How to promote managers’ innovative behavior at work: Effects of innovativeness, self-leadership, risk taking and gender difference
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Abstract
Innovative capability and creativity, particularly in high value-added industries, are viewed as core to the competitiveness of a firm. Firms can increase their innovative capability by taking advantage of individual innovative behavior. Individual innovation is also important for firms to sustain innovation processes by including a broad set of behaviors regarding innovation, such as opportunity exploration, recognition of problem, transformation of ideas into tangible outcomes and strategically planning these outcomes integrated into organizational practice. Herein, it is crucial to find out which individual and/or contextual factors promote individual innovation in the workplace. In response to promoting individual innovation, firm’s orientation toward innovation and individual’s self-leadership may motivate individuals to engage in innovative behavior in the workplace. Therefore, this research seeks to gain a better understanding of how firms’ tendency to be innovative and individuals’ self-leadership influence individual innovation behavior among managers. Prior research regarding the relationship between self-leadership and innovative behavior, have failed to determine which self-leadership strategies stimulate innovative behavior. Thereby, in this research, we fill this literature gap as we focus on the self-leadership strategies-innovative behavior relation. Additionally, promoting individual innovation depends on identifying not only individual and contextual factors, but also their interactions. Hence, in order to achieve a more holistic understanding of individual innovative behavior, we concentrate on the relation of innovativeness to managers’ innovative behavior by examining not only how innovativeness influences managers’ innovative behavior through self-leadership, but also whether the perception of risk-taking within organization and gender of the manager facilitates or impedes the process. To study these relationships, data were collected from a sample of 340 managers in banking sector. The results of the research show innovativeness, self-leadership and strategies of self-leadership are positively related to innovative behavior. Furthermore, the results indicate that self-leadership skills fully mediated the relationship between innovativeness and innovative behavior, as well as risk-taking and gender of managers moderate the mediating effect of self-leadership on the relationship between innovativeness and manager’s innovative behavior. Overall, our findings will contribute to an improved insight into the role of firms’ innovativeness, risk-taking, as well as manager’s gender and self-leadership skills in facilitating innovative behavior at work.

Keywords: Gender, Innovative Behavior, Innovativeness, Risk-Taking, Self-Leadership

Introduction
In an era of rapid growth in science and technology and fierce competition, innovative capability and creativity are associated not only with advance in knowledge, which improves
health, but also with welfare of many in the population (West and Altink, 1996). Constant innovation in the workplace is an important performance factor that provides organizations’ competitiveness and prosperity in high value-added industries, particularly in the service sector (Oldham and Cummings, 1996; Dunphy and Bryant, 1996; Janssen, 2000; Ramsey et al., 2005; Koch and Strotmann, 2008). It is crucial because the competitive intensity within the service sector requires firms to engage in constant venturing, renewal and constant innovation (Sok et al., 2017). However, innovation is a complex process due to the fact that innovation does not stem from any one particular source, but rather, it arises from the intersection between multiple resources (Schilling, 2008; Pratoom and Savatsomboon, 2012). In a similar vein, organizations are not innovative per se, especially in an ever-changing and dynamic environment. Given this focus, individuals enable organizations to enhance innovative capacity by including all behaviors regarding innovation (De Jong and Den Hartog, 2007; Ojedokun, 2012; Bysted, 2013; Abstein et al., 2014). Individual innovation is a key ingredient that enables an organization to succeed in the ever-changing and a dynamic environment through a broad set of behaviors: opportunity exploration, recognition of problem, transformation of ideas into tangible outcomes and strategically planning these outcomes integrated into organizational practice (De Jong and Den Hartog, 2010; Yuan and Woodman, 2010; Kör, 2016). Therefore, in recent years, individual innovation has received increased attention from researchers and practitioners by reason of seeking to promote the innovative behavior of broad categories of individuals that produces innovative capacity in the workplace (De Spiegelaere et al., 2012; Bysted, 2013). Although a wide array of individual, job, and environmental factors have been examined in relation to the organizational-level innovation, few studies have stressed that both individual and contextual factors enhance individual innovative behavior (Oldham and Cummings, 1996; Yuan, 2005; Wang and Ellinger, 2008; Pratoom and Savatsomboon, 2012). The lack of research in this area, creates a critical gap in our understanding of exactly how and why individual factors, contextual factors, and their interactions are affecting one’s involvement in innovative behavior (Janssen, Van de Vliert and West, 2004; Yuan and Woodman, 2010; Hammond et al., 2011; Pratoom and Savatsomboon, 2012; Madrid et al., 2014). Hereby, it is important to understand the perspectives and antecedents of individual innovative behavior in the workplace (Scott and Bruce 1994; Carmeli, Meitar and Weisberg, 2006; Yuan and Woodman, 2010; Pratoom and Savatsomboon 2012; Gomes et al., 2015a, b; Kör, 2016).

In response to the emergence of individual innovative behavior as a critical factor in creating day-to-day innovations and innovative capacity in the workplace, several contributions have been made in this area. First, a number of theoretical perspectives suggest that support for innovation is positively related to an innovative outcome (Scott and Bruce, 1994; Hammond et al., 2011). Although it is feasible that organizations that have a tendency to be innovative may motivate employees to engage in generating and/or implementing new ideas (and such motivation may increase employees’ innovative behavior), few studies have examined the link of innovativeness with individual innovative behavior. Responding to this gap, we conducted our research to extend current knowledge by advancing a model linking innovativeness and individual innovative behavior. Additionally, firm’s capacity to engage in innovation or innovativeness cannot be just explained by top-down planning and control, but rather it emerges from the interaction of management layers in which action and cooperation occur among the different parts of the organization (Ong, Wan and Chng, 2003; Elenkov, Judge and Wright, 2005; Kuratko et al., 2005). Although previous research has established the importance of managerial support in innovation, management support in literature has focused largely on executive leadership (i.e., top or strategic management level) rather than on middle or low level management (Chuang, Jason and Morgan, 2011). While top level managers take a higher degree of responsibility for innovation activities in their organizations (Sebora,
Hartman and Tower, 1994; Ong et al., 2003), all managerial employees’ attitudes toward innovation are critical for individual creativity and innovation (Mmdr, 2014). Middle level managers are identified as the “the lynchpin of the organization’s overall innovation process” and they are generally “more involved with the coordination of innovative ideas within the organization among employees from different levels” (Ong et al., 2003, p. 618). Middle level managers also integrate perspectives of executive leaderships into lower organizational levels (King, Fowler and Zeithaml, 2001; Kuratko et al., 2005). Lower (or operational) level managers are critical in generation and implementation of innovation (Dumaine, 1990; Ong et al., 2003). In this study, therefore, managers in different levels (i.e., middle and lower level managers) were considered as the unit of analysis. Besides these contributions, several scholars suggested that leadership skills affect innovative behavior (Scott and Bruce, 1994; Axtell, et al., 2000; de Jong, 2006; de Jong and den Hartog, 2007). In particular, published literature in this area generally tend to be focused on transactional and/or transformational leadership skills (e.g., Basu and Green 1997; Janssen, 2002; Boerner, Eisenbeiss and Griesser, 2007; Renvers et al., 2008; Pieterse et al., 2010; Michaelis, Stegmaier and Sonntag, 2010; Khan et al.,2012; Aryee et al., 2012; Kang, Solomon and Choi, 2015). Less research, however, has been devoted to understanding how self-leadership can promote or inhibit individual innovative behavior, particularly in service firms. Few research evidence regarding the self-leadership and individual innovation indicates that individuals need to be able to lead themselves to innovate (e.g. Carmeli et al., 2006; DiLiello and Houghton, 2006; Curral and Marques-Quinteiro, 2009). All but one study (i.e., Pratoom and Savatsomboon, 2012) supports the relationship between the combination of self-leadership strategies and individual innovative behavior. As suggested by Manz (1986) and Unsworth and Mason (2012), self-leadership is a process whereby self-direction, self-regulation and self-motivation strategies are results of higher-level controls through concepts like intrinsic motivation, thereby maximizes personal and professional strengths and effectiveness as well as minimizes personal and professional weaknesses. As stated above, innovation is a complex process, and besides requiring multiple resources integration; certain levels of uncertainty, resistance and challenges are inherent to innovation (Saad, Jones and James, 2002; Smits and Kuhlmann, 2004; Schilling, 2008; Pratoom and Savatsomboon, 2012; Kör, 2016). Given these premises, individuals must also have a certain level of inner force that enables them to cope with these uncertainties, resistances and challenges in the innovation processes (Kalyar, 2011; Kör, 2016). This internal force comes from self-leadership, which consists of behavior-focused strategies, natural reward strategies and constructive thought pattern strategies that facilitates individual innovation (Carmeli et al., 2006; Kalyar, 2011; Ghosh, 2015). Nevertheless, Gomes et al. (2015b) recently pointed out that there is not only ample room in the literature to explore the relationship between self-leadership and individual innovative behavior, but also still a paucity of literature examining which strategies of self-leadership - behavior-focused strategies, natural reward strategies, and cognitive thought pattern strategies - stimulate individual innovative behavior. Given this call in the previous work, this study makes contributions to the self-leadership and individual innovation literature in several ways. Firstly, this study aims to empirically examine the relationship between the aggregated self-leadership strategies and managerial employees’ innovative behavior in service firms. Secondly, the present study provides some evidence that whether three different strategies of self-leadership have influence on managerial employees’ innovative behavior in service firms. Underpinning the success of individual innovation depends on identifying not only individual and contextual factors, but also their interactions (Janssen et al., 2004; Huhtala and Parzefall, 2007; Pratoom and Savatsomboon, 2012). Prior research with respect to the individual innovation has proffered that potential moderators and/or mediators might be found in the individual or contextual predictors (Janssen et al., 2004; Pratoom and Savatsomboon, 2012).
Within this stream, unpacking the mediating and moderating components might make a significant progress in more complete understanding of how to promote individual innovative behaviors at work. This is because there might be a variety of different individual and contextual influence processes to facilitate individual innovative behavior. There is, however, a dearth of empirical research that explores the potential mediating and/or moderating components (Pratoom and Savatsomboon, 2012). Given these premises, the next focus of this study lies in the examination of the individual innovation context by employing an interactional perspective to analyze how individual-contextual interaction affects individual innovative behavior. Although several researchers have examined the effects of individual and contextual factors on individual innovative behavior (e.g., Scott and Bruce 1994; Ramamoorthy et al. 2005; Ng, Feldman and Lam, 2010; Bysted, 2013; Madrid et al. 2014; Ma Prieto and Pilar Perez-Santana 2014), most of them have ignored or minimized the effects of how employees perceive their work environments or context and leadership skills (Pieterse et al. 2010; Hammond et al., 2011, Kör, 2016). Employees that perceive a high tendency to openness towards innovation within their work environment, are more likely to lead themselves effectively to cope with the complexity and uncertainty of innovation processes without fear of punishment in trying something new as well as generating or implementing ideas; which in turn promotes employees’ innovative behaviors (Kör, 2016). Additionally, self-leadership skills can be viewed as effective means of ensuring that the organization’s strategic posture is translated into the high performance outputs, e.g. innovative behavior, by maximizing the workforce contribution to the organization (Dunphy and Bryant, 1996). While the perception of employee regarding the work environment that support innovation is conducive to encourage employees who exhibit self-leadership skills to facilitate innovative behavior, the propensity to risk-taking should also be supported in the work environment in order to strengthen the influence of self-leadership on individual innovative behavior. Furthermore, Carless (1998) suggested that individuals’ attitudes and cognitions may vary according to the gender of the individual; in terms of the leadership style of the individual, leadership effectiveness and performance output may also differ regarding the gender of the individual (Reuvers, et al., 2008). Therefore, innovativeness, in conjunction with individual and contextual factors (i.e., the self-leadership skills, the propensity to risk-taking, gender of the manager) should facilitate individual innovation among service firms. To this end, we intend to highlight the roles of self-leadership, risk taking and gender of managers as facilitating and intervening mechanisms in order to achieve a more holistic understanding of individual innovative behavior antecedents via two approaches: the mediating end moderating approach. We will incorporate incorporating the ‘mediating approach’ in order to explain the process through which innovativeness affects individual innovative behavior, and the ‘moderating approach’ to this link in order to explain the conditions under which innovativeness affects individual innovative behavior. In doing so, the other contribution of the study is to represent an initial effort in extending current knowledge about innovativeness-managers’ innovative behavior relations by examining not only how innovativeness influences managers’ innovative behavior through self-leadership, but also whether the perception of risk-taking within organization and gender of the manager facilitates or impedes this process.

References


