

The relationship between proactive personality, affective commitment and the role of job stressors.

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Abstract

In this study the relation between proactive personality and affective organizational commitment was examined. Furthermore it was explored whether job stressors, workload, role ambiguity and role conflict had a moderating effect on this relationship. The results of a questionnaire among 170 employees of a German administrative governmental agency suggested that proactive personality is positively related to affective commitment. Furthermore all of the three job stressors had a negative effect on affective commitment. The findings revealed a buffering effect of role conflict on the relationship between proactive personality and affective organizational commitment. The influence of workload and role ambiguity on the relation of proactive personality was not found to be significant.

Introduction

The purpose of this research is to investigate the relationships between proactive personality, job stressors and affective organizational commitment (Crant, 2000). Proactive behavior has a growing significance in the selection and hiring processes of a company. The reason for this can be found in the changing nature of work in the 21st century where work becomes more dynamic and decentralized, where it gets more and more important that employees are able to control changes in their work environments (Crant, 2000). Proactive personality, which is considered an antecedent to proactive behavior, provides the skills for an individual to engage in active changing of the work environment. Furthermore, proactive individuals show the initiative to persist until change occurs (Bateman & Crant, 1993). Additionally, some people identify problems on their own and solve them to advance their personal and organizational environment (Leavitt, 1988). This is why proactive personality skills are described as a critical determinant of organizational success (Crant, 2000) and also a determinant which leads to increased organizational effectiveness (Bateman & Crant, 1999).

Another important factor for companies is not only finding the appropriate employees with the right characteristic of proactive personality, but also to keep those talented employees (Mitchell, Holtom & Lee, 2001). This is why it is important to determine the relationship between proactive personality and affective commitment. Crant (2000) supportively suggested that there is need for further research of proactive personality in the context of work outcomes such as commitment. Affective commitment is the outcome variable in this study. It describes the emotional attachment of an employee to his organization. In affective commitment an employee shows the free will to stay with an organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). It is the most researched form of commitment in the literature, because it is the strongest predictor of desired work outcomes for an organization, such as employee retention (Allen, Shore & Griffeth, 2003; Meyer & Smith, 2000; Rhoades, Eisenberger & Armeli, 2001). Furthermore affective commitment is a crucial determinant of organizational effectiveness regarding employees job performance, employees absenteeism and employees turnover (Steers, 1975; Ferris & Arranya 1983).

Another variable, which is significant in the relationship between proactive personality and affective commitment, researched in this study, are job stressors. Job stressors are situations or conditions during work, which cause an employee to react on it, with an adaptive response (Jex & Beehr, 1991). Jobs stressors occur in every work environment. Particular job stressors which appear in jobs are stressors, such as role conflict and role ambiguity and

workloads (Spector, 2006). These are the job stressors which are researched in this study. There is a relationship between proactive personality and job stressors which might influence the relationship between proactive personality and affective commitment. Job stressors have different effects on people with high proactive personality than on people with less proactive personality (Aspinwall & Taylor, 1997).

Mischel (1977) found that behavior or work outcomes in situations which are strong are caused by the situation and not by the individual personality. A strong situation would for example be a work situation with high job stressors which would inhibit the positive effects of proactive personality which were mentioned before, which means that behavior is more a function of the situation. Oppositional in a weak situation the behavior of employees is more a function of personal dispositions. This is why a moderating effect of job stressors is expected in the relation of proactive personality and affective organizational commitment.

Research question

This study attends to the following research question:

Is there a relationship between proactive personality and affective commitment and how do job stressors influence this relationship?

Scientific relevance

In literature several studies in the context of proactive personality can be found, but as Crant (2000) suggested, there is a lack of research on proactivity and other work related contexts. This study tries to contribute to the lack of research by examining the relationship between proactive personality and affective commitment as a work outcome. Furthermore a lack of research was also identified in examining moderators in the relationship of proactive personality and other variables for example work outcomes (Crant, 2000). Therefore, job stressors are included in this study as a possible moderator in the relationship between proactive personality and affective commitment. By researching the relationship among the three variables, it is expected that this research will provide important information in the field of proactive personality and contribute to already existing perceptions.

Furthermore there are still research gaps in the understanding of the antecedents of affective organizational commitment. Minimal attention has been focused on the dispositional antecedent of commitment (Erdheim, Wang & Zickar, 2006). Thus, this study could also help to discover more information about which role proactive personality plays as a possible

antecedent of affective organizational commitment and if some individuals are predisposed to engage in affective organizational commitment.

Practical relevance

The results of this study could possibly enhance selecting and hiring process in organizations and support already existing processes, by developing methods which are specified in identifying proactive personality. For example if creative employees are needed in organizations which emphasize innovations or if employees are searched which can handle less structured jobs and can deal with job related problems without strong instructions of subordinates. This study may also contribute to further research ideas in the field of proactive personality.

Theory

In this chapter all variables used in the study are described with the help of a literature study and their linkages are explained. Based on that hypothesizes and the research model are going to be developed.

Personality traits and proactivity

In the work related research a lot of literature can be found over personality traits and their relationship with variables in the work field. For example a lot of studies have been done on the relation between personality traits and work outcomes for example job satisfaction, organizational commitment and work performance (Judge, Heller & Mount 2002; Barrick, & Mount, 1991). One of the most used models referring to personality traits is the five factor model, also called the Big Five (Goldberg, 1990), consisting of Neuroticism, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Openness and Conscientiousness. These five factors are considered the fundamental dimensions of personality (McCrae & John, 1992) and were researched in various frameworks measures, occupations and cultures (Barrick & Mount, 1991; De Raad & Doddema Winsemius, 1999; John & Srivastava, 1999; Liao & Chuang, 2004). There is strong evidence that personality traits are related to job-related attitudes and behaviors (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Judge et al., 2002; Tokar, Fisher & Subich 1998). Although the significance of the five factor model has been acknowledged in the literature, there were also findings about personality traits such as proactive personality, which are predictors of criterion variables

over and above the contribution of the Big Five (Crant, 1995; Crant & Bateman, 2000). This is the reason, why we want to concentrate on the personality traits which are connected to proactivity in this study. Crant and Bateman (1993) found that their proactivity scale was related to the personality constructs: conscientiousness and extraversion. Research has shown that over and above the contribution of the Big Five personality traits, proactive personality positively predicts a number of criterion variables (Crant, 1995; Crant & Bateman, 2000). In the next chapter proactivity in general is explained. Furthermore the concept of proactive personality is presented and the relevance as a predictor variable in this study is described.

A general term which is used to summarize and describe these actions and behaviors is the term proactive behavior. Crant (2000) defines 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” (Crant, 2000). Employees actively approach work with the initiative to create conditions which are favorable for them, thereby changing the environment. Consequently it accrues a dynamic interaction of person, environment and behavior which influence each other (Bandura, 1986). The environment can control the behavior but the behavior also controls the environment (Bowers, 1973; Schneider, 1983). The personality trait which is the disposition of proactive behavior is proactive personality, which in detail is described in the next chapter.

Proactive personality

The concept of proactive personality was developed to measure the personal disposition towards proactive behavior. It is used to identify the differences between people's tendency to influence their environment. Prototypically people with proactive personality are described as being relatively unconstrained by situational forces and have a great effect on changing the environment (Bateman & Crant, 1993). Their skills are to identify and use opportunities, to show initiative and to persist until meaningful changes are achieved (Bateman & Crant, 1993). People with low proactive personality tend to the opposite. They do not identify opportunities, cannot use them to cause changes and behave only passive and reactive on situational forces. They rather accept and adapt circumstances than change them (Crant, 1995).

The roots of the proactive personality concept in proactive behavior lie in the interactionist perspective; this means that people are able to create their own environments. Behavior of people is viewed as being both internally and externally influenced and situations which influence them are as much a function of person as vice versa (Schneider, 1983).

People who are able to change their environments are seen to be more effective in work performances. To prove this Bateman and Crant (1993) developed the Proactive Personality Scale which measures the construct of proactive personality. The Proactive Personality Scale was used in several studies to indentify the effects of proactive personality on different work outcomes. Outcome variables like individual job performance (Crant, 1995), career outcomes (for example career success, salary, number of promotions) (Seibert, Crant & Kraimer, 1999), leadership (Crant & Bateman, 2000), organizational innovation (Parker, 1998), team performance (Kirkman & Rosen,1999) and entrepreneurship (Becherer & Maurer, 1999) were studied and positive correlations were found. This states that proactive personality is an important variable in the effectiveness of performance and achievement for organizations and individuals. As mentioned before Bateman and Crant (1993) mentioned that not all effects of proactive personality are positive and as it can also lead to negative outcomes. In a study about proactive personality and its outcomes, Chan (2006) shows that situational judgment skills are important moderators of proactive personality and if lacking it could lead to maladaptive outcomes. In this study we will concentrate on the outcomes of affective commitment. This could be interesting for an organization with the idea that a proactive employee leads to more positive work outcomes.

Affective Organizational Commitment

The outcome variable in this study is affective commitment. Affective commitment is one of the dimensions of organizational commitment. This chapter deals with the development of the variable, the models created around it, as well as antecedents and consequences of it.

Organizational commitment became a variable of great interest in a variety of studies in the past. A lot of studies were done about the definition, antecedents and consequences of commitment (Meyer & Herscovich, 2001; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986). However, organizational commitment can also be found as a variable in literature, where it is not the main focus of attention (Meyer, Allen & Smith, 1993). This huge interest which is paid to organizational commitment is based on the consequences it is connected to. Employees which show a high commitment are assumed to be better performers in the job and have lower turnover rates than less committed ones (Mowday, Porter & Dubin 1974).

In general, organizational commitment can be seen as an employee's psychological attachment to an organization which makes turnover less likely (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Mowday (1982) defines it as identification with organizational goals, a desire to belong to the organization and a willingness to show effort in the interest of the organization. Furthermore

Meyer and Herscovich (2001) describe organizational commitment as a motive to engage in behavior which leads to a positive whole when an employee experiences a positive exchange relationship with the organization.

Allen and Meyer (1990) developed the component model of organizational commitment. The three dimensions are: Affective commitment which describes how an employee identifies with an organization, get involved in it and the extent of attachment he feels towards it. Employees remain with high affective commitment in an organization because of free will.

Continuance commitment refers to the cost, which are attached to leaving an organization. It includes economical losses like pensions or social losses such as friendships with colleagues. Employees with high continuance commitment remain in an organization because they have to.

Normative commitment describes the obligation towards the company which an employee perceives. This obligation can be caused by the investments a company made in an employee, for example training or skill development. Employees with high normative commitment stay in an organization because they ought to do (Allen & Meyer, 1990).

Allen and Meyer (1990) developed a scale to measure the three components. Many studies have been done to identify correlations, validity and generalizability of these scales. A correlation was found between affective and normative commitment but both are relatively independent of continuance commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990). It was also found that continuance commitment could be separated into two subscales which were correlated to affective commitment (McGee & Ford, 1987). These subscales were in accordance to the side-bet theory of Becker (1960) which describes earlier. This separation was also found in a study of Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch and Topolnytsky (2002). Furthermore it is noticeable that the three component model was found to be generalizable outside North-America (Meyer & Allen, 2002)

Commitment can also have different foci, such as professions, unions, organizations, supervisors, higher management, goal and career (Reichers, 1985) or more general foci like locally (coworkers) and (occupation, management, organization) (Becker, 1960). The separation into foci is useful to measure the strength and direction of commitment. However in this study affective commitment is chosen as an outcome variable in the relation to proactive personality.

More interesting for this study are the antecedents and consequences of affective commitment, which are described in the next chapter. Affective commitment has the most

positive consequences like for example job performance or job satisfaction, of the three dimensions beyond the high negative correlation to turnover which can be found with every dimension of commitment (Allen & Meyer, 2000). This is why we chose affective commitment as the outcome variable.

Affective commitment: antecedents and consequences

Meyer and Allen (1991) found three groups of possible antecedents for affective commitment; Personal characteristics, organizational structure and work experiences.

Personal characteristics refer less to demographic variables such as age, tenure, sex or education (Steers & Spencer, 1977). Personal disposition in this context refers to the need for achievement, affiliation and autonomy (Steers & Spencer, 1977), higher order strength (Cook and Wall, 1980), personal work ethic (Buchanan, 1974) and locus of control (Luthans, Baack, & Taylor, 1987). Another personal characteristic which has been employed to identify antecedents of affective commitment was personal disposition for the interaction with the environment. These dispositions should lead to better work attitudes (Hackman & Oldham 1976; Hulin & Blood 1968).

There is also some evidence that affective commitment is influenced by organizational structures, such as decentralization of decision making (Brooke, Russel, & Price 1988; Morris & Steers, 1980) and formalization of policy and procedure (Morris & Steers, 1980).

Work experience is thus far the most researched and strongest antecedent of affective commitment. Work experience can be divided in categories, of those experiences that comfort an employee physically or psychologically and those that contribute to an employee's feeling of competence at his work (Meyer & Allan, 1991). Examples for comforting work experience are role clarity, freedom from conflict (Blau, 1986; Morris & Koch 1979) autonomy (DeCotiis & Summers 1987) or job challenge (Buchanan, 1974; Meyer & Allen 1987, 1988).

There were strong negative correlations among affective commitment and turnover and withdrawal cognitions (Meyer et al. 2002). Additionally, affective commitment correlated negatively with absenteeism. Furthermore there were some correlations with desirable work outcome variables. Affective commitment correlated positively with job performance, organizational citizenship behavior and negatively with stress and work-family conflict (Meyer et. al 2002).

Proactive personality and affective commitment

As mentioned before people with high proactive personality tend to be relatively unconstrained by situational forces and have a great effect on changing the environment. Additionally they identify opportunities and show initiative to create meaningful changes in their environment (Bateman & Crant, 1993). Those abilities have an influence on the variable of affective commitment, where employees identify with an organization, get involved in it, pursuing its goals and feel a strong bond towards it (Allen and Meyer (1990). It could be assumed that if employees engage in opportunities to change their environments for personal and organizational benefits, it could influence their perceived attachment to the organization, because it would be a positive work experience. As mentioned before, work experience is a strong antecedent of affective commitment. This is why we presume that proactive personality and affective commitment relate with each other.

Hypothesis 1: Proactive personality is positively related to affective commitment.

Job stressors

Jex and Beehr (1991) define job stressors as a condition or situation at work that requires an adaptive response from the employee. If an employee cannot cope with a job stressor it usually leads to a job strain, which is defined as a negative reaction by an employee to a stressor. Strains can be divided into three categories; psychological reactions, physical reactions, behavioral reactions. Possible psychological reaction could be for example anger, anxiety frustration or job dissatisfaction. Physical reactions include physical symptoms such as dizziness, headache, heart pounding and stomach distress or illnesses such as cancer and heart disease. Behavioral reactions can be for example accidents, smoking, substance use, turnover, absenteeism or industrial relation difficulties (Jex & Beehr, 1991). In this study we concentrate on three job stressors which are the most researched and which can be found in a variety of work fields (Spector, 2006). We also choose them because if they are present in the work field they are examples of strong situations as mentioned before. These three job stressors are workload, role conflict and role ambiguity.

Workload describes the demand of work requested from an employee by its job. It is subdivided in quantitative workload (the amount of work a person has to do and qualitative workload (the difficulty of work related to an individual's capabilities) (Spector, 2006).

High workload is likely to cause uncertainty for the employee whether he can accomplish all his work or not (Beehr & Bhagat, 1985). This might cause anxiety and frustration.

Additionally, workload can be goal blocking for the employee because an employee has to neglect certain other aspects of job or life (Spector & Jex, 1998).

Role Conflict refers to the incompatible demands an individual is confronted with in an organization. It is separated in two forms; intrarole conflict which happens in the work and extrarole which happens between work and nonwork. Intrarole conflict occurs when an employee has conflicting tasks to deal with, for example if two different supervisors are demanding a different approach of a task such as work fast against working precise, the incompatibility working either fast or precise results in role conflict. Extrarole conflict enunciates the conflict between demands from work and non work domains, for example the job conflicting with the private life (Spector, 2006).

Role ambiguity is another role stressor which is researched in this study. It explains the lack of certainty employees have about their function, tasks and responsibilities in their job. It develops when subordinates fail to provide clear directions and guidelines about the function of the employee. This can lead to ambiguity about what the employee is required to do in the organization. The employee is uncertain of behavior in the job which is expected or the position he is in (Spector, 2006). Together with role conflicts, role ambiguity highly correlates with high levels of anxiety and tension, job satisfaction and turnover intention and commitment (Jackson & Schuler, 1985).

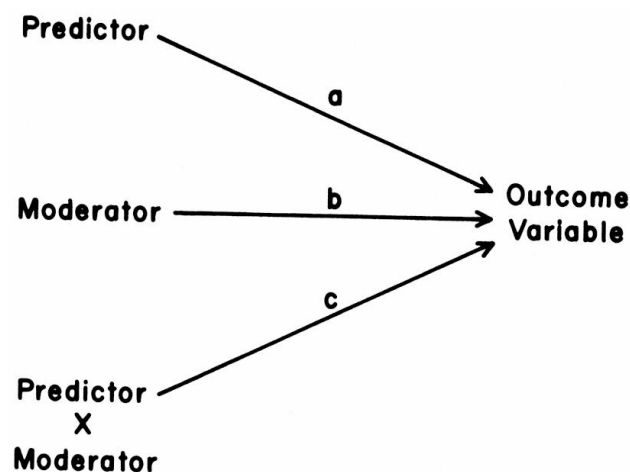


Fig. 1 Moderator model; Baron & Kenny (1986)

The moderating effect of job stressors

In the previous chapters a possible relationship between proactive personality and affective commitment was described. Positive work experience is the strongest antecedent of affective

commitment (Meyer & Allan, 1991; Meyer et al., 2002) and proactive personality might influence affective commitment because work experience which is gained while engaging in proactive behavior. Job stressors such as role ambiguity and role conflict which are seen as negative work experience have a strong negative correlation with affective commitment (Meyer et. al 2002). Employees with high proactive personality have the abilities to cope with job stressors easier than people with low proactive personality. They can change their environment and overcome job stressors for example through negotiating of job changes (Wanberg & Kammeyer-Mueller; 2000). Furthermore individuals with proactive personality are seen as relatively unconstrained by situational influences (Bateman & Crant, 1993).

However, there are theories and studies which work against the idea that situational influences matter in the relationship of personality and a certain work outcome. Mischel (1977) developed the theory of strong and weak situations, which examines in which extent situational strength moderates the relation between personality and contextual performance. Mischel's definition of a strong situation is one in which expectancies concerning appropriate behavior are relatively uniform (Mischel, 1977). This means that certain behaviors are desired and clearly reinforced by the management and subordinates. Employee's roles and tasks are unambiguous. The opposite of this is called a weak situation where there is a lack of these characteristics. In a weak situation employees do not have a common perception on what behavior is expected of them, because the weak situation does not clearly provide which behavior is desired (Mischel, 1977). Referring to the three job stressors; high workload, high role conflict and high role ambiguity are thus signs of a strong situation in an organization. In Mischel's theory it is stated that behavior or work outcomes in strong situations are caused by the situation and not by individual differences in personality. This is contrary to weak situations where the behavior is more a function of personal differences in personality than a function of the situation (Mischel, 1977). In other words strong situations constrain the expressions of personality and weak situations enhance them.

In this case, job stressors would have a moderating effect (Baron & Kenny, 1986; see Appendix), which weakens the relationship between proactive personality and affective commitment (Fig.1). This is why following hypotheses are developed.

Hypothesis 2.1: The relationship between proactive personality and affective commitment is buffered by workload.

Hypothesis 2.2: The relationship between proactive personality and affective commitment is buffered by role conflict.

Hypothesis 2.3: The relationship between proactive personality and affective commitment is buffered by role ambiguity.

Research model

Based on the literature review and hypotheses the following model was developed:

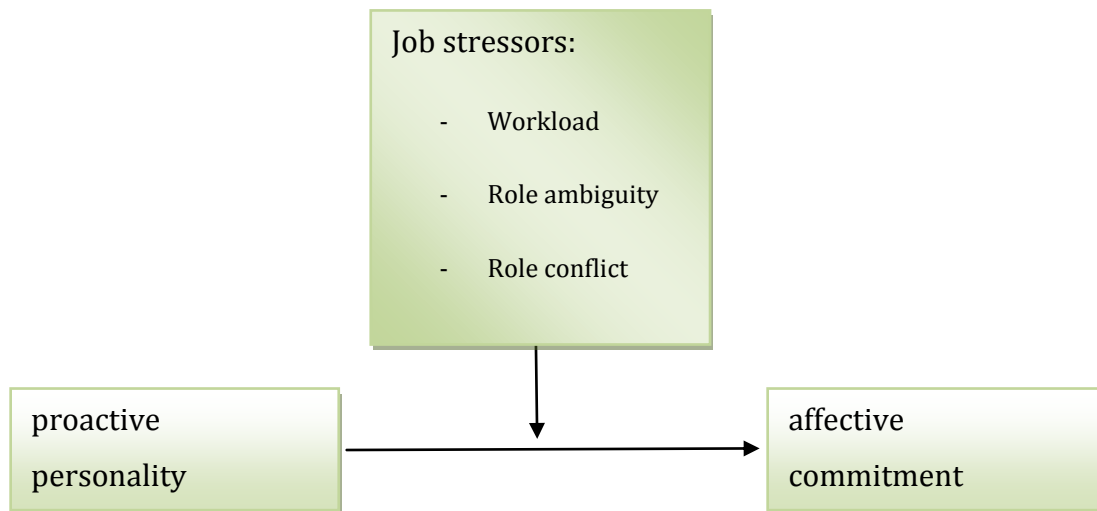


Fig.2 Research model of the correlation between proactive personality and affective commitment, moderated by job stressors

Methods

In this chapter the research methodology which was used to study the relationships amongst proactive personality, organizational commitment and the job stressors (work conflict, role conflict, and role ambiguity) is presented. Furthermore, the characteristics of the sample and the institution are described as well as the data collection procedures and the administration of the questionnaires.

Organization

The Institution in which this study was conducted is a governmental confederation in North Rhine-Westphalia in Germany, in its headquarters in Münster. The main activity of the

confederation is to administrate schools, museums, hospitals and psychiatries. The institution was founded in the 1950s and has approximately 800 employees who work in many different sectors. The sample of this study was developed from employees of a department in the headquarters in which around 400 employees were available as respondents. The department's main function is to share out distribute finances to communities and to the various facilities of the confederation also to administrate human resources for the whole confederation.

Population

The sample was taken from administrative employees from the above mentioned governmental confederation. In the sample are executive as well as non executive employees. All employees partaking in the sample have at least vocational trainings or university degrees. The total size of the sample was 400 respondents. 181 questionnaires were filled out from which 170 were completed and usable for the study. The remainder was excluded from the statistical analysis. In total there was a response rate of 42,5 %. In the following Table 1 the demographic statistics of the employees are presented.

Variables & scales

There were five scales used to measure the three different variables. Those included an affective commitment scale (Allen & Meyer, 1990) to measure the outcome variable affective commitment and a proactive personality scale (Crant & Kraimer, 1999) to measure the predictor variable proactive personality. Further there were three scales included for measuring the moderator variable job stressor: workload scale (Moore, 2000), role conflict scale (Moore, 2000) and role ambiguity scale (Moore, 2000). The reliability of the scales can be found in Table 2. All scales and items are attached in the Appendix 1. All items in the scales were answered with a 5 point Likert scale, 1 = I strongly agree, 2 = I agree, 3 = I neither agree nor disagree, 4 = I disagree and 5 = I strongly disagree.

Control variables

Demographical aspects like age, gender, years working in the organization, years working in the occupation and working in a leadership position or not, were used as control variables. Demographic statistics can be found in table 1.

Questionnaire administration and data collection

The survey was developed via computer and translated into German by a certified translator. The primary draft was presented to the department heads. With their feedback the final version was developed, in which some terms and definitions were modified for a better fit to the institution, thereby improving the face validity of the items.

As mentioned before, 400 employees were available as respondents, therefore 400 hardcopy questionnaires were delivered, each with a closeable envelope to ensure confidentiality.

The questionnaires were distributed and collected by the in-house mail service.

Table 1: *Demographic statistics of the respondents (N=170)*

	Number of respondents	Percentage
Gender		
Male	88	51,8
Female	82	48,2
Age		
20-30	18	10,6
31-40	41	24,1
41-40	58	34,1
50+	53	31,2
Years in the organisation		
Under 2 years	8	4,7
2-5 years	20	11,8
5-10 years	22	12,9
More than 10 years	120	70,6
Years in occupation		
Under 2 years	11	6,5
2-5 years	23	13,5
5-10 years	20	11,8
More than 10 years	116	68,2
Leadership position		
yes	27	15,9
no	143	84,1

Table 2: Descriptive statistics and reliability estimates of the used scales and intercorrelations between the research variables (N=170)

Variables	No. of items	Mean	SD	Alpha	1	2	3	4	5
1. Proactive personality	10	2.68	.58	.81	-				
2. Affective commitment	10	2.65	.32	.79	.342**	-			
3. Workload	4	3.36	.91	.85	-.007	-.213**	-		
4. Role ambiguity	6	3.65	.70	.79	-.235	-.227**	.218**	-	
5. Role conflict	8	3.57	.69	.78	.009	-.313**	.570**	.420**	-

Note: ** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Results

The following chapter describes the results of the statistical analysis, which was used to test the hypotheses developed on the literature research in chapter 2.

Descriptive analysis

Table 2 shows the means and the standard deviation of the used variables. Additionally, the Cronbach's alpha used for the internal reliability of the scales is illustrated and in the diagonal the correlation of the different variables can be seen which were also conducted with the Cronbach's alpha.

In general, employees scored medium on proactive personality ($M = 2.68$, $SD = 0.81$). Further, they scored comparatively low on affective commitment ($M = 2.68$, $SD = 0.79$). Thus employees were in general moderately committed to the organization. The mean scores of the work stressors: workload ($M = 3.36$, $SD = 0.91$), role ambiguity ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 0.70$) and role conflict ($M = 3.57$, $SD = 0.69$) were overall high, implicating that job stressors are broadly seen to be existent.

The internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) for the measures ranged from 0.78 to 0.85. Thus, the scales which were included in the used questionnaire showed decent levels of internal consistency reliability.

The correlation analysis shows a correlation between proactive personality and affective commitment ($r = .342$, $p < .01$). Furthermore proactive personality is significantly correlated to the job stressors: workload ($r = -.007$, $p < .01$) and role ambiguity ($r = -.235$, $p < .01$). Affective commitment has negative significant correlations with workload ($r = -.213$, $p < .01$), role ambiguity ($r = -.227$, $p < .01$) and role conflict ($r = -.313$, $p < .01$). Additionally, all job stressors have a significant correlation with each other (see table 2).

Regression analysis

The hypotheses 1 to 3.3 were tested using a hierarchical regression analysis. Therefore all variables were standardized. Affective commitment was used as the outcome variable in the different analyses. Furthermore the control variables; age, gender, years working in the organization, years working in the occupation and working in a leadership position or not,

were used as control variables. Table 3 shows the result of the regression analysis. In model 1 the job stressor workload was used, in model 2 the job stressor role conflict was used and finally in model 3 role ambiguity was employed.

Tabel 3: *Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Affective Commitment (N=170)*

Variable	Model 1 (workload)	Model 2 (role ambiguity)	Model 3 (role conflict)
	β	β	β
Gender	.052	.051	.042
Age	-.059	-.092	-.032
Years in institution	-.071	-.009	-.093
Years in Job	.148	.143	.157
Leading position	.134*	.057	.090
Proactive personality	.326***	.294 ***	.358***
Job stressor	-.234**	-.146*	-.297***
Proactive personality x job stressor	.076	.034	.126*

Note: *** = $p < .01$; ** = $p < .05$; * = $p < .10$

Hypothesis 1 suggested that there is a positive relationship between proactive personality and affective commitment. This relation was confirmed by the analysis ($\beta = .326, p < .01$)

In the hypotheses 2.1 to 2.3 the interaction of the predictors of proactive personality and job stressors were tested. Therefore the variables workload, role ambiguity and role conflict were each added in the regression analysis.

Hypotheses 2.1 and 2.2 presumed that workload and role ambiguity have a buffering influence on the relationship between proactive personality and affective commitment. Both hypotheses could not be confirmed by the regression analysis ($\beta = .076, p = \text{n.s.}; \beta = .034, p = \text{n.s.}$).

Therefore, hypotheses 2.1 and 2.2 are in contrast to hypothesis 2.3 which could be affirmed ($\beta = .126, p < .10$). Thus it can be concluded that role conflict has a buffering influence on the relationship between proactive personality and affective commitment. The interaction effect is shown in figure 3..

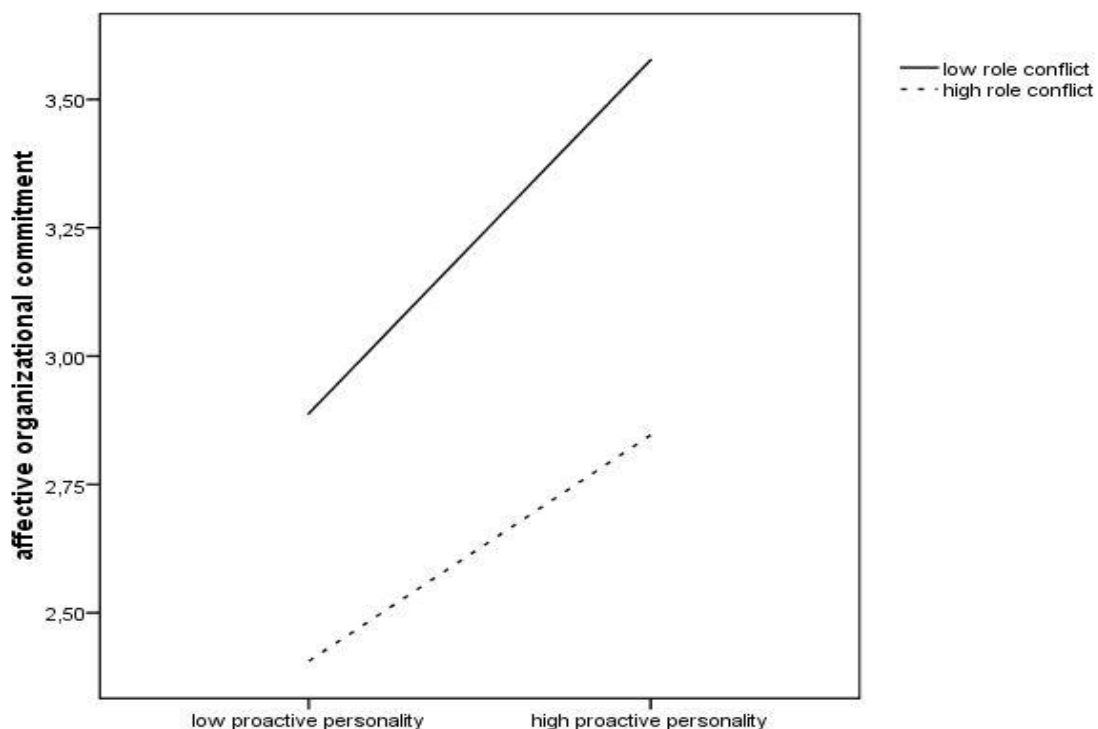


Fig. 3 Two-way interaction effect between proactive personality and role conflict on affective organizational commitment

Discussion and Conclusion

In this study the relationship between proactive personality and affective commitment was researched. In the literature it was stated that there is an influence of situations on the effects of personality (Mischel, 1977), that is the reason, why the influence of job stressors on the relation between proactive personality and affective commitment was additionally investigated. It was expected that situations with strong job stressors would have a negative influence on the relation between the predictor proactive personality and the outcome variable affective commitment. The job stressors which were used are workload, role ambiguity and role conflict.

Firstly the relationship between proactive personality and affective commitment was highly supported by the data analysis. It can be concluded that proactive personality and affective commitment have a strong relationship. Thus, employees with a proactive personality are more likely to get involved in the organization as described by Allen and Meyer (1990). This is connected with more positive work experience and higher affective commitment. For an organization it could be important to especially look for proactive personality in the hiring and selection processes of new employees to assure high affective commitment of them, because proactive personality adds to the value of the employee and thus to the value of the firm. The results also suggest that employees with high proactive personality can manipulate their environment in ways they desire to get more control in the work environment. This causes positive feelings about work, thus greater emotional attachment to the job. Organization should make space for employees to act out their proactive personality. These research findings are extending current literature about the relationships between employees and their organizations. In addition proactive personality should be included into the current models of affective organizational commitment.

Furthermore the relationship between the three job stressors and affective commitment was studied. Workload ($\beta = -.234, p < .05$), role ambiguity ($\beta = -.146, p < .10$) as well as role conflict ($\beta = -.297, p < .01$) all had a negative influence on affective commitment. It can be concluded that employees which are exposed to job stressors such as workload, role ambiguity and role conflict are less affectively committed to an organization. This also supports the finding of Allen and Meyer (1990) in their Meta analysis regarding commitment. This could mean that organizations should take care of potential job stressors, workload, role ambiguity and role conflict in their work field to increase the commitment of their employees.

In the analysis of the moderating effect of job stressors on the relation between proactive personality and affective commitment, different results as expected were found. Job stressors, workload and role ambiguity seemed to have no influence on the relation between proactive personality and affective commitment as was concluded from the literature research. Only the interaction effect between proactive personality and role conflict was significant in the relation towards affective commitment ($\beta = .126, p < 0.10$). It can be concluded that role conflict is the most disturbing factor for an employee to act out his proactive personality. Thus the analysis shows that role conflict has a buffering effect on the relationship between proactive personality and affective commitment. In an organization role conflict should be avoided, by clearly defining how tasks have to be fulfilled, as well as conspicuously determining the border between work life and private life. If those clear structures are applied, then proactive personality is not buffered by role conflict and can as an effect enhance the affective commitment of an employee.

A reason explaining why the other job stressors did not have a buffering influence could be that proactive personality individuals are not, as expected by the theory of Mischel (1977), influenced by strong situations. Rather, they are relatively unconstrained of situations as described in the definition of Bateman and Crant (1993). This point is affiliated and further discussed in the chapter about further research suggestions. From this study it can be concluded that some job stressors might have a buffering effect on the relationship between proactive personality and affective commitment. Additionally it could be concluded that strong situations with high job stressors have a negative influence on the effects of proactive personality, which supports Mischel's theory (1977). This is a second reason why proactive commitment is an important skill which is desirable for organizations, because employees with high proactive personality are not affected by strong situations with high job stressors. Furthermore this findings add to the theory of Bateman and Crant (1993) and also should be included in literature about strong situations and job stressors.

As mentioned before proactive personality can be seen as an important disposition of employees in different work fields, which is connected with positive outcome variables (Crant, 2000). For organizations it helps to predict the emotional commitment to the organization thus it can be used as a competitive advantage while choosing the proper employees with proactive skills. Furthermore it helps the management to identify how employees will react in different situations like for example in strong situation with high job stressors. As mentioned before this study contributed to the proactive personality literature by

investigating the relationship between proactive personality and affective commitment which is a significant variable for example in the performance of employees in organizations (Mowday, Porter & Dubin 1974).

We recommend that further research could be made to determine how far proactive personality individuals can cope with job stressors and use the abilities of proactive personality to overcome job stressors in a strong situation. Aspinwall and Taylor (1997) stated that, high proactive personality enables individuals to cope with job stressors and they tend to prevent and modify stressful events before they happen. In other words, it should be researched whether proactive personality has a possible mediator affect in the relation of job stressors and work outcomes such as affective commitment. Furthermore, it has to be said that the results of this study are limited, because all respondents are chosen from one work field, which lay in the administrative work field and with 170 respondents the sample size could also be increased in a future research,. The data was also only collected by self report so it is recommended to do further research to overcome these bias. It would be interesting for future research to investigate other possible mediator and moderators in the relationship between proactive personality and affective organizational commitment like for example job satisfaction. Additionally, it could be interesting to get respondents from a work field where work is more creative and the skills of proactive personality are probably more important than they are for administrative employees and where employees have bigger opportunities to act out these skills. This is also a reason that the generalizability of this study is limited.

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Appendix

Proactive Personality (Crant and Kraimer 1999, Research Reports: Proactive Personality and Career Success, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 84, 416-427).

1. I am constantly on the lookout for new ways to improve my life.
2. Wherever I have been, I have been a powerful force for constructive change.
3. Nothing is more exciting than seeing my ideas turn into reality.
4. If I see something I don't like, I fix it.
5. No matter what the odds, if I believe in something I will make it happen.
6. I love being a champion for my ideas, even against others' opposition.
7. I excel at identifying opportunities.
8. I am always looking for better ways to do things.
9. If I believe in an idea, no obstacle will prevent me from making it happen.
10. I can spot a good opportunity long before others can.

Work characteristics

Role Ambiguity (Moore, J.E. (2000), One Road to Turnover: an Examination of Work Exhaustion in Technology Professionals, *MIS Quarterly*, 24, 141-168).

1. I do not feel certain about how much authority I have.
2. Clear, planned goals and objectives do not exist for my job.
3. I know that my time is not dividend properly to do different tasks.
4. I am not sure what my responsibilities are.
5. I am not sure exactly what is expected of me.
6. It is not clearly explained that what has to be done.

Role Conflict (Moore, J.E. (2000), One Road to Turnover: an Examination of Work Exhaustion in Technology Professionals, MIS Quarterly, 24, 141-168).

1. I have to do things that should be done differently.
2. I receive an assignment without the manpower to complete it.
3. I have to "buck" a rule or policy in order to carry out an assignment.
4. I work with two or more groups who operate quite differently.
5. I receive incompatible requests from two or more people.
6. I do things that are apt to be accepted by one person and not accepted by others.
7. I receive an assignment without adequate resources and materials to execute it.
8. I work on unnecessary things.

Work Load (Moore, J.E. (2000), One Road to Turnover: an Examination of Work Exhaustion in Technology Professionals, MIS Quarterly, 24, 141-168).

1. I feel that the number of requests, problems, or complaints I deal with is more than expected.
2. I feel that the amount of work I do interferes with how well it is done.
3. I feel busy or rushed.

4. I feel pressured.

History of proactive behaviour and personality

In the early theories of the so called “golden age” of work motivation, nobody wasted a thought on the proactive motivations an employee could have while fulfilling their work and challenging their careers. Theories were mainly influenced by the orthodox views of behaviorism, where people take a reactive position against their environments, which basically means being under the control of managers (Locke & Latham, 2002). Theories which were common amongst these are, for example, expectancy theory and equity theory (Vroom, 1964; Adams, 1963, 1965).

One of the first theories with signs of proactivity is the goal-setting theory, which was developed with the idea that employees have conscious motives to choose their own behavior and are more motivated if certain goals are more difficult and specific (Locke, 1968).

Further literature gathered by Grant and Ashfort (2008) which describes how employees actively change their environments, were in the field of social processes, work structures and development and change processes. In social processes research is done to determine how employees actively shape their interpersonal relationships and social interactions. (Kipnis, Schmidt & Wilkinson, 1980). Examples how employees engage in such actions, are active feedback seeking through various tactics or citizenship behaviors (Ashford & Cummings, 1983, 1985; Ashford, Blatt & Vandewalle, 2003; Rioux & Penner, 2001). Further, the literature about work structures shows how employees actively create and develop their performance in jobs, so tasks are not only completed but also improved with new ideas and through problem solving (Staw & Boettger, 1990). This is done for example by expanding their role in their companies (Baker & Faulkner, 1991; Callero, 1994; Paker, Wall, & Jackson, 1997) or building personal goals as opposed to only reacting on goals which were set by managers (Roberson, 1989, 1990). The third field of literature studying proactivity is about development and change process. Here the focus is on employee’s active involvement in changes in their environment, such as changing organizational routines (Bell & Staw, 1989). Another observation which was found is that employees actively search for development opportunities to improve skills and knowledge, and not only react on formal trainings provided by the management (Edmondson, 1999; Sonnentag, 2003).

History of affective commitment

In the history of organizational commitment there have been debates about the dimensionality of commitment (Becker, 1960; Mowday, Steers and Porter; 1979, Allen and Meyer; 1990). Many critics were adjusted to the fact that the use of measures of commitment did not always correspond to the definition being applied (Morrow 1983; Meyer & Allan 1984; Stebbins 1970). The first dimensions which were made to synthesize a more detailed view of organizational commitment were, attitudinal commitment or emotional commitment (Mowday et. al 1979) and calculative or behavioral commitment (Becker, 1960). Attitudinal commitment is described as the identification of an employee with the organization. Through identification an employee maintains membership in an organization order to pursue its goals (Porter, Steers, Mowday and Boulian, 1974). The calculative commitment develops because an employee is bound to an organization through extraneous interests. Becker (1960) created the side-bet theory, in which employees get attached to an organization on the one hand because of values like time, money and effort, in other words pensions, seniority or specific skills. On the other hand, an employee is bound because of the lack of alternatives to get a new job. Meyer and Allen (1984) labeled the two dimensions attitudinal commitment and calculative commitment into affective and continuance commitment. After research they finally added a third dimension which is named normative commitment.

The moderator variable

A moderator variable can be described as a quantitative or qualitative variable that affects the direction and/or the strength of the relationship between an independent and a dependent variable. In a correlational analysis, a moderator is a third variable which can have influence on the zero-order correlation between two other variables (Baron & Kenny, 1986). In Fig.1 the moderator model of Baron and Kenny (1986) is shown. In this case the predictor variable is proactive personality. Path A describes the influence of the predictor proactive personality on the outcome variable affective commitment. Path B describes the impact of the moderator job stressors on the outcome variable affective commitment and the path C shows the interaction between the predictor proactive personality and the moderator job stressors on the outcome variable affective commitment. The moderator hypothesis in this case is supported if the interaction of predictor and moderator is significant (Baron & Kenny, 1986).