

The role of Teacher Support in Predicting Engagement through Academic Buoyancy

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The current research aims to investigate whether students' ability to deal with academic problems daily, known as academic buoyancy, can mediate the effect of teacher support in predicting senior high school students' engagement. The participants of the research consisted of 131 senior high school students. Instruments in the current research included a teacher support questionnaire, an academic buoyancy scale and an engagement questionnaire. Data analysis was conducted using multiple regression tests. Based on the research findings, academic buoyancy mediates the effect of teacher support in predicting senior high school students' engagement. The implication of this finding is that teachers need to be aware that every student needs the ability to deal with everyday academic problems in school. This ability can be fulfilled by the existence of teacher support, namely autonomy support, structure and involvement. This support will shape students' engagement with learning activities in the classroom.

Key words: *Teacher Support, Academic buoyancy, Engagement, Senior High School.*

Introduction

One of the determining factors for an individual that contributes to the development of a nation is education. Education is the main thing especially in entering the Industrial Revolution 4.0 era. Challenges in facing the Industrial Revolution 4.0 era will be experienced by all groups, especially the younger generation or adolescents. Adolescents must be able to adjust to the changes that occur within a nation. One of the educational paths that must be taken by Indonesian people, including adolescents, is formal education. Formal education is education that takes place in schools. The formal education pathway has clear levels of education, starting



from primary education, secondary education to higher education. One of the levels of education that individuals take in adolescence is high school.

The success of the learning program carried out by the school is highly dependent on various things, one of which is the involvement of students in various activities at school, which is called student engagement, academic engagement, school engagement or involvement. Henceforth in this article, the term *engagement* will be used.

Engagement is defined as an ongoing behavioural engagement in learning activities accompanied by a positive emotional tone towards learning activities in the classroom (Skinner & Belmont, 1993). Engagement can be seen as an integrated construct, meaning that describing engagement involves integrating emotional and behavioural components (Skinner & Pitzer, 2012a). Engagement can be studied at 3 different levels. One of the most important levels in learning engagement is student involvement in learning activities in class (Skinner & Pitzer, 2012).

Various studies on engagement conclude that engagement is an important factor for learning and academic achievement (Finn & Zimmer, 2012). Engagement has been proven to contribute to academic achievement because by engaging in learning activities, students will have more desire to learn. Through engagement, students will also be further encouraged and want to hone the skills they need to be able to achieve further success in school (Lawson and Lawson, 2013).

Research on engagement has been conducted for more than two decades. Various studies have proven that engagement is not a definite trait, but a soft condition that can be shaped by the environment (Frederick, 2004). Therefore, one of the things that needs to be studied in relation to engagement is factors that can facilitate an increase in engagement.

In various literatures, one of the social contexts that is considered the most influential on student education is teaching. The interactions that students experience in school, especially the interaction between students and teachers in the classroom, can be said to be the closest and can potentially affect students. Significant social support from teacher partners for students is considered capable of developing student engagement and achievement in schools (Skinner and Pitzer, 2012).

Research on how social context can affect student engagement generally refers to the Self Determination Theory. According to this theory, there are three dimensions or forms of teacher support that are considered to be able to influence student engagement: autonomy support, structure, and involvement (Deci & Ryan, 2017; Connell & Wellborn, 1991). Autonomy support from the teacher is an active process that involves acceptance on the part of the teacher from the point of view of the student, such as the teacher showing a willingness to listen to

students' opinions and giving students the opportunity to choose and make decisions related to class activities. When giving support in the form of autonomy support, the teacher also gives rational reasons regarding the interests of students when delivering subject matter, when asking students to do assignments or when setting the rules. Another form of support that teachers can also provide to students is structure. The structure given by the teacher can be in the form of clarity regarding the the teacher's expectations of students' behaviour and clarity and consistency in the application of consequences for students' behaviour. Further, the structure can also take the form of a guarantee that the teacher provides informational assistance if this is needed by students. The other form of teachers' support is involvement which is realised through the teachers' efforts to recognise the students personally, take time to talk with students, and show feelings of pleasure when together with their students (Connell and Welborn, 1991). Deci and Ryan (2000) suggest the importance of autonomy support, structure and involvement of the teacher so that students can function optimally. One strategy to achieve this is by engaging in learning activities in the classroom.

Research on engagement itself has begun to change its purpose from simply preventing students from dropping out of school to understanding how students fulfill academic and social demands at schools (Christenson, Sinclair, Lehr and Godber, 2001). This is because the success of completing school does not just remain at school, but depends on whether students are able to overcome challenges, decline and daily demands at school.

Martin & Marsh (2007) states that every student in school, without exception, must have experienced academic decline and challenges that are typical of the daily conditions at school (for example, facing low grades, completing assignments, overcoming repetitive stresses and difficult assignments), especially when students are in their teens (12–18 years) in which academic expectations will turn out to be more complex and students will be more responsible (Newman and Newman 2009). Furthermore, there is evidence that the increase of academic demands in adolescence causes a decrease in student engagement among secondary school student (Eccles et al, 1993).

Martin and Marsh (2009) state that the challenges experienced by students in the learning process can be classified as everyday hassles. Everyday hassles are sources of stress and pressure that are usually experienced by someone in their daily life. Typically, the challenges that usually arise in daily academic activities are getting bad grades, deadlines for handing in assignments, pressure from exams, and difficulty in doing school assignments. An ability to deal with or negotiate these challenges is needed. Martin and Marsh (2013) state that academic buoyancy is needed as a personal attribute of students to face daily, but not severe, academic challenges. Academic buoyancy is defined by Martin and Marsh (2008) as the ability of students to overcome academic setbacks or challenges that are commonly faced in schools.

According to Martin and Marsh, there are proximal factors that can trigger or influence one's academic buoyancy. One of which is the relationship between teacher and student, or the support given by the teacher to their students (Martin & Marsh, 2009). Research shows that the daily problems and challenges faced by teenage students in secondary schools can influence the level of student involvement in school (Skinner & Pitzer, 2012). How students cope with academic challenges can reduce the experience of stress and can support students to continue to participate actively and successfully in completing their education (Causey & Dubow, 1993). Students need the ability to overcome daily academic problems and challenges, so they can be involved with learning activities in class (Martin & Marsh, 2007). There is still very limited empirical research that proves academic buoyancy can affect a student's engagement. Therefore, one of the objectives of this study is to prove how academic buoyancy increases students' engagement. Besides that, this study also intends to examine teachers' support as a factor that can influence academic buoyancy. The question in this study is whether academic buoyancy mediates the effect of teacher support on engagement on high school students in Bandung.

The hypotheses to be tested in this study are:

Major Hypothesis: Academic buoyancy mediates the effect of teacher support on engagement.

Minor Hypotheses:

1. Teacher support has a significant positive effect on engagement.
2. Teacher support has a significant effect on academic buoyancy.
3. Academic buoyancy has a significant positive effect on engagement.

Method

Research design and participants

The type of research is correlational design. According to Heppner, Wampold & Kivlighan (2013), correlational design is used to study the relationship between two or more variables. This study will examine the relationship between teacher support variables (which are exogenous variables), academic buoyancy (intervening variable), and engagement (endogenous variables). The population of this research is high school students in Bandung in the 2018/2019 school year.

Measuring Instrument

Teacher support

Teacher support is measured using a teacher support questionnaire from Skinner and Pitzer (2012). This measuring device consists of three dimensions: investment, which is measured through 16 items, regarding the extent to which students perceive their teacher as being willing to spend time with and support students (e.g. "the teacher is always there for me"); structure, consisting of 29 items that measure students' perceptions of the extent to which teachers provide expectations, consistent rules and informational support to students (e.g. "everytime I make a mistake, the teacher will respond differently"); and autonomy support, consisting of 21 items that measure students' perceptions about whether their teacher gives them choices, respects their ideas and opinions, and explains the relevance of learning activities in class for themselves (e.g.: "my teacher gives me many choices about how to do my assignments"). There are four choices of answers. They are: not conforming (NC), less conforming (LC), sufficiently conforming (SC), and very conforming (VC). The original English-language questionnaire was translated into Indonesian by the first author (Meilani) and was checked by an English linguist. Internal consistency, measured using Cronbach's Alpha, which is 0.67 for autonomy support, which can be categorised as acceptable, 0.78 for involvement; and 0.79 for a structure can be categorised as respectable (DeVellis, 1991).

Academic Buoyancy

Academic buoyancy is measured using the academic buoyancy scale questionnaire (ABS, Martin, and Marsh, 2008), which consists of 4 items regarding students' perceptions of their ability to cope with everyday academic problems at school (e.g. "I will not let academic stress overwhelm me"). There are four choices of answers. They are not conforming (NC), less conforming (LC), sufficiently conforming (SC), and very conforming (VC). The original English-language questionnaire was translated into Indonesian by the first author (Meilani), and checked by an English linguist. Internal consistency, measured using Cronbach's Alpha, which is 0.80 can be categorised as respectable (DeVellis, 1991).

Engagement

Engagement is measured using the engagement questionnaire from Skinner et al. (2009). This measuring device consists of 25 items that measure student engagement in learning activities in class (e.g: "I work hard when I start something new in class"). There are four choices of answers. They are not conforming (NC), less conforming (LC), sufficiently conforming (SC), and very conforming (VC). The original English-language questionnaire was translated into Indonesian by the first author (Meilani) and checked by an English language expert. Internal consistency, measured using Cronbach's Alpha, which is 0.78 can be categorised as respectable

(DeVellis, 1991).

Result

All 131 respondents were used in this study. The average age of each respondent was 15.20 years (DS = 0.63; with an age range of 15–18 years). There were 66 female participants (50.38%) and 65 male participants (49.61%). Before conducting the regression test, a classic assumption test was performed to ensure that the data under study had a normal distribution, showed no symptoms of heteroscedasticity, and did not show symptoms of multicollinearity. Based on these tests, it is assumed that the data in this study have met the requirements to be applied in the regression analysis method.

Figure 1. Research scheme

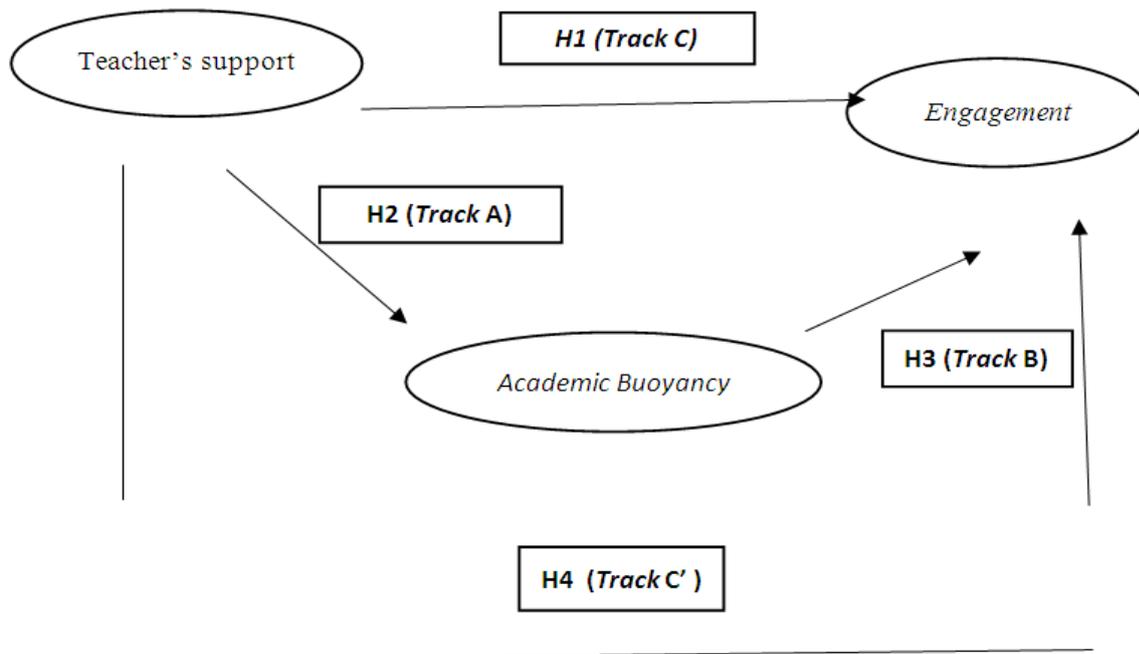


Table 1: Regression test between teacher support and engagement

Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients (β)	T	Sig.
B	Sdt. error			
41.735	2.387	.178	16.197	.000
.256	.102		2.389	0.014

Based on the data shown in the table above, $\beta = 0.178$ with $\text{sig} = 0.014$ ($p < 0.05$). This shows that there is a positive relationship, between teacher support and engagement. However, it is a very weak criterion (according to Sarwono's Criteria, 2006). Teacher support is assumed to predict engagement.

Table 2: Regression test between teacher support and academic buoyancy

<i>Unstandardised Coefficients</i>		<i>Standardised Coefficients</i>	T	Sig.
B	<i>Sdt. error</i>	(β)		
26.603	1.438	.348	22.876	.000
.189	.066		3.765	0.00

Based on the data shown in the table above, $\beta = 0.348$ with $\text{sig} = 0.000$ ($p < 0.05$). This shows that there is a fairly strong positive relationship (according to Sarwono's criteria, 2006) between teacher support and academic buoyancy. Teacher support is assumed to predict the emergence of academic buoyancy.

Table 3. Regression test between academic buoyancy and engagement

<i>Unstandardised Coefficients</i>		<i>Standardised Coefficients</i>	T	Sig.
B	<i>Sdt. Error</i>	(β)		
38.468	4.168	.325	13.688	.000
.543	.159		4.065	0.00

The data above shows $\beta = 0.325$ with $\text{sig} = 0.000$ ($p < 0.05$). This shows that there is a fairly strong positive relationship (according to Sarwono's criteria, 2006) between academic buoyancy and engagement. Academic buoyancy is assumed to be able to predict the emergence of engagement.

Table 4: Multiple regression test between teacher support, academic buoyancy, and engagement

Model	<i>Unstandardised Coefficients</i>		<i>Standardised Coefficients</i>	t	Sig.
	B	<i>Sdt. error</i>	(β)		
Teacher support	48.573	4.578		11.263	.000
	.185	.118	.154	1.985	0.83
	.287	.148	.199	2.345	.019



Academic buoyancy					
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Endogenous variable: *engagement*

The data above shows the in direct effect (Track C) the regression coefficient dropped from 0.256 (Table 1) to 0.185 (Table 4). This shows that the relationship between teacher support and engagement can be mediated by academic buoyancy. Based on the standard coefficients of the two variables $\beta = 0.154$, it can be seen that the relationship between the two variables remains positive. Another thing that can be seen from the data above is the direct relationship between the two variables shows that p is greater than 0.05 which is equal to 0.083, so according to Baron and Kenny (1998), full mediation occurs in this study.

Discussion

This study aims to examine whether academic buoyancy can mediate the effect of teacher support on engagement among high school students in Bandung. Based on the results of data analysis, it was found that the influence of teacher support on engagement can be mediated by academic buoyancy. This was obtained based on the results of multiple regression tests, where the results of direct effect calculations have a correlation coefficient of 0.154 (Table. 4) and there is a decrease in the regression coefficient from 0.256 (Table 1) to 0.185 (Table 4). Based on these data it can be concluded that academic buoyancy can mediate the influence of teacher support and engagement with full mediation.

Another thing obtained from the results of data analysis is that the correlation between teacher support and engagement is included in the weak category, but this correlation can be mediated in full mediation by the academic buoyancy variable. This means that the more positive appreciation of students towards teacher support, the more they will perceive that they have the ability to overcome academic problems every day at school. The success of students in overcoming daily problems at school will give students energy to continue to show effort, perseverance, initiative and intensity in terms of paying attention to learning activities at school, being able to enjoy learning activities in class, having enthusiasm and maintaining their interest when dealing with learning activities in class.

These results provide support for the concept proposed by Martin and Marsh (2009) that environmental factors originating from school, especially teacher and student relationships, are one of the proximal factors among factors that affect students' ability to overcome daily academic problems, an ability known as academic buoyancy. The results of this study also support the concept of Martin and Marsh (2007), which states that the ability of students to cope with every day academic problems and challenges is needed so that students can engage in learning activities in class. Further, this research can also provide empirical support to the

results of research, which until now is still very limited, which proves that students with high academic buoyancy have a high level of engagement as well (Martin, 2014; Martin et al. 2010, Martin & Marsh 2006; 2008; Putwain et al. 2012).

In this study, it was found that there was a positive correlation in the very weak category between teacher support and engagement. This proves that the first minor hypothesis proposed by the researcher is acceptable. It can be assumed that the more positive the students' appreciation of the teacher's support, the more engaged the students will be towards their learning activities.

The support given by teachers in the class can be in the form of autonomy support, structure, and involvement. In class, teachers who provide autonomy support will be willing to listen to students' opinions, provide choices for students, and allow students to make decisions. **In conveying a teacher's rules as well as explaining to students the reasons why the rules need to be followed by students.** Likewise, when the teacher submits the material or assignment, the teacher gives an explanation to students about the reasons why the material or assignment needs to be learned and what the benefits for the students are.

The explanation given by the teacher about the reasons why action was carried out will help students to understand the benefits of the action for themselves, so students complete an action not because they simply follow the directions of their teacher. In addition, when students experience that teachers are willing to listen to their opinions and provide opportunities to choose and make their own decisions, they feel that their actions are carried out on their own. This makes students more responsible for their actions. Moreover, students also understand the importance of learning activities for themselves. This will encourage students to participate in learning activities, and take the initiative when doing their assignments in class.

The form of support that can be provided by the teacher is to facilitate a clear structure in the classroom by conveying what students must achieve in an activity, for example by conveying an assessment indicator of an assignment. What must be achieved by students must be moderate, and determined by considering students' abilities. Likewise, the teacher also pays attention to the students' ability to deliver material (for example, the material presented by the component) so that students can master it more easily. If students have not been able to overcome a challenge, the teacher provides informational feedback about how students can overcome it (Connell & Wellborn, 1991).

Experiences related to this clear structure will make students feel like they have the ability to master what is expected from them (Skinner, Zimmer Gembeck, & Connell, 1989). These feelings will provide energy for students to participate when working on assignments related



to learning activities in class (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), and also positive feelings towards activities in their class, such as feelings of enjoyment, pleasure, and enthusiasm.

Teachers can also provide support in the form of involvement by providing time to talk with students and show feelings of pleasure when together with their students. Emotional attention and support will create feelings of comfort and security for students. This feeling will encourage students to be free and safe to explore an activity, so students will not feel anxious but instead feel happy when carrying out learning activities in class. Students' feelings that they are part of a group make students motivated to adapt to the behavior expected in the classroom, such as participating in in-class activities (Ryan & Deci, 2009).

The results of this study indicate a positive correlation which is quite strong and significant between the variables of teacher support and academic buoyancy. This means that the results of this study also prove the second minor hypothesis proposed by researchers, that is teacher support proved to be significantly correlated with academic buoyancy. The results of this study support the idea expressed by Martin and Marsh (2009) that the relationship between teacher and student can affect student's academic buoyancy. In fact, when teachers provide support to students by finding out, listening to and trying to respect students' opinions and points of view, providing clear rules or expectations and being willing to provide instrumental and emotional support to their students, they will be better able to overcome academic obstacles or challenges day-to-day at school. This is called having academic buoyancy abilities.

This study also proves that academic buoyancy is significantly correlated with engagement. This means that the findings in this study also prove that the third minor hypothesis proposed by the researcher is acceptable. It also provides empirical evidence for concepts from Martin and Marsh (2009) which state that students who have academic buoyancy will engage with learning activities in the classroom. Further, in accordance with previous research conducted by Frydenberg, Martin and Collie, on adolescents in Asia and the Pacific, this study shows that students who are academically buoyant show perseverance, concentration on learning activities in class, and enthusiasm, interest and a feeling of pleasure towards learning activities in the class (Frydenberg, Martin & Collie, 2017).

Students are considered to have the capacity or ability to overcome problems, setbacks and daily academic challenges (have academic buoyancy) if students can solve problems effectively (cope effectively) (Datu & Yuen, 2018). The effective solution is to use problem focused coping (Martin and Parker, 2009). By having academic buoyancy, students can successfully complete everyday hassles in a constructive way. Their success in completing everyday hassles will increase the students' self-esteem and make them become engaged in learning activities in class (Martin & Marsh 2006, 2008, Miller et al 2013). The success of students in overcoming daily problems at school will give them the energy to continue to show effort, perseverance, initiative, and intensity in terms of paying attention to learning activities



at school, enjoying learning activities in class, having enthusiasm, and maintaining their interest when dealing with learning activities in class.

The results of this study provide support for the importance of the teacher's role in shaping the ability of high school students to overcome daily academic problems at school (academic buoyancy), and later fostering student engagement in learning activities in the classroom, especially in high school where at this level of education, most students experienced an increase in challenges and anxiety in the academic field (Wang, Chow, Hofkens and Aro 2015). In addition, based on the results of the study, it was found that there was a decline in engagement during adolescence due to the increasingly diverse academic demands faced by teenagers (Eccles, 1993).

Methodologically, this study was limited to only two high schools with 131 students. With this limited number of respondents, further research needs to be done with a broader scope of locations in order to obtain research results that can be applied to a broad population. Apart from teacher support, the results of the literature study identified other social contexts, namely parents and peers who could have academic buoyancy abilities and subsequently influence children's involvement in learning activities in the classroom. Therefore there is an opportunity for researchers to examine the impact of support from other social contexts on academic buoyancy as well as on engagement and other educational outcomes in senior high school students.

Conclusion

Overall, it can be concluded that student behaviour and involvement in classroom learning activities depends on the support received by the students and the ability of students to deal with everyday academic problems at school. The implication of this finding is that teachers need to be aware that every student needs the ability to overcome everyday academic problems in school to stay involved with academic activities in the classroom, and this can be achieved through teacher's support in the form of autonomy support, structure, and involvement.



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