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## Factors Affecting Personal Initiative Among Employees: An Exploratory Study

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### ABSTRACT

The current study explores the different factors that affect personal initiative (PI), specifically with respect to higher education. Since last two decades, the higher education is continuously witnessing transformations which may be due to changes in technology or changes in pedagogy or changes in curriculum. With such transformations taking place in ecosystem, it becomes very challenging for the employees to deliver up to the mark education. In the context of such challenges the role of personal initiative among the employees becomes very important. Reason being, the traditional methods may not be sufficient to help the organizations in overcoming such challenges. Previous studies have suggested intrinsic motivation and learning goal orientation to be two important factors predicting PI. The conclusions of current study are beneficial to the managers in higher education in helping them to enhance personal initiative in their organizations.

**Keywords:** Personal Initiative, Intrinsic Motivation, Learning Goal Orientation.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The twenty first century economy is witnessing huge transformations with the applications of new technology in almost every sector. The pace of the change of the technology has been accelerated to a great extent. This rapidly changing industry environment has created the demand of graduates which are ready to handle these transformations and work in this changed environment. The expectations of industry from graduates have increased a lot, not only with respect to practical abilities but also in relation to personality and psycho – social skills (Karen et al. 2017). To meet the expectations of the industry, the higher education sector, which prepares the graduates for the industry, need to adapt itself in this transforming environment (Le and Miller, 2000; Enders, 2004). This adaptation will certainly require the transformations in the processes of delivery of education. Globally, the higher education sector is witnessing these transformations in terms of online teaching,

webinars, and online certifications and so on (Roll and Wylie, 2016). The effective implementation of these new technology-based delivery methods in higher education sector demands a lot of effort in the part of teachers. This is mainly correct in developing nations where the penetration of technology in higher education is still in nascent stage. The teachers will have to change their well - established methods of delivery and will have to shift to new platforms. Moreover, the teachers will also have to shed their customary roles and implement different ground-breaking activities (Filho et al., 2018). For any higher education institution, to be successful in such environments, it becomes very important that the teachers are proactive and exhibit initiative for the organization to successfully navigate these evolutions (Natkin and Kolbe, 2016). The employees who will be taking personal initiative (PI) will not only develop themselves but will also fulfill the growing expectations of different stakeholders including graduates and industry. As a result, it will aid universities and colleges in keeping up with the evolving environment. (Glassey and Haile, 2012; Cebrian et al., 2015). Personal initiative is one of the important personality characteristics that induce individuals to take action towards the tasks which need to be resolved and for which outcome may not be very certain.

There is no ideal service or manufacturing system because organizations are constantly developing to keep up with the shifting atmosphere. As a result, there is a certain necessity PI among personnel to adjust the organization to the surroundings (Organ, 1988), because PI entails the application of diligent, imaginative, and vibrant techniques to overcome issues as they arise (Frese, 2001). Professionals with a greater level of initiative work better on their tasks. Because of the two reasons described above, PI is thought to be linked with organization performance (Motowidlo and Scotter, 1994). The significance of PI is growing as current organizations demonstrate a high degree of independence (Frese, 1997). Kremp and McClelland (1986) also proposed that outstanding employees are differentiated.

PI has been compared to certain other notions such as citizenship behavior since it leads to efficiency of the organization (Organ, 1988). However, PI is unique for two distinct reasons. To begin with, PI adds to long-term favorable findings for an organization, whereas OCB relates to relatively brief positive approach at work. Second, OCB is characterized by compliance, whereas PI frequently denotes a defiant attitude toward the boss (Peters and Waterman, 1982).

In recent times, when organizations are attempting to adjust in a rapidly shifting environment, PI has become critical since it involves positivity and perseverance to change the organization and self in order to achieve favorable outcomes. It is about being in control of completing tasks rather than merely looking at them.

Experts agree that a person's conduct is affected by personal as well as external reasons (Pervin, 1989). Previous research on PI have focused on personal factor such as active temperament or organizational factors like role of leadership, job control as well as workplace environment. Hong et al. (2016) offered a wide perspective on PI by addition of

the personal, experiential, and environmental variables in an establishment. Whereas Parker et al. (2010) centered on motivations that result to PI, Hong et al. (2016) centered on innovative environment as well as other initiative-enhancing factors such as leadership. Workers are reflexive and responsive to their workplace, according to traditional approaches to motivating employees like equity theory and goal setting theory. Initial goal setting theory essentially clarified that objectives are established for workers and that those objectives must be met by them. Correspondingly, expectancy theory focused on the incentives that the organization would provide. However, there is growing awareness of the part that workers have in shaping and influencing their workplace culture by establishing their own objectives and creating their own incentives.

Personal initiative can be considered as an activity which motivates any employee to take a self-starting as well as defined line to their job. Such approach is in line to the organization's purpose and goals (Frese et al. 1997). PI was discovered to be associated with the effectiveness of an organization. Because no system can be perfect, organizations are constantly seeking out ways to enhance their procedures. So, for these advancements to occur, workers must primarily take charge so that innovative concepts and procedures can be implemented. PI has additionally been linked to more positive consequences (Hong et al., 2016). It is believed to be triggered for example, by employee engagement, which results to work system innovative behavior. Any person's self-appraised PI is related to dedication to all essential aspects of the company (Den Hartog and Belschak, 2007).

Previous research has also suggested PI as a set of manners that are consistent by the establishment's goals, have a lengthier alignment, are focused on goals, and are proactive. It is unyielding throughout the challenges and disadvantages, and it is distinguished by self-starting and innovative activity (Frese, et al., 1996).

## **2. ANTECEDENTS OF PI**

PI emphasizes vibrancy, which implies that an individual should be responsive. Such an individual would be worried about foreseeable problems and would vigorously strive to avoid them rather than reacting when they occur. These efforts or fresh concepts to enhance work may be disliked by higher authority or coworkers, creating barriers that must be resolved to carry out initiative. There must be a motivating factor that drives people to undertake such risky actions of deviating from their colleagues and bosses (Parker et al., 2010). This behavior should have been considered with specific goals in mind which are consistent with the company objectives.

These objectives could exist addition to a person's assigned specified job. Such inspirational states must be comprehended in relation to the specific surroundings and with the institution's clearly delineated vision and goals in mind (Parker et al., 2010).

The significant roots of PI are the care and guidance provided at workplace, skill sets, and character related variables that contribute to directions which will result in higher levels of PI. The ability to control one's work, its ambiguity, and the assistance given by the firm and leader were all necessary support at workplace for the growth of PI. These three foundations get people moving and allow them to overcome obstacles while taking the lead (Frese, 2001). Various personality and organizational characteristics have indeed been discovered to affect PI in earlier research. Ego, general positivity, the desire for achievement, adaptability, proactive behavior, and action styles such as orientation towards objectives are a few of these personality-related variables (Crant, 1995). Job involvement and self-efficacy lead to higher PI, which leads to better results (Lisbona et al., 2018).

The introduction of new concepts and operational procedures has traditionally been difficult because there is a possibility of failure. As a result, there needs to be some motivating factor that drives people to take these risks. These inspirational states are divided into three categories. First, the person is motivated to do it; next, the person has a rationale to do it; finally, the person is thrilled to do it (Parker et al., 2010). Initial component, "can do it," is known as "role breadth self-efficacy (RBSE)", the second, "reason to do it," is known as "intrinsic motivation", and the third, "energized to do it," is known as "activated positive affect".

### **3. INTRINSIC MOTIVATION (IM)**

Intrinsic motivation centred on the natural interests of the people in different actions that deliver innovation and experiment. The actions which are intrinsically motivated don't need peripheral rewards; rather, such actions talk about an individual's feeling about themselves and their area of interests (Deci and Ryan, 2010). Intrinsic motivation is based upon the human needs for capability and self-sufficiency, which grows when it leads to satisfaction. It contains an enduring progression of looking for challenges and interesting activities that deliver inspiration and after conquering those activities launching another journey. Intrinsic motivation is an outcome of an interaction between an individual and an activity. When people are doing an activity which they find interesting, they are intrinsically motivated (Deci and Ryan, 2010).

#### **Effect of Intrinsic Motivation (IM) on PI**

Intrinsic motivation deals with study of why individuals persevere with specific proactive goals. Sometimes people may be able to develop new methods but may not have any strong motive to do that. Therefore, for happening of proactive actions individuals need to look into the value that they may get out of their proactivity. The temporal construal theory also proposes that the desired reason behind any goal has stronger impact on actions in comparison to the achievability of that goal, particularly when goals are long - term in nature.

The reason facets of any deed are stronger and more vigorous in comparison to why aspects (Deci and Ryan, 1985). As a result, in proactive objective progressions, cause of motivation will be a more significant factor in comparison to “can do” reasons, especially in the case of future oriented goals.

People will be greater inclined to pursue proactive objectives when the task is enjoyable and intrinsically stimulating. The theory of self-determination suggests that persons are driven to sustain an ideal amount of stimulus and therefore need of independence and affiliation. Being proactive can fulfil their needs for independence and affiliation by bringing the challenge in job.

#### **4. LEARNING GOAL ORIENTATION (LGO)**

LGO is an aspiration to progress by attaining innovative abilities, understanding new conditions and refining one’s capability (Vandewalle, 1997). In an organization, employees respond differently to situations; some individuals take problem as a challenge and put an extra effort to overcome it while others are unenthusiastic about such situation. These differences among individuals can be explained in terms of goal orientations which include temperaments in the direction of enhancing or indicating ability in such situations (Dweck, 1986). There can be two categories of goal orientations, first is related to learning and second is related to performance. The focus of LGO is on enhancing capabilities by gaining new skills and overcoming challenging situations. The focus of performance related orientation is on showing one’s capability by looking for positive results. The individuals with LGO assume that their ability can be constantly advanced by their hard work and involvement. For such people, effort is an strategy to develop their ability to be master of any task (Vandewalle, 1997).

It has been shown by previous research that LGO can strongly affect the learning process by putting different level of effort during learning (Fisher & Ford, 1998). LGO has revealed the most reliable relationships with motivation to understand and learn new things. High LGO individuals emphasize on developing capability, gaining skills and realizing a wisdom of genius (VandeWalle et al., 2001). These characteristics can be observed in the form of a motivational behaviour in which a person look for tasks, put energy to attain objectives, and continue to work in the time of problems (Dweck, 1986). LGO also impacts the way learners perform tasks and show determination in the course of understanding (Towler & Dipboye, 2001). Depending upon it, we anticipate that motivation to learn will have a positive effect on LGO.

Person having LGO perform an activity with an intention to know something different or to boost their level of proficiency (Wood and Bandura, 1989). They pursue exciting activities to develop their understanding and capabilities and consider mistakes as an ingredient of

learning process. There can be different outcomes of learning goal orientation including better efficiency, more interest, higher level of efforts perseverance and finally better performance (Printrich, 2000). Therefore, such individuals respond to the challenging situations by adapting their response and continuously trying to overcome the challenges. The individuals with higher learning goal orientation prefer exciting activities which nurture their knowledge, even if they are not outstanding in their current skill set (Dweck, 1986). Such individuals take problems as an opportunity to learn due to which they can study and change their strategies (Godshalk and Sosik, 2003).

#### Effects of LGO on PI

Previous research has shown that LGO leads to skill enhancement (Hirst et al., 2009), pursuing self-development knowledge and advanced level of output (Lu et al., 2014), which indicates that it is a robust predictor of self-initiated understanding for upgrading and modernization. Similarly, LGO has been found to be positively associated with work engagement (Jones et al., 2017).

Dweck and Leggett (1988) suggested that the employees with LGO respond to difficulties with positivity, importance, and self-motivation. This sense of positivity and intrinsic motivation converts every challenge into a chance of building competencies. Therefore, in the context of higher education where there is a need of adopting latest technologies by the teachers, it is reasonable to expect that teachers with higher levels of LGO will appreciate the task of learning new technology and take initiatives in this direction (Yi and Hwang, 2003).

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The outcomes of this research contributed substantially to the PI research. There could be various factors that contribute towards PI. This exploratory research found that there are three motivational states that lead to personal initiative. Further the factors contributing to PI include intrinsic motivation and learning goal orientation. The research has significant ramifications for higher education administrators as well. With the dynamic evolution and procedures in higher education, employees must also engage in a variety of tasks. Employees will be required to upgrade themselves for this intent by participating in various types of initiatives. This study suggests the managers to make employees feel more intrinsically motivated and develop learning goal orientation among them so that they are able perform their tasks and take initiative.

Primarily, it is exploratory in nature and hence the findings need to be validated with the help of an empirical study with respect to given environment. The upcoming studies research should also emphasis on recognizing the different types of influences like mediating and moderating influences on personal initiative apart from determining the influencing factors.

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