



Mechanisms of Participatory Management on Employee-Initiated Innovation: A Moderated Mediation Model

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Abstract. Employee-initiated innovation is an inexhaustible driving force for corporate innovation and affects the sustainable development of corporate competitiveness, and the management model plays a significant role in influencing employee-initiated innovation behavior. Based on social cognitive theory, organizational support theory and goal-setting theory, a moderated mediation model is constructed to explore the influence mechanism and boundary conditions between participative management and employee-initiated innovation behavior. The study was conducted with 281 corporate employees, and the results of the questionnaire were statistically analyzed. The results show that participative management has a significant positive influence on employees' proactive innovation behavior; creative self-efficacy and organizational support play a partially mediating role between participative management and employees' proactive innovation behavior; job satisfaction plays a negative moderating role between participative management and employees' proactive innovation behavior, while job satisfaction weakens the influence of creative self-efficacy and organizational support on participative management and employees' proactive innovation behavior. Job satisfaction partially mediates the influence mechanism between participative management and employee-initiated innovation behavior. It reveals the "black box" of the relationship between participative management and employee-initiated innovation and enriches the study of the factors influencing employee-initiated innovation.

Keywords: Employee-initiated innovation behavior · participative management · creative self-efficacy · sense of organizational support · job satisfaction

1 Introduction

As the most important innovation subject of the company, the employees of the company are an important source of power to promote continuous innovation to enhance competitiveness. As for innovation behavior Kleysen and Street [1] define innovation behavior as all individual actions that introduce and apply beneficial innovations that can bring benefits to all parts of the organization. One of the main prerequisites of this definition

considers innovative behavior as an employee-initiated and voluntary behavior, which is a very different scenario of innovation management in the West and China. Based on this, Zhao Bin and Luan Hong et al. [2] distinguished employee innovation behavior into two categories: active and passive innovation. At present, scholars at home and abroad have researched more on employee innovation behavior, but less on employee active innovation behavior. For employee-initiated innovation, Grant, and Ashford [3] argue that the factors influencing employee-initiated innovation behavior contain situational and individual factors, which have many similarities with the influencing factors of employee innovation, but the influencing mechanisms of which are different. Employee-initiated innovation places more emphasis on employees' own psychological perceptions driving their own spontaneous innovative behaviors, rather than being pressured by performance, and their influencing mechanisms may differ and deserve further exploration. Most of the existing influencing factors revolve around leadership style, organizational behavior, and personal factors, while the influence mechanism of management model on innovation behavior is less explored. With the progress and development of society, corporate management models are constantly updated and changed, and participative management as a contextual factor of work has a positive impact on the performance improvement of organizations and employees [4]. However, the mechanism of participatory management on employees' proactive innovation behavior needs to be further explored. Whether participative management has an influential role on employee-initiated innovation behavior in the Chinese context and the mechanisms of influence need to be further verified. Therefore, it is important to investigate the impact of participative management on employee-initiated innovation behavior.

Social cognitive theory assumes that human behavior, cognition, and environmental factors constitute a dynamic interaction [5]. The mental activities of individuals in social interactions, including subjective perceptions and judgments about the intentions and behaviors of others, help to understand individual psychology and social behavior [6]. Participatory management places employees on an equal footing with management staff to study and discuss major issues in the organization, and employees' self-esteem is satisfied, and their self-confidence is boosted, which in turn enhances their sense of creative self-efficacy. Organizational support theory states, and the stronger the sense of support employees receive in the enterprise, the more inclined they will be to take the initiative to accomplish the organization's goals. Participatory management that focuses on vulnerable groups and listens to the interests of multiple stakeholders. Employees' own needs are met, and they feel supported by the organization in their work and life. This sense of support makes employees more responsible and proactive in their work, which in turn stimulates them to initiate innovative behavior. Based on this, this paper argues that creative self-efficacy and organizational support play a mediating role in the mechanism of participatory management influencing employees' proactive innovation behaviors.

Goal-setting theory suggests that goals can turn human needs into motivation and guide the direction of individual actions, while adjusting the set goals and actions against the gap between goals and results to achieve them [7]. Job satisfaction reflects the gap between what employees actually do and what they expect to be paid for their work,

and the larger the gap, the lower the satisfaction, and conversely, the higher the satisfaction [8]. Based on goal-setting theory, the lower the job satisfaction of employees, the stronger their development needs and motivation, and participative management provides them with opportunities to improve themselves and achieve their work expectations, and they will actively integrate into participative management. Thus, this paper argues that job satisfaction moderates the effect of participative management on employees' active innovation and mediates the effect of self-efficacy and organizational support.

Therefore, this paper will develop a moderated mediation model of participative management influencing employee-initiated innovation based on social cognitive theory, organizational support theory, and goal-setting theory. We will investigate the influence mechanism of participative management on employee-initiated innovation behavior, the mediating role of organizational support and creative self-efficacy in the influence mechanism, and the moderating role of job satisfaction in the influence process.

2 Theoretical Basis and Research Hypothesis

2.1 Participatory Management and Employee Innovation Behavior

Participatory management is a management model in which employees are involved in the formulation and implementation of management decisions and participate in and influence management behavior through interaction with management [9]. Lawler [10] interpreted the content of participatory management from four perspectives: information sharing, knowledge training, compensation system, and power sharing, and proposed a four-dimensional structural model of participatory management. Employee-initiated innovative behavior is different from innovative behavior, which emphasizes an extra-role behavior of employees' spontaneity [11]. Employee-initiated innovative behavior is influenced by both individual and organizational factors. Social cognitive theory proposes that environmental factors influence one's own cognition and thus behavior. Participatory management gives employees the right to participate in decision making and increases their self-confidence as their suggestions are continuously adopted. According to Mohrman and Lawler [12], participative management is a participatory process used to motivate employees to achieve their maximum potential and to strengthen their commitment to the organization. According to organizational support theory, employees satisfy some of their needs for work conditions and psychological identity in the participative management process, and they receive material and moral rewards from the organization, so that they will have more emotional commitment to the organization and actively complete tasks and solve work challenges in return. Therefore, based on social cognitive theory and organizational support theory, hypothesis H1 is proposed.

H1: Participatory management has a significant positive effect on employees' proactive innovation behavior.

2.2 The Mediating Role of Creative Self-Efficacy

Creative self-efficacy is influenced not only by one's own psychological factors but also by organizational factors [13]. Participatory management gives employees the opportunity to gain recognition from others, which satisfies their sense of accomplishment

and increases their confidence in doing their jobs. At the same time, employees' right to speak and make decisions is given full play in the process of participatory management, and the increased sense of power leads to the expansion of self-confidence [14]. Adequate confidence empowers employees with positive emotions in the face of challenging work, and positive emotions enhance individuals' cognitive processes, helping them to find similarities and differences in the scattered things and improve innovative behavior [15]. Creative self-efficacy drives the generation of employee-initiated innovative behavior, while providing employees with positive emotions that provide motivation for employee-initiated innovative behavior. Based on this, hypothesis H2 and H3 is proposed in this paper.

H2: Participatory management has a significant positive effect on creative self-efficacy.

H3: Creative self-efficacy mediates the relationship between participatory management and employee-initiated innovative behavior.

2.3 Mediating Role of the Sense of Organizational Support

In the process of participatory management, employees are given work and spiritual support by the organization, and the relationship between employees and the organization develops in a good direction. When the organization gives support to employees, employees have emotional commitment to the organization, and driven by emotional commitment employees are more willing to put efforts in their work and proactively solve the difficulties and challenges faced by the company as a return for the support given by the organization to itself [16]. At the same time, innovation work requires a lot of resource support, and employees with a stronger sense of organizational support are more confident to persevere in the innovation process, compared to employees with a strong sense of organizational support, who are less stressed to carry out innovative behavior. When innovation support and work resources are not sufficient for employees to face challenging work, employees are less willing to perform innovative behaviors [17]. Based on this, this paper proposes hypothesis H4 and H5.

H4: Participatory management has a significant positive effect on the sense of organizational support.

H5: Sense of organizational support mediates the relationship between participative management and employees' proactive innovative behavior.

2.4 Moderating Effect of Job Satisfaction

From the perspective of expectation gap, job satisfaction originates from the comparison between individuals' own work output and their original expectations, so job satisfaction reflects the difference between expected and desired effects [8]. Wang Hong [18] argued that there is no fixed relationship between job satisfaction and job performance, and high satisfaction does not necessarily produce high performance. Xuemei Liu [19] pointed out that efforts to improve employee satisfaction, on the contrary, can have a negative effect on the company's performance, and satisfied employees are not necessarily willing to change when the company needs to change to maintain their satisfied work status.

Participatory management requires employees to take on more responsibility. Employees with higher job satisfaction respond to the responsibilities brought about

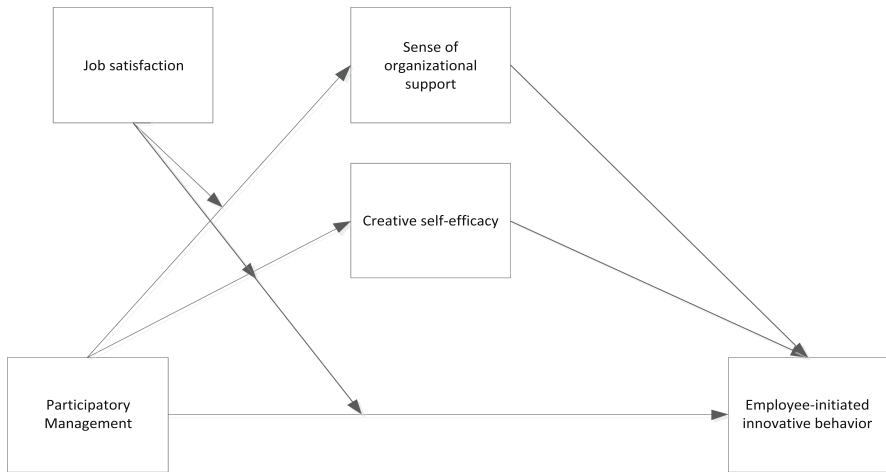


Fig. 1. Theoretical model

by participatory management with a negative attitude in order to maintain a more satisfying work status, and this negative attitude inhibits the enhancement of innovative self-efficacy, while employees' perception of organizational support is also affected; employees with low job satisfaction are more inclined to seek opportunities for their own development in the midst of change and actively participate to the management process, and positive attitudes help employees' confidence improve, while employees are more likely to perceive organizational support when they have the opportunity to develop. Based on this, hypotheses H6, H7, and H8 are proposed.

H6: Job satisfaction negatively moderates the positive effect of participatory management on employee-initiated innovation behavior.

H7: Job satisfaction negatively moderates the relationship between participatory management and creative self-efficacy.

H8: Job satisfaction negatively moderates the relationship between participative management and perceptions of organizational support.

Based on the above discussion, the theoretical model is proposed as shown in Fig. 1.

3 Variable Measurement and Data Collection

3.1 Data Collection

This study mainly used questionnaires to obtain data, the survey object is the enterprise employees. A total of 320 questionnaires were distributed and 281 valid questionnaires were returned. The efficiency rate was 87.8%. Among them, men accounted for 44.48%, women accounted for 55.52%. Age is mostly concentrated in the 30–40 between the proportion of 62.27%. Most of the education level is undergraduate accounting for 65.48%. The number of people with more than 8 years of working experience accounted for 56.58%.

3.2 Variable Measurement and Index Selection

The scales in this study were based on well-established scales from the classical literature. The main variables were measured using a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 representing “very non-conforming” and 5 representing “very conforming”.

Participatory management was based on the Participatory Management Scale developed by Pare and Tremblay [20] and combined with the actual situation in China to create an eight-item scale. The internal consistency Cronbach’ coefficient of the scale was 0.895.

A four-item creative self-efficacy scale was developed with reference to Tierney’s [21] and Gong’s [22] scales. The internal consistency Cronbach’ coefficient of this scale was 0.81.

A 7-item scale was developed with reference to the scale of Eisenberger [23]. The internal consistency Cronbach’ coefficient of this scale was 0.858.

A 9-item scale was developed with reference to the scale mentioned in Xu [24]. The internal consistency Cronbach’ coefficient of the scale was 0.905.

Job satisfaction was based on Liu’s [25] scale with four items. The internal consistency Cronbach’ coefficient of this scale is 0.893.

In this paper, gender, age, length of service, and level of education were selected as control variables.

4 Empirical Analysis

4.1 Reliability and Validity Analysis

The data were conducted using spss26.0 software. In Table 1, under the condition of introducing control variables, the Cronbach’ values of employee proactive innovation behavior, participative management, creative self-efficacy, organizational support, and job satisfaction were 0.905, 0.895, 0.81, 0.858, and 0.839, respectively, and the KMO values were 0.94, 0.931, 0.798, 0.84, 0.794; Bartlett’s sphericity test results were significant. In Table 2, validation factor analysis was performed on the model, and the five-factor model fitted well ($\chi^2/df = 1.878$ RMSEA = 0.056, SRMR = 0.051, CFI = 0.933, NNFI = 0.927) compared with other models, and the model had good discriminant validity.

4.2 Homogeneous Variance Test

The Harman one-way test was used to detect the degree of homoscedasticity bias. Factor analysis was performed on all question items in the questionnaire, and the first principal component obtained when unrotated, which did not exceed 50% of the total variance explained variance, indicated that the homoscedasticity variance was not serious [26]. The principal component factor analysis was performed by SPSS 26.0 software, and the variance explained by the first principal component obtained at unrotated was 48.108%, which was less than 50%, indicating that the homoscedasticity variance problem was not serious and could be further analyzed.

Table 1. Reliability and exploratory factor analysis results

Reliability	Cronbachs' a	KMO	Bartlett's test of sphericity		
			Pseudo Chi-square	df	sig
Proactive Innovation Behavior	0.905	0.94	1260.016	36	0.000
Participatory Management	0.895	0.931	1103.785	28	0.000
Creative self-efficacy	0.81	0.798	363.525	6	0.000
Sense of organizational support	0.858	0.84	910.415	21	0.000
Job satisfaction	0.839	0.794	481.736	6	0.000

Table 2. Results of validation factor analysis

	χ^2/df	RMSEA	CFI	NNFI	IFI	SRMR
Five-factor model	1.878	0.056	0.933	0.927	0.934	0.051
Four-factor model	2.107	0.063	0.915	0.908	0.916	0.054
Three-factor model	2.141	0.064	0.912	0.905	0.912	0.053
Two-factor model	2.156	0.064	0.91	0.904	0.911	0.053
One-factor model	2.246	0.067	0.903	0.939	0.904	0.053

4.3 Related Analysis

The data were analyzed for correlation using spss26.0, Table 3 and Table 4 reflect the mean, standard deviation, and correlation coefficient of each variable. The table shows two-by-two correlations between participative management, creative self-efficacy, organizational support, job satisfaction, and proactive innovation behavior. Participatory management was significantly correlated with proactive innovative behavior ($r = 0.871$, $p < 0.01$), participatory management was significantly correlated with innovative self-efficacy ($r = 0.821$, $p < 0.01$), participatory management was significantly correlated with organizational support ($r = 0.904$, $p < 0.01$), participatory management was significantly correlated with job satisfaction ($r = 0.857$, $p < 0.01$), innovative self-efficacy was significantly related to proactive innovation behavior ($r = 0.854$, $p < 0.01$), creative self-efficacy was significantly related to job satisfaction ($r = 0.701$, $p < 0.01$), organizational support was significantly related to proactive innovation behavior ($r = 0.810$, $p < 0.01$), and organizational support was significantly related to job satisfaction ($r = 0.865$, $p < 0.01$). This laid the foundation for the next hypothesis.

Table 3. Correlation analysis and descriptive statistics

Variables	AVG	SD	1	2	3
Age	1.5552	0.49783			
Sex	2.9288	1.05995	0.021003		
Education	1.8541	0.57014	-0.01558	0.308**	
Length of service	3.9502	1.41333	-0.01131	0.863**	0.332**
Proactive Innovation	3.8754	0.76848	-0.04992	0.505**	0.383**
Participatory Management	3.9764	0.76214	-0.0548	0.471**	0.386**
Creative self-efficacy	3.8923	0.82766	-0.05813	0.490**	0.400**
Sense of organizational support	2.1957	0.78402	-0.04802	0.491**	0.351**
Job satisfaction	2.5587	0.85988	-0.02011	0.484**	0.322**

Note: ** indicates $p < 0.01$, * indicates $p < 0.05$

Table 4. Correlation analysis and descriptive statistics

Variables	4	5	6	7	8
Age					
Sex					
Education					
Length of service					
Proactive Innovation	0.573**				
Participatory Management	0.529**	0.871**			
Creative self-efficacy	0.531**	0.854**	0.821**		
Sense of organizational support	0.564**	0.810**	0.857**	0.771**	
Job satisfaction	0.553**	0.730**	0.799**	0.701**	0.865**

Note: ** indicates $p < 0.01$, * indicates $p < 0.05$

4.4 Regression Analysis

Intermediary effect analysis.

In this study, spss26.0 was used to test the relevant hypotheses. From Table 5 and Table 6, Model 1 shows that participative management has a strong positive effect on employees' active innovation behavior ($\beta = 0.7845, p < 0.001$) Hypothesis H1 was verified. From model 5, participative management has a strong positive effect on creative self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.7866, p < 0.001$) Hypothesis H2 is verified. From model 2, when participative management and creative self-efficacy are introduced into the model simultaneously, creative self-efficacy has a significant effect on active innovation ($\beta = 0.3712, p < 0.001$) The coefficient of the effect of participative management on employee-initiated innovation is significantly lower ($\beta = 0.7845, p < 0.001$) $\rightarrow \beta = 0.4926, p < 0.001$). This shows that creative self-efficacy plays a partially mediating role between participative management and proactive innovation behavior, and hypothesis H3 was tested.

From model 7, Participatory management has a strong positive effect on the sense of organizational support ($\beta = 0.7985, p < 0.001$) Hypothesis H4 was verified. With model 3, by introducing both participative management and organizational support perceptions into the model, the impact of organizational support perceptions on proactive innovation is significant ($\beta = 0.1824, p < 0.01$) and the coefficient of the impact of participative management on employee proactive innovation is significantly lower ($\beta = 22.289, p < 0.001$) $\rightarrow \beta = 0.6389, p < 0.001$). This shows that the sense of organizational support plays a partially mediating role between participative management and proactive innovation behavior, and hypothesis H5 was verified.

Analysis of reconciliation effects.

Hierarchical regression analysis was used to test the moderating role of job satisfaction in the model. As can be seen from Table 5 and Table 6, the interaction term between participative management and job satisfaction was introduced in Model 4, and the interaction term had a significant effect on proactive innovation behavior ($\beta = -0.2417, p < 0.001$) indicating that job satisfaction plays a significant moderating role between participative management and proactive innovation behavior, and Hypothesis H6 was tested.

The interaction term between participative management and job satisfaction was introduced in Model 6, and the interaction term had a significant effect on creative self-efficacy ($\beta = -0.1938, p < 0.001$) indicating that job satisfaction plays a significant moderating role between participative management and creative self-efficacy, and hypothesis H7 was tested.

The interaction term between participative management and job satisfaction was introduced in Model 8, and the interaction term had a significant effect on the sense of organizational support ($\beta = -0.1269, p < 0.001$) indicating that job satisfaction plays a significant moderating role between participative management and the sense of organizational support, and hypothesis H8 was verified.

Table 5. Hierarchical analysis results

	Proactive Innovation			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Age	-0.0075	0.0037	-0.0067	-0.0157
Sex	-0.0043	-0.0272	-0.0006	0.0105
Education	0.045	0.0028	0.0447	-0.0015
Length of service	0.0843**	0.0727*	0.0665*	0.044
Participatory Management	0.7845***	0.4926***	0.6389***	0.5395***
Creative self-efficacy		0.3712***		
Sense of organizational support			0.1824**	
Job satisfaction				-0.0982*
Participatory Management* Job Satisfaction				-0.2417***
R2	0.7762	0.8251	0.7848	0.8056
F	190.78***	215.44***	166.54***	161.62***

Note: *** indicates $p < 0.001$, ** indicates $p < 0.01$, * indicates $p < 0.05$

Table 6. Hierarchical analysis results

	Creative self-efficacy		Sense of organizational support	
	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
Age	-0.0304	-0.0387	-0.0046	-0.0238
Sex	0.0618	0.0743	-0.0201	-0.0066
Education	0.1137*	0.0772	0.0015*	-0.0159
Length of service	0.0312	-0.0073	0.0977	0.0271
Participatory Management	0.7866***	0.5497***	0.7985***	0.3413***
Creative self-efficacy				
Sense of organizational support				
Job satisfaction		-0.028		0.36***
Participatory Management* Job Satisfaction		-0.1938***		-0.1269***
R2	0.6941	0.7125	0.7521	0.8356
F	124.80***	96.65***	166.87***	198.22***

Note: *** indicates $p < 0.001$, ** indicates $p < 0.01$, * indicates $p < 0.05$

5 Conclusion and Suggestions

5.1 Conclusion

This study verified the positive influence relationship between participative management and employee-initiated innovation, and confirmed the mediating role of creative self-efficacy and organizational support in the process, indicating that participative management as a motivational tool has a strong influence on employees' psychological feelings, and employees' creative self-efficacy and organizational support are enhanced in the process of participative management, driving employees' active innovation behavior. At the same time, Job satisfaction negatively moderates the effect of participative management on creative self-efficacy, organizational support, and employee-initiated innovation. The higher the job satisfaction the weaker the effect of participatory management on employees' active innovation behavior, and employees with higher job satisfaction are less likely to obtain a sense of creative self-efficacy and organizational support in the process of participatory management.

5.2 Suggestions

Firstly, enterprises should actively promote the implementation of participatory management in their daily management to enhance the enthusiasm and initiative of employees through participatory management and then drive them to actively carry out innovative activities. At the same time, when implementing participatory management, enterprises should pay attention to expressing recognition of employees' achievements, expressing appreciation for outstanding employees, sharing the future development direction and vision of the enterprise with employees, giving employees more freedom in their work, satisfying employees' needs for developing their own abilities.

Secondly, enterprises should focus on employees' own development, establish a transparent and reasonable promotion mechanism, and a fair reward and punishment system to motivate employees to keep moving toward their career goals. At the same time, create a positive and enterprising cultural atmosphere in the enterprise, to cultivate employees' pioneering spirit, to improve their work pursuit, to give them the opportunity to realize their own life value, so that they can constantly break through their own limits and make higher requirements for their own career planning.

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