

Self Efficacy among Working Women in Relation to their Demographic Characteristics

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ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of the study was to examine the self efficacy of working women in Indore city. An attempt was also made to analyze the association between the levels of self efficacy among the working women in relation to their demographic status. A total of 100 respondents (50 married and 50 unmarried working women) were administered the General Self efficacy Questionnaire. The marriage duration was between 5-35 years and minimum age was 25 years (for both). The age range was divided into three age-group: Between 25-34 years, Between 35-44 years and Above 45 years. Snowball sampling method was used to collect data. Women who possessed degrees of Graduation, Post Graduation and any other professional degree were considered as highly educated and below Under Graduate degree were considered as less educated. The results revealed that the marital status does not affect the generalized levels of self efficacy of working women in Indore city. However self efficacy of old unmarried working women was found to be high. Also working married women seek more economic independence as compared to unmarried working women who thrive for status; self efficacy being the same in both the cases. The study was conducted on working women in Indore city using General Self efficacy Scale. Specific scales may be used in future research in different domains to get information on possible means of intervention with large sample size.

Keywords: *Self Efficacy, General Versus Specific Self Efficacy, Low Versus High Self Efficacy, Sources of Self Efficacy, Married-Unmarried Women*

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INTRODUCTION

All individuals virtually can identify the goals they want to accomplish, things they would like to change and things they would like to achieve. However they realize that putting these plans into action is not quite so simple.

A construct that reflects “I can” is very important in maintaining quality of life. It reveals an individual’s sense of control on his or her body, mind and life (Morady et al, 2010). To make life pleasing by enabling people to handle stress and tasks related pressure, Self efficacy plays a vital role in developing and culminating into positive social relationships (Bandura, 1999). Lack of self efficacy may result into high risk behavior as it affects an individual’s thinking, emotional and behavioral patterns of human experiences (Bandura, 2006). Gender and self efficacy has always been an interesting area to be focused upon in research. Men are more confident to handle any situation at their workplaces and home (Meece, 1991; Pajares,1995; Schunk, 1996). Differences in the average level of confidence are interpreted as gender differences in self efficacy (Pajares & Valiante, 1997). One’s capability and capacity to succeed in a task is termed as Self efficacy. Efficacy may be general or specific. One’s general capacity to handle task is general self efficacy whereas beliefs about one’s ability to perform specific task is specific self efficacy. Efficacy beliefs are predictive of behavior (Marsh, Relich, & Smith,1992).

Womens’ participation in technical, mathematical and scientific careers although has increased but still women earn disproportionate degrees in these disciplines (National Center for Education Statistics, 1997). This is due to the self beliefs that these women hold about their capabilities (Betz & Schifano, 1999). Further researches also conclude that there is a positive, significant relationship between womens’ self-efficacy beliefs and their engagement in career related activities (Hackett, 1995). Working women with low self-efficacy towards a task generally avoid it, while those with high self-efficacy attempt the task, work harder and come out successfully from a difficult situation. Self-efficacy influences what work related activities women select, how much effort they put forth, how determined they are in the problematic situation, and the complexities of the goals they lay down (Hackett & Betz, 1981). Women with low self-efficacy do not expect to do well, and they often do not accomplish a level that is proportionate with their abilities. They do not believe they have the skills to do well so they do not try (Lent & Hackett, 1987).

Researchers have found that mastery experiences make self efficacy stronger (Bandura, 1986, 1997). Perceptions are formed due to explicit experiences and working women develop high or low self efficacy vicariously through other people's performances (Zeldin and Pajares, 2000). If others can do, working women felt even they could do it. They compare their competence with other people's competence (Bandura, 1997). Generally family members are involved in vicarious learning. Self efficacy can be sustained if others show faith in one's abilities.

There are two levels of self efficacy –High and Low which interact with two types of situations-Responsive and Unresponsive and result into four predictive variables (Bandura, 1997). If Self efficacy is High and the situation is Responsive, working women will have a positive attitude, will be motivated to accomplish the task assigned and will be successful. If Self efficacy is Low and the situation is Responsive, working women will not have a belief in themselves and will not be motivated to try and succeed in the task assigned and will be unsuccessful. This may be depressing. If Self efficacy is Low and the situation is Unresponsive, working women will feel that it is useless in putting efforts in the task assigned and hence will be passive. If Self efficacy is High and the situation is Unresponsive, working women will put in their full efforts to accomplish the goal or else may change the goal.

It is also not always correct to say that working women with high self efficacy always achieve their goals and are successful. Sometimes it may lead to over confidence, resulting in putting less efforts on the task assigned (Stone, 1994). Over confidence may lead to designing of wrong strategies, not listening to suggestion given by others and hence degrading the performance (Clark, 2001).

Self efficacy helps working women to see problems as challenges rather than threats. If self efficacy is high then the working women can focus on the task with greater intrinsic interest; can set challenging goals and work towards the achievement of goals with greater commitment (Bandura, 1994). Having low self efficacy can be detrimental in losing one's faith in her personal abilities leading to weak commitment towards the goals and hence negative outcomes (Bandura, 1994). In case if the actual ability levels of women with high and low self efficacy are same; then women possessing high self efficacy tend to perform better and achieve more positive outcomes (Ormrod, 2008, p.137). The study will help to identify the self efficacy of working women (married and unmarried) which will in turn help women possessing low self efficacy,

to acquire new skills, experiences, understanding and give their best try on the tasks in hand and have a successful career.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The self-efficacy concept which states that individuals act based on multiple influences from both the internal and external worlds (Bandura, 1989). An internal influence comprises of the evaluation of self and describes the impact of cognitive functioning on behavior patterns. An individual's perception of competence and capability in completing certain tasks is termed as self efficacy. An anticipation and certainty that one has in the completion of a particular task by executing the behavior required to produce the outcome defines an individual's self efficacy (Bandura, 1997).

Self efficacy does affect a person's choice of activities, efforts, persistence and judgement of their own capabilities (Pintrick & Schunck, 1995s). Different levels of self efficacy have been identified which vary in level, generality and strength (Bandura, 1997). *Level* is the complexity or simplicity of the task that the person feels competent to perform. The amount of self-efficacy felt by the person is measured in terms of the amount of challenge that the task provides. *Generality* signify the range of tasks that the person feels he is able to accomplish. While some persons feel competent of handling a wide range of tasks, others may feel particularly competent in more specific arenas. *Strength* denotes the confidence level of the person in being able to complete the task at hand. A strong sense of self-efficacy does not necessarily mean that an individual will be more likely to participate in a given task, but it does result in to greater determination in the midst of hurdles (Bandura, 1986).

Self efficacy beliefs are related to an individual's capability in handling a complicated and challenging situation. It covers a wide range of activities a person feels capable of doing it successfully (Bandura, 1997).

A co-relation of driving a car has been given by Bandura (1997) to explain self efficacy. A driver of a car who is comfortable and confident of driving in heavy traffic is not only secured of his or her ability to perform individual tasks but will be multitasking at once when confronted with unexpected situations. The same logic can be translated into feelings of self efficacy at the workplace. A person who finds himself more proficient and skillfull is likely to have more confidence in performing almost all the tasks and simultaneously will be able to handle and use his wisdom,

critical thinking, judgments and decision making skills in dealing with unanticipated and complex situations and challenging circumstances.

A feeling of self efficacy is enhances performance in physical, academic and job tasks successfully (Courneya & McAuley, 1993) A person has to believe that he or she can achieve a goal as a result of his or her action in order to even try (Bandura, 1997). If she or he has a high self efficacy in a particular area, then he or she prefer to assign her or his time and efforts in dealing with tasks that can be solved and vice versa- if they have low self efficacy stop working on tasks which are difficult to accomplish. Hence entrepreneurs are perceived to have high levels of self efficacy (Markman, Balkin, & Baron, 2002)

Many researchers over the years have made comparative studies of employed and unemployed women on various psychological variables. Studies are based on the self efficacy and well being or self efficacy and life satisfaction of married and unmarried working women. There are studies done on self efficacy of employed and unemployed married women. Many comparative studies have been done on the self-esteem of working and non-working women in Iran, Pakistan and other countries. A study of Self-efficacy in female and male undergraduate engineering students is done in US. But studies on self efficacy levels of working married and working unmarried women are scarce in India. There was a need to study the self efficacy levels of married and unmarried working women with respect to Indian context as most of the studies are outside India from which it is difficult to generalize for Indian working women as also there is a huge difference in social, cultural and political set up. Hence the study was conducted.

METHODOLOGY

In the present study 100 working women (50 married and 50 unmarried women) from Indore city were selected as respondents. Snowball sampling method was used to collect data. Women who possessed degrees of Graduation, Post Graduation and any other professional degree were considered as highly educated and below Under Graduate degree were considered as less educated.

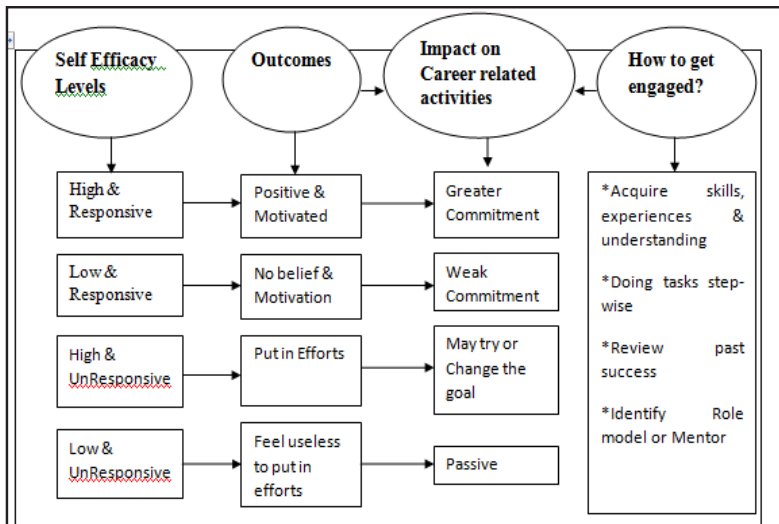
Objectives

1. To find the Self efficacy level of Working Women of Indore City.

2. To ascertain the level of self-efficacy among working women in relation to their demographic status.

Measure

The Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE) developed by Ralf Schwarzer and Matthias Jerusalem (Schwarzer, R., & Jerusalem, M. (1995) was used. It consists of 10 items with four alternative responses. The minimum and maximum possible score on this scale are 10 and 40. The higher the score, higher the self efficacy and vice-versa. Its reliability coefficient and validity are .88 and .73 respectively.



Source: Author

Hypotheses

Following Null Hypotheses were framed:

- 1) There is no significant difference between the self efficacy level of married working women and unmarried working women.
- 2a) There is no significant difference between the self efficacy level of young married working women and young unmarried working women.
- 2b) There is no significant difference between the self efficacy level of old married working women and old unmarried working women.
- 2c) There is no significant difference between the self efficacy level of married working women and unmarried working women from high and low socio-economic status.

- 2d) There is no significant difference between the self efficacy level of highly educated married working women and highly educated unmarried working women.

Analyses of Data

Table 1: Demographic Status of Working Women

CATEGORIES OF WORKING WOMEN	Married Working Women	Unmarried Working Women
AGE GROUP		
25-34 years	21(42%)	27(54%)
35-44 years	19(38%)	15(30%)
Above 45 years	10(20%)	08(16%)
TOTAL	50	50
EDUCATIONAL STATUS		
Under Graduate	07(14%)	09(18%)
Graduation	24(48%)	10(20%)
Post Graduation	17(34%)	23(46%)
Other than PG	02(4%)	08(16%)
TOTAL	50	50
PROFESSIONAL STATUS		
Government Jobs	25(50%)	20(40%)
Teachers	15(30%)	25(50%)
Business	07(14%)	04(8%)
Private Doctors	03(6%)	01(2%)
TOTAL	50	50
LIVING SYSTEM		
Single Home	28(56%)	14(28%)
Extended/Joint Home	22(44%)	10(20%)
Hostels	0(0%)	26(52%)
TOTAL	50	50
SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS		
Higher Status	08(16%)	37(74%)
Economic Independence	42(84%)	13(26%)
TOTAL	50	50

Source: Author

In the present study, 50 married and 50 unmarried working women were the respondents in filling up the General Self efficacy Questionnaire. The age range was divided into three age-group: Between 25-34 years, Between 35-44 years and Above 45 years.

As seen from Table 1; 42 % of the Married Working Women fall in the age group 25-34 years; 38% falls between 35-44 years age group and only 20% are above 45 years. 54% of the Unmarried Working Women fall in the age group 25-34 years; 30% in the age group between 35-44 years and only 10% of Unmarried women are above 45 years.

Educational status of both the categories of working women can be seen. For Married Working Women; majority are Graduates (48%), then Post Graduates (34%) .14% are Under Graduates and only 2% have other degrees.

Majority of Unmarried Working Women are Post Graduates(46%), Graduates(20%), Under Graduates(18%) and rest have other degree (16%).

From Table 1; Professions of Married Working Women were Government Jobs (50%) the highest, followed by Teachers(30%), in Business(14%) and Private Doctors (6%).

Unmarried Working Women were rendering their services including Teachers (50%) the highest, followed by Government Jobs (40%), in Business(8%) and Private Doctors (2%) only.

Table 1 also shows the Living System of these Working Women. Married Working Women were living in single homes (56%), Extended/ Joint homes with relatives or room mates (44%) and none stayed in the hostel.

Similarly Unmarried Working Women were living in single homes (28%), Extended/Joint homes with relatives or roommates (20 %) .Highest percentage was found to be living in the hostel (52%).

In the questionnaire given to the respondents , the Socio-Economic Status was perceived in terms of Higher Status in the society and Economic Independence. Majority (82%) of the Married women perceived Economic Independence whereas only 16% perceived Higher Status. For Unmarried women work to maintain a high status (74%) and only 26% work for Economic Independence.

Table 2: Duration of Marriage

Marriage Duration	Mean	SD
5-35 years	15.67	3.41

According to Table 2 , the duration of their marriages ranged from 5 to 35 years ($M=15.67$, $SD=3.41$)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

H_1 : There is no significant difference between the self efficacy level of married working women and unmarried working women.

Table 3: Self Efficacy Level of Married Working Women and Unmarried Working Women

Category of Working Women	Mean	SD	z-value
Married	2.68	0.42	0.28
Unmarried	2.65	0.43	

$p < 0.05$

As seen from Table 3; the calculated z - value (0.28) is less than the tabulated value (1.96) at 5% level of significance; hence the Null Hypothesis is not rejected. It means that there is no significant difference between the Self efficacy level of Married Working Women and Unmarried Working Women.

The result indicate that regardless of profession , the generalized self efficacy of women having both the status does not differ. This could be due to the fact that since they are into some job or profession, they have self belief and confidence. Self-esteem is found to be the most dominant and powerful predictor of young people's self reported happiness (Furnham and Cheng , 2000) .

H_{2a} : There is no significant difference between the self efficacy level of young married working women and young unmarried working women.

Table 4: Self Efficacy Level of Young Married Working Women and young Unmarried Working Women

Category of Working Women	Mean	SD	z -value
Married	2.63	0.45	0.47
Unmarried	2.67	0.41	

$p < 0.05$

As seen from the above Table 4; the calculated z - value (0.47) is less

than the tabulated value (1.96) at 5% level of significance; hence the Null Hypothesis is not rejected. It means that there is no significant difference between the Self efficacy level of Young Married Working Women and Young Unmarried Working Women, since being young the women are confident, have faith in their talent and potential and are not afraid in taking risks.

Table shows the self efficacy level value of Unmarried Working Women as 2.68 which is little higher than the self efficacy level value of Married Working Women (2.63). Unmarried women have higher self efficacy than married women (Bickel, 2004). Bickel suggested ways of identifying such women with low self efficacy and provided directions to enhance the self efficacy.

H_{2b}: There is no significant difference between the self efficacy level of old married working women and old unmarried working women.

Table 5: Self Efficacy Level of Old Married Working Women and Old Unmarried Working Women

Category of Working Women	Mean	SD	z-value
Married	2.85	0.28	2.79
Unmarried	3.4	0.52	

$p < 0.05$

As seen from the above Table 5; the calculated z - value (2.79) is more than the tabulated value (1.96) at 5% level of significance; hence the Null Hypothesis is rejected. It means that there is a significant difference between the Self efficacy level of Older Married Working Women and Older Unmarried Working Women. Self efficacy level of unmarried women has a higher value (3.4) than married women (2.85), the reason being that unmarried working women live alone at working women hostels, and most cases are single which makes them insecure in their social life and about their future. This insecurity and fear factor makes them stronger to fight against the outside world which makes them self assured and fearless. Self efficacy is linked with social support (Wulfert, & Wanck, 1995). Research has shown that professionally employed unmarried women are significantly higher on self efficacy (Murphy, Cover, & Owen, 1989).

H_{2c}: There is no significant difference between the self efficacy level of married working women and unmarried working women from different socio-economic status.

Table 6: Self Efficacy Level of Married Working Women and Unmarried Working Women from Different Socio-economic Status

Category of Working Women	Mean	SD	z-value
Married	2.68	0.42	0.30
Unmarried	2.65	0.43	

$p < 0.05$

As seen from the above Table 6; the calculated z - value (0.30) is less than the tabulated value (1.96) at 5% level of significance; hence the Null Hypothesis is not rejected. It means that there is no significant difference between the Self efficacy of Married Working Women and Unmarried Working Women on socio-economic status.

As per Table No.1, Socio-Economic Status is perceived in terms of High Status and Economic Independence by the working women. Married Working Women seek more Economic Independence whereas Unmarried Working Women thrive for more status, although the self efficacy level in both the cases is almost the same.

H_{2d}: There is no significant difference between the self efficacy level of highly educated married working women and highly educated unmarried working women.

Table 7: Self Efficacy Level of Highly Educated Married Working Women and Highly Educated Unmarried Working Women

Category of Working Women	Mean	SD	z-value
Married	2.70	0.33	1.20
Unmarried	2.60	0.43	

$p < 0.05$

As seen from the above Table 7; the calculated z - value (1.20) is less than the tabulated value (1.96) at 5% level of significance; hence the Null Hypothesis is not rejected. It means that there is no significant difference between the Self efficacy of highly educated Married Working Women and Unmarried Working Women.

In this case, Married Working Women come from all age group. The self efficacy level of these Married Working Women is high (2.70) due to the reasons that socially, culturally and religiously they seem to be more secure, secondly backed by a family gives them more mental strength which results in higher self efficacy than Unmarried Working Women (2.60).

CONCLUSION

The study shows that marital status does not affect the general sense of self efficacy of women working in Indore city. Regardless of the marital status, both married and unmarried women have the same sense of self efficacy. Since all the respondents were educated and had relatively higher levels of education, the Self efficacy level of highly educated Married Working Women was higher than highly educated Unmarried Working Women.

Self efficacy of old but unmarried women was found to be high. The result is consistent with the study that professionally employed old unmarried women are significantly higher on self efficacy (Murphy, Cover, & Owen, 1989). Also Married Working Women seek more Economic Independence whereas Unmarried Working Women thrive for more status, although the Self efficacy level in both the cases is almost the same.

IMPLICATIONS

In case of working women with low self efficacy level, managers can give them tasks to be done in small steps to accomplish easy and basic goals and slowly and then increasing the level of tasks slowly leading to bigger and difficult goals. This will definitely develop and enhance the self efficacy level since the working women is able to complete their tasks successfully (Bandura, 1994). It is advisable that Working women should review their past successes and see what they have accomplished. This will boost up their confidence and they will be able to visualize their success. Working women should identify a role model or a mentor who can guide them regarding how to complete the tasks and achieve the goals through vicarious experiences and verbal persuasion (Lent, Lopez et al., 1996). Any thought of self doubt needs to be addressed immediately.

LIMITATIONS

The Sample size for this study is not sufficiently large. The Study is also restricted to working women of Indore City only. Few Respondents were not able to understand the questionnaire. Self efficacy level was measured using a generalized self efficacy scale. Specific scales may be used in future research in different domains to get information on possible means of intervention.

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