

Fostering Innovative Work Behavior Among Plantation Workers in North Sumatra, Indonesia by Applying Employee Growth Climate

Vivi Gusri Rahmadani^a, Rahma Fauzia^b and Dina Nazriani^c
Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Sumatera Utara, Jl. Dr. Mansur, Medan, Indonesia

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Abstract: North Sumatra, Indonesia has a large plantation area and extensive agricultural industry, and this industry was proven giving benefits for the national income of this country. However, to develop the national agro-industry in the VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity) era, innovative human resources in agro-industry should become the building blocks for the companies to survive and to stay competitive. The current study focuses on the effect of employee growth climate on innovative work behavior. 607 plantation workers from one of the biggest companies in the agro-industry in North Sumatra, Indonesia were participated in this research. The result show that to increase the employees' innovative work behavior that consist of three components: idea generation, idea promotion, idea implementation, the company should aware of its organizational climate that support the employees to be innovative, which called employee growth climate. A growth climate is an organizational climate or work environment which perceived by the employees where the organizational practices, policies, and procedures encourage employee professional growth and development. Thus, the companies in the agro-industry should adapt to the current disruptive business challenges by nurturing the innovative behavior of their employee by providing supportive climate and enforcing practices and policies that stimulate innovation.

1 INTRODUCTION

Every company or organization has a goal to be achieved. Companies or organizations need assets that can help achieve these goals. One of the most valuable assets for the company is human resources (HR). HR is all humans involved in a company in order to strive for the realization of company goals. The contribution of people within the company is the most important thing for organizational effectiveness. One of the contributions that employees must make is to create new things in the company. A study says that 80% of ideas come from company employees and only 20% come from planned innovations that have been set by the company.

Innovation is a fairly broad and growing concept. One form of innovation is innovative work behavior. Innovation is at the organizational or company level, while innovative work behavior is simpler. Innovative work behavior focuses on people working

in a company. Kheng, Mahmood, and Beris, (2013) describe innovative work behavior as employee actions directed at the generation, implementation and implementation of new ideas, products, processes, and methods for their job positions, departmental units, or organizations.

Innovative work behavior is very important to support the achievement of company or organizational goals. Innovative work behavior can change an organization, but unfortunately this discussion is still often ignored or underestimated. Much research has focused on innovation within organizations, but little has focused on individual processes for innovating. This is supported by the opinion of Amo (2005) which states that most researchers studying the process of change in organizations mainly focus on organizational or management characteristics that are the source of innovation and organizational change initiatives, but rarely studies that focus on employees. Furthermore,

^a <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3726-5585>

^b <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9600-3489>

^c <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1694-0414>

the innovative work behavior structure is not yet robust enough to measure the required differences.

Janssen (2000) says that the ability to innovate and improvise products, services, and work processes is crucial in today's organizations. Every employee needs both the desire and the ability to innovate if s/he wants to realize her/his innovation. Research conducted by Solomon, Winslow, and Tarabishy (2004) found that organizational climate is an essential factor that may influence innovative behavior in individuals. Organizational climate reflects the beliefs and psychological meanings of each employee to the environment and tries to make it happen. Organizational climate is defined as a set of behaviors, attitudes, and feelings, which are seen on a daily basis in the organizational environment and every person from the organization experiences and understands it. Moreover, organizational climate is the perception that employees share, and the meaning they associate with practices, procedures, policies, and behaviors in the workplace that are supported, valued, and expected by the organization. The current study investigates the employee growth climate which is in line with Schneider's (1975) argument that the characteristics of organizational climate depend on two climates, namely the overwork climate and the employee growth climate.

This innovative work behavior can be seen in Agro-industry companies, because the territory of Indonesia is a very large area of agriculture and plantations, especially in North Sumatra, known as an agricultural country with advanced and developing agro-industry. However, continual technological advances, dynamic and unpredictable social and political turmoil, as well as the pandemic situation that has hit the whole world, including Indonesia, are the main obstacles to strengthening the agro-industrial sector. Despite many obstacles, agribusiness has enormous potential to make a significant contribution to the progress and change of economic growth. In the context of developing a national agro-industry in the VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity) era, the government encourages the industry to take active steps which include ensuring the achievement of goals and objectives and continuing to foster a spirit of innovation and improvement. so that business actors are always ready to anticipate the worst scenario.

The role of human resources for plantation workers is seen as critical and strategic targets for increasing competitiveness and productivity in the industrial sector have been achieved in terms of the contribution of agricultural exports to national

exports, but not in terms of human resources (HR) productivity. This research has been conducted in North Sumatra, Indonesia to describe the effect of organizational climate, especially employee growth climate on innovative work behavior among plantation workers.

2 HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Innovative work behavior is defined as the creation, introduction, and application of new ideas in a job, group, or organization to benefit the performance of an individual, group, or organizational role, thereby improving organizational function. Apart from that, innovative work behavior is also defined as the intentional development, introduction, and application of new ideas in job roles, groups or organizations for the appropriate roles of group or organizational performance including adequate promotion and application of creative ideas. Li and Zheng (2014) suggest that innovative work behavior is influenced by organizational innovation atmosphere factors. Organizational innovation atmosphere refers to individual perceptions about whether the organization provides a conducive and safe environment for learning and innovation, and to what degree. The atmosphere of organizational innovation will directly affect the innovative behavior, capabilities and organizational performance of employees. If employees perceive a safe work environment (secure), then innovation behavior is easier to implement.

Organizational innovation atmosphere is closely related to organizational climate, organizational climate is defined as a perception shared by employees, and the meaning they associate with workplace practices, procedures, policies, and behaviors that are supported, valued, and expected by the organization. The current study investigates the employee growth climate as mentioned by Schneider's (1975) that there were two climates, namely the overwork climate and the employee growth climate. The current study focuses on the effect of employee growth climate on innovative work behavior.

Organizational climate is related to an important job investment, the climate of employee growth. A high performance climate maximizes engagement, resulting in better business outcomes. Studying the influence of psychological safety climate on job involvement in educational institutions. The study revealed that a climate of psychological security predicts the level of teacher involvement after one

year of increased job resources. The current study adopts a similar approach, but focuses on the employee growth climate, including organizational practices, policies, and procedures that promote employee growth and professional development. Employee growth climate is related to the availability of job resources where job resources increase employee engagement. Various scholarly works have documented how job resources such as performance feedback, social support, job control, learning and career opportunities, increase employee engagement.

When an organization views employee growth as important, feedback practices reinforce learning and innovation. Organizational policies that stimulate employee careers provide a conducive and safe work environment with a focus on the strengths of each employee, namely the employee growth climate. The higher the organizational climate that facilitates employees to achieve goals by rewarding them when they take responsibility and work, the more engaged workers will be to fulfill their work goals. Furthermore, the employee growth climate encourages creative thinking and new solutions from employees. Thus, a climate like this will strengthen the connection of the workers involved to carry out innovative work behaviors.

Thus, we formulate:

Ho: There is no positive relationship between employee growth climate and innovative work behavior.

Ha: There is a positive relationship between employee growth climate and innovative work behavior.

3 RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Sample and Procedure

607 plantation workers were included in this research. They all men and come from the biggest companies in the agro-industry in North Sumatra, Indonesia especially in producing the crude palm oil. The measurement scales were distributed directly to the workers in a sealed envelope due to a confidential guarantee of their responses. The mean age of the participants was 44.6 years ($SD=7.7$); and more than half of the participants (59.6%) had completed secondary education, and only less than 20% of them had completed a higher education; furthermore, more than half of the participants (56.5%) had over 20 years of job tenure. In sum, the workers were experienced workers working in operational levels with routine tasks in the plantation such as the planter,

the harvester, the land clearer, the plant nurture, and so on. The entire data collection process took three months due the varied sites and locations of the company.

3.2 Measurement

The measurement scale consisting of two summated-rating questionnaires, was used to measure innovative work behavior and employee growth climate. All items in the questionnaires were translated from English into Bahasa Indonesia following the double translation procedure.

a. Innovative Work Behavior

The four-item innovative work behavior questionnaire was used to assess innovative work behavior. Three components were involved: idea generation, idea promotion, and idea application, with sample items such as "I create new ideas for difficult issues," "I make important organizational members enthusiastic for innovative ideas," and "I introduce innovative ideas into the work environment in a systematic way." All items were measured on a rating scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Cronbach's alpha values for this scale were 0.92.

b. Employee Growth Climate

Six out of eight items of the employee growth climate questionnaire developed by Schaufeli (2015) were used. The plantation workers evaluated the extent to which their organization encouraged their growth and development. The sample of items included "In the organization where I work, employees are encouraged to come up with new ideas and solutions." All items were measured on a rating scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Cronbach's alpha values for this 7-item scale were 0.79, whereas when eight items were used, the values went down to 0.72. Thus, one item was deleted.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Descriptive Statistic

Data was analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics. Table 1 presents the mean scores, standard deviations, between the study variables.

Table 1: Mean scores, Standard Deviations, between the Study Variables.

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
IWB	607	9	45	30.75	7.449
EGC	607	11	30	25.01	2.688
Valid N (listwise)	607				

4.2 Testing of Hypotheses

Based on the results of a simple regression test, it is proven that the significance value is $0.000 < 0.05$, so it can be concluded that the employee growth climate variable has an effect on the innovative work behavior variable. Furthermore, seen from the simple linear regression equation model, namely $Y = a + bX$, then the value of Y changes to $11.224 + (.781)X$. This means that if innovative work behavior (Y) increases, then employee growth climate (X) will increase by .781. In other words, this research shows that the higher the level of employee growth climate, the higher the level of innovative work behavior.

Table 2.

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	Beta	Std. error	Beta		
Constant	11,224	2,719		4.128	.000
EGC	.781	.108	.282	7.224	.000

Based on the results of the model summary, the magnitude of the relationship value is 0.282. From the output, the coefficient of determination (R-squared) is 0.078, which means that the employee growth climate variable has a 7.8% impact on the innovative work behavior variable.

Table 3.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.282 ^a	.079	.078	7.153

4.3 Discussion

Based on the analysis, the results of the study reveal that the employee growth climate has a positive influence on the innovative work behavior of employees. This result shows that the higher the level of employee growth climate, the higher the

employees' innovative work behavior. The results of this test conclude that the research hypothesis is supported. The result of this study is in line with previous research that showed employee growth can also be seen as a positive organizational climate that provides employees with job resources and thus, from Resource Conservation Theory, enabling employees to achieve positive work outcomes, that is, innovative work work. The higher the organizational climate that facilitates employees to achieve goals by rewarding them when they take responsibility and work, the more strongly engaged workers will fulfill their work goals innovatively. This is also in accordance with research conducted by Solomon, Winslow, and Tarabishy (2004) which found that organizational climate is an essential factor that may influence innovative behavior in individuals.

The results of the research between the employee growth climate variable and innovative work behavior have a relation of 0.282 and the coefficient of determination (R Square) is .078, which implies that the effect of the employee growth climate variable on the innovative work behavior variable is 7.8%. This is in accordance with research that organizational climate has an impact on innovation. Churchill, Ford, and Walker (1976) have suggested that organizational climate displays perceptions of work situations, organizational characteristics and how the relationships between employees in everyday life. Several foreign studies have shown that innovative behavior has nothing to do with organizational climate. In line with previous research, De Jong and Den Hartog (2008) found an insignificant relationship between the two constructs. Meanwhile, other studies say that there is a significant relationship between innovative behavior and organizational climate.

5 LIMITATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTION

This study only involves one source of data –from the workers– and one method to evaluate our theoretical model, which was a self-report measurement scale. Spector claims that the issue of common method variance (CMV), a bias that occurs when both predictors and predicted variables come from the same source, is exaggerated, however, we still recommend future studies to collect data using multisources and mix methodologies. Furthermore, the current study relied on a small sample of data from a single Indonesian agricultural holding company,

raising concerns about generalizability. Thus, caution is advised when applying our findings to other organizations. Again we suggest to future researcher to replicate this study to increase the robustness of the research model.

6 CONCLUSIONS

There is a positive and significant relationship between employee growth climate and innovative work behavior among the plantation workers. Hence, the higher the workers perceived the company has employee growth climate, the likely the worker will show innovative behavior at work. Thus, organization and management should aware that the way they build certain climate in the organization, it relates to the higher the workers will engage in innovative work behavior. Innovative work behavior is crucial not only in a non-routine-high technology jobs, but also in the low-operational level jobs. This state-owned company should nurture the innovative behavior of their workers by providing supportive climate and enforcing practices and policies that stimulate innovation.

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