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FOSTERING INDIVIDUAL CREATIVITY AMONG ACADEMICIANS: AN INTEGRATED CONCEPTUAL MODEL

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Abstract:

In higher education institutions, creativity represents a high-level capability that has become essential for managing the rapid pace of digital transformation, increasing performance expectations, and ongoing advancements in teaching and learning methodologies. Indeed, efforts to enhance creativity increasingly rely on workplace interactions that play a significant role in shaping employee creative performance. Accordingly, this conceptual framework enriches the understanding of individual creativity among academicians by examining four key antecedents: work engagement, perceived visionary leadership, digital platform capability, and training. This study, grounded in Amabile's Componential Theory of Creativity posits that organizational and environmental conditions that enable and encourage creative expression significantly influence the creative output of academicians. This study uses a quantitative research design to examine the antecedents that influence the creativity among academicians at the Faculty of Accountancy, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM). A survey of academicians will be conducted to examine the factors influencing individual creativity. This paper proposes an integrated model that provides theoretical clarity and practical guidance for higher education institutions, particularly faculty of accountancy, in their efforts to cultivate a creative academician. Further, this study provides guidelines and strategic actions aimed at enhancing academicians' creativity to drive teaching innovation, improve instructional quality, and strengthen institutional competitiveness, while also providing a foundation for future empirical research.

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Keyword:

Academicians, Digital Platform Capability, Higher Education Institutions, Individual Creativity, Perceived Visionary Leadership, Work Engagement



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Introduction

One of key aspect of Malaysia MADANI as a policy framework and Malaysian government slogan, which is ‘sustainability’ creates balanced quality of life that can be founded on indigenous understanding and knowledge, and Malaysia's distinct image. On top of that, Malaysian Higher Education Action Plan 2022–2025 planned by Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) have outlines ten important steps for achieving the goals of the system and students’ aspirations. In relation to creativity in education are Innovation Ecosystem and Transformation of Higher Education Delivery.

Through MOHE, the government is working to raise the standard of higher education in the nation, with the mission of enhancing the ecosystem of higher education by strengthening talent and knowledge to accomplish community well-being for long-term to aim for sustainable national advancement. It also encourages an increase in the achievement of international recognition such as the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Ranking, which in turn places local universities on a par with the world's leading universities. In year 2023, QS World University Rankings have included 24 Malaysian HEI in the ranking for the current year.

Since creativity calls for the development of fresh, original ideas, it is an important subject of study for HEIs impact (Bhatti et al., 2024). Therefore, it is very important for the country to improve their global ranking standing, which is evaluated based on four main categories, namely resources, environment, connectivity, and output as according to Benito et al. (2020). Employees will weigh the rewards and dangers, so top academic management team should show them support and encouragement to help them deal with the unpredictability that comes with creative work (Aldabbas et al., 2023). Fauzi (2022) stated that HEIs can become the best knowledge providers by challenging knowledge and ideas through the knowledge management system, which encourages staff to be creative and innovative in solving real-world problems.

According to Frederick & VanderWeele (2020), work engagement is linked to favorable outcomes for both employees and companies. It is typified by vigor, dedication, and absorption in one's job. Additionally, Rodionova & Dominiak (2020) claim that corporate culture and value alignment between employees and their organizations have an impact on work engagement. Positive perceptions of the significance of work are positively impacted by visionary leadership, particularly in situations with a high degree of uncertainty (Buss &

Kearney, 2024). On the other hand, performance is directly impacted by a leader's autonomy without the need for cognitive mediation (Maran et al., 2021).

The two essential elements of digital platform capability which are digital platform integration and platform reconstruction capability are regarded as higher-order capabilities (Aghazadeh et al., 2023). The ability of an organization's information and communication technology-based online platform to link with other pertinent parties is referred to as its "digital platform capability" (Liu et al., 2023). A variety of paradigms can be used to understand training, including active learning and skill development (Hordienko & Filonenko, 2022).

According to Barbot (2022) clarifies that creativity is not limited to individual differences but also can change within persons over activities, things, and time. Continuing discussion on development of Malaysian higher education system, it became clearer with the launch of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development that higher education systems must act, goal number 4 (Quality Education).

This study aims to examine the factors influencing individual creativity among academicians at the Faculty of Accountancy, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), focusing on work engagement, perceived visionary leadership, digital platform capability, and training. Understanding these factors is crucial for developing institutional strategies that support academic performance in the context of rising competition, post-pandemic teaching challenges, and Malaysia's national innovation agenda in higher education.

Literature Review

There One may infer that creativity is the initial innovation phase and that innovation cannot be implemented without creativity (Sapiyi et al., 2022). This study emphasizes individual creativity which is described as one area of human resources that significantly affects modern organizations (Chaubey et al., 2022). Establishing a well build theoretical framework to investigate the relationship between these independent variables and individual creativity is the main goal of this study. A proposed conceptual framework and testable hypotheses to guide future research in this area are the results of this study, which synthesizes findings from previous studies.

Individual creativity: Individual creativity is a measure of how well workers can come up with new ideas for practices, methods, products, and solutions to solve a variety of organizational issues (Jnaneswar & Ranjit, 2023). Aldabbas et al. (2023) explain when managers use external rewards to inspire their staff, they create a long-term responsibility for them to contribute by reaching desired results, like boosting individual creativity. According to the componential theory of creativity by Amabile (1996), every person can produce at least a little amount of creative work, and variables like time and the environment of work can affect the degree and frequency of creative behaviour. Creativity makes things better overall, increases efficiency, and helps solve difficulties, which entails identifying issues and coming up with novel solutions rather than merely going along the beaten road (Al-Ababneh, 2020). To maximise individual creativity in this digital age, organisations should consider the interactional effects of abilities, incentives, and opportunities (Cai et al., 2020).

Table 2.1: Summary of Research of Creativity in Education Globally

Journals	Total Number of Empirical Articles on CIE
CRJ	286
JCB	143
PACA	100
INT	17
LID	42
GTI	19
GCQ	13
TSC	196
Total	816

Source: (Long, et al., 2022)

Note. CIE = creativity in education; CRJ = Creativity Research Journal; JCB = The Journal of Creative Behavior; PACA = Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts; INT = Intelligence; LID = Learning and Individual Differences; GTI = Gifted and Talented International; GCQ = Gifted Child Quarterly; TSC = Thinking Skills and Creativity.

Work engagement: The definition of "work engagement" is "the concurrent employment and expression of an individual's 'favoured self' in task behaviours that encourage personal presence (physical, cognitive, and emotional), connections to work and to others, and active, full performances" (Galeazzo et al., 2024). Aldabbas et al. (2023) and Singh and Phoolka (2024) claim that work engagement affects individual creativity since one of the effects of work engagement is creativity.

Based on social exchange theory, employees attempt to compensate an organization for its consideration of their contributions and concern for their well-being by fulfilling their organizational responsibilities and exhibiting greater engagement at work (Inam et al., 2021). Work engagement is one of the desirable positive work attitudes, which continues to draw interest from both scholars and practitioners (Jnaneswar & Ranjit, 2023). Additionally, Jnaneswar & Ranjit (2023) demonstrated that the association between individual creativity and self-leadership is influenced by both organizational commitment and work engagement. According to Soediro et al. (2025), highlighting problem identification, information gathering, and idea generation is an engagement in the creative process, an interaction that involves active participation in cognitive and collaborative activities.

The long-term orientation value is therefore advantageous for the constructive stimulation of creativity generated by work engagement (Hui et al., 2020). Additionally, Singh & Phoolka (2024) mentioned that previous studies have shown that creativity and job engagement create reciprocal strengthening cycles in which one element stimulates the other. Also, Asif et al. (2019) found positive relationships between work engagement and individual creativity. As a result, this helps to create an environment where employees are more likely to form positive relationships with one another and generate original and creative ideas.

H1: There is a relationship between work engagement and individual creativity.

Perceived Visionary Leadership: In academic institutions, visionary leadership recognizes the importance of innovative curricula that address current work issues and concerns that can drive significant transformations in higher education, such as the implementation of new programs,

teaching methods, and technologies that are essential to preparing students for the future (Memon et al., 2024). Ismail et al. (2022) highlighted that a compelling sense of direction is created by perceived visionary leadership, which also coordinates a broad perspective for change and executes ideas through the actions of followers. Moreover, Alobeidli et al. (2024) study findings demonstrate a strong correlation between visionary leadership and creative staff members.

Scholars have mostly focused on the effectiveness and positive consequences of perceived visionary leadership, including raising workers' motivation and psychological fortitude at work, encouraging their creativity and adhering to rules, improving organizational performance and effectiveness, etc (Chen et al., 2024). In addition, Lei et al. (2021) explain that through the application of various leadership styles, such as servant leadership, genuine leadership, transformational leadership, perceived visionary leadership, and empowering leadership, plays a critical role in developing creativity and performance results. Visionary leaders generate employee creativity by clarifying the organization's vision and instilling a high desire for it, thus creating an environment conducive to innovation (Saleh et al., 2025).

H2: There is a relationship between perceived visionary leadership and individual creativity.

Digital Platform Capability: Researchers have previously investigated how digital platform capability might enhance a firm's creative performance through the perspective of dynamic capability (Bhatti et al., 2024). Chan et al. (2021) explain that digital literacy is found to regulate the relationships between employee engagement and workplace digitalization as well as between creative culture and employee engagement. In addition, to find resources, with the abundance of digital technologies made available by digital platform capacity, management should take full benefit of them. (Fan et al., 2023). Digital leaders foster a supportive environment by promoting a digital vision and nurturing employee creativity, integrating digital culture and competencies, and using effective digital communication (Öngel et al., 2023).

Creativity comprises not only the generation of ideas, but also the application of these ideas that implies knowledge sharing connects digital platform capabilities with new knowledge earned through education and human creativity (Bhatti et al., 2024). Educators are able to develop digital literacy skills and become proficient in using technology for communication, information retrieval and content creation by incorporating ICT tools and resources into their lessons, encouraging progressive thinking and encouraging innovative practices (Tian, 2024). Moreover, Jun et al. (2022) indicates the connection between digital platform capabilities and creativity is one of most frequently discussed subjects in academia and practice, with most of the research indicating a close association between innovation and digital platform technology.

H3: There is a relationship between digital platform capability and individual creativity.

Training: The findings of most literature have been large extensively examined employee training as a cause of innovation and its effect on organizational innovation outcomes, and moreover, researchers also generally agree that teaching and training can foster individual creativity (Chaubey et al., 2022). The social exchange theory by Blau (1964), states that when employee believe they are supported by their organization through teamwork and training, they are more likely to feel autonomous in their work and more confident in their talents.

Nguyen et al. (2024) interpreted when high-engagement work practices like team building and training are implemented in the workplace, workers frequently perform better, show more job satisfaction, more creative, and have higher employment retention rates. Training that makes use of thinking skills, which raise an individual's level of creative instincts that shares a well-known concept such as enhancing individual creativity (Chaubey et al., 2022). Incorporating competencies into the educational framework will better prepare students for the needs of rapidly changing technology, enhancing critical thinking and problem-solving skills (El-Sayed et al., 2025). Existing literature shows that training programs within organizations contribute significantly to the creative capacity of employees because they promote skill development among the workforces. Training has the potential to boost work engagement, emphasizing the need of cultivating employee engagement with the goal to enhance creativity (Singh & Phoolka, 2024).

H4: There is a relationship between training and individual creativity.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework for this study. It shows the proposed correlations between the dependent variable (individual creativity) and the independent variables (work engagement, perceived visionary leadership, digital platform capability, and training).

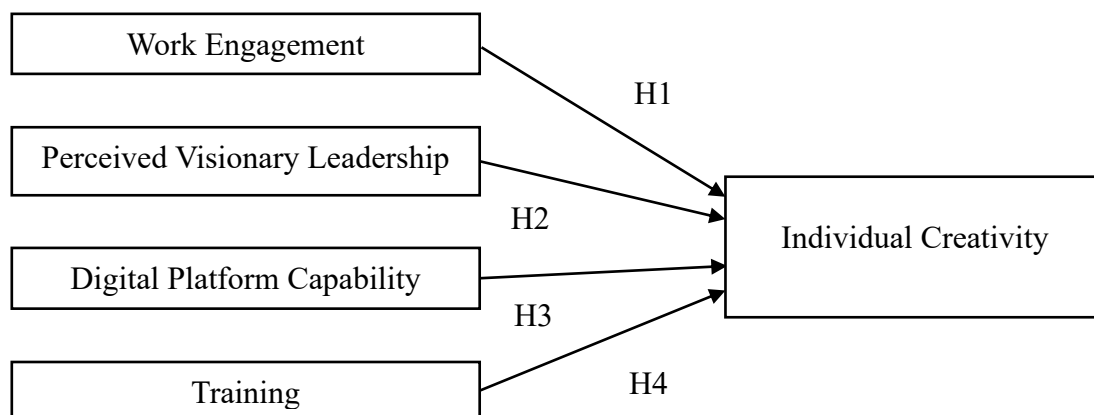


Figure 1: The Research Model

Source: Adopted from Aldabbas et al. (2023), Alobeidli et al. (2024), and Chaubey (2020)

Research Methodology

This study aims to examine the determinants of individual creativity among academicians in the Faculty of Accountancy, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM). Specifically, it investigates the roles of work engagement, perceived visionary leadership, digital platform capability, and training in influencing individual creativity. The Faculty of Accountancy was selected because creativity is essential for accountants to navigate complex challenges, adapt to change, and contribute strategic value in the organization.

This study will employ a quantitative approach using a questionnaire survey, with 140 academicians selected through simple random sampling. For this study, the sample size was determined using a statistical software of G-Power that yields the total sample size needed for

this study is 85 to achieve a minimum effect size of 0.15, assuming a significance level of 5% and a statistical power of 80% (Cohen, 1988). The instruments used in this study will be adopted from previously validated measures. The work engagement scale will be adapted from Schaufeli et al. (2006), while the perceived visionary leadership scale will be adapted from De Luque et al. (2008). The digital platform capability measure will be adapted from Cenamor et al. (2019), and the training scale from Nasreen and Mirza (2012). All items will be rated using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

To ensure the appropriateness of the instrument, its items were validated, and a pilot test was conducted to assess reliability. For face validity, two faculty experts reviewed the constructs and items, while industry experts were consulted to further validate the measures used in this study. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) will be used to analyze and interpret the collected data.

Conclusion

This study essentially offers a framework for understanding the determinants of individual creativity among academicians. By emphasizing the importance of work engagement, perceived visionary leadership, digital platform capability, and training towards individual creativity, the findings of this study can help to promote creativity with specialization in academic fields, thereby increasing innovation and knowledge output.

One limitation of this is that the framework is designed to examine the relationship between work engagement, perceived visionary leadership, digital platform capability, and training towards individual creativity. It is recommended that future research include academics from various other Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) faculties across Malaysia to increase the sample size and represent a broader population. Given that UiTM is one of the largest higher education institutions in Malaysia with a substantial academic workforce, these findings have the potential to be generalized and widely applied in future studies.

Ultimately, this study can help bridge the knowledge gap between education and creativity, making academicians better equipped to thrive in creativity in the rapidly changing technological landscape. This study offers practical guidance on fostering individual creativity among accountancy lecturers to enhance innovative thinking and teaching effectiveness. Furthermore, the policymakers, such as the Ministry of Higher Education can use this framework as a useful aid when creating curriculum design, employment policies and education strategies. In addition, this study can offer a foundation for improving the prospects of academicians and addressing their creativity gap.

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- Ethics Statement:** This study was conducted in accordance with ethical research standards. All procedures involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the Research Ethic Committee, Faculty of Business and Management, [2/2024]. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. The data that will be collected were used solely for academic purposes.
- Author Contribution Statement:** All authors contributed significantly to the development of this manuscript. Muhammad Farhan Rozain contributed to the conceptualization, literature review, handled data collection, analysis, and interpretation of results. Rosintansafinas Munir was responsible for the drafting, and critical revision of the manuscript, as well as overall supervision of the study. All authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript prior to submission.
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