PROACTIVE PERSONALITY AND INGENIOUS WORK INVOLVEMENT: EVIDENCE FROM NOT FOR PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

Erum Qureshi¹, Saquib Yusaf Janjua² and Shahab Alam Malik³

Abstract

Our research shows that proactive personality and high quality Leader-Member relationship helps to develop ingenuity at work. However, this direct relationship does not sustain empirical support in certain conditions for different reasons. This research aims to find the moderating role of task identity in relationship between proactive personality, leader member exchange and ingenious work involvement of NGO employees. We find that the antecedents of ingenious work involvement are strongly related when employees have task identity. Cross sectional study conducted in the NGO sector revealed a positive relationship between antecedents under study and ingenious work involvement and confirms the moderating role of task identity. The study brings out the importance of proactive personality, leader member exchange and job design issues for increasing employees creativity at work.

Keywords: Proactive personality, Task Identity, Ingenious Work Involvement, Leader-Member Relationship

JEL Classification: Z000

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Introduction

In this era global companies are changing at a faster pace. Therefore, such companies demand employees who take part in continuous improvement of their work environment and look for new opportunities because it facilitates organizations to move from current state to future desired state (Rank, Pace & Frese, 2004). Now what organizations should do to reach towards their desired state? One way of doing it is religiously involving employees into work so that they should act ingeniously. Different researches give different factors that can foster ingenious work involvement (IWI) of employees; like Volmer, Spurk, and Niessen (2012) suggest that providing job autonomy increases IWI of employees. In this vein Tierney and Farmer (2011) suggest that self efficacy (extent or strength of one’s belief in one’s own ability to complete tasks and reach goals) results into IWI. In the same fashion Lunenburg (2011) suggests self efficacy at workplace results into IWI and motivation of workers. Organizational support is also taken as a predictor of IWI (Eisenberger, Fasolo, & LaMastro, 1990).

Researchers have been looking into the impact of leaders and proactive personality (PP) on ingenuity as well. Ford (2002); Oldham and Cummings (1996); Tierney, Farmer, and Graen (1999) and Volmer et al. (2012) have directed growing interest to the aspects that may cultivate or hinder ingenuity at workplace. A little is known about how Leader Member Exchange (LMX) and Proactive Personality (PP) enhances ingenious work involvement (IWI). LMX and PP association with IWI depicts heterogeneous results. Eder and Sawyer (2007); Hammond. Neff, Farr, Schwall, and Zhao (2011) and Volmer et al. (2011) have pointed out inconsistencies in this relationship and they also suggest influence of third variable. Therefore, main purpose of this study is to search for the factors that cultivate or hinder process of IWI and to extend already existing research that connecting LMX or PP.
Insufficient attention is paid towards study of differential antecedents of ingenuity at work. We can find several studies in the context of PP but Crant (2000) suggests that there is lack of research on proactivity in work related context. So question arises that is there a relationship between PP, LMX with IWI, and how do task identity (TI) influences this relationship?

NGO sector has been chosen for the study because nongovernmental organizations are making use of modern managerial practices and knowledge and this sector is overlooked (Roberts, Jones, & Fröhling, 2005). NGOs demand challenge taking employees who struggle for continuous improvement of their work and search for new opportunities (Rank et al. 2004). Unlike MNCs, NGOs have limited resources and small number of employees and these people are responsible for carrying the activities from the beginning till the end. Timely action is vital for this sector so it focuses on task identity. By focusing on TI from job characteristics (JCM) it will add to the literature that how job design can foster ingenious work involvement. Research on proactive personality in work related context is missing (Crant, 2000; Volmer et al. 2012; Zhang & Bartol, 2010). In this paper readers can go through the background of study, tracks of related researches through literature review and discussions of results. The rest of the paper is organized in main sections i.e.i) literature review, ii) research methodology, iii) data analysis, iv) discussion and v) conclusion.

**Literature Review**

In this study various previous researches have been followed (Rank et al. 2004; Tierney & Farmer, 2011; Volmer et al. 2012) and major emphasis of this research is employee ingenious work involvement as a very vital component of ingenuity (Ohly, Sonnentag, & Pluntke, 2006). Ingenious work involvement can be understood as the process of engaging resources in a creative way to accomplish work related
tasks (Carmeli & Schaubroeck, 2007; Volmer et al. 2012). Ingenious performance is defined as employee’s assessment regarding creative problem solving at work (ideas or quality of suggestions; Tierney & Farmer, 2011). Researchers claim that it is important to gain knowledge about outcomes of ingenuity (ingenious performance) but it is also of vital significance to have an insight about evaluation of employee’s ingenious involvement in work (Atwater & Carmeli, 2009). Ingenious work involvement is a very important originator of ingenious outcomes because it is strongly linked to innovation and ingenious performance (Ohly et al. 2006).

Ingenious work involvement is a very complex phenomenon (Amabile, 2001; Zhou & George, 2003). There is still lack of research on how job characteristics cultivate ingenious work involvement. Task identity is focused as a moderator because it’s one of the component in job characteristics model that has not yet received research attention in job design literature (Humphrey, Morgeson, & Mannor, 2009). Task identity is described as the performing tasks from beginning till end comprising visible outcome of an identifiable unit of work (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Task identity enables an employee to do a task or project from start to finish. Such as task identity that enables the employees for self determination and attaches meaning to the work they are doing; employees can improve the methods of work, can minimise mistakes, improve the pace of their work (Zhou & George, 2003). Task identity is considered as an important factor for ingenious work involvement because it gives employees a sense of responsibility and empowerment along with this employee accountability is also trouble-free to some extent (Langfred & Moye, 2004).

**Social Exchange Theory**

The theory of LMX builds on social exchange theory (SET) that the exchange of social and material resources is a fundamental form of human interaction (Dolisca, Carter, & McDaniel, 2006) and it
is assumed that leader has a distinctive association with subordinates and there is high degree of mutual liking (Graen & Bien, 1995). One of the important factors here is ingenious work involvement as an important component of ingenuity. Ingenious work involvement is the process of engagement in creative work process (Carmeli, 2007; Volmer et al. 2012). This study is based on social exchange theory. Social exchange theory explicates that through high quality leader member exchange and provision of task identity the employee comes across the fact that organization is concerned about his/her development, then the employee will perform well to repay this act of organization (Youngcourt, Levia, & Jones, 2007). The idea of perceived organizational support (POS) is being used in terms of social exchange theory (Eisenberger et al. 1990; Eisenberger & Vandenbergh, 2002). Leader member exchange is also taken as an exchange relationship between the supervisor and the employee (Settoon, Bennett, & Liden, 1996). High quality LMX leads to high levels of ingenuity (Volmer et al. 2012). Organizational justice will build strong and continuing social exchange relationships and the employees try to repay this act by acting ingeniously (Eisenberger et al. 1990) and as a result concerned parties get weaved by strong enduring threads in social fabric.

**Proactive Personality**

People with proactive personality also search for opportunities for development rather only reacting on the formal trainings given by the organization (Sonnentag, 2003). The big five model is also referred to personality traits (Goldberg, 1990), consisting of extroversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, emotional stability (neuroticism) and conscientiousness. These five factors are considered to be fundamental dimensions of proactivity (McCrae & John, 1992).

**a) Proactive personality and ingenious work involvement**

Individuals with proactive personality are self initiated and fortune oriented and such people aim to improve the situation and their own
self (Parker, Williams, & Turner, 2006). People with proactive personality improve current circumstances by challenging status quo and involve in work ingeniously (Unsworth & Parker, 2003). Such people do not only follow manager’s commands but they also set their own goals. If the goals are more specific and challenging they are more motivated towards accomplishment (Locke & Latham, 2002). They are active feedback seekers and try to change current position to the desired one (Sonnenntag, 2003).

**Hypothesis 1:** Proactive personality will show a positive association with ingenious work involvement.

**b) LMX and ingenious work involvement**

Theory of LMX builds on social exchange theory that the exchange of social and material resources is a fundamental form of human interaction (Dolisca, Carter, & McDaniel, 2006) and it is assumed that leader has a distinctive association with subordinates and there is high degree of mutual liking (Graen & Bien, 1995). Such employees are more ingenious as compared to less-privileged employees. Van Dyne, Jehn, and Cummings (2002) found a positive correlation between LMX and ingenious work performance. Similarly, Social Exchange Theory explicates that people get into social decisions by its perceived cost and benefit analysis. So when the quality of LMX is good then the employee tends to reciprocate this good gesture by ingenious work involvement in order to continue this good relation in future (Youngcourt et al. 2007).

**Hypothesis 2:** Quality of LMX will show a positive association with ingenious work involvement.

c) **Moderating role of task identity.**

Task identity enables an employee to do a task or project from start to finish. Employees find more meaning in a job if they can
work on projects from start to end. Findings suggest that greater task identity is associated with greater perceived meaningfulness of work (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Employees who are enjoying high quality LMX will be having a proactive personality. Further, they find their work meaningful and creatively involve in their work. Employees having good LMX relationship but low task identity fail to show ingenious work involvement as compared to those who have task identity. Task identity empowers an employee so he/she try their level best to make the job done in the best possible way and it also helps an organization for accountability.

**Hypothesis 3a:** Proactive personality and ingenious work involvement relationship will be moderated by task identity; a strong relationship will exist among the people with greater task identity.

**Hypothesis 3b:** The quality of LMX and ingenious work involvement relationship will be moderated by task identity; a strong relationship will exist among the people with greater task identity.

### Theoretical Framework

**Figure 1:**

*Theoretical model*
Research Methodology

A cross-sectional survey study has been adopted. In this research NGO sector of Rawalpindi and Islamabad has been chosen. Nongovernmental organizations are making use of modern managerial practices and knowledge (Robert et al. 2005) and this sector is overlooked. It aims towards relief of pain and suffering and is working on a very positive note for this region (Pasha, Iqbal, & Iqbal, 2002). So it is tried to have an answer to the research questions through research in this sector. Convenience sampling method has been followed for data collection. Total 33 NGOs in Rawalpindi and Islamabad were contacted. Approximately 400 questionnaires were distributed to target population from which 300 questionnaires were received and 292 were useable.

The Proactive personality scale was adopted from Bateman and Crant’s (1993) scale. This from the past has been used due to the reason of high reliability and validity because it has already been used in number of studies being conducted in Pakistani context e.g. Yousaf et al. (2013) and Raza and Naqvi (2011). Task Identity is measured using 5 items scale used by Sims, Szilagyi, and Keller (1976), as mentioned in the paper that the impact of T.I on IWI is being examined for the very first time so a pre-developed scale was preffered to be used in order to conduct the cross sectional study in available time period. Ingenious work involvement was measured using 9 items scale adopted from the work of Tierney et al. (2006). Gender, leadership position, education and tenure are found related to employee ingenuity (Atwater & Carmeli, 2009; Tierney et al. 2006).

Data Analysis

Correlation Analysis

Table 1 exhibits means, standard deviations and correlations among the study variables. It shows a significant positive correlation of ingenious work involvement with proactive personality (r=0.48,
Research

Proactive Personality and Ingenious Work Involvement

It means that employee’s involvement in creative work will increase when employees will have proactive personality, good quality relation with supervisor and task identity.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics & correlations
(Means, standard deviations & correlations between study variables)

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
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<td>1 Age</td>
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<td>2 Gender</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.07</td>
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<td>3 LMX</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.40</td>
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<td>4 Tenure</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>0.60*</td>
<td>0.03</td>
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<td>5 PP</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.13</td>
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<td>6 LMX</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.46</td>
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<td>7 TI</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
<td>0.19*</td>
<td>0.28*</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.46</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 IWI</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>-0.21*</td>
<td>0.27*</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.43*</td>
<td>0.42*</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: Significant at: * p< 0.05, ** p<0.001
Gender: 1= male, 2= female
Leadership position: 1= yes, 2= no
Tenure: 1= 2 years, 2= 2-5 years, 3= more than 5 years

Results show that average age of respondents is 39-40 years, analysis also shows a significant positive relationship of leadership position, tenure, LMX, TI and IWI with PP at (r=0.21, p< 0.05), (r=0.13, p< 0.05), (0.40, p<0.001), (0.52, p< 0.001) and (r=0.43, p< 0.001) respectively. Further analysis depicts a significant positive relationship of tenure, PP, TI and IWI with LMX at (r=0.18, p< 0.05), (0.40, p<0.001), (0.46, p< 0.001) and (r=0.42, p< 0.001) respectively. Results show a
significant positive relationship of leadership position, LMX, TI and IWI with TI at \( r=0.28, p<0.001 \), \( r=0.52, p<0.001 \), \( 0.46, p<0.001 \) and \( 0.45, p<0.001 \) respectively.

Correlation in this study has investigated the existence of relationship between the variables under study. The correlation between dependent and independent variables is hypothesized to be positive and results also depict a significant positive relationship. Further it’s also visible that task identity has a positive relation with people involved in work ingeniously. Task identity was added to check whether it strengthens or weaken the relationship of LMX, PP with IWI ad results revealed significant positive relations. As suggested in literature (Poon, 2004) deviation score is used to solve problem of multi-collinearity because before using it variance inflating factor (VIF) was greater than 10 and tolerance was less than 0.01 which depicts serious multi-collinearity problem.

Hypothesis 1 postulated that PP will have a positive association with IWI. From the findings regression analysis revealed a positive and significant beta weight \( \beta=0.49, p<0.05 \). In block 1 PP accounted for 23.5% variance \( (R^2) \) in IWI. Thus, hypothesis 1 is supported.

Hypothesis 3(a) postulated that task identity will moderate in the relationship between PP and IWI and a strong relationship will exist among the people with greater task identity. Here the regression analysis depicted a positive and significant beta weight \( \beta=0.15, p<0.05 \). In block 2 TI explained additional 10.2% of variance \( (\Delta R^2) \) in IWI and in block 3 interaction term of PP and TI explained further 2.2% of variance in IWI. Which shows that overall model is explaining 36% of variance in IWI. This increase is significant by F Change test, \( F (1,288) =10.01, p<0.05 \). The results suggest that TI moderates the relationship. Thus, hypothesis 3 (a) was also supported.
Research

Proactive Personality and Ingenious Work Involvement . . .

Table 2

*Moderated hierarchical regression analysis of IWI on PP and TI*

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<tr>
<th>Ingenious Work Involvement (IWI)</th>
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<td>Proactive Personality (PP)</td>
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<td>.40**</td>
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<td>Task Identity (TI)</td>
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<td>PP x TI</td>
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<tr>
<td>Model F</td>
<td>F (1,290) = 91.44**</td>
<td>F (1,289) = 45.89 **</td>
<td>F (1,288) = 10.01*</td>
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Note: Significant at **p<0.001 and *p<0.05

Hypothesis 2 postulated that LMX will have a positive association with IWI which was proved true with (β=0.43, p<0.001). In block 1 LMX accounted for 17.9% variance (R²) in IWI, Thus, hypothesis 2 is supported.

Table 3

*Moderated hierarchical regression analysis of IWI on LMX and TI*  
*Ingenious Work Involvement (IWI)*

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<td>Leader Member Exchange (LMX)</td>
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<td>Task Identity (TI)</td>
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<tr>
<td>LMX x TI</td>
<td>.12*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Model F</td>
<td>F (1,290) = 65.04**</td>
<td>F (1,289) = 63.75 **</td>
<td>F (1,288) = 6.13*</td>
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Note: Significant at **p<0.001 and *p<0.05
Hypothesis 3(b) postulated that task identity will moderate in the relationship between LMX and IWI and a strong relationship will exist among the people with greater task identity. Here the regression analysis depicted a positive and significant beta weight ($\beta=0.122$, $p<0.05$). In block 2 TI explained additional 14.4% of variance ($\Delta R^2$) in IWI and in block 3 interaction term of LMX and TI explained further 1.4% of variance in IWI. Which shows that overall model is explaining 33.7% of variance in IWI. This increase is significant by F Change test, $F(1,288)=6.13$, $p<0.05$. The results suggest that TI moderates the relationship. Similarly, hypothesis 3(b) postulating that the quality of LMX and ingenious work involvement relationship will be moderated by task identity: a strong relationship will exist among the people with greater task identity was also proved to be true with ($\beta=0.122$, $p<0.05$).

**Discussion**

In recent years organizations are stressing employees to accomplish their task timely and effectively. In this context ingenuity is of vital importance in today’s fast changing environment. It allows organizations to move to future desired state so organizations need such employees who are proactive, take part in continuous improvement of the processes, seek opportunities and make step by step changes (Tierney et al. 2006). All this adds a need for proactive personnel and good quality supervisor-subordinate relationship (Carmeli & Schaubroeck, 2007; Volmer et al. 2012). Results of the study yielded a positive association between the independent (PP and LMX) and dependent variable (IWI). Furthermore, research shows that if employees are given an opportunity to carry their tasks in unconventional way ingenuity increases. Though teamwork is of great importance but it may also result in conflicts that may deteriorate performance of both individuals and organizations working in NGO. The study has focused that how leaders and proactive employees foster a context for ingenuity (Atwater & Carmeli, 2009). Therefore, this research put together job design literature with PP and LMX. Results depict that proactive employees are more ingenious at
workplace, leaders can also stimulate ingenious work involvement if employees are given task identity it adds to their ingenious involvement.

This study leads to report considerable understanding of antecedents to ingenious work involvement and it also supports most of the work previously done (Amabile, 2001; Crant & Bateman, 2000; Hammond et al. 2011; Volmer et al. 2012). It adds to the literature on LMX, PP and IWI by following the recommendations that highlighted the need to validate these concepts in different contexts and cultures to highlight its generalizibility (Crant & Bateman, 2000 ; Hofstede, 2006). It adds to the literature of job design i.e., how job characterists can boost employee’s ingenious work involvement.

The results of this study could possibly enhance selecting and hiring processes in organizations by developing methods which are specified in hiring people with proactive personality. Organizations can use different personality tests and select required personnel for example Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). Employees who are not ingenious at work they should be trained accordingly like they can be given training on ingenious problem solving skills (Rank et al. 2004).

Findings in study suggest that LMX and PP are positive for IWI but these can be augmented by granting task identity. To increase task identity job design literature suggests lots of prospects for instance, employees should be permitted to determine the order in which they want to carry out task, they should also be given opportunities to experiment diverse ways to complete their tasks and take responsibility for the results (Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Humphery et al. 2009). Similarly, Shalley & Gilson (2004) suggestes to provide supportive work context for example, support, encouragement and trust to employees. Additionally employers must communicate goals in advance to employees and spread powerful message that ingenuity is desireable and employees must be rewarded accordingly.
Conclusion

Postulating that PP and LMX have a positive relation with IWI and it is also proved that PP, LMX and ingenious work involvement relationship will be moderated by task identity; a strong relationship will exist among the people with greater task identity. Research suggests that organizations must take into account leadership issues, job design issues and conditions that enhance proactivity. All this will augment ingenious work involvement.

The research was employee centric hence may suffer problem of common method variance bias. In future one can focus on leader/supervisor centric approach and can go for data collection at different time frames (Graen & Bien, 1995; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003; Volmer et al. 2012). Moreover, other constructs of ingenious work involvement should be given attention, like ‘ingenious process engagement’ (Zhang & Bartol, 2010). Future research should examine factors that enhance IWI like different reward systems, how physical design of place of work can enhance ingenuity.
References


