

Investigating the Nexus Between Inspirational Leadership and Innovative Work Behavior Among Public Sector Employees

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of inspirational leadership on employees' innovative work behavior in Omani public sector. Using a convenient sampling, data were collected from 175 employees occupying different Omani function in public sector. Measurement and path analysis in SEM was employed and the finding reveals that inspirational leadership that encompasses features such as self-efficacy, change orientation and empowerment are relevant in engaging employees with innovative work behavior. This research offers a validated framework that may enhance the creativity of the employees of the public sector from a leadership perspective. Interesting recommendations are given to engage in inspirational leadership development programs to be in service of the innovation and competitiveness that are the main pillars of the Omani vision 2020-2040 concretization.

Keywords: *Inspirational Leadership, Self-Efficacy on Solving Problems, Change Orientation, Empowerment, Innovative Work Behavior.*

Introduction

Oman has an ambitious vision of 2040 to achieve high ranks in the global innovation and creativity indicators, nevertheless, the traditional role of the public sector rendered the country's economy to be less effective. Public organizations have modest performance with a culture that does not promote innovation (AL Rawas et al., 2023). Oman public sector organizations follow a hierarchical organizational setting, where the leaders centralize power and make the decisions which are followed by the employees (Saadouli and Al-Khanbashi,2021).

For this reason, the Vision of 2040 set directions to promote the competitiveness of this sector. The public sector cannot isolate itself from the dynamic changes in the external environment as it must seek ways to achieve competitive advantage that guarantee growth, survival and continuity (Al Ani et al.,2021). To do so, the public sector is required to improve in different aspects, such as increasing employees' knowledge, skills and capabilities and therefore better productivity and also the challenges posed by the external environment requires from the public sector to promote innovative work behavior among their employees (Sallem et al., 2024), in order to boost the country ranking on the global innovation index among other benefits too (Al-Mahrezi et al., 2020). Many scholars argued that numerous companies do not derive their competitive advantages from offering the lowest prices, the latest technologies, nor the best products either. Instead, they derive their advantages from being innovative. Embracing innovation in the public sector can unlock new opportunities and drive economic diversification, aligning with the vision's overarching themes (De Vries et al., 2016; Borins, 2002). To this end, leaders in public sector have an important role in developing the innovative mindset among employees, which demands a new form of leadership (Azeem et al., 2021; Distanont, 2020).

At the core of this ambitious roadmap lies the synergy between leadership and the innovative behavior framework, guiding the public sector towards sustainable growth, well-being, and global competitiveness.

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Leadership occupies special importance in contemporary management studies because of its significant impact on all elements of organizations, as well as influencing the behavior of employees in order to achieve their goals, exploit available opportunities, and deal positively with the various risks they are exposed to (Hoai et al., 2022). Yet, the answer of which of particular leadership style would promote innovative work behavior is not conclusive in the literature.

Despite this, inspiring leadership emerges as a cornerstone in shaping the innovative behavior among employees (Bonau, 2017). This is because inspiring leadership promotes autonomy that will foster employees' independent thinking and creativity (Schaufeli, 2021). This style of leadership facilitates followers' learning, innovativeness and pro-activeness. It is also challenging followers' traditional way of performing tasks and thus results in stimulating learning and innovation (Sosik, 2006). Furthermore, inspiring leadership pays attention to human relationships and ethical aspects and generates positive attitudes in the workplace (Salas-Vallina et al., 2020).

At the intersection of the need of visionary leadership and Oman's ambitious development agenda lies a complex framework of inspiring leadership dimensions – key attributes and qualities that guide leaders in navigating the challenges and opportunities for increasing the public sector competitiveness. Characterized by visionary guidance, motivation, and empowerment, inspiring leadership can rally individuals and organizations toward the ambitious goals outlined in the Vision 2040 (Al Marshoudi and Jamaluddin, 2023).

Together, inspiring leadership and innovative work behavior can cultivate a culture of excellence, creativity, and progress in Oman, positioning the nation to thrive in an increasingly complex and interconnected world. By nurturing and empowering leaders who champion innovation and inspire others to action, Oman can accelerate its journey towards a prosperous, inclusive, and sustainable future as envisioned in Oman Vision 2040. In today's rapidly evolving world, inspiring leadership and innovative work behavior are not just desirable traits but essential components for success. As public sector navigates dynamic market landscapes and societal changes, it requires leaders who can inspire and guide their teams toward creative solutions and transformative ideas (Marcy, 2023).

Studies that relate leadership and innovation are evident in the literature. Gui et al. (2024) focused on the role of transformational leadership (TL) on innovation capability. Klaic et al. (2020) focused on investigating the relationship between transformational leadership and team innovation. Alblooshi et al. (2021) provided systematic literature review and narrative synthesis on which leadership styles influence organization innovation. This systematic review of numerous articles of leadership and innovation reached a conclusion that the prior studies had many limitations and focused on specific leadership styles over other important emerging ones. Gelaidan et al. (2022) and Mubarak et al. (2018) turned their focus on the effect of authentic leadership on organization innovation and creativity. Sethibe and Steyn (2017) questioned which leadership styles (i.e. transactional vs. transformational style) influence the innovative behavior among employees. Tahir (2020) investigated the influence of ethical leadership on promoting employees' innovation among ICT sector in Oman. All of the aforementioned studies contributed to the existing body of knowledge of leadership literature, nevertheless, inspiring leadership as an emerging style was not the focus of these studies and particularly leadership in the public sector did not receive substantial attention either. Differently, Toseef et al. (2022) turned the focus on inspirational leadership and its effects on innovative communication. Salas Vallina et al. (2019) examined whether inspirational leadership affects individual ambidexterity. Sheffield et al. (2023) pointed out the requirement to conduct further research to bring further insights for an emerging field by exploring different styles of leadership and how they infuse and develop the necessary competencies for innovative work behavior among employees. Bonau (2017) argued that despite the relevancy of inspirational leadership style for practitioners, however, this style of leadership has not gained substantial research attention.

We respond to this paucity by investigating the relationship between the various dimensions of inspiring leadership and innovative work behavior. The relationship between them is unclear and requires further justification. The current study poses a timely question on how the different aspects of inspirational leadership influence the innovative work behavior among employees in the public sector? The study framework consists of inspiring leadership as an independent variable. The inspiring leadership

encompasses several dimensions, such as; empowerment of employees, leader's charisma, and strategic direction, alongside change management. While the dependent variable is innovative work behavior.

The objective of this study is to examine the relationship between inspiring leadership in different dimensions and innovative work behavior for employees in the public sector. We by doing so contribute to the leadership literature and theory by understanding the contingent conditions enforced by the competitive environment to practice inspirational leadership style and provide evidence on how such style is relevant to fill the purpose of transforming the mindset of employees in the public sector to think and implement innovation. Furthermore, by understanding the relationship between these variables and their implications for Oman's journey toward Vision 2040, we can glean valuable lessons applicable to the public sector striving for sustainable growth and prosperity in an increasingly complex global landscape. Hence our study carries significant implications for organizational leaders, HR professionals, and policymakers. It addresses the pressing need to create and encourage the practices of inspiring leadership and employees' innovative work behavior. Organizations in the public sector can craft training and development programs to equip future leaders with inspirational attributes so they can nurture a culture of innovation, elevate employee engagement, and achieve strategic objectives aligned with Oman's ambitious vision for the future.

Who is the Inspirational Leader?

Several scholars view inspirational leadership as a segment of transformational leadership (Hashim et al., 2021; Bass, 1988). Although there are some similarities between inspirational leadership and transformational leadership, there are some unique distinguishes for each leadership style. Inspirational leaders are responsible and accountable, such leaders ensure that their work morals and ethics are aligned with the organization's values and goals. Inspirational leaders are known to be authentic leaders who lead by example to inspire their followers to follow their vision. Several studies connect organizational success with inspirational leadership (Ng, 2017). Bowers et al. (2017) described this leadership style as a detail-oriented leader who seeks consensus from everyone and can provide the big picture. A leader who adopts an inspirational leadership style can help in posing unique personality traits that aid in motivating and influencing the employees and establishing a positive working environment that supports open communication. Hence, communication is considered one of the main characteristics of such a leadership style. A unique characteristic that distinguishes the inspirational leadership style is the ability to create an environment where mistakes are tolerable, and it is a way to foster learning (Bonau, 2017). Overall, the studies regarding inspirational leadership are limited as reported by (Dinh et al., 2014).

Hypothesis Development

Leader's Self-Efficacy on Solving Problems and Innovative Work Behavior

Self-efficacy is defined as “beliefs in one's capabilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action needed to meet given situational demands” (Wood and Bandura, 1989, p. 408). Self-efficacy is considered a critical aspect and attribute of successful leaders (McCormick, 2001). Self-efficacy reflects one's beliefs in their capabilities. Studies showed that leaders with self-efficacy characteristics are equipped and prepared to deal with any challenges and situations that might arise within the work environment since these leaders focus on empowering their employees and fostering problem-solving and innovative behaviors among the employees (Sarwoko, 2020). Inspirational leaders lead by example and create a work environment that fosters the sense of learning from one's mistakes (Bonau, 2017), this might result in increasing the self-efficacy of the leaders as well as the followers within an organization. Additionally, knowing one's capabilities helps boost self-confidence. A number of studies that researched self-efficacy within the inspirational leadership framework reported that such leaders focus on enhancing their employees' self-confidence allowing the employees to be more innovative (Sarwoko, 2020). Although studies regarding innovative work behaviors and their connection to inspirational leadership are limited in the literature, however, according to Shenhar (2015), inspirational leaders' traits boost innovative ideas among subordinates. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Leader's problem solving self-efficacy is associated positively with innovative work behavior.

Leader's Change Orientation and Innovative Work Behavior

Nowadays work environment is fast-paced and continuously changing. For organizations to survive and have a competitive advantage the organization should be innovative and flexible to change. Adequate leaders transfer the change vision and inspire their subordinates to be innovative (Oke et al., 2009). When leaders support the change and positively communicate the possible future, the subordinates will be motivated and inspired to contribute their ideas and solutions liberally (Denti and Hemlin, 2012). A number of studies indicated that leaders that are change-oriented not only embrace new ideas themselves but also encourage their teams to be adaptable and open to innovation (De Jong and Den Hartog, 2007). This type of leadership drives a culture of continuous improvement and creativity. Here the role of the leader is highlighted as a person who can foster change and innovative working behavior, such can occur if the leader utilizes his capability to think, reason, judge, and decide (Mistry and Hule, 2015). One of the main characteristics of inspirational leaders is that the subordinates look up to them, therefore, as a result, the employees will adapt to the change and share their innovative behaviors. Inspirational leaders are known to welcome new ideas from their teams and employees, which as a result fosters an innovative culture (Bonau, 2017). Moreover, inspirational leader helps to increase trust, and they empower their employees which might result in developing innovative work behaviors. When the employees feel supported and appreciated, they are more likely to create and implement innovative ideas. In other words, inspirational leaders who are change-orientated can encourage the employees to be innovative, consequently improving idea generation and implementation in organizations. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H2: Leader's change-orientation is positively associated with innovative work behavior.

Subordinates' Empowerment and Innovative Work Behavior

The relationship between subordinates' empowerment and innovative work behavior has been an interesting topic in management and organizational psychology. Empowerment is best described as a multifaceted perception that includes the psychological experience of individuals feeling in control, knowledgeable, and self-determined in their work (Pande & Dhar, 2014). As is indicated empowered employees are known to have a sense of autonomy, and can make decisions, since they sense that their contributions are valued by the leaders and the organization. Research indicated that such employees tend to engage in innovative work behaviors, such as generating and implementing new ideas, problem-solving, and seeking out improvement opportunities. (Pande and Dhar, 2014). Subordinate Empowerment is considered an important aspect in promoting innovative work behavior within any organization's subordinates, as studies showed that such helps in fostering the subordinates to help in decisions, take initiatives, and aid in overall organizational success (Spreitzer et al., 1999; Ashfaq et al., 2021). Additionally, there is a positive relationship between subordinated innovative work behavior and leadership (Chow, 2017; Fischer et al., 2019). Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: *Employees' empowerment is positively associated with innovative work behavior.*

Methodology

Sample Description Data Collection

The study population consisted of all of the employees working in public organizations owned by the government "state owned entity" located in the Southern region of Oman (i.e. Dhofar Governance). Dhofar is the largest governance in Oman and the city of Salalah is the second city in Oman after the capital Muscat. The city of Salalah includes public organizations that follow the same rules and regulations regardless the geographic location. Government owned entities who provide services for citizens, such as Dhofar Municipality, Public Transportation Authority and Ministries were chosen for this study with aim

to maintain homogeneity over the selected sample. Some of the approached state owned entities refused to take part of this study and therefore this study used the convenience sampling method. The inclusion criteria include local employees who have more than one year of working experience.

Data was collected from 205 local employees working in aforementioned organizations through an online structured questionnaire designed with validated scales and items to effectively measure each construct. After obtaining the necessary approval form the relevant HR Department, the link of the survey is distributed through emails among the employees in these organizations. Participants were assured of confidentiality, and informed consent was obtained before participation. In all, all the collected surveys were found useful and none of them contained missing information. The sample consists of different demographic profile as shown in Table I shows the demographical profile of the respondents. In total, there were 175 respondents. The sample consists of 55 females and 120 males. It consists also from respondents who belong to different age category with majority of respondents are between 40 to less than 50 years. Respondents of this survey represent different education level with 9 respondents who have General Diploma (i.e. equivalent to high school certificate) but the rest are Diploma, Bachelor and Master Degree holders. Our respondents represent different range of working years' experience and the majority of them have more than 10 years of working experience. There were also respondents with different job titles, such as employees who represent majority of the sample, Head of Units and Department Directors.

Table I. Demographical Profile of the Respondents

Demographic variable	Classification	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	55	31.4
	Male	120	68.6
Age	Less than 30 years	17	9.7
	From 30 to less than 40 years	65	37.1
	From 40 to less than 50 years	81	46.3
	More than 50	12	6.9
Education Level	General Diploma or less	9	5.1
	Diploma	48	27.4
	Bachelor Degree	68	38.9
	Master Degree	50	28.6
Working years of experience	Less than 5 years	33	18.9
	from 5 to less than 10 years	18	10.3
	More than 10 years	124	70.9
Job title	Employee	107	61.1
	Head of Unit	34	19.4
	Director of Department	34	19.4

Measures

Inspiring Leadership

Inspiring leadership is measured using different dimensions in the literature. There is no consensus on one common scale to measure the construct. Morris (2005) outlined several dimensions for the construct such as sincerely seeking to achieve the interests of others, trust and dependability, the ability to empower, good listening, strategic guidance to develop a common vision. These dimensions were instrumental for other scholars to develop the scale. Greenberg (2008) outlined that inspirational leaders should have self-efficacy

in solving the problems, strategic orientation, ability to manage the change and the ability to empower the followers. Based on this, we operationalized inspiring leadership into four dimensions. These dimensions are assessed using validated measurement scale. Leader's problem-solving self-efficacy which consists of 6 items adapted from (Karademas, 2006), e.g., "capable of planning action", "capable of thinking alternative solutions to a problem or difficulty", leader's change-orientation consists of six items and they were adapted from change-oriented leadership questionnaire developed by (Yukl et al., 2002). Employees empowerment was assessed using 6 items adapted from the empowering leadership questionnaire that consists of items related to participative decision making, coaching and showing concerns with team members (Arnold et al., 2000)

These three dimensions aimed to understand the degree of practicing inspiring leadership in the public organizations from employees' perspectives. This is to avoid biasness that may arise from self-reports.

Innovative Work Behavior

Innovative work behavior (IWB) scale was adapted from Jentsen et al. (2000). The scale consists of 9 items that cover three dimensions, namely; idea generation, idea promotion and idea realization. The scale showed adequate validity and internal consistency. The scale was based on 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree and completed by the employees themselves (self-reported study). The rationale behind the choice of self-reports for IWB lies in two folds. First, an employee's cognitive representation and reports of his/her own IWB may be more subtle than those of his superiors. Second, the use of supervisor rating may miss much of employee innovative activities and may capture on only those gestures intended to impress the supervisor (Organ and Konovsky, 1989).

Data Analysis

Two-step approach that includes measurement model and path analysis was used in this study. The measurement model ensures construct's validity and path analysis is used to test the proposed hypotheses. The data was also subject for potential bias using Harman's single factor extraction test.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table II presents the descriptive statistics for all four constructs proposed in the study. Subordinates have high perceptions on their leaders/managers to have high self-efficacy on solving problems, change orientation and with high ability to empower them. All the average scores of the constructs are above 4 and the highest average score is self-efficacy on solving problems. Each Construct has reasonable value of standard deviation indicating a low dispersion. Furthermore, each construct has skewness and kurtosis values that fall within the recommended range of +2 and -2 to indicate normality (De Carlo, 1997).

Table II. Descriptive Statistics of the Constructs

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
SE	175	2.83	5	4.2657	0.45734	-0.226	-0.315
CO	175	1.83	5	4.0933	0.59305	-0.557	0.873
EE	175	2.67	5	4.2143	0.56388	-0.401	-0.104
IWB	175	2.22	5	4.0267	0.48182	0.058	1.042

On the other hand, Table III presents the pairwise correlation among the constructs. All the three constructs; leader's self-efficacy, leader's change orientation and subordinates' empowerment are positively and significantly ($P < 0.01$) associated with innovative work behavior. subordinate empowerment shows the highest correlation with innovative work behavior with ($r = 0.404$). The correlation among the independent constructs are also positive and significant but the coefficients of correlation does not exceed the value of

0.8, otherwise it will be a sign of multi-collinearity. Self-efficacy on solving problems, change orientation and subordinates' empowerment are positively correlated with each other's.

Table III. Pairwise Correlation

	SE	CO	EE	IWB
SE	1			
CO	.627**	1		
EE	.446**	.598**	1	
IWB	.327**	.319**	.404**	1

The study evaluated a measurement model as shown in Table IV. The constructs show strong internal consistency and convergent validity. The constructs demonstrate adequate convergent validity with CR and AVE values are above the recommended value of 0.7 and 0.5, respectively. Items are loading adequately on each construct with a minimum factor loading of 0.6. The constructs show adequate internal consistency with a Cronbach's Alpha above 0.7. Two items were deleted from the analysis related to self-efficacy and change orientation constructs "SE6" and "CO6" as they have factor loading below the acceptable threshold. Multi-collinearity is not present in this data set, as the VIF value of each construct is below 5. For divergent validity, Fornell and Larcker (1981) approach is used to compare the AVEs square root with correlations among the proposed constructs. If the square roots of AVEs of the construct itself is greater than any of the correlation coefficients, then the divergent validity is established. This is evident in Table V, which indicates that the AVEs (highlighted in bold) are higher than other construct correlation values.

Table IV. Constructs Convergent Validity

Variable	Item	Loading	CR	AVE	Alpha	VIF
	SE1	0.629	0.865	0.565	0.804	1.9
SE	SE2	0.816				
	SE3	0.79				
	SE4	0.717				
	SE5	0.789				
CO	CO1	0.844	0.912	0.675	0.878	2.93
	CO2	0.739				
	CO3	0.874				
	CO4	0.798				
	CO5	0.845				
EE	EE1	0.857				
	EE2	0.823	0.929	0.688	0.908	1.899
	EE3	0.889				
	EE4	0.782				
	EE5	0.849				
	EE6	0.77				
IWB	IWB1	0.649				
	IWB2	0.704	0.915	0.546	0.895	1.237
	IWB3	0.658				
	IWB4	0.789				
	IWB5	0.822				
	IWB6	0.812				
	IWB7	0.738				

	IWB8	0.676			
	IWB9	0.778			

Table V. Constructs Divergent Validity

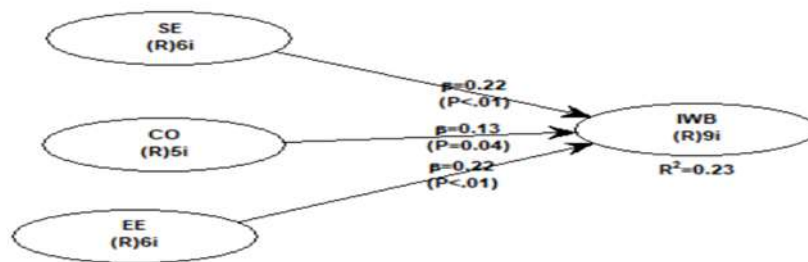
	SE	CO	EE	IWB
SE	0.705	0.586	0.458	0.333
CO	0.586	0.821	0.593	0.301
EE	0.458	0.593	0.829	0.394
IWB	0.333	0.301	0.394	0.739

Table VI shows path coefficient analysis and how strongly each of the three variables (i.e. Self-efficacy, change orientation and subordinates' empowerment) affect innovative work behavior in the model. Leader's self-efficacy has a strong positive influence on innovative work behavior with ($\beta = 0.224$), $P < 0.01$, leading to support H1. Furthermore, leader's change orientation has a moderate positive influence on innovative work behavior with ($\beta = 0.136$), $P < 0.05$ leading to support H2. Moreover, subordinates' empowerment has a strong positive influence on innovative work behavior with ($\beta = 0.217$), $P < 0.01$, leading to support H3. The proposed constructs were able to explain 23 percent in the variation of innovative work behavior as depicted in Figure 1.

Table VI. Path Coefficient Analysis

	β	<i>P-value</i>	Effect size	Result
H1	0.224	0.001	0.09	Supported
H2	0.136	0.033	0.054	Supported
H3	0.217	0.002	0.088	Supported

Figure 1. Tested Model



Discussion

The influence of three dimensions related to inspirational leadership were examined on employees' work innovative behavior in the Omani public sector own state entities and accordingly three hypotheses were proposed. We proposed that leader's self-efficacy and change orientation and subordinates' empowerment to be relevant determinant of employees' innovative work behavior. Inspirational leadership effects on employees' behaviors and attitudes are regarded to be uncharted territory in the literature. Moreover, how does inspirational leadership style effect employees' work behavior is not substantiated. Therefore, this study contributes to the leadership style by investigating a distinctive style of leadership and how its three related dimensions effect the innovative work behavior among the employees in the public sector. This study also addresses an important cutting-edge topic in Oman and similar to other GCC countries on how to promote innovative work behavior among employees in public sector. The study is timely required in tandem with the country efforts to achieve competitive edge and high rank in global innovation index, which requires public sector to embrace changes in the practiced leadership styles.

Our results supported the three proposed hypotheses and we found that leader's self-efficacy on solving problems, change orientations and subordinates' empowerment are indeed positively and significantly associated with innovative work behavior. With reference to leader's self-efficacy, Li et al. (2017) argued that leaders who have confidence in their abilities and use this confidence to solve problems which they encounter at workplace creatively are likely to have a proactive personality. With this proactive personality and self-efficacy, inspiring leaders can improve employees innovative work behavior through social learning exchanges mechanism (Zhang and Zhao, 2023). Our results are in line with previous studies in that leader's self-efficacy plays an important role in enhancing wide range of positive work behaviors in the workplace including innovative work behavior (Sürücü et al., 2022; Iqbal et al., 2023). Inspirational leadership through exhibiting self-efficacy on solving problems promotes innovative work behavior among employees by exerting an influence on employees' self-efficacy to tackle and solve problems creatively, which results in innovative work behavior. Leader's self-efficacy has been widely recognized in the literature as a potent driver of innovation and organizational change (Avolio et al., 1991; Shamir et al., 1993). It goes beyond mere personal confidence, as highlighted by Searle and Hanrahan (2011), who emphasize intentional leadership efforts in inspiring and guiding teams towards innovative outcomes.

Furthermore, leader's change orientation plays a critical role in organizational transitions, as highlighted by Lewin (1951), who proposed a three-stage model involving unfreezing, change implementation, and refreezing to facilitate behavioral change. Effective change management, as advocated Cummings and Worley (2014), involves leadership in communicating rationale, providing support, and addressing employees concerns to minimize disruption and foster the adoption of innovative practices. The literature underscores the pivotal role of leadership in driving organizational innovation and creativity. Studies like that of (Huang et al., 2022; Atitumpong and Badir, 2018) emphasize how leader's orientation to change influences team creativity and innovation, contributing to organizational growth. It was demonstrated that

people resist changes and new ideas at workplace, so the role of leader is to challenge the status-quo by convincing and motivating them to implement the change for better results. Leader's with change orientation focuses on dyadic interaction quality with colleagues to induce changes among them. Leaders through the need of change mindset and with quality interaction inspire co-workers inspire and encourage their colleagues to adopt innovative work behavior that encompasses the recognition of the need of change, suggestion of new ideas to achieve objectives and to implement these suggestions as part of new work methods e (Zhang and Bartol, 2010). Therefore, innovative work behavior will be inherent in environment that is characterized by ambiguity and uncertainty and the role inspirational leadership is to facilitate these changes to co-workers.

Moreover, subordinates' empowerment significantly influences innovative work behavior among employees, this finding aligns with the existing literature emphasizing the critical role of empowering employees in organizational dynamics. Studies consistently highlight the benefits of involving employees in decision-making, fostering autonomy, and building trust in promoting innovative work behavior (Shafi et al., 2020). Leaders who empower subordinates create cultivating environment for innovative work behavior. This is achieved by engaging subordinates in decisions making and give them the autonomy and responsibilities over the tasks to achieve (Rao Jada et al., 2019). Additionally, Shafi et al. (2020) underscore the transformative impact of inspirational leadership combined with intrinsic motivation on creativity and innovation. Schulze and Pinkow (2020) further emphasize the importance of empowering leadership in promoting adaptability and innovation within organizations.

Implications

Despite the wealth of research in various global contexts, there appears to be a gap in understanding how inspirational leadership specifically impacts innovation within the public organizations. While the broader literature provides valuable insights into leadership dynamics (Avolio et al.,1991; Searle and Hanrahan, 2011; Makridis and Han, 2021; Le Blanc et al., 2021; Dwivedi and Joshi, 2020; Xu and Yang, 2024), the absence of specific studies on inspirational leadership in Oman highlights a need for further research to explore its applicability and effectiveness of this style of leadership. The study underscores inspirational leadership's influence on employees' innovative work behavior, aligning with global research on empowering leadership (Shafi et al., 2020). Therefore, this study contributes to the leadership literature by bridging the chasm on an emerging style of leadership that has been sounded by many debates by showing that inspirational leadership style through its main features of self-efficacy, change orientation and empowerment lead to increased innovative work behavior.

Based on the findings of this study, key practical implications for organizational policymakers and leaders are highlighted. We recommend to public sector organizations to focus on building the skills of inspirational leadership by turning the focus and prepare future leaders to be inspiring, public sector will achieve many positive outcomes including but not limited to promoting innovative work behavior among employees. This concept is very crucial for public organizations who are currently under the stress to increase their competitiveness and contribute into the Oman Vision 2040 and become among the leading countries in the global innovative index. Public organization should also be committed to spread the culture of inspirational by endorsing clear vision and mission and emphasis on values that promote autonomy, open communication, team collaboration and wellbeing. These public organizations should embrace these values and change the mindset of power centralization. Policy makers in Oman have turned the focus on increasing organization innovativeness in the public sector, therefore, we recommend that they should invest in development and training programs tailored to the need of cultivating inspiring leadership skills. These programs are in support of an on-going initiatives at the country level to promote effectiveness in the leadership. These programs should be made accessible to current and potential leaders in the public organizations.

Conclusion

This study examined the influence of inspirational leadership through its three dimensions; self-efficacy on solving problems, change orientation of leaders and subordinates' empowerment on work innovative behavior. It was revealed that these dimensions which form part of inspirational leadership style are important in inducing the innovative work behavior among employees in the public sector. Therefore, this study underscores the crucial role of inspiring leadership and innovative work behavior in line with the transformational requirement towards more innovative practice in Omani public sector.

Limitations and Future Research

Every research has limitations and this one is not an exception. First, inspirational leadership style is a newly emerged style in the literature and there are several characteristics associated to it but we confined ourselves with three dimensions only. Cross-sectional and self-reports study on innovative work behavior scale might produce biased results. Furthermore, the choice of sampling in this study limits the generalizability of our findings to other sectors and to other organizations in public sector too.

Future research in Oman could yield insights into exploring the impact of other dimensions of inspirational leadership style on various organizational outcomes as advocated by (Bonau, 2017). This includes other dimensions which are central to inspirational leadership style, such as; authenticity, self-awareness and the implementation of shared vision. Future research could focus on measuring different leadership styles influence on innovative work behavior and substantiate whether inspirational leadership style will promote better innovative work behavior compared to other leadership styles that exist in the practice.

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