

Job self-efficacy, professional development and career satisfaction among women managers in China: Basis for employee retention framework

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ISSN: 2243-7770
Online ISSN: 2243-7789

Received: 18 June 2023

Revised: 20 July 2023

Accepted: 18 August 2023

OPEN ACCESS

Available Online: 25 August 2023

DOI: 10.5861/ijrsm.2023.1118

Abstract

The study aims to determine the Self-efficacy, professional development and Career Satisfaction Among Women Managers in China. Specifically, it will describe the self-efficacy of women managers in terms of Self-evaluation, Information Gathering, Goal Selection, Planning and Problem Solving; determine their professional development with reference to Psychological Traits (interest, personality, professional ability and personality traits) and Social Traits (family lifestyle, family expectation and support), Work Situation (work experience and environmental conditions during study) and Social Influence (career prestige will affect the career development of interviewees); assess their career satisfaction in terms of Work Environment, Work Group, Work Content, Corporate Background and Personal Concept; test the relationship between self-efficacy, professional development and career satisfaction and develop for Professional Development. The results show that most of the women demonstrate high evaluation on their self-efficacy, professional development as managers in China. They are also satisfied to their career as they have good working environment but they are dissatisfied when it comes to work content and personal perception. The study also revealed that women's self-efficacy as significant relationship to professional development and career satisfaction.

Keywords: self-efficacy, professional development, career satisfaction, women managers, career empowerment

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1. Introduction

With the development of society, social culture and people's thoughts have been greatly changed. Women have higher education level and higher social status. More and more women achieve higher career success than men, and more and more female managers in companies. The role of women is no longer limited to being a mother or a wife, but can shine in the workplace and give full play to their abilities, on an equal footing with men. According to the survey data of relevant recruitment websites, the proportion of female managers in Chinese enterprises is close to 50%. Because women are richer and more delicate than men in emotion and observation, they are also very popular among employees and company bosses in the workplace.

Although modern people are for women the role of cognitive science, the respect of women has gained more and more high, but the traditional concept on people's thought for a long time, the woman responsible for the birth of human reproduction, compared with male female career barriers harder, blocking factors also more, career is a big challenge. According to the survey of relevant departments, when men and women in the workplace with similar basic conditions (job skill level and knowledge level, etc.) compete for a promotion position, according to the survey, nearly 70% of women and men believe that men have more advantages in career and have greater promotion space.

As one of the core aspects of occupational psychology, self-efficacy plays a key role in career growth. Individuals with low self-efficacy often find it difficult to overcome career growth difficulties. This study was based on modern women's career development needs, the Chinese female managers as the main investigation object, through to the previous scholars on self-efficacy and career development and career satisfaction of reading and analysis of relevant research literature, determined the main direction and purpose of the present study and the relevant variables in this study are to determine and interpretation, the conclusion of this study is obtained by establishing the research model. Therefore, this study selects self-efficacy in the psychological factors of professional female executives as the research entry point.

Individuals with higher levels of conscientiousness and extraversion and lower levels of neuroticism were more likely to have higher levels of self-efficacy. A higher sense of self-efficacy improves female executives' self-recognition, makes them more confident in their own abilities, and drives their career growth in the process of constant change. Of this study was to explore the Chinese female managers career development course and its influencing factors, using a variety of qualitative case study method to explore, through in-depth interviews for data collection, the researchers will visit a number of female managers, during the end of the interview will interview content appears in the form of transcript, and data analysis, finally form the conclusion and put forward relevant suggestions.

Objectives of the Study - The study aimed to assess the self-efficacy, career satisfaction and professional development among women managers in China as basis in developing employee retention framework. Specifically, it determined the self-efficacy as to self-evaluation, information gathering, goal selection, planning and problem solving; assessed the career satisfaction in terms of work environment, work group, work content, and personal perception; and described the professional development with reference to psychological traits, social traits, work situation and social influence. It also tested the relationships among self-efficacy, career development and career satisfaction. Lastly, it developed an employee retention framework for women managers in China.

2. Methods

Research Design - This paper mainly adopts the descriptive research method to determine the relationship among the three variables of self-efficacy, professional development and career satisfaction among women managers in China. According to Rahi (2017), a descriptive research method is a study that obtains current relevant facts, data, and information, and provides an accurate overview of a situation, person, or event. This paper adopts the questionnaire survey method of this research.

Participants of the Study - The participants of the study are the women managers in China who are mostly working for almost 3-5 years, with age of 25-30 years old, married and under junior managerial position.

Data Gathering Instrument - According to the requirements of Likert-level scale, the interviewees were asked to choose the answers that fit their own opinions according to their own judgment. Check the columns provided and rate them according to the following scale. Where strongly agree (4) represents a frequency of 3.5-4.0, agree (3) represents a frequency of 2.50-3.49, disagree (2) represents a frequency of 1.50-2.49, and strongly disagree (1) represents a frequency of 1.00-1.49. Part 1 of the instrument contains indicators about self-efficacy. The second part was used to assess the professional development while the third part measured the career satisfaction of woman managers. In this paper, the author used Cronbach's alpha in SPSS28 software to check the reliability of the questionnaire.

Data Gathering Procedure - Relevant questionnaires were sent through the questionnaire star, and the respondents were asked to complete the survey by filling in the electronic questionnaire. Thereafter, the selected respondents had enough time to answer the questions. The time allocated for distribution and collection of the questionnaire takes several weeks, which would be sufficient for researchers to collect the data needed for the study. The following data are used for the data sheets.

Ethical Considerations - The study was approved by the companies before it was launched. To this end, ethical considerations was taken into account when conducting research to ensure that all information collected is used only for research purposes, so as to maintain the quality and integrity of the research. The researcher also solicited the consent of the women managers through letters and correspondence to ensure that the target interviewees are ready to answer the necessary research questions. It also ensures the confidentiality and anonymity of respondents, as they do not seek names when answering the questionnaire.

Data Analysis - Weighted mean and rank were used to determine the self-efficacy as to Self-evaluation, Information Gathering, Goal Selection, Planning and Problem Solving; to describe the career development with reference to Psychological Traits, Social Traits, Work Situation and Social Influence; and to assess the career satisfaction in terms of Work Environment, Work Group, Work Content, Personal Perception. The result of Shapiro-Wilk Test showed that p-values of all variables were less than 0.05 which means that the data set was not normally distributed. Therefore, Spearman rho was used as part of the non-parametric tests to determine the significant relationship. All analyses were performed using SPSS version 28.

3. Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows the self-efficacy assessment of the respondents. It explained the relevant indicators of self-efficacy from four aspects: self-evaluation, information gathering, goal selection, planning and problem Solving. The mean value of the index is 3.01. It shows that these four aspects are appropriate and appropriate to interpret the relevant indicators of the self-efficacy. According to the analysis of tabular data, the level of commitment is visible on the self-evaluation (3.16). "Planning and Problem Solving" ranked second with an average score of 3.04. "Information Gathering" and "Goal Selection" got the lowest mean values of 2.93 and 2.91.

Table 1*Self-Efficacy*

Key Result Areas	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Self-Evaluation	3.16	Agree	1
Information Gathering	2.93	Agree	3
Goal Selection	2.91	Agree	4
Planning and Problem Solving	3.04	Agree	2
Composite Mean	3.01	Agree	

Legend: 3.50-4.00=Strongly Agree; 2.50-3.49=Agree; 1.50-2.49=Disagree; 1.00-1.49=Strongly Disagree

Self-efficacy and occupational self-efficacy are an important concept in social cognition, which were first proposed by Bandura in 1997. It thinks that self-efficacy is always related to a specific field, and professional self-efficacy is the concrete embodiment of self-efficacy in the professional field, that is, the belief of their competence for tasks or activities related to the career. Occupational self-efficacy mainly includes two aspects: on the one hand, it is the self-efficacy related to occupational content, that is, the individual should complete the relevant content of a certain occupation, such as the education needed for the occupation, a specific occupation task, etc. The belief of ability on the other hand, the self-efficacy related to the process of professional behavior, that is, the process of professional behavior, such as career decision, career search, etc. beliefs in the ability to achieve behavioral goals.

Table 2*Career Satisfaction*

Key Result Areas	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Work Environment	3.09	Agree	2
Work Content	3.14	Agree	1
Work Group	1.94	Disagree	3
Personal Perception	1.81	Disagree	4
Composite Mean	2.50	Agree	

Legend: 3.50-4.00=Strongly Agree; 2.50-3.49=Agree; 1.50-2.49=Disagree; 1.00-1.49=Strongly Disagree

Table 2 shows the summary of career satisfaction. It explained the relevant indicators of career satisfaction from four aspects: work environment, work content, work group, personal perception. The mean value of the index is 2.50. The indicator on work content ranked first with a mean score of 3.14. Work Environment ranked second with a comprehensive score of 3.09. It shows that employee job satisfaction has a great impact on production efficiency. If employees are not satisfied with the management, work content and working environment of the enterprise, then the work efficiency of employees will be affected. Low work efficiency will lead to the decline of production efficiency, and then affect the economic benefits of the enterprise.

It can be seen from the table, the respondents disagreed on the work group (1.94) and persona perception (1.81) indicators Sullivan and Mahalik (2000) proposed that the social-cultural work environment and women's own cognition of work make women not so heavy task pressure, and their interest in work is mostly socially oriented, that is, they tend to seek harmonious interpersonal relations and equal work conditions. Therefore, women's work needs under organizational structures are likely to be more related. But times are evolving, and the pressure on women in the workplace has changed from the previous two decades (Lan & Zhang, 2013; Gu, .2003) As more and more women break the "glass ceiling" (glass celling) in the workplace, expectations for women in the workplace are growing. Women not only need to deal with interpersonal relationships, but also have a certain need for professional ability. Therefore, it is necessary for us to study the current changes in the employee needs of women in the workplace to better meet their needs and improve the work efficiency of the organization.

Table 3

Professional Development

Key Result Areas	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Psychological Traits	2.86	Agree	4
Social Traits	3.14	Agree	1
Work Situation	3.09	Agree	2
Social Influence	3.02	Agree	3
Composite Mean	3.03	Agree	

Legend: 3.50-4.00=Strongly Agree;2.50-3.49=Agree;1.50-2.49=Disagree;1.00-1.49=Strongly Disagree

Table 3 summary of professional development. Respondents positively agreed with the analysis and prediction of the career development. It explained the relevant indicators of career development from four aspects: Psychological Traits, Social Traits, Work Situation, Social Influence. Women in the new era want to balance their work and life, to deal with and balance their family life and their own career at the same time, and to be a new woman in the new era. At the same time, female managers also have their own unique advantages, such as flexible management, meticulous work, willing to listen and so on. The above advantages are a good embodiment of the role of female biology, and they are an irreplaceable advantage of men, which has played a unique effect on the organization and management work (Liu, 2021). However, due to some objective or subjective factors, many women are faced with various obstacles in their career development, which test the determination of women to pursue their career, but also seriously affect the career development of female employees (Yang, 2020).

As seen in the table 4 the computed rho values ranging from 0.204 to 0.304 indicate weak direct relationship between self-efficacy and sub variables of career satisfaction namely work environment and work content while the computed rho values ranging from -0.094 to -0.244 indicate a very weak to weak indirect relationship between self-efficacy and sub variables of career satisfaction namely work group and personal perception. There was a statistically significant relationship between self-efficacy and career satisfaction because the obtained p-values were less than 0.01/0.05. Under the workplace stress, women's physical health is not good. These physiological responses are not noticeable in a short time, and even if detected, many women will not pay attention, and certainly will not cause great harm to their health. But in the long run, these reactions can affect the normal function of the body, and even lead to disease (Shi et al., 2021).

In Bandura's view, self-efficacy is an individual's feeling of their specific ability, not the ability itself, nor a general feeling of self-worth. It regulates the individual's behavior by affecting the individual's cognition, motivation, emotion and will process, and then affects the objective external environment. It is the dynamic factor that plays a core role in the self-system. With the deepening of self-efficacy research, the self-efficacy of female managers in the research field of female managers has gradually gained attention. The self-efficacy of female managers is the confidence and belief of female managers in their own management ability, which is the subjective judgment and confidence degree of the ability required by management practice. The self-feeling of this subject plays an important role in controlling and regulating leadership behavior, and is an important influencing factor for female managers to establish clear goals, effectively implement, effectively coordinate complex relationships, complete leadership tasks, and manage self-emotions. Female managers' self-efficacy mainly influences leadership activities from the following aspects (Asandimitra& Kautsar, 2019).

Table 4

Relationship Between Self-Efficacy and Career Satisfaction

Variables	rho	p-value	Interpretation
Self-Evaluation			
Work Environment	0.272**	0.000	Highly Significant
Work Content	0.303**	0.000	Highly Significant
Work Group	-0.244**	0.000	Highly Significant
Personal Perception	-0.170**	0.003	Significant

Information Gathering			
Work Environment	0.244**	0.000	Highly Significant
Work Content	0.204**	0.000	Highly Significant
Work Group	-0.094	0.104	Not Significant
Personal Perception	-0.147*	0.011	Significant
Goal Selection			
Work Environment	0.303**	0.000	Highly Significant
Work Content	0.222**	0.000	Highly Significant
Work Group	-0.180**	0.002	Significant
Personal Perception	-0.196**	0.001	Significant
Planning and Problem Solving			
Work Environment	0.222**	0.000	Highly Significant
Work Content	0.304**	0.000	Highly Significant
Work Group	-0.163**	0.004	Significant
Personal Perception	-0.157**	0.006	Significant

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level /* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

First, self-efficacy influences the achievement motivation of female managers. Studies have shown that self-efficacy is positively associated with motivation for achievement. Individuals with high self-efficacy usually have a sense of their own quality and competence when completing a task. This sense of competence makes individuals more motivated to work, willing to work hard and enthusiastic. On the contrary, individuals with low self-efficacy may also feel incompetent when doing a job. This feeling makes the individual motivation for achievement lower, and naturally no more effort (Laura et al., 2002). Therefore, the higher the self-efficacy of the leaders, the more they will try and challenge the difficult work, and put their efforts to achieve it.

Second, self-efficacy influences the cognitive processes and thinking patterns of female managers. According to the study of class, leadership self-efficacy high leader, in the face of complex problems and high, task, tend to be more proactive, system, higher challenging goals or development direction, more, note how to solve the problem, will focus on the task to complete, even with the success of the imagination to inspire yourself. Leaders with low self-efficacy will adopt a negative avoidance attitude in the same situation. They will pay more attention to the possible failure and adverse consequences, and therefore always try to avoid the experience of failure without action. Furthermore, studies have shown a link between leadership self-efficacy and attribution methods. The higher the leadership self-efficacy, when the failure will be attributed to their own efforts. People with low leadership self-efficacy fall to incompetence. Different attribution methods will lead to different psychological experiences and different subsequent behavioral choices.

Third, self-efficacy influences the behavior choice and persistence of female managers. Recognition and perception influence rows. As seen in the table 5, the computed rho-values of 0.103 to 0.297 indicate a very weak to weak direct relationship among sub variables of self-efficacy and career development. There was statistically significant relationship between career development and sub variables of self-efficacy namely self-evaluation, goal selection, and planning and problem solving because the obtained p-values were less than 0.01. On the other hand, there was a statistically significant relationship between information gathering and sub variables of career development namely social traits, work situation and social influence because the obtained p-values were less than 0.01. However, there was no statistically significant relationship between information gathering and psychological traits because the obtained p-value was greater than 0.01.

Table 5

Relationship Between Self-Efficacy and Professional Development

Variables	rho	p-value	Interpretation
Self-Evaluation			
Psychological Traits	0.155**	0.007	Significant
Social Traits	0.203**	0.000	Highly Significant
Work Situation	0.252**	0.000	Highly Significant
Social Influence	0.181**	0.002	Significant

Information Gathering			
Psychological Traits	0.103	0.073	Not Significant
Social Traits	0.221**	0.000	Highly Significant
Work Situation	0.194**	0.001	Significant
Social Influence	0.169**	0.003	Significant
Goal Selection			
Psychological Traits	0.150**	0.009	Significant
Social Traits	0.197**	0.001	Significant
Work Situation	0.266**	0.000	Highly Significant
Social Influence	0.297**	0.000	Highly Significant
Planning and Problem Solving			
Psychological Traits	0.235**	0.000	Highly Significant
Social Traits	0.259**	0.000	Highly Significant
Work Situation	0.226**	0.000	Highly Significant
Social Influence	0.245**	0.000	Highly Significant

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

According to Karimi (2011) because women are weaker than men in physical strength, women are often at a disadvantage under the same conditions. In terms of recruitment, work arrangement, promotion, salary increase and other aspects, units consider the interests of male employees, which often makes women feel gender discrimination at work. With the growth of experience, female managers gradually become less sensitive to work, and many people have a sense of inexplicable fatigue. This psychological fatigue reduces work efficiency and weakens the competitiveness of their own development. Women's psychological and emotional easy to fluctuate, more fragile, dependence and strong conformity characteristics, is also one of the reasons that often make women feel tired in the work (Norton et al., 2015).

Studies have shown that self-efficacy is the driving source and successful cornerstone of female managers' career growth and development of management practices. Successful female managers have a high desire for achievement and confidence. They are full of passion and enthusiasm in their hearts, have the ambition and ambition to pursue success, dare to meet challenges, enjoy the fun of work, are firm in the face of setbacks, and are good at managing and regulating emotions. The lack of self-efficacy is the biggest psychological barrier for most female managers, which leads to their lack of confidence, enterprising consciousness and motivation and enthusiasm for leadership positions, unwilling to accept challenges, afraid to express independent opinions, lack of courage, courage and morale; in the face of tests, setbacks and difficulties, easy to be content with the status quo, cautious, even anxiety and depression. In short, these will affect the female managers to give full play to their management skills (Lewandowski, 2005).

Table 6

Relationship Between Career Satisfaction and Professional Development

Variables	Rho	p-value	Interpretation
Work Environment			
Psychological Traits	0.229**	0.000	Highly Significant
Social Traits	0.189**	0.001	Significant
Work Situation	0.243**	0.000	Highly Significant
Social Influence	0.226**	0.000	Highly Significant
Work Content			
Psychological Traits	0.163**	0.005	Significant
Social Traits	0.241**	0.000	Highly Significant
Work Situation	0.246**	0.000	Highly Significant
Social Influence	0.304**	0.000	Highly Significant
Work Group			
Psychological Traits	-0.283**	0.000	Highly Significant
Social Traits	-0.250**	0.000	Highly Significant
Work Situation	-0.236**	0.000	Highly Significant
Social Influence	-0.241**	0.000	Highly Significant

Personal Perception			
Psychological Traits	-0.085	0.142	Not Significant
Social Traits	-0.197**	0.001	Significant
Work Situation	-0.206**	0.000	Highly Significant
Social Influence	-0.252**	0.000	Highly Significant

** : Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

As seen in the table 6, the computed rho-values ranging from 0.163 to 0.304 indicate a very weak to weak direct relationship between career development and sub variables of career satisfaction namely work environment and work content while the computed rho-values ranging -0.085 to -0.283 indicate a very weak to weak indirect relationship between career development and sub variables namely work group and personal perception.

There was a statistically significant relationship between career development and sub variables of career satisfaction namely work environment, work content and work group because the obtained p-values were less than 0.01. On the other hand, there was a statistically significant relationship between personal perception and sub variables of career development namely social traits, work situation and social influence because the obtained p-values were less than 0.01. However, there was no statistically significant relationship between personal perception and psychological traits because the obtained p-value was greater than 0.01. Among the three levels of society, family and organization, social concept and social policy have the greatest influence, and have a certain influence on family concept and organizational culture and organizational system.

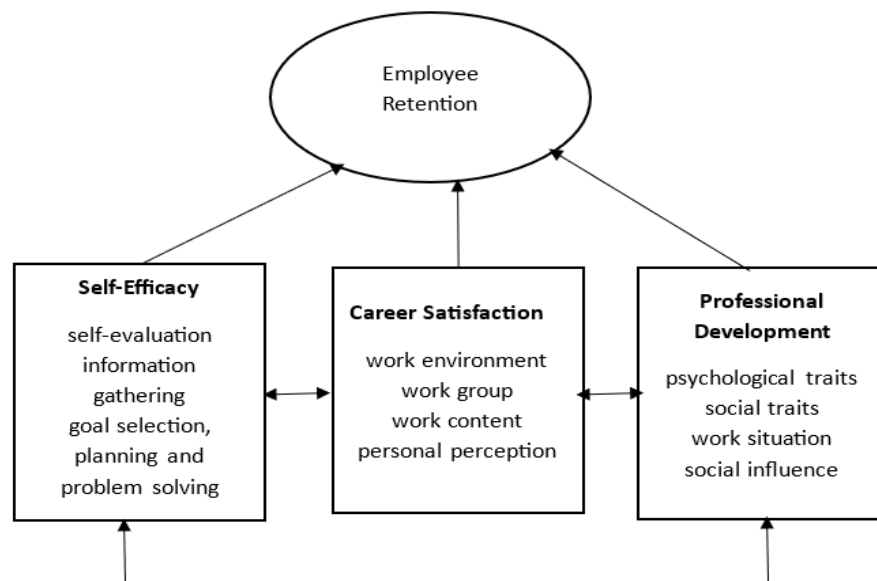


Figure 1. Employee Retention Framework

However, there was no significant difference in the effect of family and organizational factors on the career development of female managers. The results of the gender classification show that the stereotype of gender roles is so deeply imprinted in male minds that they simply do not feel the developmental barriers set up for women in their organizations and families. Although men do not have much prejudice against women, they generally still feel that women are inferior to men (Easterly & Myers 2019).

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the women managers demonstrate self-efficacy as to self-evaluation, information gathering, goal selection, planning and problem solving. As to career satisfaction, the respondents

were satisfied in terms of work environment and work group and dissatisfied in terms of work content and personal perception. The respondents manifested professional development in terms of psychological traits, social traits, work situation and social influence. There was a statistically significant relationship between self-efficacy, professional development and career satisfaction.

The state may further improve relevant laws and regulations, such as the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Women's Rights and Interests and the Law on the Labor Protection of Female Workers, to encourage communities to provide childcare and elderly care services at the social level, so that working women can further balance their work and family and reduce their worries at home. The proposed framework maybe tested and utilized by companies with women managers. Future researchers may use organizational climate and job performance as variables to assess employee retention.

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