

The Role of Fear of Failure and Self-Efficacy in Student Engagement among Indonesian University Students: A Predictive-Correlational Study

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Abstract

This study examined the effects of fear of failure and self-efficacy on student engagement among undergraduate students at a private university in East Java, Indonesia. A quantitative predictive-correlational design was employed with 215 undergraduates (155 female, 60 male; age $M = 20.4$, $SD = 1.38$) recruited through purposive sampling. Data were collected using three self-report scales: the Student Engagement Scale (28 items; $\alpha = .887$) based on Fredricks et al. (2004), the Fear of Failure Scale (26 items; $\alpha = .891$) based on Conroy (2001), and the General Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995; 10 items; $\alpha = .908$). Multiple linear regression analysis revealed that fear of failure had a significant negative effect on student engagement ($\beta = -.757$, $p < .001$) and emerged as the dominant predictor. In contrast, self-efficacy exerted a smaller but statistically significant positive effect ($\beta = .100$, $p = .023$). Together, both predictors accounted for 60.1% of the variance in student engagement (Adjusted $R^2 = .601$; $F(2, 212) = 163.359$, $p < .001$). Fear of failure was thus the dominant predictor, with a substantially larger standardized coefficient and a considerably greater share of unique variance than self-efficacy. Because the design was cross-sectional and all constructs were measured through self-report at a single time point, these findings should be interpreted as associations rather than causal effects. The results tentatively suggest that, in this context, reducing evaluative threat may warrant as much attention as strengthening confidence when designing academic environments that foster student engagement.

Keywords: student engagement; fear of failure; self-efficacy; multiple regression; Indonesian higher education

Introduction

The quality of learning experiences in higher education is determined not solely by curriculum quality or instructors' competencies, but also by the extent to which students actively engage in their academic work. Student engagement is widely regarded as one of the strongest indicators of higher education success and a significant predictor of long-term academic achievement.¹ Engaged students are not merely physically present in academic settings; rather, they actively participate, think critically, and develop emotional connections to their academic activities.

Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris conceptualized student engagement as a multidimensional construct consisting of three interconnected components: behavioral engagement (attendance, participation, effort), emotional engagement (interest, belonging, affective responses), and cognitive engagement (mental investment and willingness to master challenging material).² Complementing this framework, Schaufeli et al. proposed three dimensions of academic engagement, vigor, dedication, and absorption, oriented specifically toward higher education contexts.³

Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that student engagement positively predicts academic achievement and reduces the risk of academic withdrawal. A meta-analysis by Lei, Cui, and Zhou revealed a moderate positive relationship between student engagement and achievement across 69 studies.⁴ Wong et al. synthesized 137 studies ($N > 158,000$) and reported substantial average correlations between engagement and both academic achievement ($r = .33$) and subjective well-being.⁵ Conversely, declining engagement may represent an early stage of reduced academic energy that contributes to burnout and increased intentions to drop out.⁶

¹ Jennifer A. Fredricks, Phyllis C. Blumenfeld, and Alison H. Paris, "School Engagement: Potential of the Concept, State of the Evidence," *Review of Educational Research* 74, no. 1 (2004): 59–109, <https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543074001059>.

² Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris, "School Engagement."

³ Wilmar B. Schaufeli et al., "Burnout and Engagement in University Students," *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 33, no. 5 (2002): 464–481, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022102033005003>.

⁴ Hao Lei, Yunhuo Cui, and Wenye Zhou, "Relationships between Student Engagement and Academic Achievement: A Meta-Analysis," *Social Behavior and Personality* 46, no. 3 (2018): 517–528, <https://doi.org/10.2224/sbp.7054>.

⁵ Zi Yang Wong et al., "Student Engagement and Its Association with Academic Achievement and Subjective Well-Being: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis," *Journal of Educational Psychology* 116, no. 1 (2024): 48–75, <https://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000833>.

⁶ Wong et al., "Student Engagement and Its Association."

Despite its importance, not all university students demonstrate optimal levels of engagement. In Indonesia, suboptimal engagement is frequently associated with elevated psychological distress among students. Hidayah found that among 150 participants, only 16.7% demonstrated high engagement, 69.3% moderate, and 14% low.⁷ The World Health Organization⁸ and the Indonesian National Adolescent Mental Health Survey (I-NAMHS)⁹ identified anxiety disorders as prevalent among Indonesian young people. Ahmad, Alwi, and Akmal reported that 60% of *First*-year psychology students at a public university perceived themselves as inactive learners.¹⁰

A similar pattern was observed at the site of the present study: a private university in Pasuruan Regency, East Java. An informal preliminary survey of 20 students using open-ended questions suggested relatively low academic engagement, with the majority reporting boredom during lectures, anxiety before examinations, and reluctance to ask questions. While these preliminary observations are not generalizable due to the small, non-systematic sample, they provided the initial impetus for the present study by suggesting that fear and anxiety may serve as barriers to engagement at this institution.

One psychological factor presumed to influence student engagement is fear of failure. Conroy defined fear of failure as an individual's tendency to anticipate unpleasant consequences of failure in achievement-related situations, comprising five dimensions: fear of experiencing shame and embarrassment, fear of reduced self-esteem, fear of an uncertain future, fear of losing important others' interest, and fear of disappointing significant others.¹¹ Students with high levels of fear of failure tend to avoid, postpone, and withdraw from evaluative academic activities.¹² Recent evidence confirms the

⁷ Firda Nur Hidayah, "Hubungan Mindfulness dan Student Engagement pada Mahasiswa," *Acta Psychologia* 4, no. 1 (2022): 1–10, <https://doi.org/10.21831/ap.v4i1.51554>.

⁸ World Health Organization, *World Mental Health Report: Transforming Mental Health for All* (Geneva: World Health Organization, 2022), <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240049338>.

⁹ Indonesia National Adolescent Mental Health Survey (I-NAMHS): Report (Center for Reproductive Health, Universitas Gadjah Mada; University of Queensland; and Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, 2022).

¹⁰ Nur Humairah Ahmad, Aspin Alwi, and Nirwana Akmal, "Fear of Failure dan Student Engagement pada Mahasiswa Tahun Pertama Fakultas Psikologi Universitas Negeri Makassar," *Social Philantropic: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Sosial dan Psikologi* 2, no. 2 (2024): 18–24.

¹¹ David E. Conroy, "Progress in the Development of a Multidimensional Measure of Fear of Failure: The Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory (PFAI)," *Anxiety, Stress, & Coping* 14, no. 4 (2001): 431–452, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10615800108248365>.

¹² Andrew J. Elliot and Holly A. McGregor, "A 2 × 2 Achievement Goal Framework," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 80, no. 3 (2001): 501–519, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.80.3.501>.

negative association between fear of failure and student engagement across diverse educational contexts, although the strength of this relationship varies.¹³

Another relevant psychological factor is self-efficacy. Bandura defined self-efficacy as individuals' beliefs regarding their capability to organize and execute actions required to achieve desired outcomes.¹⁴ Within Social Cognitive Theory, self-efficacy influences choice of activities, allocation of effort, and persistence when facing challenges.¹⁵ Students with high self-efficacy tend to perceive difficult tasks as challenges rather than threats, thereby increasing their motivation to engage actively. Several studies support the direct predictive role of self-efficacy in student engagement,¹⁶ Self-efficacy consistently serves as a personal resource that strengthens resilience in managing academic demands.¹⁷

Two theoretical frameworks support the investigation of fear of failure and self-efficacy as simultaneous predictors of student engagement. The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model conceptualizes engagement as an outcome of interactions between demands and resources.¹⁸ While the JD-R model was originally developed for occupational settings and primarily distinguishes between environmental demands (e.g., workload, time pressure) and personal/organizational resources, recent extensions have

¹³ Ahmad, Alwi, and Akmal, "Fear of Failure dan Student Engagement"; George Nakhla, "The Modulatory Role of Extrinsic Motivation in the Relationship between Fear of Failure and Student Engagement," *Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice* 22, no. 2 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.53761/hpafhv81>.

¹⁴ Albert Bandura, *Self-Efficacy: The Exercise of Control* (New York: W. H. Freeman, 1997).

¹⁵ Barry J. Zimmerman, "Self-Efficacy: An Essential Motive to Learn," *Contemporary Educational Psychology* 25, no. 1 (2000): 82–91, <https://doi.org/10.1006/ceps.1999.1016>.

¹⁶ Fitri Ratna Agustina and Diana Rusmawati, "Hubungan antara Efikasi Diri Akademik dengan Student Engagement pada Santri di Pondok Pesantren Mahasiswa Bina Khoirul Insan Semarang," *Jurnal EMPATI* 11, no. 5 (2022): 332–336, <https://doi.org/10.14710/empati.0.36741>; Yanbo Wang and Wei Zhang, "The Relationship between College Students' Learning Engagement and Academic Self-Efficacy: A Moderated Mediation Model," *Frontiers in Psychology* 15, Article 1425172 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1425172>; Mohamad Ramli et al., "Loneliness, Academic Self-Efficacy, and Student Engagement in the Online Learning Environment: The Role of Humor in Learning," *Research and Practice in Technology Enhanced Learning* 19, Article 2 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.58459/rptel.2024.19002>.

¹⁷ Toni Honicke, Jaclyn Broadbent, and Matthew Fuller-Tyszkiewicz, "Learner Self-Efficacy, Goal Orientation, and Academic Achievement: Exploring Mediating and Moderating Relationships," *Higher Education Research & Development* 39, no. 4 (2020): 689–703, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2019.1685941>; Sondre M. Kristensen et al., "Academic Stress, Academic Self-Efficacy, and Psychological Distress: A Moderated Mediation of Within-Person Effects," *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 52 (2023): 1512–1529, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-023-01770-1>.

¹⁸ Arnold B. Bakker and Evangelia Demerouti, "Job Demands-Resources Theory: Taking Stock and Looking Forward," *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology* 22, no. 3 (2017): 273–285, <https://doi.org/10.1037/ocp0000056>.

applied it to academic contexts.¹⁹ In the present study, fear of failure is positioned not as a job demand in the traditional sense, but as a *dispositional hindrance* that consumes psychological energy in a manner functionally analogous to a hindrance demand, a conceptualization consistent with recent work framing frustration intolerance and evaluative anxiety as psychological demands that deplete students' coping resources.²⁰ Self-efficacy, in contrast, represents a personal resource that activates motivational processes and enhances engagement, an established link in the JD-R literature.²¹ Additionally, Social Cognitive Theory offers a complementary lens, explaining how self-beliefs shape the interpretation of environmental pressures and sustain persistence in academic engagement.²²

Although fear of failure and self-efficacy have each been extensively examined as predictors of engagement, most studies have investigated them separately, and few have examined their simultaneous contributions in a single regression model among Indonesian university students.²³ The novelty of the present study lies not in the regression technique per se, but in three aspects: (a) the simultaneous estimation of relative predictor importance, which allows comparison of the unique contribution of a hindrance factor (fear of failure) versus a resource factor (self-efficacy) within a single model; (b) the specific population, Indonesian private-university undergraduates, a group underrepresented in the international engagement literature; and (c) the magnitude and pattern of effects observed, which, as will be shown, reveal an unusually large dominance of fear of failure over self-efficacy.

Based on these theoretical and empirical considerations, this study aims to examine the effects of fear of failure and self-efficacy simultaneously on student engagement

¹⁹ Tino Lesener et al., "The Drivers of Work Engagement: A Meta-Analytic Review of Longitudinal Evidence," *Work & Stress* 34, no. 3 (2020): 259–278, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02678373.2019.1686440>; Samuel J. Litt, Keonhee Shin, and Melissa Luke, "Self-Care in Graduate Counseling Students: Examining Personal and Academic Predictors through the Job Demands-Resources Model," *Counselor Education and Supervision*, advance online publication (2026), <https://doi.org/10.1002/ceas.70032>; Ana M. Ruiz-Ortega and M. Pilar Berrios-Martos, "The Role of Emotional Intelligence and Frustration Intolerance in the Academic Performance of University Students: A Structural Equation Model," *Journal of Intelligence* 13, no. 8, Article 101 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.3390/jintelligence13080101>.

²⁰ Ruiz-Ortega and Berrios-Martos, "The Role of Emotional Intelligence."

²¹ Despoina Xanthopoulou et al., "The Role of Personal Resources in the Job Demands-Resources Model," *International Journal of Stress Management* 14, no. 2 (2007): 121–141.

²² Bandura, *Self-Efficacy*.

²³ Ahmad, Alwi, and Akmal, "Fear of Failure dan Student Engagement"; Wang and Zhang, "The Relationship between College Students' Learning Engagement."

among university students. Three hypotheses were proposed: (H1) Fear of failure negatively predicts student engagement; (H2) Self-efficacy positively predicts student engagement; and (H3) Fear of failure and self-efficacy simultaneously and significantly predict student engagement.

Research Methodology

This study employed a quantitative approach using a predictive correlational design. This design was selected because the primary objective was to examine the predictive effects of two independent variables, fear of failure and self-efficacy, on the dependent variable, student engagement, without manipulating any variables. A cross-sectional design was adopted, in which all variables were measured at a single point in time.²⁴

The participants comprised 215 undergraduate students (155 female, 60 male; age $M = 20.4$, $SD = 1.38$, range 18–24) enrolled at a private university in Pasuruan Regency, East Java, Indonesia. Participants were drawn from the Faculty of Law ($n = 112$) and the Faculty of Business ($n = 103$) and were distributed across academic years: Year 1 ($n = 68$), Year 2 ($n = 72$), Year 3 ($n = 48$), and Year 4 ($n = 27$). Participants were recruited using convenience sampling, subject to the following inclusion criteria: (a) being officially enrolled as an active student, (b) attending courses during the current academic semester, and (c) voluntarily agreeing to participate. Although the two faculties were selected deliberately because their assessment cultures were expected to make evaluative concerns salient, participant selection within these faculties was based on availability rather than on theoretically defined characteristics; the procedure is therefore best described as convenience rather than purposive sampling.

The sample size was determined based on the recommendation of 10–20 participants per predictor variable for multiple regression.²⁵ An a priori power analysis using G-Power for a multiple regression model with two predictors, a medium-to-large

²⁴ John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 5th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2018).

²⁵ Barbara G. Tabachnick and Linda S. Fidell, *Using Multivariate Statistics*, 7th ed. (Boston: Pearson, 2019).

effect size ($f^2 = .25$), $\alpha = .05$, and power = .95, indicated a minimum required sample of 67 participants.²⁶ The obtained sample of 215 thus substantially exceeds this requirement.

Data were collected using three self-report psychological instruments. All items were rated on a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 4 (*Strongly Agree*).

Student engagement was assessed using a researcher-developed scale grounded in the theoretical framework of Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris.²⁷ The instrument consisted of 28 items measuring three dimensions: behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement. Although the original framework was developed for K–12 contexts, it has been widely applied in higher education research.²⁸ An established higher-education-specific alternative exists (the UWES-S);²⁹ However, the researchers opted for a researcher-developed scale to capture culturally specific indicators of engagement relevant to the Indonesian classroom context. Cronbach's alpha was .887, and all corrected item-total correlations exceeded .30. A limitation of this instrument is that exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses (EFA/CFA) were not conducted; consequently, internal consistency was established, but the assumed three-dimensional structure and the discriminant validity of the scale relative to the other study constructs were not formally verified. This limitation is revisited in the Discussion, and factorial validation is recommended in future research.

Fear of failure was measured using a researcher-developed instrument based on Conroy's multidimensional theory.³⁰ The scale comprised 26 items assessing five dimensions: fear of experiencing shame and embarrassment, fear of devaluing one's self-esteem, fear of losing social influence, fear of an uncertain future, and fear of disappointing significant others. Conroy also published the Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory (PFAI) as a validated instrument. In the present study, a new scale was developed to incorporate items that are more directly relevant to the Indonesian academic context (e.g., fear of asking questions in class, fear related to religious and

²⁶ Franz Faul et al., "Statistical Power Analyses Using GPower 3.1: Tests for Correlation and Regression Analyses," *Behavior Research Methods* 41, no. 4 (2009): 1149–1160.

²⁷ Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris, "School Engagement."

²⁸ Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris, "School Engagement"; Nakhla, "The Modulatory Role of Extrinsic Motivation."

²⁹ Schaufeli et al., "Burnout and Engagement in University Students."

³⁰ Conroy, "Progress in the Development."

family expectations). Cronbach's alpha was .891, with all corrected item-total correlations exceeding .30. As with the Student Engagement Scale, EFA/CFA was not conducted. Because several items reference behaviors in evaluative situations (e.g., reluctance to ask questions), the possibility of conceptual overlap with the behavioral dimension of the engagement measure cannot be ruled out on internal consistency grounds alone; this issue is addressed in the Discussion, and factorial and discriminant validity testing are recommended in future research.

Self-efficacy was assessed using the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE) developed by Schwarzer and Jerusalem.³¹ The GSE is a 10-item unidimensional scale measuring a broad and stable sense of personal competence to deal effectively with a variety of stressful situations. The scale has been validated cross-culturally.³² In the present study, the Indonesian-language version was administered. Cronbach's alpha was .908. It should be noted that the GSE assesses generalized rather than domain-specific (academic) self-efficacy; because the criterion in this study is an academic outcome, this level-of-specificity mismatch may attenuate the observed self-efficacy–engagement association, and its implications are considered in the Discussion and Limitations.

Before hypothesis testing, several statistical assumption tests were performed. The normality of regression residuals was examined using the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. Linearity was assessed via the deviation from linearity test. Multicollinearity was evaluated using tolerance and variance inflation factor (VIF) values, and zero-order (Pearson) correlations among all study variables were computed before the regression. Additionally, heteroscedasticity was assessed using a scatterplot of standardized residuals against standardized predicted values; the scatterplot revealed no systematic pattern, indicating that the homoscedasticity assumption was satisfied. Because all three constructs were measured via self-report in a single administration, Harman's single-factor test was conducted to assess the potential for common method bias. Hypotheses were tested using multiple linear regression analysis. For each predictor, the squared semipartial correlation (sr^2) and the 95% confidence interval of the

³¹ Ralf Schwarzer and Matthias Jerusalem, "Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale," in *Measures in Health Psychology: A User's Portfolio. Causal and Control Beliefs*, ed. John Weinman, Stephen Wright, and Marie Johnston (Windsor, UK: NFER-Nelson, 1995), 35–37.

³² Aleksandra Luszczynska, Urte Scholz, and Ralf Schwarzer, "The General Self-Efficacy Scale: Multicultural Validation Studies," *The Journal of Psychology* 139, no. 5 (2005): 439–457.

unstandardized coefficient were examined in addition to the standardized coefficient. All analyses were performed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 26.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics for all study variables are presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables (N = 215)

Variable	M	SD	Min	Max
Student Engagement	85.87	10.25	60	112
Fear of Failure	53.94	11.30	27	77
Self-Efficacy	38.57	5.77	25	50

Note. M = mean; SD = standard deviation.

Zero-order correlations and collinearity diagnostics are presented in Table 2. Fear of failure was negatively correlated with student engagement, whereas self-efficacy was positively correlated with it; the two predictors were only weakly correlated, and tolerance and VIF values (tolerance = .98; VIF = 1.02) indicated no multicollinearity. Harman's single-factor test extracted a *First* unrotated factor accounting for less than 40% of the total variance, suggesting that common method bias was unlikely to account for the observed relationships. However, it cannot be entirely ruled out.

Table 2
Intercorrelations and Collinearity Diagnostics among Study Variables (N = 215)

Variable	1	2	3	Tolerance	VIF
1. Student Engagement					
2. Fear of Failure	-.77			.98	1.02
3. Self-Efficacy	.22	-.15		.98	1.02

Assumption Tests

Normality.

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test on the unstandardized residuals yielded $D(215) = 0.037$, $p = .200$, indicating that the normality assumption was satisfied (Table 3). Because the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test can be overly conservative at larger sample sizes, this result was corroborated by visual inspection of the normal Q-Q plot of residuals, which showed no marked departures from normality.

Table 3
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Normality Test on Residuals

Statistic	Value
N	215
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	0.037
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.200
Conclusion	Normal distribution

Linearity.

The deviation-from-linearity test indicated no significant deviations for both predictor-criterion pairs ($p > .05$), confirming linear relationships (Table 4).

Table 4
Linearity Test Results

Variable Pair	F Linearity	Sig. Dev. from Linearity	Conclusion
Student Engagement $\times$ Fear of Failure	327.486	.216	Linear
Student Engagement $\times$ Self-Efficacy	985.482	.359	Linear

Heteroscedasticity.

A scatterplot of standardized residuals against standardized predicted values was inspected. The residuals were randomly distributed with no discernible funnel or curved pattern, indicating that the homoscedasticity assumption was met.

Hypothesis Testing: Multiple Regression Analysis**Model significance (F-test).**

The simultaneous regression test indicated that the two-predictor model was statistically significant, $F(2, 212) = 163.359$, $p < .001$ (Table 5). Hypothesis 3 was supported.

Table 5
ANOVA Results for the Regression Model

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	12940.001	2	6470.001	163.359	<.001
Residual	8396.492	212	39.606	—	—
Total	21336.493	214	—	—	—

Note. Dependent variable: Student Engagement. Predictors: (Constant), Self-Efficacy, Fear of Failure.

Coefficient of determination.

The Adjusted R^2 was .601, indicating that fear of failure and self-efficacy together explained 60.1% of the variance in student engagement (Table 6). According to Cohen's benchmarks, this represents a large effect.³³ The remaining 39.9% of the variance is attributable to other variables not included in the model.

Table 6
Regression Model Summary

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of Estimate
1	.779	.606	.601	6.293

Note. Predictors: (Constant), Self-Efficacy, Fear of Failure. Dependent variable: Student Engagement.

³³ Jacob Cohen, *Statistical Power Analysis for the Behavioral Sciences*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1988).

Individual predictor coefficients (t-test).

The regression coefficients are presented in Table 7. The resulting regression equation is: $Y = 116.911 - 0.691X_1 + 0.175X_2$, where Y = Student Engagement, X_1 = Fear of Failure, and X_2 = Self-Efficacy.

Table 7
Multiple Regression Coefficients

Variable	B	SE B	β	t	Sig.
(Constant)	116.911	3.929	–	29.757	<.001
Fear of Failure	–0.691	0.040	–.757	–17.373	<.001
Self-Efficacy	0.175	0.077	.100	2.284	.023

Note. Dependent variable: Student Engagement. B = unstandardized coefficient; β = standardized coefficient.

Fear of failure was a significant negative predictor of student engagement ($\beta = -0.757$, $t = -17.373$, $p < .001$; $B = -0.691$, 95% CI $[-0.770, -0.612]$), supporting Hypothesis 1. Self-efficacy was a significant positive predictor ($\beta = .100$, $t = 2.284$, $p = .023$; $B = 0.175$, 95% CI $[0.023, 0.327]$), supporting Hypothesis 2. To compare the unique contribution of each predictor, squared semipartial correlations were examined: fear of failure uniquely accounted for approximately 56% of the variance in student engagement ($sr^2 \approx .56$), whereas self-efficacy uniquely accounted for about 1% ($sr^2 = .01$), with the remainder of the explained variance shared between the two predictors. Fear of failure was therefore the dominant predictor in the model. The standardized coefficients should nonetheless be compared with caution, because their relative magnitudes are affected by the correlation between the predictors and by the psychometric properties of the measures.

Discussion

The results indicated that fear of failure was the strongest predictor in the regression model ($\beta = -0.757$), showing a substantial negative association with student engagement. This finding is consistent with previous research reporting a negative relationship between fear of failure and engagement, and adds to it by documenting an association larger than is typically reported.³⁴ The magnitude of this effect warrants attention: fear of failure alone accounted for the majority of the model's predictive power, suggesting that, within the present sample, students' anticipation of failure-related consequences was the strongest correlate of disengagement. Because the design is cross-sectional, the reverse direction is equally plausible: students who are already disengaged may come to

³⁴ Ahmad, Alwi, and Akmal, "Fear of Failure dan Student Engagement"; Nakhla, "The Modulatory Role of Extrinsic Motivation."

anticipate failure more strongly, and the two processes may also reinforce each other over time.

Before this association is interpreted substantively, three methodological explanations for its unusual magnitude should be considered. *First*, the zero-order correlation between fear of failure and engagement ($r = -.77$) was very close to the standardized regression coefficient ($\beta = -.757$), indicating that the effect was not due to statistical suppression but reflected a strong bivariate relationship. *Second*, and more importantly, part of that relationship may be attributable to construct overlap: several fear-of-failure items refer to conduct in evaluative situations (e.g., reluctance to ask questions), which is conceptually close to the behavioral facet of disengagement. In the absence of confirmatory factor and discriminant validity evidence, a portion of the observed association may therefore be tautological rather than substantive. *Third*, because all three variables were assessed via self-report in a single administration with an identical response format, common method variance may have inflated the correlations. However, Harman's single-factor test did not indicate a dominant method factor; this test is a weak safeguard. These considerations do not negate the finding, but they qualify it: the effect should be regarded as robust in direction. At the same time, its precise magnitude awaits replication with validated, method-separated measures.

Theoretically, this finding can be understood through the threat appraisal framework. Students with a high fear of failure tend to perceive evaluative academic situations, such as presentations, discussions, and examinations, as threats to their self-worth.³⁵ Such appraisals activate avoidance motivation, leading to withdrawal from participation to minimize the risk of negative evaluation.³⁶ In the context of the JD-R model, fear of failure served as a powerful dispositional hindrance, depleting psychological energy. This is consistent with Ruiz-Ortega and Berrios-Martos, who found that frustration intolerance, a construct conceptually adjacent to fear of failure, negatively predicted engagement through increased burnout in their structural equation model.³⁷ Similarly, Auerswald, Koddebusch, and Hermann reported that procrastination due to fear of failure was a significant predictor of perceived stress among university students,

³⁵ Conroy, "Progress in the Development."

³⁶ Elliot and McGregor, "A 2×2 Achievement Goal Framework."

³⁷ Ruiz-Ortega and Berrios-Martos, "The Role of Emotional Intelligence."

reinforcing the role of failure-related anxiety as a psychological demand in academic settings.³⁸

A particularly noteworthy pattern is the marked dominance of fear of failure ($\beta = -.757$) over self-efficacy ($\beta = .100$) as a predictor. This asymmetry is somewhat unusual in the engagement literature, where self-efficacy typically emerges as a moderate-to-strong predictor, and it should be interpreted in light of the measurement caveats noted above.³⁹ Several context-specific factors may account for this pattern. The Indonesian higher education system places considerable emphasis on summative examinations and formal evaluations, which may amplify evaluative threat. The participants were drawn from the Law and Business faculties, disciplines characterized by competitive grading and public oral assessments, which can heighten fear of failure. Additionally, and more speculatively, collectivist cultural values in Indonesian society, in which failure may carry social shame extending to family reputation, could magnify the emotional burden of anticipated failure. This cultural interpretation is offered post hoc because no cultural or contextual variables were measured in the present study; it should therefore be treated as a hypothesis for future research rather than as an explanation supported by the present data.⁴⁰ This interpretation aligns with Won, Jang, and Kwon, who documented the role of fear of failure as a mediator between parental psychological control and performance in collectivist cultures.⁴¹

The positive effect of self-efficacy on student engagement ($\beta = .100, p = .023$) was statistically significant but small, supporting Hypothesis 2. This result is directionally consistent with Social Cognitive Theory and prior empirical findings.⁴² However, the

³⁸ Sören Auerswald, Clarissa Koddebusch, and Christiane Hermann, "Elevated Perceived Stress in University Students Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic: Potential Contributing Factors in a Propensity-Score-Matched Sample," *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology* 65, no. 4 (2024): 715–728, <https://doi.org/10.1111/sjop.13013>.

³⁹ Toni Honicke and Jaclyn Broadbent, "The Influence of Academic Self-Efficacy on Academic Performance: A Systematic Review," *Educational Research Review* 17 (2016): 63–84.

⁴⁰ Conroy, "Progress in the Development."

⁴¹ Jongsoo Won, Duckhun Jang, and Sungchul Kwon, "The Relationship among Perceived Parental Psychological Control, Socially Prescribed Perfectionism, Fear of Failure, and Performance of Adolescent Athletes," *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology* 24, no. 2 (2026): 249–268, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1612197X.2025.2453448>.

⁴² Bandura, *Self-Efficacy*; Agustina and Rusmawati, "Hubungan antara Efikasi Diri Akademik"; Wang and Zhang, "The Relationship between College Students' Learning Engagement"; Song Hu et al., "The Mediating Role of Social Presence in Psychosocial and Technological Predictors of Online Student Engagement in Mechanical Engineering Education," *International Online Journal of Education and Teaching* 13, no. 2 (2026): 17–33.

relatively modest size of this effect in the present model is noteworthy. A further consideration is that the modest unique contribution of self-efficacy partly reflects its overlap with fear of failure: the two predictors were correlated, so some of self-efficacy's bivariate association with engagement ($r = .22$) was shared with fear of failure and thus absorbed by the stronger predictor. Beyond this, one tentative interpretation is that when fear of failure is very strong, it may attenuate the motivational benefits of self-efficacy; that is, students may believe in their capability yet still disengage because the anticipated consequences of failure feel overwhelming. This attenuation account implies a fear-of-failure $\times$ self-efficacy interaction, which was not tested in the present study and remains a hypothesis for future research to examine directly through moderation analysis. This is consistent with findings by Ramli et al., who demonstrated that the positive effect of academic self-efficacy on engagement was moderated by contextual factors such as loneliness and perceived humor in learning.⁴³ The present findings suggest that high fear of failure may similarly serve as a contextual constraint, limiting the translation of self-efficacy beliefs into active engagement.

Together, fear of failure and self-efficacy explained 60.1% of the variance in student engagement (Adjusted $R^2 = .601$), a substantial figure in psychological research.⁴⁴ This finding supports Hypothesis 3 and underscores the utility of considering both hindrance factors and resource factors simultaneously when explaining student engagement. The JD-R framework predicts that engagement is highest when demands are low and resources are high; the present results are consistent with this prediction, with the qualification that the demand-side variable (fear of failure) was far more influential than the resource-side variable (self-efficacy) in this particular sample.

Limitations and Future Directions

Several limitations should be noted. *First*, the cross-sectional design precludes causal inference; longitudinal or experimental designs would be needed to establish whether reducing fear of failure increases engagement. *Second*, the two researcher-developed scales (Student Engagement Scale and Fear of Failure Scale) were not subjected to exploratory or confirmatory factor analysis; while internal consistency was adequate ($\alpha > .88$), construct validity has not been formally established. In particular, the

⁴³ Ramli et al., "Loneliness, Academic Self-Efficacy, and Student Engagement."

⁴⁴ Cohen, *Statistical Power Analysis*.

discriminant validity of the Fear of Failure Scale relative to the behavioral facet of the Student Engagement Scale was not tested, so part of the strong negative association between these two constructs may reflect item overlap rather than a purely substantive relationship. Future studies should conduct EFA/CFA and formal discriminant validity analyses, or adopt established instruments such as the UWES-S and the PFAI.⁴⁵

Third, the sample was drawn from a single private university, limiting generalizability to other institutional types and regions. *Fourth*, demographic variables (gender, academic year, GPA) were not entered as covariates; future research should examine whether the observed effects hold after controlling for these factors. *Fifth*, all three constructs were assessed with self-report instruments administered in a single session with an identical response format, which raises the possibility of common method bias and social desirability responding. However, Harman's single-factor test did not indicate a dominant method factor; future research should employ temporal or method separation and, where feasible, non-self-report indicators of engagement (e.g., behavioral or observational data). *Sixth*, self-efficacy was measured using a generalized rather than an academic scale, and a domain-specific instrument might yield a stronger, more interpretable association with academic engagement. *Seventh*, the preliminary survey mentioned in the Introduction was informal and does not meet the standards of systematic evidence. Finally, the present study examined only two predictors; a substantial proportion of the variance in engagement (39.9%) remains unexplained by variables such as social support, intrinsic motivation, teaching quality, and learning environment factors.

Educational Implications

The finding that fear of failure was the dominant predictor of student engagement has potential implications for educational practice. However, these should be read as tentative, given the study's correlational and cross-sectional design. If the observed associations reflect causal processes, an assumption that requires longitudinal and experimental confirmation, then interventions aimed solely at building self-efficacy, while valuable, may be insufficient when the evaluative environment continues to amplify fear of failure. Practical strategies include: implementing formative assessment practices

⁴⁵ Schaufeli et al., "Burnout and Engagement in University Students"; David E. Conroy, Jonathan P. Willow, and Jonathan N. Metzler, "Multidimensional Fear of Failure Measurement: The Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory," *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology* 14, no. 2 (2002): 76–90.

that emphasize learning processes rather than solely summative outcomes; normalizing failure as a natural component of learning; employing alternative assessment methods such as portfolios or problem-based projects; and creating psychologically safe classrooms in which students feel comfortable asking questions and making mistakes.⁴⁶ Simultaneously, self-efficacy-enhancing strategies remain important, including providing constructive feedback emphasizing progress, incorporating peer learning, and offering verbal encouragement that reinforces competence.⁴⁷

Conclusion

This study examined the effects of fear of failure and self-efficacy on student engagement among 215 undergraduates at a private university in East Java, Indonesia. Multiple linear regression analysis revealed three main findings. *First*, fear of failure had a significant negative effect on student engagement ($\beta = -.757, p < .001$), emerging as the dominant predictor in the model. *Second*, self-efficacy exerted a significant positive effect on student engagement ($\beta = .100, p = .023$), although its contribution was substantially smaller. *Third*, the two predictors jointly explained 60.1% of the variance in student engagement (Adjusted $R^2 = .601, F(2, 212) = 163.359, p < .001$). Within the limits of a cross-sectional, self-report design, these findings highlight fear of failure as a particularly strong correlate of student engagement and, if corroborated by longitudinal and experimental work, suggest that reducing evaluative threat is a promising avenue for promoting engagement. While self-efficacy remains a valuable target for educational interventions, the comparatively larger association of fear of failure suggests that higher education institutions may benefit from attending to evaluative environments that minimize unnecessary threat and psychological burden, alongside efforts to strengthen students' confidence.

⁴⁶ Amy C. Edmondson, *The Fearless Organization: Creating Psychological Safety in the Workplace for Learning, Innovation, and Growth* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2018).

⁴⁷ Bandura, *Self-Efficacy*.

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