

Personal Growth Initiative and Curiosity as Predictors of Creativity in University Students

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ABSTRACT

In a fast-paced environment such as educational institutions where ideas are recycled and repurposed to suit the urgent requirements of society, creativity that is built on novelty and functionality needs to be promoted and nurtured. Personal Growth Initiative (PGI) is a positive engagement in one's life for development and seeking greater possibilities. Curiosity is the desire to seek new and challenging information or experiences. The research aims to add to the body of scientific knowledge about creativity by investigating the relationship among creativity, personal growth initiative and curiosity in university students. Among university students between the ages of 18 and 26, standardized scales were used to evaluate domain-specific creativity, personal growth initiative, and curiosity. The results indicated that personal growth initiative and curiosity significantly predicted some domains of creativity. The results also implied that personal growth initiative and curiosity are positively correlated to domain-specific creativity. A positive correlation between curiosity and personal growth initiative was also found. Understanding the value of creativity may benefit educational institutions by integrating into the curriculum activities or initiatives that stimulate and nurture curiosity and personal growth initiative, eventually raising the level of creativity in university students.

Keywords: *Creativity, Personal Growth, Curiosity, University Students*

The capability to conceive and produce ideas that are novel, functional and contribute to the growth of the individual or the society has often been described as creativity (Sternberg, 2010). It is one of the most valuable human resources. For example, Henry Ford found a creative way to manufacture a large number of vehicles by employing the moving assembly line method of production. This innovative approach to the automobile industry contributed to the large-scale production of vehicles that enabled the public to access cars which later became an integral part of daily life. Ward, Finke, and Smith (1995) defined creativity when the products of the process are new and innovative. However, there are subtle distinctions between individuals and the creative process. Some individuals tend to isolate themselves while others seek advice and guidance. Creativity is a multifaceted phenomenon that employs a complex combination of approaches, perspectives, methods and even definitions to arrive at a partial understanding of the process. Creativity has three major stages: preparation, the development (nature and nurture) of critical knowledge and skills; innovation, the development of a creative solution; and creative production (Heilman, 2016). There is an

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intense discussion about what contributes to creativity or what qualifies an individual as creative. It is still under research what makes an individual creative, and what causes and gives rise to the creativity. J.P. Guilford proposed a model called the Structure of Intellect consisting of three dimensions: content, product and process. Content signified that every individual had a separate way of perceiving different kinds of information (Visual, Auditory, Symbolic, Semantic, and Behavioral). The dimension for the product is related to the kind of information individuals process from content types (Units, Classes, Relations, Systems, Transformations, and Implications). Content and products work together to create the processes that the brain has done with the information. It comprises Cognition, Memory, Divergent Production, Convergent Production and Evaluation. Guilford marked Divergent Production as an important marker of creativity. He proposed that creativity wasn't one abstract concept. He also hypothesized that creativity was an amalgamation of the ability to recognize problems, fluency in producing ideas, and flexibility to produce novel responses. This model strongly promoted the idea that creativity had a component of intellect. Unsworth (2014) proposed four archetypes of creativity, based on the problem type and motivation. Responsive Creativity is externally driven and works on a closed problem where the individual has less amount of creative input and only responds to the requirements of the situation. Expected Creativity is externally driven and works on an open problem and the problem is often self-discovered. Contributory Creativity is internally driven and works on closed problems, and no external factors are motivating them to do it. Proactive Creativity is internally driven and works on an open problem type, where individuals search for problems to solve.

In the study conducted by Mynbayeva et al. (2016) creativity was found to be correlated with motivation and creativity level was correlated to emotional intelligence. Dollinger et al. (2009) conducted a study on 250 university students to assess the association between identity styles and creative potential. Results suggested that individuals who are information-seeking in style and have an emphasis on their identity had the highest creative potential and also evidence of past creative accomplishments. Rushton (1990) conducted a study on 211 undergraduate students which indicated a low but consistent positive correlation between creativity and intelligence and creativity and psychoticism. In a study conducted on 278 university students by Dollinger et al. (2014), it was found that creative participants tended to lean towards self-direction and stimulation values while rejecting tradition, security and conformity values. Creative participants also indicated endorsing universalism values and rejecting power values. In a qualitative study conducted by Ethiyar & Baser (2019) to evaluate what university students understand from creativity, conceptualize creativity and their evaluations of creativity in university education. It was found that the university did not contribute to the student's creative potential and the students found the education provided by the university mostly uncreative (Assessment & Students, 2019). Mareque et al. (2019) conducted a study to analyze levels of creativity among students enrolled in Business and Tourism Management degrees. The results indicated that students had higher creative potential and low divergent thinking scores. Divergent thinking was higher in Business Management students than in Tourism Management students for the constructs of fluency and originality. In a study conducted by Cheung & Rudowicz (2003) on 859 university students in Hong Kong, it was indicated that students' verbal creativity declines with the progression of years of study at university and this trend tends to be more consistent among science and technology and social science students. Sola et al. (2017) carried out a research study to investigate levels of creativity and critical thinking among freshman and senior engineering students. Results indicated that freshman engineering students were significantly more creative than senior engineering students and senior engineering students were found to be similar at critical thinking as the freshman students. The growing body of research has examined links of

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creativity to other domains of personality traits and character strengths, however, very limited studies on creativity, personal growth initiative and curiosity were found through literature review. This study sought to methodically examine the relationship among creativity, personal growth initiative, and curiosity to investigate additional factors that can indicate creativity in university students.

Personal Growth Initiative

Personal growth has been defined as “a change within a person that is cognitive, behavioral or affective (Prochaska and Diclemente, 1986). Personal Growth Initiative is defined as “active, intentional, engagement in the process of personal growth” (Robitschek & Robitschek, 2019). The base idea of Personal Growth Initiative is that individuals with higher levels of PGI will seek out a better version of themselves, seeking opportunities and regulating their actions to move towards the version of themselves they desire. Cunff (2019) proposed a structure that comprises four stages, pact, act, react, impact (PARI). The mindframe has been created for individuals to manage and achieve their personal growth in a structured yet flexible way.

Sharma & Rani (2013) found among 960 Indian university postgraduates that Personal Growth Initiative was positively associated with Self-Efficacy. Mabekoje (2007) conducted a study on Nigerian university undergraduates to study the efficacy of self-efficacy, risk-taking behavior, and mental health on personal growth initiative. It was found that personal growth initiative was positively associated with Self-efficacy, risk taking and mental health. In a study involving BSc. Nursing students and Bachelor degree students, it was found that there is a significant positive correlation between Total Resilience, Dimensions of Psychological Wellbeing and dimensions of Personal Growth Initiative (Sapriina, 2020).

Curiosity

Curiosity is a healthy emotional-motivational system linked to the recognition, pursuit, and self-regulation of unfamiliar and difficult situations, according to Kashdan et al. (2010). According to Kashdan et al. (2018), curiosity is the awareness, pursuit, and desire to learn more about brand-new, confusing, complicated situations. Exploration, deprivation sensitivity, stress tolerance, social curiosity, and thrill-seeking are five separate factors that make up the dimensions of curiosity. Exploration comprises of interest in new information and experiences for the sake of learning something new. Deprivation sensitivity refers to the existing gap in knowledge and relieving it by seeking information. Stress tolerance indicates the ability to cope with any form of stress or anxiety in the face of different uncertainties or novelties. Social curiosity is defined as the curiosity to accumulate knowledge about others. Thrill seeking refers to the willingness to take risks to achieve novel experiences.

Jeraj et al. (2016) carried out a study on 331 entrepreneurs from Slovenia and the USA which indicated entrepreneurial curiosity positively influenced innovativeness. A longitudinal study on 123 newcomers from 12 telemarketing organizations conducted by Harrison et al. (2019) indicated specific curiosity predicted information seeking behaviors and diverse curiosity promoted positive framing. Positive framing had a positive relationship with job performance and extra-role behavior of taking charge. Supérieure, (2016) researched on 480 participants holding 188 different jobs to study the relationship between individual work-related creativity and worker innovation. It was found that individual work-related creativity was a positive predictor of worker innovation.

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Purpose

The review of literature has indicated a dearth of empirical findings to establish a significant relationship between creativity, personal growth initiative, and curiosity. The purpose of this study is to bridge the gap of knowledge in this area of study. Furthermore, the research explores to understand if there is any significant impact of personal growth initiative and curiosity.

Hypothesis

- There will be a significant and positive relationship between domain-specific creativity and personal growth initiative in university students
- There will be a significant and positive relationship between domain-specific creativity and curiosity in university students
- There will be a significant and positive relationship between personal growth and curiosity in university students
- There will be a significant impact of personal growth initiative on domain-specific creativity
- There will be a significant impact of curiosity on domain-specific creativity
- There will be a significant impact of personal growth initiative on curiosity

Sample

The total sample consisted of 38 university students from Delhi, India falling between the age range of 18-26. The participants were informed about the purpose of the research and consent was taken before the distribution of the questionnaires. The questionnaires were completed using Google Forms and some were distributed in printed forms. Informed consent was obtained from the participants before conduction of the standardized tests. The participants were ensured the confidentiality of their responses.

Measures

- **Kaufman Domains of Creativity Scale (K-DOCS)** (Kaufman et al., 2012) was used to assess self-reported creativity. The scale comprises of 50 items, where the participants rate their creative ability on a scale of 1 (much less creative) to 5 (much more creative). The scale measures domain-specific creativity and is divided into 5 domains: Everyday creativity (interpersonal relationships, work-life balance), Scholarly (writing, analysis), Performance (music/theatre), Math/Science (problem solving, experimental design) and Arts (visual arts, art appreciation)
- **Personal Growth Initiative Scale** developed by Robitschek (1998) was used to measure Personal growth initiative. The self-report instrument comprises of 9 items and uses a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (definitely disagree) to 6 (definitely agree). Sample items in the PGI scale include “I know what I need to do to get toward reaching my goals” and “I have a good sense of where I am headed in my life.” Score for this standardized scale ranges between 9 to 54. Higher scores predict higher levels of Personal growth initiative in individuals.
- **Curiosity and Exploration Inventory** developed by Kashdan et al., (2004) measures respondents’ recognition, pursuit, and integration of new and challenging stimuli and experiences in a 7-item Likert Scale (*Curiosity and Exploration Inventory*, 2004). The scale has been further categorized into two parts: Exploration and Absorption. It uses a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Sample items of the CEI scale include “Everywhere I go, I am out looking for new things or

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experiences” and “When I am actively interested in something, it takes a great deal to interrupt me”.

Procedure

Analysis of Results: The responses obtained from the participants were transferred and analyzed using SPSS statistical analysis software program. Pearson’s correlation was employed to analyze the relationship among all the variables. Linear Regression was employed to investigate the effect of curiosity and personal growth initiative on domains of creativity. The descriptive statistics of the domains of creativity scale, personal growth initiative and curiosity are shown in Table 1. Table 2 indicates the positive correlations among the variables used in the study. Table 3 indicates the linear regression for domain-specific creativity, personal growth initiative and curiosity.

Table 1: N, Mean and Standard Deviation of the Study Variables

	Self/Everyday	Scholarly	Performance	Mechanical/Science	Artistic	Personal Growth Initiative	Curiosity
N	38	38	38	38	38	38	38
Mean	40.5	38.2	29.6	23.5	30.8	38.7	5.01
Standard deviation	8.39	9.53	9.95	8.51	8.17	10.6	1.03

Table 2: Correlation Matrix of the Study Variables

		Self/Everyday	Scholarly	Performance	Mechanical/Science	Artistic	Personal Growth Initiative	Curiosity
Self/Everyday	Pearson's r	—						
	P-value	—						
Scholarly	Pearson's r	0.575***	—					
	P-value	<.001	—					
Performance	Pearson's r	0.486**	0.546**	—				
	P-value	0.002	<.001	—				
Mechanical/Science	Pearson's r	0.325*	0.562**	0.579***	—			
	P-value	0.047	<.001	<.001	—			
Artistic	Pearson's r	0.526***	0.443*	0.388*	0.404*	—		
	P-value	<.001	0.005	0.016	0.012	—		
Personal Growth Initiative	Pearson's r	0.579***	0.425*	0.109	0.073	0.321*	—	
	P-value	<.001	0.008	0.516	0.662	0.049	—	
Curiosity	Pearson's r	0.297	0.504*	0.024	0.099	0.044	0.654**	—
	P-value	0.071	0.001	0.888	0.556	0.792	<.001	—

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 3: Linear Regression of Creativity, Personal Growth Initiative and Curiosity

Predictor	Predictor	β	t	p	R ²	F	p
Personal Growth Initiative	Self/Everyday Creativity	0.579	4.26	<.001	0.335	18.2	<.001
Personal Growth Initiative	Scholarly Creativity	0.425	2.82	0.008	0.181	7.93	0.008
Personal Growth Initiative	Artistic Creativity	0.321	2.04	0.049	0.103	4.15	0.049
Personal Growth Initiative	Curiosity	0.654	5.19	<.001	0.428	26.9	<.001
Curiosity	Self/Everyday Creativity	0.297	1.86	0.071	0.0880	3.47	0.071
Curiosity	Scholarly Creativity	0.504	3.50	3.50	0.254	12.3	0.001

DISCUSSION

The results indicate that Personal Growth Initiative is significantly positively correlated to Self/Everyday Creativity ($r= 0.579, p< .001$), Scholarly Creativity ($r= 0.425, p< .001$) and Artistic Creativity ($r= 0.321, p< 0.049$). No significant correlation was found between Personal Growth Initiative and Performance Creativity and Mechanical Creativity. Thus Hypothesis 1, that there will be a significant relationship between PGI and domain-specific Creativity is partially sustained.

Positive correlation was found between Curiosity and Scholarly Creativity ($r= 0.504, p< .001$). The result is supported by the study conducted by Jeraj et al. (2016) that indicated a positive association between entrepreneurial curiosity and innovativeness in 331 entrepreneurs. Curiosity was not significantly correlated to other domain-specific creativity. Thus Hypothesis 2, that there will be a significant relationship between Curiosity and domain-specific Creativity partially holds true.

A significant positive correlation was found between Curiosity and Personal Growth Initiative ($r=0.654, p< .001$). The result is in line with the previous study conducted by Mohanty et al. (2015) that found a positive correlation between personal growth initiative and curiosity. Thus, hypothesis 3, that there will be a significant relationship between Curiosity and PGI is sustained.

Regression analysis indicated Personal Growth Initiative has a significant and positive impact on Self/Everyday Creativity ($\beta=0.579, t=4.26, p<.001$), Scholarly Creativity ($\beta=0.425, t=2.82, p<0.008$), Artistic Creativity ($\beta=0.321, t=2.04, p<0.049$). Coefficients of determinants ($R^2=0.335$) show that variation of PGI can explain 33.5% variation in Self/Everyday Creativity. Coefficients of determinants ($R^2=0.181$) show that variation of PGI can explain 18.1% variation in Scholarly Creativity. Coefficients of determinants ($R^2=0.103$) show that variation of PGI can explain 10.3% variation in Scholarly Creativity. This model adequately fits the hypothesis 4, that PGI will have a significant impact on domain-specific Creativity. Therefore, PGI was found to be a significant predictor of domain-specific creativity.

Regression analysis indicated Curiosity has a significant positive impact on Self/Everyday Creativity ($\beta=0.297, t=1.86, p<0.071$) and Scholarly Creativity ($\beta=0.504, t=3.50, p<0.001$).

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Coefficients of determinants ($R^2=0.0880$) show that variation of Curiosity can explain 8% variation in Self/Everyday Creativity. Coefficients of determinants ($R^2=0.254$) show that variation of Curiosity can explain 25.4% variation in Scholarly Creativity. Thus, indicating Curiosity has a significant impact on Self/Everyday Creativity ($F=3.47$, $p<0.071$) and Scholarly Creativity ($F=12.3$, $p<0.001$), which partially sustains hypothesis 5.

Regression analysis indicated Personal Growth Initiative has a significant and positive impact on Curiosity ($\beta= 0.654$, $t= 5.19$, $p< .001$). Coefficients of determinants ($R^2=0.428$) show that variation of PGI can explain 42.8% variation in Curiosity. This model adequately fit the hypothesis 6, that PGI will have a significant impact on Curiosity ($F=26.9$, $p< .001$). Therefore, Personal Growth Initiative was found to be a significant predictor of Curiosity in university students. This finding aligns with the previous research conducted by Robitschek & Cook (1999) that indicated that personal growth initiative predicted environment exploration in order to reach a career identity.

There is a dearth in literature investigating the association of creativity and personal growth initiative. This study aimed to contribute to bridge that gap as the results indicated a positive correlation between domain specific creativity and personal growth initiative. However, further studies are required to find a reliable and consistent pattern in their association across different sample types. This study also illustrated that personal growth initiative and curiosity could significantly predict certain domains of creativity, which also has to be further examined in order to reach a more definite and precise understanding. The relevance of the results advances our knowledge of university students' creativity, personal growth initiative, and curiosity. While pursuing university education students collaborate with peers, acquire technical and soft skills, as well as knowledge about the environment which prepares them for the upcoming challenges in several stages of life. Like Simonton (2001) had described that all the conveniences of the modern world are produced from human ingenuity. We tend to indulge in music, drama, comic books, visual arts, and fashion. These are creations of the creative mind and it not only facilitates expression and amusement of individuals but also significantly contributes to the development and advances of our society. In a study conducted by Peterson et al. (2017), to assess the strengths of character and life satisfaction, it was found that curiosity was one of the character strengths that highly linked to life satisfaction. Therefore, including strategies that encourage and sustain creativity, curiosity, and personal growth initiatives within university education curriculum could enhance students' readiness, sense of stability, and likelihood of being better equipped to face challenges in this fast-paced environment. It is important to be mindful of the study's limitations. The sample size is limiting. In order to arrive at a more certain result, future investigations on larger number of participants should be conducted. The fact that all of the study's measurements were self-reported, which limits the method's reliability due to self-report bias, is a further limitation. To better understand how these concepts interact with one another, additional studies including a bigger sample and evidence-based creativity, personal growth initiative, and curiosity are needed. For a more satisfying and meaningful existence, it is essential that we encourage personal growth initiative and curiosity. Creativity is an important factor in daily life and also has a positive effect on a number of other aspects of life. The framework of a university education can be a beneficial tool for encouraging critical thinking, intellectual curiosity, creativity in thinking, and managing daily stress since it is a great learning period for the students.

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Conflict of Interest

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