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Personality and Organizational Career Growth: The Moderating Roles of Innovation Climate and Innovation Climate Strength

Yifan Jiang[1], Qiong Wang[2], and Qingxiong (Derek) Weng[1]

Abstract

Drawing on trait activation theory, the present study answered the question about who achieves better career development in innovative organizations in the Chinese context. We examined the relationships of Big Five personality traits on organizational career growth while considering the cross-level moderating effects of innovation climate and innovation climate strength. More specifically, we argued that conscientiousness and openness to experience would be more strongly related to organizational career growth at the higher level of innovation climate, and the linkages between all Big Five personality traits and career growth are stronger when innovation climate strength is weaker. Data from 2,415 employees randomly selected from 280 institutions in China support most of the hypotheses. We discussed the theoretical and practical implications as well as the limitations and suggestions for future studies.

Keywords

Bg Five personality traits, organizational career growth, trait activation theory, innovation climate, innovation climate strength

In the current age of boundaryless careers, employees' career paths are characterized by interfirm mobility and unpredictability (Arthur et al., 2005). Few employees work within a single organization for a lifetime, and more employees are managing their own career paths rather than relying on organizations (Wang et al., 2014). These trends make the prospects for personal career development and the improvement of employability more salient for employees (Eby et al., 2003). In response, organizations have become increasingly focused on providing employees with career development opportunities and professional skill training in order to retain key employees (Weng et al., 2010). In this respect, scholars recently called for more studies on the concept of organizational career growth (Weng

[1] School of Management, University of Science and Technology of China, Hefei, Anhui, People's Republic of China
[2] School of Business Administration, Zhejiang Gongshang University, Hangzhou, Zhejiang, People's Republic of China

Corresponding Author:
Qingxiong (Derek) Weng, School of Management, University of Science and Technology of China, 96 Jinzhai Rd., Hefei, Anhui, People's Republic of China.
Email: wqx886@ustc.edu.cn

& McElroy, 2012), which captures employees' career-related progresses within their current organizations. Research showed that organizational career growth is not only a way to more precisely evaluate individuals' perceived career development within current organizations (Weng et al., 2010) but also reflects the improvement of their career-related professional ability (Wang et al., 2018).

A considerable number of empirical studies demonstrated that organizational career growth is associated with organizational attitudes and behaviors, including organizational commitment, turnover intentions, and job performance (Wang et al., 2018; Weng et al., 2010). In contrast, relative less efforts have been given to the antecedents of organizational career growth (see exceptions, Spagnoli & Weng, 2019; Van Osch & Schaveling, 2017), especially, little is known about who is likely to achieve better organizational career growth. The first aim of our study, therefore, was to investigate the relationships between personality traits and organizational career growth by using the Big Five personality traits, which is one of the most frequently examined trait taxonomies in vocational psychology (e.g., Mount & Barrick, 1995; Hurtz & Donovan, 2000). In doing so, we investigate the dispositional correlates of organizational career growth and respond to recent calls for more knowledge about the predictors of organizational career growth (see McElroy & Weng, 2016; Wang et al., 2014).

Research also suggested that the relationship between personality traits and career growth may be shaped by situational factors (Penney et al., 2011). According to Tett and Burnett (2003), situational cues at the organization-level are mostly captured by organizational climate, yet little empirical evidence has supported this idea to date. Given that the Chinese government emphasizes the role of innovation in economic growth and implements the policy of "mass innovation," Chinese organizations constitute an ideal context in which to examine the role of innovation climate. While prior literature has paid close attention to the antecedents of innovation climate (Sarros et al., 2008), the question about what kind of people achieve higher versus lower levels of development in innovative organizations is understudied, especially in China. Using data from working adults in Chinese organizations, our second purpose was to examine the cross-level moderating effect of innovation climate on the relationships between Big Five personality traits and organizational career growth.

Finally, utilizing trait activation theory as an overarching theoretical framework, we theorized that individuals' traits would be activated by the trait-related situational cues when the situation strength is weak (Tett & Burnett, 2003). In demonstrating this theoretical argument, we examined the moderating effects of innovation climate and innovation climate strength simultaneously in order to expand our knowledge about how personality traits and situational factors interactively affect career outcomes.

Theoretical Background and Hypothesis Development

Organizational career growth. Organizational career growth has been conceptualized as a multidimensional construct captured by four factors (Weng et al., 2010): career goal progress, professional ability development, promotion speed, and remuneration growth. A number of studies conducted in various countries/regions have empirically validated its use (e.g., Weng & McElroy, 2012; Weng et al., 2010).

Organizational career growth captures individuals' perceptions of career development within current organizations (Weng & McElroy, 2012). A line of empirical research has emphasized its significant correlations with important career-related behaviors and psychological states, such as turnover intentions (Weng & McElroy, 2012), organizational commitment (Weng et al., 2010), and job performance (Wang et al., 2018).

Although research has recognized the importance of organizational career growth, the antecedents of organizational career growth have not been adequately addressed. To date, research has looked at only organizational socialization learning (Spagnoli & Weng, 2019) and gender differences (Van Osch & Schaveling, 2017) as predictors of organizational career growth. Little is known about the influence of personality on organizational career growth.

Trait activation theory. Trait activation theory focuses on explaining how and when personality traits affect workplace variables, such as organizational commitment and job performance (Choi et al., 2014; Huang et al., 2016). The theory encapsulates two important principles: (a) first, personality traits are latent propensities that are expressed in response to the demands of trait-relevant situational cues; and (b) different traits may be activated by different levels (i.e., organizational vs. individual level) of situational cues (Tett & Gutterman, 2000). Derived from trait activation theory (Tett & Burnett, 2003), we identify two situation features—situation trait relevance and situation strength.

Situation trait relevance refers to the idea that the unique information provided by situational cues triggers people to express specific traits in response (Tett & Gutterman, 2000). According to Tett and Burnett (2003), a situation is relevant to a trait if such specific trait-relevant behaviors are viable responses to the situation demands. In other words, situation trait relevance focuses on figuring out why some traits, rather than others, are expressed in a specific situation.

Situation strength represents the constraints of the situational demands on individuals' responsive behaviors (Meyer et al., 2014). It is generally accepted that situation strength indicates the extent to which situations restrict the criterion-related validity of individual differences (Meyer & Dalal, 2009). Strong situations provide clear situational demands and guidelines for valued work behavior, which lead individuals to reach a consensus on an appropriate behavioral response (Meyer et al., 2009). Thus, there is likely no place for individuals to express their individual personality traits (Meyer et al., 2010), which attenuates the relationships between personality traits and work outcomes. Conversely, weak situations are "ambiguously structured" and provide few cues regarding the appropriate response patterns (Meyer et al., 2014). Hence, the ambiguity inherent in these situations allows for much more variability in behavioral responses and leads individuals to exhibit authentic expressions of their personality traits (Meyer et al., 2010). In other words, the relationship between personality traits and work outcomes are amplified in weak situations.

Big Five personality traits and organizational career growth. The structure of the Big Five personality traits has reached high consensus in organizational behavior and industrial psychology literature (Hurtz & Donovan, 2000). The Big Five refers to the traits of emotional stability, extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience (Mount & Barrick, 1995). These personality traits have been linked to various career outcomes, such as career gravitation, career adaptability, and subjective career success (e.g., Woods et al., 2013; Y. Li et al., 2015). In this study, we examined how such personality constructs relate to organizational career growth.

Emotional stability is the opposite of neuroticism. Research suggests that emotional stability enhances an individual's ability to deal with negative affect, manage demands from multiple domains, and withstand occupational strain (Bullock-Yowell et al., 2011). Consistent with previous research showing that emotional stability is linked to several positive career outcomes (i.e., promotion speed, career goal progress; Seibert et al., 2001), we expect that emotional stability positively predicts organizational career growth.

Extroversion is described as warmth, excitement seeking, and positive emotions (Watson & Clark, 1992). Extroverts are likely to take actions to fulfill the requirements of organizations and to enhance their vocational ability to match environment demands (Rammsayer & Stahl, 2004). Also, extroverts tend to be trusted by peers and supervisors (Anderson et al., 2008), which increases their career development and promotion opportunities (Lee & Ohtake, 2012). Thus, it is reasonable for us to expect that extroversion is positively related to organizational career growth.

Agreeableness consists of prosocial and communal orientations toward others and includes several subtraits such as altruism, tender-mindedness, trust, and modesty (Graziano et al., 2007). The relationship between agreeableness and organizational career growth may be complicated. Some researchers argued that agreeable individuals prefer to maintain harmonious relations in the workplace and thus are

more likely to get high evaluations within teamwork-oriented organizations (Barrick et al., 1998). However, agreeable people are also likely to sacrifice personal time and energy in pleasing others (Judge et al., 2012). In other words, "nice guys may finish last" (Tokar et al., 1998). Because recent empirical evidence has supported a positive effect for agreeableness on individuals' career adaptability and career exploration (Y. Li et al., 2015), we suppose that agreeableness is positively related to organizational career growth.

Conscientiousness refers to dutifulness and achievement striving (Judge et al., 2002) and has been shown to have the most stable predictive effect on various work outcomes (Barrick & Mount, 1991). For instance, conscientious employees perform better in job-related training (Wille et al., 2013), they are more effective and productive in reaching organizational goals (Anderson et al., 2008), and they are more likely to invest in professional skills learning (Bidjerano & Dai, 2007). Thus, we expect conscientiousness to be positively linked to organizational career growth in the work context.

Individuals scoring high on openness are characterized to be curious, broad-minded, and intelligent (Mount & Barrick, 1995). Prior literature provides few clues for predicting the relationship between openness and career growth. However, considering that openness enhances an individual's capability to adapt in different task contexts (LePine et al., 2000) and to learn new skills (Bidjerano & Dai, 2007), we propose that openness is positively related to organizational career growth.

According to the abovementioned arguments and the existing evidence supporting the relationships between Big Five personality traits and career outcomes, we proposed that:

Hypothesis 1: Emotional stability, extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness are positively related to organizational career growth.

The moderating role of innovation climate. Organizational climate captures the shared perceptions and evaluations of employees concerning their organization's characteristics (e.g., involvement, formalization, tradition; Schneider et al., 2013). Innovation climate depicts the capacity of organizations to be innovative and has been recognized as extremely essential to organizational development and individual motivation at work (Sarros et al., 2008).

From the perspective of situation trait relevance, employees achieve better career growth when their trait expression behaviors are consistent with the situational cues provided by innovation climate because such trait expression behaviors are viable responses to organizational demands and are more likely to be valued and extrinsically rewarded by organizations (Christiansen et al., 2014). Prior literature suggested that innovation climate places situational demands on behaviors that not only support the production of the innovative ideas but also the implementation of innovative practices into the organization (Zaltman et al., 1973). In this respect, openness and conscientiousness are expected to be theoretically relevant to the cues provided by the innovation climate. We develop the hypotheses below.

Openness. Since innovation climate calls for the production of innovative ideas that depend on individuals' creativity (Woodman et al., 1993), openness-related behaviors (creative, imaginative, and divergent thinking) are viable responses to an innovation climate. Therefore, individuals scoring high on openness find it easier to fulfill and exceed the situational demands provided by innovation climate and achieve better performance in their jobs (Barrick et al., 2001). Thus, the innovation climate amplifies the relationship between openness and organizational career growth to some extent.

We also expect the openness–career growth relationship to be strengthened in innovative organizations because openness enhances an employee's adaptability in innovative organizations (LePine et al., 2000). Organizations with a high innovation climate often encounter drastic changes and turbulent environments (Van der Vegt et al., 2005). Individuals scoring high on openness have been shown to be more adaptive in such changing workplaces (Wanberg & Banas, 2000). Therefore,

we hypothesize that openness will be more closely related to organizational career growth when the level of innovation climate is high.

Hypothesis 2: Innovation climate moderates the relationship between openness and organizational career growth such that the relationship is more positive when the innovation climate is higher.

Conscientiousness. Innovation climate encourages the implementation of new ideas (Zaltman et al., 1973) and forces people into unfamiliar situations (O'Reilly III et al., 1991). Fehr (2009) suggested that persistence is critical to innovation. Studies also evidenced that specific subtraits of conscientiousness (i.e., dutifulness, persistence, and achievement striving) fulfill the situational demands of innovation climate. Furthermore, conscientious employees find it easier and more relaxed to express initiative (Steel et al., 2012), and thus they are more likely to invest extra resources (e.g., time, energy) in work-related activities (e.g., power-building, goal-achievement; Anderson et al., 2008), which amplifies the relationship between conscientiousness and organizational career growth.

Hypothesis 3: Innovation climate moderates the relationship between conscientiousness and organizational career growth such that the relationship is more positive when the innovation climate is higher.

The moderating role of innovation climate strength. As we discussed earlier, a strong situation climate strength strictly constrains individuals' personality expression and limits the predictive power of personality on work outcomes (Meyer et al., 2009). As a result, the relationship between personality traits and work outcomes will be stronger in weak situations and weaker in strong situations. For instance, Meyer et al. (2014) demonstrated that the relationships between all Big Five personality traits and voluntary work behaviors were weaker in strong situations than in weak situations.

Climate strength is the situation strength measured by the degree of agreement about the organization's climate among the employees in the same organization (Lee & Dalal, 2016). Following the arguments of situation strength, we proposed that strong climate strength leads employees to interpret organizational demands in similar ways, which induces uniform expectations about the most appropriate behavior (Dalal et al., 2015). Consequently, the role of individual differences in predicting organizational career growth is expected to be undermined. However, compared with prior literature measuring general situational strength (Judge & Zapata, 2015), we focus on the specific context of innovation climate strength. According to Meyer et al. (2010), the moderating effect of such a specific facet climate strength is most likely to be demonstrated on the personality traits which are the most sensitive to situational factors. Therefore, we posit that strong innovation climate strength will restrict the expression of the personality traits that are sensitive to the innovation context. Specifically, since openness and conscientiousness are activated by the innovation climate, we hypothesize that their associations with organizational career growth will be stronger when innovation climate strength is weak.

Hypothesis 4: Innovation climate strength moderates the relationships between (a) openness, (b) conscientiousness, and (c) organizational career growth, such that the links are weaker when the innovation climate strength is higher.

Method

Samples and Procedure

The data used in this study are part of a wider survey concerning the job mobility conditions of researchers in China under the support of the China Association of Science and Technology (CAST).

Participants from 280 institutions, including universities, research institutes, hospitals, state-owned enterprises, and private enterprises located in different cities participated via online surveys. With the assistance of CAST, invitation letters enclosed with an introduction of our research, assurance of confidentiality, and a link to the online questionnaire were randomly sent to 5 to 20 employees in each institution. Each valid participant received 20 CNY as a reward. Of the 3,000 distributed questionnaires, 2,653 were returned, for a response rate of 88.4%. After list-wise deletion because of missing data, 2,415 valid questionnaires remained. Respondents and nonrespondents did not differ significantly in terms of their gender, educational level, or age.

Of the final 2,415 participants, 22.0% were 26 years old and below, 27.7% were 31–35 years old, 17.0% were 36–40 years old, 13.2% were 41–50 years old, 8.8% were 46–50 years old, and 11.3% were 50 years old and above. About 57.1% of respondents were male. Regarding the educational background, 47.3% held an undergraduate university degree, 29.4% held a master's degree, and 23.3% held a doctorate degree.

Measurement

Big Five personality traits. Participants' personality traits were measured by the Mini-IPIP (International Personality Item Pool) Scales with 20 items (Donnellan et al., 2006). The Mini-IPIP Scales measure each of the Big Five traits of extroversion (e.g., "am the life of the party"), agreeableness (e.g., "sympathize with others' feelings"), conscientiousness (e.g., "get chores done right away"), emotional stability (e.g., "have frequent mood swings"), and openness (e.g., "have a vivid imagination") using 4-item scales. In the present study, participants were asked to rate themselves on each item using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The reliability of this scale in prior studies was good (average $\alpha = .89$), and its validity is supported by the fact that the IPIP Scale is related to other Big Five personality trait measures (e.g., the Big Five Inventory; Donnellan et al., 2006). In the present study, the Mini-IPIP Scales yielded good reliabilities for extroversion ($\alpha = .76$), emotional stability ($\alpha = .81$), conscientiousness ($\alpha = .77$), agreeableness ($\alpha = .73$), and openness ($\alpha = .80$).

Organizational career growth. Consistent with Weng et al.'s (2010) study, we used a 15-item scale to measure employee organizational career growth. This scale summates ratings on the four dimensions constituting career growth within one's current organization, namely, career goal progress, professional ability development, promotion speed, and remuneration growth. Participants responded to each item (e.g., "my present job moves me closer to my career goals") on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Previous studies showed good reliability ($\alpha = .92$) and a strong relationship to organizational commitment (Weng & McElroy, 2012). In our study, the overall α coefficient for this scale is .95.

Innovation climate. To measure organizational innovation climate, we used Patterson et al.'s (2005) scale with a set of six items (e.g. "new ideas are readily accepted here", "assistance in developing new ideas is readily available") addressing the extent of encouragement and support for new ideas and innovative approaches within one's organization. This scale has shown good internal reliability ($\alpha = .95$), and a positive relationship with organizational innovation performance (Dul & Ceylan, 2014). In the present study, the scale showed good reliability with an α coefficient of .94.

We used aggregated individual scores on their self-report innovation climate to capture the organization-level innovation climate. We tested the appropriateness of using an aggregated score by within-group agreement (r_{wg}; James et al., 1984), the intraclass correlations (ICC (1)), and the reliability of the means (ICC (2); Bliese, 2000). The r_{wg} value obtained for the innovation climate presented the mean as 0.91 (standard deviation [*SD*] = 0.57), which was above the conventionally acceptable r_{wg}

value of 0.70 (James et al., 1984). The value of ICC (1) for the innovation climate was 0.11. ICC (2) value was presented as 0.96. All these values were comparable to the recommended ICC values and justified our organization-level aggregation (LeBreton & Senter, 2008).

Innovation climate strength. Innovation climate strength was conceptualized as within-group agreement. In accordance with prior literature on climate strength (e.g., Luria, 2008; Zohar & Tenne-Gazit, 2008), we computed the *SD* of employee perceptions of innovation climate within a given organization. Since the *SD* is the measure of disagreement rather than a direct measure of within-group agreement, we multiplied the *SD* by −1. Final scores indicated innovation climate strength, with higher scores representing a stronger innovation climate strength. In conclusion, the innovation climate strength was operationalized as the (sign-reversed) *SD* of employee scores on the innovation climate within each organization (Schneider et al., 2002).

Analytical Strategy

As our data spanned two levels of analysis, we used the Mplus Version 7.0 software package to test the proposed cross-level moderation model. We first tested the Level 1 random slope of Big Five personality traits on organizational career growth. Then, we tested the cross-level moderating effects of innovation climate and innovation climate strength by adding these two Level 2 predictors on the Level 1 random slope.

Results

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Confirmatory factor analyses were conducted to examine the discriminant validities among the Big Five personality traits, innovation climate, and organizational career growth. Results showed that the seven-factor model fits the data ($\chi^2 = 3{,}604.40$, $df = 744$, $p < .01$, CFI = 0.96, RMSEA = 0.04) better than either (a) the six-factor model (i.e., agreeableness and openness being combined into one factor; $\chi^2 = 4{,}937.34$, $df = 750$, $p < .01$, CFI = 0.94, RMSEA=0.05); (b) the five-factor model (i.e., with neuroticism and extroversion as well as agreeableness and openness being combined; $\chi^2 = 6{,}260.16$, $df = 755$, $p < .01$, CFI = 0.92, RMSEA = 0.06); (c) the four-factor model (i.e., in which neuroticism and conscientiousness are combined in one factor, and agreeableness, extroversion and openness are combined in another factor; $\chi^2 = 7{,}344.19$, $df = 759$, $p < .01$, CFI = 0.90, RMSEA=0.06); (d) the three-factor model (i.e., in which the Big Five personality traits are combined into a single factor; $\chi^2 = 8{,}774.37$, $df = 762$, $p < .01$, CFI = 0.88, RMSEA=0.07); (e) the two-factor model (i.e., in which the Big Five personality traits and innovation climate are combined into one factor; $\chi^2 = 15{,}962.51$, $df = 764$, $p < .01$, CFI = 0.78, RMSEA = 0.09); or (f) the one-factor model with the seven constructs combined into one single factor ($\chi^2 = 15{,}919.86$, $df = 765$, $p < 0.01$, CFI = 0.78, RMSEA = 0.09). The results supported treating the Big Five personality traits, organizational career growth, and innovation climate as distinct factors.

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Table 1 shows the means, *SD*s, and correlations among the variables across two levels. Given the hierarchical structure of the data, we present both individual-level and organizational-level correlations. Of interest, the correlation between openness and organizational career growth at the individual level is 0.11 ($p < .01$), consistent with our hypotheses. Also noteworthy is the fact that the correlation coefficient between emotional stability and organizational career growth ($\gamma = .12$, $p < .01$) at the individual level is the highest among all five traits.

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Among Variables.

Variables	Mean	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Level 1															
1. Gender	1.43	0.50		−.02*	.01	−.02	−.02*	−.01	−.01	.01	.01	−.01*	−.01	.01	−.01
2. Age	2.92	1.63	−.07**		07*	.08*	.22**	.03*	.01	.01	.20*	.01	.01	−.05**	.02
3. Education level	1.77	0.80	−.02*	−.11**		.27**	.24**	.01	.01	.02*	−.01	.02	.07**	.01	−.01
4. Salary	3.23	1.29	−.06**	.65**	.10**		.22**	−.01	.02*	.03**	.01	.05**	.13**	.02	.04**
5. Position	4.36	1.53	−.06**	.57**	.10**	.61**		.02	.02	.01	.01	.02	.07**	−.01	.01
6. Emotional stability	3.24	0.64	−.01	.16**	−.01	.07**	.09**		.01	.01	.01	.01**	.01	.01	−.01
7. Extroversion	2.77	0.50	−.02**	.02	.01	.03**	.04*	.04**		.01*	.01	.01*	.02**	.02**	.01**
8. Agreeableness	3.42	0.50	−.01	.02	.01	.04**	.02	.05**	.03**		.01**	.01**	.01	.01	−.01
9. Conscientiousness	3.73	0.52	.01*	.08**	−.01	.05**	.06**	.10**	−.01	.08**		.01**	.01	.01	−.01
10. Openness	3.33	0.60	−.03**	.02	.02**	.04**	.06*	.10**	.04**	.09**	.08**		.02**	.01*	.01
11. Organizational career growth	4.67	1.02	−.01	.05	.03*	.20**	.15**	.12**	.08**	.07**	.07**	.11**		.09**	.02**
Level 2															
12. Innovation climate	3.23	0.32													.02**
13. Innovation climate strength	−0.71	0.20													

Note. Correlations below the diagonal represent individual level correlations ($N = 2{,}415$). Correlations above the diagonal represent organizational level correlations ($N = 280$). For gender: 1 = *male*, 2 = *female*; for age: 1 = *26 years old and below*, 2 = *31–35 years old*, 3 = *36–40 years old*, 4 = *41–50 years old*, 5 = *46–50 years old*; for salary: 1 = *3,000 and below*, 2 = *3,001–4,000*, *3* = *4,001–5,000*, 4 = *5,001–8,000*, 5 = *8,001 and above*; for position: 1 = *frontline workers*, 2 = *junior technician*, 3 = *junior manager*, 4 = *middle technician*, 5 = *middle manager*, 6 = *senior technician*, 7 = *senior manager*, 8 = *other staff*; and for educational level: 1 = *bachelor's and below*, 2 = *master's*, 3 = *doctorate*.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

Table 2. Testing the Cross-Level Moderating Effect of Innovation Climate and Innovation Climate Strength.

	Career Growth	
Variable	Estimate	*SE*
Level 1		
Intercept		
Gender	−.03	.04
Age	−.05**	.02
Education level	.02	.03
Salary	.15**	.02
Position	.05*	.01
Level 2		
Random slope for emotional stability		
Intercept	.18**	.04
Innovative climate	−.18	.11
Innovation climate strength	−.13	.20
Random slope for extroversion		
Intercept	.24**	.04
Innovative climate	.02	.15
Innovation climate strength	−.40	.24
Random slope for agreeableness		
Intercept	.08	.04
Innovative climate	−.20	.13
Innovation climate strength	.20	.21
Random slope for conscientiousness		
Intercept	.11*	.05
Innovative climate	.33*	.14
Innovation climate strength	−.38*	.21
Random slope for openness		
Intercept	.15**	.05
Innovative climate	.31*	.16
Innovation climate strength	−.55*	.27

Note. The above estimates represent unstandardized path coefficients. All hypothesized effects were specified as random slopes. *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

Individual-Level Results

As shown in the first column of Table 2, after controlling for gender, age, education level, salary, and position, emotional stability($\gamma = .18$, $p < .01$), extroversion ($\gamma = .24$, $p < .01$), conscientiousness ($\gamma = .11$, $p < .05$), and openness ($\gamma = .15$, $p < .01$) are positively related to organizational career growth. However, the relationship between agreeableness and organizational career growth ($\gamma = .08$, n.s.) is not significant. These results support Hypothesis 1 with the exception of agreeableness.

Cross-Level Interactions

The slopes-as-outcomes model was used to examine the moderating roles of innovation climate and innovation climate strength on the relationships between personality traits and organizational career growth.

Hypothesis 2 states that the relationship between openness and organizational career growth is contingent on the organization's innovation climate. As presented in Table 2, the interaction of openness and innovation climate is significant ($\gamma = .31$, $p < .05$), which signifies the potential moderating role of the innovation climate. We further plotted the associations between openness and organizational career

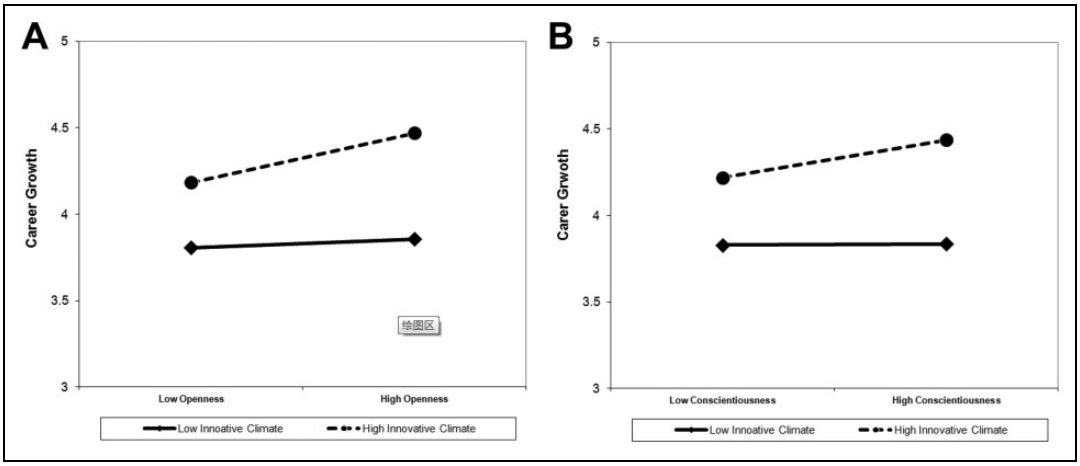

Figure 1. The moderating effects of innovative climate on the openness-career growth (A) and conscientiousness-career growth (B) relationships.

growth (see Figure 1A). Results showed that the slope was not significant for 1 *SD* below the mean ($b = .05$, $t = .07$, n.s.) but was positively significant when the innovation climate was 1 *SD* above the mean ($b = .25$, $t = .07$, $p < .05$). This result supports Hypothesis 2.

The relationship between conscientiousness and organizational career growth (Hypothesis 3) was moderated by the innovation climate as well. The interaction of conscientiousness and innovation climate was significant ($\gamma = .33$, $p < .05$). Figure 1B depicts the interaction. The relationship between conscientiousness and organizational career growth was positive and significant only when the innovation climate was high (i.e., 1 *SD* above the mean, $b = .23$, $t = .06$, $p < .01$).

Hypothesis 4 proposed the moderating role of innovation climate strength. As shown in Table 2, for the linkages of openness ($\gamma = -.55$, $p < .05$) and conscientiousness ($\gamma = -.38$, $p < .05$) with organizational career growth, innovation climate strength negatively predicted the size of the validity coefficients. Thus, Hypothesis 4 is fully supported.

Discussion

In line with trait activation theory (Tett & Gutterman, 2003), our results indicate that Big Five personality traits predict organizational career growth depending on the work environment. More specifically, our findings are generally twofold: (1) the degree of innovation climate moderates the relationship between two of the dimensions of Big Five personality traits (openness and conscientiousness) and organizational career growth; and (2) in situations in which these two personality traits are activated (openness and conscientiousness), the personality traits–career growth linkage is stronger in weak climate conditions than in strong climate conditions. Our findings suggest that future studies should consider the role of different contexts in order to better understand the linkages between personality traits and career outcomes.

Together with previous empirical studies (e.g., George & Zhou, 2001), our findings demonstrate that openness and conscientiousness, which inspire employees to perform creatively and persistently, are extremely important for employee organizational career growth in an innovative context. Regarding innovation climate strength, we found that strong innovation climate foster more uniform responses which weakens the personality traits–career growth linkage. In a weak innovation climate,

however, employees are able to exhibit greater variance in their responses, responses that reflect differences in their own personality traits. That is, in weak organizational climates, individuals who have the situationally appropriate personality traits are better able to exhibit behaviors tied to their own organizational career growth.

In conclusion, our study contributes to the literature in several ways. First, prior literature emphasized the relationship between personality traits and career outcomes across the one's total life span (Sutin et al., 2009), rather than on one's career growth within their current organization. The present study focused on organizational career growth since it is more predictable and more relevant to employees' organizational attitudes and behaviors (Weng et al., 2010). By examining the relationships between Big Five personality traits and organizational career growth, we expanded the knowledge of personality traits in predicting career outcomes.

Second, rooted in trait activation theory (Tett & Gutterman, 2003), we develop a moderation model to illustrate the situational conditions under which personality constructs can be more valid predictors of organizational career growth. Thus, the findings expanded the application of trait activation theory into the career field.

Third, by placing two distinct situational features (i.e., trait relevance and situation strength) into a theoretical framework, we posit that personality traits residing in the individuals are expressed as responses to the relevant and weak situational cues. Based on trait activation theory (Tett & Gutterman, 2003), the supported hypotheses enable us to better understand when the moderating roles of situational factors work and why specific personality trait–organizational career growth relationships are sensitive to situational factors.

Practical Implications

The present study offers several practical implications for career counselors and practitioners. First, by investigating the relationships between Big Five personality traits and organizational career growth, our results indicated that emotional stability, extroversion, conscientiousness, and openness positively predict individual organizational career growth. The fact that organizational career growth is positively related to employees' organizational commitment and job performance (Wang et al., 2018) enables HR practitioners to select applicants who score high on these personality traits in the selection process in order to recruit better and more loyal employees.

Second, our findings further suggest the significance of matching personality traits with the organizational climate. According to our results, career counselors should suggest that job seekers and employees who score high on openness and conscientiousness seek work in more innovative organizations. Moreover, given that job resources are limited within organizations, managers should provide developmental resources and opportunities to those who are high on openness and conscientiousness in order to improve the efficiency of organizations.

Finally, the findings suggest that the ability of personality traits to predict work outcomes is dependent on organizational climate strength. In view of this, the validity of personality traits as predictors of outcomes such as career growth, organizational commitment, and job performance may be limited in organizations with a climate characterized by a centralized structure and strict control. Thus, the function of personality evaluation in recruitment and personal selection may be minimized. Also, managers could weaken the effects of individual differences in the process of job design and newcomer socialization through building an extremely strong organizational environment.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

As is the case in any study, our results must be viewed in light of the study's limitations. First, we assessed personality traits and organizational career growth via self-report, which may cause common

method problems. However, since personality traits and organizational career growth encompass individual differences and psychological perceptions, they are more accurate when reported by participants themselves. Moreover, we did emphasize that the survey is confidential and only available for academic research. Nevertheless, future studies should consider using more objective criteria. Meanwhile, we suggest more effort be put into longitudinal research so as to enable stronger tests regarding the causality in our model.

Second, we examined only one aspect of an organization's climate, innovation climate. Future research is needed on other facet-specific dimensions of organizational climate. Furthermore, the role of other contextual cues derived from job- and environment-level characteristics, such as task characteristics (Ng et al., 2008) and cultural context (Chan et al., 2014), provide potential avenues for future research.

An additional limitation involves the measurement of innovation climate strength. Although we employed the most common and acceptable method, other methods may be feasible as well (Meyer & Dalal, 2009). Research should compare the efficacy of different methods for calculating climate strength in future moderation studies. Additionally, as our development of climate strength derives from the conceptualization of situation strength (Meyer et al., 2014), more work is needed on the operationalization of situation strength.

Finally, our study was limited to China. While the political climate in China provided an ideal environment to investigate the role of innovation climate and strength, we recognize that additional research is necessary in order to generalize these findings to other cultures.

Conclusions

Building on the growing interest in the relationships between personality traits and organizational career growth, this study examined the moderating effects of innovation climate and innovation climate strength within a large Chinese sample. The results indicated that individuals' emotional stability, extroversion, conscientiousness, and openness are positively related to organizational career growth. Moreover, by showing that conscientiousness and openness are more strongly related to organizational career growth under higher innovation climate and lower innovation climate strength, our study highlights the interactive role that personality and contextual factors play in determining individual organizational career growth and extends the application of trait activation theory into the literature on careers.

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ORCID iD

Qiong Wang https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8400-8354

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Author Biographies

Yifan Jiang received his bachelor's degree at Shanghai Ocean University and he is currently a PhD student in the School of Management at the University of Science and Technology of China. His research interests include personality at work, situation strength, and work–family interface. In his personal time, he enjoys music and workout.

Qiong Wang PhD, is a lecturer at School of Business Administration, Zhejiang Gongshang University. Her research interests include occupational commitment, organizational commitment, job performance, and organizational citizenship behavior. In her leisure time, she enjoys jogging and traveling.

Qingxiong Weng, PhD, is a professor at School of Management, University of Science and Technology of China, and an associate editor of the *Journal of Vocational Behavior*. He received his PhD in Huazhong University of Science and Technology and then worked as a postdoc fellow at Ghent University and the University of Queensland. His areas of interest include vocational behavior, career development, personality, selection, emotion, and leadership. Outside of academia, he enjoys reading.