



The Impact of Psychological Ownership on Employee Creativity

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Abstract. The influencing factors of employee creativity are the focus of attention of the organization and employees, and psychological ownership is the sense of possession that people have of objects (material or immaterial). Based on the self-determination theory, SPSS 27.0 was used to test the hypothesis through 409 questionnaires. This study explores the effect of psychological ownership on employee creativity, and the results show that psychological ownership has a positive impact on employee creativity. This study expands the research on the antecedent variables of employee creativity, which is helpful for organizations and managers to develop targeted intervention strategies to effectively enhance employee creativity.

Keywords: Psychological ownership, employee creativity

1 Introduction

In today's fast-paced business world, policy support and technological innovation go hand in hand, which together constitute an indispensable dual engine for enterprises to gain competitive advantage. This dual drive not only accelerates the pace of innovation, but also makes innovation a key factor for enterprises to stand out in the fierce market competition. Behind all this, the stimulation of employees' creativity plays a crucial role, which is the core source of power and a solid foundation for driving organizational innovation. By unleashing the creative potential of employees, enterprises can not only achieve continuous innovation in products and services, but also respond more flexibly to complex and changing market needs, ensuring the sustainable development of enterprises. Therefore, it is of great significance to deepen the theoretical research and provide a valuable and practical operation guide for enterprises to discuss how to effectively improve the creativity of employees.

Psychological ownership is the sense of possession that people have of an object, in its material or immaterial form^[1]. Researchers have found that psychological ownership has a significant effect in predicting employees' work attitudes and behaviors^[1]. The stimulation of creativity does not depend solely on external incentives, but is closely related to the internal motivation, psychological state and organizational environment

of employees. Therefore, based on the theory of self-determination, this study focuses on psychological ownership at the individual level and explores its mechanism in the process of employee creativity formation. This study not only expands the application scope of self-determination theory in the field of organizational behavior, but also provides a new theoretical perspective for understanding the relationship between employees' intrinsic motivation and creativity, and also deepens the understanding of the internal logic of psychological ownership affecting employees' creativity. This study not only has important theoretical value, but also provides a scientific basis for enterprise management practice.

2 Theoretical Analysis and Research Hypothesis

Psychological ownership is the mental state in which the individual perceives the object or part of it as "mine", whereby the object becomes an extension of the self. It is mainly manifested in the individual's possession perception of the object, emphasizing the self's possession of the object, and integrating the target into the self-concept as a part of self-expansion. Pierce (2001) point out that the formation of psychological ownership is based on three basic human needs: (1) efficacy, that is, the individual acquires an experience of ability by controlling, influencing and changing the object or its components; (2) self-identity, which refers to the association between the target object and the individual's "possession" consciousness, which helps the individual to self-recognize and maintain self-consistency; (3) Having a place, which is an essential element to meet the individual's need to belong, and having a space that provides a sense of security and comfort is essential for the individual^[1].

According to the Self-Determination Theory, psychological needs can be divided into three levels: Autonomy, Competence and Relatedness. When the three basic psychological needs of the individual, "autonomy", "competence" and "relationship", are satisfied, the autonomy motivation will be improved^[3]. Overall, the autonomy of motivation decreases in the order of intrinsic motivation, identity motivation, integration motivation, and extrinsic motivation^[4]. Therefore, it is necessary to study the impact of intrinsic motivation on employees' creativity.

According to the theory of self-determination, From the perspective of employees' autonomy needs, individuals feel more motivated and satisfied when they feel that their actions are voluntarily chosen rather than forced or controlled. Autonomy means that employees think that the work is their own, they have the right to make decisions about the work, and promote employees to show higher enthusiasm in their work, and participate in communication and exchange more actively, and the collision of ideas between employees helps to stimulate their creative thinking, so as to bring more innovative results to the organization^[5]. From the perspective of employees' competency needs, employees with a strong sense of psychological ownership are more likely to engage in self-improvement behaviors, such as seeking feedback, asking for help, discussing mistakes and experiences, participating in learning, and sharing resources^[6], which are conducive to the acquisition of heterogeneous knowledge and skills related to the domain, which in turn improves the individual's sense of self-competence at work and promotes

the satisfaction of competency needs. Specifically, employees' ownership can stimulate their in-depth thinking about work tasks and active learning of skills, thereby significantly enhancing their ability to innovate. From the perspective of employees' relationship needs, psychological ownership indirectly satisfies the relationship needs of individuals by enhancing a sense of belonging, providing social support, promoting communication, sharing values and culture, and encouraging collaboration and team building. Employees with high psychological ownership have a sense of "ownership" when participating in organizational activities, employees have a stronger sense of identity with the organization and work, will be more consciously involved in the realization of organizational goals, will be more active in looking for opportunities to create value for the organization, and actively engage in internal activities^[7]. At the same time, strong psychological ownership means that employees think of the organization as their home, and then employees will have a strong sense of ownership, and they will be more willing to give selflessly to protect the interests of the company, and will show more helping behavior^[8]. These positive behaviors contribute to the creation of a good interpersonal atmosphere, helping to build a harmonious network of relationships and prompting the satisfaction of employee relationship needs^[9]. Therefore, psychological ownership plays a significant role in enhancing innovation ability, stimulating innovation motivation, and creating innovation opportunities, thereby effectively promoting the generation of innovation behaviors. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Psychological ownership has a positive impact on employee creativity.

3 Method

3.1 Sample

The data were obtained by sending questionnaires to employees of several companies, and all participants were assured that the questionnaires would be filled out anonymously and the responses would be kept strictly confidential. The industries covered in the survey include a variety of industries, including finance, construction, computer services, and software. A total of 490 questionnaires were distributed, and 409 valid questionnaires were obtained after excluding invalid questionnaires with contradictory answers and obvious regularities, with a recovery rate of 83.4%. Among them, 52.5% are male and 47.4% are female.

3.2 Measures

The scales used in this study are all original English scales widely used in previous studies, and the five-point Likert scoring method is used for measurement.

Psychological ownership: using a scale developed by van Dyne and Pierce (2004) with 7 items, such as "I feel like this is my company"^[2]. Cronbach's α was 0.74.

Employee Creativity: Zhou and George (2001) scale with 13 items, such as "The employee will have an appropriate plan and timeline for implementing new ideas"^[10]. Cronbach's α was 0.865.

In addition, the gender, age, education, years of service, industry category, business

type, and size of the employee were used as control variables.

4 Results

4.1 Correlation Analysis

Table 1 shows the results of descriptive statistics and correlation analysis for the variables. The results showed that psychological ownership ($r=0.440$, $p<0.01$) was significantly positively correlated with employee creativity. Hypothesis 1 is preliminarily supported.

Table 1. Results of descriptive statistics and correlation coefficients (N=409)

	Mean Value	Standard deviation	1	2	3
1.Gender	1.474	0.499	—		
2.Scale	3.413	1.070	0.095	—	
3.Psychological ownership	3.584	1.035	-0.101	0.115	—
5.Employee creativity	3.735	0.981	-0.037	0.081	0.440**

**. At level 0.01 (two-tailed), the correlation is significant.

4.2 Hypothesis Testing

SPSS 27.0 was used for hierarchical regression analysis. The results in Table 2 show that psychological ownership ($\beta=0.268$, $p<0.001$) is significantly positively correlated with employee creativity. Hypothesis 1 is supported and validated.

Table 2. Results of regression analysis

Variables	Employee creativity			
	M1	M2	M3	M4
Gender	-0.047	-0.061	-0.026	-0.027
Age	-0.006	-0.033	-0.028	-0.024
Education background	0.01	0.06	0.068	0.061
Industry Category	0.006	0.02	0.031	0.029
Scale	0.191	0.128	0.091	0.099
Po				0.268***
R ²	0.17	0.241	0.293	0.314
ΔR^2	0.17	0.071	0.053	0.012
F	1	15.845***	18.406***	16.504***

Note: *** $p<0.001$

5 Conclusions

Based on the theory of self-determination, this study finds that psychological ownership has a significant positive impact on employee creativity. This finding not only verifies

the applicability of self-determination theory in explaining the formation mechanism of employee creativity, but also reveals the important role of psychological ownership in employee creativity.

From a theoretical point of view, psychological ownership, as a state of mind, can enhance employees' sense of responsibility and initiative, so that they can internalize the organization's goals into personal goals, thereby stimulating innovative thinking and creativity. This discovery not only enriches the theoretical framework in the field of organizational behavior and human resource management, but also provides a new perspective for understanding employee creativity. From a practical point of view, the results of the study provide important insights for managers. Organizations can effectively stimulate creativity by fostering psychological ownership in their employees, such as giving them more decision-making power, increasing autonomy at work, and creating a sense of belonging. In addition, the study also emphasizes the importance of organizational culture and management strategies, and suggests that enterprises should pay attention to the emotional investment and psychological identity of employees in daily management, so as to provide a supportive environment for the emergence of creativity. In short, the research on the relationship between psychological ownership and employee creativity not only provides a new direction for theoretical development, but also provides practical management strategies for enterprise practice, which has far-reaching academic value and application significance.

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