

# “The Antecedents of Innovative Work Behavior: The Roles of Self-Monitoring”

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# THE ANTECEDENTS OF INNOVATIVE WORK BEHAVIOR: THE ROLES OF SELF-MONITORING

## Abstract

In this study, the authors examined why employees engage in innovative behavior even though innovation is a risky behavior. Employees tend to engage in innovative behavior since they expect positive image gains. Besides, employees tend to avoid innovative behavior because it forfeits their image inside organization (expected image risks). Furthermore, the willingness to engage in innovative behavior depends on individual differences. Therefore, the authors tried to examine the role of individual differences, drawing from self-monitoring theory. The surprising findings were the quality of relationship between employees and their peers did not affect employee image risk and self-monitoring did not moderate the relationship between expected image gain and innovative work behavior.

## Keywords

innovative work behavior, self monitoring, expected image gains, image risks

## JEL Classification

D23, O15, O30, O31

## INTRODUCTION

Based on prior survey conducted by Center of Innovation and Collaboration (CIC), it was found that less than 50% of companies in Indonesia are ready to implement innovation ([www.swa.co.id](http://www.swa.co.id)). Whereas Getz and Robinson (2003) argued that every organization needs to do innovation in order to gain competitive advantages. The organization's ability to innovation implement is determined by the organization's ability to manage creative ideas from its employees. Yuan and Woodman (2010) argued that employee innovative behavior (e.g., developing new ideas, implementing new ideas) is a critical factor that enables an organization to gain competitive advantage in a dynamic business environment.

However, innovative behavior is a risky behavior or activity. Engaging in innovative activity in a workplace may bring benefits and also costs for employees. Drawing from expectancy theory of motivation by Vroom (1964), it is assumed that people tend to perform certain act to gain expected consequences in the future. People will be more highly involved in innovative behavior, since there is motivation underlying the behavior. Social perspective assumes that people tend to perform innovative act or innovative behavior as a symbolic meaning, such as signaling innovativeness (West & Farr, 1989). The social perspective emphasizes the symbolic meaning of innovative behavior and how it affects the people's image. There are two factors that motivate people

to engage in innovative behavior. First, people tend to engage in innovative activities if these activities will enhance their expected positive image inside the organization (expected image gain) (Yuan & Woodman, 2010). Second, people tend to avoid innovative activities if these activities do not conform to the organization or group norms. Besides, innovation is a risky behavior, no guarantee of success, when people involve in innovative behavior, the future consequences maybe detrimental to their image (expected image risks) (Yuan & Woodman, 2010).

The objectives of this study are twofold. First, we examine the antecedents of innovative work behavior. West and Farr (1989) argued that there are several critical factors that affect employee innovative work behavior, namely organizational, relationship with one's superior and work-group factor. This study draws from several studies such as Yuan and Woodman (2010) and West and Farr (1989) in order to examine which supports domain will receive strong supports in our study. We conducted our research in Indonesia, which is characterized by low individualism. Its score is only 14 according to culture compass by Hofstede (<https://www.hofstede-insights.com/product/compare-countries/>), such conditions will have certain effects in predicting employee's innovative work behavior. In collectivism country, support from others (organization, peers and superior) will have strong effect in employee's innovative work behavior. In the context of innovation, countries with low score on collectivism or high score on individualism tend to have open-minded mindset, independence, personal initiative and self-confidence, and all of those characteristics will spur innovation (Sarooghi et al., 2015).

The study from Scott and Bruce (1994) revealed that all of those three factors are strong predictors to employee's innovative work behavior. We try to examine how organization, superior and work-group support affect employee work behavior. Organizational support for innovation is manifested by pro-innovation climate, resource and one of critical factors can increase employee's creativity and innovation (Amabile, 1988; Kanter, 1988). As employee perceived that organization gives support for innovation, he/she tends to involve in innovation activities in order to enhance his/her image inside organization, signaling innovativeness. The quality of relationship with one's superior will enhance employee's belief that innovation will bring higher performance. Strong relationship between employee and his/her superior gives such a additional resources and support to facilitate employee's innovative work behavior and increase innovation success. Furthermore, relationship between one with his/her peers in a work group will affect one's innovative work behavior. Employee who is involved in certain group characterized by high mutual trust and respect will enhance collaboration among group members to engage in innovative work behavior.

Second, we try to examine the individual contextual factor that strengthens or weakens employee innovative work behavior. Oh et al. (2013) argued that people tend to monitor the public appearance of self they display in certain settings, especially in social settings. Since innovative work behavior is viewed as a media to impress others, to gain social attention and also popularity so we draw from self-monitoring theory (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000; Oh, Charlier, Mount, & Berry, 2002), referring to the degree to which employees monitor their public appearance of self they display in social settings and in creating and managing their interpersonal relationship. In high collectivism country such as Indonesia, individual tends to adjust their behavior or display favorable behavior in order to gain respect and to be accepted in social environment. Since innovation is a risky behavior, if the innovation is successful, then employee who engages in innovation activity will gain social attention and tends to be highly accepted in the social environment and vice versa. High self-monitors tend to adjust their behavior in order to conform, enhance their status in social settings. Conversely, low self-monitors are less apt to adjust their behavior in social settings, since they strive to behave in certain ways that are consistent with their disposition (Oh, Charlier, Mount, & Berry, 2002). Based on our previous explanation, it is necessary to get broader knowledge regarding the antecedents of innovative work behavior self-monitoring playing significant role in strengthening or weakening employee innovative work behavior.

## 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1.1. Perceived organization support

Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) argued that perceived organizational support (POS) refers to the degree to which organization supports the employees regarding the work itself and employee's welfare as well. Eisenberger et al. (1986) argued that POS is the employee's general perception associated with the extent to which the organization cares about the employees, regarding the value and contribution to the organization. The assumption underlying such support can be reviewed through the Social Exchange Theory, people should help someone who has helped them (Gouldner, 1960). In the context of organization, when an employee believes that organization supports for innovation, then employee would attempt the innovation as retribution towards the company's supports. Additionally, Jing-Zhou et al. (2007) argued that when an employee acknowledged the presence of respect and support from the organization, the employee will exchange the support with a positive attitude towards the organization.

### 1.2. Superior relationship quality

The relationship between employees and their superior will affect employee's work attitude. Such relationship could be drawn from Leader Member Exchange (LMX) theory. LMX is originated from Vertical Dyadic Linkage (VDL) that focuses on how superior build relationship with all of his/her subordinates and how superior creates in-group and out-group in their work unit (Lussier & Achua, (2004). The main idea of VDL theory is on the dyadic relationship from both superior and he/she subordinates, interrelated each other. Superior develops certain relationship with every member in his/her work-unit to create the quality of the relationship as a determinant which employee belongs to in-group or out-group. Based on LMX theory, subordinate who has good relationship with his/her superior will gain greater autonomy that subordinate with poor relationship (Graen, 1976). Ilies et al. (2007) argued that high quality relationship between superior and subordinates is characterized by high trust, interaction, support and achievement.

### 1.3. Group relationship quality

We define group relationship quality similar but distinct concept with supervisor relationship quality. The main difference between those two concepts is supervisor relationship quality involves superior and subordinates, whilst group relationship quality involves the relationship among all members in work unit (Sarooghi, Libaers, & Burkemper, 2015). Employee who attached in work process in a group is characterized by high mutual trust and mutual respect to create high collaboration. Conversely, poor group relationship is characterized by low mutual trust, low mutual respect (Sarooghi, Libaers, & Burkemper, 2015).

### 1.4. Expected image risks and expected image gains

Yuan and Woodman (2010) argued that prior study about innovative behavior was mostly examined from social point of view. People tend to behave in certain ways, innovative behavior in this case, as a means to enhance their images. When an employee has an expectation that by innovating he/she will be known as an innovator then his/her expectation is the motives underlying why he/she behaves that way. Expected image gains refers to employee's motivation to innovate, because he/she has expectation to enhance positive image inside organization (self-enhancement). Besides, there are also employees who are reluctant to behave innovatively, since that behavior does not conform to his/her social environment. Expected image risks refer to employee's motivation to not innovate, since innovative behavior does not conform to the social environment, he/she avoids to gain negative images inside organization.

### 1.5. Innovative work behavior

Yuan and Woodman (2010) argued that innovative behavior is employee's ability to generate new ideas, products, processes or procedures into his/her job, work unit or even in organization as a whole. Innovative behavior is a complex behavior that consists of how employee generates new ideas and implements those ideas. Drawing from Yuan and Woodman (2010), creativity and innovation are related but distinct concepts. Creative employees are those who able to introduce or generate

new ideas, whilst innovative employees both generate new ideas and implement those ideas. New ideas in the context of innovative behavior are not limited to ideas originated from employees inside organization, but adopting others' ideas that have not been implemented are also considered as innovative work behavior (Yuan & Woodman, 2010).

## 1.6. Self-monitoring

There are two continuums of self-monitoring, namely high and low self-monitoring. High self-monitors (people with high self-monitoring) tend to adjust their behavior in order to enhance their social status. Conversely, low self-monitors (people with low self-monitoring) tend to less apt to adjust their behavior (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000). Gangestad and Snyder (2000) argued that high self-monitors tend to behave in certain ways to gain positive image from others. High self-monitors tend to behave carefully, since they may be afraid that such behavior is not accepted in their social life, whilst low self-monitors who tend to behave as it is are less apt to adjust their behavior. Low self-monitors tend to consider that imaging is not justified (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986).

## 1.7. Hypotheses

Organizational climate is one of the most critical factors that indicates expectation of behavior and expected outcomes of the behavior. POS is related to the degree to which organization cares about its member, regarding the values and the contribution to the organization. From the social perspective, organizational support for innovation is characterized by strong supports for employees to innovate and they will gain positive image inside organization (Yuan & Woodman, 2010). If organization allows to change rather than tradition then its member will initiate change to be culturally appropriate (Yuan & Woodman, 2010). Organizational support for innovation will make members understand that being innovative will gain desirable image and involving in innovative behavior will make them look good. Moreover, when organization has strong support for innovation, it will encourage its members to be innovative, since it creates psychological safety for innovation and reduces the image risk involved in innovation attempts (Yuan & Woodman, 2010). Thus,

*H1a: Perceived organizational support for innovation is negatively related to expected image risks.*

*H1b: Perceived organizational support for innovation is positively related to expected image gains.*

An employee's relationship with his/her superior will affect his/her work attitude. LMX theory argued that the relationship of superior and his/her subordinates will change over time, at first, which is characterized by formal and impersonal will turn to high mutual trust and respect (Graen, 1976). Yuan and Woodman (2010) argued that as subordinate has strong relationship with his/her superior, he/she will gain greater autonomy. Strong relationship between superior and his/her subordinates will create high mutual respect and trust, which are critical things in organization. Superior tends to assess his/her subordinates positively when they both have strong relationship, as they have high mutual trust and respect, superior tends to appreciate his/her subordinates' new ideas. Moreover, when they have high mutual trust and respect, subordinates feel more secure in running new ideas, since their superior will not condemn if the implementation is not running well (Yuan & Woodman, 2010). Thus,

*H2a: Superior relationship quality is positively related to expected image gains.*

*H2b: Superior relationship quality is negatively related to expected image risks.*

As an employee has strong relationship within group unit, he/she will gain support from group's member in a form of high mutual trust and respect within group members (Sarooghi, Libaers, & Burkemper, 2015). Besides, strong relationship within work group will create team cohesiveness. When an employee has new ideas, the other work group members will give positive feedback so the idea generator will gain positive image. Moreover, strong relationship within work group will give psychological safety to whom is involved in innovation, because even if the innovation fails, the other members tend to not condemn the initiator. In other words, strong relationship among the members of work group will decrease the expected image risks. Thus,

*H3a: Group relationship quality is positively related to expected image gains.*

*H3b: Group relationship quality is negatively related to expected image risks.*

Yuan and Woodman (2010) argued that behavior is a function of technical and symbolic meanings. Employee's behavior to involve in innovation activities is a signal, reflecting information regarding who he/she is. Perception of others is a critical factor in determining individual behavior, since impression affects others' reaction toward innovator, whether innovative behavior will gain social support or vice versa (Yuan & Woodman, 2010). There are two impression management, namely defensive and assertive. Defensive refers to how people tend to preserve their social image, whilst assertive refers to how people tend to enhance their social image. Employee may be reluctant to involve in innovation, since he/she tends to avoid negative evaluation from social environment. Conversely, employee may highly involve in innovation, since he/she expects to gain positive image from others. Thus,

*H4a: Expected image gains is positively related to employee innovative work behavior.*

*H4b: Expected image risks is negatively related to employee innovative work behavior.*

High self-monitors tend to behave in certain ways, since they expect to gain positive image or positive impression by others. High self-monitors will behave carefully, since they want to be accepted in certain social environment. In other words, high self-monitors will involve in innovation, since they have expectation that involving in innovation will enhance their image. High self-monitors tend to be reluctant to involve in innovation if innovative behavior does not conform to their organization, since they fear not be well accepted in certain social environment, whilst low self-monitors tend to behave as it is and their behavior functionally reflects their own inner attitudes, emotions and dispositions (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000). When employee has high self-monitor, it will strengthen the relationship between expected image gains and innovative work behavior. The motive underlying the behavior of high self-monitors is high expectation

to enhance their image so that they will be more involve in innovation, since it will give them expected image as innovators. Since innovation will bring both benefits and costs, high self-monitors also consider its failure. They will avoid innovation if it will forfeit their image, make them look unable to implement innovation in organization. On the contrary, low self-monitors tend to behave as it is and do not put emphasis on their image. Even if the innovation fails, they still go with it. They realize that innovation may bring benefits and costs, but low-self monitors still strive for innovation. Thus,

*H5a: Self-monitoring will moderate the relationship between expected image gains and innovative work behavior.*

*H5b: Self-monitoring will moderate the relationship between expected image risks and innovative work behavior.*

## 2. METHOD

### 2.1. Sample and procedures

We surveyed 350 employees and their direct superiors from several companies in different industries, e.g., media industry (television, radio and newspapers), manufacturing and design. We received 270 employee questionnaires measuring all variables but innovative work behavior, since innovative work behavior using employees' direct superiors. Matching employee and superior questionnaires resulted 239 in pairs, but only 214 usable complete questionnaires.

Our final sample including creative and production 47%, research and development (R&D) 17%, sales and marketing 23%, human resource and general affairs 12%. The average range of employee respondents was 21-25 years old. Most of employee respondents were male (70.11%), whereas female only 29.89%. The average organization tenure of employee respondents was 2.55 years.

### 2.2. Measures

All measures used a response scale from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"). Perceived organizational support for innovation was mea-

sured by Yuan and Woodman's (2010) 12 items ( $\alpha = 0.79$ ). Superior relationship quality was measured by Yuan and Woodman's (2010) seven items ( $\alpha = 0.80$ ). Group relationship quality was measured by Seers' (1989) nine items ( $\alpha = 0.85$ ). Expected image gains and expected image risks were measured by Yuan and Woodman's (2010) four items ( $\alpha = 0.73$ ) and two items ( $\alpha = 0.75$ ) respectively. Self-monitoring was measured by Lennox and Wolfe's (1984) two items ( $\alpha = 0.77$ ).

### 3. RESULTS

We first tested hypotheses 1-4 with a single ordinary least square (OLS) regression in which we regressed expected image gains and expected image risks on the antecedents, respectively. Then, we tested hypothesis 5 with moderated regression analysis. The variables were entered in four steps. First, the centered score (mean centered) for expected image gains was entered. Second, the centered score for expected image risks was entered. Third, the centered score (mean centered) for self-monitoring was entered. Last, the interaction term for both expected image gains with self-monitoring and expected image risks with self-monitoring were entered. We used the centered score to create interaction in order to improve interpretation of interaction or moderating effect. Table 1 shows the results for expected image gains. The beta weight for all the antecedents was statistically significant and positive in predicting expected image gains ( $p < 0.01$ ), supporting hypotheses 1a, 2a, and 3a. Table 2 shows the results for expected image risks. The beta weight for POS and superior relationship quality were statistically significant and negative in predicting expected image risks ( $p < 0.01$ ), supporting hypotheses 1b and 2b, whilst the beta weight for group relationship quality was not statistically significant. Thus, hypothesis 3b was not supported.

Table 3 shows the results for innovative work behavior. The beta weight for expected image gains and expected image risks were both statistically significant ( $p < 0.01$ ), negative for expected image risks and positive for expected image gains, providing support for hypotheses 4a and 4b. Besides, the interaction effects of self-monitoring and expected image gains were not statistically significant, thus, hypothesis 5a was not support-

ed. The interaction effects of self-monitoring and expected image risks were statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ), providing support for hypothesis 5b.

**Table 1.** Regression results predicting expected image gains

Predictor variables	$\beta$
POS	0.337**
SRQ	0.322**
GRQ	0.091**
F	432.406**
R2	0.861

Note: \*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

**Table 2.** Regression results predicting expected image risks

Predictor variables	$\beta$
POS	-0.277**
SRQ	-0.627**
GRQ	-0.1
F	44.837**
R2	0.39

Notes: \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , POS: Perceived Organization Support, SRQ: Superior Relationship Quality, GRQ: Group Relationship Quality.

**Table 3.** Regression result predicting innovative work behavior

Variables	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
	Dep Var: Innovative Work Behavior			
IR	-0.143**	-	-0.310**	-
IG	-	0.427**	-	0.092**
SM	-	-	0.271**	-0.151
IRxSM	-	-	-0.370*	-
IGxSM	-	-	-	0.29
F	23.147**	15.385**	36.837**	13.248**
R2	0.098	0.145	0.413	0.159

Notes: \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ , IR: Expected Image Risks, IG: Expected Image Gains, SM: Self-Monitoring.

### 4. DISCUSSION

Our study contributes to management literature, especially innovative work behavior, in several ways. First, our findings revealed that the expected outcomes, namely image consequences become individual consideration to involve in innovation. Scott and Bruce (1994), Yuan and Woodman (2010) suggested that organization support for innovation

tolerated differences so employee may feel psychologically safe and less concern for their image if they involve in innovation activity. Employee may be more involve in innovation since perceive innovativeness as a desirable positive image in social context (Yuan & Woodman, 2010).

Second, as our hypothesis shows, employee who has strong relationship with their superior tends to be more confident that their innovation attempts will gain positive image inside organization. They may be confident that involving in innovation will enhance their image, especially for employee who has strong relationship, which is characterized by high mutual trust and respect.

Third, contrary to our hypothesis, our results revealed that group relationship quality did not affect employee's expected image risks. The reason underlying these results' is that there may be another factor beside peers that will make employees reluctant to involve in innovation, since its failure will affect their images. Besides, most of our respondents were creative and production team, em-

ployee may be afraid to innovate since the greater negative effects may occur from other division or department. The creative and production department are characterized by high collaborative team and high demand to be creative and innovative, so employees within creative and production department are not afraid of the negative judgment from peers. Scott and Bruce (1994), Seers (1989) argued that LMX theory assumes that work group supports innovation by offering teamwork and collaboration and employee will perceived this as support for innovation. In addition, the long-established team makes team members feel psychologically safe so they are not afraid of the negative image they gain. Thus, indicating that team which is currently need high innovation are expected to behave innovatively with less consider to the negative images. Our next surprising finding was self-monitoring did not have moderation effects in the relationship between expected image gains and innovative work behavior. As employee tries to gain positive image, he/she will be more involve in innovation, since he/she has expectation to enhance his/her image in social context.

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## CONCLUSION

The center focus of this study is how to increase employees' innovative work behavior. This study revealed that employees tend to avoid innovative behavior, since innovation is a risky behavior. Organization should reduce the social risks faced by employees if the innovation fails. There are several ways to reduce the social risks. First, by giving strong supports for employee who engages in innovation activities. Such support will make employee feel safe psychologically since the organization gives support to every employee who is engaged in innovation activities. Second, the superior also has important role in reducing employee's social risks. In order to minimize the innovation failure, superior may conduct regular meeting to monitor the innovation progress. Employee may report the problems which occur in implementing the innovation and the superior or others employees could give the solution of such problems. Third, employees should realize that innovation is a risky behavior so they may lower their self-presentation. Employee with high self-presentation tends to avoid innovation behavior because of its risks. Organization also has roles in reducing employee's self-presentation by creating strong innovation culture. Strong innovation culture is characterized by strong support from both the organization and other employees.

There are several limitations of this study. First, our sample was from several backgrounds, creative industry, manufactures, sales and marketing, human resources and general affair. We suggest that future research may only involve sample from highly demanded creativity, such as media industry (television, radio or newspaper), event organizer, etc. Yuan and Woodman (2010) argued that job characteristics may affect employee's innovative work behavior. Second, using superior ratings to measure employee innovative work behavior may also limit our study. Since our respondents' job characteristic is mostly based on team innovation so it might be difficult for superior to rate his/her subordinates innovation. Future studies should include subjective or self-rated measurement for innovation to cross-validate superior ratings.

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