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Relationship between Transformational Leadership Behaviours of Lecturers and Students' Creativity

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to determine if transformational leadership behaviours of lecturers is effective in enhancing students' creativity in research universities in Malaysia. Findings of this study indicated that there is a positive and significant relationship between students' creativity and each of the components of transformational leadership style of lecturers. Also, findings indicated that components of transformational leadership style played a role in explaining students' creativity. All five variables are important equally but have different effects on creativity. It is suggested that lecturers should learn and understand the significance of transformational leadership behaviours in enhancing students' creative thinking.

Keywords: Transformational leadership style, Creativity, Lecturers, Students.



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INTRODUCTION

Creativity is the generation of novel and useful ideas (solve an existing problem). According to Plucker, Beghetto and Dow (2004), creativity is the interaction among aptitude, process and environment by which an individual or group produces a perceptible product that is both novel and useful as defined within a social context. Many researchers emphasize the importance of leadership in mobilizing creativity and change in organization (Plucker et al., 2004; Mumford & Licuanan, 2004).

“Leaders’ vision, their action and the way that they direct and support followers in their creative endeavours can surpass or mobilize creative thinking and stifle or activate change process” (Plucker et al., 2004). In line with this idea, Jung et al. (2003) stated that leaders play an important role in managing change, creative processes and supporting innovative work practices. In fact, leaders can influence structure, culture of organizations and resources. These may affect the generation and implementation of new ideas within an organization.

As described above, leadership is necessary for change, but what style of leadership can enhance creativity and innovation in organizations. According to Afshari et al. (2010), transformational leaders are enthusiastic, energetic and passionate. They are able to change and transform individuals through the strength of their vision and personality. Transformational leadership occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality.

This type of leadership is becoming more and more important to organizations, as workforces become more diverse, technology improves and international competition heightens (Afshari et al., 2010). A number of research studies have emphasized on the effect of transformational leadership on the performance of followers and organizations but limited research have been conducted on the effects of this type of leadership on students’ creativity. This study is based on this pressing need and tries to examine the relationship between transformational leadership behaviours of lecturers and students’ creativity in selected research university in Malaysia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Gumusluoglu and Ilsew (2009), “transformational leadership behaviors closely match the determinants of innovation and creativity at the workplace, some of which are vision, support for innovation, autonomy, encouragement, recognition, and challenge” (P.462). In fact, these behaviors are as instrumental for promoting creativity. Transformational leadership comprise of five different dimensions: idealized influence (attributed), idealized influence (behavior), intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and individualized consideration.

“Idealized influence (attribute) demonstrates attributes of principals that motivate respect and pride and display a sense of power and confidence; idealized influence (behavior) refers to the principals’ behavior to communicate values, purpose, and importance of mission; inspirational motivation refers to leaders that motivate and inspire others by challenging them to exert effort; Intellectual stimulation stimulates followers’ efforts to be innovative



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and creative by questioning assumptions, reframing problems, and approaching old situations in new ways; and individualized consideration focuses on development and mentoring of followers and attends to individual needs” (Dvir et al., 2002).

Gumusluoglu and Ilsew (2009) conducted a study on 163 R&D personnel and managers at 43 micro- and small-sized Turkish software development companies and found that transformational leadership has important effects on creativity at both the individual and organizational levels. Sternberg (2006) stated that creativity needs a balance among synthetic, analytic and practical abilities. Lecturers as transformational leaders have a responsibility to encourage and develop students’ creativity by teaching students to find a balance among synthetic, and practical thinking (Sternberg, 2006).

THE STUDY

The aim of this study was to determine if transformational leadership behaviours of lecturers is effective in enhancing students’ creativity in research universities in Malaysia. The following questions are specifically to be answered by this study:

1. What is the relationship between students’ creativity and each of the components of transformational leadership style of lecturers (Idealized influence (attributed), idealized influence (behavior), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration)?
2. How many percent of the variation in students' creativity can be explained by the components of transformational leadership behaviours?
3. What is the relative importance of each components of transformational leadership style in predicting students' creativity?

METHODOLOGY

This study was an exploratory research to find the causal relationships between variables. In fact, an exploratory study can be described as finding out what is happening, and asking questions and assessing phenomena in a new light; also these type of research is most useful when there would be limited research regarding the population of study. 520 postgraduate students (Master and PhD programme) in the faculty of education of three selected research universities in Malaysia (UM, UPM, UKM) participated in the study.

For obtaining the required information, two set of questionnaire was used to measure the transformational leadership style of lecturers and students’ creativity. Questionnaires were distributed amongst 520 randomly selected postgraduate students of the three research Universities in October 2011.



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Two technical properties of a measurement that are most important features of a test and indicate the usefulness and appropriateness of the test are validity and reliability. A panel of experts who were expert in the area the instrument judged about the survey's appearance, relevance and representativeness of its elements and established face and content validity of these instruments.

Moreover, internal consistency of these instruments was measured with Cronbach's alpha and calculated via the SPSS 19 statistical package. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for these scales were: Creativity Scale=0.867 and Transformational leadership style Scale=0.909.

In the first phase, approval for carrying out this study was obtained from the University of Malaya and in a letter researcher was introduced to faculty of education of UPM, UKM, and UM. Researcher attended these universities and a total of 550 questionnaires were distributed among postgraduate students. The purpose and significance of this study was explained for them.

They were assured that their responses are confidential and their responses will be used only for research. Completed questionnaires were gathered by research assistant at the end of these sessions. 520 completed surveys were returned of 550 questionnaires that had been distributed, yielding a 91.4% return rate.

Respondents returned a total of 520 questionnaire and all were used in the analysis. Descriptive statistics (mean, percentage and frequency) and inferential statistics (correlation analysis and multiple regressions) were used in this study. Descriptive statistics were utilized to describe level of students' creativity and level of lecturers' transformational leadership style in three research universities (UKM, UPM, UM) in Malaysia.

Moreover, Pearson correlation coefficient was used to identify the relationship between each dimension of transformational leadership and students' creativity. Also, multiple regressions were used to determine the percentage of variance in students' creativity that can be explained by components of transformational leadership. Furthermore, this analysis was used to determine the relative importance of each components of transformational leadership in explaining students' creativity.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. The Relationship between Creativity and Independent Variables

In this study, Pearson correlation analysis was used to identify the relationship between students' creativity and independent variables. Results of this analysis helped researcher to understand the strength and direction of the linear relationship between two variables. Besides, preliminary analyses such as normality, linearity and homoscedasticity were examined to ensure no violation of the assumptions of correlation analysis. The correlation matrix shows a number of significant relationships between creativity and the independent variables (Table 1).



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Table 1

Summary of the Correlation Matrix of Independent Variables and Creativity

Variable	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Creativity	1	
Idealized influence (attributed)	.639**	0.000
Idealized influence (behavior)	.678**	0.000
Inspirational motivation	.665**	0.000
Intellectual stimulation	.693**	0.000
Individualized considerations	.629**	0.000

According to Table 1, there was a positive and moderate relationship between each dimension of transformational leadership and students' creativity [$r = 0.63- 0.993$, $n=520$, $p<0.05$]. The study results indicated that lecturers or supervisors who display transformational leadership behaviors, their students are more creative. In fact, "supportive supervisory management style is more likely to contribute creativity than a controlling one since it enhances individual motivation" [1]. Lecturers should provide an open forum in which students feel free to roam with new ideas and suggestions. They should create an environment conducive to the generation and implementation of novel and useful ideas. This can be achieved by concentrating on enhancing the factors that nurture employees' creativity (e.g., supervisory encouragement, stimulating work, autonomy).

B. The proportion of the variance in students' creativity that can be explained by the independent variables

To identify the percentage of variance in students' creativity that can be explained by the components of transformational leadership behaviours a multiple regression analysis was performed. Tables 2 and 3 show the summary of the multiple regression results.

According to Table 2, five dimensions of transformational leadership (idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration) explained about 54% of the variance in students' creativity ($R^2=0.54$). It is a very good result.

Also, for the final model, the F value was 124.93. The P values was statistically "highly significant ($p = 0.0001$). Thus, it can be deduced that the data fit to the model at 0.05 level of significance. In other words, this model can be considered as a good description of the relationship between five components of transformational leadership style and students' creativity. Therefore, this is a suitable and stable model and shows the variables that can enhance students' creativity.



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Table 2
Summary Anova Table

source	Sum of Squire	df	Mean Square	F value	R Square	Adjusted R Square	R	P
Regression	20408.92	5	4081.8	124.93	0.549	0.544	0.74	0.000
Error	16794.18	514	215.18					
Total	37203.10	519						

As can be seen from the Table 3, five variables were found significant in predicting students' creativity. The five predictor variables were idealized influence (attributed) ($t = 1.993$, $p = 0.041$), idealized influence (behavior) ($t = 0.196$, $p = 0.001$), inspirational motivation ($t = 0.124$, $p = 0.033$), intellectual stimulation ($t = 0.291$, $p = 0.0001$), and individualized consideration ($t = 0.104$, $p = 0.037$). All five variables are equally significant in explaining students' creativity but have different effect on this variable. Therefore, in accordance with the conceptual model suggested in this study, all five constructs should be considered in an integrated manner.

Table 3
Multiple Regressions on Dependent Variable

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig
	B	Std Error	Beta		
Constant	13.841	1.445		9.578	0.000
Idealized influence (attributed)	.324	.163	.105	1.993	0.041
Idealized influence (behavior)	.588	.177	.196	.196	0.001
Inspirational motivation	.349	.164	.124	.124	.033
Intellectual stimulation	.801	.151	.291	.291	.000
Individualized consideration	.266	.127	.104	.104	.037



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CONCLUSION

This study identified the effect of transformational leadership style of lecturers on students' creativity. Findings of this study indicated that there is a positive and significant relationship between students' creativity and each of the components of transformational leadership style of lecturers (Idealized influence (attributed), Idealized influence (behavior), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration). In fact, lecturers should help their students to correctly define their project and identify the requirements and resources for generating and developing new ideas. Also, their persuasive skills are very important to mobilizing creative efforts (Andriopoulos & Dawson, 2009).

Supervisors should persuade their students about the value of their project and encourage students' involvement in the creative process. In this way, students tend to focus all their energy and time on their jobs. Also, supervisors should allow students to choose the project that they wish to work on, or to strive to provide them with projects that they find attractive and challenging. In other words, it is important to determine an appropriate level of autonomy for students in the pursuit of an efficient level of creative performance (Andriopoulos & Dawson, 2009). According to Andrews and Farris (1967), lecturers as transformational leaders should have technical and creative problem solving skills to enhance students' creativity. They need to be competent facilitators to help their students in completing their task. Also, they should spend time to evaluate student' work and provide evaluative feedback.

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