



The Role of Workplace Psychology in Enhancing Innovation and Creativity

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Abstract: Creativity can be defined as how employees can find new and working solutions for existing problems. Innovation refers to how employees can apply novel methods and techniques to generate value. Both creativity and innovation can be fostered by implementing principles drawn from organisational psychology to highlight the inner strengths and talent of employees. Both creativity and innovation are the cornerstones for a growth mindset. A culture of psychological safety ensures trust and collaboration between employees and organisations. It is crucial to provide a sense of security and confidence to present thoughts and address workplace concerns. The culture of psychological safety helps to enhance innovation and creativity by allowing open communication, exploration, implementation, and experimentation of new ideas. This chapter draws ideas from workplace psychology to enhance innovation and creativity. Workplace psychology refers to how psychological principles can be applied to work areas and foster the well-being of employees and organisations as a whole. Workplace psychology acts as a sculptor that does not give form to the marble but helps to reveal the beauty already within; in the same way, workplace psychology helps to uncover the strengths of its employees to create a work of art. It aims to motivate employees, establish suitable leadership styles, enhance productivity, and work to improve overall organisational growth. Workplace psychology helps to understand

how employees can be motivated to produce desired outcomes and demonstrate elements of innovation and creativity in their work.

Keywords : *Innovation, Creativity, Organisational Psychology, Psychological Safety, Motivation.*

1. Introduction

1.1 Psychological Safety: The Foundation of Innovation and Growth

Psychological safety can be defined as a fertile ground where innovation can be cultivated. Just as a seed takes time and conditions to grow, innovation can be cultivated with the right amount of trust and appreciation without criticism. Psychological safety refers to an environment where individuals can delve into their emotional and psychological state without fear of punishment and insecurity to gain insight into their fullest potential. According to the research conducted by Almahri and Abd Wahab (2023), psychological safety is increasingly recognised as a crucial mental state that affects employee interaction with their work. This concept, which “refers to the ability to express thoughts, concerns, fears, and mistakes without the risk of punishment or embarrassment, fosters risk-taking, collaboration, and openness among colleagues.” As a result, it enhances creativity and problem-solving skills, ultimately leading to greater productivity. An individual who dreams of cultivating a growth mindset needs the psychological stability to explore and discover phenomena that are still unknown. Psychological safety is not just the absence of fear and insecurities but a sense of trust, collaboration, resilience, and healthy coping strategies.

As discussed and defined by Abraham Maslow, in his hierarchical theory of needs, the safety and security needs have to be fulfilled first in order to gain self-actualisation or a state where the individual reaches their fullest potential. A state of self-actualisation is characterised by acceptance, creativity, peak experiences, and continuous growth, etc., which is helpful for the individual’s willingness to learn and explore deep ideas. Despite the essential need to secure oneself physically, an individual must seek to obtain psychological safety which helps the person to collaborate, trust, discover, experiment and openly communicate needs and concerns. When employees feel valued and appreciated, they work to contribute towards new ideas, explore novel concepts and willingly find innovative solutions to already existing problems. Innovation doesn’t just grow by birth or without any efforts, it takes the ability of personal growth, willingness to explore, courage to face challenges and cognitive effort to find new solutions. To discover the unknown, appropriate environment of exploration and discovery is

needed. The appropriate environment can be understood by the condition of giving room to self-awareness, self – discovery and a lack of fear of punishment.

1.2 Motivation: The Driving Force Behind Innovation and Creativity

Motivation is a crucial factor that is required for innovation and creativity. Motivation refers to the internal or external force that generates a drive to act in a certain way. If psychological safety is the fertile ground for cultivating innovation and creativity, motivation plays the role of water and sunlight as an essential ingredient that helps individuals to grow and progress in their lives. Organisations can employ external incentives to enhance the creativity and innovation of their knowledge workers who are intrinsically motivated (Fischer et al., 2019). Motivation is not only generated by external rewards like money and trophies but also by internal rewards of praise and appreciation. There are many types of motivation that help to innovate and create, these include;

- a) Achievement motivation* refers to the motivation or drive to achieve or accomplish the desired goal. A person with achievement motivation can foster their ability to take risks and generate ideas.
- b) Social motivation*, a drive to contribute to society and foster humanity, helps in overcoming any challenge coming into the way.
- c) Competitive motivation* refers to a desire to outperform others and stand at the top level, which will be a great help in finding innovative solutions.
- d) Exploration motivation* includes the elements of curiosity, excitement, and a love to explore, similarly to a child who loves to explore and discover.

These types of motivation, but not limited to, play a pivotal role in generating a sense of innovation and creativity in an individual. Koudelkova and Milichovsky (2014) asserted that innovation is a key element for the growth of businesses. The success of innovation processes is heavily influenced by human capital.

1.3 Empowering Growth: The Transformative Role of Leaders in Innovation

Leaders are the pillars who build the foundation for employees growth and development. It is the leader who provides them insights into their strengths and areas that require improvement. Leaders are the stones who build the roadmaps to success and victory. Without capable leaders, it is hard for the subordinates to overcome challenges as they would lack the sense of guidance and support. Based on the research conducted by Win and Priyashantha (2016), the success of an organisation is influenced by its leadership styles and the efficiency of its workforce. The performance effectiveness of each individual employee relies on their leader or supervisor. A competent leader can improve individual employee

performance by employing the right leadership style, thereby retaining high-performing and talented employees in the organisation, as they recognise that such high-performing individuals are valuable assets to the company. An innovative leader questions the limits of the present and addresses the restrictions that hinder an individual's ability to go beyond what already has been discovered. They do not believe in commanding or dictating the path to their followers, but they give a light to the perspectives that are still unknown. Leaders help in dissolving the present fears and enlightening the future. An effective leader will not restrict their people to conforming to boundaries but seeks to broaden their perspectives.

In the organisational and workplace settings, it is crucial to recognise the need for appropriate and suitable leadership styles to be adopted. Leaders play a vital role in employees ability to create and innovate as they provide employees with an environment of support, guidance, trust, exploration, experimentation, and mutual understanding so that they can equip themselves to find novel ideas and thoughts. The most effective way the leader can employ is not to give orders or commands to their subordinates but to give them freedom to explore and study the depth of concepts to enhance their knowledge. A passionate leader will always motivate their employees to find novel solutions rather than sticking to existing answers. A true leader will provide the accurate amount of nurturing and care required by the employees for personal growth and development, just like a farmer who takes care of the seed he sets to grow. When leaders lead with ideals of growth and development rather than just focusing on the completion of work, they let their employees create and innovate. Based on Slimane's (2015) exploration of the connection between leadership and innovation, there is a strong link between the two. Leadership is inherently aimed at creating a more promising future. In this regard, leaders must inherently be innovators.

1.4 Psychological theories related to workplace psychology and innovation

The field of workplace psychology helps to bridge the gap between workplace and applied psychology. Workplace psychology uses principles from the field of psychology to enhance employee well-being and productivity. Various psychological theories are applied to the workplace to understand employee behaviour and conditions that can enhance their performance; these include;

- a) Social learning theory*** by Albert Bandura (1977) talks about how people observe behaviours of others and learn those behaviours. Employees, in particular, learn the behaviours of their mentors, leaders, or senior colleagues. When these people demonstrate love for learning and innovation, employees tend to cultivate a growth mindset.

- b) *Self-determination theory* by Deci and Ryan (1985) emphasises three psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness that are crucial for the employee's intrinsic motivation. When these needs are fulfilled, employees tend to get intrinsically motivated and work to enhance their performance.
- c) *Expectancy theory* by Vroom (1964) suggests that employees are motivated when they believe that their effort will lead to high performance, which in turn gives them desired rewards.

These theories and many more provide a ground for understanding the psychological underpinnings of workplace and innovation-related behaviours of the employees.

1.5 The Power of Emotional Well-Being: fuelling Innovation in Workplace Psychology

Emotional well being serves as the cornerstone for innovation , it is recognised that a mind that is peaceful and in a calm state is a mind that dreams and innovate. Creativity and innovation cannot be practiced in a stressful and fearful environment. The need to be secure both physically and emotionally has to be a core ingredient to make the recipe for new things. Innovation cannot be thrive in shadows of fear , it needs sunlight of courage to take risk and face challenges.

Emotional wellness ensures that the person is working for their own growth and development rather than for a mere pursuit of money. It is clear that a person with fear in mind and a depressed heart cannot think in the perspective of creating something new. A peaceful mind and a cheerful heart gives the strength to explore novel ideas. Workplace psychology provides the much-needed platform for the employees to innovate and create by making sure they have a stable mindset and emotional wellness.

The principles of workplace psychology provide the toolbox to employees to create, experiment, and innovate. It helps them to transform their abstract ideas and potentiality into real and applied solutions. When a workplace cultivates psychological safety, it makes sure that employees work not under any stress or fear of judgment but view challenges as opportunities for growth and development. It recognises the fact that internal harmony of thought and emotions is as much as necessary as external rewards of money and position. One can say that workplace psychology is the unseen hand that helps to cultivate psychological safety and emotional well-being in the roots as an essential ingredient that further leads to the outcomes of innovations and creativity as a product.

1.6 Workplace Psychology: Unlocking the Path to Innovation and Creativity

Innovation is not a mere product of intellect, but a combination of freedom to explore and the right environment, which helps it to occur. Workplace psychology helps to provide that

environment of exploration to its employees to gain insight into their talents and create more using their own intellect and abilities. One can think of a river that gives water the path to flow in the same way workplace psychology provides the light to brighten up innovative and creative paths. Workplace psychology is not only a field for study but also has real-life implications for improving organisational productivity, ensuring employee wellness, and enhancing overall workplace development. The notions instilled by workplace psychology, like collaboration, understanding, autonomy, freedom of speech, trust, and assistance, help employees to think beyond boundaries and take into consideration what is still there to explore.

2. Conclusion

To sum up what has been stated so far, workplace psychology plays a fundamental role in enhancing innovation and creativity by providing the environment where employees feel psychologically safe, appreciated, and valued. An encouraging workplace atmosphere is essential for maintaining employee productivity, helping to minimise stress for employees and preventing its negative impact on their job performance (Saidi et al., 2019).

Workplace psychology applies principles from the field of psychology to better facilitate the overall work experience of employees and recognises their capabilities to innovate and create while also ensuring their psychological safety. It provides a baseline to understand employee behaviour, team dynamics, and leadership patterns that will be helpful in creating novel ideas and innovating new solutions. By explaining which conditions are appropriate for employees growth and development, it enhances organisational productivity and sets trends. When the soul is free to create and the mind is free to explore, the workplace becomes an endless source of growth and invention. Innovation and creativity goes without saying when there is an environment that encourages experimentation and discovery. Psychological well-being is necessary for the creative and innovative ventures to take over. Workplace psychology helps to establish psychological well-being for the employees to showcase their creative and innovative skills. Various studies have proved that psychological well being and creativity is positively correlated such as a study by Wright & Walton (2003), demonstrated that psychological well-being and positive mood state correlates with creativity.

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