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Article

Openness to Experience and Creativity: The Role of Promotion Focus

Cogent Business & Management

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Suggested Citation: Abbasi, Saliha Gul; Alaghbari, Mohammed Abdulrazzaq; Abbas, Mazhar; Beshr, Baligh; Al-Ghazali, Basheer M. (2023) : Openness to Experience and Creativity: The Role of Promotion Focus, Cogent Business & Management, ISSN 2331-1975, Taylor & Francis, Abingdon, Vol. 10, Iss. 3, pp. 1-10,
<https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2023.2238390>

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/294551>

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To cite this article: Saliha Gul Abbasi, Mohammed Abdulrazzaq Alaghbari, Mazhar Abbas, Baligh Beshr & Basheer M. Al-Ghazali (2023) Openness to Experience and Creativity: The Role of Promotion Focus, Cogent Business & Management, 10:3, 2238390, DOI: [10.1080/23311975.2023.2238390](https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2023.2238390)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2023.2238390>



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Received: 31 October 2021
Accepted: 15 July 2023

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Reviewing editor:
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MANAGEMENT | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Openness to Experience and Creativity: The Role of Promotion Focus

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Abstract: This paper investigates the impact of openness to experience (OE) on the two distinct dimensions of creativity; radical creativity (RC) and incremental creativity, with promotion focus (PF) as regulatory factor and as the mediating mechanism. Drawing on the recent re-conceptualization of creativity as a multi-dimensional phenomenon; the current study attempts to explain the relationship of OE and PF with two dimensions of creativity. Sample is drawn from employees of advertising agencies working in creative departments. A three wave time lagged survey of 293 creative employees of advertising agencies in Karachi, Pakistan was conducted. SPSS Process Macro and AMOS software were used to analyze the data. OE was found to have an impact on both dimensions of creativity, but mediation effects of PF were confirmed between OE and RC only. The findings may assist the managers to better plan, hire and manage their creative workforce according to the jobs that require different forms of creativity. Future directions and limitations are discussed following the findings.

Subjects: Business, Management and Accounting; Industry & Industrial Studies; Cultural Studies; Education

Keywords: Advertising; incremental creativity; radical creativity; openness to experience; Pakistan; promotion focus

1. Introduction

Openness to experience (OE) is a personality trait and one of the dimensions of big five model to assess personality. It is the degree to which a person is imaginative, creative, broad-minded and curious (Raja & Johns, 2010). In the literature related to personality studies, OE has been found to have an influence on creativity of employees. Studies have found that needs, nature and forms of creativity may vary for different jobs. Some jobs require radical changes associated with exploring new avenues (Christensen et al., 2019). Participation in creative activities requires positive emotions (Smith et al., 2022). This study is an attempt to elaborate the underlying mechanisms that influence the direct relationship between OE and creativity. Employee creativity has been examined as a multi-dimensional construct. While pursuing some task, people regulate their thoughts and behaviors in either of the two ways. They may have the promotion focus (PF) or the prevention focus. These two factors are introduced as the motivational elements in this study. The motivation behind prevention focus is to avoid loss while fulfilling the responsibilities. Avoidant strategies are often used. Those having a PF, strive for achievement and advancement. They look out for conditions that let them closer to achieving their goals and completing their tasks. The reason

to use approach strategies is because the focus is to achieve goals rather than to avoid loss. Promotion focused individuals are more inclined towards positive workplace behaviors like citizenship, performance and innovation. Those having a prevention focus strive to fulfill duties and obligations. They avoid any situations that can divert their attention from pursuing a goal. They emphasize on following aspirations and ideals (Ayaburi et al., 2019). People involved in creative work may not achieve their goals initially. They have to face failures before finally coming up with a desired outcome. Creative activities enhance well-being. OE has been found to be associated with greater degree of everyday creative activities (Smith et al., 2022). This study examined the mediating role of PF on creativity because promotion focuses on gains and positive outcomes. Creativity is not a typical task or job that only needs obligations to be fulfilled, and is associated with prevention focus. In this study, we have examined the direct and mediating relationship between OE and creativity by utilizing PF as the mediating mechanism between these direct relationships. There is scarcity of studies that examined the mediating mechanisms as a motivational factor to enhance creativity. Motivation is the key to behavior. The population, i.e., employees working in advertising agencies in Pakistan are involved in creative activities on daily basis. They need to be motivated to produce desired results. Creative people must be willing to be committed to such tasks. There is scarcity of studies conducted in advertising sector of Pakistan to gauge the level of creativity. The premise of the study is built around self-regulation theory (SRT). SRT is a system of conscious personal management that involves the process of guiding one's own thoughts, behaviors and feelings to reach goals.

This study intends to make important theoretical contributions. First, it provides a clarity of relationship between OE and the two dimensions of creativity, i.e., radical creativity (RC) and incremental creativity (IC). Previous studies have provided mixed results when these relationships were examined. Second, PF has been introduced as a mediating mechanism between OE and creativity. There is scarcity of research studies particularly in developing countries like, Pakistan that have examined the mediating effects of self-regulating mechanism between specific dispositional factors and creativity. This study has thus, tried to differentiate its impact on differing types of creativity (Javed et al., 2018). The study has been conducted in advertising sector of Pakistan that involves creative and innovative work in all aspects.

Thus, this study has the following objectives:

- (1) To examine the mediation of OE on IC and RC
- (2) To examine the mediation of PF between OE and creativity

2. Literature review

2.1. OE and creativity

There are number of traits that describe personality like exuberant, hardworking, nervous, social, careful, and original. Many scales have been developed to assess personality (Christensen et al., 2019). Most of these traits can be organized in terms of five broader factors. This organization is known in literature as Big-Five model of personality. OE is one of the five dimensions of Big-Five model (Robbins et al., 2020).

OE characterizes individuals who are often eager and willing to experience a wide variety of emotions, ideas, feelings and activities (Banagou et al., 2021). Open individuals appreciate art, culture and beauty (Judge & Zapata, 2015). Their emotional reactions are richer and deeper than others. They are willing to adopt new methods to do things. They are liberal, politically and socially and have intellectual interests.

Creative people often consider their creative activities as an extension of their personality. Being curious and imaginative, these traits of open people influence their perceptions in a different way.

Studies have revealed that people with these traits are involved in creative and innovative activities (Banagou et al., 2021). Prior research has focused creativity as a uni-dimensional construct (Shalley et al., 2004). Later, scholars realized that creativity may be a multi-dimensional construct (Xu et al., 2016). This study examined the influence of OE on two types of creativity, i.e., RC and IC. RC is defined by ideas that substantially differ from existing practices in an organization. IC involves minor changes in existing practices (Xu et al., 2016). According to Judge and Zapata (2015), OE is a catalyst that drives toward creative expression and exploration. Open individuals are more likely to succeed in careers and jobs that involve creativity and innovation. They enlarge their experiences including work environment (McCrae & Costa, 1997). OE is associated with creativity and divergent thinking (Raja & Johns, 2010). Thus, the previous studies show that open individuals perform better on jobs that require independence but demand high level of innovation (Judge & Zapata, 2015). However,, there is scarcity of studies that have examined the impact of OE on creativity as a multi-dimensional construct (Jaussi & Randel, 2014). Hence, it is proposed that

H_{1(a)}: There is a significant and positive relationship between OE and RC.

H_{1(b)}: There is a significant and positive relationship between OE and IC.

2.2. OE and PF

Self-regulation is an important component of behavior. It is the ability and desire to control, evaluate and change one's own behavior. People regulate their thoughts and behaviors in different ways (Neill, Pathak, aribbens, Noel & Singh, 2018). There are two broader categories of people when self-regulation of thoughts and behaviors comes under consideration. One of them is PF and the other is prevention focus (Robbins et al., 2020). These are two independent self-regulatory systems. Individuals having PF are hopeful and inspirational and strive to achieve positive outcomes (Heydarnejad et al., 2021). Those with prevention focus, try to play it safe by avoiding negative outcomes. People with PF are eager to generate more alternatives and involve in novel problem-solving methods that lead to creative insights. PF has been found to be associated with employee creativity in organizational settings (Neill et al., 2020).

Open individuals are optimistic. Optimism enhances positive behaviors (Christensen et al., 2019). Open individuals look out for unique ways to deal with a situation and are inclined to thinking out of the box. They want to work independently and enjoy the autonomy at workplace. They do not like to be controlled and monitored. They self-regulate and monitor their own behavior to achieve the goals and focus on ways that lead them towards achievement of that goal (Delbari et al., 2021). Hence, it is proposed that

H₂: OE has a positive relationship with PF.

2.3. PF and creativity

Individuals are found to exhibit desired behaviors in presence of some motivational factor. Intention to do some task is translated into behavior when motivation is provided to do that task (Abbasi et al., 2020). PF is utilized in this study as a motivational factor that indirectly influences the positive relationship between OE and employee creativity. Creativity being a complex phenomenon requires complete cognitive as well as physical involvement and intrinsic motivation on the part of the employee. Hence, PF is considered as an important antecedent to creativity (Robbins et al., 2020). Creative behavior cannot be a result of control and forceful implementation. It cannot be expected from individuals who lack the disposition for innovation. Creativity cannot be learned or transferred like any other skill, knowledge or experience. If the employees are keen to do their work and are involved in assigned tasks, creativity and innovation can flourish.

Promotion focused employees are engaged in more creative activities (Ayaburi et al., 2019; Robbins et al., 2020). It is anticipated to be positively associated with both IC and RC. As these individuals try to seek opportunities that help them in achieving their goals, they are ready to face the obstacles and cope with the challenges of involving in creative pursuits of IC (Jaussi & Randel, 2014). Those with promotion approach, hold the motivational resources to further explore the unknown and involve in RC. Hence, it is proposed that

H_{3(a)}: PF has a positive relationship with IC.

H_{3(b)}: PF has a positive relationship with RC.

2.4. PF as a mediator

PF is an important aspect of self-regulation of thoughts and behaviors. It has been associated with outcomes like performance, motivation and creativity. In any antecedent-consequence relationship, motivational self-regulatory mechanisms act as a catalyst (Park & Kim, 2021). As PF is a motivational factor that enhances creativity, this study examines the role of PF as a mediating mechanism in a way that OE enhances PF which in turn improves the creativity.

Mediating variable explains how external factors and events take on internal significance and how these effects occur (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Literature review has developed the foundation that signals that conditions of mediation are fulfilled for the conceptual framework developed. Self-regulation has been used as a mediator in number of studies related to personality, emotions and behavior (Ayaburi et al., 2019).

According to SRT, there are several stages of self-regulation. Individuals have to contribute to their motivations and behaviors and develop a reciprocal network of interactions in these stages (Gonzalez & Lecaros, 2020). Studies have reported four components that unanimously describe self-regulation (Heydarnejad et al., 2021). These are norms of behavior, motivation to act, monitoring of thoughts and the willingness to engage in a task.

Extant literature suggested that motivational factors generally act as a mediator between dispositional factors and positive work outcomes, and one of the important outcomes is creativity (Javed et al., 2018; Xu et al., 2016). As this study examines the PF as a motivational and self-regulatory factor, the premise is developed on the basis of above literature, and hence, it is proposed that as per given figure 1:

H_{4(a)}: PF mediates the positive relationship between OE and IC.

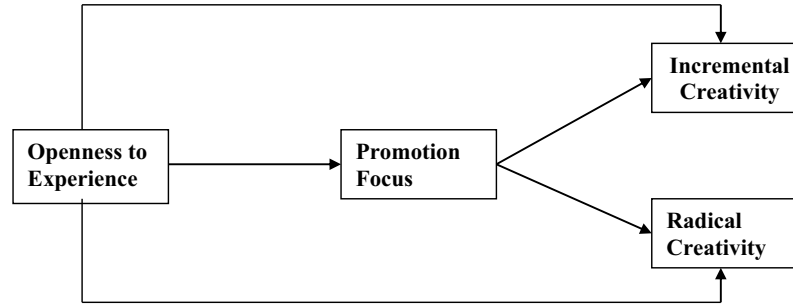
H_{4(b)}: PF mediates the positive relationship between OE and RC.

3. Methodology

3.1. Sample and procedure

The population of the study consists of individuals working in advertising agencies in Pakistan. These individuals are working in creative departments of these organizations. The purposive sampling was used which involves collection of required data from people who are most relevant to the scope of the study. Convenience sampling, a type of non-probability sampling technique was used to draw sample. This is a suitable technique when the population frame is unknown. In this study, sample was taken from agencies located in Karachi, as more than 40% of the advertising and marketing firms are functioning there. Headquarters of most of the advertising firms are in Karachi. 500 structured questionnaires were floated among these employees utilizing personal network of inter connected people. Data were collected in time lags. There was a lag of 4 weeks in the three waves of distribution of questionnaire. 314 questionnaires were returned. However, size

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework (model of the study).



of the usable survey was 293. OE was measured at time T_1 , PF was measured at time T_2 , whereas, outcomes were measured at time T_3 .

There are many ways to calculate estimated sample size for a study. The required sample size must be 10 times the number of variables in the study. Using the G power statistics, required minimum sample size for the study was calculated to be 117, whereas the sample size of the study is 293, significantly above the required minimum sample size. The sample size consists of 69% male and 31% female. Most of them were in age-bracket of 31–40 years. 46% had a 16 years of education and an average experience with the present organization was less than 5 years.

Confirmatory factor analysis, regression and mediation techniques are used for statistical analysis of data using SPSS and Amos. Detailed analysis and interpretation of results is given in the results section.

3.2. Measures

The scales used to measure latent constructs have been adopted from existing literature. These scales are valid and their reliability has been established in previous studies. Five-point Likert type scale was used to measure all the constructs. Range of responses was from “1” for “strongly disagree” to “5” for “strongly agree”. All the measures were self-reported. A reason for using self-report measures is that it is suggested that individuals are better judges of their level of creativity as compared to their supervisors or peers (Ng & Feldman, 2012; Xu et al., 2016). They are in a position to assess their creativity either as adaptive or a breakthrough in nature. Creativity being measured as self-reported has been supported in number of studies (Gilson et al., 2012; Xu et al., 2016). Another reason to use self-report measures is that measuring an individual’s daily creativity is a common approach in studies where creativity is associated with other subjective measures (Smith et al., 2022). There is significant correlation between the measures of creativity reported on self-report basis and supervisor-rated creativity (Shalley et al., 2009).

OE was measured by mini IPIP (International Personality Item Pool) with four items (Donnellan et al., 2006). Example includes, “I am interested in abstract ideas”. PF was measured by nine items (Lockwood et al., 2002). Examples include, “I often think about how I will achieve business success”. IC was measured by four-item scale by Gilson et al. (2012). Examples include, “I use previously existing ideas or work in a slightly different fashion” for IC and three items to measure RC. Example includes, “I often have new and innovative ideas”.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptives, correlations and reliability coefficients

The descriptive statistics of the sample are given in Table 1.

Reliabilities of the constructs are given on the diagonal and falls above the minimum acceptable value of 0.7. It means that items of a given construct hang together as a set. The correlations between all the variables are found to be significant.

4.2. Confirmatory factor analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis was executed to establish the credibility of variables involved in this study. AMOS version 22 was utilized for the purpose and results of the CFA show that the data is a good fit to the proposed model. Fit-indices are given in Table 2. To confirm that creativity is a multi-dimensional construct, creativity was loaded as one factor and two factor model. Employee creativity was loaded as both one and two factor models. Results in Table 2 depict that two factor model provides a better fit to the data and hence, the items of the IC are distinct from those of RC and measure two different dimensions.

4.3. Regression analysis

SPSS version 22 and its PROCESS Macro by Hayes (2013) were used to execute regression analyses for testing the proposed model and the hypotheses. There was a positive and significant relationship between OE and IC value ($\beta = 0.19, p < 0.001$) as well as between OE and RC ($\beta = 0.56, p < 0.001$). Hence, hypotheses 1(a) and 1(b) are supported.

Hypotheses 3(a) and 3(b) are also supported which proposed significant positive relationships of PF with incremental ($\beta = .14, p < 0.01$) and RC ($\beta = 0.55, p < 0.001$) respectively. Results of separate regression analyses conducted to test these two hypotheses are given in Table 3.

4.4. Mediation analysis

H₃ proposes that there is a positive relationship between OE and PF, the mediating variable. This hypothesis is supported ($\beta = .64, p < 0.001$) as shown in Table 4.

An indirect relationship was proposed between OE and IC through PF as H_{4(a)}. The bootstrap indirect effect was found to be insignificant as the upper limit confidence interval (ULCI) and lower limit confidence interval (LLCI) included zero, i.e., CI (-0.04, 0.11). When zero is included in the LLCI and ULCI, the relationship is said to be insignificant. Sobel test was run to further confirm the result

Table 1. Mean standard deviation, correlation and reliabilities

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1. OE	4.02	.46	(.81)			
2. PF	3.78	.54	.49**	(.84)		
3. RC	4.05	.47	.50**	.53**	(.74)	
4. IC	3.10	.62	.21**	.19**	.45**	(.75)

Note: ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$. OE=openness to experience, PF=promotion focus, RC=radical creativity, IC=incremental creativity.

Table 2. Confirmatory factor analysis model fit

	CMIN/DF	CFI	NFI	GFI	AGFI	RMSEA
Full Model Creativity	3.11	.80	.74	.77	.72	.07
(Two-Factor Model) Creativity	1.49	.96	.964	.96	.94	.03
(One-Factor Model)	6.31	.80	.78	.88	.78	.10

Table 3. Results of regression analysis

Variable	Radical creativity	Incremental creativity
PF	0.55**	0.14**
R ² Total	0.33	0.03
F	44.61	9.23
OE	0.56**	0.19**
R ² Total	0.31	0.03
F	139.73	14.61

Note: ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$. OE=openness to experience, PF=promotion focus, RC=radical creativity, IC=incremental creativity. β values are standardized coefficients.

which showed that the proposed indirect relationship between OE and IC is insignificant (Sobel $z = 0.59$, $p = .47$). Therefore, $H_{4(a)}$ is not supported.

$H_{4(b)}$ proposed that PF mediated the positive relationship between OE and RC ($\beta = .62$, $p < 0.001$). Bootstrap indirect effect was significant in this case as ULCI and LLCI does not include zero limit .17, CI (.12, .23). When zero is not included in the LLCI and ULCI, the relationship is interpreted as significant, as in this case. Sobel test was run to further confirm the result which showed that the proposed indirect relationship between OE and IC is significant (Sobel $z = 5.63$, $p < .001$). Therefore, $H_{4(b)}$ is supported.

5. Discussion

Findings of the study revealed that OE has a positive and significant relationship with IC and RC. This is in line with findings of previous studies (Jaussi & Randel, 2014; Javed et al., 2018). Open individuals are found to be involved in activities that are not strictly controlled. They like to work independently, like the challenges involved with innovative work (Christensen et al., 2019). They do not give up if chances of success are low and exhibit higher level of motivation to accept the challenging and difficult tasks (Judge & Zapata, 2015). Individuals with this personality trait are more creative in nature.

H_2 proposed that there is a positive and significant relationship between OE and PF. PF relates to the SRT and previous studies have found that open individuals are optimistic. They regulate and monitor their behavior (Neill et al., 2018; Robbins et al., 2020). Some personality traits including OE are associated with self-regulation and self-monitoring. Therefore, open individuals being inclined to monitoring their thoughts and behaviors show a positive influence towards the independent self-regulatory system of PF.

Similarly, significant positive relationship was found between PF with the two types of creativity outcomes. Hence, H_{3a} and H_{3b} are accepted. This is in line with the call for further research on the SRT. The study contributed theoretically by establishing a link between PF and creativity that has rarely been studied in developing countries like Pakistan. Self-regulation as a motivational factor found to be associated with creativity in previous studies (Ayaburi et al., 2019). As PF is used as a motivational factor and is an important aspect of self-regulation, hence the PF promotes creativity among individuals at workplace (Heydarnejad et al., 2021).

Performance focus is the mediating mechanism and the process that plays the role of catalyst between the direct relationship of personality and creativity. However, in case of IC, H_{4a} was not supported. For RC as the outcome, H_{4b} was supported confirming the role of PF as the intervening factor. One of the reasons for H_{4b} to be supported could be that RC is about making breakthroughs and bringing all new ideas, practices, processes, products or services. The solutions to the given problems are novel in nature, never tested before, revolutionary and unique in approach. Novelty needs more hard work and focus, more concentration and is more resource consuming. Therefore, a commitment

Table 4. Mediation results

Mediation path via bootstrapping (95%) CI	X-M	M(X)-Y	X-Y	The Mediation			
				Effect	S.E.	LL	
PF UL	a path	b path	c path				
OE → IC	0.64***	0.04	0.23**	0.03	0.05	-0.04	0.11
OE → RC	0.62***	0.27***	0.39***	0.17	0.03	0.12	0.23

Note: Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported.

N = 293

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

from the person involved in radical activities is the fundamental requirement. Individuals with PF have dispositional tendencies for creativity and seek opportunities that bring them closer to their goals. In case of IC, tendencies of being open in experience with optimistic approach and having affinity for innovative work alone is sufficient for an individual to exhibit novelty in processes and actions that do not need a change at the grass root level. Incremental tasks require adaptation and minor modifications and do not need higher level of robustness, absorption and vivacity. As creativity has been rarely tested as a multi-dimensional construct in developing countries, therefore, findings of the study suggest that PF is a significant mediator between personality and creativity when innovation of radical level is needed, whereas, in case of incremental adjustments and changes, motivational factor play less significant role and personality with innovative work tendencies are sufficient to bring about trivial changes (Kim et al., 2019).

6. Theoretical and managerial implications

This study provides important insights for managers in organizations particularly those dealing with hiring, development and retention of human resources. At the time of hiring, right sizing approach must be followed so that the candidates who are open to experience new avenues and have the qualities to accept and achieve challenges with respect to innovation and creativity are hired. Open individuals are inclined towards creativity. When combined with self-regulatory motivation in the form of PF, this personality trait provides them better opportunities to deal with RC. All the organizations have to be involved in some level of creativity. Open individuals are also good contributors for bringing IC in organizations even in absence of any motivation. Characteristic traits of open people enable them to cope with the challenges and obstacles as they have the will to continue work activities involving complex tasks. This is really crucial for advertising agencies that need creative employees to keep up with the pace and competition in this industry.

The traits of open individuals provide motivation to be involved in creative activities and behaviors. However, for radical creativity, these individuals must be motivated to involve in creative behaviors to bring up new products, services and processes etc. If the managers need an incremental level change and minor amendments in product, service design or processes structure; then open individuals can do that without any motivational factor in place.

Managers can organize trainings to develop and polish certain aspects of a personality. Accomplishment of creative jobs would be more likely to result as an outcome of such trainings. Measures should also be taken to enhance the motivation level of employees so that they are closer to fulfilling their goals and objectives. It will enhance creative behavior in return. Employee creativity is a multi-dimensional construct. Results of the study confirmed it in Pakistani context. These results replicate the findings of previous studies conducted in different cultural context (Xu et al., 2016).

7. Limitations and future research

There are some limitations in this study. First, self-report measures have been used to measure creativity of employees. Future studies may use supervisor rating and triangulation method.

Second, the sample is drawn from advertising agencies of Pakistan. It may limit the external validity of the study. In future, other sectors may be considered like IT, engineering, manufacturing and services sector that introduce innovative products and services. It would enhance the generalizability of the study. Other types of personality inventories like Myers Brigs Type Indicator (MBTI), positive affect and negative affect; and the typology of dark triad maybe used in the model to examine their effect on creativity. Contextual variables may also be introduced like employee engagement, organizational culture, and variables from (Ability, Motivation, Opportunity) AMO framework of Applebaum, Bailey, Berg & Kelleberg (2000) etc.

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Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Correction

This article has been corrected with minor changes. These changes do not impact the academic content of the article.

Citation information

Cite this article as: Openness to Experience and Creativity: The Role of Promotion Focus, Saliha Gul Abbasi, Mohammed Abdulrazzaq Alaghbari, Mazhar Abbas, Baligh Beshr & Basheer M. Al-Ghazali, *Cogent Business & Management* (2023), 10: 2238390.

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