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# Enhancing employee's contextual performance based on interpersonal skills and creativity

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## **ABSTRACT**

Employees' performance is incredible impact on the organizations, includes increase organizational effectiveness, productivity, growth, and performance. Therefore, this study focuses on investigating the effect of interpersonal skills on creativity and contextual performance, creativity on contextual performance, and finding the role of creativity in mediating interpersonal skills affects contextual performance. A questionnaire on the Likert scale collected data through the survey methods from 250 employees of companies in Indonesia. Data analysis uses path analysis completed by descriptive and correlational analysis. Data processing was carried out using SPSS 22 and LisRel 8.80. The results indicated that interpersonal skills significantly affect creativity and contextual performance; creativity significantly affects contextual performance, and interpersonal skills significantly affect contextual performance mediated by creativity. This study confirms a new empirical model regarding the mediating effect of interpersonal skill creativity on employee contextual performance that deserves discussion by researchers and practitioners before being adapted or adopted.



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# Introduction

Employees' performance is always attractive because of their incredible impact on the organizations. Tahsildari and Shahnaei's study (2015) shows that employee performance is proven to increase organizational effectiveness. Raza et al. (2014) also claim that employee performance can increase organizational productivity. Other studies indicated that employee performance is an essential predictor of organizational growth (Vosloban, 2012). Moreover, employee performance also impacts organizational performance (Fahmi et al., 2019). Conceptually, performance refers to a set of work behaviors that are specifically dedicated to achieving organizational goals (Colquitt et al., 2019). Therefore, performance includes behavior that makes a positive contribution to organizational effectiveness, which is commonly called contextual performance. It is a predisposition for the realization of task performance (Aguinis, 2018). According to Dongrey and Rokade (2022), contextual performance is not directly related to core tasks but helps achieve organizational performance. Contextual performance constructs reflect employees' willingness to work outside formal job description activities (Chin & Yusoff, 2017; Bilal et al., 2021) but ignificantly impacting organizational, social, and psychological contexts. According to Dongrey and Rokade (2022), contextual performance as an employee's behavioral response to equality in diversity practices can help reinforce employees' positive views of workforce diversity and supportive behavior toward the organization that positive contribution to employee's personal and organizational lives better. Le Sante et al. (2021) identified two aspects of contextual performance: work dedication and interpersonal facilitation. Work dedication reflects discipline, enthusiasm, and seeking additional assignments; interpersonal facilitation is related to praising, comforting, and supporting others (Van Scotter & Motowidlo, 1996). Aguinis (2018) mentions several specific characteristics that can be used as indicators for measuring contextual performance, such as enthusiasm accompanied by extra-effort to complete tasks successfully; voluntarily carry out tasks outside the job description; cooperate and help colleagues; comply with organizational rules and procedures; and defend, support, and realize organizationals' goals. These indicators are really needed by companies, especially in abnormal conditions, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic. Indonesia's economic growth experienced a drastic setback during the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2019, Indonesia's economic growth was 5.02%, and a year later (2020) it fell to -2.07%. The study of Susilawati et al. (2020) shows that the COVID-19 pandemic has seriously impacted the Indonesian economy. The performance of the national banking system as the driving force for the national economy also suffered a similar fate. In 2019, the return on assets as a performance indicator for commercial banks was 2.47%; in 2020, it decreased to 1.59%. Recovery business after the COVID-19 pandemic is not enough to be carried out in normal ways but requires extra efforts from employees, such as voluntarily carrying out additional unusual activities to help the company recover quickly. Therefore, it is crucial and urgent to know the contextual performance of company employees from the perspective of interpersonal skills and creativity. The research results of Suci et al. (2022) proved that interpersonal skills affect performance, while the study by Suryanto et al. (2021) demonstrated that creativity positively impacts performance. In addition, Wu et al. (2022) claim that interpersonal interaction as part of interpersonal skills has a significant relationship with creative performance. However, previous studies have suggested the opposite fact that creativity actually influences interpersonal skills (Blissett & McGrath, 1996). The inconsistency of the results of this study creates a research gap that requires scientific clarification. Based on this urgency, this study focuses on investigating the effect of interpersonal skills on creativity and contextual performance, creativity affects contextual performance, and finds the mediating role of creativity on the effect of interpersonal skills on contextual performance.

# **Interpersonal Skills and Contextual Performance**

The existence of contextual performance, among others, is influenced by interpersonal skills. A prior study indicated that interpersonal skills affect performance (Abdurrahman, 2018; Syahrudin, 2018; Widjaja & Saragih, 2018; Rahim et al., 2020; Suci et al., 2022). Interpersonal skills is verbal and nonverbal communication skills and competence in establishing social relationships with others (Febrianita & Hardiati, 2019). Interpersonal skills are part of soft skills seen in teamwork, communication, and the ability to overcome various problems (Chamorro-Premuzic et al., 2010). Perreault (2004) explains that interpersonal skills reflect personal qualities, attributes, or commitments that differentiate them from others. Interpersonal skills include several elements, namely attitudes, personality, abilities, and communication skills, as well as the values adopted by a person referring to ways of thinking, acting, and empathizing (Littauer, 2006). Maripaz (2012) states that interpersonal skills can determine a person's capacity to develop caring and productive relationships. These skills cover four areas: self-disclosure and mutual trust, communicating appropriately, resolving conflicts and problems constructively, and encouraging and respecting diversity. Interpersonal skills can be measured by using the taxonomy of interpersonal skills includes (1) listen enthusiastically, (2) manage views carefully, (3) receive and share knowledge, (4) negotiate intelligently, (5) understand dynamics and collaboration in groups, (6) communicate effectively, and (7) empathic and motivated to move forward (Candy et al., 1994; Birkett, 1993). When these indicators of interpersonal skills are in adequate condition can drive employees' contextual performance. For example, an employee with a high understanding of group dynamics and collaboration with colleagues tends to help and cooperate with others, endorsing, supporting, and defending company objectives. Likewise, employees who have empathy and motivate other employees highly will also tend to voluntarily carry out activities outside of their formal duties – which is needed by the company during less normal conditions after the crisis. Therefore, it can promote the first hypothesis (H):

H<sub>1</sub>: Interpersonal skills directly affect employees' contextual performance.

# Creativity and Contextual Performance

Contextual performance is also affected by creativity. Scholars claim creativity influences performance (Rohmaniyah & Nurhayati, 2017; Kaveski & Beuren, 2020; Suryanto et al., 2021). However, specifically, research regarding creativity's effect on contextual performance is limited, so needed essential for an investigation. Nowadays, creativity is increasingly popular because its existence is an important pillar for multilevel competition (Widodo & Gunawan, 2021). Conceptually, creativity is the capability of reformulating new information, building new concepts, or creating original ideas (Carter, 2014). In the work context, creativity reflects the capacity of employees to create new ideas or ways, including the adoption of new technologies or new procedures to achieve better work results (Miao & Cao, 2019). According to Huang et al. (2020), creativity is a multidimensional construct, including cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions. That is, creativity

can occur in the cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains. Thus, it includes spontaneous and imaginative mindsets or ideas that result in new discoveries and creations (Sudjarwo et al., 2019). Furthermore, its format can be in the form of associations, incremental, radical, divergent thinking, and new pattern recognition (Bessant & Tidd, 2018). Empirically, employee creativity influences business profitability (Chen et al., 2021). Besides, increased employee creativity leads to enhanced production at work (Arokiasamy et al., 2022). In an educational context, teacher creativity enhances students' creativity (Machali et al., 2021). Therefore, creativity is crucial for companies, especially when facing business situations that are not yet normal after the COVID-19 pandemic or facing competition in an increasingly massive and full of uncertain future. Theoretically, employees' creativity can be measured through five indicators: fluency, flexibility, originality, elaboration, and redefinition (Guilford, 1950; Widodo & Gunawan, 2021). When these indicators in a high level can stimulate employees' contextual performance. For instance, employees with a high level of flexibility and elaboration will tend to follow organizational rules and procedures more easily. Accordingly, it can formulate the second hypothesis:

H<sub>2</sub>: Creativity directly affect employees' contextual performance.

## **Interpersonal Skills and Creativity**

In addition to affecting contextual performance, creativity is also related to interpersonal skills. Although no studies have been found that specifically investigate the effect of interpersonal skills on creativity, there are similar research results. Study Zhu et al. (2019) indicated that interpersonal selection is related to creative ideas, while Wu et al. (2022) demonstrated that interpersonal interaction affects creative performance. It confirms that interpersonal skills are an antecedent of creativity. When indicators of interpersonal skills are in good condition, it can drive employees' creativity. As an illustration, employees who can manage their views carefully and easily receive and share knowledge tend to elaborate and redefine something new quickly. Hence, can following the third hypothesis:

H<sub>3</sub>: Interpersonal skills directly affect employees' creativity.

#### **Mediation Effect of Creativity**

Several prior studies above indicate that interpersonal skills affect creativity (Zhu et al., 2019; Wu et al., 2022), then creativity influences contextual performance (Rohmaniyah & Nurhayati, 2017; Kaveski & Beuren, 2020). From these studies, creativity is in between interpersonal skills and contextual performance. Therefore, it opens up opportunities for the mediating effect of creativity on the relationship between interpersonal skills and contextual performance. In other words, interpersonal skills positively impact creativity and implicate contextual performance. As an illustration, when employees have adequate verbal communication capacity, they will easily express their empathy, so they can quickly help and cooperate with other friends. Thus, it can predict that creativity mediates the influence of interpersonal skills on contextual performance. Thus, the fourth hypothesis can propose as follows:

**H**<sub>4</sub>: Interpersonal skills indirectly affect employees' contextual performance mediated by creativity.

Based on prior studies, can be developing a research's conceptual framework of interpersonal skills affecting contextual performance mediated by creativity, as follow in Figure 1.

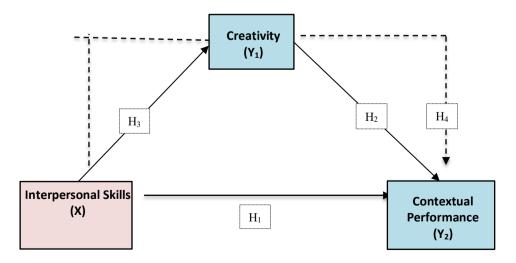


Figure 1. Research's Conceptual Framework

# Methods

#### **Participants**

The research participants were 250 employees of private companies from three industrial clusters, namely trade, services, and investment. They came from and worked in three provinces, namely Jakarta, West Java, and Banten, selected by accidental sampling based on their willingness to fill out a questionnaire during the study without compensation (Widodo, 2021). The majority of gender is male (51.2%), ages 20 – 25 years (53.2%), high school (53.2%), unmarried status (66%), job experience < 5 years (59.2%), staff position (89.6%), permanent employment status (54%), and industrial sector of trade, services and investment (45.6%).

# Research Design and Procedures

This study uses a causal design. The research stages include: formulating research objectives, conducting a literature review, developing research models and hypotheses, making research instruments, conducting instrument trials for validity and reliability, and conducting research by distributing questionnaires through the google form platform by WhatsApp and email. After the questionnaires were collected, the scoring process was continued and followed by data analysis. The last step is the writing of research reports in scientific articles format.

#### Measurement

This study used a five-scale Likert questionnaire: strongly disagree/never (score = 1), disagree/rarely (score = 2), neutral/sometimes (score = 3), agree/often (score = 4), and strongly agree/always (score = 5). The questionnaire was designed by researchers based on theoretical indicators. The interpersonal skills' indicators are (1) listening enthusiastically, (2) managing views carefully, (3) receiving and sharing knowledge, (4) negotiating intelligently, (5) understanding dynamics and collaboration in groups, (6) communicating effectively, and (7) empathic and motivated to move forward (Candy et al., 1994; Birkett, 1993). Further, creativity's indicators include fluency, flexibility, originality, elaboration, and redefinition (Guilford, 1950; Widodo & Gunawan, 2021). Finally, the contextual performance's indicators: (1) enthusiasm accompanied by extra-effort to complete tasks successfully; (2) voluntarily carrying out tasks outside the job description; (3) cooperating and helping colleagues; (4) compliance with organizational rules and procedures; and (5) defend, support, and realize organizationals' goals (Aguinis, 2018). Interpersonal skills comprise 14 items, such as "I can transfer knowledge easily," "I can negotiate with people from different backgrounds," and "I easily empathize with anyone." Creativity consists of ten item includes "I can adapt to a variety of tasks," "I try to understand other people's thinking from different perspectives," and "I try to explore new ideas to work better." Contextual performance comprises ten items, for example: "I am ready to complete unfinished tasks outside of working hours," "I am voluntarily ready to be involved in various company activities outside of formal assignments," and "I am willing to work on additional tasks from the company without receiving additional compensation." Respectively, they have a corrected item-total correlation coefficient (CICC) = 0.407–0.905, 0.396–0.717, and 0.393-0.743, and had an alpha coefficient = 0.923, 0.858, and 0.871. The CICC of all items is > 0.361, and the alpha coefficient of all variables is > 0.7. It indicates validity and reliability (van Griethuijsen et al., 2015; Hair et al., 2018).

# **Data Analysis**

The Likert scale used in this research questionnaire produces interval data so that the appropriate data analysis uses path analysis; meanwhile, the significance test to prove the hypothesis using the t-test. Path analysis and t-test were employed by LisRel 8.80. In addition, descriptive and correlational analyzes were used with SPSS version 22.

# **Result and Dicsussion**

As displayed in Table 1, the mean values of contextual performance = 40.06, creativity = 41.56, and interpersonal skills = 57.42; meanwhile, the standard deviation of creativity = 5.696, contextual performance = 5.996, and interpersonal skills = 6.754. Overall, the mean value is more than the standard deviation. It indicates that overall data are in good condition and worthy of further analysis. Furthermore, the correlation between variables was significant at p < 0.01. It indicates a reciprocal relationship. Respectively, the correlation coefficient is interpersonal skills and contextual performance (0.492), creativity and contextual performance (0.507), and interpersonal skills and creativity (0.712).

The hypothesis testing results, as summarized in Table 2, indicates that all hypothesis was supported (significant) at  $\alpha = 0.01$ . In detail, interpersonal skills directly affect contextual performance (0.26), creativity directly affects contextual performance (0,32), interpersonal skills directly affect creativity (0.71), and interpersonal skills indirectly affect contextual performance mediated by creativity (0.23). Therefore, this study

suggests that employees' contextual performance can be increased by improving interpersonal skills and creativity. However, interpersonal skills have a stronger effect on creativity (0.71) than contextual performance (0.32). This strong influence encourages creativity to play a significant role in mediating the effect of interpersonal skills on contextual performance. Hence, improving employees' contextual performance through interpersonal skills will be better and more effective if it is supported by creativity.

Tabel 1. Descriptive and Correlation Analysis

| Variables                 | Mean  | Std. Deviation | 1       | 2       | 3    |
|---------------------------|-------|----------------|---------|---------|------|
| 1. Interpersonal Skills   | 57.42 | 6.754          | 1.00    |         |      |
| 2. Creativity             | 41.56 | 5.696          | 0.712** | 1.00    |      |
| 3. Contextual Performance | 40.06 | 5.996          | 0.492** | 0.507** | 1.00 |

<sup>\*\*</sup> p < 0.01

**Table 2.** Summary of Path Coefficients and T Values

| Hypothesis   | Path<br>Coefficients | T<br>Values | Decission |
|--|----------------------|-------------|-----------|
| H <sub>1</sub> : Interpersonal skills (X) on contextual performance (Y <sub>2</sub> )  | 0.26**               | 3.47        | Supported |
| $H_2$ : Creativity $(Y_1)$ on contextual performance $(Y_2)$   | 0.32**               | 4.20        | Supported |
| $H_3$ : Interpersonal skills (X) on creativity ( $Y_1$ )   | 0.71**               | 15.97       | Supported |
| H <sub>4</sub> : Interpersonal skills (X) on contextual performance (Y <sub>2</sub> ) mediated by creativity (Y <sub>1</sub> ) | 0.23**               | 4.07        | Supported |

<sup>\*\*</sup> p < 0.01

The results of the model test using the Goodness of Fit (GoF) formula can be seen in Figure 2. The Chi-Square value obtained is 0.00, then df = 0, p-value (1.00) is greater than 0.05, and RMSEA (0.00) is smaller than 0.08. These results indicate that the theoretical model tested is a fit. Thus, the theoretical model (research's conceptual framework) developed based on previous research is supported by empirical data sourced from employees of private companies in Indonesia.

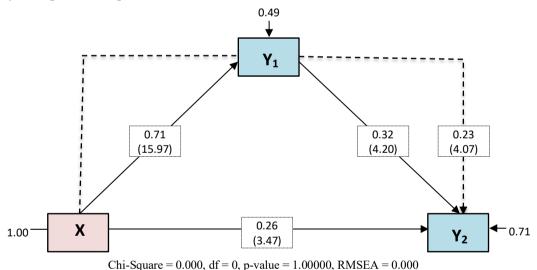


Figure 2. Path Coefficients and T Values

This study found that interpersonal skills influenced employees' contextual performance mediated by creativity and created a fit research model based on empirical data from the employees of companies in Indonesia. It confirms that interpersonal skills and creativity are crucial determinants of the employees' contextual performance. Moreover, creativity plays a significant mediating role in interpersonal skills affecting employees' contextual performance. In detail, interpersonal skills are positively affected employees' contextual performance. It indicated that interpersonal skills, for example, manifested in listening effectively, good presenting and discussing, excellent transferring of knowledge, fluent negotiating, mastery in group dynamics, effective communication, and empathy, essential antecedence of contextual performance. Hence, interpersonal skills have the potential to improve employees' contextual performance. This finding aligns with prior studies that interpersonal skills influence contextual performance, including contextual performance (Widjaja & Saragih, 2018; Suci et al., 2022). These findings address that the existence of interpersonal skills needs to be

given more attention and development to make a more outstanding contribution to employee performance and then have implications for organizational performance.

This study also revealed that creativity influences employees' contextual performance. It is demonstrated that creativity is vital for contextual performance. Therefore, creativity can improve employees' contextual performance. In practice, when employees have high work flexibility, they tend to adjust easily adjust to the policies and work procedures that apply in the company. Likewise, employees who have the ability to elaborate and translate work details well will also be enthusiastic about completing their tasks well. This practically shows that creativity can be relied on to enhance employees' contextual performance. This evidence is similar to prior studies that creativity relates to performance, including contextual performance (Kaveski & Beuren, 2020; Suryanto et al., 2021), so employee creativity deserves to be developed more seriously with the support of company management strategic policies. In this perspective, creativity is not only improved at the individual level but also at the group/team and organizational level.

Besides, this research also proves that interpersonal skills influence creativity. It indicates that creativity can be developed through improving interpersonal skills. For example, having adequate verbal and nonverbal communication skills can help employees work fluently and flexibly. Likewise, employees who can transfer and receive knowledge quickly and accurately will also find it easy to elaborate and redefine various events or objects that are relatively new. Thus, interpersonal skills have the potential to increase employee creativity, so their existence needs more attention. This evidence confirms studies by Zhu et al. (2019) and Wu et al. (2022), which prove that interpersonal selection and interaction affect creativity. These findings, once again, show the vitality of interpersonal skills for employees, both for developing their creativity and improving their contextual performance, so company management needs to facilitate the development of employee interpersonal skills.

Finally, the results of this study also find a new empirical fact that creativity significantly mediating interpersonal skills affects employees' contextual performance. It was consistent with relevant prior studies that creativity influences contextual performance (Kaveski & Beuren, 2020; Suryanto et al., 2021), and creativity is affected by interpersonal skills (Wu et al., 2022). This discovery demonstrated the critical role of creativity in the constellation of causal relationships between interpersonal skills and contextual performance. It makes a theoretical contribution to studying HRM and organizational behavior, particularly in developing employees' contextual performance based on interpersonal skills and creativity. In addition, it also provides practical implications for the development of employees' contextual performance through interpersonal skills and increased creativity. Thus, researchers and practitioners can discuss the findings of this research critically, indepth, and comprehensively before being adopted or adapted to develop employee contextual performance in the future.

# Conclusion

Employees' performance is an incredible impact on organizations. This study found that interpersonal skills affect employees' contextual performance through creativity. Accordingly, e new empirical model of creativitys' mediated interpersonal skills affects employees' contextual performance, developed. This evidence explains the vitality of creativity in mediating a causal relationship between interpersonal skills and contextual performance. Hence, improving employees' contextual performance through interpersonal skills will be better if it involves creativity. Of course, this is interesting to be discussed, adapted, or adopted by researchers and practitioners to improve employees' contextual performance. For instance, researchers can expand it into new research by structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis, adding other data resources (e.g., leaders, colleagues) and more participants from many levels and locus. Meanwhile, practitioners can use it to enhance employees' contextual performance by developing interpersonal skills supported by creativity.

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