

# Agile Leadership and Innovative Work Behavior: The Mediating Role of Organizational Climate

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## Abstract

In today's dynamic business environment, innovation is crucial for companies to meet constantly changing industry demands. This study examines the relationships between agile leadership, organizational climate, and innovative work behavior, with a particular focus on the mediating role of organizational climate. Conducted on 115 employees at a consulting firm in Indonesia, the research aims to validate hypotheses suggesting positive correlations among these variables and the mediating effect of organizational climate on the relationship between agile leadership and innovative work behavior. A correlational quantitative design, utilizing regression and structural equation modeling (SEM), was employed for data analysis. The findings indicate that agile leadership positively correlates with both organizational climate and innovative work behavior. Furthermore, organizational climate also shows a positive correlation with innovative work behavior. Significantly, the study demonstrates that organizational climate fully mediates the relationship between agile leadership and innovative work behavior, implying that the impact of agile leadership on innovative work behavior depends on the organizational climate. These results highlight the critical role of agile leadership and a supportive organizational climate in fostering innovative work behavior. Practically, organizations should focus on training leaders to develop agile skills and implementing policies that promote a positive organizational climate to enhance employee innovation. Future research should consider longitudinal designs and diverse organizational contexts to further validate these findings.

**Keyword :** Agile Leadership, Innovative Work Behavior, Organizational Climate

## Abstrak

Dalam lingkungan bisnis yang dinamis saat ini, inovasi sangat penting bagi perusahaan untuk memenuhi tuntutan industri yang terus berubah. Penelitian ini mengkaji hubungan antara kepemimpinan agile, iklim organisasi, dan perilaku kerja inovatif, dengan fokus khusus pada peran mediasi iklim organisasi. Penelitian ini dilakukan pada 115 karyawan di sebuah perusahaan konsultasi di Indonesia, dengan tujuan untuk memvalidasi hipotesis penelitian yakni adanya korelasi positif antara variabel-variabel penelitian dan adanya efek mediasi iklim organisasi pada hubungan antara kepemimpinan yang lincah dan perilaku kerja inovatif. Desain kuantitatif korelasional, menggunakan regresi dan pemodelan persamaan struktural (SEM) digunakan untuk analisis data. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan agile berkorelasi positif dengan iklim organisasi dan perilaku kerja inovatif. Selanjutnya, iklim organisasi juga menunjukkan korelasi positif dengan perilaku kerja inovatif. Secara signifikan, penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa iklim organisasi sepenuhnya memediasi hubungan antara kepemimpinan agile dan perilaku kerja inovatif, yang menyiratkan bahwa dampak kepemimpinan agile pada perilaku kerja inovatif sangat bergantung pada iklim organisasi. Hasil ini menyoroti peran penting kepemimpinan agile dan iklim organisasi yang mendukung dalam mendorong perilaku kerja inovatif. Secara praktis, organisasi harus fokus pada pelatihan pemimpin untuk mengembangkan keterampilan agile dan menerapkan kebijakan yang mempromosikan iklim organisasi yang positif untuk meningkatkan inovasi karyawan. Saran untuk penelitian berikutnya sebaiknya mempertimbangkan desain longitudinal dan konteks organisasi yang beragam untuk lebih memvalidasi temuan dalam penelitian ini.

**Kata Kunci :** Iklim organisasi, Kepemimpinan agile, Perilaku Kerja Inovatif

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## BACKGROUND

In the evolving contemporary business environment, innovation has become a crucial factor in meeting the constantly shifting needs of industries. The trend towards innovation reflects a paradigm shift in how companies approach the challenges posed by changes in the business world (Aslam et al., 2020; Farida & Setiawan, 2022; Loučanová et al., 2023). The idea of innovation arises and is implemented at the individual level, creating a necessity for companies to encourage and sustain innovative work behavior among their employees (Etikariena & Muluk, 2014). Creating a work environment that supports innovative behavior at the employee level is part of a company's efforts to remain competitively viable (Reguia, 2014; Urbancova, 2013).

The importance of innovative work behavior compels companies to recognize that it is no longer just an extra-role behavior, but also an integral part of their obligations as it directly impacts business performance and company success (Axtell et al., 2006). From an efficiency-oriented perspective, individuals who view innovation as an integral part of their job responsibilities are more likely to believe that generating, adopting, and implementing innovative ideas will enhance their professional contributions (Yuan & Woodman, 2010).

Axtell et al. (2006) emphasize the transformative nature of innovative work behavior, indicating that it transcends traditional job role boundaries. The traditional view of work behavior often considers innovation as something extra or beyond the scope of regular job duties. However, Yuan & Woodman (2010) challenge this perception by highlighting the tangible benefits that innovative behavior brings to professional performance and organizational success. By integrating innovation as a core aspect of job responsibilities, employees are encouraged to explore new ideas, challenge existing norms, and drive positive change within their organizations.

Innovative work behavior is a topic that has been widely explored in research, aiming to delve into its related antecedents. Innovative work behavior can be influenced by internal factors such as problem-solving styles (Scott & Bruce, 1994), motivation (Nasir et al., 2019), and competence (Janssen et al., 2004). Additionally, external factors also support the emergence of innovative work behavior, including social relationships among employees (Scott & Bruce, 1994), organizational climate (Etikariena & Kalimashada, 2021), and the relationship between employees and supervisors (De Jong & Den Hartog, 2007). Among the various factors that drive employees' innovative work behavior, the relationship between employees and supervisors (Leader-Member Exchange) is one of the most studied due to its significant impact (Alheet et al., 2021).

Innovative work behavior stems from individual initiative, which strongly correlates with leadership styles (De Jong & Den Hartog, 2007). Previous research has examined various leadership styles that directly influence employees' innovative work behavior (Alheet et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2020; Wu & Li, 2023). As the industry's needs continue to evolve, leadership styles also develop, with agile leadership

emerging as a contemporary approach (Kayalidere et al., 2020).

Agile leadership is characterized as a flexible leadership style encompassing the mindset, methods, characteristics, and competencies of leaders designed to support an organization's rapid response to changing environmental conditions, making it suitable for organizations with flat hierarchical structures (Greineder & Leicht, 2020). Although agile leadership has been shown to influence employee experience (Adhikersa et al., 2022) and company performance (Susanto et al., 2023), there is still limited research on its impact on innovative work behavior (Greineder & Leicht, 2020). Therefore, an in-depth understanding of the relationship between leadership styles, particularly agile leadership, and innovative work behavior is essential for companies in their efforts to remain competitive and relevant in an ever-changing business environment.

The relationship between leadership styles and innovative work behavior is also known to be dynamic; thus, contextual factors are needed to understand its impact from a broader perspective (Reuvers et al., 2008). (Scott & Bruce, 1994) proposed that leadership directly influences innovative work behavior but is also mediated by organizational climate through forms of support. In understanding how agile leadership influences innovative work behavior, organizational climate is an important contextual factor to consider.

Several previous studies have shown the significant impact of leadership styles on organizational climate. However, the literature related to agile leadership is still limited, requiring further exploration. Transformational leadership, which includes aspects of agility related to change, creates an organizational climate that encourages individuals to work beyond set expectations (Bass & Avolio, 1994). In contrast, flexible leadership styles, which also include aspects of agility (Kayalidere et al., 2020), tend to create a destructive organizational climate in many job positions (Jamaludin, 2024). Specifically, research examining the relationship between agile leadership and its impact on organizational climate is needed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the agile leadership concept.

Organizational climate, viewed as the collective perceptions and behaviors in the workplace, plays a significant role in shaping innovative work behavior at the individual level (Etikariena & Kalimashada, 2021). This climate is formed by various aspects such as leadership styles, workgroups, and individual attributions (Scott & Bruce, 1994). The role of organizational climate as a contextual variable has also been proven to mediate the relationship between leadership styles and employees' innovative behavior (Imran, 2011). However, in the context of agile leadership, the role of organizational climate as a contextual variable has not been extensively explored. This limitation in the literature represents a gap that will be addressed in this study.

Given the impact of leadership on organizational climate, particularly in the context of agile leadership, as well as how organizational climate shapes innovative work

behavior, this study aims to understand the relationship between these three factors and strives to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how organizational climate can mediate the relationship between agile leadership and innovative work behavior. By understanding the relationship among these three factors, this research hopes to provide deeper insights into the mechanisms that mediate the impact of agile leadership on innovative work behavior through organizational climate.

To further understand the relationship between agile leadership and innovative work behavior, and the mediating factor of organizational climate, the following research hypotheses are proposed:

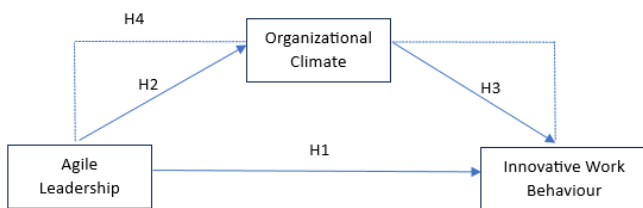


Figure 1. Research Model

*H1: There is a positive relationship between agile leadership and innovative work behavior.*

H1 posits that there is a positive relationship between agile leadership and innovative work behavior. In other words, this hypothesis suggests that as agile leadership increases within an organization, there will be a corresponding increase in innovative work behavior among its members.

*H2: There is a positive relationship between agile leadership and organizational climate.*

H2 proposes a positive relationship between agile leadership and organizational climate. This hypothesis implies that as agile leadership increases, there will be a corresponding positive impact on the overall organizational climate.

*H3: There is a positive relationship between organizational climate and innovative work behavior.*

H3 posits a positive relationship between organizational climate and innovative work behavior. This hypothesis suggests that as the organizational climate improves, there will be a corresponding increase in innovative work behavior among the organization's members.

*H4: Organizational climate mediates the relationship between agile leadership and innovative work behavior.*

H4 involves the mediating role of organizational climate in the relationship between agile leadership and innovative work behavior. This hypothesis implies that the positive relationship between agile leadership and innovative work behavior is explained by the influence of organizational climate. In other words, organizational climate serves as a

mediator in the relationship between agile leadership and innovative work behavior.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs three variables where agile leadership serves as the independent variable to predict its influence on innovative work behavior as the dependent variable. Organizational climate is used to observe whether there is a mediating effect based on the relationship between the previous two variables.

The research target is the employees of Company X, which operates in the consulting sector based in Indonesia and incorporates innovative behavior as part of the company's core. Consulting firms hold a unique position in the business landscape, as employees who directly interact with clients are required to have an innovative mindset in providing services and at the same time are expected to innovate within their workplace (Isaac et al., 2015). Moreover, the consulting industry is active in implementing agile concepts in business processes (Omonije, 2024), making the subject selection align with the research needs.

The sample target was determined based on a power analysis using the GPower program (Kang, 2021). The analysis results indicated that the study requires a minimum of 119 participants to achieve 95% statistical power ( $f^2 = 0.15$ ;  $\alpha = 0.05$ ) with a medium effect size. Respondents were selected through convenience sampling, inviting employees who meet the research criteria to participate. The research criteria refer to previous studies showing significance in control variables such as tenure and education on innovative work behavior (Etikariena & Kalimashada, 2021). Questionnaires were distributed both offline and online, with respondents who wished to participate filling out the questionnaires directly at Company X's office. However, due to the hybrid working system, some respondents completed the questionnaires online through the Surveysensum platform, a data collection platform for research purposes accessible at [www.surveysensum.com](http://www.surveysensum.com). The total number of responses that met the criteria was 115 participants.

This study uses three measurement tools in the form of questionnaires. Agile leadership is measured using a six-dimensional scale consisting of 31 items proposed by (Kayalidere et al., 2020) and adapted into Indonesian by the researcher, with an example item being "Creating a conducive work environment to encourage creativity." The scale applied is a Likert scale of 1-6, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6). This scale has a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.90 in the population of educational workers in Pakistan (Aftab et al., 2022). The measurement of innovative work behavior in both studies will use the Innovative Work Behavior Scale adapted into Indonesian by (Etikariena & Muluk, 2014), based on the tool developed by Janssen (2000). The scale applied in this tool is a Likert scale of 1-6, ranging from never done at all (1) to always done (6). This scale has a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.80 in the population of employees in Indonesia (Etikariena & Muluk, 2014). An example item is "Seeking new work methods in my job." The third measurement of organizational climate uses

the organizational climate scale developed by Patterson et al. (2005). The tool is multidimensional with 17 items, using a Likert scale of 1-4, ranging from very untrue (1) to very true (4). This scale has a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.81 in the population of coal mine employees in Indonesia (Etikariena & Kalimashada, 2021). An example item is "Employees have a clear understanding of the company's goals."

The design of this study is correlational quantitative research aiming to establish relationships between two or more variables in a specific context (Kumar, 2011). Simple regression analysis is used to determine the direct relationship between each research variable. To determine the mediating role of organizational climate in the influence of agile leadership on innovative work behavior, structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis is conducted. The SEM model provides an overview of multiple regression calculations where the response variable in one regression can serve as an explanatory variable in another regression calculation (Hox & Bechger, 1998). Data analysis will be performed using mediation analysis with the help of Jamovi version 2.3.

### RESEARCH RESULTS

Descriptive statistical analysis is shown in table 1 which includes the mean, median, standard deviation, normality, and reliability.

**Table 1. Descriptive Analysis**

	Agile Leadership	Organization Climate	Innovative Work Behavior
N	115	115	115
Mean	5.01	3.24	3.24
Median	5.00	3.19	3.11
Standard Deviation	0.548	0.303	1.08
Shapiro-Wilk W	0.983	0.986	0.979
Shapiro-Wilk p	0.141	0.290	0.066
Cronbach's $\alpha$	0.952	0.816	0.950

The initial assessment was conducted to measure the normality and internal consistency values of the 3 research variables. Shapiro-Wilk was used to measure the normality of the data distribution, and Cronbach's Alpha was used to determine the reliability of the scales used. The results of the Shapiro-Wilk test indicate that all three variables show indications of a normal distribution, with values for Agile Leadership ( $W= 0.983, p = 0.141$ ), Organizational Climate ( $W= 0.986, p= 0.290$ ), and Innovative Work Behavior ( $W= 0.979, p= 0.066$ ). Shapiro's value with  $p > 0.05$  is considered good as a normality parameter (Mohd & Bee, 2011). Based on this, the results of the normality test support the use of research parameters for further analysis.

The results of Cronbach's Alpha indicate high internal consistency values, where the value for agile leadership is 0.952, organizational climate is 0.816, and innovative work behavior is 0.950. The Item-rest correlation values show a uniformly valid level across all variable items with values above 0.20, with the exception of one item in the organizational climate variable with item code OC7. To

maintain the validity of the analysis, item OC7 is not included in further analysis. All items to be used in the analysis have values above 0.20, indicating good validity of the item scale (Józsa & Morgan, 2017).

Multiple regression analysis was also conducted to examine the effects of control variables such as working tenure, gender, age, and education. The analysis results indicate that there are no significant effects of working tenure, gender, age, and education on the correlation between the influence of agile leadership on innovative work behavior.

Correlation analysis was conducted to examine the direct relationships between variables with results as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. Corelational Analysis**

Correlation Matrix		Agile Leadership	Organization climate	Innovative Work Behavior
Agile Leadership	Pearson's r	—		
	p-value	—		
Organization climate	Pearson's r	0.386***	—	
	p-value	< .001	—	
Innovative Work Behavior	Pearson's r	0.188*	0.263**	—
	p-value	0.044	0.004	—

Note. \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Baron & Kenny (1986) proposed that there are four conditions that must be met for a mediating variable to be considered significant in mediation analysis. The first is that the independent variable must have a significant correlation to the dependent variable. The second is that the independent variable must have a significant correlation the mediator variable. The third is that the mediator variable must have a significant correlation to the dependent variable. The fourth is that when the independent variable and the mediator are included in the calculation together, the direct relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable becomes significantly smaller (partial mediation) or not significant at all (full mediation).

In Table 2, it is evident that there are significant correlations between the variables. The direct effect of agile leadership on innovative work behavior shows positive significance ( $r= 0.188, p<0.044$ ). In other words, there is a positive relationship between agile leadership and innovative work behavior. Therefore, Hypothesis H1 in this study is accepted. The relationship between the independent variable and the mediator variable also shows positive significance, with agile leadership having a relationship with organizational climate with a value of ( $r= 0.386, p<0.001$ ). The positive relationship between agile leadership and organizational climate indicates that Hypothesis H2 in the study can be accepted. Organizational climate as a mediator variable also shows a significant positive relationship with innovative work behavior ( $r=0.263, p=0.004$ ). Consequently, there is a positive relationship between organizational

climate and innovative work behavior, indicating that Hypothesis H3 in this study can also be accepted.

The results of the correlation relationship between variables align with Baron & Kenny (1986), who proposed the ideal conditions where variables are positively interconnected before examining the intercorrelation relationship in mediation influence. The intercorrelation relationship is analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling with the results shown in Table 3:

**Table 3. Structural Equation Modeling Analysis**

Indirect and Total Effects		Estimate	SE	95% C.I. (a)		$\beta$	z	p
Type	Effect			Lower	Upper			
Indirect	Agile Leadership $\Rightarrow$ Organization climate $\Rightarrow$ Innovative Work Behavior	0.171	0.0832	0.00771	0.334	0.0864	2.05	0.040
Component	Agile Leadership $\Rightarrow$ Organization climate	0.355	0.0792	0.19978	0.510	0.3056	4.48	<.001
	Organization climate $\Rightarrow$ Innovative Work Behavior	0.481	0.2083	0.07270	0.889	0.2241	2.31	0.021
Direct	Agile Leadership $\Rightarrow$ Innovative Work Behavior	0.200	0.1917	-0.17549	0.576	0.1014	1.04	0.296
Total	Agile Leadership $\Rightarrow$ Innovative Work Behavior	0.371	0.1810	0.01480	0.727	0.1878	2.04	0.041

Mediation analysis using structural equation modeling indicates that there is indirect significance in the mediation analysis ( $\beta = 0.0864$ ,  $z = 2.05$ ,  $p = 0.040$ ). In other words, Agile Leadership positively influences Organizational Climate, which then positively affects Innovative Work Behavior. The direct effect of Agile Leadership on Innovative Work Behavior is not significant ( $\beta = 0.1014$ ,  $z = 1.04$ ,  $p = 0.296$ ), but it shows significance in the total effect ( $\beta = 0.1878$ ,  $z = 2.04$ ,  $p = 0.041$ ). When the direct relationship between the independent variable and dependent variable diminishes and becomes insignificant in the mediation intercorrelation analysis, it indicates a full effect of the mediator variable (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Therefore, it can be concluded that Organizational Climate fully mediates the relationship between Agile Leadership and Innovative Work Behavior, thus Hypothesis H4 in the study is accepted.

## DISCUSSION

This study reveals the relationship between agile leadership, organizational climate, and innovative work behavior, while highlighting the mediating role of organizational climate in the relationship among these variables. The research was conducted on 115 employees at Company X, a consulting firm in Indonesia. Findings from the study show several connections with previous research.

The results of correlation analysis, indicating a significant positive relationship among agile leadership, organizational climate, and innovative work behavior, confirm hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 in this study. The positive correlation between agile leadership and innovative work behavior is consistent with prior research. Rigby, Sutherland, & Takeuchi (2016) found that agile leadership, characterized by the ability to adapt quickly and respond to changes, is crucial in dynamic business environments and can enhance employees' innovative capabilities. The company's efforts to enhance employees' innovative behavior are also directly

driven by leader involvement with an agile leadership style (Chen et al., 2022).

The relationship between agile leadership and organizational climate is also significantly evident in this study. This confirms previous research findings emphasizing the importance of leadership styles in shaping organizational climate. Flexible and adaptive leadership contributes to the formation of a positive work climate, which in turn supports workplace innovation and creativity (Yukl & Mahsud, 2010). Furthermore, responsive and supportive leadership significantly enhances employees' perceptions of a conducive organizational climate (Døving & Gooderham, 2008).

The study results also indicate a positive relationship between organizational climate and employees' innovative work behavior. This aligns with research by Anderson and West (1998), suggesting that an organizational climate supportive of creativity and innovation, characterized by management support, openness to new ideas, and flexible organizational structures, enhances employees' ability and willingness to innovate. The findings are also consistent with previous research with similar scopes when the research subjects were in Indonesia, with results showing that organizational climate significantly influences the employees' innovative work behavior (Etikariena & Kalimashada, 2021).

Although all three study variables are positively correlated, mediation analysis indicates no direct influence from agile leadership on innovative work behavior. The impact of agile leadership on innovative work behavior becomes significant when organizational climate is involved as a mediator. Organizational climate fully mediating the relationship between agile leadership and innovative work behavior suggests that the relationship between agile leadership and innovative work behavior is dynamic and influenced by contextual factors (Reuvers et al., 2008). These findings align with previous research indicating that a positive organizational climate can strengthen the relationship between leadership styles and work outcomes. Parker et al. (2003) found that an organizational climate supportive of creativity and innovation can enhance the positive effects of various leadership styles on employee innovation. A conducive organizational climate for creativity, including supportive policies, recognition of new ideas, and flexible organizational structures, is crucial for fostering innovative work behavior (Amabile, 1996).

The decrease in significance in the direct relationship between agile leadership and innovative work behavior after inclusion of organizational climate as a mediator may be due to the strong influence of organizational climate in facilitating innovation. Organizational climate plays a critical role in mediating various influences of other variables on employee behavior, including leadership (Hirshon, 2020) (Schneider et al., 2013). Moreover, organizational climate may be a more direct determinant of innovative behavior compared to leadership styles themselves. This indicates that although agile leadership is important, its full effect on

employees' innovative behavior occurs through the organizational climate it creates.

Practically, this research emphasizes the importance of developing agile leadership and creating a positive organizational climate. Organizations need to train their leaders to develop agile skills and establish policies that support innovation. Additionally, these findings highlight the need for a holistic approach to promoting innovation, where changes in leadership styles are accompanied by efforts to improve the organizational climate.

Limitations of this study include a cross-sectional design that does not allow for causal conclusions and the use of data from a single organization, limiting the generalizability of the findings. Future research may consider a longitudinal design to confirm causal relationships and include various types of organizations and industries to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Future research may also explore additional variables that may influence the relationship between agile leadership and innovative work behavior, such as organizational culture, team structure, and technological support.

## CONCLUSION

This study reveals the mediating effect of organizational climate on the relationship between agile leadership and innovative work behavior. The results show that organizational climate fully mediates the relationship between agile leadership and innovative work behavior. This study has several important implications for theory and practice within organizations. First, the positive relationship between agile leadership and employees' innovative work behavior suggests that the implementation of agile leadership in an organization can serve as a foundation for enhancing innovative work behavior. Second, the positive relationship between agile leadership and organizational climate emphasizes the importance of leadership styles in shaping a supportive organizational climate. Third, an organizational climate supportive of creativity and innovation can enhance employees' ability and willingness to engage in innovative work behavior. Fourth, agile leadership should be accompanied by the creation of a positive organizational climate to maximize employees' innovative work behavior.

Ultimately, this study emphasizes that agile leadership plays a crucial role in promoting employees' innovative work behavior, but its effectiveness is greatly influenced by the organizational climate. An organizational climate supportive of creativity and innovation serves as a key mediator that optimizes the influence of agile leadership on innovative work behavior. These findings provide valuable insights for organizational practitioners to not only focus on developing leadership skills when aiming to foster innovative work behavior among their employees but also to align efforts in creating a conducive organizational climate supportive of the implementation of innovative work behavior.

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