

The Effect of Knowledge-Based Leadership on Employees Innovative Performance through Knowledge Sharing and Collaboration in Manufacturing Companies of Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province

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Received: September, 3, 2024; Revised: March, 8, 2024

Accepted: March, 12, 2024; Published: August, 23, 2025

Abstract

Purpose: This study aimed to examine the effect of knowledge-based leadership on innovative performance, with the mediating roles of knowledge sharing and work participation behaviors.

Methodology: The present research was applied in purpose and descriptive-correlational in data collection. The statistical population comprised all managers working in manufacturing companies in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province (N=440). Using stratified random sampling proportional to size and based on Morgan's table, a sample of 205 managers was selected. Data were collected using Donati and Di Pablos's (2015) knowledge-based leadership questionnaire, Ahmed et al.'s (2024) innovative performance questionnaire, Wang and Wang's (2012) knowledge sharing behavior questionnaire, and Schaufeli et al.'s (2002) work engagement questionnaire. The reliability of these instruments, assessed by Cronbach's alpha, was 0.86, 0.82, 0.92 and 0.91 respectively. Data analysis was conducted at both descriptive and inferential levels, employing structural equation modeling (SEM).

Findings: The results indicated that knowledge-based leadership had a positive, direct, and significant effect on innovative performance. Moreover, knowledge sharing and work participation behaviors served as mediating variables in this relationship.

Conclusion: The findings suggest a significant relationship between knowledge-based leadership and innovative performance among manufacturing companies in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province. Furthermore, knowledge sharing and work participation behaviors can be considered key mediators in this relationship.

Value: Given the critical role of human resources in organizations, examining the factors influencing innovative performance is essential. Since the components of knowledge-based leadership align closely with the work environment of manufacturing companies, investigating this relationship is both necessary and highly valuable.

Keywords: *Knowledge-based leadership, knowledge sharing behaviors, work engagement, employee innovative performance.*

How to Cite:

Ghaedamini Harouni, A., & Hemtizadeh, M. (2025). The Effect of Knowledge-Based Leadership on Employees Innovative Performance through Knowledge Sharing and Collaboration in Manufacturing Companies of Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province. *Journal of Knowledge Research Studies*, 4 (2): 46-66.

Doi: [10.22034/jkrs.2025.63321.1107](https://doi.org/10.22034/jkrs.2025.63321.1107)

URL: https://jkrs.tabrizu.ac.ir/article_19534.html?lang=en

Article Type: Original Article

©The Author(s)

Publisher: University of Tabriz

E-ISSN: [2821-045X](https://doi.org/10.22034/jkrs.2025.63321.1107)

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Extended Abstract

Introduction: Knowledge management has emerged as both an academic discipline and an industry practice since the 1990s (Abubakar et al., 2019). Organizations worldwide have adopted and implemented knowledge management initiative to improve business processes and enhance productivity (Sahibzadeh et al., 2022). Empirical evidence suggests that knowledge-based initiatives improve the quality of products and services delivered to consumers (Abubakar et al., 2019; Wahi-Onou, 2020). In today's highly competitive environment, organizational success depends heavily on fostering innovation as a driver of enhanced performance (Lee et al., 2022; Park et al., 2021). Previous studies have consistently highlighted the central role of knowledge management in shaping innovation performance (Chogtai et al., 2022; Hu and Zhao, 2016; Ritala et al., 2015; Wang and Wang, 2012). Consequently, organizations seek to identify the factors that strengthen knowledge-sharing behaviors among employees. While prior research has demonstrated the importance of leadership in both knowledge management and innovation processes, with evidence that various leadership styles (e.g., transactional and transformational) promote knowledge-sharing behaviors (Shamim et al., 2019), the role of knowledge-based leadership has received relatively less scholarly attention. In parallel, scholars have confirmed that work engagement significantly influences employees' innovative performance (Baker and Xantopoulou, 2013; Demrotti et al., 2015) and is closely related to motivational factors within the workplace (Baker et al., 2008; Schaufeli et al., 2002). Based on these findings, collaboration can be considered a potential mediator between knowledge-based leadership and employees' innovative performance. Furthermore, individual motivations and attitudes have been shown to affect knowledge-sharing behaviors (Lim, 2021). As such, scholars have emphasized the need to identify antecedents of knowledge-sharing behaviors within organizations (Afshar Jalili and Qala, 2018). In this context, knowledge-based leadership has been proposed as a potential antecedent of such behaviors. Accordingly, the present study investigates the mediating role of knowledge sharing and work participation in the relationship between knowledge-based leadership and employees' innovative performance (Donati et al., 2022; Mahmoud et al., 2021).

Purpose: Knowledge-based leadership plays a crucial role in fostering knowledge management within organization by enhancing employees' knowledge, encouraging them to embrace challenges, and motivating them to exert greater effort in solving complex tasks (Birdy et al., 2021; Tomball, 2011). This leadership style not only drives employees toward achieving organizational goals (Sahibzadeh et al., 2022) but also promotes innovative work practices, as well as acquisition, storage, utilization, and sharing of knowledge (Donati and Di Pablo, 2015). Recent studies further demonstrate that knowledge-based leadership positively influences employees' knowledge-sharing behaviors (Sahibzadeh et al., 2021, 2022). Grounded in social cognitive theory, the present study examines the role of knowledge-based leadership in manufacturing companies in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province, recognized as a knowledge-oriented organizations. The research addresses several gaps: (1) it provides a framework for evaluating the role of knowledge-based leadership in manufacturing organizations, (2) It extends the literature by investigation the effect of knowledge-based leadership on employees' innovative performance (3) It highlights the value of knowledge-based leadership



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in enhancing innovative performance through knowledge sharing and collaborative behaviors in manufacturing organizations. Accordingly, the primary purpose of this study is to examine the effect of Knowledge-based leadership on employees' innovative performance, with a focus on the mediating roles of knowledge sharing and work participation behaviors.



Methodology: The present study is applied in terms of purpose and descriptive-correlational in terms of data collection. The statistical population included all managers working in manufacturing companies in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari province (440). Using stratified random sampling proportional to size, and based on Morgan's table, 205 individuals were selected as the sample. The research instruments included: Donati and Di Pablo's (2015) knowledge-based leadership questionnaire, Ahmed et al.'s (2024) innovative performance questionnaire, Wang and Wang's (2012) knowledge-sharing behavior questionnaire, and Schaufeli et al.'s (2002) work engagement questionnaire. The reliability of the instruments was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.86, 0.82, 0.92 and 0.91 respectively. Data analysis was conducted at both descriptive and inferential levels, employing structural equation modeling (SEM).

Findings: The findings revealed that knowledge-based leadership exerts a positive, direct, and statistically significant effect on innovative performance. Furthermore, both knowledge-sharing and work participation behaviors were identified as mediating factors in the relationship between knowledge-based leadership and innovative performance.

Table 1. Overall results of hypotheses testing

Hypothesis	Research Hypotheses	β	R^2	p-value
1	Knowledge-based leadership has an impact on innovative performance	0.557	0.707	<0.001
2	Knowledge sharing has a mediating role in the relationship between knowledge-based leadership and innovative performance of employees	0.577	-	<0.001
3	Work engagement plays a mediating role in the relationship between knowledge-based leadership and employee innovative performance	0.355	-	<0.001

Conclusion: The findings of this study demonstrate that knowledge-based leadership has a direct and positive effect on employees' innovative performance in manufacturing companies in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari province. These results are consistent with prior research, including Sahebzadeh et al. (2022), Donati and Di Pablo (2015), Homayounfar and Arasteh (2023), Nadi et al. (2022), Babaei Farsani et al. (2022), Hamid et al. (2024), and Ahmad et al. (2024).

In this context, knowledge-based leadership fosters behaviors that enhance innovative performance, adaptability, and overall productivity. The mediating effects of knowledge-sharing behaviors and work participation in the relationship between knowledge-based leadership and innovative performance were also confirmed, aligning with earlier studies (Cheng et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2020; Kuo et al., 2014; Yang et al., 2018; Zheng et al., 2017). Specifically, knowledge-based leadership strengthens employees' tendencies toward knowledge sharing and active participation, which in turn contribute to higher levels of innovation.

Furthermore, previous research has shown that knowledge production, storage, acquisition, sharing, and utilization improve the satisfaction of knowledge workers by enhancing the quality of their outputs (Sahibzadeh et al., 2022). Therefore, the implementation of effective knowledge management ensures the timely transfer of knowledge to employees, thereby increasing organizational efficiency and supporting sustainable innovation.

Value: Given the importance of human resources in organizations, examining the factors that influence innovative performance is both essential and valuable. Since knowledge-based leadership encompasses components that closely align with the working environment of manufacturing companies, investigating its role is particularly necessary. This study contributes to the understanding of how knowledge-based leadership can foster innovation through knowledge sharing and collaborative behaviors, thereby providing valuable insights for managers and policymakers in manufacturing sectors.



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