PROACTIVE PERSONALITY AS AN ANTECEDENT OF EMPLOYEE CREATIVITY: A STUDY OF BANK EMPLOYEES IN INDIA

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Abstract: *The paper explores and examines the relationship between Proactive Personality and Employee Creativity in select private and public banks across India. A total of 248 officers working in two public and two private banks in the tricity of Chandigarh participated in the study. A self-report measure of Proactive Personality, developed by Seibert, Crant, and Kraimer (1999) (a shortened version of the instrument originally developed by Bateman and Crant (1993)) was used to measure the Proactive Personality. Creativity is measured through the customized instrument originally developed by Rachita Sinha (Training instruments in HRD and OD Third Edition, 2010, Udai Pareekh).*

Findings of the study authenticate that Proactive Personality is not only positively associated with Employee Creativity but it acts as an antecedent to the Employee Creativity. Regression analysis and Structural Equation Modeling has been used to determine the cause and effect relationship between the two variables (and sub-variables) which confirms that Proactive Personality contributes significantly to the five components of creativity (out of six components) except one component namely "freedom" of the officers of the banks under study.

Keywords: *Proactive Personality, Employee Creativity, Freedom, Banking Industry, India.*

Intense competition, rapid technological advancements and ever rising customer expectations have made organizations "think different, act different and sell different". They are highly focused on nurturing and harnessing the potential of their human power to generate unique and useful ideas as many as possible which foster innovative strategies, products, processes and effective solutions to business problems to gain and sustain competitive advantage. The recent crowd sourcing initiative by the CEO of a global Indian IT giant to generate novel ideas from employees for better strategy is an apt corporate example to highlight the dearth for Employee Creativity. Creativity refers to the production of novel and useful ideas by an individual or by a group of individuals working together (Amabile, 1988; Shalley, Gilson & Blum, 2000; Zhou & Shalley, 2003). Creativity is

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determined by intellectual ability, knowledge, motivation, personality and environment. Employee Creativity serves as a primary source for organizational innovation (Amabile, 1988) and a number of evidences indicate that it can fundamentally contribute to organizational innovation, effectiveness, and survival (Amabile, 1996; Shalley & Zhou, 2003). It has emerged as one of the important focal point to explore the organizational, environmental and personal factors that foster Employee Creativity. Acknowledging the importance of Employee Creativity to organizations, a vast pool of studies have explored to identify the individual and contextual factors that foster it (Perry-Smith & Shalley, 2003; Shalley & Zhou, 2003; Shalley *et al.* 2004).

The not-so-subtle change from a structured environment to blue sky thinking has also made the organizations change their views on what they should be looking for while hiring people. Organizations now a days look for people, who think out of box, look for opportunities to excel, accept challenges, embrace risks, and manage the forces of change proactively. Treating proactive behavior as role requirement, organizations are emphasizing on the proactive orientation of individuals in their selection and hiring processes. The construct of Proactive Personality coined by Bateman and Crant (1993) is defined as a belief in one's ability to overcome constraints caused by situational forces and the ability to affect changes in the environment (Bateman & Crant, 1993). These individuals show personal initiative, take action when needed, inclined to engage in proactive behavior, which may include challenging the status quo in order to effect change within the organization (Seibert, Kraimer, & Crant, 1999). The three meta analysis have revealed the Proactive Personality to be a unique personality construct having a significant association with employee job performance, overall career success, proactive behaviors, well being and favorable work characteristics (Fuller & Marler, 2009; Thomas *et al.*, 2010; Tornau & Frese, 2013). Crant (2000) supportively suggested that there is a need for further research on Proactive Personality in the context of work outcomes.

Since the two constructs seem vital to be explored further, the present study seeks to examine the significance of the relationship between Proactive Personality as an antecedent of Employee Creativity in banking sector in India. Indian Banking sector known to be the growth engine of Indian economy, is gearing up to take up various challenges posed by forces like robust technological changes, global economic crisis and recovery, financial inclusion and managing generation Y customer and employees. To meet the environmental challenges and bag the opportunities, the sector has a great dearth for people who possess not only good educational background and IT skills but also have the winning and creative attitude. Banks are looking for promising people who can think out of box and have the spirit to give excellence in service quality to the customers. As the people with Proactive Personality tend to accept challenges, embrace risks, overcome

constraints and initiate more readily, this study attempts to explore the relevance and significance of Proactive Personality as an antecedent of Employee Creativity in banking sector in India.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine the level of Proactive Personality and Creativity among the officers of the banks under study.
2. To study the level of association between Proactive Personality and Creativity among the officers of the banks under study.
3. To examine the influence of Proactive Personality on various components of Employee Creativity.

Theoretical Background and Review of Literature

Proactive Personality

Proactive Personality is defined as a belief in one's ability to overcome constraints by situational forces and the ability to affect changes in the environment. Bateman and Crant (1993, 2000) found Proactive Personality different from self consciousness, need for achievement, need for dominance, and locus of control and having a moderate correlation with the five-factor model of personality. A large pool of studies have emulated that Proactive Personality is found to have a significant influence on various individual as well as organizational outcomes. The work done by Crant (1999) and his associates mainly Bateman and Seibert seem to contribute largely in pioneering and establishing the construct of Proactive Personality. In the pioneering work it was found to be positively associated with involvement of participants in community service, constructive environmental changes (Bateman and Crant, 1993) and objective job performance of real estate agents (Crant, 1995). It was also reported to predict sales performance above and beyond conscientiousness and extraversion (Crant, 1995). Further Crant (1996) reported that Proactive Personality also showed a positive relationship with entrepreneurial intentions when examined in a sample of students. It showed a significant incremental validity while predicting motivation to learn over Big Five traits of openness, extraversion and conscientiousness among a sample of financial sector employees examined by Major (2006). Proactive personality was found to positively facilitate new comer adjustment to his new work environment in a longitudinal study where the adjustment outcomes were reflected in the form of work group integration, task mastery, political knowledge and role clarity (Mueller *et al.*, 2003). Further expanding the horizon, many researchers have also explored the relationship of Proactive Personality along with other contextual factors to various positive outcomes. Searle (2011) in his study highlighetd a significant association of proactive personality to proactive work behaviour viz individual

innovation, taking charge and problem prevention through the mediation of psychological empowerment. Ford (2011) also integrated the individual trait of Proactive Personality with employee empowerment as contextual factor to explore among nurses whether the two lead to the desired employee outcomes which may demonstrate that employees are ready to take charge of situations and exhibit their initiatives to generate positive outcomes. It was observed that task performance, quality of care and perceived effectiveness were reported high among the nurses when they perceived higher levels of either of the two variables. Joo & Ready (2012) revealed in their study that personal characteristics (Proactive Personality and performance goal orientation) along with contextual characteristics (organizational learning culture and leader-member exchange quality) influence employees' career satisfaction. A more recent contribution made by Prabhu et al., (2012) reported that entrepreneurial self-efficacy acted as a mediator in predicting a strong relationship between Proactive Personality and entrepreneurial intent. Fuller et. al., (2010) highlighted that the performance of the proactive personality people gets barred in the conditions of low job autonomy hence emphasizing the role of autonomy or independence or freedom as a catalyst in their work environment to foster high performance. Linking Proactive Personality to other mediators and moderators like role conflict, emotional exhaustion, perceived safety climate, career commitment and quality of leader–member exchange; different outcomes reported by the studies were affective commitment, organizational citizenship behavior, job satisfaction (Li et al., 2010) and intentions to leave a career. The recent work by Zacher & Bock (2014, in press) found that Proactive Personality mediated the relationship between age and job search intensity and was positively related to job search intensity. A new insight was given by Li (2013) in a longitudinal study, where Proactive Personality was found to be significantly related to various career success outcomes like income, psychological well being, leadership and job complexity, however various genetic and environmental factors shaped this relationship and a reciprocal relationship between Proactive Personality and work environment was also propounded.

Creativity

Employee Creativity is the production of novel and potentially useful ideas for solving problems, and for developing new products, services, processes, systems, work methods, etc. (Amabile, 1988). Creativity can be generated by employees not only in jobs that are traditionally viewed as requiring creativity, but also in any job and at any level of the organization. The empirical findings in the literature have established that Employee Creativity contributes significantly to organizational survival and development (Amabile, 1983; 1996; George and Zhou, 2001). The literature on creativity highlights two categories of variables contributing to creativity in organizations, one are the contextual or work

environment factors and other are individual or personal traits. The contextual factors or organizational factors that have been most commonly identified are Job control, job complexity, supervisor support, Quality of leader-member relationship, Task autonomy, Time pressure and Routinization (Amabile, 1988; Oldham & Cummings, 1996; Zhou, 1998: Tierney *et al.*, 1999; Shalley, 1991; Ohly *et al.*, 1996) Many studies have explored and identified individual differences fostering creativity like personality traits (e.g. openness, broad interest, toleration of ambiguity, self-confidence, intuition), cognitive style (e.g. divergent thinking, problem solving), and knowledge (e.g. domain knowledge, broad knowledge), (Oldham & Cummings, 1996; Shalley *et al.*, 2004). From this perspective, while many individuals may have the potential to exhibit some degree of creativity, individuals possessing certain characteristics or being high on certain traits are proposed to have more creative potential than those who are not so classified (Feist, 1998). Considerable studies have revealed that individuals who are innovative in solving problems, flexible in absorbing information and are more open to new experiences (Feist, 1998) are expected to exhibit more creative results. Individuals with initiative are more likely to take an active approach to work, to go beyond what is formally required in their jobs and to have the persistence to follow their creative ideas through to implementation. George and Zhou (2001) reported that high creativity was reported among the subordinates when they were high on openness to experience, performed heuristic tasks and received positive feedback from their supervisors. Redmond et al., (1993) found that subordinates' creativity was also influenced by leader behaviors exhibiting contribution to problem construction and feelings of high self efficacy.

Proactive Personality and Employee Creativity

Zhou and Shalley (2003) believed that more in depth research is needful to develop a better understanding of what, how and why certain individual differences along with contextual factors influence the creative performance of employees. Turner (2003) asserted that proactive personality is a strong predictor of motivation to learn which in turn leads to self development behavior among employees. The results thus hold a vital implication for the learning organizations where an employee's zest to learn can lead to various positive outcomes including creativity and innovation. Joo (2007) reported in his study that employees exhibited the highest creativity when they worked on complex jobs, supervised in a supportive fashion, the organization had a higher learning culture and employees possessed Proactive Personality that positively affected LMX quality and perceived job complexity. Zhang (2007) captured the role of empowering leadership in influencing creativity among employees through psychological empowerment and creative process engagement as mediators in a study of IT company in China. The study also established that the proactive characteristics of employees played a vital role in bolstering the positive influence of creative process engagement and

intrinsic motivation on employee creativity. Kim et al., (2009) in their longitudinal study of newcomers, using SEM, established a link between Proactive Personality and Employee Creativity which in turn significantly linked to career satisfaction and perceived insider status with a mediation effect. In a study further Kim et al., (2010) reported that Proactive Personality along with the contextual factors i.e. complex jobs, supportive supervision and a higher learning culture contributed to higher Employee Creativity. In a study of matched pairs of superior and subordinate, it was found that pro-activity among employees led to better exchange of information causing higher trust ultimately resulting into enhanced creativity among employees. A positive connection was found in a study by Seibert (1999) between Proactive Personality and the two indicators of career success i.e. objective (salary and promotions) as well as subjective (career satisfaction). Navigating through the literature, Proactive Personality was also found to have a significant influence or association with successful job search among college graduates (Brown *et al.*, 2006) work engagement (Drown, 2013).

Hypothesis of the Study

- H_0: There is no significant association between Proactive Personality and components of Employee Creativity among the officers of the banks under study.

Sample Size and Data Collection

Data was collected from a total of 248 officers from junior and middle level officers working in different branches and administrative offices of the two public and two private banks, in the tricity of Chandigarh. The tricity of Chandigarh includes Chandigarh, Panchkula and Mohali. The questionnaires were distributed to 300 officers. 248 completed and usable questionnaires were received (a response rate of 82.6%). 73% per cent of the respondents were male and 27% were females.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

Proactive Personality: The self-report measure of Proactive Personality, developed by Seibert, Crant, & Kraimer, 1999 (a shortened version of the instrument originally developed by Bateman and Crant (1993) was used to measure the Proactive Personality. It was a 10-item scale and sample item was: "I excel at identifying opportunities." Responses to these items were recorded on 5-point scales (1=strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree). The reliability of the scale for this study was checked and alpha value is found to be 0.75.

Employee Creativity: The self-report measure of creativity was a 24 item scale of the Creativity Assessment Inventory developed by Rachita Sinha (Training instruments in HRD and OD Third Edition, 2010, Udai Pareekh). The scale measures

six dimensions of Creativity – Challenge(a creative person approaches challenges and difficulties energetically and with enjoyment), Freedom (prefers to be independent and happy to take initiatives and give voice to his ideas), Liveliness (remains busy, excited and happy), Openness (tends to be trusting and considers mistakes as something to learn from), Conflict (looks for a helpful win-win compromises, willing to communicate with understanding and empathy) and Risk Taking (takes responsibility readily and does not hesitate to act on new ideas. The reliability of the scale for this study was checked and alpha value is found to be 0.75. A sample item is: "Every mistake is a learning experience for me; I get easily upset by mistakes." Responses to these items were recorded on 5-point scales (1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree).

The face validity and the content validity of the instruments were examined by incorporating opinion and feedback of some experts and academicians.

RESULTS

Various statistical analyses like descriptive analysis, correlation and linear regression analysis were performed to arrive at the results. The first section of the results shows the descriptive and correlation results, while the second section presents regression results.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness
Proactive Personality	248	3.90	0.55	-0.44
Challenge	248	3.97	0.61	-0.64
Freedom	248	3.49	0.59	-0.25
Liveliness	248	4.13	0.61	-0.79
Openness	248	3.51	0.60	-0.50
Conflict	248	3.77	0.67	-0.47
Risk taking	248	3.78	1.21	5.52
Employee Creativity	248	3.78	0.46	0.08

From table 1, it can be seen that scores of the respondents are high on Proactive Personality. (Mean = 3.90). On Employee Creativity, the mean score of the respondents is (mean = 3.78). The mean score of the respondents on all the dimensions of creativity is also found to be high. The score is highest on the dimension of liveliness (mean = 4.13) followed by challenge (mean = 3.97).The lowest score was found on freedom (mean = 3.49). The value of standard deviation in risk taking seems to be little high which suggests too much of variation in the response for the statements under this variable. The negative value of skewness for Proactive Personality indicates asymmetry in the probability distribution.

Table 2
Correlations Matrix between Proactive Personality and Employee Creativity
and its dimensions (n= 248)

Proactive Personality and Dimensions of Employee Creativity	Coefficient of Correlation
D1: Challenge	0.67
D2: Freedom	0.09
D3: Liveliness	0.58
D4: Openness	0.28
D5: Conflict	0.57
D6: Risk taking	0.21
Proactive Personality and overall Employee Creativity	0.58

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level of significance (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level of significance (2-tailed).
Non Significant correlation

Table 2 shows the positive association between Proactive Personality and Employee Creativity (overall coefficient of correlation = .58), Proactive Personality and Challenge (r = .67), Proactive Personality and Freedom (r = .09), Proactive Personality and Liveliness (r = .58), Proactive Personality and Openness (r = .28), Proactive Personality and Conflict (r = .57), Proactive Personality and Risk taking (r = .21). The table shows that Proactive Personality shows strongest correlation with challenge dimension of creativity (r = .670) and weakest with freedom (r = .09, not significant).

Hence the null hypothesis "H_0: There is no significant relationship between Proactive Personality and Employee Creativity among the officers of the banks under study" is rejected.

Table 3
Proactive Personality as predictor of Employee Creativity (n= 248)

Model	R square	Adjust R square	F – value	t - value	Beta
1	0.339	0.333	59.45*	7.336*	.580*

a. Predictors: (Constant), Proactive Personality
b. Dependent Variable: Employee Creativity
* Significant at 0.05, **Significant at 0.01

From table 3, model 1 the R Square is 0.339 with adjusted R Square 0.333. It can be said from this table that there is 33 percent contribution of Proactive Personality on Employee Creativity among the officers of the banks under study. The linear

regression model which produced R^2 .339, *From Table 3,* it can be seen that F = 59.45 (sig at 0.05).

The Standardized Beta Coefficients shows the contribution of each variable to the model. The value (0.580) indicates that a unit change in this predictor variable (Proactive Personality) has a moderate effect on the criterion variable (Employee Creativity). *From the above table,* it is clear that the t value is 7.336 is significant at 0.05 level. Thus it indicates that the independent variable (Proactive Personality) has a significant impact on the dependent variable (Employee Creativity).

In order to get an in-depth analysis SEM technique has been used and a path analysis between the independent variable (Proactive Personality) and the components of Employee Creativity has been created to illustrate the relationship between the independent variable and the set of dependent variables (components of creativity).
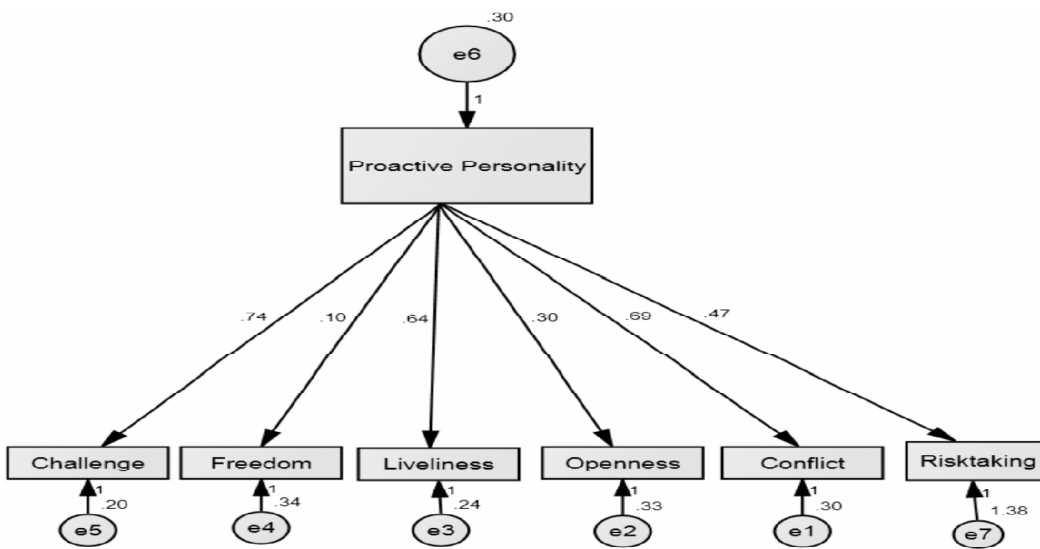

Figure 1: Structural Relationship of Proactive Personality and Components of Employee Creativity

Table 4
Model Fit Summary

Indexes	Recommended values	Model Indices
CFI	> 0.80	0.84
RMSEA	< 0.50	0.23
P value	< 0.05	0.02

DISCUSSION

This study joins Joo (2007), Kim *et al.*; (2009, 2010) and Gong et al., (2012) in demonstrating the importance of Proactive Personality as an antecedent of Employee Creativity in an applied setting. The sample shows that the respondents demonstrated high scores of Proactive Personality (mean= 3.9) and Employee Creativity (mean=3.78). Also, the sample exhibited significant levels of the dimensions of Employee Creativity measured in the study like Challenge (mean=3.97), Openness (mean=3.5), Liveliness (mean=4.13) and supported the previous findings that high creativity was reported among the subordinates when they were high on openness to experience (George and Zhou, (2001), Turner(2003) and the findings of the meta analysis by Feist (1998), establishing that creative individuals are more open to experience, confident, self accepting, ambitious and less obeying rules than less creative persons. In correlation analysis, a significant association of Proactive Personality with Employee Creativity (r= .58, p<0.05) and with most of its dimensions like Challenge, Liveliness, Openness justifies that the results sync with the findings of the earlier studies that Proactive individuals look for opportunities and act on them, show initiative, take action, and are persistent in successfully implementing change (Bateman & Crant, 1993; Crant, 2000), (Mueller *et al.*, 2003), Searle (2011), Ford(2011). Proactive Personality initiative leads to identification of new ideas for improving work processes (Seibert, Kraimer, & Crant, 2001) and openness to learn new things (Turner 2003).

The present study does not support the findings of researchers like Amabile, 1988; Amabile *et al.*, 1996; Amabile, Hadley, & Kramer, 2002; Fuller et al., 2010 which have associated freedom with Proactive Personality. The possible reason for this can be the type of industry as it requires adherence to stringent rules and regulations and it might have influenced the perception of respondents.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The literature often asserts the importance of Proactive Personality and Employee Creativity but both seem to be rarely measured in a single study in Indian context in banking sector. So, this study makes a vital contribution to the starving literature relevant to the two constructs. The findings of this study have strong implications for the banking sector in India which has a quest to nurture and maintain a workforce that thinks out of box, looks for opportunities to excel, accepts challenges, embraces risks, and manages the forces of change proactively. The sector must strive to design a hiring process that attract people with Proactive Personality and nurture a culture that promotes proactive behavior leading to high Employee Creativity. This study contributes to extend current literature on the relationship between traits of employees and their positive behavior leading to positive outcomes for the organizations.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

One of the limitations of the study is that it was limited to a few select banks in a select geographical area. A more diverse sample drawn from more banks or from the broader geographical regions would have facilitated a better understanding and generalizations of the findings. The other limitation of the study is that the self- reported measures of the constructs were used for data collection. So, the chances of natural bias and a single source bias influencing the results cannot be ruled out. Finally, due to time constraint the sample size was relatively small.

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