

## The Role of Supportive Leader in Influencing Intrapreneurship and Innovation: A Study on the Printing Houses in Topkapi, Istanbul

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Business continuity and competitiveness change according to effective management, innovative behaviors and supportive management style for creating more intrapreneurship. Intrapreneurship, innovation and management are important and interlocking concepts. This study is conducted with the workers of the micro and small-scale printing houses in Topkapi, Istanbul. Data were collected in person via survey of 16 micro- and small-scale businesses with a specific area of screen printers and digital printers. With participation from 136 members of the sector's workforce, the aim of this study is to identify the factors influencing the innovativeness of intrapreneurs and explore the role of supportive leadership in this process. This study supports that there is a strong relationship between intrapreneurship and innovation and supportive leadership that increases the innovativeness in the printing firms of Topkapi region.

*Keywords:* Innovation; intrapreneurship; supportive leadership.

### 1. Introduction

Innovation is an undeniable reality of the world today. All the technologies, institutional and social structure and systems we have today depend on innovation. Innovations throughout history not only stimulate technological development, but also social and cultural transformation. Therefore, innovation is not only a technical but also social, cultural and psychological concept. Television, radio, cinema, the worldwide web, transportation, communication and other similar technologies influence and continue to change the minds, lives and perceptions of individuals. The concept of innovation has been defined by Schumpeter in the most general sense. Schumpeter argued that innovation comes into existence as a result of the creative destruction of new companies and entrepreneurship, and the concept of innovation is in the foundation of the definition of entrepreneurship [OECD and EUROSTAT (2006)]. The entrepreneur according to Schumpeter is the person

destroying the existing system by creating new combinations such as producing new services and products, developing new processes, finding new export markets and creating a new organization structure. Innovation will come into existence only if a new technology, product, market or production process becomes an alternative for the products or organizational applications already in the market [Duran and Saraçoğlu (2009)].

It is commonly agreed in the literature that innovation is an emerging function of entrepreneurship. Regardless, a well-known reality is that existing organizations also play a significant role in entrepreneurial activities. This is known as internal entrepreneurship; commonly referred to as “intrapreneurship”. In light of a literature analysis, it is suggested that intrapreneurship has an important role for the performance of innovation from an organizational aspect [Alpkan *et al.* (2010)].

More than 90% of businesses in Turkey are considered small and medium enterprises (SME), and particularly the sector we have selected for our study — the Topkapi Region — printing houses are primarily micro-sized along with very few small-scale businesses. Therefore, our examination and discussion here will be evaluated from the perspective of micro- and small-scale enterprises.

The main purpose of this study is to look into the influence of a supportive leader on intrapreneurial and innovative activities of SMEs within the context of an emerging market economy.

## 2. Micro and Small-Scale Business Enterprises and Topkapi-Region Printing Houses

Micro and small-scale companies, defined according to the “Regulation Concerning Small and Medium Size Enterprises Definition, Characteristics and Classification” which was published in Official Gazette number 28457 on November 4, 2012 are categorized as follows [Official Gazette (2012)]:

- Micro enterprise: Businesses employing 10 people or fewer, with annual net sales revenue or a financial statement of less than 1 million Turkish Liras.
- Small enterprise: Businesses employing 50 people or fewer, with annual net sales revenue or a financial statement of less than 8 million Turkish Liras.

This study is based on the micro- and small-scale enterprises among the Topkapi-region printing houses. There are more than 200 printing houses in this district. The activity areas of these companies differ, such as paper and machinery retail, stationery sales, marketing agencies, screen printers and digital printers. In the 663-hectare area, these companies are in close proximity and they collaborate and benchmark in order to survive and sustain their existence. Most of the company owners still work side-by-side with their employees.

## 3. Supportive Leadership

Supportive leadership is usually explained with the terms “person-oriented leader” and “harmonic leader”. Supportive leadership studies [Fiedler (1996);

Hersey and Blanchard (1993); House and Mitchell (1974); Bandura (1986); Shamir (1991)], have all suggested that the leader shapes subordinate self-efficacy and in turn, positively influences performance. The main behavior of supportive leaders depends on maintaining compatible, friendly relations with subordinates. It is seen that this kind of behavior influences employee job satisfaction and employees' determination to succeed positively [Erdoğan (1997)]. A climate of supportive leadership is one where members of the organization perceive that the leadership is equally highly supportive of them and particularly encourages their empowerment and development [Schyns *et al.* (2009)].

Supportive leadership is viewed as directing its followers toward priorities such as addressing the needs of the workers and creating a friendly working environment [House (1996)]. The supportive leader is sensitive to the needs of his/her team members, focuses on creating and maintaining harmonious relationships and is responsive to the needs of individuals and teams [Yurttadur and Çakmak (2015)]. Moreover, supportive leaders serve as a model for their followers, appreciate accomplishments, provide explanations about criticism and make constructive criticism [Banai and Reisel (2007)].

#### **4. Intrapreneurship and Innovation**

Earlier studies defined intrapreneurial organizations [Antoncic and Hsrich (2003)] as

- a process on the lookout for a suitable opportunity in an organization independent from the sources controlled by the people;
- leaving traditional processes and searching for new things for suitable opportunities;
- reviving the entrepreneurship (“getting addicted to it”) in an organization;
- creating a new organization by the same organization or promoting improvement and innovation in an organization.

Antoncic [2007] defines intrapreneurship as the spirit of entrepreneurship in an existing organization which includes different activities of developing new products or creating a process for decreasing costs [Pearce and Carland (1996)]. Intrapreneurship is “the tendencies of entrepreneurship aiming and exhibiting the behaviors related to new habits apart from the traditional behaviors and the intentions to behave independently in the process of transforming the innovative ideas to the concrete realities in an existing organization” [Ağca and Kurt (2007)]. Creating a business environment that supports the individual and organizational intrapreneurship can increase the value for the shareholders, provide opportunities to increase the creative abilities of its workers, accelerate the reaction of the company to the market, and create an organizational culture that promotes the cross-functional cooperation. These changes will increase the interventional efforts to create new profit waves in the end [Zahra (1996)].

The term innovation can be defined in different ways by different researchers. Innovation is a term derived from “innovare” which means “doing something new”

[Tidd *et al.* (2005)]. Schumpeter [1939] defined innovation as developing technological improvements, new products, new markets/marketing methods and new sources of supply in the production methods of the products already used, improvements in carrying products, shortly “everything done in a different way” in the field of economy. It has also been viewed as a way or tool to adapt to the environment; it is developing and using new ideas and behaviors in organizations [Damanpour and Wisniewsky (2006)]. Innovation economically occurs when the first success happens in relation to the mentioned product, way of production or the device. In other words, the innovation can be mentioned if an idea becomes reproducible with a practical cost and in a meaningful scale [Freeman and Soete (2004)]. Innovation means producing new sources according to customer satisfaction [Barker (2002), Gupta (2017)]. Innovation is also defined as the transformation of science and technology for economic and social benefit [TÜSAD (2003)].

Innovation and intrapreneurship go hand in hand when combining sources and increasing profit [Lumpkin (2007); Ebersberger *et al.* (2012)]. In particular, large firms exhibit greater tendency toward intrapreneurship in order to actualize sustainable development while increasing profitability and productivity in their structures and processes [Thornberry (2001)]. In recent years, much research has been carried out to identify those factors that contribute to innovation efforts by SMEs; to build a more thorough theoretical foundation for the mechanisms behind innovations and to substantiate practical interventions. These studies revealed that activities directed to innovation correlate with a considerable number of variables. From a theoretical as well as from a managerial perspective, it seems to be relevant to know which variables contribute most to innovation efforts [Carrier (1994)].

Studies considering innovation merely as a dimension of intrapreneurship overlook the importance of the consequences of intrapreneurship. The main result of intrapreneurship is not profitability, growth or maintaining the continuity of the businesses but the adaptation of efficient process improvement. Thus, innovation is the improvement of commercial success, accepted by the market and finally adopted by society. Naturally, adoption of an innovation by society will attract consumer demand and this brings us to the fact that innovation is a result of continuous improvement via a so-called intrapreneurial mindset. Therefore, the primary question is how innovation occurs and who are the supporters of establishing and maintaining the innovative mindset in an organization. In this case, the leader’s role in setting this mindset and his/her style of leadership plays a principal role [Menzel *et al.* (2007); Bessant and Tidd (2011)].

## 5. Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to explore the importance of supportive leadership and intrapreneurial mindset that supports innovation in relation to the success of the micro and small printing enterprises in the Topkapi Region of Istanbul. In other

words, what factors impact the work of innovative intrapreneurs with the influence of the supportive leader. The guiding questions for this study are

- (1) To what degree is there supportive leadership in these micro- and small-size enterprises?
- (2) Is there any positive relation between supportive leadership and innovation in these micro- and small-size enterprises?
- (3) Is there any positive relation between supportive leadership and intrapreneurship in these micro- and small-size enterprises?
- (4) Is there any positive relation between intrapreneurship and innovation in these micro- and small-size enterprises?

## 6. Methodology

Because customer satisfaction and company operations have leading roles in the printing sector, with close ties to the advertising sector, maintaining an innovation focus is obligatory. Adherence to innovation is effective in the selection of the sector so that the firms in the sector can sustain operations in a competitive, continually evolving environment. The focus of this study is micro and small size printing enterprises located in the Topkapi neighborhood of Istanbul. This research was conducted via survey, using a descriptive method to ascertain the relations between supportive leaders, intrapreneurship and innovation. The sample consisted of 131 survey respondents. The survey comprised two sections. Section 1 included items regarding supportive leaders, intrapreneurship and innovation. Section 2 included items about company characteristics.

Innovation-related data were collected using the “innovation scale,” developed by Camelo-Ordaz *et al.* [2011]. The inventory consists of 11 items, each having a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly disagree” to “Strongly agree”. Reliability (Cronbach’s alpha) of these factors was 0,58. A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to establish the validity of the scale. As a result of the analysis Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin (KMO) value is determined as 0,52. Factor loadings of the scale varies between 0.62–0.89.

To assess supportive leadership, we utilized the “Organizational Factors Supporting Intrapreneurship Scale” developed and validated by Covin and Slevin [1989] and Kuratko *et al.* [1990], Zahra [1991], Hornsby *et al.* [2002]. This scale measures four separate dimensions: supportive leader, organizational structure, organizational culture and usage of resources. In the scope of this research, only the “supportive leader” dimension was used. This scale consisted of five items, each having a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly disagree” to “Strongly Agree”. According to the results of the confirmatory factor analysis, the KMO value was determined as 0,55.

Cronbach’s alpha coefficients for supportive leader was calculated as 0.57. The factor loadings of the scale varied between 0.55–0.95.

Data about intrapreneurship were gathered using “Entrescale,” developed and validated by Miller and Friesen [1978] and Covin and Slevin [1989]. The scale consisted of 15 items, each having a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly disagree”

to “Strongly agree”. In the scope of the research, seven items were used. A confirmatory factor analysis was carried out to establish validity of the scale. KMO value is determined as 0,60. The Cronbach’s alpha coefficient is calculated as 0.79. Factor loadings of the scale varied between 0.55–0.97.

Statistical information analysis was carried out by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16.0. As a preliminary step, frequency analyses and descriptive statistics are reported. In the following step, multiple regressions were completed to examine significant relationships. In the analysis, the pertinent data are presented and discussed.

## 7. Results

The results of this research are presented and discussed below.

### 7.1. Descriptive analysis of company characteristics

In this study, 131 printing company employees participated. Age of firm and percentage of sample follows. Companies less than five years old had 11 employee-respondents (8.4%); six to 10 year-old firms had 30 employee-respondents (22.9%); 11 to 20 year-old firms had 53 employee-respondents (40%); 21 to 40 year-old firms had 19 employee-respondents (14.5%); firms over 40 years in operation had 18 employee-respondents (13.75%). This indicates that companies with a life span between six and 20 years had the highest participation.

Participant ratios in relation to size of firm is as follows: 27 (20.6%) of the participants work in firms with five or fewer employees; another 27 (20.6%) of employee-respondents work in firms of six-10 employees; 77 (58.8%) of the employee-respondents work in firms with 11 to 20 employees.

### 7.2. Perception of employees about supportive leadership

According to the results displayed in Table 1, respondents indicated affirmative views regarding supportive leadership. In this context, it is understood that supportive leaders are seen as providing various forms of assistance to employees by giving importance to employee expectations and equal treatment possesses in the work environment. Survey results show that 76.3% of the employee-respondents agreed that their leadership supports employees’ innovative ideas; 84.7% of the participants agreed that leadership is open to innovative ideas and provides personal support; 93.1% of the respondents agreed that they do receive support and encouragement to implement their ideas. When we asked the question about how they are treated when their ideas are unsuccessful, the answers were divided 50/50: partly

Table 1. Descriptive statistics on supporting leader.

Variables	Number of questions	Mean	Std. deviation
Supportive leader	5	3.93	0.26

agreed to agreed. 69.6% agreed that leadership uses ideas forwarded by their employees.

**7.3. The relationship between supportive leadership, intrapreneurship and innovation**

A multiple regression model was used to determine the relationship between a supportive leader, intrapreneurship and innovation. The resulting regression coefficients were used to interpret the direction and magnitude of the relationship. The beta coefficients showed the responsiveness of the dependent variable as a result of unit change in each of the independent variables. The results of the analysis are shown in the tables below.

According to the multiple regression analysis results that are reflected in Table 2, supportive leadership variable explains 33% of the total variance ( $F = 4.376$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). There is a positive but low relationship between supportive leadership and intrapreneurship ( $p = 0.038 < 0.05$ ,  $\beta = 181$ ) and this result shows that the increase in perception of employees to variables of supportive leadership also increases the intrapreneurship mindset.

As a result of the multiple regression analysis shown in Table 3, there was no relation between the variables of supportive leadership and innovation ( $p = 0.063 < 0.05$ ,  $\beta = 163$ ).

According to the multiple regression analysis results that are reflected in Table 4, the innovation variable explains 63% of the total variance ( $F = 8.834$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). There is a positive and strong relationship between intrapreneurship and innovation ( $p = 0.004 < 0.01$ ,  $\beta = 250$ ) and this result shows that intrapreneurship increases the innovational activities in companies.

Table 2. Results of multiple regression analysis between supportive leadership and intrapreneurship.

$R^2 = 0.033$	Adj. $R^2 = 0.025$	$df = 130$	$F = 4.376$	$p = 0.000$
Independent variables		$B$	$t$	$p$
Supportive leader		0.181	2.092	0.038

Notes: \* $p < 0.05$ .

Dependent variable: Intrapreneurship.

Table 3. Results of multiple regression analysis between supportive leader and innovation.

$R^2 = 0.027$	Adj. $R^2 = 0.019$	$df = 130$	$F = 3.513$	$p = 0.000$
Independent variables		$B$	$t$	$p$
Supportive leader		0.163	1.874	0.063

Notes: \* $p < 0.05$ .

Dependent variable: Innovation.

Table 4. Results of multiple regression analysis between intrapreneurship and innovation.

$R^2 = 0.063$	Adj. $R^2 = 0.055$	$df = 130$	$F = 8.634$	$p = 0.000$
Independent variables		$B$	$t$	$p$
Intrapreneurship		0.250	2.938	0.004

Notes: \* $p < 0.01$ .

Dependent variable: Innovation.

## 8. Conclusion and Discussions

Leadership is the process of providing direction and influencing others throughout processes and operations. Contingent upon this, positive follower attitudes and self-confidence are essential characteristics of the supportive leader. Therefore, leader behavior shapes subordinate feelings of self-efficacy which in turn, positively influence performance. In this study, we defined supportive leadership as goal accomplishment by guiding subordinates to be effective and learn through their roles in the company. Determination of supportive leadership within the organization was measured by specifically asking employees if their leadership supports employees' innovative ideas; leadership is open to innovative ideas and provides personal support; receive support and encouragement to implement their ideas and how they are treated when their ideas are unsuccessful. Leadership uses ideas forwarded by their employees.

Intrapreneurship involves taking ownership, i.e. operating with an entrepreneurial mindset. Pursuing intrapreneurial activities is not a path chosen by the vast majority of employees within organizations. However, employees should be encouraged to become more intrapreneurial since it is challenging, fulfilling, personally and professionally rewarding. It is also urgently required by companies to thrive meaningfully in today's uncertain times.

Innovation is defined as creating improved, effective and efficient processes and services. Innovation is about making changes. It is also more than just making changes. The result is to have a sustained and positive influence on end users by adding value to the existing products and services.

There is a strong relationship between innovation and employees taking on entrepreneurial behavior. Entrepreneurialism enables employees to unleash their creativity and passion that often results in generating new ideas for business growth or more efficient processes. Companies require fresh ideas to survive and grow. They need to tap the entrepreneurial potential within their employees. Leadership has a significant role in creating an atmosphere wherein employees are encouraged to experiment. Leaders should endeavor to create an innovative and intrapreneurial organization, where the process of intrapreneurial innovation can be achieved.

Our study supports the notion that there is a strong relationship between intrapreneurship and innovation and supportive leadership that increases the innovativeness in the printing firms of Topkapi region as well. Since the market is very agile and changes in the marketing themes and materials are constant, it is important to support the intrapreneurial spirit. In our study, it is clear that leaders of the



industry encourage employees to take initiatives and implement their ideas. In the nature of the industry, creativity is important to stay profitable and sustain the enterprise. All levels of employees need to be passionate about their work and generate new ideas. Supportive leaders encourage this potential. Therefore, the study shows that an intrapreneurial spirit is positively influenced by a supportive leadership style that inspires intrapreneurs to create improved, effective and efficient innovative processes and products.

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## Biography

**Selva Staub** has extensive experience in the private and public sectors. She started her career as an assistant professor in her native country, Turkey. After relocating to the United States, Dr. Staub worked as a Project Manager for overseas operations at Consumers Energy (Jackson, Michigan). Also in Michigan, Dr. Staub worked at Eastern Michigan University as Regulatory Compliance Officer, and Vice President of Operations at InterConnect of Ann Arbor; a software development company.

In 2004, the Staubs decided to move to North Carolina. Dr. Staub has worked at the non-profit organization, East Carolina Community Development, as advisor to the President, and worked at Community Colleges System, as program director and strategic planner as well as instructor. After 17 years in USA, Dr. Staub joined Haliç University as Assistant Professor. Recently, she joined Bandirma Onyedi Eylül University and teaches both graduate and undergraduate programs. She is currently on the board of Continues Education department and Foreign Languages program at Bandirma Onyedi Eylül University.

**Senem Nart** received her Master and Ph.D degree from the Department of Business Administration in Social Sciences Institute at Balıkesir University, Balıkesir, Turkey. She has been working as Assistant Professor at Bandirma Onyedi Eylül University and teaches Management and Organization, Human Resources Management, Behavioral Sciences and Organizational Behavior courses both graduate and undergraduate programs.

**Hüsnü Dayan** is graduate of Printing House Teacher Education department from Marmara University, Istanbul, Turkey. He also received his masters degree from the same university. Currently, Mr. Dayan is Turkish Naval Forces Command and also Doktoral candidate of Business School at Haliç University in Istanbul, Turkey.