



Self-Efficacy and Academic Stressors in University Students

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Abstract

This quantitative study aims to assess the degree to which self-efficacy (the sense of their abilities by students) enables students to overcome their academic stress. A sample of 174 men and women university students (age range of 18-23 and 23-29) of the Islamia University of Bahawalpur participated in the research; data was obtained by convenience sampling technique. The mode of collecting data was online i.e. via emails and social apps like WhatsApp etc. Demographic information such as age, name, gender, socioeconomic status, family system and education was taken, besides, The General Self-Efficacy scale (GSE) (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995) and Opinions of Scholastic Pressure (PAS) scale (Bedewy & Gabriel) were utilized. Study findings suggest that there is a negative correlation between self-efficacy and academic stress which means, if an individual's self-efficacy declines, academic stress will increase and vice versa. The results have also shown that Self-efficacy is a strong predictor of academic stress. Implications were given for future studies on the role of self-efficacy in helping students overcome their stress and improve their academic and other fields of life success.

Key Words: Self-Efficacy, Academic Stress.

1 Introduction

Bandura (1997) argued that self-efficacy helps increase the performance of the assignment, keeping in mind that this research is intended to look at how self-efficacy helps students overcome their academic stress and improve their academic performance. The study's findings clearly indicate that high self-efficacy among university students would be a source of less academic stress. The theory of self-efficacy discusses how it develops and is changed, as well as how it influences behavioral improvement, achievements in performance, and personal well-being. Self-efficacy is concerned with the values of individuals in their ability to control life-affecting events. The basis of human motivation, performance achievements and mental well-being is this fundamental belief (Bandura, 1997, 2006). In the theory of Bandura; self-efficacy defines the confidence in one's ability to succeed in that context. He proposed that such beliefs are conceived as cognitive constructs formed by world interaction. Bandura (1999) also concluded that perceived self-efficacy affects behavior both directly and through its impact on one's self-efficacy beliefs of socio-structural facilitators and impediments to one's behavior of one's outcome.

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2 Literature Review

Self-efficacy is defined as an anonymous basis in their capacity to plan and carry out a certain course of action to solve a problem or complete a task (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002, p. 110). A study by Hajloo (2014) found out a significant relationship of procrastination with self-esteem and self-efficacy among undergraduate psychology students. According to the idea, academic self-efficacy as a mechanism may vary in severity. Some individuals think they are most successful in tough jobs, while others say they are more successful in demanding ones. Others just take on simpler tasks (Nasa & Sharma, 2014).

Academic self-efficacy

Academic self-efficacy refers to a person's confidence (belief) that they can effectively complete a particular academic activity or accomplish a specific academic goal (Schunk & Pajares, 2002). The notion has been used by educational researchers from different fields of study to predict and describe a wide variety of human functions, from sporting abilities to academic achievement. As documented by Chemers, Hu, and Garcia (2001), students with high self-efficacy often appear to be highly optimistic, and both factors contribute to a variety of positive results such as better academic performance, more successful personal adaptation, better stress management, better wellbeing, and greater overall satisfaction and dedication to remaining in school. A lack of it may lead to a pattern of habits that are dark, hidden, normalized, and thus abandon the pursuit of desired goals. On the other hand, high self-efficacy means you have the capacity to take charge of your life and be the master of your own destiny.

Academic stress

Academic stress is described as the body's reaction to academic pressure which surpasses pupils' adaptation capacities. The main source of the alarming numbers has been identified as academic stress. Lee and Larson (2000) defined this type of strain as a link between environmental stressors, student evaluations, and responses. It is a kind of stress experienced by professors and students at public universities who work in a classroom environment. Stress amongst undergraduates is interred, resulting from both academics and non-academic based on the socio, economic, and psychosocial characteristics (Brand and Schoonheim-Klein, 2009).

The complexity of academic environment triggers stress

Students have been shown to experience distinct emotions in various learning settings and environments. The difficulty of the academic environment affects learning for learners, such as inadequate teaching strategies, poor relationship between teacher and student, heavy academic workload, poor physical classroom environment. If a teacher/instructor has weak teaching abilities or a bad relationship with a student and a bad atmosphere, student learning disturbs to a great extent, creating a great deal of tension in return. Students would have less stress and greater levels of academic achievement with a good student teacher relationship, a comfortable classroom atmosphere, less academic workload, appropriate teaching methods and the opportunity to align one's leisure time with education.

Stress levels in certain students may rise to dangerously high levels, causing anxiety, especially around test and exam times. According to prior study, a high incidence rate of 10 percent to 35 percent of university students suffer from practical anxiety scale impairments (Chapell, et al., 2005; Naveh-Benjamin, et al., 1997). According to the German Student Union Social Study; test nerves impact about 15-ten percent of student performance in a "moderate" to "high" degree (Neuderth, et al., 2009).

Depression, anxiety, behavioral difficulties, impatience, and other disorders have been reported in kids with significant academic stress (Deb, Strodl, & Sun, 2015), symptoms are related to difficulty to concentrate, fear of failing, and behavioral choices evaluation in pressured teenagers (Busari, 2012). Although people's reactions to stress may be similar, the sources of stress that they identify vary. Such differences may be observed in the stresses' triggers, causes, and consequences. Overwhelming work, poor time management and social skills, and peer competition are some of the typical stresses cited in an academic environment (Fairbrother & Warn, 2003).

There are positive and negative effects of academic stress, Positive stress may not last long, although it enhances the mood, actions and results of a person, generates excitement and motivates, negative stress, on the other hand, induces anxiety, lasts long, generates fear, panic, disturbs, decreases one's morale and productivity and many more (Kassymova, et al., 2018).

Stress may be harmful to a person if it is not managed and addressed properly. The effect of stress and work adjustment on a student's professional and academic difficulties, as well as sadness, sickness, a high degree of suicidal intent, weakness, anxiety, and other physical and mental diseases, is a significant concern (Kassymova, et al., 2018; Hystad et al., 2009; Kiani, et al., 2017). Several studies have linked excessive stress to poor grades, low grade levels, low graduation rates, and increased dropout rates. According to studies by Mason (2017) and Oduwaiye, et al., (2017); the effects of stress may affect students' educational outcomes, emotional and spatial well-being, absence from class, and school events. It is important to note that academic stress has different effects on different people. Daily, female employees in universities are more badly engaged than their male counterparts (Saqib & Rehman, 2018).

How self-efficacy can help improve academic performance

Students are positive about their learning and also the resources to be studied, as they trust in their abilities. It is therefore concluded that, when studying and learning, highly self-efficacious students experience more positive emotions and less negative emotions which can, in turn, contribute to better academic success and less academic stress.

A partial mediation mechanism and a direct impact on the relationship between academic stress and academic burnout are part of academic self-efficacy. Thus, when academic self-efficacy was higher, academic stress and academic burnout were substantially lower and vice versa.

The current investigation aims to evaluate the effects of self-efficacy on academic stress of university students. It is an important aspect of the academic process because students with over stress cannot function well in the academics/examination. This study will definitely help the students in overcoming their stress during their academic career. To learn how they can handle their academic stress and improve their results, students need to improve their efficacy skills.

3 Research Methodology and Data

3.1 Data Sources

Objectives of the Study

- I. To investigate the connection among college students' personality and parenting achievement.
- II. To evaluate gender difference between the levels of self-efficacy and academic stress among university students.

3.2 Research Methodology

This study is quantitative in nature and correlational research design was employed.

Sampling Strategy

The online data collection of university students was done using purposive sampling technique. Information was obtained through online via emails and social apps like WhatsApp. A sample figure of 174 was achieved, which is appropriate according to the item respondent ratio (Memon et al., 2020).

Measurement Scale

Socio-demographic information Participant's demographic details such as name, age, gender, education, family system and socioeconomic status were asked for demographic information. It was ensured to the participants that their confidentiality will be highly maintained.

General Self-Efficacy scale (GSE) The General Self-Efficacy Scale was created by Schwarzer and Jerusalem (1995) and consists of ten questions with a four-point rating scale (not at all true=1 to precisely true=4). This is a self-report scale that assesses self-efficacy. The final score is determined by adding all of the things together. The overall score on the GSE runs from 10 to 40, with a higher score indicating more self-efficacy. Cronbach's alphas of .76 to .90 indicate internal reliability for GSE

The Perception of Academic Stress Scale (PAS) Bedewy and Gabriel created the final edition of The Perception of Academic Stress Scale (2015). The scale is divided into two parts, the first of which includes five questions with five-point rating scales (strongly disagree = 1 to strongly agree = 5) and the second of which includes thirteen items with five-point rating scales (strongly disagree = 5 to strongly agree = 1). Participants must evaluate how important they believe the comments are in contributing to academic stress. For the 18 PAS items, the internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha) was 0.7.

Measuring tools were chosen after the successful selection of objectives in this report, the writers and their concerned authors were asked for permission to use the scales. After writing them about the research intent, the respondents were asked to fill out all the questionnaires fully and also told them that their data would be kept confidential. The obtained data was analyzed.

4 Results and Discussion

This study aims to find out the impact of self-efficacy on academic stress of university students both males and females. The data of 174 university students was collected online via emails and social apps like WhatsApp. For the data collection two scales were used, one is General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE; Schwarzer & Jerusalem, (1995) which is a self-report measure of self-efficacy. Secondly, the final version of the Perception of Academic Stress Scale (PAS; Bedewy and Gabriel, 2015) was used which measures perceived stress of academic stress among University students. SPSS 24.0 was assisted for testing of hypothesis

with respect to the obtained data.

Descriptive statistics was used to assess demographic distribution. Correlation method was used to check the relation between self-efficacy and academic stress. Regression analysis was applied to see the impact of self-efficacy on academic stress; whereas t-test was used to assess the gender differences between self-efficacy and academic stress.

Table 1
Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Demographic Sheet (N=174)

<i>Respondents' Demographics</i>		<i>f (%)</i>
Gender	Male	62 (48.01)
	Female	62 (48.01)
Education	BS (Hons)	72 (50.01)
	M. Sc./M.A	62 (47.99)
	Nuclear	88 (66.17)
Family System	Joint	40 (32.82)
	Low	30(22.40)
Socioeconomic Status	Middle	58 (45.45)
	High	40(30.40)

This table indicates that gender, education, family system and socioeconomic status were taken as demographic variables. In this data number of male and female students is equal with the percentage of 48.01 per group respectively. For educational data bachelor's and master's students with percentage of 50.01 and 47.99 respectively were accommodated. Most of the data was collected from people who belong to a nuclear family system with the percentage of 66.17. Most of the respondents belong to a middle class family with 45.45 percentages.

Table 1
Descriptive and Reliability Analysis of study Variables (N=174)

Variables	<i>No of Items</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>Range</i>		
					<i>Potential</i>	<i>Actual</i>	<i>Skew</i>
Self-efficacy	7	20.43	6.54	.84	8-32	10-30	.18
Academic Stress	-						
(Percentage)		68.54	12.13	-	40-90	55-89	.49
<i>Correlation between Self efficacy and Academic stress</i>		-0.67**					

The table above indicates that suitable values of Cronbach's alpha for self-efficacy (.84) for reliability analysis. The values of skewing variables lie between the acceptable ranges. The result of this table indicates that there was negative correlation between Self-

efficacy and Academic stress (-0.67).

Table 3
Impact of Self efficacy on academic Stress (N=174)

Predictors	Model 1 β	Academic stress	
		95% CI	
Constant	2.39**	[3.44, 6.87]	
Self-efficacy	.367**	[.4, .6]	
R ²	0.687		
F	4.37**		

** $p < .01$; β = Unstandardized regression coefficient; CI = Confidence interval

The results of this table indicates that Self-efficacy is strong predictor ($R^2 = 0.687p < .01$) of academic stress.

Table 4
Independent Sample t-test for Gender Differences between Self-efficacy and Academic stress (N=174)

Variable	Female	Male	t	95%CI	
	(n = 84)	(n = 84)		LL	UL
	M(SD)	M(SD)			
Self-efficacy	22.43 (5.40)	26.45(6.62)	3.47**	-2.55	-.45
Academic stress	68.65(11.65)	72.38(13.32)	4.65**	-1.15	.40

Note. CI = Confidence Interval, LL= Lower Limit, UL = Upper Limit, $p^{**} < .01$,

The results of above table indicates that mean score of Academic stress was significantly higher among the males.

Academic frustrations, conflicts, worries, and pressures are the four components of academic stress that are often recognized in students. Educational stresses have also been characterized as a high workload, attendance at classes, setting goals, balancing college and private life, and financial difficulties. These stresses have been linked to an increased risk of depression and low school performance.

Bandura (2006) discovered that there is something which helps people to increase their performance level and make them less anxious, which he named as self-efficacy. Talking about it in terms of students, self-efficacy help students in being more performance oriented then stress oriented. The current research shows that having high self-efficacy students will have low academic stress and if their self-efficacy is lower than they will face more academic stress. In the face of defeat, people have strong self-efficacy, increase and maintain their efforts. They quickly recover their sense of efficacy after errors or losses. Although, individuals with low self-efficacy has the inability to learn, and has insufficient effort or poor knowledge and skills.

The study had a main objective to identify the impact of self-efficacy on academic stress of university students. In order to discuss the previous literature and inferences, this chapter will validate this research's findings and performance. The findings were analyzed and interpreted following the efficient collection of data on the selected steps. The analysis was performed using quantitative cross-sectional design.

5 Conclusion

This quantitative enquiry is extremely useful not only for the students but also for clinical psychologist because it would definitely pave the way for better future and better understanding of all those students, who one way or the other are overwhelmingly stressed out. This is an academic endeavor to extend help to all such students. It is high time that the students with such issues should be help out by the faculty and the university. The results of study concluded that self-efficacy has a negative relationship with academic stress which shows that self-efficacy has a strong impact on academic stress and will be a strong predictor of academic stress. Results of the study also exhibits that males comparatively have more academic stress than females. Having her academic stress means lower self-efficacy.

- This research is restricted only to particular age groups that are emerging adults, i.e. 18-29. In terms of academic stress and self-efficacy, older students/adults can have different outcomes.
- This research is carried out during the high period of COVID'19, which may be a factor for individuals who do not correctly fill out the necessary questionnaires.
- The sample was limited only to one city, so it can't be generalized on the whole population of province.
- To find out what are the other secret variables that affect students' self-efficacy and academic stress, qualitative research should be performed.
- If we specify our population in terms of individuals with higher or lower self-efficacy, our findings might be more specific.
- We may have different outcomes if we classify our population with higher or lower academic stress.
- For students to have less academic stress, their respective institutions should introduce tasks and assignments which help them in increasing their efficacy.
- Institutes should also introduce techniques for students to cope with stress and identify their stressors.

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