

Symposium: Proactivity/Personal Initiative: Untangling the Concept

A Close-up of Proactivity: Examining Similarities and Differences of Proactivity Concepts

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Proactivity research

- Increased research interest in active work behavior has led to a proliferation of related proactivity concepts
- Focus of research: Exploration of antecedents and outcomes of specific types of proactivity
- Empirical differentiation of concepts is in its infancy
- Call for more integrative and systematic proactivity research (Crant, 2000; Grant & Ashford, 2008; Parker & Collins, 2008)
 - Simultaneous assessment of multiple proactive behaviors
 - Application of multi-source designs

Forms of Proactivity/Proactive Behavior

1. Action orientation

2. Change orientation

- Personal initiative (Frese & Fay, 2001)
- Proactive personality (Bateman & Crant, 1993)
- Taking charge: functional change of work execution (Morrison & Phelps, 1999)
- Voice: change-oriented communication (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998)
- Active feedback seeking: inquiry and monitoring (Ashford, 1986)

Objectives of the Study

1. Degree of convergence between different perspectives (data sources)

- Incumbents more accurate and likely to differentiate between different behaviors than supervisors (e.g., rater biases; Parker & Collins, 2008; Scullen et al., 2000; Spector, 2006; Van Dyne & LePine, 1998)

2. Empirical overlap between proactivity concepts

3. Relationships with performance measures

- Subjective vs. objective performance measures (Bommer et al., 1995; Rich et al., 1999)
- Proactivity as challenging behavior: disapproval of supervisors but functionality for job/organization (Frese & Fay, 2001)

4. Degree of overlap with Big Five traits and add-on value of proactivity

- Conscientiousness, extraversion, openness to experience vs. agreeableness and neuroticism
- Conscientiousness (across jobs) and extraversion (sales jobs) as particular important predictors of job performance (Barrick et al., 2002; Vinchur et al., 1998)

Method

Sample:

- $N = 288$ German sales agents
 - $N = 64$ direct supervisors
 - Supervisory ratings of sales agents' proactivity and task performance (sales agents/supervisor: $M = 4$, $SD = 2.17$)
- 222 matches of sales people & supervisors

Method

Measures:

- Self- and supervisor-ratings of:
 - Personal initiative (Items: 7/7; $\alpha = .85/.92$)
 - Taking charge (Items: 10/4; $\alpha = .87/.84$)
 - Voice (Items: 6/4; $\alpha = .90/.92$)
 - Active feedback seeking (Items: 7/4; $\alpha = .82/.75$)
 - Task performance (Williams & Anderson, 2001; Items: 3/4; $\alpha = .60/.84$)

plus objective sales performance (number of orders achieved for a period of seven months)

Method

Measures:

- Self-ratings of:
 - Proactive personality (Items: 10; $\alpha = .87$)
 - Conscientiousness (NEO-PI-R; Items: 48; $\alpha = .90$)
 - Extraversion (NEO-PI-R; Items: 48; $\alpha = .86$)
 - Openness for experience (NEO-FFI; Items: 12 ; $\alpha = .68$)
 - Agreeableness (NEO-FFI; Items: 10; $\alpha = .71$)
 - Neuroticism (NEO-FFI; Items: 12; $\alpha = .87$)

Results: 1. Convergent Validity

	PI sup	TC sup	VOI sup	AFS sup
PI self	.22**	.10	.13	.14*
TC self	.18**	.25**	.21**	-.03
VOI self	.19**	.27**	.28**	-.02
AFS self	.11	-.03	.02	.21**
PP self	.10	.05	.01	.06

PI=Personal Initiative; TC=Taking Charge; VOI=Voice; AFS=Active Feedback Seeking; PP=Proactive Personality.

Self=self-rating; sup=supervisor-rating.

** $p < .01$. * $p < .05$.

2. Intercorrelations of Proactivity Concepts

a. Self-ratings

	PI	PP	TC	VOI	AFS
PI	-				
PP	.73**	-			
TC	.40**	.56**	-		
VOI	.57**	.56**	.61**	-	
AFS	.31**	.27**	.24**	.22**	-

b. Supervisor-ratings

	PI sup		TC sup	VOI sup	AFS sup
PI sup	-				
TC sup	.67**		-		
VOI sup	.71**		.77**	-	
AFS sup	.32**		.28**	.30**	-

** $p < .01$

3. Correlations with Performance

	Self-rated Task Performance	Supervisor-rated Task Performance	Objective Performance
PI	.48**	.15*	.17*
PP	.31**	.02	.11
TC	.16*	.09	.16*
VOI	.33**	.04	.17*
AFS	.24**	.22**	.02
PI sup	.33**	.78**	.43**
TC sup	.17*	.43**	.32**
VOI sup	.22**	.48**	.35**
AFS sup	.20**	.29**	.30**

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

4. Big Five and Proactivity Concepts

	Conscientiousness	Extra-version	Openness for exp.	Agreeableness	Neuroticism
PI	.59**	.44**	-.00	.14*	-.35**
PP	.42**	.40**	.15*	.04	-.33**
TC	.28**	.22**	.17*	.07	-.11
VOI	.41**	.37**	.07	.09	-.34**
AFS	.21**	.22**	-.04	.11	.17*
PI sup	.27**	.16*	-.04	-.03	-.03
TC sup	.13	.15*	.03	-.03	-.06
VOI sup	.20**	.21**	-.06	.05	-.04
AFS sup	.20**	.13	-.09	-.02	.05

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

4. Add-on Value of Proactivity Concepts

		ΔR^2	β	t
Block 1	Big Five			

DV: supervisor-rated task performance

Block 2	PI sup	.51	.76	17.07**
Block 2	TC sup	.15	.40	6.56**
Block 2	VOI sup	.18	.44	7.28**
Block 2	AFS sup	.04	.20	2.95**

DV: objective performance

Block 2	PI sup	.13	.39	6.00**
Block 2	TC sup	.07	.28	4.26**
Block 2	VOI sup	.07	.28	4.30**
Block 2	AFS sup	.05	.22	3.31**

Summary

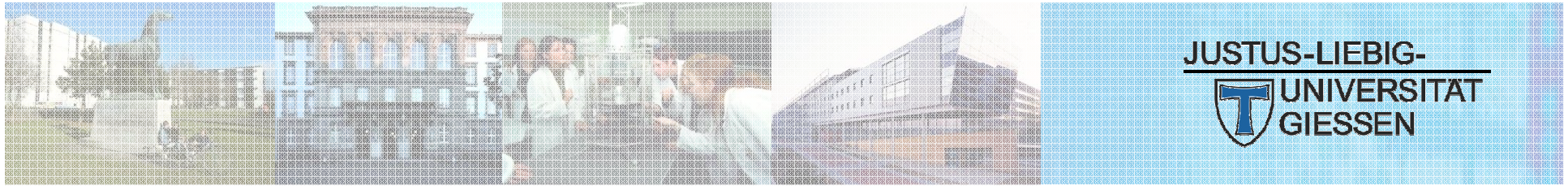
- Support for convergent validity of self- and supervisor-ratings of proactivity (Harris & Schaubroeck, 1988; Warr & Bourne, 2000)
- Large overlap between types of proactivity; lowest correlations for active feedback seeking (cf. Parker & Collins, 2008)
- Differences in relationships of proactivity concepts with performance measures
- Large correlations of self-rated proactivity with Big Five, especially conscientiousness, extraversion, and neuroticism
- Only supervisor-ratings of proactivity show add-on value over Big Five in predicting performance

Conclusion

- Importance of supervisory ratings not only with regard to taking charge and voice but also personal initiative
- However, supervisors tend to not differentiate between types of proactivity

Limitations:

- Generalizability of sample
- Importance of additional perspectives (e.g., peer-ratings)



Thank you!

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