

THE IMPACT OF ENTREPRENEURIAL LEADERSHIP ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE: MEDIATING ROLE OF CREATIVITY AND MODERATING ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT IN KAYSERI SMES

DOI: 10.17261/Pressacademia.2025.1970

RJBM- V.12-ISS.1-2025(1)-p.1-14

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Date Received: January 9, 2025

Date Accepted: June 5, 2025

OPEN ACCESS



To cite this document

Turgut, M., Aykan, E., & Haskebacpi, F. H. (2025). The impact of entrepreneurial leadership on employee performance: mediating role of creativity and moderating role of organizational support in Kayseri SMEs. Research Journal of Business and Management (RJBM), 12(1), 1-14.

Permanent link to this document: <http://doi.org/10.17261/Pressacademia.2025.1970>

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ABSTRACT

Purpose- In today's competitive and global economy, firms must prioritize creativity and entrepreneurial spirit, which are further fueled by globalization and technological advancements. Creativity and entrepreneurial action drive innovation, offer new perspectives, and uncover untapped business opportunities. Therefore, it is crucial for managers and employees to identify and eliminate detrimental practices within the workplace. This study aims to highlight the importance of leaders fostering a supportive and positive work environment to enhance creativity and, consequently, employee performance. The research also highlights the necessity of fostering an innovative and entrepreneurial culture as more crucial because businesses deal with ongoing changes in the market and technology advancements. Leaders that actively support innovation and risk-taking can motivate staff to make more significant contributions to the expansion of the business. Businesses can further improve employee performance and innovation by funding training initiatives, providing chances for skill development, and fostering an atmosphere that values ideas. This will ensure long-term sustainability and competitiveness.

Methodology- The study focused on employees of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) within Kayseri's Organized Industrial Zone. Data was collected through a survey technique, and hypotheses were tested using regression analysis to explore the relationships between variables.

Findings- The results indicate that entrepreneurial leadership behavior positively influences both employee creativity and performance. Employee creativity, in turn, significantly impacts performance. Additionally, creativity mediates the relationship between entrepreneurial leadership and employee performance, while perceived organizational support moderates the link between entrepreneurial leadership and creativity.

Conclusion- To boost employee performance, leaders must adopt entrepreneurial behaviors, cultivate a creative work environment, and provide integrated support for employees.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial leadership behavior, perceived organizational support, employee creativity, employee performance

JEL Codes: M10, M19

1. INTRODUCTION

Technology advancements, globalization, intense competition, and market volatility continuously drive businesses to develop innovative products and services while fostering an entrepreneurial mindset to remain competitive. In response to shifting consumer expectations and dynamic market conditions, companies must prioritize creativity and adaptability. To sustain growth, organizations need to cultivate a culture that encourages innovation and proactive leadership. Entrepreneurial leadership, as a leadership style that integrates vision, innovation, and risk management, plays a crucial role in enhancing employees' creative abilities and overall performance.

Entrepreneurial leaders are known for their ability to inspire employees to think creatively, recognize opportunities, and take calculated risks. By fostering an environment that values innovation and knowledge-sharing, these leaders contribute to the development of a workforce that is both productive and adaptable. Employees who perceive strong leadership support are more likely to engage in creative behaviors, leading to higher performance levels and better organizational outcomes. Furthermore, perceived organizational support enhances this relationship by reinforcing employees' sense of value and commitment to their workplace. This study aims to examine the relationship between entrepreneurial leadership and

employee performance while considering the mediating role of employee creativity and the moderating role of perceived organizational support.

This study focuses on employees working in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) located in the Organized Industrial Zone of Kayseri, Turkey. Given the crucial role SMEs play in economic development, understanding the factors that contribute to employee creativity and performance within these enterprises is essential. The research employs a quantitative approach using survey-based data collection. A structured questionnaire was distributed to employees to assess their perceptions of entrepreneurial leadership, organizational support, creativity, and performance.

The collected data was analyzed using statistical techniques, including regression analysis to examine direct relationships, mediation analysis to determine the role of creativity, and moderation analysis to evaluate the impact of perceived organizational support. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to ensure the validity and reliability of the measurement scales. The study applied the SPSS and AMOS software programs for data processing, along with the Process Macro developed by Hayes to test moderation and mediation effects.

Based on prior research and theoretical frameworks, it is anticipated that entrepreneurial leadership will have a significant positive effect on employee creativity and performance. Employee creativity is expected to mediate this relationship, reinforcing the idea that an innovative work environment enhances overall performance. Additionally, perceived organizational support is projected to strengthen the link between entrepreneurial leadership and creativity, highlighting the importance of a supportive workplace culture.

The findings of this study will contribute to the existing literature on entrepreneurship, leadership and organizational behavior by offering empirical insights into the mechanisms through which leadership styles influence employee outcomes. Furthermore, the research will provide practical implications for business leaders and policymakers, emphasizing the need for leadership development programs and supportive organizational policies that foster employee creativity and performance.

Following the introduction, second section provides a comprehensive review of the theoretical background, including definitions and key concepts related to entrepreneurial leadership, employee creativity, perceived organizational support, and employee performance. It also presents the study's hypotheses based on relevant literature. In the third section, details of the research methodology, description of the study design, sample selection, data collection techniques, and statistical methods used for analysis are explained. Section four presents the empirical findings, including descriptive statistics, reliability and validity assessments, and hypothesis testing results while implications of the findings, comparing them with previous studies and highlighting their significance for both academy and industry are discussed in section five. In section six, limitations of the study and recommendations for future research are outlined and this research is concluded with the summary of the key findings.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESIS

2.1. Entrepreneurial Leadership

Technological improvements compel businesses to be innovative, creative, and strategic. Traditional management techniques remain incapable of improvement opportunities with globalization and boosted global competition, causing the fact that companies require new leadership approaches. Entrepreneurial leadership is significantly critical to comply with the change and to become sustainable in these years that encountered intensive scientific and technological developments (Kuratko & Hornsby, 1998, p. 28, Munthe et. al., 2024, p.140).

Entrepreneurial leadership has come about with the combinations of entrepreneurship (Schumpeter, 1934) and leadership concepts. Entrepreneurship is defined as generating new ideas to ensure profitability and efficiency and the creation of new products, processes, and systems (Kanter, 1985, p. 48). It is also described as making use of job opportunities comprising new products, markets and technologies (Sathe, 1989, p. 20) and smoothing the path of innovation (Chaniago and Efewati, 2024, p.181). Businesses in today's global economy require leaders who can seize new opportunities in technology, markets, products, and services, and who can really put these initiatives into practice. The entrepreneurial leadership style is the result of fusing the entrepreneurial spirit with leadership traits including seeking opportunities, being open to ideas, being innovative, and being willing to take risks (Fernald et.al., 2005, p. 2) and becoming open to change (Goel & Nelson, 2021).

The capacity to establish clear objectives, recognize possibilities, empower staff members, strengthen intra-organizational bonds, create an entrepreneurship-focused human resources system, and persuade people to manage all resources strategically is known as entrepreneurial leadership (Cunningham and Lischeron, 1991, p. 53). Furthermore, entrepreneurial leadership can provide strategic value by suggesting ways to establish an entrepreneurial vision, conducting research, identifying and seizing opportunities, and developing and organizing personnel who possess the necessary skills and mindset to support this vision (Gupta et.al., 2004, p. 247; Addy et.al., 2024, p.287). Developing innovative initiatives to help companies

reach their objectives and forging ahead into uncharted territory to shape the future are key components of entrepreneurial leadership (Fontana and Musa, 2016, p. 3).

JetBlue Airlines President Petersen stated that entrepreneurial leaders create a new idea, a new product or service, whereas naive entrepreneurs initiate an innovation but cannot carry it out on a large scale, presidents maintain the status quo but cannot create permanent change, managers only do their jobs correctly and on time, administrators just carry out established policies and procedures, and politicians enact laws. Petersen also claims that entrepreneurial leaders can launch a new system, turn around an unsuccessful endeavor, forecast potential outcomes, and implement adjustments. It is stated that we need more entrepreneurial leaders in this period of rapidly evolving markets, shifting consumer requirements, and unparalleled social transformation (Petersen, 2020, pp. 8-10).

To succeed, today's firms need to be imaginative and inventive. For this reason, businesses need "entrepreneurial leaders" who will take calculated risks, defend novel concepts and supply the required resources, assess and choose original ideas and offer organizational support, and promote entrepreneurship within the company.

2.2. Employee Creativity

Businesses have strived to produce goods and services at the lowest possible cost since the industrial revolution. In order to do this, managerial principles are created and practically adjusted to the structure of the organization. The majority of businesses accepts that one of the managerial tenets should be innovation. To stay in business and avoid falling behind its rivals, the company must create creative goals. Innovation is the amalgamation of novel services, products, business procedures, and markets (Schumpeter, 2008, pp. 80-85). Moreover, employee creativity is accepted as a precondition for the occurrence of possible innovation in the company (Hon, 2012, p. 4). Although innovation is claimed to be cost-effective, it increases the performance of the company by providing a competitive advantage (Zan et.al, 2024, p.4).

Compared to other organizational behavior themes, research on employee creativity, one of the key subjects in the area, is relatively new. The basis of research in this field dates back to the late 1980s. The first theoretical and empirical research on creativity defines it as consistently seeking difference and innovation with creative genius and, when given freedom, producing beneficial ideas for needs. It does this by squaring the creativity with concepts like imagination, passion, and inspiration (Amabile, 1988). It is believed that creativity is the ability to turn an original, practical idea—one that was not created by anyone—into reality. It is also required of employees to be creative in coming up with novel, interesting, and useful goods, services, or procedures that people would want to utilize (Chen and Chen, 2012, p.1627, Green et.al., 2024, p.544).

It is argued that creativity is a phenomenon that can take on different forms depending on environmental conditions and is influenced by the interaction between personal and organizational elements (Woodman et.al., 1993). Therefore, in a complex social system, it's critical to recognize and comprehend organizational characteristics that may influence creative behavior.

Research on how personal and organizational traits affect employees' creativity has led researchers to the conclusion that creative workplace environments that are high-quality and stress-free, along with dynamic organizations that view employee creativity as the cornerstone of growth and development, are key to enhancing creativity performance (Oldham and Cummings, 1996). To sum up, attaining creative performance is connected to improving the creativity and innovativeness of employees, and it is affected by not only individual but also organizational features.

Employee creativity is required for organizational innovativeness and effectiveness in vague and dynamic environmental conditions. Therefore, incentivizing employee creativity is a strategic choice for businesses. It has been demonstrated that when proactive employees' job creativity and managerial support for creativity are high, the highest levels of employee creativity are displayed (Kim, Hon and Lee, 2010). In this context, it appears that nurturing and retaining creative talent is essential to a company's ability to survive and adapt to a competitive and ever-changing commercial environment (Egan et.al., 2017, p. 22).

Leaders are focusing on enhancing staff creativity as a result of digitalization brought about by technology, shifting customer expectations, the expectation of high-quality, reasonably priced production, and firms' exigence to stand out and gain a competitive edge. Additionally, they make an effort to provide working circumstances, managerial techniques, organizational support, and a creative atmosphere.

2.3. Entrepreneurial Leadership and Employee Creativity

It is believed that leaders and managers have a significant influence on the corporate climate that fosters creativity. The process can be finished if the leader can clearly state goals and objectives and inspire staff to work toward them (Jung, 2001, p. 186).

Entrepreneurial leaders need to be on the lookout for new and creative ideas, recognize gaps in the market, and act quickly to keep their company competitive and encourage their staff to emulate their actions (Renko et.al., 2015, p. 57).

Entrepreneurial leaders set an example for their team members and provide guidance. Employees are inspired to think differently and imaginatively and act accordingly when they observe their leader exhibiting entrepreneurial, inventive, and creative conduct (Kuratko et.al., 2001, p. 68). It is believed that workers with high levels of creativity in opportunity recognition and resource use are impacted by the leader's entrepreneurial performance.

It is believed that an employee's desire and success in participating in creative activities is influenced by their leader's innovative, creative, and entrepreneurial actions. It is said that there is a connection between the employees' creative performance metrics and the leader's technical proficiency and creative traits (Mumford et.al., 2002). An organization's creative side is shown by the leader's entrepreneurial actions, which include inspiring, motivating, collaborating, sharing ideas, offering resources, and encouraging staff members.

Another study stated that there is a relationship between entrepreneurial leadership and employees' creativity behavior individually and as a group (Chen, 2007). The proactive behavior of entrepreneurial leaders encourages employees to take risks, produce innovative ideas, and use more creativity in their employees to see change, look for markets.

It was demonstrated in the study that there was a positive association between the concepts and that both employee creative self-efficacy and team creative competence had a mediating effect in the relationship between entrepreneurial leadership and employee and team creativity (Cai et.al., 2019). It turns out that teams and workers under the direction of entrepreneurial leaders generate innovative solutions.

Another study concluded that the association between high-performance business systems and employee creativity and performance is moderated by entrepreneurial leadership. Examined was the connection between employee innovation, information sharing, and entrepreneurial leadership in the high-performance work environment. The study's findings indicate that staff creativity and knowledge sharing are positively impacted by entrepreneurial leadership (Ximenes et.al., 2019). It has been demonstrated that there is a positive correlation between employee creativity and entrepreneurial leadership by examining the mediating roles that psychological safety and empowerment play in the relationship between the two (Mehmood et.al., 2021). The following theory was put forth in light of these completed studies:

H1: Entrepreneurial leadership behavior has a positive effect on employee creativity.

2.4. Employee Performance

No matter the kind of business, one of the most important resources is its workforce. Employees who manage client connections well can gain a long-term competitive advantage, even in the face of fierce competition. Because of this, leaders aim to grow and enhance the performance of their team members by hiring valuable staff members first.

Performance is the ability to carry out, accomplish, triumph over, and successfully carry out one's responsibility (Kesen, 2014). Another perspective that adds a functionalist perspective to this one defines performance as the accomplishment of predefined goals and the completion of the task in a way that satisfies predetermined criteria (Bingöl, 1997). Performance is linked to the task and the individual.

The pace at which an employee uses his or her ability to finish a task within the allotted time is known as employee performance (Yildiz et.al., 2008, p. 240). Employee performance is the extent to which workers meet the objectives or benchmarks set by the company and perform satisfactorily in relation to performance criteria. It is the process of carrying out work in accordance with management-established criteria for speed, cost, and efficiency (Rothman and Coetzer, 2003, p. 68). Making efficient use of available resources, time, and energy is crucial to the task at hand.

The term "task performance" refers to carrying out duties that are part of an employee's job description. "Contextual performance" refers to actions that go beyond what is required of an employee, such as volunteering to work for the company, helping friends and management, and following the rules even when they are not specified in the job description (Motowidlo and Van Scotter, 1994, p. 476; Boffort and Hattrup, 2003, p. 17). It is taken into account in two dimensions. Additionally, a variety of metrics linked to the organization's objectives are used to measure employee performance, including departmental quality, dedication, business effectiveness, customer happiness, organizational innovation and commitment, individual productivity, and personal creativity (Armstrong, 2009, pp. 66-68).

Performance is the outcome of work and work behavior achieved in completing tasks and responsibilities given over a specific period (Lestari et. al., 2024, p.272). Employee performance is carefully assessed to guarantee excellent performance even after hiring, as it is one of the key pillars that determines a company's destiny. Furthermore, leaders aim to enhance employee performance by fostering an atmosphere that enables workers to use their skills, abilities, and experiences to carry out their jobs in an effective and efficient manner.

2.5. Entrepreneurial Leadership and Employee Performance

Entrepreneurial leadership is a style of management that inspires and guides staff members to understand the big picture, realize how consumer needs are changing and evolving, spot market opportunities, and add value (Gupta et.al, 2004, p. 246).

The conduct, skill, and performance of employees are greatly influenced by the entrepreneurial leader. It has been demonstrated in the study examining the relationship between organizational citizenship behavior and the impact of entrepreneurial leadership on employee performance that organizational citizenship behavior mediates the positive impact of entrepreneurial leadership on employee performance (Sani et.al., 2018).

It was suggested that entrepreneurial leadership has a considerable impact on both competence and performance in the study looking at how it affects employees' competence and performance (Suswati, 2020). It was discovered that the entrepreneurial leadership approach was positively related to employee performance, team performance, and organizational performance, as well as employee creativity, team creativity, and employee innovation behavior at different levels in the meta-analysis study where the effectiveness of entrepreneurial leadership was measured at team and individual levels (Lin and Yi, 2021).

Within the scope of these studies, the following hypothesis was assumed:

H2: Entrepreneurial leadership behavior has a positive effect on employee performance.

2.6. Employee Creativity and Employee Performance

Employee creativity encompasses methods for creating novel concepts, goods, and services. Two criteria form the foundation of employee creativity: an idea must be both original and valuable to be considered creative (Dewett, 2007, p. 198).

It appears that talent and motivation, along with opportunities offered by the organization such as creative policies, authority sharing, teamwork, and knowledge and skill sharing, are related to how effective employee creativity is. Therefore, in order to boost employees' creativity within the company, applications and resources that offer opportunities for innovation are required (Cheung & Wong, 2011, p. 657; Zhou & George, 2003, p. 547). Studies indicate that employees who have encouragement and the opportunity to express their creativity perform better both individually and as a team (Chen, 2007; Chen & Chen, 2012; Cheung & Wong, 2011; Ximenes et.al. 2019). It demonstrates how employees' creative behavior affects both individual and company performance by fostering innovation (Hirst et.al., 2009, pp. 281-283). Because of this, it is believed that employee creativity improves employee performance. In light of this, the following theories are anticipated:

H3: Employee creativity has a positive impact on employee performance.

H4: Employee creativity has a mediating effect on the relationship between entrepreneurial leadership behavior and employee performance.

2.7. Perceived Organizational Support

Businesses must become more efficient because of the globalization-related advancements in technology and growing competition. Enhancing efficacy and productivity is contingent upon the exceptional work output of personnel. Among the top concerns that the company should prioritize are influencing employees' attitudes and actions, making sure they are committed to the company, and showing concern for their needs and wants in order to improve their performance. In order to do this, the manager and leader must encourage their staff, give them a good work environment, act in a constructive manner, and listen to their comments (Aykan, 2007, p. 124; Kara et.al., 2021, p. 48).

Employee perception of organizational support has a favorable impact on employees and improves their performance. Organizational support is defined as the company recognizing the workers' efforts and output, considering their opinions and concerns, showing concern for them, and creating an environment that will meet their needs. Employees' perception of the support they receive from their organization reflects how much management respects their work and contributions and is concerned about their welfare (Eisenberger et.al., 1986, p. 501; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002, p. 698).

In reaction to the perceived organizational support, employees display positive attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors toward their companies. A positive sense of belonging and the ability to perform duties and responsibilities of the role to the best of one's ability are fostered by the perception that the worker receives both material and moral support as well as care, such as being valued, approved, and respected, as well as through salary and promotion, information sharing, and resource access (Eisenberger et.al., 1990, p. 52; Armeli et.al., 1998, p. 288). On the other hand, it is proposed that if an employee feels that the firm is providing this support voluntarily, their view of organizational support will be increased.

It is believed that organizational support would be perceived as lower and that the beneficial benefits will not materialize if it is assumed that these efforts are done to make up for union responsibilities or to restore the company's tarnished reputation (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002, p. 698; Byrne & Hochwarter, 2008, p. 56). There are two ideas that underpin perceived organizational support. According to the social change theory (Blau, 1964), workers will trade their dedication to their company and great job output for material rewards like pay and perks or intangible rewards like recognition and respect. Similarly, the foundation of perceived organizational support is the Reciprocity Theory, which holds that workers who offer greater resources and perks receive a sense of gratitude in return and perform better for their companies.

Employees have diverse expectations from their businesses, such as support, incentives, promotions, and good working conditions in exchange for their labor and efforts, whereas businesses expect their employees to accomplish their goals and perform well in return for the assistance they provide. When an employee feels that their efforts will be rewarded for reaching targets, they are also more likely to expect that the company would reward them for doing so, which encourages them to put in more effort and perform better. According to the reciprocity method, workers strive to provide their companies with more effort and dedication in return for the material and emotional rewards they receive (Eisenberger et.al., 1986; Armeli et.al., 1998; Aykan, 2007; Neves & Eisenberger, 2012, p. 455).

According to research, workers who experience support from their employers perceive themselves as a part of the company, respect organizational priorities, feel more trusted by their employers, are less likely to consider quitting, form strong emotional bonds with their employers, and exhibit better performance, job satisfaction, and citizenship behavior (Eisenberger et.al., 1986, p. 506; Eisenberger et.al., 1990, p. 51; Allen et.al., 2003, p. 102; Armeli et.al., 1998, p. 288; Lynch et.al., 1999, p. 477-478; Kurtessis et.al., 2017, p. 18). Because employees' perceptions of organizational support benefit the company, leaders and managers give this issue a high priority. For their workers to be committed, perform well, participate in management, voice their views, and be creative, they must give them the right organizational support and manage them skillfully. Employees that sense this support consequently put up a lot of effort to further the company's objectives.

2.8. Entrepreneurial Leadership, Employee Creativity and Perceived Organizational Support

Entrepreneurial leadership is significant because it gives the company a competitive edge and the capacity to handle dynamic, unpredictable, and fluctuating market conditions. Innovative and imaginative ideas come from employees only when they have encouragement from their bosses (Reiter-Palmon and Illies, 2004, p. 55). It is said that there is a direct correlation between an employee's behavior and the company's positive support of them (Eisenberger et.al., 1986; Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). According to studies, perceptions of organizational support are significantly influenced by the support of leaders (Eisenberger and Stinglhamber, 2011). It is said that an entrepreneurial leader who cultivates a visionary viewpoint for the company encourages employee commitment and encourages them to take ownership of the organization (Renko et.al., 2015).

In order for businesses to survive, thrive, and adapt to changing circumstances, employee creativity is becoming increasingly crucial. New concepts, procedures, ideas, and goods or services are necessary for the business to grow. As a result, managers inspire, facilitate, and furnish their staff with resources to foster creativity (Shalley and Gilson, 2004, p. 33). The results of the study demonstrated a strong and positive correlation between perceived organizational support and employee creativity, and that workers who believe their companies support them are more inclined to think creatively and come up with ideas that will benefit the company as a whole (Zhang et.al., 2016).

Employees are said to be more creative and motivated to conduct research and generate new ideas when they feel that their efforts are appreciated and supported (Soyalın et.al., 2016). Research indicates that for leaders to foster employee creativity and, thus, increase the amount of creative work produced by their staff, they must demonstrate their concern for and support of employee decisions and business-related activity (Akgündüz et.al., 2017). A strong and favorable correlation was found in the study done to ascertain the association between employees' creative levels and organizational support (Mert and Bayrak Kök, 2017). Within the parameters of these investigations, it was hypothesized that the relationship between employee creativity and entrepreneurial leadership may be moderated by perceived organizational support, and the following hypothesis was made:

H5: Perceived organizational support has a moderating effect on the relationship between entrepreneurial leadership behavior and employee creativity.

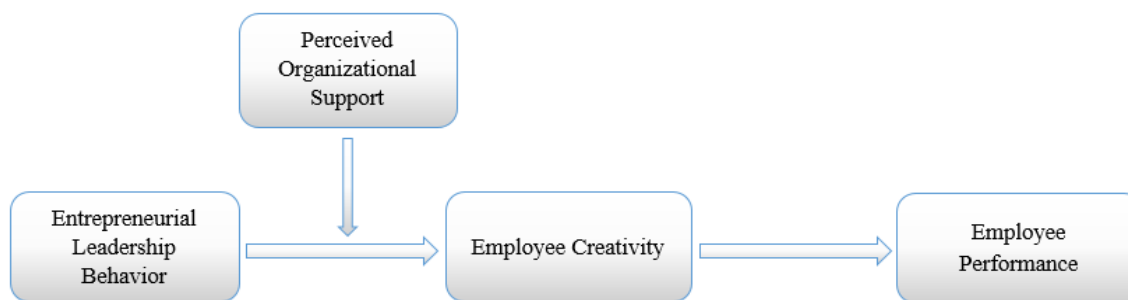
3. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. Purpose, Importance and Model of the Research

Employee performance is evaluated by the efficiency and effectiveness of employees on the job, that is, the quality of their contribution to the business. Therefore, the increase in the performance of the organization depends on the increase in the performance of its employees. The entrepreneurial leadership approach, which is characterized by characteristics such as innovative thinking, seizing opportunities, taking risks, and being proactive, is also important for businesses in terms of motivating employees, encouraging them to develop creative solutions, and increasing their performance. With the support they receive from their leaders, employees demonstrate high performance by generating ideas and developing better products, services, and business processes. It is seen that employees who feel valued and appreciated for their high performance and contributions have a positive attitude. In this context, this study is important because it tries to explain how entrepreneurial leadership behavior affects employee creativity attitude and performance, how employee creativity directs the relationship between entrepreneurial leadership and employee performance, and the regulatory role of perceived organizational support.

The research examines the relationship between entrepreneurial leadership behavior that affects the performance and creativity of employees, which is seen as the most important resource for businesses to increase their competitiveness, and the role of perceived organizational support in the relationship. Although there are many different studies on variables, the fact that there is no relationship in this model reflects the original aspect of the research. The aim of the study is to contribute to the literature by revealing the relationship between entrepreneurial leadership approach and employees' creativity and performance, determining the mediating role of employees' creativity attitude and the moderating role of perceived organizational support. The model of the structure created for the assumption of the mediating role of employee creativity and the moderating role of perceived organizational support in the effect of entrepreneurial leadership behavior on employee performance is shown in the figure.

Figure 1: Research Model



3.2. Scales

In the research, data was obtained by applying the survey technique. The survey form consisted of statements about entrepreneurial leadership, employee creativity, organizational support, and employee performance scales and questions about demographic characteristics. The scales were selected from scales that have been used in many national and international studies and whose reliability and validity have been proven.

Entrepreneurial Leadership Scale; Renko et al. (2015) and adapted by Bekmezci, Saygın and Orçanlı (2021), an 8-item scale was used. Renko et al. (2015) calculated the Cronbach's Alpha value for scale reliability as 0.885, and Bekmezci et al., (2021) calculated it as 0.923. In our research, the reliability coefficient of the entrepreneurial leadership scale is 0.945.

Employee Creativity Scale; Munoz-Doyague et al. (2008) and adapted by Ürü (2009) with a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.969, an 11-item scale is used. In this study, this value was calculated as 0.912.

Perceived Organizational Support Scale; Eisenberger et al. (1986) with a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.970 was used. Özdevicioğlu (2003) calculated this value as 0.863. In our research, the reliability of organizational support was determined as 0.919.

Employee Performance Scale; The contextual performance scale developed by Smith, Organ, and Near (1983) and the task performance scale developed by Goodman and Svyantek (1999) were used. Cronbach's Alpha values of the scale adapted by Kanigür (2009); contextual performance was found to be 0.789 and task performance was 0.845. The first 15 statements measure contextual performance and the remaining 7 statements measure task performance. In this study, Cronbach's Alpha values; contextual performance is 0.828, task performance is 0.870 and total reliability was determined as 0.895.

The data were entered into the SPSS 22 program and before proceeding with the analysis, skewness and kurtosis coefficients were calculated to determine whether the data were normally distributed. Amos 24 program was used for confirmatory factor analyses, regression analyses were used to test hypotheses, and Process Macro developed by Hayes was used to test moderator and mediator variable impact analyses.

In order to determine the mediating role of employee creativity in the effect of entrepreneurial leadership on employee performance and the moderating role of perceived organizational support in the relationship between entrepreneurial leadership behavior and employee creativity, research was conducted with the employees of small and medium-sized enterprises serving in the Organized Industrial Zone in Kayseri.

It is known that there are approximately 70 thousand employees (<http://www.kayseri.gov.tr/sanayii>). Gürbüz & Şahin (2018, p.130) state that the sample size for a population of over one million is 384 people. Of the 356 data collected by random method, 4 employees whose standardized scores exceeded ± 3.29 among continuous variables were excluded from the data set and the data obtained from 352 employees were included in the analysis (Gürbüz & Şahin, 2018, p. 214; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013, pp. 73-76). The table showing the demographic characteristics of the participants is presented below.

3.3. Reliability and Validity of Measurement Tools

In order to obtain reliable analysis results, it is seen as an important step for the variables to be normally distributed. The skewness and kurtosis values used to measure normality should be within the range of ± 1.5 specified by Tabachnick and Fidell (2013, pp. 79-82) or within the range of ± 2 suggested by George and Mallery (2001) (Uysal & Kiliç, 2022, p. 223).

Table 1: Skewness and Kurtosis Values of Variables

	Entrepreneurial Leadership	Employee Creativity	Organizational Support	Employee Performance
Skewness	-0,778	-0,926	-0,346	-1,058
Kurtosis	-0,347	1,246	0,685	1,029

As a result of the analysis, it is seen that the variables are normally distributed. Before analyzing the hypotheses, the reliability values of the scales were calculated. A Cronbach's Alpha value higher than 0.70 is considered a good value for scale reliability (Gürbüz & Şahin, 2018, p. 155).

Table 2: Reliability (Cronbach's Alpha) Values of the Scales

Scales	Cronbach's Alfa Values
Entrepreneurial Leadership	0,945
Employee Creativity	0,912
Employee Performance	0,895
Organizational Support	0,919

Confirmatory factor analyses were conducted to determine the structural validity of the scales. For the values with low goodness of fit, covariances were added between the error terms considering the correction indices. The results obtained after the repeated analysis are shown in the table.

Table 3: Results of Goodness of Fit Values of the Scales

Model Fit Criteria	Good Fit	Acceptable Fit	Entrepreneurial Leadership	Employee Creativity	Organizational Support	Employee Performance
χ^2/sd	<3	$3 < (\chi^2/sd) < 5$	2,182	3,212	3,946	2,991
RMSEA	< 0,05	< 0,08	0,058	0,079	0,082	0,075
SRMR	< 0,05	< 0,08	0,019	0,038	0,040	0,063
CFI	>0,95	>0,90	0,991	0,956	0,979	0,885
GFI	>0,95	>0,85	0,972	0,934	0,963	0,860

According to confirmatory factor analysis of the scales, it is seen that the goodness of fit values provides the determined acceptable fit values. Analysis results show that the scales are supported by data.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The hypotheses of the study were made through regression analysis, which reveals the effect of variables on each other and examines the cause-effect relationship. In order to conduct regression analysis, normal distribution of variables, linearity, and independence of errors were checked. A correlation analysis was conducted to reveal the level of relationship between entrepreneurial leadership, employee creativity, organizational support, and employee performance, and the values are shown in the table.

Table 4: Correlation Values of the Scales

	Entrepreneurial Leadership	Employee Creativity	Organizational Support	Employee Performance
Entrepreneurial Leadership	1	0,322**	0,697**	0,325**
Employee Creativity	0,322**	1	0,230**	0,565**
Organizational Support	0,697**	0,230**	1	0,210**
Employee Performance	0,325**	0,565**	0,210**	1

**Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed)

As a result of the correlation analysis, a positive relationship was found between entrepreneurial leadership and employee creativity ($r=0.322$, $p<0.01$), organizational support ($r=0.697$, $p<0.01$) and employee performance ($r=0.325$, $p<0.01$). It shows that an increase in entrepreneurial leadership behavior will positively affect employee creativity and performance. Employee creativity, which is the mediating variable, is positively correlated with employee performance ($r=0.565$, $p<0.01$). Accordingly, it means that the increase in employees' creative behavior will positively affect their performance.

Regression analyses were conducted to test the hypotheses. Analysis results show that entrepreneurial leadership positively affects employee creativity ($\beta=0.209$) and employee performance ($\beta=0.144$). Similarly, employee creativity was found to positively affect their performance ($\beta = 0.386$). According to these results, hypotheses H1, H2 and H3 are supported.

Table 5: Regression Analysis Results

	Constant	Beta	Std Err	p	Durbin-Watson
Ent. Leadership → Emp. Creativity	3,212	0,209	0,033	0,000	1,818
Ent. Leadership → Emp. Performance	3,712	0,144	0,022	0,000	1,873
Emp. Creativity → Emp. Performance	2,702	0,386	0,030	0,000	1,796

The Durbin-Watson value, which examines whether the errors are independent, is between 1.5-2.5, indicating that there is no autocorrelation among the errors (Genceli, 1990). SPSS Process add-on Model 4 was applied to determine the mediating role of employee creativity in the effect of entrepreneurial leadership on employee performance. To test the mediating effect of employees' creativity behavior on the relationship between entrepreneurial leadership and employee performance, the analysis results in Table 6 were obtained with 5000 samples and a 95% confidence interval. Entrepreneurial leadership appears to positively affect employees' creativity and performance. Since the indirect effect values, $\beta = 0.073$, and the Bootstrap confidence interval (0.045-0.108) do not contain zero, it is concluded that creativity behavior acts as a mediator between entrepreneurial leadership and employee performance. According to this result; Hypothesis H4 is confirmed.

Table 6: Confirmation of Hypothesis 4

Impacts	Unstandardized				
	Beta	Std Er	P	LLCI	ULCI
Ent. Leadership→ Emp. Creativity	0,209	0,033	0,000	0,144	0,273
Ent. Leadership→Emp. Performance (Direct Impact)	0,070	0,020	0,001	0,030	0,110
Emp. Creativity →Emp. Performance	0,351	0,031	0,000	0,290	0,413
Indirect Impact	0,073	0,016		0,045	0,108
Total Impact	0,144	0,022	0,000	0,100	0,188

In order to determine whether organizational support has a moderating effect on the relationship between entrepreneurial leadership and employee creativity, the independent and moderating variables were first standardized. As a second step, the standardized independent (x) and moderator (m) variables were multiplied to arrive at the interaction term (Gürbüz & Şahin, 2018, p. 293). Analysis values were calculated by applying the SPSS Process plug-in Model 1.

The fact that the interaction term is significant ($p=0.009$, $p<0.05$) and the Beta coefficient is positive ($\beta=0.097$) shows that organizational support has a moderating effect and is positive. It seems that the interaction term can take values within the lower limit and upper limit of the Beta coefficient (LLCI = 0.024 and ULCI = 0.170) within the 95% confidence interval. When the interaction term, that is, the moderator variable, is included in the model; It is seen that its effect here is 12% ($R^2=0.121$) and its contribution is 0.017% increase ($R^2\text{-chang}=0.017$). Additionally, in the analyses, the contribution to the model was significant when the mean of organizational support was 0 ($p=0.000$, $p<0.05$), 1 standard deviation below ($p=0.001$, $p<0.05$) or 1 standard deviation above the mean of organizational support ($p=$ It is noticeable that its contribution to the model is significant if it takes values (0.000, $p<0.05$). These results show that the H5 hypothesis is confirmed and that organizational support has a moderating effect on the relationship between entrepreneurial leadership behavior and employee creativity.

Table 7: Results on the moderating role of organizational support in the relationship between entrepreneurial leadership and employee creativity

	Beta	Std Err	P	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	3,919	0,045	0,000	3,831	4,008
Ent. Leadership (x)	0,283	0,055	0,000	0,175	0,392
Org. Support (w)	0,003	0,051	0,949	-0,098	0,104
Interaction Term (x*w)	0,097	0,037	0,009	0,024	0,170

5. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Employee performance is among the important issues for businesses to survive and realize their plans for the future. The intense competition and market uncertainty in which businesses operate, and the development of new products and services to meet the needs make the performance of employees important for the business. For this reason, it is important for businesses to identify and implement the factors that will affect the performance of employees and ensure their productivity.

It is thought that employees' adoption of their businesses and improving their performance are directly proportional to the leader's behavior and the support given to employees (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Chen, 2007; Renko, 2015; Sani et al., 2018). For the future of the business, the leader needs to exhibit entrepreneurial behaviors, express the vision he/she has created, and involve his/her employees in this vision. Entrepreneurial leaders support, empower, and authorize their employees to take responsibility for the future creative, innovative, and successful performance of the business. By structuring the business in accordance with this approach, they encourage employees' creativity and performance (Renko, 2015, p. 57). Thanks to this perceived support within the organization, employees make more personal efforts and try to improve business performance.

The results of the study reveal that entrepreneurial leadership has a positive impact on employee creativity. The leader's development of entrepreneurial behaviors indicates that employees' creative behaviors will improve. The results of this study confirm the results of previous studies by Mumford et al. (2002), Chen (2007), Cai et al. (2019), Riana et al. (2020) and Mehmood et al. (2021). Entrepreneurial leadership behavior also has significant effects on employee performance. That is, an increase in entrepreneurial leadership behaviors encourages an increase in employee performance. These findings support the studies of Sani et al. (2018), Suswati (2020), Lin & Yi (2021) and Bekmezci et al. (2021), which reveal the effects of entrepreneurial leadership on employee performance. On the other hand, employee creativity also has a positive impact on employee performance. It is concluded that the increase in employees' creative behaviors will significantly increase their performance. The results of this study support the results of Chen (2007), Chen & Chen (2012), Cheung & Wong (2011) and Ximenes et al. (2019). In addition, the findings reveal that employee creativity plays a mediating role in the relationship between entrepreneurial leadership behavior and employee performance, that is, it enhances this relationship. In addition, perceived organizational support also acts as a moderating variable in the effect of entrepreneurial leadership on employee creativity. It means that the creativity attitudes and behaviors of employees who feel supported by their management and leaders are strengthened.

The survival and growth of a business is only possible by producing need-oriented, creative and innovative products or services. The creative and solution-oriented performances of employees in complex and uncertain situations increase the performance of the organization. In this context, in order to increase the performance of employees, the leader needs to develop entrepreneurial behavior, create a creative work environment and support employees in an integrated manner.

6. LIMITATIONS

This study offers insightful information about the connections between employee creativity, perceived organizational support, performance, and entrepreneurial leadership; however, it should be noted that it has certain limitations.

Due to the heavy reliance on self-reported measures, common method bias and social desirability bias may be present in the data obtained for this study. Subsequent investigations may include several data sources, such evaluations from peers or supervisors, in order to augment the dependability and accuracy of the results.

It's possible that the study's sample isn't typical of all sectors or regions. The results may be unique to the particular setting in which the research was carried out. In order to increase the generalizability of the findings, future research should strive to include a more varied sample.

Given that organizational support and entrepreneurial leadership can differ greatly between cultural contexts, the study's cultural background may have an impact on the findings. A more thorough knowledge of these interactions may be possible through comparative research conducted in diverse cultural situations.

Other possible moderators and mediators were not looked at, despite the fact that this study focuses on the mediating function of employee creativity and the moderating impact of organizational support. Additional research is necessary to fully understand the potential effects that variables including individual personality traits, corporate culture, and external environmental influences may play.

Future studies could improve our knowledge of how entrepreneurial leadership affects employee outcomes and the circumstances in which these effects are most noticeable by addressing these limitations.

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Appendix: Survey Questions

The 5 Point Likert Scale

- My manager often comes up with radical improvement ideas for the product/service we sell or the area we work in.
- My manager has completely new product/service ideas that we can sell and improvement ideas for our area.
- My manager takes risks.
- My manager finds creative solutions to problems.
- My manager demonstrates passion for his job.
- My manager has a vision for the future of our business.
- My manager encourages me to be more innovative.
- My manager wants me to challenge the way work is done.
- I am the first of my colleagues and subordinates to try a new idea or method.
- I solve problems that cause a big problem for others.
- I seek out and obtain the resources/funds needed to implement new ideas.
- I often find new uses for existing methods or tools.
- I develop plans and programs to implement new ideas.
- I suggest new ways to achieve goals/objectives
- I usually research new technologies, processes, techniques and/or products.
- I use existing information or materials to improve ideas, methods or products that are useful for the business.
- I develop original and especially useful ideas, methods, processes or products for the business.
- The ideas I develop are very often applied/implemented in the business.
- In general, the ideas I produce are related to the success of the business.
- The organization I work for values the contribution I make to its well-being.
- The organization I work for truly cares about my well-being.
- The organization I work for generally cares about my satisfaction at work
- The organization I work for is proud of my achievements at work.
- The organization I work for does not appreciate the extra effort I put in.
- The organization I work for ignores my complaints.
- Even if I do my job in the best possible way, the organization I work for does not notice it.
- The institution I work for shows me very little closeness.
- I help my friends get their work done when they are not there.
- I come to work on time in the morning and after lunch breaks.
- I volunteer to do more than the assigned task.
- I help newcomers in the department even if it is not in my job description.
- I tend to take less leave than I deserve, I do not take leave even if it is necessary.
- When the workload of others increases, I help them until they overcome the difficulties.
- I work with high performance until the end of the day.
- If I cannot come to work, I definitely inform someone in advance, beyond the legal obligation.
- I sometimes spend long hours on personal phone calls.
- I help my department manager with his work.
- I present my innovative ideas that will increase the overall quality of my department to my manager.

- I return from breaks on time, I do not tend to prolong them.
- I am willing to perform some tasks even if they are not necessary for the business.
- I do not waste long time with empty talk.
- I can take on more responsibility than the assigned task.
- I achieve all the goals of my job.
- I meet all performance criteria.
- I perform all tasks related to my job with expertise.
- I appear suitable for a higher position.
- I am competent in all areas of the job. I handle all tasks with expertise.
- I perform well overall by performing assigned tasks as requested.
- I plan to achieve the goals of the job and complete the assigned task at the time it is due.

Demographic Questions

- Your age
- Your gender
- Your education
- Your total work experience
- Your title

Demographic Characteristics of Participants:

		Frequency	Percentage
Age	25 and below	57	16,2
	26-35	178	50,6
	36-45	89	25,3
	46-55	26	7,4
	56 and above	2	0,6
Sex	Man	101	28,7
	Woman	251	71,3
Education	High School and Below	95	27,0
	Associate	69	19,6
	Bachelor	139	39,5
	Master and above	49	13,9
Experience	Less than 1	40	11,4
	2-5	98	27,8
	6-10	81	23,0
	11-15	53	15,1
	16-20	40	11,4
	21 and above	40	11,4
Total		352	100.0