

TITLE: Self-Efficacy and Student Leaders: The Effects of Gender, Previous Leadership Experiences, and Institutional Environment

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OBJECTIVE: The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of prior student leadership experiences, gender, and perceived institutional support on student leaders' self-efficacy.

METHODOLOGY: The population consisted of 532 undergraduate student leaders at Indiana University, of whom 100 women and 88 men participated (35% response rate). Respondents completed a modified version of the Student Leadership Practices Inventory that focused on how well individuals felt they could perform the leadership behavior rather than their actual frequency of engaging in the behavior (see, Endless, 2000). Data was also collected about their prior leadership experiences and perceived institutional support.

KEY FINDINGS: The findings suggested that student leaders generally have high self-efficacy for leadership practices, with most confidence in their ability to motivate others via Encouraging, followed by Modeling, Enabling, Inspiring and Challenging. Men and women did not significantly differ in their self-efficacy for leadership on Challenging, Inspiring, Enabling, or Encouraging; while for Modeling, the scores of women were significantly higher than those of men.

Women tended to feel more supported by their advisor than men and were more likely to feel that their advisor encourages leadership development. The more an individual agrees that his or her advisor encourages leadership development, the more capable that individual feels he or she can Inspire, Enable and Model. The more likely an individual wants to repeat his or her leadership experience the more this individual feels he or she can Inspire, Model, and Encourage, and the same relationship was found for those satisfied with their leadership experience.

Organizational type also influence leadership self-efficacy. Those in activist organizations tended to have higher leadership self-efficacy in Challenging, Inspiring, and Modeling. Cultural organization participants were most confident in Encourage in comparison with other organizational types. Those in professional organizational

tended to have higher scores in Enabling and Encouraging. Individuals involved in programming and support organizations demonstrated more confidence in Enabling, while members of service-related organizations demonstrated higher levels of leadership self-efficacy in Inspiring, Enabling, and Modeling. “The different levels of self-efficacy among organizational types may be a result of characteristics of the organizational type that coincide with particular leadership practices” (pp. 42-43).