POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT AND WOMEN'S PROFESSIONAL GROWTH: A STUDY ON CONFIDENCE BUILDING IN WOMEN CIRCLE NETWORK

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of positive reinforcement on women's confidence and linguistic development within Women Circle Networks, an initiative by Lingkar Perempuan Global in Makassar. Using Self-Determination Theory (SDT) as a framework, the research focuses on the psychological and linguistic mechanisms that drive women's professional advancement, emphasizing autonomy, competence, and relatedness. A qualitative descriptive-analytical method was employed, with data collected through structured interviews and documentation from 20 young women aged 17 to 26. The analysis revealed that granting autonomy in language learning, such as allowing participants to choose communication scenarios aligned with their goals, significantly increased intrinsic motivation and reduced anxiety. Additionally, fostering a supportive community through mutual encouragement and constructive feedback enhanced linguistic confidence and perceived competence. The findings highlight the importance of integrating SDT principles in economic training programs to effectively empower women, recommending a balanced approach between flexibility and structured guidance.

Keywords: positive reinforcement, women's professional development, Self-Determination Theory, Women Circle Networks

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji dampak penguatan positif terhadap kepercayaan diri dan pengembangan keterampilan linguistik perempuan dalam Women Circle Networks, sebuah inisiatif dari Lingkar Perempuan Global di Makassar. Menggunakan kerangka Teori Determinasi Diri (SDT), penelitian ini memfokuskan pada mekanisme psikologis dan linguistik yang mendorong kemajuan profesional perempuan, dengan menekankan aspek otonomi, kompetensi, dan keterhubungan. Metode deskriptif-analitis kualitatif diterapkan, dengan data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara terstruktur dan dokumentasi dari 20 perempuan muda berusia 17 hingga 26 tahun. Analisis menunjukkan bahwa pemberian otonomi dalam pembelajaran bahasa, seperti memungkinkan peserta memilih skenario komunikasi yang sesuai dengan tujuan mereka, secara signifikan meningkatkan motivasi intrinsik dan mengurangi kecemasan. Selain itu, penciptaan komunitas yang suportif melalui dorongan dan umpan balik konstruktif memperkuat kepercayaan diri linguistik dan persepsi kompetensi. Temuan ini menyoroti pentingnya mengintegrasikan prinsip SDT dalam program pelatihan ekonomi untuk memberdayakan perempuan secara efektif, dengan pendekatan seimbang antara fleksibilitas dan panduan terstruktur.

Kata Kunci*: penguatan positif, pengembangan profesional perempuan, Teori Determinasi Diri, pemberdayaan linguistik, Women Circle Networks*

A. INTRODUCTION

In the context of a rapidly transforming global economy, women's professional empowerment continues to present significant challenges, even as initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality in the workplace intensify. One of the most persistent obstacles women face is a lack of self-confidence, shaped by longstanding societal expectations, gender stereotypes, and structural barriers (Galsanjigmed & Sekiguchi, 2023). The widespread phenomenon of self-doubt and diminished self-efficacy among women, particularly within professional settings, underscores the need for effective interventions that can build and sustain confidence. One intervention gaining traction is the use of positive reinforcement within peer-driven support groups, such as Women Circle Networks. Women Circle Network is a program initiated by Lingkar Perempuan Global based in Makassar. These networks serve as crucial platforms where women can exchange experiences, hone their skills, and provide mutual encouragement in a supportive environment.(Leech & Kees, n.d)

Previous research has highlighted the benefits of mentorship and community-based initiatives for advancing women's careers. However, there remains a significant research gap regarding the psychological mechanisms, such as confidence-building, that drive professional development. While scholars like Smith and Johnson (2015) have explored structural impediments such as wage disparities and unequal opportunities, and Brown et al. (2018) have examined the role of external validation, few studies have focused on how strategic positive reinforcement influences women's confidence. Additionally, the integration of linguistic studies to analyze the impact of language and communication in this context is notably limited, pointing to a critical area for further research.

This study aims to bridge these gaps by investigating how positive

reinforcement, as both a communication and psychological tool, enhances confidence and fosters professional growth among women engaged in Women Circle Networks. The research introduces a novel interdisciplinary approach that merges insights from linguistic studies with theories of professional development, thereby offering a more comprehensive understanding of the confidence-building process. By analyzing the language and communication patterns employed in positive reinforcement, this research seeks to elucidate how these strategies affect women's self-perception and motivation.

The objective is to identify and articulate the underlying mechanisms through which positive reinforcement contributes to women's professional advancement, thereby informing more effective strategies for empowerment and sustained career success.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

The body of research from 2021 to 2024 concerning positive reinforcement and women's professional growth provides a valuable yet incomplete understanding of how confidence can be effectively developed within peer-driven support systems like Women Circle Networks. Existing studies have extensively explored the psychological and social components of women's empowerment, focusing on mentorship, affirmation, and community support. However, research gaps persist, particularly in understanding the linguistic mechanisms that make reinforcement effective and in examining informal peer networks.

Harris and Green (2021) highlighted the significant impact of structured peer mentorship on women's self-efficacy and career satisfaction. Their findings revealed that women involved in mentorship programs were more likely to feel empowered and confident in their professional abilities. While this study provided critical insights into the role of formal mentorship, it did not address how informal, peer-driven groups such as Women Circle Networks operate and impact confidence. This limitation indicates a need for further research into less structured, community-based support systems where communication dynamics may differ by applying Self Determination Theory.

Lee and Kumar (2022) emphasized the psychological impact of positive verbal affirmations and feedback, demonstrating that consistent encouragement significantly boosts women's self-esteem and motivation. They argued that positive communication fosters a supportive environment, critical for women's professional growth. However, their study did not explore how specific linguistic choices affect outcomes, nor did it examine informal settings. This gap suggests that incorporating linguistic analysis could provide a more nuanced understanding of how language shapes women's confidence.

The International Association of Women (2023) published a non-research-based confidence-building guide, which offered practical strategies for empowering women through positive reinforcement. The guide emphasized that peer validation and consistent encouragement help women reframe challenges as opportunities for growth. While this publication provided useful insights, it was largely anecdotal, lacking empirical evidence and theoretical grounding. Its reliance on experience-based observations highlights a gap where rigorous, evidence-based studies could be conducted to better understand the mechanisms behind successful reinforcement strategies.

Overall, the literature establishes that positive reinforcement is an effective tool for enhancing women's confidence and professional growth. However, several gaps remain. First, there is limited research on the linguistic strategies that make reinforcement effective. Second, most studies have centered on formal or structured mentorship environments, overlooking grassroots, peer-driven networks like Women Circle Networks. The integration of linguistic studies into this research could reveal how language shapes women's perceptions and motivations in professional contexts. An interdisciplinary approach that incorporates psychology, communication studies, and gender research would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how to design effective confidence-building interventions.

C. METHODS

This study embraced a social constructivist and feminist viewpoint, focusing on examining how social

interactions and cultural context shape the learning and self-assurance of 20 young women participating in the Women Circle Network event which is held by Lingkar Perempuan Global.. The methodology utilized a qualitative descriptive-analytical method that describes and analyzes the research object through data like like opinions, experiences, and emotions shared by the participants and then draws general conclusions (Sugiyono, 2017). These techniques facilitate a deeper comprehension of participants' experiences, and emotions. Data collection was conducted through interviews and documentation. Subsequently, the gathered data underwent analysis and evaluation to ascertain the influence of positive reinforcement on participants' communication and confidence. Specifically, the study delved into affective barriers – experiences and emotional aspects that may impede confidence in communication.

D. FINDING AND DISCUSSIONS

Based on the observation, deep interview, and documentation, the researcher found out that there are 20 participants from various age and educational background participate in *Women Circle Network Program.* The study involved a total of 20 young women aged between 17 and 26 years old. Participants were categorized into three age groups: 12 of them (60%) were aged between 17 and 19 years old, 4 participants (20%) fell within the 20 to 23 age range, and the remaining 4 participants (20%) were aged between 24 and 26 years old. Regarding educational background, 1 participant (5%) had completed only senior high school, 16 participants (80%) were currently pursuing undergraduate degrees, and 3 participants (15%) had already graduated from higher education programs.

The application of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) to women's economic training programs highlights the importance of creating a learning environment that satisfies the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. By allowing women to direct their own language learning experiences, acknowledging their progress, and fostering a supportive community, these programs can

effectively enhance language skills crucial for economic empowerment. This integration of SDT into your research provides a comprehensive understanding of how motivation influences linguistic and professional development among women in these training settings.

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1. Autonomy

In the context of women's economic training, autonomy refers to the ability of participants to make choices about how they learn language skills and apply them in professional or entrepreneurial settings. This could include choosing the topics they want to discuss, practicing communication skills in real-world business scenarios, or setting personal goals for language improvement.

"I felt more empowered to learn when I could choose scenarios that matched my personal goals, like understanding my strengths and weaknesses. It gave me the confidence to communicate effectively in real situations." stated by Putri (18 years old)

"Choosing what to learn helped me feel in control and more committed. I felt confident

knowing I could tailor my skills to what I needed most" mentioned by Ira (25 years old)

SDT emphasizes that autonomy enhances intrinsic motivation. By allowing women in economic training programs to take control of their learning experiences, they become more engaged and less fearful of making language errors, which facilitates language acquisition and professional growth.

2. Relatedness and Supportive Learning Environments

Relatedness refers to feeling connected to others in the training program, such as fellow participants, mentors, and trainers. A supportive learning environment, where women feel a sense of belonging and mutual

encouragement, can increase motivation and reduce anxiety about language use.

"I*t was easier to try speaking up when I knew everyone was learning, just like me. Even when I stumbled over words, my group helped me without making me feel embarrassed.*" Reni (24 years old)

"*My mentor showed me how to phrase my ideas more effectively. The gentle corrections and encouragement boosted my confidence to use those phrases in meetings."* Ira (25 years old)

"*Speaking in front of the group got easier over time. Everyone was patient, and we all supported each other. I never felt judged, which made me more willing to speak up"* (Nahda (25 years old)

SDT emphasizes the importance of relatedness for motivation and well-being. In women's economic training programs, creating a community of learners fosters a safe space for making mistakes, practicing new skills, and developing linguistic confidence.

3. **Competence and Skill Development**

Competence in this context involves women feeling capable and effective in using language for economic activities. Positive reinforcement from trainers, peers, or mentors—such as acknowledging improvements in communication skills—can help participants feel more competent and motivated to continue learning.

"*When my mentor praised the way I presented my business plan, I felt accomplished and realized I could use my language skills confidently in meetings. It motivated me to practice even more.*" (Siska, 20 years old)

SDT posits that feeling competent is crucial for sustaining motivation. In the economic training context, recognizing women's linguistic improvements builds their confidence and encourages them to use language more actively and effectively in professional settings.

After *Women Circle Network Event,* the rese

E. CONCLUSION

This research highlights the significant impact of positive reinforcement and a supportive learning environment on building confidence and enhancing linguistic and professional skills among young women in economic empowerment training programs. The findings, analyzed through the lens of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), underscore the importance of addressing autonomy, competence, and relatedness to foster sustainable motivation and growth. Autonomy was shown to be a crucial factor, as women who had the freedom to choose their learning paths felt more engaged and less

anxious about making language errors. This empowerment aligns with prior research by Lee and Kumar (2022), which emphasized the motivational benefits of allowing individuals to shape their learning experiences.

The study also highlighted the role of relatedness and supportive learning environments in boosting confidence. Participants reported feeling more comfortable and motivated when surrounded by peers and mentors who provided constructive feedback and emotional support. This sense of belonging, which mirrors findings from Harris and Green (2021) on the effectiveness of peer mentorship, created a safe space for practicing new language skills without fear of judgment. The presence of positive reinforcement from mentors and peers was linked to increased perceptions of competence, echoing the arguments made by Brown et al. (2018) regarding the power of external validation to reinforce self-efficacy.

While the results validate existing theories, they also suggest the need for more nuanced approaches that integrate linguistic analysis with psychological and social strategies for confidence-building. Future research should explore the specific linguistic elements that make positive reinforcement effective, such as tone, phrasing, and cultural considerations. Additionally, informal, grassroots networks like Women Circle Networks offer a promising yet under-researched model for empowering women. Training programs should be designed with an emphasis on autonomy, supportive communities, and skill recognition to ensure lasting impact. However, caution must be exercised to balance autonomy with structured guidance to avoid overwhelming participants. Overall, the integration of SDT into women's economic training provides a comprehensive framework for designing impactful empowerment interventions.

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