Factors influencing service innovative behaviors in Vietnam

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Abstract:

This research aims to assess the effects of ethical leadership and its impacts on service innovative behaviors through the leader-member exchange at small and medium-size logistics companies in Vietnam. The proposed integrated research model was formed to enhance the relationship between ethical leadership and service innovative behaviour while interacting through the mediator leader-member exchange, and the study also examines the roles of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards as moderators. Using the empirical test of 339 respondents from small & medium (SM) logistics Companies in Vietnam indicated positive relationships among independent and dependent variables.

Furthermore, the new findings from this model showed positive relationships between moderators' intrinsic and extrinsic rewards with innovative service behaviour. These moderators generate a creative environment and promote innovative service behavior of frontline employees working in SME logistics companies in Vietnam; the leader-member exchange also shows a positive relationship as a mediator.

Keywords: Ethical, leader, ethical leadership, leader-member exchange, intrinsic reward, extrinsic reward, service innovative behavior.

1. Introduction

Due to the globalization process and international trade agreements that have connected business regions and nations, the global organizations exchange their business frequently, and the connections also affect every product and service being offered on the global market. Primarily, that caused business models to shift from manufacturing to providing alternative services as new strategies to develop their organizations (Thakur & Hale, 2013), and innovative service is an essential management feature to guarantee a firm's development, the quality of service is essential for business sustainability and essential to service industry where enterprises create competitive service advantages. Therefore, creative service plays an essential role in every business unit, influencing service innovative behavior or cognitive ability.

Current reports showed that leaders' behaviors have forced organizations to reconsider the ethical behaviour of their leaders. Ethical leadership also gained much interest in the company's applications and academics for research purposes. Most researchers found positive effects of moral leadership on work satisfaction influencing staff's performance. However, a few studies have examined the influences of ethical leadership at the workplace on innovative service behaviour that critically fosters employees to contribute their creativity for achieving the company's sustainable development.

Employee performance and service creativity are synonymously defined as a complicated interaction process among parties (Dotzel, Shankar, & Berry, 2018). Because of that, the management is looking for effective methods to offer high-quality services in the service business industry. In addition, the leaders bring out positive impacts that would motivate employees to provide quality services to customers, as more favourable treatments employees receive from leaders as higher service innovative behaviour employees offer to clients.

This is correct for the logistics market in Vietnam, where small and medium-sized logistics companies face the main challenge of strictly holding low price competitive rather than improving service quality or innovative services. Therefore, SMEs need to improve relationships among leaders and followers to direct more innovative service performance of frontline employees who directly serve customers.

Another excellent point from this paper is a study of leader-member exchange (LMX) which was known as crucial factors interacting among leaders, supervisors, managers and subordinators, LMX role influences the relationship between ethical leadership and service innovative behaviour (SIB) in the workplace (Sears & Hackett, 2011), Previous studies proved that ethical leaders are undertaking to foster positive relationships between LMX and service innovative behaviour. Hence, it is proposed that LMX and ethical leaders encourage service innovative behaviour among frontline employees.

Although two research constructs, SIB and LMX, were considered complicated processes in natural working conditions, rewards are essential motivating functions to build a constructive relationship between ethical leadership and service innovation behaviour. It plays a significant role to establish work engagement which helps employees focus on their work to complete their tasks responsibly (Malik, Butt, & Choi, 2015). Employees would use their experience, confidence and skills to deliver the best services to customers rather than just rewards.

The previous studies showed that job autonomy is a factor that plays a moderating role in influencing the relationship between ethical leadership and SIB while very few paper research reveal that ethical leadership and LMX are influencing SIB through moderating intrinsic and extrinsic reward. Whether rewards were used as a medium by leaders to promote employees' creativity at the workplace, there are contradictory standpoints regarding the impacts of rewards on creativity. Deci, Koestner, & Ryan (2001) mentioned that individuals perceive the environment expresses obstacles to their self-determination or liberality, and their interesting intrinsic tasks tend to lessen or eliminate them, resulting in poor creativity. Hence this study tries to expand the theory by examining the role of LMX in influencing employees' innovative service behaviour and to confirm intrinsic and extrinsic rewards as moderators.

Moreover, this study examines the impact of ethical leadership on service innovative behaviour of frontline employees from small and medium-sized (SME) logistics companies, those firms with under 50 employees were defined as small, and they are called medium companies if they own from 50 to under 100 employees. These companies are offering main logistics services, and those services are being managed by the department manager or leader directly, and the services are being performed by followers. Therefore, SME firms are suitable to research innovative service behaviour because frontline employees directly communicate with customers and their managers.

Frontline employees in SME often interact directly with customers to handle their daily work so that leaders use intrinsic rewards to encourage service quality like the accomplishment of the task finished, respect and esteem. Besides that, these SME's logistics leaders also use extrinsic rewards like bonuses, commission, parties or gifts to motivate their following employees (Malik et al., 2015). As a result, their employees generate more innovative behaviour in logistics services, leading to higher service quality performed and higher services competitive level for SME.

Furthermore, SME logistics companies in Vietnam provide their services such as sea freight, air freight, inland trucking, customs clearance, warehousing and documentation services to direct customers. The customers are being served by their frontline employees like customer service, customs broker, consultant and salesman or leaders also interact with customers directly if needed. Especially, third party logistics (3PL) companies play a significant role in the logistics market where an increasingly service-driven economy is well recognized (Bolumole, 2003).

Consequently, this study examines the impact of ethical leadership on SIB of frontline employees at small and medium-sized logistics companies in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The SME logistics sector was selected because the logistics field in HCMC contributes to high economic income and owns the biggest seaport and airport that attracts much investment, creating market competition and developing alternative logistics services. Logistics cost accounts for 21% in 2017 in Vietnam. More than 1,800 logistics companies and SME logistics account for 35% of the total number. SME logistics perform their main functions such as forwarding freight services by air and freight service by sea, shipping documents services, customs brokerage, trucking services, oversea agency services, and some SME logistics may offer warehouse storage.

In summary, this paper examines the factors that influence innovative service behaviour with the following purposes:

- Examining the impact of ethical leadership influencing service innovative behaviour
- Testing the moderating effects of intrinsic reward and extrinsic reward on the relationship between ethical leadership and service innovative behaviour

The organization of this study included: Introduction, literature review and hypothesis, research methodology, data analysis and results; discussion and implication; limitations and directions for future research; and conclusion in turn.

2. Literature review

Ethical leadership

Ethical leadership was defined as standard conduct behaviour through individual deeds and interpersonal relationships. There are such conducts to followers by conversation and work discussion (Brown, Treviño, & Harrison, 2006), ethical leaders play a significant role in business management. Especially for global leadership roles, that is why there are many leadership styles applied to manage employees in each suitable market. The democratic style involves a team guided by a leader where all members are inputs to make the decision and members see themselves in making the decision. As Mohiuddin (2017) stated that the autocratic leadership style states that all decisions will be taken by leaders who exercise absolute power and allocate different tasks to each group member. Therefore, ethical leaders are core resources leading employees to do the right things and make sure employees follow organization principles of conduct.

In addition, ethical leadership is alternative with other leadership styles by possessing employee orientation qualities, fairness, openness, assistance, collective encouragement, reciprocal respect, precise vision and convinced decision making (Zhu, May, & Avolio, 2004). Furthermore, ethical leadership was qualified as honest, responsible, talented, supportive, connective, and innovative factors that create a good working environment that motivates employees to perform positive behaviour at work.

Service innovative behaviour

Service innovation or service creativity are concerned with employees' initiative for new processes, new solutions, new services, new market or combination of such into a company. Hence service business models are being motivated in developing countries. There are many kinds of services that are being offered in hospitality, IT solution, financial consultant, marketing, shipping or logistics service and consistently, those services are being offered by frontline employees who directly interact with customers through work supportive tools or in person. Their emotion is fundamental at the workplace, and employees' behaviour decides how good quality service could be performed (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993).

Finally, SME logistics companies in Vietnam provide an extensive range of service activities to clients. Regarding good quality logistics services that could satisfy customers' needs, frontline employees' performance must be qualified and innovated before companies deliver creative and competitive services. Customer satisfaction is essential in logistics service because innovative behaviour employees create a positive relationship between customer satisfaction and service performances.

Ethical leadership and leader-member exchange relations

Besides defining ethical leadership as standard conduct behaviour through personal actions and interpersonal relationships (Brown, Treviño, & Harrison, 2006), other papers also clarified LMX's concepts and its relationship with EL (Garg & Dhar, 2017). The quality of LMX shows the relationship between managers and inferiors, and it also indicates the degree they exchange their work resources together or support each other. However, the LMX head has feeble effects on the performance of service employees with routine work where the support of direction and motivation from superiors is low, so that the LMX tends to affect innovative work behaviour where employees interact with ample work scenarios differently, thus showing their flexible abilities and skills.

However, ethical leaders know many solutions to reinforce the positive relationships between leaders and their subordinators. Ethical leaders also know how to increase their exchange value resources which helps employees perform jobs positively because ethical leaders own the characteristics of honesty, trustworthiness, the responsible, fair, supportive and oriented mind which help them aim to right things for employees and right things for their organization. Therefore, when leaders perform based on their best interest of caring, motivating, and supporting employees, they form positive responses and strengthen exchange value between leaders and followers, which leads all organizations to encourage their leaders to become ethical leaders.

Hypothesis 1. There is a positive relationship between ethical leadership and leader-member exchange.

The positive relationship between LMX and service innovative behaviour

The research model shows the relationships between LMX and ethical leadership, and it also shows influences of LMX on service innovative behaviour, the findings of those research are significant due to the guide to the result that LMX plays a critical role in influencing service innovative behaviour at the workplace. It could be stated that followers want to show their effective performances when they feel connected and motivated by support from leaders (Garg & Dhar, 2017). According to the norm of reciprocity and persuasion, employees tend to perform their work with innovative behaviour when they receive favourable treatment from their supervisor.

Furthermore, LMX is a construct that influences the relation between ethical leadership and service innovative behaviour by strengthening the ethical leader's personality. These greater characteristics build up more motivation to exchange with following employees and encourage employees to perform their innovative behaviour. Meanwhile, creative behaviour could bring out effective consequences and high-quality services. Hence, Ethical leadership affects LMX and LMX's influence on innovative service behaviour; therefore, a supportive relationship could exist between LMX and SIB.

Hypothesis 2. There is a positive relationship between leader-member exchange and innovative service behaviour.

The moderating role of intrinsic reward (IR) and extrinsic reward (ER) on LMX-SIB's relationship

The intrinsic reward was defined as intrinsic motivation that employees expect to receive at the workplace, which creates excites in work activities, and rewards are promoted to engage benefits for personnel such as meaningful purpose, free of choice, sense of competence and path of a career that moderating the relationship between LMX and SIB. If the degree of intrinsic rewards is low, middle, or high, then the moderating level will be adjusted. Moreover, intrinsic rewards are a dominant part of business development in the service industry when frontline employees interact with customers more frequently and directly or when they comply with rules and procedures. Therefore, the intrinsic reward factor plays moderating role in the relationship between LMX and SIB.

Hypothesis 3. Intrinsic reward moderates the relationship between the LMX and SIB. There is a positive relationship with greater intrinsic rewards.

On the contrary, extrinsic rewards are subject to the job, such as wage, bonus, commission, fringe benefits, position promotions, and vacation or day off compensation (Malik et al., 2015). The extrinsic rewards are easy to measure and compare that appear physically to any employee, which will be scaled based on their job position, task and critical performance index. They were offered rewards fairly before the job was taken and performed. In some cases, the extra extrinsic rewards were given when employees performed their task excellently or more than the leader's expectation, which will drive employees to become more innovative or creative in following tasks. Lastly, it is suggested that the importance of alternative rewards may strengthen or weaken the influences of reasonable rewards on employee creative performance and extrinsic

Figure 1: Research model

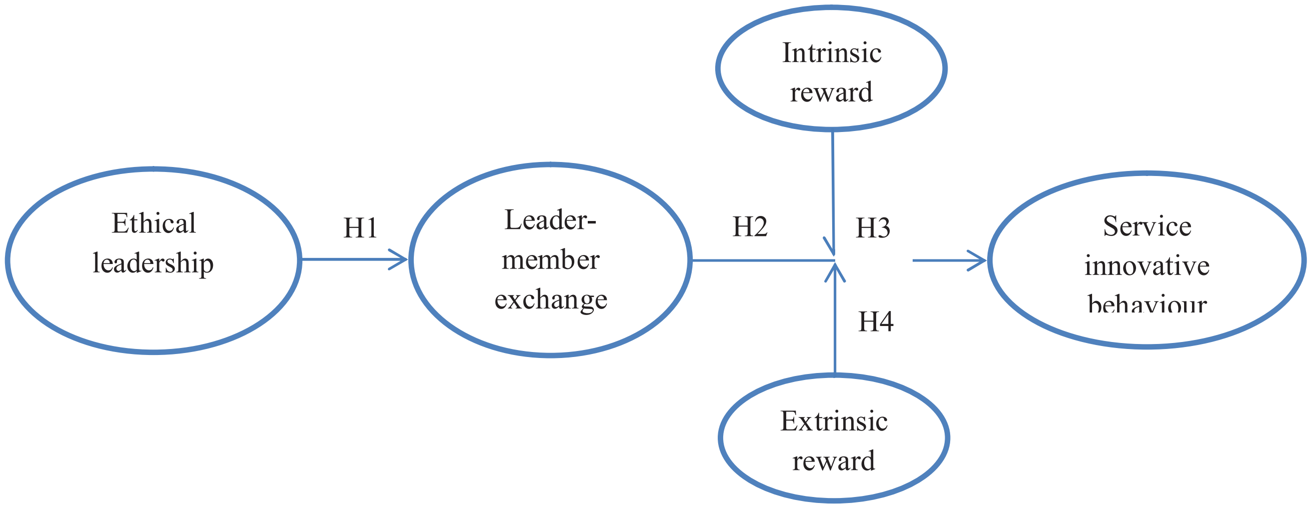
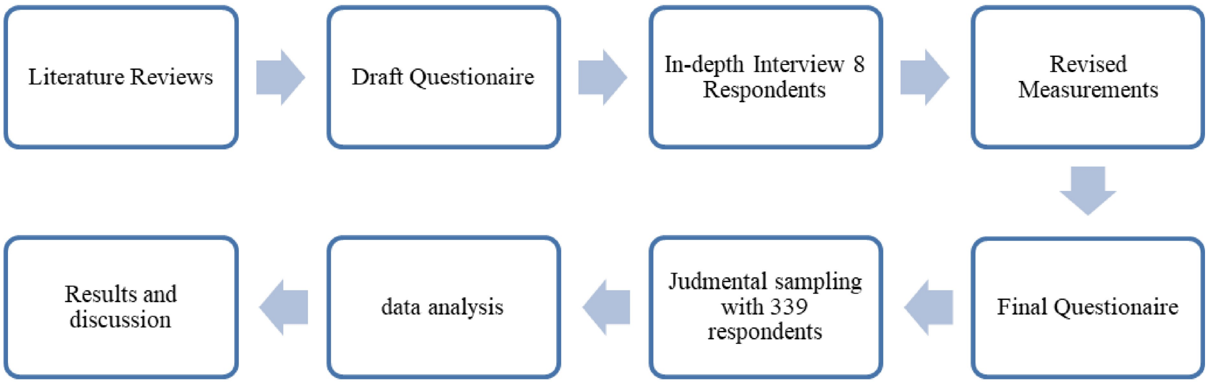


Figure 2: Research procedure



rewards play moderating roles in the relationship between LMX and SIB.

Hypothesis 4. Extrinsic reward moderates the relationship between LMX and SIB. There is a positive relationship with greater extrinsic rewards.

3. Research methodology

Research design

The data were collected from hundred respondents working in SME logistics in HCM. The designed procedure with three steps was applied in this thesis. Firstly, literature was reviewed to list down antecedent outcomes, and after that draft, the questionnaire was designed to define needed items for measurement. Secondly, the draft questionnaire was taken in the second step as a pilot test step (qualitative research) and the final step as a primary survey (quantitative research). The research procedure's detail showed in the figure 2.

The pilot study (qualitative research) was undertaken after the draft questionnaire was converted into Vietnamese for a depth interview 8 frontline logistics employees from 4 different SME logistics companies in HCMC, two salespeople from Khai Minh Global Corporation, two customer service staff of Air Sea Asian Joint Stock Company, one sales manager from Global Alliance Logistics Corporation and three operation staffs of Global Exim Trading Company, four companies were selected to minimize the rate of general bias and diversify new comments for better questionnaire.

The pilot test results revealed that some questions were not clear enough for respondents to understand totally. The ethical leadership design with 9 items, and there is one item that was recommended to replace "want to talk" with "need to discuss" in EL1, replacing "problems" with "works" in item LMX1 "My leader understands my needs and problems". The respondents also suggested replacing item SIB4, "I often plan new ideas fit with finance status" with "I often plan suitable method to develop new services". However, the remained items of IR and ER were not suggested to change or replace because all respondents understand and can answer the questions.

On the other hand, the main survey (quantitative research) was deployed to collect enough expected data, the main survey's data were collected by quantitative questionnaire forms from 700 samples that are bigger than the minimum 290 samples by formula n =50 +8*m (m = 30 independent variables). The respondents were approached, including male and female, aged from 20 to over 40 years old, to ensure they have at least 6 months experience, employees have more than 6 months experience understand the overall knowledge of logistics services and are already to interact with their managers or leaders. The employees and samples were selected using the judgmental sampling method. The sample respondents are frontline employees from SME logistics companies who are taking their position as customer service staff, operation staff, salesman and documentation employees. These employees are in charge of directly offering companies' logistics services to clients.

The questionnaire was designed to deliver to all respondents by Google form link. A hyperlink was sent to over 700 respondents in the logistics service industry. The remaining 280 respondents are from the Vietnam logistics club, HCM logistics club, and HCM forwarding forum were estimated that there are a total of thousand members. Furthermore, the main survey form link also was sent to Facebook's page of logistics communities, Skype logistics group, email address, Zalo and Viber to ensure enough respondents amount for analysis. It was also recorded schedule to remind respondents two days after sharing the survey link of the questionnaire with thank you as an email. After 5 days of the main survey deployed, there were 48.4% respondents of the total of 700 respondents who have more than 6 months experience answered, and missing data recorded is 361 samples did not answer. Therefore, 339 respondents' data was used to analyze by SPSS and AMOS software for final results.

Measures

The measurement was employed by multiple item scales with approvable internal confirmation to evaluate the study variables. Each item was accessed on a 5-points Likert scale (it is ranging from 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree), 5 - points Likert type scale was used to collect respondent rate and respondent quality along with respondents' "frustration level".

Ethical leadership was qualified on a 9-items scale developed by Brown et al. (2005). The scale comprised items as follows: leader pay attention to employees expectations, leader penalizes staff who break ethical standards, the leader often care about employees' benefits, the leader always makes the right decision, the leader is prestige, leader share term of business ethics or share value lesion with employees, leader indicate specific method how to do right things in terms of ethics, leader evaluate performance not just by results but also the way that they perform.

The 7-items scale formed a leader-member exchange contained the following items: manager comprehend my job problems and demands, a leader recognizes employee's potential abilities, supportive level from leader help employee solve the real problem in work, level of communication with employees, employee's confidence to defend and justify for leader and in a personal relationship.

Service innovative behaviour was measured by a 6-items scale included items like: You go to work with creative and innovative emotions, you attempt to put forward your creative ideas and try to convince customers, you look for new service techniques, methods or procedures, you offer a fit plan for generating new ideas, you try to deploy new plan within the current resource, and you consider yourself a creative member of the team.

Intrinsic rewards were measured by 4 items scale. They were evaluated 4-items scale to verify intrinsic rewards for innovative services that perceived by the participants, so the measure items were defined as: Be praised once the job gets completed, employee's autonomy at the workplace, employee's growth direction and employee's enjoyment of achievement.

Extrinsic rewards were evaluated by 4 items scale as well. Similar to Malik et al. (2015), this study also assessed extrinsic rewards for innovative service behaviour by using four items to measure, and they are: Fiscal bonus for employees show creative performances, followers would be recognized when they perform creatively, personal rewards and benefits and innovative performance is considered for promotion decisions.

4. Data analysis and results

Analytic approach

The Cronbach's alpha (CR) analysis was conducted for each construct to measure reliability. The Cronbach's alpha value was expected > 0.6 to prove that the measurement was excellent and reliable data. Furthermore, factor correlation analysis will be run to examine the relationship between variables where correlation coefficient index goes from 0.1 to 0.29 is suggested weak, if it shows from 0.3 to 0.49 is middle range, and it is strong if indicates from 0.5 to 1, by the way, this value should not go beyond 0.8 to avoid multi-collinearity. Moreover, the CFA test was analyzed to examine model fit based on root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), comparative fit index (CFI), adjusted and goodness fit index (AGFI & GFI), parsimony fit index (PFI), normed fit index (NFI) and x2 by using Amos-20. Finally, the structural equation modelling (SEM) was utilized to test the research model fit and moderating test with a hypothesis test.

Cronbach's Alpha results

The validity of Cronbach's alpha from all construct scales were expected to be above 0.7 or over 0.6 could be acceptable, the unachieved items was removed because their Corrected item-total Correction value was lower than 0.3.

The findings indicated the first value of Cronbach's alpha for ethical leadership was 0.672 (ethical leadership = 0.672), but the corrected item-total correction value of EL5, EL6 and EL8 was lower than 0.3. Therefore, the items EL5, EL6 and EL8 were removed to re-analyze with a new value of Cronbach's alpha of 0.898, CR = 0.786 (LMX). However, item LMX3 was removed because the item-total correction value was lower than 0.3. After calculating again, the new value of Cronbach's alpha was 0.895 (leader-member exchange), CR=0.883 (innovative service behaviour), CR=0.806 (intrinsic reward) and CR=0.896 (extrinsic reward) are achievable. After removing unachieved items and re-analyzed those factors, the new Corrected Item-Total Correlation was higher than 0.5; therefore, all items are reliable to test EFA and SEM.

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA)

KMO index was 0.889 (Table 1) that is over 0.5 and sign of Bartlett's Test was 0.000 which matching the test request theory, furthermore the EFA (Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring, Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization) loadings factor was extracted from 5 factors and all factors loadings index were higher than 0.5 with total Cumulative variance extracted was over 50% (59.7%) and eigen-value was more than 1.0; ethical leadership (eigen-values = 7.999); leader-member exchange (eigen-values = 3.255); service innovative behavior (eigenvalues = 2.575); extrinsic reward (eigen-values = 1.728) . In summary, the EFA analysis described that the expected outcomes were pleased by all item scales. The EFA analysis results was presented as Table 2.

Structural equation modelling (SEM) testing results

Structural equation modeling (SEM) test was conducted to validate the significant relationship within factors, SEM also was approached with the maximum likelihood estimates method, the result was acceptable for model fit when the value of Chi-square = 336.278, Chi-square/df =2.528: CFI = 0.942; GFI = 0.906; TLI = 0.933 and RMSEA = 0.067 (Figure 3). Besides that, all P-value < 0.001 confirmed that the relationship of the factors was statistically significant. This result also reconfirmed those factors affect each other positively, as the hypothesis proposed.

Hypothesis testing results

The results from structural model testing above by SEM tested using approach maximum likelihood estimates method also indicated that ethical leadership (EL) had a positive relationship with leader-member exchange (LMX), thus H1: Beta = 0.495, p = 0.000 and LMX had a positive effect to service innovative behaviour (SIB) with H2: Beta = 0.250, p = 0.000. Moreover, the results from SEM test presented Chi-square/df =2.528; CFI = 0.942; GFI = 0.906; TLI = 0.933 and RMSEA = 0.067, those values were

Table 1: KMO and Bartlett's Test

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.889
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	5029.290
	df	325
	Sig.	.000

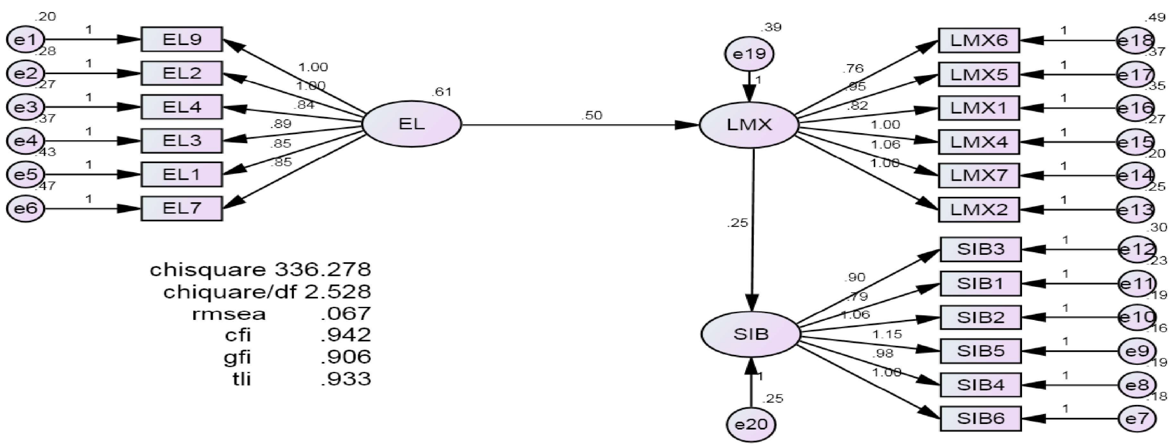
Table 2: EFA Results

Items	Factors	Loadings
	Ethical leadership: Eigen-values	7.999
EL9	My leader is ethical people	.863
EL2	My leader penalize me if I violate the regulations	.851
EL4	My leader make suitable and fair decision	.781
EL3	My leader always consider better benefits for me	.775
EL1	My leader listen what I need to discuss	.691
EL7	My leader show me examples of doing things ethically	.654
	Leader-member exchange: Eigen values	3.255
LMX7	My leader satisfy about me	.940
LMX2	My leader recognize my potential abilities	.842
LMX4	My leader always communicate and share with us new works	.817
LMX1	My leader understand my needs and problems	.708
LMX5	I'm confident to support my leader in presenting necessary job	.678
LMX6	My relationship with my leader is very good	.522
	Service innovative behaviour: Eigen values	2.575
SIB5	I try to deploy new job with available resource	.865
SIB6	I think that I'm creative person at work	.805
SIB4	I often plan suitable methods to develop new services	.760
SIB2	I often try to suggest creative ideas and convince customers to take them	.758
SIB1	I often generate new and creative ideas in works	.647
SIB3	I often think about new method, process and new services	.641
	Extrinsic reward: Eigen values	1.915
ER3	I want to be promoted after finishing many missions	.894
ER4	I love personal finance reward	.840
ER2	I would do better when the company offer more physical benefits	.824
ER1	I like more salary and bonus after complete good job	.749
	Intrinsic reward: Eigen-values	1.728
IR1	I love to be praised after finishing my task	.748
IR2	I love to be given more power to make my own decisions	.740
IR3	I want to be developed my self-career	.721
IR4	I would be very happy when the leader identify my good outcomes	.651

Tables 3: CR & AVE

	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV	SIB	EL	LMX
SIB	0.885	0.564	0.171	0.140	0.751		
EL	0.900	0.601	0.269	0.220	0.413	0.775	
LMX	0.897	0.595	0.269	0.189	0.330	0.519	0.771

Figure 3: Structural results of the model



acceptable to model fit and significant to confirmed that the hypothesis H1 and H2 was supported.

5. Conclusion

The study was aimed to examine the important role of ethical leadership in influencing the innovative service behaviour of frontline employees who travel with SME logistics companies in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The results from this paper stated the existence of a dynamic relationship between ethical leadership and service innovative behaviour. The outcomes also proved that ethical leadership takes a vital part in influencing the innovative behaviour of frontline employees in SME logistics companies. Ethical leadership also motivates staff to show their innovative performance, communication skills, activeness in works, and willingness to share their ideas or encourage employees to express their own opinions (Brown & Treviño, 2006).

This paper's discovery indicated that issues concerning ethics leadership and work design would be investigated from a mutual point of view to improve better service innovative behaviour. Therefore, this study attempts to outline an adequate layout of how ethical leaders can bring up innovative service behaviour around SME logistics frontline employees. Because global logistics service companies worldwide are using a tremendous amount of their research and financial resources to find out the factors that support creating innovative service among their employees, the new outcome of this paper may be helpful to solve their worrying questions so far. Hopefully, this study is used in the academic environment to conduct more research and apply in organizations to encourage service development in this logistics field●

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