Feeling Inspired, Being Creative: Inspiration As a Mechanism to Fuel Employee Creativity

By

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Abstract

Workplace creativity is increasingly seen as resulting from the interplay of situation- and actor-level factors. Recent work on this person-in-situation perspective highlights that situations may not only trigger or constrain the expression of creativity-relevant traits but also promote creativity by providing resources that different actors use to varying degrees. This work suggests that environments which actors perceive to be cognitively diverse constitute one potential resource in this regard. However, it raises the question through which mechanisms these benefits arise. We propose and test a model in which an employee’s experience of inspiration effectuates these benefits for creativity. Yet as realizing these benefits requires employees to be attuned to their social environment, we further argue that these benefits are more likely to emerge for employees who feel relatively powerless than for those feeling relatively powerful. Multi-source data collected across three time points from a large sample of employees and their supervisors supports the proposed contingent benefits of a cognitively diverse work environment for inspiration and indirectly creativity for employees feeling powerless. Conversely, our findings also highlight the inhibiting role of experienced powerlessness when it comes to translating this inspiration into implemented ideas. Together, these findings offer important theoretical and practical implications.

Prof. Jing Zhou is Houston Endowment Professor of Management and Director for Asian Management Research and Education at the Jones Graduate School of Business at Rice University. Her areas of expertise include creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship. She has served her profession in a number of leadership roles, including Associate Editor of Journal of Applied Psychology, President of the International Association of Chinese Management Research, representative-at-large of the OB Division of Academy of Management, and the OB/HRM Track Chair of the Association of International Business. She has served on the editorial boards of Academy of Management Journal, Academy of Management Review, Journal of Applied Psychology, Journal of Business Venturing, Journal of Management, Leadership Quarterly, Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal, and Management and Organization Review.

All interested are welcome.