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Fostering lecturer's innovative work behavior: The role of transformational leadership, interpersonal trust, and knowledge sharing

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the interrelationships between transformational leadership, interpersonal trust, knowledge sharing, and innovative work behavior among faculty members in higher education institutions. Using a cross-sectional survey with data from 343 academic staff in public universities in Indonesia through proportional random sampling, the analyses employed Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with a generalized Least Squares estimation approach. The findings indicate that transformational leadership significantly enhances knowledge sharing and interpersonal trust, while knowledge sharing serves as a mediator in the relationship between transformational leadership and innovative work behavior. Furthermore, interpersonal trust positively influences knowledge sharing, which subsequently fosters innovative work behavior. These results highlight the pivotal role of leadership and trust in promoting knowledge-sharing behaviors that drive innovation in academia. This study contributes to the fields of leadership, knowledge management, and faculty innovation, offering practical insights for university management to cultivate a trust-based, knowledge-driven academic culture that supports continuous professional development and institutional growth. Practically, universities should foster transformational leadership and strengthen interpersonal trust to enhance knowledge sharing, thereby promoting collaborative cultures, innovative pedagogy, and advancements in research.

Keywords: Innovative work behavior, Interpersonal trust, Knowledge sharing, Lecturer transformational leadership.

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1. Introduction

The need for innovative work behavior (IWB) in human resource management (HRM) within higher education has become increasingly evident due to rapid technological advancements, shifting academic expectations, and the growing emphasis on interdisciplinary education. As universities navigate rapid shifts driven by technological progress, globalization, and interdisciplinary learning, promoting lecture innovation has become a strategic priority for maintaining institutional competitiveness [1]. Therefore, HRM in higher education must evolve its strategies to cultivate a culture of innovation that strengthens lecture engagement. Lecturers play a key role in keeping universities competitive by driving innovation in teaching, research, and institutional development [2].

Their level of creativity and innovation is strongly linked to successful learning outcomes in the classroom [3]. The innovative approach of lecturers is also essential in cultivating a creative mindset among students in conducting research [4]. Furthermore, by creating a unique learning environment, lecturers not only enhance student engagement Zen and Ariani [5] but also boost their interest and academic performance, allowing them to produce high-quality work [6]. Therefore, fostering innovative work behavior among lecturers serves as a key indicator of educational innovation in higher education [7].

In contrast to the above, empirical evidence indicates that innovation in higher education remains a significant challenge for lecturers Hosseini and Haghighi Shirazi [8], particularly in Indonesia [9]. The limited ability of Indonesian lecturers to adopt and apply new and meaningful ideas in their work environment has led to low levels of innovation in fulfilling their academic responsibilities [10]. Besides, the majority of higher education instructors lack training in didactics and have not been adequately prepared to integrate technology into their teaching practices [11]. Likewise, in the research domain, the publication rate among lecturers in Indonesia is still relatively low [12].

Transformational leadership, interpersonal trust, and knowledge sharing help create an environment that nurtures creativity, adaptability, and ongoing development within academic institutions. Transformational leadership plays a key role in encouraging lecturers to adopt innovation by fostering a vision-oriented approach, stimulating intellectual curiosity, and providing personalized support. When lecturers perceive their leadership as open to new ideas, they are more inclined to take proactive steps in teaching, research, and knowledge sharing [13].

Beyond leadership, interpersonal trust is a crucial factor influencing lecturers' willingness to engage in innovative practices. Trust between lecturers and administration, as well as among colleagues, fosters a psychologically safe environment where experimentation and knowledge creation can flourish [14]. Furthermore, when lecturers feel assured that their ideas will be acknowledged and valued, they collaborate more effectively, share innovative insights, and contribute to institutional transformation [15].

Additionally, knowledge sharing contributes significantly to accelerating innovation within higher education. Universities thrive when lecturers, students, and industry partners exchange ideas, research, and best practices [16]. Moreover, lecturers who actively participate in knowledge-sharing initiatives enhance the academic landscape by improving curriculum development and student learning experiences [17]. Other research underscores the importance of human resource policies that promote knowledge-sharing activities through collaborative platforms, research funding, and interdisciplinary engagement programs [18].

However, inconsistent findings and the absence of a unified framework create a significant research gap. Other research has examined innovative work behavior from various perspectives, linking it to transformational leadership Udin and Dananjoyo [19], interpersonal trust Afsar, et al. [18], and knowledge sharing [20]. Additionally, most studies focus on corporate settings, leaving lecturers' innovative work behavior underexplored. Hence, this study aims to address these gaps by developing an alternative model to better understand how these factors shape innovation in academia, particularly in the context of developing countries like Indonesia. Theoretically, this study enriches the academic innovation literature by linking transformational leadership, interpersonal trust, and knowledge sharing to lecturers' innovative work behavior. Practically, its findings guide university policies in fostering an innovative culture through collaboration and institutional support.

2. Literature Review

The term "*innovative work behavior* " was initially introduced by West and Farr [21]. They defined it as an individual's behavior in the workplace that supports the generation and implementation of new ideas, processes, products, or procedures that can benefit the organization [22]. Additionally, Scott and Bruce [22] explained that innovative work behavior includes various actions, such as generating ideas, obtaining support for those ideas, and assisting in their implementation - extending beyond simple creativity. Meanwhile, Mumford, et al. [23] argued that behavior focused on expanding constructs and placing greater scientific emphasis on the implementation of ideas are classified as innovative behavior. Conversely, Hadi, et al. [24] identified it as a systematic process of developing, suggesting, and implementing new concepts in the context of job positions, working teams, or companies.

In higher education terms, a lecturer's innovative work behavior refers to the working environment that molds the idea generation and innovative behavior of lecturers, helping them be more efficient and creative in teaching and training [25]. It consisted of an inclination towards innovations in teaching processes, being modeled from job requirements and means [26]. Therefore, innovative work behavior of academic staff refers to the lecturer's behavior to generate, promote, and apply novel ideas in doing their job. For instance, in teaching, lecturers can create technology-based teaching methods for greater student involvement. In research, being innovative means pursuing novel, applicable subjects. Likewise, in their capacity, lecturers can create research-based capacity-building programs in community service to sustain community growth. This recent study applies innovative work behavior measurements from Sudibjo and Prameswari [27] which

encompass idea generation, idea promotion, and idea realization. These stages represent the process of creating, advocating for, and implementing new ideas to improve academic performance and support institutional growth. In the academic sector, this behavior cannot exist in isolation but requires support from transformational leadership, interpersonal trust, and knowledge sharing.

In academia, transformational leadership empowers and motivates academic staff to strive for excellence by cultivating innovation, collaboration, and ongoing development. Its key components include serving as role models, instilling a compelling vision, encouraging critical thinking, and nurturing personal and professional growth. Transformational leadership is a leadership approach that combines creative insight, perseverance, energy, intuition, and sensitivity to others' needs to align strategy with organizational culture [28]. Furthermore, it inspires followers to embrace a shared vision, instilling a sense of purpose in their work and encouraging them to engage in innovative work behavior [29]. According to Busari, et al. [30] transformational leadership is a distinctive leadership style with the theoretical capacity to shape employees' moral and ethical values, motivating them to exceed performance expectations. It can also inspire their followers by recognizing their unique qualities and abilities and encouraging them to utilize their strengths effectively [31]. It is categorized into four dimensions and eleven indicators adopted from Bass and Avolio [32] which consist of idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration dimensions [33-35]. The first means that leader is influenced by their own actions, winning the allegiance and regard of their followers through ethical and ethical practice. The next is a leader with strong communication and passion for goals and visions for the future. Then, the leader introduces innovative and creative thoughts about things for that stimulation of followers' mental processes. The last is the leader with a focus on building and developing each follower through coaching, mentorship, and advice. Recent studies show that many modern organizations are actively focusing on transformational leadership to improve employee productivity and efficiency through more effective knowledge sharing [36, 37]. The influence of transformational leadership on interpersonal trust and trust in team performance is also positive and significant [19, 38].

Interpersonal trust refers to the degree to which an individual believes in and is willing to rely on the words and actions of others, even when taking risks, reflecting the expectation that one will fulfill anticipated commitments despite underlying concerns [39]. It is also defined as the expectation by one party or one collective party that the commitments, promises, and spoken or written word by some collective party or some entity are credible and can be trusted [40]. According to Lewis and Weigert [41] and Kistyanto, et al. [42] there are two key categories of interpersonal trust: affective trust and cognitive trust. The first is built on the care and concern demonstrated by colleagues, fostering trust in team members on an emotional level. The next is from an individual's point of confidence in the expertise and reliability of their team members, emphasizing rational judgment. Interpersonal trust among employees fosters curiosity-driven self-exploration, encouraging them to share knowledge and ensure the smooth flow of information. This, in turn, promotes diverse thinking and supports the development of complex and innovative work behaviors [43]. The study by Marampa, et al. [44] mentioned that interpersonal trust influences knowledge sharing.

As a crucial intangible asset, knowledge gains greater value and effectiveness when it is shared, transferred, and applied, fostering the creation of new knowledge within the organization [45]. In the context of knowledge management, knowledge sharing acts as a key mechanism for transforming tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge, both of which are essential inputs for driving innovation [46]. Knowledge sharing refers to the degree to which individuals exhibit a positive attitude and willingness to share their expertise with others Haider, et al. [47]. Al Derei and Fam [48] define it as the exchange and transfer of experiences among organizational units, where one unit benefits from another's knowledge in problem-solving [49]. It involves individuals sharing their insights with those who have similar interests and valuable expertise [50]. According to Akram, et al. [51] knowledge sharing comprises two key dimensions, they are knowledge donating - the voluntary willingness of individuals to share their knowledge, skills, and expertise with others, promoting a collaborative and knowledge-enriched environment; and knowledge collecting – the active process of seeking, acquiring, and applying knowledge from others through discussions, mentorship, and collaboration to enhance personal competencies and organizational learning. One of the prime movers for innovation is knowledge sharing [46].

Therefore, this study examines how the innovative work behavior of the lecturers can be spanned by transformational leadership, knowledge sharing, and interpersonal trust. Figure 1 depicts the theoretical model informed by the literature; the hypotheses follow:

- H₁: Transformational leadership has a significant impact on knowledge sharing.*
- H₂: Interpersonal trust has a significant impact on knowledge sharing.*
- H₃: Knowledge sharing has a significant impact on innovative work behavior.*
- H₄: Transformational leadership has a significant impact on interpersonal trust.*
- H₅: Knowledge sharing mediates the impact of transformational leadership on innovative work behavior.*
- H₆: Knowledge sharing mediates the impact of interpersonal trust on innovative work behavior.*

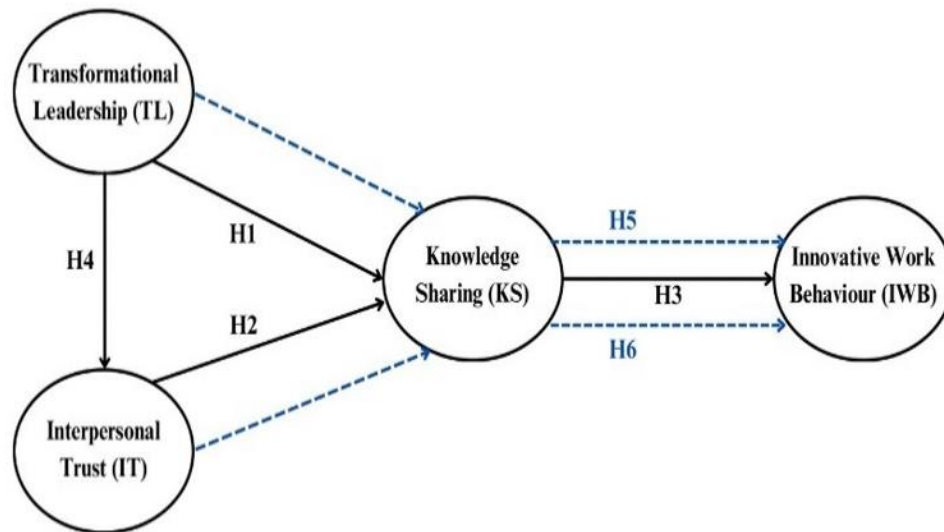


Figure 1.
The proposed research model.

3. Research Method

3.1. Research Sample

The study applied the use of a questionnaire for gathering data from the targeted faculty members from the four public universities located in Indonesia. Data collection lasted from October through December 2024, utilizing the "proportional random sampling" technique. A total of 832 questionnaires were distributed, and after eliminating the ineligible returns, the consideration for the study totaled 343, resulting in a fruitful recovery rate of 41.23%. The sample population was predominantly composed of 204 women (59%) and 139 men (41%). Most of the participants were aged between 36 and 46 (37%) and held a master's degree, with 229 lecturers (66.8%). Participants were largely comprised of 158 senior lecturers (46%), with the most tenure ranging between 0 and 10 years, amounting to 182 lecturers (53%).

3.2. Variable Assessment

The literature was reviewed and utilized to develop questionnaire items for all variables, with each variable measured using a 5-point Likert scale. Innovative work behavior was assessed using 10 items recommended by Sudibjo and Prameswari [27]. Transformational leadership was evaluated with 10 items proposed by Al-Husseini, et al. [52]. To measure knowledge sharing, 10 items from Haider, et al. [47] were adopted. The survey questions were also refined and adjusted to enhance their readability and clarity.

Data Analyses

Partial least squares (PLS) were employed using SmartPLS software version 4.0 to conduct structural equation modeling (SEM) for evaluating the hypothesized model. PLS is particularly useful and practical for predicting relationships among variables, rather than merely confirming an existing model [53]. In this study, PLS-SEM effectively analyzes the interconnections between innovative work behavior, transformational leadership, interpersonal trust, and knowledge sharing as a mediating factor. Additionally, the PLS technique is advantageous across various sample sizes, providing a refined model with fewer data constraints and serving as a powerful analytical tool [54]. The PLS-SEM approach **involves two main steps**: structural modeling and measurement modeling.

4. Results

Data collection for the study entailed the use of a Google Form-based questionnaire sent by email. Formal legal support for the study was based upon the authority granted by an officially issued letter for conducting the study. The measurement scales for all variables were high for reliability and validity. All the variables were assessed using valid measurement scales where the outer loadings were high, suggesting high correlations for the items and their latent variables. The reliability for each variable was confirmed by Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability levels above the minimum required level of 0.70, showing high internal consistency [55]. Specifically, the levels for Cronbach's Alpha ranged from 0.795 through 0.952, and Composite Reliability levels ranged from 0.860 through 0.959. Additionally, convergent validity is also supported by Average Variance Extracted (AVE) estimates all greater than the minimum value of 0.50 Henseler, et al. [56], proving the constructs account for the majority of the variance in the items. Table 1 shows the measurement variables pass the threshold, proving the variables being measured meet or even surpass the level required for reliability and validity.

Table 1.
Convergent validity and internal consistency reliability

Variable	Item	β	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Innovative Work Behaviour (IWB)	IWB.2	0.692	0.877	0.902	0.537
	IWB.3	0.698			
	IWB.4	0.786			
	IWB.5	0.758			
	IWB.6	0.744			
	IWB.8	0.764			
	IWB.9	0.721			
	IWB.10	0.691			
Knowledge Sharing (KS)	KS.1	0.758	0.886	0.907	0.521
	KS.2	0.745			
	KS.3	0.756			
	KS.4	0.787			
	KS.5	0.697			
	KS.6	0.724			
	KS.8	0.720			
	KS.9	0.656			
Transformational Leadership (TL)	TL.1	0.833	0.952	0.959	0.724
	TL.2	0.847			
	TL.3	0.874			
	TL.4	0.838			
	TL.5	0.898			
	TL.6	0.849			
	TL.7	0.849			
	TL.8	0.833			
Interpersonal Trust (IT)	IT.1	0.645	0.795	0.860	0.553
	IT.4	0.824			
	IT.5	0.659			
	IT.6	0.794			
	IT.10	0.779			

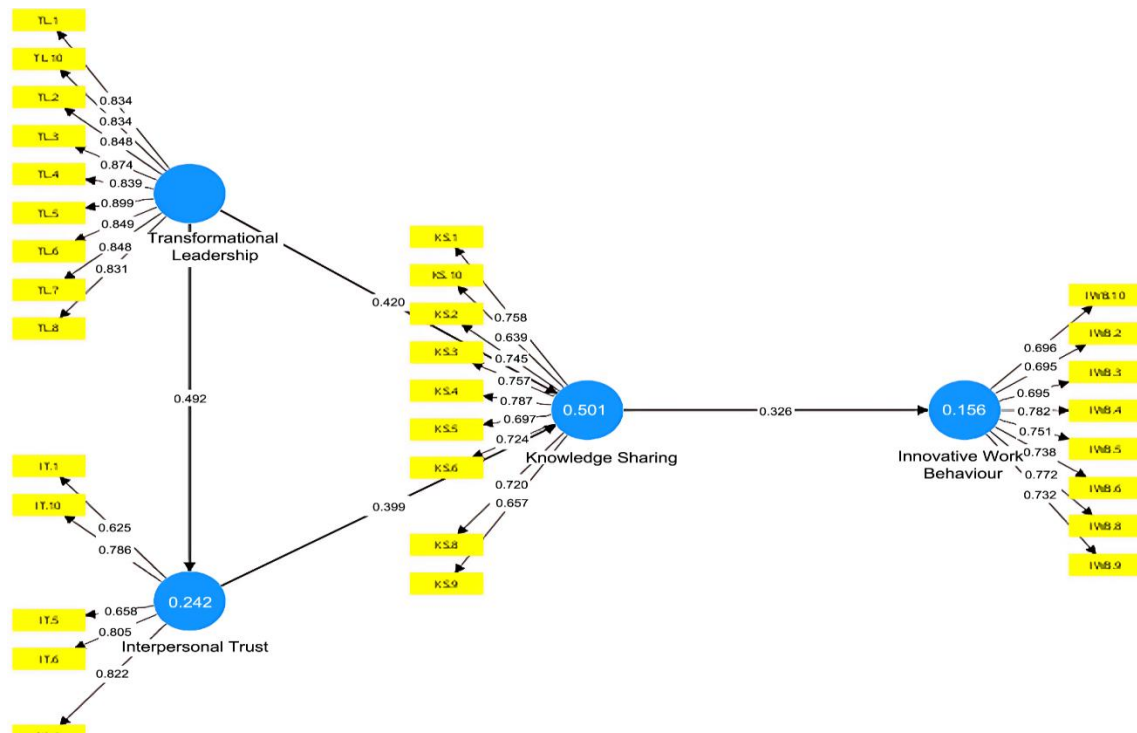


Figure 2.
Finding model.

This current study utilizes the test by the bootstrap test for the hypotheses and the analysis of the relationships among the variables. Results from the test for hypotheses using PLS 4.0 are given by Table 2, where the statistical strength and

significance of the relationships are evidenced. These variables' impacts are inferred from the study concept diagram given by Figure 1, where the interactions among the variables and the concept diagram can easily be visualized.

Table 2 illustrates the acceptance of all hypotheses (H1 to H6), demonstrating strong and significant associations among the study variables. H1 indicates that transformational leadership has a significant and positive influence on knowledge sharing, with a path coefficient of 0.420 and a p-value of 0.000. H2 highlights the significant and positive effect of interpersonal trust on knowledge sharing, showing a path coefficient of 0.399 and a p-value of 0.000. H3 confirms that knowledge sharing positively impacts innovative work behavior, with a path coefficient of 0.396 and a p-value of 0.000. H4 establishes that transformational leadership significantly strengthens interpersonal trust, with a path coefficient of 0.492 and a p-value of 0.000. Furthermore, H5 demonstrates that knowledge sharing serves as a positive mediator between transformational leadership and innovative work behavior, with a path coefficient of 0.166 and a p-value of 0.000. Similarly, H6 confirms that knowledge sharing also mediates the relationship between interpersonal trust and innovative work behavior, with a path coefficient of 0.158 and a p-value of 0.000. These results highlight the mediating role of knowledge sharing and emphasize the significant impact of transformational leadership and interpersonal trust on innovative work behavior.

Table 2.
Hypothesis testing.

Structural Model	Path Coefficient	T-Statistic	P-Values	Description
Transformational Leadership → Knowledge Sharing	0.420	9.502	0.000	Accepted
Interpersonal Trust → Knowledge Sharing	0.399	8.896	0.000	Accepted
Knowledge Sharing → Innovative Work Behaviour	0.396	7.045	0.000	Accepted
Transformational Leadership → Interpersonal Trust	0.492	10.556	0.000	Accepted
Transformational Leadership → Knowledge Sharing → Innovative Work Behaviour	0.166	5.976	0.000	Accepted
Interpersonal Trust → Knowledge Sharing → Innovative Work Behaviour	0.158	5.163	0.000	Accepted

5. Discussion

Transformational leadership can influence knowledge sharing for the better, as evidenced by Kim and Park [37] where the impact of transformational leadership on knowledge sharing has been proved. This is also evidenced by Son, et al. [45] where transformational leadership has been seen by them to be related to knowledge collection and knowledge donation. The same trend has also been observed in the work by Layaman, et al. [57] where transformational leadership can inspire and Vu and Yazdani [36] also demonstrated the same study on lecturers where transformational leadership has a direct and positive impact on knowledge exchange. This supports the views that facilitating lecturers' knowledge exchange is fundamental through transformational leadership, where motivational, inspirational, and supportive leaders foster the culture for lecturers to exchange knowledge and experience.

Interpersonal trust positively and significantly influences knowledge sharing. This finding is supported by Choi and Cho [58]; Davidavičienė, et al. [59], and Maramba, et al. [44] and this presented study. Thus, when lecturers have confidence in their colleagues, they are more willing and open to share ideas, insights, and teaching methods. This trustful environment promotes collaboration, allowing lecturers to exchange research findings, teaching strategies, and academic resources without reluctance. Such a supportive culture is essential for driving academic innovation, enhancing teaching quality, and increasing research productivity. By promoting transparent communication, strong leadership, and opportunities for professional engagement, lecturers can strengthen trust, leading to excellence in higher education.

Innovation cannot happen without knowledge sharing [46]. Some previous studies have emphasized the impact of knowledge sharing on innovative work behavior, including research by Asurakkody and Kim [60]; Nguyen, et al. [61] and Vandavasi, et al. [62]. However, Usmanova, et al. [20] reported different findings, stating that knowledge sharing does not positively influence innovative work behavior. This inconsistent result is further supported by Susilo, et al. [63] suggesting that the relationship between knowledge sharing and innovative behavior might differ based on specific contexts and conditions. The latest research further strengthens previous findings, confirming that knowledge sharing has a positive and significant impact on transformational leadership. When lecturers actively share ideas, research insights, and teaching strategies, they enhance their leadership abilities, inspire their peers, and contribute to an academic culture centred on innovation and collaboration. Besides, universities that foster a knowledge sharing environment empower lecturers to become transformational leaders, ultimately enhancing teaching quality, research productivity, and institutional growth.

Transformational leadership has a direct positive impact on interpersonal trust [64]. This view is also justified by Khattak, et al. [65] and Islam, et al. [66]. When academic leaders demonstrate integrity, vision, and genuine concern for their team members, they create a trustworthy environment where lecturers feel valued and respected. This trust strengthens collaboration, knowledge sharing, and teamwork, ultimately enhancing teaching quality, research engagement, and institutional performance. Universities that embrace transformational leadership lay the foundation for interpersonal trust, fostering a more cohesive, innovative, and dynamic academic community. However, a study conducted by Mansor, et al. [67] revealed that there is no positive and significant influence between transformational leadership and trust, particularly team trust. Thus, the present study reinforces previous finding.

Transformational leadership has a direct and positive impact on innovative work behavior, with knowledge sharing serving as a mediating factor. This finding is relevant with Al-Husseini, et al. [52]; Rafique, et al. [68] and Sudibjo and Prameswari [27]. As a result, inspirational and supportive leaders motivate lecturers to share ideas and expertise, fostering creativity, research innovation, and enhanced teaching methodologies within higher education institutions.

Interpersonal trust facilitates innovative work behavior through knowledge sharing. According to Jain [43] that trust among employees fosters independent exploration driven by curiosity. As rational individuals, they engage in knowledge sharing to optimize the flow of accurate information, promoting diverse thinking and enabling the development of complex and innovative work behaviors. Currently research reinforces prior research, emphasizing the critical role of trust in facilitating knowledge exchange, which ultimately enhances creativity and innovation in the workplace. For lecturers in higher education, trust-driven knowledge sharing strengthens academic collaboration, improves research outcomes, and supports innovative teaching methodologies.

6. Conclusion, Limitations, Future Research

This research paper explored the interrelationship between innovative work behavior and its impact on faculty staff, with a particular focus on the mediating role of knowledge sharing and its connections to interpersonal trust. The empirical findings of this study demonstrated a positive and significant influence of transformational leadership on knowledge sharing, interpersonal trust on knowledge sharing, knowledge sharing on innovative work behavior, transformational leadership on interpersonal trust, transformational leadership on innovative work behavior, mediated by knowledge sharing, and interpersonal trust on innovative work behavior, mediated by knowledge sharing. As a result, the study confirms that transformational leadership and interpersonal trust play a significant role in enhancing knowledge sharing, which in turn mediates their impact on innovative work behavior. These findings underscore the vital importance of trust and leadership in academia, highlighting their influence in fostering a collaborative and innovative academic environment. Universities should cultivate transformational leadership and enhance interpersonal trust to foster knowledge sharing, promoting collaborative cultures, innovative teaching, and research advancements. This study strengthens innovation and leadership theories, highlighting knowledge sharing as a key mediator linking leadership, trust, and innovative work behavior in academia.

This study is limited to faculty members from specific institutions, which may constrain its generalizability. Additionally, it relies primarily on self-reported data, potentially introducing bias. Future research should incorporate longitudinal studies and include broader, more diverse samples across various academic institutions and cultural contexts to enhance validity. Further studies should also investigate additional mediators and moderators, such as organizational culture and technological advancements, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of knowledge-sharing dynamics. Moreover, examining disciplinary differences in innovative work behavior among faculty members could provide deeper insights, strengthening the practical application of transformational leadership and interpersonal trust theories in academia.

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