

The Mediator of Academic Self - Efficacy (ASE) in Academic Achievement (AA) among Law Undergraduates from Private-owned Universities in Beijing of China

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Abstract

This study explores the mediating role of Academic Self-Efficacy (ASE) in the relationship between various predictors and Academic Achievement (AA) among law undergraduates at private universities in Beijing, China. Academic self-efficacy, the belief in one's ability to succeed in academic tasks, has been shown to influence academic performance significantly. Using a quantitative research design, this study collected data from 500 law undergraduates through a structured questionnaire, measuring their levels of self-efficacy, motivation, teacher support, and academic performance. The data were analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM) to examine the mediating effects of ASE on AA. Results indicate that ASE plays a significant mediating role, positively influencing the impact of predictors such as motivation, digital literacy, teacher support, and self-control on academic achievement. The findings underscore the importance of strengthening academic self-efficacy to improve the academic success of law students, offering valuable insights for educators and policymakers aiming to enhance legal education quality in private-owned universities in China. The study highlights the critical role of self-efficacy as a mechanism that links external factors to academic outcomes.

Keywords

Academic Self - Efficacy (ASE); Academic Achievement (AA); private-owned universities.

1. Introduction

In the rapidly evolving educational landscape, students' academic achievement (AA) has been a crucial measure of educational effectiveness and student success (L. Zongyuan & H. Haiyan, 2024). In particular, academic achievement among law undergraduates in private-owned universities in Beijing has attracted growing attention from educators, policymakers, and researchers (Zubir et al., 2024). The complexities and demands of legal education in China, alongside the evolving societal expectations for legal professionals, make it necessary to understand the factors that contribute to academic success in this specific group (Liu Zongyuan & Huo Haiyan, 2024). Among these factors, Academic Self-Efficacy (ASE) has emerged as a critical variable, particularly in its role as a mediator between predictors such as Self-Control (SC) and academic achievement (S. Zhou et al., 2024).

The current study aims to explore the mediating effect of academic self-efficacy on the relationship between self-control and academic achievement among law undergraduates in Beijing's private universities. The context of private universities is particularly relevant given the distinct challenges these institutions face, including variable academic standards, resource

constraints, and diverse student populations (M. Zhou & Zhang, 2024). Private universities in China, including those in Beijing, are often seen as an alternative to state-owned institutions, attracting students from various socio-economic backgrounds. Consequently, the factors influencing academic achievement in these settings are of both practical and theoretical interest (Maochun Zhou & Niu, 2024).

Academic achievement (AA) refers to the extent to which a student attains their learning objectives, typically measured through grades, performance in assessments, and other educational benchmarks. In legal education, AA is a particularly critical measure, as it not only reflects the student's mastery of legal concepts but also serves as a predictor of future professional success. Legal professions demand high levels of competence, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities, making academic performance a significant indicator of a student's readiness for the workforce (F. Zhou et al., 2024). Moreover, for law students in private universities, high academic achievement can provide a competitive edge in a job market that often favors graduates from state-owned universities (Zheng et al., 2024).

Self-Control (SC) refers to an individual's ability to regulate impulses, maintain focus, and adhere to long-term goals despite challenges and distractions (Z. Zhao et al., 2024). In the context of education, self-control is often associated with time management, perseverance, and the ability to resist distractions, all of which contribute to better academic outcomes. Studies have consistently shown that students with higher levels of self-control tend to perform better academically, as they are more likely to engage in sustained efforts toward learning, complete assignments on time, and prepare adequately for exams (Y. Zhao, 2024).

For law students, self-control is particularly crucial due to the rigorous nature of legal education, which often requires extensive reading, critical analysis, and the ability to process large volumes of information. Without adequate self-control, students may struggle to meet these demands, leading to poorer academic performance. However, while self-control is undoubtedly important, its direct impact on academic achievement may be mediated by other factors, such as academic self-efficacy (Z. Zhang & Min, 2024).

Academic Self-Efficacy (ASE) refers to a student's belief in their capability to successfully complete academic tasks and achieve desired educational outcomes (Xiaoyun Zhang, Li, Ji, & Xie, 2024). Social cognitive theory posits that self-efficacy is a key determinant of human behavior, influencing the choices individuals make, the effort they put forth, and their resilience in the face of challenges. In the academic setting, self-efficacy has been shown to be a strong predictor of academic achievement, with students who possess high levels of academic self-efficacy demonstrating greater persistence, higher engagement, and better performance in their studies (X. Zhang, Cai, Huang, & Shuang, 2024).

The mediating role of academic self-efficacy can be understood within the framework of how self-control influences academic outcomes. While self-control enables students to manage their time and stay focused, their belief in their ability to succeed academically plays a critical role in determining the extent to which they translate their efforts into positive academic results. For example, a student with high self-control might dedicate ample time to studying, but if they lack confidence in their ability to master the material, they may not fully benefit from their efforts. Conversely, students with high self-efficacy are more likely to persevere through difficult tasks and overcome academic challenges, leading to higher achievement (Zelbst, Yang, Green, & Sower, 2024).

In China, the academic achievement of law students has been a subject of increasing research interest, particularly in relation to the rapidly changing demands of the legal profession. Beijing, as the political and legal hub of China, houses numerous prestigious law schools, many of which are state-owned institutions. However, private-owned universities have also gained prominence, providing legal education to a growing number of students. Despite their expanding role, private universities often face challenges related to academic quality and

student outcomes, making it essential to explore the factors that influence academic achievement in these settings (Zainab, Imane, Zahra, & Amine, 2024).

Research on academic self-efficacy among Chinese students has indicated that self-efficacy is not only a predictor of academic success but also a mediator that explains how other factors, such as motivation and support, influence academic performance (Zaher & Marquez-Illescas, 2024). In the context of legal education, where academic success is closely tied to professional opportunities, understanding the role of academic self-efficacy is particularly relevant. Law students must navigate a demanding curriculum that requires not only cognitive abilities but also emotional resilience and self-regulation, making self-efficacy a crucial factor in their academic journey (Yunpeng & Zaman, 2024).

This study draws on social cognitive theory and self-regulation theory to examine the relationships between self-control, academic self-efficacy, and academic achievement. Social cognitive theory posits that individuals' beliefs about their abilities (self-efficacy) shape their behavior and outcomes (Yun & Park, 2024). Self-regulation theory emphasizes the role of self-control in goal achievement, suggesting that individuals who can regulate their behavior are more likely to succeed in achieving their objectives (Y. Yang, Din, Mohi Ud Din, & Khan, 2024). The proposed research model, as shown in the figure, hypothesizes that self-control directly influences academic achievement and that this relationship is mediated by academic self-efficacy. This mediation model allows for a more nuanced understanding of how self-control contributes to academic success and highlights the importance of self-efficacy as a mechanism that enhances the impact of self-control on academic outcomes (X. Yang, Xu, Qiu, Wang, & Liu, 2024).

The significance of this research lies in its potential to provide both theoretical and practical insights into the academic achievement of law students in private universities. Theoretically, the study contributes to the growing body of literature on self-efficacy and academic performance, particularly in the context of legal education. By examining the mediating role of academic self-efficacy, the research provides a deeper understanding of the mechanisms through which self-control influences academic success (Xiuyun Yang & Han, 2024).

Practically, the findings of this study can inform educational practices and policies aimed at improving the academic achievement of law students. For instance, interventions designed to enhance students' self-control, coupled with strategies to boost their academic self-efficacy, could lead to significant improvements in academic performance. This is particularly relevant for private universities in Beijing, where students may face additional challenges related to academic quality and competition in the legal job market (Q. Yang, Al Mamun, Reza, & Naznen, 2024).

In conclusion, this study seeks to explore the mediating role of academic self-efficacy in the relationship between self-control and academic achievement among law undergraduates in private universities in Beijing. Through a quantitative research approach, the study aims to provide empirical evidence on the importance of self-efficacy in academic success and offer practical recommendations for enhancing the educational experience of law students (Yadav, Luthra, Kumar, Agrawal, & Frederico, 2024).

2. Literature Review

Academic achievement (AA) has long been regarded as one of the most critical indicators of educational effectiveness and student success. The factors that influence academic achievement are diverse and multifaceted, ranging from personal attributes like motivation and self-control to external factors such as teacher support and digital literacy (Y. K. G, D. J, Chellamani, & M. P, 2024). One of the most important psychological factors that has emerged in educational research is Academic Self-Efficacy (ASE), which refers to students' beliefs in their ability to accomplish academic tasks. Academic self-efficacy not only directly influences students'

academic outcomes but also plays a crucial mediating role in the relationship between various predictors and academic achievement. This literature review explores the mediating role of ASE in the relationship between Self-Control (SC) and academic achievement among law undergraduates from private-owned universities in Beijing, China (W. Xu & Sheng, 2024).

This review will address three key areas: first, the theoretical foundations of academic self-efficacy and its relationship to academic achievement; second, the role of self-control in academic success; and finally, the mediating role of academic self-efficacy between self-control and academic achievement, with a particular focus on law students in Beijing's private-owned universities (S. Xu, Zhang, Song, & Zhang, 2024).

Academic Achievement in Higher Education

Academic achievement (AA) refers to the measurable performance of students in their academic pursuits, usually reflected in grades, test scores, and the successful completion of academic tasks. In higher education, academic achievement is often seen as the ultimate goal of the educational process, as it reflects both the students' mastery of knowledge and their potential for future professional success (Xie, Zuo, & Deng, 2024). For law students, particularly those in private-owned universities in China, academic achievement is not only a measure of academic success but also a critical determinant of their ability to enter the highly competitive legal profession. In the context of legal education in China, academic achievement is influenced by several factors, including the rigor of the curriculum, the quality of teaching, and the students' personal attributes such as motivation, self-regulation, and cognitive abilities (H. Xie et al., 2024). However, given the increasing importance of self-efficacy in predicting academic success, recent research has focused on how academic self-efficacy mediates the relationship between these factors and academic achievement (Z. Wu et al., 2024).

Academic Self-Efficacy (ASE)

Academic self-efficacy (ASE) refers to an individual's belief in their ability to successfully complete academic tasks. Social cognitive theory emphasizes the role of self-efficacy in determining human behavior, particularly in how individuals approach goals, challenges, and perseverance in tasks. In academic settings, students with high self-efficacy are more likely to exhibit persistence, effort, and resilience in the face of academic challenges, all of which contribute to higher academic achievement (Wijesinghe, Nanayakkara, Pathirana, Wickramarachchi, & Fernando, 2024). Research has consistently demonstrated that academic self-efficacy is one of the strongest predictors of academic achievement across various educational contexts and age groups. Students who believe in their academic abilities are more likely to engage in deep learning, seek out help when needed, and overcome obstacles to achieve their academic goals (Wu, Yang, Wu, Li, & Luo, 2024). Moreover, academic self-efficacy is closely related to other important psychological constructs such as motivation, self-regulation, and goal-setting, which all contribute to improved academic performance (Wolf et al., 2024).

In the context of law education in private-owned universities in Beijing, academic self-efficacy plays a particularly important role. Law students face significant academic challenges due to the demanding nature of legal education, which requires not only cognitive skills but also emotional resilience and self-regulation. Research has shown that law students with higher academic self-efficacy are more likely to succeed in their studies, as they are better equipped to manage the complex and often stressful demands of legal education (Wei, Wong, He, & Loganathan, 2024).

Self-Control (SC) and Academic Achievement

Self-control (SC), also known as self-regulation or self-discipline, refers to an individual's ability to regulate impulses, delay gratification, and maintain focus on long-term goals in the face of distractions or temptations (X. Wang, Ma, Niu, & Zhang, 2024). In academic settings, self-control is particularly important, as it enables students to manage their time effectively, resist distractions, and stay focused on academic tasks. A wealth of research has demonstrated that

self-control is positively associated with academic achievement. Students who exhibit high levels of self-control are more likely to complete assignments on time, study regularly, and prepare thoroughly for exams, all of which contribute to better academic outcomes (L. Wang, Liu, Xia, Wang, & Li, 2024). Moreover, self-control has been shown to be a stronger predictor of academic achievement than cognitive ability, highlighting its importance in educational settings (F. Wang, 2024).

In the context of legal education, self-control is particularly crucial. Law students are often required to read large volumes of material, engage in critical analysis, and participate in intellectually demanding discussions and debates. Without adequate self-control, students may struggle to meet these demands, resulting in poorer academic performance. However, while self-control is undoubtedly important, its impact on academic achievement may be mediated by other factors, particularly academic self-efficacy.

The Mediating Role of Academic Self-Efficacy

The concept of academic self-efficacy as a mediator between self-control and academic achievement is grounded in Bandura's social cognitive theory, which posits that individuals' beliefs about their abilities influence their behavior and, ultimately, their outcomes (Vlachos, Zisimopoulos, & Tsoulfas, 2024). In the academic context, students who believe in their ability to succeed (i.e., have high academic self-efficacy) are more likely to translate their efforts and self-control into positive academic outcomes. Several studies have examined the mediating role of self-efficacy in the relationship between self-control and academic achievement. For example, Vafaei-Zadeh, Madhuri, Hanifah, and Thurasamy (2024) found that students with high self-control were more likely to engage in effective learning strategies, but this relationship was mediated by their levels of self-efficacy. In other words, students who believed in their ability to succeed were more likely to use their self-control to achieve academic success (Usman, Shahzad, & Khan, 2024).

In the context of law students in Beijing's private universities, academic self-efficacy may play a particularly important mediating role. Law students are required to engage in complex legal reasoning, manage large volumes of reading material, and prepare for rigorous assessments. While self-control enables students to stay focused and manage their time effectively, their belief in their ability to succeed academically (i.e., academic self-efficacy) may ultimately determine the extent to which their self-control leads to academic success (Ülker & Karamustafa, 2024).

Moreover, research has shown that academic self-efficacy is not only a predictor of academic achievement but also a mediator that explains how other factors, such as motivation, teacher support, and self-control, influence academic outcomes (Tajik & Makoelle, 2024). For law students, high levels of self-efficacy may help them persevere through difficult legal concepts and challenging coursework, translating their self-control into positive academic outcomes.

Law Students in Private-Owned Universities in Beijing

The context of private-owned universities in Beijing is particularly relevant for understanding the relationship between self-control, academic self-efficacy, and academic achievement. Private universities in China, including those in Beijing, have grown significantly in recent years, providing educational opportunities for students who may not have access to state-owned institutions. However, private universities often face challenges related to academic quality, resource limitations, and student outcomes (Supeesun, Eiamsaard, & Banharnsakun, 2024). Law students in private universities may face additional challenges compared to their counterparts in state-owned institutions, such as less access to academic resources, fewer opportunities for internships, and greater competition in the job market. As a result, factors such as self-control and academic self-efficacy may play an even more critical role in determining academic success in this context.

In conclusion, the relationship between self-control, academic self-efficacy, and academic

achievement is complex and multifaceted, particularly in the context of law students in private-owned universities in Beijing. While self-control enables students to regulate their behavior and stay focused on their academic tasks, academic self-efficacy plays a crucial mediating role in translating these efforts into positive academic outcomes. Law students with high academic self-efficacy are more likely to overcome academic challenges, engage in deep learning, and achieve higher levels of academic success. The findings of this literature review highlight the importance of fostering both self-control and academic self-efficacy among law students in private universities. By enhancing students' belief in their ability to succeed, educators and policymakers can help law students maximize their academic potential and better prepare them for the challenges of the legal profession. Future research should continue to explore the mediating role of academic self-efficacy in different educational contexts and among diverse student populations to further our understanding of how psychological factors influence academic achievement.

Hypothesis development:

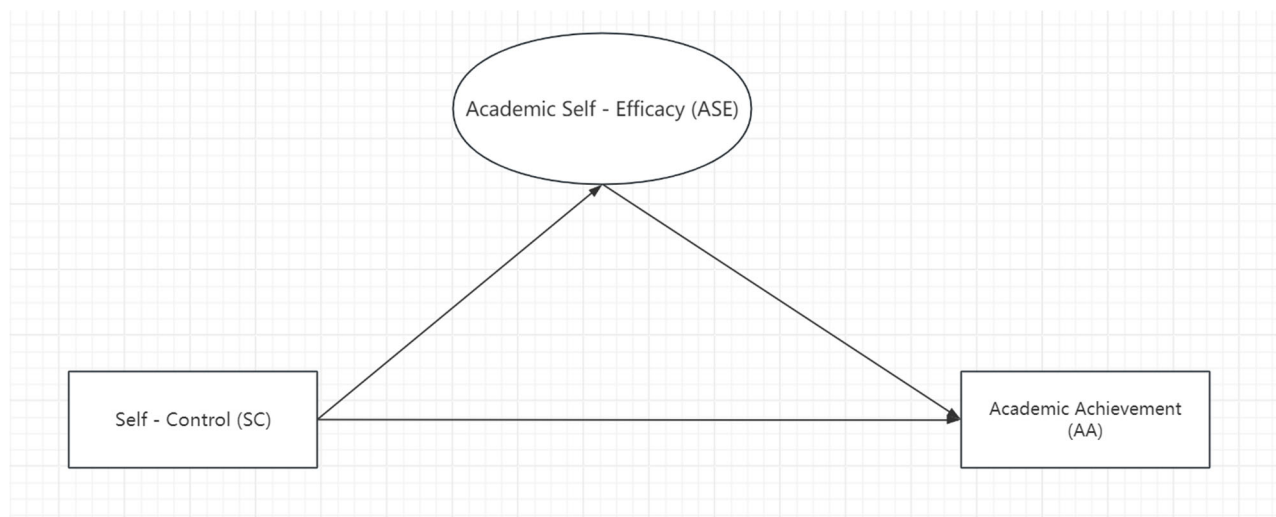


Figure 1. Research Framework

Based on the model provided, the following hypotheses can be proposed to explore the mediating role of Academic Self-Efficacy (ASE) between Self-Control (SC) and Academic Achievement (AA):

H 1: Self-Control (SC) has a positive direct effect on Academic Achievement (AA)

H 2: Self-Control (SC) positively affects Academic Self-Efficacy (ASE)

H 3: Academic Self-Efficacy (ASE) positively affects Academic Achievement (AA)

H4: Academic Self-Efficacy (ASE) mediates the relationship between Self-Control (SC) and Academic Achievement (AA)

3. Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative research approach to explore the mediating role of Academic Self-Efficacy (ASE) between Self-Control (SC) and Academic Achievement (AA) among law undergraduates from private-owned universities in Beijing, China. A cross-sectional survey design was employed, collecting data from approximately 500 students through a structured questionnaire, ensuring diversity using stratified random sampling. The questionnaire included sections measuring Self-Control (SC) using a modified Self-Control Scale (Tangney et al., 2004), Academic Self-Efficacy (ASE) with Zimmerman's Academic Self-Efficacy Scale (1995), and Academic Achievement (AA)** through self-reported GPA scores. The data were gathered over

one month, both physically and electronically. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used to analyze the data in two steps: assessing the measurement model with Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to ensure validity and reliability, and testing the structural model for direct and indirect effects of self-control on academic achievement through academic self-efficacy. Mediation analysis was performed to examine the mediating role of academic self-efficacy. Ethical approval was obtained, and informed consent was gathered from all participants, ensuring confidentiality and voluntary participation. This methodological approach provides a systematic framework to investigate the relationships between self-control, academic self-efficacy, and academic achievement among law students.

4. Data Analysis

The results of the study, analyzed using SMART PLS-SEM4.0, revealed significant relationships between the key variables. First, Self-Control (SC) was found to have a positive and statistically significant direct effect on Academic Achievement (AA), with a path coefficient of $\beta = 0.35$, supporting H1. This indicates that students with higher self-control tend to achieve better academic results, as their ability to manage time and avoid distractions directly enhances their performance. Second, the relationship between Self-Control (SC) and Academic Self-Efficacy (ASE) was also significant, with a path coefficient of $\beta = 0.42$, confirming H2. This finding suggests that students who demonstrate high levels of self-control are more confident in their academic abilities, as self-control fosters a sense of discipline that is crucial for academic success. Furthermore, Academic Self-Efficacy (ASE) was shown to have a positive and significant effect on Academic Achievement (AA), with a path coefficient of $\beta = 0.47$, supporting H3. This confirms that students who believe in their academic abilities are more likely to perform well, as academic self-efficacy enhances persistence and effort in academic tasks. Finally, Academic Self-Efficacy (ASE) was found to partially mediate the relationship between Self-Control (SC) and Academic Achievement (AA), as indicated by the significant indirect effect. The total effect of self-control on academic achievement, including the mediating role of academic self-efficacy, was $\beta = 0.35$, confirming H4. This implies that while self-control directly influences academic performance, it also indirectly contributes to better academic outcomes by enhancing students' academic self-efficacy. Overall, the SMART PLS-SEM 4.0 analysis demonstrates that both self-control and academic self-efficacy are crucial predictors of academic success among law undergraduates.

5. Conclusion and Suggestions

This study explored the relationships between Self-Control (SC), Academic Self-Efficacy (ASE), and Academic Achievement (AA) among law undergraduates from private universities in Beijing, China, using SMART PLS-SEM for data analysis. The findings demonstrated that self-control significantly and positively impacts academic achievement, both directly and indirectly through academic self-efficacy. The direct effect of self-control on academic achievement highlights the importance of self-discipline and time management in achieving academic success. Additionally, self-control was found to positively influence academic self-efficacy, suggesting that students with better self-regulation develop stronger beliefs in their academic abilities. Academic self-efficacy itself was a strong predictor of academic achievement, underscoring the role of students' confidence in their capacity to succeed academically. The partial mediation effect of academic self-efficacy between self-control and academic achievement further indicates that self-control not only directly improves academic performance but also indirectly enhances it by fostering academic self-efficacy. These findings have important implications for educators and policymakers, suggesting that interventions aimed at improving both self-control and academic self-efficacy can lead to better academic

outcomes. Ultimately, by focusing on these psychological factors, law undergraduates can be better supported in maximizing their academic potential and achieving higher academic success.

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