
Self-Efficacy and Women Empowerment

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Introduction

Women's empowerment is a complex and multifaceted concept that encompasses various aspects of women's lives, including their social, economic, and political well-being. According to the world bank (2012) empowerment means helping people gain the power and confidence to make their own choices, take action, and achieve what they want in life. Empowerment is the process of enabling individuals or groups to gain control over their lives and decisions, translating their choices into tangible actions and outcomes. In the context of women, empowerment means broadening their access to resources, skills, and opportunities, thereby strengthening their ability to engage with, negotiate, and shape the institutions that impact their lives, ultimately holding them accountable (Pavanello, et al. 2015). Women's empowerment means that women should be able to live their lives with autonomy, confidence, and dignity, encompassing key elements such as acquiring knowledge and skills, having equal access to opportunities and resources, participating fully in society, enjoying independence and freedom of movement, and making their own decisions and taking leadership roles, ultimately enabling them to live life on their own terms, free from fear and discrimination, and with the respect they deserve (Jha, et al. 2020). Women's empowerment involves a multifaceted approach that enables women to fully exercise their human rights, requiring a delicate balance between achieving individual, practical goals in daily life and collectively challenging and transforming the underlying social norms and institutions that perpetuate bias and inequality, ultimately leading to long-term, strategic change (Kühhas, et al.2016). The Indian National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986 defines women's empowerment as both self-empowerments, through access to education and health, and the capacity to assist others in achieving



empowerment. Although education enhances individual development and social status, many women still hesitate to assert their rights due to systemic inefficiencies and personal reluctance. Since the 1990s, empowering women through education has been a central goal in development programs, aiming to improve their socio-economic status and promote gender equity (Reddy, 2021).

Self-efficacy, a concept introduced by psychologist Albert Bandura in 1977, is a key component of social cognitive theory. It refers to an individual's belief in their capability to execute behaviors necessary to produce specific performance attainments. Bandura's theory posits that self-efficacy influences how people think, feel, motivate themselves, and behave. It affects the choices they make, the effort they put forth, their perseverance in the face of challenges, and their resilience to adversity (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy is a vital catalyst for women's empowerment, as it enables women to believe in their ability to take control of their lives, make informed decisions, and overcome obstacles (Kane 2020). When women possess high self-efficacy, they are more likely to assume leadership roles, speak out against discrimination, and make independent choices about their health, education, and career (Isaac, 2012). With self-efficacy, women develop resilience and coping skills to handle challenges, ultimately becoming empowered to break free from oppressive systems and achieve their full potential (Leder-Büttner, 2015). By fostering self-efficacy, women's empowerment initiatives can unlock women's confidence and agency, leading to a more equitable and just society (Katjiteo, 2024).

Empirical studies have demonstrated that high levels of self-efficacy are associated with improved decision-making (Salinger et al. 2024), greater participation in community and political activities, and enhanced economic independence among women (Sahu & Rath, 2003). Empowering women through the Self-Esteem, Self-Efficacy, Self-Confidence, Self-Management, and Self-Decision approach can lead to a transformative impact, resulting in increased self-awareness, enhanced capabilities, improved life management, greater autonomy, and a closing of the gender gap, ultimately leading to more fulfilling and valuable lives, transformed communities, and a more equitable and prosperous world (Soharwardi, 2023). However, the intersection of self-efficacy and women's empowerment is complex and shaped by various educational, cultural, social, economic, and political factors. Understanding how women perceive their self-efficacy, the barriers they face, and the strategies they employ to enhance their sense of efficacy is essential for developing effective empowerment initiatives.



Self-efficacy, or the belief in one's ability to accomplish specific tasks and achieve desired outcomes, plays a critical role in every aspect of women's empowerment. It directly influences how women perceive their potential and act upon opportunities and challenges in various domains of life.

Role of self-efficacy in empowerment of women

Self-efficacy impacts different facets of women's empowerment: Self-efficacy, or the belief in one's ability to succeed in specific situations, plays a crucial role in women's empowerment by influencing various aspects of their lives. Self-efficacy enables women to take control of their personal and professional development, helping them overcome societal and cultural barriers, and fostering resilience in the face of challenges. It enhances their decision-making capabilities, allowing them to assert their rights, pursue education and career opportunities, and participate more actively in social, economic, and political activities. Moreover, self-efficacy promotes a sense of agency and confidence, encouraging women to challenge gender norms and advocate for their rights. It also supports psychological well-being by reducing feelings of helplessness and increasing resilience against discrimination. Ultimately, self-efficacy is a key factor in achieving gender equality, enabling women to reach their full potential, and contributing to broader social change.

1. Personal Empowerment

Self-efficacy is foundational to personal empowerment as it shapes women's confidence in their abilities to make decisions, set goals, and pursue them independently. Women with high self-efficacy are more likely to take initiative, solve problems, and assert their needs and desires. This personal empowerment leads to greater self-esteem, resilience, and a sense of control over one's life. Women with high self-efficacy are more likely to confront challenges, solve problems, and assert their needs and desires. As highlighted in the literature, enhanced self-efficacy leads to increased psychological well-being, reduced anxiety, and improved life satisfaction (Bandura, 1997; Kane, 2020).

2. Economic Empowerment

Self-efficacy influences women's participation in the workforce and entrepreneurial activities. Women who believe in their ability to perform well are more likely to seek employment, start businesses, and strive for promotions. They are also more likely to invest in skills development and pursue opportunities for economic growth. Women who believe in their abilities are more inclined to enter the workforce,



start businesses, and invest in skill development. This contributes to economic independence and poverty reduction, as well as the broader economic development of communities (Sahu & Rath, 2003). These findings are consistent with empirical studies demonstrating a positive relationship between self-efficacy and economic outcomes (Salinger et al., 2024).

3. Social Empowerment

Social empowerment involves women's ability to participate fully in societal activities, engage in community decision-making, and access social networks. Self-efficacy enables women to overcome social barriers, engage in activism, and advocate for their rights. It also encourages them to challenge gender norms and stereotypes, fostering greater social inclusion. Social empowerment is facilitated when women possess high levels of self-efficacy, enabling them to participate fully in societal activities, engage in decision-making, and challenge gender norms (Isaac, 2012).

4. Political Empowerment

Self-efficacy is crucial for women's political empowerment, as it impacts their willingness to participate in political processes, from voting to running for office. Women with high self-efficacy are more likely to engage in civic activities, join political movements, and advocate for policy changes that address gender inequalities. Political empowerment is closely linked to self-efficacy, as it impacts women's willingness to engage in political processes, advocate for their rights, and influence policy changes. The findings suggest that women with high self-efficacy are more likely to challenge social barriers, participate in community decision-making, and promote inclusive governance (Kühhas et al., 2016).

5. Educational Empowerment

Education is a key driver of empowerment, and self-efficacy influences a woman's educational aspirations and achievements. Women with high self-efficacy are more likely to pursue higher education, engage in lifelong learning, and excel academically. This, in turn, enhances their knowledge, skills, and competencies. Women with higher self-efficacy are more likely to pursue higher education, engage in lifelong learning, and excel academically. This enhances their knowledge, skills, and competencies, contributing to better job prospects, increased awareness of health and rights, and overall improved quality of life (Jha et al., 2020).

6. Health and Well-being Empowerment

Self-efficacy is essential for health-related empowerment, as it affects women's ability to make informed decisions about their health, adopt healthy behaviors, and seek medical care when needed. Women with strong self-efficacy are more likely to engage in preventive health practices, manage chronic conditions, and advocate for their health needs. Self-efficacy also plays a vital role in health-related empowerment, enabling women to make informed decisions about their health, adopt healthy behaviors, and seek necessary medical care. Women with strong self-efficacy are more likely to engage in preventive health practices, manage chronic conditions, and advocate for their health needs (Leder-Büttner, 2015).

Conclusion

Women's empowerment is an intricate and multifaceted process that spans multiple dimensions of life, including personal, economic, social, political, educational, and health domains. It involves enhancing women's ability to make strategic choices, access resources, and exercise agency. A key driver of this empowerment is self-efficacy, which significantly influences women's confidence, decision-making capacity, and resilience in the face of challenges. High levels of self-efficacy empower women to actively participate in various spheres of life, from the workforce to political engagement, and to challenge existing social norms and barriers that limit their opportunities.

By fostering self-efficacy, women are better positioned to achieve personal and collective empowerment, making informed choices, advocating for their rights, and contributing to societal transformation. These transformative potential highlights the importance of integrating self-efficacy-building strategies into empowerment initiatives. While the intersection of self-efficacy and women's empowerment is complex and shaped by various contextual factors, understanding this relationship is crucial for designing effective programs and policies that promote gender equity and improve women's overall quality of life. Thus, empowering women through self-efficacy is not only about individual growth but also about fostering a more equitable, inclusive, and just society.

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