



## Unravelling the concept of innovative work behavior: A critical review

**Salma S. PARVEEN**

ORCID: 0000-0001-8106-3844

**Asi VASUDEVA REDDY**

ORCID: 0000-0001-6198-3264

*Vellore Institute of Technology, Chennai, India*

**Abstract.** *Purpose.* Innovative work behavior ensures an organization's survival and performance in the volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environment. The goal of this paper is to facilitate the concept of innovative work behavior theoretically by exploring the previous studies in detail. *Methodology.* A condensed article is provided based on the review of literature of 73 peer reviewed articles. This paper caters to serve two purposes. First, to explore the dimensions of Innovative work behavior. Second, to provide a concise framework based on the antecedents and consequences of innovative work behavior. *Findings.* Extensive review of literature has outlined idea exploration, idea generation and idea realization as the notable attributes of the Innovative work behavior. The antecedents provided in this paper are designated into three groups namely individual, work environment and organizational characteristics. Some of the factors like intrinsic motivation, emotions, work engagement, experience, leadership, and organizational justice were identified to have an influence on Innovative work behavior. Thus, instilling employees to be innovative at work would not only enhance their job satisfaction, productivity and effectiveness but would also minimize their intention to leave. *Value of results.* The framework provided in this paper would help the researchers to propose various notions for empirically testing the innovative work behavior.

**Keywords:** creativity, innovation, innovative work behavior, job satisfaction, leadership, organizational efficiency.

### Introduction

Innovation has always been substantial to an organization's development. Several researchers have widely accepted the significance of innovation for effective functioning of the organization. VUCA environment (volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous) has resulted organizations to adjust by anticipating innovative products and services to sustain in the marketplace. Therefore, organizations are in constant need of upgradation in terms of innovation to gain a competitive edge among its competitors (Nylén, Holmström, 2015; Joshi et al., 2017; Frishammar et al., 2019). Academicians have shown an evolving interest in determining the factors influencing the employees innovative work behavior (Woodman et al., 1993; Scott, Bruce, 1994). S. G. Scott and R. A. Bruce considered creativity to be an

essential component of innovative work behavior (IWB), particularly at the outset, to design novel and functional ideas (Scott Bruce, 1994). IWB, on the other hand, encompasses more than just innovation because it also involves promoting and executing ideas. IWB is the “everyday innovation” based on the employee’s conscious efforts to generate potential consequences at work (Janssen, 2000).

IWB can therefore be defined as “the intentional creation, introduction and application of new ideas within a work role, group or organization, in order to benefit role performance, the group, or the organization” (Janssen, 2000, p. 288). Organizations must become more innovative as the surroundings get more intricate and therefore should identify new methods for the sustainable performance (Shalley et al., 2004). Prior investigations have highlighted employees as the vital source of innovation and have emphasized the significance of IWB. Individual and work environmental and organizational aspects have been explored as antecedents to individual’s creative behavior in research on innovative work behavior. Today, firms are relying on innovation to accommodate swift changes in the economy and acquire a competitive edge in the market.

Innovation improves organizational performance as it allows organizations to respond faster and capitalize the market opportunities (Damanpour, 1991; Thornhill, 2006; Jiménez, Valle, 2011). IWB is described as an individual’s purposeful behavior to create and execute novel and valuable ideas that are explicitly curated to assist the person, community, or a business (Bos-Nehles et al., 2017). Employees innovate since they are in constant proximity with the surroundings and can recognize possible refinements and new advancements. However, employees tend to be innovative if they are engrossed in activities focused on the generation and execution of ideas. Employee’s innovative behavior, on the other hand, are critical to an organization’s innovative approach as employees are the foundation of all innovation. Despite its significance, understanding of IWB and how it might be modified remains fragmented and imprecise. As a result, organization’s potential to innovate may be limited since they are clueless about activating employees to participate in innovation led activities. Therefore, the current paper anticipates to a) explore the dimensions of the IWB; b) provide a concise framework on the antecedents and consequences of the IWB.

## Literature review

### Innovative work behavior

IWB is defined as “*the intentional creation, introduction, and application of new ideas within a work role, group, or organization, in order to benefit role performance, the group, or the organization*” (Janssen, 2000, p. 288) or as working towards achieving the inception and purposeful establishment of the new and helpful abstracts, commodity, process, or course of action (within a work role, group, or organization) through an individual behavior (Farr, Ford, 1990). Each element of the process includes a variety of behaviors that occur sequentially (Scott, Bruce, 1994). Several researchers contemplate IWB as a “multistage process” with creativity exhibited in the first stage (Janssen, 2000) where an employee primarily identifies difficulties at the workplace and later develops new abstracts; next mobilizes aid from subordinates for the new idea; finally, executes the idea into actuality by developing a new sample or blueprint. Similarly, creativity can be highlighted as an important constituent of IWB, particularly during the commencement of the innovation when challenges or gaps are reinforced, and novelty are developed in retaliation to an identified requirement for innovation.

Creativity can be defined as *the production of novel and useful ideas by an individual or a small group of individuals working together whereas the innovation is the successful implementation of the creative ideas* (Amabile, 1988, p. 126). Individual behaviors that elicit the creation, generation, and implementation of the positive notions at different levels of work are referred to as IWB (West,

2002). IWB differs from the employee creativity as it incorporates the implementation of the ideas. Therefore, creativity is vital for the innovation process. Innovative work behavior is an external representation of employee's inner creativity as it paves way to construct creative products and processes by which employees bring about and imply new ways to enhance efficiency or address work specific challenges (Janssen et al., 2004; Zhou, George, 2001). J. P. Jong and D. N. Hartog elucidated IWB as the "individuals" behavior directed toward the commencement and intentional introduction of innovative and helpful ideas, processes, products, or procedures in a work role, group organization" (Jong, Hartog, 2007). IWB is associated to worker creativity, but unlike the latter, the former must result in ultimate output and genuine consequences (Larson, 2013). A clear understanding of the dimensions of the IWB is discussed in the next section.

### **Dimensions of the innovative work behavior**

Though enormous studies have been carried out to actualize and materialize the innovative work behavior, it is often measured using a single dimension of the construct by J. P. Jong and D. N. Hartog (Jong, Hartog, 2007). IWB was operationalized as the "multistage process" (Scott, Bruce, 1994). The dimensions of the IWB usually represent the innovation process. Some of the dimensions mentioned in the previous investigations are tabulated below. This paper strives its best to acknowledge the theoretical aspects of the innovative work behavior by emphasizing the theory behind the stated list of constructs and variables (Sutton, Staw, 1995). Studies on dimensions like idea generation suggests that it may relate to the process, products, services, entry into the new markets (Amabile, 1988; Kanter, 1988; Ven van de, 1986). Idea promotion (Drucker, 1985) and idea realization (Galbraith, 1982; Kanter, 1983; 1988) were found to be next in line for the innovation process. Idea championing includes looking for support and coalition building (Kanter, 1988) by the means of enthusiasm, confidence, persistence and including the right people (Howell et al., 2005). Efforts and the attitude of the employees being outcome oriented was found to accelerate the process of the implementation of ideas (Kleysen, Street, 2001) which results in the creation, testing and alteration of the new commodity, process, or services (Kanter, 1988). Application of ideas achieved through the innovative work behavior brings about innovative results which in turn helps an organization survive in this competitive world (Yidong, Xinxin, 2013).

Recent research has looked at how IWB can improve employees' ability to innovate by investigating four closely related sets of behavior related activities namely "*problem recognition, idea generation, idea promotion and idea realization*". The first two activities constitute the creative work behavior phase, and the latter represents the deployment-oriented behavior in which individuals attempt to encourage a unique idea to prospective peers and management, as well as to generate realistic ideas that were adopted within the work, team, or an entire organization (Jong, Hartog, 2010). Employees who are ready to innovate, according to studies, reach out to the limits of their job responsibilities while achieving a continual flow of inventions (Parker et al., 2006). As a result, an increasing number of firms are attempting to improve their employee's IWB to sustain in increasingly unstable and complex surroundings otherwise known as the VUCA environment (Pradhan, Jena, 2019).

The dimensions in the table below are consolidated with reference to the existing literature provided by the notable researchers of this domain. The dimensions are in accordance with the innovation process. This paper entails better understanding and comprehension of the elements of the innovative work behavior. However, the final study on dimensions carried out by J. P. Jong and D. N. Hartog concluded that the innovative work behavior to be one dimensional (Jong, Hartog, 2010). The antecedents and consequences of the study are briefly discussed in the next section.

Table 1. Dimensions of innovative work behavior

Dimensions	Research
Opportunity exploration	Kleysen, Street, 2001; Shane, 2003.
Idea exploration	Kanter, 1988; Farr, Ford, 1990; Kleysen, Street, 2001; Basadur, 2004; Jong, Hartog, 2010.
Idea generation	Ven van de, 1986; Kanter, 1988; Amabile, 1988; Runco, Chand, 1994; Janssen, 2000; Shane, 2003; Basadur, 2004; Krause, 2004; Dorenbosch et al., 2005; Jong, Hartog, 2010.
Idea promotion	Drucker, 1985; Janssen, 2000; Dorenbosch et al., 2005.
Idea realization	Galbraith, 1982; Kanter, 1983; 1988; Shane, 1994; Janssen, 2000; Dorenbosch et al., 2005.
Idea championing	Shane, 1994; Kleysen, Street, 2001; Howell et al., 2005; Jong, Hartog, 2010.
Idea implementation	Kleysen, Street, 2001; Krause, 2004; Jong, Hartog, 2010.

### Antecedents and consequences of the innovative work behavior

The antecedents are the contributory factors which lead to the occurrence of a notion (Walker, Avant, 2011). Various components have been identified as antecedents of IWB and have been widely researched. The current paper groups the antecedents into the individual characteristics, work environmental characteristics and the organizational characteristics.

Motivation has been considered a vital part of the innovation process in several studies. Motivated and emotionally stable employees would display innovative work behavior to a great extent as they are more enthusiastic, eager, and attentive. Further studies on IWB have emphasized the role of motivation in generating and implementing new ideas (Amabile, 1996; Isen, 2001; Binnewies et al., 2007; Vinarski-Peretz, Carmeli, 2011; Ma Prieto, Pilar Pérez-Santana, 2014). Individual problem solving (knowledge sharing behavior and perceived supervisor support, compensation, training, and development information sharing aid in the development of the employee's innovative work behavior through accessing people's knowledge and experience (Akhavan et al., 2015; Bos-Nehles, Veenendaal, 2019; Scott, Bruce, 1994).

The work environmental factors like work group relations, job specific experience, professional certification, workplace relationships and team identification lead to the reinforcement of innovative behavior at work (Janssen, 2003; Asurakkody, Shin, 2018; Shahid et al., 2020). Workplace relationships involving trust, shared values, commitment, perfectionism and other factors like workload and team learning behavior promotes the employees to be innovative at work by ensuring effective problem-solving abilities among the employees which further decreases job burnout (Janssen, 2004; Widmann et al., 2016; Asurakkody, Shin, 2018; Montani et al., 2019).

Previous investigations on the organizational factors have noted leadership as the most prominent antecedent of the IWB as it stimulates the process of innovation. Leaders also play a prominent role in establishing a supportive innovative climate at workplace by providing them the opportunities to explore. Leader's paradox mindset also fosters creativity and enhances psychological empowerment among the employees which further leads to innovation (Pieterse et al., 2009b; Afsar et al., 2014; Larson 2013; Liu et al., 2019). Some of the notable leadership styles mentioned in the previous studies were transformational leadership, transactional leadership, ethical leadership, leader member exchange and spiritual leadership (Krause, 2004; Jong, Hartog, 2007; Pieterse et al., 2009; Yidong, Xinxin, 2012; Agarwal et al., 2012; Afsar et al., 2014; Pradhan, Jena, 2019; Khan et al., 2020; Baker, 2020; Alfarajat, Emeagwali, 2021).

Workplace spirituality is instilled among the employees through a sense of calling and membership facilitated by the spiritual leadership (Reddy, 2019; Alfarajat, Emeagwali, 2021). Considering the equity theory and the social exchange theory the employees appraise in terms of efforts taken and rewards gained (Adams, 1965; Blaue, 1964). Past studies have addressed the effects of organizational fairness and justice in shaping the employees innovative work behavior. The perception of the organizational justice imbibes a sense of trust among the employees which

latter motivates them to be engaged at work (Janssen, 2004; Agarwal et al., 2012; Ma Prieto, Pilar Pérez-Santana, 2014; Agarwal, 2014; Asurakkody, Shin, 2018). Learning organization influences the innovative work behavior through work engagement (Park et al., 2013).

Employee reputation as innovative, perceived organizational support for innovation, innovativeness as job requirement and supervisor relationship quality provides a social recognition for the employees to innovate and accelerate their performance at work (Yuan, Woodman, 2010; Jordan et al., 2020). Diversity climate and job crafting fosters innovative climate in an organization (Bos-Nehles et al., 2017; Asurakkody, Shin, 2018). A study concluded that employees who tend to accept the diversification at workplace are likely to possess excellent job crafting abilities leading to innovative work behavior (Baig et al., 2022). HRM practices fosters IWB as it encourages idea generation and idea implementation among the employees thereby improving organizational performance (Ma Prieto, Pilar Pérez-Santana, 2014; Bos-Nehles et al., 2017; Asurakkody, Shin, 2018).

A conceptual framework is thereby provided for the detailed comprehension of the antecedents and consequences of the IWB. The above framework classifies the antecedents into the individual, work environment and organizational factors. These factors when taken into consideration will promote the innovative work behavior thereby benefiting the organization.

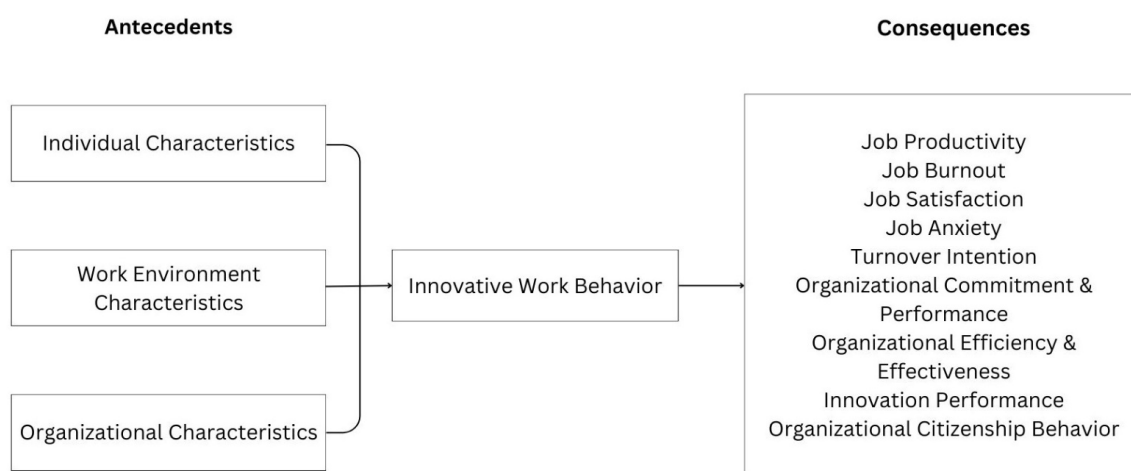


Figure 1. Antecedents and Consequences of the IWB. Source: Authors

The above framework classifies the antecedents into the individual, work environment and organizational factors. These factors when taken into consideration will promote the innovative work behavior thereby benefiting the organization. The table 2 provided below categorizes the antecedents based on the in-depth review of literature.

The work level consequences of the innovative work behavior put forth by the earlier investigations were increased job productivity, job satisfaction (Robinson, Beesley, 2010), decreased job burnout (Janssen, 2004; Asurakkody, Shin, 2018), lower levels of job-related anxiety (Janssen, 2004) and decrease in turnover intention (Agarwal et al., 2012).

IWB benefits the overall organization by enhancing the organizational commitment, organizational performance, organizational efficiency, and effectiveness (Asurakkody, Shin, 2018; Robinson, Beesley, 2010); innovation performance (Laursen, Foss, 2003) and organizational citizenship behavior (Saks, 2006) owing to the effective implementation of the factors addressed above. Effective understanding of the antecedents and the consequences would help employees to stay committed to the organization which paves way for the organizations to perform better in all spheres.

Table 2. Antecedents of the innovative work behavior

Characteristics	Examples
Individual characteristics	Knowledge sharing behavior (Akhavan et al., 2015); Individual problem solving (Scott, Bruce, 1994); Individual intrinsic motivation and emotions (Amabile, 1996; Isen, 2001; Binnewies et al., 2007; Vinarski-Peretz, Carmeli, 2011; Ma Prieto, Pilar Pe´rez-Santana, 2014); Motivation of the employees, risk taking behavior, flexibility of the individuals, perfectionism (Asurakkody, Shin, 2018); Psychological contract fulfilment (Agarwal, 2014); Perceived (compensation, training and development, information sharing, supervisor support) (Bos-Nehles, Veenendaal, 2019), Supervisor relationship quality, perceived organizational support for innovation, Employee reputation as innovative, Innovativeness as job requirement, individual dissatisfaction with the status quo (Yuan & Woodman, 2010; Jordan et al., 2020), Psychological Empowerment (Afsar et al., 2014; Pieterse et al., 2009b), Paradox mindset (Liu et al., 2019).
Work environmental characteristics	Work group relations, job specific experience, professional certification, team workplace relationships (Asurakkody, Shin, 2018), Work engagement (Agarwal et al, 2012), Workplace Spirituality (Alfarajat, Emeagwali, 2021), Team learning behavior (Widmann et al., 2016), Workload (Montani et al., 2019), Team identification (Shahid et al., 2022).
Organizational characteristics	Leadership (Krause, 2004; Jong, Hartog, 2007; Pieterse et al., 2009; Afsar et al., 2014; Yidong, Xinxin, 2012; Agarwal et al., 2012; Alfarajat, Emeagwali, 2021; Pradhan, Jena, 2019; Khan et al., 2020; Baker, 2020), Learning organization (Park et al., 2014; Asurakkody, Shin, 2018), Organizational justice (Janssen, 2004; Asurakkody, Shin, 2018; Agarwal, 2014; Ma Prieto, Pilar Pérez-Santana, 2014), HR practices — feedback, training and development, reward fairness, autonomy, job demand ,task composition and job security (Ma Prieto, Pilar Pérez-Santana, 2014; Bos-Nehles et al., 2017; Asurakkody, Shin, 2018), Innovative climate (Asurakkody, Shin, 2018; Bos-Nehles et al., 2017); diversity climate (Baig et al., 2022).

## Discussions and conclusion

IWB is a multifaceted behavior in which individuals originate and implement ideas at work. Considering these creative processes, IWB assists firms in gaining a competitive edge and establishing sustainability by investigating solutions and opportunities (AlEsa, Durugbo, 2021). Since its inception, the innovative work behavior has sparked attention among researchers which makes it important for the organizations to understand its notion. Therefore, it has evolved as an important concept for academics, professionals, and policymakers across disciplines.

This review paper contributes to the scholarly knowledge of the innovative work behavior. The dimensions of the IWB are clearly discussed in the given paper with reference to the several notions put forth by various researchers. Theoretically, IWB is identified to be multidimensional but there is no empirical evidence owing to the weak level of distinctiveness and high intercorrelation among the dimensions leading to an overall measure of IWB (Janssen, 2000; Jong, Hartog, 2010). This study also effectively articulates various factors that influence the employee’s innovative behavior. It is evident from the previous studies that employees propose and implement ideas when they have a stake in decision-making (Jong, Hartog, 2010). Furthermore, employees that find purpose in their job are likely to be intrinsically motivated to make a positive influence on the organization, thereby promoting task completion. Intrinsic motivation, as well as accountability, control and efficacy are likely to improve with leadership. This will in turn increase employee’s willingness to participate in innovation. Enhancing leadership through values will result in the alignment of organizational beliefs which will in turn engage employees to be innovate at work. Likewise creating and maintaining a supportive and innovative climate will infuse employee productivity. The organizations must inculcate an environment where the employees feel appreciated and acknowledged which will

thereby encourage employees to be innovative at work. The perception of the employees with respect to the supervisors and organization plays a significant role in motivating employee to be engaged at work.

This paper also paves way for the future researchers to empirically test the relationships provided above. This paper serves as a one stop source for the researchers to look onto various notions of the innovative work behavior. IWB is not just about providing solutions to the problems or developing ideas rather it is about turning those ideas by effectively implementing them into the organizational processes. IWB can therefore be put forth as an innate quality exhibited by an employee under certain circumstances which is often hindered by several individual, work environmental and organizational factors. It is necessary for an organization to create a desired and crafted environment for innovation by bestowing employees with opportunities to explore. IWB can also retain employees by reducing their intention to quit through effective leadership and organizational justice. IWB can be fostered by encouraging the employees to bring out their best self and by creating a supportive climate for innovation. IWB allows the employees to showcase their inert creativity and it also minimizes the monotony at work by engaging employees to think outside the box.

IWB thus helps an organization survive in a competitive environment by allowing them to benchmark to the standards set by the other organizations through innovation. Therefore, the antecedents, dimensions and outcomes emphasized in this work will aid in the creation of evaluation tools as well as future research frameworks for the empirical testing of the innovative work behavior.

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# Концепция инновационного трудового поведения: критический обзор

ПАРВИН Сальма С.

ORCID: 0000-0001-8106-3844

РЕДДИ Аси Васудева

ORCID: 0000-0001-6198-3264

Технологический институт Веллора, Ченнаи, Индия

**Аннотация.** Цель. Инновационное рабочее поведение (*innovative work behavior, IWB*) обеспечивает выживание и производительность организации в нестабильной, неопределённой, сложной и неоднозначной среде (*VUCA environment*). Целью данной статьи является теоретическая поддержка концепции инновационного рабочего поведения путём детального изучения предыдущих исследований. **Методология.** Краткая статья представлена на основе обзора литературы из 73 рецензируемых статей. Статья преследует две цели. Во-первых, изучить измерения инновационного рабочего поведения. Во-вторых, предоставить краткую структуру, основанную на предпосылках и последствиях инновационного трудового поведения. **Выводы.** Обширный обзор литературы позволил выделить тщательный поиск идей, порождение и реализацию идей как примечательные атрибуты инновационного рабочего поведения. Предпосылки такого поведения, представленные в этой статье, разделены на три группы, а именно: личностные особенности, рабочая среда и организационные характеристики. Было установлено, что некоторые факторы, такие как внутренняя мотивация, эмоции, вовлечённость в работу, опыт, лидерство и организационная справедливость, оказывают влияние на инновационное рабочее поведение. Таким образом, приучение сотрудников к инновационному подходу на работе не только повысит их удовлетворённость работой, производительность и эффективность, но также сведёт к минимуму их намерение уволиться. **Ценность результатов.** Структура, представленная в этой статье, поможет исследователям предложить различные концепции для эмпирической проверки инновационного рабочего поведения.

**Ключевые слова:** креативность, инновации, инновационное трудовое поведение, удовлетворённость работой, лидерство, организационная эффективность.