Help Me Focus On My Studies: Academic Cynicism, Stress And Self-Efficacy As Predictors Of Academic Performance Through Self-Regulation

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ABSTRACT
Academic cynicism and stress put students' thinking and learning processes at risk and have a negative impact on their academic performance. The purpose of the current study was to ascertain how students' perceptions of their academic self-efficacy get affected by their academic stress and academic cynicism. The study also investigated the mediating effects of self-regulation in connecting academic self-efficacy with academic performance. The sample for the present study was comprised of 384 students that was selected from both private and public universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). Data was gathered online using four self-report measures designed to assess students’ level of cynicism, self-efficacy, stress and self-regulation and for the assessment of academic performance CGPA records were utilized. The data was analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics using SPSS-22. The findings of the study showed that academic stress and cynicism negatively predicts academic self-efficacy which in turn adversely affects the academic performance of students. The results also ensured that self-regulation mediates partially the association of self-efficacy beliefs and academic performance. With these findings it is clear that students’ cynical attitude and stress negatively affect their self-efficacy beliefs and academic grades but high self-regulation skills help them to improve their academic performance. The present study has various implications in educational, health and social aspects of students’ life.

Keywords: Stress, cynicism, self-efficacy, academic performance, self-regulation.

Introduction
The academic environment plays a critical role in determining a student's personality, cognitive patterns, and behavior. Students improve their logic-based problem-solving skills, self-confidence, and self-efficacy in various domains of life with the help of academic life experiences. In addition, students also experience a variety of psychological problems during their time at university, such as cynicism, stress, anxiety, and depression, which put negative impact on their performance. Previous studies showed that university students had more psychological problems than individuals of their age in the general populace (Bewick et al., 2010; Keyes et al., 2012). Brockway et al. (2002) noted that students are prone to develop several types of cynicism while they are studying, such as cynicism toward the institution's administrative policies, its curriculum, or towards the institution in general.
Academic cynicism occurs due to a mismatch between student’s expectations from their institution, and what they actually experience on campus. This discrepancy causes distrust and dissatisfaction among them, which could result in a negative and hostile attitude towards the institution (Brockway et al., 2002; Zaffo et al., 2013). Maslach et al. (2008) noted that cynicism includes social detachment, diminished interest in one's work, emotional and cognitive disengagement from it, and a negative reaction to a particular task. The feelings of exhaustion, irritability and frustration among cynical students prevent them from completing academic duties properly and may adversely affect their academic future (Salanova et al., 2010; Mostert et al., 2007). Students with social cynicism feel low self-confidence and personal ineffectiveness (Wei et al., 2015).

In contrast, individuals who are self-efficacious have a strong belief in their capacity to organize and do the necessary measures to bring about the desired results (Bandura, 1997). This belief of students in their abilities and strengths is critical for students' academic success (Hill, 2002). Self-efficacy is one of the crucial component of social cognitive theory which places a strong emphasis on how past behavior, thoughts, and social context may all be used to predict future conduct. Bandura (2004) stated that behavioral change is started and maintained when people believe they can carry out the intended action (i.e., when they have self-efficacy) and anticipate that the activity will lead to the desired outcome. Consequently, self-efficacy has a substantial impact on an individual’s behavior and is also influenced by contextual circumstances (Bandura, 1977). Keeping in view Bandura’s approach, elements influencing academic self-efficacy is essential to understand. The present study attempted in this regard by examining the effects of academic cynicism and stress on students' perceptions of their ability to achieve the desired academic goals.

Students’ cynicism is destructive to their quality of life, and it has an impact on their academic satisfaction and academic progress both directly and indirectly (Atalayin et al., 2015; Xie et al., 2011). Students’ cynical attitudes decline their academic efficacy beliefs necessary for academic success and also negatively affect their academic performance (Duru et al., 2014). Aslam and Sohail (2015) also suggested that burnout-cynicism is directly associated with general self-efficacy beliefs. Atalayin et al. (2015) also noted that cynicism in academic environment adversely affect academic self-efficacy, which in-turn has a negative impact on academic achievement. Moreover, students who have good study habits and positive self-efficacy belief are less cynical than students who have poor study habits and low self-efficacy belief (Bilge et al., 2014).

In addition to cynicism, the psychological condition of students when they face a task i.e., their levels of anxiety, stress, and fatigue determines their sense of success and failure (Pajares, 1996). Students with severe mental health issues have a higher likelihood of low academic self-efficacy and delayed study progress (Grigoran et al., 2019). Stress is one of such issue associated with physiological and psychological experience of trauma, persistent strain, and other disturbances by an individual (Thoits, 2010). Stress may arise by the external environment or by the individuals’ internal views about a situation which they perceive to be stressful that cause them to experience anxiety or other unpleasant feelings (Jones et al., 2001). The mental health of university students is one the main concerns for researchers and educational psychologists (Milojevich & Lukowski, 2016). Students studying in universities
may experience challenging academic and non-academic demands affecting their daily lives such as overburden, insufficient time, financial issues, exam pressures, which might affect their well-being (Webber et al., 2019). While those who successfully manage academic stress maintain good physical and mental health, exhibit great emotional restraint, and are more likely to hold a positive self-efficacy belief (Watson & Watson, 2016).

According to Lazarus' cognitive model of stress, self-efficacy and stress are interrelated concepts. Depending on one's personal views, such as one's level of self-efficacy, a person could see any environmental requirement as either a danger or a challenge (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Individuals with high self-efficacy are more inclined to regard such demands as a challenge and make an effort to successfully handle it (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Numerous additional researches have also demonstrated the strong association between psychological discomfort and academic self-efficacy (Byrd & McKinney, 2012). For example, Matoti and Lekhu (2019) indicated inverse correlation between students' academic stress and academic self-efficacy on the basis of their performance in examinations, their participation in class discussions and the way they comprehend lectures. Shehadeh et al. (2020) also reported inverse association among subscales of self-efficacy and subscales of stress connected to academic activities.

Students with strong self-efficacy beliefs are better able to regulate and handle challenges that are seen as stressful because they have stronger self-management abilities (Bandura, 2004). There is evidence that several aspects in the academic environment influence how well students learn. They may receive reinforcement from themselves or from others (Bandura, 1986). Nonetheless, students' personal viewpoints, convictions, and perceptions of the educational setting have a significant influence on their ability to learn and perform (Bandura, 2001). According to research, students' confidence in their capacity to start and complete their studies has a crucial influence in determining how they would carry out their academic-related activities (Odaci, 2011). Students with high levels of self-efficacy display higher involvement in their academic assignments through more definite goals and exert the greatest amount of effort to reach those goals as compared to those who have low level of self-efficacy (Fennollar et al., 2007).

The link between student self-efficacy and academic achievement has been supported by a number of researches in the field of education. According to Hayat et al. (2020), academic self-efficacy improves students' academic performance through altering their learning-related emotions and metacognitive learning techniques. Breso et al. (2011) also noted that students' study engagement and performance are strongly connected with their sense of self-efficacy. The meta-analysis study found similar results, showing that academic performance is improved over time by a high level of academic self-efficacy (Talsma et al., 2018).

Students with high self-efficacy are more likely to use self-regulatory techniques like goal-setting, monitoring and evaluation of oneself as a guide to attain their intended outcomes (Snyder, 2000). According to research, people who strongly believe in their ability to regulate their behaviour are better able to retain the perseverance and motivation necessary to attain academic goals and successes (Zimmerman & Bandura, 1994). Self-regulation is humans’ propensity for setting personal goals and deliberately directing their behaviour towards achieving those goals (Zeidner et al., 2000). Self-regulation abilities enable a person to
diligently face emotional turmoil and stay hopeful during unpleasant situations (McClelland et al., 2018). Thus, high self-regulation is associated with greater psychological well-being as well as the capacity to preserve healthy interpersonal connections and perform well at school, home, and the workplace (Buckner et al., 2009).

In educational settings, self-regulation is frequently associated with self-regulated learning, which facilitates students in setting learning objectives and effectively monitoring, controlling, and regulating their feelings, motivation, and actions (Pintrich, 2000). Ejubović and Puška (2019) suggested that metacognition, computer self-efficacy, social dimension and environment structuring have a significant influence on students’ academic satisfaction and performance. In the current study, it has been hypothesized that students who lack self-efficacy are more likely to succeed academically if they practice self-regulation.

Duckworth et al. (2009) indicated that irrespective of being high or low-achievers, individuals with high self-regulation skills tend to possess a high sense of efficacy in their abilities. Higgins (1997) suggested that regulatory focus, (which encompasses promotion focus and preventive focus) is a crucial factor in affecting self-efficacy as it guides goal-oriented activities. To approve this concept, Liu et al. (2019) investigated the relationship between learning engagement and regulatory focus and concluded that low prevention-focus combined with high promotion-focus reduces depression and increases academic self-efficacy, both of which promote higher engagement in learning.

Self-efficacy and self-regulation both have a critical role in determining students' academic achievement (Boekaerts & Niemivirta, 2000). Self-efficacy has been found to considerably improve learning processes, particularly in self-regulation tasks, and leads to better academic achievements (Lent et al., 2006). Self-regulation may also be a mediating factor for students' academic efficacy (Duru et al., 2014). According to Köseolu (2015), the link of self-efficacy with GPA is partially mediated through effort regulation. Similarly, Honicke and Broadbent (2016) found that academic performance and academic self-efficacy are moderated by effort regulation, goal orientation, and deep processing techniques.

Individuals with low self-efficacy beliefs have doubts related to their capacity for success, which exerts the significant impact on the behavioural regulation process. In turn it affects the selection and preparation processes of goal achievement, and might affect the consistency, duration, and effectiveness of how hard people work to reach their goals (Bandura, 1986). Consequently, appropriate strategies for boosting motivation, self-efficacy, and achievement may assist students in creating self-regulating learning systems (Phillips et al., 2003).

**Rationale**

One of the major areas in a student’s life is his/her educational experiences. Academic life experiences exert a crucial impact on student. Now-a-days academic institutions are increasing day by day resulting in competition with compromise on quality of education. Students seem to complain about lack of facilities, overburden due to a change from annual to semester system, financial problems etc. All of these factors negatively affect their efficacy, level of motivation and may result in frustration, distrust and other psychological and physical issues. In the light of the problems student’s claim, the current study has tried to explore the factors that are behind these complaints. One of such factors identified is the cynical attitude of the
According to studies, lack of interest and indifference for academic activities contribute to students' cynicism towards their academic institution and their entire academic life experiences (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Students who exhibit a high level of cynicism may experience emotional fatigue, depersonalization, and a sense of failure (Wei et al., 2015). It may have a negative impact on their self-efficacy, which is crucial for achieving academic objectives.

Besides these, various studies have highlighted the high frequency of psychological symptoms among university students (Kim et al., 2015) and stress is considered to be one of the most prevalent psychosocial problem of students (Gustems-Carnicer et al., 2019). Stress can negatively affect students’ academic performance e.g., reduce their ability to focus attention and memorize material, decline their commitment to study (Turner et al., 2015) and might cause physical and psychological harm among them (Schönfeld et al., 2016). These studies showed how academic stressors might affect students' performance and mental health. The proposed study intends to explore how students' perceptions of their academic self-efficacy are influenced by their stress levels and academic cynicism.

In addition, previous studies have described that students with better cognitive self-regulation can effectively manage their emotions and emotional influences thus possess better educational performance (Sahranavard, 2018). This study therefore made an effort to know how students may limit the harmful impacts of poor academic self-efficacy on their academic performance and achieve academic success by using self-regulation skills.

**Conceptual Framework**

**Objectives**
1. To ascertain the significant influence of academic cynicism and stress on academic self-efficacy of students.
2. To determine whether the connection of students’ self-efficacy beliefs with academic performance is mediated by their self-regulation skills.

**Hypotheses**
Based on above objectives following hypotheses are formed.
1. Academic cynicism and stress will negatively affect students' self-efficacy beliefs.
2. There will be positive correlation between academic self-efficacy beliefs and academic performance.
3. The relationship between academic self-efficacy and academic performance will be mediated through self-regulation.
Method

Sample
The sample for the current study was based on 384 undergraduate students studying in different private and public universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) with an average stay of 2.27 years in the university. The sample comprised of 172 males (44.8%) and 212 females (55.2 %) with an age range of 19 to 25 years (M= 21.26, SD=1.65). From the list of KP universities, universities with a high undergraduate enrollment ratio were chosen in order to collect data. Students who worked part-time jobs in addition to their studies were not included in the sample. As the study was conducted during COVID 19 pandemic, data was gathered online through random sampling technique.

Instruments
Following instruments were utilized to collect data.

1. **Cynical Attitudes Toward College Scale (CATCS)**
The cynical attitude toward college scale, developed by Brockway et al. (2002), was used to assess students' cynicism (2002). The 18 items on the CATCS measure four aspects of the students' cynicism (social, academic, institutional and policy) through Likert format with score ranges from 1 to 5. There are 6 items in the academic subscale, 4 in the social subscale, 6 in the policy subscale, and 4 in the institutional subscale. High scores imply that the responder has a highly cynical attitude toward his or her academic institution. Each subscales exhibited good internal consistency such as policy cynicism and social dimension both have alpha reliability α=.75, whereas, academic cynicism and institutional cynicism has an alpha coefficient of .70 and .84 respectively. Furthermore, this scale has high validity (from .40 to.72) when correlated with other instruments, such as the organizational cynicism scale and the scale of general cynicism worldview (Zuffo et al., 2013).

2. **Student Stress Inventory (SSI)**
The SSI scale (Arip et al., 2015) comprises of four subscales that assess the stress associated with students' academic environment, physical health and interpersonal relationships. Only the academic subscale, which is intended to measure student stress related to academics, was used in this study. The full scale consists of 40 items out of which ten items represent academic stress. Responses are rated on a four point scale between 1 to 4 (1=never to 4=always). The alpha reliability of academic subscale is α=.84, and of the full scale is .85. The reported content validity of full sale is 80.5% while for academic subscale is 82. 2 % (Arip et al., 2015).

3. **Student Self-Efficacy scale**
Student Self-Efficacy (SSE; Rowbotham & Schmitz, 2013) scale is comprised of 10 items representing four aspects of a student's academic life such as academic success, skill and knowledge, social interaction between students and faculty, and management of academic related stressors. The statements are based on a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1-4. Total score can lie between 10 to 40, where higher values indicate greater student self-efficacy. The
scale has high reliability ($\alpha =0.84$) and exhibits a significant association with the general self-efficacy scale ($r = 0.70$), demonstrating the good validity of the SSE.

4. **Short Self-Regulation Questionnaire (SSRQ)**
This short version of Self-Regulation Questionnaire (Carey et al., 2004) that consists of 31 items assesses an individual’s self-regulation skills. Responses to each item (ranging from 1 to 5) are added together to get the final score where higher scores indicate that the individual possesses high self-regulation skills. The scale is highly reliable and valid as the alpha reliability value of the scale is $\alpha =.92$ and is positively correlated with the original Self-Regulation Questionnaire (full version) $r =.96$ indicating the high validity of scale.

5. **Grade Point Average (GPA)**
As the students were studying in different semesters, to gather data related to their GPA their last semester GPA records were collected from the concerned universities for the assessment of academic performance.

**Procedure**
Universities with large undergraduate enrollments were chosen from the entire list of KP universities in order to gather the data. Then, a few departments from each of the universities were chosen at random. The enrollment records were acquired with the approval of the concerned department's management in order to create the lists of students from which students were chosen through simple random sampling procedure. Following that, selected students were contacted through their email addresses collected with the consent of their teachers as face-to-face communication with the respondents was not possible due to the COVID scenario.

The selected students were given a link to an online data collection form after this preliminary phase. Participants were first taken to the informed consent form after clicking the link, which provided information on the scope and objectives of the study as well as their consent to participate. The participant acknowledged that he or she had read the information and was willing to participate by signing the informed consent form. Then they were directed towards a demographic information sheet, which included details on gender, age, the type of institution, the length of time spent there, and discipline.

After the completions of initial steps, the respondents were then directed to fill the four self-reporting questionnaires i.e., student self-efficacy scale, student stress inventory, cynical attitudes toward college scale, and short self-regulation questionnaire. On each scale, proper instructions were provided. CGPA records of the selected students were received from the concerned departments for the purpose of evaluating their academic achievement with proper student consent. The respondents were then thanked at the end for their participation.

**Results**
Necessary descriptive and inferential statistics such as Pearson correlation, multiple Regression and Mediation analyses were carried out to analyze the data using computerized software SPSS-22 (Statistical Package of Social Sciences) and PROCESS-macro (version 3.5). **Table 1 Descriptive Statistics and Psychometric Properties of the Scales**
Table 1 shows that all of the scales have good alpha values, which means that they are internally consistent and suitable for the current study.

Table 2 Correlation Matrix of Study Variables (N= 384)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Academic Cynicism</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Self-efficacy</td>
<td>.28**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Academic stress</td>
<td>.28**</td>
<td>.22**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Self-regulation</td>
<td>.21**</td>
<td>.47**</td>
<td>-.43**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Academic performance</td>
<td>-.20**</td>
<td>.54**</td>
<td>-.41**</td>
<td>.69**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: **p<.01.

Table 2 displays that there is significant negative correlation of academic cynicism and stress with the self-efficacy, self-regulation and academic performance whereas the intercorrelation between academic cynicism and stress is significantly positive. Self-efficacy, self-regulation and academic performance are positively correlated with each other.

Table 3 Multiple Regression Analyses of Academic Cynicism and Stress Regressed on Self-Efficacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>SE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>40.14***</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Cynicism</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>-.23***</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>-.16**</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. CI= 95%; **p<.01, ***p<.001

Table 3 indicates that stress and academic cynicism are significant predictors of self-efficacy where academic cynicism and stress both together account for 10% variation in self-efficacy, F (2, 381) = 21.38, p <.001.

Table 4 Regression Coefficients predicting Academic Performance from Self-Efficacy and Self-Regulation
The results in Table 4 depicts that academic performance is significantly predicted by academic self-efficacy and self-regulation. Initially the self-efficacy was entered alone to explain academic performance (illustrated in model 1) then in model 2 self-regulation was added in the model together with self-efficacy as determiners of students’ performance. The findings show, that self-regulation and academic self-efficacy both significantly influence academic performance.

Table 5 Mediating Analyses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Model 2</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>SE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>1.44***</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>-.53**</td>
<td>-.89</td>
<td>-.16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-efficacy</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.54***</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.28***</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-regulation</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.55***</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note. CI=95%. **p<.01, ***p<.001

The results in table 5 shows the analyses run through PROCESS macro-3.5. The findings reveal that academic self-efficacy explained 29% of the variation in academic achievement without taking into account the mediator, F (1, 382) = 157.82, p < .001 (shown in model 1). In model 2 the mediator plays its role and both variables combined causes 53% of change in academic performance of students, F (2, 381) = 216.77, p < .001. As the confidence interval do not have zero, which demonstrates that academic performance is indirectly affected by academic self-efficacy through self-regulation, B=.03, CI (.02, .03). The following model has been drawn to properly understand both direct and indirect association between the variables.
The paths show significant direct effect of academic self-efficacy (the independent variable) on self-regulation (the mediator) ($\beta = .47$, $p < .001$) and the self-efficacy shows a direct effect on academic performance (the dependent variable) ($\beta = .28$, $p < .001$). Furthermore, there is a direct effect of mediator on dependent variable ($\beta = .55$, $p < .001$). While academic self-efficacy exerts an indirect effect on academic performance by means of self-regulation ($\beta = .26$, $p < .001$). Particularly when the mediator was added in the model, the direct effect of independent variable on dependent variable got reduce from .54 to .28, suggesting the partial mediating role of self-regulation between self-efficacy and academic performance.

**Discussion**

The current study intended to determine the effects of academic stress and cynicism on self-efficacy beliefs of students enrolled in various public and private universities. In addition, the study attempted to identify the strength of association between students’ level of self-efficacy and their academic outcomes as well as to know what significant role self-regulation plays in their relationship.

The first hypothesis of the study predicted that students' self-efficacy beliefs would be negatively affected by their high levels of cynicism and stress. The results of the study approved the hypothesis. Table 2 illustrates the significant negative correlation of students’ cynical attitude and stress with their self-efficacy beliefs. Regression analyses shows that cynicism and stress significantly predict academic self-efficacy (see table 3). These findings are consistent with the previous work as suggested by Charkhabi et al. (2013) that students’ self-efficacy is negatively influenced by their high level of cynicism. The findings of the Wei et al. (2015) study showed that high degree of cynicism among students is linked with their high level of emotional fatigue, sense of depersonalization, and personal failure. Previous studies noted that cynicism and lack of interest are more effective predictors of academic efficacy and performance comparative to emotional exhaustion (Duru et al., 2014). Students with cynical attitude become frustrated, shows lack of interest and indifference towards their
academic related activities. Therefore, they can feel inferior in their academic life, which might hamper their academic performance (Duru et al., 2014).

Bandura's (1991) social cognitive theory confirmed that self-efficacy and perceived stress have a strong negative relationship. In addition, the findings of several studies on college and university students have shown the existence of a moderate to significant negative relationship between stress and self-efficacy (Gigliotti & Huff, 1995; Torres & Solberg, 2001). Students who are under stress experience fear and anxiety which may exert negative impact on their academic performance (Sarkar & Chattopadhyay, 2017), as it can disrupt the students thinking and learning process (Akbari et al., 2014) leading to a sense of incompetence and a decline in students' overall productivity. Yucha et al. (2015) found that students’ stress level negatively affects their self-efficacy beliefs to perform academic tasks.

In the second hypothesis of the study, it was predicted that students with high levels of self-efficacy would receive good grades, whereas those with low levels of academic self-efficacy would obtain poor academic results. The results of the study supported the prediction and the findings are consistent with previous studies, which showed that students who had a strong feeling of self-efficacy engaged in difficult tasks, made extra attempts, and remain persistent, display improved academic success versus those who lack those qualities (Bong, 2001). Self-efficacy is considered to be a good indicator of academic accomplishment (Honicke & Broadbent, 2016; Kolo et al., 2017). Several other studies demonstrated the existence of positive connection between academic performance, study engagement, and self-efficacy (Tenaw, 2013; Oriol-Granado, et al., 2017).

The results of the first two hypotheses determining the significance of self-efficacy beliefs in performance can be supported through Bandura's social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986). This theory contends that environmental, behavioral, and personal (cognitive) factors interact to produce human behavior. Self-efficacy plays a crucial part in this interaction since there is a strong correlation between perceived self-efficacy and behavioral change of an individual. It serves as a significant source of motivation and persistence while overcoming obstacles (Bandura, 1977; 1997).

Similarly, Gist and Mitchell theory (1992) of self-efficacy, also explains three processes that exert influence on performance. That is an individual first analyzes the requirements of the task, and then evaluates the experience related with the level of performance. Next the person assesses personal and/or environmental resources available or constraints present. So self-efficacious students cognitively process the whole situation which can hinder or promote their performance that is why they perform better than those who are low on self- efficaciousness. Self-efficacious students engage in academic activities more freely, set more difficult goals, and work harder to achieve those goals. Such students put in extra effort and stick around longer through challenging periods; these abilities aid them in getting high academic grades (Bandura, 1997). High self-efficacy beliefs and the use of self-regulated learning practices have both been shown in prior research to significantly improve students' psychological well-being and lead to better achievement (Boekaerts & Niemivirta, 2000).

In the present study a mediational model was proposed to get an insight how self-efficacy influences academic achievement through self-regulation. It was predicted that self-
Efficacy influences students' performance through self-regulation in addition to its direct impact on academic performance. The results of this study confirmed the partial mediating role of self-regulation. To understand how self-regulation works, three mechanisms need to be understood, that is, first of all the behavior is evaluated on the basis of personal and social standards, then the behaviour is self-monitored along with its causes and consequences and finally an emotional self-reaction is generated. Individuals may regulate and control their feelings, motivation, thoughts, and actions due to these self-reactive and self-reflective skills (Bandura, 1991). Students who possess cognitive and emotional regulation may be able to develop adaptable coping skills that will enable them to deal with stress and other emotional disturbances (Perry et al., 2001).

Saroughi (2019) noted that self-efficacy has a direct and positive impact on self-regulation. It is revealed that in order to succeed academically, self-efficacious students employ self-regulatory techniques including self-monitoring, self-evaluation, and self-reflection (Zimmerman, 2002). Students with both high degree of self-regulation and self-efficacy are better equipped to cope with environmental demands and deal with stressors in their academic and social lives. Such students are capable of handling unpleasant emotions and effect (Bandura, 1986, 1997). They oversee and manage behaviour that supports learning processes and may lead to the accomplishment of academic goals (Kitsantas & Zimmerman, 2009).

Studies showed that individuals with better self-regulation abilities are more conscious of the value of learning and will work to regulate their emotions for enhancing both the process of learning and its output (Lin, 2018; Muis et al., 2018). Self-regulation is a self-motivated learning process that calls for regular actions that could help learners get better at overcoming different learning predictors (Gandomkar & Sandars, 2018.). Learners who exhibit high levels of self-regulation actively seek out information when necessary and take action to master it, and as a result, these abilities enable them to effectively overcome challenges like unfavorable study environments, a lack of resources, confusing teachers, etc. (Weimer, 2002).

These studies affirm the critical part that self-regulation skills play in controlling thoughts, emotions, and behaviors as well as in directing the efficient use of resources, time and energy. As a result, students with excellent self-regulation abilities, although having low self-efficacy, may feel more capable and display less apathy towards their academic tasks. Research has also shown that effective self-regulation training can boost self-regulation, which could subsequently enhance self-efficacy and academic achievement (Veenman et al., 2000).

**Limitations and Suggestions**

The current study focused solely on the cynicism and stressors in academic life that affect students' productivity, while ignoring other significant aspects of the participants' personal and social lives that might have an impact on their performance. Future research should also take into account additional aspects of students' lives that may contribute to stress and cynicism among students. This study used correlational study design to analyze the significant links between study variables. Future studies can use additional approaches such as case studies, in-depth interviews, or longitudinal research study design to better explore the relation between the present study variables.
Implications
This study sheds light on how students' high levels of stress and cynicism impair their academic performance and how they can be helped by developing better self-regulation skills to mitigate the negative consequences of low academic self-efficacy. Cynical views among students may be related to indifference, apathy, and a psychological or physical withdrawal from academic-focused activities. According to studies, students who are disengaged in their social and academic lives may end up making decisions to leave college because they are dissatisfied with their academic experiences (Astin, 1993). Therefore, it is crucial to identify students who have a high level of cynicism, as doing so this study offers insightful suggestions for institutional reform. Academic stress was another significant element that was covered in this study. If stress is not properly identified at the beginning and managed, it can lead to major issues. The findings of the current study also supported closer relationship between students’ self-regulation skills and their self-efficacy, indicating that students who have high values in both or either can perform well in academics. So, the educators should concentrate on helping students develop their self-regulation skills through appropriate training in academic settings.

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