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From inspiration to innovation: A mediated model of leadership and innovative behavior

Purbo Jadmiko[1]*, Elfitra Azliyanti[2], Linda Wati[3], Neva Novianti[4], Muhammad Haikal[5]

[1,2,3,5]Management Department, Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Bung Hatta, Padang, Indonesia
[4]Accounting Department, Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Bung Hatta, Padang, Indonesia

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***Corresponding author:**
purbojadmiko@bunghatta.ac.id

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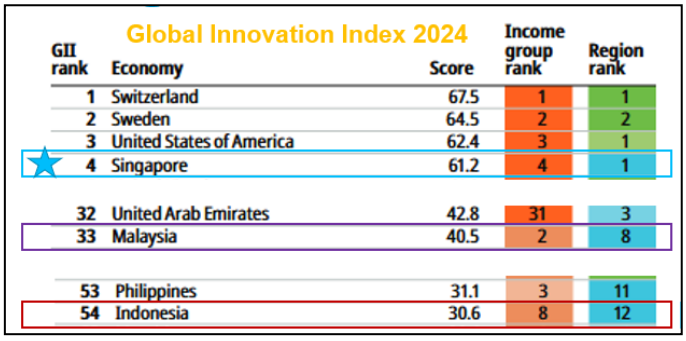
Abstract

This study investigates the effect of transformational leadership on innovative work behavior in higher education institutions, examining the mediating roles of knowledge sharing and motivation to learn. Data were collected from 150 full-time lecturers in public and private universities in Padang, Indonesia. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed to analyze both direct and indirect relationships among variables. The findings reveal that transformational leadership positively influences innovative work behavior directly and indirectly through knowledge sharing, confirming a partial mediation effect. However, motivation to learn does not significantly mediate this relationship, indicating its intrinsically driven nature. The study confirms the importance of leadership style and collaborative culture in fostering innovation among academic staff. Theoretically, the research enriches the understanding of psychological and social mechanisms linking leadership to innovation, particularly in the unique context of higher education. Practically, it offers insights for university leaders to cultivate a supportive environment that encourages knowledge sharing and intrinsic learning motivation, which are essential for sustaining innovation in academic settings.

Introduction

Based on the Global Innovation Index (GII) 2024, Indonesia is ranked 54th globally in innovation, far behind other countries in the Southeast Asian region, such as Singapore, ranked 4th, and Malaysia, ranked 33rd (see Figure 1). This ranking reflects the challenges in the national innovation ecosystem, especially in supporting sustainable development goals (SDGs) 9 (industry, innovation, and infrastructure). One of the causes of low innovation in Indonesia is the lack of support for an innovative work culture in various sectors, including education.



Global Innovation Index 2024

GII rank	Economy	Score	Income group rank	Region rank
1	Switzerland	67.5	1	1
2	Sweden	64.5	2	2
3	United States of America	62.4	3	1
4	Singapore	61.2	4	1
32	United Arab Emirates	42.8	31	3
33	Malaysia	40.5	2	8
53	Philippines	31.1	3	11
54	Indonesia	30.6	8	12

Figure 1. Global Innovation Index 2024

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Innovative work behavior in higher education environments is an important aspect of encouraging transformation and improving the quality of education services. The distinctiveness of Indonesian higher education is reflected not only in its collectivist culture, hierarchical governance, and the independent learning, independent campus (MBKM) policy, but also in the growing emphasis on "impactful campus", where universities are expected to generate direct social contributions, making the pathways to innovative work behavior contextually unique. Research shows that digital competence plays a vital role in supporting innovative behavior and can boost the creativity and effectiveness of lecturers and education staff (Carvalho et al., 2023). In addition, inclusive and innovative leadership strategies have been shown to accelerate the adoption of technology, thereby strengthening the institution's ability to adapt to the dynamics of the times (Bada et al., 2024).

On the other hand, the implementation of innovative work behavior (IWB) in higher education also supports the achievement of SDG 9. Public policies that support innovation in education can improve students' innovative abilities (Sagahón, 2023). Furthermore, the development of technology and innovation infrastructure enables universities to become centres of innovation incubation that support economic growth and social transformation (Küfeoğlu, 2022; Sagahón, 2023). Universities are required to adapt creative learning methods to face digital challenges and social change. This condition requires educators to apply new, responsive working methods in order to keep up with the times and meet the demands of students who are increasingly smart in accessing knowledge (Astuti et al., 2023). The urgency of IWB is also seen in its role in creating an adaptive organizational climate so that it can improve the quality of education. The innovation process in question not only increases job satisfaction but also facilitates the growth of lecturers' creative capacity to integrate new ideas (Ayoub et al., 2021).

Furthermore, IWB facilitates the development of leadership and organizational culture that supports collaboration and knowledge sharing (KS) climate. Several studies have demonstrated the role of leaders in fostering IWB. Transformational leadership (TL) has been shown to promote IWB among faculty and staff significantly. Studies have shown that leaders who adopt transformational practices by being visionary, inspiring, and supportive of individual growth positively influence the innovation capabilities of faculty in higher education (Hu, 2024). Similarly, research conducted in Chinese universities confirms that TL not only enhances innovation capacity but also cultivates a constructive organizational culture that embraces change and continuous improvement (Shaojing, 2024). These findings underscore the importance of TL in creating an environment conducive to innovation in academic settings.

Research on TL and innovative behavior has identified several research gaps that have not been comprehensively resolved. On the one hand, many studies focus on examining the direct influence of TL on innovative behavior. Yet, there is a lack of studies integrating mediating variables such as job crafting, intrinsic motivation, KS, and work engagement in the context of higher education (Saputra, 2025; Sudibjo & Prameswari, 2021). In addition, most studies focus on the industrial or public sector context. Hence, the application of theories and models in higher education environments with unique organizational and cultural characteristics is still underexplored in depth (Nordin et al., 2024). This gap opens up opportunities for further research to examine the complex mechanisms of influence between TL and innovative behavior through various mediating and moderating variables.

In addition, literature findings suggest that the direct effect of TL on innovative behavior is often inconsistent. Some early studies indicated a direct positive effect of TL on innovative behavior (Mubarak et al., 2021). However, the findings became weaker when mediators such as job crafting or intrinsic motivation were considered (Afsar et al., 2019). For example, Saputra (2025) found that the direct effect of TL on innovative behavior was no effect, while the indirect effect through mediating variables such as job crafting and intrinsic motivation proved significant. This highlights the need to consider mediation mechanisms in more detail to understand the dynamics of the relationship between TL, especially in higher education settings.

Indirect mechanisms are an aspect that is increasingly receiving attention in explaining how TL influences innovative behavior. Several studies have shown that mediating variables such as

KS, intrinsic motivation, and work engagement crucial in translating the influence of TL into innovative behavior among organizational members (Afsar et al., 2019; Sudibjo & Prameswari, 2021). This mediation approach offers a more explanatory explanation, revealing that TL can create an environment conducive to innovation. Thus, future research is expected to develop a conceptual model that combines direct and indirect effects simultaneously, as well as examine the boundary conditions that influence the strength or direction of this relationship in various contexts, including higher education (Afsar et al., 2019).

Previous research has not explored much of the mediation mechanisms that bridge the influence of TL on IWB, especially through motivation to learn (MoL) and KS in the context of higher education, which has unique organizational dynamics. The novelty of this study lies in the dual mediation approach that simultaneously integrates cognitive and affective pathways. While previous studies have predominantly focused on single cognitive mechanisms, this research introduces the affective dimension as an equally important mediator. Therefore, this study aims to develop and test a conceptual model that explains the indirect influence of TL on IWB through these dual mechanisms. The results of this study are expected to serve as a foundation for designing leadership strategies and higher education HR policies to foster a sustainable, innovative culture.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Innovative Work Behavior

IWB is a concept that includes a series of individual activities in creating, implementing, and evaluating new ideas in the workplace. IWB is seen as a dynamic process that requires not only creativity but also the ability to overcome obstacles and implement innovative solutions in an organizational context (Parveen & Vasudeva, 2024). In the educational environment, Pratama et al. (2023) revealed that teachers and education personnel demonstrate IWB through innovation in teaching methods, curriculum development, and improvement of overall education services. This study underlies that IWB is one of the important pillars in education quality and the competitiveness of higher education institutions.

Several studies have highlighted effect of personal and environmental factors on increasing IWB. For example, Daud et al. (2024) developed that emphasizes the role of factors such as intrinsic motivation, professional competence, and technological readiness in driving innovative behavior. Furthermore, Purba and Sugiharti (2025) emphasized that self-leadership and culture of KS contribute to increasing IWB in higher education institutions.

However, there is a research gap that needs to be addressed to fully understand IWB in the context of higher education, especially in the midst of the increasingly developing digital era. Sumual et al. (2023) proposed a new model of IWB that emphasizes the importance of integrating technology and innovative culture to enhance the success of educational organizations. In addition, Handiman and Adam (2024), through their systematic review, highlighted how digitalization affects IWB practices by changing the dynamics of work and collaboration between individuals.

Transformational on Innovative Work Behavior

TL has been identified as one of the major focus that can encourage the emergence of IWB in an organizational environment. Several studies have shown that the TL style, which emphasizes vision, inspiration, and personal support, can increase work motivation and encourage employees' courage to explore new ideas (Hadi et al., 2019; Nguon et al., 2025). The findings by Hadi et al. (2019) empirically revealed that TL has a significant direct influence on innovative behavior, where leaders who apply this style encourage their subordinates to think creatively and overcome obstacles in their work. These findings are in line with studies in various sectors that emphasize the role of leadership in creating a work climate that is conducive to innovation (Tanoto et al., 2024).

Although there is a consensus on the direct positive effect of TL on IWB, some studies emphasize the role of intervening variables that mediate the relationship. For example, Saputra (2025) found that TL does not always show direct effect on IWB. However, the significant positive effect can be amplified such as job crafting and intrinsic motivation (mediation). In addition,

Darmawan et al. (2024) suggested that organizational fit, KS behavior can also function as mediators, where TL not only has a direct impact but also creates an indirect mechanism that optimizes employee innovative behavior. Afsar and Umrani's (2019) study also confirmed that TL significantly improves employees' ability to explore new ideas also adapt to changes in the work environment.

H_1: Transformational leadership has a positive effect on innovative work behavior.

Furthermore, KS practices have emerged as an important mediating mechanism in the relationship between TL and IWB. Supriyanto et al. (2020) shows that KS plays a mediating role by disseminating information and expertise between employees, thereby enhancing the innovation process. Afsar et al. (2019) added that increased structure, social resources, and challenges in work mediated through KS practices also strengthen the influence of TL on IWB. A research conducted by Al-Husseini et al. (2019) found that KS practices encourage lecturers and education personnel to collaborate in designing curricula and developing new learning methods, which directly enhances IWB. The mediating role of KS in converting motivation and support provided by leaders into real innovation at the employee level (Liu & Zainal, 2024).

H_2: Transformational leadership has a positive effect on knowledge sharing.

H_3: Knowledge sharing mediates the positive relationship between transformational leadership and innovative work behavior.

Knowledge Sharing on Innovative Work Behavior

Within the framework of organizational learning theory, KS is considered a fundamental mechanism for creating and disseminating knowledge that drives IWB. The theory states that the flow of both tacit and explicit knowledge between individuals can stimulate new thinking and creative solutions to organizational problems (Pian et al., 2019). In this context, KS activities not only increase access to relevant information but also sow a collaborative culture that is conducive to innovation, which ultimately strengthens individuals' capabilities to develop innovative ideas (Munir & Beh, 2019).

Furthermore, the mechanism of KS becomes crucial in transforming the knowledge resources owned by the organization into innovative output. Malik (2021) research indicates that knowledge transferred through the KS process, especially in the form of tacit knowledge, acts as a mediator connecting affective variables such as emotional intelligence with IWB. Based on the description of several research results, hypothesis is formulated:

H_4: Knowledge sharing has a positive effect on innovative work behavior.

Transformational Leadership on Motivation to Learn

TL has garnered considerable attention throughout higher education for its capacity to inspire and motivate. Theoretically, TL encourages the formation of a shared vision, provides intellectual stimulation, and offers individual attention factors that have been shown to increase learning motivation through increased self-esteem (Ballesteros et al., 2023). Empirically, TL has a positive effect on learning motivation. A study conducted by Kiswanto and Yulianti (2024) showed that TL significantly increases learning motivation, which then contributes to improved overall work performance.

Furthermore, the positive influence of TL on learning motivation can also be seen in the improvement in the quality of the teaching process and innovation in educational institutions. Research by Ahuja and Yadav (2023) suggests that TL important aspect in increasing teacher motivation to develop more inclusive and creative teaching methodologies. This is due to the leadership style that encourages educators to innovate and overcome challenges through lifelong learning. A study by Afsar and Umrani (2019) emphasized that TL not only increases motivation to learn but also encourages individual contributions to innovation in the way they learn and teach. Based on the description of several research results, hypothesis is formulated:

H_5: Transformational leadership has a positive effect on motivation to learn.

Motivation to Learn on Innovative Work Behavior

Motivation to learn is an essential driver that has a positive impact on IWB in higher education environments. Research by Xie and Li (2024) showed that learning motivation significantly improves the innovative ability of graduate students, which in turn is a key indicator of IWB. Thus, increasing learning motivation not only increases knowledge capacity but also creates psychological conditions conducive to the emergence of innovation in the learning and research process.

Individuals who have high learning motivation tend to be more active in seeking information and integrating new knowledge into their practices, resulting in creative ideas. Research by Suryani et al. (2020) found that psychological empowerment and intrinsic motivation simultaneously strengthen innovative behavior, indicating that learning motivation acts as an internal source that triggers creativity and initiative in facing academic challenges. Thus, the existence of high learning motivation can facilitate the process of internal knowledge transfer and create an innovative culture in the higher education environment. Based on the description of several research results, hypothesis is formulated:

H_6: Motivation to learn has a positive effect on innovative work behavior.

Furthermore, there is an important mediating mechanism through motivation to learn that influences how TL contributes to the emergence of IWB. According to Udin's research (2024), TL can stimulate and facilitate intrinsic learning enthusiasm by emphasizing the search for meaning in work and adjusting tasks to individual interests. This increase in motivation to learn, as described by Afsar and Umrani (2019), not only increases the search for knowledge and skills but also strengthens the individual's tendency to apply innovative ideas in work. In other words, motivation to learn serves as an important link between TL and the innovation process because individuals who are motivated to learn tend to be more responsive to creative stimulation from their leaders. By testing this model, research is expected to make a significant contribution to explaining the internal mechanisms that influence innovative behavior through leadership and learning.

H_7: Motivation to learn mediates the effect of transformational leadership on innovative work behavior.

Research Methods

Data

This study aims to examine the effect of TL on IWB, with KS and MoL as mediating variables. The research context is focused on state and private universities in Padang City. A total of 150 lecturers were selected as respondents using the purposive sampling method, with the criteria of lecturers who have worked for at least one year full time. TL variables were measured using a scale adapted from Gao and Gao (2024) consisting of 6 items, "My leader gives encouragement and recognition to staff". KS is measured using an instrument from Lu et al. (2006), "In my daily work, I take the initiative to impart business knowledge to colleagues.", while motivation to learn is Noe and Schmitt (1986), "I will try to learn as much as I can from my job". IWB measured using an instrument from De Jong and Den Hartog (2010) consisting of 7 items, "I always care about the problems that occur around my work environment".

Samples and Procedures

Respondents in this study were lecturers (full-time lecturer and ≥1 year job tenure) from various faculties and study programs at state and private universities in Padang City (online survey). The sample size of 150 was deemed appropriate based on the heuristic rule of thumb of 5-10 observations per parameter (23-item) (Hair et al., 2017). All variables were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The collected data were analyzed using SEM-PLS using JASP software. Mediation analysis in this study was conducted using a variance-based SEM approach with JASP software. This method was chosen because it is more robust for complex models with multiple mediators and a relatively small sample size, which may not fulfill the strict assumptions of covariance-based SEM.

The analysis began with confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to test the construct validity and reliability of the measurement instrument. Furthermore, direct and indirect relationships between the research variables were tested, including the mediating role of KS and motivation to learn in the influence of TL on IWB.

Results and Discussion

Table 1. Respondent Profile

Profile	Description	Frequency	Per cent (%)
University	Public	36	24
	Private	114	76
Gender	Male	68	45.33
	Female	82	54.66
Age (years old)	26 – 31	8	5.33
	32 – 37	38	25.33
	38 – 43	31	20.66
	44 – 49	23	15.33
	50 – 55	34	22.66
	>56	16	10.66
Marital status	Married	138	92
	Not Married	12	8
Educational background	Master	107	71.33
	Doctoral/PhD	43	28.66
Tenure (years of experience)	0 – 3	12	8
	4 – 6	9	6
	7 – 9	38	25.33
	10 – 12	26	17.33
	13 – 14	6	4
	>15 years	59	39.33

Source: Data processing, 2025

The descriptive statistics results in Table 1 show that the majority of respondents in this study came from private universities (76%) compared to state universities (24%). In terms of gender, female respondents (54.66%) were slightly more than male respondents (45.33%). For age distribution, the majority were in the 32–37 years age range (25.33%), followed by 7–9 years of work experience (25.33%) and more than 15 years (39.33%). Most respondents were married (92%), and the education level was dominated by master's graduates (71.33%). These data provide a general picture that the population studied was relatively experienced and had a fairly high academic background.

Table 2. Correlation between Variables

Variables		KS	IWB	MoL	TL
1. KS	Pearson's r	-			
	p-value	-			
2. IWB	Pearson's r	0.586	-		
	p-value	< .001	-		
3. MoL	Pearson's r	0.573	0.563	-	
	p-value	< .001	< .001	-	
4. TL	Pearson's r	0.293	0.299	0.114	-
	p-value	< .001	< .001	0.165	-

Note. KS: knowledge sharing, IWB: innovative work behavior, MoL: motivation to learn, TL: transformational leadership
Source: Data processing, 2025

Table 2 showed a significant positive relationship between KS and IWB ($r = 0.586$, $p < .001$), indicating that the higher the KS practice, the higher the IWB. A positive correlation was

also found between motivation to learn (MoL) with KS (r = 0.573) and with IWB (r = 0.563), both significant at p < .001. Meanwhile, TL (TL) showed a positive but weaker correlation with KS and IWB (r = 0.293 and r = 0.299, both p < .001), and was not significant with MoL (r = 0.114, p = 0.165). These results emphasize the importance of KS and motivation to learn factors in enhancing innovation in the workplace.

Table 3. Fit Model

Index	Value
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	0.904
Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI)	0.891
Bentler-Bonett Non-normed Fit Index (NNFI)	0.891
Bentler-Bonett Normed Fit Index (NFI)	0.825
Parsimony Normed Fit Index (PNFI)	0.730
Bollen's Relative Fit Index (RFI)	0.802
Bollen's Incremental Fit Index (IFI)	0.905
Relative Noncentrality Index (RNI)	0.904

Source: Data processing, 2025

Model fit testing (Table 3) shows adequate results. CFI value of 0.904 and the Incremental Fit Index (IFI) of 0.905 indicate a good level of suitability (CFI and IFI> 0.90). However, the TLI value of 0.891 and RFI of 0.802 are slightly below the ideal limit of 0.90, although still in the acceptable category (Hair et al., 2017). In addition, the NFI of 0.825 and the PNFI of 0.730 also indicate a parsimonious but fairly representative model. Overall, the model used in this study is quite good at representing empirical data.

Table 4. Results of Validity and Reliability Testing with CFA

Variables	Items	Factor loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	AVE
Knowledge Sharing	KS_1	0.887	0.892	0.601
	KS_2	0.756		
	KS_3	0.863		
	KS_4	0.855		
	KS_5	0.668		
	KS_6	0.560		
Innovative Work Behavior	IWB_1	0.514	0.820	0.429
	IWB_2	0.613		
	IWB_3	0.534		
	IWB_4	0.758		
	IWB_5	0.772		
	IWB_6	0.676		
	IWB_7	0.550		
Transformational Leadership	TL_1	0.842	0.953	0.773
	TL_2	0.893		
	TL_3	0.889		
	TL_4	0.900		
	TL_5	0.876		
	TL_6	0.870		
Motivation to Learn	MoL_1	0.787	0.838	0.570
	MoL_2	0.710		
	MoL_3	0.802		
	MoL_4	0.720		

Source: Data processing, 2025

The results of the CFA analysis show that all variables have good construct reliability. Cronbach Alpha for KS is 0.892, IWB is 0.820, TL is 0.953, and Motivation to Learn is 0.838, all of which are above the minimum standard of 0.7 (Table 4). The AVE values for all constructs also

support convergent validity, except for IWB (AVE = 0.429), which is slightly below the ideal limit of 0.5 (Hair et al., 2017). However, since the construct demonstrates strong reliability (CR = 0.820), it can still be considered acceptable. However, overall, the results of this CFA support that valid and reliable.

Table 5. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

KS	IWB	TL	MoL
1.000			
0.696	1.000		
0.308	0.264	1.000	
0.658	0.680	0.110	1.000

Note. KS: knowledge sharing, IWB: innovative work behavior, MoL: motivation to learn, TL: transformational leadership
Source: Data processing, 2025

HTMT Results (Table 5) show that all correlation values between constructs are below 0.85, which is the maximum value recommended to indicate good discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2017). For example, the HTMT between KS and IWB is 0.696, and between KS and TL is 0.308. Thus, it can be concluded that each construct is unique and is able to measure different concepts, supporting the discriminant validity of the model.

Table 6. Collinearity Statistics

	Tolerance	VIF
KS	0.619	1.616
MoL	0.668	1.497
TL	0.910	1.099

Note. KS: knowledge sharing, MoL: motivation to learn, TL: transformational leadership
Source: Data processing, 2025

To assess potential common method bias (Table 6), we examined the full collinearity variance inflation factor (VIF) values of the constructs. The results show that all VIF values ranged from 1.099 to 1.616, which are well below the recommended threshold of 3.3 (Hair et al., 2017). This indicates that multicollinearity is not a concern and that common method bias is unlikely to threaten the validity of the findings in this study.

Hypothesis Testing Results

Table 7. Direct Effects

Relationships	Estimates	Std. error	p-value	95% Confidence interval	
				Lower	Upper
TL→IWB	0.029	0.011	0.012	0.006	0.051
TL→KS	0.052	0.014	< .001	0.025	0.079
KS→IWB	0.337	0.077	< .001	0.185	0.489
TL→MoL	0.020	0.014	0.160	-0.008	0.048
MoL→IWB	0.352	0.075	< .001	0.206	0.498

Note. KS: knowledge sharing, IWB: innovative work behavior, MoL: motivation to learn, TL: transformational leadership
Source: Data processing, 2025

The direct effect test (Table 7) shows that all relationships between variables have a positive direction, reinforcing that internal factors and the work environment support IWB. TL has a positive effect on IWB (Estimate = 0.029, p = 0.012). The psychological mechanism behind this relationship is that TL encourages cognitive and emotional changes in employees and increases

inspiration. With this leadership style, individuals feel more motivated to go beyond the boundaries of routine tasks and produce innovative solutions at work. The hypothesis that TL has a positive effect on IWB is proven to be supported (H1 = supported).

Similar results show that TL also has a positive effect on KS (Estimate = 0.052, $p < 0.001$). Psychologically, TL creates a safe psychological climate where employees feel satisfied sharing ideas without fear of criticism or punishment. This builds a sense of openness and interpersonal trust, which are important prerequisites for effective KS. The hypothesis that TL has a positive effect on KS is proven to be supported (H2 = supported).

Furthermore, KS has a positive effect on IWB (Estimate = 0.337, $p < 0.001$). Psychologically, KS enriches an individual's cognitive capacity; when individuals feel involved in the exchange of ideas, they are motivated to develop innovation because they feel that their contributions are appreciated and supported. The hypothesis that KS has a positive effect on IWB is proven to be supported (H4 = supported).

However, the influence of TL on motivation to learn, although positive (Estimate = 0.020), is not statistically significant ($p = 0.160$). This shows that although theoretically transformational leaders can foster a desire to learn through inspiring vision and intellectual challenges, in the context of this study, the relationship is not strong enough because individual intrinsic factors are more dominant in generating learning motivation. The hypothesis that TL has a positive effect on motivation to learn is not proven (H5 = rejected).

In addition, motivation to learn also shows a positive influence on IWB (Estimate = 0.352, $p < 0.001$). In terms of psychological mechanisms, motivation to learn fosters a growth mindset; individuals who have a strong drive to continue learning tend to be more adaptive, creative, and proactive in introducing new ideas. The hypothesis that motivation to learn has a positive influence on IWB is proven to be supported (H6 = supported).

Table 8. Indirect Effects

Relationships	Estimates	Std. error	p-value	95% Confidence interval	
				Lower	Upper
TL→KS→IWB	0.018	0.006	0.005	0.005	0.030
TL→MoL→IWB	0.007	0.005	0.178	-0.003	0.017

Note. KS: knowledge sharing, IWB: innovative work behavior, MoL: motivation to learn, TL: transformational leadership
Source: Data processing, 2025

In the indirect path (Table 8), it was found that TL indirect effect on IWB through KS (Estimate = 0.018, $p = 0.005$). The underlying psychological mechanism is that TL creates a collaborative and supportive atmosphere, which encourages employees to share knowledge. This shared knowledge enriches individuals' cognitive resources, which in turn increases their innovative capacity. In other words, sharing ideas and information becomes a psychological bridge that strengthens the influence of leadership on innovation. Partial mediation due to TL to IWB remains significant, indicating that KS acts as a partial mediator in the relationship between TL and IWB (H3 = supported).

Meanwhile, the indirect effect of TL on IWB through motivation to learn is positive but not significant (Estimate = 0.007, $p = 0.178$). In terms of psychological mechanisms, transformational leaders can provide intellectual inspiration and foster interest in learning. However, in this study, learning motivation is more influenced by internal factors than leadership style. This indicates that the spirit of learning that comes from within the individual has a greater role in encouraging innovation compared to relying only on external influences such as leadership. This finding suggests that although TL can facilitate a learning environment, in this context, motivation to learn does not significantly bridge the relationship between leadership and innovative behaviour. This confirms that learning motivation tends to be intrinsic and is not always directly influenced by leadership style (H7 = rejected).

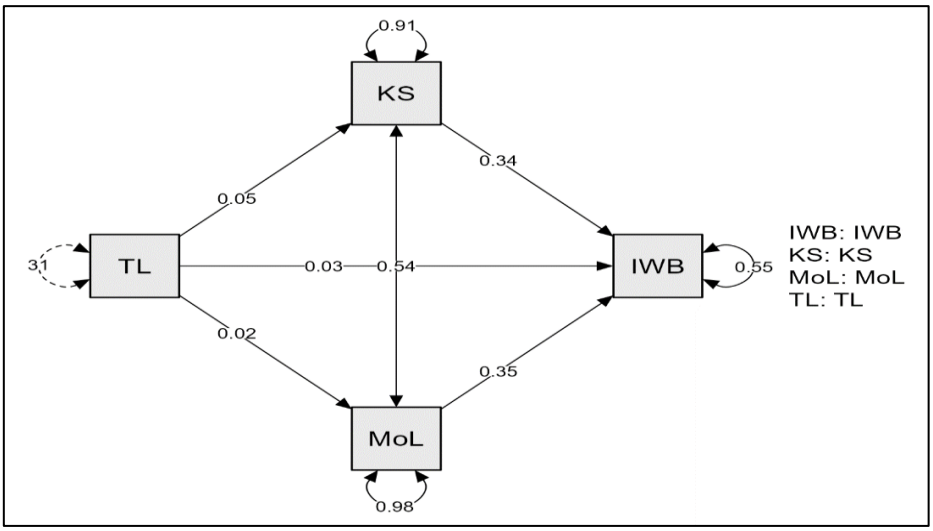

Figure 2. Path Plot

Conclusion and Implications

The results of hypothesis testing in this study consistently show that internal factors (motivation to learn) and work environment factors (TL and KS) contribute significantly to increasing IWB in higher education environments. These results are consistent with the study of Thalia and Harsanti (2023) that TL not only increases job satisfaction but also stimulates creativity by providing intellectual challenges. Other studies also show that supportive working conditions, where leaders act as role models and motivators, have a direct impact on increasing IWB in organizational environments (Abid et al., 2023; Afsar & Umrani, 2019). The consistency of these findings strengthens the argument that the presence of transformational leaders can create an innovative atmosphere in higher education institutions.

Transformational leadership cultivates an organizational learning culture by emphasizing intrinsic work motivation, facilitating continuous learning in organizations (Chabibie et al., 2021; Udin, 2024). This intrinsic motivation drives individuals to engage in learning processes more proactively, fostering an environment that encourages KS. Rahman et al. (2023) highlight that leaders employing transformational tactics such as intellectual stimulation and individualized attention can effectively influence their subordinates' innovative behaviors. Transformational leaders inspire their followers to approach their work with renewed vigor, embodying the organizational vision and pursuing innovation aligned with these goals (Pradhan & Jena, 2019).

In addition, KS and motivation to learn have also been shown to encourage lecturers to explore new ideas and transform them into real, innovative actions in the workplace. This finding is consistent with several studies, such as Sudibjo and Prameswari (2021) found that lecturers who actively share knowledge often exhibit higher levels of creativity and innovation in completing tasks. Similar findings were expressed by Wang et al. (2017), who stated that KS facilitates the exchange and integration of information, thereby stimulating creativity and work initiative. In addition, motivation to learn, especially intrinsic motivation, has also been shown to encourage IWB. Masood and Afsar (2017) showed that individuals with high learning motivation are more open to new knowledge and tend to adopt innovative approaches. However, interestingly, the relationship between TL and motivation to learn was not significant, suggesting that motivation to learn is more intrinsic and cannot be fully mediated by leadership style.

Theoretically, these results enrich the understanding of the literature on organizational behaviour and leadership, especially in the context of higher education. This study shows that KS partially mediates the effect of transformational leadership on innovative work behavior, reinforcing the knowledge-based view and extending organizational learning theory by emphasizing collective knowledge processes as drivers of innovation. Conversely, the non-significant role of motivation to learn challenges motivational theories that often link learning drive directly to innovation, suggesting that in Indonesian higher education, organizational and cultural factors may

outweigh individual motivation. These findings refine transformational leadership theory by demonstrating that its influence on innovation is context-dependent, with collective knowledge processes playing a more decisive role than personal learning motivation. These findings support and extend the TL model by showing that the influence of leadership on innovation is not only direct but also mediated by KS as a cognitive-social mechanism. This study confirms the studies of Udin and Shaikh (2022) and Puspita et al. (2022), further strengthening the finding that KS is an effective mediating variable in mediating the influence of TL on IWB.

Another important contribution is the identification that motivation to learn, although significant to IWB, cannot be automatically fostered through leadership influence alone. Thus, this study emphasizes the importance of integrating individual psychological approaches (such as a growth mindset) and collaborative work environment approaches to create sustainable, innovative ecosystems in educational institutions.

From a practical perspective, the results of this study provide important recommendations for Indonesian higher education leaders in shaping an innovative work culture among lecturers. Academic leaders should adopt a more transformative leadership style, acting not only as administrative decision-makers but also as agents of change who provide inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and psychological safety for academic staff. In addition, universities need to facilitate structured forums and systems that strengthen KS, such as communities of practice, cross-disciplinary collaboration, and low-cost digital platforms, including AI-based tools that allow lecturers to exchange knowledge effectively despite resource limitations. Leadership training modules tailored to the higher education context are also essential, equipping leaders with the skills to foster collaboration, manage digital transitions, and sustain innovation in resource-constrained environments.

This study shows that TL has a positive effect on IWB, both directly and through the mediation of KS. Inspirational and supportive leadership styles encourage employees' innovative commitment, while KS and learning motivation are also shown to contribute directly to IWB. However, the direct effect of leadership on learning motivation is not significant, indicating that intrinsic factors drive motivation. Theoretically, this study extends the IWB literature by integrating the psychological roles of leadership, KS, and learning motivation. These findings emphasize the importance of participative leadership styles and KS channels in driving innovation. The proposed conceptual model is relevant for further studies in the field of human resource management, especially in higher education.

In practice, the results of the study encourage academic leaders to implement TL and create a collaborative ecosystem and a culture of continuous learning. Although the influence of leadership on learning motivation is not significant, strengthening learning initiatives remains crucial to encourage lecturers' innovation in carrying out the tri dharma. However, the limitations of this study lie in the geographical context and cross-sectional approach, which limit generalization and understanding of causality. Moderator variables such as organizational culture or digital leadership (Jadmiko et al., 2025) have also not been studied, which could enrich the model more holistically.

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