The Impact of Transformational Leadership on Innovative Work Behaviour among Bank Employees

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Abstract

This study examines the influence of transformational leadership on innovative work behavior among bank employees in Johor. Specifically, it investigates how the dimensions of transformational leadership—idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and individual consideration—affect innovative behavior. A quantitative method was employed using a structured questionnaire distributed to 145 employees across 15 branches of a bank. Results indicated that idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, and inspirational motivation positively and significantly impact innovative work behavior. However, individual consideration showed no significant influence. These findings underscore the importance of transformational leadership in fostering innovation within the banking sector, highlighting the need for leadership development programs that emphasize these critical dimensions. By adopting transformational leadership practices, organizations can enhance employee creativity and innovation, ultimately driving competitiveness and growth.

Keywords: Transformational leadership, innovative work behavior, bank

Abstrak

Kajian ini mengkaji pengaruh kepimpinan transformasi terhadap tingkah laku kerja inovatif dalam kalangan kakitangan bank di Johor. Secara khusus, ia mengkaji bagaimana dimensi kepimpinan transformasi—pengaruh ideal, rangsangan intelektual, motivasi inspirasi dan pertimbangan individu—mempengaruhi tingkah laku inovatif. Kaedah kuantitatif telah digunakan menggunakan soal selidik berstruktur yang diedarkan kepada 145 pekerja di 15 cawangan bank tersebut. Keputusan menunjukkan bahawa pengaruh ideal, rangsangan intelektual, dan motivasi inspirasi memberi kesan positif dan signifikan terhadap tingkah laku kerja inovatif. Walau bagaimanapun, pertimbangan individu tidak menunjukkan pengaruh yang ketara.

Kata kunci: Kepimpinan transformasi, tingkah laku kerja inovatif, bank

■1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the current era of rapid technological advancement, organizations are required to continuously innovate to stay competitive and relevant. The banking sector faces increasing pressure to offer innovative solutions and services that meet evolving consumer demands. The global shift toward digital banking has further emphasized the need for creativity and innovation in the workplace (Al-Husseini et al., 2021). Leaders in these institutions play a critical role in driving innovation by fostering an environment that encourages employees to think creatively and explore new ideas. As noted by Pieterse et al. (2010), transformational leadership is one of the most effective styles for promoting innovation, as it inspires employees to transcend their own self-interest for the collective good of the organization.

Transformational leadership is a leadership style that involves inspiring and motivating followers to exceed expectations by appealing to their values and sense of purpose (Bass & Riggio, 2006). This leadership style has four primary components: idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and individual consideration (Bass, 1985). Leaders with idealized influence serve as role models who are trusted and respected by their employees, while those who employ intellectual stimulation encourage creativity by challenging norms and encouraging new perspectives (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Inspirational motivation involves articulating a compelling vision that motivates and energizes employees, while individual consideration refers to providing personal attention and support to employees to help them grow and succeed (Bass & Avolio, 1995). These leadership qualities are particularly relevant in industries like banking, where innovation is critical for long-term success (Cheung & Wong, 2011).

Despite the theoretical link between transformational leadership and innovation, empirical studies specifically examining this relationship in the banking sector remain limited. Past research has predominantly focused on industries such as manufacturing and technology (Lee et al., 2018). This study aims to fill that gap by examining the impact of transformational leadership on innovative work

behavior in the context of a bank in Johor. The research will contribute to the literature by offering insights into how different dimensions of transformational leadership affect employees' ability to generate, promote, and implement innovative ideas within a highly structured and regulated industry (Afsar & Umrani, 2019). By exploring this relationship, the study hopes to provide practical recommendations for bank leaders to enhance their innovative capabilities, ultimately ensuring better service delivery and organizational competitiveness.

In today's competitive banking industry, innovation is crucial for sustaining market relevance and success. Leadership plays a key role in fostering an environment where innovative behaviours flourish. Transformational leadership, characterized by attributes like idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, and inspirational motivation, is believed to foster such behaviours. However, there is limited research on the direct impact of transformational leadership on innovation in the banking sector. This study aims to bridge this gap by exploring the relationship between transformational leadership and innovative work behaviour on bank employees in Johor.

■2.0   LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizations must continually innovate to remain competitive and relevant in today's fast-paced and technologically advanced world. The banking industry, in particular, faces immense pressure to provide creative solutions and services that meet ever-evolving customer needs. The global shift toward digital banking has further emphasized the critical importance of fostering creativity and innovation within the workplace (Al-Husseini et al., 2021). Leaders in banking organizations play a pivotal role in driving this innovation by creating environments that encourage employees to think creatively and explore new ideas.

Transformational leadership has been identified as one of the most effective approaches for fostering innovation. As Pieterse et al. (2010) highlight, transformational leadership inspires employees to transcend their self-interest for the greater good of the organization. This leadership style is widely recognized for its ability to improve various organizational outcomes, including employee creativity (Bass & Avolio, 1995). Transformational leaders achieve this by leveraging four key dimensions: idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and individualized consideration (Bass, 1985). This approach emphasizes the development of a shared vision, encourages innovative problem-solving, and creates an atmosphere where employees feel empowered to generate, promote, and implement new ideas (Shanker et al., 2017).

Among these dimensions, intellectual stimulation is particularly influential in fostering innovation. Leaders who use intellectual stimulation challenge employees to question assumptions, think critically, and explore creative solutions to problems (Afsar & Umrani, 2019). According to De Jong and Den Hartog (2010), intellectual stimulation facilitates a cycle of idea exploration, generation, and realization. By fostering an open and supportive environment, transformational leaders help reduce the fear of failure, enabling employees to engage in innovative behaviors (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Cheung and Wong (2011) found that employees under transformational leaders tend to display higher levels of creative problem-solving and are more likely to propose innovative solutions.

In addition to intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation and idealized influence are critical dimensions of transformational leadership that drive innovative work behavior. Inspirational motivation refers to a leader's ability to communicate a compelling vision that aligns with employees' values, inspiring them to pursue organizational goals with enthusiasm and creativity (Bass & Avolio, 1994). This dimension encourages employees to go beyond routine tasks and actively contribute to the organization's success through innovative behaviors (Nusair et al., 2012). Similarly, idealized influence enhances innovation by fostering trust and admiration among employees, strengthening their commitment to organizational goals (Jung et al., 2008). Together, these dimensions create a supportive environment for innovation by aligning employee efforts with broader organizational objectives and encouraging calculated risk-taking and experimentation (Avolio & Bass, 1995).

Despite the theoretical link between transformational leadership and innovation, there is a limited body of empirical research examining this relationship within the banking sector. Existing studies primarily focus on industries like manufacturing and technology, overlooking the unique challenges of the banking industry, which operates under stringent regulations and rigid structures that often stifle creativity and innovation (Lee et al., 2018). Moreover, there is a lack of understanding of how the specific dimensions of transformational leadership— idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and individualized consideration—affect innovative work behavior in this context. This gap highlights the need for more focused research to guide banking leaders in fostering innovation effectively.

To address these gaps, this article explores the relationship between transformational leadership and innovative work behavior among employees of a bank in Johor. It examines how transformational leadership impacts employees' ability to generate, promote, and implement innovative ideas, emphasizing the importance of leadership in fostering a culture of creativity and innovation. The study delves into the unique contributions of each transformational leadership dimension, analyzing their role in shaping employees' innovative behaviors. This comprehensive analysis provides valuable insights into the mechanisms through which transformational leadership drives innovation within the structured and regulated banking industry. Finally, the article offers actionable recommendations for banking leaders, outlining practical strategies to enhance leadership effectiveness, improve service delivery, and ensure sustained organizational competitiveness in an ever-evolving industry.

■3.0   METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a quantitative approach, using a questionnaire survey to gather data from bank employees across Johor. The study population consisted of employees from 15 branches, with a final sample size of 145 respondents. Data were collected using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) for measuring leadership dimensions and the Innovative Work Behaviour Scale (De Jong & Den Hartog, 2010). The data were analyzed using SPSS, employing descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple linear regression to test the hypotheses regarding the relationship between leadership and innovative behaviour.

■ **4.0 RESULTS**

The analysis of data in which is to examine the impact of transformational leadership on innovative work behaviour among bank employees, revealed significant findings (Table 1). A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between the independent variable (transformational leadership) and the dependent variable (innovative work behaviour). The analysis demonstrated that transformational leadership, specifically through its dimensions of idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, and inspirational motivation, had a statistically significant positive effect on innovative work behaviour. These findings are consistent with earlier studies by Afsar and Umrani (2019), who found that transformational leaders inspire employees to engage in creative problem-solving and innovative practices through intellectual stimulation and motivation.

Table 1 The Relationship between Transformational Leadership and Innovative Work Behavior

		Transformational Leadership	Innovative Work Behavior
Transformational Leadership	Pearson Correlation	1	.455**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	145	145
Innovative Work Behavior	Pearson Correlation	.455**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	145	145

** The correlation is significant at the 0.01 significance level of a two-tailed test

The results in Table 2 indicated that idealized influence had the strongest positive relationship with innovative work behaviour (β = 0.293, p < 0.05). Employees perceived leaders who exhibited high levels of idealized influence as role models, which in turn encouraged them to emulate these leaders by adopting innovative behaviours (Cheung & Wong, 2011). This suggests that leaders who are admired and trusted by their subordinates can create a culture of innovation by setting high expectations and acting as ethical role models (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Intellectual stimulation (β = 0.102, p < 0.05) was also found to significantly influence innovative work behaviour, as it encourages employees to think creatively and challenge existing norms (Jung et al., 2008). Leaders who provide intellectual stimulation are likely to foster an environment where employees feel empowered to propose and implement new ideas.

Inspirational motivation (β = 0.151, p < 0.05) was another key factor in promoting innovative work behaviour. Leaders who use inspirational motivation articulate a compelling vision that resonates with employees, motivating them to go beyond routine tasks and engage in innovative activities (Bass & Avolio, 1994). This result supports the findings of Shanker et al. (2017), who suggested that transformational leaders drive innovation by motivating employees to achieve higher levels of performance and creativity. However, individual consideration did not have a statistically significant effect on innovative work behaviour (β = -0.016, p = 0.900), suggesting that in a highly regulated industry such as banking, personalized support may not be as critical for fostering innovation as other dimensions of transformational leadership.

Table 2 Dimensional Regression Analysis in Transformational Leadership Against Innovative Work Behavior

Dimensions in Transformational Leadership	Innovative Work Behaviour		
	Beta value (ß)	Significant value, (p)	Result
Idealized Influence	0.293	0.016	Significant and positive impact
Intellectual Stimulation	0.102	0.029	Significant and positive impact
Individual Consideration	-0.016	0.900	Not significant and negative impact
Inspirational Motivation	0.151	0.010	Significant and positive impact

B > 0.1, p < 0.05

■ **5.0 DISCUSSION**

The results of the study show that transformational leadership has a moderate to low impact on innovation work behavior. The influence dimensions of idealization, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation provide significant and positive regression results. While the dimension of individual consideration gives insignificant and negative regression results on innovation work behavior. The results of this study are consistent with Nusair et al.'s (2012) findings, namely that the dimension of individual consideration does not affect innovation work behavior compared to the other three dimensions. The employees of a bank throughout the State of Johor found that their leaders lacked the characteristics of individual consideration in leadership because the results showed that the dimension of individual consideration was not significant and negative. The bank leaders throughout the State of Johor do not practice this characteristic of individual consideration compared to other dimensions, possibly due to the division of duties in each department having been broken into several units. Leaders at the bank have more than three units in each department, and each unit has a unit leader. This resulted in the leaders of the bank exercising less individual judgment, as the top leaders of the bank throughout Johor give more priority to finding methods or strategies to achieve each sales target set by the organization.

Nevertheless, the employees of the bank throughout the State of Johor in this study still show an attitude of innovative work behaviour at a moderately high level. The work environment, culture, and policies practiced, as well as employee benefits such as salary, bonuses, and promotion opportunities, will cause employees to remain motivated. All these employees' benefits can compensate for their leaders' lack of individual consideration. As a result, the bank employees throughout the State of Johor always practice innovative work behavior and remain motivated to improve their careers in the future. Next, the influence dimension of idealization shows a significant and positive result on innovative work behavior. According to Siangchokyo et al. (2020), a transformational leader is described as someone who can influence followers. A leader needs to have the skills to convey a vision of the future by inspiring and motivating employees (Stanescu et al., 2020). Leaders serve as mentors to develop potential and support employees. Leaders with this characteristic will build interactive individual relationships, try to meet the needs of employees at the highest level, express a vision for the future together, and always celebrate the small successes achieved by employees. The results of this study also show that the dimension of inspirational, motivational leadership is significant and positive for innovative work behavior. Leaders are seen as having to work together to achieve goals and inspire and stimulate their employees' creativity. One of their responsibilities is to encourage employees to explore new opportunities to address organizational issues (Mughal and Iraqi, 2020). As a result, the bank employees across the State of Johor consistently demonstrate commitment and positivity in their execution of tasks and instructions, striving to achieve the established goals. Finally, the results for the dimension of intellectual stimulation are also significant and positive toward innovative work behavior. Banking organizations are usually bound by regulations— rules that are sometimes the main obstacle to the ability of employees to initiate and implement innovative ideas. Leaders who exhibit the transformational leadership characteristics of intellectual stimulation will effectively address this issue by meeting the needs of each employee, enhancing their self-worth, serving as role models, motivating and inspiring them to collaboratively achieve the organization's vision and goals (Mughal and Iraqi, 2020).

■6.0 RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings which examine the impact of transformational leadership on innovative work behavior, several recommendations can be made for the bank and similar organizations to foster an environment that promotes innovation. First, it is crucial for organizations to invest in leadership development programs that focus on enhancing the transformational leadership capabilities of their managers. Specifically, training should emphasize the importance of idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, and inspirational motivation, as these dimensions have significantly impacted innovative behavior (Nguyen et al., 2021). Leaders should be trained to model ethical behavior and set high standards, as doing so inspires employees to adopt innovative practices (Zhang et al., 2023). Furthermore, leaders must be encouraged to stimulate employees intellectually by challenging existing norms and fostering a culture where creative thinking is valued.

Second, organizations should focus on creating a work environment that supports intellectual stimulation. This can be done by implementing policies that allow employees the freedom to experiment and take calculated risks without the fear of failure (Wang et al., 2022). Innovation thrives in environments where employees feel psychologically safe to propose and test new ideas. Hence, it is recommended that the bank develop platforms, such as innovation labs or idea incubation spaces, where employees can collaborate and experiment with novel solutions to banking challenges. This approach aligns with the recommendations of Su and Chen (2020), who argue that organizations should provide structured opportunities for employees to engage in innovative projects, supported by leaders who encourage creative problem-solving.

Finally, while individual consideration did not significantly affect innovative work behavior in this study, it is important for organizations to still provide personalized support in contexts where it may be more relevant. For instance, individual consideration could be more critical in departments where personalized mentoring or development plans are necessary, such as in research and development teams (Zhang et al., 2023). Leaders should be trained to recognize when individual attention and support might enhance employee innovation. Moreover, organizational policies should aim to balance team-based innovation efforts with individual professional development programs, thus allowing employees to feel supported and challenged in their roles (Nguyen et al., 2021).

■7.0 CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate the impact of transformational leadership on innovative work behaviour among bank employees in Johor, focusing on the dimensions of idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and individual consideration. The results of this study affirm that transformational leadership significantly influences employees' innovative work behaviour, particularly through the dimensions of idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, and inspirational motivation. This supports the findings of recent studies that highlight the role of transformational leadership in enhancing innovation by creating an environment that fosters creativity and the exploration of new ideas (Nguyen et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2022).

The idealized influence was found to have the strongest impact on innovative work behaviour, suggesting that leaders who are admired and respected by employees can inspire greater creativity and innovation within the organization. When leaders model ethical behaviour and demonstrate commitment to organizational goals, employees are more likely to emulate these behaviors and contribute new ideas to the organization (Zhang et al., 2023). Intellectual stimulation was also a significant factor, as leaders who encourage critical thinking and challenge existing norms can help employees develop creative solutions to problems (Wang et al., 2022). This finding is consistent with the work of Su and Chen (2020), who argue that intellectual stimulation empowers employees to question assumptions and explore novel approaches, thereby driving innovation.

Although inspirational motivation had a significant positive impact on innovative work behaviour, individual consideration did not show a significant relationship. This finding suggests that, in industries like banking, which are highly structured and regulated, personalized

support may not be as critical for fostering innovation as other leadership qualities. Instead, employees may be more motivated by clear organizational goals and the intellectual stimulation provided by leaders (Nguyen et al., 2021). Future research could explore how organizational culture and employee autonomy might influence the effectiveness of individual consideration in promoting innovation. In conclusion, this study confirms that transformational leadership is a key driver of innovation, particularly through the dimensions of idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, and inspirational motivation. While this study provides valuable insights, it is limited by its focus on a single bank in Johor. Future research could extend these findings by examining multiple banks across different regions to enhance generalisability.

The article is structured into seven sections to provide a comprehensive exploration of the topic. The introduction highlights the importance of innovation in banking and the pivotal role of transformational leadership in driving it. The literature review delves into the theoretical foundations of transformational leadership and its connection to innovation. The methodology outlines the quantitative approach employed, detailing the data collection and analysis methods. The results section presents key findings on the relationships between leadership dimensions and innovative behavior. The discussion analyzes these findings in the context of the banking industry, while the recommendations section proposes actionable strategies for improving leadership practices to foster innovation. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the study's findings, acknowledges its limitations, and suggests avenues for future research. This structured approach ensures a thorough understanding of transformational leadership's role in promoting innovative work behavior, offering both theoretical insights and practical guidance.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author(s) declare(s) that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper

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