SELF-EFFICACY AND CAREER SATISFACTION: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF WORK EFFORT

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Abstract

This study examines whether or not employees’ willingness to exert high level of work effort mediates the correlation of self-efficacy and career satisfaction. Another intention is to find if there exist gender differences in self-efficacy, career satisfaction, and work effort. Data were collected from 422 female and male employees of various Russian organizations. The research findings support the idea that employees’ willingness to exert a high level of work effort partially mediates the correlation between self-efficacy and career satisfaction. There are also significant gender differences when measuring variables of interest. The article examines the theoretical consequences and suggests recommendations for the future research.

Keywords: career satisfaction, gender differences, mediating effect, Russia, self-efficacy, work effort

JEL code: M0, M1

1. Introduction

The choice of the Russian Federation as a site for the current research is mainly explained by its long and complex history. For the last 30 years, Russia has experienced many political and economic changes (see Astakhova et al., 2010). During the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) period it was the country with the planned economy; many projects had to be coordinated with five-year plans. In 1985 the USSR leader M. Gorbachev had an unsuccessful attempt to loosen social and economic control. As a result, in the world history, the year 1991 was marked as the year of the Soviet Union collapse. Yeltsin’s period was renowned for its both lawlessness and political chaos (see Chazam, 2002). But after V. Putin became president many positive changes happened. The improvements in reform and foreign policies raised business confidence in Russia’s economic future and increased greatly Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). In fact, the Russian rapid historical development caused the significant changes in the Russian people mindset.
Over the last two decades many researchers have argued about Russian business culture, as well as its impact on managerial practices (see Ayios, 2005; Hendley et al., 2000; May et al., 2005; Puffer, 1992; Salmi, 1996; Sedaitis, 1998). According to Johnanson (2003) and Kets de Vries et al. (2004), Russian managers tend to bring their companies up to international standards.

In order to develop effective working environment, it is necessary to investigate the specific mechanisms of developing career satisfaction and comprehend the existing gender differences. There are some studies about gender differences in employment and wages in Russia (see Jovanovic and Lokshin, 2004). As Zakirova (2014) emphasizes, every country experiences gender gap, for women, it is more difficult than for men to perform equally in social and economic spheres. In fact, studying the role which gender has on the behavior of employees is very important.

Current study has several purposes: (1) to examine the correlation between self-efficacy, work effort, and career satisfaction, (2) to empirically test the mediation effect of employees’ willingness to exert a high level of work effort on the relationship between self-efficacy and career satisfaction, and (3) to study the gender differences in self-efficacy, career satisfaction, and work effort.

This article is structured as follows. Part 2 identifies and classifies such research constructs, as self-efficacy, career satisfaction, work effort, and gender, based on the literature review. Part 3 defines the research design and related methods. Part 4 establishes the questionnaire sampling and statistical analyses. The SPSS software is used for testing the research hypotheses. Part 5 provides with the conclusion and recommendations for the future research.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Self-Efficacy and Career Satisfaction

Self-efficacy theory of Albert Bandura has become one of the most widely researched topics. It is the personal belief in own abilities to fulfill the task needs and it has an impact on behavioral choices (see Bandura 1977, 1989). Self-efficacy may even result in optimism (see Garcia et al., 2015). Jiang et al. (2013) argue that the learning environment has an impact on personal self-efficacy and goal orientation. Besides, according to the latest studies, self-efficacy has a significant correlation with a specific goal orientation (see Geitz et al., 2016). In overall, self-efficacy affects many variables, including the individual’s motivation, job performance, and job satisfaction (see Bandura, 1993).

The research conducted among teachers demonstrates the positive relationship between self-efficacy, self-esteem, and job satisfaction (see Reilly et al., 2014). Job satisfaction is the most popular indicator of overall career quality; people always look for meaningful and challenging jobs that help fulfill their potential (see Shevchuk et al., 2015). The study in 25 Pakistani organizations indicates that learning culture influences the employees’ job
satisfaction (see Sabir and Kalyar, 2013). Jawahar and Stone (2015) proved the partial mediation role of job satisfaction and support on the influence of justice perceptions on organizational citizenship behavior and counterproductive work performance.

H1: There is a significantly positive correlation between self-efficacy, career satisfaction, and work effort.

2.2 Mediating Role of Work Effort

The empirical results define that employees’ meaning of work has a positive impact on both job engagement and organizational commitment (see Jung and Yoon, 2016). Morris (2009) indicates discretionary work effort regarding the economics and organizational behavior. Levels of work effort and persistence in achieving the purposes despite the existing obstacles are determined by the motivation of the employees (see Jones and George, 2008). Some previous studies suggest a mild, positive relationship between job performance and job satisfaction (see Christen et al., 2006).

Literature regarding the mediating role of work effort and its relationship with career satisfaction has remained relatively limited. There was tested and proved the mediating role of job effort in the relationship between psychological capital and job performance (see Nguyen et al., 2014). Nguni et al. (2006) demonstrate that teachers experiencing high levels of career satisfaction will, in turn, extend extra work effort.

It is posited that employees’ willingness to exert a high level of work effort acts as a mediator of the relationship between self-efficacy and career satisfaction (Figure 1).

H2: Employees’ willingness to exert a high level of work effort mediates the relationship between self-efficacy and career satisfaction.

2.3 Gender Differences

Gender-specific issues, as well as gender influences, are an emerging field of current studies (see Jennings and Brush, 2013). It is suggested that men and women experience the socialization process oppositely based on differences in expectations, conflicts, and outcomes. The participation in both self-employment and entrepreneurship varies by gender (see Figure 1. Proposed framework

![Figure 1. Proposed framework](image-url)
Saridakis et al., 2014). Nowadays, gender differences lead female employees to adjust the labor time to the needs of their families (see Balleer et al., 2014). In both low and high positions, women have less promotion (see Gobillon et al., 2015).

According to the findings, women are more empathetic and men are more risk-taking and career-focused (see Kirkland et al., 2013; Ferriman et al., 2009). Some earlier studies in sales behaviors show that women are lack of confidence and competitive socialization and experience difficulty in the industrial sales task (see Swan and Futrell, 1978). The sex-role socialization hypothesis assumes women to be less assertive, ambitious, and career oriented than men (see Kaufman and Fetters, 1980). However, Kennedy and Lawton (1992) found a greater job involvement for women than for men, which may reflect the newcomer status of women in sales. In addition, women reported lower satisfaction and lower perceived opportunities for influence in their environments than men did. Xie and Whyte (1997) in their research about gender differences among managers and non-managers found greater differences between male and female non-managers, than between male and female managers.

There have been found significant gender differences in computer skills, security self-efficacy, and prior experience (see Anwar et al., in press). Female employees self-efficacy is lower than this of male employees (see Anwar et al., in press). The study about career satisfaction of academics shows that women are less satisfied with both personal and professional growth, as well as with work-life balance (see Machado-Taylor et al., 2014).

H3: Russian employees of different genders have different reactions to self-efficacy (H3a), work effort (H3b), and career satisfaction (H3c).

3. Materials and Methods

The scales were translated from English versions. Self-Efficacy was measured using a ten-item scale developed by Schwarzer and Jerusalem (1995). Work effort was measured using a six-item scale developed by Brown and Leigh (1996). To measure career satisfaction a five-item scale developed by Greenhaus et al. (1990) was used. Participants were asked to evaluate their agreement with the statements using a 7 points Likert scale (from 1 = very strongly disagree to 7 = very strongly agree). Respondent’s gender was self-reported and coded 1 = male, 2 = female.

3.1 Data Analysis Procedure

The article utilizes survey data collected during May-June, 2016 from 422 employees in different Russian organizations. Respondents were anonymous since the online survey platform was applied to organize and collect the data. The total 500 questionnaires were distributed and 464 questionnaires were submitted back (a 92.8% response rate). After removing 42 questionnaires because of the missing information, 422 valid questionnaires remained with a balanced ratio of 211 female (50.0%) and 211 male respondents (50.0%). The demographic characteristics of the sample are given in Table 1. Most of the respondents
are people from 41 to 50 years old, with a total number of 133 participants (31.5%). Most of the participants are single (50.2%) and educated to bachelor’s degree level (55.5%). The tenure level of the majority is from 1 to 5 years (46.9%) and most (28.2%) of respondents has an average monthly income of above RUB 80,000.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics

| Item                      | Description          | Distribution | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------|----------------------|--------------|----------------|
| Gender                    | Male                 | 211          | 50.0           |
|                           | Female               | 211          | 50.0           |
| Age                       | 18-25 years          | 10           | 2.4            |
|                           | 26-30 years          | 34           | 8.1            |
|                           | 31-40 years          | 115          | 27.3           |
|                           | 41-50 years          | 133          | 31.5           |
|                           | 51-60 years          | 129          | 30.6           |
|                           | 61 years and above   | 1            | 0.2            |
| Marital status            | Single               | 212          | 50.2           |
|                           | Married              | 193          | 45.7           |
|                           | Divorced             | 17           | 4.0            |
| Education level           | Matric               | 31           | 7.3            |
|                           | Bachelors            | 234          | 55.5           |
|                           | Master degree        | 151          | 35.8           |
|                           | Ph.D.                | 6            | 1.4            |
| Tenure                    | 1-5 years            | 198          | 46.9           |
|                           | 5-10 years           | 114          | 27.0           |
|                           | 10-15 years          | 68           | 16.1           |
|                           | 15 years and above   | 42           | 10.0           |
| Average monthly income (RUB) | 0-15,000            | 45           | 10.7           |
|                           | 15,000-30,000        | 50           | 11.8           |
|                           | 30,000-45,000        | 77           | 18.2           |
|                           | 45,000-60,000        | 75           | 17.8           |
|                           | 60,000-80,000        | 56           | 13.3           |
|                           | Above 80,000         | 119          | 28.2           |

4. Results

4.1 The Correlation between Self-Efficacy, Career Satisfaction, and Work Effort

The results of the correlation analysis along the means and standard deviations of each variable are presented in Table 2. The top diagonal number of each column of the table indicates the measure of reliability that is Cronbach’s alpha for each respective variable. The means and standard deviations for the variables of self-efficacy, career satisfaction, and work effort are 5.4220 (0.78994), 5.6442 (1.02023), and 4.6190 (1.17351) respectively. The correlation analysis shows the significant positive relationship between self-efficacy and
career satisfaction at $r = 0.486$ and $p < 0.01$. The correlation between self-efficacy and work effort is also positive at $r = 0.316$, $p < 0.01$. Furthermore, career satisfaction is positively correlated with work effort at $r = 0.450$, $p < 0.01$. Thus, hypothesis 1 is supported.

Table 2. Descriptive analysis, correlations and reliability

| Item               | Self-efficacy | Career satisfaction | Work effort |
|--------------------|---------------|---------------------|-------------|
| Self-efficacy      | 0.852         |                     |             |
| Career satisfaction| 0.486**       | 0.861               |             |
| Work effort        | 0.316**       | 0.450**             | 0.814       |
| Mean               | 5.4220        | 5.6442              | 4.6190      |
| Standard deviation | 0.78994       | 1.02023             | 1.17351     |

4.2 Work Effort as a Mediator of Relationship between Self-Efficacy and Career Satisfaction

To become aware of the tools by which self-efficacy predicts career satisfaction, employees’ willingness to exert a high level of work effort was tested as a mediator. There was found a support for its partial mediation of this relationship (Table 3). There exists a significantly positive impact of self-efficacy on work effort ($\beta = 0.627, t = 11.392, p < 0.01$), self-efficacy explains significant proportion of the total variation in work effort ($R^2 = 0.236, F = 129.771, p < 0.01$). The analysis of data shows that there is a positive correlation between work effort and career satisfaction ($\beta = 0.518, t = 10.332, p < 0.01$), work effort explains significant proportion of the total variation in career satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.203, F = 106.758, p < 0.01$). Furthermore, self-efficacy has a positive impact on career satisfaction ($\beta = 0.470, t = 6.831, p < 0.01$), self-efficacy explains significant proportion of the total variation in career satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.100, F = 46.66, p < 0.01$).

Table 3. Mediating role of work effort

| Effect                        | B      | T      | Sig. | $R^2$  | F      | Sig. |
|-------------------------------|--------|--------|------|--------|--------|------|
| Self-efficacy → work effort   | 0.627  | 11.392 | 0.00 | 0.236  | 129.771| 0.00 |
| Work effort → career satisfaction | 0.518  | 10.332 | 0.00 | 0.203  | 106.758| 0.00 |
| Self-efficacy → career satisfaction | 0.470  | 6.831  | 0.00 | 0.100  | 46.66  | 0.00 |
| Indirect effect (self-efficacy → work effort → career satisfaction) | 0.447  | 7.839  | 0.00 | 0.215  | 57.416 | 0.00 |

When accounting for work effort, the relationship between self-efficacy and career satisfaction was reduced from $\beta = 0.470$ to $\beta = 0.447$, $t = 7.839$, $p < 0.01$, $R^2 = 0.215$, $F = 57.416$, $p < 0.01$. Thus, employees’ willingness to exert a high level of work effort mediates the relationship between self-efficacy and career satisfaction. Hypothesis 2 is supported.
4.2 Gender Differences in Self-Efficacy, Work Effort, and Career Satisfaction Behaviors

The results of the t-testing analysis show that average self-efficacy of Russian male employees (M = 5.1697, SD = 0.79374) is less than those of female employees (M = 5.6744, SD = 0.70211). Levene’s test is F = 3.147 (p > 0.05), which didn’t meet the significance level. However, the value of t(420) = – 6.919, p < 0.05, reached the significance level, indicating that hypothesis 3a was supported and that the average self-efficacy scores of female employees were greater than those of male employees.

The results of the t-testing analysis show that average willingness to exert a high level of work effort of Russian male employees (M = 5.4147, SD = 1.03143) is less than those of female employees (M = 5.8736, SD = 0.95761). Levene’s test is F = 2.169 (p > 0.05), which didn’t meet the significance level. However, the value of t(420) = – 4.736, p < 0.05, reached the significance level, indicating that hypothesis 3b was supported and that the average work effort scores of female employees were greater than those of male employees.

The results of the t-testing analysis show that average career satisfaction of Russian male employees (M = 4.4464, SD = 1.22604) is less than those of female employees (M = 4.7915, SD = 1.09445). Levene’s test is F = 5.954 (p < 0.05), which reached the level of significance. At the same time the value of t(420) = – 3.049, p < 0.05, reached the significance level, indicating that hypothesis 3c was supported and that the average career satisfaction scores of female employees were greater than those of male employees. The results of t-tests are shown in Table 4.

| Variable         | Gender | Mean   | Standard deviation | F     | Sig.   | T     | df  | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|------------------|--------|--------|--------------------|-------|--------|-------|-----|-----------------|
| Self-efficacy    | 1      | 5.1697 | 0.79374            | 3.147 | 0.077  | -6.919| 420 | 0.000           |
|                  | 2      | 5.6744 | 0.70211            |       |        |       |     |                 |
| Work effort      | 1      | 5.4147 | 1.03143            | 2.169 | 0.142  | -4.736| 420 | 0.000           |
|                  | 2      | 5.8736 | 0.95761            |       |        |       |     |                 |
| Career satisfaction | 1   | 4.4464 | 1.22604            | 5.954 | 0.015  | -3.049| 420 | 0.002           |
|                  | 2      | 4.7915 | 1.09445            |       |        |       |     |                 |

5. Conclusions

Using a questionnaire survey conducted among employees in various organizations of the Russian Federation, there were studied the correlation among all main variables, the mediating role of work effort on the relationship between self-efficacy and career satisfaction, and also there were examined gender differences in self-efficacy, work effort, and career satisfaction. This study offers evidence of how work effort mediates the relationship between self-efficacy and career satisfaction, as well as gender differences existing in self-efficacy, work effort, and career satisfaction. There exists a significant correlation between main
variables and the average self-efficacy, work effort, and career satisfaction scores of female employees were found to be greater than those of male employees.

Although the relationship between self-efficacy and career satisfaction is frequently studied, the specific tool by which career satisfaction develops has yet to be researched. The research model of this article is a partial mediation model, with work effort being the mediator variable. The Pearson correlation coefficient between self-efficacy and career satisfaction was 0.470 (p < 0.001) while with mediator the value was reduced to 0.447 (p < 0.001). The present study expands on the earlier research by demonstrating the mediating effect of work effort between self-efficacy and career satisfaction among both female and male Russian employees.

5.1 Applied Implications

The research is based on responses from Russian employees working in various industries. The findings not only demonstrate the importance of work effort as a mediator in grasping self-efficacy and career satisfaction relationships but also indicate significant gender differences. The independent t-test shows that the average self-efficacy, work effort, and career satisfaction scores of women were greater than those of men. Creating the environment where managers are eager to know the employees satisfaction level and motivation seems to be one of the steps for better management. Although the satisfied employee is not necessarily a productive employee, the satisfied employee is likely to behave better (see Darrat et al., in press). According to Berkery et al. (2013), in order to become successful, organizations need to combine feminine and masculine leadership behaviors.

5.2 Limitations

As with any empirical study, this research is not without limitations. One of the limitations has to do with the model of the research. It was hypothesized that work effort mediates the relationship between self-efficacy and career satisfaction. There is a possibility for the future research to test the moderation role of work effort on their relationship.

Another limitation is that only gender differences were observed. Such variables as age, marital status, education level, tenure, or average monthly income can also be taken into consideration when measuring self-efficacy, work effort, and career satisfaction. For instance, Chaudhuri et al. (2015) didn’t find the significant impact of age on career satisfaction of female employees.

5.3 Future Research Directions

The results of the current study should be of interest to researchers studying the phenomenon of employees’ career satisfaction in Russia and in other countries. This article also highlights the need for further analysis of the current situation from different perspectives. This manuscript helps the further investigation into antecedents and consequences of career satisfaction. Despite the further investigation is needed, this research also contributes by
comparing self-efficacy, work effort, and career satisfaction scores for women and men.

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