

# Promoting creativity and innovation: expected and unexpected consequences

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The paper aims to explore the role of climate for creativity and innovation as the situational variable to lead to both expected and unexpected consequences (e.g. performance and unethical behavior), by discovering the relationships among task characteristics (e.g. difficulty, clarity and performance pressure), individual psychological aspects (e.g. mindfulness and self-justification) and work environmental conditions (e.g. peer behavior and climate for creativity and innovation). In this study, task characteristics are proposed to positively associate with unethical behavior via mindfulness. Moreover, climate for creativity and innovation is proposed to moderate the relationship between self-justification and unethical behavior. Finally, unethical behavior is predicted to positively influence on performance.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Data were collected from the sample of salespeople, who are working for variety of companies in Vietnam. Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) and SmartPLS 3 are implemented to test the path model.

**Findings** – Emphasizing both bright and dark sides of promoting creativity and innovation, the study highlights the role of climate for creativity and innovation in strengthening the positive relationship between self-justification and unethical behavior. In turn, unethical behavior positively influences performance. Further, the findings indicate that mindfulness contributes in explaining unconscious unethical behavior.

**Originality/value** – Exploring the relationships among climate for creativity and innovation, unethical behavior and performance, this paper contributes for deeper understanding of variety aspects of innovation. Demands for an intelligent management in modern workplaces are suggested.

**Keywords** Innovation, Creativity, Performance, Ethics

**Paper type** Research paper

## Introduction

Recently, creativity and innovation have received the increasing interest, because of their acknowledged effects on employees' innovativeness, performance and firm growth (Klomp and Leeuwen, 2001; Mamun and Fazal, 2018; Donkor *et al.*, 2018). However, it has been



wandered that promoting creativity and innovation may spur unethical behaviors (Baucus *et al.*, 2008). This implies that studies of creativity and innovation should not ignore the complex interactions with ethics.

Although fostering creativity and innovation has been investigated to be a driver of numerous benefits, its negative consequences (i.e., unethical behaviors) have received little attention. In other words, it is not yet known whether climate for creativity and innovation (CCI) may lead to both expected and unexpected outcomes (e.g., performance, and unethical behavior). Noticeably, not only CCI, but also some task characteristics and individual factors may interact to influence on behaviors (Baucus *et al.*, 2008; Yoo and Jeong, 2017). In that regard, this paper sheds lights on the worrisome role of CCI and strives to contribute some insight on the relationships among CCI, task characteristics and individual factors to explain about unethical behaviors.

In firms, unlike other positions, salespeople are considered as entrepreneurs and boundary spanners (Jones *et al.*, 2000). They are expected to accomplish the sales tasks, achieve sales performance to get revenue for firms, as well as responsible for contacting with customers. Facing the variety of customers and operating in vulnerable conditions, salespeople need to be creative and innovative to adapt to changeable sales situations (Cho and Chang, 2008; Yoo and Jeong, 2017). To promote salespeople's creativity and innovation, many firms have created an organizational CCI. In such situations, salespeople are empowered (Jones *et al.*, 2000) and may be accepted to break the rules to have more opportunities to try new approaches, ideas and solutions, even though their behaviors are immoral.

Moreover, they often conduct their sales tasks outside the firms and autonomously decide the way to achieve performance. With entrepreneurial traits, such as autonomy, and risk taking, salespeople easily justify their unethical behaviors (Jones *et al.*, 2000; Mallin and Serviere-Munoz, 2012). Seriously, despite taking responsible for customers' welfare is the moral responsibility of salespeople, they often perform unethical sales practices to customers to gain their sales outcomes (Abratt and Penman, 2002). Although unethical sales behaviors aim to customers, they may lead to adverse effects to firms, such as decrement of firm's brand images, and customers' loyalty. Surprisingly, while unethical behaviors in the workplace have been investigated in previous ethics studies (Schweitzer *et al.*, 2004; Welsh and Ordóñez, 2014; Niven and Healy, 2015), personal unethical sales behavior, which is performed to the external stakeholders, has been less understood (McClaren, 2013).

Further, with limited supervision, the sales tasks are often fulfilled with characteristics, including performance pressure, difficulty and clarity. These variables are also considered as task-goals, which are often designed to manage and force salespeople to pay attention to assigned tasks. However, the effortful attention to the focal goals may lead to mindlessness, or a decrement of mindfulness. In that psychological state, people can act unethically without consciousness. Although prior scholars have emphasized that people may perform unethical behaviors in unconsciousness, prior research has mainly focused on rational unethical behaviors rather than unconscious unethical behaviors (Shalvi *et al.*, 2011; Tseng, 2017; Gino and Bazerman, 2009; Sezer *et al.*, 2015; Welsh and Ordóñez, 2014; Niven and Healy, 2015).

Thus, this paper fills the research gaps by:

- clarifying the role of CCI in linking personal unethical sales behavior to sales performance; and
- extending to explore how CCI, task characteristics (e.g. difficulty, clarity and performance pressure) and psychological states (e.g. mindfulness, self-justification) contribute to influence on unethical sales behavior.

Noticeably, different cultures may be predictors of ethnic perception gaps (Jae and Jeon, 2016). Consequently, prior studies of creativity, innovative and ethics in variety of countries may suggest inconsistent results and implications. Meanwhile, it has been emphasized that ethics may be a big challenge for developing countries, including Vietnam (Nguyen and Truong, 2016). Further, due to focusing on short-term business results, most Vietnamese firms have paid little attention to support innovation (Hoang *et al.*, 2006). These bring to the necessary discussion about innovation and ethics in Vietnam to demonstrate the literature about ethics and innovation.

### Literature review

#### *Creativity and innovation: expected and unexpected consequences*

In competitive and dynamic markets, creativity and innovation have been emphasized to be the main drivers of the firms' growth (Janssen *et al.*, 2004; Donkor *et al.*, 2018). Generally, creativity may be defined as a production of useful ideas, which help firms adapt to changes in markets (Gilson and Shalley, 2004; Valentine *et al.*, 2011). Meanwhile, innovation can be understood as a generation, and an acceptance of new ideas or products, to enhance performance of an individual, or an organization (Janssen *et al.*, 2004). Accordingly, CCI may be conceptualized as an individual's perception of how creativity and innovation are supported in his/her group (Matsuo, 2006; Valentine *et al.*, 2011).

It has been widely acknowledged that CCI may contribute to create a positive work environment, which impacts employees' psychology, behaviors and performance (Matsuo, 2006; Srivastava *et al.*, 2017; Donkor *et al.*, 2018). In detail, Srivastava *et al.* (2017) study confirmed that innovation positively influences on the competitive performance of the firms. Similarly, Donkor *et al.* (2018) study, which tested on 340 small- and medium-scale enterprises, the results also confirmed that innovative capabilities had positive effects on financial performance. Thus, many organizations have paid efforts to create a work environment, which encourages employees' creativity and innovation.

However, recent studies also place much emphasis on not only the bright sides (e.g. performance, innovative behavior, job satisfaction, etc.) but also the dark sides (e.g. risk-taking, resistance to change and animosity) from pursuing creativity and innovation (Janssen *et al.*, 2004; Baucus *et al.*, 2008; Donkor *et al.*, 2018). Some scholars have argued that fostering creativity and innovation in firms may allow employees to consider their risky behaviors as creative and innovative solutions. Therefore, they blindly break accepted practices to pursue creativity and innovation, even though they are unethical.

In the ethics literature, an unethical behavior may be defined as any illegal, or unacceptable action based on the social norms (Barsky, 2008). Accordingly, in the sales context, the term "unethical sales behavior" is conceptualized as an unfair or harmful behavior, including stretching the truth to encourage customers to buy unnecessary products, or hiding products' information from customers, etc. (Roman and Munuera, 2005). Although some studies have paid attention to innovation and ethics separately, less attention has been taken placed on both CCI and ethics.

#### *Goal-setting theory*

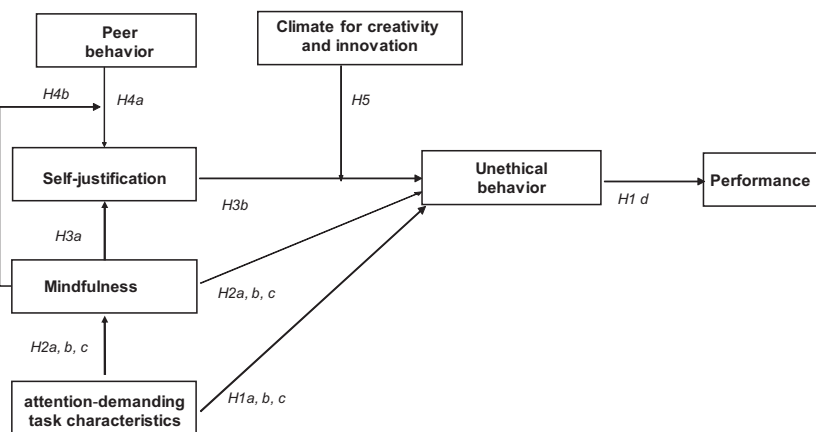
The goal-setting theory (Locke and Latham, 1990) is one of the foundation theories in explaining the links between task-goals and behaviors. This theory has suggested that the more difficult and clear task-goals are, the higher level of task performance is. These relationships can be explained through task-goals' functions, including directing a person' attention toward goals, motivating people to put efforts to achieve goals and increasing persistence the effort devoted to goals (Locke and Latham, 1990).

In many organizations, goal-setting is a common management practice to improve employees' performance. To pursue task-goals, people have to self-regulate their cognition, attention, attitude and behavior (Latham and Locke, 1991; Welsh and Ordóñez, 2014). Although through these self-regulatory mechanisms, people may govern their attention and behavior to the focal goals, it has been postulated that people may diminish their attention to goal-irrelevant issues and forget all else (Shah *et al.*, 2002). Explaining for this assumption, the theory suggests that an individual's cognitive resources, including attention resources, are limited. Thus, when an individual's cognitive resources are focused on one task, they must be withdrawn from others. Supporting for this idea, some previous studies have argued that goal-setting may lead people to decrease their ethical cognition and behave unethically (Schweitzer *et al.*, 2004; Barsky, 2008; Welsh and Ordóñez, 2014).

### *Resource depletion theory*

Presenting a different mechanism, the resource depletion theory (Helton and Warm, 2008; Helton and Russell, 2011) posits that vigilance tasks may require people to use cognitive resources, including attention resources available for information processing. Moreover, these tasks, which require sustained attention, may create a workload burden on an individual's cognition. Because of the limited resources, the sustained attention to the given tasks may require continuous employment without replenishment of resources and lead to depletion of cognitive resources (Helton and Russell, 2011).

Although existing scholars have deeply investigated how an individual performs behaviors to adapt to task requirements, the questions about how people's cognitive resources are withdrawn from ethical standards to perform unconscious unethical behavior have remained unexplored. In view of these claims, this paper proposes that task characteristics may both direct an individual's attention to task relevant stimuli and block task-irrelevant stimuli. Further, sustained attention may consume cognitive resources and lead to the depletion of cognitive resources. Considering mindfulness as a personal cognitive resource, it is expected that decrement of mindfulness may lead people to consciously perform unethical behaviors. Thus, the conceptual framework (Figure 1) was proposed.



**Figure 1.**  
Research model

*The relationship between task characteristics and unethical behavior*

As mentioned above, salespeople often have to take responsible for sales, which contribute to the total revenue. Therefore, their performance is often evaluated based on their sales. In addition, they usually perform their task outside the firms. Thus, to remind salespeople to pay attention toward their duties, sales tasks are often fulfilled with core characteristics, such as difficulty, clarity and pressure for performance. Accordingly, difficulty refers to the level to which a sales goal is attainable. Meanwhile, specificity can be understood as how clear the level of a task goal is and how specifically the goals are understood by an employee (Locke and Latham, 1990; Fang *et al.*, 2004). Besides, performance pressure is conceptualized as how an employee perceives that he/she is forced to accomplish a task goal (Rodríguez-Escudero *et al.*, 2010). For example, firms often set some difficult sales goals with a high sales quota to motivate salespeople to achieve higher performance. Moreover, the sales goals are very clear and specific, to ensure that salespeople clearly understand about what they have to achieve. Finally, pressure for performance is necessary to ensure salespeople to exert effort to gain sales outcomes.

These task-goal characteristics may not only promote higher performance, but also have relationships with cognitive and behavioral factors. More seriously, recent studies have shown that task-goal difficulty, clarity and performance pressure are predictors of unethical behaviors (Niven and Healy, 2015; Welsh and Ordóñez, 2014; Schweitzer *et al.*, 2004), highlighting the links between task characteristics and unethical behaviors.

According to the goal-setting theory, task-goals may promote an individual's performance through some mediating mechanisms, including directing attention toward goals, motivating an individual to exert effort and develop strategies to accomplish task goals (Fang *et al.*, 2004; Anderson and Stritch, 2015). For example, in the Fang *et al.* (2004) study, the results confirmed that task-goal difficulty and specificity may both lead salespeople to exert effort, perform adaptive selling behaviors and positively influence on performance. Similarly, Anderson and Stritch (2015) study demonstrated that goal clarity may positively impact on performance.

Supporting to the goal-setting theory, the load theory of attention proposes that one of the task-goal's functions is to direct an individual's attention toward goal-relevant stimuli and away from goal-irrelevant ones (Lavie *et al.*, 2004). Interestingly, the above task-goal characteristics can stimulate an individual's attention, via the following causal mechanisms. Facing task-goal difficulty, employees may interpret that accomplishing these goals will prove their performance effectiveness. These task-goals are important to their companies and themselves (Barsky, 2008). Meanwhile, task-goal clarity may be interpreted that accomplishing these tasks are their key responsibilities. How they attain these goals will be the criterion for evaluating their performance (Anderson and Stritch, 2015). Finally, facing high pressure for performance, employees may feel that task accomplishment is critical and significant. In other words, these task characteristics highlight the tasks' importance and require employees to pay attention to them. Thus, employees not only focus on tasks, develop strategies to accomplish tasks, but also reject any irrelevant issues, including ethical problems. If unethical behavior may be seen as a strategy to accomplish tasks and get higher performance as mentioned by Gould and Kaplan (2011), it is logical to assume that increases in these task characteristics may positively influence on unethical sales behavior:

*H1a-c.* There will be positive associations between task characteristics, i.e. (a) difficulty, (b) clarity, (c), performance pressure and unethical behavior.

*H1d.* There will be a positive association between unethical behavior and performance.

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*The mediating role of mindfulness*

While task characteristics have been widely acknowledged to have relationships with performance, it is not well understood about how these task characteristics and individual psychological states (i.e. mindfulness and self-justification) work together to influence on unethical practices.

As a personal cognitive resource, mindfulness can be conceptualized as a psychological state, in which people aware and pay attention to experience what is happening, both internal and external stimuli, at the moment (Brown and Ryan, 2003). Generally, mindfulness is seen as a feature of consciousness and reflects the self-regulation of attention, orientation to experience and feelings about surrounding events (Dane, 2011; Howell *et al.*, 2010).

In a modern life, mindfulness has been revealed to have relationships with clinical benefits, tolerance, well-being and ethics (Brown and Ryan, 2003; Valentine *et al.*, 2010; Ruedy and Schweitzer, 2010; Dane, 2011). For example, mindfulness reflects the strength of consciousness and mind, which helps people to reduce working conflicts, as well as realize moral values of the working environment (Valentine *et al.*, 2010). Moreover, people who have high mindfulness will less behave unethically (e.g. telling a lie) (Ruedy and Schweitzer, 2010). Based on these arguments, it is expected that mindfulness has a relationship with unethical behavior.

Although mindfulness reflects the strength of consciousness, awareness and attention, little research has explored the roles of mindfulness in explaining unconscious behaviors. Meanwhile, it was argued that many unethical decisions may stem from a lack of consciousness (Ruedy and Schweitzer, 2010). Therefore, considering mindfulness as a cognitive resource, this paper predicts that the task characteristics may influence on unintentional unethical behaviors through mindfulness. The rationales behind the prediction are the task characteristics' functions.

The first, as emphasized above, the task-goal characteristics (i.e. difficulty, clarity and performance pressure) may both direct people' attention to goal-relevant stimuli and remove their attention from others. Additionally, these task-goals may motivate employees to exert effort to accomplish tasks. Therefore, employees not only focus on goals but also self-regulate their attention, attitude, cognition, emotion and behavior in goal pursuit, yet forget all else (Shah *et al.*, 2002). As a result, people are refrained from realizing what are occurring around them. This reflects the decrement of their mindfulness.

The second, according to the resource depletion theory, sustained attention to a task may lead people to consume cognitive resources so that their cognitive resources are depleted. As cognitive capacity is reduced, people may not recognize what they are really thinking and doing. Seriously, people may not control their mind, as well as realize unethical aspects of their behaviors. Therefore, they may conduct unethical behaviors without consciousness. This argument has been supported in some of the early studies (Mead *et al.*, 2009; Welsh and Ordóñez, 2014). For example, in Mead *et al.*'s (2009) study about self-control, the results reflected that self-control depletion may be a predictor of unethical behavior. More interestingly, the results revealed that people may tell lie to attain goals, even though they do not know that they are telling a lie. In additional, Welsh and Ordóñez (2014) study confirmed that high goals may lead people to consume their self-regulatory resources so that their self-regulatory resources were depleted. Therefore, they may act unethically to achieve task-goals.

In line with these claims, it is reasonable to interpret that the task characteristics may negatively impact mindfulness. In the state of less mindfulness, people may be involved in tasks. Thus, they may not realize any ethical conflicts and mindlessly conduct unethical

behaviors (Gino and Bazerman, 2009; Sezer *et al.*, 2015). Given the aforementioned discussion, the following effects are proposed:

- H2a-c.* Task characteristics, i.e., (a) difficulty, (b) clarity and (c) performance pressure, have positive indirect relationships with unethical behavior via decreased mindfulness.

*The relationship between mindfulness and self-justification*

The concept of self-justification refers to the moral disengagement, a cognitive mechanism, in which people reconstruct their moral cognition and find moral purposes for their unethical behaviors (Bandura, 1999; Shalvi *et al.*, 2011). Among practices of self-justification, moral justification is the first practice, which promotes people to disengage in moral control (Niven and Healy, 2015). Not surprisingly, moral justification has received increasing attention in recent studies and revealed as a cognitive barrier, which prevents people to realize unethical dilemmas and help to reduce their ethical responsibilities so that they can conduct harmful behaviors without guilt and shame (Bandura, 1999; Niven and Healy, 2015). Therefore, this paper aims to investigate the role of moral justification in linking mindfulness and unethical behavior.

In a state of less mindfulness, people cannot self-regulate their awareness and attention. Therefore, they easily find acceptable reasons for their unethical behaviors. They may think that their behaviors are job responsibilities and meaningful for organizations. These moral reasons may give psychological benefits that salespeople can conduct unethical behaviors without any ethical conflicts. Consequently, self-justification may promote unethical practices (Barsky, 2011; Shalvi *et al.*, 2011; Baron *et al.*, 2015):

- H3a.* Mindfulness negatively influences self-justification.

- H3b.* Self-justification positively influences unethical behavior.

*The relationship between peer behavior and unethical behavior*

In an organization, peer behavior is considered as an environmental factor, which contributes to orient an employee's cognition and guide his/her behaviors (Valentine *et al.*, 2011; Babin *et al.*, 2000). Regarding ethical erosion, unethical behavior has been accepted to be a mixed result of variety of antecedents, including individual and environmental factors. Thus, past research has aimed to investigate peer behavior's effects on an individual's behavior (O'Fallon and Butterfield, 2012; Gould and Kaplan, 2011). As proposed in the social cognitive theory of personality (Bandura, 1999), people may learn from the models in their environment, such as leaders, peers and families. Consequently, people may act on a shared belief. If salespeople share the belief that the unethical practices are meaningful and acceptable, they may justify their sales behaviors.

This problem may be more serious if a person is in a state of less mindfulness. Once people have less mindfulness, they difficultly control their cognition. Instead, they tend to follow their peers' perceptions and behaviors. As frequency of observation of unethical peer behavior, they may gradually reconstruct their moral cognition that unethical sales practices are acceptable and meaningful. As a result, moral justification increases:

- H4a.* Unethical peer behavior has a positive association with self-justification.

*H4b.* Mindfulness negatively moderates the association between unethical peer behavior and self-justification.

#### *The moderating role of climate for creativity and innovation*

Pursuing creativity and innovation require organizations to create working climates, in which new ideas and solutions are accepted despite of risks and failures. When salespeople are encouraged to try new ideas and solutions to achieve higher performance, they may feel that they have more opportunities to try any selling practices, despite of immoral aspects of these practices. They simply think that these behaviors are creative and innovative, not unethical (Baucus *et al.*, 2008). Thus, it is predicted that CCI may strengthen the relationship between self-justification and unethical sales behavior:

*H5.* CCI positively moderates the influence of self-justification on unethical behavior.

### **Research methodology**

This paper applies a quantitative method to test these hypotheses. All of the instruments of the constructs are adopted from previous studies. The three- and four-item scales, which were developed by Fang *et al.* (2004), were used to measure the task difficulty (D) and clarity (C). Meanwhile, performance pressure (P) was measured by the scale from Akgun *et al.* (2007) and Rodriguez-Escudero *et al.* (2010). The scale from Babin *et al.* (2000) was used to measure the unethical peer behavior (UPB). To measure mindfulness (M), this paper adopted the scale from Brown and Ryan (2003). To assess self-justification (SJU), this study concentrates to moral justification, because is the first practice of moral disengagement. The scale from Barsky (2011) was used because it was developed in the sales context. The scale from Roman and Munuera (2005) was used to measure unethical sales behavior (USB) and sales performance (SAP). Finally, CCI was measured by the scale from Valentine *et al.* (2011).

Data were collected from online and paper surveys. Adopting prior studies (Roman and Munuera, 2005; Barsky, 2008; Tseng, 2017), salespeople, who are responsible for selling cars, life insurance services and houses, are chosen to be participants, because they take responsibilities for consulting and may impact on customers' buying decisions. The participants are contacted by face to face and e-mail. To reduce the rate of unusable data, the questionnaire includes some questions to examine:

*Q1.* Whether participants are salespeople.

*Q2.* Whether their sales practices may influence on customers' buying decisions.

Because of the model's complexity with both mediating and moderating relationships, partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) and SmartPLS v3 software were implemented to evaluate the models.

### **Results**

Although 278 respondents returned the questionnaires, some invalid data (e.g. missing values) were rejected. Finally, the sample comprised a total of 245 salespeople with a board range of industries (life insurance industry over 60 per cent and others 40 per cent). In addition, most of the participants are male (168 people, account for 68.57 per cent), with age from 20 to 30 years (196 people, account for 80 per cent).



*Validation of measures*

As provided in Tables I and II, all Cronbach  $\alpha$  values were higher than 0.7, and all of the composite reliability (CR) values were higher than 0.7. Thus, the reliability of the constructs was demonstrated. Furthermore, the average variance extracted (AVE) of each construct was higher than 0.50, and the AVE of each pair of constructs was higher than the squared correlation between each of the constructs and any other construct. Hence, the constructs' discriminant validity and convergent validity were demonstrated (Hair *et al.*, 2017).

*Hypotheses testing*

To test the hypotheses, bootstrapping procedure was applied with the option 5,000 bootstrap samples. The significance level of 10 per cent was chosen because this level is possible in psychology (Hair *et al.*, 2017). As described in Table III, all direct relationships were significant, except D  $\rightarrow$  USB ( $p = 0.176$ ), C  $\rightarrow$  USB ( $p = 0.617$ ), P  $\rightarrow$  USB ( $p = 0.082$ ) and UPB  $\rightarrow$  SJU ( $p = 0.665$ ).

Further analysis of indirect effects showed that some indirect relationships are significant, including D  $\rightarrow$  USB ( $p = 0.003$ ), C  $\rightarrow$  USB ( $p = 0.026$ ) and P  $\rightarrow$  USB ( $p = 0.082$ ). Thus, all of the hypotheses were supported, except H1a, H1b and H1c. From these results, it may be interpreted that although D, C and P did not directly influence USB, they indirectly influenced USB via M. In detail, D, C and P were negatively associated with M. In turn, M was negatively associated with USB (Table IV).

Supporting H4b and H5, the moderated regression analysis presented that M played a significant moderating role in the relationship between UPB and SJU (path coefficient =  $-0.24$ ;  $p = 0.004$ ), despite the relation between UPB and SJU was not significant (Figure 2).

**Table I.**  
Descriptive statistics

Construct	Cronbach's $\alpha$	CR	AVE
D	0.837	0.902	0.754
C	0.816	0.888	0.726
P	0.846	0.897	0.685
M	0.899	0.806	0.653
SJU	0.825	0.884	0.656
UPB	0.855	0.889	0.794
USB	0.836	0.917	0.786
CCI	0.839	0.903	0.757
SAP	0.703	0.835	0.630

**Table II.**  
Discriminant validity of the constructs

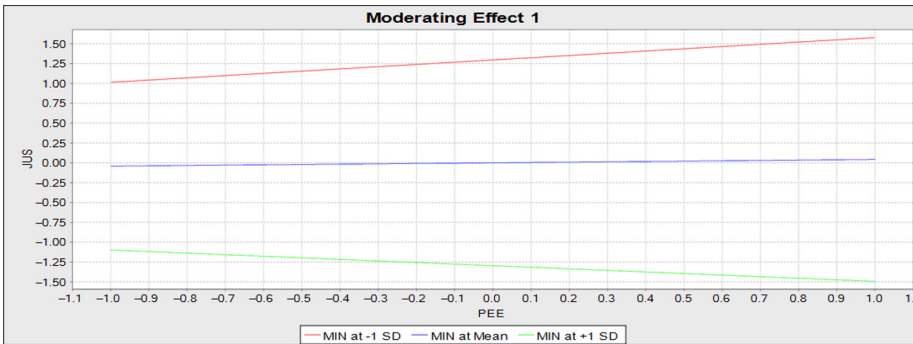
Construct	D	C	P	M	SJU	UPB	USB	CCI	SAP
D	0.868								
C	0.554	0.852							
P	0.538	0.161	0.793						
M	-0.721	-0.618	-0.599	0.796					
SJU	0.665	0.541	0.465	-0.654	0.854				
UPB	0.621	0.605	0.501	-0.416	0.516	0.891			
USB	0.645	0.519	0.513	-0.754	0.538	0.786	0.911		
CCI	0.602	0.449	0.704	-0.702	0.734	0.769	0.586	0.870	
SAP	0.253	0.327	0.216	-0.482	0.443	0.383	0.432	0.339	0.794

Direct relationship	Path coefficient	<i>p</i> -value	Decision
D → USB	0.039	0.176	Not supported
C → USB	0.020	0.617	Not supported
P → USB	0.214	0.082	Not supported
USB → SAP	0.432	0.000	Supported
D → M	-0.331	0.001	Supported
C → M	-0.212	0.064	Supported
P → M	-0.535	0.000	Supported
M → USB	-0.345	0.034	Supported
M → SJU	-0.181	0.000	Supported
SJU → USB	0.718	0.000	Supported
UPB → SJU	0.042	0.665	Not supported

**Table III.**  
Path coefficients

Total indirect effect	Path coefficient	<i>p</i> -value	Decision
D → USB	0.423	0.003	Supported
S → USB	0.234	0.026	Supported
P → USB	0.682	0.082	Supported

**Table IV.**  
Total indirect effects



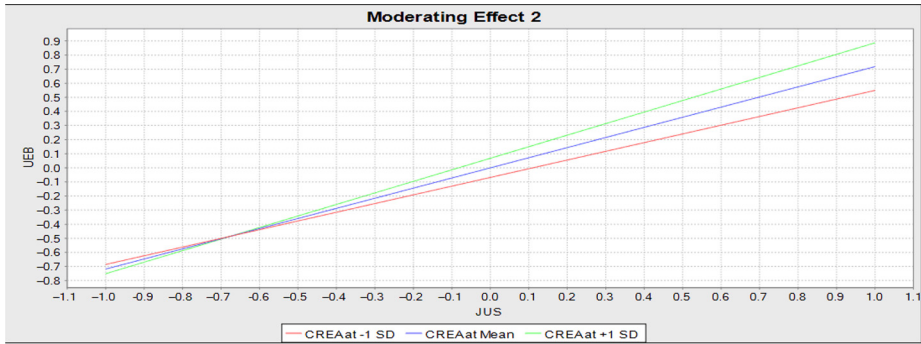
**Figure 2.**  
Moderating effect of mindfulness

In addition, although CCI weakly enhanced the relationship between SJU and USB (Figure 3), this moderating relationship was significant (path coefficient = 0.101;  $p = 0.071$ ).

*Assessing structural model.* Following the rules of thumb,  $R^2_{SAP}$  (0.187) was rather weak, whereas  $R^2_{SJU}$  (0.946),  $R^2_M$  (0.780) and  $R^2_{USB}$  (0.980) were substantial. Additionally, the blindfolding technique was performed to assess the predictive relevance of the path model. As provided in Table V, all  $Q^2$  values were larger than 0, with the omission distance of 5. Therefore, it could be concluded that the model had predictive relevance for a certain endogenous construct.

Consistent with prior studies (Anderson and Stritch, 2015; Donkor et al., 2018), the results reflected that CCI contributed to enhance sales performance. Further, the results also confirmed that the task characteristics, individual psychological states and CCI may work together to lead to unethical behavior. Although the task characteristics did not directly promote unethical behavior, their indirect relationships via mindfulness were significant.

**Figure 3.**  
Moderating effect of  
CCI



**Table V.**  
Construct cross-  
validated  
redundancy

Construct	$Q^2$
USB	0.682
SAP	0.1
SJU	0.546
M	0.392

Finally, CCI enhanced the positive effect of SJU on unethical behavior. After all, the findings contribute to explain how fostering creativity and innovation may create opportunities for unethical behaviors.

**Conclusion**

While existing literature highlights the importance and benefits of promoting creativity and innovation, less attention has focused on unexpected consequences of this. Moreover, the lack of understanding of how CCI, task characteristics and individual psychological factors work together to influence unconscious behavior motivates this paper to pay attention to these relationships. Drawing on the goal-setting and the resource depletion theories, this paper makes several contributions to the field of innovation and ethics. Accordingly, this paper proposes that both task-goal attributes (e.g. difficulty, clarity and performance pressure), individual psychological factors (e.g. mindfulness and SJU) and environmental factors (e.g. peer behavior and CCI) contribute to influence unethical behavior and performance. The findings confirmed that these task characteristics were predictors of unethical behavior. Moreover, mindfulness was explored as the mediator of the above relationships. Finally, CCI positively moderated the relationship between SJU and unethical behavior.

Therefore, the findings imply an intelligent management to create work environments to promote creativity and innovation, yet not create opportunities for unethical behaviors. In respect to the task design and performance, tasks should be designed to motivate employees' effort and attention to accomplish performance expectations, yet not lead employees to be mindless. Finally, mindfulness training should be considered to help employees balance themselves in work.

Despite of contributions, this paper has some limitations. First, the study only investigates the unethical sales behavior in Vietnam. With differences of cultures and ethnic

perceptions, the results may be inconsistent in other countries. Thus, future studies can examine this topic in other countries. Second, the quality of self-report measures may rely on the participants' honesty. To minimize this concern, the questionnaires do not include participants' names and their companies' names. However, to have clearer pictures about ethics, especially in psychology, future studies may adopt some techniques, such as interview and group discussion, to get higher quality.

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