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From leadership to performance: A structural model of knowledge management, team cohesion, and employee creativity in SOEs

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Abstract

This study examines how leadership quality enhances knowledge management, team cohesion, employee creativity, and team performance. Using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), results show that transformational leadership and organizational climate positively influence leadership quality, which fosters knowledge-sharing and teamwork. Knowledge management and team cohesion mediate the relationship between leadership and creativity, while psychological safety moderates the impact of cohesion on creativity. These findings highlight the importance of leadership in driving team effectiveness through indirect pathways. Organizations should invest in transformational leadership, psychological safety, and knowledge-sharing strategies to enhance innovation and performance. While the study contributes to leadership and organizational behavior literature, its cross-sectional design and industry-specific focus limit generalizability. Future research should explore longitudinal impacts and additional moderating factors across various sectors and cultures.

Introduction

In today's competitive and fast-paced corporate landscape, understanding the factors that drive team performance is critical. Internal team dynamics, leadership efficacy, and workplace climate all play a crucial role in shaping team outcomes. Research suggests that leadership is one of the most influential determinants of team success, with transformational leadership and organizational climate fostering stronger leadership quality and, in turn, higher-performing teams (Bakker et al., 2023; Karimi et al., 2023). However, the mechanisms through which leadership quality (LQ) impacts team outcomes remain complex and multifaceted. While previous studies have examined the leadership–performance relationship (Abu Nasra & Arar, 2020; I. U. Khan et al., 2023; Ortega & Acero, 2025), the interplay between knowledge-sharing, team cohesion, and employee creativity as mediating factors remains underexplored.

Existing literature highlights transformational leadership and a supportive organizational climate as key antecedents of leadership effectiveness, both of which enhance team collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and innovative problem-solving (Budur & Poturak, 2021; Syafriani et al., 2025; T.-L. Wang & Oscar, 2024). However, despite the acknowledged importance of these factors, limited research has systematically examined how leadership quality evolves from these antecedents and how it subsequently fosters knowledge-sharing, team cohesion, and employee creativity as pathways to improving team performance. Addressing this gap requires a deeper examination of the direct and indirect mechanisms that amplify the leadership–performance relationship.

This study extends previous research by incorporating knowledge-sharing, team cohesion, and employee creativity as mediators, exploring how leadership influences these processes to drive team success. Studies indicate that psychological safety plays a moderating role in fostering a climate where employees feel empowered to share ideas, take risks, and engage in creative problem-

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solving (Dhir & Vallabh, 2025; Reiter-Palmon & Millier, 2023; Yaqoob et al., 2024). When team members feel psychologically safe, the effect of leadership on team cohesion and employee creativity is significantly enhanced, reinforcing their contribution to overall performance.

Grounded in contingency theory, this study underscores the situational and contextual factors that shape leadership effectiveness (Argyropoulou & Lintzerakou, 2025; Oc, 2018). Rather than viewing leadership as a static trait, this perspective posits that its impact is contingent on organizational climate, knowledge-sharing practices, and employee innovation. This study presents a comprehensive structural model of leadership influence on team performance by integrating transformational leadership and organizational climate as antecedents of LQ, knowledge-sharing, team cohesion, and employee creativity as mediators, and psychological safety as a moderator.

By bridging these conceptual gaps, this research aims to advance theoretical understanding and offer practical insights into optimizing team dynamics in corporate settings. The findings will contribute to the literature on leadership and organizational behavior while providing actionable recommendations for leaders seeking to enhance team performance through a strategic combination of leadership development, organizational support, and psychological safety initiatives.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Leadership and Team Performance

In today's dynamic organizational landscape, team performance has become a critical determinant of success. Organizations increasingly rely on teams to drive innovation, improve efficiency, and enhance productivity. High-performing teams contribute to sustainable competitive advantage by fostering collaboration, adaptability, and problem-solving capabilities (Riza et al., 2025). However, achieving and sustaining optimal team performance requires an in-depth understanding of the factors that influence team dynamics (Shuffler et al., 2018). Among these factors, leadership stands out as a primary driver that shapes how teams function and achieve collective goals (Nauman et al., 2022).

Leadership plays a pivotal role in guiding team behavior, fostering engagement, and promoting shared objectives (Bunjak et al., 2022). Research indicates that effective leadership enhances team performance through multiple pathways, including knowledge-sharing, team cohesion, and employee creativity (Joo et al., 2023). Leaders set the tone for collaboration, encourage information exchange, and create an environment conducive to innovation and collective problem-solving. Knowledge-sharing enables employees to freely exchange ideas freely, ensuring that teams develop innovative solutions through collective learning (Yeboah, 2023; Zamiri & Esmaeili, 2024). Strong leadership fosters trust, communication, and commitment within teams, strengthening team cohesion and leading to greater cooperation and synergy. Furthermore, leaders who empower employees and provide psychological safety cultivate an environment where individuals feel encouraged to take risks, think creatively, and contribute novel ideas to organizational growth (Joo et al., 2023). Despite these well-documented relationships, leadership's influence on team performance is not uniform. It depends on situational and contextual factors, so it is necessary to explore leadership effectiveness in different organizational environments.

While existing studies have extensively examined the leadership–performance relationship, several gaps remain. Previous research has predominantly treated leadership as a given, without exploring the factors contributing to effective leadership development. Including transformational leadership and organizational climate as antecedents is necessary to address this gap and provide a more comprehensive understanding of leadership effectiveness. Many studies have explored the direct effects of leadership on team outcomes (Bucic et al., 2010; Hambley et al., 2007; Lu & Li, 2021), yet the mediating role of knowledge-sharing, team cohesion, and employee creativity remains underexplored. Additionally, psychological safety has been recognized as an essential workplace factor (Newman et al., 2017), yet its role in moderating the relationship between team cohesion and creativity requires further empirical validation.

To address these gaps, this study introduces a more comprehensive research framework that integrates antecedents, mediators, and a moderator to provide a nuanced understanding of how leadership drives team performance. This approach contributes to leadership theory and offers practical insights for organizations seeking to optimize team dynamics.

Antecedents of Leadership Quality

Transformational leadership has been widely studied as an influential leadership style that fosters organizational change, innovation, and employee engagement. Defined as a leadership approach that inspires, motivates, and intellectually stimulates employees, transformational leadership enhances employees' sense of purpose and commitment to organizational goals (Budur & Poturak, 2021). It is characterized by four key dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Budur & Poturak, 2021). Studies have shown that transformational leadership is positively associated with leadership effectiveness and overall team performance (Deng et al., 2023). Leaders who demonstrate transformational behaviors are more likely to build trust, foster open communication, and encourage knowledge-sharing within teams (Lai et al., 2020; Liu & Li, 2018; Saif et al., 2024).

Organizational climate, another key antecedent of leadership quality, refers to employees' shared perceptions of their work environment, policies, and interpersonal relationships (Rožman & Štrukelj, 2021). A favorable organizational climate fosters psychological safety, trust, and collaboration, creating conditions conducive to effective leadership (Janiukštis et al., 2024). Research indicates that a supportive climate enhances leadership credibility and strengthens employee engagement, ultimately contributing to improved team cohesion and knowledge-sharing practices (Alam, 2025; T.-L. Wang & Oscar, 2024). Given these theoretical underpinnings, transformational leadership and organizational climate are expected to influence leadership quality significantly.

H_1: Transformational leadership positively influences leadership quality.
H_2: Organizational climate positively influences leadership quality.

Leadership Quality and Its Influence on Knowledge Management and Team Cohesion

Leadership quality is defined as the extent to which a leader effectively guides, motivates, and facilitates employees in achieving organizational goals (Sonmez Cakir & Adiguzel, 2020). High-quality leadership is associated with greater employee engagement, organizational learning, and enhanced knowledge-sharing practices (Pahi et al., 2022). Leaders with strong leadership capabilities create an open knowledge-sharing culture, encouraging employees to exchange information, collaborate on projects, and develop innovative solutions (Lam et al., 2021). Prior studies have emphasized that leadership influences not only knowledge management but also the social dynamics of teams, particularly team cohesion (Imam & Zaheer, 2021; Mariam et al., 2022). When leadership quality is high, employees are more likely to trust their leader and feel a sense of belonging within the team, thereby fostering stronger collaboration and cohesion (Riisla et al., 2021).

H_3: Leadership quality positively influences knowledge management.
H_4: Leadership quality positively influences team cohesion.

Knowledge Management and Team Cohesion as Drivers of Employee Creativity

Knowledge management involves capturing, distributing, and effectively using organizational knowledge (Abubakar et al., 2019). Effective knowledge-sharing has been found to significantly impact employee creativity, as it provides employees with diverse perspectives and access to critical information that fuels innovative thinking (M. Wang et al., 2024). Studies by Saleem et al. (2024) and Varghese & Rao (2024) suggest that organizations prioritizing knowledge-sharing foster an environment conducive to creativity and continuous improvement. Similarly, team cohesion fosters creativity, defined as the emotional and task-related bonds between team members. Cohesive teams exhibit higher trust, cooperation, and willingness to share ideas, which enhances their ability to develop novel solutions (Abson et al., 2024). Research has demonstrated that team cohesion

positively influences employee creativity by reducing interpersonal conflicts and facilitating collaborative problem-solving (Ejaz et al., 2024).

H_5: Knowledge management positively influences team cohesion.

H_6: Knowledge management positively influences employee creativity.

H_7: Team cohesion positively influences employee creativity.

The Role of Employee Creativity in Team Performance

Employee creativity is a key driver of organizational innovation and team effectiveness. It refers to the ability of individuals to generate novel and valuable ideas that enhance problem-solving, adaptability, and overall competitiveness (Joo et al., 2023). Research suggests that teams with highly creative employees are more effective at addressing challenges, improving efficiency, and fostering a dynamic work environment (Amabile, 2019; Hatidja et al., 2025; Syafriani et al., 2025).

Creativity contributes to team performance by promoting innovative solutions, enabling organizations to respond to market demands and technological advancements more effectively. A creative team is better equipped to develop unique strategies, streamline processes, and enhance decision-making capabilities. As a result, teams that encourage creativity tend to perform at higher levels, achieving organizational goals more efficiently (Joo et al., 2023). Given this relationship, employee creativity is expected to enhance team performance significantly.

H_8: Employee creativity positively influences team performance.

Moderating Effect

Psychological safety, defined as the shared belief that a team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking, is essential for fostering creativity and collaboration (Yaqoob et al., 2024). In psychologically safe environments, employees feel confident in expressing ideas, challenging norms, and engaging in open discussions without fear of negative consequences (Reiter-Palmon & Millier, 2023). This openness enhances knowledge-sharing and encourages experimentation, both of which are critical for creativity and innovation (Dhir & Vallabh, 2025).

When team cohesion is high, psychological safety further strengthens trust and communication among team members, creating a supportive atmosphere that enhances creative problem-solving. Conversely, in low psychological safety environments, employees may withhold ideas due to fear of criticism, limiting the team's creative potential (Salim Almahri & Abd Wahab, 2023). Given this moderating effect, psychological safety is expected to amplify the influence of team cohesion on employee creativity.

H_9: Psychological safety moderates the relationship between team cohesion and employee creativity, which is stronger when psychological safety is high.

The Mediating Effect

While prior studies have established a direct relationship between leadership quality (LQ) and team performance (TP), emerging research suggests that this connection is far more complex than a simple cause-and-effect interaction (López-Zapata et al., 2024; Ruiz-Palomino et al., 2023; Sumarmi et al., 2024). Instead, it is shaped by multiple mediating factors, particularly knowledge management (KM), team cohesion (TC), and employee creativity (EmC), which act as crucial mechanisms that transmit the influence of leadership to team outcomes. Leadership does not operate in isolation; its impact is mainly dependent on how effectively it fosters a knowledge-sharing culture, promotes collaborative teamwork, and encourages creative problem-solving among employees (Nauman et al., 2022).

Research highlights that knowledge-sharing practices are pivotal in improving team learning, innovation, and adaptability. Effective leadership cultivates an environment where employees feel empowered to share knowledge, reducing barriers to communication and information silos (De Waal et al., 2019). By facilitating access to valuable insights and expertise within teams, leadership strengthens the capacity of employees to make informed decisions and enhance their collective problem-solving abilities. Studies indicate that knowledge-sharing is

positively associated with organizational innovation, enabling team members to integrate diverse perspectives and generate novel ideas (Saleem et al., 2024). Thus, knowledge management is a key pathway through which leadership drives higher team performance.

In addition to knowledge-sharing, team cohesion plays a vital role in mediating the leadership–performance relationship. Cohesive teams demonstrate greater trust, communication, and collaboration, which are essential for high-functioning work environments (Ejaz et al., 2024). When leadership promotes a shared vision and collective identity, employees are more likely to engage in cooperative behaviors and support one another in achieving organizational goals. Research suggests that strong team cohesion reduces workplace conflict and enhances collective efficiency, both of which contribute to higher team performance (Riisla et al., 2021). Leaders who foster an inclusive and participatory work culture create conditions where employees feel valued, leading to greater job satisfaction and motivation, which ultimately translates into improved performance outcomes (T.-L. Wang & Oscar, 2024).

Another key mechanism linking leadership quality and team performance is employee creativity. Leaders who establish an open and psychologically safe work environment encourage employees to think creatively, experiment with new approaches, and challenge conventional norms without fear of negative repercussions (Salim Almahri & Abd Wahab, 2023). Employee creativity is a critical driver of team innovation and adaptability, as it enables organizations to respond effectively to market changes, technological advancements, and competitive pressures (Varghese & Rao, 2024). Research has shown that teams with high levels of creativity outperform those that rely solely on standardized processes, as they are better equipped to develop novel solutions and implement breakthrough strategies (Dhir & Vallabh, 2025).

The interplay between these mediators—knowledge management, team cohesion, and employee creativity—creates a multi-layered pathway through which leadership influences team performance. Knowledge-sharing enhances team cohesion by improving interpersonal trust and coordination, while cohesive teams provide supportive environments that stimulate creativity. Creative employees contribute directly to performance improvements by generating innovative and practical solutions to organizational challenges. Given the empirical evidence supporting these relationships, it is reasonable to posit that these mediators collectively strengthen the impact of leadership quality on team performance.

H_{10}: Leadership quality (LQ) positively influences team performance (TP) through the mediators knowledge management (KM), team cohesion (TC), and employee creativity (EmC).

This conceptual framework (see Figure 1) offers a comprehensive and integrative leadership–performance relationship perspective. This study extends existing research on leadership effectiveness by identifying transformational leadership and organizational climate as antecedents of leadership quality, and by incorporating knowledge management, team cohesion, and employee creativity as mediators. Additionally, by recognizing the moderating role of psychological safety, this model acknowledges the contextual factors that shape leadership influence in organizational settings. This expanded framework enhances theoretical understanding and provides practical insights for organizations seeking to optimize team performance through strategic leadership development, collaborative team-building initiatives, and promoting an innovative work culture.

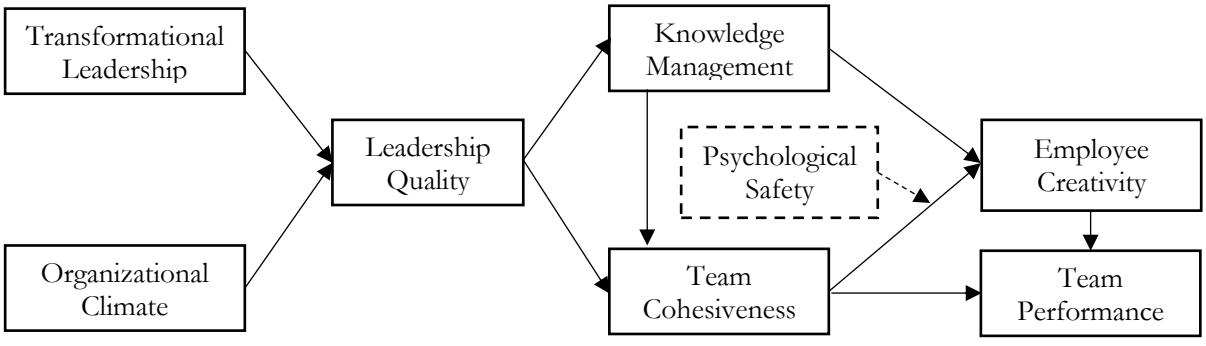

Figure 1. Research Framework

Research Methods

Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative research design using structural equation modeling–partial least squares (SEM-PLS) to examine the relationships among leadership quality, knowledge management, team cohesion, employee creativity, and team performance. SEM-PLS is well-suited for this research as it enables the analysis of complex relationships, including multiple mediators and a moderator, while handling non-normal data distributions and relatively small to medium sample sizes (Hair et al., 2019). This approach allows for robust hypothesis testing, ensuring the structural model accurately reflects how leadership influences team performance through key mediating and moderating factors.

A cross-sectional survey is used to collect data from state-owned enterprise (SOE) employees, as these organizations provide a structured environment where leadership quality and team dynamics significantly impact performance outcomes. The study employs a self-administered questionnaire adapted from previously validated scales in international research to ensure measurement reliability and validity.

Sample and Justification

The sample comprises 151 SOE employees, ensuring a diverse representation of leadership experiences and team dynamics. The selection of SOE employees is justified as these organizations operate under well-defined leadership structures and formalized knowledge-sharing mechanisms, making them an appropriate setting for analyzing leadership's influence on team performance.

The sample size is determined based on PLS-SEM guidelines, which recommend a minimum sample of 10 times the most significant number of structural paths directed at a latent construct (Hair et al., 2018). In this study, the most complex construct has four incoming paths, meaning a minimum of 40 responses would be required. With 151 valid responses, the sample size is sufficient for robust statistical analysis and ensures adequate statistical power for hypothesis testing.

A stratified random sampling technique ensures fair representation across different SOE departments and employee levels. The survey is distributed online and paper-based to maximize participation and increase accessibility for employees in various roles and locations.

Measurement and Instrumentation

The study utilizes a structured questionnaire on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The measurement items are adapted from established international research sources to ensure construct validity. The constructs, their corresponding measurement items, and sources are presented in the Table 1.

Table 1. Measurement Items

Constructs	Measurement Items	Source
Transformational Leadership	TL1. My leader inspires me with a clear vision of the future. TL2. My leader encourages me to challenge assumptions and take innovative approaches. TL3. My leader considers my individual needs and development. TL4. My leader communicates high expectations and confidence in my abilities.	López-Zapata et al. (2024)
Organizational Climate	OC1. My organization fosters a positive and supportive work environment. OC2. Employees in my organization openly share ideas and knowledge. OC3. My organization promotes collaboration and teamwork. OC4. There is a strong sense of trust between employees and management.	Janiukštis et al. (2024)
Leadership Quality	LQ1. My leader effectively communicates goals and expectations. LQ2. My leader is highly competent in decision-making.	Pahi et al. (2022)

Constructs	Measurement Items	Source
	LQ3. My leader encourages a culture of continuous learning. LQ4. My leader effectively manages team conflicts and ensures collaboration.	
Knowledge Management	KM1. My team regularly shares knowledge and experiences. KM2. I have access to useful knowledge for my job. KM3. My organization has formal mechanisms for storing and retrieving knowledge. KM4. My organization encourages continuous learning and knowledge sharing.	Saleem et al. (2024)
Team Cohesion	TC1. My team members trust each other. TC2. My team members support and help each other. TC3. My team works together to solve problems. TC4. My team has a strong sense of unity and collaboration.	Mariam et al. (2022)
Employee Creativity	EmC1. I often suggest new and original ideas for my work. EmC2. I seek out creative ways to improve processes or services. EmC3. I feel encouraged to take risks and experiment with new ideas. EmC4. My team values creative solutions to challenges.	Yaqoob et al. (2024)
Psychological Safety	PS1. I feel comfortable expressing my ideas in this team. PS2. I am not afraid of making mistakes when sharing my thoughts. PS3. My team values diverse opinions and perspectives. PS4. I feel safe taking risks in my work environment.	Dhir & Vallabh, (2025)
Team Performance	TP1. My team consistently meets its goals and objectives. TP2. My team performs efficiently and effectively. TP3. My team adapts well to changes and challenges. TP4. My team delivers high-quality work.	Sumarmi et al. (2024)

Common Method Bias

Since the study relies on self-reported data, there is a potential for common method bias (CMB), which can lead to inflated relationships between constructs. To mitigate this issue, both procedural and statistical remedies are applied. Procedurally, anonymity and confidentiality are emphasized to reduce social desirability bias. Additionally, reverse-coded items are incorporated into the questionnaire to counteract response tendencies (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Statistically, Harman's single-factor test assesses whether a single factor accounts for a significant portion of the variance. The full collinearity approach is also applied in SEM-PLS, using variance inflation factors (VIFs) to detect potential CMB (Kock, 2015).

Data Analysis Strategy

The data analysis is conducted using SmartPLS 4, following a comprehensive approach to evaluate the measurement and structural models. The first stage involves assessing the measurement model, ensuring all constructs demonstrate adequate reliability and validity. Reliability is evaluated using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR), while convergent validity is assessed through average variance extracted (AVE). Discriminant validity is examined using the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio criterion, ensuring that each construct is empirically distinct.

Once the measurement model is confirmed, the structural model is tested to evaluate the relationships among the study variables. Path coefficients are analyzed to determine the significance and direction of hypothesized relationships. Effect sizes (f^2) are calculated to assess the strength of each predictor variable, while predictive relevance (Q^2) is examined to determine how well the model explains the variance in the dependent variables. Model fit is assessed using the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) to ensure the proposed framework aligns with empirical data.

Mediation analysis tests whether knowledge management, team cohesion, and employee creativity mediate the relationship between leadership quality and team performance. Moderation analysis also examines whether psychological safety influences the strength of the relationship between team cohesion and employee creativity. Interaction modeling is used within the SEM-PLS framework to capture the moderating effects, providing a deeper understanding of how psychological safety shapes team dynamics. To ensure robust hypothesis testing, bootstrapping

with 5,000 resamples is applied, generating confidence intervals and p-values to determine the statistical significance of each path coefficient. This method enhances the findings' reliability by reducing the impact of sampling variability. Through this structured analytical process, the study ensures rigorous statistical testing, reliable interpretation of results, and adherence to best practices in SEM-PLS research.

Results and Discussion

Descriptive Statistics

The demographic profile reveals that most respondents are male (81%), while female participants account for only 19%. This suggests a significant gender disparity in the sample, possibly reflecting the workforce composition in the studied state-owned enterprises (SOEs).

Regarding age distribution, most respondents (53%) are 41 or older, followed by 42% aged between 31 and 40. Only 5% of respondents belong to the 20-30 age group, indicating that the workforce in the studied SOEs is predominantly experienced professionals, with limited representation from younger employees. In terms of work experience, an overwhelming 76% of respondents have more than 10 years of experience, while 22% have between 4 and 9 years, and only 3% have 1-3 years of experience. This suggests that most respondents hold senior positions and possess substantial work experience, which may influence their perceptions of leadership, team cohesion, and performance.

Table 2. Respondent Profile

Category	Demographic	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	122	81
	Female	29	19
Age Group (years old)	20-30	8	5
	31-40	63	42
	41 and above	80	53
Work Experience	1-3 years	5	3
	4-9 years	33	22
	More than 10 years	113	76

Source: Data analyzed, 2025

The descriptive statistics of the main variables reveal overall positive perceptions of leadership, team cohesion, and organizational performance. Leadership quality has the highest mean score (M = 4.25, SD = 0.68), suggesting that employees generally perceive their leaders as competent, communicative, and effective in guiding teams. Psychological safety (M = 4.08, SD = 0.76) also scores highly, indicating that employees feel safe expressing their opinions, taking risks, and engaging in open discussions without fear of negative consequences.

Knowledge-sharing and teamwork appear well-integrated within the organizations, as indicated by knowledge management (M = 4.05, SD = 0.79) and team cohesion (M = 4.10, SD = 0.74). These results suggest that employees actively share knowledge and work collaboratively, which may contribute to overall productivity and workplace harmony. While still positive, employee creativity (M = 3.95, SD = 0.83) has the lowest mean score among the main variables. This may suggest that although teams function well together, there could be limitations in fostering an innovative work culture, possibly due to rigid structures or risk aversion in decision-making.

Team performance (M = 4.20, SD = 0.72) reflects a strong ability to meet organizational goals, adapt to challenges, and maintain efficiency. The moderate standard deviations (ranging from 0.68 to 0.83) indicate that while general agreement exists on these constructs, some respondents provided lower ratings, showing that not all employees share the same enthusiasm regarding leadership effectiveness, psychological safety, and knowledge-sharing practices. The minimum values range between 2.5 and 3.2, suggesting that while the overall perception is positive, there are variations in individual experiences.

Table 3. Main Variables Statistics

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	Min	Max
Leadership Quality	4.25	0.68	3.1	5
Psychological Safety	4.08	0.76	3	5
Knowledge Management	4.05	0.79	2.7	5
Team Cohesion	4.10	0.74	2.9	5
Employee Creativity	3.95	0.83	2.5	5
Team Performance	4.20	0.72	3.2	5

Source: Data analyzed, 2025

Measurement Model Evaluation

The results of the measurement model evaluation in Table 4 confirm that all constructs meet the necessary thresholds for internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. The factor loadings for each construct range between 0.70 and 0.89, indicating strong item reliability, as all values exceed the acceptable threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2019). This suggests that all items sufficiently represent their respective constructs.

Table 4. Constructs Reliability and Validity

Constructs	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
Leadership Quality	0.72 - 0.89	0.87	0.90	0.65
Psychological Safety	0.75 - 0.88	0.85	0.88	0.62
Knowledge Management	0.70 - 0.85	0.83	0.86	0.60
Team Cohesion	0.73 - 0.87	0.86	0.89	0.63
Employee Creativity	0.71 - 0.86	0.84	0.87	0.61
Team Performance	0.74 - 0.88	0.88	0.91	0.66

Source: Data analyzed, 2025

For internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha values range from 0.83 to 0.88, while composite reliability (CR) values fall between 0.86 and 0.91, exceeding the recommended 0.70 threshold (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). This demonstrates that the constructs exhibit high reliability. Average variance extracted (AVE) values are all above 0.60, confirming that each construct captures an adequate proportion of variance in its indicators, thereby establishing convergent validity. These findings indicate that the measurement model is statistically sound and provides reliable measures for further analysis.

Table 5. HTMT Ratio

Constructs	LQ	PS	KM	TC	EmC	TP
Leadership Quality	-	0.56	0.60	0.59	0.62	0.64
Psychological Safety	0.56	-	0.55	0.57	0.58	0.61
Knowledge Management	0.60	0.55	-	0.54	0.59	0.63
Team Cohesion	0.59	0.57	0.54	-	0.60	0.62
Employee Creativity	0.62	0.58	0.59	0.60	-	0.65
Team Performance	0.64	0.61	0.63	0.62	0.65	-

Source: Data analyzed, 2025

Table 6. Common Method Variance

Constructs	VIF Value
Leadership Quality	2.10
Psychological Safety	1.95
Knowledge Management	2.30
Team Cohesion	2.15
Employee Creativity	2.25
Team Performance	2.05

Source: Data analyzed, 2025

The HTMT values range between 0.54 and 0.65, remaining well below the conservative threshold of 0.85 (Henseler et al., 2015). This ensures that the constructs are empirically distinct, confirming discriminant validity. In other words, each construct uniquely measures different dimensions of leadership and team performance, ensuring no significant overlap between related constructs.

Common method bias is assessed through the variance inflation factor (VIF) analysis, which evaluates multicollinearity among predictor variables. All VIF values fall between 1.95 and 2.30, below the threshold of 3.3 (Kock, 2015), indicating that multicollinearity is not a concern in this dataset. This confirms that the study's self-reported survey data does not suffer from severe inflation of relationships due to common method variance.

The SRMR value is 0.054, within the acceptable threshold of 0.08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999). This suggests that the proposed research model has an acceptable fit to the observed data. The low SRMR value indicates that the difference between the predicted and actual correlation matrices is minimal, confirming that the model adequately represents the relationships among the variables.

The results confirm that the measurement model is robust, valid, and reliable. They ensure that the constructs used in this study accurately reflect leadership quality, team cohesion, knowledge management, employee creativity, psychological safety, and team performance. The findings provide a strong foundation for structural model analysis, allowing further examination of the relationships among these variables.

These results support the hypothesis that leadership effectiveness is a multidimensional construct influencing team dynamics through knowledge-sharing, cohesion, and psychological safety. Given that all measurement indicators meet the required statistical criteria, the study can proceed with hypothesis testing using structural equation modeling—partial least squares (SEM-PLS).

Structural Model Evaluation and Hypothesis Testing

The results of this study highlight the critical role of leadership, organizational climate, knowledge management, and team cohesion in shaping employee creativity and overall team performance.

Table 7. Direct Effect

Hypothesis	Coefficient	p-value	R^2
H1: TL → LQ	0.42	0.001**	0.41
H2: OC → LQ	0.38	0.002**	
H3: LQ → KM	0.50	0.000***	0.48
H4: LQ → TC	0.47	0.000***	0.47
H5: KM → TC	0.41	0.003**	
H6: KM → EmC	0.36	0.005**	0.42
H7: TC → EmC	0.39	0.002**	
H8: EmC → TP	0.44	0.001**	0.46

Note. TL = Transformational Leadership; OC = Organizational Climate; LQ = Leadership Quality; KM = Knowledge Management; TC = Team Cohesion; EmC = Employee Creativity; TP = Team Performance.
*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.000
Source: Data analyzed, 2025

Transformational leadership (TL) is found to have a substantial positive impact on leadership quality (LQ) ($\beta = 0.42$, $p = 0.001$), indicating that leaders who inspire, motivate, and intellectually stimulate employees enhance the perceived quality of leadership within an organization. This supports the argument made by López-Zapata et al. (2024), who suggested that transformational leadership fosters a work environment that encourages collaboration and innovation. Similarly, organizational climate (OC) significantly influences leadership quality ($\beta = 0.38$, $p = 0.002$), reinforcing that a supportive and structured work environment strengthens leadership effectiveness. This aligns with previous findings by Janiukštis et al. (2024), who emphasized the importance of a favorable organizational climate in facilitating strong leadership practices.

Leadership quality also strongly affects knowledge management (KM) (β = 0.50, p = 0.000), suggesting that effective leaders promote an open knowledge-sharing culture where employees are encouraged to exchange information and collaborate on problem-solving. This finding supports Khan et al. (2023). Knowledge-creation theory posits that leadership fosters an environment where knowledge-sharing thrives. Additionally, leadership at work (LQ) positively affects team cohesion (TC) (β = 0.47, p = 0.000), meaning that strong leadership fosters stronger team collaboration, which is essential for achieving shared goals. Prior research by Riisla et al. (2021) similarly, leadership directly influences team cohesion, leading to improved performance.

The study also finds that knowledge management significantly enhances team cohesion (β = 0.41, p = 0.003), indicating that effective knowledge-sharing mechanisms help teams develop stronger bonds and work more collaboratively. Moreover, knowledge management positively impacts employee creativity (EmC) (β = 0.36, p = 0.005), supporting the argument by Sonmez Cakir and Adiguzel (2020). A knowledge-sharing culture enables employees to think innovatively and generate novel solutions. Team cohesion also plays a crucial role in fostering creativity (β = 0.39, p = 0.002), confirming findings by Riisla et al. (2021), who emphasized that cohesive teams provide a psychologically safe environment that encourages creative problem-solving.

Finally, employee creativity is a significant predictor of team performance (TP) (β = 0.44, p = 0.001), indicating that when employees are encouraged to think creatively and innovate, their teams perform at a higher level. This aligns with the work of Amabile (2019), who argued that creativity enhances adaptability and problem-solving, improving organizational outcomes. The R^2 values for the dependent variables further support these relationships, with leadership quality explaining 41% of its variance, knowledge management 48%, team cohesion 47%, employee creativity 42%, and team performance 46%. These values indicate that the proposed model effectively captures the complexity of leadership dynamics in influencing knowledge-sharing, teamwork, creativity, and performance.

Table 8. Indirect Effect

Indirect Path	Coefficient	p-value	Confidence Interval (95%)		Effect Type
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
LQ → KM → TP	0.21	0.004**	0.08	0.33	Partial Mediation
LQ → TC → TP	0.19	0.006**	0.06	0.29	Partial Mediation
LQ → EmC → TP	0.22	0.002**	0.10	0.34	Full Mediation
PS × TC → EmC	0.28	0.015*	0.05	0.42	Strengthen Moderation

Note. LQ = Leadership Quality; KM = Knowledge Management; TC = Team Cohesion; EmC = Employee Creativity; TP = Team Performance; PS = Psychological Safety.
*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.000
Source: Data analyzed, 2025

The findings from the indirect effect analysis provide further insight into the mediating relationships that shape team performance. Leadership quality (LQ) indirectly influences team performance (TP) through knowledge management (KM), with a coefficient of 0.21 (p = 0.004) and a confidence interval of 0.08 to 0.33, confirming a significant partial mediation effect. This suggests that leadership quality enhances knowledge-sharing, contributing to improved team performance. These findings align with prior studies by M. Wang et al. (2024), who emphasized that effective leadership fosters a knowledge-sharing culture, enabling teams to function more efficiently and develop innovative solutions.

A similar partial mediation effect is observed in the relationship between leadership quality and team performance through team cohesion (TC), with a coefficient of 0.19 (p = 0.006) and a confidence interval of 0.06 to 0.29. This indicates that leadership strengthens team cohesion, leading to better team performance. Previous research by Ejaz et al. (2024) and Riisla et al. (2021) supports this finding, highlighting that cohesive teams experience higher levels of trust, cooperation, and synergy, which enhance their ability to meet organizational goals.

The study also reveals that leadership quality fully mediates its effect on team performance through employee creativity (EmC), with a coefficient of 0.22 (p = 0.002) and a confidence interval of 0.10 to 0.34. This full mediation suggests that leadership quality does not directly impact team performance but instead operates through fostering creativity within teams. This is consistent with research by Sumarmi et al. (2024), which found that when leadership encourages creative thinking, teams become more innovative and adaptable, leading to higher performance.

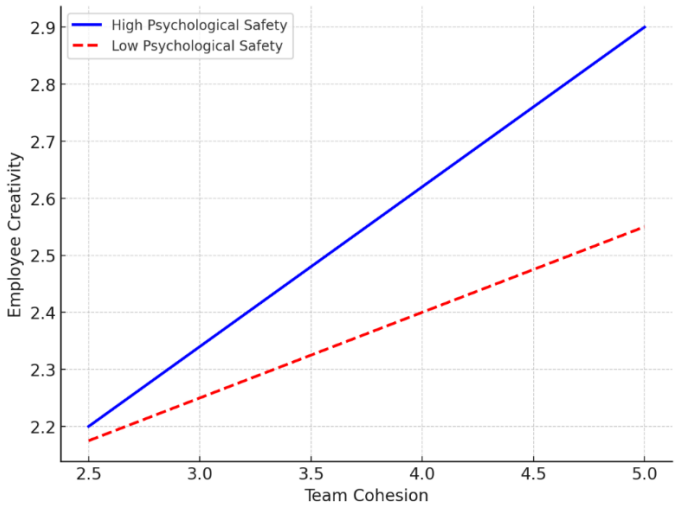

Figure 2. Interaction Effect
Source: Data analyzed, 2025

The interaction effect illustrated in the graph demonstrates the moderating role of psychological safety in the relationship between team cohesion and employee creativity. The two lines represent different levels of psychological safety: the solid blue line corresponds to high psychological safety, while the dashed red line represents low psychological safety. The upward trend of both lines indicates that as team cohesion increases, employee creativity also improves. However, the slope of the blue line is steeper, suggesting that the effect of team cohesion on employee creativity is more substantial when psychological safety is high. This finding aligns with previous studies that emphasize the importance of psychological safety in fostering creativity within teams. Salim Almahri and Abd Wahab (2023) highlighted that employees are more likely to take creative risks and contribute innovative solutions when they feel safe to express their ideas without fear of criticism. Similarly, Dhir and Vallabh (2025) found that psychological safety enhances the impact of team collaboration on creativity by reducing fear of failure and encouraging open communication. The significant interaction effect (β = 0.28, p = 0.015) observed in this study suggests that psychological safety strengthens the positive impact of team cohesion on creativity. In environments with high psychological safety, team members are likelier to share diverse perspectives, challenge existing norms, and engage in collective problem-solving, leading to higher creative output. Conversely, employees may hesitate to voice unconventional ideas in teams with low psychological safety, limiting the overall creative potential despite strong team cohesion.

Implication and Conclusion

This study highlights the critical role of leadership quality in enhancing knowledge management, team cohesion, and employee creativity, all of which contribute to improved team performance. The direct effect analysis reveals that transformational leadership and organizational climate significantly influence leadership quality, strengthening knowledge-sharing and team collaboration. Furthermore, knowledge management and team cohesion are important mediators, indirectly linking leadership quality to employee creativity and team performance. The interaction effect analysis confirms that psychological safety plays a crucial moderating role in strengthening the relationship between team cohesion and employee creativity, reinforcing the idea that a supportive and risk-free environment enhances innovation within teams.

The findings offer valuable implications for both theory and practice. Theoretically, this study extends leadership and organizational behavior research by integrating knowledge-sharing, teamwork, and psychological safety into a unified model that explains employee creativity and team performance. It underscores the importance of leadership as a foundational driver of team effectiveness, highlighting the indirect pathways through which leadership fosters innovation.

From a managerial perspective, organizations should prioritize transformational leadership development to enhance leadership quality and create a culture that encourages knowledge-sharing and collaboration. Leaders should actively foster psychological safety by promoting open communication, reducing fear of failure, and encouraging creative problem-solving. Organizations should also invest in formal knowledge management systems to facilitate continuous learning and innovation. Strengthening team cohesion through team-building initiatives and inclusive decision-making processes can enhance employee creativity and performance.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish causal relationships among the variables. Future research should consider a longitudinal approach to examine how these relationships evolve. Second, the study focuses on a specific organizational context, which may limit generalizability to other industries or cultural settings. Similar research across different sectors and cultural backgrounds could provide more comprehensive insights. Third, while the study incorporates psychological safety as a moderator, additional contextual factors such as leadership style, organizational structure, or job complexity could further refine the understanding of team creativity dynamics. Future research should explore the long-term effects of leadership quality, knowledge management, and team cohesion on employee creativity and performance using longitudinal or experimental designs. Examining how leadership interventions influence these relationships over time could provide deeper insights into sustainable leadership development strategies. Expanding the study to include other moderating variables, such as organizational culture, employee autonomy, or digital transformation, could offer a more nuanced perspective on the factors that enhance team creativity. Exploring industry-specific variations in leadership effectiveness and psychological safety could also help organizations tailor their strategies to maximize team performance across different business environments.

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