



Psychological Safety as a Catalyst for Innovative Work Behavior: The Mediating Role of Knowledge Sharing

Adhi Tristan Putranta*, Sri Astuti Pratminingsih

Universitas Widyatama Bandung, Indonesia

Email : tristan.adhi@widyatama.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

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*Corresponding Author

Innovative work behavior is essential for public organizations seeking to improve work processes, service quality, and organizational performance. However, employees' willingness to propose and implement new ideas may depend on whether they feel psychologically safe and are encouraged to exchange knowledge with colleagues. This study examines the effect of psychological safety on innovative work behavior and investigates the mediating role of knowledge sharing in this relationship. This study employed a quantitative explanatory approach with a cross-sectional design. Data were collected from 127 employees using saturated sampling and a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire. The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS. The results indicate that psychological safety positively and significantly affects innovative work behavior ($\beta = 0.291$; $t = 3.692$; $p < 0.001$). Knowledge sharing also has a positive and significant effect on innovative work behavior ($\beta = 0.486$; $t = 6.504$; $p < 0.001$). Furthermore, knowledge sharing significantly mediates the relationship between psychological safety and innovative work behavior ($\beta = 0.328$; $t = 6.004$; $p < 0.001$), indicating partial mediation. These findings suggest that organizations should foster psychologically safe environments, promote open communication, recognize employee contributions, and establish structured knowledge-sharing practices to encourage workplace innovation.

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INTRODUCTION

Innovation in public organizations matters because citizens depend on reliable, timely, transparent, and accessible services, while public employees must respond to changing needs and complex procedures. Innovative work behavior includes generating, promoting, and implementing ideas that improve work processes and organizational outcomes (Abdullah & Sukriyah, 2026;

Anapah et al., 2026). The central point is that public service improvement requires more than formal rules or digital systems; it also depends on employees' willingness to identify problems and develop solutions. This matters because procurement decisions influence the use of public funds and the delivery of goods and services. Research on public procurement highlights the importance of institutional arrangements, implementation capacity, and effective procurement systems (Suryanto & Halim, 2021; Wibowo & Sari, 2022). Therefore, understanding workplace conditions that encourage employee innovation is socially important because it may help public institutions improve procedures while preserving fairness, transparency, and accountability.

Psychological safety, knowledge sharing, and innovative work behavior represent interconnected organizational concepts. Psychological safety refers to employees' perceptions that they can ask questions, acknowledge mistakes, express concerns, and propose changes without fearing humiliation or disproportionate interpersonal consequences (Ardianto et al., 2026; Batara et al., 2026; Evanita et al., 2026). Knowledge sharing involves exchanging work-related information, experiences, and expertise, including contributing knowledge and seeking information from colleagues. Innovative work behavior encompasses generating, promoting, and implementing ideas that improve work practices. These concepts may be connected because employees who feel safe expressing themselves may participate more openly in knowledge exchange, while shared knowledge can provide resources for developing solutions. Chen et al. (2024) associate knowledge-sharing behavior with innovativeness, whereas Wang et al. (2024) distinguish knowledge donating and collecting in relation to innovative work behavior. Accordingly, this study examines whether psychological safety directly influences innovative work behavior and indirectly contributes to it through knowledge sharing.

Public organizations face the challenge of maintaining regulatory compliance while encouraging employees to identify and implement improvements (Anisa, 2026; Putri et al., 2026; Salsabila & Rohmah, 2026). This tension is particularly relevant in procurement, where employees must coordinate activities, interpret technical information, document decisions, and follow established procedures. The study context indicates increasing procurement workload and complexity alongside a gap between proposed and implemented ideas (Naimah & Sa'diyah, 2026; Ulfa & Aldin, 2026). Procurement packages increased from 847 in 2021 to 1,143 in 2024, while contract value rose from IDR 1.245 trillion to IDR 1.742 trillion. Meanwhile, staffing increased from 124 to only 127 employees. In 2025, employees proposed 52 ideas, but 22 were implemented. These figures do not establish that employees lack innovation; instead, they

indicate that generating ideas does not necessarily guarantee implementation. Consequently, examining psychological safety and knowledge sharing may clarify the organizational conditions supporting practical improvements.

Research has examined knowledge exchange and interpersonal conditions as factors associated with innovation. Chen et al. (2024) investigate knowledge-sharing behavior in the relationship between curiosity and innovativeness, while Wang et al. (2024) examine knowledge donating and collecting through enterprise social media. Xu and Suntrayuth (2022) investigate psychological safety and knowledge sharing as sequential mediators of innovative work behavior, while Septiawan (2024) examines knowledge sharing in the relationship between psychological safety and innovation. These studies suggest that knowledge exchange may explain how supportive interpersonal conditions relate to innovative action. However, findings from high-technology enterprises and broader organizational settings cannot automatically be generalized to public procurement units, where regulatory compliance and accountability influence employee discretion (Dermawan & Yusuf, 2026; Manurung et al., 2026). This contextual limitation creates a need for further evidence to establish whether the relationships among psychological safety, knowledge sharing, and innovative work behavior operate similarly within public-sector organizations.

Related studies identify organizational climate, leadership, and employee engagement as additional conditions associated with innovation. Rahnjen et al. (2023) examine organizational climate as a moderator between knowledge sharing and innovative work behavior, while Wahyuni and Fadli (2024) investigate knowledge sharing among local-government employees. Fatahillah and Adnyani (2025) consider work engagement as an intervening variable, whereas Shabrina and Etikariena (2024) examine supervisory developmental feedback alongside psychological safety. Ahn and Park (2026) connect empowering leadership with innovative work behavior through psychological safety and knowledge-sharing intention. Although these studies provide explanations of innovation-related mechanisms, further testing of the proposed direct and indirect relationships in public procurement remains necessary. Specifically, examining psychological safety and knowledge sharing together can clarify whether interpersonal safety and knowledge exchange jointly explain innovative behavior in a setting where employees must balance continuous improvement with procedural compliance and public accountability.

The novelty of this study lies in examining psychological safety and knowledge sharing together as explanations of innovative work behavior within public procurement. Rather than treating innovation solely as employee creativity, the study considers both the interpersonal conditions supporting open expression and the organizational process through which work-related

knowledge circulates. It addresses a practical implementation challenge: how employees' observations and suggestions can become improvements under regulatory and accountability constraints. Knowledge sharing is positioned as a mediating mechanism linking psychological safety with innovative work behavior, while its direct relationship with innovative behavior is examined simultaneously. This approach distinguishes idea generation from the broader process of promoting and implementing improvements. By integrating these relationships within one analytical framework, the study develops a context-sensitive explanation of employee innovation in public administration. Its findings can help clarify how public organizations encourage employee-led improvements without compromising procedural compliance, transparency, or responsible procurement practices.

This study addresses three research questions: whether psychological safety influences innovative work behavior, whether knowledge sharing influences innovative work behavior, and whether knowledge sharing mediates the relationship between psychological safety and innovative work behavior. The proposed argument is that employees who perceive their workplace as interpersonally safe may communicate concerns, exchange experiences, and seek colleagues' expertise more openly. Such exchanges can broaden their understanding of workplace problems and support the development and implementation of solutions. Psychological safety may therefore contribute to innovation both directly and indirectly through knowledge sharing. These relationships are examined using quantitative survey data and structural equation modeling. The study contributes by testing the direct effects and mediating mechanism within a single explanatory framework. Practically, the findings are intended to inform organizational efforts to strengthen open communication, encourage knowledge exchange, and support employee participation in workplace improvement while maintaining accountability and compliance with public procurement requirements.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a quantitative explanatory approach with a cross-sectional design to examine the relationships among psychological safety, knowledge sharing, and innovative work behavior. The quantitative approach was appropriate because the research aimed to test hypothesized relationships using numerical data and statistical procedures. An explanatory design enabled the assessment of direct effects and the mediating role of knowledge sharing within a single analytical framework. Cross-sectional data were collected at one period to capture employees' perceptions and examine the proposed relationships. Quantitative research requires alignment between research

questions, measurement procedures, and analytical techniques to support transparent interpretation of findings (Lim & Koay, 2024; Miller & Lengler, 2025). Accordingly, this design provided a structured basis for evaluating the proposed relationships, although the cross-sectional approach does not independently establish temporal ordering or definitive causal relationships between the variables examined.

The research was conducted among employees of the Bureau of Goods and Services Procurement, Regional Secretariat of West Java Province, Indonesia. This setting was selected because procurement activities require employees to coordinate information, interpret administrative and technical requirements, and comply with formal procedures while identifying opportunities for improvement. These characteristics make the organizational context relevant for examining whether psychological safety and knowledge sharing are associated with innovative work behavior. Procurement work also involves interdependent tasks, meaning that exchanging experiences and communicating concerns may help employees address recurring operational challenges. The study therefore focused on this organizational setting to investigate the proposed relationships within a public-sector environment characterized by procedural and accountability requirements. The contextual focus provides practical relevance, although findings should be generalized cautiously because organizational characteristics and employee experiences may differ across institutions and administrative settings.

The study population comprised 127 employees, and saturated sampling was employed by including all population members as the intended participants. This approach was appropriate because the population was clearly defined and relatively limited in size, allowing the study to seek participation from every eligible employee rather than select a subset. Sampling decisions should reflect the research objectives, population characteristics, and feasibility of collecting data from the target group (Ahmed, 2024). The intended sample therefore consisted of 127 employees. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Questionnaire items measured employees' perceptions of psychological safety, knowledge sharing, and innovative work behavior. Observation and relevant literature provided supporting contextual information. Careful questionnaire design and evaluation are important for reducing measurement errors and strengthening the interpretability of survey findings (Hill et al., 2022; Gottfried, 2024).

Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 3. The analysis evaluated the measurement model before examining the structural relationships among psychological safety, knowledge sharing, and innovative work behavior.

Measurement assessment examined indicator reliability, internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity, while structural assessment considered collinearity, explanatory power, and the significance of hypothesized paths. Hypotheses were tested using bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples, applying a significance threshold of $p < 0.05$. The mediating role of knowledge sharing was assessed through the indirect effect of psychological safety on innovative work behavior. The indirect effect and its bootstrapped uncertainty were considered when evaluating mediation (Sarstedt & Moisescu, 2024; Schuler et al., 2025). This analytical approach supports systematic estimation of direct and indirect relationships in the proposed model (Hair & Alamer, 2022; Guenther et al., 2023).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Structural Model Assessment

The hypotheses were tested using the bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 subsamples in SmartPLS 3. Statistical significance was assessed using a two-tailed 5% significance level, with a critical t -value of 1.96 and a p -value threshold of 0.05. The structural model and the estimated direct and indirect effects are presented in Figure 2, Table 1, and Table 2.

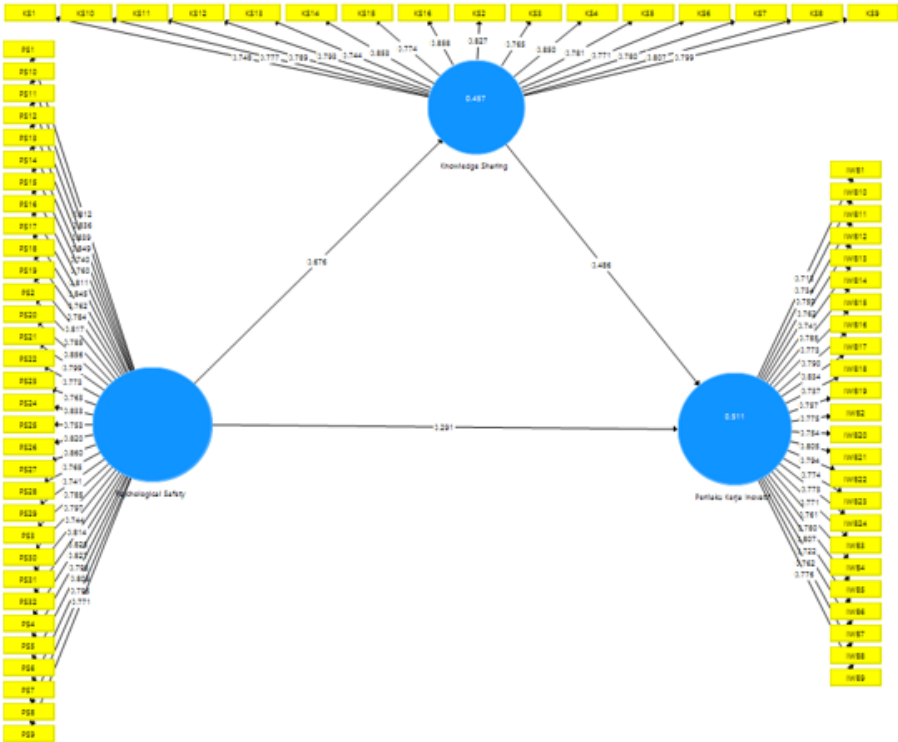


Figure 2. Structural PLS-SEM Model (Bootstrapping)

Figure 2 presents the bootstrapped structural model, including the estimated relationships among psychological safety, knowledge sharing, and innovative work behavior. The model's explanatory power was assessed using the coefficient of determination (R^2), while the significance of the hypothesized relationships was evaluated using the bootstrapped path coefficients, t -statistics, and p -values.

Direct Effects

Table 1. Direct Effects (Path Coefficients – Bootstrapping)

Path / Hypothesis	Original Sample (β)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation	t -Statistic	p -Value
Psychological Safety → Innovative Work Behavior (H1)	0.291	0.290	0.079	3.692	< 0.001
Knowledge Sharing → Innovative Work Behavior (H2)	0.486	0.487	0.075	6.504	< 0.001

As reported in Table 1, psychological safety had a positive and statistically significant relationship with innovative work behavior ($\beta = 0.291$, $t = 3.692$, $p < 0.001$). Accordingly, H1 was supported. Knowledge sharing also had a positive and statistically significant relationship with innovative work behavior ($\beta = 0.486$, $t = 6.504$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H2.

Both estimated path coefficients were positive, and their t -statistics exceeded the critical value of 1.96. The coefficient for knowledge sharing was larger than that for psychological safety. This comparison describes the estimated coefficients within the specified model and does not establish that knowledge sharing is universally more important than other potential determinants of innovative work behavior.

Indirect Effect and Mediation Analysis

Table 2. Indirect Effect through Knowledge Sharing (Bootstrapping)

Indirect Path / Hypothesis	Original Sample (β)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation	t -Statistic	p -Value
Psychological Safety → Knowledge Sharing → Innovative Work Behavior (H3)	0.328	0.331	0.055	6.004	< 0.001

Table 2 shows that the indirect relationship between psychological safety and innovative work behavior through knowledge sharing was positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.328$, $t = 6.004$, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, H3 was supported.

Because the direct relationship between psychological safety and innovative work behavior also remained statistically significant, the results are consistent with partial mediation by knowledge sharing. This classification reflects the significance of the direct and indirect relationships in the estimated model. It does not, by itself, establish a causal mechanism.

Explanatory Power of the Structural Model

The reported (R^2) values were 0.457 for knowledge sharing and 0.511 for innovative work behavior. Thus, the model explained 45.7% of the variance in knowledge sharing and 51.1% of the variance in innovative work behavior. The remaining variance was not explained by the predictors included in the respective structural equations.

These results indicate that the specified model accounts for a proportion of the observed variance in both endogenous constructs. However, (R^2) alone does not establish predictive performance, causal validity, or the practical importance of the model. Further assessment would require additional evidence, including appropriate measurement-model validity assessments and, where relevant, predictive-relevance or out-of-sample prediction analyses.

Measurement Reliability

The reported composite reliability values were 0.983 for psychological safety, 0.965 for knowledge sharing, and 0.972 for innovative work behavior. All three values exceeded the commonly applied threshold of 0.70, indicating high internal consistency for the measurement indicators associated with each construct.

Nevertheless, composite reliability provides evidence of internal consistency rather than comprehensive construct validity. These results should therefore be considered alongside convergent and discriminant validity assessments and an examination of the measurement items. The high coefficients also warrant consideration of potential item redundancy, particularly for psychological safety, whose composite reliability was 0.983.

Discussion

The findings support H1, demonstrating a positive and significant relationship between psychological safety and innovative work behavior ($\beta = 0.291$, $t = 3.692$, $p < 0.001$). This result is consistent with Elsayed et al. (2023), who examined psychological safety in relation to innovative work behavior through error risk-taking and organizational innovation climate. It also aligns with Ahmad et al. (2023), who highlighted the roles of psychological safety and proactive personality in the relationship between ethical leadership and

innovative behavior. These studies suggest that employees' willingness to express ideas and take interpersonal risks is relevant to workplace innovation. The present finding extends this discussion to a local-government procurement unit, where employees must balance improvement initiatives with procedural compliance and accountability. However, the cross-sectional design supports an association rather than a causal conclusion.

The positive relationship between psychological safety and innovative work behavior also corresponds with the broader synthesis by Edmondson and Bransby (2023), who reviewed the development of psychological safety research, and AlEssa and Durugbo (2022), who examined the concepts and contributions of innovative work behavior. Related studies by Li and Tang (2022) and AlMunthiri et al. (2024) further position psychological safety within organizational processes associated with innovation. The current result is consistent with this literature, while its contribution lies in examining the relationship within public procurement administration rather than the organizational settings commonly represented in innovation research. In this context, psychological safety may support employees in raising concerns about technical specifications, identifying procedural weaknesses, and proposing alternative work methods. Such openness must remain compatible with regulatory requirements; psychological safety should facilitate constructive discussion, not weaken professional standards or institutional accountability.

H2 was supported by the positive and significant relationship between knowledge sharing and innovative work behavior ($\beta = 0.486$, $t = 6.504$, $p < 0.001$). This finding is consistent with Wang et al. (2024), who distinguished the mechanisms of knowledge donating and knowledge collecting in relation to employees' innovative work behavior. It also corresponds with Xu and Wei (2023), whose theoretical review discussed knowledge sharing and intellectual capital as resources for workplace innovation. Saif et al. (2024) similarly examined knowledge sharing as a mediating mechanism linking transformational leadership with innovative work behavior and task performance. The present coefficient was larger than the direct coefficient for psychological safety, indicating a stronger estimated association within the specified model, not universal superiority over other innovation determinants. In procurement administration, knowledge exchange may help employees combine regulatory understanding, technical experience, and operational insights when identifying opportunities to improve work processes.

The knowledge-sharing finding also complements Arsawan et al. (2022), who examined how knowledge sharing and innovation culture contribute to sustainable competitive advantage in small and medium-sized enterprises, and Migdadi (2022), who linked knowledge-management processes with innovation

capability and organizational performance. Although these studies address different organizational outcomes and contexts, they reinforce the relevance of knowledge processes to organizational improvement. The present study contributes evidence from a public-sector administrative setting, where the usefulness of shared knowledge depends not only on accessibility but also on accuracy, documentation, and regulatory applicability. Formal repositories, updated standard operating procedures, documented lessons learned, and peer consultation may provide complementary channels for exchanging knowledge. Nevertheless, the observed association does not demonstrate that these practices independently produce innovation. Employees must still evaluate shared information and obtain the necessary authorization before implementing changes to procurement procedures.

H3 was supported because the indirect relationship between psychological safety and innovative work behavior through knowledge sharing was positive and significant ($\beta = 0.328$, $t = 6.004$, $p < 0.001$). Together with the significant direct relationship, this pattern is consistent with partial mediation. The finding offers a more integrated explanation than examining psychological safety and knowledge sharing as separate correlates of innovation. It complements Mehmood et al. (2022), who investigated team psychological safety and knowledge sharing in relation to team creativity, and Xu et al. (2022), who examined psychological safety and intrinsic motivation as mediating mechanisms in the relationship between organizational climate and innovative work behavior. The present study differs by specifying knowledge sharing as the indirect pathway in a local-government procurement context. However, the statistical mediation result alone does not establish temporal or causal mechanisms. Longitudinal or experimental research would be needed to determine whether changes in psychological safety precede changes in knowledge sharing and subsequent innovative behavior.

The study's principal contribution is its integration of psychological safety, knowledge sharing, and innovative work behavior in a public procurement unit within a regional government administration. Previous studies have examined related relationships in contexts including entrepreneurship, healthcare, small and medium-sized enterprises, and broader organizational settings (Lee & Seo, 2024; Saif et al., 2024). By examining both the direct relationships and the indirect pathway through knowledge sharing, this study provides context-specific evidence that complements these research streams. Its novelty should therefore be understood as contextual and model-specific rather than as the discovery of entirely new constructs or relationships. The results suggest that employee innovation in procurement administration can be studied through the interaction of interpersonal conditions and knowledge processes,

while recognizing that the current model does not test other possible mechanisms, such as leadership, work engagement, or organizational innovation climate.

The practical implications concern the coordinated development of a supportive work climate and reliable knowledge-sharing mechanisms. Supervisors could encourage employees to raise concerns, explain decisions transparently, and discuss operational problems without unnecessary interpersonal blame. The bureau could also strengthen knowledge repositories, peer mentoring, and brief reviews of complex procurement cases, ensuring that shared guidance is verified and updated. These recommendations are consistent with the relevance of psychological safety and knowledge exchange identified in previous studies (Edmondson & Bransby, 2023; Wang et al., 2024), but their effectiveness was not directly tested here. The study is limited by its cross-sectional design, the specified predictors, and the organizational context, which constrain causal inference and generalizability. Future research could use longitudinal designs, independent assessments of innovative behavior, and comparisons across public institutions. Further investigation of measurement validity and potential additional predictors would also help clarify the robustness and wider applicability of the proposed relationships.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that psychological safety is positively associated with innovative work behavior, both directly and indirectly through knowledge sharing, which partially mediates the relationship. The key lesson is that fostering employee innovation requires not only a supportive interpersonal climate but also opportunities to exchange and apply knowledge. The implications of these findings are that public-sector managers should encourage open communication, acknowledge employee suggestions, and institutionalize knowledge-sharing practices through mentoring, discussion forums, and documented lessons learned while maintaining procedural accountability. Scientifically, this study contributes to the literature by integrating psychological safety and knowledge sharing into a single explanatory framework for innovative work behavior in a local-government procurement context, providing context-specific evidence of the direct and indirect relationships among these constructs. However, the cross-sectional design, questionnaire-based data, and focus on a single public-sector unit limit causal inference and generalizability. Future research should employ longitudinal or mixed-method designs, include multiple government institutions, and examine additional organizational factors to clarify how these relationships develop over time.

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