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Research Paper

Unlocking Innovation through Self-Leadership: The Early Startup Founder's Journey

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ABSTRACT: *This study aims to investigate the level of innovative behavior among early-stage start-up founders during the initial funding stage. The population of this study consists of 117 early-stage start-up founders in Medan, North Sumatra, Indonesia. The research instrument used is a modified version of the Innovative Work Behaviour (IWB) scale, which includes dimensions such as idea exploration, idea generation, idea championing, and idea implementation. Meanwhile, the Self-Leadership instrument used is a modified version of The Abbreviated Self-Leadership Questionnaire (ASLQ), which includes dimensions such as behavior awareness, task motivation, and constructive cognition. The study's findings indicate that Self-Leadership has a positive impact on innovative behavior among early-stage start-up founders. The implications of this study suggest that start-up founders can cultivate self-leadership for themselves and their teams to guide their behavior in creating innovation in their businesses.*

KEYWORDS: *Self-Leadership, Innovative Behaviour, Early Start-up Founder*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Early-stage digital startup industry workers are free to adjust their work patterns to different situations, and they use their skills to determine the development and implementation of the technical requirements needed [1]. In a formal work environment, individuals are highly dependent on their leaders to find information, resources, and social support to develop and create new ideas [2]. Whereas in organizations with an informal form, the emphasis on leadership is on empowering each individual to be able to make independent decisions about their tasks at work and implement them [3]. Organizations with an informal form can be said to have a flexible work culture because they adapt to the ever-changing market. Self-leadership is the answer to the need for how we develop ourselves and survive in a complex and ambiguous environment [4].

In the business concept of startups, especially those in the early stages with less than 10 employees, each person is considered a founder, co-founder, or C-Level personnel [5]. Self-leadership will help the organization to minimize the degree of team dependence on one authority [6]. Having self-leadership as an individual engaged in business can direct new entrepreneurs to strive for higher achievements for their business success [7]. Therefore, every individual as a founder in the startup world needs personal abilities that can direct themselves towards the goals they set.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTESIS

A. Innovative Behavior

Innovative behavior is the deliberate action of generating, improving, and realizing new ideas within work, work groups, and organizations to provide benefits to the performance of the work group or organization [8]. Jansen (2002) defines innovative behavior as the intentional creation, introduction, and application of new ideas in a job, group, or organization to gain benefits in the performance of a job, group, or organization. De Jong & Den Hartog (2010) state that innovative behavior is behavior that includes exploring new opportunities and ideas, and can also include implementing new ideas, applying new knowledge, and achieving personal or

business performance improvement. Innovative behavior is not only focused on generating new ideas but also involves the implementation process of these ideas, especially in the work setting.

B. Self-Leadership

In practice, self-leadership is an extension of strategies focused on the behaviors, mindsets, and feelings that are used to direct oneself towards achieving goals (Rivai & Mulyadi, 2003). This type of leadership differs from the focus of general leadership concepts, which center on directing, managing teams, and influencing others. Self-leadership focuses on creating one's own role to take responsibility for oneself in the work environment (Mulyono, 2012). While other types of leadership generally refer to the leadership style or approach that a person uses to lead others. Thus, self-leadership is more appropriate to discuss in an individual context and is particularly useful in industries with a high level of independence [4].

This study aims to examine the extent to which self-leadership can enhance innovative behavior. Therefore, the hypothesis formulated is as follows:

H1: Self-Leadership positively influences innovative behavior.

III. RESEARCH METHOD

The research method used in this study is the quantitative method with a causal relationship research type. The population of the study consists of 117 early funding stage start-up founders in Medan City, North Sumatra, Indonesia, who are registered with a start-up development incubator. The hypothesis was tested using bootstrapping analysis with the SMARTPLS 3.0 application. The measurement of the study employs a modified tool from the Innovative Work Behaviour (IWB) scale, which includes the dimensions of idea exploration, idea generation, idea championing, and idea implementation. The measurement of Self-Leadership uses a modification of The Abbreviated Self-Leadership Questionnaire (ASLQ), encompassing the dimensions of behavior awareness, task motivation, and constructive cognition. The scales will be scored using a six-point Likert scale model (1=strongly disagree to 6=strongly agree).

IV. RESULT & DISCUSSION

4.1. Outer Model Analisis

4.1.1. Convergent Validity

Convergent validity aims to measure the similarity of dimensions or aspects of each item on a research scale. An indicator is considered valid if it has an AVE value (average variance extracted) > 0.5 or shows an outer loading value > 0.7.

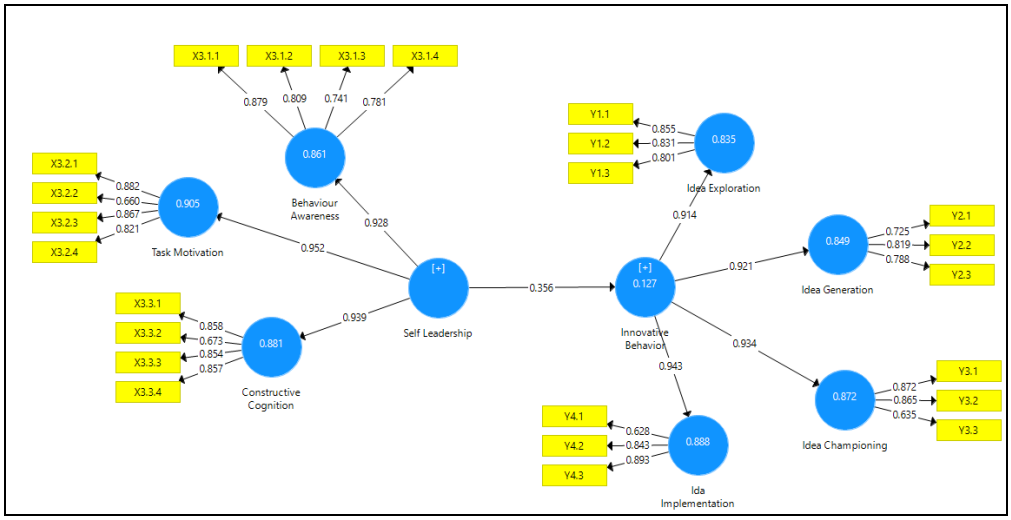

Figure 1. Measurement Model Of Innovative Behaviour and Self-Leadership

Based on the calculation of the AVE values, it can be concluded that all items in each aspect of both variables meet the convergent validity criteria based on the average variance extracted values.

4.1.2. Discriminant Validity

The second step is to look at discriminant validity. Discriminant validity is met if the cross loading value of each statement item to the variable itself is greater than the correlation value of the statement item to other variables.

	IB	IB.1	IB.2	IB.3	IB.4	SL	SL.1	SL.2	SL.3
IB	**0.743**								
IB.1	0.914	**0.830**							
IB.2	0.921	0.772	**0.778**						
IB.3	0.934	0.793	0.824	**0.798**					
IB.4	0.943	0.815	0.834	0.849	**0.796**				
SL	0.356	0.252	0.433	0.295	0.345	**0.761**			
SL.1	0.340	0.235	0.416	0.289	0.327	0.928	**0.804**		
SL.2	0.304	0.185	0.396	0.247	0.306	0.952	0.828	**0.812**	
SL.3	0.356	0.288	0.404	0.292	0.338	0.939	0.791	0.851	**0.814**

Table 1. Cross Loading of Of Innovative Behavior and Self-Leadership

Drawing from the foregoing data of **Table 1,** It can be affirmed that the cross-loading values on the constructs representing each aspect exceed those of the values on other aspects. This suggests that the items of self-leadership and innovative behavior in this study aptly characterize their latent variable and satisfy all criteria for discriminant validity.

4.1.3. Reliability

The third step involves assessing reliability, where a variable is considered reliable if it has a Cronbach's alpha value of ≥ 0.6 and a composite reliability value of ≥ 0.7. From the results on **Table 2** above, signifies that both innovative behavior and self-leadership scale exhibit high reliability.

Scale	*Cronbach's alpha*	*Composite reliability*	Keterangan
Innovative Behavior	0.925	0.936	Reliable
Self Leadership	0.933	0.942	Reliable

Table 2: Reliability Measurement Score

4.2. Inner Model Analysis

4.2.1. R-Square

The R-Square value clarifies the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that can be accounted for by the independent variables.

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Innovative Work Behavior	0.127	0.119

Table 3: R-square test

From **Table 3**, the R-Square value is 0.127, indicating that the influence of the self-leadership variables on innovative behavior accounts for 12,7%, while the remainder is influenced by other variables outside the scope of this study.

4.2.2. Direct Effect

Direct effects aim to see the direct effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable. Direct effects are accepted if t-statistic >1.96, and the probability value (p-value) < 0.01

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
Self-Leadership → Innovative Behavior	0,234	0,235	0,060	3,869	0,000

Table 4: Bootstrapping Direct Effect Analysis

Based on **Table 4**, the analysis reveals that the influence of self-leadership on innovative behavior has an original sample estimate of 0.234, indicating a positive effect. The T-Statistic is 3,869 (>1.96) with a significance value of .000 (P < .01), thus supporting our hypothesis in this research which propose that self-

leadership has a positive and significant effect on innovative behavior among early start-up founder in Kota Medan.

4.3. Discussion

Self-leadership is a spontaneous and active behavior or mindset, defined as the ability to lead oneself in challenging situations characterized by learned behaviors that can be enhanced through training [9]. Research by Kusnidar & Haholongan (2019) demonstrated the same effect on a group of employees in Jakarta, Indonesia. The results of this study showed that self-leadership positively influences employees' innovative behavior. Through self-leadership, employees become more capable, visionary, responsible, and confident in their work.

Digital start-ups often face rapid market changes. This adaptability is crucial in the digital space where consistency and continuous improvement are necessary [10]. Another study implies the importance of self-leadership for small to medium-sized business owners as a skill for creating sustainable competitive advantage. Sustainable competitive advantage can be achieved through the combination of three aspects of self-leadership: behavior awareness and volition, task motivation, and constructive cognition [11].

V. CONCLUSSION

Self-leadership positively influences innovative behavior. This means that self-leadership contributes positively to innovative behavior. The implication for this study is for early start-up founders. They should become role models for their teams by demonstrating good self-leadership. This can be shown through good time management skills, having a constructive mindset, being able to manage emotions and stress, actively participating in self-development activities, making well-considered decisions, and being able to provide appropriate rewards for individual and group achievements.

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