

Proactive Personality & Employee Creativity: The Role of Organizational Learning Culture as Mediator

Karina A. H. Putri¹, Arum Etikariena²

^{1,2}University of Indonesia

karina.aisyah91@ui.ac.id, arum.etikariena@ui.ac.id

Abstract

This study aims to determine the role of organizational learning culture on the relationship between proactive personality and employee creativity. The study uses a self-report online survey that was distributed to 158 employees in a company engaged in the construction and repair of network infrastructure in Indonesia. The data analysis technique used Hayes PROCESS Model 4 (Mediator Regression Analysis). The results of the research through the perspective of person-fit theory show that employees with a high level of proactive personality will have a high level of creativity, and will increase when employees are in an organizational learning culture. Organizational learning culture is considered to have a positive influence on employee creativity. Organizations need to consider implementation in increasing creativity through organizational learning culture.

Keywords

proactive personality; employee creativity; organizational learning culture



I. Introduction

COVID-19 is a global health problem including Indonesia. This was initiated from the information of the World Health Organization (WHO) on 31 December 2019 there was a case of a cluster of pneumonia with a new etiology in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China and later expanded beyond China. On 30 January 2020, COVID-19 was set to become the public health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC). (Susilawati, et al. 2020)

The current era of digitalization is a challenge for how organizations can structure themselves to succeed in the context of the global market (Huh & Kim, 2019). While many studies show that future employees must be equipped with digital skills and mindsets, few have written about another individual skill and competency that is also critical to future organizational success in the digital age, namely creativity (Korzynski et al, 2019). Employee creativity has become an important factor in increasing competitiveness and performance in organizations (Hahn et al, 2015). Organizations need to create conditions that can increase employee creativity, but creating these conditions can be very difficult in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. During times of stress, employees tend to give greater priority to tasks that are definite and controllable than to creative ones (Luis et al, 2020). The results of the Global Creativity Index survey (2015) also show that creativity in Indonesia is in the lower ranks compared to other countries in the world, which is ranked 115th out of 139 countries with a percentage of 0.202%. Therefore, creating conditions that support creativity become challenging for organizations (Tang et al, 2020). Organizations need to bring out the creative potential of their employees, because employee creativity can be used as the foundation for innovation, change, and organizational competitiveness (Amabile, 1988).

Employee creativity is a series of useful and new ideas, and is important for the effectiveness and survival of the organization (Amabile, 1998, 2013). Employee creativity is the basis or the beginning of the development of creativity in the organization (Zhou et al, 2018). Previous studies have found many factors of employee creativity which are divided into individual factors and contextual factors. Individual factors consist of cognitive-related characteristics such as the ability to think divergently (Jain & Jain, 2017), intrinsic motivation (Chang & Teng, 2017), personality dispositions, such as openness to experience and conscientiousness (George & Zhou, 2001), and proactivity (Gong et al, 2012). Contextual factors include variables socio-environmental (trusting work environment, good relationship with co-workers), related variables job-characteristic (feedback, autonomy, job complexity and reward), and leadership styles (supportive and controlling supervisor style) (Oldham & Cumming, 1996; Seibert et al, 1999; Shalley et al, 2004). Despite the research evidence above, it is still unclear how various factors interact in predicting employee creativity in the workplace (Zhou & Hoever, 2014) thus research is still needed to understand person-environment interactions that affect employee creativity (Zhou & Hoever, 2014).

Previous studies have revealed that individual factors play an important role in determining employee creativity. These personal characteristics include individual personality (King & Johns 2010; Yang & Wang 2010), cognitive style (Chen et al. 2015; Sagiv et al. 2010), intelligence (Ahmetoglu et al. 2016; Huang et al. 2015), knowledge (Gilson et al. 2013), and motivation. (Gerhart & Fang 2015; Hon 2012). Among the individual factors mentioned above, individual personality shows better stability than other factors such as motivation and cognitive style (Wang et al, 2018). Among employee personalities, proactive personality was found to be very important for employee creativity as it shows individual preference for engaging in challenging or risky behaviors, such as creative activities (Kim et al, 2010). Research on the relationship between proactive personality and employee creativity has not been found much (Gong et al 2012; Joo et al, 2014, Kim et al, 2010; Ohly & Fritz 2010), especially in non-western cultural contexts (Joo et al, 2014).

Proactive personality, which will later be used as the term proactive personality is a personality trait that produces strong intrinsic motivation and is defined as taking the initiative to achieve the desired goals (Presbitero, 2015), and showing the initiative to initiate meaningful changes in the environment (Bateman & Crant, 2015). 1993). The most important characteristic of a proactive personality is considering all possible future consequences (Parker & Collins, 2010). Some researchers argue that proactive personality is positively related to employee creativity (Horng et al, 2016). Based on the person-environment fit theory, it identifies two forms of fit, including demand-ability fit (DA fit) which defines the extent to which job demands and requirements match the skills and abilities of the person (Edwards & Van Harrison, 1993). Seibert et al (2001) found that individuals with a proactive personality are more active in taking the initiative and changing work procedures so that they are more innovative and creative. This is in accordance with creativity which emphasizes the generation of new and useful ideas (Joo et al, 2014). Therefore, it is important to consider individual differences that can fundamentally change the way employees perceive, process, and interact in the workplace (George, 1992, Mackey et al, 2018). Previous research found that when organizations provide an environment that physically supports creativity, employees with a proactive personality will show greater intrinsic motivation to be creative than those who work in a physical environment that does not support creativity. (Horng et al, 2016) thus that the role of a mediator is needed in knowing contextual factors that can affect employee creativity.

The second form of person environment fit theory, namely supplies-values fit (SV fit), is the extent to which the rewards and supplies provided by the environment are in accordance with the individual's needs and preferences (Edwards & Van Harrison, 1993). This conformity captures the extent to which the individual and the environment each provide what is needed (Edwards, 1996). Previous research by Amabile et al (1996) and Amabile (1997), highlighted organizational culture as a factor that can facilitate employee creativity. Organizational culture refers to the beliefs, assumptions and values held by members of the organization, which provide behavioral norms, and these norms influence behavior that is relevant to employee creativity (McLean, 2005). Despite recent developments in research examining the influence of culture on creativity, this research is still in its infancy (Chua et al, 2015).

Previous research has found that a culture that limits, regulates, and monitors behavior makes people less likely to engage in creative tasks (Chua et al. 2015). A controlling and rigid culture that does not allow divergent thinking or applying strict company policies or procedures can limit intrinsic motivation, which hinders employee creativity (Mumford et al, 2002; Shalley et al, 2004). In contrast, characteristics of organizational culture that are conducive to supporting employee creativity include intellectual orientation, independence, risk taking, task support, acceptance of uncertainty, open communication, collaboration and reward (McLean, 2005; Mumford et al, 2002; Shalley & Gilson, 2004), which all of which are characteristics of learning organizations (Jeong et al, 2017).

When an employee's personal traits, goals, or values match the organization's, it is considered appropriate, and positive congruence is expected to maximize employee attitudes (Jansen & Kristof-Brown, 2006). Organizational learning culture, which will then be used as the term organizational learning culture, can be interpreted as an integration between culture and learning organization (Hahn et al, 2015). Learning organizations support the unique views and experiments of employees, encourage collaboration towards knowledge sharing, transfer knowledge, and empower members to achieve the organization's vision (Marsick & Watkins, 2003). Organizations can also foster employee interest in learning by implementing a system of giving rewards, praise or promotions to employees (Jeong et al, 2017; Song et al, 2013). Song et al (2013) argue that "the concept of a learning organization can serve as a foundation for enhancing employee creativity".

Despite the extensive literature on the relationship between creativity and organizational learning culture, surprisingly few studies have been published empirically demonstrating this positive relationship (Hahn et al, 2015, Jeong et al, 2017, Joo et al, 2013, Yoon et al, 2010). Previous research found a positive relationship between organizational learning culture and employee creativity but with a low coefficient value of 0.23 (Hahn et al, 2015) and it was also found that organizational learning culture had no impact on employee creativity (Jeong et al, 2017) hence further research is needed. further to see the role of organizational learning culture on employee creativity

In previous studies, these variables were studied separately, hence deeper research is needed to understand the interaction person-environment that affects employee creativity by combining different combinations of variables (Jeong et al, 2017). In exploring the factors of employee creativity, this study focuses on individual traits (e.g., proactive personality) on employee creativity and the role of the environment (e.g., organizational learning culture) as factors that can affect employee creativity. The benefits of research are to develop knowledge about predictors of employee creativity. This research is expected to add insight that personal personality formed by situational factors in the organization can be a factor that affects employee creativity and becomes a consideration for organizations in today's digital era.

- H1: Proactive personality is positively related to employee creativity
H2: Proactive personality is positively related to organizational learning culture
H3: Organizational learning culture is positively related to employee creativity
H4: Organizational learning culture mediates the relationship between proactive personality and employee creativity.

II. Research Methods

The population in this study is employees of state-owned subsidiaries engaged in the construction and repair of network infrastructure. In response to the prevention and control of COVID-19, the Company has implemented a policy flexible working arrangement with the condition that employees work hybridly by working from home and work from office.

This study is a quantitative study with a design cross-sectional. This study uses a convenience sampling technique, which is a sampling technique of data sources with certain considerations (Sugiyono, 2016), and the researcher determines certain specifications that exist in the population to suit the research objectives (Daniel, 2012). The following technique is used with the aim of collecting information from participants with a homogeneous population that is easily accessible by researchers (Etikan et al, 2016).

The data collected were 179 respondents with the characteristics of having experience working in an organization for 1 year. A total of 21 participants did not include characteristics that were incongruent with the characteristics of the sample, total number of respondents was 158 respondents consisting of 76 men and 82 women aged around 22-30 years with most of the participating organizations implementing a flexible working arrangement (work from home and work from office) and full-time work from office. The data collection method uses a scale and is distributed through an online platform. Employee creativity is measured using a scale developed by Hahn et al (2015) which adapts 4 items from Zhou & George (2001) as a unidimensional scale with a reliability coefficient of = .845. An example of a scale item "I propose a new, better way to achieve a goal". Response items using a 6-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 6 = strongly agree).

Organizational learning culture was measured using the Dimension of Learning Organization Questionnaire (DLOQ-A). The scale consists of 43 items developed by Marsick & Watkins (2003) and shortened to 7 items by Yang et al. (2004) to become a unidimensional scale with a reliability coefficient of = .790. An example of a scale item "Our organization rewards employees who take initiative". Response items using a 6-point Likert scale (1 = almost incorrect, 6 = almost very true). Proactive personality was measured using the Proactive Personality Scale developed by Seibert et al. (1999) from the Bateman & Crant (1993) scale. The scale consists of 10 items with a reliability coefficient of = .887. An example of a scale item "I am constantly looking for new ways to improve my life". Response items using a 6-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 6 = strongly agree).

The characteristics of the sample are the control variables in this study. Previous research indicates that employee demographic characteristics (e.g., gender, age, educational background, and years of service in the organization) are related to employee creativity (e.g., Jiang & Gu, 2015, Jones & Weinberg, 2011, Tierney & Farmer, 2002). The work system during the COVID-19 pandemic became a variable controlled by researchers, previous research found that a telework work system associated with good autonomy was able to increase employee creativity (Naotunna & Zhou, 2018). The data analysis technique uses Hayes PROCESS Model 4 (Mediator Regression Analysis) to determine the relationship between the two variables, namely organizational learning culture and employee creativity where the relationship will depend on the third variable, namely proactive personality as a mediator.

III. Result and Discussion

This study anticipates the possibility of common method bias (CMB) by taking data only at one time. To test CMB using the Harman single factor test with the results showing a variance value of 36.80%, the results show a variance value below 50%, it can be concluded that there is no common method bias (Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 2012). Prior to the simple mediation regression test (Hayes Model 4), the researcher first tested the relationship between the demographic variables and the dependent variable. Statistical calculations show that gender ($r = -.22$, $p = .001$) has a significant negative relationship with employee creativity thus it can be concluded that gender differences can affect individual creativity levels, gender differences are found to have differences in cognitive strategies that can affect individual creativity (Abraham, 2016).

Furthermore, researchers test the hypothesis by using mediation regression analysis using Hayes PROCESS 4. Model calculations show that the overall statistical research model is able to predict the creativity of employees by 44% ($R^2 = .44$). In table 2, the results of the analysis show that there is a significant relationship between proactive personality and employee creativity ($b = 0.24$, $CI [.17, .31]$) thus H1 is supported. Furthermore, the results of the analysis show that there is a positive relationship between proactive personality and organizational learning culture ($b = 0.46$, $CI [.34, .58]$) thus H2 is supported. The results of the analysis also found a positive relationship between organizational learning culture and employee creativity ($b = 0.14$, $CI [.06, .22]$) thus H3 was supported. It is proven that there is an indirect relationship between proactive personality and employee creativity which is mediated by organizational learning culture, it shows that there is a partial mediation relationship, thus H4 is supported. The results of this study indicate that the relationship between proactive personality and employee creativity is weakened by the existence of an organizational learning culture, where this is inversely proportional to the assumption built that the existence of an organizational learning culture in organizations is able to strengthen the relationship between proactive personality and employee creativity.

Table 1. Correlation between Variablele

Variablele	Mea	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Gender	-	0.50							
2. Age	2.22	0.55	-0.00						
3. Education	-	1.26	0.28**	0.17*					
4. Tenure	1.49	0.57	-0.07	0.50**	-0.06				
5. Work system	-	0.64	-0.15	0.11	0.00	0.03			
6. Proactive Personality	4.70	0.62	-0.19*	0.04	-0.05	0.03	0.00		
7. Organizational Learning Culture	4.67	0.79	-0.09	0.08	-0.14	0.10	-0.16*	0.52**	
8. Employee Creativity	4.55	0.78	-0.22**	0.08	-0.11	-0.05	-0.11	0.62**	0.51*

N = 287. Gender (0 = Male, 1 = Female), Work System (0 = Shifting, 1 = Full Time WFO)

* $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$

Table 2. Results of the Simple Mediator Model (N = 158)

Antecedent	consequent											
	M (OLC)						Y (EC)					
	Coef	SE	t	p	LL	UL	Coef	SE	t	p	LL	UL
	ff			CI	CI	f				CI	CI	
X (PP)	0.46	0.06	7.71	0.00	0.34	0.58	0.24	0.03	6.94	0.00	0.17	0.31
M (OLC)	---	---	---	---	---	---	0.14	0.04	3.65	0.00	0.06	0.22
$R^2 = .27$						$R^2 = .44$						

EC = Employee Creativity, PP = Proactive Personality, OLC = Organization Learning Culture

This study shows that there is a significant positive relationship between proactive personality and employee creativity mediated by organizational learning culture. This study contributes to providing theoretical advances to the employee creativity literature through the perspective of person-environment fit theory. First, the results of this study indicate that employees with a proactive personality will have a higher level of creativity than employees with a low level of proactive personality. Employee creativity is key in increasing employee creativity, especially in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on the person-environment fit theory, namely demand-ability fit (DA fit), employees with a proactive personality are more active in taking the initiative and changing work procedures so they are more innovative and creative (Seibert et al, 2001). This is because the higher the demands-abilities fit, the more knowledge and skills they acquire to fulfill job requirements, therefore it will be easier for them to get rid of their conventional way of thinking (Wang & Wang, 2018). Previous research by Zhang and Long (2013) has also proven that demands-abilities fit has an extraordinary and positive effect on employee creativity by stimulating self-efficacy towards their innovations.

Second, this study also found that applying organizational learning culture indirectly had an impact on the relationship between proactive personality and employee creativity although the significance value was relatively small ($b= 0.14$, CI [.06, .22]). This is interesting because it was found that the significance value of the relationship between proactive personality and employee creativity weakened when mediated by organizational learning culture, where the results of previous studies found that learning organizations support the unique views and experiments of employees, encourage collaboration on knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer (Marsick & Watkins, 2003) which can be the basis for increasing employee creativity (Song et al, 2013). Based on the perspective of person environment fit theory, namely supplies-values fit (SV fit), this can occur if the rewards and supplies provided by the environment do not meet the individual's needs and preferences. So that employees will compare their performance with the rewards provided by the organization. If employees perceive that the rewards and supplies provided by the organization are given fairly, it will form a reciprocal relationship between the organization and its employees (Masterson et al, 2000).

The results of this study answer previous research by Jeong et al. (2017) which found organizational learning culture did not have a significant interaction effect on employee creativity. Based on Jeong et al (2017) reasons that allow the moderating effect to be insignificant include the use of DLOQ to measure the organization's overall effort in facilitating the learning process of employees not only based on an intrinsic but also extrinsic reward system, which found that rewards are able to destroy intrinsic desires, ignore reasons,

and prevent risk taking will lead to lower creative performance (Jeong et al, 2017, Kohn, 1999). This can be one of the reasons for the small significance value of organizational learning culture on employee creativity. As revealed in the research of Jeong et al. (2017), the researcher assumes that the reward aspect is able to eliminate the positive effect of organizational learning culture on employee creativity. Another reason that can explain is that the research subjects have various organizational origins, hence they do not have the same organizational learning culture values. Further research needs to consider the sample to be used from the same organization in testing the consistency of the use of measuring instruments.

Apart from the contribution to this research, there are some shortcomings that need to be recognized. First, this study uses a cross-sectional design for data collection, which allows for common method bias (CMB). We examined the potential risk of CMB using the harman's single factor test and found no presence of CMB (36.80%, < 50%). However, future research should anticipate the possibility of common method bias by using a time-lagged design in data collection (MacKenzie & Podsakoff, 2012). Second, this study uses an organizational learning culture that involves reciprocal relationships between the organization and its employees, but the data is collected using single data and may be at risk for CMB. Future studies should use other data sources, such as ratings from organizational leaders to obtain objective responses. For further researchers, it is recommended to explore other variables that can have an effect in order to know the variables that can affect the relationship between proactive personality and employee creativity which is being needed for optimization in the creative economy industry. And to be able to control the cultural elements when collecting data thus the participant subjects have the same view of cultural values in the organization.

IV. Conclusion

This study contributes to explaining the internal and external factors that influence employee creativity through the perspective of person-environment fit theory. The results obtained indicate that employees with a high level of proactive personality will influence the perspective of organizational learning culture that positively increases employee creativity in the organization.

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