



Assignment cover sheet

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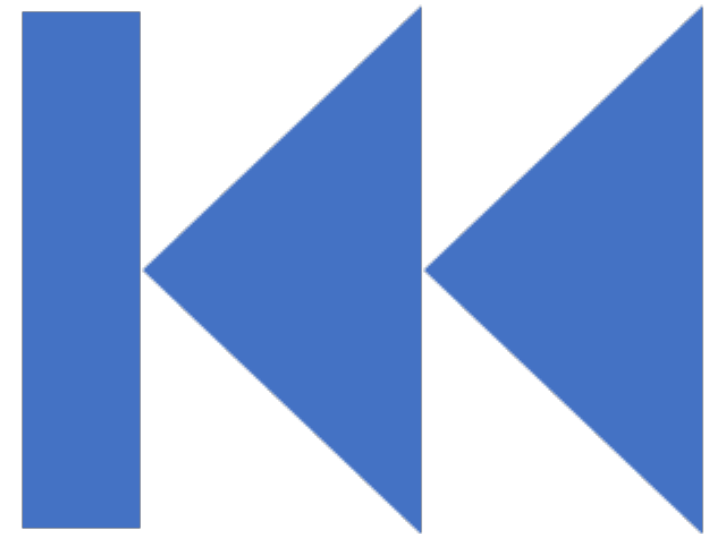
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A humorous work climate as a mediator role to
influence small-business employees' creativity and
innovative behavior under empowering leadership

Topic



Research questions

humorous work climate
has positive effect on
workplace creativity and
innovative behavior under
empowering leadership

perceived humorous work
climate moderates the
relationship empowering
leadership and innovative
behavior

Research philosophy

- Ontology (research area):
 - the impact of humorous work climate on small business employees
 - social/cognitive processes on empowering leadership-innovative behavior link
- Axiology (research gap):
 - little attention has been given to study the mediator role of humorous work climate on employees' innovative behavior
 - qualitative analysis on mediating factor of humorous work climate on empowering leadership-innovative behavior link

Research philosophy

Epistemology (grounded theory)

- Holmes (2007):
 - humor associated with workplace creativity
 - the effective use of workplace humor to generate new ideas and stimulate intellectual progress
- Conger and Kanungo (1988): 5-stage empowerment process (conditions, managerial skills, information, results, behavioral effect)

Methodology

- qualitative
- focus group

Description of context and participants

- a HK small business (under 10 employees) with 10-year experience in the industry
- cultural event management and “edu-tainment” services
- work with external stakeholders (school teachers, parents, students, tutors)
- 2 supervisors (1 to 8 years of experience)
- 4 followers (4 months to 1 year of experience)
- work independently
- meeting when it is needed

Literature review

- Humor leadership
 - Holmes (2007):
 - 3 functions of using humor (power difference, maintain solidarity, and problem solving)
 - Cooper (2008):
 - Humor can create, and destroy relationships at work
 - Tang (2008):
 - Use of humor may be possible to affect employee innovation if supervisors are trained and encouraged
 - Hughes (2009): important to key workplace outcomes including positive emotions, and creative performance
 - Slåtten (2011): climate can be described with processes, practices, and behaviors

Literature review

- Mesmer-Magnus (2012):
 - challenges of defining and operationalizing humor
 - positive influences on work performance
- Pundit (2015):
 - the role of humor leadership is widely neglected
 - humorous leadership can be used as a tool to create positive effects on cognitive and social processes
- Tremblay (2017):
 - trust in leaders plays an important contingent role in the effectiveness of a humor climate
 - offensive humor may cause a feeling of hostile humor climate

Explanation of data collection steps

- Ask permission from the CEO of the company
- Invite all the 6 employees to participate the focus group (purposive sampling; case study)
- Focus group (face-to-face) is conducted during lunch time (92 minutes)
- Explain the objective of the study, and ask permission of using the data
- Open-ended questions
- Note taking
- Audio recording with smartphone



Questions to ask

- Q1: Do your jobs need creativity?
- Q2: Do you feel the company promoting a climate of creativity or innovation?
- Q3: What is your most creative or innovative performance during the past 3 months?
- Q4: During the process from idea generation to idea implementation, how do the team communicate ideas and deal with conflicts?
- Q5: How do you communicate with external stakeholders?
- Q6: Do you think the company needs to change the ways of communication at work to improve the team climate?

Explanation of data analysis

Humorous work climate

- Fun (8)
- Joke (6)
- relax (4)
- Self-depreciation humor (4)
- Playful to combine ideas (3)
- Open communication (3)
- Natural part (2)
- Freeing from old mindsets (1)

Innovative behavior

- Idea generation (3)
- Information searching (2)
- Satisfaction (2)

Preliminary findings

Humorous work climate may have positive effects on small business employees' creativity and innovative behavior;

When meeting and communicate working plan, employees think the climate of fun, relax, making jokes, playful to combining ideas, and self-depreciation humor will help them to work more effective;

Employees wants to have quality feedback from supervisors with regards to their idea generation and implementation;

Employees aware the objective of their task and time pressure to avoid over use of humor



Discussion

- Definition of workplace humor behavior
- How to deliver positive effects on innovative behavior with the mediating factor of humorous work climate in other small enterprises?
- Limitation on followers' perspective
- Limitation on studying one small company
- Can add dimension to study the relationship between humorous work climate and company performance



Personal reflections

- Is lunch time the “best” time to conduct focus group?
- Incoming call disturbing the process of audio recording
- Top management and employees do not have knowledge about empowering leadership, humor leadership or humorous work climate. They think they cannot provide “good” answers.

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