Chapter 21

The Mediating Role of Proactive Personality in the Relationship Between HEXACO Personality and Motivation to Learn: A Study on Hospitality Sector Employees

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ABSTRACT

This study was based on the HEXACO personality model. The aim of the study was to reveal the role of proactive personality in the relationship between the six personality traits of HEXACO personality model and motivation to learn. The sample of the study consisted of the employees in a five-star hotel operating in the province of Antalya, Turkey. The data obtained from 273 employees with convenience sampling method were subjected to mediation analysis using the Bootstrap regression analysis technique. The findings showed the mediating role of proactive personality in the relationship between five of the traits making up the HEXACO personality model (humility-honesty, emotionality, extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness to experience) and the motivation to learn. The sixth trait that is an exception is agreeableness. The findings were discussed within the scope of the existing literature, and recommendations were made for future research.

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INTRODUCTION

As a result of the globalization and computerization, markets and business life are in a constant state of fast-paced change. This reality, itself an outcome of competitive and challenging development, makes it important for employees in an organization to acquire new competencies. Today’s business approach makes it a must for enterprises to propose learning and training programs for their employees both inside and outside the work environment in order to support them in acquiring the necessary competencies. This understanding is a driving force in the sense of responsibility towards learning and self-development in individuals. With the approaches of protean career, unlimited career and career self-management gaining prevalence, employees are more motivated to participate in training and development opportunities in order to maintain their internal and external competitiveness and actively seek such opportunities, thus developing into free agents who act independently. Furthermore, with the proliferation of educational opportunities and training channels, organizations now benefit from web-based learning programs and courses that operate at their own pace, independent of the constraints of time and space. These are mostly self-guided methods based on volunteerism, instead of the traditional and compulsory education experience, thus they require more initiative and responsibility from the employee. At this point, basic individual dispositions and traits (such as the Six-Factor Personality, i.e. HEXACO) and other personality traits (such as proactive personality) appear as significant variables that can help us understand who is likely to take an active part in motivational and development activities in learning (Major et al., 2006: 927; Calquitt et al., 2000: 679).

The related literature includes studies focusing on the meta-analysis of the relationship between personality and motivation to learn (Colquitt et al., 2000: 678), and on how proactive personality and five-factor personality affect the motivation to learn (Major et al., 2006: 927; Carlson et al., 2000: 283; Bertolino et al., 2011: 255). This study, however, differed from the examples above in that it sought to test the mediating role of proactive personality on the relation between the six sub-dimensions of HEXACO (humility-honesty, emotionality, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience) and the motivation to learn with the aim of contributing to the literature with a better understanding of how individuals learned in the business environment and by extension of how to ensure that employees and organizations worked more efficiently. In this study the first priority was to apply HEXACO as a new personality model in understanding the employee motivation to learn in the tourism sector, which represents a dynamic area of service requiring continuous development and change, and secondly, the study aimed to contribute to the education and development theories by integrating the mediating role of proactive personality in this application. Finally, as the third objective, this study aimed to contribute to the cross-validation of this correlation by examining its relation to the motivation to learn, as a variable in individual and organizational level, in a cultural setting other than the country, the USA, where proactive personality was predominantly studied to benefit the management theory.

BACKGROUND

In the conceptual framework of the study, the variables of prediction, outcome, and mediation in line with the model formed will be briefly explained. Moreover, previous studies revealing the relationship between these three variables will be summarized and hypotheses will be developed.