



The Relationship Between Transformational Leadership and Employee Creativity in the Ministry of Sport and Youth with the Mediating Role of Creative Self-Efficacy

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Abstract

Background and purpose: Transformational leadership is one of the leadership approaches that plays a significant role in enhancing employee performance by focusing on inspirational motivation, encouraging creativity, and fostering organizational transformation. Accordingly, this study aimed to examine the relationship between transformational leadership and employee creativity in the Ministry of Sport and Youth, with the mediating role of creative self-efficacy. **Methodology:** This study was descriptive and correlational in nature. The statistical population consisted of all 1,171 employees of the Ministry of Sport and Youth. Ultimately, 370 individuals were randomly selected as the sample. The research instruments included three questionnaires: Bass and Avolio's Transformational Leadership Questionnaire (2000), George and Zhou's Employee Creativity Questionnaire (2001), and Kavussanu et al.'s Creative Self-Efficacy Questionnaire (2013). The face and content validity of the tools were confirmed by a panel of expert faculty members, and the construct validity was established through confirmatory factor analysis based on structural equation modeling. Additionally, the reliability of the questionnaires was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. **Results:** The results revealed that creative self-efficacy impacts employee creativity. Transformational leadership influences employee creativity and creative self-efficacy. Furthermore, transformational leadership indirectly affects employee creativity through its impact on creative self-efficacy. **Conclusion:** Overall, it can be concluded that creative self-efficacy acts as a critical factor in enhancing employee creativity. Transformational leadership also plays a pivotal role in fostering employee creativity, both directly and indirectly, through its influence on creative self-efficacy. These findings suggest that leaders, by creating motivational visions, supporting innovation, and bolstering employees' confidence in their creative abilities, can provide an environment conducive to the emergence and development of creativity within the organization.

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Introduction

Transformational leadership is a leadership approach that plays a significant role in enhancing employee performance by focusing on inspirational motivation, encouraging creativity, and fostering organizational transformation (Agogué, Poirel, Pineau, Houdé, & Cassotti, 2014). This leadership style, characterized by clarifying vision, promoting team spirit, and addressing employees' individual needs, creates a dynamic and supportive environment where creativity naturally flourishes (Artz, Norman, Hatfield, & Cardinal, 2010). Employee creativity, as one of the most important competitive advantages for organizations, is essential for innovation, solving complex problems, and adapting to environmental changes (Atalay, Anafarta, & Sarvan, 2013). In today's world, where complexity and change are defining features of organizations, those capable of cultivating employee creativity have a better chance of survival and growth (Batistic, Černe, Kaše, & Zupic, 2016).

The relationship between transformational leadership and employee creativity is significant because this leadership style not only enhances employees' intrinsic motivation but also encourages them to propose new ideas and creative solutions by instilling a sense of meaning and value in their work (Becke, 2014). Exploring this relationship can help managers and leaders identify more effective ways to create innovative environments and improve organizational productivity (Bissola & Imperatori, 2011). Creativity can be defined as the interaction between talent, process, and environment, in which an individual or group generates a novel idea that has not been proposed before (Bott et al., 2014). In contrast, a creative organization is defined as a business entity whose primary revenue comes from the production of new and appropriate ideas, processes, products, or services to address identified problems or opportunities (Camisón & Villar-López, 2014).

Despite the increasing recognition of organizational creativity as a crucial driver of performance, there is limited knowledge about how to foster and stimulate these characteristics within organizations. The existing literature primarily focuses on techniques for idea generation in specific problem-solving situations. However, little research explores how creativity can be enhanced as a characteristic that permeates the organization's daily operations (Chaubey, Sahoo, & Khatri, 2019).

In today's dynamic world, organizations need leaders who can empower and motivate employees to enhance creativity and innovation. The Ministry of Sport and Youth, as a key entity in the country's cultural and social development, increasingly requires employee creativity to implement innovative programs and solve complex problems (Chiaburu, Peng, Oh, Banks, & Lomeli, 2013). However, workplace creativity does not arise spontaneously and depends on factors such as leadership style and employees' internal beliefs (Dawes, 2013). Transformational leadership, as one of the most effective leadership styles, emphasizes inspiration, encouraging positive changes, and creating a supportive environment. This leadership style plays a critical role in fostering creativity by focusing on employees' intrinsic motivation, enhancing self-confidence, and promoting teamwork (Dechamp & Szostak, 2016).

At the same time, creative self-efficacy, which refers to an individual's belief in their ability to generate novel ideas and innovative solutions, is a key factor in achieving creative behaviors. Employees with higher levels of creative self-efficacy are more likely to employ innovative ideas when facing challenges (Docherty, Kira, & Shani, 2008). In this context, the mediating role of creative self-efficacy acts as a bridge between transformational leadership and employee creativity. In other words, when leaders use transformational practices to encourage employees to embrace challenges and innovation, the impact can be amplified through increased creative self-efficacy (Shafi, Lei, Song, & Sarker, 2020).

In the Ministry of Sport and Youth, which deals with diverse societal needs in sports and youth affairs, employee creativity can significantly impact service quality, policy formulation, and the implementation of effective programs (Smith & Green, 2020). Highlighting this issue is crucial as identifying the relationship between transformational leadership, creative self-efficacy, and employee creativity can provide solutions to improve organizational performance and foster innovation within the Ministry of Sport and Youth. This study can pave the way for designing educational and managerial programs that enhance transformational leadership styles and strengthen employees' creative self-efficacy. This is particularly important in sports organizations, as no comprehensive model for fostering creativity has been proposed for these organizations. Accordingly, the present study examines the relationship between transformational leadership and employee creativity in the Ministry of Sport and Youth, with the mediating role of creative self-efficacy.

Methodology

This research employs a descriptive-correlational design with an applied approach, and the data collection was conducted in the field. The statistical population of this study consisted of all employees of the Ministry of Sport and Youth, approximately 1,171 individuals. To estimate the sample size, the Krejcie and Morgan table was used, and the sample size was determined to be 370 individuals. Three questionnaires were used in this study, as described below:

Transformational Leadership Questionnaire: To measure transformational leadership, this study employed the 20-item questionnaire by Avolio and Bass (2000), which includes four dimensions: individual consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence. The questionnaire

was designed based on a five-point Likert scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree.

Employee Creativity Questionnaire: To measure employee creativity, this study utilized the 10-item questionnaire by George and Zhou (2001), which was also designed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree.

Creative Self-Efficacy Questionnaire: To measure creative self-efficacy, this study used the 11-item questionnaire by Kavussanu et al. (2013), designed on a five-point Likert scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree.

The most important factor in evaluating a measurement tool is its validity, which addresses the extent to which the tool measures the intended attribute. In other words, validity reflects the alignment of the questionnaire with the research objectives. The higher the validity of the tool, the greater the credibility of the research. In this study, face and content validity were assessed, and it is noteworthy that the questionnaires were standardized. Expert opinions from the supervising professor and 12 management experts were also obtained and confirmed.

Reliability concerns the extent to which a measurement tool yields consistent results under the same conditions. Various methods can be used to measure reliability, but given the nature of the research tools and the widespread use of Cronbach's alpha in field research, this method was chosen. The results showed that the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.82 for transformational leadership, 0.79 for employee creativity, and 0.84 for creative self-efficacy, indicating an acceptable level of reliability for the study variables.

For data analysis, confirmatory factor analysis was used, and the variance-based structural equation modeling approach was employed using SPSS version 23 and SmartPLS version 2 software.

Results

The descriptive demographic results indicated that 45.7% of the sample were women and 54.3% were men. Moreover, 15.4% of the participants were single, and 84.6% were married. Regarding age, 13.5% were under 30 years old, 43.8% were between 31 and 40 years old, 34.1% were between 41 and 50 years old, and 8.6% were over 50 years old. In this section, the main variables of the study are described using key descriptive statistics (central tendency, dispersion, and distribution shape) (Table 1). According to the values in Table 1, the means of the study variables (transformational leadership, employee creativity, creative self-efficacy) were estimated to be above the average level (3) for the sample. In other words, the sample rated these variables above average. The standard deviation values for the study variables indicate moderate dispersion of the data around the mean.

The negative skewness index for transformational leadership suggests that the data are skewed towards higher values than the mean, while the slightly positive skewness indices for employee creativity and creative self-efficacy indicate that their scores tend toward lower values than the mean. The positive kurtosis index for transformational leadership indicates a relatively flat distribution of the data, whereas the negative kurtosis indices for employee creativity and creative self-efficacy reflect a relatively peaked distribution. Based on the skewness and kurtosis test results (ranging between -2 and 2), it can be concluded that the data follow a normal distribution.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Transformational Leadership	3.41	0.63	-0.16	0.08
Employee Creativity	3.07	0.71	0.05	-0.31

Creative Self-Efficacy	3.27	0.54	0.04	-0.29
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The correlation matrix for the main variables of the study is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Spearman Correlation Matrix for Study Variables

Variable	1	2	3
Transformational Leadership	1		
Employee Creativity	0.627**	1	
Creative Self-Efficacy	0.553**	0.621**	1

* $p < .01$, $p < .05$

The indices for evaluating the overall structural equation model indicate that the proposed model is supported by the study data. In other words, the data fit the model well, and all indices demonstrate the appropriateness of the structural equation model (Table 3).

Table 3: Model Fit Indices

Variable	AVE	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha	Communality	Redundancy
Employee Creativity	0.849	0.867	0.831	0.266	0.242
Creative Self-Efficacy	0.864	0.874	0.842	0.257	0.150
Transformational Leadership	0.789	0.909	0.894	0.250	-

The results reported in Table 4 show that creative self-efficacy has a positive and significant effect on employee creativity ($\alpha = 0.306$; $p = .001$). Transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee creativity ($\alpha = 0.505$; $p = .001$). Transformational leadership also has a positive and significant effect on creative self-efficacy ($\alpha = 0.654$; $p = .001$). Additionally, transformational

leadership exerts a positive and significant indirect effect on employee creativity through creative self-efficacy ($\alpha = 0.200$; $p = .001$).

Table 4: Direct Effects Between Study Variables

Path	Path Coefficient (α)	t-value	p-value	Result
Creative Self-Efficacy → Employee Creativity	0.306	6.159	.001	Confirmed
Transformational Leadership → Employee Creativity	0.505	11.952	.001	Confirmed
Transformational Leadership → Creative Self-Efficacy	0.654	21.564	.001	Confirmed
Transformational Leadership → Creative Self-Efficacy → Employee Creativity	0.200	5.905	.001	Confirmed

The estimated values in Table 5 indicate that creative self-efficacy explains 46.4% of the variance in employee creativity. Based on the coefficient of determination, this effect is considered moderate. In other words, creative self-efficacy has a moderately positive and significant impact on employee creativity ($p < .05$). Therefore, the hypothesis that creative self-efficacy affects employee creativity is supported.

Table 5: Impact of Creative Self-Efficacy on Employee Creativity

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	R ²	Beta	t-value	p-value
Creative Self-Efficacy	Employee Creativity	0.464	0.320	6.653	.001
Transformational Leadership	Employee Creativity	-	0.754	33.582	.001
Transformational Leadership	Creative Self-Efficacy	-	0.658	20.159	.001

Finally, the results in Table 6 demonstrate that creative self-efficacy acts as a mediator between transformational leadership and employee creativity within the

Ministry of Sport and Youth. The effect size of this mediation was estimated to be 0.211 ($\alpha = 0.211$; $p = .001$), which indicates a relatively weak mediating effect.

Table 6: Mediating Role of Creative Self-Efficacy

Path	Beta	t-value	p-value	Mediation Effect
Transformational Leadership → Creative Self-Efficacy → Employee Creativity	0.211	6.195	.001	Partial

Discussion and Conclusion

The results showed that transformational leadership has a positive and significant impact on employee creativity through creative self-efficacy. These findings align with the studies by Shafi et al. (2020) and Smith and Green (2020). The studies by Mital and Daher (2015) indicated that creative self-efficacy can act as a mediating role in the relationship between transformational leadership and employee creativity. Additionally, knowledge sharing acts as a moderator in the relationship with employee creativity. In this regard, Shafi et al. (2020) concluded that the creative role identity and creative self-efficacy are mediating variables that influence transformational leadership and employee creativity. Based on these results, it can be concluded that managers who adopt transformational leadership styles positively affect their employees' creative self-efficacy and, through creative role identity and creative self-efficacy, positively impact their creativity. The present study's findings are consistent with Bandura's social cognitive theory. According to this theory, individuals' beliefs in their abilities to generate creative outcomes and their self-recognition as creative individuals at the workplace both play crucial roles in the causal mechanism between transformational leadership and employee creativity. More importantly, considering creative self-efficacy as a variable that links transformational leadership, social-cognitive theory, and

creativity theories in the context of the sports industry contributes significantly to the literature in this field. Therefore, it can be concluded that transformational leadership has a considerable impact on employee creativity. Hence, managers should focus more on employees' self-efficacy to enhance their creativity (Shafi et al., 2020; Smith & Green, 2020).

The findings of this study indicate that creative self-efficacy has a direct and significant effect on employee creativity. This result highlights the importance of employees' beliefs in their abilities to solve problems creatively and generate novel ideas. Individuals with high creative self-efficacy are more likely to provide innovative solutions when facing challenges. This finding is consistent with motivation theories and creative behavior, emphasizing the need to design interventions that enhance creative self-efficacy. Such interventions may include creative skills training, positive feedback, and providing opportunities for successful experiences (Bott et al., 2014; Camisón & Villar-López, 2014).

The role of transformational leadership in employee creativity is also prominent. Transformational leaders, by creating a clear vision, inspiring employees, and supporting creative efforts, foster conditions that allow creativity to thrive. This leadership style positively impacts employee morale and motivation through the promotion of trust, open communication, and an emphasis on continuous learning and growth. Such leaders have the ability to encourage employees to think outside the box and explore new paths. This finding aligns with previous studies on the positive impact of transformational leadership on organizational innovation and emphasizes the need for training leaders to adopt this management style (Chaubey, Sahoo, & Khatri, 2019; Dechamp & Szostak, 2016).

The indirect relationship between transformational leadership and employee creativity through creative self-efficacy demonstrates the mediating role of this variable. This means that the influence of transformational leaders on employee

creativity is not limited to their direct actions but is amplified through enhancing creative self-efficacy, providing a foundation for improved creativity. Leaders can strengthen employees' creative self-efficacy by creating an environment where employees feel empowered and valued. This not only increases individual creativity but also contributes to enhanced organizational performance and innovation. Overall, these findings underscore the importance of considering the complex relationships between leadership styles, individual beliefs, and creative outcomes in workplace environments (Becke, 2014; Docherty, Kira, & Shani, 2008).

In conclusion, creative self-efficacy acts as a key factor in enhancing employee creativity. Moreover, transformational leadership plays a crucial role in strengthening employee creativity, both directly and through its influence on creative self-efficacy. These findings suggest that leaders who create motivational visions, support innovation, and enhance employees' confidence in their creative abilities can foster an environment that leads to the emergence and development of creativity in organizations. By employing transformational leaders and implementing individual development programs to enhance creative self-efficacy, organizations can foster a culture of creativity, laying the groundwork for innovation and progress.

Ethics

This research observed ethical standards, including obtaining informed consent and ensuring privacy and confidentiality. Also, while completing the questionnaires while emphasizing completing all the questions, the participants were free to withdraw from the research at any time and provide individual information. They were assured that the information would remain confidential, which was strictly adhered to.

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Conflict of Interest

According to the authors, this article has no financial sponsor or conflict of interest.

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