



Understanding the Association Between Constructive Nonconformity and Innovative Work Behavior: an Employee Perspective

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Abstract

Purpose: Organizations have evolved to be entities that focus primarily on efficient systems and procedures. This approach was followed by devising techniques or methodologies for employees to conform to these systems or processes. The employee orientation has often been to conform to the status quo rather than to challenge it. Most of the managers believe that cohesion at workplace can be achieved through alignment of behaviors at the workplace. Contrary to this belief, Henry Mintzberg explains, that innovative organizations need to be flexible, reject bureaucracy and most importantly; avoid emphasis on control mechanisms. Hence, the perennial relationship between nonconformance and innovative work behavior is at question here. Also, the ninth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 9) is *fostering innovation*. This paper attempts to understand and decipher this relationship between constructive nonconformity (CNC) and innovative work behavior (IWB).

Methodology/Approach: Primary data was collected using standardized questionnaire(s) that have been tested in varied contexts. The research question was framed as ‘Does constructive nonconformity influence innovative work behavior?’ The study is based on a survey data conducted on over 459 knowledge workers from an ITES firm in Pune.

Findings: The findings indicate that characteristics depicted by constructive nonconformists tend to showcase innovative work behavior. If a constructive nonconformist is allowed to thrive in any work environment, then the goal of innovative work behavior can definitely be achieved.

Practical Implications: The paper could have profound implications on managerial decision making, especially in the ITES (Information Technology Enabled Services) sector. The sample is from a single sector, i.e., ITES in India. Future research would benefit from examining the above relationships in other sectors. Hence, the scope for future research in this area is enormous, both contextually and conceptually.

JEL classification: L29, M00, M10, O31

Keywords: Innovative work behavior, nonconformity, work behavior, conformity, employee innovative behaviour

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Introduction

For decades, management has incited leaders to focus on designing efficient procedures and processes and devising ways for employees to follow them. Throughout the employee's career, they are taught to follow the stipulated rules and conform to the status quo. They are also encouraged to align themselves to the opinions and behaviors of others to bring cohesion at workplace. As you go up the corporate ladder, the pressure to conform only increases in intensity as you totally assimilate in the values and culture of the organization and perpetuate it. Conformity hammered into us helps the processes run smoothly but at the same time can hurt businesses. Also, organizations tend to burden employees with enormous pressure to conform. A study in the U.S. on over 2000 plus employees, nearly 49% agreed to "regularly feel pressure to conform in their organization". The direct impact of this pressure is that it starts a toll on the individuals and enterprises alike. Diminished work positive work experience on several dimensions was reported in the study by employees who felt the need to conform. Conformity can be classified into two types. Firstly, the 'Rational Conformity, wherein abidance, compliance and obedience are the primary outcomes. This behavior is guided by reasoning, judgement or thinking. Secondly, the 'Irrational conformity, were in herd behavior is the primary outcome or behavior showcased by the individuals. This behavior is predominantly guided by instinct, intuition and influenced by attitude towards an entity (Song *et al.*, 2012). In today's VUCA world, well established organizational norms are quite short lived. We continuously must evolve our businesses to adapt and thrive, need to open our minds to out of the box thinking and see beyond the norms. Hence engaging in constructive nonconformity (CNC) helps people and organizations in discovering new avenues.

The theory of Innovation has constantly emphasized that innovation is much more than barely creative genius. It additionally consists of executing ideas. Therefore, innovative work behavior (IWB) pertains not just to idea generation, but further includes behaviors required for implementation of ideas and achievement of these improvements that boost performance at a personal as well as business front. Ford and Farr (1990) describe innovation at work as an employee's behavior which aims to attain initiation as well as deliberate introduction (as part of an organization, group or role) of newer and more useful procedures, products, ideas and processes. Practitioners and scholars have always been emphasizing on the importance of innovative work behavior (IWB) of individual employees in organizational success. In measurable terms, some of the critical dimensions of innovative work behavior (IWB) are exploration, generation, championing and implementation of ideas (Jong and Hartog, 2008).

Enhanced performance and innovative ideas usually stem from behaviors' defying fundamental norms of an organization, which are specified thought processes and ways of implementing things. Unless employees are encouraged to question existing norms, they shall continue to do similar things repeatedly thus having to pay an opportunity cost each time they might be coerced into conforming. The United Nations Sustainable Goal – 9 focuses on fostering innovation. The Target Indicator 9b mentions the need to support and create a conducive environment for innovation in developing countries. Through this paper, the author aims to investigate the impact of constructive non-conformity on innovative behavior at work. When an individual shows non-conforming behavior benefitting the organization, it reflects he/she diligently engages in coming up with fresh ideas and their implementation.

Literature Review

Companies heavily pressurize individuals at work to conform. As per a survey of 2,087 employees in the United States across various industries, approximately 49% agree that they constantly felt

the necessity to conform. This affects employees and enterprises equally. Employees feeling the necessity of conforming stated a lesser positive experience at work across a multitude of factors like productivity, engagement and innovation. However, not all conformity is bad. But organizations of the future, that aspire to be sustainable and innovative will need to maintain the balance between formal / informal rules and freedom of employees to ensure employees perform to their fullest potential. Another concern from the business perspective is that most companies are more skewed towards conformity. Fewer companies encourage nonconformity. A survey done by (Gino, 2016c) not surprisingly showed less than 10% employees saying that they worked in companies that regularly encouraged nonconformity. Scientific management has prevailed and managers have overly focused on efficient processes and ensuring employees follow them.

To go deeper into creative literature is required and necessary as it is an aspect of the initial stage of innovative behavior, wherein employees identify plausible performance gaps and problems and suggest solutions to a felt sense for innovation (West, 2002). Further, innovative work behavior is a much wider scoped term than being proactive at work (Parker, 2006) or taking the lead and initiative (Frese, 1996). These actually rely on an individual's affinity towards implementing ideas in a proactive manner but are not able to help with the aspect of idea generation (Bilal Afsar, 2014). Furthermore, work behavior is described characteristically as “an intentional fostering, introduction and implementation of novel solutions and ideas in an organizational role or group, so as to enhance role output as well as that of the group along with the organization” (Janssen, 2000). Employees can trigger innovations because they remain in constant touch with products and procedures and are able to identify plausible opportunities and improvisations for newer developments (Anna Bos-Nehles, 2017).

Constructive Non – conformity (CNC)

What is conformity? As (Gould, 2014) states it, conformity is said to occur when an individual gives in to the perceived pressure from other group members. There could be various reasons for this, viz. fear of rejection, need to be accepted, have access to information and / or gain a reward from the group. Conformity can also be defined as a subject's behavior or attitudes towards a said object. The individual who conforms is the ‘subject’. The internal or external factors that cause the conforming actions (individuals, groups, organizations, policies, rules and regulations, or the experience and natural instinct) is the object (Song *et al.*, 2012). The internal or external factors that cause the conforming action is the object in the definition and form a critical component of the concept of conformity (Song, 2012). Constructive nonconformity is defined as “*behavior that deviates from others' actions, organizational norms, or common expectations, to the benefit of the organization*” (Gino, 2016). Gino describes constructive nonconformity as conduct of employee different from regular norms, expectations, actions set by the organization. The question arises, why is nonconformity necessary? (Harris, 1965) in his article ‘The necessity for nonconformity’ explains that nonconformity is needed not just for the sake of it. Rather the value of nonconformance as a virtue is higher the conformance held by the individual. However, it must be taken into consideration that this conduct is beneficial to the organization.

The capability to stay innovative and continually improvise products, work processes and services is key for organizations. Employees must have the willingness as well as ability to innovate for a constant flow of innovations happen (Janssen, 2000). This observation that individual actions are of key significance for continual improvement (Van de Ven, 1986) is also reflected on many other management principles, like total quality management (McLoughlin, 1997) and corporate entrepreneurship (Sharma, 1999). Constructive nonconformity has also been termed as ‘constructive deviance’. As (Cohen and Ehrlich, 2019) define constructive deviance as “a behavior that can contribute to the effectiveness of an firm despite its problematic nature.” As (Bernacka, 2016) in their study on school students stated that constructive nonconformity is “a set of inter-

related traits that constitute a specific personality energy which liberates, organizes, and determines the direction of activity.” She also states that “Nonconformity in personality is a motivation building and emotion shaping attribute of highly creative people”. Nonconformity is synonymous to deviance. Workplace deviance is becoming an increasingly important issue for organizations. Deviance may include both positive and negative aspects. As a whole deviant behavior may be perceived as being harmful to the organization, deviance can be constructive and functional as well (Galperin, 2003). Another version of the term constructive deviance is given by (Cohen and Ehrlich, 2019), who describes it as “a behavior that can contribute to the effectiveness of an organization despite its problematic nature”. The ideal constructive rebel would leverage the distaste to challenge and change the status quo (Clark, 2004).

Innovative Work Behavior (IWB)

Innovation-driven work behavior (IWB) usually involves exploring avenues and idea generation (creative attitude), as well as attitude towards change, application of newer knowledge or improvising processes to boost personal as well as business performance (Jong, 2008). The opinion that innovation is crucial for establishing competitiveness in contemporary organizations is widely approved (Zhang, 2010). The innovative behavior of an employee relates to the critical attributes of an organization’s efficiency: idea generation, their propagation and materialization benefitting output and performance (Sanders, 2010). Hence, both theoreticians and practitioners focus on describing individual as well as organizational predictors, that eventually form the basis of creative activities at workplaces. Recognizing these predictors is exceedingly crucial for practicing human capital management as it facilitates stimulation of above-mentioned behavioral patterns by using competence potential to maintain a suitable organizational ecosystem for promoting such behaviors (Agnieszka Wojtczuk-Turek, 2015).

Innovative work behavior involves introduction and usage of new methods of action; thus, it relates to a deliberate act resulting in a definitive outcome. The core attribute of this kind of behavior is that it includes introducing and applying newer methods (in relation to creativity, which is solely to generate ideas). Thus, it is a deliberate activity, aiming at achievement of a particular outcome. It highlights the fact that innovation in work behavior is intended to generate measurable factors to improve effectivity in a role, developing a sense of more holistic compatibility towards demands at work, increase in job satisfaction and enhanced interpersonal communication (Janssen, 2000). Moreover, innovative behavior at workplace is a result of an employee’s expectations for the plausible implication such behavior may have on job efficacy. A key attribute of further actions is implementing ideas to determine the basis of converting an idea into capital and gathering social acceptability for its performance, along with building the relationship capital for its implementing. This shows the secondary aspect of understanding innovation, i.e. socio-political view. Coming up with an idea is the beginning point of actions aimed at convincing that it is valuable to gather support and agreement of decision makers, encouraging others to cooperate and build the relationship capital, irreplaceable in the process of execution (Yuan, 2010).

Innovative work behavior is basically identification of issues and deliberate practicing / suggestion of newer ideas, and set of behavior patterns required to inculcate and execute these ideas with an objective to boost personal as well as business (Jong, 2008). Innovative work behavior varies from employee creativity that talks about the generating and discovery of these ideas. (Mumford, 1988) defined creativity as the procedure of introducing new, novel, feasible and relevant ideas, while innovative work behavior constitutes a set of processes and activities with an objective of modification, recognition, development, execution and adoption of ideas (Scott, 1994). Innovative work behavior has a clear applicable and practical aspect and is certain to yield innovative output and benefit in some form or other. (Anna Bos-Nehles, 2017). The role of constructive nonconformity or constructive deviance is very crucial in creating innovative work behavior. As

(Cohen and Ehrlich, 2019) aptly point out “organizations need to do their best to create a climate that increases innovation and creativity formally and openly or more secretly by way of constructive deviance”. It has been highlighted by (Galperin and Burke, 2006) that “Employees who voluntarily violate the organizational norms may be important sources of innovation and entrepreneurship. Employees who engage in nonconforming behaviors, such as champions of innovations or corporate entrepreneurs, can contribute to the innovation process and competitive advantage of organizations”. Authors such as (Howell and Higgins, 1990) in their article ‘Champions of Technological Innovations’ elaborate on the fact “that fundamental components of a champion's capacity to introduce innovations successfully are the articulation of a compelling vision, the expression of confidence in others to participate effectively in the initiative, and the display of innovative actions to achieve goals”.

Methods

Intent of this research is to understand the nuances of the association between constructive nonconformity and innovative work behavior. The primary data was captured by administering two questionnaires. Sampling technique used was a combination of convenience sampling and snowball sampling. Respondents were varied, in terms of their gender, age, work experience, corporate titles and companies. The respondents were from some of the most innovative companies from the ITES sector. The confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents and the companies is maintained. The respondents held designations ranging from Assistant Manager, to Vice President levels. Respondents varied in their experience level and hierarchical position. An online survey method was used to capture the responses from the employees who agreed to participate. The two questionnaires helped determine their level of constructive non-conformity and innovative work behavior. A total of 459 responses were collected from the ITES sector in Pune region.

Objectives

Throughout one’s life or career, we are taught to conform. Conform to the status quo, to the behaviors and opinions of others, and to information that supports our views and perspectives. Conformity is so hammered into our mind and heart that we perpetuate it in our enterprises (Gino, 2016b). In a survey conducted on over 2000 employees across a wide range of industries in the United States; over half the respondents reported to working in organizations where they often felt the pressing need to conform. Many of the respondents in a similar survey said that people hesitate to question the status quo. Most of the studies that have attempted to identify conformity or nonconformity have concluded that organizations unconsciously or consciously urge employees to check a decent chunk of their real selves at the door. The end result is – employees and employers (organizations) both pay a heavy price: declining productivity, decreased engagement levels and the most crucial being a diminishing nature of innovation and creativity.

The main objective of the article is to understand & decipher the relationship between constructive nonconformity (CNC) & innovative work behavior (IWB). The researcher attempts to decipher two research questions.

Firstly, does constructive nonconformity influence innovative work behavior?

Although, numerous studies have investigated workplace deviance in context of IWB, relatively few studies have inquired about the constructive part of deviance. The influence of constructive deviance on IWB can have enormous ramifications on the business world and work environments in general. Secondly, what are the nuances of the relation between constructive nonconformity & innovative work behavior? The relationship between IWB and CNC needs to be studied in much more detail. The investigation and exploration of the relationship would benefit the applications that could be drawn thereof.

Research Instrument

The questionnaire of constructive non-conformity consisted of 12 statements reflecting various parameters of constructive non-conformity. (Gino, 2016) developed this tool to discover whether an individual / employee was engaging in what she termed as constructive nonconformity (a deviant behavior that benefits the organization). The responses were rated on a 6-point scale, ranging from 'never' (0) to 'always' (5). Similarly, the questionnaire of innovative work behavior consisted of 6 questions reflecting various factors of innovative work behavior viz. idea generation, idea championing is captured (De Jong, 2010). The responses for the innovative work behavior tool were rated on a 7-point Scale, ranging from 'never' (0) to 'always' (6) (De Jong and Den Hartog, 2010).

(Gino, 2016a) developed the tool to help discover in individuals whether they are engaging in constructive conformity – deviant behavior that benefits the organization. A score of 0–24 indicated that the respondent is very engaged at work and is innovating frequently. The other extreme, A score of 40–60 indicated that the respondent has an unproductive level of conformity.

▪ **Constructive Non-conformity Questionnaire developed by** (Gino, 2016a)

The CNC questionnaire consisted of 12 statements:

- C1 – How often do you refrain from opposing your team?
- C2 – How often have you followed established rules, even there was a better way?
- C3 – How often have you raised questions on the processes?
- C4 – How often do you publicly supported ideas, privately disagreed?
- C5 – How often have you seen seniors challenge the status quo?
- C6 – How often have you felt pressured to conform to cultural norms?
- C7 – How often have you felt free to be yourself?
- C8 – How often have you been encouraged to solve problems on your own?
- C9 – How often do you do your job to your strengths?
- C10 – How often have you been challenged to push out of your comfort zone?
- C11 – How often have you sought information inconsistent with your views?
- C12 – How often have you been encouraged to debate ideas?

Management practitioners and behavioral scientists have for long been emphasizing the importance and criticality of innovative work behavior of employees for organizational success. However, measurement of innovative work behavior has always been an issue. (De Jong and Den Hartog, 2010) developed a measure of innovative work behavior with four dimensions – exploration, generation, championing and implementation of ideas. The analyses demonstrated sufficient criterion validity and reliability.

▪ **Innovative Work Behavior Questionnaire developed by** (De Jong and Den Hartog, 2010)

- I1 – You look for opportunities to improve processes.
- I2 – You recognize opportunities to make a positive difference.
- I3 – You experiment with new ideas.
- I4 – You persuade others on importance of a new idea.
- I5 – You push ideas forward towards implementation.
- I6 – You incorporate new ideas into daily your routine.

Results and Findings

Using the two questionnaires on constructive non-conformity and innovative work behavior, primary data was collected. SPSS version 21.0 was used for purpose of analysis of data collected. The purpose behind this paper was to establish a relationship between constructive non-conformity and innovative work behavior. The hypothesis was framed with the attempt to answer our research questions 'Does constructive nonconformity influence innovative work behavior?' and 'What are

the nuances of the relation between constructive nonconformity & innovative work behavior?’ in this relationship, Constructive nonconformity is the independent variable and innovative work behavior is the dependent variable.

- Constructive Non – Conformity (CNC): Independent Variable (IDV)
- Innovative Work Behavior (IWB): Dependent Variable (DV)

Hence, following was taken as the hypothesis:

$H_0 =$ Constructive nonconformity does not significantly influence innovative work behavior.

$H_1 =$ Constructive nonconformity significantly influences innovative work behavior.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
				Statistic	S.E.	Statistic	S.E.
Constructive Nonconformity (CNC)	459	37.6275	6.85459	.222	.114	.311	.227
Innovative Work Behavior (IWB)	459	25.9782	5.18517	-.350	.114	-.782	.227

If the sum of scores on constructive non-conformity questionnaire is low for an employee, then that denotes that he/she is a constructive non-conformist. If the sum of scores on innovative work behavior is high then that denotes that he/she exhibits innovative work behavior at work place (refer Table 1). The cumulative score for the constructive non-conformity questionnaire would range from 0 – 60. Similarly, the cumulative score for the constructive non-conformity questionnaire would range from 0 – 70.

▪ **Correlation Analysis**

To establish a relationship between the two phenomenon, Pearson and Spearman correlation(s) value was calculated. Hence, for analyzing the data, sum of both the questionnaires were taken. After running a correlation test on their sum, the Pearson’s ‘r’ which is the correlation coefficient came out to be **0.801** while the Spearman’s ‘rho’ which is the correlation coefficient came out to be **0.804**.

Table 2. Pearson Correlation

Variables	Constructive Nonconformity	Innovative Work Behaviour
Constructive Nonconformity	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.801**
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	.000
	Covariance	21519.294
	N	13038.275
Innovative Work Behaviour	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.801**
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	.000
	Covariance	13038.275
	N	12313.782

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Since the Pearson’s correlation coefficient value in Table 2 is 0.801 **, it can be implied that for those who responded to this survey, higher constructive non-conformity scores were correlated with higher innovative work behaviour score. Since $r=0.801$ **, this can be interpreted as the association between constructive non-conformity and innovative work behavior. There exists a

linear relationship between the two variables. The analysis hence supports the hypothesis; Constructive nonconformity significantly influences innovative work behavior.

Table 3. Spearman Correlation

			Constructive Nonconformity	Innovative Work Behaviour
Spearman's rho	Constructive Nonconformity	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.804**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	Innovative Work Behaviour	N	459	459
		Correlation Coefficient	.804**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	459	459

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The Spearman’s correlation coefficient value in Table 3 is 0.804**. Hence, it can be implied that higher constructive non-conformity scores correlated with higher innovative work behaviour score. Since rho=0.804**, it can be interpreted that there is a significant relationship between the independent and dependent variable. There exists a linear relationship between the two variables. The Spearman’s correlation hence further validates the hypothesis; Constructive nonconformity significantly influences innovative work behavior.

Table 4. Paired Samples Test

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
				Lower	Upper			
				10.364	5.795			

Table 4 indicates a p value less than 0.05, it can be said that there is a significant difference between the mean value(s) of constructive nonconformity and innovative work behavior. Hence, constructive nonconformity significantly influences innovative work behavior amidst employees.

▪ **Regression Analysis**

Initially a linear regression was used to predict the target variable – Innovative Work Behavior. The predictor variable for the regression analysis was Constructive non – conformity.

Table 5. Model Summary ^b

R	R Square	Adjusted Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
.801 ^a	.642	.641	3.10785	1.523

a. Predictors: (Constant), Constructive Nonconformity (CNC)

b. Dependent Variable: Innovative Work Behavior (IWB)

Table 5 show the ‘R’ and ‘R²’ values. The ‘R’ value represents the correlation the simple correlation, which is 0.801. this is an indication of a high degree of correlation between CNC & IWB. The ‘R²’ value depicts the total weightage of variation in the dependent variable – IWB, can be determined by the independent variable – CNC. In the current study, 64.2% influence can be determined.

Table 6. ANOVA ^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	7899.729	1	7899.729	817.882	.000 ^b
Residual	4414.053	457	9.659		
Total	12313.782	458			

a. Dependent Variable: Innovative Work Behavior (IWB)

b. Predictors: (Constant), Constructive Nonconformity (CNC)

The ANOVA table (refer Table 6) helps in understanding how well the regression equation fits the data – predicting IWB. Here, $p < 0.0005$, i.e., less than 0.05, this indicates that, the overall, the regression model statistically significantly predicts IWB. This indicates that constructive nonconformity significantly predicts innovative work behavior.

Table 7. Coefficients ^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	3.180	.810		3.925	.000
Constructive Nonconformity (CNC)	.606	.021	.801	28.599	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Innovative Work Behavior (IWB)

The Coefficients table (Refer Table 7) provides the necessary information to predict IWB from CNC, as well as determine whether CNC contributes significantly to the model. A multiple regression was run to predict Innovative work behavior from the twelve variables of Constructive nonconformity. These variables statistically significantly predicted innovative work behavior, $F(12, 446) = 87.180$, $p < .0005$, $R^2 = .701$. All twelve variables added statistically significantly to the prediction, $p < .05$. (Refer Table 8 and 9). Hence, the Regression equation is as follows:

$$\text{Innovative Work Behavior} = 3.18 + (0.606 \times \text{Constructive Nonconformity})$$

The mean scores derived for constructive nonconformity using (Gino, 2016a) questionnaire is 37.62; which incidentally is a good score according to the scholar. Considering this score, we would get an equation as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Innovative Work Behavior} &= 3.18 + (0.606 \times 37.62) \\ &= 25.98 \end{aligned}$$

Hence, we could imply that if a person has Constructive Nonconformity score of 37.62, we would estimate that their Innovative Work Behavior score would be $3.18 + (0.606 \times 37.62) = 25.98$. Thereby, we would predict that a person who showcases constructive nonconformity would in high probability showcase Innovative Work Behavior. Given the value of r, our prediction will accurate and reliable.

Table 8. Model Summary ^b

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.837 ^a	.701	.693	2.87269

- a. Predictors: (Constant), C12 Encouraged Debate, C5 Challenge status quo, C3 Followed but suspected Rules, C4 Raised Questions, C6 Pressured to Conform, C1 Refrained from opposition, C9 Played to strengths, C2 Conformity, C10 Been Challenged, C7 Being Self, C11 Counterviews, C8 Self reliant
- b. Dependent Variable: Innovative Work Behavior (IWB)

Table 9. ANOVA ^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	8633.246	12	719.437	87.180	.000 ^b
Residual	3680.536	446	8.252		
Total	12313.782	458			

- a. Dependent Variable: Innovative Work Behavior (IWB)
- b. Predictors: (Constant), C12 Encouraged Debate, C5 Challenge status quo, C3 Followed but suspected Rules, C4 Raised Questions, C6 Pressured to Conform, C1 Refrained from opposition, C9 Played to strengths, C2 Conformity, C10 Been Challenged, C7 Being Self, C11 Counterviews, C8 Self reliant

Table 10. Coefficients ^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.457	.835		2.944	.003
C1 Refrained from opposition	.458	.186	.079	2.455	.014
C2 Conformity	.452	.119	.115	3.795	.000
C3 Followed but suspected Rules	.370	.106	.099	3.478	.001
C4 Raised Questions	.641	.141	.136	4.557	.000
C5 Challenge status quo	.103	.107	.030	.963	.336
C6 Pressured to Conform	.529	.167	.104	3.166	.002
C7 Being Self	.647	.172	.132	3.759	.000
C8 Self reliant	1.108	.182	.212	6.098	.000
C9 Played to strengths	.086	.138	.020	.621	.535
C10 Been Challenged	.975	.127	.250	7.673	.000
C11 Counterviews	1.062	.143	.252	7.406	.000
C12 Encouraged Debate	.700	.159	.145	4.404	.000

- a. Dependent Variable: Innovative Work Behavior (IWB)

The Coefficients table (Refer Table 10) provides the necessary information to predict IWB from the twelve CNC variables, as well as determine whether they contribute significantly to the model. Seven amongst the twelve elements of the independent variable (constructive nonconformity) indicate statistical significance with the dependent variable (innovative work behavior) – Conformity (C2), Raised Questions (C4), Being Self (C7), Self-Reliant (C8), Been Challenged (C10), Counterviews (C11) and Encouraged Debate (C12). The most significant predictors being – Been Challenged (C10) and Encouraged Debate (C12).

Individuals have a tendency to publicly support an idea but privately, (Gino, 2016b) through her research has elaborated that this forms an important element of conformity. The employee is primarily showcasing conformity. This level of conformance has a significant impact on the innovative work behavior. The incumbent systems and processes of the organization influence the effectiveness of the employee performance. But, does the employee raise questions about the effectiveness of current processes and systems – the frequency and consistency in raising these questions has a significant bearing IWB. Autonomy in decision making is manifested when the employee is encouraged to solve problems on their own, without involvement of the supervisor. As (Shanker *et al.*, 2017) mention in their study as well – work behavior is influenced by the degree

of autonomy given to a subordinate. Considering multiple perspectives prior to reaching a decision in any context is of paramount importance. The empirical evidence indicates that debating on ideas and considering multiple perspectives before reaching a decision has a significant impact on innovative work behavior, and acts as a predictor. Also, an employee showing an urge to develop a new skill or take on a task that pushes oneself out of their comfort zone is a critical factor showcasing constructive nonconformity. However, it is interesting to observe that constructive nonconformity may be sabotaged by the organizational culture or the work environment. The ability of the employee to exist in this environment and come out of their comfort zone to challenge the status quo acts as an enabler for innovative work behavior.

Discussion

It was in the year 1924 that for the first time a counter movement was started which focused on the human relation approach to manage teams by motivating employees at work place. This discussion was started by Mary Parker Follet who championed worker empowerment. This marked the starting of extensive research on employee psychology and predicting their behaviour to optimize the employee's potential at workplace. In another study an inherent aspect of bureaucracy was termed as conformity (Jenness, 1932). Another well renowned name in studying constructive non-conformity has been Francesca Gino who tried to understand how non-conformity employees make choices which benefits the organization in the longer run. It was in the 2016 that she came up with the concept of *Rebel Talent*. According to her, rebel talent constitutes the following traits: novelty, curiosity, authenticity, perspective and diversity. In one of her studies, it was proved that workers who feel the pressure to conform and couldn't bring their authentic self to work place were 16% less engaged than those who felt that they could bring their authentic self at work. In this paper, the author attempts to establish a relationship between constructive non-conformity and Innovative work behaviour. Innovative work behaviour is another important aspect of successful businesses these days. A significant study on the Indian banking sector revealed that job autonomy and work engagement had significant influence on employee innovative work behavior (Garg and Dhar, 2017).

Many studies have also evolved during the last two decades. As aptly quoted by an author "Workplace deviance is becoming an increasingly important issue for organizations. The prevalence of destructive behaviours is surprisingly common in the workplace" (Galperin, 2003). The findings indicate that characteristics depicted by constructive nonconformists tend to showcase innovative work behavior. If a constructive nonconformist is allowed to thrive in any work environment, then the goal of innovative work behavior can definitely be achieved. There exists a positive correlation between the two phenomena and the strength of the relationship is significant. It can be implied that if a person is a constructive non-conformist and exhibits all the characteristics, then there is a tendency of the person to exhibit innovative work behaviour as well. This tendency results in not only generation of new ideas but also fostering an innovative work culture. Hence, the hypothesis is correct that constructive nonconformity significantly influences innovative work behaviour. Conformity hurts organizations; nonconformity deviates from the norms and expectations, but benefits the organization. Seldom do managers encourage deviant behavior in their teams.

On the contrary the attempt is to get rid of it. Despite the fact that nonconformity nurtures innovation, fosters performance and can enhance an employees' self-confidence. Conformity often grows on complacency – that usually stems from acceptance of status quo, peer pressure and self-serving biases. The end result is a bored workforce that feels 'they can't be themselves'. Constructive nonconformity can act an antidote that resolves these issues in companies. Managers need to design and implement mechanisms that encourage constructive deviance or constructive nonconformity in order to be an engaged workforce and an innovative organization. There are four

paths that can help in ensuring constructive nonconformity viz. (a) drop the arrogance, (b) favour curiosity over uncertainty, (c) be the best captain for the crew and (d) Rebels are made, not born (Gino, 2016b). Finally, the findings from this study suggest that constructive nonconformity acts as an enabler and driver of innovative work behavior.

Conclusion

This study can be concluded by saying that constructive nonconformity can go a long way in building innovative work behavior amongst employees in organizations. The results indicate that nonconformity acts as a predictor of innovative work behavior. The findings support the hypothesis. Another highlight of the article is the importance of studying the interplay of constructive nonconformity as an antecedent of innovative work behavior. As (Clark, 2021) sums it up in her article “leaders who embrace rebelliousness in themselves and others open the door for more authenticity, creativity and better ways of working”.

Limitation and Future Scope

This study was conducted on over 459 knowledge workers from an ITES firm in Pune. This is a major and critical limitation, since the respondents were within a single organisation. Hence, the study would be particularly context-specific. Another limitation of the study is that, the survey was administered through online google form. The respondents mostly completed the survey during working hours using on company computers. This acted as an advantage, as the respondents were not forced to invest private time in completing the survey. However, some respondents might have been influenced by institutional forces for compliance while completing the survey (Mertens *et al.*, 2016). The sample is from a single sector, i.e., ITES in India. Future research would benefit from examining the above relationships in other sectors. Hence, the scope for future research in this area is enormous, both contextually and conceptually.

Implications

The paper could have profound implications on managerial decision making, especially in the ITES (Information Technology Enabled Services) sector. Managers attempting to drive innovation and creativity in their teams, peers and subordinates for organizational performance can take cues from this paper. (Prieto and Pérez-Santana, 2014) note the role of Human Resource practices and interventions in managing innovative work behavior. Managers need to introduce new structures and systems where exists increased autonomy. Importance has to be given to proactive behaviors linked to innovativeness. These Human Resource practices need to be supported by the acceptance of constructive nonconformist behaviors. Notably, the findings of the study reveal that innovative work behavior can be built and developed by an essentially supporting, fostering and nurturing constructive nonconformist behavior.

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