Self-Efficacy Impact on Students Academic Performance

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Abstract

In this paper it is treated the self-efficacy topic. Self-efficacy is important for the people. It is, also, important for the students. Self-efficacy has great impact on students motivation, on their academic performance, on their expectations. The paper aims to measure self-efficacy of students of Psychology branch of the Faculty of Educational Sciences, Department of Psychology and Social Work, University "Luigi Gurakuqi", Shkodër, Albania, Bachelor degree. The paper aims, also, to analyze opinions of these students about the self-efficacy in general and about their self-efficacy. The research questions are: 1. What is the self-efficacy of students of Psychology branch of the Faculty of Educational Sciences, Department of Psychology and Social Work, University "Luigi Gurakuqi", Shkodër, Albania, Bachelor degree? 2. What are the opinions of these students about the self-efficacy in general? 3. What are the opinions of these students about their self-efficacy? This study made use of the technique of questionnaire. The measuring instrument is the General Self Efficacy Scale (GSE) (R. Schwarzer, M. Jerusalem (1995)). The GSE is a 10-item scale with a score for each question ranging from 1 to 4. Higher scores indicate stronger student’s belief in self-efficacy. It is used, also, the interview technique in order to understand the opinions of students of Psychology branch of the Faculty of Educational Sciences, Department of Psychology and Social Work, University "Luigi Gurakuqi", Shkodër, Albania, Bachelor degree, about the self-efficacy in general and about their self-efficacy. The data collected from the questionnaire was analyzed by means of the SPSS program, variant 20. There are given the appropriate conclusions and suggestions about self-efficacy of students of Psychology branch of the Faculty of Educational Sciences, Department of Psychology and Social Work, University "Luigi Gurakuqi", Shkodër, Albania, Bachelor degree.

Keywords: Self-efficacy, students academic performance, students motivation, students expectations.

Introduction

Self-efficacy beliefs are very important for the people. They have a great impact on people motivation and behavior. Self-efficacy beliefs impact, also, people actions.

Self-efficacy is important because it is the reason behind why we push ourselves to be the best we can be. It motivates us to never give up and to always do our best (Jamel Ricks).

Self-efficacy theory states that the level and strength of self-efficacy will determine 1) whether or not a behavior will be initiated, 2) how much effort will result, and 3) how long the effort will be sustained in the face of obstacles (Cited by Carol Couvillion Landry, 2003).

Self-efficacy is important for the students. Their beliefs about their self-efficacy are very important, because they have impact on their beliefs about their aptitudes and have impact on their motivation to learn.

People high in self-efficacy take better care of themselves. They see tasks as something to be mastered, and they feel more empowered. They’re not controlled by circumstances. They see setbacks as challenges to be overcome and can cope with hardship better than those with low self-efficacy (LeVan, 2010).
Theoretical Treatment

According to Albert Bandura, self-efficacy is "the belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations." In other words, self-efficacy is a person's belief in his or her ability to succeed in a particular situation (Cited by Kendra Cherry, 2015).

According to Staples et al. (1998), self-efficacy theory suggests that there are four major sources of information used by individuals when forming self-efficacy judgments. In order of strength:

1. **Performance accomplishments**: personal assessment information that is based on an individual's personal accomplishments. Previous successes raise mastery expectations, while repeated failures lower them.
2. **Vicarious experience**: gained by observing others perform activities successfully.
3. **Social persuasion**: activities where people are led, through suggestion, into believing that they can cope successfully with specific tasks.
4. **Physiological and emotional states**: The individual's physiological or emotional states influence self-efficacy judgments with respect to specific tasks.

Self-efficacy reflects confidence in the ability to exert control over one's own motivation, behavior, and social environment (American Psychological Association, 2015).

According to social cognitive theory, self-efficacy beliefs provide the foundation for human motivation, well-being, and personal accomplishment (Cited by Frank Pajares, 2009).

Students with a strong sense of efficacy are more likely to challenge themselves with difficult tasks and be intrinsically motivated. These students will put forth a high degree of effort in order to meet their commitments, and attribute failure to things which are in their control, rather than blaming external factors. Self-efficacious students also recover quickly from setbacks, and ultimately are likely to achieve their personal goals. Students with low self-efficacy, on the other hand, believe they cannot be successful and thus are less likely to make a concerted, extended effort and may consider challenging tasks as threats that are to be avoided. Thus, students with poor self-efficacy have low aspirations which may result in disappointing academic performances becoming part of a self-fulfilling feedback cycle. (Bandura (more info) ) [Margolis and McCabe, 2006].

Bandura (1993) postulates that self-efficacy beliefs affect college outcomes by increasing students' motivation and persistence to master challenging academic tasks and by fostering the efficient use of acquired knowledge and skills. Self-efficacy is shown to be associated with choice of task, motivational level, and effort and perseverance with the task (Compeau & Higgins, 1995; Hill, Smith, & Mann, 1987). Low self-efficacy is related to low academic motivation such as not persisting at a task or not working hard (Schunk, 1991). Regarding the number of hours students spent studying, Torres and Solberg (2001) found a positive association between academic self-efficacy and the motivation put forth to study (Cited by Mark Eric Barber, 2009).

Methodology of preparation and development of this paper

A growing body of research reveals that there is a positive, significant relationship between students' self-efficacy beliefs and their academic performance. People with low self-efficacy toward a task are more likely to avoid it, while those with high self-efficacy are not only more likely to attempt the task, but they also will work harder and persist longer in the face of difficulties. Self-efficacy influences: (1) what activities students select, (2) how much effort they put forth, (3) how persistent they are in the face of difficulties, and (4) the difficulty of the goals they set. Students with low self-efficacy do not expect to do well, and they often do not achieve at a level that is commensurate with their abilities. They do not believe they have the skills to do well so they don't try (W.Piper).

A student's self-efficacy may play an important role in his or her academic achievement. Schunk (1991) claims that "there is evidence that self-efficacy predicts ... academic achievement" (p. 207). According to Bandura (1977), self-efficacy affects the amount of effort and persistence that a person devotes to a task (Cited by R.E. Mayer, 2010).
It is important to know students' opinions about their self-efficacy, especially it is important to know what are the opinions of the students of Psychology branch about their self-efficacy, because they will be the future psychologists.

Assist. Prof. Bülent GÜNDÜZ, (Mersin University) conducted a study in order to see the relations between burnout and self-efficacy among school counselors. One of the findings of the study was that there is a high and positive relationship between personal accomplishment and self-efficacy (Bülent GÜNDÜZ, 2012).

While psychologists experience the universal stressors shared by the general population, they also experience specific vulnerabilities, which are products of professional psychology. Psychologists have strengths in their knowledge, training, and resources, yet their human characteristics of life-experiences and emotional injuries play a role in their work. Continuous exposure to the emotional material of others, monitoring of one’s own emotional reactions, prudent maintenance of boundaries, limited control over outcomes, and isolated work environments are all factors that present additional stress (APA Board of Professional Affairs Advisory Committee on Colleague Assistance, 2005) (Cited by Krista L. Dettle, 2014).

Aims and objectives of the paper

The main aims and objectives are:

- Measuring self-efficacy of students of Psychology branch of the Faculty of Educational Sciences, Department of Psychology and Social Work, University "Luigj Gurakuqi", Shkodër, Albania, Bachelor degree.
- Analyzing the opinions of students of Psychology branch of the Faculty of Educational Sciences, Department of Psychology and Social Work, University "Luigj Gurakuqi", Shkodër, Albania, Bachelor degree, about the self-efficacy in general.
- Analyzing the opinions of students of Psychology branch of the Faculty of Educational Sciences, Department of Psychology and Social Work, University "Luigj Gurakuqi", Shkodër, Albania, Bachelor degree, about their self-efficacy.

The research questions of the study include:

Research Question 1: What is the self-efficacy of students of Psychology branch of the Faculty of Educational Sciences, Department of Psychology and Social Work, University "Luigj Gurakuqi", Shkodër, Albania, Bachelor degree?

Research Question 2: What are the opinions of students of Psychology branch of the Faculty of Educational Sciences, Department of Psychology and Social Work, University "Luigj Gurakuqi", Shkodër, Albania, Bachelor degree, about the self-efficacy in general?

Research Question 3: What are the opinions of students of Psychology branch of the Faculty of Educational Sciences, Department of Psychology and Social Work, University "Luigj Gurakuqi", Shkodër, Albania, Bachelor degree, about their self-efficacy?

Sampling

In the study participated 146 students of Psychology branch Bachelor degree, of the Faculty of Educational Sciences, Department of Psychology and Social Work, University "Luigj Gurakuqi", Shkodër, Albania. 9 students (6% of students participating in the study) were male, 135 students (93%) were female, while 2 students (1%) haven’t given their gender. 47 students (32.2%) study in the first academic course, 53 students (36.3%) study in the second academic course, 46 students (31.5%) study in the third academic course. In the study participated students of different ages. 17 students (11.7%) were 18 years aged, 37 students (25.3%) were 19 years aged, 50 students (34.2%) were 20 years aged, 30 students (20.5%) were 21 years aged, 7 students (4.8%) were 22 years aged, 2 students (1.4%) were 23 years aged, 1 student (0.7%) was 24 years old, 1 student (0.7%) was 30 years old and 1 student (0.7%) was 35 years old. 103 students (70.5%) live in the country, 42 students (28.8%) live in the city, 1 student (0.7%) has not express where he lives.
students participating in the study live in Tirana and in different areas of Northern Albania. 72 students (49.3%) live in Shkodra district, 5 students (3.4%) live in Tirana district, 22 students (15%) live in Lezha district, 6 students (4.1%) live in Malesia e Madhe district, 3 students (2.1%) live in Burrel, 1 student (0.7%) live in Puka district, 8 students (5.5%) live in Kukes district, 9 students (6.2%) live in Lac district, 5 students (3.4%) live in Tropoje district, 3 students (2.1%) live in Kruja district, 4 students (2.7%) live in Diber, 5 students (3.4%) live in Ulqin district, 1 student (0.7%) lives in Mamurras, 1 student (0.7%) has not given where she lives.

**Apparatus/Materials**

This study makes use of the technique of questionnaire. The measuring instrument is the General Self Efficacy Scale (GSE) (R.Schwarzer, M. Jerusalem (1995)). The GSE is a 10-item scale with a score for each question ranging from 1 to 4 (1= Not at all true 2 =Hardly true 3=Moderately true 4 = Exactly true). The range is from 10 to 40 points. Higher scores indicate stronger student’s belief in self-efficacy. It is used, also, the interview technique in order to understand students’ opinions about their self-efficacy in general and about their self-efficacy. The content of the interview aims to collect students’opinions about their self-efficacy, about the factors that impact their perception about self-efficacy. The content of the interview aims, also, to collect students’opinions about the factors that impact their belief in self-efficacy. Another aim of the interview is to analyse students’perceptions about the influence of their self-efficacy on their profession as future psychologists.

The questionnaires and the interviews have been filled out by the students themselves. The administration of the questionnaires and the interviews (distribution and collection) was conducted during Mars 2015.

**Method of analysis**

The data collected from the GSE questionnaire was analyzed by means of the SPSS program, variant 20. It is estimated the reliability of the test. The internal reliability of the Self-Esteem Scale Alpha Cronbach coefficient=0,74. It is carried out the coding of the variables according to the respective rules defined by the authors.

**Piloting stage**

It is realised the piloting phase. In this phase the internal reliability of the questionnaire Alpha Cronbach coefficient=0,79. In the piloting phase we had the partecipation of 32 students of Psychology branch, the second course, the Faculty of Educational Sciences, Department of Psychology and Social Work, University "Luigi Gurakuqi", Shkodër, Albania, Bachelor degree. Alpha Cronbach coefficient was recalculated after 10 days with the partecipation of the same subjects. Alpha Cronbach coefficient was 0,79.

**Findings of the study**

**General data concerning students’ self-efficacy**

|             | N  | Mean | Median | Mode | Standard Deviation | Minimum | Maximum |
|-------------|----|------|--------|------|--------------------|---------|---------|
| Self- efficacy | 146 | 31,07 | 31     | 30   | 3,55               | 18      | 40      |
| Valid       | 146 |      |        |      |                    |         |         |

Table 1. Data about students’self-efficacy
The mean is 31.07, the median is 31 and the mode is 30. The maximum score obtained is 40 (obtained from 1 student or 0.7% of students), the minimum score obtained is 18 (obtained from 1 student or 0.7% of students). However, the corresponding histogram is shown in Graph 1.

Graph 1. Data about students' self-efficacy

The most of the results obtained is ranked in the range of values from 26 to 36 (131 students or 89.6%). A small fraction of the values obtained is ranked in the range of values from 18 to 25 (4 students or 2.8%). In the range of values from 37 to 40 is ranked the other portion of the results (11 students or 7.6%).

The analysis of the influence of students residence on mean Self-Efficacy Scale score

In this study it is used the analysis of variance ANOVA to examine the impact of students residence on mean Self-Efficacy Scale score of students. 103 students (70.5%) live in the country, 42 students (28.8%) live in the city, 1 student (0.7%) has not express where he lives, so, it is impossible to be sure about the fact if there is a significant relationship or not. Sig=0.521 and we can say that the students that live in the city have a higher average of point (31.15), whereas the students that live in the country have a lower average of point (30.73), and this relationship is not statistically significant.

The analysis of the specific academic course on mean Self-Efficacy Scale score

There is not a significant relationship between the specific academic course on mean Self-Efficacy Scale score of students (Sig=0.129). The mean for the students of the first academic course is 31.02, the mean for the students of second academic course is 31.77 and the mean for the students of the third academic course is 30.32. The students of second academic course have a higher average of point (31.77), whereas the students of the third academic course have a lower average of point (30.32), and this relationship is not statistically significant.

The analysis of students' age on Self-Efficacy Scale score
The relationship between students’ age and Self-Efficacy Scale score is calculated using Pearson correlation. Pearson Correlation is -0.103. So, there is negative correlation between students' beliefs about their self-efficacy and their age.

There are given the mean, the mode and the standard deviation for each item response.

| Items Responses                                      | Mean | Mode | Standard Deviation |
|------------------------------------------------------|------|------|--------------------|
| 1. I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough. | 3.49 | 4    | 0.578              |
| 2. If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want. | 2.90 | 3    | 0.678              |
| 3. It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals. | 2.86 | 3    | 0.667              |
| 4. I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events. | 2.88 | 3    | 0.620              |
| 5. Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations. | 2.90 | 3    | 0.678              |
| 6. I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort. | 3.52 | 4    | 0.541              |
| 7. I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities. | 3.04 | 3    | 0.735              |
| 8. When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions. | 3.19 | 3    | 0.591              |
| 9. If I am in trouble, I can usually think of a solution. | 3.29 | 3    | 0.704              |
| 10. I can usually handle whatever comes my way. | 3.08 | 3    | 0.680              |

As we can see, the lower results are for the items 2, 3, 4 and 5.

The students are based on different sources for giving their perception about their self-efficacy. For example: a) the personal experience, b) the psychological and emotional states, c) the personal beliefs, d) the experience and psychological and emotional states, e) the academic results, f) the experience and personal beliefs, g) the personal accomplishments and experience, h) the personal accomplishments and psychological and emotional states, i) the personal beliefs and psychological and emotional states, j) the personal accomplishments, the experience and the personal beliefs, and k) the personal accomplishments and beliefs.

According to the students, their beliefs about their self-efficacy has impact on: a) their efforts to succeed, b) their efforts to overcome challenges, c) their motivation, d) their motivation and their efforts to overcome challenges, e) their motivation and their academic results, f) their expectations, g) their academic results, h) their family relationships, i) their relationships with the friends, j) their efforts to succeed and their academic results, k) their efforts to succeed and their relationships with the friends.
The students think that the factors that impact the positive self-efficacy are: the academic achievements, family support and good relationships with the family, family welfare, high self-esteem, the ability to solve problems, the optimism, the motivation, the hard work, the persistence to achieve what they want, their good physiological and emotional state, the thinking positively, their experience, the good relationships with their friends and the supporting by them.

The students think that the factors that impact the negative self-efficacy are: low academic achievements, low self-esteem, negative thought about him/her, family relations, negative evaluation of the people, various failures in life, disappointments in life, the health condition, being pessimistic, poor relationships with the others and their poor supporting, poor management of the time, the inability to cope with the challenges, the family problems.

All the students consider very important the fact that the psychologist must have strong beliefs about his/her self-efficacy. They list these reasons: a) the psychologist will possess better his/her profession, b) he will better assist the client c) he will be more motivation at his/her profession, d) he will have good relationships with the client. The students think that if the psychologist hasn't strong beliefs about his/her self-efficacy, he/she would not be able at his/her profession.

Conclusions

The student's belief in self-efficacy are good. The students that live in the city have a higher average of point, whereas the students that live in the country have a lower average of point, and this relationship is not statistically significant. There is not a significant relationship between the specific academic courses on mean Self-Efficacy Scale score of students. The students of the second academic course have a higher average of point, whereas the students of the third academic course have a lower average of point. There is negative correlation between student’s age and their beliefs about their self-efficacy. Student’s beliefs about accomplishing their goals and their beliefs about confronting and resolving their problems need improvement.

Student’s perceptions about their self-efficacy are good. The students are based on different sources for giving their opinions about their self-efficacy, as: the personal experience, the psychological and emotional states, the personal beliefs, the experience and psychological and emotional states, the academic results, the experience and personal beliefs, the personal accomplishments and experience, the personal accomplishments and psychological and emotional state, the personal accomplishments.

According to the students, the psychologist must have strong beliefs about his/her self-efficacy, because this fact impacts on his/her profession quality, on his/her motivation and on his/her relationships with the client.

Recommendations

It is very important the improvement of beliefs of the students that live in the country. It is, also, very important the improvement of beliefs of the students of the third academic course.

The improvement of students’s beliefs on their self-efficacy is very important, because these students in the future will be the psychologists of the North of our country. So, improving students' beliefs on their self-efficacy will result in improving the quality of the work of psychologists and this will result in improving the quality of social services for people living in the North of our country.

One of the findings of the study conducted by Assist. Prof. Bülent GÜNDÜZ, (Mersin University, 2012) was that fact that counselors who get social support have high self-efficacy beliefs (Bülent GÜNDÜZ , 2012).

So, it is very important that our students get the needed support from our academic staff. Our support needs to be focused on students' beliefs about their performance, students' beliefs about their capabilities and students' beliefs about their psychological state. The needed support from our staff will influence student’s beliefs about their self-efficacy and this will influence the quality of work of future psychologists.
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