

Self-Efficacy and Its Role in Motivating Higher Education Pursuit among Senior Staff in Higher Education Institutions in Northern Ghana.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the role of self-efficacy in motivating the pursuit of higher education among senior staff in Higher Education Institutions in Northern Ghana. A mixed-methods cross-sectional survey design was employed. A sample of 265 senior staff pursuing higher education was selected using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size determination table. Data on socio-demographic characteristics, self-efficacy, and higher education pursuit were collected. The respondents were 52.83% female and 47.17% male, with the majority aged 36–40 years and possessing 6–15 years of work experience. Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was used to analyze the relationship between self-efficacy and higher education pursuit. The study found an exceptionally strong positive correlation between self-efficacy and higher education pursuit ($\rho = 0.966$). Self-efficacy was identified as a foundation for academic confidence and goal setting, a psychological resource for managing challenges and sustaining persistence, and a key motivational factor driving continued engagement in education despite obstacles. The findings suggest that enhancing self-efficacy can significantly strengthen staff motivation to pursue higher education. It is recommended that institutions implement self-efficacy enhancement initiatives, such as mentoring programs and professional development workshops, to build staff confidence, improve goal-setting, and promote innovation.

Keywords: Self-efficacy, Higher Education Pursuit, Senior Staff, Tertiary Institutions, Northern Ghana

INTRODUCTION

Self-efficacy emerges as an important concept in the constantly changing and uncertain world, especially within education (Nohut & Balaban, 2022). Self-efficacy is the belief that one can execute a task and attain goals (Zhang, Cui, Zhang, Saravathy, & Anusha, 2019; Sahabuddin, 2018; Buenaventura-Vera, 2017; Yu & Chen, 2016; Densberger, 2014; Konaklı, 2015; Kickul & D'Intino, 2005; Mensah & Lebbaeus, 2013). This implies a person's judgment about his/her abilities to produce specified performance levels and exert control over life-changing events. In light of this, Afriyie et al. (2020) opined that self-efficacy is a person's ability to execute a particular task. According to Afriyie et al. (2020), a person's self-efficacy will determine how much effort and persistence he/she will put into a given task. Bankole et al. (2023) indicated that people will put more effort into achieving goals if they believe they will succeed. Self-efficacy is recognized as a dominant behaviour determinant (Lee et al., 2018). Bandura's study (1986) explained self-efficacy as a person's assessment of his/her ability to take actions, accomplish tasks, and reach goals under different situations.

Tertiary institution employees with high self-efficacy often work harder to overcome their tasks, while those with low self-efficacy give up on challenges (Bankole et al. 2023). Miao, Qian, and Ma (2017) emphasized that high self-efficacy employees envisage task success. Globally, higher education institutions encourage students'

self-efficacy to align with the principles of a knowledge-based economy and innovative research (Kivinen & Nurmi, 2014). It is in this light that Celik (2013) stated that a person’s innovativeness and a sense of self-efficacy are basic experiences required for effective work or studies.

However, there is little or no research that has concurrently taken into consideration, self-efficacy, and senior staff pursuit of higher education in tertiary education institutions. This study attempts to scientifically investigate the link between these factors and the higher academic pursuit of tertiary institutions' senior staff. By exploring the correlations and interactions between these concepts, the study can offer practical implications for tertiary education institutions and senior staff as to how to bring about positive interference in achieving personal goals and improving work tasks.

The Concept of Self-Efficacy

To guarantee higher education achievement (dependent variable) in tertiary education pursuits by senior staff employees of tertiary education institutions in Northern Ghana, the study concentrated on two particular independent variables, as shown in Figure 1. Self-efficacy was the mediating variable chosen for the study. The proposed conceptual framework of the study consists of constructs, namely, higher education, innovation, self-efficacy, and academic success. In the literature on academic performance, higher education, and self-efficacy play a vital role in influencing tertiary education pursuits. Accordingly, it is important to study higher education, and the role of self-efficacy on senior staff employees’ knowledge acquisition and personal growth. The conceptual framework reflects the influence of higher education, and self-efficacy on the academic success or performance of senior staff employees in tertiary education institutions in Northern Ghana.

Figure 1 explains the process through which employees (senior staff employees) of tertiary education institutions set goals for studies and achieve success in their higher education pursuits. The relationship between these variables results in employees' growth through studies. From this framework, senior staff employees of tertiary education institutions’ academic pursuits are affected by their innovation and higher education factors, coupled with their self-efficacy. Factors in higher education institutions include norms and explicit and implicit stereotypes surrounding senior staff employees in tertiary education institutions.

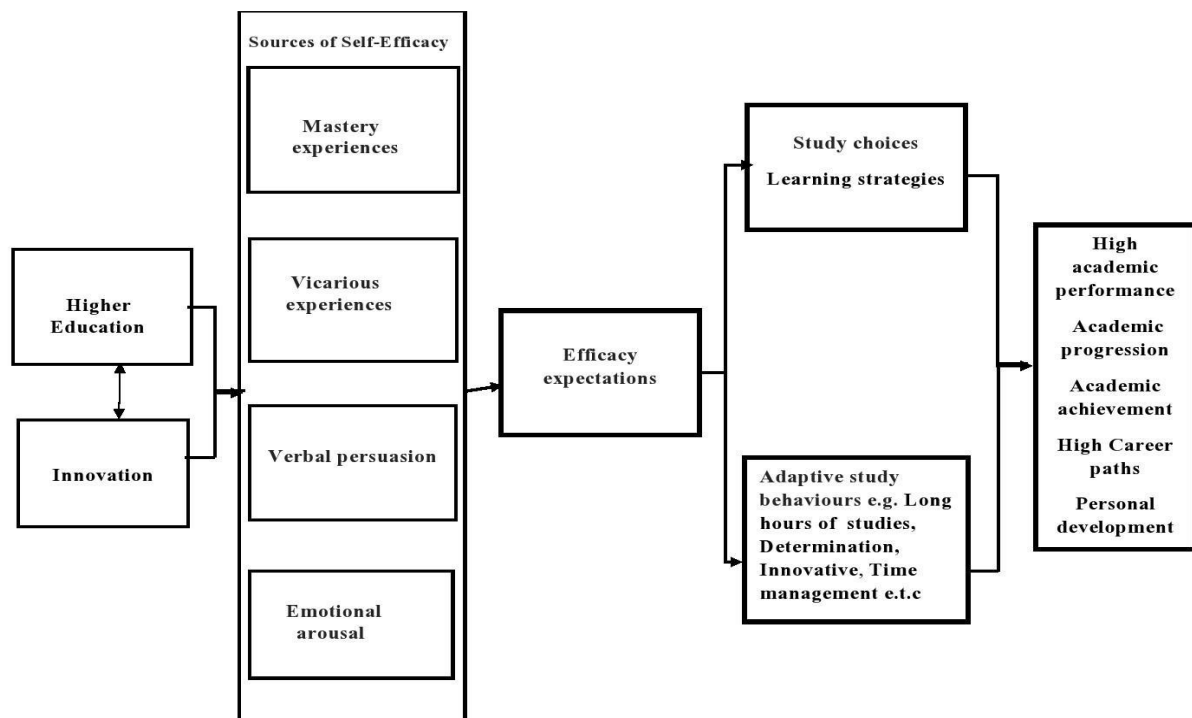


Figure 1: Variables of Senior Staff employees’ pursuit of Higher Education.

Source: Adapted from Yasinian (2019, p 52).

Empirical Reviews

Self-Efficacy and Sources of Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is an employee's self-confidence in his or her ability to perform and finish a task (Dullas 2018). Self-efficacy is a belief employees possess to achieve academic performance and confront problems and tasks they encounter (Karwowski & Koufman 2017). Employees' self-efficacy beliefs are influenced by their level of self-confidence, the amount of energy they use in learning, and the academic goals they set for themselves (Demir, 2018). Self-efficacy encourages employees to continue improving (Bankole et. al., 2023). Chen (2020) revealed that self-efficacy mechanisms consist of selection, cognition, motivation, and emotional processes as behavioural and environmental decisions are influenced by self-efficacy (Bankole et. al., 2023). Self-efficacy facilitates the correlations between personal willpower, productive behaviour, and academic effort, which all contribute meaningfully to studies and performance (Phan et. al., 2020). According to the OECD (2020), self-efficacy beliefs protect employees from stress and increase satisfaction and performance.

Self-efficacy theory suggests that people obtain information about their self-efficacy from four main sources: mastery experiences (actual performances), vicarious experiences (model observation of others), verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal (physiological states) (Bandura 1977; Pintrich & Schunk 2002).

Mastery experience is the most influential source of self-efficacy because one can practice and learn from an activity directly and accurately (Bandura 1977; Palmer 2006). Mastery experience enhances intrinsic interest in a new task which leads to more self-efficacy, satisfaction, and resilience (Bandura 1982) and when self-efficacy is built through mastery experiences, intermittent failures do not have much influence on one's sense of efficacy (Bandura, 1986) but reinforces self-efficacy and enable self-motivation with hard work (Bandura, 1977). After all, mastery experience stimulates resilience and determination by teaching that success is achieved through an endeavour and continuous striving (Bandura, 1994) since when mastery of activity is gained, people generalize their positive experience to other situations, which affects their future performance (Bandura, 1977). According to Bandura (1986, 1994), a person needs to constantly work out activities and succeed to gain mastery which in turn leads to a sense of efficacy. In a study, Bandura and Jourden (1991) discovered that there is a relationship between mastery experience and a sense of efficacy as mastery experience is the most effective means of enhancing self-efficacy (Bandura 1977, 1982, 1986).

Vicarious experience plays a key role in the development of self-efficacy as the observation of role models aimed at imitating performance. (Bandura, 1977). According to Bandura (1986), observing people in comparable situations succeeding in their tasks raises expectations and enforces the efficacious perception that success is possible for the observer since observing simulations contributes to the probability and control of a situation(s) (Bandura 1982). Role models help observers realize that, despite challenges arising in undertaking a task, challenges are predictable, and people can be prepared to handle them efficiently (Bandura 1982). Role models also help observers to understand that situations are manageable if they learn specific techniques in handling them, implying that role models play a key role in increasing people's self-efficacy to perform duties that appear to exceed their abilities, as people execute tasks successfully within their enhanced range of perceived self-efficacy and avoid those that exceed their perceived coping capabilities (Bandura 1982). The impact of vicarious experience, according to Bandura (1986, 1994), is employed through a comparison process, so observers need to consider the level of similarity between themselves and their role models because observers become more confident that they can succeed. After all, their role models in similar situations or performances succeeded. Employees' experiences and perceptions of their results and the performance of their colleagues, the influence they receive from the social context, and how they try out physically and emotionally change their self-efficacy beliefs (Zientek, Fong, & Phelps 2019).

Verbal persuasion as a source of self-efficacy proposes that people's competencies are increased through verbal encouragement and constructive feedback they receive (Bandura 1977; Bong and Skaalvik 2003). Given this, Matoti et. al. (2013) suggested that effective persuaders must cultivate employees' beliefs in their capabilities while at the same time ensuring that the perceived success is attainable because when employees are faced with obstacles, verbal persuasions boost their self-efficacy, leading them to try hard enough to succeed; since self-doubts are overcome by verbal persuasions (Adjei, 2018). Individuals convinced to believe in their abilities are

more likely to sustain their effort and master their tasks thereby improving their self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986) as positive feedback improves performance while negative criticism infuses disbelief in abilities, and leads people to avoid challenging activities (Bandura, 1993).

Emotional arousal is a source of self-efficacy which states that high levels of stress and anxiety are detrimental to self-efficacy because these emotional disorders manipulate people's judgment about their sense of efficacy by attributing the stress to their dysfunction (Bandura 1977, 1986). According to Bandura (1993), stress and anxiety affect self-efficacy, and self-efficacy envisages peoples' psychological well-being because the relationship between psychological well-being and self-efficacy is mutual. A decrease in emotional arousal is an effective way to overcome avoidance behaviour (Bandura, 1977) because if emotional arousal decreases, self-efficacy becomes higher (Bandura, 1982) and people with high self-efficacy who believe they can exercise control over their lives show less stress and anxiety than those who have lower levels of self-efficacy (Bandura 1993; van Dinther et. al. 2010). Bandura's (1977) four sources of self-efficacy – mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal are all relevant in academic settings. Self-efficacy in the learning process, especially in the pursuit of higher education among senior staff of tertiary education institutions, has to be promoted, and individuals are provided with opportunities to learn mastery, observe role models they can emulate, participate in discussions that offer positive feedback, and learn in an emotionally safe environment.

The Role of Self-Efficacy in the Pursuit of Higher Education

Self-efficacy beliefs influence employees' thoughts and feelings of calmness and challenges in the face of difficult situations (Fakhrou & Habib 2022). Self-efficacy varies according to the area of demands made on the individual (Cheng et. al., 2023). This implies that in academic settings, it is academic self-efficacy that needs to be considered. Academic self-efficacy beliefs are those that are focused on academic domains (Cheng et. al. 2023). Academic self-efficacy is defined as an employee's expectation of his/her ability to perform tasks successfully and it is measured by the score that an employee attains after responding to the items of the academic self-efficacy scale (Fakhrou & Habib 2021; Cheng et. al. 2023). Academic self-efficacy is one of the dominant factors that affect the determination and academic achievement of a university employee (Fakhrou & Habib 2022). Academic achievement is the realization of educational goals (Aziz 2019; Hodges 2018). An employee's self-efficacy belief to produce success is a predictor of academic achievement (Al-Sheeb, Hamouda & Abdella 2019; Huang 2013) because employees with higher levels of self-efficacy set goals, spend extra time and effort in tasks, take up challenging activities, regulate their studies, which influences performance (Casanova, Cervero, Núñez, Bernardo & Almeida 2018b; Costa, Araújo & Almeida 2016; Santos et. al. 2019; Tinto 2017). Qatawi and Abd Al-Karim (2015) discovered a relationship between self-efficacy and academic achievement and previous studies by Martins and dos Santos (2019) established a correlation between academic self-efficacy and performance, academic self-efficacy and academic engagement (Costa et. al. 2016) with engagement as the variable that predicts performance (Kahu & Nelson 2018) and self-efficacy in higher education and learning strategies (Martins & dos Santos 2019). Also, a previous study by Zajacova et. al. (2005) indicated a positive correlation between academic self-efficacy and academic performance. Similarly, academic self-efficacy is positively correlated with the number of hours spent studying, grades scored, and determination (Cheng et. al. 2023). The reason for these correlations, according to a previous study by Adjei (2018), is that employees with a strong sense of academic self-efficacy can manage and plan their time more effectively, are better at monitoring their efforts, and can use their knowledge and skills more efficiently. Furthermore, employees with a strong sense of academic self-efficacy view difficult tasks as challenges rather than threats and can regain their confidence quicker after setbacks or failures because there is a quick bounce from setbacks and difficulty when self-efficacy is firmly established as self-efficacious employees are categorized by perseverance through adversity (Adjei, 2018). According to Adjei (2018), employees with high levels of academic self-efficacy attribute their failures to insufficient preparation that can be improved in the future. Fior, Polydoro, Pelissoni, Dantas, Martins, & Almeida (2022) indicated that self-efficacy has a direct impact on performance and on domains that help explain employees' academic strength and their intention to continue their studies at the university and Nejati, Hassani, and Sahrapour (2014) stated that employees' performance affects their self-efficacy and self-efficacy in turn influence employees' performance. Self-efficacy in academic performance plays a significant role in academic progression (Yokoyama, 2019) because self-efficacy influences learning

outcomes (Cussó-Calabuig et. al. 2018; Alqurashi 2016) and a correlation exists between learning and self-efficacy (Zhang, Ardasheva, Egbert, & Ullrich-French 2019).

The impact of self-efficacy on the school decision-making of employees has attracted the attention of researchers because of the impact of education on employees' lives (Yasinian, 2019). Self-efficacy may impact employees in their pursuit of higher education (Beyer 2014; Sweida & Reichard 2013). The concept of self-efficacy is explained as an employee's belief in his or her capacity to perform a task (Dullas 2018). Roffeei, Yusop, and Kamarulzaman (2018) defined self-efficacy as an employee's perception of his/her ability to explore and envision the development of ideas to solve problems and to adopt and adapt suitable strategies when making decisions. De Jong, Mainhard, van Tartwijk, Veldman, Verloop, & Wubbels. (2014) defined self-efficacy as envisaging what effort to be put into an activity. Zhang et al. (2019); Sahabuddin (2018); Buenaventura-Vera (2017); Yu and Chen (2016) and Densberger (2014) defined self-efficacy as a person's beliefs that he or she is capable of achieving goals through his or her abilities to control events. Zhang et. al. (2017) defined self-efficacy as a person's perception of his or her ability to reach a goal. From the definitions, the expression "belief"–self-efficacy is not about ability, but rather, belief in ability linked to a particular task–in this circumstance, the ability to innovate (Buenaventura-Vera, 2017). A belief can influence the choices and decisions of persons and push them to or restrain them from innovating (Sahabuddin, 2018; Densberger, 2014). Self-efficacy is a part of the social cognitive theory that emphasises that self-perception about his/her ability is key to motivating a person to perform his/her task successfully (Abun Javier, Gamponia, Magallanes, & Julian, 2022). According to Gallagher (2012), the theory suggests that a successful performance is not achieved by knowledge and skills alone but also by self-efficacy which is the belief in a person's capacity to attain the outcomes. Bandura (1977) propounded the term "self-efficacy" and defined it as a person's set of beliefs that determine how well he or she can execute a plan of action in possible situations. This implies an employee's belief in his or her ability to perform a task in a given situation such as the pursuit of higher education. According to Abun et al. (2022), self-efficacy helps a person to rise above challenges and accomplish goals; and as Bandura (1997) puts it, belief in one's ability to perform a task is important to sustain the willpower to achieve the goal. The self-efficacy theory according to Abun et al. (2022) has been used in different fields including psychology, education, health, sports, and management. Hayat et.al. (2020) found that self-efficacy influences academic performance among employees. A previous study by Peters et.al. (2019) revealed that self-efficacy affects health-related quality of life. Sivrikaya (2018) established that self-efficacy affects the performance of sports skills of football players. Robertson and Sadri (2005) found that managerial self-efficacy significantly affects the managerial performance of managers. Siddiqui's (2015) study found that there is a significant correlation between self-efficacy and psychological well-being. It is evident from the above studies that self-efficacy plays a vital role in any kind of activity or task a person takes on. It is in light of this, Abun et al (2022) opined that believing in one's ability to perform a given task affects one's behaviour in performing the task and the determination to achieve the goal(s). Self-efficacy influences employees' ability to express and innovate, especially in the academic environment (Stone and Hess 2020) as a determinant of motivation (Van et. al., 2011). Self-efficacy encourages employees to set better goals for learning and performance (Kane et al., 2013). Reis and Holinger (2021) believe that women have strong innovation abilities and self-efficacy as a result of their love and passion for work or studies. It is given this, Reis (2021) indicated women with great innovation abilities have strong self-efficacy and always desire to develop their intellect, innovation ability, leadership ability, and focus on hard work. Self-efficacy contributes to the performance of an employee by influencing his or her feelings, attitudes, behaviours, and decisions (Nohut & Balaban, 2022) as expectations for a task done, the desire to solve problems encountered, the amount of effort to be shown and the willpower to struggle in the face of difficulties are all factors that determine the level of self-efficacy (Newman et al., 2019). According to Bandura (1977), individuals with a high perception of self-efficacy are patient when seeking solutions to problems and have higher cognitive success levels; the reason, Nohut & Balaban (2022) stated that self-efficacy should not be evaluated as a mere belief in one's capacity, but as one's internal source of motivation that changes existing capacity into a performance that creates value addition with effort in line with a goal. A previous study by De Clercq et al. (2018) has shown a significant and positive relationship between self-efficacy and performance. Guripek, Cemal, and Serdar (2021) stated that self-efficacy is a feature found in persons with innovation and indicated that the relationship between self-efficacy and innovation is usually explained through risk-taking; and since innovation involves acting and being different from the current situation, it also includes risk (Nohut & Balaban, 2022). It is given this, Turgut and Sokmen (2018) indicated that self-efficacy comes to the fore in situations of uncertainty– where innovation is high and

the person needs to be self-confident for success. According to Ozkan (2017), the perception of self-efficacy has a positive and significant relationship with innovation as Firin (2020) found that employees with high innovation are willing to generate new ideas, put these ideas into practice, and have a strong belief that they can achieve their goals. Self-efficacy is considered one of the under-researched psychological variables that can influence employees' success at the tertiary level and their subsequent career paths (Pajares 1996; Creed, Patton & Prideaux, 2006).

Higher Education Pursuance and Employee Self-Efficacy

Employee self-efficacy helps stimulate intention and impacts the pursuit of higher education (Jahani, Babazadeh, Haghghi, & Cheraghian, 2018). Employee self-efficacy is a self-belief or self-assurance and personal decisions of their capacity to accomplish higher education pursuance or attain specific objectives (Cheng, 2023). Employees' academic self-efficacy emerges as a significant indicator of higher education achievement, whereby the employees with high levels of academic self-efficacy have the belief that they possess the capacity to overcome academic challenges in their higher education pursuance (Cheng, 2023). Employees with higher education have stronger intentions and a higher probability of success especially when intrinsic values, such as self-efficacy, are inspired (Baidi & Suyatno, 2018). Higher Education plays an important role in the labour market, given the positive effect higher education has on economic growth (Corso 2020; Jahani, Babazadeh, Haghghi, & Cheraghian 2018; Kritskaya & Kritskaya 2016) as it prepares employees to enter the labour force (Corso 2020).

An employee's self-efficacy describes the belief in his or her ability and capacity to complete a higher education pursuit (Afriyie, Melyoki & Nchimbi 2020). Employee self-efficacy affects his/her cognitive functioning (Afriyie, Melyoki & Nchimbi 2020) and can be described as a construct associated with success in his/her higher education pursuance (Parreira, dos Santos Mónico, de Carvalho, and da Silva 2018). Employees experience success if they do not feel anxious about higher education pursuance (Parreira, dos Santos Mónico, de Carvalho, & da Silva 2018) because employees take action when they hold high efficacy beliefs that make their effort appear useful (Afriyie, Melyoki & Nchimbi 2020). Employees' actions; –higher education pursuance are motivated by their beliefs (Zaki, Ali, Bakar, & Sarwar 2019). Employee self-efficacy is related to a desirable feature such as motivation to learn and resilience which is a factor that comprises the psychological mechanisms managing motivation (Ramalho, Carvalho, Parreira, Leite, Mónico, & Salgueiro-Oliveira, 2022). Employees with high self-efficacy have habits of learning in them (Puteri, Putri, Dewi, Hidayat, Syamsudin, and Khoeriah 2021), and are open to new approaches and can adopt new strategies during teaching and learning to positively affect their performance in higher education pursuance (Bwenvu, 2023). Challenging as higher education pursuance might be, employees with self-efficacy are driven to complete it (Darmiany & Nurmawanti, 2020) by making determined efforts to avoid laziness and when their sensitivity fails, they quickly correct the problem and reorganises their life (Eshun, Dabone, Annan-Brew, Mahama, & Danquah 2023). Luo, Chen, Yu, and Zhang (2023) revealed a correlation between employee self-efficacy and higher education pursuance in their academic achievement and level of learning engagement. According to Afriyie, Melyoki, and Nchimbi (2020), there is a direct effect of self-efficacy on employees' academic success and the meditational role of self-efficacy on achievement motivation and learning strategies. A previous study by Zaki, Ali, Bakar, and Sarwar (2019) revealed a significant relationship between employees' self-efficacy and performance in higher education pursuits. Garba, Munira, and Nobaya (2017) equally established a connection between employee self-efficacy and academic performance in higher education pursuits. Employee self-efficacy has been held as a strong predictor in higher education pursuance and performance (Kraut, Chandler & Hertenstein 2016). Similarly, a previous study by Lin and Papageorgiou (2016) revealed that employees' self-efficacy affects their academic achievements.

METHODS

The study adopted a mixed research design using a cross-sectional survey, which examined the role of self-efficacy in higher education pursuits among senior staff in tertiary institutions in northern Ghana. Cross-sectional survey design enables the researcher to obtain both quantitative and qualitative data, providing an in-depth knowledge of the area of interest. A cross-sectional survey design represents an observational research method

that simultaneously gathers data from the population to study variable relationships (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Using the sample size determination table of Krejcie and Morgan (1970), the sample size for this study was 265 respondents, or 32.8% of the total population, from the target population of 807, as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1: Sample Size Determination

Senior Staff Employees by Institutions	Target Population	Sample Size	Percentage (%)
University for Development Studies			
Senior Staff	581	191	72
Tamale Technical University			
Senior Staff	143	47	18
Bagabaga College of Education			
Senior Staff	83	27	10
Total	807	265	100

Source: Abdallah (2024)

This study also employed a purposive sampling strategy, which selected senior staff who had attempted to pursue a higher education qualification and were employed from a tertiary education institution (TEI) in the Tamale Metropolis in the Northern Region. This is to ensure homogeneity of the samples, which in turn will reduce the sample bias (Zikmund, Babin, Carr, & Griffin, 2010). A random sampling technique was used to scientifically select the samples for the study. The data was collected using interviews and questionnaires. The interviews were conducted with the help of an interviewer’s guide. While the questionnaires were designed using a five-point Likert scale

The collected data were cleaned, coded, and analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. The quantitative data from the survey were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, including correlation analysis, to identify the relationship between innovation and higher education. The qualitative data from the interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify key themes and patterns, and were reported through verbatim quotes from the respondents.

The collected data were entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for statistical analyses (Kirkpatrick & Feeney, 2012). Frequencies and percentages were calculated for all variables to determine how often values for the variables (self-efficacy, innovation, and higher education) occurred (Creswell, 2012). Descriptive statistics (percentages) were used to summarize all demographic variables. The quantitative data collected from the survey were analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics, such as correlation analysis, to identify the relationships among innovation, self-efficacy, and higher education (Hair et al., 2019).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The study examined 265 demographic characteristics of senior staff members in tertiary institutions pursuing higher education, as shown in Table 2. The gender distribution showed a relatively balanced representation, with 140 (52.83%) of the respondents being female and 125 (47.17%) males, indicating a fairly equitable gender distribution in the study. Age distribution analysis revealed that most respondents were mature professionals, with the largest concentration in the 36-40 age bracket, comprising 98 respondents (36.98%), followed closely by those aged 41 and above at 87 respondents (32.83%). The data indicated that respondents had work experience. The largest group comprised those with 6-10 years of experience (89 respondents, 33.58%), followed by those with 11-15 years of experience (77 respondents, 29.06%).

Table 2: Showing the Demographics of the Respondents

ITEM	CATEGORY	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
SEX	MALE	125	47.17

	FEMALE	140	52.83
	TOTAL	265	100
AGE	18-20	4	1.51
	21-25	8	3.01
	26-30	23	8.68
	31-35	45	16.98
	36-40	98	36.98
	41+	87	32.83
	TOTAL	265	100
EXPERIENCE	1-5	55	20.75
	6-10	89	33.58
	11-15	77	29.06
	16+	44	16.60
	TOTAL	265	100
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	DIPLOMA/HND	45	16.98
	DEGREE	210	79.25
	MASTERS	10	3.77
	TOTAL	265	100

Source: Field Survey (2024).

These demographic characteristics present a picture of a mature, experienced, and well-educated workforce actively seeking to enhance their academic qualifications, which could have significant implications for institutional development in the tertiary education sector. The balanced gender representation and predominance of mid-career professionals with substantial work experience suggest a robust sample for examining the relationship between higher education pursuit and self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy and higher education pursuance among senior staff in tertiary education institutions

The study reveals strong evidence of high self-efficacy levels among senior staff pursuing higher education in tertiary institutions, with responses consistently showing positive self-perceptions across multiple dimensions of academic capability and resilience as presented in Table 3. This analysis examines nine key statements that collectively paint a picture of how self-efficacy manifests in their educational pursuits.

Table 3: Shows the level of Agreement of respondents on the statement of the role of Self-Efficacy

Statements	Strongly Agree (1)		Agree (2)		Neutral (3)		Disagree (4)		Strongly Disagree (5)	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
I can motivate myself to pursue higher education and learn new skills.	77	29.06	103	38.87	47	17.74	21	7.92	17	6.42
I can achieve most of the academic goals I have set for myself.	97	36.60	154	58.11	3	1.13	9	3.40	2	0.75
When faced with difficult assignments, I am certain I will accomplish them.	123	46.42	52	19.62	44	16.60	21	7.92	25	9.43
I am confident I can perform excellently in my higher education pursuit.	156	58.87	61	23.02	18	6.79	12	4.53	13	4.91

I take risks and try to get over challenges in my higher education pursuit.	108	40.75	91	34.34	30	11.32	20	7.55	16	6.04
I can deal with challenges that come up in my studies.	98	36.98	110	41.51	20	7.55	21	7.92	16	6.04
If I cannot do an assignment the first time, I keep trying until I do it.	92	34.72	31	11.70	79	29.81	20	7.55	43	16.23
If an assignment seems difficult, I become more determined to do it.	67	25.28	54	20.38	63	23.77	41	15.47	40	15.09
I feel confident about my ability to pursue higher education.	185	69.81	35	13.21	20	7.55	15	5.66	5	1.89

Source: Field Survey (2024)

Regarding general academic confidence, Table 3 reveals an overwhelming 83.02% of respondents (69.81% strongly agree, 13.21% agree) expressed confidence in their ability to pursue higher education. This high level of self-assurance is further reinforced by 81.89% of respondents (58.87% strongly agree, 23.02% agree), indicating confidence in their ability to perform excellently in their higher education pursuit. These strong positive responses suggest that senior staff members who pursued or are pursuing higher education generally develop high levels of self-belief, thereby enhancing their innovative behavior.

The data also demonstrates strong goal setting and achievement orientation, with 94.71% of respondents (36.60% strongly agree, 58.11% agree) believing they can achieve their self-set academic goals. This is complemented by 67.93% (29.06% strongly agree, 38.87% agree), indicating they can self-motivate to pursue higher education and learn new skills, suggesting a robust internal drive for academic advancement.

In terms of resilience and challenge management, 78.49% of respondents (36.98% strongly agree, 41.51% agree) expressed confidence in dealing with study-related challenges. Similarly, 75.09% (40.75% strongly agree, 34.34% agree) indicated willingness to take risks and overcome challenges in their educational pursuit. This high level of perceived resilience is particularly noteworthy as it suggests that self-efficacy plays a crucial role in helping senior staff navigate the difficulties inherent in pursuing higher education.

However, the data also reveals some interesting nuances in how self-efficacy manifests in specific situations. When faced with difficult assignments, 66.04% (46.42% strongly agree, 19.62% agree) expressed certainty in their ability to accomplish them. The persistence aspect shows some variation, with 46.42% (34.72% strongly agree, 11.70% agree) indicating they would keep trying until they succeed with challenging assignments, while 45.66% (25.28% Strongly agree, 20.38% agree) reported increased determination when facing difficult tasks.

These findings suggest that self-efficacy plays a multifaceted role in higher education among senior staff. First, it serves as a foundation for academic confidence and goal setting. Second, it acts as a psychological resource for managing challenges and maintaining persistence. Third, it appears to function as a motivational factor that drives continued engagement with educational pursuits despite obstacles.

The consistently high positive responses across most dimensions indicate that self-efficacy is a crucial psychological resource that enables senior staff to engage effectively with higher education. However, the variations in responses related to persistence and challenge management suggest that while general academic self-efficacy is high, there might be room for strengthening specific aspects of task-related self-efficacy, particularly in handling difficult assignments and maintaining persistence in challenging situations.

This analysis suggests that institutions might benefit from developing programs that not only leverage existing high levels of general academic self-efficacy but also focus on strengthening task-specific self-efficacy, particularly in areas where the data show more varied responses. Such targeted interventions could potentially enhance the overall effectiveness of senior staff's higher education pursuits.

The study's findings on the multifaceted role of self-efficacy in higher education pursuit align with Parreira *et al.* (2018) research describing self-efficacy as a construct associated with success in higher education pursuance. The consistently high positive responses across most dimensions support Luo *et al.* (2023) revelation of a correlation between employee self-efficacy and higher education pursuance in academic achievement and learning engagement.

The variations in responses related to persistence and challenge management suggest potential areas for institutional intervention, supporting Kraut *et al.* (2016) assertion that employee self-efficacy is a strong predictor in higher education pursuance and performance. This finding also aligns with Lin and Papageorgiou's (2016) research showing that employees' self-efficacy affects their academic achievements, suggesting the need for institutional support in enhancing task-specific self-efficacy among senior staff.

These findings contribute to the growing body of literature on self-efficacy in higher education, particularly in the context of senior staff in tertiary institutions. The results suggest that while general academic self-efficacy is strong, there may be opportunities to enhance specific aspects of task-related self-efficacy through targeted institutional support and development programs.

5.3 Correlation between the Self-Efficacy and Pursuit of higher education among senior staff in tertiary education institutions

The study employed Spearman's rank correlation coefficient to examine the relationship between the pursuit of higher education and self-efficacy among senior staff in tertiary education institutions, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Showing Spearman’s Correlation between Pursuit Higher Education and Self-Efficacy

Spearman’s rho		Higher Education	Self-Efficacy
Higher Education	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	0.966
	Sig. (2-tailed)	-	0.001
	N	265	265
Self-Efficacy	Correlation Coefficient	0.966	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001	-
	N	265	265

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 4 reveals a remarkably strong positive correlation between these two variables, with a correlation coefficient (rs) of 0.966. This exceptionally high positive correlation coefficient, which approaches the maximum possible value of 1.000, indicates an almost perfect relationship between self-efficacy and the pursuit of higher education among the studied population.

The statistical significance of this correlation is confirmed by the p-value (Sig. 2-tailed) of 0.001, which is well below the conventional threshold of 0.05. This low p-value provides strong evidence that there is a positive correlation, suggesting that the observed relationship between self-efficacy and higher education pursuit is highly unlikely to have occurred by chance. The analysis was conducted with a robust sample size of 265 respondents (N=265), lending additional credibility to the findings.

This strong positive correlation suggests that higher levels of self-efficacy are consistently associated with greater engagement in higher education pursuits among senior staff, and vice versa. The near-perfect correlation coefficient of 0.966 implies that as self-efficacy increases, there is a corresponding increase in the pursuit of higher education, with this relationship holding true across almost the entire sample. This finding is particularly noteworthy as it suggests that self-efficacy may be a crucial psychological factor in determining senior staff members' engagement with and success in higher education pursuits.

The strength and significance of this correlation have important implications for tertiary institutions and their staff development programs. The findings suggest that interventions aimed at enhancing self-efficacy among

senior staff could potentially lead to increased participation in and commitment to higher education. Conversely, the pursuit of higher education might also contribute to strengthening self-efficacy, creating a positive feedback loop that benefits both the individual and the institution.

These results provide compelling evidence that self-efficacy and the pursuit of higher education are intrinsically linked among senior staff in tertiary institutions, with the relationship being both strong and statistically significant. This understanding could be valuable for institutional planning and policy development, particularly in designing programs that support both self-efficacy enhancement and higher education pursuit among senior staff members.

The near-perfect correlation discovered in this study ($r_s = 0.966$) provides stronger empirical evidence than previously reported in some studies. For instance, while Zaki *et al.* (2019) found a significant relationship between employees' self-efficacy and performance in higher education pursuance, the current study demonstrates an even more robust connection. Similarly, while Garba *et al.* (2017) established a connection between employee self-efficacy and academic performance in higher education pursuance, the current study quantifies this relationship with a remarkably high correlation coefficient.

The findings provide strong statistical support for Kraut *et al.* (2016) assertion that employee self-efficacy is a strong predictor in higher education pursuance and performance. The robust sample size ($N=265$) and high statistical significance ($p = 0.001$) lend credibility to Lin and Papageorgiou's (2016) conclusion that employees' self-efficacy significantly affects their academic achievements.

This strong correlation also supports Yokoyama (2019) assertion that self-efficacy in academic performance plays a significant role in academic progression. The findings align with Cussó-Calabuig *et al.* (2018) and Alqurashi's (2016) research showing that self-efficacy influences learning outcomes, while also providing statistical evidence for Zhang *et al.* (2019) observation of a correlation between learning and self-efficacy.

The implications of these findings support Casanova *et al.* (2018b) research showing that employees with higher levels of self-efficacy set goals, spend extra time and effort in tasks, take up challenging activities, and regulate their studies, which influences performance. The strong positive correlation also reinforces Costa *et al.* (2016) and Santos *et al.* (2019) findings regarding the relationship between academic self-efficacy and engagement.

These results have important practical implications for tertiary institutions. The strong correlation suggests that institutions might benefit from implementing programs that enhance self-efficacy among senior staff, as suggested by Adjei (2018), who found that employees with a strong sense of academic self-efficacy can manage and plan their time more effectively. The findings also support Stone and Hess (2020) conclusion that self-efficacy influences employees' ability to express and innovate, especially in the academic environment.

The remarkably strong correlation discovered in this study adds significant weight to the existing body of literature on the relationship between self-efficacy and higher education pursuit. It provides compelling statistical evidence that these constructions are more strongly related than previously documented, suggesting that institutional policies and programs should perhaps place even greater emphasis on developing and supporting self-efficacy among senior staff pursuing higher education.

Recommendation

These findings have important implications for both theory and practice in higher education administration and organizational development, therefore.

Institutions of Higher Learning should establish a self-efficacy enhancement initiative incorporating mentoring programs and professional development workshops, considering the exceptional correlation between self-efficacy and higher education pursuit ($p = 0.966$). This would strengthen staff confidence and goal-setting abilities, ultimately improving innovative outcomes.

CONCLUSION

The significant finding is that there is an exceptionally strong positive correlation between self-efficacy and the pursuit of higher education ($\rho = 0.966$, $p < 0.001$), coupled with the moderate to strong correlation between innovation and higher education pursuit ($\rho = 0.605$, $p < 0.041$). These correlations suggest that higher education strengthens self-efficacy, which in turn catalyzes innovative outcomes. This is further supported by the high levels of self-efficacy observed among senior staff, with 83.02% expressing confidence in their academic abilities and 94.71% demonstrating strong goal-setting orientation.

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