Linking Cognitive Style and Organizational Behavior Through Self-Efficacy: A Theoretical Investigation

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ABSTRACT

This literature review explores the multifaceted role of self-efficacy in leadership, employee behavior, and organizational performance, drawing primarily on Bandura's (1997) social learning theory. Two types of self-efficacy—high and low—are discussed in the context of leadership effectiveness. Leaders with high self-efficacy exhibit goal orientation, resilience, and positive communication, which significantly enhance team motivation and organizational success. In contrast, low self-efficacy is associated with avoidance of responsibility, task delegation, and negative attitudes, often leading to reduced employee performance. The review also highlights the mediating role of self-efficacy in the relationship between organizational factors and innovative work behavior (IWB). Empirical evidence suggests that self-efficacy significantly influences innovative intentions and actions, with autonomy, past success, and learning experiences contributing to its development. Cognitive style, particularly analytic versus intuitive, further shapes self-efficacy across stages of entrepreneurial behavior. Moreover, leadership styles and organizational climates that support autonomy and creativity strengthen employees' self-belief and motivation. The review concludes that self-efficacy is not only a predictor of leadership success but also a vital mediator influencing job satisfaction, innovation, and organizational citizenship behavior. The findings underscore the importance of fostering self-efficacy through supportive leadership, experience, and reflective practices, while cautioning against authoritarian approaches that diminish employee confidence and engagement. This review contributes to the understanding of how self-efficacy shapes individual and organizational outcomes within dynamic work environments.

Keywords: Self-Efficacy, Leadership Behavior, Innovative Work Behavior (IWB), Social Learning Theory, Organizational Performance and Cognitive Style.

INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY

Innovation is widely acknowledged as an essential component for maintaining organizational competitiveness, adaptability, and long-term sustainability in today's rapidly evolving business environment (Mansoor, Wahab, & Jahan, 2021). While traditional models have historically viewed innovation as a function of R&D activity (Romer, 1990; Almulhim, 2020), recent perspectives increasingly recognize it as a product of human creativity and tacit knowledge embedded within individuals (Smith, 2002; Riaz, Xu, & Hussain, 2019). This human-centric

view of innovation is particularly relevant in labor-intensive industries like textiles, which play a significant role in national economies, including China (Salas-Vallina, Pozo, & Fernandez-Guerrero, 2020; Poh & Zi, 2005).

Despite its economic relevance, the Chinese textile industry remains underrepresented in academic research related to innovative work behavior (IWB), particularly concerning individual-level determinants of innovation such as self-efficacy. Self-efficacy, or the belief in one's capabilities to perform and succeed in specific tasks, has emerged as a pivotal factor that enables workers to initiate, persist with, and contribute to innovative activities (Bandura, 1997; Yasir et al., 2021). This study positions self-efficacy as central part and reviews all necessary concepts, models and business literature realted to self efficacy. While innovation studies have expanded globally, their contextual application within developing economies like China remains limited (Javed et al., 2017; Mitta, 2023; Liu et al., 2023). More critically, although many scholars have categorized the determinants of innovation across individual, organizational, and environmental levels (Damanpour, Szabat & Evan, 1989), individual-level drivers—such as self-efficacy—are increasingly found to be the most impactful in fostering innovation (Chourasiya, Pandey, & Malviya, 2023).

Moreover, the knowledge workers within the textile sector—engineers, designers, managers—remain underexplored in innovation research, despite being central to operational improvement and creative outcomes (Pesce et al., 2020; Cai, Khan, & Egorova, 2024). Most prior research on creativity focuses on conventional creative professions, leaving a substantial gap in understanding how self-efficacy empowers innovation in industrial contexts like textiles. Finally, there is a pressing need for more contextualized innovation research that considers industry-specific challenges and human capital contributions (Chan et al., 2024; Song et al., 2020; Nuryanto, Basrowi, & Quraysin, 2024). By investigating the role of self-efficacy in the Chinese textile sector, this study contributes to bridging theoretical gaps and offering practical insights into developing understanding as well as some predictors of self efficacy.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

In today's knowledge-driven and innovation-intensive economy, understanding self-efficacy—the belief in one's ability to succeed in specific situations—has become increasingly critical for both individuals and organizations. As the global workforce transitions from routine manual labor to cognitively demanding and creative tasks, employees with high self-efficacy are more likely to embrace innovation, adapt to change, and persist in solving complex problems (Liu, Liu, & Xu, 2024). In organizational contexts, self-efficacy has been linked to improved job performance (Shahzad, Farrukh, & Yasmin, 2020), proactive behavior, and higher engagement, all of which are essential traits in dynamic and competitive industries (Yasir et al., 2021). Furthermore, in sectors undergoing digital transformation and global competition—such as manufacturing, services, and textiles—self-efficacy plays a mediating role between leadership, organizational environment, and innovative work behavior (Ahmed, Hu, Arslan, & Huang, 2024). Understanding and nurturing self-efficacy not only contributes to individual development but also enhances organizational agility and long-term economic resilience (Cai, Khan, & Egorova, 2024). As the future of work increasingly values autonomy, creativity, and continuous learning, self-efficacy emerges as a foundational psychological resource for sustainable economic progress.

DEFINITION, SOURCES, AND ORGANIZATIONAL RELEVANCE

Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to execute behaviors needed to achieve specific outcomes (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1997). It is a psychological resource that governs how people approach challenges, learn new tasks, and regulate their motivation (Wood & Bandura, 1989). Self-efficacy influences performance (Shahzad, I. A., et al.,2018) through various factors including confidence, emotional stability, and social interactions (Lunenburg, 2011; Snyder & Lopez, 2007).

Sources and Factors Influencing Self-Efficacy: Self-efficacy significantly impacts organizational success (Lunenburg, 2011). Bandura (1997) identified four main sources influencing a leader's self-efficacy; past performance, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional cues. Past performance, considered the most important source, shows that employees who successfully complete job-related tasks tend to have higher self-efficacy (Bandura, 2004). Vicarious experience boosts confidence by observing others' successes, especially when the model is perceived as similar (Bandura & Locke, 2003; Niu, Willoughby, & Zhou, 2021). Verbal persuasion involves convincing individuals of their capability to succeed, often through the Pygmalion effect, where belief influences outcomes (Bandura, 2004; Zheng, Yin, & Liu, 2021). Emotional cues or psychological feedback affect confidence by shaping individuals' perceptions of their emotional and physical states during tasks (Bandura, 1997; Bandura & Locke, 2003).

Nilankant and Ramnarayan (2006) highlight four factors leading to low self-efficacy at work: poor human relations, absence of reward systems, organizational factors, and unclear job nature. Poor interpersonal relationships reduce collaboration and motivation, causing feelings of incompetence (Bandura, 2007). Lack of adequate rewards demotivates employees, lowering job satisfaction and efficacy (Nilankant & Ramnarayan, 2006). Organizational elements such as rigid structures, communication barriers, and management styles disrupt employee confidence (Bandura & Locke, 2003; Zhou, Li, & Zhang, 2021). Unclear job roles create conflicts and avoidance behavior, further diminishing self-efficacy (Robins & Judge, 2013; Bandura, 2007).

Additional factors influencing self-efficacy include experience, reflection, role modeling, employee motivation, mastery of challenging tasks, confidence-building, and autonomy. Experience shapes leadership ability and effectiveness (Nilankant & Ramnarayan, 2006; Airola et al., 2014). Reflection helps leaders assess and improve their efficacy. Leaders serving as role models inspire followers to emulate positive behaviors (Kouzes & Posner, 2013; Yukl, 2010). Motivating employees and involving them in difficult tasks strengthens their self-belief and performance (Brown & Keep, 2005; Nilankant & Ramnarayan, 2006). Leaders should foster trust, allow decision-making freedom, and create supportive environments to enhance team efficacy and satisfaction (Owens & Valesky, 2011; Chu, Liu, Guo, & Zhang, 2021).

Ultimately, a leader's ability to engage these components influences subordinates' perceptions of their own efficacy. Leaders with high self-efficacy demonstrate motivation and enthusiasm, while those with low self-efficacy exhibit hesitation and negativity toward tasks.
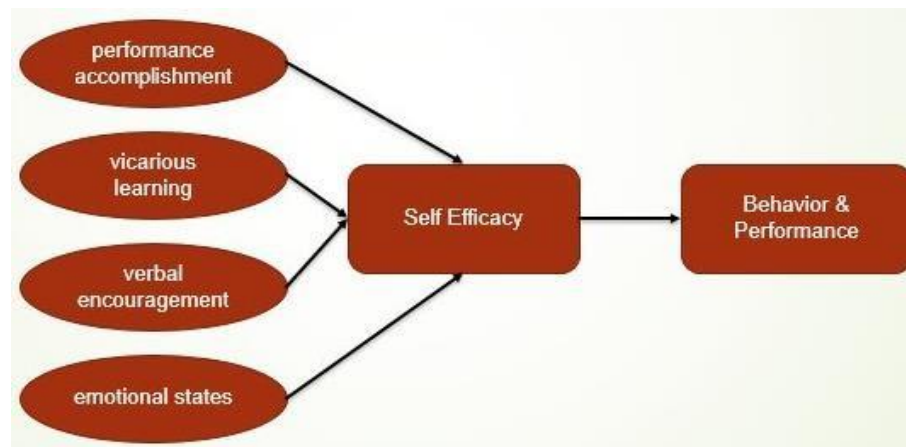
Figure1: Sources of Self-Efficacy (Source: Lunenburg,2011, p.2)

BUSINESS LITERATURE ON SELF-EFFICACY

Self-efficacy generally divides into two main types: high and low. Leaders with high self-efficacy demonstrate responsibility, goal orientation, and resourcefulness in achieving organizational objectives. They encourage subordinates and communicate changes positively, motivating their teams to provide maximum effort (Lunenburg, 2011; Liu et al., 2021). Such leaders face challenges proactively without negative attitudes (Bandura, 1997). Conversely, leaders with low self-efficacy tend to resist difficult tasks, doubting their ability to perform, often delegating challenging assignments to others and expressing dissatisfaction (Bandura, 1997; Bandura & Locke, 2003). Both high and low self-efficacy impact employee satisfaction and organizational success.
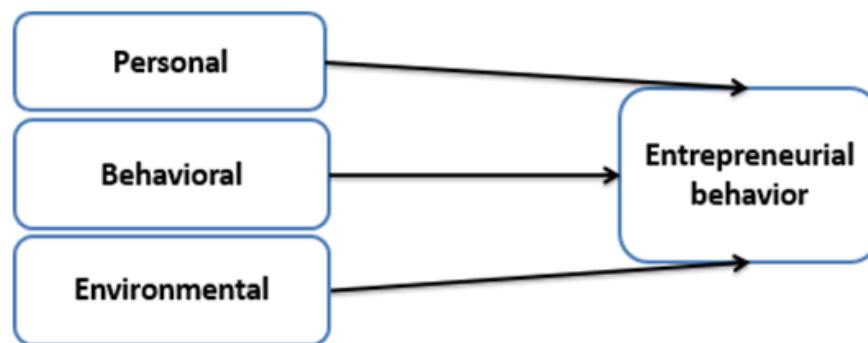

Figure 2: Triadic Reciprocity of Self-Efficacy (Source: Bandura, 1997, p.11

The mediating role of self-efficacy is crucial in linking organizational factors and innovative work behavior (IWB), although the relationship is underexplored. Studies suggest management can enhance individual behavior by fostering an organizational climate that increases perceived feasibility and desirability of innovative actions (Shepherd & Krueger, 2002; Brazeal et al., 2008). Self-efficacy strongly relates to innovative intentions and behaviors (DeNoble et al., 1999; Chen et al., 1998). Research by Zhao et al. (2005) and Kickul and Krueger (2005) highlights self-efficacy as a mediator between personal motivations and entrepreneurial intentions, with cognitive style influencing how self-efficacy impacts various stages of entrepreneurial activity (Kickul et al., 2019; Barsbosa et al., 2007).

MEASUREMENT OF SELF EFFICACY (SE) IN BUSINESS LITERATURE

In business research, self-efficacy is commonly measured using structured survey items that capture an individual's confidence in performing specific job-related tasks. The measurement typically includes statements rated on a Likert scale (e.g., 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), reflecting the respondent's perceived competence in areas such as strategic planning, change management, leadership, motivation, and goal achievement. For example, items such as "I am very good in developing new strategies for my department" and "When I try to change the behavior of an employee, I am confident to succeed" (Mair, 2005) are used to assess managerial self-efficacy. These items focus on task-specific capabilities within a business context, ensuring the measurement aligns with real-world responsibilities and challenges faced by organizational leaders. Additionally, job satisfaction and self-efficacy mediate the effects of organizational climate on innovative work behavior, as shown among IT professionals (Wong et al., 2006). Leadership style and behaviors substantially influence employee performance (Shahzad, I. A., et al.,2018) and organizational outcomes (Locke & Latham, 2002; Huang, 2021). Leaders' self-efficacy affects their commitment and employees' motivation, shaping organizational citizenship behavior (Bandura & Locke, 2003; Lunenburg, 2011).

Social learning theory explains how individuals develop self-efficacy based on past experiences and environment (Walters, 2019; Šimunović & Babarović, 2020). High self-efficacy encourages engagement in activities and persistence, leading to greater success (Nauman, Zheng, & Basit, 2021). However, authoritarian leadership can undermine employee self-efficacy by restricting autonomy and decision-making, reducing job satisfaction and motivation (De Clercq, Fatima & Jahanzeb, 2021; BenYishay & Mobarak, 2019). Employees under such leadership often lack control over tasks and fail to recognize their contributions, negatively affecting their confidence and work attitude (De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008; Hu Yu et al., 2018).
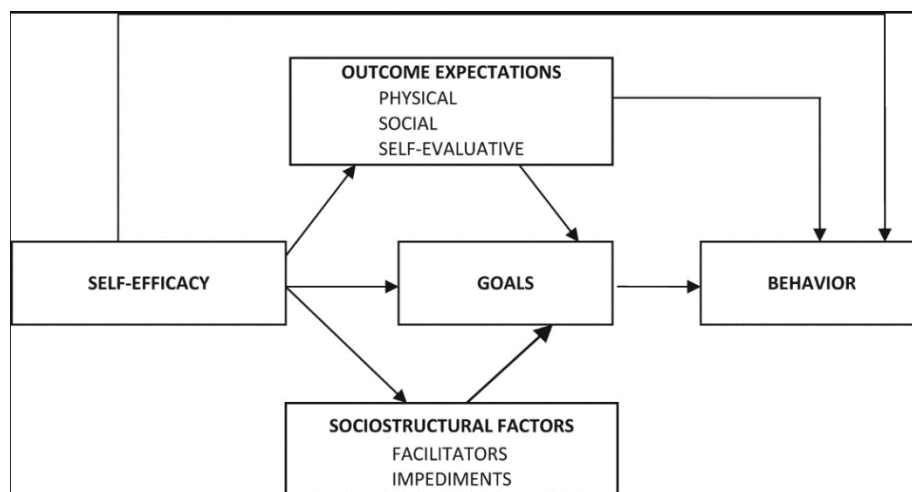

Figure 3: Characteristics of high and low self-efficacy (Source: Bandura 1997, p.5).

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL CAPITAL AND SELF-EFFICACY

Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to effectively perform tasks and achieve desired outcomes in various life domains. It plays a pivotal role in shaping behavior, influencing one's decisions, motivation, and persistence in facing challenges. In parallel, social capital represents the value derived from social relationships and networks, encompassing

elements such as trust, norms, and shared resources. The interplay between self-efficacy and social capital has gained growing attention in contemporary organizational and behavioral research. While traditionally studied in macroeconomic contexts—such as promoting innovation (Akcomak & Weel, 2009), economic development (Zak & Knack, 2001), and financial growth (Guiso, Sapienza, & Zingales, 2004)—social capital has increasingly been linked to individual-level psychological outcomes, particularly self-efficacy (Yang & Hu, 2013). Social capital, in forms like professional networks, learning communities, and peer associations, fosters knowledge exchange, mutual support, and confidence-building mechanisms, all of which contribute to enhanced self-efficacy among employees (Hanum et al., 2015).

In the textile sector, for example, employees often benefit from informal learning networks, digital forums, and professional associations that function as vital sources of social capital. These platforms help share information, encourage collaboration, and reduce uncertainty—thereby strengthening self-beliefs and workplace competence (Grootaert et al., 2004). According to Bandura's social cognitive theory (1986, 2015), such environments provide mastery experiences and vicarious learning that reinforce individuals' belief in their capabilities. Empirical studies support the notion that social capital is positively correlated with self-efficacy, both in subjective evaluations and objective performance (Bian & Qiu, 2000; Zhang & Chen, 2012;). Further, the literature indicates that self-efficacy may mediate the relationship between social capital and outcomes like work behavior, competence, and engagement (Myers et al., 2020; Chan, 2018; Manganelli et al., 2015). This mediating role suggests that while social capital provides external resources and support, it is the internalization of those resources—through self-efficacy—that drives behavior change and performance (Shahzad, & Bhatti, 2008).

In addition, theoretical frameworks such as the theory of planned behavior (Krampen, 2000) and response-outcome expectations (Bandura, 2000) highlight how belief in one's ability links intentions to action. Studies further affirm that civic and organizational participation is more likely when individuals feel competent, which is strongly influenced by their social environment and sense of belonging (Gastil et al., 2008). Overall, understanding the interconnection between social capital and self-efficacy is vital for enhancing workforce capability, promoting innovation, and improving organizational outcomes. However, despite promising insights, much of the existing research remains limited to country-level or sector-specific analysis, indicating a need for more granular, contextual investigations—especially in dynamic industries such as textiles.

Relationship Between LMX and Self-Efficacy: In the modern knowledge economy, fostering self-efficacy among employees has become essential for sustaining organizational competitiveness and workforce resilience (Chatain & Meyer-Doyle, 2017; Zaman et al., 2019). Particularly in Eastern cultures where hierarchical norms are prevalent, leadership style significantly influences employee motivation, well-being, and performance outcomes (De Clercq, Fatima, & Jahanzeb, 2021). Among various leadership frameworks, Leader-Member Exchange (LMX)—which captures the quality of interactions and exchanges between leaders and subordinates—plays a crucial role in shaping employees' psychological resources, including their self-efficacy (Mufti et al., 2020). Research suggests that positive LMX relationships, characterized by mutual trust, support, and communication, enhance employees' confidence in their abilities and encourage proactive behavior, creativity, and workplace engagement (Herrmann & Felfe, 2013;

Top, Akdere, & Tarcan, 2015; Huang et al., 2015). Conversely, authoritarian or autocratic leadership, still common in many Asian business cultures, may suppress employee voice and limit opportunities for self-development (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2018; Taşdelen-Karçkay & Bakalım, 2017), ultimately weakening self-efficacy and organizational commitment.

Despite growing empirical interest, there remains a lack of focused research on the direct relationship between LMX and self-efficacy, particularly in sectors like textile manufacturing in emerging economies such as China. Existing studies have mainly addressed the positive impacts of leadership but often ignore the psychological consequences of negative or controlling leadership styles (De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008). Moreover, the mediating or intervening role of self-efficacy in the link between LMX and innovative work behavior (IWB) is still underexplored. Self-efficacy, as defined by Bandura (2010), is an individual's belief in their capacity to achieve specific outcomes using their skills. This belief is shaped by multiple sources, including mastery experiences, observation of others (vicarious learning), verbal encouragement, and emotional arousal (Lunenburg, 2011). High levels of self-efficacy are associated with resilience, lower stress, and greater persistence in the face of obstacles (Krishnan & Krutikova, 2013; Wuepper & Lybbert, 2017).

Recent studies affirm that LMX not only influences how employees perceive leadership but also determines their internal motivational state, including their confidence to perform complex tasks (Zhang et al., 2020; Schwarzer & Luszczynska, 2008). Employees in high-quality LMX relationships tend to receive more support and feedback, which in turn enhances their belief in personal capability and readiness to innovate. Therefore, understanding this dynamic is particularly important in transitional economies where organizational structures are evolving, and human capital development is central to industrial growth. This study aims to address the gaps in existing literature by exploring how LMX affects self-efficacy, especially in the textile sector, and whether self-efficacy acts as a mediator in influencing innovative behaviors. The findings could offer theoretical contributions and practical guidance for leadership development in knowledge-intensive and labor-driven industries.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COGNITIVE STYLE AND SELF-EFFICACY

Self-efficacy, defined as an individual's belief in their ability to successfully perform tasks (Bandura, 2010), has been shown to directly impact behavioral intention and goal achievement (Hung & Wang, 2021). Within the domain of cognitive and entrepreneurial psychology, researchers have increasingly linked self-efficacy with innovative behavior. Prior studies, such as those by Zhao et al. (2005) and Verawati et al. (2021), have demonstrated the mediating role of self-efficacy in translating factors like entrepreneurial education, risk appetite, and experience into behavioral intentions. Cognitive style, or an individual's preferred way of processing information, plays a significant role in shaping self-efficacy. For instance, analytical thinkers may exhibit stronger self-regulatory capabilities in structured tasks, while intuitive individuals may excel in environments requiring creative flexibility (Kickul & Krueger, 2005; Yilmaz, 2021). Empirical findings suggest that differences in cognitive styles—measured by tools like the Cognitive Style Index (Allinson & Hayes, 2000)—can influence self-efficacy in tasks related to opportunity recognition, interpersonal management, and self-regulation (Barsbosa et al., 2007). Furthermore, cognitive preferences appear to impact perceived feasibility and intentions for action, particularly in entrepreneurship (Chuang, Yeh, & Lin,

2021). Studies by Armstrong & Hird (2009) and Zheng (2022) indicate that intuitive individuals in high-growth firms often report higher motivation and stronger self-beliefs than their analytical counterparts. These results highlight the importance of aligning organizational roles and tasks with employees' cognitive tendencies to maximize self-efficacy and behavioral performance.

Relationship Between Organizational Climate and Self-Efficacy: Organizational climate (OC)—the collective perception of workplace norms, support structures, and leadership behaviors—can significantly affect employees' willingness to take initiative and innovate (Tan et al., 2021; Jiang & Fu, 2021). While mature organizations may resist change and prefer structural rigidity (Cameron & Quinn, 2006), younger or more adaptive organizations often foster a climate that encourages risk-taking and experimentation (Deiss, 2004). A supportive climate for innovation creates an environment in which employees feel psychologically safe to engage in creative efforts (Martins & Terblanche, 2003; Hartmann, 2006). Research suggests that when organizations provide autonomy, constructive feedback, and learning opportunities, employees experience higher self-efficacy and are more likely to engage in innovation-related behaviors (Hassi, Rohlfer, & Jebsen, 2021; Ye, Liu, & Tan, 2021).

From a theoretical lens, Lewin's Field Theory (1951) emphasizes the interaction between individuals, their environment, and behavior. Applying this framework, organizational climate acts as a system-level variable that mediates the relationship between employees' internal motivations (like self-efficacy) and their external behavior (Robert & Vandenberghe, 2021; Wang & Jiang, 2021). A climate that signals support for creativity not only strengthens individual self-belief but also promotes experimentation by minimizing fear of failure (West & Wallace, 1991; Scott & Bruce, 1994). Furthermore, organizations that communicate a strong cultural endorsement of innovation tend to increase the perceived legitimacy of creative behavior, thereby enhancing self-efficacy among employees (Yuan & Woodman, 2010; Liu et al., 2021). Thus, fostering an innovation-friendly climate is essential for unlocking the potential of knowledge workers and driving sustainable organizational change.

CONCLUSION

This literature review underscores the pivotal role of self-efficacy in leadership effectiveness, employee performance, and overall organizational success. Grounded in Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1997), the findings suggest that self-efficacy significantly shapes how leaders perceive challenges, make decisions, and influence their teams. Leaders with strong self-efficacy are more confident, goal-driven, and solution-oriented, which positively impacts the motivation and performance of their subordinates. Conversely, leaders with low self-efficacy often avoid difficult tasks, show resistance to change, and may unintentionally discourage initiative among team members (Bandura & Locke, 2003; Liu et al., 2021). The review further highlights the mediating role of self-efficacy between organizational factors—such as autonomy, support, incentives, and a positive work environment—and innovative work behavior. Evidence from various empirical studies confirms that individuals with higher levels of self-efficacy are more likely to engage in creative thinking, take initiative, and contribute to innovation within their organizations (Zhao et al., 2005; Kickul & Krueger, 2005; Wong et al., 2006). Additionally, cognitive styles, particularly analytic versus intuitive, influence how individuals apply self-efficacy across different stages of decision-making and entrepreneurial

processes (Barsbosa et al., 2007; Kickul et al., 2019). The study also draws attention to the negative influence of authoritarian leadership, which often limits employee autonomy and recognition. Such environments can weaken employee confidence, reduce motivation, and diminish their sense of control over work outcomes (De Clercq, Fatima & Jahanzeb, 2021; Walters, 2019). On the other hand, empowering leadership styles that promote trust, independence, and employee development are more likely to enhance self-efficacy and, in turn, improve job satisfaction and citizenship behaviors (Nauman, Zheng, & Basit, 2021). In summary, self-efficacy is a critical psychological resource that supports effective leadership and drives innovation in organizations. Fostering self-efficacy through training, constructive feedback, experiential learning, and supportive leadership can lead to more resilient, motivated, and high-performing teams. Future research should continue to explore the development of self-efficacy in varying organizational cultures and settings to better understand its long-term impact on performance and innovation.

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