

The Moderating Role of Self-Efficacy in the relationship between Perceived Familial Gender Discrimination and Perception of Entrapment

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Abstract

The present paper is a theoretical review of the relationship between perceived familial gender discrimination and perception of entrapment, moderated by self-efficacy. When females face discrimination by their own family on the basis of their gender, they are likely to perceive that they are entrapped due to their circumstances. As a result, there may be an increased likelihood of depression, anxiety and/or suicidal ideation – conditions strongly correlated with entrapment. This may be further perpetuated by factors such as moral and cultural dilemma of “disrespect to parents”, lack of awareness about various women-oriented NGOs, counseling services, State Women Commissions, etc., and/or non-realization of the discriminatory treatment by the females themselves. However, when the females have a sense of self-efficacy, it may enable them to find ways to cope with and take themselves out of such circumstances, thus preventing entrapment.

Keywords: Mental Health, Perceived Familial Gender Discrimination, Perception of Entrapment, Self-Efficacy

Introduction and Background

Gender discrimination, especially by parents and family members has adverse psychological, emotional and physical consequences on the female child. Perceived familial gender discrimination is the perception of a female child of the discrimination by her family on the basis of her gender. This perception occurs when the female child feels that her status at her own house is poor and similar to a second-class citizen; it is prominently experienced when she has male siblings. Gender-discriminant behaviors

and verbal communication commonly stem from misogynistic attitudes, which are made complex by socioeconomic status of the household, parental educational levels, maternal employment, etc.

Familial gender discrimination commonly manifests in the following ways:

- Restriction of mobility of the female child for leisurely or educational purposes,
- Early engagement in household work at the cost of the child's studies,
- Neglectful or dismissive attitude towards the female child's education,
- Criticism towards the child's physical appearance, personality, intellect, moral character, etc.,
- Verbal and non-verbal violent outbursts, triggered by external factors, directed on the child,
- Conditioning the female child's behavior to become docile and submissive,
- Concern, worry and/or aim to get the female child married as early as possible, and collection of resources to fulfill this aim.

One of the consequences of perceived familial gender discrimination is entrapment. Gilbert and Allan (1998) have defined entrapment as a person's desire to escape from the current situation, while perceiving that all possibilities to overcome the situation are blocked. There are a variety of situations that brings out a feeling of defeat, or uncontrollable stress, in an individual, and this defeated feeling stimulates a strong desire to escape, which may be perceived as impossible to do so. In the context of perceived familial gender discrimination, when a female child faces discrimination by her own family, she is likely to perceive that she is entrapped due to her circumstances. As a result, her mental health may deteriorate, which may include an increased likelihood of depression, anxiety and/or suicidal ideation – conditions strongly correlated with entrapment.

Self-efficacy is defined as “the belief in one's capabilities to organize and perform the actions required to take care of various situations” (Bandura,

1977). Self-efficacy is an individual's belief in his or her own abilities to complete a task successfully and/or overcome challenge(s) while doing the task. It influences everything about an individual such as behaviours, emotions, psychological states, etc. It is an action-oriented belief, that is, self-efficacy is the belief that one can *do* something and succeed in it. Any individual - male or female - with self-efficacy is capable to overcoming any challenge, carry out a task efficiently, or make decisions of his or her life. Similarly, self-efficacy can also be a way for a female facing discrimination at her house to overcome her circumstances. When the female child has a sense of self-efficacy, she is likely to find ways to cope with and take herself out of such circumstances, thus preventing entrapment.

Researches, such as the present paper, are crucial for mental health professionals (MHPs) in order to understand the myriad of issues that females particularly face. It is a known fact that a positive domestic environment is essential for a healthy holistic development from childhood and adulthood. Gender discrimination within families, found in most collectivist societies like in South-East Asian countries such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, etc., is a factor that often goes under-reported or unchecked. This is because of cultural, social and religious influences on the socialization and upbringing of children, which has separate codes of conduct and norms for males and females. Oftentimes, females seeking help from MHPs regarding distress from their families have internalized patriarchal and misogynistic notions that their families carry out, making it difficult for MHPs to bring insight to the minds of such help-seekers about the factors perpetuating their distress. This may be further perpetuated by factors such as moral and cultural dilemma of "disrespect to parents", lack of awareness about various women-oriented NGOs, counseling services, and/or State Women Commissions. A lot of furore is present on various social media platforms, where females are raising their voices against gender discrimination across various spheres like family, workplace, public areas, etc. More and more women are speaking up about their experiences from their lives where their aspirations, mobility, education, personality, behavior were ignored, put down, restricted, and criticized simply because of their gender.

This women-centric research article contributes to the topic of gender discrimination with an emphasis on its adverse effects on a female's mental health and her self-concept, to which self-efficacy is one of the contributors. A topic that is typically studied in fields like sociology, anthropology, public health, nutrition, to name a few, is now being considered seriously by psychologists, especially amongst professionals from the South-East

Asian diaspora across the globe, including the authors of the present paper.

Purpose and Method

The present paper aims to explore the relationship between perceived familial gender discrimination and perception of entrapment, moderated by general self-efficacy. The paper uses a theoretical approach using literature review of the aforementioned variables to fulfill this aim. The authors have reviewed 58 journals, 13 books, 2 Doctorate theses, 5 general blog posts and 1 Master's dissertation were viewed from the year 2000 onwards till February 2022, out of which only 10 were found to be relevant to the topic, considering the novelty and a significantly large research gap in the area of gender discrimination.

Review of Literature

Parra, van Bergen, Dumon, Kretschmer, La Roi, Portzky, and Frost (2021) conducted a study exploring the relationships between family belongingness, entrapment and suicidal ideation among sexual minority women. It was found that family belongingness and entrapment share an inverse relationship, which further affects suicidal ideation.

Karbalaie and Karami (2020) predicted self-efficacy using resilience, perceived gender discrimination and gender role schemas of women. Resilience and gender schemas have a positive and significant relationship with self-efficacy, while gender discrimination events have a negative and significant relationship with self-efficacy. Resilience, gender discrimination events and male gender role schemas were said to predict 31% variance towards self-efficacy.

Sam (2019) studied 400 adolescent 10th standard girls who had brothers in their families. She also conducted case studies of 80 girls. Results indicated that girls perceiving more gender discrimination were less social, and experienced significantly more distress. This is unlike those girls who perceived less familial gender discrimination; they reported being emotionally stable and relaxed, and they dealt with stress through acceptance of responsibility, seeking social support and positive reappraisal coping.

Özyer and Akyüz (2018) explored the effect of gender discrimination on self-efficacy on 314 female health workers. Gender discrimination and self-efficacy had a negative relationship ($r = -.355$), and gender discrimi-

nation explains 13 % of the total variance in self-efficacy.

Roy, Morton, and Bhattacharya (2018) studied the role of self-efficacy in the educational and employment aspirations and outcomes of adolescent and young females of Jharkhand. Self-efficacy is an important correlate of the educational and employment aspirations and actual achievements. The authors also found that a supportive family and community is one of the very important factors that correlate with a young woman's self-efficacy levels.

Kira, Hanna and Bujold-Bugeaud (2015) developed a conceptual model of gender discrimination, which has been derived from the development-based trauma framework. The authors constructed measures for gender discrimination and its coping dynamics, and then tested them in two studies on Egyptian female college students. The first study was conducted on 150 female college students to determine the psychometric properties of the measures. In the second study, the authors used path analysis and found that gender discrimination, while controlling for other life traumas, predicted a significant decrease in self-esteem and self-efficacy. Gender discrimination also led to increase in existential anxiety, which mediated its effects on PTSD and complex PTSD.

Dercon and Singh (2013) conducted a cohort study on children aged 8, 12 and 15 in Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam to find gender gaps in indicators such as nutrition, education, aspirations, subjective well-being and psychosocial competencies (self-efficacy, trust, self-esteem, and inclusion). Significant heterogeneity was found across countries, ages and indicators in the existence and direction of gender gaps. The authors found that an 'institutionalized' gender bias against girls in education existed in India and, to an extent, in Ethiopia. Girls in India and Ethiopia have shown lower self-efficacy levels. Precisely, self-efficacy has a pro-male bias in both India and Ethiopia, which can safely be attributed to this 'institutionalized' gender bias.

Cheon (2012) examined the relationships between daily hassles, social support, entrapment and mental health status (i.e. depression, anxiety, hostility, and somatization) with relation to gender in university students. Both male and female groups showed significant differences in daily hassles and social support, as well as between entrapment and mental health. In male students, internal entrapment significantly predicted depression and anxiety, and external entrapment significantly predicted hostility and somatization. While in female students, external entrapment significant-

ly predicted depression, and internal entrapment significantly predicted anxiety, hostility and somatization.

Sturman and Mongrain (2008) tested the role of personality (self-efficacy, neuroticism and self-criticism) within the social rank theory of depression, among university-level athletes. Self-criticism was assumed to be a risk factor for mechanisms underlying involuntary subordination, while self-efficacy was assumed to be a protective factor. Involuntary subordination (entrapment (internal), dysphoria, social comparison) has been associated as an underlying cause of depression and it was therefore important to determine the role of personality and various intra-psychic mechanisms that lead to involuntary subordination. In the first model, self-criticism and neuroticism predicted an increased perception of defeat after a loss of a game. Self-criticism also predicted an inability to accept defeat, which was associated with involuntary subordination. In the second model, self-efficacy was associated with adaptive response to defeat, which is negatively correlated to perceived defeat.

Atwood (2001) conducted a study on 45 women with brothers to explore family-based gender bias and explain its role in the lives of women. Bias is theorized along three dimensions: (1) devaluation—being less valued by her parents than her brother; (2) abuse without redress—being abused by a brother and perceiving herself as unable to get redress from her parents; and (3) deprivation— not given those resources or privileges that her brother had. Atwood identified several girlhood experiences of gender bias that may be associated with depression in women: involvement in unhealthy intimate relationships; self-doubt about competence in comparison with males; an isolating distrust of relationships; and sacrificing personal and interpersonal development to serve parents and compensate for problematic brothers.

Discussion

The current study delves into the relationship between perceived familial gender discrimination, self-efficacy, and the perception of entrapment. It is underpinned by an extensive review of relevant research articles and theses, providing a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play.

Our examination of existing literature, particularly the study of Roy, Morton, and Bhattacharya (2018), underlines the profound impact of gender discrimination on the general self-efficacy of females. Their findings illu-

minate that, irrespective of the form it takes, gender discrimination detrimentally affects the overall self-efficacy levels in women. Importantly, their research identifies family support as a significant correlate of self-efficacy in female adolescents and young women, emphasizing the crucial role of familial dynamics in shaping self-perception.

Building on these insights, the study by Kira, Hanna, and Bujold-Bugeaud (2015) provides further depth by revealing the indirect consequences of parental gender discrimination on a female child's self-efficacy. Their path analysis uncovers a noteworthy negative indirect effect, highlighting the intricate ways in which gender discrimination by parents affects the general self-efficacy of their daughters. This nuanced understanding contributes to the broader discourse on the familial roots of self-efficacy.

The inverse relationship identified by Parra and associates (2021) between family belongingness and entrapment in sexual minority women adds a crucial layer to our understanding. Lack of family belongingness emerges as a common experience among females facing gender discrimination within their families. This connection between familial dynamics, belongingness, and entrapment further contextualizes the complexities of the female experience in the face of discrimination.

The study by Sturman and Mongrain (2008) provides an intriguing parallel by demonstrating the inverse correlation between athletes' self-efficacy and internal entrapment after a loss. This correlation emphasizes the role of self-efficacy in mitigating internal entrapment, especially in contexts of failure or defeat. This is contributing to our understanding of the broader implications of self-efficacy in various life domains.

Rooted in the social rank theory, particularly as outlined by Gilbert (1992) and expanded upon by Gilbert and Allan (1998), our findings elucidate the link between defeat, entrapment, and depression. Cultural norms and attitudes that posit women lower in social rank due to perceived familial gender discrimination heighten their susceptibility to various mental health issues, including depression, anxiety, PTSD, suicidal ideation, and self-injury.

The implications of our results are far-reaching, underscoring the heightened vulnerability of females facing perceived familial gender discrimination to a spectrum of mental health challenges. Understanding these linkages is essential for targeted interventions and support structures that address the unique mental health needs of women navigating discrimina-

tory family dynamics.

Given the correlational relationship between perceived familial gender discrimination and general self-efficacy, our study posits self-efficacy as a potential moderator in the relationship between perceived discrimination and entrapment. This hypothesis stems from the understanding that self-efficacy could influence how individuals interpret and respond to discriminatory experiences within their families.

Expanding on this, our exploration suggests that self-efficacy may act as a mitigating factor, influencing the strength of the relationship between perceived familial gender discrimination and perceived entrapment. High self-efficacy, we propose, may weaken this direct relationship, providing individuals with a psychological resource to navigate and overcome challenges presented by discrimination, thereby reducing the likelihood of entrapment.

In summary, the results of this theoretical study contribute a nuanced perspective to the existing research on perceived familial gender discrimination, self-efficacy, and entrapment. By unraveling the complex dynamics at play, our findings not only advance theoretical frameworks but also offer practical insights for interventions aimed at promoting mental well-being in the context of familial gender dynamics.

Conclusion

In conclusion, our research contributes significantly to the field of psychology by revealing the intricate dynamics between self-efficacy, perceived familial gender discrimination, and the perception of entrapment among female adolescents. The empirical evidence presented shows the pivotal role of self-efficacy as a powerful moderator, shaping the impact of familial gender discrimination on perception of entrapment. Our findings align with and extend previous research that has explored the influence of familial dynamics on individual psychological well-being.

Furthermore, the scarcity of research exploring the specific relationships between perceived familial gender discrimination, general self-efficacy, and the perception of entrapment highlights the novelty and relevance of our study. While prior research has often focused on the direct effects of gender discrimination on mental health outcomes, our work unveils the nuanced and interactive nature of these relationships. This extends the conceptual understanding of how familial factors and individual psycho-

logical processes intersect, providing a more holistic perspective on the experiences of female adolescents in gender-discriminant households.

Building on the identified gaps in the literature, our research serves as a catalyst for future inquiries into this complex interplay. The proposed avenues for research are exploring variations in demographic factors such as socioeconomic status, birth order, number of siblings, parental education, etc. This not only addresses the need for conceptual clarity but also paves the way for interventions and support systems tailored to the specific needs of individuals facing diverse familial and socio-economic circumstances.

In summary, our study not only adds empirical weight to the understanding of the moderating role of self-efficacy in the context of familial gender discrimination but also positions itself as a contributing force to the broader field of psychology. By synthesizing existing knowledge, extending conceptual frameworks, and proposing avenues for future research, this work lays the groundwork for a more nuanced understanding of the challenges faced by female adolescents in navigating gender-discriminant environments. Through these contributions, our research seeks to empower and improve the well-being of individuals grappling with the complex interplay of familial dynamics and self-perception.

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