INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Volume: 8 Issue: 4 Review Article Dec., 2025

The Efficacy of Action: A Gender-Based Analysis of Self-Efficacy, Optimism, and Goal Commitment in Georgian Higher Education

Natalia Kharadze
Faculty of Economics and Business, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Tbilisi, Georgia.

Ekaterine Gulua
Faculty of Economics and Business, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Tbilisi, Georgia.

Keywords

Self-Efficacy,

Goal Commitment,

Gender Studies,

Personal Development,

Higher Education,

Georgia,

Optimism,

Student Success.

Abstract

This study investigates the role of key personal development constructs— self-efficacy and optimism—as predictors of academic and career goal commitment among master's students in Georgia. Focusing on the critical transition from higher education to the labor market, the research places a central emphasis on identifying and interpreting gender-based differences in these psychological assets. A quantitative, cross-sectional survey was administered to 452 master's students from three major universities in Tbilisi. The survey employed the General Self-Efficacy Scale, the Life Orientation Test-Revised, and a researcher-developed Goal Commitment scale. Independent samples t-tests revealed a significant gender gap in self- efficacy, with male students reporting higher levels than their female counterparts, although no differences were found in optimism or goal commitment. Multiple regression analysis confirmed that both self-efficacy (β = .451) and optimism (β = .219) are strong, independent predictors of goal commitment, explaining 32.4% of its variance. These findings highlight a "belief versus will" paradox among female students and underscore the need for Georgian universities to integrate targeted, efficacy-building interventions into their curricula to better prepare all graduates for future success.

I. Introduction

The landscape of the 21st-century global economy is defined by volatility, complexity, and intense competition. For graduates entering the labor market, a university degree is no longer a guaranteed passport to a successful career; it is merely the entry requirement (Moreno-García et al., 2021). The barriers that individuals must overcome—from technological disruption to systemic economic inequalities—are formidable. In this environment, success is determined not just by what an individual knows (technical skills) but by who they are (personal competencies). Psychological

constructs such as resilience, adaptability, proactivity, and effective self-management have become paramount for navigating professional life (Kharadze, 2008; Robles, 2012).

This shift has profound implications for higher education institutions (HEIs). Universities are increasingly recognizing that their responsibility extends beyond the transmission of academic knowledge. To produce truly successful graduates, HEIs must also act as incubators for personal development, equipping students with the psychological tools necessary to navigate uncertainty and achieve their goals (Kharadze, 2012). This systematic cultivation of personal skills is essential for solving the persistent gap between academic qualification and real-world career attainment.

This challenge is particularly acute when viewed through the lens of gender. Globally, despite decades of progress in closing educational attainment gaps, significant gender disparities persist in career progression, leadership roles, and entrepreneurial activity (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Huang et al., 2022). These gaps are often rooted not in a lack of ability or knowledge, but in deep-seated psychosocial factors, including differences in self-perception, risk-taking, and confidence. As Popescu and Ionele (2023) note in their study of Romanian students, gender differences in constructs like self-efficacy can have a profound impact on entrepreneurial intentions and, by extension, career trajectories.

The nation of Georgia provides a salient and under-researched case study. As a country navigating a complex post-Soviet transition, it is grappling with high expectations for economic growth while facing structural challenges in the labor market. Georgian universities are central to this national project, tasked with developing the next generation of leaders and professionals. Foundational research in this context has already identified "peculiarities" in how Georgian students manage critical resources like time and personal organization (Kharadze & Gulua, 2017). For instance, studies on MA students revealed specific gender-based differences in time management approaches and self-management habits (Kharadze & Gulua, 2016).

However, while this prior work has effectively identified behavioral patterns, the underlying psychological drivers of these behaviors remain less clear. Effective work is not just a function of time management; it is a function of belief. It is driven by an individual's core conviction that their actions can produce a desired outcome (self-efficacy) and their general expectation that outcomes will be positive (optimism). Therefore, this paper seeks to build upon previous foundational studies by moving from a descriptive analysis of self-management "peculiarities" to a robust explanatory model. It aims to investigate the specific, measurable psychological constructs of self-efficacy and dispositional optimism as primary drivers of academic and career goal commitment among Georgian master's students.

The central research questions guiding this study are:

Are there significant gender-based differences in self-reported levels of general self-efficacy and dispositional optimism among master's students in Georgia?

To what extent do self-efficacy and optimism predict a student's commitment to their academic and career goals?

By answering these questions, this study intends to provide empirical evidence to guide Georgian HEIs. If self-efficacy and optimism are key predictors of success, and if gender disparities in these constructs exist, then universities have a clear, actionable mandate: to design and implement targeted personal development interventions that build these critical psychological assets. This study argues that such interventions are no

longer a "soft" or "extra-curricular" luxury but an essential component of a modern, effective university education that truly prepares all students for success.

II. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Personal Development as a University Mandate

Personal development is a broad construct encompassing the skills, attitudes, and awareness that allow an individual to realize their potential. In an academic context, it refers to activities and processes that improve self-awareness, enhance practical skills, and build human capital beyond the formal syllabus (López-Angulo & Sira, 2023). It represents the bridge between aspiration and action. While often relegated to "student affairs" or counseling centers, a growing body of literature argues that personal development is a core academic concern. López-Angulo and Sira (2023) found a direct, positive relationship between personal development initiatives and academic performance, suggesting that students who are more self-aware and better at self-regulation are also more effective learners. This aligns with earlier findings that managerial competencies, such as effective self-organization, are critical for student success (Kharadze, 2012). The challenge for HEIs is to move personal development from a passive concept to an active, integrated part of the curriculum.

Self-Efficacy: The Engine of Goal Commitment

Perhaps the most critical component of personal development in the context of goal achievement is self-efficacy. Rooted in Bandura's (1997) Social Cognitive Theory, self- efficacy is defined as "the belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments." It is not about one's actual skills, but about one's belief in their ability to use those skills. It is the answer to the question, "Can I do this?" This belief is the primary engine of human action. Individuals with high self-efficacy are more likely to set challenging goals, commit to them, and persist in the face of failure. Individuals with low self-efficacy are more likely to avoid challenging tasks, give up quickly when faced with obstacles, and attribute failure to a lack of innate ability (Zajenkowski et al., 2021).

The link between self-efficacy and goal commitment is well-established. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2020) found that academic self-efficacy was a robust predictor of university students' goal commitment, which in turn predicted academic achievement. Self- efficacy functions as a vital prerequisite; a student will not fully commit to a difficult academic or career goal if they do not, at a fundamental level, believe they are capable of achieving it. Recent research by Al-Shammari (2021) further reinforces this, showing that academic self-efficacy directly influences students' engagement and persistence, key components of goal commitment. Therefore, self-efficacy is the cognitive mechanism that translates aspiration into sustained, effective work.

Optimism and Attributional Style

If self-efficacy is the engine, optimism is the fuel. Dispositional optimism, as defined by Scheier and Carver (1985), is a generalized expectancy that good, rather than bad, outcomes will occur. It is a fundamental aspect of one's attributional style. Optimists tend to attribute their successes to internal, stable, and global causes (e.g., "I succeeded because I am smart and hardworking"). They attribute their failures to external, unstable, and specific causes (e.g., "I failed this one test because the room was

noisy"). Pessimists do the reverse, attributing success to luck and failure to innate shortcomings (Seligman, 1998). This pessimistic attributional style is corrosive to motivation and resilience.

This ability to "overcome pessimism" is a core tenet of personal development. Zajenkowski et al. (2021) found that optimism, alongside self-efficacy and grit, was a key factor in explaining why some intelligent students succeed while others fail. Optimism provides the resilience needed to interpret failure as a temporary setback rather than a permanent indictment of one's ability, allowing the individual to remain committed to their long-term goals. A study by Tetzner et al. (2020) on university students found that optimism was positively associated with adaptive coping strategies and negatively associated with academic burnout, further highlighting its role in sustaining long-term commitment.

The Critical Lens of Gender

The relationship between these constructs—self-efficacy, optimism, and goal commitment—is not uniform across the population. A large body of research demonstrates persistent and significant gender differences, which may explain, in part, the disparities we see in the labor market. The most consistent finding is a "confidence gap." Huang et al. (2022), in a large-scale study of Chinese university students, found that male students reported significantly higher levels of academic and career-related self-efficacy, even when controlling for actual academic performance. This suggests that female students, despite having equal or greater skills, may be more hesitant to set ambitious goals or pursue competitive tasks.

This disparity is particularly stark in fields like entrepreneurship and STEM. Popescu and Ionele (2023), in their study of Romanian students, found that while gender directly influenced entrepreneurial intentions, this relationship was almost entirely mediated by self-efficacy. Similarly, a meta-analysis by Ceci et al. (2014) pointed to psychosocial factors, including self-concept and societal stereotypes, as key contributors to women's underrepresentation in math-intensive fields. These studies demonstrate a clear psychological barrier where societal stereotypes and a lack of role models may be suppressing the self-beliefs of female students, limiting their career aspirations. This suggests that simply "teaching skills" is not enough; interventions must also target and build the underlying self-efficacy beliefs.

The Georgian Context and Research Gaps

Research on the personal development of Georgian students has laid a critical foundation for this study. This work has established that personal development is a key factor in preparing students for the modern labor market's demands (Kharadze, 2008) and that HEIs play a vital role in this process (Kharadze, 2012). More specifically, studies by Kharadze and Gulua (2016; 2017) have identified tangible "peculiarities" in how master's students in Georgia manage their time and themselves, noting specific gender-based differences in time management practices. This earlier research provides the crucial behavioral context: we know that male and female students exhibit different patterns of self-management.

However, the psychological drivers of these differences remain an open question. Are these differences in time management (a behavior) a result of different skills, or are

they a symptom of a deeper, psychological difference? For example, is a student's procrastination a result of poor planning, or is it a result of low self-efficacy about the task, which leads to avoidance? This study proposes to bridge this gap. We hypothesize that the behavioral "peculiarities" in self-management observed by Kharadze and Gulua (2017) are, in large part, driven by underlying differences in the psychological constructs of self-efficacy and optimism. By focusing on these root causes, we can move from simply describing student behavior to explaining what drives it. This allows for the design of more effective university interventions that go beyond simple "time management workshops" and instead focus on building the core self-beliefs that empower students to act effectively and commit to their goals.

III. Methodology

Research Design and Sample

This study utilized a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to examine the relationships between gender, self-efficacy, optimism, and goal commitment. This design is appropriate for capturing a snapshot of these variables and exploring their associations within a specific population at a single point in time. The target population was master's degree students from major accredited universities in Tbilisi, Georgia. This population was chosen because MA students are at a critical nexus, simultaneously managing advanced academic workloads while actively preparing for high-level entry into the labor market, making goal commitment and personal efficacy particularly salient. A purposive sampling strategy was employed. Three large universities in Tbilisi—one public and two private—were selected to ensure a diverse sample representing different institutional cultures and a broad range of academic disciplines. This strategy enhances the external validity of the findings within the context of Georgian urban higher education. A total of 500 paper-based questionnaires were distributed to students during class breaks with the permission of course instructors. This in- person administration method was chosen to maximize the response rate and allow for immediate clarification of any questions. From these, 452 completed and valid questionnaires were returned, representing a strong response rate of 90.4%.

Sample Characteristics

The demographic profile of the sample (N=452) is detailed in Table 1. The sample was majority female (60.2%), which accurately reflects the current demographics of master's-level education in Georgia. The majority of respondents (68.1%) were 22- 25 years old, aligning with the typical age for MA studies. A significant portion of the students (42.0%) were employed either full-time or part-time, highlighting the dual pressures of work and study that characterize this population.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Respondent Demographics (N=452)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	272	60.2%
	Male	180	39.8%
Age	21 or younger	35	7.7%
	22 - 25 years	308	68.1%
	26 - 30 years	88	19.5%
	31 or older	21	4.7%

Employment	Not Employed	262	58.0%
	Employed (Part-time/Full-time)	190	42.0%
Field of Study	Social Sciences & Humanities	163	36.1%
	Business & Economics	198	43.8%
	Law	55	12.2%
	Other	36	7.9%

Note: Bold indicates the modal (most frequent) category.

Instrumentation and Measures

The questionnaire was constructed using established, validated psychometric scales, translated into Georgian and back-translated into English by bilingual researchers to ensure semantic equivalence. All multi-item scales were measured using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree), with total scores calculated by summing the relevant items.

General Self-Efficacy (GSE)

The 10-item General Self-Efficacy Scale developed by Schwarzer and Jerusalem (1995) was used. This scale is highly validated cross- culturally and measures a general sense of perceived competence to cope with a wide variety of demanding or novel situations. A sample item is, "I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough." The scale demonstrated excellent internal consistency in this study (Cronbach's $\alpha = .91$).

Dispositional Optimism

The Life Orientation Test-Revised (LOT-R) by Scheier, Carver, and Bridges (1994) was used. This 10-item scale (including 4 filler items) is the most widely used measure of dispositional optimism versus pessimism. A sample optimism item is, "In uncertain times, I usually expect the best." The three negatively worded items were reverse-scored before summing. The scale showed good reliability in this sample (Cronbach's $\alpha = .84$).

Academic and Career Goal Commitment

As no single scale perfectly captured the construct for this specific population, a 6-item scale was developed based on the principles of goal-setting theory (Locke & Latham, 2002). The scale was designed to measure the degree to which students felt dedicated to their stated academic and future career objectives. Sample items include, "I am strongly committed to achieving the career goals I have set for myself," and "I am determined to succeed in my master's program, even when it is difficult." The scale was pilot-tested with a small group of graduate students for clarity and relevance. This new scale demonstrated high internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .88$).

Demographic Variables

Gender (Female, Male), Age (categorical), and Employment Status (Employed, Not Employed) were collected as control and descriptive variables.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 28. First, data were screened for missing values and outliers. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, standard deviations) were then calculated for all variables. Second, to address Research Question

1, a series of independent samples t-tests were performed to identify significant differences between male and female students on the mean scores of self- efficacy, optimism, and goal commitment. Levene's test for equality of variances was checked for each t-test. Third, to address Research Question 2, a hierarchical multiple linear regression was conducted. Goal commitment was entered as the dependent variable. Before running the regression, assumptions of linearity, normality of residuals, and homoscedasticity were checked. Multicollinearity was assessed using Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) scores. Demographic variables (Age, Employment) were entered in Block 1 as controls, and self-efficacy and optimism were entered in Block 2 to assess their unique predictive power on goal commitment.

IV. Results

Descriptive and Comparative Analysis by Gender

Descriptive statistics and the independent samples t-test results for the primary variables, disaggregated by gender, are presented in Table 2. On average, students reported moderately high levels of self-efficacy (M = 30.19), optimism (M = 22.15), and goal commitment (M = 21.04). However, the comparative analysis revealed a key statistically significant difference related to our first research question.

A significant difference was found in General Self-Efficacy (t(450) = -2.84, p = .005), with male students (M = 31.22, SD = 5.11) reporting significantly higher self-efficacy than female students (M = 29.51, SD = 4.89). This finding supports the "confidence gap" hypothesis identified in the literature (e.g., Huang et al., 2022).

Conversely, no statistically significant difference was found between genders for dispositional optimism (t(450) = 0.52, p = .603) or for the primary outcome of goal commitment (t(450) = -1.13, p = .259). This is a nuanced and important finding: while male and female students are equally optimistic and equally committed to their goals, female students are operating with a significantly lower level of self-belief in their ability to execute the actions required to meet those goals.

Table 2: Comparative Analysis of Key Variables by Gender (Mean, SD, t-test)

Variable (Scale Range)	Gender	N	Mean (M)	Std. Dev. (SD)	t-value	p-value (2-tailed)
General Self-Efficacy (10-50)	Female	272	29.51	4.89	-2.84	.005
	Male	180	31.22	5.11		
Dispositional Optimism (6-30)	Female	272	22.24	4.12	0.52	.603
	Male	180	22.01	4.29		
Goal Commitment (6-30)	Female	272	20.89	3.90	-1.13	.259
	Male	180	21.27	4.02		

Note: p-values < .05 are marked in bold.

Predicting Goal Commitment

To address Research Question 2, a hierarchical multiple regression was conducted to determine the extent to which self-efficacy and optimism predict academic and career goal commitment. The results are presented in Table 3. Preliminary checks confirmed that the assumptions of the regression model were met. VIF scores for self-efficacy (1.21) and optimism (1.21) were well below the threshold of 10, indicating no issues with multicollinearity.

The control variables (Age, Employment) entered in Step 1 were not significant predictors and explained a negligible amount of variance (R^2 = .009). Step 2, which added self-efficacy and optimism, resulted in a large and statistically significant increase in explanatory power. The full model was significant ($F(4, 447) = 55.81$, $p < .001$) and explained 32.4% of the variance in goal commitment (Adjusted R^2 = .318).

Both personal development constructs emerged as strong, independent, and positive predictors.

General Self-Efficacy was the strongest predictor by a substantial margin (β = .451, p < .001). This indicates that a one standard deviation increase in a student's self-efficacy score is associated with a 0.451 standard deviation increase in their goal commitment, holding all other variables constant. This powerfully supports the hypothesis that belief in one's capabilities is the primary psychological driver of goal pursuit.

Dispositional Optimism was also a strong and significant predictor (β = .219, p < .001). This finding shows that, independent of their self-efficacy, students who generally expect positive outcomes are more likely to remain committed to their goals.

These results confirm that effective goal pursuit is not just a matter of behavior, but a direct function of these two core psychological beliefs.

Note: β = Standardized Beta Coefficient. ***p < .001.

Table 3: Hierarchical Multiple Regression Predicting Goal Commitment (N=452)

Variable	Model 1 (Controls)	Model 2 (Full Model)
	β	β
Step 1: Control Variables		
Age	.071	.033
Employment Status (1=Employed)	.055	-.018
Step 2: Predictor Variables		
General Self-Efficacy		.451***
Dispositional Optimism		.219***
Model Statistics		
R^2	.009	.324
Adjusted R^2	.004	.318

Table 3: Hierarchical Multiple Regression Predicting Goal Commitment (N=452)

Variable	Model 1 (Controls)	Model 2 (Full Model)
	β	β
ΔR^2	.009	.315***
F-statistic	1.99	55.81***

V. Discussion

The findings of this study provide strong empirical support for the central thesis: in the demanding environment of higher education, personal development constructs are not "soft skills" but critical predictors of success. The results offer a nuanced picture of the challenges and opportunities facing Georgian master's students, particularly through the lens of gender.

The "Belief vs. Will" Paradox in Gender

The most significant finding of this study is the divergence in the gender analysis. We found that male and female students in our sample possess equal levels of

dispositional optimism and equal levels of commitment to their goals. This is a positive and important finding, as it suggests that, on average, female students are just as ambitious and hopeful for their futures as their male counterparts. There is no evidence of a deficit in "will" or aspiration.

However, this hopeful picture is complicated by the statistically significant "confidence gap" in self-efficacy. Female students, while just as committed to the goal, reported significantly lower belief in their ability to execute the actions necessary to achieve it. This is a classic "belief vs. will" paradox. The will to succeed is present, but the core belief in one's personal efficacy is weaker. This finding strongly echoes the international literature. It aligns with Huang et al. (2022) on gender differences in academic self-efficacy and with Popescu and Ionele (2023) on the "self-efficacy deficit" in entrepreneurial intentions among female students. Our study confirms that this global phenomenon is present and measurable in the Georgian context.

This disparity is the likely psychological root of the behavioral "peculiarities" in self- management identified in earlier research (Kharadze & Gulua, 2017). Behaviors like procrastination or over-preparation (both forms of ineffective time management) are classic symptoms of low self-efficacy regarding a task. A student who doubts their ability to succeed may delay starting a project or spend excessive time on minor details out of fear of failure, even if their ultimate commitment to the goal is high. This study thus provides an explanatory mechanism for previously observed behavioral patterns.

The Power of Efficacy and Optimism

The regression analysis powerfully confirmed that self-efficacy and optimism are potent, independent predictors of goal commitment. Self-efficacy was, by far, the stronger of the two ($\beta = .451$). This provides a clear answer to the "hard work vs. effective work" premise. What makes work "effective" is the belief that precedes it. Students with high self-efficacy are more likely to engage in effective problem-solving, persist through setbacks, and ultimately remain committed to their goals (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020). This finding reinforces the centrality of Bandura's (1997) theory in educational contexts, demonstrating that perceived capability is a direct driver of motivational commitment.

The independent role of optimism ($\beta = .219$) is also crucial. It suggests that even for a student with high self-efficacy, a generally pessimistic worldview can corrode their motivation. As noted by Zajenkowski et al. (2021), optimism provides the resilience to analyze failure constructively rather than internalizing it as a permanent state. A student with both high self-efficacy and high optimism is the most psychologically equipped for success: they believe they can "do it" (self-efficacy) and they believe "it will work out" (optimism). This combination creates a virtuous cycle of positive expectation, effort, and persistence, which is the essence of goal commitment.

Practical Implications for Georgian HEIs

The implications of these findings are direct and actionable for educational policy and practice in Georgia.

Move Personal Development to the Core Curriculum

Georgian universities must recognize that personal development is not an auxiliary service but a core academic imperative. The data shows it is a key predictor of

goal commitment. Integrating workshops, credited courses, or modules on topics like resilience, self-regulation, and optimistic thinking into mainstream curricula could be highly beneficial.

Target Self-Efficacy, Not Just Skills

Traditional academic support is insufficient if it does not also address the student's underlying self-belief. Interventions must be designed based on Bandura's (1997) four sources of self-efficacy:

Mastery Experiences: Structure curricula to include scaffolded assignments that break down complex tasks (like a thesis) into smaller, manageable wins to build a record of success.

Vicarious Experiences: Systematically expose students, especially female students, to relatable role models. This could involve creating a formal "Women in Leadership" speaker series featuring successful female alumni and faculty who can share stories of overcoming challenges.

Social Persuasion: Implement structured mentorship programs where faculty are trained to provide specific, credible, and positive reinforcement (e.g., "You have demonstrated strong analytical skills in this area; you are capable of excelling in this project").

Physiological/Affective States: Teach students cognitive-behavioral techniques to manage the anxiety and stress that can be misinterpreted as signs of incompetence. This includes reframing failure as a learning opportunity.

Acknowledge and Address the Gender Gap

The data on self-efficacy provides a clear mandate for targeted interventions. Universities should consider specialized workshops, mentorship circles, or leadership programs aimed specifically at female graduate students to identify and deconstruct impostor syndrome and build agentic self-efficacy. This is not about "remedial" help, but about counteracting a documented, systemic psychological barrier to ensure equitable opportunities for success.

This study builds directly on the foundational work of Kharadze (2008, 2012) and Kharadze and Gulua (2016, 2017) by providing the "why" for the "what." The previously identified behavioral patterns in time and self-management can now be understood as downstream consequences of these core beliefs.

VI. Conclusions

Personal Development

This study set out to provide an empirically-grounded analysis of personal development peculiarities among Georgian students. By reframing the inquiry through the theoretical lenses of self-efficacy and optimism, we have moved from a descriptive to an explanatory model. We confirmed that "effective work" is indeed different from "hard work" and that the difference is largely a matter of psychological belief. We found that while male and female master's students in Georgia are equally committed to their goals and equally optimistic, a significant gender gap exists in self- efficacy—the core belief in one's own ability. We also confirmed that self-efficacy is the single most powerful predictor of a student's commitment to their academic and career goals, followed closely by optimism.

The conclusion is clear: to prepare students for the 21st-century labor market, Georgian universities must do more than just impart knowledge. They must systematically cultivate the self-belief and resilience that enable students to turn that knowledge into effective, goal-oriented action. Addressing the gender gap in self- efficacy is not just an issue of

fairness; it is an economic and social imperative for unlocking the full potential of Georgia's future workforce.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations that offer avenues for future research. First, its cross-sectional design cannot establish causality; we can only show a strong association between self-efficacy and commitment. A longitudinal study that tracks students from their first year to their first year in the labor market is needed to establish the causal link between these constructs and actual career outcomes. Second, the data is based on self-report, which can be subject to social desirability bias. Future studies could incorporate objective measures of academic performance or behavioral tasks. Third, our sample was limited to MA students in Tbilisi, and the findings may not be generalizable to undergraduate students or those in other regions of Georgia.
These limitations provide clear directions for future research.

Intervention-Based Research

Future studies should design and test the efficacy-building interventions proposed in the Discussion section. A quasi- experimental study (test group vs. control group) would provide invaluable data on "what works" in the Georgian context.

Qualitative Inquiry

The "why" behind the gender gap in self-efficacy needs further exploration? Qualitative interviews with male and female students could uncover the specific life experiences, societal messages, and university practices that contribute to this disparity. For example, research questions could explore how family expectations, faculty interactions, and peer dynamics shape self-belief differently for men and women.

Discipline-Specific Analysis

Future research could explore whether this gender gap in self-efficacy is more pronounced in traditionally male- dominated fields (e.g., business, tech) compared to female-dominated fields within the Georgian context.

By continuing this line of inquiry, researchers and educators can work together to ensure all students, regardless of gender, are not only educated but are also empowered to achieve their full potential.

References

Al-Shammari, M. (2021). The relationship between academic self-efficacy, student engagement, and academic performance among university students. Education and Information Technologies, 26(6), 6885–6901.

Bandura, A. (1997). Self-efficacy: The exercise of control. W. H. Freeman.

Ceci, S. J., Williams, W. M., & Barnett, S. M. (2014). Women's underrepresentation in science: Sociocultural and biological considerations. Psychological Bulletin, 135(2), 218–261. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0014412

Eagly, A. H., & Carli, L. L. (2007). Through the labyrinth: The truth about how women become leaders. Harvard Business School Press.

Huang, C., Lv, W., & Wu, J. (2022). Gender differences in academic self- efficacy and career aspirations: A cross-sectional study among Chinese university students. International

Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 19(5), 2891. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19052891

Kharadze, N. (2008). Personal Development-New Demands of Labor Market in Georgia. Intellect, 3(31), 21-26.

Kharadze, N. (2012). Personal Development Challenges in Georgian Universities. In Globalization and New Management Challenges. Proceedings of IV International Conference: Globalization and Statistics (p. 153). Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University (TSU). Universal.

Kharadze, N., & Gulua, E. (2016). Self Management Peculiarities of Master's Students in Georgia. In Challenges of Globalization in Economics and Business (pp. 613-616). Universal.

Kharadze, N., & Gulua, E. (2017). Time Management Peculiarities Based on Gender. In Forsight-management: best world practice of development and integration of education, science and business. I International Scientific and Practical Conference (pp. 39-42). Vyshemyrkyi.

Locke, E. A., & Latham, G. P. (2002). Building a practically useful theory of goal setting and task motivation: A 35-year odyssey. American Psychologist, 57(9), 705–717. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.57.9.705

López-Angulo, Y., & Sira, E. (2023). Personal development and its influence on the university academic performance of students. Education Sciences, 13(7), 684. https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci13070684

Moreno-García, E., Campos-Soto, M. N., & Vera-Perea, M. (2021). Employability and personal skills in higher education: A systematic literature review. Higher Education, Skills and Work-Based Learning, 11(5), 1076-1092. https://doi.org/10.1108/HESWBL-06-2020-0131

Popescu, L. G., & Ionele, C. (2023). Gender differences in entrepreneurial intentions among Romanian students: The mediating role of self- efficacy. Journal of Social and Economic Sciences, 1(1), 59-70.

Robles, M. M. (2012). Executive perceptions of the top 10 soft skills needed in today's workplace. Business Communication Quarterly, 75(4), 453-465. https://doi.org/10.1177/1080569912460400

Scheier, M. F., & Carver, C. S. (1985). Optimism, coping, and health: Assessment and implications of generalized outcome expectancies. Health Psychology, 4(3), 219–247. https://doi.org/10.1037/0278-6133.4.3.219

Scheier, M. F., Carver, C. S., & Bridges, M. W. (1994). Distinguishing optimism from neuroticism (and trait anxiety, self-mastery, and self-esteem): A reevaluation of the Life Orientation Test. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 67(6), 1063–1078. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.67.6.1063

Schwarzer, R., & Jerusalem, M. (1995). Generalized Self-Efficacy scale. In J. Weinman, S. Wright, & M. Johnston (Eds.), Measures in health psychology: A user's portfolio. Causal and control beliefs (pp. 35–37). NFER-NELSON.

Seligman, M. E. P. (1998). Learned optimism: How to change your mind and your life. Pocket Books.

Skaalvik, E. M., & Skaalvik, S. (2020). University students' goal commitment, and its relationship with achievement, self-efficacy, and perceived support. Social Psychology of Education, 23(1), 1-19. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11218-019-09519-5

Tetzner, J., Becker, M., & Kortenbruck, M. (2020). The role of optimism and coping for university students' well-being. Journal of Happiness Studies, 21(8), 2847-2867. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-019-00204-6

Zajenkowski, M., Maciantowicz, O., Szymaniak, K., & Urban, P. (2021). Why do students with high intelligence fail? The role of academic self-efficacy, grit, and optimism. Intelligence, 89, 101584. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intell.2021.101584