

## **Impact of Self Efficacy on Personal Growth among Distance Learners**

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Self-efficacy is the person's complete belief on his or her abilities that he or she succeeds in a specific situation. Different activities covered by Personal growth which develop aptitudes, improve identity and boost our quality of life. The present study was intended to explore the impact of self-efficacy on personal growth among distance learners. It was deeply focused on new emerging trend of distance learning in Pakistan. Data was collected through simple random sampling from participants (males and females) aged 20-32. For the purpose of data collection two scales were used in this research i.e., Personal Growth Initiative Scale (PGIS -II; Robitschek, Ashton, Spering, Geiger, Byers, Schotts, & Thoen, 2012) and Self Efficacy scale (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 2000). Analysis of the data revealed that there is a significant impact of self-efficacy on personal growth. No gender differences were found on personal growth Initiative and self-efficacy. The findings conclude that the present study will be fruitful in uplifting the society's emerging trend of distance learning and to provide quality education to the door step of every member of the society.

*Keywords:* self-efficacy, personal growth, distance learning

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Roots of Self-efficacy and personal growth initiative are found in Positive Psychology. The scholarly emphasis of Positive Psychology is mostly on human strengths and this emphasis quickly grown up when in 1999 Martin Seligman was the president of American Psychological Association. Seligman said that psychologists should enhance their previous focus and try to explore more strength of human beings. (Shroey, Little, Snyder, Kluck & Robitschek, 2007). According to the school of positive psychology, it has been predicted that in the new century researchers and psychologists start focusing on the strengths of communities, individuals and societies and in this way positive psychology will flourish (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). In the same way, a new concept of Personal Growth Initiative (PGI) has attracted the attention of the researchers.

In order to provide large number of people with good quality of education various improved methods of media learning and different technologies are being used by distance education. People who face problems from getting admission in conventional school system or due to some family issues or socio-economic circumstances then they choose distance education. (Federal Ministry of Education, 2002). Distance learners are adults of different social status have different backgrounds and have different responsibilities where conventional school students just go through the formal education system. Distance learners enrolled in these programs with particular mission and specific objectives. Thus, self-efficacy and personal growth may be the essential aspects in the academic achievement of students of distance education.

A study by Kim & W. Frick (2011) focused on fluctuations in motivation of students through Online Learning. Results of their research suggested that there is a positive change in motivation of students during the self-directed e-learning (SDEL), which predict learner's agreement with SDEL. The significance of syllabus plan for learning performance in developing countries is demonstrated by the vital success factors for e-learning. Bhuasiri, Xaymoungkhoun, Zo, Rho, and Ciganek (2012), believed that in order to implement e-learning effectively in the developing countries some essentials like technology, awareness, changing learner's behavior and motivation are very necessary.

Students of distance education who have high level of self-efficacy for good skills in information manipulation and information seeking and these students show higher self-efficacy during online learning. Furthermore, students with high self-efficacy have higher

knowledge related to variety of digital resources. In addition, students with low self-efficacy have interest in learning knowledge through library resources. (Tang, & Tseng, 2013). A study was conducted by Robitscheck and colleagues (1998, 1997, 2012) which explored that higher the self-esteem of the students the higher the personal growth initiative, and these types of students hold good sense of knowledge and intelligence to draw guidelines of future life, desired goals and along with executable and validated action plan they also have good potential roles.

Researchers explored that people who have high personal growth initiative they have good social, emotional, and psychological well-being (Robitscheck & Keyes, 2009) emotional distress and psycho-social problems do not really bothered them. (Robitscheck & Kashubeck, 1999). Researches in positive psychology also suggest that well-being of individuals is proficiently build by personal growth initiative (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi,2000). Distance learners while completing their studies juggle into numerous works at a time and also have family commitments. During this phase in life several studies confirmed the vital role of motivation in them (Dearnley & Matthew, 2000; Lyall & McNamara, 2000; Richardson, 2007; Sankaran & Bui, 2001).In order to provide learner with a support within the distance learning system, incorporation of motivation worked as an essential component (Simpson, 2008). However, effectiveness of online and distance learning and how it effects student's learning was documented by O'Malley &McCraw (1999). The focus of present study is to check the effect of learners' characteristics especially self-efficacy beliefs about Distance Learners on their personal growth in Distance Learning.

### **Construct of Personal Growth Initiative (PGI)**

Cognitive, affective or behavioral change within a person is known as personal growth (Prochaska & Diclemente, 1986). Usually, this change in self is believed to be positive, with movement in the direction of being "more complete and fully functioning" at least from the standpoint of the individual who is altering. Personal growth is divided into three parts: intentional growth and fully in awareness, unintentional growth but in awareness and unintentional growth and out of awareness. As a consequence of unintentional and intentional process personal growth can occur. When a person show more concern only with intentional self-change, he/she during the life time can easily engage

himself in the self-change process, intentionally and actively (Robitscheck, 1999).

Personal growth initiative is an intentional, active engagement which works as developing and in changing a person (Robitscheck, 1998). Active search for self-growth experiences is known as Personal Growth Initiative. A wide inclination to refine one's self is PGI. PGI is the set of developed skills which includes attitude, cognition, motivation and behavior that an individual carry throughout the lifespan (Robitscheck, Ashton, Martinez, Murrey & Shotts, 2009). A person is supposed to be on the way of personal growth initiative when he intentionally involves himself in the growth process. Three prominent points of intentional growth include knowledge related to the process of personal growth (Knowledge related to particular things which need to be changed, Knowledge related to the actions which convey personal growth, General knowledge related to the improvement of self), intentional behavior and to value the process of personal growth (Value the process, consequences of personal growth). During the different domains of life an attained set of skills for the improvement of self is PGI. Components included are: readiness for Change (in order to get involved in personal growth process the person should be able to evaluate his/her own psychological preparedness); plan fullness (individual should be able to prepared and planned while doing self-change efforts); using resources (should be able to find and access different external resources i.e. materials and other individuals) and Intentional Behavior (make plans to change self, actual follow-through, and behaviors).

The above four components operate together, rather than consecutively, in order to enhance personal growth (Robitschek et al., 2009). It was found from the previous studies that personal growth initiative show correlation with several variables such as career exploration, psychological well-being, parental alcoholism, mental health, self-efficacy, family functioning etc.

### **Self-Efficacy**

Individuals how feel, behave, how they motivate themselves and think determines their self-efficacy This concept is explained as people have firm belief on their abilities that they are able to complete a specific task in time. This phenomenon is built from different sources of information (Bandura,1993, 1994; Bandura & Locke, 2003). Self-

efficacy has turned out to be one of the most commonly studied variables in the psychological, organizational and educational sciences, over the past 20 years (Scherbaum, Charash & Kern, 2006). Confidence of a person in his/her own abilities is self-efficacy. A difference is made by self-efficacy construct about how people think, act and feel. More challenging tasks have been adopted by people who have high self-efficacy. High level of goals has been set by them and they stick to their goals. Their plans and actions are pre-shaped and once they achieve one goal they put their more effort to achieve the next goal as soon as possible. If any failure occurs to them, they improve very rapidly and continue to remain stick to their aims (Bandura, 1997).

Self-efficacy can be task specific or domain specific. To deal efficiently with various stressful situations without losing stability in sense of personal competence is Generalized Self-Efficacy (GSE) (Sherer et al., 1982). Complete belief in one's ability is GSE where when person's main focus is only on a task is known as Specific Self-Efficacy. *General Self-Efficacy* (GSE) refers to people's capability to judge their potentials in various fields of life so as to know how efficient they are. A basic belief is being personified by GSE that is essential for all peoples. (Luszczynska, Scholf & Schwarzer, 2005).

An extensive study was conducted by Malik et al., (2013) in order to analyze how academic achievement of students of technical training institutes is effected by self-esteem and personal growth. Results of the study revealed significance differences in relationship of self-esteem and academic achievement, whereas, no significance difference was found in terms of personal growth.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study was aimed to explore the relation between self-efficacy and personal growth initiative. It was also aimed to investigate which level self-efficacy has impact on personal growth Initiative. It was assumed that there would be a significant relationship between Personal Growth Initiative and Self-Efficacy. Furthermore, it was also assumed that self-efficacy has significant impact on Total Personal Growth Initiative. Moreover exploring gender differences was also one of the main objectives of the present study.

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

The present study is an exploratory quantitative research. Survey method was used to collect the information. Simple random sampling was used to collect data from the participants.

### **Participants**

The data was collected from 300 participants selected from distance learning programme, Bahauddin Zakariya University Multan, using simple random sampling. The sample included equal number of both genders, i.e. 150 males and 150 females in order to minimize gender bias among the respondents. All were enrolled students in DLP BZU. The participants were aged between 20 to 32 years and their educational level varied and data was collected during their class timings.

### **Instruments**

For the purpose of data collection two scale were used in this study i.e., Personal Growth Initiative Scale (PGIS -II; Robitschek, Ashton, Spring, Geiger, Byers, Schotts, & Thoen, 2012), Self-Efficacy (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 2000) and demographic information form.

### **Demographic Variables**

Demographic variables included gender, education, age, socioeconomic status, marital status, and job status. Each of these variables were assessed by the single item. The only variable measured in terms of continuous was age whereas other demographic variables were measured in terms of dichotomized thus; gender (coded 1 = male; 2 = female), marital status (coded 1 = single; 2 = married), education (coded 1 = graduate; 2 = postgraduate degree), job status (coded 1 = student 2 = teacher). Economic status (coded 1 = lower class; 2 = middle class; 3 = upper class)

### **Self-Efficacy Scale**

This scale consisted of 10 items based on English version, general self-efficacy beliefs are measured by this scale developed by

Schwarzer and Jerusalem in 2000. The items of the scale evaluate the degree to which an individual feel and how a person better cope with hardships faced in life, able to perform tough tasks and able to achieve desired goals. Coefficient alpha reliability of scale is reported by author in different studies estimates between .75 and .90. in scoring, higher the scores on the scale indicates higher the levels of general self-efficacy beliefs where lower the cut of scores indicate lower level of beliefs.

### **Personal Growth Initiative Scale**

It is an independent variable consisted of 9 items and established by Robitschek, (1998). This scale has a good reliability and validity construct (Robitschek, 1998, 1999; Martin, 2009). This scale is consisted of 6 point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Higher the scores higher is the level of personal growth initiative where lower the scores lower will be the personal growth initiative.

### **Procedure**

Data was collected by using questionnaire method during the working hours of Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan. To carry out the study, formal permission was obtained from head of the distance learning programme. The instruments were administered on the distance learner participants in their departments including social sciences and natural sciences. Aims and objectives of the study were told to participants before the administration of the questionnaires. Participants were assured about the confidentiality of their responses and were informed that the information collected from them will be displayed in group. A total number of 320 questionnaires were distributed among participants with attached consent forms. The respondents were requested to fill the questionnaire in their free time with honesty and when completed submit to the contact person. Total of 300 filled questionnaires were received and analyzed following the procedures of SPSS.

### **Results**

The current research measured the relationship between Personal growth initiative and personal efficacy. The results obtained through statistical analysis of data via SPSS are as under.

Table 1

*Correlation Matrix of Personal Growth Initiative and Personal Efficacy Scale*

Varuables	1	2
1 Personal Growth Initiative	-	.56**
2 Personal Efficacy Scale		-

Note. \*\* $p < .01$

The table 1 depicts that personal growth initiative and personal efficacy had a significant positive correlation. It means that those who have positive personal growth initiative, also have positive personal efficacy

Table 2

*Regression Analysis of Personal Efficacy*

Predictors	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	p
(Constant)	-.06	3.64		-.01	.985
Personal Growth Initiative Scale	1.05	.09	.56	11.69	.001

Note.  $R^2 = 0.315$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.312$ ,  $p < 0.001$

The table 2 indicates that Personal growth initiative regressed upon Personal efficacy. Results revealed that Personal growth initiative has strong impact on Personal efficacy.

Table 3

*Mean, Standard Deviation and t- Value for the Score of Males and Female on the Personal Growth Initiative Scale*

Gender	N	M	SD	T	p
Male	151	40.52	5.90		.125
Female	149	39.39	6.75	1.54	.125



The table 3 shows the results for the comparison between male and female on personal growth initiative, and no significant difference was found. ( $df=298$ ,  $t=-1.540$ ,  $p>0.05$ ).

Table 4

*Mean, Standard Deviation and t-Value for the Score of Males and Females on the Personal Efficacy Scale.*

<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Male	151	43.22	10.89		
Female	149	40.81	12.83	1.752	.081

( $df=298$ ,  $***p<.001$ )

The table 4 shows the results for the comparison between male and female on Personal efficacy, and no significant difference was found. ( $df=298$ ,  $t=-1.752$ ,  $p>0.05$ ).

Table 5

*Mean, Standard Deviation and t- Value for the Score of Married and Unmarried on the Personal Growth Initiative.*

<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Single	246	43.14	11.54		
Married	54	36.96	12.47	3.09	.002

( $df=298$ ,  $***p<.001$ )

The table 5 shows the results for the comparison between single and married students on personal growth initiative, and significant difference was found( $df=298$ ,  $t=-1.540$ ,  $p<0.05$ ).

Table 6

*Mean, Standard Deviation and t- Value for the Score of Married and Unmarried on the Personal Efficacy Scale.*

<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Single	246	40.48	6.28619		
Married	54	37.57	6.16931	3.510	.001

( $df=298$ ,  $***p<.001$ )

The table 6 shows the results for the comparison between single and married students on personal efficacy, and significant difference was found. ( $df=298$ ,  $t=-1.540$ ,  $p<0.05$ ).

### Discussion

The study was under taken to investigate the impact of self-efficacy on personal growth among distance learners. 300 respondents were randomly sampled from the university distance learners. Data was analyzed on SPSS to get the results. Finally, the study concluded that self-efficacy effects personal growth initiative. Moreover, self-efficacy and personal growth are positively correlated. The aim of the research was to explore if there would be any relationship between Personal Growth Initiative and Self-Efficacy. It was also examined that at which level self-efficacy predicted total PGI.

Results for the correlation (table 1) revealed that there is a positive correlation between self-efficacy and personal growth. People with more self-efficacy also show personal growth initiative as high. As self-efficacy is the self-belief, personal growth will automatically be high if the former will be high. This result supports the first hypothesis that self-efficacy and personal growth are significantly correlated.

In table 2, it was found that self-efficacy has significant impact on personal growth. Self-efficacy strongly effects personal growth. These findings highly support the second hypothesis that self-efficacy has significant impact on personal growth.

Table 3 shows the results for the comparison between male and female on personal growth initiative, and no significant difference was found. ( $df=298$ ,  $t=-1.540$ ,  $p>0.05$ ). The reason is that both males and females have abilities to improve quality of life and contribute to the realization of dreams and aspirations. The results of table 4 for the comparison between male and female students on personal efficacy revealed no significant difference. ( $df=298$ ,  $t=-1.540$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). The reason is that both male and female students believe in their abilities. Both have ability to succeed in specific situations or accomplish a task.

According to table 5, the results for the comparison between single and married students on personal growth initiative showed significant difference. ( $df=298$ ,  $t=-1.540$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). single students were found with more personal growth than married. The reason is that single people have less responsibilities and less household burden than married ones. Single people are also full of energy and have high level of

motivation. Therefore, they can contribute more in uplifting the society. Table 6 shows the results for the comparison between single and married students on personal efficacy, and significant difference was found. ( $df=298, t=-1.540, p<0.05$ ). single people have higher level of motivation and self-belief and they want to participate actively. Married people, on the other hand have less personal efficacy possibly due to personal life disturbance or other responsibilities.

This study has some limitations. The study was primarily limited by its small sample size. In this study, participants were selected from specific region (Multan) only to investigate the variables. An earlier start in the data collection would have taken more time. A larger sample with range would have advanced our results. Secondly, data was collected through simple random sampling that was according to our convenience.

A greater depth of information could have been taken by choosing focus groups having representative participants and discussing each group separately. Furthermore, any other suitable research design could gather more accurate data, for example, personal interviews. Distance learning is a newly emerging trend in Pakistan. It provides quality education to those students who are living in far areas and want to gain access to highly reputed universities for higher education. This article will help in maintaining self-efficacy and personal growth balance among distance learners.

### **Conclusion**

The current study was aimed to investigate the impact of self-efficacy on personal growth. This study will open a new door of education in under developing country; Pakistan as distance learning education in new concept in our society. Various essential aspects involved in personal growth include mental, social, spiritual growth, physical, and emotional growth that permits a person to live a creative and satisfying life within the customs and rules of their society and this can only be achieved through the development of life skills.

Different activities covered by Personal growth which develop aptitudes, improve identity and boost our quality of life. Self-efficacy refers to a person's full belief in his or her abilities that he or she can easily succeed in a specific situation. Literature provides many researches are there investigating different factors in distance learners but the current study is highly focused on distance learning students'

personal growth and their self-efficacy that were not previously studied together.

This research will be helpful for management of distance learning classes for people according to their marital status as single people will contribute more towards the psychological health of society. The reason behind is that single people are more energetic and more hopeful in finding their bright future.

The study will also be fruitful in uplifting the society's emerging trend of distance learning and to provide quality education to every door step of the society.

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