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Transformational Leadership, Digital Literacy, Propensity to Trust, and Creativity of MSMEs: Mediating Effects of Knowledge Sharing

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Abstract

Amid the burgeoning creative industries in Indonesia, a gap exists in comprehending the intricate connections between transformational leadership, digital literacy, trust, knowledge sharing, and employee creativity, underscoring the need for research to navigate these uncharted dimensions of fostering innovation. Data were collected from 235 women-led micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in the creative sector in West Java, Indonesia. The researchers utilized the structural equation modeling (SEM) technique to analyze the data. The results indicated that transformational leadership positively effect to employee creativity ($\beta = 0.25, p = 0.00$). Additionally, knowledge sharing acted as a mediator between transformational leadership and employee creativity ($\beta = 0.17, p = 0.00$). Similarly, knowledge sharing mediated the relationship between digital literacy and employee creativity ($\beta = 0.21, p = 0.02$). The study also found a positive association between propensity to trust and employee creativity ($\beta = 0.12, p = 0.03$), with knowledge sharing playing a mediating role ($\beta = 0.14, p = 0.01$). These insights hold significant implications for behavioral science. They underscore the pivotal roles played by transformational leadership, digital literacy, trust-building, and knowledge sharing in stimulating and nurturing employee creativity within the dynamic context of creative industries. Business leaders and managers can utilize these insights to guide the development of strategies that foster creativity and innovation within organizations.

In the rapidly evolving digital era, micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) face increasing challenges to remain competitive and innovative (Bagale et al., 2021). The digital age has transformed how MSMEs operate, interact with customers, and compete in the global market (Khamaludin et al., 2021). Supporting this, creativity among employees is recognized as a crucial driver for innovation and sustainable organizational performance (Awan et al., 2019; Ramdan et al., 2022). Employee creativity has become a vital element in the efforts of MSMEs to survive and thrive amidst fierce business competition and constantly changing customer preferences (Li et al., 2019; Muñoz-Pascual et al., 2021; Schenkel et al., 2019). Creative employees possess the ability to generate new ideas, identify novel opportunities, and find innovative solutions to the company's challenges (Chanana & Sangeeta, 2021; Elidemir et al., 2020). Moreover, at times, they must have the courage to try unconventional approaches to tasks, without fearing either success or failure (Khan & Mohiya, 2020). To achieve optimal levels of creativity, various relevant factors play a role in enhancing employee creativity.

One of the proven factors that enhance individual creativity is transformational leadership, particularly through inspirational behavior (Zhang et al., 2018). Transformational leaders empower employees, encourage motivation, and support innovative solutions within the organization (Afsar et al., 2019; Knezović & Drkić, 2021). Moreover, such leaders facilitate knowledge sharing, promote new ideas, and inspire creative thinking in problem-solving (Kim et al., 2022; Sha et al., 2020). It is important to note that this research focuses on transformational leadership. Women's leadership has been increasingly prominent across various fields (Schenkel et al., 2019), including MSMEs, but there is still a lack of comprehensive research investigating the specific impact of transformational leadership on employee creativity (Feranita et al., 2020). Women often bring unique and different leadership characteristics as compared to male leaders (Roberto et al., 2018). They are more adept at intellectual stimulation, individual consideration, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence (Bakr, 2021). Additionally, they tend to be more participative, focus on empowering team members, and promote an inclusive work culture (Allen et al., 2019). These traits have the potential to encourage employees to actively participate in decision-making processes, share ideas, and contribute to organizational innovation.

Digital literacy has become increasingly crucial at all levels of organizations because technology has become an integral part of daily life (Selcuk, 2019). Digital literacy is the key for employees to succeed in leveraging technology and digital resources, as well as contributing to organizational growth (Fulton & McGuinness, 2016). Previous research has found that digital literacy has a positive impact on employee creativity (Alt & Raichel, 2020; Korzynski & Paniagua, 2019). With good digital literacy, employees of MSMEs can access up-to-date information sources, communicate and collaborate more efficiently, and develop analytical thinking skills to identify market opportunities and trends (Wishnu et al., 2023). Additionally, digital literacy also helps employees create creative marketing content and adapt quickly to technological changes (Kozanoglu & Abedin, 2021). Therefore, digital literacy plays a role in opening new opportunities, enhancing competitiveness, and facing business challenges on a broader scale (Fauzi et al., 2020; Priyono & Moin, 2020).

Not only leadership and digital literacy, but the tendency to trust also plays a significant role in fostering a creative work environment (Chen et al., 2021). When employees feel trusted by their superiors, colleagues, and the owners or management of MSMEs, they are more likely to express creative and innovative ideas (Jaiswal & Dhar, 2017). Trust creates an open and supportive environment where employees feel valued and acknowledged for their contributions (Basit, 2017; Gustafsson et al., 2021). It also reduces fear of failure or excessive criticism, and it helps identify uncertainty and risks (Islam et al., 2022). Employees feel a greater sense of freedom to experiment and try new things without fear of punishment or being considered inadequate. This encourages them to dare to innovate and create something unique and different, leading to improved performance (Ogunmokun et al., 2020). Conversely, employees without trust will hesitate to propose new ideas if they fear being held accountable if those ideas fail or do not succeed (Islam et al., 2022).

Given the limited research on transformational leadership, digital literacy, knowledge sharing, trust, and employee creativity in MSMEs, and the varying results in different context (Bilal et al., 2021; Chen et al., 2021; Feranita et al., 2020; Islam et al., 2022), this study aims to develop relationships between transformational leadership, digital literacy, knowledge sharing, trust, and employee creativity in one research model, exploring the role of knowledge sharing as a mediating variable. Knowledge sharing (KS) is the process of exchanging information, experiences, and knowledge among individuals or groups within an organization (Kim & Park, 2020). Drawing on social exchange theory, employees engage in two-way reciprocal transactions, where there is an exchange between involved parties by giving and receiving something (Blau, 2017). In this case, the form of social exchange is knowledge sharing, where individuals share information and contribute to creating new knowledge (Islam et al., 2021). Employees with higher levels of KS are more enthusiastic in fostering creativity in their job tasks (Lee, 2022). Thus, the presence of transformational leadership promotes a culture of knowledge sharing, which, in turn, enhances employee

creativity. Employees with good digital literacy are more likely to share knowledge, contributing to increased creativity (Arafah & Hasyim, 2023; Donelle et al., 2021; Wu, 2018). Similarly, employees with a propensity to trust others are more likely to share knowledge, which impacts increased creativity, (Rutten et al., 2016; Sabahattin et al., 2022; Sabetzadeh & Chen, 2023). This study aimed to provide insights into enhancing creativity among MSMEs employees in the creative industry sector (fashion, crafts, design, and art) in West Java, Indonesia, offer strategic recommendations for improving innovation and competitiveness.

Literature Review

This section begins by reviewing the main theory used in this research, namely social exchange theory. After that related research is reviewed to develop hypotheses to explain how knowledge sharing can act as a mediator in the relationship between transformational leadership, digital literacy, and the tendency to trust employee creativity.

Theoretical Framework

This research focuses on the complex relationship among transformational leadership, digital literacy, propensity to trust, knowledge sharing, employee creativity within an MSMEs context, grounded in the *theory of social exchange*. In this theory, cost-benefit analysis is utilized to assess the risks and benefits of interactions (Blau, 2017). There is also an economic dimension involved, where cost-benefit analysis is applied when each party possesses items or aspects valued by the other party. The concept of *social exchange theory* indicates that such evaluation occurs in various types of relationships, including romantic relationships, friendships, professional connections, and even in simple day-to-day interactions, such as communicating with customers at a cashier's counter (McRay, 2015). According to the perspective of social exchange theory, if the costs invested in a relationship outweigh the rewards received, such as effort or resources put into the relationship without positive responses, the relationship could be at risk of being terminated or abandoned (Cook & Rice, 2006). In the context of this research, transformational leadership within an organization is expected to build strong bonds between leaders and subordinates, potentially enhancing the tendency of subordinates to share knowledge with leaders and vice versa. Proficiency in digital literacy can facilitate the exchange of information and knowledge through digital platforms, enabling subordinates to participate in knowledge-sharing activities with colleagues and superiors. A high level of trust among individuals within a team can facilitate the emergence of more open and effective knowledge exchange. The creativity of employees in small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) is influenced by various factors, including the exchange of ideas and perspectives among individuals with diverse knowledge backgrounds. Amidst these dynamics, the exchange of knowledge becomes a crucial mediator linking factors such as leadership, digital literacy, and the propensity to trust with employee creativity. By stimulating innovative thinking and facilitating stronger collaboration among individuals in the organization, the exchange of knowledge becomes a central element in this interaction sequence.

Transformational Leadership and Creativity

Women's transformational leadership refers to a style and approach to leadership demonstrated by women, emphasizing inspiring and empowering others to achieve positive change and growth in individuals and organizations (Jordi & Llorenç, 2017). Transformational leadership is a unique variation of transformational leadership that is typically influenced by characteristics often more pronounced in women than men (Roberto et al., 2018). This includes the ability to stimulate intellectually, pay attention to individuality, inspire with enthusiasm, and influence through ideal examples. This leadership style is evident in how they inspire and motivate followers to achieve more than self-interest and work towards a shared vision (Bilal et al., 2021). Women using transformational leadership often strive to build strong relationships, provide guidance and development to others, and create a supportive and inclusive work environment (Saint-michel & Saint-michel, 2018). In carrying out their tasks, female leaders exhibit natural characteristics similar to those of a mother, promoting transparency in communication, using adaptability

in relationships, and relying on trust (Sharif, 2019). Transformational leadership becomes an invaluable driving force in achieving extraordinary results, solidifying a strong and fully committed team foundation, and providing exceptional and unexpected returns on investment (Hentschel et al., 2018). Transformational leadership not only overcomes gender bias discrepancies (Saint-michel & Saint-michel, 2018) but with unmatched courage, they shake the foundations and traditional expectations, proving themselves as revolutionary change agents, empowering the entire organization towards unprecedented achievements, and paving the way for an innovative and advanced future (Dappa et al., 2019).

Women leaders with a transformational leadership style tend to create an environment that psychologically empowers employees and enhances employee creativity (Kim et al., 2019). This resonates with the principles of social exchange theory, which posit that leaders who exhibit transformational qualities establish a reciprocal relationship with their subordinates. In social exchange theory, individuals engage in relationships based on the expectation of receiving benefits in return for their contributions. When women leaders provide inspiration, support, and a trusting environment, they are effectively contributing valuable resources to their employees in the form of psychological empowerment and motivation. Employee creativity, as defined by Sawyer (2012), aligns with social exchange theory by emphasizing the individual's capacity to generate novel and valuable ideas. In the context of social exchange, employees are more likely to reciprocate the positive benefits provided by transformational leaders by channeling their creativity and innovative thinking into their work. This can be seen as a form of "exchange" where the leader's support and empowerment lead to enhanced employee creativity, creating a mutually beneficial relationship. Furthermore, the relationship between employee creativity and an organization's competitiveness and productivity, as highlighted by Lv et al. (2021) and Amosun (2023), is also consistent with social exchange theory. Social exchange theory recognizes that individuals engage in relationships and exchanges that offer them personal benefits. In an organizational context, employees are motivated to contribute their creative ideas and innovative solutions when they perceive that doing so benefits both themselves and the organization. In this way, social exchange theory helps explain why employee creativity is crucial for organizational achievement. In summary, the relationship between transformational leadership, employee creativity, and organizational outcomes can be understood through the lens of social exchange theory. Transformational leaders provide valuable resources and support to their employees, fostering a reciprocal relationship where employees contribute their creativity in return. This exchange of resources and contributions ultimately contributes to organizational competitiveness and success. Based on the above review, it can be hypothesized:

H1: Transformational leadership is positively related to creativity.

Knowledge Sharing, Transformational Leadership and Employee Creativity

Knowledge sharing (KS) can be defined as the process in which members of an organization mutually exchange information and valuable expertise (Valio & Gonzalez, 2017). This process impacts how teams learn within the organization (Montani et al., 2020). The shared information can be explicit, such as documents or procedures, or tacit, derived from experience (Maravilhas & Martins, 2019). The primary goal is to avoid information silos and ensure easy access to critical knowledge (Behr et al., 2022). Through knowledge sharing, organizations achieve deeper understanding, strengthen bonds, and develop employees' leadership skills (Haesebrouck et al., 2021). This process is also related to the transfer of knowledge from departing employees to those who remain. Knowledge sharing is an integral part of knowledge management, which involves capturing, organizing, and accessing knowledge (Ng, 2020). Organizations use knowledge management systems to support these activities (Rohman et al., 2020). The main challenge lies in effectively transferring knowledge from one entity to another (Kmieciak, 2020). Therefore, organizations create an environment that fosters open communication and encourages healthy exchange of ideas to facilitate a smooth knowledge sharing process.

This research proposed knowledge sharing as a mediating variable in the relationship between transformational leadership and creativity with various supporting reasons. Transformational leadership

plays a crucial role in enhancing employee creativity (Khurosani, 2018) through knowledge sharing (Chaman et al., 2021). This leadership style inspires and motivates employees to reach their full potential and go beyond personal interests (Kim et al., 2019). Transformational leadership has been proven to positively impact employees' willingness to share knowledge (Chaman et al., 2021). Knowledge sharing is an essential process within organizations, as it enables the exchange of ideas, information, expertise, and advice among individuals (Zhang et al., 2019). With transformational leadership behavior, female leaders can create a culture of knowledge sharing within their teams, ultimately enhancing employee creativity (Liu & Li, 2018). It is crucial to establish a work environment that encourages open communication, collaboration, and sharing of ideas and expertise (Amosun, 2023). By promoting knowledge sharing, women leaders can contribute to improving employee creativity and positively influencing organizational success (Kim et al., 2019). Based on the references and arguments presented, the second hypothesis of this research is:

H2: Knowledge sharing mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and employee creativity.

Knowledge Sharing, Digital Literacy, and Employee Creativity

Digital literacy refers to an individual's ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information (Spires et al., 2019). It encompasses cognitive and technical skills in utilizing technology to generate, assess, and share information (Techataweewan & Prasertsin, 2018). In organizations, digital literacy is crucial for employees to effectively utilize technology and access digital resources, which contributes to the company's growth (Ojobo et al., 2023). In the current technology-based economic era, digital literacy has become essential for individuals and organizations to succeed (Gautam et al., 2022). Digital literacy also holds significant benefits in business decision-making by analyzing data on consumer behavior, market trends, and other factors (Katsikeas et al., 2019). Moreover, it facilitates effective communication and collaboration through digital tools and platforms, which are essential in remote work and virtual team collaborations (Prior et al., 2016). Challenges in digital literacy include access to technology, lack of training, and motivation (Hassan & Mirza, 2021). To enhance digital literacy, training and education on digital tools and platforms are required, as well as providing access to the necessary technology and infrastructure (Statti & Torres, 2020). With this approach, individuals and organizations can foster a culture that encourages the development of digital literacy, supporting progress in the technology-based economy (Uri et al., 2018).

In the current digital era, digital literacy has become a key factor in developing employee creativity (Widana et al., 2020). With the rapid advancement of technology, organizations need employees who can adapt smoothly and leverage various digital tools and platforms to enhance their creative potential (Khan et al., 2022). Although many employees may have a high level of digital literacy individually, there is often a gap in their ability to integrate this digital literacy into the workgroup (Ahmed & Sigamony, 2020). Employee creativity, which is a valuable asset for organizations (Ding et al., 2019), is often influenced by social interactions, idea exploration, and team collaboration. Strong digital literacy may not directly lead to creativity (Chen et al., 2021; Kesici, 2022). Therefore, knowledge sharing emerges as a crucial factor in connecting digital literacy with employee creativity. Employees may possess strong digital literacy (Mohd et al., 2019), but they may not know how to apply their digital knowledge in creative practices or lack effective communication skills to articulate creative ideas. Knowledge sharing plays an essential role in transferring knowledge (Lugar & Novićević, 2021), enhancing mutual understanding, and helping employees collectively comprehend how their digital literacy can be harnessed to generate productive creative ideas throughout the organization. Thus, knowledge sharing functions as an indispensable bridge and intermediary that enables the creative potential embedded in digital literacy to flourish through collaboration, knowledge integration, and the exchange of ideas in a dynamic work environment. In addition, a better understanding of digital literacy enables employees to be more skilled in using, analyzing, and leveraging information from digital, it can be hypothesized:

H3: Knowledge Sharing mediates the relationship between digital literacy and employee creativity.

Knowledge Sharing, Propensity to Trust and Employee Creativity

Propensity to trust refers to an individual's inclination to trust others in general, based on the belief that these individuals have the ability and willingness to behave fairly and honestly (Schoorman et al., 2007). When employees have trust in their coworkers and superiors, it encourages them to share, adhere to ethical standards, take risks, and be proactive (Ogunmokun et al., 2020; Ouakouak & Ouedraogo, 2017). With a high level of trust, employees will feel more confident in their creative abilities, ultimately leading to higher levels of creativity. Studies also indicate that trust plays a vital role in fostering innovative ideas (Kmieciak, 2020; Radaelli et al., 2014). Therefore, when employees have trust in the organization, their coworkers, and their leaders, and the organization promotes the flow of information and knowledge sharing, employees are more motivated to create innovative solutions in providing services within the organizational setting (Ogunmokun et al., 2020).

Previous studies have shown a positive relationship between trust and creativity (Khassawneh et al., 2022). Higher levels of cognitive and affective trust in individuals are associated with higher levels of creativity (Chen et al., 2021). Trust creates an environment that encourages risk-taking and sharing non-conventional ideas. When someone trusts their coworkers and superiors, they feel free to voice unique perspectives and provide innovative ideas without fear of rejection or criticism (Kmieciak, 2020). Trust allows individuals to step out of their comfort zones and explore new possibilities, resulting in the generation of creative and novel solutions (Dovey, 2009). To the previous hypotheses, Knowledge Sharing is proposed as a mediating variable to mediate the relationship between trust and creativity. Employees who tend to trust others will be more open to sharing knowledge and ideas, which can stimulate their creativity. With active knowledge sharing, employees can access relevant and diverse information, which assists in generating creative ideas and innovative solutions in the workplace. Based on this background, the following hypotheses are proposed:

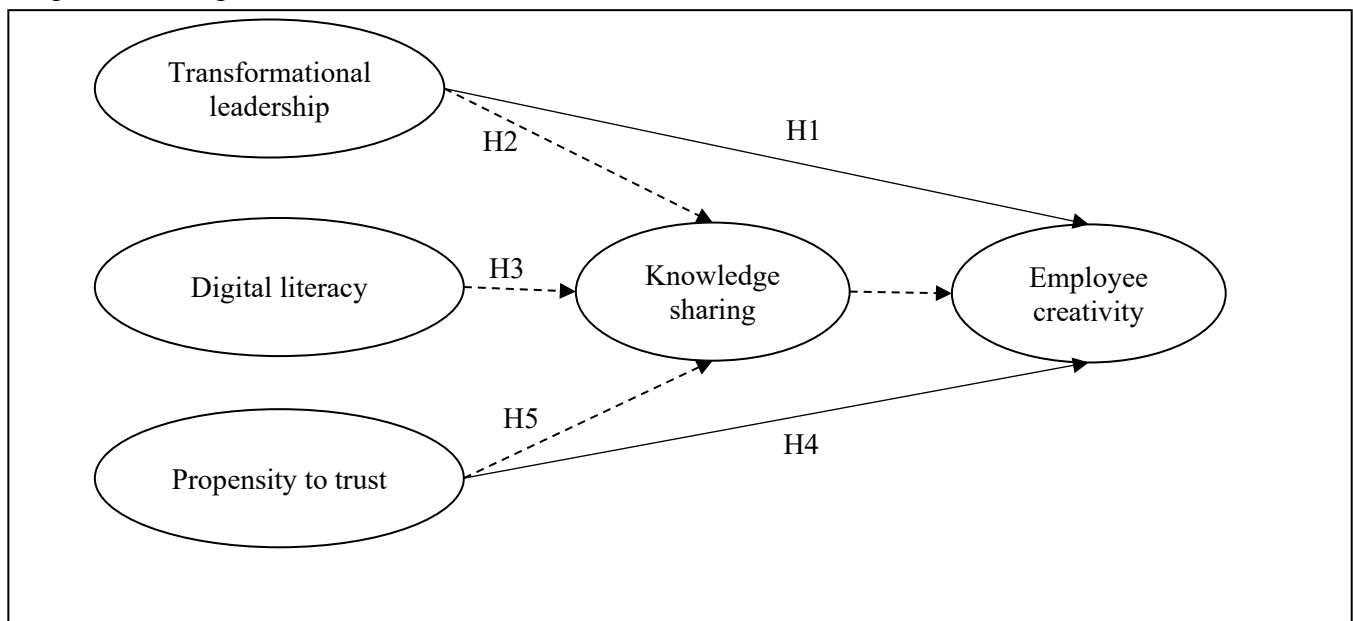
H4: Propensity to trust is positively related to employee creativity.

H5: Knowledge sharing mediates the relationship between propensity to trust and employee creativity.

Through an overview of the basic theories and the proposed hypotheses about the relationship between, knowledge sharing, propensity to trust, transformational leadership, digital literacy and employee creativity the authors propose the conceptual research model shown in figure 1.

Figure 1

Proposed Conceptual Framework



Method

Participants

Data were collected from 235 women-led MSMEs, operating in the creative industries (fashion, crafts, design, and art). Focusing on companies in the fashion, handicrafts, design, and art sectors has strong justification. These areas naturally revolve around creativity, innovation, and self-expression, making research on creativity and digital literacy in these industries highly relevant (Kim et al., 2019). Accidental sampling constitutes a form of nonprobability sampling where individuals from the intended study population fulfill specific criteria, such as being easily accessible, geographically proximate, available at a designated time, or willing to participate in alignment with the research goals (Etikan et al., 2017). Data collection was conducted through offline distribution of questionnaires to the respondents from May 2023 to June 2023. This study utilized and modified the instrument according to five constructs, the transformational leadership, digital literacy, propensity to trust, knowledge sharing, employee creativity. The survey instrument was designed to capture employee demographic information and data about the variables studied. A total of 221 questionnaires were returned, but not all of them could be included in the analysis due to damaged answer sheets and incomplete responses. Eventually, 203 questionnaires were deemed suitable for further analysis and subsequent stages. Demographic data of the respondents is given in Table 1.

Instruments

The research utilized established scales from prior studies. The assessment of transformational leadership was conducted using a set of five statements (Gong, 2009). Participants were requested to rate the extent to which the statements accurately reflected their immediate supervisors on a scale from 1 (indicating strongly disagree) to 7 (indicating 'strongly agree'). For instance, one of the questionnaire items was, "My supervisor actively seeks different viewpoints when addressing problems". To assess digital literacy, (Ng, 2012) employed a nine-item scale specifically designed for this purpose. An Example statement was, "I stay abreast of significant advancements in new technologies". Propensity to trust was measured using seven questions from Yamagishi and Yamagishi (1994). An example questionnaire item was, "I almost always trust what others say". Meanwhile, employee creativity was measured using a 3-item questionnaire from Oldham and Cummings (1996). An example statement was, "I feel that I possess a high level of creativity in my work". Finally, knowledge sharing was assessed using six questions adapted from Lee, (2016). An example question was, "Colleagues in our department offer vital knowledge to address task-related issues".

To ensure that the model met the predetermined standards, an evaluation of the data's validity and reliability was conducted. Regarding validity, p-value significance 0.00-0.05, following the guidelines provided by Hair et al. (2013). For reliability, if the Cronbach's alpha value is > 0.70 then the questionnaire or questionnaire is declared reliable or consistent. Meanwhile, if the Cronbach's alpha value is < 0.70 then the questionnaire or questionnaire is declared unreliable or inconsistent., in accordance with Hair et al. (2013). The results of this evaluation can be observed in Table 2.

Ethical Considerations

This research was reviewed and approved by the Research Institutions and Community Service Ethics Committee of Buana Perjuangan University, Karawang on April 2023, with reference number 470/LPPM/VII/2023.

Results

Sample Description

Table 1 shows the information about the research participants. The largest group of respondents falls within the age range of 17-25 years, comprising 40.39%. The majority of employees are male, accounting for 52.71% of the total, and the highest number of participants have work experience between 1-5 years, constituting 41.87%.

Table 1

Characteristics of the Respondents

Demographics	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Age	17-25 year	82	40.39
	26-40 year	78	38.43
	>41 year	43	21.18
Gender	Male	107	52.71
	Female	96	47.29
Length of work (in years)	1-5	85	41.87
	6-10	76	37.44
	11-15	42	20.69

The data were analyzed using SPSS AMOS Program Version 23. The initial stage of this research involved testing the average variance extracted (AVE), followed by assessing construct validity and composite reliability (CR). The standard reliability coefficient was higher than .70, a value that is considered adequate (Hair et al., 2013). The AVE values for all variables were higher than .50, confirming their reliability. Model goodness-of-fit was checked using several parameters, including chi-square (χ^2), degrees of freedom (df), chi-square/degrees of freedom ratio (χ^2/df), normed fit index (NFI), comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker Lewis Index (TLI), and root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA).

The Measurement Model

The results of the reliability and validity tests as well as model fit are presented in the Table 2 and Table 3.

Table 2

Reliability and Validity Analysis

Construct	Items	Standardized Loading	CR	Cronbach's Alpha	AVE
Transformational leadership	5	.75-.87	.82	.87	.78
Propensity to trust	7	.76-.86	.79	.83	.81
Digital literacy	9				
Employee creativity	3	.73-.86	.81	.85	.79
Knowledge sharing	6	.77-.85	.83	.88	.76

The findings showed that transformational leadership, propensity to trust, digital literacy, employee creativity and knowledge sharing had a CR higher than .70, providing good reliability. In terms of

convergence validity, all constructs had an average variance extracted (AVE) greater than .50, which met the criteria for convergence validity. The results of the CFA indicated that all 30 items had factor loadings above .50, thus confirming convergent validity for all latent variables. Based on results shown in Table 3, it can be concluded that the research model is a good fit.

Table 3
The Measurement Model

Relevant Statistics	Cut-Off Value	Result	Interpretation
CMIN/DF	< 3	2.30	Good Fit
GFI/Goodness of Fit Index	> .90	.92	Good Fit
RMSEA/Root mean square error of approximation	< .06	.04	Good Fit
TLI (Tucker index)	≥ .90	.91	Good Fit
NFI/Normal Fit Index	> .90	.91	Good Fit

Hypotheses Testing

The final stage in this research was testing the hypothesized relationships among the variables. The results are reported in Table 4.

Table 4
Regression Analysis

Relationship	β	p -value	Hypothesis Result
Transformational leadership is positively related to employee creativity	.25	.00	H1: Supported
Knowledge sharing mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and employee creativity	.17	.00	H2: Supported
Knowledge sharing mediates the relationship between digital literacy and employee creativity.	.21	.02	H3: Supported
Propensity to trust is positively related to Employee creativity	.12	.03	H4: Supported
Knowledge sharing mediates the relationship between propensity to trust and employee creativity	.14	.01	H5: Supported

As shown in Table 4, the first hypothesis (H1) is supported. This means that transformational leadership is positively related to employee creativity ($\beta = 0.25, p = 0.00$). These results indicate a significant positive relationship leadership and employee creativity. Knowledge sharing mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and employee creativity ($\beta = .17, p = .00$). This suggests that knowledge sharing plays a role as a mediator in the relationship between transformational leadership and employee creativity, and this hypothesis is supported by the data. The third hypothesis (H3) is also supported, meaning that knowledge sharing also mediates the relationship between digital literacy and employee creativity ($\beta = .21, p = .02$). This indicates that knowledge sharing also acts as a mediator in the relationship between digital literacy and employee creativity.

The fourth finding (H4) is supported, indicating that propensity to trust is positively related to employee creativity ($\beta = .12, p = .03$). These results demonstrate a significant positive relationship between propensity to trust and employee creativity. Finally, knowledge sharing also mediates the relationship

between propensity to trust and employee creativity ($\beta = .14, p = .01$). This indicates that knowledge sharing plays a role as a mediator in the relationship between propensity to trust and employee creativity, and this hypothesis is supported by the data.

Discussion and Conclusion

This research seeks to establish connections among transformational leadership, digital literacy, knowledge sharing, trust, and employee creativity within a single research framework, with a focus on investigating how knowledge sharing acts as a mediating factor. The first finding (H1) of this research is supported, indicating that transformational leadership is positively related to employee creativity. The presence of transformational leadership enhances the creativity of MSME employees. This study strengthens previous research that found employees working under female leadership experience increased trust and connectivity with their leaders (Kim et al., 2019). This positively affects employee creativity (Bilal et al., 2021). Employees feel more motivated to contribute with their creative ideas because they feel supported and recognized for their contributions (Hansbrough & Schyns, 2018). This enables them to express new ideas with confidence, without fear of obstacles or negative judgments (Dong et al., 2017). It is important to remember that employee creativity contributes to the development and innovation of MSMEs (Bilal et al., 2021). Thus, promoting transformational leadership by women in the MSMEs environment plays a crucial role in enhancing creativity and overall organizational performance.

The second finding (H2) is also supported, indicating that knowledge sharing is proven to mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and employee creativity. This research aligns with previous studies that successfully demonstrated when female leaders exhibit inspiring and motivating leadership behaviors towards their teams (Asad et al., 2021), it encourages knowledge sharing among employees (Liu & Li, 2018; Son et al., 2020). The outcomes of knowledge sharing enable leaders to encourage and empower employees to think creatively, share new ideas, and innovate in various aspects of MSMEs (Khassawneh et al., 2022), thereby enhancing overall creativity and performance of the businesses (De Clercq & Pereira, 2020). This finding emphasizes the importance of transformational leadership in creating an environment that supports knowledge exchange and collaboration, ultimately leading to increased creativity among employees.

The third finding (H3) is in line with expectations, as the hypothesis is supported. It is evident that Knowledge Sharing mediates the relationship between Digital literacy and Employee creativity. Knowledge sharing acts as a link between digital literacy and employee creativity, facilitating the transfer of knowledge and ideas that ultimately stimulate creative thinking within the organization. The process of exchanging information, insights, and expertise among individuals or groups within an organization is known as knowledge sharing, which plays a crucial role in stimulating employee creativity (Al-kurdi et al., 2020). On the other hand, digital literacy refers to an individual's ability to effectively use technology and digital tools for various purposes (Kozanoglu & Abedin, 2021). Several studies indicate that knowledge sharing acts as a mediator between digital literacy and employee creativity. For instance, research by Kaeophanuek et al. (2018) found that digital literacy has a positive influence on knowledge sharing, which, in turn, enhances employee creativity (Khassawneh et al., 2022). This study highlights the importance of knowledge sharing as a mediator that facilitates the relationship between digital literacy and employee creativity. In other words, knowledge sharing functions as a link between digital literacy and employee creativity, facilitating the transfer of knowledge and ideas that ultimately stimulate creative and innovative thinking within the organization.

The next finding (H4) is supported, indicating that propensity to trust is positively related to employee creativity in MSMEs. This result is consistent with previous research conducted by (Khassawneh et al., 2022). Trust creates a caring atmosphere that inspires employees to carry out their tasks diligently (Islam et al., 2022). Employees who tend to trust each other feel more liberated, thus fostering the

emergence of new ideas and reducing potential conflicts, which can lead to higher levels of creativity (Kmieciak, 2020). Trust can also enhance commitment among employees, superiors, and the organization (Chen et al., 2021). Conversely, low trust can be exploited by opportunistic partners engaging in "freeriding," which can reduce commitment levels (Chen et al., 2021). Ultimately, increasing Propensity to trust among MSMEs employees has a significantly positive impact on productivity and innovation within the business. Therefore, it is crucial to pay attention to and focus on the development and strengthening of Propensity to trust to encourage continuous creativity and innovation within MSMEs.

The final finding (H5), like the previous findings, supports the proposed hypothesis. It is evident that knowledge sharing mediates the relationship between propensity to trust and employee creativity in SMEs. In a study on knowledge management (Ogunmokun et al., 2020), it was found that the inclination to trust can significantly impact employee creativity through knowledge sharing behavior (Kmieciak, 2020). To elaborate further, when employees have a high level of trust in their coworkers and the organization, they are more likely to actively engage in knowledge sharing (Mustika & Eliyana, 2022). This sharing of knowledge, in turn, plays a crucial role in enhancing creativity as it allows access to various perspectives, ideas, and information from colleagues (Lussier et al., 2017). As a result, employees tend to generate innovative thinking and find effective ways to solve problems.

Limitations

This research is not without limitations. The first limitation is related to the adoption of a cross-sectional design to collect data directly from employees. This approach may raise concerns regarding the generalizability of the research findings since people's opinions tend to change over time (Khan et al., 2020). Therefore, future researchers should consider using a longitudinal approach that allows for a more in-depth and detailed understanding of changes over time. The second limitation is that this study focuses on transformational leadership, knowledge sharing, propensity to trust, and digital literacy to enhance creativity. Future researchers can enhance the model's validity by incorporating additional mediators and moderators. Furthermore, it is important to replicate this study in locations or countries with different power distance cultures from Indonesia to evaluate whether the results can be applied more broadly in various cultural contexts.

Implications for Behavioral Science

In the context of Micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in Indonesia, these findings have significant implications for behavioral science. Firstly, strengthening transformational leadership among MSME owners or leaders can stimulate team creativity, aid MSMEs in adapting to market changes, and promote faster growth (Afriyie & Musah, 2019; Anwar & Abadi, 2023). Secondly, improving digital literacy within MSMEs can enable them to leverage modern technology for operational efficiency and expansion into online markets (Kurniasari et al., 2023). This can be achieved through employee and owner training programs (Tahalele et al., 2021). Thirdly, building trust among team members, customers, and business partners within MSMEs can foster creative ideas and strengthen business relationships (Han & Trimi, 2022). This necessitates open communication and collaboration reinforced by knowledge-sharing practices (Kipkosgei et al., 2020). In all cases, behavioral science can be employed to design training programs, leadership strategies, and cultural initiatives that support growth, adaptation, and innovation within MSMEs.

Conclusion

All five proposed hypotheses are supported, confirming that the results of this study underscore the importance of transformational leadership and knowledge sharing in fostering a creative and innovative environment specifically within micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). By prioritizing digital literacy and nurturing trust among employees, MSMEs can cultivate an environment conducive to sustainable business development and innovation. The presence of high trust and collaboration among MSMEs employees, combined with access to diverse knowledge and perspectives through knowledge

sharing, can be pivotal in achieving heightened creativity and enhancing the overall performance of the organization. These findings highlight the critical role of leadership, knowledge exchange, and digital proficiency in promoting creativity and innovation within MSMEs, ultimately contributing to their growth and success.

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