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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Linking Leaders' Humor Styles and Employees' Organizational Creativity: Moderating Role of Organizational Tenure

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to determine the relationship between the positive (self-enhancing, affiliative) and negative (self-defeating, aggressive) use of humor of leaders and the organizational creativity of employees. The moderating role of organizational tenure in the relationship between humor styles and organizational creativity is also examined. The data used in the research are gathered by questionnaire from 335 employees working in different organizations. Research hypotheses are tested by hierarchical regression analysis. As a result of the research, a positive relationship is determined between the use of self-enhancing and affiliative humor of leaders and organizational creativity, and a negative relationship is determined between the use of aggressive humor and organizational creativity. The findings also indicate that organizational tenure has a moderation role in the relationship between affiliative humor and organizational creativity and between aggressive humor and organizational creativity.

Keywords

Humor, Humor in organizations, Humor styles, Organizational humor, Organizational creativity

Introduction

Humor is a core element of human nature and human relations. Humor and laughter are universal aspects of human experience in all cultures and almost all individuals in the world (Martin, 2007). Philosophers and researchers from various disciplines have always had a great interest in the concept of humor. Hence, it can be said that humor is an important concept that is examined academically in various fields. In this context, numerous studies were conducted such as the relationship between laughter and humor (Gervais & Wilson, 2005), the effects of humor on physical health and mental health (Galloway & Cropley, 1999; Martin, 2001), the relationship between humor and personality (Mendiburo-Seguel, Páez, & Martínez-Sánchez, 2015), and the use of humor in romantic relationships (Hall, 2017). However, more research

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is needed on humor in business and organizations because humorous situations are inevitable, and humor has wide-ranging consequences.

It is stated that humor can facilitate different organizational processes. Humor helps to establish and support relationships in the workplace (Cooper, 2008), facilitates group processes (Romero & Pescosolido, 2008), allows employees to deal with stress (Doosje, De Goede, Van Doornen, & Goldstein, 2010) and increases creativity in problem solving (Holmes, 2007). It is believed that the leaders who use humor are more popular (Holmes & Marra, 2002; Hughes & Avey, 2009).

Despite various positive effects, humor also has negative aspects. For example, it may create some problems such as distracting employees from the job at hand, hurting employee's credibility, or causing offense in increasingly diverse work settings (Scheel & Gockel, 2017). The use of negative humor in the workplace can increase hostility by enabling prejudice against the intended person (Janes & Olson, 2015), cause employee alienation and the good employees leave the organization (Plester, 2009), may lead to discrimination in the workplace (Quinn, 2000) and may reduce manager's reputation result in non-compliance with executive decisions (Lyttle, 2007).

Although there has been a greater interest in the use of humor by leaders and employees, limited studies have been conducted on humor in business and organizations. The literature reviews about the use of humor in organizations are carried out from the perspective of organizational management such as administrative communication (Wood, Beckmann, & Rossiter, 2011) and humor management in the workplace (Lyttle, 2007). Moreover, literature reviews have been conducted in areas such as humor use in the workplace (Cooper, 2008), humor styles and leadership (Romero & Cruthirds, 2006), and humor and emotions in the organizational climate (Robert & Wilbanks, 2012). Although these researches are useful, a great majority of these studies have not been empirically tested with regard to the functions of humor. Therefore, these studies are the starting point for future research initiatives (Butler, 2016).

Based on previous research on humor, the use of humor, and humor styles, this study focuses on the relationship between the leaders' humor styles and employees' organizational creativity. The purpose of this study is to determine the relationship between leaders' positive humor styles (self-enhancing, affiliative) and negative humor styles (self-defeating, aggressive) and employees' organizational creativity. The moderating role of organizational tenure in the relationship between humor styles used by the leaders and organizational creativity is also examined.

Literature Review

Humor, Organizational Humor and Humor Styles

The concept of humor has been discussed in a wider and multifaceted manner in recent studies. In humor studies, the concept has been defined in different ways and has had different characteristics such as surprise, incongruity, cognition and amusement. Long and Graesser (1988, p. 37) described humor as “something that is funny or amusing, intentionally or mistakenly made or said”. Martineau (1972, p. 114) examined the concept of humor from a sociological perspective and described the concept as “any communicative situation perceived as humorous”. According to Hurren (2006, p. 11), humor means “any verbal or non-verbal message that provokes a positive sense of fun in the receiver”.

However, it can be said that humor is potentially related to all aspects of the workplace. Humor is not just for fun. It enhances integration among employees, fosters creativity, and promotes organizational development (Holmes, 2007; Romero & Pescosolido, 2008). Also, it enhances sincerity, solidarity, and kindness among employees (Holmes & Marra, 2002). Humor contributes to the improvement of the organizational climate and is closely linked to effective leadership. A leader who can use humor well is believed to be a “good” leader (Liu & Wang, 2016)

Studies that examine humor in the workplace often seem to focus on the concept of organizational humor. Cooper (2005, pp. 766-767) defined organizational humor as “any event shared by an agent (e.g., an employee) with another individual (i.e., a target) that is intended to be amusing to the target and that the target perceives as an intentional act”. According to Romero and Cruthirds (2006, p. 59), organizational humor is defined as “entertaining communications that create positive perceptions and emotions in individuals, groups or organizations”. From this definition, Dikkers, Doosje, and de Lange (2012, p. 76) stated organizational humor as “incongruity that performed for amusement for an individual, group or organization and that shared without seriousness in workplace relations”. For Lynch (2009, p. 445) organizational humor is used as a sensemaking process that will eliminate the tension caused by a cognitive incompatibility in the workplace.

Positive organizational humor can help not only in building a good organizational climate for businesses, but also in promoting their own development (Liu & Wang, 2016)6D5CB516}. Moreover, organizational humor may have a negative aspect. Jokes carried out in order to mock and needle may have negative consequences on organizational effectiveness (Decker, Yao, & Calo, 2011).

Intentionally or unintentionally, people use humor in some way. However, people have different characteristics and these differences make a discrepancy in the form of humor. Hence, when humor styles are referred to, people’s ways of using humor are mentioned (Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray, & Weir, 2003).

Studies show that humor styles can be classified in different ways. Duncan, Smeltzer, and Leap (1990) distinguished humor styles as positive humor and negative humor. The negative humor style focuses on the feeling of victory over another person. In other words, negative humor is that person's laugh when he or she gains superiority over another person. The positive humor style is a deliberate violation of rational language or behavior patterns. Laughing in this style is associated with unexpected, ambiguous, illogical, or inappropriate situations (Duncan et al., 1990, pp. 258-260)

The most popular distinction about humor styles in the literature was carried out by Martin et al. (2003). They distinguished between four humor styles: self-enhancing humor, affiliative humor, self-defeating humor, and aggressive humor.

Self-enhancing humor is the tendency to enjoy disagreements (distress, strain) in daily life and it helps people to get rid of stressful situations. Self-enhancing humor includes a general humorous view of life, the ability to have fun with conflicts in life, and maintaining a humorous appearance in the face of stress or difficulty. People who tend to use this style do not lose a humorous view even in difficult situations. They use humor as a tool to regulate their feelings (Martin et al., 2003, p. 53; Scheel & Gockel, 2017, p. 19).

Affiliative humor is the most social humor style. It is the tendency of a person to facilitate relationships by telling and making funny jokes. In other words, it is the use of humor to entertain other people, improve relationships and make the organization enjoyable. People who tend to use this style are more likely to express funny things or jokes to entertain other people, facilitate relationships and reduce interpersonal tension. Affiliative humor is the non-hostile, tolerant use of humor and has the effect of increasing interpersonal cohesion and attractiveness (Chen & Martin, 2007, p. 216; Martin et al., 2003, p. 53; Romero & Cruthirds, 2006, p. 59; Scheel & Gockel, 2017, p. 18).

Self-defeating humor is a person's humiliation of himself/herself with telling funny stories or making jokes about himself/herself to win other's appreciation. By using self-destructive humor, the person puts himself/herself at the target of the pranks of others and laughs when he/she falls into a funny or humiliating situation. In this way, he/she tries to get accepted or to look good in his/her social environment. This style includes over-use of disparagement humor. This style also includes the use of humorous behavior in order to hide the negative emotions that exist in the subconscious and the use of humor as a form of defensive denial (Martin et al., 2003, p. 54; Romero & Cruthirds, 2006, p. 60; Scheel & Gockel, 2017, p. 19).

Aggressive humor refers to sexist and racist humor, such as irony, needling, and teasing. It is associated with manipulating or disparaging others. This style involves the use of humiliating or disparaging humor through pinning, mocking, hanging, or teasing. Aggressive humor (sexist or racist humor) is about the use of humor without thinking about how it influences

others. People who use aggressive humor aim to raise their own status and seek to feel better by pulling others down. Hence, people who use this style of humor often use humorous expressions that can hurt others (Martin et al., 2003, p. 54; Romero & Cruthirds, 2006, p. 60; Scheel & Gockel, 2017, p. 19).

Organizational Creativity

The concepts of creativity and innovation are intertwined and used interchangeably in management literature. However, researchers indicate that there are differences between the two concepts (Gupta & Banerjee, 2016; Klijin & Tomic, 2010). Creativity is defined as the creation of new and valuable ideas by individuals or groups (DiLiello & Houghton, 2006, p. 321; Gupta & Banerjee, 2016, p. 168); on the other hand, innovation is defined as strengthening or realizing the potential of creative thinking (Klijin & Tomic, 2010, p. 322; Rickards, 1999, p. 319). Creativity is seen as a sub-dimension of innovation (Woodman, Sawyer, & Griffin, 1993) or antecedent for the emergence of innovation and defined as the “production of new and useful ideas by an individual or a small group” (Amabile, 1988, p. 126).

In order to understand creativity in an organizational context, researchers adopt a more holistic approach and use the concept of organizational creativity. Organizational creativity is used to describe a relatively new area within the scope of organizational change and innovation. The most common definition of organizational creativity is the “creation of a valuable, useful, new product, service, idea, procedure or process by individuals working together in a complex social system” (Woodman et al., 1993, p. 293). Bharadwaj and Menon (2000, p. 425) stated that organizational creativity is a concept related to the degree to which the organization develops formal practices and policies and the degree to which the organization funds the promotion of original ideas that have meaning for the organization. Creative behavior implies behaviors that generate beneficial outputs to the organization by employees (Woodman et al., 1993, p. 293). The creative behavior of employees enables the emergence of new and useful products, ideas and processes that constitute an important input for organizational development and current practices (Oldham & Cummings, 1996, p. 607).

In previous research, it has been stated that there are various individual, group, and organizational factors that act as catalysts in the emergence of organizational creativity (Gupta & Banerjee, 2016; Klijin & Tomic, 2010; Woodman et al., 1993). It can be said that one of the important factors affecting organizational creativity is personality (Kim, Hon, & Lee, 2010; Williams, 2004; Woodman et al., 1993; Zhou, 2003). Research shows that individuals with a higher degree of openness to experience are more creative (George & Zhou, 2001; Mumford & Hunter, 2005; Williams, 2004). Similarly, research has found a relationship between creativity and personality traits such as self-confidence, flexibility, self-acceptance, sensitivity, and intuition (Shalley & Zhou, 2008).

Another important factor in enhancing organizational creativity is thought to be employee relationships or team processes (Caniëls, De Stobbeleir, & De Clippeleer, 2014). It is stated in the research conducted on creativity in groups that factors such as group cohesion, group compliance, and group structure play an important role in encouraging the creativity of employees (Woodman et al., 1993).

Besides, organizational factors such as organizational culture (McLean, 2005), organizational policy (Cengiz, Acuner, & Baki, 2007), leader support and interaction (Amabile, Conti, Coon, Lazenby, & Herron, 1996; Madjar, Oldham, & Pratt, 2002) and resource distribution capacity (Gupta & Banerjee, 2016) have been found to be important factors that increase organizational creativity. Similarly, Andriopoulos (2001) lists organizational factors that support organizational creativity as organizational climate, leadership style, organizational culture, resources, capabilities, organizational structure, and organizational system.

The Relationship Between Humor Styles and Organizational Creativity

Creative employees help organizations to become more responsive to opportunities and more efficient. In addition, the organization can achieve a competitive advantage in order to maintain its existence and ensure success in the long term through the creativity of its employees (Woodman et al., 1993). Therefore, the factors affecting the creativity of employees are frequently investigated in the studies conducted on organizational creativity. At this point, it can be said that humor is an important factor that increases employee creativity. Studies have found a positive relationship between the use of humor in organizations and the creative behaviors of employees (Galloway, 1994; Ghayas & Malik, 2013; Holmes, 2007; Humke & Schaefer, 1996; Rouff, 1975; Thorson & Powell, 1993).

Humor makes people feel comfortable. Thus, employees become more open to new ideas and less critical of failures or different opinions. This increases the tendency to take risks, which is the basis of creative thinking and creative behaviors (Morreall, 1991, p. 369). The lack of harsh and severe criticism provides a secure environment in the organization which allows employees to display more creative behaviors and produce new ideas (Romero & Cruthirds, 2006, p. 62).

The existence of an amusing environment within the organization enhances creativity by feeding a contagious “cheerful mood” that increases employees’ production of original ideas (Ziv, 1983). It is also possible that in a humorous working environment, employees are more likely to participate in creative problem-solving processes. Research conducted for this purpose shows that the use of humor has a positive effect on creative problem-solving (Estrada, Isen, & Young, 1994; Isen, Daubman, & Nowicki, 1987).

Research has revealed important evidence that self-enhancing humor has a positive effect on individual outcomes. It has been determined that a negative relationship between self-

enhancing humor and negative emotions such as depression, anxiety, and more generally neuroticism, and a positive relationship between openness to experience, self-esteem, and psychological well-being exists (Chen & Martin, 2007; Martin et al., 2003; Mendiburo-Se-guel et al., 2015; Romero & Cruthirds, 2006). Moreover, self-enhancing humor also has a positive effect on organizational creativity (Amjed & Tirmzi, 2016; Lee, 2015). Romero and Cruthirds (2006, p. 62) emphasize that self-enhancing humor contributes to the development of a clear working environment where ideas can be expressed freely and norms that support creativity can be freely transmitted, shedding light on the failures associated with new ideas. Similarly, Lee (2015, p. 66) argues that the self-enhancing humor style of the leader plays an important role in the development of the creativity of the employees as an entertaining means of communication.

H1: A leader's self-enhancing humor is positively associated with organizational creativity.

Further use of affiliative humor facilitates the development and maintenance of social support networks that increase happiness. Therefore, a leader's use of affiliative humor style enables him/her to develop close and positive social relations with the employees. The positive relationship between the leader and the employees can facilitate the exchange of ideas and information, thus, it helps employees to produce more creative ideas (Atwater & Carmeli, 2009; Volmer, Spurk, & Niessen, 2012). Romero and Cruthirds (2006, p. 62) state that the leader's use of affiliative humor will create a positive climate between employees so that employees will be less afraid of failure and feel more comfortable to study in new ways. In this case, it will increase creativity within the organization. Therefore, it can be said that the affiliative humor style of the leader will have a positive effect on the creative behaviors of the employees.

H2: A leader's affiliative humor is positively associated with organizational creativity.

Further use of self-defeating humor can lead to the development of incompatible social support networks that have a negative impact on psychological health. In addition, the self-defeating humor that the leader uses to ingratiate himself/herself with the employees or to seem well to the employees can cause employees to underestimate the leader. The leader in such a situation can be perceived as inconsistent with his/her leadership status and power level (Dwyer, 1991, p. 2). Therefore, self-defeating humor is a disincentive factor for a leader to protect his/her power in cases where it is important to provide and maintain trustworthiness. However, inconsistent findings have been found in researches that investigate the relationship between the use of self-defeating humor and organizational variables. In some research, it was determined that self-defeating humor increased emotional exhaustion (Malinowski, 2013; Oktuğ, 2017) and depression (Dyck & Holtzman, 2013; Kuiper & McHale, 2009). On the other hand, in the majority of the research, there was no significant relationship

between self-defeating humor and organizational commitment (Romero & Arendt, 2011), job performance (Kim, Lee, & Wong, 2016), job stress (Avtgis & Taber, 2006; Kim et al., 2016; Romero & Arendt, 2011), job satisfaction (Avtgis & Taber, 2006), leader-member exchange (Wisse & Rietzschel, 2014) and emotional exhaustion (Avtgis & Taber, 2006; Tümkaya, 2007). However, some studies have found a negative and significant relationship between self-defeating humor and creativity (Amjed & Tirmzi, 2016), but others have found an insignificant relationship (Lee, 2015).

H3: A leader's self-defeating humor is negatively associated with organizational creativity.

Aggressive humor includes humorous expressions that can hurt others. Therefore, the use of aggressive humor harms the relationship between the leader and the employee (Romero & Cruthirds, 2006). Kim et al. (2016) found a positive relationship between social distance and aggressive humor. Aggressive humor increases the tension and addictive behaviors of the employees (Evans & Steptoe-Warren, 2018; Huo, Lam, & Chen, 2012) and has a negative effect on psychological well-being (Dyck & Holtzman, 2013; Kim et al., 2016). Thus, although the use of humor by a leader is related to employee engagement and group compliance, it can also lead to separation among subordinates (Dwyer, 1991). It is seen that aggressive humor is discouraging because of the potential to destroy the positive results and reveal the negative consequences. The leader's use of aggressive humor leads employees to think that their new ideas will be criticized and will be mocked by the leader. Thus, the use of aggressive humor can suppress the creativity of employees by avoiding risky behavior.

H4: A leader's aggressive humor is negatively associated with organizational creativity.

Moderating Role of Organizational Tenure

Tenure is an important demographic variable with an influential role in management and organization research (Bell, Villado, Lukasik, Belau, & Briggs, 2011; A. Cohen, 1993; Wright & Bonett, 2002). There is some research investigating the moderating role of tenure in the studies conducted on organizations (Agarwal & Bhargava, 2013; English, Morrison, & Chalon, 2010; Ohana, 2014). Some research has investigated the moderating role of tenure between humor and organizational variables (Gkorezis, Hatzithomas, & Petridou, 2011).

Prior studies have revealed that new employees react more positively to various organizational practices, which is referred to as the "honeymoon period" (Huang, Shi, Zhang, & Cheung, 2006, p. 351; Wright & Bonett, 2002, p. 1184). During the honeymoon period, employees look at the workplace through "rose-tinted glasses" and place emphasis on only the favorable aspects of the organization. Thus, the positive aspects of the leader draw more attention from new employees than negative aspects (Gkorezis et al., 2011). This means that

the positive use of humor of leaders has a stronger effect than the negative use of humor on short-tenured employees

H5: Organizational tenure has a moderating role in the leader's self-enhancing humor and organizational creativity relationship. The positive relationship between a leader's self-enhancing humor and organizational creativity is stronger for short-tenured employees than for long-tenured employees.

H6: Organizational tenure has a moderating role in the leader's affiliative humor and organizational creativity relationship. The positive relationship between a leader's affiliative humor and organizational creativity is stronger for short-tenured employees than for long-tenured employees.

On the other hand, long-tenured employees may have higher burnout and lower motivation which leads to unfavorable perspectives towards their organization than short-tenured ones (Huang et al., 2006). They are more sensitive to the leaders' negative use of humor than positive use of humor. Moreover, the relationships of long-tenured employees with the organization are changed due to the completion of the socialization process. As tenure increases, employees become closer to their leaders and get used to the leaders' positive use of humor (Gkorezis et al., 2011). Therefore, the leaders' negative use of humor has a stronger effect than the use of positive humor on long-tenured employees.

H7: Organizational tenure has a moderating role in the leader's self-defeating humor and organizational creativity relationship. The negative relationship between a leader's self-defeating humor and organizational creativity is stronger for long-tenured employees than for short-tenured employees.

H8: Organizational tenure has a moderating role in the leader's aggressive humor and organizational creativity relationship. The negative relationship between a leader's aggressive humor and organizational creativity is stronger for long-tenured employees than for short-tenured employees.

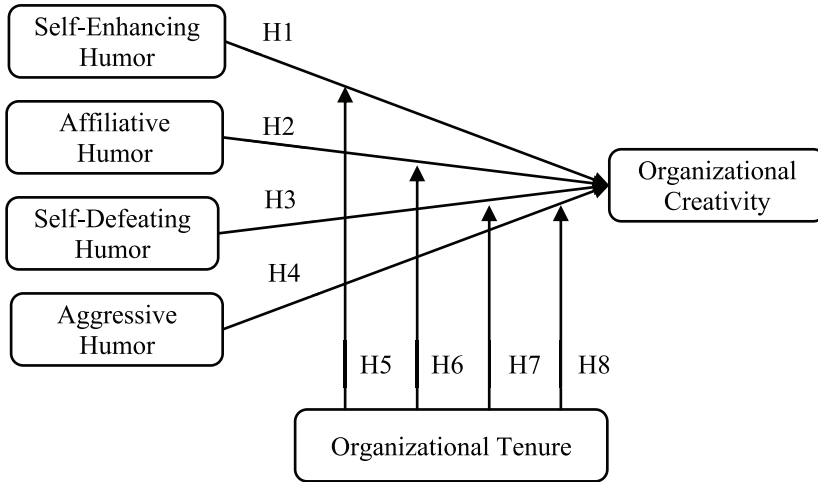


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework.

Methodology

Sample and Procedure

The research focuses on different sector employees and their supervisors. The data used in the analyses were obtained from the employees by evaluating the humor styles of their supervisors and their own attitudes. The participants are post-graduate students studying at the Social Sciences Institute of Karabuk University, Turkey, and also working in organizations in the banking, public administration, health, manufacturing, education, services, and unidentified industries. The questionnaire was distributed to the participants in the class and returned directly to the researcher. All participants completed the survey anonymously and voluntarily. Of the 550 questionnaires distributed, 358 were returned with a response rate of 65%. Among the returned questionnaires, 23 were excluded because of excessive missing data. Therefore, the sample of the research consisted of 335 participants.

Among the 335 participants, 52.8% (177 employees) were female and 47.2% (158 employees) were male. There were 187 single (55.8%) and 148 married (44.2%) in the sample. 83.9% of the respondents were MSc students and 16.1% were PhD students. The average age of the employees was 28 years and the average organizational tenure was 5 years.

Measures

All of the measures used in the study were preferred for their established validity and reliability in previous research. Cronbach's alpha was calculated separately for all measures.

The most commonly used measure in the studies conducted on humor styles is the Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ) which was developed by Martin et al. (2003). HSQ distinguishes between two positive styles (self-enhancing humor and affiliative humor) and two negative styles (self-defeating humor and aggressive humor), showing the specific ways in which people use humor in their lives. So, HSQ has four dimensions and there are 8 items in each dimension.

In this study, the Short Work-Related Humor Styles Questionnaire (swHSQ) developed by Scheel, Gerdenitsch, and Korunka (2016) was used to determine the degree of humor used by the leaders. The scale includes items that are directly suitable for working life within the HSQ, and thus focuses directly on the use of humor in working life. The swHSQ consists of four dimensions (self-enhancing humor, affiliative humor, self-defeating humor, and aggressive humor) and there are 3 items in each dimension. Each item is rated on a 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). Representative items from each of the dimensions are; self-enhancing humor "If my supervisor is feeling depressed at work, he/she can usually cheer himself/herself up with humor", affiliative humor "My supervisor enjoys making his/her colleagues laugh", self-defeating humor "My supervisor will often get carried away in putting himself/herself down if it makes his/her colleagues laugh" and aggressive humor "If someone makes a mistake at work, my supervisor will often tease them about it". Cronbach's alpha (α) was 0.88 for self-enhancing humor, 0.83 for affiliative humor, 0.77 for self-defeating humor, and 0.88 for aggressive humor. All the alpha scores exceeded 0.70 which is acceptable for the study (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

The employees' perceptions of organizational creativity were assessed with the 10 items developed by Lang and Lee (2010). The organizational creativity questionnaire was anchored on a 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). Representative items for the scale are "Organizational members generate many original ideas", "We have no qualms about trying out new ideas" and "Staff members are encouraged to explore new fields of knowledge". The Cronbach's alpha (α) obtained for this measure was 0.92 which is acceptable for the study (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

A single open-ended question was used to measure organizational tenure in which participants expressed their working year in their organization. Organizational tenure varied from six months to seventeen years and the mean was five years.

Results

Validity Tests

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to evaluate the distinctness between the variables used in the study (Table 1). The results of the CFA represent that all standardi-

zed estimates were between 0.65 and 0.89 which exceeded the cutoff value of 0.50 and the minimum t-value (critical ratio) for measurement variables was 9.87 ($p < 0.01$). With regard to the goodness of fit of the model, the chi-square goodness of fit (χ^2/df) was 1.51, the goodness of fit index (GFI) was 0.93, the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) was 0.04, the normed fit index (NFI) was 0.93, the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) was 0.97 and the comparative fit index (CFI) was 0.98. This means the overall measurement quality were achieved for the five constructs used in the study (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988; Byrne, 2016).

Additionally, the convergent validity and discriminant validity were calculated by the composite reliability (CR) and the average variance extracted (AVE) in order to determine whether the measurement variable was representative of the related construct (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Convergent validity assesses the degree to which two measures of the same concept are correlated and discriminant validity is the degree to which two conceptually similar concepts are distinct (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2014, p. 124).

Table 1

Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis

| Constructs and Items | Standardized Estimates | Standard Errors | t-value (critical ratio) | α | AVE | CR |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|----------|------|------|
| Self-Enhancing Humor | | | | 0.88 | 0.71 | 0.88 |
| (SEH1) | 0.87 | - | - | | | |
| (SEH2) | 0.81 | 0.06 | 17.16 | | | |
| (SEH3) | 0.85 | 0.06 | 18.24 | | | |
| Affiliative Humor | | | | 0.83 | 0.62 | 0.83 |
| (AFH1) | 0.80 | - | - | | | |
| (AFH2) | 0.79 | 0.07 | 14.51 | | | |
| (AFH3) | 0.77 | 0.08 | 14.03 | | | |
| Self-Defeating Humor | | | | 0.77 | 0.53 | 0.77 |
| (SDH1) | 0.65 | - | - | | | |
| (SDH2) | 0.76 | 0.11 | 9.87 | | | |
| (SDH3) | 0.77 | 0.12 | 9.88 | | | |
| Aggressive Humor | | | | 0.88 | 0.71 | 0.88 |
| (AGH1) | 0.78 | - | - | | | |
| (AGH2) | 0.89 | 0.06 | 17.36 | | | |
| (AGH3) | 0.85 | 0.07 | 16.55 | | | |
| Organizational Creativity | | | | 0.92 | 0.54 | 0.92 |
| (OCR1) | 0.78 | - | - | | | |
| (OCR2) | 0.77 | 0.09 | 13.56 | | | |
| (OCR3) | 0.73 | 0.10 | 13.45 | | | |
| (OCR4) | 0.71 | 0.10 | 12.71 | | | |
| (OCR5) | 0.71 | 0.10 | 12.49 | | | |
| (OCR6) | 0.70 | 0.10 | 12.46 | | | |
| (OCR7) | 0.77 | 0.10 | 12.25 | | | |
| (OCR8) | 0.73 | 0.10 | 13.49 | | | |
| (OCR9) | 0.77 | 0.10 | 12.81 | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|------------|--------------|------------|------------|------------|
| (OCR10) | 0.78 | 0.09 | 13.39 | | | |
| Fit Indices | χ^2/df | GFI | RMSEA | NFI | TLI | CFI |
| | 1.51 | 0.93 | 0.04 | 0.93 | 0.97 | 0.98 |

Note: α : Cronbach's alpha, AVE: Average variance extracted, CR: Composite reliability, χ^2/df : Chi-square goodness of fit, GFI: Goodness of fit index, RMSEA: Root mean square error of approximation, NFI: Normed fit index, TLI: Tucker-Lewis index, CFI: Comparative fit index.

In Table 1, all AVEs for self-enhancing humor, affiliative humor, self-defeating humor, aggressive humor, and organizational creativity were 0.71, 0.62, 0.53, 0.71, and 0.54 respectively which exceeded the cutoff value of 0.50. All CRs for self-enhancing humor, affiliative humor, self-defeating humor, aggressive humor, and organizational creativity were 0.88, 0.83, 0.77, 0.88, and 0.92 respectively which exceeded the cutoff value of 0.70 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981, pp. 45-46; Hair et al., 2014, p. 605). These values show that the convergent validity of each construct in the research model of the study is ensured.

The discriminant validity is ensured when the square root of the AVE of a construct is greater than the correlation values of that construct with the other constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981, pp. 45-46; Hair et al., 2014, p. 605). For example, in Table 2, the square root of the AVE for affiliative humor was 0.79 and all the correlations between affiliative humor and other constructs were lower. When the square root of the AVE values and the correlations between the variables are examined (Table 2), it is determined that the discriminant validity was ensured for all constructs.

Correlations and Descriptives

Descriptive statistics and correlations for all variables are reported in Table 2. The means for positive humor styles (self-enhancing humor=3.15 and affiliative humor=3.24) were significantly higher than that of negative humor styles (self-defeating humor=2.89 and aggressive humor=2.80). The self-enhancing humor and affiliative humor were positively correlated with organizational creativity ($r=0.47$, $p<0.01$; $r=0.71$, $p<0.01$, respectively), and self-defeating humor and aggressive humor were negatively correlated with organizational creativity ($r=-0.12$, $p<0.05$; $r=-0.69$, $p<0.01$, respectively).

Table 2

Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations

| | Mean | Std. Dev. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|-----------------------------|------|-----------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Self-Enh. Humor | 3.15 | 0.91 | 0.84^a | | | | |
| 2. Affiliative Humor | 3.24 | 1.01 | 0.49** | 0.79^a | | | |
| 3. Self-Def. Humor | 2.89 | 0.73 | -0.31** | -0.03 | 0.73^a | | |
| 4. Aggressive Humor | 2.80 | 1.19 | -0.48** | -0.62** | 0.26** | 0.84^a | |
| 5. Org. Creativity | 3.16 | 0.75 | 0.47** | 0.71** | -0.12* | -0.69** | 0.74^a |

Note: * $p<0.05$ ** $p<0.01$; The diagonal values (a) are the square root of average variance extracted (AVE).

Hypotheses Testing

The hypotheses were tested with hierarchical regression analysis (Table 3). In the regression analysis, gender, marital status, age, and education level were used as control variables. Predictor variables were entered into the hierarchical regression analyses in three steps; (1) control and independent variables, (2) moderator variable, and (3) interaction terms. Interaction terms were derived after the centralization of the independent variables and moderator variable. The reason for centralization is to eliminate multicollinearity associated with the use of interaction terms (Aiken & West, 1991; J. Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003).

Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2 predicted that positive humor styles (self-enhancing and affiliative) of leaders would be positively associated with organizational creativity. Table 3 (Model 1) shows that self-enhancing humor and affiliative humor were positively and significantly associated with organizational creativity ($\beta=0.11$, $p<0.05$; $\beta=0.37$, $p<0.01$, respectively). Thus, Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2 were supported.

Hypothesis 3 and Hypothesis 4 stated that negative humor styles (self-defeating and aggressive) of leaders would be negatively associated with organizational creativity. As shown in Table 3 (Model 1), self-defeating humor was not significantly related to organizational creativity ($\beta=0.02$, $p>0.05$), whereas aggressive humor was significantly and negatively related to organizational creativity ($\beta=-0.38$, $p<0.01$). Thus, Hypothesis 4 was supported, but Hypothesis 3 was not supported.

Table 3

Hierarchical Regression Analysis Results

| Predictors | Organizational Creativity | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------|---------|
| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 |
| <i>Control Variables</i> | | | |
| Gender | 0.01 | 0.01 | 0.01 |
| Marital Status | 0.01 | 0.01 | 0.02 |
| Education Level | 0.03 | 0.03 | 0.04 |
| Age | -0.08* | -0.13* | -0.14** |
| <i>Independent Variables</i> | | | |
| Self-Enhancing Humor | 0.11* | 0.11* | 0.10* |
| Affiliative Humor | 0.37** | 0.37** | 0.37** |
| Self-Defeating Humor | 0.02 | 0.02 | 0.03 |
| Aggressive Humor | -0.38** | -0.38** | -0.33** |
| <i>Moderator Variable</i> | | | |
| Tenure | | 0.07 | 0.07 |
| <i>Interaction Terms</i> | | | |
| Self-Enhancing X Tenure | | | -0.04 |

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Affiliative X Tenure | | | -0.13** |
| Aggressive X Tenure | | | -0.25** |
| R² | 0.53 | 0.54 | 0.59 |
| Adjusted R² | 0.51 | 0.52 | 0.57 |
| ΔR² | | 0.01 | 0.05** |
| F Value | 45.15** | 40.44** | 36.43** |

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, $N=335$

Hypothesis 5 proposed that organizational tenure has a moderating role in the self-enhancing humor and organizational creativity relationship. In other words, the relationship between self-enhancing humor and organizational creativity is stronger when tenure is low rather than high. As shown in Table 3 (Model 3) the interaction term between self-enhancing humor and organizational tenure was not significant ($\beta = -0.04$, $p > 0.05$). Thus, Hypothesis 5 was not supported.

Hypothesis 6 predicted that organizational tenure has a moderating role in the affiliative humor and organizational creativity relationship. In other words, the relationship between affiliative humor and organizational creativity is stronger when tenure is low rather than high. As shown in Table 3 (Model 3) the interaction term between affiliative humor and organizational tenure was significant ($\beta = -0.13$, $p < 0.01$). Specifically, tests of simple slopes (Figure 2) showed that the relationship between affiliative humor and organizational creativity was positive and significant when organizational tenure was high (0.36, $p < 0.01$), and when organizational tenure was low (0.48, $p < 0.01$). Thus, Hypothesis 6 was supported.

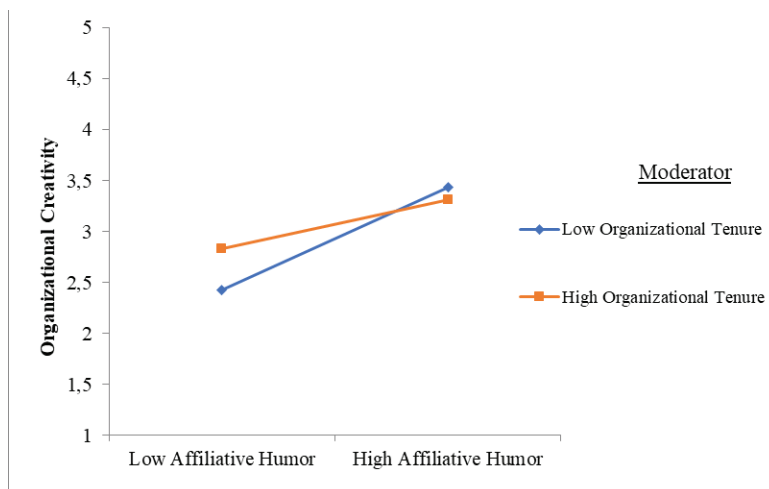


Figure 2. Affiliative humor and organizational creativity interaction for organizational tenure.

This means, if the leader's tendency to affiliative humor is low, the organizational creativity levels of the employees with low tenure are lower than those with high tenure. In other

words, while the leader's affiliative humor tendency is low, the difference between the organizational creativity levels of those with low tenure and those with high tenure employees seems to be greater than when the leader's socializing humor tendency is high.

Hypothesis 7 predicted that organizational tenure has a moderating role in the self-defeating humor and organizational creativity relationship. In other words, the relationship between self-defeating humor and organizational creativity is stronger when tenure is high rather than low. In Table 3 (Model 1), self-defeating humor had no direct effect on organizational creativity. Therefore, the moderating effect of organizational tenure in this relationship could not be examined. Thus, Hypothesis 7 was not supported.

Hypothesis 8 predicted that organizational tenure has a moderating role in the aggressive humor and organizational creativity relationship. In other words, the relationship between aggressive humor and organizational creativity is stronger when tenure is high rather than low. As shown in Table 3 (Model 3) the interaction term between aggressive humor and organizational tenure was significant ($\beta=-0.25$, $p<0.01$). Specifically, tests of simple slopes (Figure 3) revealed that the relationship between aggressive humor and organizational creativity was negative and significant when organizational tenure was high (-0.75 , $p<0.01$), but was not significant when organizational tenure was low (-0.15 , $p>0.05$). Thus, Hypothesis 8 was supported.

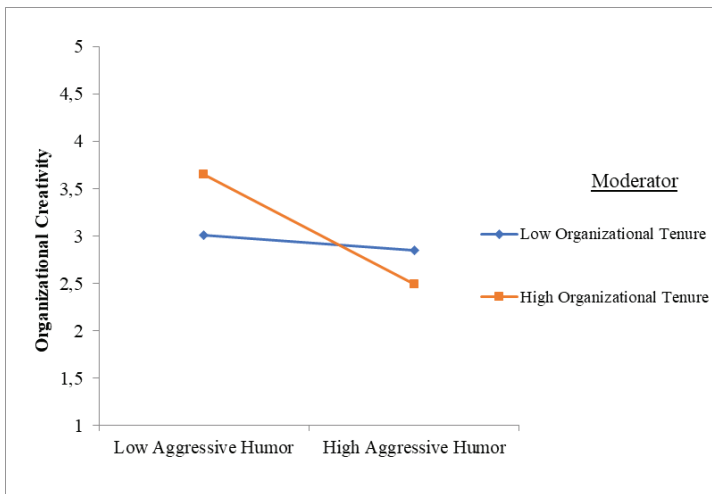


Figure 3. Aggressive humor and organizational creativity interaction for organizational tenure.

This means, in cases where the organizational tenure is low, the leader's use of low or high aggressive humor does not make a difference in organizational creativity. However, in cases where the organizational tenure is high, the level of organizational creativity decreases as the use of aggressive humor by the leader increases.

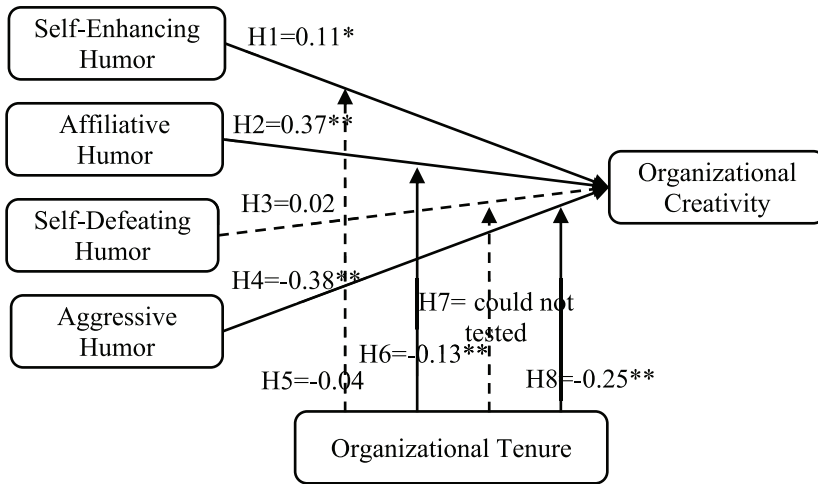


Figure 4. Final Findings of the Study.

Discussion

This research examines how leaders' use of humor affects organizational creativity. The study aims to determine the direct effect of the humor styles used by leaders on employees' organizational creativity and to reveal the moderating role of organizational tenure in the relationship between humor styles and organizational creativity. For this purpose, data were collected by questionnaire from 335 participants working in different organizations.

First, this research confirmed the predictions relating to the direct effects of positive humor styles (self-enhancing humor and affiliative humor) on organizational creativity. These results support and extend prior studies investigating the effect of positive humor on organizational outcomes (Mesmer-Magnus, Glew, & Viswesvaran, 2012; Romero & Arendt, 2011; Romero & Cruthirds, 2006; Wisse & Rietzschel, 2014) and specifically on organizational creativity (Amjed & Tirmzi, 2016; Lang & Lee, 2010; Lee, 2015). This means leaders who do not lose a humorous view even in difficult situations and use humor to entertain other people, to improve relationships, and to make the organization enjoyable contribute to the increase of the organizational creativity of the employees. In other words, a leader's use of self-enhancing and affiliative humor will create a positive climate in the organization, so that employees will not be afraid of failure and feel more comfortable working in different ways.

Second, the findings of the study show that the use of negative humor has a negative effect on organizational creativity. Although self-defeating humor has no significant effect on organizational creativity, it has been determined that aggressive humor negatively affects organizational creativity. This means that a leader's negative use of humor, particularly the

use of aggressive humor, makes the employees believe that their new ideas will be criticized and mocked. Studies that investigate the relationship between negative humor and employee attitudes indicate that the use of negative humor harms the relationship between the leader and employee. In these studies, it is also stated that leaders who use negative humor do not take into account the hurtful effects of humor on employees (Evans & Steptoe-Warren, 2018; Huo et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2016; Romero & Cruthirds, 2006). The findings of this study also support the findings of previous studies. Leaders who prefer to use negative humor want to tease and mock the employees, criticize and annoy them for their mistakes, and suppress them in the most general way. The negative use of humor by a leader makes it difficult for employees to establish positive relations with the leader and reveal negative consequences.

Third, hierarchical regression analyses were conducted to determine the moderating role of organizational tenure in the relationship between a leader's self-enhancing, affiliative, and aggressive humor respectively, and employees' organizational creativity. Because the relationship between self-defeating humor and organizational creativity was not significant, the moderating role of organizational tenure has not been tested in this relationship. However, as a result of the analyses, the moderating effect of organizational tenure on self-enhancing humor and organizational creativity could not be determined.

Study findings show that organizational tenure differentially influences the relationship between a leader's use of affiliative humor and organizational creativity. This means the leader's use of positive humor results in more organizational creativity of short-term employees. Short-tenured employees are more enthusiastic in their job and tend to react more positively to their leaders' behavior. They want to be accepted in the new workplace and want to feel like a member of the workgroup (Gkorezis et al., 2011; Huang et al., 2006). The affiliative humor used by the leader can cause newcomers to develop stronger ties with the organization and to make themselves feel well-received, respected, and reinforced. Besides, there is a good relationship between the employees with high-tenure and their leaders based on mutual trust (Cooper, 2005, 2008). Thus, it is thought that affiliative humor is an inefficient tool for leaders to increase the organizational creativity of high-tenured employees. So, it can be said that the relationship between affiliative humor use of leaders and organizational creativity is stronger for employees with short-tenure than employees with high-tenure.

Research findings also provide support for organizational tenure having a moderating role in the relationship between aggressive humor use of leaders and organizational creativity. Particularly, the relationship between a leader's aggressive humor and employees' organizational creativity is stronger for employees with long-tenure. For long-tenured employees, the jokes in the workplace mean a common understanding and a general way of communication. Short-tenured employees do not share the same understanding with their leaders. As a result, aggressive statements hidden in the humor by the leader may not be perceived by employees

with short-tenure (Gkorezis et al., 2011; Lynch, 2009). Therefore, the aggressive humor used by the leader has a lower effect on the organizational creativity of short-tenured employees. For long-tenured employees, although humor is a factor that enhances social relationships with colleagues, the aggressive humor used by a leader reduces their organizational creativity by causing them to feel humiliated and insulted. So, it can be said that a leader's use of aggressive humor has a more significant negative effect on the organizational creativity of long-tenured employees than on short-tenured employees.

Limitations and Future Research

The current research has some limitations. First, research data was only obtained by asking the subordinates to evaluate the humor styles of their leaders and to indicate their perception of organizational creativity. Leaders did not assess their own humor styles or organizational creativity levels of employees. An employee may not always be able to understand the reasons behind the humor style used by the leader. The findings of current research should be confirmed by using leader-reported measurements in future studies. Second, cross-sectional data were used in the analysis process of the research. The cross-sectional data limit the precise results of causal relationships between variables. Future research can provide more convincing evidence of causality through longitudinal data or experimental design. Third, the sample of data collection is composed of employees in different organizations and at different levels. Therefore, the findings may differ within the scope of data collected from a particular sector or a specific organization. The research findings should be replicated with future research in different sectors or countries. Fourth, only the moderating role of organizational tenure in a leader humor-organizational creativity relationship was investigated in the study. Further studies may contribute to a better understanding of the relationship between leader humor and organizational creativity by examining the role of other demographic factors such as gender or age.

Implications for Theory and Practice

The findings of this study have provided some important theoretical implications for humor and creativity research. First, numerous researchers have implicated the importance of demographic characteristics in social dynamics and have stated that demographic characteristics should be examined more in the organizational research (Agarwal & Bhargava, 2013; English et al., 2010; Gkorezis et al., 2011; Ohana, 2014; Wright & Bonett, 2002). By examining the moderating effect of organizational tenure, this study provides particular findings to the relationship between humor and employee attitudes and behaviors. Second, research findings show that humor has a multidimensional structure. Besides, the effect of a leader's humor on employee creativity may vary depending on humor style. Self-enhancing,

affiliative, and aggressive humor were significantly associated with organizational creativity, but self-defeating humor was not significantly associated with organizational creativity. This means that not all of the humor styles used by the leader affect employee creativity. Third, it has been found that organizational tenure has a moderating role in the relationship between some humor styles used by the leader and organizational creativity. Particularly, affiliative humor used by a leader results in a greater increase in organizational creativity of short-tenured employees, and aggressive humor results in a larger decrease in organizational creativity of long-tenured employees. In this context, it can be said that a moderating effect has contributed to the theory of humor in terms of determining how positive and negative humor affects employee outcomes. Besides, this finding shows that organizational tenure has a much more significant effect on the relationship between social humor styles (affiliative and aggressive humor) and employee outcomes than individual humor styles (self-enhancing and self-defeating humor). This is in line with the notion that humor is basically a social phenomenon that derives its effects from the individual and social processes it creates in an interaction (Cooper, 2008; Wisse & Rietzschel, 2014). Fourth, besides the humor literature, the research findings also contribute to the literature of creativity. Some research examined the relationship between humor and organizational creativity (Amjed & Tirmzi, 2016; Lang & Lee, 2010; Lee, 2015). In this regard, the research findings support previous research in order to understand which humor styles have an impact on organizational creativity.

The findings of the study also have provided important practical implications for leaders and organizations. First, leaders who want to increase the creativity of their employees in the organization should be careful about what type of humor they will use. Findings suggest that the use of positive humor (self-enhancing, affiliative) can increase the organizational creativity of employees, while the use of negative humor (aggressive) can hinder creativity. The convenient use of positive humor by leaders is likely to help the organizations which want to take advantage of employees' creativity. Thus, leaders need to take humor more seriously while using different humor styles and interacting with their employees. Second, leaders should also take into account the employee's organizational tenure when choosing what type of humor to use. Findings reveal that different humor styles used by a leader have different effects on organizational creativity depending on the employee's tenure. For short-tenured employees, it is better to use more affiliative humor to increase their creativity within the organization. For long-tenured employees, the situation is different. They are more affected by a leader's aggressive humor than affiliative humor. Thus, leaders should pay more attention to using positive humor to increase the organizational creativity of short-tenured employees and to avoid the negative humorous expressions that will reduce the organizational creativity of long-tenured employees.

Conclusion

The current study aims to expand growing research on humor in organizations and organizational creativity. Specifically, this study found evidence that affiliative and self-enhancing humor used by leaders may be a critically enhancing factor for organizational creativity. Also, it is found that aggressive humor used by leaders could have a negative effect on organizational creativity. In addition, the results showed that organizational tenure moderates the relationship between affiliative humor and organizational creativity and between aggressive humor and organizational creativity.

It is thought that this research contributed to an area that has shown more interest in recent years but has not yet achieved clear findings. Current research findings indicate the role of a leader's use of humor in the development of organizational creativity. However, although this study supports the notion that humor may be valuable for organizations, further research is needed.

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