The Relationship between Organizational Justice and Innovative Behavior in China's Digital Talents: The Moderating Effect of Flexible Work Arrangement

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ABSTRACT

In today's highly competitive global market, innovation is essential for corporate sustainability. In the context of increasing technological restrictions imposed by Western nations, China faces heightened pressure to strengthen its domestic innovation capacity. This study highlights the critical role of organisational justice comprising distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice in fostering employee innovative behaviour. A just organisational environment enhances employees' innovation-related awareness and behaviour, thereby contributing to both corporate resilience and national technological advancement. Amid the post-pandemic shift toward flexible work arrangements, many digital nomads are gravitating toward Southeast Asia in pursuit of lower living costs and improved work-life balance, which in turn fosters greater innovation. Drawing upon self-determination theory, this study analyses data from 406 participants and confirms that organisational justice positively influences the innovative behaviour of digital talents in China. However, flexible work arrangements are found to only partially moderate this relationship. The findings offer practical implications for policymakers, business leaders, and digital professionals. Promoting organisational justice can serve as a strategic response to technological sanctions and support national self-reliance. In the context of China's demanding 996 work culture, flexible work arrangements may help alleviate burnout, stimulate innovation, and enhance competitive advantage. For individuals, maintaining autonomy and work-life balance is essential for sustaining innovation and achieving long-term career satisfaction, thereby contributing to broader technological progress.

Keywords: Employee Innovative Behaviour, Organisational Justice, Flexible Work Arrangement, China's Digital Talents

INTRODUCTION

The global market is increasingly shaped by trade wars and technological monopolies, making innovative talents a key competitive factor among nations (Damanpour, 2014). Enterprises must identify, nurture, and engage these talents in innovation activities to drive practical innovation. Developing high-quality, well-structured technological talents is essential (Eisenhardt, 2009; Gomes et al., 2018). China faces technological blockades from the U.S. targeting firms like Huawei and DJI, creating a critical need for core innovation capabilities to break Western constraints (Xiang & Wang, 2023). Employee innovative behaviour is the foundation of enterprise innovation, playing a vital role in sustaining organisational and national technological progress.

Chinese employees' perceptions of justice are shifting under Western influence, evolving from interpersonal norms to a "reasonable laws" framework. Traditionally, justice was assessed emotionally rather than by

universal standards. However, modern employees now emphasise equal opportunities and merit-based income disparities. Companies must provide fair competition, learning, and information access while ensuring reasonable recognition based on individual contributions (Awan, 2021). This shift highlights the need for an equitable environment to enhance employees' sense of justice. High-tech firms like Huawei and Alibaba implement intense work culture (e.g., 996 and 997), sparking national debate due to their psychological and organisational impact (J. M. George & Zhou, 2001; Wu et al., 2019). With globalization and new technologies, flexible work arrangements have gained prominence, especially post-pandemic. The rise of "digital herders" in Southeast Asia reflects the demand for work-life balance and market adaptability (Julia Haking, 2018; Olga, 2020). However, amidst China's intensifying talent competition and the prevalence of the 996 work system and flexible work arrangement, it is pertinent to investigate whether justice in salary distribution and promotion channels alone suffice to drive innovative behavior.

Fair compensation and promotion enhance innovation (Belzil & Bognanno, 2008), but in China's competitive market, other justice dimensions—resource allocation, transparent conflict resolution, and interpersonal fairness—may also drive innovation. Colquitt et al. (2001) expanded interactional justice into interpersonal and informational justice, showing their distinct impacts on trust and commitment. A comprehensive examination of the impact of organizational justice on employee innovative behavior should encompass four dimensions: distributive justice, procedural justice, interpersonal justice, and informational justice. By employing this four-dimensional research framework, organizations can gain deeper insights into enhancing employees' innovative behaviors, thereby improving overall performance and competitiveness. This article aims to address whether the implementation of a flexible work system can moderate the relationship between organizational justice and employee innovative behavior. Namely, this study seeks answers to the following questions: (1) Does organizational justice have a significant positive effect on innovative behavior among China's digital talents? (2) Does flexible work arrangement moderate the relationship between distributive justice, procedural justice, interpersonal justice, and informational justice and innovative behavior among China's digital talents?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview of the Underpinning Theory

Self-determination theory (SDT), developed by American psychologists Ryan and Deci (1985), highlights the necessity of fulfilling basic psychological needs to foster personal growth and development. This theory asserts that human behavior is primarily motivated by the satisfaction of three fundamental psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Autonomy reflects the ability to act according to one's desires, competence pertains to an individual's confidence in their capability to influence outcomes and attain goals, and relatedness involves gaining recognition and approval from others to establish a sense of belonging. As noted by Ryan et al.(2009) and Deci et al. (2017), achieving personal development and well-being requires the simultaneous fulfilment of these three needs.

The rationale for employing SDT as an underpinning theory because it is believed that organizational justice can be viewed as extrinsic motivation, which is a key point of SDT. When employees perceive organizational justice, it satisfies their autonomy, sense of competence, and sense of belonging, thereby motivating them to engage more actively in innovation activities (Ryan & Deci, 2000). And the satisfaction of employees' self-determination needs can be influenced by organizational justice, which in turn can impact their innovative behavior. Organizational justice is critical for building trust and connectedness and positively affects employee innovative behavior (Carmeli & Spreitzer, 2009).

Furthermore, employees benefit from independent decision-making, perceive sufficient support, and operate in an environment that aligns with their values. SDT underscores the critical role of individual autonomy and self-determination. Providing flexible work arrangements allows employees greater autonomy, enabling them to choose when, where, and how they work. This autonomy enhances their innovative capabilities and motivation, ultimately fostering innovative behavior. Such a work environment nurtures intrinsic motivation,

which in turn encourages employees to engage in innovation. The intrinsic motivation derived from this setting aligns with the defining characteristics of flexible work, such as the freedom to determine work schedules and locations (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Consequently, a connection exists between flexible work arrangements and employees' propensity for innovative behavior.

Relationship between Organizational Justice and Employee Innovative Behavior

Organizational justice is a crucial factor in employees' motivation to report specific behaviors (Colquitt et al., 2001). If employees perceive unfair treatment, they may not feel obligated to perform tasks effectively (Akram et al., 2011) and may contribute less to their work (Momeni et al., 2014). As innovative behaviors are driven by individual motivations (Agarwal, 2014; Biswas & Kapil, 2017), it is necessary to have the motivation to perform additional role behaviors, such as innovative behaviors. Therefore, organizational justice can have both positive and negative impacts on these behaviors. Many studies have examined the relationship between organizational justice and innovative behaviors.

Distributive justice examines the fairness of distributing public goods and resources, as well as the fairness of outcomes for individuals. It focuses on principles of impartiality and fairness, and there are several principles that can be employed to achieve this division (Adams, 1965). The Equality Act pertains to remuneration that is proportional to each person's share, while it applies to the group's claim when not all members receive individual contributions. Although these two rights offer a fair way to allocate resources, their value may differ across various groups. The concept of input-output equality is based on comparing one person with another. When the distribution of outcomes aligns with that of employment, it is considered fair.

Pursuant to the extensive research conducted over the past three decades, it has been observed that assessing the value of equity in organizations can have various impacts on organizational behaviors. These behaviors include job satisfaction, interaction, trust, cooperation, and citizenship behavior. It has been found that innovative employees tend to be more satisfied with the fairness of the distribution of resources, as they trust the organization to achieve the desired outcomes. Additionally, previous studies have highlighted the significant influence of organizational integrity on EIB. Janssen's (2004) study further supports this notion, concluding that employees who have a fair balance between compensation and effort are more resourceful in meeting the needs of high-level enterprises. With reference to the discussion mentioned above, this study proposes that:

H1a: Distributive justice is positively related to innovative behavior in China's digital talents.

As per Li and Xu's (2016) research, the success of an organization mainly depends on the cooperation of its members. One meaningful way to ensure long-term collaboration and compelling behavior is by creating a supportive environment within the organization that meets the basic needs of its members. Honest and fair behavior is highly valued as acts of integrity satisfy various human needs, such as a sense of ownership and control. The context becomes an essential variable when conducting psychological research on organizations and employees, particularly in the context of organizational justice, specifically procedural justice. Kim and Chung (2019) highlight that procedural justice focuses on the decision-making process and allows individuals to express themselves. Research has shown that procedural justice has an impact on various aspects of work-related attitudes and behaviors, including spontaneous cooperation, job satisfaction, job performance, commitment, and citizenship behavior within organizations.

Although no systematic studies have been conducted on the direct impact of procedural justice on EIB, previous research has indicated a relationship between procedural justice and innovation-related behaviors. This relationship can be observed through the relationship between the two concepts, as well as the connection between equality and innovation. Additionally, there are suggestions that procedural justice may influence creativity, such as by affecting deception and outcome preference, or by providing a conducive environment for creativity after experiencing repeated acts of injustice (Kim & Chung, 2019). Based on previous research, it is generally assumed that there is a positive association between procedural justice and higher levels of EIB, and vice versa.

Appropriate behavior signifies a high position, making individuals aware of their group or authority (Kim & Chung, 2019). Moreover, when individuals identify with a group, they respond internally to their own needs, such as engaging in EIB. Additionally, intrinsic motivation is considered a crucial factor in fostering innovation. In terms of modeling tools, individuals are motivated to attain maximum positive outcomes and achieve them by having control over their own decisions. According to Kernan and Hanges (2002), the fairness of the decision-making process determines the extent to which decisions impact outcomes. It is believed that individuals can influence this process in a desired direction, aligning with their self-efficacy. Based on these concepts, studies have demonstrated a positive relationship between individual EIB and sustained organizational commitment, intrinsic motivation, and self-efficacy. With reference to the discussion mentioned above, this study proposes that:

H1b: Procedural justice is positively related to innovative behavior in China's digital talents.

Early studies on interaction focused on examining the factors that influence strategic activities, such as strategy, and relational structural elements, such as power. Inadequate conflict management in the workplace often leads to reduced productivity and even harmful personal conflicts. Adopting an equity lens offers a fresh perspective on this process (Kim & Chung, 2019). The literature on organizational justice primarily encompasses four aspects: distributive justice, procedural justice, information justice, and interpersonal justice. The first two dimensions pertain to the accuracy of outcomes and the decision-making procedures employed. The latter two dimensions are associated with the dependability of cooperation: effectiveness and reliability.

When examining peer interactions within the framework of organizational justice, it is crucial to emphasize that these interactions are driven by the act of engaging with one another. In a peer-to-peer process, the outcomes are not predetermined, and neither party possesses the authority to impose a decision on the other. As a result, the equitable distribution of resources becomes essential to ensure fairness in the procedural aspects. However, it is important to note that the outcome of these interactions is determined by the nature of the interaction itself, thereby highlighting the significance of both informational and individual justice. Social exchange theory suggests that social relationships can be seen as transactions involving the exchange of resources between individuals. Within the organizational context, the primary form of exchange is often centred around the distribution of salaries (Colquitt et al., 2001).

As stated by Wiley (1964), the principle of similar value is expected when employees donate money to colleagues. Organizational justice is often explained using social exchange theory. This study uses the theory to examine the impact of interactional justice, arguing that interactions between colleagues are based on specific and mutually beneficial correspondence. In other words, employees restore the legal relationship gained from their co-workers by responding to their nature. Interactional justice, which includes respect and dignity, focuses on providing an adequate level of relationship and professional connection between employers and employees. On the other hand, social interactions, specifically interpersonal justice, primarily occur in the affective domain and influence EIB at the individual level. With reference to the discussion as mentioned earlier, this study proposes that:

H1c: Interpersonal justice is positively related to innovative behavior in China's digital talents.

Informational impartiality refers to the provision of accurate, adequate, and timely information about positions, decisions, and actions in interactions. Organizational justice encompasses interpersonal relationships, including respect and politeness (Greenberg & Colquitt, 2005). The findings indicate their impact in various situations (Colquitt et al., 2001). For instance, when employees perceive personal information and honesty, they are more likely to receive negative comments from their managers. However, after a reorganization, they tend to have more confidence in management. In the case of double bargaining, displaying personal justice reduces the opponent's selfishness and expedites interpretation. In general, people tend to respect authority more when personal information and fairness are emphasized. Although these two aspects of information justice have significant implications, they are often considered together, and the distinction between their

impacts is rarely understood. Therefore, our research extends previous studies by emphasizing the influence of both information and interpersonal justice, with a specific focus on peer interactions.

In order to maintain informational impartiality, it is crucial to provide people with an explanation of the methods used and the reasons behind the communication of conclusions. Relational justice, which is based on the quality of treatment provided through operational procedures, plays a significant role in ensuring fairness. This is separate from the substantive aspect of decision-making behavior. The accuracy and ethical behavior of decision-making bodies, as well as their acceptance and justification of decisions, are important institutional factors to consider (Bies & Shapiro, 1987). Research also highlights the importance of interpreting judgments per corporate equal treatment standards. Additionally, arguments that are reasonable, timely, and well-founded can also influence perceptions of fairness (Colquitt et al., 2001).

On the basis of self-determination theory, the psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relationships have a significant impact on employees' behavioral performance and satisfaction. Research suggests that information fairness plays a crucial role in meeting employees' information and engagement needs, making them feel respected and valued. This satisfaction with their needs enhances employees' work motivation and innovation ability, ultimately promoting their innovative behavior (Diyendra and Perera, 2024; Baard et al., 2004; Deci & Ryan, 2000). This, in turn, can have a positive impact on discretionary behavior, such as EIB. With reference to the discussion as mentioned above, this study proposes that:

H1d: Informational justice is positively related to innovative behavior in China's digital talents.

The Moderating Effect of Flexible Work Arrangement between Work Engagement and Employee Innovative Behavior

In a study by Grant & Dutton (2012) conducted a study to examine the influence of flexible working and emotional justice, which is a dimension of organizational justice, on employees' innovative behavior. The study considered employees' perceptions of flexible working. The findings revealed that when employees perceive the positive effects of flexible working on themselves, the influence of emotional justice on their innovation behavior becomes more substantial.

Rafique et al. (2022) investigated the moderating role of organizational justice climate concerning employees' work engagement and innovative behavior. The research findings suggest that by creating a more equitable work environment, flexible work arrangements can enhance employees' work engagement and innovative behaviors.

Similarly, Zhou et al. (2020) investigated the protective role of organizational and family factors against depressive symptoms resulting from work-family conflict. Cross-level analyses revealed that organizational justice climate mitigated the negative impact of work-family conflict on depressive symptoms. Additionally, procedural and distributive justice climate were found to moderate the effects of work-family conflict on depressive symptoms. The buffering effect in the relationship between work-family conflict and depressive symptoms was contingent upon family flexibility. The research results demonstrate that flexible work arrangements, by promoting a fair working environment, can increase employees' work engagement, thereby reducing negative behaviors and fostering innovation.

These studies mentioned above offer insights into the potential moderating effect of flexible working arrangements on the relationship between organizational justice and EIB. Flexible work arrangements have been found to enhance employees' work engagement by creating a fairer working environment and reducing feelings of injustice. This, in turn, encourages employees to exhibit more innovative behavior. The combination of these factors results in a work environment and conditions that are more favorable for fostering innovation.

With reference to the discussion mentioned above, this study proposes that:

H2a: The positive relationship between distributive justice and innovative behavior in China's digital talents is stronger when flexible work arrangements is high.

H2b: The positive relationship between procedural justice and innovative behavior in China's digital talents is stronger when flexible work arrangements is high.

H2c: The positive relationship between interpersonal justice and innovative behavior in China's digitaltalents is stronger when flexible work arrangements is high.

H2d: The positive relationship between informational justice and innovative behavior in China's digital talents is stronger when flexible work arrangements is high.

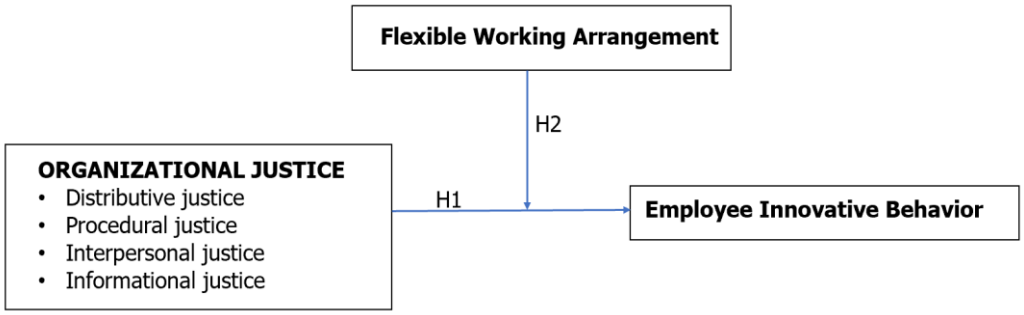

Figure 1: Research Framework

METHODOLOGY

Target Population and Procedure

This study focuses on digital talents in China, a topic increasingly prominent in management literature, particularly in digital transformation research (Karaboğa et al., 2021). Using purposive sampling, this study targets practitioners in China's information transmission, software, and new machine technology service industries (ICT-related talents). According to the China Statistical Yearbook 2023, this population comprises 5,192,000 individuals. The distribution of digital talents in China correlates with the digital economy's development, with most talents concentrated in first-tier and emerging first-tier cities, particularly in eastern and southern coastal regions. The Industrial Digital Talent Research and Development Report (2023) identified the top ten cities with the highest digital talent demand in the second half of 2022: Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Beijing, Shanghai, Wuhan, Chengdu, Xi'an, Hangzhou, Suzhou, and Hefei. These cities collectively account for 75% of the nation's digital talent. Based on this data, this study selects Guangzhou, which has a digital talent population of 602,272, as the target city for questionnaire distribution.

To align with recent research developments (Hair et al., 2021; Joseph F. Hair Jr. et al., 2024; Ringle et al., 2020), power analysis was conducted using G*Power version 3.1.9.7, a widely used statistical tool in computer and social science research. Considering a power of 0.95 and an effect size of 0.15 (Faul et al., 2009; Kang, 2021), the minimum required sample size was determined to be 129. A total of 406 valid responses were collected for this study. The inclusion criteria for respondents were as follows: (1) employment in a high-tech enterprise, (2) full-time employment in an ICT-related position, (3) at least one year of experience in their current organization with a performance evaluation, and (4) a minimum of a college education.

Measurements

Distributive justice is defined as employees' perception of the fairness in the distribution of resources and rewards, specifically about whether they believe the rewards align with their input and performance. (Colquitt, 2001). Distributive justice is divided into distributive justice, procedural justice, interpersonal Justice and informational justice. In total, a 20-item scale was taken from Colquitt (2001) (e.g., I am able to express my views during those procedures conducted in organization) to measure organizational justice. As for employee innovative behavior, 12 items were adopted from Tang (2021). The flexible working arrangement is measured using the scale developed by Hyland (2000), which evaluates the extent to which employees can select their

working hours and locations. It primarily measures the extent to which employees can freely determine their preferred working hours and workplace. All items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree as 1 to strongly agree as 5.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics of Respondents

The results show that 53% of respondents were male, while 47% were female. Participants were divided into five age groups which are below 25 years old (9.9%), 26-35 years old (43.8%), 36-45 years old (30.5%), 46-55 years old (9.6%), and 56 years or older (6.2%). Regarding educational qualifications, the majority held a bachelor's degree (62.8%), followed by junior college graduates (19.2%), with smaller proportions holding master's degrees (14.3%) or PhDs (3.7%). In terms of work experience, 33.7% had less than five years, 30% had 6-10 years, 16.7% had 16-21 years, 8.9% had 11-15 years, 6.4% had 21-26 years, and 4.2% had over 26 years. Additionally, most respondents were married (83.3%), while 16.7% were single.

Table 4: Profile of Respondent

Characteristics	**Frequency（N=406）**	**Percentage（%）**
Gender		
Male	215	53.0
Female	191	47.0
Age		
25 years or less	40	9.9
26-35 years old	178	43.8
36-45 years old	124	30.5
46-55 years old	39	9.6
56 years old and above	25	6.2
Level of education		
Junior college	78	19.2
Bachelor's degree	255	62.8
Master’s degree	58	14.3
PHD	15	3.7
Working experience		
Less than 5 years	137	33.7
6-10 years	122	30.0
11-15 years	36	8.9
16-21 years	68	16.7
21-26 years	26	6.4
26 years above	17	4.2
Marital status		
Single	68	16.7
Married	338	83.3

Common Method Variance

To address potential concerns regarding common method variance (CMV), this study implemented procedural remedies to minimize its impact. CMV refers to systematic error variance shared among variables collected

from the same source or method (Podsakoff et al., 2003). When self-administered questionnaires are used, particularly when both predictors and criteria originate from the same respondent, it is essential to assess CMV risk (Podsakoff et al., 2012). Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) analysis, with a threshold of 5.0 (Kock, 2015), was employed to evaluate collinearity. As shown in Table 5, all constructs had VIF values below the threshold, indicating no significant multicollinearity concerns in this study.

Table 5: Full Collinearity Testing

Construct	**DJ**	**PJ**	**IJ**	**INJ**	**FWA**
VIF	1.454	1.527	1.417	1.440	1.476

Note: **DJ**= Distribute Justice, **PJ**= Procedural Justice, **IJ**= Interpersonal Justice, **INJ**= Informational Justice, **FWA**= Flexible Work Arrangement

Measurement Model

Table 6 reports that all loadings exceed 0.6, AVE scores are above 0.5, and CR values surpass 0.7. Although the recommended cutoff for indicator loadings is 0.708, values between 0.6 and 0.708 are still acceptable (Hair et al., 2017, 2024). Removing the measurement item with a loading of 0.633 would decrease CR, AVE, and Cronbach's α values. Given its theoretical significance in explaining 'innovative behaviour, retaining this item remains a viable option. Internal consistency reliability was evaluated using composite reliability, where values exceeding 0.8 indicate strong reliability (Hair et al., 2021, 2024). As presented in Table 6, the CR values in this study ranged from 0.887 to 0.958, surpassing the 0.80 threshold, confirming the satisfactory internal consistency of all constructs and indicators. Therefore, the measurement model demonstrates strong reliability.

To assess convergent validity, the average variance extracted (AVE) was calculated by averaging the squared loadings of each indicator within its respective construct. An AVE score of 0.50 or higher is considered acceptable, as it confirms that the construct explains at least 50% of the variance in its indicators (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Joseph Hair et al., 2024). Table 6 shows that AVE values across constructs range from 0.673 to 0.753, exceeding the recommended threshold and confirming acceptable convergent validity.

Discriminant validity is evaluated by analyzing the relationships between constructs that may have conceptual overlap (Ramayah et al., 2016). This assessment ensures that each construct is distinct from the others. In this study, the heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) was applied to determine discriminant validity. As recommended by Henseler et al. (2015), the HTMT approach uses bootstrapping, with an ideal threshold of 0.90. Discriminant validity is established when the 95% bootstrapped confidence interval of HTMT does not include the value 1, as a value of 1 in the structural path suggests a lack of distinction between constructs. As shown in Table 7, all HTMT values remain below 0.90, confirming that the constructs meet the required reliability and validity standards.

Table 6: Reliability and Validity of Measurement Model

	Items	Loadings	CR	AVE
Distribute Justice	DJ1	0.869	0.887	0.743
	DJ2	0.860		
	DJ3	0.860		
	DJ4	0.859		
Procedural Justice	PJ1	0.816	0.926	0.690
	PJ2	0.833		
	PJ3	0.831		
	PJ4	0.827		

	Items	Loadings	CR	AVE
	PJ5	0.832		
	PJ6	0.830		
	PJ7	0.844		
Interpersonal Justice	IJ1	0.866	0.899	0.753
	IJ2	0.850		
	IJ3	0.883		
	IJ4	0.871		
Informational Justice	INJ1	0.856	0.903	0.717
	INJ2	0.853		
	INJ3	0.836		
	INJ4	0.844		
	INJ5	0.845		
Employee Innovative Behavior	IB1	0.844	0.958	0.673
	IB2	0.847		
	IB3	0.821		
	IB4	0.829		
	IB5	0.853		
	IB6	0.827		
	IB7	0.814		
	IB8	0.845		
	IB9	0.846		
	IB10	0.841		
	IB11	0.820		
	IB12	0.633		
Flexible Work	FWA1	0.871	0.907	0.719
Arrangement	FWA2	0.832		
	FWA3	0.850		
	FWA4	0.848		
	FWA5	0.838		

Note: DJ= Distribute Justice, PJ= Procedural Justice, IJ= Interpersonal Justice, INJ= Informational Justice, FWA= Flexible Work Arrangement

Table 7：HTMT

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. DJ	0.364					
2. FWA	0.238	0.357				
3. INJ	0.247	0.407	0.402			
4. IB	0.371	0.497	0.445	0.393		
5. IJ	0.269	0.407	0.367	0.36	0.409	
6. PJ	0.251	0.441	0.434	0.456	0.403	0.463

Note: **DJ**= Distribute Justice, **PJ**= Procedural Justice, **IJ**= Interpersonal Justice, **INJ**= Informational Justice, FWA= Flexible Work Arrangement

Structural Model

The analysis examined the t-test values for the direct relationship with innovative work behavior, as presented in Table 8. The findings show that all t-values were ≥ 1.98 and below the 0.05 significance level, confirming statistical significance. These results also allow for further interpretation of β values. As shown in the table, all constructs exert a positive influence towards employee innovative behavior. Physical work engagement, with a β value of 0.098, suggests that each unit increase corresponds to a 0.098 rise in innovative behavior. Hence, all direct effect hypotheses (H1a, H1b, H1c, H1d) are supported. Additionally, Table 8 illustrates that flexible work arrangements moderate the relationship between interpersonal justice (H2c) (B=0.16, t=2.296018, p≤0.05) and innovative behavior. Furthermore, the sub-dimensions of organizational justice collectively explain 42.5% of the variance in innovative behavior, demonstrating strong predictive accuracy (Hair et al., 2024). For further details, Figure 3 demonstrates that the slopes of the regression lines become steeper under the influence of flexible work arrangements. This study highlights how flexible work arrangements enhance the relationship between interpersonal justice and employee innovative behavior.

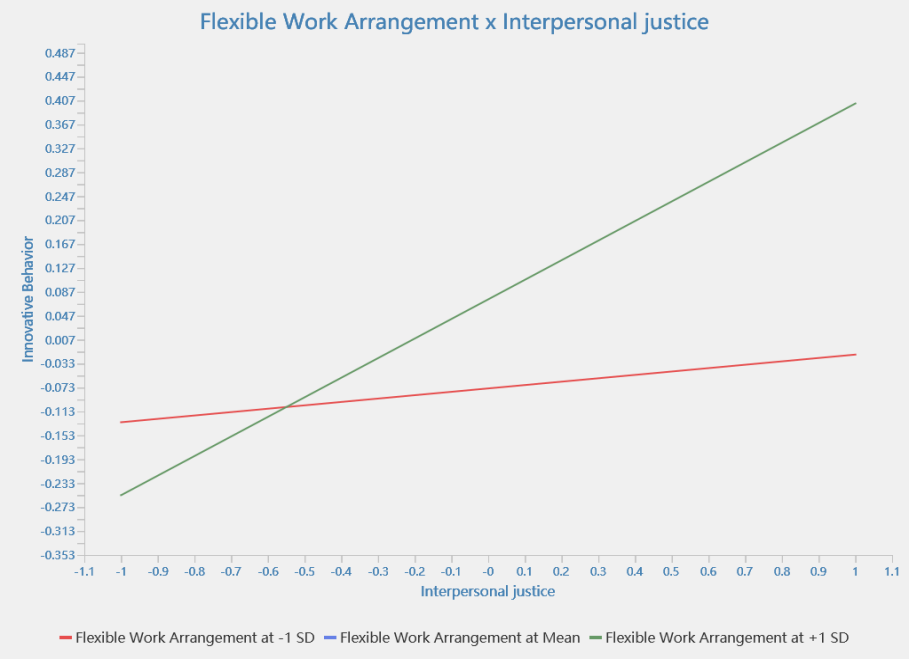

Figure 3: Plotting of the moderating role of flexible work arrangement between interpersonal justice and employee innovative behavior

Table 8: Result of the Structural Model (Hypothesis Testing)

Hypothesis	Relationship	Std Beta	Std. Dev.	t-value	p-value	BCI LL	BCI UL	R^2	Decision
H1a	DJ -> IB	0.155	0.042	3.685**	0.000	0.085	0.224	0.425	Supported
H1b	PJ -> IB	0.105	0.048	2.174*	0.015	0.026	0.185		Supported
H1c	IJ -> IB	0.125	0.047	2.662**	0.004	0.045	0.198		Supported
H1d	INJ -> IB	0.157	0.046	3.416**	0.000	0.079	0.230		Supported
H2a	FWA x DJ > IB	0.001	0.044	0.026	0.490	-0.074	0.069		Not Supported
H2b	FWA x PJ > IB	0.042	0.050	0.838	0.201	-0.043	0.120		Not Supported
H2c	FWA x IJ > IB	0.093	0.046	2.018*	0.022	0.016	0.168		Supported
H2d	FWA x INJ > IB	0.002	0.047	0.051	0.480	-0.073	0.084		Not Supported

Note: DJ= Distribute Justice, PJ= Procedural Justice, IJ= Interpersonal Justice, INJ= Informational Justice, FWA= Flexible Work Arrangement

T-value significance level **>2.33, *>1.645

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Discussion

The analysis in the previous chapter indicates that distributive justice has a positive impact on the innovative behavior of digital talents. In a study conducted in China with a sample of 235 respondents, it was found that distributive justice is positively associated with innovative work behavior (Akram et al., 2016). The researchers utilized equity theory to examine the connection between distributive justice and innovative work behavior, focusing on the interrelationships among these constructs. Similarly, a Jordanian study surveyed 1,000 employees across 20 industries and determined that distributive justice is significantly correlated with innovative work behaviors (Suliman, 2001). Another study, which employed convenience sampling with 400 respondents, also found a positive relationship between distributive justice and EIB (Gozukara & Yildirim, 2016).

Akram et al. (2016) aimed to examine the impact of various aspects of organizational justice on the innovative behavior of employees in the Chinese media communication sector. Their study revealed that all forms of organizational justice have a positive and significant influence on innovative behavior. Specifically, there was a noteworthy relationship between innovative work behavior and distributive justice. Distributive justice plays a crucial role in motivating employees and encouraging innovation within the workplace. When employees perceive fairness in their organization, they are more likely to engage in creative thinking, share intelligent ideas, and collaborate effectively with colleagues and supervisors to implement innovative solutions. Akram and his co-researchers (Akram et al., 2020) recommend that trade union organizations in Chinese companies prioritize providing distributive justice to their employees to enhance perceptions of fairness and promote active participation in generating and implementing original ideas.

The study's findings support hypothesis H1a, indicating a significant positive relationship between distributive justice and innovative work behavior. This suggests that employees who experience distributive justice in the workplace exhibit a more positive mindset. Innovation is crucial for organizational success, playing a key role in growth and sustainability. In today's rapidly evolving business landscape, companies face constant pressures, changes, and industry dynamics. To stay competitive, organizations must continuously introduce new products and services, making the creative work behavior of their employees a valuable asset. Moreover, the fair distribution of resources and performance within the organization, known as distributive justice, is essential for employees to achieve optimal outcomes in the long term (Rivera, 2017).

However, the results of this study also indicate that procedural justice had a relatively stronger link to innovative behavior than distributive justice. This may be attributed to cultural and organizational characteristics in the Chinese digital sector, where process fairness, participatory decision-making, and transparent communication are highly valued due to hierarchical structures and collectivist cultural orientations. Employees may perceive procedural justice as a stronger indicator of long-term support and stability, thus encouraging sustained innovation.

The results indicate a positive relationship between procedural justice and innovative behavior among Chinese digital talents, as supported by previous literature. For instance, Kim and Park (2017) found a significant and positive relationship between procedural justice and innovative work behavior in a study involving 400 Korean respondents. Similarly, a study (Noerchoidah & Harjanti, 2019) in Indonesia focusing on four- and five-star hotels also found a positive relationship between procedural justice and innovative behavior. Using social exchange theory, they highlighted the reciprocal nature of this relationship. Another study (Kartika Sari, 2020) in Semarang City, Indonesia, employing a proportional random sampling technique, confirmed a significant

positive relationship between procedural justice and innovative behavior. This study also interpreted their findings through the lens of social exchange theory, emphasizing the importance of fair treatment and clear procedures in fostering innovative work behaviors among employees. In the context of China's digital economy, where job roles are highly dynamic and innovation is embedded in continuous iterative processes, fair and inclusive procedural mechanisms may be more influential in shaping employee trust and engagement than outcome-based fairness. This contextual factor helps explain why procedural justice exerted a stronger influence on innovative behavior than distributive justice in this study.

This study has indicated that procedural justice has a positive impact on positive organizational behaviors, including innovative work behaviors. Organizational justice can improve employees' behaviors and attitudes, such as enhancing their innovative capabilities. However, if employees perceive unfair treatment within an organization, they are likely to exhibit negative behavioral outcomes and attitudes. This study further demonstrates that procedural justice can increase motivation among employees to participate in positive organizational behavior. Existing literature also suggests that procedural justice within organizations has both direct and indirect positive effects on employee work engagement. As outlined in this article, the perception of being treated fairly by the company leads to increased engagement in responsibilities, as fair procedures instil confidence and trust in the organization. Consequently, employees are incentivised to exhibit positive behaviors at work, such as engaging in innovative work behaviors. This emphasis on procedural fairness reflects broader organizational values in high-tech sectors, where employee empowerment, process transparency, and collaborative decision-making drive sustained innovation.

The hypotheses of H1c and H1d, which suggest that interpersonal and informational justice are positively associated with innovative work behavior, are supported by the findings of this study. These results align with existing literature. For instance, a study in Tunisia with 204 respondents found a positive link between interpersonal justice and innovative work behavior, utilizing social exchange theory to explain this connection (Daboussi Ayadi et al., 2020). This reinforces the idea that effective interpersonal management can enhance innovation. The study's results contribute to the ongoing exploration of corporate justice and innovative work behavior. It offers fresh insights into the role of individual employees in the relationship between innovative work behavior and the organization. While previous research has mainly focused on the group level, recent studies have started to examine the correlation between justice in organizations, particularly interpersonal justice, and employees' behaviors separately. A study highlights (Cheung, 2013) that peers are reliable indicators of justice expectations, with interpersonal justice significantly influencing employees' perceptions and behaviors. When employees feel respected and treated with integrity by their employers, they are more likely to generate and effectively implement new ideas (Agarwal, 2014). Similarly, research in China's telecommunications sector has shown a significant positive correlation between interpersonal justice and EIB (Akram et al., 2020).

This study examined the concept of perceived informational justice, with a specific focus on fair trade between supervisors and employees. Employees prioritize long-term relationships, such as career development, and view open communication as essential for fair decision-making (Patient & Skarlicki, 2010), reducing uncertainty (J. George & Wallio, 2017). Employees strive to ensure that awards are distributed justice and communicate this sentiment when appropriate. Consequently, the positive impact of informational justice on innovative behavior is highlighted. Research involving 344 responses from Arab countries demonstrated a positive relationship between information justice and innovative work behavior (Momeni et al., 2014). The study suggests that empowering staff through professional development and providing them with adequate information on policies and procedures is crucial. Supervisors play a key role in the timely and efficient dissemination of information, ultimately promoting innovative work behaviors among employees (Wynen et al., 2020).

Organizational justice plays a crucial role in satisfying employees' basic psychological needs, such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness, as outlined by Self-Determination Theory (SDT). When employees perceive fair treatment, it fulfils their autonomy needs, leading to increased motivation for innovative behavior in the workplace. This autonomy allows employees the freedom to explore new methods and generate fresh

ideas (Papachristopoulos et al., 2023). Moreover, a just organizational environment boosts employees' sense of competence by recognizing and valuing their efforts and contributions. This recognition enhances employees' confidence in implementing innovation and experimenting with new technologies and approaches, thereby enhancing overall innovative capabilities. Furthermore, interpersonal justice fosters innovative behavior by cultivating trust and cooperation among employees. Establishing fair interpersonal relationships makes employees feel valued and respected, promoting knowledge sharing and collaboration within the team, consequently creating more opportunities for innovation (Papachristopoulos et al., 2023). Overall, organizational justice positively influences EIB by meeting their basic psychological needs, enhancing autonomy and competence, and fostering teamwork and trust. This not only enhances employees' job satisfaction and organizational commitment but also contributes to the long-term innovation capabilities and competitive advantages of the company.

Practical Implications

Implications for Employers

This study examines the current state of China's justice environment and addresses the needs of contemporary management realities. The stability of a nation is closely tied to social justice, while the survival and growth of enterprises depend on organizational justice. The demand for both social and organizational justice is steadily increasing. This study emphasizes the importance for enterprises to focus on cultivating a fair work environment and enhancing employees' perception of organizational justice. Such efforts hold significant practical implications for the stability and development of enterprises. It motivates employees by considering non-material costs and offers practical suggestions for stimulating employee innovative behavior.

The effective adoption of FWA relies on management’s trust in employees and a results-driven leadership approach (UNDP, 2021). To cultivate this trust, managers should establish transparent performance evaluation criteria, promote open communication, and encourage employees to independently explore and innovate in their roles. Research indicates that flexible work arrangements can significantly alleviate workplace stress while enhancing job satisfaction and productivity (Malek et al., 2025; Possenriede & Plantenga, 2014).

Additionally, organizations should provide sufficient technical support and training to facilitate seamless remote work and collaboration. A well-supported work environment not only increases job satisfaction and employee loyalty but also strengthens talent attraction and retention. To ensure fairness in the workplace, companies must implement clear policies and procedures that guarantee equal opportunities in job assignments, career advancement, and performance evaluations. This approach helps reduce workplace conflicts and stress while fostering stronger employee commitment and organizational attachment.

Implications for Digital Talents

Research on the moderating variable of flexible work arrangement elucidates the circumstances in which enterprises can enhance innovation performance by improving the work climate. Digital talents are more likely to align their work activities with their most productive time, while also integrating their work schedule with their creativity. The employee innovative behavior positively affects the innovation performance of enterprises (Ashiru et al., 2022), which is a crucial element to whether China can break through the technological constraints of Western countries (Tang, 2021). Thus, flexible work arrangements can activate innovative behavior among knowledge employees (Jiang et al., 2023). According to self-determination theory, employees are more likely to display innovative behavior when they perceive the organization as fair (Ryan & Deci, 2000) and have autonomy over their work time (Deci & Ryan, 2000) and place (Parker et al., 2006). If variable flexible work arrangements are adopted by high-tech companies, employees will be released from the 996-work system and be more innovative.

In a flexible work setting, digital talents should proactively participate in team collaboration, fostering effective communication and mutual trust (Carmeli & Spreitzer, 2009). Prioritizing teamwork and trust creates an environment that nurtures innovation, allowing employees to fully leverage their creative and problem-

solving abilities (Gilson et al., 2015). Moreover, digital talents must take an active role in maintaining collaboration and communication within their teams. While flexible work arrangements may reduce in-person interactions, modern digital tools enable seamless remote teamwork. Utilizing video conferencing, instant messaging, and other communication platforms effectively helps employees stay connected, share resources, and ensure smooth information flow.

A workplace culture that emphasizes fairness and teamwork not only enhances job performance but also strengthens employees' emotional well-being and sense of belonging (Ohana et al., 2023). Equitable treatment among colleagues fosters positive team dynamics and encourages individual contributions. This is particularly crucial for extroverted employees, for whom a respectful and inclusive work environment plays a vital role in engagement and productivity.

Limitations and Future Research Opportunities

This study is constrained by the number of survey participants, with 406 valid questionnaires collected from various administrative regions in Guangzhou. The extent to which this sample can overcome resource limitations and accurately represent the broader population requires further validation. Future research will aim to expand the survey coverage, incorporating more high-tech enterprises to improve sample representativeness. Moreover, efforts will be directed toward increasing survey depth, diversifying respondent backgrounds, covering a broader range of job roles within high-tech enterprises, and exploring additional high-tech sectors. To enhance research quality, it is crucial to expand the participant pool, increase sample size to improve the stability of findings, and minimize potential biases caused by sample limitations.

Conclusion

The findings of this study provide insights for advancing China's scientific and technological innovation, offering practical guidance for governments, enterprises, and digital talents. These insights can help address technological barriers imposed by Western countries in global competition and contribute to achieving technological self-reliance. In particular, within the prevalent 996 work culture, companies can alleviate employee burnout and enhance innovation by adopting FWA, ultimately strengthening their competitive edge. Striking a balance between work demands and employee autonomy is essential for fostering innovation in high-intensity work environments. For digital professionals, the study highlights the critical role of work-life balance. Effectively managing work and personal life, maintaining high levels of organizational justice, and exercising autonomy can significantly boost innovation potential and career fulfilment. This not only benefits individual career development but also drives organizational and national technological progress. Overall, this study offers meaningful recommendations for all stakeholders, providing strong support for China's continued advancements in global scientific and technological competition.

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