the mean, standard deviations, normality estimates, internal reliability, and bivariate correlations among the constructs. The results demonstrated that all dimensions of teacher emotional support were positively correlated to intrinsic motivation ($r = .25$ to $.33$), extrinsic motivation ($r = .28$ to $.35$), amotivation ($r = -.18$ to $.30$), dedication ($r = .33$ to $.37$), vigor ($r = .23$ to $.31$), and absorption ($r = .22$ to $.30$). Consequently, the dimensions of academic motivation were positively correlated with a positive climate ($r = -.30$ to $.35$), teacher sensitivity ($r = -.18$ to $.30$), regard for adult perspective ($r = -.19$ to $.35$), dedication ($r = -.29$ to $.56$), vigor ($r = -.14$ to $.52$), and absorption ($r = -.14$ to $.54$). Lastly, all school engagement factors were positively correlated to teacher emotional support and academic motivation ($r = -.14$ to $.56$). Thus, H_1 is accepted.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics, normality estimates, internal reliability, and bivariate correlations

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. PC	(.84)								
2. TS	.71**	(.87)							
3. RAP	.69**	.82**	(.89)						
4. IM	.25**	.30**	.33**	(.93)					
5. EM	.35**	.28**	.35**	.70**	(.90)				
6. AM	-.30**	-.18**	-.19**	-.18**	-.27**	(.85)			
7. VIG	.23**	.29**	.31**	.52**	.35**	-.14**	(.75)		
8. DED	.33**	.34**	.37**	.56**	.44**	-.29**	.73**	(.84)	
9. AB	.22**	.27**	.30**	.54**	.38**	-.14**	.69**	.75**	(.78)
M	23.08	26.15	17.82	45.38	49.84	7.25	10.47	11.59	10.81
SD	2.83	3.91	2.56	9.42	7.93	3.74	2.18	2.26	2.34
Skewness	-1.58	-.84	-0.95	-0.50	-0.97	1.24	-0.03	-0.38	-0.28
Kurtosis	1.85	-0.14	-0.12	-0.017	0.59	0.91	0.39	0.20	0.42

Artículo original. The influence of teacher emotional support on academic engagement of university students: Examining the mediating role of academic motivation through the lens of Self-determination theory

Vol. 11, n.º 2; p. 1-25, Abril 2025. <https://doi.org/10.17979/sportis.2025.11.2.11328>

Note: PC = positive climate; TS = teacher sensitivity; RAP = regard for adult perspective; IM = Intrinsic Motivation; EM = Extrinsic Motivation; AM = Amotivation; VIG = vigor; DED = dedication; AB = absorption. Significant at level <.01**

Multiple regression results are presented in Table 3. The results showed that teacher emotional support is a strong predictor of academic motivation [$F(1, 1248) = 225.625, p < .001$] and school engagement of college students [$F(2, 1247) = 339.675, p < .001$]. Moreover, academic motivation has a direct positive effect on student school engagement ($\beta = 0.300, t = 20.200, p = < .001$). Furthermore, the teacher's emotional support indicates that the model accounts for 15.3% of the variability observed in academic motivation and 35.3% variance accounted for in school engagement. The variance inflation factors (VIFs) for all predictors indicate no issues with multicollinearity in the model. Thus, H_2 is accepted.

Table 3. Multiple Regression

	Dependent Variables							
	Academic Motivation				School Engagement			
	Beta	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	VIF	Beta	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	VIF
TES	.391	15.021	<.001	1.000	.375	14.303	<.001	1.181
AM					.500	20.200	<.001	1.181
	$R^2 = .153$				$R^2 = .353$			
	$F(1, 1248) = 225.625; p < .001$				$F(2, 1247) = 339.675; p < .001$			

Note: TES = teacher emotional support; AM = academic motivation; The VIF coefficients for all independent variables in each model did not surpass the statistical threshold of 2.0.

The multiple mediation analysis in Table 4 reveals significant relationships between teacher emotional support and school engagement as mediated by academic motivation (i.e., intrinsic, extrinsic, amotivation). The findings indicated that academic motivation partially mediated between the association of teacher emotional support and student school engagement ($\beta = .145 (.012), 95\% \text{ CI } [.121, .174]$). This underscores that crucial role that academic motivation plays in fostering school engagement when supported by teacher emotional support. Specifically, all factors of academic motivation showed partial mediation between teacher emotional support and student school engagement. The indirect effect of teacher emotional support on school engagement through intrinsic motivation is ($\beta = .124 (.012), 95\% \text{ CI } [.100, .150]$), indicating that students with higher intrinsic motivation, likely influenced by emotional support from

Artículo original. The influence of teacher emotional support on academic engagement of university students: Examining the mediating role of academic motivation through the lens of Self-determination theory

Vol. 11, n.º 2; p. 1-25, Abril 2025. <https://doi.org/10.17979/sportis.2025.11.2.11328>

teachers, are more engaged in school. Similarly, extrinsic motivation indirectly mediated teacher emotional support and school engagement ($\beta = .090$ (.010), 95% CI [.071, .112]). Conversely, amotivation exhibits negative relationship with both teacher emotional support ($\beta = -.106$, SE = .012) and school engagement ($\beta = -.291$, SE = .019), exhibiting the higher levels of amotivation are associated with a lower school engagement. Additionally, the results showed the indirect effect of teacher emotional support on school engagement through amotivation is ($\beta = .031$ (.006), 95% CI [.018, .048]), showing that decreasing amotivation, likely through teacher emotional support can contribute to a better engagement in school. Based on the results, H_3 is accepted.

Table 4. Multiple Mediation Analysis

	Effect of IV-M (a) β (SE)	Effect of IV-M (b) β (SE)	Total Effect β (SE)	Direct Effect (c) β (SE)	Indirect effect (ab) β (SE)	LL	UL
TES $\square$ IM $\square$ SE	.361 (.30) **	.343 (.016) **	.279 (.019) **	.155 (.018) **	.124 (.012) **	.100	.150
TES $\square$ EM $\square$ SE	.331 (.025) **	.272 (.021) **	.279 (.019) **	.189 (.020) **	.090 (.010) **	.071	.112
TES $\square$ AM $\square$ SE	-.106 (.012) **	-.291 (.045) **	.279 (.019) **	.248 (.020) **	.031 (.006) **	.018	.048
TES $\square$ ACM $\square$ SE	.798 (.053) **	.182 (.009) **	.279 (.019) **	.133 (.018) **	.145 (.012) **	.121	.174

Note: TES = teacher emotional support; ACM = academic motivation; SE = school engagement; IM= Intrinsic motivation; EM= Extrinsic motivation; Amot = Amotivation; β = unstandardized coefficients; SE = standard error; CI = confidence interval. Significant at level <.01 **

Discussion

This study examined how academic motivation mediates teacher emotional support and student school engagement. A number of findings in this study merit discussion. Teachers' emotional support affects academic motivation and student engagement, consistent with the first hypothesis. This supports previous research that shows teachers who build strong emotional connections with their students not only help students learn academic skills and knowledge (Romano et al., 2021; Brink et al., 2020), but also boost intrinsic motivation, autonomy, and learning engagement.

Artículo original. The influence of teacher emotional support on academic engagement of university students: Examining the mediating role of academic motivation through the lens of Self-determination theory

Vol. 11, n.º 2; p. 1-25, Abril 2025. <https://doi.org/10.17979/sportis.2025.11.2.11328>

Researchers have also argued that teachers' emotional support through good emotional ties with students may be more important than other forms of assistance for learning (King et al., 2024; Huéscar Hernández, 2020). The study shows that teacher emotional support boosts student motivation by fostering autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Teachers who offer strong emotional support meet students' need for connection, enhancing engagement and support in learning (Romano, Buonomo, et al., 2020; Ryan & Deci, 2020). This sense of belonging fuels intrinsic motivation, leading to deeper study engagement, which in turn enhances academic performance and personal growth (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Zhao et al. (2018) highlight that academic engagement is adaptable, allowing teachers to build effective strategies. By meeting students' psychological needs, teachers inspire motivation for learning tasks, driving positive student behavior and engagement (Ryan & Deci, 2020; Quin et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2021). The study demonstrates that teachers who understand and address students' psychological needs foster greater engagement and academic motivation, enhancing student success (Reeve & Shin, 2019; Sökmen, 2019). Teacher emotional support is crucial for academic motivation and engagement, highlighting the need for teacher training on its importance. By prioritizing students' basic psychological needs, teachers can create motivating classrooms that elevate engagement and achievement. These findings emphasize the essential role of emotional support in boosting student motivation, engagement, and overall academic success.

Moreover, academic motivation enhances the impact of teacher emotional support on school engagement. Academic motivation, which includes intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and amotivation, serves as a crucial mediator between teacher emotional support and school engagement, as delineated by Self-Determination Theory (SDT). This underscores the need of satisfying students' fundamental psychological needs for autonomy, relatedness, and competence (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Deci et al., 2001). A study by Havik and Westergård (2019) highlighted that students who are intrinsically motivated participate in academic activities for the inherent fulfillment and enjoyment associated with the learning process. This shows that intrinsically motivated students who are enthusiastic about and satisfied with their

Artículo original. The influence of teacher emotional support on academic engagement of university students: Examining the mediating role of academic motivation through the lens of Self-determination theory

Vol. 11, n.º 2; p. 1-25, Abril 2025. <https://doi.org/10.17979/sportis.2025.11.2.11328>

academic work are more likely to engage in school when they feel emotionally supported by their teachers (Ryan & Deci, 2000; 2020). Additionally, teacher emotional support creates a positive atmosphere for learning, enabling students to feel reliable, valued, and connected (Havik & Westergård, 2019). This, in turn, enhances their intrinsic motivation and promotes deeper engagement in their studies.

The results indicate that extrinsic motivation mediates the relationship between teacher emotional support and student engagement. Students motivated by their teachers' support are more likely to invest in academics, as emotional support fosters appreciation and recognition, enhancing engagement for praise and grades (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Self-Determination Theory (SDT) highlights that while intrinsic motivation drives sustained engagement, extrinsic motivation, especially when supported by teachers, can also boost engagement, connecting external rewards with feelings of competence and autonomy. Teacher support helps internalize these goals, leading students to value academic tasks beyond external rewards. Moreover, reduced amotivation from increased teacher support results in greater academic engagement (Affuso et al., 2022; Tao et al., 2022). According to Liu et al. (2019), when teachers offer emotional support, students experience increased understanding, encouragement, and a greater ability to overcome challenges, which diminishes feelings of helplessness and disengagement. Decreased amotivation correlates with increased student participation and engagement in academic tasks. This condition indicates that the student perceives a disconnection from the task's purpose or carries doubts regarding their capability to achieve success. Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) posits that teacher emotional support can fulfill students' fundamental psychological needs, specifically those concerning competence and relatedness. Emotional support for students fosters a sense of belonging and efficacy, thereby countering amotivation by enhancing their feelings of capability and support (Banerjee & Halder, 2021). Moreover, emotional support facilitates students' re-engagement with their studies, transitioning from amotivation to a more motivated and engaged state (Banerjee & Halder, 2021). Thus, diminishing amotivation by teacher emotional support improves academic engagement, consistent with SDT's focus on the necessity of satisfying

Artículo original. The influence of teacher emotional support on academic engagement of university students: Examining the mediating role of academic motivation through the lens of Self-determination theory

Vol. 11, n.º 2; p. 1-25, Abril 2025. <https://doi.org/10.17979/sportis.2025.11.2.11328>

psychological needs for ongoing motivation and engagement. Addressing factors contributing to amotivation, including lack of support and negative feedback, enables teachers to foster an environment that encourages student engagement.

Finally, total academic motivation serves as a partial mediator between teacher emotional support and student engagement. This suggests that emotional support from teachers not only enhances student engagement but also contributes to increased academic motivation. Ryan and Deci (2020) of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) asserts that motivation operates along a continuum, ranging from amotivation (lack of motivation) to extrinsic motivation (driven by external rewards), and ultimately to intrinsic motivation (engagement in activities for innate satisfaction and personal growth). Numerous studies indicate that emotional support from teachers is crucial for fulfilling students' psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness, which serve as fundamental motivators (Ryan & Deci, 2020). This aligns with the findings of Liu et al. (2019) indicating that when teachers offer emotional support, they foster an atmosphere in which students feel comprehended, esteemed, and competent, directly improving their sense of relatedness and competence. Similarly, the emotional foundation enhances students' extrinsic motivation by increasing their likelihood of engaging in projects for external rewards, such as praise or grades, while simultaneously fostering the growth of intrinsic motivation, wherein students discover delight and personal significance in academic endeavors (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Chiu, 2022). Furthermore, both intrinsic and extrinsic academic motivation play a role in this process, turning emotional support from the teacher into greater academic engagement. Students who perceive emotional support are more likely to develop higher motivation, resulting in greater engagement in their schoolwork. The partial mediation of total academic motivation in this connection indicates that, although motivation is an essential way, additional factors such as the direct impact of emotional support also play a role in students' overall engagement. In the context of Self-Determination Theory, teacher emotional support fulfills the psychological needs that drive both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, resulting in enhanced academic engagement through the interplay of various motivational processes. The findings further highlight the importance of

Artículo original. The influence of teacher emotional support on academic engagement of university students: Examining the mediating role of academic motivation through the lens of Self-determination theory

Vol. 11, n.º 2; p. 1-25, Abril 2025. <https://doi.org/10.17979/sportis.2025.11.2.11328>

prioritizing emotional support within their teaching strategies, as it enhances academic motivation and promotes sustained student engagement, resulting in improved academic outcomes and personal development.

Conclusion

Our study shed light on the positive association between teacher emotional support, academic motivation, and school engagement. Teacher emotional support has been consistently associated with increased motivation and engagement among students in higher education. Notably, factors of academic motivation, such as intrinsic, extrinsic motivation, and amotivation partially mediates teacher-emotional support and school engagement. These findings highlight the significance of teachers' emotional support in creating a motivating environment that boosts student engagement, subsequently resulting in improved academic achievement, performance, and individual growth of college students. Despite the valuable insights provided by this study, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional design prevents the establishment of causal relationships between teacher emotional support, academic motivation, and student engagement. Additionally, the study was conducted within a single university, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other educational settings or cultural contexts. Furthermore, reliance on self-reported measures introduces the possibility of social desirability bias, potentially influencing the accuracy of the responses. Moreover, the study did not account for other influential factors, such as peer support, teacher-student relationships, self-concept, or the broader learning environment, all of which could play a role in student engagement. Future research could address these limitations by incorporating alternative research designs that capture changes over time. Expanding the study across multiple institutions and diverse cultural backgrounds would also enhance the applicability of the findings. Beyond cross-sectional design, a mixed-methods design could provide deeper insights. A mixed-methods design incorporating qualitative data, such as interviews or classroom observations, could offer a more nuanced understanding of the mechanisms underlying these relationships. The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Artículo original. The influence of teacher emotional support on academic engagement of university students: Examining the mediating role of academic motivation through the lens of Self-determination theory

Vol. 11, n.º 2; p. 1-25, Abril 2025. <https://doi.org/10.17979/sportis.2025.11.2.11328>

aims to tackle environmental, economic, and social challenges to foster a more equitable future for society. The research substantially advances SDG 4 (Quality Education) by analyzing the impact of teacher emotional support and academic motivation on student engagement. It underscores the significance of establishing a supportive and motivational educational atmosphere that improves learning outcomes and overall student engagement. This aligns with the goal of ensuring high-quality education that is equitable and inclusive and promoting opportunities for continuous learning for all students. The research highlights the significance of academic motivation and emotional support, offering insights for enhancing educational practices that can result in improving academic engagement, achievement and personal growth, thereby fulfilling the primary aims of SDG 4.

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