Leadership Self-Efficacy and Resilience

Results from the 2021 Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership

Center for the Study of Student Life

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INTRODUCTION

The Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership (MSL) is an international survey that investigates the extent to which higher education institutions develop student leaders. This report compares leadership self-efficacy and resiliency scores across student demographic groups. Leadership self-efficacy is defined as one's internal belief in the likelihood that they will be successful when engaging in leadership roles and behaviors (Bandura, 1997; Hannah et al., 2008). Understanding the degree to which a student is confident in their success as a leader could predict ability to act as a leader, or at least willingness to act as a leader. Resiliency refers to the characteristics that enable one to persist during periods of adversity and to positively cope with moments of stress (Connor & Davidson, 2003). Resiliency is considered an important individual difference that distinguishes leaders in times of crisis. The measurement of these constructs in the MSL is detailed in the findings below.

In 2021, the MSL was administered to a random sample of 4,000 undergraduate students on The Ohio State University's Columbus campus. Latinx and international students were underrepresented in previous administrations of the MSL, so these groups were oversampled in 2021. A total of 715 students from the random sample and Latinx and international student oversamples responded for a response rate of 15.4%.

HIGHLIGHTS

- **86.0%** of students indicated feeling *confident* or *very confident* in their ability to be successful while working with a team on a group project
- **69.4%** of students indicated feeling *confident* or *very confident* in their ability to be successful at leading others
- Over half of the respondents (**61.0%**) indicated feeling that they could deal with whatever comes their way (i.e., *often* or *nearly all the time*)
- Less than half (**40.5%**) of the respondents felt they had the ability to not be discouraged by failure *often* or *nearly all of the time*
- Second-generation or higher students and foreign-born permanent residents both had significantly higher leadership self-efficacy scores than international students ($p < .05$)
- Men scored significantly higher on the resiliency scale than women ($p < .001$)
- Heterosexual students scored significantly higher on resiliency than LGBQ+ students ($p < .01$)
- Conservative students had significantly higher resiliency scores than liberal students ($p < .001$) and moderate students ($p < .01$)

FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP SELF-EFFICACY

Leadership self-efficacy refers to one's confidence that they will be successful when engaging in leadership-oriented behaviors (Bandura, 1997; Hannah et al., 2008). Students encountered items that asked "How confident are you that you can be successful in…" followed by one of four distinct activities that relate to leadership-oriented behaviors and activities. Items had the responses *Not at all confident*, *Somewhat confident*, *Confident* and *Very confident*, which were coded as 1, 2, 3 and 4, respectively. The MSL provides a calculated leadership self-efficacy score that is an average of the four leadership self-efficacy items described below and has a possible range between 1 and 4.

All Students

How confident are you that you can be successful in…

	Not at all confident	Somewhat confident	Confident	Very confident
Leading others	3.8%	26.7%	41.9%	27.5%
Organizing a group's tasks to accomplish a goal	2.6%	18.8%	44.8%	33.8%
Taking initiative to improve something	3.9%	22.6%	42.5%	31.1%
Working with a team on a group project	1.8%	12.2%	44.1%	41.9%

Demographic Differences

The following table examines differences in leadership self-efficacy between demographic groups. Independent samples t-tests and one-way ANOVAs were conducted to identify statistically significant differences in leadership self-efficacy between demographic groups. No significant difference was found between men and women regarding leadership self-efficacy, nor were any significant differences found between racial groups. Second-generation or higher students had a significantly greater leadership self-efficacy score than international students ($p < .01$). Foreign-born permanent residents also scored significantly higher than international students in regard to leadership self-efficacy ($p < .05$). No differences in leadership self-efficacy were found between students with and without disabilities. No differences were found between students of different political affiliations.

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

Leadership Self-Efficacy (*n* = 543)

	n	Mean	Significance
All Students	543	3.07	
Gender Identity			
Man	159	3.07	
Woman	337	3.11	
Transgender/Gender Non-Conforming	--	--	
Racial/Ethnic Identity			
White	320	3.10	
Black	26	3.14	
Asian	58	2.97	
Latinx	23	3.02	
Other race/ethnicity	26	3.08	
Multiracial/ethnic	57	3.09	
Sexual Orientation			
Heterosexual	375	3.09	
LGBQ+	132	3.04	
Preferred response not listed	--	--	
First-Generation College Student			
Continuing-generation	437	3.10	
First-generation	71	2.99	
Don't know	--	--	
Citizenship/Generation Status			*
Second-generation or higher	375	3.13	
First-generation U.S.-born	78	2.97	
Foreign-born (naturalized/permanent resident)	24	3.19	
International student	38	2.81	
Disability Status			
No disability	428	3.08	
Has disability	84	3.07	
Political Affiliation			
Liberal	276	3.06	
Moderate	187	3.05	
Conservative	75	3.17	

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

RESILIENCY

Resiliency refers to the capability of a person to resist the effects of stress and adversity and recover from those difficulties in constructive ways (Connor & Davidson, 2003). To ascertain respondents' resiliency levels, they were asked to indicate how much they agreed with a series of statements describing their ability to cope with stress over the previous month. Items are scored on a Likert scale from 1 to 5, with responses including *Not at all true*, *Rarely true*, *Sometimes true*, *Often true* and *True nearly all the time*. A composite resiliency score provided by MSL is an average of the six resiliency items described below.

All Students

Indicate how much you agree with the following statements as they apply to you over the last month:

	Not at all true	Rarely true	Sometimes true	Often true	True nearly all the time
I can deal with whatever comes my way	2.8%	2.6%	33.6%	39.7%	21.3%
Having to cope with stress can make me stronger	3.3%	8.4%	33.6%	34.9%	19.7%
Under pressure, I stay focused and think clearly	3.3%	9.1%	35.6%	36.7%	15.2%
I am not easily discouraged by failure	4.9%	16.0%	38.6%	27.4%	13.1%
I think of myself as a strong person when dealing with life's challenges and difficulties	3.2%	6.3%	26.2%	41.6%	22.8%
I am able to handle unpleasant or painful feelings like sadness, fear, and anger	4.1%	7.4%	31.0%	38.3%	19.1%

Demographic Differences

The following table examines differences in resiliency between demographic groups. Independent samples *t*-tests and one-way ANOVAs were conducted to identify statistically significant differences in resiliency between demographic groups. Men had significantly higher resiliency scores than women ($p < .001$). Heterosexual students had significantly higher resiliency scores compared with LGBQ+ students ($p < .01$). Students who reported no disability scored higher on resiliency than students with disabilities ($p < .001$). Conservative students had significantly higher resiliency scores than liberal students ($p < .001$) or moderate students ($p < .01$).

Resiliency (*n* = 534)

	n	Mean	Significance
All Students	534	3.58	
Gender Identity			***
Man	160	3.77	
Woman	335	3.51	
Transgender/Gender Non-Conforming	--	--	

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

	n	Mean	Significance
Racial/Ethnic Identity			
White	319	3.54	
Black	27	3.75	
Asian	59	3.61	
Latinx	23	3.71	
Other race/ethnicity	25	3.65	
Multiracial/ethnic	57	3.56	
Sexual Orientation			**
Heterosexual	374	3.64	
LGBQ+	133	3.38	
Preferred response not listed	--	--	
First-Generation College Student			
Continuing-generation	437	3.58	
First-generation	71	3.53	
Don't know	--	--	
Citizenship/Generation Status			
Second-generation or higher	373	3.58	
First-generation U.S.-born	78	3.50	
Foreign-born (naturalized/permanent resident)	25	3.43	
International student	39	3.79	
Disability Status			***
No disability	430	3.63	
Has disability	82	3.26	
Political Affiliation			***
Liberal	271	3.47	
Moderate	184	3.59	
Conservative	75	3.92	

REFERENCES

Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy : the exercise of control*. W.H. Freeman and Company.

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

APPENDIX A: RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

	n	%
Gender Identity		
Man	160	31.0%
Woman	341	66.1%
Transgender/Gender Non-Conforming	15	2.9%
Racial/Ethnic Identity		
White	322	62.6%
Black	27	5.3%
Asian	59	11.5%
Latinx	23	4.5%
Other race/ethnicity	26	5.1%
Multiracial/ethnic	57	11.1%
Sexual Orientation		
Heterosexual	378	73.3%
Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Queer, Questioning	134	26.0%
Preferred response not listed	4	0.8%
First-Generation College Student		
Continuing generation college student	440	84.8%
First-generation college student	72	13.9%
Don't know	7	1.3%
Citizenship/Generation Status		
Second-generation or higher	377	72.6%
First-generation U.S.-born	78	15.0%
Foreign-born (naturalized/permanent resident)	25	4.8%
International student	39	7.5%
Disability Status		
No disability	432	83.7%
Has disability	84	16.3%
Political Affiliation		
Liberal	277	50.6%
Moderate	191	34.9%
Conservative	79	14.4%

Note. A number of respondents did not complete demographic items; subtotals within each demographic category are less than the overall reported number of respondents for each year. Due to sample sizes, students who identified their gender as transgender/gender non-conforming, selected 'preferred response not listed' for sexual orientation, or selected 'don't know' for first-generation college student status were not included in demographic analyses for gender identity, sexual orientation, or first-generation college student status. Students in the Latinx and international student oversample did not all respond to the demographic items.

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