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Self-Leadership and Lecturer Productivity: A Conceptual Framework of Innovative Work Behaviour, Knowledge Sharing, and Self-Efficacy in Malaysian Higher Education

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Abstract

This study examines the role of self-leadership in enhancing lecturer productivity in Malaysian higher education, with innovative work behaviour, knowledge sharing, and self-efficacy as key supporting mechanisms. In the context of increasing demands for teaching excellence, high-impact research, and meaningful community engagement, academic staff are required to demonstrate not only technical competence but also strong self-regulation, intrinsic motivation, and innovative capability. Drawing on self-leadership theory and social cognitive theory, this paper proposes a comprehensive conceptual framework that explains how self-leadership influences academic productivity through psychological and social processes. Using a quantitative survey approach, the study outlines the relationships among the key constructs and provides a narrative synthesis of expected findings based on existing empirical evidence. The analysis suggests that lecturers who exhibit high levels of self-leadership are more likely to engage in innovative work behaviour,

actively share knowledge with colleagues, and possess stronger self-efficacy beliefs, which in turn contribute to higher levels of teaching effectiveness, research output, and overall academic performance. The study contributes theoretically by integrating leadership, innovation, and social cognitive perspectives in a higher education context, and practically by offering insights for the design of academic leadership development programmes, knowledge management initiatives, and human resource strategies aimed at strengthening sustainable productivity in universities.

Keywords: self-leadership, innovative work behaviour, knowledge sharing, self-efficacy, lecturer productivity

1. Introduction

Higher education institutions worldwide are operating in an increasingly competitive, performance-driven, and globalised environment. Universities are required to improve their standing in international rankings, increase research output, enhance teaching quality, secure external funding, and demonstrate meaningful societal impact. In this context, lecturer productivity has become a central indicator of institutional effectiveness and sustainability. Academic staff are no longer assessed solely on classroom teaching but are also expected to be active researchers, supervisors, innovators, and contributors to community and industry engagement. These expanding roles place considerable demands on lecturers and require them to manage multiple responsibilities simultaneously. Beyond disciplinary expertise, lecturers must possess strong self-regulatory capabilities, intrinsic motivation, and the ability to adapt creatively to changing academic and technological landscapes. One psychological construct that has gained increasing attention in explaining such capabilities is self-leadership. Self-leadership refers to the process through which individuals influence themselves to achieve self-direction and self-motivation in performing their work roles. In academic settings characterised by autonomy and limited direct supervision, the capacity for self-leadership is particularly critical (Houghton & Neck, 2002; Janssen, 2000).

In addition to self-leadership, innovative work behaviour has been widely recognised as a key driver of academic excellence. Innovative lecturers are more likely to introduce new pedagogical approaches, integrate digital technologies into teaching, pursue interdisciplinary research, and develop novel solutions to educational challenges. Such behaviours contribute not only to individual performance but also to the overall competitiveness and reputation of universities. Psychological and social resources further shape how self-leadership translates into innovation and productivity. Knowledge sharing facilitates the exchange of ideas, experiences, and best practices among academics, thereby supporting collective learning and creativity. Self-efficacy, defined as individuals' beliefs in their capability to successfully perform tasks, influences effort, persistence, and willingness to engage in challenging academic activities such as research, publication, and grant writing (Davenport & Prusak, 1998; Bock et al., 2005).

Despite growing interest in these constructs, empirical and conceptual studies that integrate self-leadership, innovative work behaviour, knowledge sharing, and self-efficacy within a single framework to explain lecturer productivity remain limited, particularly in the Malaysian higher education context. Accordingly, the objective of this study is to examine the role of self-leadership in enhancing lecturer productivity and to explore how innovative work behaviour, knowledge sharing, and self-efficacy function as key supporting mechanisms within an integrated conceptual framework.

2. Literature Review

This section reviews the relevant literature on the key variables of the study, namely self-leadership, innovative work behaviour, knowledge sharing, self-efficacy, and lecturer productivity. The purpose of this review is to establish the theoretical foundation for the proposed conceptual framework and to justify the relationships among the variables

examined in this study.

2.1 Self-Leadership

Self-leadership is grounded in the notion that individuals can intentionally regulate their own behaviour, cognition, and motivation in order to achieve desired performance outcomes (Anderson et al., 2014). It encompasses behavioural-focused strategies (such as self-goal setting and self-observation), natural reward strategies, and constructive thought pattern strategies. Empirical studies have consistently shown that self-leadership is positively associated with work performance, job satisfaction, creativity, and proactive behaviour. In academic environments, self-leadership enables lecturers to plan their work effectively, sustain motivation for research and teaching, and cope with the pressures associated with publication and performance evaluation.

2.2 Innovative Work Behaviour

Innovative work behaviour refers to the generation, promotion, and implementation of new ideas in the workplace (Bandura, 1997). In higher education, innovation may take the form of novel teaching methods, curriculum redesign, adoption of educational technologies, interdisciplinary research initiatives, and new approaches to supervision and assessment. Innovative behaviour has been linked to improved teaching quality, higher research impact, and greater institutional competitiveness. Self-leadership is expected to foster innovative behaviour by enhancing intrinsic motivation, creative thinking, and willingness to take initiative.

2.3 Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge sharing involves the exchange of information, skills, and expertise among organisational members (Janssen, 2000). Within universities, knowledge sharing occurs through research collaboration, seminars, mentoring, communities of practice, and informal professional interactions. A strong culture of knowledge sharing supports learning, reduces duplication of effort, and stimulates innovation. Lecturers who actively share knowledge are more likely to refine their ideas, improve the quality of their research, and adopt effective teaching practices, thereby contributing to higher productivity.

2.4 Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy reflects individuals' beliefs in their capability to organise and execute actions required to achieve specific performance outcomes (Bock et al., 2005). In academic contexts, high self-efficacy is associated with greater confidence in conducting research, writing for publication, securing grants, and experimenting with new teaching approaches. Lecturers with strong self-efficacy tend to persist in the face of setbacks, invest greater effort in challenging tasks, and display higher levels of engagement and innovation.

2.5 Productivity

Lecturer productivity encompasses multiple dimensions of academic work, including teaching effectiveness, research output, postgraduate supervision, publication, and service to

the institution and society. Productivity is influenced by both organisational factors (such as resources and policies) and individual factors (such as motivation, innovation, and self-regulation) (Janssen, 2000). Integrating self-leadership, innovative work behaviour, knowledge sharing, and self-efficacy provides a comprehensive perspective for understanding the psychological and social foundations of academic productivity.

3. Conceptual Framework

Based on the literature, this study proposes a conceptual framework in which self-leadership is positioned as a central personal capability that directly influences lecturer productivity and indirectly influences it through innovative work behaviour. Knowledge sharing and self-efficacy are conceptualised as key social and psychological resources that support and strengthen these relationships. The framework suggests that lecturers with strong self-leadership are more likely to engage in innovative work behaviour, actively share knowledge with colleagues, and develop strong beliefs in their own capabilities. These factors, in turn, contribute to higher levels of academic productivity in terms of teaching, research, and service outcomes. This study develops and test a set of hypotheses to examine the relationship among self-leadership, innovative work behaviour, knowledge sharing and self-efficacy and lecturer productivity. Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework of the study.

H1: Self-leadership has a positive relationship with innovative work behaviour among lecturers.

H2: Self-leadership has a positive relationship with lecturer productivity.

H3: Innovative work behaviour has a positive relationship with lecturer productivity.

H4: Knowledge sharing has a positive relationship with lecturer productivity.

H5: Self-efficacy has a positive relationship with self-leadership.

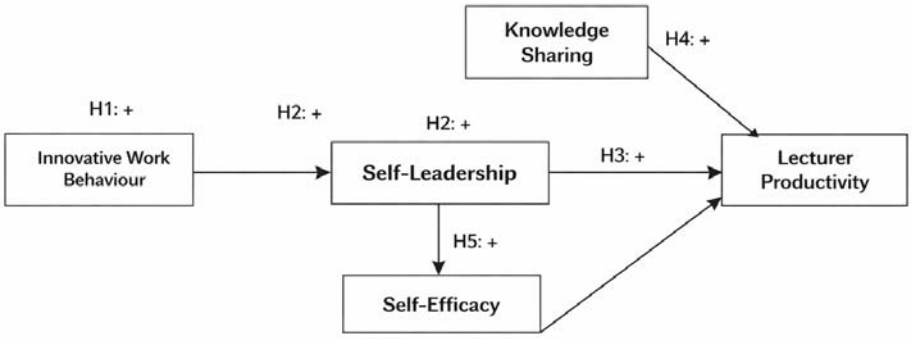

Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the study

4. Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative survey design to examine the proposed relationships among

self-leadership, innovative work behaviour, knowledge sharing, self-efficacy, and lecturer productivity. The target population comprises lecturers from public and private higher education institutions in Malaysia. Data will be collected using a structured questionnaire that includes established measurement scales for each construct, adapted to the academic context. The data analysis will employ Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) techniques to assess the measurement properties of the instruments and to test the relationships specified in the conceptual framework. SEM is appropriate for examining complex models involving multiple interrelated constructs and for assessing both direct and indirect effects. Figure 2 shows the research model and analytical flow.

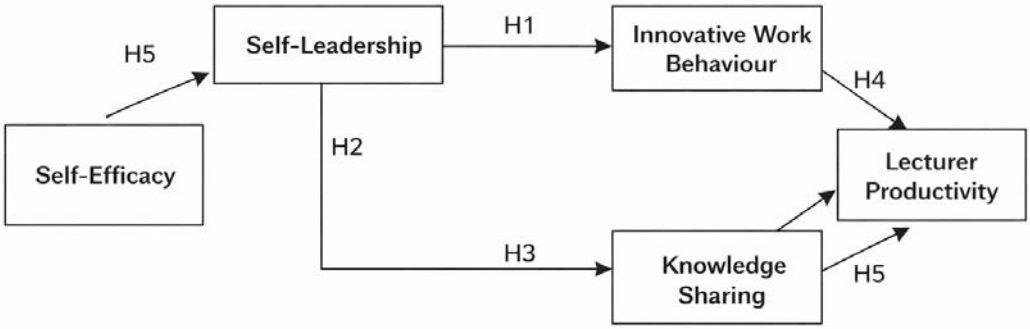

Figure 2. Research model and analytical flow

5. Findings

The narrative findings suggest that self-leadership plays a central role in shaping lecturer productivity. Lecturers who are able to set clear goals, regulate their behaviour, and maintain intrinsic motivation are more likely to perform effectively in both teaching and research roles. Such individuals tend to demonstrate higher levels of innovative work behaviour, including the adoption of new pedagogical approaches, exploration of interdisciplinary research, and proactive engagement in academic development activities. Knowledge sharing emerges as an important social mechanism that enhances innovation and productivity. Through collaboration, mentoring, and participation in academic networks, lecturers are able to exchange ideas, access diverse perspectives, and refine their research and teaching practices. A supportive knowledge-sharing culture therefore amplifies the positive effects of self-leadership on performance. Self-efficacy further strengthens these relationships by influencing lecturers' confidence in their ability to undertake complex academic tasks. High self-efficacy encourages persistence in research, resilience in the face of rejection or failure, and willingness to experiment with new approaches. Collectively, self-leadership, innovative work behaviour, knowledge sharing, and self-efficacy create a synergistic set of personal and social resources that contribute to sustainable academic productivity.

The findings of this study highlight the importance of self-leadership as a foundational

capability for academic staff. In knowledge-intensive and autonomous work environments such as universities, the ability of lecturers to lead themselves effectively is crucial for sustaining motivation, innovation, and high performance. The integration of knowledge sharing and self-efficacy into the framework underscores the interplay between individual and social factors in shaping academic outcomes. While self-leadership provides the internal drive for goal attainment, knowledge sharing facilitates collective learning and innovation, and self-efficacy reinforces confidence and persistence. Together, these factors create a supportive environment for continuous improvement in teaching and research. From a theoretical perspective, the study extends self-leadership and social cognitive theories by demonstrating their relevance in explaining academic productivity. Practically, the findings suggest that higher education institutions should invest in leadership development programmes that cultivate self-leadership skills, promote collaborative knowledge-sharing cultures, and strengthen lecturers' self-efficacy through mentoring, training, and supportive policies.

6. Conclusion

This study proposed and discussed an integrated conceptual framework that explains how self-leadership enhances lecturer productivity through innovative work behaviour, knowledge sharing, and self-efficacy. The framework provides a holistic understanding of the psychological and social mechanisms that support academic performance in Malaysian higher education. The study contributes to the literature by highlighting the central role of self-regulation and motivation in academic work and by emphasising the importance of innovation, collaboration, and confidence in achieving sustainable productivity. For practice, the framework offers guidance for the design of academic development initiatives aimed at nurturing self-leadership, fostering knowledge sharing, and strengthening self-efficacy among lecturers. Future research may empirically test the proposed framework using longitudinal designs and explore the influence of organisational culture and leadership practices in further enhancing academic productivity.

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