The importance of team climate for innovation and collaboration in enhancing the team propensity to innovate: A case study of Algérie Poste project teams

أهمية مناخ الإبتكار والتعاون داخل فريق العمل في تدعيم ميل فريق العمل للابتكار : دراسة حالة لمجموعة من فرق المشروعات التابعة لبريد الجزائر

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Abstract:

The objective of this research is to get insight into some factors that impact team innovation in the organization . Through a case study anda descriptive and analytical methodological approach, this research investigates the role ofteam climate for innovation and collaboration in enhancing team innovation.

The resulats show that there is a positive influence of the team climate for innovation and collaboartion on team propensity to be creative and to innovate. This research highlights alsothe social nature of innovation development in project teamsand the importance ofinteraction processes and team's members participation and engagement in the teamwork .

Keywords:team innovation; projectteam; team climate for innovation; collaboration; creativity.

JELClassificationCodes :O31, O15, M54.

ملخص:

الهدف من هذا البحث هو التعرف على بعض العوامل التي تؤثر على ابتكار فرق العمل في المؤسسة. بالإعتماد على دراسة حالة ومنهج وصفي تحليلي ، يركز هذا البحث على دور مناخ الابتكار والتعاون داخل الفريق في تعزيز الابتكار الجماعي.

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تظهر النتائج أن هناك تأثيرًا إيجابيًا لمناخ الابتكار والتعاون داخل الفريق على ميل الفريق إلى الإبداع والابتكار. يبرز هذا البحث أيضًا الطبيعة الاجتماعية لتطوير الابتكار في فرق المشروعات وأهمية عمليات التفاعل ومشاركة أعضاء الفريق وإلتزامهم في العمل .

كلمات مفتاحية: ابتكار فريق العمل ، فريق المشروع ،مناخ الإبتكار داخل الفريق ،؛ التعاون ؛ الإبداع.

تصنيفاتJEL : O31،O15، M54.

1. INTRODUCTION

Knowledge economy, intense global competition, market evolutions and technological advances have made innovation a fundamental prerequisite to competitiveness (Lawson and Samson, 2001,p.378). Accordingly,innovation allow the organization to adapt appropriately to a rapidly changing environment (West and Anderson, 1996,p.680), it can therefore be defined as the introduction and the application within the group, the organisation or the wider society of new products,processes or procedures that intendto benefit those entities (West and Anderson, 1996, p.680).It is important to state here that products and processeswillonly be considered innovations, if they provide adequate solutions for challenging tasks or situations to an organization or to a group of people (Messmann and Mulder, 2012).

The above definition of innovation emphasizeson the newness and the usefulness of a solution. Thus, it incorporates two concept; creativity in addition to adoption and implementation of the idea (Pirola-Merloand Mann, 2004, p. 236)**.**According to West (2002), innovation is a process that embraces two interdependence stages the creation and the implementation of innovative idea .Consequently ,the innovation capability is based at first on creativity (Lawson and Samson,2001,p. 388), which is a strategichuman capital characteristic in a firm seeking innovation(Wright, Coff, and Moliterno, 2014). Human capital is linked to creativity both at the individual, the team and the organizational level.Saying that, organizational innovation is a dynamic capability (Teece, Pisano, and Shuen, 1997) ,that

allows the organization to achieve new forms of competitive advantage, through the adaptation and the integration of its internal creative skills .

At the team and theorganizational level, this can only be achieved through complementary interaction betweenindividuals(Ployhart et al. 2014,p.373),which enables many social phenomena to arise within the team .In fact, innovation development is an interactive process (Widmann, Messmann, and Mulder,2016,p.430), during which, individuals share knowledge ,experiences and ideas to come up with a solution to a specific problemor to a challenging situation(Somech and Drach-Zahavy, 2013,p. 685).Hence ,the innovative process in the organization must be understood as a multilevel process and a collaborative one (Paulus, Dzindolet, and Kohn, 2012,p.327)**,** collaborative process involves interaction and coordination between team's members (Paulus, Dzindolet, and Kohn ,2012,p. 328).

Despite the crucial role of interaction between team's members in innovation development, there has been relatively limited research on team innovation comparing to those carried out on organisational innovation. More specifically, less attention has been paid to innovation as a team process. Simultaneously ,more team based organization are facing the challenge of developing creative and innovative team in order to increase their ability to foster innovation (Pirola-Merlo and Mann, 2004,p. 236)**.**

In this context, the main objective of this study is to highlight within the project teams of Algérie Poste the factors that are likely to contribute to development of team innovation.Therefore, this study meets a managerial need pushed by current and future transformations in Algérie post. In reality, this company is facing the challenges of promoting services both quantitatively and qualitatively and improving itsactivityprocesses. Saying that,organizational innovation development is becoming a core competence for this organization in order to maintain its effectiveness.

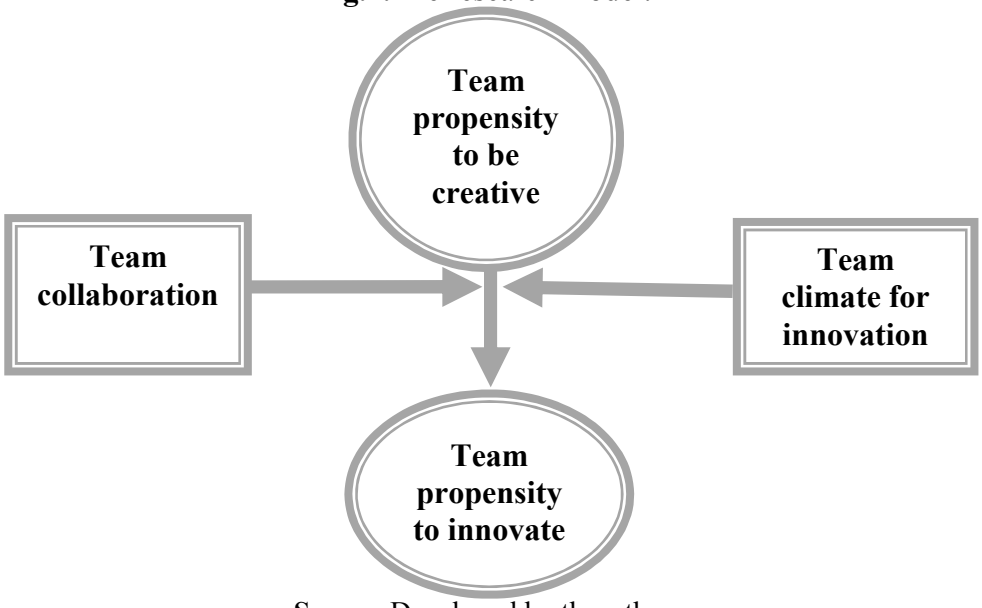
Based on the above considerations we asked the following question**: How important are team climate for innovation and collaboration in enhancing team propensity to innovate?**

To answer this question,we should at first recognize that the

complexity of the innovation process is mostly due to the complexity of factors influencing its development at different levels. In this study we will focus on the organizational aspect of innovation and more specifically on team innovation as a collective construction and the role played by team climate for innovation and collaboration in this process. In view of that, we will investigate several project teams within Algérie Poste and we will try to examine the level and the manifestation of their team innovation.In order to better control our research, we have issued the following hypotheses:

- There is a positive correlation between team propensity to be creative andteam propensity to innovate.
- There is a positive influence of team climate for innovation and collaboration on team propensity to be creative.
- The climate for innovation and collaboration mediate the relation between team creativity and team innovation.
- There are some evidences of team innovation within Algérie poste.

Fig.1. The research model.



Source: Developed by theauthor

2. The development of team innovation

A team is defined as a group of individuals who share a common goal and work together to accomplish their objectives.Simultaneously, team

innovation means the introduction and the application in a team of ideas, products or processes that are new and useful to the team and to the organisation. Also, innovation implementation refers to the adoption and the use of these ideas by the team's members or the organization and itis promoted and depend on team's climate for innovation (Somech and Drach-Zahavy, 2013,p. 684).

2.1 Team creativity

Team creativity refers to the generation processof novel and useful ideas that should have the potential to create future value for the organisation.In other words, team creativity encompasses the introduction of a new and improved way of doing things at work, therefore, it involves behavioural and social processes leading to that (West, 2002,p. 357).In order to understand the conditions that foster creativity in teams, we should at first understand the nature of team creativity process. Team creativity is still a complex process, even tough when it's performed by team work, which is often seen as the best way to realise efficient process (Fay et al. ,2015). Actually,successful teams are alwayslooking for new solutions and new problem-solving methods; their work generally includes sharing ideas and perspectives, which helps creating a shared perception of the problem. This can explain why creative work is frequently carried out in teams (Hoever et al. 2012,p.982).

Furthermore, creativity in the team is considered to be an exploration process of all the alternatives, whereas, the innovation implementation deals more with the exploitation of these alternatives (Paulus, Dzindolet, and Kohn 2012,p. 328).Many factors will influence the team creativity level and as a result, the whole innovation level.West (2002, p.358) argue that four groups of factors determine this level; task characteristics, team diversity (heterogeneity of skills), external demands and integrating process.The team task characteristics influence the waywork is done by the team (distribution of roles, individually or collectively …), for example, in a project team, work is based on the coordination of activity between actors who collectively use their skills, in order to innovate solutions to the problems. In this regard, teamwork allows also the exploitation of

heterogeneous skills.Externals demands refers to the team context of work,this includes organizational climate and the environment pressure. At the end, the influence of this factors will be mediated by integrating group process, as stated by Mumford (2019,p.09), creativity and innovation are influenced by phenomena such as group process and team climateperceptions.

2.2 Teamclimate for innovation

West's model of team climate for innovation (1990) identifies four key factors for innovation in the team ; participative safety, vision, task orientation and support for innovation (Pirola-Merlo and Mann, 2004,p. 237) . Participate safety means that team's members participate in the decision making and share their ideas without fear of ridicule. In reality, team's members should not only be encouraged to propose new ideas but should furthermore be able to do it with improvisation which is built on affective factors such as trust, respect and mutual support(Vera and Crossan, 2005,p. 205). Vision is related to the clarity of goals and their ambition, which lead members to look for new and appropriate methods to achieve them.Task orientation refers to the shared concern of members for achieving a good standard of performance (members are completely committed to achieve those goals, they control, they evaluate, and they adapt their work for that). Finally, support for innovation refers toany practical support from for the team work efficiency. According to Somech and Drach-Zahavy (2013,p. 686) ,the climate for innovation will moderate the relation between team creativity and teaminnovation implementation through these four dimensions.About this question, team climate for innovation cannot be separated from creativity climate which reflect the degree of collaboration between members to develop creative solutions (Kiratli et al. 2016,p. 201), through a sense-making process.

In actual facts, when the climate for innovation is good, innovative behaviour will gradually emerge within the team. In fact ,we can distinguish between team creative behaviour and team implementation behaviour as the two components of team innovative behaviour (Widmann, Messmann, and Mulder, 2016, p. 433).The first group of behaviours permit

the exploration of existing opportunities and problems, andsolutions identification, so more and more teams are seen as the common work structure for managing change and for discussing new ideas (Drach-Zahavy and Somech, 2001,p. 111). The second group is oriented to ideas implementation and team work organization.

We should notice that team creative behaviour is linked to team behaviour learning which occurs in a complex system, that is characterized bysocial interaction and cognitive processes. Accordingly, Decuyper, Dochy, and Van den Bossche (2010) haveproposed an integrated model of team behaviour learning based on seven behavioural dimensions . The first tree dimension are of a communicative nature ; sharing, co-construction and constructive conflict (Widmann, Messmann, and Mulder, 2016, p.435). Albeit,sharing can create common knowledge bases, co-construction should ensure the establishment of common representations or shared meaning (of goals, work, and of responsibilities). Finally, constructive conflict includes co-construction but furthermore, it comprehends the sense of negotiation of divergent and even opposing meanings.

Additionally, this model includes four other dimensions which can be understood as facilitating dimensions: Team reflexion, team activity, boundary crossing and storage and retrieval (Widmann, Messmann, and Mulder 2016,p. 435). More precisely, team reflexion means that the team reviews its work methods andadjust itsgoals, it refers to the extent to which team members collectively reflect upon the team's objectives, strategies and processes as well as their wider organization and adapt them accordingly (west, 2002,p.376) .Meanwhile, teamactivity is related to the team learning, the more team's members engage in the work the more they learn from it (the role of routines and learning by doing).Boundary crossing reflects the communication of the team with the outside environment (other teams, or other organizations).Finally, storage and retrieval enable the team to keep trace of its inputs and to make it visible .

It is crucial to highlight one moretime the role of team creativity. In reality innovation system is based on the integration of the actor's innovative behaviour, this can be done through reflexivity as an integration

mechanism (Fuglsang and Sundbo, 2005,p.330).As a consequence innovation can be seen as a social system(Fuglsang and Sundbo, 2005,p.329), that can induce change through a strategic reflexive mode.

3. Methods and materials

In order to answer our problematic, we conducted an empirical study within Algérie poste based on a descriptive and an analytical research methodology. In this sense, the principle of our methodology is to analyze the innovation development process as a social phenomenon and to try understand the construction of innovation within teams. For this purpose,the study alsoadopted a quantitative research methodology based on the collection of data through the questionnaire. This questionnaire was structured around several sections linked to the research model of our study. An analytical approach has been used to explain the result of the questionnaire survey and to describe the main factors that determine those results.

3.1 The study sample and data collection

In order to conduct our empirical study, we chose a sample of project team's members withinAlgérie Poste Company.These teams have been working on their projects for more than 6 months. The sample consisted of 72 persons from different teams. After writing the questionnaire and testing the validity and the stability of its content. The first version of the questionnaire was tested with a sample of 13 team members, selected randomly. Out of 100 questionnaires distributed, we were able to retrieve 72 useful questionnaires, which means a response rate of 72%. The data from the questionnaire were analysed by the SPSS software to both identify their meaning and allow a better understanding of the links of interdependence between thevariables.

3.2 Measures and study tools

In order to measure team climate for innovation we based our itemsconstruction onWest's model of team climate for innovation (1990) as stated inPirola-Merlo and Mann (2004,p. 237). Thus, we asked team'smembers aboutparticipation safety,task orientation, team Vision and team work organization.Examples of these items read as follow: I speak

openly and honestly in meetings and in front of other team'smembers.In my team there is a frank discussion of work problems. The team's mission is clear and the objectives are relevant. My tasks are relevant to the achievement of the team's objectives.

The following part ask the respondents to provide information about team collaboration and team size (five items were used to assessthis), examples of these items are: In my team there is solidarity between the members.I think the size of the team is optimal.In the last part,the focus has been on team propensity to be creative and to innovate, we founded our items construction onWidmann, Messmann, and Mulder' operationalisation of team innovative behaviour (2016).A five items scale was used to measure team propensity to be creative and a four items scale was used for team propensity to innovate. Examples of these items are presented as follow: New ideas are explored to solve problems. Team reflexivity allows the team to specify its objectives.Team members agree on improved ways of doing the work.

The five-dimensional Likert scalewhich ranged from1: stronglydisagree to5 strongly agreewas used to measure the items.

4. Results and discussion

This work aimed at understanding team innovation by analysing the factors that could provide a favourable context for the team innovation development. The questionnaire responses came from the standardization and documentary management project team (SDM), the EPT project(electronic payment terminals),RIS (redesign of the information system), NEPS (the new electronic payment solution) and OTR (other projects).The interpretation of the results of the questionnaire survey was partly based oninformation gatheredfrom interviews conducted with the heads of the project teams.

The standardization and documentary management project (SDM)is so important for the company, becauseit deals with the operational processes,which are at the heart of Algeria poste activity and should provide Algeria Post with a process mapping. The nature of this project requires a high degree of sharing, transfer and accumulation of knowledge and

information.

The project was structured around the following phases:

• Phase 1: Upgrading of the process mapping by the inventory of all the activities offered by Algeria post;

• Phase 2: Analysing each production process;

• Phase 3: Identifying all the documentation and procedures relating to the production processes;

• Phase 4: Updating all the documentary background: procedures and registrations;

• Phase 5: Generalizing the newversion of procedures with enriched and approved forms.

The redesign of the information systemproject is another good example of the modernization efforts undertaken by Algeria poste. the redesign of the system should allow the twinning of all the systems and the access of different structures to the same information.

Table 1. Characteristiques of some studied project teams

Projects **Characteristics**	**The standardization and documentary management**	**Electronic payment terminals**	**The redesign of the information system**
The work process	Semi-autonomous	Semi-autonomous	Semi-autonomous
Output	Process mapping Procedural manual	New electronic payment solution	New organizational information system
Challenges	-High degree of knowledge sharing -Knowledge capitalization -Efficient allocation of tasks	-Innovation capacity -creating new solutions -High degree of knowledge sharing	-Find an organizational solution -Modernization challenges

Source: Developed by author

The main characteristic of these projects is the collective dimension, where it is necessary to converge all individuals'efforts towards a common objective. Thus, the project team is a place to combine resources and to enhance collective learning and to explore new organizational solutions.

4.1 The analyses of correlations and regression

The following table shows the main correlation among the study variables:

Table 2. Person correlations

		CFI	COL	TR	Innovation
Team climate for innovation	Correlation	1	**,612****	**,669****	**,649****
	Sig. bilateral		,000	,000	,000
collaboration	Correlation	**,612****	1	**,506****	,658**
	Sig. bilateral	,000		,000	,000
Teampropensity to be creative	Correlation	**,669****	**,506****	1	**,787****
	Sig. bilateral	,000	,000		,000
Team propensity to innovate	Correlation	**,649****	**,658****	**,787****	1
	Sig. bilateral	,000	,000	,000	
	N	72	72	72	72

**. The correlation issignificant at level 0.01 (bilateral).
CEF: climate for innovation, COL: collaboration, TR: Team creativity

Source: Extracted from SPSS analyses

The correlation analysis shows a positive correlation (relationship) between the variables of our study. First of all, this correlation is observed between team propensity to be creative and team innovation with a value of **0.787.** The positive correlation is also seen between climate for innovation,collaboration and team innovation (**0.649 and 0.658**). Furthermore, the same positive correlation is seen between climate for innovation, collaboration and team creativity (**0.669**, **0.658**). The significant is 0.00 which is less than 0.05, so the correlation coefficient is statistically significant which means that there is a positive relation between the variables.

The following regression analysis highlights the relationship and correlation between many variables, but it also predicts the value of a dependent variable as a function of one or more independent variables.

Table 3. Regression model of creativity

Model	R	R-deux	adjusted R square	Std error of estimation
1	,791[a]	**,625**	,614	,44271

a. Predictors: (Constant), climate for innovation, collaboration

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	22,570	2	11,285	**57,580**	**,000[b]**
		13,523	69	,196		
	Total	36,094	71			

a. Dependant: teampropensity to be creative

b. Predictors: (Constant), climate for innovation, team collaboration

Source: Extracted from SPSS analyses

R2 is the percentage of change in the output variables explained by inputs variables. The resultshows that climate for innovation and collaboration arethe principal predictor of team creativity counting for 62% of the variances in the team propensity to be creative. This model is very significant statistically (0.000) that is to say that we reject the null hypothesis, so there is a relationship between climate for innovation, team collaboration and team creativity.

4.2 The result discussion

- ***Team reflexivity upon organizational solutions and innovation***

In the standardization and documentary managementproject, it was noted that some documents are difficult to scan,so information might be lost, as a consequence, the team's members evaluated the usefulness of this information and keep only the valuable one. The same was true for some documents that we decided to delete because they proved to be useless and others that we decided to merge because they go together.This example shows a reflection of the team on its own practices and an inquiring effort in order to build a new reality. In this effort of reflection, weclearly saw a real concertation work that has been undertaken in the team, so the members share their vision of the problem, which places us in a logic of organizational innovation. Thus, organizational innovations respond to the need of adapting work to the current activity.

- ***Constant effort of gathering information and collecting new ideas***

We observed a real dynamic of information exchange within the

standardization and documentary project team.

- ***Building common sense***

The creation of meaning is achieved through the reciprocal explanation of the activity. If the team does not manage to build a common sense and a shared representation of the situation, it will not be able to successfully carry out its mission and its activity.

- ***Team creativity and learning***

In the standardization and documentary management team, every member was asked to give his opinion on the new proposals and the ideas discussed by the team.This work resulted in the development of a new flowchart of the activity process ,which allows the promotion of new ideas (manifestations of innovation) and a model of team meeting report .This brainstorming can be considered as an organizational innovation technique through consultation, but it is conditioned by the commitment of the members of the project and the role the team leader as a facilitator.

- ***The institutionalisation of practices (implementation of team innovation)***

Starting from a set of effective practices that were based on individual initiatives,certain practices have been institutionalized, codified and disseminated to all departments of AlgériePoste.The major example in this case is the new flowchart and the team meeting report model, both have been codified and distributed to all regional offices. The innovation adoption is a good indicator of organizational innovation which is measured by the rate of adoption of innovations (Liao and Wu, 2010,p. 1097).

The results of questionnaires, interviews and observation allow us to highlightmore factors that we consider essential to enhance team propensity to innovate.

- ***The role of collective communication***

The team must take the necessary time to achieve collective understanding, both in terms of the team's objectives, as well as in terms of individual objectives. At this level, the team leader is responsible for the quality of communication in meetings and the serenity of exchanges.

- ***The importance of collaboration and sharing***

Analysis of the questionnaires confirms that the quality of personal relationships and team interactions is good. TheSDM team members strongly agreed that there was a good climate for innovation, a team spirit and a high degree of collaboration within the team. This finding is less strong in the other teams.

The retention of useful information for the project team causes several dysfunctions, it would make it difficult to detect the problems at the opportune moment which causes a waste of time and energy.

- ***The composition of the team***

It is important to pay attention to the composition of the team and the profiles of its members, team with members of different profiles (different specializations and diverse skills) learn more. The complementarity of the profiles must be checked because it is important to specify the expected contribution of each person in the team. At some extent, our result match those obtained in many researches, in fact we argue that team composition will affect team innovation (creative personality and functional heterogeneity), besides, multiplicity of perspectives may lead to a creative decision -making, this is why very small teams lack the required diversity to innovate, whereas, very large team cannot enable innovation because it is hard to sustain positive interaction within them.

- ***Motivation and recognition***

Motivation is a major issue for the project team leader because he must be attentive to understand and define the motivation criteria for each individual. This is a challenging work because each individual has its personal priorities. The team's members aspire to be recognized by their colleagues for their participation and for their qualities, otherwise they will not be able to locate themselves in the work, the individual may experience in this case a feeling of disappointment at work.

When we calculated the team average responses, we have observed that the expression and the exhibitions of team propensity to innovatewere not the same within all teams. The table below shows differences between these teams, the SDM team obtains the highest average with 4.35, while the

EPT project records the lowest average with 2.90.

Table 4. Team propensity to innovate's avrage responses

Team project	Average	N
SMD	4,3515	11
NSM	3,7000	10
TPE1	3,2593	9
RSI	3,8246	9
ATR	4,0741	19
Total	3,8056	72

Source: Extracted from SPSS analyses

To better explain these differences, we have proceeded to a contextual analysis (project teams' environment and organization) and to a process analysis (mechanisms and attributes of team innovation) using the results of interviews with team leaders.

In the conclusion of this analysis, the standardization and documentary management project team seems present a good example of the development of team innovation through the capitalization and institutionalization of knowledge, this positive result of can be explained by the existence of a good climate for innovation and the implication of members. In the other teams, the results of the statistical analysis showed lower positive values. The interviews have given us some explanatory elements for these results; in particular the instability of these teamsand themission of the project that was not clear.

A good climate for innovation requires time to be established, it requires developing safety in the team, constructive management of conflicts and climate of trust. Clarity of goals is also an important factor; collective understanding of this goal will foster member's involvement, saying that, their involvement will help their commitment to innovation implementation in the organization.

Table 5. Summary of the main results

Eveidences of team propensity to be creative	Factors favorating team propensity to innovate	Barriers to team propensity to inovate
- Reflexivity and collective decision - Collective resolution of problems through negotiation of solutions and confrontation of points of view -Self-organization	- The intensity of formal and informal exchanges -The team spirit - The mutual trust -The role and qualities of the team leader -The organization of work (guidelines and common objectives)	- Objectives are not clear -The lack of team cohesion -The instability of the team

Source: Elaborated by the author

4. CONCLUSION

In this study we explored the extent to which climate for innovation and collaboration can foster team propensity to innovate. Although innovation process starts with individuals, it can only be fostered byefficient interaction within the team, this is due to the nature of innovation that encompasses two stages; creativity and implementation. In the context of project teams, the diversity of perspective linked to member's backgrounds will nourish the innovation development. As a result, the participation and collaboration of team's members is fundamental for innovation.

Our study in AlgeriePoste has confirmed our hypothesis.In fact, there was a positive correlation between team propensity to be creative and team propensity to innovate, also, therehas been a positive influence of climate for innovation and collaboration team propensity to be creative.Furthermore,there have been some evidences of team innovation within Algérie poste.Those results tie well with our conceptual model and with some previous research in team innovationfield.We should mention that complexity of research in team innovation are explained by reciprocal influences among many variables, so we are still at an early stage of understanding team innovation. We should also acknowledge that this study presents some limitations,specially the limited samplesize.Future research

investigations are necessaryin order to better validateour results and to examine the potential effects of other factorson team innovation, for example, it would be interesting to study in the future the impact of team leadership and team empowerment on innovation.

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