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The impact of team empowerment on proactivity

The moderating roles of leader's emotional intelligence and proactive personality

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between team empowerment and team proactivity and the moderating roles of a team leader's emotional intelligence (EI) and a team member's proactive personality.

Design/methodology/approach – To provide a rigorous test of the hypotheses, a field study from a sample of 910 certified nurses in 82 teams from 12 university hospitals in Turkey was conducted.

Findings – The results reveal that proactivity is positively associated with team empowerment. In addition, team leader's EI and team members' proactive personality influence the relationship between team empowerment and team proactivity. Specifically, teams exhibit the highest proactivity when team leaders' EI and team members' proactive personality are high.

Research limitations/implications – The main strength of the investigation in this study was its multilevel research design. Most research on proactivity and empowerment has been conducted within single organizations, precluding an assessment of the way in which individual difference variables influence empowerment or proactivity. The multilevel design incorporated in this study, however, was capable of capturing the complexity of individual behaviors by considering different contexts.

Practical implications – In encouraging team proactivity, leadership and team members' personality characteristics do matter. Identifying individual difference variables such as team leader's EI, leader-member exchange, *locus* of control or team members' personality help to advance the theoretical understanding of the team proactivity. This study provides evidence of the positive relationship between team empowerment and team proactivity. Such knowledge may help to search for continuous improvement and innovative solutions to work problems employed by healthcare administrators and potentially reduce the costs associated with losing high-potential nurses.

Originality/value – This is one of the first studies to provide evidence of the moderating roles of the team leader's EI and team members' proactive personality levels on the relationship between team empowerment and team proactivity in university hospitals that formally implement work teams.

Keywords Team empowerment, Team proactivity, Emotional intelligence, Proactive personality, Team working, Turkey, Medical personnel

Paper type Research paper



Introduction

Scholars and management consultants, researching the importance of work teams for organizations (Greenberg *et al.*, 2009), have made many claims in recent years. More specifically, teams are said to contribute to better outcomes for business organizations because of improved performance of employees (Prati *et al.*, 2003), productivity

(Glassop, 2002; Hamilton *et al.*, 2003) or organizational responsiveness and flexibility (Friedman and Casner-Lotto, 2002). These benefits are often attributed to the positive impact of teams on employee attitudes such as morale and job satisfaction (Stewart *et al.*, 2000), as well as organizational commitment (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001).

As both the use of work teams in industry and the amount of research on teams have increased, scholars have paid more attention to employee empowerment (Fernandez and Moldogaziev, 2011; Kirkman and Rosen, 1999). Empowerment involves employees taking the initiative to respond autonomously to job related challenges with the encouragement and support of management (Raub and Robert, 2010). Research conducted in the healthcare context shows that empowerment plays a significant role in increasing employee job satisfaction (Laschinger *et al.*, 2001; Ugboro, 2006; Upenieks, 2003) and organizational commitment (Kuokkanen *et al.*, 2003; Laschinger *et al.*, 2001).

Interestingly, there has been little scholar attention to the interaction of empowerment and work team membership – that is, to empowerment at the team level of analysis. The literature on empowerment reveals that it has been conceptualized and empirically examined primarily at the individual level of analysis (Kirkman *et al.*, 2004; Liden *et al.*, 2000). Thus, more academic research is needed on the empowered teams (Greenberg *et al.*, 2009).

Empowerment researchers have devoted their attention primarily to employees' personal empowerment (Somech, 2005), which is defined as intrinsic task motivation manifested in four cognitive dimensions (meaningfulness, self-efficacy, autonomy and impact) reflecting an employee's orientation to his or her work role (Avolio and Bass, 2004). At the team level, Kirkman and Rosen (1997) proposed a model that parallels the dimensions of empowerment that have been specified at the individual level of analysis (Chen *et al.*, 2007). Kirkman and Rosen (2000) argued that team empowerment is as important as personal empowerment. They found that individuals who perceived their team as highly empowered were willing to contribute and to make individual sacrifices for the team's success.

The aim of this study is to examine the moderating effects of emotional intelligence and proactive personality on the relationship between team empowerment and team proactivity in healthcare industry. This study makes several contributions to the proactivity literature. First, it is a response to the call for more research on organizational and interpersonal factors and individual difference variables that may serve as moderators to proactive behaviors (Crant, 2000; Gerhardt *et al.*, 2007). Second, given that contextual and personality factors are central to team proactivity (e.g. Williams *et al.*, 2010), it is important to examine the direct and moderating effects of personality factors in a single study. To our knowledge, this study is the first to examine the moderating effect of individual difference variables on team proactivity in a single study.

Theory and hypotheses

Team empowerment defined

The concept of empowerment is the process of enhancing the capabilities and influence of individuals and teams. There are four dimensions of team empowerment: potency, meaningfulness, autonomy and impact (Rothwell, 2009).

Potency, which parallels the personal empowerment construct of self-efficacy, is defined as “each individual’s assessment of their team’s collective ability to perform job-related behaviors” (Somech, 2005).

Meaningfulness refers to a team’s experiencing its tasks as important, valuable and worthwhile (Somech, 2005).

Autonomy parallels the personal empowerment construct of autonomy and is the degree to which team members experience substantial freedom, independence and discretion in their work (Vanderfeesten and Reijers, 2006).

Impact, which parallels the personal empowerment construct of impact, is the degree to which team members sense that the team produces work that is significant and important for the organization (Somech, 2005).

Kirkman and Rosen (1997) have argued that team empowerment consists of four related (but independent) dimensions. The dimensions are related because they are likely to be mutually reinforcing (Kennedy and Schleifer, 2006; Kirkman *et al.*, 2004).

From an extensive review of the work team, empowerment, and group motivation literatures, Kirkman and Rosen (1997, 1999) theoretically identified job and organizational characteristics that may act as antecedents to team empowerment. Their search yielded antecedents in four thematic areas: external leader behavior, production/service responsibilities, team-based human resources policies, and social structure. They believed that most of the job and organizational characteristics identified would likely affect all four dimensions of team empowerment (Kirkman and Rosen, 1997).

Team empowerment and proactivity

Most research and theory has considered the concept of proactivity at the individual level. Individual-level proactive behavior refers to self-starting, future-focused action in which the individual aims to change the external situation, such as improving work methods, or to change some aspect of his/her self, such as improving one’s performance by actively seeking feedback from a supervisor (Parker *et al.*, 2006). Such behavior is more active, change oriented, and future focused than either core task performance or adaptive performance.

The focus in this study is on proactive teams rather than proactive individuals. It can be proposed that team proactivity is a team-level concept that has theoretical similarity with individual-level proactivity and thus defined team proactivity as the extent to which a team engages in self-starting, future-focused action that aims to change the external situation or the team itself. Examples of proactive team behaviors include the team introducing new work methods, the team preventing problems rather than only reacting to them, or the team scanning the environment to identify potential opportunities (Williams *et al.*, 2010).

The mechanisms driving proactivity at team level are unclear (Wu and Parker, 2011). In one of the few studies considering this issue, Williams *et al.* (2010) found that, consistent with individual-level studies, a supportive organizational culture and high levels of self-management were associated with team proactivity. However, team composition was also important. The most proactive teams had members with higher-than-average proactive personality, but also low heterogeneity in proactive personality. Having team members who vary a great deal in their tendency to be proactive appeared to result in a less positive climate, thereby lowering team proactive

behavior. Williams *et al.* (2010) supported the idea that team proactive performance in part arises from situational factors (work design, leadership, organizational characteristics) and in part from the individuals that make up the team, both of which influence the interpersonal norms of team working.

Empowerment leads to a proactive orientation toward jobs, management, and organizations (Crant, 2000). High levels of self-efficacy lead to more initiating behaviors and persistence in the face of obstacles (Gore, 2006). Deci and Ryan (1985) found that the more an individual perceived that he or she had autonomy; the more initiative that person took in work-related situations. At the team level of analysis, teams are proactive when they seek continuous improvement, revise work processes, and seek innovative solutions to work problems (Power and Waddell, 2004; Kirkman and Rosen, 1999).

Empowered teams have been found to frequently take action on problems and improve the quality of their work by initiating changes in the way work is carried out (Gibson and Vermeulen, 2003). Therefore, it is expected that team empowerment will influence team proactive behavior.

H1. The more that a team's members experience team empowerment, the more proactive their team will be.

Moderating role of leader's emotional intelligence

People vary in their ability to understand and control their emotions and the emotions of others; those higher in this ability are said to be more "emotionally intelligent" (Mayer and Salovey, 1997; Jin *et al.*, 2008). Importantly, people with greater levels of emotional intelligence have been found to be more successful at building interpersonal relationships and obtaining support from others with whom they build relationships (e.g. Lopes *et al.*, 2005; Huy and Zott, 2007).

Several researchers suggest the importance of emotions in the process of leadership (Ashkanasy and Tse, 2000; Brief and Weiss, 2002; Kanfer and Klimoski, 2002). Bass (1990) found an association between emotional maturity, managerial effectiveness and managerial development. Researchers (Parolini, 2005; Van Velsor and Leslie, 1995) found emotional instability to be the number one predictor of middle and top management failure. Kellett *et al.* (2002) offers that perception of leadership skill is impacted by leader emotional ability through empathy. George (2000) has theorized that emotionally intelligent leaders are more likely to develop and communicate compelling vision, generate collective enthusiasm and to influence followers by understanding and managing their emotions. Yukl (2002) describes emotionally intelligent people as better adjusted, less psychologically disturbed, more aware of personal strengths and limitations, less defensive and more growth-oriented, more self-controlled and less self-centered than those with less emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence has been found to be a predictor of success and performance (Cherniss, 2003; Sivanathan and Fekken, 2002; Van Rooy and Viswesvaran, 2004) in top leaders (Dulewicz and Higgs, 2003) and in managers' effectiveness in other cultures (Shipper *et al.*, 2003). Goleman (1998) explains emotional competence as a capability that can be learned in order to contribute to outstanding performance at work.

Leaders who possess high levels of EI are likely to recognize followers' needs, take active interest in them and respond to changes in their emotional states. In addition, they are likely to exhibit supportive behaviors associated with increasing effectiveness

and handling conflict with subordinates for positive outcomes on teamwork (Rahim *et al.*, 2006). The high level of leadership support inherent in an empowered team system will likely contribute to higher commitment levels among team members (Somech, 2005). Emotional intelligence has been found to influence the leadership trait of individualized consideration (Barling *et al.*, 2000; Gardner and Stough, 2002; Leban and Zulauf, 2004; Mandell and Pherwani, 2003; Palmer *et al.*, 2001) which is the leader's ability to meet the follower's need for empowerment through achievement, growth and development (Parolini, 2005). Spreitzer (1995) argued that empowerment leads to a proactive orientation toward jobs, management and organizations in which teams seek continuous improvement, revise work processes and seek innovative solutions to work problems (Power and Waddell, 2004). Therefore, it is expected that emotional intelligence would moderate the relationship between team empowerment and proactivity:

- H2.* Emotional intelligence moderates the positive relationship between team empowerment and team proactivity in such a way that the relationship is stronger when emotional intelligence level of a team leader is high than when it is low.

Moderating role of team composition: proactive personality mean

As Morgeson and Hofmann (1999, p. 258) stated that "the composition of a collective entity can have a pronounced influence on collective behavior and systems of interaction, thereby influencing the phenomena that ultimately emerge". A meta-analysis by Bell (2007) concluded that mean levels of conscientiousness, openness to experience, and collectiveness (referred to as deep-level composition variables) were strong predictors of team performance. About predicting team proactivity, whilst other personality factors might be important such as self-efficacy or locus of control, team members' proactive personality was focused in this study. Proactive people identify opportunities and act on them, show initiative, take action, and persevere until meaningful change occurs. In contrast, people who are not proactive exhibit the opposite patterns: they fail to identify, let alone seize, opportunities to change things. Less proactive individuals are passive and reactive, preferring to adapt to circumstances rather than change them (Crant, 2000).

At the individual level, proactive personality has been found to predict proactive problem solving (Parker *et al.*, 2006), individual innovation (Seibert *et al.*, 2001), career success (Seibert *et al.*, 1999), entrepreneurial behavior (Becherer and Maurer, 1999), as well as proactive work behavior (Parker and Collins, 2010). Investigating whether the effect of proactive personality extends to the team level is an important first step in understanding how team composition relates to team proactive performance (Williams *et al.*, 2010).

Team members with a proactive personality are inclined to propose ideas and make suggestions as to how to improve the way work is done, as well as to identify potential problems and think of ways to get around them. Thus, the greater the number of team members with proactive personalities the more suggestions and ideas the team will consider. Moreover, interaction amongst team members with proactive personalities is likely to stimulate team discussions resulting in the team anticipating problems and/or generating collective ideas about improving things and solving problems.

Consequently, it can be proposed that the mean level of proactive personality in the team will be positively related to team proactive behavior:

- H3. Proactive personality moderates the positive relationship between team empowerment and team proactivity in such a way that the relationship is stronger when a team member's proactive personality level is high than when it is low.

Methodology

Sample

This study was conducted in the university hospitals that had formally implemented work teams. The sample was drawn from 12 university hospitals located in all seven geographical regions of Turkey. These were randomly selected from the list of 61 university hospitals in the country (Akpınar and Karcaaltınçaba, 2010). Eight of them were state university hospitals and four were private university hospitals.

The sample in this study consisted of 910 certified nurses in 82 teams from 12 university hospitals in Turkey. The selection criteria of teams that participated in this study is a minimum team life span of six months, a clear team identity (team has names and clear boundaries need to exist between the teams) and physical separation of team members. A total of 82 teams met the criteria for participation.

Members of the research team visited the selected hospitals on three occasions (for each of the three shifts). Certified nurses were gathered during work time in one room where a four-page questionnaire was administered. They completed the questionnaires in different periods to prevent biases.

Participants were told that the study was designed to collect information on the team empowerment and the team proactivity levels in the healthcare workforce. They were given confidentially assurances and told that participation was voluntary. The questionnaires were collected immediately. A total of 1,082 nurses participated in this study. Incomplete questionnaires reduced the sample size to 910 subjects resulting in a response rate was 84 percent.

Participants comprising the final sample worked in one of the following four departments: cardiology (48 percent), neurology (20 percent), accident and emergency (12 percent) and radiotherapy (20 percent). The average number of nurses per work team was 14 persons. Moreover, the average age of nurses was 28.2 years and the average organizational tenure was 4.42 years. Lastly, among the 910 nurses, 80.6 percent were female; 88 percent held bachelor's degrees and the remaining had graduate degrees.

Measures

Team empowerment. Potency was assessed with Guzzo *et al.*'s (1993) eight-item team-level measure ($\alpha = 0.88$). The items assessed the extent to which team members agreed or disagreed that their team had confidence in itself, believed it could be extremely good at producing high-quality work, expected to be known as a high-performing team, felt it could solve any problem, believed it could be very productive, could get a lot done when it worked hard, believed that no job was too tough and expected to have influence. Team meaningfulness, team autonomy and team impact were measured by using Thomas and Tymon's (1993) 18-item individual-level measure adapted for the team level. The team meaningfulness ($\alpha = 0.96$) items

assessed the extent to which team members agreed or disagreed that their team cared about what it did, believed that its work was valuable and that purpose was important, found that what it was trying to do was meaningful and felt that its group tasks were worthwhile. The team autonomy items ($\alpha = 0.87$) assessed the extent to which team members agreed or disagreed that their team could select different ways to do its work, determined how things were done, felt a sense of freedom in what it did, determined as a team what things were done, made its own choices without being told by management and had a lot of choice in what it did. Finally, the team impact items ($\alpha = 0.92$) assessed the extent to which team members agreed or disagreed that their team made progress on its projects, had a positive impact on other hospital employees, had a positive impact on hospital patients, accomplished its objectives, performed tasks that mattered to its hospital and made a difference in the organization.

Emotional intelligence. It was measured by using Bar-On's (1997) emotional quotient index (EQI) ($\alpha = 0.88$). The EQI contains 133 items, which produce an overall EQI score, 5-scales and 15-subcales. The five scales are "intrapersonal," "interpersonal," "adaptability," "stress management," and "general mood." High scores on the Intrapersonal scale indicate an individual who is in touch with his/her feelings and has positive feelings about him/herself and his/her life (Bar-On, 1997). High scores on the interpersonal scale indicate good interpersonal skills (Bar-On, 1997). High scores on the adaptability scale indicate an ability to cope with environmental demands and pressures (Bar-On, 1997). High scores on stress management indicate an ability to handle stress and high scores on General mood scale indicate the ability to enjoy life (Bar-On, 1997). The EQI has been extensively examined and shown to have reasonable levels of reliability, validity and psychometric independence (Bar-On, 1997; Dawda and Hart, 2000).

Proactive personality. Individual-level proactive personality ($\alpha = 0.85$) was assessed using four of the highest loading items from Bateman and Crant's (1993) proactive personality scale. This measure has proven reliability and validity (e.g. Bateman and Crant, 1993) and the same abbreviated scale has been used elsewhere (e.g. Parker and Sprigg, 1999). Example items include: "If I believe in an idea, no obstacle will prevent me from making it happen" and "I am excellent at identifying opportunities". Responses ranged from 1 (not true at all) to 5 (very true). The mean level of proactive personality was the individual proactive personality measure aggregated to the team level.

Team-level proactivity. It was assessed with a seven-item adaptation of Bateman and Crant's (1993) measure of individual proactivity administered to team leaders ($\alpha = 0.88$). Examples include the extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that their team could fix things it did not like and are always looking for better ways to do something.

Control variables. The demographic variables of gender, age and job tenure, which have been related to proactive behaviors in past research, were controlled. Gender is an important control variable in light of the evidence that team leaders may expect men and women to engage in different types of proactive behaviors and make different attributions accordingly (Kidder and Parks, 2001). Age and job tenure are important control variables given that older, more experienced employees may possess more knowledge and skill for engaging in proactive behaviors effectively (Grant and

Ashford, 2008). Another measure of control variables included team size, which was obtained from hospital records (Langfred, 2000; Liden *et al.*, 1997).

Results

Table I shows the means, standard deviations and correlations for the study variables. *H1* was tested with hierarchical regression analysis (Table II). In step 1, the control variables were entered and in step 2, team empowerment. As can be seen in the section of the table showing the values yielded by step 2, team empowerment was significantly, positively related to proactive behavior ($\beta = 0.42$, $p = 0.01$), a finding that supports *H1*.

The *H2* and *H3* in the study were tested by using moderated hierarchical regression, according to the procedure delineated in Cohen and Cohen (1983). The significance of interaction effects was assessed after controlling for all main effects. In the models, gender, age, job tenure and team size were entered first as control variables; potency, team meaningfulness, team autonomy and team impact, predictor variables, were entered in the second step; the moderator variables (i.e. emotional intelligence and proactive personality) were entered in the third step; and the interaction terms, in the fourth step. In order to avoid multicollinearity problems, the predictor and moderator variables were centered and the standardized scores were used in the regression analysis (Aiken and West, 1991).

As can be seen in the step 4 results from Table III, the interaction effect for team empowerment and emotional intelligence was significant for team proactivity, supporting *H2* ($\beta = -0.36$, $p < 0.001$).

H3, which states that proactive personality moderates the relationship between team empowerment and team proactivity, received strong support (see Table IV). The interaction effect for team empowerment and proactive personality was significant for proactivity ($\beta = 0.43$, $p < 0.001$).

Figures 1 and 2 graphically show the interactional team empowerment – team proactive behavior relationship as moderated by emotional intelligence and proactive personality, for which high and low levels are depicted as one standard deviation above and below the mean, respectively.

As predicted, when a team leader had high emotional intelligence, the relationship between team empowerment and team proactive behavior was stronger. Similarly, it was found that proactive personality strengthened the positive relationship between team empowerment and proactivity. As presented in Figure 2, the positive relationship between empowerment and proactivity was more pronounced when a team member's proactive personality was high.

Discussion

The present study was designed to determine the effect of team empowerment on proactivity and the moderating roles of team leader's emotional intelligence and team member's proactive personality in this relationship. The results of this study indicate that team empowerment was positively related to proactivity. The most interesting finding was that individual difference variables, emotional intelligence and proactive personality moderated the positive relationship between team empowerment and proactive behavior. The results reveal the importance of empowerment and individual difference variables to stimulate proactive behavior in an organization.

Table I.
Means, standard
deviations and
correlations among
variables

Variables	Mean	s.d.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Age	28.20	2.08										
Gender	0.82	0.22	0.10									
Job tenure	4.42	5.86	0.26*	0.02								
Team size	10.00	4.02	0.02	0.03	0.06							
Potency	5.16	1.36	0.12	0.06	0.12	0.14						
Team meaningfulness	4.18	1.58	0.20	0.09	0.10	0.09	0.52***					
Team autonomy	4.16	1.58	0.20	0.09	0.09	0.08	0.50***	0.38**				
Team impact	5.28	0.74	0.12	0.10	0.04	0.02	0.22***	0.43***	0.36***			
Team proactivity behavior	4.82	0.86	0.06	0.10	0.16	0.18	0.22*	0.30**	0.48***	0.36***		
Emotional intelligence	5.22	1.28	0.22	0.16	0.18	0.10	0.28**	0.42**	0.40**	0.34**	0.36***	
Proactive personality	4.02	0.78	0.10	0.08	0.11	0.02	0.34**	0.46**	0.44**	0.43**	0.54***	0.32***

Notes: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

Steps and predictor variables	Models		The impact of team empowerment	
	1	2		
<i>Step 1</i>				
Age	0.12	0.08	569	
Gender	0.04	0.02		
Job tenure	0.12*	0.08		
Team size	0.08	0.06		
<i>Step 2</i>				
Potency		0.46**	Table II. Results of hierarchical regression analysis for team proactivity	
Team meaningfulness		0.36*		
Team autonomy		0.42***		
Team impact		0.26*		
Team empowerment		0.42**		
<i>F</i> (df)	0.78	3.18*		
<i>R</i> ²	0.04	0.22		
Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	0.02	0.18		
Notes: * <i>p</i> < 0.05; ** <i>p</i> < 0.01; *** <i>p</i> < 0.001				

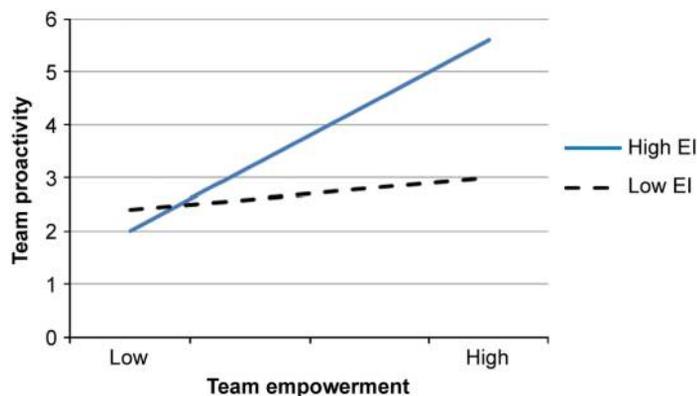
Steps and predictor variables	Models				The impact of team empowerment	
	1	2	3	4		
<i>Step 1</i>						
Age	0.15	0.10	0.09	0.08	Table III. Results of hierarchical moderated regression analysis for emotional intelligence on team proactivity	
Gender	0.08	0.03	0.03	0.01		
Job tenure	0.12	0.11	0.08	0.06		
Team size	0.08	0.05	0.03	0.03		
<i>Step 2</i>						
Potency		0.36**	0.28**	0.26**		
Team meaningfulness		0.41***	0.29**	0.24**		
Team autonomy		0.43***	0.35**	0.29**		
Team impact		0.28**	0.21**	0.20*		
Team empowerment		0.46***	0.39***	0.33***		
<i>Step 3</i>						
Emotional intelligence			0.30**	0.29**		
<i>Step 4</i>						
Potency × Emotional intelligence				0.29**		
Team meaningfulness × Emotional intelligence				0.35**		
Team autonomy × Emotional intelligence				0.32***		
Team impact × Emotional intelligence				0.26**		
Team empowerment × Emotional intelligence				0.36***		
<i>R</i> ²	0.28	0.36	0.42	0.44		
Change in <i>R</i> ²		0.08	0.06	0.02		
<i>F</i>		2.11*	2.29**	2.68**		
Notes: * <i>p</i> < 0.05; ** <i>p</i> < 0.01; *** <i>p</i> < 0.001						

Steps and predictor variables	Models			
	1	2	3	4
<i>Step 1</i>				
Age	0.15	0.10	0.06	0.04
Gender	0.08	0.03	0.01	0.01
Job tenure	0.12	0.11	0.04	0.02
Team size	0.08	0.05	0.01	0.01
<i>Step 2</i>				
Potency		0.36**	0.34**	0.33**
Team meaningfulness		0.41***	0.30**	0.28**
Team autonomy		0.43***	0.37**	0.33**
Team impact		0.28**	0.23**	0.20*
Team empowerment		0.46***	0.42***	0.39***
<i>Step 3</i>				
Proactive personality			0.47***	0.44***
<i>Step 4</i>				
Potency × Proactive personality				0.36**
Team meaningfulness × Proactive personality				0.39***
Team autonomy × Proactive personality				0.40***
Team impact × Proactive personality				0.29**
Team empowerment × Proactive personality				0.43***
R^2	0.28	0.36	0.47	0.50
Change in R^2		0.08	0.11	0.03
F		2.11*	2.74**	2.92**

Table IV.

Results of hierarchical moderated regression analysis for proactive personality on team proactivity

Notes: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

**Figure 1.**

Interactive effects of team empowerment and emotional intelligence on team proactivity

Consistent with previous research (Crant, 2000; Gore, 2006; Gibson and Vermeulen, 2003), team empowerment increased team proactivity in the study. In order to achieve team proactivity, team empowerment perception can be increased if teams set their own goals and rules, design their own work, devise and embrace rules for appropriate member behavior, are trained to communicate collaboratively and when decision making is typically democratic and leadership is participative.

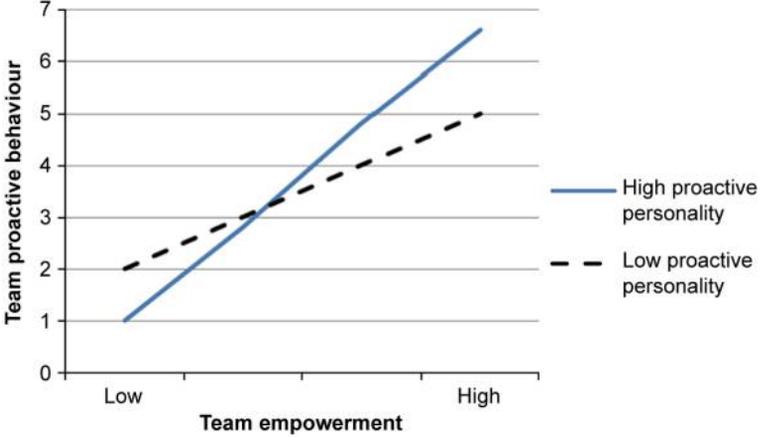


Figure 2.
Interactive effects of team
empowerment and
proactive personality on
team proactivity

Moreover, the findings of the current study are consistent with those of Rahim *et al.* (2006), Barling *et al.* (2000), Gardner and Stough (2002), Leban and Zulauf (2004), Mandell and Pherwani (2003), Palmer *et al.* (2001), Parker *et al.* (2006), Seibert *et al.* (2001), Parker and Collins (2010) and Williams *et al.* (2010) who found emotional intelligence and proactive personality have moderating effects on proactivity. The emotional intelligence of the team leader is important to the effective functioning of the team (Prati *et al.*, 2003). The leader serves as a motivator toward collective action and facilitates supportive relationships among team members. The emotionally intelligent team leader also provides a transformational influence over the team. Through adhering to team standards, empowering team members and encouraging team identity and pride, the leader is able to create an atmosphere of urgency to improve oneself and team processes for the collective good. Similarly, a team member with a proactive personality is more likely to identify and act on opportunities, show initiative, and perseverance (Seibert *et al.*, 1999). Rather than be hindered by situational constraints, a proactive team member is empowered to engage in behaviors that he or she believes will lead to desired outcomes (Cunningham and De La Rosa, 2008). Thus, proactive individuals feel the need to have a sense of control or have the ability to manipulate their environment (Bateman and Crant, 1993). In contrast, less proactive people tend to be passive and reactive, maintaining status quo rather than acting to change their environment.

The results in this study suggest that researchers should continue to investigate emotional intelligence, proactive personality and other personal/interpersonal factors such as a leader's personality (O'Reilly *et al.*, 1991) and a leader's power bases (Perry *et al.*, 1994; Dienesch and Liden, 1986), in explaining perceptions and behaviors. It is plausible that a leader's emotional intelligence and a team member's proactive personality were relevant personal variables in this setting because they were the main sources of macro variation across hospitals. In other words, the findings in this study may be sample-specific and in need of replication. In different settings, other personal factors, such as personality or social power bases, might become relevant. In developing theoretical explanations for the role of personal factors, researchers are

encouraged to consider aspects of the context that are most important to the population under investigation. Identifying personal factors, affecting the way employees view their relationships, seems to be a promising research area.

This research has implications for those organizations that wish to increase the level of personal initiative and team proactivity in the workplace. In encouraging team proactivity, leadership and team members' personal characteristics do matter. Specifically, the results suggest that leadership has the capacity to influence positively team empowerment, an element of importance in affecting proactive behavior. Team leaders who have high level of emotional intelligence can inspire and motivate teams to perform at their best (Shamir *et al.*, 1993). These leaders in particular set a clear direction and purpose for followers and work on establishing an environment of mutual trust and respect in which employees value their team membership (Paul *et al.*, 2001; Avolio and Bass, 2004). Most significantly, this type of leaders seem to raise the chances of facilitating cooperative team behaviors that promote team proactive behavior even during a very challenging period of major restructuring. Team leaders, therefore, need to be aware of the importance of effective group processes and need to be active in promoting effective communication and discussion. Leaders, having high emotional intelligence, seem to have more influence in determining that their team processes will be translated into more innovative outcomes. Moreover, proactive personality level of a team member is important to enhance team proactivity. Thus, a proactive disposition may be a useful tool for healthcare administrators seeking to enhance team proactivity levels by selecting people with proactive personalities to work in teams in a hospital.

Strengths and potential limitations

The main strength of the investigation in this study was its multilevel research design. Most research on team empowerment has been conducted within single organizations, precluding an assessment of the way in which personal/interpersonal variables influence team empowerment or team proactive behavior. The multilevel design was capable of capturing the complexity of individual behaviors by considering different contexts. A second strength was the use of an independent sample to measure team proactivity. Measuring team proactivity from a secondary source allowed us to minimize same-source bias or common method variance, which can cause systematic measurement errors that either inflate or deflate the observed relationships between constructs. The best way to avoid or minimize any potential same-source bias is to collect measures for different constructs from different sources (Chang *et al.*, 2010). Third, the use of a Turkish sample added to the growing literature examining team proactivity in non-western settings.

The study, however, has several limitations that could be overcome in future research topics. First, some characteristics of the hospitals may have affected the findings, such as their source of funding. Whether they were state or private university hospitals, funding may have affected their management styles, which, in turn, could have influenced their leadership styles and organizational cultures. Second, demographic factors might have affected the results. To illustrate, most of the participants were young with job tenure under five years. Moreover, most of the samples chosen came from females (gender wise), which would strongly open a debate of whether such results would be obtained if gender composition were different. As

previously mentioned, organizational characteristics and individual differences are important contextual and individual factors affecting team empowerment (Kirkman and Rosen, 1997, 1999) and team proactive behavior (Williams *et al.*, 2010).

Despite these potential limitations, this study contributes to the research on team empowerment and team proactivity by showing that a leader's emotional intelligence is a relevant personal variable in determining the importance of team proactivity to leader-subordinate relationships. The results in the study support the argument that team empowerment is socially constructed and therefore studies of team empowerment in relation to outcomes should recognize the personal/interpersonal variables. It is expected that the results of this study would encourage future related research to consider other variables in models of empowerment and team proactive behavior.

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