

# The boundary conditions of leader creativity expectations influencing employee creativity: job characteristic factors

Xiaohong Wang<sup>1,\*</sup> and Meng Wang<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>School of Economics and Management, Harbin Institute of Technology, Harbin, China

<sup>2</sup>School of Management, Harbin Institute of Technology, Harbin, China

**Abstract.** This study included job autonomy and task dependence into the category of job characteristic factors, and expected to find out boundary conditions of leader creativity expectations affecting employee creativity. By sending questionnaires to 35 teams, 402 subordinates' matching data were obtained and empirically analyzed. The results show that leader creativity expectations has a significant positive impact on employee creativity, and intrinsic motivation plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between them. Job autonomy positively moderates the relationship between leader creativity expectations and intrinsic motivation, and then enhances the indirect effect of leader creativity expectations on employee creativity through intrinsic motivation. Task dependence negatively moderates the relationship between leader creativity expectations and intrinsic motivation, and weakens the indirect effect of leader creativity expectations through intrinsic motivation. The study enriches the relevant research framework and has practical significance for management practice.

**Keywords:** Leader creativity expectations, Employee creativity, Job autonomy, Task dependency.

## 1 Introduction

Some scholars have confirmed that there is an important connection between leader creativity expectations and employee creativity. In the organizational environment where employees live, employees often pay attention to leaders' behaviors and act in accordance with their will. In the strong organization leadership encouraged to create atmosphere, leaders will be positive to staff to clarify the demand of creative work, provided to the employees engaged in creative activities and the resource needed help, can make it easier for employees to the organization identity into motivation of creative activity, let employees have more creative performance at work, more easy to embody creativity. Therefore, in order to explain such unexpected behavior, we focus on the role of job

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\* Corresponding author: [wangxh@hit.edu.cn](mailto:wangxh@hit.edu.cn)

autonomy in the relationship between leader creativity expectations and employees' intrinsic motivation, and whether this role can improve employees' creativity.

In the workplace, where there is a high degree of task-dependence among employees, a change in a task can be a "big deal", so team members must share materials, information or expertise to meet job expectations. While the high degree of interdependence between tasks reflects the team's belief that each employee feels his or her contribution is necessary to the team, it also blurs the boundary between individual work and the team as a whole. Studies have shown that, contrary to popular belief, intelligent, motivated and highly self-efficacy employees are also vulnerable to malicious and interpersonal attacks in the workplace. In teams with high leader creativity expectations, employees with high self-efficacy usually receive the attention of leaders. Therefore, we need to pay attention to the role of task dependence in leader creativity expectations and intrinsic motivation and whether it is conducive to the generation of employees' creativity.

In conclusion, job autonomy and task dependence can be regarded as a combination of "strong and weak situations". The factors that job autonomy may promote employees' intrinsic motivation under leader creativity expectations, and thus enhance their creativity, can be regarded as "weak situations". On the other hand, task dependence is likely to increase the workload of employees in complex and frequent interpersonal communication and strengthen their sense of lack of control over work, so it can be regarded as "strong situation". Therefore, this study included job autonomy and task dependence into the category of job characteristic factors, and expected to find out the influence of employee's fit with job and employee's fit with colleague's relationship on innovation expectation and intrinsic motivation of leaders, and whether this influence will affect the production of employee's creativity.

## **2 Literature review and hypothesis presentation**

### **2.1. The impact of job autonomy on the relationship between leader creativity expectations and intrinsic motivation**

As a core content of job characteristics, job autonomy refers to the degree to which employees have major say in arranging work, choosing the equipment they use and deciding the procedures to be followed (Hackman & Oldham, 1975). According to the connotation of work autonomy, when employees carry out work tasks in an environment with high work autonomy, they are more likely to try new and useful work procedure combinations (Wang & Cheng, 2010), these increased job autonomy can help employees break the routine, develop and present new and useful ideas, seek the best solution to problems, and thus demonstrate originality of work (Shalley & Gilson, 2004). In contrast, employees with low job autonomy can only carry out work tasks according to predefined procedures (Langfred & Moye, 2004), because employees with high job autonomy have more opportunities to try new work procedures and get more performance feedback of creative work participation, they can feel higher creative self-efficacy at work. Being seen as highly creative in the organization also helps to increase intrinsic motivation. Therefore, job autonomy can positively impact employees' intrinsic motivation.

As for the influence of job autonomy on the relationship between leader creativity expectations and employees' intrinsic motivation, we believe that job autonomy positively moderates the relationship between leader creativity expectations and employees' intrinsic motivation, namely, the higher the job autonomy, the greater the promotion effect of leader creativity expectations on employees' intrinsic motivation. First, job autonomy can stimulate leaders' role expectations of employees. In creative work, leaders' expectations on

employees' roles are often different due to different job characteristics. For jobs with low autonomy, the tasks are carried out according to established strategies (Humphrey et al., 2007), the job itself contains low innovation attribute. However, for jobs with higher autonomy, employees have more freedom to determine their own working methods, control work schedule and choose work objectives due to the job characteristics themselves, leaders tend to have higher expectations on their role innovation, thus promoting employees' intrinsic motivation.

Secondly, the interaction situation of job autonomy and leader creativity expectations constitutes a "weak scenario" of employees' working environment. In this "weak scenario", it is beneficial to improve employees' intrinsic motivation. By the above analysis, the high work autonomy is often lead the innovation expectation, and low work autonomy is often lead the innovation expectation, in contrast, high work autonomy and innovation to the leadership of the interaction for the ascension of employees' intrinsic motivation has a greater impact. We propose the following hypothesis:

H1: Job autonomy positively moderates the relationship between leader creativity expectations and employees' intrinsic motivation

## **2.2. The impact of task dependence on the relationship between leader creativity expectations and intrinsic motivation**

Task dependency reflects the degree of interaction and dependence among members required to complete a task. It has been pointed out that teams with high task dependence usually share materials, information and professional knowledge with others more frequently, which makes the whole team show strong team belief. Lepine & Van Dyne (2001) pointed out that when task interdependence among team members is high, leaders can more easily distinguish inefficient team members, which can strengthen the ability of leaders to strategically allocate internal resources to a certain extent. In this way, roles can be assigned within the team more efficiently according to the abilities and characteristics of employees. The opposite is task independence, that is, tasks among team members are relatively independent, team members have relatively little demand for leaders, each member has clear responsibilities, and there is no need to communicate too much with other members' work tasks.

Schnake & Dumler (2003) believed that as far as job characteristics are concerned, task dependence actually reflects the degree of mutual embedment among team members, which is a group-level phenomenon. When the degree of task dependence among team members deepens continuously, Members also need to take more interaction and coordination behaviors to ensure the smooth realization of team tasks, and the degree of dependence between each other will be deepened accordingly. However, in the workplace, the over-closely dependent task relationship actually limits the knowledge and contribution each individual can make. However, there is a hidden problem, when employees have limited knowledge and quick access to shared knowledge, and pay too much attention to the interests of themselves and their colleagues, whether they still have the energy to love and pursue the work itself, and whether they can show higher initiative in the work.

In addition, the high task dependency with the internal team higher demand of cooperation, and cooperation needs could be seen as a negative to rely on colleagues, or forced to work together, the employee will be faster and more directly to notice their personal effort influence on other team members, work purpose directly into trying to do their homework "which does not affect the work of other team members. Therefore, it is difficult for individuals to have the same strong intrinsic motivation even in the face of leaders' strong expectation of innovation because of the idea that "innovation may bring unnecessary workload to other team members".

From the external perspective of individuals in high task dependence teams, interdependent work structure will undoubtedly increase interpersonal conflict and social disagreement. Team members will spend a lot of time and energy on sharing information and work progress with colleagues. Aquino & Thau (2009) pointed out in their study that "interdependent work can increase the possibility of potential abusers attacking employees with vulnerability markers".

For the part under the leading innovation is looking forward to still higher task dependency within the team showed high self-efficacy employees, although because of its ability to stand out and show a deviation from the standard team but when colleagues will high performance as a threat to the limited resources, the higher the internal team task dependency, the more likely to cause dissatisfaction with the other colleagues. Therefore, even in the face of high expectations of leadership innovation, employees with high intrinsic motivation are very likely to choose to suppress their intrinsic motivation and follow the "work rhythm" of the team in order to maintain their views in the eyes of other colleagues, maintain good interpersonal relationships and avoid being hurt in the workplace.

The above analysis shows that, teams with high task dependence are difficult to stimulate the intrinsic motivation of employees, and even have an inhibiting effect on employees with high intrinsic motivation. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Task dependence negatively moderates the relationship between leaders innovation expectation and employees' intrinsic motivation

Based on the above, job autonomy can positively regulate the relationship between leaders creativity expectations and intrinsic motivation, while intrinsic motivation plays a mediating role between leader creativity expectations. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed in this paper:

H3: When the degree of job autonomy is higher, the indirect positive effect of leader creativity expectations on employee creativity through intrinsic motivation is enhanced

Similarly, task-dependent performance can negatively regulate the relationship between leaders' innovation expectation and intrinsic motivation. Therefore, we propose the following hypotheses:

H4: When the degree of task dependence is higher, the indirect positive effect of leader creativity expectations on employees' creativity through intrinsic motivation weakens

Therefore, the research hypothesis model in this chapter is shown in Figure 1:

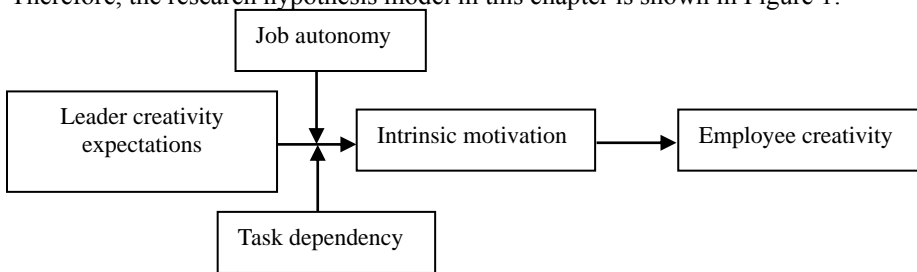


Fig. 1. Research hypothesis model.

## 3 Methods

### 3.1. Sample and data collection

Data were obtained through a questionnaire survey conducted from April 2021 to September 2021. 35 teams were involved in the questionnaire survey in the form of leaders

(QUESTIONNAIRE A) and employees (questionnaire B). Among them, the leader and employee questionnaires were named and coded respectively. The leader got questionnaire A with the employee's name and number to evaluate the creativity of his subordinates, and the employee got questionnaire B to evaluate the perceived innovation expectation, intrinsic motivation, job autonomy and task dependence of the leader. For each completed questionnaire, encapsulation and confidentiality are adopted, and the data collected by researchers will be consolidated. During the research, the data will be kept absolutely confidential and only used for scientific research.

A total of 470 pairs of questionnaires were sent out in this study. A total of 402 valid questionnaires were collected with effective recovery rate of 85.53%, excluding those that could not be matched between leaders and employees, were incomplete and had obvious errors. According to the basic analysis of the questionnaire, male employees account for 59.57%, female employees account for 40.43%, and employees under the age of 40 account for 70.32%, indicating that the age structure of employees is younger. In addition, the data shows that the employees have worked with their leaders for 4.45 years, and the leaders and employees have a deep understanding of each other, so they can theoretically answer the questions set in this questionnaire more accurately.

### **3.2. Measurement of variables**

Variables involved in this chapter include leaders' innovation expectation, employees' intrinsic motivation, employees' creativity, job autonomy and task dependence. Likert 5-level scale is used to measure research items, with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree. Specific variables are described as follows:

(1) Leader creativity expectations is measured by the scale developed by Carmeli and Schaubroeck (2007), which is filled in by employees according to their perceived expectations of their immediate leaders for innovation.

(2) Intrinsic motivation is measured by the scale developed by Zhang and Bartol (2010), which is filled in by employees according to their own situation.

(3) Employee creativity is measured by the scale developed by Tierney and Farmer (2004), which is filled in by the leader according to the perceived creativity of subordinates in work.

(4) Job autonomy adopted the scale developed by Breugh (1985), from the work method of autonomous, independent work time and work standard independent three dimensions to measure job autonomy.

(5) Task dependence adopted the scale developed by Campion et al., (1993)", measuring task interdependence from three dimensions.

## **4 Result**

The model 1 in Table 1 shows that the autonomy and leading innovation work forward to interact with the employee of the intrinsic motivation of regression coefficient is 0.550, and  $p < 0.01$ , suggesting that under the condition of high job autonomy, the expectation of leadership innovation has a stronger promoting effect on employees' intrinsic motivation. Hypothesis 1 is true; Similarly, it can be seen from Model 2 in Table 1 that the regression coefficient between the interaction term of task dependence and leader's innovation expectation and employee's intrinsic motivation is -0.418, and  $P < 0.01$ , indicating that under the working characteristics of high task dependence, The effect of leader creativity expectations on employees' intrinsic motivation is weakened.

**Table 1.** Moderating effects of job autonomy and task dependence.

	Model 1	Model 2
innovation	0.853 *** (10.16)	0.662 *** (9.02)
self_decision	0.673 *** (9.59)	
c.self_decision#c.innovation	0.550 *** (5.05)	
yl		0.714 *** (11.68)
c.yl#c.innovation		0.418 *** (4.51)
_cons	0.058 * (1.69)	0.033 (1.17)

Furthermore, this chapter discusses the moderating effect of job autonomy and task dependence on the indirect effect of leader creativity expectations on employee creativity through employee intrinsic motivation, that is, the moderating effect of job autonomy and task dependence on the mediated model. The results are shown in Table 2 and 3: Table 2 reports the moderating effect of job autonomy on the indirect effect of leader creativity expectations on employees' creativity through employees' intrinsic motivation. According to Model 5 in Table 2, the regression coefficient between the interaction terms of job autonomy and leader creativity expectations and employee creativity is 0.331,  $P < 0.01$ , indicating that in the "weak scenario" of job autonomy, the mediating effect of leader creativity expectations on employee creativity through intrinsic motivation is enhanced. Hypothesis 3 is true.

**Table 2.** The moderating effect of job autonomy on the impact of leader creativity expectations on employee creativity through intrinsic motivation.

	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
self_decision	0.689 *** (10.96)	0.673 *** (9.59)	0.430 *** (6.75)
innovation	0.831 *** (13.69)	0.853 *** (10.16)	0.503 *** (8.50)
c.self_decision#c.innovation	0.543 *** (6.03)	0.550 *** (5.05)	0.331 *** (4.25)
self_motivation			0.585 *** (8.14)
_cons	0.066 ** (2.42)	0.058 * (1.69)	0.044 ** (1.99)
Sobel test P_value	9.794 e-09		
Proportion of mediating effect	0.38167114		

Note: the values in brackets are T,\*\*\*  $P < 0.01$ ,\*\*  $P < 0.05$ ,\*  $P < 0.1$

Table 3 reports the moderating effect of task dependence on the indirect effect of leader creativity expectations on employees' creativity through employees' intrinsic motivation. It can be seen from Model 8 in Table 3 that the regression coefficient between the interaction terms of task dependence and leader creativity expectations and employee creativity is -0.273,  $P < 0.01$ . It can be seen that the mediating effect coefficient of employee intrinsic motivation decreases when task dependence is added as a moderating variable. This indicates that in the "strong scenario" of task dependence, the mediating effect of leader

creativity expectations on employee creativity through intrinsic motivation is weakened, and hypothesis 4 is established.

**Table 3.** Moderating effect of task dependence on the influence of leader creativity expectations on employee creativity through intrinsic motivation.

	Model 6	The model 7	Model 8
yl	0.684 *** (11.49)	0.714 *** (11.68)	0.422 *** (6.68)
innovation	0.696 *** (11.55)	0.662 *** (9.02)	0.454 *** (8.20)
c.yl#c.innovation	0.426 *** (5.18)	0.418 *** (4.51)	0.273 *** (3.72)
self_motivation			0.366 *** (7.74)
_cons	0.038 (1.50)	0.033 (1.17)	0.026 (1.22)
Sobel test P_value	5.826 e-07		
Proportion of mediating effect	0.33652524		
Note: the values in brackets are T,*** P<0.01,** P<0.05,* P<0.1			

## 5 Discussion

### 5.1. Theoretical significance

This paper has the following theoretical enlightenment: First, research work autonomy is proved to adjust led forward innovation to promote the positive role of employees' intrinsic motivation, and job autonomy positive adjustment leader creativity expectations through intrinsic motivation the indirect effect of positive influence on employee creativity, enriches and expands the research framework of the influence of leader creativity expectations and job characteristics on employees' intrinsic motivation and creativity. Second, task dependency negative regulation innovation staff look forward to working with intrinsic motivation between the leadership of the positive role, and this negative effect can continue to leader creativity looking forward to positive relationship with employees' creativity, enrich and expand the framework of victimization in the workplace.

### 5.2. Practical significance

In terms of management practice, the research results of this chapter have the following implications, First, managers should pay attention to the effect of leader creativity expectations and job autonomy on promoting employees' intrinsic motivation and creativity in the workplace. In particular, organizational managers should pay special attention to the work characteristic of work autonomy and pay attention to giving employees the opportunity to try new and useful combinations of work procedures when making work task design and process arrangement (Wang & Cheng, 2010). According to the leader creativity expectations, task dependence and the negative effect of their interaction on inhibiting employees' intrinsic motivation and thus reducing employees' creativity, managers should pay attention to avoid too close task cooperation between individuals and teams in positions requiring employees to show corresponding creativity. For employees who already have a high sense of self-efficacy, managers should take appropriate measures to protect them, such as work care, relationship mediation or other psychological services, to help

employees effectively resist possible negative harm, for teams with high degree of task dependence, managers should promote work identity among team members and strengthen the building of trust within the team, so as to reduce internal contradictions and negative emotions caused by excessive interpersonal communication, provide a harmonious working environment for the generation of intrinsic motivation.

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