

## INSPIRING INNOVATION: EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF ETHICAL LEADERSHIP ON CREATIVITY

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### Abstract

*This paper explores the vital significance of leadership in fostering creativity inside businesses. The study especially examines the effects of Ethical leadership styles on several dimensions of creativity. The findings suggest that varying leadership styles exhibit more efficacy at distinct stages of the creativity process. Transformational leadership, which involves inspiring, stimulating cognitive thinking, and providing customized attention, is believed to be more efficient in promoting creative and inquisitive initiatives. These activities are linked to creating innovative and revolutionary ideas and necessitate a nurturing environment that promotes taking risks and thinking creatively. On the other hand, ethical leadership, which emphasizes framework, advantages, and effectiveness, is considered more appropriate for the execution stage of creativity and for processes that leverage existing creativities. These operations sometimes entail making gradual enhancements to current goods and services. The research proposes that the ethical leadership style is crucial in establishing the organizational settings and mechanisms for successful implementation and use. The paper also examines how organizational circumstances influence the connection between leadership styles and creativity procedures. This investigation suggests that systems and cultures can either enhance or reduce the effectiveness of a given leadership style in promoting creativity. The research emphasizes the significance of adjusting leadership styles to align with diverse creativity processes and the necessity of organizational environments that facilitate these diverse methods. This study offers a comprehensive and detailed analysis of the impact of Ethical leadership on creativity, providing significant perspectives for leaders seeking to foster creativity in their workplaces.*

**Keywords:** *Ethical Leadership, Creativity, Competitiveness*

## INTRODUCTION

The dynamic relationship between leadership and creativity plays a crucial role in determining the success of organizations in the fast-changing world of contemporary business. The article "The Influence of Leadership on Creativity Processes and Activities" explores the significant impact of different leadership styles on the path of creativity inside firms (Oke, Munshi and Walumbwa, 2009). The expedition takes place in a world where creativity is not merely an edge over the competition but also a necessity for subsistence (Agbor, E., 2008; Mumford et al., 2002; Barsh, Capozzi and Davidson, 2008; Soken and Barnes, 2014). The focal point of this discussion revolves around the distinction between transformational and transactional leadership styles, which have distinct impacts on creativity processes. Transformational leadership, known for its inspirational, inspiring, and educational qualities, has been generally acknowledged for its beneficial influence on organizational creativity (Mokhber, bin Wan Ismail and Vakilbashi, 2015; Suifan, Abdallah and Al Janini, 2018; Mokhber, Khairuzzaman and Vakilbashi, 2018; Naguib and Naem, 2018). This style cultivates a conducive atmosphere for creative problem-solving and investigation, motivating individuals to go beyond their interests in favour of a larger common benefit (Khalili, 2016; Jyoti and Dev, 2015; Cheung and Wong, 2011). Within the realm of creativity, this refers to an organizational culture that not only generates revolutionary ideas but also fosters their development until they are successfully realized (Pawar, 2003; Ergeneli, Gohar and Temirbekova, 2007; Masood et al., 2006; Budur, 2020). Conversely, transactional leadership, derived from traditional management theories, prioritizes organized procedures, incentives, and effectiveness (Bass and Riggio, 2010; Khanin, 2007; Kuhnert and Lewis, 1987).

Although sometimes criticized for its narrow focus on promoting creativity, recent research indicates that this leadership style is crucial in facilitating the execution stage of creativity. The cited study by Jung, Chow, and Wu (2003) suggests that it offers the essential framework and rigour to convert imaginative concepts into concrete results. This holds especially true for incremental creativities, which prioritize the refinement and enhancement of current goods and services (Gumusluoğlu and Ilsev, 2009; Sarros, Cooper and Santora, 2008; Hollen, Van Den Bosch and Volberda, 2013). Moreover, the research explores the intricate correlation between organizational situation and leadership style. The impact of a specific leadership style on promoting creativity is not solely determined by itself but is greatly influenced by the organization's culture, framework, and outside setting (Warrick, 2017; Carmeli, Cohen-Meitar and Elizur, 2007; Benner and Tushman, 2003). This highlights the intricate relationship between leadership and creativity, requiring leaders to adjust their approaches to various creativity processes and the always-evolving organizational environments. The paper utilizes substantial scholarly research and practical case studies to develop this narrative. The text incorporates influential studies in the discipline, including Bass's (1985) theory on transformational leadership differentiation between transformational and transactional leadership.

Additionally, it incorporates recent research that both extends and questions these fundamental beliefs. An example is the research conducted by Sassen (2014), which offers a valuable understanding of the relationship between flexibility and leadership in promoting organizational agility and creativity. Similarly, the research conducted by Damanpour and Aravind (2012) thoroughly examines the factors that drive inventiveness, with leadership being identified as a crucial element.

Hence, this paper serves as an intellectual discussion and a pragmatic manual for management and leadership. The objective is to teach them how to efficiently utilize various leadership styles to cultivate an innovative culture. The meticulous analysis of different leadership styles and their effects on diverse creativity processes provides helpful advice for leaders aiming to understand the complex processes of promoting creativity in their organizations (Volberda, Van Den Bosch and Heij, 2013). Overall, *The Influence of Leadership on Creativity Processes and Activities* provides a thorough and subtle viewpoint on the crucial significance of leadership in stimulating creativity. This highlights the necessity for adaptive leadership strategies customized to the specific requirements of various creativity processes and organizational environments. The paper is a great resource for scholars, professionals, and anybody interested in comprehending the important connection between leadership and creativity by combining theoretical insights with practical applications.

Ethical leadership is a fundamental aspect that arises alongside transformational and transactional leadership in discussions about creativity. Ethical leadership is characterized by its focus on the integrity of leaders, their moral behaviour, and their ability to make ethical decisions. This type of leadership is crucial in influencing the principles and behaviours of an organization (Brown, Treviño, & Harrison, 2005). Recent research has emphasized the importance of ethical leadership in promoting a work environment that is conducive to creativity. Neubert et al. (2009) conducted a study that shows how ethical leaders may establish an atmosphere of trust and fairness, encouraging employees to feel secure enough to explore and express novel concepts. According to Sanner and Bunderson (2015), mental security is vital for promoting taking risks and creativity, both of which are necessary for the creative approach.

The impact of ethical leadership on creativity surpasses the establishment of a conducive atmosphere. It entails actively fostering and directing the creativity process while upholding ethical standards (Javed et al., 2017; Chen and Hou, 2016; Duan, Liu and Che, 2018). The study conducted by Mumford, Partlow and Mumford (2014) suggests that ethical leaders provide explicit ethical guidelines and serve as role models, thereby fostering a feeling of accountability and moral duty towards creativity. This strategy not only fosters creativity but guarantees that it is in harmony with wider cultural and moral issues, which are growing in importance in the current business landscape (Hemingway & Maclagan, 2004). The adherence to ethical principles in the field of creativity is especially important in sectors where the consequences of creativity have substantial effects on society, such as medical or ecological technology.

Furthermore, ethical leadership has a connection with both transformational and transactional leadership styles in its impact on creativity. Ethical leaders exhibit transformational attributes such as motivation and stimulating thinking while integrating aspects of transactional leadership by prioritizing fairness and transparency in incentive systems (Price, 2003). This integration implies that the most efficient leaders in promoting creativity would be those who combine moral principles with the imaginative and organized elements of transformational and transactional leadership. Eisenbeiß and Boerner (2013) conducted research that corroborates this perspective, indicating that the amalgamation of ethical and transformational leadership behaviours is especially efficacious in fostering revolutionary and progressive breakthroughs inside businesses.

### **Ethical Leadership**

Contemporary research on ethical leadership has progressively concentrated on its multifaceted influence on many corporate results, such as creativity. The groundbreaking study by Brown, Treviño, and Harrison (2005) establishes the basis for ethical leadership, which is characterized by the display of morally acceptable behaviour through individual behaviours and interactions, as well as the encouragement of such behaviour among followers through efficient interaction, encouragement, and making choices. Furthermore, Den Hartog and De Hoogh (2009) emphasize the significance of ethical leadership in creating a corporate culture that prioritizes honesty and transparency, hence promoting an environment that encourages creative and original ideas. Recent research conducted by Mayer et al. (2012) and Ng and Feldman (2015) have further expanded our knowledge by indicating that ethical leadership plays a role in creating a psychologically secure environment. In such an environment, employees feel empowered to take risks and question established norms, which is critical in fostering creativity.

The literature also examines the ways by which ethical leadership impacts creativity. Zhang et al. (2017) demonstrate that ethical leaders can boost innovative behaviour by displaying moral leadership and showing concern for the health and well-being of employees. This is achieved by enhancing creative self-worth and internal drive, crucial factors in driving creativity. Furthermore, Resick, Hanges, Dickson, and Mitchelson (2006) contend that by prioritizing justice and ethical principles, ethical leaders establish a distinct structure that fosters the growth of creativity. Recent empirical research conducted by Mo and Shi (2017) and Yang et al. (2023) provide evidence that supports the notion of a beneficial connection between ethical leadership and organizational creativity. These investigations suggest that elements such as organizational devotion and confidence play a mediating role in this link. These principles are crucial for comprehending how ethical leadership not only encourages but also directs and maintains creativity in a sustainable and moral manner.

### **Ethical Leadership Effects on Creative Thinking**

Ethical leadership significantly impacts the promotion and exploration of creativity inside organizations. Research suggests that when leaders demonstrate ethical conduct, they create an environment characterized by trustworthiness and emotional security, crucial for fostering innovation and their willingness to take risks (Edmondson, 1999; Mayer et al., 2012). Through the exhibition of justice, honesty, and consideration for stakeholders, ethical leaders establish a workplace atmosphere that fosters a sense of worth and admiration among employees. Consequently, this environment stimulates employees to actively participate in creativity and the production of ideas. An influential study by Rego, Ribeiro, and Cunha (2010) discovered a direct correlation between ethical leadership and individual-level creativity. The recent study by Huang and Paterson (2017) provided additional evidence to support the notion that ethical leadership boosts employees' creative confidence, fostering inquisitive attempts at creativity. These activities, known for their originality and trial-and-error approach, are essential for advancing innovative ideas and solutions.

Furthermore, the impact of ethical leadership on descriptive creativity initiatives is influenced by multiple organizational characteristics. Ethical leaders frequently cultivate a culture that prioritizes learning and the exchange of expertise, which is essential for promoting exploratory creativity (Zhang, Walumbwa, Aryee, Chen, & Bartol, 2017). Mo and Shi (2017) observed that ethical leadership fosters a transparent environment that motivates people to question established norms and pursue innovative opportunities. Furthermore, a recent empirical study conducted by Cheng, Yang, Li, and Zhang (2020) emphasizes the significance of ethical leadership in establishing a working environment that fosters creativity and discovery. This conducive milieu fosters the emergence of groundbreaking creativity by offering essential resources, independence, and assistance for imaginative pursuits. Consequently, ethical leadership has a direct influence on both creativity and innovative exploration while also playing a vital role in creating the corporate environment that fosters each endeavour.

### **Ethical leadership influences on Creativity execution**

The significance of ethical leadership in the process of implementing creativity is becoming more prevalent in current studies. Leaders who adhere to ethical principles, such as honesty and fairness, are crucial in navigating organizations through the intricate process of translating new concepts into tangible implementations. The study conducted by Bedi, Alpaslan and Green (2016) emphasizes that ethical leadership is crucial in establishing an organizational framework that facilitates the effective execution of creative concepts. The findings of Ko et al. (2018). Resick et al. (2011) support the notion that ethical leaders promote accountability and ethical decision-making, ensuring that creativity processes align with business objectives and moral principles.

Moreover, a study conducted by Neubert, Carlson, Kacmar, Roberts, and Chonko (2009) emphasize the crucial importance of ethical leadership in effectively handling the various interests and possible disagreements that emerge during the

implementation stage. This leadership ensures a harmonious equilibrium between creative endeavours and moral issues. Moreover, ethical leadership substantially impacts employee engagement and dedication throughout the process of implementing creativity (Resick et al., 2011).

According to Walumbwa et al. (2011), ethical leaders improve employee energy and dedication to company goals by being trustworthy and supportive. This is crucial for effectively implementing new ideas. A study conducted by Avey, Wernsing, and Palanski (2012) discovered that ethical leadership has a beneficial effect on the emotional attachment that employees have towards innovative projects. As a result, their dedication to implementing these projects is enhanced. In addition, Eisenbeiß and Boerner (2013) contend that ethical leaders play a crucial role in guiding organizations through the ethical dilemmas and obstacles that frequently arise when adopting novel creativity or procedures. They achieve this by establishing explicit ethical standards and requirements, guaranteeing an appropriate and viable approach to implementing creativity.

The influence of ethical leadership on implementing creativity is further demonstrated by its contribution to the development of organizational adaptability and flexibility. Amidst a constantly changing corporate landscape characterized by unpredictable outcomes and opposition, ethical leaders are crucial in guiding organizations through these obstacles. According to Mo and Shi (2017), ethical leaders foster a culture of ethical adaptability, which allows firms to successfully navigate and prosper in the face of change while upholding their fundamental ethical principles. Adhering to ethical norms is crucial during the execution phase of creation to ensure long-term and environmentally conscious progress. A study conducted by Zhao et al. (2020) provides further evidence for this claim, illustrating how ethical leadership improves the level of dedication to organizational change, therefore promoting the successful execution of creative concepts. This study highlights the significance of ethical leaders in effectively managing the balance between the drive for creativity and the fulfilment of ethical and social obligations. Furthermore, ethical leadership has a significant impact on stakeholder participation throughout the procedure of implementing creativity (Wadei, Chen, Frempong and Appienti, 2021; Liu et al., 2021; Wang, Kim and Kim, 2021).

Skilled ethical leaders excel at engaging diverse stakeholders, such as employees, consumers, and the wider community, in creativity. Adopting a comprehensive strategy is essential for obtaining acceptance and assistance for new endeavours. According to the research conducted by Eisenbeiß and Boerner (2013), ethical leadership behaviours such as transparent communication and involving stakeholders are crucial for effectively implementing creativity. These practices ensure that the innovative efforts are in line with the expectations of stakeholders and ethical norms. In addition, a study by Neubert et al. (2009) provides further details on how ethical leaders can improve the trustworthiness and acceptability of creativity initiatives by fostering openness and involving stakeholders. This is crucial for resolving reluctance and guaranteeing the effective execution of these projects.

### **Ethical Leadership influence on competitive creativity**

Ethical leadership substantially influences entrepreneurial initiatives, which involve improving and upgrading current goods, services, or operations. Competitive developments, albeit less revolutionary than experimental breakthroughs, are essential for maintaining company efficiency and effectiveness over time. By cultivating a culture that prioritizes continual growth and integrity, ethical leaders establish a favourable atmosphere for effectively utilizing current abilities and assets. Bello's (2020) study emphasizes the need for ethical leadership to ensure that profitable creativity is consistent with company goals and ethical standards, improving its long-term viability. Precise synchronization is crucial in businesses where opportunistic breakthroughs can have substantial environmental and social consequences. Additionally, a study conducted by Barnes et al. (2020) highlights that ethical leadership supports competitive creativity by encouraging systematic testing and gradual enhancements inside the current organizational structure. By prioritizing accountable management procedures, ethical leaders guarantee that these breakthroughs are explored while maintaining ethical norms (Goswami, Agrawal and Goswami, 2021).

Ethical leadership is crucial in fostering staff involvement and commitment to disruptive initiatives. By acknowledging and incentivizing ethical conduct in the pursuit of gradual creativity, ethical leaders inspire employees to participate in these endeavours with a strong feeling of duty and dedication. The study conducted by Kalshoven et al. (2020) demonstrates that ethical leadership has a beneficial impact on employee engagement in competitive creativity through the promotion of trust and justice in the work environment. This confidence fosters an environment where employees are motivated to participate in their concepts and exertions in order to enhance current procedures and goods. In addition, a recent study conducted by Neubert (2020) proposes that ethical leaders, through their demonstration of ethical conduct and their emphasis on the significance of conforming to moral standards in the context of creativity, motivate employees to uphold elevated levels of excellence and moral conduct in their innovative endeavours. This dedication is crucial for guaranteeing that competitive advancements not only assist in achieving the organization but also comply with wider cultural and moral requirements.

Moreover, ethical leadership has a significant impact on the provision of resources and the decision-making processes that are essential for competitive creativity. Ethical leaders are recognized for their open and fair decision-making procedures, essential when distributing resources for creative endeavours. According to the research conducted by Eisenbeiß and Boerner in 2013, ethical leadership techniques, such as making fair and accountable decisions, create a work environment where resources are distributed wisely. This improves the productivity and efficacy of competitive creativity initiatives. In addition, a study conducted by Hanges, Lucas and Dobbs in 2020, emphasizes that ethical leaders, through their consideration of the ethical consequences of their decisions, guarantee that competitive advancements are pursued in a

responsible manner, taking into consideration their potential effects on stakeholders and the environment. This prudent strategy for making decisions and distributing resources not only upholds the ethical norms of the business but also guarantees that competitive advances are both enduring and advantageous in the long run.

## **Conclusion**

To summarize, this examination of ethical leadership's impact on exploration and competitive creativity processes highlights its vital significance in influencing the prospects of organizational creativity. By upholding principles of transparency, equity, and moral judgment, ethical leaders foster an atmosphere conducive to the growth of inspiration and responsible creativity. The paper emphasizes the crucial relationship between ethical leadership and many aspects of creativity, demonstrating that moral issues are supportive and essential for achieving effective creativity practices.

The research conducted by Zhu, Zhang and Shen (2019) and Huang and Paterson (2021) demonstrates that ethical leadership has a significant role in creating a favourable atmosphere for inquisitive creativity. This is achieved by promoting creative risk-taking and facilitating open interchange of ideas. This is crucial for producing revolutionary, original advancements. Furthermore, in the context of competitive creativity, ethical leadership guarantees that gradual advancements are pursued with a strong consciousness of ethical norms and their influence on society, as examined by De Clercq et al. (2021) and Kalshoven, Den Hartog and De Hoogh (2011). Adopting a well-balanced strategy towards creativity, which recognizes the importance of both radical and incremental changes, is crucial for achieving long-term sustainable development within a company.

Furthermore, the discoveries presented in this paper have implications that go beyond the domains of organizational leadership and creativity management. These factors align with wider societal and ethical concerns in the contemporary business landscape, as creativity has far-reaching effects beyond individual organisations' confines (Ng et al., 2021). The works of Resick, Hanges, Dickson, and Mitchelson (2006) and Eisenbeiß and Boerner (2013) illustrate that ethical leaders not only promote creativity but also ensure that these breakthroughs have a good impact on society and comply with ethical standards. The simultaneous emphasis on creativity and ethics is particularly relevant in a time characterized by swift technological progress and intricate ethical dilemmas.

Given these observations, companies and leaders must acknowledge and adopt the crucial significance of ethical leadership in cultivating a climate that promotes creativity. The essay suggests that leadership development programs should prioritize cultivating ethical decision-making and truthfulness and fostering imaginative and creative capabilities. In order to achieve long-term and accountable creativity success, businesses must prioritize incorporating ethical leadership into their fundamental principles and practices as they negotiate the challenges of the current business environment.

Essentially, the convergence of ethical leadership and creativity signifies a mutually beneficial connection that is of utmost importance for the company's future. To stay viable and relevant in a constantly changing environment, organizations rely on ethical leadership to lead the way towards a future where creativity is abundant and driven by principles and meaning.

## **Potential Consequences:**

1. **Cultivating an Ethical Creativity Culture:** Leadership needs to comprehend the pivotal significance of ethical leadership in establishing a culture that fosters responsible creativity. Leaders can cultivate a work climate that promotes employee creativity and adherence to moral requirements by reflecting ethical ideals. According to Brown, Treviño, and Harrison (2005), ethical leaders establish the standard for how an organization behaves, which impacts creativity results. Managers must prioritise truthfulness, equity, and openness regarding their behaviours as leaders in order to foster a favourable culture for both inquisitive and opportunistic creativity.
2. **Leadership Development Emphasizing Ethics and Creativity:** Organizations should allocate resources towards leadership development initiatives that integrate ethical decision-making with the administration of creativity. According to Eisenbeiß and Boerner (2013), teaching leaders how to integrate ethical considerations with creativity aims can improve the efficiency of creativity procedures. These programs should strive to cultivate leaders who possess the skills to both foster creativity and effectively navigate the ethical intricacies that accompany it.
3. **Establishing Trust and Psychological Safety:** According to the research conducted by Burke et al. (2007) and Lee et al. (2010), ethical leadership plays a crucial role in fostering an environment of trust and psychological safety. These factors are vital for promoting willingness to take risks and creativity. Managers ought to establish confidence with their staff through the continuous display of ethical conduct and the promotion of transparent communication. This method can potentially cultivate a highly motivated workforce eager to offer inventive ideas and actively partake in their execution.
4. **Ensuring the Alignment of Creativity with Ethical and Organizational Values:** Leaders must guarantee that creativity endeavours are in accordance with the ethical principles and business objectives of the firm. The study conducted by Herrmann and Felfe (2014) highlights the significance of this synchronization for the achievement of competitive creativity endeavours. Managers ought to establish explicit norms and frameworks that incorporate ethical considerations into the creativity process, thereby guaranteeing that inventions have a good impact on the firm and society.
5. **Involving Stakeholders in the Creativity Process:** Ethical leaders acknowledge the significance of incorporating diverse stakeholders in the process of creativity. Demirtas and Akdogan (2015) propose that managers should embrace a collaborative approach towards creativity, involving employees, consumers, and other stakeholders in the development

process. This not only boosts the trustworthiness and embrace of novel efforts but also guarantees that a wide range of positions are considered, resulting in more thorough and ethical developments.

6. Achieving a balance between discovering and exploiting is crucial for leaders to effectively manage creativity initiatives in their firms. Innovative exploration is essential for achieving breakthroughs and gaining a competitive edge, while competitive creativity is vital for enhancing and perfecting current offers. Huang and Paterson (2017) have demonstrated that ethical leaders substantially impact effectively directing and promoting both forms of innovative activity.

To summarize, the article highlights the significance of ethical leadership in promoting responsible and efficient creativity and draws attention to its managerial consequences. Leaders may greatly improve their firms' ability to innovate and ensure that these inventions align with ethical and social norms by incorporating moral concerns into managerial procedures, creativity management, and corporate culture.

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