

Effect of Academic Self-Efficacy on Test Anxiety of Higher Vocational College Students: The Chain Mediating Effect [Letter]

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Dear editor

We read with great interest the article titled “Effect of Academic Self-Efficacy on Test Anxiety of Higher Vocational College Students: The Chain Mediating Effect” by Jia et al.¹ The study’s focus on the causes and mediating effects of test anxiety provides valuable insights for addressing this issue and alleviating extreme test anxiety among students. However, we believe that certain aspects could have been further addressed to control for potential confounding variables.

Students with high self-efficacy possess a strong belief in their ability to effectively plan and achieve their academic goals.² Considering the potential influence of confounding factors, the decision to distribute the questionnaires two weeks before the test becomes particularly interesting. This timeframe may introduce a confounder, as students’ reported self-efficacy levels could be influenced by their current revision efforts specifically for that exam, rather than capturing their overall beliefs in their academic capabilities. Therefore, conducting the questionnaire administration at different time points throughout the academic year, away from immediate exam periods, could offer valuable insights into their general self-efficacy beliefs and academic goal achievement. Such additional data collection would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between self-efficacy and academic outcomes.

The inclusion of family socioeconomic status (SES) as a confounding variable in this study is crucial, given the consistent empirical evidence linking SES to academic self-efficacy.^{3,4} By examining the potential difference in SES between genders and controlling for it in the analysis, the researchers can strengthen the soundness of their conclusion regarding gender moderation in self-efficacy and related factors. Considering SES as a confounding variable allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the interplay between gender, SES, self-efficacy, and test anxiety, enhancing the validity and generalizability of the study’s findings.

The study’s finding that self-efficacy, sense of life meaning, and fear of failure are moderated by gender is intriguing and deserves further exploration. While the authors briefly mention stronger societal expectations for males in Chinese culture, it would be beneficial for them to provide a more comprehensive explanation for these observed gender differences. Another potential explanation worth exploring is the differences in coping strategies employed by either gender when facing academic challenges. Research suggests that males tend to utilize problem-focused coping strategies, focusing on finding solutions and taking action, while females may be more inclined towards emotion-focused coping strategies, seeking support and managing their emotional stress response.⁵ These distinct coping styles could contribute to gender differences in the relationships between self-efficacy, sense of life meaning, fear of failure, and test anxiety.

In conclusion, while the study on the effect of academic self-efficacy on test anxiety offers valuable insights, some confounding factors could be better controlled. Overall, addressing these aspects would strengthen the study’s conclusions and contribute to effective interventions for reducing test anxiety among higher vocational college students.

Disclosure

The authors report no conflict of interest in this communication.

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