



# SELF-EFFICACY AS A PROTECTIVE FACTOR IN MENTAL HEALTH: INSIGHTS FROM AN EARLY ADULTHOOD PERSPECTIVE

Ankita Singh <sup>1</sup>, Dr. Mahendra Kumar <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ph.D Research Scholar, Amity Institute of Behavioural & Allied Sciences, Amity University Chhattisgarh, Raipur, India

<sup>2</sup> Assistant Professor, Amity Institute of Behavioural & Allied Sciences, Amity University Chhattisgarh, Raipur, India



## Corresponding Author

Ankita Singh, [ankita.hsc@gmail.com](mailto:ankita.hsc@gmail.com)

## DOI

[10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i1.2024.6410](https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i1.2024.6410)

**Funding:** This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

**Copyright:** © 2024 The Author(s). This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

With the license CC-BY, authors retain the copyright, allowing anyone to download, reuse, re-print, modify, distribute, and/or copy their contribution. The work must be properly attributed to its author.



## ABSTRACT

Self-efficacy is an important protective factor for mental health in early adulthood, especially during transitional life phases with increased sensitivity to stress and inter-role conflicts.

Drawing on Bandura's social cognitive theory, this study synthesises existing data to investigate how self-efficacy promotes psychological resilience, coping mechanisms, and mental well-being throughout early adulthood, with a particular emphasis on gender-specific experiences. Empirical research shows that stronger self-efficacy is connected with lower stress, better family functioning, and better coping, particularly among women juggling career and household commitments. The review also emphasises the moderating impacts of familial environment, cultural context, and professional position, emphasising how self-efficacy interacts with other social variables. Future research implications include developing targeted treatments, addressing structural hurdles, verifying cross-cultural models, and applying longitudinal approaches.

Overall, developing self-efficacy emerges as a critical approach for promoting mental health resilience in young people navigating complicated psychosocial environments.

**Keywords:** Self-Efficacy, Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, Early Adulthood, Mental Health

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Mental health in early adulthood is influenced by multiple psychosocial variables, among which self-efficacy plays a pivotal role. Defined as an individual's belief in their capacity to execute behaviors necessary to produce specific outcomes (Bandura, 1977), self-efficacy acts as a protective factor against stress, anxiety, and other psychological challenges. Early adulthood, often characterized by significant transitions such as career establishment, family responsibilities, and identity formation, brings heightened vulnerability to stress and inter-role conflicts (Agrawal, 2020; Asfahani, 2021). These life stressors can significantly influence mental health outcomes if individuals lack the confidence to cope effectively.

Research suggests that the home environment, family functioning, and perceived role expectations also contribute to an individual's psychological well-being during this phase (Apte & Bhatt, 2023; Baiocco et al., 2024). Women, in particular, face compounded stressors due to inter-role conflict between professional and domestic spheres, which may impact both mental health and perceived self-efficacy (Ahmad et al., 2011; Arifah et al., 2022). In this context,

understanding the relationship between self-efficacy and mental health offers valuable insights into coping strategies and resilience. This review synthesizes literature on the protective role of self-efficacy in maintaining psychological well-being, with emphasis on early adulthood.

### **1.1. SELF-EFFICACY: CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATION**

Bandura's (1977) seminal theory of self-efficacy emphasizes its role as a cognitive determinant of motivation, behavior, and emotional regulation. Individuals with higher self-efficacy demonstrate greater persistence, adaptability, and resilience when encountering stressors. In the context of early adulthood, self-efficacy can mitigate psychological distress and promote healthier coping strategies.

### **1.2. INTER-ROLE CONFLICT AND MENTAL HEALTH**

Inter-role conflict, particularly among women balancing work and family responsibilities, has been widely studied as a contributor to stress and compromised mental health (Agrawal, 2020; Ahmad et al., 2011). Arifah et al. (2022) highlighted that working mothers often experience heightened role strain but adopt coping mechanisms that are shaped by their self-efficacy levels.

Similarly, Asfahani (2021) argued that role conflicts, if unmanaged, can negatively affect well-being, especially among professionals navigating work-life balance. Thus, self-efficacy can act as a buffer in reducing the adverse effects of role conflicts on mental health.

### **1.3. FAMILY AND HOME ENVIRONMENT AS MODERATORS**

The home environment and family support significantly influence how individuals perceive and respond to stressors. Apte and Bhatt (2023) observed that family environment was directly linked to stress perception among women, with supportive environments fostering better mental health outcomes. Baiocco et al. (2024) further demonstrated that positivity and self-efficacy beliefs were strong predictors of healthy family functioning in young adults, suggesting a reciprocal relationship between personal belief systems and environmental conditions.

### **1.4. EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE OF SELF-EFFICACY IN MENTAL HEALTH**

Several studies highlight the centrality of self-efficacy in maintaining psychological resilience. For instance, Bajpai (1994) linked inter-role conflict with disturbances in marital and interpersonal communication, underscoring how self-beliefs could mediate the impact on mental health. Likewise, Aftab et al. (2021) found differences in decision-making patterns between working and non-working women, pointing to the role of self-confidence and perceived agency in shaping psychosocial outcomes. Collectively, these findings suggest that higher self-efficacy enhances individuals' ability to manage stress and sustain psychological well-being.

## **2. DISCUSSION**

The synthesis of reviewed studies highlights that self-efficacy operates as a key psychological construct in protecting and enhancing mental health outcomes, especially during early adulthood. Grounded in Bandura's social cognitive theory (1977, 1986, 1997), self-efficacy functions as a central mechanism by which individuals regulate thoughts, emotions, and behaviors under stress. When young adults face inter-role conflicts, family demands, or occupational pressures, self-efficacy beliefs serve as a determinant of resilience and coping (Agrawal, 2020; Arifah et al., 2022).

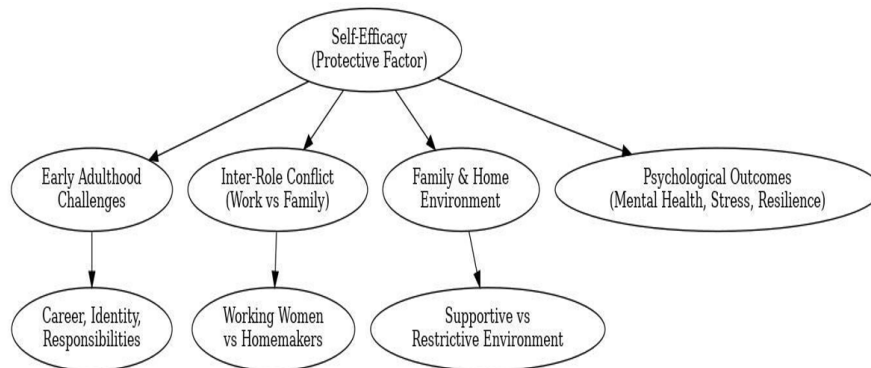
Evidence indicates that women—particularly those managing dual responsibilities at home and work—experience elevated stress yet demonstrate variations in coping outcomes depending on their efficacy beliefs (Ahmad et al., 2011; Bhattacharya & Pramanik, 2016). For instance, homemakers and working women differ in perceptions of agency and self-control, which directly influences their psychological well-being (Chaurasia & Kumari, 2023; Dibaji et al., 2017).

These differences suggest that role context interacts with efficacy expectations to determine stress vulnerability and mental health outcomes.

The role of family and social environments further shapes these associations. Studies show that supportive home and family environments enhance women's sense of efficacy and reduce perceived stress (Apte & Bhatt, 2023; Bhatia & Chadha, 1993). Baiocco et al. (2024) also emphasize that positive self-efficacy beliefs improve family functioning, thereby reinforcing reciprocal effects between the individual and their environment. Conversely, restrictive cultural or structural family systems may exacerbate stress and lower efficacy, as evidenced in sociological accounts of joint family systems and traditional expectations (Benazi et al., 2021; Bhat & Nischitha, 2022).

Comparative analyses highlight further distinctions. Professionally employed women often report higher self-efficacy and decision-making autonomy compared to homemakers, which can serve as a protective factor against depression and stress (Bharvad, 2016; Aftab et al., 2021). However, inequities in household labor distribution persist even among dual-earner couples, suggesting that structural gendered divisions may limit the protective potential of efficacy beliefs (Chen & Lopez, 2023). These findings underscore that while self-efficacy is a protective factor, it does not operate in isolation but interacts with cultural, environmental, and social determinants.

**Figure 1**



### 3. CONCLUSION

This review underscores the importance of self-efficacy as a protective factor for mental health during early adulthood, particularly among women navigating inter-role conflicts. Bandura's theoretical contributions (1977, 1986, 1994, 1997) establish self-efficacy as a cornerstone in managing psychological stress and enhancing resilience. Empirical evidence further reveals that higher self-efficacy is consistently associated with improved coping, reduced stress, and enhanced family functioning. However, variations across homemakers and working women point to the moderating role of social expectations, family dynamics, and occupational contexts.

Overall, self-efficacy not only supports individual well-being but also influences relational outcomes, suggesting its dual role in both personal and family domains. By strengthening self-efficacy through psychological interventions, educational programs, and workplace policies, mental health resilience can be fostered during this critical developmental phase.

### 4. FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

Future research and practice should focus on:

- 1) **Intervention Design:** Developing targeted interventions, such as cognitive-behavioral training and skills development workshops, aimed at enhancing self-efficacy among young women in diverse contexts (Bandura, 1997; Burger et al., 2010).
- 2) **Cross-Cultural Validation:** Examining how cultural expectations, such as joint versus nuclear family structures, shape efficacy beliefs and mental health outcomes across regions (Benazi et al., 2021; Dudu et al., 2016).
- 3) **Workplace and Policy Initiatives:** Creating policies that address inequities in household and workplace roles, reducing systemic barriers that undermine women's efficacy and psychological well-being (Chen & Lopez, 2023).
- 4) **Integration of Educational and Social Factors:** Exploring how educational levels and personality traits intersect with efficacy beliefs to influence long-term resilience and adaptability (Chiş et al., 2024).

- 5) Longitudinal Studies:** Conducting prospective studies to understand how self-efficacy evolves over time in relation to role conflicts, family demands, and mental health trajectories.

By embedding self-efficacy as a central construct in research and practice, both scholars and practitioners can contribute to strengthening protective factors for mental health during early adulthood.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

## REFERENCES

- Anupama, K. (2018). Hypothesis types and research. *International Journal of Nursing Science Practice and Research*, 4(2), 78-80. <https://doi.org/10.37628/ijnspr.v4i2.812>
- Apte, R., & Bhatt, S. (2023). Family environment and perceived stress amongst working and non-working women. *International Journal of Social Science Research and Review*, 6(7), 38-48. <http://ijssrr.com>
- Asfahani, A. M. (2021). Work-life balance and role conflict among academic staff in the Middle East: A review of literature. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 10(5), 82-87. <https://doi.org/10.5430/ijhe.v10n5p82>
- Aftab, S., Younas, N. and Nisar, I. (2021). Comparison Between Working and Non-Working Women in Household Activities in Decision-Making Patterns. *Journal of Business and Social Review in Emerging Economies*, 8(2), 427-440. [www.publishing.globalcsrc.org/jbsee](http://www.publishing.globalcsrc.org/jbsee)
- Agrawal, M. (2020). A study of role conflict among women teachers of nuclear and joint families of government school. *International Journal of Research Culture Society*, 4(4), 109-114. Retrieved from <http://www.ijrcs.org>
- Ahmad, M. S., Shah, I. A., & Fakhr, Z. (2011). Working women work-life conflict: A case study of banking sector in Pakistan. *World Applied Sciences Journal*, 13(3), 623-631. DOI: 10.1108/17515631111185923
- Apte, R., & Bhatt, S. (2023). Family environment and perceived stress amongst working and non-working women. *International Journal of Social Science Research and Review*, 6(7), 38-48. <http://ijssrr.com>
- Arifah, D. A., Akbar, R. A., Ma'rifah, S., & Rahmania, A. (2022). Interrole conflict and coping strategies among working mothers. *Southeast Asian Journal of Tropical Medicine and Public Health*, 53(Suppl. 2), 726-742. <http://repo.unida.gontor.ac.id/3056/1/04.pdf>
- Arora, R. (2015). Importance of interior decoration in home. *Journal of Civil Engineering and Environmental Technology*, 2(3), 219-220. <http://www.krishisanskriti.org/jceet.html>
- Asfahani, A. M. (2021). Work-life balance and role conflict among academic staff in the Middle East: A review of literature. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 10(5), 82-88. <http://ijhe.sciedupress.com>
- Baiocco, R., Pistella, J., Gomez Plata, M., Morelli, M., Isolani, S., Zapata Zabala, M. E., Cabas Hoyos, K. P., Uribe Tirado, L. M., Ruiz Garcia, M. S., Barbosa, C. P., Zuffiano, A., Gerbino, M., Laghi, F., & Pastorelli, C. (2024). The influence of positivity and self-efficacy beliefs on family functioning among young adults in Italy and Colombia. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 15, 1411263. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1411263>
- Bajpai, D. (1994). Interrole conflict as related to marital role disturbance, interpersonal communication and mental health of female teachers (Unpublished master's thesis). University of Lucknow, Department of Psychology. <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/549909>
- Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, 84(2), 191-215.
- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Prentice-Hall.
- Bandura, A. (1994). Self-efficacy. In V. S. Ramachaudran (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of human behavior* (Vol. 4, pp. 71-81). New York: Academic Press. (Reprinted in H. Friedman [Ed.], *Encyclopedia of mental health*. San Diego: Academic Press, 1998).
- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The Exercise of Control*. New York, NY: Freeman.
- Benazi, B., Bashir, S., Zafar, R., Ahmed, M., & Farooq, K. (2021). A sociological analysis of the attitude of working females towards the joint family system: A case study of Quetta City. *Indian Journal of Economics and Business*, 20(2), 1779-1791. <http://www.ashwinanokha.com/IJEB.php>

- Bharvad, G. (2016). Professionally employed women and homemakers on self-esteem and self-efficacy. *International Journal of Social Impact*, 1(1). DOI: 10.25215/2455/0101003
- Bhatia, H., & Chadha, N. K. (1993). *Manual for Family Environment Scale* (pp. 1–2). Ankur Psychological Agency.
- Bhat, V., & Nischitha, S. (2022). Role of women in traditional families – A review. *Journal of Veda Samskrita Academy, Centenary Commemoration Volume, Volume I*, 381–384.
- Bhattacharya, S., & Pramanik, R. (2016). Multiple roles at conflict: Reflections from life career families in Western Odisha, India. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention*, 5(9), 11–18. <http://www.ijhssi.org>
- Baiocco, R., Pistella, J., Gomez Plata, M., Morelli, M., Isolani, S., Zapata Zabala, M. E., Cabas Hoyos, K. P., Uribe Tirado, L. M., Ruiz Garcia, M. S., Barbosa, C. P., Zuffianò, A., Gerbino, M., Laghi, F., & Pastorelli, C. (2024). The influence of positivity and self-efficacy beliefs on family functioning among young adults in Italy and Colombia. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 15, 1411263. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1411263>
- Burger, C. J., Raelin, J. A., Reisberg, R. M., Bailey, M. B., & Whitman, D. (2010). Self-efficacy in female and male undergraduate engineering students: Comparisons among four institutions. In *Proceedings of the ASEE Southeast Section Conference*.
- Chiş, R., Ignat, S., Roman, R., Demeter, E., Chiş, S., Rad, D., & Arion, F. H. (2024). The influence of educational level on self-efficacy, introversion, and agreeableness: An interpersonal difference analysis. *Revista Românească pentru Educaţie Multidimensională*, 16(2), 569–580. <https://doi.org/10.18662/rrem/16.2/872>
- Chaurasia, K., & Kumari, A. (2023). A study of psychological well-being and general self-efficacy among housewives and working women. *International Education & Research Journal (IERJ)*, 9(7), 46–48.
- Chen, L., & Lopez, M. (2023). The persistent inequality: Gender disparities in household labor among dual-earner couples. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 37(3), 412–428.
- Child D. (2006). *The Essentials of Factor Analysis*. 3rd ed. London: Continuum.
- Dibaji, S. M., Oreyzi, S. H. R., & Abedi, M. R. (2017). Occupation or home: Comparison of housewives and working women in the variables of stress, depression, and perception of quantitative, mental and emotional home demands. *Review of European Studies*, 9(2), 268–276. <https://doi.org/10.5539/res.v9n2p268>
- Dudu, J. E., Omuta, G. E. D., & Otto, I. (2016). The invisibility of housewives' contributions to families: Understanding the role of women in household upkeep in Delta State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research*, 4(3), 107–118. Available at <http://www.researchpublish.com>