

Self-Efficacy: Unlock Your Potential Through Proven Habits

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Bandura points to four sources affecting self-efficacy;

1. Experience - a.k.a. Enactive Attainment

"Mastery experience" is the most important factor deciding a person's self-efficacy. Simply put, success raises self-efficacy, failure lowers it.

Children cannot be fooled by empty praise and condescending encouragement. They may have to accept artificial bolstering of their self-esteem in lieu of something better, but what I call their accruing ego identity gains real strength only from wholehearted and consistent recognition of real accomplishment, that is, achievement that has meaning in their culture." (Erik Erikson)

2. Modeling - a.k.a. "Vicarious Experience"

"If they can do it, I can do it as well." This is a process of comparison between oneself and someone else. When people see someone succeeding at something, their self-efficacy will increase; and where they see people failing, their self-efficacy will decrease. This process is more effectual when a person sees him- or herself as similar to his or her own model. If a peer who is perceived as having similar ability succeeds, this will usually increase an observer's self-efficacy. Although not as influential as experience, modeling is a powerful influence when a person is particularly unsure of him- or herself.

3. Social Persuasions

Social persuasions relate to encouragements/discouragements. These can have a strong influence - most people remember times where something said to them significantly altered their confidence. While positive persuasions increase self-efficacy, negative persuasions decrease it. It is generally easier to decrease someone's self-efficacy than it is to increase it.

4. Physiological Factors

In unusual, stressful situations, people commonly exhibit signs of distress; shakes, aches and pains, fatigue, fear, nausea, etc. A person's perceptions of these responses can markedly alter a person's self-efficacy. If a person gets 'butterflies in the stomach' before public speaking, those with low self-efficacy may take this as a sign of their own inability, thus decreasing their self-efficacy further, while those with high self-efficacy are likely to interpret such physiological signs as normal and unrelated to his or her actual ability. Thus, it is the person's belief in the implications of their physiological response that alters their self-efficacy, rather than the sheer power of the response.

Theoretical Models of Behavior

A theoretical model of the effect of self-efficacy on transgressive behavior was developed and verified in research with school children.

Prosociality and moral disengagement

Examples of prosocial behavior are helping others, sharing, being kind and cooperative. Feelings of self-efficacy (with respect to academic work, social interactions, and self-regulation) influence prosocial behavior. Self-regulatory self-efficacy and academic self-efficacy have a negative correlation with moral disengagement (making excuses for bad behavior, avoiding responsibility for consequences, blaming the victim). Social Self-Efficacy has a positive correlation with prosocial behavior. On the other hand, moral disengagement and prosocial behavior have a negative relationship. The three types of self-efficacy are positively correlated.

Over-Efficaciousness in Learning

Research on learning has indicated that in certain circumstances, having less self-efficacy for a subject may be helpful, as negative attitudes towards how quickly/well one will learn can actually prove of benefit. One study used the foreign language classroom to examine students' beliefs about learning, perceptions of goal attainment, and motivation to continue language study. Survey and interview results indicated students' attributions for success and failure and their expectations for certain subjects' learning ability played a role in the relationship between goal attainment and volition. It appears that over-efficaciousness negatively affected student motivation. For other students who felt they were "bad at languages," their negative beliefs increased their motivation to study.

Health Behavior Change

Social-cognitive models of health behavior change include the construct of perceived self-efficacy either as predictors, mediators, or moderators. Self-efficacy is supposed to facilitate the forming of behavioral intentions, the development of action plans, and the initiation of action. Moreover, self-efficacy can assist relapse prevention. As a moderator, self-efficacy can support the translation of intentions into action. See Health Action Process Approach.

Possible Applications

The applications of self-efficacy in modern society are enormous. We are searching for ways to make our children learn more effectively and be more productive, but we are also learning that adults are affected by perceived self-efficacy as well. By understanding how to help influence one to develop a positive mental assessment of their abilities, it is possible for us to design learning

and work environments that provide the necessary feedback and support for individuals. This will allow more people to develop high levels of self-efficacy that will translate into increased productivity in their environments. Also, the stress of life can be at times intolerable, but those with high self-efficacy seem to be more able to live stress-free lives that are rewarding and happy.

Generalizations/specializations of the Concept

General Self-Efficacy. Self-efficacy is commonly understood as domain-specific; that is, one can have more or less firm self-beliefs in different domains or particular situations of functioning. But some researchers have also conceptualized a general sense of self-efficacy. It refers to the global confidence in one's coping ability across a wide range of demanding or novel situations. This broader construct is most frequently assessed with the General Self-Efficacy Scale.

Social Self-efficacy. Social self-efficacy is "an individual's confidence in her/his ability to engage in the social interactional tasks necessary to initiate and maintain interpersonal relationships." As a construct social self-efficacy has been variably defined, described, and measured in the scientific literature as researchers began to generalize Bandura's theory for specific applications. For example, Smith and Betz measured social self-efficacy using an instrument they developed and tested called the Scale of Perceived Social Self-Efficacy (PSSE), which they described as a measure of self-efficacy expectations with respect to a range of social behaviors. They argued that extant attempts to measure the construct (e.g., Scherer et al., 1982; Fitchett et al., 1997) were either "psychometrically inadequate or somewhat narrow in definition and scope", particularly when applied to various target populations, and thus they created the PSSE scale. Their instrument measured six domains: (1) making friends, (2) pursuing romantic relationships, (3) social assertiveness, (4) performance in public situations, (5) groups or parties, and (6) giving or receiving help. Additionally, Matsushima and Shiomi modified an instrument used in a different study in such a way that they felt it captured and measured the construct of social self-efficacy. Some of the item domains for this instrument included Self-confidence about Social Skill in Personal Relationship, Trust in Friends, and Trust by Friends. Both sets of authors suggest that social self-efficacy is strongly correlated to the constructs of shyness and social anxiety, the measure of self-efficacy having a heavy impact upon that of the others. Moreover, when people lack social support they may be able to compensate for it by self-efficacy or vice versa.

Academic Self-efficacy. Academic self-efficacy refers to a student's belief that he or she can successfully engage in and complete course-specific academic tasks, such as accomplishing course outcomes, demonstrating competency skills used in the course, satisfactorily completing assignments, passing the course, and meeting the requirements to continue on in his or her major. Various empirical inquiries have also been conducted attempting to measure academic self-efficacy.

Teacher Self-Efficacy. Teacher self-efficacy pertains to one's perceived competence to deal with all demands and challenges that are implied in teachers' professional life.

Controversy

While the general concept that self-efficacy is a positive aspect of the human cognition is mostly accepted, the advantages of high versus low levels in certain social situations is not universally agreed upon as salient. Some research shows that while self-efficacy can be accurately reported by an individual, it isn't able to predict actual social interactions in many situations. Tasks that are specifically socially oriented, such as public speaking, were more difficult to individuals with low self-efficacy, but those individuals showed no correlating social responses in a casual social setting. The controversy exists regarding how important self-efficacy is to complex social situations, and currently more research is needed to determine if one can make any predictive claims based on perceived self-efficacy.