THE DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD EFFECT OF PROACTIVE PERSONALITY ON IN-ROLE JOB PERFORMANCE: FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ROLE THEORY

[1]Juan Luo

Panyapiwat Institute of Management, Thailand

26122676@qq.com

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study is to explore the double-edged effect of proactive personality on employees' in-role job performance. Based on the perspective of role theory, this paper proposes the chain mediating effect of extra-role behavior, positive affect and attention residual, and the moderating effect of organizational support. In order to test the theoretical hypothesis, a total of 500 questionnaires were sent out through the questionnaire star, 340 valid samples were collected, and SPSS26.0 and MPLUS8.3 were used for corresponding data analysis, including confirmatory factor analysis, descriptive statistical analysis, correlation analysis and hypothesis testing. The results show that proactive personality has an indirect positive effect on in-role performance through the chain mediating of extra-role behavior and positive affect, and an indirect negative effect on in-role performance through the chain mediating of extra-role behavior and attention residual. Organizational support positively moderates the direct relationship between extra-role behavior and positive affect and the indirect influence of proactive personality on in-role performance, and negatively moderates the direct relationship between extra-role behavior and attention residual and the indirect influence of proactive person on in-role performance. This research is helpful to reconcile the contradictions of previous studies on the positive and negative effects of proactive personality, in order to help people more comprehensively view the role of proactive personality and avoid its possible harm.

Keywords: Proactive Personality; Extra-role Behavior; In-role Job Performance; Perceived Organizational Support; Role Theory

Introduction

With the increasingly fierce economic competition, organizations have raised the requirements for employees' work initiative. As one of the key factors to improve work initiative, initiative personality has been concerned by practitioners and researchers. Previous research has focused on the positive effects of proactive personality, including its positive effects on job performance, innovation, organizational commitment, and employee satisfaction. Bakker, Tims, & Derks, 2012; Caniels, Hemeijn, & Renders, 2018; Horng, Tsai, Yang, & Liu, 2016）。 However, with the deepening of the study of active personality, some researchers

[1]Chinese Graduate School, Panyapiwat Institute of Management, Thailand

have begun to realize that it may have a potential dark side. Recent research suggests that active personality can have not only positive effects, but also negative effects (Guo & Yao, 2016; Sun, Li, Li, Liden, Li, & Zhang, 2021; Zhang, Li, & Gong, 2021）。 The emergence of this negative influence has caused confusion and concern among scholars, and has highlighted the importance of a deeper understanding of proactive personality.

In order to understand the role of proactive personality more comprehensively, this study explored the double-edged impact of proactive personality on in-role job performance from the perspective of role theory. Role theory provides a powerful framework that helps explain the different roles employees play within an organization and the interaction between these roles (Barnett & Gareis, 2006; Biddle, 1986; Biddle, 2013）。 By linking proactive personality to employees' role behaviors in the organization, we can delve into the behavioral dynamics of employees and further explore how proactive personality affects their performance in the organization. In addition, this study highlights the regulatory role of perceived organizational support.

In conclusion, this study aims to delve into the complex relationships between proactive personality and performance, and how perceived organizational support mediates these relationships. By adopting the perspective of role theory, this study is expected to fill the theoretical gaps existing in existing research, To provide a more comprehensive understanding of the effects of proactive personality on outcomes, to help resolve the contradictions between positive and negative effects of proactive personality, and to provide valuable insights into research and practice in the field of organizational behavior.

Literature Review

1. Proactive Personality

Bateman and Crant (1993) proposed that active personality aims to capture the behavior tendency to create and change the environment, and to achieve meaningful change by actively seeking opportunities. The most important characteristics of active personality include "self-starting," "change oriented" and "facing the future" (Bateman & Crant, 1993; Campbell, 2000; Crant, 1995): "Self-priming" indicates that employees feel personally responsible for the choice of a surrogate and ascribe their experiences to internal causes; "Change orientation" indicates that active employees are active agents who continuously initiated and chose to implement positive change in the environment (Full & Marler, 2009); Future-oriented indicates that proactive individuals tend to assess future opportunities and risks and take visionary actions to seize opportunities or reduce risks in creative endeavors. Compared with the classical five factor model of personality, more studies have found the positive effect of active personality in the prediction of individual behavior (Ler & Ler, 1980; Sternberg & Lubart,1991). Previous studies have shown that proactive personality has a significant positive predictive effect on innovation behavior, job performance, job satisfaction, entrepreneurial willingness and career adaptability (Pang Jiantao and Wen Ke, 2017; Campbell,2000; Jiang, 2017）。

2. Extra-role Behavior

Extra-role Behavior is a voluntary behavior that benefits or wants to be beneficial to the organization and exceeds the expectations of the existing role. In this paper, the behavior outside the role of employees is defined as the behavior that employees beyond the organizational system and post responsibilities, spontaneous and has a positive impact on the organization, including providing assistance, advising behavior, organizational citizenship behavior and so on. A large number of studies on the antecedents of extra-role behavior have found that personality traits have significant positive effects, such as due diligence, extroversion, friendliness and active personality tendencies (Pletzer, Bentvelzen, Oostrom, & De Vries, 2019), and authentic personality traits (Knoll & Van Dick, 2013). In terms of influencing results, non-role behavior has proved not only to have a positive impact on individuals, but also to have a negative effect. Extra-role behavior will generally get positive feedback and return from colleagues, improve the level of trust and relationship quality

between colleagues, and contribute to the resource gain cycle of employees (Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2015). At the same time, it has been proved that extra-role behavior will occupy the working time of helpers, thus reducing work efficiency and resulting in emotional exhaustion of helpers (Lin et al., 2014).

3. Positive Emotion

Watson (1984) and others divided emotion into two categories: positive emotion and negative emotion. Positive emotion is a pleasant and happy experience. This kind of emotion usually makes the individual full of enthusiasm, and then improves the individual's enthusiasm and initiative. Negative emotion is a negative emotional experience, including: anger, pain, helplessness, etc. Individuals with positive emotion can deal with various problems with a positive attitude. And will deal with various difficulties in a positive way, Staw & Barsad (1993) and others have shown that positive affect helps people to solve problems quickly and efficiently, effectively formulate relevant countermeasures and evaluate the difficulty of the problem. Individuals with a high level of positive emotion generally have positive beliefs and feelings, and individuals can increase their positive emotional experience even when they are under work pressure. Individuals with low levels of positive emotion tend to be negative, lack of confidence, and tend to withdraw from difficulties (VanderElst et al., 2013). Positive affect is associated with positive mental states, high self-motivation, and higher job satisfaction. In the work environment, positive affect is strongly associated with higher performance and achievements.

4. Attention Residue

According to Leory (2009), attentional residue is defined as a situation in which, after completing a task, the employee's energy and attention are scattered at work due to limited energy, time, or cognitive resources, and the employee is unable to fully focus on his or her formal job role. Resulting in a relative decrease in attention in subsequent tasks (Lroy, 2009; Newton et al., 2020）。 When the task is switched, the previous priming is likely to continue to occupy the cognitive resources of the individual, thus affecting the completion of the formal task. In previous studies, this phenomenon is known as "attention residue " (Lroy, 2009). Attention surplus is a type of ruminative thought that occurs after a task transition, specifically the reflection on a previous task in the face of the current task (Leroy, 2009). Attention surplus takes up attention resources that should be applied to the task at hand. Previous studies have shown that attention surplus may be affected by work stress and fatigue (Wang Nan et al., 2020). Highly focused employees tend to complete tasks more effectively, improve job performance, and are also associated with more innovative performance (Zhao et al., 2023). Attention surplus is also associated with employee job satisfaction, with employees who are able to maintain a high level of attention at work generally being more satisfied (Jiabo et al., 2023).

5. In-role Job Performance

Employee performance has always been the focus of human resource management. The concept of in-role performance (IRP) is derived from Karz & Kahn's (1978) discussion of the three types of employee behavior necessary for a high-performing organization. They think that job role is an important basis for employee behavior decision-making, and the performance of employee corner is the performance that employees can achieve within the boundaries of job responsibilities according to the requirements of organizational system. The study found that the knowledge level, skills, ability and other competency characteristics of employee performance, especially the role of performance has a positive predictor. Research on personality traits has proved that employees' sense of responsibility and emotional intelligence have a certain degree of influence on in-role performance. The collectivist values, self-esteem and role cognition of employees can predict organizational citizenship behavior. Finally, in terms of attitude and affective factors, there are studies that prove that organizational justice perception, job satisfaction, organizational identity, organizational commitment, motivation and other affective factors can positively predict employee performance.

6. Perceived Organizational Support

The concept of organizational support was first put forward by Eisenberger et al. (1986). Its connotation is the support that employees feel from the organization. It is an overall perception and belief of employees about how the organization views their contributions and cares for their interests. They define organizational support as "an organization that values the contributions of its employees, but also focuses on employee happiness and employee perception" (Eisenberg et al., 1986). There are many antecedents that affect the perceived organizational support, including equity, demographic variables, supervisor, organization, objective work environment, human resource management practices, psychology and emotion, coworkers, and several other dimensions or sub-dimensions. The stronger the sense of organizational support, will lead to a stronger job engagement, engagement will also be improved, so the job performance will also be improved, and the direct effect of organizational support on job performance is greater than the indirect effect. Employees with high sense of organizational support also show higher emotional commitment and more altruistic organizational citizenship behavior, such as interpersonal harmony with colleagues, active protection of company resources. Chou et al. (2016) found a negative correlation between perceived organizational support and emotional failure and a positive correlation with job satisfaction.

Research Methods

1. Samples and procedures: Using the research method of questionnaire, involving the financial industry, Leasing and business services, wholesale and retail trade, real estate, education, scientific research and technical services and other industries, the sample mainly comes from Jiangxi, Hunan, Hubei and other provinces, the types of enterprises involved include state-owned enterprises, private enterprises, foreign-funded enterprises and so on. The data were collected at four time points, with half a month interval between each time point. After the completion of the four surveys, the data were matched three times before and after. After eliminating invalid questionnaires such as unmatched, regular responses and incomplete information, 340 valid questionnaires were finally obtained, with an effective recovery rate of 68%.

2. Data analysis methods: Statistical analysis software SPSS 26.0 and MPLUS 8.3 were used to analyze the data. The specific operation process is as follows: First, the reliability of each scale is tested by SPSS, and the confirmatory factor analysis is conducted by MPLUS to test the discriminative validity of the six variables in this study. Second, the SPSS pair was used to perform the description statistical test and the correlation analysis of the variable. Finally, SPSS is used for hierarchical regression analysis to test the hypotheses.

Research Result

1. Descriptive Statistical Analysis

This study was conducted descriptive statistical analysis and relevant analysis. The mean, standard deviation and correlation coefficient of the variances are shown in Table 1. These results provide preliminary support for the main effect hypothesis of this study.

Table 1 Result of descriptive statistical analysis and relevant analysis

variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.Gender	1.24	0.25							
2.Age	2.45	1.31	0.06						
3.Years of work	2.12	1.00	0.02	0.43**					

4.Education Level	3.36	1.21	0.10	-0.05	0.10				
5.PP	2.67	0.63	-0.12*	0.00	0.02	-0.12*			
6.EB	2.78	0.61	-0.05	-0.11	-0.11	-0.05	0.37**		
7.POS	3.62	0.71	-0.02	0.03	0.00	0.06	0.01	-0.04	
8.PA	3.64	0.70	-0.03	-0.12	-0.05	-0.03	0.46**	0.29**	0.18
9.AR	2.99	1.22	0.07	0.12	0.08	0.05	0.39**	0.30**	0.13*
10.IP	4.22	0.60	0.03	0.09	0.13*	0.12	0.20*	0.19*	0.45*

Notes：N = 340；Gender：1 Male，2 Female；Age：1 indicates 22 and under，2 indicates 23~26，3 indicates 27~30，4 indicates 31~35，5 indicates 36 and over；Years of work：1 indicates 1year and under，2 indicates 1~2 years，3 indicates 3~4 years，4 indicates 5 years and over；Education Level：1 indicates Junior middle school and under；2 indicates High school，3 indicates College，4 indicates Bachelor，5 indicates Master and over；*、**Separately indicates p ＜ 0.05、p ＜ 0.01 ;PP: Proactive Personality ；EB: Extra-role Behavior；POS: Perceived Organizational Support；PA: Positive Emotion；AR: attention residue； IP: In-role Performance.

Source: Author drawing

2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

This study was conducted confirmatory factor analysis. To test the discriminative validity among the six core variables (proactive personality, extra-role behavior, perceived organizational support, positive emotion, attention residue, and in-role performance). The results are shown in Table 2. From the point of view of the fitting index of each model, the six-factor model is better than the other five five-factor, four-factor, three-factor, two-factor, one-factor model (χ/ DF = 1.79, CFI = 0.94, TLI = 0.93, RMSEA = 0.05), and the load of each index on the corresponding factors was significant ($p < 0.01$). The results show that there is good discriminant validity among the six variables in this study.

3. Test of Hypothesis

This study uses Mplus7 (Muthen & Muthen, 1998 ~ 2012) to analyze the path model. First, we estimate a baseline model (i.e., model 1) to test the effects of control variables on the mediator and outcome variables of this study. Table 4 presents estimates of the non-standardized coefficients. To test our mediation hypothesis, we build on Model 1 to estimate Model 2 by adding the effects of extra-role behavior on positive affect and attentional surplus, and the effects of extra-role behavior, positive affect, and attentional surplus on in-role job performance. As shown in Model 2 of Table 4, extra-role behavior was significantly associated with positive emotion (B = 0.28, $p < 0.01$) and attention remaining (B = 0.22, $p < 0.01$). In addition, positive affect was positive correlation with in-role performance (B = 0.18, $p < 0.01$), while attention remaining was negative correlation with in-role performance ($P < 0.01$). B = -0.18，$p < 0.01$）.

Further, we test the proposed mediating effects using bootstrapping (Precher & Hayes, 2004). The significance of each indirect effect is tested using 95% confidence intersections (CIs) of 5,000 repeat bootstrapping. As shown in Table 3, the indirect effect of out-of-role behavior on in-role job performance mediated by positive affect is significant (estimate = 0.048, Se = 0.020,95% CI = [-0.097, -0.016]), the confidence range does not contain 0. In addition, the indirect effect of out-of-role behavior on in-role job performance through attention surplus was also significant (estimate = -0.053, Se= 0.021,95% CI = [-0.105, -0.021]), the confidence range does not contain 0. Therefore, both positive emotion and attention remaining have significant mediating effects, supporting hypothesis 2a and hypothesis 2b.

Table 3 Result of intermediate effect test（5000 times bootstrapping）

	Indirect effect	Standard error	95%CI
EB→PA→IP	0.048	0.020	[-0.097, -0.016]
EB→AR→IP	-0.053	0.021	[-0.105, -0.021]

Source: Author drawing

In order to test the moderating effect, on the basis of Model 2, the effects of the interaction of extra-role behavior and perceived organizational support on positive affect, attention surplus and in-role job performance were added to estimate the moderating model (Model 3). The results showed that the model accounted for 16%, 21% and 22% of positive affect, attention surplus and in-role job performance, respectively. As shown in Model 3 in Table 4, the interaction terms of the outside role behavior and organizational support were associated with positive affect ($B = 0.08$, $p < 0.05$), There was a positive correlation between the interaction items of extra-role behavior and organizational support and the attention remaining ($B = 0.04$, $p < 0.05$).

Further, we estimated the simple slope using the interaction test developed by Preacher et al. (2006). The simple slope describes the effect of out-of-role behavior on positive affect and attention surplus at different levels of employee perceived organizational support. The high level perceived organizational support was mean plus 1 standard deviation, and the low level perceived organizational support was mean minus 1 standard deviation. The results showed that under the effect of high level of organizational support, extra-role behavior was positively correlated with positive affect (simple slope = 0.22, $p < 0.01$) and attention surplus (simple slope = 0. 30, $p < 0.01$). Under the low level of perceived organizational support, the relationship between extra-role behavior and positive affect (simple slope = 0.11, $p < 0.05$) and attention surplus (simple slope = 0.06, $p < 0.05$) was weak. The results support hypothesis 4 and hypothesis 5.

Discuss

The main purpose of this study is to explore the double-edged impact of employee initiative personality on in-role job performance. Based on the role theory, through the analysis of initiative personality, extra-role behavior, positive emotion, attention surplus, organizational support and in-role performance, the conclusions are as follows.

(1) Active personality positively affects out-of-role behavior; (2) Out-of-role behavior positively affects in-role performance through positive emotion; (3) Out-of-role behavior negatively affects in-role performance through attention surplus; (4) Active personality indirectly and positively affects in-role performance through the chain mediation of out-of-role behavior and positive emotion; (5) Active personality indirectly and negatively affects in-role performance through the chain intermediary of out-of-role behavior and attention surplus; (6) Perceived organizational support positively moderates the direct relationship between extra-role behavior and positive emotion, that is, when perceived organizational support is high, extra-role behavior has a strong direct and positive impact on positive emotion; (7) Perceived organizational support negatively regulates the relationship between extra-role behavior and attention surplus, that is, when perceived organizational support is high, the direct negative effect of extra-role behavior on attention surplus is weak; (8) Perceived organizational support positively moderates the indirect effects of active personality on in-role performance through extra-role behavior and positive emotion, that is, when perceived organizational support is high, the indirect positive effects of active personality on in-role performance are stronger; (9) Perceived organizational support negatively moderates the indirect effects of active personality on in-role performance through extra-role behavior and attention surplus, that is, when

perceived organizational support is high, the indirect negative effects of active personality on in-role performance are weak.

Summary and Suggestion

1.Thorough discusses the double-edged sword effect of proactive personality employees in their extra-role behavior

Employees with initiative personality tend to exhibit more extra-role behaviors, which means they go beyond formal job responsibilities, actively participate in collaboration, come up with new ideas, and take on additional tasks. This extra-role behavior can not only provide employees with broader development opportunities, but also contribute to organizational innovation and performance improvement.

2. Emphasizes the key role of perceived organizational support in the process of proactive personality influencing job performance

Organizational support plays an important moderating role in two key mechanisms, further deepening our understanding of this complex relationship. Therefore, our findings highlight the key role of organizational support in moderating the impact of proactive personality on job performance, and provide actionable recommendations for organizations to improve employee performance in practice.

3. Further deepen the understanding of the relationship between proactive personality, out-of-role behavior and job performance

We can understand the influence mechanism of proactive personality on job performance more comprehensively by studying the specific dimensions of extra-role behavior. Through these further research efforts, we can better understand the impact of proactive personality on employee behavior and job performance, and provide more accurate guidance for organizational management and talent cultivation.

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