

Factors Influencing Innovative Work Behaviour (IWB) of Civil Servants in Malaysian Public Service Organisations: A Conceptual Study

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Abstract: *The purpose of this paper is to develop a conceptual framework that examines innovative work behaviour, its determinants, and its impacts on public service organisations. The research draws on extant literature in innovative work behaviour to identify the determinants of innovative work behaviour in public organisations. Results of the review suggest three determinants of innovative work behaviour, which are ethical leadership, organisational commitment, and self-efficacy. Self-efficacy mediates the relationship between the determinants and innovative work behaviour. Innovative work behaviour is a tool that facilitates organisational efficiency and performance while enhancing the chance of survival from competition and globalisation. The developed framework provides a starting point for researchers and practitioners to examine innovative work behaviour practices further. For researchers, the framework clarifies the determinants of innovative work behaviour and its impacts through the proposed relationships. Practitioners can use the framework to gain insights into the factors contributing to the effectiveness of innovative work behaviour*

Keywords: Innovative work behavior, ethical leadership, organisational commitment, self-efficacy.

1. Introduction

Innovation is a process of generating creative ideas, which is prevalent in public sector organisations. Public sector innovation is linked to the growing popularity of the new public management (NPM) movement. Since the 1980s, several things have occurred which have enhanced civil servants' skills and ability to innovate, thus improving public sector performance and responsiveness (Gao, 2015; Sørensen & Torfing, 2017). Recently, experts and practitioners have become increasingly interested in public sector innovation, and they agree that employees are a vital source of innovation.

According to Bäckström and Bengtsson (2019), innovation refers to the introduction of a new product (good or service), procedure, marketing or organisational approach in business practice, organisation of the workplace or external relations. Employee innovation involves cooperative, collaborative and/or spontaneous procedures across the organisation, including among executive and non-executive employees in research and development (R&D).

Employee innovation is critical to the continuous improvement, success, and survival of organisations in facing today's economic challenges (Bäckström & Bengtsson, 2019; Muchiri, McMurray, Nkhoma, & Pham, 2020). Thus, the implementation of public sector

innovation will enhance the quality of public services, increase competitiveness, boost efficiency, reduce costs, improve the performance of employees and organisations, create effective organisations, and improve customer orientation in service delivery (Carlucci, Mura, & Schiuma, 2019; OECD, 2017).

Innovation studies have been done at various levels of analysis, such as at individual, team, or organisation level, or at several levels simultaneously. However, some researchers have recommended conducting innovative work behaviour research at the individual level (Miao, Newman, Schwarz, & Cooper, 2017) due to the lack of empirical studies on innovative work behaviour at this level in public organisations (Bysted & Hansen, 2013; De Vries, Bekkers, & Tummers, 2016; Farid, Hakimian, & Ismail, 2017). Successful organisations today prefer to hire innovative employees (Raja & Chockalingam, 2019), as individuals' innovative work behaviour is impertinent for organisational success (Hammad, 2020). However, Hammad (2020) opines that employees' innovative work behaviour has received scant attention and gained little understanding.

Similarly, in Malaysia, maintaining efficiency and performance is a challenge for the public sector. The number of complaints about ineffective and poor service in government services increased with more than 6,000 complaints recorded in 2019 (Malaysian Public Complaints Bureau, 2020). The increase in complaint numbers reflects the low level of public sector services. Therefore, Malaysian public sector employees need to be creative and innovative in order to ensure the public sector more effective. However, there is limited knowledge on innovative work behaviour due to the lack of research in this area (Abdullah, 2019) and very few studies have been conducted in the Malaysian public sector (Masrek, Noordin, & Yusof, 2017).

Since employees' creativity and innovative capacity are expected to improve the competitiveness of public organisations (Agarwal, 2014), researchers have been focusing on the factors that can inspire workers to be innovative and creative (Muchiri et al., 2020). Therefore, it is not surprising that innovative work behaviour has begun to attract the attention of researchers in their quest to identify the determinants of organisational efficiency, performance, and growth (Atatsi, Stoffers, Kil, Atatsi, & Kil, 2019).

Given the lack of research in this area in Malaysia, this study aims to address this gap by examining the factors influencing employees' innovative work behaviour in public sector organisations in Malaysia. It is hoped that this study will provide crucial information on innovative work behaviour that will facilitate the government's effort to promote the innovative behaviour among public servants for the benefit of the service and the workers themselves.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Innovative Work Behaviour

Innovation at the individual level is known as innovative behaviour. Researchers have provided various definitions for innovative work behaviour. Janssen (2000) defined innovative work behaviour as "the intentional creation, introduction, and application of new ideas within a work role, group, or organization, in order to benefit the role performance, group or the organization through idea generation, idea promotion, and idea realization". Meanwhile, Bos-Nehles et al. (2016) considered innovative work behaviour as all individual actions that are aimed at generating, processing, and applying or implementing new ideas

about how things should be done or about new product ideas, technologies, processes or work procedures to enhance organisational effectiveness and success.

Innovative work behaviour is also defined as an additional role behaviour of employees that results in a dynamic working environment (Javed, Naqvi, Khan, Arjoon, & Tayyeb, 2017). Similarly, Hammad (2020) described innovative work behaviour as frontline employees' additional role behaviour or discretionary actions, aimed at intentionally developing, promoting, and implementing new ideas, skills, processes, technologies, and procedures within a task, community, or organisation.

Employees' innovative work behaviour is a central and important source of public sector innovation (Abstein & Spieth, 2014; Pukienè, 2016) in order to identify innovation opportunities that are capable of developing and implementing the innovation itself (Bäckström & Bengtsson, 2019). Employees are the ones that develop, expand, retain, respond to, and adapt to new ideas (Al Shammari & Khalifa, 2019; Carlucci et al., 2019).

Public sector employees need to act innovatively for several reasons. Innovative work behaviour is needed in the public sector service to promote change and improve service delivery performance. Innovative work behaviour, which involves both the employees and the organisation, is crucial for organisational survival because organisations have to keep pace with the rapidly changing world. Thus, in this dynamic market climate, organisations need innovative work behaviour to retain their competitive edge (Letchumanasamy, 2013).

Besides, emerging technology and new insights into public service delivery require innovative behaviour (Thurling, Evers, & Vermeulen, 2015) for organisational success in improving the public service delivery, adopting new technologies, and building the overall capacity to act in a dynamic environment (De Vries et al., 2016; Moonesar et al., 2019; Salge & Vera, 2012; Wipulanusat, Panuwatwanich, & Stewart, 2018). Civil servants should be equipped with innovative working techniques so that the public service system and employees' performance can improve.

Innovative work behaviour consists of three phases, beginning from idea generation to idea promotion and idea realisation (Janssen, 2000). Idea generation is the phase in which employees attempt to solve the problems that emerge within the organisation by producing new ideas and thoughts (Muchiri et al., 2020). Next, in the idea promotion phase, employees must encourage and convince people in the organisation that ideas are necessary and useful (Asurakkody & Shin, 2018). Finally, idea implementation refers to the process of using and implementing ideas at the workplace.

2.2 Determinants of Innovative Work Behaviour

Various determinants of innovative work behaviour have been identified in prior research. These determinants have been classified in individual, organisational, and environmental aspects (De Vries et al., 2016). The determinants identified in previous studies are organisational commitment (Hakimian, Mohd, Ismail, & Pradeep, 2016), leadership style (Al Shammari & Khalifa, 2019), intrinsic motivation (Ngan, 2015), self-efficacy (Ibus, Wahab, & Ismail, 2020), work autonomy (Baharuddin, Masrek, & Shuhidan, 2019), and organisational culture (Naranjo-Valencia, Jiménez-Jiménez, & Sanz-Valle, 2016). However, the determinants of innovative work behaviour have yet to be fully understood, and additional empirical data on the factors affecting individuals' innovative work behaviour is needed (Carlucci, Mura, & Schiuma, 2019). Based on the literature review, this study has identified

three determinants of innovative work behaviour, namely ethical leadership, organisational commitment, and self-efficacy. Further, this study is set to examine the mediating role of self-efficacy in the relationship between the determinants and innovative work behaviour.

2.2.1 Ethical Leadership

Leadership is an essential predictor of the creativity and innovation of employees, teams, and organisations (Akram, Lei, & Haider, 2016). For the past century, leadership has become an exciting research area that attracted the attention of many researchers. One type of leadership that is gaining importance due to its influence on employees' attitude and behaviour at the workplace is ethical leadership (Luu, Pham, & Nguyen, 2020).

Ethical leadership refers to “a demonstration of normatively appropriate behaviour through personal action and interpersonal relationships and the encouragement of adherents to such behaviour through bi-directional communication, reinforcement, and decision-making” (Brown, Treviño, & Harrison, 2005). Two important components of ethical leadership are moral persons and moral managers. Moral persons have normative behaviours and personality traits that create a good sense of direction to guide the leaders' followers (Rabie & Malek, 2020). Moral managers exhibit ethical values, serve as ethical role models to their staff, and keep the staff accountable for ethical actions (Chughtai, 2014; Rabie & Malek, 2020).

Ethical leadership also refers to the implicit and explicit pursuits of desirable ethical conduct for oneself and one's followers, guided by rules and principles that promote the motivation to learn, healthy optimism, and the clarity of purpose, in order to maintain the values of empowerment, service to others, concern for human rights, change for the better, and fulfilling duties towards society, future generations, the environment and its sustainability (Shakeel et al., 2019). Besides, ethical leadership focuses on moral values such as truthfulness, trustworthiness, fairness in decision making, respect, integrity, honesty, equality, justice, compassion, and the ability to share information with subordinates (Abayomi & Adeoye, 2020).

Ethical leaders alter employees' perspective of work through their demonstrated actions. Also, ethical leaders influence followers such that the followers are inspired to exert extra efforts and pursue creative solutions. Ethical leaders in the public sector emphasise on the external impact on the community, maintain the common good, and they are very responsive and responsible to the community as a whole (Potipiroon & Ford, 2017).

While various leadership styles are applicable to organisations, not all of them can build innovative work behaviour effectively. Ethical leadership is described in the literature as a significant predictor of employees' creativity and innovative work behaviour. Studies have shown that ethical leadership leads to a multitude of key outcomes, such as the willingness to exert additional efforts at the workplace (Potipiroon & Ford, 2017), and one of them is innovative work behaviour (Zahra' & Waheed, 2017).

Some of the studies that provide empirical evidence on the relationship between ethical leadership and innovative work behaviour are Chen and Hou (2015), Duan, Liu, and Che (2018), Ma, Cheng, Ribbens, and Zhou (2013), Shafique, Ahmad, and Kalyar (2019), and Zahra' and Waheed (2017). Given the significance of ethical leadership to organisations, ethical leaders should encourage, inspire, and lay the groundwork for innovation and employee creativity (Nunn & Avella, 2015).

2.2.2 Organisational Commitment

Researchers have given considerable attention to organisational commitment as a critical factor in the relationship between individuals and the organisation at their workplace, as organisational commitment is vital for organisational performance, healthy employees, overall employees' performance, and overall organisational effectiveness (Baharuddin, Masrek, & Shuhidan, 2019).

Recently, organisational commitment in public, private, and not-for-profit sectors has been subjected to reviews across the world (Agu, 2015). Similar scenarios occur in the services sector, particularly in public sector organisations. Higher levels of organisational commitment mean that employees have increased readiness to serve organisations, which will benefit resource-scarce organisations, particularly public sector organisations (Potipiroon & Ford, 2017).

Organisational commitment, which refers to the psychological connection between an individual and an organisation, is one of the best researched organisational behavioural phenomena of the last three decades (Agu, 2015). Organisational commitment consists of three dimensions, namely affective commitment as the strength of an employee's identification and commitment to an organisation, normative commitment as a sense of moral obligation or duty to remain with an organisation, and continuance commitment as the recognition of investment losses when leaving the organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1990, 1991).

Organisational commitment is crucial for any organisation, given that committed employees are an essential capital for organisational success and efficiency. Organisations can achieve their goals and objectives efficiently provided that their employees are highly dedicated to the organisation (Siregar, Suryana, Ahman, & Senen, 2019). Employees that are aligned with the organisation's mission and values tend to be more motivated, leading to organisational efficiency (Pinho, Rodrigues & Dibb, 2014).

Organisational commitment could also be described as the behaviour of individuals and organisations (Agu, 2015). Past research indicates a significant impact of organisational commitment on innovative work behaviour (Fauzia, Budiningsih, Djaelani, & Ahmad, 2017; Sigrid van Schaijk, 2018). Along the same line, Tang, Shao, and Chen (2019) demonstrated that employees' commitment supports their innovative behaviour. Another study by Xerri and Brunetto (2013) found that organisational commitment helps in promoting innovative work behaviour.

2.2.3 Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy, which was first proposed by Bandura in 1977 (Agu, 2015), has been researched in various settings for almost three decades. Self-efficacy refers to an element of self-knowledge that is vital in daily human life, as it influences the person to determine the necessary actions to achieve a particular goal, including evaluating challenges (Rafiola, Setyosari, Radjah, & Ramli, 2020).

Social cognitive theory defines self-efficacy as an individual's perceived ability to execute actions—with focus on skills execution rather than owned abilities—to attain a specific goal (Agu, 2015; Hasan, Hossain, & Islam, 2014). This conviction can motivate a person to take actions that they believe are feasible. People with high self-efficacy can accomplish challenging tasks by being creative in solving problems and exerting more considerable efforts to accomplish the tasks.

Self-efficacy in a particular area can predict behaviour (Su, Lin, & Ding, 2019). Self-efficacy, a personal factor, intermediates the link between behavioural factors and environmental factors. Employees' self-efficacy has been widely accepted as having a positive relationship with innovative behaviour, as it has been suggested that an innovative level of employees' individual thought and working behaviour is generated when there is a healthy level of self-efficacy (Purnama, Tjahjono, Elqadri, & Prajogo, 2020). Self-efficacy mediates some of the significant influences of ethical leadership and organisational commitment on innovative work behaviour (Fatemeh, Farid, Nazari, & Nair, 2016; Zahra' & Waheed, 2017).

3. Methodology

This study draws upon the extant literature in ethical leadership, organisational commitment, and self-efficacy to identify the factors for innovative work behaviour with the development of a conceptual framework. This study used journal articles, conference papers, and dissertations as well as viewed websites referred to in the literature to gain further insights into innovative work behaviour. Further, online databases such as Google Scholar, Emerald, Springer, Proquest, and Science Direct were used for the literature search. In this section, this study discusses the findings from the literature review and synthesizes the development of a conceptual framework for innovative work behaviour in the public sector. Surprisingly, based on in-depth review of the literature, this study found that very few integrated models have been developed to understand the factors leading to innovative work behaviour (Torres, Espinosa, Dornberger, & Acosta, 2017), which has prompted the need to explore these relationships between these factors and innovative work behaviour (Table 1).

Table 1: Summary of empirical studies between significant constructs of interest

No.	Author (s)	Settings	Variables	Major Findings
1.	Dhar (2016)	Private sector (hotel)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethical leadership • Innovative work behaviour 	1. Ethical leadership promotes innovative work behaviour.
2.	Zahra' & Waheed (2017)	Public sector (research institutions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethical leadership • Psychological empowerment • Innovative work behaviour 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ethical leadership positively influences innovative work behaviour. 2. Self-efficacy mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and innovative work behaviour.
3.	Fauzia et al. (2017)	Private sector (company)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning organisation • Knowledge sharing • Organisational commitment • Innovative work behaviour 	1. Organisational commitment contributes towards enhancing employees' innovative behaviour.
4.	Hakimian et al. (2016)	Private sector (small and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisational commitment 	1. Significant relationship between two forms of

	medium manufacturing)	(affective, continuance, and normative) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovative work behaviour 	commitment (i.e., affective and normative) and employees' innovative behaviour.
5. Pukienė (2016)	Private sector (company)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affective commitment • Innovative work behaviour 	1. Affective commitment positively influences innovative work behaviour.

Source: Designed by authors based on the literature review

Proposed Framework

Following a thorough analysis of relevant literature, this study sought to establish a conceptual framework for the factors influencing innovative work behaviour that can be used to help employees in public service organisations. The framework explores the relationship between ethical leadership and organisational commitment, as well as their direct and indirect impact on employees' innovative work behaviour in public sector organisations. Further, this study proposes self-efficacy as a mediating factor in the relationship at the individual level between ethical leadership, organisational commitment, and innovative work behaviour.

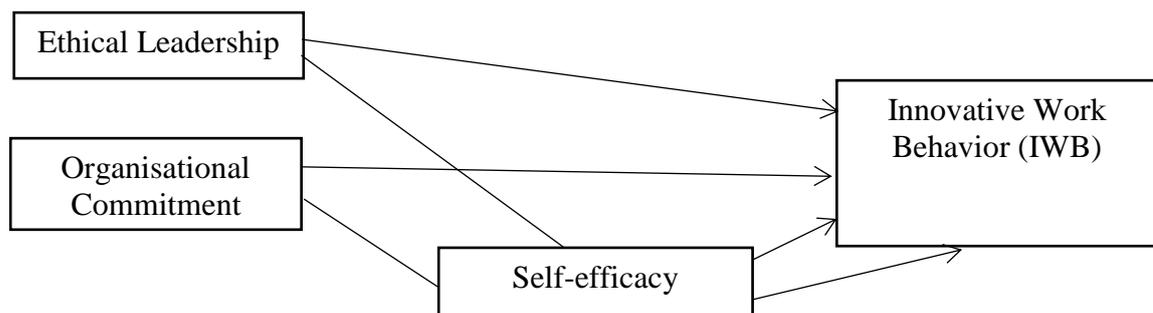


Figure 1: A propose relationship model of factors affecting innovative work behavior of employees in public service organizations

Figure 1 shows the relationship of ethical leadership, organisational commitment, and self-efficacy with innovative work behaviour of civil servants in public organisations. The framework proposes that ethical leadership and organisational commitment have a direct effect on innovative work behaviour. This proposition is consistent with the innovative work behaviour concepts developed in previous studies (e.g., Jafri, 2010; Zahra' & Waheed, 2017). Meanwhile, self-efficacy mediates ethical leadership in encouraging innovative work behaviour. This paper's proposed framework on the antecedents of innovative work behaviour can be used to inspire civil servants to adopt innovative behaviour and also for further studies by other researchers in the future.

4. Conclusion

The role of civil servants in enhancing efficiency and providing beneficial services to the public continues to evolve in this modern era. All civil servants need to possess the necessary skills, knowledge, qualities, and competencies to improve public service in order to address the changing needs of stakeholders. Innovative work behaviours are built by generating the capacity to improve productivity and meet the demands of the community. The factors influencing employees' innovative work behaviour in public service organisations can be

analysed by using the model, in which interactions among these factors are to be evaluated. The information provided in this paper is expected to add to the body of knowledge on innovative work behaviour in Malaysian public service organisations. Besides, it can be used as guidance in promoting employees' innovative work behaviour so that the performance of public service organisations will reach beyond the expected level.

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