

# An Anti-Fragile Personality in The Relationship of Transformational Leadership to Innovation Performance in Black Swan Events to Overcome Cynicism About Organizational Change

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Abstract. In order to sustain organizational growth amidst a volatile environment, organizations need to establish robust systems for innovation and adaptation to withstand threats and stressors, such as anti-fragility. The COVID-19 pandemic, often referred to as a "Black Swan Event" by some scientists, has upended the traditional business landscape, ushering in a new normal that has proven challenging for some organizations to navigate, while others have been able to innovate in the face of unprecedented disruption. This study aims to explore the relationship between transformational leadership behavior (TLB) and organizational innovation performance, with moderation by two lesser-explored constructs: cynicism about organizational change (CAOC) and the anti-fragile personality, within the context of the Black Swan COVID-19 scenario. Employing qualitative research methodology, the study investigates the interplay between TLB and Innovation Performance (IP), with moderation by CAOC and The Anti-Fragile Mutawakkil Personality (TAMP). The data for this study were purposively gathered from Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Wonosobo Regency. The findings of this research offer valuable insights for MSMEs to formulate appropriate strategies amidst the challenges of a "Black Swan Event," enabling them to survive, innovate, and sustain the growth of their businesses.

**Keywords:** Transformational Leadership, Optimism, Cynicism about Organizational Change, Innovative Performance, Black Swan Events, Theory of Reasoned Action

# 1 Introduction

The Black Swan Theory or Theory of Black Swan Events is a metaphor that describes events that come as surprises, having a huge effect. "Black Swan Theory" by [1] refers to the unexpected big events with their dominant consequences and role in history. Such events, considered extreme outliers which collectively play a much larger role than ordinary events. Technically, in the scientific monograph called "Silent Risk". Taleb mathematically defines the black swan problem as "derived from the use of degeneration meta probability"

Corona virus (Covid-19) is "Black Swan Events" which is an unexpected and difficult to predict and it is not within the normal expectation range. Nonetheless, this resulted in a severe economic contraction globally in 2020. While the magnitude of the humanitarian tragedy remains unknown and beyond the realm of our expertise, the economic and financial impact is beginning to show [2].

The Covid-19 pandemic is undoubtedly among the most significant obstacles that governments and businesses have encountered in this century [3]. Covid-19 results in numerous significant psychological, social, and professional shifts, including unemployment, decreased savings, anxiety and stress when going out, uncertainty about future health, both physical and mental [4]. This prompted several nations to enforce measures such as lockdowns to curb the transmission of the coronavirus. In Indonesia, the government implemented Emergency Community Activity Restrictions (PPKM) to contain the virus. Ever since the detection of Covid-19 cases in Indonesia and its classification as a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO), the Indonesian authorities have adopted measures to minimize virus transmission through the practice of physical distancing [5].

Emerging habits in consumers are being shaped by novel approaches to addressing perceived fears and risks, demographic shifts, and advancements in technology [6]. According to Akhmad Akbar Susamto, an economist from the Center of Reform on Economics (CORE), there has been a growing trend of layoffs across various sectors such as manufacturing, tourism, transportation, trade, and construction in recent weeks. Organizations must undergo transformation and innovation to endure these circumstances. Additionally, leaders are tasked with guiding their organizations through this process of change and innovation.

Within organization, one theory that has shown utility in helping to predict the behavior of individual attitudes and contexts is reasoned action theory [7]. From a reasoned action perspective, the best predictor of voluntary behavior is behavioral intentions. Reasoned Action Theory provides the basis for choosing the appropriate antecedent Transformational Leadership Behavior (TLB). Since organizational change is a central element of TLB, one attitudinal construct that likely captures a leader's behavioral intentions is cynicism about organizational change (CAOC) [8]. However, as is customary in western theory lies only on horizontal relations, The almighty power and the existence of Allah Ta'ala was never put into a consideration.

In the face of organizational change there is certainly a cynical and pessimistic view, as opposed to anti-fragile behavior enriched by the tawakal concept faced by transformational leaders towards the performance of innovation in the framework of change. This article seeks to understand the relationship by focusing on employees of small and medium-sized businesses (SME's) in the form of coffee both, coffee shops and small shops in Semarang and surrounding areas who are forced to make changes in order to adapt to survive. In addition, the implementation of restrictions on emergency community activities (PPKM) on July 3-20, 2021 in the city of Semarang further suppresses the business activities of business people in the field of coffee both, coffee shops and small shops [9].

# 2 Literature Review

#### 2.1 Innovation Performance (IP)

IP refer to results for companies in terms of the extent to which they actually introduce inventions to the market, for example, the rate at which they introduce new products, process systems, or devices [10][11]. IP is an important source of a company's competitive advantage and has been defined as the contribution of product and process innovation to a company's performance [10][11]. It's all about the contribution of different innovations to an organization's economic performance [12][13]. Therefore, based on these discussions, the announcement of a new product can be considered an IP indicator.

[10] and [11] measure IP by including innovation activities such as R&D investments, patents, and new products [14] Includes R&D investments, patents, patent citations, and new products as construction to assess IP. In short, it can be concluded from the literature that corporate IP can be measured in several ways.

#### 2.2 Transformational Leadership Behaviour (TLB)

Transformational Leadership is a style of leadership in which leaders transform a team or organization by creating, communicating, and modelling a vision for an organization or work unit, as well as inspiring employees to pursue that vision [15]. Transformational leaders motivate their followers by demonstrating high standards of ideals and morals. Leaders with this style define and articulate the vision of the company and inspire its followers. (e.g., [16], [17], [18]).

After more than 20 years of accumulated research evidence, there is only a little doubt that TLB connected to a variety of positive individual variables and organizational performance. [19]. With the increased attention paid to the successful change management of the past decade (e.g., [20][21]), organizations accept TLB as an important component to lead such changes.(e.g., [22], [23], [24]).

The TLB used in the study was a TLB developed by [25] and assessed by direct reports of focus leaders. TLB has received great attention in leadership literature and is widely used in empirical leadership research (e.g., [26], [27], [25]. In particular, [25] measure consists of six dimensions of transformational leaders including articulating vision (e.g., talking about the future in an enthusiastic and engaging way), providing models (e.g., setting positive examples for others to follow), communicating high performance expectations (e.g., not going to be satisfied for the second best), providing individual support (e.g., showing concern for me as a person), foster acceptance of group goals (e.g., encouraging team attitude and morale among employees), and appreciate achievements.

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#### 2.3 Cynicism about Organizational Change (CAOC)

An optimist is someone without all the information, a pessimist is an optimist with full knowledge, and a cynic is a pessimist who comprehends the facts clearly. George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) once remarked, "The power of accurate observation is commonly called cynicism by those who have not yet acquired it." In the organizational context, a leader's behavior might be encapsulated by an attitudinal concept termed "Cynicism About Organizational Change" (CAOC) [28]. Cynicism has generally been defined as, "an attitude of contempt, frustration, and distrust of an object or multiple object..." [29] Organizational leadership is often the object of such contempt and distrust [30][31].

Several scales have been developed to assess general cynicism, for the particular article we propose the CAOC Wanouset al. scale. Their eight-item scale assessed employees' feelings of futility and internal attribution (i.e., within the company) blamed for their futility. This scale was chosen because it seems to best capture the focus on organizational change associated with TLB.

#### 2.4 The Antifragile Personality (TAP)

If Black Swan conditions occur, the most adaptive psychiatric traits facing these conditions are the traits of "antifragile personality", such as personalities that give rise to antifragile personal knowledge [32]. Antifragile personality is first and foremost concentrated, paying a lot of attention when confronted by radical uncertainty. Anti-fragility' is a term presented for the first time and made famous by [33] In his book: Antifragile: Things that Gain from Disorder. Taleb argues that there are many systems in this life that can benefit from distractions and disorders to some degree. For example, human bones, as biological systems, become stronger when stress is exerted on them. Also, organizations, having the right mechanisms, can learn from shocks and build a stronger competitive advantage.'

"Somethings benefit from shocks; they thrive and grow when exposed to volatility, randomness, distraction, and stressors and love of adventure, risk, and uncertainty. However, despite the phenomenon, there is no word for the opposite of fragile other than anti-fragile. Antifragility is above "resilience" or robustness. Resilience resists shocks and stays the same while antifragile is about getting better" [33].

TAP does not have a "fixed" mindset that will be different from the new knowledge incorporated, it is a personality that is essentially oriented towards the accumulation of new knowledge and different personalities with a "growth" mindset [34]. TAP seeks new ideas from uncertainty as scientific personality [35], personality that seeks to cultivate the scheme of knowledge, similar to a scientist which trying to develop their research program [36].

The assessment of an anti-fragile personality is rooted in the Big Five personality traits. Such a personality exhibits high levels of openness, assertiveness, and a moderate degree of extraversion and agreeableness, along with low neuroticism. Moreover, an anti-fragile personality requires courage, as it entails a willingness to immerse oneself

in environments characterized by radical uncertainty [32] and entrepreneurial innovation as the classic action emerging from Black Swan events sought by individuals [37].

## **3** Theoretical Framework

#### 3.1 Leadership Style and Innovation Performance

Leadership in small organizations is a central factor influencing a company's competitive advantage [38]. Therefore, the role of an entrepreneurial leader has become an increasingly important determinant of innovation. Leaders must have the ability to influence innovation in a company by setting specific goals, introducing new ideas, and encouraging innovation initiatives from their subordinates [39]. [40] highlights that transformational leaders are excellent and fit to promote creative and innovative goals. TL is said to have a combination of positive behavioral components recognized in performance improvement and innovation among followers within the organization [41], [42]. [43] discover positive relationship between TL and innovation based on CEO's of large Spanish companies who were asked to compare the general level of TL in their organizations with those in other organizations. Thus, a hypothetical relation between TLB and PI is positive. The higher degree of Transformational Leadership Behavior (TLB) will also increase the organization Innovation Performance (PI).

# 3.2 The Moderation Role of The Antifragile "Mutawakkil" Personality (TAMP)

The Antifragile Personality (TAP) constructs as Western concepts are generally built on horizontal relationships without consideration of spiritual vertical relationships with God. "*Surrender to God*" is a concept in Western Psychology that goes into spirituality which means surrender completely to God. Surrender to God means submitting personal desires to God's rules or can be interpreted as prioritizing God's rules over personal desires.[44]. This can be interpreted as the individual will follow God's rules and surrender to God's provisions on Him. *Surrender to God is* similar to the concept of tawakal in Islam.

Imam al-Ghazali formulated a definition similar to the Anti-Fragile Personality that "Tawakkal is leaning on Allah Ta'ala when facing an interest, relying on Him in times of difficulty, firm when afflicted with disaster accompanied by a calm soul and a calm heart. Tawakal to Allah is a surrender to the provisions and decrees of Allah Ta'ala, while still carrying out all His commandments in every situation, accompanied by the effort to break the relationship of the heart other than to Allah Ta'ala [45]. [46] defining tawakal to Allah SWT in bringing benefits and rejecting dangers in various things of this world and the Hereafter. Tawakal to Allah Ta'ala is an important indicator of one's faith (QS Al Maidah [5]: 23) of Islam (QS Yunus [10]: 84-85). Allah Ta'ala commanded to trust Him after trying and exerting all his abilities and God loved those who trust him. (QS Ali Imran [3]: 159). "Mutawakkil" is a term for people who rely in Arabic. The tawakal scale is measured based on 3 dimensions, namely Worship, Not Worried and Sure in Allah Ta'ala which consists of 7 out of 25 items that aim to reveal the level of tawakal compiled by [47] which refers to the Quran and its interpretation.

ThusThe Anti-Fragile Mutawakkil Personality (TAMP) is a synthesis of TAP and Mutawakkil, which can be defined as a personality in which being able to benefit from shocks; develops and grows when there is volatility, randomness, disturbance, stressor and uncertainty by relying on Allah Ta'ala after trying and exerting all abilities. With the characteristics of TAMP above, it can be taken a hypothetical statue that The Antifragile Mutawakkil Personality (TAMP) will positively moderate the relationship between Transformational Leadership Behavior (TLB) and Performance Innovation (IP).

## 3.3 The Moderation Role of Cynicism about Organizational Change (CAOC)

The opposite role of TAMP, CAOC is likely to be negatively associated with the behavior of the desired leader. [28] finds that cynical employees filed more complaints, had lower job satisfaction, distrusted their supervisors or top management, and were not motivated to create positive change. Logically, if leaders are cynical about change, they are unlikely to be agents of change, lack the motivation and openness to engage in TLB. The combination of theory and available empirical evidence suggests that there must be a negative relationship between leader cynicism and TLB. Thus, a hypothesis can be drawn as Cynicism about Organizational Change (CAOC) will negatively moderate the relationship between Transformational Leadership Behavior (TLB) and Innovation Performance (IP).

# 4 Research Model

This research method is qualitative research, by examining the relationship between Transformational Leadership Behavior (TLB) variables and Innovation Performance (IP) which is moderated by Cynicism about Organizational Change (CAOC) and The Anti-Fragile Mutawakkil Personality (TAMP). The data source was carried out purposively by taking MSMEs in Wonosobo Regency.

From several factors that affect the Performance of Innovation above, the empiric model of research compiled as can be seen in Fig. 1.

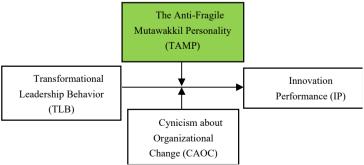


Fig. 1. Basic theoretical model

# 5 Conclusion

Corona virus Pandemic (Covid-19) is "Black Swan Events" which isan unexpected and difficult to predict history is not within the normal expectation range that makes some countries implement policies to impose *lockdowns* that make organization must change and innovate in order to adapt to survive. While the leader must take his organization through the process of change and innovate.

Innovation is defined as "an idea, product, or process, system or device that is considered new to an individual, group of people or company, industrial sector or society as a whole"[48]. IP refer to results for companies in terms of the extent to which they actually introduce inventions to the market, for example, the rate at which they introduce new products, process systems, or devices. [10]; [11]. IP is an important source of a company's competitive advantage and has been defined as the contribution of product and process innovation to a company's performance. [10]; [11]. Measurement of IP adapted innovation contributions to cost efficiency efforts, increased turnover, increased profits, and quality improvement [49] in accordance with the efforts of Coffee Shop and Eatery as SME's, IP not only measured from new products launching, but also innovation as simple as new way of serving and packaging and even new way of marketing and payments can also be used as an indicator of IP that goes into the dimension of quality improvement.

In the face of organizational change there is certainly a cynical and pessimistic view, as opposed to anti-fragile behavior that develops and seeks new ideas of uncertainty enriched by the tawakal concept faced by transformational leaders towards the performance of innovation in the framework of change. Anti-Fragile behavior based on tawakal to Allah Ta'ala is expected to be a solution for a transformational leader in improving his innovation performance to be able to survive and even develop in such a difficult and severe business conditions due to the COVID 19 pandemic despite facing a cynical view of inhibiting organizational changes.

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