PROACTIVE PERSONALITY: ORGANIZATION VS CAREER COMMITMENT

Leila Messara, Lebanese American University
Grace K. Dagher, Lebanese American University

ABSTRACT

Using a sample of 101 currently employed MBA students, the researchers assessed the relationship between proactive personality and the different types of commitment i.e. affective, continuance, normative and career. The results indicated that proactive personality is significantly positively related to affective, continuance, and career commitment. The study suggests that if employees with proactive orientation are empowered to make decisions like an entrepreneur, this will enhance their commitment to both career and organization.

INTRODUCTION

In these turbulent times, the struggle for corporate survival has added pressure on organizations to reconsider the role of individuals as key players and their capacity to revitalize the organizations. Researchers have agreed that individuals' personalities shape their behavior; we can therefore conclude that individuals with certain traits could help organizations with their efforts to adapt. One of such traits is proactive personality. According to Bateman and Crant (1993, p.105) proactive individuals "scan for opportunities, show initiative, take action, and persevere until they reach closure by bringing about change." However, if such individuals are needed for change, can we then count on their commitment to the organization, or, in other words, how committed are they? This prompted the researchers to investigate whether a relationship exists between proactive personality and the different types of commitment (Affective, continuous, normative, and career), especially since some organizations have identified proactive oriented behavior as a requirement in their hiring process (Campbell, 2000).

PROACTIVE PERSONALITY

In recent years, personality traits have become both popular and an accepted means for explaining individuals' behavior, i.e. actions, manners, targets, and purposes (Llewellyn and Wilson, 2003). This helps identify the reasons for individuals' different reactions to similar situations (Cooper, 1998). Ryckman defined Personality as the "dynamic and organized set of characteristics

of a person that uniquely influences his/her cognitions, motivations, and behaviors" (1982, p. 5). This concept represents behavioral and cognitive prototypes that have been proven stable through time and in different settings (Cattell, 1964). According to Bateman and Crant (1993) past research have considered proactive personality as a stable individual disposition.

Individuals with proactive oriented personality are somewhat unconstrained by situational factors and affect environmental change (Bateman and Grant, 1993).They recognize opportunities, show initiative, take action, and persist until meaningful positive change occur in their environment regardless of obstacles (Seibert, Kraimer, & Grant, 2001). Proactive individuals tend to set high standards and make use of all available resources toward achieving them (Grant, 1996). Crant defined proactive behavior as "taking initiative in improving current circumstances or creating new ones; it involves challenging the status quo rather than passively adapting to present conditions" (2000, p. 436). On the other hand, less proactive or reactive individuals tend to be passive, show little initiative, and are likely to adapt to situations rather than change their circumstances.

Past research has positively associated proactive behavior with entrepreneurship (e.g., Becherer & Maurer, 1999; Grant, 1996), individual and job performance (e.g. Grant, 1996; Ashford and Northcraft, 1992), career success (e.g. Seibert et al., 1999), and leadership (e.g. Crant and Bateman, 2000; Deluga, 1998). Although most of these studies indicated positive outcomes with proactive personality, nevertheless, a study by Bolino and Turnley (2005) linked it with job stress, work family conflict, and job overload which are negative outcomes.

Commitment

The definition of commitment in the literature seems inconsistent. However, in this research we define organizational commitment as the employee's goal to remain with the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Organizational commitment has been positively linked to hours devoted to work, morale, absenteeism, intent to quit, performance of the organization (Silverthome, & Hung, 2006; Fernanado J. et al., 2005; Riketta, Chen, 2002) and the satisfaction of employees (Gallie and White 1993). Previous literature also indicated that organizational commitment and job performance have a direct relationship (Chan, D. 2006, Fernando J. et al., 2005, Vandenberghe, C. et al., 2004, Bishop J. W. et al., 2000), is positively related to the need for achievement (Lee, 1971; Patchen,1970), and job challenge (Buchman, 1974). Hence, maintaining highly committed personnel should be a priority in the minds of those responsible.

Meyer & Allen (1997) distinguished a three-component model of commitment and developed a scale to measure them which generally holds up across cultures (Sulimand, & ILes, 2000; Ko, Price, & Mueller, 1997). These are: (a) Affective commitment which involves the identification, involvement and emotional attachment with the organization leading to the sentiment of wanting to continue employment in the organization; (b) Continuance commitment which stands for profit coupled with continued participation on the one hand, and the cost associated with leaving

on the other hand (Kanter, 1968) creating a feeling of needing to continue employment; and (c) Normative commitment represents a feeling of obligation towards the organization i.e. a person ought to continue employment. Together, these components make up an employee's 'commitment profile'

Organization and job commitment have received a great deal of attention from researchers. However, few studies have examined career commitment in general, and in a non-western context in particular. Researchers have indicated the distinctiveness of career, organization and work commitment constructs; nevertheless, they have also indicated a correlation between them (Goulet and Singh, 2002; Morrow, 1983 &1993; Muller, Wallace, & Price, 1992; Wiener & Vardi, 1980). Career commitment reflects individual's commitment to a specific work and could relate to work outcomes (Ballout, 2009). According to Noordin, Williams and Zimmer (2002), Career commitment is reflected by the individual's identification with the career more than with the organization membership.

Career Commitment is the planned choice of a line of work and the belief that loyalty in this choice will surpass a particular job or organizational context (Morrow, 1993). According to Colarelli and Bishop (1990), career commitment measures not only the individual's identification of personal career goals and attachment to these goals but also measures the involvement in these goals. In this study, we adopt Blau's (1985, p. 278) definition of career commitment as "one's attitude toward one's profession or vocation".

HYPOTHESES

Proactive Personality and Commitment

An individual's predisposition is basically important in understanding his/her tendency toward certain action. A growing body of literature shows that a relationship exists among personality variables and attitude or behavior at work (Roberts and Hogan, 2001), and commitment to the organization is attitudinal and behavioral in nature.

Attitudinally, individuals identify with the organization and are committed to remain in order to pursue goals (Porter et al., (1974); while behaviorally, individuals are bound to the organization through diverse interest such as, seniority, pension, etc. (Becker, 1960).

Meyer and Allen (1997) argue that affective commitment is positively related to individuals' willingness to commit extra effort to their work; this is the kind of commitment that can be expected to be related to proactive orientation. We propose:

H1:   Proactive personality is positively related to affective commitment

On the other hand, normatively committed employees attach themselves to the organization solely because they believe it is the right way to behave. It is based on the individual's personal obligation to act in a way to meet organizational goals and interests (Allen and Meyer, 1990; Wiener, 1982). Proactive individuals take action to influence positive change in their environment. They possess entrepreneurship initiatives which make them more likely to quit the organization to start their own businesses (Becherer and Maurer, 1999). Thus, we can predict that:

H2:   Proactive personality is not related to normative commitment

A longitudinal study by Seibert, Grant and Kraimer (1999) found that proactive orientation is positively associated with innovation, self reported objective (salary and promotion), and subjective career satisfaction. Together, self reported objective (which are indicators of perceived cost/benefit, referred to by Meyer and Allen as continuance commitment) and subjective career satisfaction indicate career success. We can thus propose the following Hypotheses:

H3:   Proactive personality is positively related to continuance commitment
H4:   Proactive personality is positively related to career commitment

METHODOLOGY

Instruments

In this study, the researchers focused on understanding the relationship between proactive personality and the different types of commitment i.e. affective, continuance, normative and career. A five parts questionnaire was developed to include items to measure the three dimensions of organizational commitment, career commitment and proactive personality. To measure organizational commitment, the Component-model of Commitment developed by Meyer & Allen (1997) was used in this research for it was specifically designed to measure the three types of commitment to the organization; i.e. affective, continuance, and normative commitments. It is a multidimensional scale that is widely used and intensively tested (e.g. Culpepper, 2000; Jaros, 1997). It includes 24 items, 8 items per commitment type. Sample items: affective commitment "This organization has a great deal of personal meaning to me"; continuance commitment "Right now, staying with my organization is a matter of necessity as much as a desire"; normative commitment "Jumping from organization to organization does not seem at all unethical to me".
To measure career commitment the researchers used the scale developed by Blau (1985) consisting of eight items. Sample item "I definitely want a career for myself in this industry".
As for proactive personality, we used a 10 item scale developed by Seibert et al., (1999). Sample item "I am always looking for better ways to do things". All items were measured using a

7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 as strongly agree to 7 as strongly disagree. In addition to the scale's items we included demographic questions as well.

Sample

The sample was composed of employed MBA students attending an American University in Lebanon. The researchers distributed 140 questionnaires but only 101 completed the survey forming a 72% response rate. Of the sample, 53 were male and 48 female. The majority of the respondents were single and their ages were between 20 and 30 years old. As to their current position, 42 of the respondents have a supervisor position and 24 have a middle management position.

Hypothesis Testing Results

In accordance with previous results on the different types of commitment the reliability coefficient scores for the different types of commitment were consistent with the previous studies on commitment. Table 1 provides the means, standard deviation and coefficient alpha for the variables in this study.

Table 1: Mean, Standard Deviation, and Reliability coefficient for the different types of Commitment								
Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	
1. Proactive Personality	2.31	0.87	**-0.88**					
2. Career comm	3.54	0.9	.356**	**-0.71**				
3. Continuance comm.	3.68	0.8	.326**	.212**	**-0.75**			
4. Affective comm.	3.07	0.96	.489**	.655**	.214**	**-0.74**		
5. Normative comm	3.64	0.62	.206*	.543**	.207*	.439**	**-0.73**	
* Correlation is significant at the .05 level ** Correlation is significant at the .01 level								

In order to examine the predicted relationship between proactive personality and commitment i.e. affective, continuance, normative, and career, a Pearson correlation analysis was used. Data were analyzed using SPSS 17 statistical package. Hypothesis 1 predicted that proactive personality would be positively related to affective commitment. A significant positive association of r=.509(p<.01) was found between proactive personality and affective commitment; thus supporting the predicted relationship. Hypothesis 2 predicted that proactive personality would have no relation with normative commitment. A significant relation was found; thus H2 was not supported. Hypothesis 3 predicted that proactive personality would be positively related to

continuance commitment. A significant positive association of r=.364 (p<.01) was found between proactive personality and continuance commitment; thus supporting the predicted relationship. Hypothesis 4 predicted that proactive personality would be positively related to career commitment. A significant positive association of r=.356 (p<.01) was found between proactive personality and career commitment; thus supporting the predicted relationship. The results of the correlation analysis are provided below in Table 2.

Table 2: Correlation Results between Proactive personality and commitment (N=101)				
	Career	Continuance	Affective	Normative
Proactive Personality	.356**	.326**	.489**	.206*
*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level. **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.				

To further examine the proposed relations and to provide a complete understanding of these relations regression analysis was conducted. The regression results provided additional support to the results of the Pearson correlation. The results indicated that proactive personality significantly predicted the four types of commitment. Table 3 provides a detailed description of the regression results.

Table 3: Regression analysis results						
Hypotheses	B	β	SE	R²	T	Sig
H1: DV: Affective Commitment P- Proactive Personality	.564***	.489***	0.1	0.23	5.612	0
H2: DV: Normative Commitment P- Proactive Personality	.133*	.179*	0.07	0.02	1.819	0.07
H3: DV: Continuance Commitment P- Proactive Personality	.282***	.303***	0.08	0.08	3.174	0
H4: DV: Career Commitment P- Proactive Personality	.341***	.324***	0.148	0.1	3.429	0
*p<.1, **p<.05, ***p<.01						

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

A sample of 101 currently employed MBA students from an American university in Lebanon was surveyed in order to assess the relationship between proactive personality and affective, continuous, normative and career commitment. Our results show that proactive personality is significantly positively related to affective and continuance commitment. This could be the result

of our sample characteristic i.e. employed MBA students. In general, MBA students are young and as such might be either newly employed or has not been with the organization for a long time. This is in line with previous literature that found a positive relation between proactive personality and newcomer adaptation (Chan and Schmitt, 2000).

Our results also indicate a positive relation between proactive personality and career commitment. This is also in line with previous research that linked proactive orientation with entrepreneurship (e.g., Becherer & Maurer, 1999; Grant, 1996). In addition, although our results show a significant relationship between proactive personality and normative commitment, nevertheless, the r square value is 2% indicating a very weak relation between these variables. In conclusion, the widely debated relationship between career commitment and organizational commitment remains controversial. While Aranya and Ferris (1984) suggest commitment to only one, Norris and Niebuhr (1983) and Bartol (1979) conversely see high commitment to both. Gouldner (1957), however, claims incompatibility.

As stipulated in our research, provided the empirical evidence that proactive personality was positively related to affective, continuance, and career commitment, and since previous literature has positively related proactive orientation to entrepreneurship, we can therefore conclude: if employees with proactive orientation are empowered to make decisions like an entrepreneur, this will enhance their commitment to both career and organization. According to Chatman et al., (1998), individuals whose values are congruent with the operating values of the organization are more likely to be committed to the organization.

LIMITATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Our results extend the literature on proactive personality and commitment. However, no study is without limitations. The first limitation is that data was collected from a single source thus the study can not be generalized. It is recommended that future research should examine whether our finding can be generalized beyond employed MBA students and other cultures. The second limitation is the demographic characteristic with regard to the age and the education level of our respondents, the majority of our sample was between 20-30 years old and pursuing their masters degree. Future research should collect data from different groups. The third limitation is the self-reported data. Future research should collect data from both employees and supervisors to have a better understanding of the employees' commitment to career and organization and how these are linked to proactive personality. Further studies could also examine variables that might mediate the relationship between proactive personality and career commitment such as motivation and job satisfaction. In addition, examining the moderating effect of gender, age, and experience on the relation between proactive personality and the commitment types may provide a better understanding of this type of relationships.

REFERENCES

Allen, N. J. & Meyer, J. P. (1990). The measurement and antecedents of affective, continuance and normative commitment to the organization. *Journal of Occupational Psychology,* 63, 1-18.

Aranya, N. and Ferris, K.R. (1984). A reexamination of Accountants' Organizational – Professional Conflict, *Accounting Review,* 59, 1-14.

Ashford, S.J., & Northcraft, G.B. (1992). Conveying more (or less) than we realize: The role of impression management in feedback-seeking. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes,* 53, 310.–334.

Ballout, H.I. (2009). Career commitment and career success: moderating role of self-efficacy, *Career Development International*, 14 (7), 655-670.

Bartol, K.M. (1979). Professionalism as a Predictor of Organizational Commitment, Role Stress, and Turnover: A Multidimensional Approach, *Academy of Management Journal,* 22, 815-821.

Bateman, Thomas S., & J. Michael Crant (1993). "The Proactive Component of Organizational Behavior: A Measure and Correlates," *Journal of Organizational Behavior,* 14, 103-118.

Becherer,R.C.,& Maurer, J.G. (1999). The proactive personality disposition and entrepreneurial behavior among small company presidents, *Journal of Small Business Management,* 28-36.

Becker, H. S. (I960). Notes on the concept of commitment. *American Journal of Sociology*, 66, 32-40.

Bishop, J.W., Scott, K.D. & Burroughs, S.M. (2000). Support, commitment and employee outcomes in a team environment. *Journal of Management,* 26(6), 1113-1132.

Blau, G.J. (1985). The measurement and prediction of career commitment. *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, 58, 277-288.

Bolino,M.C.,& Turnley,W.H. (2005). The personal cost of citizenship behavior: the relationship between individual initiative and role-overload, job stress, and work-family conflict. *Journal of Applied Psychology,* 90(4), 740-748.

Buchman, B. (1974). Building organizational commitment: the socialization of managers in work organizations, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 19, 533-546.

Campbell, D.J. (2000). The proactive employee: Managing workplace initiative. *Academy of Management Executive,* 14(3), 52.–66.

Cattell, R. B. (1964). Objective personality tests: A reply to Dr. Eysenck. *Occupational Psychology,* 38, 69-86.

Chan, D., & Schmitt, N. (2000). Interindividual differences in intraindividual changes in proactivity during organizational entry: A latent growth modeling approach to understanding newcomer adaptation. *Journal of Applied Psychology,* 85, 190-210.

Chatman, J.A., Polzer, J.T., Barsade, S.G., Neale, M.A. (1998), Being different yet feeling similar: the influence of demographic composition and organizational culture on work process and outcomes, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 43, 749-80.

Chan. D (2006). Interaction Effects of Situational Judgment Effectiveness and Proactive Personality on Work Perceptions and Work Outcomes. *Journal of Applied Psychology,* 91(2), 475-481.

Chen, J., C. Silverthome & J. Hung (2006). Organization Communication, Job Stress, Organizational Commitment, and Job Performance of Accounting Professionals in Taiwan and America. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal,* 27 (4), 242-249.

Colarelli, S.M. and Bishop, R.C. (1990). Career commitment: Functions, correlates, and management, *Group & Organization Studies,* 15, 158-176.

Cooper, H. (1998). The happy personality: A meta-analysis of 137 personality traits and subjective well-being. *Psychological Bulletin,* 124, 197–229.

Crant, J. M. (2000). Proactive behavior in organizations. *Journal of Management,* 26, 435-462.

Crant, M. J., & Bateman, T. S. (2000). Charismatic leadership viewed from above: The impact of proactive personality. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 21, 63-75.

Culpepper, R. A. (2000). A Test of Revised Scales for the Meyer and Allen (1991) Three- Component Commitment Construct, *Educational and Psychological Measurement,* 60 (4), 604-616.

Deluga, R. (1998). American presidential proactivity, charismatic leadership and rated performance. *Leadership Quarterly*, 9, 265.–291.

Fernando J., Jay P. M., and Greg W. M. (2005). A meta-analysis of the relationship between organizational commitment and salesperson job performance: 25 years of research, *Journal of Business Research,* 58,705-714.

Gallie, D., White, M. (1993). Employee Commitment and the Skills Revolution: First Findings from the Employment in Britain Survey. London: Policy Studies Institute.

Gouldner, A.W. (1957), Cosmopolitans and locals: toward an analysis of latent social roles, *Administrative Science Quarterly,* 2, 281-306.

Goulet, L.R. & Singh, P. (2002). Career commitment: A Reexamination and an extension, *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 61, 73-91.

Grant, R.M. (1996). Toward a knowledge-based view of the firm, *Strategic Management Journal,* 17,109-22.

Jaros, S. J. (1997). An Assessment of Meyer and Allen's (1991) Three- Component Model of Organizational and Turnover Intentions, *Journal of Vocational Behavior,* 51 (3), 319-337.

Kanter, R. M. (1968). Commitment and social organization: a study of commitment mechanisms in Utopian communities, *American Sociological Review,* 33, 499-517.

Ko, J., J. L.Price & C. W. Mueller (1997). Assessment of Meyer and Allen's Three Component Model of Organizational Commitment in South Korea, *Journal of Applied Psychology,* 82 (6), 961-973.

Lee, Sang M. (1971). An empirical analysis of organizational identification, *Academy of Management Journal*, 14, 213-226.

Llewellyn, D and Wilson (2003). The controversial role of personality traits in entrepreneurial psychology, *K. Education + Training*, 45 (6).

Meyer, J. P. & Allen, N.J. (1997). *Commitment in the Workplace: Theory, Research, and Application.* Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks.

Morrow,P.C. (1993). *The Theory and Measurement of Work Commitment,* Jai Press Inc., 157-188.

Morrow, P.C. (1983) Concept redundancy in organizational research: The case of work commitment, *Academy of Management Review*, 8(3), 486-500.

Muller, C. W., Wallace, J.E., & Price, J.L. (1992). Employee Commitment: Resolving some issues. *Work and occupations,* 19(3), 211-236.

Noordin, F., Williams, T., & Zimmer, C. (2002). Career commitment in collectivist and individualist cultures: a comparative study, *International Journal of Human Resource Management,* 13(1), 35-54.

Norris, D.R.and Niebuh, R.E. (1983). Professionalism, Organizational Commitment and Job Satisfaction in Accounting Organization, *Accounting, Organizations, and Society*, 9, 49-59.

Patchen, M (1970). *Participation, Achievement, and Involvement on the Job*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall.

Porter,L.W.,Steers, R.M.,Mowday,R.T.,& Boulian,P.V. (1974). Organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and turnover among psychiatric technicians, *Journal Of Applied Psychology,* 59,603-609.

Riketta, M. (2002).Attitudinal Organizational Commitment and Job Performance: A Meta-Analysis, *Journal of Organizational Behavior,* 23(3), 257-266.

Roberts, B. W., & Hogan, R. (Eds.). (2001). *Personality psychology in the workplace*.

Ryckman, R. (1982). *Theories of Personality*, (2nd ed.). Brooks-Cole, Monterey, CA.

Salgado, J. F. (1997). The five factor model of personality and job performance in the European Community. *Journal of Applied Psychology,* 80, 607-620.

Seibert,S.E., Crant, J.M.,& Kraimer, M.L. (1999). Proactive personality and career success, *Journal of Applied Research*, 416-427.

Seibert,S.E.,Kraimer, M.L. & Crant,J.M.(2001).What do proactive people do? A longitudinal model linking proactive personality and career success, *Personnel Psychology,* 850.

Sulimand,A.M. & P.A . Iles (2000).The Multi-Dimensional Nature of Organizational Commitment in a non-Western Context, *Journal of Management Development.* 9(1), 71-82.

Vandenberghe, C. , Bentein, K. & Stinglhamber, F. (2004), Affective commitment to the organization, supervisor, and work group: Antecedents and outcomes. *Journal of Vocational Behavior,* 64, 47-71.

Wiener, Y., & Vardi, Y. (1980). Relationships between job, organization, career commitments and work outcomes: An integrative approach, *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance,* 26, 81-96.

Wiener,Y.(1982). Commitment in organizations: A Normative View, *Academy of Management Review,* 7 (3), 418-428.