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**TEAM-LEVEL ANALYSIS OF STUDENT TEAMS ON CRUCIAL CHARACTERISTIC FACTORS FOR CREATIVITY****YEH, YU-MEI****ASST. PROFESSOR****DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING & DISTRIBUTION MANAGEMENT****HSING WU UNIVERSITY****TAIWAN****LI, FENG-CHIA****ASST. PROFESSOR****DEPARTMENT OF DISTRIBUTION MANAGEMENT****NATIONAL CHIN-YI UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY****TAIWAN****LIN, HUNG-YUAN****ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR****DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION MANAGEMENT****SHIH HSIN UNIVERSITY****TAIWAN****ABSTRACT**

To produce the creative process usually transpires in the team stages. Modern firms closely rely on creativity and innovation as crucial strategies for ensuring high performance and survival. This research aims at the point of interaction between contextual and individual factors in the team level via the interactionist perspective and social cognitive theory. This research explored how team contextual factors (team-task-required creativity and team time management) interact with individual cognition (individualistic self-construal) and contribute to facilitate team creativity. Not only examined 85 creative marketing task teams comprising a total of 338 junior students, but led by teachers at universities of science and technology in Taiwan. The structural equation modeling (SEM) analyses were also used to show that team-task-required creativity, team time management, and individualistic self-construal benefit team creativity. In addition, team time management and individualistic self-construal mediate the relationship between team-task-required creativity and team creativity.

**KEYWORDS**

team-task-required creativity, team time management, individualistic self-construal, team creativity

**INTRODUCTION**

Creativity is regarded as a means for obtaining and maintaining competitive advantages (Amabile, Conti, Coon, Lazenby & Herron, 1996; Wang, Tsai, & Tsai, 2014). Previous studies have found that perceptions of the work environment influence individual creative performance (Amabile et al., 1996; Choi, 2012; Shalley, Gilson & Blum, 2000; Sung & Choi, 2009). Creativity as a job requirement is an obvious antecedent and predictor of individual creative job performance (Hon, 2013; Shin, 2014). To enrich creativity theory and determine the mediating mechanism between job creativity requirements and performance (Hon, 2013; Shin, 2014). Recent studies have suggested that, in the context of the work environment, task characteristics, the work setting, and team members' relationships are suitable examples of contextual factors (Choi, 2012; Chae, Seo, & Lee, 2013; Shin, 2014; Tierney & Farmer, 2011). Thus, this study examined the mediating processes that transform the interactive relationships among team-task-required creativity, team time management, and individualistic self-construal into team creativity.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

Recently, job-required creativity as a component of job design has begun to be empirically examined (Shalley et al., 2000; Gilson & Shalley, 2004). Job creativity requirements have theoretical consequence and can potentially enhance individual creativity, as well as the relevant literature does not describe whether the creativity requirement relates to individual performance (Amabile et al., 1996; Hon, 2013; Mathisen, 2011; Shin, 2014). Thus, this study proposed Hypothesis 1: Team-task-required creativity is positively related to team creativity.

Accomplishing creative activities requires a substantial amount of time and effort (Hon & Kim, 2007; Hon, 2013; Shin, 2014; Zhou & George, 2003). People are more creative when they have high levels of autonomy over how their daily work is conducted, such as a sense of control over how their time is allocated and how tasks are to be performed (Amabile et al., 1996; Mathisen, 2011). Thus, this study proposed Hypothesis 2: Team time management is positively related to team creativity.

The originality of groups can highly benefit from group members with individualistic self-construal (Bechtoldt, Choi & Nijstad, 2012). People with individualistic self-construal are likely to think divergently and differentiate themselves from others, thereby reducing conformity and increasing idea originality (Edmondson & Mogelof, 2006; Bechtoldt et al., 2012). Goncalo and Staw (2006) showed that individualism may foster creativity. And individualistic groups generate more original ideas than collectivistic groups do (Bechtoldt et al., 2012; Goncalo & Staw, 2006). Thus, this study proposed Hypothesis 3: The more members with individualistic self-construal a team has, the greater team creativity will be.

Creative tasks require individuals willing to invest considerable time in gathering or exchanging knowledge and to develop or enhance the exchange of novel ideas to address unexpected events (Chae et al., 2013). When tasks are challenging and require ingenuity, individuals focus their attention and effort on their task, making them more persistent and more likely to consider different alternatives, possibly resulting in creative outcomes and enabling them to overcome challenges (Mathisen, 2011). Thus, this study proposed Hypothesis 4: Team time management mediates the positive relationship between team-task-required creativity and team creativity.

Individuals in complex and creative tasks could have a tendency toward individualistic self-construal to arouse more recognition of their creative role identity, more confidence in their creative self-efficacy, and a clearer focus on creative ideas (Wang et al., 2014). Specifically, individuals with more creative task complexity and autonomy can enhance the positive relationship between creative role identity and creativity (Shin, 2014; Wang et al., 2014). Thus, this study proposed Hypothesis 5: Individualistic self-construal mediates the positive relationship between team-task-required creativity and team creativity.

**METHOD**

In participants, 338 third-year students (age mean=21 years old; male=115 and female=123) were participated with 85 teams. The average size of the 85 teams was 5.8 members (SD= 2.4), and the team size ranged from three to five members. The average response rate in the participating teams was 72.0% (SD=11.7). These teams varied in functional areas: business administration (78.1%); information management (83.5%); and communication, tourism, and hospitality (72.2%). In procedure of participant recruitment, we randomly selected 10 universities focus on cultivating the professional functions required of talented personnel in service industries (such as retail and wholesale, franchising, information services, and tourism and leisure). And then selected faculties (business administration, information management and communication, and tourism and hospitality) within these universities, from which five teachers who guided student projects were also randomly selected. A total of 346 questionnaires with third-year students from 85 creative marketing task teams were recovered, and eight were invalid. The 338 valid questionnaires were collected, and the valid recovery rate was 34%. Then in procedure of survey collection, firstly, we collected the independent variable at one point in time and both the mediators and the dependent variable at another point in time, with a lag of 10 weeks between Time 1 and Time 2. This approach reduces the potential bias associated with collecting data at one point in time. Secondly, because the mediators (team members with individualistic self-construal and team time management) and the dependent variable (team creativity) were collected at the same point in time, we used a CFA to compare two models: 1) a one-factor model with all observed items of both the mediator variable and the dependent variable loaded onto one latent variable, the results following fit indices: a chi-square of 1129.2 with 134 degrees of freedom, CFI=.73, IFI=.73, TLI=.69, and RMSEA=.15. And 2) a two-factor solution where all observed items of the mediator variable were specified to one latent variable and all observed items of the dependent variable were specified to another latent variable, the results showed a much better fit indices: a chi-square of 195.45 with 87 degrees of freedom, CFI=.95, IFI=.95, TLI=.94, and RMSEA=.06. Because of the cross-sectional nature of the data, several procedures were used to reduce common method variance (Ostroff, Kinicki, & Clark, 2002).

In measures, we designed two questionnaires, team creativity is completed from the teachers and the collaborative industry supervisors (the external experts). And team-task-required creativity, team members with individualistic self-construal, and team time management are answered from the students. To avoid ambiguity and uncertainty in the respondents' answers, we used a 6-point Likert-type scale for all of our measurements, with 1 representing *strongly disagree* (or extremely low) and 6 representing *strongly agree* (or extremely high). And we used HLM to test intergroup variability to compared median  $r_{wg}$  scores and intraclass correlation coefficients (ICC[1] and ICC[2]). 1) *Team-Task-Required Creativity (TTRC)* adapted three items from Mathisen (2011) scale for tasks requiring creativity. TTRC were scored as a function of "The tasks in my team are such that they require us to be creative." High scores indicated a high level of TTRC. We summed and averaged the three items for each team; Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was .79,  $r_{wg(i)} = .87$ , ICC(1)=.152, ICC(2)=.61,  $F=144.3$ , and  $p < .001$ . 2) *Team Individualistic Self-Construal Value Orientation (TISVO)* : Team members with individualistic self-construal are strongly aware of their distinctive features and perceive themselves as different from their team members. Therefore, the study adopted four items developed by Bechtoldt et al. (2012) for determining the extent to which participants perceived themselves as unique compared with their team members. The participants rated their responses to the four items on a scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 6 (*very much*), and an example item is listed as follows: "Compared to your team members, to what extent are your attitudes special?" We averaged the four items; Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was .88,  $r_{wg(i)} = .85$ , ICC(1)=.116, ICC(2)=.536,  $F= 125.52$ , and  $p < .005$ . 3) *Team Time Management (TTM)* developed 10 items through a focus group. We invited five management experts to discuss, develop, and revise 10 items. After exploratory factor analysis, we deleted three items. We summed the averages of the scores for the seven assessment items for each team, as provided by the team members, to measure TTM. An example item is provided as follows: "My team members can arrange for their own time outside of school to learn other professional competences." High scores indicated a high level of TTM. We summed and averaged the seven items for each team; Cronbach's  $\alpha = .78$ ,  $r_{wg(i)} = .91$ , ICC(1)=.19, ICC(2)=.673,  $F=163.2$ , and  $p < .001$ . 4) *Team Creativity (TC)* adopted four items developed by Zhou and George (2001). We summed the averages of the scores for the four assessment items for each team. High scores indicated a high level of TC. An example item is listed as follows: "This team used novel and feasible ideas to solve team problems." The Cronbach's  $\alpha = .87$ ,  $r_{wg(i)} = 0.81$ , ICC(1)=.115, ICC(2)=.63,  $F=125.53$ , and  $p < .005$ . In addition, we adapted back-translation from English to Chinese and back to English procedure for all of the scales. With three assistance of qualified researchers in the field subsequently reviewed the translations and revisions to ensure the suitability of the items for our subjects and the content validity of the scales. To assess the discriminant validity, we conducted a CFA for the items of TTRC, TISVO, and TTM. As presented in Table 1, the hypothesized three-factor model (Model 0) demonstrated a significantly better fit than any of the alternative models (Model 1 and 2) did.

**TABLE 1: RESULTS OF CONFIRMATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS AND CHI-SQUARE DIFFERENCE TESTS**

Measurement models	$\chi^2$	df	CFI	AIC	AGFI	TLI	RMSEA	$\Delta\chi^2$	$p$ value of $\Delta\chi^2$
Model 0: Hypothesized three-factor model	461.6	164	.93	553.58	.85	.92	.07	----	----
Model 1: Two-factor model(Combining TTRC and TISVO into a single factor)	656.4	167	.88	742.39	.78	.87	.09	194.8	<.001
Model 2: Two-factor model(Combining TTM and ISVO into a single factor)	683.1	167	.87	769.07	.76	.86	.09	221.5	<.001

In data analysis, as shown in Figure 1, the direct effect of team-task-required creativity was tested through SEM analysis with Amos 18, and the results indicated that it has a significant, positive relationship with TC ( $\beta = .11$ ,  $p < .001$ ); thus, Hypothesis 1 was supported. TTRC had a direct effect on TTM ( $\beta = .74$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and TTRC had a highly positive effect on TISVO ( $\beta = .84$ ,  $p < .001$ ), lending support to Hypotheses 2 and 3. In mediating effects analysis of Hypotheses 4 and 5, the effect of TTRC on team creativity through the indirect effect of TTM ( $\beta = .74 * .28 = .21$ ,  $p < .001$ ) was superior to that of the direct effect of TTRC on TC ( $\beta = .11$ ,  $p < .001$ ). In other, the effect of TTRC on TC through the significant mediating effect of TISVO ( $\beta = .84 * .62 = .52$ ,  $p < .001$ ) was superior to the direct effect of TTRC on TC ( $\beta = .11$ ,  $p < .001$ ). TTRC exerted a significant indirect effect on TC through TTM [point estimate = 0.234,  $p < .1$ , confidence interval (CI) = (-0.011, 0.550)]. TTRC exerted a significant indirect effect on TC through TISVO [point estimate = 0.598,  $p < .05$ , CI = (-0.084, 0.282)]. These findings, coupled with the results of the SEM analyses, provide support for Hypotheses 4 and 5.

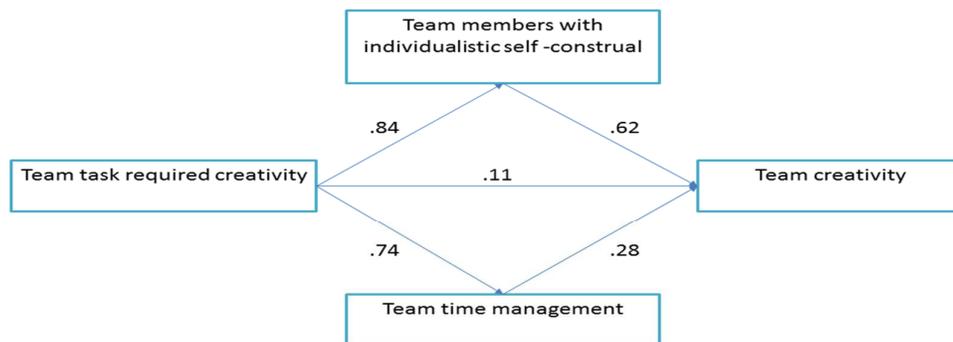


Fig. 1. The hypothesized four-factor model

**CONCLUSION**

This study concludes that team-task-required creativity, team time management, and individualistic self-construal benefit team creativity. In addition, team time management and individualistic self-construal mediate the relationship between team-task-required creativity and team creativity. The purpose of this study was to profoundly understand how team contextual factors interact with individual cognition and contribute and facilitate team creativity. First, the testing results of this study provide empirical support for previous theories regarding work environment characteristics facilitating creativity (Shalley, et al., 2000). In addition, this study focused on the team context, supplementing the research gap discussed in the introduction and extending the research on team-level contexts. This study facilitates testing the potential link between individualistic self-construal and creativity, to which insufficient attention has been directed in the context of creativity (Tierney & Farmer, 2011), and realizing the factors causing creativity requirements to relate to individual performance. This study provides evidence that combining individualistic self-construal and team characteristics as well as team-task-required creativity and team time management is highly beneficial to group creativity (Bechtoldt et al., 2012). The combinations more adequately explain task design features, attitudes towards team activities, and team characteristics and interactions associated with teams more likely to be engaged in creative processes. Finally, this study supports recent studies that developing a sense of individualistic self-construal is plausible in the workplace and that the means for accomplishing this are present within the individual, their team tasks, and the social context in which they operate (Tierney & Farmer, 2011). The study contributes to an understanding of the joint or combinational influences of cross-level factors, team contextual factors, and individual factors on creativity (Choi, 2012; Chae et al., 2013; Shin, 2014; Tierney & Farmer, 2011).

By understanding the antecedents of the creative process, researchers and managers should be more capable of ensuring that creativity is fostered rather than stifled by assisting teams in being creative. The impact of creative performance on changes in individualistic self-construal should be considered and explored in a future study. As discussed in the literature review section, numerous studies have discussed the contextual factors that interact with creative role identity and creative self-efficacy; however, few studies have focused on how self-construal interacts with creative role identity and creative self-efficacy. Although probable relationships among individualistic self-construal, creative role identity, creative self-efficacy, and creativity were proposed, the causal paths among these variables were not tested in this study. The causal paths should be examined in a future study. Finally, although the model in this study was designed to combine the influences of cross-level factors (i.e., team contextual factors and individual factors of creativity), but not explore personal values, ability and interactive experience to enhance team creativity. Longitudinal study and case study should be performed in future study.

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