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Stress, Creative Appreciation, and Work Environment: Moderation Analysis in the Indian Banking Context

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Despite being influential in fostering creativity at the workplace, the role of stress and social and environmental factors remains under-explored. This study investigates the relationship between work-related stress, the work environment, and their impact on creative appreciation among Indian bank employees in supervisory roles. Higher levels of work-related stress were significantly correlated with lower appreciation for creative persons ($r = -0.511$, $p < 0.01$), while a positive correlation existed between the work environment for creativity and appreciation for creative persons ($r = 0.711$, $p < 0.01$). Additionally, work-related stress was negatively correlated with the work environment for creativity ($r = -0.513$, $p < 0.01$). The indirect effect of work environment on appreciation for creative persons through work-related stress was significant (B = 0.1018, BootSE = 0.0225, BootLLCI = 0.0567, BootULCI = 0.1463). These findings emphasize the need for supportive work environments to foster a culture of creativity among bank employees in India.

Keywords: Workplace Creativity, Work-Related Stress, Creative Appreciation, Work Environment, Indian Bank Employees

The world today with its novel, complicated problems, demands creativity (Runco, 2004; Newton & Newton, 2014; Reid, 2015; Allen, 2016; Dietrich, 2019). Creativity, defined as "*the generation of new and useful ideas*" in accordance with "*the context in which they were generated*" (Allen, 2016), is critical in bringing about change by producing new knowledge in new domains. Creativity adds value to products and processes, making it the primary source of development and economic advancement (Aithal & Aithal, 2020). However, in order for creativity to thrive, a climate that promotes idea generation and creative thinking is required (Amabile 1998; 2010; Polits 2005; Carroll 2014; Eysenck, 1995; Guilford, 1950; Rhodes, 1961). As a result, organizations wanting innovative individuals must make room for transforming approaches to create a climate that encourages creativity.

Muller et al. (2005) provided an innovation framework that outlined the perspective for a set of indicators that help assess and enhance organizational capacity for innovation. This model's fundamental assumption was that innovation is not a one-time or random act in any organization, but rather a permanent feature prevailing in the organizational culture that views innovative practices and processes as habits of employees and leadership - The favourable culture serves as an input, allowing processes such as research and experimentation to take place in order to create distinctive products. The leadership perspective analyses the extent to which organizational leadership supports innovation.

In the context of creative environments, there have been calls to highlight social and cultural components (Glăveanu, 2010). These factors can differ greatly and have an

impact on creative outcomes (Chua, Roth, & Lemoine, 2015; Florida, 2003). 'Human' aspect of the environment is another paradigm that has gained popularity recently. According to Bukowitz (2013), there is a model where the "right people" are willing and able to participate, and the last layer of "culture" shows how ingrained certain practises are that are hard to change. Creative endeavours are therefore embedded in the social setting. Colleagues, supervisors, educators, and family members are among the individuals the creative person interacts with, and their level of appreciation for the creative personality varies (Jauk et al., 2019). The immediate social-environmental circumstances that foster creativity are referred to as the "climate for creativity" (Hunter, Bedell, & Mumford, 2007). How well or poorly certain social settings support the development or expression of creativity depends in large part on how accepting they are of creative endeavours, ideas, and, eventually, creative people (MacKinnon, 1978).

On the surface, creativity appears to be a highly valued attribute in individuals, particularly in the workplace (Mueller, Melwani, & Goncalo, 2012). Working with creative people, on the other hand, is tough since they are rebellious and often appear to be impractical (Jauk et al., 2019). However, creative people can only thrive in the apposite surroundings. The extent to which people in their immediate surroundings appreciate the creative individual has been thoroughly established in the familial environment (Miller & Gerard, 1979; Simonton, 1984; Kwaniewska et al., 2018). Therefore, being acknowledged for one's creative nature by influential others can be seen as an important social element for people in a variety of creative situations and can act as a starting point for studies on the creative environment.

Research stresses the importance of immediate environment in fostering individual spontaneity and creativity (Amabile et al., 1996; Ekvall, 1996; Anderson & West, 1998; Hunter et al., 2007). Studies also highlight the significance of tolerance for the creative personality's natural spontaneity, unconventionality, and nonconformity (Andreas, Zech, Coyle, & Rindermann, 2016; Furnahm & Batey, 2008; Eysenck, 1995; Feist, 1998) and also because it fosters an open environment for creativity and knowledge spillover (Audretsch and Belitski, 2021). Talbot, Cooper & Barrow's 1992 examination of stress and creativity in the workplace found a negative link between creative climate scores and stress. Add to that the likely frustration (Jauk et al., 2019) of working with a creative individual.

As the model for measuring appreciation for creative personnel is relatively new, it has not been adapted or validated in the Indian setting. As per available literature on ACP (Jauk et al., 2019), the scale has only been tested on academic and family settings. Due to this the present literature on the measurement as well as the area does not account for the role of work-related stress on the appreciation for creative persons at the workplace among mentors, nor does the present research take into account the possible effect of work environment on the relationship between the two factors. The current study, thus, attempts to explore the relationship between ACP and work-related stress, as moderated by the work environment (Fig. 1). Additionally, it is also tested if a work environment that is conducive to creativity may lead to lower work-related stress which may in turn lead to an increase in appreciation for creative peers at the workplace (Amabile et al., 1996; Oldham & Cummings, 1996).

Furthermore, in the Indian banking sector, which is a crucial component of the country's financial landscape, innovative financial products, services, and customer experiences are essential. However, in this

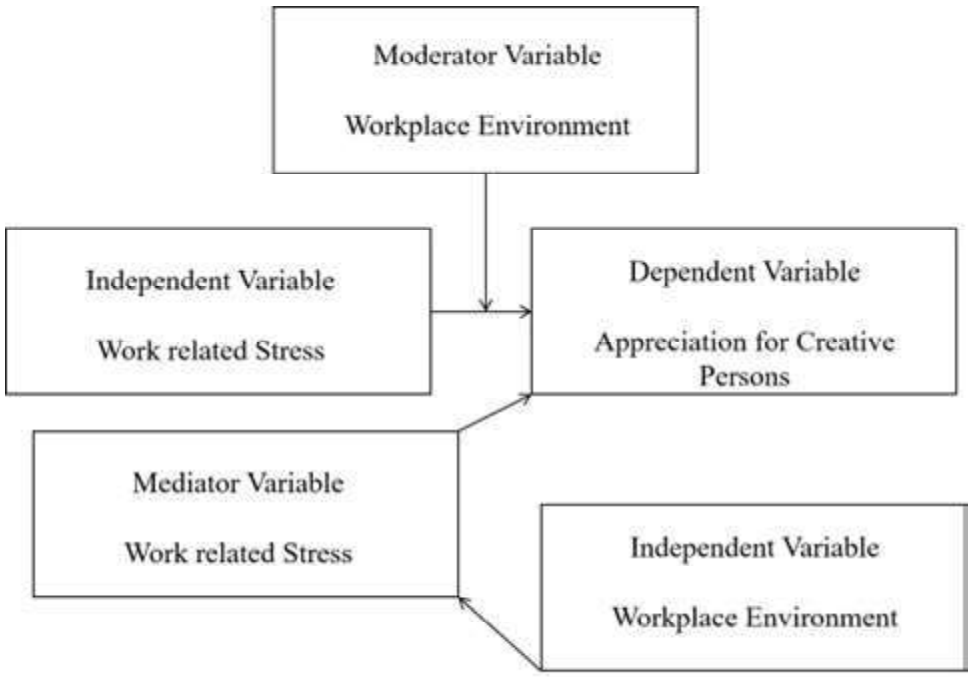

Fig. 1: Conceptual Model

field, support for innovative individuals is under-examined (Sofat & Hiro, 2007; Malamardi, et al., 2015, Jain & Jain, 2016; Parameswar et al., 2019). This study recognizes the specific issues and dynamics that exist in the Indian banking sector and seeks to fill a gap in the existing literature.

The importance of the work environment in the Indian banking industry cannot be over-stated. Banks differ greatly in terms of organizational culture, leadership practices, and the availability of support systems (Kamath et al., 2003; Goyal & Joshi, 2012). Some banks may encourage an environment of innovation and support, whilst others may be more traditional and hierarchical (Shukla & Sinha, 2013). The purpose of this study is to investigate how these work environment characteristics, which are unique to the Indian banking industry, either increase or reduce the influence of work-related stress on the appreciation of creative employees.

Thus, the present study attempts to enhance the understanding of the unique challenges within the Indian banking landscape by investigating the effect of the work environment and work-related stress on a mentors' appreciation for creative persons within the Indian Banking context.

Research Questions

1. How does work-related stress among mentors affect their appreciation for creative persons?
2. How does the work environment impact work-related stress among mentors?
3. How does the work environment impact the appreciation for creative persons among mentors?
4. Does the work environment moderate the effect of work-related stress on mentors' appreciation for creative persons?

5. Does work-related stress mediate the relationship between the work environment and mentors' appreciation for creative persons?
6. Are there significant differences between private and public sector banks in terms of work-related stress, work environment for creativity, and appreciation for creative persons?
7. Do the relationships between work-related stress, work environment for creativity, and appreciation for creative persons differ between private and public sector banks?

Objectives

1. To examine the relationship between work-related stress and appreciation for creative persons among mentors.
2. To examine the relationship between the work environment and work-related stress among mentors.
3. To examine the relationship between the work environment and appreciation for creative persons among mentors.
4. To investigate whether the work environment moderates the relationship between work-related stress and appreciation for creative persons among mentors.
5. To investigate whether work-related stress mediates the relationship between the work environment for creativity and appreciation for creative persons among mentors.
6. To compare levels of work-related stress, work environment for creativity, and appreciation for creative persons between private and public sector banks.
7. To examine whether the relationships between work-related stress, work environment for creativity, and appreciation for creative persons differ between private and public sector banks.

Hypotheses

Direct Effects:

H1: Higher work-related stress among mentors is negatively correlated with their appreciation for creative persons.

H2: High score on work environment for creativity is negatively correlated with work-related stress among mentors.

H3: High score on environment for creativity is positively correlated with the appreciation for creative persons among mentors.

Moderation Effect:

H4: The work environment for creativity moderates the negative relationship between work-related stress and appreciation for creative persons, such that the relationship is weaker with a higher score on work environment for creativity.

Mediation Effect:

H5: Work-related stress mediates the relationship between the work environment for creativity and mentors' appreciation for creative persons, such that high score on work environment for creativity reduces work-related stress, which in turn increases appreciation for creative persons.

Sector Differences:

H6: There are significant differences between private and public sector banks in the levels of work-related stress, work environment for creativity, and appreciation for creative persons.

H7: The relationship between work-related stress, work environment for creativity, and appreciation for creative persons

differs between private and public sector banks.

Method

Participants

Bankers from all over India were approached for participating in the study through referrals. Total 315 responses were received on Google forms, of which 306 were retained for analysis based on demographic exclusion criteria. Thus, data from participants having more than 10 years of experience in a public or private sector bank in India was considered for the study. All participants also had experience in mentoring/ supervising colleagues with 100% of participants being from the managerial cadre.

Type of Bank: 43.2% of respondents belonged to Private Sector Banks and the rest 56.8% were from Public Sector Banks (PSBs).

Location: Approximately 50% of the participants were from the state of Maharashtra, and rest approximately equally from Karnataka, New Delhi, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Gujarat and Rajasthan. However it is notable that in Indian public sector banks, employees are typically transferred to a different location (which may include change in city or state) every 3 to 5 years (Ministry of Finance, 2021).

Gender: 31.8% of the participants were female and the rest 68.2% were male. This distribution is close to the distribution in the actual population (Catalyst, 2023) where female employees constitute 24% of the workforce in Banking Sector within the managerial cadre.

Procedure

An online Google survey form was built by compiling all the scales along with demographic data such as age, location, gender, years of experience, whether they have experience as a supervisor as well as type of bank which were presented after a consent form where the purpose of the study as well as ethical considerations were declared to all participants. Participants could only proceed after clicking on the 'agree' button. All items in the scale were mandatory and options as well as items (within section) were shuffled to control for random responses as well as to control for common method variance at the procedural level (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003).

Measures

The Job Stress Scale (Shukla & Srivastava, 2015) which is an improved version of Pareek's 1981 Scale of the same name is a new 22-item scale with a 5-point Likert type scale that measures job stress across diverse categories by integrating time stress, anxiety stress, role expectation conflict, coworker support, and work-life balance to create a four-part scale: Job stress scale, role expectation conflict scale, coworker support scale, and work-life balance scale. The scale has a good level of internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha greater than 0.7).

ACP (Jauk et al, 2019) assesses people's proclivity to generate a creative environment by appreciating creative aspects in others. This 13-item scale had a reported internal consistency of 0.77, which is considered acceptable.

Scale of Workplace Creativity (Azeem, 2019): The scale is a 12-item questionnaire that covers four of the KEYs scale's five components - challenge, incentive, independence, and resources (Amabile, 2013). Each dimension is further subdivided into three elements. The reported Cronbach Alpha value for the scale is 0.59, which is within an acceptable range. The scale was adapted to the Indian Banking context using the 4-step protocol by Ambuehl & Inauen (2022).

Results and Discussion

Measures

Job Stress Scale (Shukla & Srivastava, 2015): The complete 22-item scale showed Cronbach's alpha 0.71 on standardized items. However, it was observed that the reliability of the scale improved significantly by computing it in two parts - A and B (i.e. Job stress scale and role expectation conflict scale in A and co-worker support scale and work-life balance scale in B). Part A (JSSA) having 14 items had a high internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha 0.911 on standardized items) while Part B (JSSB) having the other 8 items showed a moderately high internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha 0.679 on standardized items). Because these two sub-scales were also negatively correlated (r = -.50, p<.001), regressions as well as bivariate correlations with other variables were computed separately.

Workplace Creativity Scale (Azeem, 2019) was originally developed for an academic setting and was thus adapted for the present context based on a review of literature and case studies, as well as qualitative interviews with 10 industry professionals, and validated for the current research context and job family without compromising the composition and placement of the scale items. Based on the content validity measurements, a few items from the original scale were changed, while two items (both related to resource availability) were discarded following review and around eight more were added, resulting in a scale of 18 items. The revised scale (WES) had improved internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha 0.878 on standardized items).

Although the Appreciation for Creative Persons (ACP) scale demonstrated statistically significant positive correlations with three fundamental personality traits: extraversion ($r = 0.399$, $p < 0.001$), agreeableness ($r = 0.361$, $p < 0.001$), and openness to experience ($r = 0.712$, $p < 0.001$) which is in line with the findings from the scale's convergent validity measures (Jauk et al., 2019), the scale's overall internal consistency, was low but within acceptable range (Cronbach's alpha 0.538 on standardized items).

The responses for none of the variables were normally distributed (Fig. 3.1). Here, the variance for JSSA (111.0370192) and WES (125.8725062) was higher while that for JSSB (13.0553520) and ACP (6.7051109) was low. This is an indication of the diversity in the obtained sample. The data was then standardized (ZScore) for further analysis.

	JSSA	JSSB	ACP	WES	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
JSSA	1				44.53	10.537	306
JSSB	0.02	1			27.69	3.613	306
ACP	-.511**	-0.074	1		8.9	2.589	306
WES	-.513**	0.027	.711**	1	61.18	11.219	306

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Fig. 3.1. Correlations and Descriptive Statistics for W (JSSA), Appreciation for Creative Persons (ACP), and Work Environment for Creativity (WES).

Correlations

JSSA and ACP have a significant and negative relationship (r= -0.511, p 0.001). Furthermore, the association with JSS Part B is not statistically significant (r = -0.074, p = 0.196). In other words, mentors who report

higher levels of work-related stress are likely to have lower scores on appreciation for creative people, supporting H1.

JSSA and WES have a significant and negative correlation (r = -0.513, p 0.001). As a result, mentors who report lower levels of stress tend to have a higher workplace creativity score, lending support to H2. However, not unlike in H1, the correlation with JSS Part B is not significant (r = 0.020, p = 0.725).

WES and ACP have a significant and positive correlaion (Pearson Correlation = 0.711, p 0.001). Thus, mentors who report higher levels of work environment for creativity are likely to have greater appreciation for creative people at the workplace, in alignment with H3.

Variable	Test	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
JSSA	Equal variances assumed	0.428	0.514	3.91	304	0	4.609	1.179	2.289 - 6.928
	Equal variances not assumed		3.907	300.377	0	4.609	1.18	2.287 - 6.930	
ACP	Equal variances assumed	6.261	0.013	-1.923	304	0.055	-0.567	0.295	-1.161
	Equal variances not assumed		-1.933	303.814	0.054	-0.567	0.293	-1.155	
WES	Equal variances assumed	1.047	0.307	-4.354	304	0	-5.433	1.248	-4.911
	Equal variances not assumed		-4.361	303.015	0	-5.433	1.246	-4.904	

Figure 3.2.a. Independent Samples Test

JSSA: The t-test shows a significant difference in work-related stress between public and private sector bank employees (t = 3.910, p < 0.001), with public sector employees reporting higher levels.

ACP: The difference in appreciation for creative persons between the two sectors is marginally non-significant (t = -1.923, p = 0.055), indicating a trend towards private sector employees appreciating creativity more.

WES: There is a significant difference in the perceived work environment for creativity (t = -4.354, p < 0.001), with private sector employees perceiving their environment as more supportive of creativity.

The analysis indicates significant differences between public and private sector bank employees in terms of work-related stress (JSSA) and the work environment for creativity (WES). These findings suggest that organizational context plays a critical role in influencing employees' experiences and perceptions related to work-related stress and creativity, confirming H6.

Linear Regression Models

H4: The work environment for creativity moderates the negative relationship between work-related stress and appreciation for creative persons, such that the relationship is weaker with a higher score on work environment for creativity.

H7: The relationship between work-related stress, work environment for creativity, and appreciation for creative persons differs between private and public sector banks.

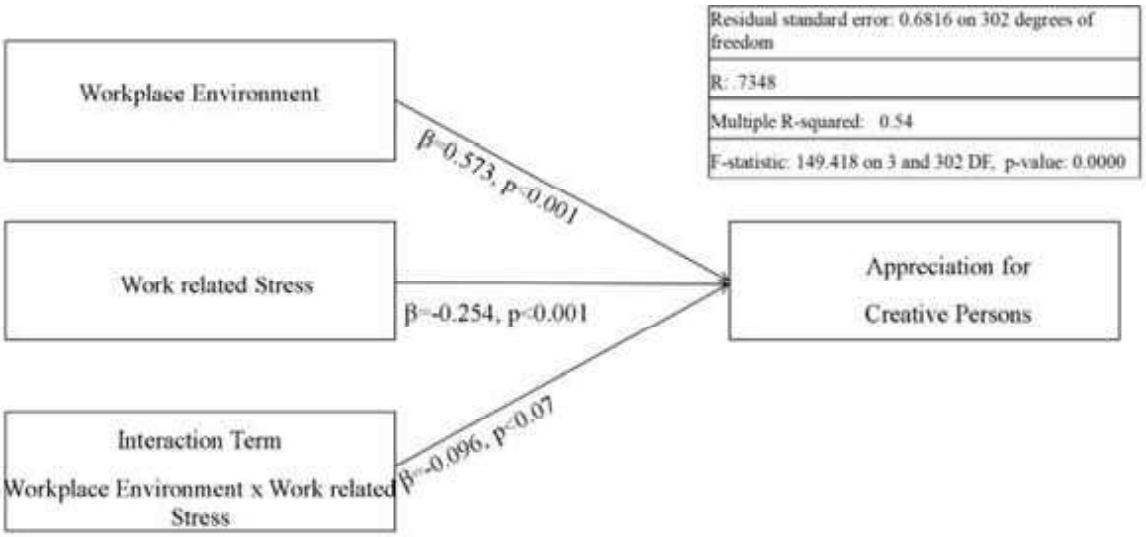

Fig. 3.2. b: Model 1: Total Data - Public and Private Sector Bank Employees

With an R-squared value of 0.54, the linear regression analysis model explains a significant percentage of the variance in the dependent variable (ACP). Notably, JSSA and WES are both significant predictors of ACP, with JSSA being a negative predictor and WES being a positive predictor. Furthermore, there is a marginally significant interaction between JSSA and WES, implying that the link between JSSA and ACP is dependent on the level of WES. Overall, this model implies that JSSA and WES, as well as their interaction, play key roles in explaining the differences in ACP, making them crucial aspects to study.

Model 2: Public Sector Bank Employees (Fig. 4.3.b)

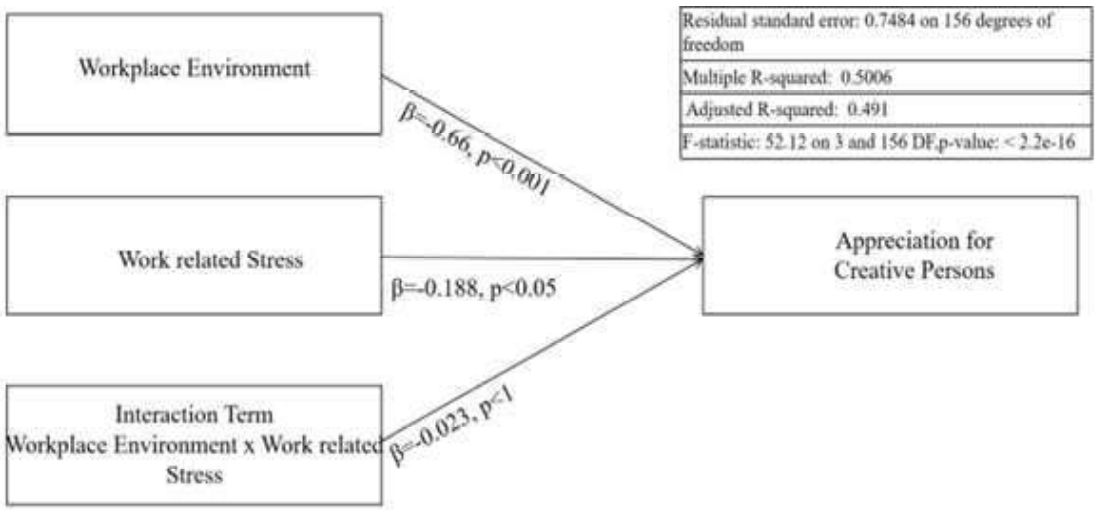

Fig. 3.2.c: Model 2: Public Sector Bank Employees

The F-statistic for the model is significant (F-statistic: 52.12, p-value: 2.2e-16), indicating that the overall model is statistically significant. With an R-squared value of 0.5006, it explains a significant percentage of the variance in the dependent variable (ACP). JSSA and WES both have significant coefficients; where while JSSA has a negative effect WES has a positive effect. However, the interaction term JSSA: WES is not significant, indicating that the combined effect of JSSA and WES on ACP does not depart significantly from their independent effects in this subset of employees. Overall, this model reveals that JSSA and WES are important predictors of ACP, but they have opposing effects.

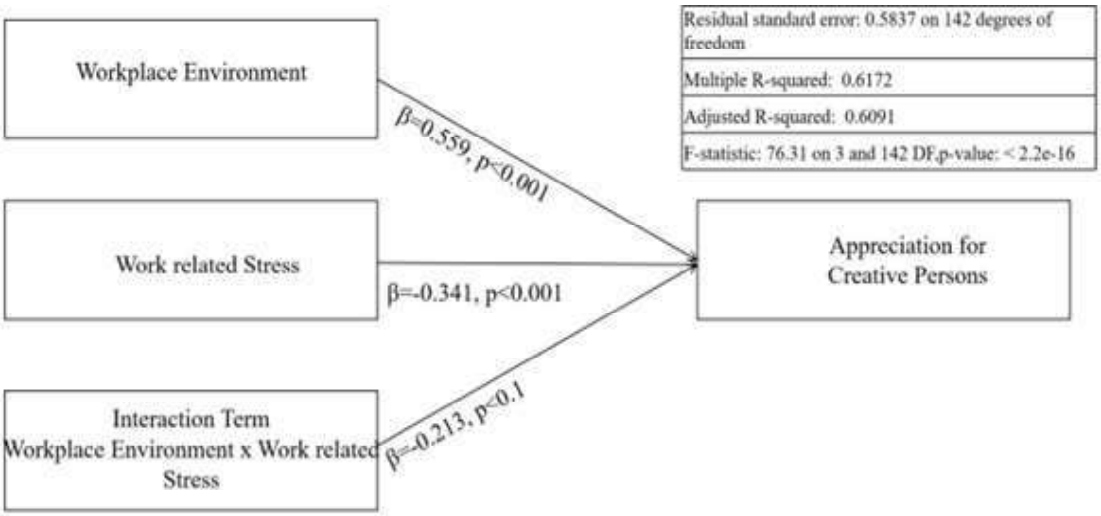

Fig. 3.2.d. Model 3: Private Sector Bank Employees

The model has a significant F-statistic (76.31, p-value: 2.2e-16), which indicates that the model is statistically significant. With an R-squared value of 0.6172, it explains a significant percentage of the variance in the dependent variable (ACP). JSSA and WES both have significant coefficients; JSSA has a negative effect, while WES has a positive effect. Furthermore, the interaction term JSSA:WES is significant, indicating that the combined effect of JSSA and WES on ACP differs from their independent effects. Overall, this model reveals that both JSSA and WES are significant predictors of ACP, and that their interaction affects ACP even more in this specific subset of private sector bank employees.

Based on the results from the three regression models, we can draw the following conclusions regarding H4:

While the interaction term between JSSA and WES was significant in the Private Sector Bank Employees model, implying that workplace creativity influences the negative connection between work-related stress and appreciation for creative people in the private sector bank employee subset, it was only marginally significant in case of the total data model and not significant in case of public sector bank employees. Thus, evidence supports H4 in the setting of private sector bank employees, where workplace creativity moderates the relationship between work-related stress and appreciation for creative individuals.

In the Private Sector Bank Employees model and the Total Data Model, where the interaction term between JSSA and WES is significant, the results confirm H5. This

implies that workplace creativity does, in fact, operate as a moderator, impacting the link between work-related stress and appreciation for creative individuals among private sector bank employees. However, the interaction term between JSSA and WES was not significant in the Public Sector Bank Employees model. The findings suggest that the relationship between work-related stress, appreciation for creative people, and the moderating impact of workplace creativity varies depending on whether employees work in public or private sector banks in India. Research exploring differentiating variables and possibly larger sample sizes may be required to properly explore these dynamics in both areas.

Mediation Analysis

H5: Work-related stress mediates the relationship between the work environment for creativity and mentors' appreciation for creative persons, such that high score on work environment for creativity reduces work-related stress, which in turn increases appreciation for creative persons.

A mediation analysis was conducted to examine the effect of the work environment for creativity (ZWES) on the appreciation for creative persons (ZACP), with work-related stress (ZJSSA) as the mediator, across three models. The first one included both public and private sector bank employees, the second one includes only public sector bank employees and lastly the third model includes only private sector bank employees.

Variable	Coeff	SE(HC3)	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	R	R-sq	F(HC3)	df1	df2	p (Model)
Model 1: ZJSSA												
Constant	0	0.0493	0	1	-0.0969	0.0969	0.5131	0.2632	149.5374	1	304	0
ZWES	-0.5131	0.042	-12.2285	0	-0.5956	-0.4305						
Model 2: ZACP												
Constant	0	0.0393	0	1	-0.0774	0.0774	0.7308	0.5341	185.4676	2	303	0
ZWES	0.6089	0.0434	14.0219	0	0.5235	0.6944						
ZJSSA	-0.1984	0.0425	-4.6712	0	-0.282	-0.1148						
Total Effect of ZWES on ZACP												
Constant	0	0.0404	0	1	-0.0795	0.0795	0.7107	0.5051	347.2241	1	304	0
ZWES	0.7107	0.0381	18.634	0	0.6357	0.7858						
Indirect Effect of ZWES on ZACP through ZJSSA												
Effect (ZJSSA)	0.1018	0.0225			0.0567	0.1463						
Std. Effect (ZJSSA)	0.1018	0.0226			0.0564	0.1462						

Figure 3.4.a. Mediation Analysis with Public and Private Sector Bank Employees

A mediation analysis was conducted to examine the effect of the work environment on creativity (ZWES) on the appreciation for creative persons (ZACP), with work-related stress (ZJSSA) as the mediator, including both public and private sector bank employees. The model for ZJSSA indicated that ZWES significantly predicted ZJSSA, accounting for 26.32% of the variance (R^2 = 0.2632, F(HC3) = 149.5374, $p < 0.001$). The effect of ZWES on ZJSSA was significant (b = -0.5131, SE = 0.0420, t = -12.2285, $p < 0.001$).

For ZACP, the model revealed that both ZWES and ZJSSA were significant predictors, accounting for 53.41% of the variance (R^2 = 0.5341, F(HC3) = 185.4676, $p < 0.001$). The effect of ZWES on ZACP was positive and significant (b = 0.6089, SE = 0.0434, t = 14.0219, $p < 0.001$), while the effect of ZJSSA on ZACP was negative and significant (b = -0.1984, SE = 0.0425, t = -4.6712, $p < 0.001$).

The total effect model indicated that ZWES significantly predicted ZACP, accounting for 50.51% of the variance (R^2 =

0.5051, F(HC3) = 347.2241, p < 0.001), with a significant total effect (b = 0.7107, SE = 0.0381, t = 18.6340, p < 0.001). The direct effect of ZWES on ZACP was also significant (b = 0.6089, SE = 0.0434, t = 14.0219, p < 0.001).

The indirect effect of ZWES on ZACP through ZJSSA was significant (Effect = 0.1018, BootSE = 0.0225, BootLLCI = 0.0567, BootULCI = 0.1463), with a completely standardized indirect effect (Effect = 0.1018, BootSE = 0.0226, BootLLCI = 0.0564, BootULCI = 0.1462).

In conclusion, the work environment for creativity (ZWES) has a significant positive impact on the appreciation for creative persons (ZACP), both directly and indirectly through work-related stress (ZJSSA). This mediation effect suggests that improving the work environment for creativity can enhance the appreciation for creative persons among bank employees by reducing work-related stress, confirming H5.

Variable	Coeff	SE(HC3)	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	R	R-sq	F(HC3)	df1	df2	p (Model)
Model 1: ZJSSA												
Constant	0.1144	0.0839	1.3632	0.1748	-0.0514	0.2802	0.4159	0.1729	28.7063	1	158	0
ZWES	-0.4079	0.0761	-5.3578	0	-0.5583	-0.2576						
Model 2: ZACP												
Constant	0.087	0.0569	1.5294	0.1282	-0.0254	0.1994	0.7073	0.5003	90.7132	2	157	0
ZWES	0.6474	0.0626	10.3342	0	0.5236	0.7711						
ZJSSA	-0.2011	0.0589	-3.4171	0.0008	-0.3174	-0.0849						
Total Effect of ZWES on ZACP												
Constant	0.064	0.0609	1.0505	0.2951	-0.0563	0.1843	0.6868	0.4717	157.4891	1	158	0
ZWES	0.7294	0.0581	12.5495	0	0.6146	0.8442						
Indirect Effect of ZWES on ZACP through ZJSSA												
Effect (ZJSSA)	0.0821	0.0269			0.0319	0.1389						
Std. Effect (ZJSSA)	0.0773	0.0254			0.0299	0.13						

Figure 3.4.b. Mediation Analysis for Public Sector Bank employees

The analysis revealed that ZWES significantly predicted ZJSSA, accounting for 17.29% of the variance (R^2 = 0.1729, F(HC3) = 28.7063, p < 0.001). The effect of ZWES on ZJSSA was significant (b = -0.4079, SE = 0.0761, t = -5.3578, p < 0.001). In predicting ZACP, both ZWES and ZJSSA were significant, accounting for 50.03% of the variance (R^2 = 0.5003, F(HC3) = 90.7132, p < 0.001), with ZWES showing a positive effect (b = 0.6474, SE = 0.0626, t = 10.3342, p < 0.001) and ZJSSA showing a negative effect (b = -0.2011, SE = 0.0589, t = -3.4171, p = 0.0008). The total effect model indicated that ZWES significantly predicted ZACP, accounting for 47.17% of the variance (R^2 = 0.4717, F(HC3) = 157.4891, p < 0.001), with a significant total effect (b = 0.7294, SE = 0.0581, t = 12.5495, p < 0.001). The direct effect of ZWES on ZACP was also significant (b = 0.6474, SE = 0.0626, t = 10.3342, p < 0.001). The indirect effect of ZWES on ZACP through ZJSSA was significant (Effect = 0.0821, BootSE = 0.0269, BootLLCI = 0.0319, BootULCI = 0.1389), with a completely standardized indirect effect (Effect = 0.0773, BootSE = 0.0254, BootLLCI = 0.0299, BootULCI = 0.1300). These results suggest that while the work environment for creativity directly influences the appreciation for creative persons among public sector bank employees, this relationship is partially mediated by work-related stress.

Variable	Coeff	SE(HC3)	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	R	R-sq	F(HC3)	df1	df2	p (Model)
Model 1: ZJSSA												
Constant	-0.0809	0.0659	-1.226	0.2221	-0.2112	0.0495	0.5645	0.3186	131.7941	1	144	0
ZWES	-0.5838	0.0508	-11.48	0	-0.6843	-0.4833						
Model 2: ZACP												
Constant	-0.087	0.0515	-1.689	0.0935	-0.1888	0.0148	0.7654	0.5859	126.6599	2	143	0
ZWES	0.5918	0.0604	9.791	0	0.4723	0.7112						
ZJSSA	-0.2261	0.0614	-3.683	0.0003	-0.3475	-0.1048						
Total Effect of ZWES on ZACP												
Constant	-0.0687	0.0535	-1.285	0.201	-0.1744	0.037	0.7396	0.547	228.9811	1	144	0
ZWES	0.7238	0.0478	15.132	0	0.6292	0.8183						
Indirect Effect of ZWES on ZACP through ZJSSA												
Effect (ZJSSA)	0.132	0.0367			0.0614	0.2082						
Std. Effect (ZJSSA)	0.1349	0.0371			0.0626	0.2115						

Fig. 3.4.c: Mediation Analysis for Private Sector Employees

In the first stage, ZWES significantly predicted ZJSSA, accounting for 31.86% of the variance (R^2 = 0.3186, F(HC3) = 131.7941, $p < 0.001$). The results showed that ZWES had a significant negative effect on ZJSSA (b = -0.5838, $p < 0.001$). In the second stage, both ZWES and ZJSSA significantly predicted ZACP, accounting for 58.59% of the variance (R^2 = 0.5859, F(HC3) = 126.6599, $p < 0.001$). ZWES had a positive effect on ZACP (b = 0.5918, $p < 0.001$), while ZJSSA had a negative effect on ZACP (b = -0.2261, $p < 0.001$). The total effect of ZWES on ZACP was also significant (b = 0.7238, $p < 0.001$), accounting for 54.70% of the variance (R^2 = 0.5470, F(HC3) = 228.9811, $p < 0.001$). The indirect effect of ZWES on ZACP through ZJSSA was significant, as indicated by bootstrap confidence intervals that did not include zero (Effect = 0.1320, BootSE = 0.0367, BootLLCI = 0.0614, BootULCI = 0.2082). This suggests that ZJSSA partially mediates the relationship between ZWES and ZACP, indicating that the work environment for creativity influences appreciation for creative persons both directly and indirectly by affecting work-related stress among private sector bank employees.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide important insights into the links between work-related stress, workplace creativity, and mentor appreciation for creative individuals. These findings have significant implications for understanding the dynamics of mentoring in India's banking sector. First, our findings demonstrated a significant and negative relationship between work-related stress (as measured by the JSS Part A) and appreciation for creative people (ACP). This finding supports our first hypothesis (H1), thus, when mentors are under significant

stress, they may have a diminished aptitude or desire to recognize and appreciate creative contributions. This emphasizes the significance of controlling and reducing work-related stress in order to build a more positive and helpful mentoring environment.

Second, we observed a significant and negative relationship between workplace creativity (WES) and work-related stress (JSSA), supporting our second hypothesis (H2). Although the association is moderate in strength, this means that mentors in banks with higher levels of creative environment tend to feel lower levels of work-related stress highlighting the potential benefits of cultivating and supporting an environment conducive to creativity in the workplace. A work environment that fosters creativity is distinguished by coworker support, leadership encouragement for innovation, dynamic and challenging work, and the availability of resources, including expertise (Amabile, 1996 ; Azeem, 2019), all of which contribute to a less stressful work environment (Shukla & Sinha, 2013).

Finally, the study found a significant and positive relationship between workplace creativity (WES) and appreciation for creative people (ACP), supporting our third hypothesis (H3). This suggests that mentors in organizations with a higher level of creative environment are more likely to appreciate and value creative individuals' efforts. Many studies preceding this study (Cole & Sugioka, 1999; Andriopoulos, 2001; Hunter et al., 2007; Kaufman, 2016; Soomro et al., 2022) have emphasized the role of work environment in fostering creativity and the current findings while being in line with past studies further underline the role of the work environment in fostering a social environment for creativity.

The interaction effects tested in the three models may have been marginal and insignificant (as in the case of the Public Sector Banks model) due to multicollinearity or shared variance between the independent variables. Significant and strong correlations among the independent and dependent variables suggest potential redundancy, thereby reducing the unique contribution of each independent variable (Dormann et al., 2013; MacKinnon, 2008).

The differences in the two models for Private and Public Sector banks may be further investigated with a larger sample size and with additional variables that differentiate elements in the environment of the two types of banks, such as job security, incentive structures, resource availability and overall organizational vision and mission. Finally, despite the marginal moderation effects, the significant main effects underscore the critical roles of work-related stress reduction and the promotion of workplace creativity in enhancing mentor appreciation for creative contributions.

Conclusion

Although primary, this study offers helpful insights into the intricate relationships that exist between workplace creativity, work-related stress, and mentors' appreciation of creative individuals in the banking industry. The empirical results emphasise the importance of workplace creativity and work-related stress in influencing mentors' attitudes and behaviours towards creative coworkers. For companies looking to create a supportive, creative, and peaceful work atmosphere that fosters creativity and innovation, these insights are essential. One of the main findings of the study is the importance of stress management within the organizational structure. It is recommended that organizations allocate resources towards all-inclusive stress management initiatives that furnish mentors with the necessary tools and resources to successfully carry out their duties. As is previously reported, reducing work-related stress enhances mentors' well-

being and creates an atmosphere where mentors are better able to identify, value, and appreciate the contributions of their creative peers (Ghafoor & Haar, 2022; Nasir et al., 2022).

The development of an environment that fosters creativity in the workplace is equally important (Amabile et al., 2004; Dul & Ceylan 2011). The study's findings support the idea that a creative workplace fosters innovation and affects mentors' perceptions of creative individuals. Companies can actively promote creativity by fostering a culture of transparency, risk-taking, and idea exchange (Amabile et al., 2004). Leaders may foster an environment where innovative thinking is not only encouraged but also rewarded by providing resources and acting as mentors for unique ideas (Amabile et al., 2004; Dul & Ceylan 2011). In addition to lowering stress levels, workplace creativity fosters a culture where mentors are more inclined to value and encourage the creative qualities of their subordinates.

Building a strong mentoring ecosystem requires integrating stress reduction and a culture of creativity where organizations that lower professional constraints and foster creativity can lay the foundation for more fruitful mentor-mentee interactions. Thus, the study's conclusions offer a roadmap for businesses hoping to foster stronger mentorship relationships, increase creativity, and lessen employee stress.

Limitations

A significant limitation in our survey methodology is its reliance on snowball sampling. This technique could skew the sample as it depends on existing respondents to attract new ones. Because of this, some individuals or groups inside the network may be oversampled, which would bias the results. Future studies may utilize randomized and representative sampling techniques in order to guarantee a larger and more varied sample. The somewhat small yet diverse dataset may pose a challenge to our study with respect to the public and private bank groups. Although the data provided useful insights, it might not reflect the complexity of mentoring in those settings in its entirety.

Practical Implications

The findings' practical implications offer valuable insights for organisations seeking to enhance employee well-being and promote creativity in the workplace. Primarily, the research highlights the importance of creating efficient stress management initiatives within companies, particularly in high-pressure sectors like finance. By identifying and addressing stressors, organizations may significantly enhance the general well-being and mental health of their workers, including mentors. Particularly for creative people, this can result in higher job satisfaction and lower turnover rates. Additionally, the positive correlation between creativity in the workplace and appreciation for creative individuals highlights the necessity for organizations to actively foster creative work environments. By giving resources for creative projects and praising and rewarding creative accomplishments, employers can inspire their staff to think creatively. This fosters a culture where mentors are more likely to recognize and reward the creative abilities of their colleagues in addition to encouraging innovation. Organizations can use these findings to enhance their mentoring programmes, train mentors in stress management, and create an environment that encourages creativity while reducing work-related stress.

Theoretical Implications

This study closes the gap between theories of stress and creativity, enabling a more thorough comprehension of the well-being of employees and innovation in

organisations. By facilitating further research into the potential benefits of stress reduction on creativity and innovation, this integration broadens the theoretical framework in organisational studies and psychology. The study also highlights how important it is to consider contextual changes in workplace dynamics. The disparities between bank workers in the public and private sectors underscore the significance of examining the ways in which industry-specific organisational characteristics affect the relationship between work-related stress and workplace creativity. The complexities of mentorship relationships and their connections to creativity and stress can also be studied in a variety of contexts.

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