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On the relationship between individual creativity and time management

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ABSTRACT

The article investigates the relationship between time management behaviours and attitudes with measures of creativity, as assessed by self-rated creativity and a measure of creative personality. Additionally, total creativity is examined, as the sum of the two creativity constructs when z-scored. Using data from a survey of 186 participants, results suggest that creativity is positively related to daily planning behaviour, confidence on long-range planning, perceived control of time and tenacity and negatively related to preference for disorganization. These results have theoretical implications for understanding how creativity relates to time management. Implications of the results are considered and future research directions identified.

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1. Introduction

In today's rapidly changing environment and expanding global competition there is a continuing and ever-growing recognition on creativity and the management of time. Creativity is considered as a key to personal and organizational social prosperity; creativity signifies the production of novel and useful ideas, and marks the starting point for innovation and entrepreneurship (Amabile, 1996; Zampetakis & Moustakis, 2006). Time, on the other hand, represents a commodity that needs to be efficiently managed, not to mention that, more often than not, effective time management is a key indicator of organizational competitive edge (Claessens, van Eerde, Rutte, & Roe, 2007).

Early research on creativity has demonstrated that time is an important resource (Wallas, 1926). Time for instance, is important for incubation; individuals should be given sufficient time if they are expected to do creative work (Runco, 2007). According to Mednick (1962), original ideas tend to be remote and are usually found far away from the original problem or initial idea. This remoteness requires time; it takes time to move from idea to idea to idea, and to find the remote associate.

Although time has been frequently used as a variable or as an implied dimension in creativity research, no empirical studies to date have been undertaken to integrate knowledge about the relation of time management with creativity. Empirical evidence on the relationship between creativity and time has been limited basically to the effects of time pressure to creative

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outcomes in organizations (Amabile, Conti, Coon, Lazenby, & Herron, 1996; Amabile, Mueller, Simpson, Hadley, Kramer, & Fleming, 2002). Researchers have paid scant attention to the relationship between individual creativity and individual time management practices. Considering the importance of creativity and time management, the gap in research and literature on the relationship between individual creativity and time management practices forms a notable deficiency.

To address the aforementioned gap, the purpose of this exploratory study was to examine two different measures of creativity; the Creative Personality Scale (CPS; Gough, 1979) and a measure of self-rated creativity adapted from Zhou and George (2001), in relation to time management behaviours (daily planning and confidence on long-range planning) and attitudes (perceive control of time, tenacity and preference for disorganization). The study contributes to theory and research in that it is the first study that develops and empirically examines a framework for the relationship between time management practices and attitudes and creativity.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows: First, we review previous literature on individual creativity and time management and set out the objectives of the study. Next, we report the results from a cross-sectional study designed to test our model using a sample of 186 randomly selected business, engineering and science students. The paper ends with a discussion of the implications, the limitations and future research.

2. Theoretical background and literature review

2.1. On the concept of the individual creativity

There is a consensus in the literature that the phenomenon termed individual creativity is a highly complex one and the measurement of creativity has been a persistent source of debate and critique (Feist, 1998; Runco, 2007). Creativity can be conceived as a product, person, press or process (Amabile, 1996; Runco, 2007) or as the interaction among “aptitude, process, and environment” (Plucker, Beghetto, & Dow, 2004).

According to Eysenck (1995), creativity is conceived as a latent trait underlying creative behaviour. Oldham and Cummings (1996) demonstrated that an individual is likely to have high creative output if she has the personality traits of a creative person. One limitation however, with the research on personality and creativity is that it is not domain specific but rather covers individuals in general. Recent studies however, suggest the domain-specificity of personality variables with regards to creativity (e.g. Baer, 1998). Feist (1998) for instance, argued that, although personality dispositions do regularly and predictably relate to creative achievement in art and science, there appears to be temporal stability of these distinguishing personality dimensions of creative people; creative artists and creative scientists do not completely share the same unique personality profiles. One of the most widely used constructs of the creative personality (Hocevar, 1981; Oldham & Cummings, 1996), is Gough's Creative Personality Scale (CPS; Gough, 1979) for the Adjective Check List. CPS assesses aspects of the creative personality that have been demonstrated to relate to rated creativity (Gough, 1979).

Additionally, creativity can be considered as the production of ideas, products, or procedures that are (a) novel and (b) potentially useful or practical (Amabile, 1996; Zhou & George, 2001). This approach is product oriented and focuses on the extent to which outcomes are creative. Several researchers have proposed that self-rated creativity provides a valid approximation of individual creativity (Batey & Furnham, 2008; Zampetakis, 2008). This argument is in line with evidence that creative people possess insight into or awareness of their own creativity (Batey & Furnham, 2008). It is plausible that individuals should be able to recognize whether they are able to produce novel and useful ideas or products (i.e. their own creativity), to a certain degree. Zhou and George (2001) introduced a self-rated measure in line with the product oriented approach to creativity.

In the present study we use both the CPS and Zhou and George's constructs to assess individual creativity. Furthermore the sum of the two measures (when z-scored) was used as the total individual creativity.

2.2. On the concept of time management

Broadly speaking, time management refers to activities that imply an effective use of time that is deemed to facilitate productivity and alleviate stress. A common feature among the conceptualizations of time management is “planning behaviour” (Claessens et al., 2007). Planning behaviour refers to decisions about which tasks to perform, prioritization of tasks and effectively management of possible distractions (Claessens, van Eerde, Rutte, & Roe, 2004, 2007). Time management, as planning behaviour, can be considered a particular way of goal setting. Goals may increase attention and effort (i.e. motivation) by providing clear targets toward which individuals can direct their energies (Locke & Latham, 1990).

Britton and Tesser (1991) proposed that engaging in time management behaviours may be viewed as an individual difference in planning behaviour skills such as, short-range planning and preference for long-range planning. Short-range planning refers to time management activities within a daily or weekly timeframe. Preference for long-range planning refers to having long-range goals and having well-organized work habits. Macan (1994), propose that effective use of time results from three types of behaviours, namely: (1) setting goals and priorities; (2) mechanics of time management (i.e. making lists); and (3) preference for organization.

In addition to the aforementioned behavioural aspects of time management, both Britton and Tesser (1991) and Macan (1994) proposed that time management encompasses individual's perceptions and attitudes about time: “perceived control of time” and “time attitudes”, respectively. Perceived control of time reflects the extent to which one believes he or she

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