

An Examination of the Relationship Between Individual Creativity and Perceived Organizational Support Levels of Employees

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Abstract

Creative thinking has gained more prominence than ever under contemporary evolving and advancing conditions. In this line, development of creativity of human resources and its configuration into a functional tool have gained strategic importance. Creativity is considered as a process for acquisition of both novel and utility outputs. Perceived organizational support is that existing values in an organization are qualified in a way that they attach importance to and prioritize employee's satisfaction, motivation and happiness. The objective of this study is to determine and investigate the relationship between employees' individual creativity levels and the organizational support perceived by them. The study was conducted on 177 employees at the teknokent. The Spearman correlation analysis was applied along the constructed hypotheses so as to determine the correlation. According to the obtained results, a positive and statistically significant correlation was determined between employees' individual creativity levels and their perceived organizational support. Mann Whitney U Test and Kruskal Wallis Test were employed in evaluation of employees with respect to their individual demographical characteristics. On the basis of their gender and marital status, it was revealed that organizational support and individual creativity were higher among male and single respondents. Moreover, perceived organizational support and individual creativity were mostly seen in the age group of 17-23. With regard to work experience, the highest individual creativity was determined with the respondents with 2-5 years work experience; the highest perceived organizational support was determined with the respondents with work experience of 16 years and longer.

Keywords: Individual Creativity, Perceived Organizational Support

Introduction

Today, business organizations are required to come forward with various features in order to survive through compelling competition environment, progress with significant steps in comparison with their competitors and prepare themselves to future. The principal aspects of these factors which comprised of economic and social subjects are considered as capability to have strong economy, adjust to change and novelties, and to display continuous development (Samen, 2008: 364). In the meantime, a notable transition from conventional understanding to modern one was observed in this process: Management-Oriented conventional business understanding was replaced by entrepreneurial spirit; labor force was replaced by brain power; industrial society understanding was replaced by information society understanding and individual movement was replaced by collaborative movement understanding. In these processes, fundamental factor is "human" for businesses. Human, the most important capital factor, is required to have advanced intellectual knowledge, be open to innovations, to have dubious and creative characteristics so as to accomplish purposes of business; introduce solutions to problems; and to progress (Marimuthu et al., 2009: 266).

In terms of businesses, development of creativity of human resource and enhancing its functionality are considered strategically fundamental (Balay, 2010: 44). In other words, the association between processes of competitive edge and adjustment to development and change and creativity strength of human resources has been more remarkable than ever (Ünal, 2002: 1-2) and it has come to the first place as a value adding factor.

Under such conditions of the business life in which "human" factor play such essential role, fulfillment of expectations of employees and their support are proportionally essential and necessary because it is thought that fulfillment of expectations of employees would contribute into productivity and efficiency of the overall organization (İplik et al., 2014: 110). The relevant studies in the literature reveal that employees are directly influenced by the positive or negative situations that they encounter at the workplace (Amabile, 1997: 55; Shalley et al., 2000: 221; McLean, 2005: 241). When employees think that they are adequately supported by their organizations, their sense of belonging towards the organization enhances, which eventually advances their work performance. On the contrary, employees who feel deficiency of support of their organization would avoid using their talent and skills for the benefit of their organization (Eder and Eisenberger, 2008: 55).

Accordingly, it is necessary that employees' individual creativity levels to be explored, enhanced and to utilize in more efficient way. Hence, in order to ensure this, organizations should attach importance to and support creativity skills of their employees. Therefore, this study tried to investigate

the relationship between employees' individual creativity levels and their perception of organizational support.

Literature Review

The Concept of Creativity

Creativity has long standing concept as humankind. However, its significance has grown further in the 21st century. The need for seeing available opportunities, structuring new tools, interpreting life in evolving and ever changing societies and cultures within the business and daily life conditions getting more complicated and becoming vague further has intensified as days pass. This need introduced requirement of more creative structures to provide expert guidance to solution of current and future issues; to develop our individual skills; to accomplish more comprehensive learning about relevant facts of today and future (Tan and Perleth, 2015: 1). Due to the need for creativity concept, it has attracted more attention day by day and it has been studied from various points of angles (Anoiko, 2011: 23). This diversity required to consider creativity with its three dimensions subject to ever changing and developing circumstances of the era. The first dimension relates with describing human and their personality. In this scope, there are field studies on cognition, personality and concept (Guilford, 1950: 444-445; Runco, 2014: 1-2). In the second dimension concentrated on organizational characteristics while strives to reveal the relationship between creativity and organization (Woodman et al., 1993: 293). Finally the third dimension is concentrated on education and improvement subjects. By applying different education methods to individuals, their consequences with respect to creativity are tried to be investigated (Mansfield et al., 1978: 517).

Creativity, in the most general sense, is described as a talent to acquire both new and utility outputs. When this concept is taken into consideration within the context of organization, it is required to be handled with all factors such as novel and utility ideas, products, service, procedure, process, environmental conditions and personal characteristics displayed by employees in complex systems to add value to their organization (Mumford and Gustafson, 1988: 27-28). In other words, as it could be understood from the content of the creativity concept, creative products, processes and circumstances and the interaction among them must be comprehended well in order to understand creativity (Lee et al., 2013: 2).

Creativity, from a different point of view, is a concept which could offer solution for issues; is not comprised of cognitive elements but also includes motives and affections that make it closely related with individual factors in cultural context. In this line, creativity could be described as a process that occurs as a result of discovery of new ideas or rearrangement of current factors (Boden, 1998: 347).

As it could be understood from the descriptions above, it is not possible to describe the concept of creativity within certain limits. To the end of comprehending the process and to draw a better description, the creativity process and its outputs are required to be investigated with their characteristics. In the organizational sense, the common points among the considered descriptions of individual creativity could be summarized as follows: "Revealing the one which has not been thought before", "making innovation", "being different", "being different than the commonly known", "sharing result" and "independence from regular and stereotyped things".

Individuals are considered as the minor constituents of society or social order. On the other hand, groups are comprised of two or more individuals who are thought to have inter-dependencies, relationships or interactions (Yeloğlu, 2007: 136). When inter-personal and group relationships are taken together, it would be possible to state that creativity starts at the personal level and persists at the group level. On the basis of this opinion, the concept of creativity will be tried to be considered with its two dimensions of individual creativity and organizational creativity.

Individual Creativity: Individual creativity is described as the capacity to display behaviors or knowledge that could provide an appropriate solution in the face of various problems (Kapu and Baştürk, 2009: 527). According to Amabile, individual creativity occurs subject to three factors: proficiency, creative thinking and task motivation (Amabile, 1997: 42). Intelligence and knowledge of an individual constitute his/her creative strength. Therefore, proficiency includes the things known by an individual and that could be accomplished by this individual in his/her expertise field (Ford, 1996: 1123). Individuals' approach towards issues is related with creative thinking skill (Runco, 2014: 241). Characteristics such as convincing and encouraging oneself about a task, self-motivation are related with overall motivation (Ford, 1996: 1120). The interaction among these three factors yields individual creativity.

Organizational Creativity: In the most common sense, organizational creativity is that individuals' creation of service, idea, process, procedure and new products that would add value to the organization while they are working together within complex systems (Woodman et al., 1993: 293). Another description which approaches organizational creativity from a more comprehensive point is given as follows: "Organizational creativity represents adoption of new concepts and understanding and developing them further through the process by establishing an environment allowing transition to new ideas, services and processes (Yahyagil, 2001: 8). In this description, persistence of need for change, that is requirement of going beyond stereotyped ideas, was emphasized. According to another description which prioritizes information transfer and development of

individual creativity, organizational creativity is described as a circumstance which occurs as a result of using individual expertise in line with organizational interests by members of organizations (Chang and Chiang, 2007: 4).

Creativity Process

Following five steps frequently encountered in the relevant literature need to be mentioned about the creativity process:

- 1. Description of Issue and Determining Opportunities:** Creative idea, project, service and product are the elements, which are not known whether they are needed until they are "discovered". However, they necessarily should be determined so that they could be discovered. At this stage, issues and opportunities are required to be exposed clearly and evidently (Bentley, 2004: 76).
- 2. Gathering Information:** This is the stage for gathering information to the end of investigation into necessary details concerning the subject (Yıldırım, 2007: 114).
- 3. Creating Idea:** This is the stage for blending gathered information afterwards of description of issue and determining opportunity. This period is also referred as incubation period. This stage requires more focusing on intellectual processes (Cengiz et al., 2006: 423).
- 4. Developing and Amending Ideas:** This is the stage in which potential solutions are evaluated. That is, this is emerging an invention or acquisition of an invention (Arık, 1987: 34-35).
- 5. Application:** At this stage, consideration of applicability of obtained results are finalized and application is initiated (Stamm, 2003: 41). In other words, this is transformation of all acquisitions into something useful.

The Concept of Perceived Organizational Support

The concept of perceived organizational support has not been conceptualized entirely until 1980s. However, the concept of organizational support has been reported in management literature for almost seventy years. Accordingly, the concept has been tried to be interpreted by various researchers through different forms (Beheshtifar and Zare, 2012: 30).

On the basis of the description drawn by Eisenberger et al. who has prominent studies in the literature on perceived organizational support concept, organizational support is the contribution and awaken interest among employees of an organization stimulated by values embraced in an organization in terms of performing better (Eisenberger et al., 1986: 501). In other words, existing values in an organization are required to be qualified as they attach importance and prioritize to employees' satisfaction, motivation and happiness.

The concept of organizational support is essentially based on perception. This concept includes everything perceived by employees. In this sense, organizational support is that employees feel the support given by their organization to them (Yoshimura, 2003: 10).

In the relevant studies, it is reported that there are various factors effective on perception of organizational support by employees (Zang et al., 2012: 423). From different points of view, factors effective on perceived organizational support could be examined in two fundamental groups with respect to their general characteristics: Individual factors and Organizational factors.

Individual Factors: Individual factors effective on organizational support are consisted of personality characteristics and demographical characteristics in general. Whereas personality characteristics are comprised of positive and negative affections as well as conscience, trustworthiness, carefulness, rigor, patience and responsibility; demographical characteristics are comprised of age, gender, education and service period (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002: 701).

Organizational Factors: Organizational factors are consisted of organizational justice, supervisor support and human resources practices.

Methodology

Individuals' capability to exhibit their creativity is proportional to the opportunities supplied for them by their organizations. This is because organization members' capability to use and develop their individual creativity depends on the fact that existing organization values are directly related with organizational environment which attaches importance to and prioritising employees' satisfaction, motivation and happiness. Especially Eisenberger et al., studies in the literature addresses the significance of this relationship (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002: 698). In sum, it is possible to conclude that perceived organizational support and individual creativity level are associated. The primary purpose of this study is to determine this relationship. To the end of this objective, the main hypothesis was structured as below:

Hypothesis: There is positive and statistically significant relationship between organizational support perceived by respondents and their individual creativity level.

Additionally, the study also aimed to investigate whether organizational support perceived by employees and their creativity levels differ with respect to their gender, age, education status, marital status, professional experience and industry. Along these objectives, following sub-objectives were structured:

H₁: Organizational support perception of respondents displays significant difference with respect to their gender.

H₂: Individual creativity levels of respondents display significant difference with respect to their gender.

H₃: Organizational support perception of respondents displays significant difference with respect to their marital status.

H₄: Individual creativity levels of respondents display significant difference with respect to their marital status.

H₅: Organizational support perception of respondents displays significant difference with respect to their education status.

H₆: Individual creativity levels of respondents display significant difference with respect to their education status.

H₇: Organizational support perception of respondents displays significant difference with respect to their age.

H₈: Individual creativity levels of respondents display significant difference with respect to their ages.

H₉: Organizational support perception of respondents displays significant difference with respect to their education status.

H₁₀: Individual creativity levels of respondents display significant difference with respect to their professional experience.

H₁₁: Organizational support perception of respondents displays significant difference with respect to their industry.

H₁₂: Individual creativity levels of respondents display significant difference with respect to their industry.

The first data collection tool employed in the study was the 8-item perceived organizational support scale developed by Eisenberger et al. (1986). The other tool was individual creativity scale comprised of 16 questions developed by Balay (2010). Both scales were structured in 5-point Likert type.

The universe of the study is consisted of employees of companies located at the Pamukkale Teknokent (PT). According to the data received from the administration of the PT, number of registered employee and companies were determined as 317 and 101, respectively. Totally 200 respondent were reached and requested to answer the survey form. The number of survey forms completed fully and without an error were 177, which means 88% return rate. Obtained results from this study could represent the study universe at 95% ($\alpha=.05$) confidence level.

Results

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 21 has been used for the analysis of the data. First of all, the reliability of the data has been controlled by investigating the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. As both of them are above of 70% (see in Table 1), scales found reliable.

Table 1: Reliability Statistics

Scale	N of items	Cronbach's Alpha(α)
Perceived organizational support	8	0,917
Individual creativity	16	0,914

Answers of respondents are required to be examined whether they are distributed normally, or not. In this way, first their skewness and kurtosis levels of them were analyzed. While skewness value of perceived organizational support data was estimated at -1.05; and kurtosis value was estimated at 2.27. Since these values were in the range of -1 and +1, it is possible to conclude that data did not show normal distribution. While skewness value of individual creativity data was estimated at -4.22; their kurtosis was estimated at 5.2. Again, since these values were not in the range of -1 and +1, it is possible to conclude that data did not show normal distribution. Moreover, statistical significance levels of normality tests of Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk analyses were found to be 0.00. These results also supported that obtained data was not normally distributed. Thus, non-parametric methods will be employed in these analyses.

Table 2 exhibits mean and standard deviation values and correlation analysis results of data collected by means of the employee perceived organizational support and individual creativity scales. The mean score of the answers given to the individual creativity scale was found to be higher with respect to the perceived organizational support scale. The mean scores of both scales were determined high. The Spearman correlation degree between the perceived organizational support and the individual creativity scales was estimated at 0.52 and this was found to be statistically significant at 1% level. According to these findings, the main hypothesis was not rejected. Our findings displayed similarity with results of previous findings. Such that, Eisenberger et al. reported in their study that organizational support and occurrence of new approaches were correlated (Eisenberger et al., 1990: 55). There are other studies supporting this study in the literature as well (Amabile, 1997: 55; Shalley et al., 2000: 221; Eren and Gündüz, 2002: 65; McLean, 2005: 241).

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics and Correlation

Scale	Mean (\bar{x})	Std. Deviation	Perceived Organizational Support	Individual Creativity
Perceived organizational support	3,74	0,81		
Individual creativity	3,97	0,57	0,52**	

**correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

In the last section of the study, whether there was difference between respondents' mean scores with respect to their demographical characteristics

was investigated. At the first place, results of the Mann Whitney U Test which analyzed data with two variables were exhibited on Table 3. According to the obtained results, a statistically significant difference was determined between perceived organizational support and individual creativity with respect to gender and marital status ($p < 0.05$). Accordingly, H_1 , H_2 , H_3 and H_4 hypotheses were accepted. When it is interpreted with respect to mean scores, it could be seen that mean scores from the organizational support and the individual creativity scales were higher among male and single respondent groups. In one of the previous studies, Hu et al. reported that individual creativity levels of Chinese male respondents were found to be higher in comparison with female respondents (Y₁ et al., 2013: 35).

Table 3: Mann-Whitney U Test Results

Perceived organizational support		Sig.(p)	Mean
Gender	Female	0,00	72,92
	Male		100,82
Marital status	Married	0,019	80,42
	Single		98,50
Individual creativity		Sig.(p)	Mean
Gender	Female	0,01	74,30
	Male		99,81
Marital status	Married	0,00	75,27
	Single		104,20

Among the answers given by respondents, which concern demographical data, the ones with variables more than two were investigated by means of the Kruskal-Wallis Test. Test results were exhibited in Table 4. In order to conduct this analysis, first whether variances of these variables were distributed homogeneously was investigated. When homogeneity of variance was estimated as $p > 0.05$, it was considered that they displayed homogenous distribution and thus Kruskal-Wallis Test was proceeded. In order to evaluate statistical significance of Kruskal-Wallis Test results, the condition of $p < 0.05$ was probed. According to our findings, perceived organizational support and individual creativity were most determined with the age group of 17-23. While individual creativity was mostly determined with respondents with master degree, perceived organizational support was mostly determined with the respondents graduated from high school. With regard to respondents' professional experience, the highest individual creativity was determined with the ones with 2-5 years experience; the highest perceived organizational support was determined with the respondents with 16 and longer experience. In terms of respondents' industry, the highest perceived organizational support and individual creativity were determined with the computer and communication

information industry. In line with these findings, H₅, H₆, H₇, H₈, H₉, H₁₀, H₁₁ and H₁₂ hypotheses were accepted.

Table 4: Kruskal-Wallis Test Results

Perceived organizational support			Sig. (p)	Mean rank	Individual creativity			Sig. (p)	Mean rank
Education status	Primary		0,00	80,55	Education status	Primary	0,003	48,35	
	High Sch.			125,43		High Sch.			103,2
	Associate			127,5		Associate			102,5
	Undergra.			63,43		Undergra.			78,77
	Graduate			90,16		Graduate			104
Age	17-23		0,00	127,27	Age	17-23	0,001	119,24	
	24-30			73,25		24-30			89,55
	31-37			83,1		31-37			77,51
	38-44			92,21		38-44			74,45
	45 and ov.			46,25		45 and ov.			58,5
Experience	0-1		0,00	105,77	Experience	0-1	0,002	100,61	
	2-5			95,95		2-5			105,56
	6-10			62,91		6-10			65,28
	11-15			72,68		11-15			75
	16 and ov.			113,83		16 and ov.			93,72
Sector	Res./Cons.		0,00	61,31	Sector	Res./Cons.	0,00	77,19	
	Comp.			123,96		Comp.			110,53
	Energy			57,5		Energy			106,1
	Public			64,6		Public			68,76
	Mining			116,63		Mining			97,22
Textile		59,19	Textile		75,69				

Conclusion

In today business world experiencing substantial evolution, it is necessary to keep up with change and even to go beyond them. Since these changes include both variety of product and service and technology, customer and competitors and numbers of dynamics in society (Koçel, 2015: 394), having control over these dynamic processes has become more fundamental than ever. Businesses are required to act based on creativity in order to catch up with advancements. They could accomplish their targets through their current employees. It is considered that positive results could be achieved as long as necessary creativity conditions are provided to employees.

In this scope, firstly the relationship between perceived organizational support and creativity levels was investigated. As a result of the study, a positive and significant correlation was observed between the two variables.

On the basis of evaluation of respondents with respect to demographical data, Mann Whitney U Test and Kruskal Wallis Test were employed. When mean scores of respondents were evaluated according to gender and marital status, organizational support and individual creativity were found higher among males and singles. Moreover, perceived organizational support and individual creativity was seen most among the age group of 17-23. Whereas individual creativity was seen most among respondents with master degree, perceived organizational support was seen with high school graduates. With regard to professional experience, the highest individual creativity was observed with the respondents with 2-5 years experience, the highest perceived organizational support was observed with the respondents with 16 years experience. On the other side, the highest levels of perceived organizational support and individual creativity were determined with computer, communication and information industry.

In line with the results of this study, following suggestions were drawn: especially approach of senior management must guide creative factors in organizations. The senior management could provide supportive trainings, programs, courses, seminars, workshops and conferences to their employees in order to put creative characteristics forward within guidance. Organizations could integrate the organizational culture supporting creativity to all processes. They could utilize from available appropriate organizational development methods while performing this. Human resources department could apply various test methods which discover creativity factors during recruitment processes. Employees' creative behaviors could be rewarded in organizations so as to encourage other employees. Activities, programs and supports of institutions such as Teknokent which support creativity activities could be followed. Thus, additional resource could be obtained for activities planned to be implemented in organizations.

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