The effects of Korean leadership style on members’ creativity: Perceived supervisor support as a mediator

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<Abstract>

With a sample of 200 paired employees working at multinational quick service restaurants in Korea, the current study investigated the relationship between the supervisors’ Korean leadership style and subordinates’ creativity. In order to avoid common method variance, two sources of data were collected from the restaurant operation supervisors and their subordinates separately. Hypotheses of the study contended that Korean leadership style, in particular the relational dimensions, i.e. relationship with the superiors (upward adaptability), peers (lateral harmony) and subordinates (downward benevolence), would enhance subordinates’ creativity. It is postulated that subordinates would role model after their supervisors’ relational behaviors and work collectively and harmoniously with their working group, underpinned by the Korean unique “cheong”, “woori” emotional phenomena and the “can do” competitive spirit. In the process, the subordinates would de-individualize and adjust their behavior to meet their supervisors’ and group business goals. Consequently, the subordinates would make it their priority to think of better and improved creative ways to execute. The results of regression analyses

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revealed that the relational dimensions of the Korean leadership style were positively related to subordinates' creativity, and the subordinates' perceived supervisor support was shown to fully mediate. Implications of the study results were discussed along with study limitations and future directions of research.

Keywords: Korean leadership, perceived supervisor support, creativity

I. Introduction

Companies expect employees to perform creatively as this is the first step to innovation, critical for organizations’ competitive advantage to survive and prosper (Amabile, 1988; Amabile, 1996; Nonaka, 1991; Shalley, Zhou, & Oldham, 2004; Skerlavaj, Cerne, & Dvsvik, 2014). In the workplace, creative performance is defined as a problem solving behavior, producing ideas and solutions for products, services, processes, and procedures by an individual or by a group of individuals (Amabile, 1983; Oldham & Cummings, 1996; Shalley & Gilson, 2004). The key is then to find what triggers employees’ creativity.

Researchers have explained that one of the most relevant social contextual factors is leadership, and leaders are thought to be a key driver for organizational effectiveness and success (Shalley & Gilson, 2004; Zhou & Shalley, 2003). In fact, in recent years, there has been marked increase in the study of the influence of leadership on creativity.

However, there are still different and often contradictory explanations and research results on whether leadership has positive effects on creativity as earlier reported by Vessey, Barrett, Mumford, Johnson, & Litwiller (2014). Some theories of leadership predicted leaders' influence on subordinates' creativity, including transformational leadership, leader-member exchange, authentic leadership, servant leadership, empowering leadership, benevolent leadership, and supportive leadership. Several
researchers focused on identifying the roles of specific leadership behaviors and leaders’ characteristics in supporting, suppressing, facilitating or inhibiting creativity. Other components and characteristics including personalities, controlling and close monitoring, developmental feedback, supportive and abusive supervision were also considered to affect creativity (Atwater & Carmeli, 2009; Hirst, van Dick, & van Knippenberg, 2009; Mumford, Scott, Gaddis, & Strange, 2002; Oldham & Cummings, 1996; Rego, Sousa, Cunha, Correia, & Saur, 2007; Reiter-Palmon & Illies, 2004; Shalley & Gilson, 2004; Shin & Zhou, 2003; Tierney & Farmer, 2004; Tierney, Farmer & Graen, 1999; Wang & Cheng, 2010; Zhang & Bartol, 2010; Zhou, 2003; Zhou & George, 2001; Zhou & George, 2003). It still remains a challenge to find a consistent pattern, and more studies are in demand given that leadership may be important in triggering creativity.

This is even further more complicating, since most researches and theories about leadership come from the West and are based on the Western context (Yukl, 2010). This leads to a debate whether these arguments can predict and interpret leadership practices in the non-western contexts. This is especially if the contextual factors like cultures are different, and leadership phenomenon may need to be explained within their own local meanings and concepts (Barney & Zhang, 2009; Hofstede, 1993; Hofstede 2001; Rosenzweig, 1994; Rousseau & Fried, 2001; Tsui, 2004). Based on the action theory (Parsons & Shils, 1951), individual actions may be formed, molded, and influenced by specific social and cultural systems, and the leadership behaviors may follow the same process. Then, it is not an understatement that an indigenous leadership research outside the Western context is becoming a necessity to understand the leadership within the unique societal and cultural context of a particular region or country (Kempster & Parry, 2011; Tsui, 2004).
In this vein, the present field study intends to research on leadership which embeds more cultural and values specific to a particular country, and in this case, specifically the unique leadership style that the Koreans display, hereon called “Korean leadership” which has been recently defined by Baik, Seo, Koo, & Kim (2010). It is of particular interest to examine the influence of the relational dimensions of the Korean leadership, i.e. the leaders' interpersonal relationship with their supervisors, peers and subordinates, which is underpinned by the culturally deeply rooted Korean unique values and sentiments called “cheong” and “woori”, on the subordinates' creativity. Then, an insight of the subordinates' perceived supervisor support as a mediator between the relational dimensions of the Korean leadership and the subordinates' creativity in the Korean context is provided. Hence, the following figure depicts the proposed research model.

![Figure 1> The proposed research model](image)

Ⅱ. Theory and Hypotheses

1. The Korean Leadership Style

Baik et al. (2010) define the uniqueness of the Korean leadership that has its strong root in the Korean cultural psychological sentiments and values, “cheong” and “woori” (Choi, 1991; Choi &
“Cheong” is a subtle natural emotional phenomenon, and though it does not have a direct translation in English, it is best defined as a feeling of affection and empathy for others in a relationship. The individuals who share the “cheong” in a relationship would de-individualize and lose their differentiated identity to psychologically bond in trust with others, or put in different words, integrate into cohesive collective unity, becoming one, or “woori” (we-ness) with a collective group (Choi, 1991). The boundaries between the individuals become unclear and individual selves yield to the collective unit of “woori”. The individuals are expected to own a strong obligation for the benefit of the group and not to pursue for their self-interests. This “woori” is not simply "we" in a sense of an individual feeling group solidarity in a collective group, but it is a feeling of self-erasing for the unity and harmony of the group. It is deeply embedded in the Korean psychology that hardly one refers to oneself as “I” and instead uses the “woori” terminology when speaking in the Korean language (Yang, 2006).

Referring back to the Korean leadership, Baik et al. (2010) explain that these Korean unique characteristics are “embedded” (Graen, Hui, & Taylor, 2004) in the relationship beyond the leader and the subordinates: It is in the relationship between the leader and three parties - the superiors, peers and subordinates. A strong “woori” collective comradery emerges amongst the leader with his/her superiors, peers and subordinates. They share extensive areas of commonalities among themselves, as they psychologically bond into one unity.

In addition to “cheong” and “woori”, one another important attribute of the Korean leadership is the “can do” spirit (Shin,
shared and inspired with the collective followers. The leaders show strong conviction that they can impact, make changes and shape the future. Their strong response to the changes, and drive for the competitive edge to win in the market prevail in their leadership behaviors as they synchronize with the “woori” collective group to meet the ends.

Containing the underlying collective emotional spirit of “cheong” and “woori” and the “can do” spirit, the Korean leadership (Baik et al., 2010) comprises of eight dimensions as explained in Table 1.

<Table 1> Korean leadership and its eight dimensions

| Dimensions                  | Definition                                                                 |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 Future Vision             | Having an insight into the future and systematically drives a plan to deliver and execute |
| 2 Self-Confidence           | Having an ability to be decisive and fast in responding regardless of how difficulty the challenges are |
| 3 Response to Situational Change | Having a strong network to gather and update knowledge of the industry that he/she works and the competitors |
| 4 Leading by Example        | Being ethical, patient and exemplary to the collective group               |
| 5 Passion for Achievement   | Being accountable and goal oriented even at the cost of self-sacrifice    |
| 6 Upward Adaptability       | Having a strong loyalty to the superior(s) and supporting them to meet their goals with best results |
| 7 Lateral Harmony           | Having a positive and trusting interpersonal relationship with peers to gain their cooperation |
| 8 Downward Benevolence      | Showing protection, development and taking responsibilities and sacrifice for their subordinates |

Since the Korean leadership introduction by Baik et al. (2010), the
empirical researches with parts of the eight dimensions were conducted. Jang (2014) used five dimensions - future vision, response to situational change, leading by example, passion for achievement and downward benevolence - to show the CEO’s Korean leadership's impact on the financial performance with productive organizational energy as a mediator. Then, there are research works by Shim, Baik, & Kim (2014a) and Shim, Baik, & Kim (2014b), who used the relational dimensions, i.e. upward adaptability (relationship with superiors), lateral harmony (relationship with peers) and downward benevolence (relationship with subordinates). The Korean leadership's influence on team satisfaction, innovation and effectiveness was examined. Affective commitment as a mediator, and procedural justice as a moderator were also tested.

2. The Korean Leadership Style and Creativity

Creative employees are those who tend to identify opportunities and find improved ways for practice and procedures; hence, researchers have suggested that creativity is required in almost any job (Shalley & Gilson, 2004).

The extensive theoretical works of Amabile (1996, 2012) provide a general framework that enhances the emergence of creativity. She explains how four components are necessary to support the individual’s creativity. Three are within the individual: Domain relevant skills, creativity relevant processes and intrinsic task motivation. Lastly, the fourth is outside the individual: the social environment.

Referring to her work, domain relevant skills refer to the individual’s knowledge, expertise, technical skills, intelligence and talent in a particular subject. The individuals working on their subject matter or domain would
use their skills to come up with creative possibilities. Creativity-relevant processes mean individual’s cognitive style and personality characteristics. It is the ability to take the information, synthesize, develop ideas and generate new approaches on problems. Intrinsic task motivation refers to the individual’s being motivated by the problem itself. The feeling of gratification and joy from working on a challenging task dominantly motivates the individual to be creative. As such, the above explains the three components within oneself that trigger creativity. Unlike these components, the social environment is external which refers to the social factors. Positive social factors that stimulate creativity include working in collaboration with a team, actively sharing ideas and supervisors’ encouraging for new ideas. This last component in particular supports that leadership as a social factor (Oldham & Cummings, 1996; Shalley & Gilson, 2004) could play an important role in stimulating individual creativity. One can then question whether the social influencing factor, in this case, the Korean leadership may stimulate individual’s creativity, and particularly the dominant social factor of the Korean leadership's three relational dimensions, i.e. with superiors, peers and subordinates all together.

Drawing from the social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), it is argued that people learn simply by role modelling, observing and replicating the behavior of others. Yukl (2010) adds that especially leaders are often viewed as role models given their status, position, and power. The followers would be imitating the behaviors of their superiors. An individual would repeatedly observe and interact with his or her leader, even into beyond the expectations (Dragoni, 2005).

Role modelling, however, extends beyond imitating the leader’s behavior. Employees also model the behaviors of members of the
collective (Bandura, 1977, Liden, Wayne, Liao & Meuser, 2014). They would be also patterning their thoughts, feelings, or actions (Bandura, 1969) after the others, in this case, identifying with the collective group of people surrounding them. This is relevant in the Korean context as the Korean leadership is defined as a wholly comprehensive relational dimension with the superiors, peers and subordinates all together (Baik et al, 2010). Put in other words, behaviors are contagiously learned and mimicked (Mayer, Keunzi, Greenbaum, Bardes, & Salvador, 2009) such as the leaders’ loyalty to their upper superiors, the harmony and cooperation they show with their peers, and the benevolence they extend to their subordinates. Hence, the Korean individuals, who are driven by the “can do” competitiveness and strong enthusiasm to win (Shim et al., 2014a), would be mimicking and role modeling their leaders’ and their group's strong willingness to achieve.

Other literature also shows that leadership plays an active role in fostering, encouraging, and supporting creativity (Shalley & Gilson, 2004) because leaders set appropriate goals and targets which inspire the individuals to be creative. The subordinates would direct their energies toward these goals (Carson & Carson, 1993; Shalley & Gilson, 2004). Hence, with the Korean unique characteristics and energy, the subordinates would be compelled to produce more effective and creative solutions for their leaders' and their group's objectives and goals. Based on the above argument, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 1: The Korean leadership’s relational dimensions, i.e. upward adaptability, lateral harmony, and downward benevolence, will have a positive relationship with subordinates' creativity.
3. Perceived Supervisor Support

According to the organizational support theory (Eisenberger, Cummings, Armelia, & Lynch, 1997; Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson, & Sowa, 1986; Eisenberger, Stringhamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski, & Rhoades, 2002; Shore & Shore, 1995), employees develop views concerning the degree to which supervisors value their contributions and care about their well-being. This is supported by Amabile’s componential theory (Amabile, 2012) that specifies that supervisors contribute to the perceived work environment for creativity. The subordinates' perception of the support that they are getting from their supervisors, known as perceived supervisor support (Eisenberger et al., 2002) may be influencing the subordinates' creativity.

Literature suggests that perceived supervisor support occurs when a supervisor serves as a good role model; plans, sets, and facilitates the goal setting process without controlling; values employee contributions; communicates well interactively; protects individuals and teams; shows confidence and trust in their employees; and, does this all in enthusiasm (Amabile, 1996; Amabile, Conti, Coon, Lazenby & Herron, 1996, Shalley & Gilson, 2004). The supportive supervisor helps employees to be committed to work projects by modelling desired behavior (Amabile, 1996).

Drawing on the leader-member exchange theory (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), one could suppose that the most important relationship at work would be the dyad relationship between the immediate supervisor and the subordinate. The subordinates, who perceive that their leaders are trustable and reliable to help them meet their work related goals, would be proactively creative (Oldham & Cummings, 1996). In another study,
Wayne, Shore and Liden (1997) describe in a high quality exchange leader-member exchange relationship, the subordinates would feel obligated to perform the task and engage in behaviors even beyond expectations that directly benefit their leaders. Showing positive affective emotions was found to be related to creativity (Amabile, Barsade, Mueller, & Staw, 2005). Subordinates would need to perceive a strong level of comfort and interpersonal trust necessary for creativity (Mumford & Gustafson, 1988). Interpreted in the Korean context, it is a shared consensus that leaders show affection, benevolence, protection and support for their subordinates' well-being, and the Korean employees show high loyalty and commitment to their leaders. This "cheong" and "woori" trusting bond is especially glued between the immediate supervisor and a subordinate as it is deepened due to frequent interactions. The Koreans' saying "what is your business is my business, and my business is your business" prevails at workplace and explains the subordinates' willingness to find improved and better ways to support their leaders in meeting their goals. The subordinates would show their loyalty and commitment through their actions such as standing by just in case their leaders may call upon them; hence, it is not uncommon that Koreans would leave their work places after their leaders had left first.

Another research finds that leaders, in the leader-member exchange situation, often serve as mentors to their followers (Sosik & Godshalk, 2000), who often learn by mimicking the behaviors of their mentors (Lankau & Scandura, 2002). In fact, the Korean followers show their commitment and dedication to their supervisors whom they call “sasu”, which may be translated as a mentor or master of teaching the subordinates how to survive and do well at work, within the business context and scope and even beyond into personal matters. This strong
“sasu” mentoring relationship is long term and forged under the “cheong” and “woori” bond. Conclusively, the individual’s perceived supervisor support felt within the Korean context is an emotional attachment and an important mechanism and process through which creativity is triggered. Based on the above argument, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 2: Perceived supervisor support will mediate the Korean leadership’s relational dimensions, i.e. upward adaptability, lateral harmony and downward benevolence, and subordinates’ creativity.

III. Method

1. Sample and Procedure

A multinational quick service restaurant firm with 410 restaurants located in Seoul, South Korea was selected for the research. With an intention to minimize other influential factors that can affect the researching variables, the participants were from the same industry, company and functional group. The sample population had managers who were accountable for the profit and loss of their business units (i.e. region, sub regions, districts, or restaurants) which means that they would be driven to meet business goals. Restaurant business knowledge and skills may be learned comparatively within relatively short time. Nonetheless, restaurant business is very competitive and employees would be accountable for promoting sales activities, meeting customer satisfaction and increasing customer re-visitation, developing and presenting finished products with speed and excellence, maintaining the attractiveness of the
restaurant ambience, improving work processes and procedures to be more efficient and effective; and, at the same time being profitable and lowering the cost. Hence, problem solving and finding solutions are critical.

Two hundred and twenty nine full time Korean managers were invited to participate. These managers would be responsible for a region, a sub region, or restaurant units. Of the total participants, 27 managers had four to seven subordinates, in which case these managers may have been paired four to seven times with different subordinates. Realizing that leader and member exchange and relationship dynamics are unique in each individual case, each pair was counted statistically. 184 managers with a response rate of 80.3% completed the surveys.

Out of the 448 completed surveys, 200 pairs were matched or 89.3% of the total completed surveys, having discarded the ones which did not have a matching pair, or the survey was found to be incomplete. More than half of the participants were female (N=263, 65.8%). More than half were in their 30’s (N=243, 60.8%). However, considering the ones who were in their 40’s (N=105, 26.3%), this may be interpreted that more than 87.1% were in their 30’s and 40’s. The education level was mostly above high school, either having finished junior college or four year college/university (N=295, 73.8%); however, there was a large group of people who had only high school diploma (N=97, 24.3%). Only two (0.5%) had less than one year employment tenure and more than half (N=224, 56%) had been with the company for more than ten years. When reviewing the length of time the employees had been with their supervisors, the largest pool was between the range of one to five years (N=207, 51.8%) followed by below one year (N=159, 39.8%). The following Table 2 gives details of the profile of the 400 respondents.
After obtaining the permission from the organization’s leaders, i.e. the leaders of the restaurant operations, human resources and legal, surveys were sent out via email to the operations head and the sub region leadership staff, who then delivered to the district managers, restaurant managers and restaurant assistant managers via email.

To avoid common method bias, data were collected by two separate survey questions. The supervisors were asked on their immediate subordinates’ creativity, and the subordinates were asked on their
immediate supervisors’ Korean leadership’s three relational dimensions and the perception of their supervisor’s support. The respondents shared their names and their supervisor's or subordinate’s so the researchers can find the matching pairs. The completed surveys were returned to the researchers individually and directly through email. Employees were also asked for the names of the restaurants (if applicable), age, gender, educational level, employment tenure and the length of time with their immediate supervisors.

2. Measures

The Korean leadership is already originally available in the Korean language. The other two constructs, creativity and perceived supervisor support have already been translated into the Korean language. The existing Korean translation were re-assessed by two professors who are experts in bilingual translation and interpretation and international communication to ensure that the translation’s wordings and nuance are intact as in the original’s intention (Brislin, 1980).

**Korean Leadership’s Relational Dimensions:** We used the three relational dimensions of the Korean leadership, i.e. upward adaptability, lateral harmony, and downward benevolence (Baik et al., 2010). In the original research by Baik et al. (2010), they showed eigen value of upward adaptability is 2.53, lateral harmony 8.29, and downward benevolence 4.54. In addition, the Cronbach α of upward adaptability is 0.72, lateral harmony 0.96, and downward benevolence 0.91. We have combined the three relational dimensions in our research because the Korean leadership's relationship component is not a relationship only between the supervisors and the subordinates but includes all three
relational dimensions as the Korean emotions and spirits are embedded and shared across the relationships as mentioned earlier. This combined relational dimensions approach was also used in earlier researches (Shim et al., 2014a; Shim et al., 2014b). For this study, four items on upward adaptability, five items each on lateral harmony and downward benevolence, totaling 14 items were selected for measurement. They scored highest in the factor analysis and reliability tests of each respective dimension found in the original study by Baik et al. (2010). (Upward adaptability was an exception because it only had four items in the original work.) Some sample items are: “My supervisor sub-serves his/her superior with devotion”, “My supervisor turns credits to his/her superior for accomplishments”, “My supervisor is considered trustworthy by peers”, and “My supervisor is lenient about subordinate’s faults related to work”. The survey was provided in the original Korean language as developed by its authors. All items were scored on a five-point Likert response scale ranging from one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree).

**Creativity:** The supervisors rated their employees’ creativity on Zhou and George’s (2001) 13 items measurement. Some sample items are: “My subordinate comes up with new and practical ideas to improve performance”, and “My subordinate suggests new ways to achieve goals or objectives”. 5-point Likert scale was used with response scale ranging from one (strongly disagree) to seven (strongly agree).

**Perceived Supervisor Support:** The employees’ perceived supervisor support was evaluated on Cole, Bruch, & Vogel (2006)’s four items measurement. Some sample items are: “My manager provides intensive support in order to help me accomplish important priorities”, and “I can fully rely on management”. 7-point Likert scale was used with response scale ranging from one (strongly disagree) to seven (strongly agree).
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Control Variables: Employment tenure was controlled as this may reflect work domain expertise (Oldham & Cummings, 1996; Tierney & Farmer, 2004). The dyad tenure of the employee with the particular supervisor was controlled as the supervisor-subordinate relationship could impact on the relational commitment (Landry & Vandenberghe, 2012). The control variables were self-reported.

IV. Results

1. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

To validate the constructs, three factor analyses were run on i) the combined Korean leadership’s three relational dimensions, ii) perceived supervisor support, and iii) creativity. The eigen value of the relational dimensions of Korean leadership, perceived supervisor support and creativity was each higher than 1.0 minimum threshold: upward adaptability scored 3.047, lateral harmony 4.218, downward benevolence 2.727, perceived supervisor support 3.410, and creativity 8.140. The percentage of accumulated total variance of the Korean leadership relational dimensions was 71.4, and total variance for perceived supervisor support was 85.3 and creativity 62.6.

Also at factor loading, any item scored lesser than 0.6 was eliminated. All 14 items of the Korean leadership’s relational dimensions, four items of perceived supervisory support and 13 items of creativity were qualified. Also to ensure the reliability, Cronbach’s α was used with the minimum threshold at 0.6. The lowest result was 0.833, hence reliability was confirmed in all dimensions. The results are shown in Table 3.
### Table 3: Factor analysis and reliability results

| Var.                      | Items                                                                 | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | Eigen Value | Cronbach α |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|----|----|----|----|----|--------------|-------------|
| **Upward Adaptability**   | My supervisor shows a good protocol to superiors in interactions       |    |    |    |    |    | 0.867        |             |
|                           | My supervisor sub-serves his/her superior with devotion                |    |    |    |    |    | 0.788        |             |
|                           | My supervisor tries to read his/her superior’s mind                   |    |    |    |    |    | 0.759        |             |
|                           | My supervisor turns credits to his/her superior for accomplishments    |    |    |    |    |    | 0.711        |             |
| **Lateral Harmony**       | My supervisor actively collaborates with his/her peers                 |    |    |    |    |    | 0.825        |             |
|                           | My supervisor is considered trustworthy by peers                       |    |    |    |    |    | 0.816        |             |
|                           | My supervisor has good interpersonal relations with his/her peers      |    |    |    |    |    | 0.783        |             |
|                           | My supervisor shares information with his/her peers                    |    |    |    |    |    | 0.769        |             |
|                           | My supervisor gets along with his/her peers                           |    |    |    |    |    | 0.763        |             |
| **Downward Benevolence**  | My supervisor forgives subordinate’s ethical or legal issues          |    |    |    |    |    | 0.759        |             |
|                           | My supervisor is lenient about subordinate’s faults related to work    |    |    |    |    |    | 0.743        |             |
|                           | My supervisor turns credits to superiors for accomplishments and takes responsibility his/herself for failures |    |    |    |    |    | 0.689        | 2.727 0.833 |
|                           | My supervisor shelters followers                                       |    |    |    |    |    | 0.680        |             |
|                           | My supervisor sacrifices him/herself for followers                     |    |    |    |    |    | 0.663        |             |
| **Perceived Supervisor Support** | My manager provides intensive support in order to help me accomplish important priorities |    |    |    |    |    | 0.948        |             |
|                           | My manager assures us that help is available if it is needed          |    |    |    |    |    | 0.942        | 3.410 0.940 |
|                           | My manager shows active concern for my feelings.                      |    |    |    |    |    | 0.904        |             |
|                           | I can fully rely on management                                         |    |    |    |    |    | 0.900        |             |
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| Var.                  | Items                                                                 | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | Eigen Value | Cronbach α |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|----|----|----|----|----|--------------|-------------|
| Creativity            | My subordinate comes up with new and practical ideas to improve performance |    |    |    |    |    | 0.855        |             |
|                       | My subordinate searches out new technologies, processes, techniques and/or product ideas |    |    |    |    |    | 0.848        |             |
|                       | My subordinate suggests new ways to achieve goals or objectives      |    |    |    |    |    | 0.829        |             |
|                       | My subordinate suggests new ways to increase quality                  |    |    |    |    |    | 0.822        |             |
|                       | My subordinate is a good source of creative ideas                     |    |    |    |    |    | 0.813        |             |
|                       | My subordinate suggests new ways of performing work tasks.            |    |    |    |    |    | 0.811        |             |
|                       | My subordinate often has new and innovative ideas                     |    |    |    |    |    | 0.802        |             |
|                       | My subordinate exhibits creativity on the job when given the opportunity to |    |    |    |    |    | 0.796        |             |
|                       | My subordinate develops adequate plans and schedules for the implementation of new ideas |    |    |    |    |    | 0.779        |             |
|                       | My subordinate promotes and champions ideas to others                  |    |    |    |    |    | 0.748        |             |
|                       | My subordinate often has a fresh approach to problems                 |    |    |    |    |    | 0.726        |             |
|                       | My subordinate is not afraid to take risks                             |    |    |    |    |    | 0.631        |             |
| Percentage of total variance |                                                                     | 21.8 | 30.1 | 19.5 | 85.3 | 62.6 |             |             |

Note: The separate reliability and validity tests on each of the relational dimensions are as follows: The eigen value of upward adaptability is 2.822, lateral harmony 3.708, and downward benevolence 3.146. The Cronbach α of upward adaptability is 0.842, lateral harmony 0.910, and downward benevolence 0.833.

Next, to examine the correlation between and among variables, a Pearson analysis was used for testing. Standard deviations and correlations...
are shown in Table 4. The control variables, i.e. employment tenure and
time with supervisor which were thought to influence creativity showed to
be not positively significant. The combined Korean leadership’s relational
dimensions was negatively significant with employment tenure (-.186,
\( p<0.01 \)).

In relevance to the research aim, the three variables showed correlation:
Korean leadership’ relational dimensions and perceived supervisor support
(.762, \( p<0.01 \)); Korean leadership’s relational dimensions and creativity
(.239, \( p<0.01 \)); and, perceived supervisor support and creativity (.302,
\( p<0.01 \)). These results were supportive in line with the hypotheses
proposed.

<Table 4> Means, standard deviations and correlations

|       | Means | Standard Deviation | 1     | 2       | 3       | 4     | 5     |
|-------|-------|--------------------|-------|---------|---------|-------|-------|
| 1     |       |                    |       |         |         |       |       |
|       | Employment tenure | 3.02 | 0.84 |         |         |       |       |
| 2     |       |                    |       |         |         |       |       |
|       | Time with supervisor | 1.59 | 0.60 | .208** |         |       |       |
| 3     |       |                    |       |         |         |       |       |
|       | Korean leadership’s relational dimensions | 3.99 | 0.62 | -.186** | -.032 |       |       |
| 4     |       |                    |       |         |         |       |       |
|       | Perceived supervisor support | 5.58 | 1.27 | -.061 | .013 | .762** | 1     |
| 5     |       |                    |       |         |         |       |       |
|       | Creativity | 3.50 | 0.65 | -.065 | -.010 | .239** | .302** | 1     |

Notes: * \( p<.05 \), ** \( p<.01 \), *** \( p<.001 \).

2. Hypotheses Testing

To test the hypotheses, a regression method was used on SPSS. Hypothesis 1 on whether the Korean leadership’s relational dimensions, i.e.
upward adaptability, lateral harmony, and downward benevolence, have a
positive relationship with creativity was analyzed. In Model 1, the control variables, i.e. subordinates’ employment tenure and length of time with supervisor, and creativity (the dependent variable) were analyzed. In Model 2, the combined Korean leadership’s relational dimensions (the independent variable) was input additionally to observe the change. Then in Model 3, the perceived supervisor support was observed whether it mediates between the Korean leadership's relational dimensions and creativity. Table 5 shows the results.

<Table 5> The regression analysis of Korean leadership’s relational dimensions and creativity, and perceived supervisor support as a mediator

| Items                        | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 |
|------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Controlled Variables         |         |         |         |
| Constant                     | ***     | ***     | ***     |
| Employment Tenure            | -.054   | -.948   | -.019   | -.333   | -.038   | -.680   |
| Time with Supervisor         | .012    | .152    | .011    | .141    | .003    | .042    |
| Independent Variable         |         |         |         |
| Korean Leadership: Relational Dimensions | .249*** | 3.332   | .011    | .095    |
| Mediator                     |         |         |         |
| Perceived Supervisor Support |         |         | .149**  | 2.711    |
| \( R^2 \)                    | .005    | .059    | .094    |
| \( R^2 \) adj                | -.006   | .044    | .075    |
| \( \Delta R^2 \)             |         | .054    | .035    |
| F                            | .450    | 4.016** | 4.949*** |
| \( \Delta F \)               |         | 11.100*** | 7.349** |

Notes: * \( p<.05 \), ** \( p<.01 \), *** \( p<.001 \)

The relationship between the Korean leadership’s relational dimensions
and creativity in Model 2 showed $R^2=.059$, $R^2_{adj}=.044$, $\Delta R^2=.054$, $F=4.016$, $p<.01$, $\Delta F=11.100$, $p<.001$. Compared to Model 1 where only control variables were input, the Model 2 results showed positive increasing change and the relationship was significant. Moreover, the Korean leadership’s relationship dimensions showed $\beta=.249$, $t=3.332$, $p<.001$ in Model 2, indicating that the relationship between the Korean leadership’s relational dimensions and creativity was positively significant. The hypothesis 1 is therefore supported.

Finally, to test the mediator of the perceived supervisor support in the relationship between the Korean leadership’s three relational dimensions and creativity, the test was run on Baron & Kenny’s (1986) mediated regression analysis. Accordingly to establish mediation, the following conditions and steps had to be met. First, the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable had to be positively significant; secondly, the relationship between the independent variable and mediating variable had to be positively significant; and, lastly, after having input the independent variable and the mediating variable together and regressed, the relationship between the mediating variable and the dependent variable had to be positively significant. In the latter, if the independent variable continued to be positively significant then it is shown to be a partial mediating effect; however, if the independent variable showed to be insignificant, and the mediating variable showed to be positively significant, then it is shown to be a full mediating effect.

Accordingly, in Model 3, perceived supervisor support as a mediator was additionally input to examine its role in the relationship between the Korean leadership’s relational dimensions and creativity. The data showed a significant increase ($R^2=.094$, $R^2_{adj}=.075$, $\Delta R^2=.035$, $F=4.949$, $p<.001$, $\Delta F=7.349$, $p<.01$). In Model 2, we were able to observe that the
relationship between the Korean leadership’s relational dimensions and creativity was significant as mentioned earlier; however, in Model 3, the Korean leadership’s relational dimensions showed $\beta=.011$, $t=.095$, and was no longer significant. Instead, perceived supervisor support showed $\beta=.149$, $t=2.711$, $p<.01$, which then means the perceived supervisor support variable is a full mediator in the relationship between the Korean leadership’s relational dimensions and creativity. Hence, hypothesis 2 is supported.

V. Discussions and Conclusion

To ensure that the business is competitive and sustainable, companies pursue for employees’ creative performance. Prior researches showed that leaders may be critical factor in triggering the emergence of the individual creativity. However, the leadership theories were defined and developed in the West within the western cultures, which may not be applicable in all societies and cultures. Hence, to understand the leadership that Koreans show within the Korean cultural context would be more meaningful.

Recently, Baik et al. (2010) have defined the Korean leadership style with eight dimensions. The finding has started to attract attention with more empirical researches to come such as Korean leadership's impact on team effectiveness and innovation (Shim et al., 2014a; Shim et al., 2014b), and financial and business performances (Jang, 2014). However, in these cases, not all the Korean leadership's eight dimensions were used as this research has shown also. This calls for more robust empirical researches to review and back up the measurement in the original work.

The Korean leadership, and the subtleness of “cheong” and “woori” emotional phenomena that bonded the Korean people together, erasing the
selfness and merging as group selves were discussed. This was also explained from the social learning theory perspective. The employees would role model after their leader’s solid relationship with his/her upper level superiors, peers and subordinates, and also the leader’s “can do” enthusiasm and spirit to win, underpinned by the Korean “cheong” and “woori” emotional bond. The followers learn to collectively take part in the problem solving to ensure that they meet their leader’s and organizational goals and learn that they should turn the credits of accomplishments to their superiors. Hence, the individuals’ acceptance of the group’s goals triggers employees’ enthusiasm to win for the group and in so doing, they get engaged in creative activities.

From an individual level, the dyad relationship between the leader and the subordinate is necessary to be interpreted from the Korean cultural viewpoint. It is beyond the transactional relationship and becomes an emotional bond. The leader provides full support and protection and receives in return the subordinate's loyalty and commitment to fully support the leader in successfully delivering the business objectives. This strong highly emotional relationship forged between the supervisor and subordinate, and the subordinate's commitment to do whatever is necessary for the supervisor are culturally embedded and believed to trigger the subordinate's creativity. Hence, the employee's “cheong” and “woori” relationship with the immediate supervisor is probably more intense due to interaction frequency, and hence perceived supervisor support is a mediator between the Korean leadership's relational dimensions and creativity.

However, there is limitation in this study. Future studies are proposed as follows for more insight into the Korean leadership's effectiveness. Firstly, there are other unique Korean affective behaviors, such as “shinbaram” and “heung” which are positive emotions, and negative
emotions such as “han” of the Korean people that may play a role in the relationship between Korean leadership style and creativity. How they together with “cheong” and “woori” may be considered to further understand how creativity is triggered. It is worth to mention that the challenge would be the availability of the measurements of these Korean phenomena, such as “cheong”, which are critical factors for understanding the Korean leadership style. Secondly, this study has its limitation to focus on one important mediating variable; however, future studies may also include testing the hypothesized model including moderating and mediating other variables for explaining how Korea leadership tends to encourage, promote, stifle, and inhibit their employees’ creative performances, i.e. emotional intelligence and voice behaviors. Thirdly, as in this study, more than half of the leadership positions were held by women. How “cheong” and “woori” are played by Korean female leaders versus male leaders may be another option to investigate. Fourthly, Korean leadership style’s relationship with other dependent variables than creativity is proposed as Korean leadership style is still in its early stages since it has been defined in 2010. Fifthly, this study has its limitation for studying only the relational dimensions; therefore, more investigation using all eight dimensions of the Korean leadership style is needed to provide flood of insights into the Korean leadership. Finally, longitudinal cross sectional study with samples from the Koreans working in Korean and non Korean companies to understand the causality relationship in the Korean leadership and critical variables may also provide valuable insights in the make of Korean leadership’s effect at workplace.

As a conclusion, the present empirical study examined the effect of Korea leadership on creativity, with perceived supervisor support as a mediator. The results showed positive effect. It is especially notable from
a viewpoint that the study took the leadership phenomenon within its own cultural and social meanings and concepts. Further testing of the Korean leadership measurements to identifying what are the other possible variables that link between the leadership and its impact on creativity and other dependent variables need to be continuously followed up.

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