Proactivity at work

av

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Akademisk avhandling

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Abstract


Proactive behaviour implies taking initiative and mastering unexpected situations, and hence, is desirable in different situations. The present thesis includes three empirical studies intended to understand the consequences of proactive behaviour, as well as the factors that contribute to proactive behaviour at work and when facing unemployment. More specifically, whether job design, as measured by objective work task analysis, provides conditions conducive to proactivity in the workplace and when facing unemployment. The results of proactive behaviour during unemployment were also of interest. Study I focused on the influence of job design on individuals’ personal initiative and confidence in their ability when facing unemployment. Participants were employees at a downsizing Swedish assembly plant. Confidence in one’s ability mediated the relationship between job design and personal initiative, and personal initiative affected job search behaviour when advised to be dismissed. Study II, a longitudinal exploration, focused on the predictors of re-employment in the same group as in Study I. Men were more than nine times as likely as women to obtain jobs within 15 months. Individuals without children were more than seven times as likely as those with children to find work within 15 months. The desire to change occupation and willingness to relocate also increased the probability of being re-employed, whereas anonymous-passive job-search behaviour and work-related self-efficacy actually decreased the probability of re-employment. The number of job applications did not impact later re-employment. Study III analysed job design as a predictor of group initiative and self-organisational activities in semiautonomous industrial work groups. An input-process-output model showed that group processes such as reflexivity mediated the impact of job design on proactivity in work groups. Taken together, these studies suggest that work task analysis a useful tool, since it provides access to information that cannot be obtained with self-report measures. Job design indirectly affected proactivity both in the face of unemployment, and in industrial work groups. Further, it is worthwhile to continue identifying the antecedents and consequences of proactivity, as this seems to be an important factor regarding work and unemployment.

Keywords: Job design, work task analysis, proactivity, unemployment, attitudes, personal initiative, job-search behaviour, group initiative, group processes

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