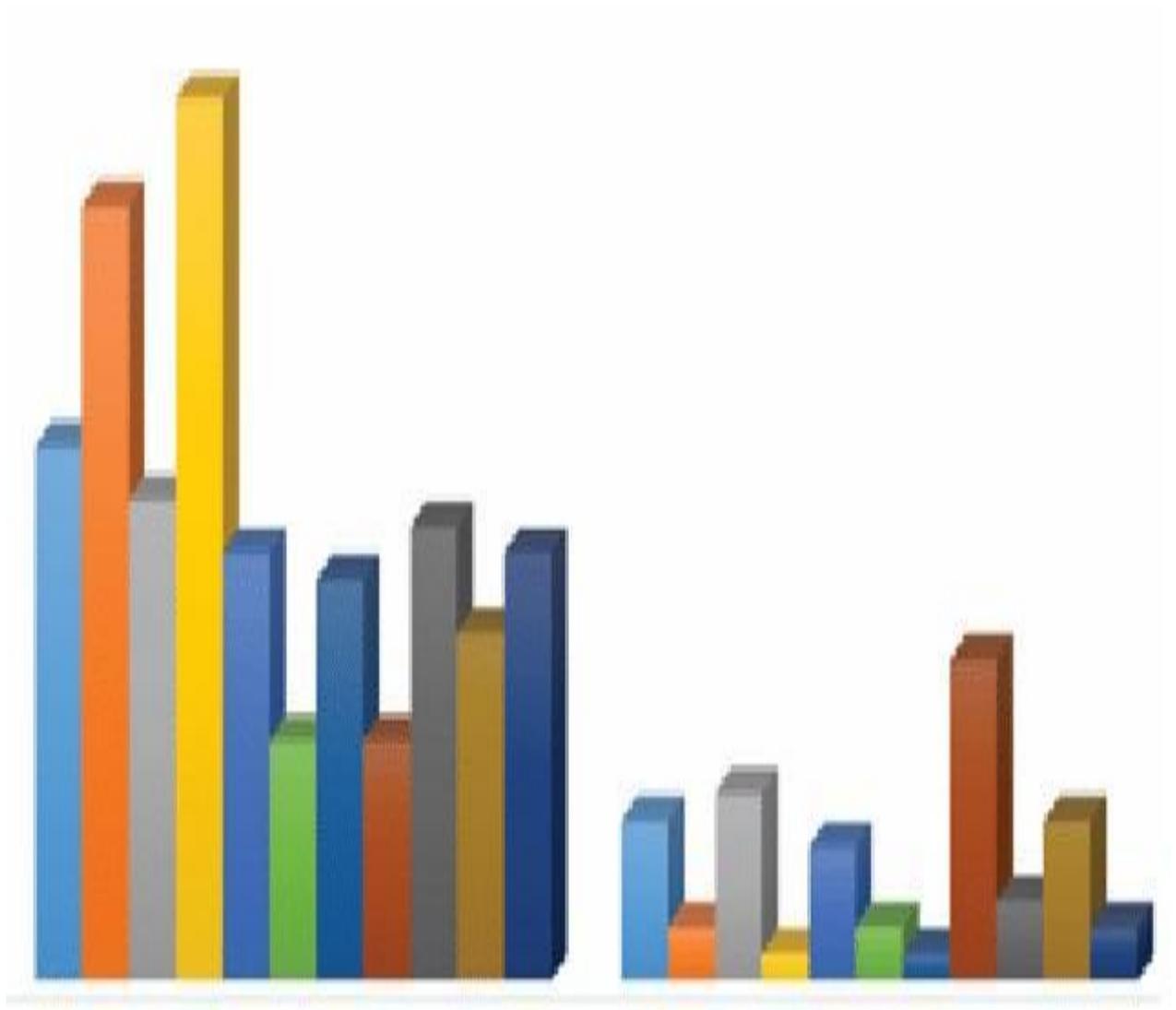


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Research Article

Motivation and Team Performance: Applying Management Theories in Creative Design Studios

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how motivation and team performance are shaped within creative design studios by examining the interaction of psychological needs, job design, leadership practices, and team climate. Drawing on an integrated theoretical framework that combines Self-Determination Theory, the Job Characteristics Model, Herzberg's two-factor theory, and psychological safety concepts, the study adopts a qualitative research approach to explore the lived experiences of designers and studio managers working in project-based creative environments. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observational insights, and document analysis across multiple studios and analysed using thematic analysis. Findings indicate that intrinsic motivation, supported by autonomy, competence development, and social relatedness, is central to sustained creative engagement, while hygiene factors such as operational stability and fair compensation function as critical preconditions for performance. Leadership behaviours that balance autonomy with accountability and foster psychologically safe team climates significantly enhance knowledge sharing, experimentation, and collective problem-solving. The study further reveals that misalignment among organisational systems, leadership practices, and project structures weakens motivational mechanisms and constrains creative output. The findings contribute to organisational behaviour and creativity literature by demonstrating the necessity of multi-level alignment for sustainable creative performance and offer practical implications for evidence-based management in creative industries.

Keywords: creative design studios; intrinsic motivation; team performance; psychological safety; leadership behavior; job design; qualitative research

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1. Introduction

In the contemporary knowledge economy, creative design studios occupy a strategically significant position as generators of symbolic value, innovation, and competitive differentiation for organisations and clients alike. Whether operating in graphic design, branding, user experience (UX), motion graphics, or product design, these studios rely predominantly on human creativity, collaborative problem-solving, and iterative experimentation rather than standardised routines or mechanised production processes. Consequently, team motivation and collective performance become central determinants of organisational success in creative contexts (Amabile, 1996; Oldham & Cummings, 1996).

Unlike traditional manufacturing or administrative environments, creative studios are characterised by ambiguity, fluid task boundaries, evolving client expectations, and compressed project timelines. Designers are frequently required to navigate ill-defined problems, integrate aesthetic and functional considerations, and respond dynamically to feedback from multiple stakeholders. Under such conditions, performance cannot be sustained solely through formal controls or financial incentives. Instead, sustained engagement, psychological commitment, and intrinsic interest in the work play a decisive role in shaping both individual contributions and team-level outcomes (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Shalley & Gilson, 2004).

Motivation theory has long distinguished between intrinsic and extrinsic drivers of behaviour. Intrinsic motivation refers to engaging in activities for their inherent satisfaction, curiosity, or challenge, whereas extrinsic motivation arises from external rewards or pressures such as pay, deadlines, or evaluations (Deci et al., 1999). Empirical studies consistently demonstrate that intrinsic

motivation is a critical predictor of creative performance, particularly when tasks require cognitive flexibility, originality, and sustained problem-solving (Amabile, 1996). However, creative professionals do not operate in a motivational vacuum; organisational structures, leadership practices, job design, and team climates can either nurture or suppress intrinsic motivation.

Management theories provide useful conceptual tools for understanding how organisations can design environments that support motivation and performance. Self-Determination Theory (SDT) emphasises three basic psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—as essential conditions for intrinsic motivation and psychological well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Similarly, Hackman and Oldham’s Job Characteristics Model identifies task attributes such as skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback as key determinants of internal work motivation and performance (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Herzberg’s two-factor theory further distinguishes between hygiene factors that prevent dissatisfaction and motivators that actively promote satisfaction and engagement (Herzberg et al., 1959). Collectively, these theories suggest that motivation is shaped by an interplay of psychological needs, task structures, and organisational practices.

At the team level, performance in creative settings is influenced not only by individual motivation but also by group dynamics, communication patterns, and leadership behaviours. Models of team development propose that groups evolve through stages requiring different forms of managerial support (Tuckman, 1965). Contemporary research highlights psychological safety—the shared belief that interpersonal risk-taking is acceptable—as a foundational condition for

learning, experimentation, and innovation in teams (Edmondson, 1999). In creative studios, where critique, revision, and idea-sharing are integral to the design process, psychological safety becomes particularly salient. Without it, teams may default to safe, conventional solutions rather than pursuing innovative alternatives.

Despite the relevance of these theoretical insights, much of the existing research on motivation and team performance has been conducted in corporate, manufacturing, or general service-sector environments. Creative design studios possess distinctive features that complicate the direct application of traditional management prescriptions. These features include project-based work structures, hybrid employment models involving freelancers, portfolio-driven career incentives, strong professional identities centred on craft, and intense client involvement in creative decision-making (Florida, 2002). Such characteristics shape both what motivates designers and how teams coordinate their efforts under pressure.

Furthermore, creative studios often operate under economic constraints that intensify workload volatility and resource uncertainty. Tight budgets, fluctuating demand, and competitive markets may lead to extended working hours, rapid project turnover, and limited opportunities for recovery. In such contexts, even highly motivated professionals may experience burnout, disengagement, or turnover if organisational systems fail to provide adequate support and recognition (Oldham & Cummings, 1996). Therefore, understanding motivation in creative studios requires attention not only to individual preferences but also to structural and relational factors embedded in studio operations.

This study addresses an important gap in applied management research by examining

how established theories of motivation and team performance function within the specific context of creative design studios. Rather than treating creativity as an exclusively individual trait, the study adopts a socio-organisational perspective, recognising that creative outcomes emerge from interactions among people, tasks, leadership practices, and institutional constraints (Amabile, 1996; Shalley & Gilson, 2004). Through qualitative investigation of multiple studio environments, the research seeks to uncover how designers and managers interpret motivational practices, how teams experience collaboration, and how organisational arrangements shape performance trajectories.

Accordingly, the central research question guiding this study is:

How do classical and contemporary management theories of motivation and team performance apply to creative design studios, and what practical strategies can studio managers use to enhance team effectiveness and creative outcomes?

To address this question, the study integrates insights from Self-Determination Theory, the Job Characteristics Model, Herzberg's two-factor theory, and team development and psychological safety frameworks. This integrative approach allows for examination of both individual-level motivational processes and team-level performance mechanisms within real organisational settings.

The significance of this research is twofold. Theoretically, it contributes to organisational behaviour and creativity literature by contextualising widely used motivation theories within an under-researched but economically important sector. Practically, it offers evidence-based guidance for studio managers, creative directors, and project

leaders seeking to balance creative autonomy with operational discipline. In an era where creative industries are increasingly recognised as drivers of economic growth and cultural production, understanding how to sustain motivated, high-performing creative teams is not only an academic concern but also a strategic imperative.

In sum, creative design studios present a complex organisational environment where motivation, collaboration, and performance intersect in distinctive ways. Traditional management tools alone are insufficient to capture these dynamics. By exploring how motivational theories translate into studio practices and team experiences, this study aims to develop a more nuanced, context-sensitive understanding of how creative work can be effectively organised and sustained over time.

2. Literature Review

This section critically reviews existing scholarly literature on motivation, leadership, job design, and team performance within creative and knowledge-intensive work environments. The purpose of the review is to identify dominant theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and methodological approaches that explain how motivational processes influence creative productivity at both individual and team levels. By synthesising research from organisational behaviour, creativity studies, and project-based work systems, the review highlights areas of theoretical convergence as well as persistent gaps, particularly regarding the interaction between psychological, social, and structural factors in creative design studios. This critical synthesis provides the empirical and conceptual foundation for developing an integrated theoretical framework in the subsequent section.

2.1 Conceptualising Motivation in Organisational Contexts

Motivation is commonly defined as the set of psychological processes that determine the direction, intensity, and persistence of behaviour toward achieving a goal (Pinder, 2014). In organisational contexts, motivation explains why employees choose to engage in certain tasks, how much effort they exert, and how long they sustain that effort. Classical motivation theories largely focused on economic incentives and physiological needs, while contemporary approaches emphasise cognitive and psychological processes that shape engagement and satisfaction.

Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs was among the earliest frameworks to propose that human behaviour is driven by progressively higher-level needs, ranging from physiological survival to self-actualisation. Although criticised for its rigid hierarchy, Maslow's model remains influential in highlighting the importance of psychological growth and meaning at work, factors particularly relevant in creative professions where self-expression and mastery are central. Building on this perspective, Alderfer's ERG theory condensed needs into existence, relatedness, and growth categories, suggesting that multiple needs can operate simultaneously (Alderfer, 1972).

Process theories introduced a more dynamic understanding of motivation by focusing on cognitive evaluations. Expectancy theory argues that individuals exert effort when they believe it will lead to performance and valued outcomes (Vroom, 1964). Similarly, equity theory emphasises perceived fairness in reward distribution as a determinant of motivation and job satisfaction (Adams, 1965). These perspectives are relevant to creative studios where perceived inequities in

recognition, workload, or client exposure may undermine collaboration and morale.

2.2 Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation in Creative Work

Creativity research has consistently emphasised the centrality of intrinsic motivation. Amabile's (1996) componential theory of creativity posits that creative performance depends on domain-relevant skills, creativity-relevant processes, and intrinsic task motivation. Among these components, intrinsic motivation is considered the most directly controllable through organisational design. When individuals experience autonomy, curiosity, and enjoyment in tasks, they are more likely to engage in exploratory thinking and persist through complex problems.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) provides a robust framework for understanding intrinsic motivation by identifying autonomy, competence, and relatedness as basic psychological needs (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Autonomy refers to experiencing choice and volition, competence reflects a sense of effectiveness and mastery, and relatedness involves meaningful social connection. Numerous studies demonstrate that satisfaction of these needs predicts creativity, engagement, and well-being (Deci et al., 2017). In design studios, autonomy over methods, opportunities for skill development, and collaborative critique environments can directly fulfil these needs.

The role of extrinsic rewards remains controversial. Meta-analytic evidence suggests that controlling rewards can undermine intrinsic motivation, whereas informational rewards that affirm competence can enhance it (Deci et al., 1999). In creative settings, performance-based incentives tied narrowly to output metrics may reduce experimentation, while

recognition focused on learning and craft improvement may reinforce intrinsic engagement. Thus, the motivational impact of extrinsic factors depends largely on how they are framed and implemented.

2.3 Job Design and Work Characteristics

Job design theories provide important insights into how task structures influence motivation and performance. Hackman and Oldham's (1976) Job Characteristics Model (JCM) identifies five core job dimensions—skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback—that lead to critical psychological states and positive outcomes such as internal motivation and job satisfaction. Empirical research supports the model's applicability across occupations, including professional and creative roles (Humphrey et al., 2007).

In creative studios, job characteristics are shaped by project allocation practices, workflow segmentation, and client engagement. Designers who participate in projects from concept to execution experience higher task identity, while fragmented workflows may reduce ownership and learning opportunities. Immediate peer and client feedback, common in studio settings, can strengthen the feedback dimension of jobs but may also increase stress when feedback is inconsistent or contradictory (Shalley & Gilson, 2004).

Herzberg's two-factor theory complements job design approaches by distinguishing between hygiene factors that prevent dissatisfaction and motivators that foster satisfaction (Herzberg et al., 1959). For creative professionals, hygiene factors include fair compensation, reliable tools, and reasonable working hours, while motivators involve recognition, achievement, and meaningful creative challenges. Research

suggests that creative workers are particularly sensitive to contextual disruptions that interfere with creative flow, such as administrative inefficiencies and poor briefing practices (Oldham & Cummings, 1996).

2.4 Leadership and Motivational Climate

Leadership plays a critical role in shaping motivational climates. Transformational leadership, characterised by vision, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration, has been linked to higher creativity and team engagement (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Leaders who encourage experimentation and frame mistakes as learning opportunities promote psychological safety and risk-taking behaviours essential for innovation (Edmondson, 1999).

From an SDT perspective, autonomy-supportive leadership-providing rationale, acknowledging perspectives, and offering meaningful choices-predicts higher intrinsic motivation and creativity (Deci et al., 2017). Conversely, controlling leadership styles that emphasise surveillance and rigid compliance reduce perceived autonomy and creative initiative. In creative studios, where professional identity and craft pride are salient, leadership behaviours that respect expertise and encourage dialogue are particularly influential.

Shared and distributed leadership models are also relevant to project-based creative teams. Pearce and Conger (2003) argue that leadership can emerge from multiple team members depending on expertise and task phase. Such fluid leadership structures align with studio practices where senior designers, art directors, and project managers may alternate leadership roles across project stages.

2.5 Team Dynamics and Psychological Safety

Team performance literature emphasises that collective outcomes depend not only on individual skills but also on interaction patterns, trust, and shared norms. Tuckman's (1965) model of team development suggests that teams progress through stages of forming, storming, norming, and performing, each requiring different forms of coordination and leadership support. In project-based studios, teams may repeatedly cycle through early stages as new project groups form, making norm-setting and role clarification recurring challenges.

Psychological safety has emerged as one of the strongest predictors of learning behaviour and innovation in teams (Edmondson, 1999). When team members feel safe to express doubts, propose unconventional ideas, and admit mistakes, teams are more likely to engage in experimentation and iterative refinement. Creative design processes rely heavily on critique and revision; without psychological safety, feedback may be perceived as a personal threat rather than developmental input.

Research on team creativity also highlights the importance of diversity and cognitive conflict. While diversity can enhance idea generation, it may also increase relational tension if not managed effectively (De Dreu & West, 2001). Leaders must therefore cultivate norms that encourage task-focused debate while discouraging interpersonal hostility. Structured critique protocols and facilitative leadership can help maintain constructive conflict.

2.6 Creative Industries and Studio-Specific Contexts

Creative industries research emphasises that creative labour is shaped by portfolio careers, freelance mobility, and strong professional

identities (Florida, 2002). Designers often evaluate success not only in financial terms but also in terms of reputation, learning opportunities, and creative autonomy. These values influence how motivation is constructed and sustained over time.

Project-based employment structures introduce additional complexities. Short-term teams must rapidly establish trust and coordination, while freelancers may experience weaker organisational attachment and limited access to developmental feedback (Bakker, 2011). Studies suggest that inclusive onboarding practices and consistent communication improve integration and performance of contingent workers (Ashford et al., 2007).

Client relationships further complicate motivational dynamics. Client-driven revisions, scope changes, and time pressures can undermine perceived autonomy and creative ownership. However, constructive client collaboration can also enhance task significance and learning when designers view projects as meaningful contributions rather than transactional outputs (Shalley & Gilson, 2004).

2.7 Research Gaps and Need for Integrated Frameworks

Although substantial literature exists on motivation, job design, leadership, and team performance, relatively few studies examine how these mechanisms interact within creative design studios as holistic systems. Many investigations focus either on individual creativity or on general team processes without addressing how project structures, client dynamics, and hybrid staffing models moderate motivational processes.

Moreover, existing models are often tested in stable organisational settings, whereas

studios operate under fluctuating workloads and shifting team compositions. This limits the explanatory power of traditional organisational behaviour theories when applied directly to creative project environments. There is therefore a need for integrative frameworks that combine individual psychological needs, job characteristics, leadership behaviours, and team-level constructs while accounting for industry-specific contextual factors.

This study responds to that gap by synthesising multiple theoretical perspectives and examining their practical manifestation in studio operations. By adopting a qualitative, multi-case approach, the research aims to capture nuanced motivational processes that quantitative surveys may overlook, such as informal feedback rituals, cultural norms, and identity-driven commitment. The literature thus supports the relevance of established motivation theories while underscoring the necessity of contextual adaptation for creative organisational settings.

3. Theoretical Framework

Building on the insights derived from the literature review, this section develops an integrated theoretical framework to explain how motivation and team performance are jointly shaped in creative design studios. Rather than relying on a single theoretical perspective, the framework synthesises Self-Determination Theory, the Job Characteristics Model, Herzberg's two-factor theory, leadership theories, and team-level psychological safety concepts into a multi-level explanatory model. The objective is to illustrate how individual psychological needs, job structures, leadership behaviours, and team climates interact dynamically to influence creative engagement and collective performance outcomes. This integrated approach allows for a more comprehensive

understanding of creative productivity in project-based organisational contexts.

3.1 Purpose and Rationale of the Framework

The purpose of this theoretical framework is to integrate key motivational and team-performance theories into a coherent model tailored to the organisational realities of creative design studios. While traditional organisational behaviour theories explain employee motivation and performance in relatively stable and hierarchical environments, creative studios operate through project-based work, fluid team compositions, and intense client interaction. Therefore, an integrated framework is required to capture how individual psychological needs, job design features, leadership behaviours, and team dynamics jointly shape creative team performance.

The framework synthesises four major theoretical streams: Self-Determination Theory (SDT), the Job Characteristics Model (JCM), Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, and team-level constructs, including team development stages and psychological safety. These theories are integrated to explain how motivational inputs translate into sustained engagement, creative risk-taking, and collective performance outcomes in studio contexts (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Herzberg et al., 1959; Edmondson, 1999).

3.2 Individual-Level Motivation: Self-Determination Theory

Self-Determination Theory posits that human motivation and well-being are governed by the satisfaction of three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000). When these needs are satisfied, individuals are more likely to experience intrinsic motivation, persistence, and creativity.

In creative design studios, autonomy refers to having discretion over creative methods, tools, and problem-solving approaches rather than merely following prescriptive procedures. Competence is supported through opportunities for skill development, mastery of new software or techniques, and constructive feedback during critiques. Relatedness emerges through collaborative ideation, peer mentoring, and shared creative struggles during project cycles. Prior research shows that satisfaction of these needs predicts creativity and proactive behaviour at work (Deci et al., 2017).

Within the framework, SDT functions as the primary explanatory mechanism linking organisational practices to intrinsic motivation. Leadership behaviours, job structures, and team norms are conceptualised as contextual factors that either support or thwart psychological need satisfaction. When need satisfaction is high, designers are expected to demonstrate greater engagement, creative persistence, and willingness to experiment, all of which are essential to design quality.

3.3 Task and Role Design: Job Characteristics Model

While SDT explains motivational processes, the Job Characteristics Model specifies how task structures influence motivation. Hackman and Oldham (1976) propose that five core job dimensions—skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback—produce critical psychological states that lead to internal work motivation and performance.

In the context of creative studios, projects that require diverse skills (e.g., research, concept development, visual execution) enhance skill variety. Allowing designers to remain involved from brief to final delivery strengthens task identity. Task significance is reinforced when designers perceive that their

work affects users, brand perception, or social outcomes. Autonomy overlaps with SDT's autonomy need but is operationalised here at the task-structural level. Feedback is typically embedded in studio routines through critiques and client reviews.

The framework positions job design as a structural mechanism that operationalises psychological need support. Well-designed roles facilitate competence and autonomy satisfaction, while poorly segmented or overly specialised roles may reduce learning opportunities and ownership. Thus, JCM provides actionable levers for studio managers to design motivating work environments that complement psychological processes described by SDT (Humphrey et al., 2007).

3.4 Contextual Conditions: Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory distinguishes between hygiene factors, which prevent dissatisfaction, and motivators, which promote satisfaction and engagement (Herzberg et al., 1959). Hygiene factors include salary, working conditions, company policies, and interpersonal relations, whereas motivators involve achievement, recognition, responsibility, and growth.

In creative studios, hygiene conditions include reliable payment systems (especially for freelancers), functional hardware and software, manageable workloads, and clear project briefings. Failure to meet these baseline conditions may not reduce creative ability directly, but it generates frustration, stress, and turnover intentions. Motivators, by contrast, involve recognition of creative contributions, opportunities to lead projects, and participation in high-profile or experimental assignments.

Within the integrated framework, hygiene factors are treated as enabling conditions that moderate the effectiveness of motivational interventions. Even autonomy-supportive leadership and enriched job design may fail if hygiene conditions are deficient. Therefore, Herzberg's theory explains why operational stability is a prerequisite for sustained intrinsic motivation in high-pressure creative environments.

3.5 Team-Level Dynamics: Development and Psychological Safety

Creative work is inherently social and iterative, requiring frequent exchange of ideas, critique, and coordination. Team-level constructs, therefore, play a central role in translating individual motivation into collective performance. Two complementary perspectives inform this component of the framework: team development stages and psychological safety.

Tuckman's (1965) model proposes that teams move through forming, storming, norming, and performing stages. In project-based studios, teams often cycle rapidly through early stages due to changing project compositions. Without deliberate norm-setting and role clarification, teams may remain stuck in conflict or coordination breakdowns, undermining performance.

Psychological safety, defined as a shared belief that interpersonal risk-taking is safe, is a critical predictor of learning and innovation in teams (Edmondson, 1999). In creative studios, designers must regularly present incomplete ideas and accept critique. When psychological safety is low, individuals may avoid proposing novel concepts or challenging dominant ideas, leading to conservative outputs.

The framework conceptualises psychological safety as both an outcome of leadership behaviours and a mediator between motivation and performance. Even highly motivated individuals may withhold contributions if team climates are punitive or hierarchical. Therefore, psychological safety is necessary for translating intrinsic motivation into observable creative behaviours.

3.6 Leadership as an Integrative Mechanism

Leadership functions as the connective tissue linking individual, task, and team-level processes. Autonomy-supportive leadership, characterised by offering choice, acknowledging perspectives, and providing meaningful rationale, supports psychological need satisfaction and intrinsic motivation (Deci et al., 2017). Transformational leadership behaviours further inspire commitment by articulating vision and encouraging innovation (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

In creative studios, leadership is often distributed across creative directors, project managers, and senior designers. Each role contributes differently: creative directors shape vision and standards; project managers buffer teams from client pressures; senior designers provide mentoring and informal guidance. The framework, therefore, adopts a shared leadership perspective, recognising that motivational support can emerge from multiple actors depending on the project phase (Pearce & Conger, 2003).

Leadership also influences team norms and psychological safety. Leaders who model vulnerability, invite dissent, and normalise learning from failure foster climates that support experimentation. Conversely, controlling or punitive leadership styles suppress voice behaviour and creative risk-taking.

3.7 Integrated Pathways and Propositions

Drawing on the preceding components, the integrated framework proposes the following pathways:

- **Leadership and job design influence psychological need satisfaction** by shaping autonomy, competence development, and social connection.
- **Psychological need satisfaction promotes intrinsic motivation**, leading to sustained engagement and creative persistence (SDT pathway).
- **Task characteristics enhance motivation and learning opportunities**, reinforcing competence and task ownership (JCM pathway).
- **Hygiene factors moderate motivational effects**, such that poor operational conditions weaken the impact of motivational practices (Herzberg pathway).
- **Psychological safety mediates between motivation and team performance**, enabling risk-taking, open communication, and collaborative learning.
- **Team development processes shape coordination effectiveness**, influencing how efficiently motivated individuals translate effort into collective output.

Together, these pathways suggest that creative team performance is not the product of isolated interventions but the cumulative result of aligned leadership, job structures, supportive climates, and operational stability.

3.8 Contextual Moderators in Creative Studios

The framework also recognises contextual moderators specific to creative studios. Client pressures may reduce autonomy and increase time stress, potentially undermining intrinsic motivation. Freelance staffing models affect relatedness and access to feedback, influencing competence development. Project temporality affects team stability and norm formation. These factors do not negate theoretical mechanisms but alter their strength and expression.

Therefore, the framework emphasises adaptability: managerial interventions must be calibrated to project types, team compositions, and client relationships. Universal motivational prescriptions are unlikely to be effective without contextual sensitivity.

3.9 Theoretical and Practical Contributions

Theoretically, the framework advances motivation research by integrating psychological, structural, and relational mechanisms within a single explanatory model tailored to creative organisations. It bridges individual-centred motivation theories with team and leadership research, addressing calls for multi-level approaches to creativity management (Shalley & Gilson, 2004).

Practically, the framework guides studio managers in diagnosing motivational breakdowns. Low creativity may stem not from lack of talent but from misaligned job design, unsafe team climates, or unresolved hygiene issues. By identifying multiple leverage points, the model supports targeted interventions rather than generic motivational programs.

4. Research Methodology

This section outlines the qualitative research design adopted to explore the complex and context-dependent nature of motivation and team performance in creative design studios. Given the subjective, relational, and process-oriented characteristics of creative work, a qualitative approach is considered most appropriate for capturing participants' lived experiences, perceptions, and meaning-making processes. The methodology is designed to facilitate in-depth exploration of how motivational practices, leadership interactions, and team dynamics are enacted in real organisational settings. The section details the research paradigm, sampling strategy, data collection procedures, analytical techniques, and ethical considerations guiding the study.

4.1 Research Design and Approach

This study adopts a qualitative, multiple-case study design to explore how motivation and team performance are experienced and enacted within creative design studios. Qualitative methodology is appropriate when the objective is to understand complex social processes, subjective meanings, and contextual influences that cannot be adequately captured through standardised measurement instruments (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Since creative work is inherently interpretive, socially constructed, and context-dependent, qualitative inquiry enables rich exploration of how designers and managers perceive motivation, leadership, and collaboration in daily practice.

A multiple-case design enhances analytical rigour by enabling comparison across diverse organisational settings, facilitating identification of both common mechanisms and context-specific variations (Yin, 2018). Rather than seeking statistical generalisation,

the study aims for analytical generalisation, whereby theoretical propositions are refined and extended through empirical observation.

4.2 Site Selection and Sampling Strategy

Studios were selected using purposive, maximum-variation sampling to capture heterogeneity in organisational size, creative specialisation, and employment structures (Patton, 2015). Selection criteria included:

- primary service domain (e.g., branding, UX/UI, motion graphics, product design),
- studio size (small: 5–15 employees; medium: 16–40 employees), and
- staffing model (fully in-house vs. hybrid models incorporating freelancers).

Five studios located in major urban creative hubs were selected. This diversity enabled exploration of how motivational processes operate under varying project demands and resource conditions. Such sampling increases the transferability of findings by demonstrating how similar mechanisms function across differing contexts rather than assuming homogeneity of creative workplaces.

4.3 Participants

Participants were recruited through studio management and snowball sampling within each site. Inclusion criteria required that participants had worked on at least two studio projects within the past twelve months, ensuring familiarity with team processes and managerial practices. The final sample comprised 38 participants, including studio directors, creative directors, project managers, senior designers, junior designers, and freelance collaborators.

This role diversity allowed triangulation of perspectives on leadership practices, job design, and team dynamics. Collecting viewpoints from both managerial and non-managerial staff enhanced the credibility of findings and reduced single-source bias (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Demographic data such as years of experience and functional specialisation were recorded to contextualise responses while maintaining participant anonymity.

4.4 Data Collection Methods

Three complementary qualitative methods were employed: semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Methodological triangulation strengthens validity by corroborating findings across data sources (Patton, 2015).

Semi-structured interviews served as the primary data source. Interviews lasted between 45 and 75 minutes and followed an interview guide aligned with theoretical constructs, including autonomy, competence development, feedback, leadership behaviours, psychological safety, and perceived performance outcomes. However, open-ended questioning allowed participants to introduce emergent themes and unanticipated experiences.

Interviews were audio-recorded with consent and transcribed verbatim. This approach enabled detailed examination of language, meaning-making processes, and emotional cues related to motivational experiences (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015).

Participant observation was conducted in each studio for periods ranging from two to five working days. Observations included design critique sessions, project planning meetings, informal interactions, and collaborative work episodes. Field notes documented interaction patterns, leadership

behaviours, spatial arrangements, and emotional tone of team exchanges.

Observation allowed the researcher to capture discrepancies between formal accounts and actual practices, particularly regarding feedback styles, power dynamics, and participation levels (Yin, 2018). These insights were critical for understanding psychological safety and team coordination beyond self-reported perceptions.

Organisational documents, such as onboarding materials, project briefs, feedback templates, performance review forms, and internal communication guidelines, were collected where accessible. These artefacts provided insight into formalised expectations, reward structures, and communication norms. Document analysis also supported the interpretation of how studios institutionalise motivational practices and manage project workflows.

4.5 Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis followed an iterative thematic analysis approach combined with cross-case synthesis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Yin, 2018). Analysis progressed through several stages:

- **Familiarisation:** Transcripts and field notes were read repeatedly to gain a holistic understanding. Reflexive memos captured emerging impressions and potential theoretical linkages.
- **Initial Coding:** Open coding was applied to identify meaningful segments of text. Codes were both theory-driven (e.g., autonomy support, feedback quality) and data-driven (e.g., client pressure, creative fatigue).
- **Theme Development:** Codes were clustered into broader themes

representing motivational mechanisms, leadership practices, team climates, and performance consequences.

- **Cross-Case Comparison:** Themes were compared across studios to identify convergent patterns and contextual divergences. This step facilitated the identification of mechanisms robust across organisational variations.
- **Theory Integration:** Emergent themes were mapped onto the integrated theoretical framework to confirm, refine, or extend theoretical propositions. Negative cases were analysed to test explanatory boundaries.

Qualitative data management software was used to organise transcripts, codes, and memos, enhancing auditability and analytical transparency.

4.6 Trustworthiness and Rigour

Several strategies were employed to enhance trustworthiness in line with qualitative research standards (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

- **Credibility:** Triangulation across interviews, observations, and documents reduced reliance on single data sources. Member checking was conducted by sharing thematic summaries with selected participants for validation of interpretations.
- **Transferability:** Thick description of studio contexts, workflows, and cultural norms allows readers to assess applicability to similar creative environments.
- **Dependability:** An audit trail documenting methodological

decisions, coding frameworks, and analytical iterations was maintained.

- **Confirmability:** Reflexive journaling helped identify researcher assumptions and mitigate interpretive bias.

4.7 Ethical Considerations

Participants received detailed information sheets explaining the study's purpose, voluntary nature, and confidentiality protections. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants. To protect anonymity, pseudonyms were used for studios and individuals, and identifying client information was omitted. Audio recordings and transcripts were securely stored on encrypted devices accessible only to the research team. Participants retained the right to withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty.

4.8 Methodological Limitations

While qualitative methods enable deep contextual understanding, they limit statistical generalizability. Findings are analytically rather than statistically generalizable to similar creative settings. Additionally, observational periods were time-bounded and may not capture long-term cultural dynamics or seasonal workload fluctuations.

Researcher presence may also influence participant behaviour during observations, although prolonged engagement and informal interactions helped reduce reactivity over time. Future research could adopt longitudinal designs or mixed-methods approaches to examine causal relationships and quantify performance outcomes associated with specific motivational interventions.

5. Findings

This section presents the major themes that emerged from interviews, observations, and document analysis across the five creative design studios. Findings are organised around motivational drivers, leadership practices, team dynamics, and contextual constraints influencing team performance. While individual experiences varied by studio size and project type, several consistent patterns were observed across cases, suggesting shared mechanisms shaping creative team effectiveness.

5.1 Predominance of Intrinsic Motivation

Across all studios, participants consistently identified intrinsic factors as the primary drivers of sustained engagement. Designers described motivation in terms of “solving interesting problems,” “learning new techniques,” and “seeing ideas come to life.” These expressions align with Self-Determination Theory's emphasis on autonomy and competence as central to intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Junior designers highlighted skill acquisition and portfolio development as critical sources of motivation, whereas senior designers emphasised mastery, experimentation, and mentoring roles. Projects that allowed exploration and iteration generated higher energy levels and greater willingness to invest extra effort. In contrast, highly standardised production tasks were associated with lower engagement, even when financially rewarding.

These findings support creativity research demonstrating that intrinsic motivation predicts persistence and originality in complex problem-solving contexts (Amabile, 1996). Extrinsic incentives, such as bonuses, were viewed as appreciated but insufficient

to compensate for monotonous or overly constrained creative tasks.

5.2 Hygiene Failures as Immediate Demotivators

While intrinsic factors drove engagement, operational and administrative shortcomings rapidly eroded motivation. Participants frequently mentioned delayed payments, unclear contracts for freelancers, unstable project scopes, and inadequate hardware or software as major stressors. These conditions were not cited as motivators when present but became dominant complaints when absent, consistent with Herzberg's two-factor theory (Herzberg et al., 1959).

Several designers reported that talented colleagues left studios not because of creative dissatisfaction but due to burnout caused by chaotic scheduling and constant client revisions. Observational data further revealed that teams experiencing repeated workflow disruptions exhibited reduced patience during critiques and less collaborative problem-solving.

These findings suggest that hygiene conditions function as necessary foundations for motivational systems. Without stable administrative infrastructures, even autonomy-supportive leadership and enriching job design were insufficient to sustain engagement.

5.3 Autonomy with Clear Boundaries Enhances Performance

Autonomy emerged as a strong motivational driver, but participants emphasised that autonomy was most effective when paired with clear goals and constraints. Designers preferred creative freedom in methods rather than ambiguity in expectations. Briefs that articulated desired outcomes while allowing

flexible approaches generated higher perceived ownership and accountability.

Studios that adopted outcome-focused briefs and iterative feedback checkpoints reported smoother project flows and fewer late-stage redesigns. Conversely, environments with either rigid procedural control or vague instructions produced frustration and inefficiencies. This balance reflects the dual importance of autonomy and structure identified in both SDT and job design literature (Deci et al., 2017; Hackman & Oldham, 1976).

Project managers played a critical role in translating client demands into feasible creative constraints, effectively acting as buffers. When this translation failed, designers experienced reduced autonomy and increased emotional exhaustion.

5.4 Structured Feedback Rituals Foster Learning and Cohesion

Formalised feedback practices were strongly associated with competence development and team cohesion. Studios that institutionalised critique sessions, post-project reviews, and peer mentoring demonstrated higher reflective learning and fewer interpersonal conflicts. Participants reported that predictable feedback rituals normalised critique and reduced defensiveness.

Feedback was most effective when framed around problem-solving rather than personal evaluation. Observations showed that teams using shared visual artefacts and collaborative annotations engaged more constructively than those relying on hierarchical approval structures. These practices align with JCM's emphasis on feedback as a motivational job characteristic and with psychological safety principles

(Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Edmondson, 1999).

Conversely, studios lacking regular feedback mechanisms relied heavily on ad hoc client feedback, which was often perceived as inconsistent and emotionally taxing.

5.5 Psychological Safety Enables Creative Risk-Taking

Psychological safety emerged as a critical enabler of innovation. Teams with supportive climates were more willing to present incomplete ideas, challenge dominant concepts, and admit mistakes. Leaders who openly acknowledged uncertainties and encouraged debate cultivated stronger trust and participation.

In contrast, studios characterised by blame-oriented cultures showed higher conformity and reluctance to deviate from safe design choices. Junior designers in these environments often withheld alternative ideas to avoid negative evaluation. These findings corroborate prior research linking psychological safety with learning behaviour and innovation (Edmondson, 1999).

Psychological safety also moderated the impact of intrinsic motivation. Even highly motivated designers limited their contributions when they perceived interpersonal risks, suggesting that safety is a necessary mediator between motivation and creative performance.

5.6 Leadership Behaviours Shape Motivational Trajectories

Leadership style significantly influenced how motivation was sustained over project cycles. Autonomy-supportive leaders who explained rationales, sought input, and recognised effort fostered stronger engagement and loyalty. Transformational behaviours such as articulating design vision

and celebrating creative milestones reinforced shared purpose.

Micromanagement and public criticism, by contrast, were associated with reduced initiative and defensive communication patterns. Participants emphasised that creative confidence was highly sensitive to leadership tone, particularly during early ideation phases.

Importantly, leadership was not confined to formal roles. Senior designers often acted as informal mentors, providing feedback and emotional support. This distributed leadership dynamic aligns with shared leadership theories emphasising fluid influence structures in knowledge-intensive teams (Pearce & Conger, 2003).

5.7 Recognition That Honours Craft Over Output Metrics

Recognition practices influenced perceptions of competence and professional identity. Participants valued feedback that acknowledged specific design decisions and learning progress more than generic praise or purely output-based rewards. Public recognition during critique sessions or internal showcases reinforced peer learning and collective pride.

Financial bonuses were appreciated but did not significantly affect creative effort unless coupled with meaningful feedback. This supports SDT research showing that competence-affirming recognition strengthens intrinsic motivation, whereas controlling rewards may undermine it (Deci et al., 1999).

Studios that linked recognition to collaborative achievements rather than individual competition exhibited stronger team cohesion and reduced social comparison.

5.8 Freelancers and Hybrid Staffing Models Create Motivational Challenges

Hybrid staffing models introduced unique coordination and motivational challenges. Freelancers valued autonomy and project variety but often felt peripheral to studio culture. Lack of inclusion in feedback sessions and delayed payments were common demotivators.

Studios that invested in structured onboarding for freelancers, provided clear briefs, and included them in critique rituals reported smoother collaboration and higher commitment. These practices enhanced relatedness and competence development, key SDT components. Without such integration, freelancers tend to focus narrowly on task completion, reducing knowledge sharing and team learning.

5.9 Client Dynamics as Contextual Moderators

Client behaviour significantly shaped motivational climates. Unrealistic deadlines, frequent scope changes, and subjective feedback reduced designers' sense of control and increased emotional labour. Conversely, clients who engaged constructively and respected professional judgment enhanced task significance and creative pride.

Project managers who negotiated scope boundaries and shielded teams from unnecessary revisions preserved autonomy and morale. These buffering behaviours were particularly important in high-stakes branding and UX projects where client scrutiny was intense. Thus, client relationships acted as external moderators influencing the effectiveness of internal motivational systems.

5.10 Task Ownership and End-to-End Responsibility: Enhance Commitment

Designers who maintained involvement from ideation through final delivery reported stronger ownership and accountability. End-to-end task responsibility facilitated learning from outcomes and strengthened professional identity.

Fragmented workflows, where designers contributed only isolated components, reduced perceived task identity and occasionally led to misalignment and rework. This finding reinforces the relevance of JCM's task identity dimension in creative project design (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Studios implementing rotating project leadership roles further enhanced ownership and leadership development.

5.11 Emergent Motivational Practices

Several innovative practices were observed across studios:

- **Learning rituals:** informal workshops and skill-sharing sessions.
- **Failure showcases:** presentations focused on lessons from unsuccessful projects.
- **Exploration time:** allocated hours for experimental work not tied to client deliverables.
- **Peer mentoring pairs:** structured support for junior designers.

These practices supported competence development, relatedness, and psychological safety, reinforcing the integrated framework's emphasis on multi-level motivational mechanisms.

6. Discussion

This section interprets the empirical findings in light of the integrated theoretical framework, linking observed motivational mechanisms in creative design studios to established theories of motivation, job design, leadership, and team performance. The discussion demonstrates how individual psychological needs, structural job features, leadership behaviours, and team climates interact to shape sustained creative performance. Rather than treating these factors in isolation, the findings suggest that creative productivity emerges from multi-level alignment across motivational systems.

6.1 Centrality of Intrinsic Motivation in Creative Performance

The dominance of intrinsic motivation observed across studios strongly supports Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which posits that autonomy, competence, and relatedness are essential for sustained engagement and high-quality performance (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Designers consistently reported that learning opportunities, problem-solving challenges, and creative ownership were more motivating than financial rewards alone. This aligns with Amabile's (1996) componential theory of creativity, which identifies intrinsic motivation as the most direct predictor of creative output.

Importantly, intrinsic motivation was not purely dispositional but highly sensitive to organisational conditions. When job structures limited experimentation or when client pressures constrained creative judgment, motivation declined even among highly skilled professionals. This finding reinforces SDT's emphasis on contextual support for psychological needs rather than assuming stable internal traits.

6.2 Job Design as a Structural Enabler of Motivation

Findings related to task ownership, end-to-end responsibility, and feedback rituals correspond closely with Hackman and Oldham's Job Characteristics Model (JCM) (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). High task identity enabled designers to connect their efforts with outcomes, strengthening personal investment and learning. Similarly, frequent and constructive feedback supported competence development, reinforcing intrinsic motivation.

However, the study extends JCM by illustrating how project-based workflows can both enhance and undermine job characteristics. While creative projects naturally offer high skill variety, fragmented task allocation and rapid team reconfiguration may reduce task identity and continuity of feedback. Thus, structural features of creative industries complicate traditional job design assumptions, suggesting that managers must intentionally design project roles to preserve motivational benefits.

6.3 Hygiene Factors as Preconditions, Not Motivators

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory received strong empirical support in explaining why administrative and operational problems disproportionately affected morale (Herzberg et al., 1959). Delayed payments, unclear briefs, and unstable schedules did not increase satisfaction when resolved, but their absence caused immediate dissatisfaction and turnover intentions. This asymmetry underscores that motivational strategies cannot compensate for poor basic working conditions.

The findings further suggest that hygiene factors moderate the effectiveness of motivational interventions. Autonomy-

supportive leadership and enriching tasks were less effective in studios plagued by operational instability. This interaction highlights the need to integrate motivational psychology with organisational infrastructure in creative management strategies.

6.4 Leadership as a Catalyst for Psychological Need Satisfaction

Leadership behaviours emerged as pivotal in translating organisational structures into lived motivational experiences. Autonomy-supportive leadership supported psychological need satisfaction by validating designer perspectives and providing meaningful choices (Deci et al., 2017). Transformational behaviours further strengthened collective purpose and resilience during challenging projects (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

The distributed nature of leadership in studios, where influence shifts between creative directors, project managers, and senior designers, aligns with shared leadership theory (Pearce & Conger, 2003). This fluid leadership structure may be particularly well-suited to knowledge-intensive work where expertise is situational. The findings suggest that leadership effectiveness in creative teams depends less on formal authority and more on relational credibility and professional respect.

6.5 Psychological Safety as a Mediator of Creative Expression

Psychological safety functioned as a crucial mediator between motivation and observable creative behaviour. Even when designers were intrinsically motivated, low safety climates suppressed idea sharing and experimentation. This supports Edmondson's (1999) argument that psychological safety is foundational for learning and innovation.

In creative contexts, where critique is unavoidable, the distinction between developmental and judgmental feedback becomes critical. Teams that institutionalised respectful critique norms maintained higher levels of experimentation. Thus, psychological safety is not merely an interpersonal climate variable but an operational necessity for iterative design processes.

6.6 Balancing Autonomy and Constraint: The Creativity Paradox

A recurring tension in the findings was the need to balance creative freedom with project discipline. Excessive autonomy without clear direction led to scope creep and frustration, while rigid control stifled experimentation. This reflects the broader paradox of creativity management: innovation thrives within enabling constraints (Shalley & Gilson, 2004).

The integrated framework helps resolve this tension by distinguishing between autonomy in methods and clarity in outcomes. Leaders who articulated performance expectations while allowing flexibility in approach preserved both motivation and efficiency. This nuance extends SDT by demonstrating how autonomy support must coexist with accountability structures in professional settings.

6.7 Freelancers, Identity, and Motivational Fragility

Hybrid staffing models complicated motivational dynamics by weakening relatedness and organisational identification among freelancers. While freelancers valued autonomy, their peripheral status reduced access to feedback and social support, undermining competence development and commitment. This finding resonates with research on nonstandard employment, which

highlights challenges in social integration and career development (Ashford et al., 2007; Bakker, 2011).

Studios that treated freelancers as temporary but valued team members mitigated these issues through onboarding, inclusion in rituals, and transparent communication. These practices effectively extended SDT principles to contingent workers, suggesting that psychological needs remain salient regardless of contractual status.

6.8 Client Pressures as External Motivational Constraints

Client relationships emerged as powerful external moderators of motivational systems. Frequent revisions, unrealistic deadlines, and subjective feedback reduced autonomy and increased emotional labour. These pressures often bypassed internal motivational practices, demonstrating that motivation cannot be fully controlled by organisational policies alone.

Project managers who buffered teams from client volatility preserved creative focus and morale. This buffering role illustrates how boundary-spanning leadership can protect internal motivational climates from external disruptions. The finding extends leadership theory by emphasising managerial mediation between market demands and creative labour conditions.

6.9 Multi-Level Alignment as the Basis of Sustainable Performance

Collectively, the findings suggest that sustainable creative performance depends on alignment across individual, team, and organisational levels. Intrinsic motivation alone is insufficient if job design undermines ownership, if team climates suppress voice, or if operational systems generate chronic stress. Conversely, even strong organisational systems cannot compensate

for psychologically controlling leadership or unsafe interpersonal climates.

This multi-level perspective supports calls in creativity research for integrative models that account for interactions among motivational, social, and structural variables (Shalley & Gilson, 2004). The integrated framework proposed in this study provides a conceptual map for understanding these interactions in studio environments.

6.10 Implications for Management Theory

From a theoretical standpoint, the study contributes to organisational behaviour literature by contextualising universal motivation theories within creative, project-based settings. It demonstrates that SDT and JCM remain highly relevant but require adaptation to account for fluid team structures and client-mediated workflows.

Furthermore, the findings highlight the importance of psychological safety as a bridging construct linking individual motivation to team innovation. This reinforces the argument that creativity is not solely an individual cognitive process but a socially embedded organisational outcome.

The study also supports emerging views of leadership as distributed and relational rather than purely hierarchical, particularly in professional creative organisations.

6.11 Limitations and Alternative Interpretations

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the qualitative design limits causal inference; while strong associations were observed, definitive causal pathways cannot be established. Second, studios with healthier cultures may have been more willing to participate, potentially biasing results toward more functional environments.

Resource availability may also confound findings. Better-funded studios may implement supportive practices more easily, raising questions about whether observed effects stem from motivation systems or broader economic advantages. Future studies using mixed methods could disentangle these influences.

Cultural context is another consideration. Norms regarding hierarchy, feedback, and authority vary across societies, potentially shaping psychological safety and leadership effectiveness. Therefore, findings may not fully generalise across cultural settings without adaptation.

6.12 Directions for Future Research

Future research could pursue several avenues. Longitudinal designs would allow examination of how motivation and team performance evolve across project cycles and organisational changes. Quantitative studies could test specific pathways in the integrated framework, such as the mediating role of psychological safety between leadership behaviours and creative output.

Comparative studies between independent studios and in-house corporate design teams could further illuminate how institutional contexts shape motivational systems. Additionally, research focusing on digital and remote collaboration environments is increasingly relevant as creative work becomes more geographically dispersed.

6.13 Practical Synthesis: Toward Evidence-Based Studio Management

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that improving creative performance does not require expensive incentive programs but rather thoughtful alignment of everyday practices with human psychological needs. Designing jobs to preserve ownership, training leaders in

autonomy-supportive behaviours, institutionalising constructive critique, and ensuring basic operational stability may yield substantial performance benefits.

Importantly, interventions must be systemic rather than isolated. Introducing creative workshops without addressing burnout or promoting autonomy without clarifying expectations may produce limited or even counterproductive effects. The integrated framework encourages managers to diagnose motivational problems holistically rather than attributing them to individual attitudes.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined how classical and contemporary management theories of motivation and team performance operate within creative design studios, emphasising the interaction of individual psychological needs, job design features, leadership behaviours, and team climates. Drawing on Self-Determination Theory, the Job Characteristics Model, Herzberg's two-factor theory, and team development and psychological safety frameworks, the study proposed an integrated model explaining how sustainable creative performance emerges from multi-level organisational alignment (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Herzberg et al., 1959; Edmondson, 1999).

The findings demonstrate that intrinsic motivation, driven by autonomy, competence development, and social connection, constitutes the primary engine of creative engagement. However, intrinsic motivation alone is insufficient when operational hygiene factors such as unstable workflows, delayed payments, and unclear role expectations undermine basic work conditions. Moreover, team-level psychological safety and leadership

behaviours critically shape whether motivated individuals are willing to take creative risks and contribute openly. These results reinforce the view that creativity is not merely an individual trait but an organisational capability shaped by structures, relationships, and institutional practices (Amabile, 1996; Shalley & Gilson, 2004).

Managerial Implications

For studio managers and creative leaders, the study offers several actionable recommendations. First, roles and project assignments should be designed to enhance task identity and feedback by allowing designers to participate across multiple project stages and by institutionalising structured critique rituals. Second, leaders should adopt autonomy-supportive behaviours by clarifying outcomes while granting flexibility in methods and acknowledging individual perspectives. Third, psychological safety must be treated as a strategic resource through explicit critique norms, modelling of vulnerability by leaders, and reinforcement of learning-oriented responses to failure. Finally, hygiene factors such as timely payment systems, functional tools, and transparent client-brief translation processes must be prioritised, as motivational initiatives are unlikely to succeed in their absence.

Policy and Industry Implications

At the policy level, creative industry regulators and professional associations can support studio sustainability by promoting fair freelance contracting standards, timely payment regulations, and occupational health guidelines addressing burnout in project-based creative work. Public funding programs for creative industries may also consider incorporating organisational development components that support leadership training and team-based learning,

not only technical skill enhancement. Such measures would contribute to more stable creative labour markets and higher-quality cultural production.

Future Research Directions

Future research should extend this study through longitudinal and mixed-methods designs to examine causal relationships between motivational practices and performance outcomes over time. Quantitative testing of the integrated framework could clarify the mediating roles of psychological safety and job characteristics. Comparative studies across cultural contexts and between independent studios and in-house corporate design teams would further refine the model's generalizability. Additionally, as remote and hybrid collaboration becomes more prevalent in creative industries, future research should investigate how digital communication platforms reshape motivation, feedback processes, and team cohesion.

In conclusion, creative design studios that intentionally align leadership practices, job design, team norms, and operational systems with fundamental human motivational needs are more likely to achieve sustainable creative excellence. Motivation in creative work is not a peripheral human resource concern but a central strategic determinant of innovation capacity and organisational resilience.

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