

## The Relationship Between Self-Efficacy and Experience in Close Relationships Among College Students

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### ABSTRACT

The study examines the relationship between self-efficacy and experiences in close relationships among college students. It posits that higher levels of self-efficacy correlate with positive experiences in close relationships, which are essential for academic success and mental well-being. Utilizing established scales to measure self-efficacy and relationship experiences, the research identifies a modest connection between self-reliance and attachment tendencies. The findings suggest that enhanced self-efficacy may lead to lower attachment levels, prompting implications for educational strategies and interventions. Future research is recommended to explore the interplay of personality traits, coping strategies, and cultural influences in this dynamic, aiming to optimize both personal development and relationship health in young adults.

**Keywords:** *Self-Efficacy, Experience, Close Relationships, College Students*

### SELF-EFFICACY

Self-efficacy is what? It is just an individual's capacity or belief in them to succeed in a particular situation and till now this variable is the key component of psychological study (Bandura, 1997). This variable always has a significant impact on people as to how they think, feel and behave and social settings.

Albert Bandura, is one of the famous psychologist, he gave the social cognitive theory. In this theory he talks that how the response of an individual is based on their personal, social, emotional and environment factors (Bandura, 1997). This also highlights that humans are always in the learning phase, and societal rules and regulations helps in shaping the human's behavior.

Now if we talk about self-efficacy in college students, it is really important for both personal growth and as well as academics. If a person is high on self-efficacy parameter then he or she won't face any kind of difficulty in their normal life, as they themselves are well equipped with as to how to handle their stress successfully and build meaningful connections. Also, if a person is low on self-efficacy he or she will face challenges, worry, and stress in their lives.

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## The Relationship Between Self-Efficacy and Experience in Close Relationships Among College Students

### EXPERIENCE IN CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS

This is the another important factor which deals with the emotional intimacy, mutual support and trust that is provided by one individual to another, or in Indian context the emotional support, care, love that is provided by the families to their children, so that they can grow and become a successful person in future (Singh, 2010). These relationships, whether it is a blood relation, romantic relationship, or a bond of friends, it helps to shape the individuals identity and it also influence their mental health also it will impact to the life satisfaction of the person (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

The experiences that I am talking here is all from early childhood to adulthood, which helps us to understand ourselves and others in a better way, and also make healthy connections with others. In college, there are many complex situations or situations where the person has to take quick decision about their future while keeping in mind of their close relationships, even at that time the support provided by families, helps a lot (Aron, Aron, & Allen, 1998). If a person is high on experience in close relationship scale then their academic performance can be improved, their stress level will be reduced, and it will also foster the sense of belongingness in them (Reis, Clark, & Holmes, 2004). Therefore, if a person will be low on this factor that this will lead to loneliness, anxiety and depression (Cacioppo & Patrick, 2008).

Now the main point is that how these two factors are linked with each other, so self-efficacy and experience in close relationships are linked and they mutually influence each other (Bandura, 1997; Reis, Clark, & Holmes, 2004). Its proven that if a person is high on self-efficacy then there will be positive impact on their quality of close relationships. Also if a person is high in experience in close relationship scale then it will help in the enhancement of their self-efficacy.

#### *Positive impact on college students:*

- **Enhancement in academic performance:** the main and important component in college students. So academic can be challenging, and students need help. So if we work on these factors together and focus how these factors can be improved then obviously with proper strategies and planning we can help students to make there relationships good, help them how and when to ask for emotional support, as these things will further reduce their day-to-day stress and make them more focused and concentrated towards their goals (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).
- **Improve mental health:** self-efficacy and supportive relationships can help students to deal with their stress, anxiety and also helps them to learn to be resilient and how they can form a positive outlook about things. Further the relationship support will help them to fight with their negative emotions and promote mental and emotional well-being (Cacioppo & Patrick, 2008).
- **Strong Social Skills:** if a person know that they have a back-up, back-up from their close relationships like family and friends then they won't be afraid to take risk for their goals, for their dreams, because they know if something bad will happen, they have their family to support them. Whereas self-efficacy in social situations can help to develop strong and more positive interpersonal skills, like empathy, effective communication and positive conflict resolution skills (Aron, Aron, & Allen, 1998).
- **Increase life satisfaction:** when a person has good relationship skills then their desire to live increase, and its proven. So when a person is high on self-efficacy

## The Relationship Between Self-Efficacy and Experience in Close Relationships Among College Students

index and have positive relationships then it will increase the chance overall life satisfaction. Individuals who are confident about themselves, their qualities, and their social connections are more likely to have a happy and fulfilling life (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

By understanding the intricate relationship between self-efficacy and close relationships, educators, counselors, and parents can develop interventions to promote both, ultimately leading to improved academic and personal outcomes for college students.

### *Problem Statement*

Main focus of my study is to see the relationship between self-efficacy and experience in close relationships which is important for the development of college students. It deals with that how both the variables are interlinked with each other.

### *Objective*

- To measure the levels of self-efficacy and experience in close relationships among college students.
- To examine the correlation between self-efficacy and experience in close relationships.
- To determine whether self-efficacy predicts positive experiences in close relationships or not.

## **METHODOLOGY**

**Sample** – 110 college students

**Age Range** – 18-21

**Qualification** – Under-graduate

### *Variables* –

Independent Variable: Self-Efficacy

Dependent Variable: Experience in Close Relationships

### *Tool used* –

1. **The Experiences in Close Relationship Scale (ECR):** Developed by Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998 ECR-Short Form was used to measure the individual's experience in their relationship; this scale helps us to understand the two major aspects of relationship Attachment Anxiety, which involves an excessive need for approval from others, and Attachment Avoidance associated with an excessive need for self-reliance. Participants are rated on a seven point likert scale (1 as strongly disagree, 2 as Disagree, 3 as Slightly disagree, 4 as neutral, 5 as slightly agree, 6 as agree, 7 as strongly agree). The internal consistencies measured by Coefficient alphas were .78 (Anxiety) and .84 (Avoidance) for the 12-item ECR-S
2. **Self-Efficacy Scale: The General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE)** was developed by **R. Schwarzer and M. Jerusalem** in 1995. The GSE measures self-perceived competence to cope with a broad range of stressful or challenging demands. The scale consists of **10 items**. The Internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha) ranges from **0.76 to 0.90**, indicating good to excellent reliability. Whereas the scale is positively correlated with emotional stability, optimism, and work satisfaction. Negative correlations are observed with constructs like depression, stress, health complaints, burnout, and anxiety, supporting its construct validity. Respondents rate

## The Relationship Between Self-Efficacy and Experience in Close Relationships Among College Students

items on a **4-point Likert scale**: **1**: Not at all true; **2**: Hardly true; **3**: Moderately true; **4**: Exactly true. The total score is obtained by summing up the responses to all items. Scores range from **10 to 40**, with higher scores reflecting greater self-efficacy. The score is calculated as the sum of all item responses. Higher total scores indicate higher levels of generalized self-efficacy.

### *Procedure*

For this study, two scales were chosen: the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE) and the Experiences in Close Relationships Scale-Short Form. These scales, as well as other demographic questions, were combined into a Google Form. This form was then delivered to college students who willingly took part in the study. After receiving the replies, the collected data was assembled and statistically analyzed to study the link between the participants' self-efficacy and their experiences in intimate relationships. The analysis intended to discover correlations and predicted patterns that were consistent with the study's hypothesis and aims.

### *Statistical analysis*

SPSS Statistics 2023 is used for the analysis of the data.

## **RESULTS**

*Table 1: Descriptive Statistics*

	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
Self-Efficacy	110	30.481	5.508
Experience in close relationship	110	43.336	7.778

The descriptive statistics presented in Table 1 provide a summary of the data collected on self-efficacy and experience in close relationships among 62 college students. The average self-efficacy score was 30.481, with a standard deviation of 5.508. This suggests a moderate level of self-efficacy among the participants, with some variation in scores. The mean score for experience in close relationships was 43.336, with a standard deviation of 7.778. This indicates a moderate to high level of experience in close relationships among the participants, with some variability in scores.

*TABLE 2: Correlation Analysis Between Self-Efficacy and Experience in Close Relationship Scale*

		<b>Self-Efficacy</b>	<b>Exp. Close R.</b>
Self-Efficacy	Correlation	1.000	-.237*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.013
	N	110	110
Exp. Close rela.	Correlation	-.237*	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.013	
	N	110	110

\*. *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

The correlation analysis presented in Table 1 explores the relationship between self-efficacy and experience in close relationships among 110 college students. The results indicate a significant negative correlation between the two variables ( $r = -.237$ ,  $p < .05$ ). This suggests

## The Relationship Between Self-Efficacy and Experience in Close Relationships Among College Students

that as self-efficacy increases, experience in close relationships tends to decrease, and vice versa.

There is a small but significant negative correlation between Self-Efficacy and Experience in Close Relationships. This means that individuals with higher self-efficacy tend to have lower scores on close relationship experiences (possibly indicating difficulties in close relationships or less dependence on them). Conversely, individuals with lower self-efficacy may be more reliant on close relationships.

**Table 3: Paired Sample T-Test**

	Mean	SD	SEM	r	t	df	p
Self-Efficacy	30.48	5.50	0.52				
Exp. In close relationship	43.33	9.50	0.90	-0.21	-11.2	109	.000

The results of the paired sample t-test presented in Table 3 compare Self-Efficacy and Experience in Close Relationships among 110 participants. The mean score for Self-Efficacy was 30.48 (SD = 5.50), while the mean score for Experience in Close Relationships was 43.33 (SD = 9.50), indicating a higher average score in close relationship experiences. The correlation coefficient (r) between the two variables was -0.21, suggesting a weak negative relationship. The t-value for the comparison was -11.2, with 109 degrees of freedom (df). The p-value was .000, which is highly significant ( $p < .001$ ). This suggests a statistically significant difference between the two variables, indicating that individuals tend to score significantly lower on Self-Efficacy compared to their scores on Experience in Close Relationships. This finding implies that individuals with higher experiences in close relationships may exhibit lower self-efficacy or vice versa.

## DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate a significant negative correlation between self-efficacy and attachment in the college population, as evidenced by Spearman's correlation coefficient ( $r = -0.237$ ,  $p = 0.013$ ). This suggests that individuals with higher self-efficacy tend to report lower attachment levels in their close relationships.

A possible explanation for this finding is that students with greater self-efficacy may be more independent and self-reliant, relying less on attachment figures for emotional support. This aligns with previous research that suggests that individuals with high self-efficacy often feel more confident in handling challenges on their own rather than seeking support from close relationships. Conversely, those with lower self-efficacy may depend more on attachment figures, possibly due to a perceived inability to navigate academic and personal challenges independently.

It is also important to consider the developmental context of college students, who are often in a transitional phase, balancing independence and the need for close relationships. The negative association found in this study may reflect that students who are highly self-reliant prioritize personal achievement over relationship closeness. However, the correlation is relatively weak, suggesting that while there is an association, other factors likely influence this relationship.

## CONCLUSION

This study highlights a modest yet significant negative relationship between self-efficacy and attachment in close relationships among college students. The findings suggest that higher self-efficacy is linked to lower attachment tendencies, potentially due to greater self-reliance. However, given the small effect size, future research should explore additional factors such as personality traits, coping strategies, and cultural influences that might mediate this relationship. Understanding these dynamics can provide insight into how self-efficacy and attachment styles interact and inform interventions aimed at fostering both personal confidence and healthy relationships in young adults.

### *Recommendation*

Based on the findings, it is recommended that educators, counselors, and families focus on creating strategies to enhance self-efficacy while maintaining strong emotional support systems for students. Interventions such as mentoring programs, resilience training, and relationship workshops could address the dual needs of fostering independence and ensuring access to meaningful connections. Promoting self-awareness and emotional intelligence in young adults may also help them navigate the balance between self-reliance and interdependence effectively.

### *Future Implication*

Future research could explore the underlying factors driving the negative correlation between self-efficacy and close relationships. Additionally, longitudinal studies could help determine how these dynamics evolve over time and influence long-term academic, social, and mental health outcomes. Research could also investigate interventions that balance self-efficacy development with fostering healthy relationships to maximize students' overall well-being.

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## The Relationship Between Self-Efficacy and Experience in Close Relationships Among College Students

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### ***Conflict of Interest***

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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