

Workers with Disabilities Personal Growth Initiative: The Contribution of Family Functioning and Work Empowerment

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Abstract

The study analyzed the relationship between family functioning and work empowerment on personal growth initiative among workers with disabilities. It involved 244 participants selected through purposive sampling, focusing on active workers across various sectors. The researchers utilized Likert scales to measure family functioning, work empowerment, and personal growth initiative, ensuring reliability with Cronbach's Alpha ($\alpha > 0.8$). Normality and linearity assumptions were met before analysis. Multiple regression analysis results showed a significant relationship (F = 32.521, p < 0.01), indicating that family functioning and work empowerment explained 21.3% of the variation in personal growth initiative (R² = 0.213). These findings highlighted the importance of family support and workplace empowerment in promoting personal growth for workers with disabilities, suggesting a need for inclusive policies and support programs to enhance their quality of life. **Keywords**: disability workers, inclusive work practices, personal growth initiative.

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Introduction

In today's workplace, prioritizing the inclusion and empowerment of people with disabilities is essential for fostering a diverse and innovative environment. While there have been significant strides in inclusive policies and practices (World Health Organization, 2011), many workers with disabilities continue to face obstacles that hinder their ability to thrive and reach their full potential (Lindsay et al., 2018). A vital component of overcoming these challenges is the Personal Growth Initiative (PGI), which emphasizes the importance of individuals actively participating in their development journey (Robitschek et al., 2012). By focusing on PGI, organizations can create a supportive culture that empowers all employees to grow and succeed.

In today's workplace, prioritizing inclusion and empowering people with disabilities is not just a matter of social responsibility; it is also essential for fostering a diverse and innovative work environment (WHO, 2011). Despite advancements in inclusive policies and practices, many workers with disabilities still face barriers that hinder their ability to thrive and reach their full potential (Annor et al., 2024; Rosalina & Setiyowati, 2024; Bialik & Mhiri, 2022; Morwane et al., 2021; Chan et al., 2020; Lindstrom et al., 2014). Addressing these challenges requires a focus on key personal development frameworks, with the Personal Growth Initiative (PGI) being particularly noteworthy. PGI highlights the proactive involvement of individuals in their development journey, emphasizing



that such engagement is crucial for achieving both personal and professional fulfillment (Robitschek et al., 2012; van Woerkom & Meyers, 2019; Le Cunff, 2019). Organizations that promote PGI not only enhance workplace culture but also empower all employees to pursue growth and achieve success (Meyers et al., 2015; Yuliawati & Teonata, 2022).

Previous research has convincingly demonstrated the critical role of PGI in enhancing psychological well-being and work performance, which is vital for driving organizational success (Asif et al., 2024; Thapa & Singh, 2020; Meyers et al., 2015). However, factors influencing PGI among workers with disabilities have largely been underexplored and inadequately addressed in existing literature. Most global studies have focused on PGI in workers without disabilities across various industries or among college students (Green, 2024; Jiao et al., 2024; Joo et al., 2020; Srivastava & Singh, 2020; Thapa & Singh, 2020). To bridge this gap, this study utilizes Self-Determination Theory (SDT) as a framework to investigate the complex relationship between family functioning, work empowerment, and PGI. SDT posits those three fundamental components—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—are crucial for motivation and personal growth, helping clarify how different environmental and interpersonal factors may shape PGI (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Vansteenkiste et al., 2012).

Family functioning is a critical element in this interplay, encompassing aspects such as cohesion, flexibility, and communication. These familial dynamics significantly influence individual development (Parame-decin, 2023). For individuals with disabilities, positive family interactions can be a vital foundation for overcoming workplace challenges and fostering personal growth (Tough et al., 2017; Alcover et al., 2018; Bourke et al., 2024). Current research affirms that effective family support enhances resilience, intrinsic motivation, and overall well-being, which aligns with SDT's emphasis on relatedness (Slemp et al., 2024; Ryan & Deci, 2020; Frielink et al., 2018). However, despite its recognized importance for career development (Lindstrom et al., 2007), the direct influence of family functioning on PGI among workers with disabilities remains insufficiently examined, highlighting a critical gap in understanding how familial relationships contribute to personal development.

Moreover, work empowerment is equally vital for fostering PGI. Defined as the provision of autonomy, decision-making authority, and access to essential resources, work empowerment is fundamental for enabling workers to succeed or show great work performance (Spreitzer, 1995; Haas, 2010; Sylvia Nabila et al., 2021; Kim & Beehr, 2022). Evidence shows that workers with disabilities in empowered environments report higher levels of intrinsic motivation, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment, which directly relates to SDT's principles of autonomy and competence (Murray & Holmes, 2021; Van Den Broeck et al., 2021; Orgambídez et al., 2024). Llorente et al., (2024) also indicate that work empowerment significantly enhances the quality of work life for individuals with disabilities. Workers who feel empowered demonstrate greater job satisfaction and organizational commitment, potentially leading to increased personal growth initiatives. Additionally, empowering workplaces can effectively mitigate the adverse effects of discrimination, further supporting the personal growth trajectories of employees with disabilities (Kim & Beehr, 2022).

Despite these insights, there is still a significant gap in literature specifically examining PGI among workers with disabilities. Much of the existing research mainly focuses on general populations or explores constructs such as self-esteem, resilience, and quality of life, without investigating how family functioning and work empowerment directly influence PGI in this unique context (Mashood & Arshad, 2021; Dhania et al., 2022). Recent reviews highlight this lack of targeted research, particularly concerning the dynamics of personal growth and empowerment in a disability-inclusive workforce (Jiao et al., 2024). This study aims to analyze the relationship between family functioning and work



empowerment on PGI among workers with disabilities. By understanding these dynamics, we aim to provide valuable insights for developing more effective strategies to support the personal and professional growth of individuals with disabilities.

Method

Design

This survey research used a cross-sectional design to examine the relationship between family functioning, work empowerment, and personal growth initiative.

Participants

The study included a population of 244 workers with disabilities in Kudus, Indonesia. A purposive sampling method was employed to select participants, adhering to specific inclusion criteria: individuals were required to have a mild to moderate disability (sufficient to engage in work), fall within the productive working age, and be employed within the preceding year. Informed consent was acquired from all participants, who completed questionnaires distributed via Google Forms.

Measurements

This study used the personal growth initiative, family functioning, and work empowerment scale as measurement tools. Validity was assessed using content validity through expert judgment, while reliability was measured using internal consistency via Cronbach's alpha statistics.

The Personal Growth Initiative Scale-II (PGIS II), developed by Robitschek et al. (2012), consists of 16 items designed to assess how actively and intentionally individuals with disabilities engage in their personal development. Sample items include statements such as "My partner and I openly share our feelings" and "I take every opportunity to grow as it arises." Respondents rate these items on a Likert scale that ranges from I (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

The Family APGAR scale, developed by Smilkstein in 1978, was utilized to assess the family functioning. The acronym APGAR represents five key areas: Adaptation, Partnership, Growth, Affection, and Resolve. Participants respond to 26 statements by indicating their level of agreement or disagreement on a 5-point Likert scale, with ratings ranging from I (Never) to 5 (Always). The individual scores are then summed to calculate an overall score.

For work empowerment, a 19-item scale based on the work empowerment dimensions from Matthews et al., (2002) is administered to participants. This scale measures the extent to which participants believe their workplace encourages a sense of control among employees.

Data Analysis

analysis was conducted to explore the relationships among the research variables. Prior to hypothesis testing, preliminary assumption checks—including tests of normality, linearity, and multicollinearity—were performed. All analyses were carried out using SPSS version 20.

Result

The demographic characteristics of the study participants are summarized in Table I. The sample consisted of 244 individuals with diverse backgrounds in terms of gender, age, and work tenure. The gender distribution shows that the majority of participants were male (N=162, 66%), while females comprised 34% (N=82) of the sample. In terms of age, most participants were in the 40-50 years age group, accounting for 34% (N=84) of the respondents. This was followed by participants aged 30-40 years, representing 27% (N= 66), and those aged 20-30 years, comprising 24% (N=59). A smaller



proportion of participants were over 50 years old (N=32, 13.1%), while only 1.2% (N=3) were under the age of 20. Regarding tenure, 32.3% (N=79) of the participants had more than 10 years of work experience. Additionally, 31.5% (N=77) reported working for 1-2 years, 19.2% (N=47) had a tenure of 3-5 years, and 16.8% (N=41) had 6-10 years of experience.

Variable	f	%
Gender		
Male	162	66
Female	82	34
Age (years)		
< 20	3	1.2
20-30	59	24
30-40	66	27
40-50	84	34
>50	32	13.1
Tenure (years)		
1-2	77	31.5
3-5	47	19.2
6-10	41	16.8
>10	79	32.3

Table I Descriptive statistics of demographic variables (N=244)

The validity test results for the Personal Growth Initiative Scale revealed that 14 out of 16 statement items were valid, yielding a Cronbach's Alpha reliability score of 0.879. For the Family Functioning Scale, 21 out of 26 statement items met the validity criterion, resulting in a Cronbach's Alpha score of 0.875. Furthermore, the Work Empowerment Scale demonstrated that 12 out of 19 statement items were valid, with a reliability score of 0.837.

Utilizing the Kolmogorov-Smirnov technique for the normality test indicated that the data for all three variables were normally distributed. Specifically, the Personal Growth Initiative variable produced a p-value of 0.098 (p > 0.05), while the Family Functioning variable yielded a p-value of 0.112 (p > 0.05), and the Work Empowerment variable had a p-value of 0.332 (p > 0.05). Moreover, the results of the linearity test illustrated a significant linear relationship between Family Functioning and Personal Growth Initiative, with an F value of 1.318 and a p-value of 0.135 (p > 0.05). A similar linear relationship between Work Empowerment and Personal Growth Initiative was also established, showing an F value of 0.976 with a p-value of 0.506 (p > 0.05).

Additionally, correlation tests revealed a highly significant relationship between Family Functioning and Work Empowerment with Personal Growth Initiative (rx12y), exhibiting an R-value of 0.461 and a significance level of p < 0.01, indicating an effective contribution of 21.3%. The correlation between Family Functioning and Personal Growth Initiative (rx1y) also demonstrated a significant relationship, with an R-value of 0.227 and a significance level of p < 0.01. Furthermore, the correlation between the Work Empowerment variable and Personal Growth Initiative (rx2y) yielded very significant results, with an R-value of 0.433 and a significance level of p < 0.01.

Discussion

This study found that positive family functioning creates a strong foundation for individual development, while work empowerment adds further motivation in a professional context.



Together, these two factors significantly contribute to the development of personal growth initiatives (PGI).

Healthy family functioning is characterized by effective communication, strong emotional bonds, and support for the autonomy of family members (Olson, 2000). In such an environment, individuals tend to develop a sense of security and self-confidence, which serve as a foundation for self-exploration and personal growth (Bowlby, 1988). Families that foster positive dynamics also instill values that promote self-development and lifelong learning, which are essential for PGI (Robitschek & Kashubeck, 1999). Recent studies emphasize that family support plays a critical role in bolstering resilience and promoting self-efficacy, which are fundamental in achieving personal growth (Herdiana & Dewi, 2023; Akanni & Ajila, 2021; Alsubaie et al., 2021).

For workers with disabilities, positive family functioning is particularly crucial as it helps overcome workplace barriers. Families not only assist in advocating for reasonable accommodations (Schur et al., 2009) but also provide emotional support to counter stigma or discrimination (Corrigan & Miller, 2006) and encourage the development of work-related skills (Lindsay et al., 2012). This is supported by research indicating that familial emotional and instrumental support significantly enhances workplace adaptation among individuals with disabilities (Fengbo et al., 2024; Pérez et al., 2015).

On the other hand, work empowerment is about individuals perceiving autonomy, competence, and the ability to make an impact in the workplace (Spreitzer, 1995). Empowered employees tend to be proactive in seeking learning and development opportunities (Seibert et al., 2011). This empowerment also boosts self-efficacy, enabling individuals to take the initiative in their personal development (Bandura, 1997). Research by Joo et al., (2021) demonstrates that work empowerment significantly influences PGI, particularly by fostering an intrinsic motivation to learn and develop.

Therefore, workers with disabilities who feel empowered at work are more likely to engage in personal growth initiatives. Empowering work environments provide access to resources, information, and opportunities that facilitate self-development. Recent studies confirm that psychological empowerment is positively associated with goal-setting behaviors and proactive career management among marginalized groups, including individuals with disabilities (Kim & Beehr, 2022).

Robitschek (1998) defined PGI as an active and intentional tendency to engage in processes fostering personal growth. This tendency is influenced by the interplay of family dynamics and work experiences. Individuals raised in supportive families and employed in empowering work environments possess greater psychological resources to pursue PGI (Ryff & Singer, 1998).

Self-Determination Theory (SDT), developed by Ryan and Deci (2000), provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how family functioning and work empowerment affect PGI. SDT posits that fulfilling three basic psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—is essential for psychological growth, integrity, and well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Positive family dynamics and workplace empowerment collaboratively enhance these needs, creating optimal conditions for developing PGI. Vansteenkiste and Ryan (2013) emphasize that autonomy-supportive environments, both in families and workplaces, are instrumental in meeting these needs and promoting personal growth. For example, when individuals feel connected and supported by their families while experiencing a sense of competence and autonomy at work, they are more likely to actively seek opportunities for growth and self-development. Sheldon and Elliot (1999) noted that fulfilling autonomy, competence, and relatedness during goal pursuit significantly contributes to personal growth and overall well-being.



Several past studies support these findings. For instance, Robitschek and Kashubeck (1999) investigated parental alcoholism's impact on family functioning and psychological health, finding that hardiness and personal growth orientation mediate these relationships, linking family functioning to PGI. Similarly, research by Joo et al., (2021) revealed that work empowerment positively correlates with PGI, especially when combined with supportive leadership. Employees who feel a sense of empowerment in their workplace tend to demonstrate higher levels of PGI.

Conclusion

The study's results revealed a significant relationship between family functioning, work empowerment, and personal growth initiative. Based on these findings, companies should strive to create an organizational culture that values and fosters personal growth, innovation, and ongoing learning. Employers can implement policies that support a healthy work-life balance for employees, such as flexible working hours, remote work options, and expanded family leave. Additionally, increasing work empowerment through programs that grant employees greater autonomy, involve them in decision-making, and offer opportunities for skill development can be beneficial.

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Conflict of Interest

The researchers declare that this paper has no conflicts of interest.

Author Contribution

All authors have contributed equally to the study's conceptualization, interpreting data, reviewing, and editing the manuscript.

Data Availability

Data can be provided upon request to the author.

Declarations Ethical Statement

The study followed the guidelines of the Declaration of Helsinki.

Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from all persons involved in the study.

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