Too Confident for AI? The Role of Academic Self-Efficacy in Student Help-Seeking

Antonaki, A., & Karayianni, I.
a.antonaki@acg.edu ikarayianni@acg.edu

1 INTRODUCTION

The rise of AI tools in education has transformed students' help-seeking behaviors, offering a non-judgmental alternative to traditional academic help seeking (AHS) in a multiform of ways (Ruchi & Ganguly, 2024). Academic self-efficacy facilitates AHS (Al-Rashidi & Ibrahim, 2023; Xu & Wang, 2024) and predicts lower levels of fear of judgment (Jia & Yue, 2023). In turn, high levels of fear of judgment are negatively correlated with AHS (Al-Rashidi & Ibrahim, 2023). Furthermore, students are more likely to seek help from AI because it provides anonymity and a non-judgmental environment (Chan & Tsi, 2024). Findings on the relationship of AI AHS and academic self-efficacy are inconclusive. Specifically, some researchers suggest that self-efficacy is enhanced when engaging with AI tools for AHS (Bouzar et al., 2024; Chang et al., 2021), while others propose that high self-efficacy is negatively correlated with AHS from AI (Rodríguez-Ruiz et al., 2024).

Aim: explore how academic self-efficacy is related to students' AHS behavior from instructors and AI, and the potential role of fear of judgment.

Hypotheses & RQ: **1)** Academic self-efficacy would be positively correlated with AHS from instructors, and **2)** negatively with fear of judgment, **3)** fear of judgment would negatively correlate with AHS from instructors, and **4)** positively with AI AHS. **5)** How would academic self-efficacy be related to AI AHS?

2 DEFINITIONS

Academic self-efficacy: the students' beliefs about their ability to complete academic tasks successfully.

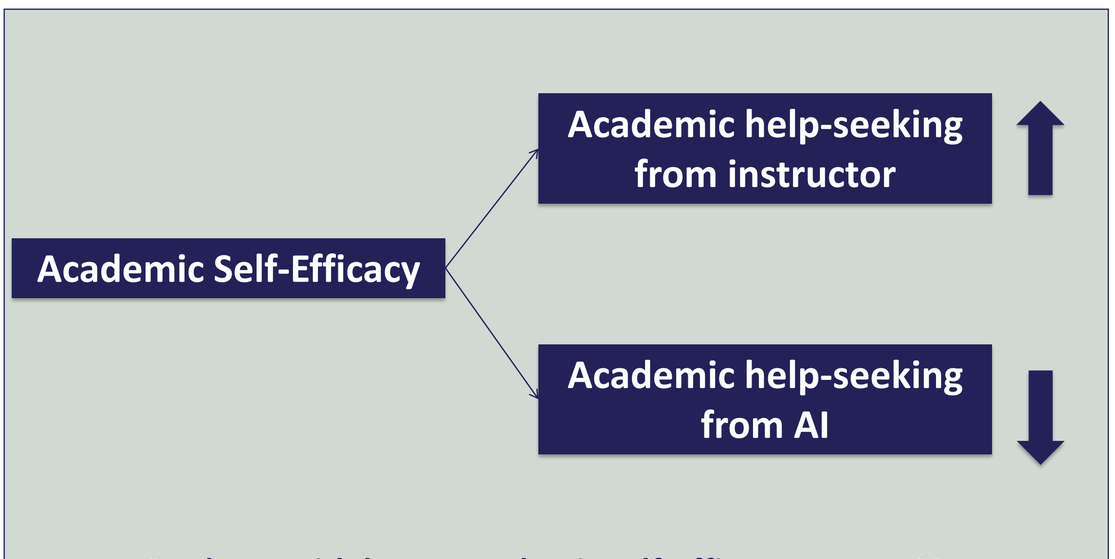
Academic help-seeking: self-regulatory strategy that contributes to student learning.

Fear of judgment: anxiety or concern someone experiences due to the belief that others will judge them negatively.

3 METHOD

Online survey for PS 3618, 108 ACG undergraduates, 62% females, 65.7% Psychology students, M_{age} 21.84, M_{GPA} 3.44 ; Fall Semester 2024

Materials: information about most recent class and instructor, frequency of GenAI use for academic purposes, Academic Self-Efficacy Scale from the Maslach Burnout Inventory – Student Survey (Schaufelli et al., 2002), Academic Help-Seeking Scale adapted for AI use (Micari & Calkins, 2019), Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale (Leary, 1983)



Students with lower academic self-efficacy turn to AI; those with higher self-efficacy turn to instructors.

Educators and institutions need to help students develop informed academic help-seeking strategies by guiding appropriate and ethical AI use, while reinforcing the value of instructor support, especially for younger or less confident students who may rely on AI out of academic insecurity.

4 RESULTS & DISCUSSION

In line with previous findings, students with higher academic self-efficacy were more likely to seek help from instructors (Al-Rashidi & Ibrahim, 2023; Duenas et al., 2021; Xu & Wang, 2024) and less likely to seek help from AI (Rodríguez-Ruiz et al., 2024). The results suggested that more confident students preferred interpersonal support from instructors over algorithmic guidance and were less reliant on external tools to succeed academically.

Contrary to previous findings, no significant relationship was observed between academic self-efficacy and fear of judgment, nor fear of judgment and AHS from instructors and AI.

One potential reason that H2-4 were not supported is the contextual anchoring in self-efficacy and AHS from instructors and AI, but not fear of judgment: the former were measured in relation to a specific class and instructor, while fear of judgment captured a general tendency rather than context-specific fear. In a familiar supportive class, students may report high self-efficacy and low fear of judgment, which might not reflect their global disposition. Also, the relatively low levels and restricted range of fear of judgment may have suppressed correlations, making them hard to detect. Finally, the small effect sizes indicate that a larger sample may be needed to detect such weak correlations.

Exploratory analyses showed that older students had higher academic self-efficacy. Also, students were more likely to seek help from an instructor of a different gender, which may reflect social norms and expectations that might have led students to believe that different-gender interactions are less evaluative (Aragón et al., 2023)

Sample, Course and Instructor Characteristics

Sample characteristics	*n*	%	*M*	*SD*
Gender				
Female	67	62%		
Male	39	36.1%		
Other / prefer not to say	2	1.8%		
Year of Study				
Year 1, Freshperson (0-29 Credits)	6	5.6%		
Year 2, Sophomore (30-59 Credits)	32	29.6%		
Year 3, Junior (60-89 Credits)	29	26.9%		
Year 4, Senior (90+ Credits)	39	36.1%		
I do not remember	2	1.9%		
Major				
Psychology	71	65.7%		
International Business	7	6.5%		
Information Technology	5	4.6%		
Marketing Management	3	2.8%		
Communication	1	0.9%		
Other	21	19.4%		
Is this course…				
Major/Minor Requirement	82	75.9%		
General Education Requirement	8	7.4%		
General Elective	8	7.4%		
Major Elective	8	7.4%		
Other	2	1.9%		
Is the instructor male or female?				
Female	66	61.1%		
Male	42	38.9%		
GenAI tools usage frequency for academic purposes			2.31	0.86
Age			21.84	2.64
GPA/CI			3.44	0.36

Correlations

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4
1. Academic self-efficacy	4.12	.93	-	**.20***	**-.36****	.10
2. AHS (instructor)	5.18	1.21	-	-	-.15	-.06
3. AHS(AI)	4.04	2.00	-	-	-	-.03
4. Fear of judgment	2.86	.89	-	-	-	-

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