



An Empirical Study on Course Selection Motivation of College Students from the Perspective of Self-Determination Theory

Jinghang Cang

International Business, Liaoning Normal University, Malan Street, Shahekou District, Dalian
China

jc679s@missouristate.edu

Abstract. As a crucial component of the modern education system, elective courses in universities play a significant role in cultivating students' comprehensive qualities, broadening their knowledge horizons, and enhancing their critical thinking abilities. However, nowadays, there exists a phenomenon where students choose elective courses not based on their interests or pursuit of knowledge itself, but rather for obtaining higher credits and improving their comprehensive quality evaluations. Against this backdrop, this study is conducted based on Self-Determination Theory. It adopts survey questionnaires and interviews to collect data, conducts data analysis, and utilizes methods such as open coding, axial coding, and selective coding to explore and interpret the relationship between learning environment, individual perception, and learning motivation. Additionally, it highlights the significant relationship between types of motivation and behavioral performance.

Keywords: Course selection motivation, university elective courses, learning participation, educational strategies.

1 Introduction

University elective courses are an indispensable component of higher education curriculum systems. By selecting elective courses of interest, students can engage in learning within a more autonomous environment, fostering individual development, nurturing innovative thinking, and problem-solving abilities. However, there is a phenomenon where some students select courses not based on their interests and pursuit of knowledge but rather for the sake of obtaining higher credits and improving comprehensive quality evaluations. Consequently, behaviors such as skipping classes emerge. Therefore, increasing students' positive course selection motivation and enhancing their classroom participation have garnered attention from the academic community. Self-Determination Theory, as one of the important theories in education, is fundamentally a humanistic motivation theory. Motivation is a crucial factor in guiding student learning in higher education. Within the framework of

© The Author(s) 2024

Z. Zhan et al. (eds.), *Proceedings of the 2024 10th International Conference on Humanities and Social Science Research (ICHSSR 2024)*, Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research 858,

https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-277-4_152

Self-Determination Theory, it has been observed that college students' course selection motivation tends to lean towards maximizing utility rather than solely pursuing the maximization of utility gains(Luo, Z. M.& Ma, J. F., 2022) ^[1]. Based on this premise, this paper aims, under the guidance of Self-Determination Theory and utilizing grounded theory, to delve deeper into the mechanism between college students' course selection motivation and classroom participation behavior.

2 Literature Review

In 1945, Harvard University President Conant organized the compilation of the seminal document "The Harvard Red Book" in the field of general education. The report posited that the aim of general education is to cultivate what kind of individuals students become, while professional education addresses vocational skills (Conant, 1945)^[2]. Following the publication of "General Education in a Free Society," it became one of the milestones of the American "General Education Movement." In China, since 2000, a series of measures such as general education evaluation and teacher training have promoted the popularization of general education in various schools. Gan Yang (2006)^[3] emphasized the importance of general education in fostering students' independent and critical thinking abilities. Therefore, analyzing elective courses from the perspective of student subjects is of practical significance.

In the field of course selection research, course selection motivation has received attention. Based on domestic and foreign research literature and analysis of survey results, the influencing factors of student course selection motivation can be categorized into four aspects: career planning and academic exploration, social interaction, interests and hobbies, and personality orientation.

According to Holland's vocational interest theory, individuals tend to consider future academic exploration directions and career prospects more comprehensively when choosing elective courses. Ma (2021)^[4] categorized students into four types using the K-means clustering algorithm: balanced (concerned with grades, utility, and interests), achievement-oriented (most concerned with grades), learning-oriented (more focused on knowledge acquisition and skill mastery), and socially oriented (emphasizing peer recommendations and social interaction). Among them, learning-oriented students, according to Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, prioritize their knowledge acquisition and career planning needs during the elective course selection phase.

As social beings, social needs become indispensable factors in daily learning. American sociologist Homans (1961) ^[5]proposed social exchange theory, emphasizing the calculation of individual interests and exchange behavior in social interaction, providing a new perspective for understanding the role of social interaction in learning and other social activities. Building upon this, American psychologist Bandura (1986)^[6] proposed social cognitive theory, integrating cognitive components into traditional behavioral personality theories to form his own social cognitive theory. He emphasized that human behavior, especially complex behavior, is primarily learned postnatally, and this learning is influenced by genetic factors, physiological factors,

and social environment. This theory not only explains how individuals learn new behaviors through observation and imitation but also further explores the significant role of social interaction in this process.

Learning motivation refers to the psychological inclination or internal drive that stimulates and sustains learning behavior, while interests and hobbies are often important sources of learning motivation. When learners have a strong interest in a field or topic, they are more likely to engage in in-depth exploration and learning, thereby achieving better learning outcomes. Additionally, Self-Determination Theory also emphasizes the importance of interests and hobbies in learning motivation. Self-Determination Theory was proposed by American psychologists Deci and Ryan in the 1980s. This theory suggests that individuals, after fully understanding personal needs and environmental information, make free choices in their actions. When learners' interests and hobbies align with their personal needs and environmental information, they are more likely to generate intrinsic learning motivation and become more autonomously engaged in learning (Deci, E. L., Vallerand, R. J., Pelletier, L. G., & Ryan, R. M., 1985)^[7].

Overall, both domestic and foreign research in the relevant fields of learning motivation and behavior have a long history and tend to have a more mature research system and philosophy, laying a solid foundation for the development of this study. However, existing studies on course selection motivation have paid little attention to elective courses, and there is still a lack of research on the mechanism analysis of course participation. Most of them only analyze and summarize the popularity and current situation of elective courses in China, with issues such as mismatched data used in surveys and the new development situation of existing universities. Based on this, this study, grounded in self-determination theory, adopts questionnaire surveys and in-depth interviews, and utilizes grounded theory to explore the mechanism from student course selection motivation to course participation behavior, supplementing the relevant research on university elective courses.

3 Data Analysis

3.1 Research Subjects

From February 2024 to April 2024, the researcher invited 16 students with differences in majors and future plans based on the principle of maximum diversity to conduct semi-structured interviews. The basic information of the interviewees is shown in Table 1. Among them, there were 5 freshmen, 5 sophomores, and 6 juniors. By continuously comparing and analyzing the interview data of university students at different levels and majors, new categories were continually refined to amend existing theories until no new categories emerged, achieving theoretical saturation. This process aims to provide a basis for the in-depth analysis of college students' course selection motivation and to analyze the deviation phenomenon between their motivation and actual utility. The interviewees consisted of 8 male students and 8 female students. Among them, 12 students planned to take the postgraduate entrance exam, 3 planned to study abroad, 1 planned to seek employment, and 1 planned to either study abroad

or take the postgraduate entrance exam. A total of 14,188 words of interview transcripts were collected, and the researcher ensured the confidentiality of the interviewees' privacy.

Table 1. Interview Participant Coding Table

Code	Age	Grade	Gender	Future plan
h1	19	freshman student	male	graduate school entrance exam
h2	19	freshman student	male	graduate school entrance exam
h3	19	freshman student	female	graduate school entrance exam
h4	19	freshman student	female	graduate school entrance exam
h5	19	freshman student	female	study abroad
h6	20	sophomore student	male	graduate school entrance exam
h7	20	sophomore student	male	graduate school entrance exam
h8	20	sophomore student	male	employment
h9	20	sophomore student	female	study abroad/graduate school entrance exam
h10	20	sophomore student	female	graduate school entrance exam
h11	21	junior student	male	graduate school entrance exam
h12	21	junior student	male	graduate school entrance exam
h13	21	junior student	male	graduate school entrance exam
h14	21	junior student	female	study abroad
h15	21	junior student	female	graduate school entrance exam
h16	21	junior student	female	graduate school entrance exam

The Table was developed by the author.

3.2 Research Subject

3.2.1 Analysis of Measurement Tool Reliability and Validity

Internal consistency coefficient analysis of the questionnaire items for each variable was conducted using SPSS 25.0 software. As shown in Table 1, the internal consistency coefficients of each construct are all greater than 0.9, and the item-total coefficients are also greater than 0.9. Additionally, after deleting any item, the internal consistency coefficient either decreases or remains unchanged, indicating good reliability for all scales. Internal Consistency Coefficients of Each Scale is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Internal Consistency Coefficients of Each Scale

Variables	Items	Item-total correlation coefficient	α coefficient after deletion	α coefficient
Course selection motivation	STR1	0.952**	0.888	0.927
	STR2	0.870**	0.913	
	STR3	0.862**	0.916	
	STR 4	0.865**	0.915	
	STR 5	0.848**	0.918	
Learning participation	CLA1	0.757**	0.872	0.918
	CLA2	0.796**	0.909	
	CLA3	0.750**	0.903	
	CLA4	0.812**	0.911	
	CLA5	0.951**	0.900	

The Table was developed by the author.

3.2.2 Overall Characteristics Descriptive Statistics

In the effective sample, the questionnaire's current status is depicted in the table below. Overall characteristics descriptive statistics is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Overall characteristics descriptive statistics

Variable	Category	Quantity	Proportion
Gender	male	200	44.64%
	female	243	55.36%
Grade	freshman student	121	27.01%
	sophomore student	110	24.55%
	junior student	111	24.78%
	senior student	106	23.66%
Major	Science	115	25.67%
	Literature	16	3.57%
	Agriculture	13	2.9%
	Philosophy	10	2.23%
	Economics	50	11.16%
	Law	11	2.46%
	Education	35	7.81%
	History	15	3.35%
	Engineering	97	21.65%
	Management	58	12.95%
Number of elective courses	Fine Arts	8	1.79%
	Medicine	20	4.46%
	one course	155	34.6%
	two courses	165	36.83%
	three courses	79	17.63%

	four or more courses	49	10.94%
Graduation plan	admission to graduate school without entrance exam	54	12.05%
	take the postgraduate entrance exam	169	37.72%
	employment	201	44.87%
	take the civil service examination	17	3.79%
	other	7	1.56%

The Table was developed by the author.

3.2.3 Pearson Correlation

Data were analyzed for correlation using SPSS 26.0. The results of the mean, standard deviation, and correlation coefficients for each variable are shown in Table 4. The results indicate a significant positive correlation between students' motivation for elective course selection and their participation in elective course learning ($r = 0.637, p < 0.001$).

Table 4. Results of Correlation Analysis

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2
1.Course Selection Motivation	3.41	1.06	1	
2.Learning Participation	3.46	1.02	.637***	1

Note: (1) * indicates $p < 0.10$, ** indicates $p < 0.05$, and *** indicates $p < 0.01$.

The Table was developed by the author.

It can be seen that in the study of elective courses, improving students' course selection motivation helps to enhance their classroom participation in elective courses, achieving better teaching outcomes. When organizing general education course selection, schools should stimulate students' achievement motivation while avoiding students' selection of general education courses based on avoidance motivation. Driven by achievement motivation, students achieve better learning outcomes; conversely, driven by avoidance motivation, students' learning outcomes are poor. - From "An Empirical Study on the Correlation between General Education Course Selection Motivation and Learning Performance in Colleges and Universities" (Gu, C.M. & Hou, Y., 2020),^[8].

The reason why interest stands out among many factors influencing student course selection is mainly due to the positioning of elective courses. Elective courses are an organic part of the structure of higher education curriculum, aimed at stimulating students' self-learning consciousness, broadening their knowledge, cultivating innovative thinking and various skills, improving personal comprehensive qualities, enhancing students' adaptability to social development, and opening up paths for the cultivation of compound talents. - From "A Brief Analysis of the Psychological State of College Students in Selecting Elective Public Courses" (Bai, Y. P., 2013)^[9].

3.2.4 Linear Regression

The Pearson correlation coefficient shows that the correlation coefficient between teaching strategy efficacy and self-efficacy is 0.637***, indicating a high positive correlation between students' course selection motivation for elective courses and their classroom participation in elective courses. Therefore, theoretically, a one-dimensional regression model can be established. In this model, t represents students' course selection motivation for elective courses, and Y represents students' classroom participation in elective courses. ab are the unknown parameters of the model, referred to as the regression constant and regression coefficient, respectively. The parameters ab in the model can be found based on historical data (samples) using Ordinary Least Squares (OLS).

$$b = \frac{n \sum tY_t - \sum t \sum Y_t}{n \sum t^2 - (\sum t)^2}$$

In the equation, n represents the sample size, and the meanings of other letters are the same as in the previous equation. Linear regression analysis was conducted using a one-dimensional linear regression method, while rigorously controlling for reality, disciplinary attributes, and academic level. The results show that the standardized regression equation between teaching strategy efficacy and teacher self-efficacy is $Y = 0.637t$, where $\text{Sig} (F=304.933) < 0.001$, indicating statistical significance of the model, and the standardized coefficient is 0.637.

4 Interview Analysis

4.1 Open Coding

Open coding involves breaking down raw interview data into separate concepts and then recombining them in new ways (Chen, X. M., 2000)^[10]. To ensure comprehensiveness, research members repeatedly compare the logical relationships between concepts and categories during the research process, identify consistent parts, and classify the original codes. Through conceptualization and generalization of research data, three categories are identified. Open Coding Table is shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Open Coding Table

Open Coding		Original language excerpt (initial concepts)	
Tagging	Conceptualization	Categorization	
a1 Credit accumulation	A1 requires high score attainment (a2, a3)		I would choose courses that are easier to score higher in (A1a1, a2).
a2 High score achievement	A2 low difficulty in learning (a4, a5)	AA1 High score requirement (A1)	For online courses, once the course hours are completed (A3 a1), I prefer courses that offer higher grades with fewer tasks (A2, a1a5).
a3 Grading situation	A3 credit acquisition (a1)	AA2 Pressure reduction requirement (A3)	I'm less inclined to choose courses that are abstract and unrelated to my major (A4 a6).
a4 Course difficulty	A4 effectiveness evaluation (a6)	AA3 Graduation requirement (A3)	If a course is highly relevant to my major, I would be more willing to attend (A4 a6a7).
a5 Ease of passing	A5 improvement in examination skills (a5, a8)		
a6 Practical utility	A6 compulsory learning (a1, a9)		
a7 Future planning			
a8 Evaluation			I hope teachers grade based on student effort, and somewhat relax

method	academic standards accordingly (A2 a3a4).
a9 Institutional	I'm unwilling to/won't spend time on subjects that are not important (less relevant to the major) (A4 a7).
management	I prefer courses where the content is simple and easy to understand, and where the teacher helps us focus on key points efficiently through pre-exam summaries (A5 a8).
	During finals week, I review for a week in advance, focusing on key points (A5 a8).
	Once I've fulfilled my credit requirements, I can prioritize courses I like/are good at, without worrying about credit requirements affecting graduation (A4 a6a7).
	I prefer courses with high quality, considering whether they meet my practical needs (A4 a6a7).
	Teachers grade very strictly; low-quality assignments receive low scores (A2, a4a5).
	If time permits, I choose subjects that are easy to pass; graduation is the goal (A3 a1a5).
	I enjoy hands-on courses where I can gain practical life experience (A4 a6a7). Online exams are easy to pass because answers can be obtained easily (A3 a5a8). School management is strict/systematized—students must attend classes on time (A6 a8a9). Exams don't test knowledge; not much studying is needed to pass (A5 a5a8). I won't choose courses where the standards are high, but the grades are still not ideal (A1 a2a3). I enjoy easy-going courses where little theoretical knowledge is required; a few presentations and then class is dismissed, a good way to pass time (A2 a4a5). Usually, courses that are harder to pass (strict teacher, relatively more assignments) offer more credits (A6 a1a9). Some courses like Modern Science and Frontier Science feel difficult and less relevant to the major, but are necessary to take (A6 a6a9). I choose courses with difficulty and value; grades are not the goal, learning is about the significance and process (A4 a6a7). I filter and choose courses that I find useful (helpful for future postgraduate exams, etc.), and I will attend them seriously (A4 a6a7). If I don't pay attention in class, the exam will be difficult (A5 a4a8). For elective courses, I prefer less emphasis on specialization; comprehensive assessment methods are suggested, and the atmosphere should be relaxed (A6 a4a6).

The Table was developed by the author.

4.2 Axial Coding

Axial coding is a further analysis of the data based on the open coding process, primarily aimed at discovering and establishing connections between categories, thereby presenting the organic relationships among different parts of the data. During the analysis, researchers repeatedly scrutinize the conceptual framework and categories, engaging in in-depth discussions until consensus is reached. Through coding discoveries, structural relationships, causal relationships, and contextual relationships among categories are identified. After continuous comparison and analysis, 12 main categories are derived, including score orientation, interest-driven, academic gains, course preferences, social needs, self-improvement needs, external incentives, evaluation

reputation, supportive environment, inhibitory environment, high participation willingness, and low participation willingness. The logical relationships between categories gradually emerge, becoming more concrete. The following example illustrates axial coding. Axial Coding Table is shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Axial Coding Table

Axial Coding	Optional encoding
Score orientation	Credit requirements GPA improvement
Interest-driven	Subject interest Activity interest
Academic gains	Enhancement of research ability Broadening academic perspectives
Course preferences	Grading format Classroom atmosphere
Social needs	Emotional enhancement Post-class communication
Self-improvement needs	Challenging oneself Deepening knowledge
External incentives	Teacher influence Employment prospects
Evaluation reputation	Quality consideration Reputation accumulation
Supportive environment	Peer support Support for a good classroom experience
Inhibitory environment	Vague standards Tedious content
High willingness to participate	Concentration
Low willingness to participate	Not attending class Distracted

The Table was developed by the author.

4.3 Selective Coding

Selective coding involves identifying core categories from all discovered categories, establishing typical relational structures among categories centered around the core categories, and then constructing a theoretical model through the analysis of logical relationships. From the 23 categories abstracted from open coding and axial coding, 10 main categories were deeply explored. The core category was determined to be the mechanism of intrinsic motivation formation in student elective courses, as illustrated in the typical relational structure diagram. Mechanism from Motivation to Behavior Performance is shown in Figure 1.

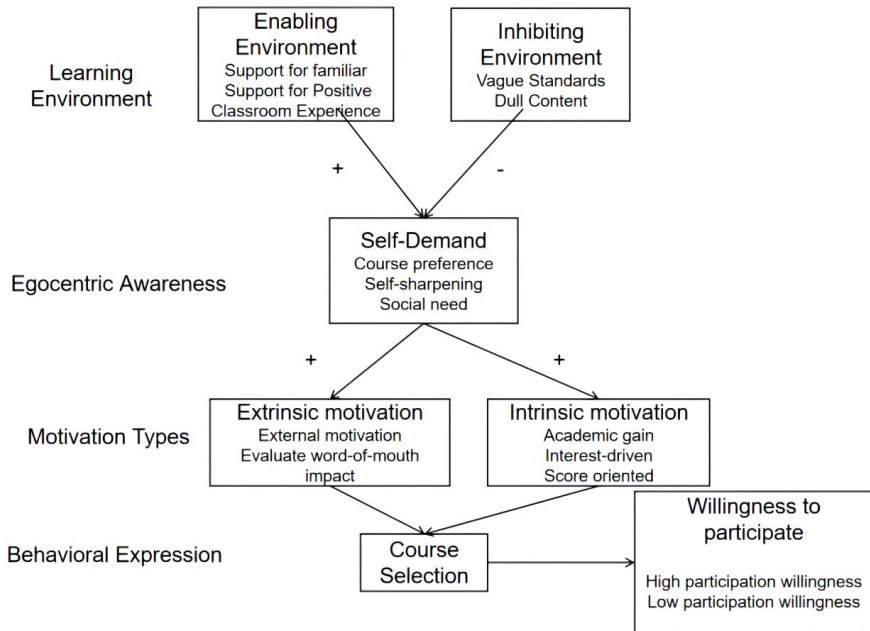


Fig. 1. Mechanism from Motivation to Behavior Performance

The Figure was developed by the author.

4.4 Testing Theoretical Saturation

When collecting new data becomes difficult to generate new theoretical insights and cannot explain new attributes of core theoretical categories, the data reaches saturation (Kathy, C., 2009)^[11]. To test the theoretical saturation in the grounded theory study, this research conducted theoretical saturation testing with 5 reserved pieces of information, proceeding through open coding, axial coding, and selective coding sequentially. The test results indicated that after the conceptual categories designed by the theory were fully developed and refined, no new important categories or logical relationships emerged during the coding process that would impact the study.

Additionally, no new initial concepts were found within the categories. Therefore, this study achieved saturation and completeness through grounded theory analysis.

5 Interview Analysis

5.1 Environmental Impact on Students' Individual Perception of Learning

The learning environment is a critical factor in college students' course selection decisions. The learning environment is divided into promotive and inhibitory environments, while individual perception involves the satisfaction of self-needs. Chinese

scholar Hong Sun (2005) ^[12] first proposed the concept of the ideal "promotive environment" in her research based on Maslow's theory of needs. This ideal promotive environment consists of four factors: concrete support provided through help and learning resources, attention and involvement from other significant individuals, opportunities for free choice, and freedom from external control in emotional aspects. A promotive environment can effectively enhance students' course selection satisfaction and learning outcomes, while an inhibitory environment may lead to a decrease in students' willingness to select courses. Promotive environments such as peer support and positive classroom experiences can stimulate students' enthusiasm and participation, thus improving learning outcomes. Peer support is manifested in mutual assistance and cooperation among classmates, aiming to create a positive learning atmosphere for collective progress; positive classroom experiences include teaching methods, classroom interactions, and the richness of teaching resources, all of which collectively affect students' learning experiences. In contrast, inhibitory environments such as vague evaluation standards and tedious content may hinder students' learning progress in elective courses. Inhibitory environments, like unclear grading criteria, can make it difficult for students to assess their own learning outcomes. "Teachers who don't intentionally lower grades." (a16) Individual perception is students' subjective feelings and evaluations of the learning environment, reflecting their expectations and needs for courses. Course preferences reflect students' interest in a certain subject or field; self-improvement needs reflect students' desire for personal growth and progress; social needs represent students' need to establish connections with others and share experiences during the learning process. Li Hui (2014)^[13] research also indicates that the degree of match between students' self-needs and the learning environment significantly affects their course selection decisions.

There is a positive correlation between promotive environments and self-needs. Peer support and positive classroom experiences can satisfy students' course preferences, self-improvement needs, and social needs, thus stimulating their enthusiasm and motivation for course selection. When the learning environment can provide the resources and support students need, they are more likely to choose courses that match their interests and needs and achieve better grades in the learning process.

Conversely, inhibitory environments may inhibit the satisfaction of students' self-needs. Vague standards and tedious content may cause students to lose interest in learning, even leading to feelings of aversion to learning, thus affecting their course selection decisions and learning outcomes.

5.2 The Inseparability of Individual Perception and Learning Motivation

Motivation is a crucial factor in students' elective course selection behavior, divided into external and internal motivations. External motivation is mainly influenced by external incentives and word-of-mouth reputation, such as scholarships, the teaching style of instructors, or others' evaluations of the course; while internal motivation originates from academic gains, interest-driven factors, and grade orientation, meaning students choose courses out of a desire for knowledge, interest in course content, or pursuit of high grades.

External incentives and positive word-of-mouth reputation can stimulate students' enthusiasm for course selection and satisfy their self-improvement needs. For instance, external incentives like scholarships or course completion certificates can encourage students to choose more challenging courses to enhance their academic abilities and competitiveness. Simultaneously, positive word-of-mouth reputation can influence students' course preferences, making them more inclined to choose courses with good reviews. However, excessive reliance on external motivation may cause students to overlook their own interests and needs, blindly pursuing external recognition, thereby affecting the rationality of their course selection decisions. Therefore, while stimulating external motivation, it is also necessary to address students' internal needs and guide them to achieve a balance between self-needs and external motivation.

Academic gains and interest-driven factors are core elements of internal motivation, directly satisfying students' course preferences and self-improvement needs. Research by Wang Jia (2019)^[14] indicates that even with the prerequisite of meeting credit requirements, internal motivation still significantly drives students' course selection. Furthermore, the study suggests that due to the increasingly fierce social competition in today's society, many students are forced to prioritize utilitarianism within their limited learning careers. This does not imply that they lack lofty ideals or exploration. On the contrary, they are always curious about unknown fields. However, societal pressures remain unavoidable constraints for most students. They lack sufficient time and energy to engage in adventures with uncertain returns. Grade orientation, as another form of internal motivation, may motivate students to select courses to a certain extent, but excessive focus on grades may cause students to overlook the value and significance of the courses themselves, making course selection decisions solely based on grades. Therefore, while guiding students' attention to grades, it is also essential to emphasize the academic value of the courses and their significance for students' personal growth.

5.3 The Relationship between Motivation Types and Behavioral Performance

College students' course selection behavioral performance mainly manifests in two aspects: course selection and willingness to participate. Course selection refers to students selecting elective courses based on their interests, needs, and goals, while willingness to participate refers to the positive attitudes and behaviors students exhibit during the course selection process, such as actively seeking course information and participating in classroom discussions. External motivation has a significant impact on college students' course selection behavioral performance. For example, external rewards such as scholarships, certificates, encouragement from instructors, and praise from peers can motivate students to choose more challenging courses. At the same time, avoiding punishment or meeting others' expectations may also influence students' course selection decisions. However, excessive reliance on external motivation may lead to students overlooking their interests and needs, resulting in short-term and utilitarian course selection behavior. Research by Wang Yasuang (2020)^[15] on student types based on learning engagement indicates three types: comprehensive, autono-

mous, and detached. The study found differences in behavior among different types of students. Among them, detached students deserve particular attention. Through survey statistics, it was found that the proportion of detached students has reached as high as 24.40%, a figure that cannot be ignored. These students exhibit particularly weak performance in learning engagement in general education courses, with relatively low scores in various assessments, clearly indicating that a considerable number of students are in a detached state during general education course learning, lacking sufficient engagement. The substantial presence of detached students will undoubtedly have an adverse effect on the implementation effectiveness of general education courses. Therefore, universities and instructors should promptly pay attention to the learning behavior characteristics of detached students, conduct in-depth analysis of the reasons for their lack of engagement, which may be closely related to their background factors, participation in school activities, and personal interests, among other factors. At the same time, differentiated teaching support and adequate course resources should be provided for different types of student groups to meet the needs of comprehensive students.

6 Conclusion

This study, through questionnaires and interviews, found that course selection motivations significantly influence students' classroom participation and analyzed the underlying mechanism between college students' course selection motivations and classroom participation behavior. Additionally, the study found that some students choose courses to obtain credits and improve comprehensive quality, leading to low classroom participation. Therefore, in the reform of elective course management, universities should pay more attention to guiding and stimulating students' course selection motivations to improve their classroom participation and learning outcomes.

At the same time, this study also has certain limitations. Firstly, in terms of research methods, although a mixed research method was adopted, the sample size was relatively small, which may not comprehensively reflect the course selection motivations of all university students. Secondly, this study mainly focused on students' perspectives and did not fully consider the impact of factors such as teachers and course settings on course selection motivations and learning participation.

Based on this, this study hopes that in the future, universities can further improve the course selection system to enhance the classroom participation of elective courses, increase students' autonomy in course selection, strengthen course selection guidance, and focus on interests and knowledge needs. Additionally, personalized course selection models tailored to the characteristics of each student can be developed to stimulate students' interests and activate their initiative in learning.

References

1. Luo, Z. M. & Ma, J. F. (2022) University governance capacity building: New challenges, new requirements and focus. *Journal of Nanchang University (Humanities and Social Sciences Edition)* (03), 111-119. doi: 10.13764/j.cnki.ncds.2022.03.007.
2. Conant, J.B. (2015) General Education in a free society report of the Harvard Committee. <http://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BA00487463>.
3. Gan, Y. (2006) The idea, goal and mode of humanities education in university. *Education theory of Peking University*, 38-65+189-190. doi: 10.19355/j.cnki.1671-9468.2006.03.006.
4. Ma, B., Min, L., Taniguchi, Y., & Konomi, S. (2021) Investigating course choice motivations in university environments. *Smart Learning Environments*8(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40561-021-00177-4>.
5. Homans, G. C. (1958) Social behavior as exchange. *American Journal of Sociology*, 63(6), 597-606. <https://doi.org/10.1086/222355>.
6. Bandura, A. (1986) *Social Foundations of Thought and Action; A Social Cognitive Theory*. Social Cognitive Theory. <https://ci.nii.ac.jp/naid/10010087207/>.
7. Deci, E. L., Vallerand, R. J., Pelletier, L. G., & Ryan, R. M. (1991) Motivation and Education: The Self-Determination Perspective. *Educational Psychologist :Educational Psychologist*, 26(3-4), 325-346. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520.1991.9653137>.
8. Gu, C.M. & Hou, Y. (2020) An empirical study on the correlation between motivation and learning effectiveness in college general studies, *Kanto Journal*(03), 164-172. Doi: 10.19470/j.cnki.cn22-1417/c.2020.03.018.
9. Bai, Y. P., Guan, M. L. & Qu, Z. L. (2013) Analysis on the psychological state of college students taking public elective courses. *Agricultural education in China* (06), 61-64.
10. Chen, X. M. (2000) *Qualitative Research Methods and Social Science Research*. Beijing: Education Science Press, 334-335.
11. Casey Kamaz. *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide for Qualitative research*.
12. Homans, G. C. (1958) Social behavior as exchange. *American Journal of Sociology*, 63(6), 597-606. <https://doi.org/10.1086/222355>.
13. Li, H. (2014) Investigation and research on the integration of classroom teaching resources by rural teachers. Master (Dissertation, Guangxi Normal University). https://kns.cnki.net/kcms2/article/abstract?v=6zqdfgkTh_pqJQNcfxdzhwO-3TmODSIMwZKID2jN85ri-IpKoEkuj7NiEPe0Vg0D11r6aJ6MwkjVIL_rKsmWdp-l3o5P6y7z36R8Sx0m28ql0nf-Yk9ukslrXKHwFXi9R9fHfHAsQ362swab_MNBoA=&uniplatform=NZKPT&language=CHS.
14. Wang, J. (2019) The opportunistic "phubbing tribe" behind the master (dissertation, Nanjing University).
15. Wang, Y.S. (2020) Study on college students' learning engagement in general studies from the perspective of typology -- based on an empirical analysis of a "double first-class" university. *Journal of the National Academy of Educational Administration* (03), 78-85.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

