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Benevolent ethical climate and creative behavior; The sequential moderating role of worker autonomy and intrinsic motivation in the Colombian electricity sector

Clima ético benevolente y comportamiento creativo; el papel moderador secuencial de la autonomía laboral y de la motivación intrínseca en el sector eléctrico colombiano

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Abstract

The organizational expansion of the Colombian electricity sector, supported by constant creative performance, must be filtered through ethical behaviors to prevent irregular behaviors. Therefore, this research seeks to identify how benevolent ethical climates relate to creative behavior, through a progressive moderation of work autonomy and intrinsic motivation. The sample consist of 448 employees of the Colombian electricity sector. Highlighted among the results is that a benevolent ethical climate is directly linked to the creativity of professional employees. Additionally, the breadth of work autonomy does not influence creative behavior unless the perceived intrinsic motivation is at medium or high levels. In conclusion, the relationship between benevolent ethical climates and creative behavior depends, to a large extent, on having a sufficient perception of intrinsic motivation. When interpreted as weak, intrinsic motivation hinders the beneficial effects of work freedom and flexibility.

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Resumen

La expansión organizacional del sector eléctrico colombiano, que está soportada en un desempeño creativo constante, debe filtrarse a través de comportamientos éticos que eviten conductas irregulares. Por eso, esta investigación busca identificar como un clima ético benevolente se asocia con el comportamiento creativo mediante la moderación progresiva de la autonomía laboral y la motivación intrínseca. La muestra es de 448 empleados del sector eléctrico colombiano. De los resultados cabe destacar que un clima ético benevolente se vincula directamente con la creatividad de los empleados profesionales. Además, la amplitud de autonomía laboral no influye sobre el comportamiento creativo salvo que la motivación intrínseca percibida esté en niveles medios o altos. En conclusión, la relación entre un clima ético benevolente y el comportamiento creativo depende en gran medida de una percepción suficiente de motivación intrínseca, pues esta obstaculiza los efectos beneficiosos de la libertad y flexibilidad laborales, cuando es interpretada de forma débil.

Código JEL: M10, J01, J20, J21, J24
Palabras clave: clima ético benevolente; comportamiento creativo; creatividad; autonomía laboral; motivación intrínseca; sector eléctrico colombiano

Introduction

Colombia is one of Latin America's main emerging economies with a sustained electricity demand (Granados et al., 2022). For this reason, the Colombian energy sector and, specifically, the electricity sector are vital for the country's growth. The construction of smart grids is the next stage for developing the electrical fabric in part of the national territory since they enable the activation of electricity cogeneration methods and the inclusion of renewable energies that favor the multiplicity of the energy model. In reality and today, more than seventy percent of the electric power produced in Colombia is hydro (Viola & Aceros, 2016). Therefore, and within this context of expansion, ethical behavior is key to developing a work climate where integrity anticipates and diminishes deviant behaviors (Teng et al., 2020).

For this reason, in 2015, the sector in question proposed a collective program on ethics and transparency as an initiative that consensually associates more than thirty-five organizations to materialize shared objectives (Santiago-Torner & Rojas-Espinosa, 2021). In addition, among its commitments stands out the design and dissemination of a corruption risk outline fed through good practice, notably the construction of an ethical climate where the perception of justice, in all processes, is predominant (Gumusluoglu et al., 2020). Accordingly, this research is based on a benevolent ethical climate, as several studies have shown that activities involving corporate social responsibility (CSR) often cross

organizational boundaries (Derin et al., 2022). Indeed, in a benevolent ethical climate, employees adopt unifying criteria that consider the interests, friendly relations, and well-being of most group members and society (McKay et al., 2017). Hence, this reflects its importance as it focuses on the impact that organizational behavior can have on the environment and the community. For these reasons, the model used in this research restricts its focus to a benevolent ethical climate. In turn, the Colombian electricity sector's transformation demands a type of management where creative behavior becomes a sustainable and effective competitive advantage (Pulgar, 2021). The complexity of processes and their automation require interpersonal competencies oriented to innovative results through critical and divergent thinking (Leroy et al., 2022).

On the other hand, for a benevolent ethical climate to converge with creative organizational behavior, it is necessary to promote a work dynamic in which employees have control over their work and greater freedom of decision (Yunus & Mostafa, 2021). Undoubtedly, perceived worker autonomy becomes a valuable resource that enables employees to redistribute their workloads to be consistent with their personal and family conditions (Santiago-Torner, 2021a). Indeed, a healthy work environment requires worker autonomy and a context in which trust and friendship between employees and supervisors stimulate an innovative human resources system that enables constant creative responses (Yap & Zainal Badri, 2020).

In conjunction, autonomy needs, to be truly effective, high levels of intrinsic motivation on the part of the professional force it relies on (Huang, 2021). To this effect, Rupp et al. (2018) show that intrinsic motivation is born when employees consider their work environment to be particularly valuable—in other words, enriching from an inherent point of view. Consequently, the greater the assimilation and identification of the individual with the intrinsic stimuli that move them to continue developing professionally, the more autonomous their behavior and the way they relate to their creative performance are expected to be (Deci et al., 2017). Therefore, this analysis aims to observe how a benevolent ethical climate is associated with creative behavior through the progressive moderation of worker autonomy and intrinsic motivation through a quantitative, cross-sectional, non-experimental, and correlational-exploratory methodological approach.

This research contributes non-trivially to the literature on ethical climates and differs from previous studies for several reasons. Firstly, it addresses a specific ethical climate, the benevolent one, and its direct and moderate relation to creative behavior; paradoxically, almost no authors have been attracted to this particular problem. In this regard, Derin et al. (2022), Koo Moon and Kwon Choi (2014), and Kwon Choi et al. (2013) relate ethical climates with innovation. Secondly, knowing how and why two variables are related is a priority from a theoretical and practical point of view. Specifically, this study uses two moderating variables that act sequentially (worker autonomy and intrinsic motivation).

Therefore, the relation between a benevolent ethical climate and creative behavior will also depend on how the two moderating variables interact, giving much more sense and consistency to the results obtained, which indicates an advance that aims to fill a knowledge gap. Similarly, Fischer et al. (2019) propose a model where worker autonomy is related to creative behavior through intrinsic motivation. Thirdly, and from a strictly theoretical approach, the matrix used can be extrapolated to the country's entire energy sector since it has very similar characteristics concerning the human capital that compose it. Finally, conclusions and practical implications can be drawn from this research that are useful for the electricity sector in its desire to consolidate ethical climates as drivers of organizational change and an ethical culture that can permeate the entire country.

Benevolent ethical climate and creative behavior

Victor and Cullen (1988) specify that a benevolent climate is subject to social reasoning criteria; its main theological consideration is shared well-being, which is used to identify and solve ethical problems. This definition has been widely used, and only a few subsequent studies have added minor adjustments. Specifically, Blome and Paulraj (2013) consider that this organizational climate provides sufficient guidelines for an employee to discern between ethically permissible behaviors and those that are out of place. Therefore, it focuses more on impact and not so much on an initial predisposition that may be empty of content (Santiago-Torner, 2023c).

In a broader sense, authors such as Derin et al. (2022) conclude that a benevolent ethical climate mediates the relation between knowledge sharing and innovative behavior. Indeed, organizations that manage their knowledge comprehensively tend to foster greater interactions among their members. Therefore, it is easier for individuals to pay attention to other people's interests and learn to be more sensitive to each other. A benevolent ethical climate regulates the bonds of friendship, team consciousness, group interest, and CSR that make up an organization (Gumusluoglu et al., 2020). Regarding that, creative expressions often occur in dynamic social settings (Beghetto & Karwowski, 2018). From that approach, organizational settings should include, in order to foster creative behavior, key aspects such as feedback and work disciplines that tend to discovery (Silvia & Christensen, 2020).

Feist (1998) defines creative behavior as an individual predisposition to be novel, original, useful, and adaptive; therefore, originality is not the only important aspect. Thus, the benevolent ethical climate connects individuals to develop and implement ideas creatively and with a practical scope. Of course, the creative person acts within a network of interpersonal relations and group influences where the content transmitted through informal ties, such as friendship, can be decisive in driving such innovative and functional ideas (Hopp et al., 2019).

From this point of view, a benevolent ethical climate provides clear information to individuals to avoid contradictions in the face of ethical expectations. For this reason, employees' behaviors will be similar and foster friendly relations based on the attraction to common values and ideals (McKay et al., 2017). Therefore, positive relations built through trust or ease of communication tend to share personal traits such as openness to experience intimately related to creative behavior. Indeed, trust and friendship open spaces where the fear of criticism is diluted, making it easier to share new ideas (Pulgar, 2021).

Similarly, team dynamics help to understand diversity as a benefit that fosters creative behavior through inclusion and shared experiences (Leroy et al., 2022). Indeed, existing research hints that complex problems that may arise in an organization require group creativity with novel and useful ideas from employees working interdependently (Hopp et al., 2019). Nevertheless, there must also be a high sense of belonging, which a benevolent ethical climate often stimulates (Teng et al., 2020).

CSR is another factor that links a benevolent ethical climate with creative behavior. It entails changing employee behavior and commitment when employees identify with creating a corporate image (Tong et al., 2019). The perception of CSR leads to higher job satisfaction, which builds a collective awareness that there is a caring and supportive climate in the organization (Kim et al., 2021). Consequently, this promotes an independent work environment with few constraints, where employees can develop innovative products and services. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 1: A benevolent ethical climate will significantly stimulate creative behavior.

Benevolent ethical climate, worker autonomy, intrinsic motivation, and creative behavior

A benevolent ethical climate focuses on employees and the community (Blome & Paulraj, 2013). Therefore, it stimulates relations of trust and friendship where shared interests and values are prioritized. Work well-being depends on several factors, notably friendship and worker autonomy (Yap & Zainal Badri, 2020). The concept of worker autonomy occupies a prominent place in all organizational and work psychology theories. Being autonomous refers to having sufficient conditions of freedom and the possibility of making decisions, such as choosing certain work processes and their order (Oldham & Cummings, 1996). In this regard, Guerci et al. (2015) specify that a benevolent ethical climate insists on a sincere interest in the employee through a dynamic context where worker autonomy is a decisive element. Of course, autonomy allows the employee a certain freedom of decision and control over their work, i.e., greater flexibility that brings self-regulation of the stressors associated with the work. Therefore, Yunus and Mostafa (2021) emphasize that the worker perceives worker autonomy as a social reward, strengthening the trust between employer and employee. In addition, worker autonomy has a

double dimension as an organizational and personal resource that empowers the individual and increases their self-efficacy to proactively improve their work experience with greater intrinsic motivation (Fürstenberg et al., 2021).

Moreover, a benevolent ethical climate is notable for its CSR (Blome & Paulraj, 2013). Nevertheless, employee motivation to participate in CSR-related activities depends on their perceived worker autonomy. Indeed, intrinsic motivation is expressed in perceived worker autonomy (Rupp et al., 2018). Therefore, worker autonomy is organizationally related to higher performance and a positive attitude toward situations where intrinsic motivation is conclusive. Therefore, autonomy at work is a suitable route to understanding employee motivation (Ng, 2018). By definition, the innermost motivation of human beings, intrinsic motivation, seeks change, difficult challenges, and exploiting one's learning capabilities from a perspective isolated from external incentives. Of course, individual cognitive development depends on an explicit inclination toward curiosity and comprehension as dynamic sources of life (Spivack & Milosevic, 2018).

At the same time, intrinsic motivation predicts persistence and performance in the workplace (Santiago-Torner, 2021b). Consequently, the effectiveness of worker autonomy in a context where job characteristics facilitate it is subject to the degree of individual intrinsic motivation (Huang, 2021). Internally motivating stimuli also depend on the perceived extent of competence and social connectedness as other psychological needs inherent to human beings (Deci et al., 2017).

Worker autonomy precedes various employee outcomes, including intrinsic motivation or creative behavior (Auger & Woodman, 2016). Therefore, intrinsic motivation moderates the relation of worker autonomy to any other variable, such as creativity. That is, a job that enables freedom and independence to choose methods or ways to conduct tasks along with the possibility of expanding knowledge important to the employee's role will be truly useful depending on the range of intrinsic motivation the employee has (Dysvik & Kuvaas, 2011). Llopis and Foss (2016) clarify that employees with high intrinsic motivation perform better when they have assimilated the guidelines and configuration of their job role. In other words, the individual with optimal levels of intrinsic motivation responds positively to the perception of worker autonomy. In contrast, the worker with low intrinsic motivation lacks the drive and commitment to work independently and the perceived levels of autonomy are not inspiring enough to change the meaning of their work (Huang, 2021).

From a similar perspective, Auger and Woodman (2016) explain that the relation between intrinsic motivation and creative behavior is complex. Several previous studies directly relate intrinsic motivation with creative behavior, stating that intrinsically motivated individuals tend to be more curious, take risks, and be persistent regardless of difficulties, which results in highly creative behavior (Shalley et al., 2004). Nevertheless, George (2007) questions that single direction, considering that creative

behavior, especially in complex organizations, often emerges through opposing interactions. That is, creative behavior depends on the organizational nature. Therefore, it requires a much more nuanced perspective and should focus not only on a single process but possibly several that act dependently. Fischer et al. (2019) propose a model in which worker autonomy positively affects serial creative behavior through intrinsic motivation and the cognitive flexibility it brings. To this end, they use the interactionist approach, set within an organizational context, as proposed by Shalley et al. (2004), to understand how worker autonomy, within a consistent interrelationship of different human resource measures, drives employees' intrinsic motivation (Pattnaik & Sahoo, 2021).

Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 2: Worker autonomy and intrinsic motivation sequentially moderate the relation between a benevolent ethical climate and creative behavior.

Hypothesis 2.1: At low, medium, and high levels of perceived worker autonomy, if intrinsic motivation is low, the sequential moderation of both variables for the relation between benevolent climate and creative behavior will not be significant.

Hypothesis 2.2: At medium and high, but not low, levels of perceived worker autonomy, if intrinsic motivation is medium, the sequential moderation of both variables for the relation between benevolent climate and creative behavior will be significant and positive.

Hypothesis 2.3: If intrinsic motivation is high at medium and high, but not low, levels of perceived worker autonomy, the sequential moderation of both variables regarding the relation between benevolent climate and creative behavior will be significant and positive.

Method

Participants

This study's total sample consisted of 448 professional workers linked to six different organizations in the Colombian electricity sector: 273 men and 175 women aged between 20 and 69. Eighty-two percent of the participants are under 50 years of age. Regarding departmental distribution, 44% belonged to Antioquia, 26% to Caldas, and the remaining 30% were distributed in equal parts in regions such as Cundinamarca, Risaralda, and Valle del Cauca.

Regarding academic training, 100% have university studies and 57% have postgraduate studies. It is noteworthy that 63% of the members of the sample have more than 4 years of length of service, which denotes strong professional stability. In addition, 58% have children, and 39% have elderly dependents. It is relevant that 76% of the people surveyed live in a socio-economic stratum between 1 and 4, which

shows the inequality in the country regardless of the level of education. The Colombian National Planning Department classifies households by environments or zones and, according to this criterion, establishes a hierarchical order: 6 (high); 5 (medium-high); 4 (medium); 3 (medium-low); 2 (low); 1 (low-low). Finally, only 10% of these people suffer from chronic diseases, and 32% of them have an average daily sleep of between 3 and 6 hours.

Instruments

Part of the multidimensional scale proposed by (Victor & Cullen, 1988) was used to measure the benevolent ethical climate. Dimension number 1 is the center of analysis, where the individual, the local, and the cosmopolitan cohabit with the benevolent moral criterion belonging to dimension number 2. It is composed of 11 items in 3 subscales: (1). Friendship (3 questions) (2). Group or team interest (4 questions) and (3). Social responsibility (4 questions). Improving the general interest of the whole organizational community is evaluated. This scale is used by Santiago-Torner (2023c) through a 6-point Likert scale and an internal consistency of between .88 . The initial scale uses a 5-point Likert scale and shows a Cronbach's Alpha between .49 and .85. This study obtains a Cronbach's Alpha of .88 (see Table 1).

In order to measure worker autonomy, the one-dimensional scale suggested by Spreitzer (1995) was used, where worker autonomy is evaluated through three items. The initial internal consistency of the scale yields a Cronbach's Alpha of .72. It assesses whether workers have sufficient independence to make decisions in the performance of their work and to exercise a certain degree of control over it. The construct is used by Pattnaik and Sahoo (2021). This study obtains a Cronbach's Alpha of .87 (see Table 1).

In order to measure intrinsic motivation, the standard suggested by Tierney et al. (1999) containing five questions was used through a six-point scale, and a Cronbach's Alpha of .74 was used by Messmann and Mulder (2014) through a 7-point Likert scale. It analyzes the causes that drive the employee to perform a job without external incentives. This study achieves a Cronbach's Alpha of .90 (see Table 1).

Finally, George and Zhou (2001) elaborated a one-dimensional scale to measure creative behavior to evaluate the creative traits a supervisor can recognize when employees perform their duties. Of these, 10 are the authors' own, and 3 are adapted from the scale proposed by Scott and Bruce (1994). The Cronbach's alpha obtained in the original scale is .96 and is applied through a 5-point Likert scale. It is used among others by Salazar-Carvajal et al. (2014). This study achieves a Cronbach's Alpha of .93 (see Table 1).

Procedure

Figure 1. Research process
Source: created by the author.

Data analysis

The descriptive statistics and the correlations between the 4 variables studied are initially quantified (see Table 1) through the SPSS 25 statistical program. Secondly, the relevance of the model is evaluated through a confirmatory factor analysis and the convergent and discriminant validity (see Table 2) using the Amos v.26 macro. Later, using the Process v.3.5 macro for Spss (Hayes, 2018), the sequential moderating role of worker autonomy and intrinsic motivation is analyzed for the relation between benevolent ethical climate and creative behavior (see Tables 3 and 4). For this complex function, model 2 (composite moderation) proposed by Hayes (2018) is used, with a 95% confidence interval (CI) and a bootstrapping sample size of 10 000. Likewise, using the multicollinearity indices, the Variance inflation factor (VIF), which is between 1.04 and 1.23, together with the tolerance values, which are between .914 and .973, it is determined that there is no collinearity. It is possible to deduce that there are no high correlations between variables. In turn, the Durbin-Watson value (1.972), between 1.5 and 2.5, verifies independence between the residuals. Figures 2 and 3 represent the conceptual and statistical model used, while Figure 4 interprets the moderation model used with unstandardized coefficients with the help of the Amos v.26 macro for Spss (Hayes, 2018). Figure 5 represents the sequential moderation of worker autonomy and intrinsic motivation concerning the relation between a benevolent ethical climate and creative behavior, conditional on three direct effects (low, medium, and high). Finally, Figures 6 and 7 complement the independent moderation analysis of worker autonomy and intrinsic motivation.

Results

Reliability analysis

Initially, the reliability of the four general scales used in this research was verified (see Table 1). The Cronbach's alpha (α) obtained reach values between .87 and .93, which, according to V, show a solid internal consistency. Only the Individual BEC subscale shows some weakness with an α below .70. Table 1 indicates the number of questions per scale, means, standard deviations, and Pearson correlation coefficients.

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted before hypothesis testing to examine construct validity. The overall fit of the model with its four main variables was acceptable: $\chi^2 = 971.35$, $p< 0.01$; $\chi^2/gl = 2.56$; GFI = .912; IFI = .919; NFI = .917; CFI = .911; RMSEA = .0534; RMSR = .0653. $\chi^2/gl<3$ (Keith et al., 2003); IFI, NFI, GFI, CFI > .90; RMSEA< .006; RMSR< .008. (Bollen, 1990). In addition, all factor loadings were significant, and the design was verified with two additional analyses, as indicated by Chin (1998): 1. Composite reliability (CFC). 2. Average variance extracted (AVE) and discriminant validity. Table 2 specifies the values according to Bagozzi et al. (1998). The critical coefficients (CR) are following Hair et al. (2011) (>1.96; $p < 0.05$). Cronbach's Alpha and CFC coefficients exceed .7 (Hair et al., 2011). AVE values are between .48 and .79, explaining 48% and 79% of the variance, indicating stability. Likewise, MSV values are between .69 and .89, well above the maximum Pearson's main correlation of .58. For discriminant validity to exist, the square root of AVE (MSV) has to be higher than the different correlations (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 1
Reliability, Means, Standard Deviations, Correlations between Variables (n=448) CI (95%)

Variables	α	N	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
Benevolent Ethical Climate (BEC)	.88	11	55	12.1						
Individual BEC	.60	3	14.26	2.4	.866*					
Local BEC	.75	4	19.67	3.0	.920*	.722*				
Cosmopolitan BEC	.85	4	21.03	2.6	.858*	.595*	.682*			
Worker Autonomy	.87	3	14.91	2.5	.262*	.217*	.259*	.214*		
Intrinsic Motivation	.90	5	27.08	3.1	.363*	.261*	.306*	.394*	.309*	
Creative Behavior	.93	13	64.89	7.9	.286*	.241*	.250*	.268*	.304*	.579*

General Note. * $p < .05$
Source: created by the author.

Table 2
Convergent and discriminant validity

	ALPHA[1]	CR[2]	CFC[3]	AVE[4]	MSV[4]
Benevolent Ethical Climate	.880	> 1.96	.880	.540	.730
Worker Autonomy	.870	> 1.96	.850	.790	.890
Intrinsic Motivation	.900	> 1.96	.860	.530	.730
Creative Behavior	.930	> 1.96	.820	.480	.690

General Note. 1. Cronbach's Alpha. 2. Critical Coefficients. 3. Composite Reliability. 4. Average Variance Extracted. 5. Discriminant Validity
Source: created by the author.

Validity analysis

Regarding the analyses developed, it is worth mentioning that they are conducted with unstandardized coefficients, significance indicators at 95%, and the largest and smallest values (LLCI and ULCI) as annotations. The regression analysis is no longer relevant if 0 appears within the space delimited by the ranges. First, the model presents the following characteristics: R: .620; R^2: .384; F: 55.108; p: .001, i.e., it explains 38% of the variance of the dependent variable. Its f^2 (statistical power) is high .615 (high >.35). First, benevolent ethical climate (independent variable) is related to creative behavior (dependent variable) through path b1 (see Table 3 and Figure 4) (β= 1.129;p <.05; [1.668, 2.589]) which verifies Hypothesis 1. In addition, both worker autonomy and intrinsic motivation positively and meaningfully affect creative behavior, paths b2 and b3 (see Table 3 and Figure 4). Similarly, paths b4 and b5 (see Table 3 and Figure 4) support the relation of benevolent climate x worker autonomy - intrinsic motivation, respectively, on creative behavior. Therefore, the dual sequential moderating role of worker autonomy and intrinsic motivation (β= .033;p <.05; [.002, .065]) and (β= .026;p <.05; [.005, .046]) is fulfilled, which verifies Hypothesis 2. Finally, through conditional effects, Table 4 and Figure 5 indicate that low, medium, and high levels of autonomy with low intrinsic motivation have no effect on creative behavior, which justifies Hypothesis 2.1. Likewise, medium and high ranges of worker autonomy through medium intrinsic motivation influence creative behavior, as stated in Hypothesis 2.2. Finally, medium and high indices of worker autonomy with high intrinsic motivation drive creative behavior, which corroborates Hypothesis 2.3.

Table 3
Results of dual moderation analysis BEC on CB[1] 95% (CI)(R^2 = .384) (f^2 = .615; high)(n=448)

Effect	Route	β	p	t	ES	LLCI	ULCI
Benevolent Ethical Climate Effect (BEC) on CB	b1	1.129	.001	4.110	.275	1.668	2.589
Effect of Worker Autonomy on CB	b2	1.411	.005	3.627	.867	1.116	2.294
Effect of Intrinsic Motivation on CB	b3	1.020	.001	3.036	.548	1.058	2.097
Effect of BEC x Worker Autonomy on CB	b4	.033	.024	3.083	.016	.002	.065
Effect of BEC x Intrinsic Motivation on CB	b5	.026	.014	3.475	.010	.005	.046

General Note. [1] Creative behavior. $f^2 > .02$ (low), $f^2 > .15$ (medium), $f^2 > .35$ (high)
Source: created by the author.

Table 4
Conditional effects WA and IM (moderators) 95% (n=448)

WA	IM	Effect	SE	T	p	LLCI	ULCI
12	25	-.085	.063	-1.349	.178	-.209	.039
12	28	-.008	.071	-.114	.909	-.148	.132
12	30	.043	.083	.522	.602	-.120	.206
15	25	.015	.050	.302	.763	-.083	.113
15	28	.092	.046	1.986	.048	.001	.183
15	30	.144	.055	2.619	.009	.036	.251
18	25	.115	.075	1.537	.125	-.032	.263
18	28	.192	.062	3.091	.002	.070	.315
18	30	.244	.061	3.967	.001	.123	.365

General Note. 1. Worker Autonomy. 2. Intrinsic Motivation
Source: created by the author.

Figures 2 and 3 graphically represent the proposed model from a conceptual and statistical point of view. Figure 4 includes the value of the unstandardized regression coefficients calculated for each variable studied.

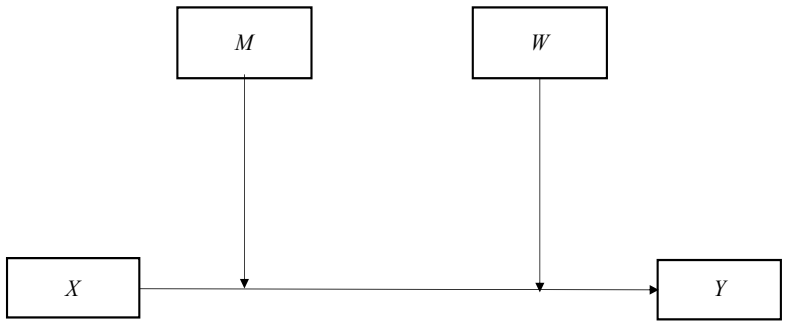

Figure 2. Conceptual diagram. Model 2
Source: created by the author.

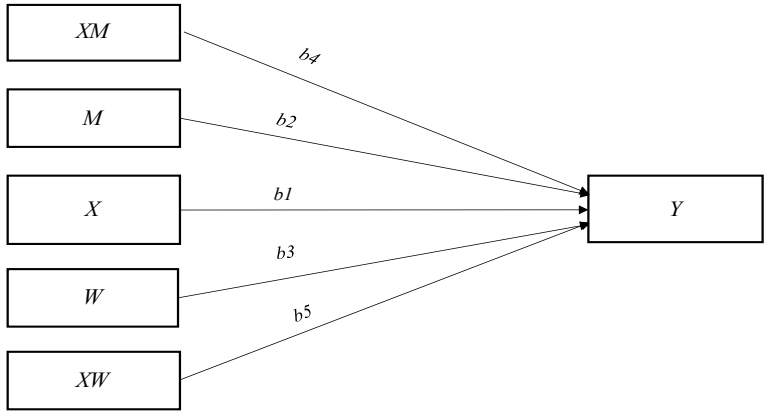

Figure 3. Statistic diagram
Source: created by the author.

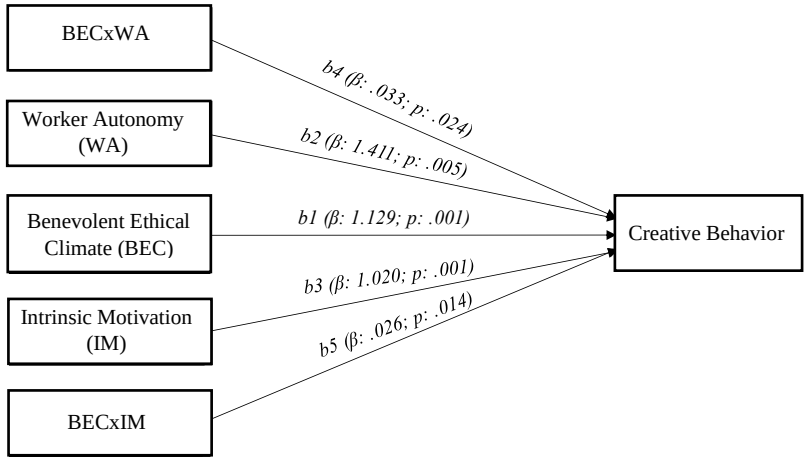

Figure 4. Results of regression analysis with unstandardized coefficients
Source: created by the author.

Figure 5 explains under which circumstances a benevolent ethical climate (bottom center) as an independent variable (x) is linked to creative behavior (left side 60 to 72) as a dependent variable (y). The moderating variables shape those particularities or junctures that affect the effect size of x (Igartua & Hayes, 2021). Indeed, this statistical interaction shows how intrinsic motivation indices restrain worker autonomy from being effective in the bond (xy). Indeed, only medium or high intrinsic motivation enables worker autonomy in the same proportion to interact positively with it and both variables to effectively

conduct their moderating function. From a more specific statistic level, it is important to highlight that worker autonomy (low, medium, high) is not significant (p: .178; p: .763; p: .125) in the face of poor intrinsic motivation (25). Therefore, a benevolent ethical climate does not influence creative behavior in such circumstances. Second, worker autonomy (medium and high) is associated (p: .048; p: .002) with medium intrinsic motivation (28); that is, a benevolent ethical climate only influences creative behavior through medium-high ranges of worker autonomy and appreciable intrinsic motivation. Finally, worker autonomy (medium and high) is related (p: .009; p: .001) to high intrinsic motivation (30). A benevolent ethical climate considerably impacts creative behavior through medium-high autonomy ranges and higher intrinsic motivation. For this reason, it is key to align autonomous spaces with relevant ranges of intrinsic motivation, which is an organizational challenge.

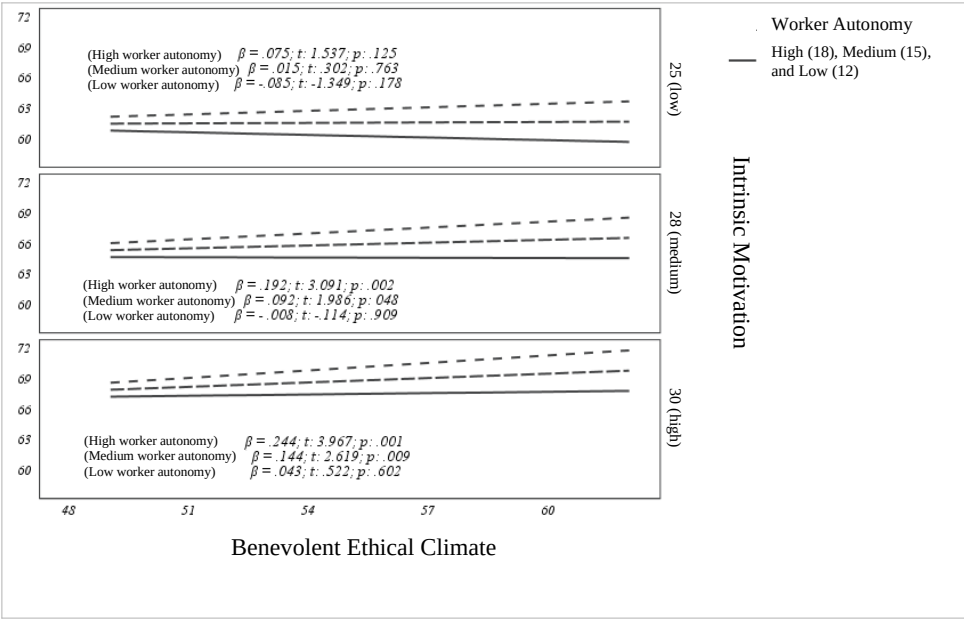

Figure 5. Sequential moderation of worker autonomy and intrinsic motivation regarding the link between benevolent ethical climate and creative behavior
Source: created by the author.

Figures 6 and 7 are complementary and explain the moderation effect independently. The first figure shows the moderating effect of worker autonomy without intrinsic motivation. On the other hand, the second figure highlights the moderating effect of intrinsic motivation without considering the degree

of job flexibility. Low levels of autonomy and intrinsic motivation are irrelevant in the relation between a benevolent ethical climate and creative behavior.

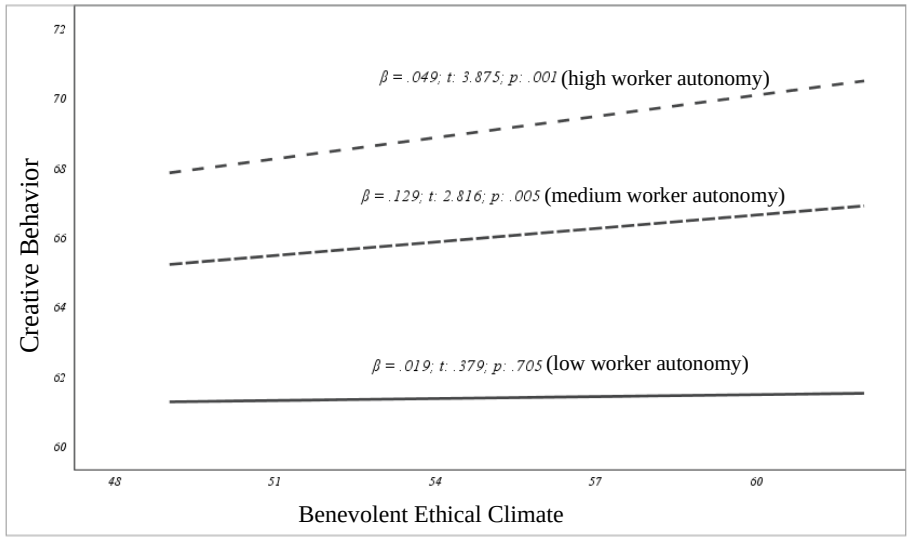

Figure 6. Simple moderation of worker autonomy (WA). As WA decreases, the influence of the benevolent ethical climate on creative behavior decreases until it fades away.
Source: created by the author.

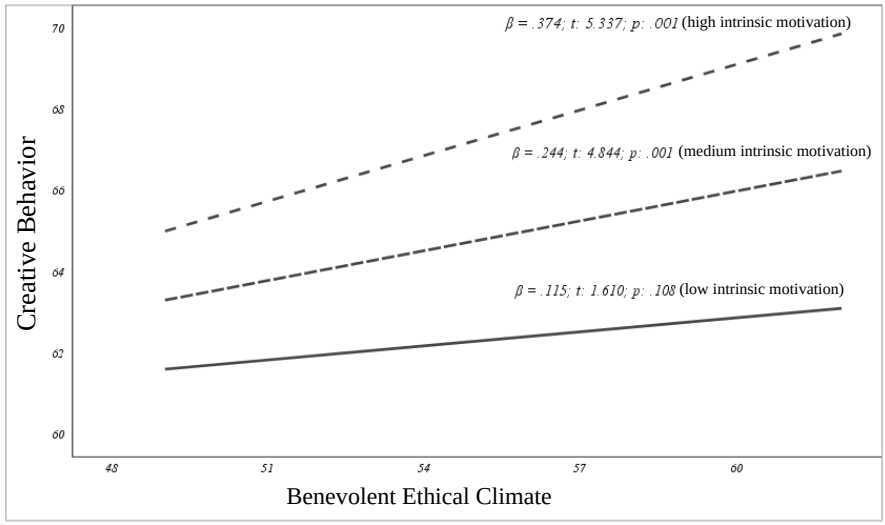

Figure 7. Simple moderation of intrinsic motivation (IM). As IM decreases, the influence of the benevolent ethical climate on creative behavior decreases until it disappears.
Source: created by the author.

Discussion

The benevolent ethical climate and its dimensions are associated with creative behavior, which is a major step forward in understanding in which contexts creative behavior progresses (hypothesis 1). Only some research (Derin et al., 2022; Kwon Choi et al., 2013) relates ethical climate with innovation but none associates, in a more rigorous way, a benevolent ethical climate with greater organizational creative behavior, which helps to reduce the knowledge gaps on the subject.

Indeed, such a relation is possible through friendship as a concept that brings together affinities and attracts individuals who are comfortable sharing creative and innovative ideas through a common framework (McKay et al., 2017). A benevolent ethical climate manages employee expectations through a desirable environment and fair working conditions that shape and drive creative behaviors based on similarity and attraction (Derin et al., 2022). Likewise, group interest and a sense of belonging permeate the individual, making them aware that they can express their uniqueness as part of an integration of resources that tend to divergence and creativity (Leroy et al., 2022). Finally, the perception of CSR gives employees the feeling that their work is meaningful and supportive. At the same time, it widens the ranges of empathy, intrinsic motivation, and commitment, which leads to more creative behavior (Tong et al., 2019). A benevolent ethical climate gives the employee a strong sense of organizational support that encourages greater effort to solve complex situations through original attitudes (El-Kassar et al., 2022).

Together, worker autonomy and intrinsic motivation positively and significantly moderate the relation between a benevolent ethical climate and creative behavior (hypothesis 2), which is another important finding since similar results have not been found. Moderating variables are of great methodological relevance as they determine the strength and direction between the output variable (X) and the predictor (Y). In this case, a benevolent ethical climate has to transit sequentially through worker autonomy and intrinsic motivation to affect creative behavior. Moderating variables propose conditions to achieve a positive outcome; they assume a relevant causal effect between the independent and dependent variables (Igartua & Hayes, 2021). The validity of this consecutive moderation consolidates the importance of this research.

Among the characteristics linked to work, worker autonomy is the critical antecedent of other variables, such as intrinsic motivation. Indeed, the employee must identify with the job to find it fulfilling and satisfying (Yap & Zainal Badri, 2020). Accordingly, worker autonomy is naturally related to an employee's positive reaction to the task, as self-determination is an essential component of intrinsic motivation (Deci et al., 2017). Autonomy is a contextual factor that leads to a psychological state of responsibility that precedes the direction, intensity, and persistence of the employee's efforts, as behaviors associated with intrinsic motivation lead to appropriate creative behavior (Sansone & Tang, 2021).

From this perspective, a benevolent ethical climate is based on the care of its human capital. Therefore, this climate promotes job satisfaction through high levels of independence, enabling employees to choose the procedures to influence their performance autonomously. Worker autonomy is an essential strategic competence that, in addition to promoting an entrepreneurial spirit, stimulates knowledge sharing and intrinsically motivates the employee (Fischer et al., 2019). Accordingly, knowledge-based organizations, such as those in this research, increasingly depend on constantly elaborating creative ideas. Consequently, high intrinsic motivation shapes organizational behavior focused on permanent creative behavior. Furthermore, Grant and Berry (2011) find that service to others amplifies the positive effect of intrinsic motivation on creative behavior, consolidating the effect of a benevolent ethical climate on creative behavior through worker autonomy and intrinsic motivation.

Likewise, the different scales of worker autonomy depend on the extent of intrinsic motivation to act effectively on creative behavior, and there is a relation between benevolent ethical climate and creative behavior (hypotheses 2.1; 2.2; 2.3) which represents the third major finding of this study; from that point of view, although worker autonomy facilitates the possibility for the worker to experience and master other processes of the organizational operation, this opportunity is only exploited to its full extent when the individual has sufficient intrinsic motivation (Huang, 2021). Therefore, intrinsic motivation depends on a balance between implicit and explicit stimuli (Rheinberg & Engeser, 2018).

The employee's motivational system requires alignment with conscious and unconscious work; that is, the relation between the manifest (explicit and conscious) characteristics of the job and the biological ones representing the particular ability to perceive an incentive as pleasurable (implicit and unconscious) need stability (Bakaç et al., 2022). Therefore, incongruence of motives (explicit and implicit) leads to low intrinsic motivation (Rawolle et al., 2016). Employees with low intrinsic motivation do not respond positively to the breadth of worker autonomy as they lack the necessary drive, commitment, or purpose (Dysvik & Kuvaas, 2011). The opportunity to feel competent is doubtless one of the essential reasons that increases intrinsic motivation and explains why worker autonomy is insufficient to face the obligations of the job responsibly and willingly (Pattnaik & Sahoo, 2021).

To conclude, the employee often prefers the spontaneous job satisfaction produced by identification with the work activity, sense of competence, curiosity, and difficulties associated with problem-solving to material rewards (Huang, 2021). Therefore, it makes sense that the intrinsically motivated individual consciously actively explores new ideas that foster the conception of creative behaviors (Fischer et al., 2019). In addition, high intrinsic motivation orients the worker's will toward more challenging tasks that require great flexibility and autonomy or, in other words, an instinctive desire for the work that enhances the development of creative ideas, enjoying the whole process through great freedom of action (Deci et al., 2017; Ng, 2018).

Conclusions

A benevolent climate enables the employee to approach an ethical problem with the necessary tools to solve it properly. This context of security becomes an ideal habitat that amplifies certain personal traits such as tolerance of ambiguity, personal balance, and self-confidence, which in general terms determine the effectiveness of creative behavior. In addition, a benevolent climate prioritizes mutual interest and CSR with constant feedback that increases creative behavior through an interactive and dynamic environment. The organizations included in this research are public or non-profit organizations, which possibly makes their members have a clear social outlook, pay more attention to other people's interests, be more sensitive to each other, and have greater emotional stability, which tends to stimulate creative behavior significantly.

On the other hand, a business sector that wishes to integrate worker autonomy and intrinsic motivation cannot be oriented toward a work model that only seeks to enrich tasks without considering the role of interpersonal relations. Of course, the design of a job, in addition to seeking a logical combination of the scope of autonomy and its impact on intrinsic motivation, also assumes the responsibility of encouraging behaviors that implicitly wish to preserve and promote the well-being of others. Indeed, friendship at work predicts perceived task importance and, specifically, levels of intrinsic motivation. Therefore, a prosocial and autonomous environment, together with significant intrinsic motivation, is the starting point for employees to take risks, be persistent, and have active information processing that enables them to tackle challenging tasks through creative and useful ideas. Hence the importance of a benevolent ethical climate that deepens friendly relations and general interest, developing a friendly environment that focuses on care and awareness for others. Of course, employees must recognize autonomy, fulfillment, and satisfaction in their work as motivational precursors that promote greater creative behavior.

Finally, worker autonomy and individual intrinsic motivation ratings are interdependent and subordinate. Nevertheless, worker autonomy in and of itself is insufficient to foster creative behavior without significant intrinsic motivation. When not associated with intrinsic interest, order, flexibility, and speed in accomplishing a task do not facilitate creative behavior. Therefore, within a benevolent ethical climate, a high degree of worker autonomy, when perceived by an employee with low intrinsic motivation, is insufficient to develop innovative and creative ideas. In other words, a high degree of worker autonomy must be associated with medium and high intrinsic motivation levels to influence creative behavior effectively.

In conclusion, a climate that fosters personal well-being and insists on essential values such as trust through a high degree of autonomy will likely activate an implicit willingness to experiment, leading

to original and valuable results. Nonetheless, it requires a broad and coordinated interaction between worker autonomy and intrinsic motivation.

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