Perceived organizational support: Fostering employee creativity in media houses through work engagement

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Abstract In today’s dynamic and competitive media industry, creativity plays a crucial role in driving innovation and maintaining a competitive edge. Media houses need creative individuals and teams to develop innovative programs and services, enabling them to remain competitive and profitable. The study examined the relationship between the perceived organizational support and employee creativity. Additionally, the study has also considered the role of work engagement as a mediator. Based on the structural complexity of the model, the calculator recommended a minimum sample size of 400. Out of the 650 questionnaires distributed, 525 were returned, and 471 valid responses were selected for analysis from diverse departments involved in content creation, including news, entertainment, marketing, and production. The results of the study revealed that there is a moderate positive and statistically significant relationship between perceived organizational support and employee creativity. Additionally, the results revealed that there would be a positive association between perceived organizational support and work engagement. The work engagement found to significantly mediate the relationship between the organizational support and employee creativity. This study adds value to the employee creativity literature from the media industry.

Keywords: employee creativity, employee engagement, perceived organizational support, media industry, employee performance

1. Introduction

In today’s dynamic and competitive media industry, creativity plays a crucial role in driving innovation and maintaining a competitive edge. Media houses need creative individuals and teams to develop innovative programs and services, enabling them to remain competitive and profitable (Scott, 2020). In this regard, employee creativity is widely considered the source of organizational innovation (Ferreira, Coelho, & Moutinho, 2020) and such individuals are highly esteemed within organizations as an invaluable resource (Liu et al., 2017). Therefore, it is crucial for media houses to comprehend the factors that influence employee creativity and implement strategies to foster creativity in the workplace.

Media organizations continuously encounter the task of generating fresh and captivating content to attract and retain audiences. Media houses need employees who can generate innovative ideas, think outside the box, and adapt to changing trends. Employee creativity leads to the development of unique content, innovative strategies, and cutting-edge products and services. The ability of media houses to think creatively, develop fresh ideas, and produce compelling content is essential for achieving organizational goals (Bilton, 2007). Consequently, understanding the factors that influence employee creativity within media houses is of utmost importance. To address this challenge, organizations must establish a supportive work environment that encourages employee creativity (Kuada, 2019).

One significant factor that influences employee creativity is perceived organizational support (POS). POS is defined as the belief of employees that their organization values their contributions and provides support for their work (Pierce, Kostova, & Dirks, 2001). Previous research indicates that POS can potentially foster employee creativity ultimately leading towards higher organizational performance. This perception of support creates a favorable work environment that facilitates creativity by empowering employees to take risks and explore new ideas without the fear of negative repercussions (Liu et al., 2019). Furthermore, when employees feel supported by their organization, they experience a sense of psychological safety, which promotes the sharing and collaboration of creative ideas without the concern of judgment or criticism (Tang et al., 2020). This positive work environment cultivates employee creativity by fostering the freedom and confidence to think beyond conventional boundaries and generate innovative solutions (Wu & Cheng, 2018).
Research has shown that POS has a significant impact on various employee outcomes, such as job satisfaction, commitment, and performance. A potential explanation is that POS influences work engagement, which affects employee creativity. Work engagement is a positive, satisfied state of mind that is characterized by zeal, commitment, and immersion in a job (Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006). Work engagement refers to the level of dedication, enthusiasm, and absorption employees have toward their work (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Research has found that work engagement is positively associated with employee creativity (Xu & Wu, 2017). Additionally, recent studies have highlighted the mediating role of work engagement in the relationship between perceived organizational support and employee outcomes (Eisenberger et al., 2009, Zhang, & Li, 2021). Engaged employees in media houses exhibit high levels of energy, focus, and involvement in their tasks, which can significantly impact their creative contributions. Therefore, it is important to explore the mediating role of work engagement in the relationship between POS and employee creativity in media houses.

This research is of significant importance as it aims to investigate and provide insights into the relationship between Perceived Organizational Support (POS) and employee creativity, with an emphasis on the mediating function of work engagement. Theoretically, this specific relationship has not been extensively studied (Aldabbas, Pinnington, & Lahrech, 2023) and within the specific context of Asian media organizations not been studied at all. Media professionals face distinct challenges, such as tight deadlines, high audience expectations, and constant innovation, which may influence the dynamics between perceived organizational support and employee creativity (Dewett, 2007). By exploring this relationship in an Asian setting, this research can contribute to filling the existing gap in the literature and provide valuable insights into how cultural factors and organizational practices influence the interplay between POS, employee creativity, and work engagement.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Perceived Organizational Support and Employee Creativity

POS is defined as employees’ perception that their organization values their contributions and provides support for their work (Pierce et al., 2001). Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) further defined perceived organizational support as employees' perception of how the organization appreciates their contributions, cares for their well-being, and their perception of the organization’s readiness to reward increased work performance. Supportive organizational environments in facilitating creative thinking and idea generation among media employees.

Employee creativity is the ability to produce innovative and unique concepts that are suitable and beneficial within the given context (Amabile and Pratt, 2016). Traditionally, research has emphasized creativity as an outcome of relatively stable dispositional traits (Kung & Scholer, 2018). However, situational factors can also facilitate creativity. Organizations, therefore, play a fundamental role in promoting the creativity of their employees (Mote & Karadas, 2022).

Research by Liu et al. (2019) found that perceived organizational support positively influenced employee creativity in media organizations. For instance, Kumar et al. (2017) showed that POS was connected to an improvement in media professionals' ability to solve creative problems. Similar findings were made by Janssen and Van Yperen (2004), who discovered that POS was a significant factor in the creativity of media professionals. Similarly, a study by Chang, Hsu, and Chen (2012) found that POS is positively related to employees’ creativity. One such study conducted by Yu and Frenkel (2013) found that employees with high levels of perceived organizational support exhibited greater creativity, leading to improved performance. Furthermore, a higher level of perceived organizational support enhances the impact of transformational leadership on employee creativity (Du, & Wang, 2022, Aldabbas, Pinnington, & Lahrech, 2021).

Research has indicated a positive correlation between perceived organizational support (POS) and employee creativity (Yuan, & Xie, 2022, Nilasari, Muhidin, & Prasetyo, 2022, Aldabbas et al., 2021). On the other hand, other studies (Gong et al., 2009; Hu & Liden, 2006) have not discovered a connection between POS and employee creativity. For instance, Gong et al. (2009) found no evidence of a connection between media professionals’ POS and creativity. The existing research on the relationship between perceived organizational support and employee creativity has yielded inconsistent findings, indicating the need for further exploration and comprehension of this dynamic. (Yang, & Zhou, 2022, Fan, Tang, Chen, & Sun, 2022). Considering the preceding discussion and the inconsistent results observed in previous research, the existing literature prompts the formulation of a hypothesis for future investigation. On the basis of above findings, we assert that.

Hypothesis 1: POS is positively related to Employee creativity

2.2. Work Engagement as a Mediating Mechanism

Work engagement is a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006). Rich, Lepine, & Crawford, (2010) revealed that POS was significantly related to work engagement, indicating that when employees perceive support from their organization, they are more likely to be engaged and committed to their work. The results indicate a significant and positive relationship between perceived organizational support (POS) and work engagement (WE) (Oubibi, Fute, Xiao, Sun, & Zhou, 2022). Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) found that higher levels of POS were linked to increased work engagement.
Employees will become more receptive to new ideas if they get engaged in their work, according to Bakker et al. (2020). According to Eldor (2017), individuals who are motivated are more likely to exhibit creativity when they proactively take initiative, adapt to their organizational environment, and actively share knowledge. Moreover, Aldabbas et al. (2021) suggest that employees are more inclined to engage in innovative behaviors when they have appropriate access to information and resources within their organizations. Zhou and George found that creativity in dissatisfied employees was highest when continuance commitment and POS for creativity were both high, indicating that engaged employees are more likely to be creative.

Another study by Li et al. (2019) examined the mediating role of work engagement in the relationship between perceived organizational support and the creative performance of journalists. Their findings indicated that work engagement fully mediated the positive effect of perceived organizational support on creative performance, emphasizing the importance of fostering engagement to enhance employee creativity in media settings. Furthermore, another study by Wang, Zhang, and Li (2018) also found that work engagement fully mediated the relationship between POS and employee creativity in the Chinese healthcare industry. In summary, the existing literature supports the notion that work engagement mediates the relationship between perceived organizational support and employee creativity. Organizations can promote employee creativity by fostering a supportive work environment that enhances work engagement through perceived organizational support.

H2: Work engagement mediates the positive relationship between perceived organizational support and employee creativity.

3. Methodology

3.1. Sample and Procedure

This research paper utilized a quantitative approach and employed purposive sampling to investigate the relationship between perceived organizational support (POS) and employee creativity in media houses. Work engagement was considered as a mediator variable. The sample size was determined using the "A-priori Sample Size Calculator for Structural Equation Models" by Daniel Soper, which takes into account factors such as observed and latent variables, anticipated effect size, and desired probability and statistical power levels (Soper, 2023). Based on the structural complexity of the model, the calculator recommended a minimum sample size of 400. Out of the 650 questionnaires distributed, 525 were returned, and valid responses were selected for analysis from diverse departments involved in content creation, including news, entertainment, marketing, and production. 54 more questionnaires were excluded because they were incomplete or improper responses. Finally, 471 responses were used for data analysis. Data collection involved a structured questionnaire comprising validated scales to measure perceived organizational support, work engagement, and employee creativity. The questionnaire items were adapted from existing studies and tailored to suit the specific context of media organizations.

3.2. Measures

In our study, we used a measure called Perceived Organizational Support, which consisted of 10 items selected from Eisenberger et al. (2020). These items were treated as a single concept in our research. For example, one item stated: "The organization recognizes and values my contributions for its well-being." We assessed participants' perceptions using a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 7 ("strongly agree"). The Cronbach's α coefficient for all 10 items was .939, indicating a high level of internal consistency or reliability.

In our study, we measured employee creativity using a scale consisting of 5 items adapted from Coelho and Augusto (2010). It is worth noting that several recent studies, such as those conducted by Hur et al. (2020), Liao et al. (2018), and Moon et al. (2019), have utilized the same scale to assess individual employee creativity. An example item from the scale is: "I make an effort to be as creative as possible in my job." To evaluate the internal consistency of the scale, we calculated Cronbach's α coefficient, which was found to be .891, indicating a good level of reliability. In our study, we measured work engagement using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale—9 (UWES-9), a shortened version derived from the original 17-item Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-17) developed by Schaufeli et al. (2002). Schaufeli et al. (2006) noted that the UWES scale has been extensively examined in over ten countries, with a sample size of 14,521 respondents. Numerous studies on engagement have adopted the UWES scale, highlighting its widespread use (Saks, 2019). In our study, we treated work engagement as a single construct encompassing these three dimensions. The 9 statements assessed how individuals feel in their work environment, with an example item being "At my work, I feel bursting with energy." We employed a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from 0 to 6 (0 = never to 6 = always), for participants to rate their agreement with each statement. The internal consistency of the scale was assessed using Cronbach's α, and the coefficient for these nine items was found to be .939, indicating a high level of reliability.

3.3. Data Analysis
We employed the SPSS 24 for the descriptive analysis and PLS-SEM (Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling) method to empirically examine our research model and test the proposed hypotheses, aiming to gain deeper insights into the relationships among the selected constructs. PLS-SEM is emerging statistical approach used to analyze the complex models. Additionally, it is also used to assess the models involving the non-normal data since it is a non-parametric approach. Moreover, the study did not aim to develop a new theory or explore new phenomenon (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2022). Therefore, PLS-SEM was the best choice for the data analysis. Additionally, this method enabled us to simultaneously test multiple hypotheses encompassing direct and indirect effects in a complex system. We specifically chose PLS-SEM for several reasons. Firstly, our sample size was relatively small (n=471). Additionally, the research model we employed was complex, focusing on the prediction of dependent variables, and utilized latent variable scores for predictive purposes. This software provides the advantage of simultaneous evaluation of both the (measurement and structural) models, streamlining our analysis process.

4. Results

The initial stage involves assessing the reliability and validity of the measurement model, while the subsequent stage entails evaluating the structural model.

4.1. Measurement Model

To evaluate the construct validity of the measurement model, it is crucial to examine its fitness using various fit indices. These indices provide an indication of the acceptable levels of model fit. According to Hair et al. (2006), several fit indices can be considered for this assessment. Cronbach's alpha is a commonly used measure of internal consistency, assessing how well the items within a construct correlate with each other. All three constructs (POS, EC, and WE) exhibit high levels of reliability, with Cronbach's alpha values 0.921, 0.851, and 0.906 respectively. These values suggest that the items within each construct are highly correlated and can be considered reliable for measuring their respective constructs.

Composite reliability is another measure of internal consistency that takes provides an indication of the overall reliability of the construct. The composite reliability values reported for POS 0.928, EC 0.852, and WE 0.907 are quite high. These values further support the notion that the measurement scales are reliable. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is a measure of convergent validity, indicating the amount of variance captured by the construct compared to measurement error. The AVE values provided for all three constructs (POS = 0.602, EC = 0.533, and WE = 0.517) are greater than 0.5 which indicates a substantial proportion of the variance in the observed variables is suggesting good convergent validity (Figure 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Cronbach's alpha (standardized)</th>
<th>Cronbach's alpha (unstandardized)</th>
<th>Composite reliability</th>
<th>Average variance extracted (AVE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>POS</td>
<td>0.921</td>
<td>0.919</td>
<td>0.928</td>
<td>0.602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC</td>
<td>0.851</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.852</td>
<td>0.533</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WE</td>
<td>0.906</td>
<td>0.906</td>
<td>0.907</td>
<td>0.517</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2. Model Fit

In assessing the construct validity of the measurement model GFI (Goodness of Fit Index) = 0.911, Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) =0.903, Comparative Fit Index (CFI) 0.928, and Normed Fit Index (NFI) = 0.898 TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index) = 0.909 are useful indicators of model fit. These indices should be greater than 0.90 to suggest a good fit. The (root mean square error of approximation) RMSEA = 0.0567 value less than 0.08 is typically considered acceptable, while a value below 0.05 indicates a good fit. The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) = 0.068 in an estimated model, however, a value lower than 0.08 indicates a better fit.

4.3. Path Coefficients
The results of this research study provide evidence supporting the hypotheses proposed. Firstly, there is a moderate positive and statistically significant relationship between perceived organizational support (POS) and employee creativity (EC), as indicated by the path coefficient ($\beta = 0.437, p < 0.05$). This finding confirms H1, which postulated that there would be a positive relationship between POS and EC. Secondly, the relationship between POS and work engagement (WE) is strong, positive, and highly significant ($\beta = 0.727, p < 0.05$), providing support for H2. This result aligns with the hypothesis, which stated that there would be a positive association between POS and WE. Furthermore, the estimated model indicates a moderate positive relationship between work engagement (WE) and employee creativity (EC) ($\beta = 0.545, p < 0.05$). This finding supports H3, which proposed a positive relationship between WE and EC. Additionally, the total indirect effect of POS on EC through the mediating variable (WE) is estimated to be moderate, positive, and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.396, p < 0.05$). This implies that a significant portion of the relationship between POS and EC is mediated by WE. Overall, the results provide empirical support for the positive relationships between POS and both EC and WE. Moreover, the mediating role of WE in the relationship between POS and EC highlights the importance of work engagement as a mechanism through which POS influences employee creativity (Figure 2).

Figure 2 Structural Model.

5. Discussion

The present study aimed to examine the relationships between perceived organizational support (POS), employee creativity (EC), and work engagement (WE) based on previous literature that suggested positive associations between these variables. The findings of this study support the hypotheses and align with prior research, further contributing to the existing knowledge in this field. Consistent with previous studies (Liu et al., 2019; Wu & Cheng, 2018), the results reveal a moderate positive and statistically significant relationship between POS and EC ($\beta = 0.437, p < 0.05$). This indicates that when employees perceive higher levels of support from their organization, they are more likely to exhibit greater levels of creativity. This finding underscores the importance of fostering a supportive organizational climate that encourages and recognizes employee contributions, as it can positively influence their creative output.

The strong positive and highly significant relationship between POS and WE ($\beta = 0.727, p < 0.05$) supports previous research findings (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002) that have consistently reported a positive association between POS and work engagement. This implies that when employees perceive high levels of organizational support, they are more likely to feel engaged and committed to their work. Organizations should, therefore, prioritize providing support mechanisms, such as training and development opportunities, feedback, and recognition, to enhance employee engagement levels.

Furthermore, the study identified a moderate positive relationship between WE and EC ($\beta = 0.545, p < 0.05$). This finding is in line with previous studies (Bakker et al., 2010; Hakanen et al., 2008) that have highlighted the positive association between work engagement and employee creativity. The results suggest that when employees are highly engaged in their work, they are more likely to exhibit greater levels of creativity. This indicates that organizations should focus on promoting work engagement through various means, such as providing challenging tasks, fostering a supportive work environment, and encouraging autonomy, as it can contribute to enhancing employee creativity. The mediation analysis revealed a significant indirect effect of POS on EC through the mediating variable of WE ($\beta = 0.396, p < 0.05$). While there are no specific literature-supported values for total indirect effects, previous studies have highlighted the mediating role of work engagement in the relationship between perceived organizational support and employee creativity (Tang et al., 2020; Zhang & Li, 2021). This finding supports the notion the positive impact of perceived organizational support on employee creativity is partially explained by the increased levels of work engagement. This highlights the importance of work engagement as a mechanism through which organizations can enhance employee creativity.
5.1. Implications

Utilization of human resources, converting their activities into valuable performance, and giving direction to individuals' efforts towards achievement for organizational success, all can be attained through appropriate leadership style. To gain a competitive advantage motivated, creative, visionary, trustworthy, committed, satisfied, and competent staff is required. Academic leaders can provide quality services only with their satisfied and efficient staff. Principals having transformational leadership styles are more successful in developing an appropriate educational environment by affecting teaching staff. The findings of this study purposed that transformational principals are effective to enhance performance levels through satisfying their staff members. In reality, no one is having explicitly one style of leadership only, but leaders are practicing many styles at the same time. Transactional leadership style directly affects the performance of the employees and appeals to the followers to some extent also. Results of the study suggest that the laissez-faire style is not suitable for leaders in the educational sector especially. In the Pakistani education system, student exam results are considered a major part of teachers’ performance, so quality teaching is mainly concerned with the satisfaction level of staff. Based on findings, for the private sector especially, academic leaders need to develop liaison with staff that is supportive to create a performance-based environment.

5.2. Limitations and Future Directions

This research study highlights the significance of perceived organizational support in fostering employee creativity within the context of media houses. The findings underscore the importance of establishing a supportive work environment that values employee contributions and promotes engagement. By cultivating a culture of support and providing necessary resources, organizations can enhance employee creativity and drive innovation in the media industry. Media house managers should prioritize creating a work environment that encourages work engagement and supports employees’ creative pursuits. Investing in perceived organizational support can ultimately lead to a more innovative and competitive media industry. In today’s rapidly evolving digital landscape, perceived organizational support plays a crucial role in shaping employee creativity. By creating a work environment that fosters a sense of support, trust, and appreciation, media organizations can unlock the creative potential of their employees. This, in turn, will result in the development of innovative content, strategies, and products that can drive the success of media houses. To thrive in the dynamic and competitive media industry, it is imperative for organizations to prioritize the well-being and creative potential of their employees. Embracing the power of perceived organizational support and promoting work engagement can contribute to the long-term success and growth of media organizations in today’s challenging and ever-changing landscape.

5.3. Limitations and Future Directions

Despite the valuable insights provided by this study, there are several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the research was conducted in a specific context (media houses) and may not be generalizable to other industries or organizational settings. Second, the study relied on self-report measures, which may be subject to social desirability bias. Third, the cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish causality. Future research should address these limitations by employing longitudinal designs and exploring the relationships in different organizational contexts. Future research could delve deeper into the specific mechanisms through which POS influences EC and explore additional factors that may influence these relationships, such as organizational culture or leadership styles.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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Ethical considerations

The consent for the voluntary participation in the present study has been obtained from the respondents.

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