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Article

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Transformational Leadership and Adhocracy Culture: Drivers of Innovative Work Behaviour and Employee Performance

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Abstract

This study explores the effects of transformational leadership and adhocracy culture on innovative work behaviour and employee performance. The research involved 286 employees from diverse disciplines, primarily in marketing communications and services, based in Ho Chi Minh City. Data analysis was performed using SPSS 26 and Smart PLS 4.0 software to assess the influence of adhocracy culture and on the five dimensions of transformational leadership on employee performance. The findings reveal that both adhocracy culture and transformational leadership positively impact employee performance. Furthermore, the study introduces a novel approach to predicting job effectiveness through innovative work behaviour. The results provide valuable managerial insights for cultivating an adhocracy culture and promoting transformational leadership, which can enhance innovative work behaviour, strengthen long-term organizational commitment, and improve overall employee performance.

Keywords

Transformational leadership, Adhocracy culture, Innovative work behaviour, Employee performance, Smart-PLS 4.0

JEL Classification

M10, M14, M20

Introduction

In the era of globalization and rapid market dynamics, companies face increasingly complex challenges in maintaining their competitiveness (Maman & Hasan, 2024). Achieving a sustainable competitive advantage and establishing a strong market position are critical concerns for businesses. To enhance visibility and solidify their market position, companies must leverage their unique differentiators. Porter (1996) suggested that businesses can achieve better performance compared to competitors by creating distinctive and sustainable factors, with innovation being a fundamental approach to gaining competitive advantage. Based on this objective, the authors aim to explore how businesses enhance differentiation and sustainable competition through employee performance by fostering innovative work behaviors. The proposed model examines the direct impact of factors such as transformational leadership and adhocracy culture on employee performance, as well as their indirect impact through the mediating role of innovative work behavior. This model is based on Muhammad et al. (2014) research on the impact of leadership and organizational culture on employee performance via work motivation and incorporates adjustments to include innovative work behavior as a mediator, drawing on studies of contagion theory from organizational culture and leadership to employee behavior (Hatfield et al., 1993) and social exchange theory (Li et al., 2019).

Numerous studies have investigated the influence of transformational leadership on organizational innovation processes (Naguib & Naem, 2018) and its direct effects on organizational performance (Sattayaraksa, 2015; Arif & Akram, 2018). Leadership is widely acknowledged as a crucial factor in fostering employee innovation and ensuring the fulfillment of their roles, thereby contributing to long-term sustainability and competitive advantage

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(Choi et al., 2016; Le & Lei, 2017; Ritala et al., 2018). Transformational leaders, through inspirational motivation, stimulate employee enthusiasm and encourage them to exceed organizational goals (Avolio et al., 1995; Le et al., 2018). In addition to leadership styles, an adhocracy culture significantly impacts employee engagement within organizations. Establishing an adhocracy culture requires a focus on four key elements: risk acceptance, employee involvement, creativity stimulation, and shared goals (Al-Ali et al., 2017; Abubakar et al., 2019; Chege et al., 2022). According to Khurosani (2013), an adhocracy culture empowers individuals to express their ideas and initiatives freely.

Employee innovative work behavior is vital for enhancing an organization's competitiveness. Alhady et al. (2011) suggest that organizations should encourage employees to contribute and share their creative ideas to drive innovation. Employees can tackle personal and organizational challenges through creative problem-solving (Nonaka, 1994). Burns (1978) characterized transformational leadership as a process in which leaders and followers interact to elevate moral and motivational levels within the organization. Bass (1985) and his colleagues (Avolio, Bass, & Jung, 1995) identified key factors influencing transformational leadership, including influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Cameron and Quinn (2006) highlighted that the characteristics of an adhocracy culture provide an environment where leaders can demonstrate foresight, promote innovation, and embrace risk-taking, thereby fostering a spirit of experimentation within the organization.

This research aims to equip leaders to effectively foster motivation and competitiveness, ultimately helping organizations strengthen their position and brand while achieving stable, sustainable growth. To elucidate the effects of independent variables on mediating and dependent variables, the authors primarily employ Social Exchange Theory (SET) as the foundation for the research model and reference Contagion Theory to illustrate the interplay between organizational culture, leadership style, and employee behavior. By fostering innovative work behaviors, organizations can achieve higher job performance, thereby enhancing their competitive edge and ensuring sustainable development.

To fulfill the research objectives, the study will address the following questions: (i) What is the direct impact of transformational leadership and an adhocracy culture on employee performance? (ii) How do transformational leadership and an adhocracy culture influence employees' innovative work behaviour? and (iii) What is the indirect impact of transformational leadership and an adhocracy culture on employee performance through the mediating role of innovative work behavior?

Literature Review

Social Exchange Theory (SET) explains how transformational leadership can impact employees by improving a friendly work environment and fostering open communication within the organization. The basic principle of SET is that the positive behavior and attitudes of leaders contribute to promoting innovation in work behavior and enhancing employee performance. Transformational leadership can stimulate higher levels of employee engagement by creating a comfortable and trustworthy work environment (Li et al., 2019). Furthermore, in a productive work environment, employees receive appropriate support from colleagues, superiors, and the organization, and they reciprocate by engaging in beneficial activities related to the organization (Li et al., 2019).

Contagion Theory refers to the tendency of people to follow the behaviors of others (Hatfield et al., 1993), thereby creating synchronization of expressions and behaviors. Contagion occurs through cognitive, conscious, sensory, and sometimes unconscious processes. The process of emotional contagion begins when a person joins a group and is influenced by the group's emotions, attitudes, language, and interactions (Schoenewolf, 1990). Contagion theory is relevant when there is a bond between the influencer and the affected person (Clarkson et al., 2020). Therefore, contagion can occur within businesses, between leaders and employees. Organizational culture and leadership style serve as sources for the spread of behaviors and attitudes within businesses and deeply influence employee behavior (Alzghoul et al., 2024).

Transformational Leadership

The theory of transformational leadership, introduced by Alzghoul (1978) and further developed by Bass (1985), states that transformational leaders serve as role models of ethics and focus on the common interests of the group, organization, and employees. Transformational leaders emphasize psychological and behavioral factors such as individualized consideration, enhancing innovative effectiveness, and attracting long-term commitment from employees. Based on the work of Avolio et al. (1995) and a review of related studies, transformational leadership is manifested through five aspects: idealized influence attribution (IA), idealized influence behavior (IB), individualized consideration (IC), inspirational motivation (IM), and intellectual stimulation (IS). In their work processes, transformational leaders often encourage employees to develop their own solutions and empower them when necessary (Sattayaraksa, 2015; Para-González et al., 2018). They improve employees' self-confidence, communicate the organization's mission and vision, and collaborate to meet employee needs (Yıldız et al., 2014; Sattayaraksa, 2015; Suwanto et al., 2022). Furthermore, transformational leadership is one of the important factors contributing to improved organizational performance and facilitating innovation (Sattayaraksa, 2015; Para-

González et al., 2018).

Adhocracy Culture

The concept of adhocracy culture emerged as a common rationale for explaining the relationship between organization, culture, and creativity (Morris et al., 2007). According to Cameron and Quinn (2006), an adhocracy culture is a dynamic and inspirational work environment where members are always willing to go beyond their comfort zones, openly accept challenges, and do not hesitate to engage in new initiatives. Belias and Koustelios (2014) emphasized that this culture helps organizations adapt quickly to change and develop more sustainably. Adhocracy culture also encourages risk-taking, promotes continuous innovation, and fosters learning from failures (Al-Ali et al., 2017; Abubakar et al., 2019). In short, adhocracy culture promotes entrepreneurship through actions that build creativity and innovation in businesses (Khedhaouria et al., 2020; Chege et al., 2022). In this study, adhocracy culture is defined as an environment where leaders possess a long-term vision, allow employees to take risks, and foster a spirit of experimentation and innovation (Chege et al., 2022).

Innovative Work Behavior

Raykov (2014) defines innovation as the process of creating social and economic value through the creation, sharing, and transformation of knowledge to generate new products and processes. Innovative work behavior (IWB) includes all activities aimed at creating, developing and implementing new initiatives in the organization (Khan et al., 2022; Karimi et al., 2023; Khairunnisa et al., 2023). Bawuro et al. (2019) describe IWB as an intentional approach by employees to achieve organizational goals, generate and implement new ideas, gain a competitive advantage, and ensure sustainability. Additionally, Woods et al. (2018) demonstrated that IWB involves applying knowledge to create new value for customers through innovative products and services. Personal knowledge and abilities play a vital role in creative activities, as employees' expertise is an important resource that allows them to generate and implement new ideas in the workplace (Osmanaj et al., 2020). In conclusion, innovative work behavior encompasses all the work activities that employees must perform to complete essential innovation tasks. These activities can be either physical or cognitive, conducted individually or in a social context, and can support various innovation tasks.

Employee Performance

Employee performance is defined by Hoxha and Heimerer (2019) as the expected value of an individual's actions to achieve results within a standard time frame. Additionally, Alawamleh et al. (2018) argue that performance is a measure of resource utilization to achieve goals and is a central concept in research. Performance not only measures the use of resources to achieve job objectives but also relates to the quality and quantity of work according to responsibilities (Hermina & Yosepha, 2019), including outputs, relevance, and timeliness (Irum et al., 2014). At the same time, performance is manifested through work behaviors aligned with organizational goals. Moreover, performance focuses on the outputs that employees bring to the organization, which are related to job satisfaction, rewards, and individual skills (Hermina & Yosepha, 2019) and contribute to the overall development of the organization (Santis et al., 2018).

Research hypotheses

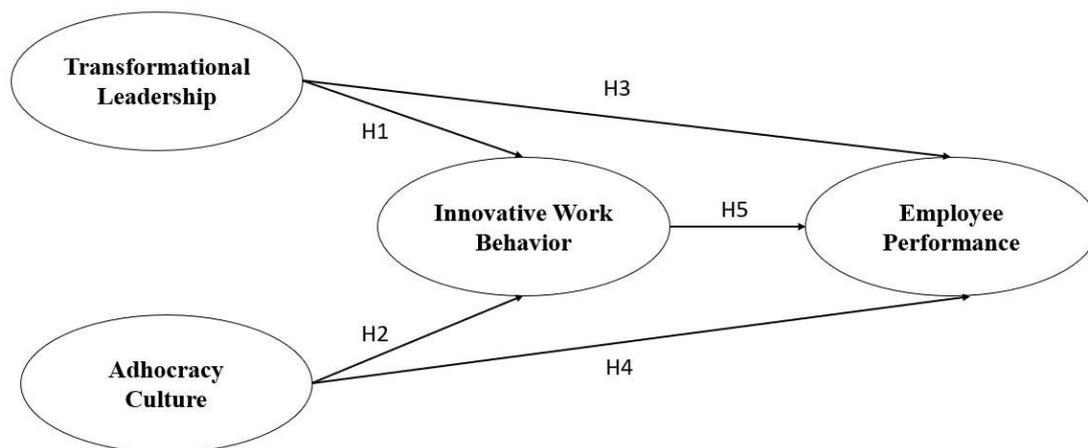


Fig 1. The conceptual model.

The Impact of Transformational Leadership on Innovative Work Behavior

Transformational leadership plays a key role in promoting innovation in organizations (Al-Husseini et al., 2021). Empirical research shows that transformational leaders through raising expectations and creating vision, promote problem-solving thinking, which is the main driving force for employee creativity and innovation (Grošelj et al., 2021; Jyoti and Dev, 2015). Transformational leaders stimulate intellectual abilities and inspire employees to create opportunities whereby they have a significant influence on their own role in the workplace leading to higher levels

of innovative work behavior (Afsar et al., 2014; Grošelj et al., 2021). The authors assert that transformational leadership is a key driver of employee innovation because it creates a positive and participative atmosphere that is conducive to change (Khalili et al., 2016; Watts et al., 2020). Recent studies demonstrate that transformational leadership has a positive impact on the formation and development of innovation and creative capacity in organizations (Chaubey et al., 2019; Løvaas et al., 2020; Amankwaa et al., 2022). Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H1: Transformational leadership style influences employees' innovative work behavior.

The Impact of Adhocracy Culture on Innovative Work Behavior

Recent studies, such as Li and Liu (2022), have explored the factor of adhocracy culture and its influence on employees' innovative work behavior. Applying the theory of contagion, organizational culture serves as the source for the spread of behaviors and attitudes, profoundly impacting employee behavior. Specifically, adhocracy culture has a positive impact on employees by shaping the behavior and attitudes of each employee toward their goals through creativity (Tseng, 2019; Chege et al., 2022). The impact of adhocracy cultural characteristics on employee behavior, first, adhocracy culture encourages thinking beyond conventional boundaries (Aprilianty & Waskito, 2023). Second, it encourages both external and internal communication and collaboration to enhance the organization's learning capabilities (Xiong et al., 2020). Third, leaders belonging to adhocracy culture show creativity and encourage employees to take risks and embrace failure (Khan et al., 2022; Aprilianty & Waskito, 2023). Accordingly, the authors propose the following hypothesis:

H2: Adhocracy culture impacts employees' innovative work behavior.

The Impact of Transformational Leadership on Employee Performance

According to Sattayaraksa (2015), leadership is the most important factor affecting the effectiveness of organizational activities and employee performance. Transformational leaders promote a positive environment, encourage innovation and creativity, leading to increased productivity and organizational success (Shafi et al., 2020; Tseng et al., 2018; Wuryaningrat et al., 2023). According to social exchange theory, transformational leadership impacts employee behavior and attitudes, thereby improving job performance (Hui et al., 2019). On the other hand, transformational leadership represents a leadership style that implicitly helps employees look beyond their personal interests, by helping them perform beyond their expectations (Jena et al., 2018; Khan et al., 2021). This leadership style prioritizes member development, providing opportunities to enhance the skills necessary for individual and team performance (Rampen et al., 2023; Wulur & Mandagi, 2023). Applying this leadership style well in the organization helps create positive interactions between leaders and employees, thereby improving employee performance and work quality (Hasib et al., 2020). Therefore, the authors propose the following hypothesis:

H3: Transformational leadership style affects employee performance.

The Impact of Adhocracy Culture on Employee Performance

Organizational culture as a set of key assumptions that employees actively apply, positively promoting work performance (Rahayu et al., 2019). Agbaworde (2016) argues that when employees understand the culture, they are more motivated to work, feel in control of their tasks, and act according to the organization's values and mission. Creativity is the application of new ideas into products, services, organizational methods, or marketing techniques (OECD, 2005; Naranjo-Valencia et al., 2016). An innovative and adhocracy culture positively impacts individual creativity and enhances team performance. Based on the previous observations combined with social exchange theory and contagion theory, adhocracy culture creates a friendly and open working environment, where employees receive help and support from superiors and colleagues. Therefore, applying a creative culture helps organizations promote innovative behavior and employee performance, creating sustainable competitive factors (Khan et al., 2022). Since then, the authors propose the following hypothesis:

H4: Adhocracy culture affects employee performance.

The Impact of Innovative Work Behavior on Employee Performance

Recent studies show that innovative work behavior has a positive and significant influence on employee performance (Khan et al., 2022; Berdiyana et al., 2022; Haris et al., 2023; Karimi et al., 2023). Innovative work behavior influences employee performance in multiple dimensions (Babu et al., 2024) and its role in the performance feedback process remains under-explored (Christensen, 2014). Employees with high-level creativity consistently demonstrate superior performance by optimally leveraging their cognitive resources and generating novel solutions to work-related challenges (Hughes et al., 2018). Specifically, employees who exhibit creativity by inventing unique ideas, products, or processes that significantly boost performance stimulate growth, productivity, and competitiveness (Gilson & Litchfield, 2017). Furthermore, employees who engage in innovative work behavior tend to acquire new technological knowledge, processes, and work methods (Babu et al., 2024). In terms of organizational innovation, the existence of technologies that support the service process can help improve employee performance and work efficiency, which will have an impact on improving organizational performance (Zulkifli et al., 2023). Therefore, the author proposes the following hypothesis:

H5: Innovative work behavior impacts employee performance.

The Mediating Role of Innovative Work Behavior

Many previous studies demonstrated that transformational leadership and innovative behavior have a significant impact on employee performance (Aryee et al., 2012; Rizki et al., 2019; Widodo & Mawarto, 2020), these findings indicated that improving performance can be achieved by improving leadership style and innovation activities of employees. Based on Social exchange theory, Transformational leadership fosters a positive environment that encourages innovation and creativity, leading to increased productivity and organizational success (Shafi et al., 2020; Tse et al., 2018; Wuryaningrat et al., 2023). Transformational leadership is an advanced alternative that helps traditional leaders change the way they manage their employees (Nguon, 2022). Moreover, they participate with employees in implementing new ideas and solutions that increase benefits for the organization. Innovation plays an important role in organization's operations, success, and development, helping businesses adapt and increase sustainable competitiveness (Anderson et al., 2014). Based on this research, the authors propose the following hypothesis:

H6: Innovative work behavior mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance.

Organizational culture is increasingly being emphasized due to its impact on innovative behavior (Caliskan & Zhu, 2020). It is a system of values and beliefs that shapes employee behavior (Eskiler et al., 2016). Adhocracy culture demonstrates a willingness to accept new ideas and take risks to achieve high performance (Cameron & Quinn, 2006). Innovation performance is crucial for organizational development, as it reflects a firm's innovative behavior. Bawuro et al. (2019) indicate that innovative behavior is an intentional approach to gaining competitive advantage and ensuring sustainability. In other words, organizational performance is closely linked to innovative capabilities such as culture, processes, and employee innovative behavior. Based on this research, the authors propose the following hypothesis:

H7: Innovative work behavior plays a mediating role in the relationship between organizational culture and employee performance.

Methods

Sample and Data Collection

This research focuses on employees in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Vietnam across diverse sectors. These firms, located in Ho Chi Minh City, often exhibit an adhocracy culture and are led by transformational leaders. The research survey was conducted from January to June 2024, yielding responses from 286 valid surveys. In the initial stage of the research process, the authors distributed questionnaires and collected 50 pilot samples. Subsequently, variable elimination was performed, and the official questionnaires were distributed. The respondents were predominantly female (67.1%), aged under 25 (77.9%), mostly holding bachelor's degrees (79.7%), and had less than 2 years of work experience (61.1%), with 59.4% working in marketing communications.

Measurements

The transformational leadership scale includes characteristics (idealized influence attribution, idealized influence behavior, individualized consideration, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation) with 20 items referencing the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaires of Bass and Avolio (2004). The adhocracy culture scale comprises 7 items adapted from Cameron et al. (1991). The innovative work behavior (IWB) scale includes 7 items adapted from Scott and Bruce (1994). Finally, the employee performance scale consists of 8 items adapted from Borman and Motowildo (1997) and Rego and Cunha (2008).

Results

The descriptive statistical results, based on the quantitative research findings, demonstrate the representativeness of the sample in terms of gender, age, education level, work experience, occupation, and industry sector.

Table 1. The descriptive statistical results.

Sample size (n = 286)		Quantity	Ratio (%)
Gender	Male	94	32.8
	Female	192	67.2
Age	Under 25 years old	223	77.9
	Between 25 and under 35	47	16.4
	Between 35 and under 45	13	4.9
	From 45 years old or older	3	0.8

Academic level	College	39	13.6
	University	228	79.7
	Postgraduate	19	6.7
Experience	Under 2 years	175	61.2
	From 2 years to less than 5 years	85	29.7
	From 5 years to less than 10 years	18	6.3
	10 years or more	8	2.8
Occupation	Marketing Communications	170	59.4
	Information technology	16	5.6
	Education	19	6.6
	Medical	4	1.4
	Engineering	8	2.8
	Service	44	15.4
	Technical	21	7.3
	Other	4	1.5
Industry sector	Marketing Communications	159	55.6
	Information technology	17	5.9
	Education	24	8.4
	Medical	5	1.7
	Engineering	8	2.8
	Service	51	17.8
	Technical	18	6.3
	Other	4	1.5

A model for assessing reflective

Internal consistency reliability

Cronbach's alpha coefficient must be greater than 0.60 for a scale to ensure reliability (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The results in Table 3 indicate that the lowest value among the observed variable groups is 0.723 (Transformational Leadership), while the highest value is 0.811 (Employee Performance), with all variables exceeding the 0.60 threshold. The results of the composite reliability analysis demonstrate that the combined reliability of the variables is also greater than 0.60 (Hair et al., 2014). Specifically, the scale with the highest composite reliability is Employee Performance (CR value = 0.864), while the scale with the lowest composite reliability is Transformational Leadership (CR value = 0.827).

Table 2. The reliability and validity assessment.

Constructs	Items	Outer loading	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE	R2	VIF
Transformational Leadership	IA4	0.724	0.723	0.827	0.545	-	1.326
	IS3	0.727					1.402
	IS4	0.727					1.357
	IC3	0.773					1.343
Adhocracy Culture	AC2	0.744	0.737	0.835	0.559	-	1.381
	AC3	0.746					1.411
	AC4	0.753					1.413
	AC5	0.747					1.378
Innovational Work Behavior	IWB1	0.695	0.781	0.851	0.553	0.400	1.349
	IWB3	0.693					1.429
	IWB4	0.753					1.549

	IWB6	0.788					1.636
	IWB7	0.717					1.415
Employee Performance	EP3	0.744	0.811	0.864	0.514	0.473	1.554
	EP4	0.724					1.538
	EP5	0.680					1.412
	EP6	0.716					1.554
	EP7	0.762					1.671
	EP8	0.673					1.41

To assess the reliability of the indicators, the authors conducted an Outer Loading analysis, with values exceeding 0.60 (Hair et al., 2014). The results, as shown in Table 2, indicate that all Outer Loading values are greater than 0.60.

According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values must exceed 0.50 to meet the necessary conditions. If the AVE value is below 0.50, the corresponding factor or latent variable is considered for removal from the research model. Based on the research findings, several variables with inadequate indicators were removed, resulting in an AVE value below 0.50. Specifically, the Transformational Leadership scale removed indicator IB2, the Adhocracy Culture scale removed indicators AC1 and AC7, and the Employee Performance scale removed indicators EP1 and EP2. Ultimately, the results revealed that the highest AVE value was for the Adhocracy Culture variable (0.559), while the lowest was for the Employee Performance variable (0.515).

The analysis of discriminant validity followed the methodology proposed by Henseler et al. (2015), which suggests two assessment thresholds. This study employed the HTMT < 0.9 criterion to evaluate the discriminant validity between two latent variables. Initial results indicated that the correlation coefficient between Transformational Leadership (TL) and Employee Performance (EP) exceeded 0.9. Consequently, the authors removed indicators IA2 and IS3 from the TL scale. The final results confirmed that the study effectively distinguishes between the two latent factors.

Table 3. Heterotrait-Monotrait Factors.

Variable	TL	AC	IWB	EP
TL	-	-	-	-
AC	0.881	-	-	-
IWB	0.705	0.781	-	-
EP	0.626	0.685	0.827	-

Assessment in structural modeling

Building upon the research by Hair et al. (2019) regarding the thresholds for evaluating VIF values and multicollinearity, this study employed PLS-SEM structural analysis using Smart-PLS software to assess the presence of multicollinearity in the model. The analysis revealed that all observed variables have VIF values below 5.0 (Table 2), indicating a lack of multicollinearity and suggesting strong relationships among the model's factors.

Table 4. Hypothesis testing results.

Hypothesis	Relationship	Path coefficient (β)	T-values	P-values	Result
H1	TL \rightarrow IWB	0.271	4.205	0,000	Accepted
H2	CC \rightarrow IWB	0.424	6.643	0,000	Accepted
H3	TL \rightarrow EP	0.106	1.597	0,110	Rejected
H4	CC \rightarrow EP	0.155	2.142	0,032	Accepted
H5	IWB \rightarrow EP	0.512	9.431	0,000	Accepted
H6	TL \rightarrow IWB \rightarrow EP	0.139	3.727	0,000	Accepted
H7	CC \rightarrow IWB \rightarrow EP	0.217	5.393	0,000	Accepted

Regarding Hypothesis H1, the results indicate a path coefficient of 0.271, with $t = 4.205$ and $p = 0.000$. For Hypothesis H2, the analysis shows a path coefficient of 0.424, with $t = 6.643$ and $p = 0.000$. Hypothesis H3 presents a path coefficient of 0.106, with $t = 1.106$ and $p = 0.110$. For Hypothesis H4, the path coefficient is 0.155, with $t = 2.142$ and $p = 0.032$. Lastly, for Hypothesis H5, the path coefficient is 0.512, with $t = 9.431$ and $p = 0.000$.

Consequently, Hypotheses H1, H2, H4, and H5 are statistically supported, while Hypothesis H3 is rejected.

According to the research of Hock and Ringle (2010), R^2 value can be explained at three levels. Including R^2 value exceeds 0.67: strong effect; R^2 value between 0.33 and 0.67: moderate effect; R^2 value between 0.19 and 0.33: extremely small or no effect. Based on the analysis results, the R^2 value of the Innovative work behavior variable the R^2 value of the Employee performance variable is 0.473. Overall, the model explained 40% of the variance in the observed variable Work innovation behavior and 47.3% of the variance in the observed variable Employee performance.

According to the analysis of the H6 hypothesis, the result obtained (Table 6) is $\beta = 0.139$; $t=3.727$; $p=0.000$. Hypothesis H7, with the result obtained is $\beta = 0.217$; $t = 5.393$; $p = 0.000$. Results indicate that hypotheses H6 and H7 are both statistically significant. Therefore, Innovational work behavior plays an intermediate role in the influence of Transformational leadership, Adhocracy culture on Employee performance.

Discussion

According to the arguments developed in the previous sections, this study has identified a structural model of the relationship between Transformational leadership style and Adhocracy culture affecting Innovative work behavior and Employee performance based on Social exchange theory (SET) and Contagion theory (CT).

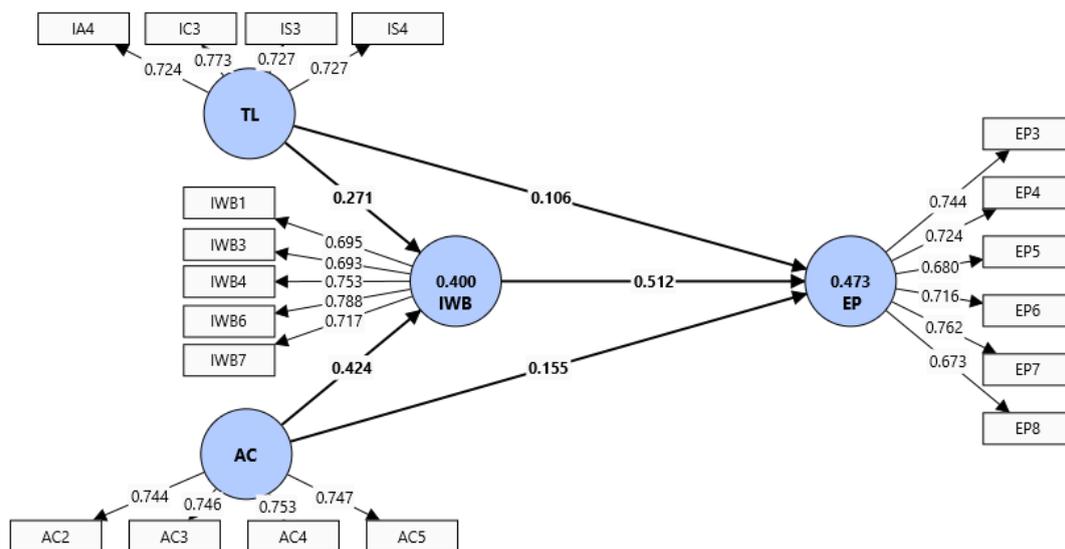


Fig 2. The research results.

Hypotheses H1, H2, H4, H5, H6, H7 are all statistically significant. In which hypothesis H3 ($\beta = 0.106$; $t = 1.597 < 1.96$; $p = 0.110 > 0.05$) is rejected. This result shows that within the survey range of the authors' research, Transformational Leadership does not directly impact employee performance but exerts an indirect influence mediated by innovative work behavior.

Conclusion

Based on the survey results, most respondents who identified with the adhocracy culture and transformational leadership style are female employees (age under 30 years old) working in the fields of marketing, communications, and services. The findings confirm the mediating role of Innovative Work Behavior, as both Hypotheses H6 and H7 are statistically significant. This aligns with the research of Shafi et al. (2020), Tse et al. (2018), and Wuryaningrat et al. (2023), which shows that transformational leaders actively promote a working environment that supports and encourages innovation and creativity. Consequently, this leads to increased productivity and contributes to the overall success of the organization. The results indicate that to cultivate innovative work behavior and enhance employee performance, organizations should focus on fostering cultural characteristics such as a dynamic, entrepreneurial, and spirited work environment that encourages creativity, initiative-taking, empowerment, and risk-taking (Quinn & Cameron, 1988).

Theoretical implication

Drawing upon the transformational leadership theory of Bass et al. (1995), this study identifies that leaders exhibiting this style possess unique qualities and behaviors. Notably, they demonstrate a deep concern for the well-being of their employees and foster creativity by encouraging innovative working methods. Regarding adhocracy culture, Cameron and Quinn (2006) define it as a dynamic working environment full of energy and creative inspiration. Consequently, research results have shown that for the majority of entry-level female employees who are given the opportunity to experience this culture, they are willing to go beyond their comfort

zones, embrace challenges, and engage in new activities. In summary, based on Social Exchange Theory and Contagion Theory, this research has explored the roles that certain characteristics of transformational leadership and adhocracy culture play in influencing innovative work behavior and performance of employees with limited experience. The analysis results indicate a positive and statistically significant relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

Practical implication

Research by Hang et al. (2022) shows that the research and development activities of Vietnamese enterprises are still limited, traditional, and classic. Considering this, this study offers practical implications to promote innovation capacity and improve the competitiveness of Vietnamese enterprises. Transformational leaders should create social connections with employees by paying attention to their individual lives and work, promoting an innovative mindset, and evaluating problems from diverse viewpoints. This not only enhances the work performance of each employee but also contributes to the sustainable development of the organization. Particularly for SMEs in the media and service industries, building a strong organizational culture involves creating consensus and cohesion among all members, from leadership to employees. Organizations must also prioritize addressing employees' needs to foster an open and empowering work environment that enables them to thrive and reach their full potential, especially for entry-level female employees. By 2024, people under the age of 30 belong to generation Z, the characteristics of employees in this group are those who have access to modern technology, prefer dynamic work environment, and are willing to transform to adapt to new challenges (Ly-Le & Le, 2024). Effective innovation necessitates a comprehensive organizational approach, encompassing the cultivation of an adhocracy culture, the appointment of visionary and transformational leaders, and the fostering of creative management practices. According to SMEs facing many challenges of growth (Kindström et al., 2024), this requires the perspective of CEOs to understand and adapt to change. This research proposes operating methods to help CEOs orient and nurture a creative environment in the organization according to a transformational leadership style, including ideal role models for employees, inspiration, and personal care. and encourage employee ideas in innovation.

Limitation

The study only determined the impact of transformational leadership style and creative culture on behavior and performance within media and service businesses in Vietnamese SMEs. On the other hand, the sample range collected is limited, because survey respondents are the majority of entry-level female employees with age under 30 years old. This leads to the inability to draw more comprehensive and general conclusions.

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