

# COMPARISON OF SELF-EFFICACY AND SELF-REGULATION BETWEEN THE STUDENTS WITH SCHOOL REFUSAL BEHAVIOR (SRB) AND THE STUDENTS WITHOUT (SRB), AND THE RELATIONSHIPS OF THESE VARIABLES TO ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

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## ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this study was to compare self-efficacy and self-regulation between the students with SRB and students without SRB, and the relationship of these variables to academic performance. Using a random stratified sampling technique 60 girl students who had School Refusal Behavior (SRB) and 60 students without SRB were selected from 8 high schools. The general self efficacy scale (GSE; Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995), the Kearney, Cook, and Chapman, 2007's school refusal criteria; self-regulation inventory (Kanlapan & Velasco, 2009), and the student's current academic performance scores as a measure of academic performance were used for collecting the data. Independent t-Test showed that there are significant differences between self-efficacy, self-regulation and academic performance among two groups ( $p < 0.05$ ). Finally results showed that self-efficacy and self-regulation have simple and multiple significant correlation with academic performance in two groups ( $p < 5\%$ ).*

*Keywords: Self-Efficacy, Self-Regulation, Academic Performance, High School Students.*

## INTRODUCTION

School refusal is a term basically used in the United Kingdom to describe refusal to attend school, due to emotional distress. School refusal differs from truancy in that children with school refusal feel anxiety or fear towards school, whereas truant children generally have no feelings of fear towards school, often feeling angry or bored with it instead. The term was made as a more general alternative to school phobia, which was used to describe these youths in the past. School refusal is a broader term that recognizes that children have problems attending school for a variety of different reasons. However, these reasons might not be the expression of a true phobia, such as separation or social anxiety (Fremont, 2003).

Approximately 1 to 5% of school-aged children have school refusal (American Academy of Family Physicians, 2003), though it is most common in 5- and 6-year olds and in 10- and 11-year olds (sometimes 11- and 12-year olds), (Setzer & Salzhauer, 2001) it occurs more frequently

during major changes in a child's life, such as entrance to Kindergarten or changing from elementary to middle school (Fremont, 2003). The problem may start after vacations, holidays, or brief illness, after the child has been home for some time. School refusal can also occur after a stressful event, such as moving to a new house, or the death of a pet or relative (Setzer & Salzhauer, 2001).

The rate is similar within both genders (Setzer & Salzhauer, 2001), and although it is significantly more prevalent in some urban areas, there are no known socioeconomic differences (Anxiety Disorders of America (n.d).).

Symptoms of school refusal include the child saying they feel sick often, or waking up with a headache, stomachache, or sore throat. If the child stays home from school, these symptoms might go away, but come back the next morning before school. Additionally, children with school refusal may have crying spells or throw temper tantrums (Setzer & Salzhauer, 2001).

Warning signs of school refusal include frequent

complaints about attending school, frequent tardiness or unexcused absences, absences on significant days (tests, speeches, physical education class), frequent requests to call or go home, excessive worrying about a parent when in school, frequent requests to go to the nurse's office because of physical complaints, and crying about wanting to go home (Fremont, 2003).

### ***Factors that Cause School Refusal***

Factors that can cause reluctance to attend school can be divided into four categories. These categories have been developed based on studies in the United States under the leadership of Professor Christopher Kearney. Some people may be affected by several factors at once. It may be possible that the child wants to avoid school-related issues and situations that cause unpleasant feelings in her or him, such as anxiety, depression, or psychosomatic symptoms. The reluctance to attend school is one symptom that can indicate the presence of a larger issue, such as anxiety disorder, depression, sleep disorder, separation anxiety or panic disorder.

It may also be that the child wants to avoid tests, presentations, group work, specific lessons, or interaction with other children.

Third, the child may want attention from significant people outside of school, such as parents or older acquaintances.

Finally, it may be that the child wants to do something more enjoyable outside of school, like practice hobbies, play computer games, watch movies, play with friends such as riding bikes, etc., or learn auto didactically.

There are psychological and motivational factors that mediate school refusal behavior such as self-efficacy and self-regulation. Self-efficacy refers to individual's beliefs about his /her ability to perform tasks. Academic self-efficacy is a person's confidence in his/her ability to organize, execute, and regulate performance in order to solve a problem or accomplish a task at a designated level of skill and ability. Academic self-efficacy refers to a person's conviction that they can successfully achieve at a designated level in a specific academic subject area.

Individuals typically choose tasks and activities in which they feel competent and avoid those in which they do not. Students who are confident in their capability to organize, execute, and regulate their problem-solving or task performance at a designated level of competence are demonstrating high self-efficacy. Academic self-efficacy is grounded in self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy is believed to effect performance via the influence on task perceptions. For example, research suggests high self-efficacy creates a feeling of calmness or serenity when approaching difficult tasks while low self-efficacy may result in an individual perceiving a task as more difficult than reality, which, in turn, may create anxiety, stress and a narrower idea on how best to approach the solving of a problem or activity.

Because theories of self-regulated learning seek to explain student's personal initiative in acquiring knowledge and skill, they all treat student's motivational processes as interdependent with learning processes. How these processes are described and how they are hypothesized to interact, however, varies from theory to theory. All theories of self-regulation assume that students interpret learning outcomes as having tangible or intangible personal (i.e. self) implications. Behaviorally oriented approaches (e.g. Mace et al, 1989, cited in Zimmerman, 1989) focus on tangible outcomes such as material or gains, whereas cognitively oriented approaches emphasize intangible outcomes such as self-actualization, self-efficacy, or reduced cognitive dissonance (Zimmerman, 1989).

Self-regulated students possess 3 major characteristics and employ 3 major processes (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Zimmerman, 2000). Self-regulated students typically use a variety of self-regulated strategies, believe they can perform well (positive self-efficacy), and set multiple and varying personal goals. Furthermore, "self-regulated learners engage in three important processes: self-observation (monitoring of one's activities); self-judgment (evaluation of how well one's own performance compares to a standard or to the performance of others); and self-reactions (reactions to performance outcomes)" (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002, p. 124). Of particular importance

to students who experience repeated failure (e.g., students with disabilities) is the finding that students who receive positive feedback from their self- observations and judgments tend to continue to engage in positive goal- directed learning. Conversely, self-observation and judgment that provides frequent unfavorable evaluations and reactions increases the probability of disengagement from learning.

A study by Fuladchang (2002) regarding to the effectiveness of self-regulation skills on academic achievement, showed that the experimental group in comparison to the control group had better performance after training.

Karimzadeh (2000) showed that self-efficacy was the best predictor of academic achievement. He found that among self-efficacy components (effort, content, and talent), effort had more proportion in predicting academic achievement. Further, he showed the more self-efficacy, the more academic performance.

Schunk (1991) showed, persons who have a high self-efficacy to perform a task, try more and when are faced to difficulties persist more; whereas, those with low self-efficacy give up the task or avoid to carry out it (Cited in Kadivar, 2009).

Bulter & Winne (1995) showed that self-regulation is a learning style for learners, including strong abilities such as setting goals to develop knowledge and selecting moderator strategies against unwanted situations; and self-regulated learners are aware of their knowledge, beliefs, motivation and the quality of cognitive processes.

Kovack (2000) found that self-regulated learners set their academics, choose appropriate learning strategies to get academics, monitor continuously the process of achievement goals and have a better academic performance. Zimmerman (1989) found perceived inner motivational techniques of learning increase academic performance.

Pintrich & DeGroot (1990) found that self-efficacy and self-regulation have a positive relationship to academic performance, and self-efficacy was the best predictor of academic performance.

## Need for the Present Study

Adolescents need to develop their self-regulation and self-efficacy skills, because these skills have an important effect on their academic readiness and relationship to peers. It seems that self-regulation is more important in adolescence, which is identified by an increasing vulnerability to problems such as truancy (McCluskey, Bynum & Patchin, 2004); victimize a friend and substance abuse (Wulfert, Block, Rodriguez & Colman, 2002). According to Shapiro (2000), those adolescents who don't regulate their behavior, are more likely to engage in unhealthy and dangerous behaviors. Ability to repress impulsive behavior and positive adaptation to behavior are related to positive consequences in adolescents. Some positive consequences are: 1) high academic achievement: students, who are self-regulated and self-efficacious, have better performance at school. 2) School engagement: adolescents who delay their gratifications and adjust their behavior, are more likely engaged in school and school related activities. 3) Peer acceptance: self-regulation is related to favorite perceptions from others. In a study, Kallavan, Maez and Gat (2010) found 19 children and adolescents who were able to control their impulses, had more friends and enjoyed more to be with others.

Individuals typically choose tasks and activities that provide them a sense of capability and avoid from activities that do not provide them such a sense. Students who are confident about their capability to organize and manage affairs and tasks, show high sense of self-efficacy (Kadivar, 2009). Therefore, lack of self-regulated and self-efficacious behaviors decrease the student's inner motivation to be present at school and in turn, influences his/her ability to continuous study, and this leads to failure at school, maladaptive behaviors at home and school and also drop out. In this study, an attempt is made to compare self-efficacy and self-regulation between the students with School Refusal Behavior (SRB) and those with no SRB (NSRB), and also the relationship of these variables to academic performance.

## Aim

The purpose of this study was to compare self-efficacy and self-regulation between the students with SRB and students with NSRB, and the relationship of these variables to academic performance.

- Comparison of self-efficacy between the students with SRB and no SRB.
- Comparison of self-regulation between the students with SRB and no SRB.
- To study the simple coefficient of correlation between self-efficacy and self-regulation to academic performance.
- To study the multiple coefficients of correlation between self-efficacy and self-regulation to academic performance.

## Hypotheses

- There are significant differences between the students with SRB and NSRB in relation to self-efficacy and self-regulation.
- There is significant difference between the students with SRB and NSRB in academic performance.
- Self-efficacy and self-regulation have simple significant correlation with academic performance.
- There are multiple significant correlations between self-efficacy and self-regulation with academic performance.

## Participants

Using a random stratified sampling technique, 60 girl students with SRB and 60 students without SRB (according to Kearney, Cook and Chapman's SRB criteria) were selected from 1st grade high school students with the age range between 15-16 years.

## Research Tools

### *General Self Efficacy Scale (GSES)*

The General Self Efficacy Scale (GSE; Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995) assesses a general sense of perceived self efficacy with the aim in mind to predict coping with daily hassles as well as adaptation after experiencing all kinds of stressful life events. The scale is designed for the general adult population, including adolescents above

the age of 12 years old. The GSE consists 10 self report items and each item includes four choices (keyed 1-not at all true; 2-hardly true; 3-moderately true; 4-exactly true). Summing up the responses to all 10 items, yield the final composite score with a range from 10 to 40.

Reliability: In samples from 23 nations, Cronbach's alpha ranged from .76 to .90, with the majority in 80s.

Validity: Criterion related validity is documented in numerous correlation studies where positive coefficients were found with favorable emotions, dispositional optimism, and work satisfaction. Negative coefficients were found with depression, anxiety, stress, burnout and health complaints.

### *Self-Regulation Scale (SRS)*

SRS was constructed by Kanlapan and Velasco (2009) according to Zimmerman's self-regulation scale. This scale was established to study self-regulation skills among high school students. SRS has eight subscales including: 1) goal setting: setting certain goals is the first stage of self-regulation; 2) rebuild of context; 3) strong strategies; 4) self-monitoring; 5) time management; 6) self-evaluation; 7) causal attribution; and 8) coordination of future strategies.

In the present study, Certain Goal Setting Subscale (CGSS) was used for gathering the information. This subscale consists of 15 self-report items and each item include of four choices (keyed 0 not at all; 1 sometime; 2 many times; and 3 always). Summing up the responses to all 15 items yield the final composite score with a range from 0 to 45. The internal consistency for total scale was .94 and for goal-setting subscale was .77. The structural validity of scale shows that all subscales of SRS are correlated together. Further, in the present study, the internal consistency of CGSS with test-retest method after four weeks on 60 students showed a reliable coefficient of correlation (.81).

### *School Refusal Behavior Criteria (SRBC)*

In this study to collect the information about school refusal behavior SRBC; Kearney, Cook and Chapman, 2007- was used. These criteria included: 1) are completely absent from school; 2) initially attend and then leave during the

school day; 3) go to school, but only after a behavioral incident in the morning, such as tantrum, vomiting and etc. 4) display unusual distress during the school day and pleas for nonattendance.

## Results

### Findings related to hypotheses

*Hypothesis 1:* There are significant differences between the students with SRB and NSRB in relation to self-efficacy and self-regulation.

To assess this hypothesis, independent t-test was used. Results showed that there are significant differences between two groups in respect to self-efficacy ( $t=7.24$ ;  $DF=118$ ;  $p<0.01$ ); self-regulation ( $t=7.27$ ;  $DF=118$ ;  $p<0.01$ ). As shown in Table 2, mean scores of students in SRB group in all variables interestingly were less than NSRB group. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected and its alternative hypothesis is supported (Table 2).

*Hypothesis 2:* There is significant difference between students with SRB and NSRB in academic performance.

Results showed a significant t-value 4.87,  $DF=118$ ,  $p<0.001$ , indicating difference between two groups in academic performance. Comparison of mean scores between two groups showed that SRB students were low in academic performance 13.65 vs. 15.32 in NSRB group (Table 1).

*Hypothesis 3:* Self-efficacy and self-regulation have simple significant correlation with academic performance.

Groups	SRB			NSRB		
	M	SD	N	M	SD	N
Statistics Variables						
Self-efficacy	18.98	4.42	60	26.82	5.24	60
Self-regulation	29.10	4.10	60	42.32	5.74	60
Academic performance	13.65	1.64	60	15.32	1.42	60

Table 1. Showing Mean Scores of Variables in Two Groups

Groups	SRB			NSRB			DF	t	sig
	M	SD	N	M	SD	N			
Statistics Variables									
Self-efficacy	18.98	4.42	60	26.82	5.24	60	118	7.24	0.000
Self-regulation	29.10	4.10	60	42.32	5.74	60	118	7.27	0.000
Academic performance	13.65	1.64	60	15.32	1.42	60	118	4.87	0.000

Table 2. Independent t-test to Compare of the Variables between Two Groups

To assess this hypothesis, Pearson's coefficient of correlation was used. Results showed that the relationship between self-efficacy and academic performance ( $r=0.41$ ;  $p<0.01$ ), and self-regulation with academic performance ( $r=0.32$ ;  $p<0.01$ ) were statistically significant in SRB group. Further, the relationships between self-efficacy and academic performance in NSRB group ( $r=0.30$ ;  $p<0.01$ ) and between self-regulation and academic performance ( $r=0.27$ ;  $p<0.01$ ) were statistically significant (Table 3). As shown in Table 3, the Fisher's Z-test in order to comparison of correlations between two groups indicates that there is a significant difference between correlations of two groups in relation to self-efficacy and academic performance ( $Z=5.05$ ;  $p<0.01$ ). In other word, the coefficient of correlation between self-efficacy and academic performance in SRB group was stronger than NSRB group. On the other hand, There was no significant difference between two groups regarding to relationship of self-regulation and academic performance ( $Z=1.6$ ,  $p>0.05$ ).

*Hypothesis 4:* There are multiple significant correlations between self-efficacy and self-regulation with academic performance.

To assess this hypothesis, multiple regression analyze was used. In this regard, self-efficacy and self-regulation as predictors and academic performance as a criterion variable were entered in the regression equation with enter method. As shown in Table 4, the multiple coefficient

Criterion variable	Academic performance				Comparing correlations	
	SRB		NSRB		Z-test	sig
Groups	r	sig	r	sig		
Predictors						
Self-efficacy	0.41	0.000	0.30	0.000	5.05	0.000
Self-regulation	0.32	0.000	0.27	0.000	1.60	N.S

Table 3. Comparison of Correlations Among Variables between Two Groups

Groups	Sources	SS	DF	MS	R	R square	F	sig
SRB	Between group	18.78	2	9.39				
	Within group	86.32	57	2.33	0.42	0.18	4.03	0.000
	Total	105.10	59					
NSRB	Between group	1.30	2	0.654				
	Within group	77.46	57	2.09	0.13	0.02	0.312	0.734
	Total	78.77	59					

Table 4. Analyze of Variance and Multiple Coefficient of Correlation in Two Groups



of correlation ( $R=0.42$ ) and adjusted R square ( $R^2= 0.18$ ) indicate that predictors can explain 18% of variance of academic performance. Further, analyze of variance (ANOVA) showed that the observed R square is statistically significant  $F(2,57)=4.03$ ,  $P<0.01$ . Also, finding showed that self-efficacy is a stronger predictor of academic performance ( $Beta=0.39$ ,  $t=2.60$ ;  $p<0.05$ ), and indicates that the portion of self-efficacy in explanation of variance of academic performance was equal to 39 percent. Further, in NSRB group the amount of variance explained by self-efficacy and self-regulation was 2 percent ( $R\ square=0.02$ ) which is not statistically significant  $F(2, 57) = 0.312$ ,  $p>0.05$  (Table 4).

## Discussion

Present study compared self-efficacy, self-regulation and academic performance between the students with School Refusal Behavior (SRB) and Normal Students (NSRB). Further, the simple and multiple relationships of self-efficacy and self-regulation to academic performance have been investigated. The results of this study are discussed according to two pivots: 1) comparison of variables in two groups; and 2) the relationship between the variables.

### Pivot 1

As mentioned prior, the differences of variables between SRB and NSRB groups were statistically significant. Regarding to low scores of variables in SRB group, it can be concluded that poor self-efficacy and lack of self-regulation skills led to avoidance from school and maladaptive behaviors. One probable explanation of this finding is that students who do not believe their academic capabilities and have no certain goals, cannot use their potential capabilities to adjustment to school environment, organize and manage tasks, because they do not know how to use appropriate strategies for goal setting. Therefore, low self-efficacy and self-regulation reduce the student's motivation to study well and lead to adaptive difficulties, interpersonal problems at home and school, poor academic performance, academic failure, school aversion, and finally drop out.

Theoretically, self-efficient and self-regulated learners

have cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies and utilize them to implement the tasks. These learners have certain learning goals and seriously attempt to get them. They are self-motivated, and begin learning by themselves, control and evaluate their goal's progression. Inner motivation and self-motivation are two basic features in self-efficient and self-regulated learners (Walters, 1998). These learners effectively seek knowledge and find out ways for coping when they face barriers, such as unpleasant situation, and difficult academics (Bulter and Wine, 1995).

### Pivot 2

As stated previously, coefficient of correlation showed that there are significant simple and multiple relationships between the variables. These findings are consistent to the previous findings (e.g. Pintrich & Degroot, 1990; Kovack, 2000; Zimmerman & Martinz Pons, 1990; Desi & Rayan, 1985) and indicate that believing to own capabilities and having certain goals can positively influence academic performance. On the other hand, decreased self-efficacy and self-regulation tangibly prevent the student's achievement.

A probable explanation of this is that, if students cannot rely on their own abilities, they will find their academics very difficult and for fear of blaming and despising due to academic failure will give up the school and study. In fact, they use to run away from the school as a shield to hide their academic deficits.

### Strengths of the Present Study

This study was a key to identify the students with school refusal behavior, so that some of these students participated in an interventional program (cognitive behavioral interventions, CBIs). The results of this study will come out after the treatment.

### Weaknesses of the Present Study

Lack of a standard questionnaire for assessing the various aspects of school refusal behavior was the major weakness of the present study. Identifying the SRB students has been done only in accordance to a few criterions and using a comprehensive scale may provide more important information in this respect.

## Limitations and Recommendations

In spite of all attempts to do this research in the best possible manner the, researcher faced some limitations that may affect the results.

In this study, the effect of intervening variables such as student's Intelligence Quotient (IQ) was not controlled. As we know IQ is related with academic achievement. Thus, both school refusal behavior and poor academic performance can be related to low IQ.

Studying a large sample of students with SRB was not possible.

In this study, the studied schools included students who were from rural regions. Thus, lack of interest to study, lack of certain goals, maladjusted behaviors and poor performance can be related to type of family and its structure, parent's literacy level and financial problems.

There were no comprehensive studies related to this study, so, comparing the results of the present study to previous findings has not been done.

It is recommended for future that studies, 1) researchers match the students with regard to intervening variables (e.g. IQ, type of school and family structure) so that it can explain the real effects of self-efficacy and self-regulation. 2) Compare governmental and private school students in relation of motivational variables. 3) Training courses on self-efficacy and self-regulation skills for students, particularly students with motivational problems.

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