



Creativity: The impact of psychological capital and curiosity from the employee's perspective in Bandung, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

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Creativity is a determining factor of organizational success. To engage employees with a high level of creativity, it is necessary to encourage excellent psychological capital and employee curiosity. This study examines the effect of psychological capital on employee creativity, mediated by curiosity. Research on creativity is closely related to curiosity as well as psychological capital; however, there is still a research gap. Therefore, our research focuses on the relationship between these variables. It employed a survey to gather data from 222 employees in seven retail store branches in Bandung, Indonesia. To evaluate the hypothesis proposed by the authors, partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was used. The results indicated that psychological capital had an effect on employee creativity that was mediated by curiosity. The study results suggest that organizations can empower employees by increasing psychological capital and employee curiosity.

Contribution/Originality: This study is one of few to study the effect of psychological capital on employee creativity, mediated by curiosity, in retail store branches from an employee perspective. The results contribute to filling the research gap related to creativity, curiosity, and psychological capital.

1. INTRODUCTION

Health impacts are currently causing significant changes in people's lives (Noda, 2020). To mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, governments have taken steps to control the movement of people to minimize the spread of the virus (Byass, 2020). The control measures implemented by the government have created limitations for business activities in general (Chirico et al., 2020). Moreover, the government's appeal to businesspeople has led companies to adjust their business activities (Zaremba, Kizys, Aharon, & Demir, 2020). Companies have changed their business activities by requiring their employees to work from home (Bloom, 2020). This work pattern requires employees to complete tasks assigned by the company from their home location (Baker, Bloom, Davis, & Terry,

2020). Completion of this work requires the use of information media facilities connected to the internet (Jaiswal & Arun, 2020).

Profit-oriented companies will be cautious in making these changes due to the fear of decreased revenue (Bakas & Triantafyllou, 2020). Moreover, companies incur additional costs connected with implementing these changes, such as conducting COVID-19 tests, providing additional funds for internet costs, and arranging work facilities following health protocols (Altig et al., 2020). Changes determined by the company also need to be implemented by employees by adapting to new ways of working (Pathak & Joshi, 2021). Employees are challenged to learn new ways to complete their assignments (Bolisani, Scarso, Ipsen, Kirchner, & Hansen, 2020; Zinchenko, Morosanova, Kondratyuk, & Fomina, 2020). The completion of tasks assigned by the company will have an impact on the company's long-term survival (Bierema, 2020). To solve this problem, companies need employees who have a good level of creativity (Jaiswal & Arun, 2020). This employee learning process requires an adequate ability to learn new ways to complete work, which requires creativity (Zinchenko et al., 2020).

Since employee creativity is demanded by changes in work patterns, creativity is one of the driving forces for employees to complete their work. Research conducted by Černe, Nerstad, Dysvik, and Škerlavaj (2014) and Miao and Cao (2019) has shown that creativity can lead to good performance. Pattnaik and Sahoo (2021) identified the impact of creativity on the better completion of work tasks. However, according to Haase, Hoff, Hanel, and Innes-Ker (2018), several studies have shown that companies' creativity leads to increased costs. This increase in costs is due to employee development programs and could be compensated for by increased company performance (Harari, Reaves, & Viswesvaran, 2016).

Research by Yu, Li, Tsai, and Wang (2019) proved that psychological capital influences creativity. Alessandri, Consiglio, Luthans, and Borgogni (2018) found that psychological capital increased employee work output. Luthans and Youssef-Morgan (2017) stated that psychological capital is closely related to individuals' behaviors and attitudes in an organization. An increase in individual creativity is triggered by a high sense of employee self-efficacy (Han & Bai, 2020), which is supported by qualified resilience (Liu, Wang, & Zhu, 2020). Hope and optimism also drive employees' creativity (Anwar, Abid, & Waqas, 2019). Previous research, such as that of Cai, Lysova, Bossink, Khapova, and Wang (2019) and Hammond, Neff, Farr, Schwall, and Zhao (2011), supports the view that psychological capital affects employee creativity.

New methods require internal employee characteristics such as curiosity about new things and openness to change (Van Knippenberg & Hirst, 2020). Research conducted by Gross, Zedelius, and Schooler (2020) has shown that curiosity impacts creativity. Likewise, research conducted by Zhang, Xu, and Sun (2020) has shown that curiosity can boost employee creativity.

However, there is still scarce evidence for the influence of curiosity, which can encourage psychological capital to increase employee creativity; that is the problem examined in this study. The studies described above reveal a gap in the theory, which forms the basis for this research. Based on the literature review and previous research, the objective of this study is thus to explore and analyze the influence of psychological capital on creativity, mediated by curiosity. The results of this study are expected to contribute to the development of employee creativity in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. FRAMEWORK

Employees with good psychological capital will be accommodating in completing tasks assigned by the company (Choi, Noe, & Cho, 2019; Gupta, Singh, No, & Block, 2011). If employees have a good sense of self-efficacy, they can meet the company's targets (Han & Bai, 2020) and complete tasks based on previous experience in completing similar tasks. In addition, since employees often experience difficulties and failures in completing the tasks given, they must display adequate endurance in the problem-solving process (Chen, Liu, Tang, & Hogan, 2021; Li, Dai, Chin, & Rafiq, 2019). The obstacles that occur when completing tasks are closely related to employee

creativity; therefore, the better their creativity, the more likely they are to solve problems that occur (Harari et al., 2016; Zhang & Bartol, 2010).

H1: The better their psychological capital, the more creative employees will be.

Creativity is an essential asset for companies to complete predetermined tasks (Avey, Luthans, & Jensen, 2009; Haase et al., 2018). High creativity is often a reference for companies when evaluating employee performance (Alzghoul, Elrehail, Emeagwali, & AlShboul, 2018). Creativity is also a driving force for the progress of the company. Research conducted by Yaakobi and Weisberg (2020) has proved that creativity can affect the progress of organizational performance. Amabile, Conti, Coon, Lazenby, and Herron's (1996) research has shown that creativity is also related to organizational development. Sipa (2018) suggested that to encourage creativity, there is a need for companies to take steps to develop their employees. Also, creativity is driven by individual curiosity (Chang & Shih, 2019) to try new ways of completing tasks. Finally, Gross et al. (2020) showed that curiosity strongly influences individual creativity.

H2: The greater their curiosity, the more creative employees will be.

Implementing new ways of completing tasks as determined by the company requires adequate employee self-efficacy (Ma, Gong, Long, & Zhang, 2021; Silla & Gamero, 2018). Good self-efficacy, which is characterized by a high sense of self-confidence based on the successful completion of previous tasks, further encourages employee creativity (Chang & Shih, 2019). The failure to complete tasks requires employees to have a high sense of optimism that they will complete them successfully in the future (Wagstaff, Flores, Ahmed, & Villanueva, 2021). The better their psychological capital, the more creative employees will be; this condition has been confirmed by the research of Luthans, Avey, Avolio, and Peterson (2010). Moreover, the results of Hagtvedt, Dossinger, Harrison, and Huang (2019) showed that employees with an adequate level of psychological capital have more curiosity to try new solutions. Employee curiosity (Hardy III, Ness, & Mecca, 2017) to try new methods to solve problems related to their work duties is a driver of employee creativity. The results of Schutte and Malouff's (2020) research showed that curiosity caused employee creativity to increase. Wagstaff et al. (2021) showed that psychological capital is closely related to curiosity and the desire to adapt to future changes. Future changes will affect employees' behavior patterns in responding to their assigned tasks; therefore, it is necessary for employees to have an excellent adaptive desire to cope with possible changes in the future (Hite & McDonald, 2020).

H3: The better their psychological capital, the more employee creativity will be driven by curiosity.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

The researchers used a survey approach to gather data on the research problems. The survey was conducted with 222 employees in the retail sector, specifically 7 retail store branches in Bandung, Indonesia. Respondents willing to participate in the study were randomly selected from each retail store. Questionnaires were distributed by entrusting them to representatives of authorized respondents connected with the health protocol that required the public to maintain social distancing. The questionnaire was distributed for two months, after which the data were analyzed. The questionnaire was prepared based on previous research; for the psychological capital instrument, the researchers adopted the PsyCap Questionnaire developed by Luthans, Avolio, Avey, and Norman (2007). The instrument consisted of 24 statement items that measured the level of employee self-efficacy, resilience, hope, and optimism. The instrument used to measure employee creativity was developed by George and Zhou (2002) and consisted of 13 statement items. This instrument measured how employees propose, suggest, and show new ways of completing their tasks. Finally, the curiosity instrument was adapted from the Curiosity and Exploration Inventory (CEI-II) developed by Kashdan et al. (2009) and consisted of 10 statement items measuring employees' willingness to acquire new challenging information/experiences and employees' tendency to be involved in implementing it. The demographic information collected in the questionnaire showed that most of the respondents (55.1%) were women. This result reflects the situation in the field where most of the retail workers serving the community at the

sub-district level in Bandung City are women. Most of the respondents were aged less than 30 years to 40 years. This reflects the fact that most of the respondents were productive workers who provided services to the community. Respondents had a high level of education; specifically, 64.1% had completed high school or a diploma. Meanwhile, 49.0% of the respondents had a tenure of service of less than three years, and 42.4% of respondents had a tenure of between three and ten years. The tenure period shows that many of the respondents were employees who already knew their job well. After collecting the data, the researchers tested the validity and reliability of the research constructs and then tested the predictions of the research model using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Before evaluating the hypotheses using PLS-SEM, the research instrument's validity and reliability were first tested. The research instrument test results showed that there were several invalid statement items, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The results of the factor loading of the research instrument.

Item	Efficacy	Hope	Resilience	Optimism	Stretching	Embracing	Creative
SE1	0.715						
SE2	0.771						
SE3	0.837						
SE4	0.778						
SE5	0.759						
SE6	0.663						
HoP1		0.688					
HoP2		0.723					
HoP4		0.717					
HoP5		0.780					
HoP6		0.660					
RES1			0.534				
RES2			0.740				
RES3			0.795				
RES4			0.701				
RES5			0.769				
OPT1				0.698			
OPT3				0.789			
OPT4				0.711			
OPT5				0.693			
CREAT1					0.755		
CREAT2					0.828		
CREAT3					0.866		
CREAT4					0.810		
CREAT5					0.797		
CREAT6					0.654		
CREAT7					0.736		
CREAT8					0.728		
CREAT9					0.748		
CREAT10					0.788		
CREAT11					0.810		
CREAT12					0.785		
CREAT13					0.784		
STRET2						0.660	
STRET3						0.742	
STRET4						0.782	
STRET5						0.764	
EMB3							0.525
EMB4							0.788
EMB5							0.812

The research instrument's loading factor results showed that five items had a value of <0.5 and thus did not meet the requirements for further data analysis. The reliability results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Reliability calculation results.

Reliability	Efficacy	Hope	Resilience	Optimism	Psycap	Stretching	Embracing	Curiosity	Creative
Composite reliability	0.888	0.839	0.836	0.815	0.899	0.827	0.758	0.874	0.952
Cronbach's alpha	0.848	0.759	0.754	0.796	0.849	0.721	0.703	0.783	0.945
Average variances extracted	0.571	0.511	0.510	0.524	0.690	0.545	0.519	0.777	0.605

The reliability results show that the research variables met the requirements for data analysis. The composite reliability (CR) result shows that the value ranges from 0.815 to 0.952, with Cronbach's alpha (CA) ranging from 0.703 to 0.945, and the average variances extracted (AVE) value ranging from 0.510 to 0.777.

Next, the hypothesis testing results show that the proposed hypotheses are accepted, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of hypothesis testing.

Path	Coefficients	P-value	Result
Psycap -> Curiosity	0.153	0.010	Accepted
Psycap -> Creativity	0.618	<0.001	Accepted
Curiosity -> Creativity	0.389	<0.001	Accepted
R ² curiosity	0.151	<0.001	Accepted
R ² creativity	0.481	<0.001	Accepted

The P-values of the structural model obtained from the regression analysis are shown in Table 3 and Figure 1.

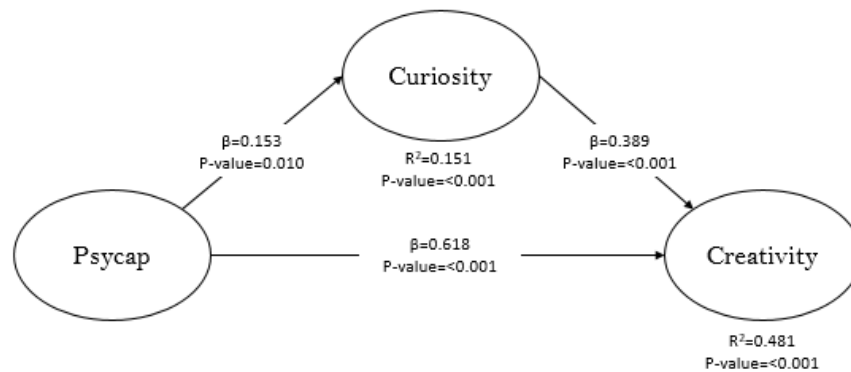


Figure 1. The path result of the research variables.

Table 3 and Figure 1 show that Psycap -> Curiosity has a coefficient value of 0.153 with a p-value of 0.010, Psycap -> Creativity has a coefficient value of 0.618 with a p-value of <0.001, and Curiosity -> Creativity has a coefficient value of 0.389 with a p-value of <0.001. The R-squared value of Curiosity is 0.151, and that of Creativity is 0.481. The calculation results mean that all the hypotheses proposed in this study are accepted.

H1: The better their psychological capital, the more creative employees will be. The first hypothesis in this study is accepted.

Employees with high psychological capital, indicated by an adequate level of self-efficacy, can generate new ideas to solve their work problems. Using a sample of 899 workers in the United States (US), Sweetman, Luthans, Avey, and Luthans (2011) proved that self-efficacy can encourage worker creativity. Likewise, new ways to solve problems at work are supported by a high degree of tenacity as well as high hopes and a sense of optimism (Abbas & Raja, 2015). Luthans, Youssef, and Rawski (2011) proved that employees who have experience related to previous assignments have a high level of confidence when implementing new ways to complete their tasks. The results of

this study indicate that a good level of self-efficacy, accompanied by tenacity, will provide hope for the employee to complete his work creatively. This is in line with Agarwal and Farndale (2017), who proved that psychological capital can increase employee creativity. Wang, Liu, and Zhu (2018) also showed that psychological capital can mediate the creativity of subordinates. Finally, research conducted by Cai et al. (2019) proved that psychological capital is an influential factor in increasing employee creativity.

H2: The greater their curiosity, the more creative employees will be. The second hypothesis in this study is accepted.

The application of new ways of completing tasks that the company has determined will not work well if employees do not have the curiosity to obtain information related to their work and the desire to apply these new methods. Hunter, Abraham, Hunter, Goldberg, and Eastwood (2016) confirmed that individual traits are closely related to curiosity and creativity and indicated that curiosity plays an essential role in increasing creativity. Employees' curiosity about the positive impact that might occur when performing a complicated and challenging job can be an opportunity to grow, learn, and develop (Karwowski, 2012). The research results identify curiosity and the desire to apply new ways to solve complex work problems as indicators of good performance. The study conducted by Kashdan, Rose, and Fincham (2004) similarly showed that exploration and absorption predict positive individual behaviors. Likewise, research conducted by Harrison and Dossinger (2017) proved that curiosity impacts the creativity of T-shirt designers, which was shown to have implications for innovation in nursing students (Liu, Chang, Wang, & Chao, 2020). Horstmeyer (2018) employed a volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA) approach to measure the effect of curiosity on innovation. The results indicated that curiosity increases individuals' abilities within an organization.

H3: The better their psychological capital, the more employee creativity will be driven by curiosity. The third hypothesis in this study is accepted.

Psychological capital is an important factor for individuals when completing challenging tasks (Hobfoll, 2002). Psychological capital is an individual's desire to achieve certain success in life (Luthans, 2002). In an organization, psychological capital can increase employees' achievement of assigned tasks (Luthans et al., 2010). Employees with high psychological capital expect to produce a performance that aligns with organizational goals (Darvishmotevali & Ali, 2020). One way to produce the performance required by the company is to employ creativity (Ghosh, 2015; Van Knippenberg & Hirst, 2020). When completing tasks, there are often obstacles that require employees to solve the problem using new methods (Hammond et al., 2011). Creativity can help companies achieve their targets (Liu et al., 2020). Individuals with a high level of creativity can often complete tasks that are difficult to carry out; for this reason, it is necessary to have creative employees to achieve the company's targets (Ma et al., 2021). This creative power is related to a sense of curiosity and a willingness to adapt to new things (Hammond et al., 2011). The desire for future change can be one of the assets that generate employee creativity to solve the work problems they face (Akkermans, Richardson, & Kraimer, 2020).

5. CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND LIMITATIONS

Psychological capital is an essential factor for individuals to complete challenging tasks. New ways of completing tasks, as determined by the company, require employees' efforts and an excellent level of self-efficacy. A high level of expectation from the work results is also necessary. Employee tenacity instills a sense of confidence that they can achieve the tasks given to them. However, it is also necessary to cultivate motivation to seek new knowledge and experiences and instill a desire to try new things with unpredictable results.

The study results suggest that organizations can empower employees by increasing psychological capital and employee curiosity. Empowering employees with psychological capital and curiosity will increase their creativity.

The results of this study have several limitations. The model is built only at the predictive level, meaning that further research is needed to generalize the research results. It is necessary to use a broader sample and to add control variable testing.

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