

Available online at [www.sciencedirect.com](http://www.sciencedirect.com)

ScienceDirect

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/aebj](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/aebj)

# The impact of relational leadership on employee innovative work behavior in IT industry of China

Tayyaba Akram<sup>a,b,\*</sup>, Shen Lei<sup>a</sup>, Muhammad Jamal Haider<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Glorious Sun School of Business and Management, Donghua University, Shanghai, China

<sup>b</sup> FMS, BUIITEMS, Quetta, Pakistan

## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received 24 February 2016

Received in revised form

14 April 2016

Accepted 8 June 2016

### Keywords:

Relational leadership

Employee innovative work behavior

Idea generation

Idea promotion

Idea realization

China

## ABSTRACT

This study is an attempt to investigate the effect of relational leadership (RL) on the three different stages of employee innovative work behavior (EIWB) in information technology industry of China. It also investigates the overall effect of relational leadership on total EIWB. It was proposed that relational leadership effects EIWB positively. For testing the hypotheses, a self-administered questionnaire was used to find out what are the responses of 261 employees from an IT company. Correlation and regression analysis suggested that relational leadership affects all three stages of employee innovative work behavior in significant manner. Its overall effect on EIWB is also very prominent in our analysis. The results of this study suggest that relational leadership, being a powerful motivational tool, helps employees to depict innovative work behavior at each of idea generation, idea promotion and idea realization stages of EIWB. The implications and limitations of the study are further discussed.

© 2016 The Authors. Production and hosting by Elsevier B.V. on behalf of Holy Spirit University of Kaslik. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

## 1. Introduction

Changes in basic regulations, technological advancements and also global competition have made it extremely difficult for organizations to compete in present business world successfully. Therefore, at present, continuous innovation is crucial source for organizational survival in market-oriented economies. As a result, organizations are more and more interested in examining all those factors that increase the innovative work behavior of its employees (Agarwal, 2014; Scott & Bruce, 1994, p. 580). This is particularly true for information technology business due to the radical innovation requirements and dynamic environment in which these businesses are operating. Nevertheless, innovation is not a new concept in the literature anymore; however, a relatively smaller portion of the literature focuses on part of organizational features that leads innovation in the organization (Chandler, Keller, & Lyon, 2000). According to Woodman, Sawyer, and Griffin (1993), “we know little about how organizations can successfully promote and manage individual and organizational creativity (p. 316)”. Many authors (such as Woodman et al., 1993) found rewards, organizational culture and resources as the determinants of innovative behavior in the organization. Some others (e.g. Damanpour, 1991) identified internal and external communication and managerial attitude toward change as positively correlated factors with

\* Corresponding author at: Glorious Sun School of Business and Management, Donghua University, Shanghai, China.

E-mail address: [tayyaba.akram1@hotmail.com](mailto:tayyaba.akram1@hotmail.com) (T. Akram).

Peer review under responsibility of Holy Spirit University of Kaslik.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.aebj.2016.06.001>

2214-4625/© 2016 The Authors. Production and hosting by Elsevier B.V. on behalf of Holy Spirit University of Kaslik. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

innovation. On the other hand, some other studies focused on how different forms of leadership influence innovative work behavior (e.g. Kahai, Sosik, & Avolio, 2003; Tsai & Tseng, 2010). The major rationale of studying leadership as a contributor to innovative work behavior is that although literature progressed a lot but still a lot has to do regarding the leadership (Hilaire, 2008), particularly in Chinese context due to rapid growth in its market-oriented economy. According to Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) "Despite many years of leadership research and thousands of studies, we still do not have a clear understanding of what leadership is and how it can be achieved". As a matter of fact and time, leaders play crucial role in shaping organizational work climate; therefore, many researchers mentioned that leaders and managers have increased level of responsibility for developing their employees and also facilitating human resource teaching in their organizations (Noor & Dzulkifli, 2013). Although the influence of different forms of leadership on innovative work behavior has been understudy in past, however, there is little if any about the relationship between relational leadership and innovative work behavior in previous research studies which is a new leadership phenomenon. Particularly, the sample was collected from Chinese IT industry because China is growing rapidly in technological and scientific innovations in recent years. This is predominantly true for IT firms in China, who are moving from narrow downstream services to complete range and becoming better IT service providers in the world (Lin & Liang, 2009). Although China's economic growth has slowed down, however, Chinese desire to innovate is still at top priority list of Chinese government's 13th 5 year plan for 2016-2020. According to a report, the country pursues for heavy investment in science and technology in coming five years that if implemented, will boost the spending in this area up to 9.1% in current year (2016) to 271 billion Yuan (*Asian Scientist Magazine*, April 6, 2016). The report further quoted the words from the opening speech of Premier Li Keqiang on March 5, 2016 as under,

"Innovation is the primary driving force for the development and must occupy a central place in China's development strategy".

While transmuting from plan-economy to market-economy, economic globalization and information technology are generating a great revolution in China. However, this transformation requires a continuous dedication for innovation that is impossible without internal motivation of employees. This highlights the further importance of innovation for Chinese IT companies. As leadership is equally an important organizational phenomenon and its effects, in shaping behaviors and attitudes of followers, are long lasting and enduring, therefore, this study focuses on a new dimension in leadership i.e. relational leadership. Therefore, this study aims to explore how a better innovative work behavior can be achieved in China through using relational leadership. In order to better understand this interaction between independent and dependent variables, this study investigates the relationship between relational leadership and three stages of employee innovative work behavior. It also analyzes the overall effect of relational leadership on Employee innovative work behavior.

---

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Relational leadership

Since many years, leadership has been an important phenomenon in organizational research. This prominent attention has been due to the fact that leaders shape the behaviors of their followers. Leadership has been defined differently according to the individual viewpoint of the researchers and the phenomenal facets that interest them the most. It is mostly defined by terms like post heroic (Fletcher, 2004), Distributed (Gronn, 2002), shared (Conger & Pearce, 2003), constructed (Hosking, 2007) and also relational (Uhl-Bien, 2006). The difference in these definitions is based on the emphasis on personality traits, influence relationships, appeal to self-versus collective interests, leader ability and individual versus group orientation. With the emerging organizational trends and employee relationship management, leadership has also changed drastically. Particularly since 1980s interest in studying new dimensions of leadership has increased (Bryman, 1992). Researchers has started finding out such leadership style that focused on leader's ability to attain higher level of performance from its employees. Nevertheless, literature on this subject has progressed a lot; however, there is still a great need to work more on leadership (Hilaire, 2008). In the search of new concepts about leadership, relational leadership is an emerging concept (such as Uhl-Bien, 2006). As many leadership theories are concentrating on the evaluation and understanding of leadership process, relational leadership even goes further with the notion that social dynamism is the cause of individual's influential capacity (Hilaire, 2008). In their study, Komives, Lucas, and McMahon (1998) emphasized that "leadership is a relational process of people working together to accomplish change or to make a difference that will benefit the common good". Purposeful, inclusive, ethical, process-oriented and empowering were nominated as main elements of relational leadership by these authors. In another study, Komives, Lucas, and McMahon (2013) defined relational leadership as "Leadership is a relational and ethical process of people together attempting to accomplish positive change". Uhl-Bien (2006) provided the most comprehensive theoretical model of relational leadership. This theory provides auspicious approach of rethinking, re-theorizing and re-assessing the social influence practice in leadership (Hilaire, 2008).

At present, in addition to having administrative skills, a leader should be able to take initiative and develop as well as maintain positive functioning relationships in the organization (Watt, 2013). Hence, a leader is the one who can make difference by understanding the change him/herself, makes strategies for change and flourishing together with his/her followers. Therefore, leadership is not based only at the traits of the leader but it is the social process that occurs between followers and the leader, i.e. leadership is a relational process. There are plenty research work about the effects of leadership on different variables such as turnover, work satisfaction, performance, etc., however, there are very few studies about the relationship between the leader and

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7395740>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/7395740>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)