



# A Self-determination Approach to Understand Employees' Innovative Work Behavior

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## Introduction

**Background:** Nowadays, globalization and rapid technology development intensify the competition in the marketplace. Smith and Tushman (2005) pointed that innovation is crucial for organizations to remain competitive and successful. Employees as the most important resource of the organizations should be encouraged to conduct innovative work behavior (IWB).

**Research Gap:** The recent literature on IWB mostly focus on the effects of organizational and job characteristics, few really cared about employees' psychological status or individual differences intervening in this process.

**Theoretical Basis:** Self-determination theory is a general theory of motivation, which was initially developed by Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan. It has been applied successfully to predict human behaviour (Vansteenkiste, Niemiec, & Soenens, 2010).

**Reasons to conduct research under specific context:** The variability of values and behaviours across different cultures need us to consider psychological issues from cultural perspective (Ryan et al., 2015).

**Chinese context:** Relatively high collectivism, power distance, and relatively low autonomy → examine the effects of values at individual level (The variability of individuals' values within one cultural group).

## Objectives

1. Address the question: what is the psychological mechanism that facilitates employees' innovative work behavior?
2. Examine whether cultural values (collectivism, power distance and uncertainty avoidance) at individual level influence employees' IWB.

## Method

### Sample & Procedure :

- **Sample Source:** Employees' from two Chinese medical equipment and supply companies (functional departments and R&D departments)
- **Methodology:** online questionnaire
- **Procedure:** Get the permission from the two companies, and then administrators of companies' inner communication system massed the questionnaire link.
- **Final Sample:** 284 responses in total. 175 were male, and 109 were female. Average age was 33.97 (SD 6.185) and the average organizational tenure is 4.5 years.

### Measures:

- All the study variables were measured using existing instruments with Likert-type scales.
- Scales were translated into Chinese following a translation back-translation procedure.

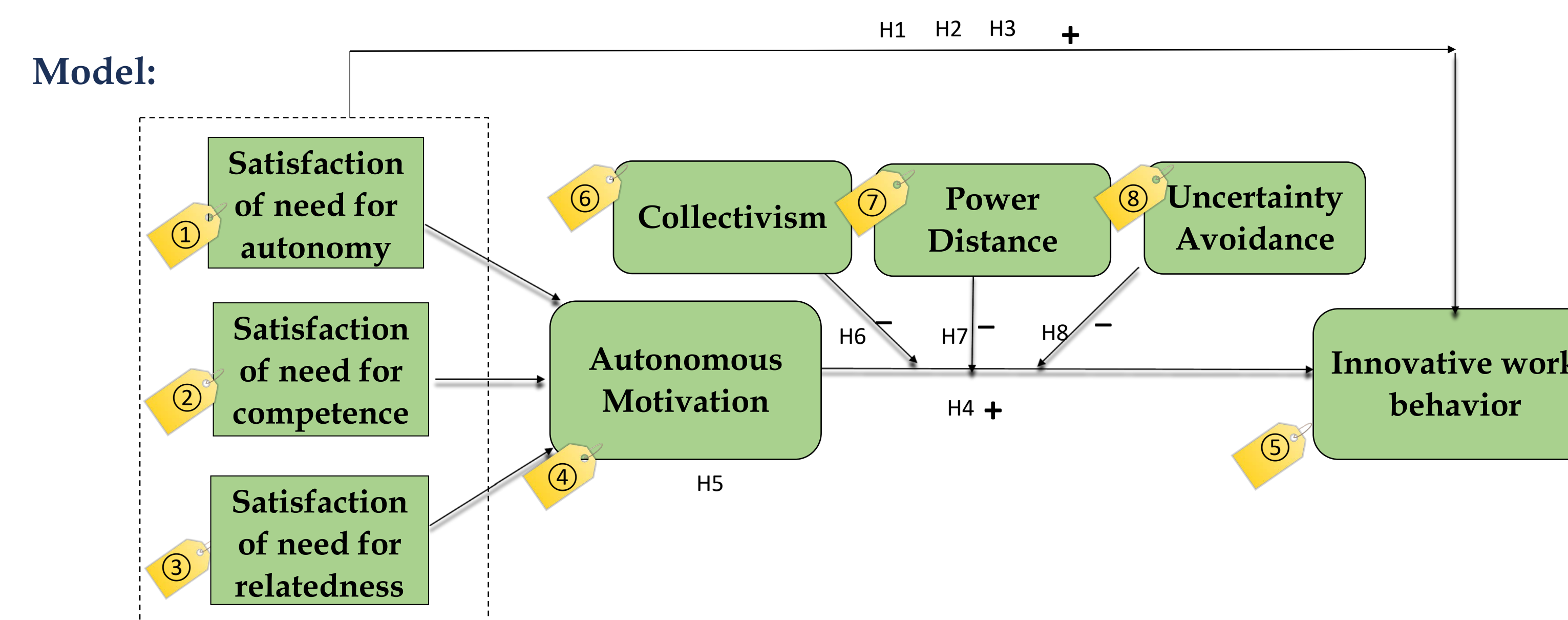
### Control Variables:

Age, gender, organizational tenure, tenure with the present supervisor



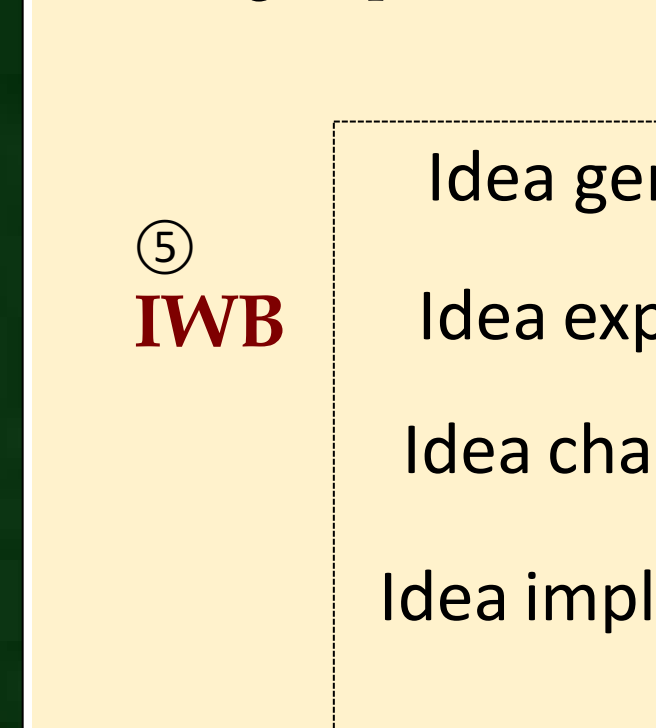
## Theoretical Model & Hypotheses

**Research Question: What is the psychological mechanism that facilitates employees' innovative work behavior in Chinese Cultural Context?**



### Mediation Model

Self-initiation and self-regulation of one's own behavior  
Ability to interact with environment proficiently and effectively  
Feelings of closeness and belongs to a social group

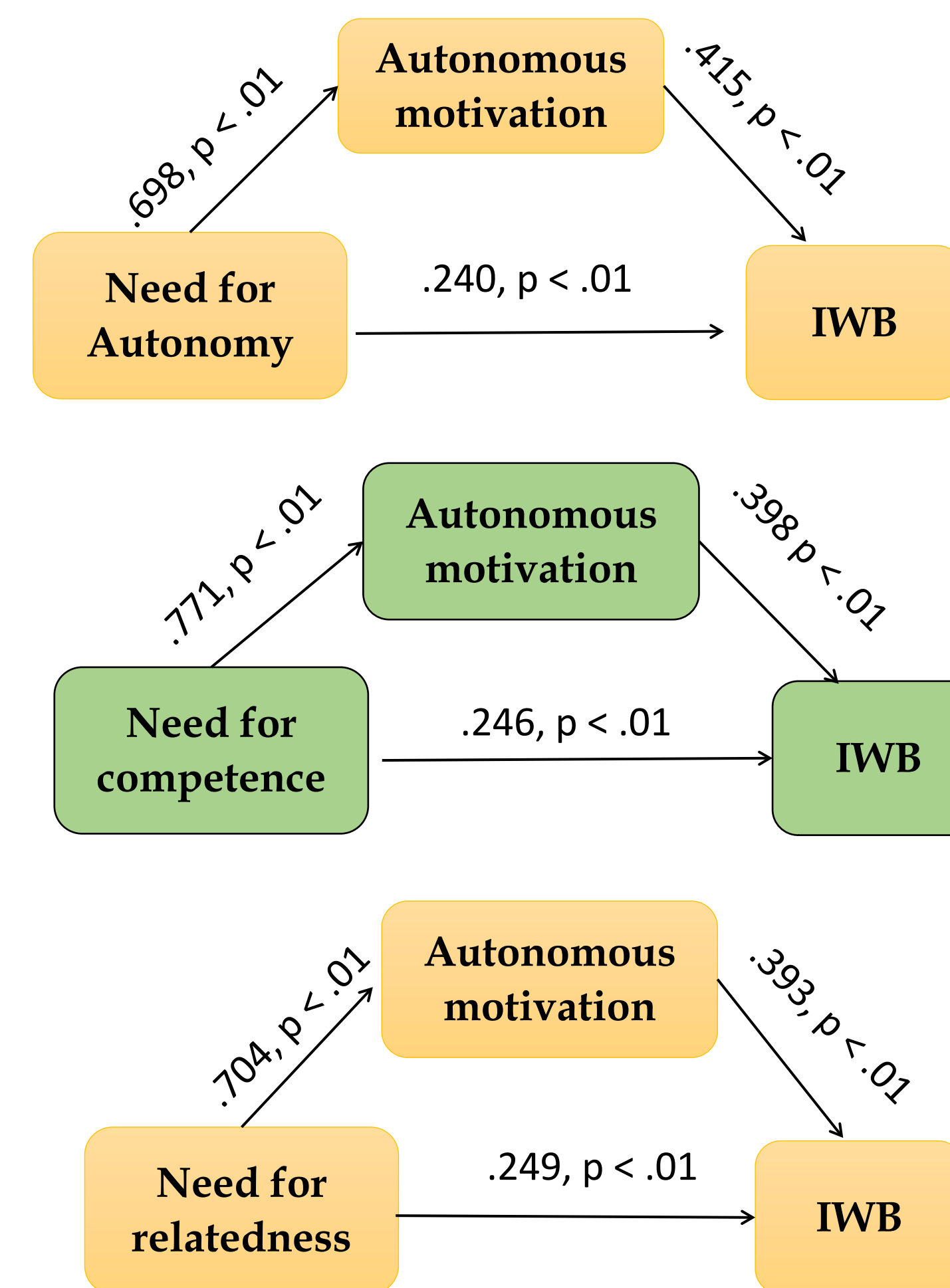


H1-H3: Three basic needs satisfaction are positively related to IWB.  
H4: Autonomous motivation is positively related to IWB.  
H5: Autonomous motivation mediates the relationship between three needs satisfaction and IWB.

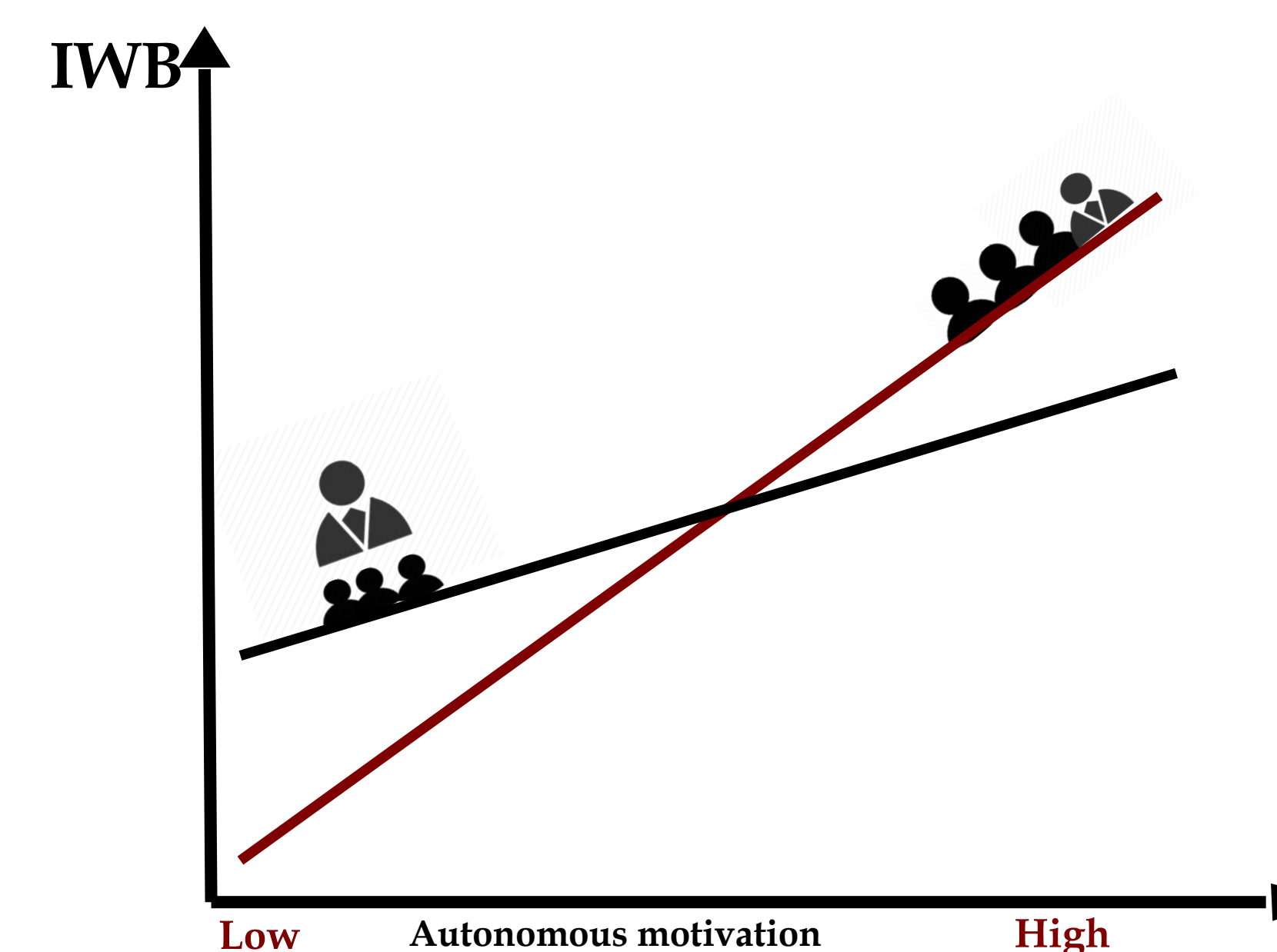
### Moderation Model

⑥ **Collectivism:** the degree to which individual view themselves as interdependent with selected others (Triandis et al., 1995)  
⑦ **Power Distance:** the acceptance and endorsement of power difference ( Hofetede & Bond, 1984)  
⑧ **Uncertainty Avoidance:** lower tolerance for unpredictable situations (Hofetede & Bond, 1984)  
H6-H8: Collectivism orientation, power distance perception, and uncertainty avoidance are negatively moderated the positively relationship between autonomous motivation and IWB.

## Results



Interaction Term	Coeff.	p
Collectivism * Autonomous	0.719	0.044
Power distance * Autonomous	-1.201	0.000
Uncertainty avoidance * Autonomous	0.222	0.457



**Results: Hypotheses 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7 were supported.**

## Discussion

### Conclusions:

- The current study supports the relationship between the three basic needs satisfaction and the innovative work behavior as well as the mediating role of autonomous motivation.
- Individual's high power distance perception moderates the relationship between autonomous motivation and innovative work behavior.

### Contributions & Implications :

**Theoretical:** This research contribute to the IWB and SDT literature in two ways.

- First, based on the SDT theory, it concentrated on the psychological mechanism of IWB.
- Second, the individual differences were taken into consideration and proved that the cultural values at individual level intervene in this process.

### Practical:

- Organizations or departments which aim to stimulate their employees' IWB should make efforts to improve their autonomous motivation.
- In order to improve employees' autonomous motivation, organization should concentrate on their employees' satisfaction of three basic needs. Many factors, such as appropriate job demands, transformational leadership style and positive working environment are beneficial to the satisfaction of three basic needs. Training courses, decision-making engagement and organizational support event all contribute to the satisfaction of three basic needs.
- The conclusion that high power distance negatively affect the relationship between autonomous motivation and IWB offers guidance to the managers seeking to encourage their employees' IWB. They should pay attention to whether the contextual norms lead their employees' believe that they have the autonomy to conduct IWB.

### Limitations and suggestions for future research:

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|---|--------------------|
| <b>Limitations</b>  | <b>Suggestions</b> |
| ▪ Cross-sectional data → Longitudinal data                      |                    |
| ▪ Self-report → Self-report & peer ratings & supervisor ratings |                    |
| ▪ Medical industry → other industry                             |                    |
| ▪ China → Other countries                                       |                    |



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