
**IMPACTS OF SELF-EFFICACY ON WOMEN'S CAREER CHOICES AND
ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS: A REVIEW OF EXISTING
LITERATURE**

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ABSTRACT

The women in India are undergoing a transition. Their career aspirations, career behavior and career development aspects need an interpretation. In view of limited and non-convergent research with regard to working women's career aspirations, the current study attempts to theoretically review the impact of self efficacy on women's career choices. The present study points towards the evolving role of individual's perceived efficacies in shaping the content and context of career related decisions.

Keywords: Self efficacy, working women, career aspirations

INTRODUCTION

Women's "career development" as a socio economic phenomenon has attracted immense attention across academic literature (VICTORIA, 1996).The women's career aspirations has always remained a matter of intense debate and review across the world (CESINGER, 2011). The creation of self-identity and lure of financial security has attracted women into the fold of sustainable career building.

The ongoing "active engagement" of women in economic activities worldwide has always been questioned on the basis of gender and other differences, yet the march of women has now globalized as she searches for non-traditional career opportunities outside her area of comfort. In a study across career conscious women in India, the significance of career to Indian women was vindicated in form of women's intense search for self-identity, financial security and achievement of intellectual satisfaction (RAJESH, 2015)

The working women's career aspiration in Indian context has been explored either as a comparative context or as a study on gender disparities. The IMF study on women workers in

India (DAS, Chandra, Kochar, Kumar, 2015) classifies demographic characteristics and lower educational attainments as reasons for misplaced career aspirations across female workers and hence the lower female participation. The study observed that the female labor participation in rural areas is more than that in urban areas. The study confirmed the women's efficacy towards the traditional occupations than towards the emerging nontraditional occupations.

A recent report of National Commission on Women on status of women scientists in science and technology institutions in Delhi; acknowledges the inclination of Indian women towards the traditional career avenues instead of sciences and mathematics as options. The sizable lack of career awareness and career related counseling were highlighted as other reasons for this state of affairs.

THEORETICAL CONTEXT

The concept of "self-efficacy" can be understood as one's belief in one's capabilities to accomplish a task in a set of existing conditions (BANDURA, 1977). In other terms, it denotes the ability of an individual (women in this case) to succeed and dominate in a particular condition. The review of literature points towards factors that seem to weaken the individual's resolve (individual's self-beliefs) with regard to achieving something tangible in form of career. The conditioned observational learning, social experiences and reciprocal determinism; have been observed to shape one's resolve to accomplish something in life. In context of women and their career choices (BANDURA, 1986), it can thus be inferred that the women's initial attempts at mastering an art, seeing and observing others as succeeding in a line of career, social persuasion and individual's psychological response do shape the women's sense of achieving or failing to realize a career aspiration and hence the impact on her resultant psychological well-being.

The women's "self-efficacy" is regarded as core construct in the social cognitive career framework (LENT, Brown, Hackett, 1994) as it impacts the women's initiative behavior and also impacts the degree of effort they (women) put in for sustaining their subjective behavior (career) despite the presence of challenges.

The review of existing academic literature points towards the evolving role of individual's perceived efficacies in shaping the content and context of career related decisions (HACKETT, 1995). In a research across male and female college students, Hackett observed that the perceived efficacy beliefs do shape the career choices of male and female students. In other words, the individual's self-efficacy has largely contributed towards widening the academic understanding of women's career concerns.

The research pointed towards the growing tendency of the female students to close off the viable non-traditional career options on account of their weak efficacy beliefs. In the related research, Hackett further observed that the women's weaker personal efficacy with regard to career related behavior lead to underutilization of their capabilities, talents and energies in perusal of career opportunities in non-traditional areas in comparison with men.

Betz and Hackett in their research across the women underlined the significance of self-efficacy approach in understanding women's career development in social cognitive terms. The research illustrated the growing significance of cognitive mediational factors in understanding the women's responses to career. The research further concluded that substantial difference do exist across males and females in terms of their beliefs with regard to traditional career versus the non-traditional career (occupation). The existing literature points towards the sizable impact of self-efficacy in women's career decisions, choices and aspirations across life time, (HACKETT, 1995).

Betz and Hackett (1981) examined the student's (male and female) perceptions of self-efficacy with regard to educational requirements and occupational duties across twenty common professions. The research scale assumed women's under representation and consciously incorporated the male dominated occupations for the study. The research concluded that women's self-efficacy levels were significantly lower for the male dominated careers. In other words, the research implied that the efficacy beliefs with regard to gender specific nontraditional career options do limit the range of career options opinioned by males and females.

Hackett (1995) observed the prevalence of pungent need of career counseling across women with regard to non-traditional options and career outlook.

Women's self-efficacy and career aspirations

The "self-efficacy" as a research construct has received tremendous attention across the literature (HACKETT, 1995), (LENT, Brown, Hackett, 1994), (WEISS, Freund, Weise, 2012). The "self-efficacy" in women has been observed to directly impact the women's choice behavior in three distinct manners (BANDURA, 1986). Firstly the women's level of self-efficacy enables or disables her to choose or negate a course of action (career option in this case).

Secondly, the self-efficacy impacts the women's level and consistency of performance across an area of her choice (BANDURA, 1986). Thirdly the women's levels of self-efficacy have been observed to face or give up in view of the mounting challenges that come across her path to successful realization of her chosen career aspiration in social context (BANDURA, 1977).

The comparatively higher levels of self-efficacy in women have been observed across the women with higher levels of self-efficacy with regard to academic attainments. In context of Indian working women a research highlighted the evolving role of social cognitive aspects of women's psyche. The research further studied the impact of diverse factors on women's inclination for traditional career versus the non-traditional career

Bandura (1977) stressed the critical role of individual's (women in this case) self-efficacy beliefs in deciding the activities they participate in , the quantum of effort undertaken as well as the individual's intention to continue or leave mid-way. In terms of evolving women's career aspirations, the women's self-efficacy beliefs could be regarded as self-choices or intrinsic perceptions.

Machida, Feltz (2013) in a research across sportswomen, observed that the women possess the infinite ability to lead more effectively in comparison with male counterparts yet in pressing conditions they are the ones who give up early. The conditioned low self-efficacy levels might be the reason behind the women's rampant inability to achieve top leadership positions in sports, business and society. The study further highlighted the impacts of women's lower confidence on their respective motivation levels, intentions and ongoing actions.

Weiss, Freund (2012) in a study across high school male and female students, observed that the women's ability to cope with uncertainty decreases substantially across the segment that is low in openness. The study further concluded that the women's endorsement of traditional gender role beliefs contributed to self-efficacy and subjective well-being across the section of women low in openness.

In case of women ranking higher on openness, the rejection of traditional gender role beliefs bore a positive impact on their career, levels of self-efficacy and resultant sense of well-being (WEISS, Freund, Weise, 2012). The occupational self-efficacy (ABELE, Spurk, 2009) and career goals across women have been observed to exert a positive impact on objective and subjective career success.

The impacts of self-efficacy on career choices and academic achievements

In context of career aspiration, individual's level of "self –efficacy" has largely been interpreted as a patterned or a learned behavior (BANDURA, 1977) of the individual (women in this case) that manifests itself through the four distinct experiences. The individual's learning experiences could either be from her past performance, or from the vicarious learning or from the social persuasion or from the individual's emotional arousal. In context of career development, women's aspirations have been observed to exhibit more consistency and improvement when

they have prior successful performances at micro aspects. In contrast the previous failures raise the probability of a unsuccessful performance again.

The women's career has been observed to bear the impact of her vicarious learning when she compares her present attainments with the peer members, groups members, colleagues or even across her family members (like the brother, sister or other family members). The notion of modeling the actions on success models has been observed to bear favorable results only when there are respective similarities in the individual and her role model. This could explain the phenomenon of a girl when she topped the Punjab Judicial services examination in the previous year.

The social persuasion conforms to the phenomenon of a positive or negative feedback from other social members. The positive feedback has been observed to raise the levels of self-efficacy with regard to career aspirations. Lastly the emotional state of women with regard to career options, also impacts her learning experience across time.

All these grossly impact the women's mastery over certain academic subjects like the mathematics and engineering sciences (BANDURA, 1977). In other words, these learning orientations impact the academic performance which in turn impacts the career performances in longer run.

Bandura (1996) observed that the self-efficacy in women is positively related to their academic and educational performance and attainments in longer run. At the same time the research concluded that the future education orientation of the aforesaid women is also affected by their current levels of self-efficacy. In a study across the students enrolled across engineering and mathematics based subjects, Mau (2003) pointed towards the existence of the subject based self-efficacy in career aspirations, curriculum related engagement as well as respective performance in examinations.

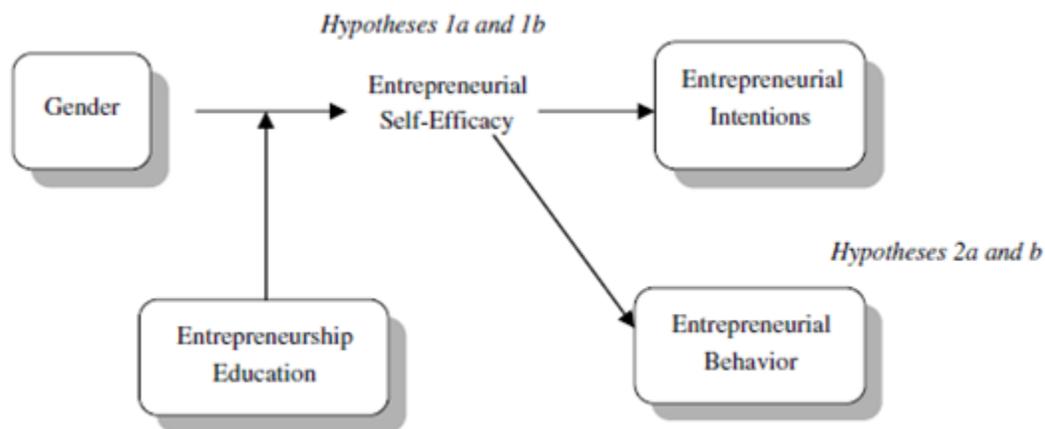
The relation between individual's academic attainments and education orientation further strengthens the impact of women's levels of "self-efficacy" on the career aspirations as well as attainments.

Bassi (2007) in a study across the high school girls and boys; observed the prevalence of the self-driven positive motivation towards learning and educational attainments. The higher levels of self-efficacy in respective sample students was upheld as the driving force for student's spending of more time in doing home-works, in higher concentrations of attendance and participation in class activities as well a success in examinations. The review of existing literature points towards the existence of a relation between the student's decision making abilities, student's vision of

goals, student's aspirations as well as the levels of self-efficacy.

Pinquart (2003) pointed towards the prevalence of the relation between student's higher self-efficacy based beliefs and their respective transition from school to work in uncertain business environments. The study concluded the existence of the consciousness across adolescent German students with regard to escaping unemployment with an inclination for early possible search for job and seeking satisfaction across the job in hand.

Similarly the individual's level of self-efficacy, have been observed to impact the academic achievements, career aspirations and educational goals in diverse and unknown manners. Wilson, Kilkul, (2009) interpreted the gender specific entrepreneurial self-efficacy in women entrepreneurs and observed that the career choices across women are indeed shaped by entrepreneurial interests and aspirations. The research further upholds the fact that the impact of entrepreneurial education on individual's self-efficacy was stronger across women in comparison with men.



Source: (WILSON, Kilkul, 2009)

CONCLUSION

The relationship between individual's career behaviors and individual's levels of self-efficacy has attracted tremendous academic attention (ABELE, Spurk, 2009). The higher levels of individual's self-efficacy foster a greater clarity regarding the future career goals (CREED, Patton, 2007).

The women's higher levels of self-efficacy have been observed to mediate the career development in lateral manner (ZIMMERMAN, Bandura, 1994). Along with this, the

individual's self-efficacy beliefs influence the educational achievements, development of entrepreneurial behavior, social leadership attributes and consistency of performance on a non-traditional career platform.

In context of Indian working women, self-efficacy beliefs have been observed to be differential in nature on account of the varying and distinct impact of the contextual forces. The existing literature on the overall educational and career development of working women is yet to explain the phenomenon in context of developing economy like India.

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