

## Determinants of Innovative Work Behavior of MSME Employees during the Covid-19 Pandemic in Pematangsiantar City

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### **Abstract**

The main objective of this study is to determine the contribution of transformational leadership, psychological empowerment, and knowledge sharing to innovative work behavior. This study's research method includes library and field research design with a quantitative approach. The research subjects taken in this study were SME actors in the culinary sector in Pematangsiantar City. The research was carried out in eight sub-districts in Pematangsiantar City. Data collection techniques using observation, interviews, questionnaires, and documentation. The data analysis method used is Partial Least Square (PLS). The data analysis test tool uses the Smartpls statistical software. The results of the data analysis concluded that transformational leadership, psychological empowerment, and knowledge sharing positively and significantly affect innovative work behavior. The theoretical implication of this study concludes that aspects of knowledge sharing, psychological empowerment, and transformational leadership are important stimulants to encourage innovative work behavior. Furthermore, the managerial implications in this study conclude that aspects of knowledge sharing, psychological empowerment, and transformational leadership require serious attention for business actors to encourage more innovative work behavior.

**Keywords:** transformational leadership; psychological empowerment; knowledge sharing; innovative work behavior

### **Abstrak**

Tujuan utama dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui kontribusi dari transformational leadership, psychological empowerment, serta knowledge sharing terhadap perilaku kerja inovatif. Metode penelitian dalam penelitian ini meliputi desain penelitian kepustakaan dan lapangan dengan pendekatan kuantitatif. Subjek penelitian yang diambil dalam penelitian ini adalah pelaku UKM sektor kuliner di Kota Pematangsiantar. Pelaksanaan penelitian dilakukan pada delapan Kecamatan yang ada di Kota Pematangsiantar. Teknik Pengumpulan data menggunakan observasi, wawancara, kuesioner dan dokumentasi. Metode analisis data yang digunakan adalah Partial Least Square (PLS). Alat uji analisis data menggunakan perangkat lunak statistik Smartpls. Hasil analisis data menyimpulkan transformational leadership, psychological empowerment, serta knowledge sharing berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap perilaku kerja inovatif. Implikasi teoritis penelitian ini menyimpulkan aspek knowledge sharing, psychological empowerment, dan transformational leadership merupakan stimulan yang penting untuk mendorong innovative work behavior. Selanjutnya, untuk implikasi manajerial dalam penelitian ini menyimpulkan untuk aspek knowledge sharing, psychological empowerment, dan transformational leadership diperlukan perhatian yang serius bagi pelaku usaha untuk mendorong perilaku kerja yang lebih inovatif.

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**Kata Kunci:** transformational leadership; psychological empowerment; knowledge sharing; innovative work behavior

## INTRODUCTION

During the Covid-19 pandemic, many companies have reduced staff. That way, the workload increases for retained employees due to a lack of Human Resources (Van Den Hooff and Ridder 2004); (Akram et al. 2018). A strategy for enhancing employees' proactive behavior is the application of transformational leadership and psychological empowerment. This approach is thought to be appropriate in forming innovative work behavior in order to carry out and complete work as efficiently as possible during the Covid-19 pandemic. Additionally, if there is support for information exchange, then in our opinion this may aid employees in developing their creative work capacity in carrying out their roles and responsibilities. Employee motivation will generally increase if their work is relevant (Anser et al. 2020); (Radaelli et al. 2014). In the current digital world, innovative workplace behavior is essential for a firm. Understanding employee behavior is crucial for organizational executives in order to forecast and foster constructive staff performance (Gozukara, Yildirim, and Yildiz 2016). Because employees believe they receive more ideas and inspiration, their capacity is growing along with their ambition to create.

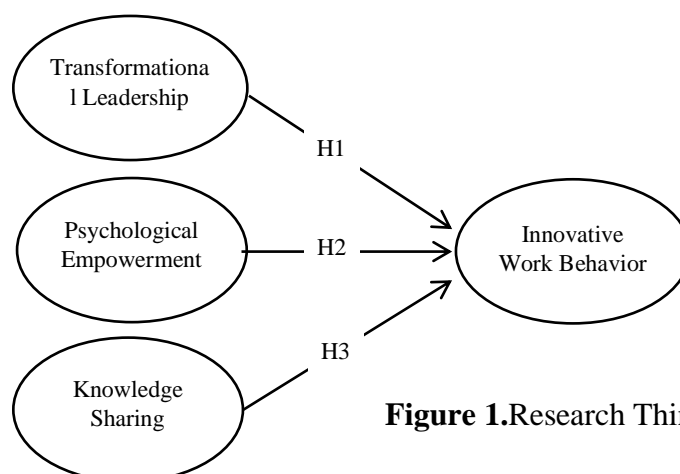
Innovative work behavior determines an organization's competitive advantage (Axtell, Holman, and Wall 2006); (Afsar and Umrani 2020). Activities including employee growth, employee advancement, and the application of practical innovations at any organizational level are referred to as innovative work behavior (Janssen 2000). Innovative work practices involve the creation of fresh concepts, methodologies, and tools as well as the testing and implementation of novel approaches to vital elements affecting an organization's competitive edge (De Jong and Den Hartog 2010). Activities including employee development, employee advancement, and the application of beneficial innovations at any level of the business are referred to as innovative work behavior. To put it another way, creative behavior is the discovery and use of new technology or work methods to improve upon already completed jobs (Silalahi et al. 2022). On the other hand, innovative work behavior is described as channeling all individual activities in any organization into production, promotion, and innovation development (Efendi et al. 2022). Innovative work behavior includes developing new ideas and testing and applying new methods related to business procedures in certain work areas (Muchiri et al. 2020); (Aldabbas, Pinnington, and Lahrech 2020). Organizations need to develop innovations to meet the problems and challenges that arise due to increasing global competition and market changes (Djajasinga et al. 2021); (Prabowo, Mustika, and Sjabadhyni 2018).

Innovative work behavior is reflected as a deliberate act of workers towards the realization of new ideas to perform activities in the workplace in a better way (Hartini, Sudirman, and Wardhana 2021); (Almulhim 2020). Innovative work behavior is a procedure for identifying, encouraging, realizing, and implementing ideas in certain operations within an organization that provides performance improvement benefits at the individual and organizational levels (Ayesha et al. 2021). This challenge requires employees to engage in innovative behavior to increase the competitive advantage of SMEs. The main problem of this study is that the innovative work behavior of MSME employees has decreased due to the imbalance in the implementation of transformational leadership, psychological empowerment, and knowledge sharing. The existence of behavior that leads to innovation is one of the important factors for the company because it can guarantee business growth and become a strong pillar in driving its success (Ayesha et al. 2021); (Knezovic and Drkic 2021). The next problem regarding employee work innovation is the lack of attention from the leadership regarding the work needs of each employee, so this triggers a slowdown in their proactive behavior (Wu, Lin, and Hsu 2007). Therefore, designing jobs

following their capacities and desires can improve employee innovative work behavior because innovative work behavior only arises in employees who have an initiative spirit and can try to implement it in real work (Nurjaman et al. 2019); (Afsar, Masood, and Umrani 2019).

To support the implementation of innovative work behavior, support from various aspects is needed, such as transformational leadership, psychological empowerment, and knowledge sharing (Aydin and Erkilic 2020); (Imran, Zaheer, and Noreen 2011); (Spreitzer 1995). Personal attention and support of transformational leaders to followers' needs and requirements can increase their influence on employee involvement in encouraging creative activities (Gashema 2021). The results of several studies show that transformational leadership has a significant positive effect on employees' innovative work behavior (Alnajjar and Hashim 2020); (Gashema 2021). Employees that feel psychologically empowered will have more confidence in their ability to think creatively, behave pro-actively, take the initiative, and work autonomously (Sherly et al. 2022). The findings of several research on psychological empowerment demonstrate that it significantly improves workers' innovative work behavior (Rahman, Panatik, and Alias 2014); (Nasir, Halimatussakdiah, and Suryani 2018). Sharing knowledge is essential since it may significantly improve employees' job happiness and foster creativity at work (Almulhim 2020); (Nguyen et al. 2020). The results of several studies examining knowledge sharing show that knowledge sharing has a significant positive effect on employees' innovative work behavior (Widyani, Sarmawa, and Dewi 2017); (Munir and Beh 2019).

Researchers believe that if these three aspects can be managed optimally, it will directly impact the innovative work behavior of sustainable MSME employees. This is because by studying it, every MSME owner has the opportunity to ensure business growth and become a strong pillar to encourage the company's success. The urgency of this study is to attempt to use transformational leadership, psychological empowerment, and knowledge sharing variables as a stimulant in predicting the innovative work behavior of MSME employees given the importance of knowing the extent of understanding of each MSME actor related to these concepts. Researchers are interested in studying this further because there is currently little information on knowledge sharing, psychological empowerment, and transformational leadership with creative work behavior in Indonesia. In addition, researchers see that there are still many phenomena related to these variables in the MSME sector and the impact caused by the inability to share knowledge with business owners, the imbalance between personal and work life, and the ineffectiveness of transformational leadership on innovative work behavior of employees. Affect the effectiveness of business operations. Therefore, this study will see whether there is a positive relationship between transformational leadership, psychological empowerment, and knowledge sharing on innovative work behavior. The main objective of this study is to determine the contribution of transformational leadership, psychological empowerment, and knowledge sharing to innovative work behavior. Through this research, it is hoped that it can provide a basic contribution in the form of supporting information related to strategic steps in optimizing human resources owned by MSME business actors.



**Figure 1.**Research Thinking Framework

From Figure 1 above, the research hypotheses can be formulated, including:

H1 = Transformational leadership affect innovative work behavior

H2 = Psychological empowerment affects innovative work behavior

H3 = Knowledge sharing affects innovative work behavior

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a literature and field research design with a quantitative approach. The research plan is carried out from early 2022 until the end of 2022. All MSME employees from Pematangsiantar City's food, fashion, agricultural, automotive, tour and travel, and beauty and personal care firms make up the study's population. The convenience sampling approach was utilized in this study since it is the quickest way possible given the time limits, and anyone who just happens to run into the researcher can be used as a sample provided they are deemed eligible as a data source. (Hair 2014) claims that if the population is unknown, it is possible to estimate the number of samples by multiplying it by 5–10 times the number of indicators used in a single construct. Since there are 17 indicators from 4 dimensions of existing variables used in this study,  $17 \times 10 = 170$  research samples were collected. Partial Least Squares is the technique used for data analysis (PLS). The statistical program Smartpls 3.0 is used by the data analysis test tool. The analysis stage consists of testing the validity and reliability and evaluating the external model with converge. Convergent validity expectations are  $> 0.7$ . (Hair 2014). The internal assessment model evaluates the R Square (R<sup>2</sup>) value using the criteria that the R<sup>2</sup> value is between 0.5 and 0.6, which is good, 0 to 0.33, which is moderate, and 0 to 0.19, which is poor. Reviewing the F-Square (f<sup>2</sup>) value next using the assessment criteria of 0.02 for weak, 0.15 for moderate, and 0.35 for big (Hair 2014). The last criterion for determining significance and probability values below 0.05 is testing the hypothesis.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Outer Model Measurement

In the validity test presented in table 2 below, the value of each loading factor and AVE on the indicator of knowledge sharing, psychological empowerment, transformational leadership, and innovative work behavior is above 0.7 for the loading factor and above 0.5 for AVE, so it indicates that all items used in the construct are valid. Furthermore, the value for each Reliability as measured by the composite reliability value and Cronbach's alpha, it is known that knowledge sharing, psychological empowerment, transformational leadership, and innovative work behavior have a value above 0.7, thus indicating that all research variables have an excellent reliability value. Furthermore, judging from the R-square value of the endogenous variable, the value obtained is 0.662 for innovative work behavior, this shows that the overall ability of exogenous variables to explain innovative work behavior is strong (Ghozali 2014).

**Table 2.** Validity, Reliability, and R-Square test

Variables	Items	Outer Loading	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha
Knowledge Sharing	Social Interaction (KS1)	0.727	<b>0.6200</b>	<b>0.890</b>	<b>0.846</b>
	Experience Sharing (KS2)	0.776			
	Informal Relationship (KS3)	0.827			
	Observation (KS4)	0.801			
	Mutual Trust (KS5)	0.799			

Variables	Items	Outer Loading	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha
Psychological Empowerment	Meaning (PE1)	0.880	<b>0.720</b>	<b>0.911</b>	<b>0.869</b>
	Competence (PE2)	0.866			
	Self-Determination (PE3)	0.859			
	Impact (PE4)	0.785			
Transformational Leadership	Idealistic Influence (TL1)	0.873	<b>0.709</b>	<b>0.907</b>	<b>0.863</b>
	Individualized Consideration (TL2)	0.856			
	Intellectual Stimulation (TL3)	0.818			
	Inspirational Motivation (TL4)	0.820			
Innovative Work Behavior	Idea Exploration (IWB1)	0.798	<b>0.741</b>	<b>0.919</b>	<b>0.882</b>
	Idea Generation (IWB2)	0.841			
	Idea Champion (IWB3)	0.912			
	Idea Implementation (IWB4)	0.887			
<b>R-Square</b>					
		<i>R-square</i>	<i>R-square Adjusted</i>		
Innovative Work Behavior		0.662	0.656		

Source: Data Processing Results (2022)

### Hypotheses Test

The association between the exogenous and endogenous factors was also determined using a significance test, which was also performed. The p-value revealed the significance criteria. If the p-value between the exogenous and endogenous variables is less than 0.05 and the significance level is 5%, the exogenous factors substantially influence the endogenous variable. In contrast, if the value is greater than 0.05, the exogenous factors have no impact on how the endogenous variable is constructed. The results of the hypothesis test are presented in Table 3:

**Table 3.** Hypotheses Result

Hypotheses	Coefficients	t-Statistics	P-Value	Result
Knowledge Sharing→ Innovative Work Behavior (H1)	0.144	1994	0.046	Accepted
Psychological Empowerment→ Innovative Work Behavior (H2)	0.452	5.857	0.000	Accepted
Transformational Leadership→ Innovative Work Behavior (H3)	0.348	5.823	0.000	Accepted

Source: Data Processing Results (2022)

Based on the results of testing the first hypothesis (H1), obtained results that lead to positive and significant results between knowledge sharing and innovative work behavior. This proves that the knowledge-sharing aspect of employees is important to be managed by the company to improve innovative work behavior. In business, the role of employees is very

important for the company's sustainability (Sa'adah and Rijanti 2022). Without competent and good quality employees, a company can fall and have a bad reputation. Therefore, many companies are competing to increase the competency capacity of their employees. Knowledge sharing is important to help a person or organization maintain a competitive advantage in a dynamic environment (Sherly et al. 2021). This condition occurs between individuals, producing new knowledge to produce innovation. However, there is the biggest challenge in implementing this knowledge sharing, which considers knowledge the most valuable thing for him. Hence, he is reluctant to share his knowledge with others. So it is necessary to change the individual's behavior because the knowledge sharing activity is the first step in applying knowledge sharing (Chai, Das, and Rao 2011). Their company aims to grow along with more competent employees or employees. Furthermore, the main factor for the success of knowledge-sharing activities is having a common language in communicating with all employees in a company.

The relationship between psychological empowerment and innovative work behavior has been shown to be favorable and significant based on the findings of testing the second hypothesis (H2). These findings support the notion that one of the most effective motivating strategies for encouraging workers to choose their tasks carefully is psychological empowerment. This serves as the foundation for certain employees' highly motivated performance of all tasks (Aldabbas et al. 2020). Employees that are psychologically driven can advance or accomplish tasks without substantial difficulties or responsibilities. This circumstance will motivate them to promote innovation in the job they are assigned and to feel confident in their ability to carry out their tasks. Companies that value employee empowerment frequently give out prizes depending on their financial performance. The goal of empowerment is to alter managerial roles and practices (Javed et al. 2019). Only a culture of high standards, where everyone feels respected and cherished, and where individuals consistently give their best can begin the process of empowerment. Leadership support is also necessary for the empowerment process since without it, cultural transformation would be challenging and empowerment may not be feasible to achieve (Efendi et al. 2022). Researchers and organizational practitioners have identified psychological empowerment as the main construct for shaping strong innovative work behaviors.

Based on the results of testing the third hypothesis (H3), obtained results that lead to positive and significant results between transformational leadership and innovative work behavior. Transformational leadership is one element that shapes the innovation process in the workplace. Transformational leadership can help employees achieve better future goals by making employees feel useful, valued, and involved in the organization. Leadership is an element that must exist in an organization, whether bad or successful or not an organization is determined by transformational leadership (Li et al. 2020). Therefore, the role of transformational leaders is the most important part of a company or organization. A wise leader must have great credibility and reputation. Because with that reputation, he can inspire and motivate everyone (employees/subordinates) both internally and externally because a leader must be able to make everyone realize that change is important. In this case, the efforts that must be made to explore various aspects of effective leaders must be carried out continuously because the success of an organization, both as a whole and as a group, is very dependent on the quality of transformational leadership in the organization concerned. In addition, companies need individuals with the desire and ability to introduce something new such as innovative work behavior, because it can refer to things that are beneficial to the work, group, or organization (Butarbutar et al. 2022). On the other hand, a transformational leader must be responsible for the management of the company as a whole, because the leader is in addition to building a vision, a mission is also in charge of making strategic plans both in the long and short term, in addition to setting the company's goals, mission and strategies (Ling and Ling 2012).

## CONCLUSION

This study's results concluded that knowledge sharing, psychological empowerment, and transformational leadership positively and significantly influence innovative work behavior. The results of this study conclude that in an organization, it is very necessary to share knowledge in setting the vision, mission, and goals of the organization, this is useful for determining the direction of the running of an organization, both planning what to do, and how to develop an effective and strategic plan in setting goals, in order to get maximum results. The results of this study conclude that transformational leaders are responsible for the company's overall management in solving problems in various ways to achieve company goals. So, The leader's job in strategic management is multidimensional and oriented toward the organization's welfare as a whole. The transformational leadership applied by business actors has succeeded in encouraging an increase in innovative work behavior in their daily work. The more aspects are available in work following the employees' wishes, the higher the innovative work behavior they do. The theoretical implication of this study concludes that aspects of knowledge sharing, psychological empowerment, and transformational leadership are important stimulants to encourage innovative work behavior. Theoretically, creating an innovative work culture requires an effort so that employees want to share their knowledge with co-workers.

The managerial implication in this study concludes that the knowledge-sharing aspect requires serious attention for business actors. The development of information technology after the Covid-19 pandemic has progressed rapidly, and many solutions have been offered, such as the existence of the virtual community. The role of information communication technology today allows a community to share knowledge with people scattered in different places so that they can still share knowledge despite obstacles or limitations. There are two types of interaction in a virtual community: face-to-face and online. So that it can be a means to implement a social exchange, this can make it easier for an organization to achieve the vision and mission that has been implemented. Knowledge sharing and psychological empowerment can be carried out across groups within the company. For example, a new employee who has a brilliant idea for marketing can be shared it with his seniors who are there. In addition, if someone has the best method in solving a situation for a problem, he can pass it on to others through this method as well. Further research on innovative work behavior can develop and explore matters relating to variables suspected to have a relationship with the development of innovative work behavior, such as cultural diversity, organizational commitment, reward, work satisfaction, and organizational citizenship behavior. Furthermore, the sample size used in the study is still small and has not been able to provide general generalizations, further research should add a larger sample size from different regions. On the other hand, data analysis methods can be used using the Amos application for larger sample sizes and more complex models.

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