

# The Role of Work Methods and People Dimension as a Mechanisms Linking Leadership Style with Readiness to Change: A Study of Thailand Services Sector

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## ABSTRACT

Research has been extensively discussed on individual's readiness to change (IRC), and its effects differ in terms of leadership styles. We offer work methods dimension and the people dimension to overcome this gap. The paper seeks to examine the role of empowering leadership (EL), work methods dimension and the people dimension in enhancing IRC that will have an impact strategic behaviours. 257 civil servants are surveyed based on questionnaires and PLS-SEM is used for data analysis. However, the findings indicate that the association between EL and IRC is not mediated by quality of work methods (QWM), whereas the link between EL and IRC is mediated by quality of people (QP). Strategic role behaviour (SRB) for organizational performance is carried out when employees are ready to change.

## Keywords

Individual readiness to change, Empowering leadership, Strategic behaviour, Quality of work methods, Quality of people, Thailand

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## Introduction

The aim of organizational change keeps people element as a key element away from social, methodological, organizational and purposive factors. In order to improve employee behaviour, two key elements, such as internal and external factors of people and work method/technology need to be examined (Kreitnar & Kinichi, 2007). Internal and external factors include organizational commitment (Jermstittiparsert, Suan, & Kaliappen, 2019; Jermstittiparsert & Urairak, 2019; Sawasdee, Saengchai, & Jermstittiparsert, 2020), department, leader-member exchange (LMX), organizational culture (Chienwattanasook & Jermstittiparsert, 2019) and job satisfaction (Baker & Peterson, 2015; Siriattakul & Jermstittiparsert, 2019). Job design, workflow, work process and technology are all dimensions of work methods (Anja, Parker, & Holman, 2017). As a basis for achieving a competitive advantage, the SRB of employees can be transferred and evaluated to other people. Schuler (1992) argue that SRB implies a long-term competitive advantage of an organisation. In addition, Learmonth, Griffin, and Piper (2018) indicate that the strategic advantage can be achieved by "organizational readiness" that needs to be developed by the organisation, a variable that explains the standards of organizational life that children are experiencing while processing the cultural stimuli that they are likely to encounter.

Studies related to IRC at work have been carried out previously and various outcomes have been achieved. As per Baker and Peterson (2015), IRC is referred to as the internal-external resources of the individual to help change behaviour. The IRC is an important success factor, since

organisations act and change by their members, and only the most coordinated events in the organisations are the outcome of a mix of individual member organisational activities (Maria, 2014). The organisational RC is mainly the result of staff members IRC. The probability of positive organizational change is even higher if employees are able and willing to be responsible for making improvements. Nevertheless, it is not mandatory that all employees are willing to adapt to start making changes. Leaders must work towards developing priorities to meet their particular stage of transition to create successful organizational changes (Learmonth et al., 2018; Liu, Li, Han, & Zhang, 2016).

Huo, Li, and Long (2017) argues that participatory leadership, close to EL, is an important way for leadership to build trust in followers. EL is referred to as a condition in which a leader unfairly shares motivation, autonomy, power and other employment privileges with his followers. It is also suspected that EL will support IRC, whereas some earlier studies have shown different outcomes. For instance, some scholars say EL will help IRC (Choi, Lee, Youn, & Chun, 2017; Huo et al., 2017). Nevertheless, Learmonth et al. (2018) and Anja et al. (2017) infer that EL is insufficient to make people more ready for change. For IRC, a mechanism should be required for IRC as the primary driver. This is the result or effect of the EL. Hamad, Al-Hussami, Darawad, and Maharmeh (2017) and Liu et al. (2016) agree that EL helps employees decide how to work and seize the technique they need to do their job well. The public sector leadership work carried out by Cho, Fernandez, and Perry (2010) indicates that leaders take on the role of change agents for employees of the organization as a sub-agency that positively impacts organizational efficiency.

The current study aims to improve the literature review on the needs of the IRC, in particular for bureaucratic organisations that appear to be associated with government legislation. QWM and QP are the constructs proposed in this study. Moreover, we infer that the QWM and the QP are critical outcomes of EL. Therein, EL is seen as enabling the link between leader and followers to enhance their empowerment for innovation and creativity (Bartol & Zhang, 2010). QWM and QP have a significant influence on IRC, which increases their strategic role behaviour. The aim of this study is to contribute theories on the significance of EL in enhancing IRC by the dimensions of work methods (e.g. innovative culture, job design and technology) and the dimensions of people (e.g. intrinsic motivation to innovate, employee engagement and leader-member exchange) that lead to SRB.

## Review of Literature and Development of Hypotheses

### Relationship between EL and QWM

Davim and Machado (2014) have clearly stated that organisations must have more advanced technologies. According to Kurt and Eren (2011), the role of headmaster in training programs has had a positive impact on technology advancement leadership policies. In addition, the link between the perceptions of headmasters of their technological capabilities and their leadership behaviour is significant Gallouj, Djellal, and Miles (2013). An extensive body of literature discusses the link between the use of modern information technology and several basic economic factors, including capability, productivity, work, organisational capacity and quality of tradable and service products. Furthermore, Avermaet (2001) discusses the effect of social theory on the quality of job design as senior management leader. The model based on theory underlies job design in (Hackman, 1980) job characteristics model, which is autonomous, defined as the same as the concept of Karasek for intellectual wisdom and authority decision in support of control and demand.

Leadership research by Newman, Miao, Schwarz, and Cooper (2018) in Chinese public sector employees demonstrates that the leadership style has an important impact on the innovative behaviour of psychologically empowered employees. It is therefore proven that the creative environment for methodological work needs the support of the leaders. However, Joachim (2011) research shows that human resource management strategies transcend corporate obsessions and create an organizational culture of innovation. It calls for a strong and real commitment to a sustainable organisation. This method is a long-term journey through an occurrence that requires help from leaders who can cover all facets of the business. Thus, an organisation should be mindful of the need to pursue strategies and activities at many levels to build a culture of innovation. Improving leadership is an important factor for fostering organizational transitions and improvements. Hospitality and leadership support will grow at a high level. Therein, less people know the link among leadership style and innovative culture and how much the process of enhancement of quality is used in practices. Rehman, Bhatti,

and Chaudhry (2019) work shows that leadership style has an important effect on the innovative culture. Keeping in view the above discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: EL has a positive and significant impact on QWM.

### Relationship between EL and QP

Bartol and Zhang (2010) argue that EL should be willing and rewarded to motivate their members to take responsibility for their actions. Leaders with EL style can be said to be able to serve as a changer and to turn organizational changes into better conditions. Schwarz, Newman, Cooper, and Sendjaya (2017) described that the leader may be an agent of change overall. An organisation leader should be in a position to serve members as a change Agent (Jenny, Mueller, & Bauer, 2012). Thus, by redefining the mental maps of all members, a leader's success as a change-agent must first and foremost be focused on individuals (people) (Zhou, Gao, Yang, & Zhou, 2005). The position of a change agent encourages the participants to act within the organisation's enthusiasm when they are ready for change, as this is the basic factor in achieving a long-lasting competitive edge. A leadership who uses his / her position as a change agent shows that he / she will have contact with members and other stakeholders. The role of public sector leadership in organizational change promotes employees' change (Fernandez (2003); (Hamad et al., 2017; Schwarz et al., 2017).

In addition, businesses are facing many daunting and disgraceful challenges in the digital era in which the market is constantly experiencing rapid changes. However, it is becoming evident that businesses need a new form of management, such as leadership empowerment (Huo et al., 2017). In particular, organization needs leading leader with ambitions, strong principles and honesty, capable of creating an everlasting organisation, and are able to inspire their workers to provide better customer support (Huo et al., 2017; Waldman, Zhang, Han, & Li, 2015). Furthermore, research carried out in Belgium by Devos, Hulpia, Rosseel, and Vlerick (2012) with 1,520 teachers as employees of the public sector shows that support for leadership will develop employee engagement (EE) with decision making and creative learning methods by means of self-motivation. Singh (2016) are also promoting a belief that people who are inspired by the leader are better motivated. Keeping in view the above discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: EL has a positive and significant impact on QP.

### Relationship between QWM and IRC

In current literature, technology used to enhance the consistency of the research outcomes was discussed. Management as a function that brings forward productivity and performance technologies to effectively manage resources and increase service quality (Anja et al., 2017). Individuals in every position must take responsibilities and make quick choices to the ever-changing modern business world (Kör, 2016). Anja et al. (2017) argue in their research that organisations tackle these organisational problems as choices on information flows, layout, rewards, people, technology and job design. In addition, technology use provides the organisation with many benefits, from maximizing efficiency to increasing organizational versatility. Anja et al. (2017) describe that job design is a

mechanism by which individuals change their job tasks and social limitations to increase their employment significance or reduce negative factors. The job-design depends on the organization determination of individual or collective activities. Job design is designed to deal with tools, jobs and the relationship between behavioural and social influence needed by the organisation.

Moreover, the effect of “human relation” culture on IRC is addressed by Jimmieson, Jones, and Griffiths (2005). The outcomes concluded that the concept of “human relation” culture has an important relationship with IRC. Bardzki, Reid, and McNamee (2004) argue that the mechanism for the exchange of information and the development of infrastructure can be used to explore the essence of organisational culture. The organisational structure of the public sector is typically complex and hierarchical. This is a difficult job to incorporate knowledge management. The current study demonstrates that organisational culture is one of the key factors in the IRC model. Furthermore, organisational culture can be viewed worthy and significant in terms of IRC to extend organizational capabilities (Li & Sudharatna, 2004). Therefore, keeping in view the above discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: QWM has a positive and significant impact on IRC.

#### **Relationship between QP and IRC**

The LMX is a type of informal interaction between leaders and members or between leaders and direct subordinates (Lämsä & Nie, 2015; Schwarz et al., 2017). Recent findings from Tricomi and DePasque (2015) indicate that the Dyad Partners and LMX are closely related. Moreover, Notgras (2014) research indicates that LMX has a positive effect on IRC. Indeed, EE is a type of behaviour that demonstrates a degree of encouragement for individuals to support the work of the organisation. In terms of innovation and development, employee interests in organisational aims and duties would have a positive effect (Bartol & Zhang, 2010). Tang, Gu, and Jiang (2015) stress that a person can demonstrate a high degree of innovation when they understand their existence and role. This high degree of innovation will lead to IRC. The literature review will improve efficiency if the engagement of innovation process is implemented to encourage successful research on individual opportunities. In addition, the lower level of engagement of innovation work appears to reflect the lower level of individual attempt activation.

As a result, the balance of organizational innovation engagement in processes would stabilise increasing people creative requirements. The engagement of innovation processes also lies in the principle of identity roles (Khosa, Ishaq, & Kamil, 2020a). The identity role theory explains how individuals prepare and internalize themselves as an element of self identity and function over appropriate behaviour in the job description. On the other hand, people will analyze themselves or dig out meaning that is taken from them and discuss those positions. Self-identity role concerns how “self” is further identified as the level of identity hierarchy. Furthermore, human resource presumes that they have played two roles in coordinating significant meanings and believes that few identities are more relevant than others. Blackman, O’Flynn, and Ugyel (2013) suggest that a move for progress for creativity affects transition

readiness. Hafar, Al-Karaghoul, and Ghoneim (2014) also endorse this finding, which has a direct and significant effect on IRC. Based on the above literature, we hypothesize the following:

H4: QP has a positive and significant effect on IRC.

#### **Relationship between IRC and SRB**

Lovallo, Powell, and Fox (2011) describe SRB as a behaviour that integrates both social as well as cognitive psychology into the theory and practice of strategic management. The aim is to improve its application in strategic theory theoretically and empirically based on strategic management and a clear understanding of social, emotional and human interaction. The IRC is referred to as a desire to engage in the organizational operations following the changing experience of the organization. Change should begin by managing employees for change, since people are essentially the object and subject of change and resist change. The IRC has a positive effect on individuals behaviours (Jenny et al., 2012; Learmonth et al., 2018). The empirical and systematic research in the literature on management which explores the influence of types of organisational culture on IRC. Hafar et al. (2014) demonstrate a lower level of IRC and a negative view of the total quality management by members of the organization. However, Baker and Peterson (2015) have researched that IRC has a positive and significant effect on SRB. Therefore, keeping in view the above discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H5: IRC has a positive and significant impact on SRB.

### **Research Methodology**

The current study is carried out in two major Thailand cities (Bangkok and Ayutthaya). Employees of the government office or public service are the respondents. This sector is selected due to its lack of creativity and less support for information technology in organizations. We approached four government organizations from two major cities of Thailand, and 14 departments agreed to take part in this study and provide access to data. Copies of questionnaires were distributed to different organizations, depending on the size of the organization, in order to increase their sample representation. This study includes a total of 257 participants. Since the overall number of employees working in these organizations is not known, we consider Loehlin (1998), who suggested to reduce bias in PLS-SEM, the minimum sample size should be 200. We are therefore sure that 257 sample size is enough to evaluate data using PLS-SEM.

#### **Measurement Scales**

The measurement scale of empowering leadership with four (4) dimensions with twelve (12) items in total was adapted from Ahearne, Mathieu, and Rapp (2005). Each dimension contains three (3) items each. These dimensions include “providing autonomy from bureaucratic constraints, expressing confidence in high performance, fostering participation in decision making and enhancing the meaningfulness of work”. Furthermore, measurement scale of QP with three (3) dimensions (e.g. intrinsic motivation, engagement and LMX quality). Intrinsic motivation with three (3) items and engagement with nine (9) items were adopted from Amabile (1983) and Bartol and Zhang (2010),



whereas, LMX quality with ten (10) items were adopted from Rosen and Gomez (2001). Moreover, QWM with three (3) dimensions (e.g. innovation culture, job design and technology use) were used in this research. Innovation culture contains five (5) items, job design has three (3) items and technology use with six (6) items. Similarly, IRC contains twelve (12) items and SRB contains fifteen (15) items.

### Research Findings

The descriptive statistics, the reliability scale of each latent construct and the correlation are shown in Table 1.

#### Structural Model Assessment

This study used PLS-SEM to evaluate the validity and causality between latent variables of the model using the Smart PLS. The current study explores five hypotheses of the structural model. The causality of the model is tested by means of a null hypothesis indicating that coefficient in each relation is equal to the use of the null hypothesis by t-test as existed in the regression method. The results of the structural model analysis indicate that out of five hypotheses, four hypotheses are statistically significant on  $\alpha = 0.05$  as shown in Table 2. The results of the study indicate that in structural path model, EL has a positive and significant impact on QP (beta value = 0.619 and t-value = 8.867). Similarly, the values of structural path coefficient indicate that the relationship between EL and QWM is positive and significant (beta value = 0.643 and t-value = 9.374). Nevertheless, the results of the structural path coefficient indicate that the link between QWM and IRC is not significant (beta value = 0.158 and t-value = 1.157). This indicates that while the QWM changes, it would not affect IRC. In addition, the results of the study indicate that QP has a positive and significant impact on IRC (beta value = 0.534 and t-value = 5.173). Likewise, the results of the study indicate that IRC has a positive and significant impact on SRB (beta value = 0.796 and t-value = 22.342).

The results of this paper show that EL has six indirect relationships as shown in Table 3. Firstly, the results indicate that IRC through QP has path coefficient (beta value = 0.319 and z-value = 4.365). This shows that QP has a mediating effect on the link between EL and IRC. Secondly, the outcomes show that IRC through QWM has path coefficient (beta value = 0.089 and z-value = 1.234). The results indicate that QWM do not mediate the link between EL and IRC. Thirdly, the results indicate that the link between QP and SRB is mediated by IRC (beta value = 0.412 and z-value = 4.864). Fourthly, the results indicate that the link between QWMP and SRB is not mediated by IRC (beta value = 0.131 and z-value = 1.272). Fifthly, the results of the structural path coefficient indicate that SRB through QP and IRC (beta value = 0.194 and z-value = 4.104). This indicates that EL has a significant impact on SRB. Sixthly, the results indicate that the link between EL and SRB is not mediated by QWM and IRC (beta value = 0.084 and z-value = 1.204).

**Table 1** Results of Descriptive statistic and correlation coefficient

Construct	EL	UT	JD	IC	LMX	EE	IM	IRC	SRB
EL	1	0.12	0.08	0.15	0.10	0.05	0.03	0.02	0.01
UT	0.12	1	0.05	0.10	0.08	0.04	0.02	0.01	0.01
JD	0.08	0.05	1	0.03	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01
IC	0.15	0.10	0.03	1	0.05	0.03	0.02	0.01	0.01
LMX	0.10	0.08	0.02	0.05	1	0.04	0.02	0.01	0.01
EE	0.05	0.04	0.01	0.03	0.04	1	0.02	0.01	0.01
IM	0.03	0.02	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.02	1	0.01	0.01
IRC	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	1	0.01
SRB	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	1

ts											
EL	3.	0.	1.								
	6	4	0								
	9	8	0								
	1	6	0								
UT	4.	0.	0.	1.							
	1	5	3	0							
	0	0	2	0							
	6	1	4	0							
JD	3.	0.	0.	0.	1.						
	8	5	6	3	0						
	2	4	8	0	0						
	1	3	9	1	0						
IC	3.	0.	0.	0.	0.	1.					
	7	4	4	2	4	0					
	6	9	6	8	0	0					
	4	8	2	4	5	0					
LMX	3.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	1.				
	3	7	6	2	4	4	0				
	4	1	1	0	3	8	0				
	5	5	0	3	5	6	0				
EE	4.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	1.			
	2	4	3	5	3	4	3	0			
	3	1	2	8	0	2	5	0			
	0	3	8	3	4	9	8	0			
IM	4.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	1.		
	2	5	4	3	4	3	4	5	0		
	7	7	0	4	8	4	8	3	0		
	6	4	5	8	6	3	3	4	0		
IRC	4.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	1.	
	2	3	3	5	3	2	2	7	4	0	
	4	7	7	1	6	3	7	0	9	0	
	0	6	6	9	0	9	1	6	0	0	
SRB	4.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	1.
	1	4	4	5	3	5	4	6	4	7	0
	3	4	5	4	8	0	0	8	5	3	0
	1	3	0	6	4	7	1	8	8	9	0

Note: Empowering leadership (EL), Use of technology (UT), Job design (JD), Innovation culture (IC), Leader-member exchange (LMX), Employee engagement (EE), Intrinsic motivation (IM), Individual readiness to change (IRC) and Strategic role behaviour (SRB)

**Table 2** Results of Structural Model

Relationshi ps		b- valu es	Subsamp le Mean	SD	t- value s	Decisio n
EL	->	0.643	0.679	0.06	9.374	Support
QWM				9		ed
EL -> QP		0.619	0.640	0.06	8.867	Support
				2		ed
QWM	->	0.158	0.143	0.13	1.157	Not
IRC				0		Support

QP -> IRC	0.534	0.549	0.113	5.173	Supported
IRC -> SRB	0.796	0.799	0.043	22.342	Supported

**Table 3** Structural Model Indirect Effect

Relationships	Indirect effect	Z-value	Significance	Decision
EL -> QWM -> IRC	0.089	1.234	0.301	Mediation
EL -> QP -> IRC	0.319	4.365	0.000	No mediation
QWM -> IRC -> SRB	0.131	1.272	0.312	Mediation
QP -> IRC -> SRB	0.412	4.864	0.000	No mediation
EL -> QWM -> IRC -> SRB	0.084	1.204	0.325	Mediation
EL -> QP -> IRC -> SRB	0.194	4.104	0.000	No mediation

## Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that EL has several important consequences. Firstly, EL influences the QP that involves intrinsic motivation, engagement and LMX. The results of the study are in line with (Fachrunnisa, 2015; Gupta & Krishnan, 2004; Hulpia, Devos, Rosseel, & Vlerick, 2012; Khosa, Ishaq, & Kamil, 2020b; Khuong & Yen, 2014) research, who found that a strong leadership has a positive and significant impact on intrinsic motivation, engagement and LMX. Secondly, EL has also significant impact on QWM which contains innovation culture, job design and technology use. This shows that a leader of a civil servant organization has provided technology to help them achieve their given task. A research done by Hollford (2019) indicate leaders are pushing the creativity of employees and their explicit knowledge in technology. Moreover, EL has a positive and significant impact on job design, which ensures that civil servants' leader of the organisation has the potential to manipulate job design in order to complete the tasks. Similarly, a research done by Mazzei, Lee, and Kim (2018) suggests that the leadership of the innovation culture would contribute to the substantial enhancement of employee productivity and performance. Thirdly, intrinsic motivation, engagement and LMX quality positively and significant effects IRC. The desire of a person to be creative can impact IRC. People with an intrinsic inspiration should have many innovative ideas and inventions to provide the company with solutions. Such intrinsic drive may help them to achieve their goals. The findings of this paper indicate that the link between EL and

IRC is mediated by QP. It indicates that the relation between EL and IRC is influenced by intrinsic motivation, engagement and LMX quality. Nevertheless, statistics show the association between EL and IRC is not mediated by QWM (e.g. innovation culture, job design and technology use). Fourthly, the findings of the significant impact on SRB. The findings of the study are in line with Learmonth et al. (2018) and Baker and Peterson (2015) research that shows that IRC has a significant effect on individual behaviour.

## Implications

The research results may have theoretical implications. Firstly, the present study contributes to developing the theory of the dimensions of people as a mediator in the link between EL and IRC. Moreover, EL is considered to be a source of the dimension of people, including intrinsic motivation, engagement and LMX quality. Secondly, in the creation of IRC value regulations/policies to promote SRB, it provides advice on application theory to governments. Thirdly, to function effectively, it introduced the best theoretical working system. However, EL has a substantial impact on QP and QWM. Further, QWM has three dimensions (e.g. innovation culture, job design and technology use). The results also showed that QP has a significant impact on IRC in an organisation, whereas QWM is not significantly related to IRC. In addition, the IRC has a positive and significant impact on SRB.

The study findings may also have practical implications. First of all, the company needs to enhance people quality, for instance situations or policies that promote intrinsic motivation through contact/communication, quality enhancement of employee engagement and quality of LMX. Secondly, the communication quality that promotes change, demonstrates a sense of leadership towards individuals and creates interesting job characteristic and job design can lead to innovative forms of completion for individuals. Thirdly, leaders and management must understand that future generation of skilled officials will be guided by intrinsic motivational factors to achieve excellent employee engagement and intrinsic motivation in the organisation. Fourthly, in developing countries, because of the relevance of civil servants, managers/leaders need to be productive in the management of disruptive behaviour to promote change.

## Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The following aspects of this research have limitations. Firstly, this paper used cross-sectional research design which is unable to ensure the causal links developed in hypotheses, although the outcomes are compatible with empirical evidence. This issue could be overcome by future researchers using a longitudinal research approach. Secondly, this research assesses QWM and QP on change processes. However, more complex strategies may be required to make full use of and cycle of change in order to get distinct outcomes if organizations are in different situations (i.e., time and environmental stage). Hence, future research may attempt to examine another form of work

process efficiency with different temporal or environmental conditions. Thirdly, this study uses self-reporting data. This can create the problem of common method variance. Further studies may be beneficial if objective measurements of strategic role behaviours are obtained independently and implemented. Fourthly, t-test to confirm whether this analysis imposes a non-response bias. There is a potential limit to the poor response rate of the survey. In future studies, researchers should use a short form of measurement and to give ample time to the participants in answering the questionnaires. Fifthly, Thailand government officials with perceived cultural limitations are the respondents of this survey. As a result, countries or geographical areas may be based on various cultural backgrounds through future studies to validate findings across a broader range of geographies and cultures.

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