



# MBA

Dissertation Subject:

**How Leader's Self-Criticism can influence employees' Creativity,  
Voice and Engagement through Politics Perceptions**

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## Abstract

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The achievement of favorable work-outcomes by employees is emerging as a critical organizational issue, especially as organizations struggle to respond to what is a continuously changing environment. The role of effective Leadership has been widely examined for its influence on employee behavior and feelings.

The purpose of this study is to contribute to Leadership and Organization Behavior literature by examining a very well-defined Leader behavior, the act of Self-Criticism, and its influence on three employee work outcomes – Creativity, Voice and Engagement. The study also aims to contribute on research that explores the relationship among Leadership, context, and work outcomes, as it uses employee perception of organizational politics as the mediator variable to explain the aforementioned relationship.

To address my objectives, I conducted an online survey (N= 152) using Prolific Academic - an online labor marketplace. I demonstrated that Leader Self-Criticism has a positive direct effect on employee Creativity, Voice, Engagement and Organizational Politics Perceptions and that the later, indeed, acts as a mediator variable. The theoretical and managerial implications of the findings are discussed in relation to Organizational Change, Leadership and the Positive Psychology movement.

**Keywords:** Leadership, Organizational Behavior, Work Outcomes, Creativity, Voice, Engagement, Perceptions of Politics, Self-Criticism

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## Introduction

In today's organizational reality, uncertainty and complexity surrounds everyday organizational practice, stressing the limits of predictability and the ability to design and plan the future (Griffin, Neal, & Parker, 2007). Organizations are struggling to respond to the continuously changing environment, to gain competitive advantage, and to remain efficient while keeping their employees satisfied (Stacey, 2009). Due to these circumstances, organizations need to be flexible, better organized and responsive to rapid market's changes.

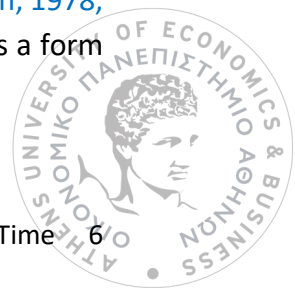
According to the resource-based view (Wernerfelt, 1984), the human element of every organization is argued to be a vital resource for success and competitive advantage. A dedicated and talented workforce serve as a valuable, scarce resource that can help firms execute successfully a selected positioning strategy (Lado & Wilson, 1994). Moreover, the human capital can contribute to competitive advantage through developing competencies that are firm specific, producing complex social relationships and generating tacit organizational knowledge (Barney, 1991).

An organization's commitment, care and devotion to its human capital is therefore, vital for its success, and its capability to achieve and improve favorable work outcomes is of the outmost importance (Jelinek, 1993). In this study, I will discuss a potential way to improve three very important work outcomes, employees' Creativity, Engagement and Voice. I selected these variables as recent research has pointed to their being instrumental in providing organizations with a competitive edge. Their definition and importance are explained below.

Creativity is defined as *the production of new and useful ideas concerning products, services, processes and procedures* (Amabile, Conti, Coon, Lazenby, & Herron, 1996). It has become a topic of ever-increasing interest for managers and organizations (Shalley & Oldham, 1985) as they realize that to remain competitive they need their employees to be actively involved in their work and trying to generate novel and appropriate products and approaches (Woodman, 1993). People's creative efforts make an important contribution to organizational performance, being necessary for organizations interested in responding to:

*"(a) advancing technology; (b) changing environment; (c) changing organizational structures or strategies; (d) overcoming competitors that improve their products, processes, and services; (e) evolving customer desires; and (f) evolving societies influenced increasingly by global issues and diversity"* (Egan, 2005).

The notion of Voice stems from the idea that employees recognize some source of dissatisfaction or opportunity for improving their own and/or their organization's well-being (Hirschman, 1970). Scholars have acknowledged from early on the contributions that Voice and change-oriented behaviors can make to organizational effectiveness (Katz & Kahn, 1978; Schein, 1988). Employees' comments and suggestions are very desirable primarily as a form



of communication with the management, and also as means of change-oriented communication intended to improve the situation (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). Voice is particularly important today because, as (Senge, 1990) wrote , it is “*just not possible any longer to 'figure it out' from the top*”.

Engagement is defined by Schaufeli, Salanova, Gon Alez-ro, & Bakker (2002) as *an active, motivational, work-related state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption*. Engaged employees have high levels of energy, are enthusiastically and actively involved in their work and use their personal allocation of resources to secure desired outcomes (Eldor & Harpaz, 2016). Also, they care about the future of the company and are willing to invest in order to see that the organization succeeds. Engagement is considered to be a key driver of individual attitudes, behavior, and performance as well as organizational performance and financial performance (Baumruk, 2006; Catteeuw, Flynn, & Vonderhorst, 2007)

## 1. Purpose of this study

Development of favorable work outcomes is simultaneously affected by the personal characteristics or skills of the actor as well as by the organizational or environmental factors in which the actor operates. While a fair amount is known about personality characteristics there is an increasing need for a greater understanding of the contextual factors that may enhance or discourage employees' work outcomes. According to scholars (Detert & Burris, 2007; Shalley & Gilson, 2004), future scholarship should be directed to examine other or more specific contextual features of the work environment, associated human resource practices as well as the role of Leadership in encouraging employee outcomes.

The role of Leadership is one of the most important factors influencing positive work outcomes. A capable Leader provides direction for the organization and lead followers towards achieving desired goals (Conger & Kanungo, 1987). Leaders also influence subordinates indirectly through their control over organizational policies and structures and their impact on an overall culture (Morrison & Milliken, 2000). Many studies have found that Leaders can influence employee optimism, organizational commitment, collective identification, and mutual cooperation (Mumford, Scott, Gaddis, & Strange, 2002; Zaccaro, Rittman, & Marks, 2001) .

However, most managers would say that they would like to see more from their employees but it has not always been clear how managers should lead for those results to occur (Detert et al., 2007; Shalley & Gilson, 2004). While much has been written about the direct link between Leader behaviors and work outcomes (Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, & May, 2004; Shalley & Gilson, 2004) , there is an unexplored field in the influence a Leader can have on the context within the employees work. Therefore, importance should be given to yet potentially equally or more important, relationship among Leadership, context, and work outcomes.



People's perceptions of organizational politics in the work environment, also relate to their work outcomes. Empirical research has provided considerable discussions for linkages between perceptions of organizational politics and a variety of employee outcomes, including job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Ferris & Kacmar (1992) noted that employees may respond to perceptions of organizational politics by increasing involvement in their jobs. Other scholars have largely focused on the negative aspects of organizational politics, which have been linked to manipulation, self-interests, and other subversive activities (Hochwarter, Ferris, Laird, Treadway, & Gallagher, 2010). The phenomenon has a multitude of meanings that can also challenge and stimulate employees (Drory, 1993; Hochwarter et al., 2010).

The purpose of this study is to examine how a specific Leader's behavior can affect organizational factors so as to achieve positive outcomes. Specifically, I examined whether and how the practice of Self-Criticism by someone in a leading position can affect the Creativity, Engagement, and Voice of employees. As a mediator variable, I used a theoretical framework which examines politics perceptions in relation to work outcome. The study hypothesizes that a Leader's Self-Criticism can strengthen positive perception of politics by employees, something that, in turn, leads to the improvement of outcomes including Creativity, Engagement and Voice.

Respectively, the non-existence of Leader's Self-Criticism, leads to worse perception of politics and thus, worse work-outcomes.

## 2. Importance of topics

The topics addressed are important in several ways.

To begin with, this study examines a specific Leader behavior, i.e. self-criticism. The relationship between general Leadership styles – authentic, transformational, charismatic Leadership etc. – and work outcomes has been examined in depth (Chan & Chan, 2005; Rehman, Shareef, Mahood, & Ishaque, 2012; Saleem, 2015). Rather than aiming at a general analysis of positive behaviors, this thesis seeks instead to focus at the correlation between a very well-defined Leader's behavior with work outcomes. It is in this focused approach that the practical value of this research can be found.

Secondly, this thesis examines the impact of a **positive** Leader's behavior. Scholars in the field of work and organizational psychology have become increasingly interested in employees' positive experiences at work (Luthans, 2002). Most research in organizational studies has been problem-focused as negative occurrences appear to have greater impact on individual behavior than positive ones (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001). On the other hand, positive occurrences are more closely connected what makes work life abundant. (Cameron, Dutton, Quinn, & Wrzesniewski, 2003). Understanding these positive dynamics within organizations requires that new phenomena are examined. This thesis aims to contribute in this new way of seeing.





Finally, I advanced a theoretical model that attempts to explain how Leader's Self-Criticism influences employees' work outcome. Rather than attempting to just prove a relationship between the dependent and the independent variable, employees' politics perception is used as the mediator variable explaining the relationship.

### 3. Contributions

The aim of this study is to contribute to the literature on organizational behaviour, Leadership and perception of politics theory and to provide an important link between past studies and future directions in research.

This study aims to advance theory in four meaningful ways. First, it examines a new contextual factor that may enhance or discourage employees' work outcomes. The act of self-criticism by someone in a leading position is a variable which has not yet been examined. Secondly, this study examines the undiscovered relationship between Leadership, context, and work outcomes. It supports research on how Leaders' influence indirectly their subordinates by controlling the context in which they work.

Thirdly, it builds on the positive psychology movement (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) on the basis of which most contemporary organizational research adopts a positive approach to understanding organizational phenomena.

Finally, this study adds evidence to the theories of positive linkages between perceptions of organizational politics and a variety of employee outcomes, while it challenges the long-held perspective that politics in organizations are an important underlying cause of unethical practices (manipulation, self-interests) and organizational ineffectiveness.

This study has also practical implications for acting managers. The literature review undertakes a thorough examination of the research that exists concerning organizational level factors that should be of interest to Leaders within a framework of how they can manage their human resources to encourage work-outcomes. Because Leadership plays a key role in providing a context where outcomes can be nourished, Leaders need to understand the context within which their employees currently work and to ascertain whether there is a need for change.

Moreover, the practical implications of the review for the day-to-day management should be highlighted. The Leader may enhance employees' Creativity, Voice and Engagement by practising Self-Criticism. This applies to how Leaders interact with employees. Managers should also attempt to affect employees' perception of politics for the work context.

This study wishes, also, to *educate* Leader's on how to approach employees' outcomes and how similar behaviors (to Self-Criticism) may influence them. It is very likely that other work-outcomes such as employees' satisfaction, performance, etc. are equally affected by self-criticism. Also, other behaviors of Leaders such as transparency, ambiguity, etc., may influence work outcomes through the same mediator variable (POPs). It is at the Leader's discretion to examine in action or through research such relationships.



Finally, this study aims to assist managers design their team's performance management. Developing a framework for managing organizational performance includes two important issues that need to be addressed. First, what are the key objectives that are central to the organization's overall future success and second, which are the strategies, plans and processes that the organization will adopt in order to reach its objectives (Otley, 1999). This study provides a process on how to achieve Creativity, Engagement and Voice which are three common KPIs on teams' performance management.

#### 4. Structure

In order to support the hypothesis, this study undertakes a thorough examination of the theoretical background and existing bibliography regarding all aspects of its central problems and concerns. An in-depth examination has been realized concerning the ways in which the three aforementioned work- outcomes are generally achieved, as well as the ways in which these are linked with POPs theory. An experiment has been conducted to test the relationship – an approach that is not often encountered in the field.

More specifically, the research paper unfolds as follows: (a) an examination is given of existing, major theoretical frameworks and introduction to the study's hypothesis; (b) a presentation is made of the experiment testing the hypothesis and; (c) the experiment's results are presented and discussed.

## Literature Review

This section provides an overview of recent research examining contextual factors that can either foster or hinder employee outcomes and which relate to our question (whether and how the practice of self-criticism by someone in a leading position can affect Creativity, Engagement and Voice). Specifically, I examine the role of Leadership and work environment in developing a work context which promotes the achievement of favorable outcomes.

### 1. Creativity

#### Theoretical Framework

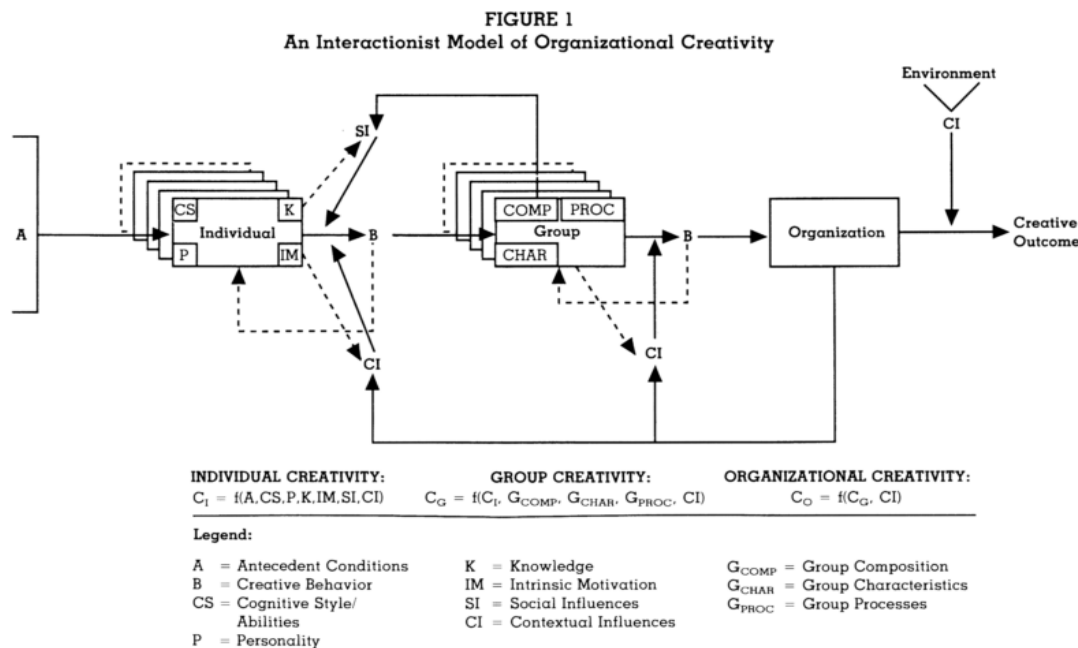
A solid theoretical framework with regards to Creativity has been drawn from the work of [Amabile \(1983, 1988, 1996\)](#) & [Woodman et al. \(1993\)](#), from which the consequent empirical research, too, takes its direction. Through their research and respective publications, Amabile and Woodman both attempt to explain how individual characteristics and environmental factors impact employee Creativity, by either enhancing or restricting it. For the purpose of this thesis, I will refer to the “Interactionist Approach” framework from Woodman et al., briefly presented below.

#### *An Interactionist Approach to Organizational Creativity* ([Woodman, Sawyer, & Griffin, 1993](#))

In *An Interactionist Approach to Organizational Creativity*, Richard W. Woodman in collaboration with others, suggests, that “Creativity is the complex product of a person's behavior in a given situation”. The aim is to develop a theoretical framework capable of producing an understanding of Creativity in complex social settings.

The creative behavior of individuals within an organization is, for Woodman, a complex person-situation interaction, influenced by individual characteristics, past events, as well as salient aspects of the situation at hand.

*Figure 1 attempts to represent the interactions between persons and situations, as well as the cross-level influences among individual, group, and organizational traits.*



{ Source: (Woodman et al., 1993) }

Insofar as individual characteristics are concerned, Woodman et al. focus on personality factors, cognitive abilities or style, intrinsic motivation, and knowledge, observing that they all play an important role in enhancing or constraining Creativity. These individual factors, furthermore, both influence and are influenced by social and contextual factors.

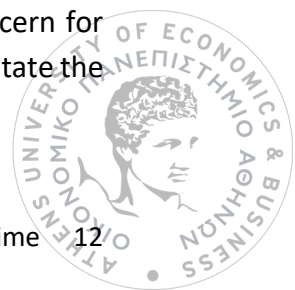
The group or team wherein individual Creativity occurs is that which establishes the immediate social influences on individual Creativity. The group characteristics that Woodman discusses include norms, cohesiveness, size, diversity, roles, task and problem-solving approaches. Finally, organizational characteristics such as culture, resources, rewards, strategy, structure and technology are also highlighted as important contextual factors.

Social and contextual influences together compose a given situation which according to Woodman et al. respectively affect creative accomplishment.

### Leadership and Supervisory Behaviors

The connection between Leadership and supervisory behaviors has been the focus of a number of field studies. Results tend to indicate that the former significantly affect the latter.

Important research has, in the first place, been conducted to examine the link between different styles of supervision (supportive vs controlling) and Creativity (Amabile & Gryskiewicz, 1987; Deci & Ryan, 1987). Supervision that is supportive is considered to have a positive impact, enhancing creative achievement. Supportive supervisors show concern for the employees' feelings and needs, encourage them to voice their concerns, and facilitate the



development of their skills (Oldham & Cummings, 1996a). Presented with more choice, individuals are, as (Zuckerman, 1978) observe, significantly more motivated on an intrinsic level than individuals lacking the same degree of freedom. Supervision that is controlling is understood, in proportion, to diminish creative performance, with supervisors monitoring employee behavior, excluding employees from the decision making process and pressuring them to think, feel, and behave in certain ways (Oldham & Cummings, 1996b).

Attention has also been given by researchers the relationship between a Leader's feedback and Creativity (Amabile, 1988; Shalley & Oldham, 1985). Zhou (1998) has stressed the importance of feedback style, meaning the manner in which feedback is delivered. Feedback style can be either informational or controlling. Feedback delivered in an informational style is not restrictive or constraining nor does it impose the feedback giver's will or wishes on the feedback recipient, and thus it does not restrict Creativity. On the opposite end, feedback delivered in a controlling way emphasizes on certain types of ideas that the recipient must obtain, and/or certain levels of Creativity they must achieve.

Finally, Scott & Bruce (1994) & Tierney, Farmer, & Graen, (1999) have found that the quality of the exchange or relationship between a supervisor and his or her subordinate (i.e., Leader-member exchange, LMX) also plays a role with regards to the subordinate's Creativity. Mature interactions characterized by trust, mutual liking, and respect (high-quality Leader- member exchange) allow greater autonomy and decision latitude, both of which have been shown to be essential for innovative behavior.

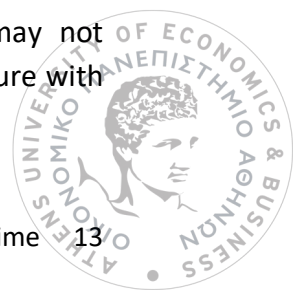
#### Organizational-level factors

Researchers have also examined the effect of work environment on the Creativity of employees.

Values, beliefs, history, and traditions of an organization have been argued to affect employees' propensity to be creative. According to (Isaksen, Lauer, Ekvall, & Britz, 2001) these factors influence the way people behave, feel and, in particular, the way in which they respond to ambiguity, Creativity and change. Respectively, organization culture affects Creativity in a significant manner. Employees working within cultures in which Creativity is a valued outcome are more willing to experiment with new ideas, more open to communicating and more likely to seek input from others about new ideas. They behave, overall, in ways that lead to creative outcomes.

Another aspect of work environments examined by researchers in relation to Creativity is climate. A climate where risk taking is encouraged and uncertainty is permitted can foster employee' Creativity. Such a climate is believed to cultivate a working culture wherein employees feel psychologically safe that blame or punishment will not be assigned for pursuing new ideas or breaking with the status quo (A. Edmondson, 1999).

Furthermore, organizational structure can play a critical role for Creativity. Researchers have found that structures that promote open contact or the pursuit of information from multiple sources are linked to Creativity. A highly bureaucratic organization may not encourage employees to try new ways of doing their work, whereas a flatter structure with



wider spans of control may be more conducive to employee Creativity (Christina E. Shalley & Gilson, 2004).

A final component of work environment affecting Creativity is the level of justice or fairness at hand. According to James (1993) a fair environment allows individuals to focus on their tasks, as it removes concerns about how decisions are made or how individuals are treated. In order to pursue and achieve Creativity, employees must perceive the context in which they work to be one where decisions are made and applied in a just manner.

## 2. Voice

### Theoretical Framework

This section focuses on discussing the question or problem of employee Voice. Scholars have previously investigated a number of possible personal characteristics as well as situational antecedents in order to understand Voice behavior.

The most systematic research has focused on individual differences in personality and demographic characteristics as antecedents of Voice (LePine & Van Dyne, 2001) which states that some individuals are simply more likely than others to "make the extra step" regarding speaking up. A second research stream focuses on aspects of an organizational context that may affect employees' willingness to speak up. An implicit conclusion in this view is that even the most proactive or satisfied employees are likely to be ambiguous as to whether it is safe and worthwhile to speak up in their particular context (A. C. Edmondson, 2003; Milliken, Morrison, & Hewlin, 2003).

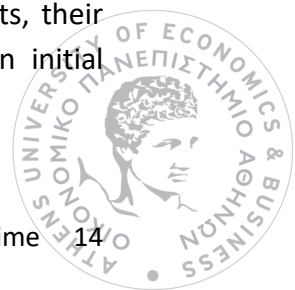
Aiming to further develop the contextual stream, I concentrate on the role that specific Leadership attitudes and work environments play in influencing employee' participation and the decision to voluntarily provide comments or suggestions.

### Leadership and Supervisory Behaviors

Although few quantitative studies have taken place that allow for an assessment of aspects of Leadership influence on employee Voice, it is clear that Leadership plays a decisive role with regards to the emergence of Voice. Leaders are inherently implicated in the process of Voice development as they are its target/recipients.

Employees are continually confronted with the dilemma of speaking up or remaining silent, as to speak up entails, by definition, a degree of confrontation with someone in occupying a higher arena. For employees, the process most commonly involves raising an issue in order to convince those in leading positions to devote organizational resources towards its resolution (French & Raven, 1959). "Speaking up" in situations like this can feel risky for employees also because it means having to point out a need for improvement to individuals responsible for the status quo within an organization, and who are likely to feel personally attached to it (Detert et al., 2007).

Moreover, as Leaders have the authority to administer rewards and punishments, their actions are perceived as salient signals for behavior (Depret & Fiske, 1993). An initial



motivation for Voice is more likely to translate in behavior when the potential benefits (getting the problem solved & rewards e.g., money, promotion, recognition etc.) outweigh potential costs (demotion, humiliation or loss of social standing) (Milliken et al., 2003).

Since the cost and benefit of Voice may depend on to whom the employees speak to, Voice behavior is very target sensitive and, thus, the behavior and attributes of a Leader are significant factors in the Voice process.

According to (Detert et al., 2007), *management openness* is positively associated with Voice. Managerial openness describes an atmosphere where employees feel that management listens to them, takes interest in their ideas, treats them fairly, and takes action to resolve any issues raised when appropriate. Because Voice involves the suggestion to approach something differently, a Leader's behavior that signals openness to change becomes a critical contextual influence on employee's willingness to speak up. Thus, when Leaders transmit signals manifesting a willingness to act on subordinate Voice, their subordinates' motivation should enhance; when such signals are absent, on the other hand, the subordinates' motivation is restricted. Managerial openness and the Leadership traits associated with it, thus, play a significant role in maintaining initial motivation to speak up on the part of employees (Milliken et al., 2003).

Moreover, (Saunders, Sheppard, Knight, & Roth, 1992) have suggested that an employee's perception of their supervisor's style as a Voice manager significantly affects the possibility that they will speak up. Employees who perceive their supervisors as *approachable* and *responsive* are more likely to express their Voice. Employees who feel uncertain about the reactions of their supervisor as well as about how to approach them, are less likely to Voice their thoughts and feelings.

In conclusion, ethical Leadership is linked to an individual's willingness to Voice in a significant manner. Ethical Leaders, according to (Brown, Treviño, & Harrison, 2005) speak out publicly against inappropriate, unjust organizational actions and behaviors, and give priority to doing the right thing. From a social learning perspective (Bandura, 1977), when Leaders create a fair work environment, they convey high moral standards to employees and encourage them to Voice opinions and suggestions, not only about ethical matters but work-related processes and work context more generally.

Finally, when employees are managed fairly by the Leader and are able to have trust in their relationship, they are more likely to assess this relationship in terms of social rather than economic exchange. Constructive Voice behavior is considered by employees as one way to retaliate for such treatment.





### 3. Engagement

#### Theoretical Framework

Engagement is a concept with a sparse and diverse theoretical net. Beginning with [Kahn's work \(1990\)](#) who introduced the psychological conditions of personal Engagement and disengagement at work (found that there were three psychological conditions associated with it: *meaningfulness, safety, and availability*) and [Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter \(2001\)](#) work who proposed six areas of work environment that cause burnout and engagement (*workload, control rewards and recognition, community and social support, perceived fairness, and values*), a number of models have been developed in order to explain the Engagement process.

For the purpose of this study, I will introduce the Self Determination Theory ([Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000](#)) which is believed to serve as a unifying framework ([Culture & Meyer, 2011](#)).

Within Self-Determination Theory, three basic psychological needs are proposed as necessary for humans to actualize their potentials and to flourish. Those are the needs for Autonomy, Belongingness, and Competence. Autonomy is defined as “*people's desire to experience ownership of their behavior and to act with a sense of volition*” ([Deci & Ryan, 2000](#)). The sense of volition is reached when the individuals have the opportunity to make personal choices, but also then they successfully carry out jobs that have been assigned to them externally. Second, the need for belongingness refers to “*the human striving for close and intimate relationships and the desire to achieve a sense of communion and belongingness*” ([Baumeister & Leary, 1995](#)). Employees who feel part of a team and feel free to express their work-related and personal troubles are more likely to have their need for belongingness fulfilled than employees who feel lonely and lack confidants at work. Finally, the need for competence represents individuals' desire to feel capable of mastering the environment, to bring about desired outcomes, and to manage various challenges ([White, 1959](#)).

#### Leadership and Supervisory Behaviors

Leadership is a key antecedent of Engagement. Leadership research shows that certain Leadership behaviors have clear association with Engagement constructs such as motivation, job satisfaction, organizational commitment and proactive behavior ([Xu & Cooper Thomas, 2011](#)). Leadership behaviors which are associated with Engagement belong into two categories: relationship- and task- oriented behaviors. For the purpose of this study, I will analyse relationship-oriented ones.

According to [Kahn \(1990\)](#) psychological safety is the most important antecedent of Engagement and offers the most potential for Leadership to influence Engagement. An important aspect of safety stems from the amount of care and support employees perceive by their direct supervisor. In fact, [Kahn \(1990\)](#) found that supportive and trusting interpersonal relationships as well as supportive management promoted psychological





safety. Organizational members, thus, react positively to Leaders who behave in ways that support the team, trust them and create a blame – free environment. For example, taking a genuine interest in team members' personal development, celebrating team successes, and respond to this support with higher levels of Engagement (Xu & Cooper Thomas, 2011).

Moreover, Papalexandris & Galanaki (2009) identified a set of management/mentoring Skills characteristics which are positively linked with Engagement. This set includes behaviors such as imparting confidence to followers, integrity, power sharing, communication, providing role clarification and articulation of vision which could be characterized as inspirational, visionary, decisive and team-oriented. Those behaviors increase Engagement of the subordinates of a Leader as they reduce uncertainty, while they allow them to take initiatives and therefore increase the interest in the job (Allen & O'Brien, 2006).

Final, a Leader's decision to focus on increasing Engagement is thought to be a positive antecedent to its development; a kind of workplace which is self-fulfilling and that provide organizational initiatives such as corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs that involve employee volunteerism and service work have been examined as an empirically driven antecedent (Davies & Crane, 2010; Lindorff & Peck, 2010).

#### Organizational-level factors

First, social support is one of the conditions influencing the sense of belongingness of the Self Determination theory and improving Engagement. A lack of social support has consistently been found to be related to burnout (Maslach et al., 2001). A variable that is likely to capture the essence of social support is the perceived organizational support (POS) which refers to a general belief that one's organization values their contribution and cares about their well-being (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). POS creates a psychological obligation on the part of employees to care about the organization's welfare and to help the organization reach its objectives (Rhoades, Eisenberger, & Armeli, 2001). In other words, employees' who have higher POS might become more engaged to their job and organization.

Moreover, another organizational factor influencing Engagement is the formality of procedures of distributing rewards as well as of allocating them (Colquitt, 2001; Rhoades et al., 2001). An organization which is predictable and consistent, increases the procedural justice which refers to the perceived fairness of the means and processes used to determine the amount and distribution of resources.

#### 4. Leader's Self-Criticism

Changes in the organizational reality of a workplace require managers to possess a different set of skills/behaviors than previously needed. A Leader, once described as an overseer, is better described today as a coach or facilitator (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991; Nyhan & Martin, 1999). The correlation between a Leader's new set of necessary skills/behaviors with work outcomes is a topic of over-increasing interest. The practice of



self-criticism by someone in a leading position is investigated for the first time, in this study, as a behavior positively linked with favorable work outcomes.

Self-criticism refers to the processes by which individuals evaluate themselves. In literature regarding psychology, Self-Criticism is typically discussed as a negative characteristic in which the person has an agitated self-identity associated with depression and social anxiety (Blatt, 2008). In contrast, this study treats self-criticism as a positive and significant aspect of personality and development. A Leader who exercises self-criticism is critical about their action and performance; they undertake responsibility, communicate it with the team and encourage self-criticism in their team members

Organizational behavior and Leadership theory do not make any reference to this behavior. However, related behaviors such as Leader accountability, self-control against criticism, behavioral integrity and relational transparency, have been examined as to their impact on the working environment.

First, Leader accountability refers to *"a Leader's expectation that she/he may be called on to justify her/his decisions and actions to others"* (De Cremer & Dijk, 2009; Tetlock, 1992). Accountability mechanisms can range from formal (e.g., performance evaluation systems, financial reporting procedures, etc.) to informal (e.g., feelings of loyalty to an organization) (Ammeter, Douglas, Ferris, & Goka, 2004). A lack of Leader accountability can often lead to unethical behavior in organizations. More specifically, according to Beu & Buckley (2001) leaders' temptation to act in ways that benefit their own interest rather than the welfare of the common good (e.g., customers, society, etc.) will be more intense when they do not await to be called to justify for their judgement. Research suggests that a number of dependent variables are positively influenced by accountability, including performance (Yarnold, Mueser, & Lyons, 1988), satisfaction (Haccoun & Klimoski, 1975), conformity (Breaugh & Klimoski, 1977), goals and attentiveness (Frink, 1998).

We can argue that Self-Criticism and accountability are comparable behaviors since both include the justification of decisions and actions to oneself and/or to others. Likewise, it is possible that Leader self-criticism will have analogous influence over outcomes. Of course, Self-Criticism is as a personal procedure, a state of mind, and is, therefore, more similar to informal accountability.

Self-control against criticism is another behavior that is similar to self-criticism. Leaders that lack self-control against criticism are more likely to take comments and suggestions from their employees as personal attacks and become less open to feedback and ideas (Prati, Douglas, Ferris, Ammeter, & Buckley, 2003). Trust can suffer, and employees may fear proposing creative ideas and meeting opportunities (Prati et al. 2003). By contrast, Leaders with higher self-control against criticism may feel less threatened by the changes that creative ideas might imply; they may be more inclined to welcome creative suggestions by employees, establish higher quality exchanges with employees (Brower, Schoorman, Hoon Tan, & Brower, 2000; Tierney, Farmer, & Graen, 1999) and foster employees' willingness to propose creative ideas (Prati et al. 2003). It is reasonable to assume that Leaders with high self-control against criticism are more likely to exercise self-criticism than Leaders with low self-control.



Thirdly, Behavioral Integrity (BI) refers to a Leader's wholeness, authenticity, as well as consistency in the face of adversity and between words and actions or moral and ethical behavior (Palanski & Yammarino, 2007). Leader BI is positively associated with follower trust, organizational commitment, satisfaction with the Leader (Palanski & Yammarino, 2007; Simons, Friedman, Liu, & McLean Parks, 2007) and organizational citizenship behaviors (Dineen, Lewicki, & Tomlinson, 2006). Moreover, followers who perceive high BI in their Leader are more willing to offer criticism (Simons et al., 2007). Palanski & Yammarino, 2007 have suggested that, as a virtue, perceived Leader integrity is also likely to foster subordinate achievements.

If Leaders with high BI exhibit traits such as authenticity, consistency and a general ethical behavior, these characteristics are also associated with self-criticism and we can argue that the later is more likely to appear when high BI is present.

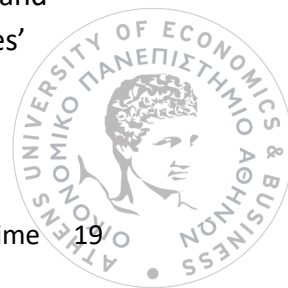
Relational transparency, finally, refers to the act of presenting one's authentic self to others (Kernis, 2003). Leaders that achieve relational transparency come to know and accept themselves, display higher levels of trustworthiness, openness, and willingness to share their thoughts and feelings in close relationships (Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, & Walumbwa, 2005). Relational transparency promotes trust through disclosures that involve the open sharing of information and expressions of one's true thoughts and feelings (Kernis, 2003), leading to interpersonal cooperation and teamwork (Jones & George, 1998). A Leader who exercises self-criticism is likely to achieve high levels of relational transparency as by practicing self-criticism Leaders show true trustworthiness, openness, and willingness to share their thoughts and feelings.

### Hypotheses 1-3

From the above Literature analyses, it can be conducted that employees' work outcomes are straight connected with leadership behaviors. Positive leadership behaviors have very often been linked to the improvement of employee outcomes.

The first hypothesis of this study, states that a very well-defined leadership behavior, Self-Criticism, will have a positive effect on Creativity. Creativity, as it is described in the Literature Review, has been proved to be positively affected by certain leaders' behaviors such as supportive management (Amabile & Gryskiewicz, 1987; Deci & Ryan, 1987), feedback delivered in an informational style (Zhou, 1998) as well as an overall built-in relationship based on fundamental principles including trust and respect (Scott & Bruce, 1994 & Tierney, Farmer, & Graen, 1999). I believe that the act of Self-Criticism by someone in a leading position can and will have a similar influence upon creativity for certain reasons.

A leader who is self-critical is likely to achieve high levels of trust as employees will feel that their leader is open, accountable for his/her decisions and consistent between words and actions. The evolvement of trust, respect and mutual liking between employees and their leader's is fundamental for the development of Creativity. Moreover, employees'



willingness to propose creative ideas will be fostered as they won't feel threatened by their leader's reaction or the penalization of their mistakes. Final, when a leader is self-critical it is much more likely that his/her feedback will be received as informational by employees. The overall feedback process in this case is two-way as the leader publicly admits and shares his/her own weaknesses.

From the conclusions drawn from the above literature analysis, my first hypothesis arises:

### **H1. Leader's Self-Criticism will have a positive effect on employees' Creativity**

The second hypothesis of this study, states that Leader's Self-Criticism will have a positive effect also on employees' Voice. As came to light from the Literature Review, Voice behavior of an employee is very much depended on to whom he/she speaks to.

Leaders who are considered open, approachable and responsive are more likely to have subordinates who voluntarily provide comments and suggestions (Detert et al., 2007, (Milliken et al., 2003). Leader's Self-Criticism, I believe, can have a positive effect on how employees perceive their supervisor regarding the three above-mentioned characteristics. When a Leader is self-critical, he/she is open to sharing information as well as true thoughts and feelings leading to interpersonal cooperation, trust and openness. Moreover, when Leaders discuss about their decisions and acts, they prove a willingness to improve current situations which should enhance their subordinates' motivation to Voice.

Second, Ethical Leadership positively affects an individual's willingness to Voice (Brown, Treviño, & Harrison, 2005). When Leaders create a fair work environment, their subordinates are encouraged to voice opinions and suggestions in order to improve established situations. Leader's self-criticism can have a significant impact on employees' perceptions regarding the environment's fairness, as Self-Criticism is basically about giving priority to doing the right thing and treating everyone equally, two fundamental prerequisites of fairness.

Final, employees' Voice is affected by the relationship between the perceived potential benefits of speaking up versus the potential costs (Milliken et al., 2003). It is reasonable to assume, that when a leader is self-critical, employees perceived potential costs such as demotion, humiliation or loss of social standing are reduced. This is because, when the leader is honest and authentic, as well as consistent between his/her words and actions, a culture of trust and openness is created where employees feel safe to express themselves.

From the conclusions drawn from the above literature analysis, my second hypothesis arises:

### **H2. Leader's Self-Criticism will have a positive effect on employees' Voice**

The third hypothesis of this study, states that Leader's Self-Criticism will have a positive effect on employees' Engagement. Leadership research shows that certain Leadership



behaviors have clear association with the improvement of Engagement and this study attempt to add a new one, that of Leader's Self-Criticism. The reasoning is explained below.

According to (Kahn, 1990) psychological safety is one of the most important antecedents of Engagement. Psychological safety can be promoted by supportive and trusting interpersonal relationships as well as supportive management. A Leader who is self-critical shows true trustworthiness, openness, and willingness to exchange real thoughts and feelings and is likely to achieve high levels of followers' trust, commitment and satisfaction. Leader's Self-Criticism is, thus, likely to contribute on the improvement of employee' Engagement by promoting the feeling of psychological safety.

Moreover, according to Papalexandris & Galanaki (2009), Leader's integrity as well as power sharing, are positively linked to employees' Engagement. We can argue that Leader's Self-Criticism and integrity are very relevant concepts as both are associated with traits as authenticity, consistency and a general ethical behavior [see points on section 4. (Self-Criticism), p. 18]. In the same way, we can argue that Leader's Self-Criticism and power sharing are associated concepts as both refute the status quo within an organization regarding power and overall behavior of individuals occupying in a higher arena.

From the conclusions drawn from the above literature analysis, my third hypothesis arises:

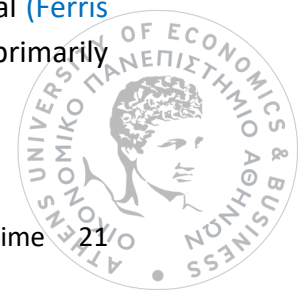
### **H3. Leader's Self-Criticism will have a positive effect on employees' Engagement**

## **5. Perceptions of Organizational Politics**

Organizational politics refers to actions taken by employees within an organization to acquire, develop, and use of power and other resources with the ultimate goal of attaining personal and organizational outcomes (Elbanna, Kapoutsis, & Mellahi, 2017). This political behavior can be expressed in several ways.

Employees often engage in some legitimate, organizationally sanctioned political activities that are beneficial to work groups and organizations (Fedor, Maslyn, Farmer, & Bettenhausen, 2008) or demonstrate a number of illegitimate political activities (e.g., coalition building, favoritism-based pay and promotion decisions, and backstabbing) that are strategically designed to protect and enhance self-interests, often without regard for the welfare of their organization or co-workers (Ferris, Russ, & Fandt, 1989). As such, politics may have both functional and dysfunctional consequences depending on the volition – benevolent or self-serving – of decision makers (Kapoutsis, Papalexandris, Treadway, & Bentley, 2017).

The most relevant concept from organizational politics theory for the purposes of this study, is that of Perception of Organizational Politics (POPs). Politics perceptions describe the appraisal by the individual of the informal and usually energy-consuming influence process that characterizes their work environment. The individual's perception of politics is more relevant for our purposes than the actual presence of organizational politics because individuals respond to what they perceive, not necessarily to what is objectively real (Ferris et al., 1996; Lewin, Stacey, & DeMartino, 1958), and thus work-outcomes are primarily





affected by their perceptions.

These perceptions affect how employees feel about their company, Leader, and co-workers, and they impact in several ways their work outcomes and responses (Ferris & Kacmar, 1992). In general, politics perceptions have been associated with unfavorable work outcomes. For example, job satisfaction has been found to be negatively related to politics perceptions in numerous studies (Chang, Rosen, & Levy, 2009; Miller, Rutherford, & Kolodinsky, 2008) as well as intention to turnover, which is another important outcome as it is related to withdrawal behaviors and can be costly to organizations (Campion, 1991). Politics perceptions have also been linked to manipulation, self-interests, and other subversive activities (Hochwarter et al., 2010).

As Ferris et al. (1989) have noted, however, employees may also respond to perceptions of organizational politics by increasing involvement in their jobs and thus perceived politics may lead to positive outcomes. There is evidence that perceptions of organizational politics are associated with lower strain (Ferris et al., 1993), increased job involvement (Ferris & Kacmar, 1992) and performance (Fedor et al., 2008).

Two explanations that link perceptions of organizational politics to work outcomes have been provided by theorists.

#### *Stress-Based Effects of Perceptions of Organizational Politics*

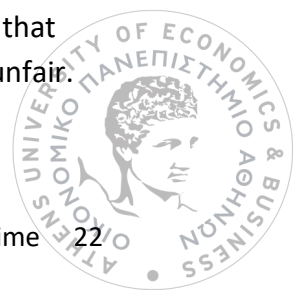
Ferris et al. (1989) proposed that perceptions of organizational politics represent a stressor for employees that is directly related to attitudinal and behavioral reactions.

Highly political organizations tend to reward employees who engage in strong influence tactics, take credit for the work of others etc. As organizations reward these activities, workers are indirectly pushed to engage in political behaviors to compete for resources. Perceptions of organizational politics, thus, trigger employees' beliefs (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) that the work context is threatening and that in order to meet their goals they need to respond with corresponding political behaviors. This emotional strain requires efforts, which are taken away from resources that could be devoted to job performance. Also organizational culture is influenced simultaneously with the health of employees (Dragano, Verde, & Siegrist, 2005). This emotional strain drives employees to search for less stressful work environments.

#### *A Social Exchange Perspective*

In highly political environments, rewards are tied to relationships, power, and other nonobjective factors. As a result, *"the immediate environment becomes unpredictable because the unwritten rules for success change as the power of those playing the political game varies"* (Hall et al., 2004). Employees feel that it is difficult to predict if their behaviors will lead to rewards and that it is more likely to perceive less outcomes than they deserve for their performance (Aryee, 2004; Cropanzano, Howes, Grandey, & Toth, 1997).

This situation leads to low morale which is, according to Rosen et al. (2006), the mediating role between perceptions of organizational politics and performance. She suggested that lower morale reflects judgments that reward allocation processes are arbitrary and unfair.



Employees holding less favorable attitudes also feel less obligated to reciprocate with behaviors that enhance the well-being of their organization. Thus, Rosen et al. provided evidence, indirectly, that morale is part of the social exchange mechanism that links perceptions of organizational politics to performance.

## Hypotheses 4-5

The fourth hypothesis of this study, states that Leader's Self-Criticism will have a positive effect on employees' Politics Perceptions.

Politics perceptions, as described in the above literature analysis, refer to the appraisal by employees of the informal influence processes that characterize their work environment. Those influence processes appear as actions taken by co-workers to acquire, develop, and use of power and other resources with the ultimate goal of attaining personal and organizational outcomes (Elbanna, Kapoutsis, & Mellahi, 2017).

Leader's Self-Criticism, I believe, is a personality trait that detests to informal processes, as it is characterized by openness, honesty and integrity. More specifically, a leader who is self-critical justifies for his/her decisions and actions and promotes the open sharing of information and expressions of one's true thoughts and feelings. Moreover, taken into consideration the assumption that Self-Criticism is more likely to appear when high Behavioral Integrity is present [see points on section 4 (Self-Criticism), p. 19], Leaders who are self-critical are not likely to reward employees who engage in strong influence tactics or support their actions.

Consequently, a leader who is self-critical will help employees feel less threaten of informal actions and released from any force to engage in political behaviors.

Given these points, we can argue, that this leadership behavior, weakens employees' perceptions that organizational politics exist within the organization.

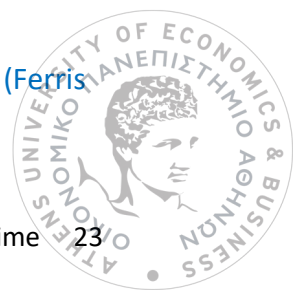
### **H4. Leader's Self-Criticism will have a positive effect on employees' Politics Perceptions.**

The fifth hypothesis of this study, states that Perceptions of Organizational Politics play a mediating role between Leader's Self-Criticism and work outcomes.

As can be seen for the Literature analysis regarding work outcomes, organizational-level factors in general, play an important role on work outcomes. Creativity for example, has been proven to be significantly affected by organization's culture (Isaksen, Lauer, Ekvall, & Britz, 2001), climate (A. Edmondson, 1999) as well as structure (Christina E. Shalley & Gilson, 2004) where Engagement by the perceived organization support (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002) and procedural justice (Colquitt, 2001; Rhoades et al., 2001)

In this study, I support, that a specific organizational-level factor, that of POPs, affects work outcomes and moreover, plays the mediating role between the positive influence of Self-Criticism on work outcomes.

According to "*Stress-Based Effects of Perceptions of Organizational Politics*" theory (Ferris



et al., 1989), negative POPs represent a stressor for employees that is directly related to attitudinal and behavioral reactions. This is because, in order to confront this emotional strain, all their efforts are focused on this threatening and are taken away activities devoted to job performance. Similarly, according to “A Social Exchange Perspective” theory (Hall et al., 2004), negative POPs lead to low employees' morale as employees feel that it is more likely to perceive less outcomes than they deserve and that it is difficult to predict if their behaviors will lead to rewards.

Provided that information, we can assume that when POPs are improved, work outcomes are, likewise improved.

From the conclusions drawn from the above literature analysis as well as H4, I support, that POPs variable explains the relationship between Self-Criticism and work outcomes.

#### **H5. POPs have a mediating role between Leader's Self-Criticism and work outcomes**





## Study Description

### 1. Participants and procedure

The participants were 152 full-time employees and had a mean age of 35 years ( $SD_{age} = 9.643$ ) and 3.76 mean years of work experience ( $SD_{tenure} = 0.474$ ). Forty-three percent were females.

They were recruited through Prolific Academic, an online labor marketplace in which employers can recruit workers to complete short tasks for a small fee. Recent studies have shown that such crowdsourcing online marketplaces (e.g., Amazon's MTurk, Prolific Academic, Crowdfunder) for recruitment of subjects in research are a reliable and cost-efficient method of getting high-quality data associated with significant benefits (Rand, Greene, & Nowak, 2012). The most prominent benefits are that the demographic characteristics of their workers are more representative of non-college populations and that such platforms allow other researchers to replicate findings (Rand et al., 2012). Based on recent evidence (Peer, Brandimarte, Samat, & Acquisti, 2017), the Prolific Academic platform managed to reproduce known effects of all the tested tasks, its workers exhibited lower propensity to engage in dishonest behaviors, while the data reliability (i.e., passing attention checks) was high.

For this study, I chose few pre-screening requirements. Participants' pool consisted of English speaking Caucasians, who worked full-time for-profit companies, in workgroups of minimum two people. To be eligible to participate, they also had to display at least 90% approval rate in prior tasks (an indication of the quality of their responses) and had at least two successful submissions. The total number of eligible participants at the time of the data collection was 2209. To compensate for their time, we offered a baseline payment of £7/hour, which was above the lower (£5/hour) hourly rate. The average time needed to complete the survey was 6 min.

To ensure that all participants would display a satisfactory level of attention and hence reduce noise in the data, I included four attention checks scattered into different sections of the online survey. For example, I entered check questions between the study questions as "It's important that you pay attention to this study. Please tick 'a little'" or participants had to choose the value that equals  $3 \times 2$ . Participants who failed to pass one attention were excluded from the study after being debriefed of the reason. The probability of passing all attentions checks by providing automated answers was practically 0 (i.e., below 0.1%).

### 2. Design

To test my propositions, I designed an online survey. The survey included five main parts asking questions for our topics of interest (Creativity, Engagement, Voice, Self-Criticism & POPs). The participants had to answer several statements about themselves, their Leader and their work group and organization using response scales which tested to what extend



they agree with the statements. The survey tests my hypotheses. To our knowledge, this research is the first to investigate the role of Leader's Self-Criticism in work outcomes.

### *Ethics Statement*

An ethics approval was not needed for this type of study according to institutional and national guidelines. In my cover letter to participants, I explicitly stated that participation was voluntary, and that anonymity was ensured as no identifying, personal, or health related information were collected. Furthermore, all participants were informed that they had the option to withdraw from the survey at any moment while at the beginning of the survey they indicated their consent by checking a relevant checkbox.

## 3. Measures

### *Creativity*

Creativity was measured using a four items scale developed by [Farmer, Tierney, & Kung-Mcintyre \(2003\)](#). Representative items include "Seeks new ideas and ways to solve problems". A five-point response format was used ranging from very slightly or not at all (1) to extremely (5). Reliability estimates were adequate ( $\alpha=.86$ ).

### *Engagement*

Engagement was assessed using two categories (emotional and cognitive Engagement) of 12 items total from a scale developed by [Rich, Lepine, & Crawford \(2010\)](#). An example scale item is: "At work, I focus a great deal of attention on my job".

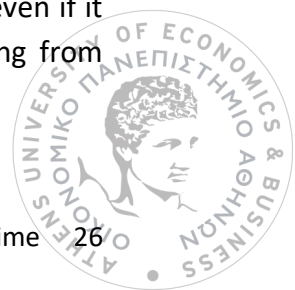
A five-point response format was used ranging from very slightly or not at all (1) to extremely (5). Reliability estimates were adequate ( $\alpha=.96$ ).

### *Voice*

Voice was measured using a six items scale developed by [Van Dyne & LePine \(1998\)](#). Representative items include "Communicates his/her opinions about work issues to others in this group even if his/her opinion is different and others in the group disagree with him/her". A five-point response format was used ranging from very slightly or not at all (1) to extremely (5). Reliability estimates were adequate ( $\alpha=.92$ ).

### *Perceptions of politics*

To measure perception of politics, I used twelve items from the Perceptions of Positive and Negative Politics scale developed by [Fedor, Maslyn, Farmer, & Bettenhausen \(2008\)](#). In particular, I used all items from the two sub-factors, namely "Positive and negative perceptions/Group" and "Positive and negative perceptions/Organization". Representative items include "People in this organization attempt to build themselves up by tearing others down" and "There is no place for "yes-men" around here; good ideas are desired, even if it means disagreeing with superiors". A five-point response format was used ranging from



strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Reliability estimates for Negative Politics ( $\alpha=.86$ ) and Positive Politics ( $\alpha=.82$ ) were adequate.

#### *Leader's Self- Criticism*

To measure Leader's Self-Criticism, I used four items from the Factor Analysis of the Self-Management Leader Behavior Items scale developed by [Manz & Sims \(1987\)](#). More specifically, I used all items from a sub-factor, namely "Encourage self-criticism". Those items were used in two ways: a) to test if the Leader encouraged Self-Criticism b) to test if a Leader exercises Self-Criticism. This dual use can be seen in the following representative items: "He/she expects us to be tough on our- selves when our performance is not up to standard" vs "He/she is tough on his/her self when his/her performance is not up to standard". A five-point response format was used ranging from very slightly or not at all (1) to extremely (5). Reliability estimates were adequate ( $\alpha=.92$ ).

#### 4. Data Analyses

First, descriptive statistics for all variables were measured. Second, a Pearson Correlation Analysis was conducted in order to measure linear correlations between any variables' pair. Final, regression analyses were conducted using A. F. Haye's "Process" macro.

Process is a logistic regression path analysis modeling tool for SPSS and SAS. It is widely used through the social, business, and health sciences for estimating direct and indirect effects in single and multiple mediator models. Hayes (2015) introduced this simple approach to testing a linear moderated mediation hypothesis based on an index of moderated mediation. The weight for the moderator in a linear function relating the size of the indirect effect to the moderator. Regression analyses in this study, were conducted in order to assess the effect of Leader's Self-Criticism on employee work outcomes (Creativity, Voice and Engagement) as well as the mediating role of Politics Perception (Leader's Self-Criticism x Politics Perceptions interaction effect).



## Study Results

### 1. Pearson Correlation Analysis

**Table I** presents the descriptive statistics and the Pearson correlation matrix of the study variables. Overall, the effect sizes between work outcomes are the most relatively statistically significant. More specifically, the higher correlation appears between employees' Voice and Creativity ( $r=.71^{**}$ ) while also emotional Engagement as well as total Engagement seem to have a strong relationship with Voice and Creativity. These results are expected as literature review showed that those work outcomes are respectively affected by sibling organizational factors and Leadership behaviors. Contrarywise, the lower relationship of engagement with the rest work outcomes can be explained by the fact that employees' engagement is a more complex outcome to achieve (especially cognitive Engagement) (Kahn, 1990).

Among the several interesting relationships represented in the table is the positive relationship between positive (group and organizational) POPs and Self-Criticism ( $r=.45^{**}$ ,  $r=.50^{**}$  respectively). This result offers support for my fourth hypothesis which states that Leader's Self-Criticism will have a positive impact on employees' politics perceptions.

Moreover, a high correlation appears between positive organizational POPs and work outcomes, a result offering support for my fifth hypothesis i.e. POPs have a mediating role between Leader's Self-Criticism and work outcomes.

Finally, the effect size between negative group and negative organizational POPs is statistically significant ( $r=.65^{**}$ ) and stronger than the effect size between positive group and positive organizational POPs ( $r=.44^{**}$ ). This outcome offers support to theory stating that negative occurrences appear to have greater impact on individual behavior than positive ones (Baumeister et al., 2001).

### 2. Regression Analyses

Results of regression analysis are presented at Table II. Creativity, Voice and Engagement are treated as the dependent variables, Leader's Self-Criticism and Encouragement of Self-Criticism as the independent ones and finally, POPs as the mediators.

The regression analysis reveals three main types of results:

- (A) the relationship between independent variables and mediators [ Group & Organizational (Positive & Negative) POPs]
- (B) the indirect effects of independent variables on dependent variables through mediators
- (C) the direct effects from the mediators and independent variables on dependent variables

Notably, the relationship between independent variables and mediators (A) is the same regardless of the dependent variable and are therefore presented solely once for each independent-mediators variables pair.

First type of results (A) show that both Leader's Self-Criticism and Encouragement of Self-Criticism have a positive influence on positive (group and organizational) POPs. Encouragement of Self-Criticism seems to also have a marginal negative effect on negative (group and organizational) POPs. Based on these results, we find partial support for hypothesis H4, i.e. Leader's Self-Criticism will have a positive impact on employees' politics perceptions.

The mediation analysis results (B) further reveal that Leader's Self-Criticism has a positive indirect effect on all three tested employees' work outcomes through positive organizational POPs (Creativity: effect = .17, BootLLCI = .07, BootULCI = .27 | Voice: effect = .24, BootLLCI = .15, BootULCI = .33 | Engagement: effect = .16, BootLLCI = .06, BootULCI = .27). Moreover, Encouragement of Self-Criticism has a positive indirect impact on Creativity (effect = .10, BootLLCI = .031, BootULCI = .18) and Voice (effect = .14, BootLLCI = .06, BootULCI = .22), again through positive organizational POPs.

In conclusion, this analysis reveals that mediation between independent and dependent variables happens only through positive organizational POPs while positive group POPs and negative (group or organizational) POPs do not act as mediators. Results regarding negative POPs are, however, expected. Above mentioned results provide partial support for hypothesis H5, i.e. POPs have a mediating role between Leader's Self-Criticism and work outcomes.

Analysis of the direct effects (C) shows interesting relationships. Creativity is positively affected by Leader's Self-Criticism and positive organizational POPs. Voice is positively affected by Leader's Self-Criticism, positive organizational POPs as well as employee's sex. Moreover, Voice is negatively affected by negative group POPs. Finally, Engagement is positively affected by Leader's Self-Criticism, Encouragement of Self-Criticism and positive organizational POPs. Based on these results, we find support for hypothesis H1,2,3 i.e. Leader's Self-Criticism will have a positive effect on employees' Creativity/Voice/Engagement.



**Table I. Pearson correlation and mean values of constructs**

n=152	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)
(1) Voice	1										
(2) Creativity	.71**	1									
(3) Cognitive Engagement	.49**	.47**	1								
(4) Emotional Engagement	.54**	.57	.65**	1							
(5) Engagement	.57**	.57**	.89**	.92**	1						
(6) Encourage Self- Criticism	.18*	.17*	.22**	.22**	.24**	1					
(7) Self - Criticism	.26**	.29**	.14***	.30**	.25**	.44**	1				
(8) Group Negative POPs	.16***	-.04	.05	.05	.06	.16***	.00	1			
(8) Group Positive POPs	.19*	.16*	.05	.10	.09	.35**	.45**	-.30**	1		
(10) Organizational Negative POPs	-.04	.04	.09	.15***	.14***	-.16	.01	.65**	-.25**	1	
(11) Organizational Positive POPs	.45**	.40**	.28**	.40**	.38**	.26**	.50**	.10	.44**	.21**	1
Mean	3.43	3.11	3.89	3.42	3.65	2.95	2.72	3.28	2.52	3.43	2.68
Std. Deviation	.91	.95	.90	1.07	.89	1.10	1.20	1.30	.97	1.17	1.14

Note: \*p < 0.05, \*\*p < 0.01 and \*\*\*p < 0.1

**Table II. Regression Analyses****1. X1: Leader's Self-Criticism / mediators: Group POPs**

(A) Relationship between Independent variable and mediators

Negative Group Pops

	Coefficient	t	p	
Leader's Self-Criticism	.02	.19	.85	No direct effect of LSC on negative group Pops
Sex	-.04	-.23	.82	No direct effect of sex on negative group Pops
Age	.02	1.46	.15	No direct effect of age on negative group Pops

*Model Summary: R-sq=.01, F=.74, p=.53*

Positive Group Pops

	Coefficient	t	p	
Leader's Self-Criticism	.37	6.01	.00	<b>Positive effect of LSC on positive group Pops</b>
Sex	.05	.32	.75	No direct effect of sex on positive group Pops
Age	.00	.26	.80	No direct effect of age on positive group Pops

*Model Summary: R-sq=.20, F=12.29, p=.00***Y1: Creativity**

(B) Completely standardized indirect effect of independent variable on dependent variable

	Effect	BootLLCI	BootULCI	
TOTAL	.01	-.00	.09	No indirect effect
Negative Group POPs	-.00	-.02	.01	
Positive Group POPs	.01	-.08	.09	
(C1)	-.01	-.10	.08	

(C) Direct effects from the mediators and independent variables on dependent variables

	Coefficient	t	p	
Leader's Self-Criticism	.22	3.12	.00	<b>Positive direct effect of LSC on Creativity</b>
Negative Group POPs	-.03	-.45	.65	No effect
Positive Group POPs	.02	.26	.80	No effect
Sex	-.05	-.36	.71	No effect
Age	.00	.32	.75	No effect

*Model Summary: R-sq=.09, F=2.92, p=.015*

**Y2: Voice**

(B) Completely standardized indirect effect of independent variable on dependent variable

	Effect	BootLLCI	BootULCI	
TOTAL	.01	-.09	.10	No indirect effect
Negative Group POPs	-.00	-.04	.03	
Positive Group POPs	.01	-.09	.09	
(C1)	-.01	-.10	.09	

(C) Direct effects from the mediators and independent variables on dependent variables

	Coefficient	t	p	
Leader's Self-Criticism	.21	3.01	.00	<b>Positive direct effect of LSC on Voice</b>
Negative Group POPs	-.11	-1.87	.06	<b>Marginal negative effect of negative group POPs on Voice</b>
Positive Group POPs	.03	.30	.76	No effect
Sex	.21	1.42	.16	No effect
Age	.01	.99	.32	No effect

*Model Summary: R-sq=.11, F=3.59, p=.00***Y3: Engagement**

(B) Completely standardized indirect effect of independent variable on dependent variable

	Effect	BootLLCI	BootULCI	
TOTAL	-.01	-.10	.07	No indirect effect
Negative Group POPs	.00	-.02	.02	
Positive Group POPs	-.01	-.10	.07	
(C1)	.01	-.07	.10	

(C) Direct effects from the mediators and independent variables on dependent variables

	Coefficient	t	p	
Leader's Self-Criticism	.21	2.30	.00	<b>Positive direct effect of LSC on Engagement</b>
Negative Group POPs	.03	.45	.65	No effect
Positive Group POPs	-.019	-.22	.83	No effect
Sex	.01	1.24	.23	No effect
Age	.03	.22	.82	No effect

*Model Summary: R-sq=.07, F=2.37, p=.04*



## 2. X1: Leader's Self-Criticism/mediators: Organizational POPs

### (A) Relationship between Independent variable and mediators

#### Negative Organizational Pops

	Coefficient	t	p	
Leader's Self-Criticism	.01	.15	.88	No direct effect of LSC on negative organizational Pops
Sex	-.19	-.97	.33	No direct effect of sex on negative organizational Pops
Age	.01	.82	.42	No direct effect of age on negative organizational Pops

Model Summary:  $R\text{-sq}=.01$ ,  $F=.58$ ,  $p=.63$

#### Positive Organizational Pops

	Coefficient	t	p	
Leader's Self-Criticism	.47	6.84	.00	<b>Positive direct effect of LSC on positive organizational POPs</b>
Sex	-.20	-1.23	.22	No direct effect of sex on positive organizational POPs
Age	.01	.77	.44	No direct effect of age on positive organizational POPs

Model Summary:  $R\text{-sq}=.26$ ,  $F=17.20$ ,  $p=.00$

## Y1: Creativity

### (B) Completely standardized indirect effect of independent variable on dependent variable

	Effect	BootLLCI	BootULCI	
TOTAL	.17	.08	.27	<b>Positive indirect effect of LSC on Creativity</b>
Negative Organizational POPs	-.00	-.02	.01	
Positive Organizational POPs	.17	.08	.28	<b>Mediator</b>
(C1)	-.17	-.28	-.07	

### (C) Direct effects from the mediators and independent variables on dependent variables

	Coefficient	t	p	
Leader's Self-Criticism	.10	1.40	.16	No direct effect
Negative Organizational POPs	-.03	-.49	.63	No direct effect
Positive Organizational POPs	.29	3.86	.00	<b>Positive direct effect of positive organizational POPs on Creativity</b>
Sex	-.00	-.00	1.00	No direct effect
Age	.00	.07	.94	No direct effect

Model Summary:  $R\text{-sq}=.17$ ,  $F=6.14$ ,  $p=.00$



**Y2: Voice****(B) Completely standardized indirect effect of independent variable on dependent variable**

	Effect	BootLLCI	BootULCI	
TOTAL	.24	.15	.33	<b>Positive indirect effect of LSC on Voice</b>
Negative Organizational POPs	-.00	-.03	.02	
Positive Organizational POPs	.24	.15	.34	<b>Mediator</b>
(C1)	-.24	-.35	-.14	

**(C) Direct effects from the mediators and independent variables on dependent variables**

	Coefficient	t	p	
Leader's Self-Criticism	.03	.53	.60	No direct effect of LSC on Voice
Negative Organizational POPs	-.10	-1.77	.08	Marginal negative effect of negative organizational POPs on Voice
Positive Organizational POPs	.39	5.64	.00	<b>Positive direct effect of positive organizational POPs on Voice</b>
Sex	.27	2.02	.05	<b>Positive direct effect of sex on Voice</b>
Age	.00	.59	.55	No effect

Model Summary:  $R\text{-sq}=.25$ ,  $F=9.63$ ,  $p=.00$

**Y3: Engagement****(B) Completely standardized indirect effect of independent variable on dependent variable**

	Effect	BootLLCI	BootULCI	
TOTAL	.16	.06	.27	<b>Positive indirect effect of LSC on Engagement</b>
Negative Organizational POPs	.00	-.02	.02	
Positive Organizational POPs	.16	.06	.26	<b>Mediator</b>
(C1)	-.16	-.26	-.06	

**(C) Direct effects from the mediators and independent variables on dependent variables**

	Coefficient	t	p	
Leader's Self-Criticism	.08	1.20	.23	No effect
Negative Organizational POPs	.05	.84	.40	No effect
Positive Organizational POPs	.25	3.55	.00	<b>Positive direct effect of positive organizational POPs on Engagement</b>
Sex	.09	.65	.5	No effect
Age	.01	1.07	.29	No effect

Model Summary:  $R\text{-sq}=.16$ ,  $F=5.63$ ,  $p=.00$



**3. X2: Encouragement of Self-Criticism/ mediators: Group POPs**

(A) Relationship between Independent variable and mediators

Negative Group POPs

	Coefficient	t	p	
Encouragement of Self-Criticism	-.17	-1.80	.07	<b>Marginal negative effect of SC Encouragement on negative group POPs</b>
Sex	-.07	-.34	.73	No direct effect of sex on negative group POPs
Age	.01	1.26	.21	No direct effect of age on negative group POPs

*Model Summary: R-sq=.04, F=1.83, p=.14*

Positive Group POPs

	Coefficient	t	p	
Encouragement of Self-Criticism	.31	4.53	.00	<b>Positive direct effect of SC Encouragement on positive group Pops</b>
Sex	-.04	-.29	.77	No direct effect of sex on negative group POPs
Age	-.00	-.20	.84	No direct effect of age on negative group POPs

*Model Summary: R-sq=.13, F=7.07, p=.00***Y1: Creativity**

(B) Completely standardized indirect effect of independent variable on dependent variable

	Effect	BootLLCI	BootULCI	
TOTAL	.04	-.01	.12	No indirect effect
Negative Group POPs	-.00	-.01	.06	
Positive Group POPs	.04	-.02	.11	
(C1)	-.04	-.11	.06	

(C) Direct effects from the mediators and independent variables on dependent variables

	Coefficient	t	p	
Encouragement of Self-Criticism	.11	1.52	.13	No direct effect
Negative Group POPs	.01	.15	.88	No direct effect
Positive Group POPs	.11	1.30	.19	No direct effect
Sex	-.11	-.71	.48	No direct effect
Age	-.00	-.08	.94	No direct effect

*Model Summary: R-sq=.05, F=1.38, p=.23*

### Y2: Voice

#### (B) Completely standardized indirect effect of independent variable on dependent variable

	Effect	BootLLCI	BootULCI	
TOTAL	.0557	-.0950	.0965	No indirect effect
Negative Group POPs	.0157	-.0386	.0271	
Positive Group POPs	.0399	-.0853	.0941	
(C1)	-.0242	-.0987	.0934	

#### (C) Direct effects from the mediators and independent variables on dependent variables

	Coefficient	t	p	
Encouragement of Self-Criticism	.1106	1.5497	.1234	No effect
Negative Group POPs	-.0753	-1.2779	.2033	No effect
Positive Group POPs	.1073	1.2894	.1993	No effect
Sex	.1556	1.0569	.2923	No effect
Age	.0046	.6041	.5467	No effect

Model Summary: R-sq=.0695, F=2.1794, p=.0595

### Y3: Engagement

#### (B) Completely standardized indirect effect of independent variable on dependent variable

	Effect	BootLLCI	BootULCI	
TOTAL	-.0042	-.0677	.0561	No indirect effect
Negative Group POPs	-.0137	-.0544	.0119	
Positive Group POPs	.0094	-.0575	.0726	
(C1)	-.0231	-.1057	.0583	

#### (C) Direct effects from the mediators and independent variables on dependent variables

	Coefficient	t	p	
Encouragement of Self-Criticism	.2059	2.9597	.0036	<b>Positive direct effect of SC Encouragement on Engagement</b>
Negative Group POPs	.0640	1.1137	.2672	No effect
Positive Group POPs	.0248	.3056	.7603	No effect
Sex	-.0105	-.0734	.9416	No effect
Age	.0074	.9841	.3267	No effect

Model Summary: R-sq=.2713, F=2.3198, p=.0462



#### 4. X2: Encouragement of Self-Criticism/ mediators: Organizational POPs

(A) Relationship between Independent variable and mediators (Path A's)

Negative Organizational POPs

	Coefficient	t	p	
Encouragement of Self-Criticism	-.1648	-1.9059	.0586	<b>Marginal negative effect of SC Encouragement on negative organizational POPs</b>
Sex	-.2093	-1.0991	.2735	No direct effect of sex on negative organizational POPs
Age	.0060	.6083	.5439	No direct effect of age on negative organizational POPs

*Model Summary: R-sq=.0352, F=1.8011, p=.1495*

Positive Organizational POPs

	Coefficient	t	p	
Encouragement of Self-Criticism	.2598	3.1668	.0019	<b>Positive direct effect of SC Encouragement on positive organizational POPs</b>
Sex	-.3315	-1.8349	.0685	<b>Marginal negative effect of sex on positive organizational POPs</b>
Age	-.0003	.0351	.9721	No direct effect of age on positive organizational POPs

*Model Summary: R-sq=.0863, F=4.6582, p=.0038*

#### Y1: Creativity

(B) Completely standardized indirect effect of independent variable on dependent variable

	Effect	BootLLCI	BootULCI	
TOTAL	.1027	.0316	.1792	<b>Positive indirect effect of SC encouragement on Creativity</b>
Negative Organizational POPs	.0054	-.0191	.0338	No effect
Positive Organizational POPs	.0974	-.0329	.1702	<b>Mediator</b>
(C1)	-.0920	-.1676	-.0200	

(C) Direct effects from the mediators and independent variables on dependent variables

	Coefficient	t	p	
Encouragement of Self-Criticism	.0584	.8452	.3994	No direct effect
Negative Organizational POPs	-.0279	-.4349	.6643	No direct effect
Positive Organizational POPs	.3220	4.7605	.0000	<b>Positive direct effect of positive organizational POPs on Creativity</b>
Sex	-.0140	-.0961	.9235	No direct effect
Age	-.0006	-.0851	.9323	No direct effect

*Model Summary: R-sq=.1668, F=5.846, p=.0001*

### Y2: Voice

(B) Completely standardized indirect effect of independent variable on dependent variable

	Effect	BootLLCI	BootULCI	
TOTAL	.1426	.0603	.2273	<b>Positive indirect effect of SC encouragement on Voice</b>
Negative Organizational POPs	.0194	-.0050	.0525	
Positive Organizational POPs	.1232	.0444	.2067	<b>Mediator</b>
(C1)	-.1039	-.1960	-.0152	

(C) Direct effects from the mediators and independent variables on dependent variables

	Coefficient	t	p	
Encouragement of Self-Criticism	.0383	.6031	.5474	No direct effect
Negative Organizational POPs	-.0977	-1.6566	.0997	No direct effect
Positive Organizational POPs	.3943	6.3423	.0000	<b>Positive direct effect of positive organizational POPs on Voice</b>
Sex	.0039	.5642	.5735	No direct effect
Age	.2665	1.9910	.0483	No direct effect

*Model Summary: R-sq=.2483, F=9.6464, p=.0000*

### Y3: Engagement

(B) Completely standardized indirect effect of independent variable on dependent variable

	Effect	BootLLCI	BootULCI	
TOTAL	.0655	-.0103	.1452	No indirect effect
Negative Organizational POPs	-.0148	-.0561	.0105	
Positive Organizational POPs	.0803	.0263	.1487	
(C1)	-.0951	-.1652	-.0374	

(C) Direct effects from the mediators and independent variables on dependent variables

	Coefficient	t	p	
Encouragement of Self-Criticism	.1493	2.3063	.0225	<b>Positive direct effect of SC encouragement on Engagement</b>
Negative Organizational POPs	.0730	1.2145	.2265	No direct effect
Positive Organizational POPs	.2510	3.9635	.0001	<b>Positive direct effect of positive organizational POPs on Engagement</b>
Sex	.0822	.6030	.5475	No direct effect
Age	.0077	1.0993	.2735	No direct effect

*Model Summary: R-sq=.1830, F=6.5425, p=.0000*



## Discussion

First, the main findings of the study are summarized and discussed. I then present the theoretical and managerial implications of these findings and conclude with future research directions and limitations.

### 1. Summary and conclusions

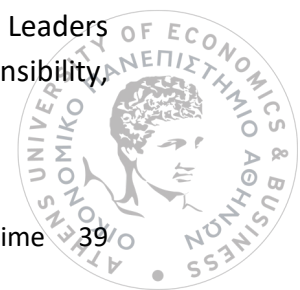
This study sheds light on the relationship between an unexplored Leader's behavior (the action of Self-Criticism) and desirable work outcomes, using POPs theory as an explanatory mechanism.

Findings are summarized in Table III.

**Table III.**

Effect	Dependent Variable		
	Creativity	Voice	Engagement
Direct			
Leader's Self-Criticism	Positive	Positive	Positive
Encouragement of Self-Criticism	Positive	Positive	Positive
Negative Group POPs	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Positive Group POPs	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Negative Organizational POPs	n.s.	Marginal Negative	n.s.
Positive Organizational POPs	Positive	Positive	Positive
Age	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Sex	n.s.	Positive	n.s.
Indirect			
Leader's Self-Criticism	Positive	Positive	n.s.
Encouragement of Self-Criticism	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.

Self-Criticism has commonly been approached by scholars as a negative personality trait which, describing a person with disrupted self-identity, is linked, further, with depression and social anxiety (Blatt, 2008). In this study, I argued that Self-Criticism can, instead, be a positive personality trait that promotes development and which, more specifically, allows Leaders who exercise it to be critical about their actions and performance, undertake responsibility,



and exhibit higher levels of trustworthiness and openness with their employees.

Consistent with my hypothesis, the results of this research indicate that Leader Self-Criticism has a significant, positive effect on all tested work outcomes (H1-3) and a direct influence on positive (group and organizational) POPs. Encouragement of Self-Criticism has a similar positive influence upon work outcomes and POPs.

The fact that those behaviors were found to relate and positively influence work outcomes and positive POPs highlights the constructive role this Leadership behavior can play in the area of Human Resources Management and offers a new perspective on theory evolving around this trait.

In addition, working against the core assumptions of research that adopts negative definitions and conceptualizations of POPs (e.g. [Chang et al., 2009](#); [Miller et al., 2008](#); [Poon, 2003](#)), I hypothesized that POPs play a mediating role between Leader Self-Criticism and favorable work outcomes. The findings support that this applies partially.

More specifically, the study showed a direct, positive effect of positive organizational POPs on work outcomes. This means that when employees hold positive perceptions for the internal politics of an organization, their creativity, voice and engagement are improved.

The mediating role of positive organizational POPs was, furthermore, confirmed, meaning that the feature dominates over the relationship between independent (i.e. Leader's Self-Criticism) and dependent (i.e. work outcomes) variables.

By contrast, this is not the case with positive group POPs, which were not proved to have any effect on outcomes or play a mediating role between the independent and dependent variables. These results suggest that employees are more likely to be affected by the overall culture and environment of the organization they inhabit, than the environment governing the cluster of their team. It is also possible that, within groups, the behavior of employees and work-outcomes are affected more strongly by managerial attitudes and behaviors, than by perceptions of a group's environment.

Furthermore, one very important finding of this research contradicts the theory associating politics perceptions with unfavorable work outcomes [i.e. Stress-Based Effects of Perceptions of Organizational Politics ([Ferris et al., 1989](#)), Social Exchange Theory ([Hall et al., 2004](#))], by showing negative (group and/or organizational) POPs to have no effect (negative or positive) on the tested work outcomes. A slight negative effect of negative POPs was only observed in the case of Voice, suggesting that negative POPs may increase the risk involved in speaking up in employees' perceptions and decrease perceived potential benefits ([Detert, Burris, Detert, & Burris, 2007](#)).

Finally, direct relationships between demographic characteristics, i.e. employee Age and Sex, and work outcomes were tested during the study. A significant, direct statistical relationship was discovered only in the case of Sex and Voice (coeff.=.2707). This result indicates that male employees are more likely to practice Voice than their female counterparts.



## 2. Managerial Implications

The findings of this study also have potential implications for the practice of Management.

First, a day to day managerial practice is highlighted. A manager can expect the improvement of employee perception of organizational politics, as well as the improvement of employee creativity, voice and engagement, when he/she exercises Self-Criticism and/or encourages employees to be Self-Critical. This is a very important implication, as it provides Leaders a very-easy-to-apply way to improve the feelings and behaviors of their employees, together with the overall relationship between them. It also arms Leaders with a framework for managing human resources in a manner that encourages work-outcomes, and for providing a context wherein such outcomes can be achieved.

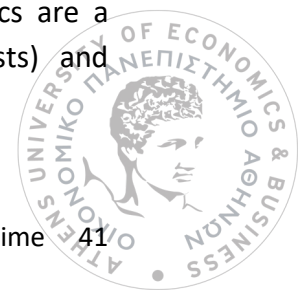
Furthermore, this study's findings concerning the effect of employee POPs on work outcomes can, too, prove constructive for managers. As it was explained in the results' section, negative POPs were not found to have negative effects on work outcomes, whereas the effects of positive POPs were proven to be positive on the three tested outcomes, although more so in the case of organizational rather than group positive POPs. Taking this into consideration, Leaders should thus focus on improving and securing positive employee perceptions of politics on a large scale, such as their perceptions of the organization as a whole, the political behaviors of senior executives etc.

Moreover, the results of this study should be viewed as an example of the breadth of potential that managers hold to influence employees through their behaviors. It is very likely that other work-outcomes such as employee satisfaction, performance, etc. are equally affected by Self-Criticism. It might also be the case that other Leader behavior, e.g. transparency, ambiguity, etc., influence work outcomes through the same mediator variable (POPs). It is at the Leader's discretion to examine such relationships in action or through research.

Finally, this study can assist managers in designing a part of their team's performance management. For organizations where Creativity, Voice and Engagement are considered important, desirable KPI's, this study provides a path through which to achieve those goals, as it suggests a feasible and simple process to improve work outcomes.

## 3. Theoretical Implications

To begin with, this study adds to POPs theory and more specifically to theories of positive linkages between perceptions of organizational politics and employee outcomes (e.g. Eldor, 2017; Maslyn et al., 2017; Landells and Albrecht, 2017; Fedor et al., 2008; Hochwarter, 2012; Kane-Frieder et al., 2014). It affirms that positive linkages between positive perception of organizational politics and three employees' work outcomes (Creativity, Voice, Engagement) exist, and it provides cues that the same linkages will occur with other relevant work outcomes. It also challenges the long-held perspective that organizational politics are a significant, underlying cause of unethical practices (manipulation, self-interests) and



organizational ineffectiveness (Ellen et al., 2013).

Further, the study proves that there exists a positive relationship between the practice of Self-Criticism by someone in a leading position and employee outcomes. This positive relationship is examined here for the first time in a relevant concept and forms an addition on Leadership theory as it points to a new Leadership behavior, capable of enhancing employee work-outcomes (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991; Nyhan & Martin, 1999).

Moreover, the outcomes presented here are interesting also for Organizational Behavior (OB) theory, as my study examines the previously-undiscovered relationship between Leadership, context, and work outcomes, and provides useful information on how Leaders indirectly influence their subordinates by controlling the context in which they work.

Finally, the study builds on and supports the positive psychology movement (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), on the basis of which most contemporary organizational research adopts a positive approach to understanding organizational phenomena.

#### 4. Conclusions

In this study I explored existing literature regarding the question of how employee Creativity, Voice and Engagement are affected by managerial and organizational factors. I also attempted to contribute in this broad theory by conducting a survey exploring the influence of a specific Leader's behavior (*Self-Criticism*) on them.

Study results suggested that there is a positive influence of Leader's Self-Criticism on the three tested work outcomes and that Positive Organizational Politics Perceptions act as a mediator variable explaining the relationship.

The practical value of this study is found on the fact that it examines a very well-defined Leader's behavior rather than focusing on a general analysis and it provides a very easy-to-achieve way for organizations to improve their performance.

There is breadth of research potential on exploring other specific managerial behaviors and their influence on a broad range of work outcome as well as for further investigation on the relationship between Leadership, context and work outcomes.



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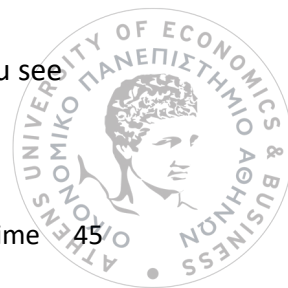
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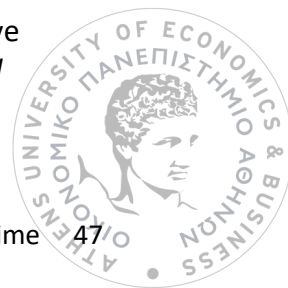




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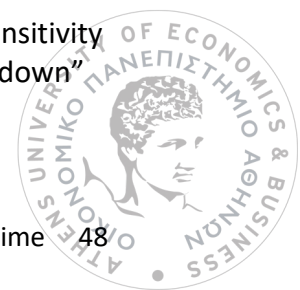


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## Appendix

### Online Survey

18/8/2018

Print version

#### Questionnaire

##### 1 Consent form

**Welcome!**

**Thanks for showing interest in this study.**

Please read the following before starting:

Please complete this survey in one go. In other words, please only participate in this survey, if you have the estimated completion time that you can dedicate to it. Thank you very much.

Consent form

I consent to participate in this survey, which will involve few instructions and questions, and demographic information.

I understand that all data will be kept confidential by the researcher. My personal information will not be stored with the data. I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

I consent to the publication of study results as long as the information is anonymous so that no identification of participants can be made.

I will receive the reward for participating in this study if I respond to **all** survey questions and only if **all** questions of attention are answered correctly. This payment is for my time and personal cost of participation.

By ticking the consent option I confirm that I have read and understand the explanations and I voluntarily consent to participate in this study.

☐ I consent to participate in this survey.

##### 2 General Instructions

Before you start, please:

- maximize your browser window
- switch off phone/e-mail/music & anything else distracting

and please enter your Prolific ID

[Note for participants: it can be found at the top of this webpage or when going to your account info]:

Prolific ID:

##### 3 Demographics

**What is your biological sex?**

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

**What is your age (in years)?**

years

**How many years of work experience do you have?**

- ☐ < = 1
- ☐ < = 2
- ☐ < = 3
- ☐ > 3

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1/5



18/8/2018

Print version

**It's important that you pay attention to this study. 3 x 2 equals:**

- ☐ 10
- ☐ 5
- ☐ 8
- ☐ 6
- ☐ 9

#### 4.1 Filter

**In order to participate in this survey you need to have work experience within a team for more than a year. Therefore, you can not proceed any further in the survey and no information will be stored. I am aware that this may have caused some frustration; nonetheless, it is important to keep the noise out of this survey. Thank you for your understanding.**

#### 5.1 Filter

**You see this page because you did not provide the correct answer to a question of attention (i.e., It's important that you pay attention to this study. 3 x 2 equals). Therefore, you can not proceed any further in the survey and no information will be stored. I am aware that this may have caused some frustration; nonetheless, it is important to keep the noise out of this survey. Thank you for your understanding.**

### 6 Creativity & Voice

**Below are several statements about you with which you may agree or disagree. Using the response scale below, indicate to what extent you have felt this way during the past few weeks:**

	very slightly or not at all	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely
I develop and make recommendations concerning issues that affect this work group	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I speak up and encourage others in this group to get involved in issues that affect the group	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I communicate my opinions about work issues to others in this group even if my opinion is different and others in the group disagree with me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I keep well informed about issues where my opinion might be useful to this work group	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I get involved in issues that affect the quality of work life here in this group	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
it's important that you pay attention to this study. Please tick the middle option	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I speak up in this group with ideas for new projects or changes in procedure	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
At work, I try new ideas or methods first	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
At work, I seek new ideas and ways to solve problems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
At work, I generate ground-breaking ideas related to the field	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
At work, I am a good role model for creativity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

#### 6.1.1 Filter

**You see this page because you did not provide the correct answer to a question of attention (i.e., It's important that you pay attention to this study. Please tick the middle option). Therefore, you can not proceed any further in the survey and no information will be stored. I am aware that this may have caused some frustration; nonetheless, it is important to keep the noise out of this survey. Thank you for your understanding.**





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**7 Engagement**

Below are several statements about you with which you may agree or disagree. Using the response scale below, indicate to what extent you have felt this way during the past few weeks:

	very slightly or not at all	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely
At work, my mind is focused on my job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
At work, I pay a lot of attention to my job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
At work, I focus a great deal of attention on my job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
At work, I am absorbed by my job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
At work, I concentrate on my job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
At work, it's important that you pay attention to this study. Please tick 'extremely'	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
At work, I devote a lot of attention to my job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am enthusiastic in my job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel energetic at my job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am interested in my job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am proud of my job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel positive about my job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am excited about my job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**8.1 Filter**

You see this page because you did not provide the correct answer to a question of attention (i.e., It's important that you pay attention to this study. Please tick 'extremely'). Therefore, you can not proceed any further in the survey and no information will be stored. I am aware that this may have caused some frustration; nonetheless, it is important to keep the noise out of this survey. Thank you for your understanding.

**9 Self Criticism**

Below are several statements about your direct supervisor which you may agree or disagree. Using the response scale below, indicate to what extent you agree with the statements during the past few weeks:

	very slightly or not at all	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely
Our leader expects us to be tough on ourselves when our performance is not up to standard.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our leader urges us to be self-critical if our performance is not up to par	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If our performance on a job is below par, our leader encourages us to be critical of ourselves.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It's important that you pay attention to this study. Please tick 'quite a bit'	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our leader encourages us to be critical of ourselves when we do poorly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If our leader's performance on a job is below par, he/she is critical with his/her self	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our leader is tough on his/her self when his/her performance is not up to standard.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our leader is self-critical if his/her performance is not up to par	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our leader is critical of his/her self when he/she do poorly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**10.1 Filter**

You see this page because you did not provide the correct answer to a question of attention (i.e., It's important that you pay attention to this study. Please tick 'quite a bit'). Therefore, you can not proceed any further in the survey and no information will be stored. I am aware that this may have caused some frustration; nonetheless, it is important to keep the noise out of this survey. Thank you for your understanding.

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**11 Pops**

Below are several statements about your work group and organization with which you may agree or disagree. Using the response scale below, indicate to what extent you agree with the statements during the past few weeks:

**Important note:** With the terms "politician/being political" we refer to any deliberate behavior that aims at influencing others to attain personal and organizational interests.

	very slightly or not at all	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely
Political behavior within my work group has wasted time and effort that could have been more productively channeled	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We have not been as effective as we could have been because of people being political within our work group	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Favoritism rather than merit determines who gets ahead in my work group	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People in this organization attempt to build themselves up by tearing others down	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It's important that you pay attention to this study. Please tick the first option	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There has always been an influential department in this organization that no one ever crosses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People in this organization who use their power are the ones who get what they want	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have seen changes made in policies here that only serve the purposes of a few individuals, not the work unit or the organization	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Below are several statements about your work group and organization with which you may agree or disagree. Using the response scale below, indicate to what extent you agree with the statements during the past few weeks:

**Important note:** With the terms "politician/being political" we refer to any deliberate behavior that aims at influencing others to attain personal and organizational interests.

	very slightly or not at all	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely
The better my manager is at being a politician, the better it is for my work group	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
As long as we are performing well, it does not bother me if my work group is accused of being somewhat political	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
While others might judge what my manager/supervisor does as being political, his/her actions have been for the benefit of my work group.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Employees are encouraged to speak out frankly, even when they are critical of well-established ideas.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There is no place for "yes-men" around here; good ideas are desired, even if it means disagreeing with superiors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**12.1 Filter**

**You see this page because you did not provide the correct answer to a question of attention (i.e., It's important that you pay attention to this study. Please tick the first option). Therefore, you can not proceed any further in the survey and no information will be stored. I am aware that this may have caused some frustration; nonetheless, it is important to keep the noise out of this survey. Thank you for your understanding.**

**13 Final page**

**Thank you for your participation!**

**Please click the following link to show that you completed this survey and then press next.**

<https://app.prolific.ac/submissions/complete?cc=GL2FNJN0>

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