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Designing Process Intensity to Promote Employee Creativity:

Transformational Leadership on Macro-Micro

Level Origins Integration

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Abstract: Creativity, learning and knowledge leverage are crucial for the organization to compete successfully in the current knowledge-based economy. For creativity to occur in organizations, leaders need to support and promote it. Although a number of studies have investigated the impact of leaders on creativity, the investigations have largely focused on issues of leadership support. Noticeably missing from research attention has been process designed that focus greater effort on organizational learning approaches that can address the elemental underpinning of creativity. Therefore, a contribution of this study is to design and connect the theory of transformational leadership and macro-micro level origins that addresses the comprehensive process and employee creativity through important intervening variables.

Keywords: employee creativity; organizational mechanisms; creative process engagement; and transformational leadership

JEL codes: M10, M12, M14

1. Introduction

Central to the origins of competitiveness is the question of how organizations can energize their employee to be more creative. As employee creativity is an important source of organizational innovation (Amabile, 1988, 1996; Zhou & George, 2003; Oldham & Cummings, 1996; Shalley, 1991), organizations are increasingly seeking to promote individual creativity (Oldham, 2003). Creativity refers to the production of novel and useful ideas by an individual or by a group of individuals working together (Amabile, 1988; Madjar, Oldham, & Pratt, 2002; Shalley, Gilson, & Blum, 2000; Zhou & Shalley, 2003). Thus, enhancing creativity is not only requires the identification of employee with creative potential but also an understanding of how the process context influences the creativity of individuals with different disposition (Hirst, Knippenberg & Zhou, 2009). Driven by the assumption that creativity is beneficial for work outcomes, recent researches have devoted considerable attention to identifying its antecedents, but they have shown less interest in its process design (Zhou & Shalley, 2008; Gong, Huang, & Farh, 2009). Thus, the current work addresses important variables that determine both the antecedent

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and consequences of employee creativity.

Recent researches examine and believe that employee creativity will flourish when a supervisor provides transformational leadership (Jaussi & Dionne, 2003; Shin & Zhou, 2003), particularly, through transformational leadership behavior (Rubin, Munz, & Bommer, 2005), and when employees have a learning orientation (Redmond, Mumford, & Teach, 1993). Transformational leadership represents the most active and effective form of leadership, a form in which leaders are closely engaged with follower, motivating them to outperform their potential. Podsakoff and colleagues extensively reviewed seven conceptualizations of transformational leadership behavior and found that it included articulating a vision of the future, fostering group-oriented work, setting high expectations, challenging followers' thinking, supporting followers' individual needs, and acting as a role model (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, & Fetter, 1990).

In addition, Bass (1985) has theorized that transformational leadership comprises four dimensions: intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, idealized influence, and inspirational stimulation. All these capabilities relate directly to enhancing firms to encounter the difficulty of enhancing employees' motivation and investment in their work (Kirkman & Rosen, 1997, 1999; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). Thus, there are reasonable to expect transformational leader to have a positive impact on creativity (Amabile, 1988; Amabile, Conti, Coon, Lazenby, & Herron, 1996; Amabile, Schatzel, Moneta, & Krammer, 2004; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990; Zhou, 1998). Therefore, designing and examining the process intensity model that addresses the connection between transformational leadership and employee creativity is proposed.

The premise of this paper is that research on employee creativity need macro and microfoundations that capture more comprehensively what know about action and creativity within organization. In building a model linking transformational leadership and employee creativity, the research further drew on the organizational mechanisms associated with coordination capabilities (macro), and psychological empowerment literature (micro) and the creativity literature to posit mediating mechanism with high potential to explain linkages between transformational leadership and employee creativity.

2. Literature Review and Proposition Development

2.1 Transformational Leadership and Organizational Mechanisms: Macro-level Origins Design

Despite the growing interest in employee creativity, few have captured the richness and multidimensionality of macro-foundations concept. Moreover, while most studies have focused on the competitive benefits of employee creativity, organizational antecedents have been largely ignored (Lane, Koka, & Pathak, 2002). Even when organizational antecedents have been considered (e.g., Lane, Salk, & Lyles, 2001; Van Den Bosch, Volberda, & De Boer, 1999), their relationships with transformational leader, particularly on process design, have not been examined. Organizational antecedents may have differing effects on dimension of designing process and subsequently lead to different creativity outcomes. Examining the macro-level origins, transformational leadership on organizational antecedent would not only clarify how creative process engagement can be developed, but also reveal why firms have difficulties in fostering creativity.

Transformational leadership has been defined as influencing subordinates by "broadening and elevating followers" goals and providing them with confidence to perform beyond the expectations specified in the implicit or explicit exchange agreement (Dvir, Eden, Avolio, & Shamir, 2002, p. 735). Leadership is an important aspect of the work environment for employee (e.g., Oldham & Cummings, 1996; Scott & Bruce, 1994). Transformational

leadership describes a class of behaviors enacted by leader characteristics of intellectual stimulation (i.e., challenging the status quo and taking novel approaches to problems), individual consideration (i.e., supporting, developing and mentoring followers), idealized influence, and inspirational motivation (Bass, 1985). From the perspective of social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986, 1997), transformational leadership represents a critical macro-level origins factor in employee learning and creativity. Transformational leaders, by engaging in intellectual stimulation, set the expectation for creativity and serve as creative role model for employee through organizational mechanisms.

Previous research identify that organizational mechanisms involve a common features of combinative capabilities that each influence organizational absorptive capacity through employee creativity (e.g., Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; Henderson & Cockburn, 1994). However, none have been gained into how organizational mechanisms effects creative process intensity. Therefore, this research examines specific organizational mechanisms on the basis of macrofoundations on coordination capabilities, particularly cross-functional interface, participation in decision making, and job rotation.

2.2 Transformational Leadership and Cross-functional Interface

Coordination capabilities enhance knowledge exchange across disciplinary and hierarchical boundaries (Henderson et al., 1994; Matusik, 2002; Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997). Common features of coordination capabilities are cross-functional interfaces, participation in decision making, and job rotation (Galbraith, 1973; Henderson et al., 1994; Van Den Bosch, 1999; Jansen, Van Den Bosch, & Volberda, 2005). Therefore, transformational leadership can explore and exploit these macro-mechanisms, particularly cross-functional interface, to bring together different sources of expertise and enhance lateral interaction between areas of functional, or component, knowledge. Cross-functional interfaces result in lateral forms of communication that deepen knowledge flow across functional boundaries and line of authority. The effectiveness of transformational leadership on promoting cross-functional interface can enhance non-routine and reciprocal information processing (Egelhoff, 1991) and contribute to design process intensity. Thus, transformational leadership can enhance cross-functional interface underlying process intensity.

Proposition 1: Transformational leadership will be positively related to cross-functional interface.

2.3 Transformational Leadership and Participation in Decision Making

Although cross-functional interfaces are beneficial to integrate diverse knowledge components. To support employee in rethinking the systematic nature of existing process, employee participation in decision making provide an effective way of generating commitment and facilitating the design of process intensity. Participation in decision making indicates the extent to which subordinates take part in higher-level decision-making process (Hage & Aiken, 1967). In addition, participation in decision making allows for open interplay among a variety of perspectives and leads to rich internal network of diverse knowledge (Hage & Aiken, 1967, p. 510). Moreover, participation in decision making also facilitate the initiation of innovative behavior, but hinders its implementation. These evidences suggest that transformational leadership can enable the prospect of moving forward to foster creativity. Therefore, transformational leadership will enhance employee participation in decision making. Hence;

Proposition 2: Transformational leadership will be positively related to participation in decision making.

2.4 Transformational Leadership and Job Rotation

Transformational leadership creates aspect of work environment for employee (e.g., Oldham & Cumming, 1996; Scott & Bruce, 1994). Current researches have extended in an attempt to foster creativity and innovation through strategic adaptation. This paper focuses on an influence of leader on follower value and aspiration,

activate their higher-order needs, and motivate them to transcend their own self-interest to organizational development (Bass, 1985; Yukl, 1999). Job rotation is the lateral transfer of employees between jobs (Campion, Cheraskin, & Stevens, 1994). Job rotation has been assumed to enhance redundancy as well as diversity of knowledge backgrounds, to increasing managerial and problem-solving skills, to redesign the process. Diverse knowledge structure support explorative learning (McGrath, 2001) and increase the prospect of creativity. Therefore, transformational leadership can able to stimulate and challenge employee status quo and taking novel approach to problems through job rotation. Thus;

Proposition 3: Transformational leadership will be positively related to job rotation.

2.5 Transformational Leadership and Psychological Empowerment: Micro-level Origins Design

Recent research indicates that different forms of leadership, transformational leadership influences the fundamental attitudes and assumptions of an organizational's members, creating a common mentality to attain the firm' goals. Although evidence shows that the transformational leader exercise a substantial influence on performance, understanding of the processes through which he or she exerts this influence is still limited (Yulk, 1999). Few studies trace the causal path of the effects of transformational leadership on performance systematically by examining the intermediate influence of leaders' behavior on micro-level origins setting variables related to knowledge and creativity (Bass, 1999).

Transformational leaders have charisma, inspiration, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration of employee (Bass, 1999; Bass & Avolio, 2000). Therefore, transformational leadership guides and motivates a common vision of the organization. It motivates workers to create, share knowledge, and generating knowledge slack (Argyris & Schon, 1996). Knowledge slack is essential to facilitate personal and professional growth (Senge, 1990), learning and innovation (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990). Inherent in the combination of transformational leadership is determination, facilitation, and mobilization of an employee, so as to enable the employee to make decisions and implement actions without direct supervision and intervention (Bass, 1985; Jung, Chow & Wu, 2003). Given the nature of creativity, such delegation help establish a work context wherein an employee is encouraged and empowered to explore diverse creativity alternative before settling on a viable creative solution (Amabile, Conti, Coon, Lazenby, & Herron, 1996).

This research define transformational leadership as the initiator of process design and implementing micro-level origins condition, through psychological empowerment, that permit sharing power with an employee by expressing confidence in the employee's capabilities and removing hindrances to performance (Arnold, Arad, Rhoades, & Drasgow, 2000; Zhang & Bartol, 2010). Psychological empowerment is conceptualized as an experienced psychological state or set of cognitions. Conger and Kanungo (1988) defined psychological empowerment as a process of heightening feeling of employee self-efficacy "through the identification of conditions that foster powerlessness and through their removal by both formal organizational practices and informal techniques of providing efficacy information" (1988, p. 474). Thomas and Velhouse (1990) extended this approach by specifying a more complete set of task assessments (meaningfulness, competence, choice, and impact) that determine intrinsic task motivation in workers.

Spreitzer (1995) defined empowerment as a process or psychological state manifested in four cognitions: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact. Specifically, meaning concerns a sense of feeling that one's work is personally important. Competence refers to self-efficacy, or belief in one's ability to successfully perform tasks, self-determination indicates perception of freedom to choose how to initiate and carry out tasks. Impact represents the degree to which one views one's behaviors as making a difference in work outcomes (Zhang et al.,

2010). Thus, psychological empowerment is seen as an enabling process that enhances an employee's task initiation (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). This case exhibited closely linkage between transformational leadership and psychological empowerment. To assess this prospect, one can draw on transformational leadership of enhancing meaningfulness of work by helping an employee realize the importance of their contribution to overall organizational effectiveness. This micro-level origins design on process potentially provides an employee a feeling of greater control over the immediate work situation and confidence to make a difference work results creatively. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that transformational leadership influences employee's perceptions of psychological empowerment. Thus;

Proposition 4: Transformational leadership will be positively related to employee psychological empowerment.

2.6 Organizational Mechanisms and Creative Process Engagement

Exploring how organizational mechanisms support facilitating the design of process intensity is crucial, particularly on redesigning the existing process to enhance better employee creativity. The specific linkage between organizational mechanisms and combinative capabilities reveals how macro-foundations matter and deriving new insights of redesigning process. In addition to prior knowledge resources, units need to develop organizational capabilities, defined as combinative capabilities (Kogut & Zander, 1992), that enable them to synthesize and apply current and newly acquired external knowledge (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; Kogut & Zander, 1992). Combinative capabilities are path-dependent in their emergence and idiosyncratic in detail; however they exhibit common features (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000, p. 1116). Examining how combinative capabilities, especially coordinative capabilities involve in the design of newly intensity process to enhance employee creativity is explore.

According to Amabile's (1983) "componential conceptualization" of creativity, intrinsic task motivation is necessary, but not sufficient, condition for creative outcomes. Amabile (1983) argued that engaging in creative process activities has an equal, if not more important, influence on individual creative behaviors. Recent researches have begun to address the antecedent of creative process whereby each employee came to share and develop creative ideas (Drazin, Glynn, & Kazanjian, 1999; Mumford, 2000; Shalley & Zhou, 2004). In considering this aspect, this research proposed creative process engagement which can posit and also helping connect the macro and microfoundations of process intensity with employee creativity outcomes.

Creative process engagement is defined as employee involvement in creativity-relevant methods or process, including (1) problem identification, (2) information searching and encoding, and (3) idea and alternative generation (Amabile, 1983; Reiter-Palmon & Illies, 2004). Employee minimally engagement in the process may not exhibit novel outcomes. Effective organizational mechanisms, leading by transformational leadership, can foster employee spends more effort identify the problem, obtains as much knowledge as possible to generate creative ideas and alternative solutions that both novel and useful. Thus, well-design organizational mechanisms initiate and enhance creative process engagement. Hence,

Proposition 5: Organizational mechanisms associated with coordination capabilities will be positively related to creative process engagement.

2.7 Moderation of Organizational Mechanisms and Creative Process Engagement by Employee Psychological Empowerment

Although there are conceptual and empirical reasons to expect that a psychological empowered employee will be more prone to creative process engagement, psychological empowerment, by itself, have never been

empirically examined as the moderator to enhance the relationship between organizational mechanisms and creative process engagement (Zhang et al., 2010). Recently, researchers (e.g., Mainemelis, 2001; Mumford, 2000; Shalley & Gilson, 2004) have suggested that a promising direction for creativity research would be to focus on achieving a better understanding of the process that eventually leads to creative outcomes. Conceptually, creative process engagement defined as employee involvement or engagement in creativity relevant cognitive processes. Therefore, integrating micro-level origins, psychological empowerment in the designed process intensity, may generate both novel and valuable outcomes.

In considering the role of psychological empowerment in facilitating creativity, this paper theorized that psychological empowerment have important influences on an employee's willingness to engage in a creative process. Particularly, when an employee perceives that his or her job requirements are meaningful and personally important, the employee will spend more effort on clarifying a problem from multiple perspectives, and searching for creative alternatives outcomes (Gilson & Shalley, 2004). Additionally, when an employee involve with organizational mechanisms associated with coordination capabilities, he or she will has the ability to perform a task successfully and has a certain degree of self-determination over job execution that can shape creative outcomes. Hence;

Proposition 6: Psychological empowerment strengthens the relationship between organizational mechanisms associated with coordination capabilities and creative process engagement.

2.8 Creative Process Engagement and Employee Creativity

Recent researches have suggested that when individuals realize the importance of creativity in their jobs, they are more likely to actually be creative (e.g., Carson & Carson, 1993; Speller & Schumacher, 1975). Shalley (1991, 1995) found that assigned creativity goals effectively enhanced employee creative creativity performance, whereas assigned performance goals actually detracted from creative performance. Similarly, Pinto and Prescott (1988) concluded that a clarify mission statement by leader enables a greater focus on new idea development and subsequent successful innovation.

As discussed previously, to foster creative outcomes, an individual must engage in creative activity such as problem identification (Shalley, 1991; Simon, 1966), exchange knowledge flows across functional boundaries, combine sets of existing and newly acquired knowledge, generate commitment and facilitating the implementation of decisions (Bahrami & Evans, 1987). This creative process "determine the flexibility with which cognitive pathways are explored, the attention given to particular aspects of the task, and the extent to which a particular pathway is followed in pursuit of a solution" (Amabile, 1996, p. 95). In addition, when an employee engage in creative process, he or she is likely to focus on an idea or a problem longer and more persistently (Deci & Ryan, 1991; Spreitzer, 1995). Such an employee is also more likely to take risks, explore new cognitive pathways, and be playful with creative ideas (Amabile et al., 1996). Hence;

Proposition 7: Creative process engagement will be positively related to employee creativity.

3. Discussion and Conclusion

This research have assumed that human resources contribute to improve a firm's ability both to explore and exploit knowledge through well-designed process under supervisory of transformational leadership that managing organizational mechanisms associated with coordination capabilities in promoting employee creativity. In this paper, the focus has drawn on three unique dimensions: (1) macro-level origins (transformational leadership,

organizational mechanisms), (2) micro-level origins (psychological empowerment), and (3) integrative dimension (creative process engagement) of relationships that may play complementary roles in facilitating employee creativity by synthesizing the extant literature on organizational learning and social relations. Specifically, the combinative capabilities and organizational mechanisms consists of cross-functional interfaces, participation in decision making and job rotation (Galbraith, 1973; Henderson & Cockburn, 1994; Van Den Bosch et al., 1999), generalized creativity through the proposed model of process intensity. This paper also has extended the process design by highlighting how transformational leader influence employee creativity effectively through process intensity.

This research makes several important contributions to the literature on leadership, organizational learning, and employee creativity. First, while employee have been conceived of in term of human capital or knowledge stocks, little effort has been made to identify the social relations, particularly through process intensity, among employee that provide the mechanisms to facilitate efficient knowledge flow and organizational learning as the source of value creation. This paper has provided insight into the potential value of organizational mechanisms associated with coordination capabilities within and across firm boundaries by providing a theoretical framework of employee creativity relationships. Specifically, the paper has addressed how firms can redesign process by applying macro and micro level origins to enhance employee creativity.

Second, the overall contribution is the proposed conceptual model that uniquely integrates transformational leadership theory with organizational learning and creativity theories. Although a number of studies have investigated relationships between leadership style (e.g., supportive vs. controlling leadership style) and employee creativity (e.g., Amabile, Schatzel, Moneta, & Krammer, 2004; Tierney & Farmer, 2002, 2004; Zhou & George, 2003), transformational leadership and process design has been surprisingly absent from consideration. This paper has argued and uniquely proposed that there are strong theoretical reasons to consider macro-microfoundations to be well positioned to influence fundamentals underlying creative outcomes. Therefore, future research might be able to examine specific answers regarding how to foster employee creativity. Others interesting direction for future study might be to access the extent to which the individual difference interact with various aspects of creative process engagement to influence creativity outcomes.

In conclusion, this study uniquely synthesizes leadership theories, organizational learning theories, empowerment theories, and creativity theories to further design conceptual model on process intensity to influence creativity. These processes generally referred to as organizational learning can originate from sources both macro and micro-level origins of the firm, and they are essential for enhancing the firm's knowledge stock to be more productive via creativity. It is in the sense that managing coordination, system, and socialization capabilities is instrumental for learning in the firm. Hence, leader must be able to draw these logical connections that link to employee creativity through well-designed organizational learning process.

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