



The Impact of Proactive Personality on Turnover Intention and Psychological Empowerment with the Mediating Role of Career Adaptability in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic among Snapp Company Employees in Iran

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Abstract

Background: Career adaptability can help individuals see probabilities in unforeseen changes, invest in those changes, and improve unpredictable outcomes. On the other hand, career adaptability can be a double-edged sword and may lead to voluntary turnover intention. To better understand the concept of career adaptability and its role in an organization, the present study has focused on examining the impact of proactive personality on turnover intention and psychological empowerment with the mediating role of career adaptability in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Methods: This study employs a correlational method and is considered basic research from an objective standpoint. The administrative staff of Snapp company, who were 5000 individuals at the time of the study (2021), were selected as the statistical population, and 357 individuals were chosen as the sample based on Krejcie and Morgan Table. Due to the inability to access all individuals, sampling was done using the convenience sampling method. To assess proactive personality, the Bateman and Crant (1993) Proactive Personality Scale ($\alpha=0.909$) was used. For measuring career adaptability the Savickas and Porfeli (2012) Career Adapt-Abilities Scale ($\alpha=0.843$) was used. To measure turnover intention, the Kim et al. (2007) Turnover Intention Scale ($\alpha=0.809$) was utilized, and to measure psychological empowerment the Spreitzer (1995) Psychological Empowerment Scale ($\alpha=0.898$) was employed. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to choose the data analysis method. Due to the non-normality of the data, the structural equation modeling (and path analysis) technique was used to assess the causal relationship between variables.

Results: Data analysis showed that there is a relationship between proactive personality and psychological empowerment of Snapp employees during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the mediating role of career adaptability ($\beta=0.370$). Additionally there is a significant positive relationship between proactive personality and turnover intention ($\beta=0.211$) and psychological empowerment ($\beta=0.557$). Furthermore, the career adaptability of employees is significantly positively related to their psychological empowerment ($\beta=0.438$).

Conclusions: Despite this, contrary to previous research, the results obtained in the current study did not show a relationship between career adaptability and turnover intention, and in the same way, rejected the mediating role of career adaptability in the mentioned relationship.

Keywords: Proactive personality, Turnover intention, Psychological empowerment, Career adaptability.

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Introduction

In 2019, with the widespread and global outbreak of COVID-19, the work culture changed, which led to global changes in early 2020. In such circumstances, the World Health Organization declared that the spread of the COVID-19 disease had created a public health emergency and raised concerns internationally. The rapid spread of the COVID-19 virus also disrupted international mobility, with 14 cases identified in Europe in early March 2020, sounding an emergency alarm for public health¹. The rapid spread of the virus resulted in uncertainty in various sectors, leading many countries to lockdown to prevent further spread of the disease². The COVID-19 disease caused job insecurity, reduced workforce opportunities, and increased unemployment globally. Employees were temporarily suspended to ensure the survival of the companies¹. Companies resorted to laying off employees and reducing their salaries to survive³. However, the decrease in the turnover intention of remaining employees (both skilled and unskilled) became a serious issue for organizations. Turnover intention is a growing concern that can directly impact human resources and organizational forces⁴.

If the members of an organization perceive other job opportunities as better than the organization's job opportunities and nurture the idea of leaving the organization, the turnover intention is developed in them. Turnover intention and subsequent job turnover can cause high costs for the organization because the organization incurs high costs in terms of interviewing, training, and empowering employees⁵. Empowerment fosters the belief that freedom and will are reliable resources for empowerment by altering attitudes and judgments toward individual and organizational issues. Therefore, when a group of individuals becomes empowered, their relationships with power holders change, and they will share common goals. Empowered individuals change their relationships with others and power holders, such as companies and governments⁶. In the conditions of facing COVID-19 challenges and to increase efficiency, organizations have tried to empower their employees and help them gain the necessary skills for independent decision-making in the current situation by creating relief funds, providing alternative working



arrangements, and offering training programs⁷ to reduce their turnover intention. Empowerment is the process of aiding the improvement and continuous enhancement of individuals' and groups' performance through the development and expansion of their influence and capabilities. Empowerment is a strategy for organizational development and flourishing⁸.

The most vital asset of any organization is its human resources, and the quality and capability of human resources are the most essential factors in the survival and livelihood of the organization. Competent human resources bring about a competent organization⁹. Among these, proactive personality is one of the crucial characteristics of employees that has become very important in current circumstances¹⁰. Proactive personality represents a relatively new advancement in research and has attracted considerable attention in the fields of management and psychology since its conceptualization¹¹. In this line of research, the relationship between the individual and the environment is considered a mutual process in which individuals are not just sculptures created by environmental forces but sculptors of their surrounding environment. The concept of proactive personality is based on the observation that some individuals are constantly seeking to change their environment, change the world, and exert initial control that modifies objective conditions, while others prefer to conform to the current situation, adapt to the world, and exert secondary control that is just compliant with existing conditions. In the workplace, similar patterns can be observed: some employees constantly pursue issues, initiate new initiatives, and provide constructive solutions, while others are relatively satisfied with the current situation and simply go with the flow. Researchers have found that proactive employees are likely to be well-prepared for job-related changes¹², and proactive personality is a crucial factor that influences the formation of career adaptability^{12,13}. Career adaptability refers to psychological processes that align employees with job changes and is described as a state of compatibility and favorable mental state that reflects the individual's relationship with their work environment¹⁴. While increasing career adaptability is generally perceived as a positive trait, it does not always benefit employers. On the one hand, career adaptability has positive outcomes, such as job satisfaction and higher empowerment^{15,16}, leading to lower turnover intentions¹⁷.

Organizations believe that increasing employees' career adaptability through training can help them cope with

workplace challenges during this difficult time¹⁷. Heath (2020) stated that career adaptability can help individuals see possibilities in unforeseen changes, invest in those changes, and improve unpredictable outcomes¹⁸. On the other hand, career adaptability can be a double-edged sword and may lead to voluntary job turnover¹⁹. So far, it is still unclear how career adaptability affects employees' turnover intention and their empowerment. Given the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the labor market, organizations, including those active in the services sector, highly adaptable employees may be seeking opportunities outside their current company. In other words, highly adaptable individuals may be less dependent on their current employers and show a higher intention to relocate.

Such reasoning can be particularly linked to job insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, it is crucial to address this research gap, especially considering its increased significance during the COVID-19 pandemic²⁰. Thus, the present study aims to raise the issue in this area to answer this fundamental question: Considering the mediating role of career adaptability, what is the relationship between proactive personality and turnover intention, and the psychological empowerment of employees in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic? Furthermore, Iran is a country with a different political, social, economic, and cultural structure, and companies operating in it work under different conditions. Therefore, research in Iran may yield different results due to differences in working conditions²¹. Hence, it is crucial to regularly assess the matter of employee empowerment and their turnover intention. The importance of addressing the issue lies in the fact that it yields the following results:

- Assisting in filling out the existing literature on proactive personality and its role in service organizations
- Helping to empower employees and reduce their turnover intention to improve organizational performance

The theoretical model of the study, as shown in Figure 1, is based on the research by Lee et al. (2021) and Zho et al. (2019), where proactive personality is the independent variable, career adaptability is the mediating variable, and turnover intention and psychological empowerment are the dependent variables^{20,22}.

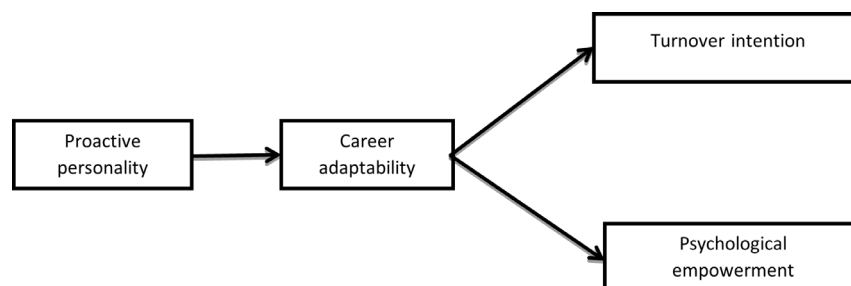


Figure 1. The theoretical model of the study²⁰

Materials and Methods

The current study examines the impact of proactive personality on turnover intention and psychological empowerment with the mediating role of career adaptability in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic among employees of Snapp Company in Iran. Methodologically, it is a descriptive correlational study, and objectively, it is basic research. The statistical population of the current study is administrative employees of Snapp company at the time of the study (the year 2021), totaling 5000 individuals. In the present study, the sample size was calculated to be 357 individuals according to the Krejcie and Morgan table²³. Due to the inability to access all individuals, sampling was done through the convenience sampling method. In this way, the questionnaire was first prepared online, and its link was placed in the comprehensive group system of Snapp Company, where all employees have access to it to respond to the set questions.

Proactive personality: In the present study, the Bateman and Crant Proactive Personality Scale (1993) was used to assess proactive personality. This questionnaire consists of seventeen items, but in this study, seven items from this questionnaire were used, whose validity and reliability (0.825) were confirmed by Lee et al. (2021)²⁰. The items include: I am always looking for new ways to improve my life; wherever I have been, I have been a powerful force for constructive change; there is nothing more exciting than turning my ideas into reality; if I see something I don't like, I fix it; no matter what the odds are, if I believe in something, I will make it happen; I love being a hero for my ideas, even in the face of opposition; I excel in recognizing opportunities (I am always looking for better ways to do things).

Career Adapt-Abilities Scale-USA Form: In the present study, the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale, designed and validated by Savickas and Porfeli (2012), was used to measure career adaptability²⁴. This questionnaire consists of twenty-four items based on a five-point Likert scale and has been validated in Iran by Yousefi (2011)²⁵. However, based on the research by Lee et al. (2021), seven items from this questionnaire, whose validity and reliability (0.966) had been confirmed in their study, were utilized²⁰. The items include: My job provides good job security; There are opportunities for advancement and promotion in my job; The company's managers treat me fairly; I receive fair wages; I have never thought that I made a mistake in choosing my career; I enjoy facing challenges in my job; I have enough authority in my job.

Turnover intention: In the current study, the Turnover Intention Scale developed and validated by Kim et al. (2015) was used to measure turnover intention²⁶. This questionnaire consists of fifteen items based on a five-point Likert scale and has been validated in Iran by Sokhanvar, Hasanpoor, Hajhashemi, & Kakemam, (2016)²⁷. However, based on the research of Lee et al. (2021), nine items from this questionnaire, with a confirmed validity and reliability (0.892), were used in this study²⁰. The items include: I often think about quitting my job; If a new job opportunity arises, I will definitely accept it; I am not satisfied with my current job;

When I get nervous, I think about quitting my job; I have no attachment to my current job; I feel confused about staying in my job; I have almost no compelling reason to stay in my job; My salary does not cover my living expenses; The salary I receive for my job is not fair.

Psychological empowerment: In the current study, the Psychological Empowerment Scale designed and validated by Spreitzer (1995) was used to assess psychological empowerment²⁸. This questionnaire consists of eighteen items based on a five-point Likert scale, measuring five dimensions, including a sense of competence, self-determination, meaning, impact, and trust in others, validated in Iran by Batool, Batool, & Fayyaz (2017)²⁹. These items include: I value the work I do; I am confident in my abilities to do the job; I have a lot of freedom in deciding how to do the work; I am sure my colleagues are sincere with me; the work activities are personally meaningful to me; I can make decisions about how to do the tasks; I pay attention to what I do in my work; my opinion is taken into account in decision-making in my work unit; I believe my colleagues pay attention to my success and achievements.

Results

In this study, 170 individuals (48%) responding to the questions are male, and 187 individuals (52%) responding to the questions are female. Therefore, the majority of respondents to the questions were women. It shows that 36 individuals (10%) responding to the questions are under 22 years old, 59 individuals (17%) are between 23 and 27 years old, 148 individuals (41%) are between 28 and 32 years old, 64 individuals (18%) are between 33 and 37 years old, and 40 individuals (11%) are between 33 and 37 years old. Hence, most respondents to the questions fall within the age group of 28 to 32 years. It is demonstrated that 201 individuals (56%) holding a bachelor's degree, 154 individuals (43%) holding a master's degree, and two individuals (1%) holding a doctorate responded to the questions. 187 individuals (52%) responding to the questions are female. Therefore, the majority of respondents to the questions were women. 104 individuals (29 percent) surveyed have less than 3 years of experience, 189 individuals (53 percent) have between 3 and 5 years of experience, and 64 individuals (18 percent) have between 5 and 7 years of experience at Snap company. As a result, the majority of respondents had work experience ranging from 3 to 5 years.

Table 1 shows that the variable with the highest average value is an intention to leave the job (4.131) while the empowerment variable has the lowest average value (3.955). The highest variance, 1.165, is found in the active personality variable, while the intention to leave the job variable has the lowest variance at 0.824 (Table2 and Figure 2).

According to table 3, the first main hypothesis is rejected as job adaptability, with a coefficient of 1.859, does not mediate the relationship between active personality and intention to leave the job. This rejection is due to the lack of confirmation on the connection between job adaptability and intention to quit among employees.



The second main hypothesis suggests that the active personality of SNAP employees during the COVID-19 pandemic is correlated with their psychological empowerment, with job adaptability serving as a mediator. Confirming the second sub-hypothesis, job adaptability, with a significant

coefficient of 8.015 at a 99% confidence level, mediates the relationship between active personality and psychological empowerment. The path coefficient of 0.37 indicates that job adaptability explains 37% of the impact of active personality on employees' psychological empowerment.

Table 1. Description of research variables

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation	Min	Max
Active personality	3.95	0.95	1.00	5.00
Job compatibility	4.01	0.91	1.00	5.00
intention to leave the job	4.13	0.90	1.00	5.00
Empowerment	3.95	0.92	1.00	5.00

Table 2. Path coefficient values

Direct effect				
	Empowerment	Job compatibility	Active personality	Intention to leave the job
Empowerment				
Job compatibility	0.438			0.209
Active personality	0.557	0.844		0.211
Intention to leave the job				
Indirect effect				
Active personality -> Job compatibility -> Empowerment				0.370
Active personality -> Job compatibility -> Intention to leave the job				0.176

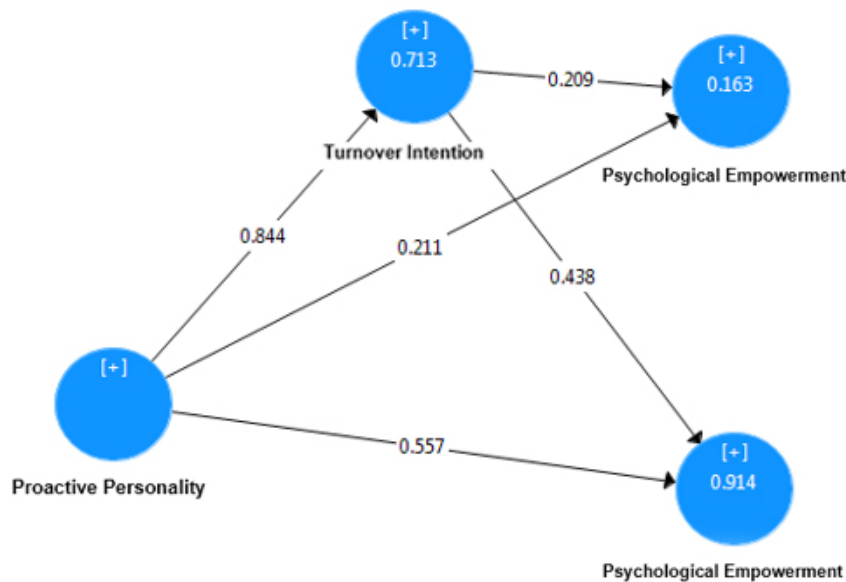


Figure 2. Path coefficient values

Table 3. Summary of research hypothesis testing

	The significance	Coefficient of the path	Result
Active personality -> Job compatibility -> intention to leave the job	1.859	0.176	Rejected
Active personality -> Job compatibility -> Empowerment	8.150	0.370	Confirmation

Discussion

Primary hypothesis one: Proactive personality is related to turnover intention with the mediating role of career adaptability among Snapp employees in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Career adaptability with a significant coefficient of 1.859 does not mediate the relationship between proactive personality and turnover intention of employees, and the first primary hypothesis is rejected. The reason for rejecting this hypothesis is that the relationship between employees' career adaptability and turnover intention was not confirmed. In a more detailed explanation of this hypothesis, it should be stated that human career life requires the ability to make changes in oneself and the situation to achieve success. Humans need adaptability in all dimensions of life for survival and sustainability. Doing this in the work domain requires career adaptability, which is considered a specific capacity to use the necessary psychological resources to make changes in oneself and conditions for job success³⁰. Individuals must continuously make themselves compatible and adaptable throughout their lives to effectively respond to changing personal needs, environmental needs, and opportunities³¹. With an understanding of this reality, scientists and researchers in the field of professions worldwide today consider career adaptability to be essential and worthy of attention³².

Career adaptability is now indicative of a fundamental construct for understanding professional behavior and is the center of interventions for fostering work-life patterns³³. As a necessary competency for effective occupational structure and life design, career adaptability today is a practical and conceptual framework that is valid and valuable internationally and provides practical solutions to help individuals manage their jobs in a changing world and local economies and job markets³⁴. Career and career adaptability have always been part of human life at all ages, and the right and informed career choice begins from the earliest days of human consciousness³⁵. When a person pays more attention to certain matters, their talents gradually become apparent concerning the surrounding world, and in today's world, where economic problems, unemployment, and job dissatisfaction are widespread, career adaptability enhances the competence and confidence of employees in dealing with work-related issues, and according to the research of Al-Refaei et al. (2024), Fiori et al. (2015), and Guan et al. (2016) reduces their turnover intention³⁶⁻³⁸.

Due to the continuity of the COVID-19 pandemic, this study has only been able to examine employees' turnover intentions rather than their actual behaviors. A longitudinal study could be conducted to capture the actual turnover behaviors of employees after the pandemic. It is recommended that in future research, the role of moderator variables such as supervisor support, coworker support, organizational position, and other variables be investigated when studying adaptability and personality. However, in the current study, the role of moderator variables has not been examined.

Despite this, contrary to previous research, the results obtained in the current study did not show a relationship

between career adaptability and turnover intention, and in the same way, rejected the mediating role of career adaptability in the mentioned relationship. However, the results obtained need further investigation, as the study was only conducted in one company and used convenient sampling, with employees responding online. Perhaps a change in the sampling method or expanding the sampling domain may lead to a change in the results.

Ethical Considerations

The research involving human subjects followed the ethical guidelines set out by the Tonekabon Branch, Islamic Azad University under the code IR.IAU.TON.REC.1400.134. The authors express gratitude to the participants for their help and significant contribution to the success of the research.

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Conflict of Interest

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