INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN BUSINESS & SOCIAL SCIENCES

Vol 15, Issue 01, (2025) E-ISSN: 2222-6990

Unlocking Creative Potential: How Personality Traits Shape Self-Efficacy and Creative Deviance

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To Link this Article: http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v15-i1/24601 DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v15-i1/24601

Published Date: 20 January 2025

Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the effect of two types of personality traits from the Five Factors Model on employees' creative activities. Drawing on Social Cognitive Theory and Cognitive Evaluation Theory, openness to experience and conscientiousness were proposed to influence creative self-efficacy and creative deviance. Our research employed a quantitative approach, collecting data from 215 employees across various industries. Using partial least squares structural equation modeling as statistical analysis, we reveal that openness to experience positively influences both creative self-efficacy and creative deviance. Conversely, conscientiousness demonstrates a positive effect on creative self-efficacy but a negative impact on creative deviance. Our study contributes to the growing body of literature on creativity and innovation management by highlighting the importance of individual differences in fostering creative activities. The results suggest a nuanced interplay between personality traits and creative activities in organizational settings.

Keywords: Social Cognitive Theory, Cognitive Evaluation Theory, Personality Traits, Creativity, Creative Deviance, Creative Self-Efficacy

Introduction

The capability of the organization to cultivate creative activities among employees is an essential mission to ensure long-term viability. To achieve this mission, the organization needs to have good management strategies that emphasize creativity and facilitate creative activities in the work environment (Ferreiraa, Coelhoa & Mountinho 2018). One effective way to manage creativity is by studying employees' individual differences, as understanding these differences allows organizations to customize opportunities and resources that promote creativity in a personalized manner. Creativity empowers employees to enhance their competency, thereby contributing to their competitive edge and performance (Esch, Wei, & Chiang 2016).

Personality traits are one of the key factors that influence employees' engagement in creative activities, including creative performance (Li et al., 2020), bootlegging (Goblocnik 2023), and creative deviance (Liu et al., 2022; Martin, 2021, p.24; Tenzer & Yang 2019). Previous research has manifested that personality traits play a crucial role in shaping how individuals interact with their environment, respond to challenges, and engage in creative processes (e.g., Alikaj et al. 2021; Backer et al. 2012; Chatzi et al. 2023; Hampson 2012; Mumford et al. 2002; Yunus et al. 2018). The Five Factors Model, also known as the Big Five personality traits, is one of the dominant paradigms that encompass five dimensions, namely openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism (Barrick & Mount 1999; McCrae 2009). Each trait embodies a spectrum along which individuals can vary, providing a comprehensive overview that helps in predicting various outcomes, including innovative potential within organizations (Judge et al. 2009). While previous studies have established a connection between specific personality traits and creativity, its effect on creative deviance is still limited. This study focuses specifically on openness to experience and conscientiousness by investigating how these traits increase creative self-efficacy and influence the likelihood of employees' engagement in creative deviance. Building upon previous studies that have explored individual differences in creative deviance (Mainemelis 2010; Martin 2021; Tenzer & Yang, 2018), we aim to provide a deeper understanding of the individual factors that drive creative behavior in organizational settings.

This study advances behavioral research by investigating the influence of personality traits, specifically openness to experience and conscientiousness, on creative self-efficacy and creative deviance. Drawing on Social Cognitive Theory and Cognitive Evaluation Theory, we investigate why certain individuals are more prone to engage in creative deviance. Moreover, we aim to provide a deeper understanding of the individual differences in unlocking creative potential by examining how openness to experience and conscientiousness increase creative self-efficacy and creative deviance, respectively. Our findings offer valuable insights for business practitioners. We propose that organizations can optimize their creative output by cultivating a balanced workforce that combines employees who are open to new experiences with those exhibiting high conscientiousness. This approach has the potential to enhance both creativity and performance, which consequently contributes to organizational success.

Underpinning Theory

Social Cognitive Theory

Social Cognitive Theory provides a comprehensive understanding of how cognitive mechanisms influence human motivation, attitudes, and actions (Bandura, 1997; Bandura, 2001). This theory posits that learning occurs within a social context and can be facilitated through observation, imitation, and modeling (Bandura, 2012). Social context acts as the crucial role of cognitive processes in the acquisition and maintenance of behaviors (Bandura, 1999; Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998; Tierney & Farmer, 2002). Within this theoretical framework, personality traits such as openness to experience and conscientiousness can significantly impact creative activities through cognitive processes and by shaping behaviors (Tierney & Farmer, 2002). Openness to experience, characterized by a willingness to explore novel ideas and unconventional solutions, may lead individuals to challenge existing norms and engage in creative activities (Griffin & McDermott 1998; McCrae 1987; Xu et al. 2021). Conscientiousness, typically associated with rule-abiding and goal-oriented behavior, can positively impact individual performance through task completion and persistence (Gellatly,

1996; Meyer et al., 2024). However, the relationship between conscientiousness and creativity is more complex, with some studies revealing a dynamic interplay between this trait and creative output (Jirásek & Sudzina, 2020; Reiter-Palmon et al., 2009). Therefore, the appealing, complex quality understanding of personality traits within the Social Cognitive Theory framework provides valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of creative activities.

Cognitive Evaluation Theory

Cognitive Evaluation Theory, a sub-theory within Self-Determination Theory, posits that external factors, such as rewards or constraints, can significantly impact an individual's intrinsic motivation, which is crucial for creative activities (Ryan, 1982; Shalley & Perry-Smith, 2001). This theoretical framework offers a foundation for understanding how personality traits and creative self-efficacy interact with environmental factors to influence creative pursuits (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Wang et al. 2017). The interplay between personality traits, particularly openness to experience and conscientiousness, and creative engagement can be elucidated through Cognitive Evaluation Theory. Individuals high in openness to experience, characterized by curiosity and a preference for novelty, may be more susceptible to the positive effects of autonomy-supportive environments (Shalley & Perry-Smith, 2001). These individuals are likely to perceive such environments as opportunities for exploration and self-expression, thereby enhancing their willingness to engage in creative activities. Drawing on Cognitive Evaluation Theory, a theoretical model has been developed to investigate the effect of personality traits on creative self-efficacy and creative deviance among employees. Cognitive Evaluation Theory suggests that when individuals are involved in certain activities, they have psychological needs such as autonomy and absorption (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Deci & Ryan, 2010; Shalley & Perry-Smith, 2001). When these needs are met, intrinsic motivation is triggered, leading to a greater sense of enjoyment and, subsequently, increased engagement in activities (Lee & Yang, 2011; Mitchell 2022), ultimately affecting creative behavior.

Hypothesis Development

Openness to Experience and Creative Self-Efficacy

Openness to experience is one of the core dimensions of the Five-Factor Model of personality traits (McCrae, 1996) and has garnered significant attention in behavioral research due to its potential impact on creative self-efficacy (Zhou & Shalley, 2003; Karwowski et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2016). Openness to experience, characterized by a propensity for seeking new experiences, intellectual curiosity, and imaginative thinking (Costa & McCrae, 1992). According to Social Cognitive Theory, individuals high in openness to experience are more likely to actively seek out new opportunities and initiate change, which in turn enhances their self-beliefs regarding their creative capabilities (Bandura, 1997). Individuals who are open to new experiences are more confident in their creative abilities (McCrae 1987) and significantly affect their self-efficacy (Bandura 1999; Stajkovic & Luthans 1998). This theoretical perspective is complemented by Cognitive Evaluation Theory, which posits that the intrinsic motivation associated with openness to experience can foster a sense of competence and autonomy, crucial elements in developing creative self-efficacy (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Empirically, research has demonstrated that individuals high in openness to experience tend to be more optimistic in generating new ideas (Wanberg & Banas, 2000), exhibit higher cognitive flexibility (McCrae, 1996), and have been consistently linked to

creative self-efficacy (Chen, 2016; Farmer & Tierney, 2017; Xia et al., 2021). According to Xia and others (2022), openness to experience promotes the development and use of creative self-efficacy by fostering an environment receptive to exploration, experimentation, and collaboration, all of which contribute to improved team creativity. Additionally, Xu and others (2021) suggested that individuals high in openness to experience tend to be more creative because this trait encompasses curiosity, imagination, and a preference for novelty, all of which are critical for creative thinking. Openness to experience is expected to influence creative self-efficacy as explained by both Social Cognitive Theory and Cognitive Evaluation Theory. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:
H1: There is a positive relationship between openness to experience and self-efficacy.

Conscientiousness and Self-Efficacy
Besides openness to experience, conscientiousness as well is one of the personality traits that have received substantial attention in the behavioral research (Zhou and Shalley 2003; Karwowski et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2016). Conscientiousness is a personality trait characterized by self-discipline, organization, consistency, and a strong sense of duty. Individuals high in conscientiousness are diligent in their work, adhere to rules and procedures, and strive for achievement and success through structured approaches. The relationship between conscientiousness and self-efficacy can be explained through Social Cognitive theoretical perspectives. According to Social Cognitive Theory, when individuals have high self-discipline in undertaking their tasks, they are more likely to gain self-beliefs in their capabilities when doing things (Bandura 1999). Social Cognitive Theory also explains that if individuals continuously perform a task effectively, they will gain the experience of mastery in that particular task (Bandura, 1997). Therefore, individuals with this trait will be more likely to accumulate rich mastery experience and develop a strong efficacious belief in their ability to be creative (Liu et al., 2016). Also, individuals with conscientiousness traits.

Several studies have shown that conscientiousness is positively related to creative self-efficacy (Chen, 2016; Farmer & Tierney, 2017; Liu et al., 2016). Singh and Bala (2020) found that individuals with higher levels of conscientiousness tend to exhibit higher self-efficacy. They are believed to be hardworking and persistent in completing tasks effectively (Barrick et al., 2002). Similarly, Fino and Sun (2022) identified that individuals with high conscientiousness are developed in confidence in creative capabilities and creative self-efficacy. Social Cognitive Theory suggests that conscientious individuals, with their disciplined and goal-oriented nature, may develop higher levels of self-efficacy. Their systematic approach to tasks, persistence in overcoming challenges, and attention to detail contribute to a sense of competence and capability in achieving desired outcomes. Therefore, drawing on theoretical justification and empirical evidence, we propose the following hypothesis:
Hypothesis 2: There is a positive relationship between conscientiousness and self-efficacy.

Openness to Experience and Creative Deviance
Openness to experience reflects an individual's proclivity toward intellectual curiosity, creativity, and a preference for novelty (McCrae, 1996). Individuals high in openness are characterized by traits such as resourcefulness, curiosity, and open-mindedness, which drive them to explore unconventional solutions and embrace change (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Burke & Witt, 2002). This trait is closely linked to creativity, as open individuals often think beyond conventional boundaries and challenge the status quo (Wanberg & Banas, 2000). In

workplace contexts, such individuals are more likely to contribute innovative ideas and experiment with new ways of achieving objectives, making openness to experience a significant predictor of creative behavior (Zhou & Shalley, 2003).

Social cognitive theory posits that behavior results from the interplay of personal factors, environmental influences, and individual actions (Bandura, 1997). Employees high in openness, motivated by intellectual stimulation and novelty, may perceive managerial orders to stop pursuing creative ideas as obstacles to their intrinsic drive for exploration and innovation (Martin, 2021). Similarly, cognitive evaluation theory emphasizes that intrinsic motivation, fueled by autonomy and competence, makes individuals act in ways that align with their sense of self-expression and intuition (Deci & Ryan, 1980). Open individuals, driven by a need for intellectual growth and creative fulfillment, are more likely to engage in creative deviance when organizational structures constrain their ability to innovate.

Previous scholars found the theoretical links between openness to experience and creative outcomes. Research has consistently shown that individuals high in openness are more likely to engage in creative activities, exhibit innovative behaviors, and challenge traditional norms (George & Zhou, 2001; Zuhdi & Etikariena, 2022). These individuals often display resilience in the face of setbacks, driven by their intrinsic desire for novelty and intellectual exploration. Creative deviance, defined as the intentional pursuit of rejected ideas despite managerial orders (Mainemelis, 2010), aligns with the behavior of individuals high in openness. Their propensity to explore new ideas, coupled with a willingness to defy constraints, positions them as key contributors to workplace innovation (Martin, 2021; Liu et al., 2016). Their intrinsic motivation, intellectual curiosity, and desire to explore uncharted territories enable them to challenge organizational constraints and pursue innovation, even when faced with resistance. Consequently, this study hypothesizes that:

Hypothesis 3: There is a positive relationship between openness to experience and creative deviance.

Conscientiousness and Creative Deviance

Individuals with high conscientiousness are known as individuals who exhibit high levels of self-discipline, organization, and a strong sense of responsibility in fulfilling their duties (Barrick & Mount, 1993). These individuals are often determined, goal-oriented, and meticulous in their work, consistently striving for achievement and excellence through structured and planned approaches. According to Social Cognitive Theory, personality traits, including conscientiousness, act as external circumstances and reciprocal influences that shape individuals behavior. Individuals with high conscientiousness are more likely to act in a way that complies with standard and established protocol because they value order and following the rules. Meanwhile, based on Cognitive Evaluation Theory, some external controls, such as managerial directives and structured work environments, may undermine individuals' intuition. For conscientious individuals, these controls often resonate with their intrinsic preferences for structure and accountability, reinforcing their adherence to norms but potentially limiting their willingness to deviate even in a case of creativity.

Previous scholars have identified conscientiousness as having a relationship with work performance, such as fostering persistence, increasing motivation, and a focus on task completion (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Ohme & Zacher, 2015). Taggar (2021) found that

conscientiousness within teams increases performance in creative tasks, but its influence is nuanced. This is because conscientiousness positively contributes to task focus and goal achievement; nevertheless, excessively high levels can sometimes hinder creativity due to rigid adherence to rules and processes. Ohme and Zacher (2015) further support this argument, indicating that while conscientiousness is positively associated with task performance and some forms of creativity, it may simultaneously constrain behaviors that deviate from established norms. It has been shown that conscientiousness is negatively related to counterproductive and deviant workplace behaviors, as these individuals prioritize efficiency, orderliness, and responsibility over risk-taking and unconventional actions (Bowling & Nathman, 2010; Colbert et al., 2004). In the context of creative deviance defined as the deliberate pursuit of new ideas against managerial directives, conscientious individuals may view such behavior as a threat to organizational stability and their own adherence to duty.

Therefore, even though individuals with conscientiousness are capable of generating creative ideas, they are less likely to engage in creative deviance due to their preference for rule-bound and risk-averse approaches. Their intrinsic motivation for achievement is often channeled through structured, methodical strategies that align with organizational expectations. As such, they may refrain from violating managerial orders, even in pursuit of innovative outcomes. Based on these theoretical underpinnings and empirical findings, we propose the following hypothesis:
Hypothesis 4: There is a negative relationship between conscientiousness and creative deviance.

Self-Efficacy and Creative Deviance
Creative self-efficacy, derived from Bandura's (1977) concept of self-efficacy, refers to an individual's belief in their ability to produce creative outcomes within a specific context (Tierney & Farmer, 2002). This belief is a motivational view that influences how individuals approach challenges, persist in the face of setbacks, and strive to achieve creative performance (Bandura, 1983). Creative self-efficacy provides the psychological foundation for individuals to overcome self-doubt and approach tasks requiring innovative thinking and originality (Tierner & Farmer, 2002), considered a factor for creativity.

According to Social Cognitive Theory, self-efficacy is central to human motivation and action, shaping an individual's persistence, resilience, and behavior in achieving goals (Bandura, 1997). While individuals with high creative self-efficacy are more likely to engage in creative processes, navigating through trial-and-error experiences with greater confidence and determination (Tierney & Farmer, 2002). Social Cognitive Theory posits that creative self-efficacy strengthens an individual’s belief in their capability to overcome barriers, adapt to changing circumstances, and produce novel solutions. This argument also aligns with cognitive evaluation theory, which emphasizes how intrinsic motivation, driven by self-determined beliefs and autonomy, enhances creativity by fostering a sense of competence and control over one’s creative endeavors.

Previous studies have demonstrated that individuals with high creative self-efficacy are more likely to persist in idea development, navigate organizational constraints, and take risks necessary for innovation (Tierney & Farmer, 2002; Bandura, 1997). Even when faced with

rejection or opposition, such individuals maintain confidence in their ability to generate creative outcomes. This persistence may lead them to engage in creative deviance, a behavior characterized by continuing to develop ideas that have been formally rejected by managerial authorities (Mainemelis, 2010). Therefore, based on the arguments presented, we propose the following hypothesis:
Hypothesis 5: There is a positive relationship between creative self-efficacy and creative deviance.

Research Method

Sampling Method

Data were collected from employees based in Selangor, Putrajaya, and Kuala Lumpur, providing a diverse representation of urban professional contexts in Malaysia. The set of questionnaires distributed included a screening question on the first page, *"Have you ever experienced idea rejection from your manager?".* It is enabling the segregation of individuals who had encountered situations where their creative ideas were rejected by managerial authorities. This targeted approach enhances the reliability of the findings by ensuring the sample aligns with one of the study's variables (Hair et al., 2017; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019). Therefore, a total of 214 usable data samples were obtained and able to be analyzed. In this sample, 57.9% of the respondents were female, 35.0% of the employees were between the ages of 30 and 35, 70.6% had a bachelor's degree or higher, and 61.2% had been employed for three to five years or even longer.

Measurement

Openness to experience and conscientiousness were measured using established scale that taken from Goldberg (1999). This scale was first developed by John and Srivasta (1999), and contained 10 items for openness to experience, which is two of the items were reversed coded. ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The items of openness to experience include “I see myself as someone who is original, comes up with new ideas”. Similarly, to scale of conscientiousness which has 6 items with five Likert-type ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A sample item in conscientiousness scale is “I am careful to avoid making mistakes”.

Creative self-efficacy was assessed using a validated scale taken from Tierney and Farmer’s (2002). This measurement contains four items with Likert-type scale which is ranged between 1 (very strongly disagree) to 5 (very strongly agree). A sample item is “I have confidence in my ability to solve problems creatively.”

Creative deviance was measured using scale that developed by Lin et al (2016). This scale captures the extent to which participants have engaged in creative deviance, defined as continuing to work on a creative idea despite managerial orders to stop. The scale contains nine items with seven Likert-type ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). A sample item is “I continue to improve some of the new ideas, although they did not receive my supervisor’s approval”.

Result

Measurement Assessment

The first step in PLS-SEM analysis is the analysis of the measurement model. In this study, all constructs are modeled reflectively. Table 1 presents the results of this assessment of reflective measurement model. The outer loadings range with the highest value recorded as 0.902 (CD9) and the lowest as 0.566 (OP7). We removed item OP9 for having an extremely low outer loading value. Nevertheless, we decided to remain item OP7. Even though the recommended threshold for outer loading should not exceed 0.70 because the value of average variance extracted (AVE) for variable openness to experience is still above the cut-off value of 0.50. Internal consistency reliability was evaluated using two metrics: Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability. As shown in Table 1, Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.754 to 0.952, while composite reliability values were between 0.841 and 0.960. Both metrics surpassed the minimum threshold of 0.7, as recommended by Hair et al. (2017), indicating strong internal consistency reliability. Convergent validity, measured by the average variance extracted (AVE), was also assessed. All constructs had AVE values above the cut-off of 0.50, indicating that at least 50% of the variance in each construct's indicators was captured by the construct itself.

Table 1
Results of Reflective Measurement Model

Construct	Items	Outer loading	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted
Openness to experience	OP1	0.797	0.899	0.918	0.534
	OP2	0.698			
	OP3	0.722			
	OP4	0.839			
	OP5	0.785			
	OP6	0.837			
	OP7	0.566			
	OP8	0.701			
	OP10	0.734			
Conscientiousness	CS1	0.784	0.903	0.925	0.673
	CS2	0.800			
	CS3	0.848			
	CS4	0.826			
	CS5	0.827			
	CS6	0.834			
Creative self-efficacy	SE1	0.793	0.754	0.841	0.571
	SE2	0.777			
	SE3	0.706			
	SE4	0.744			
Creative deviance	CD1	0.801	0.952	0.960	0.725
	CD2	0.787			
	CD3	0.856			
	CD4	0.869			
	CD5	0.831			
	CD6	0.892			
	CD7	0.855			
	CD8	0.865			
	CD9	0.902			

Discriminant validity was assessed using the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT), with results presented in Table 2. For this study, a conventional HTMT threshold of 0.85 was adopted, meaning all HTMT values were expected to fall below this limit. HTMT analysis showed that all HTMT values ranged from 0.297 to 0.850, which were within the acceptable range as recommended by Henseler et al. (2014).

Table 2
Results of Discriminant Validity using HTMT

	Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT)
CS <--> CD	0.520
OP <--> CD	0.850
OP <--> CS	0.511
SE <--> CD	0.203
SE <--> CS	0.201
SE <--> OP	0.297

Structural Assessment
The four assessment criteria at the measurement model stage show that the model is reliable and valid. The next stage in the PLS-SEM analysis involves assessing the structural model, which include assessing the variance in inflation factor (VIF), coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), path coefficients and its significance (Hair et al., 2017).

Table 3
Results of VIF, Coefficient of Determination and Effect Size

Latent variables	Creative deviance (R^2 = 0.645)		Creative self-efficacy (R^2 = 0.166)	
	VIF	Effect size (f^2)	VIF	Effect size (f^2)
Conscientiousness	1.416	0.062	1.093	0.125
Creative self-efficacy	1.467	0.002		
Openness to experience	1.258	0.947	1.093	0.166

All VIF values as shown in Table 3 were below than 5, indicates there is no issue of collinearity. In the proposed model, there are two endogenous latent variables, which are creative self-efficacy and creative deviance. The coefficient of determination for creative self-efficacy was 0.166, which means that 16.6 percent of the variance in creative self-efficacy is explained by conscientiousness and openness to experience, with a stronger effect from openness to experience (f^2 = 0.166). The ultimate endogenous latent variable is creative deviance. All three exogenous latent variables explained creative deviance, and as such its coefficient of determination was 0.645. Thus, it indicates that 64.5 percent of the variance in the creative deviance was explained by conscientiousness, creative self-efficacy and openness to experience. The largest effect on creative deviance is openness to experience, which was

0.947. This means that openness to experience has substantive effect on creative deviance. Meanwhile, creative self-efficacy has no effect on creative deviance (f^2 = 0.002).

Table 4 shows the magnitude and significance of the hypothesized paths. The bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples was used to generate the results. As shown in Table 4, hypothesis 1 (β = 0.417, p < 0.000) and hypothesis 2 (β = 0.362, p < 0.000) were supported. Similarly, hypothesis 3 (β = 0.702, p < 0.000) and hypothesis 4 (β = -0.177, p < 0.000) were supported. The results indicate that both openness to experience and conscientiousness directly predict creative self-efficacy and creative deviance. Hypothesis 5 that specifies creative self-efficacy positively predicts creative deviance, however, was not supported (β = 0.024, p = 0.554).

Table 4
Magnitude and Significance of Hypothesized Relationships

Hypothesized relationships	β	p-value
H1: Openness to experience -> Creative self-efficacy	0.417	0.000
H2: Conscientiousness -> Creative self-efficacy	0.362	0.000
H3: Openness to experience -> Creative deviance	0.702	0.000
H4: Conscientiousness -> Creative deviance	-0.177	0.000
H5: Creative self-efficacy -> Creative deviance	0.028	0.554

Discussion

In order to maintain a competitive advantage and ensure long-term success, organizations must tap into their employees' creative potential. One effective way to manage creativity among employees is by understanding their individual' differences. By recognizing and valuing each employee's unique strengths and perspectives, organizations can foster an environment that encourages innovative thinking. This allows organizations to tailor opportunities and resources to foster creativity. In this study we investigated two personality traits, which are openness to experience and conscientiousness towards employees' creative potential and their involvement in creative activities. Our findings highlight how these traits contribute differently to the creative processes within organizational contexts.

Consistent with Cognitive Evaluation Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1980), our results suggest that openness to experience is a significant factor in driving creative potential. Employees who score high in this trait tend to be curious, imaginative, and eager to explore new ideas. They are more likely to seek novel opportunities, approach challenges with flexibility, and experiment with unconventional methods to achieve creative outcomes. While openness supports creativity, it can also lead individuals to question managerial directives they see as hindrances to their creative work, which can sometimes result in creative deviance. Our study extends previous research (e.g., Tenzer & Yang, 2018; Liu et al., 2022), showing that openness not only boosts creative performance but also encourages risk-taking in the pursuit of innovation.

On the other hand, conscientiousness plays a more structured yet equally essential role in creativity. Conscientious employees are focused, goal-oriented, and methodical, which

allows them to deliver high-quality creative outcomes within established frameworks. Their disciplined approach also strengthens their creative self-efficacy, as they believe in their ability to achieve creative goals through consistent effort and adherence to processes. However, their preference for structure and avoidance of mistakes makes them less inclined to engage in creative deviance. This suggests that while conscientiousness fosters creativity through perseverance and attention to detail, it also serves as a safeguard against actions that could undermine organizational norms or managerial expectations. Balancing conscientiousness within teams is crucial to optimizing both creative performance and task completion, as conscientious employees are known for their reliability and efficiency.

Our study found no direct link between creative self-efficacy and creative deviance. As Bandura (1997) suggested, self-beliefs are influenced by both personal and situational factors. We propose that employees with high creative self-efficacy are confident in their ability to generate creative ideas. When their ideas are rejected by superiors, they are more likely to refine their concepts or explore alternative solutions rather than engaging in deviant behavior. This confidence enables them to align their creativity with organizational expectations, which may reduce the likelihood of creative deviance. Our findings indicate that creative self-efficacy does not directly influence creative deviance, highlighting the complex role of self-belief in creativity.

Therefore, this study underscores the distinct roles of openness to experience and conscientiousness in shaping creative potential. Openness encourages risk-taking and exploration, while conscientiousness ensures discipline and adherence to organizational norms. By cultivating a work environment that values both open-mindedness and structure, organizations can foster creativity while maintaining consistency and order. This balance enables firms to enhance their creative capacity and achieve sustained success.

Research Implication

This study comes with both theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, this study offers valuable insights into the role of individual traits in fostering creative activities within organizational settings. We specifically examine openness to experience and conscientiousness as key personality traits that influence employees' creative potential and their likelihood of engaging in creative deviance. Building on Cognitive Evaluation Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1980), we show that individuals high in openness to experience are driven by curiosity and a desire for exploration, which leads them to embrace unconventional ideas and risk-taking. This trait is crucial for driving creative innovation but also increases the chances of creative deviance when employees feel their creativity is stifled by managerial constraints. Our results support and extend previous studies (e.g., Tenzer & Yang, 2018; Liu et al., 2022) by emphasizing that openness not only boosts creative performance but also heightens the tendency to challenge established norms. In contrast, conscientiousness operates differently in the context of creativity. Conscientious individuals are disciplined and goal-focused, excelling in structured environments where creativity must align with guidelines. Their attention to detail and persistent effort enhance their creative output while maintaining adherence to organizational expectations. Interestingly, conscientious employees are less likely to engage in creative deviance because their preference for order and caution typically keeps them within established boundaries. This finding highlights the nuanced relationship between personality traits and creative behavior, suggesting that balancing both openness

and conscientiousness within teams can lead to more effective and productive creative outcomes.

From a practical perspective, the study provides organizations with actionable insights on how to manage creativity while addressing the risks of creative deviance. Specifically, human resources teams can use our findings to refine recruitment processes by targeting traits aligned with specific roles. For positions that require innovative thinking and the exploration of new ideas, organizations can prioritize candidates with high openness to experience. However, they must also be aware that such individuals may push boundaries, potentially leading to conflicts with organizational norms. To mitigate this, fostering a culture of psychological safety, where employees feel supported in taking risks and proposing unconventional solutions, can help harness their creative potential without fostering deviant behavior (Edmondson, 1999; Ismail et al., 2024). On the other hand, roles that demand reliability, precision, and adherence to established processes would benefit from conscientious employees, who bring structure and consistent effort to creative tasks. Organizations should create environments where these employees can thrive, providing clear goals and performance standards. The disciplined approach of conscientious employees contributes to high-quality, systematic creative outputs while minimizing the likelihood of creative deviance.

Finally, although creative self-efficacy strengthens individuals' belief in their ability to innovate, our study suggests that it has a small effect on creative deviance. Individuals with high self-efficacy tend to refine their ideas or find alternative solutions when their ideas are rejected, rather than engaging in disruptive behaviors. This indicates that enhancing self-efficacy through mentorship and skill development can foster creativity while ensuring that employees remain aligned with organizational expectations, reducing the likelihood of rule-breaking actions. This research also brings attention to the growing issue of creative deviance in organizations within Malaysia, illustrating that it is not just a global phenomenon but one that is increasingly present across diverse sectors locally. To address this, organizations need to balance the creative freedoms of employees with the structure necessary to maintain productivity and minimize risks. By cultivating a work environment that values both openness to experience and conscientiousness, organizations can better support creative potential while maintaining order, ultimately leading to sustained success and innovation.

Limitation and Future Research

While this study provides valuable insights into the role of personality traits in creative potential and creative deviance, there are several limitations to consider. First, the use of self-report measures for personality traits and creative behavior may introduce biases, as participants could be influenced by social desirability or lack of self-awareness. Future studies could employ more objective measures, such as peer and supervisor evaluations or creative performance, to cross-validate the results. Second, this study was conducted in a specific cultural and geographical context in Malaysia where organizational norms and creativity might differ from other regions. The findings may not fully generalize to other countries or cultures with distinct approaches to creativity, authority, and risk-taking behaviors. Future research could expand the scope by examining similar models in other countries, particularly in non-Western or collectivist cultures, to understand the cross-cultural applicability of the results. Third, our study focused on two personality traits, which are openness to experience

and conscientiousness, while other personality dimensions, such as extraversion or emotional stability, may also influence creative behaviors. Future studies could examine a more comprehensive set of personality traits to offer a more holistic understanding of individual differences in creativity and deviance. Future studies should explore the interaction effects between different personality traits (e.g., openness to experience and extraversion) and contextual factors (e.g., organizational culture, leadership style) in shaping creative deviance. Understanding how various traits combine in different work environments could provide more nuanced insights into how creativity and deviance manifest in diverse organizational settings.

Additionally, this study is using cross-sectional research designs, limiting the ability to draw conclusions about causal relationships between personality traits and creative deviance. Future research could consider longitudinal designs to explore how these traits affect creative outcomes and organizational behavior over time. Second, examining the temporal dynamics of creative deviance would be valuable. For instance, longitudinal studies could investigate how employees' creative behavior evolves over time, particularly in response to organizational changes or shifts in leadership. This would provide a clearer picture of how creative self-efficacy, openness, and conscientiousness influence creative outcomes and deviance at different stages of employees' careers.

Another suggestion is to explore the impact of team dynamics on creativity and creative deviance. While this study focused on individual personality traits, creativity in organizational settings is often a team effort. Future studies could examine how team composition, diversity, and collaboration influence the likelihood of creative deviance and how personality traits interact within teams to foster innovation or conflict. Finally, research could investigate the organizational interventions that could mitigate the risks of creative deviance while still encouraging innovative thinking. This could include examining how leadership styles (e.g., transformational vs. transactional leadership) or organizational structures (e.g., flexible vs. hierarchical) influence employees’ willingness to challenge norms and engage in creative deviance. Understanding these factors would help organizations develop strategies to balance creativity and compliance effectively.

In conclusion, this study enriched the understanding of personality traits, specifically openness to experience and conscientiousness, in shaping employees' creative potential. By understanding how these traits influence employees’ creative activities, organizations can better manage and nurture creative talent, fostering an environment that encourages innovation while maintaining balance with organizational norms. The findings offer valuable insights for both theory and practice, helping businesses make informed decisions about recruitment, team dynamics, and leadership strategies to optimize creative outcomes and ensure long-term success.

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