The Mediator Role of Proactive Personality in the Effect of Psychological Empowerment on Self-Leadership: A Study for the Aviation Industry

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Abstract

In recent years, psychological empowerment has been a tool to solve management problems arising from the need for creativity, innovation, and flexibility. In an environment where competition is intense, meeting the needs and expectations of conscious customers is only possible with a working style that can benefit from the initiative of the personnel. The concept of self-leadership consists of the theory of self-control and includes the concepts of self-influence and self-leadership. This study examines the mediating role of proactive personality in the effect of psychological empowerment on self-leadership. In this direction, a questionnaire was applied to 406 people in the province of Istanbul, including the cabin cockpit, ground services, operations, and general directorate in the civil aviation industry. The study used a structural equation model for the analysis. As a result, it concludes that personality has a partial mediating role in the effect of psychological empowerment on self-leadership. It suggests a need for personnel who can take the initiative, manage themselves, and adapt quickly to change, especially in the aviation sector, where safety and security are the most critical factors. Accordingly, there is a need for appropriate industry professionals in recruitment, selection and placement, training and development, and talent and career management. This need will continue to grow in the future.

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1. Introduction

Leadership has become an increasingly important driving force. Regardless of technological advancement and automated systems facilitating decision-making, leadership remains one of the basic units in the decision-making process, and it will remain an integral part now and then. Therefore, there have been several ongoing research studies on leadership despite many previous studies already conducted in the field. With the advent of globalization during the 1980s, leadership gained a different dimension. Globalization forced international companies to compete and survive in different regional markets. They needed to boost their production capacity, respond to modernization's emerging needs, and adapt to change. This emerging situation created a need for people with change management skills to interpret the signs of change in the markets. Nowadays, competition is even fiercer than ever, rapidly transforming the business environment. As the level of education rises, employees' expectations and requirements change. When it is impossible to respond correctly to the emerging conditions, the classical hierarchy based on command and control weakens. All combined create an organizational need to respond to their customers' demands faster. In order to meet these demands on-site and on time, companies resort to human resources empowerment practices.

Employee empowerment is a process in which employees feel motivated, trust their knowledge and abilities, take the initiative in relevant matters, believe they can control events, and do the jobs they see fit.

Psychological empowerment, a stimulating method of empowerment, depends on the individual's perception. It refers to the feeling of competency, the ability to act independently and effectively in the decision-making process. Leadership can help employees feel energetic and motivated when appropriately applied. It can facilitate the production of more talented staff when combined with empowerment since empowerment boosts organizational energy and motivation.

Today, the new management approach has been trending, and therefore, new management techniques emerged, giving more importance to the relationship between managers and employees. However, several personal and organizational factors have a direct or indirect impact on this relationship. Some include organizational commitment, performance, and organizational success. Besides, the employees' personality and characteristics are also important. Recent research on organizational behavior has been focusing on employees' personality traits. When the individual's personality aligns with his business life, organizational integration and employee attitude help regulate organizational commitment. The

individual will be able to make the best use of his mental and physical characteristics and thus work more efficiently and achieve business objectives.

Furthermore, establishing a link between an individual's social structure and personality will make him readily comply with the group's standards. Establishing a link between an individual's behavior and relationship with the group members will help the management process. Creating the desired link between individual expectations and corporate goals is critical to organizational sustainability. An employee's personality has a vital role in this process since it can influence one's perception and evaluation of his business and environment. Therefore, the civil aviation industry has been one of such sectors adapting to this rapid change and transformation. The civil aviation industry is one of the most significant industries globally and in Turkey. As an industry based on safety and security concepts, the 'human' factor is the most important in the civil aviation industry - similar to other industries. It is a prerequisite to offer the best service for an aviation company to distinguish itself from its competitors in this fierce market. This context predicts that the effect of psychological empowerment on self-leadership and proactive personality might play a mediating role. Hence, this study examines the moderation of proactive personality in psychological empowerment on self-leadership through a holistic model on demographic variables such as age, gender, department, sectoral experience, and working style of aviation employees in civil aviation enterprises in Istanbul.

2. Conceptual Framework
2.1. Psychological Empowerment

The study analyzes two types of empowerments for the concept within this scope. One represents the empowerment that makes it possible to distribute power within the scope of a hierarchical structure and imposes responsibility on the activities and actions of the employees; on the other hand, the other is the empowerment that concerns the psychological aspects of the employees (Tolay et al., 2012: 449). Structural enforcement refers to the input, whereas psychological enforcement refers to the output. They are both said to complement (Torun, 2016: 146). In addition, psychological empowerment provides employees with responsibility, authority, opportunity, and freedom to be involved in decisions. Psychological empowerment is the identification and elimination of obstacles and limitations making employees feel powerless, and the feeling of self-efficacy of employees by increasing their sense of self-efficacy (Erdem, Gökmen, & Türen, 2016: 163). Empowerment enables employees to make better decisions, seize opportunities, increase their motivation, and increase their authority.

Empowerment is effective in the process of implementing organizational opportunities. Employees should have a control center and be empowered. In this context, it is easier for employees to achieve success. Psychological empowerment enables employees to feel better psychologically with their responsibilities and achievements. A psychologically empowered person can take the initiative, see the risks ahead of time, create a policy against them, be innovative and lead to innovation for his teammates and employees. Psychological empowerment can lead to the emergence of desired behavioral changes in employees. Employees psychologically empowered see their activities as more valuable and meaningful. They see themselves as more talented and happier

and reflect their positive feelings to their colleagues. It is possible to list the outcomes of psychological empowerment as follows (Doğan and Demiral, 2009: 54; Ergeneli et al., 2007:42; Hill and Huq, 2004:1028; Akçakaya, 2010: 160; Chang and Liu, 2008:1444):

• In organizations adopting psychological empowerment, there are fewer interpersonal problems, and employees and managers are more willing to take steps towards company objectives.

• Psychological empowerment enables employees to trust their managers and organizations.

2.2. Self-leadership

Groups comprise those with different abilities, labor potential (professional competence, leadership, creative, communicative, moral, and motivational components), mental characteristics, motives, needs, expectations, and character. Groups made up of different people should be managed in such a way that the organization achieves its objectives (Polat and Arabacı, 2015: 208; Kırmaz, 2010: 213; Uzun, 2005: 4; Öztırak, 2017). The role of the leader or manager is thus significant in business enterprises. Leadership is a stage where the leader directs others towards either personal or organizational goals through influence (Ataman, 2009: 544). Self-leadership motivates individuals by using certain aspects of their understanding and behavior, controlling their behavior, and guiding and motivating them to achieve success (Manz, 1986: 589).

Self-leadership is an approach focusing on the "what," "how," and "why" of a task (Durnali, 2020: 129).

Self-leadership positively affects personal activities and consists of behavioral and cognitive strategies. Modern researchers think that there are three different strategies of self-leadership that will modify the attitude (Prussia et al., 1998: 105). Self-leading individuals tend to keep their motivations high in business life and thus increase their performance.

Self-leading individuals become more successful individuals in business and social life because they can provide their self-control without the need for warning and direction from others. Individuals working under the direction and control of a leader may be deficient in revealing their potential. At this point, self-leadership benefits individuals in terms of individual performance, motivation, and job satisfaction.

2.3. Proactive Personality

Personality refers to characteristic behaviors and cognitive and emotional patterns deriving from biological and environmental factors. Although there is no consensus on the definition of personality, most theories focus on motivation and psychological interactions with one's environment. Personality refers to the consistent features influencing human behaviors that make people unique (Sığrı and Gürbüz, 2011: 31; Deniz, 2011: 99). It is highly distinctive for each individual, including abilities, interests, communication styles, attitudes, external appearance, and environmental adaptation (Güney, 2006: 15). Proactive behavior involves acting in advance for a future situation rather than reacting (Adam, 2008: 34). It means taking control of a situation and making early changes rather than adapting to it. Proactive personality refers to an individual's ability to initiate the change he deems necessary without taking any orders (Bolino et al., 2010: 327). A proactive personality is a person who sees opportunities

before everyone else and refuses to remain patient and thus takes the initiative to improve the conditions while remaining patient until the formation of an ideal environment (Crant, 2000: 435-462). What proactive behaviors have in common is that they focus on taking control by looking forward and initiating change. This whole process is under the impact of disposition and situational forces.

In terms of individual importance, individual differences and contextual factors are accepted as precursors of proactive work behaviors, while researchers mainly highlight individual differences. For example, general self-efficacy and a sense of responsibility are associated with a desire for control and proactive personality proactive work behaviors (Crant, 2000: 452; Parker, Bindl and Strauss, 2010: 42; Parker and Collins, 2010: 67; Ashford and Black, 1996: 201; Morrison and Phelps, 1999: 419). Proactive personality varies from individual to individual.

2. Data Collection Tools and Analysis of Data
2.2. Data Collection Tools

Measurement tools used in the study were personal information forms and scales for psychological empowerment, self-leadership, and proactive personality. Personal information forms consist of a questionnaire on gender, age, marital status, education, position in the sector, and the employment period in the aviation industry.

The study used Spreitzer's "Perception of Psychological Empowerment" scale to measure psychological empowerment. The scale consists of 12 items gathered under four dimensions: meaning, adequacy, choice, and effect. Although the original scale consisted of a 7-point Likert scale, a 5-point Likert scale was used in the study, and the Cronbach alpha value was found to be 0.84 (1= strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree) (Üner & Turan, 2010: 10).

In the measurement of self-leadership, the Turkish version of Turkoz's 35-item revised self-leadership scale was used in addition to reliability and validity studies. A total of 29 items, obtained by subtracting six items, were used. It consists of eight dimensions: self-reward, clue reminder, self-punishment, self-observation, evaluation of thoughts and ideas, self-talk, imagining successful performance by setting one's own goals and focusing on thinking through natural rewards. In the study, the total reliability value of the scale was 0.88, consistent with the result. The study concludes that the scale could be a measurement tool for self-leadership (Türköz, 2010: 22).

Researchers prepared a scale to measure proactive working behavior, consisting of 9 questions used in the second part of the questionnaire by Şahbazoğlu (Şahbazoğlu, 2014: 16).

A 5-point Likert-type scale is used to evaluate the expressions in these three parts of the survey. The Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was .86. The test-retest reliability coefficient was .95, and the corrected item-total correlations were between .50 and .66. The participants answered questions in three sections on proactive personality, proactive work, and person-to-job fit. They were asked to mark one of the options: 1-Strongly Disagree, 2- Disagree, 3- Not Sure, 4- Agree, 5- Completely Agree (Akgündüz, Gök, & Alkan, 2017: 50-68).

2.3. Analysis of Data

A structural equation model measuring the participation of proactive personality as a mediator role of employees in the Effect of Psychological Empowerment on Self-Leadership was created. In so doing, the status of the relationship between them will be tested through a statistical program. Analyzes were performed using SPSS 21.0 and AMOS 21.0 and were studied with a 95% confidence level. The kurtosis and skewness values obtained from the scales included in the items are considered sufficient for the normal distribution (Groeneandld and Meeden, 1984: 27; Moors, 1986: 86; Hopkins and Weeks, 1990: 10; De Carlo, 1997: 30).

As a result, independent t-test, ANOVA, and Pearson correlation test groups, considered parametric, were used in the analyses. The difference between the scale scores according to the two-group variables was analyzed with the t-test. The difference between the variables with 3 or more groups was analyzed with the ANOVA test. Tukey's pairwise comparison test (ANOVA) was used for the difference. The relationship between scale scores was analyzed using the Pearson correlation test. Mediation was analyzed using the structural equation model.

3. Findings

This section includes the findings of the study. All tests performed are detailed in the tables.

Table 1. Conformity Index

Conformity Index
χ2/sd <5
GFI >0.90
AGFI >0.90
CFI >0.90
RMSEA <0.08
RMR <0.08

Conformity index of the study is shown in the table above.

Table 2. Validity Reliability Analysis

	Cronbach's Alfa
Proactive Personality	0.761
Self-Reward	0.867
Tips Reminder	0.855
Self-Punishment	0.798
Self-Observation	0.667
Evaluating Thoughts and Ideas	0.627
Self-Talk	0.815
Imagining Successful Performance by Setting a Goal for Oneself	0.799
Focus on Natural Rewards	0.305
Self-Leadership	0.894
Meaning	0.823
Competence	0.831
Autonomy	0.825
Effect	0.888
Psychological Empowerment	0.840

The general reliability value of the variables is well above 0.700, which is the threshold value of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. This value obtained from the research scale consisting of 59 questions, nine demographic questions, and 50 scale questions is more than sufficient for research in social sciences. In addition, all scale groups were analyzed separately, and the results were well above the threshold value of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. It can be stated that the scales are meaningful.

Since the skewness and kurtosis values obtained from the scale and sub-dimension scores of proactive Personality, self-leadership and psychological empowerment were between +3 and -3, normality was ensured and parametric test techniques were used in our analysis.

Table 3. Test of Normality

	n	Skewness	Kurtosis
Proactive Personality	406	-.518	.609
Self-Reward	406	-1.437	2.568
Tips Reminder	406	-1.107	.590
Self-Punishment	406	-.657	.030
Self-Observation	406	-.375	-.195
Behavior-Oriented Strategies	406	-.038	1.261
Evaluating Thoughts and Ideas	406	-.714	1.050
Self-Talk	406	-1.221	1.557
Imagining Successful Performance by Setting a Goal for Oneself	406	-.641	.818
Constructive Thinking Strategies	406	-.652	.681
Focus on Natural Rewards	406	-1.003	1.639
Self-Leadership	406	-.568	1.170
Meaning	406	-.669	.250
Competence	406	-.905	1.235
Autonomy	406	-.926	.882
Effect	406	-.836	.242
Psychological Empowerment	406	-.396	.102

Table 4. Information on Demographic Variables

		n	%
Gender	Male	194	47.8
	Woman	212	52.2
Educational Status High	High School	21	5.2
	associate degree	110	27.1
	License	182	44.8
	graduate	93	22.9
Age	less than 25 years old	123	30.3
	25-30	132	32.5
	31-35	55	13.5
	greater than 35	96	23.6
Marital Status	Married	89	21.9
	single	317	78.1
Your monthly income	2000 TL or less	53	13.1
	2001-3000 TL	58	14.3
	3001-4000 TL	47	11.6
	4001 TL and above	248	61.1
The Airline You Are Working With International or National	The Airline You Are Working With	187	46.1
	International	219	53.9
Your Department/Department	National	70	17.2
	Airport		
	Operation	40	9.9
	cabin/cockpit	208	51.2
	Headquarters	88	21.7
How Many Years Have You Worked/Worked in the Aviation Industry?	1-5 years	245	60.3
	6-10 years	51	12.6
	11-15 years	59	14.5
	15-20 years	20	4.9
	20 years and above	31	7.6
Your Position (Duty Level)	Officer	268	66.0
	Manager/Supervisor	114	28.1
	senior manager	24	5.9
Your Place of Duty, Your Working	Apron/Office/Head Office/Cargo/Technical (Shift)	114	28.1
	Cockpit/ Flight Staff	208	51.2
	Office / Education Department / Head Office / Cargo (working between 09:00-17:00)	84	20.7

The proportion of women was 52.2%. The rate of those with a bachelor's degree is 44.8%. The proportion of those aged 25-30 is 32.5%, and the rate of single participants is 78.1%. The rate of those with a monthly income of 4001 TL or more is 61.1%. 53.9% works in international airline companies. The ratio of employees in the cabin/cockpit department is 51.2%. 60.3% have worked in the aviation sector for 1-5 years. The

rate of civil servants is 66.0%. The ratio of employees in Cockpit / Flying Personnel is 51.2%.

Hypothesis

H1: Psychological empowerment affects self-leadership positively and significantly.

H2: Psychological empowerment affects proactive personality positively and significantly.

H3: Proactive personality has a mediating role in the effect of psychological empowerment on self-leadership.

Table 5. Examining the Effect of Psychological Empowerment on Self-Leadership

			Beta	S.E.	P
Self-leadership	<---	Psychological Empowerment	.514	.029	***

When the first hypothesis of the research is evaluated, it is seen that psychological empowerment directly affects self-leadership positively (β=0.514, p=0.000≤0.01). The more psychologically empowered employees are, the more their self-leadership increases. Therefore, the explanation of the relevant hypothesis is given below. The hypothesis "H1: Psychological empowerment has an effect on self-leadership" is accepted.
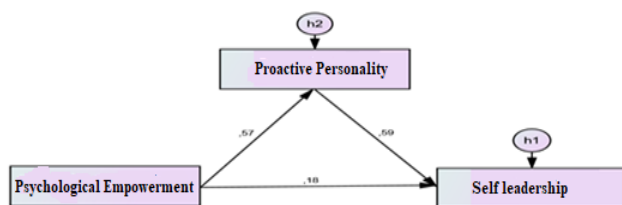

Figure 1. Examining the Mediating Role of Proactive Personality in the Effect of Psychological Empowerment on Self-Leadership

Regression coefficients were calculated, and all relationships are established in the structural equation model examining the mediating role of personality in the effect of psychological empowerment on self-leadership, which confirms the consistency of the model.

Table 6. Examination of the Mediating Role of Personality in the Effect of Psychological Empowerment on Self-Leadership

			Beta	S.E.	P
Proactive Personality	<---	Psychological Empowerment	.567	.033	***
Self-leadership	<---	Psychological Empowerment	.177	.029	***
Self-leadership	<---	Proactive Personality	.594	.036	***

An analysis of the second hypothesis reveals that psychological empowerment has a positive effect on proactive personality (β=0.567, p=0.033≤0.05), confirming the hypothesis of "H2: psychological empowerment affects proactive personality positively and significantly". Psychological empowerment has a positive effect on self-leadership (β=0.177, p=0.029≤0.05), and proactive personality has a positive effect on self-leadership (β=0.594, p=0.036≤0.05). An analysis of the effect of psychological empowerment on self-leadership puts forward that the effect is β=0.514 (Table 17), and the effect is β=0.177 with the inclusion of the proactive personality mediator variable in the model, confirming the significance of the effect and decrease in its level. Therefore, the third hypothesis is determined. The

hypothesis "H3: personality has a partial mediating role in the effect of psychological empowerment on self-leadership".

4. Conclusion

Below is a summary of the results of the relationship between the variables:

For proactive individuals, the significance and importance of work and work-related activities in the business environment, the level of competence and decision-making, and their impact on all kinds of changes and developments in business increase altogether.

We can say that aviation industry employees with a high level of self-reward have proactive personality traits. That is to say, employees with a high level of self-reward have more meaning and importance at work and in work-related activities. They have a higher level of competence, affecting their work-related decisions and overall psychological resilience.

The study concludes that those who use tips and reminders for work-related tasks have higher proactive personality traits. The findings determine that using reminders and tips for the tasks to be done and work-related activities increase occupational competency, boosts decision-making, and has a meaningful effect on work-related changes and developments.

Leaders who self-punish for work-related mistakes have more positive personality traits. They find their jobs more meaningful and vital. They have better decision-making skills on their own, and they have more influence on all kinds of changes and developments related to their jobs. In other words, leaders with self-punishment have more general psychological empowerment.

Leaders with self-observation features have more positive personality traits, give more meaning and importance to their work, have more competencies for their work, make more decisions about their work by themselves, and have more influence on all kinds of changes and developments related to their work. Their overall psychological empowerment levels are also high.

Leaders with better behavior-oriented strategies have positive personality traits, give more meaning and importance to their work, have more competence for their work, are more effective in all kinds of changes and developments related to their work, and have more general psychological empowerment features.

The leaders in aviation -with more advanced skills in evaluating the thoughts and ideas- have positive personality traits, they find their jobs more meaningful and essential, they are more competent in their profession, they can make their own decisions, and they have a more significant impact on the development and change of their jobs. The general psychological empowerment aspect of leaders who evaluate thoughts and ideas correctly is robust.

The personality traits of the leaders who talk to themselves while performing their work in the working environment are optimistic; they give more meaning and importance to their work, and they have excellent competencies. Their ability to make decisions on their own is high, and they have more effects on the development and change of their work. Self-talk leaders have overall psychological empowerment.

Leaders who set goals for themselves and dream of successful performance can develop positive personality traits, give more importance to their work, be more competent, be skilled in making their own decisions, and significantly impact

development and change. Leaders who dream of successful performance by setting goals for themselves have higher general psychological empowerment characteristics.

Leaders with constructive thinking strategies have positive personality traits. They think that their work is meaningful and vital, their competence in their work is high, their ability to make their own decisions increases, they have a more significant effect on the realization of their work, and their overall psychological empowerment will increase.

Leaders with a strong focus on natural rewards show positive personality traits. Apart from this, they may find their job meaningful and vital. Their competence in their job increases, their ability to make their own decisions may increase, they can take a more active role in their jobs, and their overall psychological empowerment features may intensify.

The personality traits of aviation employees with strong self-leadership traits are positive. The meaning and importance they attach to their job's increases, and their competencies increase. Their ability to make their own decisions has increased, and their active role in getting things done can increase. Leaders with great self-leadership features also have more psychological empowerment features.

As a result of structural equation modeling to determine the mediating role of proactive personality trait in the effect of psychological empowerment on self-leadership, one might say that proactive personality trait has a partial mediating role in the effect of psychological empowerment on self-leadership. There is no study examining the mediating role of personality in the relationship between psychological empowerment and self-leadership. Therefore, this thesis will help further research. A study investigating the relationship between psychological empowerment and self-leadership concluded that self-leadership has both direct and indirect effects on psychological empowerment.

As a result, the psychological empowerment of employees affects their self-leadership tendencies, and proactive personality traits have a partial mediation effect. The employees' personality also plays a role in the impact of these two variables.

5. Suggestions

The civil aviation industry is highly competitive and demanding in terms of time management, crisis management, and communication management. Therefore, there is a need for employees and personnel who can take action quickly and proactively in the face of events.

Therefore, selecting the personnel with these characteristics requires meticulous work filled with tests such as the DISC personality inventory used during recruitment, selection, and placement.

Personnel empowerment is about assigning the responsibility of the job to the individual. Therefore, civil aviation personnel must take the initiative and take action during any crisis.

Civil aviation personnel should have developed leadership skills. For example, the cabin chief's authority over the cabin crew is essential for the passengers to provide a good service (time, comfort, quality).

As a result of the study, while the psychological empowerment rate of the cabin cockpit personnel was the lowest, it was the highest among the general directorate employees. This situation shows that cabin crews must adapt to their leader and cabin chief and fulfill their directives.

Civil aviation personnel such as loadmasters and dispatchers working in the field must intervene immediately in situations they encounter while performing their jobs. Sometimes, there may not be time to reach their top managers and get approval due to time pressure. Therefore, competent personnel should be selected, and a full delegation of authority should be carried out.

Civil aviation sector personnel should be certified by national and international organizations such as IATA, ICAO, SHGM (Directorate General of Civil Aviation)

As in the world aviation companies, it is necessary to give importance to sector experience. People with sectoral experience will be able to take the initiative and act proactively readily since they have experienced similar events before.

This study focuses on the employees operating in the civil aviation sector in Istanbul. It will be a source for future studies on the proactive personality, whose positive effects on the psychological empowerment and self-leadership of the employees, which increase the performance and productivity of the employees, have been scientifically proven.

Ethical approval
Approved by the Ethics committee, with the decision of Istanbul Aydın University Ethics Commission, dd 22.12.2020, no 2020/11.

Conflicts of Interest
The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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