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Empowering Leadership and Employee Creativity: The Mediating Role of Mindfulness and the Moderating Role of Perceived Organizational Support

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ABSTRACT

The research examines how empowering leadership fosters employee creativity by investigating the mediating role of mindfulness and the moderating role of perceived organizational support. Although empowering leadership is widely recognized as an important antecedent of employee creativity, the psychological processes and organizational conditions through which it promotes employee creative behavior remain insufficiently understood. This research proposes a model in which mindfulness mediates the relationship between empowering leadership and employee creativity, while perceived organizational support moderates this relationship. A survey is conducted among 215 lecturers at a public university in Aceh, Indonesia, and the data are analyzed using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS. The results indicate that empowering leadership positively influences employee creativity. Moreover, mindfulness mediates the relationship between empowering leadership and employee creativity, suggesting that empowering leadership fosters employees' mindful response to workplace experience. Perceived organizational support also strengthens the effect of empowering leadership on employee creativity, indicating that organizational support enables employees to transform leadership support into employee creative outcomes more effectively. These findings empirically support the proposed research framework. The research contributes to the leadership and creativity literature by demonstrating the complementary roles of employees' mindfulness and organizational support in explaining how empowering leadership facilitates employee creativity.

Keywords: empowering leadership, employee creativity, mindfulness, perceived organizational support

INTRODUCTION

In a progressively globalized and swiftly evolving economic environment, innovation and creativity are essential determinants of organizational success (Chow, 2018), survival, and competitive advantage (Ren & Song, 2024). Creativity and innovation are essential factors that enable organizations to improve their adaptability, foster innovation, and sustain long-term viability (Lua et al., 2024). Employee creativity, defined as generating novel and useful ideas about products, services, and work methods, is essential to organizations' continued improvement and success (AlEssa & Durugbo, 2022; Hora et al., 2021). Leadership is a key contextual factor that influences creativity at work (Tierney, 2024).

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Past studies have argued that empowering leadership affects employees' creativity (Ahmad et al., 2023; Peng et al., 2024; Riaz et al., 2021; Zhang & Bartol, 2010; Zhang & Zhou, 2014). Empowering leadership enables organizations to recognize employees' potential to seize opportunities and overcome challenges in a complex, uncertain world (Singh, 2023). Creative performance refers to employees' ability to generate novel and useful ideas that contribute to organizational improvement. This process often requires employees to proactively seek information, acquire knowledge, explore alternatives, and take initiative in developing new solutions (Liu et al., 2024; Sumanth et al., 2023; Tolkamp et al., 2022). Empowering leadership positively influences proactive employee behavior (Hoang et al., 2021; Rescalvo-Martin et al., 2022).

Engaging in creative behaviors requires employees to go beyond established ways of working and accept potential risks, as generating novel ideas often involves ambiguity and disrupts existing practices (Park et al., 2024). Employees often rely on leadership support as an important source of confidence when facing uncertain or challenging tasks. Therefore, empowering leadership may function as a compensatory mechanism by reducing employees' perceptions of risk associated with engaging in such behaviors (Yin & Jeon, 2026). Leadership behaviors foster psychological safety, enabling employees to be creative even in high-risk situations (Mehmood et al., 2022). Empowering leadership provides both psychological empowerment and psychological safety, allowing employees to reach their full potential at work and mitigate the risk of being creative (Zhou et al., 2024). Empowered employees can feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and opinions freely with their empowering leaders (Tian & Chae, 2023). Empowering leaders promote employees' idea sharing and creative behaviors by granting autonomy, offering support, and strengthening employees' confidence in their abilities, thereby enhancing psychological empowerment and creative performance (Wei et al., 2024; Zhou et al., 2024). The researchers use social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) and leader-member exchange theory (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), explaining social relations as the outcome of reciprocal exchange between individuals.

Although empowering leadership has been acknowledged to have the greatest impact on employee creativity, the exact significance of this influence has not been fully established (Chow, 2018). Previous research has yet to clarify when and how empowering leadership is most likely to stimulate creative outcomes (Audenaert & Decramer, 2018). Although previous studies have examined the relationship between empowering leadership and employee creativity through various mediating and moderating factors, few have explored it from an organizational standpoint (Yin & Liu, 2022). Previous research has found inconsistent results regarding the direct effect of empowering leadership on creativity, but Joo et al. (2023) have found that empowering leadership does not affect creativity. Meanwhile, Abuzaid et al. (2024) have found that empowering leadership affects innovative work behavior.

Empowering leadership is also defined as a process of creating conditions that enable leaders to share power with employees through emphasizing the importance of employees' work roles, providing greater autonomy in decision-making, affirming confidence in employees' abilities, and removing obstacles that can interfere with performance (Ahearne et al., 2005). These qualities nourish creativity, and there is a logical connection between empowering leadership and creative performance (Audenaert & Decramer, 2018). Autonomy and participation in decision-making can foster employee creativity by providing greater discretion in how employees approach their work and supporting the intrinsic motivation and work engagement that facilitate creative performance (Nili & Tasavori, 2022; Gürbüz et al., 2024). Empowering leadership is linked to creativity (Peng et al., 2024).

By exercising authority and removing obstacles, empowering leaders give employees opportunities to explore diverse creative alternatives, eventually leading to the selection of the most viable ideas (Zhou et al., 2024). In addition, autonomy enhances employees' job control, and with appropriate levels of job control, employees are more likely to engage in creative behavior (Yin & Liu, 2022).

Employees may feel uncertain or lack confidence in their creative ideas because engaging in creative work often entails considerable risks and uncertainty (Ross & Groves, 2023). Empowering leaders, however, demonstrate trust in employees' abilities, set high-performance standards, and encourage them to see their work as more meaningful and impactful (Ahearne et al., 2005). In other words, empowering leaders enhance employees' psychological empowerment by expressing confidence in their abilities and reinforcing their perceptions of competence, meaningfulness, and influence (Liu & Ren, 2022). As a result, empowered employees develop greater confidence and exhibit creative self-efficacy, which enhances their psychological resources to cope with potential risks (Yin & Liu, 2022). Hence, the first hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H1: Empowering leadership influences creativity

To develop a more comprehensive model, the researchers propose perceived organizational support as a moderating variable, which has also been linked to creative performance (Aldabbas et al., 2021). Creativity involves risks because introducing novel ideas and challenging established organizational practices may disrupt the status quo and expose employees to potential resistance from others (Ng & De Clercq, 2021; Park et al., 2024). Therefore, organizational support for creative behavior becomes essential (Dulla et al., 2023). With empowering leaders, employees feel safe being creative when they perceive

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that the organization is willing to recognize and reward their creativity. The strength of this relationship may differ across various contextual conditions (Zhou et al., 2024). Perceived organizational support not only serves as a psychological mechanism that links leader behavior to employee outcomes but can also function as a contextual condition that strengthens this relationship. Perceived organizational support serves as a psychological mechanism that explains how empowering leadership influences employees' innovative and creative behaviors (Wang & Tang, 2023).

Empirical evidence also suggests that perceived organizational support plays an important role in strengthening various organizational employee relationships. Employees who perceive greater support from their organization tend to develop more positive attitudes and engage in behaviors that contribute to organizational goals (Eisenberger et al., 2025). Perceived organizational support is known to increase intrinsic motivation, positive affect, and self-efficacy, foster a sense of obligation to reciprocate with positive performance (Kao et al., 2023), as well as strengthen employees' motivation by fostering a supportive work environment in which employees feel valued and encouraged to dedicate greater effort to their tasks (Mori et al., 2024).

According to organizational support theory, perceived organizational support fosters a sense of obligation among employees to reciprocate the organization's care and support by demonstrating positive work behaviors, including improved performance and a greater willingness to go beyond formal job responsibilities (Eisenberger et al., 2025; Kao et al., 2023). Based on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), employees respond to organizational actions based on their perceptions of benefits received, trust, and a sense of obligation (Ahmad et al., 2023). Employees whose organization cares about their well-being, values their contributions, and supports their work believe the organization will appreciate their effort and may reciprocate by responding positively to empowering leaders and becoming more creative (Yan et al., 2024). For example, employees are motivated to engage in creative behavior by suggesting new ideas, taking risks, and conducting more experiments (Park et al., 2024). In other words, empowering leadership is more effective at encouraging creativity when employees feel that the organization values their contributions and cares about their welfare (Kulachai et al., 2024).

Being creative involves risk, uncertainty, and often leads to anxiety and stress (Daker et al., 2023; Zhang & Zhou, 2014). Not only the presence of empowering leaders can reduce it, but perceived organizational support can also reduce employees' anxiety and foster their willingness to take risks (Okręglicka et al., 2023), address concerns about potential negative outcomes, and encourage them to engage in innovative behaviors by fostering a supportive work environment (Al-Taie & Khattak, 2024). Moreover, creativity requires substantial resources, including energy, time, emotions, and the risk of failure (Choi et al., 2021). When creative efforts fail, employees waste these resources and may experience increased strain. However, perceived organizational support provides employees with valuable organizational resources that compensate for resource depletion and help them to cope with workplace demands (Bai et al., 2023). It can replenish and enhance employees' psychological capacities, creating a value-added resource cycle that encourages employees to experiment and engage more actively in creative endeavors (Yang & Zhou, 2022).

Psychologically, perceived organizational support strengthens the effects of empowering leadership by creating the perception of additional resources needed for creative endeavors. Creativity requires substantial energy, time, and cognitive capacity (Amabile & Pratt, 2016). Empowering leadership gives employees autonomy, meaning, and self-confidence (Ahearne et al., 2005), while perceived organizational support provides a sense of security and confidence that the organization will support them if they fail (Aldabbas et al., 2023). When both factors are present simultaneously, employees not only have intrinsic motivation but also feel protected from risk, making them more willing to take initiative and generate creative ideas. This shows that perceived organizational support acts as a catalyst, strengthening the effectiveness of empowering leadership in fostering creative behavior.

In other conditions, when perceived organizational support is low, empowering leadership's effect on creativity can be weakened. Despite empowering leaders' efforts to provide autonomy, consultation, and training, employees may still be reluctant to engage in creative behaviors when they perceive that their organization does not appreciate their contributions, as creativity requires personal investment and involves uncertainty and the possibility of failure (Aldabbas et al., 2023). This condition makes employees more cautious and more likely to avoid the risks inherent in creative activities (Elsayed et al., 2023). Thus, the existence of perceived organizational support determines the extent to which empowering leadership can be transformed into creative behavior. The second hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H2: Perceived organizational support moderates the relationship between empowering leadership and creativity

Empowering leadership describes leader behavior that seeks to increase autonomy, participation in decision-making, and self-confidence in the work process (Ahearne et al., 2005; Zhang & Bartol, 2010). Through these dimensions, leaders create a work environment that supports autonomy and participation in decision-making, encouraging employees to be more deeply involved and to focus cognitively

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and emotionally in their work (Burhan & Khan, 2024). Empowering leadership has been linked to mindfulness (Albacete-Saez et al., 2025). In addition, empowering leaders help employees to be aware of their internal experiences, self-regulation abilities, and full presence, such as present-moment awareness and attentional engagement at work (Khan et al., 2023). When employees are fully present at work, they are more open to information, explore new approaches, and integrate feedback from leaders effectively (Hughes, Ball, et al., 2023). Hence, it increases their ability to be more creative (Gip et al., 2022). When leaders show confidence in employees' abilities and create a psychologically safe work environment, employees' self-confidence increases and anxiety decreases, encouraging present awareness and attention, which in turn leads to creativity.

In this framework, mindfulness represents a complementary psychological mechanism that explains how empowering leadership may contribute to employee creativity. Mindfulness refers to a psychological state characterized by heightened awareness of present-moment experiences without judgment or automatic reactions (Hülsheger et al., 2013). The research applies the mediating personal factor of mindfulness, which has been lacking in both the empowering leadership and creativity literature. Mindfulness is a state of present-moment awareness characterized by consciously attending to ongoing experiences with openness, acceptance, and non-judgment. This state enables individuals to remain attentive to what is occurring in the present rather than becoming absorbed in thoughts about the past or future (Chems-Maarif et al., 2025).

Empowering leaders to create safe work conditions that reduce stress and increase intrinsic motivation and self-awareness, leading employees to be more mindful (Cougot et al., 2024). As a result, mindful employees can think flexibly, generate new ideas, and respond to challenges more adaptively, thereby increasing creativity (Li et al., 2023). Therefore, empowering leaders not only encourages performance above expectations but also fosters reflective awareness, enabling employees to think creatively and innovatively.

Mindfulness practices are increasingly attracting attention from psychology researchers (M. Rusdi & Wibowo, 2022). Recently, in organizational behavior and psychology, Kim and Park (2023) and Wang et al. (2021) have explored how mindfulness enhances task performance and improves workplace outcomes. Past studies have demonstrated that mindfulness is positively associated with creative behavior (Op den Kamp et al., 2023). Moreover, mindfulness has frequently been examined as a moderating factor that serves as a protective mechanism in reducing negative workplace effects such as job insecurity, high job demands, and role conflict (Montani et al., 2021). However, to date, there is a lack of research investigating mindfulness as a mediating mechanism in the relationship between empowering leadership and employee creativity. Previous studies have found that other leadership types affect mindfulness, such as servant leadership (Miralles et al., 2024). Given its role in fostering self-regulation, openness, and adaptive cognitive processing, mindfulness represents a promising construct that may facilitate the beneficial impact of empowering leadership on employees' creative outcomes (Aggarwal et al., 2024). Therefore, this model illustrates a mechanism in which organizational support and individual self-awareness jointly contribute to increased employee creativity under empowering leadership. Existing literature has positioned mindfulness as a moderator (Xu et al., 2021) or examined leader mindfulness as an antecedent to leadership behavior. Conversely, research on employee mindfulness as a mediator between leadership styles and outcomes, particularly regarding empowering leadership, remains relatively limited. This aligns with an integrative review of workplace mindfulness, which concludes that research into the organizational antecedents of mindfulness, including the role of leadership, remains an emerging area requiring further empirical evidence (Shahbaz & Parker, 2022).

Furthermore, this state of mindfulness supports the emergence of creativity because it requires the ability to observe, divergent thinking, and persistent focus in the face of challenges (Hughes, Shelton, et al., 2023). Empirical research shows that mindfulness is indeed positively related to creativity. For example, mindfulness improves attentional control and concentration by enabling individuals to sustain their focus on present-moment experiences and reduce distractions (Zhong et al., 2024). In addition, it increases open-mindedness (Khemraj et al., 2023) and facilitates creative thinking by reducing rigid attentional patterns and less fear of being judged (Gilbert et al., 2023). Therefore, empowering leadership creates conditions that increase employee mindfulness, which in turn facilitates employee creativity. Mindfulness serves as a psychological bridge that explains how empowering leadership can increase creativity. Empowering leadership fosters a supportive work environment by increasing employees' autonomy and psychological resources, thereby facilitating their ability to recognize and regulate their thoughts and emotions (Khan et al., 2023). Based on the explanation, the third hypothesis is as follows:

H3: Mindfulness mediates the relationship between empowering leadership and creativity

The research aims to make several contributions to research on empowering leadership and employee creativity. First, perceived organizational support is introduced as a moderating factor to examine how organizational support conditions the relationship between empowering leadership and creativity. Second, mindfulness serves as a mediator, explaining the psychological mechanism through which empowering leadership influences employee creativity. Third, the

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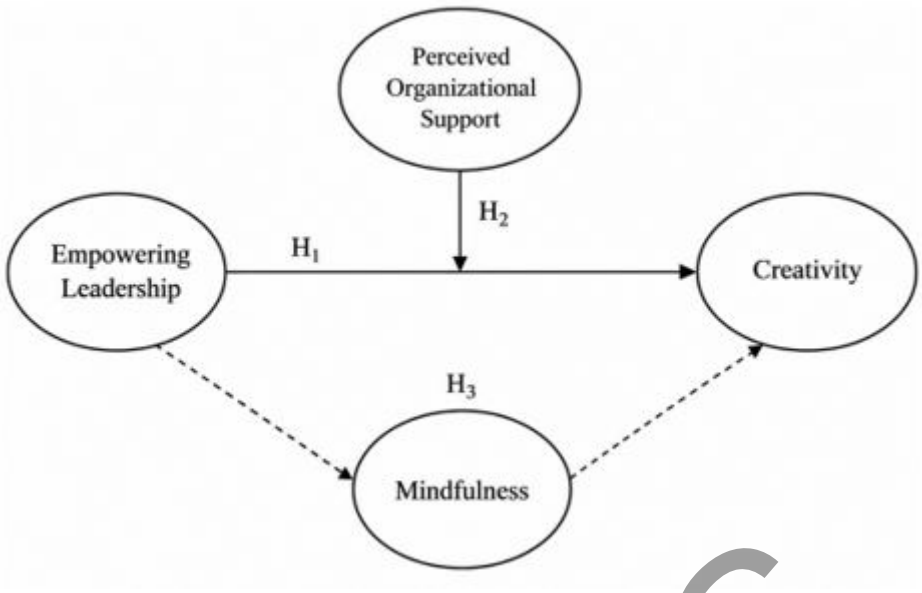


Figure 1 Research Model

research focuses on university lecturers, whose work characteristics differ from those of employees in conventional corporate settings. Lecturers perform multiple and interconnected roles, including teaching, research, community service, student supervision, and academic administration. Their work also involves substantial cognitive demands, professional autonomy, and discretion in designing teaching activities, conducting research, and developing academic solutions. These characteristics make the university context particularly relevant for examining how empowering leadership may foster creativity, how mindfulness may facilitate this process, and how perceived organizational support may strengthen the positive effects of empowering leadership on lecturers' creativity. Figure 1 shows the research model.

METHODS

The online questionnaires are distributed via WhatsApp to 300 active lecturers at a public university in Aceh Province, with 215 completing them, yielding a 71.7% response rate. The research employs a stratified random sampling technique. The population is divided into 12 strata by faculty, and respondents are randomly selected from each faculty to ensure adequate representation across academic disciplines. Inclusion criteria require participants to be active lecturers at the university and to have experience interacting with their direct leaders. Data were collected from August to September 2024 using a structured questionnaire. Before the analysis, the collected data are screened for incomplete responses and missing values. Responses containing incomplete information are excluded, and the final dataset is coded and analyzed using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS.

All constructs, including empowering leadership, perceived organizational support, mindfulness, and employee creativity, are modeled as reflective constructs because their indicators represent manifestations of the underlying latent variables. All indicators are measured using a five-point Likert scale. No manual standardization is performed prior to analysis because SmartPLS estimates the model using the original indicator values.

Questions for all variables are adopted from English-language measures and need to be translated into Indonesian. Using a common back-translation process (Brislin & Freimanis, 2001), the researchers translate all questions to ensure the best possible translation and avoid language bias and translation errors. Mindfulness is measured using four items adapted from Liang et al. (2018), focusing on the acceptance dimension of mindfulness. Unlike measures that emphasize attentional awareness, this measure captures individuals' tendency to accept internal experiences rather than suppress or avoid unpleasant thoughts and emotions. Because the original items are negatively worded, all items are reverse-coded before analysis. Higher scores represent greater mindful acceptance and lower experiential avoidance. Empowering leadership has 12 items adapted from Ahearne et al. (2005). Meanwhile, the perceived organizational support with 9 items is adapted from Eisenberger et al. (1986). Furthermore, 13 items of creativity are adopted from Zhou and George (2001). Table 1 shows the research instrument we used in this study.

The moderating effect of perceived organizational support is examined using a two-stage approach in SmartPLS 3. In the first stage, the latent variable scores of empowering leadership and perceived organizational support are estimated. In the second stage, the interaction term between empowering leadership and perceived organizational support is generated and tested to examine its effect on employee creativity.

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Table 1 Research Instruments

Variable	Indicator	Item
Empowering Leadership (Ahearne et al., 2005)	1. My leader helps me to connect my work goals with the institution's vision and mission. 2. My leader helps me to realize the importance of my work for the institution's performance effectiveness. 3. My leader helps me to understand how my work contributes to the institution's vision and mission. 4. My leader makes many decisions with me. 5. My leader often consults me regarding strategic decisions. 6. My leader asks for my opinion regarding a decision that will affect me. 7. My leader believes that I can handle demanding tasks. 8. My leader believes that my abilities can grow even when I make mistakes. 9. My leader demonstrates confidence in my ability to work at a high level. 10. My leader allows me to do the work in my own way. 11. My leader enables me to work more efficiently by simplifying rules and regulations. 12. My leader allows me to make important decisions quickly to meet the needs of students (our institution's customers).	12
Perceived Organizational Support (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002)	1. The institution where I work shows that it cares about me. 2. The institution where I work cares about my job satisfaction at work. 3. The institution where I work cares deeply about my well-being. 4. The institution where I work places great importance on my work goals and values. 5. The institution where I work values the opinions I offer. 6. When I do a good job, the institution where I work will notice it. 7. The institution where I work is proud of my achievements at work. 8. The institution where I work continues to evolve to enhance employee performance to the highest level. 9. The institution where I work will help me when I have problems.	9
Creativity (Zhou & George, 2001)	1. I suggest new ways to achieve goals or objectives. 2. I come up with new and practical ideas to improve performance. 3. I am looking for new technologies, processes, techniques, and/or ideas. 4. I suggest new ways to improve quality. 5. I am a good source of creative ideas. 6. I am not afraid to take risks 7. I promote and champion my new ideas to others. 8. I demonstrate creativity in my work when given the opportunity. 9. I develop an adequate plan and schedule for the implementation of new ideas. 10. I often have new and innovative ideas. 11. I provide creative solutions to problems. 12. I often take a new approach to problems. 13. I suggest new ways of doing work tasks	13
Mindfulness Acceptance (Liang et al., 2018)	1. I try to distract myself when I feel unpleasant emotions. 2. I try to stay busy to keep thoughts or feelings from coming to mind. 3. I tell myself that I must not have certain thoughts. 4. I try not to think about my problems.	4

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Table 2 Description of Demographic Profile

Variables		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	84	39%
	Female	131	61%
Age	25−35 years old	77	36%
	36−45 years old	86	40%
	46−55 years old	38	18%
	> 55 years old	14	6%
Education Level	Master's Degree	164	76%
	PhD	51	24%
Marriage Status	Married	169	79%
	Single	36	16%
	Widow	10	5%

Source: Processed Data (2026)

Table 3 Results of Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)

	CR	EL*POS	EL	Mind	POS
CR					
EL*POS	1.227				
EL	2.453			1.000	
Mind	1.105				
POS	2.075				

Note: EL = Empowering Leadership; POS = Perceived Organizational Support; CR = Creativity; and Mind = Mindfulness.

Source: Processed Data (2026)

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results provide empirical evidence on the proposed relationships among the variables in the model. Using PLS-SEM, the research evaluates the constructs' measurement properties and tests the direct, mediating, and moderating effects of the proposed model. Table 2 shows that most participants are female (61%), while male respondents account for 39% of the sample. In terms of age distribution, most respondents are between 36–45 years old (40%), followed by those aged 25–35 years (36%), 46–55 years (18%), and above 55 years (6%). Regarding educational background, most respondents hold a master's degree (76%), while 24% have doctoral qualifications. Furthermore, most respondents are married (79%), whereas 16% are single, and 5% are widowed. Overall, the demographic characteristics indicate that the respondents represent experienced lecturers with postgraduate qualifications. These demographic variables describe the sample composition and provide contextual information about the respondents. They are not specified as control variables in the structural model because their inclusion is not supported by a strong theoretical rationale in the proposed relationships. Accordingly, the structural model is restricted to the theoretically specified variables and hypotheses examined in the research.

After collecting all data, the researchers conduct data quality testing and continue the analysis using Smart PLS. The analysis evaluates the measurement model (outer model) and the structural model (inner model). The measurement model is assessed through indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Meanwhile, the structural model is evaluated by examining path coefficients, t-values, p-values, R^2, effect sizes, and predictive relevance. To assess potential Common Method Bias (CMB), a full collinearity assessment is conducted following (Kock & Lynn, 2012; Podsakoff et al., 2003). This approach evaluates whether collinearity among constructs indicates common method variance. Table 3 shows that all Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values range from 1.000 to 2.453, below the recommended threshold of 3.3. Therefore, CMB is not considered a critical concern in the research.

The convergent validity test examines the values reported by (Hair et al., 2021). The results show that some indicators have a loading factor below 0.70:

Table 4 Results of Outer Loading

	CR	EL*POS	EL	Mind	POS
CR1	0.765				
CR10	0.834				
CR11	0.775				
CR12	0.767				
CR13	0.799				
CR2	0.815				
CR3	0.786				
CR4	0.815				
CR5	0.743				
CR7	0.754				
CR8	0.755				
CR9	0.825				
EL1			0.848		
EL11			0.777		
EL2			0.848		
EL3			0.866		
EL4			0.860		
EL5			0.800		
EL6			0.839		
EL8			0.736		
EL9			0.826		
EL * POS		0.334			
MIND1				0.857	
MIND2				0.834	
MIND3				0.748	
POS1					0.851
POS2					0.900
POS3					0.855
POS4					0.883
POS5					0.864
POS6					0.850
POS7					0.853
POS8					0.857
POS9					0.823

Note: EL = Empowering Leadership; POS = Perceived Organizational Support; CR = Creativity; and Mind = Mindfulness.

Source: Processed Data (2026)

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items 7, 10, and 12 of empowering leadership; item 6 of creativity; and item 4 of mindfulness. Therefore, those items are excluded in Table 4. The remaining items are above 0.70, indicating a strong contribution to reflecting the construct.

The measurement model was assessed for internal consistency reliability using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR), with values of 0.70 or higher considered acceptable. Convergent validity was assessed using the average variance extracted (AVE), with a threshold of 0.50 or higher (Hair et al., 2021). As shown in Table 5, construct reliability testing is conducted to ensure that the indicators yield consistent measurement results. The results show that all constructs have Cronbach's alpha and CR values above 0.70, indicating high internal consistency and stable measurement of their respective constructs. Discriminant validity is also conducted to assess the extent to which a construct is truly distinct from other constructs in the model. The AVE root values for each construct should be higher than the correlations among the other constructs (Cheung et al., 2024). The results

Table 5 Results of Construct Reliability and Validity

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
CR	0.944	0.945	0.951	0.619
EL*POS	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
EL	0.940	0.942	0.950	0.679
Mind	0.751	0.790	0.855	0.663
POS	0.956	0.958	0.962	0.739

Note: EL = Empowering Leadership; POS = Perceived Organizational Support; CR = Creativity; and Mind = Mindfulness.

Source: Processed Data (2026)

Table 6 Results of the Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	CR	EL	Mind	POS
CR	0.787			
EL	0.491	0.824		
Mind	0.422	0.277	0.814	
POS	0.406	0.725	0.200	0.860

Note: EL = Empowering Leadership; POS = Perceived Organizational Support; CR = Creativity; and Mind = Mindfulness.

Source: Processed Data (2026)

Table 7 Results of Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	CR	EL*POS	EL	Mind	POS
CR					
EL*POS	0.122				
EL	0.520	0.428			
Mindful	0.482	0.040	0.320		
POS	0.424	0.274	0.760	0.233	

Note: EL = Empowering Leadership; POS = Perceived Organizational Support; CR = Creativity; and Mind = Mindfulness.

Source: Processed Data (2026)

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show that each construct's AVE root value is greater than its correlations with other constructs, so it meets these criteria.

Discriminant validity is tested using two approaches: Fornell-Larcker and Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) criteria. The Fornell-Larcker results in Table 6 show that the square root of the AVE for each construct exceeds its correlations with all other constructs. Creativity (0.787), empowering leadership (0.824), mindfulness (0.814), and perceived organizational support (0.860) exhibit higher diagonal values than their corresponding inter-construct correlations. These findings indicate that each construct is empirically distinct and captures a unique aspect of the conceptual model, thereby confirming adequate discriminant validity (Cheung et al., 2024).

Based on the test results in Table 7, the HTMT value is below 0.85, indicating that the constructs in the model have adequate discrimination from one another (Kline, 2023). There are no discriminant problems between the constructs. In other words, the results indicate an acceptable discriminant validity despite their relatively strong theoretical association. The relatively high correlation between empowering leadership and perceived organizational support is theoretically expected because empowering leaders often act as organizational agents. Consequently, employees may perceive supportive leadership behaviors as signals of organizational support.

The next stage is evaluating the structural model. The R2 value in Table 8 shows the proportion of variance in the dependent variable explained by the independent variables. The analysis results show that employee creativity has an R^2 value of 0.436 (adjusted

Table 8 Results of R-Squared Test

	R-Squared	R-Squared Adjusted
CR	0.436	0.426
Mind	0.079	0.074

Note: CR = Creativity and Mind = Mindfulness.
Source: Processed Data (2026)

Table 9 Results of F-Squared Test

	CR	EL*POS	EL	Mind	POS
CR					
EL*POS	0.171				
EL	0.187			0.085	
Mind	0.110				
POS	0.005				

Note: EL = Empowering Leadership; POS = Perceived Organizational Support; CR = Creativity; and Mind = Mindfulness.

Source: Processed Data (2026)

Table 10 Conditional Effects of Empowering Leadership on Creativity at Different Levels of Perceived Organizational Support level

Perceived Organizational Support level	Conditional effect (β)	95% CI
Low (−1 SD)	0.250	[0.052, 0.421]
High (+1 SD)	0.768	[0.548, 1.019]

Note: SD = Standard Deviation and CI = Confidence Interval

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R^2 = 0.426), indicating that empowering leadership, perceived organizational support, and mindfulness explain 43.6% of the variance in employee creativity. This result indicates that the model has moderate explanatory power in explaining employee creativity. The remaining 56.4% of the variance is attributable to other factors not included in the model and unexplained variation. The adjusted R^2 value of 0.426 further indicates that the model explains 42.6% of the variance after accounting for the number of predictors included in the analysis.

An effect size (f^2) analysis assesses the strength of each exogenous construct's influence on the endogenous construct in the structural model (Hair et al., 2021). The results in Table 9 show that empowering leadership has a moderate influence on creativity (f^2 = 0.187), indicating that this variable contributes substantially to explaining variation between these two constructs. The influence of empowering leadership on mindfulness falls in the small-to-medium range (f^2 = 0.085). Then, mindfulness (f^2 = 0.110) and perceived organizational support (f^2 = 0.005) have a very small effect on creativity.

For interaction variables, the results show that the interaction between empowering leadership and perceived organizational support (EL*POS) has an f^2 value of 0.171, which falls in the medium range. The results indicate that perceived organizational support plays a quite strong role as a moderating variable, strengthening the relationship between empowering leadership and creativity. Overall, these findings strengthen the path coefficient analysis, indicating that empowering leadership plays an important direct role in creativity and perceived organizational support. Meanwhile, the influence of perceived organizational support is more limited to certain contexts.

To further measure the significant interaction between empowering leadership and perceived organizational support, a simple slopes analysis is conducted at one standard deviation below and above the mean of perceived organizational support. The results in Table 10 show that the positive relationship between empowering leadership and creativity is significant at low levels of perceived organizational support (-1 Standard Deviation (SD); β = 0.250, 95% C onfidence Interval (CI) [0.052, 0.421]) and becomes substantially stronger at high levels of perceived organizational support (+1 SD; β = 0.768, 95% CI [0.548, 1.019]). Thus, perceived organizational support strengthens the positive relationship between empowering leadership and employee creativity. Employees who perceive greater perceived

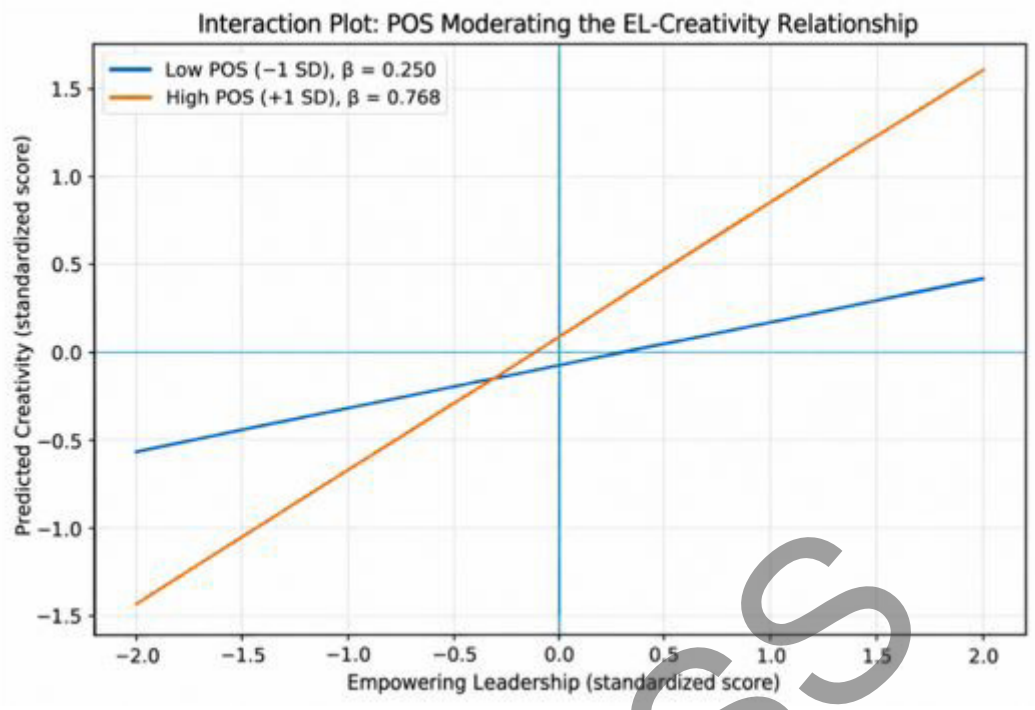


Figure 2 Interaction Plot

Table 11 Results of Path Coefficients

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T-Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P-Values
EL*POS → CR	0.258	0.248	0.073	3.549	0.000
EL → CR	0.509	0.507	0.080	6.334	0.000
EL → Mind	0.280	0.286	0.084	3.345	0.001
Mind → CR	0.262	0.271	0.064	4.088	0.000
POS → CR	0.080	0.082	0.090	0.879	0.380
EL → Mind → CR	0.074	0.076	0.028	2.640	0.009

Note: EL = Empowering Leadership; POS = Perceived Organizational Support; CR = Creativity; and Mind = Mindfulness.

Source: Processed Data (2026)

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organizational support are more likely to translate empowering leadership into creative outcomes. As shown in Figure 2, the slope for high perceived organizational support is considerably steeper than the slope for low perceived organizational support.

The bootstrapping test results in Table 11 show that the relationship between empowering leadership and employee creativity is significant ($\beta = 0.509$; $t = 6.334$; $p = 0.000$). Therefore, the first hypothesis is accepted. For mindfulness, the relationship between empowering leadership and mindfulness is also significant ($\beta = 0.280$; $t = 3.345$; $p < 0.005$). Similarly, mindfulness positively and significantly affects employee creativity ($\beta = 0.262$; $t = 4.088$; $p < 0.001$). The path coefficient for the interaction between empowering leadership and perceived organizational support (EL*POS) on creativity ($\beta = 0.258$; $t = 3.549$; $p < 0.001$) indicates a statistically significant relationship and supports the second hypothesis. Although perceived organizational support does not exert a significant direct effect on employee creativity, its interaction with empowering leadership is significant. This finding suggests that organizational support functions primarily as a boundary condition rather than an independent predictor of creativity. In other words, perceived organizational support strengthens employees' ability to translate empowering leadership into creative behaviors rather than directly enhancing creativity itself. When employees feel a high level of perceived organizational support, the positive impact of empowering leadership on their creativity becomes stronger.

To test the mediation, the analysis examines bootstrapped estimates of indirect effects and interaction terms. The mediation test examines the significance of the indirect effect. The mediating

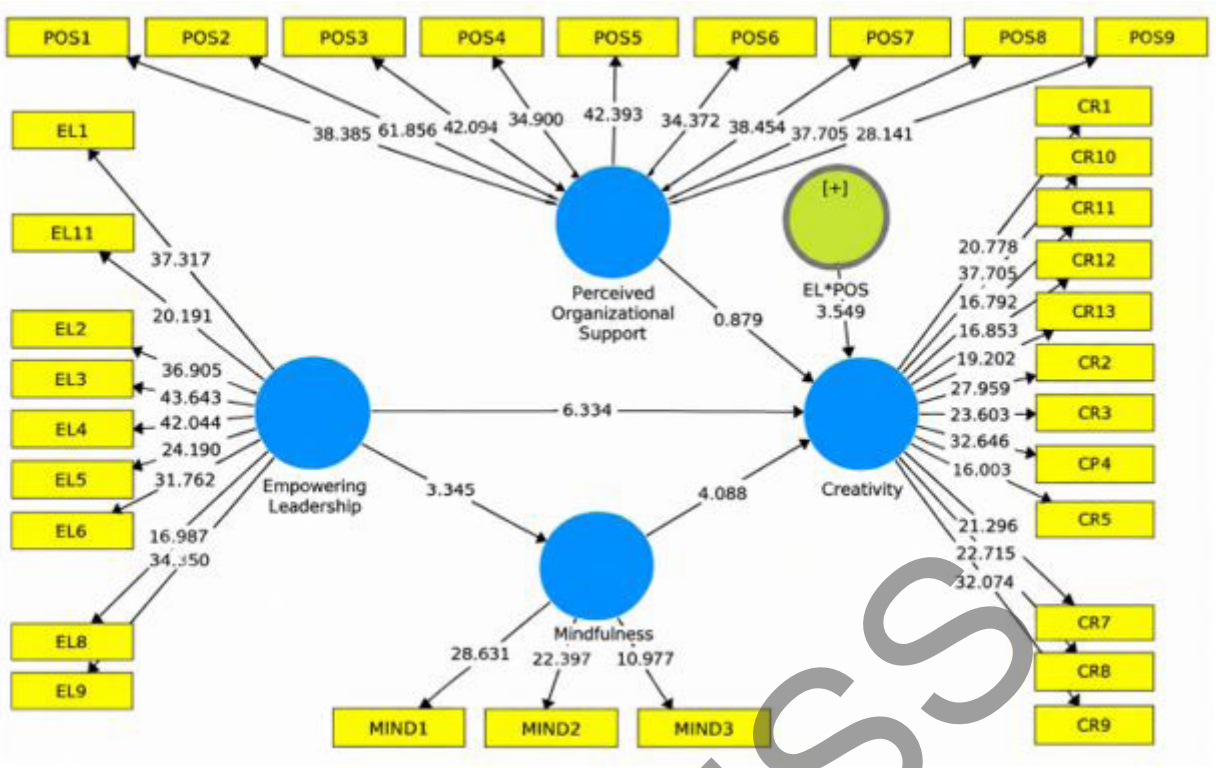


Figure 3 Measurement Model Result

effect of empowering leadership and mindfulness on creativity is significant ($\beta = 0.074$; $t = 2.640$; $p < 0.05$), supporting the third hypothesis. Although mindfulness has a statistically significant mediating effect, its effect size suggests it is one of several psychological pathways explaining how empowering leadership relates to employee creativity. The final measurement model result is shown in Figure 3.

The research model examines the effect of empowering leadership on creativity by considering perceived organizational support as a moderating variable and mindfulness as a mediating variable. The research finds that empowering leadership has a positive and significant relationship with employee creativity. This finding indicates that empowering leaders can foster creativity by providing employees with autonomy, trust, and support that encourage generating and expressing new ideas. Consistent with the social exchange theory, employees tend to reciprocate the valuable resources provided by empowering leaders through positive work behaviors, including creativity (Blau, 1964). Empowering leaders provide autonomy, trust, and developmental support, encouraging employees to engage more in creative activities.

Furthermore, the leader-member exchange theory complements this perspective by explaining that high-quality leader-member relationships characterized by trust and mutual support facilitate employees' willingness to express novel ideas and facilitate managerial support for ideas that challenge existing practices (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Marwan et al., 2023; Urbach & Fay, 2021). This finding also helps clarify the inconsistent results reported in previous studies. While some studies have demonstrated a positive relationship between empowering leadership and creativity (e.g., Alif & Nastiti, 2022; Abuzaid et al., 2024), other research has found an insignificant relationship (e.g., Joo et al., 2023). One possible explanation for these divergent findings is that the effect of empowering leadership may depend on the psychological and contextual conditions surrounding employees. In this research, the inclusion of mindfulness as an underlying psychological pathway and perceived organizational support as a contextual condition provides a more comprehensive explanation of how empowering leadership is translated into creative outcomes. Thus, the findings suggest that empowering leadership may not automatically enhance creativity but is more effective when employees possess psychological readiness and perceive supportive organizational conditions.

Meanwhile, the results show that perceived organizational support moderates the relationship between empowering leadership and creativity. Perceived organizational support strengthens the relationship between empowering leadership and creativity because it reflects the extent to which employees feel the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986, 2020). In addition, perceived organizational support strengthens the psychological mechanisms of autonomy, intrinsic motivation, and self-confidence that are generated by empowering leadership, thereby increasing the likelihood of

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creative behavior (Zhang & Bartol, 2010) . When levels of perceived organizational support are high, employees will interpret empowering leader behaviors, such as providing autonomy, supporting decision-making, and encouraging innovation, as tangible forms of trust and support from the organization. In this context, empowering leadership becomes more effective because employees feel psychologically safe taking creative risks and expressing new ideas. In contrast, when perceived organizational support is low, employees may view leaders' empowering behaviors with skepticism because they may be uncertain whether the organization will support them if their creative efforts fail. This interpretation is consistent with the view that employees' perceptions of organizational support influence their expectations regarding how the organization values and responds to their contributions (Eisenberger et al., 2020). Consequently, employees may be less willing to translate the autonomy and decision-making opportunities provided by empowering leaders into creative actions. Thus, perceived organizational support may function as a boundary condition that strengthens or weakens the relationship between empowering leadership and employee creativity. This relationship can be explained through social exchange theory, which suggests that employees tend to reciprocate favorable treatment with positive work-related attitudes and behaviors (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Accordingly, when employees perceive strong organizational support, they may be more inclined to respond to empowering leadership by engaging in creative activities, consistent with the role of psychological empowerment and intrinsic motivation in fostering employee creativity (Zhang & Bartol, 2010). This finding is consistent with (Alipour & Hejazi, 2025) that perceived organizational support moderates the relationship between empowering leadership dimensions and innovative work behavior. It also aligns with Harris et al. (2014) that the relationship between empowering leadership and newcomer creativity depends on contextual factors, including organizational support for creativity. Taken together, these findings suggest that empowering leadership may be more effective in fostering creative outcomes when employees perceive a supportive organizational environment.

The results suggest that mindfulness functions as an important mediating pathway through which empowering leadership fosters employee creativity. As expected, mindfulness mediates the relationship between empowering leadership and creativity. Empowering leadership likely fosters employee mindfulness by increasing autonomy, decision latitude, and perceived support. These job resources create cognitive space, reduce unnecessary distractions, and facilitate emotional regulation, all of which support mindful attention (Pan et al., 2024). Therefore, mindfulness enhances cognitive abilities and motivation, which encourages creativity (Hughes, Ball, et al., 2023). Empowering leaders may establish work environments that alleviate stress and enhance intrinsic drive, which potentially facilitates self-awareness. Employees with higher levels of mindfulness are more likely to engage in creativity-relevant processes, including problem identification, information search, and idea generation. Such engagement facilitates the development of both individual creativity and innovative work behaviors, thereby enhancing overall creative performance (Khan & Abbas, 2022). Therefore, mindfulness serves as a psychological bridge that explains how empowering leadership can increase creativity. This finding is consistent with Li et al. (2023) that employee mindfulness contributes to creativity directly and indirectly through creative process engagement and a sequential mechanism, involving psychological capital. Furthermore, previous research has shown that empowering leadership can foster employee creativity through other psychological and motivational mechanisms, including work engagement and knowledge sharing (Joo et al., 2023). Taken together, these findings suggest that empowering leadership may facilitate employee creativity by fostering psychological states and work processes that enable employees to engage more effectively in creative activities.

CONCLUSION

The research aims to investigate the relationship between empowering leadership and employee creativity, with perceived organizational support as a moderator and mindfulness as a mediator. Findings indicate that mindfulness can serve as a mediator, whereas perceived organizational support acts as an interactive mechanism in this relationship. The findings extend existing explanations based on social exchange theory and leader-member exchange theory by highlighting the importance of employees' internal psychological processes in translating empowering leadership into creative outcomes. While empowering leadership represents a valuable relational resource provided by leaders, mindfulness explains how employees internalize and utilize this resource to engage in creative activities. Furthermore, perceived organizational support represents an important contextual condition that strengthens the extent to which empowering leadership is associated with employee creativity.

The research provides several practical implications for academic institutions seeking to enhance employee creativity. First, the findings highlight the importance of empowering leadership as an effective managerial approach for fostering creativity among lecturers. Institutional leaders and department heads should develop empowering leadership practices by providing autonomy, involving employees in decision-making, expressing confidence in employees' abilities, and linking individual contributions to institutional goals. Such practices can create a work environment where employees feel

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trusted and motivated to generate and implement new ideas.

Second, the mediating role of mindfulness suggests that organizations should pay closer attention to employees' psychological resources that help them to turn leadership support into creative outcomes. Institutions may consider implementing initiatives that encourage mindfulness-related practices, such as reflective activities, self-awareness development, and opportunities for employees to manage cognitive demands effectively. These practices may help employees to maintain attention, regulate their responses to workplace challenges, and become more engaged in creative problem-solving.

Third, the moderating role of perceived organizational support indicates that empowering leadership may be more effective when employees perceive that their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being. Therefore, university management should strengthen organizational support through recognizing employees' achievements, providing adequate resources, responding to employees' concerns, and creating policies that appreciate employees' contributions. By integrating empowering leadership practices with a supportive organizational climate, institutions can create conditions that encourage sustained employee creativity.

This research has several limitations that may affect the interpretation of the results and the scope of generalization. First, this research is conducted at only one institution. This means that the organizational context, including work culture, leadership structure, and employee characteristics, may be unique and different from other organizations. Thus, the findings may not be widely generalizable across industrial sectors or organization types with different characteristics. The research context may limit external validity, as the results reflect more specific phenomena within the organization under study. Future research can examine whether the proposed relationships hold across different occupational and organizational contexts.

Second, the research uses a cross-sectional design, in which data are collected at only one point in time, which does not allow researchers to draw causal conclusions. Therefore, although relationships between variables can be identified, the direction of the relationship or the causal mechanism cannot be ascertained. Findings on the relationship between empowering leadership and employee creativity show only an association. They cannot confirm whether leadership actually causes increased creativity or whether employee creativity drives perceptions of leadership. Cross-sectional designs have limitations in capturing the temporal dynamics of relationships between variables, so longitudinal research or multiple data collection points are recommended to understand causal relationships better.

Third, this research uses a self-rated questionnaire, which leads to subjective bias among respondents. Respondents may give answers that are considered more socially appropriate, such as social desirability bias or CMB, which occurs when all variables are measured from the same data source and at the same time. This condition can inflate correlations between variables, increasing the likelihood that the observed relationship reflects the measurement method rather than the true relationship between constructs. Self-report may also reflect individual perceptions that differ from reality. These limitations suggest that the research results should be interpreted in a specific context. Therefore, future research can combine self-report data with other data sources, such as ratings from superiors, colleagues, or objective performance data, to minimize single-method bias.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Contributed to conceptualization, methodology, formal analysis, writing original draft, and project administration, I. S.; Finalized questionnaires statements and scale of google form before sending to respondents, I. S.; Checked data from respondents and run SmartPLS, I. S.; Interpreted research results, I. S.; Wrote the paper, I. S.; Wrote the data analysis process and provided statistical analysis, N.; Run the SmartPLS and performed the analysis, N.; Wrote the data analysis section, N.; Set up the measurement and scale, population and sampling technique and contacted respondents, I. R.; Provide the questionnaire in Google Form and sent it to respondents, I. R.; Set up questionnaire data from respondents before analysis, I. R.; Wrote measurement and demography parts, I. R.; Contributed to research model and previous research, K; Finalize the paper writing, manuscript revision, checked grammar and writing style, K; and Handled proofreading, K.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The data that support the findings of the research are available from the corresponding author, Irma Suryani, upon reasonable request. Access to the data is restricted to protect respondents' confidentiality and privacy, as the dataset contains information collected from individual participants. Data may be shared in an anonymized form, subject to applicable ethical

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requirements and the protection of participants' identities.

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