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## A Cross-Sectional Research on Proactive Safety Behavior of The Young Malaysian Workers

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### Abstract

Young workers, aged between 18 to 29 years old, make up over 18 percent of the Malaysian working-age population. Poor workplace safety is a major concern for these young Malaysian workers, with relatively high levels of workplace accidents and injuries being recorded. This study investigates young workers' proactive safety behavior practices, defined as anticipatory, change-oriented, and self-initiated behavior in sustaining workplace safety in situations where management safety controls are often neglected. The study was conducted with a cross-sectional design that had its focal point in identifying the predictors of proactive safety behavior in an individual's daily working experiences. 215 young workers aged between 18 to 28 years old participated in this research represented various industries. The Hierarchical Multiple Linear Regression indicated a significant relationship with this block of variables and proactive safety behavior at Time 1 [ $F(11,203) = 8.01, p < .01$ ]. Proactive motivation (Can do) is the strongest predictor of proactive safety behavior ( $\beta = .41$ ), followed by proactive motivation (Reason to) at  $\beta = .20$ .

**Keywords:** Proactive, Safety, Behavior, Young Malaysian, Workers

### Introduction

Safety at work is perceived as critical, both on the international and local levels. The recent report presented by the International Labour Organization (ILO) addressed the issue of safety at work, especially among the young employees as crucial and needed further examination and rapid improvement (ILO, 2014). Under the ILO, young employees are categorized into two distinct categories, (1) under the 18 years old (15-18 years old) of which are defined as 'children', but are legally allowed to do jobs and protected under a specific regulation and (2) those who are between 18-24 years old, considered as adults and covered under the labour acts (ILO, 2018). The common issues being discussed under the safety at work among the young employees are the rising number of occupational injuries resulted from occupational accidents and disease. The worldwide estimation of workplace accidents is reaching over 264 million with over 350,000 fatalities occur each year (Hamalainen et al., 2006; ILO, 2006), hence, there is a huge concern over the safety and health of the young workers. About 62.5 million young workers are engaged in hazardous work, compared to 51 million in 2004 (ILO,

2012). Based on the data provided, the number of workplace injuries is alarming and prevalent especially among the young workers from the developing countries, including Malaysia.

### **The Conceptualization of Proactive Safety Behaviour**

The concept of proactive safety behavior has emerged from the literature on safety participation, in particular, that dealing with safety citizenship behavior. Although some researchers have used the concepts of safety citizenship and proactive safety behavior interchangeably (Fugas et al., 2011), more recent research has begun to differentiate between aspects of safety citizenship behavior to identify those aspects that are more clearly future-focused and about the exercise of personal initiative, taking charge, and bringing about change, as opposed to those that are largely grounded in the present and concerned, for example with helping and supporting others (Curcuruto & Griffin, 2016; Curcuruto et al., 2019). Recall that proactive behavior was defined as anticipatory, self-initiated, future-focused and change-oriented behavior. Building on earlier work on safety citizenship behavior, several scholars have recently begun to explore the role of proactivity in a safety context (Fugas et al., 2011; Curcuruto & Griffin, 2016). Workplace safety is an area of increasing focus for most organizations, as they seek to reduce the risk of accidents and injury to their workers. In rapidly industrializing countries, the rising incidence of accidents and worker injury is of particular concern.

### **Methods and Procedure**

The participants selection is based on the inclusion criteria; age between 18-28 years old and currently employed. The survey was developed through UWA Qualtrics and then shared with the participants. For this study, we adopted a cross-sectional research design. The measures are Proactive ability. Four items from the Proactive Personality Scale by Bateman & Crant (1993) were used to measure proactive ability. The resultant reliability was acceptable, with Cronbach's  $\alpha=.83$ . For Proactive motivation (Can do) four items from the Role Breadth Self-Efficacy scale developed by Parker (1998) were used to measure proactive motivation (Can do). Cronbach's alpha for reliability was found to be acceptable ( $\alpha=.83$ ). For Proactive motivation (Reason to), four questions were extracted from the Situational Motivation Scale (SIMS) by Guay et al (2000) with the resultant Cronbach's  $\alpha=.87$ . Proactive motivation (Energized to) was measured using the Positive Affective and Negative Affective Scale (PANAS) (Thompson, 2007). Cronbach's alpha for this variable was verified at  $\alpha=.75$ . Three items were extracted from the 'Autonomy' sub-scale of *the* Job Demands-Resources questionnaire (Bakker et al., 2011) to assess Proactive Opportunity. Seven items were selected to measure this variable Proactive safety behavior were adapted from (Griffin et al., 2007b). The resultant measure's reliability was acceptable ( $\alpha=.94$ ).

**Analysis**

Table 1.0: Correlation Table

	Mean	S.D	T1 Age	T1 Gender	T1 Level of Education	T1 Job Tenure	T1 Safety Training	T1 Proactive Ability	T1 Proactive Motivation Can Do	T1 Proactive Motivation Reason To	T1 Proactive Motivation Energized To	T1 Proactive Opportunity	T1 Work Engagement	T1 Proactive Safety Behaviour
T1Age	24.78	2.26												
T1Gender	1.56	.50	-.17*											
T1LevelofEducation	3.50	.75	.46**	-.08										
T1Job Tenure	1.92	.67	.11	-.15*	-.24**									
T1Safety Training	2.04	.83	.02	-.10	.01	.11								
T1Proactive Ability	5.26	.91	.06	.02	.09	-.16*	.02							
T1Proactive Motivation Can Do	4.82	1.07	.13*	-.05	.12	.01	.12	.61**						
T1Proactive Motivation Reason To	5.05	1.08	.06	.05	.10	-.03	.07	.30*	.38					
T1Proactive Motivation Energized To	2.20	.71	-.02	-.04	.02	-.19**	.03	-.05	-.04	-.11				
T1Proactive Opportunity	3.35	.93	.09	.11	.11	-.01	-.02	.35**	.49**	.25**	-.19**			
T1Work Engagement	4.63	1.11	.08	.17*	.06	-.01	.09	.42**	.57**	.35**	-.24**	.51**		
T1Proactive Safety Behaviour	3.31	.94	.06	.06	.00	-.00	.22**	.32**	.51**	.24**	-.08	.43**	.45**	

**Hierarchical Multiple Linear Regression**

Table 1.1 presents the result of the hierarchical multiple regression analyses, comparing four models. Model 1 includes age, gender, level of education, and safety training (Time 1) as the control variables. Other than safety training, which was weakly related to proactive safety behavior at Time 1, none of the control variables were significantly related to proactive safety behavior, and collectively they accounted for only two percent of the overall variance in the dependent variable. In Model 2, I included the variables' proactive ability, proactive motivation, and proactive opportunity (Time 1). The findings indicate a significant relationship with this block of variables and proactive safety behavior at Time 1 [F (11,203) = 8.01, p<.01]. Proactive motivation (Can do) is the strongest predictor of proactive safety behavior ( $\beta=.41$ ), followed by proactive motivation (Reason to) at  $\beta=.20$ . Overall, the inclusion of the proactive ability, motivation, and opportunity variables in the model accounts for an additional 15% of the variance in Time 2 proactive safety behavior. In Model 3, I included Work Engagement at Time 1. The results indicate that including this variable makes no significant additional contribution towards the prediction of Time 1 proactive safety behavior. Finally, in Model 4, I included Time 1 proactive safety behavior. The ability, motivation, and opportunity variables remain as significant predictors of proactive safety behavior at Time 1, even when Time 1 proactive safety behavior is included.

Table 1.1

*Hierarchical Regression Analysis Summary*

Model	1	2	3	4
	$\beta$	$\beta$	$\beta$	$\beta$
T1 Age	.10	.06	.06	.05
T1 Gender	.02	.01	.00	-.01
T1 Level of Education	-.13	-.18*	-.18*	-.15*
T1 Job Tenure	-.01	-.04	-.04	-.03
T1 Safety Training	.17*	.12	.12	.07
T1 Proactive Ability		.17*	-.18*	-.17*
T1 Proactive Motivation Can Do		.41**	.40**	.31**
T1 Proactive Motivation Reason To		.20**	.20**	.19**
T1 Proactive Motivation Energized To		.01	.02	.02
T1 Proactive Opportunity		.07	.06	.00
T1 Work Engagement			.03	-.01
T1 Proactive Safety Behavior				.27**
<i>F</i>	1.88	8.01**	7.04**	8.49**
$\Delta F$	1.88	37.04**	1.16	15.25**
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.04	.19	.19	.25
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> (total adjusted)	.02	.16	.16	.22

T1=Time 1,  $\beta$  represents the standardized beta coefficient (the effect of an independent variable on the dependent variable)

N = 215; \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $P < .01$

### Discussion and Conclusion

As predicted, proactive motivation was a strong predictor of proactive safety behavior. However, the findings also indicated that only two aspects of proactive motivation (Can-do, Reason-to) were themselves significant predictors of this behavior. Proactive motivation (Can do) is associated with self-efficacy, a person's ability, and confidence to execute a task. It showed that the participants have the confidence to engage in proactive safety behavior. The finding supported previous research on the relationship between one's self-confidence with safety behavior (Belschak & Den Hartog, 2010; Grau, et al., 2002; Parker, 2000). The Proactive Motivation (Can Do) measure is adopted and adapted from the measure of Role-Breadth Self-Efficacy (RBSE) that emphasized how the current condition or the environment is affecting the young workers to motivate them to carry out a task beyond the job description in safety behavior engagement. Employees who are involved in RBSE are those who are attentive and confident to propose and execute actions for safety improvement (Parker, 2000; Schwaer, Biemann, & Voelpel, 2012). RBSE is influenced by Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) (Hwang et al., 2015) that acknowledged the Triadic Reciprocal Determinism of Environment-Person-Behavior (Zhang & Parker, 2018). Under this circumstance, the young Malaysian workers are aware of the volatile situation of workplace safety, hence took actions by recommending the extra initiative to the management.

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