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Editorial: Cross-cultural and intercultural dimensions of creativity in the workplace

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Editorial on the Research Topic Cross-cultural and intercultural dimensions of creativity in the workplace

This Research Topic aims to shed light on the influence of culture on creativity in the workplace. Creativity is not only crucial for innovation, but it is considered a fundamental competence of managers and employees, coping with digital transformations and the ascent of AI, Robotics and Industry 4.0 (Kim et al., 2021).

The guest editors of this Research Topic are Fabrizio Maimone (LUMSA University, Italy), Marta Sinclair (Griffith University, Australia), Lisa Min Tan (University of Applied Management, Germany).

The notion of creativity at work as the starting point for something “new,” unique and actually “different” from the past, aimed at the achievement of one or a few goals (Amabile, 1983), reflects Western thought. Maybe, it is the legacy of the biblical concept of God creator, who was considered in turn the source of human creativity. It is also part of the Ancient Greek tradition (Niu and Sternberg, 2006). The view of people living in Far East countries is fundamentally different. Cultures influenced by Confucianism, such as those in China, Japan, and Korea, consider creativity as the act of reinterpreting and giving new value to something that already exists, based on collective processes and grounded in social and moral values (Niu and Sternberg, 2002; Pang and Plucker, 2013). This suggests that culture matters for the development of creative processes, and not only in the workplace.

Even though a cultural dimension of creativity in the workplace has been established, studies outlining creative processes within organizations tend to overlook the cross-cultural and intercultural aspects. Therefore, there is an emerging need to provide systematic and accurate frameworks. This Research Topic aimed to fill this gap, showcasing insightful papers that investigate the relation between culture and creativity in the workplace.

Six papers were selected. They provide an articulate and complex view on the Topic.

Domains of everyday creativity and personal values

This paper, written by [Lebedeva et al.](#) showed the results of two studies, conducted in two different Russian regions (Central Russia and the North Caucasus). The first study tested a hybrid model, in which creativity comprises both general and domain-specific components. In the second study, the authors measured motivational drivers of six domains of creativity, administering the Portrait Value Questionnaire ([Schwartz et al., 2012](#); [Schwartz, 2017](#)). For all six domains, creativity was greater in Central Russia than in the North Caucasus, the distribution of personal values in the two regional samples was also different. This distinction explains at least partially diverse orientation toward creativity, which suggests a relationship between creativity and culture.

Creativity in the advertisement domain: The role of experience in creative achievement

This paper, written by [Agnoli et al.](#) focused on the role of creativity in advertisement campaigns. The authors reported the findings of a study, based on psychometric measurement, run on a sample of employees working for a large advertising company in London (UK). The results showed that experience, fluency, and openness to experience play an important role in creating a connection between originality and creative achievement. According to the authors, it would be necessary to replicate the study in other national samples, in order to determine whether the identified effects of professional culture are universal or are shaped by national culture (and how).

Fostering creativity in intercultural and interdisciplinary teams: The VICTORY model

This paper, written by [Tang](#), focused on how to build and manage interdisciplinary and intercultural teams to achieve creative goals. It proposes the VICTORY model, based on three components: non-cognitive factors (Vision, Openness, Risk-taking, Yes-I-Can Mindset); cognitive factors (Ideation, Creative Combination); and environmental factors (Team and the environmental enablers of non-cognitive and cognitive components). These components are crucial to manage multicultural teams and to transform cultural diversity into creative and innovative achievements. They are interdependent, interact with each other and are influenced by the environment.

The inseparable three: How organization and culture can foster individual creativity

This paper, written by [Hermida et al.](#) provided an integrated framework of individual, organizational, and cultural influences on creativity in the workplace. A proactive personality is crucial for individual creativity. But, according to the authors, creativity at work may be improved by the interplay of specific individual, organizational, and cultural factors and more focus should be placed on within-country differences. For what concerns the role of culture, multicultural experiences, cultural tightness and looseness, combination of individualistic, or collectivistic values are the most influential elements of the model.

Fear-free cross-cultural communication: Toward a more balanced approach with insight from neuroscience

This paper, written by [Nguyen-Phuong-Mai](#), applied Neuroscience perspective to intercultural communication, adopting Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS) as the main paradigm of research. According to the author, the etic approach toward cross-cultural research, based on cultural mapping ([Hofstede, 2001](#)), and the emphasis on cultural differences ([Kogut and Singh, 1988](#)) may contribute to building barriers instead of bridges among cultures. The author suggested to facilitate intercultural communication by focusing on similarity as a starting point, in order to establish trust, which in turn may create the right condition for creativity in the workplace to rise. Team building may facilitate intercultural relations. Employees not only can modify their values and attitudes, but also integrate opposing values and switch cultural frames to adapt to different context.

The development and validation of a cognitive diversity scale for Chinese academic research teams

This paper, written by [Dong et al.](#) focused on the study of Academic Team Cognitive Diversity that was found to have a positive effect on creativity. The authors developed a scale to measure team cognitive diversity in the Chinese academic context. It is interesting to notice that the worldview is one of the dimensions included in the validated scale. According to the authors, worldviews emerge from a cultural milieu including religion, politics, science, place-based values, education, and ethnicity—this suggests that cultural values may shape creativity differently.

The emerging overall picture

The collected papers illustrate that culture matters not only for creativity in the workplace, but creativity may be conceived and enacted differently in different places and cultures. Cultural processes, according to the authors of the papers, should be studied in terms of evolutionary dynamics, and not only as something stable and reified, as assumed by etic approaches and mainstream managerial literature (Hofstede et al., 2005). Moreover, it is possible to assume that there is a glocal dimension of culture, characterized by a complex and evolutionary picture, based on the interaction between local and global dimensions of cultures in organizations (Maimone, 2022).

A few authors argued also for the role played by the organizational context and by in-group/out-group dynamics in facilitating intercultural dynamics and integration, which in turn creates the right precondition for creativity in the workplace to rise. It is interesting to notice that researchers, starting from different disciplinary and theoretical perspectives, converged to the point of attributing a crucial role to workplace and team dynamics in facilitating cultural inclusion, assuming that the sense of “weness” created by a positive and constructive intercultural interaction and team building processes may go beyond cultural differences and thus overcome cultural barriers.

But cultural processes should be integrated within a complex framework, since they interact dynamically and interdependently with other individual, team and organizational factors impacting creativity in the workplace. A complex and multifactorial approach to the study of creativity is suggested, aimed to go beyond reductionist models.

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According to the presented findings, the study of the relation between culture and creativity in the workplace seems to be a very promising and challenging frontier for research, not only in the fields of organizational and work psychology, but also organizational behavior and more generally management sciences.

Author contributions

All authors listed have made a substantial, direct, and intellectual contribution to the work and approved it for publication.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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