

## The influence of project leadership style, innovative work behavior, and openness to experience on employee performance

Evada Rustina<sup>a</sup>, Muhammad Andi Mubarak<sup>b</sup>, Eka Lestari Mahyuni<sup>c</sup>, Eddy Rusman<sup>d</sup>, Firman Edi<sup>e</sup>, Bejo Slamet<sup>f</sup>, Wiwin Mintarsih Purnamasari<sup>g</sup> and Mei Ie<sup>h</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Akademi Ketatalaksanaan Pelayaran Niaga Bahtera, Indonesia

<sup>b</sup>Department of Accounting, School of Accounting-Master of Accounting, Bina Nusantara University, Indonesia

<sup>c</sup>Occupational Safety and Health, Faculty of Public Health, Universitas Sumatera Utara, Indonesia

<sup>d</sup>Student of Perbanas Institute, Indonesia

<sup>e</sup>Institut Teknologi Batam, Indonesia

<sup>f</sup>Research Center for Fishery, National Research and Innovation Agency, Indonesia

<sup>g</sup>Poltekkes Kemenkes Tasikmalaya, Indonesia

<sup>h</sup>Universitas Tarumanagara, Indonesia

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to analyze the relationships between project leadership style and performance, innovation work behavior and performance, and openness to experience and performance. A quantitative research method was employed, and the analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) via SmartPLS software version 4.0.9.9. PLS-SEM was chosen for its suitability in analyzing complex models with multiple constructs and pathways, particularly in exploratory research contexts. The study surveyed 430 SME employees, selected through snowball sampling based on the accessibility of reliable participants—those who had already completed the questionnaire. PLS-SEM is especially effective for handling small to medium sample sizes, non-normal data distributions, and both reflective and formative constructs. It also prioritizes maximizing the explained variance of dependent variables and is well-suited for testing relationships between latent constructs. A five-point Likert scale was used to measure respondents' agreement with statements related to the variable indicators, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The data analysis included validity testing, reliability testing, significance testing, and hypothesis testing. The results indicate that project leadership style has a positive and significant relationship with performance. Similarly, innovation work behavior and openness to experience both show positive and significant associations with performance.

## 1. Introduction

The performance of SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises) in 2025 is expected to be positive, with significant growth potential. The government and various parties continue to encourage digitalization, improving the quality and competitiveness of SMEs. According to Alheet et al. (2021), on the other hand, SMEs are also faced with challenges such as global competition and the need to adapt to technology. In general, SMEs are projected to experience growth in 2025, driven by economic recovery and various government support programs. In the digital era, SMEs also need to measure technology-based performance. For example, how effective are their online campaigns in increasing sales, or how efficient is the digital stock management system they use (Vo et al., 2024).

\* Corresponding author

E-mail address [rustinaagp@gmail.com](mailto:rustinaagp@gmail.com) (E. Rustina)

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According to Ahmed et al. (2020), leadership has become a topic of interest in various disciplines, including management, psychology, and sociology. In the context of organizations, leadership plays an important role in determining the direction and success of a team or company. Along with the development of the era and the increasing complexity of the business environment, the challenges faced by leaders are also increasingly diverse. In the era of globalization and information technology, organizations are required to adapt quickly to change. Effective leaders must be able to manage change, motivate teams, and create innovation. In addition, good leadership also contributes to the development of a positive organizational culture, which in turn can increase employee job satisfaction and productivity. Various studies have shown that the leadership style applied by a leader can affect team performance and organizational results. Therefore, a deep understanding of the application of leadership and the various styles that exist is very important. Thus, leaders can choose the approach that best suits the situation and characteristics of the team they lead. In this context, this article aims to explore the application of leadership in organizations, as well as provide insight into the various leadership styles that can be used to achieve common goals. According to Afsar and Umrani (2020), By understanding the background and importance of leadership, it is hoped that leaders can be more effective.

Various leadership styles influence subordinates differently; for instance, transformational leadership inspires and empowers employees, enhancing innovation and performance. In contrast, transactional leadership focuses on goals and rewards but may only moderately encourage innovation. Laissez-faire leadership often leads to poorer outcomes regarding creativity and innovation. The success of an organization is greatly influenced by the quality of its leadership. A leader is someone who delegates responsibility and authority to his subordinates so that they can work towards achieving organizational goals. Without a leader, an organization can become disorganized and lose definite and clear direction. Leadership is the ability to influence a group towards achieving goals. An effective leader can motivate and direct members of the organization to achieve common goals more efficiently and effectively, while poor or ineffective leadership can cause organizational performance to decline and potentially trigger conflict within the organization. Therefore, a leader must be able to influence its members well so that the ideology and direction conveyed can be well received without obstacles, so that organizational goals can be achieved. According to Chow (2018), Leadership in organizations is an important topic and is often discussed in the context of modern organizations. The concept of leadership has been widely studied in various fields, including management, psychology, and sociology. This is because leadership plays an important role in influencing organizational performance and achieving predetermined goals. However, more detailed and in-depth research is needed to understand the concept and practice of leadership in organizations. This shows that leadership is very important for the success of any organization. It is believed that studying organizational leadership will lead to a better understanding of the factors that influence organizational success. Furthermore, if a business is serious about developing its capabilities and remaining competitive, then it must have a shared vision that is clearly defined and followed by all members (Yasmin et al., 2024).

The competitiveness of SMEs and the survival of the company depend on how they can manage their innovation. Creative and innovative SMEs will be able to face business uncertainty, adapt to rapidly changing market conditions, and maintain a competitive advantage that differentiates the company from its competitors (Yesil & Sozbilir, 2013). Therefore, to be able to compete in the current technological era, every SME needs innovation to continue to generate new ideas. Innovation can be in the form of creating value as a source of competitive advantage for the company. Innovation can also be a characteristic of a company's products or services and differentiate them from products or services from other companies both now and in the future. In Indonesia, innovation is one of the keys to business growth that has an impact on national economic development. According to Chow (2018), the number of organizations that fail due to lack of innovation makes organizations need to improve their performance to bring out innovative behavior in employees. Several studies have stated that companies are now beginning to realize that one way for organizations to become more innovative is to utilize the ability of their employees to innovate, the innovative behavior of employees is innovation at the individual level that is useful for effectiveness in an SMEs. Innovative employees have a role in driving a business that moves so fast and helps the success of a company. Therefore, companies should direct their efforts to make their employees more innovative in their work. Improving performance in a dynamic and uncertain environment like today plays an important role in the success of the organization and is also an asset for the organization. The results of other studies state that innovative behavior has a long-term effect that will be useful for increasing profits for SMEs in the long term (Yusuf et al., 2023). Innovative work behavior in employees is also called innovative work behavior (IWB) (Miller & Miller, 2020). Innovative work behavior begins with the recognition of problems, the discovery of ideas or solutions, and ends with the implementation of these new ideas. Innovative employees create new ideas and apply them in groups or organizations so that they are very important for the sustainability of the company. By using their innovative abilities, employees can contribute better by generating new ideas to improve performance both in producing products and services. Thus, it is very important for SMEs to know what factors can give rise to innovative behavior in employees (Zuhdi & Etikariena, 2022).

Innovation demonstrated by individuals can be seen from the tendency of employees to engage in extra-role behavior that can be beneficial and have an impact on increasing effectiveness in the organization, innovative work behavior consists of three stages, namely idea generation, idea promotion, and idea realization. According to Eyamba and Apau (2020), Innovative work behavior begins with the idea generation stage where someone will start producing new things and useful ideas when faced with problems. In the next stage, namely idea promotion, individuals will start promoting potential ideas by seeking support to gain strength in realizing their ideas. In the last stage, namely idea realization, it is marked by the implementation and

application of ideas in work roles, groups, or organizations and will then be useful for organizational effectiveness. In other words, innovative work behavior is behavior that is deliberately carried out by employees to create and apply new ideas related to individual, group, or organizational work that can benefit the progress of the organization. Leaders are a bridge for companies to create innovative work behavior. Today's competitive and rapidly changing environment requires the organization of people in teams to solve unclear problems and produce innovative solutions, the extent to which leaders can facilitate the process and results of team innovation has become a critical question for both theory and practice. Based on previous research, it was found that leadership significantly determines the emergence of creative and innovative work behavior in employees. According to Graham and Smith (2023) leadership style can influence the production of a person's creative ideas so that it can encourage or inhibit employee innovative behavior. This is because leaders have a major role in directly directing and evaluating employee performance. Referring to the explanation above, various studies have been conducted involving different leadership styles that are associated with innovative behavior, including transformational. These studies focus on the influence of leadership on innovative behavior, but research related to the interaction between superiors and subordinates is still little done. A leader should be able to build a close relationship with employees so that it can create trust between leaders and followers so that it can create a positive work attitude (Kiarie et al., 2017; Vo et al., 2024).

According to George and Zhou (2001), Innovative work behavior is not only about creating an idea but also having to implement it. This is a long process because an individual must be responsible and able to overcome various processes and challenges in working. To deal with all situations effectively, the work spirit shown with a strong harmonious passion that is owned will support an employee's ability to explore ideas and challenges in forming innovative work behavior. People who harmoniously like their work will voluntarily internalize the work into a preferred activity, without any pressure. Although often associated with work engagement, both work engagement and work passion have different concepts. Work engagement shows the positive psychological fulfillment of an individual, while work passion is a type of work engagement that activates the psychological process to internalize work activities into individual activities. According to Hildenbrand et al. (2018), Innovation work behavior as a process that will give birth to an innovative thinking spirit naturally in the organization and increase innovation activities as a whole at all levels of employees. Therefore, organizations that implement a culture of innovation involve creativity, freedom, teamwork, search for values oriented towards solutions, communicative, instill respect and trust and fast decision making. Innovation work behavior describes a new ecosystem in business and production philosophy, this is why organizations need to implement a culture of innovation because the implementation of an Innovation work behavior is considered capable of increasing success in creating product innovation and service innovation. Innovation work behavior can be interpreted as a process of achieving the latest things by providing support and freedom to employees to develop in achieving solutions to company and market needs. Indicators of Innovation work behavior are training, joint decision-making, and support (Xia et al., 2022; Haider et al., 2023; Sonmez Cakir, & Adiguzel, 2019).

According to Hu et al. (2025), Openness to experience is one of the five main personality traits in the Big Five Personality model. This trait describes the extent to which a person tends to be open to new things, innovative ideas, and different experiences. Individuals who have high levels of openness tend to be more creative, imaginative, and have great curiosity, while those who are low in openness tend to be more comfortable with routines and familiar things. In general, it refers to an individual's tendency to explore new things, new ideas, and different experiences. Shows a strong curiosity and broad interest in various fields. Tends to be creative, imaginative, and has good abstract thinking skills. More likely to try new things, take risks, and adapt to change. Individuals with low openness: Tend to be more comfortable with routines and familiar things. Less interested in new things and prefer to stay in their comfort zone (Zhang et al., 2020). This research is urgently needed by organizations seeking to improve employee performance in a competitive environment. With ongoing innovation and changing workforce dynamics, understanding the psychological factors that influence performance has become critical. This study explores how these elements drive creativity and resilience, thereby improving employee performance. These findings will provide insights for effective leadership programs and management strategies in today's business environment.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1 Project leadership style

Project leadership style is the approach a leader uses to motivate, guide, and influence a project team to achieve established project objectives (Turner & Müller, 2005). This style encompasses the behaviors, methods, and decision-making strategies applied throughout the project lifecycle to create a work culture that supports project success. Project leadership style is important because it improves project performance. Flexible leaders can choose the right style for each situation, positively impacting project outcomes. Creating a positive work climate. The right style can foster trust, collaboration, and commitment within the team. Influencing the team. Project leadership style influences how team members interact, innovate, and achieve shared goals (Cunningham et al., 2015). Project leadership style is the behavioral approach, methods, and decision-making strategies a leader uses to motivate, guide, and influence a team to achieve successful project goals. This style encompasses a combination of traits, communication habits, and behavioral patterns developed by the leader, and is heavily influenced by the project context, team, and work environment to achieve optimal results (Xia et al., 2022). The goal of project leadership style is to ensure successful project completion, on time, and within budget by inspiring, motivating, and directing the team to achieve project objectives. Project leadership aims to create a positive work culture, address challenges, and encourage

optimal team performance through flexible approaches tailored to the project context, such as transformational, democratic, or servant leadership styles (Zhang et al., 2020).

### *2.2 Innovation work behavior*

Innovation work behavior is a workplace environment that actively encourages and rewards employees to generate new ideas, experiment, collaborate, and continuously implement creative solutions (AlEssa & Durugbo, 2022). This involves believing that innovation can come from anyone in the organization, not just top management, and fostering an open mindset for problem-solving and a willingness to learn from failure. Innovative work behavior is a series of actions taken by individuals to identify and develop new, useful ideas and then implement them into new products, processes, or procedures that provide value to the organization (Farrukh et al., 2023). This behavior includes idea generation, promotion, and implementation of those ideas to improve work efficiency and effectiveness. The goal of innovative work behavior is to encourage employees to create, adopt, and implement new ideas that benefit the organization, resulting in increased effectiveness, competitive advantage, growth, and the organization's ability to survive and remain relevant amidst changing times (Vo et al., 2024). This behavior includes the development of new products, technologies, and work methods, aimed at solving problems, improving processes, and ultimately optimizing overall organizational performance. By implementing new ideas, organizations can create products, services, and work methods that are superior to those of competitors, which is crucial for the company's survival and excellence. Employees with innovative behavior can develop updates or expansions to existing products and services, ensuring customer satisfaction and market relevance. Innovation can bring changes to work procedures and processes, thereby reducing operational costs and increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of organizational performance. In a constantly changing environment, innovative work behavior enables organizations to continuously adapt, stay relevant, and remain abreast of technological advances or market trends (Zuhdi & Etikariena, 2022). This behavior centers on employees' ability to generate new ideas that have the potential to provide solutions to business or operational challenges facing the organization. Through the various innovations generated, organizations can experience sustainable growth, both in terms of products, markets, and human resources.

### *2.3 Openness to Experience*

Openness to experience is a personality trait that indicates a person's openness to new ideas, experiences, change, and variety in life, as well as a tendency to be imaginative and intellectual. This trait is one of the five personality dimensions in the Big Five model, which also includes extroversion, agreeableness, neuroticism, and conscientiousness (McCrae, 1993). The purpose or benefit of the Openness to Experience personality trait is to enhance creativity, academic and career performance, as well as happiness and life satisfaction through an open attitude to new ideas, diverse experiences, and change, which results in greater innovation and adaptability. Someone who is open to new ideas is more likely to think outside the box, seek innovative solutions, and generate novel ideas. A high level of curiosity and broad interests make individuals with high openness scores more receptive to absorbing new information, adapting to different situations, and developing new skills, which can enhance both academic and career performance (Connelly et al., 2014; Bahru et al., 2023). The ability to embrace change and new ideas makes these individuals more adaptable to dynamic environments and situations, both in their personal and professional lives. Open individuals tend to be better able to cope with stress, manage their emotions, and express themselves in healthy ways (Zuhdi & Etikariena, 2022). They also have a greater appreciation for beauty and art and often feel more grateful and optimistic. This trait encourages individuals to independently explore and broaden their horizons, thus enabling them to continuously learn and gain a broader understanding of the world. By seeking challenges, adventures, and opportunities for growth, open individuals tend to enjoy life more and have a strong sense of meaning in their lives.

### *2.4 Employee performance*

Employee performance is the work results, both in quality and quantity, achieved by an employee in carrying out their duties and responsibilities according to the standards set by the company for a specific period of time, and contributing to the achievement of organizational goals. This performance can also be seen from how well an employee meets job requirements and demonstrates concrete behaviors that demonstrate work performance (Gusnadi & Hermawan, 2019). Work results refer to the output or tangible product of an employee's work, both in terms of quantity and quality. Employee performance is measured by how well they complete assigned tasks and fulfill their assigned responsibilities. Good performance is performance that meets or exceeds the quality and quantity standards set by the company for that job. Good employee work results will contribute to the development and progress of the company or organization (Cox et al., 2003). Performance is evaluated over a specific period of time so that results can be compared with predetermined targets. The goals of employee performance include improving organizational performance, motivating and developing employee potential, providing a basis for rewards and career development, and increasing company productivity and profitability (Zuhdi & Etikariena, 2022). Performance appraisals also serve to identify training needs, support management decisions regarding promotions and compensation, and help align individual actions with broader company goals. The purpose of employee performance management is to improve organizational performance, align employee efforts with company goals, foster a performance-oriented culture, and ultimately increase overall productivity and profitability (Vo et al., 2024). Support Decision-Making: Serve as a critical source of information for human resource (HR) planning, career development, promotions, and

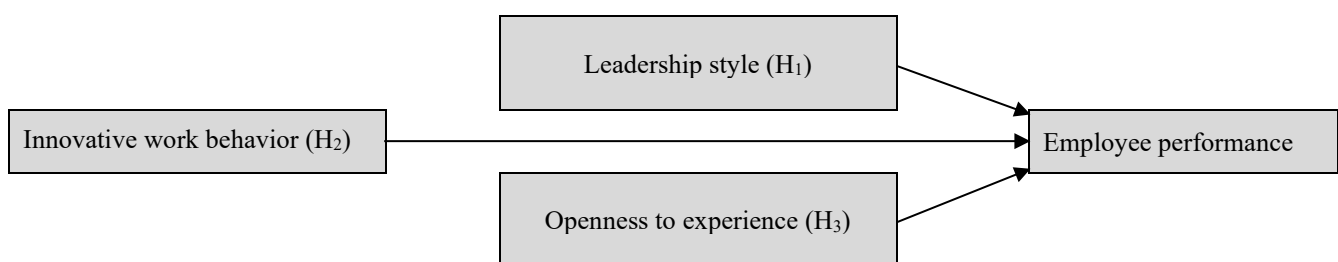
compensation allocation. Create a Conducive Work Environment: Promote a positive work culture through performance recognition and constructive feedback. Increase Motivation and Commitment: Provide recognition and appreciation for efforts, thereby boosting morale and a sense of belonging to the company. Help employees understand areas for development, serve as a basis for training programs, and help them reach their full potential. Set clear, measurable goals to guide employees toward success and ensure they understand the expectations of their roles. Provide information on work achievements that can be used as a basis for future promotions and career development.

### 3. Research method

The approach used in this study is a quantitative approach. The type of research used in this study is non-experimental which is used to find the relationship between variables. Based on its purpose, this study is a correlational study which seeks a relationship or connection between two or more variables used in the study. Based on the number of contacts with respondents, this study uses a perspective that is classified as a cross-sectional design, because the research data collection was carried out at one time. Data collection was carried out with an online instrument using a google form. The sample of the study was selected based on demographic characteristics with a questionnaire collection method. The population of this study were employees in various sectors or fields of work. This was done with the intention that this study would have a varied sample so that it was not limited to certain types of work. The research sample was selected based on demographic characteristics, namely the length of service where respondents were expected to have a minimum of one year of service with the aim of providing sufficient time to assess the quality of the relationship between them, including in fostering passion for work and generating innovative work behavior.

The respondents of this study were 430 SMEs employees selected using the snowball sampling technique based on the ease of finding potential participants from reliable sources (participants who have filled out the questionnaire). The data collection process began by contacting relatives who were known because they were the easiest to obtain. The researcher also contacted potential respondents who matched the characteristics of the participants via Whatsapp, Line, and Instagram direct messages. Furthermore, the questionnaire was given to several respondents via social media such as email, Whatsapp, Line, or Instagram direct messages. This questionnaire uses an ordinal scale using a Likert scale. The scale used in data collection in this study is a scale ranging from 1 to 5. The criteria for the scale are as follows: Strongly Disagree (STS = 1); Disagree (TS = 2); Undecided (RR = 3); Agree (S = 4); and Strongly Agree (SS = 5). Structural Equation Model - Partial Least Square (SEM-PLS) serves as a data processing technique employed subsequent to the successful collection of data. The SEM-PLS method is a methodological framework employed in the study because the study entailed a comparatively limited quantity of samples, with a minimum sample size falling between 30 and 100 samples.

For the analysis of data utilizing the SmartPLS 4.0 software application. The analytical technique employed in this study is Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), conducted using SmartPLS software version 4.0.9.9. PLS-SEM is employed in this study due to its suitability for analyzing complex models with multiple constructs and pathways, especially when the research is exploratory in nature. It is particularly effective in handling small to medium sample sizes, non-normal data distributions, and both reflective and formative constructs. PLS-SEM also prioritizes maximizing the explained variance of dependent variables, and is effective for testing relationships between variables. The stages of data testing are validity testing, reliability testing, significance testing and hypothesis testing.



**Fig. 1.** Research framework

The hypothesis of this study according Fig. 1 is developed as follows:

**H<sub>1</sub>:** *Project Leadership style has a positive relationship with employee performance.*

**H<sub>2</sub>:** *Innovative Work Behavior has a positive relationship with employee performance.*

**H<sub>3</sub>:** *Openness to experience has a positive relationship with employee performance.*

The variables indicators are show in Table 1 below:

**Table 1**  
Variables indicators

Variables	Indicator	References
Project Leadership style	1. Direction: How clearly the leader provides direction and instructions to achieve project goals. Communication: The leader's skill in conveying information, listening to input, and providing effective feedback to the team.	Turner & Müller. (2005); Cunningham, & Wielgus (2015).
	2. Decision-Making: The leader's approach to decision-making, whether independently (autocratic), collaboratively with the team (democratic), or by delegating some decisions.	
	3. Motivation: The leader's ability to inspire, motivate, and motivate team members to achieve their best performance.	
Innovative Work Behavior	1. Ideation: This is the stage where employees actively generate new and useful ideas that have never existed before.	AlEssa & Durugbo (2022); Farrukh et al. (2023)
	2. Idea Promotion: This stage involves employee behavior to support, share, and convince others of the ideas they have generated.	
	3. Idea Implementation: The approved ideas are translated into concrete actions and implemented in the form of new products, services, work processes, or procedures that can improve organizational performance.	
	4. Knowledge Sharing: Employees who actively share and gather knowledge tend to be more innovative because they have the intellectual foundation to generate new ideas.	
Openness to experience	1. Intellectual Curiosity: Having a strong drive to learn, understand the world, and expand knowledge.	McCrae (1993); Connelly et al. (2014).
	2. Creativity: Tendency to generate new and innovative ideas.	
	3. Openness to New Ideas: Willingness to accept and explore ideas that differ from conventional ways of thinking.	
	4. Enjoying New Experiences: Enjoying trying new things, such as exotic foods or traveling to foreign places.	
Employee performance	1. Work Quality: How well and accurately an employee completes their tasks.	Gusnadi & Hermawan (2019), Cox et al. (2003).
	2. Work Quantity: How many or how quickly an employee can complete a task within a given time period.	
	3. Task Execution: An employee's ability to carry out tasks according to instructions and without error.	
	4. Responsibility: Awareness and fulfillment of obligations in completing work.	

## 4. Data analysis and discussion

### 4.1 Characteristics of Respondents

Table 2 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the respondents, including gender, age, occupation, and educational background. In the gender category, male respondents constituted the majority, representing 79.07% of the sample. Regarding age, the largest group of respondents was between 26 and 34 years old, accounting for 54.42% of the sample. Finally, in the education category, most respondents held Senior High School / Equivalent making up 49.53% of the sample.

**Table 2**  
Demographic Respondents

	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Man	340	79.07%
	Woman	90	20.93%
Age	17 - 25 Years old	23	5.35%
	26 - 34 Years old	234	54.42%
	35 - 44 Years old	120	27.91%
	> 45 Years old	53	12.33%
Highest Education Level	Junior High School	124	28.84%
	Senior High School / Equivalent	213	49.53%
	Diploma (D3) / Bachelor's Degree (S1)	65	15.12%
	Master's Degree (S2)	28	6.51%

The respondents were predominantly male (79.07%), with females making up 20.93%. Most participants were aged 26–34 years (54.42%), followed by 35–44 years (27.91%). Smaller groups included those aged 17–25 (5.35%) and over 45 (12.33%). In terms of education, 49.53% had completed senior high school, while 28.84% finished junior high school; 15.12% held a diploma or bachelor's degree, and 6.51% had a master's degree. This indicates a study focused on young males with moderate education levels.

### 4.2 Measurement Model Evaluation (Outer Model)

#### Validity Test

Validity tests are conducted to determine whether the measurement instruments accurately assess the intended constructs. These tests include convergent validity and discriminant validity. Convergent validity refers to the extent to which items measuring the same construct are highly correlated. It is evaluated using loading factor values and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), as shown in Table 2. A construct is considered valid if each item has a loading factor greater than 0.7 and an AVE value greater than 0.5. As presented in Table 3, all items have loading factor values exceeding 0.7, and Table 2 confirming their validity. Additionally, all variables have AVE values greater than 0.5, indicating strong convergent validity.

**Table 3**  
Composite reliability

Variable	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Project Leadership style	0.984	0.985	0.986	0.821
Innovative Work Behavior	0.951	0.954	0.958	0.719
Openness to experience	0.933	0.936	0.945	0.683
Employee performance	0.955	0.956	0.960	0.615

The next phase involves testing discriminant validity using the Fornell-Larcker Criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT). Discriminant validity ensures that measures of different constructs are not highly correlated. A construct is considered valid if the square root of its AVE is greater than its correlations with other constructs, and if the HTMT ratio is less than 0.9 As shown in Table 3, all variables meet the Fornell-Larcker Criterion, as the square root of each construct's AVE is greater than its correlations with other constructs.

**Table 4**  
Discriminant validity Fornell-Larcker criterion results

Variable	Leadership style	Innovative Work Behavior	Openness to experience	Employee performance
Leadership style	0.906			
Innovative Work Behavior	0.728	0.790		
Openness to experience	0.458	0.580	0.826	
Employee performance	0.626	0.721	0.515	0.784

**Table 5**  
Discriminant validity HTMT

Variable	Leadership style	Innovative Work Behavior	Openness To Experience	Employee performance
Project Leadership style				
Innovative Work Behavior	0.781			
Openness to experience	0.474	0.638		
Employee performance	0.641	0.782	0.540	

*Reliability Test*

The stability, consistency, and dependability of a measurement instrument are evaluated through reliability testing. This process typically involves assessing Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values. A construct is considered reliable if both Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values exceed 0.7. As shown in Table 3, all variables have Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values greater than 0.7. Based on the results of the validity and reliability tests, it can be concluded that all variables meet the required criteria for validity and reliability, indicating a robust measurement model.

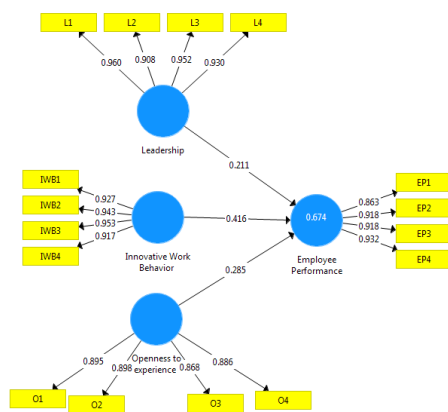
*Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model)*

*R Square(R<sup>2</sup>)*

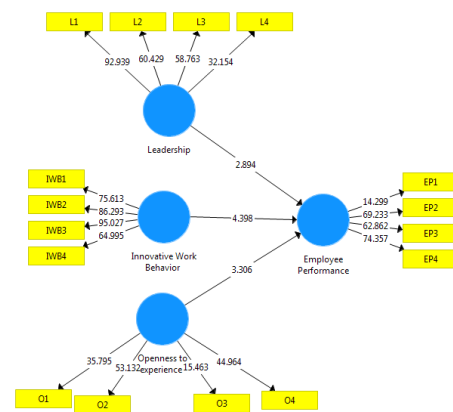
R-squared (R<sup>2</sup>) represents the coefficient of determination for the dependent variable, indicating the proportion of variation explained by the independent variables. R<sup>2</sup> values are typically categorized as weak (0.19), medium (0.33), and strong (0.67). As shown in Table 6 and Fig. 2., Employee Performance accounts for 51.9% and indicating a medium level of influence. The remaining 48.1% of the variation is explained by other external factors.

**Table 6**  
R Square

Variable	R-square	R-square adjusted	Q-square
Employee Performance	0.526	0.522	0.315



**Fig. 2.** Validity testing



**Fig. 3.** Hypothesis testing

**Table 6**  
Hypothesis test results

Variable	Original	T statistics	P values	Hypothesis Results
<b>Direct Effect</b>				
Project Leadership → Employee Performance	0.211	2.894	0.000	Accepted
Innovative Work Behavior → Employee Performance	0.416	4.398	0.000	Accepted
Openness to experience → Employee Performance	0.285	3.306	0.000	Accepted

### *Q Square ( $Q^2$ )*

Q Square is used to evaluate the predictive relevance of a model by measuring the accuracy of observations based on parameter estimation and model results. A model is considered to have predictive relevance if the  $Q^2$  value is greater than 0. As shown in Table 5 and Fig. 3, the employee performance variable has a  $Q^2$  value of 0.317. Since values are greater than 0, this indicates that the model has predictive relevance.

### *Project Leadership style has a positive relationship with employee performance*

Based on the results of hypothesis testing, it can be concluded that Leadership style has a positive relationship with employee performance. This conclusion is supported by the statistical findings, which show a t-statistic value of 2.894 (greater than the critical t-table value of 1.65), a p-value of 0.000 (less than 0.05), and a path coefficient of 0.211 indicating a positive relationship. Therefore, hypothesis H1 is accepted, confirming that Leadership style has a positive relationship with employee performance. This finding aligns with several previous studies, which have consistently demonstrated that Leadership style has a positive relationship with employee performance.

One of the factors that can affect employee performance is leadership style. The right leadership style is essential to develop a conducive work environment and improve employee performance so that it is expected to produce high work productivity. According to Jing et al. (2022), Leadership plays a vital role in moving SMEs towards their desired goals. Leadership is practiced not only by top managers, but also by supervisors on the production line who directly interact with operators. Effective leadership can encourage work enthusiasm, increase employee commitment, and create a positive work climate. The transformational leadership style applied by several managers is a driver of successful work culture change. Transformational leaders usually have a clear vision, provide inspiration, and support individual development. According to Kousina and Voudouris (2023), Participatory leadership has also been shown to improve team performance. By involving employees in decision making, the company creates a sense of ownership of their duties and responsibilities. Employees are more motivated to contribute and show their best performance. The right leadership style is essential to develop a conducive work environment and improve employee performance so that it is expected to produce high work productivity (Zuhdi & Etikariena, 2022). Employee performance depends on the leader who plays a role in deciding, directing and supervising his employees. Therefore, leadership style plays a major role in improving employee performance.

According to Khan et al. (2020), Leadership style has a close relationship with employee performance. In his research, a person's leadership style will greatly influence the development of human resources in the future. A good leader should be able to understand the conditions around him, including what the employees need, so that the employees can be motivated to work harder. The higher the good leadership traits will be able to improve the performance of each employee. Leadership style has a close relationship with employee performance that can affect the success of SMEs. Leadership is the way a leader influences the behavior of subordinates, so that they are willing to cooperate and work productively to achieve SMEs goals. From this definition, it can be seen that leadership is an important part of management, where a leader must be able to create harmonious integration with his subordinates, also including fostering cooperation, directing and encouraging the work passion of subordinates, influencing and providing attitudes and behavior of individuals and groups, so as to form a leadership style that the leader applies (Yusuf et al., 2023) behavior of a leader is an influence that will create its own understanding that will affect the psychological condition of subordinates, there are subordinates who see, observe and imitate the behavior of the leader shown by their superiors in carrying out work according to their expectations. If the leadership behavior displayed by the superior is perceived as something expected by the subordinates, it will have a better influence and impact on employee performance. Conversely, if the leadership behavior displayed by the superior is something that is not in accordance with his expectations, it will have a less good effect on employee performance. Performance refers to the level of accomplishment in attaining results from the implementation of certain tasks. In the context of leadership, the performance of an employee in SMEs is very much needed to achieve work performance for the employee himself and also for the success of the SMEs (Zuhdi & Etikariena, 2022).

According to Liu et al. (2023), The leadership style of a leader will greatly affect the performance of employees or subordinates. Leaders must be able to choose a leadership style according to the existing situation, if the leadership style applied is correct and appropriate, it will be able to direct the achievement of organizational and individual goals. Conversely,

if the leadership style chosen is wrong and does not match the existing situation, it will make it difficult to achieve organizational goals. Effective leadership has a positive impact on organizational performance. Good leadership can create a healthy work culture and motivate people involved in the organization to be more productive and efficient. A leader who knows how to give clear instructions, offer sufficient support, and set realistic goals can help achieve the desired results more effectively. In addition, effective leadership can also help build good relationships between leaders and people in the organization so that a harmonious work atmosphere is created and encourages everyone to be more actively involved in achieving SMEs goals. On the other hand, poor leadership can have a negative impact on SMEs performance. Authoritarian leaders or those who have deficiencies in leading a team can cause discomfort and anxiety to their members, which can affect the quality and productivity of work. According to Sonmez et al. (2019), Members may also feel unmotivated or even unwilling to work hard because they feel their efforts are not appreciated or recognized. In addition, poor leadership can create insecurity among members, which can affect the ability of SMEs to achieve their goals. Therefore, it is important for SMEs to choose the right leaders.

The relationship between project leadership and employee performance is positive and strong. Effective leadership can improve employee performance in several ways: providing a clear vision, inspiring and motivating the team, creating a positive work environment, providing support and direction, and involving employees in decision-making, all of which contribute to increased productivity and the achievement of project goals. Effective project leaders are able to inspire and motivate employees, so they work more enthusiastically and have greater confidence in achieving the best results. Good leaders create a positive, open, and supportive work environment where employees feel valued and comfortable, which in turn increases their productivity. Strong project leadership provides a clear vision and specific direction to the team, helping employees understand their goals and how to contribute to their achievement. Project leaders who involve employees in the decision-making process and value their opinions will increase their sense of ownership and commitment, thereby increasing productivity.

Project leaders provide the guidance and support necessary to develop employees' skills and potential, helping them overcome challenges and become more effective in their work. Several leadership styles have a strong influence on employee performance: Focusing on follower development, inspiration, and collaboration, which drives long-term performance. Involving the team in decision-making, boosting employee confidence and initiative. Providing instructions and rewards to motivate employees to go the extra mile to achieve goals. Overall, project leaders play a crucial role in shaping the work environment and motivating team members. Positive and effective project leadership is a key factor in improving employee performance and project success. Effective project leadership has a significant positive impact on employee performance, with good leaders able to motivate, direct, and provide support, thereby increasing productivity, efficiency, and the achievement of project goals. Conversely, poor leadership can reduce team morale and performance, indicating a mutually reinforcing relationship between leadership and employee performance.

### **Innovative Work Behavior has a positive relationship with employee performance**

Based on the results of hypothesis testing, it can be concluded that Innovative Work Behavior has a positive relationship with employee performance. This conclusion is supported by the statistical findings, which show a t-statistic value of 4.398 (greater than the critical t-table value of 1.65), a p-value of 0.000 (less than 0.05), and a path coefficient of 0.416, indicating a positive relationship. Therefore, hypothesis H2 is accepted, confirming Innovative Work Behavior has a positive relationship with employee performance. This finding aligns with several previous studies, which have consistently demonstrated that Innovative Work Behavior has a positive relationship with employee performance.

Innovation work behavior in an organization can encourage creativity, risk-taking, and original thinking, which can ultimately improve employee and overall organizational performance. Innovation work behavior that encourages employees to think outside the box, experiment, and take risks can generate new ideas and innovative solutions that can improve performance. Employees who feel supported to innovate and see their ideas valued tend to be more motivated and engaged in their work, which in turn can improve their performance. According to Rangus and Černe (2019), An Innovation work behavior encourages continuous learning and skills development, which can help employees stay relevant and adaptive to change, and improve their overall performance. SMEs with a strong Innovation work behavior are more likely to adapt to market changes, create innovative new products and services, and maintain a competitive edge, which can ultimately improve business performance. Innovation work behavior that supports collaboration, open communication, and mutual respect can create a positive and productive work environment, which can improve employee performance and reduce turnover rates. Overall, an Innovation work behavior plays a significant role in creating an environment conducive to the growth and success of SMEs, by improving employee performance and SME competitiveness. that innovation serves as an intermediary factor between market orientation and performance, as it positively affects growth and profitability/ROA through both administrative and technical innovation. Furthermore, knowledge of information technology has a positive effect on changes in business processes in the banking industry. Innovation can improve company performance in the banking industry; innovation is a key determinant of business performance. According to Saleem et al. (2023), there is a significant positive correlation between multidimensional innovation indicators and organizational performance in the banking sector. This finding is supported by the results of research which concludes that the relationship between innovation and performance not only emphasizes the

separation of administrative and technical innovation contributions to company performance but also supports synergy between these types of innovation to improve overall company performance. The results of this study are reinforced by stating that service innovation radically has a positive effect on company performance. According to Sonmez et al. (2019), Research in the hospitality industry found that innovation has a significant positive effect on business performance. A study conducted on manufacturing firms in Indonesia found that innovation has a significant effect on corporate performance. Additionally, an examination of the banking industry found that financial innovation influences company performance. Research in the service industry found that the ability to innovate significantly influences organizational performance.

Previous research According to Sonmez et al. (2019), provides evidence to understand the relationship process between employee development and innovative behavior, by examining social and contextual resources that influence each other in their relationship. The results of the study indicate that support and opportunities in the workplace make development more effective and facilitate innovative behavior. The findings in the study provide an example to extend social cognitive theory in a multilevel framework. Focusing more attention on the development of social resources, and considering and combining individual characteristics and contextually provide a more nuanced view of the motivation process of employee innovative behavior (Xia et al., 2022). The findings in the study direct organizations to utilize their employees with effective resources that encourage their behavior towards innovation. Employees if their openness value is high will increase their innovative work behavior, because they are freer to carry out tasks and have the freedom to do so, then they tend to be open to new ideas, they are easy to tolerate change and happy with new experiences: Based on the data processing that has been done, openness to experience has a positive effect on innovative work behavior. That the other four personality dimensions except openness to experience to predict the emergence of creativity are less consistent, either positive or negative. This argument seems to support the findings of this study as the study conducted by the researcher found the influence of these four personality dimensions on innovation behavior (Zuraik et al., 2020). The personality dimensions of employees, as far as innovative behavior and related issues are concerned need to be explored. Management needs to pay attention to personality traits and issues during employee selection and career development. Organizations need to employ individuals with relevant personality traits so that they can enhance their innovative potential and capabilities. As we agree that individuals at the workplace are the greatest assets of the organization that need to be channeled for the success of the organization (i.e. innovation performance). SMEs should encourage their employees to be more innovative through proper systems, policies and procedures such as ensuring career opportunities and reward systems.

Innovation work behavior has a strong and significant positive influence on employee performance, driving increased productivity, motivation, and creativity through a work environment that supports learning, collaboration, and tolerance for mistakes. Organizations with a strong innovative culture create a competitive advantage by facilitating long-term value creation through new ideas and adapting to market changes. A culture that supports innovation creates a positive work environment, motivating employees to actively engage in their work and contribute their best. A culture that tolerates mistakes and values new ideas encourages employees to try new things and creatively explore new possibilities. A collaborative work culture increases team productivity and enables effective information exchange, which then sparks innovative ideas. An environment that continuously supports learning and openness makes an organization more adaptable to change and capable of creating innovative solutions. Better performance in generating new ideas and implementing innovations ultimately impacts employee and overall organizational productivity. Encourage employees to try without fear of negative consequences if failure. Create a sense of emotional safety so employees feel comfortable voicing their ideas. Reward individual contributions and celebrate success. Ensuring a comfortable, supportive, and innovative work environment. Providing rest periods and space for personal development to prevent burnout and maintain productivity.

### **Openness to experience has a positive relationship with employee performance**

Based on the results of hypothesis testing, it can be concluded that Openness to experience has a positive relationship with employee performance. This conclusion is supported by the statistical findings, which show a t-statistic value of 3.306 (greater than the critical t-table value of 1.65), a p-value of 0.000 (less than 0.05), and a path coefficient of 0.285, indicating a positive relationship. Therefore, hypothesis H3 is accepted, confirming Openness to experience has a positive relationship with employee performance. This finding aligns with several previous studies, which have consistently demonstrated that Openness to experience has a positive relationship with employee performance.

Openness to experience indicates the extent to which a person is open to new ideas, experiences, and change. In the context of performance, openness to experience can have a positive impact, especially in jobs that require creativity, adaptation, and problem solving. However, the relationship between openness to experience and performance is not always linear and can vary depending on the type of job and the context. Individuals who are open to experience tend to be more creative and innovative, because they are more willing to try new things and see problems from different perspectives. Openness to experience helps individuals adapt more quickly to changes in the work environment and new tasks. Several studies Saif et al. (2024), Sonmez et al. (2019), have shown that openness to experience is positively related to job satisfaction, because open individuals are more likely to feel challenged and engaged in their work. Openness to experience has been shown to contribute to better performance in jobs that require creative thinking, problem solving, and adaptation, such as jobs in research, the arts, or technology. Openness to Experience, or openness to experience, is one of the important factors and dimensions in the Big

Five Personality theory that is positive and relevant in the context of the world of work. Openness to Experience describes a person's openness to be open and adapt to new ideas, new experiences and values, to changes in something. Usually someone with high openness will have a broad imagination and also new ideas that are always interesting. They are also usually interested in art, philosophical thinking, and have good artistic skills. Generally they will have a strong enough drive to want and continue to learn and also understand the world around them. They also like challenges, both light challenges and big challenges to expand their knowledge and experience. Of course, someone with a high openness dimension will always be open and want to get new experiences from those around them. They will also be interested in trying new things and are also not afraid to try and face a change (Zuhdi & Etikariena, 2022). Someone with a high openness dimension also usually has a reflective view and is open to criticism or self-evaluation. They will consider an evaluation as a challenge and will accept new ideas that can make themselves better. They also tend to be someone who has flexible thinking and will not be fixated on just one thing. Because they are open to new ideas and values, they will also be faster and able to adapt to change.

According to Saleem et al. (2023), Innovation requires employees to be cognitively and emotionally involved and requires employees to invest significant resources at each stage of innovation, for example the idea generation stage requires involvement in a series of activities that require continuous effort over a sustained period. Furthermore, when new ideas are developed, emotional effort is required to overcome various obstacles in the organization. In addition, unexpected problems also require employees to devote additional effort to problem solving when involved in the innovation process (Zuhdi & Etikariena, 2022). The role of harmonious passion in this case is to make employees internalize work into a preferred activity, have mental resilience, energy, and high willingness to invest effort every time they face challenges, which results in increased performance including innovative work behavior. Therefore, with harmonious passion in working, employees will really enjoy their involvement in working so that it will encourage continuous innovative work behavior in working. This result is also in accordance with the innovation model where innovation is driven by individual cognitive abilities, personality, knowledge, and internal motivation where each innovation can be developed through new things and can produce something new based on it. Thus, one efficient way to get various new lessons is with the openness personality possessed by employees. By being open to new experiences, employees will continue to learn new things and in turn grow their ability to generate new ideas from their thoughts and implement them.

## 5. Research implications

The need for employees to display innovative work behavior is very important for the success of the organization. The results of this study can be used as practical implications that can be applied in today's companies where Innovation work behavior is one of the predictors that can shape innovative work behavior in employees. To encourage innovative behavior, it is important for managers to build good relationships with their subordinates so that the quality of the relationship formed does not only refer to the employment contract. During the pandemic, especially when implementing work from home, management must be able to facilitate the quality of the relationship between superiors and subordinates which will encourage employees to be more involved in creative and innovative thinking. This can be done by providing training sessions for managers to build positive relationships with their employees. The high quality of the relationship between superiors and subordinates is characterized by a strong sense of mutual trust and active communication. The manager's efforts to build trust will help employees become more open which will ultimately encourage them to behave innovatively. The existence of mutual trust, respect, and mutual obligations will make employees more open to information and promote new ideas in working to their superiors. Furthermore, leaders will provide recognition and support when subordinates convey their ideas so that these ideas can be realized. In addition to external factors, practitioners in companies are expected to be able to consider individual factors where according to the results of this study, it was found that the personality of openness to experience and harmonious passion can also play a role in the formation of innovative work behavior. These findings highlight the importance of openness in human resource practices in organizations. Therefore, the results of this study can provide an overview for various companies in recruiting new employees by considering prospective employees who have an open personality. The increasingly dynamic business conditions such as today make employees have the need to get new ideas, making the openness personality very valuable.

Openness to Experience has a positive and significant impact on employee performance. Employees with high levels of Openness to Experience tend to be more creative, receptive to new ideas, and adaptable to change, which ultimately improves their productivity and performance in the workplace. Openness is closely related to creativity, making employees more capable of generating new ideas and innovative solutions to work problems. Individuals who are open to experience are more flexible and ready to face change, whether it be new technology, work processes, or company targets. Employees with high Openness scores are more motivated to learn new things and develop skills, which are essential for long-term performance improvement. They are willing to consider ideas from others or from different sources, which can enrich their perspectives and work strategies. Thus, Openness to Experience can encourage employees to be proactive, innovative, and able to face challenges in the workplace, all of which contribute to better performance. The relationship between openness to experience and employee performance varies depending on the context and type of work, but in general, employees with high levels of openness tend to be more innovative and adaptable to change. Conversely, some studies have found that this trait does not significantly influence specific performance, so it is important to consider the type of job and organizational culture when analyzing this relationship. Employees with high levels of openness to experience tend to seek new ideas and are willing to

try different things, which directly contributes to innovative work behavior. This trait helps employees more easily accept and adapt to changes in the environment.

The implementation of effective project leadership is a key factor in achieving organizational goals. In this discussion, various key elements that support leadership have been outlined, such as a clear vision and mission, effective communication, wise decision making, team empowerment and motivation, and continuous evaluation and feedback. Various leadership styles, such as autocratic, participative, transformational, and laissez-faire, have their own advantages and disadvantages. Successful leaders must be able to choose and adjust their leadership style to the situation and characteristics of the team they lead. The challenges faced by modern leaders, including rapidly changing business environments, multicultural team dynamics, conflict management, and the need for digital leadership, require adaptive and innovative strategies. By implementing effective strategies, such as developing an inspiring vision, strengthening communication, providing training, implementing change management, encouraging innovation, empowering teams, and conducting structured evaluations, leaders can improve leadership effectiveness and overall organizational performance.

## 6. Conclusion

The results of this study are project Leadership style has a positive and significant relationship to performance, Innovation work behavior has a positive and significant relationship to performance, openness to experience has a positive and significant relationship to performance. The Project leadership style applied by several managers is a driver of successful work culture change. Transformational leaders usually have a clear vision, provide inspiration, and support individual development. Participative leadership has also been shown to improve production team performance. By involving employees in decision making, the company creates a sense of ownership of their tasks and responsibilities. Employees are more motivated to contribute and show their best performance. The right leadership style is needed to develop a conducive work environment and improve employee performance so that it is expected to produce high work productivity. Employee performance depends on the leader who plays a role in deciding, directing and supervising his employees. Therefore, leadership style has a major role in improving employee performance. This study contributes to individual factors and situational factors that can influence the emergence of innovative work behavior in employees. Specifically, this study explains the relationship between four variables, namely openness to experience personality, harmonious passion, leader-member exchange, and innovative work behavior using self-determination theory. This study is expected to contribute and complement the literature, especially in the field of industrial and organizational psychology related to factors that can cause the formation of innovative work behavior. Based on the results of data processing which states that openness to experience in employees and lecturers is already high. Therefore, the researcher suggests that supervisors and their staff maintain the existence of character development and education regarding applicable policies in accustoming employees, so that they can carry out their work better and more orderly. In addition to improving the quality of work, this can also make them work happily and sincerely, as respondents stated that they base their work on good intentions and sincerity, and bring religious values by considering work as worship.

## 7. Limitations

This study has various limitations that can be suggestions for further research. First, data collection in the study used a cross-sectional design which was only carried out at one time, so that further research can consider using a time-lagged research design. The time lagged research design can anticipate the occurrence of common method bias, although from the results of Harman's one-factor test analysis, this study does not have a problem with common method bias. Second, this study only looks at the perception of innovative work behavior from one perspective, namely employees.

## Suggestions

1. Vision and Mission Development: Organizations need to regularly evaluate and update their vision and mission to stay relevant to changes in the business environment. Leaders should involve team members in this process to create a sense of ownership and commitment.
2. Communication Skills Training: Leaders and team members should be trained in effective communication skills. This training can include active listening techniques, clear message delivery, and the use of modern communication technologies.
3. Flexible Leadership Style Application: Leaders are advised to develop the ability to apply various leadership styles according to the situation and needs of the team. Flexibility in leadership style can increase effectiveness and responsiveness to change.
4. Proactive Change Management: Organizations should develop a clear change management plan and involve all team members in the transition process. Transparent communication about the changes that will occur is essential to reduce resistance.
5. Encourage a Culture of Innovation: Leaders need to create an environment that supports innovation and creativity. This can be done by providing space for team members to experiment and develop new ideas without fear of failure.

6. Continuous Performance Evaluation: Organizations should implement an objective and transparent performance evaluation system. Constructive feedback should be given regularly to help team members in self-development and performance improvement.
7. Team Member Well-being: Leaders should pay attention to the mental and emotional well-being of team members. Creating a healthy and supportive work environment can increase motivation and productivity.

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