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Content

Relationship Between the Feeling of Self-Efficacy and Students' Perceived University Work

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Abstract: This study verified whether there is a relationship between the feeling of self-efficacy and perceived academic work on the one hand, and between the feeling of self-efficacy and gender and age on the other hand among students at the University of Lomé in Togo. To achieve this objective, a questionnaire of socio-demographic information and Schwarzer's (1993) Self-Efficacy Scale were submitted to 527 willing and consenting students. The data collected were subjected to statistical processing using SPSS 21 software. The results show that students' feeling of self-efficacy is related to their age and perceived academic work. Despite an average score for girls on the SPSS slightly higher than for boys, the feeling of self-efficacy did not vary significantly by gender.

Keywords: Feeling of Self-Efficacy, Perceived Academic Work, Age, Gender, Students

1. Introduction

The literature is replete with multiple factors that may be sociological, institutional, psychological, or interactionist in explaining the poor performance of students at university. In this study, we focus on one of these psychological factors, namely the feeling of self-efficacy, which is a lever of motivation (Burkhardt, 2017). According to Bandura (1997), this factor is very important because of its contribution to the development of cognitive skills and its power over students' academic success.

Feeling of self-efficacy (SAE), Feeling of personal competence (SCP), and Feeling of self-efficacy (SEP) are synonymous terms used by Bandura (1977; 1986; 1997) to refer to "the belief of the individual in his or her ability to organize and execute the course of action required to produce desired results" (Bandura, 2007, p. 12). Schwarzer (1993, cited in Caron, 2004, p. 8) defines self-efficacy as "the overall confidence that people have in their own abilities to manage difficulties across a wide range of life demands and stressful situations. This means having a sense of control over one's environment and is based largely on one's internal resources and previous experiences. It is this general self-efficacy that is studied in this research.

According to Lardy et al (2015), if the consequences of a strong feeling of personal self-efficacy on academic performance are known, the main sources should be identified. Bandura's (1986) feeling of competence theory taken up by Lecomte (2004) maintains that self-efficacy beliefs are constructed from four main sources of information (Bandura, 1997). The first is the "active experience of mastery". Actively experiencing success is an opportunity to increase one's feeling of self-efficacy. In other words, "success serves as an indicator of ability and thus allows one to build a solid belief in personal effectiveness, while failure undermines it" (Lecomte, 2004, p. 62). In reality, it is the cognitive treatment that the individual will make of this success or failure that will determine its impact (Bandura, 2007). "Vicarious experiences" or "social learning" are the second source of self-efficacy. Indeed, in many learning situations, individuals do not have the objective means to measure their ability to

maintain a course of action leading to a given outcome. The performance of others is then a valuable indicator of one's own feeling of self-efficacy. Normative comparison will help to persuade oneself of one's ability to succeed in a given task (Lardy et al. 2015). Generally, it is the subjects whose characteristics (age, sex, etc.) are closest to each other that are most likely to be a source of information (Lecomte, 2004). Verbal persuasion" or "persuasion by others" is the third means of influencing the feeling of self-efficacy. According to Lecomte (2004), it is easier for someone to maintain a feeling of effectiveness, especially when faced with difficulties, if other significant individuals (parents, teachers, peers, etc.) express confidence in their abilities. However, this effect is most evident if the person already has good reason to believe that he or she can act effectively. Finally, "physiological and emotional states" are the fourth cause of changes in the feeling of self-efficacy. Somatic states such as stress, anxiety, unpleasant thoughts or feelings of fatigue will reduce the feeling of self-efficacy (Lardy et al. 2015). For example, trembling, heart palpitations or a feeling of panic during an activity deemed stressful can be interpreted as signs of vulnerability and incompetence in the individual (Bandura, 2003, cited by Gaudreau, 2013).

Applied in a school or academic context, these sources of self-efficacy offer interesting avenues of intervention to support student engagement and success (Gaudreau, 2013; Capres, 2015). The feeling of self-efficacy influences the quality of reasoning and the use of acquired cognitive skills at the origin of an individual's academic performance, but it also promotes this performance by increasing perseverance in the search for solutions (Bandura, 2007; Lardy et al., 2015; Masson and Fenouillet, 2013; Pajares, 1997).

According to Joet (2009), the research conducted on this concept of self-efficacy revolves around three main axes: the impact of the self-efficacy feeling expressed by students on the professional career choices they make; the impact of self-efficacy manifested by teachers on their educational practices and, finally, the link that exists between students' self-efficacy and their academic performance. Our study is in line with the third axis. On this subject, Masson and Fenouillet (2013) consider that one of the strong points of the feeling of effectiveness is its impact on success, particularly in the school domain. They report the work of Pintrich and DeGroot (1990), Bembenutty and Zimmerman (2003) and Bandura (1989). Indeed, Pintrich and DeGroot (1990) show an indirect relationship between feelings of self-efficacy and academic performance. Thus, a student with a high feeling of self-efficacy will use more effective cognitive strategies and thus obtain better results. As for Bembenutty and Zimmerman (2003), concerning school work at home, they find that the feeling of self-efficacy is correlated with homework completion and therefore improves academic performance. Bandura (1989) found a more direct relationship, as students performed better when their feeling of self-efficacy in mathematics was high, both for students who performed well in mathematics and for those who typically performed poorly in mathematics. It has also been shown that the higher the feeling of efficacy, the more the individual sets high goals, the better he or she regulates his or her efforts, the more he or she perseveres in the face of difficulties, the better he or she manages stress and anxiety, and the better his or her performance (Bandura, 1988; Bong & Skaalvik, 2003; Marsh, 1990; cited by Lambert-Le Mener, 2012). Compared to the feeling of specific self-efficacy, Bandura (1989) shows that there is a more direct link since students perform better when their feeling of self-efficacy in mathematics is high, and this is true both for students who perform well in this subject and for those who usually perform poorly (Gbati, 2012). Bito (2013) shows that the students with the highest performance in French have the

highest feeling of self-efficacy in this subject. The same result is found by Bouffard et al (2001). For these authors, the contextualized feeling of self-efficacy (French discipline) is strongly correlated with academic performance.

Most of the work to our knowledge on the feeling of self-efficacy has focused on the primary (Bandura, 1988; Bong and Skaalvik, 2003; Marsh, 1990; cited by Lambert-Le Mener, 2012; Masson and Fenouillet, 2013) or secondary cycles (Bito, 2013; Gbati, 2012). Bawa's study (2018) is one of the few to apprehend this concept at university in the African context but the latter links it to university performance in terms of the number of credits capitalized by the student since he or she has been at university; the study then focused on a relatively small sample. This time, the aim is not only to study it with a larger sample, but also to associate it with students' perceptions of university work and to see if it is associated with the age and gender of our subjects. Thus, like Bandura (1988) and Schwarzer (1993), we ask ourselves the following research question is there a relationship between feelings of self-efficacy and perceived academic work, gender and age?

2. Research Method

This study population is composed of University of Lomé students of all backgrounds, faculties, schools and institutes. They are estimated at 60000. With the "all-vendor" technique, we were able to recruit 527 willing and voluntary students to constitute our sample. The sample is composed of 67.37% boys and 32.63% girls. We note that three participants did not agree to provide their gender, which explains three missing data on this subject.

Subjects in this sample responded to the Schwarzer (1993) Self-Efficacy Scale. The version we used has a total of ten items (α = 0.80).

Examples of items are:

1. Item 1: I always manage to solve my difficulties if I try hard enough.
2. Item 6: I can solve most of my problems if I invest the necessary effort.
3. Item 10: No matter what happens to me, I am usually able to deal with it.

During the handover, each of the ten statements is rated by the participants on a Likert scale from 1 to 4 (1: not at all true, 4: totally true). The minimum and maximum scores are 10 and 40 respectively. According to Schwarzer (2011), there is no threshold score. The higher the score, the stronger the feeling of self-efficacy.

Then, the variable is measured by a question related to the student's perception of his or her work. In a challenge to the LMD system where repetition is no longer decreed, this is the best way to proceed. Here is the question: "Overall, how do you feel about your academic work? The participant is offered three forced choice answers:

1. "Good work", when the student has completed more than half of the course work;
2. "Average work", when the student has completed half the credits in his or her course;
3. "bad work" when the student has completed less than half of the credits in his or her course.
4. Lastly, sex and age were provided using the socio-demographic questionnaire.

This study is essentially quantitative. For this reason, the various data collected were analysed using statistical methods. Analyses of variance with the calculation of Student's t-test or Snédécor's F-test (as appropriate) were used to observe the different relationships between the variables with the exception of the relationship between the feeling of self-efficacy and age. In this case, we applied Pearson's r correlation.

3. Results and Discussion

Table 1. Students' feeling of self-efficacy and perceived academic work

Perceived Academic Work	N	Mean	Sd	ANOVA
Good work	63	28,68	4,58	
Average Work	389	26,53	4,58	
Bad work	75	24,88	4,85	F = 11,60 ; ddl = 2 ; p = 0,000
Total	527	26,55	4,72	

In spite of their small size relative to others, good students have a higher average score (28.68) than average students (26.53) and bad students (24.88). An analysis of variance applied to these results, using Snédécor's Fisher's calculation, is highly significant (F (2; 524) = 11.60; p = 0.000). It goes without saying that good students are those who have a high sense of self-efficacy compared to others. This result clearly shows that the feeling of efficiency affects performance as well as the perception of academic work (Bandura, 1989; 1997; Bawa, 2018; Gaudreau, 2003; Lecomte, 2004). With reference to Bandura's model (1977; 1989; 1997), good students draw their strength from their physiological and emotional states. Indeed, the high level of stress imposed by LMD can be associated with a feeling of loss of control and promotes the development of low self-efficacy beliefs among poor students (Caron, 2004). Conversely, despite this stress, good students enjoy their studies, which allows them to develop a high sense of self-efficacy while increasing their motivation to succeed (Gaudreau, 2013; Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2007). In addition, these students have a strong belief in their potential for success to the point where they approach difficult academic tasks as challenges to be met rather than threats to be avoided. They set stimulating goals for themselves and maintain a strong commitment to their studies and invest a great deal of effort to that effect (Lecomte, 2004).

Table 2. Feeling of self-efficacy and gender of students

Gender	N	Mean	Sd	ANOVA
Male	353	26,40	4,73	t = 1,09 ; ddl = 522 ; p = 0,27
Female	171	26,88	4,68	

Missing systems = 3

We did not find a significant difference in the relationship between self-efficacy and gender, although very slightly, girls seemed more likely to have a higher feeling of self-efficacy than boys (t522 = 1.09; p = 0.27). This result is similar to that of Bawa (2018) and Joet et al (2011). On the other hand, Bandura (1986), Pajares (2005) and Dumont et al. (2003) clearly show that boys' feeling of self-efficacy is higher than that of girls. In our context, regardless of gender, all students experience the same difficulties in the era of the LMD system. Therefore, we are not surprised by the undifferentiated impact on the feeling of self-efficacy.

Table 3. Students' feeling of self-efficacy and age

Variables	Age	Feeling of self-efficacy
Age	1	0,29**
Feeling of self-efficacy	0,29**	1

The result in Table 1 shows a positive and significant Pearson's correlation at the .001 threshold. It can be concluded that there is a positive relationship between the sense of self-efficacy and the age of the students in our sample. As age increases, so does the feeling of self-efficacy (Lecomte, 2004). It goes without saying that young students, most of whom are in their first year, faced with their inexperience in the university environment (difficulties and constraints related to the LMD system) easily resign themselves; this would reflect their low sense of self-efficacy.

4. Conclusion

At the end of this study, our results show that the sense of self-efficacy is related to perceived academic work and the age of the students. The result with age allows us to propose a psychological support system to young baccalaureate holders who are facing the LMD system for the first time. On the other hand, it is associated with the gender of the students.

Like any scientific study, this one too has its limits. Indeed, it did not take into account the specificity of the studies according to the training courses. It is

obvious that the influence of the LMD system will depend on this specificity. In doing so, the specific character of the feeling of self-efficacy would be taken into account. Isn't this a lead for a future study?

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