Participative Leadership and Employee Creativity: Moderating Role of Need for Achievement

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Abstract

This research study aimed to examine the interactive effect of participative leadership and need for achievement on peer reported employee creativity. The proposed theoretical framework employed social cognitive theory to explain the hypotheses. To test the model, data was collected through a survey conducted on banks of Gujrat and twin cities Rawalpindi & Islamabad. Time lagged design was used to collect the data at two intervals of time separated by 6 weeks through self-administered questionnaires. The final sample size after matched responses and discarding incomplete questionnaires was 400. The measures were validated using confirmatory factor analysis. Hierarchical linear regression was used to investigate the moderating role of need for achievement. Results indicated a strong support for our hypotheses. Slope test revealed that the relationship between participative leadership and employee creativity becomes stronger for the people having high need for achievement. Moreover, managerial implications and future research directions have been discussed.

Keywords: Participative leadership, creativity, need for achievement, Social Cognitive Theory

Introduction

Leadership has been considered an effective tool for organizational success in practice and research. There are many leadership styles but nowadays participative leadership is regarded as motivational tool to improve organizational effectiveness. Participative leadership encourages employees to participate in decisions making process which directly influence their work lives (Ardekani & Jahromi, 2011). It is also evidenced that participative leadership style improves employee performance and job satisfaction in the workplace (Tuuli & Rowlinson, 2009). Recent research urged to examine how and when participative leadership can be beneficial in terms of employee work outcomes (Hwang, 2015).

Creativity means to produce a novel idea; it has been considered a main factor for the high performance of organizations those are operating in competitive environments (Oldham & Cummings, 1996). Evidence suggests that organizational creativity and innovation is based on employee's creativity (Amabile, 1996) which can be achieved through participative leadership

(Krause, Gebert, & Kearney, 2007; Somech, 2006). But in practice it is a common observation that all employees could not be proved equal in their creativity even under a participative leadership. The difference may be tied with the individual differences among employees.

Need for achievement (nAch) refers to an individual's desire for considerable achievement. People who have higher nAch are in deliberation to have a desire to chase high performance goals (Jackson, 1974; McClelland, 1965). From the prior researches it has been investigated that the higher need for achievement is very crucial for business expansion (McClelland, 1965; Morris & Fargher, 1974). There is scarce evidence that need for achievement matters a lot to enhance creative performance under a positive leadership style like participative. To address this gap in the literature, this study aims to investigate the interactive effect of participative leadership style and need for achievement of the follower on creativity.

The proposed framework is based on Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986). The triangular model of this theory describes that environmental events affects our cognition & behavior and operate as interrelated objects and have influence on each other. The theory posits that environmental factors (like culture, communication policies, strategies; influence on others etc.) and personal factors affect our cognition that leads to form a behavior. This theory best describes that how participative leadership as environmental factors have an influence on behaviors. According to this theory if there is a participative environment in an organization then the employees are more creative. Moreover, the personal factors like high need for achievement amplify the positive relationship between participative leadership and employee creativity.

Theory and Hypotheses

Participative Leadership and Creativity

Participative leadership (PL) is a leadership style in which leaders encourage employees to participate in process of making organizational decisions and problem solving (Kahai, Sosik & Avolio, 1997; Somech, 2006). PL is an approach which requires subordinates to take some responsibility in the workplace (Sauer, 2011). Leaders prefer consultation over direction (Amabile, Schatzel, Moneta & Kramer, 2004). Under participative leadership employees feel psychological state of empowerment that increases employee involvement, intrinsic motivation & organizational commitment (Huang, Iun, Liu & Gong, 2010; Jones & George, 2006; Miao, *et. al*., 2013), organizational citizenship behavior (Jones & George, 2006; Van Yperen, Berg & Willering, 1999) and provide good quality services to the customers (Ahearne, Mathieu, & Rapp, 2005).

Moreover, it is also found that participative leadership decreases the intensity of turnover and absenteeism in organizations (Steinheider, Bayerl & Wuestewald, 2006). All these evidences show that participative leaders have strong impact on employee performance behavior (Somech & Wendrew, 2006).

Creativity is defined as "the generation of novel and potentially useful ideas about organizational products, practices, or procedures" (Amabile, 1997). The construct of creativity is very complex and comprehensive. By using different approaches much of the researchers have tried to unravel the structure of creativity (Amabile, 1988). Prior researches indicate that creativity is rooted in psychology and sociology (Ford, 1996). Resultantly creativity is the generation of unique ideas regarding organizational actions (Amabile, 1997).

Generation of idea and promotion of idea are two constructs of creativity (Khazanchi & Masterson, 2011; Montag, Maertz, & Baer, 2012). There are further three categories in generation of new idea that is recognition of problem, search out information to solve the problem and find out solution or possible alternative options to solve a problem that generate innovative ideas (Zhang & Bartol, 2010).

Problem means well defined problem because when a problem is defined well then it is expected to result in quality solutions. After the completion of first step that is problem definition there is a need of diverse information that must gathered and incorporated regarding problem. After information gathering the third step is solution generating that is the use of existing knowledge and information in generating alternative solutions after that select one of the best suitable solutions by using existing knowledge. The idea promotion behavior is about to convince others that their ideas are creative (Janssen, 2000).

Evidences from prior researches suggest that those organizations are more effective whose employees are creative (Amabile, 1996). Presently, researchers are trying to find out all those conditions that enable employees to be creative at work. It is evidenced that participative leadership encourages employee creativity (Krause, Gebert & Kearney, 2007; Somech, 2006). In today's dynamic and competitive environment, the success of organizations depends on to be creative (Rosing, Frese & Bauch, 2011). Prior literature indicates that participation of employees in organizational problems is necessary for innovation and creativity in problem solving. Moreover, participative leadership style is not very common in organizations because people on higher positions may have fear of losing their position (White 1981). Leaders who encourage the followers to participate in discussion regarding organizational matters including problem solution and processes

improvement, the followers feel more motivated to give their unique ideas (Abraham & Hayward, 1985).

Employing social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986), this research considers participative leadership as environmental factor (in the form of culture, strategies, communication policies, influence on others etc.) affect the behavior of employees in the form of creativity. According to this theory all those employees who work under participative leadership environment are more creative because their participation in decision making process gives them a sense of ownership they think that their suggestions are valuable for their organization so they try to be more creative & innovative to contribute their organizations to remain competitive in turbulent environment. Based on prior literature, it is hypothesized that:

H1. *Participative leadership is positively related to employee creativity.*

Need for Achievement as a Moderator

Need for achievement (nAch) was treated as a human aim (Murray, 1938; McClelland, *et al*., 1989). High nAch employees have deep motivation to exhibit high performance (Robbins, *et al*., 2004). Need for achievement is constituted on two instruments 1) move toward and 2) an escaping inclination (Elliot & Church, 1997). Move toward means hope for success and escaping inclination means fear of failure (Elliot, 2006).

Modern research on need for achievement depends on a person's desire to achieve their own targets (Ames, 1992). Prior scholars made a comparison of achievement targets and the effects of these targets on cognition and behavior (Ames, 1992; Urdan, 1997). Many researchers acknowledged intrinsic motivation as a central feature in the in the need for achievement domain (Harackiewicz, 1989). Jackson (1974) indicates that employees who score high in need for achievement (nAch) they seek to carry out difficult tasks. Prior researchers predicted a positive relationship between nAch and setting high standards. Present research also assumed that need for achievement will have more positive aspects than negative ones. Need for achievement is used as moderator in various studies but need for achievement is yet to be explored in participative leadership-creativity link. At the one side, high need for achievement arouses the learning process and on the other side it has a strong relationship with the aspiration (Soyer, *et al*., 1999), working hard and intrinsic motivation (Spence & Helmreich, 1983).

Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986) explains that environmental factor like culture, communication policies, strategies; influence on others etc. affects our cognition or personal factors like influence on thoughts and actions that leads to form a behavior. As need for achievement comes under personal factors or personal standards then this theory supports the model in a way that when a person has high need for achievement it affects personal standards or

cognition that ultimately affects the relationship of environmental factors (Participative leadership) and behavior (employee creativity). In other words, the individual factor i.e. high need for achievement fosters the relationship between participative leadership and employee creativity. Therefore, it can be hypothesized that:

H2: *Need for achievement moderates the relationship between participative leadership and creativity such that the relationship is stronger when need for achievement is high.*

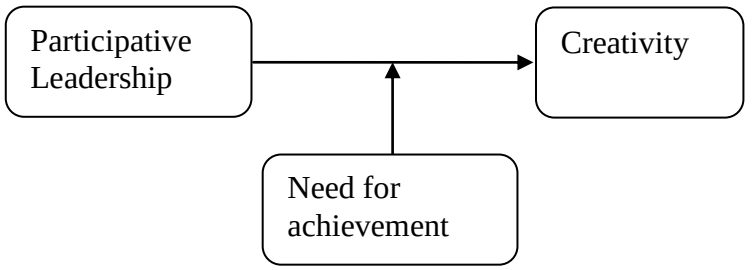

Fig1: *Moderating Role of Need for Achievement between Participative leadership and employee creativity*

Methods

Research Design

This quantitative study is based on a time lagged design of data collection. A survey method was used in non-contrived settings. To address the method bias response was taken at two time lags separated by six weeks on average and creativity was reported by the peers of the main respondent. Responses on participative leadership and need for achievement was taken by employees from three management levels working under some supervisor at least for six months. The target population for this research was the banking sector employees of Gujrat and twin cities; Islamabad & Rawalpindi based on convenience sampling. We tried to opt for 20 responses per item rule instead of rule of 10 (Arrindell & Van Der Ende, 1985; Velicer & Fava, 1998) to achieve an appropriate sample size for model testing.

Sample and Data Collection

Data were collected using self-administered questionnaires and response was taken through professional contacts. At first point of time 700 questionnaires were distributed out of which 630 were received back. For second time response, the peers of those 630 respondents were contacted and received 510 questionnaires back. After discarding unmatched and incomplete responses we remained with 400 questionnaires with final response rate of 57%.

10% data was collected from government sector, 20% from semi-government and 70% from private sector banks. 22% respondents were from lower level management; 68% respondents were from middle level management and 10% from upper level management. The mean age of respondents was 31 years with standard deviation of 8 years. 68% respondents were males. Each respondent was working under current supervisor for at least six months. In the same manner, each peer was working with respondents for at least three months.

Measures Reliability and Validity

Participative leadership and need for achievement was taken from self-reported questionnaire and creativity data was peer-reported. Five points 1 through 5 Likert scale was used to anchor all responses.

Participative Leadership: A six-item scale of Arnold *et al.* (2000) has been used to measure participative leadership. Participants rate their immediate supervisor regarding their participative behavior. Sample item was "My supervisor listens to my work group's ideas and suggestions." One item was dropped due to insignificant loading. Reliability of this scale was 0.93. The Cronbach's alpha 0.8 and higher is considered more ideal (Nunnely & Bernstein, 2010). The confirmatory factor analysis proved the construct validity with model fit results CMIN/df = 3.23, CFI = .99, RMR = .01, GFI = .99, AGFI = .93, NFI = .99, TLI = .98 and RMSEA = .06. Factor loading range was from 0.83 to 0.87.

Creativity: Creativity was measured with 5-items scale of Churchman, Scharf, & Wright (1990). A sample item was "this employee searches out many creative ideas and methods that might improve current conditions". The internal consistency Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.90. Its model fit results were CMIN/DF = 2.35, CFI = .99, RMR = .01, GFI = .99, AGFI = .96, NFI = .99, TLI = .98 & RMSEA = .05 which indicated a good fit. Factor loadings range was from 0.79 to 0.87.

Need for Achievement: This was measured using five items adopted from the Steers, & Braunstein, (1976). The sample item was "I enjoy the satisfaction of successfully completing a difficult job." The reliability for this scale was 0.91 and factor loading range was from 0.86 to 0.80.

Measurement Models

To examine the discriminant validity of all study variables, paired CFAs were analyzed. We compared one and two combined factor models with three factor model and found best results for three factor model/full measurement model indicating CMIN/df = 3.18, CFI = .96, RMR = .04, GFI = .92, NFI = .94, TLI = .95 and RMSEA = .05 as given in table 2.

Table 1: *CFA result of Individual and paired analysis (Measurement Models)*

Model	CMIN	DF	CMIN / DF	CFI	RMR	GFI	NFI	TLI	RMSEA
Individual Analysis									
PL	8.47	2	4.23	.99	.01	.99	.99	.98	.09
NACH	8.14	2	4.07	.99	.01	.99	.99	.98	.08
CR	7.07	3	2.35	.99	.01	.99	.99	.98	.05
Paired Analysis									
1factor (PL+ NA+ CR *combined*)	212.79	65	3.27	.89	.14	.82	.88	.87	.12
2factor CR, (PL+NA *combined*)	219.12	70	3.43	.90	.07	.84	.88	.87	.07
2 factor PL, (NA+CR *Combined*)	273.92	72	3.80	.88	.13	.88	.87	.86	.08
2 factor NA, (PL+CR *Combined*)	264.77	70	3.78	.87	.09	.84	.86	.86	.11
3factor PL, NA, CR	**242.07**	**76**	**3.18**	**.96**	**.04**	**.92**	**.94**	**.95**	**.05**

Degrees of freedom (df), Root mean square residual (RMR), Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) PL= Participative leadership; NACH= Need for achievement; CR= creativity; PL= participative leadership; NACH= Need for achievement; CRT= creativity; N=400

Descriptive and Correlations

The descriptive statistics including mean and standard deviations are given of study variables in table 2. The mean value for participative leadership was 3.81 (S.D = 1.09), need for achievement was 4.08 (S.D = .87) and for peer reported employee creativity was 3.87 (S.D = .79). These variables are positively correlated with each other. Participative leadership was significantly and positively correlated with Need for achievement (r=.28, P < 0.01) and creativity (r =.40, P < 0.01). Creativity was also found significantly related to need for achievement (r = .23, P < 0.01).

Table 2: *Mean, standard Deviation, reliabilities & correlation of study variables*

	Mean	SD	PLT1	NACHT1	CRT2
PLT1	3.81	1.09	(.93)		
NACHT1	4.08	.87	.284**	(.91)	
CRT2	3.87	.79	.405**	.235**	(.90)

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

N=400; T1= Time1; T2= Time2, PL= Participative leadership; NACH= Need for achievement; CR= creativity peer reported

Moderation Analysis

Hierarchical linear regression was used to analyze the interactive effect of participative leadership style and need for achievement on employee

creativity. Following Baron & Kenny (1986) procedure, independent variable (Participative Leadership) and moderator (Need for Achievement) were entered in the first step whereas interaction term of both variables (PL_c x NA_C) was entered in the second step. Independent and moderating variables were centered as suggested by Aiken and West (1991). The results indicated significant impact of participative leadership ($\beta = .27$, $p < .001$) and need for achievement ($\beta = .15$, $p < .001$) on creativity by producing variance of 18 % that approved hypothesis 1. Interaction term of participative leadership and need for achievement also showed a significant impact on creativity ($\beta = .13$, $p < .001$) with additional variance of 2.6 % that proves moderation as given in Table 3. To examine the direction of the relationship at high and low value of need for achievement, we analyzed slope test. Results showed that the relationship between participative leadership and creativity got stronger at high value (-1 SD) of moderator ($\beta = .39$, $p < .001$) and at low value (+1 SD) of moderator ($\beta = .15$, $p < .001$) as given in Table 4. Therefore, moderation hypothesis 2 was also accepted. Interaction plot is also given in figure 2 to show the impact of participative leadership on creativity at high and low condition of need for achievement.

Table 3: *Hierarchical Regression Analysis for moderation*

Predictors	B	R^2	▲R^2	Sig.
Step1 NACH_c	.151			
PL_c	.273	.180	.180	.000
Step 2 PLxNACH	.138	.206	.026	.000

*P<.05, **P <.001

Table 4: *Conditional effect of X on y at values of the moderator(s)*

NACH(Moderator)	Effect	SE	t-value	p-value	LLCI	ULCI
-.8718	.1537	.0460	3.3451	.0009	.0634	.2441
.0000	.2745	.0339	8.1076	.0000	.2079	.3410
.8718	.3952	.0494	8.0043	.0000	.2981	.4923

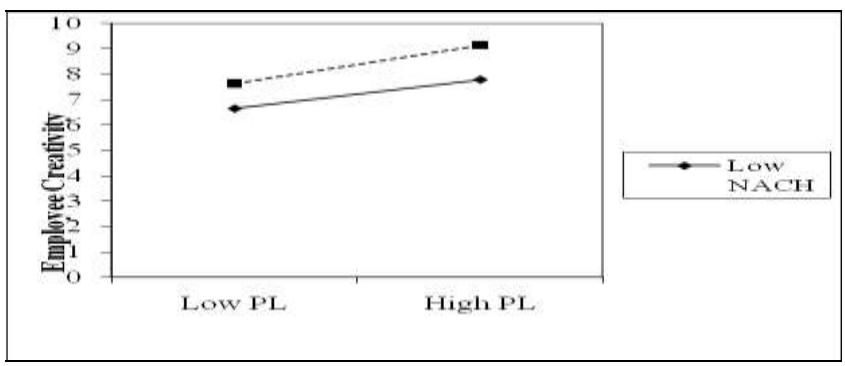

Fig 2: *Interaction plot for moderation*

Discussion

This study intended to examine how participative leadership style develops creativity among employees. We also proposed and analyzed moderating role of an individual factor of employees the need for achievement between participative leadership and creativity relationship. Results indicated a good support for both hypotheses. We employed Social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) to explain how followers learn from their leaders' behavior and behave accordingly.

The significant impact of participative leadership on followers' creativity validated previous studies results reported by Aspland, Darmawan, & Ben (2013) who revealed that participative leadership was positively associated with employee performance. These results are also similar to prior studies of that participative leadership style enhances employee creativity (Abraham & Hayward, 1985; Gupta & Singh, 2014). Moreover, our results also proved that employees show more creativity under participative leadership style and who possess high need for achievement. It is may be based on a positive association between need for achievement and goal accomplishment (Slocum, Cron, & Brown, 2002). This study contributes the domain of knowledge by examining the role of individual factor the need for achievement to enhance creative performance under participative leadership. Employees feel more motivation due to the leader as well as their own need for achievement and share their creative ideas to perform their jobs in a better and efficient manner. Study was conducted in banking sector employees that also indicates that they perform better under participative leadership style where they feel more confidence and trust on leader to share their creative ideas. By methodology this study addresses the issue of common method bias by taking time lagged and peer rated response for creativity.

Implications for Managers

The present study makes multiple valuable managerial implications as well. This study tested a moderation model of participative leadership style in the banking sector domain. Each manger wants a creative work team that has an ability to resolve the problems and perform the tasks in better and efficient manner. Present study helps managers to recognize rigorous features of participative leadership, and its importance to generate creativity among followers. Secondly managers can identify the potential employees having higher need for achievement for the creative jobs. Particularly in the context of Pakistan where society is high power distance, where employees are not encouraged to share their ideas with their leaders, may thrive more if they get a participative leader.

Limitations and Future Suggestions

Although we tried to test the proposed model in a time lagged design, but truly longitudinal design could be better choice. We selected banking organizations based on convenience for data collection, but the proposed model should also be tested in telecom sector employees where employee creativity is highly required. We examined moderating role of need for achievement but in future studies, creative self-efficacy and creative environment can be examined to figure out their conditional impact between participative leadership style and creativity. Few more attitudinal and behavioral outcome should also be included for example, job engagement and organizational commitment.

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