The role of empowering leadership in creating employee creativity: moderation – mediation mechanism

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Abstract. The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of empowering leadership for the employee creativity through mediating role of motivation to learn, trust in leader, creative self-efficacy, and the moderating role of openness to experience variable. Questionnaire was used as the data collection method. For the sampling technique, it used a multi-stage sampling technique. The number of samples is 220 employees of state-owned banks in the city of Semarang, Indonesia. The data analysis used the Structural Equation Model (SEM) method with WarpPLS 6.0. Result of this research the leader empowerment has a positive effect on motivation to learn, trust in leader, creative self-efficacy and employee creativity. In addition, the results of the study also show that motivation to learn, trust in leader, and creative self-efficacy have a positive impact on employee creativity. The role of motivation to learn, trust in leader and creative self-efficacy is supported to mediate between empowerment on employee creativity. Also, openness to experience variable is supported as a moderation role.

1. Introduction
As working environment becomes fast and competitive, it has an impact on the high demand of employees who actively involved in their job. This involvement can be in the form of the ability to produce ideas, products, processes, and right approaches [46]. Therefore, it is important for employees to have creativity in their involvement. A competitive advantage in creative industries is needed to compete globally because market orientation is the key to the success of a business [56]. Creativity is often regarded as a key factor where organizations can achieve sustainable competitive advantage [45]. Leaders have a significant influence on the creative behavior that involving employees. The previous research has shown that empowering leadership can increase creativity [59]. Empowering leadership can influence the intrinsic motivation, which in turn stimulates motivation to learn [28]. Motivation acts as a process of mobilizing individuals’ actions to achieve a goal or target [41]. In addition to motivation to learn, leaders can also encourage the employee creativity through a climate of trust established.

Trust is considered as an effective governance tool and is able to increase the knowledge transfer between leaders and subordinates, thus it can increase the new ideas and creative products [12,55,59,14]. The ability of leaders to empower their employees can also increase employee self-confidence. Self-confidence can increase employee potential and enhance their creativity [35,3]. Thus, it is expected that the ability of leaders to empower the subordinates can have a positive influence on self-confidence for being creative, which in turn will increase the employee creativity. Creative self-efficacy has the potential to mediate leadership relations and employee creativity [60].

Literature about creativity shows that not all employees can show their creativity [48]. This is because each employee has a different personality. Personality can influence creativity if the personality has characteristics that can trigger individuals to think and even behave out of their habit [31]. Therefore, one type of personality needed to increase employee creativity is openness to experience. An individual with a high level of openness to experience have better access to a
variety of feelings, thoughts, perspectives, and ideas. Thus, they are more adaptable to change, and provide more experience, and tend to be more able to create a new challenging idea [38]. Openness to experience in this case is considered as a moderator that strengthens the influence of contextual factors on creativity [38, 25, 34]. Therefore, the strong or weak influence of trust and motivation to learn on employee creativity will be determined by the employee’s openness to experience.

There are several interesting point in this study. First, research related to the ability to empower subordinates to employee creativity seems to be rarely studied. Although there are many studies aimed at employee creativity, there are still few that relate to the ability to empower subordinates. This is quite unfortunate considering that employee creativity can be stimulated through leaders who are able to empower subordinates so that they can produce creative performance [28]. Second, there are still differences in the results of the study, so that it is necessary to have further research to clarify the relationship of the ability to empower subordinates for employee creativity [44, 38]. Third, this study adds mediation and moderation variables to complement the needs of previous research. It is hoped that the role of mediation and moderation can help to explain the mechanism of the ability to empower subordinates for the creativity of different employees before. Fourth, previous research on the relationship of the ability to empower subordinates for employee creativity is mostly done in manufacturing companies [60] and software companies [39]. But it has not dealt with the state-owned banking services as the object of the study. In fact, at present development of the banking sector requires creativity in creating products and services with respect to the people’s needs. The dynamic development of banking does not only need employees who are just smart but also creative in completing their tasks so that the results obtained will be maximized. Therefore, research related to employee creativity is appropriate to be done in state-owned banks.

This study aims to examine the mediating role of motivation to learn, trust in leader, and creative self-efficacy in the relationship of empowering leadership and creativity of state-owned banking employees. This study also aims to examine the moderating role of openness to experience on the influence of trust in leader and motivation to learn on the creativity of state-owned banking employees. Furthermore, this article is written into several sections (sections). In part 2, we present a literature review and the development of hypotheses. In section 3, we present the research method approach used. In section 4, we present the results and discussions according to the research objectives. Finally, our conclusions are presented in section 5.

2. Methods

The number of samples in this study was 220 respondents’ employees of state-owned banks in the city of Semarang, Indonesia. Probability sampling techniques with a type of multi-stage sampling was used as the sampling technique. The methods of data collection used a 1-5 Likert scale questionnaire, observations, and interviews, which conducted on managers and employees. The instrument was the validity test of convergent use with the factor loading of ≥ 0.30 and the discriminant by comparing the factor loading > cross loading. The reliability test with composite reliability coefficient > 0.70 and Cronbach alpha coefficient > 0.60 said to be reliable. Based on the instrument test, 67 items of the questions were declared valid. While in the reliability test, all items stated reliable. The hypothesis testing used the resampling method and done by t-test through WarpPLS 6.0.

The employee creativity variable as the dependent variable was measured using 9 question items from Tierney et al. [55]. Here are some examples of the question items “I dare to take risks to create new ideas on my work”, and “I am able to produce revolutionary ideas in my field of work”, “I show authenticity in the work” and “I am able to identify opportunities”.

Empowering leadership as the independent variables were measured using 17 question items from Amundsen [2]. Here are some examples of the question items “My leader provides the information I need to achieve the quality results”, “My leader focuses on corrective action rather than blaming when I make a mistake”, “My leader gives responsibility for customer satisfaction” and “My leader tries to help to provide solutions when the problems rise.”
The mediation variable is motivation to learn consisting of 8 items of questions from Cole [16]. The following are some examples of the question items “I am sure that by learning the training material about banking will be beneficial for me”, and “I am ready to spend a lot of time for getting training in banking.”

Trust in leader uses 17 items of questions from Guinalíu dan Jordán [26]. Here are some examples of the question items: “I trust in my leader because my leader is someone who has integrity”, and “I think my leader treats me fairly”, “I feel my leaders respect my work” and “I believe in the ability of my leaders.”

Creative self-efficacy was measured using 6 items of questions from Tierney et al. [55]. Here are some examples of the question items: “I feel that I am good at generating new ideas”, “I believe in my ability to solve problems creatively”, and “I have more abilities than others to develop ideas.”

Openness to experience as the moderating variable used 10 items of question from Benetmartinez and John [11]. Here are some examples of the question items: “I am someone who likes to imagine new ideas”, “I am a reliable and resourceful thinker,” and “I have great curiosity in many ways.”

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Demographic Characteristic of Respondents

The respondent’s background is dominated by women (55.45%) aged between 30 and 32 (18.18%). The majority of education levels are undergraduate graduates (72.28%) and 20% of respondents have 7-9 years of service. Mean, standard deviation, and correlation for each variable is in Table 1. Correlation between empowering leadership and other variables ranged from 0.610 to 0.346 (all ρ <0.01) with the highest value for empowering leadership (M = 62.28) and trust in leader with the highest value scale (M = 65.99). The highest score of trust in the leader is because the working period of the respondent is more than 5 years. Other variables such as motivation to learn with a value of 29.03, creative self-efficacy with a value of 22.89, openness to experience value of 37.74 and employee creativity of 33.25. That is, that testing of structural equation models can be continued.

| Variable       | Mean  | s.d.  | EL   | MTL  | TIL  | CSE  | OTE  | EC  |
|----------------|-------|-------|------|------|------|------|------|-----|
| 1. Empowering  | 62.28 | 7.36  | 1    |      |      |      |      |     |
| Leadership     |       |       |      |      |      |      |      |     |
| 2. Motivation  | 29.03 | 3.75  | 0.591| 1    |      |      |      |     |
| to Learn       |       |       |      |      |      |      |      |     |
| 3. Trust in    | 65.99 | 6.43  | 0.505| 0.638| 1    |      |      |     |
| Leader         |       |       |      |      |      |      |      |     |
| 4. Creative    | 22.89 | 2.87  | 0.346| 0.457| 0.497| 1    |      |     |
| Self-efficacy  |       |       |      |      |      |      |      |     |
| 5. Openness    | 37.74 | 4.16  | 0.531| 0.548| 0.575| 0.697| 1    |     |
| To Experience  |       |       |      |      |      |      |      |     |
| 6. Employee    | 33.25 | 4.54  | 0.610| 0.687| 0.583| 0.545| 0.652| 1   |
| Creativity     |       |       |      |      |      |      |      |     |

3.2. Measurement Testing

In Table 2, the model fit and quality indices test were conducted to see the suitability of the model in the study. The model fit and quality indices criteria are as a rule of thumb, thus the test results do not apply rigidly and absolutely. The results in Table 2 show that the Goodness of Fit Model has good results to explain the relationship between latent variables and their assumptions for testing hypotheses.

| Model Fit and Quality Indices | Ideal | Analysis Result |
|-------------------------------|-------|-----------------|
|                               |       |                 |

Table 1. Mean, Standard Deviation, and Correlation among Variable

Table 2. Model Fit and Quality Indices Test
Table 3. Confirmatory factor analysis

| Item                        | Factor loading | AVE  | Cronbach's alpha | CR   |
|-----------------------------|----------------|------|------------------|------|
| Empowering leadership (ES)  |                |      |                  |      |
| EL1                         | 0.359          | 0.492| 0.839            | 0.797|
| EL2                         | 0.510          |      |                  |      |
| EL3                         | 0.489          |      |                  |      |
| EL4                         | 0.539          |      |                  |      |
| EL5                         | 0.475          |      |                  |      |
| EL6                         | 0.373          |      |                  |      |
| EL7                         | 0.338          |      |                  |      |
| EL8                         | 0.332          |      |                  |      |
| EL9                         | 0.566          |      |                  |      |
| EL10                        | 0.413          |      |                  |      |
| EL11                        | 0.531          |      |                  |      |
| EL12                        | 0.540          |      |                  |      |
| EL13                        | 0.609          |      |                  |      |
| EL14                        | 0.614          |      |                  |      |
| EL15                        | 0.544          |      |                  |      |
| EL16                        | 0.443          |      |                  |      |
| EL17                        | 0.329          |      |                  |      |
| Motivation to learn (MTL)   |                |      |                  |      |
| MTL1                        | 0.662          | 0.586| 0.801            | 0.715|
| MTL2                        | 0.657          |      |                  |      |
| MTL3                        | 0.537          |      |                  |      |
| MTL4                        | 0.657          |      |                  |      |
| MTL5                        | 0.391          |      |                  |      |
| MTL6                        | 0.539          |      |                  |      |
| MTL7                        | 0.720          |      |                  |      |
| MTL8                        | 0.437          |      |                  |      |
| Trust in leader (TIL)       |                |      |                  |      |
| TIL1                        | 0.459          | 0.568| 0.886            | 0.863|
| TIL2                        | 0.552          |      |                  |      |
| TIL3                        | 0.472          |      |                  |      |
| TIL4                        | 0.550          |      |                  |      |
| TIL5                        | 0.587          |      |                  |      |
| TIL6                        | 0.625          |      |                  |      |
| TIL7                        | 0.374          |      |                  |      |
| TIL8                        | 0.548          |      |                  |      |
| TIL9                        | 0.647          |      |                  |      |
| TIL10                       | 0.584          |      |                  |      |
| TIL11                       | 0.619          |      |                  |      |
| TIL12                       | 0.657          |      |                  |      |
| TIL13                       | 0.624          |      |                  |      |
| TIL14                       | 0.628          |      |                  |      |
| TIL15                       | 0.620          |      |                  |      |
| TIL16                       | 0.677          |      |                  |      |
| Creative self-efficacy (CSE)|                |      |                  |      |
| CSE1                        | 0.527          | 0.687| 0.841            | 0.772|
| CSE2                        | 0.656          |      |                  |      |
| CSE3                        | 0.702          |      |                  |      |
| CSE4                        | 0.701          |      |                  |      |
| CSE5                        | 0.777          |      |                  |      |
| CSE6                        | 0.732          |      |                  |      |
Table 3 shows the results of the convergent validity test on the variables statement items in this study. There is one item of question from the trust in leader variable declared invalid because the factor loading is ≤ 0.30, thus it is omitted because it is represented by another statement item that is considered representing each dimension of TIL and the validity test has been done to obtain a valid result. Therefore, the statement is said to be able to measure the problems that occur in this study and in accordance with the actual conditions. Reliability testing can consistently present the measurement of concept without bias with the Composite reliability coefficients and Cronbach’s alpha coefficients above 0.5. The results in table 3 show that the instruments in this study have met the requirements of the reliability test and the same AVE root value variable has been higher than the AVE root value in other variables. It shows that the criteria of discriminant validity test have been fulfilled. Thereby, the instrument used has been declared valid for further testing of the hypothesis.

3.3. The Result of Hypothesis Test

This study examines the mechanism of mediation and moderation in the mechanism of empowering leadership relationships on employee creativity. Mediation mechanisms through motivation to learn, trust in leader and creative self-efficacy, whereas, moderation mechanism involves openness to experience. This study uses the WarpPLS 6.0 calculation. The results of the research are as follows:
Based on the results in Table 4, it shows that the direct influence of empowering leadership on employee creativity ($\beta = 0.27, p < 0.001$) is positive and significant; the direct influence of empowering leadership on motivation to learn ($\beta = 0.60, p < 0.001$) is positive and significant; motivation to learn on employee creativity ($\beta = 0.36, p < 0.001$) is positive and significant. While the mediation analysis involving the influence of motivation to learn with the results of $\beta = 0.486 > 0.27$ (direct influence), $p <0.001$ H1 is supported, meaning that motivation to learn can mediate the relationship between empowering leadership on employee creativity. Empowering leadership can influence intrinsic motivation, which in turn stimulates the motivation to learn of the employee. Leaders who are able to empower their subordinates optimally will motivate the employee to learn new things and increase knowledge investment that can increase employee creativity (Arnold et al., 2000; Colquitt, Lepine, & Noe, 2000; X. Zhang, 2010; M. L. P. Zhang, 2016; Hau & Chow, 2017).

The direct influence of empowering leadership on employee creativity of $\beta = 0.27, p < 0.001$) is positive and significant; empowering leadership on trust in leader of $\beta = 0.50, p <0.001$ is positive and significant; trust in leaders on employee creativity of $\beta = 0.10, p = 0.07$ is positive and significant. While the mediation analysis involving the influence of trust in leader with the results of $\beta = 0.320 > 0.27$ (direct influence), $p <0.001$ H2 is supported, meaning that trust in a leader can mediate the relationship between empowering leadership on employee creativity. The ability to empower subordinates can help to create trust and a supportive environment, in which leaders show respect for their subordinates. The empowered employees are willing to make extra efforts and show a greater desire to be involved in creative activities [9,12,50,53].
Table 4. Summary of Research Results

| No | Relationship among Variables | Path Coef. | P-Value | Note. |
|----|------------------------------|-----------|---------|-------|
|    | Explanatory Variable | Mediation Variable | Moderation Variable | Response Variable | Path Coef. of Indirect Influence and Moderation | P-Value | Note. |
| 1. | EL | MTL | - | EC | 0.486 | <0.001*** | Mediation |
| 2. | EL | TIL | - | EC | 0.320 | <0.001*** | Mediation |
| 3. | EL | CSE | - | EC | 0.353 | <0.001*** | Mediation |
| 4. | MTL | - | OTE | EC | 0.10 | 0.06** | Moderation |
| 5. | TIL | - | OTE | EC | 0.04 | 0.28ns | Not Moderation |

Note: *** = significance in $\alpha \leq 0.01$ (highly significant); ** = significance in $\alpha \leq 0.05$ (highly significant); * = not significance in $\alpha \leq 0.10$ (weakly significant); ns = not significance

The direct influence of empowering leadership on employee creativity of $\beta = 0.27$, $p < 0.001$ is positive and significant; empowering leadership on creative self-efficacy of $\beta = 0.36$, $p < 0.001$ is positive and significant; creative self-efficacy on employee creativity of $\beta = 0.23$, $p < 0.001$ is positive and significant. Mediation analysis by involving the influence of creative self-efficacy with the results of $\beta = 0.353 > 0.27$ (direct influence), $p < 0.001$ H3 is supported, meaning that creative self-efficacy is able to mediate the relationship between empowering leadership on employee creativity. Leaders who empower their subordinates, according to the affective aspects—by giving attention and respect, will encourage employees to believe in leaders and will create creativity from themselves. Thereby, the ability to empower subordinates can increase employee creativity if employees have a sense of trust in the leader (Ferrin, 2002; Mathisen, 2011; Tierney et al., 2014; X. Zhang & Zhou, 2014; Amundsen & Martinsen, 2015; M. L. P. Zhang, 2016; Han et al., 2017; Mo & Yu, 2017).

The role of moderation of openness to experience of $\beta = 0.10$, $p = 0.06$ H4 is supported positively and significantly, meaning that the influence of motivation to learn on employee creativity will be stronger with the openness to experience. This result is not in line with Hau dan Chow [28], stating that openness to experience is not proven to moderate the influence of motivation to learn on employee creativity. Yet, the results of this study are in the same vein with Shi et al. [47] which shows that openness to experience can be a moderating factor in the mechanism of individual characteristics such as intelligence or motivation on creativity. Employees who have an openness to experience show more open in the way of thinking. Employees who are open-minded tend to be more courageous in facing uncertainty because they always have a positive perspective, are willing to admit mistakes and learn from failures to make things better so they are more creative. The results of the moderation test of openness to experience in the relationship of trust in leaders and creativity of $\beta = 0.04$, $p = 0.28$ H5 is rejected (not significant). It indicates the lack of fit between trust in leaders and openness to experience, which results in employee creativity in stagnant condition—not decreasing or increasing. It shows that openness to experience cannot strengthen or weaken the influence of trust in leaders on employee creativity. This study is contrast with the study conducted by Hau and Chow [28] asserting that openness to experience moderates the influence of trust in creativity. Similar to Javed et al., [32] suggesting that openness to experience cannot moderate the influence of trust in leader on creativity.

4. Conclusions

Empowering leadership has a positive and significant influence on employee creativity through motivation to learn as the mediating variable. Thus, when a leader is able to empower his subordinates optimally it will help increase motivation to learn and indirectly influence employee creativity. Empowering leadership also has a positive and significant influence on employee creativity through trust in leader as the mediating variables. Creative self-efficacy is also proven to mediate the relationship of empowering leadership on employee creativity. Therefore, the role of motivation to learn, trust in the leader, and creative self-efficacy can be considered as the explanation of the mechanism of the relationship between empowering leadership and employees’ creativity. Openness to experience has
proven to be a factor that strengthens motivation to learn and employee creativity. Openness to experience can strengthen the influence of motivation to learn on employee creativity in the workplace. This study shows different results, that openness to experience is not proven to be able to moderate the influence of trust in leader on employee creativity.

The results of this study are expected to contribute to the practice of the organization, especially for the leaders of the State-Owned Bank. The leaders should give priority to their employees to take effective and efficient actions in their work. In addition, companies must provide equal rights for training to their employees and always maintain a harmonious relationship with their leaders so that they can achieve the company’s vision and mission. Theoretically, this research is expected to contribute to the literature on the topic of empowering leadership and employee creativity. This research is also expected to pave the way for research in the banking sector.

In the end, it would be very helpful if further research examines the mechanism of empowering leadership on employee creativity with the longitudinal approach. Subsequent research also needs to enlarge the type and number of research samples to get the generalizations of the results. In reviewing the different objects, further research is also important to consider the cultural aspects.

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