

# College Student's Academic Help-Seeking Behavior

Subjects: [Psychology](#) | [Education & Educational Research](#) | [Behavioral Sciences](#)

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Seeking academic help has a positive impact on students' ability to handle challenges, leading to improved academic success. As the academic landscape becomes more competitive, the importance of students seeking and using academic support is widely recognized for enhancing their learning experience and achievements.

[college students](#)

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## 1. Introduction

As higher education entered the era of massification in many nations during the 20th century, an increasing number of individuals have been able to attend college [\[1\]](#). Meanwhile, university assignments have become increasingly complex and challenging. At college, students face a variety of academic obstacles [\[2\]](#)[\[3\]](#)[\[4\]](#)[\[5\]](#). Learning is hardly ever accomplished alone. Therefore, students should seek help from their teachers or peers [\[6\]](#)[\[7\]](#)[\[8\]](#), the school's counseling service [\[9\]](#), or the Internet [\[10\]](#). The ability to actively seek academic assistance to promote academic success is one of the most important study skills college students must possess. If students struggle with completing their projects, they may want educational support to figure out the issue or challenge themselves [\[11\]](#). People may experience this scenario psychologically in many ways, engage in various thought processes, and adopt various behaviors. From a learning adjustment perspective, academic help-seeking (AHS) is often considered to be a more important and effective self-regulation strategy [\[12\]](#)[\[13\]](#)[\[14\]](#). Obtaining academic help is also an essential self-regulated learning strategy for college students, which plays a significant role in their academic careers [\[15\]](#)[\[16\]](#)[\[17\]](#)[\[18\]](#). AHS involves seeking support from individuals and other sources to help students do well in the academic environment [\[10\]](#)[\[19\]](#).

Since the 1980s, numerous studies have been published that investigate the definition and structure of AHS as a construct [\[20\]](#)[\[21\]](#) and relate it to other key variables in the education disciplines [\[22\]](#)[\[23\]](#)[\[24\]](#). Nonetheless, due to its social aspects, AHS exhibits diverse individual traits. Its complexity manifests itself on various levels, including the factors that impact AHS, the performance of AHS, and its effects. Interest in this topic has developed during the past decade [\[25\]](#). College students' academic help-seeking behavior is a complex phenomenon that has garnered significant research attention. However, there is a need for a comprehensive understanding of this behavior, including its characteristics, trends, and various aspects related to its definition, relationship with academic performance, available resources, influential factors, and the impact of online platforms.

## 2. Defining Student Help-Seeking

Topic 1 focuses on the definition and theories related to students' AHS behavior, as well as the reasons why students seek help and the circumstances under which they refuse to seek help. It also describes the classification of student help-seeking behavior and concludes with recent advances in student help-seeking behavior. Ames and Lau [26] defined AHS as a method of locating and utilizing additional resources for one's success.". When an individual recognizes that they cannot overcome their problems on their own, help-seeking behavior develops. In general, the help-seeking process entails acknowledging the need for assistance, locating potential people who can assist, articulating the problem that needs to be solved, and evaluating the outcome of the help-seeking process. Likewise, Almaghaslah and Alsayari [9] hold the view that the behavioral strategy of actively seeking academic assistance is through social interaction. Beisler and Medaille [27] explained the students' perceptions of academic help as an effective problem-solving strategy. According to these studies, asking for AHS is a good learning strategy. Students use AHS behaviors to address their academic challenges and difficulties through their efforts and ultimately to achieve academic success because they are the main subjects of learning in the university setting.

Some authors view AHS as a self-regulation strategy employed by students [20][28]. Unlike other cognitive strategies, this AHS combines cognitive and social integration skills. The first step in a student's process of seeking help is becoming aware of the need for it. Therefore, when a student seeks assistance, a series of choices are made. These choices could be but are not restricted to becoming aware of the issue and challenge; choosing to seek assistance; choosing from whom to seek assistance; choosing when to seek assistance; selecting the form of assistance to seek [29]. Recently, Payne utilized Yosso's community cultural wealth framework, understanding how the academic help-seeking behavior of first-generation college students can lead to success in the field of post-secondary education through the accumulation of their cultural capital. Meanwhile, they conducted a systematic study of first-generation college students' academic help-seeking behavior and concluded that academic help-seeking provides students with a source of power over their family's cultural capital as well as the school's cultural capital collision [30].

Reeves and Sperling [31] claimed that a student's AHS behaviors are significant for predicting performance and assisting students in overcoming academic obstacles by accepting associate instruction from a school. Similarly, Almaghaslah and Alsayari [9] asserted additional motivation to complete academic courses and improve academic performance improves students' help-seeking behavior in learning. Academic help-seeking behavior can be extremely beneficial to a student's academic success, but many students do not use it successfully; for example, Schworm and Gruber [32] used a survey to find that college students are reluctant to seek academic assistance in traditional classroom settings. This view is explained by Mahasneh et al. [33], who wrote that this effect may be influenced by the absence of necessary background information and the perception of danger associated with seeking assistance.

A broader perspective has been adopted by Almaghaslah and Alsayari [9] who argued that in the definition of academics, formal academic help-seeking is generally considered to be seeking help from teachers in the

classroom and formal academic institutions in school, whereas informal AHS is primarily seeking help from classmates, friends, peers, or family members. Help-seeking comes in two forms [14][34]: The first type of help-seeking behavior is rapid help-seeking, also known as executive help-seeking, which is primarily characterized by seeking the best solution directly from teachers or peers, without thinking. The second type, referred to as slow help-seeking behavior or instrumental help-seeking, is primarily characterized by the assistance of others who can eventually complete the task on their own [35]. Beisler and Medaille [27] described when a student requests quick or executive help, they are searching for an immediate fix and are not concerned with significantly contributing to the help-seeking process. However, students want to be able to develop their learning and problem-solving abilities during the AHS process when the type of help sought is instrumental. There is also a classification by Reeves and Sperling [31], who identified two orientations of student help-seeking behavior, adaptive, and avoidant. Pupils who are adaptive help-seekers are more capable of engaging in positive academic help-seeking behaviors, whereas those with avoidant orientations are more likely to rely on their strengths to solve problems. The study of students' academic help-seeking behaviors can now be viewed in a new light thanks to decision-inspired methods. In addition, several research techniques should be used to investigate the types of resources students use to seek academic assistance in their actual behavior [36].

Current research on students' help-seeking behavior has concentrated primarily on academic perspectives instead of investigating how students recognize and perceive their help-seeking behavior. Theories of learned help-seeking behavior are more diverse, ranging from a psychological perspective that views it as a learning strategy and dissects the process of help-seeking behaviors to a cultural capital perspective that views it as a type of cultural capital that students can use.

### 3. Academic Help-Seeking and Academic Performance

Active help-seeking in academics is a prosocial, structured, and interactive behavior that promotes students' academic growth. And in the fields of education and psychology, help-seeking has been one of the key research themes [37]. The link between academic assistance and academic achievement has been studied for many years, with most studies concluding that academic help-seeking behavior has a positive effect on academic success. Karabenick and Knapp [14] asserted that a student's academic performance can be improved by seeking academic assistance from peers and teachers. Schworm and Berndt [38] found that one of the most crucial study skills for college students to have to succeed in their studies is the ability to ask for AHS which is supported by Payakachat, Gubbins, Ragland, Norman, Flowers, Stowe, DeHart, Pace, and Hastings [39].

One study by Umarani [40] examined that seeking academic assistance is an academic process learning strategy for students. And, students with academic difficulties who actively seek academic assistance can improve their academic performance. In general, students who refuse academic support perform worse in school than those who regularly interact with their teachers. Another study by Algharaibeh [37] offers an analysis of the various sources of academic assistance, including the fact that formal sources are typically school teachers and academic service centers provided by the school, whereas informal sources are typically parents, peers, classmates, etc. Help-seeking, whether formal or informal, can improve academic performance, encourage positive learning, and

increase students' sense of self-efficacy. Additionally, there are studies in which researchers have looked at how academic achievement and help-seeking fare across disciplines. In a cross-sectional study conducted by Rini and Wijanarko [41], it was shown that the Nursing Science Research Project at the Muhammad Foundation in Bali found a positive correlation between seeking academic assistance and student achievement. Sun et al. [42] also found that there was a significant positive correlation between students' self-efficacy in learning math, their utilization of help-seeking strategies, and academic achievement in both pre-and in-class learning settings. Zheng and Zhang [43] contended the use of peer learning and help-seeking positively affected the performance of first- and second-year students in the flipped classroom.

In the realm of educational research, help-seeking behaviors among students have long been acknowledged as crucial determinants of academic development. Nevertheless, not all help-seeking behaviors are created equal. In earlier research, the terms expedient help-seeking and adaptive help-seeking were distinguished [20][44]. Expedient help-seeking typically involves students looking for shortcuts, often expecting others to complete tasks for them or directly asking for solutions without seeking genuine understanding. Such behaviors can be counterproductive, sometimes resulting in poorer academic outcomes and heightened levels of student anxiety. In contrast, adaptive help-seeking behavior, also known as instrumental help-seeking behavior, occurs when students seek assistance by considering other people or resources and eventually solve the problem on their own [21][45].

## 4. Resources of Academic Help-Seeking

Early studies on college students' AHS behavior concentrated on patterns of AHS behavior and the variables affecting that behavior. The use of specific academic resources, such as academic service centers in libraries and schools and online help-seeking within the scope of distance education, has emerged in more recent studies of the academic literature [9]. The following section discusses the different types of academic assistance resources, such as peers, classmates, friends, teachers, libraries, academic service centers, and the Internet. With varying regularity and efficacy, students use various kinds of academic support tools. Effectiveness, timeliness, cost, accessibility, and for students, user-friendliness is the most important factor to consider when selecting academic support resources [9].

A mixed study by Beisler and Medaille [27] described eighty students who used drawings to describe their AHS behavior; the results revealed that 59% of the students sought assistance from a peer or family member, followed by their tutor and the school's writing center. This view is supported by other scholars who concur that when students encounter academic difficulties, they typically seek assistance from their peers. Mahasneh, Sowan, and Nassar [33] found that peers are students' first choice when looking for academic assistance. Moreover, more than forty percent of students who encounter academic difficulties attempt to find solutions on their own. Likewise, Almaghaslah and Alsayari [9] hold the view that peers, online course portals, and online educational resources are the three most popular types of resources used by students following an academic call for assistance. In the context of higher education, university instructors do need to understand that one of the components of their student's academic success is their support of them [46]. The behavior of the instructor in the classroom has a direct impact on the effectiveness of the student's lessons, their attitudes toward learning methods, and ultimately

the quality of their learning [47]. In a similar vein, Thomas et al. [48] in their article noted that to succeed academically, students first ask for assistance from their teachers and peers.

When the help-seeking scenario arrived in the school setting, scholars conducted the following research. Giblin, Stefaniak, Eckhoff, and Luo [36] conducted a similar experiment at a university, and the results revealed distinct manifestations of students' AHS behavior in and out of the classroom. In the classroom, 43% of students chose their classmates for academic assistance, while 17% chose their notes; however, outside the classroom, 39% chose online resources, and 28% chose classmates or friends. Less frequently did students utilize textbooks, class notes, and their teachers' instruction. Moreover, the study revealed that students formed study groups and utilized multiple websites to achieve their AHS behavior. Another study showed that email was the most popular resource for academic assistance before and after class, whereas discussion and office hours were the least popular [31].

Typically, students select their advisor rather than the school's academic services as the official source of assistance [14]. Academic services are faced with a new challenge because the majority of undergraduate students do not know how to ask for assistance. Elias et al. [49] describe the three main aims that most of these services have in common: (1) educating students about online academic support resources; (2) encouragement of students to seek academic assistance; (3) helping learners to use self-directed learning strategies. The library is also underutilized by students. But, most students are unaware of the library's resources and the assistance offered by the library staff. A study conducted by Beisler and Medaille [27] indicated that in-class library instruction sessions do seem to have a positive impact on students; however, students do not connect their different research needs with possible library assistance. Wirtz et al. [50] concluded four new patterns in students' behavior when looking for assistance: Students AHS will have access to a variety of resources, but the frequency of their use is undesirable; (2) The utility of resources is not the only factor motivating student use of them; (3) The ranking of academic assistance resources by students is primarily based on the availability of resources; (4) The time and location of access to resources explain why students seek help, the more convenient a resource is perceived to be, the more likely a student is to use it.

## 5. Factors of Academic Help-Seeking

An extensive and expanding body of literature has investigated what factors influence students' AHS behaviors. Some of these factors can help or hinder students' help-seeking behavior, while others may be found to not affect students' AHS after the study. The elements that affect students' AHS are specifically described below.

Many students believe that seeking academic assistance from others reveals their academic deficiencies, which can negatively impact their self-esteem. The desire of students to seek assistance will decrease if they believe that doing so will bring down their self-esteem [47]. Zander and Hoehne [35] have been able to show that it can lessen students' behavior toward seeking assistance if they experience exclusion by fellow students. AHS behavior can be reduced by ambivalence and the perception of academic help-seeking threats [39].

According to one study, students were more likely to see the threatening aspect of asking for academic help in person [31]. The main cause of students' perceived help-seeking threats is low self-esteem, which is brought on by reluctance to admit their failings. Additionally, the learning environment and types of resources available for help-seeking influence students' perceptions of help-seeking threats [51]. A student may choose not to ask for help for numerous explanations, including the nature of the difficulty they are facing, their study habits and tendencies, their relationship with their preferred potential helper, and the particular circumstances surrounding the request for help at the time [27]. Similarly, Schworm and Gruber [32] also mentioned that students may refuse assistance due to a lack of information or the perceived threat of asking for assistance. Thomas and Tagler [52] in their study used the Reasoned Action Model (RAM) to investigate the determinants of students' intentions to utilize university-based sources of academic support. They found that perceived normative pressure and attitudes accounted for a considerable amount of variability in intentions to seek help.

Additionally, gender has distinct influences on students' help-seeking behaviors [53]. Dunn et al. [54] found that as individuals grew older, their tendency to seek help decreased. Furthermore, in Calarco's [55] study, socio-economic status also influences students' academic help-seeking behavior; in general, students from lower socio-economic backgrounds believe teachers will respond negatively if they ask for assistance, whereas students from middle-class families do not hold this viewpoint. Commenting on avoiding seeking help, Mahasneh, Sowan and Nassar [33] argued: to begin with, asking for assistance is a dependent learning strategy, so students may avoid doing so when putting the idea of independent and autonomous learning into practice. The second is that students might interpret asking for assistance as an indication of incompetence. Third, asking for academic help is a socially interactive behavior, so how the student perceives the academic environment around him, or she may have an impact on how the student asks for assistance. There is also a claim that if a student feels uncomfortable in the classroom when interacting with peers or the teacher, this may deter them from asking for assistance.

Significant amounts of the literature have been published on students seeking academic assistance. Several encouraging influences on students' willingness to ask for help were uncovered by these studies. For example, Beisler and Medaille [27] uncovered that direct academic instruction in the classroom encourages students to seek out academic help-seeking. Micari and Calkins [47] showed that positive attitudes toward students' help-seeking behaviors will result in more academic help-seeking behaviors at the course's conclusion.

Additionally, if students are given more incentives for helping, their behavior of asking for assistance will support their academic success, and they will be more attentive to the subject matter and engaged in class discussions [32]. Students' instrumental help-seeking behavior is influenced, as expected, by a collaborative approach to course learning [38]. Thus far, Dunn, Rakes, and Rakes [54] demonstrated that academic self-discipline and thinking critically positively influence academic help-seeking behaviors, and as academic self-discipline and critical thinking increase, so do academic help-seeking behaviors.

And, in a study carried out by Payakachat, Gubbins, Ragland, Norman, Flowers, Stowe, DeHart, Pace, and Hastings [39], it was shown that how students act when they need help in school can be affected by how smart they think they are and how helpful their teachers are. Brouwer and Engels [56] greater emphasis was placed on

examining the impact of peers on students' tendencies to seek help, revealing that they were more inclined to seek assistance from a friend. Opdecam et al. [57] indicate that students who favored team learning had lower ability levels but higher intrinsic motivation, less control over their learning beliefs, increased help-seeking behavior, and a greater willingness to share knowledge with peers. In addition, the similarity of academic achievement among friends contributed to the occurrence of help-seeking behaviors and ultimately led to the formation of the student's academic help-seeking network. As noted by Won et al. [58], even when considering the student's motivation to seek help, the student's perceived sense of belonging predisposes the student to adaptive academic help-seeking behavior. In the meantime, self-efficacy for self-regulated learning positively predicted adaptive help-seeking strategies as well. When faced with challenges or difficulties in their academic work, college students are more likely to seek assistance if they have greater confidence in their ability to self-regulate their studies. Long and Neff [59] noted that self-compassion indirectly promotes help-seeking by reducing the fear of positive evaluation. Additionally, self-compassion directly encourages help-seeking due to the focus on personal well-being.

The impact of gender on academic help-seeking is currently viewed in different ways. As noted by Zander and Hoehne [35], women are typically more proactive than men in seeking academic assistance. While in another two studies, researchers found gender is not a variable that impacts help-seeking [60]. In another experimental research, Miranda Lery Santos et al. [61] compare the economic, time, and social costs of help-seeking to the expected benefits, and found participants were more likely to seek help when there was no economic cost to help, but were not as sensitive to the time cost and social cost parameters.

Overall, there seems to be some evidence to indicate numerous factors affect how students behave when they need academic assistance. For instance, while some pursuits of academic excellence and self-affirmation can encourage constructive help-seeking behaviors, others, such as low self-esteem, uncertainty about issues, and failure-related fear, can have an impact on students' efforts to get assistance. The school environment and the social environment in which students live can also affect students' help-seeking behaviors, along with gender and age.

Obtaining AHS via the Internet is a novel method. The following section compares the effectiveness of face-to-face help-seeking, hybrid help-seeking, and online help-seeking. In addition, the role of Facebook and live chat in academic help-seeking behavior is described.

To date, several studies have defined what it means to obtain AHS online. Seeking academic assistance through online platforms or tools, such as search engines, email, instant messengers, and social media, is referred to as seeking academic help online [62]. Students seeking online academic help can receive both formal and informal academic assistance, and doing so is a strategy for succeeding academically [63]. Broadbent and Lodge [64] thought that students primarily turn to the Internet for academic help from peers, friends, and teachers to overcome academic obstacles. In addition, email, forums, social media, and classroom questioning interactions were the most common online resources used to seek academic help.

According to a quantitative study of college students in Taiwan, getting academic assistance online is the new way to learn, and these students are more inclined to use online resources to look up solutions to their academic problems [65]. Students who frequently used Facebook formally and informally for academic support perceived the web as socially interactive, were able to foster a sense of community through online interactions, and were more likely to seek academic assistance online [15]. Another important study by Broadbent and Lodge [64] explained why students like to seek help online. Two reasons cited significantly more frequently by online students as justifications for their preference for live chat are highlighted by thematic analysis. Live chat may be the most popular method for online students to seek assistance. This is primarily because they have greater access to the instructor and can communicate in this manner to facilitate face-to-face interaction and because live chat enables the staff to respond quickly.

When compared to face-to-face contact, Mahasneh, Sowan, and Nassar [33] noted that online learning environments encourage students to use help-seeking techniques more frequently than traditional classroom settings do. However, in a recent quantitative study, Reeves and Sperling [31] investigated that students still plan to rely more on interpersonal rather than technological channels of support, despite the threat. In one well-known web-based survey, Tang [46] reported that Students with greater self-efficacy frequently visit the library and seek academic assistance from afar. In-person rather than online academic assistance is preferred by students who live close to their school. Email remains the most common source of academic assistance for students who live far from school.

As Hayman et al. [66] stated that students use their Facebook confessions in four different ways to support their academic experiences and guide their undergraduate careers: they ask for help on Facebook, give study advice, look for useful information, and control their study habits. Broadbent and Lodge [64] compared opinions of live chat technology used for online academic help in higher education between online and blended learners. Because they feel more cared for by the teaching team through timely chat, online students are more satisfied with live chat and are more likely than blended students to suggest others use this form of assistance. Furthermore, Hao, Wright, Barnes, and Branch [62] investigated computer science majors' online help-seeking behavior was predicted. For each of the three online help-seeking categories, the biggest predictor was the degree of difficulty of the problem. Learners' ability level, academic performance, and epistemological beliefs were significant predictors of online search and faculty help-seeking. Barnard et al. [67] conceptualize Self-regulated Learning (SRL) as a complex construct consisting of six dimensions: environment structuring, goal setting, time management, help-seeking, task strategies, and self-evaluation. Vilkova and Shcheglova [68] survey to evaluate the function of SRL dimensions and found that low communication between MOOC students and instructors during the learning process implies that the dimension 'help-seeking' is not effective in the MOOC environment.

Taken together, these studies prove the proposition that academic help-seeking online is accepted by most students. Additionally, requesting assistance online provides better and quicker access to elementary teachers, protecting students' privacy while also facilitating better access. The resources available for students seeking academic assistance have been further increased by the advancement of Internet technology.

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