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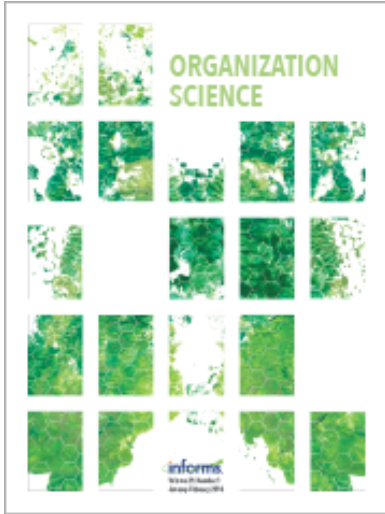
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For Better *and* Worse: How Proactive Personality Alters the Strain Responses to Challenge and Hindrance Stressors

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Abstract. Employees with a proactive personality tend to show exceptional initiative and perseverance, suggesting that they are relatively impervious to stressors. Yet some evidence suggests that proactive personality may exacerbate the effect of stressors on strain. In this study, we clarify these conflicting ideas by systematically distinguishing between different types of chronic work stressors. Integrating the conservation-of-resources model and the challenge–hindrance stressor framework, we suggest that employees with more proactive personalities are especially sensitive to the extent to which chronic work stressors are amenable to their resource investments. Specifically, we hypothesize that, for more proactive employees, challenge stressors (opportunities more amenable to resource investment) lead to less strain (i.e., emotional exhaustion and turnover intentions) but also that hindrance stressors (demands less amenable to proactive expectations of achievement) lead to relatively *more* strain. We further propose perceived organizational support as a mediator of these interactive effects wherein challenging opportunities are interpreted by proactive employees as particularly indicative of high support and hindering demands as particularly indicative of low support, ultimately leading to lower and higher perceptions of strain, respectively. A three-wave survey of 256 architects generally supports these hypotheses: the effects of challenge stressors on emotional exhaustion and turnover intentions were significantly attenuated and the effects of hindrance stressors on these outcomes were significantly exacerbated for more proactive people. These effects were mediated (partially for exhaustion, fully for turnover intentions) by perceived support. Follow-up analysis demonstrates that this interactive effect extends to turnover behavior 2.5 years later, fully mediated by perceived support.

Keywords: proactive personality • challenge–hindrance stress • perceived organizational support • burnout

With trends toward autonomy and decentralization (Lee and Edmondson 2017), the modern workplace requires employees to accomplish organizational goals while also responding to—and overcoming—concomitant work demands. These demands, or stressors, “require sustained physical or mental effort” (Crawford et al. 2010, p. 835) and can ultimately lead to personal strain—such as burnout—particularly when individuals perceive that they have insufficient resources to address them (e.g., Ong and Johnson 2022). In addition to employee well-being, this is a problem for organizations’ bottom lines with annual costs to replace voluntary turnover estimated to total more than \$148 billion in the United States alone (Society for Human Resource Management 2016). Conservation-of-resources (i.e., COR) theory explains that, as employees spend resources dealing with work demands, they must also actively work to protect, maintain, and develop resources (Hobfoll 1989).

Unfortunately, the process of investing resources to address work demands can also entail *stalled resources*,

occurring when an individual “has reached a stalemate” between resource investment and resource returns, characterized by a resource level that remains stubbornly flat and that can be considered a failure of resource investment (Halbesleben et al. 2014, p. 1352). In other words, stalled resources occur when one’s resource levels do not change in response to additional resource investments. For example, spending considerable time navigating office politics may sometimes fail to favorably influence organizational decisions, or time, effort, and money spent expanding one’s credentials may not result in improved career prospects (see Halbesleben 2006, Grosemans and De Cuyper 2021). Although the stalled resources concept has been present in common parlance (e.g., “hitting a plateau,” “stuck in neutral,” “in a rut”) and the popular press (e.g., Godin 2007) for some time, it has only recently been formally introduced to COR theory. Scholars call for a more precise understanding of why stalled resource investments lead some individuals to “rebound” afterward yet lead others to experience

greater levels of strain (Halbesleben et al. 2014, p. 1352). Individuals experiencing stalled resources may withdraw or divert effort to different goals, yet others may persistently (or stubbornly) continue to invest in the same course of action (DeShon and Gillespie 2005, Tolle and Schmidt 2008). Thus, individuals may fundamentally differ in how they approach stalled resources and how psychologically strained they are as a result.

A key to understanding these differences—and addressing the organizational and personal costs associated with burnout and turnover—may lie in the domain of personality. Indeed, COR scholars theorize that personality traits can serve as “key” resources that are particularly important in understanding the effects of work demands (Hobfoll 2002, Alarcon et al. 2009, ten Brummelhuis and Bakker 2012). One personality trait—*proactive personality*—may be especially relevant to building resources because of its emphasis on persistent resource investment; that is, proactive people tend to “identify opportunities and act on them, show initiative, and persevere until they bring about meaningful change” (Crant and Bateman 2000, p. 65). Such a disposition is likely why scholars suggest that those who “proactively cope by striving to acquire and maintain their resource reservoirs” are more likely to succeed in regulating their work environments (Hobfoll 2001, p. 352). Organizations broadly value proactive personality because proactive people are considered to be more resilient to work demands (Bateman and Crant 1993) and more motivated to positively change their environment (Erdogan and Bauer 2005, Onyemah 2008, Li et al. 2014). Supporting this view, studies find that proactive personality limits the effects of job demands on strain (Parker and Sprigg 1999, Cunningham and De La Rosa 2008, Alarcon et al. 2009, Park and DeFrank 2018). These findings paint an image of proactive employees as nearly unstoppable forces who expect to achieve their work and career goals “no matter what the odds” (Crant 1995, p. 45). From this perspective, proactive employees appear to have a clear advantage in overcoming stalled resources given the persistence and intensity of their resource investments.

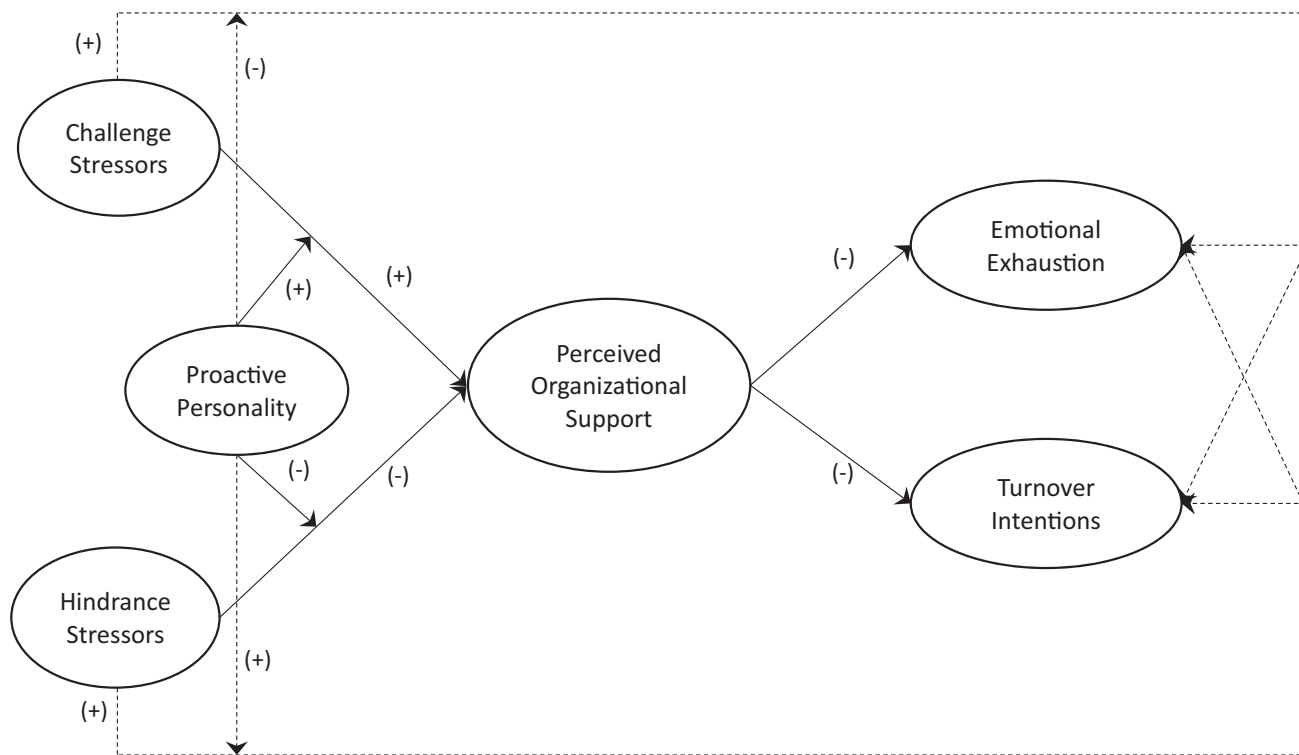
However, additional evidence complicates this view. For instance, proactive personality can be maladaptive based on individuals’ inability to interpret work demands correctly (Chan 2006). Additionally, proactive people may be more sensitive to factors that thwart goal accomplishment (Harvey et al. 2006). Thus, counter to the image laid out, this evidence suggests the possibility that, in work environments characterized by chronic work demands (stressors), the experience of stalled resources may be particularly straining for more proactive individuals. These two opposing viewpoints on proactive personality raise the question of how, exactly, a proactive disposition shapes the stressor–strain process.

Given that proactive people tend to invest resources more intensely (Crant and Bateman 2000), how are proactive employees affected, relative to more passive peers, when confronted with a chronic work environment in which resource investments fail to yield expected returns?

This question remains unanswered in part because there is no overarching theory of how proactive personality shapes responses to different stressor conditions (Crant 2000, cf. Chan 2006) and in part because conservation-of-resources theory has not taken a systematic approach to identifying stressor differences that correspond with the potential costs versus benefits of proactivity. Yet these are theoretically important questions to answer if COR scholars are to more fully understand “when” and “why” (Whetten 1989) stalled resources matter most and for proactivity researchers to understand when and why proactive personality is valuable to individuals and their organizations. In addition, without a clear understanding of how proactive personality shapes the stress process, managers may lack the knowledge necessary to protect more proactive employees from strain that can undermine their well-being and sustained contributions to the organization.

To address this issue, we integrate the challenge–hindrance framework (Cavanaugh et al. 2000) with conservation-of-resources theory to make a distinction between stressors that are more likely associated with stalled resources (i.e., hindrance stressors) and those characterized by the opportunity for positive returns (i.e., challenge stressors). This theoretical integration leads us to suggest that, compared with their more passive peers, employees with more proactive personalities tend to experience less strain from some demands (challenge stressors) but more strain from others (hindrance stressors). We propose that this occurs because proactive people are more likely to interpret stressor type as a reflection of the organization’s support for their personal resource investments (i.e., perceived organizational support). Specifically, we argue that the same hallmarks of proactive personality (e.g., anticipation, initiative, and persistence) that make proactive people expect achievement “no matter what the odds” (Crant 1995, p. 45) also create a particular sensitivity to the differential features of each stressor type. We argue that proactive employees are especially likely to view challenge stressors as indicative of a resource-enriching environment (high organizational support) and hindrance stressors as indicative of a resource-demanding environment (low organization support). These perceptions are hypothesized to predict strain, operationalized as emotional exhaustion and turnover intentions (see Figure 1). To test these ideas, we employ a three-wave field survey of 256 architects from a variety of firms in the United States.

Figure 1. Conceptual Model of the Interactive Effect of Proactive Personality and Stressors on Strain



Notes. Solid lines indicate paths related to conditional indirect effects, whereas dotted lines indicate paths related to conditional direct effects. By definition, together these constitute the conditional total effects.

Our research makes important contributions to the literature on conservation-of-resources theory. First, our examination of proactive personality and hindrance stressors answers calls for more research regarding stalled resources (Halbesleben et al. 2014), specifically providing insight into whether stalled resources—and any associated decrements to well-being and willingness to remain with an organization—are experienced similarly by people with different dispositions. We propose that those who tend to invest resources more persistently and intensely (i.e., those high in proactive personality) are particularly galled by stalled resources, refuting an intuitive expectation that hindrances are equally straining for all. This theorizing helps improve understanding of stalled resources and how they may cause some people more strain than others. In addition, little research documents situations in which key resources are costly as opposed to beneficial (cf. Russell et al. 2017). Our research suggests that key resources—in the present case, proactive personality—may sometimes be liabilities to both the individuals and their organizations. Indeed, our theorizing suggests that accounting for proactive personality alters the predictions of conservation of resources: whereas the trait may spur additional resource investment, persistent investment toward making changes may not always lend itself to “consideration of the best use” of resources (Hobfoll et al. 2018, p. 113).

That is, although many individuals tend to scale back on resource investment when they experience resource losses (Halbesleben 2010), our study suggests that proactive people do not do so and may incur costs instead. This sheds light on the question of how people determine the best options for their resources, which is largely unanswered among COR theorists (Halbesleben et al. 2014).

Second, our incorporation of perceptions of contextual resources (i.e., perceived organizational support) that are shaped by personal resources (i.e., proactive personality) answers calls in COR theory for more knowledge about resource passageways: the ways in which the organizational environment can provide support for an employee’s personal resource investments (Hobfoll 2011). Specifically, our theorizing suggests that proactive people may be especially likely to perceive the presence (resource-enriching environment) or absence (resource-demanding environment) of resource passageways according to their views of whether work demands encourage resource investment. This is an important extension of conservation-of-resources theory because it suggests that whether employees “see” resource passageways in their organization is not only determined by the presence of demands that shape the “ability to access those resources” (Hobfoll 2011, p. 118), but is also dependent on the employee’s predisposition for resource investment. This

has implications for organizational support theory more specifically because that literature largely neglects the role of dispositional factors on perceived support. Our research builds on a line of work that emphasizes the role of proactive personality in developing or acquiring social support (e.g., Kammeyer-Mueller and Wanberg 2003, Chan 2006) to more directly account for the role that a proactive disposition has in shaping one's support perceptions.

Third, our research makes an important contribution to the proactive personality literature by providing a systematic clarification regarding proactive personality as potentially both an asset and a liability for stress management. Specifically, we demonstrate that the very disposition presumed to drive individuals to work toward their goals no matter the odds may in fact heighten their sensitivity to the types of stressors they encounter. This clarification addresses a need to better understand how proactive personality shapes one's experience of stress (Crant et al. 2017) and provides greater clarity for how organizations can shape stress environments so as to leverage the power of proactive personality rather than compromise it. Notably, this complements prior research on the "dark" side of proactive personality, which predominantly focuses on interpersonal (rather than intrapersonal) factors, such as the negative attitudes of peers or supervisors toward one's proactivity (Chan 2006, Zhang et al. 2012, Sun and van Emmerik 2015). Finally, our focus on *chronic* stressors—those that are typical of one's day-to-day work—is a complementary extension of previous research that focuses mostly on how proactive people adjust to dynamic contexts driven by discrete events, such as job change (e.g., Morrison 1993, Bauer and Green 1998, Ashforth et al. 2007) or major sociopolitical change (Fay and Sonnentag 2002, Li et al. 2014).

Proactive Personality and Resource Investment

Conservation-of-resources theory remains one of two predominant theories of the last 30 years to explain how individuals respond to stressors (Hobfoll et al. 2018). Notably, it accounts for features of the organizational environment (in our case, stressors) as well as individual differences (in our case, proactive personality). The job demands–resources model (Bakker and Demerouti 2007) is the leading work-specific outgrowth of conservation-of-resources theory to describe responses to organizational stress (Hobfoll et al. 2018). Though its primary focus is on categorizing job conditions as either demands or resources to the exclusion of individual differences or personality (Crawford et al. 2010), the theory is relevant as it has begun to incorporate conservation of resources' notion of personal resources (Hobfoll et al. 2003) to examine self-evaluations linked to resiliency,

such as self-efficacy, self-esteem, and optimism (e.g., Xanthopoulou et al. 2007, 2009). The other predominant theory of stress—the transactional theory of Lazarus and Folkman (1984)—is criticized by Hobfoll (2011) and Hobfoll et al. (2018) for its emphasis on idiographic individual appraisals of stressors. However, a large body of literature, including several meta-analyses on the challenge–hindrance stressor framework (Cavanaugh et al. 2000, LePine et al. 2005, Podsakoff et al. 2007, Crawford et al. 2010, LePine et al. 2016) emerged from the transactional theory of stress to demonstrate that challenges and hindrances are two commonly and consistently appraised categories of stressors for people across a wide array of settings. Further, these categories are pervasively distinct in their nature and effects. Thus, we build on integrations of the challenge–hindrance framework with conservation-of-resources theory (Zhang et al. 2018) and the job demands resources model (Crawford et al. 2010) in our explanations of how proactive personalities respond to these two types of stressors.

It is worth noting that one alternative theory—social exchange theory—offers similar predictions to COR theory with respect to maintaining balance in the face of stressors but is instead rooted in a focus on reciprocity and exchange relationships rather than conservation of resources. For example, exchange theorists propose that individuals experience stress via negative emotions when their efforts are not adequately reciprocated by their organization or workgroup (Lawler 2001). In our research, we primarily draw from COR theory and the challenge–hindrance framework because this approach possesses greater precision in differentiating between different demands in the workplace as well as in explaining the role of personality traits in the stress process.

Conservation of resources theory explains that individuals are motivated to acquire, invest, and conserve resources to obtain and protect those things they centrally value (Hobfoll et al. 2018). Among these central values are health, well-being, family, self-esteem, and a sense of purpose and meaning in life. Resources are stores or supplies that individuals can—but are not guaranteed to—use to achieve these and related goals (Halbesleben et al. 2014). Strain occurs when resources are threatened or lost or when people perceive that insufficient gains are made from resource investments (i.e., a net loss). Scholars often distinguish between resources that are personal—those inherent to the individual, such as personality traits, energies, time, and attention—and those that are contextual—emanating from the environment (Hobfoll 1989, ten Brummelhuis and Bakker 2012). Personal resources provide the primary reservoir used by individuals to achieve goals. Moreover, when people are able to use their personal resources effectively and efficiently in their jobs, they are more likely to believe that the organization is providing

sufficient contextual resources in support (Rhoades and Eisenberger 2002). This belief is important because, when people perceive that contextual resources are in sufficient supply, they gain a sense of stability and security that reduces levels of strain (Halbesleben 2006). This is the main reason why conservation-of-resources theory emphasizes the importance of organizations creating resource passageways that foster rather than block individuals' resource investments (Hobfoll 2011).

The conservation of resources literature identifies a particularly valuable group of personal resources characterized by stable personality traits that facilitate individuals' efforts to address work stressors (ten Brummelhuis and Bakker 2012, Halbesleben et al. 2014). These traits—referred to as *key resources*—make an individual “more capable of selecting, altering, and implementing their other resources to meet stressful demands” (Thoits 1994; Hobfoll 2002, p. 308). Generally, research finds that key resources (such as conscientiousness) help individuals to more effectively invest other personal resources (such as energy or experience) toward important work goals (Halbesleben et al. 2009, Kammeyer-Mueller et al. 2009, Lin et al. 2015) although key resources can have negative effects in some contexts (Winkel et al. 2011). Given that proactive personality is a trait that increases one's capability to implement other personal resources, such as time, energy, knowledge, skills, and abilities (Crant 1996, Seibert et al. 2001, Thompson 2005, Dikkers et al. 2010), it represents a widely valued key resource. Indeed, proactive personality leads to the acquisition and maintenance of resource reservoirs that help people achieve their goals (Hobfoll 2001). Because proactive personality has a mobilizing effect on one's other resources, people with a proactive disposition tend to make larger investments (e.g., of energy, knowledge) than more passive individuals.

Proactively disposed individuals are also less likely to adapt their level of investment depending on the environment; rather, they consistently invest at relatively high levels because they expect success regardless of their situation (Crant 1995). Grant and Ashford (2008) posit that these expectations are fueled by dispositional attributions about one's past experiences of being proactive. These attributions over time coalesce into strong beliefs about what one is capable of accomplishing if one anticipates, takes initiative, and persists in order to achieve meaningful work goals. It follows that people high in proactive personality expect to effectively address demands in *any* situation, an idea summed up in this maxim: “If I believe in an idea, no obstacle will prevent me from making it happen” (Bateman and Crant 1993, p. 112). In sum, proactive personalities tend to “show initiative [and] take action,” and are believed to exhibit the same level of initiative and action in any situation as they “persevere

until they reach closure” (Bateman and Crant 1993, p. 105).

The Influence of Proactive Personality on the Stress Process

Although proactive people invest their resources more heavily than others, the extent to which they achieve their goals is likely to be influenced not just by their investment, but also by the nature of the chronic stress environment in their jobs. Most people are affected by stressors based on expected outcomes (Lazarus and Folkman 1984). Hobfoll (1989), for example, states that “people roughly judge their potential losses ... and analyze the likelihood of succeeding or offsetting losses” (p. 519). But not all stressors are created equal. When individuals regularly encounter stressors that allow for gains that succeed or offset the level of resources invested, they experience relatively low levels of strain. In contrast, when individuals regularly encounter stressors that frustrate one's return on investment or create stalled resources, people develop relatively high levels of strain (Halbesleben et al. 2014). This suggests that some chronic stressors may lead to more strain than others because resource investments are more successful under some circumstances than under others.

Despite the critical role that stressors play in conservation-of-resources theory, the theory has not traditionally distinguished between different types of stressors. However, recent research begins to highlight the need to make such distinctions. For example, Halbesleben et al. (2014) discuss the need to better understand stalled resources, which implies a certain type of stress environment. Further, Zhang et al. (2018) integrates conservation-of-resources theory with the challenge–hindrance stressor framework (Cavanaugh et al. 2000, LePine et al. 2005) to explain how some stressors (hindrances) affect deviance, whereas others (challenges) do not. Building from this work, we consider how proactive personality affects one's experience of strain from chronic work stressors, which leads us to distinguish between workplace challenge and hindrance stressors, thereby adding precision to the conservation-of-resources framework.

Challenge and Hindrance Stressors

The challenge–hindrance stressor framework (Cavanaugh et al. 2000, LePine et al. 2005) defines challenge stressors as work demands that provide opportunities for learning, growth, and development (e.g., time pressure, workload, or task complexity). Although these stressors can cause strain, they also provide motivation (LePine et al. 2005). From a conservation-of-resources perspective, challenge stressors facilitate returns on resource investment. When a job environment contains high levels of challenge stressors,

employees may expect their efforts to lead to positive returns in the form of growth, learning, accomplishment, and rewards. These gains compensate for the investment of resources to cope with challenge stressors. In contrast, hindrance stressors are work demands that impede, thwart, or block growth and accomplishment (e.g., resource inadequacy, role conflict, and role ambiguity). From a conservation-of-resources perspective, hindrance stressors tend to create net losses on resource investment—a situation in which resource investments seem stalled (i.e., when the resource level does not change in response to additional investment).¹ When a job environment contains high levels of hindrance stressors, employees may expect their efforts to lead to poor returns in the forms of growth, learning, accomplishment, and rewards. This creates a sense of loss from using up resources to cope with hindrance stressors. Although individuals may be able to affect the level of challenge and hindrance stressors in their environments under circumstances of acute change (i.e., job transition; Chan and Schmitt 2000, Li et al. 2014) or in specific tasks (Fritz and Sonnentag 2009), chronic stress environments can persist continually over long periods of time because of the nature and inertia of one's organization (Nelson and Sutton 1990, Kelly and Amburgey 1991).

Appraisals of a particular stressor as a challenge or a hindrance might vary as a function of the appraising individual. Indeed, this is the very nature of the Hobfoll (2011) and Hobfoll et al. (2018) critique of appraisals as ideographic. However, empirical evidence from samples of executives (Cavanaugh et al. 2000), lower level employees (Boswell et al. 2004), part-time master of business administration students (LePine et al. 2005), and U.S. Marines (LePine et al. 2016) support the notion that, despite potential individual differences and unique experiences with job demands, certain types of demands are more likely to be deemed challenges and other types of demands are more likely to be deemed hindrances. Meta-analyses of challenge–hindrance research show that challenge and hindrance stressors tend to co-occur across work contexts, exhibiting a moderate, positive relationship (LePine et al. 2005, Podsakoff et al. 2007, Crawford et al. 2010). Both types of stressors are predictive of strain although hindrances typically exhibit a stronger relationship with strain than do challenges. Hindrances and challenges systematically differ in their relationships with motivation, engagement, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and performance. Hindrances generally have more negative relationships with these outcomes, whereas challenges exhibit more positive relationships.

This body of literature also suggests that challenge and hindrance stressors contribute to emotional exhaustion and turnover intentions (Podsakoff et al. 2007, Crawford et al. 2010). Emotional exhaustion is a state

of fatigue characterized by a depletion of emotional and motivational resources and is the most frequently studied aspect of burnout (Maslach and Jackson 1981, Hülsheger et al. 2013, Kammeyer-Mueller et al. 2016). Turnover intentions indicate an employee's expectation that the employee will leave the employee's current job soon (Hom and Griffeth 1991). Research consistently shows a positive relationship between stressors and both exhaustion and turnover intentions although challenges tend to exhibit less deleterious effects in both cases (Lee and Ashforth 1996, Podsakoff et al. 2007, Alarcon 2011, Rubino et al. 2012). Exhausted employees and those with intentions to leave the organization perform more poorly than do others (Wright and Cropanzano 1998). They also create potential transaction costs for organizations and indicate a low level of well-being among a critical group of organizational stakeholders (Grant et al. 2007).

Because proactive personalities tend to show exceptional initiative and perseverance, a conventional view of proactive people suggests that they are relatively impervious to stressors (Bateman and Crant 1993). However, newer evidence suggests instead that proactive people can be even more reactive to stressors (Chan 2006, Harvey et al. 2006). Yet we have no systematic explanation for why this could be the case. We propose that integrating knowledge of proactive personality and challenge and hindrance stressors in conservation-of-resources reasoning can provide such an explanation. In the following sections, we first provide our logic for the overall relationships between stressors, proactive personality, and strain outcomes. We then explain how perceived organizational support—viewed as a perception that one's resource investments are enriched by the organization—is a mechanism explaining these relationships. This sequence of our theorizing is consistent with the logic of mediational inference in that we first establish a relationship between predictors and outcomes and then increase understanding of the relationships by establishing an underlying mechanism responsible for such effects (Mathieu et al. 2008).

Proactive Personality and Stressor–Strain Relationships

Proactive personalities invest more resources than passive individuals. As a result, they stand to gain more from their efforts when their investments are successful. This suggests that a chronic stress environment that facilitates successful resource investment is likely to be particularly fruitful for proactive people. Challenge stressors represent such an environment because they provide opportunities for which investments can lead to growth and meaningful achievement. Thus, in jobs with frequent challenge stressors, proactive employees may be able to realize greater gains because of their larger investments, and these gains translate into relatively low levels of strain. In addition, growth and positive change are a particularly salient and

valued part of the self for proactive people; thus, they may need to self-regulate to a lesser degree when addressing challenge stressors (Muraven and Baumeister 2000), further helping them maintain lower levels of strain. On one hand, proactive individuals may be able to better leverage the opportunities inherent in challenge stressors, allowing them to meet their high expectations for resource investment. On the other hand, less proactive individuals—who invest at lower levels and with more difficulty—may obtain lesser gains and experience greater demands associated with challenge stressors, leading to higher levels of strain.

However, in addition to making larger investments than others, those high in proactive personality are also less likely to adjust their investments based on the environment, persevering against all odds. This may be problematic for chronic stress environments high in hindrance stressors, which inherently thwart returns on resource investments. Conservation-of-resources theory posits that one of the main causes of strain occurs because of stalled resources—a stalemate between resources and demands characterized by static resource levels that do not respond to additional resource investments (Halbesleben 2006). Proactive employees may particularly be strained by stalled resource investments because of their pervasive beliefs that no obstacle should prevent them from realizing gains. Thus, in a high hindrance stressor environment, they maintain a large investment even as their more passive peers reduce their investments based on a low likelihood of success (Hobfoll 1989). Given that hindrance stressors are less likely to accommodate successful resource investment, these larger investments may tend to translate into larger losses that increase the strain experienced. On the one hand, more proactive employees may be particularly galled by regular low returns on their considerable efforts. On the other hand, less proactive employees may not be as strained by stalled resources because their expectations and, thus, investments tend to be lower.

In sum, under chronic conditions, in which regularly recurring challenge and hindrance stressors persist as a typical part of the job, more proactive employees' approach to resource investment is likely to lead to differential levels of exhaustion and turnover intentions. Whereas challenge stressors have potential upsides and, thus, are amenable to proactive expectations regarding resource investment, hindrance stressors operate in opposition to the investment mindset of a proactive disposition and are more likely to violate those expectations. Thus, we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 1a. *Proactive personality weakens the positive relationship between challenge stressors and emotional exhaustion.*

Hypothesis 1b. *Proactive personality strengthens the positive relationship between hindrance stressors and emotional exhaustion.*

Hypothesis 2a. *Proactive personality weakens the positive relationship between challenge stressors and turnover intentions.*

Hypothesis 2b. *Proactive personality strengthens the positive relationship between hindrance stressors and turnover intentions.*

The Interactive Effect of Proactive Personality and Stressors on Perceived Organizational Support

Job Stressors and Perceived Support. We suggest that a central reason for proactive individuals' reactions to stressors stems from the fact that personality characteristics shape an individual's perception of the organizational context in distinctive ways. In particular, we propose that proactive people's reactions to stressors can be explained by the extent to which they perceive that support is available from the organizational environment around them. Conservation-of-resources theory posits that effective organizations operate resource passageways, which are ways in which the organizational environment can provide support for an employee's personal resource investments (Hobfoll 2011, Halbesleben et al. 2014). The concept of resource passageways suggests that "resource investment rests in large part on the collective pool of resources available within [the] organizational ecology, and individuals' and groups' ability to access those resources" (Hobfoll 2011, p. 118). The theory, thus, holds that, when organizations cultivate a resource-enriching ecology, it facilitates employees' efforts and reduces strain; in contrast, when organizations form a resource-demanding ecology, it obstructs employee efforts and increases strain (Chen et al. 2005, Gillet et al. 2012, Cooke et al. 2019).

According to Hobfoll (2011), the level of organizational support is a key indication of a resource-enriching ecology in which resource passageways are able to facilitate or accelerate the return on one's resource investments.² Perceived organizational support refers to an individual's belief that the organization values the individual's contributions and is concerned about the individual's well-being (Levinson 1965, Eisenberger et al. 1986). Although objective features of organizations inform perceptions of organizational support, research has long shown that personal experiences with one's organization create variance in individuals' perceptions (Rhoades and Eisenberger 2002). Additionally, research shows that perceptions of resources can impact efforts at self-regulation regardless of objective resource availability (Clarkson

et al. 2010), and perceptions of job characteristics may vary based on contextual cues without any changes to the objective underlying job characteristics themselves (Salancik and Pfeffer 1978, Griffin et al. 1987, Piccolo and Colquitt 2006). Thus, we focus on perceptions of organizational support rather than objective measures of organizational resource availability.

A key factor that shapes perceptions of support—and, thus, one’s interpretation of the enriching or depleting nature of the organizational context—is the level and type of stressors one faces in the organization (Rhoades and Eisenberger 2002). Across the entire literature on perceived organizational support, Kurtessis et al. (2017) find that developmental opportunities have a strong positive effect on perceptions of support, but role ambiguity and role conflict have significant negative effects on those perceptions. These findings are largely consistent with conservation-of-resources theory in that, whereas developmental opportunities suggest to employees perception of an environment that facilitates successful personal resource investments (a resource-enriching ecology), ambiguity and conflict suggest perception of an environment that limits the success of personal resource investments (a resource-demanding ecology). Similarly, challenge and hindrance stressors may differentially inform employees’ perceptions of organizational support. However, although challenge stressors are more likely than hindrances to be perceived as developmental (LePine et al. 2016), they also tend to cause strain (LePine et al. 2005). This ambivalence suggests an ambiguous relationship between challenge stressors and perceptions of organizational support (e.g., Richardson et al. 2008). In contrast, hindrance stressors, which stall resources and needlessly block progress and achievement, are likely to lead employees to perceive the organizational environment as not facilitating resource investment (Kurtessis et al. 2017), suggesting a negative relationship with perceived organizational support.

Proactive Personality and the Job Stressors–Perceived Support Relationship. In addition to shaping the level of investment one makes, the intense disposition of proactive people is also likely to shape their perceptions about why the stressors they face are present in their job. Because proactive people are especially sensitive to whether job stressors allow expected gains from resource investment, we argue that proactive employees are more likely to interpret stressors as an indication of the resource passageways in the organization. Specifically, we propose that proactive personality shapes the extent to which challenge and hindrance stressors predict perceived organizational support with proactive people forming (a) particularly strong perceptions of support if job stressors seem to facilitate meaningful

investment (a resource-enriching ecology) or (b) particularly strong perceptions of *inadequate* support (a resource-demanding ecology) if job stressors seem to reduce the returns on one’s investment (Li et al. 2010).

A large body of social psychology research highlights a human tendency to assume that others share one’s motivations, beliefs, and behavioral tendencies (Ross et al. 1977, Marks and Miller 1987). This false consensus effect occurs because people tend to spend more time with similar others, which makes their own beliefs and orientations more salient (Krueger and Clement 1994). One important implication of this pervasive tendency is that, although key resources, such as proactive personality, help people invest personal resources, those key resources also shape the kinds of motivations and beliefs that a person expects to be present in others (Holmes 1978).³ Indeed, the presence of a proactive personality in an employee suggests a particular form of false consensus effect that is relevant to how employees interpret the resource passageways in the organization. That is, because proactive people view themselves as capable of achieving goals no matter the odds, they are particularly likely to expect that organizational agents, such as managers, share a similar belief—that is, that they are unconstrained by the environment around them. This suggests that the proactive employee views organizational agents—that is, managers—as having control over the overall stress environment in the organization because proactive people consider themselves to have control of their own environment. Moreover, proactive employees are likely to maintain this assumption even if they notice evidence to the contrary because the false consensus tendency also causes people to believe that managers will share their belief in the future even if they do not appear to share it in the present (Rogers et al. 2017).

The idea that proactive employees assume that managers have control over job conditions is especially relevant to their perception of resource passageways in the organization. When an employee believes that the organization has control over job conditions, those conditions (e.g., stressors) are more likely to be linked to perceived support (Eisenberger et al. 1997, Rhoades and Eisenberger 2002). This suggests that proactive personality makes it more likely that challenge (hindrance) stressors are interpreted as an indication of a whether sufficient resource passageways are present in the organization (resource-enriching ecology) or not (resource-demanding ecology). That is, compared with more passive individuals, proactive people are more likely to view challenge stressors as indicative of a supportive organization that facilitates successful personal resource investments and are more likely to view hindrance stressors as obstacles indicative of an unsupportive organization that obstructs

personal resource investments. Accordingly, we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 3a. *Proactive personality moderates the relationship between challenge stressors and perceived organizational support such that it is more positive at high levels of proactive personality.*

Hypothesis 3b. *Proactive personality moderates the relationship between hindrance stressors and perceived organizational support such that it is more negative at high levels of proactive personality.*

Perceived Organizational Support as a Mediating Mechanism

Conservation-of-resources theory suggests that perceived organizational support, by virtue of signaling the potential availability of resources, should reassure individuals that their personal resource investments directed toward desired outcomes are complemented or supplemented in meaningful ways, thus enhancing personal well-being (cf. Halbesleben et al. 2014). More particularly, organizational support theory indicates that perceived organizational support provides socioemotional need fulfillment that reduces the amount of emotional exhaustion and promotes intentions to remain with the organization (Halbesleben 2006, Kurtessis et al. 2017). Perceiving that organizational resources are potentially available if necessary helps to create a buoyancy of employee mood, emotions, and esteem, reinforcing “positive aspects of the self” (Halbesleben 2006, p. 1135). This also engenders a sense of security and stability that is inherently needful for individuals (Deci and Ryan 2000, Chen et al. 2005), thereby reducing emotional exhaustion (Halbesleben 2006, Gillet et al. 2012). Moreover, increased perceptions of organizational support lead individuals to experience greater organizational commitment and reduced turnover intentions (Rhoades et al. 2001, Meyer et al. 2002). This expectation also aligns with social exchange theory, which likewise predicts that employees who perceive a high-quality exchange relationship with the organization exhibit a more psychologically sustainable relationship with their work (Lawler 2001, Cropanzano et al. 2017). In sum, compared with less proactive peers, proactive people are significantly less strained by challenge stressors but significantly more strained by hindrance stressors because of their stronger tendency to interpret stressors as indications of the resource environment as manifested by perceptions of organizational support.

Hypothesis 4a. *The effect of challenge stressors on emotional exhaustion (conditional on proactive personality) is mediated by perceived organizational support.*

Hypothesis 4b. *The effect of hindrance stressors on emotional exhaustion (conditional on proactive personality) is mediated by perceived organizational support.*

Hypothesis 5a. *The effect of challenge stressors on turnover intentions (conditional on proactive personality) is mediated by perceived organizational support.*

Hypothesis 5b. *The effect of hindrance stressors on turnover intentions (conditional on proactive personality) is mediated by perceived organizational support.*

Method

Sample and Procedures

To test our hypotheses, we studied architects from various firms and locations in the Midwestern United States. Architecture does not just involve understanding the stress and strain relative to materials and structures; it also involves relatively high levels of stress experienced by employees (Brienza 2011). In fact, architects experience a great deal of stressors from both sides of the challenge–hindrance aisle. For example, architects often face the challenge of time pressure to meet tight deadlines, and they must constantly deal with the hindrance of legal red tape regarding building specifications and zoning regulations. More generally, architects are a prototypical example of professionals whose project-based work often consists of institutionalized practices and workflows that give way to chronic patterns of stressors (von Nordenflycht 2010). They are also knowledge workers and, thus, represent a type of job environment representative of a substantial portion of the modern economy (Davenport 2005). For these reasons, architects represented an appropriate sample for our study.

The architects in our sample were surveyed three separate times in order to minimize method biases while preserving the construct validity of the subjective outcome measures which, consistent with our perceptual model, are best captured from the subjects directly (Chan 2009). Surveys were administered two weeks apart from one another. Two weeks was chosen as it minimized the possibility of mood or recency effects (Spector 2006), established general temporal precedence, and reduced the probability of impactful shocks to our subjects’ job environments, which could have skewed their answers. The study was designed as a between-individual examination because this was consistent with our focus on disposition and chronic stressors as opposed to specific behaviors and discrete events.

The time 1 survey included measures of proactive personality, challenge and hindrance stressors, job autonomy, and demographic variables. The time 2 survey included a measure of perceived organizational support. Finally, the time 3 survey included measures of emotional exhaustion and turnover intentions. Initially, surveys were sent to 454 individuals from a wide range of architecture firms. Of this group,

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics, Correlations, and Reliabilities

	Mean	Standard deviation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Emotional exhaustion	3.80	1.55	(0.92)								
2. Turnover intentions	2.01	1.05	0.48**	(0.95)							
3. Proactive personality	3.79	0.50	0.00	-0.03	(0.85)						
4. Challenge stressors	4.09	0.52	0.15*	-0.05	0.09	(0.87)					
5. Hindrance stressors	2.49	0.58	0.30**	0.34**	0.05	0.24**	(0.86)				
6. POS	3.80	0.79	-0.44**	-0.58**	0.12*	0.05	-0.46**	(0.93)			
7. Job autonomy	3.90	0.87	-0.34**	-0.41**	0.11	0.15*	-0.29**	0.47**	(0.91)		
8. Age	45.52	13.17	-0.33**	-0.18**	0.04	0.15*	-0.07	0.17**	0.31**		
9. Tenure	10.81	9.22	-0.17**	-0.19**	0.04	0.21**	-0.06	0.25**	0.26**	0.59**	
10. Gender	0.67	0.47	-0.16*	-0.11	0.06	0.02	-0.04	0.13	0.10	0.25**	0.15*

Notes. $N = 248\text{--}310$. Alpha reliabilities are reported on the diagonal, bolded in parentheses. POS = perceived organizational support. Male coded as one, female coded as zero.

** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

310 completed the first survey (a 62% response rate). Ninety percent of these respondents indicated that they were licensed architects, but the survey also included some architecture interns working toward licensure. The average age of respondents was 45.5 ($SD = 13.2$), and average tenure was 10.8 years ($SD = 9.2$). About 67% of these respondents were male. Sample sizes across the various surveys were similar with 256 respondents completing surveys one and two, 248 respondents completing surveys two and three, 252 respondents completing surveys one and three. In the end, 229 respondents completed all three surveys. Following Edwards and Lambert (2007), we used all possible cases in analyzing the hypothesized model. Descriptive statistics and correlations are reported in Table 1.

Measures

Emotional Exhaustion. To measure emotional exhaustion, we used five items ($\alpha = 0.92$) from the Maslach Burnout Inventory General Survey (Maslach and Jackson 1981). An example item is “I feel emotionally drained from my work.” Respondents indicated how often they felt exhausted using a scale from one (“never”) to seven (“every day”).

Turnover Intentions. To measure turnover intentions, we used four items ($\alpha = 0.95$) from Mitchell et al. (2001) and Spector et al. (2007). An example item is “Do you intend to leave the organization in the next 12 months?” Respondents answered using a scale from one (“definitely not”) to five (“definitely yes”).

Proactive Personality. We measured proactive personality with 10 items ($\alpha = 0.85$) using the short version of Bateman and Crant’s (1993) measure (Seibert et al. 2001). Example items include “I am constantly on the lookout for new ways to improve my life” and “I love being a champion for my ideas, even against others’ opposition.” Respondents indicated their level

of agreement with these statements (1 = “strongly disagree,” 5 = “strongly agree”).

Stressors. We measured challenge ($\alpha = 0.87$) and hindrance stressors ($\alpha = 0.86$) using 10 items each from LePine et al. (2016). Respondents were asked to indicate how frequently they experienced each stressful demand in their work (1 = “never,” 5 = “always”). Examples of challenge stressors include “Having to complete a lot of work,” “Performing complex tasks,” and “Having to balance several projects at once.” Examples of hindrance stressors include “Inadequate resources to accomplish tasks,” “Office politics,” and “Conflicting instructions from your boss or bosses.”

Perceived Organizational Support. To measure perceptions of organizational support, we utilized eight items ($\alpha = 0.93$) from Rhoades et al. (2001). Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the items (1 = “strongly disagree,” 5 = “strongly agree”). Example items include “Help is available from my organization if I have a problem” and “My organization cares about my opinions.”

Covariates. Previous research demonstrates that it is important to consider job autonomy—the level of control one has over how one does one’s work—when predicting strain outcomes (Karasek 1979, Parker and Sprigg 1999). More specifically, because autonomy is related to stressors (Tai and Liu 2007, Buch et al. 2015, Dawson et al. 2016) and is predictive of both strain (Alarcon 2011) and perceptions of support (Kurtessis et al. 2017), model relationships are likely biased if it is not included in statistical models (Schwab 2005). In addition, the stress literature identifies autonomy as a pervasive and vitally important job resource in organizations at the individual level (Bakker et al. 2005). Thus, we include it as a critical covariate to hold constant the level of a critical resource as we examine the role of proactive personality in shaping responses to stressors.

We measured it with three items from Spreitzer (1995). An example item is “I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job” (1 = “strongly disagree,” 5 = “strongly agree”).

Results

Measurement Model and Analytic Approach

Before testing our hypotheses, we assessed our measurement model via a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), examining the extent to which our various measures can be considered distinct. With regard to the measurement model, a CFA including the seven latent variables in our study exhibited good model fit ($\chi^2 = 824.67$, $df = 413$; comparative fit index = 0.941, root mean square error of approximation = 0.053 (0.048, 0.058), standardized root mean squared residual = 0.061). We compared the hypothesized measurement model to various alternative models. The hypothesized model exhibited better fit than (1) a model that constrained the correlation between challenge and hindrance stressors to one ($\Delta\chi^2 = 260.61$, $\Delta df = 1$, $p < 0.001$), (2) a model that constrained the correlation between hindrance and emotional exhaustion to one ($\Delta\chi^2 = 73.20$, $\Delta df = 1$, $p < 0.001$), and (3) a model that constrained the correlation between emotional exhaustion and turnover intentions to one ($\Delta\chi^2 = 11.43$, $\Delta df = 1$, $p < 0.001$). Thus, the hypothesized seven-factor model was supported.

We analyzed the hypothesized model using the path analytic approach outlined by Edwards and Lambert (2007) to test a mediated-moderation model. This approach combines moderated regression with path analysis and enables the calculation of conditional indirect effects for which bootstrapped confidence intervals may be estimated in order to test for significance. First, we conducted two moderated regression analyses (see Table 2) wherein emotional exhaustion and turnover intentions were regressed on the predictors, interactions, and the mediator. Then,

we estimated an equation that regressed the mediator (i.e., perceived organizational support) onto the predictors and interactions. All predictor variables were mean-centered. Following Edwards and Lambert (2007), we then created bootstrapped confidence intervals for the conditional direct, conditional indirect, and conditional total effects of challenge and hindrance on each outcome. We compared the effects at levels of proactive personality that were one standard deviation above (high) and one standard deviation below (low) the mean. We tested the significance of the difference between effects at high and low levels of proactive personality by estimating bootstrapped confidence intervals around each difference ($d = \text{effect at } +1 \text{ SD} \text{ minus the effect at } -1 \text{ SD}$). The conditional effects of challenge and hindrance are reported in Table 3.⁴ Finally, following the Aiken and West (1991) convention, we plotted the significant interactions from our model in Figures 2–5 in order to facilitate their interpretation. The simple slopes for these figures are reported in Table 3 (and described as follows) with their associated 95% confidence intervals.

Hypothesis Tests

As reported in Table 2, the challenge interaction ($b = 0.30$, standard error (se) = 0.15, $p < 0.05$) and hindrance interaction ($b = 0.30$, se = 0.15, $p < 0.05$) with proactive personality both significantly predicted emotional exhaustion when perceived support was included in the model, but this was not the case for either the challenge interaction ($b = -0.22$, se = 0.20, n.s.) or the hindrance interaction ($b = 0.30$, se = 0.20, n.s.) when predicting turnover intentions with perceived support in the model. Perceived support significantly predicted exhaustion ($b = -0.52$, se = 0.14, $p < 0.01$) and turnover intentions ($b = -0.60$, se = 0.09, $p < 0.01$). The interaction between challenge stressors and proactive personality significantly predicted perceived support ($b = 0.30$, se = 0.15, $p < 0.05$) in the expected direction

Table 2. Regression Coefficients Used for Deriving Path Analytic Estimates

	Perceived organizational support	Emotional exhaustion	Turnover intentions
Intercept	3.79** (0.04)	3.79** (0.09)	2.01** (0.06)
Autonomy	0.30** (0.05)	-0.39** (0.12)	-0.18* (0.07)
Challenge stressors	0.09 (0.09)	0.62** (0.20)	0.00 (0.12)
Hindrance stressors	-0.49** (0.08)	0.23 (0.18)	0.20† (0.11)
Proactive personality	0.15† (0.08)	0.09 (0.18)	0.15 (0.11)
POS	—	-0.52** (0.14)	-0.60** (0.09)
Challenge × PP	0.30* (0.15)	-0.87** (0.33)	-0.22 (0.20)
Hindrance × PP	-0.37* (0.15)	0.71* (0.33)	0.30 (0.20)
<i>N</i>	256	229	229
<i>R</i> ²	0.36	0.27	0.38
<i>F</i>	23.74**	11.90**	19.52**

Note. PP = proactive personality; POS = perceived organizational support.

** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$; † $p < 0.10$.

Table 3. Effects of Stressors Through Perceived Organizational Support, Conditional on Proactive Personality

	Emotional exhaustion				
	Total (Hypothesis 1, Hypothesis 2)	First stage (Hypothesis 3)	Second stage	Indirect (Hypothesis 4, Hypothesis 5)	Direct
Challenge effects					
High PP	0.06 (−0.40, 0.50)	0.24* (0.02, 0.51)	−0.52* (−0.86, −0.21)	−0.13* (−0.32, −0.02)	0.19 (−0.26, 0.59)
Low PP	1.08* (0.56, 1.66)	−0.06 (−0.36, 0.22)	−0.52* (−0.86, −0.21)	0.03 (−0.10, 0.22)	1.05* (0.55, 1.58)
Difference	−1.02* (−1.60, −0.45)	0.30* (0.02, 0.66)	—	−0.16* (−0.44, −0.01)	−0.86* (−1.42, −0.30)
Hindrance effects					
High PP	0.94* (0.58, 1.27)	−0.68* (−0.89, −0.45)	−0.52* (−0.86, −0.21)	0.35* (0.14, 0.66)	0.58* (0.22, 0.94)
Low PP	0.04 (−0.42, 0.63)	−0.31* (−0.60, −0.06)	−0.52* (−0.86, −0.21)	0.16* (0.04, 0.43)	−0.12 (−0.57, 0.49)
Difference	0.90* (0.29, 1.40)	−0.37* (−0.70, −0.04)	—	0.19* (0.04, 0.51)	0.70* (0.13, 1.21)
Turnover intentions					
Challenge effects					
High PP	−0.25 (−0.55, 0.08)	0.24* (0.02, 0.51)	−0.60* (−0.80, −0.39)	−0.14* (−0.35, −0.03)	−0.11 (−0.37, 0.18)
Low PP	0.15 (−0.24, 0.54)	−0.06 (−0.36, 0.22)	−0.60* (−0.80, −0.39)	0.04 (−0.13, 0.22)	0.11 (−0.24, 0.45)
Difference	−0.40 (−0.82, 0.02)	0.30* (0.02, 0.66)	—	−0.18* (−0.44, −0.02)	0.22 (−0.57, 0.12)
Hindrance effects					
High PP	0.76* (0.45, 1.10)	−0.68* (−0.89, −0.45)	−0.60* (−0.80, −0.39)	0.41* (0.24, 0.65)	0.35* (0.03, 0.71)
Low PP	0.24 (−0.10, 0.57)	−0.31* (−0.60, −0.06)	−0.60* (−0.80, −0.39)	0.19* (0.04, 0.40)	0.05 (−0.23, 0.37)
Difference	0.52* (0.07, 1.02)	−0.37* (−0.70, −0.04)	—	0.22* (0.04, 0.49)	0.30 (−0.12, 0.77)

Notes. $N = 229\text{--}256$. PP = proactive personality, First stage = effect of stressors on perceived support, Second stage = effect of perceived support on outcome. Bolded font represents hypothesized effects.

* $p < 0.05$.

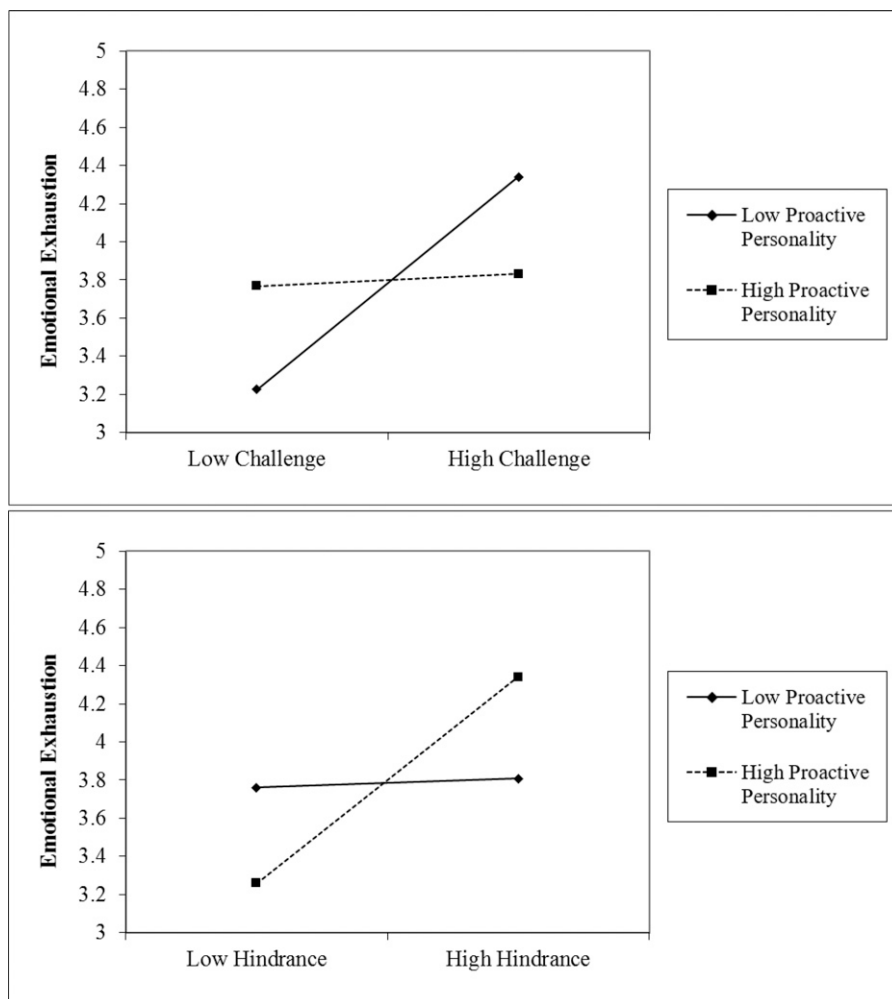
as did interaction involving hindrance stressors ($b = -0.37$, $se = 0.15$, $p < 0.05$).

We formally tested hypotheses by estimating the total effects (Hypotheses 1 and 2), first stage effects (Hypothesis 3), and indirect effects (Hypotheses 4 and 5) following the Edwards and Lambert (2007) procedure. To test Hypothesis 1, we examined whether the total effects of challenge (Hypothesis 1a) and hindrance (Hypothesis 1b) stressors on emotional exhaustion were statistically different at high versus low levels of proactive personality (Table 3, “Total”). The total effect (TE) of challenge stressors on emotional exhaustion at high levels of proactive personality was not statistically different from zero ($TE = 0.06$, 95% confidence interval (CI) (−0.40, 0.50)); however the total effect at low levels of proactive personality was positive ($TE = 1.08$, 95% CI (0.56, 1.66)). The difference between these two total effects was statistically significant ($d = -1.02$, 95% CI (−1.60, −0.45)), indicating that the relationship between challenge stressors and emotional exhaustion was attenuated (less positive) for those with more proactive personalities. Thus, Hypothesis 1a was supported. The total effect of hindrance stressors on emotional exhaustion at high levels of proactive personality was positive ($TE = 0.94$, 95% CI (0.58, 1.27)), and the total effect at low levels of proactive personality was not statistically different from zero ($TE = 0.04$, 95% CI (−0.42, 0.63)). The difference between the two conditional effects was also statistically significant ($d = 0.90$, 95% CI (0.29, 1.40)), indicating that the relationship between hindrance stressors and emotional exhaustion was exacerbated (more positive) for those with

more proactive personalities. Thus, Hypothesis 1b was also supported. Consistent with expectations, Figure 2 shows that the total effect of challenge stressors on exhaustion is strongly positive at high levels of proactive personality but is null at low levels; hindrance stressors exhibit the opposite pattern with a strong positive total effect at high levels of proactive personality and a null effect at low levels of proactive personality.

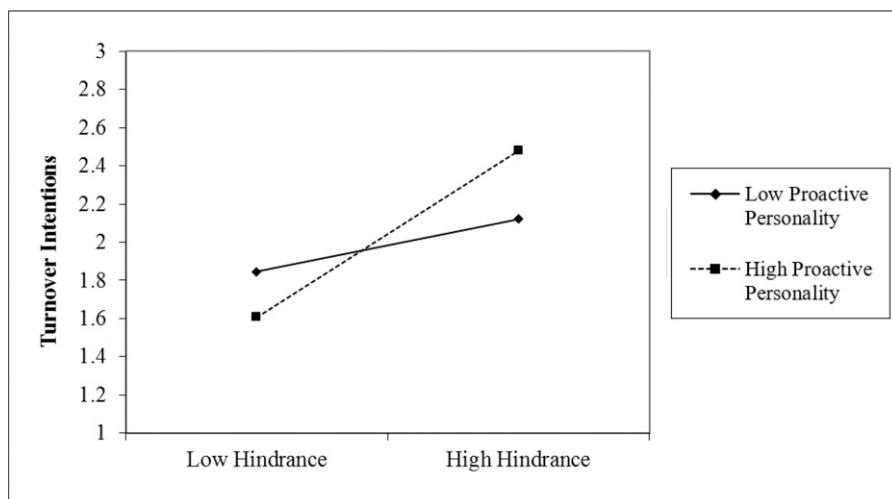
To test Hypothesis 2, we examined whether the total effects of challenge (Hypothesis 2a) and hindrance (Hypothesis 2b) stressors on turnover intentions were significantly different at high versus low levels of proactive personality. The total effect of challenge stressors on turnover intentions at high levels of proactive personality was negative ($TE = -0.25$, 95% CI (−0.55, 0.08)), and the total effect at low levels of proactive personality was positive ($TE = 0.15$, 95% CI (−0.24, 0.54)); however neither were statistically different from zero. The difference between the conditional total effects was in the hypothesized direction but not statistically significant ($d = -0.40$, 95% CI (−0.82, 0.02)). Thus, Hypothesis 2a was not supported. The total effect of hindrance stressors on turnover intentions at high levels of proactive personality was positive ($TE = 0.76$, 95% CI (0.45, 1.10)), and the total effect at low levels of proactive personality was not statistically different from zero ($TE = 0.24$, 95% CI (−0.10, 0.57)). The difference between the two conditional effects was also statistically significant ($d = 0.52$, 95% CI (0.07, 1.02)), indicating that the relationship between hindrance stressors and turnover intentions was stronger (more positive) for those with more proactive

Figure 2. Conditional Total Effects of Stressors on Emotional Exhaustion



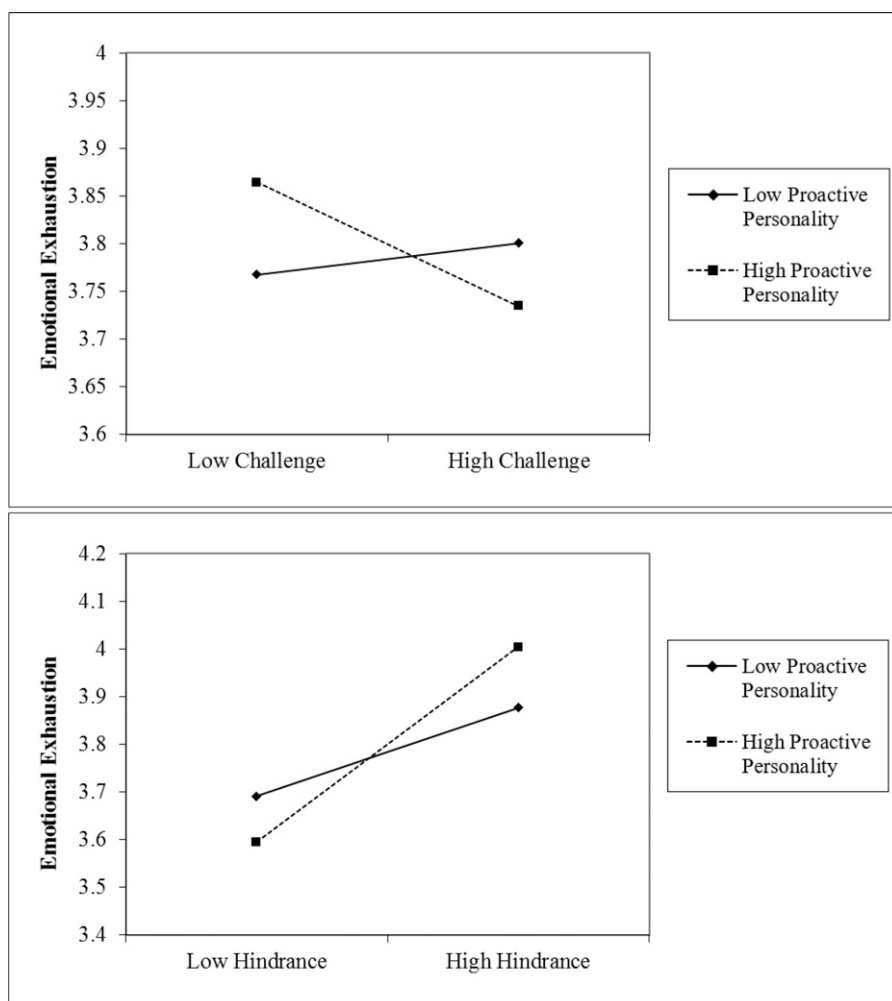
Notes. Total effect of challenge stressors at high proactive personality is null ($b = 0.06$, 95% CI $(-0.40, 0.50)$); effect at low levels is positive ($b = 1.08$, 95% CI $(0.56, 1.66)$). Total effect of hindrance stressors at high proactive personality is positive ($b = 0.94$, 95% CI $(0.58, 1.27)$); effect at low levels is null ($b = 0.04$, 95% CI $(-0.42, 0.63)$).

Figure 3. Conditional Total Effect of Hindrance Stressors on Turnover Intentions



Note. Total effect of hindrance stressors at high proactive personality is positive ($b = 0.76$, 95% CI $(0.45, 1.10)$); effect at low levels is null ($b = 0.24$, 95% CI $(-0.10, 0.57)$).

Figure 4. Conditional Indirect Effects of Stressors on Emotional Exhaustion via Perceived Organizational Support



Notes. Indirect effect of challenge stressors at high proactive personality is negative ($b = -0.13$, 95% CI $(-0.32, -0.02)$); effect at low levels is null ($b = 0.03$, 95% CI $(-0.10, 0.22)$). Indirect effect of hindrance stressors at high proactive personality is positive ($b = 0.35$, 95% CI $(0.14, 0.66)$); effect at low levels is less positive ($b = 0.16$, 95% CI $(0.04, 0.43)$).

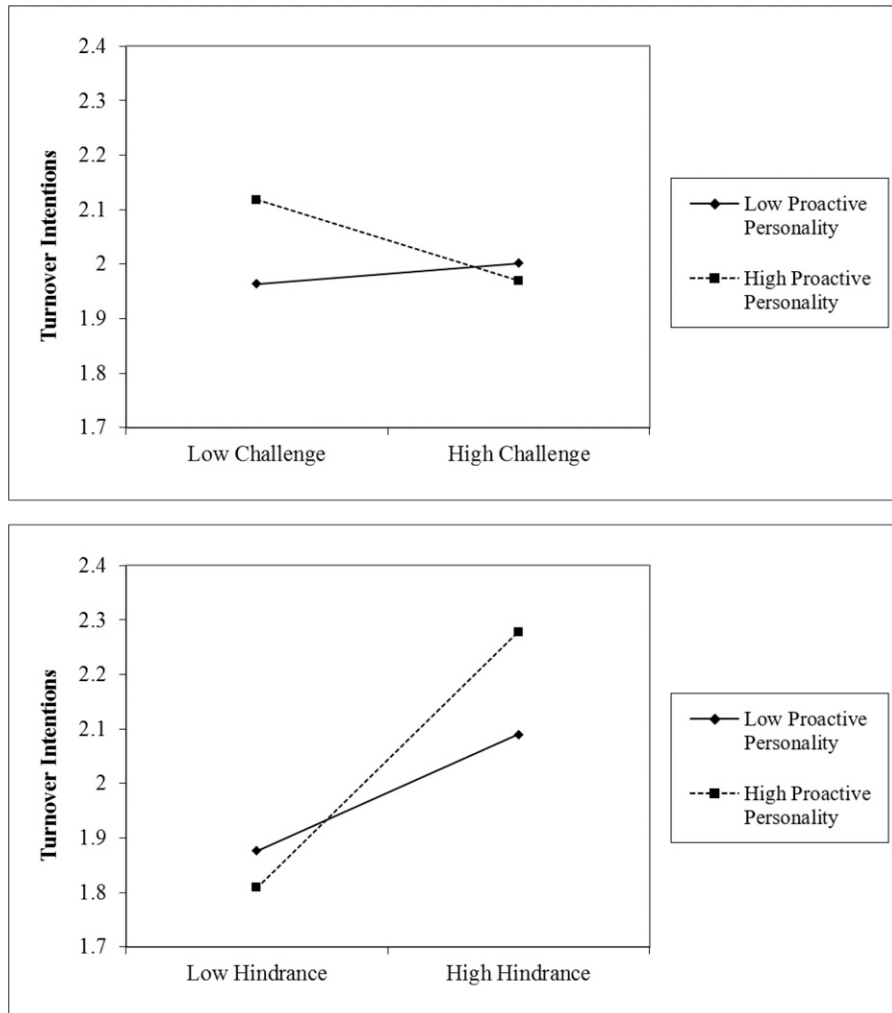
personalities. Thus, Hypothesis 2b was supported. Consistent with expectations, Figure 3 shows that the conditional total effect of hindrance stressors on turnover intentions is positive at high levels of proactive personality, and the total effect is null at low levels of proactive personality

Hypotheses 3a and 3b state that the relationships between challenge and hindrance stressors, respectively, and perceived organizational support are moderated by proactive personality. Thus, these hypotheses are with respect to the first stage of the indirect effects of stressors on emotional exhaustion and turnover intentions (Table 3, “First stage”). The conditional first stage effects showed that, at high levels of proactive personality, challenge stressors had a positive effect on support ($a = 0.24$, 95% CI $(0.02, 0.51)$), but at low levels, the effect was not statistically different from zero ($a = -0.06$, 95% CI $(-0.36, 0.22)$). The difference between the two effects was statistically

significant ($d = 0.30$, 95% CI $(0.02, 0.66)$), indicating that the relationship between challenge stressors and perceived organizational support is stronger (more positive) for those with more proactive personalities. Thus, Hypothesis 3a was supported. At high levels of proactive personality, hindrance stressors had a negative effect on support ($a = -0.68$, 95% CI $(-0.89, -0.45)$), but at low levels, the effect was less negative ($a = -0.31$, 95% CI $(-0.60, -0.06)$). The difference was statistically significant ($d = -0.37$, 95% CI $(-0.70, -0.04)$), indicating that the relationship between hindrance stressors and perceived organizational support is stronger (more negative) for those with more proactive personalities. Thus, Hypothesis 3b was supported.

Next, we examined Hypotheses 4 and 5, which state that the conditional effects of challenge (Hypotheses 4a and 5a) and hindrance (Hypotheses 4b and 5b) stressors on emotional exhaustion and turnover intentions are

Figure 5. Conditional Indirect Effects of Challenge and Hindrance Stressors on Turnover Intentions via Perceived Organizational Support



Notes. Indirect effect of challenge stressors at high proactive personality is negative ($b = -0.14$, 95% CI $(-0.35, -0.03)$); effect at low levels is null ($b = 0.04$, 95% CI $(-0.13, 0.22)$). Indirect effect of hindrance stressors at high proactive personality is positive ($b = 0.41$, 95% CI $(0.24, 0.65)$); effect at low levels is less positive ($b = 0.19$, 95% CI $(0.04, 0.40)$).

mediated by perceived organizational support. Specifically, we analyzed the conditional indirect effects to see whether the indirect effects were significantly different from each other at high and low levels of proactive personality (Table 3, “Indirect”). Results indicate that the indirect effect of challenge stressors on emotional exhaustion at high levels of proactive personality was negative ($ab = -0.13$, 95% CI $(-0.32, -0.02)$), but at low levels of proactive personality, it did not differ from zero ($ab = 0.03$, 95% CI $(-0.10, 0.22)$). The difference was statistically significant ($d = -0.16$, 95% CI $(-0.44, -0.01)$), indicating that challenge stressors have an ameliorating relationship with emotional exhaustion through perceived organizational support for those with more proactive personalities, but not for those with less proactive personalities. Thus, Hypothesis 4a was supported. The

indirect effect of hindrance stressors on emotional exhaustion at high levels of proactive personality was positive ($ab = 0.35$, 95% CI $(0.14, 0.66)$) as well as well at low levels of proactive personality though the effect was weaker ($ab = 0.16$, 95% CI $(0.04, 0.43)$). The difference was statistically significant ($d = 0.19$, 95% CI $(0.04, 0.51)$), indicating that, although hindrance stressors are positively associated with emotional exhaustion through worsening perceptions of organizational support, this is even more so the case for those with more proactive personalities. Thus, Hypothesis 4b was also supported. Consistent with expectations, Figure 4 illustrates that the indirect effect of challenge stressors on exhaustion through perceived organizational support is negative at high levels of proactive personality but null at low levels of proactive personality, and the indirect effect of

hindrance stressors on exhaustion is positive at high levels of proactive personality and less positive at low levels of proactive personality.

The indirect effect of challenge stressors on turnover intentions at high levels of proactive personality was negative ($ab = -0.14$, 95% CI $(-0.35, -0.03)$), but at low levels of proactive personality, the effect did not differ from zero ($ab = 0.04$, 95% CI $(-0.13, 0.22)$). The difference was statistically significant ($d = -0.18$, 95% CI $(-0.44, -0.02)$), indicating that challenge stressors also have an ameliorating relationship with turnover intentions through perceived organizational support for those with more proactive personalities but not for those with less proactive personalities. Thus, Hypothesis 5a was supported. The indirect effect of hindrance stressors on turnover intentions at high levels of proactive personality was positive ($ab = 0.41$, 95% CI $(0.24, 0.65)$). It was also positive but to a lesser degree at low levels of proactive personality ($ab = 0.19$, 95% CI $(0.04, 0.40)$). The difference was statistically significant ($d = 0.22$, 95% CI $(0.04, 0.49)$), indicating that although hindrance stressors are positively associated with turnover intentions through perceptions of organizational support, this is even more so for those with more proactive personalities. Thus, Hypothesis 5b was also supported. Consistent with this interpretation, Figure 5 illustrates that the indirect effect of challenge stressors on turnover intentions at high levels of proactive personality is negative, whereas the indirect effect at low levels is null; the indirect effect of hindrance stressors at high levels of proactive personality is positive, whereas the effect is less positive at low levels.

In summary, proactive personality significantly moderated the total, indirect (via perceived support), and direct effects of stressors on emotional exhaustion. Proactive personality also significantly moderated the total and indirect effect of hindrance stressors on turnover intentions but moderated only the indirect effect of challenge stressors on turnover intentions. Taken together, these results suggest that perceived organizational support “partially” mediates the effect of both types of stressors on emotional exhaustion whereas “fully” mediating the effect of both types of stressors on turnover intentions.

Supplemental Turnover Analysis

These results demonstrate that proactive personality generally exhibits the hypothesized moderation effect on the relationship between challenge and hindrance stressors and strain, partially mediated by perceived organizational support. However, after examining exhaustion and turnover intentions, we then sought to further test the consequences of our model for an objective behavioral outcome: turnover. Obtaining turnover data for our architect sample could not be done via survey given that many of the participants who

had left their organization were likely to have new contact information. As a result, we gathered turnover data by manually examining the LinkedIn profiles of our participants. Architects maintain active professional groups on LinkedIn, and the vast majority of our sample had active LinkedIn profiles. We were able to find turnover data for all but four of the architects who initially signed up for the study, all four of which did not complete past survey 1, therefore allowing for an analysis of all respondents who were included in the path analysis. We coded turnover by examining whether they had changed organizations at any time between the final survey and January 2020 (a 2.5-year time period) to avoid any confounding influences associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. The data from LinkedIn was checked against data from other online resources, primarily employee listings on company and professional association websites and also email communication when such was possible. This helped check against any confounding situations, such as a merger, which would show a different company name but would not constitute turnover (something that occurred with several of our participants).

Using the turnover data, we conducted binary logistic regression analysis with turnover as the outcome, perceived organizational support as the mediator, and the other predictors included in our initial analyses as described. To estimate the model coefficients, we used the PROCESS procedure, which mirrors our analyses but easily adjusts for the key differences inherent in logistic regression (Hayes 2017). The first stage of the model (showing significant interactive effects on perceived support) was identical to the results found in Table 2, and the second stage results (i.e., the logistic regression) are reported in Table 4. The interaction

Table 4. Logistic Regression of Turnover on Predictors

	Turnover
Intercept	2.75* (1.03)
Autonomy	0.10 (0.23)
Challenge stressors	-0.15 (0.40)
Hindrance stressors	-0.05* (0.39)
Proactive personality	0.97* (0.39)
POS	-1.23** (0.29)
Challenge × PP	0.08 (0.66)
Hindrance × PP	-1.20 [†] (0.68)
N	256
-2LL	195.53
Model LL	33.00
df	7.00

Notes. N = 256. See supplemental analysis for indirect effects: proactive personality significantly moderated the indirect effects of challenge and hindrance stressors on turnover via POS. The index of moderated mediation was significant (IMM=0.458 (0.070, 1.026)). PP = proactive personality; POS = perceived organizational support.

**p < 0.01; *p < 0.05; [†]p < 0.10.

terms did not have direct effects on turnover. However, perceived organizational support exhibited a significant negative effect on turnover ($b = -1.23$, $se = 0.29$, $p < 0.001$). Using bootstrapped confidence intervals, we found the indirect effects (via perceived support) of both challenge and hindrance stressors on turnover to be contingent on proactive personality. At low levels of proactive personality, challenge stressors exhibited a null indirect effect (IE) ($IE = 0.086$, 95% CI = $(-0.314, 0.474)$), whereas at high levels of proactive personality, the effect was significantly negative ($IE = -0.283$, CI = $(-0.749, -0.020)$). The index of moderated mediation shows that the variation in indirect effects was significantly contingent on proactive personality ($IE = -0.37$, CI = $(-0.973, -0.001)$). At low levels of proactive personality, hindrance stressors exhibited a positive indirect effect ($IE = 0.367$, CI = $(0.051, 0.903)$). This effect was much stronger at high levels of proactive personality ($IE = 0.821$, CI = $(0.399, 1.466)$). The index of moderated mediation shows that the variation in indirect effects was significantly contingent on proactive personality ($IE = 0.458$, CI = $(0.070, 1.026)$). Proactive personality also exhibited a direct effect on turnover ($b = 0.97$, $se = 0.39$, $p < 0.05$).

Together, this analysis demonstrates that not only do the hypothesized interactions exhibit significant indirect effects via perceived organizational support on turnover intentions, but these interactions also predict the objective behavioral outcome of turnover via perceived organizational support. That perceived organizational support is a strong predictor of turnover also lends further support to the idea that it is a key mechanism whereby the proposed interactions affect employees.

Discussion

In this study, we theorized about how people vary in their responses to stalled resources, and we specifically implicate the role of proactive personality in the stress process. Findings from a study of architects generally supports our theorizing and helps to clarify a puzzling equivocation in the literature: why might proactive personality both mitigate and exacerbate the effects of stressors on employee strain? We find that distinguishing between two fundamental types of stressors may be the key to providing this clarification: challenge stressors are *less* likely to have undesirable effects on emotional exhaustion and turnover intentions when proactive personality is high, whereas hindrance stressors are *more* likely to have undesirable effects on these outcomes when proactive personality is high. These interactive effects are largely explained by the fact that proactive people report significantly higher perceived organizational support than others when faced with chronic challenge stressors but significantly lower support than others when faced with chronic hindrance stressors.

Later analysis with turnover data shows that perceived support also mediates interactive effects on turnover after 2.5 years. Together, our findings suggest that proactive personality shapes the degree to which stressors inform perceptions of organizational support, which, in turn, helps to explain emotional exhaustion, turnover intentions, and turnover behavior. Next, we discuss the theoretical and practical contributions of this research.

Theoretical Contributions

This research extends our understanding of stalled resources as well as the role of proactive personality in the stressor–strain process. First, our research provides insights about stalled resources. Upon introducing this concept, Halbesleben et al. (2014) suggest that individuals experiencing a stalemate between invested resources and gained resources may “drop this ambition and switch to achieving alternative goals” (p. 1352). Our research helps to clarify for whom such a switch is least likely and how not switching affects individual well-being and behavioral withdrawal. Indeed, we find that proactive people seem to be particularly strained by workplace conditions characterized by stalled resources (i.e., chronic hindrance stressors). This finding suggests an intriguing pattern regarding stalled resources: that those who tend to invest resources intensely no matter the environmental factors ultimately fare poorly unless their work stressors are aligned with meaningful challenges, improvements, and growth. Indeed, our findings relative to challenge stressors suggest that proactive employees thrive under these conditions even more than their less proactive peers. In contrast, when work stressors are characterized by bureaucracy, interpersonal conflict, ambiguity, etc., proactive employees’ relentless efforts may ultimately be wasted, leaving them to feel even more burned out and much more likely to leave their organization than their less proactive peers.

Second, our findings suggest that key resources, such as proactive personality, are not always entirely beneficial, an idea that builds on other research showing that predominantly positive personality traits are capable of exacerbating stress (e.g., conscientiousness; Witt et al. 2004). Thus, although key resources typically facilitate the effective management of personal resources, they do not make employees immune to stressors. In addition, although conservation-of-resources theory suggests that more proactive individuals tend to expect greater returns on their efforts than others do, our findings suggest that they may not be better at distinguishing between situations that are amenable to proactive investments and those that are not. This appears to be the natural result of taking proactive maxims too far with individuals not acknowledging that some demands (hindrances) should be evaluated

differently than others (challenges). Taken in conjunction with prior work that finds the effectiveness of proactive personality depends on one's acuity in judging the particular aspects of the immediate environment (Chan 2006), our study implies that a proactive personality may lead to an unwise allocation of personal resources with employees expending effort in circumstances in which the marginal cost of doing so exceeds the marginal benefit to the detriment of their own personal well-being.

Third, our research sheds additional light on the question of how employees perceive resource passageways in their organization, which is an area of conservation-of-resources theory that has yet to receive much attention. Hobfoll (2011) argues that successful organizations create resource passageways to "facilitate the transaction of resources to meet the organization's mission" (p. 118). Yet employee perceptions of those passageways depend on each employee's individual experiences with personal resource investment in the organization. Our findings suggest that proactive personality magnifies the importance of the distinctive features of challenge and hindrance stressors such that proactive people are particularly likely to interpret the type of job stressors they face as an indication of whether resource passageways are present and functioning effectively. This pattern is particularly notable for challenge stressors because, whereas the effect of challenge stressors on perceived organizational support for those low in proactive personality was null, the effect for those high in proactive personality was significantly positive. It appears that more passive individuals view challenge stressors ambivalently as evidence of both a supportive organization (opportunity for growth and development) and an unsupportive organization (asking too much), whereas proactive people largely view them mostly in terms of the former. In contrast, hindrance stressors negatively predict perceived support regardless. However, the magnitude of this relationship is more than two times greater for proactive people, which strongly suggests that they view hindrance stressors as an exceptionally troubling indication of low support. Taken as a whole, these findings may indicate that proactive employees are more likely than others to blame or credit their organization based on the stressors they encounter in their work. More broadly, perceived organizational support may be an important link between work demands and personal well-being because of what it signals about the personal utility of investing oneself at very high levels.

Finally, our research makes an important contribution to the specific proactive personality literature. Proactive personality is often viewed as a desirable trait because of proactive individuals' capacities to be "unconstrained" by environmental forces and not be merely "reactive" to work demands (Bateman and Crant 1993, Parker et al.

2010, Spitzmuller and Van Dyne 2013). Indeed, much of the literature indicates that more proactive individuals can influence their environment in dynamic contexts driven by discrete events or transitions (Morrison 1993, Bauer and Green 1998, Ashforth et al. 2007, Bauer et al. 2007). However, our study highlights that proactive personality can entail important risks or costs with respect to well-being. In chronic contexts in which stressors constantly recur as a part of one's job, proactive people's tenacity may be a double-edged sword, giving them an advantage in challenge-heavy environments but a disadvantage in hindrance-heavy environments.

Explaining that individuals with a more proactive personality may be relatively unconstrained in the face of some work demands (i.e., challenge stressors) while experiencing greater strain in the face of other work demands (i.e., hindrance stressors) contributes to the nascent literature on the dark side of proactivity and provides a more nuanced understanding of the utility of proactive personality. The idea that proactive personality may not always be beneficial is noted by others (Chan 2006, Harvey et al. 2006, Li et al. 2010). However, the idea that proactive personality may relate negatively to personal well-being highlights an important caveat to the proactivity literature, which generally expects a positive relationship between proactive personality and well-being (e.g., Greguras and Diefendorff 2010). Whereas a proactive nature is found to drive employee performance and career success, in certain stress environments, these benefits appear to be accompanied by important costs. A proactive individual surrounded by frequent hindrance stressors may be particularly vulnerable to feelings of burnout and a desire to leave, sometimes actually culminating in turnover behavior. Ironically, less proactive employees may not be as vulnerable to the deleterious effects of stubborn barriers in the workplace by the very fact that they invest less heavily of themselves in the first place.

Practical Implications

This research helps address how organizations might leverage the valuable resource of proactive employees in a sustainable manner. Our research suggests that proactive individuals' capacity to respond positively to some types of work stressors may also lead them to react particularly negatively if the stressors are perceived as meaningless obstacles that seem impossible to remove instead of meaningful opportunities to effect positive change. Managers should consider finding ways to promote the presence of challenge stressors and reduce the presence of hindrance stressors if they want to ensure that (a) proactive individuals in their employ are able to maintain high levels of well-being and (b) organizational costs are reduced for replacing those who turn over as a result of hindrance

stressors. Leadership models, such as the path-goal model, suggest that a leader's primary function is to remove obstacles to employee performance (House 1971). Indeed, as Hobfoll (2001) suggests, "removing obstacles to people's successful application of resources" is a crucial function of effective organizational managers who wish to facilitate proactive efforts by employees (p. 362, emphasis added). Unfortunately, the introduction of challenges or removal of hindrances may not be feasible in all contexts. The reality of organizational life is that hindrance stressors are likely to be present in most settings to some degree with potentially greater prevalence in some types of organizations (e.g., large bureaucratic organizations) than others (e.g., small entrepreneurial ventures). Thus, managers may not be able to easily or directly remove such obstacles and may need to consider other strategies that help support their employees. Some potential remedies for resolving proactive employees' sensitivity to hindrances may be to manage expectations, to validate their emotional reaction to hindrances, and to provide a long-term plan for helping them enact changes in the organizational environment. This idea is consistent with Hobfoll's (2011) discussion of creating supportive resource passageways in organizations. We urge managers to find ways to provide resources for proactive individuals to utilize in their efforts to make meaningful changes at work even when hindrance stressors prove resistant to removal efforts.

An additional implication is that managers should consider selecting employees that interact sustainably with the makeup of their organizational stress environment—that is, to make selection decisions around proactivity based on an objective assessment of the organization's ecology of stressors and resources. Organizations characterized by challenge stressors may do well to continue the predominant wisdom of selecting proactive employees who are ready to take charge and make things happen. However, organizations that continue to be plagued by hindrances—that is, that are either unable or unwilling to reduce the level of hindrance stressors or to provide resources to help their employees cope with hindrances—should acknowledge the potential replacement costs associated with higher turnover for their more proactive employees, particularly when the costs of turnover may exceed the benefits gained by the employees' proactivity during employment. Instead, they might resort to selecting more moderately proactive employees who are less likely to burn out and leave. Similarly, proactive individuals should be mindful of the costs involved with high-hindrance jobs when considering longer term career planning. In sum, the role of proactive personality in influencing the extent to which job conditions shape perceptions of support suggests that selection decisions might affect how employees relate job conditions to perceptions of support.

Limitations and Future Research

One potential limitation of the research presented here is that our focal variables are self-reported, potentially creating a same-source bias that inflates statistical relationships. Importantly, methodological research shows that interaction effects cannot be inflated because of common method variance and, instead, can be severely deflated (Siemsen et al. 2010). Thus, given that our hypotheses focus on interaction effects, same-source bias does not represent a serious threat to the interaction effects tested in this study. However, it is possible that a same-source bias inflated the relationships between the mediator in our model and the outcomes given that these are not interaction effects. To attenuate concerns about same-source data, we used a three-wave, time-lagged approach that limited the possibility of recency or mood effects (Spector 2006). However, in addition, we explicitly tested for common method variance by using the CFA marker technique (Williams et al. 2010), which is shown to consistently account for inflated factor correlations (Williams and O'Boyle 2015). We measured attitude toward the color blue as a marker variable in the time 2 survey with three items recommended by Simmering et al. (2015). Results show that the correlations between perceived organizational support, emotional exhaustion, and turnover intentions were virtually identical whether method variance was accounted for. Thus, we find no evidence of marker-related same-source bias in our data. Finally, we demonstrate that the hypothesized interactions exhibit significant indirect effects on an objective criterion, turnover behavior, for which no bias is possible.

As a field survey, this study lacks the ability to lead to strong causal inference such as that attainable in an experiment. However, the causal direction outlined in our theorizing is consistent with the predominant theoretical perspectives in stress theories and organizational support theory. Moreover, we find that perceived support is a significant predictor of turnover after 2.5 years, which demonstrates temporal precedence with respect to that outcome and suggests that temporal precedence is plausible with respect to exhaustion and turnover intentions. The fact that stressors exhibit weak to nonsignificant effects on turnover when perceived support is included in the model further suggests that the proposed causal order is plausible. This field study gives our research strong external validity, but future research might identify a way to strengthen the internal validity of these conclusions. Experiments may be devised to examine the causal nature of our model; however, it is difficult to create experimental conditions that provide an ecologically valid test of ideas rooted in chronic workplace conditions. A better option may be to use a cross-lagged panel design that more precisely identifies effects over time.

As with any sampling strategy, our focus on architects likely exhibits trade-offs in terms of generalizability. It

may be that architects experience the interaction between proactive personality and work stressors differently than employees in other contexts. This may limit the applicability of our findings to other employees. However, although the inferences made in this study are unlikely to cover all contexts, architects generally experience work in ways that are representative of many other professionals. For example, the Occupational Information Network (O*NET) describes architect jobs as revolving around projects, being client-based, and involving a variety of analytical and creative skills. To the extent that other subpopulations of employees share similar work characteristics with architects, the results of the study are likely to generalize. The architects in our sample covered varying degrees of career stages and organizational ranks and represented a wide array of different architecture firms, some large and some small. In this way, our sampling strategy was able to control for some work characteristics while still capturing significant variance in individual employee circumstances. Future research might explicitly examine whether or how the stress reactions of proactive people differ across occupations.

Notably, some theories other than conservation of resources may be able to provide additional insight into how proactive personality shapes the stress process. Our focus is on intrapersonal processes; however, other perspectives, such as equity theory or the literature on social value orientation, may be better equipped to consider how proactive people engage in social comparison. For example, our research examines proactive personality as an intense disposition toward resource investment; however, we do not yet know if or how proactive personality shapes one's preferences for how resources ought to be distributed between peers. Van Lange (1999) distinguishes between prosocial, individualistic, and competitive social value orientations with regard to how resources are allocated within social groups. To our knowledge, the relationship between proactivity and social value orientation has received very little attention (cf. Janssen 2016). Some research suggests that those with a prosocial value orientation view noncooperative others as immoral; an analogous extension of this research might suggest that proactive people view nonproactive individuals as immoral or view obstructive workplace features such as hindrance stressors as immoral. In fact, it is possible that this may serve as an alternative explanation (though identical in direction) for why proactive people are particularly strained by job demands that appear to waste resources. Future research might directly examine these similarities between proactive personality and prosocial value orientation.

This study finds that perceived organizational support partially explains why proactive people are particularly sensitive to the features of challenge and hindrance stressors. However, we still find significant direct effects

of the interactions on emotional exhaustion. This suggests there may be other mediating mechanisms at play that we have not yet uncovered. Foremost, future work might consider more directly examining whether these effects are captured by expectations of reciprocity or needs-based self-enhancement, which are common mechanisms in organizational support theory that do not directly overlap with conservation-of-resources theory (Rhoades and Eisenberger 2002). Additionally, our findings suggest that future work on social exchange may fruitfully examine whether individuals' differences in investment preferences shape their responses to patterns of exchange (cf. Lawler 2001) or whether (and which) organizational barriers to equitable exchanges lead some to experience more strain.

In this research, we focus on the between-person effects of chronic stressors. However, it may be important to consider within-individual variance in stressors. Future research might investigate how proactive personality shapes an employee's response to an unusually high stress day or week at work and if the response depends on the nature of the stressor (cf. Rosen et al. 2020). Finally, it may be that our model has additional complexities that are not made explicit. For example, we find that challenge stressors lead to increased perceptions of perceived support for proactive people. Yet it may be that other contextual resources are necessary in order for this to be the case. In our study, we account for autonomy, which is an important job resource. Future research might provide a more focused examination of how contextual resources further moderate the interaction between challenge stressors and proactive personality.

Conclusion

Proactive personality is a characteristic that is lauded by professionals, managers, and researchers, and its benefits are even often touted via cultural archetypes claiming that one can achieve whatever one desires if one is willing to act rather than be acted upon. In our rush to pursue goals as influential agents, however, we might consider how our expectations for change may color our reactions to the challenging opportunities or hindering obstacles we face. Our research provides an improved understanding of these relationships, allowing managers and professionals to make informed decisions that affect individual and organizational well-being.

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Endnotes

¹ In support of an association between hindrance stressors and stalled resources, the Cavanaugh et al. (2000) measure of hindrance stressors specifically captures “the degree to which my career seems stalled,” which captures one particular example in which resource level (i.e., career success) does not seem to change with additional investment.

² Other indications of resource passageways mentioned by researchers include stability and safety (Hobfoll 2011) as well as working conditions, organizational and societal culture, and work–home interface situations (Halbesleben et al. 2014).

³ Holmes notes that people are often found “attributing traits to others as a function of [their] own personality rather than the reality of the situation” (p. 678). This idea is central to the false consensus effect, by which people have a “general tendency to perceive a false consensus for one’s opinions, evaluations, attributes, and behaviors” (Marks and Miller 1987, p. 75, emphasis added).

⁴ Tests of differences in effects do not depend on the scores used to represent high and low values of the moderator (i.e., +1 and –1 SD). As Edwards and Lambert (2007) explain, “Increasing the gap between scores increases the standard error of the difference between the effects, such that tests comparing effects at low and high scores remain the same” (p. 17). Thus, choosing alternative scores for high and low, such as 2 or 0.5 SD, does not change the results of the test.

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