Study of Relationship between Proactive Personalities and Organizational Performance in Chinese Corporations - A Focus on the Mediating Effects of Perceived Organizational Support

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This paper examined the mediating effects of perceived organizational support on the influences of Chinese company employees' proactive personalities on affective commitment and turnover intention. Using the collected data, an exploratory factor analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, reliability analysis, and correlation analysis were conducted. In addition, the model's goodness of fit was confirmed and the hypotheses were verified using a structural equation. It was found that employees who have proactive personalities have an increased affective commitment and reduces their turnover intention. The effects of a proactive personality on the two outcome variables are mediated by the organizational support provided by a firm. In order to raise Chinese company employees' affective commitment, it is necessary to select employees with highly proactive personalities or educate/train employees to make them proactive. In addition, as perceived organizational support is a key mediator, companies need to provide sufficient intrinsic and extrinsic rewards to their employee. As a proactive personality on its own does not directly influence turnover intention, mediums such as perceived organizational support should be utilized to reduce turnover intention. This study reviewed and integrated preceding research on the effects of proactive personalities and

perceived organizational support on affective commitment and turnover intention in Chinese companies.

Introduction

The requirements for organizations, including international competitiveness and continuous change, influence their interest in an organizational employee's autonomy and initiative. In the drastically changing corporate environment, it is difficult for managers to direct an employee's actions to effectively handle all possible situations. Thus, company employees need to be able to perform more actions than just those associated with given tasks, and as such proactivity is seen as a desirable ability for employees who must handle many tasks.

Organizational employees with highly proactive personalities build harmonious and positive social relationships with others. They also have the will to achieve organizational goals by sharing them and collaborating with others. Organizational members adapt to rapidly changing management environments through proactive learning and building mutually collaborative relationships, which then improve their ability to complete tasks (Merriam et al., 2007, Abdul et al., 2018, Abdul et al., 2019, Abubakar and Ishak, 2017, Ahmad, 2018, Alberti, 2017, Sharif et al., 2017). Ultimately, this becomes the basis for employees to increase their commitment and reduce their turnover intention.

According to preceding research on perceived organizational support, when organizational members believe that an organization acknowledges their contribution and treats them as valuable, their commitment increases and their turnover intention decreases (Eisenberger et al., 1990). Well perceived organizational support enhances employee trust in the organization and its' members. As such, the organization's perception of and rewards for trust, boost organizational performance.

Proactive personalities can influence perceived organizational support through its direct effects on commitment and turnover intention, thus, it is possible to study the mediating effects of perceived organizational support through this lens.

Preceding research don these relationships is scarce, especially for works targeting Chinese companies. The preceding research is insufficient for explaining commitment and turnover

intention based on proactive personalities and perceived organizational support.

Theoretical Background
A. *Proactive Personalities*

The term "Proactive personality" refers to the inclination to perform active and progressive actions to change ones surrounding environment (Frese et al., 2007). Parker et al (2006) investigated proactive personalities in individuals through the lens of autonomy and the inclination to influence ones surrounding environment. "Autonomy" means the will to work independently and "inclination to influence the surrounding environment" refers to an individual's autonomic and continuous action to change the current environment or create a new one (Parker et al., 2006).

Generally, people with highly proactive personalities try to grasp an opportunity, take action, be active, and persist until there is a meaningful change (Crant, 2000). Accordingly, they do not struggle to cope with new and unexpected tasks and are accustomed to following directions; thus they tend to not feel pressure when they have to make decisions (Seibert et al., 1999).

A proactive personality is partially related to the "Big Five" personality factors (Bateman and Crant, 1993). Out of the five personality factors, a proactive personality was found to be related to extraversion as those with proactive personalities seek new experiences and activities.

B. *Perceived Organizational Support*

Perceived organizational support refers to the trust that is formed by employees, based on how much the organization values its members' contributions and shows an interest in their welfare (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Once employees believe that their organization trusts and supports them, they form a sense of responsibility to voluntarily contribute to the organization in a mutually beneficial way. Employees also develop a sense of belonging and identity, which also influences their trust in evaluations by, and rewards from, the organization (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002).

If organizational commitment is an employee's commitment to the organization, then perceived organizational support could personify the organization, allowing it to commit to individuals. That is, if members receive compliments, acknowledgment, or mentoring from the organization, perceived organizational support would increase, which can lead to increases in individual commitment to the organization, which subsequently creates positive effects on working attitudes and performance (Eisenberger et al., 1986).

The various aspects of rewards and job conditions influence perceived organizational support. Fairly evaluating an employee's contribution, and rewarding them appropriately, can positively influence perceived organizational support (Greenberg, 1990).

C. Affective Commitment

Affective commitment helps members to have a pleasant experience when they participate in their organization's goal achievement and their tasks. It can be further defined as an employee's affection and passion for the purpose and values of the organization. Affective commitment is differentiated from continuous commitment based on rational judgment as affective commitment is based on emotion (Allen and Meyer, 1996).

When employees commit to their organization through affective commitment and a reliance on others, they show positive organizational performance, accumulate job experiences that meet their own emotional needs and expectations, and develop a strong affection for the organization (Mathieu and Zajac, 1990). Thus, affective commitment is recognized as an important index of employee's pride in, and affection for, the organization based on their emotional and psychological state (Meyer and Allen, 1997).

Employees with high affective commitment have a strong sense of belonging, a strong will to concentrate on organizational activity and goal achievement, and a strong passion to remain in the organization (Rhoades et al., 2001). Employees with high affective commitment remain in their organization because it is what they desire.

D. Turnover Intention

"Turnover intention" describes an employee's intention to stop being a member of their organization and leave their current workplace. Additionally, it is a concept that is focused on organizational employees' free will, and is often defined as the will to change current jobs or an estimation of the subjective possibility of leaving an organization in the future (Vandenberg and Nelson, 1999).

If valuable employees leave, the organizations investment in their recruitment and training is wasted, thus, turnover intention has received considerable research attention. One of the most precise factors for explaining turnover availability is an awareness of the state of external management of the organization.

If other organizations can be selected, then turnover availability is high. On the contrary, turnover experiences reduces turnover in general. Turnover intention was confirmed to be a predictor variable of turnover. Due to it being difficult to directly measure turnover, most studies related to turnover used turnover intention as an outcome variable (Griffeth et al., 2000).

Research Model and Hypotheses Development
A. Research Model

This study set proactive personality as the independent variable, and affective commitment and turnover intention as dependent variables. To determine if perceived organizational support would mediate the effects of proactive personality on affective commitment and turnover intention, a research model was created, as seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Research Model
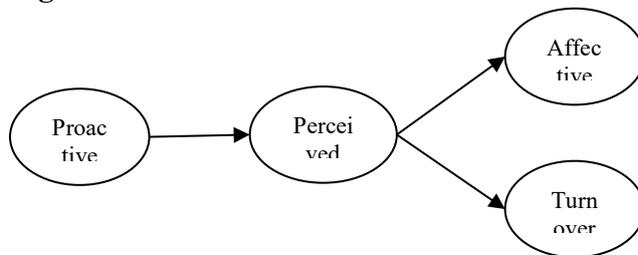
B. Hypotheses Development
(1) The relationships between proactive personalities and affective commitment and turnover intention

Individuals' proactive personalities within an organization are defined as organizational employees' inclination to voluntarily perform job-related actions beyond the minimum requirements or general expectations (Podsakoff et al., 2000). Here, job-related actions include voluntarily participation in creative and innovative activities to improve individual or organizational performance, maintaining passion for their own tasks, generally making extra efforts, and volunteering for job activities not directly related to one's own tasks.

When organizational members assume new duties, their proactive personalities influences their likelihood of taking on tasks (Chan and Schmitt, 2000). That is, those with highly proactive personalities voluntarily perform additional tasks and proactively remove factors that hinder job satisfaction. They also tend to aggressively take action to improve the current environment or create a new one (Crant, 2000). When people with such personalities recognize the necessity of change, they tend to voluntarily develop their competence to adapt to the changed

environment (Thomas et al., 2010).

Li, Liang, & Crant (2010) argued that those with proactive personality try to find methods to improve their life, play an essential role in making constructive changes, and realize their dream, even against all odds (Li et al., 2010). Thus, employees with proactive personalities take proactive action when selecting, creating, and influencing the working environment, which provides an opportunity for them to satisfy themselves.

A proactive personality is closely related to career results such as wage, promotion, and career satisfaction (Seibert et al., 1999). With this in mind, the following hypotheses were set by integrating the results of preceding studies.

Hypothesis 1. A proactive personality has positive effects on affective commitment.
Hypothesis 2. A proactive personality has negative effects on turnover intention.

(2) Mediating effects of perceived organizational support

As people with proactive personalities can grasp opportunities, take action, be active, and persist until a meaningful change occurs, it is highly likely that they build successful relationships between other members of the organization and learn their tasks very well (Kammeyer-Mueller and Wanberg, 2003). In consideration of personality types, proactive individuals find it easier to accept perceived organizational support than non-proactive individuals (VanderZee et al., 1997).

Andrews & Kacmar (2001) contended that when an organization rewards individual employees (outside of official support), they think that they are being supported by the organization, which makes them more actively exchange opinions with their colleagues and commit more to the organization. If organizational employees judge organizational support as inappropriate, they tend to irrationality perceive their exchange relations with the organization, which then leads to a credibility problem.

In social exchange theory, as employees produce results through their work, they wish to feel that they are considered as valuable and are being supported. The value of organizational support, consisting of material (wage, promotion) and immaterial (position, social relation) rewards, decreases when the employment relationship is discontinued. Organizational employees that have received organizational support may try to maintain their positive feelings toward the organization to prevent the termination of the employment relationship.

A proactive personality leads to active and voluntarily participation in an organization to ensure its' growth. In this process, members receive organizational support that meets their own needs, including acknowledgement by the organization. As employees actively exchange opinions with others, their commitment to the organization increases, and at the same time, their perception of the acquisition of rewards also makes them more likely to feel positive towards their organization. Thus, the following hypotheses were set.

Hypothesis 3. Perceived organizational support mediates the positive relationship between proactive personalities and affective commitment.
Hypothesis 4. Perceived organizational support mediates the negative relationship between proactive personalities and turnover intention.

Research Methodology
A. Data Collection

From November 2018 to January 2019, this study surveyed employees of Enterprises in Zhejiang province, China. The survey presented various statements, and the participants indicated their responses on, five-point Likert scale. In total, 410 surveys were collected and 399 were used (11 were excluded due to insincere responses).

The demographics of the participants are provided as follows. There were 183 men (45.9%) and 216 women (54.1%). 220 (55.1%) participants were under 30 years old, 152 (38.1%) were under 40 years old, and 27 (6.8%) were over 40 years old. 203 people (50.9%) were married and 196 (49.1%) were single.

As for position, 260 (65.2%) respondents were general staff, 76 (19.0%) were senior officials, 47 (11.9%) were top managers, 10 (2.5%) were assistant manager, and 6 were executives (1.5%). The business category showed that 97 (24.3%) respondents were in sales, 58 in manufacturing (14.5%), 38 in administrative positions (9.5%), 48 in engineering (12.0%), 43 in accounting (10.8%) and 10 in buying (2.5 %). 105 respondents (26.3%) did not fit into any available business category.

B. Operational Definition of Variables

Proactive Personality: Bateman & Crant's (1993) examples were used to measure proactive personalities. Examples statements are as follows: "The work I do is very important to me," "My job activities are personally meaningful to me," "The work I do is meaningful to me," and "I am confident about my ability to do my job."

Perceived Organizational Support: Nine statements by Eisenberger et al. (1989) were used to measure perceived organizational support. Examples statements are as follows: "My companys management cares about my general satisfaction at work", "My companys management really cares about my well-being", and "My companys management strongly considers my goals and values".

Affective Commitment: Eight statements by Allen & Meyer (1990) were used to measure affective commitment. Examples statements are as follows: "I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization", "I enjoy discussing my organization with people outside this organization", "I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own", and "This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me".

Turnover Intention: Eight statements by Chen et al. (1988) were used to measure turnover intention. Examples statements are as follows: "I often think about quitting my job", "As soon as I can find a better job, I will quit", "I often think of leaving my organization", and "It is possible that I will look for a new job".

Analysis Results
A. Construct Reliability and Validity

In order to verify the validity of the variables included in the research model, this study conducted a principle component analysis using Varimax to test the component validity between variables.

As for the criterion for item selection, if a factor loading exceeds 0.5, the variable is considered to be important; therefore, this study used only variables that exceeded 0.5 as a factors. As a result, one item from proactive personality, three items from perceived organizational support, four items from affective commitment, and four items from turnover intention were removed. After removing the variables that did not meet the criterion, the exploratory factor analysis extracted a total of four factors, which implies a high construct validity.

Factor 1 was perceived organizational support (factor loading = 0.692~0.842), Factor 2 was turnover intention (factor loading = 0.726~0.861), Factor 3 was proactive personality (factor loading = 0.737~0.861), and Factor 4 was affective commitment (factor loading = .670~.746); all four factors explained 69.28% of the variance.

For the reliability of the measurement items, Cronbach's alpha was 0.931 for proactive

personality, 0.863 for perceived organizational support, 0.764 for affective commitment, and 0.910 for turnover intention. The Cronbach's alpha values of all the variables turned out to be over 0.6, which shows an acceptable level of reliability for the research.

A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted using AMOS 22.0. The result factors extracted by the exploratory factor analysis were applied to the research model, and the results are shown in Table 2. A confirmatory factor analysis was carried out in order to measure if the items represent each factor well.

The fit indices were as follows; $\chi2$=393.10, df=129, p<0.000, NFI=0.905, TLI=0.921, CFI=0.934, GFI=0.900, RMSEA=0.072. Each component's factor loading was over 0.5, the criterion value. In addition, no standard factor's factor loading exceeded 1, and the standard factor loading turned out to be significant at 95% level (t>1.96), which indicates convergent validity.

Table 2: Results for Construct Reliability and Validity

Variable	Statement	Factor Loading	AVE	C.R.	α
Proactive Personality	The work I do is very important to me	0.803	0.656	0.883	0.913
	My job activities are personally meaningful to me	0.795			
	The work I do is meaningful to me	0.773			
	I am confident about my ability to do my job	0.622			
Turnover Intention	I often think about quitting my job	0.707	0.730	0.915	0.910
	As soon as I can find a better job, I will quit	0.822			
	I often think of leaving my organization	0.848			
	It is possible that I will look for a new job	0.799			
Perceived Organizational Support	My companys management cares about my general satisfaction at work	0.763	0.683	0.927	0.863
	My companys management really cares about my well-being	0.649			
	My companys management strongly considers my goals and values	0.918			
	My companys management cares about my opinions	0.705			
	My companys management is willing to extend itself	0.922			

	in order to help me perform my job to the best of my ability				
	Help is available from your company management when you have a problem	0.843			
Affective Commitment	I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization	0.793			
	I enjoy discussing my organization with people outside this organization	0.569	0.520	0.809	0.764
	I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own	0.742			
	This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me	0.571			

B. Correlation Analysis

To examine the relationship between the variables before analyzing the hypotheses, Pearson correlation analysis was conducted, and the results are shown in Table 3. The independent variable, proactive personality, had positive correlations with the mediating variable of perceived organizational support (r=0.296, p < 0.01) and dependent variable of affective commitment (r=0.367, p < 0.01). Perceived organizational support had a positive correlation with affective commitment (r=0.468, p < 0.01), but it had a negative correlation with turnover intention (r=-0.444, p < 0.01).

Discriminant validity can be confirmed using the relationship between the correlation coefficient of each factor and the square root of each factor's average variance extracted (AVE). As shown in Table 3, all of the correlation coefficients of the factors were smaller than the square root of each factor's AVE, which proves their discriminatory power (Gefen et al., 2000).

Table 3: Results for Discriminant Validity

Variables	Mean	S. D.	1	2	3	4
1. Proactive Personality	3.64	0.619	(0.809)			
2. Perceived Organizational Support	3.28	0.660	0.296***	(0.854)		
3. Affective Commitment	3.56	0.609	0.367***	0.468***	(0.826)	
4. Turnover Intention	2.53	0.877	-0.089	-0.444***	-0.357***	(0.721)

Note. *** $p < 0.01$, $\sqrt{AVE}$ in parentheses

C. Hypothesis Testing

In order to verify the effects of proactive personalities on affective commitment and turnover intention, and to the mediating effects of perceived organizational support, the research model was verified using covariance structure analysis.

As a result, the structural equation model provided a good fit ($\chi2=420.92$, df=130, p<0.000, NFI=0.898, TLI=0.914, CFI=0.927, RMSEA=0.075) compared to general indexes, so the research model was found to be appropriate.

The results of the hypothesis testing are shown in Table 4 and Table 5. As proactive personalities turned out to have significant effects on affective commitment (β=0.149, p<0.001), Hypothesis 1 was accepted, but Hypothesis 2 was rejected as proactive personalities had no significant effects on turnover intention (β=0.050, p>0.05).

These results are seen in the preceding research (Seibert et.al., 1999), and the meaning of these results will be discussed in the conclusion and implications section below.

Table 4: Results of Structural Equation Modelling

Path	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	C.R.
Perceived Organizational Support ← Proactive Personality	0.295	0.336	5.715***
Affective Commitment ← Perceived Organizational Support	0.765	0.583	8.965***
Turnover Intention ← Perceived Organizational Support	-0.872	-0.532	-8.962***
Affective Commitment ← Proactive Personality	0.171	0.149	2.676***
Turnover Intention ← Proactive Personality	0.072	0.050	0.936

Note. *** p < 0.01

To verify the significance of the indirect effects of the mediator, a bootstrapping analysis was conducted 2000 times using maximum likelihood. Bias-corrected confidence intervals were used in the selection of the significance level used for the analysis. The results of the bootstrapping analysis are shown in Table 4, and the path model of standardized coefficients is shown in Figure 2.

Looking at the results, both the effects of proactive personalities on affective commitment mediated by perceived organizational support (β=0.196, p<0.01), and the effects of proactive personalities on turnover intention mediated by perceived organizational support (β=-0.179, p<0.01), turned out to be significant, so Hypotheses 3 and 4 were accepted.

Affective commitment is both directly influenced by proactive personalities and indirectly influenced by the mediating effects of perceived organizational support (β=0.345, p<0.01). Turnover intention is not directly influenced by proactive personalities but is indirectly influenced by the mediating effects of perceived organizational support (β=-0.128, p<0.10).

Table. 5: Mediating Effects Using Bootstrapping

Path	Total Effect	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect
P.P→P.O.S →A.C	0.345***	0.149**	0.196***
P.P→P.O.S →T.I	-0.128*	0.050	0.179***

Note. *p<0.1, **p<0.5, *** p < 0.01

Conclusion

This study used affective commitment and turnover intention as dependent variables and examined how proactive personalities would influence them. It also analyzed the mediating effects of perceived organizational support with a focus on Chinese company employees. The study results can be summarized as follows.

Proactive personalities turned out to have positive effects on affective commitment. This result implies that when members voluntarily perform tasks beyond a certain level, they become deeply engaged in their organization's goal achievement. Ultimately, those involved in this process repeatedly increase their sense of belonging to the organization and become willing to remain in it.

This result also entails a strong practical implication in that, if organizations recruit employees with strong proactive personalities, they will share an awareness of the organization's goals and boost organizational performance. Thus, Chinese companies need to develop personnel systems that will help them recruit employees with strong proactive personalities in the future, and it is also important for them to raise their existing employees' proactivity through the development of human resource programs.

A proactive personality had no negative effects on the other dependent variable of turnover intention. As proactive personality influenced affective commitment, it was expected to have the opposite effects on turnover intention, but the results did not substantiate this. This means that Chinese company employees' turnover intention cannot be judged based on simple individual characteristics, and thus it is necessary to consider various factors. The results of this study also show that a proactive personality has significant effects on turnover intention when mediated by perceived organizational support. This implies that it is necessary to judge

and consider more elements in regard to employees' voluntary turnover.

Proactive personalities had positive effects on affective commitment when mediated by perceived organizational support. In other words, when individuals had an inclination to receive compliments and support from the organization, it leads to an increased perception of organizational support and a strengthening of commitment to the organization, thus creating a virtuous circle.

Proactive personalities had negative effects on turnover intention when mediated by perceived organizational support. This finding has important theoretical and practical implications as no preceding research has reported this result. Considering the results of preceding studies, proactive personalities were expected to have direct effects on turnover intention, but this study found that proactive personalities would influence turnover intention only when mediated by perceived organizational support.

From a practical perspective, for members who are loyal to the organization, have confidence, participate in related activities, are acknowledged by the organization, perceived organizational support helps them to meet their own needs. Thus, organizations need to prevent member turnover by increasing their support for employees' growth by inducing active and voluntary participation.

Although this study has both theoretical and practical implications, it also has the following limitations. Firstly, considering Chinas huge territory and population, the sample size was not very large. Bootstrapping was used to resolve this limitation, but the sample size is still not sufficient to represent all Chinese company employees. Secondly, a survey was performed for empirical analysis in this study.

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