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Entrepreneurial leadership and work performance: When creativity becomes the key

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Abstract

Purpose – This study examines the role of individual creativity as a mediator in the relationship between entrepreneurial leadership and work performance.

Theoretical framework – We present and discuss the concepts of entrepreneurial leadership and work performance, focusing particularly on the psychological mechanisms involved in employee creativity based on social cognitive theory.

Design/methodology/approach – We used a quantitative approach with partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) to analyze the relationships among the variables. We used a sample of 184 small businesses in the fashion industry to establish and examine four hypotheses.

Findings – The empirical findings show that entrepreneurial leadership significantly enhances individual creativity and work performance. Additionally, individual creativity partially mediates the relationship between entrepreneurial leadership and work performance, though the effect is low.

Practical and social implications of the research – The study provides theoretical insights into the psychological pathways connecting leadership and performance. It also offers practical guidance for small fashion industry entrepreneurs on how to foster creativity and improve performance through entrepreneurial leadership.

Originality/value – Although many studies have examined the impact of entrepreneurial leadership on individual performance, few have investigated the psychological mechanisms influencing employee performance through creativity. Additionally, most previous studies have focused on large corporations and high-tech environments, leaving a significant gap in our understanding of how entrepreneurial leadership functions within small, creative businesses.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial leadership, individual creativity, work performance, small businesses, fashion industry.

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1 Introduction

In knowledge-based and innovation-driven economies, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) depend more and more on employees who can generate novel and useful ideas and transform them into effective work outcomes (Mirza et al., 2024; Muñoz-Pascual et al., 2021). Creativity is central to adaptability, problem-solving, and sustained competitiveness. However, it is also strongly influenced by the leadership context in which employees work (Mascareño et al., 2021; Mehmood et al., 2021). Entrepreneurial leadership (EL) is especially relevant because it combines opportunity recognition, proactive action, innovation, and calculated risk-taking with the capacity to mobilize employees under uncertainty (Bagheri et al., 2022b; Pauceanu et al., 2021).

The issue is especially relevant in small fashion firms in Indonesia. In small businesses, owner-managers immediately influence work priorities, resource allocation, idea evaluation, and employees' willingness to experiment. At the same time, limited resources, short product cycles, and changing customer preferences make creative problem-solving essential for survival and growth. Consequently, Indonesia provides a theoretically informative setting in a developing economy in which EL can operate through close leader-employee interaction and relatively informal organizational systems (Hasan et al., 2024; Nguyen et al., 2021).

Prior studies have established relationships between EL and other factors. EL has been associated with employee creativity, innovative work behavior, and creative self-efficacy (Bagheri et al., 2022a; Mehmood et al., 2021; Yang & Bentein, 2023), while other research has linked EL to SME- or firm-level performance (Nguyen et al., 2021). Creativity has also been related to innovation and performance outcomes in multiple work settings (Carmeli et al., 2021; Cheng, 2024; Jiang et al., 2023). The established direct relationships are not the primary focus of this study. Rather, they provide the theoretical foundation for examining the underlying mechanism. The unresolved question concerns the individual-level pathway from EL to broader work performance. Much of the existing literature emphasizes innovative work behavior, team creativity, or firm-level outcomes. Less is known, however, about whether employees' individual creativity explains how EL translates into both task and contextual performance. This distinction matters. A predominantly direct effect would suggest that performance depends mainly on leaders' immediate direction and support. In contrast, a meaningful indirect effect would indicate that leaders improve performance by developing employees' creative capacity. Evidence on this mechanism is limited in small creative firms in developing countries, where leadership is close and resources for formal innovation systems are scarce.

The componential theory of creativity provides the primary theoretical foundation for this mechanism. According to this theory, creative outcomes emerge from the interaction of domain-relevant skills, creativity-relevant processes, and intrinsic motivation (Amabile & Pratt, 2016). EL can influence these components by presenting challenging opportunities, offering autonomy and feedback, and validating experimentation. Social cognitive theory complements this explanation by emphasizing observational learning and self-beliefs. Employees may emulate a leader's proactive and risk-tolerant behavior, developing greater confidence to propose and implement ideas (Jiang et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2023). Creativity is not assumed to be the only mediator. Psychological empowerment, creative self-efficacy, psychological safety, and knowledge sharing may also carry part of the effect. The present study isolates creativity to test its specific explanatory role.

To test the model, survey data were collected from 184 employees in 76 small fashion firms in Bandung, Indonesia. The data were analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). The study examined the direct effects of EL on individual creativity and work performance, as well as the indirect effect of EL on work performance through creativity. The study clarifies an employee-level mechanism, tests that mechanism in an underrepresented small-business and developing-economy context, and derives concrete implications for leader development, creativity-supporting work practices, and performance management.

2 Conceptual framework and hypothesis development

The model proposes that EL affects work performance both directly and indirectly through individual creativity. The direct paths (H1-H3) establish the conditions required for mediation. Meanwhile, H4 tests whether creativity accounts for some of the effect of EL on work performance (Figure 1).

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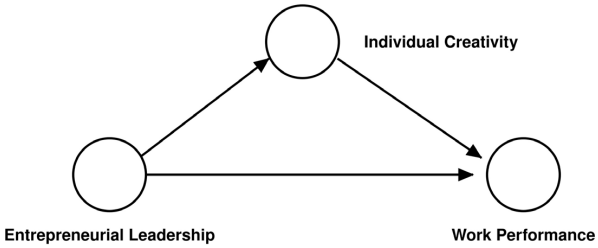


Figure 1. Research Framework
Source: Own compilation, 2025

2.1 Entrepreneurial leadership and work performance

EL is the process by which leaders mobilize people and resources to recognize and exploit opportunities in uncertain situations (Pauceanu et al., 2021). Through articulating direction, removing obstacles, building commitment, and defining boundaries for action, entrepreneurial leaders can enhance role clarity, persistence, adaptive problem-solving, and coordination. These behaviors are particularly consequential in small firms, where the owner-manager's decisions quickly affect employees' daily work. Previous studies have generally reported positive associations between EL and employee or firm performance (Bagheri et al., 2022b; Nguyen et al., 2021). Thus, H1 is a theoretically established relationship that is retested here as part of the mediation model rather than claimed as the study's main novelty.

> H1. Entrepreneurial leadership positively affects work performance.

2.2 Entrepreneurial leadership and individual creativity

Social cognitive theory explains how entrepreneurial leaders influence employee creativity. Leaders who communicate an opportunity-focused vision, demonstrate proactive behavior, tolerate reasonable risk, and support experimentation serve as role models for their employees. Meanwhile, autonomy, recognition, feedback, and access to resources can strengthen intrinsic motivation and creative self-efficacy. These mechanisms correspond to the componential theory of creativity, which emphasizes motivation, relevant knowledge, and creativity-supporting processes as conditions for generating novel, useful ideas (Amabile & Pratt, 2016). Empirical research consistently links EL with employee creativity and innovative behavior through empowerment, self-efficacy, and an innovation-supportive climate (Bagheri et al., 2022a; Mehmood et al., 2021; Yang & Bentein, 2023). Similar patterns have been observed in creative industry settings, where experimentation and rapid adaptation are central to the work (Du et al., 2021). These findings establish the relationship between EL and creativity. The present study uses this relationship as the first stage of the proposed indirect pathway. EL can therefore strengthen employees' willingness and capacity to develop novel and useful work ideas, especially when leaders legitimize experimentation and support acting on those ideas.

> H2. Entrepreneurial leadership positively affects individual creativity.

2.3 Individual creativity and work performance

Individual creativity is defined as an employee's ability to generate novel and useful ideas for improving work processes, products, or outcomes (Glăveanu & Beghetto, 2021). This definition is not sector-specific. In small fashion firms, creativity may manifest as design alternatives, material use, production methods, customer solutions, merchandising, or marketing practices. Therefore, the construct can be transferred from service and general organizational research to the fashion context provided the items are worded around employees' actual work activities.

According to componential creativity theory, domain-relevant skills, creativity-relevant cognitive processes, and intrinsic motivation enable employees to move beyond routine responses and develop workable alternatives (Amabile & Pratt, 2016). These alternatives can improve task performance by increasing efficiency, quality, and problem resolution. They can also improve contextual performance because creative employees often share knowledge, help colleagues, and support experimentation across work boundaries (Carmeli et al., 2021; Hennessey, 2015).

Across work settings, evidence shows that creativity and creative problem-solving are associated with innovation performance, service outcomes, adaptability, and employee performance (Cheng, 2024; Jiang et al., 2023; Nwachukwu & Vu, 2022; Soomro & Soomro, 2024). While the strength of this relationship may depend on whether ideas are implemented and supported by the organization, the literature consistently suggests that employees who report greater creativity will also report stronger work performance.

H3. Individual creativity positively affects work performance.

2.4 The mediating role of individual creativity

EL can improve work performance directly by providing direction, coordinating resources, and motivating employees. However, EL can also improve performance indirectly by enabling employees to generate and apply better ideas. Entrepreneurial leaders present challenging opportunities, grant discretion, and minimize barriers to experimentation. These conditions strengthen the motivational and process components of creativity, leading to more effective task execution and constructive contextual behavior (Amabile & Pratt, 2016; Liu et al., 2023).

The proposed mediation does not imply that creativity is the only pathway. Previous studies have identified psychological empowerment, innovative self-efficacy, psychological safety, and organizational factors as additional mechanisms connecting EL with employee or firm outcomes (Bagheri et al., 2022a; Majooni & Nasiri, 2024; Nguyen et al., 2021). Nevertheless, testing creativity separately is important because it shows whether EL produces performance benefits by building employee capabilities rather than solely through direct leader control.

While existing evidence supports parts of this sequence, it often examines innovative work behavior, team creativity, or firm performance rather than broad individual work performance (Al Doghan et al., 2023; Mehmood et al., 2021). By estimating the direct and indirect paths simultaneously in small Indonesian fashion firms, this study evaluates whether creativity provides a statistically meaningful explanation of the EL-work performance relationship, even if it is only partial.

H4. Individual creativity mediates the relationship between entrepreneurial leadership and work performance.

3 Research method

3.1 Research setting, sample, and procedure

The study was conducted from January to April 2025. It examined employees of 76 small fashion firms registered with the Bandung City Department of Cooperatives and SMEs (KUKM) in Indonesia. To be eligible, firms had to have operated for at least three years, employed at least five full-time employees, and appeared in the official KUKM database. The research team contacted the owner or manager of each eligible firm and requested employees with at least two years of tenure. Each firm nominated three high-performing employees. Of the 228 questionnaires distributed, 184 usable responses were obtained, yielding an effective response rate of 80.70%. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. Since the respondents were nominated rather than randomly selected, the design is purposive and does not support claims of full sample representativeness.

The respondents represented different demographic groups: 42% were men, and 58% were women. Additionally, 31% were younger than 30 years old, 38% were between 30 and 40 years old, 28% were between 41 and 50 years old, and 3% were older than 50 years old. In terms of education, 4.1% had completed junior high school, 41.8% had completed senior high school, 46.6% had a bachelor's degree, and 7.5% had a master's degree. In terms of work experience, 22.2% had less than three years, 47.2% had three to six years, and 30.6% had more than seven years (Supplementary Data 1: Database and Codebook).

3.2 Measures and scale adaptation

The questionnaire was based on previously validated measures of EL, individual creativity, and work performance (Supplementary Data 2: Questionnaire). The wording was adjusted to refer to owner-managers and small-firm work routines, as well as to provide examples relevant to fashion-related tasks. However, the conceptual meaning of the source scales was retained. A pilot test with 30 employees assessed item clarity and preliminary reliability. Ambiguous wording was refined before the main survey. All measures used a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with higher scores indicating a higher level of the construct. A formal translation and back-translation record was not kept. This limitation is acknowledged below.

EL was measured with 10 items adapted from Li et al. (2020) and Renko et al. (2015). These items covered framing the challenge, absorbing uncertainty, clearing paths, building commitment, and specifying limits. Individual creativity was measured with nine items based on Amabile and Pratt (2016) and Fischer et al. (2019). These items assess the self-perceived ability to generate ideas, as well as the competence, relatedness, and autonomy conditions that support creative action.

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Sample items include "My leader encourages me to think creatively about challenges" and "I am capable of generating new ideas in my work." Tables 1 and 2 present the operationalization.

Work performance was measured using 10 items adapted from Çaliskan and Koroglu (2022) and De Jong and Den Hartog (2007). These items assess both task and contextual performance using wording related to innovation and fashion work. Examples include trying more effective approaches, implementing ideas, sharing improvements, supporting coworkers, and learning for innovation. One sample item is, "I complete tasks by trying more creative approaches." Table 3 presents the operationalization.

Information on gender, age, education, and job tenure was collected to describe the sample. These variables were not part of the hypothesized structural model. Since these variables were not relevant to the theoretical contribution of the study, the detailed demographic correlation table and its inferential interpretation were removed from the main text.

3.3 Analytical strategy

PLS-SEM was performed in SmartPLS 4 because the study estimates a prediction-oriented model with latent constructs and an indirect effect. The analysis proceeded in two stages. First, the reflective measurement model was assessed using standardized indicator loadings, Cronbach's alpha, rho_A, average variance extracted (AVE), indicator collinearity, and the Fornell-Larcker criterion. Second, the structural model was evaluated using path coefficients, 95% bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals, p-values, effect sizes, and R^2. Mediation was inferred when the bootstrapped indirect effect confidence interval excluded zero. The persistence of a significant direct effect was used to distinguish partial from full mediation.

Table 1
Operationalization of the Variable for Entrepreneurial Leadership

Item no.	Dimensions of entrepreneurial leadership	Statements	Source
EL1	Framing the challenge	My leader inspires me by explaining the vision and work goals.	Li et al. (2020), Renko et al. (2015)
EL2		My leader encourages me to think creatively about challenges.	
EL3	Absorbing uncertainty	My leader supports the team when facing risks.	
EL4		My leader can make important decisions under uncertain circumstances.	
EL5	Path clearing	My leader helps me overcome obstacles in my work.	
EL6	Building commitment	My leader actively removes obstacles that hinder innovation.	
EL7		My leader fosters a collaborative spirit within the team.	
EL8	Specifying limits	My leader motivates me to achieve more than I thought possible.	
EL9		My leader provides clear work rules that don't stifle creativity.	
EL10		My leader clearly communicates the team' dos and don'ts.	

Table 2
Operationalization of the Variable for Individual Creativity

Item no.	Dimensions of individual creativity	Statements	Source
IC 1	Needs for competence	I am capable of generating new ideas in my work.	Fischer et al. (2019)
IC 2		I have the skills to complete tasks creatively.	
IC 3		I am motivated to continuously improve my ability to create innovative solutions.	
IC 4	Needs for relatedness	I feel more creative when working in a supportive team.	
IC 5	Needs for autonomy	Positive interactions with coworkers encourage me to think more innovatively.	
IC 6		My work environment values my ideas.	
IC 7		I feel free to express my ideas without fear of negative judgment.	
IC 8		I have the flexibility to try new approaches to completing work.	
IC 9		I am more passionate when I am given the freedom to organize my work.	

Table 3
Operationalization of the Variable for Work Performance

Item no.	Dimensions of work performance	Statements	Source
IP 1	Task performance-innovation Integrated indicators	I complete tasks by trying more creative approaches.	Çaliskan and Koroglu (2022), de Jong and Den Hartog (2007)
IP 2		I actively seek new, more effective ways of working.	
IP 3		I enjoy trying new approaches when facing work problems.	
IP 4		I implement new ideas to improve work results.	
IP 5		My ideas bring positive change to the workplace.	
IP 6		I encourage my coworkers to try new approaches.	
IP 7		I share new ideas to improve team performance.	
IP 8	Contextual performance-innovation Integrated indicators	I actively foster an atmosphere that supports experimentation and learning.	
		I advocate for my ideas with colleagues and supervisors so they can be implemented.	
IP 9		I continually learn new things to promote innovation in the workplace.	
IP10			

Table 4
Summary of Standardized Loadings, Reliability, and Convergent Validity

Constructs	Outer loading (indicator)	AVE	VIF	α	rho_A
Entrepreneurial leadership	0.669 - 0.737	0.500	1.564 - 1.852	0.886	0.887
Individual creativity	0.739 - 0.819	0.608	1.941 - 2.425	0.919	0.923
Work performance	0.764 - 0.839	0.676	2.079 - 2.999	0.947	0.947

Source: Data processed in 2025

4 Analysis of results

4.1 Measurement model

Since the study employed PLS-SEM, the measurement evaluation was performed as a confirmatory analysis of the reflective measurement model instead of covariance-based confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Consequently, χ^2, CFI, TLI, and RMSEA were not considered primary criteria. All of the standardized loadings of the 29 indicators in the variables exceeded the threshold of 0.5. Therefore, no items were removed.

Table 4 summarizes the measurement results. The AVE values were .500 for EL, .608 for individual creativity (IC), and .676 for work performance (WP), meeting the .50 criterion for convergent validity. Cronbach's alpha ranged from .886 to .947, and rho_A ranged from .887 to .947, both exceeding the recommended .70 level. The indicator VIF values ranged from 1.564 to 2.999, which is below the 5.0 threshold, suggesting that collinearity among the indicators was not problematic (Hair et al., 2019; Sarstedt et al., 2022).

The Fornell-Larcker results are reported in Table 5. The diagonal values for WP (.822) and IC (.779) are higher than their respective correlations with the other constructs. However, the diagonal value for EL (.702) is lower than its correlation with WP (.815). This indicates a potential concern regarding discriminant validity between these constructs. Therefore, we avoid claiming unqualified discriminant validity and interpret the structural paths cautiously. The high association may partly reflect conceptual overlap between leadership ratings and innovation-oriented WP items. Future analyses should verify this issue using the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio, cross-loadings, and alternative measurement specifications.

4.2 Structural model and hypothesis testing

The structural model was assessed after the measurement model. Path coefficients, bias-corrected 95% bootstrap confidence intervals, p-values, f^2 values for direct paths, and R^2 were used to evaluate the hypotheses.

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The model explained 35.3% of the variance in IC and 72.7% of the variance in WP (Figure 2). Table 6 reports the direct and indirect effects. Since the direct effect of EL on WP remained significant after the mediator was included, the significant indirect effect was interpreted as partial mediation.

All direct paths were positive and statistically significant. EL predicted both WP (β = .632, p < .001, 95% CI [.524, .736]) and IC (β = .594, p < .001, 95% CI [.483, .673]), thus supporting H1 and H2. IC predicted WP (β = .309, p < .001, 95% CI [.178, .435]), thus supporting H3. The direct-path effect sizes were large for EL to WP (f^2 = .946) and for EL to IC (f^2 = .545) and medium for IC to WP (f^2 = .226).

The indirect effect of EL on WP through IC was positive and significant (β = .184, p < .001, 95% CI [.102, .265]), thus supporting H4. However, the magnitude of the indirect effect was small (reported effect size estimate = .033), and the direct path from EL to WP remained significant.

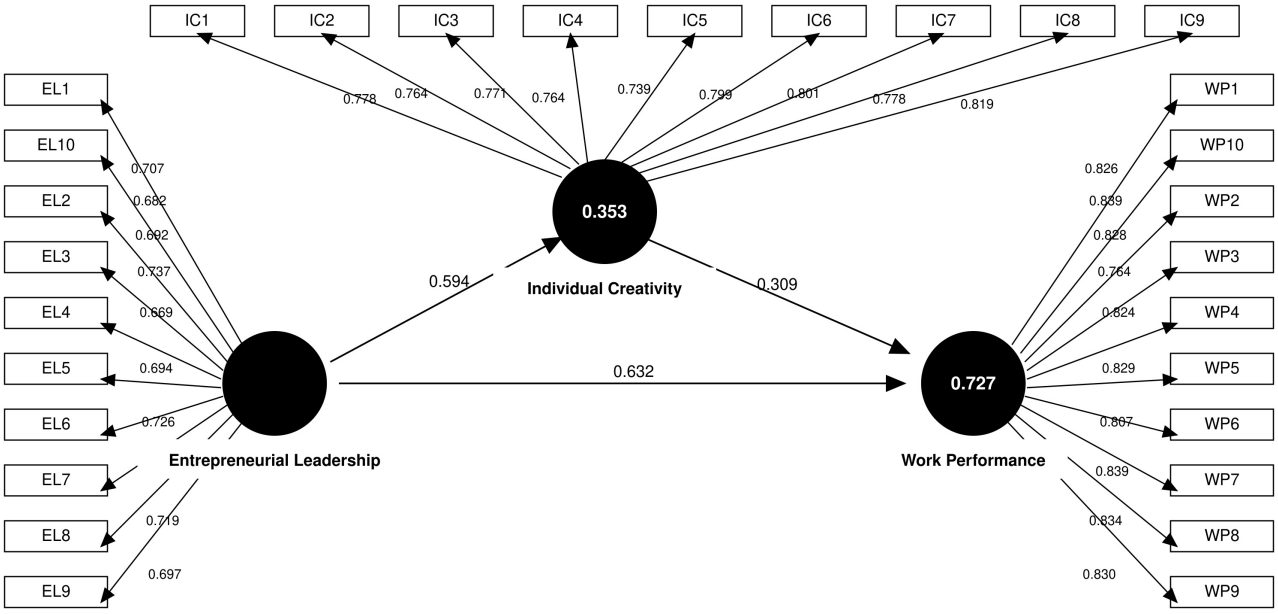


Figure 2. Structural model
Source: Data processed in 2025

Table 5
Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	Work performance	Entrepreneurial leadership	Individual creativity
Work performance	0.822		
Entrepreneurial leadership	0.815	0.702	
Individual creativity	0.594	0.684	0.779

Source: Data processed in 2025.

Table 6
Direct and Indirect Effects

Hypothesis	Path	Effect	β	p value	95% CI	Effect size	Decision
H1	EL → WP	Direct	.632	< .001	[.524, .736]	f^2 = .946 (large)	Supported
H2	EL → IC	Direct	.594	< .001	[.483, .673]	f^2 = .545 (large)	Supported
H3	IC → WP	Direct	.309	< .001	[.178, .435]	f^2 = .226 (medium)	Supported
H4	EL → IC → WP	Indirect	.184	< .001	[.102, .265]	.033 (small)	Supported; partial mediation

Source: Data processed in 2025.

Therefore, the result indicates complementary partial mediation rather than a dominant or substantial mediation effect. The total effect of EL on WP was .815. Creativity explains only a small portion of the relationship, leaving room for other mechanisms, such as psychological empowerment, creative self-efficacy, psychological safety, and knowledge sharing.

4.3 Discussion

The findings confirm the positive, direct relationships proposed in H1 and H2. These results align with previous studies indicating that entrepreneurial leaders enhance employee outcomes by clarifying opportunities, demonstrating proactive behavior, eliminating obstacles, and encouraging experimentation (Bagheri et al., 2022b; Mehmood et al., 2021; Yang & Bentein, 2023). In the present study, their value is primarily contextual and model-building rather than novel in isolation. In small fashion firms, close owner-manager involvement may make leadership cues especially visible. Employees can quickly observe which ideas receive attention, the level of risk tolerated, and whether resources are made available. This helps explain why EL was strongly related to both creativity and work performance.

H3 was also supported, indicating that employees who reported greater creativity also reported stronger work performance. In the fashion context, novel and useful ideas can affect core tasks and contextual contributions. Employees may improve designs, material use, production routines, customer responses, or marketing practices while sharing ideas and helping colleagues experiment. This interpretation aligns with componential creativity theory and with evidence linking creativity to problem-solving, adaptability, innovation, and performance (Carmeli et al., 2021; Cheng, 2024; Jiang et al., 2023). However, creativity should not automatically equate to performance. Ideas must still be feasible, supported, and implemented.

The main contribution relates to H4. Although creativity partially transmitted the positive effects of EL to work performance, the indirect effect was small, and the direct effect remained strong. Therefore, the finding should be interpreted as complementary partial mediation. Entrepreneurial leaders seem to enhance performance by strengthening their employees' creativity and motivation while operating through immediate channels, such as providing direction, coordination, access to resources, and accountability. This nuanced result differs from claims that creativity is the primary pathway. It also helps explain why studies using other mediators, such as empowerment, self-efficacy, psychological safety, and organizational factors (Bagheri et al., 2022a; Majooni & Nasiri, 2024; Nguyen et al., 2021), can obtain additional explanatory power. The small-firm, creative-industry, developing-country setting suggests that close leader influence can coexist with employee creativity, but is not replaced by it.

4.4 Theoretical implications

The study expands upon the componential theory of creativity by presenting EL as a contextual input that shapes employees' motivation and creativity-related processes. These processes then contribute to work performance. Additionally, it complements social cognitive theory by demonstrating that leader modeling and support are associated with not only creativity, but also a partial creativity-based pathway to performance. Theoretically, the key contribution is not the re-establishment of H1 or H2, but rather the simultaneous estimation of the direct and indirect paths, revealing that creativity is a significant yet limited mechanism. This boundary condition cautions against single-mediator explanations and encourages future models that compare creativity with empowerment, self-efficacy, psychological safety, and knowledge sharing.

4.5 Practical and policy implications

Small fashion firm owners and managers should translate EL into observable routines. Decisions regarding selection and promotion can assess opportunity recognition, tolerance for informed experimentation, constructive feedback, and the ability to remove work barriers. Training should include short opportunity-framing exercises, coaching conversations, and post-project reviews to distinguish productive experiments from avoidable errors. Managers can also implement low-cost mechanisms, such as weekly idea discussions, small test budgets, rapid feedback, cross-role problem-solving teams, and dedicated time for process improvement experimentation.

Creativity should be incorporated into performance management without replacing core task standards. Evaluation systems should recognize the usefulness, implementation, learning value, and knowledge-sharing of ideas, as well as support for coworkers. Since the indirect effect was minimal, organizations should not rely solely on creativity initiatives; they should combine these initiatives with clear goals, adequate resources, coordination, and accountability.

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Policymakers and SME support agencies can reinforce these practices through owner-manager development programs, creative industry clusters, mentoring, and small innovation grants that help firms test employee-generated improvements.

5 Conclusions

This study examined whether individual creativity helps explain the relationship between EL and work performance among 184 employees in 76 small fashion firms in Bandung, Indonesia. EL was positively related to creativity and work performance, and creativity was also positively related to work performance. While the indirect effect of EL on work performance through creativity was statistically significant but small, the direct effect of EL on work performance remained strong. Therefore, creativity functions as a complementary partial mediator rather than the dominant pathway.

The study's theoretical contribution lies in identifying a bounded, employee-level mechanism within a context of close owner-manager influence, resource constraints, and creativity-intensive work. The findings support both the componential and social cognitive explanations of creativity, while also indicating that EL likely operates through additional motivational, relational, and organizational mechanisms. Accordingly, the results should not be generalized beyond small Indonesian fashion firms without further evidence.

In practice, EL should be paired with concrete systems that give employees discretion, feedback, resources, and opportunities to test useful ideas. While creativity-related behaviors can be recognized in performance systems, they should complement, rather than substitute, task clarity, coordination, and accountability.

Several limitations qualify the findings. First, the cross-sectional design cannot establish temporal or causal order, so longitudinal or experimental studies are needed. Second, since all core variables were self-reported, associations may be inflated due to common-method and perceptual bias. Future studies should use supervisor ratings, objective indicators, or time-separated measures. Third, firms nominated employees who were considered high performers. This purposive selection process may introduce selection bias and range restriction. Future research should compare randomly selected lower-, average-, and higher-performing employees. Fourth, the sample is limited to one city, one country, and one creative industry subsector, which restricts external validity. Fifth, a formal translation and back-translation record was not retained, so future replications should document the linguistic and cultural adaptation process more fully. Sixth, the Fornell-Larcker result indicates potential overlap between EL and work performance. Future analysis should verify discriminant validity using HTMT, cross-loadings, and alternative measurement specifications. Finally, creativity is only one possible mediator. Comparative and multilevel models should examine psychological empowerment, self-efficacy, psychological safety, knowledge sharing, organizational culture, and firm-level conditions.

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SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

Supplementary material accompanies this paper.
Supplementary Data 1: Database and Codebook
Supplementary Data 2: Questionnaire

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