



Self Efficacy – A Comparison among University Postgraduates in Demographic Profiles

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Abstract

This study was set out to make comparisons among university in different aspects of self-efficacy in relation to some demographic profiles i.e. age groups, gender, locality and faculty. Descriptive Survey Method was used. The sample was comprised of 960 postgraduates from three universities of Haryana State in India i.e. Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra (KUK), Maharshi Dayanand University, Rohtak (MDU) and Chaudhary Devi Lal University, Sirsa (CDLU). The data was collected through General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES) by Yildirim and Ilhan (2010) which was originally developed by Sherer et al. (1982). The GSES was found to have reliable and valid factor structure and Cronbach alpha of the GSES in the current study was 0.714. The response rate of filled in questionnaire was 85% (out of 960, 818 questionnaires were completely filled in). The findings revealed that university postgraduates were not found to differ significantly by age-groups but significant differences were observed among university postgraduates by gender, locality and faculty. On the basis of findings, implications for university postgraduates were given.

Keywords: Self-efficacy, university postgraduates, demographic profiles, positive psychology.

Introduction

Theoretical Underpinning of the Study: In earlier 20th century, numerous researches had been conducted in the field of psychology highlighting the dark side of human nature- i.e. disorders, impairments, and mental illness and pessimistic feelings like anger, shame, humiliation, depression, or guilt¹. In this context, Maslow (1954) also lamented that “*science of psychology has been far more successful on the negative than on the positive side. It has revealed to us much about man’s shortcomings, his illness, his sins, but little about his potentialities, his virtues, his achievable aspirations, or his full psychological height. It is as if psychology has voluntarily restricted itself to only half its rightful jurisdiction, and that, the darker, meaner half*”². In the latter half of the 20th century also, researches in psychology revealed much about despair, racial discrimination, aggression, violence, self-esteem management, self-worth, self-respect, irrationality etc. At that point of time, researchers were not exploring the positive emotions and optimistic feelings of an individual like appreciation, efficacy, gratitude, positive side of mental health, admiration, respect, initiative or ethical elevation³. So, little attention has been paid to one’s merits, strengths, qualities, virtues and the conditions that motivate the individual to survive in the world with high levels of happiness, contentment and commitment. Thus, for the sake of bringing equilibrium to the field of psychology, a new science gains a momentum in 2000 which is known as the positive psychology movement. From a historical point of view, positive psychology is not a new science. It has its roots in the works of William James’s (‘healthy mindedness’ in 1902),

Allport’s interest in human virtues, Maslow’s voice for the study of healthy people (despite sick people in 1968), Seligman’s call for human strengths and Cowan’s research on resilience in children and adolescents^{4,5}.

Positive psychology is the scientific study of optimal human functioning which aims to realize the factors that allow individuals and societies to flourish and prosper⁶. It is scientific study of ordinary human strengths and virtues which revert to ‘the average person’ with an interest in finding out what works, what is right, and what is improving.... Thus, Positive psychology is an effort to advocate psychologists to take up an admiring and appreciative perception regarding human potentials, motives and capacities⁷. Thus, positive psychology with its scholarly emphasis upon human virtues and strengths called upon psychologists to augment the previous focus upon pathology and explore human beings’ strengths⁸. It has been envisaged that positive psychology will thrive and prosper in the new century and that researchers and psychologists will move toward to focus on the strength of individuals, communities and societies⁹.

Construct of Self-Efficacy: It is generally argued that people with problems generally know exactly what actions are needed to do the things they want to do. But, knowing what to do is not enough. People also need to be confident about their ability to produce a desired action and Bandura termed this confidence as *self-efficacy*^{10,11}. During the last two decades, self-efficacy has become one of the most widely studied variables in the educational, psychological, and organizational sciences¹². Self-

efficacy is a positive construct is that associated with mindfulness, consciousness, awareness, and will concepts in personality psychology, and humanistic and cognitive traditions¹³. The confidence or believe in self is termed as self-efficacy in behavioural sciences. Self-efficacy means self-confidence, self-reliance, self-assurance and trust on oneself. Self-efficacy is regarded as one's optimistic self-reliance¹⁴.

Self-efficacy is an individual's belief in his or her capacity to congregate the cognitive, motivational and behavioral resources required to perform in a given situation¹⁵. Self efficacy depicts the confidence of an individual in his/her own abilities. An individual's self-efficacy beliefs determine his/her level of motivation in terms of how much effort he/she will put forth in a venture and how long they will stick to the goal in adverse situations. The stronger the belief in their capabilities, the greater and more persistent are their efforts³. When an action results in failure, people with a high level of belief in their self-efficacy do not relate the failure to their own deficiency, but to the methods or strategies they used¹⁶.

Review of Related Literature: Literature revealed that the construct of stronger self-efficacy beliefs has been associated with younger age, a higher level of education, higher information-processing speed, less depression and a lower number of chronic conditions¹⁷. Willis investigated that general self-efficacy had significant negative correlations with seven of the nine sub-scales of psychopathology: obsessive-compulsive, interpersonal sensitivity, depression, anxiety, hostility, phobic anxiety, and paranoid ideation. General self-efficacy was not found significantly related to somatization or psychoticism¹⁸. Lim and Loo demonstrated the relationship among parental job insecurity, authoritarian parenting behaviour, and youth's self-efficacy and work attitudes. It was revealed that self-efficacy was positively associated with youth's work attitudes and relationship between paternal authoritarian parenting behaviours and youth's self-efficacy was not statistically significant while maternal job insecurity was significantly and negatively associated with youth's self-efficacy. Perceived paternal and maternal job insecurity was negatively associated with youth's self-efficacy. Results also revealed that youth's self-efficacy was significantly and positively associated with their work attitude¹⁹. In another study, Lampert examined the relationship of self-efficacy and self-concept to academic performance in a college sample. The College Academic Self-Efficacy Scale (CASES), academic self-efficacy (ASE), General Self-Efficacy, Social Self-Efficacy were good predictors of actual Grade Point Average (GPA) and explained 18% of the variance in GPA. In fact, academic self-efficacy, which was a specific construct, was a better predictor of GPA than academic self-concept or general self-efficacy. CASES and the social self efficacy scale were also found to be correlated with actual GPA²⁰. DeWitz, Woolsey and Walsh (2009) explored the relationship between self-efficacy and purpose in life among college students. All the variables of self-efficacy i.e. General self-efficacy, social self-efficacy and college self-efficacy were significantly and positively correlated

with purpose in life. General self-efficacy was the most significant predictor for purpose in life which accounted for 41% of the variance in purpose in life and social and college self-efficacy accounted for an additional 1% and 5% of the variance in purpose in life²¹. Thus, review made it clear that self-efficacy is an important construct and plays significant role in academic and personal life of an individual.

Operational Definition of the Terms Used: Self Efficacy: is a construct which describes personal competence to deal effectively with a variety of situations and an individual's ability to effectively manage new situations, initiate effort and persist in the face of adversities across numerous domains. It represents willingness to initiate behaviour (initiative), willingness to expend effort in completing the behaviour (effort) and perseverance, persistence or determination in the face of adversity (Persistence).

University Postgraduates: are the students who are pursuing their postgraduate degree in any of university department in the age range of 20-24 years or above.

Demographic Profiles: are the personal statistics which include age, gender, ethnicity, educational level, socio-economic status etc. In the current study, age groups, gender, locality and faculty were taken as demographic profiles.

Objective of the Study: The objective of the study was to compare different aspects of self-efficacy among university postgraduates in various demographic profiles i.e. age group, gender, locality and faculty in which they were studying.

Hypotheses of the Study: *Ha₁*: There exists a significant difference among university postgraduates in different aspects of Self-Efficacy with reference to age groups. *Ha₂*: There exists a significant difference between male and female university postgraduates in different aspects of Self-Efficacy. *Ha₃*: There exists a significant difference among university postgraduates belonging to urban and rural area in different aspects of Self-Efficacy. *Ha₄*: There exists a significant difference among university postgraduates of four faculties in various aspects of Self-Efficacy.

Research Methodology

Method: Descriptive Survey Method was used in the present study.

Participants: 960 postgraduates from three state universities of Haryana (India) i.e. Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra, Maharshi Dayanand University, Rohtak and Chaudhary Devi Lal University, Sirsa constituted the sample of the study. Purposive- cum- Stratified random sampling was used.

Instrument for Data Collection: General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES): In the present work, self-efficacy has been

operationalized as general set of beliefs of an individual. For this purpose, General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES) by Yildirim and Ilhan was used and this scale was originally developed by Sherer et al. In the present study, for the purpose of measuring general self-efficacy, SGSES by Yildirim and Ilhan was used as it is the most recent adaptation of SGSES. The total 17-item on a five point Likert scale represented three aspects underlying the scale: (i) Initiative (9 items)-which is the willingness to initiate the behaviour (ii) Persistence (5 items)- which is the perseverance in the face of adversity (iii) Effort (3items)- which is the willingness to expend the effort in completing the behaviour. There were 17 items measured on a 5-point Likert Scale scores range from '1', '2', '3', '4' and '5' for Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Agree and

Strongly Agree respectively. The total score ranges from 17 to 85 and higher scores indicate a higher level of belief in one's self-efficacy.

Results and Discussion

Demographic Information of the Participants: Comparison in Different Aspects of Self-Efficacy among University Postgraduates in Demographic Profiles: In order to find out the difference among university postgraduates in different aspects of self-efficacy, Kruskal-Wallis test was performed. It is a non-parametric test applied on Nominal and Ordinal Data. It is also based on the assumption of independency of groups and random selection of individual item²².

Table-1
Demographic Information of the Participants

Characteristics of the sample		Frequency	Percentages
Gender	Male	295	36%
	Female	523	64%
	Total	818	100%
Age Group	20-24 Years	732	89%
	Above 24 Years	86	11%
	Total	818	100%
Locality	Urban	417	51%
	Rural	401	49%
	Total	818	100%
University	KUK	266	32.52%
	MDU	292	35.70%
	CDLU	260	31.78%
	Total	818	100%
Faculty	Science	238	29.1%
	Education	185	22.6%
	Social Science	173	21.1%
	Commerce and Management	222	27.1%
	Total	818	100%
Department	Mathematics	114	13.9%
	Computer Science	125	15.3%
	Education	94	11.5%
	Physical Education	90	11.0%
	Economics	101	12.3%
	Public Administration	72	8.8%
	Commerce	108	13.2%
	Business Administration	114	13.9%
Total	818	100.0%	

Table-2
Kruskal-Wallis One Way ANOVA: Self Efficacy to Demographic Profiles

S.No.	GSES Items	Age		Gender		Locality		Faculty	
		χ^2	Sig.(p)	χ^2	Sig.(p)	χ^2	Sig.(p)	χ^2	Sig.(p)
1	If something looks too complicated I will not even bother to try it.	0.049	0.825	3.095	0.079	17.864	0.000*	7.094	0.069
2	I avoid facing difficulties.	0.065	0.798	14.946	0.000*	12.078	0.001*	44.344	0.000*
3	I do not seem capable of dealing with most problems that come up in my life.	0.073	0.788	3.437	0.064	8.754	0.003*	29.662	0.000*
4	I avoid trying to learn new things when they look too difficult for me.	2.519	0.112	15.603	0.000*	9.859	0.002*	25.092	0.000*
5	When I set important goals for myself, I rarely achieve them.	0.183	0.669	2.358	0.125	20.734	0.000*	21.722	0.000*
6	When trying to learn something new, I soon give up if I am not initially successful.	0.002	0.967	1.182	0.277	17.021	0.000*	4.290	0.232
7	When unexpected problems occur, I don't handle them very well.	0.718	0.397	5.690	0.017*	11.105	0.001*	4.486	0.214
8	I give up on things before completing them.	0.058	0.810	0.411	0.521	11.208	0.001*	14.751	0.002*
9	One of my problems is that I cannot get down to work when I should.	0.584	0.445	2.578	0.108	4.468	0.035*	1.664	0.645
10	I am a self reliant person.	0.380	0.538	2.228	0.136	5.775	0.016*	11.965	0.008*
11	Failure just makes me try harder.	0.746	0.388	4.299	0.038*	2.031	0.154	16.941	0.001*
12	I give up easily.	0.569	0.451	0.206	0.650	28.305	0.000*	12.114	0.007*
13	If I can't do a job the first time, I keep trying until I can.	2.307	0.129	4.505	0.034*	0.975	0.324	21.527	0.000*
14	I feel unsure about my ability to do things.	0.020	0.887	2.599	0.107	2.190	0.139	8.995	0.029*
15	When I have something unpleasant to do, I stick to it until I finish it.	0.426	0.514	0.366	0.545	3.992	0.046*	5.046	0.168
16	When I decide to do something, I go right to work on it.	0.017	0.897	9.919	0.002*	2.672	0.102	6.047	0.109
17	When I make plans, I am certain I can make them work.	0.184	0.668	0.142	0.707	0.724	0.395	0.744	0.863

Bold* values are significant

From the table 2, it was examined that university postgraduates of two different age-groups did not differ significantly in different aspects of self-efficacy as none of the *p* value was significant.

Table 2 also revealed that university postgraduates differed significantly on gender basis following aspects of self-efficacy: i. I avoid facing difficulties ($\chi^2 = 14.946, p=0.000$), ii. I avoid trying to learn new things when they look too difficult for me ($\chi^2 = 5.603, p=0.000$), iii. When unexpected problems occur, I don't handle them very well ($\chi^2 = 5.690, p=0.017$). iv. Failure

just makes me try harder ($\chi^2 = 4.299, p=0.038$), v. If I can't do a job the first time, I keep trying until I can ($\chi^2 = 4.505, p=0.034$), vi. When I decide to do something, I go right to work on it ($\chi^2 = 9.919, p= 0.002$)

In other aspects of self-efficacy, no significant difference was found among university postgraduates on gender basis.

From the table 2, it was analyzed that a significant difference was found in following aspects of self-efficacy (as *p* value was significant) among university postgraduates belonging to urban

and rural area: i. If something looks too complicated I will not even bother to try it ($\chi^2=17.864, p=0.000$), ii. I avoid facing difficulties ($\chi^2=12.078, p=0.001$), iii. I do not seem capable of dealing with most problems that come up in my life ($\chi^2=8.754, p=0.003$), iv. I avoid trying to learn new things when they look too difficult for me ($\chi^2=9.859, p=0.002$), v. When I set important goals for myself, I rarely achieve them ($\chi^2=20.734, p=0.000$), vi. When trying to learn something new, I soon give up if I am not initially successful ($\chi^2=17.021, p=0.000$), vii. When unexpected problems occur, I don't handle them very well ($\chi^2=11.105, p=0.001$), viii. I give up on things before completing them ($\chi^2=11.208, p=0.001$), ix. One of my problems is that I cannot get down to work when I should ($\chi^2=4.468, p=0.035$), x. I am a self reliant person ($\chi^2=5.775, p=0.016$), xi. I give up easily ($\chi^2=28.305, p=0.000$), xii. When I have something unpleasant to do, I stick to it until I finish it ($\chi^2=3.992, p=0.046$)

In other aspects of self-efficacy, no significant difference was found among university postgraduates on the basis of locality.

From the table 2, it was also revealed that university postgraduates of four faculties differed significantly in following aspects of self-efficacy: i. I avoid facing difficulties ($\chi^2=44.344, p=0.000$), ii. I do not seem capable of dealing with most problems that come up in my life ($\chi^2=29.662, p=0.000$), iii. I avoid trying to learn new things when they look too difficult for me ($\chi^2=25.092, p=0.000$), iv. When I set important goals for myself, I rarely achieve them. ($\chi^2=21.722, p=0.000$), v. I give up on things before completing them. ($\chi^2=14.751, p=0.002$), vi. I am a self reliant person. ($\chi^2=11.965, p=0.008$), vii. Failure just makes me try harder ($\chi^2=16.941, p=0.001$), viii. I give up easily ($\chi^2=12.114, p=0.007$), viii. If I can't do a job the first time, I keep trying until I can. ($\chi^2=21.527, p=0.000$), ix. I feel unsure about my ability to do things. ($\chi^2=8.995, p=0.029$)

In other aspects of self-efficacy, no significant difference was found among university postgraduates of different faculties.

Discussion: H_{a1} viz. "There exists a significant difference among university postgraduates in different aspects of Self-Efficacy with reference to age groups" was rejected as no significant difference was found among university postgraduates in two age groups (none of p value is significant). Thus, alternate hypothesis was rejected. The results supported the findings of Willis who revealed that self-efficacy was not found to be related to age.

H_{a2} viz. "There exists a significant difference between male and female university postgraduates in different aspects of self-efficacy" was retained as postgraduates were found to differ in six out of seventeen aspects of self-efficacy by gender. Further, it was found that male postgraduates (mean, 51.47) were found to have better self-efficacy beliefs than female postgraduates

(mean, 50.40). This result is inconsistent with the findings of Willis, Imam²³, Brewer²⁴ and DeWitz, Woolsey and Walsh²⁵ who examined that self-efficacy was not associated with gender and male and female were not found to differ on their self-efficacy beliefs. But the result is consistent with Scholz, Dona, Sud and Schwarzer²⁶ who reported that males are having better self-efficacy beliefs as compared to females in various cultures. The reason for this difference may be that male postgraduates were found to differ from their counterparts in different aspects like failure made them try harder, when they decide to do something in their lives, they started work on it and keep trying until they achieve their goals.

H_{a3} viz. "There exists a significant difference among university postgraduates belonging to urban and rural area in different aspects of self-efficacy" was confirmed as significant difference was found in twelve aspects of self-efficacy. The study provided sufficient evidences to retain the hypothesis. Further, it was found that mean values of self-efficacy for postgraduates belonging to urban and rural areas were 49.22 and 52.42 respectively. The plausible reasons for the difference may be that the university postgraduates in urban area were afraid of facing difficulties, not trying complicated things, not trying to learn new things that are difficult, incapable of dealing with most problems that come up in life, difficulty in handling unexpected problems, refrain from completing the task, self-reliance etc.

H_{a4} viz. "There exists a significant difference among university postgraduates of four faculties in various aspects of Self-Efficacy" was retained as significant difference was found among university postgraduates of four faculties in ten out of seventeen aspects of self-efficacy. The study had given enough evidences to retain the hypothesis. Further, it was found that mean values of self-efficacy scores for Faculty of Science, Commerce and Management, Education and Social Science were 49.57, 50.47, 51.16 and 52.46 respectively. The possible reason for this difference may be that postgraduates belonging to four different faculties were supposed to avoid facing difficulties, incapable of dealing with most problems that come up in life, avoid to learn new things which are difficult, rare achievement of important goals in life, give up on things before completing them, lack of self-reliance, fear of failure, unsure about their abilities to do things etc.

Conclusion

The findings of the study made it clear that when university postgraduates of two age groups were compared regarding their self-efficacy beliefs, no significant difference was observed. This finding is inconsistent with the findings of Bosscher and Smit (1998)²⁷ in which stronger self-efficacy beliefs were associated with younger age⁴.

Results also indicated that a significant difference existed among university postgraduates by gender in different aspects of

self-efficacy beliefs. Further, it was found that male postgraduates were exhibiting better self-efficacy beliefs than female postgraduates. The finding is contradictory to the findings of Dehghani, Sani, Pakmehr and Malekzadeh in which girls were found to have higher self-efficacy than boys²⁸. The reason for this difference may be that male postgraduates were showing stronger beliefs in different aspects of self-efficacy like failure made them try harder, when they decide to do something in their lives, they started work on it and keep trying until they achieve their goals, they are not avoiding difficulties etc.

It was also found that university postgraduates of urban and rural areas differed significantly when compared regarding their self-efficacy beliefs. Surprisingly, postgraduates of rural area were found to hold strong self-efficacy beliefs than their counterparts.

The findings also revealed that university postgraduates of four faculties differed significantly on self-efficacy beliefs. The postgraduates of Social Science Faculty were found to have greater self-efficacy beliefs followed by postgraduates of Faculty of Education.

Thus from the findings it can be concluded that general self efficacy is an important construct that help the individual to achieve his goal in any of life domain. An individual having more trust on his/her abilities, more would be the confidence and stronger will be the self efficacy beliefs.

Implications of the Study: From the findings it can be concluded that male university postgraduates were having stronger self-efficacy beliefs than female university postgraduates. So, it is recommended to female university postgraduates that they should face difficulties, try to learn new things even if they are complicated, should have guts to handle unexpected problem, should not be afraid of failures but try to learn from them, keep trying until the goal is achieved, start working immediately when they decide to do something in their lives. By improving upon these aspects, the female postgraduates would be having stronger self- efficacy beliefs.

From the findings, it was revealed that university postgraduates belonging to the rural area have stronger self-efficacy beliefs than their counterparts. So it is recommended to urban university postgraduates that they can hold up stronger self efficacy beliefs if they try improve upon certain aspects of self efficacy like facing difficulties, fortitude to deal with problems in life, try to face adverse situations, try to learn new things or novel situations even if they are difficult, spirit to handle unexpected problems, should not easily give up, self-reliant etc.

It was revealed that postgraduates of Science and Commerce and Management Faculty were found to have lower self-efficacy beliefs. So, it is suggested to the postgraduates from these faculties that they would be having better self beliefs if the improve upon some aspects like learning from failures, self-

reliance, by sticking to their goals, faith on their abilities, try to learn new and difficult things etc.

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