



## Transformational Leadership and Innovative Work Behavior: The Mediation-Moderation Model of Ambidextrous Culture

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**Abstract.** In the Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity (VUCA) era, organization in complex businesses and competitive environments with unprecedented challenges and opportunities. In this context, the development of innovation is required to survive through work behavior. Therefore, this research aimed to explore the influence of transformational leadership on work behavior of employees, considering meaningful work as a mediating variable. The moderating role of ambidextrous organizational culture is also tested on ASN (civil servant) at the Indonesia Ministry of X ( $N = 210$ ) using the self-report data collection method. The data were analyzed using the PROCESS Model 15 statistical method developed by Hayes. The result showed that meaningful work mediated the relationship between transformational leadership and innovative work behavior ( $B = .50$ , CI 95% [.15, .42]). Moreover, ambidextrous organizational culture played a significant role as a moderator of the direct relationship between the variables ( $B = .3449$ ,  $p < .05$ ), but does not play a role in the indirect relationship ( $B = -.1292$ ,  $p > .05$ ). Practical and innovative contributions were also provided to practitioners of industrial and organizational psychology, as well as ASN in exploring innovative work behavior.

**Keywords:** ambidextrous organizational culture, government employee, innovative work behavior, meaningful work, transformational leadership

## Kepemimpinan Transformasional dan Perilaku Kerja Inovatif: Peran Mediasi dan Moderasi Budaya Ambidextrous

**Abstrak.** Pada era VUCA, organisasi berada pada lingkungan bisnis dan persaingan yang kompleks seperti tantangan dan peluang yang belum pernah terjadi sebelumnya. Kondisi ini menuntut munculnya inovasi dalam organisasi untuk bertahan dan berkembang melalui perilaku kerja inovatif karyawan. Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi dampak kepemimpinan transformasional terhadap perilaku kerja karyawan, dengan mempertimbangkan pekerjaan yang bermakna sebagai penghubung. Peneliti juga menguji peran moderasi dari budaya organisasi *ambidextrous*. Partisipan penelitian ini adalah Aparatur Sipil Negara Kementerian X ( $N = 210$ ), dengan metode pengambilan data *self-report*. Data dianalisis dengan teknik statistik PROCESS Model 15 yang dikembangkan oleh Hayes. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pekerjaan yang bermakna memediasi hubungan antara kepemimpinan transformasional dengan perilaku kerja inovatif ( $B = .50$ , CI 95% [.15, .42]). Serta budaya organisasi *ambidextrous* berperan signifikan sebagai moderator hubungan langsung antara kepemimpinan transformasional dengan perilaku kerja inovatif ( $B = .3449$ ,  $p < .05$ ), namun tidak berperan dalam hubungan tidak langsung ( $B = -.1292$ ,  $p > .05$ ). Hasil penelitian ini dapat memberikan kontribusi praktis bagi praktisi psikologi industri dan organisasi, serta ASN Kementerian, khususnya di Indonesia dalam mengeksplorasi perilaku kerja inovatif. Serta kontribusi teoretis mengenai perilaku kerja inovatif dalam budaya organisasi *ambidextrous* pada sektor publik.

**Kata Kunci:** aparatur sipil negara, budaya organisasi *ambidextrous*, kepemimpinan transformasional, pekerjaan yang bermakna, perilaku kerja inovatif

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In the Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity (VUCA) era, organization is subjected to complex business and competitive environments with unprecedented challenges and opportunities, including climate crisis, technological change, global health issues, as well as changing social values (McKinsey, 2023). Transformation, rapid change and human method are the main focus of organizational management. These conditions require the development of new ideas and strategies to improve a competitive advantage (Atwater & Carmeli, 2009) through innovation. Meanwhile, an organization's innovation cannot be separated from the contribution of human resources. In this context, employees are the strongest asset in creating a competitive advantage for all jobs (Yadav & Vihari, 2023). The competitive advantage of an organization is produced by innovative work behavior (Jiang & Gu, 2016; Shin et al, 2017; Wang et al, 2015).

The 2023 Global Innovation Index places Indonesia in 61st place out of 132 countries in the world based on an assessment of innovation input and output. In this assessment, insignificant positive developments were reported in the last three years compared to countries in Southeast Asia (WIPO, 2023). Therefore, the economic development and growth of a country are driven by innovation (Stewart-Weeks & Kastle, 2015). Innovation increases efficiency and effectiveness in providing solutions to overcome current challenges and

provide better services to the community (Borins, 2006). Challenges for the public sector arise from economic, social, demographic, and environmental changes, requiring the public sector to face contradictory elements (Deserti & Rizzo, 2014). Understanding the key role of government employees in providing services, making policies, and implementing programs is fundamental to employee management (Dharmanegara et al, 2023).

ASN (Civil Servants) often work in a more structured and bureaucratic environment compared to the private sector. Rigid organizational structures and complex bureaucratic processes are barriers to innovation among ASN, while the private sector may have greater flexibility to test and implement new ideas. Innovative behavior is also crucial for producing effective and efficient solutions (Apipudin et al, 2023). The stages recommended for the creation of an innovative government are contained in Indonesia Presidential Regulation Number 81 of 2010 concerning Grand Design for Bureaucratic Reform 2010-2025. The principle of bureaucratic reform provides wide space for Ministries, Institutions, and Regional Governments to carry out innovations and produce better performance (Perpres, 2010). Therefore, the mechanisms influencing innovative work behavior should be explored, especially in government organization in Indonesia.

According to Scott and Bruce (1994), innovative work behavior is a process of developing an answer to existing problems by forming coalitions to promote ideas. This variable consists of activities related to the development, promotion, and implementation of innovations useful for employees (Rank et al, 2004). In addition, organization can function more effectively with innovation (Janssen, 2000). In the public sector, innovation is defined as a learning process in which governments are expected to meet specific social challenges. This can be solved by developing new services, technologies, organizational structures, management methods, governance processes, and policy concepts (Bekkers et al, 2011). Employees need experience of working and learning together to trigger innovative work behavior (Afsar & Umrani, 2019).

Various research have been carried out to explore the factors causing innovative work behavior. One of the Internal factors that influence are meaningful work (Pradhan & Jena, 2019). Employees with the perception that work is meaningful tend to have higher levels of job satisfaction and contribute more to innovative goals. Other internal factors are the motivation to learn (Afsar & Umrani, 2019) and the proactive personality of employees (Li et al, 2017; Mubarak et al, 2021). The external factors contributing to this variable include transformational leadership (Afsar et al, 2019; Afsar & Umrani, 2019; Lin, 2023; Odugbesan et

al, 2023; Pradhan & Jena, 2019), ambidextrous culture (Liu et al, 2019; Pratiwi & Salendu, 2021), and memory (Etikariena & Muluk, 2014). Smet et al. (2023) in a survey conducted by McKinsey stated that leadership played a big role in creating high-performing employees who supported innovative work behavior.

Transformational leadership is the process of providing inspirational motivation to achieve collective organizational vision and goals. In this context, leaders have the role of stimulating and motivating innovative behavior (Afsar & Umrani, 2019). Bednall et al. (2018) explained that transformational leadership focused on new methods of strengthening the relationship between leaders and employees to achieve goals. In addition, the variable plays a major role in increasing innovation in organization such as creating a supportive work environment (Masood & Afsar, 2017) to obtain new ideas (Afsar & Umrani, 2019). Employees who feel supported by this environment produce innovation in the form of new ideas.

Research exploring the influence of transformational leadership on innovative work behavior has been conducted previously. The results in Pakistan (Afsar & Umrani, 2019) and China (Lin, 2023) showed that the variable was related to innovative work behavior. In Indonesian research conducted by Udin and Shaikh (2022) using 193 samples from stone mining companies, there was no relationship between transformational leadership and

innovative work behavior. Even though the three research were conducted on populations with collectivist cultures, the inconsistency of results promotes the examination of the bridging mechanism between the relationship of the variables. Previous research used mediator mechanisms in the relationship by focusing on external factors influencing intentions (Kidwell & Jewell, 2003). Therefore, this research proposes meaningful work as an internal factor to be an appropriate mediator in the relationship between transformational leadership and innovative work behavior.

Meaningful work is defined as an individual's perception supporting meaningful and positive self-development oriented towards certain goals, as well as beneficial to other people and the surrounding environment (Steger et al., 2012). This variable is the influence of the psychological support provided by transformational leaders, including competence, autonomy and relatedness. In contrast, transformational leadership is an important social resource used to change employees' orientation from self to collective interest (Meng et al., 2023). Positive interpersonal relationships between transformational leaders and employees lead to a high sense of meaningfulness by enhancing valued identity (Kahn, 2007; Meng et al., 2023)

According to May et al. (2004), individuals who perceive work as meaningful invest resources and are intrinsically motivated to manage difficulties (Simonton, 1999). This

motivation is caused by finding the purpose, value, and significance of work (Cai et al., 2018). Previous research showed that employees were motivated to innovate when work was perceived as meaningful (Pradhan & Jena, 2019). In this context, meaningful work can be influenced by a transformational leadership style (Arnold et al., 2007), which is positively associated with a higher purpose at work. Transformational leadership plays a role in employee change by increasing the motivation to determine a higher purpose (Walumbwa et al., 2013). This variable motivates co-workers, colleagues, subordinates, and clients to move beyond individual interests for the good of the group, organization, or society (Bass & Bass, 2008). Meanwhile, transformational leadership provides the most intuitive connection to meaningful work.

The use of moderators is proposed in the relationship between transformational leadership and innovative work behavior. This is motivated by recent research on the relationship between the variables, exploring connecting mechanisms and moderators (Afsar & Umrani, 2019; Lin, 2023; Odugbesan et al., 2023). In an organizational context, culture is a contributing and external factor motivating individuals to realize ideas (De-Jong & Den-Hartog, 2007). A good organizational culture enhances positive motivation (Ferdinan & Lindawati, 2021) and plays a role in shaping behavior to carry out innovations that support improvements in the organization. Meanwhile,

ambidextrous organizational culture is an important type of cultural variable.

According to Wang and Rafiq (2014), ambidextrous organizational culture is a method used to develop exploitation and exploration activities. This includes individual participation to generate innovative behavior (Pratiwi & Salendu, 2021). The relationship between ambidexterity and innovation should not be ignored since the variables are related (Liu et al, 2019). Diversity and shared vision are the two types of ambidextrous organizational culture. Organizational diversity is "a set of values and norms that promotes and tolerates differences, as well as recognizes and appreciates the viewpoints, skills, and knowledge of different individuals". The dimension is defined as a set of values and norms that support the active participation of members in the development, communication, socialization, and implementation of goals (Wang & Rafiq, 2014).

Liu et al. (2019) stated that ambidextrous organizational culture was positively related to innovative work behavior. According to Bryson et al. (2008), public organization had the capacity and opportunity to possess an ambidextrous culture. For innovation to accommodate formal processes, demand must be increased such as being transparent, accountable, and efficient in achieving goals (Plimmer et al., 2017). Pratiwi and Salendu (2021) conducted research on the variable, with samples of employees in various fields of

work. in Indonesian ASN context, it is important to analyze the role of ambidextrous organizational culture.

Interactionist Perspective of Creativity (IPC) theory was used to connect the variables. IPC theory states that creativity is related to complex interactions including individual and situational factors (Woodman et al, 1993). The influence of creativity arising from interactions between individual and group factors describes innovative work behavior. Meaningful work plays a role in generating innovative work behavior in employees, while situational factors are transformational leadership and ambidextrous organizational culture. Employees can be inspired to do meaningful work and create innovative behavior through transformational leadership style. Therefore, meaningful work acts as a mediator for ambidextrous organizational culture in the process of influencing leadership to innovative work behavior. The dynamics of ASN's innovative behavior are complex with different level of challenges, namely strong bureaucratic culture, strict regulations, and a lack of incentives to innovate (Dharmanegara et al, 2023). This research tests the ASN context with the IPC theory which considers the interaction of individual and situational factors.

Mediator and moderator mechanisms are used to explain the relationship between transformational leadership and innovative work behavior. This research explores the mechanism of meaningful work as a mediator

of transformational leadership in causing innovative work behavior in employees. Therefore, the hypothesis proposes that transformational leadership influences innovative work behavior through meaningful work moderated by ambidextrous organizational culture.

## Method

This research has been subjected to ethical review stages carried out by the Ethics Review Committee of the Psychology Faculty, University of Indonesia with number: 146/FPsi.Ethics Committee/PDP.04.00/2022. The participants were informed that survey responses would remain anonymous and used only for analysis and reporting. This research aimed to test the relationship between variables where the design used was cross-sectional. The non-experimental quantitative method examined the relationship between variables. Quantitative data measurements were carried out by statistical calculations originating from certain samples. Meanwhile, data collection was carried out by self-report and participants were asked to provide response statements from the questionnaire.

Convenience sampling method was used and the number of samples was measured using G-power. The minimum number of participants required for this research was 119 participants. The method was based on the ease of obtaining

data since the collection was carried out online using Google Forms. The process includes distributing questionnaires according to participant characteristics through personal networks and social media. Participants were ASN who had worked for three years at Ministry X. The justification for selecting the population was that Ministry X was committed to innovation as an organizational culture, since 2013. This commitment was manifested in Ministerial Decrees, as well as programs to create innovative work behavior implemented on an ongoing basis. Data collection was carried out from 13 to 20 November 2023 with a total number of 213 participants. Meanwhile, 210 data were included in the analysis since 3 respondents provided patterned responses, as shown in Table 1.

In this research, 63% were males while 37% were females with an age range of 23-57 years ( $M = 34.11$ ,  $SD = 5.714$ ). The age categorization was based on the career development stages of Super and Jordaan (1973). This consisted of four stages, namely establishment (21-24 years), progress (25-44 years), maintenance (45-64 years), and withdrawal (over 65 years). The majority of participants were in the age range of 25-44 years, amounting to 91%, while 69% were positioned as executors. A total of 44% had a bachelor's degree and worked 11-15 years as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
*Demographic Characteristics*

Characteristics	<i>n</i>	%
Gender		
Male	132	63
Female	78	37
Age		
21 – 24 years old	5	2.4
25 – 44 years old	191	91
45 – 64 years old	14	6.6
Position		
Structural	14	7
Functional	50	24
Executor	146	69
Education		
Master degree	47	22
Bachelor degree	124	59
Association degree	38	18
Senior high school	1	0.5
Working Duration		
More than 15 years	39	19
11- 15 years	93	44
5 – 10 years	58	28
Under 5 years	20	9

### Research procedure

This research considered the potential for common method bias to influence results in self-report and cross-sectional analysis (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The order of each measuring instrument was randomized with item distractors to ensure respondents answered questions with focus. This provided rewards in the form of electronic money of IDR 50,000 given randomly to 20 lucky participants. For participants who are interested in getting rewards, a separate link was provided at the end of the question naire. Subsequently, cleaning and elimination were conducted to remove data that did not pass the item checker and other criteria.

### Measurement

This research was measured by the instruments obtained from journals and has been published generally. The adaptation process to Indonesian was carried out on the measuring instruments using the rules of Beaton et al. (2000) in the stages of back translation. This analysis also used a qualitative review of the adopted measurement tools and a pilot analysis was conducted on 30 respondents. Meanwhile, the data was processed by testing reliability using the SPSS statistical application and the analysis testing was performed by employing Corrected Item-Total Correlation (CrIT) results with a minimum score of 0.3. According to Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), items with a CrIT value  $>.30$  were considered

good. This is because the items are considered capable of discriminating between individuals with high and low scores. The items used in this research variable passed the test before collecting data.

### ***Innovative work behavior***

The research instrument used to measure employees' innovative work behavior was obtained from Janssen (2000) which was adapted into Indonesian by Etikariena and Muluk (2014). This measuring tool consists of 9 items with a 6-point Likert scale. The Cronbach alpha value is .88 in measuring innovative work behavior. An example of an item is "Looking for new working methods in my job".

### ***Transformational leadership***

Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire developed by Podsakoff (1996) was used to measure transformational leadership and the tool consists of 20 items with a 6-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, to 6 = Strongly Agree). The Cronbach alpha value is .82, and an example item is "My leader talks about my most important values and beliefs".

### ***Meaningful work***

Meaningful work was adapted from The Work and Meaning Inventory developed by Steger et al. (2012). The tool consists of 10 items with a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, to 5 = Strongly Agree) with a Cronbach alpha value of .92. An example item is "I have found a meaningful career".

### ***Ambidextrous organizational culture***

The instrument used to measure ambidextrous organizational culture was adapted from Wang and Rafiq (2014). This measuring tool consists of 7 items with a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, to 5 = Strongly Agree). In addition, the Cronbach alpha value is .88 in measuring ambidextrous organizational culture. An example of an item is "The future direction of this business unit is communicated to everyone."

### **Data analysis**

Data analysis was carried out using SPSS version 26 software. Quantitative analysis using Hayes's PROCESS model 15 included a moderated mediator.

## **Results**

This research aimed to examine the role of meaningful work as a link in the interaction between transformational leadership and innovative work behavior moderated by ambidextrous organizational culture. Table 2 shows the average value, standard deviation, and correlation tests on each variable. The statistical calculations showed that transformational leadership has a significant correlation with innovative work behavior ( $r = .291, p < .01$ ). Therefore, transformational leadership is directly proportional to innovative performance behavior. The relationship between other variables has a positive and significant relationship.



**Table 2**

*Mean, Standard Deviation, and Correlation Matrix Between Variables*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4
1. Innovative Work Behavior	3.75	1.25	1			
2. Transformational Leadership	4.62	.81	.219**	2		
3. Meaningful Work	4.80	.74	.357**	.553**	3	
4. Ambidextrous Organizational Culture	4.86	.75	.348**	.770**	.709**	4

Note. N = 210. \* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$

The research hypothesis was tested using regression analysis with Hayes' PROCESS Model 15 as reported in Table 3. The effect of transformational leadership on innovative work behavior was not significant ( $p > .05$ ). In addition, meaningful work was shown to be a

significant link between transformational leadership and innovative work behavior ( $B = .50$ , CI 95% [.15, .42]). This showed that the variable fully mediated the relationship between transformational leadership and innovative work behavior.

**Table 3**

*Regression Analysis Results*

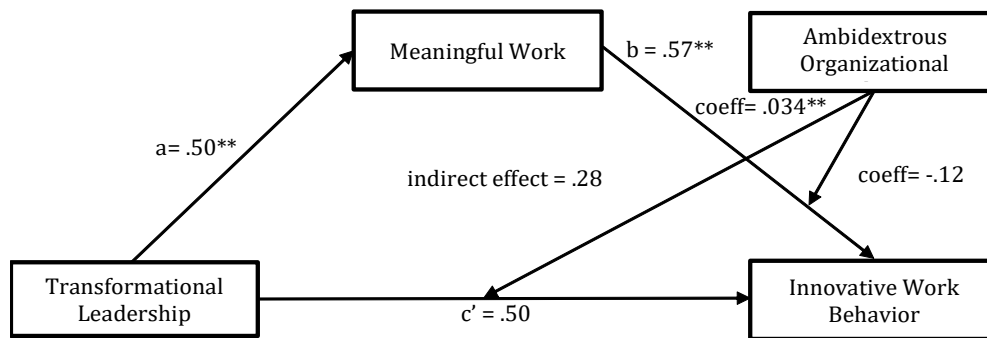
Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	95%CI	
				LL	UL
TL → IWB	.500	.1202	.678	-.1869	.2869
TL → MW	.501	.0525	.000*	1.998	2.970
MW → IWB	.576	.1324	.000*	.3150	.8370
<b>Indirect Effect</b>	.2886	.0688	-	.1527	.4252
AOC → IWB	.5425	2.6655	.0083*	.1412	.9439
Interaction 1	.3449	2.0971	.0372*	.0206	.6691
Interaction 2	-.1292	-.6529	.5146	-.5193	.2609

Note: N = 210. Interaction 1: Transformational leadership x ambidextrous organizational culture → innovative work behavior | Interaction 2: Transformational leadership x ambidextrous organizational culture → meaningful work \* $p =$  significant

The test carried out to determine the moderating role of direct and indirect effects is presented in Table 3. The role of ambidextrous organizational culture as a moderator of the relationship reported a significant influence on interaction 1 ( $B = .3449$ ,  $p < .05$ ). However, ambidextrous

organizational culture did not have a moderating effect when testing was carried out on interaction 2 ( $B = -.1292$ ,  $p > .05$ ). Based on the results, the variable did not moderate the indirect relationship between transformational leadership and innovative work behavior.

**Figure 1**  
*Research Model*



**Discussion**

This research examined the role of meaningful work in the interaction between transformational leadership and innovative work behavior among Ministry X ASN. The role of ambidextrous organizational culture is also examined as a moderator on the influence of the variables, both directly and through meaningful work relationships. The results showed that the influence of transformational leadership on innovative work behavior is not significant ( $p > .05$ ).

Meaningful work fully mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and innovative work behavior ( $B = .50$ , CI 95% [.15, .42]). According to (Pradhan & Jena, 2019), meaningful work has a role in producing innovative work behavior. This confirmed previous research where transformational leadership did not have a significant direct influence on innovative work behavior in the context of employees (Udin & Shaikh, 2022). New ideas or ways of working

are one of the stages of innovative work behavior (Jansen, 1988). The perception of meaningfulness in work increases with the initiative taken to show a transformational leadership style (Walumbwa et al., 2013). Therefore, this variable serves as an appropriate bridging mechanism in the relationship between transformational leadership and innovative work behavior.

The results showed the role of ambidextrous organizational culture as a strengthener of the relationship between transformational leadership and innovative work behavior ( $B = .3449$ ,  $p < .05$ ). This research supported previous research where ambidextrous organizational culture is a factor supporting innovation (Wang & Rafiq, 2014). The role of ambidextrous organizational culture as a moderator showed inconsistent results in direct and indirect conditions. This supported previous research where exploitation and exploration activities were two continuums at different ends (Sari, 2017).

Ambidextrous organizational culture moderates the relationship between transformational leadership and innovative work behavior (Lee et al, 2019). This is supported by this research consideration of taking participants in an organization. According to Gieske et al. (2020), when the organizational culture is ambidextrous, public employees will optimize innovation. Organizational culture theory states that every organization has a different culture with shared meanings influencing the mindset and perceptions of individuals (Schein & Schein, 2016).

The exploration of the role of ambidextrous organizational culture in government organization still needs to be carried out. Ambidextrous organizational culture structurally differentiates between exploitation and exploration units integrated at high hierarchical levels (O'Reilly & Tushman, 2011). This can lead to the need for the separation of functions since innovation needs to be conducted. However, formal processes with efficiency and accountability must be considered (Hartley et al, 2013). In government organization, an ambidextrous culture creates a supportive context enabling employees to focus on exploitation and exploration (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004).

According to the IPC theory, innovation is the product of complex interactions between individuals and situational factors (Woodman et al, 1993).

In this context, meaningful work fully mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and ambidextrous organizational culture. The interaction of the factors is significant in predicting innovative work behavior. This is supported by the result that the moderator has no effect when tested with the mechanism of ambidextrous organizational culture in indirect relationships. Meanwhile, different results are shown in the direct relationship, where the role of the moderator becomes significant in the absence of an individual factor. Tests showed comprehensive results regarding organizational culture as reflected in a sample of an organization.

Based on a literature review conducted, this research contributed to the development of science, especially industrial and organizational psychology. The relationship between transformational leadership and innovative work behavior was examined by testing meaningful work as a mediator. This research also examined the moderating role of ambidextrous organizational culture on the relationship between transformational leadership and innovative work behavior directly and indirectly through meaningful work. Ambidextrous organizational culture has not been explored in the context of ASN. The samples were obtained from ASN in Indonesia, hence government organization contributed to making policies for innovative work behavior.

## Conclusions

This research explores the mechanism of meaningful work as a mediator of transformational leadership in causing innovative work behavior in employees. In conclusion, meaningful work was reported as a full mediator in the relationship between transformational leadership and innovative work behavior. Meanwhile, the role of ambidextrous organizational culture as a moderator was only supported by the direct relationship between the variables. In the indirect relationship using a mediator, the role was not significant. The tests carried out showed that there was a need for a liaison or moderator mechanism in the relationship between transformational leadership in predicting innovative work behavior. This supported the IPC theory where innovation was the product of complex interactions between individual and situational factors (Woodman et al, 1993).

This research had several limitations refined by subsequent results. First, a correlational design was used and could not determine causal effects for the variables. Second, the data collected was limited since the collection process in bureaucratic government organization required tiered licensing. Therefore, future research should be directed at establishing good collaboration and improving the data collection process.

## Suggestion

This research has tested the role of meaningful work mediators and moderators of

ambidextrous organizational culture on the relationship between transformational leadership and innovative work behavior. However, further research must be conducted to explore different organizational culture conditions to enrich empirical evidence.

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