Proceedings of the 4th International Conference on Global Politics and Socio-Humanities
DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2026.32283

Analysis of How Teachers Support the Mental Health of Adolescent Students in the Exam-Oriented Education System

Wanting Zhao

School of Psychological and Social Sciences, Hamilton, New Zealand
zhaowanting53@gmail.com

Abstract. In today's education system, the teaching model oriented towards examinations and centered on teachers still exists. While it enhances examination achievements, it also subjects adolescent students to considerable academic pressure for a long time, leading to prominent mental health problems among teenagers. Maintaining the healthy psychological development of teenagers will gradually become an important issue. This article aims to explore the impact of teacher support on the mental health of adolescents in an exam-oriented education system by reviewing relevant literature. The article outlines the basic concepts of teacher support and classroom interaction and compares the differences in teachers' roles under different teaching orientations and reviews the research progress between teacher support and students' psychological outcomes, and analyzes the possible psychological risks brought by teaching practice in the exam-oriented environment. Finally, the possible paths to promote students' mental health by optimizing teacher support methods in the background of the examination system are discussed to provide references for teaching practice.

Keywords: Teacher Support, Exam-Oriented Education, Adolescent Mental Health, Classroom Interaction Mechanisms

1. Introduction

When many educational backgrounds occur, individuals will experience fluctuations in emotional sensitivity, identity formation and learning motivation. In an exam-oriented education system, these developmental characteristics may further exacerbate students' psychological vulnerability. Although these systems are designed to enhance teaching efficiency and classroom discipline, they often generate continuous academic pressure.

The research progress of this article mainly sorts out four types of studies related to teacher support, classroom interaction, and adolescent psychological variables. These studies provide theoretical and empirical foundations for this research from different aspects such as classroom structure, psychological mechanisms, and intervention systems.

Firstly, at the level of classroom interaction and teacher structure, the problem of "formalistic interaction" is widespread in current classrooms. That is, students have long been in a passive response position, interacting mechanically. This situation is likely to reduce the development of students' participation, cooperation, and critical thinking skills. Pan argues that the role of teachers

© 2026 The Authors. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2026.32283

should shift from "authority transmitter" to "dialogue facilitator," promoting the active participation of students by re-establishing an equal teacher-student relationship [1]. This suggests that teacher support is not an isolated teaching behavior, but a relational construction closely related to the power structure and interactive relationship in the classroom.

Secondly, at the psychological level of the mechanism of teacher support, Zheng proposed from the perspective of applied psychology that teachers' teaching styles do not directly affect students' learning autonomy, but rather drive students' learning autonomy through a clear chain-like mediating path of bringing students a sense of hope and emotional engagement [2]. This article indicates that the mechanism of teacher support largely occurs at the level of students' internal psychological resources.

At the intervention level, Li pointed out that the academic pressure on high school students has multi-source characteristics, and the intervention of a single teacher is difficult to produce a stable effect [3]. Its research proposed and empirically demonstrated that the "dual-teacher support model" of psychological teachers and class advisors is more effective in practice. This suggests that teacher support is not only an individual behavior but also a system design issue at the school level.

Similarly, Sun found that teacher autonomous support can indirectly reduce academic pressure by shaping students' growth mindset, and growth mindset itself is interventionable [4]. This finding further connects teacher support with Dweck's growth mindset theory.

Finally, Henan University Mental Health Education and Counseling Center recommends that when students show depressive tendencies such as self-harm and suicide risk, the school needs to initiate, through the class teacher, a three-level support system composed of psychological teachers and professional psychiatrists [5]. This realistic policy framework institutionally validates the fundamental and forward-looking role of teacher support in the student mental health security system.

In conclusion, this study adopts the literature review method to systematically sort out and analyze the existing empirical research on the relationship between teacher support and the mental health of adolescents. At the same time, sort out the manifestations of teacher support in classroom interaction and teaching feedback, and integrate the findings and deficiencies of research related to the mental health of adolescent students during adolescence in the exam-oriented educational context. Theoretically, it is pointed out that supportive feedback is directly related to academic pressure and test anxiety. Propose more targeted variable combinations and research directions for future empirical studies. In practice, the research provides practical ideas for classroom improvement for frontline teachers and schools, promoting the integration of mental health and daily teaching.

2. Literature review

In this review, teacher support is regarded as an independent variable (IV), including teacher support, classroom interaction, etc. Through separate discussions at school and at home as situational variables. The mental health of teenagers, such as academic pressure and learning motivation, was sorted out as dependent variables (DV). Summarize the potential influence mechanism of teacher support on the mental health of adolescents in exam-oriented educational contexts, and on this basis, propose a comprehensive discussion.

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2026.32283

2.1. Self-support

In terms of the dimension of autonomy support for teachers, some research is based on the Self-determination Theory (SDT).

This theory holds that an individual's intrinsic motivation and mental health depend on the satisfaction of three fundamental psychological needs: The sense of autonomy, competence, and relationship define "teacher support" as the degree of support that teachers provide to students' independent choices and decisions during the teaching process. That is, teachers need to relieve stress and promote students' mental health by giving students choices, constructive feedback, and emotional support [6]. From the perspective of practical measurement experience, existing studies mostly use student self-assessment questionnaires to conduct operational measurements of teacher support. For instance, Sun adopted the revised "Learning Atmosphere Questionnaire [4]." As shown in Figure 1, the results of the correlation analysis indicated that there were significant correlations among junior high school students' teacher autonomous support, growth mindset, and academic pressure. It also indicates that supporting autonomous teaching practices is associated with a lower perceived level of academic pressure. Meanwhile, as shown in Figure 2, the mediating effect exists significantly. The data results confirm that the growth mindset plays a partial mediating role in the influence of teachers' autonomous support on academic pressure. At the level of teaching practice, students' autonomy not only depends on teachers' support but is also influenced by specific teaching methods. Bruner pointed out in the scaffolding theory that the core role of teachers is to provide phased support in the process of students' ability development and gradually guide them to achieve independent learning. This viewpoint is highly consistent with the emphasis on autonomy and the need for a sense of ability in self-determination theory. Supportive teaching should be manifested as "guiding support" rather than "controlling intervention."

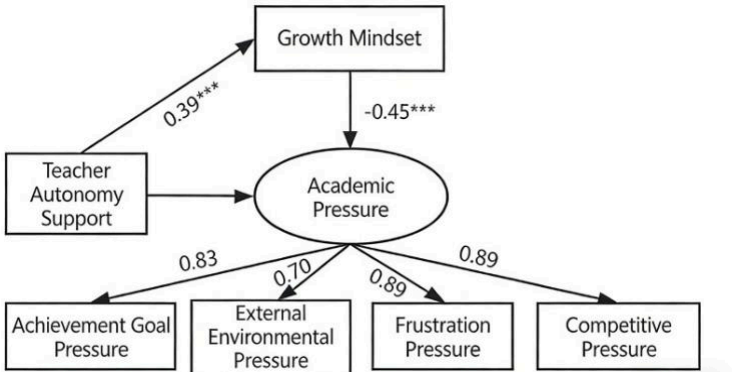

Figure 1. Test of the mediating effect of growth mindset

Table 1. Path analysis results

Path	Effect Size	Boot SE	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	Relative Effect (%)
Teacher Autonomy Support → Academic Pressure	-0.35	0.04	-0.43	-0.27	85.71%
Teacher Autonomy Support → Growth Mindset → Academic Pressure	-0.06	0.02	-0.10	-0.03	14.29%
Total Effect	-0.42	0.04	-0.49	-0.34	100%

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2026.32283

2.2. Teaching feedback and classroom interaction

In addition to self-support, classroom interaction and teaching feedback are other important aspects. Vygotsky believed that higher-order cognitive functions are not independently developed by individuals but are first formed in social interactions and then internalized as individual psychological processes [7]. Cheng classified early classroom interaction in China into five main types: interaction between teachers and individual students, interaction between teachers and student groups, interaction among students, interaction between individual students and student groups, and interaction among student groups [8]. These interactions are further distinguished based on the psychological and behavioral characteristics of teachers and students, including the forms of cooperation, confrontation, and competition, as well as two types of interaction patterns: verbal and non-verbal. Subsequent research has shown that classroom interaction patterns vary depending on group dynamics and teachers' classroom control styles. Recent literature critically examines the structure of classroom interaction by integrating dialogue theory. Just as Pan emphasized, teachers should shift from being "authority transmitters" to "dialogue guides" and rebuild an equal classroom relationship [1]. This theoretical approach is to understand teacher support as an interaction and relationship rather than an isolated teaching technique.

2.3. DV measurement

In the research examining the impact of teacher support on the mental health of adolescents during adolescence, Shen pointed out that the short scale of emotional and behavioral problems of Chinese adolescents can well explain how the mental health of adolescents is measured and defined [9]. The table includes surveys related to learning, such as students' anxiety and depression symptoms, so this tool is widely applicable to assessing students' psychological states in school research. This questionnaire consists of 18 items and is rated on a 7-point Likert scale. These four dimensions include humor and liveliness, rigor and logical clarity, care and sharing, as well as innovation and exploration. This questionnaire demonstrates strong psychometric characteristics, with an overall internal consistency coefficient of 0.913 and factor reliability exceeding 0.70. In subsequent applications, Cronbach's α coefficient reached 0.945, indicating high reliability. By focusing on students' perceptions, this measurement framework regards emotional support as an experiential structure rather than an externally imposed teaching feature. At the same time, it answered where the boundaries of teacher support lie and when teachers should shift from "classroom support" to "crisis intervention." But at the same time, we also need to be vigilant. Teachers are the first line of defense for the mental health of teenagers and play a leading and foundational role in the mental health system of students, but they do not bear unlimited responsibility.

2.4. Scenario variable

Among the scenario variables, schools, due to the supremacy of meritocracy, are regarded as an important setting for the occurrence of mental health problems among adolescents.

In this highly utilitarian environment, teachers are often positioned as authoritative sources of knowledge, while students are forced to play a passive role. Although this teacher-centered approach can promote classroom order and short-term teaching efficiency, research shows that it may hinder students' participation, collaboration, and the development of critical thinking skills.

Furthermore, in teacher-centered classrooms, even if order can be effectively maintained on the surface in the short term, students' learning motivation is often externally regulated, and teenagers

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2026.32283

may experience a loss of autonomy, increased stress, and decreased motivation. These findings emphasize the importance of checking teacher support, not only as an individual behavior but also as a situational practice embedded in an exam-focused institutional structure.

2.5. Family background: parents' educational anxiety

In addition to factors based on schools, parental educational anxiety in family backgrounds also plays a significant role in the mental health of teenagers. Those who experience high educational anxiety are highly educated parents who usually adopt a controlling or "helicopter" parenting style, which is characterized by a parenting model that exerts a high degree of control and intervention on their children. This parenting style can create a negative emotional atmosphere in the family and intensify the psychological pressure on teenagers.

According to the data from the "Report on the Mental Health and Academic Status of Youth" released by the Institute of Psychology, Chinese Academy of Sciences, teenagers with higher emotional support from their parents and more frequent parent-child communication have a lower risk of depression and anxiety [10]. These findings suggest that merely focusing on the academic achievements of teenagers is one-sided. Family communication and emotional support play a crucial role in the mental health of teenagers, and family support is another essential compensatory protective factor.

3. Discussion

In real-life situations, teachers' ability to change the educational evaluation system is often limited.From this perspective, supportive teaching should not be understood as deviating from traditional academic approaches, but rather as an interactive practice that is more in line with the psychological support of teenagers during their adolescence. Through emotional support, autonomous feedback, equal dialogue, classroom interaction, etc., teacher support can be used as a rapid and low-cost buffer mechanism, that is, without the need for systematic reform, it can reduce the cost of maintaining the mental health of teenagers in exam-oriented education.

Importantly, the results of this review can be explained through a comprehensive theoretical framework that combines the perspectives of social interaction, self-determination, and growth mindset. Drawing on Vygotsky's theory of social interaction, classroom dialogue is the main medium for cognitive and emotional development. Self-determination further explains how teaching that supports autonomy can meet students' competence and relationship and cultivate students' intrinsic motivation and stress resilience under assessment pressure. Meanwhile, Dweck's growth mindset theory emphasizes how supportive feedback can guide students to restructure failed challenges into development opportunities rather than characterize them as self-deficiencies. These viewpoints indicate that supportive classroom interaction operates simultaneously at the relational, motivational, and cognitive levels.

4. Conclusion

This study aims to explore through literature review how teachers can support the mental health of adolescents through teaching support and classroom interaction practices under the exam-oriented education system.

Based on the existing literature research, it can be found that there is a significant association between teacher support and the mental health of adolescents, and the mental health of adolescents

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2026.32283

is influenced by internal psychological mechanisms such as students' autonomous consciousness. At the practical level, this literature study shows that although individual teachers find it difficult to change the system, they can still exert a positive influence on students through practical actions in daily teaching. At the same time, school mental health support should not be allocated separately but should rely entirely on psychology teachers or professional intervention programs. Attention should also be paid to the realization of daily teaching practice.

This study also has certain limitations. Firstly, the literature mainly focuses on the educational background in China, which limits the generalizability of the research results. Secondly, most studies rely on self-reported questionnaires and cross-sectional data, which limits causal reasoning. In addition, changes in business definitions and cultural backgrounds have increased the difficulty of comparison and integration.

Future research should adopt longitudinal and mixed study designs to investigate the long-term impact of teacher support on adolescent mental health in larger samples. More attention should also be paid to the interaction among the school system, family environment and teaching practice, to provide stronger evidence for incorporating mental health support into regular classroom teaching.

References

[1] Pan, R. (2024). A study on classroom subject interaction from the perspective of dialogic theory (master's thesis, Qufu Normal University). China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI).

[2] Zheng Sihong. (2024). The relationship between teachers' teaching style and learning autonomy in the perception of junior high school students: a chain intermediary and intervention research on the sense of hope and emotional input (master's thesis, Southern Fujian Normal University). Master's degree https: //doi.org/10.27726/d.cnki.gzzsf.2024.000595.

[3] Li, L. (2025). The effects of collaborative intervention between school psychologists and homeroom teachers on senior high school students' academic stress. Education Observation, (20), 35–37.

[4] Sun Jiayi. (2025). The relationship between teachers' independent support and junior high school students' academic pressure: the intermediary and educational intervention research of growth-oriented thinking (master's thesis, Chengdu University). Master https: //doi.org/10.27917/d.cnki.gcxdy.2025.000157.

[5] Henan University Mental Health Education and Counseling Center. (2020, June 30). Psychological crisis intervention workflow for Henan University students. Henan University. https: //heart.henu.edu.cn/info/1069/1315.htm

[6] Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior. New York, NY: Plenum Press.

[7] McLeod, S. A. (2018). Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of cognitive development. Simply Psychology. https: //www.simplypsychology.org/vygotsky.html

[8] Wu, K. N. (1996). A review of discussions on the social functions of education. Journal of Central China Normal University (Humanities and Social Sciences Edition), 35(3), 77–84.

[9] Shen, M., Hu, M., & Sun, Z. (2017). Development and validation of brief scales to measure emotional and behavioural problems among Chinese adolescents. BMJ Open, 7(1), e012961. https: //doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2016-012961

[10] Chen, Z., Guo, F., Fang, Y., & Liu, S. (2025). 2024 Youth Mental Health and Academic Status Survey Report. In the Blue Book of Mental Health: Report on the Mental Health Development of Chinese Citizens (2023-2024) Psychological research institute, Chinese Academy of Sciences. https: //www.psy.com.cn/article/view.asp?id=70175