

Article

The Sustainability of Motivation Driven by High Performance Expectations: A Self-Defeating Effect

Yi Li ¹, Nana Li ¹, Mengru Wu ¹ and Man Zhang ^{1,2,*}¹ School of Management, Shanghai University, Shanghai 200000, China² Party School of Anhui Provincial Committee of C.P.C., Hefei 230022, China

* Correspondence: zhangmanah@126.com

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Abstract: It is generally believed that having high performance expectations is an effective means of motivating employees to pursue excellence and sustain the motivation driven by it, while ignoring the negative impact that hinders the incentive to sustain such expectations. Drawing on the conservation of resources theory, we constructed a moderated mediation model to examine the relationship between supervisor's high performance expectations and the employee's territoriality utilizing data from 291 supervisor–subordinate dyads from two companies in China. The results revealed that task autonomy moderated the indirect and positive effect of high performance expectations on employees' territoriality through stress, such that this indirect effect was stronger when employees were assigned to higher levels of task autonomy. The theoretical of these findings, as well as future research directions, are discussed.

Keywords: high performance expectations; territoriality; stress; task autonomy

1. Introduction

In the sustainable human resource management area, it is commonly thought that organizations need to rely upon their employees to form long-term competitive advantage and sustainable performance. Accordingly, it has been the common practice for managers who believe in the Pygmalion effect to motivate employees through implementing sustainable high performance expectations in management practice [1–4]. High performance expectations are behavior that demonstrates the supervisors' expectations for quality, excellence, and/or high performance on the part of followers [5]. Due to the universal phenomenon of high performance expectations, it is of vital importance to determine whether it is really effective, and more specifically, to clarify what kind of psychological mechanism employees will stimulate when they face the high performance requirement, making it a considerable topic for research.

Although prior research has overwhelmingly demonstrated that managers can motivate employees by implementing high performance expectations, promoting them to internalize external expectations into their own expectations to improve their performance [3,6]. However, the fact that can not be ignored is that people with high performance expectations do not always show performance improvement, and excessive expectations may lead to insomnia or even withdrawal behavior [3,4]. This indicates that extant literature may have overlooked the negative effects of high performance expectations. The absence of studies linking high performance expectations to negative impacts represents an important research opportunity with both theoretical and practical implications.

We developed a conceptual model to examine the relationship between high performance expectations and the employees' territoriality by integrating the conservation of resources theory (COR theory) and the job demands–resources model (JD-R model). Territoriality refers to an individual's behavioral expression of his or her feelings of ownership toward a physical or social object in

organizations [7]. From the perspective of resources, territoriality is concerned with the control of organizational resources [7] and it aims to protect owned resources. It is worth studying territoriality further based on COR theory. High performance expectations imply that more resources should be invested and acquired. As the COR theory points out, when an individual's central or key resources are threatened with investment or acquisition, the individual's stress will rise. Hence, we predict that employees who have high performance expectations imposed on them may be more likely to be stressed.

According to the conservation of resources theory, it is reasonable to speculate that employees tend to protect their own resources whenever they perceive stress. The principle of the conservation of resources theory indicates that resource loss is disproportionately more salient than resource gain [8]. Hence, the individual's consciousness of protecting their own resources is stronger than that of acquiring surplus resources. The protection of resources can be well represented by territoriality. Therefore, we predict that stress may have an influence on territoriality.

We also studied the moderating effect of task autonomy as a job characteristic in the model. According to the JD-R model, task autonomy as a job characteristic can be considered a job resource that functions to achieve work goals and reduce job demands together with the associated physiological and psychological costs [9,10]. This indicates that task autonomy can affect employees from the perspective of resources. As such, the purpose of this research is to investigate stress induced by high performance expectations as the antecedent of territoriality, and identify the conditions under which a stressed employee might enhance his or her territoriality. We integrated the constructs above by expecting the relationship between high performance expectations and employee's territoriality, and by examining the mediating role of the employees' stress and the moderating role of the employee's task autonomy.

To answer the above questions, we conducted a field survey consisting of 80 sales teams and 291 samples from two high-tech companies headquartered in Shanghai, China. This study is composed of six parts. The second part introduces the theoretical background and hypothesis development. Parts three and four define the methodology and present the results. The fifth part discusses the findings, limitations, and future research directions and the sixth part concludes the paper.

2. Background and Hypotheses Development

2.1. Territoriality

Territoriality is defined as an individual's behavioral expression of his or her feelings of ownership toward a physical or social object within an organization [7]. Life in organizations is fundamentally territorial and the territorial feelings of employees are innate and universal [11]. Extant research has largely shown that territoriality has a significant influence on organizations. These include positive outcomes, such as stimulating the sense of belonging to it [7] and simplifying social interactions [12]. They also include negative outcomes, such as increasing distraction and conflict [13,14] that would negatively affect employees' work performance [15] in open office settings. Such crucial and different impacts have compelled managers and scholars to consider what triggers employees' territoriality and how to intervene in it.

The previous literature has overwhelmingly highlighted the outcomes induced by territoriality within organizations. However, far less is known about the source of territoriality. Indeed, only a few published studies have investigated the antecedents of territoriality. For example, Brown et al. (2005) reported that psychological ownership is positively related to territoriality. Subsequent scholars have confirmed that territorial infringement induces reactionary defenses [16], and the anticipation of employee defections trigger anticipatory defenses [17], which both refer to one specific type of territorial behavior. Although the existing work has provided some worthy insights into the particular mechanisms underlying territoriality, there are several important issues to address.

2.2. High Performance Expectations and Stress

Supervisors have been one of the most considerable factors that have affected employees' attitudes and behaviors [18,19]. The influence of supervisors and leadership styles on an employee's stress have been validated [20], and we know that performance has always been the core of the supervisors' and employees' attention. Consequently, it is reasonable to speculate that performance expectations put forward by supervisors plays an important part in influencing employees' perceived stress.

Based on COR theory, we contend that employees must invest the resources they already have to acquire more resources when they are facing sustained high performance expectations. High performance expectations represent the quality and excellence of the employees' performance, which require additional resources to achieve, exceeding the resources the employees currently have. The second principle of COR theory posits that people must invest resources to protect against resource loss, recover from loss, and gain resources. COR theory also posits that when stress occurs, central or key resources are threatened with loss, according to the primacy of resource loss and the slowness of resource gain. Accordingly, employees who have high performance expectations placed on them will experience stress. We, therefore, hypothesize as follows:

Hypothesis 1. *High performance expectations are positively related to stress.*

2.3. Stress and Territoriality

COR theory has been instrumental for advancing the explanation of stress in organizations to some extent, that is, resource loss has largely been applied to understand stress [21]. In this study, stress is defined as an individual's psychological response to a situation in which there is something at stake for him or her and where the situation taxes or exceeds the individual's capacity or resources [22]. In view of COR theory, stress occurs when key or central resources are under threat of loss. Meanwhile, COR theory starts with the tenet that individuals are motivated to acquire new resources and retain, foster, and protect current resources [8,23].

As a "prevention-focused" form of ownership, territoriality means preventing the usurpation of one's own territory [16]. Employees who perceive stress from work will suffer from a serious threat of resource loss, resulting in a greater tendency to protect their resources (i.e., territoriality). Loss is primary in human systems because people are the product of evolution, and in evolutionary terms, even small losses have often been significantly tied to the failure to survive [7]. Inversely, in view of COR theory, employees with lower levels of perceived stress will experience less threat of resource loss and a corresponding decline in the desire to conserve resources, naturally showing less territoriality.

Hence, based on COR, we postulate that the stress related to resource loss will positively affect territoriality. Stated formally, we pose hypothesis as follows:

Hypothesis 2. *Stress is positively related to territoriality.*

2.4. The Moderating Effect of Task Autonomy

Task autonomy is defined as the extent to which an individual has control over how to carry out a task [24]. Based on COR, controlling the means to accomplish a task can be understood as employees having the decision-making power over the use of resources required by the task. In other words, individuals in a condition of high task autonomy have the freedom to select the way in which the work will be done. However, when individuals are in a low task autonomy condition, they have little control over how to accomplish the task [25]. Given that task autonomy as a job characteristic is generally expected to be related to higher satisfaction, performance, and interpersonal facilitation [26–28], it is worth considering how the special characteristics of jobs affect employees' psychological state and behaviors (i.e., territoriality).

According to the COR theory, high task autonomy means that employees have greater control over the resources involved in the task. With a high level of task autonomy, employees under stress

will enhance their control over working resources to cope with resource loss caused by stress, further promoting their territoriality. In comparison, employees who perceive stress and are low in task autonomy are probably inclined to express less territoriality because they lack control over resources. Accordingly, we contend that task autonomy will moderate the negative effect of stress and territoriality. Based on the above, we pose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3. *Task autonomy moderates the positive effect of stress on territoriality, such that this relationship is stronger when task autonomy is higher.*

To verify this mechanism as a whole, we use a second-stage moderated mediation model, which proposes that task autonomy will moderate the mediation effect of stress on the relationship between high performance expectations and territoriality. The overarching framework described above integrates multiple variables and well represents our suggested relational viewpoint of territoriality. Accordingly, taken together, we develop the full hypothesis based on the above hypotheses:

Hypothesis 4. *Task autonomy moderates the indirect and positive effect of high performance expectations on employees' territoriality through stress. Specifically, stress will mediate these relationships under the condition of task autonomy such that this indirect effect is stronger when employees perceive a higher level of task autonomy.*

Based on COR theory, we provide a graphical depiction of the proposed models in Figure 1.

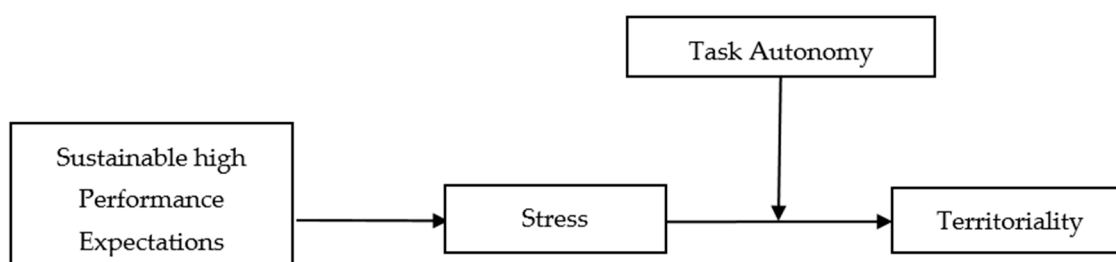


Figure 1. Study model.

3. Methods

3.1. Sample and Procedure

We examined our hypotheses using data collected from two enterprises in mainland China. Specifically, one enterprise is a large joint venture brand automobile sales and service enterprise, whose branches cover all provincial capitals in China; the other is a large manufacturing enterprise. After obtaining the consent of the human resources departments of the two enterprises, we chose the sales department from the first enterprise and employees who engaged in technical research and development and professional knowledge positions from the second enterprise. For this study, we selected a sales group as our participants, mainly because they had experience with divided sales territories, which could predispose them to feelings of territoriality [29]. Furthermore, employees in technical research and development and professional knowledge positions have more obvious knowledge territoriality. Similar to the existing research methods, we prepared two scales. Two sets of questionnaires were distributed in our survey: One for the subordinates and the other for their team supervisors. A total of 350 supervisor–subordinate matching surveys from 85 work teams participated in the survey in July 2018. Among them, 291 matches were returned and completed, representing a response rate of 83.142%. All of the participants completed this study on a voluntary basis. These 291 employees were nested within 80 teams, each guided by a supervisor. Of the participants, 51.2% (SD = 0.501) were women; the mean age was 32.96 years (SD = 5.908); approximately 41.9% (SD = 1.090) of the participants held a university or higher educational degree; and their annual average income from their organization was 71.1 thousand yuan (SD = 4.749).

3.2. Measures

To control the common variance, a method combining self-assessment and other evaluations was adopted for data collection. High performance expectations were evaluated by direct supervisors, whereas stress, territoriality, and task autonomy were evaluated by the subordinates. The English measurements involved were all translated into Chinese following the back-translation procedure because the survey was conducted in China [30]. All items used a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree; attached in Appendix A). The reliability of all the scales was estimated by Cronbach's alpha.

3.2.1. Territoriality

To assess territoriality, we used the scale of Avey et al. (2009), which includes four items [16]. The scale has been widely used in academic circles and has been proved to be applicable to Chinese situations [31]. Sample items are "I feel that people I work with in my organization should not invade my workplace" and "I feel I need to protect my ideas from being used by others in my organization". The reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) for this scale was 0.823.

3.2.2. High Performance Expectations

High performance expectations were measured using the three-item scale of Podsakoff et al. (1990) [5]. The scale has been proved to be applicable to Chinese situations [32]. Sample items are "I insist on only the best performance" and "I show employees that I expect a lot from them". The reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) of this scale was 0.765.

3.2.3. Stress

We asked the employees to describe their work stress using the 13-item scale [22] of Zhang et al. (2014), which is widely used in Chinese contexts and is of good measurement validity. We specifically asked them about "the amount of work that must be accomplished in the time limit" and to respond to the statement, "I need to go through too much red tape to get my job done" (1 = "strongly disagree", 5 = "strongly agree"). The reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) for this scale was 0.803.

3.2.4. Task Autonomy

We used the 3-item scale of Liu et al. (2007) [33] to measure task autonomy. Sample items are "I decide how to complete the task by myself" and "This job provides me with quite a lot of opportunities to complete work tasks independently and freely". The reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) for this scale was 0.811.

3.2.5. Control Variables

We selected the potential control variables based on theoretical and methodological considerations. Previous studies have indicated that differences between individuals may affect employees' territorial behavior. We controlled for educational level, age (in years), income, and gender in our analyses. Scholars have previously found that gender [34,35] influences territoriality and that gender [36], educational level [37], and income [38] affect stress. Thus, it is important to control such factors that may potentially affect stress and territoriality.

3.3. Analysis Strategy

Although our proposed model operates at the individual level, our data structure is nested because one supervisor rated several employees on their high performance expectations. In this study, to account for the nested effects, we adopted the multilevel structural equation modeling (MSEM) approach [39], and first calculated the ICC (1) for the independent variable. We tested the moderating effect of task autonomy on the relationship between stress and territoriality using the method of LMS

proposed by Preacher, Zhang, and Zyphur (2016) [40] and used the MSEM method to test the proposed hypotheses with Mplus 7.4 [41]. For the estimated path coefficients, we followed Liu, Zhang, Wang, and Lee's (2011) parameter bootstrapping technique to test the moderated indirect effects using Mplus 7.4 [42].

4. Results

4.1. Preliminary Analyses

The estimated ICC (1) was 0.14 for supervisor-rated high performance expectations, implying that around 14% of the variance in high performance expectations was attributed to supervisor-level factors. This means that the data were nested. Thus, in subsequent analyses, we controlled for the between-level variances of the supervisor-rated outcome variables that were significantly explained at the supervisor level.

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations, and correlations of our studied variables. An examination of the zero-order correlations provided initial support for our hypotheses. As expected, high performance expectations were significantly correlated with stress ($r = 0.290, p < 0.01$), and stress was shown to significantly affect territoriality ($r = 0.198, p < 0.01$).

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, and correlations.

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Education	3.080	1.090	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
2. Income	7.110	4.749	0.554 **	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
3. Gender	1.510	0.501	−0.141 *	−0.259 **	—	—	—	—	—	—
4. Age	32.960	5.908	−0.139 *	0.178 **	−0.120 *	—	—	—	—	—
5. Highperformance expectations	3.701	0.832	−0.007	0.159 **	−0.086	0.146 *	—	—	—	—
6. Stress	2.858	0.582	0.167 **	0.160 **	−0.258 ***	0.096	0.290 ***	—	—	—
7. Territoriality	3.166	0.620	−0.042	−0.127 *	−0.088	−0.051	−0.024	0.198 **	—	—
8. Task autonomy	3.747	0.741	0.118 *	0.190 **	−0.089	0.028	0.297 **	0.078	−0.030	—

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. For all variables, $n = 291$. For education, 1 = junior middle school, 2 = high school, 3 = junior college, 4 = bachelor, 5 = master, 6 = doctor. For gender, 1 = male, 2 = female.

4.2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

We carried out a confirmatory factor analysis to verify the construct validity of the scales for high-performance expectations, stress, territoriality, and task autonomy. Because the number of measurement items overstepped the suggested parameters for the sample size ratio for evaluation, we packaged the scale items for stress into three parcels following previous research [43]. Bandalos (2002) argued that the inclusion of all measurement items as observed indicators in the original model will result in some parameter estimation bias because the recommended parameters to sample size ratio will be exceeded [44]. Thus, following Rogers et al. (2004), our study used item parceling, which adopts a high load strategy [43]. Stress was measured using 13 items. According to the order of load factor, we averaged four items as the first parcel (items 1–4), four items as the second parcel (items 5, 6, 7, and 10), and the remaining five items as the third parcel. The hypothesized four-factor model ($\chi^2 = 127.94$; $df = 59$; CFI = 0.939; RMSEA = 0.063; TLI = 0.919) was superior to the other three models. The results in Table 2 showed that the distinctiveness of the four constructs in this study was acceptable.

Table 2. Comparison of measurement models.

Model	Factors	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	RMSEA	TLI	CFI	$\Delta\chi^2$
Baseline Model	Four Factors	127.94	59	2.168	0.063	0.919	0.939	
Model 1	Three factors—High performance expectations and stress combined	297.01	62	4.790	0.114	0.738	0.791	169.07
Model 2	Two factors—High performance expectations, stress, task autonomy combined	468.02	64	7.313	0.147	0.641	0.563	340.08
Model 3	All four factors were combined	899.09	65	13.832	0.210	0.260	0.112	771.15

4.3. Hypothesis Testing

Snijders and Bosker's (1994) formulas were used to calculate the pseudo-R² for the effect sizes in predicting outcomes [45]. In particular, the two-level structural model estimates showed that after ruling out variances due to team membership, high performance expectations were positively related to stress ($\gamma = 0.208$, $SE = 0.054$, $p < 0.001$, H1) at the employee level. Stress had significant and positive effects on territoriality ($\gamma = 0.230$, $SE = 0.075$, $p < 0.01$, H2). The stress–territoriality link was moderated by stress ($\gamma = 0.275$, $SE = 0.114$, $p < 0.05$, H3). The parameter bootstrapping results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Multi-level structural equation modeling results.

Predictors	Stress		Territoriality			
	γ	SE	γ	SE	γ	SE
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
Education	0.047	0.063	0.026	0.061	0.023	0.045
Income	0.001	0.018	−0.033 **	0.011	−0.027 **	0.008
Gender	−0.292 ***	0.073	−0.07	0.083	−0.028	0.071
Age	0.008	0.007	−0.008	0.008	0.002	0.007
High performance expectations	0.208 ***	0.054			−0.066	0.059
Stress			0.230 **	0.075	0.345 **	0.084
Task Autonomy					−0.013	0.055
Stress * Task Autonomy					0.275 *	0.114
Pseudo-R ²	0.09		0.18		0.09	

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. Pseudo-R²: Snijders and Bosker's (1994) formulas were used to calculate pseudo-R² for the effect sizes in predicting outcomes. The indirect effects and conditional indirect effects were tested using two-level modeling in Mplus 7.4 with 5000 times of parameter bootstrapping. γ and SE refer to the unstandardized parameter estimates and their corresponding standard errors, respectively.

From Figure 2, it can be seen that task autonomy moderated the relationship between stress and territoriality. Specifically, when task autonomy was high (1 SD above the mean), stress was more pronounced with territoriality; whereas when it was low (1 SD below the mean), stress was less positively related to territoriality.

With respect to Hypothesis 4, a moderated mediation model was estimated, which moderated the second stage. In this study, we used the Monte Carlo simulation bootstrap procedure recommended by Preacher and Selig (2012) to estimate the unbiased confidence intervals of conditional indirect effects [46]. The confidence level was set to 95%, and the bootstrap self-sampling number was set to 5000. The test results can be seen in Table 4 below.

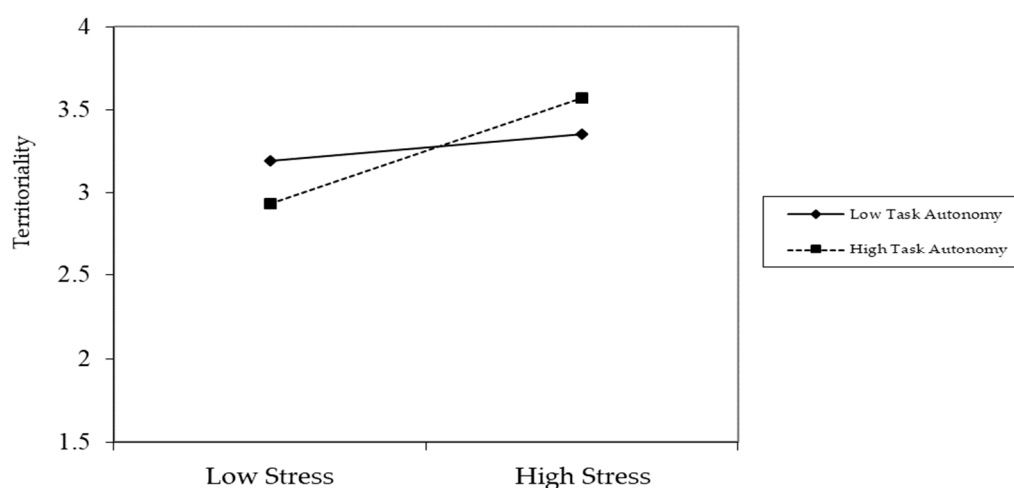


Figure 2. Task autonomy moderates the relationship between stress and territoriality.

Table 4. Test two-level modeling results of the moderated mediation effect.

Group Statistics	γ	SE	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Limit	Upper Limit
Conditional indirect effect				
High Task Autonomy (+1 SD)	0.102	0.038	0.028	0.175
Low Task Autonomy (−1 SD)	0.009	0.024	−0.038	0.056
DIFF	0.092	0.046	0.002	0.183

As Table 4 indicates, the negative effect between high performance expectations and territoriality through the conduction path of stress was significantly stronger for employees with higher levels of task autonomy than employees with lower levels of task autonomy. The difference between the two levels reached a significant level ($\gamma = 0.092$, $SE = 0.046$, $p < 0.0$), and its 95% unbiased interval [0.002, 0.183], excluding 0. Thus, Hypothesis 4 was supported by the observation data. The multilevel structural equation modeling results are summarized at the bottom of Figure 3.

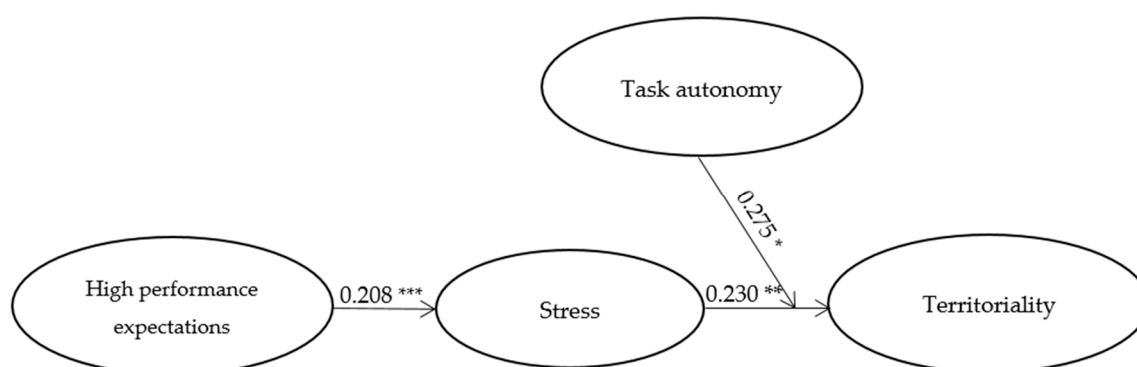


Figure 3. Multilevel structural equation modeling results. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

5. Discussion

Sustainability has become a hot topic in current society and has attracted increasing attention [47]. In the field of sustainable human resource management, how to continuously stimulate employees' high performance, aiming to achieve the sustainable development of organizations has become an important research topic [48,49]. Based on the understanding of the Pygmalion effect, a common measure for managers is to continuously express high performance expectations to their subordinates in order to achieve an upward spiraling cycle of high performance through sustainable motivation.

However, this study finds that high performance expectations may have a double-edged sword effect through an employee's psychological mechanisms while promoting employee's high performance. Unfortunately, broadly speaking, scholars have not been concerned.

Based on COR theory, we comprehensively derived a possible conceptual model that specified the relationship between high performance expectations and territoriality. By identifying an important mechanism of territoriality, we conducted an empirical study grounded in COR theory. We further explored the mediating role of stress on the high performance expectations–territoriality relationship and the moderating role of task autonomy for influencing this mediation. Based on a sample of 291 matches, the results revealed that the effect of high performance expectations on territoriality through stress was conditioned on task autonomy, lending support for all of the proposed hypotheses. Specifically, high task autonomy strengthened the negative effect of stress on territoriality, which further magnified the influence of high performance expectations.

These results suggest that high performance expectations from supervisors are positively related to employees' general stress levels. These findings are consistent with the research of Diebig et al. (2016) of the relation between high performance expectations and stress [50]. As they claimed, the high performance expectations from their leaders might lead them to a feeling of uncomfortableness and create a mental overload. Our study confirms this effect and promotes the further understanding of the relationship, and clarifies the negative psychological mechanism that high performance expectations may bring to subordinates as a whole. Our research also responds to the call for more attention to the psychological mechanisms in relation to the sustainable human resource management field.

In addition, we find that stress plays a mediating part in the relation between high performance expectations and territoriality. The previously mentioned negative effect will inversely undermine the motivation and performance through employees' bad psychological mood and distraction. This may be one of the important ways that high performance expectations fail to generate sustainable incentives, which is consistent with the study of Dai et al. (2018) [3], supporting and verifying the existence of negative effects of high performance expectations. Similarly, our results confirmed the antecedent of territoriality from the perspective of resources. It is in line with the essence of territoriality proposed by Brown et al. (2005), namely that territoriality is concerned with the control of organizational resources [7].

Finally, the indirect effects of high performance expectations on territoriality via stress were stronger when job autonomy was high. Our study's result was inconsistent with the prior research findings about job autonomy. Our research confirms that job autonomy acts as a catalyst in the stress to outcome mechanism, and we suggest that more in-depth research is required.

5.1. Theoretical Implications

Our research provides a number of theoretical implications. First, our findings enrich the application of COR theory to the territoriality literature. Territoriality is essentially the protection of all tangible or intangible resources. Accordingly, COR theory can well explain the relevant research on territoriality. Past research has mainly focused on the regulatory focus theory or psychological ownership theory [16,51]. We took a new perspective on resources to explore territoriality.

Second, our work contributes to the territoriality literature by examining stress as a mechanism of territoriality. Past work has mostly addressed the outcome variables of territoriality [18,31]. It has shed light on the harmful consequences of territoriality, but has paid relatively little attention to the factors that predict how territoriality is likely to occur. To some extent, the sources of territoriality have been relatively neglected. Our results enrich the exploration of the antecedent variables of territoriality by opening the black box between high performance expectations and territoriality. Therefore, this study has responded to authors' calls [42] and filled the empirical void. In addition, past studies examining the antecedents of territoriality have mainly focused on individuals' perceptions of themselves, their peers, and their subordinates. Our research has shifted the focus to the behaviors of the supervisors. This approach may provide a new perspective to answer the question: What triggers territoriality?

Third, this study explored the negative effect of high performance expectations, which the previous literature has largely ignored. Prior findings have revealed that high performance expectations have been negatively associated with employees' persistence in the face of adversity [3] and stress [50]. Our study successfully combined high performance expectations and territoriality to further uncover the downside of high performance expectations. Hence, it supplements other studies conducted by scholars like Chen and Liang (2017) [32] on high performance expectations.

Finally, with task autonomy as the moderator variable, we verified the strengthened effect of task autonomy on the negative outcomes induced by stress, namely strengthening territoriality. This is inconsistent with prior research findings on the positive effects of task autonomy, such as higher satisfaction, motivation, and performance. Hence, our findings show that task autonomy, as a moderator, plays an important role in organizational behavior research. Moreover, our findings have expanded the research on individual territoriality and how it is moderated by contextual variables such as trust in the work environment [52]. This further verifies the types of territoriality that can be affected and moderated.

5.2. Practical Implications

Overall, our findings provide insights into organizational management and human resource practices. First, they provide a new direction for reducing the negative effect induced by territoriality. At present, teamwork has become the mainstream of work design. Effective teamwork contributes to knowledge sharing and innovation [53]. However, some literature has shown that territoriality may impede interpersonal communications and knowledge sharing between employees, negatively affecting team performance [7,50]. As we mentioned above, stress has a direct effect on territoriality, thus, it is necessary to decrease the stress to control territoriality. We all know that the sources of stress at work are varied [54]. Hence, there are many ways to reduce stress such as providing organizational support, supervisor support, and so on [55]. Especially, managers should pay more attention to the stress caused by performance. In some ways, stress caused by performance has a more significant impact on individuals and organizations because performance is the core concern of employees.

Second, we shed light on the importance of managing supervisor's sustainable performance expectations. Our results indicate that high performance expectations negatively influence territoriality through stress, whereas task autonomy moderates the positive relationship between stress and territoriality. We encourage managers to recognize that high performance expectations have a negative effect. This would remind them to pay attention to a reasonably set range when setting high performance expectations to reduce its negative impact instead of promoting blind, unsustainable expectations.

Finally, our findings underscore that task autonomy influences subordinates. Managers already know that task autonomy can bring higher motivation, satisfaction, and performance. Further, research on job crafting encourages managers to craft more autonomy for employees. This would make them feel more responsible for their performance and be motivated to devote more effort to the task [56]. However, our findings suggest that it is necessary to consider the negative effect of some work characteristics such as task autonomy. For work with high task autonomy (e.g., innovative scientific research), the sharing intention of jobholders is of a low level. Hence, when employees are assigned jobs with high-level task autonomy, it reminds managers to control the employees' stress at a reasonable level to decrease the possible negative impact. Similarly, if the stress level is high, managers should control the level of task autonomy.

5.3. Limitation and Future Study

Territoriality is gradually becoming a new hot spot in the organizational behavior field. In fact, there are several limitations in this study that must be addressed in future research. First, the cross-sectional design used in the data collection of this study made it impossible to infer causality between the variables in our model. To be specific, we measured all variables at a time point. Although the cross-sectional design did not impair the associations that existed in the model and its usefulness for

generating hypotheses for future research [57], we encourage researchers to overcome the limitations mentioned above by adopting longitudinal cross-lagged studies of the variables to further verify the validity from dynamic data.

Second, employees' territoriality is presented at the team and organizational levels. The majority of current scholars have carried out individual-level research on territoriality, and this study was also conducted at the individual level. Only a few studies have explored territoriality at the team level. For example, Liu, Chen, Xiao, and Zhou (2016) studied internal and external territorial behavior from the perspective of teams [58]. Therefore, it is necessary for future researchers to expand from the individual level to the team organization level.

Finally, this study used data collected from two companies with the two occupational attributes. It is feasible that occupational characteristics may have affected our findings. Attributes characterized by occupation, such as salespersons, are more concerned with protecting their sales territory. Accordingly, the relational model we build might be more prominent among such teams. When generalizing our findings to other occupational backgrounds in future research, caution is recommended.

6. Conclusions

High performance expectations as an effective management measure have gained increasing attention for their motivational effect. This study of its negative effects reveals one of the factors that affect the sustainability of motivation. Exploring its negative effects from different perspectives can help us understand the incentive of high performance expectations more comprehensively. Territoriality as a social-behavioral concept has a significant effect on the performance and well-being of organizations and their members, such as diminishing the focus on task performance and increasing conflict. It is therefore important that researchers continue to investigate the antecedent conditions associated with territoriality. Our findings are significant because we draw attention to previously unexamined antecedents of territoriality and provide the bases for practical interventions that have the potential to curb the intension of territoriality. There is much yet to be explored. We hope that this study encourages future inquiries into the antecedents of territoriality and the influence of the context in which they operate.

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Appendix A

Territoriality

1. I feel I need to protect my ideas from being used by others in my organization.
2. I feel that people I work with in my organization should not invade my workspace.
3. I feel that people I work with in my organization should not use my information and ideas without my permission.
4. I feel I have to tell people in my organization not to use the information, ideas, and know-how that are mine.

Stress

1. having to complete a lot of work.
2. having to work very hard.
3. time pressure.

4. having to perform complex tasks.
5. having to multitask your assigned projects.
6. having high levels of responsibility.
7. administrative hassles.
8. bureaucratic constraints to completing work (red tape).
9. conflicting instructions and expectations from your boss or bosses.
10. unclear job tasks.
11. conflicting requests from your supervisor(s).
12. disputes with co-workers.
13. office politics.

High Performance Expectations

1. Shows us that he/she expects a lot from us.
2. Insists on only the best performance.
3. Will not settle for second best.

Task Autonomy

1. I decide how to complete the task by myself.
2. This job provides me with quite a lot of opportunities to complete work tasks independently and freely.
3. The job gives me a chance to use my personal initiative and judgment in carrying out the work.

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