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The Relationship between Creativity and Organizational Climate among hotel employees in Hong Kong: Canonical Analysis Approach

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1. Introduction

The interest to investigate “Creativity” came from the awakening presidential speech by Guilford (1950) at the American Psychologists Association. Boden (1994) once said creativity is a puzzle or a mystery. According to Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, creativity is defined as “production of something new through imaginative skills” (1983, pg 304). In Hong Kong, creativity has become an important and demanding trait for managers and supervisors (VTC, 2001). In the hospitality field, the subject of creativity is not new, and Berger & Ferguson (1990) first attempted to develop different creativity techniques for hospitality managers.

In general terms, creativity can be investigated by six research approaches (Mayer, 1999; Sternberg and Lubart, 1999). These are: 1.) Biographical; 2.) Psychological / Cognitive; 3.) Biological; 4.) Computational; 5.) Contextual; and 6.) Psychometric approach. Amabile (1983) is the guru to study creativity in the contextual approach who argues that creativity can be affected by the environment. This research focuses on understanding creativity by psychometric measurement and investigates if there is any relationship with the outside environment. This research will aim to see the relationship between the contextual (environment) and Psychometric (measurement of creativity).

2. Research Objectives

This research has four objectives:

1. To measure hotel employees’ creativity by psychometric instrument in the Hong Kong industry;
2. To measure the organizational climate of hotel industry in Hong Kong;
3. To investigate any relationship between Creativity and Organizational Climate among hotel employees; and
4. To suggest recommendations on how to improve creativity in the hotel industry

3. Literature Review

3.1 Creativity

The ability to produce work that is both novel (original) and appropriate (useful) is achieved by human beings (Sternberg, 1988; Lubart, 1994); Sternberg and Lubart, 1991, 1995, 1999) so that we can manage the world in a better way. Creativity is an ability only to be found and utilized by human beings. If we try to trace the person who inaugurated the study of creativity, it was Galton (1870) as quoted from Sternberg (1999) who started a century ago using a scientific approach to the understanding of creative performance. Galton focused on the study of intellect, where creativity is a subsidiary role in the domain. Over a hundred years later, the pioneer of creativity research comes with Guilford’s speech (1950). After Guilford’s influential speech, psychologists started to investigate creativity.

Six major approaches emerged in the investigation of creativity and briefly outlined as follows. Researchers taking the biographical approach attempted to uncover the histories of creative persons. They investigated the past behaviors of creative people, creative works, paintings,

writing and creation. They aimed to ascertain if there a pattern or trend that could be found within creative persons. The Psychological approach focuses on understanding how the creative person thinks and rationalizes problems and solutions. Researchers taking the biological approach work like a doctor to explore the anatomy of how the human brain works. For example, is there any an enzyme or chemical reaction happens when creative ideas come out? The computational approach tries to use computer to imitate human being on creativity. The artificial intelligence is the common nowadays to create creative machines. Researchers taking the contextual approach argue that creativity is affected by the environments. The elements of both internal and external environments are their focus. Finally, researchers taking the Psychometric approach focus on “measuring” creativity. In addition to the different approaches, numerous instruments were developed in order to “evaluate” or “measure” the level of creativity. Byrd (1971) successfully identified a two-factor model to measure creativity: creativity and risk taking dimensions. Byrd’s (1971) instrument was adopted as an instrument to measure creativity in this research.

3.2. Organizational Climate

Organizational Climate is at the centre of much research. However, it can be considered as independent and, intervening / moderating variable and as a dependent variable to be studied. Like many other aspects in social science, a phenomenon can co-exist as independent and dependent nature. Neves (1988) revealed that a favourable and positive organizational climate as perceived by worker does account for training effectiveness, in terms of results of workers’ training as assessed by themselves, supervisors and managers alike. Mok (1999) discovered a partial model of turnover intentions as affected by organizational climate, job stressors, job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

The earliest literature that touched on organizational climate was Litwin and Stringer (1968) who developed the Organizational Climate Questionnaire (OCQ) with nine dimensions. However, Muchinsky (1976) disagreed with Litwin and Stringer’s (1968) model and reassessed its dimensionality and come out with another six dimensions. Mok (1999) applied factor analysis on the original Litwin and Stringer’s (1968) model and derived another four dimensions. Thus the Organizational Climate questionnaire appears to be vague in both external and internal validity for measuring organizational climate.

When tracing the literature about organizational climate and creativity, the earliest research was by Cummings (1965) who highlighted the importance of organizational environment to the creativity of the individual. However, it was only after nearly 17 years, the ingredients of organizational climate started to develop. The ingredients of organizational climate have been a challenge as many researchers developed different dimensions. For example, Hunt (1979) suggested five dimensions. Joyce and Slocum (1984) suggested 6-factor model. O’Reilly et al. (1991) suggested seven characteristics. Robbins (1994) suggested ten characteristics that compose the organizational climate.

After comparing all models, this research adopted Moos’ (1986) Work Environment Scale – real form (WES) as an instrument to measure organizational climate in this study. The rationale for this is because the three underlying dimensions are more suitable for the hotel industry as compared to others are too generic and apply to all companies WES It has three sub-dimensions:

1.) Relationship; 2.) Personal Growth; and 3.) System Maintenance and Change. Relationship dimension includes involvement, peer cohesion and supervisor support. Personal Growth dimension includes autonomy, task orientation and work pressure. System maintenance and change dimension includes clarity, control, innovation, and physical comfort.

4. Methodology

This research adopts a quantitative method and uses a self-administrated questionnaire. The questionnaire is divided into three sections. Section one measures creativity of hotel employees. The instrument used is Byrd (1971, 1982 & 1986). Respondents are asked to indicate their choice by Likert scale ranging from “1” as “Completely Disagree” to “7” as “Completely Agree”. Section two measures the organizational climate with the instrument from Moos (1986). Likert scale is used again ranging from “1” as “Completely Disagree” to “7” as “Completely Agree”. Section three collects demographic data such as gender, age group, education level, etc. Since majority of the hotel employees in Hong Kong are Chinese, this questionnaire had a bilingual version using Back translation method (Brislin, 1971) to ensure correct meaning of original instrument was maintained.

By mathematical model, we aim to test this hypothesis (Ho):
There is no relationship between Creativity and Organizational Climate

$$RT + C = OC1 + OC2 + OC3$$

Where: C = Creativity Dimension
RT = Risk Taking Dimension
OC1= Relationship Dimension
OC2= Personal Growth Dimension
OC3= System Maintenance and Change Dimension

4.1 Sampling Subjects & Method

The subjects are all hotel employees working in the Hong Kong Hotel industry. A letter of invitation to participate the survey was sent to all Human Resources Directors / Managers to solicit their assistance to distribute the 50 questionnaires to their employees randomly. Repeated contact by telephone and personal visits were conducted in order to increase response rate.

5. Findings & Conclusion

983 out of 1,545 valid and completed questionnaires were returned with a response rate of 63.62%. Mean values of both creativity dimension (5.92) and organizational climate dimension (6.332) indicated a positive agreement for these areas. Pearson Correlation analysis revealed that there are significant relationships among all sub-dimensions in creativity and organizational climate. Canonical correlation analysis discovered that there is a relationship between creativity and organizational climate with coefficient as 0.339 and significance level at 0.000. Canonical Cross loading analysis further discovered that risk taking factor of the creativity dimension was

found to relate to the Personal Growth factor of the Organizational Climate. Based on these findings, several recommendations on how to improve employee creativity are suggested and discussed. These include: 1) Implement methods to allow staff to take risk; 2.) Offer more autonomy for staff to work; 3.) Provide clear direction and guidelines for work to be done; and 4.) Exert necessary and appropriate urgency on work or projects.

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