



# **Perceived organizational innovativeness: The difference between individual and social creativity.**

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The aim of the present study was to explore the relationships between perceived individual creativity, social creativity and organizational innovativeness. Participants (N=140) were randomized from a list of employees at one workplace and consisted of 45 men and 95 women with a mean age of 41.34. The result indicates that participants perceiving themselves as individually creative and participants perceiving themselves as socially creative score their workplace on innovativeness differently. People scoring high on individual creativity score high on perceived organizational innovativeness, while self-reported social creativity correlate negatively with organizational innovativeness.

**Keywords:** Creativity, individual creativity, social creativity, organizational innovativeness.



Innovation at work is the subject of increased interest both in practice and in academia. But the difficulty of measuring organizational innovativeness have somehow discouraged the development of sound quantitative measurements. Instead mainstream innovation research make use of a variety of measurements, many with unknown reliability. The reliable measurements are often context specific or evaluate the outcome of innovativeness instead of innovation (see for example Alegre, Lapiedra, & Chiva, 2006).

The present study make use of a self-report measurement from the seventies with high internal consistency, the perceived organizational innovativeness scale (PORGI) (Hurt & Teigen, 1977). Self-report measurements give valuable information about how people perceive different domains in their lives. Furthermore, the creative scales used in the study are also based on participants own perceptions. Using the same kind of measurement for creativity and innovation was also a benefit of self-reported measurement of organizational innovativeness.

It is here argued that creativity and innovation are related but individual creativity might be different from social creativity. This is so because socially creative people find or seek ways to be creative in different social contexts and thus needs to be at innovative workplaces to flourish. While – at least some - individually creative people find ways to be creative in their own thought processes or inner life and thus is less dependent on being in an innovative organization.

Without creative people, it is difficult for a company to be innovative. Therefore, it is reasonable to suspect a strong correlation between self-reported creativity and perceived organizational innovativeness. The questions put forward here regards how creative people perceive their workplace innovativeness. The main question regards the differences between individual and social creativity. I developed the socially creative scale (Eisele, 2016) with a conviction that social creativity should be distinguished from individual creativity. The hypothesis put forward here is that people that perceive themselves as socially creative will score their workplace differently on innovativeness than people with high score on individual creativity.



## **Creativity**

Creativity be one single domain or as something domain-specific. The fact that creative domains can be separated from each other and is convergent with personality factors (Kaufman, 2012) give support for the multiple domain viewpoint. Kaufman (2012) developed the K-DOCS which describe creativity in five domains; self/everyday, scholarly, performance (writing, music), mechanical/ scientific, and artistic. In the 50-item scale there are several social items but no distinguishing has been made between individual and social creativity.

The componential theory of organizational creativity and innovation (Amabile, 1997) has been very influential. the theory describes how work environments impact creativity by affecting components that contribute to creativity which represent a basic source for organizational innovation). According to Amabile there are three major components contributing to individual creativity: expertise, creative-thinking skill, and intrinsic motivation (Amabile, 1997).

The interactionist perspective of organizational creativity (Woodman, Sawyer, & Griffin, 1993) tries to describe the complex interaction between the individual and the workplace. At the individual level, individual creativity is the result of antecedent conditions like biographical variables, cognitive style and ability personality, relevant knowledge, motivation, social influences, and contextual influences. At the team level, creativity is described as a consequence of individual creative behavior, the interaction between the group members, group characteristics, team processes, and contextual influences. The interactionist model describe innovation as a function of both individual and group creativity (Woodman et al., 1993).

Although both the work of Amabile (1983:1988; 1996) and the interactionist theory (Woodman et al., 1993) are very important contributions for the understanding of workplace creativity they both fail to address social creative behavior as something distinguished from individual creative behavior. Amabile, Conti, Coon, Lazenby and Herron (1996) have demonstrated the importance of the social context for creativity at work.



However, I believe that social creative behavior is the missing piece in the creativity at work puzzle.

### **Innovation at work**

Creativity and innovation are multi-level phenomena that develop over time and therefore are difficult to measure. However, how people perceive such complex matters as innovation is informative and give important insight about a workplace. Perceived organizational innovativeness (PORGI) (Hurt & Teigen, 1977) is a self-report measurement that incorporate several perceivable aspects of organizational culture related to innovation. These innovation related aspects are about whether a company accept new ideas or is suspicious about new ways of thinking. If a workplace seeks out creative ways to do things or is stuck in a routine, whether they can respond to change or not. An innovative workplace often involves others in decision making and problem solving which require good communication and often include seeking advice from people outside the organization. There are certain aspects of innovation incorporated in a hidden culture that are not observable. But still, a measurement like PORGI give a reliable and informative estimate of an organizations perceivable innovativeness.

Perceived organizational effectiveness have been shown to be related to important dependent variables in several studies. For example, employees that perceived their workplace as innovative showed higher levels of loyalty toward their organization (Socel & Mak, 2004). Muceldili, Turan and OyaErdil (2013) found that employees' creativity mediates the relation between authentic leadership and innovativeness. Innovation enhances organizational performance directly as well as mediate the organizational culture performance relationship (Naranjo-Valencia, Jiménez-Jiménez & Sanz-Valle, 2016). Innovativeness is positively associated with adhocracy culture characterized by creativity, empowerment, freedom, autonomy and risk taking and negatively associated with hierarchical cultures.

Organizational Innovativeness refers to a firm's capacity to introduce new ideas, processes or products. To distinguish innovation from creativity, the implementation of ideas should probably be included in the definition of innovation. The implementation of ideas can be understood as the management phase of a creativity and innovation process.

The link between creativity and innovation seems at first sight rather upfront but data indicate that it is rather complex. In a meta-analysis, Sarooghi, Libaers and Burkemper (2015) concluded that the seeming straightforward correlation between creativity and innovation varied greatly and correlated at a rather modest level of .46. One reason for this could be that the cognitive part of creativity and the social part of creativity are different.

Anderson, Potočnik and Zhou (2014) proposed an integrative definition:

*“Creativity and innovation at work are the process, outcomes, and products of attempts to develop and introduce new and improved ways of doing things. The creativity stage of this process refers to idea generation, and innovation to the subsequent stage of implementing ideas toward better procedures, practices, or products. Creativity and innovation can occur at the level of the individual, work team, organization, or at more than one of these levels combined, but will invariably result in identifiable benefits at one or more of these levels-of-analysis.” p .4*

Much human creativity is social, arising from activities that take place in a social context in which interaction with other people (Fischer, 2000). However, being socially creative is different from being creative in the presence of others. This was the basis for the development of the socially creative scale (Eisele, 2016). It was argued that some people are socially creative but not very individually creative and vice versa. If this assumption is true, the two different forms of creativity should affect different outcomes differently. In the present study, it was examined how people self-report levels of individual creativity and social creativity and how they perceive their workplace innovativeness.

## Method

### Participants

The sample came from one workplace and consisted of 140 participants, 45 men and 95 women with a mean age of 41.34.



## Measures

### *Creativity*

Individual creative scale was based on the K-DOCS developed by Kaufman (2012). The individual creative scale used in the present study is a short form of the individual items in the K-DOCS instrument and consist of 15 items. The socially creative scale was originally based on social items from the K-DOCS. It has been further developed prior to this study (Eisele, 2016) and consist of 16 items. Both creative scales used a Likert scale ranging from -2 to 2.

### *Innovation*

The Swedish version of the PORGI scale (Hurt & Teigen, 1977) have been validated prior to the present study with a Cronbach Alpha of .89. PORGI consist of 25 items. For the present study, a five point Likert scale ranging from -2 to 2 was used.

## Procedure

Participants in the sample were randomized from a list of employees at one workplace. The workplace is a civil service company in the state sector.

The participants filled out the questionnaires during a prolonged lunchbreak. The measurements were printed out and was given to the author of this paper directly during the lunchbreak.

Anonymity was guaranteed but the participants filled out either their own name or a made-up name that they were instructed to remember for future identification.

After completion of the data the result were presented in a power point file and sent to the administration for distribution to the participants and human resource personnel.

## Result

Descriptive statistics are shown in Table 1. The overall mean value on perceived organizational innovativeness is very low compared to larger population data. The internal

consistency is very high on all three scales. For individual creativity scale the Cronbach alpha was .95, for social creativity scale .93 and for PORGI it was .98.

Individual creativity had a strong positive correlation ( $r = .72, p < .001$ ) with innovation while social creativity had weak negative correlation with innovation ( $r = -.28, p = .001$ ). To further examine this result and to check for interaction effects, the participants were categorized as low medium or high on social creativity and individual creativity, respectively.

Univariate ANOVA analyses confirm the correlational pattern of opposite effects of social creativity and individual creativity on perceived organizational innovativeness. There was a significant effect on perceived organizational innovativeness for self-reported social creativity  $F(2,131) = 6.18, p = .003$ , for self-reported individual creativity  $F(2,131) = 14.48, p < .001$ , and a significant interaction effect  $F(4,131) = 2.45, p = .049$ .

The interaction effect consists of the result that participants perceiving themselves as low on the social creative scale perceive their workplace as more innovative while the opposite holds for individually creative people. That is, participants perceiving themselves as individually creative perceived their workplace as more innovative than people scoring low on individual creative measurement.

## **Discussion and conclusion**

Individual creativity had a positive correlation with innovation while social creativity had a negative correlation with innovation. This tend to suggest that people that score themselves high on social creativity are different from people that score themselves high on individual creativity. Also, socially creative people are more critical toward their work organization than individually creative people.

The result is obtained at one specific company that score very low on innovativeness. Still it shows the importance of making a distinction between these two types of creativity. One reason for this is that employees in the category of social creative people could be an important underused asset for companies. If individual creativity is the only way to measure creativity it is very high risk that a whole group of people at workplaces are not



being recognized and not getting the chance to flourish even at companies that otherwise value creativity.

The very high internal consistency of PORGI in this study could be because perceived organizational innovativeness was very low and thus vary less compared to a firm with higher – and likely more varied - innovativeness. Thus, one limitation of the study is the lack of generalizability.

It was proposed that there would be a difference on PORGI for individual creativity compared to social creativity but the difference was larger than expected. The scoring on perceived organizational innovativeness was opposite for people with different scores on the individual creative scale and the social creative scale. Individually creative people perceived their workplace as much more innovative than socially creative participants. One reason for this could be cognitive dissonance. Thoughts like “I am creative therefore my workplace must be innovative” might have taken place. Socially creative people might put more interest in social groups and therefore feel less cognitive dissonance. This is at this point a speculation but probably worth investigating in future studies.

Most definitions of creativity focus on the combination of novelty and appropriateness. By making a distinction between task novelty and solution novelty, Kaufmann (2004) expanded the taxonomy. The concepts of proactive and reactive creativity are important for development of creativity scales.

Future studies should examine differences between individual and social creativity in many different settings and contexts. To take social creativity into account is a way to enhance innovation that so far have been underutilized in human resource and/or within organizational development. The present study is one small step in the direction of highlighting social creativity at work.

Another important understudied area regards how contextual variables contribute to individuals' creative performance. In exploring potential psychological processes that mediate the effects of individual and contextual variables on the creative performance of individuals Choi (2004) showed that underlying psychological processes (creative self-efficacy and creativity intention) completely mediated the effect of individual



(motivation, personality, ability) and contextual factors (social influences from leaders and peers) on creative performance. In an ongoing study, one such contextual factor, leadership for innovation is examined at several organizations.

In short, the implications of the findings for organizations is that socially creative people are an important asset that may enhance innovativeness if they are recognized.

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