A STRESS AND COPING PERSPECTIVE ON CREATIVITY: A REWARD FOR CREATIVITY POLICY AS A STRESSOR IN ORGANIZATIONS

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the underlying mechanisms by which the reward for creativity policy affects individual behaviors and attitudes in organizations. This research topic is important because it contributes to the creativity literature and provides practical implications for practitioners. In this study, the CET model and the transactional model were proposed based on both the traditional motivation theory (Cognitive Evaluation Theory, CET) and the newly introduced transactional theory of stress and coping, respectively. Specifically, the CET model posits that intrinsic motivation mediates the effects of both the informational and controlling aspects of the policy on individual behaviors and attitudes. Meanwhile, the transactional model claims that coping strategies (problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping) mediate the influences of cognitive appraisal (challenge appraisal of the policy, threat appraisal of the policy, and creative self-efficacy) on individual behaviors and attitudes. Furthermore, in the specific context of the policy, the transactional model is expected to have more predictive power relative to the CET model, and the mediating roles of coping strategies proposed by the transactional theory are expected to have more predictive power as compared to that of intrinsic motivation as proposed by CET.
The organization, located in the middle part of China, has executed the reward for creativity policy and was thereby chosen as the appropriate context to test the author’s hypotheses. The dependent variables included both objective and subjective measures for creative performance (the amount of reward and perceived creative contribution to the group) and satisfaction with the policy. The findings showed that in the CET model, intrinsic motivation only partially mediated the impacts of the informational aspect of the policy on both the amount of reward and satisfaction with the policy. On the other hand, in the transactional model, problem-focused coping fully or partially mediated the effects of the policy’s challenge appraisal and creative self-efficacy on three outcome variables. At the same time, as a subcategory of emotion-focused coping, blaming fully mediated the effect of threat appraisal of the policy on both the amount of reward and satisfaction with the policy. By incorporating all mediators into a single model, the results indicated that both problem-focused coping and blaming fully replaced the mediating role of intrinsic motivation in the CET model. Moreover, in the transactional model, the mediating effects of coping strategies remained unchanged in the presence of intrinsic motivation. Based on the results, most of the researcher’s hypotheses were supported.

The findings of this dissertation have important theoretical and practical implications for both theory and practice.
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