

## From Leadership to Innovation: Managing Employee Creativity

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### Abstract

This study aims to measure the influence of leadership autonomy support (LAS) on the innovative behavior of individuals (IIB) of MSMEs employees in Banten mediated by individual creativity (IC). Data collection used simple random sampling and collected 97 samples from five MSMEs in Banten. Data processing using SEM method with the help of SmartPLS 3.0 software. The results showed that the support for leadership autonomy has a positive and significant effect on individual innovative behavior, either directly or indirectly through the mediation of individual creativity. This research can be an opportunity to improve employee readiness in facing the era of the industrial revolution 4.0, by proposing a model for the formation of individual innovative behavior among MSMEs employees in Banten through increased support for leadership autonomy with individual creativity as a mediator.

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### Keywords:

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## INTRODUCTION

Most companies and organizations are aware of the need for innovation, this is related to the company's goals so that they can continue to do business and not be left behind by competitors. Innovation is relatively difficult to achieve but is considered very valuable so that many companies and organizations are proactive in finding their approach or being innovative. The MSMEs industry organizations both government and private are no exception (Asbari, Novitasari, et al., 2020; Hutagalung et al., 2020; Novitasari, Kumoro, et al., 2020; Novitasari, Yuwono, et al., 2020). Regarding the goals of companies or MSMEs organizations, innovation is considered to play an important role such as organizational efficiency or an effective response to the needs of the MSMEs industry (Agistiawati et al., 2020; Hutagalung et al., 2020; Novitasari, Kumoro, et al., 2020).

Like most organizations, MSMEs face constant changes and unexpected challenges (Asbari, 2020; Basuki et al., 2020; Goestjahjanti et al., 2020; Novitasari, Kumoro, et al., 2020; Novitasari & Asbari, 2020b, 2020a; Silitonga et al., 2020; Sudiyono et al., 2020; Yuwono, Novitasari, et al., 2020; Yuwono, Wiyono, et al., 2020; Zaman et al., 2020). In particular, industrial organizations of MSMEs are under constant pressure to find new ways to reduce costs and increase the effectiveness of industrial services. Because there are various alternative MSMEs services to choose from, customer expectations of the quality of MSME services are getting higher. These aspects highlight the importance of pursuing incremental or radical innovation in almost every area of the MSMEs industry. Therefore, MSMEs industrial organizations need to immediately identify and develop factors that have a positive impact on innovative behavior. As already mentioned, innovation has become a critical capability of all MSMEs industrial organizations (Asbari, Wijayanti, Hyun, Purwanto, & Santoso, 2020; Asbari, Wijayanti, Hyun, Purwanto, Santoso, et al., 2020; Novitasari, Yuwono, et al., 2020; Purwanto et al., 2021; Putra et al., 2021).

Although there is a lot of literature on innovative behavior in general, there is still little research that has been done on the industrial organizations of MSMEs, especially in Indonesia. Also, in a review on the innovation of the MSMEs industry, Länsisalmi et al. (2006) found most of the previous studies (45%) limited their focus to organizational-level innovation. In their review, the authors found that only 13% of studies focused on individual-level innovation. Very few previous studies have focused on employee innovative behavior on aspects such as employee empowerment, work productivity, structural empowerment, psychological, motivation, and perceived stress (Länsisalmi et al., 2006). The limitations of research on individual innovation behavior in MSME industry research are a very important concern, this is because employees (individuals) in the organization are the main and fundamental drivers of implementing new ideas in their work (Xerri & Brunetto, 2013, and Kim & Park. , 2015). Therefore, more research is needed on the potential factors associated with innovative behavior from the perspective of employees in the MSME industry. However, it should be noted that although the creativity used is synonymous with innovation, in this study the concept of creativity is separated from the concept of innovative behavior.

Based on the explanation above, this research has three objectives, namely: First, to study innovative behavior from the perspective of employees by using the MSMEs industrial organization as an empirical setting; Second, based on the literature on innovative behavior influenced by personal characteristics (Kim & Park, 2015), this research discusses one of the personal characteristics, namely employee creativity; Third, innovative behavior is also influenced by organizational characteristics (Kim & Park, 2015), including aspects of leadership. Specifically, this study examines whether and how leadership autonomy support

is associated with individual creativity and innovative behavior. By focusing on these three constructs, this research is expected to contribute to the realm of innovation research in the MMSMES industry, particularly the packaging industry.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Individual Innovative Behavior (IIB)

According to Fuglsang, innovation is a phenomenon that is difficult to define and study, and there is no consensus on how to define innovation '(Fuglsang, 2010). One of the earliest definitions of innovation is Schumpeter's definition, which is innovation as a new combination of services, work processes, products, and markets (Schumpeter, 2008). Different definitions of innovation show the characteristics of each type of innovation. Simply put, innovation can be realized anywhere in an organization. However, this research focuses on innovations that are relevant to individual employees. The type of innovation evaluated in this study is IIB in MSMEs. IIB concerns the implementation of innovation, potentially providing benefits for employee performance by paying attention to employee behavior and their ability to adapt and use new and useful ideas in the work environment.

### Individual Creativity (IC)

Creativity is flexible and dynamic and varies between individuals in creating. Creativity is related to innovation. IC in this research is defined as employees who actively contribute with useful ideas or solutions to a problem. Refers to the process of making ideas or solving problems and contributing to providing actual solutions (Amabile et al., 2005). In contrast to IC, the IIB concept is related to behavior, which specifically refers to the implementation of creative ideas behavior. As a result, there are reasonable differences between IC and IIB, even though the two concepts are closely related or interdependent. Slätten et al., (2020), stressing the importance of creativity, characterizing it as a major source of innovative behavior. This is in line with the research of Slätten et al., (2011) which found a positive relationship between creativity and innovation at the individual level. So that the first hypothesis proposed is as follows:

*Hypothesis 1: Individual creativity has a significant effect on innovative behavior.*

### Leadership Autonomy Support (LAS)

In general, leadership plays an important role in an organization, because it can affect the creative performance of employees in construction such as IC and IIB and affect motivation in the work context (Gagné & Deci, 2005). In this study, LAS refers to employees 'perceptions of the quality of employees' interpersonal relationships with their leaders. The focus of LAS is on the context of interpersonal work and whether employees view their leaders as motivating people, and encourage them to work independently. Often a leader who does not support autonomy is considered a lowering of inner motivation by employees and vice versa. Therefore, autonomy in the workplace and leaders who support autonomy are closely related to the inner motivation of employees. There are several interrelated reasons why LAS has a direct impact on IC and IIB employees, namely: First, LAS has the potential to support employees with an inner motivation that increases interest and directs them to focus on work performance; Second, LAS is associated with positive motivation, so it is fair to assume that employees also become more engaged and dedicated, thereby improving their IC and IIB.

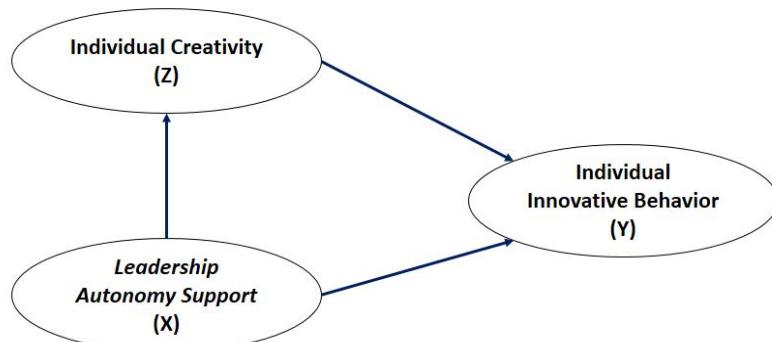
Therefore, employees perceive that the function of LAS is in line with their motivation by promoting IC and IIB. The importance of motivation for creativity and innovation is supported in the comparative theory about creativity (Amabile et al., 2005). Also, individual creativity is noted as a precursor to IIB in the workplace, because idea formation (creativity) is an important step towards implementing (innovation) ideas. Previous research has shown that leaders who support autonomy have an impact on employee performance (Amabile et al., 2005; Hocine & Zhang, 2014) by revealing that when employees experience the opposite of autonomy support in the workplace this can damage employee creativity and innovation. Therefore, based on previous research, there are several reasons to assume that when employees view LAS positively it will have a positive impact on IC and IIB. This reasoning leads to the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 2: Leadership autonomy support has a significant effect on individual creativity.*

*Hypothesis 3: Leadership autonomy support has a significant effect on innovative behavior.*

The importance of motivation for creativity and innovation is supported in the comparative theory about creativity (Amabile et al., 2005). Also, individual creativity is noted as a precursor to IIB in the workplace, because idea formation (creativity) is an important step towards implementing (innovation) ideas. Previous research has shown that leaders who support autonomy have an impact on employee performance (Amabile et al., 2005; Hocine & Zhang, 2014) by revealing that when employees experience the opposite of autonomy support in the workplace this can damage employee creativity and innovation. Therefore, based on previous research, there are several reasons to assume that when employees view LAS positively it will have a positive impact on IC and IIB:

*Hypothesis 4: Leadership autonomy support has a significant effect on innovative behavior through individual creativity as a mediator.*



**Figure 1.**  
*Research Model*

## METHODS

The method used in this research is the quantitative method. Data collection was carried out by distributing questionnaires to all employees in the MSMEs industry in Banten. The questionnaire was distributed using a simple random sampling technique, from a population of 104 people

obtained 97 samples or amounted to 93.3% of the total population. Data processing method using PLS with SmartPLS version 3.0 software.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Sample Description

The characteristics of the respondents observed in this study include age, years of service as permanent employees, and recent education. Based on data obtained from 97 respondents who participated in this study, the general description of the respondents is presented as follows: *First*, 23 respondents (24%) aged <30 years (24%), 48 respondents aged 30-40 years (49%), and respondents > 40 years of age as many as 26 people (27%). This shows that the majority of respondents aged 30-40 years; *Second*, Table 1. below shows that respondents with a period of service as permanent employees <5 years are 33 people (34%), with a tenure of work as permanent employees for 5-10 years as many as 52 people (54%), and as permanent employees for > 10 years as many as 12 people (12%). This describes that the majority of respondents are employees who have worked as permanent employees with a span of 5-10 years, about 54% of the total respondents; *Third*, respondents with the latest level of education were 22 people (23%), 73 people (75%) of high school, and 2 (2%) S1. So that it is known that the majority of respondents have the highest level of education at high school level as many as 73 people %).

**Table 1.**  
*Sample Description*

Criteria		Qty.	%
Age	<30 yrs.	23	24%
	30 - 40 years.	48	49%
	> 40 yrs.	26	27%
Period of service as a permanent employee	<5 yrs.	33	34%
	5-10 yrs.	52	54%
	> 10 yrs.	12	12%
Highest diploma	Junior High	22	23%
	High school	73	75%
	≥ S1	2	2%

### Convergent Validity Testing

A convergent validity test is done by looking at the loading factor value of each indicator against the construct. A factor value of 0.5 or more is considered to have sufficiently strong validation to explain latent constructs (Chin, 1998; Ghazali, 2014; Hair et al., 2010). After going through SmartPLS 3.0 processing, all indicators have a loading factor value above 0.5 or provided that the AVE value is above 0.5, so they are deemed to have met the requirements. A fit or valid research model can be seen in Figure 2, and the loading value, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and AVE for each complete construct can be seen in Table 2. Below.

**Table 2.**

*Items Loadings, Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE)*

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Items</b>	<b>Loadings</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>Composite Reliability</b>	<b>AVE</b>
<i>Leadership Autonomy Support (X)</i>	X1	0.821	0.842	0.887	0.613
	X1	0.786			
	X1	0.708			
	X1	0.721			
	X1	0.868			
<i>Individual Creativity (Z)</i>	Z1	0.904	0.741	0.885	0.794
	Z2	0.878			
<i>Innovative Behavior (Y)</i>	Y1	0.767	0.863	0.900	0.645
	Y2	0.713			
	Y3	0.902			
	Y4	0.800			
	Y5	0.823			

Source: SmartPLS 3.0 Processing Results (2021)

### **Construct Reliability Testing**

The construct reliability can be assessed from the Cronbach alpha value and the composite reliability of each construct. The recommended composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha value were more than 0.7 (Ghozali, 2014). The reliability test results in Table 2. above show that all constructs have composite reliability and the Cronbach's alpha value is greater than 0.7 ( $> 0.7$ ), and it can be concluded that all constructs have met the required reliability.

**Table 3.**

*Discriminant Validity*

<b>Variables</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>Z</b>
<i>Leadership Autonomy Support (X)</i>	<b>0.783</b>		
<i>Innovative Behavior (Y)</i>	0.459	<b>0.803</b>	
<i>Individual Creativity (Z)</i>	0.354	0.621	<b>0.891</b>

Source: SmartPLS 3.0 Processing Results (2021)

### **Discriminant Validity Testing**

The results of the discriminant validity test in Table 3. above show that all constructs have a square root value of AVE above the correlation value with other latent constructs (through the Fornell-Larcker criteria). Likewise, the cross-loading value of all items from an indicator is greater than the other indicator items as mentioned in Table 4. below, so it can be concluded that the model has met discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

**Table 4.***Collinearity Statistics (VIF)*

Variables	X	Y	Z
Leadership Autonomy Support (X)	<b>1.144</b>		1,000
Innovative Behavior (Y)			
Individual Creativity (Z)		<b>1.144</b>	

Source: SmartPLS 3.0 Processing Results (2021)

**Hypothesis test**

Based on Table 5. below, the R Square value of individual creativity (Z) is 0.126, which means that the individual creativity variable (Z) can be explained by the leadership autonomy support variable (X) of 12.6%, while the remaining 87.4% is explained by other variables that are not discussed in this study. The R Square value of innovative behavior (Y) is 0.451, which means that the variable innovative behavior (Y) can be explained by the leadership autonomy support variable (X) and individual creativity (Z) of 45.1%, while the remaining 54.9% is explained by other variables that are not discussed in this study.

**Table 5.***Value of R Square*

Variables	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Innovative Behavior (Y)	0.451	0.432
Individual Creativity (Z)	0.126	0.111

Source: SmartPLS 3.0 Processing Results (2021)

Table 6 shows t-statistics and p-values which show the influence between the research variables that have been mentioned.

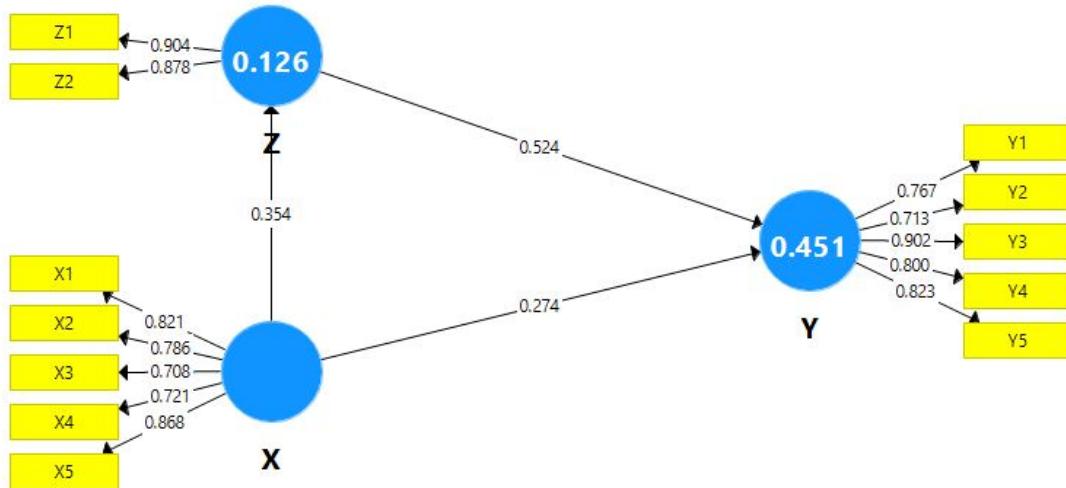
**Table 6.***Hypotheses Testing*

Hypotheses	Relationship	Beta	SE	T Statistics	P-Values	Decision
H1	Z -> Y	0.524	0.094	5,597	0.000	<i>Supported</i>
H2	X -> Z	0.354	0.130	2.730	0.007	<i>Supported</i>
H3	X -> Y	0.274	0.115	2.382	0.018	<i>Supported</i>
H4	X -> Z -> Y	0.186	0.069	2.690	0.007	<i>Supported</i>

Source: SmartPLS 3.0 Processing Results (2021)

Individual creativity has a significant effect on innovative behavior ( $\beta = 0.524$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), thus supporting Hypothesis 1. Furthermore, leadership autonomy has also been shown to have a significant effect on individual creativity ( $\beta = 0.354$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and innovative behavior ( $\beta = 0.274$ ),  $p < 0.05$ ) thus supporting Hypotheses 2 and 3. Also, in line with Hypotheses 2 and 3, leadership autonomy also has a significant effect on innovative behavior mediated by individual creativity ( $\beta = 0.186$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) so that Hypothesis 4 can predict that Individual creativity can mediate the

relationship between leadership autonomy and individual innovative behavior. This explanation can be seen in Figure 2. below



**Figure 2.**  
*Valid Research Model*  
 Source: SmartPLS 3.0 Processing Results (2021)

## Discussion

The results of data analysis show that: First, individual creativity has a positive and significant effect on innovative behavior. Thus the H1 hypothesis is supported and these findings are in line with Amabile et al. (2005) and Slätten et al. (2011). Thus it can be stated that increasing innovative behavior can be done by encouraging creative behavior in employees.

Second, the support for leadership autonomy has a positive and significant effect on individual creativity and the H2 hypothesis is supported. Leaders who provide wider autonomy to subordinates can be a source of motivation by employees in increasing their efforts and focus to behave more creatively. This is evidenced by research by Amabile et al., (2005) and Hocine & Zhang, (2014).

Third, the support for leadership autonomy has a positive and significant effect on individual innovative behavior, and hypothesis H3 is accepted, as well as in line with Amabile et al., (2005), Gagné & Deci, (2005) and Hocine & Zhang, (2014). Granting broad autonomy by leaders to subordinates can increase and change creative thinking on innovative ideas into concrete actions and behavior; Fourth, leadership autonomy has a positive and significant effect on innovative behavior mediated by individual creativity. hypothesis H4 is accepted. It can be stated that autonomy support for leadership encourages employee creative behavior and then has an impact on increasing innovative behavior, this is in line with the research of Amabile et al, (2005) and Hocine & Zhang, (2014) which stated a positive and significant effect.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

This research aims to measure the effect of leadership autonomy support on innovative behavior mediated by individual creativity in MSMEs employees in Banten. The research results conclude that: First, individual creativity has a positive and significant effect on innovative behavior; Second, support for leadership autonomy has a positive and significant effect on individual creativity and innovative behavior; Furthermore, thirdly, the support for leadership autonomy has a positive and significant effect on innovative behavior mediated by the individual creativity of employees in the packaging industry in Banten.

The study of a phenomenon is not enough to be done just once. It is necessary to carry out studies and research on an ongoing basis so that the results obtained can be generalized. Therefore, for future research, there are several things that need to be considered, namely: First, further research should examine sectors other than packagings, such as the service industry, finance, education, and other sectors so that they can enrich the research topic; Second, it is advisable to increase the sample size to produce a more comprehensive study conclusion; and Third, it is better to add and include other relevant variables, such as motivation, leadership, HR practices, and so on so that research on this theme is more complete.

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Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study.

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