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Influential aspects of leader’s Bourdieu capitals on Malaysian landscape architecture subordinates’ creativity

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Abstract. Free Trade Agreements as implemented by Malaysian government calls out local businesses such as landscape architecture consultant firm to explore internationally and strengthen their performance to compete locally. Performance of landscape architecture firm as a design firm depends entirely on creativity of the subordinates in the firm. Past research has neglected studying the influence of a leader’s capitals on subordinates’ creativity, especially in Malaysian landscape architecture firms. The aim of this research is to investigate the influence of subordinates’ perceptions of the leader’s Bourdieu capitals towards promoting subordinate’s creative behaviours in Malaysian Landscape Architecture firms. The sample chosen for this research are subordinates in registered landscape architecture firm. Data was collected using qualitative semi-structured interviews with 13 respondents and analysed using Qualitative Category Coding. Aspects of the leader’s social capital (i.e. knowledge acquisition, problem solving, motivation boosting), human capital (guidance, demotivating leadership, experiential knowledge, knowledge acquisition), and emotional capital (chemistry with leader, respect, knowledge acquisition, trust, understanding, self-inflicted demotivation) that influence subordinates’ creativity were uncovered from the data. The main finding is that the leader’s capitals promote the subordinate landscape architects or assistant landscape architect to be more creative based on three main things, first is knowledge acquisition, motivation, and ability for the leader to influence through positive relationship. The finding contributes to a new way of understanding the leader’s characteristics that influence subordinates’ creativity.

1. Introduction

Malaysia has entered Free Trade Agreements with other countries so as to have reciprocating preferential access in each other’s markets [1, 2]. This preferential access that includes creative service suppliers such as architects and engineers will lead to increase competition from foreign and domestic firms in a country’s marketplace. Landscape architecture firm are firms that operate on continuous creativity as indication of their performance. Creativity is one of their competitive tools to compete with other firms in the industry. Institute of Landscape Architects Malaysia [3] has listed 10 Strategic Focus Area to improve the profession towards becoming more influential aspect in built environment industry. One of the strategic focuses is Human Capital Enhancement. In Human Capital Enhancement, the board suggested that the landscape architecture industry should focus more on the development of leadership and promoting creativity. The encouragement from Institute of Landscape...
Architects Malaysia (ILAM) shows the importance of leadership and creativity enhancement for landscape architecture firms in Malaysia. To deal with global and economic conditions, firms around the world are encouraging employees to be creative for increased productivity [4, 5]. Creativity is the core competency of design occupations such as landscape architects, building architects etc. During the design processes, creativity is used to generate possible solutions to the design problem [6]. Andries and Czarnitzki [7] reported that subordinates also contribute to innovation and creativity performance of the firm. Hence, subordinate’s creativity is significant in sustaining the firm’s performance especially in creative-oriented-firm such as landscape architecture firm. The enhancement of the subordinate designers’ creativity in the workplace is necessary for their firms to remain competitive in their respective industries. The role of leadership in promoting creativity has continued to be an object of research [8, 9, 10, 11]. The leader plays an important role to influence employee’s creativity [12]. According to Zhang and Zhou [13], leader needs to be aware that their own leadership behaviour is capable to influence the development of employee’s creativity. The research on leadership in promoting creativity mostly focussed on a basis of relationship between the leader and subordinate in the firm. However, there are few studies that emphasise the influencing role of a leader’s intangible resources on his followers. Network diversity, human quality, and emotional intelligence are some of the intangible resources that leader have. Network or relationship diversity can give access to social resources such as support and signal credibility [14]. Bourdieu [15] identified diversity of relationship as one aspect of social capital. Social capital is one of the three main forms of capital. These capitals are useful in sustaining and improving of person’s status in life. Capitals are sets of valuable resources and powers that a person accumulates through his life actions [15, 16]. Thus, a capital is a set of tangible and intangible resources that every person possesses. It can be referred to a person’s social connection, a person’s academic qualification, a person’s work experiences, or a person’s emotional resources.

2. Past Research on Capitals
Most past researches [17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22] that studied the influence of Bourdieu’s capitals tend to focus on a single capital in their research instead of using all Bourdieu’s capitals. Past studies [19, 20] on the capitals’ influences on creativity and innovation were mostly focused on social capital rather than human and emotional. Ooi, Hooy and Mat Som [23] combined social and human capitals, but did not incorporate emotional capital in their study. Their field of study also was not relating to creativity. Even though emotional theory has attracted a considerable amount of research in the recent decade, emotional capital has not been given enough attention in the management literature [22]. Past studies [17, 19, 20, 24, 25, 26, 27] in education and manufacturing indicated that social capital is proved to exert a clear influence on innovation and creativity. No studies have been carried out upon the creative industry and in Malaysian context. A knowledge gap regarding Bourdieu’s capitals’ influence on leadership exists because of the absence of a study using Bourdieu’s capitals, and the minimal research on the capitals’ influence on the creative work. Thus, this paper report the findings of the exploratory interviews undertaken in a research to investigate the influence of subordinates’ perceptions of the leader’s Bourdieu capitals (social, human and emotional) towards promoting subordinate’s creative behaviours in Malaysian Landscape Architecture firms.

3. Research Methodology
This research is exploratory and uses a qualitative interview data methodology. The population comprises landscape architects or assistant landscape architects in registered landscape architecture consultant firms in Malaysia listed in the Institute of Landscape Architects Malaysia (ILAM) website directory (updated to 7 October 2015). The potential respondents are subordinates in landscape architecture firm working as landscape architect or assistant landscape architect with more than 3 years experiences in landscape architecture. The interviews were carried out by telephone calls to subordinate landscape architect and assistant landscape architect. The sampling technique used is purposive sampling. Fourteen firms from 18 contacted firms responded and agreed to participate in the telephone interviews. Only thirteen interviews were analysed (12 subordinate landscape architects and one assistant landscape architect) because one respondent was rejected for unsuitable demographics. The interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed for analysis. Qualitative Category Coding was used to generate the categorical findings.
4. Result From Exploratory Study

The respondents were landscape architects subordinate’s minimum experiences of 3 years in the field except for a respondent who was an assistant landscape architect. Nine (69%) respondents were female while the rest were male. Half of the respondents (54%, 7 respondents) have 1 to 5 years’ experiences in the field. The remaining respondents have 6 to 15 years work experiences. The academic background of the one respondent (8%) was from diploma in landscape architecture. The respondents have mostly bachelor of landscape architecture (77%, 10 respondents) as highest qualifications. Two respondents (15%) and one respondent have landscape architecture master degrees and diploma respectively. The respondents were coded from LA01 to LA13. They were located in Malaysia peninsular east coast region (LA01 & LA11), southern region (LA02 and LA03), central region (LA07, LA08, LA09, and LA13), northern region (LA05, LA06, and LA12) and lastly, Borneo region (LA04 and LA10). The responses on the influence of their leader’s Bourdieu’s capitals towards promoting their creativity differed according to the capitals (social, human and emotional). All respondents said that at least one or more of the capitals can influence their creativity. The transcript analysis generated thirteen meaning units that were then grouped into one of three capital categories. Table 1 describes the effect of capitals towards creativity as perceived by the respondents.

| Category                  | Category Definition                                                                 | Meaning Unit            | Meaning Unit Definition                                                                 |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Social Capital             | Perception of subordinates towards their leader’s durable social network of more or less institutionalised relationship of mutual acquaintance and recognition. | Knowledge Acquisition   | The subordinate indirectly gaining knowledge from the social network of the leader.     |
|                           |                                                                                      | Problem Solving         | The ability of subordinates to solve problems because of the indirect use of leader’s social capital. |
|                           |                                                                                      | Motivation Boosting     | The increase of subordinate’s motivations to be creative because the available potential use of the leader’s social capital to achieve the subordinate design goals. |
| Human Capital              | Knowledge, Institutionalised recognition, skills and experiences of a leader as perceived by his/her subordinates. | Guidance                | The advice or information focused at resolving problems or difficulties using the leader’s human capital. |
|                           |                                                                                      | Demotivating Leadership | The subordinate’s demotivation to become creative due to the design being overly dependent on input from the leader’s human capital. |
|                           |                                                                                      | Experiential Knowledge   | The design knowledge gained by the subordinate through sharing the leader’s experiential knowledge. |
|                           |                                                                                      | Knowledge Acquisition   | The knowledge gained by the subordinate through sharing the leader’s overt knowledge.     |
| Emotional Capital          | A leader’s emotional resources in the form of emotional support, expenditure of time, attention, care and concern that is available to his/her subordinates. | Chemistry with Leader   | Good interaction between a leader and subordinate from the emotional capital that the leader has. |
|                           |                                                                                      | Respect                 | A feeling of admiration for leader from subordinate caused by the leader’s emotional capital. |
|                           |                                                                                      | Knowledge Acquisition   | The ease of the subordinate gaining knowledge from the leader due to the comfortable interactions between them. |
|                           |                                                                                      | (EC)                    | The subordinate’s belief in the leader’s reliability, truth, ability, or strength.         |
|                           |                                                                                      | Trust                   | The subordinate’s ability to understand the needs of his/her leader due to the comfortable interactions between them. |
|                           |                                                                                      | Understanding           | Demotivation arising from subordinate’s acquiesce to leader’s demands due to the comfortable interactions between them. |
|                           |                                                                                      | Self-inflicted          | Demotivation                          |
|                           |                                                                                      | Demotivation            | Demotivation                          |

Table 1. Definition of category and meaning unit generated
Most respondents said that leader’s social capital, human capital and emotional capital do influence their creativity. One common reason is knowledge acquisition. They believed the existence of their leader’s capitals (social, human, and emotional) enable them to receive more knowledge from their leader. Respondents (LA01, LA02, LA03, LA04, LA05, LA06, LA08, LA09, and LA11) told that social capital that their leaders have helped them to acquire knowledge, to easily solve problems, and boost their motivation to be more creative. However, four respondents (LA07, LA10, LA12, and LA13) stated that their leader’s social capital does not inspire or help them to be more creative. Most respondents (LA01, LA02, LA03, LA04, LA05, LA06, LA07, LA08, LA09, LA10, and LA11) except LA08 related that leader’s human capital influences their creativity in designing by guiding them, influencing them, give experiential knowledge and acquiring knowledge. LA02, LA03, LA07 and LA08 however mentioned that their leader’s human capital limited their freedom to be creative because they need to always follow the leader’s preferences, thus encouraging them to be overly dependent on the input from the leader. LA12 explained that in his/her office, the process started with individual brainstorming about the design and then regularly discussing with the principal who suggests many ways to make it more creative. There are six effects of leader’s emotional capital towards subordinate’s creativity as perceived by the respondents. They agreed that the leader’s emotional capital leads them to have a good chemistry with their leader (LA01, LA02, LA07, and LA08); They also acquire respect, knowledge, trust, and understanding from the capital (LA03, LA04, LA08, LA09, LA06, LA11, LA12, and LA13). Yet, LA10 noted that the effect of her leader’s emotional capital could over-pressure her to be creative to meet the expectation of the leader thus causing her self-inflicted demotivation. LA05 on the other hand believed that emotional capital does not influence her directly through the relationship, but more on the expertise or skills and experiences of the leader that helped encourage her to be creative.

5. Discussion from the analysis
From the analysis, the leader’s capitals influenced subordinate landscape architects or assistant landscape architect to be more creative based on three main things, first is knowledge acquisition, motivation, and ability for the leader to influence through positive relationship. These findings support Gu, Zhang, and Liu [27] that social capital helped to enable an individual to gain knowledge and information as well as triggering original ideas and creative thinking. One of the items described by respondents that can generate a positive relationship is trust. According to Zhou and George [28], subordinates or employees are encouraged to take risk to be creative because of the trust towards their leader. The trust gives them the confidence that the new ideas and directions that they proposed will be taken seriously by their leader [28]. Yoshida [29] also supported the importance of trust through positive relationship in fostering employee’s creativity. The positive relationship through emotional capital that the leader possesses is a significant factor in promoting creativity. The influence of the leader’s human capital on the subordinate’s creativity through giving guidance and knowledge from their accumulated skills and experiences is also consistent with Jaiswal and Dhar [30]. Transformational leadership which has elements of teaching and coaching can promote a follower’s creativity [30]. However, leader’s capitals also could cause demotivation through human and emotional capital aspect. Lengnick-Hall and Lengnick-Hall [31] stated in their research, ‘wanting to give the expected answers’ was one of the common barriers to creativity. The statement aligns with LA10’s opinion on her leader’s emotional capital. Thus, it supports the position that leader’s capitals can also demotivate subordinate’s creativity. This research has limitations. First, the findings of this qualitative study cannot be generalised to the population of landscape architect firm’s design subordinates. Secondly, the respondents gave information implying that the leader capitals had promoted the subordinates to be more creative, but does not specifically prove that the capitals change the creativity of the subordinates.

6. Conclusion
The leader’s capitals influence on promoting subordinate landscape architects’ creativity reflected on three main things; first is knowledge acquisition, second are motivation and demotivation, third is leader ability to influence (because of follower’s trust, respect, and understanding towards the leader). This exploratory research contributes to knowledge relating to the influence of the leader’s capitals upon subordinate’s creativity by promoting them to be more creative.
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