



## Antecedents of Employee Creativity in the Tourism and Hospitality Industry: A Systematic Literature Review

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### Abstract

The concept of employee creativity plays an important role in the success and effectiveness of today's organizations, especially service organizations. In this sense, it is considered important to discover the factors affecting employee creativity. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to synthesize the extant literature to gain insight into the antecedents of employee creativity in the hospitality and tourism industry. As a matter of fact, systematic literature review (SLR) is frequently used to evaluate existing research on a particular research topic. 38 articles published in SSCI indexed journals in the Web of Science database were analysed systematically using content analysis. The vast majority of empirical articles on the topic were based on the quantitative research method. Moreover, the antecedents of employee creativity were classified under five main categories: individual, organizational, psychological, job related and leader related. Overall, most of the studies reviewed highlighted organizational and leader-related factors as antecedents of employee creativity. Finally, this paper offers suggestions to tourism and hospitality managers on how to increase employee creativity.

**Keywords:** Employee creativity, Hospitality, Tourism, Systematic literature review

**Jel Codes:** L80, L83

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**Submitted:** 13/08/2023

**Revised:** 31/08/2023

**Accepted:** 5/09/2023

**Online Published:** 15/09/2023

**Citation:** Ersoy, A. (2023). Antecedents of Employee Creativity in the Tourism and Hospitality Industry: A Systematic Literature Review, *Journal of Tourism Intelligence and Smartness*, 6(2), 107-120.

<http://doi.org/10.58636/jtis.1342529>

### Introduction

Creativity is essential for organizations operating in a volatile and uncertain environment (Gupta and Bajaj, 2017). In other words, creativity has become a primary factor that organizations need to develop to help them respond to changing environmental demands and provide flexibility (Sigala and Chalkiti, 2015). Creativity is considered a key factor to meet demands in a global environment, as it is associated with gaining competitive advantage and seizing business opportunities, new ideas and services (Hou et al., 2024). Similarly, employee creativity in the hospitality and tourism industry has been considered as a crucial element for the success of an organization (Chang and Teng, 2017). Considering that employees in labor-intensive hospitality businesses are in one-to-one contact with customers, the concept of creativity emerges as a way of satisfying customers (Ye et al., 2020). Therefore, it has become imperative for organizations to analyse and understand how employees can perform creatively and what kind of environment they need for this (Gupta and Bajaj, 2017).

Encouraging creativity in organizations requires not only the selection of creative performers but also an understanding of the factors that impact employee creativity (Hou et al., 2024). In particular, in the hospitality industry context, many studies have focused on identifying



factors that influence employee creativity, which is effective in providing innovation, service quality and competitive advantage (Tsai et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2021; Shao et al., 2022). While some of these argue that leadership is an effective element in employee creativity (Cheung and Wong, 2011; Wang et al., 2014), others are concerned with factors such as personality (Chien et al., 2021) and motivation (Horng et al., 2016). Despite the fact that with the COVID-19 crisis, employee creativity in the hospitality and tourism industry has become more important than ever (Bavik and Kuo, 2022), studies to systematically review employee creativity are scarce. For example, Bavik and Kuo (2022) conducted a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) on the concept of creativity in the tourism and hospitality context. However, the antecedents of employee creativity in the tourism and hospitality context have not yet been examined through a SLR. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to systematically review the extant literature on the antecedents of employee creativity and to offer a comprehensive view of the related topic.

This SLR contributes to the tourism and hospitality literature as follows. First, to the best of the author's knowledge, this is one of the pioneering research to provide a comprehensive review to discover the antecedents of employee creativity in the hospitality and tourism context. This is useful for bridging the gap in the literature and offering new avenues for future work. Second, this paper presents a model that summarizes the various antecedents of employee creativity and provides a comprehensive framework. Thus, the results of this research provide tourism and hospitality managers with insights to discover the factors that positively or negatively impact employee creativity and to take measures in this direction.

## Literature Review

### Employee Creativity in the Tourism and Hospitality Industry

Creativity is defined as “the constellation of personality and intellectual traits shown by individuals who, when given a measure of free rein, spend significant amounts of time engaged in the creative process” (Amabile, 1988: 125). In other words, creativity is the result of individuals' skills, expertise and creative thinking based on their education and experience (Darini et al., 2011). On the other hand, employee creativity is the skill of employees to develop new ideas about processes, procedures and services in the business environment and the degree to which they perceive it (Liao and Chen, 2018). That is, creative employee behavior can be summarized as an employee's belief and insight about his or her creative performance (Rice, 2006). Creative employees present unconventional ways of solving problems and fulfilling their tasks in the face of obstacles (Hon, 2011). Creative employees play an important role in organizations' productivity, innovation and sustainability (Lukersmith and Burgess-Limerick, 2013). As seen, creative employees help the organization become more innovative by producing new services, but also help organizations gain competitive advantage (Islam et al., 2021).

Employee creativity has taken its place as an important concept in the hospitality and tourism industry over the last two decades (Bavik and Kuo, 2022). Since this industry operates in an intensely competitive environment, it has focused on employee creativity as a way to provide quality service and meet customer needs (Chang and Teng, 2017). Because the key to success in the highly competitive tourism and hospitality industry is to respond to customer demands by offering creative performance (Horng et al., 2016). In other words, in the hospitality and tourism context, employee creativity can help increase customer satisfaction and service quality, as service employees interact with customers one-on-one (Hou et al., 2024). Studies conducted in the context of the tourism and hospitality industry have revealed that employee creativity positively affects innovative work behavior (Hakim and Wahab, 2023), job satisfaction (Yoopetch, 2017), job performance (Anasori et al., 2023), employee service performance (Sok et al., 2018). In this sense, in the hospitality and tourism context, the issue of creating an environment that positively impacts employee creativity is on the agenda (Hon, 2011). As creative employees need greater intrinsic motivation and role clarity, organizations need to reward creative performance through performance appraisal systems (Mullin and Sherman, 1993). Also, an employee's creativity is generally defined by

individual characteristics, organizational factors, and the interactions between these characteristics (Sigala and Chalkiti, 2015). Therefore, examining factors such as organizational culture, leadership style and job characteristics helps hospitality and tourism businesses understand that change is necessary to promote innovation and creativity and provide the essential technical and emotional support to employees (Hon and Lui, 2016).

## Methodology

SLR was carried out to discover and analyse the antecedents of employee creativity. This SLR followed a five-step process suggested by Khan et al. (2003): formulating research questions, identifying articles, assessing the quality of articles, and summarizing and interpreting findings. The first step of SLR studies is to determine the focus of the research by formulating research questions in accordance with the purpose of the paper (Denyer and Tranfield, 2009). The main question of this study was decided after extensive reviews of the research gaps in the extant literature. This review is guided by the following research question:

*RQ1.* What are the antecedents of employee creativity in the tourism and hospitality context and how do they affect employee creativity?

The second step involves the selection of database to identify relevant studies. The SLR was conducted using the Web of Science database. WOS is the leading citation database with the highest impact journals in the world (Liu et al., 2013). The following keywords group was searched in the WOS database by using the "title, abstract and keywords": ("employee creativity\*" OR "creativity") AND ("Tourism" OR "travel" OR "hotel" OR "hotels" OR "aviation" OR "hospitality" OR "tourist" OR "leisure" OR "hospitality management" OR "restaurant"). The database was searched on 16 July 2023. No publication year restrictions were made, and the end date was selected as 2023. Only SSCI-indexed journals were included to ensure the quality of the studies. As a next step, inclusion and exclusion criteria were utilized to assess the eligibility of the articles.

Inclusion criteria were:

- Articles based on empirical research,
- Articles describing employee creativity in the hospitality and tourism context,
- Peer-reviewed journals,
- Articles written in English,
- Articles based on employees and employee-subordinate dyads as samples.

Exclusion criteria were:

- Articles not based on empirical research,
- Publications other than articles,
- Articles that did not include employees as a sample group.
- Articles outside the scope of tourism and hospitality industry,
- Articles without full text.

The initial search with the identified keywords yielded 692 articles. The next step involved examining the title and abstract of each article. At this stage, articles not related to the topic of this article were excluded, and the second search generated 241 articles. After this round, the full texts were reviewed and this search resulted in 241 articles. The full text of two of these articles could not be accessed and 201 were eliminated because they were beyond the scope of this article. As a result of the evaluation of the full texts, the final sample was narrowed to 38 articles (Figure 1).

In the final stage, the extracted data were analysed manually using content analysis. First, the articles were categorized after determining the common features. Each article was then evaluated and analysed in the context of the method used, methodology and antecedents of employee creativity. The results were grouped according to the emerging themes.

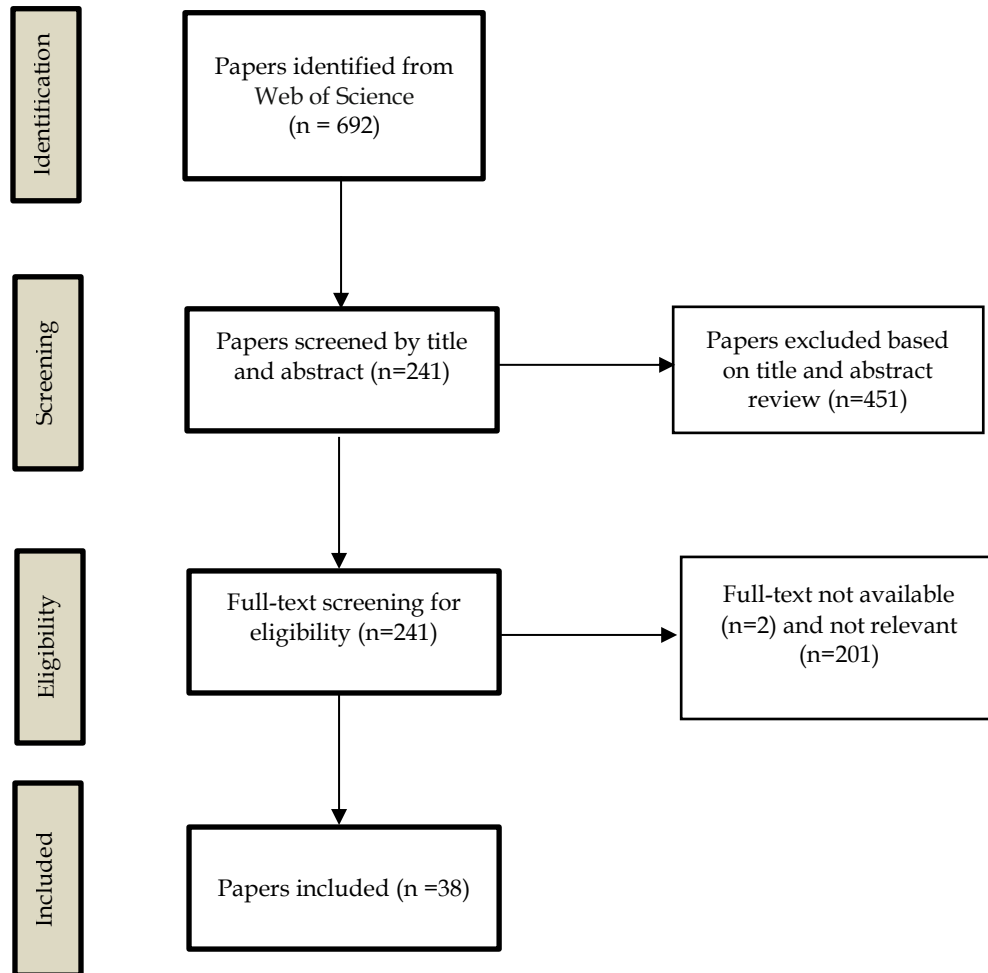


Figure 1. Systematic Review Flowchart

## Findings

This section presents data from 38 articles analysed. First, we provide information about the research methodology and the source of the articles. Afterwards, the classification for the antecedents of employee creativity is presented.

### The Main Research Methodologies Used

Various methodologies and methods have been used to discover the antecedents of employee creativity. As seen in Table 1, all of the studies are empirical in nature. However, the majority of studies are based on quantitative methodology (n=37) conducted using survey, online survey and paper and pencil survey. Only one article is based on mixed approach conducted using web-based survey and interview.

Table 1. Distribution of Articles by Methodology and Methods

Methodology	Data gathering method	No of Articles	Total
Quantitative	Survey	30	37
	Online survey	4	
	Paper and pencil survey	3	
Mixed approach	Web based survey and interview	1	1
Total		38	

### Source of Articles

The 38 articles examined within the scope of this study were published in 18 different journals. As seen in Table 2, the journal with the highest number of published articles on

employee creativity is the International Hospitality Management Journal (n=11), followed by International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management (n=4), Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management (n=3) and Sustainability (n=3), respectively.

**Table 2.** Distribution of Articles by Journal

Journal	No of articles
International Journal of Hospitality Management	11
International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management	4
Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management	3
Sustainability	3
Current Issues in Tourism	2
Leadership & Organization Development Journal	2
Current Psychology	2
Tourism Management	1
Frontiers in Psychology	1
Cornell Hospitality Quarterly	1
Journal of Management & Organization	1
International Journal of Emerging Markets	1
The Service Industries Journal	1
International Journal of Tourism Research	1
Journal of Services Marketing	1
Journal of Business Ethics	1
Behavioral Sciences	1
Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research	1
Total	38

### Thematic Analysis

This section provides the results of the SLR to identify the antecedents of employee creativity. Accordingly, 43 antecedents of employee creativity were reached and they were classified by the authors into five main categories based on the relevant literature: individual, organizational, psychological, job related and leader related. The result of the SLR is shown in Figure 2. The following section provides detailed information on each antecedent.

#### Individual Factors

Individual factors affecting employee creativity are related to their individual attributes. Table 3 provides information on the effect of various individual factors on employee creativity and presents the main findings regarding the antecedents investigated.

**Table 3.** Individual Related Antecedents of Employee Creativity

Antecedents	Findings
Proactive personality	A positive relationship was found between proactive personality and employee creativity through the meaning of work (Akgunduz et al., 2018). Proactive personality is the positive antecedent of intrinsic motivation (as a result employee creativity) (Horng et al., 2016). Proactive personality is positively correlated with frontline service employee creativity (Chien et al., 2021).
Emotional intelligence	Travel agency employees who have emotional intelligence exhibit a great deal of creativity (Tsai and Lee, 2014). Emotional intelligence is positively associated with frontline service employees' creativity (Darvishmotevali et al., 2018).
Employee adaptiveness	Employee adaptiveness is a positive predictor of employee creativity (Zywiolek et al., 2022).
Individual characteristic	The need for power and the need for achievement, which are among individual characteristics, are positively correlated with employee creativity (Hon, 2012a).
Mindfulness	Hospitality employee's mindfulness is positively correlated to employee creativity (Wang et al., 2021)
Creative personality	The creative personality of the employees is an important factor that positively affects their creative behavior (Chang and Teng, 2017).
Employee self-concordance	A positive relationship was found between employee creativity and employee self-confidence (Hon, 2011).

As seen in Table 3, seven individual related factors affect employee creativity. All antecedents evaluated under these factors showed a positive relationship with employee creativity in all relevant studies. Proactive personality and emotional intelligence were the most researched individual antecedents of employee creativity.

### **Organizational Factors**

The antecedents in this category have been extensively studied in the relevant literature. Table 4 provides information on organizational factors affecting employee creativity and presents the main findings of the antecedents in this category. As shown in Table 4, the most frequently mentioned of the 12 organizational factors affecting employee creativity are corporate social responsibility, perceived organizational support and organizational climate. Under this category, only organizational inertia and workplace bullying showed a negative relationship with employee creativity.

**Table 4.** Organization Related Antecedents of Employee Creativity

<b>Antecedents</b>	<b>Findings</b>
Perceived organizational support	<p>POS is associated with the meaning of work (therefore high employee creativity) among hotel employees (Akgunduz et al., 2018).</p> <p>A positive correlation was found between POS and employee creativity (Wang, 2022).</p> <p>POS is a positive antecedent of employees' creative performance, in turn, employee creativity (Tsai et al., 2015).</p>
Organizational climate	<p>Climate for creativity is positively correlated to employee creativity through employees' autonomous (intrinsic) motivation (Hon, 2012b).</p> <p>Innovative climate is positively correlated to employee creativity (Jaiswal and Dhar, 2015).</p>
Corporate social responsibility	<p>A hotel's micro-level CSR activities are positively associated with employee creativity (Ahmad et al., 2022).</p> <p>Employees' perceptions of CSR towards their organizations are positively correlated to their creativity (Shao et al., 2022).</p> <p>Hotel employees' perceptions of CSR are predictors of employees' intrinsic motivation and compassion at work, which is a key driver of employee creativity (Hur et al., 2018).</p> <p>Employees' CSR perceptions promote creativity. Work engagement mediates these associations (Oh et al., 2022).</p> <p>CSR affects employee creativity directly and via job autonomy (Guo et al., 2021).</p>
Workplace bullying	Workplace bullying negatively influences employee creativity (Anasori et al., 2023).
Error management culture	Error management culture positively influences employee creativity via group efficacy and manager trust (Wang et al., 2018).
Group efficacy	Group efficacy positively affects employee creativity (Wang et al., 2018).
Diversity-oriented practices	HR Diversity-oriented HR practices predict knowledge sharing, which in turn positively impact employee creativity (Trong Tuan, 2020).
High-performance practices	HR High-performance HR practices impact employee creativity significantly and via psychological empowerment (He et al., 2021).
CBP (competency-based pay)	Reward for knowledge and reward for skill, as assessed under CBP, predict employee creativity (Hon, 2012a).
Organizational inertia	Organizational inertia is negatively correlated with service employee creativity (AlKayid et al., 2023).
Organizational modernity	Organizational modernity is positively correlated to employee self-concordance, which positively impact employee creativity (Hon, 2011).
Work environment	A work environment that characterizes promotion, knowledge sharing, procedural fairness, and motivation is positively associated with employee creativity (Tsai et al., 2015).

### Psychological Factors

The category of psychological factors presents the fewest antecedents. Table 5 demonstrates findings for each antecedent in this category. As seen, the most frequently cited among the six psychological factors affecting employee creativity was intrinsic motivation. While all the antecedents in this category were positively associated with employee creativity, only psychological distress was negatively associated.

**Table 5.** Psychological Antecedents of Employee Creativity

Antecedents	Findings
Meaning of work	Work meaningfulness is positively correlated with employee creativity (Akgunduz et al., 2018).
Intrinsic motivation	When employees have a high sense of autonomous motivation, employee creativity increases (Hon, 2012b).  Intrinsic motivation is positively associated with employee creativity (Horng et al., 2016).  There is a positive relationship between intrinsic motivation and employee creativity (Hur et al., 2016).
Respectful engagement	Respectful engagement positively impacts employee creativity (Hai et al., 2022).
Psychological distress	Psychological distress negatively affects employee creativity (Anasori et al., 2023).
Manager trust	Manager trust enhances employee creativity (Wang et al., 2018).
Collective positive psychological	Collective positive psychological capital promotes employee creativity (Wu and Chen, 2018).

### Job related Factors

Job-related factors that affect employee creativity refer to those related to their job. Table 6 provides information on the effect of job-related factors on employee creativity and presents the findings of the antecedents in this category. As highlighted in Table 6, among the seven job-related factors affecting employee creativity, coworker support was the most frequently cited in the literature. However, job characteristics, job autonomy, co-worker support and challenge oriented stress were positively associated with employee creativity, while role ambiguity, role conflict, workplace incivility and hindrance oriented stress were negatively associated.

**Table 6.** Job Related Antecedents of Employee Creativity

Antecedents	Findings
Job characteristics	A positive relationship was found between employee creativity and job characteristics (Tsaour et al., 2011).
Role conflict	Role conflict is negatively correlated with employee creativity (Chien et al., 2021).
Role ambiguity	Role ambiguity negatively impacts employee creativity (Chien et al., 2021).
Workplace incivility	Coworker and customer incivility triggers emotional exhaustion, which decreases intrinsic motivation and finally decreases creativity (Hur et al., 2016).
Job autonomy	Job autonomy positively influences employee creativity (Guo et al., 2021).
Work stress	Challenge-related stress is positively associated with employee creativity, while hindrance related stress is negatively associated with employee creativity (Hon et al., 2013).
Coworker support	Coworker support positively affects creativity. Employee self-concordance partially mediated this relationship (Hon, 2011).  Coworker support is positively correlated to employee creativity through autonomous motivation (Hon, 2012b).  A positive relationship was found between knowledge-sharing and employee creativity (Thanh and Tran, 2023).

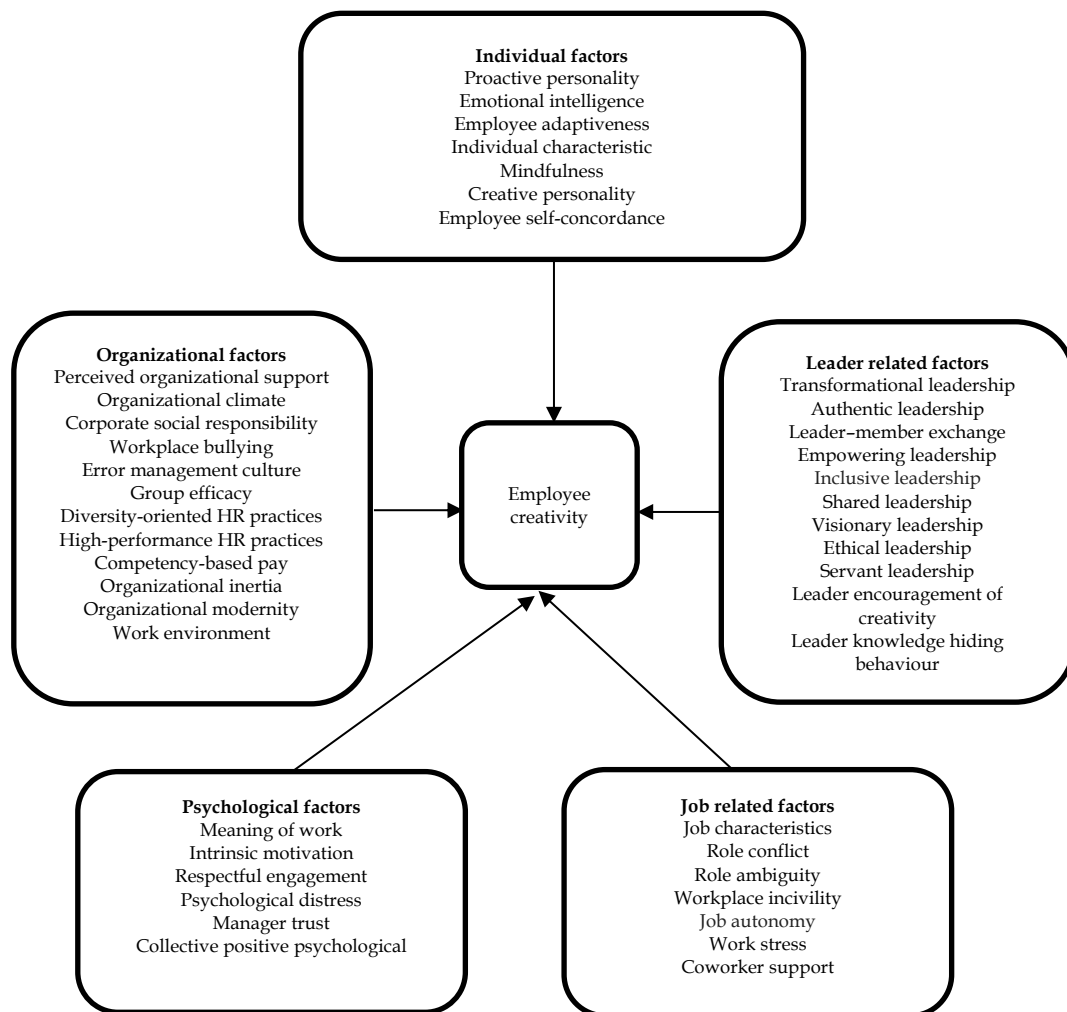
### Leader Related Factors

Leader-related factors influencing employee creativity are related to leader behaviors that affect employees. The category of leader related factors has been the second most researched category in the literature on presenting antecedents that affect employee creativity. Table 7 provides information on the effect of leader-related factors on employee creativity and presents the findings of emerging antecedents. As seen in Table 7, transformational leadership, LMX and empowering leadership have been studied the most in the literature among the 11 leader related factors that affect employee creativity. Only two antecedents of this category showed an indirect relationship with employee creativity: visionary leadership and ethical leadership. Leader knowledge hiding behavior had negative relationship with employee creativity.

**Table 7.** Leader Related Antecedents of Employee Creativity

Antecedents	Findings
Transformational Leadership	Transformational leadership impacts employee creativity positively and via innovate climate (Jaiswal and Dhar, 2015).  There is a positive correlation between employee creativity and transformational leadership (Wang et al., 2014).  A positive relationship was found between transformational leadership and employee creativity, and this relationship is stronger when leaders have high task and relationship support (Cheung and Wong, 2011).  There is a positive correlation between employee creativity and transformational leadership (Zywiolok et al., 2022).  Transformational leadership enhances employee creativity via respectful engagement (Hai et al., 2022).  Transformational leadership is positively correlated to employee creativity (Chang and Teng, 2017). Transformational leadership helps to develop an innovative climate and therefore positively affects the employee creativity (Mohamed, 2016).  Transformational leadership positively associated with employee creativity (Wang, 2022).
Authentic leadership	Authentic leadership positively influences employee creativity. LMX mediates this relationship (Yıkılmaz and Sürücü, 2021).
Leader-member exchange	LMX is positively correlated with employee creativity (Yıkılmaz and Sürücü, 2021).  A positive relationship was found between employee creativity and LMX (Wang, 2016).
Empowering leadership	Empowering leadership is positively correlated to autonomous motivation, which in turn positively affects employee creativity (Hon, 2012b).  Psychological empowerment is positively correlated with creativity (Javed et al., 2017).
Inclusive leadership	Inclusive leadership positively impacts employee creativity (Shao et al., 2022).
Shared leadership	Shared leadership promotes creativity and collective PsyCap partially mediated this relationship (Wu and Chen, 2018).
Visionary leadership	There is an indirect relationship between visionary leadership and employee creativity and organizational inertia mediates this relationship (AlKayed et al., 2023).
Ethical leadership	Ethical leadership promotes employee creativity, and psychological empowerment mediates this relationship (Javed et al., 2017).
Servant leadership	A positive relationship was found between employee creativity and servant leadership (Ruiz Palomino and Zoghbi Manrique de Lara, 2020).
Leader encouragement of creativity	Leader encouragement is positively correlated with employee creativity (Thanh and Tran, 2023).
Leader knowledge hiding behaviour	A negative relationship was found between LKH behavior and employee creativity, and FAB mediates this relationship (Akhtar et al., 2022).





**Figure 2.** Antecedents of Employee Creativity

## Conclusion and Suggestions

In this paper, a systematic review of the extant literature investigating the antecedents of employee creativity is presented. As seen in Figure 2, empirical studies used different antecedents to measure employee creativity and these were grouped into five categories: individual, organizational, psychological, job-related, and leader-related. Researchers have often used proactive personality and emotional intelligence in the context of individual antecedents of employee creativity. The reason to frequently research these antecedents may be due to the people-oriented nature of the hospitality and tourism industry. In fact, employee personality is important in this industry, because in the service process, the one-to-one interaction of employees with customers is essential (Akgunduz et al., 2018). As a result, individual characteristics (e.g. proactive personality and emotional intelligence) possessed by employees are one of the antecedents that provide customer satisfaction by increasing the quality of one-to-one relationships (Ekinci and Daves, 2009). On the other hand, the antecedents in the category of organizational factors have been extensively researched in the relevant literature. In this context, perceived organizational support, organizational climate and corporate social responsibility were among the antecedents that positively affected employee creativity. On the other hand, organizational inertia and workplace bullying were among the antecedents that negatively affected employee creativity. Consistent with this finding, Bavik and Kuo (2022) state that the organizational environment has an effect on employee creativity and that managers should create an organizational climate that allows employees to display creative performance. In this sense, tourism and hospitality managers need to create a supportive environment that tolerates mistakes and encourages employees to take risks in order to increase their creative performance (Hon, 2012b).

Within the scope of psychological factors, it has been seen that intrinsic motivation is the most frequently researched antecedent that positively affects employee creativity. However, psychological distress is among the psychological antecedents that negatively affect employee creativity. This finding is not surprising because tourism and hospitality employees need to be passionate and intrinsically motivated to perform creatively, provide quality service, and delight customers (Horng et al., 2016). Within the scope of job-related factors affecting employee creativity, the most researched antecedent has been co-worker support. Hence, hospitality employees can share their knowledge and expertise with each other when faced with difficulties, and contribute to the generation of new ideas through their supportive approach (Hon, 2011). In contrast, role ambiguity, role conflict, workplace incivility, and hindrance oriented stress were negatively associated with employee creativity. Accordingly, hospitality managers need to minimize destructive personal and task conflicts by creating a work environment that encourages knowledge sharing among employees (Hon, 2012b). Finally, leader-related factors affecting employee creativity have also been frequently investigated in the literature. In particular, transformational leadership, LMX, and empowering leadership were the most frequently studied antecedents. In addition, the leader's knowledge hiding behavior has taken place as an antecedent that negatively affects employee creativity. In this context, considering the role of leaders in influencing employee behaviors, it may be beneficial for organizations to create an environment that allows leaders to further develop their skills and to organize trainings in this sense (Siachou et al., 2021). This study provides valuable information to tourism and hospitality managers in recognizing the importance of employee creativity and the factors affecting it. The results of this paper may enable sector managers to prepare the necessary conditions and take measures to increase employee creativity.

This study has certain limitations. Firstly, Web of Science was chosen as the database to identify the antecedents of employee creativity. Future studies on this topic may use other databases such as Scopus, Google Scholar and Ebsco. Second, the current review includes only English-language articles published in journals indexed in the SSCI. Future research may also examine journals, books, and conference proceedings and reach more comprehensive conclusions.

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**Peer-review:**

Externally peer-reviewed

**Conflict of interests:**

The author(s) has (have) no conflict of interest to declare.

**Grant Support:**

The author(s) declared that this study has received no financial support

**Ethics Committee Approval:**

The study was conducted without requiring approval from the ethics committee. Secondary data were used in the research.