

The Factors That Affect Employee Creativity among Staff in a Malaysian Energy Corporation

Saidatul Nur Atieka binti Azman, Nur Aizureen Anwar*, Norashikin Hussein, Norhayati Omar,
Murni Zarina Mohamed Razali

Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Cawangan Selangor, Kampus Puncak Alam,
Selangor, Malaysia

2015393433@student.uitm.edu.my, nuraizureen@uitm.edu.my*, shikin6320@uitm.edu.my,
norha981@uitm.edu.my, murnizarina@uitm.edu.my

Abstract: This article aims to analyze the factors that affect employee creativity among staff in a Malaysian operating in the energy industry that faced the crucial situation impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The total number of respondents involved in this study is 108 using a questionnaire as an instrument in this study. As a result of correlation analysis, it shows that there are significant relationships between personality and work environment with employee creativity. For reward, there is no relationship with employee creativity. According to the result of multiple regression, R^2 was 37.6% which means all the independent variables influence the dependent variable on that amount. The rest of the amount 62.4% is influenced by other factors. The regression result also shows that only the hypothesis on personality and work environment is supported. And other factors that affect employee creativity should be considered in future research. The significance of this study is to highlight the importance of understanding the factors affecting employees' creativity during Movement Control Order (MCO). From the perspective of the organization, this study helps to better understand its operation and to maximize employee creativity during MCO. On the other hand, the employees may benefit from this study by giving awareness, to educate and support employees during MCO as some need to Work-From-Home (WFH) with problems with internet connection.

Keywords: *Employee Creativity, Personality, Work Environment, Reward.*

1. Introduction and Background

The creativity of employees is an important aspect of solving employee problems because it encourages the solution to current problems (Sourchi & Jianqiao, 2015). One of the basic human needs is creativity, which is the need for self-realization (self-actualization) and is the greatest human need (Munandar & Fuady, 2017). In the current competitive world, these studies will investigate the views of individuals in organizations or manufacturing companies about the variables that help promote the imagination of the representative of organizations in their work environment. Recent studies have attempted to determine what factors in the business environment affect creative output. Gu, Strauss, Bond, & Cavanagh, (2015), for instance, discovered found that the moral position of the leader has a positive effect on a team's creative output.

Regarding the issues of creative individual (self) and creative concept, arises the question of who or what can be called creative. Kaufman and Beghetto (2009) addressed this question by designating the various levels of creativity. The 'Little C Level' innovation is illustrated in unique organizational creativity literature within this categorization. According to this, in all individuals, imagination is present and it occurs with sufficient environmental conditions and encouragement. Creative people are versatile, they like playing and laughing, according to Feist (2010). Characteristics of social personality include actions and attitudes that concern one's interaction with others. Creative individuals like problems and also disregard social norms and customs. Feist (2010) also offers an overview of the relationship between personality and imagination. He indicated that personality affects creativity by minimizing behavior, stressing that genetic and brain characteristics contribute to differences in personality, influencing creative thoughts and behavior.

We are living in rapidly changing times. Considering that organizations have had to adjust to completely new marketing platforms (web and social) in a single generation, the company must think develop invest in and use new technologies. To succeed on the global level, the company must concentrate on strategies and accomplish its dream and mission. There are now so many challenges that the organization can face, particularly in finding the right individual for the right role. It would take a longer time for workers to expertly build skills and competencies. The secret to a prosperous future is the right talents, competencies, and a great personality. Thus, this study is to investigate factors that affect employee creativity among the staff of a Malaysian energy

corporation. The aim of this study will be analyzed based on the variable stated which is personality, work environment and reward.

2. Literature Review

Employee Creativity: Creativity is important to the company because it makes workers more appealing with creativity and helps the organization move forward with a generous idea from the employee himself. It also enables the company to adjust to the current trends that could impact the company or employee itself to survive in the global market. In the workplace, creativity is something that needs to be polished. In the studied energy corporation, when the organization wants to encourage their staff to give creative ideas on slogans, the management will organize an event and all the staff will be given an opportunity participate to in that event. Those who give the most creative slogan will receive rewards and appreciation from the top management.

Creativity is extracted from the cumulative creative thinking skills and knowledge of a person based on their formal education and previous experience (Gong, Yaping, Huang, Jia-Chi, Farh & Jiing-Lih. 2009). Creativity is considered a personal trait in some research, with characteristics that include large areas of interest and high levels of energy (King & Gurland, 2007). An understanding of organizational creativity would require an understanding of the creative process, the creative object, the creative individual, the creative situation, and how each of these components interacts with each other (Harrington, 1990).

Creativity is something imaginative individuals have or do, according to popular wisdom (Amabile, 1997). Creative people have many characteristics that differentiate them from their less creative peers, i.e. they have a rich body of domain-relevant information and well-developed skills, they find their job intrinsically inspiring, and they appear to be autonomous, and greater. Unconventional and higher risk-takers have diverse preferences and greater tolerance to new experiences (Simonton, 2000). Many studies have identified creativity as an outcome that focuses on new and useful ideas (Shalley & Gilson, 2004). Creativity is an essential indicator of the success of a company in modern business, and a creative work atmosphere can encourage employee well-being in terms of job satisfaction and decreased intentions to leave (Shalley, Gilson & Blum, 2000).

Most research shows that employees with certain dispositional differences such as a creative personality, a big-five personality, and divergent cognitions may produce more creativity. A theoretical explanation is that these personalities encompass the general tendency to seek challenges and produce creative ideas. Research by Cohen-Meitar, Carmeli and Waldman (2009) has shown that in creative work, workers can find significance and that meaningful creative work can improve job satisfaction and participation, as well as employee performance and retention by extension. This is particularly true if workers feel they can and will be imaginative at work (Jaussi, Randel & Dionne, 2007). Organizations can do all they can to equip workers to persist creatively, given that all employees can add value creatively. Taking full advantage of the natural flow of employee creativity to reap the rewards of higher performance in creativity, the right performance in creativity and self-sustaining performance in creativity.

Personality and Employee Creativity: It is possible to recognize constructive action as a personal effort to change the status quo and strengthen the current situation. 'People with a proactive personality recognize and take action on opportunities, demonstrate initiative, show an effort and maintain before substantial change occurs.' (2000, p.436, Crant). The researcher has demonstrated a consistent positive correlation between proactive personality and the Three Big Five Factors which are Extraversion, Conscientiousness and Openness to experience. Amabile (1998) and Barron and Harrington (1981) show that personality characteristics such as intellectual curiosity, intellectual integrity, elf trust, the firm sense of self of being imaginative, resilience and openness that distinguish personality are relatively stable in different fields. Managers can inspire and influence employee creativity by modeling how to do creative work, presenting social cues and signals about how they perceive organizational standards for creativity, and responding to other people's creativity (Tierney & Farmer, 2004). Managers may promote or discourage the imaginative persistence of employees even though they have higher levels of creative self-identity and self-efficacy (Carmeli, Reiter-Palmon & Ziv, 2010). Based on these analyses, it is hypothesized that:

H1: Personality is associated with Employee Creativity.

Work Environment and Employee Creativity: Employees who find different ways to be innovative, whether by demonstrating their work's originality, testing out new concepts and solutions to problem-solving, finding possibilities for new products/processes or creating new, yet realistic, work-related ideas, are far more likely to remain creatively engaged regardless of the difficulties they face (Carmeli, Reiter-Palmon, Ziv, 2010).

A better work environment is important for the employee to do their job every day. The routine they had been doing would make them feel less attractive. The management must think about how to increase the motivation of the employee so that they can do their job in a good mood and also encourage their mind to think better and more creatively.

By developing a favorable working atmosphere in which creativity, valued insisted on being discouraged, leaders can also exert direct or indirect impacts on employee creativity. Supervisory and leadership practices have been shown to have a major effect on workplace innovation in previous research (Mumford et al., 2002, Oldham & Cummings, 1996; Scott & Bruce, 1994; Tierney et al., 1999; Zhou, 2003). Based on these analyses, it is hypothesized that:

H2: Work Environment is associated with Employee Creativity.

Reward and Employee Creativity: The researchers, Amabile, 1998; and Woodman et al. 1993, show a positive correlation between perceived organizational support (POS) and the creativity of the person. The degree to which an employee believes that the company promotes, supports, rewards, and honors employees who demonstrate creativity has been described as POS for creativity (Zhou & George, 2011).

According to Dr Baskar (2018), mentioned the fact that workers appeared to be less driven with no awards. Since the company and therefore the business unit are in a state of transition, workers in this group may choose to leave the organization. This brings the company unit under pressure to retain these personnel. The business unit could benefit from a retention plan being introduced, which has a heavy emphasis on recognition in and of itself.

As previously reported, if increased, incentives and appreciation may have a beneficial impact on motivation and satisfaction. According to the results, acknowledgment requires both appreciation and performance reviews. To provide daily recognition and input, managers in the business unit could thus use the performance management system. Based on these analyses, it is hypothesized that:

H3: Rewards is associated with Employee Creativity.

3. Research Methodology

This study aims to investigate and identify the cause-and-effect relationship between the Independent variable (IV) and Dependent Variable (DV) the population of 150 total staff at a Malaysian energy corporation is chosen as a sample for this research. A complete questionnaire will be distributed among staff and 108 respondents have been selected randomly. The sampling technique that will be used for this study is convenience sampling which means that the respondents will easily understand and answer the questionnaire provided to them. This technique can be considered quick and efficient without causing any disturbance to the normal working environment at this energy company. The questionnaire is designed with Google Forms and distributed to the respondent by sending the link through WhatsApp, Telegram or Email. Validation of the questionnaire is made by the research advisor for this study that expert in this field.

4. Results and Discussion

Profile of Respondents: Table 1 displays a summary of the demographic of the total sample of respondents who participated in the study.

Table 1: Demographic Information about Respondents (n=108)

Sample Profile	Sub Profile	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percent %
Gender	Male	60	55.6	55.6
	Female	48	44.4	100.0
Age	Less than 20 years old	3	2.8	2.8
	21 - 30 years old	61	56.5	59.3
	31 - 40 years old	36	33.3	92.6
	41 - 50 years old	6	5.6	98.1
	51 and above	2	1.9	100.0
Race	Malay	103	95.4	95.4
	Chinese	2	1.9	97.2
	Indian	2	1.9	99.1
	Others	1	0.9	100.0
Position	Permanent	88	81.5	81.5
	Contract	20	18.5	100.0
Length of service	Less than 2 years	19	17.6	17.6
	2-5 years	50	46.3	63.9
	5 years and above	39	36.1	100.0
Total		108	100.0	100.0

Descriptive Statistics: To ensure the questionnaire was distributed normally to the respondents. The normality test was done in Skewness and Kurtosis. Table 2 below shows the information.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

Items		Personality	Work Environment	Reward	Employee Creativity
N	Valid	108	108	108	108
	Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean		4.1694	3.8438	3.9806	3.9479
Median		4.1500	3.8750	4.0000	4.0000
Mode		4.00	3.88	4.00	4.00
Std. Deviation		0.40843	0.46272	0.46973	0.49681
Variance		0.167	0.214	0.221	0.247
Skewness		-0.341	-0.208	0.139	-0.034
Kurtosis		0.494	0.674	-0.270	0.186

The distribution of the questionnaire is normal, the value of Skewness and Kurtosis must be less than 1.9. Based on Table 2 above, the values of Skewness and Kurtosis are normal for all variables.

Correlation Analysis: According to correlation strength based on Guilford Law there is a positive relationship between personality, work environment, reward and employee creativity. Table 3 below shows the summary of the correlation analysis between the variables.

Table 3: Correlation Analysis

Items		Employee Creativity	Personality	Work Environment	Reward
Employee Creativity	Pearson	1	.529**	.568**	.451**
	Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	108	108	108	108
Personality	Pearson	.529**	1	.642**	.522**
	Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000	0.000
	N	108	108	108	108
Work	Pearson	.568**	.642**	1	.614**

Environment	Correlation				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000		0.000
	N	108	108	108	108
Reward	Pearson	.451**	.522**	.614**	1
	Correlation				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	
	N	108	108	108	108

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Based on table 3 above concludes that all variables have moderate positive and low positive correlations between personality and employee creativity ($r = .529$). Work environment and employee creativity ($r = .568$) and reward is low positive correlation which is ($r = .451$).

Regression Analysis: Based on Table 4 R_2 is 37.6% which means all the independent variables influence the dependent variable on that amount. The rest of the amount 62.4% is influenced by other factors. F-stat, 20.889 is significant (p -value < 0.05) showing that there is a relationship between personality and work environment. The relationship between reward and employee creativity (DV), is not significant with a value of 0.270 (p -value > 0.05) however, the degree of each IV and DV will be explained in hypothesis testing. The regression function of employee creativity is equal to a constant (0.800), personality (0.309), work environment (0.362) and reward (0.118).

Table 4: Regression Analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	0.800	0.421		1.902	0.060
Personality	0.309	0.126	0.254	2.460	0.016
Work Environment	0.362	0.120	0.337	3.016	0.003
Reward	0.118	0.106	0.111	1.108	0.270
R_2	0.376				
F	20.889				
Sig.	.000 ^b				

Dependent Variable: Employee Creativity

Based on the above table, it shows that: **H1:** The value of t-stat is 2.460 (p -value < 0.05), $p = 0.016$ which means there is a significant and there is relationship between personality and employee creativity. Therefore, the H1 is supported. **H2:** The value of t-stat is 3.016 (p -value < 0.05), $p = 0.003$ which means there is a significant and there is relationship between work environment and employee creativity. Therefore, the H2 is supported. **H3:** The value of the t-stat is 1.108 (p -value < 0.05), $p = 0.270$ which means there is no significant relationship between reward and employee creativity. Therefore, the H3 is not supported. The conclusion is, between the 3-hypothesis provided above, the most value that significant and dominant is the Work Environment with the largest beta coefficient which is 0.337 and a significant value is 0.003.

Discussion: Based on the data analysis, it shows that there is a positive correlation when $r = .529$, $p = 0.000$ ($p < 0.01$) and the relationship is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). According to Guilford Law, there is a moderate positive correlation between personality and employee creativity. The finding of this study is different from the study by Kamlesh Singh (2010). By referring to her journal, mentioned that her study may be used to develop and test theories by using its factor to understand different target populations and by examining its relationship with other relevant psychological factors and outcomes such as positive relationships. It can also be applied to test the efficacy of treatments used to promote well-being and represent the positive aspects of personality. It can also be used to promote mental health by identifying and assessing these positive personality traits. In conclusion, the personality of an individual might be influenced by many factors that can lead to her or his creativity and how they think to solve the problem in the organization. It also can help them to create something that can be beneficial to another employee. Personality also may refer to the

big five model personality. By referring to the data analysis collected, it shows that there is a positive significant correlation when $r = .568$, $p = 0.000$ ($p < 0.01$) and the relationship is significant at the level 0.01 level (2-tailed). According to correlation strength based on Guilford Law, there is a positive relationship between work environment and employee creativity. Based on the findings in the journal Kolnhofer Derecskei (2017), stated that the creative individual will choose a workplace where the space is ensured for their creativity and the creative environment facilitates employees' creativity. Based on the finding by Leslie E Barrett (2016), her findings mentioned that the creativity componential model proposes that psychosocial elements in the work environment can foster creativity through contextual influences, and the interactionist model proposes that creativity comprises the interactions between individual and their work situation based on situational and behavioral factors at the individual, team and organizational levels (Cokpekin & Knudsen, 2012; Woodman et al., 1993). The conclusion of the survey that conducted in the studied Malaysian energy company is the staff is more comfortable working in a good environment because they can do their job in a comfortable situation and the same time can help an employee to create an idea creatively.

Based on the data collected, it shows that there is no positive correlation when $r = .451$, $p = 0.000$ ($p < 0.01$) and the relationship is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). According to correlation strength based on Guilford Law, there is a low positive correlation between reward and employee creativity. According to Baskar (2018), mentioned that the fact that workers appeared to be less driven with no awards. Since the company and therefore the business unit are in a state of transition, workers in this group may choose to leave the organization. This brings the company unit under pressure to retain these personnel. The business unit could benefit from a retention plan being introduced, which has a heavy emphasis on recognition in and of itself. Compared to the finding in this study, the relationship between reward and employee creativity is in low positive correlation meaning that the staff in the studied organization feels lower in appreciation. They need more attention and reward; the management of the organization must make an effort to re-assess and rectify the situation to encourage employees to become motivated and creative. If the organization take these things not in seriously way, in the future it will have a bad impact on the performance of the employees and also on the performance of the company. In conclusion, reward is one of the most important factors that can help the company retain its employees. A lot of things can motivate people and that which motivates one person may not necessarily motivate another. Thus, companies should take into account the interests of all employees.

5. Managerial Implications and Recommendations

The researcher would like to suggest that to persuade the respondent about the goal of the outcome for further analysis in the future so that they can get the exact outcome and information from them. Also, to confirm that the respondent can understand the purpose and meaning of the analysis to provide the standard finding. The respondent may provide the right information and cooperation in the collection process. Other than that, the researchers suggest that this research is not limited to employees at a Malaysian energy corporation only but also can be done by other employees from different industries. With different respondents from different industries might help gain more information and will enrich more knowledge. For this study, there are three independent variables (IV) that are involved which are personality, work environment and rewards while the dependent variable (DV) is employee creativity. However, based on the findings several questions remain to be answered and all three IVs indicate a moderate positive correlation and a low positive correlation for rewards. To find a strong relationship between these three IVs and DV, another variable should be evaluated for future analysis as a new independent variable (IV).

Conclusion: The result of this study confirmed that personality and work environment have a positive relationship with employee creativity. However, the strongest relationship is between work environment and employee creativity. And there is no relationship between reward and employee creativity. The researcher also finds, that there is another factor that most influences employee creativity but not being mentioned in this study. Hopefully, in the future, more studies can be done to find another factor that influences employee creativity. Researchers believe everyone is unique everyone has a lot of creative ideas to show to others and Researchers also believe everyone has an intention to make their creativity and their creative ideas well known around the world. Creativity is something that can make the future better than before and it can help others to explore more and do a lot of research and development (R&D) to ensure their idea is realistic.

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