Team Creativity in the Organization: Overcoming Work Stress to attain Competitive Advantage in the Retail Industry

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ABSTRACT

For businesses to succeed in contemporary rapid and dynamic business environment, keeping a competitive advantage is essential. Team creativity and job stress are two important variables that can greatly affect competitive advantage. Team creativity refers to the ability of teams to generate innovative ideas, solve complex problems, and think outside the box. When teams possess high levels of creativity, they can develop unique products, services, and strategies that differentiate them from competitors. This creativity enables organizations to adapt to market changes, identify new opportunities, and stay ahead in a rapidly evolving environment.

On the other hand, work stress can have both positive and negative effects on competitive advantage. Moderate levels of stress can motivate individuals and teams to perform at their best, stimulating creativity and innovation. However, excessive and chronic work stress can hinder creative thinking, impede collaboration, and lead to burnout. When employees are overwhelmed by stress, their cognitive abilities, decision-making skills, and overall performance may be compromised, negatively impacting competitive advantage. To leverage the positive impact of team creativity and mitigate the negative effects of work stress, organizations must create a supportive and empowering work environment. Providing resources, training, and encouragement for creative thinking can foster innovation within teams. Additionally, implementing strategies to manage work stress, such as promoting work-life balance, providing adequate support systems, and fostering a positive organizational culture, can help employees cope effectively and maintain their creative capabilities.

1. INTRODUCTION

Organisations are continuously looking for ways to obtain a competitive edge and preserve their place in the market in today's intensely competitive business environment. The interaction of team
creativity and work stress is an essential factor that can greatly impact an organization’s competitive edge. Team creativity is the capacity of a group of people to produce novel ideas, exercise critical thought, and work together to solve complicated issues (Hon, 2013). The physiological and psychological reactions that employees go through as a result of the demands and pressures of their jobs are referred to as work stress (Vorobeva Victoria, 2022).

Understanding the impact of team creativity and work stress on competitive advantage is essential for organizations to harness the full potential of their teams while mitigating the negative effects of stress (Barczak et al., 2010). On one hand, team creativity can fuel innovation, differentiation, and adaptability, giving organizations the ability to develop unique products, services, and strategies that set them apart from competitors (Pirola-Merlo and Mann, 2004). Creative teams have the capacity to identify emerging trends, anticipate customer needs, and find novel solutions to complex challenges, providing organizations with a sustainable competitive advantage (Yildiz and Esmer, 2023).

On the other hand, work stress can have both positive and negative effects on an organization’s competitive advantage. Moderate levels of stress can act as a motivating factor, pushing individuals and teams to perform at their best, boosting creativity, and fostering productivity (Park et al., 2016). However, excessive or chronic work stress can lead to burnout, hamper creativity, and impair decision-making abilities (Chen, 2006). When employees are overwhelmed by stress, their performance, collaboration, and overall well-being may suffer, potentially undermining an organization’s competitive advantage (Hoever et al., 2012).

To leverage the positive impact of team creativity and mitigate the negative effects of work stress, organizations need to create a conducive and supportive work environment (Kasssem et al., 2019). This includes providing the necessary resources, training, and opportunities for teams to think creatively and innovate (Hamdan et al., 2019). Additionally, implementing strategies to manage work stress, such as promoting work-life balance, offering employee support programs, and fostering a positive organizational culture, can help alleviate stress levels and maintain employees’ well-being and productivity (AlDhaheri et al., 2023).

By understanding the relationship between team creativity, work stress, and competitive advantage, organizations can develop effective strategies to enhance their performance in the marketplace (Siddiqi and Qureshi, 2016). Nurturing a creative and collaborative team environment while addressing work stress enables organizations to tap into the full potential of their employees, drive innovation, and maintain a competitive advantage. This paper will delve into the intricacies of the impact of team creativity and work stress on competitive advantage, exploring the mechanisms through which they interact and providing insights into effective practices for organizations to harness these factors for success.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. Team Creativity

Team creativity is the ability of a group of people to come up with novel ideas, solutions, and strategies through cooperative and synergistic efforts. In order to develop creative thinking, encourage innovation, and produce distinctive results that go beyond what could be accomplished individually, it entails the integration of various viewpoints, expertise, and abilities within a team (Gaytan et al., 2023). Open communication, brainstorming, the free exchange of ideas, constructive criticism, and a supportive environment that promotes risk-taking and experimentation are characteristics of team creativity (Khatib et al., 2016). It enables teams to take on difficult problems, spot opportunities, and come up with innovative solutions that set them apart from rivals, spur innovation, and help the organization succeed as a whole.

2.2. Work Stress

Work stress can be defined as the physical, emotional, and psychological strain experienced by individuals due to the demands, pressures, and expectations associated with their work environment. It arises from various factors such as high workloads, tight deadlines, role ambiguity, interpersonal conflicts, lack of control, and the need to meet organizational goals (AlDhaheri et al., 2023). Work stress can manifest in a variety of ways, including increased anxiety, fatigue, irritability, decreased motivation, and impaired cognitive function (El Khatib et al., 2020b). It can
have a detrimental impact on an individual's overall well-being, job satisfaction, and performance (Muhammad Turki Alshurideh et al., 2022b). Excessive or prolonged work stress can lead to burnout, reduced productivity, and negative health outcomes (M. Alzoubi et al., 2021). Managing work stress involves implementing strategies to minimize stressors, promote work-life balance, provide support systems, and foster a positive work environment to help individuals cope effectively and maintain their overall well-being and job performance.

2.3. Competitive Advantage
Competitive advantage is the distinct combination of traits, skills, resources, or market positioning that enables a company to outperform its rivals, deliver superior results, and achieve long-term commercial success (Bawaneh et al., 2023; Gulseven and Ahmed, 2022; M. El Khatib et al., 2021). It stands for the unique advantage that makes a company stand out and enables it to provide more value to customers, produce more income, and increase its market share (Nuseir and Elrefae, 2022). Innovative goods or services, superior quality, cost leadership, effective procedures, client retention, a strong brand reputation, intellectual property (Almasaeid et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2023), efficient distribution channels, and access to strategic alliances or networks are just a few examples of the many factors that can contribute to competitive advantage (El Khatib et al., 2020a). It gives the business a better position in the market, greater profitability, and resistance to market forces.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW
3.1. Relationship between Team Creativity and Work Stress
(Akour et al., 2023; Mohammed T. Nuseir et al., 2022) Investigated, workplace stress of a moderate degree can foster creative teamwork. Individuals might be inspired by pressure to think critically, come up with original solutions, and question accepted practises (H. M. Alzoubi et al., 2022c). Teams may be encouraged to explore unusual ideas and come up with unique solutions to fulfil deadlines or overcome hurdles as a result of time pressure and high stakes (Muhammad Turki Alshurideh et al., 2022a).
According to (Kassem and Martinez, 2022; E. Khatib et al., 2021), as team members work together to overcome obstacles, work stress can improve team cohesion and collaboration and generate an encouraging environment that fosters innovation.
Team creativity can mitigate work stress by providing innovative solutions to complex problems, reducing the burden on individuals and creating a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction (Muhammad Turki Alshurideh et al., 2023c; H. Alzoubi et al., 2022; Amiri et al., 2020). Whereas, creative problem-solving approaches can streamline processes, optimize workflows, and alleviate stress-inducing inefficiencies within a team, enhancing overall productivity and reducing stress levels (I. Akour et al., 2022; Muhammad Alshurideh et al., 2023; Yasir et al., 2022).
Similarly, engaging in creative activities and brainstorming sessions can serve as a positive outlet for team members to express themselves, reduce stress, and foster a more positive work environment (El Khatib and Ahmed, 2018). (Aityassine et al., 2022; Louzi et al., 2022b) has argued, promoting a culture of open communication, collaboration, and psychological safety, a supportive workplace that fosters team innovation can help reduce work stress (Ahmad Ibrahim Aljumah et al., 2022a). According to (Abudaqa et al., 2022; H. M. Alzoubi et al., 2022e; Nadzri et al., 2023), team creativity can act as a coping mechanism for people who are under pressure at work by giving them a platform for expression, problem-solving, and personal development (Mubeen et al., 2022). On the other hand, by minimising distractions, encouraging work-life balance, and offering support networks, good stress management at work can foster the conditions for team creativity to thrive (Aljumah et al., 2023; M T Alshurideh et al., 2022).

3.2. Relationship between team creativity and Competitive Advantage
Team creativity enables the creation of cutting-edge concepts, plans, and goods that can set an organisation apart from its rivals (Ahmad Ibrahim Aljumah et al., 2022b; Khatib, 2022). When teams are encouraged to use their imaginations, they can come up with original and fresh approaches to problems, which results in the development of ground-breaking solutions that provide the organisation a competitive edge (A I Aljumah et al,
Team creativity encourages flexibility and agility, enabling organisations to react to market developments successfully (Al-Kassem et al., 2022; Louzi et al., 2022a). Creative teams are better able to stay ahead of the competition and preserve a competitive advantage because they can recognise emerging trends rapidly, anticipate client wants, and modify their strategy accordingly. According to (Al-Awamleh et al., 2022; Nuseir, 2020), by addressing problems from many perspectives, thinking outside the box, and coming up with novel ideas, creative teams excel at problem-solving (Muhammad Turki Alshurideh et al., 2023b).

Through better productivity and resource optimisation, this problem-solving capacity increases efficiency (Kurdi et al., 2022b), lowers costs, and simplifies processes, all of which can help an organisation gain a competitive advantage (Alshawabkeh et al., 2021; Muhammad Alshurideh et al., 2022). Team creativity can result in the creation of unique goods, services, or experiences that go above and beyond what customers expect (H. M. Alzoubi et al., 2022b). Organisations can get a competitive advantage by attracting and maintaining customers by giving distinctive and worthwhile goods. This helps them stand out in the market (Nuseir et al., 2020; Sakkthivel et al., 2022). Teams with a creative bent are more likely to support an innovative and constant improvement culture (Khan et al., 2022; Nuseir and Aljumah, 2020). By continually providing higher quality, more value, or distinctive features, they ensure they stay ahead of the competition and actively look for chances to improve their products, processes, or services (Muhammad Turki Alshurideh et al., 2023d; Nuseir, 2021). Companies that encourage team innovation are frequently viewed as desirable workplaces, recruiting and keeping top personnel (Ahmed et al., 2022; Al-Marooof et al., 2022b; M Alshurideh et al., 2023a). The environments that appreciate and foster creative thinking attract creative people, and their contributions can further strengthen the organization's competitive edge through their expertise and novel viewpoints (H. M. Alzoubi et al., 2022f).

Employee performance can be negatively impacted by high levels of job stress, which can also lead to lower motivation, poor productivity, and trouble making decisions (Nuseira and Aljumahb, 2020). Employee performance and contribution to the competitive advantage of the company are impaired when they are under a great deal of stress (Abudaqa et al., 2021; Hani Al-Kassem, 2021). Employee disengagement and unhappiness as a result of excessive work stress might increase the chance of turnover (Muhammad Turki Alshurideh et al., 2022c; El Khatib and Ahmed, 2019).

The competitive advantage of the organisation is harmed by the loss of competent and experienced workers because it undermines continuity, information sharing, and the retention of priceless skills (Al-Kassem, 2017). On the health and wellbeing of employees, work stress can have a negative impact. As discussed by (Al-Dmour et al., 2023; Blooshi et al., 2023; Khatib et al., 2022b), chronic stress can cause problems with the physical and emotional well-being, absenteeism, and resilience.

Employee performance and capacity to contribute to the competitive advantage of the company are hampered when they are not in good health (Akour et al., 2021). Within an organisation, work stress can hinder innovation and creativity (Nuseir and Aljumah, 2022). When people are under a lot of stress (Al-Marooof et al., 2022a), it can be difficult for them to think creatively, come up with novel solutions, and approach issues from a fresh perspective (Khatib and Opulencia, 2015; Tariq et al., 2022b).

This may restrict the company's ability to innovate and create special solutions that give it a competitive edge (Taher M. Ghazal et al., 2023; Khatib et al., 2016). Collaboration and teamwork might suffer from work-related stress (Aljumah et al., 2020). High amounts of stress might cause team members to have difficulty communicating, disagree, and cooperate (Ahmed and Nabeel Al Amiri, 2022). For the purpose of utilising different viewpoints, knowledge sharing, and producing synergistic results that lead to competitive advantage, collaboration and good cooperation are crucial (H. M. Alzoubi et al., 2022a; M T Nuseir et al., 2022a).

3.3. Relationship between work stress and competitive advantage

3.4. Relationship between Team Creativity and Competitive Advantage through Work Stress
The relationship between team creativity and competitive advantage can be influenced by work stress (A I Aljumah et al., 2022b). While moderate levels of stress can sometimes enhance creativity and performance, excessive or chronic stress can have detrimental effects. According to (Aziz et al., 2023; Khatib et al., 2022a), Moderate levels of work stress can stimulate team members' creativity and problem-solving abilities (I. A. Akour et al., 2022; Al-Kassem, 2014). When individuals experience moderate stress, their cognitive arousal increases, leading to heightened focus, motivation, and divergent thinking (Aljumah et al., 2021a; Blooshi et al., 2023; Kurdi et al., 2022a). This heightened state can promote innovative ideas, unique solutions, and increased adaptability, which can contribute to a team's creative output (H. M. Alzoubi et al., 2022d).

Excessive work stress, on the other hand, can hinder team creativity and, consequently, competitive advantage (R. S. Al-Maroor et al., 2021b; Varma et al., 2023). When individuals are overwhelmed by high levels of stress, their cognitive resources become depleted, impairing their ability to think creatively (Al-Kassem et al., 2013; El Khatib et al., 2021; Tariq et al., 2022a). Stress can lead to decreased motivation, reduced cognitive flexibility, and increased reliance on routine or familiar approaches (A. Al-Maroor et al., 2021; H. M. Alzoubi et al., 2020). This restricts the team's ability to generate novel ideas or find innovative solutions, limiting their competitive advantage.

Moreover, as stated by (Aljumah et al., 2021b; Arshad et al., 2023), Efficient stress management strategies play a crucial role in maintaining and enhancing team creativity. Organizations that prioritize stress reduction techniques, such as providing adequate resources, promoting work-life balance, fostering a supportive work environment, and encouraging regular breaks, can positively influence team members' stress levels (Alzoubi and Ahmed, 2019; El Khatib and Ahmed, 2020; Mat Som and Kassem, 2013). By minimizing excessive stress, organizations create an environment conducive to creativity, allowing teams to explore new possibilities and maximize their competitive advantage.

A study investigated (H. Alzoubi et al., 2020; T M Ghazal et al., 2023c), work stress can act as a mediator between team creativity and competitive advantage. Excessive stress can diminish creativity, leading to a reduced ability to generate innovative ideas, problem-solve effectively, and adapt to changing market demands (AlHamad et al., 2021; Farrukh et al., 2023). Consequently, teams may experience limitations in developing unique products, services, or strategies, which can undermine their competitive advantage (Nuseir et al., 2021). Conversely, effective stress management practices can mitigate the negative impact of stress, enabling teams to leverage their creativity and gain a competitive edge (R. S. Al-Maroor et al., 2021a; El Khatib, 2015; T M Ghazal et al., 2023b).

Work stress has an impact on the link between team creativity and competitive advantage (Al-Kassem et al., 2022). Stress levels that are moderate might boost creativity, improving one's competitive advantage (Alzoubi et al., 2019; El Khatib et al., 2019; T M Ghazal et al., 2023a). The team's ability to innovate can be hampered by severe stress, which will reduce their competitive advantage (M T Nuseir et al., 2022b). Organisations seeking to effectively harness team creativity and establish a sustained competitive advantage must employ stress management techniques to maintain healthy stress levels.

3.5. Hypothesis Development
H1: Team Creativity Positively influence Work Stress
H2: Team Creativity Positively influence Competitive Advantage
H3: Work Stress Positively influence Competitive Advantage
H4: Team Creativity positively influence competitive advantage through work stress.

3.6. Research Model
4. METHODOLOGY
The topic under discussion aims to comprehend the effects of team creativity and workplace stress on the organization's competitive advantage in the retail sector. This will lead to the conduct of an empirical study, the results will allow for the right outcome to be determined. Quantitative method would be applied for this study, therefore the analysis would be conducted with statistical results. For the purpose of the study descriptive research design has been selected with the help of explicit explanation would be done and a structure would be followed with comprehensive explanations would be done in order to reach the conclusion. A deductive approach would be followed for the collection of the data. Primary data source used to evaluate the model. The data was collected from the employees working in retail industry.

5. EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS
This study aims to explore customer preferences in the retail industry. The study investigates the factors influencing customers’ purchasing decisions, their satisfaction with the shopping experience, and their perceptions of customer service in retail settings. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a diverse sample of 20 retail customers to gather rich and detailed data also providing a short concise questionnaire. The findings provide valuable insights into understanding customer needs and preferences in the retail industry, which can inform retailers' strategies to enhance team creativity, reducing work stress and improving competitive advantage.

5.1. Measurement Model Assessment
A consistent PLS algorithm assumes that the constructs are multicollinear and modifies the correlations of the reflective constructs to sort the results according to a factor-model. Since multicollinearity is not present in this formative model, the PLS algorithm was employed instead of the consistent PLS algorithm. Most loadings were significant at 0.70 or 0.50, constituting both the first-order construct and the second-order construct, according to (Hair et al., 2012). However, any indicator that had a loading of less than 0.50 was also retained, taking into account how it contributed to the development of the construct and assuming it had no bearing on how dependable the constructs were. Table 1 displayed the statistical outcomes.

**Table 1 : Model Reliability and Validity**
To ensure that the model measurements can accurately measure the relevant constructs, it is first necessary to analyse the key requirements for indicators validation of the measures. One of the main tests for this evaluation is to carry out several crucial processes as advised by (Hair et al., 2012). As an illustration, consider the indicators factor loadings of the relevant variables, which show how many indicators are needed to measure each factor. Additionally, the indicators must be analysed by looking at their level of reliability, which can be determined using the methods Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Composite Reliability (CR), and Cronbach’s Alpha. Additionally, through this technique, the researchers are able to outline the crucial steps required to evaluate the indicators’ dependability. The model validity, also known as internal consistency, is a crucial component of the study and is taken into consideration when presenting the variables.

The average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliability (CR) outputs from PLS-SEM were used to conduct this test and check for reliability concerns. These results, which are often satisfactory and above the cut-offs, are presented in Table 2. For instance, AVE and CR calculated a type of convergent validity, which demonstrated excellent results for the measurement model.

Additionally, the comparatively low standard
deviation of these statements less than (1) indicates constancy in the sample members’ attitudes about them.

6. DISCUSSION
Team creativity can potentially enhance competitive advantage, the role of work stress in this relationship requires careful examination. Here, we critically analyze the potential impact of team creativity on competitive advantage in the context of work stress.

The overall study findings revealed team creativity, characterized by the generation of innovative ideas, problem-solving abilities, and adaptability, has the potential to contribute significantly to competitive advantage. Creative teams can develop novel products, services, and strategies, enabling organizations to differentiate themselves in the market. When team members are engaged in creative processes, they can leverage their diverse perspectives and expertise to drive innovation and stay ahead of competitors.

However, the study has also exposed work stress can have both positive and negative implications for team creativity and subsequent competitive advantage. Moderate levels of stress can stimulate team members’ cognitive arousal and motivation, enhancing their creative thinking and problem-solving abilities. However, excessive or chronic stress can be detrimental to team creativity. High stress levels can deplete cognitive resources, hinder information processing, and impede the generation of innovative ideas. Therefore, it is crucial to strike a balance between stress levels and creative potential.

Furthermore, effective stress management plays a critical role in optimizing the relationship between team creativity and competitive advantage. Organizations that prioritize stress reduction strategies and create supportive work environments can enhance team members' well-being and creativity. By providing resources, promoting work-life balance, and encouraging stress-reducing practices, organizations can foster a conducive atmosphere for creative thinking. Managing work stress effectively can enable teams to harness their creative potential and gain a competitive edge.

In some cases, team creativity may emerge as a response to work stress. When faced with challenging situations, teams may exhibit adaptive creativity to overcome obstacles or find innovative solutions. Work stress can act as a catalyst for creative problem-solving, leading to competitive advantages such as improved efficiency, cost reduction, or customer satisfaction. This highlights the importance of recognizing the potential positive outcomes that can arise from leveraging team creativity in stressful environments.

The impact of team creativity on competitive advantage through work stress can be influenced by individual differences and contextual factors. Team composition, leadership style, organizational culture, and industry-specific demands can shape the relationship between team creativity, work stress, and competitive advantage. For instance, organizations that foster a supportive and empowering culture are more likely to promote creative thinking even in high-stress situations, thereby enhancing their competitive advantage.

While team creativity may yield short-term competitive advantages, sustaining long-term competitive advantage requires continuous innovation and adaptability. Therefore, organizations must consider the long-term implications of work stress on team creativity. Chronic or excessive stress can lead to burnout, reduced job satisfaction, and turnover, which can ultimately hinder an organization’s competitive advantage. Prioritizing employee well-being and stress management is crucial for maintaining a sustainable creative workforce and competitive advantage over time.

4. CONCLUSION
Team creativity has the potential to both reduce work stress and provide teams a competitive edge, while job stress can have the opposite effect. Organizations must understand how crucial it is to build a supportive and creative work environment, properly manage employee stress, and use team creativity as a catalyst for innovation and difference. Organisations can improve their competitive advantage and prosper in a competitive market by fostering team creativity while reducing workplace stress.

Moreover, the relationship between team creativity, work stress, and competitive advantage is a complex interplay. While team creativity can potentially enhance competitive advantage, the impact of work stress on creativity requires careful
management. Striking a balance between stress levels, providing stress management strategies, and fostering a supportive work environment are critical for optimizing team creativity and gaining a sustainable competitive advantage. Organizations must recognize the nuanced dynamics at play and continually adapt their strategies to maximize the potential benefits of team creativity while minimizing the negative effects of work stress.

- Limitations

While studying the impact of team creativity on competitive advantage through work stress, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of the research. These limitations can help identify areas for future study and provide context for interpreting the findings. Here are some potential limitations of research on this topic:

**Generalizability:** The findings of any specific study on team creativity, work stress, and competitive advantage may not be generalizable to all industries, organizations, or teams. The context in which the research is conducted, such as the industry type, organizational culture, and team composition, can significantly influence the results. Therefore, caution should be exercised when applying the findings to different contexts.

**Measurement Bias:** Assessing team creativity, work stress, and competitive advantage is a complex task that often relies on self-report measures or subjective evaluations. This can introduce measurement bias and potential discrepancies between participants' perceptions and objective reality. The reliance on self-report measures may limit the accuracy and reliability of the data collected.

**Directionality of Causality:** Establishing a causal relationship between team creativity, work stress, and competitive advantage can be challenging. While there may be a relationship between these variables, it is important to consider the directionality of causality. Work stress could potentially impact team creativity, but it is also possible that creative teams can influence the levels of stress they experience. Determining the direction of causality requires longitudinal or experimental designs.

Acknowledging these limitations is crucial for interpreting and contextualizing the findings of research on the impact of team creativity on competitive advantage through work stress. Future studies should strive to address these limitations by employing more diverse and representative samples, adopting longitudinal designs, considering alternative explanations, and utilizing objective measures when possible.

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