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## The Effect of Perceived Organizational Support and Proactive Personality on Reentry Adjustment for Returned Teachers from University

**Dr. Yan Yan**

*Business School, Shanghai Dianji University, Shanghai, China*

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### ABSTRACT

Based on re-entry research, this paper studies the effect of perceived organizational support and proactive personality on re-entry adjustment for returned teachers from universities. Specially, there are three dimensions of perceived organizational support for returnees, financial perceived organizational support, career perceived organizational support and adjustment perceived organizational support. This study discusses the effect of perceived organizational support from general, work and interaction environment individually. Data is collected from 229 returned teachers from universities. The results show that financial perceived organizational support, career perceived organizational support and adjustment perceived organizational support have significant positive effect on general adjustment, work adjustment and interaction adjustment respectively. Moreover, proactive personality has positive effect on re-entry adjustment. Specifically, proactive personality shows more significant positive effect when financial perceived organizational support and adjustment perceived organizational support is high.

**Keywords:** Returnee, Perceived Organizational Support, Proactive Personality, Re-entry Adjustment

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### INTRODUCTION

With the high speed of globalization, the focus of world competition has been changed from resource war to talents war. Technology innovation is the dynamic for a nation's economic development. However, talents, especially those from overseas transferring knowledge, are predominant for innovation. It is shown that there are 818.4 thousand Chinese return to China when they finish degree overseas from 1978 to 2011. Moreover, colleges and universities make great contribution to this number. According to statistics from Shanghai Science and Education System, returned teachers in universities accounts for 71.5% of all the returnees. With the implementation of strategy of talents, the proportion of returned teachers are rising. Actually, returned teachers are having a big scale in some universities.

For returned teachers, they will experience reverse culture shock. They may feel difficult in adapting the home environment. However, there is little research focusing on the readjustment of this group. This paper concentrates on returned teachers in universities; exploring how perceived organizational support and proactive personality affect readjustment by questionnaires. Hopefully, this research will be helpful for human resource management practice for universities.

### THEORETIC FRAMEWORK

Perceived organizational support (POS) is one of the most important variables in organization research. Researchers have agreed that perceived organizational support is the global beliefs concerning the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Robert Eisenberger & Robin Huntington, 1986). However, researchers have different view on the dimensions of perceived organizational support. Thus, this paper classifies the categories of perceived organizational support dimensions with the background of re-entry firstly. Then, it discusses the relation between perceived organizational support and readjustment, and the relation between proactive personality and readjustment. Finally, it concludes the limitation of these literatures.

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*\*Address for correspondence:*

sadyy85@163.com

### **Perceived Organizational Support with the Background of Re-Entry**

Perceived Organizational Support reflects not only if the employer values the contribution employee makes to the organization, but also cares about the social and emotional need of the employee. Eisenberger & Huntington (1986) found out the dimensions of Perceived Organizational Support through large scale of employee survey. This scale has been widely used in human resource management researches. Their research shows that Perceived Organizational Support is one-dimension variable that can be measured by 17-item scale. This scale has been widely used in human resource management researches. However, Kraimer (2004) proposed that different kinds employee might have different dimensions of Perceived Organizational Support, especially for cross-culture employee. He considered that Perceived Organizational Support for cross-culture employee should have adjustment Perceived Organizational Support, career Perceived Organizational Support and financial Perceived Organizational Support. Furthermore, he verified this thought by a survey on expatriates.

Reentry refers to the process that enters into the home environment after a period of cross culture experience. Cross culture experience means a period of continuous visit to the foreign environment that is very different from home environment. According to social support theory by Kahn (1976), social support can be classified into three categories, aid, affect and affirmation.

In returned teachers context, aid entails providing relevant information and assistance to the returned teachers in order to reduce his or her stress and help him or her make sense of work environment. Pre job training and regular meeting offered by organization are dominant ways for returned teachers to get information about the organization and home environment, such as organization rules, organization culture and social norms. This information satisfies the need of returnees and helps them to know more about the organization and home environment. Therefore, aid is taken as adjustment support.

Affect is based on interpersonal attraction between the source of social support and support seeker. In order to attract returnees, universities offer a lot of career support, such as separate promotion channel and priority in project application, which satisfies returnees' need of career development and self-fulfillment. Thus, career support is good for common interest of organization and employees. Based on this, organization and employees will construct independent relationship. Therefore, career support can be categorized as the second type of social support affect.

The third type of social support is affirmation and refers to reaffirming the support seeker's abilities and beliefs in one self to deal with the stressful situation. In re entry context, organization offers financial support to returnees in order to keep high living standard and welfare (Florkowsk & Fogel, 1999), which will boost their confidence in coping with the stressful environment. In practice, Chinese universities attract returnees by high income, such as salary, setting-in allowance and scientific research fund. As for returned teachers, financial support offered by universities could help to cope with the financial difficulties in life and concentrate on job. However, as for universities, the financial support could be taken as the evaluation and affirmation of returned teachers' work and coping stress ability. Therefore, the third type of social support is taken as financial support.

### **The Relation between Perceived Organizational Support and Readjustment**

The foreign environment, such as outlook and behavior norms, has affected returnees when they are abroad. As a result, returnees have changed their behavior and thoughts after they come back home. On the other hand, home environment also has changed when returnees are abroad. For example, people have changed their communicational and behavioral habits and outlook. The key point is that the change of returnees and home environment are independent. They are not related to each other. Thus, returnees may feel strange when they come back home and encounters strong sense of uncertainty (Black & Gregersen, 1992). They need adjust to the new home environment. Black (1991) has found that there are three dimensions of adjustment, general adjustment, work adjustment and interaction adjustment.

Perceived organizational support is predominant for readjustment for returnees (Payne, 1980). In general environment, financial support is the most effective way to satisfy the basic need of returned teachers. When returned teachers have high financial perceived organizational support, that means high income, such as salary, communication and housing subsidy, will help to solve the living,

communication and housing problems. Therefore, financial perceived organizational support is helpful to general adjustment.

*H1a: Financial Perceived Organizational Support is positively related to General Adjustment.*

In work environment, career support offered by the organization would satisfy the career development and self-fulfillment need of returnees. Zweig (2006) has verified that the main purpose for returnees to come back is to seek good career opportunity through a survey by 145 Chinese researchers overseas. Universities will offer returned teachers effective training, excellent promotion space, clear task and career planning. When returned teachers have high career perceived organizational support, they will know how to finish work, cooperate with colleagues, satisfy the supervisor's expectation and make good use of skills and knowledge actively.

*H1b: Career Perceived Organizational Support is positively related to Work Adjustment.*

In interaction environment, returnees have been leaving for abroad for many years. They are far away from the home interaction environment for a long time. When they come back, people at home may have changed their interaction habits and norms. Thus, the pre job training, regular meeting and association activities organization holds are important channel for returned teachers to know more about the home interaction environment. When they have high adjustment perceived organizational support, they will feel happy to get the useful information from the organizational activities which will decrease the uncertainty of home environment. As a result, it will be easier for them to readjust to the home interaction environment.

*H1c: Adjustment Perceived Organizational Support is positively related to Interaction Adjustment.*

### **The Relation between Proactive Personality and Readjustment**

Proactive personality is defined as the relatively stable tendency to effect environmental change (Bateman & Crant, 1993). O'Sullivan (2002) found that individual with proactive personality tends to have proactive behavior. Individual with proactive personality will actively get information from the new environment so as to decrease the uncertainty and adjust to the new environment. As for proactive returned teachers, they will purposely change social and non-social environment around them in order to get information and construct social network. In working environment, returned teachers will get work information through the network with colleagues and get expectation information through network with supervisors. Chan (2000) found that proactive individual would get technical information through network with colleagues and referent information through network with supervisor by a survey of new employees. In non-work environment, proactive individual would interact with family and friends frequently so as to get non-work information, such as living customs, behavioral habits and interaction norms. Work and non-work information are helpful for them to know more about the organization and home environment, and will be easy to adjust to the new environment.

H2a: Proactive Personality is positively related to General Adjustment;

H2b: Proactive Personality is positively related to Work adjustment;

H2c: Proactive Personality is positively related to Interaction adjustment.

### **The Interaction between Perceived Organizational Support and Proactive Personality**

According to Trait Activation Theory, a kind of personality can be active depends on whether environment has the clue related to this personality. That is, individual will have the behavior related to one personality only when he or she is staying in the environment that is closely related to the personality (Tett & Burnett, 2003). When returned teachers get much financial support from the universities, individual with proactive personality will actively interact with families and friends, for example, participating parties and clubs, from which they may get some non-work information. While in work environment, universities offer career support for returned teachers which satisfy their career development needs. In order to reciprocate the universities, employees think they have the responsibility for the organization (Bateman & Crant, 1993). Returned teachers would be responsible for the task and organization. Meanwhile, support from the organization and supervisor is helpful to cope with the difficulties in job. As for returned teachers with proactive personality, it is easy for

individual with high career perceived organizational support to get work information and adjust to the new work environment easily.

H3a: The interaction between Financial Perceived Organizational Support and Proactive Personality is positively related to General Adjustment.

H3b: The interaction between Career Perceived Organizational Support and Proactive Personality is positively related to Work Adjustment.

H3c: The interaction between Adjustment Perceived Organizational Support and Proactive Personality is positively related to Interaction Adjustment.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Sampling**

This research is designed to take survey on returned teachers in colleges and universities in China. They are born in China, studying or working aboard for a period in foreign universities and research institutions. When they finish their education or work, they choose to return home and get a job on knowledge transformation and creation in Chinese colleges and universities.

This survey was taken two months from 9th November to 2nd January in 2011. 919 questionnaires were sent to returned teachers from about 20 cities, such as Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjing, Chengdu, Wuhan, etc. because of wrong email address or delivering error, 871 questionnaires were successfully sent. 254 questionnaires were collected and valid questionnaires were 229, accounting for 90.16%.

In this survey, females are 68.6% and males are 31.4%. The average age is 34.8. individuals who have doctor degree accounts for 83.9%. 82.1% have been married. They have worked for their organization for 4.1 years on average. 91.7% are studying or working in western countries in which US, UK, Canada and Australia are the dominant countries that they are staying. They have been abroad for 5.4 years on average and have been returned back for 3.5 years on average. 52.7% people do not have work experience and 78.4% do not have overseas experience before they going abroad.

### **Scale**

Scale of Perceived Organizational Support is from Kraimer (2004). There are 12 items in his scale in which 4 items are evaluating one dimension respectively. Item 5 illustrates “(Company) takes an interest in my career.” and item 8 is “I feel that (Company) cares about my career development.” They show the similar meaning in Chinese, so we delete item 5. Finally, there are 4 items for Financial Perceived Organizational Support, 3 items for Career Perceived Organizational Support and 4 items for Adjustment Perceived Organizational Support.

Proactive personality is taken from Seibert (1999). There are 10 items in evaluating individual’s proactive behavior, such as “Wherever I have ever been, I have been a powerful force for constructive change”, “If I see something I don’t like, I fix it”.

Readjustment is from Black (1991) containing 15 items, in which 7 items are evaluating for general adjustment, 4 are work adjustment and 4 are interaction adjustment. All the scale are evaluating by 5-point Likert which 1 showing strongly disagree and 5 showing strongly agree.

### **Scale Validity**

Confirmatory factor analysis is used to test the validity of scale. Because of the small sample size, we refer to Hewett (2001) dividing the sample into two parts, exogenous and endogenous variables. Perceived Organizational Support and Proactive Personality are exogenous variables and Readjustment is endogenous variable. Although Chi-square value for both exogenous and endogenous variables are significant ( $\chi^2=383.048$  and  $\chi^2=257.097$  respectively), this value is affected by sample easily. Therefore, we should consider further indicator of goodness of fit. Exogenous variable model has GFI=0.858, CFI=0.935, TLI=0.926 and endogenous variable model has GFI=0.865, CFI=0.904, TLI=0.884. According to Hewett (2001), this factor model is fitting good.

Then, we test the reliability of this scale. Table 1 shows that all the Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  of sub-scale are over 0.7, having good internality. AVE and composite reliability are over 0.5 and 0.7 respectively.

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According to Bagazzi (1988), all the factor loading are over 0.5, showing good unidimensionality and convergent validity.

**Table1.** Factor Loading and Reliability

Item	Loading	Cronbach's $\alpha$	AVE	Composite reliability	Item	Loading	Cronbach's $\alpha$	AVE	Composite reliability
<b>FPOS</b>					<b>PAP</b>				
Item 1	0.798	0.916	0.734	0.917	Item 19	0.775	0.857	0.529	0.918
Item 2	0.884				Item 20	0.753			
Item 3	0.864				Item 21	0.853			
Item 4	0.878				<b>GA</b>				
<b>CPOS</b>					Item 22	0.714	0.873	0.504	0.876
Item 5	0.884	0.897	0.746	0.898	Item 23	0.686			
Item 6	0.792				Item 24	0.631			
Item 7	0.911				Item 25	0.758			
<b>APOS</b>					Item 26	0.742	0.929	0.767	0.929
Item 8	0.904	0.929	0.767	0.929	Item 27	0.782			
Item 9	0.864				Item 28	0.642			
Item 10	0.881				<b>IA</b>				
Item 11	0.853				Item 29	0.7	0.867	0.633	0.869
<b>PAP</b>					Item 30	0.835			
Item 12	0.634	0.857	0.529	0.918	Item 31	0.82			
Item 13	0.695				Item 32	0.802			
Item 14	0.64				<b>WA</b>				
Item 15	0.751				Item 33	0.75			
Item 16	0.677				Item 34	0.822			
Item 17	0.637				Item 35	0.726			
Item 18	0.826				Item 36	0.672	0.826	0.554	0.832

## RESULTS

In order to explore the relation between variables, we construct correlation of each variable in Table 2. It is shown that financial perceived organizational support has significant correlation with general adjustment and work adjustment. Career perceived organizational support is correlated significantly with general adjustment, interaction adjustment and work adjustment. It has the same result for adjustment perceived organizational support and proactive personality. It is noted that proactive personality has significant correlation with three dimensions of perceived organizational support.

**Table2.** Correlation of Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	FPOS	CPOS	APOS	PAP	GA	IA	WA
FPOS	2.719	0.959	1	0.737**	0.703**	0.225**	0.212**	0.099	0.353**
CPOS	2.989	0.919		1	0.765**	0.248**	0.248**	0.171**	0.425**
APOS	2.643	0.927			1	0.250**	0.201**	0.193**	0.366**
PAP	3.406	0.621				1	0.176**	0.226**	0.256**
GA	3.352	0.714					1	0.607**	0.478**
IA	3.665	0.731						1	0.547**
WA	3.478	0.708							1

\*\* $P < 0.01$

Based on the result of correlation, it is needed to construct model and test the hypothesis. According to Jaccard (2003), we use multiple regressions to test the main effect and interaction effect of this model. There are two groups of equation. In The first group, dependent variable is perceived organizational support and proactive personality and independent variable is readjustment. That is to test how perceived organizational support and proactive personality have effect on readjustment. In the second group, the interaction of perceived organizational support and proactive personality is added into the equation to test the interaction effect. Thus, the equation is showing as followed.

$$GA = \beta_0 + \beta_1 FPOS + \beta_2 PAP + \beta_3 CV + \varepsilon_1 = f_1(x) + \varepsilon_1 \quad (1)$$

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$$WA = \beta'_0 + \beta'_1 CPOS + \beta'_2 PAP + \beta'_3 CV + \varepsilon'_1 = f'_1(x) + \varepsilon'_1 \quad (2)$$

$$IA = \beta''_0 + \beta''_1 APOS + \beta''_2 PAP + \beta''_3 CV + \varepsilon''_1 = f''_1(x) + \varepsilon''_1 \quad (3)$$

$$GA = f_1(x) + \alpha_1 FPOS \times PAP + \varepsilon_2 \quad (4)$$

$$WA = f'_1(x) + \alpha'_1 CPOS \times PAP + \varepsilon'_2 \quad (5)$$

$$IA = f''_1(x) + \alpha''_1 APOS \times PAP + \varepsilon''_2 \quad (6)$$

Among the equation, CV is controlled variable including gender, age, education, marital status, and period of going abroad and coming home, work and overseas experience before going abroad.  $\beta_0, \beta_1$  and  $\beta_3$  are constant,  $(\beta_1 \dots \beta_3)$ ,  $(\beta'_1 \dots \beta'_3)$ ,  $(\beta''_1 \dots \beta''_3)$  and  $(\alpha_1, \alpha'_1, \alpha''_1)$  are coefficient.  $(\varepsilon_1, \varepsilon_2)$ ,  $(\varepsilon'_1, \varepsilon'_2)$  and  $(\varepsilon''_1, \varepsilon''_2)$  are errors.

M1a, M1b and M1c are to test the main effect of perceived organizational support and proactive personality on readjustment. M2a, M2b and M2c are to test the interaction effect of perceived organizational support and proactive personality on readjustment.

**Table 3.** Regression Results of Equation

Equation	M1 Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> =0.186, F=6.095			M2 Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> =0.169, F=4.329			M3 Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> =0.15, F=4.933		
Dependent Variable	GA			WA			IA		
Independent Variable	Coefficient	SD	T	Coefficient	SD	T	Coefficient	SD	T
Constant	2.218	0.51	4.346 <sup>a</sup>	3.112	0.54	5.759 <sup>a</sup>	1.705	0.519	3.286 <sup>a</sup>
FPOS	0.21	0.047	4.428 <sup>a</sup>						
CPOS				0.137	0.052	2.639 <sup>c</sup>			
APOS							0.253	0.049	5.162 <sup>a</sup>
PAP	0.236	0.076	3.098 <sup>b</sup>	0.25	0.082	3.063 <sup>b</sup>	0.195	0.077	2.526 <sup>b</sup>
Equation	M4 Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> =0.19, F=5.745			M5 Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> =0.146, F=4.46			M6 Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> =0.166, F=5.048		
Dependent Variable	GA			WA			IA		
Independent Variable	Coefficient	SD	T	Coefficient	SD	T	Coefficient	SD	T
Constant	2.24	0.509	4.398 <sup>a</sup>	3.11	0.535	5.809 <sup>a</sup>	1.785	0.515	3.466 <sup>a</sup>
FPOS	0.22	0.048	4.593 <sup>a</sup>						
CPOS				0.161	0.053	3.065 <sup>b</sup>			
APOS							0.268	0.049	5.461 <sup>a</sup>
PAP	0.228	0.076	2.991 <sup>b</sup>	0.243	0.081	3.004 <sup>b</sup>			
FPOS*PAP	0.112	0.08	1.401						
CPOS*PAP				0.19	0.085	2.228 <sup>b</sup>			
APOS*PAP							0.188	0.082	2.286 <sup>b</sup>

a:  $p < 0.01$ , b:  $p < 0.05$ , c:  $p < 0.1$

This research is construct regression on the six equations. The result is shown in Table 3. All the variable values are means of item which evaluating it. Meanwhile, all the variables in second group equations have been mean-centered before regression in order to solve the multicollinearity. In the six equations, the biggest VIF is 2.01, which means this model does not have strong multicollinearity.

It is shown in the table 3 that adjusted R2 for M1a and M2a are 0.186 and 0.19 respectively. Adjusted R2 for M1b and M2b are 0.169 and 0.146, 0.15 and 0.166 for M1c and M2c respectively. This means independent variable could well explain dependent variable in each equation.

According to table 3, financial perceived organizational support has significant positive effect on general adjustment (T=4.428), career perceived organizational support shows positive effect on work

adjustment ( $T=2.639$ ), adjustment perceived organizational support has positive effect on interaction adjustment ( $T=5.162$ ). Thus, H1a, H1b and H1c are supported.

Also, it is found that proactive personality has positive effect on general adjustment, work adjustment and interaction adjustment. The T values are 3.098, 3.063 and 2.526 respectively. Therefore, H2a, H2b and H2c are supported.

It is shown in the table 3 that the coefficient of interaction of financial perceived organizational support and proactive personality is positively significant ( $T=2.228$ ), and the coefficient of interaction of adjustment perceived organizational support and proactive personality is positively significant ( $t=2.286$ ). Therefore, H3b and H3c are supported. H3a is not supported because the coefficient of interaction of financial perceived organizational support and proactive personality is not significant. That means when it is high financial perceived organizational support, proactive personality does not improve general adjustment significantly. The reason for this is that most returned teachers are lack of work experience before they are going abroad. When they return home to enter into a work environment and begin their career development. They are in the exploration of career stage and pay more attention on skills learning, application and information collection. At the same time, they are evaluating themselves whether they are fit for this job. They value career opportunity more than financial income. Thus, for returned teachers who have proactive personality, whatever supports the organization give, their proactivity in searching information would not be affected. They will stay in the organization only if they could show their talents in it, rather than they could get high income without good career development.

## **CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION**

This paper is subjected as returned teachers in universities in China and explores the relationship between perceived organizational support, proactive personality and readjustment with the background of reentry. Regression results show that H1a, H1b, H1c, H2a, H2b, H2c, H3b and H3c are supported, H3a is not supported.

The first finding is financial perceived organizational support is good for general adjustment career perceived organizational support is benefit for work adjustment, and adjustment perceived organizational support is helpful for interaction adjustment. This finding is consistent with stress theory, which proposes that foreign environment will bring uncertainty and stress to individual. As the most important social support, Organization support will help the employee to decrease the uncertainty and release from the stressful environment.

Secondly, returned teachers with proactive personality could adjust to the general, work and interaction environment more easily. Returned teacher are knowledge workers. Same with other knowledge workers, returned teachers are eager for better work opportunities, such as training system and promotion channel. But they have some difference with other knowledge workers. For example, they have strong sense of survival and competition during abroad. They have high self-efficiency. Their internal sense of survival and completion are brought out in foreign environment when they return. They make effort to adjust to home environment and make achievement in career.

Thirdly, when returned teachers with high career perceived organizational support, individual with proactive personality will adjust to the work environment more easily. This is also true for returned teachers with high adjustment perceived organizational support. Returned teachers are coming back for good career development and self-achievement. However, they do not know much about behavioral and interaction norms when they are abroad. When they enter into the organization, organization support makes it easy to get work and non-work information for proactive returnees, which helps them to adjust to the home environment.

Finally, because of the limited time and energy, there are some limitations of this research. Firstly, the research design could be modified. This research is using self-report which may leads to error. Although we have tried best to reduce it, it may exist in this research. Thus, in future study, researchers may use many subjects to make survey in order to get object evaluation of perceived organizational support and readjustment. Secondly, the measurement could be modified. Because of limited time and energy, we are using cross-section data collection to test the effect. However, longitudinal data collection could be used in future research to have a broader view of returnees' adjustment.

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## **AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY**



**Dr. Yan Yan** is the lecturer of Business School of Shanghai Dianji University in China. Dr. Yan has published many papers in both international journals and Chinese journals. Dr. Yan has successfully applied for MOE (Ministry of Education in China) Project of Humanities and Social Sciences (Project No. 14YJC630156), which is one of the most important government grants in China. She also has got municipal government grant, which will be finished at the end of 2015. Dr. Yan was granted by Chinese government to visit York University as an exchange PhD student from 2010 to 2011. During this time, she served as a research assistant to finish the experiment held by Professor Fei Song and Bram Cansby. After returning to China, She applies for project with the cooperation of Canadian professors and Chinese scholars.