Personal Growth Initiative and Self Esteem as Predictors of Academic Achievement among Students of Technical Training Institutes

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Abstract:
The present study aimed to see the predictive role of personal growth initiative and self esteem for academic achievement among students of technical training institutes. Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) and Personal Growth Initiative Scale (PGIS, Robitschek, et al., 2012) were used for data collection. The sample of 150 students from five different technical training institutions of Sargodha city was selected through purposive sampling. Pearson correlation and regression analysis showed that subscales of personal growth initiative i.e., planfulness and intentional behavior, along with self-esteem has significant positive correlation with academic achievement however, only planfulness and self-esteem were found to be the significant predictor of academic achievement. T-test analysis revealed significant gender differences in terms of academic achievement and self esteem, however with reference to personal growth significant differences were found only in use of resources where as all the other features showed no difference across gender.

Keywords: Personal growth initiative; Self-esteem; Gender; Academic achievement; Technical education

I. Introduction

In the time of rapid change in technological and social life styles, psychologists are interested for the contributory factors needed to secure success in recent times. Here personal growth initiative (PGI) emerged as an interesting topic of research for educationist and developmental psychologist with reference to adolescents and it has been considered as a profound contributing factor in successful personal goal fulfillment and human development. Robitschek (1998); Robitschek and Kashubeck (1999) has described personal growth initiative as “an active and intentional involvement in the self change process” and it was further suggested that personal growth initiative has been
assumed on hypothetical ground to have cognitive and behavioral aspects i.e., generally one’s aim related to personal plans and required changes for objectives accomplishments (Robitschek, 2003). Consequently, according to these definitions individuals having high PGI are deliberately concerned about their self improvements; are involved in motivating and shifting themselves toward their desired directions consciously on regular basis than the individuals having low PGI who were found to be highly prone to become less confident about their abilities for tackling challenges of life (Shorey, Little, Snyder, Kluck, & Robitschek, 2007).

Researchers found that individuals having high personal growth initiative tend to have sound emotional, social and psychological well-being (Robitschek & Keyes, 2009) by having less or minute emotional distress or psycho-social problems (Robitschek & Kashubeck, 1999). Personal growth initiative is an essential construct which proves to be proficient of building and developing well-being of individuals as found by the researches of positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Furthermore, students with high level of personal growth initiative also showed wisdom for their directions and optimal roles of future with an ample executable and rationale action plan for accomplishing these specific goals (Robitscheck, 1998). Many students appear to know the ways of changing their lives for betterment and growth whereas many other are deficits in these basic life skills. In a study conducted in Taiwan (Yang, 2004) on technical and vocational college students it was found that students who had a deep sense of self improvement, goal accomplishment and self efficacy; were more vigilant towards learning and training related features. These students had more sound educational achievement profile and along with effective dealing of personal and emotional crises during college life. Generally, colleges/universities provide a variety of exceptional and influential breakthroughs for personal development and growth; and undergraduate/graduate students especially enrolled in technical or vocational degrees frequently face imperative choices with reference to their career in future, present friendships, close relationships, spiritual/religious association, physical fitness and bonds of family life (Meier, & Schmeck, 1985). As frequently, college phase is considered as a time of ‘soul searching’ in which one enthusiastically tends to struggle for developing an idea of his/her own self by answering the questions like who they are, who they want to be and what roles they will play in life. However, several students lack the drive to actively initiate personal growth and which results in stress, anxiety related to their future life as they leave the college without clear realization and logical measures to face future life challenges. This deficiency has been found to be significantly linked with their future professional and personal life burnout (McCarthy, Pretty, & Catano, 1990). Furthermore, failure is also a contributing factor in their loss of self esteem and very much related to their below grade performance/academic achievement.

Self esteem is considered to be as set of attitudes and beliefs of person with which he faces the world (Rosenberg, 1965; Branden, 1997). These beliefs comprised of his/her evaluations of success/failure, decisions about efforts input, assessments and attributions of failure and success on specific life tasks as whether failure at a task will be painful and whether he or she will become more capable as a result of difficult experience (Coopersmith, 1967, 1981). Researches has recognized the important role played by high self- esteem in one’s performance and perception about academic achievement, personal and social responsibility (Redenbach, 1991; Spinath, Spinath, Harlaar, & Plomin, 2006; Skaalvik & Valas; 1999). It was further found that perceptions of students regarding a
perfect balance between academic demands and their self concept played vital role in establishing their learning potential where self esteem worked as a significant moderator along with strongly affecting the level of adeptness in all fields of enterprise (Malbi & Reasoner, 2000) and has been found to correlate with general happiness, school achievement, job success and interpersonal compatibility too (Gebauer, Riketta, Broemer, & Maio, 2008; Redenbach, 1991). Psychologists and educators recognized self-esteem to be a major factor in learning outcomes now a day (Lawrence, 2000) and it has been empirically evident that the ways people value themselves consistently and positively correlates with their academic attainments (Maruyama, Rubin, & Kingsbury, 1981). Failure in facing the academic challenges leads to stigmatization as “loser” which affects one’s personal growth and subjective well being and they become unable to tackle challenges of work and personal life (Link, Struening, Rahav, Phelan, & Nuttbrock, 1997) e.g., initiating interactions and contacts of social nature (Piner & Kahle, 1984). Furthermore, significant loss of personal growth and self-esteem are consequences of stigmatization (Sultan, 2011) which made it very important to examine the factors of personal growth initiative among students during college; to see how his/her personal growth is related to his/her perception of self accomplishment / self esteem and in what ways theses in combination reflects in his/her academic achievements.

II. Rationale of Present Study

Besides, many studies which focused on some elements related to youth educational and psychological life e.g., relationship between personal growth initiative, self esteem and stigmatization (Sultan, 2011); personal growth initiative, self efficacy and risk taking behavior (Ogunyemi & Mabekoje, 2007); personal growth initiative and life career renewals (Robitschek, 1997); personal growth initiative acculturative stress and adjustment (Yakunina, Weigold, & Weigold, 2013); personal growth initiative through growth and education activity interventions (Martinez, Robitschek, Mirkalai, & Vazquez, 2010) personal growth initiative, psychological well being and psychological distress among adolescents (Ayub & Iqbal, 2012) still there are some important aspects needed to be researched out. To fill this gap present study has the core object to explore these prospects consecutively to enhanced and understand the mechanisms through which students’ personal growth initiative and self esteem may predict academic achievement among students of technical training institutes. As they are the prime populations streaming toward professional development. In a country like Pakistan who is in continuous journey of development youth are the major contributing work force of future and it is very important to give them sound professional and self development to prevent any future outburst of mental or, social or economical dilemma. Furthermore, specifically present reach aimed to investigate the relationship between personal growth initiative, academic achievement and self esteem; to determine the predictive relationship of personal growth initiative and self esteem for academic achievement and to find out the differences on demographic variable of gender with reference to constructs under study. On the basis of above mentioned objectives following hypotheses were phrased:

i. Personal growth initiative, self esteem and academic achievement would be positively related.

ii. There would be no significant gender difference in personal growth initiative of students.

iii. There would be significant gender difference in terms of self esteem and academic achievement of students.
III. Methodology

a. Participants
The total number of participants were 150 (84 boys and 66 girls) from different five different institutions of Sargodha city i.e., Govt. Poly Technical Institute, Hira Poly Technical Institute, University of Sargodha and University of Lahore Sargodha Campus enrolled in BSIT, Civil, Electrical and Electronics engineering programs. Participants were selected by using purposive sampling technique. The age range of the subjects ranged from 18-24 years (M = 19.55, SD = 4.61). Educational level of the participants was at least intermediate and they were taken from their third or fourth semester of professional graduate level programs. All the participants belonged to lower, middle and high class.

b. Instruments
The data of present study was collected through two scales i.e., Personal Growth Initiative Scale (PGIS-II; Robitschek, Ashton, Spering, Geiger, Byers, Schotts, & Thoen, 2012), Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (RSS: Rosenberg, 1965), and a demographic information form.

Demographic Information Form comprised of information related to about age, gender, qualification, and currently studying in which year was completed by the participants.

Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (RSS: Rosenberg, 1965) is comprised of 10 items having four point rating scale. Items format of this scale ranged from strongly agree, agree, and disagree to strongly disagree. The score range of total scales ranges from 0-30 where scores between 15 and 25 are within normal range of self-esteem; and scores below 15 suggest low self-esteem. The scale generally has high reliability and for present study alpha coefficient was found to be .89.

Personal Growth Initiative Scale (PGIS-II; Robitschek et al., 2012) is a new multidimensional measure of PGI consisted of 16-item, that provides a richer assessment of one’s attunement to growth experiences and improving oneself. It includes 4 subscales: Readiness for Change (item no. 2, 8, 11, 16), Planfulness (item no. 1, 3, 5, 10, 13) Using Resources (item no. 6, 12, 14), and Intentional Behavior (item no. 4, 7, 9, 15). Participants responded on likert scale (ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree). Scores can range from 0 – 80 and were obtained by calculating the responses to the items. Those who scores high have an inclination for growth, while those who scare low on the scale do not intentionally search out for the growth process. In this sample, the reliability of PGIS-II total was .82 and for its subscales it ranged from .65 to .87.

Academic Achievement was measured through previous Cumulative Grade point Average (CGPA) as ones academic attainments/achievements are generally reflected through their Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) which is calculated by dividing the total amount of earned grade point by the total amount of attempted credit hours.

c. Procedure
The participants were approached from various technical training institutes of Sargodha city after southing formal permission from their administration staff and principles. The aim of the study was elucidated to the participants and informed consents
of the college authorities plus students were obtained. Student’s previous performance in the form of their attained CGPA was obtained from institutional records with the permission of authorities. In accordance to APA ethical guidelines a written consent was taken from the participant and they were ensured about the confidentiality of the data. Firstly, demographic information was filled by the participants then researcher gave direction for the about the filling criteria of study scales. After completion of the questionnaire, participants were thanked for being participation in this research and for their precious time. Later on demographic form and data obtained through scales (as they were scored according to the instructions given in the manual) was analyzed.

IV. Results
The present study was aimed to examine the role of personal growth initiative and self esteem in predicting academic achievement among student of technical training institutes. The obtained data was analyzed with SSPS-17 and results are in the following:

Table 1: Correlation Matrix for all the Variables Used in the Study (N = 150)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S#</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>PGIS-II</th>
<th>Readiness for change</th>
<th>Planfulness</th>
<th>Using resources</th>
<th>Intentional Behaviour</th>
<th>Academic achievement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.18*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.17*</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.17*</td>
<td>.25**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.81**</td>
<td>.84**</td>
<td>.51**</td>
<td>.83**</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.61**</td>
<td>.16**</td>
<td>.64**</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>3.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.15**</td>
<td>.64**</td>
<td>.21**</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>5.04</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.56**</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>8.76</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.17**</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>.834</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05, **p < .01

Table 1 describes inter-correlations among all the study variables. It suggests that personal growth initiative is significantly and positively correlated with personal growth initiative (r = .18**), the subscales of personal growth initiative i.e., planfulness (r = .17*), and intentional behavior (r = .17*). However total scale doesn’t have significant correlation with academic achievement. Whereas subscales of PGIS-II i.e., planfulness (r = .21**) and intentional behavior (r = .16**) shows significant correlation with academic achievement (r = .21**). This supports study hypothesis partially.

Table further showed that all the subscales of PGIS-II were significantly correlated with their total scale readiness for change (r = .21**), planfulness (r = .84**), using resources (r = .51**), and intentional behavior (r = .83**). Table also reveals that all the subscales of PGIS-II have significant inter-scale correlation which is indicative of internal consistency of scale. Results also show that PGIS-II subscale of planfulness has significant positive correlation with readiness for change (r = .84**), self-esteem (r = .17*) and academic achievement (r = .25**). Similarly, the subscale of intentional behavior has significant positive correlation with using resources (r = .56**), planfulness
Results of table shows that self esteem is significantly and positively related with PGIS-II ($r = .18^{**}$), its sub-scales of planfulness ($r = .17^{*}$), intentional behavior ($r = .17^{*}$) and academic achievement ($r = .25^{**}$) while, all other variables do not show significant correlations. Upon these finding regression analysis were carried out to see the predictive role of self esteem and sub scales of PGIS-II i.e., planfulness and intentional behavior for academic achievements.

Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis of Planfulness, Intentional Behavior and Self-Esteem for Academic Achievement ($N = 150$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor variable</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>$\Delta R^2$</th>
<th>$F$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planfulness</td>
<td>.21**</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>4.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intentional Behavior</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self esteem</td>
<td>.16*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$df = 148,^{*}p < .05,^{**}p < .01$

Table 2 demonstrates that the subscale of planfulness (PGIS-II), ($F (2,148) = 4.05, \beta = .21$) and self-esteem (\(\beta = .16\)) are significant and positive predictors of academic achievement. It has also showed 10% variance in academic achievement that could be attributed to planfulness and self-esteem ($R^2 = .10$). It has also displayed that the sub-scale of intentional behavior (\(\beta = .30\)) is not significant predictor of academic achievement though it shows significant correlation earlier.

Under study variables Personal Growth Initiative Scale-II and Self Esteem has satisfactory internal consistency $\alpha = .82$ and $\alpha = .89$. Personal Growth Initiative Scale-II has significant and positive correlation with Self Esteem ($r = .178, p < .05$). CGPA has significant and positive correlation with Self Esteem ($r = .245, p < .01$).

Present study also aimed to explore the gender differences in terms of personal growth initiative, self esteem and academic achievements among students of technical training and results of t-test are as following:

Table 3: Means, Standard Deviations and T-Values of Boys and Girls Students on All of Study Variables ($N=150$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Boys (n=84)</th>
<th>Girls (n=66)</th>
<th>t(148)</th>
<th>$p$</th>
<th>95% CI</th>
<th>Cohen's $d$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td></td>
<td>$LL$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>-1.94*</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PGIS-II</td>
<td>13.36</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>13.61</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readiness for change</td>
<td>13.33</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>12.58</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planfulness</td>
<td>17.00</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>16.70</td>
<td>5.26</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using resources</td>
<td>9.76</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>8.15</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>2.88**</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intentional Behaviour</td>
<td>13.35</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>-.40</td>
<td>.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results showed that both boys and girls students of technical training differ significantly in terms of their self esteem ($p < .05$) academic achievements ($p < .01$) and using resources ($p < .01$) to excel for their objectives with reference to their initiative of personal growth. Here mean differences show that girls are high in their self esteem and academic achievement whereas boys show more capability to utilize resources and opportunities at the right time effectively for personal growth process. However, there were no significant differences visible in personal growth behavior related to readiness for change, planfulness and intentional behavior towards goals achievements.

V. Discussion

There is a famous Chinese proverb that to gain profound intellectually stimulated knowledge through studying is more noble and enriching than anything else in the world. As a result, in recent time’s certificates, diplomas and professional degrees have become extremely important as they help to enhance ones professional and personal growth. In order to discover the correlation between personal growth initativeness, self esteem and academic achievement among students of technical training programs present study was conducted. The important objective was to see the predictive ability of personal goal initiative and self esteem in determining student’s academic achievement. It was hypothesized that there was positive relationship between personal growth initiative, self esteem and academic achievement and findings of the study revealed that personal growth initativeness and self esteem had significant positive correlation. These findings were supported by previous literature which found self-esteem as major contributing factor for academic and learning potential outcomes (Lawrence, 1998; 2000). There exists a most vibrant relationship between one’s self-esteem and skill development and it is a type of relationship where both sides of the equation increases on parallel grounds means that as student improves in self-esteem, his academic competence also increases; and as that his/her competency increases, his/her self-esteem also tends to improves (Richard, 2012). Empirical evidence yield positive link between self esteem and education (Heather, 1995) and consistently it has been found that how people value their own self and their attainments in academia strongly linked together in a positive way. Therefore, those who feel confident generally have high level of achievement in comparison to those who lack confidence in themselves and their achievement level is less (Maruyama, Rubin, & Kingsbury, 1981; Spinath, Spinath, Harlaar, & Plomin, 2006). Present study has the similar findings as self esteem of students was significantly related to their academic achievements. A part of hypothesis that personal growth initiative will positively correlate with academic achievement was not supported in present study and has found to be non-significant. These findings not supported the underlying theme i.e., a lot of students knowledgeable about the ways for changing life aspects in order to do well, while other students lack these basic life skills (Robitscheck 2012). Furthermore although a mixture of unique and influential opportunities for socio-personal growth and development are being offered by universities and colleges, still students had to take-up many principal decisions of life at times specifically in relation to their future personal and professional life, present friendships or close relationships, religious membership and associations, physical or mental health choices and family bonding. This kind of toughness and challenges in life demands many life skills and deficiencies of life and

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic achievement</th>
<th>3.01</th>
<th>.4</th>
<th>3.29</th>
<th>.40</th>
<th>-3.03**</th>
<th>.01</th>
<th>-.36</th>
<th>-.07</th>
<th>.50</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

$df = 148, *p < .05, **p < .01$
decision making skills put them at stake of major life hazards for example, a number of students lack knowledge and skills to make effectively change their lives, lack wisdom and initiative to change and ultimately fail to equilibrium their lives. This ultimately made them handicapped and most of them lose their interest about grades/CGPAs. Basically these students tends to be short of the initiative ability for personal growth and consequently various of them indebted in stress, anxiety about vague future as they leave college without having obvious sense or skills to face challenges of life in a more progressive way (Lawrence, 2000).

Results of present research found that though over all personal growth initiative was not related to academic achievement but its subscales of planfulness and intention behavior had significant positive relationship with academic achievement of students. Researches done by Robitscheck and colleagues (1998, 1997, 2012) found that students having high self esteem also have high initiative for personal growth, posses wisdom and intellect to draw directions of future life, desired goals and potential roles along executable and rationale action plan. Regression analysis of present study further confirmed the findings of Robitscheck as it was evident that definite personal growth initativeness in the name of planfulness and self-esteem were significant and positive predictors of academic achievement with 10% variance. This asserts that those students who plan properly for their professional, educational, personal and social growth by availing opportunities at the right place and time definitely secure the future goal achievements and in this major role as being attentive and vigilant cannot be ignored. Social cognitive theory (SCT; Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998) also state that as the person is active, vigilant, and motivated towards its objective of life he/she put forth all the efforts to achieve them by utilizing all the energies and capabilities, which in turns gives him a deep sense of accomplishment that is purely related to boost up his/her self efficacy and self esteem. Drawing from SCT, Bandura and others (Bandura, 1977, 1982, 1986; Bandura, & Locke, 2003) also found the same trends.

Present research also aimed to see gender differences on the constructs under study and findings revealed that girls had high level of self esteem and academic achievement in comparison to boys. It was further found that boys showed high capability for utilizing resources and opportunities at the right time effectively for personal growth process. However, no significant differences were revealed in overall personal growth behavior and with specific importance related to readiness for change, planfulness and intentional behavior towards goals achievements across gender. These findings are supported by research as it has been found that boys and girls both take personal growth continuum as important factor in their life and try hard to maintain and sustain it, however their ways and emphases may differ in goal achievement process (Robitscheck, et al. 2012)

VI. Conclusion
Research findings showed that personal growth initiative and self esteem are inter-related and self esteem also positively relates with ones academic achievement. It was further found that though overall personal growth doesn’t relate with academic achievement but its components of planfulness and intention behavior had significant and positive relation with academic achievement. Most importantly it was revealed that planfulness component of personal growth initiative along with self esteem was found to be significant positive predictor of academic achievements among technical training students. T-test analysis revealed significant gender differences in terms of self esteem,
academic achievement, and capability to utilize resources and opportunities at the right
time effectively for personal growth process.

VII. Limitation and Suggestions
Like any other social sciences research present study also has some limitations.
Firstly, most of our researches are non funded which, at times face problems like low
response rate, small sample size, limited coverage of large geographical area and
population frame which affected the reliability and generalization of results. The sample
of study was limited to colleges and universities of Sargodha city therefore it is suggested
that future research may focus on large sample size, and representativeness of major
cities, both govt. and private sector colleges/technical training institutes and universities
to ensure the Personal Growth Initiative factor. Secondly, properties of PGI-II were only
tested with college students, but this research fits with most prior research with PGI and
represents only a starting point. Further studies in this dimension should also carry out
analysis on age, educational degree type, geographical affiliation i.e., urban rural, family
relations, birth order among technical training students. Moreover, it is suggested that
present study was carried out by using cross section research design which is short of
inferring causality regarding the variables in the Personal Growth Initiative as whole data
was collected at one point in the time. Therefore, it is suggested that longitudinal research
design may be incorporated in future research to check constructs under present study
and their respective change at the time of entry at institute, during the degree attainment
process and at the end of degree completion or exit from the institute.

VIII. Implication of the Study
Present study result are important as they offer some practical implications to be
carried out by educational ministry to set up and furnish multiple education policies and
teaching strategies to increase student’s motivation for learning and to secure their
personal development and growth. Especially, efforts and focus for the improvement of
educational environment, course plan/design, and teaching content as they should be
arranged to match with intrinsic and extrinsic properties of student will be helpful in
reducing waste of educational resources in general and student burnout in specific. On the
whole present study results stressed that psychological and environmental factors are
partially or fully linked to student personal growth initativeness, self esteem and
academic achievement with reference to their biological disposition as gender.

Findings are also helpful for teachers and authorities of technical institutes to
identify what problems are faced by students, so that they can help them to cope up with
their problems through proper career counseling and guidance services arrangements.

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