



# Leader-follower congruence in proactive personality and work engagement: A polynomial regression analysis

Kejian Yang, Xiaofei Yan, Jieyi Fan, Zhengxue Luo <sup>\*,1</sup>

Department of Aerospace Medicine, The Fourth Military Medical University, Xi'an, China

## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received 8 July 2016

Received in revised form 16 September 2016

Accepted 18 September 2016

Available online 22 September 2016

### Keywords:

Proactive personality

Work engagement

Person-environment fit

Congruence

Polynomial regression analysis

## ABSTRACT

Integrating the theory of person-environment fit and job demands-resources model, this study explored the effects of congruence of proactive personalities of leaders and followers on follower work engagement. Dyadic data were collected from 100 leaders and 583 followers in two public hospitals in China. Using polynomial regression analysis and response surface modeling, the effect of the congruence of leader and follower proactive personalities on follower work engagement was justified. The results indicated that follower work engagement increased when their proactive personalities increased. The results further highlighted an asymmetrical incongruence effect that followers are more engaged at work when followers' proactive personalities exceeded that of their leaders than when leaders' proactive personalities exceeded that of followers. These findings provide valuable suggestions to promote work engagement.

© 2016 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

## 1. Introduction

Work engagement is a growing issue in positive psychology and modern workforce (Bakker, Demerouti & Sanz-Vergel, 2014; Eldor & Harpaz, 2016). Work engagement, which is defined as the positive, fulfilling state of well-being related to work and characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli, Bakker, & Marisa, 2006; Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, & Bakker, 2002), has been shown to be strongly associated with employee motivational and job-related outcomes (Bakker et al., 2014; Breevaart, Bakker, Demerouti, & van den Heuvel, 2015; Christian, Garza, & Slaughter, 2011). As desirable consequences of work engagement, a significant number of studies have explored the antecedents of work engagement. Situational and individual factors have been identified as antecedents of work engagement (Bakker et al., 2014). In recent years, scholars have reached a consensus that situational and individual factors not only have an effect on work engagement, they may also interact to affect work engagement, such as person-environment fit (Macey & Schneider, 2008). Person-environment fit is defined broadly as a match or compatibility between person and environment (Edwards, 2008; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005). Person-supervisor fit is the most studied area in person-environment fit, because a leader

is one of the most important situational factors for employees in the workplace. The characteristics of a leader have an effect on employees' work engagement (Christian et al., 2011), and leader and follower characteristics are believed to have a joint effect on employees' work engagement.

Proactive personality congruence could affect follower work engagement. Proactive personality refers to an individual's enduring behavioral tendency to take initiative to improve current situations (Bateman & Crant, 1993; Crant, 2000). Followers with high proactive personality are more engaged at work (Christian et al., 2011). However, leaders' response to followers' proactivity can either be positive or negative, depending on leaders' attributions of their proactive personality (Campbell, 2000; Zhang, Wang, & Shi, 2012), which implies that proactive personality has a congruence effect on follower work engagement. Although Zhang et al. (2012) showed that congruence in leader and follower proactive personalities can affect employees' work outcomes, a critical question still remains. How does the fit between leader and follower proactive personalities affect employees' work engagement? This study endeavors to bridge this gap.

In this study, we use polynomial regression and response surface model to examine the effects of the congruence of leader and follower proactive personalities on follower work engagement. We also compare two incongruence scenarios (either leaders' proactive personalities are higher or that of the followers are higher) to deepen our understanding of the misfit of leader and follower proactive personalities with follower work engagement.

<sup>\*</sup> Corresponding author.

E-mail address: [luohan@fmmu.edu.cn](mailto:luohan@fmmu.edu.cn) (Z. Luo).

<sup>1</sup> He dedicates in academic field of organization behavior and human resource management.

## 2. Theory development and hypotheses

### 2.1. Congruence in proactive personality

Individuals with highly proactive personalities constantly seek methods to improve their work life (Bateman & Crant, 1993; Campbell, 2000). Hence, when the proactive personalities of leaders and followers are aligned, they have similar goals, thereby ensuring continuous improvement in work processes and outcomes as well as better dyadic relationships (Zhang et al., 2012). Having similar goals with their leader makes followers perceive more task significance and self-control over their work, which are important predictors of followers' work engagement (Christian et al., 2011). Congruence in proactive personality can also result in higher LMX quality, which enable followers to obtain more work resources, including feedback, support, and autonomy (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2009; Xu, Huang, Lam, & Miao, 2012). According to the job demands-resources model, job resources are the most important antecedents of follower work engagement (Bakker et al., 2014; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Christian et al., 2011; Crawford, Lepine, & Rich, 2010; Demerouti, Nachreiner, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2001; Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). Hence, when the proactive personalities of leaders and followers are aligned, followers become more engaged at work because they have more job resources. Followers also exercise more self-control over their work. Under this circumstance, followers work engagement may differ because of the different levels of proactive personality. Hence, it is easy to conclude that followers are more engaged when proactive personality increases because followers with high levels proactive personality are more likely to exert efforts in developing a better work environment. Thus we hypothesize that

**Hypothesis 1a.** Congruence between the proactive personalities of leaders and followers will be positively related to follower work engagement.

**Hypothesis 1b.** When the proactive personalities of followers and leaders are congruent, follower work engagement will increase with increasing proactive personality.

### 2.2. Incongruence in proactive personality

Previous studies have shown that work outcomes are affected differently by two scenarios of leader-follower incongruence (Edwards, 1999; Jansen & Kristof-Brown, 2005; Zhang et al., 2012). Hence, we expect followers to be more engaged at work when their proactive personality exceeds that of their leaders than when leaders' proactive personalities exceed that of the followers. Followers are more likely to feel masterful and in control when their proactive personality exceeds that of their leaders (Campbell, 2000). These followers perceive less job demands and are more engaged at work (Bakker et al., 2014; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Crawford et al., 2010). In contrast, followers who are less proactive than their leaders are likely to have comparatively lower LMX with their leaders (Zhang et al., 2012), and would lack access to job resources. Proactive leaders also urge followers to change the status quo, which requires extra personal resources for followers to achieve the demands of leaders. In sum, followers can have comparatively more demands and lesser resources when their proactive personality exceeds that of their leaders. We hypothesize that

**Hypothesis 2.** Followers will be more engaged when their proactive personalities are higher than their leader's rather than when a leader's proactive personality is higher than a follower's.

## 3. Method

### 3.1. Sample and procedure

The study participants came from two public hospital affiliated with the university and are located in the same city in northwest of China. For the participants, we selected the nursing teams in the hospitals and distributed questionnaires and envelopes to individual members and formal team leaders. The cover page of the questionnaire outlined the objectives of the study, the voluntary nature of the survey, and an assurance of confidentiality to the participants. The participants were instructed to return the completed surveys directly with the envelopes sealed. We received questionnaires from 100 leaders and 583 followers. Each team had roughly equal number of members. All participants were female. The average age of the followers was 28.48 ( $SD = 3.78$ ), and an average organizational tenure of 6.46 years ( $SD = 4.35$ ). Among the leaders, the average age was 37.88 ( $SD = 5.90$ ), and average organizational tenure was 17.87 years ( $SD = 7.03$ ).

### 3.2. Measures

To ensure equivalence of the following measures in the Chinese and English versions, the translation/back-translation procedure was followed to translate English-based measures into Chinese (Brislin, 1980). All study measures used in the present study employed a Likert response scale that ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

#### 3.2.1. Proactive personality

We assessed leaders' and followers' proactive personalities using Seibert et al.'s (1999) ten-item Proactive Personality Scale (PPS) (Seibert, Crant, & Krainer, 1999). Sample items include "I am constantly on the lookout for new ways to improve my life" and "I excel at identifying opportunities". Reliability coefficients for this scale were 0.85 for followers and 0.81 for leaders.

#### 3.2.2. Work engagement

Follower work engagement was measured using the nine-item version of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) (Schaufeli et al., 2006). We focused on overall work engagement and thus did not distinguish the three dimensions of UWES. Example items are "At my work, I feel bursting with energy" and "When I am working, I forget everything else around me". Reliability coefficient for this scale was 0.90.

#### 3.2.3. Control variables

Similarities in leader and follower demographic characteristics, such as age and tenure, are related to followers' work outcomes. Therefore, we controlled the dissimilarity of age and tenure in leaders and followers.

### 3.3. Data analysis

We tested the hypotheses by using polynomial regression (Jansen & Kristof-Brown, 2005) and response surface modeling (Edwards & Parry, 1993). Specifically, follower work engagement was regressed on control variables, centered follower proactive personality squared ( $F^2$ ), centered leader proactive personality ( $L$ ), follower proactive personality squared ( $F^2$ ), follower proactive personality times leader proactive personality ( $F \times L$ ), and leader proactive personality squared ( $L^2$ ). The regression equation used was as follows (to simplify, we omitted all control variables):

$$WE = b_0 + b_1F + b_2L + b_3F^2 + b_4F \times L + b_5L^2 + e,$$

where WE represents follower work engagement, and F and L are follower and leader proactive personalities, respectively. We plotted the

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/5036027>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/5036027>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)