

Research Paper

A Study on Research Self-Efficacy among Research Scholars of a Public University in Punjab

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ABSTRACT

Research self-efficacy is defined as the confidence possessed by research scholars based on their self-beliefs about research activity. This study investigated the difference in research self-efficacy and its dimensions, Literature Review and Research Problem, Discussion, Data Analysis, Research Plan, Research Ethics, and Conceptual/Theoretical Framework among 120 research scholars enrolled in degree of doctor of philosophy in departments of social science and science streams at Punjabi University, Patiala. The descriptive research approach was employed to conduct the present study, and data was collected from the respondents with the assistance of Research Self-Efficacy Scale developed and validated by Tas, Demiral and Uzan (2023). The Independent Sample t-test was used to test the significance of difference in research self-efficacy among research scholars with regard to gender, location of residence, and stream of the study. According to the findings of the study, male research scholars had better research self-efficacy than female research scholars. Moreover; there was no significant difference in research self-efficacy among the research scholars with regard to their place of residence and stream of study. But, it was also uncovered that research scholars of the science stream had better on data analysis aspect of research self-efficacy than research scholars of the social science stream.

Keywords: *Research Self-Efficacy, Research Scholars, Gender, Location, Stream of the Study*

Man has always been in search of knowledge from ancient times to the present day and has tried to search for solutions to the problems faced by him (Wadhwa, 2013; Roul, 2018). All innovations have been imaginable with the assistance of research. With the support of research, men were able to discover the medicine for flu, polio, and many other horrible syndromes (Shaukat et al., 2014). In today's fast-paced world research has become an important intellectual tool for human beings to adapt their lifestyle as per to the demands of the society (Singh, 2015). Overall, research is an essential part of social life in contemporary times (Issaka et al., 2022). Best and Kahn (1993) have appropriately stated, "The mystery of our social advancement has been research distributing back the regions of obliviousness by finding new facts, which, thus, lead to better methods of getting things done and better items." Good outcomes of research can significantly contribute to developing countries (Mondal et al., 2024) and increase the advancement of knowledge and progress of society (Islam, 2023). At present, higher education is usually

¹Doctor of Philosophy (Education)

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Received: January 26, 2026; Revision Received: June 21, 2026; Accepted: June 25, 2026

broken down into three components, namely teaching, research, and service. Research is a key component among the essential components of the work of institutions related to the field of academics and is considered very important for the funding and faculty members' development related to their profession (Sasson & Miedijensky, 2023). Research is more than the set of skills (Bhome et al., 2013) which involves searching for solutions to problems to discover new knowledge (Wadhwa, 2013) and necessity for the nations or community-specific groups to produce the essential peddle for human, social, and industrial expansion and enlargement in countries that identify its value and importance (Akhidime, 2017).

The word "research" is formulated from the old French word "recherchier" (Wiktionary, n.d.) a compound word from "re" + "cerchier," or "searcher," meaning to search and search again (Kabir, 2016). The earliest recorded use of the term was in 1577 (Online Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2025). In The Concise Oxford English Dictionary (2002) the meaning of 'research' is defined as "the systematic investigation into and study of material and sources in order to establish facts and reach new conclusions." The simple description of research can be comprehended from its synthesis wording "re" and "search". The word "re" denotes "anew, continuation, persistence, again, and back," and the word "search" denotes "experimentation, study, investigation, exploration, examination," or attempts in the direction of finding out or find out something up till now unknown or unfound (Akhidime, 2017; Devipriya et al., 2024). Thus, the word research means to investigate, study, or examine something again and again or reputedly from different aspects to draw new conclusions to increase and update the existing knowledge about something.

Research is a process of steps used to collect and analyse information to increase individuals' understanding of a topic. At a general level, research consists of three steps: a) pose a problem, b) collect data to answer the question, and c) present an answer to the question. Educators undertake research to contribute to existing information about issues, to become more effective professionals, and to provide information to policymakers when they search and debate educational topics (Cresswell, 2022). In other words, research is a process involving the collection of data, analysis, interpretation, and assessment procedures conducted in a planned manner in order to find possible solutions to a problem (Rezaei & Zimani-Minadashti, 2013). Koul (2020) defined the research as "the application of a systematic method in the study of problems." The terms "research" and "scientific method" are sometimes used interchangeably.

In the 1970s, psychologist Albert Bandura developed the framework of self-efficacy (The Education Hub, 2019). Bandura (1986) defined self-efficacy in terms of: 'people's opinion or estimate of their capabilities to arrange and carry out the courses of action needed for attaining designated types of performances.' Albert Bandura's self-efficacy theory was introduced as a component of his social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977). In 1994 Bandura defined self-efficacy as one's belief in his or her own ability to produce a desired effect. The basic assumption of the theory of self-efficacy is that "people's beliefs in their ability to do desired work by their own acts" (Bandura, 1997) are the most major determinant factor of the actions of people that they prefer to be involved in and how much they carry on their attempts in the face of barriers and difficulties. According to the available literature on self-efficacy research, the findings of the study of Phillips and Russell (1994) indicated that self-efficacy can forecast the research enthusiasm and conduct of research on a sample of postgraduate students. Also, the students with a high level of self-efficacy can overcome the barriers and arrangements that may arise during the implementation of his

research and with any events. Self-efficacy can help an individual to think regarding his/her future plan to survive with the psychologically and emotionally stressful state.

During recent decades, the construct self-efficacy has been receiving growing attention in educational research. The self-efficacy has been rising upward in the enlightening research, and researchers focused on the variables of the influence of self-efficacy on research, constructing a novel theory called research self-efficacy (Garavand et al. 2014). Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy model is seen as proposing a suitable conceptual framework for advisory in what way student attitudes might be assisting or deterring their procurement of research skills. In applying Bandura's standpoint to students' recreation of research proficiency, the model of research self-efficacy (i.e., students' judgment to hold about their capability to grip research-related jobs) becomes mainly important. Unluckily, students' improbability about their capability to "do" research has been identified by educationalists as one of the probable causes for the indecision, if not disdain, often observed in social work students' approach to research (Montcalm, 1999).

In summary, research self-efficacy refers to one's capabilities to execute particular tasks in the research domain (Rezaei & Zimani-Minadashti, 2013). Bieschke et al. (1996) defined research self-efficacy as one's trust in one's capacity to efficiently accomplish research-related activities. Research self-efficacy is one's belief in one's ability to carry out tasks related to research, from starting a research plan to finalizing the research cycle, which comprises a everything from library research and understanding to inscription and dissemination (Boswell, 2014). A combination of weighty levels of self-efficacy and learned assistance was related to the highest levels of research self-efficacy (Overall et al., 2011). Accordingly, research self-efficacy belongs to the beliefs of researcher in leading research and refers to the judgment of people about their capabilities of start-up and implementing research activities (Brancolini & Kennedy, 2017). Seraji et al. (2017) said that the perception of an individual regarding their research capability plays a significant role in successfully conducting the research. Research self-efficacy, like the construct attitude towards research, is believed to impact the choices related to the behavior of the students, persistence, and accordingly, task success. Individuals with research capacity are able to find appropriate solutions to difficult problems and communicate the results by developing a mindset based upon utilizing a scientific approach.

In the present study, the investigator assessed the research self-efficacy of research scholars as their own judgment about the self-confidence in their own ability to successfully accomplish research-related tasks as given below:

- **Literature Review and Research Problem:** It refers to the confidence of the research scholars in a systemic review of literature and finding out a researchable problem from the literature.
- **Discussion:** It refers to the confidence of research scholars in doing discussion with the result of the study and the results of the previous research.
- **Data Analysis:** It refers to the confidence of the research scholars in the analysis of the data and arranges the results in the form of interpretation of the results in the form of tables and figures.
- **Research Plan:** It refers to the confidence of the research scholars in planning the research, which includes the method of research, the steps of the research and, types of different research and their basis.

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- **Research Ethics:** It refers to the confidence of the research scholars in research ethics established by research associations of the world, which must be followed for standard research.
- **Conceptual/Theoretical Framework:** It refers to the confidence of the research scholars in write the conceptual and theoretical framework of the variables by focusing on the background of the variables and some related theories given by the experts.

Review of Related Literature and Research Gap

From the literature examined, it can be inferred that studies like, Landino and Owen (1988), Vasil (1992), Williams (2004), Wright and Holttum (2012), Rezaei and Zamani-Miandashti (2013), Westhuizen (2014), Ashrafi-Rizi et al. (2015), Hemmings and Kay (2016), Seraji et al (2017), Niehaus et al. (2018), Wajid and Jami (2020), Seng et al. (2020), Khatony et al. (2021), Gaoat (2022), Bougmiza et al. (2022), Mannethodi et al. (2023), Abd and Ai-Atabi (2023), Hosseinabadi et al. (2023), Osunronbi et al. (2023), Sasson and Miedijensky (2023), Amador-Campos et al. (2023) and Miao et al. (2025) are designed to identifying research self-efficacy among students at different educational levels at international level, and some studies are conducted in different states of India like, Kashmir (Jan, 2019), Kerala (Jacob, 2023), and West Bengal (Mondal et al., 2024).

But, the investigator found that there is no study conducted to explore the research self-efficacy among graduation students, post-graduation students, and research scholars in universities and colleges located in Punjab. So, there is the dearth of research in this field. Inadequate research has been dedicated to the research self-efficacy in Punjab.

Significance of the Study

In Punjab, almost all categories of higher education institutions are present. These institutions consist of universities, institutions of national importance, colleges teaching general education, professional colleges, etc. The students are not only being imparted general education in humanities, social sciences, physical sciences, and life sciences, but also technical and professional education in engineering, medicine, veterinary sciences, law, education, agriculture, etc. In Punjab, at the post-graduation (PG) level, the majority of students are pursuing a Master of Arts, which is followed by a Master of Science and a Master of Commerce. Student enrolment in Ph.D. programs in higher Education Institutes in Punjab across three periods- 1990-2000, 2000-2010, and 2010-2020 has been growing steadily, with a rate exceeding 19.0 percent, particularly after 2000 (Kaur & Singh, 2024). As per the details available on the Online Admission Facilitation Portal, Department of Higher Education, Punjab, there are 61 government colleges and 194 private colleges in which 164,114 students are studying in academic session 2025-2026 (Admission Portal, Department of Higher Education, Punjab). Establishment of a National Research Foundation to fund outstanding peer-reviewed research and to actively seed research in universities and colleges (NEP, 2020). As per the National Education Policy (2020). National Research Foundation acts as a liaison between researchers and relevant branches of government as well as industry so that research scholars are constantly made aware of the most urgent national research issues and so that policymakers are constantly made aware of the latest research breakthroughs so as to allow breakthroughs to be optimally brought into policy and/or implementation.

The recent escalation in the admission for Ph.D. programs at Indian institutions of higher education is the best example to demonstrate the significance of research. So, there is the

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dearth of research in this field. Inadequate research has been dedicated to the research self-efficacy. Also, the investigator found no recent literature that examined the research self-efficacy among research scholars in universities and colleges of Punjab. So, there is a need to dissolve this ground to prolong the boundary of knowledge and to develop the research self-efficacy among research scholars. It will serve as a motivating factor for undertaking the present research to fill an existing important research gap.

The present study has been devised to assess research scholars' research self-efficacy to enlighten the differences in research self-efficacy that happen due to some demographical variables. This study focused on all the researchers who are at the initial, middle as well as last staged of their research studies.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the gender differences in research self-efficacy and it's dimensions among research scholars.
2. To study the locale wise differences in research self-efficacy and it's dimensions among research scholars.
3. To study the differences in research self-efficacy it's dimensions among research scholars with regard to their stream of the study.

Hypotheses of the Study

1. There will be no significant differences in research self-efficacy and it's dimensions among male and female research scholars.
2. There will be no significant differences in research self-efficacy and it's dimensions among research scholars living in urban and rural areas.
3. There will be no significant differences in research self-efficacy and it's dimensions among research scholars of the science and social science streams.

METHOD

The present study was conducted by using a descriptive method of research with quantitative nature of data.

Population and Sample

The research scholars who had enrolled at Punjabi University, Patiala, Punjab, and were pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy degree through the regular mode in departments related to social science and science streams formed the study population. A sample of 125 research scholars comprising 79 females and 41 males. The sample was divided into two groups: 60 from rural residences and 60 from urban residences. The sample was also categorized into two stare as of study: 89 from the social science stream and 31 from the science stream of study chosen for data gathering.

Measures

- **Socio demographic:** The first part of the measures dealt with the demographics and comprised options regarding gender, location of residence, and stream of study of research scholars.
- **Research Self-Efficacy Scale:** The Research Self-Efficacy Scale developed and validated by Tas, Demiral & Uzan (2023) was used by the investigator to assess the research self-efficacy of research scholars. This scale has 33 items on a five-point Likert (strongly agree to strongly disagree). It has six dimensions namely, Literature Review and Research Problem, Discussion, Data Analysis, Research Plan, Research

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Ethics, and Conceptual/Theoretical Framework which have Cronbach's Alpha Reliability of 0.88, 0.94, 0.90, 0.92, 0.85, and 0.90, respectively and all dimensions are bivariate, significantly and positively correlated with each other.

Ethical Consideration

Ethics in research signals scientific ethical standards. The investigator has followed the rules related to research ethics while conducting this research. The investigator assured the research scholars before data collection that the data provided by them would be kept confidential and would not be shared with any third party.

Statistical Techniques

Collected data was analyzed by using mean, standard deviation, and Independent sample t-test, which are used to test the significance of differences in variables between two independent groups. SPSS 25.0 was used for the analysis of the data. In the present study, independent groups are made on the basis of gender (Male and Female), location (Rural and Urban), and stream of the study (Science and Social Science), and score on dimensions of Research Self-Efficacy and overall taken as dependent.

RESULT

Table 1 Means and SDs along with t-values on Research Self-Efficacy and It's Aspects among Female and Male Research Scholars

Variable	Female (N=79)		Male (N=41)		t-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Literature Review and Research Problem	21.23	5.52	23.56	5.26	2.23*
Discussion	14.44	3.53	15.85	3.82	2.02*
Data Analysis	9.84	1.64	10.49	1.34	2.20*
Research Plan	19.62	4.84	19.39	4.87	0.25 ^{NS}
Research Ethics	11.66	3.21	11.49	3.19	0.28 ^{NS}
Conceptual/Theoretical Framework	5.92	1.41	6.02	1.46	0.37 ^{NS}
Research Self-Efficacy (Overall)	82.71	8.66	86.80	7.86	2.53*

Note: NS: Not Significant at 0.05; * $p \leq 0.05$

The table 1 shows that the t-values 2.23, 2.02, 2.20, and 2.53 are significant at the 0.05 level of significance. It may be concluded that the male research scholars have better literature review and research problem, discussion, and data analysis aspects of research self-efficacy and overall research self-efficacy than female research scholars. But t-values of 0.25, 0.28, and 0.37 are not significant at the 0.05 level of significance, revealing that there are no significant differences in the research plan, research ethics, and conceptual/theoretical framework aspects of the research self-efficacy of male and female research scholars.

Table 2 Means and SDs along with t-values on Research Self-Efficacy and It's Aspects among Rural and Urban Research Scholars

Variable	Rural (N=60)		Urban (N=60)		t-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Literature Review and Research Problem	21.98	5.58	22.07	5.52	0.08 ^{NS}
Discussion	14.98	3.70	14.87	3.69	0.17 ^{NS}
Data Analysis	10.05	1.66	10.07	1.48	0.06 ^{NS}
Research Plan	19.03	4.83	20.05	4.82	1.15 ^{NS}
Research Ethics	11.80	3.27	11.40	3.12	0.68 ^{NS}

Variable	Rural (N=60)		Urban (N=60)		t-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Conceptual/Theoretical Framework	5.78	1.37	6.13	1.47	1.35 ^{NS}
Research Self-Efficacy (Overall)	83.63	8.48	84.58	8.73	0.60 ^{NS}

Note: NS: Not Significant at 0.05

The table 2 shows that the t-values 0.08, 0.17, 0.06, 1.15, 0.68, 1.35, and 0.60 are not significant at the 0.05 level of significance. It may be concluded that there are no significant differences in literature review and research problem, discussion, data analysis, research plan, research ethics, conceptual/theoretical framework aspects of research self-efficacy, and overall research self-efficacy of rural and urban research scholars.

Table 3 Means and SDs along with t-values on Research Self-Efficacy and It's Aspects among Social Science and Science Research Scholars

Variable	Social Science (N= 89)		Science (N= 31)		t-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Literature Review and Research Problem	21.83	5.45	22.58	5.79	0.64 ^{NS}
Discussion	15.18	3.52	14.19	4.06	1.28 ^{NS}
Data Analysis	9.87	1.63	10.61	1.26	2.32*
Research Plan	19.52	4.73	19.61	5.20	0.09 ^{NS}
Research Ethics	11.84	3.22	10.90	3.06	1.41 ^{NS}
Conceptual/Theoretical Framework	6.00	1.45	5.84	1.37	0.54 ^{NS}
Research Self-Efficacy (Overall)	84.24	8.45	83.74	9.10	0.27 ^{NS}

Note: NS: Not Significant at 0.05; * $p \leq 0.05$

The table 3 shows that the t-values 0.64, 1.28, 0.09, 1.41, 0.54 and 0.27 are not significant at the 0.05 level of significance. It may be concluded that there are no significant differences in literature review and research problem, discussion, research plan, research ethics, conceptual/theoretical framework aspects of research self-efficacy, and overall research self-efficacy of social science and science research scholars. But the t value of 2.32 for data analysis aspect which is significant at the 0.05 level, reveals that science research scholars are better at data analysis aspect of research self-efficacy than research scholars of social science.

DISCUSSION

- Male research scholars had better research self-efficacy than female research scholars. Researches done by Osunronbi et al. (2023), Vasil (1992), Landino and Owen (1988), Khatony et al. (2021), Seng et al. (2020), Amador-Campos et al. (2023), Williams (2004) also found the same results in their researches.
- There is no significant difference in research self-efficacy of rural and urban research scholars. Similar result was found by Jan (2019) in his research done on research scholars in Kashmir state of India.
- There is no significant difference in research self-efficacy of research scholars of social science and science stream. Similar results was identified in research of Jan (2019) in Kashmir state and in a research of Mondal et al. (2024) on research scholars of West-Bengal state of India. Result of Ashrafi-Rizi et al. (2015) also supported the findings of the present study.

Implementation:

- Research self-efficacy has been observed to be lower among female research scholars than male research scholars; therefore, the administration and teaching personnel of the universities should organize special seminars and expert lectures on research by focusing on the female research scholars.
- To enhance the confidence in data analysis among research scholars of the social science stream of study, special workshops should be organized for them in which they are exposed to techniques of data analysis and software related to analysis of the data.

Limitation of the study

The current study had certain limitations. Firstly, the data were gathering by using a self-reporting scale, probably affecting the correctness of the results. Secondly, because the sample consisted of research scholars of Punjabi University, Patiala (Punjab), so the results cannot be universal to research scholars in other universities of Punjab and in other states of India.

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Acknowledgment

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Singh, S. (2026). A Study on Research Self-Efficacy among Research Scholars of a Public University in Punjab. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 14(2), 2416-2427. DIP:18.01.219.20261402, DOI:10.25215/1402.219