Mediating effects of knowledge sharing and employee creativity on the relationship between visionary leadership and innovative work behavior

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Abstract

Purpose – This study aims to explore how visionary leadership influences innovative work behavior (IWB) with the mediating effect of knowledge sharing (KS), employee creativity and moderating role of work centrality in the relationship between employee creativity and IWB in the organization.

Design/methodology/approach – A survey was administered to 304 respondents who were employees in different organizations in the United Arab Emirates. The data were analyzed through structural equation modeling using SmartPLS4.

Findings – The results show that visionary leadership is significantly associated with KS and employee creativity. Moreover, employee creativity has a notable impact on IWB, and the connection between employee creativity and IWB remains unaffected by work centrality.

Originality/value – This study offers a novel perspective by investigating the interrelationship between visionary leadership, KS, employee creativity, work centrality and IWB. A distinctive feature of this study lies in its focus on the mediation and moderation effects within this framework, with emphasis on a relatively new leadership style, visionary leadership. By exploring the mediating role of KS between visionary leadership and employee creativity, as well as the mediating role of employee creativity between KS and IWB, this study offers one of the first to highlight the underlying mechanisms that drive IWB. Furthermore, to the best of the authors' knowledge, this study is one of the first to introduce work centrality as a moderator in the relationship between employee creativity and IWB.

Keywords Visionary leadership, Innovative work behavior, Employee creativity, Work centrality, Knowledge sharing, United Arab Emirates

Paper type Research paper

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Introduction

In the current highly competitive business climate, innovative work behavior (IWB) of employees has emerged as a vital aspect for the organization to acquire a competitive advantage and ensure long-term survival. Organizations that continually innovate have been found to achieve a higher level of organizational performance and identify antecedents that foster employee's IWB with the influences of different leadership styles (Erhan *et al.*, 2022; Rao Jada *et al.*, 2019). Although existing research studies have revealed that leadership style is crucial for encouraging IWB (Iqbal *et al.*, 2020), there is limited empirical research in a non-Western context. In the United Arab Emirates (UAE), most of the organizations tend to adopt Western management practices, like many transition economies and this was due to Western education practices and to compete globally. However, it is increasingly being questioned if the applicability of Western management theories can be applied to different cultures such as UAE. For instance, leadership behavior in the UAE has shown evidence of cultural and Islamic beliefs, public policies and social norms (ElKaleh, 2019). Due to the collectivistic structure of UAE society and the country's extremely high-power distance, the involvement of leadership in fostering employee-related outcomes can play a significant role in comparison to the Western cultures (Rao *et al.*, 2021).

There is some evidence that national culture may have an impact on knowledge sharing (KS) among employees. For example, the KS intention is strongly influenced by a collectivist attitude associated with shared knowledge. Common knowledge comprises of knowledge components possessed by the members of the organization, and individuals with collectivists values are more inclined to share information with coworkers to achieve shared objectives (Kim, 2019). Furthermore, employee creativity has emerged as a critical factor for achieving effectiveness and sustainability. Therefore, it is important to explore new approaches that nurtures creativity as companies lacking in creativity face the risk of losing their competitive edge (El-Kassar *et al.*, 2022). While it is logical to assume that creativity leads to IWB, this desirable outcome may not always be realized in the workplace. The IWB at work may depend on work centrality, which refers to the degree to which workers, regardless of their current position, perceive work as a significant part in their lives (Volery and Tarabashkina, 2021). However, it is essential to look at the connections between a leader's approach to KS of their team members, taking into consideration employee creativity and work centrality, which organizations still need to be explored, as small number of studies has addressed the issue through the perspective of UAE organizations.

Despite the extensive research on IWB, there are notable gaps that this study aims to fill. First, while some studies have explored the role of leadership styles in influencing IWB, most of this work has been conducted in Western contexts (Messmann *et al.*, 2022). Existing literature lacks empirical research on the influence of leadership styles on IWB in non-Western contexts (Rao Jada *et al.*, 2019), specifically in the UAE, a unique environment influenced by distinct cultural, social and religious dynamics (ElKaleh, 2019). Moreover, this study set apart as its specific focus on visionary leadership, a leadership style not yet examined in the context of the UAE. Visionary leaders are essential for instigating a culture of innovation, as they not only articulate a compelling vision for the future but also inspire employees to go beyond their job descriptions in creative and productive ways (Mascareño *et al.*, 2019). This approach not only addresses a geographical research gap but also offers new, actionable insights that align with the UAE's vision for a knowledge-based economy.

Second, the study contributes to existing literature by further exploring the mediating role of KS in the relationship between visionary leadership and employee creativity. KS serves as a pivotal mechanism in this process, as it fosters an organizational culture where ideas and information are freely exchanged, thereby amplifying creativity. Hence, visionary

leadership has been defined as the articulation of a future collective image aimed at persuading others to actively participate in bringing that envisioned future into reality (Van der Voet and Steijn, 2021). Thus, the study contributes to the understanding of the mechanism through which visionary leadership can promote creative outcomes in the workplace, offering actionable insights for organizations aiming to cultivate a more innovative workforce. Furthermore, this study extends the literature by examining the mediating role of employee creativity between KS and IWB. By establishing the mediation, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the mechanisms through which knowledge sharing influences IWB.

Third, the introduction of work centrality where work holds a central position in an individual's life, creativity may more effectively translate into IWBs. Therefore, work centrality as a moderator in the relationship between employee creativity and IWB enhances the understanding of the boundary conditions that shape the impact of employee creativity on IWB this approach will help in filling a research gap regarding the boundary conditions that shape this relationship.

Fourth, this study seeks to integrate the constructs of visionary leadership, KS, employee creativity and work centrality into a comprehensive framework to provide a more holistic understanding of the factors driving IWB. This approach fills a research gap by strengthening the understanding of the interrelationship between visionary leadership, KS, employee creativity, work centrality and IWB. By integrating these constructs into a comprehensive framework, the study provides a holistic understanding of the factors that can drive IWB. In essence, based on the lens of social exchange theory (SET) the research demonstrates how SET can be broadened to understand not just isolated interactions but the synergistic effect of multiple variables contributing to IWB. This approach not only fills a gap in empirical research but also enhances the theoretical richness of SET, providing new avenues for future studies to explore. Consequently, this research aims to explore the critical role of visionary leadership in shaping IWB, a key determinant of organizational productivity and success. The study specifically seeks to provide answers to the following main research questions:

RQ1. Does visionary leadership impact the employees' creativity at work with the influence of knowledge sharing from the UAE collectivist culture respective?

RQ2. Does knowledge sharing impact the IWB at work with the effect of employee creativity?

RQ3. Does work centrality affect the relationship between employee creativity and IWB?

This paper is structured as follows. The conceptual framework and theories are first described. Next, we will provide the data collection, analysis and findings. Finally, wrapping up by talking about the theoretical and practical ideas for future study limitations and implications.

Conceptual framework and hypotheses development

Drawing on the SET the study proposes the positive effect of visionary leadership on employee intentions toward creativity, introducing and applying new ideas at work, which can lead to IWB (Rao Jada *et al.*, 2019). In a similar vein, based on the SET (Blau, 1964), when employees receive support and help from their leaders, employees reciprocate by sharing knowledge, the employees feel pressure or obligation to reciprocate for the support received from the leadership; the KS in response to the leadership support can further help in

fostering employee creativity and benefit the organization through innovation practice (Kim and Qu, 2020). Considering the SET, the employee will tend to work hard, engage in creative activities and show high creativity to get support, trust and other resources from leaders (Lee *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, studying serial mediation and moderation based on SET provides insights into reciprocal relationships, explicates the dynamics between leaders and employees, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of how visionary leadership, KS, employee creativity and work centrality foster IWB in the workplace.

Visionary leadership, knowledge sharing and employee creativity

Visionary leaders have the ability to create a compelling vision of the future, aiming to inspire others to help bring that particular future into reality (Mascareño *et al.*, 2019). Effective visionary leaders go beyond simply formulating a vision; leaders must also communicate it in a way that inspires the team to work toward achieving it (Ye *et al.*, 2022). It is critical for visionary leaders to proactively address teamwork challenges while fostering a culture that emphasizes KS to stimulate creativity (Owens and Hekman, 2016).

Employees tend to trust and respond positively to the managerial strategies used by the visionary leaders and exhibit positive responses to these strategies within their work environment (Ismail *et al.*, 2021). Regular interactions with these leaders create an environment where individual strengths are recognized, and unique contributions are valued. Consequently, when confronted with the need for innovative solutions, team members are more inclined to share their knowledge and seek assistance from an appropriate colleague (Hu *et al.*, 2018).

Employee creativity is greatly influenced by the attitudes and behaviors of their peers, which are molded through one-on-one interactions and team dynamics (Amabile and Pratt, 2016). Owens and Hekman (2016) argued that leaders who exhibit humility can inspire their team members to be more receptive to diverse ideas through a process known as social contagion. This openness encourages team members to appreciate different perspectives and understand the importance of seeking fresh viewpoints, thus fostering a culture that values KS for the generation of creative insights. According to Ye *et al.* (2022), KS is a behavior through which individual disseminates knowledge to fellow members of the organization. This behavior is crucial in fostering a culture of innovation and creativity. Numerous studies in the literature have demonstrated a positive link between KS and enhanced creativity, exploring various motivating factors (Rese *et al.*, 2020). It is anticipated that team members acquire knowledge and develop new skills through direct interactions or observation, which, in turn, contribute to their ability to undertake and deliver creative projects (Mehmood *et al.*, 2022).

Participating in KS procedures often leads individuals to develop a shared vocabulary and a common set of values when participating in KS procedures, which, in turn, fosters mutual trust and positively influences creativity. Moreover, through knowledge exchange, employees enable others to enhance their resourcefulness and acquire the necessary knowledge to generate, implement and deliver innovative ideas and services with diverse qualities such as warmth and inventiveness. This combination of equipment and expertise shapes an enterprise's innovation image. To encourage employee creativity, leaders can engage transformative behaviors, which include communication, information exchange, the development of a compelling vision and maintaining the status quo (Afsar *et al.*, 2019). These leadership behaviors play a crucial role in nurturing an environment that supports and promotes creative thinking and innovation within the organization.

Furthermore, culture plays a crucial role in influencing how individuals within an organization process information and knowledge, which, in turn, impacts on leadership practices, the promotion of new ideas (creativity), KS, innovation and attitude change

(Ashok *et al.*, 2021). The UAE culture is characterized as a collectivistic society with strong adherence to cultural and religious values, high uncertainty avoidance and a strict code of conduct and norms. It scores high on Hofstede's power distance dimension, indicating a significant hierarchical gap within society (Hofstede insights, 2020). Collectivist cultures distinguish between members of the in- and the out-group and emphasize a strong sense of group membership (Singh, 2019). Therefore, leadership approaches that are effective in Western countries may not necessarily be the most suitable in non-Western countries such as the UAE.

By building an environment that promotes KS, and creativity, leaders can effectively influence this process. To the extent that leaders can connect the organization's vision with personal objectives, inspiring followers to act in the organization's best interests (Bednall *et al.*, 2018). According to Liao *et al.* (2018), encouraging KS can be considered a crucial aspect of the leadership. KS is a practice that is prevalent in an organization; when leaders are supportive and engage in participatory decision-making, employees have increased opportunities to take into the collective wisdom of their coworkers, consequently generating solutions, opinions, proposals, ideas and information from coworkers (Guan *et al.*, 2018). Based on the aforementioned literature it is proposed that:

H1. Visionary leadership has a significant and positive impact on knowledge sharing.

H2. KS significantly mediates the relationship between visionary leadership and employee creativity.

Knowledge sharing, employee creativity and innovative work behavior

KS is essential for enhancing both individual and group creativity (Ali *et al.*, 2019). Creativity is the production of such concepts that lead to fresh and successful consequences. However, coming up with new ideas alone is insufficient unless they are shared and implemented (Van Knippenberg, 2017). Therefore, organizations that support employee creativity in transforming innovative ideas into goods and services have a competitive advantage (Kremer *et al.*, 2019). Mazhar and Akhtar(2018) stated that creativity is developed when group members use their collective intelligence and share knowledge to find better answers to their problems, they concluded that there is a strong correlation between creativity and KS. Therefore, it is proposed that:

H3. Knowledge sharing has a significant and positive impact on employee creativity.

Different studies define IWB as innovative ideas that employees submit to improve production, offer creative solutions or develop new procedures for specific duties to create value for a company (Rehman *et al.*, 2019). The key to success for an organization is innovation via creative ideas (Acar *et al.*, 2019). According to Iqbal (2021), businesses can boost innovation performance through knowledge-related activities, such as knowledge creation, KS and suggestion of new ideas, concentrating on enhancing employee behavior that encourages to exert goal-oriented effort and display innovative behaviors, that improves their innovation performance and lead to more rapid and high-quality innovation. Employee creativity and IWB are different. Creativity forms part of the multistage process of IWB; however, creativity must not be confused with IWB; IWB includes creativity but incorporates idea promotion and implementation as well (Venketsamy and Lew, 2024). KS is a crucial prerequisite for creativity; employees who have access to domain-specific knowledge have the propensity to generate new, creative ideas and put those ideas to use toward IWB (Bhatti *et al.*, 2020). The view is proposed on SET that interactions among

individuals are not merely transactional but are forms of social exchange that build trust, social capital and reciprocity (Blau, 1964). In the organizational context, employees engage in KS as a social exchange that goes beyond mere information transfer. This fosters a collaborative culture that not only amplifies individual creativity but also channels it into actionable IWB (Muhammed and Zaim, 2020). Consequently, the theory offers a comprehensive lens to understand how and why KS can serve as a catalyst for transforming individual creativity into collective innovative output.

Therefore, this study anticipates that KS will boost employees' creative output. Che *et al.* (2019) found that KS is crucial for developing ideas and putting innovations into practice. The innovative workplace can encourage KS and idea exchange that allows creativity to blossom (Do *et al.*, 2022). However, the presence of KS in the workplace has a positive impact on the overall work environment. When individuals have the opportunity to engage in KS, it fosters collaboration and creativity, leading to successful IWB. KS increases the effectiveness of innovation, whereas knowledge access stimulates quality product and service development (Papa *et al.*, 2020). Employees who believe that their IWB is valued by the team's innovative climate will actively engage in the innovation awareness process and come up with creative solutions to challenges that will encourage KS and information in social interactions (Zhang and Wang, 2021). Thus, based on the literature, it is proposed that:

H4. Employee creativity significantly mediates the relationship between knowledge sharing and IWB.

H5. Employee creativity has a significant and positive impact on IWB.

Employee creativity, innovative work behavior and work centrality (moderator)

Work centrality is a term that describes how important work is to an individual's life and represents personal beliefs about the value of work. Although it is natural to believe that creativity will lead to improved IWB, achieving this highly desired outcome may not always occur in the workplace. It may depend on the degree of work centrality among employees. Employees who have a high work centrality believe that work is the most significant aspect of their lives and pursue it for its intrinsic worth. Such individuals are more likely to experience a strong connection to their job and exhibit higher levels of engagement (Hu *et al.*, 2021). Such a view aligns with SET, which suggests that relationships in the workplace are built on mutual obligations and are not purely transactional (Blau, 1964). High work centrality fosters a stronger emotional and cognitive commitment to work roles, enhancing creativity and eventually IWB. This commitment is not just a by-product of transactional exchanges, such as salary for time, but is part of a richer, more meaningful social exchange. This mirrors findings from SET that quality of relationships, fostered by trust and mutual respect, can lead to more than just task-related benefits (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). In contrast, employees with low work centrality may display creative talents but are less likely to channel these into IWB (Jiang and Johnson, 2018). Their relationship with their work environment is primarily transactional, lacking the rich social exchanges that catalyze creativity into innovative behavior.

Moreover, work centrality facilitates the alignment of individuals' self-concept with the values and objectives of the organization. It also enables them to obtain essential resources, knowledge and skills necessary for achieving high performance in their work roles. This alignment is in line with identity theory, which posits that one's identity plays a pivotal role in shaping self-definition and motivating individuals to take actions that safeguard their core identities (Usman *et al.*, 2021).

Employees with high levels of work centrality are driven to maintain a positive self-image at work, exhibit innovation and place significant value on how they are perceived and treated by their colleagues within the organization (Li *et al.*, 2019). Irrespective of the level of work centrality, employees are more likely to invest emotional and cognitive energy resulting in increased creativity that promotes constructive work reflection and affective commitment. When it holds substantial importance in their lives, employees with high work centrality are more likely to have a stronger commitment. This is because employees bring their differences to the workplace, and their normative beliefs regarding the importance of work can influence IWB especially when work centrality is more salient (Jiang and Johnson, 2018).

In addition, work centrality can act as an individual-level moderator, influencing the relationship between creativity and IWB. Employees who consider their work to be more integral to their lives are likely to exhibit stronger identification with their job, which, in turn, fosters self-motivation and individual innovation in generating novel solutions within the workplace. On the other hand, employees with low work centrality, even if they possess the necessary creative attributes, may display less interest in engaging in IWB. Hence, based on the literature, it is proposed that:

H6. Work centrality moderates the relationship between employee creativity and IWB. Such relationships are strengthened when work centrality is high rather than low.

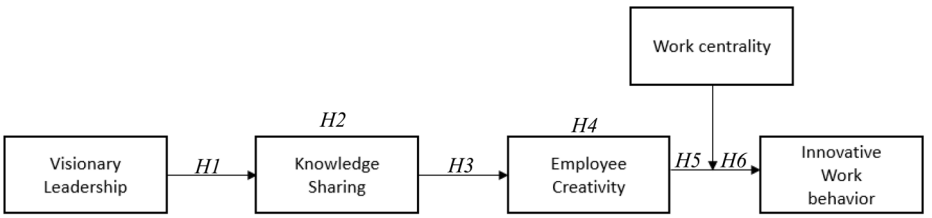
The conceptual framework proposed is shown in Figure 1.

Research methodology

Research context

This study offers a novel perspective by investigating the interrelationship between visionary leadership, KS, employee creativity, work centrality and IWB in UAE based organizations. The research focuses on employees in UAE organizations for several reasons. The UAE Vision, 2021 emphasizes the importance of developing a diversified, and flexible knowledge-based economy that will be powered by skilled Emiratis. Consequently, there is a significant interest in fostering intellectual and human capital (Ewers, 2013). This implies that organizations should embrace visionary leaders who prioritize KS, creativity and IWB. In a similar vein government's initiative aim to encourage public and private firms to promote and nurture intelligent practices such as KS among their employees (AlBastaki *et al.*, 2020).

Furthermore, the UAE is classified as a collectivistic society with social norms emphasizing the importance of teamwork and interpersonal interactions in the workplace (Ewers, 2013). Consequently, fostering an organizational culture that promotes visionary leadership, KS, innovation and employee creativity. However, the specific impact of linking



Source: Developed by authors

Figure 1.
Conceptual model of this study

visionary leadership with IWB among employees in UAE organizations has not been sufficiently investigated. However, existing research has yet to adequately explore how visionary leadership intersects with IWB in this specific cultural setting. This study aims to bridge this gap by bolstering the theoretical framework with an integrated model that examines the mediating and moderating roles of KS, employee creativity and work centrality in the relationship between visionary leadership and IWB. In doing so, this research will enrich the academic discourse and offer practical and theoretical implications for organizations striving to optimize performance and cultivate a culture of innovation and creativity, particularly in the context of the UAE.

Sample design and procedure

The research aims to explore how visionary leadership influences IWB with the mediating effect of KS, employee creativity and the moderating role of work centrality in the relationship between employee creativity and IWB in the organization. To address these objectives effectively, the study opted for a quantitative approach that allows us to systematically gather numerical data from a large and diverse sample to understand the relationships between the variables. Moreover, to rigorously test the hypothesized research model and ensure the study's validity and reliability, the study adopted a well-structured sampling and procedural approach. Furthermore, to test the hypothesized research model, employees of different UAE organizations are chosen to gather data on the relationships between the variables. Previous research has demonstrated that employees are the key drivers of innovation (Tsai, 2018). The purposive sampling technique was used to select the participants for this study. According to Etikan *et al.* (2016), purposive sampling is appropriate when the research has specific criteria and the participants align with the purpose of the study. Hence, the purposive sampling technique was chosen to ensure that data were collected from employees across various organizations in different areas. This approach was undertaken to enhance the understanding of the relationship between the variables under investigation.

The study targeted employees from government and private organizations across the country. Using a cross-sectional study design, a total of 500 questionnaires were distributed; every questionnaire included a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study, assuring the anonymity of the respondents and requesting their voluntary participation. A total of 415 questionnaires were received back, resulting in a response rate of 83%. A total of 111 responses were incomplete and removed from further analysis. The final sample for analysis had 304 respondents.

The sample included 117 (38.5%) male and 187 (61.5%) female respondents. The prominent reason females are more than males in the research is that females were found to be more responsive toward filling the responses, and men did not respond much to participate in the study. In terms of education, 31 (10.2%) had education high school and below, 39 (12.8%) held a diploma and 174 (57.2%) respondents had a bachelor's degree. A total of 55 participants (18.1%) had a master's degree, and only five participants (1.6%) had a doctorate degree. In total, 73 (24%) participants had an experience of less than one year, 78 (25.7%) participants have experience of one to five years and 52 (17.1%) participants have experience of 6–10 years; other than this, 39 (12.8%) participants have experience of 11–15 years and 62 (20.4%) of them had the experience of more than 15 years. In total, 80 (26.3%) of the participants were from Abu Dhabi, 123 (40.5%) of them were from Dubai, 10 (3.3%) were from Ajman, 70 (23.0%) were from Sharjah, 12 (3.9%) were from Ras al Khaimah, 1 (0.3%) from Um Al Quwain and 8 (2.6%) from Fujairah. Other than this, in terms, of occupation, 61.8% of them were from government organizations and 38.2% of

them were from private organizations. In the context of employment, 28% of them were junior employees, 38.1% of them were mid-level and 32.9% of them were senior-level employees.

Measuring the constructs

To reduce the confusion and improve the understanding the questionnaire, the study distributes the questionnaire for as a pilot testing to five senior employees: two vice presidents from the space sector, one chief executive officer and a manager from the space industry, one manager from the ministry and five mid-level employees from different organizations across the UAE to make sure that the measurement scale is clearly understood. Changes were made to the final questionnaire based on the feedback received from the respondents.

The rating scale for all the statements ranged from 1: "strongly disagree" to 5: "strongly agree. A questionnaire prepared to obtain data from the participants was categorized into different sections to examine the relationship between the variables. The first section focused on generating responses pertinent to the demographic profile of the respondents, followed by the scales of visionary leadership, KS, employee creativity, IWB and work centrality. Data was gathered directly from the participants to measure these constructs and determine the relationship between the targeted variables. This study adopted measures from previous research to ensure the validity and reliability of the measurement. Sreejesh *et al.* (2018) recommended the need to use already validated questionnaires used in relevant research studies that are being undertaken.

Dependent variable

Innovative work behavior. IWB scale was based on the 11 items adapted from Derin *et al.* (2021). Example items include I regularly suggest innovative work ideas at work and (I look for new methods, techniques and tools for work), etc. The Cronbach's α test showed the construct had good reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.924$).

Independent variables

Visionary leadership. Visionary leadership was based on a six items scale developed by Conger and Kanungo (1994) that assessed the direct supervisors' leadership behavior by their employees. Asking them to answer six questions about whether their supervisor had characteristics of a visionary leader (e.g. my direct supervisor's leadership behavior has a vision, often brings up ideas about possibilities for the future), based on questions which have been used in previous studies (Conger and Kanungo, 1994). The Cronbach α test showed the construct had good reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.938$).

Knowledge sharing. KS was assessed by employees about the knowledge-sharing behaviors. KS was measured using seven adapted from Lu *et al.* (2006). Examples items include: (I always tell whatever I know without any hoarding as long as the other colleagues need it) and (I keep my work experience and never share it out with others easily). The Cronbach's α test showed the construct had good reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.818$).

Employee creativity. Employee creativity was measured using a four items scale developed by Soda *et al.* (2019) scale. Examples statements include, "I provide new ideas to improve the department's performance" and "I come up with creative solutions to emerging problems." The Cronbach's α test showed the construct had good reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.896$).

Work centrality. Using Volery and Tarabashkina (2021) and Jiang and Johnson (2018) scale, the study measured work centrality using four items. Example items include "Work is the most important thing in my life" and "The major satisfaction in my life comes from my work rather than my family." The Cronbach's α test showed the construct had good reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.882$).

Data analysis and results

To analyze the proposed model, the partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) technique was used to analyze the data. PLS-SEM and covariance-based structural equation modeling (CB-SEM) are both statistical methods used for SEM. PLS-SEM is often considered a better option when handling complex models because it is more robust to nonnormal or missing data. PLS-SEM is also robust to violations of assumptions such as normality and linearity. CB-SEM, on the other hand, assumes multivariate normality and may yield biased results if these assumptions are violated (Hair, 2021). PLS-SEM is well-suited for predictive modeling because it emphasizes the ability to predict outcomes or dependent variables. PLS-SEM focuses on finding relationships that maximize the predictive power of the model. This makes it a suitable choice when the primary goal is prediction rather than estimation of causal relationships (Hair, 2021).

In PLS-SEM, two steps are required for analyzing the data. The first step involves the assessment of the outer model; this includes the evaluation of the measurement model. Assessment of measurement model entails assessing factor loadings, construct reliability and construct validity. The second step is the substantiation of the proposed hypotheses using path coefficients.

Measurement model assessment

Measurement model includes the examination of factor loadings, construct reliability and construct validity (Hair, 2021). For the assessment of factor loadings, according to Hair (2021), the recommended threshold is 0.70. However, according to Hair *et al.* (2014), factor loadings may be below the recommended threshold of 0.70. The items that fall in the range of 0.40–0.70 shall only be removed if the removal of the indicators can improve the construct reliability and convergent validity over the recommended threshold of 0.70 and 0.50, respectively, (construct reliability and convergent validity are discussed later in this section).

In the initial model assessment, two items (KS2 and KS5) were found with loadings less than 0.40. Hence, they were removed from further analysis. One item (IWB7) had loadings over 0.40. However, the loadings were found to be significant. The item was not removed from further analysis. To assess the construct reliability, two techniques are prevalent. The traditional technique is referred to as the Cronbach's alpha, and a more recent method is named composite reliability. The threshold for both techniques is 0.70 (Hair *et al.*, 2014). The results for reliability analysis reveal that Cronbach's alpha ranged between 0.818 and 0.938. In contrast, the composite reliability ranged between 0.873 and 0.951. Hence, the construct reliability was established (see Table 1).

To establish convergent validity, Fornell and Larcker (1981) recommended the use of average variance extracted (AVE) statistics. An AVE value of 0.50 or over shows that the construct has convergent validity, and the items converge to represent the underlying construct. PLS-SEM algorithm results show that for each of the constructs in the study, the AVE value was over the recommended statistic of 0.50. Hence, the items show adequate convergent validity. Where convergent validity is a measure to assess if the items converge to measure the underlying construct, the discriminant validity is used to establish

Construct	Outer loadings	*T* statistics	*p*-values	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted (AVE)
VL1	0.804	22.584	0.000	0.938	0.951	0.765
VL2	0.883	47.654	0.000			
VL3	0.896	61.820	0.000			
VL4	0.898	51.742	0.000			
VL5	0.878	40.085	0.000			
VL6	0.884	57.518	0.000			
KS1	0.677	13.418	0.000	0.818	0.873	0.580
KS3	0.808	26.695	0.000			
KS4	0.843	39.371	0.000			
KS6	0.720	16.474	0.000			
KS7	0.747	18.983	0.000			
EC1	0.859	33.491	0.000	0.896	0.928	0.762
EC2	0.889	50.436	0.000			
EC3	0.898	52.400	0.000			
EC4	0.846	45.990	0.000			
WC1	0.854	33.575	0.000	0.882	0.917	0.735
WC2	0.817	21.021	0.000			
WC3	0.875	42.566	0.000			
WC4	0.882	42.638	0.000			
IWB1	0.787	28.860	0.000	0.924	0.937	0.578
IWB10	0.738	20.844	0.000			
IWB11	0.713	18.664	0.000			
IWB2	0.796	31.806	0.000			
IWB3	0.832	34.981	0.000			
IWB4	0.782	23.302	0.000			
IWB5	0.812	29.075	0.000			
IWB6	0.830	36.066	0.000			
IWB7	0.433	6.507	0.000			
IWB8	0.769	25.044	0.000			
IWB9	0.788	27.854	0.000			

Notes: VL = visionary leadership; KS = knowledge sharing; EC = employee creativity; WC = work centrality; IWB = innovative work behavior
Source: Developed by authors

Table 1.
Factor loadings, construct reliability and convergent validity

the individuality of the construct in the study. Discriminant validity in the present study is established through the Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion and heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio (Henseler *et al.*, 2015).

According to Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion, to establish the distinctiveness of the construct, the square root of AVE (within construct variance) of each latent variable should be greater than the construct correlation with all the other constructs in the study (shared variance). The results reveal that the square root of AVE for each of the constructs was found higher than its correlation with all the other constructs in the study. Hence, showing the within-construct variance was higher than the shared variance. Accordingly, based on the Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion, the discriminant validity was established (Table 2).

As proposed by Henseler *et al.* (2015), the HTMT ratio can be used to establish the discriminant validity. Based on the HTMT criterion, discriminant validity is established when the HTMT ratio between the constructs in the study is less than 0.90. Data analysis results reveal that all the HTMT values were less than 0.90. Hence, discriminant validity

was established (see Table 3). The measurement model in Figure 2 shows the indicators with their factor loading, path coefficient and the *R*-square.

Hypotheses testing

The significance test was based on the assessment of the significance of path coefficients using the bootstrapping procedure, with 10,000 bootstrap samples. The significance is based on the *p*-value with a value less than or equal to 0.05 shows that the path from predictor to the outcome is significant. *H1* proposed to assess the significant and positive impact of visionary leadership on KS. The results of the structural model assessment show that visionary leadership has a significant and positive impact on KS (*H1*: $\beta = 0.418$, $t = 8.645$, $p < 0.001$). Hence, *H1* was accepted. *H3* proposed to assess the significant and positive impact of KS on employee creativity. The results of the structural model assessment show that KS has a significant and positive impact on employee creativity (*H3*: $\beta = 0.574$, $t = 11.972$, $p < 0.001$). Hence, *H3* was accepted. *H5* proposed to assess the significant and positive impact of employee creativity on IWB. The results of the structural model assessment show that employee creativity has a significant and positive impact on the IWB (*H5*: $\beta = 0.725$, $t = 13.820$, $p < 0.001$). Hence, *H5* was accepted. *H6* assesses the moderating role of work centrality on the relationship between employee creativity on IWB. The results reveal an insignificant moderating role of work centrality on the relationship between employee creativity on IWB (*H6*: $\beta = -0.047$, $t = 0.696$, $p = 0.243$). Hence *H6* was not supported.

Moreover, even if work centrality was found insignificant, it still necessary to be tested because it plays a key role in understanding central work to an employee's life and can affect how much they give back to their job in terms of creativity and innovation. Based on SET, work centrality can shape the balance of giving and receiving between employees and their workplaces. Therefore, it was essential to test work centrality to help us understand the variability in these

Table 2.
Fornell and Larcker criterion

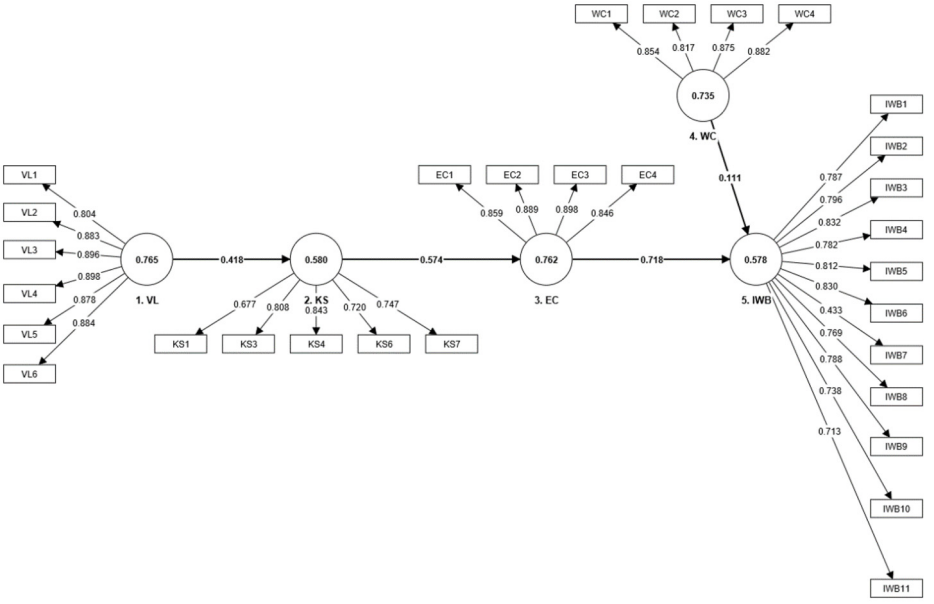
Construct	1. VL	2. KS	3. EC	4. WC	5. IWB
1. VL	*0.874**				
2. KS	0.418	*0.761**			
3. EC	0.364	0.574	*0.873**		
4. WC	0.307	0.095	0.192	*0.858**	
5. IWB	0.416	0.658	0.739	0.248	*0.760**

Note: Values on the diagonal are the square root of AVE
Source: Developed by authors

Table 3.
Heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio

Construct	1. VL	2. KS	3. EC	4. WC	5. IWB
1. VL					
2. KS	0.463				
3. EC	0.397	0.659			
4. WC	0.338	0.127	0.208		
5. IWB	0.440	0.753	0.797	0.280	

Notes: VL = visionary leadership; KS = knowledge sharing; EC = employee creativity; WC = work centrality; IWB = innovative work behavior
Source: Developed by authors



Source: Developed by authors

Figure 2.
Measurement model results

behaviors. Direct and moderating hypotheses results are presented in Table 4. The structural paths with their path coefficient and *p*-value are represented in Figure 3.

Mediation analysis

The study seeks to assess the mediating role of KS on the relationship between visionary leadership and employee creativity (*H2*) and the mediating role of employee creativity on the relationship between KS and IWB (*H4*). The results (see Table 5) reveal a significant indirect effect of visionary leadership on employee creativity through KS (*H2*: $\beta = 0.240$, $t = 6.510$, $p < 0.001$). Hence, *H2* was supported. Further, the results show a significant indirect effect of KS on IWB through employee creativity (*H4*: $\beta = 0.416$, $t = 7.942$, $p < 0.001$). Hence, *H4* was supported.

R-square and Q-square

The model's explanatory power and predictive relevance were assessed using the *R*-square and *Q*-square statistics, respectively. The *R*-square for KS was 0.175. This shows that a

Paths	Path coefficients	SD	*T* statistics	*p*-values
H1: VL → KS	0.418	0.048	8.645	0.000
H3. KS → EC	0.574	0.048	11.972	0.000
H5. EC → IWB	0.725	0.052	13.820	0.000
H6. WC × EC → IWB	−0.047	0.068	0.696	0.243

Source: Developed by authors

Table 4.
Hypotheses result – direct and moderating relationships

17.5% change in KS is accounted by visionary leadership. The *R*-square for employee creativity is 0.330. This indicates that a 33% change in employee creativity can be accounted by KS. Results show that *R*-square value of 0.561 for IWB. This reveals that 56.1% change in IWB can be accounted to employee creativity, work centrality and the interaction term (employee creativity × work centrality). According to Hair (2021), *R*-square values can be considered satisfactory (>0.10) (Hair, 2021). Further to the assessment of *R*-square, predictive relevance was assessed using the *Q*-square value. The *Q*-square values for KS, employee creativity and IWB were over 0. Hence, the results indicate that the model has predictive relevance. *R*-square and *Q*-square statistics are presented in Table 6.

Discussion

The study undertakes to confirm that visionary leadership affects IWB through KS and employee creativity as mediating variables and work centrality as moderators. First, the results revealed a significant impact of visionary leadership on employee creativity and mediating role of employee KS between visionary leadership and employee creativity in the context of UAE. The significance of the relationship can be attributed to the collectivist

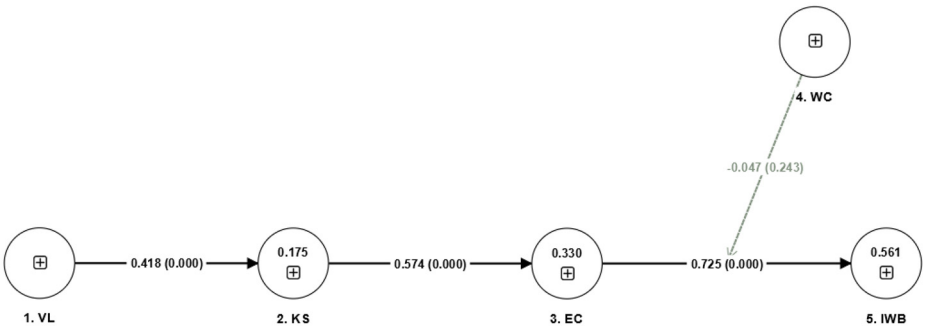


Figure 3.
Structural model

Source: Developed by authors

Paths	Path coefficients	SD	*T* statistics	*p*-values
H2: VL → KS → EC	0.240	0.037	6.510	0.000
H4: KS → EC → IWB	0.416	0.052	7.942	0.000

Table 5.
Mediation analysis results

Source: Developed by authors

Construct	*R*-square	*Q*-square
KS	0.175	0.164
EC	0.330	0.113
IWB	0.559	0.137

Table 6.
R-square and *Q*-square

Source: Developed by authors

culture of UAE, a culture that emphasizes group and team harmony, discriminates between in- and out-group members and possesses strong feelings about group membership. This is in line with leadership behavior in Arab countries that have been shown to be influenced by cultural, Islamic beliefs and social norms (ElKaleh, 2019). This confirms the need for visionary leaders that tend to share their knowledge and experiences and encourage creativity through engagement and communication practices. That will raise UAE organization employees' knowledge capacity by improving their motivation to acquire new skills and information. Therefore, a visionary leader needs to foster KS among employees to boost creativity by engaging them in open discussions and encouraging them to learn and share knowledge with one another and apply creative practice. The results support previous research findings which demonstrate that leadership's vision is a strategic approach to KS, which is essential for enhancing both individual and group creativity in Arab countries (Ali *et al.*, 2019; AlShamsi and Ajmal, 2018).

Second, the findings illustrate the significant impact of KS on IWB and the mediating role of employee creativity on the relationship between KS and IWB among UAE organization employees. Therefore, it was found that employees with high levels of KS had higher levels of creativity. KS enhances employee creativity by allowing employees to think creatively about how to implement new ideas. Supporting the research results, Mazhar and Akhtar (2018) conducted a study that determined the significant impact of creativity on sharing and managing knowledge among employees in the organization. Employees' creativity was also found to have a significant effect on IWB. This means employees who exhibited high levels of creativity were also more likely to show innovation in their work. This finding could be attributed in line with previous studies showing that employee creativity with the necessary skills and capabilities will perform well and achieve a high level of IWB in their workplace (Rehman *et al.*, 2019). The study also confirms that employee creativity has a significant mediating effect on the relationship between KS and IWB. Therefore, for organizations to be successful in their knowledge management initiatives, managers should encourage their employees to be creative and think out of the box by creating a collaborative environment where employees can share their knowledge and experience and work together to achieve common goals and practice IWB.

Third, the research shows that work centrality does not moderate the relationship between employee creativity and IWB. This may be because the work setting in which the study was conducted was very stressful and demanded high levels of performance from employees. Therefore, employees were very busy working at full capacity in their organizations and had very little time to devote to creativity in their workplaces and practice IWB. Consequently, they were not able to bring about a significant difference in the productivity of their workplace and make any positive contribution to their organization. As employees bring their differences to work, normative beliefs about the importance of work may affect creativity and IWB; this is when work centrality is more significant for employees (Jiang and Johnson, 2018). In conclusion, the study believes that IWB is key to driving innovation across UAE organizations. Organizations are well-placed to harness the innovative and entrepreneurial potential of their employees. When harnessing this potential, they must establish and maintain open and transparent communication channels and encourage creative behavior through training and recognition. UAE Organizations can also provide their employees with access to an array of resources to help them develop their creativity and innovative skills. The study contradicts the finding of earlier research that has documented that work centrality has a stronger moderator role on employee creativity and IWB (Volery and Tarabashkina, 2021).

Implications of the study

Theoretical implications

This study offers groundbreaking theoretical insights, particularly into the role of visionary leadership in fostering IWB within the unique context of a UAE-based organization. First, the research is pioneering in its exploration of the mediating role of KS in the relationship between visionary leadership and employees' creativity, specifically within the UAE's collectivist culture. This research contributes to the understanding of SET by examining its relevance within the context of visionary leadership, KS and employee creativity. SET posits that individuals engage in reciprocity within social interactions. In this study, it was found that KS plays a mediating role in the relationship between visionary leadership and employee creativity. By elucidating these connections, the paper offer a more comprehensive understanding of how SET can be applied in the workplace setting in relationship to develop a better understanding of different organizational factors leading to IWB. As KS is a crucial strategy for fostering creativity, understanding the behaviors that support its development is paramount. The study underscores the importance of encouraging employees to share knowledge, as it fosters mutual understanding and creativity in problem-solving. This aligns with the SET, which posits that interactions based on mutual exchange foster positive relationships and outcomes. The research, therefore, provides a novel and persuasive framework for understanding the interplay between visionary leadership, KS and employee creativity in UAE organizations, grounded in the principles of SET.

Second, this research extends the understanding of employee creativity by highlighting its pivotal role as a mediator between KS and IWB. Employee creativity is not only an outcome but also a driver of innovative behaviors in the workplace. This finding adds depth to SET on creativity and innovation, emphasizing that fostering creativity among employees is a critical strategy for organizations aiming to enhance their innovative capabilities that are fostered in return for improve KS that leaders to higher creativity. The research provides unique insights into how facilitating knowledge exchange among colleagues can enhance employee creativity, leading to increased IWB. This is particularly relevant for organizations operating within unique cultures like the UAE, where creative behavior is highly valued. The study, therefore, offers a comprehensive understanding of the roles of leadership and KS in fostering employee creativity and IWB and provides practical guidance for managers aiming to enhance these aspects.

Third, this study sheds light on the role of work centrality in moderating the relationship between employee creativity and IWB through the lens of SET. The theory suggests that social interactions at work, such as those involved in creative endeavors, are not merely transactional but foster a culture of trust and reciprocity. However, when work becomes overly central in employees' lives, the social exchanges may become imbalanced, leading to stress and overload. This novel insight emphasizes the need for a balanced work–life dynamic to foster innovation, highlighting that the quality of social exchanges at work can either facilitate or hinder the effective conversion of creativity into IWB.

Finally, the findings underscore the importance of nurturing creative employees to maintain a competitive edge. The study contributes to the literature by offering a fresh perspective through the lens of SET on the relationship between leadership and IWB, highlighting the need for visionary leadership and a conducive environment for KS and creativity. Therefore, the study not only provides a novel theoretical foundation for understanding the dynamics of leadership, KS and IWB but also offers persuasive insights for organizations seeking to foster a culture of innovation and creativity.

Practical implications

This study offers several practical implications, particularly for integrating innovative practices within organizations. First, the study underscores the importance of visionary leadership in fostering IWB. Managers should be cognizant of the need for leaders to exchange information and create compelling visions to effectively stimulate IWB. This can be achieved when employees are encouraged to be creative and share their knowledge. To this end, managers should create more opportunities for KS by organizing discussion sessions and fostering creative workspaces where ideas can be freely exchanged. Additionally, involving employees more in decision-making processes, giving them greater responsibilities and providing opportunities for their voices to be heard can further enhance IWB.

Second, the study reveals that the relationship between IWB and KS is contingent on the level of employee creativity within the organization. Thus, managers should strive to cultivate a culture that encourages creativity, as this can improve IWB and strengthen the organization's competitive position. By enhancing KS among employees, organizations can stimulate creativity and innovation, leading to improved product and service quality and overall organizational performance.

Third, the study highlights the role of work centrality as a moderator between employee creativity and innovative behavior. While work centrality may be intrinsic, managers can foster it through initiatives and cultures that encourage employees to engage more deeply with their work. By reorganizing jobs to give employees more freedom and autonomy, managers can increase intrinsic motivation and work centrality, thereby boosting IWB. In conclusion, the research provides practical insights for managers seeking to foster a culture of innovation and creativity. By promoting visionary leadership, encouraging KS and fostering a culture of work centrality, organizations can enhance their competitive position and overall performance.

Limitations and future study

This study, while offering valuable insights, has certain limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the survey used in this study relies on purposive sampling with a limited sample size, which may not be generalizable to the broader population. Because of the possibility that the results may not apply to the full population, the finding could be challenging. Second, common procedure variations may have an impact on the survey's findings. As a result, it is difficult to determine whether the findings of this research are due to the actual effect of the independent variable or a result of a common effect. A wider sampling frame would offer a better representation of the entire population. This would allow them to gain a complete picture of the relationship between the study's variables.

Moreover, in terms of generalizability to other cultures, the study was conducted within a UAE-based organization, which operates within a unique, collectivist culture. This cultural context may influence the behaviors and attitudes of employees, particularly concerning KS and creativity. Therefore, while the principles of visionary leadership, KS and employee creativity are universal and can be applied across different cultural contexts, the specific findings of this study may not be directly generalizable. Future research should aim to replicate this study in different cultural contexts to test the generalizability of the findings. Future research could focus on the viability of visionary leadership and its different mediating variables to the final output of effectiveness and efficiency. The studies should also investigate visionary leaders' characteristics to determine their impact on organizational outcomes. This emphasis will help rebuild the case for promoting effective leaders who can lead their organizations toward success.

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