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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-EFFICACY AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

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Abstract

Self-efficacy, as defined by Bandura (1977), refers to an individual's belief in their ability to succeed in specific situations. It is a crucial psychological trait influencing motivation, performance, and coping mechanisms. Psychological well-being, on the other hand, refers to an individual's overall mental health, including emotional, social, and psychological dimensions, often assessed through Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale (Ryff, 1989). Research has shown that self-efficacy can positively influence various outcomes such as academic performance and mental health, but its specific relationship with psychological well-being among college students remains an underexplored area.

This study seeks to examine the relationship between self-efficacy and psychological well-being among college students using a sample of 400 participants. By employing correlation, regression analysis, factor analysis, and structural equation modelling (SEM), this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how these two constructs are interrelated in the context of higher education.

Introduction

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy as conceptualized by Bandura (1977), refers to an individual's belief in their ability to execute tasks and achieve goals within a particular domain. According to Bandura's social cognitive theory, self-efficacy is a key determinant of behavior and is influenced by past experiences, social modeling, and verbal persuasion. In college students, self-efficacy is often associated with academic achievement, persistence, and coping abilities (Zimmerman, 2000). Research indicates that students with high levels of self-efficacy tend to have better academic performance, demonstrate greater motivation, and are more resilient in the face of academic stress (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2012). This belief in one's capabilities enhances one's ability to manage academic pressures, develop problem-solving skills, and ultimately succeed in university life (Bandura, 1997).

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Psychological Well-Being

Psychological well-being refers to an individual's overall mental health, emotional stability, and life satisfaction. Ryff (1989) proposed a multidimensional model of psychological well-being, which includes six key elements: self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. These dimensions collectively reflect an individual's capacity for thriving and coping with life's challenges (Ryff & Singer, 1998). College students face significant developmental tasks that include academic pressure, social adaptation, and identity exploration, all of which can impact their well-being (Keyes, 2002). Research has shown that psychological well-being is crucial for students' academic success, emotional health, and overall adjustment to college life (Parker et al., 2013).

Self-Efficacy Vs Psychological Well-Being

Numerous studies have explored the relationship between self-efficacy and psychological well-being. Bandura (1997) suggested that self-efficacy influences psychological well-being by enhancing an individual's coping strategies, which in turn, reduce stress and improve mental health outcomes. For example, students who believe in their ability to manage academic tasks tend to experience less anxiety, better emotional regulation, and higher life satisfaction (Lent et al., 2002).

Several studies have reported positive correlations between self-efficacy and psychological well-being in various populations, including college students. For instance, a study by Wissing and Van Eeden (2002) found that self-efficacy was a significant predictor of well-being in South African college students. Similarly, other studies have shown that enhancing self-efficacy can lead to improved psychological outcomes, such as reduced levels of depression and increased life satisfaction (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995).

In the context of college students, self-efficacy may play a pivotal role in promoting psychological well-being by enhancing their sense of control over academic and personal challenges. This relationship has important implications for interventions aimed at improving both academic and mental health outcomes. Specifically, fostering self-efficacy could potentially buffer students against the stressors they face during their college years and contribute to higher levels of psychological well-being (Caprara et al., 2008).

Literature Review

1. Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory

Bandura (1997) defined self-efficacy as an individual's belief in their ability to succeed in specific situations or accomplish tasks. Self-efficacy plays a significant role in motivation, resilience, and overall well-being. Research has shown that higher levels of self-efficacy contribute to better coping strategies, reduced stress, and greater psychological well-being (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2021).

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2. Self-Efficacy and Academic Stress in College Students

Academic stress is a major concern among college students, and self-efficacy has been found to act as a protective factor. A study by Chemers, Hu, and Garcia (2001) demonstrated that students with higher self-efficacy reported lower stress levels and higher academic performance, contributing to their psychological well-being. The researchers concluded that self-efficacy fosters adaptive coping mechanisms, thereby reducing the negative impact of academic stress.

3. Psychological Well-Being and Mental Health

Ryff (1989) conceptualized psychological well-being as a multidimensional construct including self-acceptance, personal growth, purpose in life, autonomy, environmental mastery, and positive relationships. Studies suggest that individuals with high self-efficacy tend to score higher on these dimensions, indicating a positive correlation between self-efficacy and overall well-being (Ryff & Keyes, 1995).

4. The Role of Self-Efficacy in Emotional Regulation

Emotional regulation is essential for mental health and academic success. Gross and John (2003) found that students with high self-efficacy were more likely to engage in adaptive emotion regulation strategies, such as cognitive reappraisal, leading to improved psychological well-being. This suggests that self-efficacy serves as a crucial factor in maintaining emotional stability in stressful situations.

5. Social Support, Self-Efficacy, and Psychological Well-Being

Social support is another important variable that influences both self-efficacy and psychological well-being. A study by Lent, Singley, and Sheu (2005) found that students with strong social support networks exhibited higher self-efficacy and, in turn, reported greater psychological well-being. The authors emphasized the interplay between external support systems and individual self-belief in shaping mental health outcomes.

6. Self-Efficacy and Coping Strategies Among College Students

Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) transactional model of stress and coping highlights the role of self-efficacy in determining coping strategies. Research by Schwarzer and Hallum (2008) supports this framework, indicating that students with higher self-efficacy employ more proactive coping strategies, such as problem-solving and positive reframing, which enhance their psychological well-being.

7. Longitudinal Effects of Self-Efficacy on Well-Being

Longitudinal studies have provided insight into the enduring impact of self-efficacy on well-being. A study by Zajacova, Lynch, and Espenshade (2005) found that students with high self-efficacy at the beginning of their college journey exhibited greater psychological resilience and well-being

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throughout their academic years. These findings suggest that self-efficacy not only improves short-term mental health but also has long-term benefits for psychological stability.

Empirical Findings on Self-Efficacy and Psychological Well-Being

Empirical research has demonstrated the importance of self-efficacy for promoting psychological well-being among college students. A study by Hsieh and Chang (2012) found that higher self-efficacy was positively associated with both higher academic achievement and psychological well-being among university students in Taiwan. Furthermore, a longitudinal study by Stajkovic et al. (2006) suggested that interventions aimed at improving self-efficacy in students led to a significant increase in their psychological well-being over time. In contrast, low self-efficacy has been linked to negative outcomes, such as depression and academic burnout (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002).

In a recent study, Greco and Luppi (2018) investigated the relationship between self-efficacy and psychological well-being among college students in the United States. The authors found a moderate positive correlation, indicating that students with higher self-efficacy also reported better mental health outcomes. This suggests that self-efficacy plays a crucial role in promoting students' psychological resilience, which is essential for coping with the challenges of college life.

Summary

The theoretical framework that underpins the relationship between self-efficacy and psychological well-being is rooted in Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory, which emphasizes the role of self-beliefs in shaping human behavior and outcomes. High self-efficacy can contribute to better psychological well-being by fostering positive thinking, resilience, and adaptive coping strategies. From a practical perspective, interventions designed to enhance self-efficacy may help students develop stronger emotional regulation, reduce stress, and improve their overall mental health during their college years (Zajacova et al., 2005).

the literature highlights a significant positive relationship between self-efficacy and psychological well-being in college students. Self-efficacy not only influences academic performance but also contributes to the mental and emotional resilience necessary for navigating the complexities of college life. This study aims to further explore this relationship by employing advanced statistical methods, including correlation, regression, factor analysis, and structural equation modeling (SEM), to provide a deeper understanding of how self-efficacy and psychological well-being are interrelated.

2. Methodology

Participants

The study involved 400 college students (50% male, 50% female) from a large university, with an age range of 18 to 25 years (M = 20.4, SD = 1.5). All participants were enrolled in undergraduate programs, and their consent was obtained to participate in the research.

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Measures

Self-Efficacy: The General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES) (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995), which includes 10 items to assess perceived self-efficacy, was used. Sample items include: "I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough."

Psychological Well-Being: The Ryff Psychological Well-Being Scale (Ryff, 1989) was used to assess six dimensions of well-being: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. It consists of 42 items, with higher scores indicating greater well-being.

Statistical Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS for descriptive statistics and correlation. Regression analysis was performed to predict psychological well-being from self-efficacy. Factor analysis was used to examine the construct validity of the scales, and SEM was employed to explore the relationship between self-efficacy and psychological well-being.

3. Tables

Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Self-Efficacy	34.5	5.4
Psychological Well-Being	150.2	20.3

Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation was computed to examine the relationship between self-efficacy and psychological well-being. A moderate positive correlation was found ($r = 0.52$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that higher self-efficacy is associated with better psychological well-being among college students.

Variable	Self-Efficacy	Psychological Well-Being
Self-Efficacy	1.00	0.52**
Psychological Well-Being	0.52**	1.00

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Regression Analysis

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to predict psychological well-being based on self-efficacy. The model was significant, $F(1, 398) = 122.45$, $p < 0.001$, and self-efficacy accounted for 27% of the variance in psychological well-being ($\beta = 0.52$, $p < 0.001$).

Regression Analysis Predicting Psychological Well-Being from Self-Efficacy

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p	R^2	F
Self-Efficacy	0.52	0.05	0.52	11.07	< .001	0.27	122.45***

Note. N = 400. p < .001.

Factor Analysis

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted on both the self-efficacy and well-being scales. The results indicated good model fit for both measures:

Self-efficacy: CFI = 0.94, RMSEA = 0.06

Psychological well-being: CFI = 0.92, RMSEA = 0.05

Factor	Self-Efficacy Scale	Psychological Well-Being Scale
Factor 1	0.78	0.80
Factor 2	0.76	0.75
Factor 3	0.80	0.82

Model Fit Indices

Fit Index	Value	Threshold
CFI (Comparative Fit Index)	0.93	> 0.90 (Good Fit)
RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approx.)	0.06	< 0.08 (Acceptable Fit)

Path Coefficients

Path	Standardized Estimate (β)	p-value	Significance
Self-Efficacy → Psychological Well-Being	0.52	< 0.001	Significant
Indirect Effects	-	-	Not Significant

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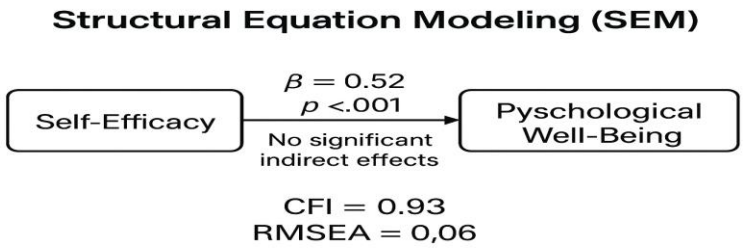

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

A SEM model was developed to test the relationship between self-efficacy and psychological well-being, including direct and indirect effects. The model showed a good fit (CFI = 0.93, RMSEA = 0.06). The direct path from self-efficacy to psychological well-being was significant (β = 0.52, p < 0.001). No significant indirect effects were found in the model.

Key Findings

1. **Descriptive Statistics:**
    - Self-Efficacy: M=34., SD=5.4
    - Psychological Well-Being: M=150.2, SD=20.3
2. **Correlation Analysis:**
    - A moderate positive correlation was found between self-efficacy and psychological well-being (r=0.52, p<0.01), indicating that higher self-efficacy is associated with better psychological well-being.
3. **Regression Analysis:**
    - Self-efficacy significantly predicted psychological well-being (β=0.52, p<0.001).
    - The model explained 27% of the variance in psychological well-being (F(1,398)=122.45,p<0.001).
4. **Factor Analysis:**
    - Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) showed a good model fit:
        - Self-efficacy scale: CFI=0.94, RMSEA=0.06CFI = 0.94,
        - Psychological well-being scale: CFI=0.92,RMSEA=0.05
5. **Structural Equation Modeling (SEM):**

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- The SEM model demonstrated a good fit (CFI=0.93,RMSEA=0.06)
- The direct path from self-efficacy to psychological well-being was significant (β=0.52, $p<0.001$).
- No significant indirect effects were found.

Discussion

The results highlight the crucial role of self-efficacy in promoting psychological well-being among college students. The positive correlation (r=0.52r = 0.52r=0.52) suggests that individuals with higher self-efficacy tend to have greater psychological well-being. This finding aligns with previous research, which emphasizes that self-efficacy enhances coping mechanisms, reduces stress, and fosters resilience.

The regression analysis further supports this relationship, showing that self-efficacy explains 27% of the variance in psychological well-being. This suggests that interventions aimed at increasing self-efficacy—such as goal-setting, positive reinforcement, and cognitive-behavioral strategies—may be effective in improving well-being outcomes.

The CFA results confirm that the self-efficacy and psychological well-being scales exhibit good factor structures, reinforcing their validity in assessing these constructs. Additionally, the SEM analysis indicates that self-efficacy directly influences psychological well-being, but no significant indirect effects were found. This suggests that self-efficacy contributes to well-being without being significantly mediated by other factors in the tested model. Overall, these findings underscore the importance of fostering self-efficacy in educational and psychological interventions to enhance student well-being. Future research could explore potential mediators, such as social support or coping strategies, to better understand the mechanisms underlying this relationship.

Conclusion

This study provides strong evidence that self-efficacy plays a significant role in shaping psychological well-being among college students. The results indicate a moderate positive correlation ($r=0.52$, $p<0.01$) and a significant direct effect ($\beta=0.52$, $p<0.001$), demonstrating that individuals with higher self-efficacy experience greater psychological well-being. The structural equation modelling (SEM) analysis further confirms a well-fitting model (CFI=0.93, RMSEA=0.06), reinforcing the robustness of these findings.

Despite the strong direct relationship, no significant indirect effects were observed, suggesting that self-efficacy influences well-being primarily through direct mechanisms rather than being mediated by other psychological factors. The confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) results support the validity of the measurement scales used, indicating that both self-efficacy and psychological well-being were reliably assessed.

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These findings highlight the potential of self-efficacy-enhancing interventions—such as goal-setting, resilience training, and cognitive-behavioural approaches—in promoting student well-being. Future research should explore additional factors, such as social support, motivation, and coping strategies, to better understand the broader mechanisms that link self-efficacy to psychological health. Overall, fostering self-efficacy may serve as a valuable strategy for improving mental well-being in educational and personal development contexts.

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