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Exploring Self-Efficacy with an Emphasis on Direct Selling

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ABSTRACT

Self-efficacy, the confidence that one has in his or her capabilities to achieve a goal, is one of the most widely studied constructs in personal selling and sales management research. With few exceptions, self-efficacy has been studied as antecedent to sales performance. The present study differs from prior marketing-related studies of self-efficacy in that it explores whether a direct selling experience can enhance business/professional self-efficacy and personal life self-efficacy. In other words, in the present study self-efficacy is treated as consequent to a direct selling experience. An online survey was conducted in which a nationally representative sample of 495 current direct sellers responded to a self-efficacy scale consisting of 14 items regarding the impact of their direct selling experience on their business/professional skills and a self-efficacy scale consisting of 13 items regarding the impact of their direct selling experience on their personal life skills. More than 60 percent of the direct sellers surveyed either somewhat or strongly believed that their direct selling experience improved their business/professional and their personal life skills. There were differences in impact based on the gender and the age of the direct sellers. Both business/professional self-efficacy and personal life self-efficacy were significantly and positively related to self-perceived sales performance and performance on a non-direct selling job. The theoretical and managerial implications of the findings are discussed.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Collectively, Robert A. Peterson (PhD University of Minnesota), Gerald Albaum (PhD University of Wisconsin), and Victoria L. Crittenden (DBA Harvard University) have published in excess of 400 books and refereed articles. They acknowledge the financial support of the Direct Selling Education Foundation for the current research.