

**“SELF-EFFICACY BELIEFS IN STUDENTS”**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Self-efficacy refers to the individual's belief that he or she can successfully execute the behaviors required by a particular situation. Perceptions of one's own efficacy importantly guide and direct one's behavior. The close connection between high self-efficacy expectations and effective performance is illustrated in studies of people who received various treatments to help reduce specific fears. A consistently high association was found between the degrees to which persons improved from treatment (becoming able to handle snakes fearlessly) and their perceived self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). If we assess perceived self-efficacy (asking people to specifically predict their ability to do a given act successfully), according to Bandura we can predict whether or not will be able to perform it. Perceived self-efficacy influences the goals people set for themselves and the risks that they are willing to take: the greater their perceived self-efficacy, the higher the goals they choose and the stronger their commitment and perseverance in pursuing them (Bandura, 1977, 2001). Conversely, people who view themselves as lacking efficacy for coping with life tasks are vulnerable to anxiety and may develop avoidance patterns designed to reduce their fears. People who see themselves as lacking in essential efficacy also may become prone to depression. They may even show impairments in their immune system when coping with stressors that they believe they cannot control.*

**KEYWORDS:** *coping with life, goals, performance, self-efficacy.*

**INTRODUCTION**

Self-efficacy is defined as people's beliefs about their capabilities to produced designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave. Such beliefs produce these diverse effects through four major processes. They include cognitive, motivational, affective and selection processes. A strong sense of efficacy enhances human accomplishment and personal well-being in many ways. People with high assurance in their capabilities approach difficult tasks as challenges to be mastered rather than as threats to be avoided. Such an efficacious outlook fosters intrinsic interest and deep engrossment in activities. They set themselves challenging goals and maintain strong commitment to them. They heighten and sustain their efforts in the face of failure. They quickly recover their sense of efficacy after failures or setbacks. They attribute failure to insufficient effort or deficient knowledge and skills which are acquirable. They approach threatening situations with assurance that they can exercise control over them. Such an efficacious outlook produces personal accomplishments, reduces stress and lowers vulnerability to depression. In contrast, people who doubt their capabilities shy away from difficult tasks which they view as personal threats. They have low aspirations and weak commitment to the goals they choose to pursue. When faced with difficult tasks, they dwell on their personal deficiencies, on the obstacles they will encounter, and all kinds of adverse outcomes rather than concentrate on how to perform successfully. They slacken their efforts and give up quickly in the face of difficulties. They are slow to recover their sense of efficacy following failure or setbacks. Because they view insufficient performance as deficient aptitude it does not require much failure for them to lose faith in their capabilities. They fall easy victim to stress and depression.

### STUDENTS SELF-EFFICACY

The concept of self-efficacy is based on a Triadic Reciprocal Determinism model, where human functioning is viewed as the product of a dynamic interplay between personal factors (i.e. cognition, emotions and biological events), behaviour and environmental factors (Bandura, 1986, 1994, 1997; pajares, 2006). According to pajares, 2006, the way individuals “interpret the results of their behaviour informs and alerts their environments, and the personal factors they possess, which in turn, informs and alerts future actions”. In school for example, “students” efficacy beliefs can be enhanced when students alter their emotions and thoughts (personal factors), when their teachers use effective classroom structures (environmental factors), when students improve their self-regularity practices (behaviour) (Usher, 2009, p.276). Walker, Greene and Mansell (2006) posited that “people are said to have a high self-efficacy for a task when they believe that they possess the capabilities necessary to perform the task successfully. Bandura (1977) outlined four sources of information that individuals employ to judge their efficacy: performance outcomes (performance accomplishments), vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological feedback (emotional arousal). These components help individuals determine if they believe they have the capability to accomplish specific tasks. Williams and Williams (2010) note that “individuals with high levels of self-efficacy approach difficult tasks as challenges to master rather than as threats to be avoided” (Williams & Williams, 2010, p. 455).

**Mastery Experience:-** People's beliefs about their efficacy can be developed by four main sources of influence. The most effective way of creating a strong sense of efficacy is through mastery experiences. Successes build a robust belief in one's personal efficacy. Failures undermine it, especially if failures occur before a sense of efficacy is firmly established. If people experience only easy successes they come to expect quick results and are easily discouraged by failure. A resilient sense of efficacy requires experience in overcoming obstacles through perseverant effort. Some setbacks and difficulties in human pursuits serve a useful purpose in teaching that success usually requires sustained effort. After people become convinced they have what it takes to succeed, they persevere in the face of adversity and quickly rebound from setbacks. By sticking it out through tough times, they emerge stronger from adversity.

**Vicarious Experiences:-** The second way of creating and strengthening self-beliefs of efficacy is through the vicarious experiences provided by social models. Seeing people similar to oneself succeed by sustained effort raises observers' beliefs that they too possess the capabilities master comparable activities to succeed. By the same token, observing others' fail despite high effort lowers observers' judgments of their own efficacy and undermines their efforts. The impact of modeling on perceived self-efficacy is strongly influenced by perceived similarity to the models. The greater the assumed similarity, the more persuasive are the models' successes and failures. If people see the models as very different from themselves their perceived self-efficacy is not much influenced by the models' behavior and the results it produces.

**Social Persuasion:-** Social persuasion is a third way of strengthening people's beliefs that they have what it takes to succeed. People who are persuaded verbally that they possess the capabilities to master given activities are likely to mobilize greater effort and sustain it than if they harbor self-doubts and dwell on personal deficiencies when problems arise. To the extent that persuasive boosts in perceived self-efficacy lead people to try hard enough to succeed, they promote development of skills and a sense of personal efficacy.



**Physiological States:-** Physiological states such as anxiety, stress, arousal, fatigue, and mood states also provide information about efficacy beliefs. Because individuals have the capability to alter their own thinking, self-efficacy beliefs, in turn, also powerfully influence the physiological states themselves. Bandura (1997) has observed that people live with psychic environments that are primarily of their own making. It is often said that people can "read" themselves, and so this reading comes to be a realization of the thoughts and emotional states that individuals have themselves created. Often, they can gauge their confidence by the emotional state they experience as they contemplate an action. Moreover, when people experience aversive thoughts and fears about their capabilities, those negative affective reactions can themselves further lower perceptions of capability and trigger the stress and agitation that help ensure the inadequate performance they fear. This is not to say that the typical anxiety experienced before an important endeavor is a guide to low self-efficacy. Strong emotional reactions to a task, however, provide clues about the anticipated success or failure of the outcome. In all self-efficacy beliefs of students are created and strengthened by the exposure to and interactions with the four sources of self-efficacy during their educational development. Therefore, teachers at all levels need to better understand the various sources from the perspective of their students in order to develop and implement classroom interventions that will increase the availability of sources of self-efficacy for their students.

#### **EFFECTS OF SELF-EFFICACY BELIEFS**

Self-efficacy beliefs influence motivational and self-regulatory processes in several ways. They influence the choices people make and the courses of action they pursue. Most people engage in tasks in which they feel competent and confident and avoid those in which they do not. William James (1892/1985) wrote that experience is essentially what individuals choose to attend to. If this is the case, then the self-beliefs that influence those choices are instrumental in defining one's experience and providing an avenue through which individuals exercise control over the events that affect their lives. Beliefs of personal competence also help determine how much effort people will expend on an activity, how long they will persevere when confronting obstacles, and how resilient they will prove in the face of adverse situations--the higher the sense of efficacy, the greater the effort, persistence, and resilience. Efficacy beliefs also influence the amount of stress and anxiety individuals experience as they engage in a task and the level of accomplishment they realize. Strong self-efficacy beliefs enhance human accomplishment and personal well-being in many ways. People with a strong sense of personal competence in a domain approach difficult tasks in that domain as challenges to be mastered rather than as dangers to be avoided, have greater intrinsic interest in activities, set challenging goals and maintain a strong commitment to them, heighten their efforts in the face of failure, more easily recover their confidence after failures or setbacks, and attribute failure to insufficient effort or deficient knowledge and skills which they believe they are capable of acquiring. High self-efficacy helps create feelings of serenity in approaching difficult tasks and activities. Conversely, people with low self-efficacy may believe that things are tougher than they really are, a belief that fosters stress, depression, and a narrow vision of how best to solve a problem. As a result of these influences, self-efficacy beliefs are strong determinants and predictors of the level of accomplishment that individuals finally attain. For these reasons, Bandura (1986, 1997) has made the strong claim that beliefs of personal efficacy constitute the key factor of human agency. An attempt is made to review the studies conducted in India and abroad on self-efficacy. Tuncer (2016) found that academic self-efficacy positively related to the foreign language classroom anxiety and metacognitive awareness. Ferla, Valcke & Cai (2014) conducted study on academic self-efficacy and academic self-concept: reconsidering structural relationships. The sample of the study consisted of 15 year old students in all OECD countries (Organizational for Economic Co-operation and Development) in PISA survey. Results of the study indicated that (1) math self-efficacy and math self-concept do indeed represent conceptually and empirically different construct, even when

studied within the same domain, (2) student's academic self-concept strongly influences their academic self-efficacy beliefs, (3) academic self-concept is a better predictor (and mediator) for affective motivational variables, while academic self-efficacy is the better predictor (and mediator) for academic achievement. Kamala an Annaraja (2007) conducted study on relationship between academic achievement and self-efficacy of V standard students. The major objectives of the study were: (i) to find out the level of self-efficacy of V standard students. (ii) to find out the level of academic achievement of V standard students and (iii) to find out the relationship between self-efficacy and academic achievement of V standard high school students.

## CONCLUSION

Self-efficacy Beliefs have also shown convergent validity in influencing such key indices of academic motivation as choice of activities, level of effort, persistence, and emotional reactions. There is evidence that self-efficacious students participate more readily, work harder, persist longer, and have fewer adverse emotional reactions when they encounter difficulties than do those who doubt their capabilities.

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