The Impact of Facades of Conformity on Individual Creativity: The Critical Role of Emotional Exhaustion and Organizational Political Climate

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Abstract. The business environment is complex and changeable, which posed challenges for leaders to focus on improving individual creativity. Drawing on the conservation of resources theory, this study investigated the negative impact of facades of conformity on individual creativity by focusing on the mediating role of emotional exhaustion and the moderating role of organizational political climate. The data were collected from 335 employees of different industries in Guangdong, Guangxi, Jiangxi and other regions in China. Results indicate that (1) facades of conformity has a significantly negative impact on individual creativity; (2) there is a mediation of emotional exhaustion in the relationship between facades of conformity and individual creativity; and (3) organizational political climate significantly moderate the relationships between facades of conformity and emotional exhaustion and the mediating effect of emotional exhaustion. This study opens up a new perspective for the study of individual creativity and provides theoretical and practical basis for the effective promotion of individual creativity by organizational managers.

Keywords: Facades of Conformity; Individual Creativity; Emotional Exhaustion; Organizational Political Climate.

1. Introduction

With the rapid changes in science and technology, organizations are facing with an increasingly complex and changing environment (Yuan et al., 2022), thus, how to stimulate employees' individual creativity is quite crucial for enterprise. Individual creativity refers to creative ideas that are both novel and practical (Duarte et al., 2021). Various factors impact individual creativity mainly by individuals' psychological mechanism such as intrinsic motivation and creative self-efficacy (Wang et al., 2022). The study of employee psychological mechanisms has been the focus of scholars and organizational managers in the field of innovation. However, under the high-power-distant culture of China, while individuals' values are different from corporate values, they often choose facades of conformity as a survival strategy in workplace (Hewlin, 2003). This strategy can not only bring an excess of press, but also greatly limit the use of cognitive resources, inhibit the formation of intrinsic motivation (Chou et al., 2019), and finally make bad effects to individuals. Thus, it is pretty critical for theoretical significance and practice values to clarify the internal relationship between facades of conformity and individual creativity.

Facades of conformity may negatively impact individual creativity in a large part (Hewlin, 2003), because the values of facades of conformity is not the true values of themselves, which will make bad impact on individuals (Doblhofer et al., 2019). For example, previous studies have found evidence supporting the negative effects of facades of conformity including higher job stress, lower job satisfaction and bad effects on individuals' out-of-role behaviors (Hewlin, 2009; Anjum, 2015; Huai, Liangliang, 2020; Akhtar et al., 2022). These studies have revealed the hazard causing by facades of conformity in workplace, but the mechanism of action of facades of conformity on individual

creativity is still a lack of discussion (Hewlin et al., 2017), thus is not good for seeing the complexity of facades of conformity and management practices for managers.

Emotional exhaustion is seen as a negative psychological reaction that will exhaust employees' emotional resources and psychological resources causing negative effects including work meaning, job satisfaction and work well-being (Opoku et al., 2021). If employees have emotional exhaustion for a long time, they may have more negative psychological experiences (Abusamra et al., 2022), such as fatigue and tension (Wright and Cropanzano, 1998; Cropanzano et al., 2003; Halbesleben and Buckley, 2016; Zhou and Chen, 2021), which is harmful to individuals' job performance, causing higher turnover intention (Ángeles López-Cabarcos et al., 2021), and finally results in lower individual creativity. Depending on the conservation of resources theory, negative psychological emotions usually exacerbating the loss of individual resources that make employees burnout (Hobfoll et al., 2018; Wallace and Coughlan, 2022), while this state of affairs cannot be improved, employees will be struggling in both in-role and out-of-role duties (McFarland and Hlubocky, 2021), and finally causing to lower individual creativity. According to the current study, too much pressure at work, low levels of job resources, low levels of job control and so on can bring to emotional exhaustion of employees (Maslach et al., 2001; Wu et al., 2019). However, there needs an empirical test to confirm the mediation effect of emotional exhaustion.

Moreover, this study assumes that contextual factors can moderate the effect of facades of conformity on individual creativity (Anjum and Shah, 2017): organizational political climate. Previous studies have examined that organizational political climate can affect individuals' psychological, cognitive and behavior significantly from various levels(Martinko and Mackey, 2019). For example, according to Hou et al. (2020), organizational political climate serves as a role negatively moderating the effect of emotional intelligence on innovative behavior. In high-power-distant societies of China, individuals tend to adjust their work behaviors and ways by observing and evaluating the development of self-interested behavior in the organization. Corporations under organizational political climate are full of "selfishness" and "humanism" with unbalanced distribution of resources, and only these employees who are good at political skills can obtain more resources (Hobfoll, 2001; Chang et al., 2009). While the level of organizational political climate is high, individuals of facades of conformity will be worry about the unfairness of workplace, thus results in higher emotional exhaustion and finally reduces to lower individual creativity (Hobfoll, 1989); while the level of organizational political climate is low, employees don't have to take extra energy to dealing with political behaviors in the organization, so the positive effect of facades of conformity on emotional exhaustion will be reduced, and then the negative impact on individual creativity will be reduced as well. Accordingly, this study assumes that organizational political climate plays a moderating role between facades of conformity and individual creativity.

Recognizing the call and fulfilling the research gap, this study aims to analyze the association between facades of conformity and individual creativity more thoroughly using mediating and moderating variables and employing "conservation of resources theory" as a theoretical background. First, this study examines the relationship of facades of conformity and individual creativity, thus extending the scope of related research about individual creativity. Second, this study investigates the underlying mechanism between facades of conformity and individual creativity to reveal the intrinsic connection. Additionally, this study discloses the in-depth mechanism between facades of conformity and individual creativity from the perspective of organizational political climate. To sum up, the research of this study will help organizations and managers to actively carry out organizational management, effectively resolve the negative effects of facades of conformity on employees' work, and provide theoretical and practical basis for improving individual creativity.

2. Theory and Hypotheses

2.1 Facades of Conformity and Individual Creativity

Facades of conformity refers to a survival strategy in which employees deliberately conceal their personal views and pretend to accept the organization's values (Hewlin, 2003). In contrast to the concept of "congruence" from Ibarra (2016), facades of conformity focuses on the deviation of an individual's true values from the dominant values pursued by the organization (Ibarra, 2016). Most existing studies have explored facades of conformity at the behavioral level or at the level of the survival needs of individuals in organizations, i.e., the false appearance of "what is true is not true" in organizations (Hewlin, 2009). It has been found that facades of conformity can trigger negative emotions in individuals, lead to lower emotional commitment, lower work engagement, less organizational citizenship behavior, and a higher propensity to leave the organization (Hewlin, 2009).

Individual creativity is the generation of fresh ideas and valuable solutions (Duarte et al., 2021), which is mainly influenced by the preconditions (e.g., life experiences), cognitive styles and abilities (e.g., divergent thinking), personality traits (e.g., self-esteem), and individual resources (e.g., social support) (Woodman et al., 1993). As an important factor influencing individuals' work attitudes, behaviors and performance, facades of conformity is likely to negatively affect individual creativity. First, individuals will invest more resources in performing facades of conformity due to misaligned values, and according to the conservation of resources theory, employees will invest less time and resources in innovation in order to maintain a balance between resource payoffs and benefits (Hunter et al., 2012), which in turn inhibits individual creativity levels; second, under facades of conformity, employees are unable to express their true ideas for a long time, which leads to role pressure (Phillips et al., 2016), and the overload pressure leads to the reduction of employees' enthusiasm and initiative making them lack of sufficient passion and motivation to broaden new ideas, construct new ideas, and propose new initiatives, thus not effectively stimulating individual enthusiasm for innovation and inhibiting individual creativity; finally, facades of conformity makes individuals choose to hide their creativity for fear that their views are wrong or not in line with the mainstream values, which leads to refutation, ridicule, ostracism by colleagues and endangers their personal image and development, thus inhibiting the transformation of idea to creativity, and ultimately reduces individual creativity. In summary, facades of conformity can excessively consume individual cognitive and psychological resources, which in turn inhibits individual creativity. As a result, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H1: Facades of conformity negatively correlates with individual creativity.

2.2 The Mediating Role of Emotional Exhaustion

Emotional exhaustion is a negative psychological state of exhaustion formed by the excessive consumption of employees' emotional resources (Maslach et al., 2001), and is a specific form of job burnout, which is usually the result of a stress response caused by stressors in the workplace. According to the conservation of resources theory, personal values are regarded as a precious resource (Liu et al., 2021), when employees defend their personal values by facades of conformity, additional emotional and psychological resources are consumed that mismatch of resource input and return leads to emotional exhaustion, which in turn has a negative impact on individual creativity. Studies have shown that facades of conformity can negatively affect positive work attitudes and behaviors by triggering emotional exhaustion (Hewlin, 2009; Anjum, 2015; Akbar and Akhtar, 2017; Anjum and Shah, 2017). This suggests that emotional exhaustion may mediate the process of facades of conformity on individual creativity.

Facades of conformity can trigger emotional exhaustion in employees. Specifically, on the one hand, as an out-of-role non-work behavior, facades of conformity causes excessive depletion of individuals' psychological resources. When the supply of resources is not enough to meet work needs, individuals tend to feel higher work pressure, which leads to emotional exhaustion (Hobfoll, 1989; Wright and Cropanzano, 1998; Deery et al., 2002; Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). On the other hand,

when individuals are afraid of future benefits, they will look ahead in front of the organization and choose facades of conformity as a survival mechanism (Tynan, 2005), which requires employees to hide or suppress their true values by controlling and adjusting their emotions, words and behaviors at work. The continuous depletion of psychological and cognitive resources is more likely to cause emotional exhaustion in individuals. Thus, the loss of resources caused by facades of conformity exacerbates the individual's emotional exhaustion.

When employees exhibit emotional exhaustion, they tend to ignore or avoid difficulties at work, have reduced self-restraint and have difficulty controlling their behavior to meet the role requirements (Michel et al., 2011). As one study pointed out, emotional exhaustion causes individuals to be less engaged in their work, produces lower task performance and negatively affects individual creativity (Brotheridge and Grandey, 2002). Specifically, according to the conservation of resources theory, when individuals' resources are threatened, they choose to spare no effort to protect existing resources or compensate for lost resources. Therefore, individuals who engage in facades of conformity will develop work withdrawal behaviors to reduce further depletion of resources by emotional exhaustion, and individuals' intrinsic work motivation and work engagement levels will be significantly reduced, which in turn hinders individual creativity (Hobfoll, 1989; Sonnentag et al., 2010). In addition, when individuals are deprived of resources, they tend to be exhausted, less motivated, and indifferent to people or tasks in the organization, especially when the anxiety, tension and fatigue caused by the process of emotional exhaustion cannot be relieved, causing that it is difficult for individuals to perform their in-role and out-of-role duties (Baumeister et al., 1998). As a result, when individuals consume too many resources by coping with facades of conformity, they will stop focusing on how to accomplish their own tasks and out-of-role work, resulting in low productivity and ultimately inhibiting individual creativity.

In summary, facades of conformity in the workplace causes individuals to consume a large amount of psychological and cognitive resources for self-regulation, resulting in an excessive drain of individual resources and triggering emotional exhaustion. Under the influence of emotional exhaustion, individuals' internal motivation to work is significantly weakened resulting in a decrease in their willingness to engage in innovation, which in turn is detrimental to the formation of creativity (Opoku et al., 2022). In other words, emotional exhaustion is likely to mediate the relationship between facades of conformity and individual creativity. As a result, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Emotional exhaustion plays a mediation effect between facades of conformity and individual creativity.

2.3 The Moderating Effect of Organizational Political Climate

Organizational political climate refers to the shared perceptions of organizational members regarding behaviors that are not fair and justly appropriated by members due to a lack of guidance from organizational goals and that are not generally accepted by the organization due to self-interest (Drory, 2016). Most the existing researches explore the positive organizational climate, such as how employees provide feedback through innovative behavior and maintain a supportive, safe and fair climate created by organizational leaders (Hou et al., 2018; Chaubey et al., 2021; You et al., 2022). However, the negative organizational political climate tending to destroy the contract between employees and the organization, indirectly destroying communication among individuals, performance and the proactive intentions of individuals, needs to be paid high attention (Zhang et al., 2019). It has been noted that organizational political climate, as an important work context variable, plays an important role in influencing individual behavioral decisions (Kohan et al., 2018; Rasyid and Marta, 2021), and that individual psychological perceptions vary under the influence of different levels of organizational political climate (Prieto-Díez et al., 2022), which in turn has different effects on individual behavior (Zhang et al., 2019). Thus, organizational political climate is likely to have an impact on the mechanism of action of facades of conformity.

Specifically analyzed, on the one hand, the organizational political climate reflects an unfair work environment that emphasizes power means, political strategies and organizational relationships. In a stronger organizational political climate, individuals who perform facades of conformity are more sensitive to the degree of fairness and justice in the work environment and they are likely to use more emotional resources to cope out of self-preservation motives or out of reciprocity motives. At this time, individuals who choose to be facades of conformity will be more inclined to hide their different political views and pretend to be in line with the mainstream organizational views, accept the overall direction of the organization in managing diversity, sustainability or performance standards. They also create sincerity and support for the organization by suppressing the expression of true values to prevent rejection by leaders and organization members (Hewlin et al., 2016; Anjum and Shah, 2017), which in turn leads to emotional exhaustion. On the other hand, in a higher organizational political climate, most organizational members will use self-interested but unrecognized political means to obtain resources. In this case, the material and spiritual resources that individuals get do not come from the organization's real evaluation of individual performance, but from informal political behaviors such as using means and backdoor (Farmer et al., 2003). In this way, with limited organizational resources, if individuals want to gain more benefits, they must harm the interests of other members of the organization. As a result, each member of the organization is cautious of what he or she says and does, and is always on guard against the "bad intentions" and "duplicity" of others. In this case, facades of conformity causes more emotional resource depletion and leads to higher emotional depletion in individuals. On the contrary, in a non-intense organizational political climate where individuals do not have to invest too much resources in performing, the positive effect of facades of conformity on individual affective depletion is significantly lower. In summary, this paper proposes the following hypothesis:

H3a: Organizational political climate plays a positively moderating effect between facades of conformity and emotional exhaustion.

In conjunction with H2 and H3a, emotional exhaustion mediated the relationship between facades of conformity and individual creativity, and it was further hypothesized that organizational political climate moderated this mediating role, i.e., the strength of the indirect effect of facades of conformity on individual creativity through emotional exhaustion depended on whether the organizational political climate was high or not. Specifically, in a higher organizational political climate, facades of conformity triggers stronger emotional exhaustion, and thus facades of conformity has a stronger negative indirect effect on individual creativity through emotional exhaustion; in a lower organizational political climate, facades of conformity experiences less depression and triggers weaker emotional exhaustion, and thus facades of conformity has a weaker negative indirect effect on individual creativity through emotional exhaustion. The negative indirect effect of facades of conformity on individual creativity through emotional exhaustion is also weaker. In summary, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3b: Organizational political climate plays a negatively moderating role in the indirect effect of facades of conformity on individual creativity through emotional exhaustion.

In summary, **Figure 1** shows the hypothetical model of this study.

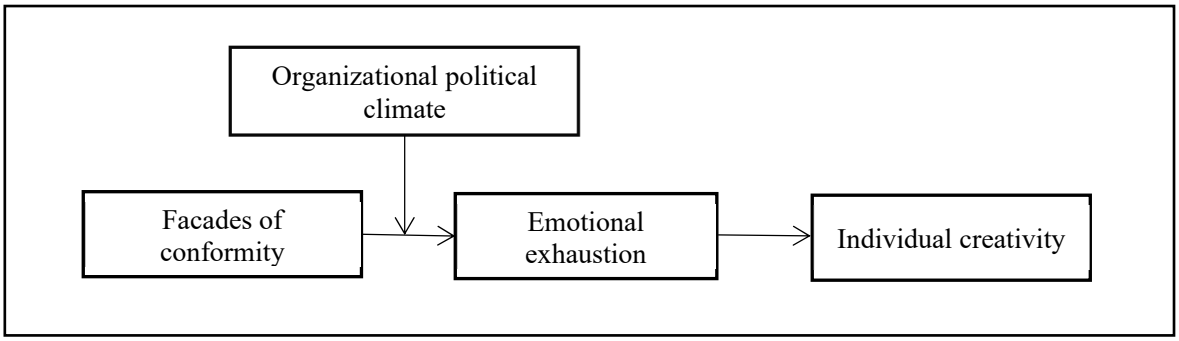


Figure 1. Theoretical model

3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Procedure and Participants

To effectively enhance the universality and external validity of the research structure, this study used convenience sampling to conduct a paired survey of working employees and their immediate supervisors from companies in different industries in Guangdong, Guangxi, and Jiangxi. In addition, to avoid the effects of common method bias, multiple time points (divided into two time points) with paired questionnaires were used for questionnaire data collection. The questionnaire distribution procedures were conducted in person and by mail through personal networks, and the questionnaire distribution and collection procedures were as follows: (1) After asking the number of interested participants in advance through the organization's contact person in each company and obtaining the consent of the unit supervisor, the contact person was given an information packet with the relevant instructions (explaining the distribution method and collection process at 15-day intervals), questionnaire record sheets, questionnaires for each stage of employees and supervisors, a large return envelope, a small sealed envelope, and a $10 cash prize for valid respondents; (2) In order to prevent the validity of the questionnaire from being affected by factors such as the social approval of the respondents or their own precautionary attitude. In addition to reminding respondents that the questionnaires are strictly anonymous, used for academic research only, presented in a holistic manner for analysis, and that the data are confidential, respondents may complete the questionnaires individually and return them to the contact person directly in a small sealed envelope; (3) after completing both phases of the questionnaires, the contact person will either hand them to the researcher personally or return the paired questionnaires to the researcher in a large self-addressed envelope.

During the two phases, a total of 400 questionnaires were distributed and 335 were used for final data analysis. The effective sample recovery rate was 83.75%. Among the valid employee samples, 52.54% were male employees and 47.46% were female employees; the participating employees mainly had a bachelor's degree, accounting for 48.66%, and 93.43% had a college degree or above; their age was mainly concentrated in 31-35 years old, accounting for 48.66%; their working years were mainly concentrated in 2-7 years, accounting for 64.78%, and their working years with leaders were mainly concentrated in 2-5 years, accounting for 69.55%. In terms of industry types, 164 (48.96%) employees were in the service industry, 67 (19.10%) employees were in the manufacturing industry, 48 (14.33%) employees were in the financial industry, 34 (10.15%) employees were in the medical industry, and 22 (7.46%) employees were in other industries.

3.2 Measures

The questionnaire is composed by five sections including facades of conformity scale, individual creativity scale, emotional exhaustion scale, organizational political climate and demographics. The respondents indicated their level of agreement with each item on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = "Totally disagree" to 5 = "Totally disagree"). All scales are from established scales in China and abroad, which have been proven to be reliable and valid.

Facades of Conformity

We used a 6-item scale of facades of conformity developed by Hewlin (2009) to measure facades of conformity(e.g.,"I suppress personal values that are different from those of the organization"), and Cronbach's α was 0.806.

Emotional Exhaustion

We used a 5-item scale of emotional exhaustion developed by Maslach et al. (2001) to measure emotional exhaustion(e.g.,"Working all day is very stressful for me"), and Cronbach's α was 0.847.

Individual Creativity

We used a 4-item scale of individual creativity developed by Farmer et al. (2003) (e.g.,"Tries new ideas or methods first") to measure individual creativity, and Cronbach's α was 0.909.

Organizational Political Climate

We used a 7-item scale of organizational political climate developed by Kacmar and Ferris (1991) (e.g.,"Usually only a few people can benefit from changes in unit policies") to measure organizational political climate, and Cronbach's α was 0.884.

Control Variables

Because the demographic characteristics may have a great influence on the results, we chose employees' gender, age, education, years of work experience and industry category as control variables.

4. Results

4.1 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

To examine whether the four variables' items capture distinct constructs as opposed to creating common-source bias, confirmatory factor analyses were performed. In addition, Harman's single factor technique was also applied. An exploratory factor analysis without rotation was performed, revealing that the first factor accounts for only 27.87% of the total variance (61.68%). These results indicate that the four constructs show discriminant validity and that no serious common-method bias is present in the present study. Second, discriminant validity was tested by validated factor analysis. The results showed (see **Table 1** for details) that the four-factor model was significantly better than the other models, indicating a better level of discriminant validity between the variables.

Table 1. Results of confirmatory factor analysis

Measurement Models	Factors	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR
Four-factor model	COF, EE, IC, OPC	287.597	203	1.417	0.974	0.971	0.035	0.040
Three-factor model	COF+EE, IC, OPC	705.644	206	3.425	0.847	0.829	0.085	0.084
Two-factor model	COF+EE+IC, OPC	1336.392	208	6.425	0.655	0.617	0.127	0.136
One-factor model	COF+EE+IC+OPC	2075.775	209	9.932	0.429	0.369	0.163	0.147

COF, facades of conformity; EE, emotional exhaustion; IC, individual creativity; OPC, organizational political climate.

4.2 Correlation Analysis

Table 2. Descriptive statistical analysis and reliability.

variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4
Facades of conformity	3.46	0.79	1			
Emotional exhaustion	3.55	0.70	0.292**	1		
Individual creativity	2.71	1.03	-0.208**	-0.338**	1	
Organizational political climate	3.56	0.71	0.195**	0.374**	-0.173**	1

*N=335. **stand for p < 0.01(duplex).*

Table 2 presents the results of correlation analysis. As shown in **Table 2**, a positive relationship exists between facades of conformity and emotional exhaustion ($r = 0.292$, $p < 0.01$), a negative relationship exists between facades of conformity and individual creativity ($r = -0.208$, $p < 0.01$), and

a negative relationship exists between emotional exhaustion and individual creativity ($r = -0.338$, $p < 0.01$).

4.3 Hypothesis Testing

Table 3. Fitting indexes of structural equation model.

Measurement Models	χ2	df	χ2/df	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR	Δχ2
Model1	85.094	79	1.077	0.996	0.995	0.015	0.035	-
Model2	216.240	158	1.369	0.973	0.970	0.033	0.060	-
Model3	210.489	157	1.341	0.975	0.972	0.032	0.055	5.751
Model1, COF→IC; Model2, COF→EE→IC; Model3, COF→EE→IC, COF→IC.								

Table 4. Results of mediating chain effect test.

Effect relationships	Model path	Estimate	SE	95%CI	Significance level
Direct effects	COF→ IC	-0.156*	0.071	[-0.295, -0.019]	significant
	COF→EE	0.328***	0.063	[0.203, 0.450]	significant
	EE→IC	-0.291***	0.070	[-0.426, -0.155]	significant
Indirect effects	COF→EE→IC	-0.095**	0.058	[-0.164, -0.044]	significant
*N=335; ***p<0.001; Bootstrap sample size=5000; COF, facades of conformity; EE, emotional exhaustion; IC, individual creativity.*					

On the one hand, a Structural Equation Model was used to examine the main effect and mediation effect, and we used Baron and Kennys' three-step principle to analyse the mediation effect of emotional exhaustion. First, we verified the significant impact of facades of conformity on individual creativity. Then, we examined the significant effect of facades of conformity on emotional exhaustion. Finally, we analysed whether the effect of facades of conformity on individual creativity had reduced and examined the impact of emotional exhaustion on individual creativity by leading emotional exhaustion into the main effect model. Therefore, we established three different structural equation models and the goodness-of-fit indices were shown in **Table 3**. (1) The result shown in Table 3 implied that the goodness-of-fit indices of main effect structural equation model was within the standard range. By controlling demographic variables, the path index of facades of conformity on individual creativity is -0.252 ($p < 0.001$) indicating that there is a significantly negative impact of facades of conformity on individual creativity. Hypothesis H1 thus received empirical support. (2) After comparing the path indices of full mediation model 2 and partial mediation model 3, found that the goodness-of-fit of partial mediation model 3 was better than full mediation model 2 and there was a highly significant difference between the them ($\Delta\chi^2 = 5.751$, $p < 0.05$), so we chose partial mediation model 3 to make this study and the specific results were shown in **Table 4**. (3) As shown in **Table 4**, by controlling demographic variables, the path indices of facades of conformity on emotional exhaustion and facades of conformity on individual creativity were 0.328 ($p < 0.001$), -0.156 ($p < 0.05$) respectively and the impact of facades of conformity on individual creativity decreased from -0.252 to -0.156. According to the result, the significant effect still existed, indicating that the mediating effect of emotional exhaustion still existed. Further, we used Bootstrap repeated sampling to examine the mediating effect. The result showed that the indirect effect of facades of conformity on individual creativity through emotional exhaustion was -0.095 under 95% confidence intervals [-

0.164, -0.044]. It showed that the indirect effect of facades of conformity on individual creativity is extremely significant. Hypothesis H2 thus received empirical support.

Table 5. Results of moderating mediating effect test

variables		**EE**					
		Coeff	**SE**	**t**	**p**	**LLCI**	**ULCI**
Constant		3.004	0.183	16.420	0.000	2.644	3.364
Control variables	Gender	-0.065	0.066	-0.976	0.330	-0.195	0.066
	Age	0.110	0.042	2.633	0.009	0.028	0.192
	Education level	0.066	0.044	1.509	0.132	-0.020	0.153
	Years of service	0.012	0.040	0.292	0.771	-0.067	0.090
	Years of working with leaders	0.056	0.040	1.397	0.163	-0.023	0.135
Direct effects	COF	0.226	0.044	5.162	0.000	0.140	0.312
	OPC	0.318	0.050	6.400	0.000	0.220	0.415
Interaction effects	COFxOPC	0.183	0.060	3.061	0.002	0.065	0.301

R-square increase	R^2	F	P
	0.021	9.369	0.002

Table 6. Results of moderated mediating effect test

Conditional indirect effects					**Mediating effect of regulation**			
OPC	Effect	Boot SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI	INDEX	Boot SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
Lower(-1SD)	-0.036	0.027	-0.092	0.012	-0.070	0.032	-0.143	-0.014
Upper(+1SD)	-0.135	0.041	-0.225	-0.066				
discrepancy	-0.099	0.046	-0.203	-0.020				

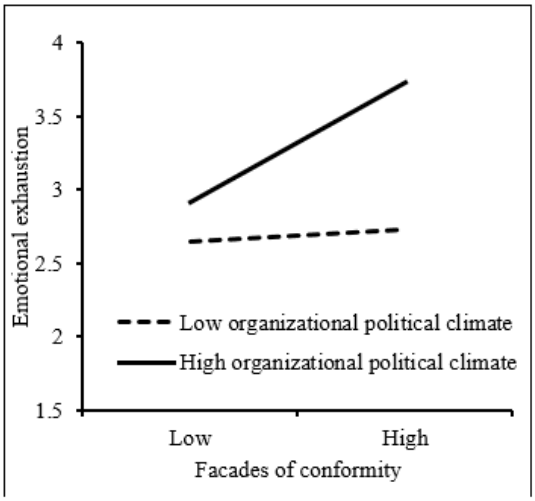


Figure 2. Results of moderating role of organizational political climate in the relationship between facades of conformity and emotional exhaustion

On the other hand, The PROCESS plug-in in SPSS software was used for evaluating mediation effects and the result was shown in **Table 5**. As shown in **Table 5**, coefficient of interaction of facades of conformity and organizational political climate is 0.183 ($p < 0.01$), and organizational political climate plays a positive regulatory role between facades of conformity and emotional exhaustion. Hypothesis H3a thus received empirical support. Furthermore, in order to validate the mediation effect of organizational political climate between facades of conformity and emotional exhaustion, we made a slope analysis and a mediation effect figure (see **Table 2**). As can be seen from **Figure 2**, while there was a low organizational political climate (-1SD), there was a non-significant influence of facades of conformity on emotional exhaustion ($\beta = 0.043$, $p = 0.695$); and while there was a high organizational political climate, there was a significant influence of facades of conformity on emotional exhaustion ($\beta = 0.409$, $p < 0.001$). Thus, the mediation effect result of organizational political climate was consistent with the expectation. Hypothesis H3a thus received deeper empirical support. Finally, this study used Bootstrap method to analyse moderated mediation effect. As shown in **Table 6**, while organizational political climate was low (-1SD), the indirect effect of facades of conformity on individual creativity through emotional exhaustion was -0.036 with confidence interval of [-0.092, 0.012] including 0; while organizational political climate was high (+1SD), the indirect effect of facades of conformity on individual creativity through emotional exhaustion was -0.135 with confidence interval of [-0.225, -0.066] excluding 0. There was a significant difference of mediation effect under these two situations (diff = -0.099, 95%CI = [-0.203, -0.020]), and INDEX of moderated mediation role was -0.070 with confidence interval of [-0.143, -0.014]. It meant that the higher organizational political climate was, the higher indirect effect of facades of conformity on individual creativity through emotional exhaustion was. Hypothesis H3a thus received empirical support.

5. Discussion

This study sought to examine the associations between facades of conformity and individual creativity, the mediating role of emotional exhaustion and the regulatory role of organizational political climate. We found evidence of significant negative associations between facades of conformity and individual creativity. Emotional exhaustion played a partial mediating role, that is to say, facades of conformity can inhibit individual creativity through emotional exhaustion. In respect to the moderating role of organizational political climate, we found that there was a positive moderating effect of organizational political climate on the relationship of facades of conformity and emotional exhaustion as well as facades of conformity and individual creativity through emotional exhaustion. The results revealed the internal mechanism between facades of conformity and individual creativity, which can provide theoretical bases for organizations to promote individual creativity.

6. Theoretical Implications

The findings make three significant contributions to the literature.

First, the findings extend the antecedent variables of individual creativity. The findings imply that there was a negative effect between facades of conformity and individual creativity, which reveals the negative effect of facades of conformity further in organization. Previous researches mainly focus on the positive factors of individual differences and environmental characteristics on individual creativity, such as transformational leadership and work support, while the studies about negative factors on individual creativity were shortage. Combining facades of conformity with individual creativity can not only extend the influencing factors of individual creativity from behavioral perspective, but also make up the deficiency about negative effect of individual creativity, which provide some theoretical implications for understanding the relationship of facades of conformity and individual creativity.

Second, basing on the conservation of resources theory, the findings clarify the mechanism of facades of conformity on individual creativity. The study answers the call for further empirical research from those who have argued that more information is needed to fully understand the mechanisms between facades of conformity and individual creativity through emotional exhaustion. The study reveals the internal mechanism of facades of conformity on individual creativity, which remains under explored in the literature. Therefore, this study addressed significant research gaps by testing the relevant variables' mediating effect.

Third, this study extend the boundary mechanism of facades of conformity. This study answered the question that when and how facades of conformity can make a impact on individual creativity from organizational political climate perspective, which cleared the theoretical boundaries for understanding the differentiated influence mechanism of facades of conformity on individual creativity exactly. Combining facades of conformity, individual creativity, emotional exhaustion and organizational political climate together verifies that the negative effect of facades of conformity has different results in divers situations, which can be theoretical enlightenment significance.

7. Practical Implications

Individual creativity in organizational management is an important prerequisite for enhancing organizational performance. This study emphasizes the importance of facades of conformity on individual creativity under the organizational political climate perspective and provides management ideas for managers to realize organizational vitality.

First, organizations need to establish and improve the relevant rules and regulations to make employees dare to show their personal values, express their true opinions and speak freely, so that employees can be psychologically desensitized to superficially submissive behaviors and make the original "inconsistent" or "inappropriate" solidified thinking "legitimize", reduce the threat perception of high power distance environment and reduce emotional exhaustion. At the same time, organizations should help employees correctly understand the advantages and disadvantages of expressing their personal values, and eliminate concerns and worries about the risks that may be caused by employees' true expression of behavior, so as to create and optimize a harmonious organizational climate where they are courageous enough to speak out.

Second, organizations need to concern the bad emotions of employees in workplace, so that it can reduce the negative impact of emotional exhaustion on individual creativity. On the one hand, managers should provide more emotional support to employees, carry out psychological assessment of employees on a regular or irregular basis, discover their bad emotions and communicate with them in a timely manner; on the other hand, managers should provide more work support to employees, strengthen their training and development, give them more work autonomy and stimulate their intrinsic motivation for innovation.

Third, managers need to attach importance to the potential hazards of organizational political climate and take some strategies avoiding higher organizational political climate, which can reduce the feeling of perceptions of organizational politics. On the one hand, managers can clearly resist and discipline political behaviors in the organization in terms of organizational culture, reward and punishment system, and performance evaluation, so as to purge the organization of "parochialism" and "rule of man" that use strength over weakness and power for personal gain; on the other hand, as the distributor of scarce resources and power, managers should learn to weigh the pros and cons of the organization's political atmosphere, and when it is difficult to avoid political behaviors in the organization, they should make their legality public, so as to reduce the negative impact they may have on the organization's members and thus enhance individual creativity.

8. Limitations and Future Research

Despite this research's valuable contributions, several limitations should be considered when interpreting and generalizing the findings.

First, the data was only filled by employees in service and their direct supervisor, which may blur the accuracy of these variables causing a lower reliability of the empirical results. So future studies need to obtain data from different methods to understand the relationship between variables accurately.

Second, another drawbacks of the study is the limited number of sample. Only Guangdong, Guangxi, Jiangxi were taken as sample, which may cause the results lacking of universality. Therefore, future study should add the number of samples, such as choosing other provinces of China as sample to carry out robustness checks.

Third, organizational political climate is only one of many moderating variables and this study just explore organizational political climate from perceptions of organizational politics perspective. Therefore, future research can start from new perspective of organizational political climate or other moderating variables to explore the boundary conditions of facades of conformity on individual creativity.

Data Availability Statement

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Author Contributions

All authors listed have made a substantial, direct, and intellectual contribution to the work and approved it for publication.

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