



## The Role of Proactive Personality in Promoting Innovative Work Behavior and Creativity: A Study of the Mediation of Intrinsic Motivation and Thriving at Work in Teachers

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### Abstract

In today's world, creativity and innovation are recognized as key factors in improving education quality, and the proactive personality of teachers can play a significant role in this field. Accordingly, this study aimed to investigate the effect of proactive personality on innovative work behavior and creativity of teachers through the mediation of intrinsic motivation and thriving at work. This study was correlation using descriptive methods and structural equation modeling for applied goals. In this regard, 250 people were selected from 711 senior high school teachers in Urmia City by stratified random sampling method and using Morgan Table. To collect data, the questionnaires of Buck's proactive personality (2011), Scott and Bruce's innovative work behavior (1994), Tierney et al.'s work creativity (1999), Kern's thriving at work (2018), and Tierney et al.'s intrinsic motivation of employees (1999) were used. After confirming face and content validity of every questionnaire, the construct validity was calculated using confirmatory factor analysis and its consistency was calculated using Cronbach's Alpha. All variables had a Cronbach's alpha coefficient above 0.7. Data analysis was performed using SPSS and PLS3 software. The results of testing research hypotheses showed that the proactive personality had a positive effect on teachers' innovative work behavior and creativity, and intrinsic motivation mediated this relationship. Also, teachers' work thriving as a result of these interactions increases creativity and innovation in the teaching process.

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## 1. Introduction

As the most prominent, most effective, and widespread organization responsible for the formal education and training of individuals in every society and also as a provider of human resources for other organizations, education department has an important and extraordinary impact on the social, economic, and cultural sustainability of every country (Ghanbari et al., 2023). Among them, as the main element of this organization, teachers have the greatest impact on the progress and survival of a society; in such a way that their optimal performance can guarantee the success of the society. Therefore, it can be said that the teacher is the most prominent member of the educational system in the teaching-learning process and the main architect of the educational system (Nejat Bakhsh et al., 2024); also, one of the most important factors in the long-term success and effectiveness of schools is the existence of a suitable atmosphere for innovation and expression of innovative behavior for teachers (Khosravi et al., 2020). Innovative work behavior is individual actions aimed at generating, proposing, and implementing new ideas about job-related tasks that benefit organizational performance (Tran Pham & Nguyen, 2024) and includes a set of voluntary and extra-role behaviors of employees based on the production of ideas and organizational growth (Pouryazdani Kajur et al., 2021). Therefore, the importance of innovative behavior is that it increases organizational efficiency and effectiveness by sharing resources, and innovative individuals contribute greatly to organizations in complex and ambiguous environments and to improving organizational performance (Jamshidi et al., 2021). According to Scott (2015), innovation and creativity are among the most important competencies in a knowledge-based society. Teachers and employees who are creative can have innovative performance by acquiring skills, exchanging knowledge, and learning new solutions to perform tasks (Sharei and Hajiabadi, 2025). Meanwhile, teaching, as one of the influential professions, has always been an important platform for the emergence of professional and individual creativity of interested and motivated teachers and instructors. Undoubtedly, creativity in teaching, especially in very restrictive conditions, can act as a very effective driver in achieving educational and learning goals (Henriksen & Mishra, 2013).

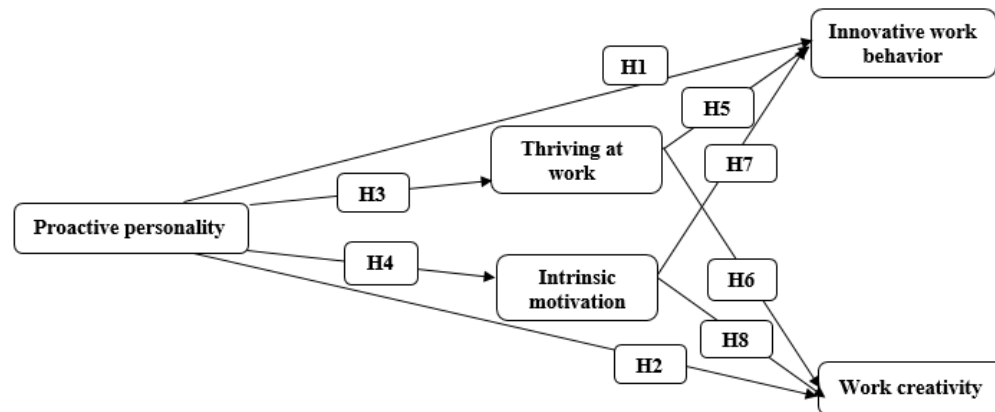
In the present era, employee creativity has become an important element in the organization and is one

of the determining factors for the success of an organization (Chang and Teng, 2017; Kandampully et al., 2016).

Organizations need employees who have the ability to make decisions and provide new and innovative solutions to different problems and are creative (Azimpour and Jalilian, 2020). Creativity is the power to use mental abilities to create a new thought and concept and can increase flexibility, improve the level of abilities, and expand the level of organizational learning (Gholipour and Ebrahimzadeh, 2020). At the same time, it is a factor that promotes the progress of organizations and contributes significantly to the development of organizational programs by increasing capabilities (Emami and Nazem, 2018). According to many education experts, creative teaching and the use of new teaching methods based on creative thinking are essential and the most basic requirements of the educational systems of any country (Mohebi-Amin et al., 2013). According to Ismail et al. (2018), creativity in education, like literacy, is a fundamental life skill that prepares our future generations for survival and growth, and to achieve this goal, special attention should be paid to promoting the element of contradiction in both teachers and students in educational designs (Azizi et al., 2020). Creative teachers emphasize the potential psychological relationships between imagination and professional experience in both their planning process and teaching and place great value on curiosity and risk-taking, ownership, and independence, and the development of imaginative and unusual ideas in themselves and their students (Cremin & Oliver, 2017). Research supports the idea that a proactive personality positively affects creativity (Zhang and Xu, 2024; Zhang et al., 2021; Alikaj et al., 2021). This occurs because people with very proactive personalities are highly motivated to take initiative and respond to the situations that arise around them (Kim et al., 2010). Proactive individuals, who are driven by positive goals for constructive changes, actively participate in exchanging information with others to identify opportunities. This exchange within their work units may lead to the discovery of problems that they see as opportunities for improvement (Frese and Fay, 2001; Ahmad et al., 2023). Employees differ in their knowledge, skills, information, and perspectives on work issues. Through their effective exchange of information, these employees discover new ways of thinking, introduce innovative ideas, and gather

insights from their colleagues to identify opportunities or address existing problems (Grant and Ashford, 2008; Fitriana and Satrya, 2022). These individuals often bring in new ideas (Ullah et al., 2023; Auliya et al., 2022; Mubarak et al., 2021) and are more motivated if the ideas they present can be applied in the surrounding environment (Pons et al., 2016). Such proactive individuals may seek information from within and outside their work units (Mehmood et al., 2023). Proactive personality can be considered a crucial factor in various contexts that can affect an individual's performance; hence, it revives evidence that personality should be a source of motivation (Karimi et al., 2022; Lumanisa, 2015); However, the emergence of individual creativity depends on organizational and individual factors (Sarani et al., 2020) and employees need to have an intrinsic motivation for creativity (Arstana et al., 2023; Saati et al., 2022; Hon, 2011). Intrinsically motivated employees are more curious and more mentally and cognitively flexible. These employees have a strong tendency to seek new information and knowledge and try to use newer approaches in their decisions (Yazdanshenas and Shiravand, 2023), which makes them more creative (Aldabbas, 2021). One of the key components of increasing and developing employee creativity and innovation is the individual's intrinsic motivation (Yeap, 2023; Lee et al., 2023). Therefore, by designing motivational programs, efforts can be made to improve employee motivation for thriving at work and developing work. Because in this state, due to their strong energy and intrinsic motivation to learn, individuals are likely to be more involved in planning for their future careers, taking responsibility for their careers, exploring themselves and their environment for career opportunities, and having strong faith in their abilities to deal with career obstacles (Abbasi and Hosseini-Borojeni, 2023). In fact, thriving is a resource that helps employees achieve their goals and is associated with desirable outcomes, such as accountability, innovative work behavior (Srivastava and Singh, 2022), job adjustment, life satisfaction, and self-development, allowing organizations to gain a competitive advantage (Alwahhabi et al., 2023; Rahaman et al., 2022). Research shows that proactive personality is positively associated with

thriving (Nadeem et al., 2019). Teachers are role models and mentors for their students, influencing their minds and stimulating correct social and moral values through their words and actions inside and outside the classroom and making an important contribution to shaping the personalities of their students. Therefore, promoting and educating the thriving of a society begins with teachers (Yeo, 2011). When teachers can manage positive relationships and classroom climate well, not only will they feel more empowered, but students will also benefit from it (Murray, 2002). In addition, there is a relationship between teachers' enthusiasm and students' intrinsic motivation to learn and student ability in the classroom. Also, students' motivation and attitude towards school are closely related to student-teacher relationships. When relationships are good, students tend to be more motivated and have more positive attitudes towards school (Patrick et al., 2000). As research has shown, teachers' thriving is also related to teaching effectiveness, resilience in teaching, and students' motivation and progress (Hojabrian et al., 2019). The main pillar of education in any country is its teachers. Teachers bear the main burden of educating students and preparing them for life; then, in order to be able to play their role properly and raise a good generation, teachers must have sufficient thriving and motivation to establish good relationships, effective social behaviors, good health, life expectancy, and confront issues, problems, conflicts, adversities, and etc. On the other hand, the main challenge of educational organizations is finding ways to maintain creativity at work and motivate teachers to participate in innovative activities. In order to create a continuous and consistent process of initiatives and innovations, teachers must be both capable and willing to innovate; however, applying creative energy is not easy and the emergence of new ideas and innovations does not happen by itself; rather, it requires the right context and specific personality conditions. accordingly, the present study seeks to answer the question of what is the effect of proactive personality on innovative work behavior and work creativity of teachers with the mediation of thriving at work and intrinsic motivation?



**Figure 1. Conceptual model of the research**

## 2. Methodology

This study was a survey using descriptive methods for applied goals. The statistical population of the study was 711 senior high school teachers in the first district of Urmia City. The research scales for measuring the variables were first extracted from theoretical foundations. Then, based on the experts' opinions, the face and content validity of the scales

were reviewed and confirmed. Also, to ensure the consistency of the measurement scales, the Cronbach's alpha value was calculated, whose values are presented in Table (1). As can be seen, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for all research scales is at the desired level, which indicates the validity of the research scales.

**Table 1. Consistency results and sources of measurement scales**

Variables	Scale reference	No of questions	Cronbach's alpha
Proactive personality	Buck (2011)	10	0.87
creativity	Tierney et al. (1999)	9	0.91
Innovative work behavior	Scott & Bruce (1994)	6	0.86
Thriving at work	Kern (2014)	23	0.88
Internal motivation	Tierney et al. (1999)	5	0.87

Morgan Table was used to determine the required sample size, which was 250 in this study. Respondents were also selected using a single-stage cluster random sampling method.

### 2.1 Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted through structural equation modeling. First, the normality of the variables was examined through the Kolmogorov-

Smirnov test. Since some variables were not normal, the PLS method was used for structural equation modeling.

Table 2 presents the demographic features of the study sample. As seen in Table 2, 56% of the respondents were female with a master's degree, majored in literature and arts, and 58.8% of the respondents had an experience of over 21 years.

**Table 2. Demographic characteristics of the sample**

Demographic features		Frequency	Frequency percentage	Demographic features		Frequency	t
gender	female	140	56	Education	Associate degree	6	2.4
	male	110	44		BA	62	32.8
	arts	112	48.4		MA	138	55.2
major	Economics and management	5	2		PhD	24	9.6
	Electricity & computer	13	5.2		2-5	18	7/2



Basic sciences	96	38.4	Job records	5-11	27	10/8
Physical education	4	1.6		11-21	58	32/2
Technical & engineering	11	4.4		Over 21	147	58/8

Factor loadings are calculated using the correlation value of the indices of a construct with that construct. To examine the model, first the factor loading coefficients of the observable variables were

calculated. The mentioned coefficients are shown in Figure 2.

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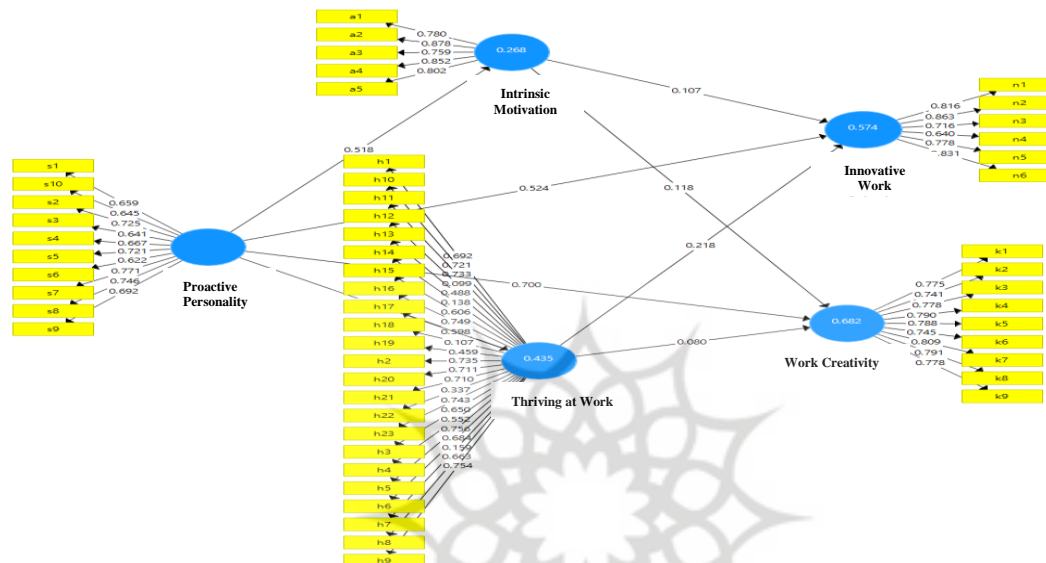


Figure 2. Factor loading values of research variable items

As Figure 2 shows, the factor loading of all variables is acceptable ( $< 0.4$ ), implying that the correlation coefficient of the observable variables has the necessary ability to estimate their corresponding latent variable and it confirms the

construct validity of the model. In order to examine the model, external fit was first examined, and in the second stage, internal fit was examined, and finally, the overall fit of the model was examined.

Table 3. Fit of external model indices

Fit of external model indices	Acceptable limit	Proactive personality	creativity	Innovative work behavior	Thriving at work	Intrinsic motivation
Cronbach's Alpha	$>0.7$	0.825	0.918	0.867	0.879	0.873
CR	$>0.7$	0.873	0.932	0.901	0.906	0.908
AVE	$>0.5$	0.535	0.665	0.605	0.581	0.665

To evaluate the measurement and reliability indicators of the model, the extracted mean, composite consistancy, and Cronbach's Alpha are used. Results of the Table 3 show that all of the above values are higher than the desired level.

To examine the divergent validity, the relationship

between a construct and its indicators is shown by comparing the relationship between that construct and other constructs using the Fornell-Larker matrix. In this method, only the first-order latent variables are entered in the matrix. Table 4 shows the results.

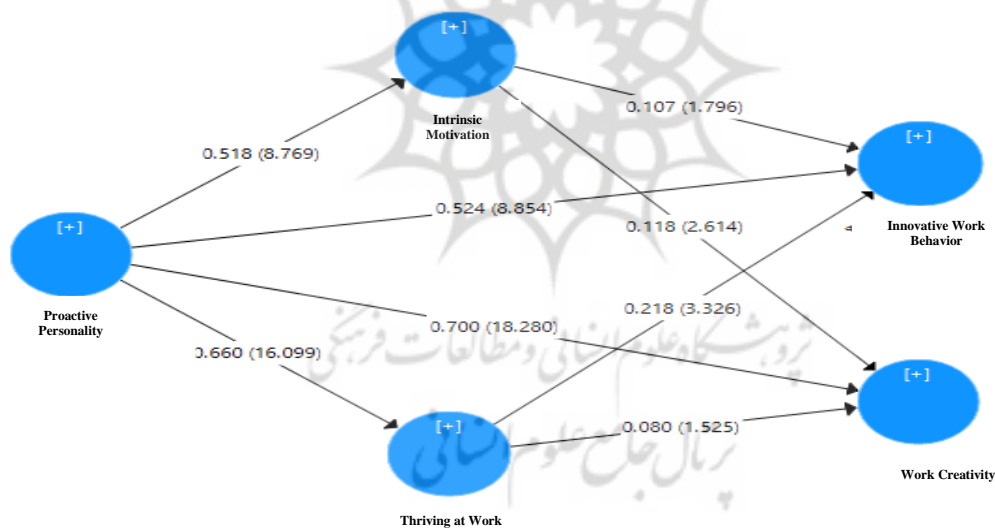
**Table 4. Divergent validity (Fornell-Larker method)**

Row	variables	1	2	3	4	5
1	Intrinsic motivation	0.81				
2	Creativity at work	0.53	0.77			
3	Innovative work behavior	0.52	0.81	0.77		
4	Proactive personality	0.51	0.81	0.72	0.62	
5	Thriving at work	0.66	0.62	0.63	0.66	0.60

For computing this matrix, the AVE root value of the latent variables in this study, which are located in the main diagonal of the matrix, must be greater than the correlation value between them, which are located in the lower and left cells of the main diagonal. As seen in Table 4, it can be seen that the latent variables in the model interact more with their indicators than with other constructs and the divergent validity of the model is at an appropriate level.

In the model, the  $R^2$  index for the innovative work behavior variable is 0.574 and for the work creativity is 0.682, which are at a desirable level, indicating that a large amount of dependent

variables can be predicted by independent and mediating variables. In order to examine the fit of the structural model, the standard root mean square residual index (SRMR) and the normal fit index (NFI) were used to fit the research model. The SRMR index is reported to be 0.06, which is less than 0.08, and the NFI index is reported to be 0.93, which is close to one and  $> 0.9$ , which provides a fit value for judging the match between the experimental data and the theoretical model of the research; therefore, goodness of fit of the model was confirmed.

**Figure 3. T-values and path coefficients of the research model**

In Figure 3, the numbers indicated on the arrows indicate the T-values and path coefficients. In order to test the hypotheses at the 0.95 confidence level, t-values greater than and equal to the absolute value of 1.96 mean a significant correlation between the two variables. The direction of the relationship is determined based on whether these values are positive or negative. Based on what was said, only in two paths, the effect of thriving at work on work creativity and the effect of intrinsic motivation on

innovative work behavior, a significant correlation was not found.

## 2.2 Hypotheses

The criterion for confirming the research hypotheses is that the path coefficients are positive and the t-statistic is higher than 1.96. Tables 5 and 6 present the results of the hypothesis testing.

**Table 5. Testing the hypotheses and direct effects of the research variables**

Hypotheses	Path Coefficient	value t	Result
(H1) Proactive personality on innovative work behavior	0.524	8.854	Confirmed
(H2) Proactive personality on creativity at work	0.700	18.280	Confirmed
(H3) Proactive personality on thriving at work	0.660	16.099	Confirmed
Proactive personality on intrinsic motivation (H4)	0.518	8.769	Confirmed
Thriving at work on innovative work behavior (H5)	0.190	2.728	Confirmed
Thriving at work on creativity at work(H6)	0.051	0.918	Rejected
Intrinsic motivation on innovative work behavior (H7)	0.107	1.796	Rejected
Intrinsic motivation on creativity at work (H8)	0.118	2.614	Confirmed

**Table 6. Estimating the coefficients of indirect effects of research variables**

Independent variable	Mediating variable	Dependent variable	Path coefficient	t value	Result
Proactive personality	Intrinsic motivation	Innovative work	0.056	1.638	Rejected
	Thriving at work	behavior	0.114	3.234	Confirmed
	Intrinsic motivation	Creativity at	0.060	2.320	Confirmed
	Thriving at work	work	0.053	1.502	Rejected

### 3. Discussion and Conclusion

Fostering creativity and encouraging innovative behaviors among teachers can be considered as an effective strategy in improving education quality and students' academic outcomes. Teachers with proactive personality usually seek continuous learning and improving their skills. These features not only help them find creative solutions when facing educational challenges, but also strengthen their intrinsic motivation and thriving at work. So, teachers with high intrinsic motivation are more inclined to try new teaching methods and seek innovation in their classes. Therefore, this study has investigated the causal relationships between proactive personality with innovative work behavior and teachers' work creativity with the mediation of thriving at work and intrinsic motivation, and the research model was strongly confirmed by data collected from senior high school teachers in Urmia. In this study, it was observed that proactive personality has a direct, positive, and significant effect on innovative work behavior and explains 52.4% of the variance in innovative work behavior, which is consistent with the findings of Ullah et al. (2023), Ahmad et al. (2023), Fitriana and Satrya (2022), Auliya et al. (2022) and Mubarak et al.

(2021). Employees with proactive personality who are driven by positive goals for constructive change actively participate in exchanging information with others to identify opportunities. This exchange in their work units may lead to the discovery of problems that they see as opportunities for improvement (Frese and Fay, 2001; Ahmad et al., 2023). As a psychological trait, proactive personality includes a willingness to accept challenges, motivation to learn, and the ability to solve problems. In educational settings, teachers with proactive personalities are typically more flexible and able to respond quickly to student needs and changes. These characteristics help them to implement more innovative ideas in their teaching process. Also, proactive personality has a direct, positive and significant effect on teachers' work creativity and explains 70% of the variance in work creativity, which is consistent with the findings of Zhang and Xu (2024), Zhang et al. (2021), and Alikaj et al. (2021). People with high proactive personalities are highly motivated to take the initiative and respond to the situation that arises around them (Kim et al., 2010). The proactive personality of teachers plays a key role in increasing their work creativity. This type of personality, with features such as curiosity, flexibility, and

willingness to take risks, enables teachers to use innovative methods and ideas in the teaching process. Teachers with proactive personalities usually seek continuous learning and improvement of their skills, which helps to improve the quality of education and create a creative and dynamic environment in the classroom. Also, these teachers usually have a greater ability to create positive relationships with students and colleagues, which can lead to the exchange of ideas and inspiration in the educational environment. Meanwhile, proactive personality has a direct, positive and significant effect on the mediator variable of teachers' intrinsic motivation and explains 51.8% of the variance of intrinsic motivation, which is in line with the findings of Karimi et al. (2022) and Lumanisa (2015). Proactive personality can have a significant effect on individuals' intrinsic motivation by creating curiosity, a sense of control, and positive relationships. This is important not only in educational fields but also in everyday life and can contribute to the personal and professional development. The effect of teachers' proactive personality on thriving at work was also confirmed and explained 66% of the variance of thriving at work, which is consistent with the findings of Abbasi and Hosseini Borujeni (2023) and Nadim et al. (2019). Proactive individuals are more likely to thrive at work because they tend to exhibit proactive behaviors that can thrive. More specifically, proactive individuals tend to show initiative and perseverance at work, and this tendency to participate in their work makes them focus more on their tasks. Additionally, people with proactive personalities are more likely to seek self-development since they are constantly looking for new opportunities that can contribute to their own progress. Finally, since proactive individuals are looking for new ways to do tasks, they tend to create networks with people who have impact or power to help them achieve their goals by providing information or other resources. Therefore, by engaging in these active behaviors, proactive individuals progress more at work (Alikaj et al., 2021).

Results showed that thriving at work has a direct, positive, and significant effect on teachers' innovative work behavior. 19% of the variance in innovative work behavior is explained by the thriving at work variable. These results are in line with the findings of Alwahhabi et al. (2023), Srivastava and Singh (2022), Saati et al. (2022), and

Rahman et al. (2022). In fact, thriving is a resource that helps employees achieve their goals and is associated with desirable outcomes, such as responsibility, innovative work behavior, job adaptability, life satisfaction and self-development, allowing organizations to gain a competitive advantage (Rahaman et al., 2022). Thriving at work, which refers to a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment in the workplace, can significantly impact teachers' innovative work behavior. When teachers thrive in their jobs, they feel more self-efficacy and are more motivated to be creative and innovative. This positive feeling not only helps them increase their confidence in offering new and diverse teaching methods, but also makes them more risk-taking in the face of educational challenges. Results showed that thriving at work does not affect the creativity of senior high school teachers in Urmia. This result disagrees with the findings of Alikaj et al. (2021). Thriving is a multidimensional concept that may be perceived differently by different individuals. Some teachers may not be able to feel thrived due to external pressures, such as heavy workload or lack of administrative support, even if they are successful in their work. This lack of feeling may negatively affect their creativity. It can be concluded that thriving at work alone cannot act as a determining factor in increasing teachers' creativity and there is a need for a more comprehensive study of the factors affecting creativity. Results showed that intrinsic motivation does not affect the innovative work behavior of senior high school teachers in Urmia, and the findings of Yeap (2023) and Lee et al. (2023) are inconsistent with the findings of this study. Due to their strong energy and intrinsic motivation to learn, individuals are likely to be more involved in planning for their future careers, taking responsibility for their careers, exploring themselves and their surroundings for career opportunities, and having strong faith in their abilities to deal with career obstacles (Abbasi and Hosseini-Borojeni, 2023). However, the lack of impact of intrinsic motivation on teachers' innovative work behavior may be due to several factors. First, although intrinsic motivation is known to be a strong motivator for creativity and innovation, external pressures, such as educational requirements, continuous assessments, and lack of resources in educational environments can weaken this motivation.

Secondly, the lack of organizational and cultural support in the school can make teachers feel that



their ideas and innovations are not being considered, which in turn reduces their willingness to take risks and present innovative behaviors.

The effect of intrinsic motivation of teachers on their creativity was also confirmed regarding the research findings so that 11.8% of the variance in creativity at work is explained by intrinsic motivation. These results are in line with the findings of Aristana et al. (2023), Karimi et al. (2022), Saati et al. (2022), Yazdanshenas and Shiravand (2023), and Hon (2011). Employees who are intrinsically motivated are more curious and more mentally and cognitively flexible. These employees have a strong desire to seek new information and knowledge and try to use newer approaches in their decisions, making them more creative (Yazdanshenas and Shiravand, 2023). Intrinsic motivation helps teachers to show more persistence in the face of challenges and obstacles. This persistence can lead them to seek creative solutions and protect them from monotony and boredom caused by repetitive tasks. Creativity and innovative work behavior of teachers are among the key factors in improving the quality of teaching and learning in modern educational systems. These features allow teachers to create a dynamic and attractive learning environment in which students can actively participate in the learning process. Teachers' creativity enables them to present educational content in diverse and attractive ways that attract students' attention and interest. Also, innovative behaviors of teachers in using new technologies and modern teaching methods help to improve the quality of education and prepare students to face the challenges of today's world. Therefore, paying attention to fostering creativity and encouraging innovative behaviors among teachers should be one of the basic priorities of educational systems. Teachers with proactive personality are likely to be well prepared to face job-related changes because proactive individuals are interested in taking initiative in their work and using new and effective methods to significantly change the existing situation and also take steps in the progress and development of the organization by discovering or solving problems in an effective way. Thus, if appropriate conditions and facilities or proper support is provided to proactive teachers, they will definitely have a strong internal motivation that is created in them. They will try to create constructive and meaningful changes with their own initiative and move towards creativity, innovation

and doing things as well as possible. In this case, teachers will experience a sense of growth and forward movement; then, the result of this creativity and innovation will be professional and social success, growth and development of talents and abilities, job satisfaction and finally self-esteem of teachers. Accordingly, the result and consequence of these behaviors will also affect the target community, that is, students, and they will become creative and innovative.

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