APSSHS

Academic Publications of Social Sciences and Humanities Studies
2023, Volume 3, Page No: 72-78
Available online at: https://apsshs.com/

Journal of Applied Organizational Systems and Behavior

Exploring Psychological Empowerment and Its Connection to Employee Creativity in Vietnam Telecommunication Enterprises: The Mediating Influence of Intrinsic Work Motivation

Michael Osei[1]*, Kwame Mensah[1], Abena Boateng[1], Samuel Asare[1]

1. Department of Individual and Organizational Behavior, School of Business, University of Ghana, Accra, Ghana.

Abstract

Employee creativity plays a vital role in boosting the competitive edge of enterprises, particularly those that demand high levels of innovation, such as telecommunication enterprises. This research aims to explore the connections between psychological empowerment, intrinsic work motivation, and employee creativity. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study combines qualitative insights from in-depth interviews with quantitative data collected through a large-scale survey involving 420 employees from telecommunication companies. The findings reveal that psychological empowerment is strongly linked to both intrinsic work motivation and employee creativity, while intrinsic work motivation positively influences employee creativity. Furthermore, intrinsic work motivation serves as a mediator between psychological empowerment and employee creativity. Drawing on these results, the study offers managerial recommendations emphasizing the importance of nurturing employees' psychological empowerment and fostering intrinsic work motivation to stimulate employee creativity within Vietnam telecommunication enterprises.

Keywords: Vietnam, Employee creativity, Psychological empowerment, Intrinsic work motivation, Telecommunication enterprises

How to cite this article: Osei M, Mensah K, Boateng A, Asare S. Exploring psychological empowerment and its connection to employee creativity in Vietnam telecommunication enterprises: the mediating influence of intrinsic work motivation. J Appl Organ Syst Behav. 2023;3:72-8. https://doi.org/10.51847/VI18Mh8ssJ

Received: 22 May 2023; **Revised:** 12 November 2023; **Accepted:** 17 November 2023
Corresponding author: Michael Osei
E-mail ✉ michael.osei@outlook.com

Introduction

In today's fast-paced and competitive business landscape, organizations must remain agile, continuously assimilating new knowledge, technologies, and processes to innovate and deliver products and services that offer advantages in cost and speed [1]. Creativity plays a pivotal role in securing such competitive edges [2]. It involves harnessing a diverse set of skills, knowledge, perspectives, and experiences to generate novel solutions for challenges and to efficiently accomplish tasks [3]. This emphasis on creativity is particularly prominent in the service sector, where collaboration among employees is vital for building shared insights about customers and shaping service design [4].

The telecommunications sector has experienced substantial growth over recent years, significantly contributing to the country's socio-economic progress. This growth is evidenced by a reported revenue of roughly 472,300 billion Vietnam dong in 2019, marking an 18% rise compared to 2018, primarily fueled by telecommunications services [5, 6]. Despite these advances, telecommunications firms face ongoing pressure from rapid technological advancements that challenge their ability to sustain competitive advantages [7]. Innovation is thus recognized as a critical driver of organizational success [8]. Today's competition within this industry hinges on innovation as enterprises strive to adapt to evolving customer demands, with many Vietnamese telecommunications companies actively seeking effective solutions [9]. Empowerment plays a vital role in strengthening teams and boosting organizational outcomes [10]. Psychological empowerment, in particular, has been shown

to significantly influence employee creativity [11, 12], innovative performance [13], and innovative behaviors [14]. Nevertheless, questions remain regarding how individual differences shape the dynamics between psychological empowerment, employee creativity, and the psychological mechanisms connecting these elements within telecommunications firms.

Intrinsic work motivation refers to an individual's inherent drive to engage in work purely for the enjoyment or satisfaction derived from the task itself [15]. It encourages employees to be more adaptable and persistent in their efforts [16]. While intrinsic work motivation has been posited as a key factor linking psychological empowerment to employee performance and creativity [17], empirical studies exploring this connection remain limited [18].

This research aims to address three core objectives: first, to examine the relationships among psychological empowerment, employee creativity, and intrinsic work motivation; second, to investigate the mediating effect of intrinsic work motivation in the link between psychological empowerment and employee creativity; and third, to evaluate how psychological empowerment functions within telecommunications companies operating in an emerging market like Vietnam.

Theoretical background and hypotheses

Psychological empowerment and employee creativity

According to Thomas and Velthouse (1990), psychological empowerment comprises four key components[19]: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact. Meaning pertains to how employees perceive their work in relation to their personal values. Competence denotes the confidence in one's ability to successfully perform tasks. Self-determination refers to the degree of autonomy in controlling one's work activities. Impact reflects the belief that one's efforts can influence organizational outcomes.

Psychological empowerment fosters confidence and independent thinking, preparing employees to innovate [20]. Employees who feel empowered perceive themselves as capable of shaping their work environment and tend to take initiative [21]. Such individuals feel their contributions significantly affect organizational goals [22]. Autonomy encourages positive workplace behaviors and creativity [23]. When employees have control over their tasks, they are more likely to embrace risk-taking, pursue new knowledge, and generate creative ideas [21, 24, 25]. Psychological empowerment arises from individuals' awareness of their competence, meaningfulness, self-governance, and influence on organizational performance [26].

Conversely, Thomas and Velthouse (1990) note that traditional organizational practices often suppress employee productivity and creativity[19]. Lack of psychological empowerment leads to passive compliance rather than proactive problem-solving [18, 20]. Accordingly, we propose:

H1: Psychological empowerment positively impacts employee creativity in Vietnamese telecommunications firms.

Psychological empowerment and intrinsic work motivation

Intrinsic work motivation consists of internal drives that energize and sustain work-related activities [15]. It reflects individuals' perceptions of being the originators of their actions, choosing pathways to reach goals [27]. Core elements influencing intrinsic motivation include competence, autonomy, and relatedness needs satisfaction [28].

The theory of psychological empowerment suggests that employees' perceptions of empowerment stimulate their intrinsic motivation [29]. Thomas and Velthouse (1990) affirm the positive association between psychological empowerment and intrinsic motivation[19]. From this understanding, we formulate:

H2: Psychological empowerment positively influences intrinsic work motivation among telecommunications employees in Vietnam.

Intrinsic work motivation and employee creativity

Employee creativity encompasses the generation of beneficial ideas relating to products, services, processes, or work methods that enhance organizational growth [30–32]. Creativity is shaped by both individual traits and contextual factors [33], involving cognitive capacities and social influences [34]. When employees are genuinely engaged and interested, they tend to explore innovative solutions [24]. Those driven by intrinsic motivation often exhibit greater flexibility and openness, using unconventional approaches to resolve workplace challenges [35]. Research underscores intrinsic motivation's positive correlation with creativity, perseverance, and well-being [36]. Thus, we hypothesize:

H3: Intrinsic work motivation positively affects employee creativity in Vietnamese telecommunications companies.

Intrinsic work motivation as a mediator

Granting employees autonomy fosters creativity by empowering decision-making in their tasks [24]. Self-determination theory posits that autonomy enhances intrinsic motivation, which in turn fuels creativity, as intrinsic motivation is a vital source of creative output [18]. Psychological empowerment further boosts internal motivation, promoting creative performance [21]. Empowered individuals tend to be more passionate, goal-oriented, and confident, which encourages initiative and innovation [36]. Given that intrinsic motivation strongly drives creative work [24], the final hypothesis is:

H4: Intrinsic work motivation mediates the relationship between psychological empowerment and employee creativity.

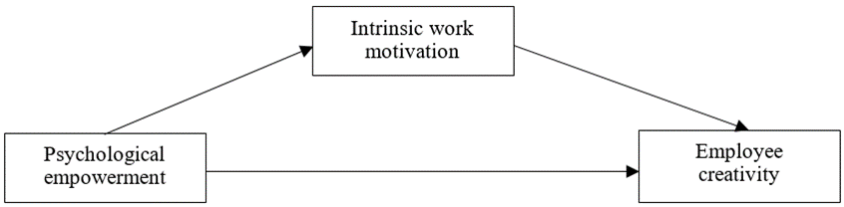

Figure 1. The conceptual model

Materials and Methods

Sample and procedure

To gain deeper insight into psychological empowerment, employee creativity, and intrinsic work motivation, the author initially carried out comprehensive interviews with five managers and five staff members from telecommunications companies. These interviews helped to clarify the interconnections among the three central constructs in the research framework and verified the appropriateness of the measurement items. Subsequently, a structured questionnaire was developed for widespread data collection. The measurement scales used in this study were adapted from prior research. The author reached out to multiple telecommunications firms across Vietnam's northern, central, and southern regions. The questionnaire was directly distributed to employees within these telecommunications companies from October through December 2019.

A total of 500 completed questionnaires were collected from 21 telecommunications enterprises nationwide. After a screening process to ensure data quality, 420 valid responses were retained for analysis. Regarding gender distribution, male respondents numbered 188 (44.8%), while female respondents accounted for 232 (55.2%). Age-wise, the majority of participants (64.5%) were between 20 and 30 years old, with 30.2% falling within the 31 to 40 age bracket. Educational qualifications showed that most respondents held a college or university degree, representing 79.8% of the sample. In terms of professional experience, over half (55.6%) had between one and five years of work tenure, followed by 17.9% who had worked for six to ten years.

Measures

Psychological empowerment (PE) was assessed using Spreitzer's (1995) 12-item scale covering four dimensions: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact. The confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) supported the scale's validity, yielding satisfactory fit indices ($\chi 2 = 67.303$, df = 50, $p < 0.001$; CFI = 0.990, GFI = 0.987, RMSEA = 0.029). Employee creativity (EC) was measured by 13 items from Zhou and George [37]; however, two items (EC6 and EC7) were excluded due to low item-total correlation coefficients (below 0.4). Intrinsic work motivation (IWM) was evaluated using three items drawn from Amabile (1985) and Tierney *et al*. (1999)[38, 39]. Respondents rated all items on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Results and Discussion

Descriptive statistics and confirmatory factor analysis

The reliability of the scales was confirmed by Cronbach's alpha coefficients for psychological empowerment ($\alpha = 0.810$), employee creativity ($\alpha = 0.885$), and intrinsic work motivation ($\alpha = 0.758$), each surpassing the accepted threshold of 0.7 [40]. **Table 1** presents the means, standard deviations, and correlation coefficients among the constructs within the research model. The findings revealed that psychological empowerment was positively associated with employee creativity ($r = 0.120$, $p < 0.05$) and intrinsic work motivation ($r = 0.178$, $p < 0.05$). Additionally, intrinsic work motivation showed a significant positive correlation with employee creativity ($r = 0.305$, $p < 0.01$).

Table 1. Means, standard deviations and correlations

	Mean	Std. Deviation	PE	EC	IWM
PE	3.5036	0.69380	1	0.120*	0.178**
EC	3.6549	0.51588	0.120*	1	0.305**
IWM	3.6730	0.87146	0.178**	0.305**	1

Following that, the researchers carried out confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to test the measurement model's adequacy. The evaluation showed that the model fit indicators met the accepted standards ($\chi 2 = 473.448$, df = 269, $p < 0.001$; CFI =

0.955; GFI = 0.915; RMSEA = 0.042), indicating a good overall alignment between the data collected and the hypothesized model.

To verify convergent validity, the study examined three primary indices: factor loadings (standardized estimates), average variance extracted (AVE), and composite reliability (CR). The standardized loadings for all constructs were found between 0.667 and 0.846, with all values reaching statistical significance (p-values). The AVE scores ranged from 0.505 to 0.623, while CR values fell between 0.758 and 0.918. These findings confirm that both AVE and CR meet the necessary thresholds, thus supporting the scales' convergent validity and reliability as detailed in **Table 2**.

Table 2. The measurement model

Construct	Item	Standardized estimates	AVE	CR	p-value
PE_M	PE1	0.763	0.623	0.832	0.000
	PE2	0.756			
	PE3	0.846			
PE_C	PE4	0.786	0.569	0.798	0.000
	PE5	0.757			
	PE6	0.719			
PE_S	PE7	0.710	0.521	0.764	0.000
	PE8	0.781			
	PE9	0.669			
PE_I	PE10	0.692	0.591	0.811	0.000
	PE11	0.844			
	PE12	0.763			
EC	EC1	0.687	0.505	0.918	0.000
	EC2	0.690			
	EC3	0.699			
	EC4	0.730			
	EC5	0.693			
	EC8	0.754			
	EC9	0.719			
	EC10	0.712			
	EC11	0.756			
	EC12	0.708			
	EC13	0.667			
IM	IM1	0.680	0.511	0.758	0.000
	IM3	0.731			
	IM2	0.733			

Hypotheses analysis

To evaluate the proposed hypotheses, the authors applied hierarchical regression analysis to explore the connections between the variables summarized in **Table 3**. The first model demonstrated that psychological empowerment positively predicts employee creativity ($\beta = 0.120$, $p < 0.05$), thereby supporting hypothesis H1. Additionally, psychological empowerment was found to have a significant positive effect on intrinsic work motivation ($\beta = 0.178$, $p < 0.001$), confirming hypothesis H2. The second model revealed that intrinsic work motivation plays a significant role in enhancing employee creativity ($\beta = 0.305$, $p < 0.001$), providing support for hypothesis H3. Thus, hypotheses H1 through H3 received empirical backing.

Following the mediation analysis framework outlined by Baron and Kenny [41], the criteria for mediation testing were met as hypotheses H1, H2, and H3 held true. In model 3, after accounting for intrinsic work motivation, the direct link between psychological empowerment and employee creativity diminished and became statistically non-significant ($\beta = 0.068$, $p > 0.05$). Conversely, intrinsic work motivation retained a significant positive association with employee creativity ($\beta = 0.293$, $p < 0.001$). These results confirm that intrinsic work motivation functions as a mediator in the relationship between psychological empowerment and employee creativity, thus supporting hypothesis H4.

Table 3. Results of regression analysis

Variables	Model 1		Model 2	Model 3
	Employee creativity	Intrinsic work motivation	Employee creativity	Employee creativity
Psychological empowerment	0.120*	0.178***		0.068
Intrinsic work motivation			0.305***	0.293***
R^2	0.012	0.030	0.091	0.093

Notes: n = 420; *$p < 0.05$; ***$p < 0.001$

This investigation set out to explore how psychological empowerment, employee creativity, and intrinsic work motivation interrelate, with a focus on examining whether intrinsic work motivation mediates the link between psychological empowerment and employee creativity. The data robustly supported every hypothesis posited in the model.

To begin with, the findings reinforce that psychological empowerment correlates positively with employee creativity, a conclusion echoed in the literature by Aslam (2017), Javed *et al*. (2017), and Tung (2016)[12, 42, 43]. Individuals who feel psychologically empowered tend to actively shape their job roles and environments [21], which drives them to innovate and find novel solutions during task performance [11, 44].

Next, a significant positive influence of psychological empowerment on intrinsic work motivation was found, consistent with research conducted by Aslam (2017), Hahm (2018), and Zhang and Bartol (2010)[18, 42, 45].

Further, intrinsic work motivation itself was shown to have a strong positive relationship with employee creativity, corroborating earlier studies such as Coelho *et al*. (2011) and Zhang and Bartol (2010)[18, 46]. Prior evidence highlights intrinsic motivation's crucial role in fostering creativity within organizational settings [17].

Lastly, the mediating role of intrinsic work motivation between psychological empowerment and employee creativity was confirmed, aligning with Hahm's (2018) findings on this mechanism[45].

Practical implications

The outcomes of this study offer valuable insights for management within Vietnam's telecommunications industry:

Managers are encouraged to enhance psychological empowerment among staff, nurturing a workplace culture that promotes autonomy, responsibility, and alignment with the company's mission. Empowering employees to make decisions and use resources independently, without excessive managerial interference, can cultivate intrinsic motivation and creative engagement [47].

Additionally, since intrinsic motivation mediates the empowerment-creativity relationship, leaders should invest in measures such as recognition programs, career progression pathways, and supportive work environments to further stimulate intrinsic motivation.

Conclusion

In summary, psychological empowerment exerts a favorable effect on both intrinsic work motivation and employee creativity, with intrinsic motivation playing a critical mediating role between empowerment and creativity. Therefore, management should prioritize fostering psychological empowerment and adopt comprehensive strategies to enhance intrinsic motivation to boost creativity within telecommunications organizations in Vietnam.

Acknowledgments: None

Conflict of interest: None

Financial support: This study received funding from the National Economics University, Hanoi, Vietnam.

Ethics statement: None

References

1. Zubair A, Bashir M, Abrar M, Baig SA, Hassan SY. Employee's participation in decision making and manager's encouragement of creativity: the mediating role of climate for creativity and change. J Serv Sci Manag. 2015;8(3):306.
2. Oldham GR, Cummings A. Employee creativity: personal and contextual factors at work. Acad Manag J. 1996;39(3):607-34.
3. Cheung MF, Wong CS. Transformational leadership, leader support, and employee creativity. Leadersh Organ Dev J. 2011;32(7):656-72.
4. Chen MH, Chang YC. The dynamics of conflict and creativity during a project's life cycle: a comparative study between service-driven and technology-driven teams in Taiwan. Int J Organ Anal. 1993;13:127-50.
5. Nguyen H. Revenue from technology and telecommunications industry reached 3.1 million billion dong. VnExpress J. 2019.
6. Attia DA, Al-kadhi NA, Saeed IAHM, Abass KS. Sleep deprivation effect on concentration of some reproductive hormones in healthy men and women volunteers. J Adv Pharm Educ Res. 2021;11(1):156-60. doi:10.51847/Glckp1ltAa
7. Tushman M, Anderson P. Managing strategic innovation and change: a collection of readings. Oxford: Oxford Univ Press; 2004.

8. Begonja M, Čićek F, Balboni B, Gerbin A. Innovation and business performance determinants of SMEs in the Adriatic region that introduced social innovation. Econ Res-Ekon Istraz. 2016;29(1):1136-49.
9. Nham TP, Nguyen TM, Tran NH, Nguyen HA. Knowledge sharing and innovation capability at both individual and organizational levels: an empirical study from Vietnam's telecommunication companies. Manag Mark. 2020;15(2):275-301.
10. Bennis W, Nanus B. The strategies for taking charge. New York: Harper Row; 1985.
11. Sun LY, Zhang Z, Qi J, Chen ZX. Empowerment and creativity: a cross-level investigation. Leadersh Q. 2012;23(1):55-65.
12. Tung FC. Does transformational, ambidextrous, transactional leadership promote employee creativity? Mediating effects of empowerment and promotion focus. Int J Manpow. 2016;37(8):1250-63.
13. Singh M, Sarkar A. The relationship between psychological empowerment and innovative behavior: a dimensional analysis with job involvement as mediator. J Pers Psychol. 2012;11(3):127-37.
14. Luoh HF, Tsaur SH, Tang YY. Empowering employees: job standardization and innovative behavior. Int J Contemp Hosp Manag. 2014;26(7):1100-17.
15. Ambrose ML, Kulik CT. Old friends, new faces: motivation research in the 1990s. J Manag. 1999;25(3):231-92.
16. McGraw KO, Fiala J. Undermining the Zeigarnik effect: another hidden cost of reward. J Pers. 1982;50(1):58-66.
17. Amabile TM. Creativity and innovation in organization. Boston: Harvard Business School; 1996.
18. Zhang X, Bartol KM. Linking empowering leadership and employee creativity: the influence of psychological empowerment, intrinsic motivation, and creative process engagement. Acad Manag J. 2010;53(1):107-28.
19. Thomas KW, Velthouse BA. Cognitive elements of empowerment: an "interpretive" model of intrinsic task motivation. Acad Manag Rev. 1990;15(4):666-81.
20. Bin Saeed B, Afsar B, Shahjeha A, Imad Shah S. Does transformational leadership foster innovative work behavior? The roles of psychological empowerment, intrinsic motivation, and creative process engagement. Econ Res-Ekon Istraz. 2019;32(1):254-81.
21. Spreitzer GM. Psychological empowerment in the workplace: dimensions, measurement, and validation. Acad Manag J. 1995;38(5):1442-65.
22. Shah TA, Khattak MN, Zolin R, Shah SZA. Psychological empowerment and employee attitudinal outcomes: the pivotal role of psychological capital. Manag Res Rev. 2019;42(7):797-817.
23. Shu M, Zhong Z, Ren H. Voice contributes to creativity via leaders' endorsement especially when proposed by extraverted high performance employees. Psychol Res Behav Manag. 2022;15:213.
24. Amabile TM, Conti R, Coon H, Lazenby J, Herron M. Assessing the work environment for creativity. Acad Manag J. 1996;39(5):1154-84.
25. Deci EL, Ryan RM. A motivational approach to self: integration in personality. In: Nebraska symposium on motivation. Vol 38. Lincoln: Univ Nebraska Press; 1991. p. 237-88.
26. Malik M, Sarwar S, Orr S. Agile practices and performance: examining the role of psychological empowerment. Int J Proj Manag. 2021;39(1):10-20.
27. Demircioglu MA, Chen CA. Public employees' use of social media: its impact on need satisfaction and intrinsic work motivation. Gov Inf Q. 2019;36(1):51-60.
28. Deci EL, Ryan RM. The general causality orientations scale: self-determination in personality. J Res Pers. 1985;19(2):109-34.
29. Mishra AK, Spreitzer GM. Explaining how survivors respond to downsizing: the roles of trust, empowerment, justice, and work redesign. Acad Manag Rev. 1998;23(3):567-88.
30. Amabile TM. A model of creativity and innovation in organizations. Res Organ Behav. 1988;10(1):123-67.
31. Shalley CE. Effects of productivity goals, creativity goals, and personal discretion on individual creativity. J Appl Psychol. 1991;76(2):179.
32. Oldham GR. Stimulating and supporting creativity in organizations. In: Managing knowledge for sustained competitive advantage. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass; 2003. p. 243-73.
33. Woodman RW, Sawyer JE, Griffin RW. Toward a theory of organizational creativity. Acad Manag Rev. 1993;18(2):293-321.
34. Saraç M, Efil I, Eryilmaz M. A study of the relationship between person-organization fit and employee creativity. Manag Res Rev. 2014;37(5):479-501.
35. Shin SJ, Zhou J. Transformational leadership, conservation, and creativity: evidence from Korea. Acad Manag J. 2003;46(6):703-14.
36. Ryan RM, Deci EL. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations: classic definitions and new directions. Contemp Educ Psychol. 2000;25(1):54-67.

37. Zhou J, George JM. When job dissatisfaction leads to creativity: encouraging the expression of voice. Acad Manag J. 2001;44(4):682-96.
38. Amabile TM. Motivation and creativity: effects of motivational orientation on creative writers. J Pers Soc Psychol. 1985;48(2):393.
39. Tierney P, Farmer SM, Graen GB. An examination of leadership and employee creativity: the relevance of traits and relationships. Pers Psychol. 1999;52(3):591-620.
40. Nunnally J, Bernstein I. Psychological methods. New York: McGraw-Hill; 1994.
41. Baron RM, Kenny DA. The moderator-mediator variable distinction in social psychological research: conceptual, strategic, and statistical considerations. J Pers Soc Psychol. 1986;51(6):1173.
42. Aslam S. Psychological empowerment on creativity among employees of IT sector: the mediating role of creative process engagement and intrinsic motivation. Can Soc Sci. 2017;13(6):11-34.
43. Javed B, Khan AA, Bashir S, Arjoon S. Impact of ethical leadership on creativity: the role of psychological empowerment. Curr Issues Tour. 2017;20(8):839-51.
44. Muravev NV, Diachkova EY, Larionova EV, Tarasenko SV. Medicinal methods for prevention and treatment of alveolar osteitis. Ann Dent Spec. 2021;9(1):16-9. doi:10.51847/W3XENSZyPf
45. Hahm SW. Roles of authentic leadership, psychological empowerment and intrinsic motivation on workers' creativity in e-business. J Internet Comput Serv. 2018;19(1):113-22.
46. Coelho F, Augusto M, Lages LF. Contextual factors and the creativity of frontline employees: the mediating effects of role stress and intrinsic motivation. J Retail. 2011;87(1):31-45.
47. Nguyen TPL, Doan HX. Psychological empowerment and employees' creativity in Vietnam telecommunications enterprises: the mediating role of creative process engagement and intrinsic motivation. Int J Emerg Mark. 2021.