



Proactive personality in the workplace and its relevance in South Africa

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Abstract

Employees are inclined to be passive or proactive, and proactive individuals are particularly valued in situations which call for action beyond that which is accepted as the customary, namely situations requiring contingency actions, as often experienced in the hospitality industry and the allied sectors. As the proactive personality (PP) was conceptualised in the United States of America (USA), and as it is associated with several valuable outcomes, the validation of the concept (via a measure thereof), within the South African context constitutes the aim of this study. South African employees (more than 3 000), across different organisations provided information on their inclinations to be proactive in their respective work contexts. A cross-sectional survey design was used, collecting quantitative data generated through standardised instruments, assessing PP traits, and correlations thereto, in order to test theoretically informed hypotheses. All the measures had acceptable reliability, with PP having an alpha of .881. As hypothesised, PP correlated more with innovative work behaviour ($r = .489$) than with organisational citizen behaviour ($r = .302$) as outcomes, and more with innovation climate ($r = .202$) than with human resource practices ($r = .199$) as antecedents. In line with USA findings, PP correlated, as theoretically conceptualised, with constructs in the SA context. As the PP seems to be a valid construct within the SA context, it is recommended that PP be assessed regularly in SA, particularly in selecting individuals who are required to take control of unstructured situations.

Keywords: Proactive personality; contingency, innovation, hospitality, South Africa.

Introduction

Manifest behaviour has personal as well as situational causes, and individuals develop relatively stable behavioural tendencies, which become particularly apparent when they are confronted with novel situations (Seibert, Crant & Kraimer, 1999). In this regard social cognitive theory postulates that the person, the situation, and manifest behaviour consistently influence each other (Bandura, 1986), with individuals being “neither passive victims of their life circumstances nor empty organisms programmed by histories of reinforcement” (McCrate & Costa, 1999: 142). It is within this context of interactionalism that the PP is conceptualised as a disposition which “identifies differences among people to the extent to which they take action to influence their environments” (Bateman & Crant, 1993). These individuals “create environments and set them in motion”, acting “foreactive”, and not simply “counteractive” (Bandura, 1986: 2).

Proactive individuals display self-starting behaviour (Crant, 2000), being “transcendent more than acquiescent”, taking primary rather than secondary control, and applying “agency more than passivity” (Bateman & Crant, 1993: 105). Within their work context they show initiative, seek out opportunities, and are focused on bringing about meaningful change, all of which “enhance the likelihood of high levels of performance” (Seibert et al., 1999: 427). They create circumstances which facilitate personal and organisational success (Chan & Schmitt, 2000) and this relates to long term organisational goals (Thomas, Whitman & Viswesvaran, 2010).

In their meta-analytic review of the PP, Thomas et al. (2010: 278) suggest that proactive individuals engage in instrumental behaviours such as “information seeking, skills



development, sensemaking, negotiating, resource gathering, issue selling, socialisation, and role restructuring”. They found the PP to relate to, among other things, job performance and organisational commitment. In an additional meta-analysis, Fuller and Marler (2009) found that proactiveness related to supervisor-rated overall job performance more than any other personality trait, including conscientiousness.

Given that all organisations exist in a dynamic environment (Cascio & Aguinis, 2011), those individuals who need to manage the organisation’s adaptation need to be proactive, rather than passive (Fuller, Barnett, Hester, Reelyea & Frey, 2007) as well as “active agents that shape their organisational fates” (Bateman & Crant, 1993:105). It is, however, not only those in leadership positions who need to be proactive, but also those who are confronted with diverse clients, which happens frequently in the hospitality industry. These individuals need to act in a proactive manner, adapting to and taking charge of their ever-changing work settings (Kammeyer-Meuller & Wanberg, 2003). Proactivity is clearly an essential part in achieving outstanding experiences for guests and other stakeholders in hospitality and employees require motivation in this regard so as to be empowered to liberate their proactive personalities (Ko, 2015). More often than not, problems or frustrations lived through by guests can be easily avoided if a hotel or similar lodging establishment uses proactivity rather than always being in a reactive mode. This is where proactive personalities are critically important. Challenging jobs in *inter alia*, hospitality, require a range of skills and behaviours and that serve to promote innovative behaviour which resides in certain individuals (Hammond et al., 2011). Once employees feel psychologically safe in their work environments, they are motivated to make recommendations, give suggestions, and take decisions in a new and a positive fashion leading to better service quality outcomes, without having any apprehensions or fear of negative repercussions (Muna Ibrahim & Zhang, 2015).

The Proactive Personality Scale (PPS) (Bateman & Crant, 1993) is the most widely used measure of proactive tendencies (Thomas et al., 2010). The instrument was developed and validated in the United States of America, and as such, questions could rightly be asked about the appropriateness of the use of this instrument in a different context (cross-cultural psychology), a concern raised by Fontaine (2008) and Fuller and Marler (2009). The aim of this study was to test and report on the reliability and validity of the PPS in the South African context, focusing on nomological networks as well as on correlates. The study could be deemed important as the PP seems to be instrumental to organisational success, and without information on the reliability and validity of the instrument, the use thereof may be unsupported.

The article will commence with a literature review focusing on the development of the PPS and reporting on the psychometric properties of the instrument as well as on hypotheses tested regarding correlates to PP. The literature review will be followed by a section focusing on the methodology used to conduct the research and also setting the hypotheses for this study. A report on the results will then follow and the article will be completed by drawing some conclusions on the appropriateness of the use of the PPS in the South African context.

Literature Review

In the dynamic global hospitality market, businesses are rapidly expanding and are increasingly more receptive to decentralization, so they require employees to be able to work even without close supervision by line-managers. Employees thus need to be more innovative, which requires a measure of proactivity. Proactivity in for example. hotels, motels and guest lodges, involves improving organizational and operational effectiveness by adopting a self-starting attitude and commitment towards effecting and realising needed changes to satisfy guests needs and wants (Cleverism, 2016). Proactive hospitality employees include those who totally recognize that if they desire greater personal, operational and organization effectiveness, they need to be able to adapt and change to meet diverse situations which arise on a daily basis (Yildirim, 2007). In many hotels, including some of the giant brands that exist



globally, the culture within the organization is highly restrictive so that employees are not permitted to make even minor decisions without first getting the go-ahead from their often sluggish line managers and supervisors. This means they cannot conceivably even attempt to be proactive (Campo, Díaz & Yagüe, 2014).

Thomas S. Bateman and J. Michael Crant presented the PPS in their article “The proactive component of organizational behaviour: A measure and correlates”, published in the Journal of Organizational Behavior, in 1993. In the article, they present a 17-instrument measuring proactive behaviour, which they “conceive as a process that is foreactive more than counteractive, transcendent more than acquiescent, a means of primary more than secondary control, and agency more than passivity” (p. 105), and particularly as “a disposition construct that identifies differences among people in the extent to which they take action to influence their environments” (p.103).

The 17 items of the instrument, presented below, clearly indicate both the personal as well as organisational nature of the concept. The items read as follows:

Table 1. Items of the Proactive Personality Scale (PPS)

1	I am constantly on the lookout for new ways to improve my life
2	I feel driven to make a difference in my community, and maybe the world
3	I tend to let others take initiative to start new projects
4	Wherever I have been, I have been a powerful force for constructive change
5	I enjoy facing and overcoming obstacles to my ideas
6	Nothing is more exciting than seeing my ideas turn into reality
7	If I see something I don't like, I fix it
8	No matter what the odds, if I believe in something I will make it happen
9	I love being a champion for my ideas, even against others' opposition
10	I excel at identifying opportunities
11	I am always looking for better ways to do things
12	If I believe in an idea, no obstacle will prevent me from making it happen
13	I love to challenge the <i>status quo</i>
14	When I have a problem, I tackle it head-on
15	I am great at turning problems into opportunities
16	I can spot a good opportunity long before others can
17	If I see someone in trouble, I help out any way I can

Source: Bateman and Crant (1993)

Bateman and Crant (1993) report that the instrument has a coefficient alpha of .89 and an average inter-item correlation of .29, suggesting firstly reliability, and secondly a common domain, without item redundancy. The factor analyses they performed revealed a one factor solution (only one-factor had an eigenvalue greater than 1), and this was also supported by the scree plot. The factor explained just more than 30 per cent of the variance in the instrument. This prompted them to retain only one factor, and to conceptualise the PP as a unidimensional construct.

Bateman and Crant (1993) tested several hypotheses on correlates to the PP. They demonstrated that the PP relates to the “Big Five” personality domains in a rational manner, being significantly related to conscientiousness ($r = .43$) and extraversion ($r = .25$), and not significantly related to openness ($r = .17$), agreeableness ($r = -.09$) and neuroticism ($r = -.16$). PP did not correlate significantly with locus of control ($r = .18$), but that it did with need for achievement ($r = .45$) and dominance ($r = .43$). Bateman and Crant (1993) conclude that the data supported the predicted relationships, indicative of discriminate validity. They also assessed three work-related criteria, and report that PP, more than any of the other “Big Five” constructs, explained the variance theme, and that none of the “Big Five” explained all three.

Two meta-analyses focusing particularly on the PP were located. Fuller and Marler (2009) report on 313 correlations in 107 studies. In total, 30 studies reported reliability data on the PPS, with alphas varying from .73 to .91, with .86 as an average. Fuller and Marler (2009) report estimated true score correlations (correlations corrected for measurement error in in both the predictor and the criterion; ρ) as indicators of relatedness. They found PP to relate



more strongly with measures of subjective career (e.g. Career satisfaction; overall $\rho = .25$) than with objective measures of career success (e.g. Salary; overall $\rho = .13$). They also established that PP correlated with proactive behaviour (e.g. Voice, overall $\rho = .32$) and job performance (e.g. Overall job performance; $\rho = .35$). Fuller and Marler (2009) were not able to replicate Bateman and Crant (1993)'s high conscientiousness and extraversion, versus low openness, agreeableness and neuroticism findings. They report, in declining order, estimated true score correlations with extraversion (.41), openness and conscientiousness (.34), agreeableness, and neuroticism (-.02). They conclude by stating that PP offers a "unique and valuable contribution to the personality trait literature and that the PP is likely to be of practical utility in the workplace (p. 341).

Thomas et al. (2010), in their analyses of 103 independent samples, report a mean internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) of .86 (standard deviation = .049) for PP. They calculated estimated true score correlations (ρ) and found that PP correlated significantly with overall performance (.26), subjective performance (.38) and objective performance (.16). They found PP to relate to satisfaction (.25), effective organisational commitment (.25), and social networking (.27). They were also not able to replicate Bateman and Crant (1993)'s conscientiousness and extraversion, versus openness, agreeableness and neuroticism findings. They report very similar estimated true score correlations for conscientiousness (.39), extraversion (.42), openness (.38), and emotional stability (.31), with only agreeableness having a very low correlation (.02)¹. Neither work experience (.02), nor age (.04), or general mental ability (.03) overlapped significantly with PP. In many respects the Thomas et al. (2010) study confirms the discriminant, as well as convergent (with performance), validity of PP.

Given that the PPS seems to be a reliable and valid measure of PP, and as it is an influential variable in the workplace and related to organisational success, the article will proceed by testing the psychometric properties of the PPS in South Africa. An explanation of how the study was conducted and how the data were analysed is provided below.

Methodology

A cross-sectional survey research design was used to collect quantitative data on PP, as well as correlates thereto. The sample consisted of 3 180 employees across 52 South African organisations. The correlates to PP were innovation climate, human resource practices, innovative work behaviour, and organisational citizen behaviour. These correlates were selected because data were available across all respondents and because meaningful hypotheses could be generated using these constructs.

Before setting the hypotheses, it is important to provide more detail on the constructs which will be used in correlates, as this explains the logic behind the hypotheses.

- Innovation climate (IC) was measured with a shortened version of the Corporate Entrepreneurship Assessment Instrument (Hornsby, Kuratko & Zahra, 2002) developed by Strydom (2013). The instrument measures an organisational climate associated with innovation in the workplace, covering the level of management support, work discretion or autonomy, rewards and reinforcement, time availability, and organisational boundaries (Hornsby et al., 2002). The Strydom (2013) version consists of 20 items (four per construct), and the author reports a reliability coefficient of 0.810 for the entire instrument, as well as information on the predictive validity of the instrument. Steyn and de Bruin (2018a) report a Cronbach's alpha of .762 on the shortened version of the instrument, and replicate the factorial structure as presented by Hornsby et al. (2002). The following is a sample item from IC: "Individual risk takers are often recognised for their willingness to champion new projects, whether eventually successful or not".

¹ When conducting a meta-analytical path analysis to predict overall performance, using PP and the "Big Five" as predictors, only extraversion ($\beta = .20$) and PP ($\beta = .25$) were significant at $p < .01$



- The Human Resource Practices Scale (HRP) (Nyawose, 2009) is based on literature regarding different human resource management practices, particularly training and development, remuneration, performance management, supervisor support, staffing, diversity management, and communication. The HRP questionnaire consisted of 21 items (three per construct). Nyawose (2009) reported Cronbach's alphas between 0.74 and 0.93, with Steyn (2012) reporting alphas between 0.74 and 0.88. Both authors also report findings suggesting the predictive validity of the HRP. Steyn and de Bruin (2018b) were able to replicate the factorial structure of the HRP. The following is a sample item from the HRP questionnaire: "My company is committed to the training and development needs of its employees".
- Innovative Work Behaviour (IWB) was measured with a 14-item instrument developed by Kleysen and Street (2001) assessing individual innovation, focusing on opportunity exploration, generativity, information investigation, championing, and application. Hebenstreit (2003) reports an alpha of .948, for a unidimensional innovative work behaviour construct. Steyn and de Bruin (no date) were able to replicate the five-factor structure of IWB as proposed by Kleysen and Street (2001). The following is a sample item from the IWB instrument: "As an employee how often do you pay attention to issues that are not part of your daily work?"
- Organisational Citizen Behaviour (OCB) (Smith, Organ & Near, 1983) conceptually consists of two separate constructs, "altruism, or helping specific persons, and generalized compliance, a more impersonal form of conscientious citizenship" (pp. 653). They report an alpha coefficient of .91 and .81 for the two factors, and suggest that the constructs each contribute to this pro-social construct. Organ (2018) reports that the validity of OCB is well established, and that OCB relates to positive individual outcomes and, at an organisational level, average levels of OCB within work units are associated with better unit performance. The following is a sample item from OCB: "I help others who have been absent".

Given these descriptions, and the nature of PP at work (Grant & Ashford, 2008; Seibert, Kraimer & Crant, 2001), it is possible to set a few logical hypotheses. Although all the variables could reciprocally relate to each other, it could be foreseen that an innovative work climate may be more conducive to displaying PP traits; more so than when general human resource services are simply rendered well. The behaviour typical of PP (See Table 1) will definitely be activated by IC, more than is the case simply for general human resource compliance. It can also be claimed that PP leads to innovative work behaviour, to a larger extent than is the case for organisational citizen behaviour, particularly given the characteristics of the PP described in Table 1. Only some of the questions listed in Table 1 relate to citizen behaviour (e.g. See item 17), whilst most refer to self-efficacy and action – more typical of innovation than of caring for the organisation or colleagues. Given this broad introduction, the following specific hypotheses were set:

- PP correlates significantly with important enabling antecedents, such as innovation climate (H1: $r_{PP-IC} = 0$) and human resource practices (H2: $r_{PP-HRP} = 0$). Previous research has found a clear link between an IC (Cai, Parker, Chen & Lam, 2019) as well as HRP (Lee, Pak, Kim & Li, 2019) and proactivity. It is also hypothesised that, given the characteristics of both these correlates, the PP would correlate more with innovation climate than with human resource practices (H3: $r_{PP-HRP} = r_{PP-IC}$). This hypothesis is grounded in previous research (Parker, Williams & Turner, 2006) which found that flexible role orientation and job autonomy (more typical of IC than of HRP) influence proactive behaviour.
- PP correlates significantly with criteria outcomes, such as innovative work behaviour (H4: $r_{PP-IWB} = 0$) and organisational citizen behaviour (H5: $r_{PP-OCB} = 0$). Previous research has found that PP personality relates to employee creativity (Kim, Hon & Crant, 2009) as well as organisational citizen behaviour (Greguras & Diefendorff, 2010). It is also hypothesised that, given the characteristics of both these correlates,



the PP would correlate more with (H6: $r_{PP-IWB} = r_{PP-OCB}$) innovative work behaviour than with organisational citizen behaviour.

As in the original Bateman and Crant (1993) article, correlation coefficients will be calculated to test the extent of the overlap between PP and its correlates. As the sample in this study is relatively large, practical effect sizes will be reported on top of statistical significance. As per the Bateman and Crant (1993) article, and given general practice, reliability data as well as data on the factorial structure of the PPS will be reported. The Bateman and Crant (1993) article goes to great lengths to demonstrate that PPS is a unidimensional measure of PP.

Results

The results will be presented with reference to the demographics of the respondents, the reliability of the PPS and its correlates, reporting on the factorial structure of the PPS, and lastly, results pertaining to the set hypotheses.

Demographics of the respondents

In contrast to the Bateman and Crant (1993) study, where two groups of undergraduate students (N = 282, N = 130), and 148 Masters of Business Administration (MBA) students were used to test the psychometric properties of the PPS, this study used 3 180 employees across more than 50 South African organisations. The respondents in this study thus had real life experiences of work. Their tenure varied between one month and 42 years, with a mean of 8.49 years (standard deviation = 7.45). Both gender and race composition mirrored the demographic characteristics of the South African workforce (Statistics South Africa, 2016). Unlike the student (studying) respondents used by Bateman and Crant (1993), this study included many individuals who had already completed their studies, with 934 or 29.4% of the respondents holding a bachelor's degree or higher, and 1 274 or 40.1% possessing a diploma. About 70% of the respondents were therefore already qualified. Furthermore, in this sample, those in management positions totalled 1 156 (36.4%), with those reporting that they were in non-management positions representing 1 983 (62.4%) of the respondents.

Descriptive statistics

Bateman and Crant (1993) do not indicate the scale students used when completing the questionnaire, but it is assumed that it was a 7-point scale, with scores ranging from 17 to 119. The average they report is 90.7, with a standard deviation of 11.4. The average score on the 7-point scale was therefore 5.34, with a standard deviation of .67. The descriptive statistics for the PPS, as assessed on a 6-point scale, are presented below.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Skewness ¹	Kurtosis ²
PPS	3180	0	84	52.12	8.55	-.738	1.495
IC	3180	12	98	65.73	9.31	-.352	.557
HRP	3180	21	108	71.22	15.27	-.307	-.108
OCB	3180	18	88	59.18	8.59	-.505	.534
IWB	3180	10	84	52.98	13.17	.082	-.222

¹Standard error for skewness = .043 ²Standard error for kurtosis = .087

Note: HRP = Human Resource Practices, IC = Innovation Climate, OCB = Employee Citizen Behaviour, IWB = Innovative Work Behaviour, PPS = Proactive Personality Scale.

As was the case with the original PPS, the distribution was negatively skew when the instrument was applied in South Africa. Most of the other instruments also showed negative skewness, which is quite common when assessing positive attributes.

Reliability of the measures

Bateman and Crant (1993) report a respectable Cronbach alpha coefficient ($\alpha = .890$) for the 17-item instrument they used on the 148 MBA students, with an acceptable inter-item



correlation ($r = .320$). In the present study, the reliability statistic was an acceptable ($\alpha = .881$; $N = 3180$) and an inter-item correlation ($r = .306$) – very similar to the figures of Bateman and Crant (1993), who regarded these results as indicative of a common domain, but also lacking in item redundancy.

The reliability for HRP was $\alpha = .930$, IC $\alpha = .762$, OCB $\alpha = .715$ and IWB $\alpha = .893$.

Factorial structure of the PPS

The factor analyses performed by Bateman and Crant (1993) revealed a one-factor solution, with only one factor possessing an eigenvalue greater than 1. This was also supported by the scree plot they drew. Even though the single factor explained just more than 30 per cent of the variance in the instrument, they retained only one factor, and conceptualised the PP as a unidimensional construct. The factor loadings of the items, as per the original instrument and also as per the present study, are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Factor loadings of the items of the Proactive Personality Scale (PPS)

	Item	Bateman and Crant (1993)	Present Study
1	I am constantly on the lookout for new ways to ...	.56	.500
2	I feel driven to make a difference in my community ...	.50	.543
3	I tend to let others take initiative to start new projects	.48	-.242
4	Wherever I have been, I have been a powerful force ...	.57	.630
5	I enjoy facing and overcoming obstacles to my ideas	.49	.661
6	Nothing is more exciting than seeing my ideas turn ...	.62	.603
7	If I see something I don't like, I fix it	.60	.577
8	No matter what the odds, if I believe in something ...	.59	.656
9	I love being a champion for my ideas, even against ...	.63	.650
10	I excel at identifying opportunities	.58	.709
11	I am always looking for better ways to do things	.62	.693
12	If I believe in an idea, no obstacle will prevent me ...	.61	.740
13	I love to challenge the status quo	.51	.681
14	When I have a problem, I tackle it head-on	.43	.678
15	I am great at turning problems into opportunities	.57	.745
16	I can spot a good opportunity long before others can	.62	.707
17	If I see someone in trouble, I help out any way I can	.34	.576

Source: Bateman and Crant (1993) and Author

Bateman and Crant (1993) report that 30.6% of the variance is declared by the general factor. In the present study, this was a much more acceptable 40.2%. The unidimensional structure proposed by the developers of the instrument was, therefore, an even better fit for the South African sample. Only Item 3 had a poor fit.

Hypotheses tests: PPS and its correlates

Six hypotheses were tested, all relating to correlates to the PP, some referring to antecedents ($H1: r_{PP-IC} = 0$; $H2: r_{PP-HRP} = 0$; $H3: r_{PP-HRP} = r_{PP-IC}$), and the others to outcomes ($H4: r_{PP-IWB} = 0$; $H5: r_{PP-OCB} = 0$; $H6: r_{PP-IWB} = r_{PP-OCB}$). The Pearson correlation coefficients between the different constructs are reported in Table 4.

Table 4. Correlations between the constructs

	IC	HRP	OCB	IWB	PPS
IC	1	.527	.153	.277	.202
HRP	.527	1	.214	.323	.199
OCB	.153	.214	1	.364	.302
IWB	.277	.323	.364	1	.489
PPS	.202	.199	.302	.489	1

Note: Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); HRP = Human Resource Practices, IC = Innovation Climate, OCB = Employee Citizen Behaviour, IWB = Innovative Work Behaviour, PPS = Proactive Personality Scale.

Given the results presented Table 4, the following decisions were made regarding the hypotheses:



- H1: $r_{PP-IC} = 0$; rejected; $r = .202$ ($p < .001$), medium effect, $R^2 = .040$. PP thus correlates with the antecedent IC.
- H2: $r_{PP-HRP} = 0$; rejected; $r = .119$ ($p < .001$), small effect, $R^2 = .014$. PP therefore correlates with the antecedent HRP.
- H3: $r_{PP-HRP} = r_{PP-IC}$; not-rejected; difference in $r = .003$, z -observed = 3.355, $p < .001$. The two antecedents to PP differ statistically in the way they correlate with PP. On statistical grounds this hypothesis can be rejected, but on a practical level a difference of .003 is well below what a small effect size is ($r = .100$), and as such the null hypothesis was not-rejected.
- H4: $r_{PP-IWB} = 0$; rejected; $r = .489$ ($p < .001$), medium effect, $R^2 = .239$. PP therefore correlates with the IWB outcome.
- H5: $r_{PP-OCB} = 0$; rejected; $r = .302$ ($p < .001$), medium effect, $R^2 = .091$. PP therefore correlates with the OCB outcome.
- H6: $r_{PP-IWB} = r_{PP-OCB}$; rejected; difference in $r = .187$, z -observed = 7.992, $p < .001$. The two outcomes of PP differ statistically in the way that they correlate with PP. Practically, this difference was not small ($r = .100$), almost twice the size of small, and in a sample of more than 3 000 respondents.

Only one of the six null-hypotheses was not rejected. The proposed correlations between PP and the other constructs therefore materialised as expected. Please note that R^2 is the coefficient of determination, and that it reflects the percentage variance the variables share, whilst z -observed is a test of differences between correlations, where values greater than 1.96 indicate a significant difference between two correlation coefficients, with $p < .05$.

Discussion

In this article, the PP and the importance thereof were presented. Inspecting the items of the PPS reveals that those employees who are proactive are valuable to organisations, for example, pro-activity invariably leads to the satisfying of guest needs and wants and impacts upon the bottom-line due to the enhanced likelihood of repeat business. Furthermore, employee proactive envisioning, employee proactive planning, and employee proactive enacting are positively and significantly interrelated (Presbitero & Teng-Calleja, 2017). Thus, proactive individuals may be particularly treasured in situations which require action beyond that which is accepted as the routine, in other words they excel in situations requiring contingency actions – the type of actions necessary in turbulent situations, as often found in the dynamic hospitality industry. It could be very valuable to human resource managers to measure this construct, in order to identify those who will be most effective in these situations of turbulence, but also to identify managerial change agents, as these individuals bring structure to loosely defined situations and advance organisational success agendas. The main problem human resource managers face is that the PP was conceptualised in the United States of America (USA), and the validation of the concept via a measurement tool, the PPS, was also done in the USA, among students (Bateman & Crant, 1993). Questions may therefore rightly be asked about the validity of the PP concept and the PPS within the South African context. The aim of this study was to provide such information.

In this study, data were collected from more than 3 000 South African employees, much more representative of the workforce than the 148 MBA students included in the Bateman and Crant (1993) study. The results of the present study should therefore be more generalizable to the South African population than the original data.

In the Bateman and Crant (1993) article much of the work is dedicated to the development of the PPS, and the authors succeed well in establishing it as an independent unidimensional personality, distinct from the “Big Five”, and also as a predictor of valuable workplace outcomes. Their work is well respected elsewhere in the world, and the PP concept is now widely used, with at least two meta-analyses having been conducted on the importance of the PP construct, and its correlates. The PPS also features prominently in these analyses.



In the present study, the PPS showed an acceptable reliability (.881), slightly lower than the .890 reported by Bateman and Crant (1993). Also in the present study, the unidimensional measurement of PP was largely affirmed, with only one item, Item 3 (the only reverse scored item), not loading significantly on the general factor. Despite the poor performance of this single item, in the South African sample, the general factor declared 40.2% of the variance in the instrument, much more than the 30.6% reported when developing the instrument. The PPS thus showed acceptable reliability and internal validity.

The essence of the article was, however, about determining whether PP relates to constructs in a theoretically sound manner. Five of the six set hypotheses were rejected, indicating that the PPS performed in an acceptable manner in the South African context. The one hypothesis that was not rejected, however, revealed a difference in the direction expected, but this was not significant. As hypothesised, PP correlated with the outcomes IWB ($r = .489$) and OCB ($r = .302$), and more with IWB than with OCB. This confirms the theoretical links suggested above. PPS scores also significantly correlated with the antecedents IC ($r = .202$) and HRP ($r = .199$), but the expected difference between IC and HRP was not significant. Interestingly, and with the wisdom of hindsight, the outcome variables correlated more with PP than the antecedents. This suggests that PP is a powerful determinant of behaviour (outcomes), and that these outcomes followed even when antecedents were absent. The trait, rather than situation-based nature of PP as a measure of personality, is supported by these outcomes.

Conclusion

The PP is an important personality trait and has meaningful impact on organisational outcomes, being responsible for 23.9% of the variance in IWB and 9.1% of the variance in OCB. As such, human resource managers such as those employed in hospitality enterprises, should be concerned with the valid measurement thereof. In line with USA findings, and several studies which followed, PP correlated, as theoretically hypothesised, with constructs in the South African context, and the PPS seems to be a valid measure of the construct. As the PPS seems to be a valid construct within the South African context, it is recommended that PPS should be used to assess personality in the local workplace, particularly in settings where individuals are selected to take charge of unstructured situations.

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