

Enhancing creativity in higher education

by Dhyah Harjanti

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Enhancing Creativity: The Role of Affective Commitment and Knowledge Sharing

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ABSTRACT

As higher education institutions were facing strong competition to attract new coming students, the contributions of lecturers were acknowledged as one of the driving resources of the university's competitive advantage. Besides teaching, all lecturers were required to conduct research and social services. While fulfilling these tasks, some lecturers focused on one aspect only and neglect the others. This situation created a disparity in lecturers' creative mindsets, as they keep on doing similar tasks repeatedly. Creativity developed by the lecturers could become the competitive advantage of their university. The objective of this study was to examine how lecturers' creativity is constructed. Two influencing factors, which are affective commitment and knowledge sharing, were tested to see their influences on creativity. The data were collected from 170 randomly selected lecturers of private universities who obtained an "A" accreditation. Since this was quantitative research, the collected data were processed with the Partial Least Square technique. The results showed that lecturers' creativity was significantly affected by knowledge sharing as well as affective commitment. However, knowledge sharing did not mediate the relationship between affective commitment and creativity.

Corresponding Author:

Email: dhyah@petra.ac.id

INTRODUCTION

In the current era of globalization, universities cope with very tight competition. Universities as higher education institutions must continually improve to be able to compete with other universities. Universities' ability to compete and sustain depends on the behavior of their lecturers. The role of lecturers is very important in achieving university success (Celep & Yilmazturk, 2012). In carrying out their duties and responsibilities, lecturers must be committed to improving their self and contributing to the university's competitive advantage. The lecturer's organizational commitment is the involvement and loyalty of the lecturer in identifying personal goals with organizational goals. Organizational commitment consists of normative, affective, and continuance commitment (Cheema & Javed, 2017).

Affective commitment explains individual emotional involvement in organizational purpose (Camelo-Ordaz, García-Cruz, Sousa-Ginel, & Valle-Cabrera, 2011). Employee emotional attachment is a main driving force for employees to stay in the organization, as well as to respect work opportunities (Ahmed, Farzeen, & Anwar, 2017). In the social identification context, affective commitment is an intense emotional feeling and intrinsic motivation of employees to attach to an organization (Meyer & Allen, 1984; Johnson, Chang, & Yang, 2010). Therefore, to be able to deliver their best effort to the university, lecturers should have affective commitment, not only focus on normative commitments (such as obligations) or concentrate on continuance commitments (such as rewards and transactions).

This study focuses only on one type of commitment, i.e. affective commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1984). Affective commitment stands for a member's emotional or psychological attachment to the organization's advancement, which is demonstrated in form of moral support, accepting organization values, and determination to serve the organization (Camelo-Ordaz *et al.*, 2011). Since it involves emotional factors, affective commitment is more valuable to the organization than both types of normative and continuous commitment. Employees with affective commitments will work with contentment and enjoy their role in the organization. Previous studies show that organizational commitment is related to various factors, including performance and productivity (Irefin & Mechanic, 2014; Andrew, 2017), job satisfaction (Sieger, Bernhard, & Frey, 2011; Leite, de Aguiar Rodrigues, & de Albuquerque, 2014), creativity (Shi & Su, 2017), and knowledge sharing (Li, Yuan, Ning, & Li-Ying, 2015; Cheema & Javed, 2017).

Knowledge sharing has diverse consequences and prospective values for organizations. The influence of knowledge sharing has been studied from various dimensions. Previous studies have shown that sharing knowledge improves cost savings, efficiency, employee performance, and teamwork development (Mesmer-Magnus & Dechurch, 2012). In addition, knowledge sharing facilitates employees to innovate, collaborate, and make a decision efficiently.

Knowledge is the most important resource for developing skills and competencies in the organization (Nonaka, 1994). It is prominent for organizations, especially for universities as higher education institutions (Sizer, 2001). Organizations can enhance employee performance by providing valuable and appropriate knowledge (Liu & Liu, 2011). This is a major source for competitive advantage, long-term sustainability, and success of an organization (Raykov, 2014), including educational institutions. Nowadays, knowledge sharing has become an important and challenging issue in higher education. Numerous universities have implemented knowledge management practices (Tsuda, 2011). In higher education institutions, lecturers manage, combine, and share knowledge among themselves. Effective knowledge sharing management can encourage innovation by supporting organization members to innovate, collaborate, and make appropriate decisions efficiently.

Individual creativity is a foundation for innovation, change, and competitiveness of the organization. Individuals are source of new ideas for the organization. They are fundamental elements of an organization's creative and innovative capability (Zhang & Bartol, 2010). There are several approaches to enhance creativity, for instance by continuing to enlighten individuals about their capability to produce new knowledge, to apply it, and to maintain knowledge for future applications (Chen & Chen, 2012). Previous studies on organizational commitment and creativity show that commitment has positive effect on creativity (Rahdarpour & Taboli, 2016; Shi & Su, 2017). However, other studies show different

results, such as the research of Moss and Ritossa (2007) which shows that affective commitment does not influence creativity significantly. This dissimilarity of results calls for further research.

Using social exchange theory as groundwork, this study explains affective commitment and knowledge sharing effect on the creativity of lecturers. The social exchange theory established that knowledge sharing arises from rewards that individuals receive from organizations, for example, job security, position, and maintenance of future relationships. These rewards explain the motivations of individual behavior in organizations (Casimir, Lee, & Loon, 2012). Most of the earlier studies mainly discussed knowledge sharing effect on organizational performance. However, this research examines its effect on individual creativity. This research has two objectives. First, to find out affective commitment combined with knowledge sharing influence on lecturer creativity. Second, to explore the mediation role of knowledge sharing between affective commitment and creativity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Affective Commitment

In the organizational behavior context, organizational commitment is considered a key element affecting participation, attitudes, and organizational effectiveness (Cooper, Stanley, Klein, & Tenhiälä, 2016). In their prominent work, Meyer and Allen (1984) described affective organizational commitment as employee emotional connection to, and engagement in organization and its objectives (Meyer & Allen, 1984). This is an important aspect of employee motivation to work in the organization (Lombardi, Sassetti, & Cavaliere, 2019). Employees with high affective commitment consider their work more broadly than just job description requirements but also include a wider range of behaviors, known as extra-roles. As a result, affective commitment influences behavior beyond organizational boundaries (e.g. persistence, innovation, and strategy development) (Morrison, 1994).

Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge sharing enables individual learning to transform into organizational learning (Nissen, Evald, & Clarke, 2014). It contributes to organizational and individual learning, improves organizational performance and service quality (Paulin & Sunseson, 2012; Vogel *et al.*, 2013). Higher education institutions have a mission to develop and to share knowledge. It is very important for lecturers in higher education institutions to perform knowledge sharing in formal (e.g., research projects) and informal communities. Knowledge sharing is not a simple construction (Wang & Noe, 2010). Knowledge sharing is characterized by knowledge donating (i.e. offering individual intellectual capital to others) and knowledge collecting (i.e. referring intellectual capital of colleagues) (Van Den Hooff & Ridder, 2004; Noerchoidah & Harjanti, 2019). Previous study shows that affective commitment has a positive influence on both knowledge donating and collecting (Van Den Hooff & Ridder, 2004).

According to Cabrera & Cabrera (2005), beside as reorganizing and disseminating skills and information, knowledge sharing also shows formation of novel knowledge and original ideas. Sharing knowledge enhances individuals to collaborate, thus encourages them to be more creative (Chen & Chen, 2012; Amin, Basri, Hassan, & Rehman, 2011).

Creativity

Creativity is considered as the beginning of innovation, which is defined as the execution of new ideas (Van de Ven, 1986). Creativity is development of new and potential ideas about

product, practice, service or procedure (Van de Ven, 1986; Amabile, 1985). An idea is considered new, if it is unique compared to other ideas currently available in the organization. Idea is considered useful if it has potential to be valuable to the organization.

One important aspect of innovation process is motivation of individuals to be creative and to remain involved creatively in the workplace (Amabile, 1985). To develop creative responses, an individual must be involved in creative activities (Amabile & Pratt, 2016). This concept refers to activities where creativity occurs, such as problem identification, information searching and coding, and alternative ideas generating (Zhang & Bartol, 2010).

Affective Commitment and Knowledge Sharing

Affective commitment is important to achieve organizational competitive advantage. It is employee's genuine and convincing recognition. Affective commitment is emotional connection and strong psychological relationship with the organization. It is important in facilitating knowledge sharing (Matzler *et al.*, 2011). Earlier studies show that knowledge sharing at the organizational level has associated with individual learning, affective commitment, knowledge management orientation, and social capital (Fullwood, Rowley, & Delbridge, 2013).

Knowledge sharing is important driver in current and future economy. Knowledge-based organizations play a role in improving the intellectual abilities of employees individually, which in turn are beneficial to innovation ability and creativity of the organization (Shih, Hsu, Zhu, & Balasubramanian, 2012). Higher level affective commitment can generate an altruistic spirit in facilitating knowledge sharing among colleagues (Jo & Joo, 2011; Lombardi *et al.*, 2019). Previous studies have showed positive correlation between affective commitment and knowledge sharing (Van Den Hooff & Ridder, 2004; Camelo-Ordaz *et al.*, 2011; Casimir *et al.*, 2012; Cheema & Javed, 2017).

Therefore, the following hypothesis is developed:

H1: Affective commitment significantly influences knowledge sharing.

Knowledge Sharing and Creativity

Knowledge is a very important organizational resource. It can enhance organization sustainable competitiveness. By sharing knowledge, a team can exploit knowledge-based resources to increase organizational competitiveness (Liu & Liu, 2011). Whereas creativity is an extra role behavior, where employees generate innovative and valuable ideas for organization (Amabile, 1985). It comes from curiosity or flexibility of thought (Amabile, 1985; de Stobbeleir, Ashford & Buyens, 2011; Grant & Berry, 2011). Facilitating creativity takes time, materials, teamwork, hard work and knowledge. Of all these requirements, knowledge is considered as essential factor in the development of creativity and innovation in organization (Lee, Lee, Seo, & Jo, 2011; Harjanti & Noerchoidah, 2017). Creative ideas can be obtained when individuals share ideas with others and discuss these ideas.

As organizational members share knowledge, they create new ideas. Knowledge sharing is proven to be able to encourage individual creativity (Chen & Chen, 2012; Noerchoidah, Eliyana, & Christiananta, 2020), since knowledge sharing supports cooperation in an organization (Amin *et al.*, 2011).

By sharing knowledge, individuals acquire new knowledge to be compiled with their current knowledge. This compilation of knowledge will produce new ideas (Amin *et al.*, 2011). Prior studies have also shown that employee creativity can be enhanced through developing individual skills and knowledge sharing (Dong, Yuntao, Bartol, Zhang, 2016). Son, Cho, & Kang (2017) have examined relationship of creativity and knowledge sharing. Their study indicated mediating role of knowledge sharing. The results of Lee (2018) also show the positive influence of knowledge sharing on individual creativity. From the description above, we propose the following hypothesis:

H₂: Knowledge sharing significantly influences creativity.

Affective Commitment and Creativity

As one type of organizational commitment, affective commitment is important in predicting creativity because employees play an important part in the creative process that accelerates organizational innovation (Amabile, 1985). Affective commitment is crucial to create knowledge and can lead to change-oriented organizational citizenship behavior, such as creativity.

Creativity is developed concepts about products, services, methods, processes, and routines that are considered innovative and useful (Hirst, Van Knippenberg, Zhou, Quintane, & Zhu, 2015). Employee creativity involves developing fresh and concrete solutions to work challenges, including way out to business problems, modifications in work practices, and new approaches to sell products. Since creativity cultivated from new ideas and outlooks, consequently individual network to pursue advice also influences the extent of employee openness to fresh and miscellaneous information, and their chance to produce creative ideas (Gong, Huang, & Farh, 2009). A positive relationship was found between affective commitment with creative work behavior (Shi & Su, 2017).

From the explanation above, we propose the following hypothesis:

H₃: Affective commitment significantly influences creativity.

Knowledge Sharing Mediation Effect

Affective commitment is behavior that shows individual identification and illustrates psychological attachment, as well as positive and inherent loyalty felt by someone to an organization (Casimir, al., 2012; Noor, Kasim, Scarlat, & Muhamad, 2012). Employees with affective commitments have a tendency to help others so they can produce benefits not only for themselves but also for coworkers and organizations. Among the helpful behaviors among coworkers is the willingness to share knowledge to develop new abilities (Jo & Joo, 2011). Individuals with high affective commitment will have a high sense of awareness that their knowledge also belongs to the organization (Lin, 2007; Han, Chiang, & Chang, 2010).

Effective knowledge sharing is proven positively relate to organizational performance and can encourage organizational innovation by supporting members to innovate (Mesmer-Magnus & Dechurch, 2009). Knowledge sharing involves the exchange of knowledge, experience, and skills with others. By sharing knowledge, individuals are enabled to overcome difficulties, initiate ideas, or employ methods or procedures (Tangaraja, Rasdi, Ismail, & Samah, 2015; Noerchoidah & Dhyah, 2019). Eventually, knowledge sharing facilitates creativity of individuals involved (Dong, Bartol, Zhang, & Li, 2016).

Some studies have found positive relationship between organizational commitment and intention to share knowledge (Van Den Hooff & Ridder, 2004). While the next hypothesis is proposed:

H₄: Knowledge sharing significantly mediates relationship between affective commitment and creativity.

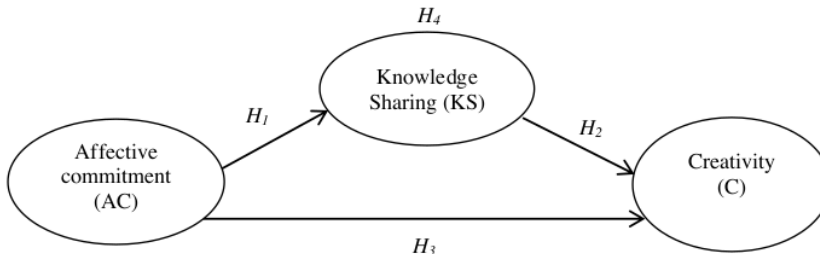


Figure 1. Research framework

METHOD

Population and Sample

This study used quantitative research method. The data is collected by distributing questionnaire to lecturers from six private universities in Surabaya, East Java. All these universities have been accredited "A" by BAN PT (2019). Surabaya was chosen as the research location, because there are the highest number of private universities with A accreditation in Surabaya.

The sampling technique used is non-probability sampling, which is convenience sampling. Questionnaires were distributed to 200 lecturers of "A" accredited private universities in Surabaya. There are 186 returned questionnaires, but only 170 questionnaires that can be used (response rate 85%).

Instruments and Measurements

Variable measurement in this research used Likert scale, ranging from 1 as "strongly disagree" to 5 as "strongly agree". This research used Partial Least Square (PLS) to analyze data. We use a measuring instrument from Sieger *et al.* (2011) to measure affective commitment with an example of the item "I feel emotionally bound to an institution". Knowledge sharing is operationalized as knowledge collecting and knowledge donating using a measuring instrument from Van Den Hooff & Ridder (2004). An example of knowledge collecting items is "I ask colleagues to share their experiences". One of the knowledge donating items is "I teach my expertise to colleagues in my department". While creativity uses a measuring instrument from Lee (2018) with an example of the item "I promote and fight for ideas to others". Model measurements were tested in two stages (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2014) that is analyzing convergent and discriminant validity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Hair *et al.* (2014) stated that convergent validity requirements were met when a factor loading > 0.5. Based on Table 1, the validity of individual items from each factor loading is significant (> 0.5). There are 3 indicators of knowledge sharing variables and 3 indicators of creativity variables from a total of 23 indicator items that have a factor loading < 0.5. Therefore, the six indicators are considered invalid and not included in further testing.

All composite reliability (CR) as well as Cronbach's α meet standard (> 0.7), thus the construct reliability requirement is met (Hair *et al.*, 2014). The average variance extracted (AVE) values of each construct are > 0.5 , therefore convergent validity is met.

Table 1
Model Measurement Results

Construct	Items	Loading Factor (> 0.5)	Cronbach α (> 0.7)	CR > 0.7	AVE (> 0.5)
Affective Commitment	AC1	0.725	0.896	0.928	0.876
	AC2	0.774			
	AC3	0.627			
	AC4	0.618			
	AC5	0.743			
	AC6	0.868			
Knowledge Sharing	KS1	0.691	0.867	0.896	0.832
	KS4	0.795			
	KS5	0.719			
	KS6	0.747			
	KS7	0.779			
	KS9	0.648			
Creativity	KS10	0.759	0.814	0.833	0.714
	C2	0.833			
	C4	0.809			
	C5	0.803			
	C6	0.844			

We tested the hypothesis by running a *t-test* on each effect partially.

Table 2
Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Path	Path Coefficient	<i>p-Value</i>	<i>T value</i>	Result
H_1	AC \rightarrow KS	0.353	0.000	5.333	Significant
H_2	KS \rightarrow C	0.567	0.000	6.422	Significant
H_3	AC \rightarrow C	0.312	0.000	5.789	Significant
H_4	AC \rightarrow KS \rightarrow C	0.200	0.000	4.386	Significant

Table 2 shows hypothesis testing results. The testing results of the effect of affective commitment (AC) on knowledge sharing (KS) obtained path coefficient of 0.353 with a *T value* of 5.333 and *p-value* of 0.000. Since *T value* $>$ *t-table* 1.96 and *p-value* $<$ alpha 0.05, it means that affective commitment (AC) significantly influences knowledge sharing (KS), therefore hypothesis H_1 is accepted.

The testing results of knowledge sharing (KS) effect on creativity (C) showed path coefficient of 0.567 with a *T value* of 6.422 and a *p value* of 0.000. Since *T value* $>$ *t-table* 1.96 and *p value* $<$ alpha 0.05, it means that knowledge sharing (KS) significantly effects on creativity (C). Accordingly, hypothesis H_2 is accepted.

In a direct test between affective commitment (AC) to creativity (C), the result shows path coefficient of 0.312 with *T value* of 5.789 and *p value* of 0.000. *T value* $>$ *t table* 1.96 and *p*

value < alpha 0.05, indicating a significant influence of affective commitment (AC) on creativity (C). Thus, hypothesis H_3 is accepted.

The testing results of knowledge sharing (KS) mediation effect on affective commitment (AC) and creativity (C) relationship show a path coefficient of 0.200 with a T value of 4.386 and a p value of 0.000. T value > t table 1.96 and p value < alpha 0.05. This provides empirical evidence of the mediating role of knowledge sharing on the effect of affective commitment on creativity. Thus, hypothesis H_4 is accepted.

This study explores affective commitment effect on knowledge sharing and creativity among "A" accredited private university lecturers. From the findings of this study, it can be concluded that affective commitment affects knowledge sharing. Lecturers who have high affective commitment have a tendency to settle in the same institution and are motivated to do extra role work in knowledge sharing with students and fellow lecturers. This results are in line with prior studies (Van Den Hooff & Ridder, 2004; Camelo-Ordaz *et al.*, 2011; Casimir *et al.*, 2012; Cheema & Javed, 2017; Lombardi *et al.*, 2019).

Another finding of this study is that affective commitment influences creativity. This means that the lecturers' affective commitment as an emotional relationship with a higher education institution is very much needed in generating new ideas and perspectives to produce new products, services, procedures, and values, that are highly needed by universities (Hirst *et al.*, 2015; Gong, Huang, & Farh, 2009; Montani, Courcy, & Vandenberghe, 2017). This results are consistent with the results of Cheung's (2005) and Shi and Su's (2017) research. However, the findings show different results from Moss and Ritossa findings (2007), which revealed that affective commitment does not significantly affect creativity. The inequality of findings can occur due to differences in cultural and environmental factors of individuals. These differences could make creativity of individual does not depend on emotional ties to the organization (Semedo, Coelho, & Ribeiro, 2016).

Furthermore, findings about knowledge sharing and creativity relationship shows that lecturer consciousness to disseminate knowledge has a significant positive effect on the creativity of lecturers. This result shows that knowledge is seen as an important facilitator of inspired ideas when individuals disseminate ideas with others and produce new creative thoughts and knowledge (Amin *et al.*, 2011). This is support Son *et al.* (2017) and Lee's research.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATION

Considering that knowledge-sharing and affective commitment could increase the creativity of lecturers, universities need to build a knowledge-sharing culture by providing facilities, systems, and an atmosphere that supports the creation of a knowledge-sharing process. The universities could increase lecturers' affective commitment by building open communication and providing opportunities for lecturers to develop themselves and use various skills they have.

CONCLUSION

The findings prove that knowledge sharing significantly and positively mediates the correlation relating affective commitment and creativity. These results indicate that the

stronger affective commitment, the higher the willingness to do knowledge sharing, which in turn increases the creativity of lecturers.

There are several limitations of this current research that require extended research to better comprehend how affective commitment affects creativity. First, this study used convenience sampling, which limits the generalization of results. Second, the cross-sectional research design prohibits obtaining strong conclusions about the causal relationships involving research variables. Future studies should consider conducting longitudinal research. Third, the respondents used in this study came from Surabaya and only at universities that were accredited with "A". Further research can test on universities accredited "B" and "C" in East Java. Fourth, this study only covers one mediating variable. Future research can examine more fully the mechanisms that encourage creativity, for example: organizational support and authentic leadership.

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