International Journal of Human Resource and Organization Development
IJHROD
Graduate School of Human Resource Development
National Institute of Development Administration, Thailand

Research Article

The Connect of Self-Leadership and Innovative Work Behavior: Insights from a Systematic Review

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Received: November 11, 2024
Revised: May 23, 2025
Accepted: July 8, 2025

Abstract

In the era of flexible work arrangements, a critical question emerges: "What leadership qualities are essential when work can occur anywhere, anytime?" While these arrangements are increasingly utilized to attract and retain talent, their impact on employee innovation performance remains debated. Self-leadership has been widely recognized for its influence on innovative work behavior (IWB). This study employs a systematic review to explore the dynamic relationship between self-leadership and IWB. The analysis reveals four positive role types of self-leadership in relation to IWB: antecedent, antecedent with mediating mechanisms, mediator, and moderate mediator. Findings highlight self-efficacy and knowledge sharing as key mediators in this relationship. This study contributes to both theory and practice by providing insights into the multifaceted roles of self-leadership in fostering IWB. Future research directions are proposed to further expand upon these findings.

Keywords: Self-leadership, Innovative work behavior, Innovation, Systematic review

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Introduction

Remote work experienced a dramatic global shift due to the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in rapid changes in workplace attitudes and practices; however, this transition has not automatically resulted in greater employee autonomy or job satisfaction (Bierema, 2020). As noted by Wang and Xie (2023), many organizations have adopted remote work as part of flexible work arrangements to attract, motivate, and retain key knowledge-based talent, a trend that remains significant in the post-pandemic era. Despite this, the impact of these arrangements on employee innovation performance continues to be a subject of debate (Wang & Xie, 2023).

Innovation is widely acknowledged as a critical factor for enhancing organizational competitiveness, contributing to both short-term profitability and long-term sustainability (Cakir & Adiguzel, 2022). According to Contreras et al. (2020), innovation is inherently linked to the creation of novel products, services, and processes, with the overarching objective of improving organizational performance across various hierarchical and functional dimensions. Van de Ven (1986) emphasizes that the innovation process involves the generation and implementation of new ideas by individuals, who, over time, engage in interactions within an institutional context. The genesis of innovation is rooted in ideas, with individuals playing a pivotal role in generating, communicating, responding to, and refining these ideas (Van de Ven, 1986). Consequently, understanding the factors that motivate or facilitate individual innovative behavior is imperative for advancing innovation (Scott & Bruce, 1994). Innovative work behavior is therefore essential for enhancing an organization's innovation capacity, as the innovation process requires both organizational structures and individual contributions, particularly through employees' engagement in innovative work behaviors (Contreras et al., 2020).

Among the numerous factors influencing employees' innovative work behavior, leadership has emerged as one of the most extensively studied variables (Contreras et al., 2020; Yildiz et al., 2017). Extensive research has established a significant relationship between many types of leadership and innovative work behavior (Contreras et al., 2020; Grošelj et al., 2020; Jabid et al., 2023: Mutonyi et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2024). Among the many studies in this area, Contreras et al. (2020) contended that transformational leadership influences IWB, likewise Grošelj et al. (2020) argued that authentic and transformational leadership positively influences innovative work behaviors through psychological empowerment. Furthermore, several other studies have also highlighted the connection between empowering leadership and individual innovative behavior (Jabid et al., 2023; Mutonyi et al., 2020). While Wang et al (2024) suggested that humble leadership positively influences the innovative behavior of followers.

Consequently, a critical question arises regarding the types of leaders that will emerge in response to the evolving landscape, which demands new leadership approaches (Bierema, 2020; Zipkovic, 2022). Zipkovic (2022) emphasizes that autonomy, resourcefulness, and self-direction are increasingly vital for many organizations. This shift can be facilitated by empowering leadership and fostering a culture that promotes the development of self-leadership within organizations (Zipkovic, 2022).

Self-leadership involves a process in which individuals influence themselves to develop the necessary self-direction and self-motivation (Manz, 1986). Neck and Houghton (2006) posited that self-leadership strategies are associated with various positive outcomes, including enhanced commitment, independence, creativity, innovation, trust, potency, affect, job satisfaction, psychological empowerment, and self-efficacy. These factors may function as key mechanisms influencing performance at the individual, group, and organizational levels (Neck & Houghton, 2006). Numerous scholars have examined the influence of self-leadership on various aspects of team and individual outcomes, such as sales performance (Singh et al., 2017; Xunwen et al., 2019), job satisfaction, and team performance (Politis, 2006), self-efficacy (Harari et al., 2021), work engagement (Harunavamwe et al., 2020). Additionally, prior research has yielded substantial results on the relationship between self-leadership and innovative work behavior (Carmeli et al., 2006; Knott et al., 2021). Moreover, Khahan et al. (2024) highlight the crucial influence of self-leadership in fostering creative work behavior within organizations. By cultivating self-awareness, self-regulation, and self-motivation, employees are better equipped to generate innovative ideas, take calculated risks, and actively engage in innovation-driven initiatives (Khahan et al., 2024). Organizations that encourage self-leadership among their workforce are likely to experience a boost in innovative work behaviors, ultimately gaining a competitive advantage in the ever-evolving business landscape (Neck et al., 2024). However, Neck and Houghton (2006) emphasize the importance of further exploring the relationships between self-leadership, creativity, and innovation in greater detail.

Self-leadership and IWB are grounded in several interrelated psychological and organizational theories. A comprehensive understanding of these constructs requires exploration of their theoretical underpinnings, particularly those derived from self-regulation theory, social cognitive theory (SCT), self-determination theory, and self-efficacy theory. Central to self-leadership is the notion of self-efficacy, one's belief in their capability to execute tasks successfully, which significantly shapes both the initiation and perseverance of self-directed behaviors (Deci & Ryan, 2000). From a theoretical standpoint, self-leadership draws heavily on social cognitive theory, which posits that individuals are both products and producers of their environment

(Bandura, 1986). SCT emphasizes reciprocal determinism, wherein personal factors, behavior, and environmental influences continuously interact. Within this context, self-leadership can be seen as a self-regulatory mechanism through which individuals manage their motivation and behavior, thereby enabling enhanced learning and performance outcomes.

Social learning theory further supports this view by highlighting the role of observational learning and social modeling in shaping individual behavior. Stajkovic and Luthans (1998) suggest that individuals' interactions with their social environment, particularly through learning from influential role models, can enhance the utilization of learning strategies. This dynamic plays a crucial role in activating informal learning processes, which are instrumental in fostering innovative behavior through self-leadership (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998).

IWB refers to the intentional creation, introduction, and application of novel ideas within a work role or organization to benefit performance (Scott & Bruce, 1994). Organizational climate, particularly as perceived by individuals, has been found to significantly influence IWB. At the individual level, climate conveys cues about organizational expectations and acceptable behaviors. These signals, in turn, shape how individuals regulate their actions to achieve positive self-evaluative outcomes such as pride and satisfaction (Bandura, 1991). SCT again provides a useful lens for understanding IWB, asserting that individuals' behavioral intentions guide how they interact with internal beliefs and external stimuli.

The theoretical linkage between self-leadership and IWB is primarily situated within the frameworks of social cognitive theory and self-efficacy theory. These theories collectively emphasize the proactive role of individuals in shaping their own cognitive and behavioral processes, which are essential for innovation. While a substantial body of research has affirmed the positive relationship between self-leadership and various individual and organizational outcomes, more nuanced insights have emerged concerning its specific influence on creativity and innovation. Khan et al. (2023) argue that self-leadership, as a self-regulatory process, enables individuals to organize their competencies effectively, enhancing their creative self-efficacy and subsequently promoting IWB. This notion is supported by Gkontelos et al. (2023), who identify self-efficacy as a primary predictor of IWB. Moreover, self-motivated individuals, such as educators, who engage in self-management and strategic planning are more likely to exhibit innovative behaviors that align with their professional goals (Supriyani & Azizah, 2024).

Recent literature increasingly points to the mediating roles of self-efficacy, work engagement, and job satisfaction in strengthening the link between self-leadership and IWB. Moreover, scholars have emphasized the need to incorporate all three dimensions of self-leadership—behavior-focused, cognitive-focused, and natural reward strategies—to achieve more

sustained and impactful innovation outcomes. Such an integrated approach not only fosters personal initiative and creativity but also contributes to organizational adaptability and long-term competitiveness. For instance, Harari et al. (2021), in their meta-analysis of 101 studies, concluded that self-leadership is positively associated with job attitudes, self-efficacy, and overall performance. However, their findings also indicate that behavior-focused strategies alone do not consistently enhance performance, suggesting that the impact of self-leadership may vary depending on contextual factors and the strategic combinations employed. Similarly, Omar et al. (2019) found that constructive thought strategies exert only a marginal effect on innovative behavior, further underscoring the importance of adopting a holistic approach to self-leadership.

Unlike previous systematic reviews on self-leadership and IWB, which primarily examined antecedents, outcomes, or specific constructs mediating their relationship (AlEssa & Durugbo, 2021; Aziz & Abiddin, 2024; Harari et al., 2021), the present study seeks to address a knowledge gap in the literature by exploring the dynamic interplay between self-leadership and IWB in a more integrative and comprehensive manner. In addition to offering a theoretical synthesis, this research aims to provide practical insights for organizational leaders and practitioners on how self-leadership can be strategically leveraged to foster innovative work behaviors.

Focusing on scholarly contributions published between 2014 and 2024, this study adopts a systematic review methodology to answer the research question: How does self-leadership relate to innovative work behavior? Furthermore, this investigation seeks to deepen the understanding of how this relationship manifests across various organizational settings and work environments. It also endeavors to raise awareness about the advantages of cultivating self-leadership, particularly in flexible and dynamic work contexts, thereby offering actionable insights for enhancing innovation at both individual and organizational levels.

Literature Review

Self-Leadership

Self-leadership is a process by which individuals exercise influence over their own thoughts, emotions, attitudes, and behaviors to cultivate self-direction and motivation, ultimately enhancing their work performance (Harari et al., 2021; Houghton & Neck, 2002). The concept of self-leadership, first introduced in 1983, has evolved over the past four decades, building upon the foundational ideas of self-management (Neck & Houghton, 2006; Goldsby et al., 2021).

Manz and Sims (1987) are acknowledged as pioneers in the investigation of self-leadership within the realms of empowering leadership and self-managing teams in organizational settings (Neck & Houghton, 2006). Their seminal research introduced behavior-focused strategies, positing

that the most effective external leaders of self-managing work teams are those who facilitate self-leadership strategies among team members. These strategies encompass self-observation, self-goal setting, and self-reward (Manz & Sims, 1987). Neck and Houghton (2006) synthesize numerous empirical studies that demonstrate the broad applicability of self-leadership principles across diverse contexts, including workplace spirituality, organizational change, goal-setting and performance, performance appraisals, total quality management, entrepreneurship, job satisfaction, and non-profit management.

Self-leadership involves specific behavioral and cognitive strategies, functioning within the frameworks of self-regulation theory, social cognitive theory, self-control theory, and intrinsic motivation theory (Neck & Houghton, 2006). Self-efficacy holds a position of paramount importance within the construct of self-leadership. Manz (1986) posits that a primary objective of all self-leadership strategies, with particular emphasis on natural reward and thought pattern strategies, is the enhancement of self-efficacy perceptions as a precursor to elevated performance levels. Its primary goal is to enhance individual effectiveness by utilizing three distinct categories of strategies: behavior-focused strategies, natural reward strategies, and constructive thought strategies (Houghton & Neck, 2002; Neck & Houghton, 2006).

The domain of behavioral-focused strategies emphasizes the regulation of personal actions to achieve desired outcomes. These strategies include self-goal setting, self-reward, self-punishment, self-observation, and self-cueing. Self-goal setting involves establishing specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) objectives, which are critical for motivating individuals to focus their efforts and track their progress (Locke & Latham, 2002; Manz, 1986). Self-reward utilizes personal incentives to reinforce desirable behaviors, thereby enhancing intrinsic motivation over time (Manz & Sims, 1987; Deci & Ryan, 2000). Conversely, self-punishment imposes negative consequences on oneself for not meeting standards or goals, though excessive use can decrease self-efficacy and overall motivation (Manz & Sims, 1987; Bandura, 1991; Carver & Scheier, 1998). A balanced approach that combines corrective measures and positive reinforcement is more effective for sustaining motivation and well-being. Self-observation entails systematically monitoring one's behavior, performance, and emotional responses, which is crucial for self-regulation and adapting behaviors to achieve goals (Manz, 1986; Zimmerman, 2000). This process can also enhance self-efficacy by providing evidence of one's capabilities and growth (Bandura, 1986; Carver & Scheier, 1981). Finally, self-cueing employs physical or verbal reminders to prompt desired behaviors, helping maintain focus and task completion (Manz, 1986). Implementation intentions, a form of self-cueing, have been shown to significantly enhance goal achievement by linking situational cues to desired actions (Gollwitzer, 1999; Wood & Neal, 2007).

Natural reward strategies emphasize the importance of intrinsic motivation by directing attention to the inherently enjoyable and satisfying aspects of tasks (Manz,1986). This dimension involves focusing thoughts on natural rewards. Focusing thoughts on natural rewards entails directing one's attention to the intrinsic pleasure and satisfaction derived from activities (Manz, 1986). By recognizing and appreciating the inherently enjoyable facets of tasks, individuals can enhance their motivation and persistence. The theoretical work of Deci and Ryan (2000) further supports this natural reward strategy by highlighting how intrinsic rewards that fulfill psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness can significantly enhance motivation and overall well-being. When individuals can find inherent satisfaction and fulfillment in their activities, they are more likely to sustain their efforts and achieve their desired outcomes.

Constructive thought pattern strategies encompass cognitive techniques aimed at enhancing self-leadership, including visualization of successful performance, self-talk, and the evaluation of beliefs and assumptions. Visualization involves mentally rehearsing and envisioning successful outcomes, which fosters increased confidence and preparedness (Neck & Manz, 1992). In organizational contexts, visualization aids individuals in anticipating challenges, devising clear action plans, and mentally practicing obstacle navigation, thereby enhancing performance (Driskell et al., 1994; Moritz et al., 1996). Self-talk refers to the internal dialogue that supports self-regulation and performance (Neck & Manz, 1992). Engaging in positive self-talk, characterized by encouraging and motivational language, enhances confidence and diminishes anxiety, especially in high-pressure situations (Hardy, 2006). Research indicates that positive self-talk improves focus and resilience, benefiting both athletes and employees by aiding stress management and sustaining productivity under pressure (Hatzigeorgiadis et al., 2011; Theodorakis et al., 2000). Evaluating beliefs and assumptions involves critically assessing and adjusting one's beliefs to ensure they are realistic and constructive (Neck & Manz, 1992). Regular evaluation of beliefs cultivates a positive mindset, reduces anxiety, and enhances self-esteem, which contributes to improved emotional and cognitive functioning (Fennell, 1997).

The self-leadership measurement scale has evolved over several decades, with significant contributions from various scholars since the emergence of self-leadership theory (Houghton & Neck, 2002). According to Houghton and Neck (2002), the Self-Leadership Questionnaire (SLQ) was initially developed by Manz and Sims (1987) and subsequently refined by Cox (1993), Anderson and Prussia (1997), and Houghton and Neck (2002). The most widely used version, Revised Self-Leadership Questionnaire (RSLQ), comprises 35 items divided into nine subscales representing three core dimensions of self-leadership. It employs a self-assessment scale ranging from 1 (not at all accurate) to 5 (completely accurate) (Neck & Houghton, 2006). However, to reduce the potential bias

of self-reporting, some researchers have used self-leadership measurements that include ratings from both employees and their supervisors (Carmeli et al., 2006).

Innovative work behavior (IWB)

Innovative Work Behavior (IWB) has been conceptualized in various ways within the academic literature, reflecting its multifaceted and dynamic nature. Scott and Bruce (1994) describe IWB as a process involving the generation, development, and implementation of novel ideas. This conceptualization is further supported by Janssen (2010) and Zhu et al. (2019), who break IWB down into three distinct phases: idea generation, idea promotion, and idea implementation. Research has also highlighted significant parallels between IWB and related constructs, such as proactive personality and proactive work behavior (Li et al., 2016). In their comprehensive review of IWB, AlEssa and Durugbo (2021) synthesized definitions from eleven scholars and identified key elements that define IWB, including individual capabilities, complex and non-routine tasks, and a series of behaviors critical for organizational change. These conceptualizations converge on the understanding that IWB involves employees' proactive efforts to challenge the status quo, develop innovative ideas, and implement solutions that ultimately enhance both individual and organizational performance.

AlEssa and Durugbo's (2021) systematic review revealed that the most frequently referenced theoretical frameworks in IWB research are rooted in social theories, particularly social exchange theory, motivation theory, and leadership theories. Among various leadership styles examined in relation to fostering IWB, inclusive leadership and transformational leadership have been consistently found to play a pivotal role (AlEssa & Durugbo, 2021). Furthermore, the authors proposed four sets of management concepts-Innovative Work Learning and Leadership (WILL), Innovative Work Process and Performances (IWPPs), Innovative Work Characteristics and Conditions (IWCCs), and Innovative Work Inhibitors and Interdependencies (IWIIs)-as essential tools for stimulating and sustaining IWB within organizations.

Scott and Bruce (1994) were the first to create a six-item measure of Innovative Work Behavior (IWB), based on Kanter's (1988) model of innovation that includes idea creation, building support, and putting ideas into action. Their tool was designed for managers to rate their employees' innovative behaviors. De Jong and Hartog (2018) note that other researchers, including Janssen (2010), Spreitzer (1995), and Krause (2004), later developed additional IWB measures. About half of these tools rely on workers rating themselves rather than being rated by others. Janssen (2010) made progress by developing the first truly multi-part measure using both self-ratings and ratings from others. De Jong and Hartog (2018) further improved the concept by identifying four types of

innovative behavior: 1) finding opportunities, 2) creating ideas, 3) promoting ideas, and 4) implementing ideas (De Jong & Hartog, 2018; Janssen, 2010).

Self-leadership and IWB

The relationship between self-leadership and individual outcomes, particularly creativity and innovation, has attracted significant scholarly attention. A substantial body of empirical research consistently demonstrates a positive correlation between self-leadership and various individual and organizational outcomes. For instance, Politis (2006) investigated behavioral-focused strategies in self-leadership, identifying a strong positive association with job satisfaction and team performance. Similarly, studies by Singh et al. (2017) and Xunwen et al. (2019) demonstrated the positive impact of self-leadership on sales performance. Harunavamwe et al. (2020) further posited that self-leadership enhances work engagement by building psychological resources. Supporting this, Harari et al. (2021) conducted a comprehensive meta-analysis of 101 studies, concluding that self-leadership positively influences job attitudes, self-efficacy, and job performance. However, they also noted that behavior-focused strategies alone did not uniformly enhance job performance, underscoring the complexity of self-leadership's effects in varying contexts.

Notably, several scholars have observed a more robust relationship between self-leadership and creativity or innovation-related outcomes compared to other performance metrics. Knotts et al. (2021), through their meta-analysis, found that creativity and innovative performance demonstrated a stronger association with self-leadership than other individual outcomes. Their findings align with those of Harari et al. (2021), suggesting that behavior-focused strategies are less effective in isolation. Instead, combining them with cognitive-focused strategies leads to stronger individual outcomes. Knotts et al. (2021) further emphasized, through path analysis, that self-leadership exerts a more direct influence on creativity, while its impact on task performance tends to be mediated by factors such as self-efficacy, work engagement, and job satisfaction.

In the context of Innovative Work Behavior (IWB), Carmeli et al. (2006) provided an alternative perspective by measuring IWB using supervisor ratings rather than self-ratings, arguing that managerial perceptions of IWB are equally important. Their findings corroborate prior studies, showing that self-leadership is strongly associated with IWB across both supervisor and employee groups. However, they also found that natural reward-focused strategies were not significantly related to IWB from supervisors' perspectives.

Collectively, these findings highlight the critical role of self-leadership in fostering creativity and innovation within organizational settings. The literature suggests that the influence of self-leadership on IWB extends beyond direct effects, being reinforced by mediating mechanisms

such as self-efficacy, work engagement and job satisfaction. Moreover, researchers have emphasized the importance of utilizing all three dimensions of self-leadership: behavior-focused, cognitive-focused, and natural reward strategies to enhance the relationship with IWB, thereby promoting sustained innovation and performance in the workplace.

Research Methodology

To ensure the robustness and quality of literature reviews, researchers often employ the systematic literature review (SLR) methodology, which is renowned for its comprehensive and rigorous approach (Levy & Ellis 2006). This well-established method offers a structured framework for synthesizing existing research. Given its methodological strengths and alignment with the research objectives of this study, the systematic literature review has been adopted as the primary approach for conducting this investigation. The selection of this methodological approach is directly informed by and responsive to the primary research question: "How does self-leadership relate to innovative work behavior?". This approach ensures a comprehensive and methodologically rigorous exploration of the subject matter, allowing for a systematic examination of the existing literature to elucidate the interplay between these two constructs. By aligning the research methodology with the central inquiry, this study aims to provide a robust and nuanced understanding of how self-leadership influences and relates to innovative work behavior in organizational contexts.

The Search and Review Protocol

To elevate the rigor and comprehensiveness of this investigation, an extensive data search was conducted across multiple prominent academic databases. ProQuest, Semantic Scholar, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar were selected as the primary repositories for sourcing pertinent literature. The search strategy employed the Boolean operator AND to conjoin the terms "self-leadership" and "innovative behavior," facilitating the identification of scholarly works examining the nexus between self-leadership and innovative work behavior (IWB) over the decade spanning from 2014 to 2024. This approach to literature retrieval yielded an initial corpus of 3,527 potentially relevant records; 125 from ProQuest, 478 from Semantic, 2,890 from Google Scholar, and 34 from ScienceDirect providing a substantial foundation for subsequent analysis.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To distill the initial corpus of literature, a set of inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied, adhering to established systematic literature review methodologies (Moher et al., 2010). This process ensured that the selected articles aligned precisely with the study's objectives. The inclusion criteria encompassed English-language publications, original research with peer-

reviewed articles published within a 10-year timeframe (2014-2024) to capture the most current and dynamic context, and the relevance of the title and abstract to the central research question. Conversely, exclusion criteria were implemented to filter out studies published prior to 2014 and those whose research objectives did not explicitly address the relationship between self-leadership and IWB. In accordance with the principles outlined by Levy and Ellis (2006) for ensuring research quality, the review was restricted to peer-reviewed academic journals and original research. Consequently, other forms of scholarly output, including books, book chapters, theses, dissertations, conference proceedings, systematic review articles, and essays were excluded from the final analysis.

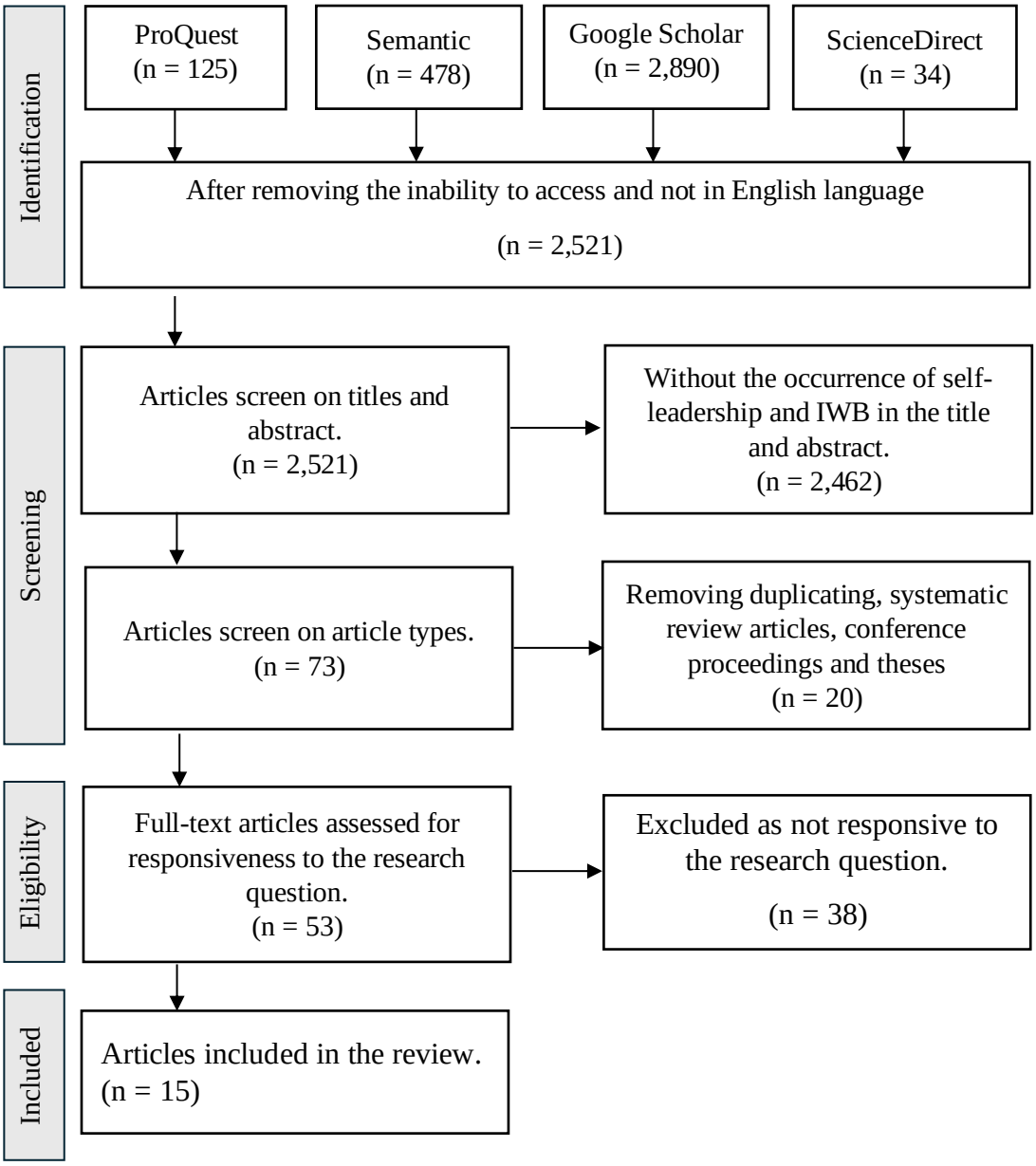
Following the initial screening process, a comprehensive eligibility assessment was conducted, involving an in-depth examination of 53 full-text articles to determine their relevance to the research question. This rigorous evaluation resulted in the exclusion of 38 articles that did not sufficiently address the central inquiry. Such exclusions were deemed essential to maintain the integrity and pertinence of the review. Consequently, a final cohort of 15 articles was retained for inclusion in this systematic review. These selected studies not only satisfied all predetermined inclusion criteria but also demonstrated direct relevance to the research focus, thereby contributing substantive data and insights that align precisely with the objectives of this comprehensive analysis to the understanding of the relationship between self-leadership and IWB.

Data Extraction and Analysis

This study utilized the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework as a guiding structure for the systematic review process (Moher et al., 2010). This methodological approach informed the establishment of selection criteria, delineation of inclusion and exclusion parameters, extraction of relevant data, and synthesis of findings. A qualitative content analysis was employed to identify emergent patterns, and insights pertaining to the relationship between self-leadership and innovative work behavior (IWB) across various geographic regions and industry contexts. This analytical approach aims to elucidate the implications of these relationships and their significance in promoting innovation throughout diverse organizational settings.

Figure 1 offers a visual schematic of the systematic process employed for literature search and identification, illustrating the step-by-step procedure for article selection and inclusion in this comprehensive review. The adoption of this rigorous methodological framework ensures a systematic and replicable review process, thereby enhancing the reliability and validity of the study's findings. This approach not only facilitates transparency in the research process but also strengthens the robustness of the conclusions drawn from the synthesized literature.

Figure 1 PRISMA flow diagram for systematic review



Findings

The systematic review of 15 empirical studies examining the relationship between self-leadership and innovative work behavior (IWB) yields significant insights into this association. The corpus of analyzed research uniformly employed quantitative methodologies to investigate this nexus across diverse organizational contexts. Notably, the geographical scope of these studies was exclusively confined to Asian countries, including South Korea, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Turkey. The research encompassed a broad spectrum of industries, such as education, manufacturing, banking, information technology, and logistics, spanning both private and public sectors.

Self-leadership as an antecedent

The findings from these studies indicate a positive relationship between self-leadership and IWB in several dimensions. In most studies, self-leadership was employed as an antecedent, demonstrating an influence on IWB. Typically, self-leadership functioned as a singular antecedent to IWB (Omar et al., 2019; Sauid et al., 2018), although some studies explored its role in conjunction with other factors. For instance, Sary et al. (2023) examined the combined effect of digital competency and self-leadership on IWB. Similarly, Mustika et al. (2020) investigated the impact of knowledge-sharing efficacy alongside self-leadership on IWB, mediated by knowledge-sharing behavior. Likewise, Widyani et al. (2017) explored the interaction between self-efficacy and self-leadership in enhancing IWB, with knowledge-sharing as a mediating variable.

Nevertheless, the role of self-leadership as an antecedent exhibit a complex interplay with IWB. The analysis also highlights various constructs used to mediate or moderate the relationship between self-leadership and IWB. Knowledge-sharing, knowledge-sharing behavior, creative self-efficacy, and informal learning emerged as key mediating variables (Kang et al., 2022; Khan et al., 2023; Mustika et al., 2020; Supriyani & Azizah, 2024; Widyani et al., 2017). Additionally, smartphone addiction and resilience were identified as moderators in the self-leadership-IWB relationship (Khahan et al., 2024; Park et al., 2014). Remarkably, Omar et al. (2019) expanded the understanding of self-leadership by examining another version of self-leadership- adding physical vitality strategies as a fourth strategy in the educational context, which demonstrated a strong association with IWB. In contrast, constructive thought pattern strategies were found to have a weaker connection with IWB.

Self-leadership as a mediator

Beyond its role as an antecedent, self-leadership also serves as a mediator (Asurakkody & Kim, 2020; Kim & Zhou, 2018; Kör, 2016) in the relationship between other antecedent variables and IWB. For example, Asurakkody and Kim (2020) studied the mediating effect of self-leadership on the relationship between knowledge-sharing behavior and IWB among nursing students. Similarly, Kim and Zhou (2018) investigated how self-leadership mediates the relationship between power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and IWB in private companies in China and Korea. Kör (2016) also examined the mediating role of self-leadership in the link between perceived entrepreneurial orientation and IWB in banking context.

Self-leadership as a moderator

In the context of this review, the moderating role of self-leadership was explored in only two studies, both employing it as a moderated mediator. In one instance, within a manufacturing company setting, self-leadership was found to enhance the mediating effect of creative self-efficacy on the relationship between learning organizations and Innovative Work Behavior (IWB) (Chughtai

& Khalid, 2022). The other study, conducted by Asif et al. (2023) in China's service industry, investigated self-leadership as a catalyst in the indirect relationship between ethical leadership and IWB, with job crafting serving as a mediator. Their findings indicated that the association was more pronounced among employees exhibiting high levels of self-leadership compared to those with low levels (Asif et al., 2023).

In summary, self-leadership has both direct and indirect effects to IWB. Typically, mediating variables were used in this relationship. Additionally, self-leadership demonstrates a crucial role as a mediator to moderators and the domain of constructive thought pattern strategies in the link between self-leadership and IWB requires further investigation and additional empirical studies. The findings from the analysis are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1 Summary of the analysis

Author (Year)	Sector Country	Relationship with IWB	Other constructs in the research*
1. Asif et al. (2023)	Service China	Moderated Mediator	Ethical Leadership, Job Crafting
2. Asurakkody & Kim (2020)	Education Sri Lanka.	Mediator	Tacit and Explicit Knowledge, Participating in Knowledge Sharing Activities
3. Chughtai & Khalid (2022)	Manufacturing Pakistan	Moderated Mediator	Learning Organizations, Creative Self-Efficacy
4. Kang et al. (2022)	Various sectors Korea	Antecedent	Informal Learning, Social Capital
5. Khahan et al. (2024)	Logistics Thailand	Antecedent	Resilience
6. Khan et al. (2023)	IT Pakistan	Antecedent	Knowledge Sharing, Creative Self-Efficacy
7. Kim & Zhou (2018)	Various sectors Korea & China	Mediator	Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance
8. Kör (2016)	Banking Turkey	Mediator	Perceived Entrepreneurial Orientation
9. Mustika et al. (2020)	Watchmaking Indonesia	Antecedent	Knowledge Sharing, Self-Efficacy, Knowledge Sharing Behavior

Author (Year)	Sector Country	Relationship with IWB	Other constructs in the research*
10. Omar et al. (2019)	Education Malaysia	Antecedent	Physical Vitality strategies (added in Self Leadership strategies)
11. Park et al. (2014)	Education Korea	Antecedent	Smart Phone Addiction
12. Sary et al. (2023)	Education Indonesia	Antecedent	Digital Competency
13. Sauid et al. (2018)	N/A Malaysia	Antecedent	-
14. Supriyani & Azizah (2024)	Education Malaysia	Antecedent	Creative Self-Efficacy
15. Widyani et al. (2017)	Textile Indonesia	Antecedent	Self-Efficacy, Knowledge Sharing

Note: *Other constructs in the research mean other variables exclude self-leadership and IWB that had been studied in each research.

Discussion and Recommendation

This study employed a systematic review to address a research gap by providing a comprehensive exploration of the dynamic relationship between self-leadership and Innovative Work Behavior (IWB). Insights from the analysis corroborate previous findings, reaffirming that self-leadership functions as a critical antecedent to IWB. Most studies reviewed conceptualized self-leadership as an independent variable directly influencing IWB. Omar et al. (2019) and Sauid et al. (2018) posited a direct link between self-leadership and IWB, supporting earlier work by Carmeli et al. (2006) and Knotts et al. (2021), which also demonstrated self-leadership's direct impact on IWB as opposed to other individual performance metrics. Furthermore, Omar et al. (2019) echoed the findings of Carmeli et al. (2006), Harari et al. (2021), and Knotts et al. (2021), asserting that self-leadership's three core strategies—behavioral, cognitive, and natural reward—must be employed collectively to strengthen the relationship with IWB, as isolated strategies yield weaker effects.

A novel aspect of this study is the inclusion of an additional strategy—physical vitality—within the self-leadership framework, which was found to enhance the relationship with IWB (Omar et al., 2019). This addition broadens the application of self-leadership across diverse contexts, as highlighted by Neck and Houghton (2006). Additionally, self-efficacy emerged as a primary mediator in the self-leadership-IWB relationship, aligning with foundational self-leadership theory grounded in self-efficacy (Manz, 1986). Several studies (Chughtai & Khalid, 2022; Khan et al.,

2023; Mustika et al., 2020; Widyani et al., 2017) consistently identified self-efficacy as a key mediator, further extending Manz (1986) work. Knowledge sharing was also frequently cited as a mediator, reinforcing findings from Knotts et al. (2021).

In contrast to the findings of Knotts et al. (2021), which suggested that mediating mechanisms support a direct relationship between self-leadership and Innovative Work Behavior (IWB), this analysis revealed a more nuanced perspective. The current review indicates that self-leadership has been employed as both a mediating and moderating mechanism in the relationship between various constructs and IWB (Asif et al., 2023; Asurakkody & Kim, 2020; Chughtai & Khalid, 2022; Kim & Zhou, 2018; Kör, 2016). Furthermore, research grounded in social theories that take into account organizational climate and industry context suggests that these factors may influence the strength of the self-leadership–IWB relationship. For example, Omar et al. (2019), in a study of teachers in government schools, found only a slight influence of self-leadership—particularly constructive thought patterns—on IWB, which may be due to limited motivational mechanisms in that environment. Similarly, Park et al. (2014) reported that increased smartphone addiction among students weakened the relationship between self-leadership and IWB.

These divergence in findings underscores the complexity of the role of self-leadership in fostering innovative behaviors within various organizational contexts, suggesting that its influence may be more multifaceted than previously postulated.

In conclusion, self-leadership exerts a multifaceted and evolving influence on IWB, addressing the growing demand for innovation in organizations. This analysis contributes to both theoretical and practical implications by offering insights into the multiple roles self-leadership plays in shaping IWB. Scholars are encouraged to adopt and adapt these insights for future research. Given the predominance of quantitative studies utilizing self-assessment questionnaires to examine self-leadership and innovative work behavior (IWB), future research should consider incorporating peer-assessment questionnaires to provide a more comprehensive perspective, qualitative, mixed-methods or case study approaches to generate deeper insights into this relationship. Notably, recent research has explored self-leadership as a personality trait of high-profile innovators such as Elon Musk, illustrating the practical applications of self-leadership in real-world innovation and entrepreneurship (Khatri et al., 2024). To further advance the understanding of self-leadership's impact on IWB, multi-level analyses—such as team-level and organizational-level studies—should be conducted to assess the relationship in high-performing and innovative organizations. Lastly, HR management should prioritize developing self-leadership programs across all staff levels, not solely for those in leadership positions, to cultivate an innovative culture essential for organizational sustainability.

Limitation and Future Research

This study provides valuable insights into the relationship between self-leadership and IWB. However, it is essential to acknowledge its limitations, which in turn suggest directions for future research.

One primary limitation lies in the scope of the literature review. While the study utilized multiple prominent academic databases (ProQuest, Semantic Scholar, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar), it was restricted to full-text, English-language, peer-reviewed articles published within the last 10 years. This time constraint, while ensuring recent and relevant research, may have excluded seminal or influential works published earlier. The exclusion of books, conference papers, and unpublished works may have also resulted in overlooking potentially relevant research. Moreover, the limitation to only full-text accessible articles may have led to the omission of significant studies that were not freely available or behind paywalls, potentially introducing bias into the review.

The specific search terms "self-leadership" and "innovative behavior" may have inadvertently omitted studies using synonymous terms such as self-influence, self-direct, creativity, creation, innovation, or proactive behavior. Another limitation is the focus on the overarching constructs of self-leadership and IWB, potentially neglecting research that explores relationships between their individual domains.

An unintentional geographical limitation of this study is that all the reviewed research was conducted in Asian countries. This narrow focus may limit the generalizability of findings to other cultural contexts and potentially overlook important cultural variations in the self-leadership-IWB relationship. Notably, all studies included in this review employed quantitative methodologies, indicating a gap in qualitative and mixed-methods approaches to investigating the self-leadership-IWB relationship. Thereby, future research should address these limitations by expanding the literature search to include a wider range of publication types, languages, and a broader timeframe to capture influential earlier works and incorporate paywalled or restricted-access articles to ensure a more comprehensive review together with broadening search terms to encompass related concepts and domain-specific keywords within self-leadership and IWB to investigate potential relationships between specific domains of self-leadership and stages of IWB and covering various research methodology to provide a more nuanced understanding of the self-leadership-IWB relationship.

By addressing these limitations and pursuing these research directions, future studies can contribute to a more comprehensive and globally representative understanding of how self-leadership influences innovative work behavior across various contexts and populations, while also considering the evolution of these concepts over time.

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