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THE ROLE OF BUSINESS ACUMEN IN FOSTERING INNOVATIVE WORK BEHAVIOR MODERATED BY INNOVATIVE CLIMATE

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role of business acumen (BA) in fostering innovative work behavior (IWB) among employees, moderated by an innovative climate (IC). The focus is on startups in Indonesia, where innovation is crucial for the survival and growth of companies. Using a quantitative approach, data were collected from 226 startup employees through an online questionnaire. The study employed a cross-sectional design and statistical analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics 26 and PROCESS Hayes Version 4.2. The findings reveal a significant positive relationship between BA and innovative work behavior, indicating that employees with higher BA are more likely to exhibit innovative behavior. However, the moderating effect of an innovative climate on the BA-IWB relationship was not supported, suggesting that the presence of an innovative climate does not necessarily enhance the impact of BA on innovative work behavior. The results highlight the importance of BA as a key competency for driving innovation in startups, regardless of the organizational climate. This study contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence on the role of BA in promoting innovative work behavior and offers practical implications for startups to focus on developing BA among their employees to foster innovation. Future research should explore other potential moderators and different contexts to further understand the dynamics of BA and innovative work behavior.

KEYWORDS *Business Acumen, Innovative Work Behavior, Innovative Climate, Startup, Person-Environment Fit Theory.*

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INTRODUCTION

The emergence of startups is no longer a novel phenomenon in Indonesia. Startups are typically defined as companies that have been established for less than ten years, employing various funding mechanisms such as bootstrapping, investment, incubation, loans, or crowdfunding, and offering products or services characterized by technological innovation that is adaptable and responsive to market changes (Baldridge, 2024; European Startup Monitor, 2021; Rahardjo,

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2020). Since their inception in the early 2000s, the number of startups in Indonesia has grown significantly, reaching 2,431 by 2022 (Southeast Asia Development Solution, 2023). The COVID-19 pandemic has further accelerated this growth by altering consumer behaviors and increasing the demand for technology-and digital-based innovations (Negara & Meilasari-Sugiana, 2022). The proliferation of startups has intensified competition as companies strive to attract investment. One prevalent strategy involves pursuing innovation aligned with their specific business sectors (Southeast Asia Development Solution, 2023). Innovation not only serves to capture investor interest but also functions as a critical factor for business sustainability amid escalating competition (Deloitte, 2023; Saeed, *et al*, 2018). Historical evidence suggests that innovation plays a vital role in enabling businesses to withstand economic downturns, such as the 2008 financial crisis (Furstenthal *et al*, 2022) and the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-2021 (Apedo-Amah *et al*, 2020). A substantial body of literature from both academic and practical perspectives underscores the importance of individual innovation efforts in bolstering an organization's competitive edge (AlEssa & Durugbo, 2021; De Jong & Den Hartog, 2008; Janssen, 2000; McLoughlin & Harris, 1997).

Innovative work behavior refers to a complex set of individual actions related to innovation, encompassing three distinct phases: idea generation, idea promotion, and idea realization (Janssen, 2000; Scott & Bruce, 1994). Employees engage in the innovation process by first deliberately generating new ideas, which are then promoted by seeking support from others who can assist in bringing these ideas to fruition, ultimately contributing to team or organizational performance (Janssen, 2000). Innovative work behavior is influenced by two primary factors. The first factor involves individual characteristics, such as personality, motivation, competence (including knowledge and skills), knowledge sharing, and work attitude (AlEssa & Durugbo, 2021; Salam & Senin, 2022; Thurlings *et al*, 2015). The second factor involves organizational elements, such as an innovative climate, team climate, and openness to innovation (AlEssa & Durugbo, 2021; Salam & Senin, 2022; Thurlings *et al*, 2015).

The growing recognition of the importance of innovative work behavior and the increasing number of correlating factors have made research on this topic a persistent trend over the years ((AlEssa & Durugbo, 2021). Previous studies have frequently examined the interplay between individual and organizational factors, using various theoretical frameworks, including the Person-Environment (P-E) Fit Theory (AlEssa & Durugbo, 2021; Al-Omari *et al*, 2019; Muchiri *et al*, 2020). Commonly investigated internal factors include personality, knowledge sharing, psychological capital, job performance, and creativity. However, there is a noticeable gap in research addressing the role of competencies, particularly business-related competencies such as business acumen (BA), in relation to innovative work behavior (Malibari & Bajaba, 2022). Exploring such competencies is essential, as it can aid companies in identifying the knowledge or skills that need to be developed in employees. or determining which competencies are likely to promote innovative work behavior.

Business acumen is a variable or construct widely recognized among business practitioners and human resource professionals (Haines, 2019). Cohen (2015) defines business acumen as the expertise to comprehend and apply information to contribute to an organization's strategic plans. It is regarded as a critical variable because it aids employees in making informed decisions within their roles (Makhele & Barnard, 2020). While previous studies on business acumen have predominantly utilized qualitative methods (Killough, 2013; Makhele & Barnard, 2020; Ragas, 2019), there is a notable gap in research employing quantitative approaches to explore the antecedents and consequences associated with this variable. Consequently, this study aims to use a quantitative approach to examine how business acumen, as an internal variable, can influence the manifestation of innovative work behavior.

Meanwhile, an external factor frequently examined in research is the innovative climate (Newman *et al*, 2020). Scott and Bruce (1994) define the innovative climate as the support provided by a company or organization to promote innovative work behaviors. This variable is also highly indicative of the characteristics of startup companies, which are known for fostering and generating new innovations to address the continuously evolving needs of customers (Indeed Editorial Team, 2023; Revita, 2023; Shields, 2020). Accordingly, this study explores the relationship between BA and the innovative climate to assess how these factors influence the emergence of innovative work behaviors (see Figure 1).

Competence is recognized as a key antecedent to the emergence of innovative work behavior (Siregar *et al*, 2019; Vila *et al*, 2014). However, research into the specific forms or types of competence that impact innovative work behavior is still limited (Malibari & Bajaba, 2022). One area of competence that has been less explored in academic literature, particularly within industrial and organizational psychology, is business acumen. Business acumen (BA) is a competency comprising various areas of knowledge and skills, including: (a) business knowledge, (b) accounting and finance knowledge, (c) sales and marketing knowledge, (d) business operations knowledge, (e) understanding of government regulations, (f) strategic thinking skills, and (g) effective administrative skills (Cohen, 2021). Another definition provided by business practitioners, which will be used as a reference in this study, describes BA as an individual's ability to comprehend different business dimensions that support operational effectiveness (Haines, 2019). These dimensions include: (a) general business knowledge, (b) business and market environment, (c) mindset and orientation, (d) communication, (e) interpersonal skills, (f) business performance, and (g) self-awareness. The integration of diverse information and knowledge allows individuals to discover creative solutions or generate new ideas for problem-solving within their organizations or companies (Saeed *et al*, 2018). For example, understanding a company's revenue sources can initiate innovative behavior, such as exploring alternative revenue streams that are pertinent to the business. This assertion is supported by research conducted by Waenink (2012), which indicates that individual competencies can facilitate the conceptualization of new ideas. Therefore, competence in the form of BA is likely to influence the development of innovative work behavior.

Hl: Employees with business acumen are more likely to exhibit innovative work behavior.

The Person-Environment (P-E) Fit Theory posits that understanding behavior requires consideration of both an individual's internal factors and the environmental or contextual factors in which the individual operates. This theory broadly examines how human behavior can be predicted based on the interplay between individual and environmental factors (Schneider, 1987). While each factor can independently predict behavior, outcomes are more optimal when there is a congruence between the two (Van Vianen, 2018). The applicability of this theory has expanded to areas such as stress, job satisfaction, work adjustment, recruitment and selection, career choices, and organizational culture ((Edwards, 2008; Van Vianen, 2018). Regarding organizational culture, the P-E Fit Theory suggests that individuals are more likely to be attracted to and remain in organizations that align with their interests and personalities. Conversely, individuals who perceive a misalignment with the environmental factors are more likely to leave the organization (Schneider, 1987). The theory posits that individuals seek environments that align with their internal characteristics to mitigate negative psychological impacts that could affect their work performance (Van Vianen, 2018). Moreover, the theory highlights that individual behavior within an organization can influence organizational culture, and a sustained organizational culture can guide the selection and retention of individuals who fit within it (Schneider, 1987). Thus, the theory recommends that organizational changes should begin with transformations at the individual level. In the context of person-organization fit, if an organization's resources support employees' innovative needs, it will encourage the generation of new ideas (Wu & Wu, 2017). The concept of fit is categorized into two types: supplementary fit, where individuals and environments share similar attributes, such as values, and complementary fit, where individuals and environments possess mutually reinforcing attributes, such as individual skills complemented by teamwork (Van Vianen, 2018).

The relationship between business acumen (BA) and innovative work behavior can be enhanced when environmental or organizational factors support such behavior. Startups, being closely associated with innovation, often cultivate and promote an innovative climate within their organizations to encourage employees to engage consistently in innovation (Rahardjo, 2020). Individuals possessing the requisite competencies for innovation, and who are situated in a supportive or conducive environment, are more likely to exhibit innovative behavior due to the enhanced fit that increases the likelihood of such behavior occurring (AlEssa & Durugbo, 2021; Van Vianen, 2018). In the context of this study, individuals with strong BA are anticipated to demonstrate innovative work behavior, and this relationship can be further strengthened by environmental support, such as an innovative climate that fosters such behavior. An innovative climate thus characterizes the nature of startup companies.

H2: An innovative climate moderates the relationship between BA and innovative work behavior, such that the positive relationship between BA and innovative work behavior is stronger in the presence of an innovative climate.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a cross-sectional design using quantitative methods to compute numerical values from each participant and statistical analysis to interpret the results (Gravetter & Forzano, 2018). Data were collected via an online questionnaire distributed through social media platforms. All measurement instruments underwent translation into Indonesian by a certified translation agency and were tested for face validity to ensure language appropriateness within the Indonesian context. To assess participant engagement, an attention checker in the form of an instructed response item (e.g., "please select 'strongly disagree'") was included (Gummer *et al*, 2021; Kam & Chan, 2018).

The online questionnaire was distributed from July to October 2023. Participants were employees of startup companies in Indonesia. A convenience sampling technique was used, whereby the researcher personally contacted employees from various Indonesian startups through Linkedin to request their participation (Gravetter & Forzano, 2018). Those who agreed were sent the questionnaire to complete. Employees with more than three months of tenure at their startup were contacted to ensure they were sufficiently familiar with their work environment. Of the 485 participants who responded, 226 responses were usable after checking for attention checker compliance and data completeness, while 259 responses were excluded from further analysis.

Business Acumen (BA)

This variable was assessed using the business acumen tool developed by Haines (2019). The tool consists of 38 items and employs a Likert scale from 1 (Limited) to 4 (Consistent). An example item is: "I understand and utilize key business processes to complete tasks." Given that this tool was developed by practitioners, a pilot study was conducted to ensure its validity. The a coefficient for this tool was 0.92 based on the pilot study results, which involved 30 startup employees selected through convenience sampling (Gravetter & Forzano, 2018).

Innovative Climate (IC)

This variable was measured using the perceived organizational support for innovative climate tool developed by Malik and Wilson (1995). This tool comprises 5 items with a Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 6 (Strongly Agree). An example item is: "The organization is flexible and regularly adapts to changes." The a coefficient for this tool was 0.87.

Innovative Work Behavior (IWB)

This variable was measured using the innovative work behavior (IWB) tool developed by Janssen (2000), adapted into Indonesian by Etikariena and Muluk (2014), and utilized in previous research (Vandiya & Etikariena, 2018; Winarsih & Etikariena, 2020; Windiarsih *et al*, 2017). The tool includes 9 items rated on a Likert scale from 1 (Never) to 6 (Always). An example item is: "Turning innovative ideas into implementable applications or programs." The a coefficient for this tool was 0.89.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Statistical analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics 26 and PROCESS Hayes Version 4.2. The sample consisted of 41.2% male participants (n = 93). The majority of participants held a bachelor's degree (85.4%; n = 186) and were employed at the staff level (68.6%, n = 15). The most common duration of employment was 1-2 years (58%; n = 131). Table 1 presents the correlations between variables in the study. The BA variable is positively correlated with job level ($r = .214$, $p < .01$) and innovative climate ($r = .431$, $p < .01$). This suggests that higher BA levels are associated with higher job levels and a more innovative climate within the organization. The innovative work behavior (IWB) variable is positively correlated with job level ($r = .177$, $p < .01$), innovative climate ($r = .443$, $p < .01$), and BA ($r = .614$, $p < .01$). These correlations indicate that higher job levels and greater organizational support for innovation are linked to increased employee innovative behavior. Additionally, a higher BA is associated with greater employee innovative behavior.

Table 1. Correlation Between Variables

Variabel	**M**	**SD**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
1. Position Level	1.45	.76	1				
2. Tenure	1.06	.61	.29**	1			
3. Innovative Climate	4.94	.86	.03	.05	1		
4.Business Acumen	3.20	.37	.21**	.03	.43**	1	
5.Innovative Work Behavior	6.78	1.43	.17**	.02	.44**	.61**	1

Note. N = 226
** p < .05; ** p < .01*

Table 2 reports the results of a simple moderation analysis using PROCESS Hayes Model 2 (2022) with bootstrapping. The analysis reveals a significant positive association between BA and IWB ($b = 2.00$, 95% IC [1.57, 2.43], $t = 9.22$, $p < .05$). This finding suggests that higher BA levels increase the likelihood of employees exhibiting innovative work behavior, supporting the acceptance of Hypothesis 1 (H1).

Table 2. Moderation Analysis Results

	b	**SE**	***t***	***p***
Constant	6.82	0.08	85.69	0.00
Business Acumen	2.00	0.22	9.22	0.00
Innovative Climate	0.35	0.09	3.66	0.00
Business Acumen × Innovative Climate	-0.28	0.22	-1.24	0.22

Note.
N = 226

However, the analysis results indicate that innovative climate (IC) does not moderate the relationship between BA and IWB ($b = -.27$, 95% IC [-.72, .16], $t = -1.2$, $p = .21$). Thus, the data does not support Hypothesis 2 (H2). Figure 1 illustrates

the interaction between BA, IWB, and IC, showing that the impact of BA on IWB does not change across different levels of IC. Nevertheless, these findings also suggest that IC is independently associated with IWB.

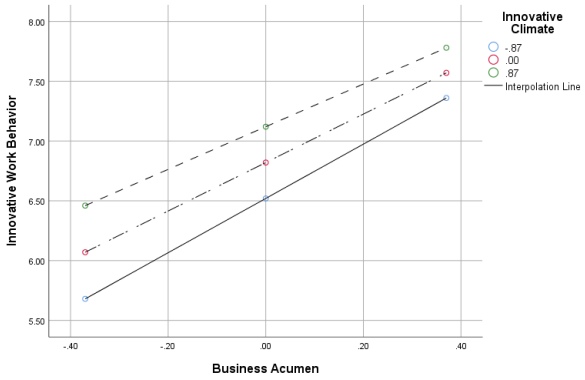

Figure 1. BA-IC-IWB Interaction Graph

Discussion

This study finds that Business Acumen (BA) has a positive relationship with innovative behavior among startup employees. Employees who possess BA competencies are better equipped to exhibit innovative behavior. This finding aligns with previous research, which indicates that individual competencies influence the emergence of innovative behavior (Saeed *et al*, 2018; Waenik, 2012). Employees with BA competencies have a thorough understanding of their company's business operations and can approach innovation from multiple perspectives before making decisions. In startups, it is crucial for innovation to consider all viewpoints comprehensively before developing an idea (Honoré, 2022). Such consideration is necessary for assessing risks and ensuring the availability ofrequired resources (Parkins, 2023). Employees with strong BA competencies significantly contribute to generating ideas and implementing future innovations.

The study also reveals that the innovative climate does not moderate the relationship between BA and innovative work behavior among startup employees. This finding is notable because prior research frequently identified the innovative climate as a moderator that strengthens the relationship between variables (Charbonnier-Voirin, 2010; Chen & Hou, 2016; Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2013). Statistically, this could be due to data collection from startups, where an innovative climate is a prevalent feature across these companies (Parkins, 2023). As a result, differences between companies with low or high innovative climates may not be apparent. In startups, where the innovative climate is relatively uniform, the relationship between BA and innovative behavior remains consistent, and the innovative climate does not directly influence this relationship (Dawson, 2013).

Additionally, startups are generally required to respond rapidly to needs or issues, often resulting in quick, short-term innovations with limited impact (Halligan, 2016). The demand for rapid response affects decision-making and guidance from leadership, which frequently changes and may lead to employee

confusion, causing them to become passive in the innovation process (Halligan, 2016). The startup environment, characterized by relatively inexperienced management and frequent decision changes while seeking an appropriate business model, contributes to this dynamic. Employees with strong BA competencies understand how a company can operate and focus on generating long-term profits (Haines, 2019). Such employees are better positioned to make informed and objective decisions regarding necessary innovations and problems that need addressing, enabling the company to contribute effectively while maintaining long-term operations. Discrepancies in views on innovation and its direction ultimately result in the innovative climate within startups not moderating the relationship between BA and innovative work behavior.

Nevertheless, both the innovative climate and BA independently influence the emergence of Innovative Work Behavior (IWB). Employees with adequate BA competencies are likely to actively display such behavior. Therefore, regardless of the company's support for innovation, individuals with sufficient BA competencies will be able to direct their behavior towards exhibiting innovative behavior.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study have the potential to advance research and theoretical understanding concerning the variables examined, especially variables such as Business Analytics (BA), which, despite their popularity among practitioners, remain relatively underexplored in academic literature. Additionally, this research introduces new perspectives on approaches for explaining the innovative climate variable. For practitioners, this study reinforces the significance of BA competencies in the workplace, particularly within startup environments where employee involvement in innovation is critical. Companies may consider recruiting individuals with strong BA skills or enhancing their current employees' BA competencies through tailored training programs that meet organizational needs. Moreover, this research offers valuable insights for company practitioners to reassess and evaluate whether their current organizational climate is conducive to effective implementation.

Despite offering new insights, this study has several limitations. Firstly, the use of a cross-sectional model restricts the ability to observe how the relationships between variables evolve over time. Future research could address this limitation by employing longitudinal studies to investigate the temporal effects on these relationships. Additionally, another limitation is that this study exclusively examines the context of startup companies. Future studies might explore different contexts, such as government or private sector organizations, to identify any potential differences. Furthermore, subsequent research could examine other relevant variables, such as those related to leader-member exchange or the processes of knowledge transfer within organizations. Finally, future studies should consider utilizing alternative measurement tools to assess the consistency of the observed relationships between variables.

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