

Article

Explore Strategies of Teacher Support in Junior High School

Qianqian Zhu ^{1,*} and Yasmin Binti Hussain ¹¹ City University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

* Correspondence: Qianqian Zhu, City University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Abstract: Teacher support refers to the assistance that teachers offer to students in their studies and lives during education. Teacher support helps stimulate students' learning motivation, build strong teacher-student relationships, and assist students in becoming better learners. Teachers should offer appropriate academic guidance, balance the individual differences among students, provide autonomous support and targeted support, and guide students to develop a healthy self-awareness. The above are the necessary measures to enhance teachers' support. This research provides a theoretical reference for the scientific implementation of teacher support strategies and the construction of supportive classroom teaching.

Keywords: teacher support; junior high school education; middle school students; support strategies

1. Introduction

Improving the quality of compulsory education has always been a key concern of the state, and junior high school education has always attracted much attention. Teacher support is an important factor in the external environment for junior high school learning. When middle school students move from primary school to middle school, the learning and living environment they face undergoes significant changes [1]. As the person most closely related to students' learning, if teachers provide sufficient support in their daily study and life and make students feel the teachers' attention, students can often face the difficulties they encounter in their studies with a positive attitude. Therefore, paying attention to teacher support not only helps promote the personal development of middle school students, but also is of great significance for improving the teaching quality of middle schools [2].

2. The Dimension of Teacher Support

China's Ministry of Education pointed out that teachers are the key to talent cultivation and the main backbone force of teaching reform. In the classroom learning environment, teachers occupy a core position. Teachers can put educational concepts into practice and also provide beneficial guidance for students during the learning process. Teacher support is an important manifestation of positive teacher behaviors and an indispensable social environmental variable for understanding students' learning behaviors and academic achievements. Teacher support is a multi-dimensional variable [3]. At present, the academic circle divides the dimensions of teacher support into three dimensions or four dimensions. This study divides teacher support into three dimensions: autonomous support, emotional support and ability support.

3. The Educational Significance of Teacher Support

3.1. Teachers' Autonomous Support Helps Stimulate Learning Motivation

Teacher autonomous support is one of the teacher behaviors that motivate or delegate authority to students for autonomous learning, and it is also an important way to

Received: 02 May 2025

Revised: 06 May 2025

Accepted: 27 May 2025

Published: 28 May 2025



Copyright: © 2025 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

promote students' autonomous academic learning and active participation. Teachers providing varying degrees of autonomous support can directly affect students' learning process and learning outcomes [4]. Researchers have found that teachers' autonomous support is one of the important factors promoting academic achievement. Compared with classes where teachers tend to be controlling, in classes where teachers provide a higher degree of autonomous support, students feel more supported by their teachers and the overall learning environment [5]. Therefore, they are more interested in learning and have a higher level of autonomous motivation. They are willing to complete basic learning tasks by themselves, and also willing to take on difficult learning tasks. They feel more pleasure in school life and show high effort and perseverance in their studies. Meanwhile, compared with controlling teachers, autonomy-supportive teachers are more effective at meeting students' basic psychological needs. This helps maintain students' curiosity about learning and results in a relatively high level of self-motivation. Furthermore, even for very uninteresting tasks, providing explanations and reasons for the tasks can stimulate the participants' autonomous motivation and increase their level of engagement [6].

In recent years, intelligent education technologies such as AI-powered learning systems have provided teachers with new tools to support student autonomy. For example, AI-based platforms can deliver adaptive tasks, instant feedback, and flexible pacing — helping students take ownership of their learning experience. Studies have shown that such tools can empower learners, especially non-native language learners, by enhancing engagement and self-regulation. For instance, AI-assisted strategies have improved Chinese language acquisition among both school-age children and adult learners by offering personalized, context-aware guidance. These practices reflect the essence of teacher autonomous support in digital contexts: offering students space, resources, and feedback without over-control, thus nurturing intrinsic motivation and independent learning.

Evidently, teachers' autonomous support — whether through interpersonal strategies or the integration of intelligent systems — can promote the internalization of motivation and play a positive role in promoting students' learning. The role of teachers' autonomous support can be assessed by evaluating the internalization of students' motivation, the emergence of autonomous motivation, and its overall intensity. Therefore, the autonomous support environment of teachers undoubtedly plays a promoting role in students' learning [7].

3.2. Teachers' Emotional Support Helps Cultivate a Good Teacher-Student Relationship

Teacher emotional support refers to the extent to which teachers are willing to help and encourage students, particularly in forming friendly and trusting relationships with them. Teachers' emotional support, which reflects their willingness to help and encourage students, plays a crucial role in building positive teacher-student relationships. Merritt found that when students perceive being loved and respected, their prosocial behaviors, self-restraint, self-efficacy and interest in seeking knowledge will all increase [8]. Research has found that perceiving teachers' emotional support can effectively reduce their negative emotions, academic confusion and behavioral problems. In teaching practice, if a teacher is too kind or too strict with students, it may put either the teacher or the students in a passive position. Conversely, if teachers take the initiative to enter students' lives, connect with their emotional world and bring them life strength, it can help establish a good teacher-student relationship. In an emotionally supportive relationship, teachers and students do not share equal responsibilities. Teachers, as more mature individuals, should take the initiative to guide and support students, thereby fostering a positive learning environment. The creation of a harmonious educational and teaching atmosphere between teachers and students mainly relies on teachers, who need to truly play a leading and exemplary role. In the process of interaction between teachers and students, when teachers consciously pay attention to their own ways of expression, it is conducive to the

healthy development of students' psychology and personality, and helps to deepen students' understanding and respect for teachers and the education cause [9]. Students who receive emotional care and proper guidance are more likely to communicate openly with teachers, maintain close relationships, and actively engage in classroom activities. In the process of getting along with teachers, they are generous, sincere and calm, and their negative emotions can also be vented in a way that is easy for people to accept. Therefore, the appropriate emotional support given by teachers to students can promote the formation of a good teacher-student relationship between students and teachers.

3.3. Teacher Ability Support Helps Students Become Better Learners

Teacher ability support plays a critical role in both the academic development and socialization of middle school students. The middle school stage (aged 12 to 18) is a crucial period for students' cognitive leap and personality formation. Teachers' ability support not only affects academic performance but also profoundly influences their thinking patterns, self-identity, and future development directions. The middle school stage serves as a crucial period for constructing a "cognitive scaffolding" that supports future learning and development. Teachers' ability support not only facilitates knowledge transmission but also shapes students' thinking patterns and cognitive frameworks. This kind of influence often fully manifests itself only after entering higher education or the workplace, highlighting the long-term value of ability support for secondary school teachers [10].

4. Teacher-Supported Strategy Application

4.1. Teachers Should Provide Appropriate Academic Guidance

Teaching at the junior high school stage is of great significance. Teachers need to put a great deal of effort into improving teaching and classroom practice, and provide learners with more knowledge and guidance. However, the failure of some students in their studies is not only due to insufficient mastery of knowledge, but more so because of the lack of psychological support. In daily teaching, teachers should not neglect to teach practical cognitive strategies. At the same time, they should pay attention to cultivating good learning qualities and provide timely assistance when students face difficult or challenging tasks, guiding them to master more optimized strategic means, methods and approaches [11]. This helps learners integrate learning tasks, apply learning skills, and avoid engaging in ineffective repetitive tasks. Teachers should evaluate junior high school students' learning through multiple dimensions and methods, and use diverse approaches to understand and support students in different learning environments. Teachers should comprehensively observe, understand and analyze the strengths and weaknesses of learners before making evaluations, rather than merely relying on a single perspective such as grades to measure students' performance [12]. Teachers should be good at discovering students' potential, providing them with appropriate support, enhancing learners' self-awareness, helping students develop their own strengths and narrow their weaknesses, and cultivating students' various abilities. Teachers should enable evaluations to truly and effectively influence students, allowing them to feel that teachers are paying attention to their personal progress.

4.2. Teachers Should Balance the Individual Differences among Students

Due to the diverse backgrounds of students, teachers should adopt differentiated supportive attitudes and behaviors rather than treating all students exactly the same, in order to enhance the overall learning engagement in the classroom. When dealing with students such as female students, students who are not class cadres, students from rural families, and students with sensitive psychology, teachers need to pay extra attention to the students' conditions. In the classroom, adopt methods such as questioning and interaction to guide these students to immerse themselves in the class. Set questions and provide answer guidance from the perspectives that students are interested in, good at, or

have come into contact with. Through positive language and expressions, use educational wit to maintain students' self-confidence and self-esteem and develop their sense of hope. In daily life, teachers should take the initiative to enhance the sense of closeness with students who need their support more [13]. During spare time, they can share the little things in life and their inner thoughts with students. Teachers can appropriately use physical gestures such as patting the shoulder or back and nodding to shorten the distance between teachers and students, making students feel valued by the teachers, perceive more support from the teachers, and gain positive emotions and feelings, thus actively engaging in learning.

4.3. Teachers Should Provide Autonomous Support

The self-determination theory holds that teachers who support autonomy will stimulate students' stronger curiosity and desire for challenges, that is, intrinsic motivation. Students will show high persistence in learning and thus be more engaged. For example, in terms of course management, give learners more time and autonomy to enable them to arrange their learning progress independently. In terms of task design, provide learners with challenging and diverse online learning activities. Besides topic discussions, online communication, peer evaluation, etc., appropriately increase outcome-based learning activities that can enhance learners' engagement in online learning. Furthermore, in terms of resource design and promotion, on the one hand, diverse learning resources should be designed to give learners appropriate autonomy in making choices and respect their own decisions [14]. For example, some expansive learning resources allow learners to independently choose the learning content, and during the learning process, they provide support for operations such as pausing, rebounding, and fast-forwarding. After completing the task, learners are allowed to select test questions based on their own real-life situations. On the other hand, enhance the interaction degree of online learning resources to provide opportunities for learners' active learning, thereby helping learners obtain the optimal learning experience and learning effect.

4.4. Teachers Should Provide Targeted Support

For junior high school students who have difficulties in learning English, English teachers should not simply tell them what to do. Instead, they should handle the situation flexibly based on the actual situation of the students and teach students in accordance with their aptitudes in the teaching process. There are various reasons why junior high school students may experience difficulties in learning English. For instance, personal personality traits, learning psychology, learning habits, and intellectual factors are all factors that affect students' English learning. Students have diverse personality traits that influence their learning styles and needs. Teachers should recognize and respect individual differences, providing tailored emotional support to all students to foster their initiative and motivation in learning English. Teachers should be aware of their unconscious biases and ensure that emotional support and encouragement are provided fairly to all students, regardless of gender, to foster initiative in English learning. Teachers need to pay more attention to this situation. They should adopt corresponding support measures based on the personality characteristics of male and female students, so that every student can feel the support from the teacher. In addition, due to the different age stages of junior high school students, English teachers need to be flexible and adaptable in teaching students of different grades. This is because the learning tasks and developmental needs of students at different grade levels vary. For instance, junior high school students have just entered the junior high school stage and still have an adaptation period in English learning. At this time, teachers should provide more guidance. Help them adapt to junior high school English learning as soon as possible. In conclusion, when supporting students' learning, teachers should be flexible and adaptable, and adopt targeted support to ensure that all students can make progress.

4.5. Teachers Should Guide Students to Establish Correct Self-Awareness

Junior high school students are in early adolescence. Their understanding of complex issues is still developing. When they encounter difficulties in their studies, they may feel uncertain and confused about their future development. They cannot have a comprehensive understanding. Therefore, when they encounter problems and difficulties, they will have significant psychological emotions and doubt their own behaviors. At this point, it is necessary for teachers to integrate learning support with teaching, establish a good communication relationship between teaching and students, exchange their thoughts with students who have learning difficulties, and listen from the perspective of a listener and a guide to understand their most genuine thoughts. As a teacher, one should maintain an appropriate professional boundary while also being a mentor and supportive friend to students. When students with learning difficulties need it, teachers should be there to impart knowledge, solve doubts and guide them. In addition, teachers should guide students with learning difficulties to establish correct cognition, help them accurately position themselves, encourage and guide them more, change their learning attitudes, and cultivate their behavior of seeking help for their studies. They should not give up on themselves or abandon themselves just because they encounter difficulties. However, teachers' encouragement and support do not mean indulgence or shielding. Instead, they help students establish correct values and view things with the right values.

4.6. Teachers Should Leverage AI Tools to Support Personalized Learning

In the era of digital education, artificial intelligence has emerged as a powerful tool for enhancing language instruction, especially for learners with diverse backgrounds and abilities. Research has shown that AI-powered systems can effectively support non-native students in mastering complex language skills by providing timely feedback, adaptive learning paths, and personalized practice strategies [4]. For instance, in Chinese language education, AI tools have been applied to improve performance among non-native children, AP exam candidates, and adult learners in lifelong learning contexts [6]. Teachers in junior high schools can draw insights from these practices to better assist students struggling with English by integrating AI-assisted diagnostic tools, intelligent tutoring systems, and customized learning modules into their teaching strategies. Furthermore, AI has proven beneficial in remote and online settings by enhancing student engagement and ensuring more equitable access to learning opportunities [15,16].

5. Conclusion

This study explored the multifaceted role of teacher support in fostering positive academic outcomes among junior high school students, with a particular focus on its psychological and motivational impacts. Drawing upon recent empirical findings, it is evident that perceived teacher support significantly contributes to students' autonomous motivation, self-efficacy, emotional well-being, and academic engagement.

Research consistently demonstrates that when students perceive their teachers as emotionally supportive and academically helpful, they are more likely to develop intrinsic motivation and resilient learning behaviors. Mediating factors such as achievement emotions, psychological need satisfaction, and achievement goals further clarify the mechanisms by which teacher support enhances student outcomes. Moreover, meta-analyses confirm that teacher autonomy support not only improves engagement but also strengthens students' long-term academic performance.

Additionally, studies involving Chinese junior high school students emphasize the cultural importance of teacher-student relationships and the nuanced impact of motivational strategies in East Asian educational contexts. Emotional support, encouragement of autonomy, and attention to individual differences emerge as key strategies in promoting creative self-efficacy and academic resilience.

In conclusion, effective teacher support goes beyond academic instruction. It requires the intentional cultivation of a supportive classroom environment that respects students' emotional needs and individual characteristics. These findings offer a theoretical foundation and practical implications for the development of supportive teaching strategies that can significantly enhance student learning in junior high school settings.

References

1. C. Chen, X. Gong, J. Wang, and S. Gao, "Does need for relatedness matter more? The dynamic mechanism between teacher support and need satisfaction in explaining Chinese school children's regulatory styles," *Learn. Individ. Differ.*, vol. 92, p. 102083, 2021, doi: 10.1016/j.lindif.2021.102083.
2. E. A. Skinner and M. J. Belmont, "Motivation in the classroom: Reciprocal effects of teacher behavior and student engagement across the school year," *J. Educ. Psychol.*, vol. 85, no. 4, pp. 571–581, 1993, doi: 10.1037/0022-0663.85.4.571.
3. R. de O. Barbosa, G. C. dos Santos, J. M. da Silva, T. M. de S. Silva, P. H. G. Dias, R. C. Correa, et al., "Does autonomous motivation and self-efficacy mediate associations between environmental factors and physical activity in adolescents?," *BMC Psychol.*, vol. 12, no. 1, p. 548, 2024, doi: 10.1186/s40359-024-02055-3.
4. Z. Mo, "AI-powered language learning: Empowering non-native children to master Chinese," *J. Linguist. Cult. Stud.*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 24–33, 2025, doi: 10.70088/ev8tgr31.
5. G. Wang and Z. Zhao, "A meta-analysis on teacher autonomy support and student academic achievement: The mediating effect of psychological need satisfaction, academic motivation, and academic engagement," *Front. Educ. China*, vol. 19, no. 4, 2024, doi: 10.3868/s110-010-024-0022-3.
6. Z. Mo, "AI-assisted strategies for improving Chinese proficiency in non-native AP exam takers," *J. Comput. Signal Syst. Res.*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 115–122, 2025, doi: 10.71222/4tksvc16.
7. X. Wei and Q. Xu, "Predictors of willingness to communicate in a second language (L2 WTC): Toward an integrated L2 WTC model from the socio-psychological perspective," *Foreign Lang. Ann.*, vol. 55, no. 1, pp. 258–282, 2022, doi: 10.1111/flan.12595.
8. E. G. Merritt, S. B. Wanless, S. E. Rimm-Kaufman, C. Cameron, and J. L. Peugh, "The contribution of teachers' emotional support to children's social behaviors and self-regulatory skills in first grade," *Sch. Psychol. Rev.*, vol. 41, no. 2, pp. 141–159, 2012, doi: 10.1080/02796015.2012.12087517.
9. Z. Mo, "Artificial intelligence in lifelong learning: Enhancing Chinese language instruction for non-native adult learners," *GBP Proc. Ser.*, vol. 2, pp. 141–146, 2025, doi: 10.71222/vxzcka39.
10. Z. Mo, "Artificial intelligence empowering online teaching of Chinese as a foreign language: Opportunities, challenges, and future prospects," *Educ. Insights*, vol. 1, no. 5, pp. 18–29, Dec. 2024, doi: 10.70088/nwwqch86.
11. X. X. Liu, S. Y. Gong, H. P. Zhang, Q. L. Yu, and Z. J. Zhou, "Perceived teacher support and creative self-efficacy: The mediating roles of autonomous motivation and achievement emotions in Chinese junior high school students," *Think. Skills Creat.*, vol. 39, p. 100752, 2021, doi: 10.1016/j.tsc.2020.100752.
12. X. Ren, B. Jing, H. Li, and C. Wu, "The impact of perceived teacher support on Chinese junior high school students' academic self-efficacy: The mediating roles of achievement goals and academic emotions," *Front. Psychol.*, vol. 13, p. 1028722, 2022, doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1028722.
13. Y. Tao, Y. Meng, Z. Gao, and X. Yang, "Perceived teacher support, student engagement, and academic achievement: A meta-analysis," *Educ. Psychol.*, vol. 42, no. 4, pp. 401–420, 2022, doi: 10.1080/01443410.2022.2033168.
14. L. Romano, G. Angelini, P. Consiglio, and C. Fiorilli, "Academic resilience and engagement in high school students: The mediating role of perceived teacher emotional support," *Eur. J. Investig. Health Psychol. Educ.*, vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 334–344, 2021, doi: 10.3390/ejihpe11020025.
15. Z. Mo, "Innovative approaches in online language education: Enhancing cultural competence in virtual classrooms," *Bus. Soc. Sci. Proc.*, vol. 1, pp. 84–91, May 2025, doi: 10.5281/zenodo.15515592.
16. Y. E. Shen, "Relationships between self-efficacy, social support and stress coping strategies in Chinese primary and secondary school teachers," *Stress Health*, vol. 25, no. 2, pp. 129–138, 2009, doi: 10.1002/smi.1229.

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of GBP and/or the editor(s). GBP and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.