

THE MEDIATING ROLE OF SELF-EFFICACY BETWEEN SELF-LEADERSHIP AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS FROM MANDALAY UNIVERSITY OF DISTANCE EDUCATION*

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Abstract

This paper intends to analyse the effect of self-leadership on academic performance, and to examine the mediating role of self-efficacy between self-leadership and academic performance of oriental studies students from Mandalay University of Distance Education (MUDE). The scope is limited to only second year and third year students who enrolled at MUDE for academic year 2024. The first-year students are excluded due to early time to assess their academic performance, and the final year students are also neglected due to low benefits for them as lesson learn from this research findings: this semester is very near to finish their distance study. The two-stage sampling approach is applied. At the first stage, simple random sampling method is applied by randomly selecting one major specialization among fourteen major specializations offered at MUDE. The selected major specialization is oriental studies. There are 40 second year students and 15 third year students at this major in 2024 (total 55 students). At the second stage, the 38 students are randomly selected from 55 students (69% of total). The primary data are collected from them by questionnaire survey method. The structured questionnaires are distributed to them in classes, then collected their responses. From analyses, it is found that most of the students have high self-leadership skills, strong self-efficacy, and they have confidence in their effort to pass the exam or to gain good academic performance results. Their self-leadership skills have positive significant influence on academic performance. Moreover, their self-efficacy has positive significant mediating effect between self-leadership and academic performance. From comparing the direct effect of self-leadership on academic performance and the indirect effect of self-leadership through self-efficacy on academic performance, the direct effect is larger than indirect effect. Thus, top management and teachers should consider developing curriculum and syllabuses for enhancing the self-leadership and self-efficacy of students.

Keywords: Self-leadership, self-efficacy, academic performance

Introduction

Students must have self-managed skills and self-control behavior in learning, especially in distance learning. With distance learning, students cannot rely largely on teachers and administrators for their academic results. Their performance inherently depends on their self-learning and self-leading (self-planning, self-organizing, self-control and self-motivation). If they have the habit of finding support and guidance from others, they will not gain academic success, even they may fail or incomplete their academic journey.

In general, self-leadership skill of students can impact on their academic performance. In distance learning, self-leadership skill alone may not lead to the good academic results. Distance learning students may also need the self-efficacy besides self-leadership ability. Through distance learning system, at the one hand, they receive the opportunities to spend their time in working and in personal cases. They just need to come to distance university at the times of intensive period (normally 10 days a year) before the final exam period (6~7 days). They also need to come to school for assignment submissions (two times a year: for two semesters). However, for some

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special cases (example; due to disaster effect), other persons on behalf of student can come to school for assignment submission. At the other hand, they must learn the lessons (with support of on-air broadcasting via television channels and radio channels) by themselves: they must lose the chance to meet teachers face-to-face almost the study time. Thus, their knowledge-gain will come largely from self-learning.

For good academic performance, distance learning students must have the abilities of self-leadership and self-efficacy. Self-leadership involves leading oneself to develop essential skills and qualities to achieve personal and organizational goals (Neck, 2006). If students have self-leadership ability, they will develop the set of definite policies for their self-improvement (Al-Jamal & Ghamrawi, 2015). Sydanmaanlakka (2005) described three elements of self-leadership: self-control, self-belief, and self-awareness). These elements are crucial in guiding individuals towards self-improvement and personal growth (Tuovinen, 2010).

Nel and Van Zyl (2015) presented that self-leadership is a crucial component for individuals in academic and working situations to perform effectively. The level of achievement in education goals for a student is measured by academic performance, which is assessed through continuous evaluation or cumulative grade point average (Narad & Abdullah, 2016). However, the student's academic performance is assessed with self-administered questions by (Prussia et al, 1998: Kremenkor & Novotny, 2020: Vachova et al, 2023).

Rationale of the Study

Many scholars stated the consequences of low academic performance and high academic performance. The higher academic achievement rounded off by successful finishing of university study means not only that the cost of study paid by state is not wasted, but also it is easier to get a job (graduate students have generally the lowest ratio of unemployment (Zelenka, 2018). Low academic performance will lead to failure in finishing of courses, thus they cannot go to the labor market during relevant time or they can get only low-paid jobs (Karoly, 2016). The level of academic performance can influence student's personality, their mental quality, self-confidence, and self-esteem (Tripathy & Srivastava, 2020). Repeated failure might lead to anxiety, depression, and burnout, and result in giving up their study, and eventually their occupational goals (Sorberg Wallian, 2019).

Since the negative effect of poor academic performance can result not only in lowering personal values but also in barriers to country's development as mentioned above, finding ways to support to students for good academic performance must be urgently focused. Among students, the academic performance of distance learning students may be relatively more tied with their self-leadership and self-efficacy. If it is true, teachers and top management of distance universities should manage the pedagogy to upgrade students' self-leadership and self-efficacy.

Problem Statement

Students used to rely on parents, teachers, study-guides, and others throughout their study at primary and secondary levels. Thus, it is very difficult for them to change such habit into self-management habit when their primary and secondary periods are over. When they arrive at university or collage, the learning nature is significantly changed, especially at universities of distance education. They must stand on their feet: they must manage their time, learning materials,

learning styles by themselves, and self-learning is necessary. However, most of students at universities of distance learning may find support from student service staff, and also from teachers through informal ways. By doing so, office staff and teachers may act unethical behavior by doing many tasks on behalf of students (submitting assignments and taking informal extra classes to compensate students' lack of self-learning, lack of self-leadership and self-efficacy abilities).

Research Questions

The three research questions are explored from observation and preliminary literature search:

- (1) To what extent the students from Mandalay University of Distance Education have the self-leadership ability?
- (2) How can the self-leadership effect on academic performance of students from Mandalay University of Distance Education?
- (3) How can self-efficacy support to the influence of self-leadership on academic performance of students from Mandalay University of Distance Education?

Research Objectives

This study has two main objectives:

- (1) To analyse the effect of self-leadership on academic performance of students from Mandalay University of Distance Education
- (2) To investigate the mediating support of self-efficacy on the influence of self-leadership on academic performance of students from Mandalay University of Distance Education

Scope and Methods of the Study

This study focuses only on the self-leadership, self-efficacy, and academic performance of the second year and third year students from Mandalay University of Distance Education (MUDE). The first-year students cannot mention their academic performance at university (the first-year exam result has not yet out). The fourth-year students may not be beneficial from this study findings due to no time for lesson learn: this final year exam may be the last exam for them before going to the labor market. There are 14 bachelor's degree-courses offered by MUDE.

In this study, the two stage sampling approach is followed. At the first stage, the simple random sampling method is applied to select one major-specialization from total fourteen. This randomly selected one is "oriental studies" major. There are 55 (40 second year and 15 third year students) students who enrolled in 2024 academic year. At the second stage, the 38 students are randomly selected from total 55 students (69% of total). The questionnaire survey is used to collect the primary data from them. Data collection period is during October 2024. For data analysis, both descriptive and regression methods are applied.

Literature Review

The first part of this section presents the concepts and definitions of key variables of this study: self-leadership, self-efficacy, and academic performance. Then, the empirical studies on the relationships between these three variables followed.

(1) Concepts and Definitions of Key Variables

The three key variables are considered in this study.

Self-leadership

Self-leadership involves the influence people exert over themselves to achieve the self-motivation and self-direction needed to behave in desirable ways (Manz, 1992b). Stewart et. al (2019) defined self-leadership as a holistic self-influence process, encompassing driving oneself to perform tasks that are intrinsically compelling or necessary but not intrinsically motivating. Neck (2006) also defined self-leadership as the method of inducing oneself to acquire the necessary management and personality traits to fulfill tasks and responsibilities. Zakir et. al (2023) mentioned that self-leadership is a process by which individuals successfully influence themselves to attain the self-motivation and self-direction required to complete their jobs. According to (Cranmer et al., 2019), self-leadership revolves around self-awareness and guidelines that inspire individuals to give their best effort.

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is the extent to which an individual believes him or herself capable of successfully performing a specific behavior (Bandura, 1986). The individuals who have high self-efficacy will be more confident about success in a particular task than individuals who are lack in self-efficacy. Bhati (2022) stated that self- efficacy concerns with the question of how an individual holds belief in his/her ability to execute a course of action, rather than how much a person likes him/her or what skills and abilities a person possesses. Cheng and Chiou (2010) observed some dimensions of academic self-efficacy such as time management, learning process, comprehension, memory, reading, goal orientation, adjustment and examination, peer relationship and teacher-student relationship.

Academic Performance

Academic achievement, academic performance, academic success and similar terms refer in general to the ability of (mostly university) students to handle and manage the demands of the university study process, achieve good learning outcomes, successfully finish university study, and (ideally) succeed in the labor market (Farooq et. al, 2011). There are several approaches to measure academic performance. York et. al (2015) stated that the grade point average (GPA) and cumulative grade point average (CGPA) are the best single indicators of academic performance. However, at the other hand, Prevatt et. al (2011) and Weinstein and Palmer (2002) described general aspects of academic performance: study skills, attitude, motivation, anxiety, information processing, self-organization, and concentration. Thus, the psychological aspects of one's personality greatly contribute to academic performance.

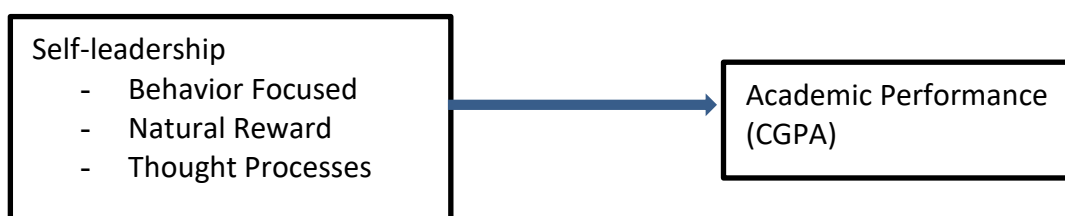
(2) Empirical Studies

The two closely relating articles are reviewed thoroughly. Some other relating articles are also briefly reviewed.

Self-leadership and Academic Performance

Numerous studies have shown that self-leadership has a definite, favorable impact on performance, efficacy, and self-confidence (Zakir et al., 2023). Many scholars pointed out that the

self-leadership resulted in high performance indices such as good psychological functioning, communication, working relationships, quality control, reduced work-related stress, and higher job satisfaction (Dolbier, et al, 2001). It is also relating to better health, increased toughness, less stressful atmosphere, and decreased interpersonal distrust among college students (Dolbier et al., 2001). At workplace or at schools, due to changing situations (new technologies, new challenges, and new constraints as well as new opportunities), employer-employee relationship or student-teacher relationship is shifting to the cooperative nature, and employees or students must take personal responsibility (Salminen-Tuomaala, 2009). Zakir et al, (2023) presented the conceptual model (as shown in Figure-1) showing the link between self-leadership and academic performance of university students.



Source: Zakir et al (2023)

Figure (1) Link between Self-leadership and Academic Performance

Zakir et al (2023) mentioned that self-goal setting, self-reward, self-cueing and self-observation are the elements of behavior focused self-leadership skill; self-talk, visualizing successful performance, and evaluating believes and assumptions are the elements of thought processes self-leadership skill. This study analysed the link between self-leadership and academic performance of students from Women University of AJK Bagh. The quantative approach was applied conducting a survey method. The sample size is 326 students, and the closed-ended questionnaires were distributed to them. The Pearson correlation method was applied, and the findings showed that the strong positive correlation between self-leadership and academic performance of university students.

Mediating Role of Self-efficacy between Self-leadership and Academic Performance

Prussia et. al (1998) examined whether the influence of self-leadership on academic performance is mediated by self-efficacy. Structural equation modeling was applied to analyse the data received from sample 151 students who enrolled in three separate undergraduate entrepreneurship classes at a large southwestern university. The self-efficacy is considered as the mediating variable, the dependent variable is academic performance, and independent variable is self-leadership. The conceptual model of this research is shown in Figure (2).



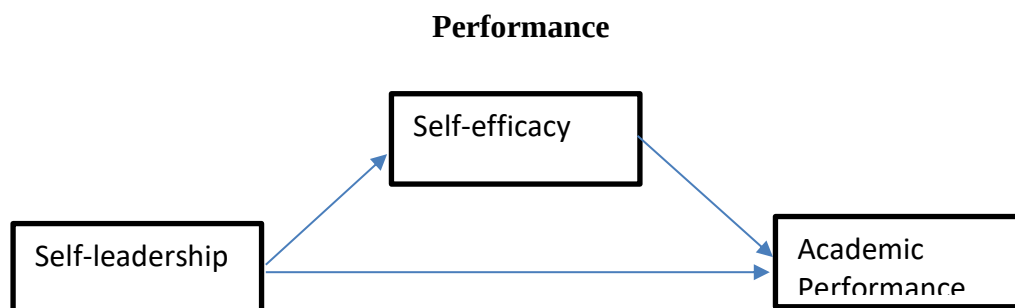
Source: Prussia et al .(1998)

Figure (2) Self-leadership, Self-efficacy, and Performance

This study approved that the self-leadership skills had a significant effect on self-efficacy, and self-efficacy directly effected performance. It also found that the self-efficacy fully mediated the self-leadership/performance relationship.

Conceptual Framework of the Study

The conceptual framework of the study is shown in Figure (3).



Source: Own Compilation (2024)

Figure (3) Mediating Role of Self-efficacy between Self-leadership and Academic Performance

The two previous studies as mentioned above are based to develop the conceptual framework of the study. The major assumption is that the self-efficacy may be mediating between self-leadership and academic performance of students from Mandalay University of Distance Education. It is also assumed that the self-leadership alone can lead to academic performance.

Reliability Analysis

The data reliability is tested with Cronbach's Alpha values. The Cronbach's Alpha values of each of the variables are shown in Table (1).

Table (1) Reliability Test Results

Sr. No.	Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Question Items
1	Self-leadership	0.796	9
2	Self-efficacy	0.809	9
3	Academic Performance	0.848	8

Source: Survey Data, 2014

Since the Cronbach's Alpha values are greater than 0.7, it can be assumed that the data collected in this research have good internal consistency (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

Findings from Descriptive Analysis

To explore the level of self-leadership skills perceived by students who are attending at second year and third year oriental studies major at Mandalay University of Distance Education, the descriptive analysis is conducted. The results (mean values of the question items of self-leadership) are shown in Table (2).

Table (2) Students' Perception on Their Self-leadership Skill

Sr. No.	Question Items	Mean Values
1	Thinking always about the self-improvement	4.42
2	Monitoring and keeping effort on track to be on the right direction to goals	4.19
3	Keeping the own goals on mind	4.38
4	Keeping records on the progress	3.58
5	Having no desire to put effort for high results: trying just for minimum requirement (R)*	4.54
6	Solving by self the self-problems	4.23
7	Finding ways by self to own problems	3.88
8	Always finding ways for success or improvements in life	4.38
9	Trying to change the current life into better life	4.58
General Mean		4.24

Source: Survey Data, 2014

(R)* Reversed question item (data are converted into reverse direction) in mean calculation

According to the mean values as shown in Table (2), most of the oriental studies second year and third year students have high level of self-leadership skills. They used to solve their problems by themselves, and they are finding ways for improvement and success in life. They are also ambitious to change their status quo into better state. They are learning through distance education system not because of desire to get minimum requirement (just pass the exam with above the margin line) but because of intention to step onto higher life standard. They have consciousness for not vary from desired goals when they are walking the study journey. Thus, they keep track onto the right way and keep records their progress. The results (mean values of the question items of self-efficacy) are shown in Table (3).

Table (3) Students' Perception on Their Self-efficacy

Sr. No.	Question Items	Mean Values
1	Being understand the teaching in classes	4.23
2	Believing that enough practice will provide understanding all subjects	4.19
3	Believing that regular practice will provide higher skills	4.46
4	Having ability to reach the target once decided to gain	4.31
5	Having confidence to reach self-goals	4.35
6	It is difficult to turn back once decided to overcome the difficult cases	3.73
7	I believe myself I have capacity to learn any major specialization	3.85
8	Gaining more and more capacity through hard working	4.27
9	Anyone can upgrade skills through hard working	4.65
General Mean		4.23

Source: Survey Data, 2024

According to the mean values as shown in Table (3), most of the oriental studies second year and third year students have high level of self-efficacy. They have confidence in hard working that will lead to ease in learning various subjects, high results, high skills and reaching goals. They are also highly dedicated to their academic goals. The results (mean values of the question items of academic performance) are shown in Table (4).

Table (4) Students' Self-administration on Their Academic Performance

Sr. No.	Question Items	Mean Values
1	Being ready for all subjects	3.58
2	Listening and learning well in classes	4.27
3	Having desire to get high marks	4.58
4	Participating in class discussions	4.04
5	Believing in gaining desired goals	4.42
6	Believing to be easy in exam due to self-learning at home	4.42
7	Used to overcome by self the difficulties	4.04
8	Submitted all assignments early to the deadlines	4.42
General Mean		4.22

Source: Survey Data, 2024

According to the mean values as shown in Table (4), most of the oriental studies second year and third year students are sure that they can gain good academic performance. They are now ready for the exam due to self-practice at home and active in classes.

Findings from Regression Analysis

Regression analysis is conducted to investigate the effect of self-leadership on academic performance (objective-1 of the study) of oriental studies second year and third year students. Then, in this analysis, the mediating role of self-efficacy between self-leadership and academic performance (objective-2 of the study) of oriental studies second year and third year students. The regression results for the objective (1) are shown in Table (5).

Table (5) Effect of Self-leadership on Academic Performance

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig	VIF
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
(Constant)	1.141	0.710		1.608	0.121	1.000
Self-leadership	0.726***	0.166	0.665	4.361	0.000	1.000
R Square	0.442					
Adjusted R Square	0.419					
F Value	19.019***					

Dependent Variable is "Academic Performance"

*** Significant at 1 percent

** Significant at 5 percent level

* Significant at 10 percent level

The survey results showed that the self-leadership skills of students are leading to good academic performance of students who are attending at second year and third year oriental studies at MUDE.

For the objective (2), to analyse the mediating effect of self-efficacy between self-leadership and academic performance, at the first step, the total effect is found. The total effect value is 0.726 (the unstandardized coefficient value of self-leadership) in finding the effect of self-leadership on academic performance (as shown in Table (5)).

At the second step, the effect of self-leadership (independent variable) on self-efficacy (mediating variable) is tested. The regression results are shown in Table (6). From these results, the unstandardized coefficient value and standard error value of independent variable (self-leadership) are used as input data in Sobel test in next step.

Table (6) Effect of Self-leadership on Self-efficacy

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig	VIF
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
(Constant)	1.667	0.701		2.376	0.026	1.000
Self-leadership	0.603***	0.165	0.599	3.667	0.001	1.000
R Square	0.359					
Adjusted R Square	0.332					
F Value	13.445***					

Dependent Variable is "Self-efficacy"

*** Significant at 1 percent level

** Significant at 5 percent level

* Significant at 10 percent level

The self-leadership has positive effect on self-efficacy. At the third step, the multiple regression analysis is conducted to show the effect of self-leadership (independent variable) and self-efficacy (mediating variable) on academic performance (dependent variable). The results are shown in Table (7).

Table (7) Effect of Self-leadership and Self-efficacy on Academic Performance

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig	VIF
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
(Constant)	0.346	0.711		0.488	0.630	
Self-leadership	0.438**	0.187	0.401	2.340	0.028	1.560
Self-efficacy	0.477**	0.186	0.440	2.563	0.017	1.560
R Square	0.566					
Adjusted R Square	0.528					
F Value	15.001***					

Dependent Variable is "Academic Performance"

*** Significant at 1 percent level

** Significant at 5 percent level

* Significant at 10 percent level

Both self-leadership and self-efficacy respectively has positive effect on academic performance. To test the mediating role of self-efficacy between self-leadership and academic performance, the SPSS PROCESS Macro by Hayes (2022) is applied. The results are as below:

Output for Mediating Effect Analysis

Model : 4

Y : AP

X : SL

M : SE

Sample Size: 38

***** TOTAL EFFECT MODEL *****

OUTCOME VARIABLE: AP

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.6649	.4421	.1252	19.0191	1.0000	24.0000	.0002

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	1.1411	.7097	1.6080	.1209	-.3236	2.6058
SL	.7258	.1664	4.3611	.0002	.3823	1.0693

Standardized coefficients

coeff

SL .6649

***** TOTAL, DIRECT, AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF X ON Y *****

Total effect of X on Y

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	c'_cs
.7258	.1664	4.3611	.0002	.3823	1.0693	.6649

Direct effect of X on Y

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	c'_cs
.4382	.1873	2.3396	.0284	.0507	.8256	.4014

Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
SE	.2876	.1312	.0216	.5423

Completely standardized indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
SE	.2635	.1156	.0186	.4785

Source: SPSS Output, 2024

Since the BootLLCI and BootULCI values in indirect effect analysis table are positive (not crossing the “0”), there is a mediating effect of self-efficacy between self-leadership and academic performance. The students’ self-leadership quality upgrades their self-efficacy, and this self-efficacy positively effect on their academic performance. According to the data shown in direct effect analysis table, there is a significant direct effect of self-leadership on academic performance. Thus, the mediating effect is a partial effect.

The indirect effect is 0.2876, and the direct effect is 0.4382. The total effect is 0.7258 (0.2876+0.4382).

Discussions

Most of the second year and third year oriental studies students have high self-leadership skills, good self-efficacy perception and they believe they will gain academic success. Their self-leadership skills are positively affecting on their academic performance. They are capable to try for reaching their academic goals. This capacity is resulted from their good management (self-motivation, self-thinking, self-control, and self-determination: self-leadership skills).

The self-leadership can enhance self-efficacy besides it can directly influence on academic performance. This self-efficacy can also support to good academic performance. The indirect effect is greater than direct effect. Thus, self-leadership can more support to good academic performance through developing the self-efficacy of students.

Conclusion

In Myanmar, there are only two distance education universities: Yangon University of Distance Education and Mandalay University of Distance Education. However, during recent years, through one-campus two systems, many universities take responsibility for distance education. Thus, education sector authorities need to consider the strategies for upgrading self-leadership skills and self-efficacy through effective syllabus and teaching styles at primary and secondary levels.

Suggestions

For effective distance education, the top management of distance universities and teachers should tactfully induce students to change attitude from relying on teachers to self-managing in problem solving, goal setting, developing strategies to reach goals, and upgrading self-confidence. Parents should provide self-leadership skills through direct and indirect teaching and communicating. Students must have habitual behavior of self-leadership.

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