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Employee Creativity: An empirical study of a logistic company in Malaysia

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Abstract

This study aimed to identify the consequences of four dimensions of psychological capital: self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism, as well as the effect of leadership support on employee creativity. Data were collected from 102 respondents among employees of a logistic company in Klang Valley, Malaysia. This study used convenience sampling, and based on the regression analysis results, any significant relationships between all independent and dependent variables were ascertained. For findings, only leadership support was significant in predicting employee creativity, while all dimensions of psychological capital were not. Therefore, this study provides empirical evidence supporting the importance of leadership support in enabling employee creativity.

Keywords: Employee Creativity; Psychological Capital, Leadership Support, Logistic Company

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1.0 Introduction

In this era of global competition and the changing world, organisations must keep reinventing their strategies. Hence, employees must be creative and proactive to grow their competencies in facing all the hardships and difficulties (Yu et al., 2019a). This study investigates the effects of psychological capital and leadership support on employee creativity among the employees in a logistic company. Employee creativity is essential among employees in logistic companies because a creative employee will give satisfaction to their customers and productivity. However, the high level of employee creativity itself is not necessarily fully discovered and developed. Thus, the employee psychological capital will facilitate the creativity of individual employees. An individual's creativity can also be enhanced as leadership support can encourage employees (Yu et al., 2019a). Many researchers have studied the different types of leadership and their impact on creativity. However, the management practices that may stimulate employee creativity have received little attention (Elqassaby, 2018). Hence, employees can be more efficient when they are creative in their work. Therefore, the conditions under which psychological capital

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exerts the most influence on creativity warrant further research. In particular, this study's objectives are to determine the relationships between each dimension of psychological capital and leadership support with employee creativity.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Employee Creativity

Employee creativity is commonly defined as an individual with a novel, valuable ideas, products and processes. This person must be flexible to work in a team rather than individually in completing a project (Runco, 2004). There are growing concerns in this field, and many studies have been conducted to ascertain the factors and outcomes of employee creativity. For instance, Zhang et al. (2020) highlighted that openness to experience was a positive influence, whilst close monitoring by employers negatively influenced employee creativity. Creative ideas in the workplace range from employees' simple suggestions related to their tasks (e.g., ways to save the department money or help develop a new filing system to increase efficiency) to innovative ideas for promoting the company's products and services that require substantive organisational change. Moreover, Shafi et al. (2020) elucidated that Idealised Influence, Intellectual Stimulation, and Inspirational Motivation significantly influence employee creativity.

2.2 Psychological Capital (PsyCap)

In today's workplace, psychological capital is described as an individual's positive psychological state of development using his/her motivational and cognitive resources to achieve a high level of performance (Luthans et al., 2008). They believe the central combination of human, social, and psychological capital is necessary to realise the potential, such as obtaining the possible self in today's workplace. The psychological capital is reflected in an individual's internal resources, such as who they are and whom they are becoming (Thompson et al., 2015). A study by Slatten et al. (2020) among 1008 hospital employees in Norway identified the positive effect of PsyCap on employee creativity. As Ghafoor and Haar (2022) claimed, employees with more excellent psychological resources might be better able to manage and ultimately leverage job stress to enhance creativity. Additionally, Cai et al. (2019) discovered that PsyCap is most effective at enhancing creativity when both supervisor support and job characteristics are high. Nevertheless, there are four dimensions of psychological capital as per the following subsections:

2.2.1 Self-efficacy

Efficacy refers to an employee's belief in their capacity to mobilise their motivation, cognitive resources, and action plans to complete a task successfully (Luthans et al., 2008). People with self-efficacy, like challenging tasks, put out the effort and motivational resources to achieve their goals and have a positive attitude toward problem-solving. According to Amabile (2012), higher levels of efficacy are linked to improved creative performance and are related to individual creativity in general. People with high self-efficacy like strenuous activities, putting forth effort and motivating resources to attain their objectives, and having a positive attitude toward problem-solving (Luthans et al., 2008). People with a high level of self-efficacy will put in more effort after taking action than those with a low level of self-efficacy (Shwarzer, 2014). As a result, employees with a high level of self-efficacy are more likely than those with a low level of self-efficacy to learn via observation and improve their ability to achieve their goals. However, Yu et al.'s (2019b) study among 468 employees of twenty manufacturing firms in China ascertained that the effect of efficacious towards creativity was not significant. In conclusion, people with high self-efficacy have greater motivation and learning capabilities and are more likely to participate in workplace innovation than those with low self-efficacy. As a result, we provide the following hypothesis:

H1a: There is a relationship between self-efficacy and employee creativity.

2.2.2 Hope

The degree of goal-directed energy employees spends on accomplishing a task and how the activity is completed is referred to as hope (Snyder, 2002). Luthans et al. (2008) stated that the previous research findings revealed that hopeful employees are highly related to creative behaviours in the organisation. Bright risk-takers hunt for alternate routes when the old ones are closed because they are driven to achieve their objectives (Snyder, 2002). The previous research findings revealed that hopeful employees are highly related to creative behaviours in the organisation (Luthans et al., 2008). Most hopeful employees like pursuing their goals, are more organically motivated, and look for innovative ways to use their "agency energy" (Snyder, 2002). People with a high level of hope are more likely to put forth a more motivated effort and create pathways for mental techniques for creative problem-solving, increasing their creative potential. Then Similarly, Yu et al. (2019b) established that hope positively impacted employee creativity. When employees with modest expectations fail to meet their goals, they use the feedback to enhance their goal-pursuing thoughts and techniques, making them more active and prone to finding new and innovative ways to overcome obstacles. As a result, we provide the following hypothesis:

H1b: There is a relationship between hope and employee creativity.

2.2.3 Resilience

Tugade and Fredrickson (2004), resilient personnel can effectively recover from negative stress and avoid stressful events as they can successfully use their psychological resources to prepare for adversity and limit the negative impact of stressful situations on themselves. Resilient employees are more likely to effectively use their available assets (such as cognitive, affective, social, financial, and other positive characteristics, skills, and resources) to mitigate the impact of risk factors (such as weaknesses, deficiencies, and other negative factors that can amplify setbacks) (Masten & Reed, 2002). Employees with high resilience can cope with stressful situations more quickly and do not suffer as many negative consequences as employees with poor resilience. Resilient employees are more likely to plan for adversity and reduce it by correctly utilising their psychological resources, and they can lessen the damage of traumatic situations to themselves (Fredrickson et al., 2008). Extending these findings to the context of employee resilience, Yu et al. (2019b) claimed that employees with a high degree of resilience would be more creative in their work and at the same time, resilience plays a mediating role between optimism and hope and employee creativity. As a result, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1c: There is a relationship between resilience and employee creativity.

2.2.4 Optimism

Optimism refers to employees having good feelings about the future (Carver & Scheier, 2002). Furthermore, optimistic persons are less likely to give up. They are more likely to have a positive impact in difficult situations, experience pleasant feelings, endure in the face of adversity and seek out novel solutions to problems and opportunities (Luthans et al., 2008). Optimists give themselves credit for good things that happen in their lives, which boosts their self-esteem and morale, leading to more creativity (Goldsmith & Martherly, 2012). Optimist employees showed positive emotions regarding future expectations.

Furthermore, an optimistic individual is less likely to give up and more likely to have a positive impact on stressful situations, experience pleasant emotions, persevere in the face of adversity, and seek out innovative solutions to problems and possibilities (Frederickson et al., 2008; Luthans et al., 2008). Employees with a high sense of optimism are more likely to be creative. According to Yu et al. (2019b), the promotion of optimism is more likely to contribute to creativity as people are motivated to succeed. As a result, highly optimistic individuals who expect to achieve their goals are more likely to be innovative than less optimistic employees. The following hypothesis is proposed:

H1d: There is a relationship between optimism and employee creativity.

2.3 Leadership Support

According to Zaitouni and Ouakouak (2018), leadership support positively impacts staff creativity. According to Tierney and Farmer (2002), bosses and coworkers who promote creativity encourage and assist employees so that they are entirely motivated to solve issues and look outside the box for more efficient techniques. Leadership and coworker support have had a positive influence on employee creativity as stated by Zaitouni and Ouakouak (2018). Leadership support explains the responsibilities of leaders for increasing employee creativity by providing a suitable environment (Zhang & Bartol, 2010). Employees' beliefs will increase that their performance will be rewarded and motivate them to be creative through supportive relationships with supervisors and coworkers. For Lee and Kim (2021), leadership communication cause employees to seek more feedback from different interpersonal sources, including supervisors, coworkers, and peers in other departments, enhancing creativity.

Nisula (2015) highlighted that organisations' supervisors and leaders must pay attention to management practices to encourage innovation, novel solutions, and creativity in their subordinates. Individual creativity and innovative work behaviour are affected by supervisor support, and many people have agreed with it (Yu et al., 2019a). According to Mehmood et al. (2020), support for creativity by supervisors and coworkers is a significant factor in creating new products and the "go ahead" of an organisation's competition (Islam et al., 2009). In a creative environment at the workplace, the supervisor encourages employees to explore the problem and to figure out a creative idea to select the best possible solution (Shalley et al., 2008). Support for creativity refers to how bosses and coworkers encourage employees to develop innovative ideas. Supervisors and coworkers that support creativity encourage and assist employees so that they are wholly motivated to discover answers to problems and to look outside the box for more efficient techniques. Additionally, a study by Li et al. (2019) found a positive relationship between humorous leadership and employee workplace creativity,

Amabile (2012) discussed that daily perceptions, feelings, and performances are influenced by the leaders who interact daily with their subordinates through specific behaviours used by those subordinates. It will influence the creativity of the work that they have assigned. Examples of leaders showing their support to their subordinates are monitoring their work progress, consulting with them on important decisions, motivating them emotionally and rewarding them for good work. On the other hand, the supervisors will display their lack of support to the subordinate by monitoring progress unfairly, giving unclear task assignments and not motivating their hard work. Rego et al. (2012) demonstrated that authentic leadership (AL) is a significant predictor of employee creativity and aids in understanding the relationship's dynamics. A more recent study by Zhou et al. (2022) established that supportive leaders would enhance employee creativity through improvements in employees' motivation and sense of efficacy, generating positive spillover and promoting work participation and mobility.

Interestingly, Suifan et al.'s (2018) study among 369 banking staff in Jordan found that transformational leadership positively affects some dimensions of employees' creativity but perceived organisational support is not significantly related to employees' creativity. In comparison, Slatten et al.'s (2020) study among 1008 Norwegian hospital staff found that leadership autonomy support positively relates to employee creativity. On the other hand, Guo et al. (2018) argued that negative leadership, such as authoritarian leadership, would

hinder employee creativity and that the relationship was more robust when psychological capital was low (versus high). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: There is a relationship between leadership support and employee creativity.

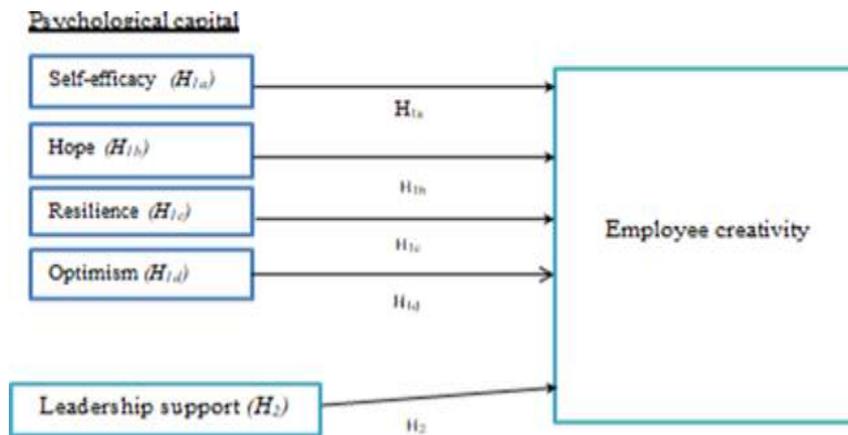


Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework for This Study

3.0 Methodology

Table 1. Measurements

Variable	List of Item	Source
Employee Creativity	1. I always suggest new ways to achieve goals or objectives. 2. I come up with new and practical ideas to improve performance. 3. I come up with new and practical ideas to improve performance. 4. I suggest new ways to increase the quality 5. I come up with creative solutions to problems.	Scott and Bruce (1994)
Psychological Capital	<p><u>Self-Efficacy</u></p> 1. I feel confident analysing a long-term problem to find a solution. 2. I feel confident in representing my work area in meetings with management. 3. I feel confident contributing to discussions about the company's strategy. 4. I feel confident helping to set targets/goals in my work area. 5. I feel confident contacting people outside the company (e.g., suppliers and customers) to discuss problems. 6. I feel confident presenting information to a group of colleagues.	Luthans et al. (2008)
	<p><u>Hope</u></p> 7. If I should find myself in a jam at work, I could think of many ways to get out of it. 8. At present, I am energetically pursuing my work goals. 9. There are lots of ways around any problem. 10. Right now, I see myself as being pretty successful at work. 11. I can think of many ways to reach my current goals. 12. At this time, I am meeting the work	
	<p><u>Resilience</u></p> 13. When I have a setback at work, I have trouble recovering from it and moving on. 14. I usually manage difficulties one way or another at work. 15. I can be "on my own," so to speak, at work if I have to. 16. I usually take stressful things at work in stride. 17. I can get through difficult times at work because I've experienced difficulty before. 18. I feel I can handle many things at a time at this job.	
	<p><u>Optimism</u></p> 19. When things are uncertain for me at work, I usually expect the best. 20. If something can go wrong for me work-wise, it will. 21. I always look on the bright side of things regarding my job. 22. I'm optimistic about what will happen to me in the future regarding work. 23. In this job, things never work out the way I want them to. 24. I approach this job as if "every cloud has a silver lining".	

Leadership Support	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The management of this company encourages and emphasises or reinforces creativity by learners. 2. The management of this company respects learners' ability to function creatively. 3. The management of this company allows learners to try to solve the same problems in different ways. 4. The management of this company will reward learners who are creative in doing their job. 5. The management of this company will publicly recognise those who are creative. 	Scott and Bruce (1994)
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The researchers used a quantitative cross-sectional strategy with a standardised questionnaire for their investigation, which means only gathering data once to identify the relationship between employee creativity, psychological capital, and leadership support. To describe the characteristics of respondents, descriptive (frequency analysis) research was conducted (age, gender, race, tenure, etc.). The individual employee in a logistic company located in Klang Valley, Malaysia served as the study's unit of analysis. The convenience sampling technique was applied for this investigation due to the unavailability of a sampling frame since the list of employees was confidential. Therefore, probability sampling could not be conducted.

Furthermore, this method would be the most economical, prompt and uncomplicated as the data was collected from a convenient pool of respondents within the same organisation. The minimum sample size was supposed to be 306 for a total population of approximately 1500; due to the time constraint of 1 month, the collected and usable responses were 102. All measurements of this study were adopted from previous prominent researchers, i.e., employee creativity (5-item) from Scott and Bruce (1994), psychological capital (24-item) from Luthans et al. (2008), and leadership support (5-item) from Scott and Bruce (1994). For all variables in this study, an interval scale was utilised, commonly known as a Likert scale, ranging from 1 = "Strongly Disagree" to 5 = "Strongly Agree." The following Table 1 displays all the adapted measurements in this study.

4.0 Findings and Discussion

According to the findings, 55.9% of females and 44.1 per cent of males were among the responders. Malays accounted for 81.4 per cent of the population, followed by Chinese (13.7 per cent), Indians (3.9 per cent), and Sabahans (1.0 per cent). About 74.5 per cent of respondents were between the ages of 21 and 30, 22.5 per cent were between the ages of 31 and 40, and the lowest percentage were those between the ages of 41 and 50. (2.9 per cent). Most respondents worked for 1 to 5 years (88.2%), 6 to 10 years (10.8%) and the rest, 1.0%, were 11 to 15 years.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Correlations of All Study Variables

	Self-Efficacy	Hope	Resilience	Optimism	Leadership Support
Self-Efficacy	1.00	0.74**	0.74**	0.61**	0.62**
Hope	0.74**	1.00	0.78**	0.74**	0.63**
Resilience	0.74**	0.78**	1.00	0.76**	0.60**
Optimism	0.61**	0.74**	0.76**	1.00	0.68**
Leadership Support	0.62**	0.63**	0.60**	0.68**	1.00
Employee Creativity	0.70**	0.73**	0.72**	0.72**	0.71**
Mean	4.27	4.30	4.24	4.30	4.21
SD	0.58	0.58	0.61	0.55	0.65

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of all study variables. The mean employee creativity was 4.27. Next, followed by the independent variable of psychological capital; i.e., self-efficacy was 4.27, hope was 4.30, resilience was 4.27, and optimism was 4.30. The independent variable of leadership support was 4.21. These results showed that, on average, employees agreed with the questions presented in the survey. Therefore, employee creativity, psychological capital, and leadership support among the studied Malaysian logistic company employees were considered at a high level. The association level between all variables in this research study was determined using Pearson Correlation. As per Table 2, It shows a highly positive and significant association between self-efficacy and employee creativity ($r = 0.70, p < 0.01$), between hope and employee creativity ($r = 0.73, p < 0.01$), between resilience and employee creativity ($r = 0.72, p < 0.01$), and between optimism and employee creativity ($r = 0.72, p < 0.01$). Thus, based on the bivariate relationship, it can be expected that a high level of employee creativity is associated with a high level of psychological capital (self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism). Similarly, leadership support also showed a highly positive and significant correlation with employee creativity ($r = 0.71, p < 0.01$).

Table 3 describes the outcome of the framework suggested in this study. Using the multiple regression model, all factors gave an R^2 of 0.69, which indicated that the two (2) independent variables of psychological capital (self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism) and leadership support could explain 69 per cent of the variability in employee creativity. Meanwhile, the other factors not considered in this study explained the remaining 31% of the variation in the dependent variable. Additionally, the study model was fit, with a statistically significant p-value of 0.01 and an F-value of 42.48. Surprisingly, there were no significant t-value in all four aspects of psychological capital (self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism). In other words, self-efficacy contributes ($\beta=0.18, p>0.05$), hope ($\beta=0.18, p>0.05$), resilience ($\beta=0.13, p>0.05$) and optimism ($\beta=0.20, p>0.05$). Thus, H1a, H1b, H1c and H1d were not supported. In contrast, leadership support significantly impacted employee creativity ($\beta=0.28, p<0.01$). Thus, H2 was supported.

Table 3. Multiple Regression Analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	-0.5	.31		-.17	.867
Self-Efficacy	.19	.10	.18	1.85	.068
Hope	.19	.12	.18	1.64	.104
Resilience	.13	.11	.13	1.21	.230
Optimism	.22	.12	.20	1.94	.055
Leadership Support	.28	.08	.28	3.42	.001
F value					42.48
Sig					.000*
Adjusted R ²					0.69
R ²					0.83

5.0 Discussion

The findings of this study were very much enjoyable. This is because, based on correlational analysis, all variables were positively significant and were highly associated with each other. Hence, these results corroborated the significant relationship between all four dimensions of PsyCap and employee creativity, as discovered by Yu et al. (2019b), who studied 468 Chinese manufacturing employees. On top of that, this study's significant correlational relationship between leadership support and employee creativity also affirms the recent study by Zhou et al. (2022), who also found the same among 393 Chinese high technology industrial workers. However, the findings of multiple regression were inconsistent when all of the variables were regressed together in ascertaining their impacts on the surveyed employee creativity of a logistic company in Malaysia. Astoundingly, all dimensions of PsyCap were not significantly affecting employee creativity other than the factor of leadership support alone, although the total variations amounted to almost 70% of the dependent variable. Therefore, it can be decided that the creativity among the studied logistic company's employees would be significantly influenced by their leaders, i.e., whether their supervisors are supportive in encouraging them to initiate new ideas and innovations. Thus, when the leaders take good care of their subordinates, the individual employee's psychology will not be a significant factor as the employee shall work following the guidance and facilitation of their supervisors. This study conformed to the importance of supportive leadership in boosting employee creativity, as validated in the recent study by Slatten et al. (2020) among 1008 hospital employees in Norway. The inconsistent effect of PsyCap in impacting employee creativity consequently signifies that internal cognitive and affective behavioural output by any employee would be muchly influenced by their superior since in a company, especially the logistics industry in Malaysia, the job security and rewards primarily rely on the superiors' discretion. Hence, this study has shed light on the importance of a leader in achieving organisational objectives. Nevertheless, the ability to act supportive is a skill that requires training, mentoring, constant monitoring and inducements by the organisation's top management.

6.0 Conclusion & Recommendations

Overall, the primary goal of this study is to examine the elements that influence employee creativity in a Malaysian logistics company. Although only one inference was accepted, while the other four were dismissed, the strong influence of leadership support toward employee creativity made this study a vital reference for all human resource practitioners. The finding of this study is also limited to one organisation, specifically in the Malaysian logistic industry; hence, its generalizability would not be determined. Conversely, employees' innovativeness could be regarded as unaffected by any aspect of psychological capital. Hence it is highly recommended for all organisations to focus on the relationship between leader and subordinate. A specific policy and performance management initiatives should be developed to regulate and control how supervisors and staff handle their work relationships. This ensures that a supportive environment can be established, and any misuse or exploitation can be abolished. Human resource managers should also undertake many training programs and experiential learning activities to enrich the supportive skills of all identified leaders. The wisdom of handling complex relationships, especially among the old and experienced leaders, should be captured and retained through effective knowledge management strategies so that it can be transferred and disseminated to the new and upcoming younger leaders. Rewards and incentives could also be introduced to compensate for the best effort and handwork of the leaders who constantly support their staff in any way possible. Ultimately, all the recommended activities shall later create a supportive culture thus ensuring the same shared values, norms, and beliefs among all employees in an organisation, thus encouraging creativity to be flourished successfully to compete in this global world. In future, new directions of study are needed to investigate the effects of psychological capital and leadership support on employee creativity by incorporating additional factors and researching more organisations to gain more input and a better in-depth understanding of how to effectively foster employees to be creative. Future studies in this line of research should deliberate how creativity at the level of

groups and the organisational level is influenced by leadership support, and cross-validation replication is also required to establish the generalizability of this study by conducting research in other Eastern, Western, Northern and Southern countries.

7.0 Paper Contribution to Related Study

This study has significantly contributed to the knowledge of employee creativity and its antecedents. Creativity is a behavioural aspect of any worker and is dynamic to ensure the organisation's sustainability in the current competitive edge. In addition, this study also added to the fact of environmental importance in influencing employee behaviour. In this case, the strong effect of leadership support towards employee creativity implies the necessity for any organisation to ensure the relationship environment is being taken care of so that everyone's goals and objectives would be efficiently achieved.

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