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## INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ADVANCED RESEARCH (IJAR)

Article DOI:10.21474/IJAR01/18479  
DOI URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21474/IJAR01/18479>



### RESEARCH ARTICLE

#### TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND EMPLOYEE CREATIVITY: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

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#### Manuscript Info

##### Manuscript History

Received: 25 January 2024

Final Accepted: 27 February 2024

Published: March 2024

##### Keywords: -

Employee Creativity, Transformational Leadership, Empirical Study

#### Abstract

Whether or not transformational leadership antecedes employee creativity is explored in this research endeavour. Sample respondents from 3-5-star hotels self-reported their creativity in addition to reporting the transformational leadership style of their leaders. Transformational leadership along with its four dimensions was associated with the creative behaviour of an employee. The study found a positive and significant association between transformational leadership style and employee creativity. However, the variances in the association between the sub-factors of TL and EC further elucidate the relationship between TL and EC. We discuss the findings about transformational leadership style and employee creativity.

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#### Introduction:-

The intense competition from other firms in the modern era, along with other environmental uncertainties and opportunities, is an unavoidable challenge that businesses must deal with. One strategy for firms to sustain a competitive edge over competitors and capitalize on market possibilities is to promote employee creativity (Anderson, Potocnik, & Zhou, 2014; Gong, Kim, Lee, & Zhu, 2013). Having a creative staff is likely to help businesses find unique and effective remedies to the problems presented by the many environmental elements and market rivals. It is undoubtedly essential for enterprises to constantly strive for creativity and innovation given the ever-changing economic circumstances, fast technological development, global rivalry, and other factors (Joo, Mclean, & Yang, 2013; Mumford, Whetzel, & Reiter-Palmon, 1997). Creativity is the ability of a person to offer original and helpful insights or practical solutions to ongoing workplace difficulties (e.g., Amabile, 1988; Zhou & George, 2001, 2003). It is claimed to be one of the most significant workplace effects of diversity (Bell, Villado, Lukasik, Belau, & Briggs, 2011; Jackson, Joshi, & Erhardt, 2003). Moreover, other researchers describe creativity differently, for example, according to Evans (1991), a person's creativity is expressed in his/her characteristics including mindfulness or sensitivity to problems, ideal memory, and an increased degree of adaptability. As per Francis and Bessant (2005), the success of any business enterprise in an environment of intense competition depends on its ability to innovate, which is preceded by the creative behavior of the workforce (Amabile, Conti, Coon, Lazenby, & Herron, 1996). For instance, "APPLE" retained the number-one spot in the Boston Consulting Group's list of "the Most Innovative Companies" for 11 years in a row, mostly due to its emphasis on creativity (Landry, 2017). The need for unleashing employees' inbuilt creative abilities has become even more important for organizational change and innovation as a result of the continuous entry of professionals and skilled workers into the job market (Amabile, 1988; Woodman, Sawyer, & Griffin, 1993; Zhou & George, 2003).

Although creativity is still regarded as being essential to the organizations' ability to compete (Ford & Gioia, 1995), in the constantly shifting business atmospheres where we operate, it is inherently related to people (Barney, 1991)

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and the environment that fosters and supports its effective activation and utilization (Lubart, 1999). In this scenario, leadership's role in establishing the proper contextual environment to foster a sense of innovation or creativeness among followers is well established in the research (Mumford et al., 1997). While leadership is a contextual factor that generally has a positive impact on creativity (Tierney, Farmer, & Graen, 1999), transformational leadership is believed to specifically encourage EC (Gumusluoglu & Ilsev, 2009) by fostering individual skills and creativity (Gong, Huang, & Farh, 2009).

While finding the essential antecedents to employee creativity, research on leadership has suggested that transformational leadership may serve as a predictor of the innovative staff (e.g., Mittal & Dhar, 2015). The currently available research, however, shows disagreement and a knowledge gap about the aforementioned links among the constructs.

### **Transformational Leadership and Employee Creativity Relationship**

The extant literature has explicitly indicated that leadership among other work environmental factors could play a pivotal factor in ensuring creativity or innovation (Amabile et al., 2004), as leaders are truly in a position to offer essential combinatorial factors, like motivations, skills, creativity-supporting expertise and resources to promote creativity among individuals (Barsade, 2002). In fact, leadership is a situational factor, which strongly influences creativity (Tierney, Farmer, & Graen, 1999), and transformational leadership style, in particular, is argued to promote creativity among followers (Ma, Jiang, Wang, & Xiong, 2020). Transformational leaders are perceived as key antecedents to creativity because there is a shared consensus among researchers and academicians that they are the key factors to ensure and promote high levels of creative skills among followers (Gong, Huang, & Farh, 2009).

Notwithstanding the above, the relationship between TL and employee creativity is mixed including negative (Basu & Green, 1997), non-significant, and/or non-existence of any relationship between the said constructs (Jaussi & Dionne, 2003; Kim & Lee, 2011; Wang, Rode, Shi, Luo, & Chen, 2013). These equivocal discoveries and skepticism on the relationship between TL and EC suggest a need for a fresh empirical investigation, which will comprehensively and critically examine the relationship between TL and EC by addressing the existing inconsistencies between the said relationship. Given the above arguments following hypothesis is formulated.

**H1.** There will be a significant positive association between Transformational Leadership and employee creativity.

### **Relationship Among Dimensions of Transformational Leadership and Employee Creativity**

Interestingly, the studies that demonstrated a link between TL and EC also indicated variances in identifying the sub-factors of TL. For instance, intellectual stimulation, a sub-factor of TL, was in some studies found to have a relatively low level of positive liaison with EC as compared to other sub-factors of TL like Individualized Consideration, Inspirational Motivation, and Idealized Influence (e.g., Cekmecelioglu & Ozbag, 2016) and as a result has further elucidated TL and EC connection. In yet another study, while Kim & Lee (2011), found all three attributes of TL except idealized influence to significantly affect the creative behavior of employees via motivation, the study, however, didn't report any direct influence of these attributes on EC, thus, underscoring the role of intervening variables in augmenting the relationship between the said constructs. Likewise, the liaison between all four dimensions of TL and EC was analyzed in two different settings Turkey and Algeria by Kasimoglu and Ammari (2020) and it was observed that the two settings show mixed results concerning the association between the dimensions of TL and EC.

Therefore, it was observed from the review of the extant literature that the selected studies have focused on studying only the overall/general relationship among the constructs TL and EC, whereas, only very few studies could be seen analyzing the more nuanced relationship among the dimensions of TL constructs and EC, as well, in addition to overall association. Therefore, such scarcity of research on account of dimension-wise relationships has resulted in significant gaps in the existing research. Accordingly, in addition to the above main research hypothesis the relationship among the dimensions of the TL and EC is also examined in line with the following four hypotheses.

**H2.** There will be a positive and significant association between IC and employee creativity.

**H3.** There will be a positive and significant association between II and employee creativity.

**H4.** There will be a positive and significant association between IM and employee creativity.

**H5.** There will be a positive and significant association between IS and employee creativity.

### **Research Design**

#### **Sample and data collection**

An established questionnaire was used to collect the information from the survey participants for this study. The questionnaires were distributed to hotel staff from August 2021 to October 2022. Participants were ensured of the survey's confidentiality, and academic aim, and the researcher explicitly stated in advance that participation was voluntary. Every participant received a paper copy of the questionnaire, along with more detailed guidelines on how to complete it. An approximately 92% response rate was achieved with the receipt of 404 of the 440 questionnaires that were given out. Thirteen inquiries were, nevertheless, completely discarded since the participants left one or more parts empty. Besides, 39 responses were gathered online via Google Forms, bringing the total number of completed questionnaires to 430, which were then subjected to further review.

### Research Instruments

Being a cross-sectional study, a survey design was adopted using a questionnaire approach. The instrument for the study was organized into two categories, the first of which included demographic information such as gender, age, marital status, education, and duration of employment, and the second part contained the latent constructs of the study. A Likert scale of five points with statements ranging from 1 "strongly disagree" to 5 "strongly agree" was used to measure each research variable using dependable, already established, structured, and closed-ended questionnaires.

### Employee Creativity

The criterion variable employee creativity was assessed by employing the 13-item unidimensional creativity measurement scale developed by Zhou and George (2001). Following the well-established research (Boedker & Chong, 2022; Henker, Sonnentag, & Unger, 2015) a self-rating version of the scale was used in the present study. According to research (Janssen 2000), self-judgments of creativity are more reliable than manager evaluations.

### Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership, i.e., the mediating variable in the present study was measured using a 20-item MLQ-5X (Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire) measurement instrument developed by (Bass & Avolio, 1997). Four of the MLQ's subscales/dimensions were chosen given the present investigation's primary focus is on the transformational style of leadership only (Hilton et al., 2023; Zeinabadi, 2013). Idealized influence behavior (eight items), individualized consideration (four items), intellectual stimulation (four items), and inspirational motivation (four items) are the subscales used to identify transformational leadership style. The items of the scale were assessed on a Likert scale of 1 (not at all) to 5 (frequently, if not always).

## Results:-

### Descriptive Statistics

The results as seen from Table 1.1 support the hypothesized relationship between the constructs of the study. Additionally, the mean and standard deviation show reasonable dispersion and little indication of floor or ceiling effects. According to Table 1.1, immediate managers in the hospitality industry have recorded a significant mean score of 3.7263 and a standard deviation of .74232 for the construct TL. Also, the mean value for the criterion variable EC is 3.7959 therefore showcasing the presence of high perception of EC and TL among the sample respondents as well. Besides the satisfactory mean score on account of study constructs, the researcher also went on to see the direction of the relationship between TL and EC and the dimensions of TL and EC. The results reflected a positive relationship between TL and EC ( $r = 0.440$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Therefore, the reported association sufficiently indicates that a greater perception of TL is related to a greater positive score of EC. Moreover, all the dimensions of TL could also be seen as positively related to EC. IS dimension could be seen as having the highest degree of influence on EC (0.462), whereas, II lowest (0.330).

**Table 1.1:-** Descriptive statistics and the correlation.

	EC	TL	IS	II	IM	IC
EC#	1					
TL##	.440**	1				
IS	.462**	.820**	1			
II	.330**	.909**	.650**	1		
IM	.375**	.812**	.619**	.640**	1	

IC	.332**	.711**	.490**	.492**	.482**	1
Mean	3.7959	3.7263	3.7477	3.6945	3.7221	3.7727
Std. Deviation	.74954	.74232	.90130	.89005	.88735	.89266

Note: Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (\*\*=P<0.01) (2-tailed).

# Employee Creativity, ## Transformational Leadership.

Source: Analysis of data.

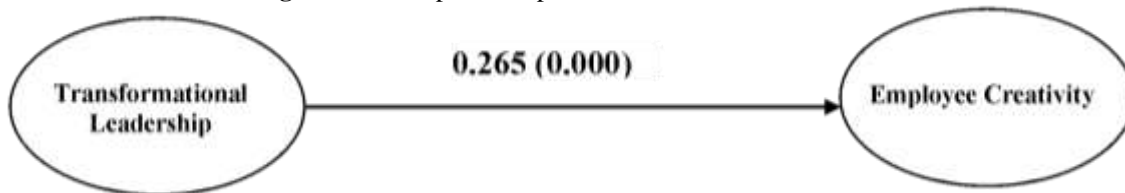
**Testing Hypotheses**

To test the hypotheses of this study, multiple regression analysis is performed to analyze and measure the relationship between a single dependent variable and several independent variables (Hair, et al., 2010). In other words, this measure provides an idea about how well the independent variable will contribute to the overall prediction. In this study, all the variables are metric and therefore divided into dependent and independent. transformational leadership and its dimensions worked as the independent variables and employee creativity worked as the dependent variable. Testing of the hypotheses is presented as follows:

**Transformational leadership and employee creativity.**

The staff of the organization may show an increase in the levels of their creative and innovative behavior if they are well treated, respected, encouraged, and given individualized attention by their superiors. And it is quite evident from the findings that there is a positive association between TL and EC given the path coefficient of 0.265, which is statistically significant. The bootstrapped structural model was used to assess the size and significance of structural path coefficients using 5000 sub-samples (Hayes, 2009). Results as portrayed in Table 1.2 clearly show the presence of a significant direct path coefficient between TL and EC ( $\beta = 0.265$ ,  $t = 5.509$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , CI: 0.170, 0.360). Consequently, the research hypothesis that there is a positive relationship between TL and EC is accepted. By establishing the positive link between TL and EC this study confirms the findings of the extant literature, e.g., (Gong, Huang, & Farh, 2009; Tse, To, & Chiu, 2017).

**Figure 1.1:-** Graphical Representation of Path Coefficient.



**Table 1.2:-** Results of Hypotheses Testing (Transformational Leadership and Employee Creativity) Hospitality Industry.

Hypotheses	B	SD	t value	P-value	CI	f <sup>2</sup>	Result
H1 Transformational Leadership → Employee Creativity	0.265	0.048	5.509	0.002	[0.170, 0.360]	0.085	Supported

Notes: CI, Confidence Interval; SD, Standard Deviation

Source: PLS-SEM

**Overall Dimension wise association**

In line with the hypotheses of the study, the relationship between EC and the dimensions of TL is also tested. Interestingly, the present study found a direct and significant relationship between TL and EC, however, variances in identifying sub-factors of TL were observed, which further elucidates the relationship between TL and EC. It could be seen that IS and IC have a positive and significant association with EC, whereas IM has a non-significant association with EC and II has a non-significant as well as negative association with EC.

Therefore, the results of the study endorse hypothesis second (H2) and hypothesis five (H5) which hypothesized the positive and significant association between IC and EC and IS and EC respectively. Contrarily, hypothesis third

(H3) and hypothesis fourth (H4) which assume the positive and significant association between II and EC and IM and EC stand not supported in line with the findings of the present study.

Hypotheses	B	SD	t value	p value	CI	f <sup>2</sup>	Result
H2 IC -> EC	0.155	0.057	3.945	0.045	[0.054, 0.172]	0.031	supported
H3 II -> EC	-0.021	0.058	0.357	0.721	[-0.137, 0.091]	0.000	Not supported
H4 IM -> EC	0.011	0.050	0.209	0.835	[-0.087, 0.111]	0.000	Not supported
H5 IS -> EC	0.265	0.055	4.815	0.000	[0.157, 0.371]	0.052	supported

**Notes:** CI, Confidence Interval;SD, Standard Deviation

**Source:** PLS-SEM

### Discussion and Conclusion:-

The objectives and study hypotheses examined in this research endeavor were linked to the association between transformational leadership and Employee creativity and between the EC and the dimensions of TL. A structural model was employed to test various empirical linkages between the constructs that were established as hypotheses. In this study, we investigated the understudied topic of how the transformational style of leadership (TL) may influence employees' creativity (EC) by studying each dimension of TL separately. As hypothesized results revealed that there is a low-level relationship between TL and EC, thereby indicating that TL promotes EC as per the findings. The association between TL and employee creativity is supported by the extant literature, however, not that much research has been done in examining the impact of the dimensions of TL on EC as such this research study can prove handy in addressing this gap.

In fact, this study addressed an important research gap by examining the relationship between the four factors of TL and employee creativity. The mixed results were found with regard to the influence of four factors of TL on EC that have further elucidated the nature of the association between TL and EC. The primary theoretical conclusion of the current study is that the transformational leadership style forms the essential antecedent to follower creativity. From a practical perspective, this study has significant implications concerning the hospitality sector of Jammu and Kashmir. First and foremost, the findings indicate that supplementing leaders' TL style is critical in this constantly changing and demanding climate since it is a key predictor of employee creativity and is necessary for successfully addressing the challenges that arise in the work environment. Employers are supposed to be cognizant of the fact that knowing people's abilities, attitudes, and motivations is essential to creating the most prosperous and innovative organization. Employees in the hotel industry who scored highly on creativity perceived their leaders to possess higher degrees of transformational leadership. Therefore, practitioners must ensure that the managers have higher transformational leadership attributes and that employees receive due consideration for their unique needs and the chance to participate in decision-making by putting forth their ideas, among other things.

### Limitations and Scope for Further Research

Despite the outcomes of the present investigation verifying the theories established in the prior research and providing some key contributions to the existing literature, the drawbacks of this inquiry are worthy of being noted. The shortcomings and suggestions for further research are discussed in this part of the study.

The findings pertaining to the hypothesized associations provided in this piece of empirical research are statistically relevant, valid, and dependable. Yet, they may not be sufficient enough to establish an explicit causal relationship between the constructs due to the cross-sectional approach employed in this research. Therefore, assessing the suggested model using the longitudinal data set, if not using a totally experimental method, might be a good way to solve the issue in future research. The population that was analyzed in the present investigation may not be a fair representation of various other populations, which further restricts the scope of this research. The relevance of the

suggestions beyond the selected sector by the present study may be determined by further replication of this sort of study and empirical validation. The variable employee creativity has been characterized as an individual-level characteristic in the majority of the studies, including the current one. It would be extremely useful to consider employee creativity as a group-level variable and accordingly establish its antecedents in further studies because most expanding organizations are primarily interested in teamwork rather than in individual contributions. In addition to assessing the transformational leadership style competencies of their leaders by the followers, this study used a self-report measure to gauge the followers' own creativity. Self-reporting surveys are an effective and relatively cost-effective technique to get data from a greater number of respondents. Future studies may include horizontal and vertical assessments and could address common response and common method bias by using a variety of sample frames and research settings, merging items from different constructs in the instrument, assessing people in actual work environments, gathering data for both independent and dependent variables at multiple points of time, and using a triadic sample consisting of managers, employees, and customers to gather the required information.

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