

PROACTIVITY AND ADAPTATION TO WORK: VALIDATION OF THE PROACTIVE WORK ADAPTATION QUESTIONNAIRE (PWAQ)

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Purpose: This study describes the preliminary validation of the Proactive Work Adaptation Questionnaire (PWAQ), which is a new method designed to assess an individual's proactive adaptation to work in practice. The PWAQ measures the tendency to self-start the action and change the environment to fulfill one's goals while adapting to work.

Design/methodology/approach: The study was conducted with a group of 220 employees to test the psychometric properties of the instrument, specifically its reliability and validity. The exploratory factor analysis showed a three-factor structure. The external relevance showed positive correlations between each factor and other individual difference factors, i.e., proactive personality and self-efficacy beliefs. As expected, proactive adaptation was related to motivation to work.

Practical implications: The validation results found the PWAQ a valid and reliable measure for evaluating proactivity in the work adaptation process.

Originality/value: PWAQ is a promising tool for analyzing the newcomers' ability to act proactively in new and challenging professional conditions, which might be useful during the onboarding process.

Keywords: work adaptation, proactive coping, proactive work adaptation, organizational newcomers, proactive adaptation scale.

Category of the paper: Research paper.

1. Introduction

Nowadays, employees change their place of employment at least once in 10 years. High occupational mobility occurs mainly among younger employees who enter a new organization, on average, every two years (European Foundation..., 2006). According to worldwide predictions (Bauer, Erdogan, 2011), individuals change their place of employment an average of ten times over 20 years. A strong intention to change work is found among newly

hired employees. Some new employees (4%) leave immediately after a bad first day at work, while 22% resign within the first 45 days. One of the reasons for employee turnover is poor adaptation to the new workplace, which results in a lack of commitment to the job or even a desire to change it. In accordance, increasing job mobility results in frequent entering a new organization, and thus, effective adaptation to a new workplace gains more and more importance.

Adaptation to the workplace is understood as the actions the employee takes to recognize their role in the organization, establish relationships within the team, acquire the skills necessary to perform job duties and build identification with the organization. Failure in adaptation might lead a person to face admonishment and even exclusion from the group (Schein, 2004). Therefore, effective adaptation to the new workplace is becoming a significant issue, and skillful management of introducing new employees to the organization seems to be the main task of human resource management. Employees' skills are improved and optimized through human resources development (HRD) procedures, which should be carried out for the organization's and individuals' benefits (Swanson, 2001; Greenan, 2023). Thus, HRD merges individual and group, as well as focuses on the integrity of work processes and the organization as a whole.

According to the former view on new employees, they were considered submissive individuals, passively adapting to the environment under the influence of organizational trends. However, according to a more contemporary concept of the protean career (Hall, 2004; Tamontseva, Akkermans, 2024), employees are characterized by increasing responsibility for their professional development. Currently, employees are perceived as active participants in their adaptation process (De Vos et al., 2009). Therefore, the importance of individual proactivity is higher (Griffin et al., 2007). The proactivity of individuals means that they show proactive behaviors such as direct inquiry, feedback seeking, networking, negotiating job tasks, etc. (Cooper-Thomas et al., 2014) that lead them to better adaptation outcomes. Based on the assumption that entering the new organization states a time of coping with both anticipated and occurring stressors, proactive coping should help in this process. This period has been considered crucial for the adjustment of newcomers (Saks et al., 2007), and proactive behavior is seen as one of the key techniques to enhance orientation at work. A range of research on proactivity suggests positive effects on a variety of adaptation outcomes (Greenglass, Fiksenbaum, 2009; Thomas et al., 2010), such as job performance and job satisfaction (Seibert et al., 2001; Wanberg, Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000). Drawing from the Human Resource Development approach (HRD; McLean, McLean, 2001; Swanson, 2001), research is needed to explore the role of organizational factors in shaping employees' abilities to engage in proactive coping behaviors. For example, organizational culture, leadership styles, and training opportunities may all play a role in facilitating or hindering employees' proactive coping efforts. In the following, we introduce the validation of the new scale PWAQ to measure proactive coping at work that is tailored to broad organizational requirements.

In this paper, we report the results of a validation of the new measure, i.e., the PWAQ. It was designed to assess an individual's proactive coping during adaptation to work. The instrument was developed to fill the gap between research and practice (Danquah et al., 2022), particularly to provide scholars and practitioners with a short and reliable tool to assess the proactive behaviors of new employees in the organizational setting. From a practical standpoint, addressing this research gap could have important implications for HRD professionals seeking to promote employees' well-being and resilience in the face of workplace stressors (Torraco, Lundgren, 2020) and to enhance their learning attitudes (Park et al., 2018). By better understanding how individuals develop and sustain proactive coping strategies, organizations can design more effective interventions and support systems to help employees thrive in their work environments.

2. Theoretical background

In this study, we emphasize the role of proactive behavior in work adaptation in a sample of newly employed workers. In relation to the HRD approach (McLean, McLean, 2001; Swanson, 2001), and proactive coping theory (Aspinwall, Taylor, 1997; Schwarzer, Taubert, 2002), we analyzed the method of assessing proactive behavior in the adaptation process to a new workplace. Studies on HRD (Greenan, 2023; Park et al., 2018; Torraco, Lundgren, 2020) consider HRD a development process involving proactive and systematic strategies undertaken to improve performance and to reach both individual and organizational long-term goals. Based on the above, we underline that recognizing the individual capability already at the organizational entrance phase will lead to better workplace adaptation, higher learning attitudes and, as a result, performance improvement in the long run.

In this paper, we discuss the theoretical background and the validation process of the PWAQ, a short scale to measure the components of proactive adaptation. Based on the assumption of the existence of potential stages of adaptation to work, such as role clarification, adaptation, and adjustment (Nicholson, 1984; Ślebarska, Flakus, 2021), as well as the concept of proactive coping, we specified three aspects of proactive adaptation to work (i.e., taking initiative, constructing opportunities and recognizing/gathering resources).

2.1. Newcomer adaptation to work

The dynamics of the labor market, increasing complexity, and often unclear tasks imposed on employees generate a demand for quickly "adaptable" workers (de Stobbeleir et al., 2010). Human adaptability is generally defined as the ability to change behavior, feelings, and thoughts to adapt to new circumstances (Fugate et al., 2004). Research on adaptability focuses on the stable personal resources that influence how employees adapt to changes in their work

environment (Fugate, Kinicki, 2008). In the past, the adaptation process was recognized as based on adaptive capacity described in terms of career opportunities in planning, exploration and decision-making (Savickas, 1997). Most recent research, however, emphasizes the role of personal initiative and proactivity in understanding employee behavior (Frese, 2008; Seibert et al., 2001). According to this concept, individuals who can adapt aim at preparing for specific or anticipated threats or changes in advance rather than waiting until a change or requirement becomes a fact (Aspinwall, Taylor, 1997). The above conceptualization of adaptive capacity is based on active adaptation and proactivity at work (Ashford, Black, 1996).

The task of a new employee is to learn and understand the vision, goals, and activities of the organization, as well as the generally accepted canon of behavior that includes the norms and customs of the workplace. Acquiring the information necessary to perform job duties efficiently is a part of successful adaptation to a new workplace. According to the adaptive performance model (Pulakos et al., 2000), there are eight dimensions of adaptive performance, including handling emergencies or crisis situations, handling work stress, solving problems creatively, dealing with uncertain or unpredictable work situations, learning new tasks, technologies and procedures, demonstrating interpersonal adaptability, demonstrating cultural adaptability and demonstrating physically oriented adaptability. On the one hand, such adaptive behaviors are a human disposition. On the other hand, they can be effectively shaped through training.

Existing research (Greenan, 2023; Danquah et al., 2022) emphasizes the importance of HRD in organizations by arguing that investing in employees' development is crucial for enhancing job performance and productivity, but also for fostering employee satisfaction and engagement. The need for organizations to align their HRD strategies with their overall business objectives to ensure that employees are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to contribute effectively to the organization's success has been highlighted (Greenan, 2023; Hirudayaraj, Matić, 2021). Hence, continuous learning and skill development in a permanently evolving work environment becomes crucial (Torraco, Lundgren, 2020).

2.2. Proactive adaptation

Current research emphasizes the importance of proactivity in understanding employee behavior (Seibert et al., 2001). According to this approach, adaptable individuals do not wait for a specific change or threat to occur, but they rather prepare for it in advance (Aspinwall, Taylor, 1997). Adaptation includes planning, setting long-term goals, dealing with potential stressors, expanding available resources, and self-development, which corresponds to the theory of proactive coping. In contrast to past research approaches, new employees are currently perceived as active individuals involved in an individual adaptation process based on proactive patterns (De Vos et al., 2009).

Proactive adaptation is defined as the activity of newly hired workers, such as taking initiative in learning. Proactivity is treated as an element even more important than the support received by those employed to work in a new organization, such as feedback or advice given by superiors (Savickas, 1997). Proactive coping is understood as a person's ability to analyze a situation to recognize possible difficulties and see them as an opportunity/challenge. A proactively coping individual can recognize their own and environmental resources and skillfully use them in overcoming challenges. Thus, proactive coping should play an important role in the adaptation process, leading to positive results by reducing the negative aspects of the transition from outside the organization to a given workplace. Continuous development and a strong focus on refreshing employee skills give rise to the need for a proactive employee who is characterized by motivation for change, tolerance of uncertainty, ability to anticipate future tasks and creation of their future (Frese, 2008; Ślebarska et al., 2019). For new employees, adaptive activities and proactivity become particularly important. Adaptable individuals do not wait for a particular change or threat to occur, but they prepare for it adequately in advance. The importance of personal initiative and proactive action is visible at this point (Ślebarska et al., 2019).

Proactive behavior is related to solving a problem in advance, i.e., before it occurs (Grant, Ashford, 2008). A proactive individual takes control of a situation rather than waiting passively for it to develop. The individual treats difficulties as a challenge and tries to change them instead of adjusting to the patterns. The actions taken by a proactive worker involve positive assessment of events, identification, and gathering of one's resources, establishing short- and long-term goals, developing an action plan, and creating a plan to deal with possible obstacles (Schwarzer, Taubert, 2002). Increasing the number of proactive coping activities makes new employees feel comfortable in the new organization. Their satisfaction increases, which can favor a better understanding of their job responsibilities or the hierarchy and mission of a particular organization.

3. Methodology

Based on the theoretical framework outlined above and a literature review on work adaptation, we developed PWAQ, a short-scale diagnosing proactive adaptation to work. Below, we present the construction and validation process of the PWAQ.

3.1. Preliminary scale development

Based on psychometric standards (Hornowska, 2007), a procedure for constructing the measurement tool with further steps was proposed. First, the aim of the measurement was defined, namely the identification of the strengths and weaknesses of proactive coping in the

employee's adaptation to work. Next, the measured trait was explained in direct relation to the concept of proactive coping proposed by Aspinwall and Taylor (1997). Deriving from the theory of proactive coping, an initial set of the items was prepared with the determination of their format (number of items, response scale, form of statements and responses). Drawing on the extensive literature on indicators of proactive coping (Aspinwall, Taylor, 1997; Ślebarska et al., 2019), a pool of test items included 38% more items than the final version of the tool. All the items were checked for linguistic correctness (grammatical and stylistic correctness), as well as comprehensibility for the potential audience. The content relevance analysis of the items was conducted to evaluate the relevance of specific statements with the measured competence in relation to the adopted concept of proactive coping. In the final stage, a key was developed to assess the responses. For this purpose, a pilot study was conducted on a group of 86 employees. The level of attractiveness of the initial version of the tool for the study participants was checked on a group of 14 working psychology students.

To ensure the content validity of the PWAQ, three different groups of Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) reviewed the items. The items were evaluated by competent judges (work and organizational psychologists, fourth-year psychology students, and practicing psychologists). The judges were provided with the definitions of the dimensions, according to which they evaluated each item assigned to each dimension, as instructed ("Determine the level to which each statement reflects proactive coping in adapting to work"). The assessment was performed by indicating the value on a five-point scale (1 - the minimum value; the statement completely fails to address the assumed dimension; 5 - the maximum value - the statement fully addresses the assumed dimension). The opinions of the competent judges resulted in preparing a set of 24 questionnaire items.

The following instruction was developed for the questionnaire: "Listed below are a number of behaviors that people undertake when starting new tasks at work. Using the scale, determine how often you undertake such behaviors"). The respondents were asked to answer according to the adopted five-point scale (1 - very rarely, 2 - rarely, 3 - sometimes, 4 - often, 5 - very often), which made it possible to determine the severity of the measured feature. The response scale allowed the determination of the obtained results on the continuum of the trait, thus making it possible to notice the change in the level of proactive coping in the process of adaptation to work.

3.2. Sample and procedure

The tool was used in a study that was conducted on a group of 220 individuals aged 22-70 years ($M = 30.39$, $SD = 10.08$) who were differentiated in terms of education and occupation. Individuals with higher education (46.36) and secondary education (35.9%) were predominant. The category of job declared by the respondents included professional/technical (29.5%), managerial (13.64%), sales (24.09%), Office/Clerical (25%), Craft/Operatives (1.36%),

Laborers (0.91%) and Service Workers (5.45%). Overall, 70.9% of the sample were women. The participants were asked about their form of work (68.18% - face-to-face work in their workplace; 10.45% - remote work, 21.36% - hybrid work, which is a blend of in-office and remote work).

The study was conducted online using the Microsoft Forms platform. The online survey was aimed at employed adults. The study included 220 respondents who answered all the questions included in the survey. The individuals were informed of the voluntary nature of participation in the study and anonymity of data collection, i.e., collective data analysis without any possibility of recognizing the individual participant. They were informed that there were no wrong answers and that all their opinions were important. The respondents were also informed about the aim of the study, i.e., investigating the strategies of work adaptation. No written informed consent was obtained because all the participants were volunteers. Before participation, they provided oral consent to participate in the study and were informed about the possibility of withdrawing from the study at any time. The study received approval from the Research Ethics Committee (decision no. KEUS.58/10.2020).

4. Results

4.1. Factor analysis

Factor analysis using the principal component method with Oblimin rotation was used to select the dimensions of the questionnaire. The obtained Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value (0.853) and Bartlett's sphericity test result ($p = 0.001$) were satisfactory. The analysis of the shape of the scree plot (Figure 1) showed three factors that had an eigenvalue greater than 1. The theoretical assumption of the three dimensions (taking initiative, constructing opportunities and recognizing/gathering resources) was confirmed. The three-factor structure explained 54.9% of the variance. The final version of the questionnaire included items with factor loadings greater than 0.40 and with the predominant saturation of one factor (Table 1).

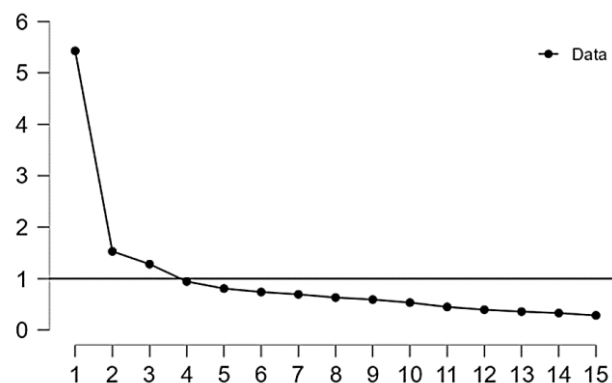


Figure 1. Scree plot for the factor analysis of the preliminary version of the questionnaire.

Table 1.
The content of the selected factors

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
1. I am aware of my competencies and their limitations when determining my future tasks with my superior.	0.490		0.264
2. I take the initiative in defining my role in the workplace.	0.518	0.489	-0.241
3. When taking on team tasks, I am aware of my strengths and weaknesses.	0.679		
4. I can identify which of my colleagues has the right competencies to help me in the case of difficulties.	0.733		
5. I take the initiative in making contacts at work.	0.733	0.137	-0.359
6. When I need support, I ask for it.	0.764	-0.151	
7. I know which of my colleagues can be recommended for cooperation to increase the chances in the face of the need to complete a task urgently.	0.436		0.334
8. I determine where I can get adequate support at work and ask for it in the case of difficulties.	0.533		0.286
9. I actively co-create my professional goals in the organization so as to realize my potential.	0.171	0.641	
10. I search for the ways to improve my work on my own.		0.744	
11. Even in challenging work situations, I recognize potential opportunities.	-0.132	0.801	0.160
12. In each task, I look for the ways to develop my skills.		0.781	
13. Before taking on a task, I prepare to overcome potential difficulties.			0.832
14. When starting a new task, I find out where I can get support if I have some doubts.	0.452	-0.112	0.518
15. I prepare in advance to overcome potential difficulties.	-0.128	0.285	0.724

Note. Factor loadings for a given dimension are in bold.

Factor 1 – Initiative (8 items; $\alpha = 0.81$): a high score on this dimension indicated a higher tendency to take the initiative when adapting to work, while a low score indicated low self-initiative in taking steps to adapt to work.

Factor 2 – Constructing opportunities (4 items; $\alpha = 0.78$): a high score indicated a greater ability to analyze the situation to recognize possible difficulties and view them in terms of an opportunity/challenge, while a low score on this dimension meant less ability to treat tasks in terms of an opportunity/challenge and more ability to see them in terms of harm/loss.

Factor 3 – Recognizing/gathering resources (3 items; $\alpha = 0.69$): a high score on this dimension indicated a greater ability to recognize one's resources and those of the environment and to skillfully use them in overcoming difficulties, while a low score indicated a lower ability to recognize and accumulate internal as well as external resources.

Descriptive statistics for all items in the questionnaire are given in Table 2. As the results show, all items in the questionnaire were characterized by a left-skewed distribution, with the skewness coefficient for most items (13 out of 15) not exceeding the absolute value of 1. Based on the results, it was assumed that the distribution was not shifted from the classical normal distribution. The statistics for kurtosis showed the predominance of values below 3, which indicated a platykurtic distribution of the results.

Table 2.
Descriptive statistics for the PWAQ items

Item content	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Skewness SD = 0.164	Kurtosis SD = 0.327
I am aware of my competencies and their limitations when determining my future tasks with my superior.	1	5	3.741	0.902	-0.932	0.850
I take the initiative in defining my role in the workplace.	1	5	3.768	0.982	-0.273	-0.736
When taking on team tasks, I am aware of my strengths and weaknesses.	1	5	3.818	0.898	-0.650	0.737
I can identify which of my colleagues has the right competencies to help me in the case of difficulties.	1	5	4.114	0.897	-1.481	3.840
I take the initiative in making contacts at work.	1	5	3.673	0.980	-0.553	-0.373
When I need support, I ask for it.	1	5	3.741	0.902	-0.604	-0.055
I know which of my colleagues can be recommended for cooperation to increase the chances in the face of the need to complete a task urgently.	1	5	3.768	0.982	-0.941	0.782
I determine where I can get adequate support at work and ask for it in case of difficulties.	1	5	3.818	0.898	-0.875	1.528
I actively co-create my professional goals in the organization so as to realize my potential.	1	5	4.114	0.897	-0.402	-0.524
I search for the ways to improve my work on my own.	1	5	3.673	0.980	-0.990	1.380
Even in challenging work situations, I recognize potential opportunities.	1	5	3.741	0.902	-0.443	-0.158
In each task, I search for the ways to develop my skills.	1	5	3.768	0.982	-0.455	-0.398
Before taking on a task, I prepare to overcome potential difficulties.	1	5	3.818	0.898	-0.587	0.227
When starting a new task, I find out where I can get support if I have some doubts.	1	5	4.114	0.897	-1.069	0.972
I prepare in advance to overcome potential difficulties.	1	5	3.673	0.980	-0.302	-0.645

Next, the discriminatory power of the questionnaire items was checked to determine how the collected items affected the overall score of the trait measured by the tool (Mahmood, Miller, 2022). The correlation of the items assigned to a particular scale with the score on each scale was analyzed. Correlations of individual items with the score of the scale to which they were assigned showed statistical significance at $p < 0.01$. Correlation values ranged from $r = 0.62$ to $r = 0.82$. The analysis showed good discriminatory power. The intercorrelations between all three scales were $r = 0.544$ (scale 1 and scale 2), $r = 0.535$ (scale 1 and scale 3),

and $r = 0.480$ (scale 2 and scale 3). All scales were significantly correlated at $p < 0.01$ and the relationships were positive and moderate. On this basis, it seemed reasonable to adopt a summary approach to the results obtained in all scales (the total score of the questionnaire). Summing the results could provide a basis for estimating the overall generalized ability to proactively adapt to work.

In order to analyze the psychometric properties of the scale, the exploratory analysis was extended with the structural equation method using the AMOS 29.0 program. The analysis was performed on the raw data matrix using the generalized least squares estimates (GLSE). Assumptions for GLSE were checked by calculating the normality of the distribution of variables and multivariate normality. The calculated indices obtained the values that allowed us to assume that the distributions of the observational variables and their overall multivariate distribution did not deviate significantly from the normal distribution. Finally, a model assuming model fit with three latent variables was tested.

The identification of factors with the exploratory analysis is understood by the fact that a certain set of factors characterizing a non-measurable variable was previously assumed based on literature and research (Ślebarska et al., 2019). The aim of the exploratory analysis was to examine the accuracy of the scale model with the three latent variables and to estimate the factor loadings obtained in the main study for each scale item. To obtain psychometric characteristics of the PWAQ, the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) was used. When the RMSEA is calculated, there is no comparison between the estimated model and the baseline model. The lower the value of the RMSEA calculated from the model is, the better the model fit. It is assumed (Kline, 2005) that for a value of RMSEA less than 0.1, the model is fitted to the data. However, the cutoff is sometimes established at 0.05 (Konarski, 2009).

In the case of the exploratory analysis, the hypothesis was formulated that the model was a good fit and the discrepancies between the theoretical variance-covariance matrix from the model and the observed variance-covariance matrix were insignificant. We used the maximum likelihood method in modeling and the following parameters of the estimated model were obtained for the questionnaire. The estimated model of the PWAQ was compared with the values of the independence model and the saturated model.

Assessing the quality of the PWAQ model, it was found that the FMIN value was 1.09, which was closer to the value of the saturated model, while the CMIN value was 239.12, which with 87 degrees of freedom gave the significance level of 0.000. Hoelter's N for the confidence interval of 95% showed a value of 101 and the CMIN/DF value was 2.74 (not exceeding the critical value). It should be considered a better fit of the analyzed model to the saturated model compared to the independence model (Figure 2).

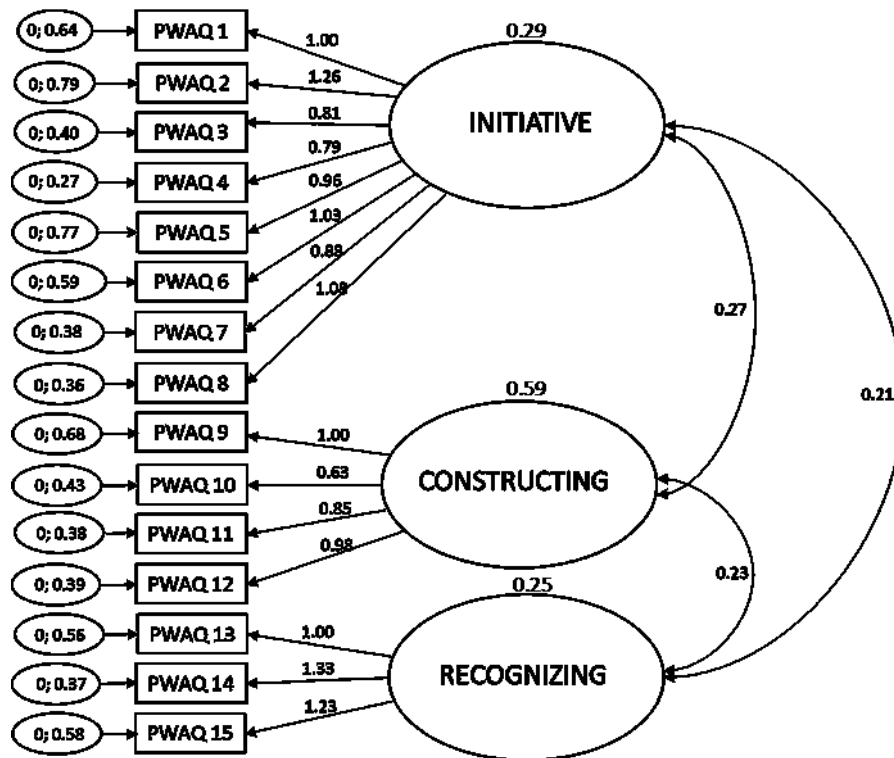


Figure 2. The path diagram of the PWAQ with three latent variables.

In the case of the PWAQ, the value of RMSEA showed the cutoff of model fit in relation to the population (0.08; Konarski, 2009). The PNFI and PCFI were 0.65 and 0.7, respectively. The values of the Akaike information criteria (AIC) showed fit to the saturated model. Additionally, the ECVI and MECVI criteria showed fit to the saturated model. The following parameters of selected quality measures were obtained in the analysis of the PWAQ scale: CMIN = 239.12; $p = 0.000$; DF = 87, and CMIN/DF = 2.74.

4.2. External validity test

Measuring the external validity of the PWAQ included three measures. The selected scales are conceptually related to proactive behavior, including at the time of adaptation to work.

Proactive Personality was assessed with the 6-item scale. This study was based on the shortened version of PPS (cf. PPS; Bateman, Crant, 1993; Parker, Sprigg, 1999; Polish version: Adamek, 2019). The scale was translated into Polish via the back-translation procedure. A sample question was “If I believe in an idea, no obstacle will prevent me from making it happen”. The response options for all items ranged from 1 (not at all true) to 4 (exactly true). Higher scores indicated higher levels of proactivity. Cronbach's alpha was $\alpha = 0.70$.

Self-efficacy was assessed using the 10-item Polish version of the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES; Schwarzer et al., 2008). A sample item was “I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.” The response options for all items ranged from 1 = (not at all true) to 4 (exactly true). Higher scores indicated higher levels of general self-efficacy. Cronbach's alpha was $\alpha = 0.89$.

Work Motivation was assessed using the 6-item Polish version of the Work Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation Scale (WEIMS-6; Tremblay et al., 2009; Polish version: Chrupała-Pniak, Grabowski, 2016). WEIMS-PL consists of the following six subscales: amotivation (AMO), external regulation (EXT), introjected regulation (INTRO), identified regulation (IDEN), integrated regulation (INTEG), and intrinsic motivation (IM). Each subscale comprises three items answered on a 7-point Likert scale.

Table 3.
Descriptive statistics of the selected variables

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
Initiative	31.60	4.68	220
Constructing opportunities	15.05	2.99	220
Recognizing and gathering resources	11.60	2.17	220
Result-Total	58.25	8.22	220
Proactive personality	22.22	3.27	220
Excessive expectations	2.56	1.64	220
Income	4.47	1.81	220
Willingness to be very good at work	5.05	1.59	220
Willingness to achieve professional goals	4.42	1.95	220
Identification with work	4.24	1.94	220
Satisfaction from the challenges	4.85	1.83	220
Self-efficacy	32.28	5.71	220

Table 4.
Relationships of proactive behaviors at work with proactive personality, intrinsic/extrinsic motivation indicators and self-efficacy

		Proactive personality	Excessive expectations	Income	Willingness to be very good at work	Willingness to achieve professional goals	Identification with work	Satisfaction from the challenges	Self-efficacy
Initiative	<i>r</i>	.323**	-.274**	.046	.204**	.139*	.147*	.231**	.380**
	<i>p</i>	.000	.000	.494	.002	.040	.029	.001	.000
Constructing Opportunities	<i>r</i>	.383**	-.218**	-.038	.435**	.381**	.450**	.530**	.525**
	<i>p</i>	.000	.001	.575	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
Recognizing and gathering resources	<i>r</i>	.230**	-.141*	-.011	.206**	.219**	.235**	.229**	.337**
	<i>p</i>	.001	.037	.866	.002	.001	.000	.001	.000
PWAQ – total	<i>r</i>	.384**	-.273**	.010	.329**	.276**	.310**	.385**	.497**
	<i>p</i>	.000	.000	.889	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

Table 3 and 4 shows significant correlations between the scales, the total score and other variables. All the dimensions of proactive actions during adaptation to work showed a positive correlation with proactive personality, self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation to work. As shown in Table 4, individuals with higher initiative, creating a favorable situation (constructing opportunities) and inclined to recognize and gather their own and environmental resources did not perceive work to be too demanding. Instead, they strove to achieve excellence (desire to be

good at work). Constructing opportunities and recognizing/gathering resources were additionally associated with a stronger desire to achieve occupational goals, identify with work, and were also related to satisfaction with challenges. None of the dimensions in the questionnaire was significantly associated with job-related income.

5. Discussion

The results of the structural research of the method for diagnosing proactive coping in the process of adaptation to work confirmed the theoretical assumptions based on the analysis of the literature (Frese et al., 2016; Ślebarska et al., 2019). Organizational newcomers are currently expected to perform proactive behaviors during their organizational socialization and work adaptation process (Gruman, Saks, 2011), e.g., information-seeking that leads to reducing uncertainty and creating a safer environment. Given the importance of proactive behavior at work, we emphasize the need to test proactive coping in the adaptation process to work, which is further linked to better performance, such as a lower tendency to leave (Ślebarska et al., 2019). Drawing from the stress-oriented perspective on organizational socialization (Ellis et al., 2015) and the need for self-initiated, proactive employees (Frese, 2008), we presented the tool to diagnose proactive coping during the work adaptation process. We introduced the new and short scale to build the bridge between both scientific measures and practice. This scale might be useful to assess the employee's skills and behaviors in the organizational setting, meeting the needs of practitioners, and parallel based on the strong and well-developed theoretical basis, i.e., proactive coping. According to the assumption, a three-dimensional structure of proactive action during adaptation was obtained. The common method variance (CMV) was used to test whether individual scales were adequately varied. Harman's single-factor test with an unrotated factor solution was used to manage the variance, which showed the explained variance of 31.72%, well below the suggested threshold of 50% (Podsakoff et al., 2003). On this basis, it seemed reasonable to maintain the three-factor design of the tool. The validity of differentiating the three factors in the questionnaire was affirmed by the exploratory factor analysis. Precisely, the 15-item scale contains three subscales that allow for the assessment of proactive adaptation to the workplace in general and in reference to distinguished dimensions, i.e., undertaking initiative, constructing opportunities, and recognizing/gathering resources. The analyzed structure adequately described proactive work behavior. Drawing from the proactive coping theory, this tool covers all the crucial aspects of proactive behavior and embeds them in the workplace environment. Thus, we perceive the possibility for broad usage of PWAQ, as an assessment of the baseline level of proactive coping at work, as well as further change in proactivity, particularly in the first phase of organizational entry.

The external validity of PWAQ was confirmed by the hypothesized relations of proactive work adaptation with proactive personality, self-efficacy, and motivation to work. Significant relationships between the selected dimensions and the dimensions of proactivity, work motivation, and self-efficacy confirmed the relevance of the proposed approach to proactive behavior in the new workplace. The results indicate an increased tendency to proactive behaviors on all dimensions accordingly to a higher score of proactive personality, or self-efficacy. The obtained results confirmed the main assumptions in the approach to proactive coping in a challenging situation.

5.1. Limitations

Several potential limitations of the present study should be kept in mind. First, our sample is not representative, which is related to one-country aspects. However, available evidence pointed out that Poland reflects the processes of Central and Eastern Europe and might be considered a representative country (Sanocka, Kurpisz, 2003). More precisely, similarities in economic development are common for all countries of the region. However, further exploration of the scale in more countries might provide valuable input into its properties. Nevertheless, our sample was large ($N = 220$) and comprised no college students, but was strongly associated with the organizational setting, which makes the results more reliable. Moreover, the sample provided sufficient statistical power to test the hypothesized model. Second, since the participation was voluntary and data were collected online, a self-selection bias may have occurred, with more proactive individuals being more likely to participate. Nevertheless, the diversity of the sample in terms of occupational sectors and demographic characteristics helps mitigate this limitation. In addition, the factor structure and reliability indices were consistent with theoretical expectations, supporting the robustness of the PWAQ despite potential sampling bias. Future research, however, should aim to include a more diverse and randomly selected sample, possibly through cooperation with different organizations and recruitment channels. Next, we used self-report measures, which are often the only possible way to examine psychological constructs, such as self-efficacy in a specific context (Lucas, 2018). Finally, we examined the perceived effectiveness but not the likelihood of undertaking certain actions. It should be considered in future studies since it refers more directly to a behavioral intention. Despite that, all measures used for assessing the external relevance of the PWAQ had well-assessed psychometric properties (reliability and validity) and were used in other research settings. The use of self-report data was reasonable since we were primarily interested in the perceptions of employees and subjective evaluations of their employment situation. Nonetheless, longitudinal studies should be conducted to assess behavioral indicators. However, the above-mentioned cases are rarely a serious problem in most research settings (Paulhus, Vazire, 2009), which may be solved by the verification of the psychometric properties of the instruments (Lucas, 2018).

5.2. Implications for research

The current study contributed in several ways to our understanding of the importance of proactive coping in the context of adaptation to a new workplace, referring to HRD. The perspective of combining both concepts, i.e., HRD (McLean, McLean, 2001; Swanson, 2001) and proactive coping (Aspinwall, Taylor, 1997; Schwarzer, Taubert, 2002), can lead in practice to a higher level of engagement and motivation among employees. Proactive employees are more likely to actively seek opportunities for development and growth, while organizations prioritizing human resource development aim to support their workers and encourage them to take on new challenges. Accordingly, organizations that foster a culture of proactivity provide individuals with opportunities for training, development, and career advancement. Particularly, offering the proper assistance during the adaptation phase to a new workplace, such as an onboarding program based on proactive theory, would improve their adaptation outcomes. The PWAQ might be useful in assessing proactivity among organizational newcomers, as well as the employed facing the job transition or during the work form change, e.g., from stationary to remote. Although workplace changes may compel employees to learn, yet contextual factors in their immediate work environment can also encourage proactive attitudes toward learning. One of the factors that influence participation in the learning process is the appropriate HR management since HR practitioners are responsible for introducing learning opportunities (Lundqvist et al., 2023; Purcell, Hutchinson, 2007). PWAQ, as a short-scale to assess the proactivity of the stakeholders, might be beneficial for recognizing and enhancing employees' learning attitudes and behavior (Park et al., 2018) and, in further perspective, transferring learning into performance (Blume et al., 2010). By investing in human resource development that encourages proactive behaviors, organizations can create more self-initiated and resilient employees who are better equipped to undertake the challenges of modern business environments. This can further lead to increased productivity, innovation, and overall success for both, individuals and the organization.

A prior study (Ślebarska et al., 2019) showed that from the individuals' perspective, proactivity promotes ongoing career development, including the search for career opportunities also outside the current organization. Deriving from the personal resources development concept (Danquah et al., 2022; Swanson, 2001), the organization should ensure the means to increase organizational commitment to avoid employee fluctuation while fostering proactive coping. Thus, there is still a need to investigate the organizational benefits and costs of employees' proactive coping in more detail, as well as managers' perception of newcomers' proactive behaviors (Ellis et al., 2017).

5.3. Implications for practice

Referring to the above, the current evaluation study has several practical implications. In the near past, we could observe a massive transfer of job duties from in-person to remote working. This tendency, although in the smaller range, lasts up to nowadays. From a practical perspective, organizations are supposed to support the employee during the work change, including the change from on-site to remote work or vice versa. Proactive adaptation in accordance with a new work environment, particularly remote working, refers to regular employees, team leaders, and managers as well. A prior study (Kowalski, Ślebarska, 2022) showed the importance of activating the available strengths of remote work to empower organizational resources and work effectiveness. Thus, pointed out the role of proactivity at work. The PWAQ might provide useful information on how employees adapt to new work circumstances, assessing their proactive coping that leads to further suggestions for organizational assistance. Moreover, the current processes of transformation in the energy sector as a part of sustainable development comprise a perspective of workforce relocation. That means constant movement in the labor market, such as the influx of new employees or workplace changers within the same organization, resulting in the need for proactive adaptation measurement. Another possibility to apply the theory-based and evidence-based PWAQ is the onboarding programs for organizational newcomers, as well as employees returning to work after longer breaks (i.e., parental leave) to monitor their coping abilities during the adaptation process.

In the current study, we draw the focus on organizational socialization from the newcomers' perspective and thus follow the previous suggestion (Ellis et al., 2015) that resources can contribute to the socialization process. Drawing from the human resources development theory (McLean, McLean, 2001) and proactive coping approach (Aspinwall, Taylor, 1997; Schwarzer, Taubert, 2002), encouraging employees to engage in continuous learning and coping skill development will enhance their coping abilities and resilience in the face of difficulties. The above aim might be reached by providing tailored training programs focused on proactive coping strategies, referring to strategic planning, resource accumulation, and stress management. Focusing on individual resources, i.e., proactive coping skills, might exert its influence on adaptation outcomes such as work-life balance, mental health, and well-being. Encouraging employees to take responsibility and initiative in their personal development and well-being by setting goals, searching for feedback, and actively seeking opportunities for growth and improvement would enhance their coping competencies and adaptation outcomes.

Summing up, by using the PWAQ in HRD practice, organizations can assess employees' proactive coping skills and develop interventions to enhance them. This can lead to higher levels of employee resilience, productivity, and overall well-being. Furthermore, using a theory-based questionnaire like the PWAQ allows organizations to have a standardized and structured approach to assessing proactive coping skills, ensuring that results are reliable and

valid, independently of the cultural or organizational context. This can help organizations make informed decisions about employee training and development initiatives.

It should be taken into account, however, that the PWAQ dimensions may vary depending on organizational context or work mode (on-site, hybrid, or remote). Considering these contextual factors would enhance the relevance of proactive coping assessment and allow for the development of more targeted organizational support strategies. From the organization's perspective, fostering proactive coping should be accompanied by measures aimed at increasing employees' organizational commitment.

6. Conclusions

The Proactive Work Adaptation Questionnaire (PWAQ) satisfies essential requirements for factor validity and reliability. This allows the tool to be considered useful in research studies that regulate one's influence and importance in the organization. The developed questionnaire to measure proactive coping during adaptation to work can become a useful tool when employees start a new job. It can be applied to analyze their ability to act proactively in new and challenging professional conditions, such as a new workplace or a new form of work. Overall, the PWAQ has the potential to be a valuable tool in the international arena of HRD practice, helping organizations to better understand and support their employees' proactive behaviors.

Acknowledgement

This work was supported by the National Center for Research and Development under Grant TANGO IV no. A/0052/2019; project titled *Developing the original program entitled ON-BOARDINGPro supporting employees' proactivity in the process of new workplace adaptation in the form of e-learning training.*

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