

Exploring the Academic Self-Efficacy of the First Year Student Teachers of University of Rwanda-College of Education (UR-CE)

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ABSTRACT

The research investigates the academic self-efficacy of first-year students at University of Rwanda-College of Education (UR-CE) in line with both Bandura's social cognitive theory and self-efficacy theory. Utilizing a sequential explanatory model for quantitative and qualitative data collection, the research took place during academic year 2023 with total of 1,435 first-year students and it also engaged five members of the academic staff. Cochran's formula was used to calculate sample size and 304 student teachers were randomly selected and 5 academic staff member were selected, one from each of the five departments. A multi-stage sampling and simple random sampling were used to select the student teachers who undertook an online survey. After analyzing the quantitative statistical data, two in-depth interviews were conducted: one with 20 student teachers focusing on their academic self-efficacy and average scores, and another with five staff members from UR-CE. The overall mean for the four components of ASE on Likert scale was 3.67 which is equivalent to moderate ASE. The results of both in-depth interviews also confirmed these findings. The overall SD of scores in the four components of ASE is 1.91, indicating heterogeneity in levels of academic self-efficacy among UR-CE first-year teacher students. Self-regulated learning scored 3.89 indicating that first-year teachers excelled in regulating their learning to achieve academic goals, while competency scored 3.50 indicating that these student teachers have gaps in academic skills. In accordance with Bandura (2006)'s classification, 78.29% of student teachers have moderate ASE; 20.72% have high ASE; while 0.99% have low ASE. The study recommends that UR-CE improve programmes that enhance students' academic self-efficacy and other psychosocial skills, and include these skills in its recruitment criteria. Finally, it is recommended that lecturers use specific pedagogical strategies to stimulate students' academic self-efficacy rather than discourage them.

Key words: Academic Self-Efficacy, Academic Performance, First Year Student Teachers, Self-Efficacy

I. INTRODUCTION

Higher education programmes worldwide are becoming more varied in terms of socio backgrounds and personal circumstances. The global Education, for all policy and regional initiatives, like the 2015 European Commission agreement strive to empower students facing disadvantages to pursue education (Bowl, 2018; Claeys, Kulik & Jørgensen, 2018). In the UK specifically the Widening Participation (WP) programme aims to promote university enrollment among groups. The Rwandan government has initiatives to ensure that a larger number of Rwandans can pursue education opportunities through programmes focused on increasing participation, in education (MINEDUC 2008). Nevertheless these efforts may lead to rates of failure and students dropping out. To evaluate the effectiveness of these programmes tactics, in colleges and universities should prioritize retaining and advancing students from their year when dropout rates are highest. It is essential to emphasize diversity, within the education sector as highlighted in the research carried out by Naylor et al. (2018).

It's tough to keep first year undergrads engaged as they tend to drop out than later year students do, in their programmes due to factors like adjusting to a new setting and not having clear goals or feeling isolated in the academic environment; issues outside academics, like family responsibilities and money troubles could also impact their learning ability. Voluntary and involuntary dropout or failure related to these concerns can have an effect, on student retention and advancement (Naylor et al., 2013). The first year sees low advancement rates and high numbers of dropouts for undergraduate students. This is probably for reasons including adjustment to a new environment, absence of direction, academic culture and loneliness. Family issues, financial problems and many other non-

academic-related troubles can prevent first year students from studying too (Naylor et al., 2013; Briggs et al. 2012; Pennington et al., 2018; Pitkethly & Prosser, 2001; Jeffreys, 2007).

Academic self-efficacy (ASE) is a student's belief in his or her capability to do well in academic tasks. ASE has better academic and healthy lifestyle outcomes. According to the self-efficacy theory, students need confidence in their ability to answer questions or do tasks. Many authors emphasized that self-efficacy is the belief in one's abilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations (Pajares, 1996; Payne et al., 2007; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Dogan, 2015).

Academic self-efficacy is the student's confidence in his or her individual abilities to perform any learning tasks at a particular standard (Gore 2006; Bandura, 1997; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Elias & Loomis, 2002; Schunk & Pajares, 2002). In other words, it gives rise to their mental enthusiasm for learning where they strive to achieve the given goals (Hayat et al., 2020). When student believe they have ability for an academic task, their motivation and performance increase. On the other hand, lack of faith in one's ability has adverse effect on learning and academic performance. Students with low self-efficacy fear more and also are scared off from doing required things and delay all the academic works. Students who struggle with self-efficacy are disadvantaged in the classroom (Satici & Can, 2016). Given these foundational beliefs, low self-efficacy can hinder new students — particularly those from lower socioeconomic households — leading to a lack of academic and social success. Society creates social and economic status which ensures that students are successful (Armstrong & Hamilton, 2013). Stephens et al. (2012) suggested that first-generation students (those who do not have a person in family who holds at least a Bachelor's degree) lack the support from the family, which contributes to attrition rates and lower levels of college success compared to their continuous generation counterparts.

Whether the levels of academic self-efficacy are at a satisfactory level or not in Rwandan tertiary education is unknown. The impact of academic self-efficacy on academic performance in Rwanda at any level of education is also unknown. It is still unknown whether the practices of lecturers and students in Rwanda are so far likely to help increase the academic self-efficacy which in turn may impact positively on their academic performance. Tehetna (2017) found that psychosocial wellbeing of orphans in Rwanda depends on living environments, quality of care and psychological vulnerability. This means that disadvantaged students are already psychosocially vulnerable and they need a quality care including the nurturing on academic self-efficacy to enable them have improved performance either academically or professionally. This study is an attempt to explore the levels of academic self-efficacy and to suggest how these levels may be improved as studies proved that ASE influences the academic performance of students and other success in life (Habyarimana et al., 2022; Tehetna, 2017; Armstrong & Hamilton, 2013).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

To improve the quality of education at all levels, Rwanda has initiated measures that cater for cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains (MINEDUC, 2016; MINEDUC, 2019). Despite the importance of academic self-efficacy, which is one of the constructs and skills of affective domain, as a very good predictor for individual students' success in academic activities and in their future social and economic life (Habyarimana et al., 2022; Tehetna, 2017; Armstrong & Hamilton, 2013), this phenomenon and its extent on year one students is entirely unexploited in Rwanda. This study seeks to know the status of the levels of academic self-efficacy and thereby inviting future examination of this important domain of student achievement in Rwandan education system.

1.2 Research Objective

This study has one objective of exploring the levels of academic self-efficacy among the first- year student teachers of the University of Rwanda-College of Education during the academic year 2023.

1.3 Research Question

What are the levels of academic self-efficacy among the first year-student teachers of UR-College of Education during the academic year 2023-2024?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) and Self-Efficacy Theory (SET)

Self-efficacy is a construct derived from Social Cognitive Theory — a theory of personality development focusing on the importance of observational learning, imitation, and social experience. Reciprocal determinism (Bandura, 1986) explains an interaction between personal, behavioral and environmental influences implying a triadic reciprocity. Social cognitive theory is distinguished from other theories by its importance on put on cognition and its discerning reality and behavior. This theory favors efforts in therapy or counseling at incremental personal,

environmental and behavioural level. Through helping students overcome personal barriers, provide alternatives to irrational beliefs, enhance academic skill and restructure school environments that restrain achievement, teachers can make a significant difference in enhancing academic learning and student's academic self-efficacy.

SCT is underpinned by the view of human institutions that make room for human beings to participate in their own cultivation and build things (or practice which makes perfect). Of course, the existence of this institution is based not only on those individual factors. People have a measure of control over their thoughts, feelings and behaviors simply because they believe themselves to be in control. "What people think, believe and feel effects how they behave" Bandura (1986, p. 25). Bandura has claimed that the transformative agents in this personal representation are woven by the beliefs individuals have about themselves which serve as a prime basis for control. After centuries of the isolation of the people, Bandura extended the ideas about human agency to cover large collective spheres. According to SCT, economic sociocultural context (SEC), status and education in conjunction with family composition have implications for human behavior that are so pervasive that they shape wants, efficacy expectations, normative beliefs, mood states and other self-regulation cross influences.

Self-efficacy is the belief in one's ability to act in the way that is necessary to attain certain goals. It was introduced in 1977 by the psychologist Albert Bandura. Self-efficacy is the term defined by Albert Bandura as having confident in one's abilities to carry out a task or achieve success in specific situations. Self-efficacy influences how a person approaches goals, tasks, and challenges (Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2005). Self-efficacy plays a role in all aspects of human activity. Self-efficacy powerfully enhances the ability a person has to actually confront and deal with life's challenges competently by determining what a person believes he or she needs to hold the potential to do. More particularly and compellingly, these behaviours are evident in investments behaviors as detailed in health, education (Krishnan & Krutikova, 2013), agriculture (Wuepper & Lybbert, 2017).

When coming down to human accomplishing and people's well-being — self-efficacy is the one that carries it through. Someone with high self-efficacy sees challenges as what they are to be mastered and react not threatened. They bounce back more quickly from failure and attribute it to a lack of effort. They have the mindset that they can manage threatening situations. High levels of academic self-efficacy are associated with lower levels of stress and reduced susceptibility to depression (Bandura, 2010). On the other hand, people with low self-efficacy see any challenge as a threat and avoid it. Challenging tasks cause them to focus on what they don't know rather than what they do. They easily lose faith in their own abilities to accomplish a task. Stress and depression are also associated with high levels of low self-efficacy (Bandura, 2010).

2.1.2 Self-Efficacy Theory and Construct of SCT

Self-efficacy beliefs are important for the well-functioning of human beings and their personal performance. They govern a person's aptitude to establish and perform activities to attain specific goals (Bandura, 1986). Students with high self-efficacy feel encouraged to set goals, monitor their progress, and employ worthy strategies for learning. This belief boosts their interest to embrace challenging tasks and attain their goals, thereby enhancing their overall well-being and achievement. Positive student attitudes reduce stress and depression, while low self-efficacy leads to doubt and avoidance of challenging academic tasks, as students perceive them as threats and avoid them based on personal factors (Zimmerman et al., 1992).

In Education field, the affective domain of instructional objectives must be inseparable from the cognitive domain, as one alone can make the other imperfect and unnecessary (Hall, 2010; Garretz, 2010; Malikow, 2006). Affective skills, like self-efficacy, boost cognitive learning. Aspiration and motivation, rather than academic success, are critical for learning (Stiggins, 2002). A positive attitude decreases stress and depression, while low self-efficacy can lead students to doubt their abilities and escape challenging academic tasks based on personal reasons.

Academic self-efficacy fetches its influence from two inherent theories of intelligence: entity theory of intelligence and incremental theory (Dweck, 1999). Students who subscribe to entity theory of intelligence are less likely to try puzzling tasks and risk academic underachievement. They have faith in fixed and stable intelligence, favoring mastery goals and evading cognitive and meta-cognitive approaches. They select to show off to others and avoid looking unintelligent, but they prefer to avoid the expected effort. On the other hand, "incremental theory" treats intelligence as malleable, fluid and changeable. Students who subscribe to "incremental theory" are delighted with the pleasure emanating from the learning process and may seek occasions for perfection and tend to work hard. They do not concentrate on the result but rather on what they can attain from participating in the learning processes, they display higher self-efficacy, are motivated better, focus within the realm of metacognition and do not paint themselves to a corner. The implicit theories of intelligence elucidate feelings of self-efficacy, the goals pursued, the level of self-regulation and academic achievement (Valentine et al., DuBois, & Cooper, 2004; Komarraju et al., Karau, & Schmeck, 2009). Academic self-efficacy, which implicates self-regulated learning, can impact academic attainment and motivation. It permits students to use their own resources to plan, control, and analyze tasks, activities, and learning products, eventually leading to better learning outcomes (Zimmerman, 1995).

According to social cognitive theory, self-efficacy beliefs are related to the agency of a person, their choices, efforts, perseverance, and emotions (Pajares, 1997). Academic self-efficacy has a bearing on one's level of enthusiasm, activity type and level, duration, and feelings. In his 1977 work, Bandura argued that individuals with high self-efficacy are more competent, diligent, persistent, and display mild emotions when confronted with challenges. The concept self-efficacy in academic context contributes to enhancing the intellectual performance of students and their educational goals (Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992).

2.1.3 Development of Academic Self-Efficacy

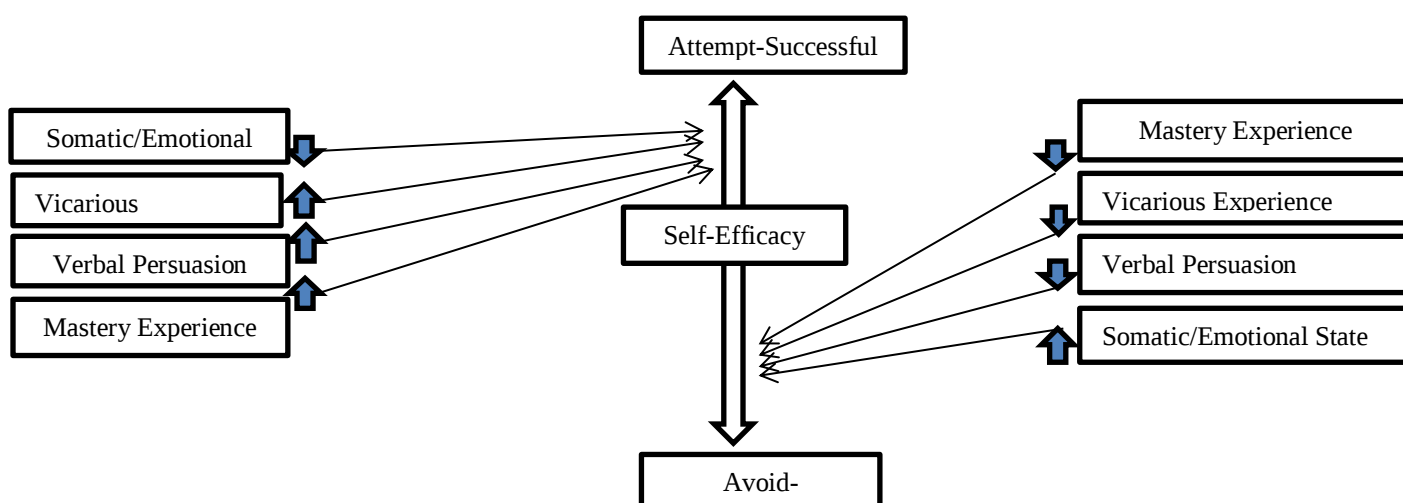


Figure 1

Model of Academic Self-Efficacy Theory

Source: Kardong-Edgren (2013)

Lopez-Garrido (2020) identifies four factors that cultivate self-efficacy, these being: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion and emotional states or physiological feedback. Mastery experiences reinforce one's skills, vicarious experiences are used to compare one's skills with those of others, social persuasion is used to motivate or demotivate actions, while emotional and physiological feedback affect self-efficacy through bodily and physiological experiences. Also, these sources determine future outcomes of one's success, as previously attained sources add to one's potential to succeed.

Although a number of studies accepted the four sources of self-efficacy namely mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion and somatic/emotional states (Zimmerman et al., 1992; Bandura, 1994, 1997; Kardong-Edgren, 2013), the study looks at some self-efficacy dimensions like self-regulated learning, perceived control, persistence, and competence. It goes further to construct the domains academic self-efficacy from the previous literature concerning its use in academic environments using ideas of self-regulated learning, perceived control, and competence. It has also been noted that Self-efficacy has many components such as self-regulated learning, Perceived Control, Persistence, and Competence, which have been awarded their due by different researchers. These studies emphasize the role of self-regulation in improving learning and control as a basis for improved performance" (Byrne et al., 2014; O'Neil, 2017; Gaumeret et al., 2018; Sherer et al., 1982).

Self-Regulated Learning

Self-regulation, or SRL, is an important notion within the concept of academic self-efficacy. It refers to thoughts, affections, and behaviors that are created, structured, and altered in the interest of achieving one's self-defined goals and allowing the practice of cognitive capacities to be expressed through learning performance (Kjuhl et al, 1997 & 2000; Schunk, 1991 & 1999; Zimmerman 2008; Salmeron et al, 2010; Schnell et al, 2015).

Implementing and practicing such techniques independently, thus driving towards defined goals, accurately represents self-regulated learning, or SRL in this case. Other important strategies which greatly aided high SRL students' academic success include planning, self-evaluation, self-correction and appropriate self-advancement with regards to academics (Zimmerman, 2008; Brown & Ralph, 2008; as cited in Cazan, 2012). In their study, Zimmerman & Schunk (2008), among other things established that self-efficacy beliefs and self-regulation had a two-way

interaction. Self-efficacy, according to Diset (2011), predicts academic self-regulation, and as self-efficacy in students develop so does their self-regulation allowing students greater scope to meet new academic challenges.

Perceived Control or Internal Locus of Control

Perceived control, also known as Internal Locus of Control, is a key component of self-efficacy, influencing individuals to attribute their successes and failures to themselves, believing they can change their behavior (Rotter, 1990; Feist et al., 2013). Wood and Wood (1996) suggest that individuals with a sense of internal control and strong self-efficacy exhibit intrinsic drive. Bandura (1994, 1997) and others (Schunk & Pajares, 2002, Zimmerman & Cleary, 2006) found that perceptions of ability, social comparison, attributions, time availability, and perceived importance influence self-efficacy.

Persistence

Persistence is linked to academic self-efficacy, as it helps maintain goal-oriented behavior amidst academic challenges. Persistence is characterized by fearlessness, advocacy for beliefs, and willingness to confront challenges, as per self-efficacy researchers (Schunk & Pajares, 2002; Schnell et al., 2015). Confidence boosts self-efficacy, influencing decision-making, effort, perseverance, and anxiety levels (Bandura, 1994, 1997). High self-efficacy leads to positive academic behaviors and higher performance assessment among students (Bouffard et al., 2005).

Competence

Competence is a subcategory of self-efficacy, with anticipation and ability beliefs being assessments of students' competence and self-efficacy. Expectancy beliefs focus on a student's ability to learn or perform well, while ability beliefs assess their self-esteem and performance compared to peers. Competence is a subcategory of self-efficacy, with anticipation and ability beliefs being assessments of students' competence and self-efficacy. Expectancy beliefs focus on a student's ability to learn or perform well, while ability beliefs assess their self-esteem and performance compared to peers (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). Schunk and Pajares (2002) define self-competence and self-efficacy as domain-specific and task-specific beliefs. Students with strong self-efficacy prioritize skill improvement and learning activities. Competence leads to increased self-efficacy and control over the future, while high self-efficacy prioritizes improving competencies and learning activities (Schunk & Pajares, 2002) define self-competence and self-efficacy as domain-specific and task-specific beliefs. Students with strong self-efficacy prioritize skill improvement and learning activities. Competence leads to increased self-efficacy and control over the future, while high self-efficacy prioritizes improving competencies and learning activities (Lavasani et al., 2010).

2.2 Empirical Review

A cross-sectional study in Bangladesh found that a significant number of students have strong academic self-efficacy and motivation in medical education (Maraghi et al., 2016). A study in India found a significant difference in self-efficacy's impact on psychological well-being among undergraduate students (Siddiqui, 2015).

Mbabazi (2016) examined the impact of attitude and self-efficacy on students' academic achievement in Mathematics. The study was conducted in Uganda and the results showed satisfactory academic performance, with no significant gender differences in attitude or self-efficacy. The study also found that an attitude towards mathematics significantly influences academic success. Adopting a positive attitude towards mathematics can enhance students' performance, and it is crucial for parents, professors, and other stakeholders to support students in this area. This study, which included first-year student teachers at UR-College of Education, focused on one subject.

The study by Habyarimana et al. (2022) reveals that parental family background significantly influences school dropout rates, particularly among first-generation students. Other factors like low socioeconomic status and lower enrollment intensity contribute to high dropout rates. The study aims to investigate the academic self-efficacy levels of year one students from diverse backgrounds to identify ways to improve their academic performance, particularly in areas influenced by poor backgrounds, by implementing appropriate measures.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study followed a sequential explanatory design. It was a two-phase approach, with quantitative data collected and evaluated initially and qualitative data collected and analyzed in response to the quantitative results.

3.2 Study Location

The study was carried out at the University of Rwanda-College of Education whose students are dispatched into three campuses: Rukara campus, Nyagatare campus and Remera campus.

3.3 Target Population

The study's target group was 1435 first-year student teachers at UR-College of Education and all academic staff members who had facilitated these students during the academic year 2023.

3.4 Sample size and Sampling Techniques

The sample size of 304 first-year student teachers was obtained using Cochran's formula (Cochran, 1977). Respondents who completed an online academic self-efficacy questionnaire were identified using multistage cluster sampling and simple random sampling procedures. Purposive sampling was used in the selection of 20 student teachers who were to be interviewed. The same technique was also used to select 5 academic staff members who were to be interviewed.

3.5 Data Collection Instruments

The study used three types of instruments for data collection namely an online questionnaire, documentation, and in-depth interviews.

Documentation

The report of annual marks of year one student teachers for the academic year 2023 was analysed in the sampling procedure as the selection of 20 interviewees among the whole sample of students was based on various categories of academic performance (high performers, moderate performers, and low performers) alongside various levels of ASE in the same sample (high ASE, moderate ASE and low ASE).

Online questionnaire

An online academic self-efficacy questionnaire was addressed to 304 year one student teachers. It was a five point scale Likert questionnaire built on basis of the four components of academic self-efficacy namely self-regulated learning, internal locus of control or perceived control, competence and persistence.

In-depth interviews

After analyzing the quantitative data, two types of in-depth interviews were done. One interview addressed to five academic staff members who were purposefully selected among heads of departments, subject leaders, and module leaders, with one interviewee representing each of the five departments. Another interview targeted first-year student teachers, with 20 students purposefully and randomly chosen to participate in an in-depth interview to validate the quantitative results from the questionnaire.

3.6 Validity and Reliability

To check reliability of the instruments, test-retest method was adopted, and the instrument was reliable as it computed 0.83 as a correlation coefficient. The content validity was also 0.921 proving that the instrument had acceptable internal validity as it was above 0.7.

3.7 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed by using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 21, where it computed descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, and presented the findings using tables while the qualitative data were analyzed thematically and presented using a text.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Response Rate

The response rates were satisfactory in delivering valid and reliable presentation of targeted population. This was calculated from questionnaires obtained from participants.

Table 2

Questionnaires Return Rate

Campus	Student teachers who received the online questionnaire	Student teachers who fully completed the online questionnaire	Percentage of Student teachers who fully completed the online questionnaire
Rukara Campus	126	126	100%
Nyagatare Campus	163	163	100%
Remera Campus	15	15	100%

The table 2 shows the return rate of the online questionnaire. The researchers sent the online questionnaire to 304 student teachers and they all sent back their responses at 100%. This percentage was sufficient to continue the research.

4.1.1 Levels of Academic Self-Efficacy among First-Year UR-CE Student Teachers

This part assessed various levels of Academic self-efficacy among first-year student teachers of UR-CE. It investigated concepts and variables related to self-efficacy itself and these ones include self-regulated learning (SRL), perceived control (PC) or internal locus of control, persistence, and competence.

Self-Regulated Learning

The table 3 presents the responses of student teachers on how they perceive their self-regulated learning (SRL). The analysis and interpretation of the data contained in this table are provided below the table.

Table 3

Self-Regulated Learning

Self-regulated learning Items	N	MEAN	SD
I am able to adapt to challenging assignments in class.	304	3.56	1.89
I'm capable of studying alone.	304	3.30	1.82
I welcome suggestions to change my negative study habits.	304	3.54	1.88
I am able to track my progress in learning.	304	3.58	1.89
I am able to turn in my requirements ahead of schedule.	304	3.47	1.86
I keep my academic work organized.	304	3.60	1.90
I organize my academic schedule.	304	3.61	1.90
I remember the discussions that were held in class.	304	3.51	1.87
I can apply the knowledge I've gained from textbooks.	304	3.60	1.90
I'm focusing on my studies right now.	304	3.61	1.90
I set up my study room so that I can learn without distractions.	304	3.44	1.85
I can motivate myself to complete schoolwork and assignments.	304	3.75	1.94
I can motivate myself to learn.	304	3.75	1.94
I'm motivated to pass all subjects.	304	3.72	1.93
When I make mistakes, I am willing to change my behavior.	304	3.78	1.94
I believe I perform best in written assignments in my academics, such as quizzes, units, and long tests.	304	3.56	1.89
I effectively organize and plan for academic performance tasks such as group presentations, oral work, multimedia presentations, and research projects..	304	3.62	1.90
I am motivated to excel in the quarterly evaluation of my academic performance, such as periodic exams.	304	4.21	2.05
Grand mean		3.89	1.97

The grand mean for self-regulated learning across respondents is 3.89 as shown in the table 3, which is high. Self-regulated learning is a cycle in which the student organizes a task, checks his or her performance and then reflects on the results. This process repeats, as the student uses reflection to plan and prepare for the next activity. This approach is not comprehensive; it should be personalized for each student and their unique learning activities (Zimmerman, 2002). A high grand mean of SD on this component of self-regulated learning (1.97) implies that there is a lack of homogeneity in the responses provided by student teachers about how they regulate their own learning. A sizeable number of respondents ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 1.89$) agreed that they could change when academically challenged, and low number of respondents ($M = 3.30$, $SD = 1.82$) agreed that they could study alone. Furthermore, the majority of respondents ($M = 3.54$, $SD = 1.88$) said that they would accept advice to help them with their lack of study skills and a substantial number of respondents ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 1.89$) agreed that they could track their learning progress. A relatively low number respondents ($M = 3.47$, $SD = 1.86$) said they could turn in assignments early and stay organized with their work. A majority of respondents $M = 3.60$, $SD = 1.90$ agreed they could plan their academic calendar, and a significant number $M = 3.61$, $SD = 1.90$ stated that they could recall class talks. In addition, the large number of respondents $M = 3.51$, $SD = 1.87$ said that they can use the knowledge they learned from textbooks, while most agreed that they could focus on studying. In addition, most respondents ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 1.90$) agree that they could turn their study space into a distraction-free zone, and a low number of participants ($M = 3.44$, $SD = 1.85$) said they could motivate themselves to do school work and tasks. Moreover, many participants were in agreement to some extent (M

= 3.75, SD = 1.94) that they could push themselves to learn and (M = 3.75, SD = 1.94) they wanted to excel in every subject. The survey also discovered that most respondents (M = 3.78, SD = 1.94) are ready to change their behaviour when they make mistakes. Moreover, a substantial proportion of respondents (M = 3.94, SD = 1.98) felt they did well in academic writing, such as quizzes, unit tests and long exams. The majority of respondents (M = 3.78, SD = 1.94) said they were able to organize and plan their academic assignments well including group presentations, oral work, multimedia presentations or research projects. The main motivation for a large number of respondents (M = 3.56, SD = 1.89) was to do well in their regular academic assessments, and periodic exams. The interviewed academic staff members were not that far from the above results as 3 out of 5 interviewees (60%) agreed that first year student teachers seemed to be able to self-regulate their learning despite their various socioeconomic backgrounds. The UR-CE launched many programmes, but these are not yet enough. One interviewee said:

“Year one students are in the position to self-regulate their learning thanks to various programmes initiated by the UR-CE such as the module of “Academic and Life Skills” which is taught to students at their arrival at university, the induction sessions, the service of guidance and counseling available to students, and various clubs available at the college. However, some students do not participate actively in such programmes and so their family backgrounds keep impacting their academic performance as it becomes difficult for them to self-regulate learning and so they study in disorder, with poor time management, poor lecture attendance, poor use of university facilities etc. I also mention that the service of guidance and counseling is not well performing and so some students who are in need of such services do not get them adequately”

The remaining 2 out of 5 academic staff members (40%) showed that students were relatively lazy and learn with difficulty and indiscipline confirming that their level of SRL is low. One of these lecturers said;

“Nowadays students are lazy and do not want to work hard, they like getting undeserved marks without demonstrating enough skills and knowledge. Many of them are not willing to attend lectures and they only attend when they are threatened to forfeit marks in assignments or quizzes. Even in class, some are distracted by other activities like chatting on their smartphones; some others sleep in class as if they spend nights in night clubs. Some students drop out of university and others fail simply because they are not dedicated to their studies. The UR-CE needs to focus on guidance and counseling services so that student’s especially those in year one may benefit from them and increase their level of ASE.”

The information provided by interviewed student teachers also validated the results from ASE questionnaire. 14 out of 20 (70%) interviewed students showed that year one student teachers had relatively high self-regulated learning abilities as they get support from various sources namely universities programmes such as the module of academic and life skills, induction programme, UR-CE clubs, university library, and some lecturers who could encourage them to work hard in their respective modules.

One student argued:

“The UR-CE has set up various opportunities likely to help us self-regulate our learning. When we reached here we were given sessions of induction, in the semester we studied the module called academic and life skills in which we got study skills such as how to attend successfully a lecture, how to take assignments, how to visit library, how to write composition, how to seek help either from lecturer or a colleague. We also learnt life skills. However, the guidance and counseling services are not working properly to help us when we are in need. Some lecturers also discourage students instead of hearing and helping them build their self-confidence in academic matters. You can hear a lecturer telling students that they are good at nothing, that they will not succeed in his/her module and in life in general!”

4.1.2 Responses of Student Teachers on their Perceived Control (Internal Locus of Control)

The table 4 presents the responses of first year students on how they perceive their internal locus of control. Its analysis is shown below the table.

Table 4*Perceived Control (Internal Locus of Control)*

Perceived Control (Internal Locus of Control) Items	N	MEAN	SD
I can succeed because I can improve my study habit	304	3.88	1.97
I will be able to finish my university education because I am smart enough to do so	304	3.54	1.88
When I am called in class to give my opinion, I give the correct answer because I pay attention	304	3.63	1.90
Passing a subject depends on how well I perform.	304	3.75	1.94
The future depends on what I do now.	304	4.03	2.01
My lecturers give me high marks because I deserve them.	304	3.41	1.85
Because I developed good study habits, I learned more.	304	3.78	1.94
I can successfully control the outcome of my performance tasks, such as group presentations, oral works, multimedia presentations, and research projects.	304	3.68	1.92
My lecturers see me as a good student.	304	3.47	1.86
I believe that I can pass all modules because I can do so.	304	3.69	1.92
I believe that I can pass research because I can do so.	304	3.63	1.91
I can successfully control the outcome of written work in my academics, such as quizzes, units, or long tests.	304	3.70	1.92
Grand Mean		3.68	1.92

Table 4 shows that the grand mean is 3.68 meaning moderate perceived control. The grand mean of the SD for this component is high (1.92) showing a wide dispersion between the respondents. The majority of respondents ($M = 3.88$, $SD = 1.97$) believed that they would be able to succeed because they knew they could change their study habits, and a sizable number of respondents ($M = 3.54$, $SD = 1.88$) believed they can complete their university education since they are smart enough. Additionally, the majority of respondents ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 1.90$) claimed that when they asked to answer in class, they give the right answer because they have good listening and a considerable amount of respondents ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 1.94$) said that when they pass a subject it is because they have already learned that material. And a high proportion of respondents ($M = 4.03$, $SD = 2.01$) agreed that their future depends on what they do today. A small but significant number of respondents ($M=3.41$, $SD=1.85$) said that the lectures give them great grades based on their merit.

A large number of respondents ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 1.94$) agreed that developing effective study habits helps them learn more. A number of respondents ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 1.92$) believed they could successfully influence the outcome of their performance tasks, such as group presentations, oral works, multimedia presentations, and research projects. Moreover, a low number of respondents ($M=3.47$, $SD = 1.86$) agreed that their lecturers regard them as good students. The majority of respondents ($M = 3.69$, $SD = 1.92$) believe they can pass all subjects, while a significant number ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 1.91$) believe they could pass research. Additionally, a significant number of respondents ($M = 3.70$, $SD = 1.92$) believe they can successfully control the outcome of written works in their academics, such as quizzes, end of units tests, or long tests.

Musher-Eizenman et al., (2002) realized that students with strong perceived control outperform academically their counterparts that have poor perceived control. Perceived control refers to a person's independent ideas about how much control he has over the environment or the outcome (Kondo et al., 2021). Psychologists believe that people who are healthy and successful strongly control their lives and their surroundings. Perceived control indicates an individual's belief that a situation is under control and that he or she possesses the requisite skills to achieve a desired (or prevent an undesirable) outcome.

The results from the interviews conducted with academic staff members corroborate the above findings in that 4 out of 5 of the interviewees (80%) suggested that the year one student teachers had internal locus of control whereby they accept their role and effort as responsible of their academic success or failure while only one out of 5 of interviewees (20%) suggested that the majority of year one students had academic external locus of control whereby they declined their responsibilities in their success or failure and claim that their success or failure lie in the hands of the lecturer or just happen by chance. These ones were sometimes involved in malpractices during exams or any academic activity.

The students who were interviewed also validated the results from questionnaire whereby 13 out of 20 interviewed students (65%) proved to have internal locus of control as they showed that their academic success or failure was the result of their own effort and laziness and not from lecturers or someone else nor from chance. However, 7 out of 20 interviewed students (35%) proved that they had external locus of control whereby they decline their responsibility in the academic performance they get. As a consequence this attitude is likely to hinder their self-regulated learning because they believe in academic determinism.

4.1.3 Responses of Student Teachers on their Competence

The table 5 presents the responses of first year students teachers on their academic competence. The analysis and interpretation of the data in that table are shown below the table.

Table 5

Competence

Competence	N	MEAN	SD
In whatever I do, I strive to attain excellence.	304	3.85	1.96
I do things creatively, which helps me get good grades.	304	3.74	1.93
I can perform very well in my field of study.	304	3.75	1.94
I do not feel anxious during exams because I know I can pass any form of academic assessment with high marks.	304	3.36	1.84
Speaking before the audience doesn't worry me because I perform confidently and intelligently.	304	3.54	1.88
My lecturers consider me to be among the top students in the class..	304	3.15	1.77
I have faith that I can grasp the ideas and material covered in my class.	304	3.45	1.86
In terms of academic performance, I believe I perform better than my classmates.	304	3.07	1.75
I can perform exceptionally well in my modules.	304	3.32	1.82
I care about the homework that I was given in class.	304	3.16	1.78
I can do well on written assignments, including quizzes, units, and lengthy tests.	304	3.66	1.91
I am capable of completing academic assignments like research projects, oral presentations, multimedia presentations, and group presentations.	304	3.66	1.91
I am able to pass my periodic test or assessment.	304	3.68	1.92
I know how to use educational technologies effectively.	304	3.58	1.89
Grand mean		3.50	1.87

Although most respondents in table 5 said they thought they were capable of performing well, the grand mean of their answers is just 3.50, which is low and Elliott (2002) defined academic competence as a multifaceted term that includes students' abilities, attitudes, and behaviours that support success in the classroom. The grand mean of standard deviation on this component of competence was high (1.87) which showed a significant dispersion among the respondents.

The findings contained in the table 5 show that most respondents ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 1.96$) agreed that they aim for excellence in all they do, while some respondents ($M = 3.74$, $SD = 1.93$) felt that using their creativity helps them receive good grades. A good number of respondents ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 1.94$) accepted that they could perform very well in their field of study. A sizable number of respondents ($M = 3.36$, $SD = 1.84$) stated that they didn't feel nervous before tests since they knew they could pass the test with excellent marks. A sizable number of respondents ($M = 3.54$, $SD = 1.88$) agreed that speaking before the audience doesn't worry them because they perform confidently and intelligently. The majority of respondents also agreed that they could perform extremely well in whichever sector they could enter. Furthermore, a low average of respondents ($M = 3.15$, $SD = 1.77$) indicated that their lecturers consider them to be among the best students in the class, and a relatively small percentage of respondents ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 1.86$) agreed that they believed that they could grasp the ideas and material covered in their class. A small proportion of respondents ($M = 3.07$, $SD = 1.75$) agreed that in terms of academic performance, they believed they performed better than their classmates. A small number of respondents ($M = 3.32$, $SD = 1.82$) agreed they could perform exceptionally well in their modules. A small number of respondents ($M = 3.16$, $SD = 1.78$) agreed they cared about the homework that they were given in class. Furthermore, a sizable portion of respondents ($M = 3.66$, $SD = 1.91$) agreed that they could receive good grades on written work, such as quizzes, end of units tests, or lengthy tests. Additionally, a significant portion of respondents ($M = 3.66$, $SD = 1.91$) agreed that they could complete their academic assignments, including group presentations, oral work, multimedia presentations, and research projects. Furthermore, a sizable portion of respondents ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 1.92$) believed that they could pass their periodic assessments, and the majority of respondents ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 1.89$) stated that they are proficient in using their educational tools.

Interviews with academic staff corroborated data from the ASE questionnaire concerning competence. The general mean score of those who agreed on various items of competence is 3.50, as shown in the table 5. Also, 3 out of 5 interviewed academic staff (60%) regarded year one student teachers as largely competent academically. That is, they regarded students as having a combination of the skills, the attitudes, and the behaviours that could contribute to their success in academic activity and tasks. On the contrary, 2 out of 5 academic staff (40%) viewed year one students as not fully competent academically. They are perceived to require more time to competently complete assigned work, often lacking in confidence when giving presentations, and often inefficient in their use of time.

The students who were interviewed validated the results from the ASE questionnaire concerning their academic competence. Of the 20 students, 14 students (70%) admitted having academic competence. Their responses thus were evidence for their combinative skill, attitude and behaviour that would make them successful in academic activities and tasks. Of these, however, 6 respondents (30%) said all sorts of things that placed them among the academically incompetent identified by indecision on course selection, extreme postponement, recurring requests for extension or consideration, and avoidance or domination of discussions often.

4.1.4 Persistence

Table 6 presents the responses of student teachers on how they perceived their persistence on academic work when they could get challenged. The analysis and interpretation of these responses are shown below the table.

Table 6
Persistence

Persistence	N	MEAN	SD
In spite of peer discouragement, I keep up my diligent study habits.	304	3.47	1.86
I keep up my good grades in spite of university pressures.	304	3.48	1.87
Even when others give up on me passing a subject, I persevere.	304	3.62	1.90
I never give up on understanding the lesson, even when it is difficult for me.	304	3.73	1.93
I don't let obstacles stop me from achieving my objective.	304	3.76	1.94
If I don't give up, I can finish my difficult homework.	304	3.76	1.94
I can excel in even the most difficult subject if I put in the necessary work.	304	3.58	1.89
I know that working hard and consistently is how I take care of myself.	304	3.73	1.93
I am always able to figure out answers to problems related to my courses.	304	3.56	1.89
I always finish the most difficult assignments.	304	3.38	1.84
If I persevere, almost all of the difficult assignments in school are manageable.	304	3.41	1.85
I am able to gain knowledge from all of my challenges.	304	3.69	1.92
I'm determined to pass every subject.	304	3.58	1.89
I put in a lot of effort even in the face of challenges to receive good grades on written assignments for my classes, quizzes, and lengthy tests.	304	3.66	1.91
I can complete my academic performance assignments, including research projects, group presentations, oral work, and multimedia presentations, in spite of challenges.	304	3.60	1.90
Grand mean		3.60	1.90

The table 6, results presented a persistence score of 3.60 suggesting a level of persistence that aligns with Neuville (2013) definition of persistence, as a year-long process that encompasses various behaviors like attending classes and reading for enjoyment during the week and weekends. The concept is often explored in student studies when considering enrollment, in the academic field in future years. The average standard deviation, for this persistence aspect is quite high (1.90) indicating a variation among the participants.

The findings displayed in the table 6 reveal that a considerable proportion of participants ($M = 3.47$; $SD = 1.86$) acknowledged maintaining their academic pursuits despite discouragement, from peers and similarly noteworthy numbers ($M = 3.48$; $SD = 1.87$) acknowledged maintaining good grades despite pressures from the university environment. Many participants indicated that they had managed to persisted despite facing skepticism, about their capability to succeed in a subject (3.62 ; $SD = 1.90$). Moreover, a majority expressed the sentiment of not giving up when encountering challenges in comprehending a lesson ($M = 3.73$; $SD = 1.93$). Most people surveyed indicated that they continued working towards their goals when faced with challenges and obstacles; moreover, a significant number also expressed confidence, in accomplishing tasks without giving up on them. A significant number of participants indicated that with effort and determination, they could pass subjects ($M = 3.58$; $SD = 1.89$). Moreover, a considerable majority of respondents mentioned that they could self-help by maintaining a work consistently ($M = 3.73$; $SD = 1.93$). Additionally, many participants indicated an inclination ($M = 3.56$; $SD = 1.89$), toward tackling challenges, within their academic fields. Conversely, a smaller number of respondents ($M = 3.38$, $SD = 1.84$) acknowledged mastering the complex class tasks. Many participants indicated that they persist in tackling challenging tasks and believe they can overcome obstacles by learning from them based on the survey results (rating of 3;41, with a standard deviation of 1.85). Another group of respondents also expressed confidence, in their ability to acquire knowledge from the challenges they encounter ($M = 3.69$; $SD = 1.92$). Many participants indicated a commitment, to succeeding in their studies and overcoming challenges to achieve grades in various academic assessments, like quizzes

or exams. Many participants ($M = 3.60$; $SD = 1.90$) mentioned that they could overcome obstacles and carry out assignments, like group presentations oral tasks, multimedia presentations, and research projects.

The results of interviews given by academic staff members showed that the way they perceive the academic persistence of year one student teachers corroborate the responses provided by students through ASE questionnaire. The grand mean of students who agreed they have persistence was 3.86 while their standard deviation was 1.96 while 4 out of 5 interviewed academic staff members (80%) also believed that their students were academically persistent as they could manage to resist challenges when they were given academic activities. One of these interviewees said:-

”. Of course we do not ignore individual differences and needs in academic matters but our first year students try their best to reach the final results when they are given academic tasks no matters the challenges they encounter, they end up reaching their academic goals in general, but lecturers need to provide clear guidance and help and encourage student to seek help instead of giving up. ”

However, one of these 5 academic staff members, (20%) showed a low perception on year one student teachers academic persistence whereby he said they were lazy and needed free marks without working hard and some even tried to cheat during academic tasks.

The interviewed student teachers also confirmed the findings from ASE questionnaire on academic persistence whereby 13 students out of 20 (65%) showed that they could resist any challenge encountered during their academic activities by seeking help from colleagues or from lecturers. They proved a strong resilience and confirmed that they manage more effort until they achieve their academic goals instead of giving up in front of challenges. However, 7 out 20 interviewed students (35%) showed lack of academic persistence as they can easily give up when they get challenges on their academic tasks and hence fail to achieve their academic goals. Their resilience was shown low as they could be stuck and fail to seek help and this caused them to perform poorly.

The overall mean for the four components of ASE was 3.67 which is equivalent to moderate ASE. The overall standard deviation of students' score on ASE for all its four components is 1.91 which shows a high dispersion of scores in that set of students considered as the sample. It means that the levels of ASE are very scattered among first year student teachers of UR-CE.

4.1.5 Levels of ASE According to Albert Bandura's Interpretation

The levels of ASE adopted from self-efficacy scales by Bandura (2006) could be interpreted as follows: high self-efficacy is the range between 80-100, and the subject is highly certain she/he can do, moderate score is around 40-79 and the subject is moderately certain he/she can do, and low self-efficacy score is from 0-39 where the individual cannot do at all.

Table 7

Levels of ASE according to Albert Bandura's Interpretation

Range of ASE level	Frequency	Percentage	Interpretation
0-39	3	0.99	Low ASE (cannot do at all)
40-79	238	78.29	Moderate ASE(moderately certain can do)
80-100	63	20.72	High ASE (highly certain can do)
Total	304	100	

The table 7 shows that the majority of respondents 238 (78.29%) have moderate ASE, that is, they are moderately certain they can achieve academic goals, followed by a meaningful number of respondents 63 (20.72%) who have high ASE, that is, they are highly certain they can accomplish successfully academic activities or successfully achieve academic goals. However the very low number of respondents 3(0.99%) have low ASE, meaning that they believe they cannot achieve academic goals.

V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

Based on the results of this study it was determined that first-year student teachers, at UR College of Education had a self-efficacy score ranging from 3.50 to 3.89 on a Likert scale across all four aspects of self-efficacy (ASE). Self-regulated learning received a score of 3.89 with a standard deviation of 1.97 while competence had the lowest average score of 3.50 with a standard deviation of 1.87. When considering all components together for ASE assessment the average was found to be 3.67, with a standard deviation of 1.91. The findings indicate that the ASE level of first-year student teachers, in UR CE, is moderate and the standard deviation reveals a heterogeneity in ASE scores among them. According to Bandura (2006) when it comes to self-efficacy among first-year student teachers, at UR-CE, the majority fall into the category of ASE with 78.29% indicating they are moderately confident in their

ability to reach their academic goals. The minority group consists of 20.72% showing high academic self-efficacy, that is, a high belief in their capability to excel academically. Only a small fraction of students (0.99%) exhibits academic self-confidence and feel they are unable to reach their academic goals successfully. These students, with low academic self-efficacy and others with moderate but close to low levels are susceptible to facing academic challenges that could result in failure, dropout, or engaging in unethical academic behaviors.

5.2 Recommendations

The results and conclusions of this study offer backing for universities to design initiatives and programmes aimed at enhancing students' academic self-belief and other psychosocial skills. It is suggested that universities integrate assessments of self-efficacy and other psychosocial skills into their selection processes since students could face challenges due, to self-efficacy levels despite having high intellectual abilities. The concept of self-efficacy is soft skill that universities, professors, and other academic service providers should emphasize. Implementing teaching methods like group work can effectively enhance self-efficacy. Moreover, universities should strive to create an inclusive environment for students through guidance career planning initiatives, and opportunities, for professional growth. Research indicates that fostering such an atmosphere leads to improved academic self-efficacy and ultimately boosts performance.

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