

Self – Efficacy and Stress among Mizo Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

The present study investigates the relationship between self-efficacy and stress, and examine whether gender plays a role in self-efficacy and stress among Mizo adolescents. The sample consists of 60 (Male = 30, Female = 30), with ages ranging from 15 to 21 years. Consent form and data was collected along with the demographic data. The self-efficacy scale (SES-SANS) and Stress Scale (SS-LVNS) were used to measure self-efficacy and stress respectively. A one-way between-subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of gender on self-efficacy and stress. There was a significant effect of gender on self-efficacy at the $p < .01$ level [$F(1,58) = 21.53, p = .000$] and on stress at the $p < .05$ level [$F(1,58) = 6.14, p = .016$]. This indicates that gender plays a role in self-efficacy and stress. Results of the Pearson correlation indicated that there was a significant negative association between self-efficacy and stress, ($r(59) = -0.34, p < 0.01$). Self-efficacy was also found to significantly predict stress. These findings reveal that inflating self-efficacy may result in a more positive impact in diminishing stress. Hence, the study implies the need for enhancing self-efficacy among adolescents to manage stress.

Keywords: *Self-Efficacy, Stress, Adolescents*

Self-efficacy is the notion that an individual has a sense of his ability and capacity to perform a particular task to attain a particular goal. In a simple manner, we can say that self-efficacy is a belief in ones' own ability to execute a task successfully. Self-efficacy is the key concept of Bandura's 'Social Cognitive Theory' (1986). According to Bandura, self-efficacy beliefs determine one's feelings, thought, motivation and behaviour. Such belief affects four major processes, cognitive, motivational, affective and selection processes. (Bandura, 1994).

A strong self-efficacy belief enhances the individual accomplishment and well-being as people with high affirmation in their capabilities proceed to work difficult tasks as an opportunity to master the task rather than as a threat to avoid. This efficacious way of thinking provides for intrinsic interest and deep engrossment in activities. They set themselves with challenging goals, sustain their efforts when faced with difficulty and

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maintain strong commitment to them. They attribute their failures to insufficient effort or deficits in knowledge and skills which can be acquired. Approaching threatening situations with the belief that they have the capacity to exert control over them in turn reduce stress, enhances capacity to personal accomplishments and vulnerability to depression (Bandura, 1994).

In contrast, people who doubt themselves and their capabilities move away from difficult tasks as they see it as a threat. They tend to have low aspiration and have weak commitment to the goals they opted to pursue. When faced with challenging tasks, they criticize themselves, blaming the obstacles they encounter rather than concentrate on tackling the problem and building concrete solution to the problem. They ease up on their efforts and give up quickly in times of adversity. This outlook on themselves and setbacks in turns makes them vulnerable to stress and depression as they lose faith in their capabilities and potential to succeed in life (Bandura, 1994).

Stress is a part of our daily life; it is the physiological or psychological response to internal or external stressors. Stress affects nearly every system of our body, influencing our feelings and behaviour. Palpitations, sweating, dry mouth, shortness of breath, fidgeting, accelerated speech, augmentation of negative emotions (if already present), and prolonged stress fatigue are some of the symptoms. By inflicting the mind–body changes, stress directly have negative impacts on our psychological and physiological well-being, reducing quality of life.

The pioneering work of Selye (1956) recognised stress as a response to threatful situations in the environment. According to Selye, certain level of stress is inevitable and cannot be escaped. The concept of stress evolved into a dynamic process which presents stress as a product of a transaction between personal attributes and the environment.

(Lazarus, 1991; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). When a person experience stress and is unable to deal with the demands from his environment and lack the resources to cope with, it becomes uncertain to lead a promising successful and satisfying life (Roberson, 1985). Stress affects every person regardless of age, gender, social etc. Overcoming stress primarily depends on the resources available to the individual at any given time. Apart from the availability of the resources, the individual's characteristic such as his standpoint in his potential becomes an important factor in determining the effects of stress.

Adolescence is a period of transition from childhood to adulthood, often referred to as period of 'stress and storm'. Adolescence is the developmental stage at which the individual is expected to tackle and adapt to rigorous modification in terms of school, social and family life. Thus, at this stage of life, adolescents may endure immeasurable amount of challenges. Adolescents approaching young adults also face changes in various aspects of their lives (Schulenberg, Bryant & O'Malley, 2004). Adolescence is a crucial stage of life every individual experienced in terms of educational opportunities, exploring career options and preparation of independent adult life. During this period, adolescents often compare between the values they held during their childhood and the values they learned as they become older. Thus, adolescence can be seen as the most suitable time to represent the exploration about one's own self (Jessor, Donovan & Costa, 1991) and the time to start committing into more adult responsibilities (Erikson, 1968). Therefore, it is important for an individual to have the confidence in the ability of controlling one's own environment which is known as self-efficacy. At this stage, the ability to uphold one's confidence is believed to

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bring out fruitful outcome in terms of subjective well-being. In adolescence, self-efficacy plays a significant role in coping with the demanding situations of life.

Reddy, Menon, & Thattil (2017) in their review of articles on stress and its physiological impact, cognitive and social influences, sources of stress detailing Indian findings from online databases, found that the prevalence rate of stress varied from 15%-45% in studies conducted after 2000.

Parikh et al.,(2019) concluded in their study the necessity of developing culturally sensitive and age-appropriate psychosocial interventions for distressed adolescents addressing the challenges from home, school, peer and neighbourhood environments. They highlight the importance of enhancing problem - and emotion-focused strategies to support adolescents' repertoire of adaptive coping skills in stressful social environments in their study of stress and coping among urban school-going adolescents in India.

Haraldstad et al., (2019) conducted a cross-sectional study of 723 adolescents (12–18 years) attending school, and investigated the association between health-related quality of life (HRQOL) and self-efficacy and bullying. They found that self-efficacy plays an important role as a predictor of high HRQOL. Their studies highlighted the importance of self-efficacy belief in improving general self-efficacy (GSE) and HRQOL in adolescents involved in bullying.

Arslan (2017) studied the relationship between educational stress and emotional self-efficacy on 232 secondary school students. The result shows that high emotional self-efficacy decreases educational stress.

Although much research has been conducted on self-efficacy and on stress, there is very limited literature reported with regards to the relationships between these two variables in the Mizo population. Since these two factors are of concern during adolescence as it is the time to prepare for the future and as adolescence is a period of change and challenges, and increasing self-efficacy results in lower stress, it was deemed appropriate to investigate and explore the association between these two variables among the Mizo adolescent population. Therefore, the present study was undertaken with the following objectives (1) to investigate the relationship between self-efficacy and stress, and (2) to determine the predictability of self-efficacy on stress, and (3) to investigate gender effects on self-efficacy and stress among the Mizo adolescent population.

Hypotheses

Based on the objectives elucidated, the following hypotheses are proposed for the study

1. There will be gender difference on self-efficacy and stress among Mizo adolescents.
2. There will be a significant relationship between self - efficacy and stress among Mizo adolescents.
3. Self-efficacy will significantly predict stress among Mizo adolescents.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The participants in this study consisted of 60 adolescents (30 females and 30 males) studying in Higher Secondary Schools in Aizawl, Mizoram. The ages ranged from 15 to 21 years with a mean age of 16.5 years.

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Instruments

Two measures were used in this study,

1. Self-efficacy scale (SES; Singh & Narain, 2014) - The self-efficacy scale consists of 20 statements, which is administered individually. There are five responses —Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. The Self-Efficacy Scale measures four sub-scales i.e., Self-Confidence, Efficacy Expectation, Positive Attitude and Outcome Expectation. This scale is meant for Adolescents of the age range 12 years and above. The possible range of the scores varies from 73 (minimum) to 85 (maximum) High ratings indicated high self-efficacy whereas low rating indicate low self-efficacy of the subjects.

2. Stress Scale (SS; Lakshmi & Narain, 2014) - The Stress Scale has four dimensions: a) Pressure b) Physical Stress c) Anxiety d) Frustration. This scale can be administered by self. There are only two responses —Yes or No, the subject will put a tick mark in his preferred answer. This scale is meant for Adolescents in the age range of 12 to 24 years. There is no fixed time limit as such. However, it generally takes about 10 to 15 minutes. It contains 40 statements. Stress level which is 25 and above indicates high level of stress, 14-15 levels of stress is moderate and 0-13 level of stress is low.

Procedure

The study was carried out in September, 2021. The questionnaires, consent form and demographic data were collected using Google forms as it was the most convenient method as schools remained closed due to the pandemic. The purpose of the study was explained in the form and confidentiality was assured. The SPSS was used to analyze all of the data. To study the effect of gender on self-efficacy and stress, one-way between-subjects ANOVA was employed and Pearson's correlation (r) was calculated to measure the association between self-efficacy and stress, and furthermore, linear regression analysis was done to check the predictability of self-efficacy on stress.

RESULTS

Table No. 1 Descriptive statistics and Reliability Indices (Cronbach's Alpha) of the Scales

Variable/Scales	N	Minimum Statistic	Maximum Statistic	Mean	SD	Cronbach's Alpha coefficients
Age	60	15	21	16.6	1.02	
Self-Efficacy	60	53	86	70.62	7.66	0.72
Stress	60	5	33	19.33	5.87	0.69

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for the data obtained. It is shown that the mean age of the participants is 16.5 years. The mean score of the participants (male and female) for Self-efficacy is 70.61 and the mean score of the participants (male and female) for Stress Scale is 19.93. Reliability indices (Cronbach's Alpha) revealed satisfactory correlations indicating that the behavioural measures of self-efficacy and stress are good scales for use with the target population.

Table No. 2 Frequencies of the Demographic Data

Demographic Variable	Value	Frequency	Percent
Age	15	6	10
	16	27	45
	17	19	31.6
	18	6	10
	19	1	1.7

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	21	1	1.7
	Total	60	100
Gender	Male	30	50
	Female	30	50
	Total	60	100
Family Size	4	7	11.7
	5	20	33.3
	6	14	23.3
	7	7	11.7
	8	5	8.3
	9	4	6.7
	10	2	3.3
	11	1	1.7
	Total	100	100
Father's Occupation	Self Employed	5	8.3
	Government Job	21	35
	Private Sector	30	50
	Others	4	6.7
	Total	60	100
Mother's Occupation	Self Employed	35	58.3
	Government Job	6	10
	Private Sector	19	31.7
	Total	60	100
Family Income/Month	Below 10000	3	5
	10000-19000	19	31.7
	20000-29000	14	23.3
	30000 and above	24	40
	Total	60	100

Demographic features of the sample is highlighted in Table 2 which shows the data in terms of frequency and percentages. The age range of the sample is 15 to 21 years, the majority of the sample (45%) are 16 years of age. Equal representation of gender is found among the sample constituting 50% males and females each. The family size ranges from 4 to 11 members in the family, while a majority of the sample (33.3%) come from a family size of 5 members. With regards to the father's occupation, 50% are working in the private sector as compared to 35% working in the government. In terms of the mother's occupation, most of them (58.3%) are self-employed while only a few are government servants (10%) and around 31.7% working in the private sector. In terms of family income, 40% of the sample have their family income at Rs.30,000 and above per month.

Table No. 3 Showing Gender differences on Self-Efficacy and Stress

Scales	Gender	Mean	F-ratio	Sig.	Mean Difference
Self-Efficacy	Male	74.57	21.53	0.00	7.9
	Female	66.67			
	Total	70.62			
Stress	Male	18.13	6.14	0.02	3.6
	Female	21.73			
	Total	19.33			

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Results of ANOVA for independent samples reveal significant gender differences on self-efficacy ($F= 21.53$; $p < .01$) and stress ($F=6.14$; $p < .05$) indicating that males have higher self-efficacy while stress is experienced in greater amounts by females. From Table-3, we can see that the mean of self-efficacy for males ($M=74.57$) is higher than females ($M=66.67$). Also, we can see that the mean of stress for males ($M= 18.13$) is lower than females ($M=21.73$). Gender differences in stress among adolescents have also been observed by Dixit and Arya (2021). Furthermore, significant gender differences in self-efficacy and stress highlighted in this study emerged to be consistent with the findings of Sailo et al., (2019) as well as McKay et al., (2014).

Table No. 4 Showing Relationship of Self-Efficacy and Stress

Variables	Stress
Self-Efficacy	-0.34 **

** $p < .01$ (correlation is significant at the 0.01 level)

Result Table 4 shows the relationship between Self-Efficacy and Stress. We can see that there is a negative association ($r=-0.34$) between self-efficacy and stress, which is significant at 0.01 level. Higher levels of self-efficacy may result in the ability to handle frustrations and be able to deal with stress, thus lowering experienced stress level. The finding is similar to the results obtained by Rumi and Kunio (2003) who studied the relationship between social self-efficacy and interpersonal stress in adolescence. They found a negative correlation between scores on social self-efficacy with those on interpersonal stress and interpersonal stress coping. Dixit and Arya (2021) also found a significant negative correlation between self-efficacy and stress among adolescents, stating that those who believe in their abilities will see themselves as efficient, able to deal with stress in a better way, become more focused in handling daily hassles and stressful situations.

Table No. 5 Regression Analysis with Self-Efficacy as predictor and Stress as the Criterion

Predictor	R ²	β	t	p
Self-Efficacy	0.121	-0.35	-2.8	0.01

Results of simple linear regression (Table 5) indicate significant predictability of stress from self-efficacy. The analysis revealed that 12.1 % ($t = -2.8$, $p < .01$) of variance in Stress can be explained by Self-Efficacy which is significant at 0.01 level of significance. Self-efficacy thus can be an important personal resource in the management of experienced stress.

DISCUSSION

Adolescence is a natural process that one goes through, experiencing many biological, physical, emotional, cognitive changes. It is a developmental period in which an individual may feel pressured, and make essential changes that may enhance one's coping skills, and lead a satisfying life. It is important to have a better understanding of individual's resources that may mitigate the stress in life. The present study sought out to explore the effects of gender on self-efficacy and on stress, and to investigate the relationship between self-efficacy and stress as well as the predictability of self-efficacy on stress among Mizo adolescents.

The results indicated that there is a gender difference on self-efficacy and on stress, the first hypothesis which states that there is a gender difference on self-efficacy and stress among

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Mizo adolescents is accepted. From the result, males have higher mean scores than females which is significant at $p < .01$ level [$F(1,58) = 21.53, p = .000$] and on stress males have lower mean score than females significant at the $p < .05$ level [$F(1,58) = 6.14, p = .016$]. This indicates that gender plays a role in self-efficacy and stress. This distinction may be related to the socialization experiences, wherein in the Mizo culture males have more opportunities to socialize within their community resulting in understanding their abilities and potential to a greater extent. Spence et al. (2014) found that males had significantly higher self-efficacy as compared to females, which resulted in significantly more physical activity. Muris (2001) in his research findings indicated that compared to males, females have lower level of self-efficacy and emotional self-efficacy. Similarly, Milioni et al., (2001) identified that males are said to score higher in self-efficacy in managing negative emotions compared to females.

Results of Pearson correlation indicated that there was a significant negative association between self-efficacy and stress, ($r(59) = -0.34, p < 0.01$), hence the second hypothesis is accepted stating that there is a significant negative relationship between self- efficacy and stress among Mizo adolescents. This indicates that an individual with a belief that he is capable of completing a task successfully, approach difficult tasks with the opportunity to grow and develop skills has a better chance of managing stress in life. Burger and Samuel (2017) discussed in their study that the negative impact of baseline stress on life satisfaction is lessened by the baseline self-efficacy. This illustrates that the development of self-efficacy is essential in diminishing stress and a determinant of adolescent's leading a satisfactory life as the adolescent slowly moves on to young adulthood.

The results also indicated that males have a higher level of self-efficacy and lower level of stress while females have low level of self-efficacy with higher level of stress. With regards to males, this may be due to the fact that Mizo society is a patriarchal society where they are expected or meant to be involved and make contributions on different aspects of society and life. Moreover, males are more permitted and excused in their interactions, and expressions of themselves but with little consequences. Also, having given more freedom to associate oneself in the society along with participation with low consequences, it is easier to develop self-confidence and as a result, raises the self - efficacy to a higher level rather than that of females. On the other hand, the condition for females in the Mizo society is quite different from that of the males and is thus reflected in the results obtained. From the results, we know that females seem to have lower levels of self-efficacy with higher stress level as compared to males. This may be due to the reason that they are also put under societal pressures like that of the males, but for the females in the Mizo society, they are expected to contribute both in the society and in the household but mostly in the household. Even though females in the Mizo society are allowed participation or interaction like that of the males, they still have many issues to worry about in that area. They have to be conscious about how they talk, interact or treat other people especially the males; as a result of the society being a patriarchal society. Also, the females in the society are further expected to improve their skills not only in the outside environment but also inside the household which clearly affects or suggest an image of herself towards everyone. So, we can clearly see that due to these factors, females may be put under pressure and expectations and are also even put under scrutiny unconsciously by most people in the society. This may result in self-limitation, inability to express oneself physically or emotionally. These limitations may lead to unfamiliarity of one's capability and affect or even prevent confidence building for themselves, resulting in lower self-efficacy which eventually yields higher level of stress.

Limitations, Suggestions and Conclusion

The present study is done on adolescents only. However, it can be extended to young adults as well as older adults. Since self-efficacy is a factor that can influence the ability to handle stress, it will give an informative output so that methods to improve self-efficacy can be generated for people of all ages. A larger sample size may be used for future studies to get a broader picture of exactly how self-efficacy is related to stress, along with the inclusion of relevant mediating variables in the relationship between self-efficacy and stress.

In essence, the results of the current study led to the conclusion that enhancing self-efficacy among adolescents will tend to have a positive influence in the reduction of stress. This in turn may lead to improvement in their well-being, their academic achievement and in dealing with the harsh realities of life. Thus, the findings underline the importance of establishing the need for increase in self-efficacy by implementing Bandura's four ways of creating a sense of strong self-efficacy: providing opportunities to master experiences, increase physiological and emotional arousal, vicarious experience, and social persuasion.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interests.

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