

Strategizing for innovative work behavior in higher education institutions: the role of creative self-efficacy

The role of
creative self-
efficacy on
IWB

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Abstract

Purpose – Scholars have emphasized the antecedent role of personal factors such as creative self-efficacy (CSE) in enhancing innovative behavior in work settings. Existent studies have revealed that individuals with high CSE have the cognitive ability to resiliently exhibit innovative work behavior (IWB). Little is however known as regards the influence of CSE on innovative work behavior in service settings, more so in developing countries. This study sought to establish the antecedent role of CSE on IWB as a multistage process comprising creativity and IWB.

Design/methodology/approach – The research adopted a cross-sectional research design to establish the hypothetical influence of CSE on innovative work behavior and collected data at one point in time. The researchers used regression analysis to establish the influence of CSE on IWB using a sample of teaching staff selected from Ugandan public Universities.

Findings – The findings reveal that CSE has a significant effect on creativity as the first step in the innovation process. The results further revealed that CSE has a statistically significant influence on IWB.

Research limitations/implications – The researchers collected data from public Universities, and the application of the findings may fall short when applied to a setting of private universities. Therefore, future research can consider a setting of private universities to replicate the current study findings. The study was cross-sectional, and yet employees' CSE and innovation behavior may change over time. This study opens grounds for longitudinal research in the same research area.

Practical implications – The study shapes direction for practicing managers to resiliently strategize for enhancing creative self-efficacy of employees to promote IWB. Specifically, our study indicates that organizations must enhance positive organizational behavior like CSE to enhance employees' ability to resiliently overcome the fear of uncertainty associated with innovation. While devising the intervention strategies geared towards enhancing CSE, organizations need to consider the stage of IWB required whether at creativity or innovation stage of the innovative behavior.



Conflict of interest declaration: On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

Originality/value – This research is empirically and theoretically valuable. This is an original study to establish a direct causal influence of CSE on creativity and IWB using a sample drawn from public Universities in the context of a developing Country. Theoretically, the study expands on the applicability of the social cognitive theory (SCT) by revealing that the influence of an individual's personality characteristics like CSE varies with the stage of IWB because the tasks involved in the various types of IWB differ and thus the magnitude of influence varies.

Keywords Innovative work behavior, Creative self-efficacy, Social cognitive theory, Higher education institutions, Resilience

Paper type Research paper

1. Background

Innovative work behavior is a crucial professional requirement for education institutions to survive in the challenging dynamic environment and keep up to date with the rapidly changing societal demands (Ahmad, 2020; Al-Husseini and Elbeltagi, 2018). This dynamism requires organizations to acquire employees who can resiliently continue to execute work roles in sync with environmental changes (Bhamra, 2015). Organizations can resiliently succeed in diverse situations (Burnard and Bhamra, 2019) when employee have the ability to adapt to the environmental changes by adopting innovative methods of work execution. Innovative employees can face diverse situations and recover from a down fall due to their cognitive ability to bounce back from a down turn (Bhamra, 2015). Innovative individuals are also resilient to take risk and are therefore capable of developing and executing new work roles relevant to a society (Mafabi *et al.*, 2015). Innovative work behavior (IWB) is a sophisticated collection of practices that are intended to explore, originate, promote and execute novel ideas in a work setting (Luthans and Youssef-Morgan, 2017). Relatedly, numerous scholars such as Janssen (2000), Saeed *et al.* (2019) and Newman *et al.* (2018) refer to IWB as the deliberate origination of unique and relevant work ideas concerning a product, a service and work processes in a work role, group, or organization.

Prior scholars argue that IWB is a multi-stage process comprising of creativity in the preliminary stages (Yuan and Woodman, 2010; Kimwolo and Cheruiyot, 2018). Scholars further concur that IWB is a sequential construct that includes creativity as the initial stage in the innovative process comprising of idea exploration (the ability of an individual to examine a problem and think of novel means to solve the problem), idea generation (an individual's ability to generate alternative solutions to solve work problems) and idea championing (an individual's ability to convince and persuade colleagues to buy support of the new generated ideas) (Yuan and Woodman, 2010). Therefore, the facets of creativity; idea exploration, idea generation and idea championing are the first three components in the conceptualization of IWB (Agarwal, 2014). Scholars further concur that idea implementation adds up to IWB (Carvalho *et al.*, 2017). Although creativity is related to IWB and occasionally interchangeably used, creativity is the preliminary stage in the innovation process associated with exploration, generation and promotion of novel ideas, while innovation goes beyond generating ideas and includes implementation of the generated ideas to realize value (De Jong and Den Hartog, 2010).

Innovative higher education employees transfer innovative skills to students through innovative teaching. The students, in turn, transfer the creative knowledge to work settings through creative and innovative work execution (Thurlings *et al.*, 2015). Employees capable of initiating and executing creative work ideas are the embodiment of an organization's innovation. Universities engage in innovative activities by adopting, developing and implementing new services such as research projects, new courses, new teaching tools and other new initiatives like generation and use of new technology (Al-Husseini and Elbeltagi, 2018). Universities are a think-tank for innovation, and therefore employees need to be innovative to keep up with educational innovation (Ahmad, 2020).

the results may not be extended to private universities due to the differences in the innovation environment. Further research should therefore be conducted to replicate the same findings using empirical evidence from a private university setting.

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