



How Style of Leadership Shape on Innovative Work Behavior of Employees: The Mediating Role of Psychological Empowerment in Innovative Culinary MSMEs in Gunung Pati District

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ABSTRACT

Research Aims: This research examines the effect of two contemporary leadership styles: transformational and transactional. Both transformational and transactional leadership styles play a role in shaping employees' innovative work behavior. It further examines the mediating function of psychological empowerment in clarifying the connection across innovative and leadership style.

Design/methodology/approach: The research design used was empirical. Information was gathered through a standardized questionnaire distributed to 102 employees of innovative culinary MSMEs in Gunungpati District, Semarang.

Research Findings: The research indicates that employing change-oriented leadership has a noteworthy and favorable impact on the application on creative work practices. Conversely, transactional leadership is associated with a substantial decline in employees' innovative behavior. Furthermore, It was discovered that the bond between creative work practices and transformative leadership was mediated by psychological empowerment. thereby strengthening its positive influence. However, psychological empowerment did not mediate the influence of transactional leadership.

Theoretical Contribution/Originality: The analysis contributes to the literature on talent management in the MSME sector by emphasizing the critical role of leadership styles that promote empowerment and foster innovation among employees.

Keywords: Transformational Leadership, Transactional Leadership, Psychological Empowerment, Innovative Work Behavior

Introduction

As an essential component of organizational human capital, human resources remain a highly pertinent issue in the era of globalization and rapid technological advancement. Within this evolving landscape, the capacity to foster innovation has emerged as a fundamental determinant of organizational sustainability and growth. This requirement extends beyond large-scale corporations; micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) are likewise expected to continuously pursue innovation to secure long-term competitiveness (Chuzaimah, 2008).

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The development of innovative ideas and their subsequent practice in the workplace is conceptualized as innovative work behavior (Baer, 2012). Employees who exhibit such behavior are pivotal in enhancing an organization's capacity to address problems and adapt creatively to change (Widodo, 2014). Leadership style is recognized as a critical determinant in facilitating the development of employees' innovative behavior. Transformational leadership, in particular, is regarded as effective in promoting through inspirational and motivational leadership practices that foster creativity and innovation (Avolio & Bass, 2002). Conversely, transactional leadership is often considered less effective in encouraging innovation, with several studies suggesting that it may even have adverse effects on employees' creative work behavior (Pieterse et al., 2010).

Despite evidence of these effects, prior research has produced mixed results concerning the impact of leadership styles. While some studies indicate a constructive highlight the connection transformational leadership and innovation (Afsar & Masood, 2018), others report contrary outcomes. For example, (Basu & Green, 1997) identified an unfavorable the contribution of transformational leadership on innovative behavior, and (Khaola, 2013) similarly observed a decline in innovative work behavior attributable to leadership effects.

Such inconsistencies indicate a critical research gap, namely the limited Understanding the ways that leadership approaches affect creative actions at work, along with the specific situations that impact these effects. In particular, prior studies have not adequately examined Psychological empowerment's function as an intermediate channel connecting leadership style to employee innovation. Among the potential intervening factors, psychological empowerment has been widely acknowledged as a critical factor (Schermuly et al., 2013). Nevertheless, research examining the interplay of these three constructs simultaneously, especially within the context of Indonesian MSMEs, remains scarce.

Addressing this gap, the present study focuses on employees working in innovative culinary MSMEs in Gunung Pati District, Semarang. Despite the rapid growth of MSMEs in this area, driven by expanding residential development and the presence of higher education institutions such as Universitas Negeri Semarang, many employees have not yet fully optimized their innovative potential in daily work practices.

So, this research aims to look at how different ways of leading impact how creative workers are, by thinking about how feeling empowered affects things. In particular, this research aims to:

- 1) Study how leadership approaches that create change and those focused on exchange affect creative actions at work;
- 2) Examine the role of leadership styles on psychological empowerment;

- 3) Look into how feeling strong and in control might change the link between how leaders lead and how new and creative people are at work;

By addressing these objectives, this study is expected to contribute theoretically by clarifying the inconsistent findings in prior research and empirically by providing practical insights for improving human resource management practices within Indonesian MSMEs.

Literature Review

Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange Theory (SET) was originally introduced by John Thibaut and Harold Kelley in 1959 and was subsequently expanded by (Janssen, 2000), who posited that individuals develop relationships within organizations based on the principle of reciprocity. According to this theory, workers will probably do extra things, such as coming up with new ideas. When they perceive fair treatment, support, and mutual exchange within their organization. Innovation, which often entails risk taking and effort beyond formal job requirements, is more likely to emerge when employees believe their contributions will be valued and reciprocated.

Within leadership contexts, SET explains how leadership style shape employees perceptions of social exchange quality. Leaders who demonstrate trust, recognition, and support foster stronger relational bonds, encouraging employees to reciprocate through proactive and innovative behaviors. So, SET gives us a strong base for seeing how leadership approaches affect creative work habits, both straightaway and through mental things like feeling capable

Great Man Theory and Transformational Leadership

The Great Man Theory originated in the 1840s and was popularized by Thomas Carlyle, who argued that historical developments are shaped by extraordinary individuals with exceptional traits. This perspective later provided a conceptual foundation for transformational leadership theory. In 1978, James MacGregor Burns introduced the term transformational leadership, defining it as a process through which organizations experience significant change driven by the vision and influence of their leaders. Later, Bass (1990) made this idea bigger, pinpointing important parts, like being a role model, stirring excitement, encouraging new thinking, and treating each person as unique, which help innovation grow. Transformational leaders encourage employees to question existing assumptions, explore novel solutions, and feel psychologically safe in expressing creative ideas.

Research studies continually show that transformational leadership improves creative actions at work by building a space that supports independence and natural drive (Afsar & Masood, 2018; Gumusluolu & Ilsev, 2009). However, contradictory findings in some studies (Basu & Green, 1997; Khaola, 2013) indicate that leadership

effects on innovation may depend on underlying psychological conditions. This inconsistency underscores the need to examine psychological empowerment as a mediating mechanism, particularly in MSME contexts where leadership influence is more direct and interpersonal.

H1: Transformational leadership is positively associated with employees' innovative work behavior in innovative culinary MSMEs in Gunung Pati District.

Transactional Leadership and Innovative Work Behavior

With transactional leadership, leaders and those who report to them focus on trading things that help achieve goals, highlighting rewards for good work and fixing problems (Avolio & Bass, 2002). While this leadership style can be effective for improving efficiency and task compliance, its implications for innovation remain debated. From a social exchange perspective, transactional leadership may limit innovation by emphasizing extrinsic rewards and minimizing autonomy, thereby reducing employees' intrinsic motivation to explore creative solutions.

Empirical evidence suggests that transactional leadership often exhibits a negative or insignificant relationship with innovative work behavior (Khaola, 2013; Liu et al., 2011). In MSMEs, where flexibility and creativity are essential for survival, rigid performance-based exchanges may constrain employees' willingness to engage in experimentation and idea generation. Consequently, transactional leadership may hinder the development of innovative work behavior, particularly when employees lack psychological resources to offset these constraints.

H2: Transactional leadership negatively influences innovative work behavior among employees of innovative culinary MSMEs in Gunung Pati District

Psychological Empowerment and Innovative Work Behavior

The idea of empowerment originated from management approaches, particularly those proposed by (Conger & Kanungo, 1988), who emphasized the value of creating work environments that enhance intrinsic motivation. Building on this foundation, (Spreitzer, 1995) refined the concept by introducing psychological empowerment, which is constituted by four primary dimensions: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact. Under such conditions, factors comprise adequately addressed, employees have a higher tendency to actively contribute in innovative work behavior.

Prior research demonstrates that psychological empowerment fosters innovative work behavior by strengthening employees' intrinsic motivation and proactive engagement (Jha, 2014; Jung et al., 2003). Employees who feel psychologically empowered are more inclined to willing to experiment with new ideas and invest effort in creative problem-solving.

Previous empirical studies conducted in various settings, including small and medium enterprises, have confirmed the positive association between psychological empowerment and innovative work behavior.

H3: Employees with higher psychological empowerment tend to demonstrate stronger innovative work behavior among employees of innovative culinary MSMEs in Gunung Pati District.

2.5 The Mediating Role of Psychological Empowerment

Psychological empowerment contributes a crucial mediating mechanism in translating leadership influence into innovative outcomes. Transformational leadership, by means of inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation, enhances employees' perceptions of meaning and competence, thereby fostering empowerment. (Schermyl et al., 2013) empirically demonstrated that psychological empowerment fully acts as a mediating mechanism in the relationship between transformational leadership and innovative work behavior, suggesting that empowerment is a key psychological mechanism underlying leadership effectiveness.

Similarly, in the context of transactional leadership, psychological empowerment may buffer or weaken the negative effects of rigid exchange-based leadership. While transactional leadership alone may not stimulate innovation, empowered employees may still engage in innovative behavior when they perceive autonomous and competent in their roles. This mediating perspective is particularly relevant for MSMEs, where leadership practices directly shape employees' daily experiences and psychological states.

H4: Psychological empowerment mediates the linkage between transformational leadership and innovative work behavior among employees culinary MSMEs in Gunung Pati District.

H5: Psychological empowerment serves as a mediating mechanism between transactional leadership and innovative work behavior among employees of innovative culinary MSMEs in Gunung Pati District.

Method

A quantitative, causal research design was employed to investigate the effects of transformational and transactional leadership on employees' innovative work behavior, with psychological empowerment acting as a mediating variable. The population comprised all employees of innovative culinary MSMEs registered with the Semarang City Office of Cooperatives and MSMEs in Gunung Pati District (N = 102). Given the relatively small and accessible population, a census approach was applied, whereby all employees were included as respondents.

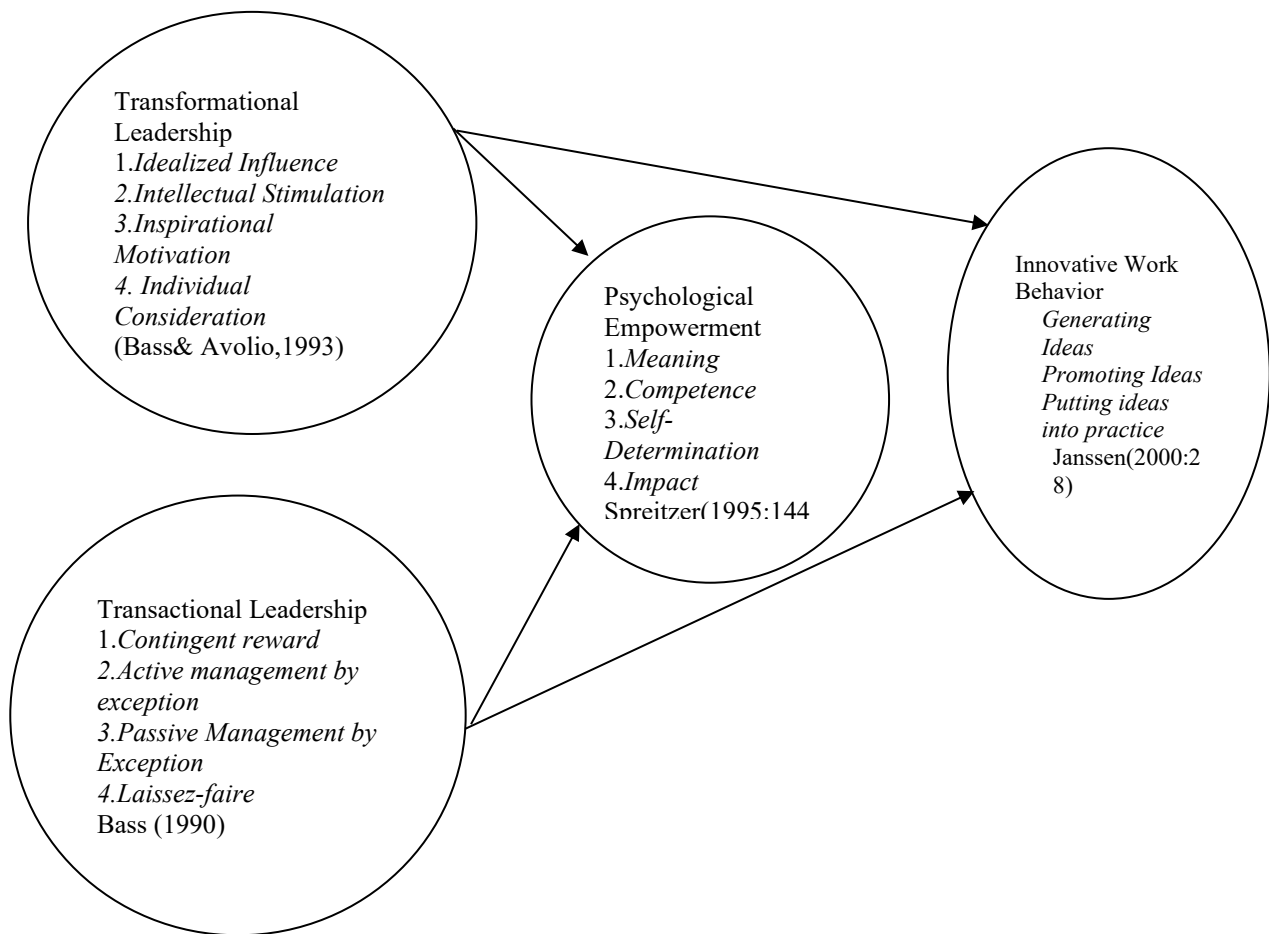


Figure 1. Research Model

A structured questionnaire, adapted from established instruments, was used to collect data established instruments. Transformational and transactional leadership were measured using items derived from Bass and Avolio (1990), psychological empowerment was measured based on (Spreitzer, 1995) four dimensions (meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact), and innovative work behavior was assessed using Janssen's (2000) scale. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale, with values ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Prior to hypothesis testing, validity and reliability tests were conducted. All measurement items met the required validity criteria, and reliability testing indicated acceptable internal consistency across constructs. Data analysis was performed using SPSS. Classical assumption tests were conducted to verify the adequacy of the regression model. Direct relationships were tested using multiple linear regression analysis of leadership styles and psychological empowerment on innovative work behavior, while mediation effects were examined using regression-based mediation

analysis supported by the Sobel test. This approach is appropriate for testing causal relationships and mediation effects in quantitative studies with limited sample sizes.

Results and Discussion

4.1 Respondent Characteristics

The current study involved 102 employees of innovative culinary MSMEs in Gunung Pati District. Respondents were predominantly female (57.8%), aged between 20–23 years (34.31%). The majority of respondents had attained senior high school or vocational education (41.2%) and had fewer than five years of work experience. (72.5%).

4.2 Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis Testing: How Transformational and Transactional Leadership Affect and Psychological Empowerment on Employees' Innovative Work Behavior

Table 1. Hypothesis Test Results

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients			Standardized Coefficients	
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1 (Constant)	17.637	1.728		10.207	.000
KTF	.204	.066	.293	3.119	.002
KTS	-.291	.049	-.428	-6.001	.000
PP	.176	.073	.227	2.410	.018

Source: Processed Primary Data

Table 1 demonstrates a significant the correlation across transformational leadership and workers creative work practices, as reflected a t-value of 3.119 and a significance level of 0.002 (<0.05). This finding reveals that a rise in the application of transformational leadership is associated with a corresponding increase in workers creative conduct. Therefore, the first hypothesis (H1) is supported. The results align with earlier research suggesting that transformational leadership positively impacts creative work practices (Khan & Aslam, 2012) and enhances organizational innovation (Gumusluolu & Ilsev, 2009).

For transactional leadership, the analysis yielded a t-value of -6.001 with a substantial value of level of 0.000 (<0.05), showing a significant negative effect. This outcome suggests that an increased emphasis on transactional leadership is linked to a decreased tendency for employees to exhibit innovative behavior. Which means that,

a rigid, reward-based leadership approach may inhibit employee creativity and initiative. Consequently, the study's second hypothesis (H2) is supported. The findings are in line with earlier studies demonstrating that earlier analysis reporting that transactional leadership exerts a negative impact on creative work practices (Pieterse et al., 2010).

The findings additionally demonstrate that psychological empowerment has a t-value of 2.410 and an important level of 0.018 (<0.05), indicating a significant positive effect. This evidence demonstrates that psychological empowerment substantially enhances employees' inclination to engage in innovative behavior within the workplace. Accordingly, the third hypothesis (H3) is supported. These findings corroborate earlier research showing a notable significant positive association between psychological empowerment and creative work practices (Javed et al., 2019).

Statistical Analysis of the Effects of Transformational and Transactional Leadership on Psychological Empowerment

Table 2. Regression Analysis 1

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized		Standardized		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1 (Constant)	10.096	2.146		4.704	.000
KTF	.599	.067	.668	8.951	.000
KTS	-.132	.065	-.151	-2.022	.046

Source: Processed Primary Data

Statistical Analysis implication of Transactional Leadership on Innovative Work Behavior through Mediation by Psychological Empowerment

Table 3. Regression Analysis 2

Mode	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.748 ^a	.559	.550		.817

Source: Processed Primary Data

The immediate role coefficient of transformational leadership on innovative work behavior (b_4) was 0.293. The consequential impact of transformative leadership on the creative behavior of workers through psychological empowerment was calculated as $(b_1 \times b_3) = 0.668 \times 0.227 = 0.152$. Consequently, the total transformational

leadership and its role in enhancing innovative work performance: The function of psychological empowerment as a mediating variable, was $b_4 + (b_1 \times b_3) = 0.293 + 0.152 = 0.445$.

The total effect of 0.445, representing transformational leadership mediated by psychological empowerment, exceeds the primary effect of 0.293. This indicates that psychological empowerment functions as a partial acting as a bridge in the context of transformational leadership effect on creative work practices. Therefore, the fourth hypothesis (H4) is supported. These results correspond to prior finding by (Prabowo et al., 2018), which demonstrated that psychological empowerment mediates the contribution of transformational leadership in creative work practices. Similarly, (Pieterse et al., 2010) reported with employees who perceive themselves as empowered, influential, and impactful within their work environment, resulting in greater proactivity, autonomy, and initiative in their behavior.

The primary impact of transactional leadership in creative work practices (b_5) was -0.428. Psychological empowerment served acting as an intervening variable in the connection transactional leadership and employees creativity and innovation calculated as $(b_2 \times b_3) = -0.151 \times 0.227 = -0.034$. Consequently, the total contribution of transactional leadership on the creative behavior of employees, incorporating the mediating function of psychological empowerment, was $b_5 + (b_2 \times b_3) = -0.428 + (-0.034) = -0.462$.

The unintended consequence of transactional leadership on employees creative work practices through psychological empowerment was calculated at 0.462, which is lower in magnitude than the immediate result of transactional leadership in creative conduct, measured at -0.428. These results imply that psychological empowerment does not serve as a significant facilitating element in the relationship in association with transactional leadership and the creative work practices of workers. Consequently, the fifth hypothesis (H5) is not supported. These outcomes are comparable to the findings of (Lei et al., 2011), which indicated that psychological empowerment mediates only a the minor transactional leadership's effect on creative work practices.

Discussion

The results showed that a leadership style focused on change helps workers to be more creative at their jobs. This aligns with the Social Exchange Theory, suggesting that when leaders support and inspire, workers tend to respond with positive actions in return. Leaders who provide vision, thinking challenges, mental excitement, and personalized attention help workers create and use new thoughts. This finding is similar to what earlier research has shown about how transformational leadership helps to boost innovation. (Gumusluolu & Ilsev, 2009; Khan & Aslam, 2012).

In contrast, transactional leadership negatively affects innovative work behavior. A leadership approach that emphasizes strict performance monitoring and contingent rewards may limit employees' autonomy and intrinsic motivation, thereby inhibiting creativity. This finding supports previous research suggesting that transactional leadership prioritizes task completion over innovation (Pieterse et al., 2010).

It was discovered that having a sense of psychological empowerment helps people be more innovative at work, supporting Empowerment Theory. Workers who view their job as significant and have feeling of capability and independence are more inclined to participate in inventive issue resolution and groundbreaking ideas. This result is consistent with prior studies demonstrating that empowerment plays a role in enhancing employees' intrinsic motivation and innovative performance (Javed et al., 2019).

Furthermore, feeling psychologically strong somewhat explains how having a leader who inspires change relates to acting creatively at work. This implies that transformational leaders enhance innovation not only directly but also indirectly by fostering employees' sense of empowerment. However, psychological empowerment does not mediate the effect of transactional leadership, indicating that empowerment alone is insufficient to counteract the restrictive nature of transactional leadership practices.

Despite these findings, this study is subject to several limitations, particularly its cross-sectional design, which constrains causal interpretation. and the results are context-specific to innovative culinary MSMEs in Gunung Pati District. Therefore, generalization to other sectors or regions should be undertaken with caution. Future research may consider longitudinal designs and additional contextual variables to further explore leadership-innovation dynamics.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings exerts a strong and significant influence on the creative work practices of staff members in creative culinary MSMEs in Gunung Pati District. Leaders who provide inspiration, articulate a clear vision, and demonstrate individualized consideration are able to enhance employees' idea generation and innovative actions. Conversely, Innovative work behavior is significantly yet negatively impacted by transactional leadership. Leadership approaches that prioritize control and punitive measures tend to suppress employee creativity and initiative. Psychological empowerment also demonstrates a strong and and substantial influence on creative work practices. Employees who interpret their work as meaningful, and who experience autonomy, competence, and a perceived sense of impact, tend to engage in innovative practices. Additionally, psychological empowerment mediates the correlation in connection with transformational

leadership and creative work practices, however, the mediating role was not supported for transactional leadership in creative work practices.

Accordingly, owners and managers of culinary MSMEs are advised to implement transformational or participative leadership styles that cultivate positive emotional relationships with employees, promote a shared vision, and exemplify innovative thinking. It is essential for MSMEs to establish a work environment that facilitates psychological empowerment by providing employees the opportunity to voice their opinions, be involved in decision-making, and propose new ideas openly. Employees are expected to respond actively to such leadership support by demonstrating innovative behaviors, including the willingness to explore novel approaches in production, marketing, and service delivery.

Future research could examine additional factors influencing innovative work behavior, such as organizational culture, job satisfaction, or overall organizational support, and may extend to other regions or MSME sectors to improve the generalizability of the results. According to this study's empirical findings, appropriate leadership styles can effectively promote employees' innovative behavior.

Therefore, it is recommended that MSME owners receive practical leadership training emphasizing two-way communication, recognition of employee contributions, and support for employee-generated ideas. Moreover, since psychological empowerment has been shown to act as an intervening variable in the link leadership and innovation, managers should foster employees' self-confidence and autonomy through the delegation of challenging tasks, transparent information sharing, and acknowledgment of individual contributions. Enhancing employees' innovative behavior will enable culinary MSMEs in Gunung Pati to compete more effectively, adapt to evolving market preferences, and develop unique products and services, which is crucial in the highly competitive and rapidly changing culinary industry.

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