

## The effect of leadership styles on employees' innovative work behavior

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### ABSTRACT

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This study aims to investigate the impact of leadership styles (transformational leadership style, transactional leadership style, and Laisser-Faire leadership style) on employees' innovative work at Al-Ahliyya Amman University Employees. It follows the descriptive analytical approach by distributing a questionnaire to a sample of 461 employees following the convenience sampling technique. The findings show a positive statistically significant impact of transformational leadership style on employees' innovative work behavior, while there was a negative statistically significant impact of transactional and Laisser-faire leadership styles on the employees' innovative work behavior at Al-Ahliyya Amman University Employees.

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## 1. Introduction

As the birth of a new idea begins primarily in the minds of individuals (De Jong & Den Hartog, 2010) the majority of companies emphasize that the main source of creativity is not related to any element other than company employees and their behavior (Dörner, 2012), so creative behavior is one of the best ways to enhance the creativity of the organization (Mytelka & Smith, 2002). Nowadays, due to the volatility, dynamism of business environment, and the aggressive competition, employees are driven to contend with innovation through getting engaged in innovative behavior (Hong, Liao, Raub & Han, 2016). This engagement is inevitable to take place without the role of leadership. This is because that leaders motivate their sub-ordinates through the traits, they possess to transcend their individual goals and gains towards a more important vision: the prosperity of the organization and the increase of its creative outputs (Mintzberg, 2010). In the same vein, leaders exert great influence on employees' behavior towards their jobs, and with the changing role of leaders in today's organizations, the success of any organization depends on the leadership style exercised by the leader (Saleem, Tufail, Atta & Asghar, 2015). Hence, it is crucial to identify which leadership style enhances/ promotes followers' innovative work behavior (Kark, Van Dijk & Vashdi, 2018). This calls organizations to emphasize on such behavior, especially as the latter becomes one of the critical issues that might impede their survival. Additionally, with the fast changes brought by globalization, customers' access to unlimited amount of information has raised massively, adding more complexity to their demands and enormously increasing their needs that they seek to be fulfilled (González – roma, 2008; Sarros, Cooper & Santora, 2008). Consequently, organizations were driven to find out all possible paths to nurture such behavior as perceived the only option to assure remaining in business. Thus, organizations were confronted/challenged/provoked with two options: either to adapt themselves to cope with these accelerating changes by promoting their employees' innovative work behavior, or to get out of the competition and

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leave the market in which they operate (De Spiegelaere, Van Gyes, De Witte, Niesen & Van Hootegeem, 2014). Additionally, the problem associated with the lack of innovative behavior can become worthier as it will undermine the organizations' ability to implement their strategies, and thus, fail to achieve their goals (Shojaei & Siuki, 2014). Drawing on the above, innovative work behavior has emerged as a challenging issue put in face of organizations, as today's employees are far more required to proactively deal with complex issues in their work context that are not expected nor prescribed in their job descriptions (Joo & Bennett, 2018). The manifestation of this threat is due to the fact that along years, innovative initiatives have been recognized as the cornerstone for organizational growth and success (Zhou & Hoever, 2014; Zhou & Shalley, 2011) with sub-sequent critical outcomes (Anderson, Potocnik & Zhou, 2014; Liu, Jiang, Shalley, Keem & Zhou, 2016). This called organizations to develop effective leadership to drive followers from routine performance of duties towards challenging the status quo (Wang, Tsai & Tsai, 2014). Despite that, there is a plethora of literature that has examined leadership styles and their relationships with employees' innovative behavior, but how leadership influences this behavior was not sufficiently investigated (Basu & Green, 1997; Mumford, Scott, Gaddis & Strange, 2002). Though, transformational leadership theories have emphasized encouraging creativity as a primary function of leaders (Bass, 1985; Conger, 1999; Tichy & Ulrich, 1984), on the contrary, there is considerable debate on the leadership innovation literature in terms of the lack of transactional leadership' ability to stimulate employee innovative work behavior (Basu & Green, 1997). Additionally, a surge of literature has revealed inconsistent results in terms of the role played by the transformational and transactional leadership styles in engendering their followers innovative work behavior (Kahai, Sosik & Avolio, 2003; Shin & Zhou, 2003), as some studies reported positive impact of these two leadership styles on employees' innovative work behavior while other studies showed that they have negative effects, so, the lack of empirical evidence that directly addresses the impact of leadership styles on employees' creativity, makes further studies useful. Moreover, given the inconsistent results, it seems important to identify possible causes of these discrepancies (Pieterse, Knippenberg, Schippers & Stam, 2010).

## 2. Literature review and hypotheses development

### 2.1 Leadership styles and innovative work behavior

There are many factors that enhance the innovative work behavior of employees, but leadership was perceived as the most prominent situational factor that promotes the generation of such behavior among employees (Huang, Wu, Lu & Lin, 2016), so, leadership has often been suggested as one of the key stimulants that triggers such behavior. This is because a leader can create attitudes and conditions that evoke the innovative work behavior of their sub-ordinates and thus reach desirable creative outcomes (Wu & Lin, 2018). In this vein, the role of a leader as influencing the innovative work behavior of employees may vary from being a transactional leader to be a transformational leader (Oke, Munshi & Walumba, 2009). Hence, leaders should strive to create an environment that induces their subordinates innovative work behavior (Sethibe & Steyn, 2016).

#### 2.1.1 Transformational leadership style and innovative work behavior

Transformational leadership creates an appropriate environment for employees who seek to engage in innovative work behaviors, especially since those behaviors are complex and risky due to the uncertainty in the success of the idea (Masood & Afsar, 2017). Transformational leaders are developing in their sub-ordinates a sense of self-efficacy (Kark et al., 2018). Thus, followers inspired by their transformational leaders recognize precisely what it is anticipated from them to achieve and they are willing to exert any effort to contribute to the attainment of the organization' goals, accordingly they are in ultimate search for innovative solutions of approaching their tasks, which is reflected on their innovative behavior (Ng, 2017). Inspirational motivation, a component of transformational leadership, is considered a key factor in stimulating employees' innovative work behavior through a positive compelling future vision, while intellectual stimulation creates motivation to challenge existing assumptions and view problems from new perspectives that increase potential opportunities to generate creative solutions to these problems (Bass & Avolio, 2000). Therefore, this inspirational motivation of those leaders will enable their sub-ordinates to perform their work at an exceptional level that exceeds expectations and promotes the ability of these employees to generate new ideas and to be more innovative (Ismail, Mohamad, Mohamed, Rafiuddin & Zhen, 2010). Additionally, followers respond to the individualized consideration by reciprocating their leaders concern towards this by positively contributing to their organizations through innovative endeavor (Eisenbeiss, van Knippenberg & Boerner, 2008). Furthermore, the transformational leaders' idealized influence triggers followers to imitate the formers' behavior in pursuing novel and creative ideas (Çekmecelioğlu & Özbağ, 2016). Furthermore, this positive relationship between transformational leadership and innovation stemmed from leaders holding the capacity to stimulate their followers' intrinsic motivation to initiate in creative and innovative outcomes (Zhang, Miner, Boutros, Rogulja & Crickmore, 2018). Therefore, it is hypothesized:

H<sub>1</sub> Transformational leadership positively impacts employees' innovative work behavior.

#### 2.1.2 Transactional leadership style and innovative work behavior

The negative relationship between the transactional leadership style and employees' innovative work behavior is based on the conception of their style as it is directed towards job performance and not innovation stemmed from the reciprocal relation between the leader and their sub-ordinates in terms of contingent rewards for satisfactory performance or punishments in case their performance was below the preset levels or encompasses deficiencies. According to their style, the leader identifies their desire to accomplish job tasks and how to perform them through permanent notes that by its turn impede employees' innova-

tive work behavior (Masood & Afsar, 2017). According to Pieterse et al. (2010), transactional leadership might have a negative impact on employees' innovative work behavior because their leadership style is more oriented towards employees' performance than stimulating novel and original activities. In contrast, one study found that transactional leaders also encourage their employees to possess innovative work behavior at almost the same level practiced by transformational leadership (Contreras, Espinosa, Dornberger & Acosta, 2017). There is what Khaola and Sephelane (2013) emphasized that transactional leadership is negatively related to employees' innovative work behavior, while Boerner, Eisenbeiss and Griesse (2007) found no relationship between transactional leadership style and employees innovative work behavior. Therefore, it is hypothesized:

H<sub>2</sub> Transactional leadership negatively impacts employees' innovative work behavior.

### 2.1.3 Laisser-Faire leadership style and innovative work behavior

It is noteworthy that employee development is not a concern for their leadership style, based on a belief that subordinates can take care of themselves. The focus of their style of leadership is not on performance or employees. The leader relinquishes controlling their employees and avoids being in contact with them (Puni, Agyemang, & Asamoah, 2016). Their leadership style avoids all forms of interaction with sub-ordinates; thus, it is absent when needed, and represents the approach of giving up responsibilities and avoiding decision-making. Their style of leadership may only intervene to make corrections when something goes wrong, and does not keep tracks of the violations committed by their sub-ordinates, and therefore their leadership style does not support creativity and does not motivate its followers to practice innovative work behavior (Munawar, Muhammad & Ishfaq, 2011). Therefore, it is hypothesized:

H<sub>3</sub> Transactional leadership negatively impacts employees' innovative work behavior.

## 3. Methodology

The current study was conducted in Al-Ahliyya Amman University Employees. The study pursues a descriptive analytical approach using cross-sectional survey that was administered to employees working in their foundation. The questionnaire consisted of three parts; first part that captures data pertinent to the respondents' background; the second part discusses/highlights the three leadership styles namely transformational leadership style, transactional leadership style and Laisser-Faire leadership style, where the Multi Factor Questionnaire (MLQ) with 32 items was adopted to measure these styles. Meanwhile, employees' innovative work behavior items were adopted from previous studies (De Jong & Den Hartog, 2008; Kheng, June & Mahmood, 2013; Oukes, 2010). The statistical techniques used in the study include factor analysis, Cronbach Alpha, Pearson correlation and multiple regression (SPSS version 23).

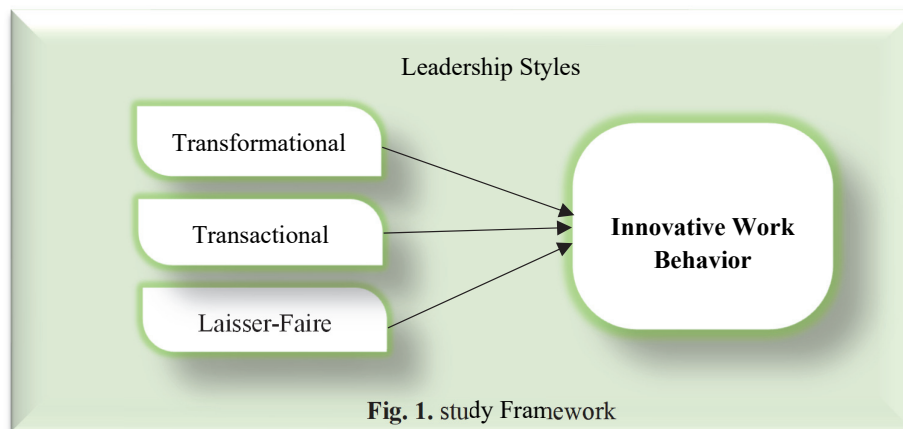


Fig. 1. study Framework

Table 1

Personal characteristics of the participants

Gender	Male	Female		
	53.7	46.7		
Age	25-30	31-40	41-50	More than 51
	17.9	37.7	30.2	14.2
Education	School Diploma	Diploma	Bachelor	Post Studies
	4.4	9.5	53.3	32.8
Experience	0-5	6-10	11-15	More than 16
	11.4	21.6	23.0	44.0
Job	Employee	Supervisor	Department Head	Director
	50.9	13.7	20.2	15.1

#### 4. Findings

A total of 430 responses were elicited from the study sample. Among them, 229 were males, while females were 201. Above two third of the respondents were within the age between 31 to 50, years. In terms of education level, most of the respondents who have a bachelor's degree or above reached 229 members of the sample. Regarding the years of experience, the majority have 16 years and above. Furthermore, the bulk of respondents were employees. Details of respondents' background are illustrated in table 1.

Table 2 shows the factor loading for all constructs of scale items. The factor loadings of each item to the whole scale are above the minimum verge/limit of 0.45 which shows that all the adapted items have internal validity. Each item Coefficient Correlation is significance at 0.01 level. Therefore, the construct does not have any kind of validity or reliability issues.

**Table 2**

The results of factor loading

Item	Component	Item	Component	Item	Component	Item	Component
TF1	0.554	TL1	0.417	LF1	0.699	IWB1	0.589
TF2	0.740	TL2	0.564	LF2	0.830	IWB2	0.402
TF3	0.827	TL3	0.125	LF3	0.842	IWB3	0.761
TF4	0.678	TL4	0.665	LF4	0.815	IWB4	0.807
TF5	0.802	TL5	0.774	LF5	0.887	IWB5	0.787
TF6	0.775	TL6	0.785	LF6	0.900	IWB6	0.830
TF7	0.820	TL7	0.792	LF7	0.858	IWB7	0.822
TF8	0.752	TL8	0.765	LF8	0.874	IWB8	0.741
TF9	0.842					IWB9	0.859
TF10	0.712					IWB10	0.675
TF11	0.809					IWB11	0.746
TF12	0.694					IWB12	0.809
TF13	0.767					IWB13	0.670
TF14	0.827					IWB14	0.783
TF15	0.814					IWB15	0.716
TF16	0.787						

**Table 3**

The results of Cronbach Alpha

Var	Variable Description	No. of Items	Cronbach Alpha
Ind1	Transformational Leadership	16	0.957
Ind2	Transactional Leadership	8	0.778
Ind3	Laisser-Faire Leadership	8	0.939
Dep2	Innovative Work Behavior	15	0.874

As stated in Table 3, the results reveal that all model variables are significantly correlated to each other at  $p < 0.01$ . Additionally, the overall Cronbach Alpha values are way above the minimum threshold/verge of 0.65 which suggests a good internal consistency of each scale (Gliem & Gliem, 2003).

**Table 4**

The summary of Pearson Correlation Coefficient between leadership styles and employees' innovative work behavior

Variables	Dimensions of leadership styles			Total
	Transformational leadership	Transactional leadership	Laisser Faire leadership	
Employee Innovative Work Behavior	.154**	-.079	.414**	.236**
Rank	2	4	3	1
Sig.	.001	.104	.000	.000

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

As depicted in Table 4, the correlation results show that there is a positive significant relationship between both Transformational Leadership style and Laisser Faire Leadership style and employees' innovative work behavior. However, Transactional leadership style indicates/reveals an insignificant correlation with innovative work behavior. To determine the extent of each leadership style on employees' innovative work behavior, Multiple Regression Analysis was conducted as illustrated in the Table 5.

**Table 5**

Multiple regressions between leadership styles and employee innovative work behavior

Model	R	R. Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.462 <sup>a</sup>	.214	.208	.88281

a. Predictors: (Constant), Laisser Faire Leadership, Transactional Leadership, Transformational Leadership

**Table 6**  
The results of ANNOVA test

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	90.266	3	30.089	38.607	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	332.007	426	.779		
Total	422.273	429			

a. Dependent Variable: IWB\_M

b. Predictors: (Constant), Laisser Faire Leadership, Transactional Leadership, Transformational Leadership

**Table 7**  
Output of Coefficients<sup>a</sup> for the Multiple Regressions

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	3.743	.312		11.988	.000
Transformational Leadership	.309	.065	.236	4.782	.000
Transactional Leadership	-.139	.066	-.096	-2.091	.037
Laisser Faire Leadership	-.295	.046	-.309	-6.418	.000

a. Dependent Variable: IWB\_M

As stated in Table 7, the results reveal that the transformational leadership has high Beta value of .236 with significant level of 0.000. Hence, it proves that transformational leadership has a significant positive impact on employees' innovative work behavior. Thus, H<sub>1</sub> is statistically supported. However, the results show that both transactional leadership and Laisser-Faire leadership have significant negative impact on employees' innovative work behavior. Therefore, H<sub>2</sub> and H<sub>3</sub> are statistically supported.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of the study is to investigate the impact of leadership styles on employees' innovative work behavior in Al-Ahliyya Amman University Employees. The findings reveal that leadership styles have a significant impact on employees' innovative work behavior as ( $R^2 = 0.214$ ), illustrating that the three leadership styles interpret the variance in employees' innovative work behavior in their foundation. Their result is in agreement with the findings revealed by previous studies (Cheng, Cao, Zhong, He & Qian, 2019; Škudienė, Augutyte-Kvedaraviciene, Demeško & Suchockis, 2018; Wu & Lin, 2018; Naqvi, Ullah, S. & Javed, 2017; Hansen & Pihl-Thingvad, 2017; Arthur, Wagstaff & Hardy, 2016; Kurt & Yahyagil, 2015; Herrmann & Felfe, 2012; Khan, Aslam & Riaz, 2012).

However, transformational leadership was the single leadership style that exerts positive significant impact on employees' innovative work behavior in Al-Ahliyya Amman University Employees. Their result confirms similar findings in previous studies (Cheng et al., 2019; Günzel-Jensen, Hansen, Jakobsen & Wulff, 2018; Sethibe & Steyn, 2016; Wu & Lin, 2018; Kang, Solomon & Choi, 2015; Khan et al., 2012). There is attributed to the recognition depicted by followers of transformational leaders, in addition to being treated respectfully, as well as the assertion of those leaders to the crucial importance of enhancing a collective sense of responsibility have urged those followers to practice innovative work behavior.

Meanwhile, the findings reveal that transactional leadership and Laisser-Faire leadership have significant negative impact on employees' innovative work behavior. Their result agrees with similar findings in previous studies (Škudienė, et al., 2018; Naqvi et al., 2017; Khan et al., 2012). The probable justification is that transactional leadership style is more focused on its followers' performance orientation rather than going beyond their and practicing innovative work behavior. In terms of Laisser-Faire leadership, their style is a passive avoidant by nature that averts getting involved in making decisions or responding to its followers which impede any innovative initiation from the part of their followers.

The study concluded that the leaders of the Al-Ahliyya Amman University Employees who belong to the transformational leadership style are keen to treat their sub-ordinates as important individuals and let them realize their value, but they do not spend time teaching and training their subordinates, while on the other side, leaders who belong to the transactional leadership style express their satisfaction when the performance of their sub-ordinates matches their expectations, However, they do not trace all mistakes committed by their sub-ordinates, but with regard to leaders belonging to the Laisser-Faire style, the results show that they avoid getting involved when problems arise. Despite that, they are convinced that necessary procedures should be taken before problems become chronic. Regarding employees' innovative work behavior, it has been found that employees of Al-Ahliyya Amman University Employees are exerting efforts to develop their work issues, while not seeking to discover and secure the necessary funding to implement new ideas.

### 5.1 Theoretical Contribution

Their study contributes to the leadership and innovation literature by adding more knowledge to the identification of which leadership style exerts positive impact on practicing innovative work behavior that was employed by transformational leadership style. Thus, the study will be responding to a recent call in the leadership and innovation literature that urged to determine the leadership style that promotes followers' innovative work behavior (Kark et al., 2018). Furthermore, the study is

adding more empirical evidence to the negative impact of both transactional and Laisser-Faire styles on employees' innovative work behavior.

### 5.2 Managerial Implications

The study recommended leaders who belong to the transformational leadership style of different job levels (supervisors, department heads and directors) to incorporate a span of their time for the purpose of educating and training their subordinates. Moreover, the study recommended guiding/steering leaders at Al-Ahliyya Amman University Employees who practice the transactional leadership style to clarify the errors committed by subordinates as they may constitute valuable opportunities for their subordinates to learn and to acquire more skills. Furthermore, the study suggested advising leaders who belong to the Laisser-Faire leadership style to stop practicing their leadership style, as it is characterized by passivity and to shift to practicing transformational leadership style, which has proven to have a significant impact on enhancing employees' innovative work behavior. The study also recommended leaders of different job levels to encourage their subordinates to align creative ideas that they put forward with companies and commercial institutions related to those ideas, where these ideas may constitute a path to develop their operations, products or services, and then support those creative ideas and provide appropriate funding for them.

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