

# 4\_ The Effects of Time Pressure and Situational Constrains on The Proactive Work Behavior Through Psychological Empowerment as a Mediator

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**Submission date:** 09-Mar-2020 11:03AM (UTC+0800)

**Submission ID:** 1271911881

**File name:** 4\_THE\_EFFECTS\_OF\_TIME\_PRESSURE\_AND\_SITUATIONAL\_CONSTRAINS.pdf (154.03K)

**Word count:** 3350

**Character count:** 19641

DOI 10.18551/rjoas.2019-01.63

**THE EFFECTS OF TIME PRESSURE AND SITUATIONAL CONSTRAINS  
ON THE PROACTIVE WORK BEHAVIOR THROUGH PSYCHOLOGICAL  
EMPOWERMENT AS A MEDIATOR**

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**ABSTRACT**

Proactive work behavior has become a necessity for many modern, dynamic and global companies, in which employees are required to exhibit proactive work behavior in order to successfully achieve both individual and organizational outcomes. A person's behavior is not only influenced by the nature inherent in him or her, but a person's traits interact with his or her environmental situation. Emphasizing negative contextual factors, this study measured the effects of job stressors (time pressure and situational constraints) on the proactive work behavior through psychological empowerment as a mediator. The samples used were 140 salespeople in various business sectors. The sampling technique used was accidental sampling technique and the data collection tool was in the form of a questionnaire using a proactive work behavior scale ( $\alpha = 0,916$ ); time pressure ( $\alpha = 0,845$ ); situational constraints ( $\alpha = 0,881$ ); psychological empowerment ( $\alpha = 0,898$ ). The data analysis used was partial least square by means of SmartPLS 3.0 program. The findings indicated that the job stressor of time pressure had a positive effect on the proactive work behavior, while the job stressor of situational constraints had a negative effect on the proactive work behavior. Related to the mediating role, the psychological empowerment did not have a mediating role in the relationship between those two job stressors and the proactive work behavior.

**KEY WORDS**

Proactive work behavior, psychological empowerment, situational constrains, time pressure.

Many companies require their employees to take active and proactive steps by identifying future opportunities to achieve stable long-term goals in an unpredictable environment (Crant, 2000). The impact of proactive work behavior is very beneficial for both employees and companies. The proactive work behavior is the most important determinant of the success and improvement of company effectiveness (Crant, 2000; Griffin, Neal & Parker, 2007). Proactive work behavior is takes the initiative to improve the current situation or create new things involving the status quo, rather than just passively accepting the current conditions (Carnt, 2000). Changes and demands to be proactive can cause an increase in employee work stress (Sonnentag & Spychala, 2012).

Previous studies showed a negative relationship between job stressors and employee performance, meaning that an increase in the job stressors is associated with a direct or indirect decrease in the employee performance (Jex, 1998). Workload and time pressure affected the employee performance through poor health conditions (Jex, 1998). In addition, the situational constraints were consistently associated with poor job performance (Ellis, 2012). The relationship between the job stressors and employee performance still seems weak and inconsistent (Jex, 1998).

Recently, some empirical studies have proven that the job stressors do not always have a damaging and bad impact on one's work results or behavior. In their study, Fay and Sonnentag (2002) found that the job stressors were positively associated to taking personal initiative. Fritz and Sonnentag (2009) showed that the job stressors and positive affections predicted the proactive work behavior on the same day and the following day. Sonnentag and Spychala (2012) actually found different results that the situational constraints were not related to the proactive work behavior and had a negative relationship with role breadth self-

efficacy while the job control and time pressure were positively related to the proactive work behavior through the role breadth self-efficacy.

The inconsistency of the results of the previous studies is important to reexamine the relationship between the job stressors and proactive work behavior. This study focused on two job stressors, namely the time pressure and situational constraints on the proactive work behavior. Both job stressors have been proven to have the strongest effects in the work settings and are often associated with a decrease in the employee health and well being (Jex, 1998; De Lange, et al., 2003, in Fritz & Sonnentag, 2009). However, the employees must continue to strive to achieve the work targets that have been set because it will affect their performance achievements and overall company effectiveness. One strategy to achieve these goals is that the employees must demonstrate the proactive work behavior (Fritz & Sonnentag, 2009).

This study used the psychological empowerment as a mediator variable. The psychological empowerment is intrinsic motivation that reflects one's orientation and how individuals who have confidence in their ability to accomplish their role in a positive way (Spreitzer, 1995). Psychologically, the employees who feel the meaningfulness of their work will show more sense of responsibility for their work so that they can provide positive work results for themselves, work units and companies (Luth, 2012). Active employees definitely want to create their work role and increase their motivation so that it results in higher proactive work behavior (Searle, 2011). Organ (1988, in Tastan & Serinkan, 2013) also suggests that for the employees, the most likely way to complete their obligations is by showing the proactive work behavior.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Griffin, Neal and Parker (2007) classifies individual task behavior, team member behavior and organizational member behavior into proficiency, adaptivity and proactivity. The proactive work behavior is the extent to which the individual takes action independently to anticipate or initiate changes in work systems or work roles (Griffin, et al., 2007). There are three dimensions to identify the proactive work behavior, first, the proactive as individual task (directed towards an individual's work, such as improving one's work procedures), second, proactive as team member (directed to help the team and other team members, such as improving the way the team works) and third, proactive as an organizational member (directed towards broader system changes or organizational practices such as improving the systems for knowledge management in the organizations).

Job stressors can be defined as the pressure experienced by individuals as a result of external factors such as the characteristics of work such as the demands of their work and constraints of other organizations (Kahn et al., 1964, in Essiam, Mensah, Kudu & Gyamfi, 2015). Semmer (1984) measures the job stressors that only focus on a single aspect but recurrent chronic aspects of his work.

Time pressure is a measure of the amount of work felt related to speed and number of tasks (Spector & Jex, 1998). Sonnentag and Spychala (2012) suggest that time pressure is too many tasks that must be completed in a short time. Time pressure is characterized by how many tasks must be done in a given period (Semmer, et al., 1996) and included as a challenge stressors, namely stress that encourages a person to achieve goals, learning and development (Cavanaugh, Boswell, Roehling & Boudreau, 2000). Individuals will be challenged to overcome obstacles that provide opportunities for learning (Luth, 2012). Time pressure is the workload that drives it to take action and change something to reduce stress.

H1a: Time pressure will be positively related to proactive work behavior.

H1b: Time pressure will be positively related to psychological empowerment.

H3c: The relationship between time pressure and proactive work behavior will be mediated by psychological empowerment.

Situational or organizational constraints represent situations or things that prevent employees from showing their abilities as an effort to improve job performance (Spector & Jex, 1998). Situational constraints are characterized by faulty equipment, incomplete

information, inadequate procedures or perhaps other people's interruptions (Spector & Jex, 1998). Individuals work with poor quality work materials, do not get the work material needed, work requirements and procedures are not appropriate because of situational constraints (Semmer, et al., 1996). Situational constraints are classified as hindrance stressors, namely stress which inhibits the achievement of one's tasks or goals (Cavanaugh, et al., 2000).

H2a: Situational constraints will be negatively related to proactive work behavior.

H2b: Situational constraints will be negatively related to psychological empowerment.

H2c: The relationship between situational constraints and proactive work behavior will be mediated by psychological empowerment.

According to Spreitzer (1995), the psychological empowerment as an individual's intrinsic motivation to the task resulting in the emergence of the feelings capable of actively carrying out and controlling his/her work role manifested in four cognitions: meaning, self-determination, competence and effect. Thomas and Velthouse (1990) define psychological empowerment as a set of cognitions that are influenced by the work environment to help create an active orientation towards one's work. Empowerment not only follows the judgment of individuals from their work assignments but also depends on contextual factors, such as input from superiors and coworkers. The psychological empowerment is conceptualized as an active motivation construct instead of passive motivation construct and orientation for work roles.

H3: Psychological empowerment will be positively related to proactive work behavior.

## METHODS OF RESEARCH

We collected data with questionnaires in various business sectors (banking, insurance, manufacturing, automotive, hospitality, telecommunication, and others). The samples of this study were 140 salespeople. A total of 43.6% were men and 54.4% were women, the average age was 21-30 years and the average length of work ranged from 1-3 years. Concerning education, 71.4% of the employees held a university degree.

We assessed proactive behavior using five point Likert scales from 1 (*fully disagree*) to 5 (*fully agree*) with the nine-item scale developed by Griffin et al. (2007). We assessed job stressors (time pressure and situational constraints) with self-report scales developed by Semmer (1984). We measured *time pressure* with five items with possible answers from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*very often*) and we assessed *situational constraints* with five items, which concern situations characterized by malfunctioning or incomplete equipment, tools, or information. We assessed psychological empowerment by Spreitzer's (1995) with 12 items to measure the four dimensions of psychological empowerment. The overall scale exhibited adequate internal consistency (proactive work behavior ( $\alpha = 0,916$ ); time pressure ( $\alpha = 0,845$ ); situational constraints ( $\alpha = 0,881$ ); psychological empowerment ( $\alpha = 0,898$ )).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data analysis used was *Partial Least Square* (PLS) to predict the relationship between the constructs and be able to be used as a confirmation theory to build relationship that has not have theoretical foundation or for testing propositions. The purpose of this study is to explain the effect of time pressure and situational constraints on proactive work behavior with psychological empowerment as a mediator.

Table 1 – Means, Standard Deviation, and Correlation among Variables

| n/n                       | Mean  | St. Dev | Adj. R2 | CR  | AVE  |
|---------------------------|-------|---------|---------|-----|------|
| Time pressure             | 16.29 | 3.65    |         | .87 | .572 |
| Situational constrains    | 15.23 | 3.67    |         | .92 | .707 |
| Psychological empowerment | 48.54 | 8.20    | .54     | .94 | .578 |
| Proactive work behavior   | 36.96 | 5.07    | .79     | .92 | .552 |

*St. Dev* = standard deviation; *Adj. R2* = adjusted R-squared; *CR* = composite reliability; *AVE* = average variance extracted.



Table 2 – Model Results

| Path                                 | <i>t-values</i> | <i>p-values</i> | Comment                     |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| TPressure → Proactive                | 7.48            | .000            | Hypothesis 1a supported     |
| TPressure → PsyEmpower               | 3.52            | .001            | Hypothesis 1b supported     |
| SConstrains → Proactive              | - 6.89          | .000            | Hypothesis 2a supported     |
| SConstrains → PsyEmpower             | - 5.17          | .000            | Hypothesis 2b supported     |
| PsyEmpowerment → Proactive           | 3.75            | .000            | Hypothesis 3 supported      |
| TPressure → PsyEmpower → Proactive   | 2.53            | .012            | Hypothesis 1c not supported |
| SConstrains → PsyEmpower → Proactive | 3.18            | .002            | Hypothesis 2c not supported |

*TPressure* = time pressure; *SConstrains* = situational constrains; *PsyEmpower* = psychological empowerment; *Proactive* = proactive work behavior.  $p < .05$ .

Psychological empowerment is positively and significantly related to proactive work behavior ( $p = .000$ ,  $t = 3.75$ ), supporting H3. Consistent with H1a and H1b, time pressure was positively related to proactive work behavior ( $p = .001$ ,  $t = 7.48$ ) and we found a significant direct positive relation between time pressure and psychological empowerment ( $p = .000$ ,  $t = 3.52$ ). The positive indirect relation between time pressure and proactive work behavior via psychological empowerment was not significant ( $p = .012$ ,  $t = 2.53$ ). Hypothesis 1c was not supported. Situational constrains were negatively and significantly related to proactive work behavior ( $p = .000$ ,  $t = - 6.89$ ) and psychological empowerment ( $p = .000$ ,  $t = - 5.17$ ). H2a and H2b was supported. The indirect relation between situational constraints and proactive behavior via psychological empowerment was not significant ( $p = .002$ ,  $t = 3.18$ ). Hypothesis H3c was not supported.

Time pressure showed positive relation with proactive work behavior. The findings of the above study were consistent with previous studies, Ohly, et al. (2006); Fay & Sonnentag, 2002; Ellis (2012) which found that there was a positive relationship between the time pressure and proactive work behavior. LePine, et al. (2005) suggests that some job stressors, such as the time pressure, can be positively overcome by individuals so that it leads to behavior and confidence in the personal achievement according to the goals set. Individuals who feel the time pressure as a challenge and challenge assessment will actively demonstrate proactivity in the workplace. The time pressure can be described as overtaxing regulations, requiring more resources to quickly complete work and increased energy to ensure the goal achievements (Ohly & Fritz, 2010).

Situational constraints showed negative relation with proactive work behavior. The findings of this study indicated a negative and significant direct effect of the situational constraints on the proactive work behavior. Situational constraints are a type of hindrance stressors that has a negative relationship in fulfilling the work so that it affects the individual performance (LePine, et al., 2005). The findings of this study were different from the findings of several existing studies, such as studies conducted by Fritz and Sonnentag (2009); Fay and Sonnentag (2002) which revealed that there was a positive relationship where the high situational constraints and time pressure were associated with higher proactive work behavior levels. The differences in the findings between this study and several other studies might be caused by the differences in the characteristics of the research subjects and differences in the possessed internal motivation.

Psychological empowerment showed positive relation with proactive work behavior. Psychological empowerment increases the employees' work role to engage in the proactive work behavior (Searle, 2011). Huang (2017) suggests that the psychological empowerment is positively related to the proactive work behavior, i.e. the employees who have stronger empowerment perception than other employees will demonstrate the proactive work behavior. In his study, Huang (2012) also stated that the psychological empowerment was an important antecedent for one's proactive work behavior by finding feedback. In the mediating role, the psychological empowerment did not have a mediating role between the effects of the job stressors namely the time pressure and situational constraints on the proactive work behavior.

## CONSLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The findings indicated that the work stressor of time pressure had a positive effect on the proactive work behavior, while the work stressor of situational constraints had a negative effect on the proactive work behavior. Related to the mediating role, the psychological empowerment did not have a mediating role in the relationship between those two work stressors and the proactive work behavior. Although providing additional insight by extending the previous studies, this study also has several limitations.

For further research, it is expected that it can add personality factors as individual characteristic factors. This is to find out whether the effects produced are as strong as the effect of the proactive personality on the employees' proactive work behavior. Secondly, the development of the literature and research on one's proactivity has resulted in various different approaches. Nevertheless, there is no agreement to date regarding the appropriate approach to measure proactive as the proactive work behavior. For further research, it is also expected that it can use different theories and dimensions of the proactive work behavior to enrich the findings of the previous studies. Third, in this study, the proactive work behavior data were collected from only one source, namely the employees. For further research, it is also expected that it can use two data sources, namely employees and ratings from superiors or coworkers to avoid bias.

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