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An Investigation into Self-Esteem and Stress of Prospective Teachers

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between stress and self-esteem among prospective teachers. The research design for this study is descriptive research survey method. Data were collected by using random sampling technique. A total of 300 prospective teachers from Yangon University of Education in Myanmar were used as the sample. Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory Adult-form (CSEI-A), and University Students Stress Items (Burge, 2009) were used as the instruments for this study. Before data collection, content validity was taken from experts in respective fields and pilot study was conducted to confirm internal consistency for the

esteem levels. The self-esteem of the prospective teachers was negatively correlated with their stress.

Key words: Self-Esteem, Stress

1. Introduction

Stress is everywhere. Stress affects all of us regardless of our gender, age, race, or class. Children are stressed. Some such as the typical 5- or 6-year-old, are stressed adjusting to the new world of school. Others are stressed from trying to cope with the pressures that accompany divorce, socioeconomic status, and blended families. College students are stressed. Some are trying to cope with the demands of adapting to a new living environment, new peers, academic pressure, and sexual concerns. College can also put financial stress on students and their families, and it seems that there is never enough time to attend class, study, and work enough hours to pay the bills. The elderly are stressed. Some are caught between the demands of forced retirement and the difficulty of meeting their financial needs. Others cope with the demands of frail health status and escalating health care costs. Still others are stressed by the loss of their spouses or the dissolution of their families as their adult children leave home.

Students may come to school under stress from events or circumstances at home. The stress a student brings to school can impact the climate of the school by influencing student behaviors and academic achievement. Common stressors in late adolescence, when students are beginning college, include transitioning from home to school and transitioning from dependence on family to oneself and one's friends. In university classes, students contend with a series of new challenges while at the same time loosing the structure of the high school learning environment, family life and daily instrumental support of family. On their own, students must organize their schedules, do their own work, attend to their own requirements, physical health, work on time, and allocate sufficient time for studying. The new found responsibilities for their own lifestyle, work ethic, resource use and choice of professional courses, in addition to demands of the society is well managed by some and staggering to others (Arnett, 2004).

Prospective teachers today are faced with everyday stressful events such as overexposure to the media (war, extreme weather, terrorism, illness and death), family related issues (divorce, single parent families, addictions, illness and death), and school (the ever rising expectations, over scheduling, bullying, and peer pressure). As they are same age with other university students, they have the problems of adolescents such as their physical appearance, relationship problems and financial problems. We as a society need to begin to take a proactive approach to helping prospective teachers to deal with the everyday problems they are being faced with. Studies among college students suggest that higher stress level generally related to greater symptomatology, including anxiety, depression, lower levels of general well-being and low self-esteem. Self-esteem can be considered as an important one to normal psychological development. To understand a man

psychological experiencing (Bednar & Peterson, 1995).

A favorable self-esteem is obviously essential for personal happiness and effective functioning, through one's life. Self-esteem, how people tend to feel about themselves, is personality trait that is relevant to stress. Self-esteem is one factor that can influence the relation between daily hassles and emotional responses to stressors. Additionally, low self-esteem is associated with increased blood pressure in response to stressors and other physiological responses that often occur in response to stressors, such as trembling hands, pounding heart, pressures or pains in the head, sweating hands, and dizziness. Low self -esteem also has an important role in depression and stress.

2. Review of Related Literature

Self-Esteem

According to Coopersmith (1967), self-esteem is significantly associated with personal satisfaction and effective functioning. Maslow is probably best known with his hierarchy of needs. These needs began with physiological needs of hunger and thirst, proceed to safety needs, then to the need for love, to the need for esteem and finally to the need for self-actualization (Maslow, 1971). Positive self-esteem is characterized by feelings of self-respect and worthiness. Moreover, the individual recognizes his/her strengths and weaknesses. On the other hand, the person with low self-esteem feels lack of respect for him/her and seeks him/herself as unworthy and inadequate or deficient person (Rosenberg, 1979).

Stress

Stress is a negative emotional experience accompanied by predictable biochemical, physiological, cognitive, and behavioral changes that are directed either toward altering the stressful event or accommodating to its effects. The stressful events that produce threats to our well-being are called stressors.

Moreover, stress can increase the risk of developing health problems, such as cardiovascular disease and anxiety disorders. This bad kind of stress is called distress, the kind of stress that people usually are referring to when they use the word stress. A convenient way to think about stress is in terms of stressors and stress responses. Stressors are events that threaten or challenge people. They are the sources of stress, such as having to make decisions, getting married and natural disasters. Stress responses are psychological, physiological, and behavioral reactions to stressors. Anxiety, depression, concentration difficulties, and muscle tension are all examples of stress responses.

Studies about Self-Esteem and Stressful Life Events

The literature about stressful life events and self-esteem revealed a significant relationship.

North Dakota high school students between the ages 14 and 19 participated by completing the Life Experiences Survey and the Self-Esteem Inventory. The findings indicated that as the number of life events increased, the level of self-esteem decreased (Youngs & Rathge, 1990).

3. Methodology

Sample of the Study

The study selected 300 first year prospective teachers from Yangon University of Education by using random sampling technique.

Research Instruments

1. Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory-Adult form (CSEI-A)

Self-esteem was examined by Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory-Adult form (CSEI-A). The CSEI-A is a self-report questionnaire intended to measure "the evaluation a person makes and customarily maintains with regard to him or herself" (Coopersmith, 1989). It is a 25 item inventory that concerned with the student's perception in four areas: general self-esteem, social self-esteem, home-parents, school-academic.

2. University Students Stress Items (USS) (Burge, 2009)

The USS was used to explore the stressors of university students. This draft set of items has been developed from Burge (2009). The original USS item consists of altogether 86 items. In USS, there are five proposed factors: (1) Academic including teaching quality, relations with teachers and support from teachers (2) Intrapersonal/Self including time balance, work and financial (3) Family (4) Interpersonal/Social and (5) Environmental/ Campus/ Administrative/ Transition. These themes were derived from content analysis of 282 open-ended responses from USS (Burge, 2007) including three factors Academic, Time and Environmental/Social. The USS is a 4-point Likert scale including always stressful, sometimes stressful, rarely stressful and no stressful.

Pilot Study

The content validity and face validity were taken from 9 experts from educational psychology and psychology field. According to the valuable advices of the experts, irrelevant and overlapped items were removed. Some questions are added to get demographic data of prospective teachers. After that, preliminary test administration was conducted with 50 first year prospective teachers from Yangon University of Education. Based on the pilot study, internal consistencies for whole scale and sub-scales are expressed as follows:

Table 3.1: Reliability Statistics for Whole Scales

				standardized items
1.	Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory-Adult form	25	**.68**	0.670
2.	University Student Stress Items	78	**.92**	0.921

4. Findings

4.1 Findings for Self-Esteem of Prospective Teachers

Descriptive analyses revealed that the mean and standard deviation of prospective teachers' self-esteem were 51.29 and 16.58 respectively. According to the norms of Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (CSEI-A) Adult Form, the scores for all respondents were calculated on their responses for 25 measures on the CSEI-A. The maximum possible score is 100 and the minimum possible score is 0. The respondents' scores ranged from a low of 4 to a high of 100. Respondents with scores in the range of 0 to 40 were considered to have low self-esteem. Scores in the range of 41 to 70 represented moderate self-esteem in respondents. The respondents with high self-esteem scores ranged from 71 to 100 (Coopersmith, 1967).

Results revealed that 14.7% of the prospective teachers have low level of self-esteem and 29.6% of the prospective teachers have high level of self-esteem. The majority of respondents were scored as possessing moderate self-esteem (*n* = 167, 55.7%). Table (4.2) illustrates the distribution of respondents' CSEI-A scores in ranges of low, moderate, and high according to gender.

Table 4.1: Descriptive Statistics of Prospective Teachers' Self-Esteem

	Mean	SD	N	Minimum	Maximum
Self-Esteem	51.29	16.58	300	8	96

Table 4.2: Frequencies and Percentages of Prospective Teachers' Self-Esteem Level by Gender

Low	14 (12.3%)	30 (16.13%)	44(14.7%)
Moderate	73 (64.03%)	94 (50.54%)	167(55.7%)
High	27 (23.67%)	62 (33.33%)	89(29.6%)
Total (N)	114	186	300

It was found that the number and percentage of female students in high self-esteem level is slightly more than the number and percentage of male students in high self-esteem level (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.3: Mean Comparison of Prospective Teachers' Self-Esteem by Gender

Gender	Mean	SD	*t*	ρ
Male	52.42	15.10	0.954	0.341
Female	50.60	14.43		
Total	51.29	16.58		

According to Table 4.3, the mean score of male was more than that of female. This means that male prospective teachers are high in self-esteem than female prospective teachers. To confirm the result, the independent sample t test was used. The results revealed that gender difference was not found to be on self-esteem.

4.2 Findings for Stress of Prospective Teachers

According to the result, most of the prospective teachers in this study felt stress in the first year prospective teacher life. To investigate in details, mean percentage of five components of stress: academic stress, intrapersonal/self, family stress, interpersonal/social stress and environmental stress were examined.

Table 4.4: Descriptive Statistics of Prospective Teachers' Stress

	Mean	SD	N	Minimum	Maximum
Stress	271.50	41.19	300	154	438

Table 4.5: Descriptive Statistics of Prospective Teachers' Stress Components

Intrapersonal/Self Stress	**59.66**	10.602
Family Stress	51.29	16.796
Interpersonal/Social Stress	46.18	13.529
Environmental Stress	57.16	14.669

According to Table 4.5, the mean percentage value of intrapersonal/self stress was higher than other four stress components. This confirmed that this component was the most stressful one among five components. The followings are some stressful events in intrapersonal/self that most students felt.

Stress Component	**Always stressful**
	Stressful Events most students felt
Intrapersonal/ Self	-Fear of failing -Lack of motivation -Supporting financially themselves -Family finance -Parting from their parents

Table 4.6: Mean Comparison of Prospective Teachers' Stress by Gender

Gender	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**	***t***	**ρ**
Male	114	269.66	48.376	**- 1.862***	**0.017**
Female	186	**274.50**	44.591		
Total	300	271.50	41.19		

*<0.05level

The result revealed that gender difference was found to be on stress. The mean score of female prospective teachers (274.50) was significantly higher than that of male (269.66).

Table 4.7: Results of Independent Sample t-test of Stress Components by Gender

Academic Stress	Male	58.11	9.804	1.214	298	0.226
	Female	56.67	10.127			
	Total	57.22	10.014			
Intrapersonal/ Self Stress	Male	59.30	10.792	**-0.461***	298	0.045
	Female	**59.88**	10.507			
	Total	59.66	10.602			
Family Stress	Male	51.69	16.135	0.327	298	0.774
	Female	51.04	17.227			
	Total	51.29	16.796			
Interpersonal/ Social Stress	Male	46.32	13.566	0.145	298	0.085
	Female	46.09	13.542			
	Total	46.18	13.529			
Environmental	Male	59.08	15.143	1.777	298	0.077
	Female	55.99	14.285			
	Total	57.16	14.669			

* The mean difference is significant at 0.05 level.

Table 4.7 revealed that the mean differences between stress components on gender. Among five components, the mean scores of female prospective teachers were higher than that of male prospective teachers in intrapersonal/self stress.

Table 4.8: Mean Comparison of Prospective Teachers' Stress by Self-Esteem Level

SE Levels	Low Self-Esteem	Moderate Self-Esteem	High Self-Esteem	*F*	ρ
N	44	167	89	**7.263*** **	0.000
Mean	**284.62**	269.36	253.07		
SD	(54.167)	(41.778)	(49.969)		

*** The mean difference is significant at 0.001 level.

It was found that the significant mean difference was found among self-esteem level on stress. The prospective teachers in low self-esteem level have stress more than those in moderate self-esteem level and high self-esteem level. To investigate the highly significant differences, Post-Hoc Test was executed by Tukey HSD method.

Table 4.9: Post-Hoc Analysis of Prospective Teachers' Stress by Self-Esteem Levels by Tukey HSD Method

	High	31.557**	.001
Moderate	Low	-15.226**	.001
	High	16.290	.484

** The mean difference is significant at 0.01 level.

According to Table 4.9, there was a significant difference between low self-esteem level and moderate self-esteem level and also high self-esteem level while there was no significant difference between moderate self-esteem level and high self-esteem level. This means that the prospective teachers in low self-esteem feel stress more than those from other two levels.

4.3 Relationship between Self-Esteem and Stress

Table 4.10: Correlation between Self-Esteem and Stress

	Self-Esteem	Stress
Self-Esteem	1	-0.366**
Stress		1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

The result can be predicted that self-esteem would be negatively correlated with stress. It can be predicted that prospective teachers who have low self-esteem have more stressful life events.

Table 4.11: Correlation between Self-Esteem and Stress Components

	2	3	4	5	6
1. Academic Stress	. 386**	. 284**	.175**	. 296**	-.091
2. Intrapersonal/Self Stress	1	. 585**	. 432**	. 364**	-.375**
3. Family Stress		1	.487**	.411**	-.298**
4. Interpersonal/Social Stress			1	.384**	-.208**
5. Environmental Stress				1	-.239
6. Self-Esteem					1

The Pearson product-moment correlation was used to examine the relationships between the variables. Results revealed that the self-esteem of prospective teachers was negatively correlated

In the present study, self-esteem of prospective teachers was negatively correlated with stress.

Recommendation

In the present study, it was seen that having high self-esteem has a supporting effect on coping with stressful life events that one experiences in daily life. As a consequence, teacher educators, counselors or professionals should take into consideration this effect and they could develop programs for prospective teachers in order to enhance self-esteem. According to Branden (1994), there are several approaches to build self-esteem. First one is cognitive approach that places the emphasis on developing positive mental attitudes, helping prospective teachers to think about their feelings, and adopt healthier ways of interpreting or relating to the events that occur in their lives. Second one is behavioural approach which endeavors to develop specific functional behaviours in prospective teachers so that they can display behaviours that command greater respect from others and self-esteem in selves. Such behaviours may relate to voice control, posture, eye contact, or expression of feelings. Another one is experimental approach that provides positive experiences for prospective teachers to build up feelings of self-respect and self-esteem. Environmental approach is more holistic approach that structures the environment and the activities students engage in to develop particular attitudes and skills that lead to self-esteem. It tends to address such aspects as discipline, social activities, goal setting, responsibility, and how adults interact with prospective teachers (Branden, 1994). With respect to self-esteem and also stressful life events, environmental approach could be beneficial because it is a holistic approach, which needs to study about prospective teachers' inside world and his/her environment. Therefore, counselor should have such a holistic approach to be beneficial and effective in that area.

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