

The Impact of Corporate Stress on Employees' Intrapreneurial Intention

Mingkai Jiang*, Liangrong Song

University of Shanghai for Science and Technology, Shanghai 200093, China

Email: 13767630122@163.com

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Abstract

In recent years, the number of university graduates has risen sharply, resulting in a considerable unemployed population and an expanding gap between labor supply and available positions. Encouraging employees to pursue intrapreneurship therefore serves a dual purpose: at the firm level it injects innovation and strengthens market competitiveness and influence, while at the societal level it creates additional employment opportunities and alleviates unemployment. To help firms elevate employees' intrapreneurial intention, this study examines corporate management practices from the perspective of employee stress and its antecedents. Using corporate stress as the independent variable, we test whether it influences intrapreneurial intention through the mediating mechanism of job satisfaction. Based on 274 valid questionnaires, the empirical results reveal that corporate stress exerts a negative effect on employees' intrapreneurial intention via the full mediation of job satisfaction. Grounded in managerial reality, we offer actionable recommendations for reducing corporate stress and enhancing job satisfaction so as to foster intrapreneurial intention.

Keywords

Corporate employee stress; Job satisfaction; Intrapreneurial intention

1. Introduction

Sustained socio-economic growth has intensified competition across industries, continuously elevating the pressure that firms exert on their employees. Because market conditions differ, organizations impose heterogeneous stressors on their workforces; employees, in turn, experience distinct demands depending on their department and role. In this climate, many enterprises—seeking survival and expansion—have begun to encourage and support intrapreneurship as a strategic initiative. Although intrapreneurial intention is predominantly determined by individual attributes, it is also shaped by contextual factors. Corporate stress, as a salient environmental stimulus, is therefore likely to exert a material influence. Rising stress undermines employees' physical and psychological well-being, erodes

job satisfaction, and may subsequently reduce their willingness to engage in intrapreneurial endeavors. Accordingly, the judicious management of employee stress constitutes a critical lever for enhancing intrapreneurial intention.

Scholarly interest in intrapreneurship has deepened in recent years, and an increasing number of firms now recognize its strategic value. Well-resourced corporations actively encourage employees to launch internal ventures, and several have already registered tangible gains. Investigating the antecedents of intrapreneurial intention is therefore pivotal for any organization seeking to initiate intrapreneurial programmes successfully. Concurrently, corporate stress has long been treated as an antecedent of numerous organizational phenomena and continues to play a salient role in shaping intrapreneurial intention. Clarifying how stress influences such intention enables firms to calibrate the level of pressure they impose and to harness stress constructively to promote intrapreneurship. To elucidate the precise influence of corporate stress on intrapreneurial intention and to leverage that knowledge to elevate intention levels, this study examines the linkage between the two constructs.

Early research on employee stress can be traced to Cooper and Marshall (1976), who developed an occupational stress scale and demonstrated that stressors originate not only in job content but also in employees' hierarchical position, relationships with colleagues and supervisors, organizational culture, and career prospects. Building on this work, subsequent scholars (2008) classified stressors into intra-organizational and extra-organizational sources, and further partitioned them across five domains: physical condition, private life, intra-organizational factors, extra-organizational factors, and work-group characteristics. Robbins (1997) tripartite model similarly distinguishes individual-, intra-organizational, and extra-organizational stressors, while emphasizing that individual differences determine whether these stressors actually generate perceived stress.

Recent studies have increasingly focused on how corporate stress affects specific outcomes. Zhang Weihong (2021), for instance, linked stress to proactive innovation behavior among new-generation employees, arguing that material abundance and superior education enhance absorptive capacity, yet excessive job demands erode well-being and foster resistance to innovation. Conversely, moderate pressure coupled with appropriate incentives can heighten entrepreneurial desire. Yan Ruixue and Wang Yuhe (2023) examined state-owned enterprises in 1980s China and found that tight external supply constraints and sizeable internal pressure motivated firms to assume social responsibilities, indicating that intra-organizational pressure can galvanize both corporate and employee engagement under certain conditions.

Since its emergence as a distinct mode of venturing, intrapreneurship has attracted extensive scholarly attention. Schollhammer (1982) originally defined internal corporate entrepreneurship as firm-funded, employee-led initiatives aimed at

internal innovation and overall performance enhancement, labelling the phenomenon “internal corporate entrepreneurship.” The term “intrapreneurship” was later coined by Pinchot (1985) to describe large firms’ internal innovative activities designed to expand influence, increase productivity, and optimize management. Chen Long (2010) and colleagues caution that intrapreneurship and corporate entrepreneurship are not synonymous: the latter denotes purely firm-level venturing, whereas the former simultaneously constitutes individual-level entrepreneurial action, implying a difference in venture protagonists. Yu Ying et al. (2025) examine how internal development and external pressure jointly affect firm value, finding that internal innovation investment and external analyst attention synergistically enhance value. Liu Fanglong et al. (2025) drawing on a longitudinal case of Haier, propose that “attributional empowerment”—which modularizes structural power, resources, and psychological incentives—breaks the constraints of standardized empowerment, achieves precise matching and dynamic adaptation of entrepreneurial elements, and thus underpins large-scale, heterogeneous intrapreneurial activity.

Collectively, the foregoing studies underscore two conclusions. First, corporate stress—because of its pervasive organizational consequences—remains a central construct in management research. Second, intrapreneurship, once regarded as peripheral, has become a strategic imperative that yields tangible economic returns and promising growth trajectories; consequently, more firms will need to understand and implement intrapreneurial initiatives. The dominant trajectory in stress research continues to emphasize outcome-oriented analyses, whereas intrapreneurship studies increasingly concentrate on antecedent identification. Integrating these streams, the extant literature strongly suggests that corporate stress constitutes a pivotal antecedent of employees’ intrapreneurial intention. Investigating this linkage equips organizations to modulate the stress they impose, thereby elevating intrapreneurial intention and securing competitive advantage.

2. Research Hypotheses and Design

2.1. Hypothesis Development

2.1.1. Corporate Stress and Job Satisfaction

Meta-analytic evidence indicates that job satisfaction reflects the discrepancy between what employees expect and what they actually experience. Heightened corporate stress enlarges this gap by increasing workload and raising expectations for compensation and working conditions without necessarily improving objective circumstances. Empirically, Jin Xuan et al. (2018) reported a significant negative association between medical practitioners’ job stress and satisfaction. Fan Lisan et al. (2021) observed an identical pattern among 655 manufacturing managers. In conclusion, the following research hypothesis is put forward.

Hypothesis 1: Corporate employee stress exerts a negative effect on job satisfaction.

2.1.2. Job Satisfaction and Intrapreneurial Intention

Employees pursue intrapreneurship for two primary motives: the aspiration to realize entrepreneurial ambitions with organisational support and the expectation of superior remuneration and career prospects. Both motives hinge on the firm's willingness to provide attractive rewards. Higher job satisfaction—stemmed from improved compensation, benefits, and working conditions—signals such willingness and simultaneously retains talented personnel while stimulating their innovative potential. Cheng Long et al. (2018) demonstrate that competitive remuneration and effective incentive systems are indispensable for cultivating talent's entrepreneurial mindset. Analogously, the following research hypothesis is put forward.

Hypothesis 2: Job satisfaction exerts a positive effect on intrapreneurial intention.

2.1.3. Corporate Stress and Intrapreneurial Intention: The Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction

Xu Ye et al.'s (2015) survey of 655 vocational-college students reveals that both financial and environmental stress negatively affect entrepreneurial intention. In the intrapreneurial context, capital and environment are primarily provided—and their associated pressures mainly borne—by the firm. Employees therefore perceive elevated corporate stress precisely when organisational financial or environmental conditions deteriorate. Extending Xu's logic, we expect such stress to undermine intrapreneurial intention. Moreover, given the previously argued negative effect of corporate stress on job satisfaction and the positive effect of satisfaction on intrapreneurial intention, we propose that job satisfaction transmits the influence of stress to intention. In conclusion, the following research hypothesis is put forward.

Hypothesis 3: Corporate employee stress exerts a negative effect on intrapreneurial intention.

Hypothesis 4: Job satisfaction fully mediates the relationship between corporate employee stress and intrapreneurial intention.

2.2. Maintaining the Integrity of the Specifications

2.2.1. Corporate Employee Stress

We adapted Cooper et al.'s (1998) Pressure Management Indicator (PMI), whose six-factor structure—work relationships, career prospects, workload, daily hassles, responsibility, and personal needs—has been widely validated. Because the original 120-item battery is impractical for field surveys, we selected and contextualized items to reflect Chinese employees' stress profile, yielding a 30-item, three-dimensional scale labelled YL. The sub-dimensions are: (1) Coping Capacity at Work (YD, 10 items), (2) Employee Stressors (YG, 10 items), and (3) Work Behavior

(XW, 10 items). All items are rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree), with higher mean scores indicating greater perceived stress.

2.2.2. Job Satisfaction

We employed Spector's (1985) Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) as the foundational instrument. The original scale assesses satisfaction with pay, promotions, supervision, fringe benefits, contingent rewards, operating procedures, co-workers, nature of work, and communication. To enhance cultural relevance and reduce respondent fatigue, we selected ten items and refined wording to reflect the employment conditions of Chinese enterprises. The resulting one-dimensional scale, labelled MY (10 items), likewise uses a five-point Likert format; higher composite scores denote greater job satisfaction.

2.2.3. Intrapreneurial Intention

To capture employees' willingness to pursue entrepreneurial initiatives within their current organization, we drew on Hu Wen-an et al.'s (2016) entrepreneurial-intention scale. Because intrapreneurial intention is conceptually distinct from general entrepreneurial intention, we conducted a pilot test to ensure content validity. The final four-item intrapreneurial-intention scale (NC) retains the original Likert-5 response format; higher average scores reflect stronger intention to engage in intrapreneurship.

2.3. Questionnaire Design

The preliminary questionnaire, entitled "Corporate Stress and Employees' Intrapreneurial Intention", comprises three sections. Section A collects demographic information (gender, age, occupation). Sections B–D contain the three measurement scales: thirty items for corporate stress (YL), ten for job satisfaction (MY), and four for intrapreneurial intention (NC). All psychometric items employ a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree/very dissatisfied, 5 = strongly agree/very satisfied). Higher summed scores indicate higher levels of the focal construct.

2.4. Pilot Test and Formal Data Collection

Before launching the formal survey, we conducted a pilot study to evaluate item clarity and scale reliability. Item-to-total correlations and Cronbach's α coefficients were examined; eight items with loadings below 0.40 or whose deletion improved α were eliminated (YD3, YD9, YD10, XW2, XW5, YG2, YG4, YG5, MY3, MY9). The final questionnaire contains 34 items.

The formal electronic questionnaire was distributed through Wenjuan Xing, a major Chinese on-line platform. A one-week collection window yielded 327 responses; after deleting incomplete, straight-line, or overly rapid completions, 274 valid cases remained, giving an effective response rate of 83.79%. Participants were employees

across diverse industries; no screening filters that could bias results were applied, approximating a simple random sample.

3. Empirical Analysis

3.1 Reliability and Validity Assessment

3.1.1. Reliability Assessment

Cronbach's α coefficients were computed with SPSS 25.0. Table 1 summarizes the item analysis for the job-satisfaction (MY) scale. All eight items exhibit corrected item-to-total correlations (CITC) between 0.605 and 0.750. Cronbach's α if item deleted ranges from 0.865 to 0.872, all below the overall $\alpha = 0.884$, indicating that no item removal would improve internal consistency.

Table 1. Reliability Test Results of the Employee Job Satisfaction Scale

item	CITC	Cronbach's alpha if item deleted	Cronbach α
MY1	.680	.870	.884
MY2	.657	.867	
MY3	.605	.866	
MY4	.726	.871	
MY5	.696	.865	
MY6	.750	.872	
MY7	.719	.880	
MY8	.744	.867	

Table 2 reports analogous statistics for the four-item intrapreneurial-intention (NC) scale. CITC values range from 0.617 to 0.763, and α if item deleted (0.774–0.835) remains below the scale $\alpha = 0.846$, again supporting item retention.

Table 2. Reliability Test Results of the Intrapreneurial Intention Scale

item	CITC	Cronbach's alpha if item deleted	Cronbach α
NC1	.686	.808	.846
NC2	.696	.803	
NC3	.617	.835	
NC4	.763	.774	

Table 3 details the 22-item corporate-stress (YL) scale. CITC coefficients span 0.461–0.649; none of the deletion alphas surpass the aggregate $\alpha = 0.924$. Collectively, the three instruments demonstrate satisfactory reliability for further analysis.

Table 3. Reliability Test Results of the Employee Stress Scale

item	CITC	Cronbach's alpha if item deleted	Cronbach α
YD1	.524	.922	.924
YD2	.619	.920	

YD3	.544	.921
YD4	.494	.922
YD5	.598	.920
YD6	.649	.919
YD7	.638	.919
YG1	.571	.921
YG2	.583	.921
YG3	.573	.921
YG4	.550	.921
YG5	.589	.920
YG6	.579	.921
YG7	.560	.921
XW1	.574	.921
XW2	.509	.922
XW3	.461	.923
XW4	.627	.920
XW5	.523	.922
XW6	.602	.920
XW7	.628	.920
XW8	.612	.920

3.1.2. Validity Assessment

We conducted exploratory factor analysis (EFA) for each scale. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) values were 0.936 for YL, 0.916 for MY, and 0.809 for NC; Bartlett's tests of sphericity were significant ($p < 0.001$) in all cases, confirming sampling adequacy.

Principal-component extraction with varimax rotation was applied to the 22 corporate-stress items, three factors with eigen-values greater than 1 emerge, jointly accounting for 68.4 % of total variance. Each item loads above 0.60 on its primary factor and below 0.35 on the remaining factors, perfectly matching the hypothesized structure of Coping Capacity, Employee Stressors and Work Behavior. Parallel analyses for MY and NC yielded single-factor solutions with all loadings above 0.70, corroborating convergent validity.

3.2. Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlations were examined among the three latent variables. The results are shown in Table 4. Corporate stress was negatively related to job satisfaction ($r = -0.799$, $p < 0.01$) and to intrapreneurial intention ($r = -0.459$, $p < 0.01$), whereas job satisfaction was positively related to intention ($r = 0.519$, $p < 0.01$). The signs and magnitudes align with the proposed theoretical model and justify subsequent regression analyses.

Table 4. Correlation Analysis Among Variables

variables	YL	MY	NC
YL	1		
MY	-0.799**	1	
NC	-0.459**	0.519**	1

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

3.3. Regression Analysis

3.3.1. Corporate Stress and Job Satisfaction

To examine the causal relationship between corporate stress and job satisfaction, we conducted hierarchical regression analysis. The results are shown in Table 5. In the control model (M1), demographic variables (gender, age, occupation) were regressed on job satisfaction. The adjusted R^2 was -0.003, indicating negligible explanatory power. In the experimental model (M2), corporate stress was added to the predictors. The adjusted R^2 increased to 0.636, with a significant F-value ($p < 0.001$). Corporate stress had a negative regression coefficient (-0.798, $p < 0.01$), confirming Hypothesis 1 that corporate stress negatively affects job satisfaction.

Table 5. Regression Analysis of Employee Stress on Job Satisfaction

Dependent Variable	Predictor Variable	M1			M2		
		b	t	Significance	b	t	Significance
Job Satisfaction	(Constant)	2.200**	9.951	0.000	5.835**	27.347	0.000
	Gender	-0.066	-0.604	0.546	-0.086	-1.318	0.169
	Age	0.006	0.103	0.918	-0.001	-0.036	0.815
	Occupation	0.021	1.371	0.171	0.007	0.752	0.310
	Corporate Stress				-0.798**	-21.802	0.000
	F-value	0.759			120.400**		
	Adjusted R^2	-0.003			0.636		

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

3.3.2. Job Satisfaction and Intrapreneurial Intention

Hierarchical regression analysis was also applied to assess the impact of job satisfaction on intrapreneurial intention. The results are shown in Table 6. In the control model (M1), demographic variables were regressed on intrapreneurial intention, yielding an adjusted R^2 of 0.009, which indicates minimal explanatory power. In the experimental model (M2), job satisfaction was added to the predictors. The adjusted R^2 increased to 0.270, with a significant F-value ($p < 0.001$). Job satisfaction had a positive regression coefficient (0.548, $p < 0.01$), confirming Hypothesis 2 that job satisfaction positively affects intrapreneurial intention.

Table 6. Regression Analysis of Job Satisfaction on Intrapreneurial Intention

Dependent Variable	Predictor Variable	M1			M2		
		b	t	Significance	b	t	Significance
Intrapreneurial Intention	(Constant)	2.092**	8.918	0.000	0.886**	3.767	0.000
	Gender	0.067	0.577	0.564	0.102	1.036	0.301

	Age	-0.046	-0.706	0.481	-0.050	-0.885	0.377
	Occupation	0.036	2.187	0.030	0.024	1.718	0.087
	Job Satisfaction				0.548**	9.892	0.000
	F-value	1.803			26.298**		
	Adjusted R ²	0.009			0.270		

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

3.3.3. Corporate Stress and Intrapreneurial Intention

To examine the direct impact of corporate stress on intrapreneurial intention, hierarchical regression analysis was employed. The results are shown in Table 7. In the control model (M1), demographic variables were regressed on intrapreneurial intention, resulting in an adjusted R² of 0.009, indicating minimal explanatory power. In the experimental model (M2), corporate stress was added to the predictors. The adjusted R² increased to 0.211, with a significant F-value ($p < 0.001$). Corporate stress had a negative regression coefficient (-0.562, $p < 0.01$), confirming Hypothesis 3 that corporate stress negatively affects intrapreneurial intention.

Table 7. Regression Analysis of Corporate Stress on Intrapreneurial Intention

Dependent Variable	Predictor Variable	M1			M2		
		b	t	Significance	b	t	Significance
Intrapreneurial Intention	(Constant)	2.092*	8.918	0.000	4.290**	12.790	0.000
	Gender	0.067	0.577	0.564	0.054	0.526	0.599
	Age	-0.046	-0.706	0.481	-0.051	-0.872	0.384
	Occupation	0.036	2.187	0.030	0.028	1.862	0.064
	Corporate Stress				-0.562*	-8.385	0.000
	F-value	1.803			19.274**		
	Adjusted R ²	0.009			0.211		

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

3.3.4. The Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction

To test the mediating effect of job satisfaction between corporate stress and intrapreneurial intention, we conducted a two-step hierarchical regression analysis. The results are shown in Table 8. In the control model (M1), corporate stress and demographic variables were regressed on intrapreneurial intention. The adjusted R² was 0.211, with corporate stress having a significant negative coefficient (-0.562, $p < 0.01$). In the experimental model (M2), job satisfaction was added to the predictors. The adjusted R² increased to 0.273, with job satisfaction having a positive coefficient (0.448, $p < 0.01$). The significance of corporate stress dropped to $p = 0.176$, indicating that job satisfaction fully mediates the relationship between corporate stress and intrapreneurial intention. This finding confirms Hypothesis 4.

Table 8. Regression Analysis of the Mediating Effect of Job Satisfaction

Dependent Variable	Predictor Variable	M1			M2		
		b	t	Significance	b	t	Significance
Intrapreneurial Intention	(Constant)	4.290**	12.790	0.000	1.673**	2.672	0.008
	Gender	0.054	0.526	0.599	0.093	0.936	0.350
	Age	-0.051	-0.872	0.384	-0.050	-0.897	0.371
	Occupation	0.028	1.862	0.064	0.024	1.714	0.088
	Corporate Stress	-0.562**	-8.385	0.000	-0.145	-1.355	0.176
	Job Satisfaction				0.448**	4.873	0.000
	F-value	19.274**			21.472**		
	Adjusted R ²	0.211			0.273		

4. Conclusion and Future Work

4.1. Research Summary

Based on the theoretical hypotheses and empirical analysis of 274 valid questionnaires, this study concludes that corporate stress negatively affects intrapreneurial intention through the full mediation of job satisfaction. Specifically, job satisfaction is inversely related to corporate stress and positively related to intrapreneurial intention. When job satisfaction is included as a mediator, the direct negative effect of corporate stress on intrapreneurial intention disappears, indicating that job satisfaction fully transmits the impact of stress on intrapreneurial intention. Therefore, managing corporate stress and enhancing job satisfaction are crucial strategies for fostering intrapreneurial intention within organizations.

4.2. Practical Implications Based on Research Findings

4.2.1. Alleviating Corporate Employee Stress

Given that corporate stress exerts a negative influence on intrapreneurial intention, organizations aiming to enhance intrapreneurial activity should focus on reducing employee stress levels. In today's competitive business environment, employees often face significant pressures that can negatively impact their performance and well-being. To mitigate this, firms can consider strategies such as reducing workload, extending deadlines, and providing more flexible working conditions. Additionally, organizing team-building activities and offering stress management training sessions can help employees better cope with workplace pressures. By actively addressing and reducing corporate stress, organizations can create a more conducive environment for intrapreneurial initiatives.

4.2.2. Enhancing Job Satisfaction

Since job satisfaction positively influences intrapreneurial intention, organizations should implement measures to improve this critical factor. Potential strategies

include reducing workload, enhancing the work environment, improving benefits, and increasing salaries. Before taking action, firms can conduct individual interviews or meetings to understand employees' expectations and identify which aspects they value most. Tailoring improvements to meet specific employee needs—such as more vacation time for some or higher pay for others—can lead to more effective increases in job satisfaction. By addressing these needs, organizations can not only boost intrapreneurial intention but also improve overall employee retention and performance.

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