



## Proactive Personality as a Predictor of Career Sustainability among Gig Economy and Traditional Employment

Hafiza Muneeba Yasin (Corresponding Author)

MPhil Scholar, National Institute of Psychology, Quaid-i-Azam  
University, Islamabad, Pakistan

[muneeba.es23@nip.edu.pk](mailto:muneeba.es23@nip.edu.pk)

Dr. Haleema Saadia Khan

Assistant Professor, National Institute of Psychology, Quaid-i-  
Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan

### ABSTRACT

*This study examines the predictive role of proactive personality on career sustainability among individuals employed in the gig economy and traditional employment. A total of 500 working professionals ( $n = 272$  traditional employment;  $n = 228$  gig economy) from Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Peshawar and Lahore cities of Pakistan participated in the study, selected through purposive sampling. The Proactive Personality Scale (Bateman & Crant, 1993) and the Career Sustainability Scale (Chin et al., 2021) were used to measure the constructs. Statistical analyses, including Pearson correlation, independent samples t-tests and hierarchical regression were conducted using SPSS. Results revealed a significant positive relationship between proactive personality and career sustainability. Results of hierarchical regression highlight proactive personality as a strong predictor of career sustainability. However, no significant differences were found between gig and traditionally employed workers in levels of proactive personality or career sustainability. These findings highlight the importance of proactive personality as a dispositional trait that supports career sustainability across gig economy and traditional employment and offering valuable insight for career counselors and organizations supporting career sustainability across employment types.*

**Keywords:** Proactive Personality, Career Sustainability, Gig Economy, Traditional Employment.

### Introduction

The rapidly evolving nature of work has led to the emergence of diverse employment types, including traditional employment and the gig economy. The gig economy is characterized by short-term, flexible contracts and freelance work, often facilitated through digital platforms (Ozkurt & Alpay, 2018). In contrast, traditional employment involves structured, long-term work arrangements with clear roles and responsibilities (Guderman, 2010). These changing employment dynamics have prompted researchers to explore the factors that contribute to sustained career success and adaptability across these distinct employment contexts (Zhang et al., 2021). Proactive personality has been identified as a critical variable that influences career sustainability in both gig and traditional employment settings (Crant & Bateman, 2000).

A proactive personality is characterized by a tendency to take initiative, anticipate future challenges, and take action to influence the work environment (Crant & Bateman, 2000). Research suggests that individuals with proactive personalities are better equipped to navigate career challenges and maintain long-term career sustainability (Bateman & Crant, 1993). In the gig economy, where job security and structured career development opportunities are often limited, proactive individuals are more likely to seek and create opportunities, maintain professional networks, and engage in continuous skill development (Al-Obaidi, 2021). Similarly, in traditional employment, proactive personality

traits are associated with better job performance, increased career satisfaction, and upward career mobility (Guderman, 2010).

Career sustainability, as conceptualized by De Vos and Van der Heijden (2017), encompasses the continuity of career experiences over time, marked by meaning, agency, and adaptability. Chin et al. (2021) further operationalized this concept through four dimensions: resourcefulness, flexibility, renewability, and integration. These dimensions reflect an individual's capacity to continuously learn, adapt, and align their career with personal and professional goals. In volatile job markets, such as freelancing or contract-based employment, sustainability is dependent on personal initiative and adaptability.

Studies suggest a significant link between proactive personality and career sustainability. Individuals high in proactivity tend to demonstrate greater resilience, engage in continuous development, and maintain broader professional networks (Seibert et al., 1999). Their ability to anticipate future demands and take early action helps them stay relevant and employable. While previous research supports this relationship, there remains a lack of comparative analysis between gig and traditional employment groups.

Therefore, the present study aims to examine the relationship between proactive personality and career sustainability among working individuals. It seeks to determine whether proactive personality significantly predicts career sustainability among gig economy and traditional employment.

### Hypotheses

1. There is positive relationship between proactive personality and career sustainability among gig economy and traditional employment.
2. Proactive personality positively predicts career sustainability among gig economy and traditional employment.

### Method

#### Participants

The study comprised a sample of 500 working professionals, equally representing two distinct employment sectors: the gig economy and traditional employment. Participants were selected using purposive sampling from cities of Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Lahore and Peshawar of Pakistan. Inclusion criteria required individuals to be currently employed either in freelance/contract-based (gig) or full-time structured (traditional) jobs, with at least 1 year of work experience. The sample included both male and female participants with diverse educational backgrounds and professional roles.

#### Instruments

Proactive personality was measured using a 10-item short version scale originally developed by Bateman and Crant (1993). An example item from the scale states, "I am constantly on the lookout for new ways to improve my life." Participants responded to each item using a 7-point Likert-type scale, with response options ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree. The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was reported to be 0.82.

Career sustainability was measured by using Career Sustainability Scale developed by Chin et al., (2021). The 12 items scale is broken down into 4 subscales: Resourceful ( $\alpha = 0.86$ ), Flexible ( $\alpha = 0.86$ ), Renewable ( $\alpha = 0.82$ ), and Integrative ( $\alpha = 0.85$ ). Each

subscale includes three items. A 6-point Likert scale, with 1 strongly disagree and 6 denoting strongly agree, was used to rate the items. The scale's Cronbach alpha was reported to be .91, indicating a satisfactory level of reliability.

Procedure

Data were collected through in-person survey forms. Informed consent was obtained from all participants. Participants were assured of confidentiality and informed about the voluntary nature of their participation. The study adhered to ethical guidelines provided by the National Institute of Psychology, Quaid-i-Azam University.

Statistical Analysis

Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and hierarchical regression analysis were conducted using SPSS to examine the relationship and predictive role of proactive personality on career sustainability among gig economy and traditional employees. Additionally, independent samples t-tests were conducted to explore mean differences in proactive personality and career sustainability between individuals employed in gig economy and traditional employment.

Results

Descriptive statistics and psychometric properties of the scales used in the current study are presented in Table 1. All scales demonstrated good internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from .78 (Renewable) to .93 (Career Sustainability Scale). The Career Sustainability Scale (CSS) had a mean of 52.47 (SD = 15.68), and the Proactive Personality Scale (PPS) had a mean of 52.43 (SD = 14.29). Subdimensions of career sustainability; Resourceful, Flexible, Renewable, and Integrative also displayed satisfactory internal consistency ( $\alpha = .78$  to  $.88$ ). Skewness and kurtosis values for all variables fell within acceptable ranges, indicating normal distribution of the data.

Table 1

Alpha Reliability Coefficient and other Psychometric Properties of the Scales (N = 500)

Scales	K	$\alpha$	M	SD	Range		Skewn ess	Kurto sis
					Poten tial	Act ual		
CSS	12	.93	52.47	15.68	12-72	15-72	-.94	-.06
Resourc eful	3	.88	12.49	4.31	3-18	6-18	-.71	-.60
Flexibl e	3	.85	13.44	4.12	3-18	6-18	-.99	.07
Renewa ble	3	.78	13.19	4.09	3-18	6-18	-.89	-.17
Integrat ive	3	.82	13.32	4.29	3-18	6-18	-.96	-.13
PPS	10	.86	52.43	14.29	10-70	10-66	-1.24	.76

Note. CSS = Career Sustainability Scale; PPS = Proactive Personality Scale.

Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to examine the relationships among study variables (see Table 2). Proactive personality showed significant positive correlations with career sustainability and with all four subdimensions; Resourceful, Flexible, Renewable, and Integrative. Career sustainability was also positively associated with its subdimensions. These findings

support the hypothesized associations between proactive personality and career sustainability.

Table 2

Correlation Among Study Variables (N=500)

S #	Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Proactive Personality	-	.67**	.60**	.65**	.62**	.63**
2	Career Sustainability		-	.80**	.74**	.76**	.84**
3	Resourceful			-	.78**	.81**	.72**
4	Flexible				-	.79**	.84**
5	Renewable					-	.87**
6	Integrative						-

Note. \*\* $p < .01$ . \* $p < .05$ .

To examine the predictive role of proactive personality on career sustainability, a hierarchical regression analysis was conducted (see Table 3). The results revealed that proactive personality significantly predicted career sustainability, explaining approximately 45% of the variance. These findings provide strong evidence that proactive personality is a meaningful predictor of career sustainability across employment types.

Table 3

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Study Variable as Predicting Career Sustainability among Gig Economy and Traditional Employment (N = 500)

	Career Sustainability		
	Model 1	95% CI	
Predictors	B	LL	UL
Constant	14.79**	10.97	18.61
Proactive Personality	.72**	.65	.79
R2	.45		
F	401.15**		

Note. \*\* $p < .01$ . \* $p < .05$ .

To examine differences in the study variables between gig workers and traditionally employed individuals, independent samples t-tests were conducted (Table 4). Results indicated no significant differences between gig and traditional employment groups on proactive personality, career sustainability, or its subdimensions.

Table 4

Differences between Gig Economy and Traditional Employment Work Type on Study Variables (N = 500)

Variables	Traditiona l Employment (n = 272 )		Gig Econom y (n = 228 )		t	p	95% CI	
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	U



<b>Proactive Personality</b>	53.02	12.56	51.76	16.03	.98	.33	-1.27	3.79
<b>Career Sustainability</b>	52.81	14.21	52.08	17.21	.52	.61	-2.04	3.50
<b>Resourceful</b>	12.72	4.09	12.22	4.54	1.30	.20	-.26	1.26
<b>Flexible</b>	13.42	3.79	13.46	4.48	-.11	.91	-.77	.69
<b>Renewable</b>	13.31	3.67	13.04	4.52	.73	.46	-.45	.99
<b>Integrative</b>	13.30	4.01	13.35	4.61	-.12	.91	-.80	.71

## Discussion

The present study aimed to investigate the role of proactive personality in predicting career sustainability, while also comparing levels of proactive personality and career sustainability between gig economy workers and those in traditional employment. The findings provide meaningful insights into how personality traits influence career development across different work contexts.

Consistent with Hypothesis 1, the results revealed a significant positive relationship between proactive personality and career sustainability among gig economy and traditional employment. This finding supports previous literature indicating that individuals who demonstrate initiative, anticipate future challenges, and take charge of their career direction are more likely to experience long-term career success and satisfaction. Proactive individuals are often forward-thinking and resilient, traits that are essential for navigating the uncertainties of the modern workforce. Individuals with a proactive personality actively seek opportunities, take initiative, and adapt to changing environments, which enhances their ability to sustain and grow their careers in both gig and traditional employment settings (Bateman & Crant, 1993; Seibert et al., 1999). Proactive behaviors such as planning, networking, and skill development are directly linked to career sustainability, as they enable workers to navigate challenges and maintain employability across diverse work contexts (Jiang, 2017; Hirschi et al., 2015).

Furthermore, Hypothesis 2, which stated that proactive personality positively predicts career sustainability among gig economy and traditional employment workers, was supported in the present research. The findings are in line with previous studies that underscore the significance of proactive personality in shaping sustainable career outcomes. Bateman and Crant (1993) highlighted that individuals with proactive personalities tend to anticipate and act upon opportunities, which positions them for long-term success in dynamic work environments. This proactive approach helps individuals navigate uncertainties in both traditional and gig economy settings. Supporting this perspective, Guderman (2010) emphasized that proactive individuals are more likely to engage in future-oriented planning, increasing their chances of career longevity and satisfaction.

The findings of this study also align with the work of Zhang et al. (2021), who found that proactive personality significantly contributes to career resilience and adaptability, particularly in unstable employment environments like the gig economy. By taking initiative and demonstrating self-directed behavior, proactive individuals are better equipped to overcome challenges and maintain their career trajectories. In essence, the current study

reaffirms that proactive personality is a key predictor of career sustainability. Individuals with proactive tendencies are not only able to manage immediate career-related tasks but also strategically position themselves for future growth and development, making this trait indispensable in both gig and traditional employment contexts.

No significant differences among gig economy and traditional employment participants in levels of proactive personality and career sustainability were observed (see Table 4). This suggests that these constructs operate similarly across both employment types, highlighting the broad applicability of proactive personality as a predictor of career sustainability regardless of employment context.

Overall, these findings reinforce the relevance of proactive personality as a stable psychological resource that contributes positively to career sustainability across diverse work settings. It emphasizes that enhancing proactive behaviors can be a valuable strategy in career development programs, regardless of employment type.

## Limitations and Future Directions

This study is not without limitations. First, its reliance on self-report measures introduces the possibility of common method bias and socially desirable responding. Future studies may benefit from incorporating multi-source data, such as supervisor or peer assessments, to enhance objectivity. Second, while the study compared gig and traditional employment sectors, it did not examine specific types of gig work (e.g., creative freelancing, ride-sharing, or online consulting). Future research could explore these sub-sectors to provide more nuanced insights.

Additionally, the study focused solely on proactive personality as a predictor, excluding other potentially influential factors such as career adaptability, proactive career behaviors, emotional intelligence, job autonomy, and opportunities for skill development. Including these variables in future research would offer a more comprehensive understanding of career sustainability. Moreover, the lack of cross-cultural and economic contextualization limits the generalizability of the findings. Cross-cultural comparative and longitudinal studies are recommended to explore broader patterns and contextual differences. Finally, intervention-based research focused on fostering proactive traits and sustainable career practices could offer valuable guidance for individuals, organizations, and career development professionals.

## Practical Implications

The findings of this study hold practical relevance for individuals, organizations, and policymakers. Promoting the development of a proactive personality can serve as a strategic tool to enhance career sustainability, especially in an increasingly dynamic and uncertain work environment. Organizations may consider integrating personality development and self-leadership training into employee development initiatives to support long-term career success and workforce stability.

For individuals engaged in gig or non-traditional employment, targeted career counseling and coaching interventions may help build proactive competencies that improve their ability to manage uncertainty and navigate career transitions. Furthermore, policymakers and industry leaders may design supportive frameworks and development programs that strengthen career resilience and stability, particularly for the expanding gig workforce.

## Conclusion

The present study concludes that proactive personality has a significant positive relationship with career sustainability, as demonstrated by the correlation analysis. Individuals with higher levels of proactive personality tend to experience greater career

sustainability. Furthermore, regression analysis confirmed that proactive personality significantly predicts career sustainability, accounting for 47% of the variance. Interestingly, no significant differences were found in the levels of proactive personality and career sustainability between gig economy workers and traditional employees. This suggests that the benefits of having a proactive personality extend across different forms of employment, reinforcing its role as a vital trait for maintaining long-term, adaptable, and fulfilling careers.

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