

Exploring The Mediating Effect Of Employee Happiness On The Relationship Between Visionary Leadership And Employee Creativity In KSA

Hala Elrashied Osman Bashier¹, Elsit Abdalla Elfadul Mukhtar², Engy Ahmed AbdelGhany Mostafa³, Abeer Bakri Siralkhatim Alhaj⁴, Anjom Ahmed Osman⁵, Rasha Siraj M Alhumaidi⁶, Mohammed Mustafa Fadul⁷, Siham Hider Elderderi⁸, Tarig Osman Abdallah Helal⁹

Abstract

The aim of this study is to explore the mediating role of employee happiness on the relationship between visionary leadership and employee creativity in the universities of Saudi Arabia. Although there are growing interest toward studying the effect of leadership on employee creativity, still there is a lack of empirical evidence in this area. This study followed the quantitative approach, so 100 self-administered questionnaires were collected from academic staff. For analyzing the data, we employed SPSS, and Smart-PLS software for having the results of this study. The results indicated that visionary leadership has a positive impact on employee happiness and creativity, however, employee happiness is found not predicting employee creativity. Moreover, the results also showed that the role of mediator of employee happiness is not found. Therefore, the study provided new ideas and implications for leaders and policymakers due to the significant role of visionary leadership for increasing the employees' happiness and creativity in workplace.

Keywords: Visionary Leadership, Happiness, Employee Creativity.

1.0 Introduction

Nowadays, the competitive advantage is become crucial for organizations in order to continue making profits or providing the best services. One of the most significant competitive advantage is having creative employees in organization. Employee creativity is acting as the basis for organizational creativity, organization' score competency, and an organization's competitive advantage at the end (Woodman, Sawyer, and Griffin 1993). Thus, employee

¹ Lecturer, Applied College, King Khalid University, Abha, Saudi Arabia.

² Assistant Professor, Applied College, King Khalid University, Abha, Saudi Arabia.

³ Lecturer, Applied College, King Khalid University, Abha, Saudi Arabia.

⁴ Assistant Professor, Applied College, King Khalid University, Abha, Saudi Arabia.

⁵ Assistant Professor, Applied College, King Khalid University, Abha, Saudi Arabia.

⁶ Lecturer, Applied College, King Khalid University, Abha, Saudi Arabia.

⁷ Assistant Professor, Sudan University of Science and Technology, Khartoum, Sudan.

⁸ Assistant Professor, City University Ajman, Ajman, United Arab Emirates.

⁹ Assistant Professor, College of Business, Jouf University, Saudi Arabia.

creativity is described as the basis for product innovation, which is widely expressed as an igniter of innovation and some scholars suggested that all innovations begun with the creative ideas (Chaubey, Sahoo, and Khatri 2019). According to Gong et al. (2009) who defined creativity as introducing new and useful ideas which improve the overall effectiveness of the organizational processes (Gong et al. 2009). Moreover, employees' creativity also refers to the degree to which an employee demonstrates new ideas or applications for activities and solutions at work (Edwards 1989). These definitions emerged from industrial environment or business, however, there are other definitions related to service organizations such as schools and universities. Due to that, some scholars have investigated the teacher creativity. Teacher creativity in the learning process is actions that are deliberately taken by teachers to develop, convey and use new or different ideas from before in carrying out interactive, interesting and effective learning activities so as to improve learning outcomes (Makhrus, Sunardi, and Retnowati 2022). While, teacher creativity consists of several dimensions are; i) Curiosity; ii) Persistent development of ideas; iii) respect for students' ideas; iv) Implementation of novelty in learning activities; and v) Dare to take risks (Makhrus et al. 2022). Furthermore, creative teacher enhances learning process and make it is meaningful, and profoundly experiential that will be helpful for students' improvement in terms of elevating their cognitive and emotional skills (Chen and Yuan 2021). Relatedly, the creative teaching of teachers is an important factor producing creativity of teaching, which has need nowadays for education development (Sharma 2017). Empirical evidence showed that creative teaching is surrounded by internal factors (e.g., motivation, characteristics, attitude, ability, and teaching experience of teachers) and external factors (e.g., students' attitudes, students' interactions with the school environment, the school administration, and the teaching media used) (Chen and Yuan 2021; Sharma 2017). These factors have a positive or negative effect on teaching or teacher creativity. Thus, managers of organizations are keen to search for effective ways to facilitate and enhance employee creativity. Li et al. (2023) concluded that employee creativity is increased and supported by leaders in organization. Although, literatures showed the positive influence of leadership styles on enhancing the employee creativity such as transformational leadership (Chaubey et al. 2019; Gong et al. 2009), authentic leadership (Semedo, Coelho, and Ribeiro 2017), and visionary leadership (Li et al. 2023; Zhou et al. 2018). There still a lack of studies in examine the relationship between leadership and creativity. More specifically, the relationship between visionary leadership and employee creativity in tertiary institutions. In contrast, the previous studies focused on employee creativity at profitable organizations such as company or firms in general, however, less studies focused on non-profitable organizations such as schools and universities. In addition, there also some studies have addressed the relationship in the Western culture, however, there is a lack of research been conducted in non-Western culture (Li et al. 2023). Therefore, this study attempt to achieve two objectives; first, to investigate the relationship between visionary leadership and employee creativity in Universities in Saudi Arabia. Second, to examine the mediating role of employee happiness between visionary leadership and employee creativity.

2.0 Literature review

2.1 Visionary leadership and employee creativity

Recently, research has paid more attention toward visionary leadership as one of the helpful styles that has significant effect on employee/ organizational performance. Visionary leadership refer to the leader's ability to create and articulate a realistic, trustworthy, attractive, vision of the future for an organization or organizational unit that continues to grow and improve today (Makhrus et al. 2022). Also, it defined as leaders' ability to communicate their

vision for the organization to other employees, with the intention to persuade them to accept and follow this vision (Bunnoiko and Atthirawong 2017). Moreover, visionary leadership consists the ability, capability, extraordinary expertise to offer success and triumph in the future (Apriyani, Sutisna, and Suharyati 2019). Thus, visionary leaders are able to expect that might arise, manage the future and encourage others to act in the right ways. In other words, visionary leaders are able to see the challenges and opportunities before they occur and then set the organization to achieve its best goals (Apriyani et al. 2019). Another description of visionary leaders as those who are able to build a 'new dawn' with intuition and imagination, appreciation, and boldness. They present a challenge as an effort to provide the best for the organization and make it as something evocative to achieve organizational goals (Sugiarti 2017). Thus, in order to visionary leadership to be effective, there are suggested indicators as; i) creating a vision into action, ii) thinking of the future iii) motivating inspiration, iiiv) intellectual encouragement, v) personal attention and vi) communicating well (Apriyani et al. 2019).

Based on above-mentioned definitions, scholars argued that visionary leaders can increase the productivity, performance, and creativity among employee and organization (Darma, Notosudjono, and Herfina 2021; Li et al. 2023; Makhrus et al. 2022). On the other hand, we found some studies have highlighted that visionary leadership may have a positive impact on employee creativity at workplace. For example, Li et al. (2023) investigated the role of visionary leadership on employee creativity for 229 employees who working in seven enterprises in South China. The results showed that visionary leadership has a positive effect on employee creativity (Li et al. 2023). Moreover, in Indonesia, Apriyani and colleagues (2019) examined the relationship between visionary leadership and teacher creativity in schools. The results revealed that visionary leadership has a significant effect on teacher creativity (Apriyani et al. 2019). Therefore, and based on abovementioned evidence we proposed that; H1: visionary leadership has a positive effect on employee creativity among academic staff in Saudi universities.

2.2 Visionary leadership and employee happiness

In recent decades, academicians have increased interest toward studying the happiness. This because happiness consists a variety of forms such as pleasant moods and emotions, well-being, and positive attitudes. Happiness is also can be a form of joy, appears in every typology of 'basic' human emotions (Fisher 2010). Hence, happiness can be referred to as a general term that describes life in peace and happiness (Fisher 2010; Isa et al. 2019). Moreover, happiness is something that is subjective and needed by humans. However, the interpretation of each individual's happiness is vary due to the differentiation in physical and mental effects on human life (Isa et al. 2019). So, the spreading of happiness among employees is an important for organizations in order to achieve their goals in future. The empirical evidence showed that when employees are become happy enjoying their tasks, they will be more productive and less stressed at workplace (Akgunduz, Bardakoglu, and Kizilcalioglu 2023; Fisher 2010; Opatha and Uresha 2020; Semedo, Coelho, and Ribeiro 2019). In this context, it is important for organizations to ensure that the employees are able to remain loyal and continue working in the organizations through their leaders (Isa et al. 2019). Accordingly, there are many studies addressed the significant role of leadership styles on employee happiness. For instance, Isa et al. (2019) examined the effect of leadership on employees' happiness in Malaysia. The results revealed that leaders have a positive effect on employees' happiness at work (Isa et al. 2019). Further, Semedo et al. (2019) investigated the relationship between authentic leadership and employee happiness of 543 employees working in Cape Verdean organizations. The results indicated that authentic leadership has positively related to employees' happiness (Semedo et al. 2019). However, Yang (2014) addressed the impact of ethical leadership on employee

happiness among Chinese. The results showed the negative impact of ethical leadership on employee happiness (i.e., well-being) (Yang 2014). Therefore, and based on the previous empirical evidence, we proposed that; H2: visionary leadership has a positive effect on employee happiness.

2.3 Employee happiness and employee creativity

Happiness is an umbrella term for all that is good which contributes to the 'wellbeing' or 'quality of life' of both individuals and society (Veenhoven 2011). Due to the importance of happiness, research findings showed that there is a significant relationship between happiness and employee creativity at workplace. According to Diržytė et al. (2021) studied the relationship between employee happiness and employee creativity. The results showed that there is a significant association between happiness and creativity (Diržytė et al. 2021). Furthermore, Semedo et al. (2017) also found that happiness has a positive effect on employee creativity (Semedo et al. 2017). in the context of university students, Pannells and Claxton (2008) addressed the relationship between happiness and creativity among students. The results revealed that happiness has a positive influence on student creativity (Pannells and Claxton 2008). Therefore, and based on the stated evidence, we suggest that; H3: Happiness has a positive effect on employee creativity.

2.4 The mediating role of Employee happiness

Previous research suggested the essential role of happiness as a mediator between leadership and positive outcomes. However, there is a lack of research in address the issue of mediation and moderation variable in the happiness literature. For example, Semedo and colleagues (2017) examined the role of happiness between authentic leadership and employee creativity. The results showed that employee happiness is playing a significant mediation role between authentic leadership and employee creativity (Semedo et al. 2017). Furthermore, the prior findings showed that there is direct relationship between visionary leadership and happiness (Isa et al. 2019; Opatha and Uresha 2020; Semedo et al. 2017, 2019). On the other hand, there are some studies have found that happiness has a positive influence of employee creativity (Diržytė et al. 2021; Giacinto, Ferrante, and Vistocco 2007; Pannells and Claxton 2008). Therefore, and based on the above-mentioned empirical evidence, we proposed that; H4: Employee happiness is mediating the relationship between visionary leadership and employee creativity.

2.4 Conceptual framework

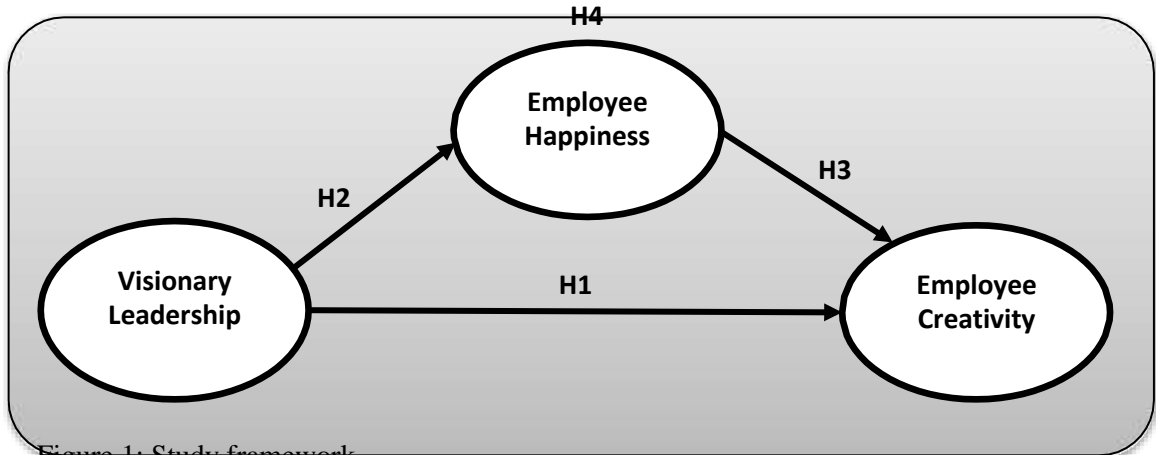


Figure 1: Study framework

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Participants

The data employed in this study were collected from academic staff who working King Khalid University (KKU) located in Saudi Arabia during the both months of November and December 2023. We anticipated to collect data from 150 samples of academic staff in the stated university according to the rule of thumb depicted by the methodologist for sample size determination. Thus, according to Kerjcie and Morgan (1970) and Cohen (1969) table of minimum samples size (Krejcie and Morgan 1970; Sekaran 2003; Sekaran and Bougie 2016). So, we managed to collect 100 through google form questionnaires which it was interesting for increasing the degree of accuracy for having good results in future.

3.2 Measures

The questionnaire's items for measurement were administrated in Saudi Arabia. The technique of back to back translation (Brislin 1970) applied to the questionnaire's items because the language of respondents is Arabic, so the questions have translated into Arabic language. While, the final draft of items after more revisions, the questionnaires had been allocated to the respondents. Whereas, the constructs' measures were specified in details. First, visionary leadership is assessed by five (5) items adapted from Conger et al. (1994). These items used in the previous studies (e.g. my leader has the vision and blueprint for the future), and the Cronbach α test showed the construct had good reliability (Cronbach's alpha) was 0.88 (Conger, Jay and Kanungo, Rabindra 1994). Second, employee creativity was measured by academic staff working in Saudi universities using Farmer et al. (2003) scale, which consisted of four (4) items. Examples include: "The employee seeks new ideas or new ways to solve problems" (Farmer, Tierney, and Kung-Mcintyre 2003). The Cronbach α test showed the construct had good reliability (Cronbach's alpha) was 0.87. Finally, employee happiness was measured by four (4) items have adapted from Karakasidou et al. (2016). These measures used in previous research (e.g., In general, I consider myself happy at workplace) which was providing a good factor loadings (Karakasidou et al. 2016). whereas, Cronbach Alpha of grit's items was 0.76.

4.0 Data analysis and results

The Data has been collected and cleaned in order to be ready for final analysis. Regarding the theory of testing, we conducted descriptive analysis for demographic data and descriptive analysis for items have done through using SPSS 20.0 software which was ranged between 0.76 to 0.88 for all constructs' items in the study. In other words, Internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha) exceeded 0.70 for all items which it was reached the minimum threshold above 0.70. Then, we employed Smart-PLS version 4.0, for running the two stages analysis based on Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) (Hair, Joe F.Ringle and Sarstedt 2011; Nitzl 2014; Sarstedt, Ringle, and Hair 2017); first, Confirmatory Factor analysis (CFA) which includes convergent and discriminant validity test for assessing the reliability and validity of constructs. Next, the second test is to run the path coefficient analysis, this mainly for hypotheses testing in order to come out with the results based on the primary data that collected from the respondents.

4.1 Demographic Data

Table 1: Showing the Description of Sample

Items		Frequency	Percent%
Gender	Male	4	4.0
	Female	96	96.0
	Total	100	100.0
Age	Less Than 25	74	74.0
	From 25 - 35	8	8.0
	From 36 - 45	7	7.0
	From 46 - 55	10	10.0
	More than 55	1	1.0
	Total	100	100.0
Education	Bachelor Degree	7	7.0
	Master Degree	5	5.0
	PhD or DBA	13	13.0
	Others	75	75.0
	Total	100	100.0
Current Occupation	Lecturer	42	42.0
	Assistant Professor	11	11.0
	Associate Professor	1	1.0
	Full Professor	1	1.0
	Officer	3	3.0
	Others	42	42.0
Total	100	100.0	
Working Experience	Less than 5 years	70	70.0
	6 - 10	10	10.0
	11-15	9	9.0
	More than 15	11	11.0
	Total	100	100.0

The result of demographic data of this study includes males (n=4) 4.0% and females (n=96) 96.0% working in KSA universities, and their ages between less than 25 (n=74) 74.0%, between 25 to 35 (n=8) 8.0%, between 36 to 45 (n=7) 7.0%, and between 46 to 55 (n=10) 10.0%, and more than 55 (n=1) 1.0%. Further, in terms of education, the participants holding bachelor degree (n=7) 7.0%, master degree (n=5) 5.0%, doctorate degree (n=13) 13.0%, and

other certificates was the ranked high (n=75) 75.0%. In addition, their occupation is more located between lecturer (n=42) 42.0%, assistant professor (n=11) 11.0%, associated professor (n=1) 1.0%, full professor (n=1) 1.0%, officer (n=3) 3.0%, and others (n=42) 42.0%. Finally, in term of experience, most of respondents are having experience from less than 5 years (n=70) 70.0%, then from 6 to 10 years (n=10) 10.0%, then 11 to 15 years (n=9) 9.0%, and who their experience is more than 15 years (n=11) 11.0%. whereas, for more details see table no.1 under.

4.2 Construct reliability and validity, and discriminant validity analysis

According to Hair et al. (2017), the test of constructs' items reliability and validity is assessing by establishing the composite reliability and discriminant validity which consist Composite Reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), and Cronbach's Alpha (CA) (Hair et al. 2017). Therefore, the Table 2 and Table 3 (Fronell-Lacker) is showing the construct reliability and discriminant validity of the measurement model which consists PCO as an independent variable, Grit as a mediator variable, and ACS as a dependent variable. The results showed that the model is consistent with threshold of validity by employing the CA was more than 0.70 for all constructs, CR was over 0.75, AVE was over 0.5, and VIF for multi-collinearity is less than 3. Hence, based on assessment of previous tests is ensuring the establishment of constructs validity and reliability for the model understudy.

Table 2: Showing the construct reliability and validity

Variables	CA	CR	AVE	VIF
Creativity	0.87	0.89	0.72	1.264
Happiness	0.76	0.88	0.60	1.264
leadership	0.88	0.88	0.67	1.000

Note: Composite Reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Cronbach's Alpha (CA), Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)

Table 3: Showing the Fronell-Larcker criterion

Variables	Creativity	Happiness	Leadership
Creativity	0.848		
Happiness	0.339	0.772	
leadership	0.580	0.453	0.817

Note: the threshold is not exceeding 1%.

4.3 Path analysis

Path coefficient analysis is the second stage for assessing the model through examining the direct path and indirect path for the relationships in the model for extracting the values such as P-values and t-values that are more important for validating the hypotheses.

Table 4: Showing Structural Path Model (Hypotheses testing)

Structural Path	Beta value	S.E.	T- value	P-value	Supported
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H1: VL -> EC	0.537	0.138	3.877	***	Yes
H2: VL -> EH	0.453	0.104	4.369	***	Yes
H3: EH -> EC	0.096	0.122	0.790	0.430	No
H4: VL -> EH -> EC	0.043	0.058	0.739	0.460	No

Notes: *** = 0.000, SE = standard error; T- Value => 1.645; P- Value = < 0.05.

Accordingly, Table 4 is showing the effect of visionary leadership (VL), employee happiness (EH), and employee creativity (EC). Hence, the statistical results showed that; first, there is a positive relationship between VL and EC ($\beta = 0.537$, SE = 0.138 t = 3.877, $p < 0.000$), second, there is a positive relationship between VL and EH ($\beta = 0.453$, SE = 0.104, t = 4.369, $p = 0.000$), third, there is insignificant relationship between EH and EC ($\beta = 0.096$, SE = 0.122, t = 0.790, $p = 0.430$), and finally, the statistical results of mediating effect showed that, there is no mediating effect of EH between VL and EC ($\beta = 0.043$, SE = 0.058, t = 0.739, $p = 0.460$) (see, Figure 2). Therefore, the statistical results indicated that H1 (there is a positive relationship between VL and EC), and H2 (there is a positive relationship between VL and EH) were supported. However, H3 (there is a positive relationship between EH and EC), and H4 (EH mediate the relationship between VL and EC) were not supported. Generally, these results are matching with some studies and contradicted with others (For more details, see Table 4 and Figure 2).

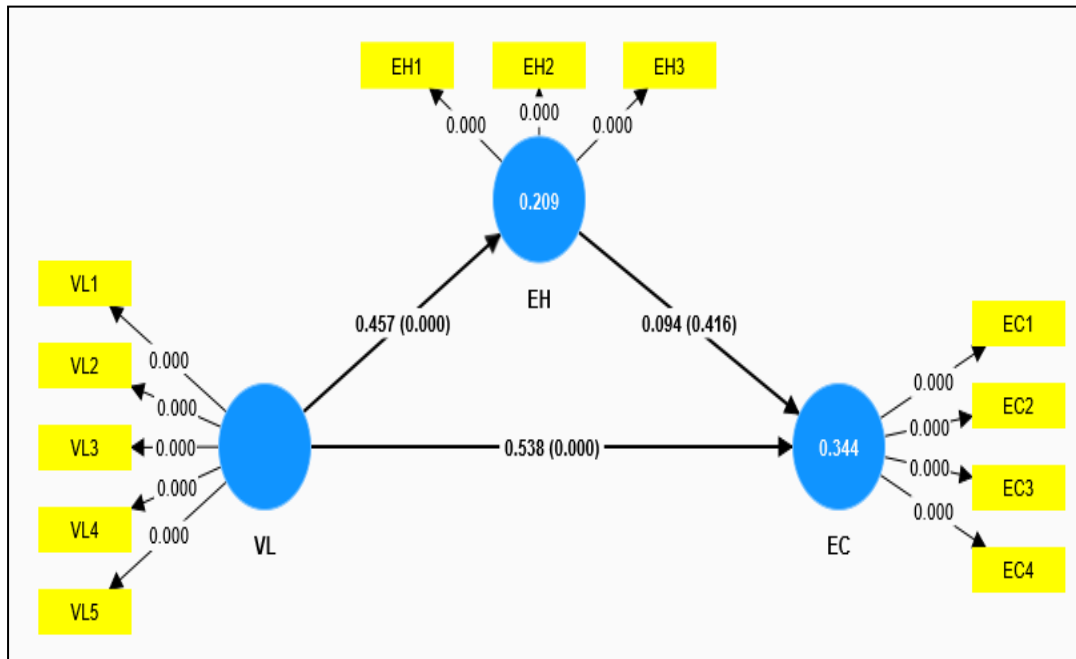


Figure 2: Structural Path Model

5.0 Discussion

The study focused on investigating the mediating effect of employee happiness on the relationship between visionary leadership and employee creativity. The results revealed that; first, H1 is proposed as “there is a positive relationship between visionary leadership and

employee creativity,” which is supported and congruent with previous scholars findings such (Cai, Fan, and Wang 2023; Li et al. 2023; Zhou et al. 2018) who found that there is a positive link between visionary leadership and employee creativity in different countries. Second, H2 is suggested that “there is a positive relationship between visionary leadership and employee happiness” which is supported and consistent with prior empirical findings of some studies as (Isa et al. 2019; Semedo et al. 2017) which showed the significant effect of visionary leadership on employee happiness. Third, H3 is proposed that “there is a positive relationship between employee happiness and employee creativity” which is not supported. In other words, the results showed there is insignificant relationship between employee happiness and employee creativity. This results is contradicted with work of (Diržytė et al. 2021; Semedo et al. 2019), whereas, it consistent with (Sindane 2011) who found that happiness has insignificant relationship with employee creativity. This is possible because not every happy employee is creative at his/her work due to the bundles of creativity. Hence, academic staff sometimes abide by curriculum of subjects sat by their university so will be hard to them to go out of that path in order to be more creative in their recent job. However, the happiness will lead to creativity, if the employee has pave way to do so. Finally, H4 is suggested that “employee happiness mediates the relationship between visionary leadership and employee creativity” which is not supported. This results is inconsistent with some literature such as (Semedo et al. 2017). However, in this study, employee happiness is not playing a mediator role between visionary leadership and employee creativity due to the possibility of nature of employee understanding to creativity or the happiness’ measures which we find that the previous studies operationalize the happiness as well-being.

Therefore, this study brought new trajectories for future studies that to introduce the construct of happiness as a moderator which may provide more interesting results. In sum, the study offered interesting results that would be like eye opener for policymakers and leader in tertiary institutions for promoting the role of visionary leadership style for maximizing the employees’ happiness and creativity at work environment.

6.0 Conclusion

The objective of this study is to explore the mediating role of employee happiness on the relationship between visionary leadership and employee creativity in the universities of Saudi Arabia. The data collected from academic staff who working in King Khalid University (KKU). For analyzing the data, we employed SPSS, and Smart-PLS software for having the results of this study. The results revealed that visionary leadership has a positive impact on employee happiness and creativity, however, employee happiness is found not predicting employee creativity. Moreover, the results also showed that the role of mediator of employee happiness is not found. Therefore, these interesting results would give policymakers new trajectories for paying more attention to the role of visionary leadership at workplace in order to increase the employees’ happiness and creativity.

7.0 Limitations

Every research has surrounded by some limitations due to variety of aspects. Firstly, the objective of this study is to address the mediation effect of happiness on the relationship between visionary leadership and employee creativity. In contrast, future research should focus on the moderating effect of happiness because we found there is no mediation effect of happiness between visionary leadership and employee creativity. Secondly, the sample of the study is oriented to specific universities. However, the future studies need to have enlarging the sample size and may be from different context. Thirdly, in term of measurements of

employee happiness, the majority of previous research utilized an employee well-being to measure happiness. However, this study focused on the original measures of happiness. So, the gap and argumentation among literature is avail. Finally, this study employed quantitative methods for guiding procedures and results, but future studies may attempt other research methods such as qualitative approaches or mixed methods for providing interesting suggestions in future.

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1296 *Exploring The Mediating Effect Of Employee Happiness On The Relationship Between Visionary Leadership And Employee Creativity In KSA*

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