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Newcomer Innovative Role Orientation: A Moderated Mediation Model From A Resource-Based Perspective

Abstract

Newcomers can be a source of innovation for organisations, bringing fresh perspectives and novel solutions. Thus, in some organisations, it is desirable for newcomers to adopt an innovative role orientation. Guided by the Pygmalion effect and the conservation of resources theory, we propose a moderated mediation model wherein supervisor expectations for creativity predicts newcomer innovative role orientation through work engagement, and we also expected this mediation effect would be moderated by perceived insider status. Two-wave data collected from 102 graduates from a university in south China largely supported our hypothesized model: Supervisor expectations for creativity indirectly predicted newcomer innovative role orientation via work engagement, and this was more apparent for those newcomers low in perceived insider status, that is, those who did not perceive themselves as organizational insiders. Implications of these findings for theory and practice are discussed.

Key words: supervisor expectations for creativity, role orientation, Pygmalion effect, conservation of resources theory, newcomer

Word count: 5612

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Given that newcomers are often expected to change personally to assimilate into new organizational roles (Fisher, 1986), to date most research efforts have investigated how organizations can align newcomers with organizational norms and rules, encouraging newcomers to adopt a custodial role orientation (Bauer, Bodner, Erdogan, Truxillo, & Tucker, 2007; Saks, Uggerslev, & Fassina, 2007). Yet organisations can also benefit when newcomers adopt the opposite orientation, that is an innovative role orientation (Ashforth, Sluss & Saks, 2007; van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Innovative role orientation ranges from major changes, such as redefining the role in terms of the aims associated with the role, yet can include less radical change, such as to procedures that define how the role is conducted (Jones, 1986; van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

Little is known as to what factors foster newcomers' innovative role orientation. This is particularly interesting because newcomers who have distinct skills and unique job experiences are often considered as potentially valuable resources to generate innovative ideas and bring creative performance (Ashforth, Sluss, & Saks, 2007). However, there is also evidence to show that newcomers do not automatically initiate positive changes to the work environment (e.g., Baer, Leenders, Oldham, & Vadera, 2010; Woods, Mustafa, Anderson, & Sayer, 2018). If newcomers are not enabled to be innovative, their valuable skills and abilities may be wasted (Wang, Kammeyer-Mueller, Liu, & Li, 2015).

To broaden our understanding of how to facilitate newcomer innovative role orientation, we explore a rarely discussed contextual factor in the socialization study, namely supervisor expectations for creativity, defined as the extent to which newcomers are expected to bring creative ideas and performance (Tierney & Farmer, 2004). In the context of organizational socialization, supervisors are considered to be one of the most common resources to help newcomers to clarify job requirements and guide newcomers on appropriate behaviours (Morrison, 1993; Nifadkar, Tsui, & Ashforth, 2012). Supervisor expectations should thus be construed as a major source for newcomers to internalize role perceptions, which can further influence newcomers' future performance and role orientation. The potential link between supervisor expectations for creativity and newcomer role orientation can be explained by the Pygmalion effect that implies that individuals tend to behave in accordance with what is expected of them (Eden, 1984; Natanovich & Eden, 2008; Ambady & Rosenthal, 1993). Eden and Ravid (1982) found out that managers can influence an employee's self-expectations through differential expectations and managerial behaviours, leading to different behaviours and achievements from followers. Sutton and Woodman (1989) suggested when the target individual receives the expectations from the individual who are normally in the authority, they are more likely to increase their efforts, resulting in improved performance and productivity.

However, as indicated by Karakowsky, DeGama and McBey (2012), prior research often simplifies the Pygmalion effect by assuming that managerial expectations can translate directly into employee performance through self-expectations (Eden, 1992; Duan, Li, Xu, & Wu, 2017; Carmeli & Schaubroeck, 2007; Tierney & Farmer, 2004; White & Locke, 2000), with insufficient attention to the target's (employee's) own perceptions and experience. Consistent with this view, we propose that the self-expectations mechanism only represents one lens through which the effects of supervisor expectations for creativity can be interpreted. Supervisor expectations for creativity also represents a supportive and resourceful context. Take Tierney and Farmer's (2004) study for example, they found that leaders are more likely to demonstrate creativity-supportive behaviour when they expect their employees to be creative, which in turn links to employees' creative behaviour. Viewed from this perspective, this resource-based influence of supervisor expectations for creativity on role behaviours cannot be fully captured by self-expectations.

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Conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989) is therefore perceived as a useful perspective to provide an alternative view to understand why supervisor expectations for creativity is associated with newcomer role orientation. Hobfoll (2001) suggested that individuals with resources are in a better position to invest those resources. Because innovative role orientation represents extra-role attempts, such as redefining one's role in the organization (Crant, 2000), this orientation may require additional efforts and energy. A handful of studies have demonstrated that newcomers with more resources increase their capacity to deal with uncertainty and achieve job satisfaction (Jokisaari & Nurmi, 2009). Therefore, we argue that newcomers who are expected to be creative are more resourceful, and therefore more likely and capable of engaging at work, which may further influence their innovative role orientation. In other words, supervisor expectations for creativity is associated to newcomer innovative role orientation through work engagement. Work engagement, defined as a 'positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigour, dedication, and absorption' (Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, & Bakker, 2002, p. 74), reflects the state of adequate resources (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2009).

Moreover, Karakowsky et al. (2012) suggested that existing studies on the Pygmalion effect place more emphasis on leaders than on their subordinates, and we know little about when leader expectations and support can effectively trigger the Pygmalion effect. They called for more studies on the fundamental question of 'what factors facilitate or impede the link between leader expectations and subordinate performance' (p. 581), and suggested researchers consider the moderating factors of the target's cognitive receptiveness towards their Pygmalion leader's efforts. Following Karakowsky et al.'s suggestion, we propose that target's perceived insider status (i.e., a sense of personal relatedness with other organization members, Stemper & Masterson, 2002) may serve as one important moderator to influence the impact of supervisor expectations for creativity on newcomer innovative role orientation because newcomers who perceive themselves as organizational insiders are more likely to worry about potential social cost associated with innovative role orientation. From the COR perspective which suggests that individuals attempt to obtain, maintain and protect their valued resources (Hobfoll, 2001), those worries may deplete newcomers' energy and lead to the lower level of innovative role orientation. In contrast, for newcomers who perceive themselves as organizational outsiders, they do not really have to worry about the negative impact of engaging innovative role orientation, as there are no such 'insider status' to sacrifice.

To sum up, we propose and test a moderated mediation model (see Figure 1), which jointly including both mediating (i.e., work engagement), and moderating (i.e., perceived insider status) mechanisms to show how and when supervisor expectations of creativity can elicit innovative role orientation among newcomers. By examining these relationships, the present research contributes to the literature in several ways. First of all, a significant group of scholars have suggested that situational factors are essential to account for the variation in individual socialization behaviours (Ashforth et al., 2007; Bauer et al., 2007). However, there are fewer suggestions on how such contextual factors may manifest their impacts on newcomer innovative role orientation. As discussed earlier, we focus on the influence of supervisor expectations of creativity here to tackle this issue.

Second, this study addresses the research call of exploring mechanisms to better explain the relationship between supervisor expectations for creativity and employee creativity (Wang & Gu, 2017). Given the self-expectation mechanism has largely focused on task performance (Whiteley, Sy, & Johnson, 2012), we suggest supervisor expectations can also reflect a resourceful context and promote feelings and energies leading to affective and

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motivational state (i.e., work engagement). The mechanism of work engagement can be more critical to employees' extra-role activities such as innovative role orientation.

Third, Karakowsky et al. (2012) suggested future research should examine "the dynamics that make an employee more or less susceptible to the Pygmalion leader's expectations and supportive behaviour" (p. 592). Our study addresses these concerns by investigating the moderator of perceived insider status from the perspective of COR theory. We are not aware of any other empirical tests of testing perceived insider status in the context of organizational socialization to date. By examining these contingent moderators, we aim to provide insights into the boundary conditions that can reflect more accurately the way on how the influence of supervisor expectations of creativity on newcomer innovative role orientation can be differed.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Supervisor expectations for creativity

Guided by the Pygmalion effect, we propose that supervisor expectations of creativity can manifest as a dimension of work climate to deliver 'expectancies' and signal potential outcomes of such behaviour (Scott & Bruce, 1994). In the context of organizational socialization, supervisors are one of the most common resources for newcomers to seek information and assimilate into the organization (Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992). Therefore, supervisor expectations should be construed as providing critical standards for role performance. The supervisor may hold various expectations towards newcomers after their organizational entry such as understanding work procedures, and performing tasks efficiently. One supervisory expectation is the newcomer's orientation to their role, which may range from taking a custodial approach and replicating previous the role as performed previously, or it may be to bring new ideas and challenge the status quo. Supervisor expectations for creativity provide an essential cue if newcomers are expected to innovate in their role. Specifically, supervisor expectations for creativity is found to increase subordinates' intrinsic motivation (Atwater & Carmeli, 2009), creative performance (Tierney & Farmer, 2004), and involvement in innovative behaviour (Carmeli & Schaubroeck, 2007; Scott & Bruce, 1994). In fact, empirical evidence on the positive link between supervisor expectations for creativity and employee creativity has been gained not only from Western cultural contexts, but also Eastern cultural contexts (e.g., Wang & Gu, 2017).

From the COR perspective, we further argue that supervisor expectations may promote feelings and energies leading to affective and motivational state, in the form of work engagement. In fact, the nascent research stream suggests that supervisor supportive behaviours promote stronger effort by enhancing positive affect, identity and cooperative exchanges (Haynie, Mossholder, & Harris, 2016). Building on these dynamics, we examined work engagement as a motivational vehicle capable of explaining supervisor expectations for creativity on newcomer innovative role orientation. We now turn to an elaboration of the mediating role work engagement in this relationship.

Mediator of work engagement

From the perspective of COR, when people have more resources, they are increasingly capable of acquiring more resources in the future because their resource reservoir help to protect people from loss (Hobfoll, 2001, 2011). We propose that newcomers are more likely to experience engagement at work if they perceive a high level of supervisor expectations for creativity. First, supervisor expectations for creativity facilitate a feeling of 'can do' in the employees (Wang & Gu, 2017), which acts as a motivational resource, leading to positive assessments of their own creative capabilities (Gong, Huang, & Fahr, 2009; Huang, Krasikova, & Liu, 2016), and increasing creative self-efficacy (Wang & Gu, 2017). Second,

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in the case of supervisor expectations for creativity, the supervisor may behave differently towards high- and low expectancy employees. For example, Tierney and Farmer (2004) found that leaders are more likely to demonstrate creativity-supportive behaviour when they expect their employees to be creative. Similarly, in the educational psychology literature, a number of studies have shown that teachers are more supportive to their high expectancy students, providing more positive feedback and more opportunities for them to demonstrate mastery (Broyphy, 1983; Jussim & Harber, 2005). In the organizational socialization context, when supervisors are supportive, newcomers may feel welcomed and valued, and thus more likely to engage in risk-taking behaviours without the fear of punishment (Graen & Cashman, 1975). Likewise, newcomers who receive expectations from their supervisor experience a psychologically safe context to initiate change (Perrot, Bauer, Abonneau, Campoy, Erdogan, & Liden, 2014). Such psychological safety can serve as an essential resource to help newcomers to overcome aversive physiological arousal, thereby being engaged at work.

Moreover, we argue that engaged newcomers are more likely to take innovative role orientation. First, engaged employees are more likely to explore environment and seem to be more open to new experiences and act creatively (Bakker & Xanthopoulou, 2013). The experience of vigour, energy, or aliveness associated with work engagement can stimulate extra-role behaviour (Bakker, Demerouti & Berbeke, 2004) and self-starting initiatives (Schmitt, Den Hartog, & Belschak, 2016). Second, given work engagement suggests an affective-motivational state (Macey & Schneider, 2008), positive emotions act as important personal resources to widen individual's scope of awareness and behavioral repertoires (Fredrickson, 1998), buffering individuals against stress (Cohn, Fredrickson, Brown, Mikels, & Conway, 2009). Therefore, although innovative role orientation is more risky, we propose that engaged newcomers embody affective energies and resources that are crucial to generate a willingness to pursue innovative role orientation towards quality task performance. Taken together, we propose:

Hypothesis 1: Work engagement mediates the positive relationship between supervisor expectation of creativity and newcomer innovative role orientation.

Moderator of perceived insider status

As discussed earlier, the Pygmalion effect literature does not fully capture the subtle psychological effect towards the willingness of engaging in innovative role orientation. After all, although innovative role orientation can be beneficial for organizational development (Jones, 1986; van Maanen & Schein, 1979), and the necessary changes can help to improve task proficiency (Anderston, Potonik, & Zhou, 2014), change-oriented attempts such as innovative role orientation may also bring social costs (Cooper-Thomas & Burke, 2012), because modifying work environment might not always be well-received by other colleagues. Those who challenge the status quo or authority are at risk of losing desirable social resources, which may even result in conflict and less satisfactory relationships with colleagues (Janssen, 2003), requiring future resource depletion (Ng & Feldman, 2012).

We therefore draw on COR theory to discuss the contingent factor in the relationship between work engagement and innovative role orientation. Specifically, this study discusses the moderator of perceived insider status (vs. perceived outsider status), because it deeply affects employees' attitudes and behaviours (Stemper & Masterson, 2002), and the insider status perceptions are often developed through organizational socialization processes (Thomas & Anderson, 1998). This intimacy translates into the feeling of perceived acceptance by other insiders (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Therefore, perceived insider status is an indicator of a sense of belonging to the community of the organization, which is a kin to the concept of social acceptance (Bauer et al., 2007).

According to the COR theory, stress occurs when the valued resources are threatened with loss or are actually lost (Hobfoll, 1988). Therefore, when confronted with the potential

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threat of losing valued resources, employees may attempt to distance themselves from the stressors to engage in passive behaviours (Hobfoll & Shirom, 1993). In doing so, they try to protect their resources and avoid the depletion of energy. Given that relational resources are essential for reducing stress associated with organisational socialisation (Ellis, Nifadkar, Bauer, & Erdogan, 2017), we argue that newcomers who perceive themselves as organizational insiders are more likely to consider innovative role orientation as the threat to their insider status. Such worries may drain energy resources from them to make sense of innovative role orientation. In this regard, rather than engaging in innovative role orientation, those newcomers with higher perceived insider status may invest fewer resources into those change-oriented tasks to protect them from the potential loss of this valued relational resource of perceived insider status. On the contrary, newcomers who perceive themselves as organizational outsiders do not have such concerns, and may appraise innovative role orientation as less threatening to their relational resources as they have little to lose. In other words, they are less sensitive to the negative signal delivered by innovative role orientation. In support of this idea, Kiazad, Seibert and Kraimer (2014) suggested that employees are more likely to engage in innovative acts when they perceive little sacrifice to resources rather than high sacrifice.

Moreover, COR theory suggests that individuals with limited resources need to acquire additional resources, even if their chance of success are low (Hobfoll, 2001). The relevant interpretation of this tenet for understanding the work engagement – innovative role orientation relationship is that when newcomers do not perceive themselves as organizational insiders, they may not wait for the group to accept them; instead, they may respond to the lack of relational resource by proactively investing time and efforts to engage in role innovation (Scott & Bruce, 1994). In doing so, employees may acquire potential recognition and rewards from the work group (Ng & Feldman, 2012). Therefore, we argue that newcomers who perceive themselves as outsiders may have a stronger motive to engage in extra-role behaviours such as innovative role orientation in order to acquire additional resources to facilitate their adjustment, although the further loss of relational resource is likely due to the potential social cost associated with innovative ideas and initiatives (Janseen, 2003).

Additionally, according to Granovetter's (1973) strength of weak ties perspective, weak ties are more likely to facilitate nonredundant connections in the dense social contacts, and thus leave more room for critical thoughts and divergent ideas stimulated by outside connections. Newcomers who entered the organization but still perceive themselves as organizational outsiders are not fully socialized, and often on the periphery (van Mann, 1975). Perry-Smith and Shalley (2003) stated that employees on the periphery provides 'a unique opportunity to fully take advantage of boundary-spanning ties and to see things in fresh ways' (p. 98). Further, they argued that the peripheral actor who are not firmly embedded in the dense social circles are more likely to avoid automatic conformity with organizational rules and norms, which is beneficial to the development of creativity. In contrast, the insiders who have gained a more central position may have little willing to pursue innovative role orientation due to the comfortable feeling associated to the strong ties with other insiders. Therefore, we propose that perceived insider status may mitigate the positive impact of work engagement on newcomer innovative role orientation.

Hypothesis 2: Perceived insider status moderates the positive relationship between work engagement and newcomer innovative role orientation. Such relationship is stronger when perceived insider status is low rather than high.

Likewise, we argued that perceived insider status should attenuate the role of work engagement in mediating the effects of supervisor expectations for creativity on newcomer innovative role orientation. Therefore, we posit:

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Hypothesis 3: Perceived insider status moderates the positive relationship between supervisor expectations for creativity and newcomer innovative role orientation via work engagement. Such relationship is more pronounced when perceived insider status is low rather than high.

METHOD

Sample and procedure

Data were collected from recently graduated students from a university in south China at two time points, four months after graduation (Time 1), and then two months later (Time 2). Email invitations were sent to graduates from two departments, requesting participation from those who had started a job after graduation. Participation was voluntary and was acknowledged with a gift voucher.

We collected demographic information, supervisor expectation for creativity at Time 1, and then work engagement, perceived insider status and role orientation at Time 2. All surveys were assigned a code number to track returns. At Time 1, 178 graduates responded with useable data. The Time 2 survey were sent out 6 months later after graduation to all consenting respondents from Time 1. 119 responded (67%). Among them, there were 10 unmatched cases and 7 case included missing data. Therefore, our final combined sample consisted of 102 respondents who provided complete data at Time 1 and Time 2. A multiple analysis of variance revealed no significant mean differences between participants who responded at Time 1 only and those who responded at both Time 1 and Time 2 in terms of age, gender, employment type and any key variable of interest. Altogether, 102 matched complete responses represent a variety of job sectors. Among them, 43% participants were in the sector of finance and auditing, and 93% participants reported that they had permanent employment contract. Also, the majority of participants were female (69%) with an average age of 23.7 years and an average tenure of 97 days.

Measures

The translation back-translation method suggested by Brislin (1986) was applied to develop the Chinese version of the survey. Likert agreement scales with 5 points were used across all measures (1 = “strongly disagree” to 5 = “strongly agree”).

Supervisor expectations for creativity were assessed with a four-item scale from Carmeli and Schaubroeck (2007). An example item is “My supervisor expects me to be creative”.

Work engagement was measured at Time 2, using six items from Ashford and Black (1996). An example item is “At my work, I feel full of energy.”

Perceived insider status was assessed at Time 2, consisting of three items adopted from Stamper and Masterson (2002). An example item is ‘I feel like I am an “outsider” from my work organization (R)’.

Newcomer innovative role orientation was measured at Time 2, with five items developed by Jones (1986). However, we deleted one reverse-coded item ‘The procedures for performing my job are generally appropriate in my view’ due to a low factor loading. An example item is “While I am satisfied with my overall job responsibilities, I have altered the procedures for doing by job”.

Analytic strategy

Data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics 24 for descriptive analyses and Amos 24 for confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Interactive effects were tested by using hierarchical multiple regression analysis. Following the suggestions of Cohen, West and Aiken (2003), all predictors were mean-centred prior to analysis, and we then plotted the regression of the dependent variable on the independent variable at two levels of moderating variable (i.e. ± 1 SD from the mean). To test the moderated mediation model, we used PROCESS v3.

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PROCESS is an advanced regression-based approach focusing on conditional indirect effect testing via bootstrapping (Hayes, 2013). In our model, we examine the impact of supervisor expectation for creativity on newcomer innovative role orientation through the mediator work engagement. We also examine whether this mediating effect is moderated by perceived insider status.

RESULTS

Means, standard deviations, measurement reliabilities and correlations among variables are displayed in Table 1. Cronbach's alphas for all the scales investigated in this study were above 0.7, which indicates an acceptable internal consistency within those scales used for following analysis. As indicated, all the correlations were significant.

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Measurement Model

We ran confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) to establish the discriminability of the constructs. The CFA results showed that all the individual standardized parameters estimated from the exogenous constructs to their corresponding indicators were statistically significant. The 4-factor model (supervisor expectations for creativity, work engagement, perceived outsider status and role orientation) provided an acceptable fit ($\chi^2(113) = 199.059, p < .001$; CFI = .94, TLI = .92, RMSEA = .066), with all items significantly loading on their hypothesized factor. The 4-factor model fit significantly better than the 3-factor model ($\chi^2(116) = 302.733, p < .001$; CFI = .87, TLI = .82, RMSEA = .095) and the 1-factor model ($\chi^2(119) = 793.636, p < .001$; CFI = .51, TLI = .37, RMSEA = .179).

Hypothesis Testing

A hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to test the mediating and moderating regression effects. As shown in Table 2, the results demonstrated that there was significant direct relationship between supervisor expectations for creativity and innovative role orientation ($\beta = .34, p < .001$). However, when including the mediator work engagement, the positive effect of supervisor expectations for creativity on innovative role orientation become nonsignificant ($\beta = .17, p = .085$), and work engagement remained positively related to newcomer innovative role orientation ($\beta = .37, p < .001$), indicating a full mediation effect. The indirect effect of supervisor expectations for creativity on innovative role orientation via work engagement was estimated as 0.14 with the 95% bias-corrected confidence interval as 0.04 and 0.25. Since the confidence interval did not contain zero, the indirect effect was therefore statistically significant, providing additional evidence to support Hypothesis 1.

Model 4 of Table 2 shows the results of examining whether perceived insider status moderates the positive relationship between work engagement and innovative role orientation. The interaction term was significant ($\beta = -.27, p = .01$), and explained an additional 5% of the variance in innovative role orientation. To illustrate, as shown in Figure 2, the positive relationship between work engagement and innovative role orientation is relatively stronger for newcomers who did not perceive themselves as organizational insiders. The simple slope test further showed that, at high level of perceived insider status, work engagement was not significantly related to innovative role orientation (simple slope = .13, $p = .223$). On the other hand, at low level of perceived insider status, relationship between work engagement was positively related to innovative role orientation (simple slope = .62, $p < .001$). Therefore, the significant interactions were in line with the hypothesized forms, providing support to Hypothesis 2.

We further bootstrapped the confidence intervals to assess whether perceived insider status also moderated the indirect effects of supervisor expectations for creativity on

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innovative role orientation via work engagement. The PROCESS output revealed that the 95% bias-corrected confidence interval (-.12, 95% CI [-.28, -.01]), indicating that the conditional indirect effect of supervisor expectations for creativity on innovative role orientation is significant when newcomers perceived themselves as outsiders (.27, 95% CI [.10, .46]), but not significant if they perceive themselves as insiders (.05, 95% CI [-.10, .17]). Therefore, Hypothesis 3 was supported.

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

DISCUSSION

Given the importance of newcomers for the organizational development, there is increasing attention on how supportive work environments can trigger newcomer innovative initiatives to challenge the status quo of the internal organizational environment (Kammeyer-Mueller, Livingston, & Liao, 2011). Our study contributes to this emerging stream of research and investigated why and when supervisor expectations for creativity promote newcomer innovative role orientation, guided by the Pygmalion effect and the COR theory.

Our results extend beyond existing socialization studies by identifying supervisor expectations for creativity as an important antecedent of newcomer innovative role orientation through the mechanism of work engagement. This finding not only answers the research call to examine other motivational mechanisms through which supervisor expectations for creativity affect employee behaviours (Jiang & Gu, 2017). The results also indicate that one cannot take for granted a universal positive effect of the Pygmalion effect on newcomer role orientation, but rather this depends on the presence of certain boundary conditions, in this case perceived insider status.

For newcomers making the decision of where to orient themselves on the continuum from innovative role orientation to custodial role orientation, newcomers also evaluate if innovative role orientation may be too costly even when they have plenty resources (Cooper-Thomas & Burke, 2012). In the present study, we found out the conditional indirect effect exists for those newcomers who did not perceive themselves as insiders. That is, the psychological and emotional resources provided by supervisor expectations can stimulate work engagement, but engaged newcomers adopt an innovative role orientation only when they perceive themselves as outsiders. In other words, when they perceive themselves as organizational insiders, work engagement is less likely to translate into innovative role orientation. From the COR perspective, we argued that this is because the newcomers with perceived insider status are more likely to protect this valued relational resource by distancing themselves from innovative role orientation. Therefore, work engagement is less likely to elicit innovative role orientation for these newcomers. Consistent with this finding, Woods and colleagues (2018) found out that highly conscientious employees are less innovative with longer tenure, suggesting that establishing relationships with colleagues make innovation less possible. Similarly, Jokisarri and Nurmi (2012) found that sparser networks, that is when employees were less well integrated, they showed higher innovation; and Wiersema and Bantel (1993) found that new CEOs with long organizational tenure that includes deep-rooted relationships with colleagues are less likely to make necessary innovations.

Our findings contribute to the theory in several ways. First, drawing on COR theory, we propose a moderated mediation model to understand the effects of supervisor expectations for creativity on newcomer innovative role orientation. The result implies that work engagement

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mechanism provides a plausible account of the positive effects of supervisor expectations for creativity on newcomer innovative role orientation, but this mechanism has rarely been discussed in the existing literature.

Second, this study examined the Pygmalion effect on the organizational socialization context and sheds lights on contingent factors to explain when the Pygmalion effect occurs (McNatt et al., 2000). Specifically, our study suggests that engaged newcomers are more likely to demonstrate innovative role orientation when they perceive themselves as outsiders, because those newcomers with perceived insider status may strive to retain and protect their perceived insider status as a valued social resource. We therefore articulate a viewpoint that the triggered innovative role orientation can be influenced by the perceived insider status. Our results provide support for Karakowsky et al.'s (2012) proposition that target's cognitive perceptions of their supervisor's expectations influence the impact of the Pygmalion effect. With more attention to the characteristics of the target employee, we are likely to gain a greater understanding of when and for whom the Pygmalion effect will occur.

Third, this study also extends the application of COR theory to the socialization context when discussing newcomer change-oriented attempts. Previous socialization studies have indicated that COR theory is a useful theoretical framework to understand the issue of employee well-being (e.g., Ellis et al., 2015). However, this perspective has rarely been applied to explain newcomer change-oriented attempts. In fact, most of existing studies on newcomer change-oriented behaviours such as creative performance focus on supervisory or organizational positive treatments such as empowering leadership (Harris et al., 2014) and institutionalized socialization tactics (Ashforth et al., 2007). The concept of reciprocity is noted in those studies based on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964). For this reason, social support is perceived as essential condition to drive change attempts. However, studies based on social exchange cannot capture the dynamics of the diverse extant resources at work. In this study, we found out the perceived insider status can influence the effect of supervisor expectations for creativity on the innovative role orientation via work engagement. This finding highlights the motive of protecting and maintaining valued resource (Hobfoll, 2001). It suggests that newcomers engage innovative acts only when they perceive little sacrifice to resources rather than high sacrifice. Clearly, our study provides evidence to support the resource-based perspective on discussing newcomer innovative role orientation.

Practical implications

Given the importance of creativity and innovation for organizational development, considerable research efforts have been taken to discuss how to capitalise on the fresh skills and abilities of newcomers (Wang et al., 2015), and how to enhance employees' willingness to bring creative ideas and act innovatively (Amabile, Schatzel, Moneta, & Kramer, 2004; Harris, Li, Boswell, & Zhang, 2014). Our results reveal that the level of supervisor expectation is related to newcomer innovative role orientation through work engagement. Therefore, when deciding the job roles and responsibilities, managers need to consider if innovative role orientation is really expected from newcomers. If so, managers should provide support to help newcomers engage at work and facilitate innovative role orientation.

Our results also reveal that not all newcomers respond to supervisor expectations for creativity in the same manner. More specifically, we show that the effect of supervisor expectations for creativity on innovative role orientation differs across newcomers' perceived insider status. The result suggests that innovative role orientation is less likely to be demonstrated for those who have already achieved perceived insider status perhaps due to the concern of potential threat of losing insider status if engaging innovative role orientation. Put differently, although previous studies indicate that feeling a sense of belong is essential for newcomer adaptation (Bauer et al., 2007), our study suggests that innovative role orientation is more likely when newcomers are not fully socialized. Therefore, it is so essential to make

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use of the first couple of months if innovative role orientation is expected from newcomers. Organizations need to provide support and resources to make it happen.

Limitations and future research

Despite the contributions of the present study, certain methodological challenges are also worth noting. First of all, as our participants were graduates. While graduates are an important population to study, given their role in injecting talent into the labour market, we do not know whether these findings generalize either to more experienced newcomers or newcomers with fewer years of education. Also, we test these ideas using data from newcomers in China, a context with a highly collectivist culture (Hofstede, 2001), where individuals feel a stronger duty to uphold group benefits and maintain social harmony (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Chen, 1995). Although the motivation to maintain and acquire resources is assumed to be general, the types and interpretation of resources may be culturally nested (Hobfoll, 2011). Future research using data from the Western cultural context is encouraged. Moreover, it is noted that our measures are based on self-reports. Although our analysis provided no evidence of common method biases affecting our results, future research using data from multiple time points and multiple sources would further offset such concerns. Also, the small sample size is another methodological limitation. Because this study focused on newcomers who joined the organization recently, the sample is constrained by the number of employees hired. Larger sample sizes are desirable in future studies, achieved either through targeting an organisation with large numbers of newcomers joining, or sampling across organisations.

Conclusions

Given that newcomers are often considered as new resources for the organization's development and long-term survival, newcomer innovative role orientation may be expected and encouraged. Drawing from the Pygmalion effect and COR theory, our study represents the first attempt to investigate how and when supervisor expectations for creativity predict newcomer innovative role orientation. The moderated mediation model tested highlights the role of work engagement and perceived insider status to influence the effect of supervisor expectations for creativity on newcomer role orientation. Going forward, we hope that the present study opens the door for future research regarding the combined effects of the work context and perceived insider status on newcomer role orientation.

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Table 1.

Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations among Variables.

	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4
1. supervisor expectations for creativity	3.30	.74	(.85)			
2. work engagement	3.70	.72	.45***	(.93)		
3. innovative role orientation	3.67	.58	.34***	.45***	(.83)	
4. perceived insider status	3.80	.83	-.09	.16	.04	(.87)

Note. $N = 102$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

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Table 2.

Results of the Proposed Relationships.

Testing steps	Work engagement		Innovative role orientation		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model3	Model 4	Model 5
Main variable					
Supervisor expectations for creativity	.43***	.34***	.17	.17	.19
Mediator					
Work engagement			.37***	.37***	.46***
Moderator					
Perceived insider status				-.01	.08
Interaction					
Work engagement x Perceived insider status					-.27*
R ²	.21	.12	.23	.23	.28
Adjusted R	.20	.11	.21	.20	.25
F-statistic	26.64***	13.17***	14.44***	9.53***	9.31***
R ² change			.11***	.00	.05*
F-statistic change			13.99***	.00	6.92*

Note. Standardized regression coefficients were reported.

$N = 102$.

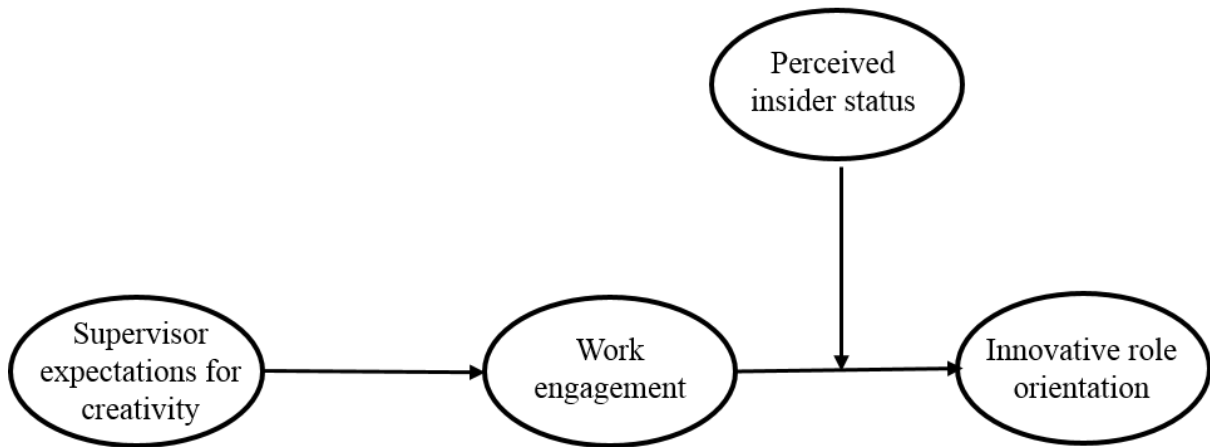
* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$

*** $p < .001$

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Figure 1.

Research Model.

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Figure 2.

Plot of 2-way Moderated Regression Showing Relationship between Work Engagement and Innovative Role Orientation under Low and High Perceived Insider Status.

