

## **A SOCIAL-STRUCTURAL PERSPECTIVE ON EMPLOYEE- ORGANISATION RELATIONSHIPS AND TEAM CREATIVITY**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper examines how Employee-Organisation Relationships (EORs) impact team creativity in the Nigerian music industry from a social-structural perspective. The research focuses on the shared venture EOR model, where music organizations provide key rewards in exchange for high worker commitment. The study suggests that this model enhances team creativity by fostering dense work-related communication networks among employees, which are essential for sharing ideas and development, especially in the complex environments of music creation and promotion. The study draws on data from 1,807 workers across 229 teams in various Nigerian music companies. The findings support the idea that the shared venture EOR model significantly boosts team creativity compared to other models by improving communication networks. These networks facilitate more effective information sharing, crucial for fostering creativity and innovation in music. The research fills a gap in existing literature by exploring the effect of EORs on creativity in the Nigerian music industry, with a focus on social capital. Additionally, the study highlights that the positive effects of dense communication networks on creativity are even greater in teams working on complex music projects. This paper provides insights for Nigerian music organizations on how to enhance team creativity by strategically managing EORs to promote both employee motivation and communication.

**Keywords:** Social exchange theory, team creativity, task complexity, work related communication density

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### **INTRODUCTION**

A critical gap in current research on employment relationships is the assessment of their impact on team relationships. While it has been suggested that certain types of employee relationships could foster creative and innovative thinking (e.g., Coyle-Shapira & Shore, 2007; Schneider, 1987), there has been limited exploration of this area. Coyle-Shapiro & Shore (2007) highlighted this gap in the EOR literature. This study aims to explore the relationship between different EOR structures and creativity at the team level.

Most existing literature focuses on social exchange as the mechanism linking EOR to outcomes (Smith & McCann, 2005), where employees respond to the investments and expectations of managers with corresponding

levels of commitment and performance. However, understanding team creativity is more complex, as it involves the exchange and integration of information, which requires a process beyond simple response (Sacramento, 2008; Pugh & Dietz, 2008). The researcher proposes a social-structural framework to explain how EORs impact team creativity. Building on the idea that social capital — the value derived from relationships — is essential for innovation (Coleman, 1988), it was argued that EOR structures influence workplace communication, which, in turn, affects team creativity.

The researcher refines the model by considering team complexity as an important boundary condition. Social capital theories often assume high task complexity, with Gracious et al. (2006) suggesting their findings

apply to moderately complex tasks. Team complexity plays a key role in both EOR and creativity research (Datta, et al, 2005; Amabile and Conti, 1999). Therefore, the research proposes that social capital is more effectively activated in conditions with higher team complexity.

In line with Smith and McCann (1997), the research conceptualizes work relationships at the functional level, where team members perform similar tasks and share the same EOR. Employee relationships can vary not only across hierarchical levels (e.g., managers vs. production workers) but also across functions or jobs (e.g., accountants vs. programmers) (Smith and McCann., 1997). Latham and Pinder (2005) describe this as human resource architecture. It is expected that organizational leaders define cross-team differences in rewards and commitments, with team managers influencing specific aspects of the employment relationship. For example, an organization might offer higher pay to key teams or roles while providing standard benefits across the board. Managers may emphasize developmental rewards differently based on job nature and employee training. As a result, expected commitments and rewards may vary across teams and be influenced by management.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Employee-Organisation Relationship and Team Creativity in Nigeria**

The study of employee-organisation relationships (EORs) has gathered significant attention in organizational behavior research due to their impact on various workplace outcomes, including creativity and innovation. In Nigeria, as in other settings, understanding EOR dynamics is crucial for improving organizational performance, especially in industries where creativity can enhance competitiveness. This literature review synthesizes existing research on EORs and their impact on team creativity, incorporating both global perspectives and context-specific factors relevant to Nigerian organizations.

EOR models are primarily grounded in social exchange theory, which asserts that

relationships between workers and their organizations are based on reciprocal exchanges of benefits and contributions. Blau (1964) suggests that when organizations invest in their employees through rewards, developmental opportunities, and supportive conditions, employees are likely to respond with loyalty, increased performance, and higher creativity. This exchange cycle is vital in fostering an organizational climate that supports innovation.

In Nigeria, the dynamics of EORs are influenced by social values such as cooperation and respect for hierarchical structures, which shape the expectations and commitments perceived by employees. These social factors can affect how EORs are managed and experienced within Nigerian organizations. For example, Nigerian employees may place high value on organizational support and the provision of clear career advancement opportunities, viewing these as essential elements of a positive EOR. This aligns with the mutual investment model of EORs, where organizations provide significant incentives and, in return, expect high levels of commitment from their employees.

Sacramento (2008) categorize EORs into four main models: mutual investment, overinvestment, underinvestment, and quasi-spot contracts. The mutual investment model is particularly relevant in the Nigerian context, where a strong relationship between organizational support and employee outcomes is expected. In this model, organizations offer substantial developmental and material rewards, which increase employee satisfaction and motivate employees to contribute creatively to organizational goals. Research indicates that when employees perceive a high level of investment from their organization, they are more likely to behave in ways that promote creativity.

Nevertheless, the effect of EORs on creativity is not clear. While mutual investment relationships encourage a favorable climate for creativity, other EOR models can have different impacts. For example, in overinvestment situations, where organizations provide extensive rewards but expect relatively low commitments from employees, the lack of

challenge and motivation may lead to disengagement, reducing the likelihood of creative outcomes. On the other hand, underinvestment relationships, where high employee commitments are expected with minimal organizational support, may create a competitive environment that stifles collaboration and innovation. In such settings, employees may become disengaged or feel unsupported, leading to decreased creative efforts.

Additionally, the relationship between EORs and creativity is mediated by social structures within the organization, especially the density of work-related communication among employees. Dense communication networks facilitate the exchange of diverse ideas, promote collaboration, and help blend information from different perspectives—key components for creative problem-solving. In Nigerian organizations, where teamwork and collective effort are often emphasized, the ability to build and maintain dense communication networks can significantly boost team creativity. These networks enable the rapid spread of information and integration of various perspectives, leading to more creative solutions.

Task complexity also plays a crucial role in shaping the relationship between EORs and team creativity. In environments where tasks are complex and require high levels of intellectual input, dense communication networks become even more important. Complex tasks demand the generation and evaluation of multiple solutions, requiring frequent and effective communication among employees. In Nigerian organizations, where employees often work in diverse and challenging conditions, the ability to navigate complex tasks through collaboration is essential for achieving creative outcomes. Therefore, the mutual investment EOR model, which promotes both high levels of organizational incentives and employee commitments, is particularly effective in fostering creativity in such settings.

Thus, the study of EORs and their impact on team creativity offers valuable insights for Nigerian organizations seeking to enhance their creative capacities. By adopting the mutual

investment model, organizations can create an environment that motivates employees and supports the social structures needed for creativity to thrive. However, it is important to consider the specific social and organizational context in Nigeria, as these factors can significantly affect the effectiveness of various EOR models. Future research should continue exploring the interaction between EORs, communication networks, and task complexity to develop more nuanced approaches for fostering creativity in Nigerian workplaces.

Organizational culture is another crucial factor influencing the relationship between EORs and team creativity. A culture that promotes continuous learning, openness to new ideas, and collaboration can reinforce the benefits of the mutual investment EOR model. In Nigerian organizations, where collectivist values often emphasize group harmony, a culture that also values creativity and innovation can align individual and organizational goals. Such a culture encourages employees to freely share information, collaborate across functions, and contribute to the organization's overall success, thereby boosting creativity.

Furthermore, Nigeria's economic context, characterized by rapid growth and increasing competition, necessitates a focus on innovation for sustained organizational success. Globalization and technological advancements require Nigerian organizations to continuously adapt and innovate. In this environment, flexible and adaptable EORs, such as the mutual investment model, can provide a competitive edge by fostering a creative workforce. However, economic challenges, such as resource constraints and regulatory uncertainties, can also affect the effectiveness of different EOR models. Organizations must navigate these challenges by adapting their EOR strategies to the broader economic environment to support long-term creativity and growth.

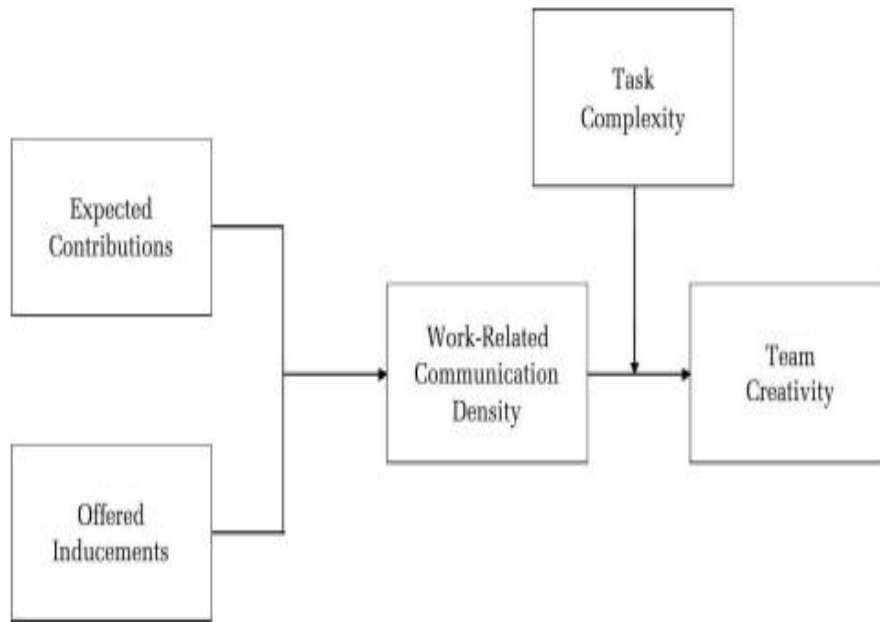
The influence of informal relationships and social capital in Nigerian organizations is also important. Given the importance of relationships in Nigerian culture, informal interactions among employees can significantly impact the effectiveness of formal EORs. These informal networks often facilitate the flow of

information and ideas, serving as a complement to the formal communication channels within teams. The interaction between formal EORs and informal networks can create a rich

environment for creativity, where employees are motivated and empowered to contribute innovative ideas.

**FIGURE 1**

**A Social-Structural View of Team-Level Employee-Organization Relationships (Expected Contributions and Offered Inducements), Work-Related Communication Density, Task Complexity, and Team Creativity**



Following Staw and Ross (1987) the research proposes that the relationship between offered inducements and expected contributions will influence work-related communication density. Specifically:

**Hypothesis 1:** The relationship between expected contributions and team members' work-related communication density will be positive and significant when offered inducements are high, but this relationship will be weaker or insignificant when offered inducements are low.

### **Business-related Communication Density and Team Creativity**

Team creativity is defined as the creation of "significant, useful new products, services, ideas, methods, or processes by people working together in a complex social system" (Woodman et al. 1993, p. 293). The researcher believes that team creativity is positively influenced by the density of work-related

communication because firstly, dense communication networks promote coordination and help refine and develop ideas, Edmondson, 1999). These networks allow employees to access various perspectives, skills, and information, which are essential for generating creative ideas (Krackhard & Kilduff, . 1999). Effective relationships and the cross-pollination of ideas increase creativity (Gilson, Mathieu, Shalley, & Bronzed, 2005; Perry-Smith & Shalley, 2003).

Secondly, dense communication networks support the exchange of tacit knowledge — informal insights and "unwritten rules" that are often critical for innovation (Krackhardt & Kilduff, 1999). This type of knowledge is difficult to transfer through weak ties or among peripheral individuals. Kijkuit & van der Ende (2010) emphasized that creative solutions often rely on quick information exchange using a shared, informal language developed through frequent interactions.

Thirdly, dense communication networks improve the effectiveness of relational communication, which is vital for the speed and timeliness required in creativity-focused tasks (Amabile, 1996; Dean and Snell 1991). The exchange of tacit information, crucial for innovation, depends on tightly-knit communication networks rather than just the volume of communication. High-density networks empower more precise and effective decision-making (Edmondson, 1999). Fang et al, (2011) found that multiple direct contacts within an organization were more beneficial for team creativity than sparse, efficient networks. Dense, overlapping networks were proven to be more effective in fostering creativity and innovation.

Hence, propose the following:

**Hypothesis 2:** Employees' work-related communication density will positively correlate with team creativity.

Scholars have suggested that mutual investment employment relationships can enhance team creativity and innovation (Zhou & George, 2001), but empirical support has been limited. Given that dense communication networks are key drivers of creativity and innovation (Tsai & Ghoshal, 1998), it is reasonable to assume that employee relationships will impact team creativity by fostering stronger ties and enhancing coordination both within and outside the team (Gittel et al. 2010). Therefore, the researcher hypothesize that the mutual investment EOR model, which encourages dense communication networks, will be positively linked to team creativity.

**Hypothesis 3:** The relationship between EORs and team creativity will be mediated by employees' work-related communication density, with the mediated effect being strongest for the mutual investment EOR model.

### **The Moderating Effect of Task Complexity**

Team complexity is defined as the degree to which tasks involve low routine, high uncertainty, high cognitive demand, and ambiguity (Herold, 1978; Zhou & George,

2001). Social capital theory also assumes that complex task conditions influence the relationship between EOR and team creativity. Thus, social capital developments should be more pronounced in high-complexity tasks. I expect that work-related communication density will be more effectively mobilized for creativity in high-complexity tasks than in low-complexity tasks for two reasons:

1. Complex tasks require the generation and evaluation of multiple solutions when none are readily available. Non-routine and difficult tasks increase the need for information exchange and collaboration among employees (Tjosvold, 2008). Dense communication networks facilitate the flow of information and the effective use of social capital to address complex tasks. Simple, routine tasks require less communication and have fewer demands for complex information exchange.
2. Complex tasks often require information that no single person possesses. Dense communication networks allow team members to access, share, compare, and contrast information, leading to synergistic solutions. As a result, dense networks are crucial for activating the inherent value within these networks to enhance creativity in complex tasks.

**Hypothesis 4:** The relationship between team work-related communication density and team creativity will be moderated by team complexity, such that the positive relationship will be stronger when team complexity is high.

Building on these insights, the research propose a moderated mediation model connecting EOR, employees' work-related communication density, task complexity, and team creativity. Specifically, the researcher expect that the benefits of the mutual investment EOR—such as denser communication networks and higher team creativity—will be more pronounced under conditions of high task complexity.

**Hypothesis 5:** The strength of the mediated relationship between EORs and team creativity (through employees' work-related



communication density) will depend on team complexity. The indirect and overall effects of EORs (especially the mutual investment approach) on team creativity will be stronger when team complexity is high.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study employed a survey conducted across the Nigerian music industry to examine the relationship between Employee-Organisation Relationships (EORs) and team creativity. The research targeted various music organizations in Nigeria, selected for their impact on the creation, production, and promotion of music. To ensure a comprehensive understanding of the industry, the study focused on a diverse sample of teams involved in different aspects of the music production process, including artists, producers, sound engineers, marketing, and promotional teams.

The researcher randomly selected 100 music organizations from a pool of 500 active music companies in Nigeria, focusing on organizations involved in music creation, production, and promotion. The sample comprised both established music companies and emerging firms in the industry to capture a wide range of practices and organizational structures. The organizations were identified through publicly available directories and databases, as well as recommendations from industry experts. The survey design aimed to capture detailed data on the Employee-Organisation Relationship (EOR) models, team creativity, and communication networks within the context of the Nigerian music industry.

To ensure high participation rates and a representative sample, the researcher initially sent explanatory letters to top executives of the selected organizations. After obtaining approval, meetings were held with Human Resources (HR) directors to understand the organizational structure and determine which teams and employees would participate in the survey. For each organization, 5 to 8 teams were selected to participate, representing a cross-section of departments such as music production, sound engineering, marketing, promotion, and management.

Surveys were distributed to employee's onsite with the assistance of HR directors, who facilitated survey distribution in meeting rooms or directly at employees' workstations. Participants were assured of confidentiality and were incentivized with small tokens, such as gift cards or exclusive music industry content. Surveys were completed onsite, and employees who were absent were provided with pre-paid return envelopes for mail-in responses. The researcher collected approximately 90% of completed surveys onsite.

### *Sample Size and Composition*

Of the 100 music organizations initially contacted, 72 organizations agreed to participate representing 72% of the sample. On average, each organization contributed 5 to 7 teams, with an average of 35 employees per team. A total of 1,950 employees participated, including 350 team supervisors. The second-wave survey, conducted two months later, was completed by 64 of the original 72 organizations.

The final dataset used for hypothesis testing included 64 organizations and 229 teams, comprising 1,807 employees who participated in both surveys and provided usable data. The final sample had an average team size of 8 members, with 37% female representation. The employees had an average tenure of 4.1 years in the music industry, with the majority holding at least a junior college or university degree.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

In this study, employees were asked to identify up to five colleagues they frequently communicated with about work. The communication frequency was categorized into two groups: "some communication" (coded as 1 for communication two to three times a week) and "frequent communication" (coded as 1 for communication more than three times a week). Communication density was calculated using Scott's (2000) formula: the number of communication ties divided by the total number of possible ties, represented as  $N(N-1)$ .

Since communication network density is typically more consistent within teams than between teams due to similar EOR experiences,

the researcher collected individual-level data to calculate a team-level measure. The average communication density was determined by averaging the individual densities within each team. This approach uses a configuration method for team-level measures (Gupta, et al. 2000).

- **Within-Team Agreement:** High mean within-team agreement for density estimates (mean rwg = .96, range = .63–1.00) shows that employees generally agree on their communication networks.
- **Reliability:** The ICC(1) value of .10 ( $p < .01$ ) indicates some variation in network density between teams, while the ICC(2) of .46 shows moderate reliability of team-level data.

#### Task Complexity

Task complexity was measured with a seven-item scale adapted from Dean and Snell (1991) to capture mental challenges and variety in tasks faced by employees. Supervisors rated items like:

- "To what extent do jobs involve problem-solving?"
- "How much variety do team members encounter in tasks, clients, or things daily?"

The reliability of this scale was good, with a coefficient alpha of .80.

#### Team Creativity

Team creativity was assessed with a six-item scale. Four items were adapted from Farmer, Tierney, and Kung-Mcintyre (2003), and two from Leenders, van Engelen, and Kratzer (2003). Sample items included:

- "This team seeks innovative ways to solve problems."
- "This team tries new ideas or methods first."
- "This team generates breakthrough ideas in its field."
- "This team serves as a role model for creativity."

- "This team creates new applications."
- "This team generates new inventions."

Supervisors rated these items on a six-point Likert scale from "1" (strongly disagree) to "6" (strongly agree). The scale showed good reliability with a coefficient alpha of .86.

The analysis showed that the effect of expected contributions on team creativity via work-related communication density depends on the level of offered inducements.

In conclusion, these results indicate that both high offered inducements and high task complexity are essential for maximizing the effect of expected contributions on team creativity through enhanced communication density.

The investigation uncovered that the effect of expected commitments in team creativity through work-related communication density shifts relying upon the degree of offered affectations. In particular:

- **High Offered Instigations:** The aberrant impact of expected commitments in team creativity was huge ( $PYMPMX = .05, p < .05$ ), and the complete impact was additionally critical ( $PYX - PYMPMX = .26, p < .05$ ). These impacts were impressively more grounded contrasted with those saw with low offered instigations (backhanded impact:  $PYMPMX = .01, n.s.$ ; all out impact:  $PYX - PYMPMX = -.04, n.s.$ ). The impacts of expected commitments in team creativity by means of communication density were positive with high offered affectations yet irrelevant with low promptings, supporting Hypothesis 3.

#### Impact balance by undertaking intricacy

When both offered affectations and task intricacy were high, the indirect effects of expected contributions on team creativity were positive and significant ( $PYMPMX = .13, p < .01$ ), as were the total effects ( $PYX - PYMPMX = .36, p < .01$ ). However, when offered affectations were high but task complexity was low, neither the indirect effects ( $PYMPMX = -.02, n.s.$ ) nor the total effects ( $PYX - PYMPMX = .21, n.s.$ ) were significant. Moreover, when offered affectations were low, the effects of expected contributions on team creativity

through communication density were not significant, regardless of task complexity levels.

The observed total effects of expected contributions on team creativity through work-related communication density, based on various combinations of low and high offered affectations and task intricacy.

Overall, these findings suggest that both high offered affectations and high task intricacy are crucial for enhancing the impact of expected contributions on team creativity through increased communication density.

The results showed that the total effect was particularly significant and most pronounced when both high inducements and high task complexity were present. The researcher further detailed the statistical comparisons among the four slopes using Dawson and Richter's (2006) method. The slope difference tests revealed that the condition with high inducements and high task complexity was significantly distinct from all other conditions, although the difference with the high inducements and low task complexity condition was marginal ( $t = 1.91, p = .06$ ).

## Discussion

This study provides new insights into the dynamics of employee-organisation relationships (EOR), social capital development, and team creativity. Based on social capital theory, The research propose a framework that connects the interaction between two elements of EOR—expected contributions and offered inducements—to team creativity, with work-related communication density acting as a mediator. Additionally, the researcher argues that the advantages of higher communication density are more pronounced in teams handling complex tasks. The empirical findings largely support my theoretical predictions, with path analysis results illustrating the study's main outcomes. While the findings regarding combined EOR effects on density deviate slightly from my hypothesized outcomes where employees in the overinvestment EOR type reported the lowest density—the mutual investment relationship is generally associated

with the highest communication density and greater team creativity. This effect, however, is most noticeable in teams working on complex tasks. In conclusion, mutual investment relationships, marked by high levels of inducements and expansive expected contributions, yield more significant benefits in complex task environments.

As shown, the absolute impact was prominently critical and best when both high promptings and high errand intricacy were available. The slant distinction tests demonstrate that the situation of high instigations joined with high undertaking intricacy was fundamentally not quite the same as any remaining circumstances, albeit the distinction from the high incitements and low errand intricacy condition was negligible ( $t = 1.91, p = .06$ ).

While acknowledging the organisation-established impact of social exchange in shaping employee responses to employment relationships, this study introduces a new angle. The researcher argues that decisions made by organisations about rewards and expected contributions also influence structural aspects and information flow, extending beyond the traditional framework of social exchange. Prior research (Dcoyle-Shapio and Shoe 2007) has explored these elements, often focusing on just one aspect of the employment relationship or only on commitment outcomes. In contrast, this study provides a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of how these dynamics impact team creativity.

Building on social capital theory (Coleman, 1998), the researcher propose that high contribution expectations drive team members to create strong communication networks, while meaningful rewards facilitate the development of these networks. Without both, creativity-enhancing networks are less likely to emerge. Findings suggest that improving either contributions or rewards without addressing the other has little effect on creativity or communication. For instance, offering high rewards without high expectations may allow creativity networks to form, but lack motivation. On the other hand, high expectations without adequate rewards may inspire employees but fail to provide the necessary resources for network development.



This research bridges the fields of social capital and team creativity. While prior studies suggest that certain types of employment relationships can promote creativity (Pugh and Dietz, 2008), and social capital theory emphasizes that networks support creativity and innovation, this study integrates these perspectives. It provides evidence that supports both views and highlights how task complexity is crucial in leveraging the benefits of communication networks for creativity.

The findings align with existing research that supports the positive impact of mutual investment in employment relationships on creativity. However, it was also found that in simpler task environments, the benefits of mutual investment in employment relationships may not be fully realized, particularly in terms of creativity. This suggests that mutual investment is more effective for complex tasks, where its value is maximized in addressing intricate problems.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study advances this discourse by presenting a social-structural perspective on employment relationship effects. The research examines how different forms of employment relationships influence communication network density and creativity, with task complexity acting as a moderating factor. This approach provides a deeper and more nuanced understanding of how various employment relationship models impact both employees and organisations. By identifying the conditions that foster optimal outcomes, my research enriches the broader conversation on employment relationships and their implications for enhancing organisational performance and creativity.

This study provides a nuanced examination of the relationships between employment relationships (EORs), work-related communication density, team creativity, and task complexity, yielding several significant insights. My analysis suggests that the level of inducements within EORs plays a crucial role in shaping the relationship between expected contributions and work-related communication density. Specifically, when inducements are high, there is a robust and positive relationship

between expected contributions and communication density, indicating that generous inducements can drive more frequent and effective communication among team members. Conversely, when inducements are low, this relationship weakens or becomes insignificant, highlighting the critical role that incentives play in fostering effective communication.

Work-related communication density, characterized by the frequency and quality of interactions among team members, is found to have a positive impact on team creativity. Dense communication networks facilitate the exchange of diverse perspectives and ideas, which are essential for the development of innovative solutions. This supports existing theories that emphasize the importance of coordinated action, refined idea development, and the transfer of tacit knowledge in enhancing creativity. Dense networks enable team members to share and build upon each other's insights, leading to more effective problem-solving and idea generation.

The study further reveals that the mutual investment approach to EORs significantly influences team creativity through its effect on communication density. This approach fosters an environment where team members are more likely to engage in frequent and meaningful interactions, thereby enhancing the team's overall creative capacity. The positive relationship between mutual investment EORs and team creativity, mediated by communication density, underscores the importance of designing employment relationships that support and promote dense communication networks.

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