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SELF-EFFICACY, HUMOR AND PROSOCIAL TENDENCIES IN COLLEGE EDUCATORS

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Abstract
This quantitative research study analyzed the interdependence among the self-efficacy, styles of humor and prosocial tendencies in college teachers. Purposive sampling was carried out with a sample (N=150) college teachers (72% female), was 25 to 60 years old (M= 35.91, SD= 9.75) to take some portion of government and private colleges. The research design was the correlational type and standardized tests were utilized: General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE), Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ), and Prosocial Tendencies Measure-Revised (PTM-R). The results gave evidence of positive and significant results of self-efficacy with both humor styles, and prosocial tendencies, and association between humor styles and prosocial tendencies. Regression showed an unequal level of self-efficacy as it predicted styles of humor and prosocial tendencies. Mediation analysis confirmed that prosocial tendencies mediated partially the association between self-efficacy and humor styles (indirect effect B = .585, 95 % CI [.280, .985]). Such findings demonstrate that high levels of self-efficacy by college teacher encourage prosocial behavior, which in turn enhances the adaptive humor styles such as self-enhancing humor. The study recommends the importance of incorporating prosocial and humor-grounded approaches in any teacher preparation programs to create emotionally tough and pro-socialized learning settings.

INTRODUCTION

In educational contexts, psychological constructs such as self-efficacy, humor style, and prosocial tendencies play a critical role in shaping teaching behavior and fostering a supportive learning environment.

Self-efficacy as defined by Bandura (1977), refers to an individual's belief in their capability to execute tasks and overcome challenges. This belief influences not only performance outcomes but also how individuals approach problems, set goals, and manage setbacks. Teachers with high self-efficacy are more likely to demonstrate persistence, take initiative, and effectively manage complex classroom dynamics (Mourankarimi & Mehdinezhad, 2018).

Humor as a multidimensional social and emotional tool, is often expressed when individuals perceive themselves in advantageous or relaxed situations (Asilioglu, 2021). In the teaching profession, humor can enhance communication, build rapport with students, and reduce social distance. The Humor Styles Framework (Martin et al., 2003) categorizes humor into four distinct types: affiliative, self-enhancing, aggressive, and self-defeating. Of these, affiliative and self-enhancing humor are generally associated with positive interpersonal outcomes, while aggressive and self-defeating humor may contribute to social friction.

Prosocial tendencies encompass voluntary behaviors intended to benefit others, such as helping, sharing, and offering emotional support (Eisenberg et al., 2010). In educators, prosocial behaviors manifest through mentorship, empathy, and cooperative engagement with students and colleagues. These tendencies are often linked with intrinsic motivations such as moral responsibility and empathy (Li & Hu, 2023).

Multiple theoretical perspectives help to explain prosocial behavior. For example, Bandura's Social Learning Theory has suggested that people learn prosocial behavior through observation and reinforcement (McLeod, 2025). Empathy-altruism hypothesis has argued that empathetic concern has the potential to be the central motivator of altruistic actions (Batson, 2024), whereas kin selection theory has accounted for such behaviors in terms of evolutionary benefit (Biernaskie, 2022).

In education settings, all three of these constructs self-efficacy, humor styles, and prosocial behavior are highly interlinked. Teachers possessing high self-efficacy will embrace positive humor styles including affiliative and self-enhancing humor, which will further lead to prosocial behavior and enhance teacher–student relationships (Salvo et al., 2025). Alternatively, lower self-efficacy teachers might adopt maladaptive humor styles, including sarcasm or self-deprecation, that could disintegrate their classroom environment (Olivier et al., 2024). It is important to explore the interaction of these factors to develop effective teacher training and professional development programs. Facilitating self-efficacy can motivate adaptive humor use and enhance prosocial behavior, improving both teacher well-being and student achievement. The present research aims to investigate the dynamic interaction between self-efficacy, sense of humor, and prosocial orientations among college instructors. By analyzing these factors as a cohesive set, the study will offer insights into how psychological strengths could be used to cultivate more effective and emotionally intelligent teaching behaviors.

Literature Review

There has been more interest in recent years in the psychological constructs underlying successful teaching and interpersonal behavior in educational settings. Of these, self-efficacy, styles of humor, and prosociality have been found to be important dimensions that influence teachers' professional functioning and social behaviors. College instructors, specifically, must contend with a variety of academic and interpersonal demands that call for not just competence but also personal resilience to promote supportive learning environments. Strong self-efficacy, positive humor use, and the tendency to engage in prosocial behavior play a critical role in responding to such demands and improving the academic experience of students.

Humor styles have been found to have a central contribution towards forming emotional empathy, relational competence, and social bonding. Falanga et al. (2014) examined adolescents and found that affiliative and self-enhancing humor styles were positively correlated with empathic and social self-efficacy, while self-defeating humor had a negative correlation. Similar findings were reported by De-Caroli and Sagone (2013), who found strong links between empathic self-efficacy and prosocial behaviors in adolescents, particularly in emotionally charged contexts.

Wang and Huang (2022) extended this framework to post-COVID-19 college students, revealing that post-traumatic growth predicted entrepreneurial intentions through the mediating roles of entrepreneurial self-efficacy and prosocial tendencies. Yildiz et al. (2015) supported the connection between self-efficacy and prosocial behavior in the context of physical education, emphasizing gender-based variations and the potential impact of athletic experience.

Holland (2016) reported that self-enhancing humor was positively linked with self-efficacy and inversely related to perceived stress, with gender and age differences in humor preferences. Samfira (2023) confirmed that adaptive humor styles correlated positively with assertiveness, emotional stability, and conscientiousness, while maladaptive styles correlated negatively. The affiliates humor used by leaders positively influenced team knowledge-sharing behaviors, mediated by knowledge-sharing self-efficacy and psychological safety ((Yasin, 2024).

The genetic basis of humor styles and their connection to personality traits were explored by Veselka et al. (2010) who used a twin study design to link humor with HEXCO personality dimensions. Other age-specific studies, such as those by Yildirim et al. (2024) and Halfpenny & James (2020), emphasized the social-emotional benefits of humor among primary school children and preteens. Notably, Afzal (2017) found a positive relationship between social self-efficacy and humor styles in college students. Locally, (Asif,2024) established that perceived social support significantly enhances teachers' self-efficacy.

Study Rationale

College educators significantly influence students' academic success, emotional development, and social integration. Self-efficacy has been associated with positive teaching behaviors, and adaptive humor particularly affiliative and self-enhancing styles has been found to reinforce prosocial conduct (Asilioglu, 2021). Despite this, research investigating the simultaneous relationship among self-efficacy, humor styles, and prosocial tendencies, particularly in educators, remains limited (Davis, 2015).

The study addresses an important gap in literature by exploring interconnectedness of these constructs among college teachers. The findings can inform teacher training, enhance teacher-student interaction, and foster positive classroom environments that benefit student outcomes and overall institutional climate.

Objectives

The current research focused on investigating the following aspects as a continuation of previous research. This research is designed to explore.

- This quantitative study intended to evaluate the association between self-efficacy, humor style and prosocial tendencies in college teachers.

Hypotheses

Based on theoretical frameworks and prior empirical findings.

1. There will be a significant relationship between self-efficacy, humor styles, and prosocial tendencies in college teachers.
2. Self-efficacy will significantly predict humor styles and prosocial tendencies.
3. Prosocial tendencies will mediate the relationship between self-efficacy and humor styles.
4. Demographic and personal factors (gender, marital status, family system, institution type) will be significantly associated with self-efficacy, humor styles, and prosocial tendencies.

Methodology

Participants and sampling strategy

A correlational research design to determine the correlation among self-efficacy, humor styles and prosocial tendencies in college teachers. Participants and Sampling Strategy The sample was comprised of both male and female college teachers (N=150) whose age ranged between 25 to 60 years (M = 35.91, SD = 9.75). All the data was collected physically from various government and private colleges. The 28% belonged to male teachers and 72% belonged to female teachers, 48% were of the private colleges and 52% were of the government colleges. 62.7% were of the nuclear family and 37.3% were of the joint family.

Procedure

Prior to data collection, ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Review Committee of the Department of Humanities at COMSATS University. A purposive sampling technique was used to select a sample of 150 college teachers from various public and private institutions. Participants were informed about the study's objectives and assured of confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation. Informed consent was obtained. Data were collected through in-person administration of the questionnaires. The entire assessment process took approximately 40 to 50 minutes per participant.

Institutional cooperation was secured through formal permission, and multiple visits were made to ensure comprehensive data collection. Upon completion, participants were thanked, and institutional support was acknowledged.

Measures

A self-developed demographic form was used to collect background information. Variables included age, gender, area of residence, marital status, family system, socioeconomic status, designation, teaching modality, years of teaching experience, job nature, and type of institution. General Self-Efficacy (GSE) Scale is a 10-item self-report measure designed to assess an individual's belief in their ability to cope with challenging situations. Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ), is consists of 32 items which assesses how individuals utilize humor in interpersonal relationships and coping strategies. Prosocial Tendencies Measure-Revised (PTM-R) includes 25 items which assesses six forms of prosocial behavior: public, anonymous, emotional, compliant, altruistic, and dire helping tendencies.

Statistical Analysis

Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 23. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, frequencies, percentages) were computed to summarize sample characteristics and scale distributions. Reliability of the scales was assessed via Cronbach's alpha coefficients. Pearson correlation and multiple regression analyses were conducted to test associations and predictive relationships among variables. Mediation analysis was performed using PROCESS macro version 4.2 to examine the indirect effects of prosocial tendencies in the relationship between self-efficacy and humor styles.

Results

Table 1 indicates the demographic factors of study. The mean, frequencies and standard deviation were being calculated of these variables.

Table 1Descriptive statistics of Demographic Variables (N= 150)

Characteristics	*f (%)*	*M(SD)*
Age (in years)		35.91(9.751)
Gender		
Male	42(28%)	
Female	108(72%)	
Area of residence		
Rural	11(7.3%)	
Urban	139(92.7%)	
Marital status		
Single	54(36%)	
Married	92(61.3%)	
Divorced/separated	4(2.7%)	
Family system		
Nuclear	94(62.7%)	
Joint	56(37.3%)	
Designation		
Lecturer	116(77.3%)	
Assistant professor	19(12.7%)	
Associate professor	10(6.7%)	
Professor	4(2.7%)	
Head of department	1(0.7%)	
Years of teaching		
0 to 5 years	40(26.7%)	

Characteristics	*f (%)*	*M(SD)*
6 or more	110(73.3%)	
Type of institution		
Private	72(48%)	
Government	78(52%)	

Note: M= Mean, SD= standard Deviation, *f*= frequencies

Table 2 Descriptive statistics and reliability of study variables (N=150)

Study variables	*k*	α	M	SD
Self-efficacy	10	0.82	31.82	4.71
Humor styles	32	0.68	1.27	18.12
Prosocial tendencies	25	0.86	86.69	14.87

Note: *k* = no. of items, α = alpha, M = mean, SD = standard deviation
Table 2 shows the scale items, standard deviation, mean score, Cronbach alpha reliability. It shows a reliability greater than 0.6 across all the scales.

Table 3 Interco relation between study variables and their subscales (N=150)

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Self-efficacy	_	.29**	.03	.51**	-.06	.17*	.34**	.10	.35**	.37**	.35**	.20*	.16**
Humor styles		_	-.04	.75**	.63**	.82**	.48**	.49**	.25**	.02	.26**	.14	.46**
Affiliative humor			_	-.09	-.32**	-.38**	-.18*	-.26**	.01	.09	-.09	.15	-.30**
Self-enhancing				_	.17*	.54**	.43**	.24**	.46**	.22**	.33**	.24**	.25**
Aggressive humor					_	.49**	.24**	.49**	-.12	-.27**	-.01	-.12	.46**
Self-defeating humor						_	.50**	.54**	.19*	.00	.31**	.07	.52**
Prosocial tendencies							_	.74**	.65**	.50**	.76**	.46**	.74**
Public								_	.14	.01	.31**	.05	.70**
Anonymous									_	.53**	.54**	.54**	.23**
Dire										_	.57**	.40**	.04
Emotional											_	.38**	.39**
Complaint												_	.11
Altruism													_

Note: *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001, 1= self-efficacy, 2= humor styles, 3=affiliative humor, 4=self-enhancing humor, 5=aggressive humor, 6=self-defeating humor, 7= prosocial tendencies, 8= public prosocial behavior, 9=anonymous prosocial behavior, 10=dire prosocial behavior, 11=emotional prosocial behavior, 12=compliant prosocial behavior, 13=altruism

Table 3 indicates that the hypothesis was supported the results clearly show that self-efficacy is significantly correlated with humor styles and prosocial tendencies in college teachers.

Table 4 The inter-correlation between the study variables and demographic variables (N=150)

Measure	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Gender	1.72	0.45	_	.17*	.05	.44**	-.08	-.26**	-.16*
Marital status	1.67	0.52		_	.09	.15	.06	-.09	-.19*
Family system	1.37	0.48			_	.10	-.17*	-.08	-.16*
Institution type	1.52	0.51				_	-.15	-.24**	.10
Self-efficacy	31.82	4.71					_	.29**	.34**
Humor style	127.93	18.12						_	.48**
Prosocial tendencies	86.69	14.87							_

Note: *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

The inter correlation among demographic characteristics is indicated in table 4. Gender, marital status, family system and institution type has been significantly negatively correlated with self-efficacy, humor style and prosocial behavior.

Table 5 Self-efficacy will predict the humor styles and prosocial tendencies (N=150)

Variables	B	β	Adj R^2	R^2	p
			Model 1		
Constant	51.68		.116	.122	<.001
Self-efficacy	1.100	.349			<.001
			Model 2		
Constant	64.109		.246	.256	<.001
Self-efficacy	.555	.144			.05
Prosocial. B	.532	.437			<.001

Note: ***p<.001, B=unstandardized coefficients beta, β=standardized coefficient beta, Adj R2= adjusted R square, p=significant, where R2=R square, prosocial. B= prosocial behavior

Table 5, self-efficacy is a positive predictor of humor styles because, with the increase in self-efficacy, the humor style scores also increase. Prosocial tendencies made a powerful predictor of adaptive humor style and an important mediator of the independent relationship between self-efficacy and hum

Table 6 Mediation analysis on prosocial tendencies, self-efficacy, and humor styles on college teachers (N=150)

Variable	Estimation	SE	P
SE → PT	1.100	.243	<.001
PT → HS	.532	.093	<.001
SE → HS	1.141	.301	<.001

Note: *p<.001 level of significance, SE (self-efficacy) = X (independent variable), PT (prosocial tendencies) = M (mediate), HS (humor style) = Y (outcome variable).

Effect	B	SE(β)	p	95%CI	
				LLCI	ULCI
A	1.100	.243	<.001	.619	1.580
B	.532	.093	<.001	.349	.715
C	1.141	.301	<.001	.544	1.737
c′	.555	.292	.05	-.021	1.132
Ab	.585	.178	_	.280	.985

Note: *p<.001 level of significance, a = effect from X (self-efficacy) onto M (prosocial tendencies); b=effect from M (prosocial tendencies) onto Y (humor styles); c= total effect of X on Y Controlling M; c′ = direct effect of X on Y Controlling M; Ab=indirect effect of X on Y through M. Weights are all standardized.

Table 6 showed that self-efficacy has a significant predictive role related to humor styles and prosocial behavior as this component described a significant amount of variance in both performances.

Discussion

The current study examined that relationships among self-efficacy, humor styles, and prosocial tendencies in college teachers. The results yield useful information regarding the connections between teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about their abilities and their application of humor in classrooms and their tendencies to engage in prosocial behaviors. The findings indicate significant associations among these psychological variables, especially in educational contexts with adaptive interpersonal functioning and emotional resilience needs.

The hypothesis, that there existed a high relationship between self-efficacy, humor styles, and prosocial tendencies, was confirmed by the results. Results indicated a strong positive correlation between self-efficacy and both humor styles and prosocial behavior. In particular, educators with greater self-efficacy reported were more inclined towards using humor that is self-enhancing, defined as the ability to show a funny attitude even in stressful situations, and prosocial behaviors, including empathy, altruism, and emotional support. These results are consistent with Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory that predicts people who have confidence in their ability to accomplish tasks are more likely to initiate activities, cope with adversity, and construct a positive social environment.

In a surprising finding, affiliative humor that aims at binding people together and aggressive humor that can sometimes be expressed in the form of teasing or sarcasm did not exhibit high correlations with self-efficacy. This indicates that such humor styles are more personality-dependent or situational than a reflection of belief in one's capabilities. The research made its major contribution in establishing the

mediating role of prosocial tendencies between self-efficacy and humor style. Mediation analysis indicated that self-efficacious teachers tend to be more prosocial, and these prosocial tendencies, in turn, influence their use of humor. Although the direct relationship between self-efficacy and humor style remained significant, it was attenuated when prosocial behavior was included in the model highlighting partial mediation. This finding underscores the role of prosocial orientation as a pathway through which internal confidence translates into adaptive interpersonal strategies like constructive humor use.

These results are consistent with prior research, including Falanga et al. (2014), who reported positive correlations between empathic self-efficacy and prosocial behavior, and Martin et al. (2003), who emphasized the role of adaptive humor styles in fostering trust and emotional safety. Similarly, Wang and Huang (2022) showed that prosocial behavior and self-efficacy can jointly influence goal-directed behaviors such as entrepreneurship. On the contrary, maladaptive humor styles aggressive and self-defeating did not correlate positively with self-efficacy. Teachers who rely on such styles may do so as a defense mechanism against insecurity or stress. This aligns with Holland (2016), which discovered that self-defeating humor relates to elevated levels of stress as well as lower self-efficacy.

The research also examined the impact of demographic variables. Female educators had higher prosociality and more affiliative humor use, while male educators had more aggressive humor usage a trend seen in earlier research (Tsai et al., 2023). Educators in nuclear families had slightly higher self-efficacy and humor style scores, perhaps because they had more autonomy and personal responsibility. In addition, teachers from private schools showed more prosocial and adaptive humor behaviors than teachers from government schools, possibly indicative of variations in institutional culture and expectations.

Implications

This research has direct implications for teacher development and educational policy. Improving teacher self-efficacy and encouraging prosocial behavior can contribute to more supportive, engaging, and emotionally intelligent classrooms. Promoting the use of constructive humor in the form of light jokes and playful teasing, for example, can reduce student anxiety, enhance attentiveness, and support classroom cohesion. Teacher-training programs should hence place as much emphasis on prosocial values as pedagogical competence.

Conclusion

The results untangle that self-efficacy, humor style, and prosocial behavior are interconnected in the life of college teachers. Similarly, when teachers are confident about themselves, they are more resilient and effective, and that can contribute to building positive relationships with students. Educational institutions can shape the conditions in which students thrive in their academic and emotional well-being by investing in teacher development. In the end, an assured, friendly and jovial teacher is not only a superior instructor- they are also a greater influence in the overall development and success of the students.

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