Relationship between social self-efficacy and learning activities with friends for adjustment to and a sense of fulfillment at the University

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between social self-efficacy and learning activities with friends for adjustment to university and a sense of fulfillment in university life. A growing body of research has recognized and established that peers contribute to students' adjustment to school and their academic motivation (Berndt, 1999). However, the reason why good peer relations positively predict adjustment to school or academic achievement has not yet been thoroughly examined, especially for university students. A questionnaire was administered to 220 university students in Japan. Participants responded to four scales measuring their social self-efficacy, learning activities with friends, adjustment to university, and sense of fulfillment in university life. A cluster analysis was conducted to integrate social self-efficacy and learning activities with friends. The cluster analysis provides a comprehensive profile of students with distinct variation in adjustment to university and sense of fulfillment in university life. As predicted, results indicated that students who were categorized into high social self-efficacy with many learning activities with friends had better opportunities to adjust to university and feel a sense of fulfillment in university life. In contrast, students with low social self-efficacy and many learning support exchanges with friends experience both a lack of adjustment to university and a lower sense of fulfillment in university life.

Key words: peer relations, learning activities with friends, university adjustment

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Introduction

A growing body of research has recognized that peers contribute to students' successful adjustment to school and also to their academic motivation (Berndt, 1999; Fass, 2002). Okada (2008) focused on learning activities with friends among junior high school students and observed that reciprocal learning predicted their satisfaction with both friendship and learning. Furthermore, help-seeking learning behaviors from friends in academic settings was related to friendship satisfaction, and help-giving learning behaviors for friends was related to their satisfaction with learning.

However, the reason for good peer relations positively predicting adjustment to school or academic achievement has not yet been thoroughly examined, especially for university students.

This study examined to what extent the relationship between social self-efficacy, which was defined as confidence in one's ability to engage in the social interactional tasks necessary to initiate and maintain interpersonal relationships in social life and career activities (Anderson & Betz, 2001), and learning activities with friends predicted successful adjustment to and a sense of fulfillment in university life.

On the basis of prior research with school age students, it was hypothesized that high social-efficacy and more learning activities with friends would indicate a higher score of successful university adjustment and sense of fulfillment.

Method

Participants

The participants were 220 Japanese university students from two private universities (M age=20.02 year, SD=1.84) .

Measurements

Sense of fulfillment. － This 11-item section was adopted from Ohno's (1984) study. Originally, this scale was divided into the following four subscales; fulfillment sentiment vs. boredom-emptiness, independence and self-reliance vs. *amae* and lack of self-reliance, solidarity vs. isolation, and trust and time-perspective vs. mistrust and time-diffusion. However, in this study, only fulfillment sentiment vs. boredom-emptiness subscale was used. When responding to the scale, participants were asked to think about their university life. A 5-point rating scale was used for ratings, with anchors of 1: Not at all and 5: Very strongly.

Social self-efficacy. －A total of 40 items were adopted from Matsushima and Shiomi (2003). This scale was divided into the following three subscales (Matsushima, 2014) ; trust in friends, self-confidence in personal relationships, and belief in the power of friendship. When responding to the scale, participants were asked to think about their friendships during university life. A 5-point rating scale was used for ratings, with anchors of 1: Not at all and 5: Very strongly.

Learning activities with friends. － This 31-item section was adopted from Matsushima's (2014) study. Originally, this scale was divided into the following four subscales; support exchanges in their assignments and reports, support exchanges in class and exam preparation, emotional support, and cooperation with club members in exam and report preparation. In this study, three scales were used except for cooperation with club members in exam and report preparation. When responding to the scale, participants were asked to think about their academic activities with friends at the university. A 5-point rating scale was used for ratings, with anchors of 1: Not at all and 5: Very strongly.

University adjustment. － This 29-item section was adopted from Okubo and Aoyagi (2003) with four scales; sense of comfort, sense of being trusted and accepted, existence of interest and purpose of studying, and no sense of rejection. When responding to the scale, participants were asked to think about their university lives. A 5-point rating scale was used for ratings, with anchors of 1: Not at all and 5: Very strongly.

Analysis

In the first procedure, a cluster analysis was conducted to integrate social self-efficacy and learning activities with friends. In the second procedure, a one-way ANOVA was conducted on the four factor scores of the subjective adjustment to school scale and the sense of fulfillment scale to examine the differences between the four clusters.

Results

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations, and Cronbach's α for all the scales and Table 2 shows the example items of each factor.

Table 1 Mean score and Cronbach' α of each factor

Table 2		M	SD	α
	1.Trust in friends	3.22	0.68	.895
	2.Self-confidence in personal relationships	3.05	0.77	.871
	3.Belief in the power of friendship	3.57	0.66	.656
	4.Support exchanges in their assignments and reports	2.51	0.88	.887
	5.Support exchanges in class and exam preparation	3.56	0.80	.874
	6.Emotional support	3.15	0.88	.743
	7.Sense of comfort	3.29	0.72	.888
	8.Sense of being trusted and accepted	3.09	0.76	.860
	9.Existence of Interest and purpose of studying	3.50	0.76	.801
	10.No sense of rejection	3.25	0.75	.799

Examples of items

Name of Subscale	Examples of Items
1.Trust in friends	I think my friends understand me whatever I say. I believe my friends understand me regardless of what I say.
2.Self-confidence in personal relationships	I can introduce myself well to strangers at the first meeting. I can talk with anybody easily.
3.Belief in the power of friendship	I think it is important for us to accomplish something with our companions. We can do anything if we cooperate.
4.Support exchanges in their assignments and reports	I have my friends' help for my report and homework. I help my friends with their report and homework.
5.Support exchanges in class and exam preparation	I have my friends teach me the scope of the exam. I check the scope and contents of the exam with my friends before exam.
6.Emotional support	My friends and I motivate each other to learn. My friends and I support each other to motivate our learning.
7.Sense of comfort	I can fit in with this environment. I have good time with people.
8.Sense of being trusted and accepted	I can feel I was trusted by people. I can feel I am needed.
9.Existence of Interest and purpose of studying	I have something that I am really into. I can do what I want to do.
10.No sense of rejection	I feel people don't recognize the existence of me. (*) I feel people are cold to me. (*)
11.Sense of fulfillment	I live a life worth living. I live boring daily life. (*)

Cluster Analysis

A hierarchical cluster analysis using the Ward method was conducted to form participant groups based on the characteristics of social self-efficacy and learning activities with friends. As a result of this analysis, four clusters were produced (Figure 1). A one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine which classifying variables were significantly different among the clusters. There was a significant difference between clusters for each of the six variables of social self-efficacy and learning activities with friends (Figure 1). Tukey's honest significant difference (HSD) procedure was conducted to determine where the differences lie. The characteristics of four clusters are shown in Table 3.
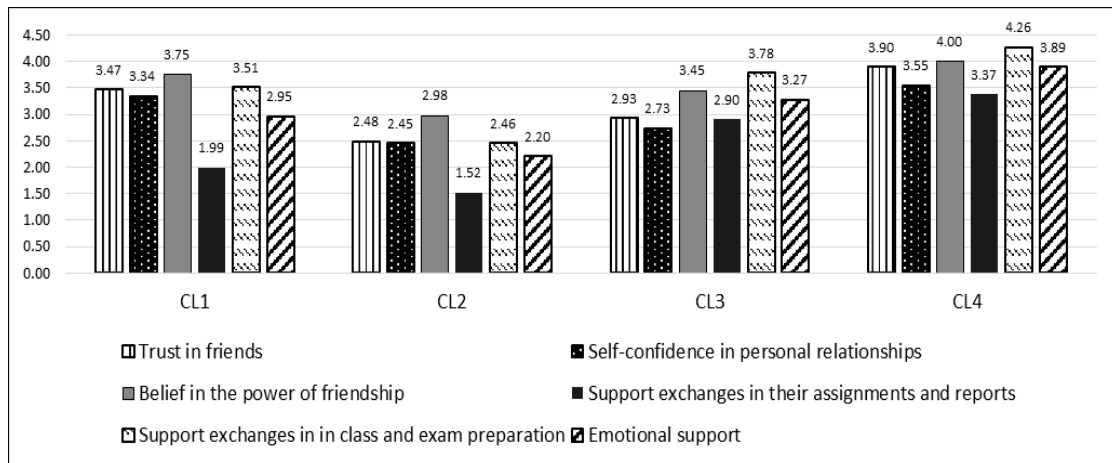
Figure 1　Mean score of social self-efficacy and learning activities with friends among four clusters

Table 3 Characteristics of four clusters

Cluster number	Characteristics of each cluster
CL1	high social self-efficacy with moderate learning activities friends
CL2	low social self-efficacy with low learning activities with friends
CL3	low social self-efficacy with high learning support exchanges with friends
CL4	high social self-efficacy with high learning activities with friends

Difference between by the clusters

A one-way ANOVA was conducted on the five scores of the subjective adjustment to school scale and the sense of fulfillment scores to examine the difference between the four clusters. The results of the one-way ANOVA are shown in Table 4 and Figure 2. All variables of the five scales were significant. The results of the post hoc comparisons using Tukey's HSD are also shown in Table 4.

Table 4 Means and SDs of the sense of fulfillment and school adjustment by the clusters

|	CL1 (n=56)		CL2 (n=43)		CL3 (n=59)		CL4 (n=51)		F−value	Tukey's	effect size
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		multiple comparison	η^2
Sense of fulfillment	3.37	0.67	2.97	0.79	3.07	0.71	3.51	0.76	5.75**	4,1>2　4>3	0.08
Sense of comfort	3.43	0.59	2.61	0.59	3.06	0.49	3.95	0.52	50.94**	4>1>3>2	0.44
Sense of being trusted and accepted	3.24	0.63	2.49	0.58	2.83	0.53	3.67	0.72	32.55**	4>1>3>2	0.33
Existence of interest and purpose of studying	3.69	0.67	3.21	0.82	3.22	0.64	3.87	0.67	11.62**	4,1>3,2	0.15
No sense of rejection	3.50	0.68	2.93	0.59	2.99	0.69	3.58	0.72	12.34**	4,1>3,2	0.16
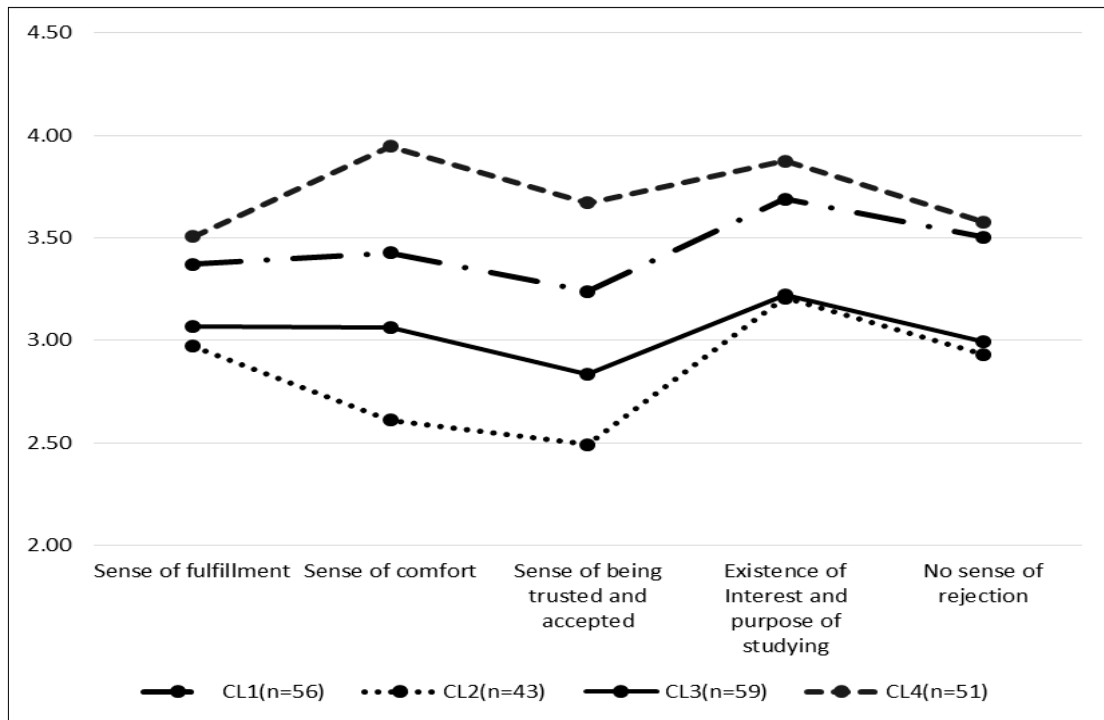
Figure 2   Mean scores of the sense of fulfillment and school adjustment by the clusters

Discussion

As predicted, results indicated that students who were categorized into the high social self-efficacy with many learning activities with friends cluster had better opportunities to adjust and feel a sense of fulfillment in university life. Alternatively, students in the low social self-efficacy and low learning support exchanges with friends cluster experienced both a lack of adjustment to and a lower sense of fulfillment in university life.

As for CL1 and CL3, the scores of the support exchanges regarding assignments and reports and support exchanges in class and exam preparation for CL3 were significantly higher than these for CL1. On the other hand, CL1 which had higher scores in social self-efficacy showed higher scores in a sense of fulfillment and adjustment to school. Therefore, social-efficacy is considered as a significant factor for university adjustment and a sense of fulfillment in university.

Overall, the results indicate that students who have high social self-efficacy have opportunities to learn with friends and support their friends in learning activities, which in turn predicts successful adjustment to and a sense of fulfillment in university life. Thus, we suggest that learning behaviors with friends contribute to better university adjustment, and that the impact of friends on university adjustment is based on their support and encouragement of each other in their learning.

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