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The Relationships between Leader Creativity Expectations, Intrinsic Motivation, and Creative Performance

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Objective - The objectives of this conceptual paper are two folds: to propose and argue a) the direct relationship between leader creativity expectations and creative performance; and b) the mediating role of intrinsic motivation between leader creativity expectations and creative performance.

Design - Drawing upon Pygmalion effect, Herzberg's two-factor theory of motivation, and componential theory of creativity, two propositions are suggested.

Findings - It is proposed that there will be a positive relationship between leader creativity expectations and creative performance. In addition, the authors also make the case that intrinsic motivation will mediate the relationship between leader creativity expectations and creative performance.

Originality - The significant original contribution of this article is that it suggests a theoretical relationship of Pygmalion effect with Herzberg's two-factor theory of motivation and componential theory of creativity to propose a new conceptual framework. In addition, this paper extends our knowledge regarding the pertinent role of leader creativity expectations in stimulating divergent thinking process of people in the workplace.

Policy Implications - This article attempts to provide a clear guideline to both practitioners and academicians to better explore the relationship between expectations and employee creativity. The proposed framework may be applied in various social contexts such as healthcare, education, creative advertising, research and development, hospitality and new business incubation.

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Introduction

In the 21st century, employee creativity has been recognized as the most important leadership quality (Carr, 2010). Due to hyper-competition, it is increasingly becoming very difficult and challenging for business leaders and managers to gain and sustain their competitive advantage (D'Aveni & Gunther, 1994). In fact, business organizations as well as educational establishments ought to induct highly creative people who could contribute far much better than a common employee in gaining and sustaining competitive advantage. The literature on creativity has suggested that there is a much-closed relationship between leadership variables and employee creative performance. These variables are generally characterized as contextual factors or boundary conditions. One of these boundary conditions is the leader's self-expectations of creativity from his/her subordinates. A very little is known about this relationship both in terms of theory as well as empirical examinations.

Therefore, the main idea of this conceptual paper is to propose and argue a direct relationship between leader creativity expectations and creative performance. Moreover, it also attempts to extend knowledge about the mediating effect of intrinsic motivation between leader creativity expectations and creative performance.

This paper is organized in the following way. Firstly it provides various definitions and frequently-used conceptualization of creativity. It then follows to describe the Pygmalion effect in order to establish its relationship with creative performance to suggest our first proposition. Later, the indirect effect of intrinsic motivation for the relationship between leader creativity expectations and creative performance is examined in light of Herzberg's two-factor theory and componential theory of creativity. It leads to suggest our second proposition. Finally, this paper provides a synthesis of the measurement of creative performance and leader creativity expectations.

Definitions of Creativity

The literature on creativity has stated numerous definitions of creativity. For instance, Guilford (1950) argued that "The creative person has novel ideas. The degree of novelty of which the person is capable, or which he habitually exhibits… can be tested in terms of the frequency of uncommon, yet acceptable, responses to items" (p. 452). Similarly, Ochse (1990) described that "Creativity involves bringing something into being that is Original (new, unusual, novel, unexpected) and also Valuable (useful, good, adaptive, appropriate)" (p. 2). Anderson (1992) argued that "Creativity is nothing more than going beyond the current boundaries, whether those are boundaries of technology, knowledge, social norms or beliefs" (p. 41).

Besides, a few authors have defined creativity in terms of generating novel and useful ideas. For instance, creativity refers to "The production of novel and useful ideas by an individual or small group of individuals working together" (Amabile, 1988, p. 126). In other words, "Creative thought or behavior must be both novel-original and useful-adaptive" (Feist, 1998, p. 290). Creativity is "…the ability to produce work that is both novels (i.e., original, unexpected) and appropriate (i.e., useful, adaptive concerning task constraints)" (Sternberg & Lubart, 1999, p. 3). More recently, Ma (2009) noted that creativity denotes "… the ability to reorganize the available knowledge, information, cues, facts and/or skills in a person's reservoir to generate new ideas or useful solutions" (p. 39). Likewise, there are some authors who have listed down the various definition of creativity in one paper such as 25 interpretations of creativity in Morgan (1953).

Considering the fact that there are numerous interpretations and definitions of the word 'creativity' in the literature, it is necessary to describe the proper conceptualization of creativity in any empirical investigation. Some of the widely-used conceptualizations of creativity are discussed below.

Conceptualizations of Creativity

Creativity has been conceptualized in different ways. For instance, creativity is an outcome in the form of a creative product; creativity is a multilevel phenomenon largely based on a 'sense-making' approach (Drazin, Glynn, & Kazanjian, 1999); creativity reflects human positive and negative emotions (called 'affects') who tend to experience 'timelessness' in organizations (Mainemelis, 2001); creativity may be conceptualized into four types based on problem types and drivers of creative work engagement i.e. expected creativity, proactive creativity, responsive creativity, and contributory creativity (Unsworth, 2001); creativity is a social network which involves structural bridge having strong and weak ties of social relationship (Perry-Smith & Shalley, 2003).

Besides, creativity has also been conceptualized as a cognitive behavior of individuals (Amabile, 1983; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, Drazin et al., 1999) which involves a series of iterative processes. These processes tend to incite divergent thinking of an individual leading to a novel and useful solution of a problem in question (Runco & Acar, 2012). Firstly, Wallas (1926) introduced four stages of a creative process i.e. "preparation, incubation, illumination (and its accompaniments), and verification" (p. 10). However, these four stages were further classified into five stages i.e. "preparation; incubation; intimation; illumination; verification" (Sadler-Smith, 2015, p. 342). Moreover, Policastro (1995) added 'creative intuition' between 'incubation' and 'illumination' phases of creative performance.

The componential theory of creativity (Amabile, 1983) describes three components of employee creative behavior namely, expertise, creative-thinking skills, and intrinsic motivation (Figure 1). According to this theory of creativity, expertise denotes the technical, procedural, and intellectual knowledge one possesses whereas, creative-thinking skills determine the extent to which an individual attempt to think imaginatively and flexible. Finally, unlike extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation is the actual inner passion of the individual to solve a problem in question.
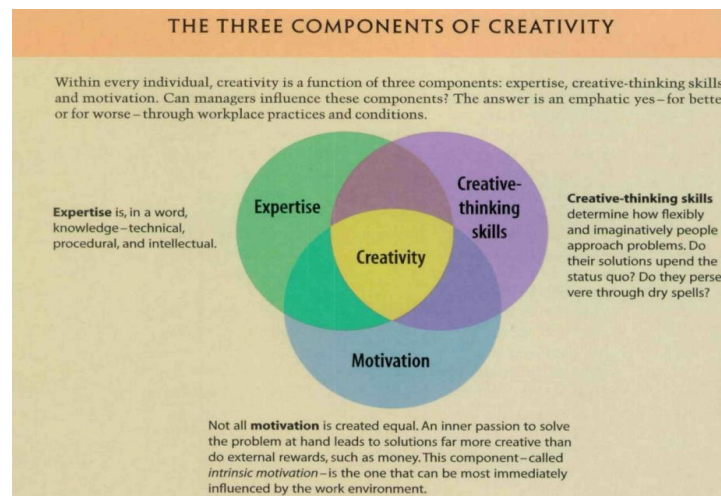

Figure 1 - Componential Theory of Creativity
Source: Amabile (1998, p. 78)

Recently, Amabile and Pratt (2016) upgraded the componential theory of creativity into a dynamic componential model of creativity (Figure 2) by developing a holistic framework of the individual, team, and organizational creativity and innovation. They added that although expertise, creative-thinking skills, and intrinsic motivation are very important, there are some other very important boundary conditions which have substantial effects on individual, team, and organizational creativity and innovation. These conditions include work orientation, meaningful work, and effect (i.e. emotions). To conclude, it is quite imperative to

concentrate on various creative processes which may result in frequent mistakes as well as disappointments (Watson, 2018).
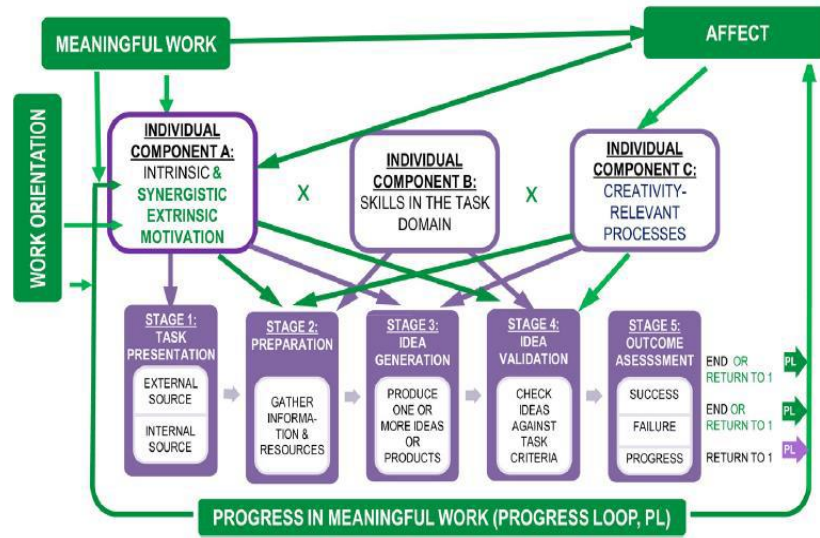

Figure 2 - Dynamic Componental Model of Creativity
Source: Amabile and Pratt (2016, p. 164)

Pygmalion Effect and Leader Creativity Expectations

Figure 3 illustrates the Pygmalion effect (Eden, 1984; Eden et al., 2000) holds that "if one expects more one gets more" (Carmeli & Schaubroeck, 2007, p. 37). Employees believe that when their leader expects them to be creative, it reflects the leader's confidence in their competencies (Tierney & Farmer, 2004). As a result, they also expect that the leader will provide the necessary organizational resources in exhibiting creativity (Scott & Bruce, 1994). It leads to the conclusion that leader creativity expectations have a very strong relationship with creative performance (Whiteley, Sy, & Johnson, 2012).

Figure 3 - Pygmalion Effect

The Relationship between Leader Creativity Expectations and Creative Performance

Undoubtedly, setting expectations for subordinates in such a manner that they could achieve set goals is a challenging task (Amabile & Gryskiewicz, 1987). Leader creativity expectations serve as a very strong motivational force among employees for exhibiting creativity (Carmeli & Schaubroeck, 2007; Locke & Latham, 1990; Redmond, Mumford, & Teach, 1993). In response to leader's creativity expectations, followers also develop their expectations from their leader as well in terms of the availability of mentoring, appreciation, friendliness, and dependency (Xu, Huang, Lam, & Miao, 2012).

Very little empirical evidence is known to date about the application of Pygmalion effect on creative performance with minor exceptions such as Adil, Khan, Khan, & Qureshi, 2018; Carmeli & Schaubroeck, 2007; Eden, 1992; Jiang & Gu, 2017; Qu et al., 2015; Scott & Bruce, 1994; Tierney & Farmer, 2004; Whiteley et al., 2012. Nevertheless, Dong, Bartol, Zhang, and Li (2017) have recently advised to further ascertain the relationship between leader creativity expectations and creative performance. In short, it is argued that leaders should effectively communicate their creativity expectations with their followers (Shalley & Gilson, 2004). Therefore, we propose the following:

Proposition 1: There will be a positive relationship between leader creativity expectations and creative performance.

Intrinsic Motivation and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

Herzberg's two-factor theory of motivation is classified as a content theory (Fisher, 2009). In 1959, Frederick Irving Herzberg coined this theory of motivation which is also termed as known as Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory or dual-factor theory or bi-factor theory (Herzberg, 1959; Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959). Based on over 200 interviews with general managers and accounting professionals in manufacturing firms of Pittsburg, Pennsylvania about what satisfied or dissatisfied them in their job, two sets of factors were emerged: 'hygiene' and 'motivator' factors.

Motivators comprise of factors which a manager can use to encourage his subordinates for better job performance whereas, managers should alleviate the repercussion of hygiene factors which may cause job dissatisfaction (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 2005; Sledge, Miles, & Coppage, 2008). Figure 4 depicts different factors affecting job attitudes as reported in 12 investigations (Herzberg, 2003).

Leader creativity expectations may be conceptualized as a hygiene factor because expectations do not generally present as an integral component of one's job description. Rather, the expectations are the organizational (or contextual) factor which if present may motivate someone, however, will surely disappoint the person if not present in the job. In other words, it has been argued that employees are less likely to exhibit creativity in their jobs when they have established a strong feeling that they are not expected to perform creativity or even their job does not require them to be creative. Consequently, it leads to employee job dissatisfaction.

So far we have argued that leader creativity expectations will have a positive relationship with creative performance. Moreover, we also propose that there will be an indirect relationship between leader creativity expectations and creative performance through intrinsic motivation. The componential theory of creativity holds that intrinsic motivation is one of the three key components of employee creative performance (Amabile, 1983; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996) though, it depends on various boundary conditions (Meng, Tan, & Li, 2017).
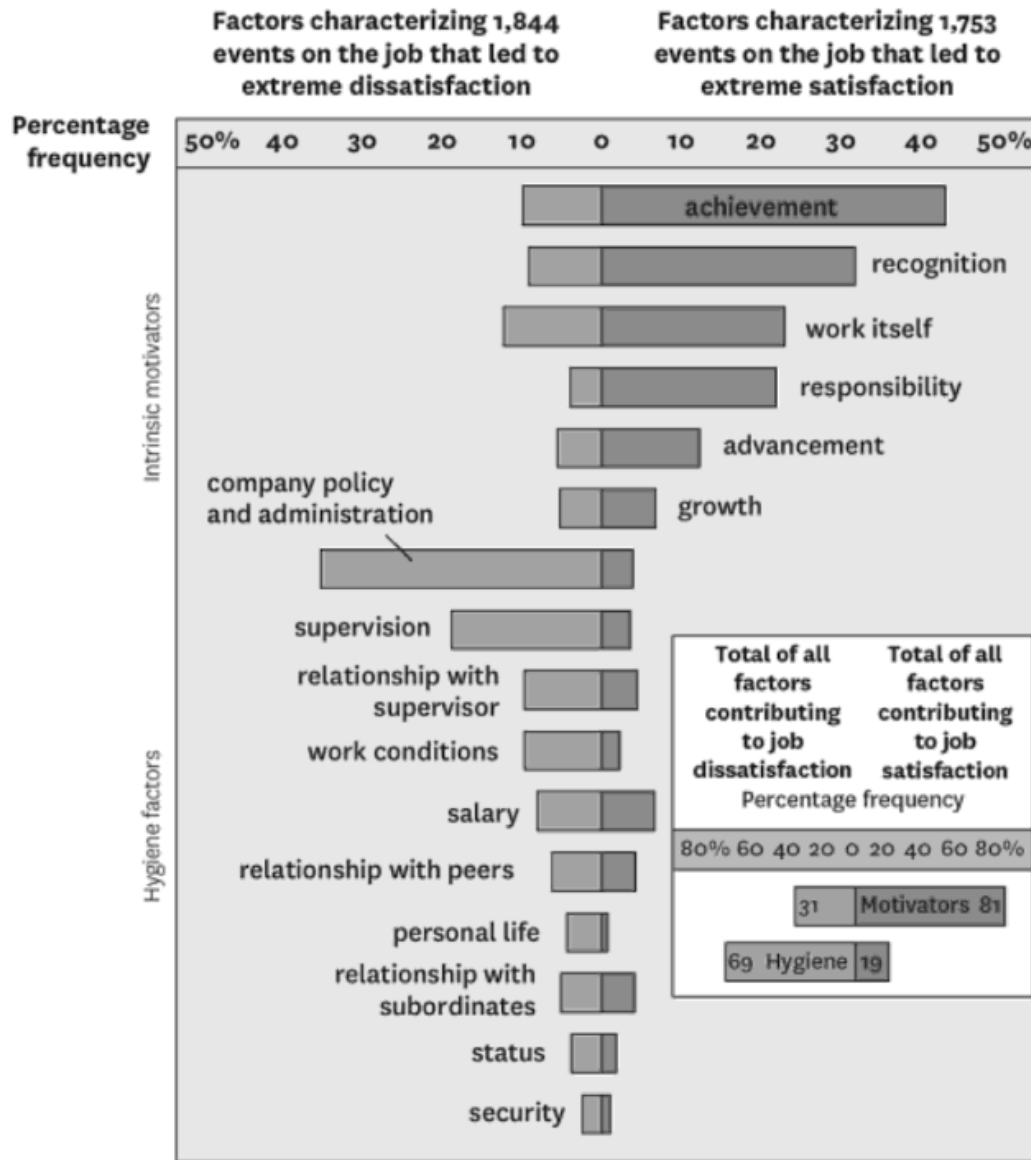
Figure 4 - Factors Affecting Job Attitudes As Reported In 12 Investigations
Source: Adapted from Herzberg (2003, p. 90)

Numerous literature (e.g. Amabile, Hennessey, & Tighe, 1994; Amabile & Mueller, 2008; Carmeli, Reiter-Palmon, & Ziv, 2010; Shalley, Zhou, & Oldham, 2004) and some recent empirical evidence (e.g. Hannam & Narayan, 2015; Hur et al., 2016; Muñoz-Pascual, & Galende, 2017) have suggested that intrinsic motivation is a mediating construct between different variables and creative performance. Therefore, we propose the following:

Proposition 2: Intrinsic motivation will mediate the relationship between leader creativity expectations and creative performance.

Measurement of Creative Performance

Creative performance has been measured in both objectives as well as in a subjective manner. In fact, adherents of objectives measurement of creativity believe that creativity is output in the form of a product,

patent, license or any other form of intellectual property. Moreover, in a number of studies, a supervisor has rated the creative performance of his/her subordinates e.g. George and Zhou (2001); Oldham and Cummings (1996); Tierney and Farmer (2011) etc.

In contrast, we propose that creative performance may also be measured in a subjective way, particularly self-rated by the individual whose performance is being measured because "…they are the ones who are aware of the subtle things they do in their jobs that make them creative" (Shalley, Gilson, & Blum, 2009, p. 495). Moreover, Liao, Liu, and Loi (2010) argued that "supervisors' subjective ratings of subordinates' creativity may be biased due to a variety of intentional and inadvertent factors such as demographic characteristics, supervisory liking, and halo effect" (p. 1097) though, "…more work is now needed to further examine the effects of employees' self-views on their creativity" (Shalley et al., 2004, p. 946).

Past studies have used a self-reported scale for measuring employee creative performance e.g. Aleksić, Černe, Dysvik, and Škerlavaj (2016); Dahmen-Wassenberg, Kämmerle, Unterrainer, and Fink (2016); Kemmelmeier and Walton (2016); Laguía, Moriano, and Gorgievski (2019) etc. Besides, some meta-analyses have also provided a systematic review of self-report creative performance e.g. Silvia, Wigert, Reiter-Palmon, and Kaufman (2012) etc.

Measurement of Leader Creativity Expectations

A single-item (e.g. Scott & Bruce, 1994), as well as a multi-item scale (e.g. Carmeli & Schaubroeck, 2007), have been used in the creativity literature to quantitatively measure leader creativity expectations. Furthermore, Tierney & Farmer (2004) used Wanous, Reichers, and Hudy (1997) technique to address the convergent validity issues of a single-item scale. Although some recent studies (e.g. Jiang & Gu, 2017); Zhao & Guo, 2019) have used this scale and reported acceptable psychometric properties of the scale, we suggest that upcoming studies should use Carmeli and Schaubroeck (2007) four-item scale because of it better accounts for measurement error. Moreover, either a five-point Likert type ordinal measuring scale or 7 points numerical scale for interval level of measurement may be used for hypothesis testing.

Conclusion

Creative performance has increasingly gained its momentum in the 21st century. Authors are in search of new insights by theorizing its direct and/or indirect relationship with numerous variables, inter alia, transformational leadership, abusive supervision, ambidextrous leadership, workplace ostracism, objective underemployment, emotional and cultural intelligence, leader humility, information literacy, career and performance orientation etc. Drawing upon the principle of Pygmalion effect, Herzberg's two-factor theory, and componential theory of creativity, we suggested two proposition with a review to establish a direct relationship between leader creativity expectations and creative performance as well as an indirect relationship with intrinsic motivation. It was argued that a better understanding of leader creativity expectations in stimulating employee creative performance should lead to better outcomes for both organizations and individuals as well as it provides directions for future studies too.

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