

Cultivating Curiosity: Unleashing the Potential of Innovative Work Behavior

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This study explored the relationship between Curiosity and Innovative Work Behaviour (IWB) and the moderating role of the organizational innovative climate. The findings indicate that stretching and embracing dimensions of curiosity contribute to IWB, with embracing ambiguity exhibiting a slightly more substantial influence. Furthermore, the study establishes a significant association between organizational innovative climate and IWB, reinforcing the importance of an innovative organizational environment. However, the study's most intriguing finding is the negative moderation effect of innovative climate on the relationship between curiosity and IWB. This surprising result challenges conventional wisdom and calls for further exploration. Additional avenues for investigation may include examining the impact of organizational climates that emphasize overwork and its potential implications for employee well-being innovation.

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Introduction

Innovative Work Behavior (IWB) exhibited by employees is pivotal in driving organizational innovation. IWB involves identifying challenges, generating ideas, and developing practical products, systems, or services (Al-Omari et al, 2020). Research shows that generating novel ideas through employees' IWB significantly contributes to organizational innovation, providing a distinct competitive advantage (Chatzoglou & Chatzoudes, 2018). Recent studies affirm a positive correlation between IWB and overall competitive advantage (Elidemir et al, 2020).

IWB has gained recognition as a critical element in enhancing business performance (De Spiegelaere et al., 2014). Employees' ability to contribute innovative concepts that help organizations achieve sustainable competitive advantages is well-documented (Jose & Mampilly, 2015). They possess valuable, context-specific knowledge to generate

unique and irreplicable value (Robinson & Schroeder, 2004). As an example of the transformative potential of successful IWB, Schultz and Yang (1997) highlighted a Starbucks store where an employee's initiative to address the summer heat led to the creation of the popular Frappuccino beverage. This innovation significantly increased profits and profoundly impacted the entire organization.

Literature Review

In this study, IWB is defined as the intentional and proactive behavior of individuals aimed at introducing fresh and valuable ideas, processes, products, or procedures within their work, community, or organization. It involves the desire to create something new or different (Spreitzer, 1995) and encompasses activities like generating valuable ideas in response to identified challenges (Scott & Bruce, 1994). Janssen (2000, 2004) further characterizes IWB as a multifaceted behavior consisting of three key components: Idea Generation, Idea Promotion, and Idea Realization. This comprehensive definition of IWB by Janssen is adopted for this study.

In this context, curiosity is defined as recognizing, embracing, and actively seeking out knowledge and novel experiences (Kashdan et al, 2009). It has been shown to enhance task and job performance. It is closely linked to cognitive ability, specific personality traits, intrinsic motivation, and a learning-oriented mindset, making it a crucial trait in today's fast-changing and uncertain business environment (Mussel, 2012).

Curiosity also plays a pivotal role in organizations, particularly during times of uncertainty and change, as it serves as the foundation for adapting to evolving environments and addressing emerging needs through innovative approaches (Weick, 1993). The research underscores the strong connection between curiosity and creativity, highlighting its importance for entrepreneurs (Wilkinson, 2015). It is a fundamental aspect of human nature, reflecting the innate desire and ability to explore new ideas and search for meaning (Kashdan et al, 2009; Litman et al, 2005).

As defined by Schneider and Reichers (1983) and Ostroff et al. (2013), organisational climate refers to the shared perceptions of the meaning attached to an organization's policies, practices, and procedures. It also includes the behaviors employees observe being rewarded, supported, or expected. Organizational climate is critical in shaping various aspects of organizational life and may impact outcomes. This study leverages the concept of an innovative climate to explore its moderating effect on the relationship between curiosity and IWB. This is based on the understanding that curiosity and IWB require environmental support to manifest among employees, and the outcomes of this relationship are anticipated to benefit the organization.

Furthermore, previous research has shown links between organizationally focused climate, motivation (Neal & Griffin, 2006), innovation effectiveness (Klein et al, 2001), and organizational perfor-

mance (Ehrhart & Raver, 2014), which adds to the relevance of examining the influence of an innovation climate on the primary variables in this study.

Hypotheses Development

The research literature extensively explores the relationship between curiosity and IWB, emphasizing curiosity's role as a potent motivator that drives individuals to engage with novelty, learning, and adaptation. It is also acknowledged as a critical factor in developing cognitive and creative capabilities in individuals (Chang & Shih, 2019). The researchers have proposed an integrative model that links curiosity with various facets of IWB, including novelty, idea generation, idea implementation, and related consequences such as information seeking. Additionally, research has shown a connection between Absorptive Capacity, which parallels organizational and individual curiosity (Ali & Park, 2016). Kashdan et al. (2004) explored the interplay between curiosity and elements of IWB, including novelty, challenges, and growth opportunities. Celik et al. (2016) identified a predictive relationship between work-related curiosity and worker innovative behavior, suggesting that curiosity contributes to innovation skills through exploratory skills. Based on this research, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Curiosity's role as a potent motivator that drives individuals to engage with novelty, learning, and adaptation.

H1: Curiosity positively predicts employees' IWB.

H1a: Stretching positively predicts employees' IWB.

H1b: Embracing positively predicts employees' IWB.

Furthermore, research has examined the influence of organizational climate on innovation and IWB. For instance, Song et al. (2020) established a predictive link between a creative climate and green product innovation, highlighting the importance of managers in shaping focused climates to facilitate individual values, attitudes, and capabilities. Ibrahim et al. (2018) emphasized the critical role of IWB in today's fast-paced, dynamic, and uncertain markets, citing various researchers concurring on the impact of organizational climate on facilitating specific outcomes. Imran et al. (2010) found a significant impact of organizational climate on IWB, while Anderson and West (1998) recognized the effect of facet-specific organizational climate on innovation within workgroups. Building upon this literature, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Innovative organizational climate significantly predicts employees' IWB.

H2a: Innovative organizational climate significantly predicts employees' IWB.

H2b: Innovative organizational climate moderates the relationship between curiosity and employees' IWB.

Research Methodology

In our present study, we adopted a cross-sectional research design. We considered three demographic variables: gender, education level, and organizational tenure. Gender was categorized as a bi-

nary variable, assigned a code of 0 for female participants and 1 for male participants. Organizational tenure was assessed in terms of completed years. A comprehensive overview of the demographic characteristics of our study sample is given in Table 1.

Table 1 Respondents' Characteristics

Measure	Item	Frequency	Percentage
Nature of Organisation	1 Private -Manufacturing	58	26
	2 PSU- Manufacturing	65	29.5
	3 Private-Corporate Office	98	44.5
Gender	Male	180	82
	Female	39	18
Educational Qualification	10 th	0	0
	12 th	0	0
	ITI	0	0
	Diploma	5	2.5
	Graduate Degree	112	51
	Post-Graduate Degree	96	44
	Professional/Other Degree	5	2.5
	PhD	1	0
Work Experience	0 – 4 Yrs	37	16.9
	5 – 8 Yrs	51	23.3
	9 – 12 Yrs	47	21.5
	13 – 16 Yrs	30	13.7
	17 – 20 Yrs	17	7.7
	21 - 24 Yrs	19	8.7
	25 Yrs <	18	8.2
Nature of Job	Full Time (Permanent)	219*	100

*The N of respondents analyzed considered whether the Smart PLS system accepts the final one

Data collection for this study was carried out using a convenience sampling technique. The deliberate decision to include only permanent employees on the organizations' payrolls aligned with the study's focus on examining the implications of stable, long-term employer-employee relationships. Moreover, by concentrating on this particular group, the study aimed to maintain homogeneity within the sample, thereby controlling for

variables that could introduce unexpected influences related to research conditions and organizational settings.

The data were collected using standardized instruments designed to assess the constructs of the selected variables under investigation. The comprehensive online survey used in this study consisted of 35 items, including questions related to participants' demographic information.

Further details about the measurement instruments employed in the study are given in Table 2. Ultimately, responses were obtained from 219 participants, resulting in an approximate response rate of 68%.

Table 2 Details of Tools Used to Collect the Data on Variables of Interest

Variable	Tool	Dimensions/Factors measured	Psychometric Properties	Total Items
Curiosity	Curiosity and Exploration Inventory II (Kashdan et. al., 2009)	Stretching and embracing	Internal Reliability $\alpha = 0.86$ Construct Validity NNFI = 0.96 CFI = 0.97	10
Organizational Climate	The Organizational Climate Questionnaire (Furnham and Goodstein, 1997)	Innovative Climate	Internal Reliability $\alpha = 0.77$ Validity mean importance rating > 5.0	5*2 = 10
IWB**	IWB Scale (Janssen, O., 2000)	Idea Generation	Idea Promotion Idea Realization $\alpha = 0.95$ Significant correlation between self-supervisor rating $r^2 = 0.35$	9

** The tool was modified. The supervisor ratings were not collected due to the limitations posed by COVID – COVID-19 pandemic conditions and lockdown restrictions.

Descriptive Statistics & Reliability Values

Table 3 includes essential statistical measures such as the mean, variance, standard deviation, minimum and maximum values, and the number of items for each scale. The mean score for Innovative Organizational Climate is 4.13, with a standard deviation of 1.33. For curiosity, the mean is 4.37, accompanied by a standard deviation of 1.56. Lastly, for IWB, the mean score is 9.21, with a standard deviation of 3.96. Regarding reliability, it is customary to evaluate the internal consistency of a scale using reliability coefficients. Typically, reliability values falling within the range of 0.700 to 0.950 are considered acceptable, as

Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) established. Following a thorough examination of the reliability of the scales, all items were retained without modification and were deemed suitable for further analysis. Likewise, all constructs remained original during the data analysis phase.

Correlation Matrix

In the following analysis stage, we computed Pearson's two-tailed correlations using SPSS as the initial step in testing and verifying our hypotheses. At this stage, we calculated correlation coefficients for each dimension of every variable under investigation. It is noteworthy that the hypothesized relationships between most of the variables

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Analysis

Dimension	N of Items	Mean	Variance	Std. Dev.	Minimum	Maximum	Cronbach's Alpha
Organization Climate							
Innovative Climate	5	2.34	1.07	1.036	1	6.2	0.85
Importance							
Innovative Climate Agreement	5	1.79	0.38	0.61	1	5.6	0.8
Curiosity							
Stretching	5	2.02	0.7	0.84	1	5	0.86
Embracing	5	2.68	0.67	0.82	1	5	0.75
IWB							
Idea Generation	3	2.85	1.68	1.29	1	6	0.84
Idea Promotion	3	3.15	2.09	1.45	1	6.67	0.88
Idea Realization	3	3.21	2.19	1.48	1	6.67	0.92

and their dimensions were found to be statistically significant at 95% or 99% confidence intervals, considering the sample size. Specifically, all three dimensions of the dependent variable (DV), i.e., IWB, exhibited moderate to strong positive correlations with the independent variables of curiosity and innovative climate at a statistically significant level of .000.

The results of our analysis indicate that the dimension of stretching is moderately correlated with all three dimensions of IWB (with correlation coefficients of $r = 0.472$, 0.391 , and 0.392 ; all p -values < 0.01). Similarly, the dimension of embracing demonstrates moderately positive correlations with all three dimensions of IWB (with correlation coefficients of $r = 0.410$, 0.379 , and 0.378 ; all p -values < 0.01). Upon closer examination of Pearson's correlation coefficients, it becomes evident that the dimensions

of curiosity exhibit a stronger relationship with the Idea Generation component of IWB compared to the other two dimensions, namely Idea Promotion and Idea Realization.

The dimensions of curiosity exhibit a stronger relationship with the Idea Generation component of IWB.

Furthermore, the innovative climate displays a weak to moderate positive correlation with the three dimensions of IWB, with correlation coefficients (R -values) ranging from 0.19 to 0.32 , all of which are statistically significant ($p < 0.01$). It is worth noting that these correlation values are generally higher for the importance ratings compared to the agreement ratings. This suggests that the perceived importance of factors related to innovation and IWB is more strongly

Table 4 Correlation Matrix

	Nature of Org.	Gender	Work Ex	Qualification	IIC	SSStretching	EEmbracing	IIG	IIP	IIR
Nature of Org.	1.000									
Gender	-.245**	1.000	.077	.177**	-.033	.107	.145*	.180**	.262**	.244**
Work Ex	.077	.332**	1.000	-.279**	.051	.006	.057	-.096	-.122	-.104
Edu. Qualification	.177**	-.279**	-.066	1.000	.043	-.039	-.018	-.042	.026	-.087
IC	-.033	.051	.014	.043	1.000	.202**	.158	.187**	.139**	.181**
Stretching	.107	.006	-.075	-.039	.202**	1.000	.666**	.472**	.391**	.392**
Embracing	.145*	.057	.041	-.018	.158*	.666**	1.000	.410**	.379**	.378**
IG	.180**	-.096	-.042	.187**	.235**	.472**	.410**	1.000	.805**	.770**
IP	.262**	-.122	.026	.139**	.244**	.391**	.379**	.805**	1.000	.875**
IR	.244**	-.104	-.087	.181**	.191**	.392**	.378**	.770**	.875**	1.000

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)
IG refers to Idea Generation; IP refers to Idea Promotion; IR refers to Idea Realization

linked to the observed behaviors and outcomes than the mere agreement or consensus among respondents.

To test the hypotheses from 1a through 2b, we utilized Smart PLS software version 3 to construct a structural equation model and analyze the effects within the inner model. The path model analysis allowed us to examine the direct, indirect, and total effects to assess the relationships among the variable constructs utilizing the indicators and latent variables. The appropriate effects were illustrated, considering the formative variable of curiosity and the reflective variable IWB. Fig. 1 visually represents the path coefficients, the R2 values, the values of the variable constructs, and the relationships between them. These analyses were conducted using a sample size of 219 after eliminating any missing data samples from the original sample size of 221. It is important to note that all the primary and sub-hypotheses from 1 through 2 are incorporated and tested within this path model.

Fig. 2 displays the computed t-score values generated through a bootstrapping procedure with a size of 5000. The bootstrapped t-score considers the standard error by simulating a large sample of data instances. This process aids in isolating significant interaction effects, which helps us confirm or refute the hypotheses. In the path model, only the agreement scale of innovative climate was considered, as the perception of importance was irrelevant to the specific hypothesis being investigated. This focused approach allowed us to assess the significance of the

Fig. 1 Path Model 1: R² Scores

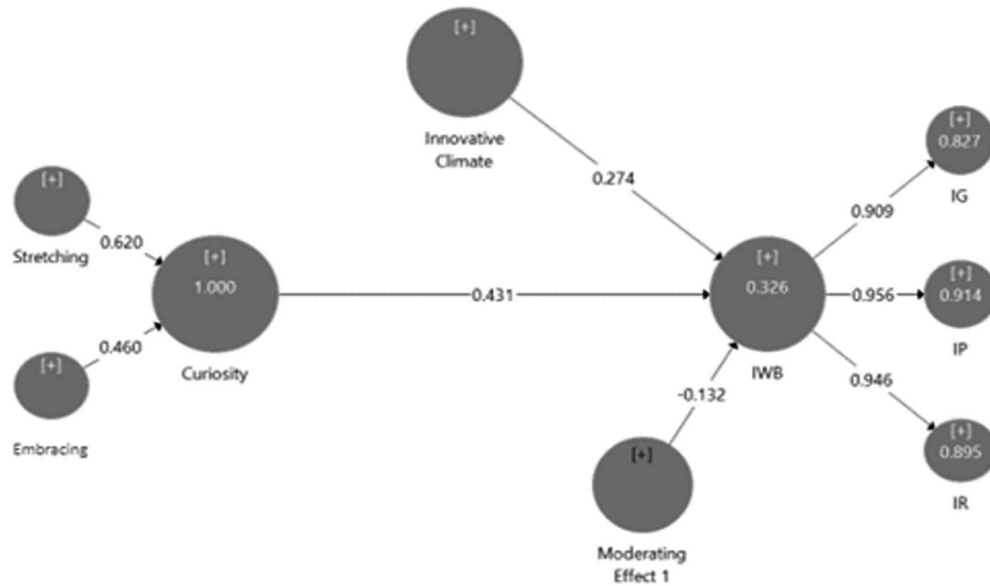
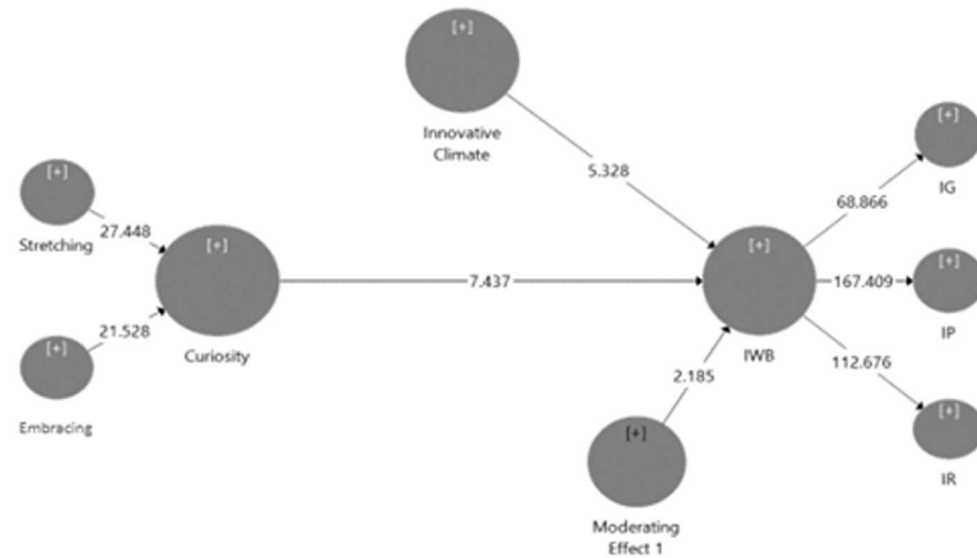


Fig. 2 Path Model 1: T – Scores



relationships and interactions within the model, helping to validate or reject the proposed hypotheses.

Table 5 is a direct output of the path analysis algorithm provided by the Smart PLS as an export to Excel option.

Table 5 Results of Hypothesis testing

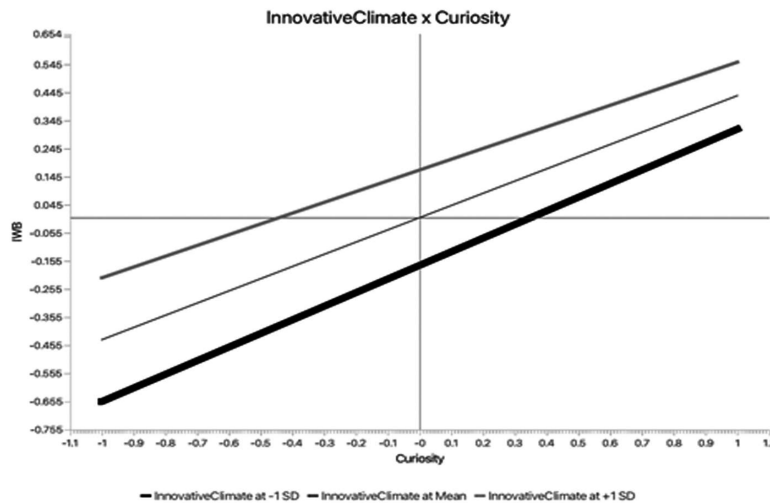
Hypothesis	R ²	T score	P value	Test
H1: Curiosity Predicts IWB	0.431	7.437	.000	Accepted
H1a: Stretching Predicts IWB	0.267	7.413	.000	Accepted
H1b: Embracing Predicts IWB	0.198	.6.81	.000	Accepted
H2a: Innovative Organizational Climate Predicts IWB	0.27	5.33	.000	Accepted
H2b: Innovative Organizational Climate Moderates the Relationship between Curiosity IWB	- 0.13	2.18	.030	Rejected*

* A negative value of the regression coefficient signifies a suppressed moderation effect as opposed to an enhanced one

It is crucial to highlight that the last hypothesis concerning Innovative Climate, while statistically significant, exhibits a negative moderation effect ($R^2 = -0.132$, $p < 0.030$). This finding implies that the combined effect of curiosity and innovative climate is less than the sum of their individual effects as independent variables. Based on deductive reasoning and existing literature, one would anticipate that the relationship between curiosity and IWB would be positively moderated, enhancing the individual relationships between independent variables (IVs) and the dependent variable (DV) when considered separately.

Simple Slope Analysis: A simple slope analysis of the moderating effect of innovative climate on the relationship between curiosity and IWB, as depicted in the Fig. 3, reveals that the relationship weakens with each standard deviation increment in the moderating variable. This is evident from the graph, where the slope of the relationship line diminishes for each increment in the standard deviation of the moderating variable, which, in this case, is the innovative climate. This observation provides additional insights into the relationship dynamics between these variables.

Fig. 3 Simple Slope Analysis – The Moderating Effect



Discussion

The study explored the connection between curiosity and IWB, considering the moderating influence of the organizational sub-climate of innovation, termed the innovative climate. In terms of IWB, the study drew on the theoretical framework proposed by Janssen (2004), which defines IWB as a multifaceted set of three behavioral tasks: Idea Generation, Idea Promotion, and Idea Realization. Curiosity was assessed based on previous researchers' established trait curiosity framework. Curiosity generally encompasses three facets: exploration or stretching, a willingness to embrace novelty and uncertainty, and tolerance for uncertainty. However, in this study, the curiosity exploration inventory primarily focused on the first two facets (Kashdan et al, 2009).

The concept of Innovative Organizational Climate was adapted to align with the research topic and the specific organizations under investigation. Unlike predefined core dimensions, this construct allows for the customization of dimensions based on the unique research context (Furnham & Goodstein, 1997). Previous research by Kashdan et al (2004) established a link between curiosity and the antecedents of IWB. They developed a framework describing curiosity as "a positive emotional-motivation system associated with the recognition, pursuit, and self-regulation of novelty and challenge." Additionally, Celik et al. (2016) found an association between curiosity and innovation skills across various job roles using structural equation modeling and me-

diation analysis. The current study confirmed a positive predictive relationship (0.421**) between curiosity and IWB, consistent with established findings. Furthermore, when examining the individual dimensions of curiosity, it was revealed that stretching (0.427**) and embracing (0.472**) contributed positively to IWB, with embracing ambiguity showing a slightly stronger influence. While this distinction may not hold significant academic implications, it offers practical insights by underscoring the importance of embracing ambiguity to enhance IWB.

The current study confirmed a positive predictive relationship between curiosity and IWB, consistent with established findings.

The study also investigated the relationship between organizational climate and innovative performance. Song (2020) supported this connection through one of his hypotheses, highlighting the role of an innovative organizational climate in fostering sustainable innovation performance. Similarly, Ibrahim et al (2018) confirmed the association between organizational climate and IWB through multiple regression analysis, using the organizational competing values framework to measure organizational climate. In the present study, these findings were corroborated, with an innovative organizational climate showing a significant association with IWB (0.274**).

An additional relevant study by Bos-Nehles and Veenendal (2017) examined

the moderating impact of an innovative organizational climate on the relationship between perceptions of HR practices and IWB. They found support for their hypothesis that an innovative climate positively moderates the relationship between information sharing and IWB (0.28**). However, their hypothesis regarding the moderation of training and development on IWB displayed a negative moderation effect (-0.17*). This aligns with the current study's surprising finding that the impact of an innovative organizational climate on the relationship between curiosity and IWB is negatively moderated (-0.132*).

The impact of an innovative organizational climate on the relationship between curiosity and IWB is negatively moderated.

These results suggest a potential avenue for further inquiry, which could involve examining organizational climates that excessively emphasize overwork as a critical factor in career growth. Such climates have been linked to undesirable outcomes, including lower job satisfaction, compromised health, and reduced well-being (Beckers et al, 2008).

The study's findings have several theoretical and practical implications.

Implications

- *New Line of Inquiry:* This study introduces a novel line of inquiry by exploring the moderating role of facet-specific organizational climates, such

as the innovative climate, on organizational innovative outcomes. It challenges conventional wisdom, suggesting that the relationship between climate outcomes may not always be straightforward and beneficial. This allows researchers to investigate indirect approaches to enhance organizational innovation creativity, considering the complex interplay between these variables.

- *Complex Nature of Innovation:* The study highlights the intricate nature of IWB the potential non-linear relationships between the antecedents' outcomes. This complexity underscores the need for a deeper understanding of organizations' processes and mechanisms that influence IWB.
- *Harnessing Curiosity:* Curiosity is a potent construct for enhancing IWB, especially in today's rapidly changing, uncertain business landscape. Organizations can leverage curiosity by strategically stimulating employees to sequentially prioritize specific dimensions of curiosity, such as stretching and embracing. This approach can maximize the impact of curiosity on enhancing employee IWB.

Limitations

The study has several limitations that should be taken into consideration:

1. *Limited Industry Context:* The research focused on specific industry professionals at a particular level.

Consequently, the findings may not apply to employees in different industries, such as IT or Technology, where the dynamic factors influencing IWB could vary significantly.

2. *Exclusion of Manager Ratings:* Due to the constraints imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, manager ratings of their subordinates' IWB were omitted from the study. Including this perspective could have offered additional insights into IWB, potentially enriching the understanding of the phenomenon.
3. *Limited Literature Coverage:* While the individual constructs examined in the study have been extensively researched, the relationships between them remain relatively underexplored. More comprehensive, rigorous research is needed to elucidate the intricate connections between curiosity, organizational climate, and IWB.
4. *Non-Uniform Data Sources:* The data sources used in the study were not uniformly distributed across all sectors or industries. This non-uniformity prevented comparative analyses of samples, which could have provided valuable sector-specific insights into the relationships under investigation.

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