
The Impact of Selected Components of the Manager- Employee Relations on the Performance of Creative Tasks in the Organization

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Abstract:

Purpose: The article deals with the issues of the influence of the relationship between the manager and employees on their creative activities. The scientific aim of the article is to explain and extend the conceptualization in terms of indicating which selected components of the manager-employee relationship (trust in managers, cooperation and communication with managers and learning from them) determine the work of creative employees.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The theoretical part of the article formed the basis for the formulation of the research hypothesis: There is a relationship between selected components of the manager's relations with employees and their performance of creative tasks. To verify such a hypothesis, the results of survey study conducted among employees working in creative organizations in the West Pomeranian voivodeship, Poland, were used.

Findings: The results of the research show that significant relationships between the selected components of relations with managers and creative tasks were obtained for three out of four components. This means that building manager-employee relations based on cooperation, open communication and mutual learning is conducive to performing creative tasks.

Practical Implications: Theoretical consideration and the obtained research results are of particular importance for shaping the right attitudes of managers in the field of selected aspects of relations with employees performing creative tasks in organizations. The results of the research allowed to identify those elements of relations, the improvement of which could affect more effective undertaking of creative tasks in the organization.

Originality/value: The article was prepared on the basis of own research conducted in organizations where creative activities are undertaken. The obtained research results showed which components of the manager-employee relationship are conducive to undertaking creative tasks. This will allow organizations to focus on these components in order to achieve better results in the form of more innovations.

Keywords: Creative activities, organization, creativity, creative manager.

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Paper Type: Research study.

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1. Introduction

To achieve success in the knowledge-based economy organizations should base their activities on knowledge and creativity. Since the source of these resources are people, knowledge workers are of the greatest importance for the competitiveness of creative organizations. The value of these employees results, on the one hand, from having unique skills that allow them to create key competencies of the entity, and on the other hand, from the fact that they are the main promoters of change and creators of new ideas, products or services. The prestige they enjoy in their professional environment is also significant for the value of these employees.

The growing role of knowledge workers means that in modern organizations the work of creative managers is focused on shaping human capital as the main element of the organization's strategic assets that allow it to compete effectively on the extremely competitive market. It is confirmed by Florida and Goodnight (2005) who are of the opinion that nowadays the creative capital, understood as "[...] *an arsenal of creative thinkers whose ideas can be turned into valuable products and services*", is the most important asset of the organization. This capital is not just a collection of individuals' ideas, but a product of interaction.

Therefore, in order to present a certain scientific area and analyze it, two trends have been distinguished in the article. The first one is focused on the literature studies and allowed for a critical analysis of the researched issues and shaped the research framework. The second trend focuses on conducted research using the author's questionnaire. In the research, the relationship between selected aspects of the relations between employees and managers in the performance of creative tasks was sought.

2. Creative Manager in the Organization

Modern organizations need professionals with the ability to act independently and effectively. This professionalism requires, on the one hand, perfection in performing tasks, and on the other hand, having certain predispositions, such as: the ability to perform various roles, orientation towards versatility both in terms of skills and experience, orientation towards change, flexibility and speed in action, permanent development of competences, mobility. Such professionals are creative managers.

Although issues related to the creativity of managers have been the subject of scientific research for years (Szostak and Sułkowi, 2020; Granot, 2011; Saukh and Vikarchuk, 2021; Higgs and Hender, 2004; Shoghi and Kian, 2022; Bérubé and Demers, 2019; Sousa *et al.*, 2019; Du *et al.*, 2021; Sokół *et al.*, 2022; Sokół and Figungska, 2021; Sus *et al.*, 2021), to this day, there is no single universally accepted definition of a creative manager.

The manager is a white-collar worker who is responsible for the input of work that affects the organization's ability to achieve. A good manager is an effective organizer, effective in achieving economic and non-economic goals (Drucker, 2006). A manager can achieve the goals imposed by the owner of the organization or set goals independently. In the latter case, he becomes the leader (Jankurová *et al.*, 2017) who is able to influence resources (both psychological and institutional) to motivate and trigger necessary actions (Postuła and Majczyk, 2018).

According to Szostak and Sułkowi (2020) “[...] *one of the basic features of an effective manager and good leader is creativity in the approach to managing and in defining the goals*”. Creative managers go beyond well-known patterns and old solutions, and enter the active forms of thinking. They bring novel thinking to managerial challenges and at the same time deploy strategic prioritizing and decision-making to creative opportunities (Slocum, 2015).

Thanks to that they are more efficient than others in making proper job opportunities, creating an organizational environment supporting employees' hard work, and improving their organizational productivity. Their role is to foster creativity and innovation, motivate, encourage and empower employees, find people with creative minds, and use the creativity of others (Shoghi and Kian, 2022). In other words, they should help workers be great by stimulation of their minds and minimalization of hassles (Florida and Goodnight, 2005).

Due to the position held, the creative manager is responsible for the work input and its creative effectiveness, and his tasks include, above all (Sokół, 2015): identification of current and potential sources of creativity in the organization; purposeful, continuous and dynamic stimulation of creativity among employees and creation of a creative climate within the organization; creating an organizational culture conducive to creativity; continuous teaching of people and creating a creative organization; skillful management of creative resources as well as creating and using methods and tools for effective management of creativity in the organization.

An important determinant of the effectiveness and efficiency of creative managers' work are competencies that reflect the level of professional tasks performed (Witaszek, 2011). The work of a creative manager requires them to have both hard and soft competences, as well as conceptual, social and emotional competences.

Summing up the previous considerations, it should be pointed out that a creative manager (Witaszek, 2011):

- should have: high professional qualifications; organizational and managerial skills; knowledge relevant to the development of the organization; the ability to communicate and understand people; the ability to make effective decisions; the ability to reconcile rationality with intuition; a vision of their own professional career; self-esteem and self-confidence;

- should be: committed to enhancing the organizational capacity for creative problem solving and knowledge acquisition; focused on properly motivating employees; loyal to others; creative and encourage subordinates to be creative; patient and persistent in achieving goals; flexible, understanding and open to changes; capable of operating under pressure from external pressures;
- should build: a culture and climate in the organization that support creativity development; an infrastructure of creative management in the organization; an atmosphere of trust, openness and kindness; cooperation for the benefit of the organization and its creative achievements;
- should: supervise the work related to the creative process in teams and its results; think entrepreneurially; improve professional qualifications; support subordinates in raising qualifications; listen to the opinions of subordinates;.

3. Elements of Relations Between Managers and Employees in the Context of Taking Creative Tasks

The relationship is a sequence of interactions between entities, which is a creator of targeted processes and organizational activities. Behavioral expression of relations are actions of entities resulting from the existence of a connection between them. This connection consists in the fact that the behavior of one relation's participant causes actions of another participant. Therefore it is reasonable to assume that the method of the realization of specific organizational activities depends on the relations between entities that are involved in these activities.

Readiness of individuals to adopt specific behaviors when interacting with other people is understood as their relational potential (Pawłowska, 2006). Components of the relational potential are employee demographics and personality of people, their knowledge, skills, social notions, the system of meanings, interpretative patterns, role descriptions and other factors (Obakpolo, 2015; Figurska, 2019a). Relational potentials of relations' participants "collide", which determines the nature of the relationship and, consequently, undertaking specific actions. In this sense, these actions are created by relations (Pawłowska, 2006).

The course of relations is determined by relational potential of its participants, subject of relations, working conditions, organizational culture, job requirements and the style of human resources management (Figurska, 2019a).

The above considerations confirm the impact of the relations between employees in the organization on the actions taken by their participants. This means that the nature, direction and strength of the relationship between the manager and his subordinates may determine undertaking creative activities by them, understood as activities previously unknown to them, thanks to which they enrich themselves (through the development of knowledge, increase in authority, etc.) and the environment (through new products, services, processes, etc.) (Sokół *et al.*, 2022).

The components of employee-manager relations that may determine the quantity and quality of creative tasks performed are, among others: trust in superiors, cooperation with superiors, communication with superiors, and learning from superiors.

Trust in managers means a willingness of employees to be vulnerable to managers' actions based on the expectation that they will perform a particular actions important to employees, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control managers (Mayer *et al.*, 1995). Not verbal declarations, but the behaviours, attitudes, and actions of the relationship's participants convince of the existence of the trust. Therefore trust requires consistency between what is thought, said and done (Figurska, 2019b).

Cooperation between managers and employees means undertaking mutually compatible and complementary activities having a positive meaning in terms of their impact on achieving the objectives of the firm (Lichtarski, 1992). Cooperation occurs when "two parties have many key mutual interests and would both benefit from investing in the relationship to help each other" (Peterson and Behfar, 2022).

Learning from managers is a process in which employees gain and store managers' experiences that then result in new or modified forms of employees' behaviour and actions. The entire system of employees' knowledge, skills, habits and beliefs is mastered thanks to learning (Encyklopedia PWN). Learning from managers influences employees' work effects and increases their acceptance for changes.

Communication is a two-way process of sending information from the sender to the recipient, during which they are influenced by each other. It is a prerequisite for cooperation and knowledge sharing in the organization. For proper communication between managers and employees, its broadly understood context is very important, including physical, historical, psychological and cultural context (Listwan, 2010).

It should be mentioned here that the choice of these four components of the manager-subordinate relationship was dictated by the analysis of the literature, according to which, for example, trust in the superior and a sense of security are important attributes conducive to the proper performance of creative tasks (Ekvall, 1996).

It can be noticed that there is a specific relationship, which consists in the fact that with the increase in trust, openness, security and cooperation, the level of job satisfaction increases, and thus the level of expected creativity in organizations increases. Where there is contentment, there is less stress and tension, and there is space for learning, development and change. Too much stress has been proven to be an undesirable effect as anxiety interferes with organizational learning and adaptability, not to mention creative processes (Franková, 2011).

What is more, appropriate communication with the superior determines the generation of new ideas and triggers proactive attitudes (Dyduch, 2004). The

opportunity to learn, especially from superiors, is also very important for the effectiveness of creative activities. Acquiring new knowledge in the learning process, or transforming knowledge already acquired so as to generate new ideas is very important in terms of undertaking creative activities (Sokół, 2015).

4. Materials and Methods

The analysis of the source literature allowed to establish a theoretical framework and to gain a broader understanding of the relationships between the components selected for the study. The verification procedure adopted in this article consisted in examining certain interdependencies between observable phenomena or facts, without researchers' intervention.

The research was diagnostic and exploratory. The research aimed to gain knowledge about the discussed phenomena and to analyze them to verify the theory. The conducted analysis made it possible to organize the knowledge related to the discussed issue. The main research problem is to find out the relationship between performing creative tasks and selected aspects of the relations between employees and managers. In the research the authors' self-designed questionnaire was used. The authors aimed to conduct an in-depth analysis of the identified research problem. For this purpose, the following research hypothesis was put forward:

Hypothesis: There is a relationship between selected components of the manager's relations with employees and their performance of creative tasks.

Then, after defining the sampling frame, i.e., a set of items in the statistical population, used to verify the formulated hypothesis, a research sample was drawn using a stratified non-proportional random sampling method. The sample consisted of 250 employees working in organizations that perform creative activities in the West Pomeranian voivodeship, Poland.

The study was of a pilot nature. The collected data was encoded in a research matrix in an Excel file and further analyzed using the SPSS program. The obtained results are presented in the next section. In order to measure the relationship, the Spearman correlation coefficient between the ordinal variables was calculated. Then, the strength of the relationship between the nominal and ordinal variables was measured using chi-square tests. The limit of statistical significance was $p < 0.05$.

5. Results of the Research

The theoretical considerations were verified by an empirical analysis carried out according to research sequences based on the results obtained thanks to the conducted research. The first stage of the analysis involved processing the obtained data. In the second stage, the hypothesis was verified, while in the third stage, final conclusions were drawn and recommendations were developed.

The first research aspect was the assessment of the relationship between the selected four important components of the manager-employee (i.e., trust in superiors, cooperation and communication with superiors, learning from superiors), which may determine the quantity and quality of creative tasks performed.

The assessment of selected conditions of relations between employees and superiors was made by analyzing the creative activities performed by the respondents, such as: (1) implementation of previously unused products or services; (2) development of new processes or procedures that have not been implemented so far; (3) creating new ideas, concepts, and (4) other tasks.

Then, the percentage values of the answers obtained in relation to the above-mentioned creative tasks were analyzed. When evaluating the components of the relationship selected for the study, a points from 1 to 5 were adopted, where 1 means: "I rate very badly" and 5 means: "I rate very well" a given component of the relationship with the superior.

Table 1. Selected components of manager-employee relations and the implementation of creative tasks

Components	RESPONSE SCALE										In total	
	1 - I rate very badly		2		3		4		5 - I rate very well			
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
trust in superiors												
1	4	9,5	3	7,1	15	35,7	4	9,5	16	38,1	42	100,0
2	6	11,8	5	9,8	8	15,7	11	21,6	21	41,2	51	100,0
3	0	0,0	3	6,8	8	18,2	17	38,6	16	36,4	44	100,0
4	1	7,1	1	7,1	3	21,4	6	42,9	3	21,4	14	100,0
Pearson's chi-square		Value - 50,824		df 28		p 0,005						
N		246										
cooperation with superiors												
1	5	12,5	2	5,0	8	20,0	13	32,5	12	30,0	40	100,0
2	4	7,8	7	13,7	9	17,6	11	21,6	20	39,2	51	100,0
3	2	4,5	2	4,5	8	18,2	17	38,6	15	34,1	44	100,0
4	1	9,1	1	9,1	0	0,0	5	45,5	4	36,4	11	100,0
Pearson's chi-square		Value - 33,338		df 28		p 0,224						
N		240										
communication with superiors												
1	3	7,3	4	9,8	5	12,2	14	34,1	15	36,6	41	100,0
2	4	7,7	3	5,8	13	25,0	11	21,2	21	40,4	52	100,0
3	1	2,3	2	4,7	9	20,9	14	32,6	17	39,5	43	100,0
4.	0	0,0	3	25,0	0	0,0	5	41,7	4	33,3	12	100,0
Pearson's chi-square		Value - 39,867		df 28		p 0,068						

N		243										
learning from superiors												
1	4	10,0	7	17,5	8	20,0	12	30,0	9	22,5	40	100,0
2	9	17,6	6	11,8	4	7,8	15	29,4	17	33,3	51	100,0
3	2	4,5	2	4,5	13	29,5	14	31,8	13	29,5	44	100,0
4.	1	7,1	0	0,0	3	21,4	4	28,6	6	42,9	14	100,0
Pearson's chi-square		Value - 32,141		df 28	p 0,269							
N		245										

Source: Own study.

Types of creative tasks: (1) implementation of previously unused products or services; (2) development of new processes or procedures that have not been implemented so far; (3) creating new ideas, concepts, and (4) other tasks.

The results of the research presented in Table 1 show that significant relationships between the selected components of relations with managers and creative tasks were obtained for three out of four components. These were, cooperation with superiors, communication with superiors, and learning from superiors. On the other hand, trust in superiors did not show significant correlations with creative tasks.

When analyzing the respondents' answers regarding the assessment of trust in their superiors in the context of performing various creative tasks, it should be noted that the highest percentage of respondents performing work involving the implementation of previously unused products or services (38.1%) and the development of new processes or procedures that have not been implemented so far (41.2%) rated the level of trust in the superiors very well.

On the other hand, the largest percentage of respondents performing work involving the creation of new ideas, concepts (38.6%) and respondents performing other tasks (42.9%) assessed the level of trust in their superiors as good.

The analysis cooperation with superiors in the context of performing various creative tasks shows that the largest percentage of respondents performing work involving the development of new, not yet implemented processes or procedures assessed cooperation with superiors as very good (39.2%). On the other hand, respondents performing other types of creative tasks most often assessed this component of relations with superiors as good.

When evaluating communication with superiors in the context of performing various creative tasks, it should be noted that the largest percentage of respondents performing other creative tasks assessed the level of communication with superiors as good (41.7%). Respondents performing the other types of creative tasks listed in the study rated the level of communication with their superiors as very good.

The last research area in the presented analysis is learning from superiors in the context of performing various creative tasks. The obtained results indicate that the largest number of respondents involved in the development of new processes or procedures (33.3%) and performing other creative tasks (42.9%) assessed learning from their superiors as very good. Respondents performing other creative tasks most often assessed the level of learning from their superiors as good.

6. Conclusions

Creativity in an organization, if properly generated and used, brings many measurable benefits. The source of creativity are employees and managers who have the appropriate creative potential, including experience and knowledge. In order for creativity to develop in the organization and generate added value, it is necessary to create appropriate conditions for it, as well as concentrate the work of employees who perform creative tasks.

It is very difficult to assess the effectiveness of relations between managers and creative employees, because it is a complex phenomenon. These relations reflect the characteristics of managers and employees, the scope of tasks performed, mutual expectations and requirements that the organization places on employees.

The results of the research show that significant relationships between the selected components of relations managers-employees and performance of creative tasks were obtained for three out of four components. This means that building managers-employees relations based on cooperation, open communication and mutual learning is conducive to performing creative tasks. This is an important observation of practical importance for managing employees in creative organizations.

Building and maintaining such relations also requires an appropriate organizational culture that promotes cooperation and not competition, focused on learning and using knowledge in the process of undertaking creative activities. It is also worth noting that the vast majority of respondents assessed listed in the survey components of the relations between managers and employees who perform creative tasks as good and very good.

In the context of the study performed, certain limitations should be taken into account. The first limitation is the number of respondents which does not allow the study conclusions to be transferred to the entire population of employees performing creative tasks. The second limitation concerns the components of manager-employee relations included in the study. These are only selected components that do not reflect the entire complexity of the analyzed relations.

The described limitations are the starting point for determining further research directions. It is planned to continue the study of the described relations on a larger

group of respondents, and to include additional components of the manager-employee relations.

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