

New Wine in an Old Bottle? Zhong-Yong Thinking and Creativity

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Abstract : Zhong-Yong represents unique values and cognitive beliefs of Chinese culture. Zhong-Yong thinking emphasizes (a) holistic thinking and perspective taking, (b) tolerance of contradictions, and (c) pursuance of a person's interpersonal and inner harmony. With a unique way of naïve dialectical thinking based on Chinese culture, previous studies have found that people with higher Zhong-Yong thinking have more cognitive resources and resilience to make decision for dilemmas and cope stresses. Creativity is defined as the behavior to create novel and value products and viewed as the most important capital for individuals and enterprises. However, the relationship between Zhong-Yong thinking and creativity is still remaining to be unexplored. Three studies were conducted to explore the effects of Zhong-Yong thinking on creativity. In Study1, with 87 undergraduate students from a university in southern Taiwan as participants, we used questionnaire to measure Zhong-Yong thinking and processed creative task (unusual uses task) to get indicators of fluency and flexibility. After controlling background and openness to experience of Big five, the results showed that Zhong-Yong thinking had significant positive effects on fluency and flexibility. In Study 2, 97 undergraduate students were recruited to do Zhong-Yong thinking task and creative task. The result showed that, compared with control group, the participants had higher creative performance after being primed with Zhong-Yong thinking. In Study 3, we adopted questionnaire survey and took 397 employees from private enterprises in Taiwan as sample. Besides the main effects of Zhong-Yong thinking, the moderating effects on the relationship between leadership behavior and employee's creative performance were also investigated. We found that (a) Zhong-Yong thinking was positively associated to creative performance; (b) Zhong-Yong thinking strengthened the positive effects of transformational and authoritative leadership on creative performance. Finally, the implications of theory/practice and limitations/future directions were also discussed.

Keywords : Zhong-Yong thinking, creativity and creative performance, unusual uses task, transformational leadership, authoritative leadership

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