

Stress, Self-Efficacy and Psychological Wellbeing Among Performing Arts Students

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Abstract

Performing arts is important means of creative communication such as music, dance, drama, mime, puppetry, circus, illusion, magic, etc. Professionals may come across various difficulties, stresses, and issues of psychological wellbeing but, a little research on this subject is done in Pakistan. The objective of this study was to examine the relationship of perceived stress, self-efficacy, and psychological well-being among performing arts students. The sample comprised 203 (111 acting and 92 singing) performing arts students recruited from different colleges and universities of Pakistan. Simple linear regression analysis found that stress significantly negatively predicted four dimensions of psychological well-being such as environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relation, and self-acceptance. Women showed significantly higher levels of stress as compared to men among performing arts students. The research has implications for the performing arts students, counselors, and therapists for a better understanding of stress, self-efficacy, and dimensions of psychological well-being i.e., autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, purpose in life, and self-acceptance.

Keywords: Performing Arts, Acting, Dancing, Stress, Self-Efficacy, Psychological Well-Being.

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1. Introduction

Professionals may come across various difficulties, stresses, and issues of psychological wellbeing but a little research on this subject is done in Pakistan. The objective of this study was to examine the relationship of perceived stress, self-efficacy, and psychological well-being among performing arts students.

Art is an expression of human creative skills and their activities. It is the social procedure of an emotion or an instrument that brings personal and close aspects of our being into the area of social life (Vygotsky, 1971). Performing arts is an art that presents a live presentation to an audience and is also considered as traditional high arts (music, opera, theatre, and dance) to popular arts (live arts and non-live arts) through recordings, internet, radio, television, etc. (McCarthy et al., 2001; Charles et al., 2021).

Performing arts communicate and present the characteristics of people which are strongly associated with the formation of individual and social senses of identity. Performing art, is a method of understanding and communicating, serves as necessary complements to more rational and scientific ways of seeing and thinking about human existence. It compromises skills that are seen as

conventional and includes scientific ways of knowledge (Greene,1995; Kuhnke, 2021).

Performing arts are differentiated from visual arts and plastic forms of arts based on temporal forms. In many genres and forms, music and dance connect and combine. There is a clear distinction of a combination of music, drama, and dance in terms of specific modes, forms, and techniques (Wyse et al., 2016). Also, Vygotsky (1971) published his first work, *The Psychology of Art*, in the first part of the twentieth century. He was interested in thinking about dramatic arts.

Performing arts was considered as a collective endeavor, created from socially structured art in producing artistic events and artifacts. The idea of art as a social tool and technique is useful while considering the role of performing arts in the curriculum (Hess, 2021). Its different techniques use many cultural forms that can be termed as tools (Laes et al., 2021). These tools are developed from history, pre-exist with any individual and are repurposed to conventional or/and unconventional ways to shape the material that is available through cultural and social life.

The reason for conducting the research is to add to the body of knowledge and fill the research gap.

The present study aimed to determine whether performing art as an extracurricular activity is causing stress and poor psychological well-being or leads to enhanced self-efficacy and good psychological well-being among college and university students. The rationale of this research is that the relationship of proposed variables is checked in advanced countries, but it is the initial effort to check the relationships of these variables in the Pakistani cultural context.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Stress

Stress is an individual's response to a threatening situation. It results from pressure; pressure can be from internal perceptions of an individual or from external sources. Stress can result in pain, sadness, post-traumatic stress disorder, and many other psychological disorders (Shahsavarani et al., 2015).

Stress occurs when an individual believes that they cannot cope with the demand and threats of others (Lazarus, 1966). Bandura (1977) defined Self-efficacy as "an individual's belief in his/her capacity to produce specific performance attainments and to execute behaviors required to maintain that behavior". Self-efficacy is not an intention to attain a basic goal, according to the

research intentions are influenced by several other factors other than self-efficacy. It helps in producing desired effects by one's actions (Maddux, 2012).

2.2. Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is neither a drive, motive, a need of control, a personality trait nor an outcome expectation. Rather, it's an ability to coordinate desired goals by coordinating with one's potential, abilities, and skills in particular circumstances. It plays a chief role in many common psychological problems. Avoidant behavior, depression, and dysfunctional anxiety are the direct consequences of low self-efficacy (Badura, 1997; Williams, 1995). Psychological well-being represents one's affiliation with others and self-referent attitudes i.e., individuals of growth, mastery skills. It is linked with intra-individual and inter-individual levels of positive and effective functioning. It shows dimensions of affect judgments of life satisfaction. Psychological well-being reflects multidimensional approach, represented by 06 distinct areas: personal growth, autonomy, purpose in life, environmental mastery, positive relatedness with others, and self-acceptance (Burns, 2016).

Self-efficacy is linked to many psychological issues. People with

depressive mood tendencies believe that they aren't capable and are a failure. It plays an important role in eating disorders and substance abuse disorders. Each of these problems can be improved by improving self-control and implementing coping strategies which will enhance self-efficacy and will improve psychological well-being (Bandura, 1997; Maddux, 1995).

In research conducted by Haycox and Wilson (1992) on 162 performing artists that included 26 dancers, 33 actors, 38 singers, and 65 musicians, the dancers were indicted as anxious, unhappy, hypochondriacally with low self-esteem, actors as expressive and extraverted and musicians as unadventurous and introverted. Singers were seen in between actors and musicians. 47% of musicians and one-third of actors were suffering from performance anxiety, 38% depression was recorded in dancers, and everyone other than actors suffered from shoulder-ache more than the control group. Results showed that career was self-selection in terms of occupation, including different qualities mandatory for keeping the profession and unusual stressors made compulsory by performers' lifestyle.

Performance anxiety among musicians and music students occurs usually. It causes psychological stress

and tension. Professional development starts early among future musicians and the ratio seems relatively high in adolescents. The performance anxiety was discovered in a German Special music school that included a sample of 15-19-year-old pupils. Occurrence and expression of anxiety and managing tactics were checked. High-performance anxiety was seen in the study sample, and one-third of them were suffering from anxiety and distress (Fehm & Schmidt, 2004).

2.3. Psychological Well-Being

A study was conducted to measure the psychological well-being of American professional actors and to explore factors that might affect the psychological well-being of 20 South Australian actors with equal gender, having professional experience of one to fifty years with purposive and snowball sampling technique. The findings of the result suggest that American actors experienced a great range of threats to their well-being i.e., lack of environmental mastery, problems with autonomy, high self-criticism, and complex interpersonal relationship. According to findings, actors were also vulnerable to stress, depression, generalized anxiety symptoms, perfectionism, and vicarious trauma (Robb et al., 2016).

It is generally known that performing arts is an extracurricular activity that plays a part in promoting psychological well-being among students as it leads to enhanced self-esteem and social competence. But less attention is paid to students involved in performing arts in an academic environment especially acting and dancing students. However, there are several types of research evidence found on the professional artist and music students but very few on acting and dancing students in the academic environment.

Current research uses the dimensions of psychological well-being i.e., autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive

relations, purpose in life, and self-acceptance.

3. Hypotheses

H1. There is a negative impact of stress with dimensions of psychological well-being (autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, purpose in life, and self-acceptance) among performing arts students.

H2. There is a negative impact of stress on self-efficacy among performing arts students.

4. Methodology

4.1. Nature of Study

The authors have used quantitative research methods and data is collected through a structured questionnaire.

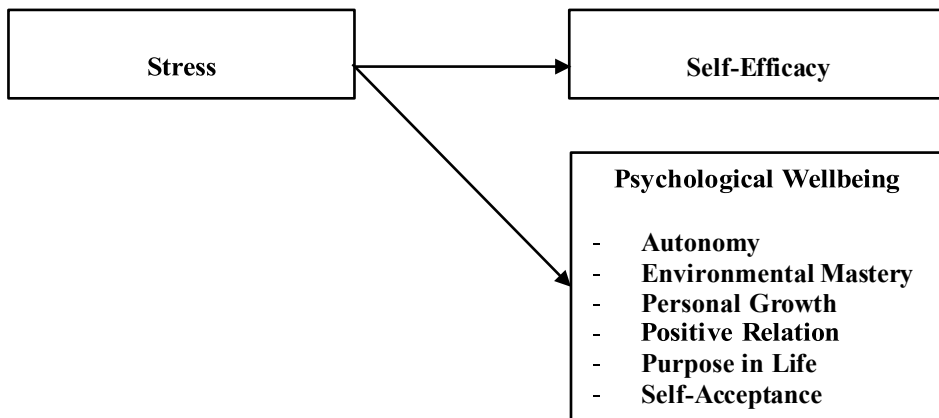


Figure 1: Hypothesized Model

4.2. Sample

A convenient sampling strategy was used to collect the sample. The initially recruited sample comprised of 223 performing arts students out of which there were 111 acting students, 92 singing and 20 dancing students. The sample was collected from different universities in Pakistan. Due to the shortage of dancing students' data, it was not included in the study sample. Thus, the final data included 203 performing arts students.

4.3. Inclusion Criteria

- The sample included performing arts students from both colleges and universities with the age range 17- 28 years.
- It included only two categories of performing arts: acting and singing.
- It included regular performing arts students who were a member of different dramatic clubs, music societies in their colleges or universities.

4.4. Exclusion Criteria

- The sample excludes all those students who were not a member of any dramatic and singing societies of their colleges or universities.
- It also excluded students with any severe mental and physical disability.

- It excluded all performing arts students other than the acting and singing categories.

4.5. Instruments

In addition to the demographic information as shown in Table 1, the following instruments were used for this study

4.5.1. Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen, 1983)

It contained 10 items with a five-point Likert scale as 0 = "Never", 1 = "Rarely", 2 = "Sometimes", 3 = "Fairly Often", 4 = "Very Often". It is the most commonly used test to measure the perception of stress. The questions are designed to measure the unpredictable, uncontrollable and overloaded respondents perceive their lives. For example, the description of the 1st item is "In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?".

The 2nd item is "In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?", and the 3rd item is "In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and stressed?". The reliability of the perceived stress scale is $\alpha = 0.70$.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Sample (N=203)

Characteristics	M (SD)	f (%)
Age (in years)	21.05(2.21)	
Gender		
Men		99(48.8)
Women		104(51.2)
CGPA	3.16(.46)	
Family System		
Nuclear		145(71.4)
Joint		58(28.6)
Socioeconomic Status		
Lower Class		3(1.5)
Middle Class		187(92.1)
Upper Class		13(6.4)
Area of Expertise		
Acting		111(54.7)
Singing		92(45.3)

Note: *M* = Mean, *SD* = Standard Deviation, *f* = Frequency and % = Percentage of key variables.

4.5.2. General Self Efficacy Scale (Jerusalem & Schwarzer, 1981)

It contained 10 items with a four-point Likert scale 1 = “Not at All”, 2 = “Hardly True”, 3 = “Moderately True”, 4 = “Exactly True”. It is designed to measure the optimistic core belief to cope with the different demands of life. For example, the 1st item is “I can always manage to solve different problems if I try hard enough” and 2nd is “If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want”. The reliability of the self-efficacy scale is between 0.76 - 0.90.

4.5.3. Psychological Well-being Scale (Ryff, 1989)

It contained 42 items with six points Likert scale as 1 = “Strongly Disagree”, 2 = “Disagree Somewhat”, 3 = “Disagree Slightly”, 4 = “Agree Slightly”, 5 = “Agree Somewhat”, 6 = “Strongly Agree”. It is a multidimensional model that comprises of six psychological dimensions, Self-Acceptance, Positive Relation with Others, Autonomy, Environmental Mastery, Personal Growth and Purpose in Life. For example, the 1st item is “I am not afraid to voice my opinions, even when they are in opposition to the opinions of most people”. The 2nd item is “In general, I feel I am in charge of the situation in which I live”

etc. The overall reliability of psychological wellbeing is 0.79.

4.5.4. Procedure

First of all, the topic was approved by the Departmental Board of Studies. Permissions were taken from the original authors to use their scales. Data was collected from performing arts students from dramatic clubs and music societies of different colleges and universities. Due to Covid-19 and the lockdown situation, the data was collected

through online google forms. All ethical considerations were taken care of.

5. Results

Psychometric analysis was used to check the reliability of scales used in the research. The calculated values of all three scales were in a good range. Psychometric properties of perceived stress, self-efficacy, and psychological well-being are shown below in Table 2.

Table 2: Psychometric Properties of the Perceived Stress, Self-Efficacy, and Psychological Well-being among Performing Arts Students (N=203)

Variables	K	M	SD	A	Range	
					Potential	Actual
Stress	10	22.11	4.66	.70	0-40	13-40
Self-Efficacy	10	31.43	4.84	.78	4-40	18-40
Psychological Wellbeing	42	168.88	23.12	.79	42-252	78-228
Autonomy	07	23.78	3.81		7-42	11-34
Environmental Mastery	07	22.06	4.27		7-42	15-36
Personal Growth	07	28.81	5.87		7-42	12-42
Positive Relations	07	28.81	5.87		7-42	12-42
Purpose in Life	07	28.43	5.55		7-42	12-42
Self-Acceptance	07	28.97	6.09		7-42	10-42

Note: K= Number of items; α = Cronbach's Alpha; M= Mean; SD= Standard Deviation.

The relationship between stress, self-efficacy, and psychological well-being among performing arts students along with demographic variables is shown in Table 3.

Results of correlation analysis showed that there is a significant positive correlation of age with self-efficacy, personal growth, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. A significant

positive correlation of gender (men) with interference in academic performance was seen. A significant positive correlation of socioeconomic (lower class) status with creative potential was observed. Respondents who joined performing arts for fame showed a significant positive correlation with creative potential and a significant negative correlation with interference with academic performance, personal growth, and self-acceptance.

Respondents whose life is not affected by participation in performing arts showed a significant positive correlation with interference with environmental mastery while those having a neutral view on this showed a positive correlation with academic performance. A significant negative correlation of stress was observed with psychological well-being's dimensions of environmental mastery and purpose in life. Self-efficacy showed a significant positive correlation with psychological well-being's dimensions of autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. All the dimensions of psychological well-being were found to be positively correlated with each other.

Simple linear regression analysis predicting self-efficacy and

psychological well-being in university students (N=203) is shown in Table 4.

Table No 4 and Figure No 2 describe regression analysis of the variables. Simple linear regression showed that stress significantly negatively predicted environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, and self-acceptance. Their respective p values are less than 0.0000. No relationship of stress was predicted with self-efficacy because their value of beta is very small, and values of p are greater than 0.10.

6. Discussion

Performance is an art that includes a live presentation to an audience presenting arts like acting, dance, music, painting, and poetry. It is usually regarded as an on-stage performance, an event rather than an artifact. It can be recorded using the means of still photography (Wainwright, 2007). It is a time-based art. Performing arts is traditional high arts including music, opera, theatre, and dance to popular arts presented on television, radio, recordings, internet, etc. (McCarthy et al., 2001). Performing arts communicates and presents the characteristics of people and these are strongly associated with the formation of individual and social senses of identity (Greene,1995;

Langer, 1953). Performing arts is common and students are involved in different types of performing arts in different settings i.e., schools, colleges, universities, etc. So, this

study was designed to find out the relationship of stress, self-efficacy, and psychological well-being on performing arts students.

Table 3: Intercorrelation among Demographic Variables, Stress, Self-Efficacy and Psychological Well-being in Performing Arts Students (N=203)

Var	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
AG	-	-.16*	-.05	-.10	.06	.11	-.01	-.14*	.15*	.06	.11	.17*	.14*	.18*	.17*
GN		-	.03	-.08	.01	.18**	.05	.09	-.10	-.09	-.02	-.05	-.09	-.05	-.05
SE			-	.03	.04	-.08	-.08	-.03	-.09	-.12	-.04	.02	.02	.01	.02
RP				-	-.02	-.22**	.04	.05	-.07	-.02	-.06	-.19**	-.13	-.11	-.19**
IP					-	.35**	.03	-.07	.07	.07	.16*	.14	.11	.13	.14
IA						-	.02	.02	.09	.04	.05	.07	.02	.05	.07
AE							-	.08	.12	.07	-.00	.10	.07	.09	.10
PS								-	-.02	-.02	-.15*	-.12	-.09	-.18*	-.12
SE									-	.15*	.17*	.39**	.25**	.36**	.39**
AT										-	.06	.20**	.18**	.27**	.20**
EM											-	.39**	.29**	.43**	.39**
PG												-	.58**	.63**	1.00**
PR													-	.51**	.58**
PL														-	.63**
SA															-

Note:AG= Age, GN= Gender, SE= Socioeconomic Status, RP=Reason of its Part, IP= Interference with Personal Life. IA=Interference with Academic Performance, CP= Creative Potential, AE= Area of Expertise, PS= Perceived Stress, SE= Self Efficacy, AT= Autonomy, EM= Environmental Mastery, PG= Personal Growth, PR= Positive Relations, PL=Purpose in Life, SA= Self-Acceptance;

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

According to this study by Akins (2008), a negative impact of stress was observed on dimensions of psychological well-being i.e., environmental mastery and purpose in life. Self-efficacy presented a significant positive correlation with dimensions of psychological well-being i.e., autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive

relations, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. All dimensions of psychological well-being were found to be positively correlated with each other. Sabouripour and Roslan (2015) study on self-efficacy, psychological well-being, and resilience among students reveal that self-efficacy is a significant predictor of resilience and three dimensions of psychological

well-being i.e., autonomy, environmental mastery, and self-acceptance.

7. Limitations

Performing arts is a diverse area that includes other than acting and singing; for example, dance (ballet, folk, modern), theatre, opera, music (popular, jazzy, symphony), media arts, film (narrative, documentary), digital art, installation art, visual arts (sculpture, paintings, basketry, ceramics, sketching) and literary arts, poetry and fiction arts, etc. So, this research cannot be generalized on other performing arts students of Pakistani population as data was collected from acting and singing students only.

Stress was considered as a predictor for self-efficacy and psychological well-being and other likely extraneous variables were not considered as predictors for self-efficacy and psychological well-being in this study.

8. Suggestions

To get a detailed outlook on the variables and to get insight on aspects affecting self-efficacy & psychological well-being, qualitative research should be conducted with detailed interviews on the performing art students. A cross-cultural study should be conducted across different cultures to explore the norms affecting the psychological well-being of performing arts students.

Table 4: Simple Linear Regression Analysis Predicting Self-Efficacy and Psychological Well-being among Performing Arts Students (N=203)

Variable	Self-Efficacy		Autonomy		Environmental Mastery		Personal Growth		Positive Relations		Purpose in Life		Self-Acceptance	
	B	SE	B	SE	β	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Stress	-.02	.09	-.03	.07	-.13*	.08	-.14*	.10	-.14*	.10	-.10	.09	-.18**	.11
R	.02		.03		.13		.14		.14		.10		.18	
R ²	.00		.00		.02		.02		.02		.01		.03	
F	.06		.13		3.65*		4.06*		4.06*		2.08		7.06**	
P	0.54		0.000		0.000		0.000		0.000		0.89		0.000	

Note: SE= Standard Error, AT=Autonomy, EM= Environmental Mastery, PG= Personal Growth, PR= Positive Relations, PL= Purpose in Life, SA= Self-Acceptance; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

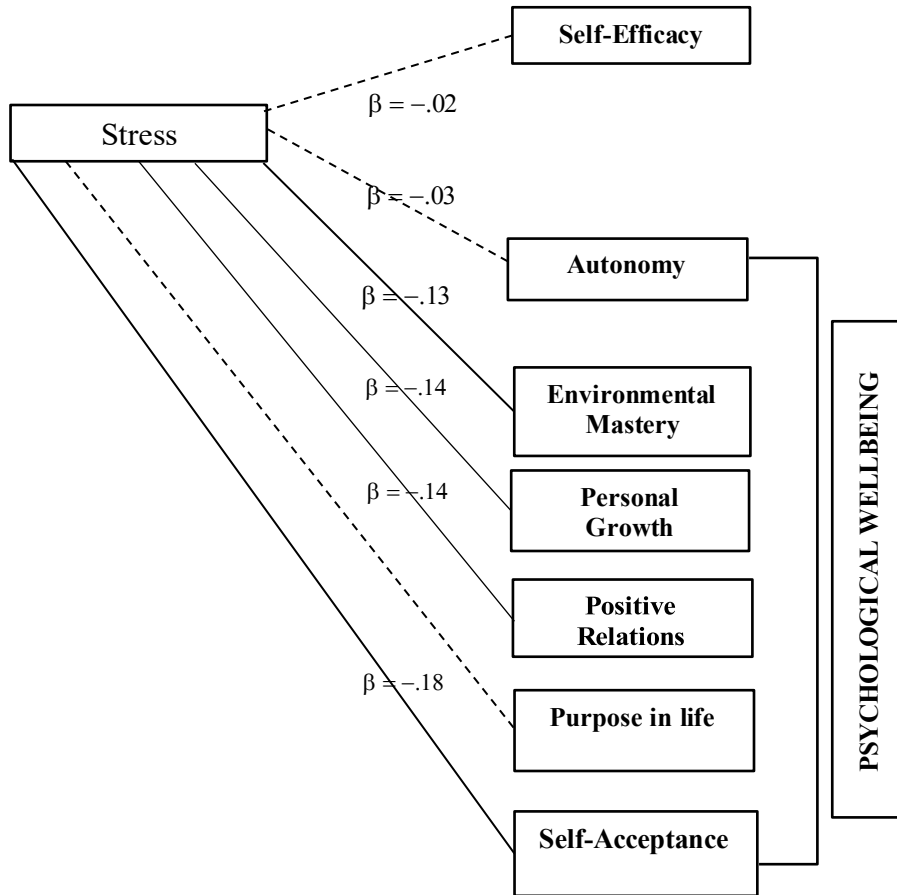


Figure 2. Statistical model showing the relationship between stress, self-efficacy and psychological well-being in performing arts students.

9. Implications

This research can bring awareness to the performing arts students that stress negatively predicts psychological well-being, so the administration and students need to manage their academic and other stressors to optimize the levels of self-efficacy and psychological well-being. The findings of the study will help

parents, teachers, coaches, psychologists, counselors, and researchers for developing approaches to improve the performance of performing arts students to boost their self-efficacy and lower the levels of stress by giving them proper training on time management and other techniques. This study will be given a new direction to future studies regarding performing arts

students while focusing on the psychological challenges the students face. Further, the importance of performing arts and their repercussions on people's social well-being should not be neglected anymore.

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