

# Leadership Styles and Roles in Navigating Current Creativity: A Systematic Literature Review From 2019-2023

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## Abstract

In today's world, characterized by its ever-changing, unpredictable nature, and complex challenges, creativity emerges as a pivotal solution. This study presents a systematic literature review on the significant leadership styles and roles play in enhancing creativity in organizations. The full range of Scopus journals were surveyed from 2019 till 2023 and a total of 13 research articles were selected for further analysis. The findings reveal that Indonesia was the country where the most studies were conducted, followed by China, Spain and cross countries. This study also reveals that transformational leadership was the most studied leadership although there were other leadership styles contributing to enhance employee creativity. A balanced approach to leadership, incorporating various leadership styles and roles, is instrumental in fostering a dynamic and effective organizational environment. In this study, we provide leadership styles and its roles in the creative current. This research contributes valuable insights into the relationship between leadership and creativity, providing a foundation for future studies. By offering a comprehensive overview of leadership styles and their roles in the creative process, it aims to guide organizations in fostering innovation and adaptability.

**Keywords:** Leadership, Creativity, Systematic Literature Review

## Introduction

In the rapidly evolving landscape of BANI (Brittle, Anxious, Nonlinear, Incomprehensible) environments (Jamais, 2020), characterized by the integration of digital technologies, artificial intelligence, and the Internet of Things, the role of leadership in fostering creativity within organizations has become increasingly significant. The intersection of leadership and creativity in the context of Industry 4.0, BANI environments, and the digital era presents a complex and multifaceted area of study (Jamais, 2020). Leadership in this context is not just about guiding organizations through operational tasks but also about fostering an environment where creativity and innovation can thrive. The rapid pace of technological

advancements and the unpredictable nature of societal changes demand leaders who are not only technologically adept but also skilled in managing and inspiring diverse organizations.

In the realm of the digital era, leaders are expected to navigate the integration of advanced digital technologies while maintaining an innovative edge. This requires a deep understanding of technological trends and the ability to foresee how these trends can be harnessed creatively within the organization. The BANI world further complicates this scenario, as leaders must exhibit agility and resilience, adapting their strategies to volatile and uncertain conditions while ensuring that their organizations remain focused and motivated. The emphasis on soft skills in leadership is more critical than ever. Emotional intelligence, for instance, enables leaders to connect with their team members on a deeper level, fostering a trust-based culture that is conducive to creative thinking and risk-taking. Similarly, adaptability and collaborative problem-solving are essential in navigating the complexities of the digital era, where traditional approaches to leadership and management may no longer be effective.

Despite the recognition of these evolving demands on leadership, there is a noticeable gap in scholarly literature specifically addressing the roles and strategies leaders should adopt in this new landscape. Much of the existing research tends to focus on traditional leadership models or on the technical skills required in the digital age, without adequately exploring how these models and skills intersect with the need to foster creativity and innovation in organizations. This literature gap highlights the need for more comprehensive research that not only acknowledges the changing landscape of leadership but also provides actionable insights into how leaders can effectively cultivate creativity and innovation in their teams. Such research should consider the unique challenges posed by the BANI environments and offer guidance on how leaders can adapt their strategies to meet these challenges while promoting a culture of creativity and continuous learning. The role of leadership in enhancing organizational creativity in the context of the BANI environment is a critical area of study that needs further exploration. As organizations navigate these complex and rapidly changing environments, understanding the specific roles and strategies leaders should adopt to foster creativity and innovation becomes increasingly important.

## **Literature Review**

### **Employee Creativity**

Employee creativity has become an increasingly vital aspect in the contemporary digital landscape, primarily due to its significant contribution to innovation (Ivcevic et al., 2020), competitive advantage (Ferreira et al., 2020), and organizational adaptability (Namada, 2018; Skog et al., 2018). To have a solid basis for creativity and innovation, organizations must possess creative employees (Fuchs et al., 2021). These employees are not only capable of generating new ideas but can also think critically and solve problems in unique ways. Their diverse perspectives and willingness to take risks contribute to a culture of innovation within the organization. The importance of creative employees is underlined by various studies that delve into the dynamics of how creativity is fostered within organizations (Inam et al., 2021; Fu et al., 2022; Marić et al., 2022; Ahmad et al., 2022).

The surge in the importance of employee creativity can be attributed to several factors (Nakano & Wechsler, 2018). Firstly, the rapid pace of technological advancements and the

need for constant innovation necessitate creative problem-solving skills (Lv et al., 2021). Due to technological advancements and societal changes, organizations are compelled to think creatively to stay relevant and competitive. Secondly, globalization has led to a more interconnected world, where the exchange of ideas and diverse perspectives stimulates creative thinking. This diversity in thought and experience is a key driver of innovation. Furthermore, research highlights the role of organizational culture in nurturing creativity (Ali Taha et al., 2016). A supportive environment that encourages risk-taking, values diverse viewpoints, and fosters open communication is essential for creative ideas to flourish. Leadership style also plays a crucial role (Huang et al., 2022); transformational leaders, for example, are found to inspire creativity in employees by motivating them, providing intellectual stimulation, and giving personal attention.

Additionally, the shift towards knowledge-based economies has placed a premium on intellectual capital. Organizations that cultivate the creative abilities of their workforce are better positioned to develop unique innovation, services, and solutions, thereby gaining a competitive edge (Ferreira et al., 2020). Despite significant academic attention on how constructive factors, for example leadership, are enhancing employee creativity, there is less understanding of how a mix or other leadership styles impact on the creativity. In conclusion, employee creativity is pivotal for organizational success in today's fast-paced, ever-changing business world. Its growing importance is driven by the need for innovation and adaptation in a globalized, knowledge-intensive economy, and is significantly influenced by organizational culture and leadership.

### **Leadership Styles and Roles in Employee Creativity**

The success of a leader can be evaluated based on their ability to execute changes, enhance the organization's capacities, and elevate performance (Amiri et al., 2020). Leadership, as recently described, refers to the process by which an individual exerts influence over a group of individuals in order to collectively accomplish a shared objective (Kinicki, 2021). Leadership encompasses the ability to exert influence over the actions and conduct of those who follow (Kerr et al., 1974). Furthermore, in today's world, leadership is gaining power through the act of entrusting authority to employees and fostering motivation (Kinicki, 2021). The crucial responsibility of a leader includes their capacity, aided by managerial actions, to generate and assign the authority to influence, motivate, and inspire followers to accomplish the objectives of the organization. A leader with effective management and leadership abilities recognizes that the sustainability of their support is reliant upon the competence of their human resources. The leader's goal is evident in how they act while managing human resources (Kinicki, 2021).

Good leadership contributes to creativity primarily through creating an environment that encourages innovation and supports risk-taking. Transformational leadership, in particular, has been widely recognized for its positive impact on employee creativity. Transformational leaders inspire and motivate their followers, challenging them to think creatively and go beyond their existing capabilities. They achieve this by setting a vision, providing intellectual stimulation, and giving personal attention to their followers' needs and development. These leaders are often seen as role models who encourage a culture of trust, openness, and autonomy, essential for creative thinking. The roles of leadership in enhancing creativity are multifaceted. Firstly, leaders are responsible for setting a clear vision and objectives that

stimulate creativity. They need to articulate the importance of innovation and how it aligns with the organization's goals. Secondly, leaders play a crucial role in resource allocation, ensuring that teams have the necessary tools and time to engage in creative processes. Thirdly, leaders must cultivate a supportive culture that values diversity, encourages experimentation, and tolerates failure. This involves not only verbal encouragement but also structural support, such as establishing processes that allow for idea generation and development.

However, certain leadership behaviors and organizational practices can hinder the role of leadership in promoting employee creativity. One significant barrier is a leadership style that suppresses individuality and discourages risk-taking. When leaders are overly controlling or critical, it can lead to a climate of fear where employees are reluctant to express novel ideas or challenge the status quo. Additionally, a lack of recognition and support for creative efforts can demotivate employees. If creative endeavors are not acknowledged or rewarded, employees may feel that their creative efforts are futile. Furthermore, excessive focus on short-term results and efficiency can also stifle creativity, as it leaves little room for exploration and experimentation.

### **Formulation of Research Questions**

The formulation of research questions for this study was based on PICO. PICO is a tool that assists authors to develop suitable research questions for the review. PICO is based on three main concepts namely Population or Problem, Interest and Context. Based on these concepts, the authors have included three main aspects in the review namely leaders (Population), leadership roles and strategies (Interest) and world (Context) which then guide the authors to formulate research questions

- 1) What is the general review of research on leadership styles and roles in enhancing employee creativity?
- 2) What are the leadership styles and roles practiced in enhancing employee creativity in the world?

### **Materials and Methods**

This section explains the five main sub-sections, namely PRISMA, resources, inclusion and exclusion criteria, systematic review process, and data abstraction and analysis which are employed in the current research.

#### **PRISMA**

PRISMA or Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses is a published standard to conduct a systematic literature review. Generally, publication standards are required to guide authors with the related and necessary information that will enable them to evaluate and examine the quality and rigor of a review. In addition, PRISMA emphasizes on the reviews report that evaluates randomized trials which can also be utilized as the fundamental in reporting systematic reviews for other types of research (Moher et al., 2009). PRISMA clearly defines the research questions towards the need for a systematic review despite the fact that PRISMA is often utilized within medical studies, and at the same time, able to identify the inclusion and exclusion criteria for a particular study. Moreover, PRISMA examines the extensive database of scientific literature at a defined time which allows an accurate search of terms to be conducted in regard to strategies of teacher

creativity. Other than that, the use of PRISMA enables coded information concerning future teacher digital competence reviews.

### **Resources**

Accordingly, Younger (2010) suggested that researchers should conduct their searching process using more databases in order to increase the likelihood of obtaining relevant articles. The review method of the present study was conducted using the Scopus database, considering that this database is robust and covers more than 256 fields of studies. However, it should be noted that no database is perfect or comprehensive including Scopus and Web of Science.

### **The systematic review process for selecting the articles**

#### **i. Identification**

The systematic review process in selecting a number of relevant articles for the present study consisted of three main stages. The first stage is the identification of keywords, followed by the process of searching for related and similar terms based on thesaurus, dictionaries, encyclopedia, and past research. Accordingly, search strings on Scopus database were developed in December 2023 (Refer Table 1) after all relevant keywords managed to be determined. Most importantly, the current research work successfully retrieved a total of 156 articles from the database in the first stage of the systematic review process.

#### **ii. Screening**

The purpose of the first stage of screening was to remove duplicate articles. In this case, a total of 115 articles were excluded during the first stage, while articles were screened based on several inclusion and exclusion criteria determined by the researchers in the second stage. The first criterion was the literature type in which the researchers decided to focus only on the journal (research articles) because it acts as the primary sources that offer empirical data. Hence, this further implies that publication in the form of systematic review, review, meta-analysis, meta-synthesis, book series, book, chapter in a book, and conference proceedings were excluded in the current research. In addition, it should be noted that this review only focused on articles that were published in English. Moreover, it is crucial to note that a five year period (2019-2023) was chosen for the timeline. Overall, a total of 41 articles were excluded based on these criteria (Refer to Table 2).

#### **iii. Eligibility**

A total of 41 articles were prepared for the third stage known as the eligibility. At this stage, on a more important note, the titles, abstracts, and the main contents of all the articles were examined thoroughly to ensure that they fulfilled the inclusion criteria and fit to be employed in the present study in order to achieve the objectives of the current research. Consequently, a total of 28 articles were excluded because they are not based on empirical data and discovered to be hard sciences articles that did not focus on strategies toward leadership roles on creativity. Finally, a total of 13 remaining articles are ready to be analyzed (see. Fig. 1)

Table 1

*The search string*

Database search string	
Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY ( digital AND leadership* AND creativity* ) AND PUBYEAR > 2018 AND PUBYEAR < 2024 AND ( LIMIT-TO ( DOCTYPE , "ar" ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( LANGUAGE , "English" ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( PUBSTAGE , "final" ) )

Table 2

*Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria*

Criteria	Inclusion Eligibility	Exclusion Eligibility
Timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Publish from 2019 – 2023</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Published before 2019</li> </ul>
Literatur Type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Journal (research articles)</li> <li>● Full paper</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Excluded systematic review, conference proceedings, commentaries, editorial viewpoints, book chapters, or book series</li> </ul>
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Written in English</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Non-English Language Papers</li> </ul>
Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Focus on leadership styles and roles, and creativity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Non – English language papers</li> <li>● Not focus on leadership styles and roles, and creativity</li> </ul>

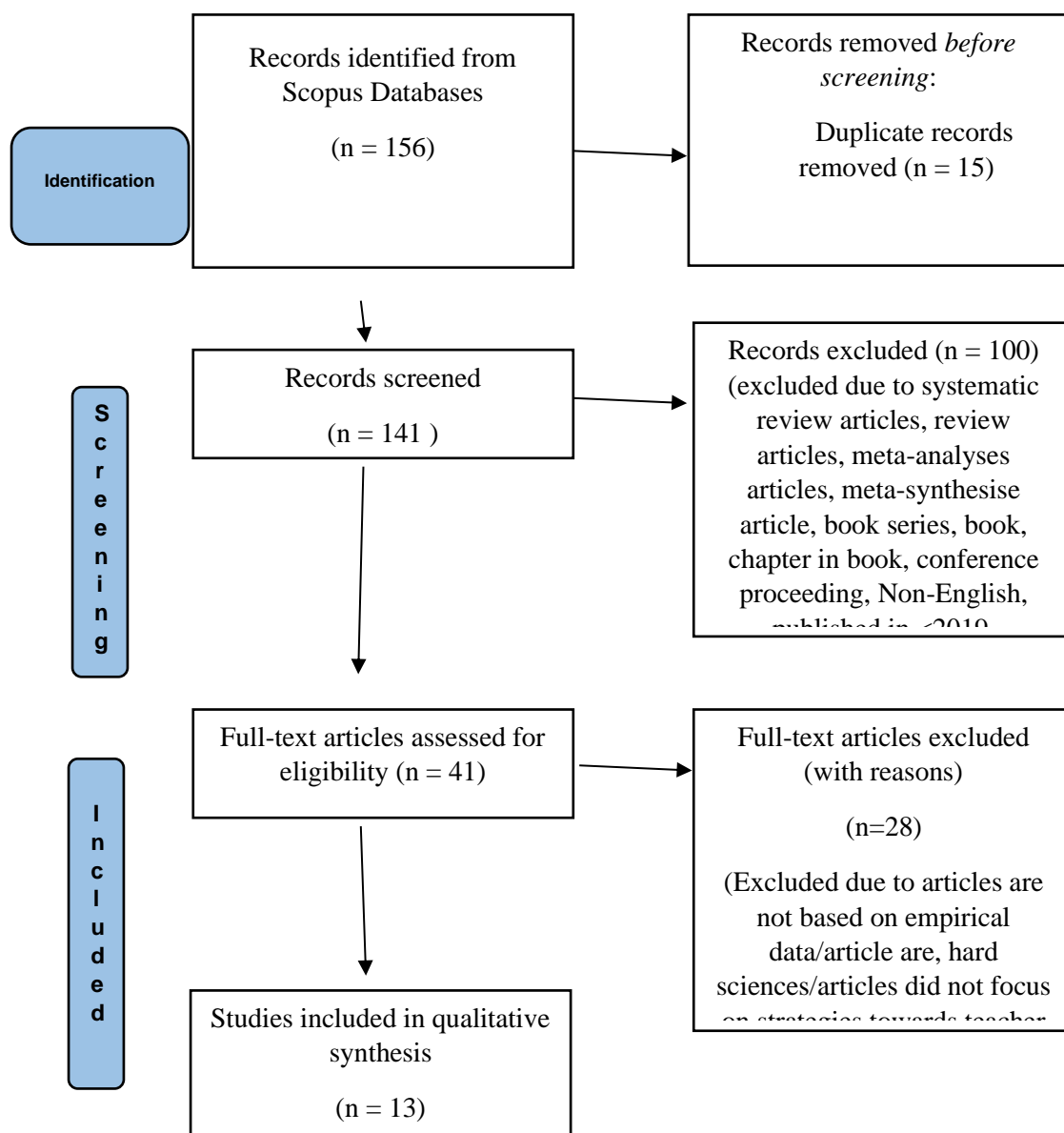


Figure 1. Flow Diagram of the study (adapted from Moher et al., 2009).

#### iv. Data abstraction and analysis

This study performed an integrative review, one of the review techniques that analyzes and synthesizes diverse research designs together (qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods) and this can be settled by transforming one type into the other qualitzing quantitative data or quantitizing qualitative data (Whitemore & Knafl, 2005). This study opt for qualitzing all selected data. The processes of developing the appropriate themes and the sub-themes were carried out based on thematic analysis. The first phase within the theme development processes was the compilation of data. In this phase, the authors carefully analyzed a group of 13 selected articles to extract statements or data that answers the research questions. Subsequently, in the second phase, the authors created meaningful groups via coding method according to the nature of the data. In other words, the second phase converts raw data into usable data via the identification of themes, concepts, or ideas for a more connected and related data (Sandelowski, 1995; Patton, 2002). Eventually, the process has resulted in a total



of two main themes of teacher digital competence strategies namely strategies of developing teacher digital competence in digital environment and non-digital environment. Thereafter, the authors resumed the process in each of the created themes whereby any themes, concepts, or ideas that have some connection with each other within that developed themes will be developed as sub-themes. Within the scope of this review, the corresponding author developed the themes based on the findings with other co-authors to consistently theme the findings while a record was kept during the entire process of data analysis that document resulted analysis, thought, puzzles or any idea that can be associated with the interpretation of the data. The authors also compared the results with the aim of addressing any inconsistencies in the process of theme development and accordingly, the authors discussed with each other if there were any inconsistencies on the themes emerged. Finally, the developed themes and sub-themes were adjusted accordingly in order to ensure their consistency. To ensure the validity of the themes and the sub-themes, expert reviews were performed by a total of three experts, where two of them are educational experts while the third person is a qualitative expert. The expert review process establishes the domain validity and helps to ensure the clarity, relevance and appropriateness of each sub-themes within its respective themes. Drawing on the experts' feedback and comments, adjustments were made based on the discretion of the authors.

## **Results and Discussions**

### **i. General Findings**

A total of nine (9) studies used quantitative methods, while three (3) other studies used qualitative methods in their studies. Only one (1) study used the mixed method. This suggests a preference for empirical, data-driven approaches in studying creativity, though there is room for more comprehensive insights and in-depth understanding with mixed methods. In terms of published years, seven (7) articles were published in 2023, four (4) in 2022, one (1) in 2020, and one (1) in 2019 (see Fig.2). A significant number of the studies (7 out of 13) were published in 2023, indicating a recent surge in interest and research in this field. This reflects the evolving nature of work environments and the increasing importance of creativity in the post-pandemic era. For example, the Indonesian government has recognized the creative economy as a strategic sector. Initiatives like forming of the Creative Economy Agency (Bekraf) demonstrate a strong institutional commitment to nurturing and developing this sector (UNESCO, 2017; Sonobe et al., 2022). Notedly, no publication in 2021 grabbed research attention in this general findings. The year 2021 was a critical period in the COVID-19 pandemic. Many researchers and institutions faced disruptions due to lockdowns, social distancing measures, and shifts in priorities to pandemic-related topics. This shift could have temporarily reduced the focus on creativity research (Görlich, 2023). However, it is important to note that these are speculative reasons, and the actual cause for the lack of publications in 2021 could be a combination of these and other factors not immediately apparent from the literature.



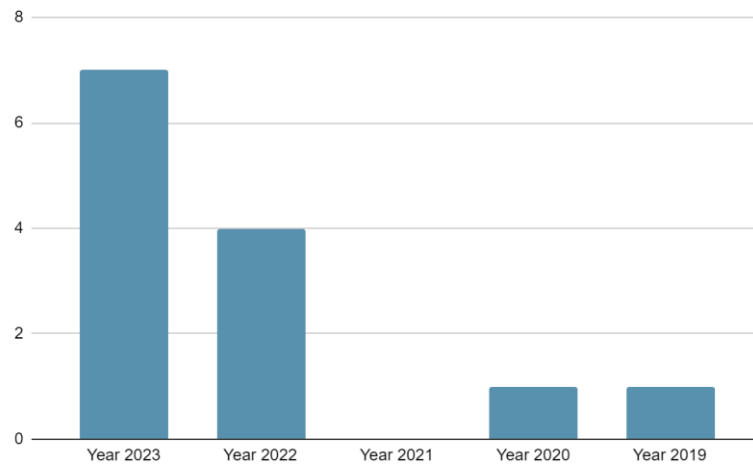


Figure 2. Publications per year

Most of the studies reviewed were conducted in Indonesia (3), followed by China and Spain (2), Hong Kong (1), Iran (1), Russia (1), and Malaysia (1). Only two of these papers conducted cross-countries, between Italy and Norway (1), Pakistan, Poland, Romania, and Turkey (1) were also included in this review (see Fig.3). The studies are geographically diverse, with the majority conducted in Indonesia, followed by China and Spain. Southeast Asia has seen rapid digitalization and technological growth, impacting the creative sectors. This technological advancement, especially in countries like Indonesia and China, offers new avenues for creativity research (ASEAN, 2022). This diversity suggests a global interest in the topic of creativity, although the concentration in certain countries indicates potential cultural or regional specificities in how creativity is approached and studied.

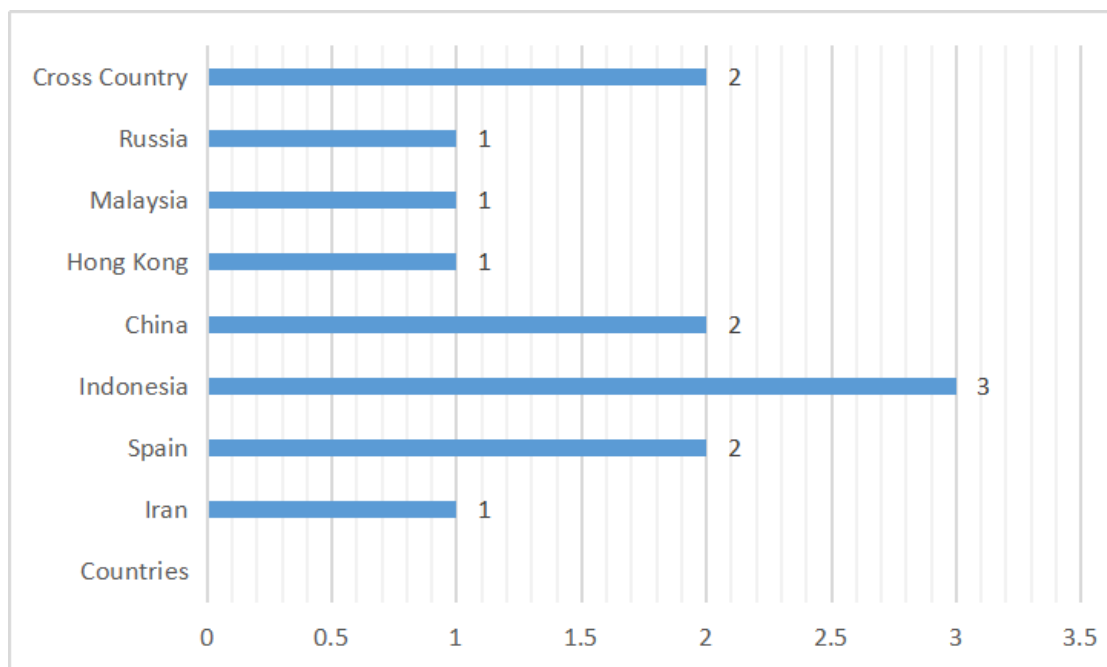


Figure 3. Countries where the studies were conducted.

## ii. Leadership Styles and Roles in Promoting Employee Creativity

Leadership plays a pivotal role in promoting employee creativity, as evidenced by the literature review conducted in this study (see Table 3). The findings of previous literature provides a comprehensive understanding of how different aspects of leadership roles influence creativity in the organizations. Firstly, ethical leadership, characterized by trustworthiness and integrity, is fundamental in creating an environment where employees feel comfortable sharing their ideas and concerns. Hosseini and Ferreira (2023) indicate that ethical leadership can facilitate employee voice, enhance employees' creativity, and promote knowledge-sharing behavior inside the organization. They propose that leaders exhibit personal integrity, freely seek employees' views and suggestions, approach employees with truthfulness, and strive to optimize potential benefits for their employees. This open communication fosters a culture of creativity and can lead to competitive advantages and quick responses to environmental crises (Hosseini & Ferreira, 2023). Furthermore, empowering leadership, which involves psychological empowerment (Chen, et al., 2023) and self-leadership (Alif & Nastiti, 2022), directly and indirectly influences employee creativity in the context of the millennial generation. This type of leadership enables employees to take ownership of their work, fostering an environment where creativity can thrive and facilitate the transition phase of digital transformation (Chen et al., 2023; Alif & Nastiti, 2022). Thus, it highlights the interconnection between leadership ethics and the creative capacities of employees, suggesting that the way leaders should conduct themselves and interact with their employees can significantly influence the creative output of an organization.

Moreover, the style of leadership significantly impacts employee creativity. Kinder Leadership, emphasizing teamwork, motivation, and risk-taking, impacts creativity, although its direct effect appears less pronounced compared to other competencies (Yela Aránega et al., 2023). Most of the literature studies focus on transformational leadership to enhance creativity among employees (Żywiołek et al., 2022; Chua et al., 2021; Chua, Lim & Wiruchnipawan, 2022; Awang et al., 2020; Rehmani et al., 2023; Pertiwi, Setyawati & Anggraeni, 2023). Transformational leadership, known for its inspirational and motivational qualities, has been shown to positively affect employee creativity (Alieva & Powell, 2023). It encourages knowledge sharing and trust-building, which are crucial for creative endeavors (Pertiwi, Setyawati & Anggraeni, 2023). Żywiołek et al. (2022) reveal that knowledge sharing in transformational leadership not only impacts employee creativity, but plays a key role for employee adaptiveness links. In contrast, transactional leadership, which focuses more on structured tasks and rewards, might inhibit creative thinking (Chua, Lim & Wiruchnipawan, 2022). They suggest that leaders should ensure they engage in fewer transactional leadership behaviors and focus on activators to stimulate employee creativity. Chua, Lim and Wiruchnipawan (2022) also suggests a pivot towards transformational leadership practices that prioritize activities stimulating creativity and 'doing' rather than rigid task execution. This shift is believed to create a more dynamic, open, and innovative organizational culture, essential for nurturing creativity and adaptability in a constantly evolving digital landscape.

Digital leadership also emerges as a key factor, especially in the context of the digital era. Leaders who are adept in digital tools and strategies can significantly enhance employee creativity (Zhu, Zhang, Xie & Cao, 2022). This is particularly relevant in the process of digital transformation, where leadership styles need to adapt to the changing digital landscape (Zhu et al., 2022; Tekic & Koroteev, 2019). In line with that, the importance of leaders having a

strong understanding of digital tools and resources is highlighted by Priyanto, Murwaningsari and Augustine (2023). With a strong understanding of digital tools and resources, leaders must establish a culture that promotes the integration of digital technology throughout the organization, while also having a clear vision for utilizing digital technology in present and future operations. Therefore, leaders should play their roles: (1) setting a clear vision and direction, (2) developing comprehensive strategies, (3) ensuring that sufficient resources, (4) identifying potential risks and challenges, (5) fostering an organizational culture, (6) communicating effectively with all stakeholders, (7) keeping abreast of emerging technologies, (8) investing in the development of employees' digital skills and competencies, (9) encouraging and facilitating innovation, and (10) being adaptable to rapidly changing digital landscapes. These leadership roles in formulating the digital transformation strategies are important to identify opportunities and threats of digital transformation (Tekic & Koroteev, 2019).

In summary, the findings of this study clearly illustrates that leadership plays a critical role in enhancing employee creativity. Different leadership styles and approaches, including ethical leadership, kinder leadership, transformational leadership, digital leadership, and empowering leadership, each contribute uniquely to fostering a creative work environment. This understanding is essential for organizations aiming to cultivate creativity and innovation among their employees. Table 4 lists the leadership styles and roles in enhancing employee creativity.

Table 4

*Leadership styles and roles in enhancing employee creativity*

<b>Leadership Styles</b>	<b>Leadership Roles</b>
Ethical Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Exhibiting trustworthiness and integrity.</li> <li>● Facilitating employee voice and promoting knowledge-sharing.</li> <li>● Creating an environment for open communication and idea sharing.</li> </ul>
Transformational Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Inspiring and motivating employees.</li> <li>● Encouraging knowledge sharing and trust-building.</li> <li>● Focusing on stimulating employee creativity and adaptiveness.</li> </ul>
Transactional Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reducing focus on structured tasks and rewards.</li> <li>● Engaging in behaviors that stimulate creativity rather than inhibit it.</li> </ul>
Digital Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Proficiency in digital tools and strategies.</li> <li>● Leading digital transformation by identifying opportunities and threats.</li> <li>● Adapting leadership styles to changing digital landscapes.</li> </ul>

Empowering Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Invoking psychological empowerment and self-leadership.</li> <li>● Enabling employees to take ownership of their work.</li> <li>● Fostering a work environment conducive to creativity, especially among millennials.</li> </ul>
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### Conclusion

This study was conducted to identify the leadership styles and roles in enhancing employee creativity that focussed in the literature from 2019 to 2023. Although transformational leadership is the leadership style that has the highest frequency (five studies), it cannot be generalized as the best leadership styles for enhancing employee creativity in organizations. A balanced approach to leadership, incorporating various styles and roles, is instrumental in fostering a dynamic and effective organizational environment. Therefore, it can be concluded that a balanced approach to different leadership roles and styles should be explored further to fill up the knowledge and methodology gap based on the results of this study.

### Future Research

The results of this study led to the identification of the following current gaps and needs in enhancing employee creativity. For future research, the following ideas are provided:

- i. Lack of research on exploring leadership styles and roles in enhancing employee creativity in Malaysian contexts, leaving a gap in our understanding of how leadership styles and roles can be developed and used in Malaysian context.
- ii. Lack of research on exploring leadership styles and roles in enhancing employee creativity by using mixed methods. Future research could employ a mixed-methods research design that combines quantitative methods (like surveys and experiments) with qualitative methods (such as interviews and case studies). This approach can provide a more holistic understanding of how different leadership styles impact employee creativity.

### Limitations

Research articles evaluated in review studies are selected according to various criteria. In this study, only studies published in the Scopus journal database were analyzed. It is possible to find research articles on leadership and creativity in other SSCI journal databases. In this systematic review, "article" was selected as the document type. Future researchers may wish to examine conference papers, reviews, editorials, theses and dissertations. With such wider bases of data, it is possible that different leadership styles and roles on enhancing employee creativity may be found.

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