

A Study on Self-Efficacy of Male Postgraduate Students

Dr. Sayantani Bhattacharya¹, Shayona Sarkar^{2*}

ABSTRACT

Postgraduate male students are on the verge of entering a new life of independence. They encounter numerous life-altering incidents where they require a belief in their own abilities. They deal with these situations in accordance to their self-efficacy belief, which may be determined by other variables as well. This requires a farther deliberation into the factors. The present study focused on the effects of resilience, mindfulness, helping attitude and different factors of personality on self-efficacy of 100 male post graduate students. Pertinent statistical analyses of data like Pearson's Product Moment Correlation of Coefficient and Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis (SMRA) were done using SPSS 16.0. Results supported the existence of a significant correlation between self-efficacy of male postgraduate students and the following variables- resilience, mindfulness, helping attitude at 0.05 level and openness to experience at 0.01 level. Findings confirm that increase in resilience, mindfulness, helping attitude and openness to experience leads to the rise in self-efficacy scores of male postgraduate students. Resilience was found to be a contributing factor to the self-efficacy of male post graduate students in the present study.

Keywords: *Self-Efficacy, Resilience, Mindfulness, Helping Attitude, Personality*

The young adults of our society stand at an interesting juncture of their lives. Their life may be seen as a vast ocean of opportunities, experiences, emotions, hormonal changes, growth spurts, quandary and so on. This period of life is highly crucial for every individual because of the major transformations that occur. The individuals are exposed from their protective chaperone to the real struggles of life. This metamorphosis is necessary for every entity to survive in the real world. The stepping into the actual harsh reality often leaves the students perplexed but they do need to muster up spirits to begin their voyage into the world of unknown and uncertainty.

The young adults are at a vital period of their life where they are adventuresome and eager to try out the new tastes of life. They want themselves to be regarded as important and responsible citizens of the society. Hence, they may come ahead in hours of the need for

¹ Lecturer, Department of Psychology, Women's College, Calcutta, Kolkata, West Bengal, India

² Student, Department of Psychology, Women's College, Calcutta, Kolkata, West Bengal, India

**Responding Author*

Received: February 2, 2018; Revision Received: March 11, 2018; Accepted: March 25, 2018

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others. When circumstances arise that the individuals at critical points in life are faced with failures, heartbreaks, financial crisis or other stressful situations, some are seen to retaliate while some give in to the distressing situation. Here, arises the notion of resilience- the ability to “bounce-back”. Resilience refers to rapidly returning to baseline functioning after being exposed to trauma (Snyder, et al., 2011). Self-efficacy can help the person to think about and plan his or her future to cope with the traumatic state (Berry and West, 1993). Ryff and Singer (2003) have stated that empirical findings have documented that, many individuals have been able to maintain or even enhance their well-being as they encounter various life challenges. It is quite a difficult errand to face a challenging situation and fight against it to come out as a champion. To do so, it may be highly crucial for one to know his or her resources and capabilities to act in the formidable circumstances. This knowledge of the person’s own abilities may help him or her to rebound the situation or capitulate to the demanding situation. Until and unless a person believes that the young male students are capable of carrying out a particular task they may not proceed to fight against any situation after encountering failure. Resilience might enable a self-efficacious person to provide a better concept of self and the available resources, to combat the situation. Self-efficacy as has been self-evaluation of one’s competence to successfully execute a course of action, necessary to reach desired outcomes. Self-efficacy beliefs are highly specific, control related perceptions of one’s ability to perform a particular behaviour (Zajacova, et al., 2005). If the male students have control of their resources they may believe that they can definitely fight against the odds. So, to emerge victorious from an onerous condition self-efficacy may be a suggestive quality to be present in the individual.

The students have to combat a variety of obstacles. Some overcome these impediments while some are incapable of doing so. Those who are able to overcome the hurdles are efficacious. They are aware of their ability to deal with the situation. This indicates that such individuals are attentive to their inner strengths and have knowledge of the present state. This involves a self-reflection of the thoughts, feelings and emotions experienced by persons; which is likely to fortify self-efficacy. Thus, self-efficacy converges with the modern concept of mindfulness. Mindfulness is a cognitive perspective of any individual to feel competent enough to a certain task (Chavez et al., 2014). It is heightened and deliberate awareness of both the internal and external experiences taking place in the present moment (Brown and Ryan, 2003; Kabat-Zinn, 1990). Mindfulness consists of a psychological process of bringing one’s attention to the internal as well as external experiences occurring in the present moment. The person needs to experience the current state totally to obtain a mindful state. It has often been seen that while attempting or accomplishing a task some people come forward while some move away. This may depend upon their self-efficacy beliefs. Bandura and Schunk (1981) have defined this belief system as “people’s judgement of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances.” This judgement of capabilities is possible when the person is aware or mindful of the various thoughts, feelings and emotions experienced and direct them accordingly. It may be stated as an acceptance of the present state and presence of mind in the present situation (Iskender, 2009). A person who is more attentive to the abilities to overcome the fights with reality can

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be said to be more mindful as a person. The mindful ones are quite disciplined about the tasks they carry out as they are attentive to the moment.

The young adult males come across various life circumstances where they are required to offer help to others at home, on the college campus or someplace else. They come to realize that they have certain responsibilities in the society. Those male postgraduate students who come forward to help others have a belief in their capabilities to relief others from distress. This belief is a tremendous requirement to furnish the required help to the distressed people. Social interpersonal relationships have been found to help build knowledge about self (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). The person may get an extra push to help others while having complete trust in their abilities. Helping others requires human beings to have a clear knowledge of their own ability to deal with such situations effectively. The male students' efficacious belief to help others is signified by their rendered help. Throughout one's life, helping attitude has been observed to improve social relationships and this may lead to self-efficacy and promotes better psychosocial adaption (Musick et al., 1999; Wiligen, 2000). Whether a person will come forward to help a person in anguish may depend upon the helper's self-efficacy. It denotes that the person may be aware of his present capabilities and potency to carry out the helping behaviour. Here, the desired goal of providing help to the needy has its basis on the helping attitude to move toward the person in need than moving away from him or her. The actions and the emotional expressions talk a great deal about one's personal being. These young adult males by their acts of helpfulness and prosocial behaviour make themselves more appealing in the eyes of the society, family and friends. This might open a new gateway towards self-exploration of one's inclinations. It eventually increases their self-worth and perform such deeds in the future. It helps the self to recognize the capacities and besides strengthen them. This, as a result, magnifies their self-efficacy opening a novel perspective of the personal attributes. It constitutes a major part of one's personality (Shaheen et al., 2013). Every individual-young or old, men or women vary in their personality characteristics. The combination these personality characteristics are distinctive to every individual. Presence of self-efficacy- the belief in one's ability in performing a certain task which he or she ought to be performing, of the young adults may be determined by personality. Personality, as has been defined by Allport (1937), is the dynamic organization within the individual of the psychophysical systems that determine his unique adjustment to his environment. This adaptation to the surrounding circumstances might depend upon the efficacious belief of the individual. If he believes that it is the capability to suit the changing situation, he might be able to bring about a change in the 'dynamic organization' and reveal his temperament qualities. According to Quinn et al. (2003), personality is considered a fairly stable pattern of psychological behaviour and influences how one will act in response to diverse circumstances. The five factors dealt with in the present are Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to experience, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness based on personality theory proposed by McCrae and Costa (1987). Researchers have previously found a fair degree of concordance between self-efficacy and other reports of personality traits (Caprara, et al., 1993). Whether a person will possess a belief system about his proficiencies might largely depend on the Big Five personality factors namely- Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to

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experience, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness (McCrae and Costa, 1987). Neuroticism may be referred to as an individual's degree of emotional stability and impulse control. An individual who scores high on extraversion is characterized by high energy, positive emotions, talkativeness, assertiveness, geniality and the tendency to seek stimulation in the company of others. Openness reflects a person's degree of intellectual curiosity, creativity and bent for novelty and diversity. It is also described as the extent to which a person is imaginative or independent; it describes a personal preference for a variety of activities over a strict routine. It involves an inclination towards new ideas or solutions to a problem. Agreeableness trait measures one's tendency to be compassionate and cooperative rather than suspicious and antagonistic towards others. It is also a measure of a person's trusting and helpful nature and whether that person is generally well-tempered or not. Conscientiousness refers to one's tendency toward self-discipline, dutifulness, competence, thoughtfulness, and achievement-striving such as goal-directed behaviour. All the above characteristics stand on individual pillars of personality dimensions, namely- Neuroticism, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Openness to experience and Conscientiousness. Thus, it may be surely stated that considering the above variables namely- self-efficacy, mindfulness, resilience, helping attitude and personality for the present study is quite a fascinating undertaking to deal with, in respect to male postgraduate students. The variables are distinct in their functions in the students' lives and might also influence one another, enhancing the self-efficacious nature of the students. Lastly, all the above variables may somewhere be interrelated to personality dimensions possessed by the individuals. In others words, it may also be said that the presence or absence of the above combination of variables gives rise to a completely distinctive personality. The objective of the present study may be enlisted as follows:

1. To find out the correlation between self-efficacy and the following variables - resilience, mindfulness, helping attitude and the five personality factors -neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness, of male postgraduate students.
2. To find out the relative contribution of mindfulness, resilience, helping attitude and the five factors of personality on self-efficacy of male postgraduate students.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The study consisted of a group of 100 male post-graduate students. The subjects were selected from various university campuses and also using snowball sampling following specific inclusion criteria. All the subjects are Indian, Hindu, unmarried Post-Graduate students, lying within the age range of 21 and 24 years (Mean of age=22.27 and S.D. of age=1.18).The group was devoid of any psychiatric or medical complaints.

Tools used

1. **Information Schedule:** Information schedule was prepared to obtain the demographic variables of the subject, keeping in mind the purpose of the study and specific inclusion and exclusion criteria.

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- 2. General Self-efficacy Scale:** This scale was developed by Matthias Jerusalem and Ralf Schwarzer in the year 1995. The scale is uni-dimensional. The measure has been used internationally with success for two decades. It is suitable for a broad range of applications. This 10 item scale was created to assess a general sense of perceived self-efficacy. The items are answered on a 4-point scale, involving 1 for “Not at all true”, 2 for “Hardly true”, 3 for “Moderately true”, and 4 for “Exactly true”. The participants were asked to select from the above responses which suit them best. Cronbach’s Alphas ranged from .76 to .90, with the majority in the high .80s. A test-retest value of 0.82 was recorded over a period of two weeks. Criterion-related validity is documented in numerous correlation studies where positive coefficients were found.
- 3. Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale:** This is relatively new scale for the measure of resilience, designed by K.M. Connor, J.R. Davidson in 2003. The Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) comprises of 25 items. The scale is a five-factor model comprising personal competence, high standards, tenacity; trust in one’s instincts, tolerance of negative affect, strengthening effects of stress; positive acceptance of change, secure relationships; control; and spiritual influences. Each item is rated on a 5-point scale (0-4), with higher scores reflecting greater resilience. Cronbach's α was 0.93 at baseline and the item-total item correlation ranged from 0.19 to 0.73. The test-retest reliability was 0.70. Results showed potential convergent, concurrent and construct validity in earlier researchers.
- 4. Toronto Mindfulness Scale-** This scale measures the state of being in the work performed at the moment. It was developed by Lau, Bishop, Segal, Buis, Anderson, Carlson, Shapiro and Carmody in the year 2006. This scale comprises of 13 items. It has a two-factor structure (Curiosity, Decentering). The items of Factor 1 (Curiosity) reflect an attitude of wanting to learn more about one’s experiences. The items of Factor 2 (Decentering) reflect a shift from identifying personally with thoughts and feelings to relating to one’s experience in a wider field of awareness. These items are to be responded on a 5-point scale which is – “Not at All”, “A Little”, “Moderately”, “Quite a Bit” and “Very much”. The total scale reliability has been found to be .73. The 95% confidence interval for the inter-factor correlation (r.42) did not include a value of 1 providing further support for two distinct but related latent constructs. The scale has shown adequate construct validity in previous studies.
- 5. Helping Attitude Scale:** This scale was developed by Gary S. Nickell (1998). This consists of a 20-item questionnaire. The items measure respondents’ beliefs, feelings and behaviours associated with helping. Each item is answered on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The scale also uses reverse scoring for 6 items. The scores for the reversely scored items are reversed and all twenty scores are added to obtain the total HAS score. Cronbach’s Alpha has been found to be .86. Test-Retest reliability r is .85. The internal consistency for the scale is .869. This scale has been found to have a good amount of content validity.

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6. **NEO Five-Factor Inventory-3:** This inventory was developed by Paul T. Costa, Jr. and Robert R. McCrae. It has been revised in 2010. This inventory is a 60-item version of the NEO-PI-3. It provides a quick, reliable, and accurate measure of the five domains of personality (Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness). This is available in two forms- S and B. The booklet is provided with instructions and examples showing the correct procedure to mark the responses. The participants have to select an option from the 5-point Likert scale comprising of “Strongly Disagree”, “Disagree”, “Neutral”, “Agree” and “Strongly Agree”. The reliability of each domain as reported in the NEO-FFI-3 manual is: N = .86, E = .79, O = .78, A = .79, C = .82. Cross-observer validity has been established. Correlations were found to be ranging from 0.92, 0.90, 0.91, 0.77 and 0.87 for the domains N, E, O, A and C respectively.

Procedure

In the present study, the subjects were selected according to the inclusion criteria. Rapport was established with the subjects and it was told to them that their information would be kept extremely confidential. Those participants who were willing to participate were handed over the particular questionnaires with the information schedule at the beginning. The completed questionnaires were retained while the incomplete ones were discarded. After the collection of the data, the responses were scored according to the standard procedures given in the respective test manual and scores on each of the psychological tests were obtained.

Statistical Analysis

Statistical treatment of the collected data was done. Mean and Standard Deviation of the concerned variables were computed. To find out the relationships between the different variables Pearson’s coefficient correlation was done. Finally, stepwise multiple regression analyses were done to find out the relative contributing variables of self-efficacy of the students. Statistical calculation was done with the help of standardized computer package, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 16.0 (SPSS 16.0). For the analysis, 0.05 and 0.01 levels of significance were accepted.

RESULT AND CALCULATIONS

Table No. 1 shows the product moment coefficient of correlation representing the magnitude and direction of the relationship between self-efficacy and each of the variables- resilience, mindfulness, helping attitude and personality factors of the male postgraduate students.

VARIABLES	SELF-EFFICACY	REMARKS
RESILIENCE	0.601	Significant**
MINDFULNESS	0.384	Significant**
HELPING ATTITUDE	0.309	Significant**
NEUROTICISM	-0.211	Not significant
EXTRAVERSION	0.160	Not significant
OPENNESS TO EXPERIENCE	0.260	Significant*
AGREEABLENESS	0.035	Not significant

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CONSCIENTIOUSNESS	0.185	Not significant
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* denotes correlation at 0.05 level of significance.

**denotes correlation at 0.01 level of significance.

Table No. 2 shows the result of stepwise multiple regression analysis (SMRA) representing variables contributing significantly to the self-efficacy of male postgraduate students.

DEPENDENT VARIABLE	PREDICTOR	R ²	BETA
SELF-EFFICACY	RESILIENCE	0.342	0.585

DISCUSSION

In the present study, a positive correlation was found to exist between self-efficacy and openness to experience at the 0.05 level of significance. A positive correlation was also obtained between self-efficacy and each of the variables namely resilience, mindfulness and helping attitude at the 0.01 level of significance. A relation between resilience and self-efficacy has been found in case of male postgraduate students. This result may be substantiated by the study performed by Rutter (1987), where a similar result was observed. Being self-efficacious may, however also be helpful to show resilience in the face of adversity. By activating affective, motivational and behavioural mechanisms in taxing situations, self-efficacy beliefs can promote resilience (Schwarzer and Ralf, 2012). When a student faces certain crisis in his life he may succumb to it or rise to fight against it. Here arises the role of self-efficacy. If the student believes that he posses the capacity to deal with the situation, he becomes resilient and overcomes the peril. Self-efficacy therefore has sometimes been conceptualized as one component of resilience (Werner, 1982). A student may have faced numerous disappointment but the presence of self-efficacy helps him deal with the collapse and strive to make things right. Mindfulness may be essential to decide upon the efficacy of the students. Being mindful involves a non-critical awareness of the present state. This enables the individual to determine his ability to perform the task. A study of Caldwell et al. (2010) on mindfulness of college students, found a positive relation between self-efficacy and mindfulness. It may be said that when a person senses the present moment completely without being judgemental, he may have a better insight into his abilities to bring out the desired outcome. This belief system may enable him to act in the present moment efficiently. Mindfulness may also help the male students to deal with their stressful life. The students' nerve-racking life may consists of academic pressures, performance in the examinations, concern regarding future job opportunities, troubles in family and friends, relationship issues, Hence, the result in the present study on male postgraduate students' mindfulness has a relation with that of self-efficacy that have helped the students to be aware of their conditions and deal with them according to their competencies. If one is aware of his resources and confident in his capabilities to help others only when he can offer help to the distressed. His confidence in his potentials invigorates his self-trust. This trust in return is reflected in the person's self-efficacious nature. The present study also shows a relation between helping attitude and self-efficacy among male postgraduate students. The students' belief upon their capabilities may be more readily available for all sorts of help. This may be

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because they are confident enough about their abilities that are required in the hours of need. This might ignite within them the attitude to help others. In a study by Falanga et al. (2014) helping attitude in emotionally critical and dire situations positively correlated with self-efficacy. This study verifies the result in the present study. This may be because helping the needy is possible when a person is fully aware of his abilities and believes that he can support the distressed person and help him to overcome the obstruction. A positive relation has been found between openness to experience and self-efficacy among the male postgraduate students. A study by Akanbi (2013) showed a similar result. It may be said that when a person is open to varied novel experiences and possesses intellectual curiosity, he may also be ready to re-examine himself. He may know his capacities better than those who are not. When a male postgraduate student is exposed to new experiences, his outlook may broaden and perhaps they may consider unconventional ideas. Openness to experience is related to the psychological trait of active imagination, aesthetic sensitivity, attentive to inner feelings, preference for variety and intellectual curiosity (McCrae and Costa, 1992). All the above characteristics might help the male postgraduate students to measure his abilities and act in accordance to their perceived abilities. Persons who welcome novelty often take in account various aspects of a particular stressful condition. The ability of active mind and artistic understanding enables them to overcome the distressing situation by involving in creative occupations. This as a consequence may retest his limits and may allow him to modify his self-belief system.

In the study, no correlation was found between self-efficacy and rest of the personality traits, specifically neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness. The relation between self-efficacy and the personality traits of neuroticism, extraversion and conscientiousness can be corroborated with the study by Ebstrup et al. (2013). It may be assumed that when a person is anxious, impulsive, hypertensive and hostile, he is less likely to have faith in his own abilities and he may not perform the activities efficiently as he should. It may be the same even if the person is too much excitement-seeking and tries to be the centre of attention in a group situation. His mind may be engrossed in making himself noticeable among the others present. Too much of talkativeness, tender-mindedness, orderliness and a tendency to over-think, may deviate one from the path of attaining a knowledge about self and his potentialities. Although no study has been found to substantiate the result between self-efficacy and agreeableness, it may be supposed that if the male college students are helpful, co-operative, friendly, caring, and nurturing they may often perform deeds to come into the notice of the peers and teachers just to get positive reception, they may be at loss of being self-efficacious.

Stepwise multiple regression analysis revealed resilience to be the only predictor of self-efficacy for the male postgraduate students in the current study. It can be said that resilience has acted as a contributing factor to the self-efficacy of male postgraduate students. This can be validated by the studies by Mcmillan and Reed (1994) as well as by Benight and Cieslak (2011). It has been discussed in one of the studies that self-efficacy beliefs are considered the core resiliency beliefs (Benight and Cieslak, 2011). Self-efficacy facilitates dealing with a

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broad range of stressors, including those related to the exposure to trauma (Benight and Cieslak, 2011). Perceived self-efficacy is a person's belief that she/he has the capability to influence events that affect her life (Bandura, 1994). High self-efficacy has been found to be associated with a sense of control, positive cognitions about the self, good decision-making and the ability to manage one's feelings (Benight and Cieslak 2011), as well as a smaller likelihood of experiencing depression and anxiety. When dealing with a traumatic event, self-efficacy is the person's belief in her ability to cope with the consequences and demands of this event (Benight and Cieslak, 2011). When one experiences traumatic events or major setbacks in life that leaves the person shattered, the ability of being resilient helps the person to recuperate from the life-turning point bravely by making the necessary adjustments in his behaviour and emotions. He works to fight against the letdown using his belief in his capacities. He gradually stands up to the failure. If the person abandons hope due to his breakdown, then the person is said to have lack of faith in his abilities to contend with the situation. He may be said to have want of resilient powers. As a result, on facing adversity he is likely to give up all hope and give in to the frustrating circumstances. A person lack in resiliency loses his self-efficacy to combat the stressful situation; consequently he yields to the defeat. Therefore, it can be surely reiterated that resilience is a contributing factor for self-efficacy of postgraduate students.

LIMITATIONS

The present study comprises of a few limitations. The major limitations are as follows:

1. The sample consists of males postgraduate students within the age range of 21 to 24 years reduces the generalizability of the study.
2. The sample is taken from a limited region which prevents from assuming any universality.
3. Impact of presence of siblings was not studied.
4. The socio-economic status of the population was not taken into deliberation.
5. The influence of family type was not studied.
6. The tools used were self report inventories which may have included biases.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

Thus, as a conclusion it may be stated that self-efficacy in male postgraduate students can be related to resilience, mindfulness, helping attitude, neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness. A significant correlation has been found to exist between self-efficacy and these factors, specifically- resilience, mindfulness, helping attitude and openness to experience among male post-graduate students. This is indicative of the fact that an increase in the above-mentioned factors leads to a better self-efficacious belief in the male postgraduate students. The contributing factor for self-efficacy in male postgraduate students is obtained to be resilience.

Stress in various forms impedes the youthful life of the college students. It is highly important for them to learn to come out of these nerve-racking circumstances successfully using their self-efficacy. This self-efficacy will help them to deal with unforeseen problems

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not only at present but also in the future. To have a lucid acquaintance of the various factors that might help the college students to deal effectively with these stressors and gain self-efficacy, the present study is of relevance. It may also be supportive for further research on the variables involved in the present study.

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How to cite this article: Bhattacharya S & Sarkar S (2018). A Study on Self-Efficacy of Male Postgraduate Students. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, Vol. 6, (1), DIP: 18.01.081/20180601, DOI: 10.25215/0601.081