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## **Relationship between Personal Growth Initiative and Acculturative Stress Level among Immigrants**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The present study aimed to study the relationship between personal growth initiatives (PGI) and acculturative stress (ACS) among Asian and South African immigrants in India. Participants (N=120, Aged=20-30 year, 50% female) completed the Acculturative Stress Scale (1994) developed by Sandhu and Asrabadi and Personal Growth Initiative scale-II (2012) developed by Robitschek. Majority of the immigrants were observed with moderate or high level of personal growth initiative and acculturative stress levels. Interestingly, male immigrants showed high personal growth initiative than to the female immigrants, specifically in domain of using the resources. The study found significant positive relationship between PGI with ACS. Differences were observed among acculturative stress levels of immigrants coming from different continents. The trends on other dimensions of the above two scales were examined in connection with the immigrants from Asian and South African countries.*

**Keywords:** *personal growth initiative, acculturative stress, immigrants.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Personal growth initiative (PGI) construct is concerned to every domain of life. PGI assumed to be build of different transferable skills which are implemented in the variety of growth opportunities by humans in their lives (Robitschek, 1999; Robitschek & Kashubeck, 1999). Personal Growth Initiative is defined as “active intentional engagement in the process of personal growth and self-change” (Robitschek, 1998). Individuals who can change themselves in the same directions which they want to achieve are high in personal growth initiative.

Hardin et al., (2007) suggest that the persons who are higher in Personal Growth Initiatives experience low social pressure by preserving lower self-inconsistencies. Robitschek (1998) considered the PGI as the component of meta-cognition, awareness and planned assurance in conditions of growth enrichment and assumed it as an endeavor toward change and growth across life spheres.

The term Acculturative stress (ACS) was termed by Chicago’s “institution of international education” which means culture shock. When an individual moves from one place to another he/she used to struggle to adapt and adjust in new circumstances on every aspect of life (culture, socially and psychologically). While adjusting in the new situation an individual has

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to face some stress which comes from differences in norms, social customs, values, and education standards between original and host culture.

Toshitaka and Philip (2014) examined 52 East Asian international and 126 North American students for acculturative stress, maladaptive perfectionism, grade point average satisfaction, and depression. The results showed the effect of perfectionism and acculturative stress responsible for more than 30% of the variance related to depression. Also both play an important role in improving the overall well-being of the individual. Yakunina et al. (2013) obtained results showing the personal growth initiative helping an individual in the growth and development process across the multiple domains of the life. Regression analysis indicated that planfulness dimension of personal growth initiative responsible for noticeable difference in adjustment and also high level of using resources dimension of personal growth initiative effect the acculturative stress on adjustment. A limited amount of empirical body was found for the personal growth initiative and acculturative stress related to immigrants of Asian and African societies.

The present study focused on personal growth initiative and acculturative stress, particularly amongst the immigrated members of Asian and South African countries. In context of ever increasing globalization immigration has become a common phenomenon. The current research work attempted to investigate the immigrants in connection with their personal growth initiatives and acculturative stress behaviors. Following objectives were framed to study the PGI and ACS patterns among Asian and South African immigrants in India using the co-relational design.

#### **Objectives:**

- To examine the level of personal growth initiative and acculturative stress among immigrants.
- To compare the male and female participants with regard to personal growth initiative and acculturative stress.
- To investigate difference among immigrants from different continents for their personal growth initiative and acculturative stress.
- To study the relationship between personal growth initiative and acculturative stress of immigrants.

#### **Hypotheses:**

- Personal growth initiatives and acculturative stress do not exist among immigrants.
- There are no statistical gender differences in personal growth initiatives and acculturative stress of immigrants from different continents.
- Immigrants from different continents are equal on their personal growth initiatives and acculturative stress levels.
- There is no significant relationship between personal growth initiatives and acculturative stress of the immigrants.

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## Method

### Participants:

120 immigrants (60 males and 60 females) ranging from age 20 to 30 years were selected by convenient sampling from different departments of the Lovely Professional University campus. Furthermore, male and female participants were equally distributed among Asian and South African countries.

### Tools:

Personal Growth Initiatives scale (Robitschek, 2012) consists of 16 items having four dimensions- intentional behaviour, using resources, readiness for change and Planfulness. Test-Retest reliability ranges from 0.61 to 0.77 and scale has high content validity under Indian conditions which is 0.845.

Acculturative stress scale (Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994) consists of 36 items to be answered on 5-point likert scale including perceived discrimination, homesickness, perceived hate/rejection, fear, stress due to change/culture shock, guilt and non-specific concerns identified as major contributing factors. The reliability coefficient of the scale with Cronbach's alpha ranged from .92 to .94.

## RESULTS

### Descriptive statistics and levels of PGI and ACS:

#### 1. Personal growth initiatives and acculturative stress among immigrants

16.67% of all the immigrants fall under low category of PGI, whereas 72.5% of the immigrants fall in average category. 10.83% of the immigrants have high level of PGI. Thus, the findings reflected majority of the immigrants having either average or high level of personal growth initiatives.

The average scores in ACS range from 100-140. 21.67% of the immigrants fall in high level of acculturative stress, and 58.33% falls in average level of ACS. Only 20% of the participants have low level of acculturative stress. Thus, majority of immigrants were experiencing the acculturative stress.

#### 2. Personal growth initiatives amongst male and female immigrants.

Descriptive statistics for the males and females separately are presented in Table 1. The results showed the male immigrants (M=60.92, SD=4.32) with higher level of personal growth initiatives in comparison to female (M=57.98, SD=9.26) counterparts and the differences were statistically significant at 0.05 level. The hypothesis 'there are no statistical gender differences in personal growth initiatives of immigrants' stands rejected. Figure 1 reports the PGI differences among male and female immigrants.

Table 2 showed the descriptive statistics and t-ratio of four dimensions of personal growth initiatives scale. Significant differences were found among male and female immigrants on second dimension 'using resources' of PGI. (t-ratio=3.185, p<.05). However, dimensions of intentional behaviour, readiness for change and planfulness could not reach to significant

level for differences among male and female immigrants. This shows that male immigrants ( $M=19.92$ ,  $SD=2.52$ ) use the resources better than the female immigrants ( $M=18.07$ ,  $SD=3.72$ ) for their personal growth initiatives. Second hypothesis for differences of PGI among male and female immigrants is partially rejected as the three dimensions out of four are insignificant and gender differences could not be observed.

### **3. Differences in the levels of acculturative stress among male and female immigrants.**

Mean differences and t-statistics are shown in Table 3.1 which reports the insignificant gender differences. Therefore the hypothesis ‘there are no statistical gender differences in acculturative stress of immigrants’ is retained. Male as well as female immigrants showed similar level of acculturative stress.

Male and female immigrants were examined for their acculturative stress levels across the seven dimensions. However, none of the seven dimensions could reflect significant gender differences as results are presented in Table 3.2. This shows that male and female immigrants experience same level of acculturative stress on all dimensions when they are in new culture.

### **4. Differences in the personal growth initiatives among Asian and South African immigrants.**

In order to explore the differences in Asian and South African immigrants in India descriptive statistics and t-ratio were computed and obtained results are shown in Table 4.1.

Results in Table 4.1 make it apparent that immigrants from different continents or countries have similar level of PGI. Asian ( $M=59.09$ ,  $SD=5.37$ ) and South African ( $M=59.75$ ,  $SD=8.70$ ) immigrants could not reflected any significant differences ( $p>.05$ ). The hypothesis that ‘immigrants from different continents are equal on their personal growth initiatives scores’ is retained. Asian and South African PGI levels demonstrated in Figure 2.

It is evident from Table 4.2 that Asian and South African immigrants are significantly different ( $t\text{-ratio}=1.731$ ,  $p<.05$ ) for their personal growth initiative dimension of ‘intentional behaviour’. This shows that Asian immigrants use more resources ( $M=15.40$ ,  $SD=1.39$ ) than as compared to South African immigrants ( $M=14.77$ ,  $SD=2.37$ ). Rest of the three dimensions, using resources, readiness for change and planfulness are found insignificant.

### **5. Difference in the level of acculturative stress among immigrants from different continents.**

To investigate the differences in acculturative stress levels of immigrants from different continents, descriptive statistics and t-ratio were computed and results were organized in Table 5.1. Immigrants from different continents exhibited statistical significant differences ( $t\text{-ratio}= 2.036$ ,  $p<.05$ ) for their scores on acculturative stress scale. The null hypothesis ‘immigrants from different continents are equal on their acculturative stress scores’ stands rejected. Interestingly, Asian immigrants showed higher ( $M=124.04$ ,  $SD=19.49$ ) acculturative stress than compared to South African immigrants ( $M=116.78$ ,  $SD=19.39$ ). Differences are plotted in the Figure 3 below.

The significant differences ( $t\text{-ratio}= 3.318$ ,  $p<.01$ ) were found for first dimension ‘perception towards discrimination’ of ACS of both the group, e.g. Asian and South African immigrants (Table 5.2). Asians yielded higher stress ( $M=29.11$ ,  $SD=4.96$ ) on perception towards discrimination than to the South Africans ( $M=26.17$ ,  $SD=4.73$ ). However, rest of the six

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dimensions of the acculturative stress scale showed no significant differences amongst two groups of continents. This shows that immigrants from different continent face almost equal levels of acculturative stress while enter into a new cultural environment.

#### **6. To study the relationship between personal growth initiative and acculturative stress of immigrants.**

To find out the strength and direction of relationship between personal growth initiative and acculturative stress including their dimensions Pearson's product moment coefficient was computed and the results are presented in Table 6.

Entries in above Table 6 depict that personal growth initiatives has insignificant positive relationship ( $r=0.163$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) with acculturative stress. This shows that immigrants who had the personal growth initiatives they also experienced the acculturative stress but it could not reach at significant level.

Interestingly, 'using resources' dimension of PGI reflected significant positive correlation with ACS ( $r=.233$ ,  $p<.05$ ) and also with homesickness, hate and rejection ( $r=.203$ ,  $p<.05$ ), fear ( $r=.197$ ,  $p<.05$ ), culture shock ( $r=.240$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and with other significant factors ( $r=.223$ ,  $p<.05$ ) dimensions of the ACS. This clearly means that in situations of resource use in the culture other than own, the immigrants develop the stress due to the increased efforts to understand the resources usage. Overall PGI and its dimension of intentional behaviour were noticed with significant positive correlation with hate and rejection dimension of acculturative stress, ( $r=.236$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and ( $r=.258$ ,  $p<.01$ ), respectively. Rest of the dimensions of PGI and ACS could not reach to a significant level and did not show a strong relationship among them. The findings are inconsistent to earlier studies (Robitschek, 1998; Yakunina, et al., 2013) that personal growth initiatives are negatively correlated to acculturative stress and helpful in adjustment.

#### **CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

Findings revealed that PGI and ACS positively related to each other. Personal growth initiatives increments also increase the level of acculturative stress. And for personal growth it is essential to have initiatives along with the movements to countries with more opportunities. Immigrants are on increment because of such facts and therefore, acculturative stress levels are also visible. As much as the use of resource initiative increases in the culture other than one's own, the experience of acculturative stress is expected to be on higher side as the relationship between the two is significantly positive.

Immigrants from different lands have separate behavior patterns towards personal growth initiatives and acculturative stress. Asian immigrants are with higher stress level of culture change whereas South Africans experience the stress in new culture but not as much as Asians. Majority of the immigrants have personal growth initiatives and also experience some amount of acculturative stress. Male immigrants demonstrated higher levels of personal growth initiatives but both, male and female immigrants were not found statistically different on acculturative stress levels.

Coming to a new culture can be demanding, challenging and stressful. Adjust to new climate, situations, communication, food and people need relative increased initiatives, particularly in early phase of migration. In ever changing educational and job scenario, male and female



immigrants have equal level of challenges. In the light of current research findings it is suggested for immigrants to have training on use of resources in new culture so as to reduce the stress. In the face of cultural and interpersonal challenges immigrants are encouraged to develop a sense of resilience, and maintain an optimistic attitude (Lipson & Goodman, 2008). Culture shock, fear, hate and rejection types of sub-dimensions of acculturative stress can be controlled by having changes in personal growth initiative behavior, particularly in early phases of migration. Personal growth initiatives have been defined with conscious improvement and development of talent and abilities in long run (Robitschek, 1998). Hence, acculturative stress would also be lower once the growth initiatives develop the abilities. Furthermore, it is recommended for the immigrants to achieve optimal adjustment they should analyze and increase their personal and multicultural strengths.

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**Table 1. Summary of Personal Growth Initiatives descriptive statistics and t-ratio for male and female immigrants.**

Variable	Male			Female			df	t-ratio	Remarks
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD			
Personal growth initiatives	60	60.92	4.32	60	57.98	9.26	118	2.22	S*

**Table 2. Differences over four dimensions of personal growth initiatives of male and female immigrants.**

Sr. No.	Dimensions of personal growth initiatives	Male			Female			df	t-ratio	Remarks
		N	M	SD	M	M	SD			
1.	Intentional behaviour	60	15.20	1.36	60	14.92	2.49	118	.773	NS
2.	Using resources	60	19.92	2.52	60	18.07	3.72	118	3.185	S**
3.	Readiness for change	60	10.60	1.75	60	10.72	2.08	118	.332	NS
4.	Planfulness	60	15.20	2.22	60	14.28	3.18	118	1.828	NS

**Table 3.1 Summary of descriptive statistics and t-ratio of acculturative stress of male and female immigrants.**

Variables	Male			Female			df	t-ratio	Remarks
	No.	Mean	SD	No.	Mean	SD			
Acculturative stress	60	121.18	20.23	60	118.2	18.42	118	0.844	NS

**Table 3.2 Descriptive statistics for dimensions of acculturative stress among male and female immigrants.**

S. No	Dimensions of acculturative stress	Male			Female			df	t-ratio	Remarks
		N	M	SD	N	M	SD			
1.	Perception towards discrimination	60	27.72	5.62	60	27.12	4.27	118	.586	NS
2.	Homesickness	60	13.62	3.16	60	13.55	3.00	118	.118	NS
3.	Hate and rejection	60	18.48	3.05	60	18.35	3.09	118	.237	NS
4.	Fear	60	13.00	3.09	60	11.98	3.35	118	1.725	NS
5.	Culture shock	60	10.42	2.59	60	9.87	2.59	118	1.165	NS
6.	Perception towards guilt	60	6.22	1.54	60	6.62	1.58	118	1.401	NS
7.	Other significant factors	60	31.80	6.29	60	30.72	5.66	118	.992	NS

**Table 4.1. Descriptive statistics and t-ratio of personal growth initiatives of immigrants from different continents.**

Variable	Asia			South Africa			df	t-ratio	Remarks
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD			
Personal growth initiative	60	59.09	5.37	60	59.75	8.70	118	.491	NS



**Table 4.2. Difference in the level of personal growth initiative dimensions among immigrants from different continents.**

S. No	Dimensions of personal growth initiative	Asian			South African			df	t-ratio	Remarks
		N	M	SD	N	M	SD			
1.	Intentional behaviour	60	15.40	1.39	60	14.77	2.37	118	1.731	S*
2.	Using resources	60	18.82	3.28	60	19.14	3.34	118	.528	NS
3.	Readiness for change	60	10.36	1.91	60	10.91	1.90	118	.855	NS
4.	Planfulness	60	14.51	2.46	60	14.94	3.02	118	.084	NS

**Table 5.1 Summary of acculturative stress score's t-ratio for immigrants from different continents.**

Variables	Asia			South Africa			df	t-ratio	Remarks
Acculturative stress	N	M	SD	M	M	SD	118	2.036	S*
	60	124.04	19.49	60	116.78	19.39			

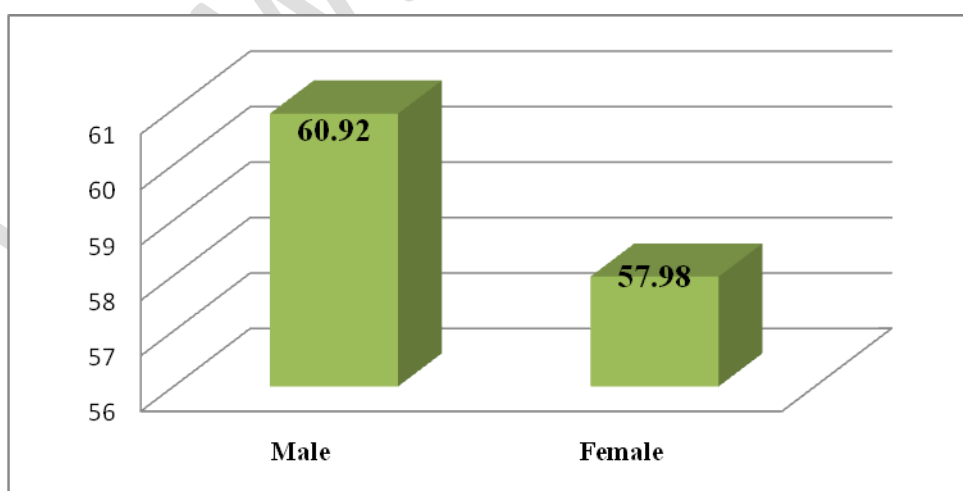
**Table 5.2 Descriptive statistics and t-ratio for seven dimensions of acculturative stress among immigrants from different continents.**

S. No.	Dimensions of acculturative stress	Asian			South African			df	t-ratio	Remarks
		N	M	SD	N	M	SD			
1.	Perception towards discrimination	60	29.11	4.96	60	26.17	4.73	118	3.318	S**
2.	Homesickness	60	13.87	2.84	60	13.46	3.73	118	.715	NS
3.	Hate and rejection	60	18.69	3.06	60	18.23	3.14	118	.809	NS
4.	Fear	60	13.04	2.82	60	12.4	3.64	118	1.488	NS
5.	Culture shock	60	10.22	2.77	60	10.18	2.51	118	0.070	NS
6.	Perception towards guilt	60	6.84	1.17	60	6.09	1.76	118	2.68	NS
7.	Other significant factors	60	32.27	6.15	60	30.49	5.82	118	1.62	NS

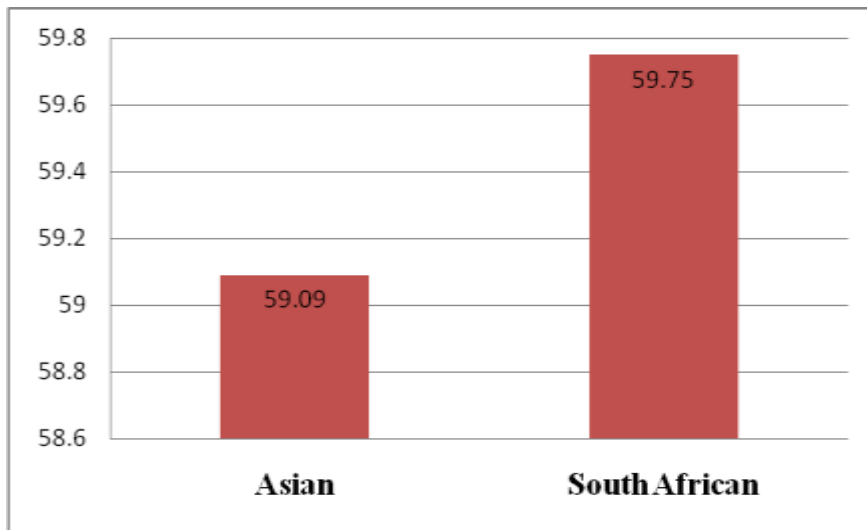
**Table 6. Coefficients of correlation of PGI and ACS and their dimensions**

Pearson correlation		Total Score (Personal Growth Initiatives)	PGI1 (Intentional behavior)	PGI2 (Using resources)	PGI3 (Readiness for change)	PGI4 (Planfulness)
Total score (Acculturative stress)	Pearson correlation	0.163	0.128	.233*	0.006	0.058
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.075	0.164	0.01	0.949	0.531
ACS1(perception towards discrimination)	Pearson Correlation	0.077	0.118	0.105	-0.085	0.051
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.406	0.197	0.254	0.355	0.579
ACS2 (homesickness)	Pearson Correlation	0.092	0.089	.203*	-0.02	-0.047
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.316	0.335	0.026	0.828	0.608
ACS3 (hate and rejection)	Pearson Correlation	.236**	.258**	.203*	0.094	0.132
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.009	0.004	0.026	0.31	0.152
ACS4 (fear)	Pearson Correlation	0.152	0.096	.197*	-0.071	0.147
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.097	0.295	0.031	0.442	0.108
ACS5 (culture shock)	Pearson Correlation	0.161	-0.012	.240**	0.106	0.077
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.079	0.898	0.008	0.25	0.406
ACS6 (perception towards guilt)	Pearson Correlation	0.086	0.073	0.112	0.084	-0.017
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.351	0.43	0.223	0.362	0.856
ACS7 (other significant factors)	Pearson Correlation	0.123	0.074	.223*	0.022	-0.008
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.181	0.423	0.014	0.815	0.933

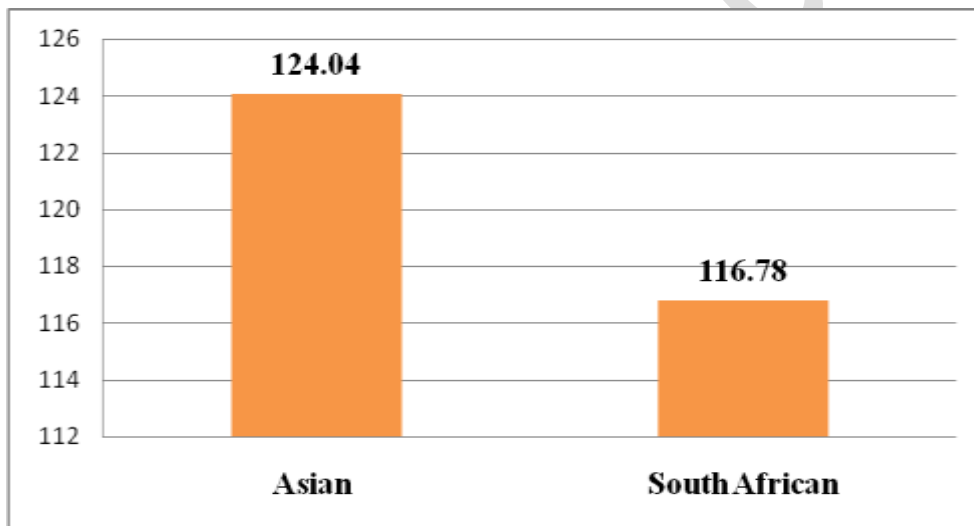
\*\* significant at .001 level and \*significant at .05 level (2-tailed test)



**Figure 1. PGI Mean differences of male and female immigrants**



**Figure 2. PGI Mean differences among immigrants from different continents.**



**Figure 3. ACS Mean differences among immigrants from different continents.**