



# A Study of the Self-efficacy of Viola Majors in Chinese Universities Regarding Career Choice

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**Abstract.** This study examined and analysed the impact of self-efficacy on the career decisions of 52 viola students enrolled in Chinese universities. According to the findings, the level of self-efficacy influences the learning and career decisions of students directly. Higher self-efficacy can positively affect how individuals perceive their past experiences and those of others. Therefore, a high degree of self-efficacy can be advantageous. Self-efficacy is primarily influenced by a person's prior experiences, alternative experiences, verbal persuasion, and physical and emotional state during work-based learning. Schools may offer courses that foster and improve the development of self-efficacy in order to help viola majors in improving their self-efficacy effectively.

**Keywords:** viola · self-efficacy · career choice

## 1 Introduction

When making crucial musical decisions, musicians consider multiple factors, such as personal success or failure, professionalism, and confidence in problem-solving and goal attainment. It is also known as “self-efficacy theory,” and it is one of the theories that have a substantial impact on the learning and lives of individuals. In addition, self-efficacy theory is a component of the “social learning theory system,” and many educators consider it “a prerequisite for academic success because it motivates behaviors (primarily perseverance) that lead to success” [1, 2] (Jinks & Lorschach, 2003, p. 323; McPherson & McCormick, 2006). Learning to play the viola is complex and arduous; students must exhibit much perseverance and daily practice and endure many unforeseen obstacles and challenges to perform on stage eventually. A resilient sense of self-efficacy is essential for the success of viola students, as demonstrated. However, few studies have examined the role of the relationship between career choice and self-efficacy among violists. The viola is an essential string instrument that resembles the violin in construction but is slightly larger. It has a richer and warmer tone than the violin's high, distinctive sound. Nonetheless, the viola is significantly less popular than the violin, and some misconceptions exist. Each year, a small percentage of music majors at Chinese universities have been viola students (for example, the China Conservatory of Music only admits six viola majors each year but enrolls twelve violin students).

In order to clarify the current situation and dilemmas of viola students in domestic universities and to maximize the role of self-efficacy in career selection, this paper surveyed 52 viola students in Chinese universities using a questionnaire. The survey results indicate that 84.62% and 80.77% of students believe that a strong sense of self-efficacy improves their viola playing ability and attitude when facing challenges, respectively. Individuals with a strong sense of self-efficacy are typically more confident and capable of achieving their objectives. The survey results indicate that 86.54% of students believe self-efficacy influences their academic performance and career decisions, while 61.54% believe they need help from others to improve their self-efficacy.

## **2 The Role of Self-efficacy in the Learning and Career Choices of Viola Students**

People are most capable of overcoming obstacles when they have a high level of self-efficacy, which is developed primarily through personal successes [3] (Bandura, 1997). People with high self-efficacy are more resilient, can recover from setbacks more quickly, and continue on the path to success. When things do not go according to plan, they immediately analyze why the problem occurred and find comfortable coping mechanisms, such as modifying their approach, seeking help, or rearranging their activities. High achievers are distinguished from low achievers partly by their resilience in facing adversity and setbacks [3] (Bandura, 1997). When viola students have confidence in their abilities, their performances are of a higher caliber, and they have a more evident career for their future careers. Career choice is the selection and determination of one's desired job based on one's abilities and interests. Some viola majors, for instance, favor a performance career over teaching because their sense of self-efficacy and confidence in performance are stronger when they are performing. According to [4] Parkes and Jones (2011), some performance majors believe that good performance does not equate to good teaching ability. As a result, they lack confidence in their teaching abilities; thus, their playing self-efficacy is more significant than their teaching self-efficacy. On the other hand, students who chose teaching as a career believed they were better at transferring knowledge to others than they were at playing because their playing and learning experiences could help others. Consequently, their self-efficacy in teaching was more confident.

## **3 Some Advice on Career Choices for Viola Students**

In symphonies, chamber music, and string quartets, the viola plays a crucial role as one of the essential string instruments. The tone is more delicate than those of the violin and cello, and it can provide an excellent counterpoint to the melody of the other voices in a piece. The majority of viola students choose to continue playing as a profession. It is due to their passion for music and the viola and their increased sense of self-efficacy in performance, aided by their previous stage experience. Specifically, music majors derive a high "intrinsic interest value" from playing [4] (Parkes and Jones, 2011, p. 26). Consequently, viola players have a high degree of self-efficacy. They may consider

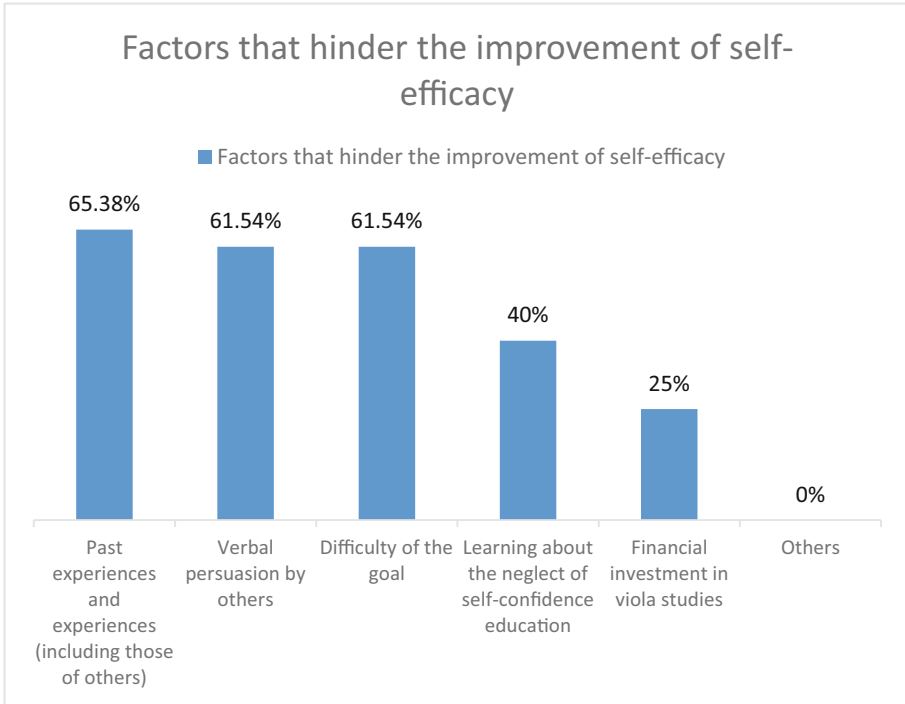
careers as viola soloists, chamber musicians, or string quartet members, which provide students with more opportunities and platforms to perform musical pieces. Students who choose teaching as a career path frequently desire to set an example for other students in the same field, are passionate about teaching, have teaching experience, and demonstrate high self-efficacy. They are consequently more likely to become college viola teachers or elementary and secondary school music teachers. These occupations can incorporate teaching in a way that highlights the importance of the student. By directing the school's student orchestra, for instance, they can better comprehend the challenges students will face in their performances and offer them advice based on their prior performance experience (symphony orchestra, wind orchestra, and string orchestra). Using their theoretical knowledge and practical experience, viola majors can teach music theory courses to aid student learning.

Additionally, students may consider working as a music self-publisher dedicated to promoting musical literacy and spreading the word about music. They can combine their music and ideas to create new works and utilize the influence of online platforms to popularise them, raise public awareness of music, and promote music literacy. As a result, students whom self-publish music will have greater confidence in their general aptitude and creativity.

#### **4 Analysis of Factors Affecting the Self-efficacy of Viola Students**

Past experiences, alternative experiences of others, verbal persuasion, and physical and emotional states while performing work-based learning can be broadly classified as factors influencing self-efficacy [5] (Bandura, 1977). According to the results of this questionnaire (like Fig. 1), past experiences and experiences (including those of others) ranked first (65.38%) among the factors that hinder the improvement of self-efficacy as the primary factor affecting self-efficacy because each success builds confidence, and each failure weakens it [3] (Bandura, 1997). Students are influenced by similar experiences or by seeing others who have had similar experiences when they have had them. Self-efficacy is enhanced when one or more individuals can complete a task, whereas failure can negatively affect self-efficacy. In general, learners' experiences directly influence individuals' perceptions and thoughts on career options while generating varying degrees of self-efficacy because positive personal experiences provide the most credible evidence of validity [3, 6] (Bandura, 1997; Schunk & Usher, 2012).

Others' verbal persuasion (61.54%) also impacts the development of self-efficacy in viola students. Different types of verbal persuasion can have varying effects and influence students' self-efficacy levels. Teachers who encourage their students verbally, for instance, can help them improve their self-efficacy, which can influence their career choices. Instilling healthy self-efficacy is one of the most critical things instrumental music teachers can do for their students, and they have a significant responsibility in this regard [7] (Presland, 2005). When a viola student has a strong sense of self-efficacy during orchestra rehearsals, he becomes more interested in working in a professional orchestra and will consider pursuing a career as an orchestra musician. Although verbal encouragement frequently positively affects students, research has demonstrated limitations. Under the influence of such constraints, students frequently develop goals that



**Fig. 1.** Factors that hinder the improvement of self-efficacy

are difficult to attain [5, 3] (Bandura, 1977, 1997). Therefore, misused verbal persuasion is susceptible to adverse effects and can even hinder students' ability to learn independently [8] (Dweck, 2013). Students' self-efficacy may also be affected in this situation, influencing their career decisions.

The emotional changes caused by the physiological and emotional state, i.e. the individual's perception of the goal's difficulty (61.54%), should also be addressed during work-based learning. Learners' career decisions are influenced by the association of similar tasks to their careers and the emergence or experience of initial emotional responses. Performance on stage is an essential requirement for viola majors, and mood swings can directly impact the quality and confidence of performance. Self-efficacy decreases if students are in a chronic physiological state of tension and unease [9] (Cioffi, 1991).

## 5 Effective Ways to Improve the Self-efficacy of Viola Students

Self-efficacy influences students' perceptions of their professional abilities and, consequently, their career choices. 57.69% of respondents believe improving self-efficacy can help them be more competitive in their viola studies and employment. According to relevant studies, students who give themselves high self-efficacy ratings may be more capable of handling tasks and finding solutions [2] (MacAfee & Comeau, 2020). In

addition to necessary professional skills, a certain level of self-efficacy can help individuals predict whether they will be able to accomplish their objectives. Respondents to this survey identified self-efficacy as a significant factor influencing learning and career decisions. However, domestic universities must still provide self-efficacy-related courses and activities, as well as professional guidance and advice, to help students comprehend and improve their self-efficacy. Students' self-efficacy development and performance are limited to some extent because they cannot receive more theoretical guidance and help unless they can improve their self-efficacy.

Instrumentalists could improve their self-efficacy through greater effort. 61.54% of respondents felt they required external help to improve their self-efficacy. Inter-school exchange, learning opportunities, and verbal encouragement from others were the three most prevalent ways to improve self-efficacy. More opportunities to perform can enhance instrumentalists' stage experience, and audience feedback can help musicians help a sense of self-efficacy. Due to the uniqueness of the viola, the school's lectures or courses on self-efficacy will help students better comprehend and improve their self-efficacy. In addition, it will help students improve their self-efficacy by establishing cooperative relationships among various teaching bodies and research units, deepening the education's cooperation mechanism, promoting exchange and learning among viola students, and accumulating more stage experience. Instead of focusing solely on improving students' professional skills, viola teachers can emphasize cultivating students' self-efficacy through daily learning, using sincere praise and encouragement to stimulate students' self-efficacy.

When lacking the necessary knowledge and skills, students will rely on self-efficacy alone to produce a competent performance of goals; however, to maximize self-efficacy, they will require sufficient repetitions and positive experiences.

## 6 Conclusion

A survey on the self-efficacy of viola students revealed that students' personal experiences and alternative experiences of others were the most influential factors on self-efficacy, followed by the persuasion of others and physical and emotional states while performing work study. Teachers can help students develop and improve their self-efficacy by employing positive teaching strategies, such as praising and encouraging students in class. In addition, schools can provide self-efficacy-related workshops and inter-school collaborations to assist students in enhancing their self-efficacy and expanding performance opportunities.

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