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GRATITUDE, PROACTIVITY, AND JOB PERFORMANCE: IS
THERE A RELATIONSHIP?

Dissertation presented to Universidade Católica Portuguesa
to obtain a Master's Degree in Psychology in Business and
Economics

By

Daniela Filipa Maio Cristóvão

Faculty of Human Sciences

September 2022



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Abstract

We have witnessed a rise in positive psychology, especially in the workplace environment, with increasing studies analysing the benefits of positive emotions in organisational settings. Consistently, job proactivity and job performance are crucial for a company's and employee's success and have been linked to gratitude. Therefore, the aim of this dissertation is to analyse the efficacy of a gratitude intervention on job performance, as a function of job proactivity. One hundred and sixty-five participants were randomly assigned to three journal-type interventions (control condition vs. gratitude condition vs. positive control condition) and were then asked to complete the scales for measuring gratitude at work, job proactivity and job performance. The results showed that job proactivity is not a moderator for the relationship between gratitude at work and job performance. However, exploratory analyses suggest that the relationship between gratitude for meaningful work and task performance is statistically significant for contexts where gratitude and other positive emotions are encouraged. This study showed the usefulness of brief inexpensive interventions that can be implemented by organisations through nudges to promote positive emotions in a work environment, and consequently, improve task performance.

Keywords: Gratitude at the work, job proactivity, job performance

Resumo

Temos experienciado um aumento na área da psicologia positiva, especialmente dentro do ambiente de trabalho, com um aumento de estudos analisando os seus benefícios nos ambientes organizacionais. Consistentemente, a proatividade no trabalho e o desempenho no trabalho são cruciais para o sucesso de uma empresa e de um funcionário e mostram estar ligados à gratidão. Desta forma, o objetivo desta dissertação foi analisar a eficácia de uma intervenção de um diário de gratidão no desempenho no trabalho, como função de proatividade no trabalho. Cento e sessenta e cinco participantes foram atribuídos aleatoriamente a três intervenções com formato de diário (condição de controlo vs. condição de gratidão vs. condição de controlo positivo) e foi pedido que preenchessem as escalas para medir gratidão no trabalho, proatividade no trabalho e desempenho no trabalho. Os resultados mostraram que a proatividade no trabalho não é um moderador para a relação entre gratidão no trabalho e desempenho no trabalho. No entanto, análises exploratórias sugerem que a relação entre a gratidão pelo trabalho significativo e o desempenho de tarefa é estatisticamente significativa para contextos onde a gratidão e outras emoções positivas são incentivadas. Este estudo mostrou a utilidade de intervenções breves e de baixo custo que podem ser implementadas pelas organizações por meio de nudges para promover emoções positivas em um ambiente de trabalho e, conseqüentemente, melhorar o desempenho de tarefas.

Palavras-chave: Gratidão no trabalho, proatividade, desempenho profissional

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List of Abbreviations

CP: Contextual performance

CWB: Counterproductive work behaviour

GAWS: Gratitude at work scale

GAWS-MW: Gratitude for meaningful work

GAWS-SWE: Gratitude for a supportive work environment

IWPQ: Individual work performance questionnaire

LMX: Leader-member exchange theory

OCBs: Organisational citizenship behaviours

TP: Task performance

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

It is not the first time that we associate the concept of “*job*” with “*stress*” or “*burnout*”. According to the Order of Portuguese Psychologists (OPP, 2020), occupational stress is the second most reported work-related health problem in Europe, and it is associated with 50% to 60% of work absenteeism (Leka & Jain, s.d. as cited in OPP, 2020). Additionally, according to Mental Health at Work (2017), 60% of employees have experienced mental health problems within the previous year due to work.

Job burnout, for example, has increased during the COVID-19 pandemic (Kotera et al., 2021 as cited in Cotterill et al., 2021) which should be worrisome to employers since this disorder can have an impact on mental and physical health or hinder job satisfaction and perceived performance (Maslach et al., 2001).

Some organisations are depicted as having environments where egocentrism, selfishness (Vogel, 2006 as cited in Fehr et al., 2017) and conflict thrive (Harvey & Martinko, 2009 as cited in Fehr et al., 2017), consequently affecting the mental and physical health of the employees. Nonetheless, in the last years, positive psychology has been recognised as a great tool to promote employees’ well-being within work environments. For instance, some organisations promote good relationships and prosocial behaviour through “appreciation and thankfulness” (Cameron & Spreitzer, 2012 as cited in Fehr et al., 2017).

Additionally, it has been stated that positive emotions can be fostered in supportive organisational environments, and specifically gratitude can aid us to surpass difficult obstacles (Froman, 2010) and improve employee well-being (Kaplan et al., 2014).

Recently, within organisations, the study of gratitude and its relationship with various variables has been further explored, some of which include prosocial organisational behaviours (Ford et al., 2018; Grant & Gino, 2010; Li et al., 2022; Michie, 2009; Spence et al., 2014), teamwork, and altruism (Dik et al., 2015). Furthermore, gratitude has also been shown to be of importance concerning work engagement (H. W. Lee et al., 2019), job satisfaction (Stegen & Wankier, 2018), and job performance (Chhajer & Dutta, 2021; Grant & Wrzesniewski, 2010; Komase et al., 2019).

However, to my knowledge, how gratitude at the workplace is related to proactivity and job performance is a promising, underexplored topic and therefore the focus of this dissertation.

More specifically, this dissertation aims to study if gratitude at the workplace influences job performance, moderated by proactivity. Specifically, the goal of this dissertation is to test if a gratitude intervention affects how grateful employees feel. Consequently, if gratitude is linked to job performance which, if checked, can aid future organisational interventions. And finally, if proactive behaviours strengthen the previous relationship, then leaders and managers can use this discovery to foster an environment prone to invoking proactive behaviours.

Hence, an in-depth literature review about the subject to define the variables used, to frame them through relevant theories and to clarify the suppositions made will be presented in Chapter 2, followed by the methodology used to test the hypotheses in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 describes in detail the analysis of the empirical data collected through an online experiment. Chapter 5 includes the discussion of the findings, whilst Chapter 6 encloses the conclusions, limitations, and future managerial implications derived from this dissertation.

This research will contribute to the literature on the beneficial role that gratitude plays in the workplace, by informing how it can affect job performance and if proactivity can moderate this relationship. Additionally, gratitude interventions not only require very few resources but also, managers and organisations can implement them rather easily.

CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

2.1. Theories in Gratitude Literature

Gratitude is an other-praising emotion, that is a positive emotion that results from good or exemplary actions performed by other individuals (Haidt, 2003). Emotions are often the subject of research regarding their use and purpose. As such, researchers have constructed theories regarding other-praising emotions and, consequently, gratitude as well.

Weiner (1985) proposed a theory of motivation and emotion often referred to as “attribution theory” which describes how people explain the causes of certain events which will determine future motivated behaviour. In the case of gratitude, research suggests that this emotion is only elicited when the beneficiary's action was voluntary and intended. However, even if the presence of these antecedents, the beneficiary may or may not decide to feel grateful due to personal reasons (Subramanian R & Thakur, 2022). Therefore, gratitude is dependent on the appraisal the benefactor gives to the action. The fact that gratitude is an “attribution-dependent emotion” led Subramanian R and Thakur (2022) to consider this theory to be the best explaining model for gratitude.

While the attribution theory focuses on the connection between the antecedents of gratitude (e.g.: “perceived cost and intention of the help”) and the emotion elicited, other theories such as the broaden-and-build theory and the find-remind-and-bind theory have focused on the consequences of the emotion gratitude (Subramanian R & Thakur, 2022).

In the theoretical field of positive emotions, Fredrickson (1998) noted that the existing “emotion-general” models failed at including various positive emotions due to an incompatibility between characteristics of these and negative emotions, thus proposing a distinctive model for positive emotions called the broaden-and-build model. While negative emotions act in reducing someone’s momentary thought-action repertoire, Fredrickson, based on empirical evidence, proposed that positive emotions contrarily broaden someone’s momentary thought-action repertoires which allow an individual to build their lasting personal resources. This aspect of positive emotions may have been important in evolution, however nowadays its value manifests mainly in two different ways: (a) positive emotions may act as “antidotes” for the aftereffects of negative emotions; and (b) positive emotions may protect health. The first implication is referred to by the author as the “undoing effect” where, supported by empirical evidence, the author

hypothesised that positive emotions not only help the body substitute the narrow thought-action repertoire for a vaster one (after the more linear thought process is no longer needed) but also allow to restore flexible thinking. Secondly, the aftereffects of negative emotions can have health repercussions if frequent and prolonged, therefore if the “undoing effect” is possible, it means that positive emotions can interrupt harmful implications and consequently improve well-being.

Moreover, while both previous theories can embrace various emotions depending on some characteristics, Algoe (2012) developed the find-remind-and-bind theory which focuses on specifically gratitude. This theory focuses on reciprocally altruistic relationships, in other words, while the importance of gratitude in establishing relationships with strangers or acquaintances has been discussed before (e.g.: McCullough et al., 2008), the find-remind-and-bind theory proposes that the primary goal of gratitude is to improve interpersonal connections regardless of the existing intimacy level. First, the *find* function of gratitude posits that if this emotion is experienced because of a moral act then it helps to find new relationships. Secondly, the *remind* function of gratitude helps to remind people of their existing high-quality significant relationships. And finally, the *bind* function of gratitude helps to strengthen the relationships by prompting expressions of this emotion (Subramanian R & Thakur, 2022).

The theoretical models behind the emotion of gratitude aid us in understanding the possible causes and consequences of this emotion, assisting the development of conceptual definitions for gratitude.

2.2. Defining Gratitude

Gratitude is conceived as thankfulness and as an appreciation for life directed at either other individuals or nonhuman sources. Within various religions gratitude is a concept extensively explored since it is commonly encouraged to believers to be grateful to a superior entity and their “many gifts and mercies”, thus making this emotion integrally related to spirituality (Emmons & Shelton, 2002) which connects individuals in a transcendent manner (Streng, 1989 as cited in Emmons & Shelton, 2002). Additionally, as an emotion gratitude is explained as “acute, intense, and typically brief psychophysiological changes that result from a response to a meaningful situation in one’s environment” (Rosenberg, 1998 as cited in McCullough et al., 2004).

McCullough et al. (2001) categorised gratitude as a moral affect where the core idea is that this emotion both results from and invokes moral behaviours (i.e.: behaviours motivated out of concern for another individual). Based on relevant literature three moral functions were identified: (a) a moral barometer (gratitude acts as an indicator of moral actions, that is if a behaviour is perceived to have a high cost of effort, then a high level of gratitude will be felt by the beneficiary, consequently, the intentions perceived by the beneficiary of the moral actions can alert to a change in the social relationships); (b) a moral motive (gratitude leads the beneficiary to act prosocially towards the benefactor and others and inhibits destructive motivations directed at the benefactor); (c) a moral reinforcer (when gratitude is expressed to the benefactor by the beneficiary, it prompts the former to behave prosocially since their helpful actions were appreciated, and therefore reinforced). Therefore, gratitude is considered to be a moral affect since this emotion is a consequence of and encourages prosocial behaviour, and not because gratefulness is itself a moral response (McCullough et al., 2002).

Additionally, gratitude can be studied as a trait (also known as dispositional gratitude), state, and mood. As a trait, gratitude is characterised by differences within individuals in the occurrence of feeling thankful in everyday life. While as a state, gratitude includes feeling gratefulness as a reaction to a beneficial event (Wood et al., 2008). Moreover, as a mood gratitude has a longer duration than as a state while being less accessible to conscious awareness, however, it also fluctuates since it is also affected by everyday events (McCullough et al., 2004). Essentially, the distinction between these forms of gratitude suggests that even though trait gratitude may differ for different people, state gratitude can be intentionally nurtured (Emmons & Mishra, 2011). While different, they all share characteristics and have been shown to be correlated (Leong et al., 2020; McCullough et al., 2004; Wood et al., 2008).

According to Emmons et al. (2004), grateful disposition displays four facets that characterise people's experiences. The first is *intensity*, which suggests that people who are inherently more grateful will likely feel gratefulness more intensely when encountering a positive event. Secondly, *frequency* refers to when people with a grateful disposition are more likely to experience gratitude multiple times throughout their day, even for small events which might not be enough to elicit gratitude in people with a weaker gratitude disposition, thus not experiencing gratitude as frequently. The third facet is called *span*,

which is regarding the quantity of life events for which an individual feels grateful during a given time. Aspects such as family, career and health might elicit gratitude in someone with a strong grateful disposition, while an individual with a weaker disposition may feel gratitude for fewer parts of their lives. Finally, the fourth facet *density* refers to the number of people to whom one feels gratitude regarding a particular positive life event. While people with a greater grateful disposition might say a higher amount of people, individuals with a weaker grateful disposition may list fewer people to whom they attribute gratitude regarding that event.

Additionally, Emmons et al. (2004) conceptualise gratitude as being able to be experienced through four perspectives. The first is the *dispositional perspective* which refers to someone's inherent tendency to feel gratefulness through time and events. Furthermore, in this situation, all four facets of gratitude are important to assess. Secondly, there is the *benefit perspective* which emerges as a consequence of a benefit received, in other words, is when someone feels gratitude for something, therefore here the facet span would not be of interest to study. Thirdly, the *benefactor perspective* is when gratitude arises because of and towards someone that has previously bestowed benefits to the individual. In this case, the focus is if the individual feels gratitude towards someone and, therefore, the facet density is not significant which leaves intensity, frequency and span the subjects of interest in this situation. Lastly, the fourth perspective is an intersection between the last two perspectives creating the *benefit × benefactor perspective*. In this case, the focus is the gratefulness an individual feels because of a specific benefit given by a specific benefactor which leads to the interest in the facts of intensity and frequency leaving span and density out of relevance.

In order to better understand a concept, empirical research is essential to comprehend the connections it may present. With the rise of interest in gratitude, scholars have also used some components in experiments and research.

2.3. Gratitude Outcomes

As briefly mentioned before, gratitude is closely related to prosocial behaviours. It was found that prosocial behaviours and prosocial traits are associated with more grateful people (McCullough et al., 2002). Gratitude evokes a broad range of prosocial behaviours not limited to the urge of reciprocating toward the benefactor, especially when this is not

directly possible (Algoe & Haidt, 2009). However, some literature suggests that it also builds and strengthens social relationships through actions inspired by gratitude. Thus, gratitude conforms to the broaden-and-build theory (Fredrickson, 2004).

Grant and Gino (2010) found that gratitude does lead to an increase in prosocial behaviour through communal mechanisms but not through agentic mechanisms. Even though self-efficacy and social worth were increased due to gratitude, only the latter explained the effect of gratitude on prosociality, thus suggesting that people value more being socially valued through being thanked, than their experience of feelings of capability, therefore leading to a higher probability in engaging in future helpful behaviours.

Additionally, a meta-analysis revealed a moderate positive correlation between gratitude and prosociality which was shown to have a larger effect size when the studies focused on gratitude as an affective state instead of gratitude as a trait. Moreover, a stronger effect was observed when gratitude was a result of a benefit given instead of generalised gratitude which assesses appreciation towards aspects of life (Ma et al., 2017).

In recent years gratitude has increasingly been subject of empirical studies concerning vast diverse themes. For example, gratitude is often described as the feeling induced when one is the recipient of another's beneficial acts (McCullough et al., 2001), however, Baumgarten-Tramer (1938) found in a study with children that this emotion not only elicits a feeling of repayment to the benefactor, but also a feeling of wanting to further connect with them (as cited in Algoe & Haidt, 2009).

The relationship between gratitude and well-being has also been extensively studied (see Wood et al., 2010). For example, studies have shown that groups in gratitude interventions displayed an improvement in well-being when compared with other groups (Emmons & McCullough, 2003). Moreover, dispositional gratitude has been positively related to self-esteem and well-being (Lin, 2015; Rash et al., 2011), and specifically trait gratitude moderates the relationship between a gratitude intervention and life satisfaction (Rash et al., 2011).

A frequent intervention used throughout gratitude research requires participants to reflect and write in a journal what they feel grateful for during a pre-determined set of time (e.g., two to four weeks). This type of intervention has been shown to be effective in improving well-being (Killen & Macaskill, 2015; Megawati et al., 2019; Rash et al., 2011).

Even though journal-type interventions seem to be the most common, Gabana et al. (2019) chose to implement a workshop-type intervention among 51 student-athletes which also resulted in significant increases in well-being.

A meta-analysis focused on studies of gratitude interventions reported that when used, individuals show higher levels of well-being when compared with some control groups. Nonetheless, since gratitude interventions did not outperform psychologically active conditions, the authors state that these show “positive but limited promise” and suggest that they may act through placebo effects (Davis et al., 2016).

According to Emmons et al. (2019), some studies have shown that gratitude contributes “to an increase in happiness, health, and other desirable life outcomes”, “to a decrease in negative affect and problematic functioning” and seems to serve as a “protective factor against posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms”. In a study including 464 male firefighters, gratitude was found to act as an independent protective factor against not only stress but also burnout (Lee et al., 2018), therefore, it is not surprising that studies show that gratitude is negatively associated with burnout in teachers (Chan, 2010), mental health professionals (Lanham et al., 2012), and athletes (Gabana et al., 2017),

Moreover, Lambert et al. (2012) showed through eight studies that gratitude is associated with a decrease in depressive symptoms and that both positive reframing and positive emotion mediate simultaneously the relationship between the two. Similarly, Cregg and Cheavens (2021) found a reduction in symptoms of depression and anxiety at both post-test and follow-up after gratitude interventions, however, even though it was significant the effect was considered small.

Additionally, gratitude journal interventions have also been associated with other positive outcomes other than well-being. For example, this type of intervention often referred to as “counting blessings”, has led to statistically significant improvements in academic motivation in a sample composed of students (Nawa & Yamagishi, 2021), and life satisfaction (Chan, 2013).

Another type of gratitude intervention requires participants to write a letter thanking someone else for something that they did and affected the participants' lives, which has been found to be effective in enhancing positive affect in students when they already present low levels of positive affect (Froh et al., 2009), and to increase life satisfaction, especially when people prioritise meaning and positivity within their lives (Atad & Russo-

Netzer, 2021). Kaczmarek et al. (2015) found that both gratitude journal interventions and gratitude letter interventions, were equally socially acceptable by participants, however, they also felt that gratitude letters were less effective thus hindering self-initiation and completion of this type of intervention.

Gratitude has also been indirectly linked to self-acceptance via self-compassion, in addition to the finding that grateful individuals base their self-worth on intrinsic domains, thus results indicate that gratitude has the capacity of helping the relationship with the self through manners that lead to positive psychological functioning (Homan & Hosack, 2019). Conversely, gratitude also aids the relationship with others. Lambert et al. (2010) found that the more people express gratitude to someone, it improved people's perception of the communal strength of the bond with that person.

2.4. Gratitude Within the Workplace

A large portion of our time is spent at work, thus Emmons (2016) reasons that since gratitude is an essential human requirement, experiencing gratitude at work is crucial. Also, the workplace is a social environment where people interact every day with colleagues, managers, and clients. These relationships can lead to problems which individuals need to overcome, a process where emotions play a key role (Morris & Keltner, 2000). Moreover, appreciation and gratitude can be powerful tools among employees since they not only are able to fulfil the "higher psychological needs of individuals", but also the "higher social needs of groups" (Mosley & Irvine, 2014).

Fehr et al. (2017) created a multilevel model to better understand gratitude in organisations. According to the model, gratitude at the organisational level can be conceptualised in three levels: (a) as an emotion as a result of an event, (b) a tendency for the individual to experience gratefulness, and (c) as a sense of gratitude at the organisational level. At the event level gratitude is felt as an emotion as the result of an experience or its interpretation designated as "episodic gratitude", for example, it can be evoked after the help of a colleague. On the other hand, persistent gratitude, which is a "stable tendency to feel grateful within a particular context", is experienced at both the individual and collective level. In the former, persistent gratitude can emerge when an individual frequently experiences intense episodic gratitude and make the person more susceptible to gratitude-inducing stimuli (Compton, 2003 as cited in Fehr et al., 2017), they

can better remember past experiences that invoked gratitude allowing for a better interpretation of situations (DeCoster & Claypool, 2004 as cited in Fehr et al., 2017), and finally, ambiguous events may be interpreted through gratitude-inducing appraisals (Wilkowski et al., 2007). At the collective or organisational level, the experiences of coworkers of persistent gratitude converge and it is experienced as a shared phenomenon (collective gratitude) (Rousseau, 1985).

Additionally, within the organisational level, the leader-member exchange (LMX) theory based on the social exchange theory appears to have notoriety. LMX argues that the relationships created between leaders and followers are unique and can entail certain advantages (G. B. Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). A high quality of LMX has been related to more opportunities for communication with the leader (Liden et al., 1997 as cited in Lai et al., 2019), job satisfaction, turnover intentions (Gerstner & Day, 1997), organisation identification and commitment (Gerstner & Day, 1997; Hall et al., 2016 as cited in Marco, 2020). According to the LMX theory, gratitude is elicited in the employee as a product of the unique relationship between them and the leader (Subramanian R & Thakur, 2022). Furthermore, the attribution theory, mentioned above, explains gratitude within the workplace as well, since employees feel gratitude when they attribute the benefit received from their leaders to them as an individual instead of when attributing to the relationship between the two (Sun et al., 2019).

Furthermore, humans strive for happiness however, they also have the unique need to have meaning in their life (Baumeister et al., 2013). Thus, a search for it is common in aspects such as work. Mosley and Irvine (2014) propose that this meaning can be achieved in employees through social behaviour such as appreciation and gratitude. While the first comprises acknowledging good work, the second requires a personal connotation, such as thanking for the benefit received that provided some sort of value.

Additionally, Amabile and Kramer (2011) state that “making progress” is vital for a positive work life and performance, and the crucial element for progress is meaningful work. Moreover, gratitude has been linked to personal accomplishment and a sense of meaning in life (Chan, 2010), and general literature regarding gratitude and organisations suggests that this emotion may be a trustworthy source for increasing meaning at work (Dik et al., 2015).

As such, Cain et al. (2019) have distinguished this concept in the creation of a gratitude at work scale (GAWS). This scale aims to measure *workplace gratitude* defined as the tendency to acknowledge and be grateful for the manner in which aspects of one's job affect their life. This assessment is completed through two subscales: (a) gratitude for meaningful work (GAWS-MW); and (b) gratitude for a supportive work environment (GAWS-SWE). While the first aims to reflect “workplace thriving (through achievements, meaningful impact, etc.)”, the GAWS-SWE reflects the “ways that work can support well-being (through work-life balance, support, etc.)”.

The GAWS aims to measure dispositional gratitude, however, both subscales were found to be positively correlated with both trait and state gratitude. Thus, indicating that the construct measured through the GAWS overlaps with state gratitude as well, despite aiming to measure dispositional gratitude. However, since it is a modest correlation, the construct measured is distinct from others assessed through previously existing gratitude scales which were used in the validation process of this scale (Cain et al., 2019). Therefore, even though the scale measures dispositional gratitude, it is likely that it also captures facets of state workplace gratitude.

As previously seen, gratitude is linked to various positive outcomes, however, within the organisational environment gratitude has also been shown to be a valuable construct. For example, it has been seen to be linked to job satisfaction (Lanham et al., 2012; Waters, 2012) and to positively predict workplace friendship which then predicted workplace affective well-being (Badri et al., 2022).

A study focused on the relationship between dispositional gratitude, state gratitude and institutionalised gratitude (i.e., organisational characteristic that promotes gratitude among the members of that organisation throughout time) with job satisfaction, found that all three forms of gratitude were positively correlated to job satisfaction. However, dispositional gratitude did not show to be a significant predictor of the dependent variable when the other two types of gratitude were entered into the regression. Whereas state gratitude and institutionalised gratitude were shown to predict job satisfaction among employees. The author, therefore, suggests that when employees are immersed in an environment that fosters gratitude, they gain a benefit through job satisfaction. Institutionalised gratitude can be promoted by leaders by encouraging and frequently displaying grateful emotions, and through company reward policies (Waters, 2012), especially since positive emotions

shown by leaders predict group performance (George, 1995). Additionally, the perception of gratitude when shown by a direct supervisor was found to be a significant positive predictor of perceived supervisor support, perceived organisational support, affective organisational commitment, and job satisfaction (McKeon et al., 2020).

Moreover, a healthy organisational environment where errors are accepted and viewed as a source of improvement instead of a cause of problems was positively associated with gratitude which in turn influenced the service recovery performance of employees, that is the ability to conduct proper actions after a service failure. Once again, leaders and managers play a crucial role in fostering such a culture (Wang et al., 2020).

Gratitude has been found to increase concern for corporate social responsibility, specifically employees with greater levels of gratitude had a higher sense of responsibility regarding employee and societal issues (Andersson et al., 2007), while also predicting lower workplace materialism, that is the importance given to extrinsic work aspirations (e.g., money), instead of intrinsic (e.g., well-being), which has been linked to negative outcomes such as burnout, job insecurity, anti-ethical behaviours, and turn over intentions (Unanue et al., 2021).

Furthermore, Lee et al. (2019) suggest that in a workplace, helping actions increase expressions of gratitude when they are reactive, that is when they are performed as per the request of the beneficiary, whereas when they are proactive, meaning when the beneficent performs a helpful action without being asked, gratitude expressions are reduced. Consequently, demonstrations of gratitude are linked to increases in work engagement the following day. Accordingly, helping behaviours within the workplace can be increased through feelings of gratitude of employees which, in turn, can be stimulated through mindfulness (Sawyer et al., 2021).

Chhajer and Dutta (2021) found that greater levels of gratitude significantly predict mutuality, positive regard, and vitality which, consequently, significantly predict contextual performance. Whereas mutuality significantly predicts task performance. Both contextual performance and task performance represent subscales measuring individual work performance.

Gratitude interventions have shown to be promising and have been argued to be the most efficient instruments created by positive psychology (Wood et al., 2010). Therefore, some researchers have experimented with gratitude interventions in workplaces. For

example, a gratitude journal intervention implemented for 10 days was capable of improving self-control resources which led to a decline in workplace mistreatment (Locklear et al., 2020).

Additionally, gratitude journal interventions have also been shown to decrease depressive symptoms and perceived stress among health care practitioners (Cheng et al., 2015), and to increase positive affective well-being and self-reported gratitude among university employees (Kaplan et al., 2014).

Since gratitude has been shown to predict job satisfaction, it is comprehensible that there is an improvement of 17.9% in job satisfaction following a gratitude intervention within the workplace (Stegen & Wankier, 2018). Similarly, a gratitude intervention has also been shown to improve self-efficacy and job performance among 145 workers (Komase et al., 2019).

While not in an organisation setting, a study including teams found that a gratitude journal intervention was shown to improve information elaboration leading to an enhancement in team creativity (Pillay et al., 2020), therefore the same may transpire in a workplace setting.

However, gratitude is not the only positive emotion that can be elicited and sustained within a supportive work environment (Froman, 2010).

2.5. Other Positive Emotions

2.5.1. Kindness and Pride

Within positive emotions, we can also highlight kindness since it has been studied alongside gratitude (e.g.: Kerr et al., 2015). Contrarily to gratitude where one needs to be at the receiving end of kind acts, kindness requires one to act kindly toward others (Otake et al., 2006; Symeonidou et al., 2019) with either altruistic motivations or a desire to act prosocially (Kerr et al., 2015). Some studies show that “counting kindness” interventions similarly to “counting blessings”, improve happiness and well-being (Otake et al., 2006; Symeonidou et al., 2019).

Furthermore, an additional consequence of the “counting kindness” intervention may be the surge of the positive emotion of pride. According to Fredrickson (2004), pride is a result of personal achievements, and it seems to broaden by wanting to share those achievements with others. Additionally, not only helping others brings pride, but it may

also motivate to help again in the future (Fredrickson & Branigan, 2001a as cited in Fredrickson, 2004).

Therefore, in the “counting kindness” intervention when someone is asked to remember and share acts of kindness they have done, it is possible that the feeling of pride may be invoked, while in the “counting blessings” intervention feelings of thankfulness are the ones induced.

Pride, similarly to gratitude, has also been considered to be a moral affect because it may possibly stimulate self-respect and respect for others (Hart & Matsuba, 2007; Tangney, 1999). This emotion can enhance prosocial behaviours and, when shared with others, can also encourage goals of bigger achievements (Froman, 2010; Hart & Matsuba, 2007; Tracy & Robins, 2007).

According to Michie (2009), gratitude and pride contrast regarding perceived control. For example, whilst gratitude emerges when a positive consequence is credited to the actions of others, pride is felt when a positive outcome happens due to their own efforts.

Additionally, it was found within a workplace environment that the tendency for a leader to experience pride was positively related to social justice and altruism which in turn are two forms of prosocial behaviour (Michie, 2009). Moreover, prosocial acts performed within the workplace improved employees’ well-being, life and job satisfaction (Chancellor et al., 2018).

2.6. Organisational Behaviour

Organisational behaviour can be divided into three domains: individual, group/team, and the general organisational system. However, they should not be treated as separate but as interdependent. For example, the practices, culture, and structure displayed by the organisation and its leaders are a reflection of its virtues which can impact both groups and individuals. Moreover, in agreement with the *broaden-and-build theory*, an employee considered helpful, encouraging, and kind can aid foster positive relationships with their colleagues and inspire meaningful work (Froman, 2010).

Nowadays, organisations are increasingly recognising the value of people for success, especially because of personal initiative and proactive behaviour (Crant, 2000; J. B. Fuller et al., 2007). Modernisation led to more ambiguous and less structured work

situations (Murphy & Jackson, 1999 as cited in van Veldhoven & Dorenbosch, 2008), such as less micromanagement of employees which allows for independency to take place leading them to produce their work the way they desire as long as it meets the expectations. Therefore, these new dynamics may require an active approach by the employee to recognise the tasks and needs of the organisation (Frese & Fay, 2001 as cited in van Veldhoven & Dorenbosch, 2008; Parker, 2000 as cited in van Veldhoven & Dorenbosch, 2008) which can also encourage them to exceed what is expected of them to improve personally and professionally.

2.6.1. Job Proactivity

Proactivity refers to behaviours that are self-starting and action-oriented that have the end goal of either improving oneself or an organisation's effectiveness (Unsworth & Parker, 2003). Therefore, while no single definition exists, in general job proactivity refers to proactive behaviours an employee can demonstrate that aim to influence aspects of their work or their workplace.

Within the theoretical realm, the LMX theory has also been related to proactive behaviours (Cerit, 2017; Mostafa & El-Motalib, 2019) which, as mentioned before, often entails the need for additional resources so new goals can be implemented (Erdogan & Bauer, 2005 as cited in Cerit, 2017). Since the leader is often in control of resources, the quality of LMX can affect the employees' proactive behaviour (Cerit, 2017; Morrison & Phelps, 1999). On the other hand, it is also suggested that a high LMX may lead the employee to feel that they are treated well, and in return, this invokes the urge to reciprocate to the organisation (Martin et al., 2016 as cited in Mostafa & El-Motalib, 2019; Newman et al., 2017 as cited in Mostafa & El-Motalib, 2019; Van Dyne et al., 2008 as cited in Cerit, 2017).

Within proactive behaviours, there are two constructs that can be highlighted. First, personal initiative is conceptualised as a behaviour pattern where not only do individuals take an active, self-approach to work, but also go beyond what is required by the job. It requires pro-company goals/intentions, action in implementing these goals and perseverance since new initiatives are often met with obstacles (Frese et al., 1997). The second construct is designated as "taking charge" which entails efforts by an individual to change how work is performed with the goal of improvement. Even though it appears to be

similar to personal initiative, the authors state that some examples given to explain personal initiative fall under more conventional extra-role behaviours (e.g.: offering suggestions) while others seem to be similar to the description of “taking charge” (e.g.: attempts to reorganise a work structure) (Morrison & Phelps, 1999). Throughout this dissertation, both constructs will be used under the umbrella of proactive behaviours and job proactivity.

Organisational citizenship behaviours (OCBs) are related to proactive behaviours, yet they cannot be considered identical (Munene, 1995 as cited in Frese et al., 1997; Organ, 1990 as cited in Frese et al., 1997). OCBs are considered pro-organisational behaviours that aim to maintain the status quo, however, considering the flexibility of work environments, employees who challenge the status quo are vital for an organisation’s long-term success while OCBs are important in the short-term to maintain a positive social environment (Frese et al., 1997; Morrison & Phelps, 1999).

2.6.2. Job Performance

The concept of “job/work performance” is popular in organisational research due to its significance at both an individual and organisational level (Sonnetag et al., 2008). High-performing individuals seem to not only be praised and rewarded but also have better career prospects (Van Scotter et al., 2000 as cited in Sonnetag et al., 2008).

The LMX theory has reportedly also been positively related to job performance (Gerstner & Day, 1997; G. Graen et al., 1982). Comparably to how LMX may affect proactive behaviours, it can also improve job performance since favourable ratings by the supervisor may change the performance of the employee through a self-fulfilling prophecy (Gerstner & Day, 1997). Campbell (2000) argues that this theory helps to understand how employees with high-quality LMX help the leader’s job performance. These employees serve as extensions of the leader due to the nature of the relationship of trust and respect established between them, they take on additional responsibilities which lead to higher autonomy and, consequently, facilitating the leader’s performance.

Individual work performance is defined as behaviours performed by an individual that are relevant to the organisation’s goals (Campbell, 1990 as cited in Koopmans, 2015). Consequently, these behaviours establish the base for the collective performance of the

team and organisation (Campbell & Wiernik, 2015 as cited in Harari & Viswesvaran, 2018).

However, nowadays it is generally accepted that individual work performance consists of three domains: task performance, contextual performance, and counterproductive work behaviours. Task performance is described as the expertise individuals present when performing central tasks to his/her job (Campbell, 1990 as cited in Koopmans, 2015) (e.g.: work quantity and quality, job knowledge; Campbell, 1990 as cited in Koopmans, 2015; Rotundo & Sackett, 2002 as cited in Koopmans, 2015). Contextual performance refers to “behaviours that support the organisational, social and psychological environment in which the technical core must function” (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993 as cited in Koopmans, 2015) (e.g.: cooperating, facilitating team performance; Campbell, 1990 as cited in Koopmans, 2015; Rotundo & Sackett, 2002 as cited in Koopmans, 2015). And counterproductive work behaviour is conceptualised as “behaviour that harms the well-being of the organisation” (Rotundo & Sackett, 2002 as cited in Koopmans, 2015) (e.g.: absenteeism, off-task behaviour; Koopmans, 2011 as cited in Koopmans, 2015).

2.7. Objectives and Hypotheses

As seen throughout this literature review gratitude, job proactivity and job performance are linked. Understanding this relationship can be advantageous to employees and organisations so they can reach greater goals in an effective manner.

In sum, positive practices within a work environment are beneficial and predict organisational performance, specifically, they predict improvements in some effectiveness indicators (Cameron et al., 2011). Accordingly, gratitude interventions in the workplace have been tested and shown to improve job performance (Komase et al., 2019).

Furthermore, gratitude itself has been linked to both positive constructs of the IW PQ: task performance and contextual performance (Chhajjer & Dutta, 2021), while Cortini et al. (2019) have shown that gratitude predicts job performance. Additionally, Grant and Wrzesniewski (2010) showed that “when employees with high core self-evaluations experience anticipated (...) gratitude, they are more likely to achieve high performance”.

Moreover, gratitude urges prosocial behaviours, strengthens relationships, and it can also motivate people to amplify the reputation of others (Algoe et al., 2008 as cited in Fehr

et al., 2017). These actions can be viewed as organisational citizenship behaviours which have been shown to be predicted by gratitude (Ford et al., 2018; Li et al., 2022; Spence et al., 2014; Zhan et al., 2021). Even though not identical, this type of behaviour is related to proactive behaviours (Frese et al., 1997).

Finally, even though there is extensive literature relating proactivity and job performance (Bakker et al., 2012; Fuller & Marler, 2009; Fuller et al., 2010; Joo & Bennett, 2018; Pitt et al., 2002; Thompson, 2005), there are still areas left to explore since, to my knowledge, the majority of literature studies proactive behaviour as a personality trait. However, there are some indications that link managerial proactivity and job performance (Goerdel, 2006).

Therefore, a gratitude intervention implemented in the workplace may help improve gratitude levels which may lead to better job performance, while job proactivity may enhance this relationship hence, the following hypotheses were created:

H1: The gratitude condition increases gratitude at work¹.

H2: Job proactivity moderates the relationship between the gratitude condition and task performance.

H3: Job proactivity moderates the relationship between the gratitude condition and contextual performance.

H4: Job proactivity moderates the relationship between gratitude at work and task performance.

H5: Job proactivity moderates the relationship between gratitude at work and contextual performance.

¹ This hypothesis was created in order to test if gratitude condition was actually eliciting gratitude at work (manipulation check).

CHAPTER 3: Method

This study aimed to investigate if gratitude increases job performance levels when compared with a control condition or with a positive control condition. Furthermore, another objective of this study was to analyse if job proactivity strengthens the relationship between gratitude at the workplace and job performance.

3.1. Participants

An a priori power analysis was conducted using the G*Power 3.1.9.6 program (Faul et al., 2007) for a one-way ANOVA predicting an effect between the three groups. With $f = .25$, $\alpha = 0.05$, and to achieve 80% of power, the recommended sample size was 159 participants. A total of 224 participants voluntarily initiated the experiment, however, only 165 ($M^{age} = 35.32$, $SD = 9.08$) participations completed the questionnaire and were therefore considered valid and included in the final analysis.

The sample was 64.24% female, 34.55% male, and 1.21% non-binary, and mostly of Portuguese nationality (97%). Regarding the level of education: .6% completed primary school, 23% completed high school, and 76.4% finished a degree in higher education. Most of the participants were full-time permanent employees (78.8%), 12.1% were working full-time under a fixed-term contract, 3.6% were permanent part-time employees, 1.8% were working part-time under a fixed-term contract, and finally, 3.6% had another type of contract. Most individuals (57%) reported working in an organisation with over 200 employees, and on average people integrated a team of around 11.20 ($SD = 16.49$) people.

3.2. Design

This experiment resorts to a between-subjects design where participants were randomly assigned to one of three journal-type experimental conditions (control condition, positive control condition, and gratitude condition) and asked to list three to five aspects varying according to the manipulation participants were randomly assigned to. In the control manipulation, the task adapted from Gilek (2010) requested participants to list three to five things they have done that day ($n = 58$). In the positive control manipulation adapted from the kindness intervention used by Kerr et al. (2015), participants were asked to list three to five kind acts that they have done for someone else within the professional

environment ($n = 52$). Lastly, in the gratitude manipulation adapted from Martínez-Martí et al. (2010), the task asked participants to list three to five things they feel grateful for within their professional life ($n = 55$).

3.3. Measurements

3.3.1. Gratitude at Work

Gratitude at work was used in this study to measure gratitude within the workplace through the Gratitude at Work Scale (GAWS) by Cain et al. (2019). The scale contains 10 items and is divided into two subscales: gratitude for a supportive work environment (GAWS-SWE) composed by six items (e.g.: “*How often are you grateful for the salary and benefits you receive?*”) and gratitude for meaningful work (GAWS-MW) constituted by the remaining four items (e.g.: “*How often are you grateful for the positive impact your job has on others?*”). This instrument uses a Likert-scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (almost always) to establish how often participants feel grateful regarding certain aspects relating to their job. To ensure translation reliability, the items were first translated to Portuguese, next translated back to English by a third party, and then the two versions were compared so it could be assessed if there were miscommunications within the translations. The Cronbach’s alphas are reported per scale and present the following values: $\alpha^{\text{SWE}} = .78$ ($M = 22.43$, $SD = 4.08$), $\alpha^{\text{MW}} = .78$ ($M = 15.53$, $SD = 2.67$) (see Appendix A).

3.3.2. Job Proactivity

Job proactivity is hypothesized as the moderator variable of this study and was assessed using five items previously used by van Veldhoven and Dorenbosch (2008) from two different scales. Three items were taken from the taking charge scale by Morrison and Phelps (1999) measuring the extent to which employees initiate problem-solving behaviours when there are issues within the work process (e.g.: “*In my work, I make suggestions to improve the way we work.*”). Furthermore, two items were taken from the personal initiative scale by Frese et al. (1997). First, one item intends to measure social comparison (“*I take initiative even when others don’t.*”). Second, the last item measures the discussion of improvements with superiors and the perception of organizational support for that (“*I discuss work methods with my supervisor, when I think they could be improved.*”). A Likert-scale was used once again ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly

agree). To ensure translation reliability, the items were translated to Portuguese, followed by a reversed translation back to English by a third party where then both versions were compared to assess if there were misperceptions within the translations. The Cronbach's alpha is .80 ($M = 21.07$, $SD = 2.44$, see Appendix B).

3.3.3. Job Performance

Job performance in this study is the dependent variable and was measured through the Individual Work Performance Questionnaire 1.0 (IWPQ 1.0) used by Koopmans et al. (2014) and Ramos-Villagrasa et al. (2019) which includes 18 items that compose three different sub-scales: task performance (TP) with five items, contextual performance (CP) with eight items, and counterproductive work behaviour (CWB) with five items. Some sample items of the sub-scales are “*I managed to plan my work so that it was done on time.*”, “*I took on extra responsibilities.*” and “*I complained about unimportant matters at work.*”, respectively. The scale uses the previous three months as the timeframe to recall the behaviours described and applies a 5-point Likert scale (from 0 “seldom” to 4 “always” for TP and CP, and from 0 “never” to 4 “often” for CWB) as a numeric rating. To measure this construct consistently, the scale was altered from “0–4” to “1–5”. To ensure translation reliability, the items of the IWPQ were translated to Portuguese and then translated back to English by a third party, these two versions were compared to assess if there were misunderstandings of the content. The Cronbach's alphas are reported per scale and present the following values: $\alpha^{TP} = .82$ ($M = 18.33$, $SD = 3.41$), $\alpha^{CP} = .85$ ($M = 29.93$, $SD = 5.57$) and $\alpha^{CWB} = .76$ ($M = 11.91$, $SD = 3.16$), respectively (see Appendix C).

3.3.4. Demographics

Socio-demographic information, such as gender, age, nationality, education, professional area, type of contract and how many employees their company employs and how many people are a part of their team (if applicable) was collected for each participant.

3.4. Procedure

3.4.1. Data Collection

The sample was contacted through a convenience method through both social media (*Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn*) and personal contacts. The experimental survey was

created through the Qualtrics platform and started with an informed consent stating that the participation was voluntary and that the goal of this research was to better understand emotions within the workplace. Participants had to state that they were at least 18 years old and that they were employed by the same entity for at least six months by checking a statement box before entering the experiment. The second page asked again for how long they worked in their current job where some people could answer “do not work”, “less than six months” or “over than six months”. For those people who chose one of the two first options, the survey was terminated. Therefore, a total of 29 people were excluded since they did not meet the criteria to participate.

The following section gathered socio-demographic information about participants, and subsequently, one of the three between-subjects’ tasks randomly appeared: control vs. positive control vs. gratitude and participants were asked to fill in three to five appropriate descriptions as a representation of the reflection done by the participant. A total of four participants were excluded for not completing the task correctly (e.g.: filling out the field with numbers or answering only two fields correctly by putting a random character in the third required field), and 26 were excluded for not finishing the survey.

Lastly, participants answered the three scales used starting with GAWS, then the IWPG, and finally the items used to analyse job proactivity.

3.4.2. Data Analysis

All data analyses were conducted using SPSS Statistics 28. First and foremost, Cronbach's α was used to test the internal consistency of each measured construct using scales. All scales showed to have a good reliability.

Consequently, descriptive statistics were used to report the means and standard deviations for the measured variables, in addition to a descriptive analysis of the sample.

Moreover, to test the first hypothesis a One-way ANOVA was used, while the following hypotheses were tested using a Moderation (Model 1) analysis using PROCESS, v 4 by Hayes (2018).

CHAPTER 4: Results

This chapter will focus on testing the main hypotheses and describing the main findings obtained through the analyses performed.

To study the link between gratitude at work, job proactivity and job performance the initial hypotheses were tested, in addition to supplementary exploratory analyses so a better understanding of the interaction between the variables could be reached.

4.1. Correlations Between All Variables

The correlations between all the variables were computed using Pearson correlations. Table 1 shows these correlations, highlighting those which are statistically significant. All the variables have significant correlations, except for the correlations between the variable CWB with job proactivity and CP. Additionally, most correlations are positive, however, as expected the statistically significant correlations with the variable CWB are negative since this variable measures behaviours unfavourable to job performance.

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, and correlations between all variables (n = 165).

Variables	Descriptives		Correlations				
	Mean	<i>SD</i>	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. GAWS-SWE	3.74	.68	---	---	---	---	---
2. GAWS-MW	3.88	.67	.61 *	---	---	---	---
3. Job proactivity	4.21	.49	.41 *	.32 *	---	---	---
4. TP	3.67	.68	.40 *	.38 *	.24 **	---	---
5. CP	3.74	.70	.28 *	.38 *	.47 *	.47 *	---
6. CWB	2.38	.63	-.37 *	-.34 *	-.13	-.19 ***	-.08

Note: *p < .001; **p < .01; ***p < .05.

4.2. Initial Hypotheses Testing

4.2.1. H1: The Gratitude Condition Increases Gratitude at Work

Since the gratitude at work is divided into two subscales, both were used as dependent variables in separate analyses, when testing the effect of the gratitude condition on the general construct of gratitude at work.

First, the effect of the gratitude condition on GAWS-MW levels was tested. The condition was entered as the independent factor and GAWS-MW as the dependent variable. The effect of the gratitude condition on GAWS-MW was not statistically significant, $F(2, 162) = 1.07, p = .35$.

Additionally, the effect of the gratitude condition on GAWS-SWE levels was tested as well. Similarly, the condition was entered as the independent variable and GAWS-SWE as the dependent. The effect of the gratitude condition on GAWS-SWE was not statistically significant, $F(2, 162) = 0.16, p = .86$.

4.2.2. H2: Job Proactivity Moderates the Relationship Between the Gratitude Condition and Task Performance

The aim was to test if job proactivity moderates the relationship between the gratitude condition (vs. control and positive control conditions) and TP.

Therefore, it was tested whether the interaction between the gratitude condition would predict a better TP (dependent variable) as a function of job proactivity (moderator variable).

Nevertheless, the moderation by job proactivity was not statistically significant neither for the difference between gratitude condition and the control condition ($b = 0.01, SE = 0.27, t(164) = 0.02, p = .98, 95\% CI [-0.53; 0.54]$), nor for the difference between gratitude condition and positive control condition ($b = 0.14, SE = 0.29, t(164) = 0.50, p = .62, 95\% CI [-0.43; 0.72]$).

4.2.3. H3: Job Proactivity Moderates the Relationship Between the Gratitude Condition and Contextual Performance

The aim was to test if job proactivity moderates the relationship between the gratitude condition and CP when comparing with the control conditions.

Thus, it was tested whether the interaction between job proactivity (moderator variable) and the difference between gratitude condition and the control condition predicted a better CP (dependent variable). The current moderation was not statistically significant ($b = 0.04$, $SE = 0.25$, $t(164) = 0.15$, $p = .88$, 95% $CI [-0.46; 0.54]$), neither was the moderation between job proactivity (moderator variable) and the difference between gratitude condition and the positive control condition ($b = 0.16$, $SE = 0.27$, $t(164) = 0.58$, $p = .56$, 95% $CI [-0.38; 0.69]$).

4.2.4. H4: Job Proactivity Moderates the Relationship Between Gratitude at Work and Task Performance

The gratitude at work subscales were tested separately.

4.2.4.1. Gratitude for a Supportive Work Environment. The goal was to test if the link between GAWS-SWE and TP was moderated by job proactivity.

Therefore, it was tested whether GAWS-SWE (predictor) would predict a better TP (dependent variable) as a function of job proactivity (moderator).

Nevertheless, the moderation by job proactivity was not statistically significant ($b = 0.15$, $SE = 0.12$, $t(164) = 1.25$, $p = .21$, 95% $CI [-0.09; 0.40]$).

4.2.4.2. Gratitude for Meaningful Work. The aim of this analysis was to test if the link between GAWS-MW and TP was moderated by job proactivity.

Therefore, it was tested whether GAWS-MW (predictor) would predict a better TP (dependent variable) as a function of job proactivity (moderator).

However, the moderation by job proactivity was not statistically significant ($b = -0.11$, $SE = 0.16$, $t(164) = -0.70$, $p = .49$, 95% $CI [-0.42; 0.20]$).

4.2.5. H5: Job Proactivity Moderates the Relationship Between Gratitude at Work and Contextual Performance

The gratitude at work subscales were tested separately.

4.2.5.1. Gratitude for a Supportive Work Environment. The objective was to test if the link between GAWS-SWE and CP was moderated by job proactivity.

Therefore, it was tested whether GAWS-SWE (predictor) would predict a better CP (dependent variable) as a function of job proactivity (moderator).

Nonetheless, the moderation by job proactivity was not statistically significant ($b = -0.03$, $SE = 0.12$, $t(164) = -0.25$, $p = .81$, 95% $CI [-0.27; 0.21]$).

4.2.5.2. Gratitude for Meaningful Work. The aim was to test if the link between GAWS-MW and CP was moderated by job proactivity.

Therefore, it was tested whether GAWS-MW (predictor) would predict a better CP (dependent variable) as a function of job proactivity (moderator).

However, the moderation by job proactivity was not statistically significant ($b < -0.001$, $SE = 0.15$, $t(164) = -0.01$, $p = 1.00$, 95% $CI [-0.29; 0.29]$).

4.3. Exploratory Analyses

4.3.1. Team and Company's size

Pearson correlations were also used to assess if either the size of participants' team or the number of individuals employed by the company were related to the gratitude at work subscales. However, regarding gratitude for a supportive work environment, neither the size of the team ($r = .06$, $p = .47$) nor the size of the company ($r = .10$, $p = .24$) showed to be significantly related. Moreover, gratitude for meaningful work did not show any significant relation with either the team's size ($r = .07$, $p = .41$), nor the company's size ($r = -.10$, $p = .23$).

4.3.2. GAWS-MW as a Proxy for Job Proactivity

Since the initial hypotheses were not confirmed, supplementary analyses were conducted to further explore the interactions between the variables used.

As seen above, the scales GAWS-MW and job proactivity are significantly correlated with each other ($r = .32$, $p < .001$) which demonstrates that both variables are linearly related, in other words, when GAWS-MW increases, job proactivity is increased as well.

Taking into consideration the construct analysed by the subscale of GAWS-MW, it may be possible for this variable to be considered the result of proactive behaviours within

the workplace, or in other words job proactivity. Therefore, we used GAWS-MW as a proxy for job proactivity.

Hence, to test the effect of the condition and GAWS-MW on TP, a Univariate ANOVA was conducted. The condition was entered as between-subjects factors, GAWS-MW as a covariate, and TP as the dependent variable. Results showed a statistically significant main effect of condition on TP, $F(2, 159) = 3.69, p = .03, \eta_p^2 = .04$, a main effect of GAWS-MW on TP, $F(1, 159) = 27.16, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .15$, and an interaction effect of condition \times GAWS-MS on TP, $F(2, 159) = 3.29, p = .04, \eta_p^2 = .04$.

To decompose this interaction effect between condition and GAWS-MW on TP, I used three independent regression analyses, to analyse the link between GAWS-MS and job performance under each of the different conditions (control condition vs. gratitude condition vs. positive control condition).

For the control condition, the link between GAWS-MS and TP was not statistically significant ($\beta = .25, p = .07$), Full regression model fit: $R^2 = .241, SE = .72; F(1, 56) = 3.45, p = .068$). For the gratitude condition, there was a significant link between GAWS-MS and TP ($\beta = .25, p = .03$) Full model: $R^2 = .286, SE = .53; F(1, 53) = 4.72, p = .03$), although small, as only 29% of the variance of TP is explained by GAWS-MW under gratitude condition, job proactivity (moderator variable) and the difference between gratitude condition and the control condition. Surprisingly, in the positive control condition, GAWS-MW was strongly and positively associated with TP ($\beta = .66, p < .001$). The model displayed a large effect since 60% of variance of TP is explained by GAWS-MW under the positive control condition ($R^2 = .596, SE = .60; F(1, 50) = 27.5, p < .001$).

CHAPTER 5: Discussion

People dedicate a large portion of their time and effort to their job which includes overcoming difficulties within a workplace environment. Therefore, emotions play an important role when managing challenges at the workplace, gratitude in particular has been shown in previous studies to be a valuable asset underexplored in organisations (e.g., Chhajer & Dutta, 2021; Cortini et al., 2019; di Fabio et al., 2017).

Through this dissertation, some important findings regarding gratitude at the workplace came to light. The study included three groups: a control group, a positive control group, and the gratitude group. As explained before, each one had to complete a different task. While the control group was used as a baseline to compare with the other conditions, the positive control condition was used to assess if the benefits that the gratitude condition could possibly accomplish were due to gratitude itself and not another positive emotion.

Even though the benefits of the gratitude condition did not outperform the positive control condition, we were able to distinguish that the relationship between GAWS-MW and TP is statistically significant for contexts where gratitude and other positive emotions are encouraged. This may be explained through positive environments which could be more favourable to fostering psychological safety (Newman et al., 2017; Turner & Harder, 2018) and, consequently, creating more settings and situations where gratitude may arise for colleagues, leaders, benefits, and organisations.

After an extensive literature review, the relationship between workplace gratitude, job proactivity and job performance became an interesting topic to explore within this dissertation, thus five hypotheses were formulated and then tested. Hypothesis 1 predicted that the gratitude condition would increase the levels of gratitude at work which was not confirmed. The control group and positive control group did not show statistically significant differences from the group that completed the gratitude condition. The analyses were performed separately for GAWS-MW and GAWS-SWE, however, neither effects of the gratitude condition on the dependent variables were statistically significant.

H2 and H3 posited that job proactivity moderates the relationship between the gratitude condition and the respective dependent variables: TP and CP, however, neither were supported. The interactions of the control group and the positive control group with

the gratitude group did not predict higher levels of TP nor CP when moderated by job proactivity.

The intervention was derived from previous studies, however, as seen before, journaling gratitude interventions frequently used in empirical research are implemented during an extended period (e.g., Kaplan et al., 2014; Locklear et al., 2020; Nawa & Yamagishi, 2021), for example, people typically must complete the task daily for several days.

Therefore, since this was an experimental study executed only once when the person chose to participate, the task was only completed one time before the measurement of the variables, thus the results, when compared with previous research, indicate that when moderated by job proactivity, this procedure may not be sufficient to increase gratitude levels in a statistically significant manner. As such, gratitude journal interventions may need to be implemented for a longer period so their benefits can arise.

On the other hand, people may not direct their feelings of gratitude to their workplace, instead attributing them to life events, for example, someone may not feel grateful to their organisation for their salary or benefits because these may be perceived to be low value. If the employee believes that their compensation is the minimum that the company is required or wants to pay, appreciative feelings may not arise, thus leading to perceiving these benefits at the same level of actions that they have done that day.

Moreover, job proactivity did not moderate the relationship between gratitude at work and TP (H4 not supported). Since the GAWS has two different constructs, both were tested separately, however, the analyses showed to not be statistically significant, meaning that job proactivity does not moderate the relationship between the variables. Similarly to H4, H5 predicted that job proactivity moderates the relationship between gratitude at work and CP, however, it was also not supported implicating that job proactivity does not moderate this relationship either. The non-statistically significant results may be because the constructs may have other facets that were not captured by the instruments used, which could have been important to the relationship studied.

Consequently, since none of the hypotheses was supported, we decided to complete exploratory analyses to assess if there were any associations between the variables measured.

First, it was analysed if either the size of the team the participant was a part of or if the size of the organisation, assessed by the number of individuals employed, was related to either GAWS-SWE or GAWS-MW, however, neither association showed to be statistically significant.

As briefly explained in the previous chapter, GAWS-MW may be an acceptable proxy for job proactivity since the GAWS-MW reflects “workplace thriving (through achievements, meaningful impact, etc.)”. The items that comprise this subscale (see Appendix A) imply actions that the individual must perform within the workplace that are not necessarily a requirement of their tasks but that are beneficial to the company (e.g.: “*How often are you grateful for your own accomplishments at work?*”), which in turn reflect the behaviours measured by the questions that aim to measure job proactivity.

Additionally, it has been shown that GAWS-MW positively predicts personal accomplishment (Cain et al., 2019) which reflects feelings of capability and successful achievement in the individual’s work (Maslach & Jackson, 1981), and in turn, demonstrates behaviours one took in their job in order to attain a positive outcome which could also include proactive behaviours.

Therefore, taking into account that both variables were statistically significant correlated, it may be possible to consider GAWS-MW as a proxy for job proactivity, since a proxy is a representant of something else.

Under the gratitude condition and under the positive control condition GAWS-MW positively predicted TP. This effect was stronger for positive control, when compared to gratitude condition. This may possibly be due to the fact that gratitude may be self-sufficient, meaning since gratitude is linked to self-esteem and self-worth (Homan & Hosack, 2019; Lin, 2015) the relationship of GAWS-MW with TP will not be as strong as in the positive control condition because it may already have other components that are connected with the dependent variable. Whereas in the presence of either kindness or pride, a positive psychological context may be created that allows people to express themselves openly and positively, hence feeling valued and appreciated, and therefore leading to a stronger relationship between GAWS-MW and TP.

Additionally, the fact that the control condition did not produce statistically significant results while the conditions that aimed to increase the levels of positive

emotions did, indicates that there is a need in the workplace to foster positive emotions which is in accordance with previous literature (e.g., Locklear et al., 2020).

CHAPTER 6: Conclusion

Positive psychology has been an emerging topic in recent years, especially in workplace environments (Froman, 2010). Job proactivity and job performance are two concepts essential for the success of organisations which appear to be connected with gratitude (Cortini et al., 2019; Ford et al., 2018; Grant & Wrzesniewski, 2010; Spence et al., 2014).

Therefore, this dissertation aimed to further analyse the link between gratitude at work, job proactivity, and job performance to possibly support the success of employees and organisations.

Regarding theoretical implications, this study brought to light the benefits of gratitude interventions and counting kindness interventions, since they showed that positive contexts or mindsets promote a positive relation between GAWS-MW and TP.

Moreover, in applied settings, managers and leaders may take these findings and implement similar techniques in the workplace. This intervention has the advantage of not only being inexpensive but also, it does not take long to implement unlike other interventions studied before. For example, through the use of nudges, organisations can use either physical posters, desktop backgrounds, and even email newsletters to ask employees to reflect on acts of kindness they have performed in their workplace or on things connected to their work that they feel grateful for, thus triggering positive emotions towards their work environment, affecting consequently their performance.

This study presents some limitations that should be clarified. Firstly, appropriate tests should be conducted to verify the validity of the scales used in a Portuguese sample. Secondly, this study relied on self-reported measures of gratitude at work, job proactivity, and job performance which, specifically for the last two constructs, may include the participants' biases and, therefore, influence their results. Research has found that self-report measures of job performance are not a direct replacement for objective performance measures (Pransky et al., 2006), therefore, future research may want to either further study the validity of the IWPQ or use other objective job performance measures. Thirdly, the sample was gathered through a convenience method, thus not probabilistic which limits the possible generalisation of these findings.

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Appendix A

Items for Gratitude at Work translated to Portuguese

Refleta sobre a sua experiência a trabalhar no seu emprego atual. Se tem mais que um emprego pense naquele em que passa mais tempo.

Depois, indique com que frequência de 1 (nunca) a 5 (quase sempre) se sente grato pelos aspetos do seu trabalho indicados a baixo.

Com que frequência se sente grato por²...

1. as suas interações com aqueles que serve (e.g., os seus clientes/pacientes/alunos)?
2. o salário e benefícios que recebe?
3. o impacto positivo que o seu trabalho tem nos outros?
4. o equilíbrio entre o seu emprego e vida pessoal?
5. as suas conquistas no trabalho?
6. a atmosfera/clima do seu ambiente de trabalho?
7. a sua habilidade de crescer e aprender com o seu trabalho?
8. o apoio que recebe do(s) seu(s) supervisor(es)?
9. o apoio que recebe do(s) seu(s) colega(s)?
10. a sua autonomia no seu trabalho?

² Gratitude for a supportive work environment subscale items: 2, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10; gratitude for meaningful work subscale items: 1, 3, 5, 7.

Appendix B

Items for Job Proactivity translated to Portuguese

Refleta sobre a sua experiência a trabalhar no seu emprego atual. Se tem mais que um emprego pense naquele em que passa mais tempo.

Por favor, identifique de 1 (discordo fortemente) a 5 (concordo fortemente) o quão concorda com as seguintes frases:

1. No meu trabalho, eu faço sugestões para melhorar a forma como trabalhamos.
2. Quando os métodos ou procedimentos de trabalho não são eficazes, tento fazer algo a seu respeito.
3. Quando algo não está correto na forma como o trabalho é feito, eu procuro melhorar-lho.
4. Eu tomo iniciativa mesmo quando os outros não tomam.
5. Eu discuto métodos de trabalho com o meu supervisor, quando penso que estes poderiam ser melhorados.

Appendix C

Items for Job Performance translated to Portuguese

Refleta sobre a sua experiência a trabalhar no seu emprego atual. Se tem mais que um emprego pense naquele em que passa mais tempo.

Tendo os últimos 3 meses em mente, por favor, identifique de 1 (raramente) a 5 (sempre) o quão se identifica com as seguintes frases³:

1. Consegui planear o meu trabalho para que fosse concluído a tempo.
2. O meu planeamento foi ótimo.
3. Mantive em mente os resultados que tinha que alcançar no meu trabalho.
4. Consegui separar os problemas principais dos secundários no trabalho.
5. Consegui realizar bem o meu trabalho com o mínimo de tempo e esforço.
6. Assumi responsabilidades extras.
7. Comecei novas tarefas sozinho/a, quando as anteriores terminaram.
8. Aceitei tarefas de trabalho desafiadoras, quando estavam disponíveis.
9. Trabalhei para manter os meus conhecimentos sobre o meu trabalho atualizados.
10. Trabalhei para manter minhas competências de trabalho atualizadas.
11. Eu criei soluções criativas para novos problemas.
12. Continuei à procura de novos desafios no meu trabalho.
13. Participei ativamente nas reuniões de trabalho.

Tendo os últimos 3 meses em mente, por favor, identifique de 1 (nunca) a 5 (frequentemente) o quão se identifica com as seguintes frases⁴:

1. Eu queixei-me sobre assuntos laborais sem importância no trabalho.
2. Tornei problemas piores do que eram no trabalho.
3. Concentrei-me nos aspetos negativos de uma situação de trabalho, em vez de nos aspetos positivos.
4. Falei com colegas sobre os aspetos negativos do meu trabalho.

³ Task performance subscale items: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5; contextual performance subscale items: 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13.

⁴ Counterproductive work behaviour subscale items: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

5. Falei com pessoas de fora da organização sobre os aspetos negativos do meu trabalho.