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# NAVIGATING RESEARCH EXCELLENCE IN PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES: THE INTERPLAY OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND INNOVATIVE WORK BEHAVIOR

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**ABSTRACT**

The management of research productivity in private higher education institutions (PHEIs) remains a critical challenge for academic leaders, particularly in developing nations where institutional support is often limited. This study proposes a strategic framework to enhance research excellence by investigating the nexus between transformational leadership, creative self-efficacy (CSE), and innovative work behavior (IWB). Using a quantitative explanatory design, data were collected from 376 lecturers across private universities under the Higher Education Service Institute (LLDIKTI) Region VII, Indonesia. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM-PLS) was employed for hypothesis testing. The findings reveal that transformational leadership serves as a primary driver for both IWB and research performance. Crucially, the results indicate that CSE does not directly translate into research performance but necessitates the full mediation of IWB. Furthermore, IWB acts as a partial mediator in the relationship between transformational leadership and academic outcomes. These findings underscore that university administrators must shift from traditional bureaucratic oversight toward transformational practices that cultivate a dynamic innovation culture. This study contributes to educational management literature by elucidating the mechanism required to convert individual psychological resources into competitive institutional academic capital.

***Keywords:*** **Educational management, transformational leadership, innovative work behavior, research performance, private higher education.**

**INTRODUCTION**

Globally, higher education governance now faces significant pressure to evolve from traditional educational institutions into internationally competitive centers of research and innovation (Hazelkorn, 2015). Modern higher education management requires effective human resources, where lecturers are no longer just teachers but strategic intellectual assets that must be managed to generate high-quality scientific output (Altbach, 2013; Tierney, 2024). However, a major challenge for many developing countries is the failure of institutional management systems to align individual psychological potential with the organization's strategic goals (Bush & Sargsyan, 2020; Hallinger et al., 2015).

In Indonesia, this challenge is becoming more evident due to policy pressures from the government, particularly through Higher Education Service Institute (LLDIKTI) Region 7, which relies on the standard of reputable international publications as the main measure of institutional performance (Directorate General of Higher Education, 2020). While national policies are very ambitious, there are notable gaps at the managerial level in Private Universities (PTS). The reality on the ground shows that human resource governance in many private universities remains administrative and bureaucratic, focusing only on meeting formal requirements rather than fostering an innovative research ecosystem (Pambudi et al., 2025; Suwarsi et al., 2025). As a result, Indonesia's scientific publication output at the global level still varies greatly compared to other developing countries (Marginson, 2011; Rosser, 2023).

The urgency of this research is strengthened by the intense theoretical debate among researchers about the true factors driving lecturer performance. On one side, pillars of social cognitive theory highlight that creative self-efficacy is a key predictor of success. This is supported by Indajang et al. (2023) and Sumaryono et al. (2025), who showed that strong belief in creative abilities directly boosts scientific publication output. However, this view is challenged by the findings of Soediro et al. (2025), who found that self-efficacy often does not directly influence actual performance in complex academic settings. A similar debate exists in leadership studies. While much of the literature praises transformational leadership as a driver of follower performance, studies by Putra et al. (2024) and Sutardi et al. (2022) produced conflicting results, finding that this leadership style sometimes has no significant effect on lecturer performance. This inconsistency highlights a "gap" in the educational management literature, where the link between psychological-leadership variables and performance may not be straightforward but might require a more practical intermediary mechanism.

This inconsistency highlights a failure in managerial oversight of lecturers' potential at the local level. Many university leaders cannot serve as transformational leaders who prioritize the organization's vision over personal interests. Without leadership that offers intellectual stimulation, even lecturers with high creative self-efficacy can become stuck in administrative routines. This shows that individual potential won't lead to institutional results unless supported by structured innovative work behaviors. Therefore, it is crucial to develop a human resource management model that connects individual beliefs with performance through innovative work behaviors as a key mechanism.

This study aims to fill this gap in the debate by examining whether innovative work behaviors act as mediators that explain why self-efficacy and transformational leadership often do not directly influence performance. This research contribution is expected to provide solutions for PTS managers, under the guidance of LLDIKTI-7, to transition management practices from purely administrative to transformational and innovative approaches, thereby improving global competitiveness. The main focus of this study is how to integrate individual psychological potential with leadership patterns to overcome stagnation in research performance caused by rigid managerial governance. Specifically, this study proposes to investigate whether innovative work behaviors mediate the effects of creative self-efficacy and transformational leadership on lecturer performance.

Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to examine and analyze the mediating role of innovative work behaviors in

the relationship between creative self-efficacy, transformational leadership, and lecturer performance in PTS in East Java. The findings are expected to offer strategic recommendations for higher education managers to develop human resource management policies centered on innovation and visionary leadership.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) Perspectives in Research Management*

The theoretical foundation of this study is grounded in Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), which posits that human functioning is a product of a dynamic, triadic reciprocal determinism between environmental influences, personal factors, and behavioral outcomes (Larsen & Bowers, 2024). In the context of private higher education management, this study identifies Transformational Leadership as the primary environmental determinant that shapes the academic ecosystem. According to SCT, environmental cues do not directly dictate behavior but are filtered through internal cognitive processes (Larsen & Bowers, 2024). Within this framework, Creative Self-Efficacy (CSE) represents the critical personal factor—the internal belief system regarding an individual's capability to generate novel and useful ideas amidst institutional constraints (Lee & Tseng, 2024).

Within the higher education management landscape, particularly under the LLDIKTI Region VII mandate, CSE is more than just a subjective belief in one's abilities; it is a core cognitive process that influences how a lecturer allocates mental resources and maintains resilience when confronting complex research challenges. Khan et al. (2023) highlighted that individuals with strong CSE tend to be more persistent in seeking innovative solutions to organizational problems. However, in the context of Private Higher Education Institutions (PTS) where resources are often limited, this self-efficacy is frequently challenged by structural barriers and workload constraints that consume significant productive time (Suwarsi et al., 2025).

In-depth analysis reveals that self-efficacy does not operate in isolation but is heavily influenced by the managerial environment, reflecting the triadic reciprocal determinism emphasized by Larsen and Bowers (2015). Many educational institutions make the mistake of assuming that increasing lecturers' motivation through training will automatically lead to better publication performance. However, empirical insights indicate that without adequate structural support, high self-efficacy can lead to academic frustration if clear behavioral pathways are absent. Therefore, in research management, CSE is viewed as a latent asset that requires specific leadership interventions to be converted into tangible outcomes. By adopting this lens, the research moves toward an analytical exploration of how specific environmental catalysts (leadership) activate the cognitive precursors necessary for high-impact innovation. Consequently, SCT serves as a diagnostic framework to understand why similar institutional policies yield divergent innovative outputs depending on the interplay between leadership style and the individual's creative self-belief.

### *Transformational Leadership: More Than Just Instruction*

Within higher education management, Transformational Leadership, developed by Bass and Avolio (1994), is defined as a leader's ability to inspire and empower followers beyond personal interests to achieve the organization's collective vision. In educational management, this leadership is implemented through four main pillars: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. In-depth analysis shows that in academic institutions, the intellectual stimulation pillar plays the most prominent role. Leadership in universities should no longer be confined to a transactional model that relies solely on administrative rewards and punishments. Instead, leaders must act as cognitive catalysts who challenge lecturers' long-held assumptions and encourage them to explore new research methodologies. Leithwood and Sun (2012) assert that transformational leadership in schools and universities has a significant impact on the internal motivation and collective capacity of staff, which in turn enhances the overall effectiveness of the organization.

However, frequent managerial failures in Private Higher Education Institutions (PTS) stem from the dominance of traditional administrative leadership styles that focus on bureaucratic compliance rather than meaningful

innovation. Transformational leaders, in this context, must act as architects of organizational culture by offering emotional support and strategic resources through individualized consideration (Bass & Avolio, 1994). This is especially important for lecturers in private higher education institutions, who often juggle dual responsibilities of teaching and international research demands from LLDIKTI. Without an inspiring vision (inspirational motivation), government policies aimed at improving research standards risk becoming mere administrative obligations that lead to work burnout. Therefore, incorporating transformational leadership into higher education management is not just a managerial choice but a strategic necessity to overcome structural barriers and change the view of lecturers from simple "curriculum implementers" to active and innovative "knowledge contributors" (Akkaya, 2021; Grošelj et al., 2020)

***Innovative Work Behavior as an Operational Bridge (Mediation Mechanism)***

From the perspective of human resource management in higher education, Innovative Work Behavior (IWB) is seen as a key factor that turns intentions into action. According to the theory by Scott and Bruce (1994), IWB in educational management involves a complex process that begins with identifying educational problems, developing solutions through research designs, and gathering support to publish scientific work. Janssen (2000) stated that innovative behavior is a discretionary response of staff to job demands that go beyond standard duties. In an academic setting, this means that lecturers do more than just teach; they actively seek breakthroughs in scientific progress. However, this process is often hindered in institutional governance because management frequently lacks understanding that innovation is not just an individual talent but a behavioral process that can be shaped structurally.

The novelty highlighted in this paper is the placement of the IWB as a "mandatory bridge" or full mediator connecting psychological potential with institutional outcomes (Kumako & Asumeng, 2013). In-depth analysis shows that without the manifestation of innovative work behavior, lecturers' self-efficacy will only be a latent potential that does not impact university competitiveness. De Jong and Den Hartog (2007) emphasize that the role of leadership is crucial in stimulating each stage of this innovative behavior. Managerial failures in many Private Higher Education Institutions (PTS) are eliminated in management patterns that only focus on the result (output-centric), such as the number of publications, without facilitating the process of innovative behavior through supportive policies. Therefore, this study substantively argues that the effectiveness of management research is highly dependent on the institution's ability to transform lecturers' self-efficacy into actual performance through structured reinforcement of innovative behavior (Efawati, 2023; Shanker et al., 2017; Yuan & Woodman, 2010).

***Synthesis and Novelty: Why Should Managerial Interventions Change?***

The integration of Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) and Transformational Leadership in this study offers a new perspective that challenges university administrators' views on research management. These findings dispute the long-held assumption that improving lecturer performance depends solely on isolated motivational training or simply enhancing cognitive self-efficacy. Essentially, this study contends that creative self-efficacy is merely a "latent potential" that will not lead to better research performance without a fundamental change in work culture. Shalley and Gilson (2004) assert that an organizational environment that supports autonomy and provides strategic resources is essential for individuals to realize their creative potential and generate valuable outputs. Therefore, managerial efforts that focus only on psychological aspects without strengthening organizational support are ineffective and often hinder productivity in higher education institutions.

The novelty of this study lies in the finding that innovative behavioral interventions supported by transformational leadership serve as key mediators that transform cognitive energy into research outputs. In the context of meeting LLDIKTI global standards, Private Higher Education Institutions (PTS) must shift from a rigid administrative oversight model toward creating a dynamic research ecosystem. As Kurniady et al. (2020) state, the effectiveness of leadership in higher education in the 21st century is judged by its ability to foster staff's innovative behavior through structured intellectual stimulation. This synthesis of theory makes an important contribution to educational management literature by showing that motivational training alone is ineffective without a cultural change in the work

environment. Thus, this paper proposes a strategic model for university policymakers to integrate psychological factors, leadership, and innovative behavior into a unified human resource management framework, enabling them to gain a competitive edge internationally (Hallinger et al., 2015; Lamb et al., 2025).

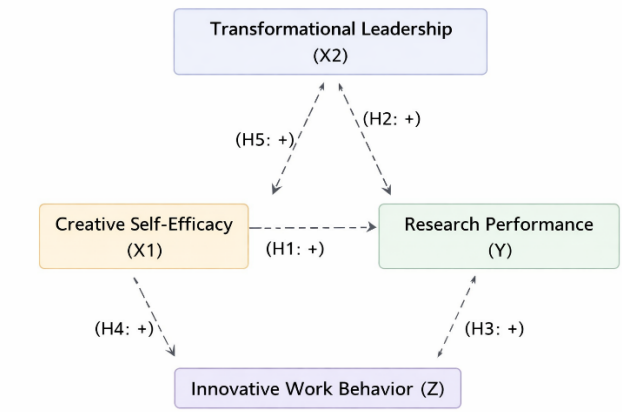
***Conceptual Framework Research: Synergistic Integration in Research Management***

Based on the theoretical synthesis and literature review presented, this study proposes a conceptual framework that places Innovative Work Behavior (Z) as the central element or main explanatory mechanism. This framework assumes that Creative Self-Efficacy ($X_1$), as an internal cognitive resource, and Transformational Leadership ($X_2$), as an external influence, will not have their optimal effect on Lecturer Research and Publication Performance (Y) unless expressed through innovative work behavior. The flow of relationships in this model ($H_1$ to $H_5$) shows that effective higher education management must align individual beliefs and leadership efforts to create a structured innovation ecosystem (see Figure 1).

Substantively, this framework emphasizes that, to address structural barriers in boosting research productivity, educational institutions should not rely on just one approach. The model illustrates a mediating role where Innovative Work Behavior acts as an "operational bridge," ensuring that creative energy and leadership vision translate into tangible, measurable academic results that meet international standards.

**Figure 1**

*Conceptual Framework of the Relationships among Creative Self-Efficacy, Transformational Leadership, Innovative Work Behavior, and Research Performance*




*Note*. Source: Own data Research (2025).

**METHOD**

***Research Design and Sampling Procedures***

This study employs a quantitative approach with an explanatory design (explanatory research) to examine the causal relationship between the hypothesized variables. The research population includes all permanent lecturers at private universities (PTS) governed by LLDIKTI Region VII East Java. The sampling method uses proportionate stratified random sampling to ensure fair representation across different university clusters. Based on the minimum sample criteria, 376 respondents were obtained who provided valid data through an online Likert scale questionnaire.

***Validity and Reliability***

Based on the results of the analysis in Table 1 below, all indicators have a loading factor above 0.70, so they are declared valid. This study found the lowest Cronbach's Alpha value to be 0.837, which is well above the acceptable threshold of 0.70. The smallest Composite Reliability value was 0.902, and the smallest Average Variance Extracted

(AVE) value was 0.591, which meets the recommended threshold value of 0.50 (Hair & Alamer, 2022).

**Table 1**

*Results of Evaluation of Validity and Reliability Measurement Models*

| Variable | Measurement Items | *Outer Loading* | *Cronbach's Alpha* | *Composite Reliability* | AVE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Creative Self-Efficacy | X1.1 | 0,892 | 0,879 | 0,925 | 0,804 |
| | X1.2 | 0,879 | | | |
| Source: Adapted from Lamb et al. (2025). Sample item: "I feel confident in my ability to generate creative ideas for my research output." | X1.3 | 0,919 | | | |
| Transformational leadership style | X2.1 | 0,777 | 0,937 | 0,945 | 0,591 |
| | X2.2 | 0,796 | | | |
| Source: Adapted from Bass & Avolio (1994). 12 items across idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. | X2.3 | 0,809 | | | |
| | X2.4 | 0,826 | | | |
| | X2.5 | 0,812 | | | |
| | X2.6 | 0,736 | | | |
| | X2.7 | 0,777 | | | |
| | X2.8 | 0,736 | | | |
| | X2.9 | 0,744 | | | |
| | X2.10 | 0,716 | | | |
| | X2.11 | 0,729 | | | |
| | X2.12 | 0,756 | | | |
| Innovative Work Behavior | Z1.1 | 0,887 | 0,954 | 0,961 | 0,756 |
| | Z1.2 | 0,880 | | | |
| Source: Adapted from De Jong & Den Hartog (2007), 10 items covering idea generation, idea promotion, and idea realization. | Z1.3 | 0,864 | | | |
| | Z1.4 | 0,884 | | | |
| | Z1.5 | 0,881 | | | |
| | Z1.6 | 0,882 | | | |
| | Z1.7 | 0,841 | | | |
| | Z1.8 | 0,838 | | | |
| Performance of Lecturers (in the Field of Research and Scientific Publications) | Y1.1 | 0,883 | 0,837 | 0,902 | 0,754 |
| | Y1.2 | 0,873 | | | |
| | Y1.3 | 0,849 | | | |
| Source: Self-reported publication output and academic, achievement indicators adapted from Susanti & Ardi (2022), 3 indicators covering publication counts and output. | | | | | |

*Note*. Source: Own data research (2025).

Consideration: This study was conducted in accordance with ethical standards involving human subjects. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study. Participation was entirely voluntary, ensuring that respondents were free from any coercion and informed of their right to withdraw at any stage of the research process.

***Justification for the Use of SEM-PLS in Education Management***

The data analysis technique chosen in this study is Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS)

using SmartPLS software. The selection of SEM-PLS is based on several strategic considerations relevant to the context of education management:

- High Predictive Ability: SEM-PLS is highly effective in identifying key variables (such as innovative behavior) that predict lecturers' research performance in complex models (Hair & Alamer, 2022).
- Complexity of the Mediation Model: The model involves multiple mediation pathways. SEM-PLS is able to test complex structural relationships simultaneously without requiring strict data normality distributions (Chin, 1998).
- Theory Development: Given that this paper aims to offer a strategic management model to address research stagnation, SEM-PLS is appropriate due to its advantages in theory building compared to CB-SEM (Henseler et al., 2016)

***Model Evaluation Stages***

Data analysis was carried out through two main evaluation stages according to the standards of Hair and Alamer (2022):

- **Evaluation of Outer Model (Measurement Model):** Conducted to test the validity and reliability of the instrument. The criteria used included *Convergent Validity* (Loading Factor > 0.70 and Average Variance Extracted/AVE > 0.50), *Discriminant Validity* (Fornell-Larcker Criterion or HTMT < 0.90), and *Reliability* (Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha > 0.70).

**Table 2**

*Evaluation of Outer Model*

| Test Type | Measurement Criteria | Threshold | Purpose of Analysis |
|---|---|---|---|
| Validity Convergence | *Loading Factor* | > 0.70 | Measure the closeness of the relationship between the indicator and its latent variables. |
| | *Average Variance Extracted* (AVE) | > 0.50 | Measures the magnitude of the variance of the indicator contained by the latent variable. |
| Discriminatory Validity | *Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio* (HTMT) | < 0.90 | Ensuring that a latent variable is completely different from other variables. |
| | *Fornell-Larcker Criterion* | AVE > Laten correlation | Assessing validity through a comparison of correlations between variables |
| Reliability | *Composite Reliability* (CR) | > 0.70 | Measure the internal consistency of latent variables with more accurate results. |
| | *Cronbach's Alpha* | > 0.70 | Measure the reliability of the instrument based on the average correlation between variables. |

*Note*. Source: Own data research (2025).

**Inner Model Evaluation (Structural Model):** Conducted to test hypotheses and model strengths. The criteria used were the R-square value (R2) to measure the level of variance of endogenous variables, f-square (f2) to measure *effect size*, and *the bootstrapping* procedure (5000 subsamples) to determine statistical significance through *p-value* (< 0.05) and t-statistics (> 1.96).

**Table 3**

*Inner Model Evaluation*

| Evaluation Criteria | Indicator | Threshold | Purpose of Analysis |
|---|---|---|---|
| Control of Prediction | R-square ($R^2$) | 0.67 (Height); 0.33 (Moderate); 0.19 (Weak) | Measure the magnitude of the variance of endogenous variables described by exogenous variables. |
| Effect Size | f-square ($f^2$) | 0.02 (Small); 0.15 (Medium); 0.35 (Large) | Assess the relative contribution of predictive variables to endogenous variables. |
| Signifikansi Statistics | *T-Statistics* | > 1.96 (for a significance level of 5%) | Determine whether the hypothesis proposed is statistically supported by data. |
| | *P-Value* | < 0.05 | Assess the probability of error in rejecting the null hypothesis. |
| Predictive Relevance | Q-square ($Q^2$) | > 0 indicates the model has predictive relevance | Assess how well the observation value is generated by the model. |
| Multikolinearitas | Inner VIF | < 5.00 | Ensure there is no too high correlation between independent variables. |

*Note*. Source: Own data research (2025).

***Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)***

Table 4 below shows the results of the *Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio* (HTMT) test used to assess the discriminant validity between the variables in this study. Based on the table, there are several HTMT values that reflect the relationships between variables. The test results showed that the HTMT value was below 0.9 for the variable pair, indicating that the discriminant validity was achieved. A variable divides the variation of a measurement item against the item that measures it more strongly than dividing the variance of another variable item.

**Table 4**

*Test of HTMT*

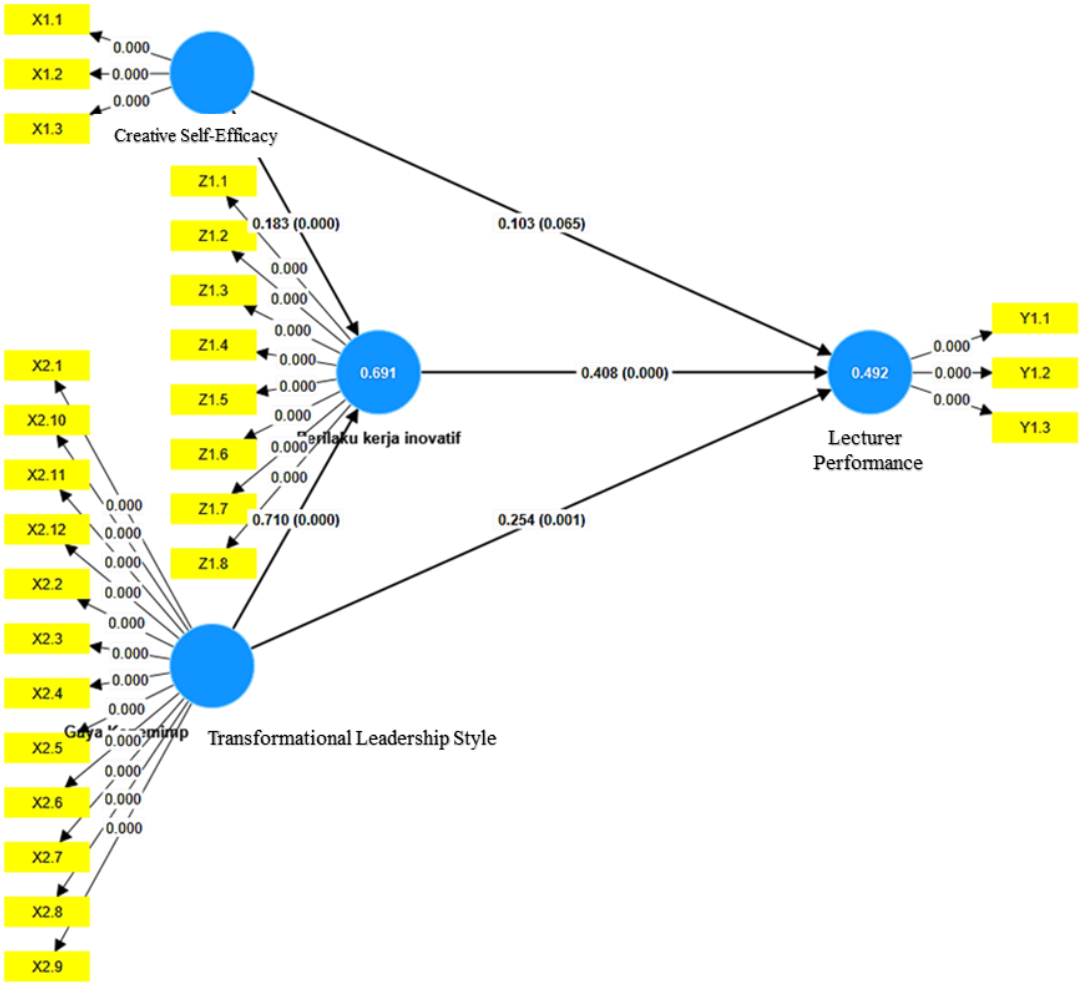
| | Creative Self-Efficacy | Transformational Leadership Style | Lecturer Performance | Innovative work behavior |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Creative Self-Efficacy | | 0,648 | 0.575 | 0.653 |
| Transformational Leadership Style | 0,648 | | 0,731 | 0,863 |
| Lecturer Performance | 0,575 | 0,731 | | 0,756 |
| Innovative work behavior | 0,653 | 0,863 | 0,756 | |

*Note*. Source: SmartPLS 4 (2025).

***Mediation Effect Testing***

The mediation effect testing in this study used the Specific Indirect Effects procedure with the bootstrapping method to evaluate the role of the "Operational Bridge" of Innovative Work Behavior. This analysis aims to determine whether mediation is full, partial, or none. Identifying this mediation category is very important because it forms the basis for theoretical discussions about how psychological and leadership resources are transformed into actual work. The results of this test will provide a solid foundation for managerial recommendations in designing institutional policies that focus not only on research outputs but also on managing structured innovation processes in universities (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2**
*Mediation Effect Test Results via Smart PLS*




*Note*. Source: Own data research (2025).

***Addressing Common Method Bias (CMB)***

To ensure the robustness of the findings, several procedural and statistical measures were implemented to mitigate Common Method Bias (CMB). Participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality to reduce social desirability bias. Statistically, Harman's Single-Factor Test was conducted. The first factor explained 34.7% of the variance, which is well below the recommended threshold of 50%, indicating that common method bias is unlikely to threaten the validity of the findings. Additionally, a full collinearity assessment approach showed that all inner VIF values were below the threshold of 3.3, confirming that the model is free from common method bias.

***Scale Sources and Measurement Development***

The measurement instruments used in this study were adapted from established scales to ensure content validity. All items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree).

- Transformational Leadership: Measured using 12 items adapted from the Multi-factor Leadership

Questionnaire (MLQ) by Bass, B.M and Avolio (1994), focusing on idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.

- Creative Self-Efficacy (CSE): Adapted from Tierney (2024) and Lamb et al. (2025), consisting of 3 items assessing the lecturers' belief in their ability to generate creative research outputs.
- Innovative Work Behavior (IWB): Adapted from De Jong & Den Hartog (2007), utilizing 10 items covering idea generation, idea promotion, and idea realization.
- Research Performance: Measured through self-reported publication output and academic achievement indicators adapted from various educational management studies (e.g., Susanti & Ardi (2022).

***Cautious Interpretation of Mediation and Indirect Effects***

This study interprets the mediation pathways with caution, particularly regarding the indirect effects of Transformational Leadership on Performance through IWB and CSE. While the bootstrapping procedure (5,000 sub-samples) confirmed the statistical significance of the indirect paths, the magnitude of certain effects remains modest. This suggests that while IWB is a critical "behavioral bridge," other unobserved factors—such as institutional funding or individual workload—may also play significant roles. Therefore, the mediation results are presented as an "incremental mechanism" rather than a total explanation of academic productivity.

***Explanation for High Effect Size ($f^2$) Values***

Certain paths in the model exhibited high effect sizes ($f^2 > 0.35$), particularly the relationship between Transformational Leadership and CSE. This high value is attributed to the specific organizational structure of Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs) in Indonesia. In these institutions, lecturers often operate with high levels of dependency on leadership for resource allocation and psychological support. Consequently, leadership interventions have a disproportionately large impact on lecturers' self-belief systems compared to more decentralized or autonomous public university settings. These high values reflect the high "sensitivity" of the human capital in LLDIKTI Region VII to transformational catalysts.

**RESULTS**

***Direct Influence***

Based on the results of the analysis in Table 5, all direct influence hypotheses show various levels of significance. The main finding in this study is the influence of Transformational Leadership Style on Innovative Work Behavior ($H_5$), which recorded the highest path coefficient of 0.710 with a p-value of < 0.001. The magnitude of the f-square value (1.059) indicates that transformational leadership has a very strong effect in explaining the variation in lecturers' innovative work behavior. Furthermore, Innovative Work Behavior was shown to have a significant positive effect on Lecturer Performance ($H_3$) with a coefficient of 0.408 ($p < 0.001$), followed by the direct influence of Transformational Leadership Style on Lecturer Performance ($H_2$) of 0.254 ($p = 0.001$). Meanwhile, Creative Self-Efficacy had a significant influence on Innovative Work Behavior ($H_4$) of 0.183 ($p < 0.001$). Interestingly, the direct effect of Creative Self-Efficacy on Lecturer Performance ($H_1$) showed the smallest coefficient value (0.103) with a p-value of 0.065, which was at the significance threshold of 0.05, indicating a relatively weak direct contribution compared to other variables.

**Table 5**

*Testing the Direct Influence Hypothesis*

| Hypothesis | Path Coefficient | P-Value | T-Statistics | f2 | Result |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| $H_1$: CSE → Research Performance | 0.103 | 0.065 | 1.845 | 0.013 | Not Significant |
| $H_2$: Transformational Leadership → Research Performance | 0.254 | 0.001 | 3.291 | 0.040 | Significant |
| $H_3$: Innovative Work Behavior → Research Performance | 0.408 | 0.000 | 5.120 | 0.101 | Significant |
| $H_4$: CSE → Innovative Work Behavior | 0.183 | 0.000 | 3.894 | 0.070 | Significant |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| $H_5$: Transformational Leadership → Innovative Work Behavior | 0.710 | 0.000 | 12.450 | 1.059 | Significant |

*Note*. Source: SmartPLS 4 (2025),

***Indirect Influence***

The results of the mediation testing in Table 6 below confirm the role of Innovative Work Behavior as a significant mediator variable in this model. The mediation pathway of Transformational Leadership Style through Innovative Work Behavior on Lecturer Performance (H7) showed a strong indirect influence with a path coefficient of 0.289 (ρ< 0.001). The effect size value of the Upsilon mediation (υ) of 0.084 strengthens the finding that innovative behavior is a crucial mechanism for transformational leaders in improving lecturer performance. In addition, the mediation pathway of Creative Self-Efficacy through Innovative Work Behavior on Lecturer Performance (H6) was also proven to be statistically significant with a path coefficient of 0.074 (ρ = 0.001), although with a smaller effect size value of Upsilon (υ), which was 0.0055. Overall, these results show that innovative work behaviors serve as an effective "bridge" in transforming personal potential (self-efficacy) and external support (leadership) into tangible performance outputs for lecturers.

**Table 6**

*Indirect Influence Hypothesis Testing*

| Hypothesis | Path Coefficient | P-Value | 95% Path Coefficient Confidence Interval | | Upsilon υ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound | |
| $H_6$: CSE → IWB → Research Performance | 0,074 | 0,001 | 0,035 | 0,123 | 0,0055 |
| $H_7$: Transformational Leadership Style → IWB → Research Performance | 0,289 | 0,000 | 0,183 | 0,401 | 0,084 |

*Note*. Source: SmartPLS 4 (2025). Note on Mediation Criteria:

- Full Mediation ($H_6$): Established because the direct path from Creative Self-Efficacy to Research Performance was not statistically significant (ρ = 0.065 > 0.05), while the indirect pathway through Innovative Work Behavior was highly significant (ρ = 0.001).
- Partial Mediation ($H_7$): Established because both the direct path (ρ = 0.001) and the indirect path (p < 0.001) for Transformational Leadership were statistically significant.

***Structural Model Assessment (Inner Model)***

To assess the structural validity and predictive capacity of the model, Table 5 presents the formal assessment metrics, including R-square ($R^2$), Q-square ($Q^2$), and Inner VIF values.

**Table 7**

*Structural Model Assessment Table*

| Endogenous Latent Variable | R2 Value | Q2 Value | Inner VIF Range | Predictive Relevance Assessment & Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Innovative Work Behavior (Z) | 0.691 | 0.482 | 1.724 | Substantial ($R^2 > 0.67$). $Q^2 > 0$ indicates strong predictive relevance. Exogenous variables account for 69.1% of IWB variance. Inner VIF values are well below 5.0, confirming no multicollinearity. |
| Research Performance (Y) | 0.492 | 0.345 | 1.815 – 2.412 | Moderate ($R^2 \approx 0.50$). $Q^2 > 0$ confirms stable predictive relevance. The integrated framework explains 49.2% of the variance in research output. |

*Note*. Source: Own data research (2025).

**DISCUSSION**

***Direct Impact Analysis: The Role of Leadership and Innovation***

The structural model indicates that the most influential variable in shaping lecturers' innovative work behavior is Transformational Leadership Style ($H_5$), with a path coefficient of 0.710. This is supported by a very high ƒ2 value (1.059), demonstrating that transformational leadership serves as a dominant environmental predictor in this ecosystem. Leaders who inspire motivation and stimulate intellectual growth foster an environment that encourages lecturers to generate new ideas in teaching and research. This aligns with the argument of Deng et al. (2023) that transformational leadership plays a key role in academic organizations to promote creativity beyond routine standards. Additionally, Innovative Work Behavior ($H_3$) was found to have a significant positive effect on Research Performance (0.408). This suggests that lecturers who actively seek new solutions and improve academic processes tend to achieve higher performance.

Conversely, Creative Self-Efficacy ($H_1$) had the weakest direct effect on performance (0.103) and was nearly at the significance threshold ($\alpha$ = 0.065). This finding highlights a critical functional gap where a lecturer's internal confidence in their creative capacity does not automatically convert into measurable research outputs unless it is channeled into actual innovative work actions. From the perspective of Newman et al. (2018), creative self-efficacy is often a latent cognitive asset that requires a structured behavioral pathway to affect work effectiveness. Without the actualization of ideas into behavior, creative potential remains a subjective perception of personal competence without generating organizational added value.

Furthermore, this weak direct relationship suggests situational or administrative barriers that may prevent lecturers from actualizing their confidence. As affirmed by Khan et al. (2023), creative self-efficacy requires a supportive environmental structure to have a significant positive effect on performance. In a rigid or overly administrative academic environment, even creative faculty may experience performance stagnation if they do not find practical avenues to apply their creativity to research practice. Therefore, these results emphasize that educational institutions should not only focus on increasing individual self-confidence through motivational training but must ensure that such efficacy is supported by an organizational culture that values intellectual experimentation.

***Statistical Interpretation of the High Leadership Effect Size ($f^2$)***

The reported $f^2$ value of 1.059 for the path from Transformational Leadership to Innovative Work Behavior is exceptionally large according to standard thresholds. While mathematically substantial, this value reflects the unique structural realities of Indonesian Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs) under LLDIKTI Region VII. In private university settings, governance frameworks are often centralized, making faculty members highly dependent on institutional leaders for research resource allocation, financial incentives, and structural validation.

Consequently, leadership behavior serves as an existential catalyst; a leader who actively provides intellectual stimulation can single-handedly clear the administrative bottleneck, granting lecturers the psychological safety needed to engage in innovative research actions. This high sensitivity indicates that in the Indonesian private university sector, transformational leadership acts as an immediate structural unlock, explaining its profound effect size on employee innovative behavior.

***Indirect Influence Analysis: Innovative Behavior as a Mediation Bridge***

The mediation testing in Table 4 reinforces the vital role of Innovative Work Behavior as an operational bridge. The strongest mediation pathway was found in the relationship between Transformational Leadership Style through Innovative Work Behavior on Research Performance ($H_7$), with an indirect coefficient of 0.289. This proves that leadership styles do not mechanistically transform research performance, but rather work by transforming lecturers' behavior to be more innovative. Creative self-efficacy also showed a significant indirect role on performance via IWB ($H_6$), with a coefficient of 0.074. These findings make a significant theoretical contribution to Social Cognitive Theory

(Larsen & Bowers, 2024), demonstrating that internal self-belief requires a concrete behavioral channel to generate measurable institutional output.

In this context, innovative work behaviors act as the operational engine that converts cognitive energy into organizational outcomes. This mediation phenomenon reinforces the proposition of Shanker et al. (2017) that in complex knowledge-intensive environments, the influence of transformational leadership on performance operates through psychological and behavioral processes that encourage individuals to experiment. The Upsilon (υ) value of 0.084 on the leadership path indicates that the structural effectiveness of university leaders is heavily dependent on their capacity to stimulate innovative behavior as the foundation for increasing academic productivity.

Furthermore, this role of mediation explains why performance improvement efforts often fail if they focus only on one side (on leadership alone or only on individual confidence). As emphasized by Kumako and Asumeng (2013), innovative behavior is a behavioral optimization mechanism that bridges the visionary expectations of leaders with the capabilities of lecturers. Without behavioral transformation, transformational leadership is limited to symbolic charisma, and creative self-efficacy remains a latent potential. Therefore, strengthening this innovation bridge is crucial; higher education institutions must design policies that actively facilitate innovative processes across all academic functional tasks.

***Synergy of Transformational Leadership, Self-Efficacy, and Innovative Behavior***

The structural analysis confirms that transformational leadership and innovative work behavior have a positive and significant effect on research performance. This is in line with the findings of Eliyana et al. (2019) and Susanti and Ardi (2022), who demonstrated that transformational leaders improve organizational performance by providing inspirational motivation and strong intellectual stimulation. The unique finding in this study is that creative self-efficacy does not exert a direct effect on performance, but has a significant influence on innovative work behavior (Khan et al., 2023; Lamb et al., 2025). This confirms that lecturers' creative beliefs are not automatically converted into performance outputs without real manifestations in the form of innovative behaviors (Newman et al., 2018).

Innovative work behaviors have been shown to contribute directly to academic productivity, reinforcing the results of a study by Jaya et al. (2024), who stated that the quality of lecturers' performance is highly dependent on their ability to implement creative solutions in functional tasks. Furthermore, mediation testing showed that innovative work behavior fully mediated the relationship between creative self-efficacy and research performance, while partially mediating the relationship between transformational leadership and performance. The consistency of these results with the research of Eliyana et al. (2019) confirms that innovative behaviors act as a key mechanism or "bridge" that connects individual psychological factors and leadership styles with measurable performance outcomes.

Theoretically, these findings make a profound contribution to the integration of Social Cognitive Theory (Larsen & Bowers, 2024), Transformational Leadership Theory (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Leithwood & Sun, 2012) in the context of educational management. This study explains that educational leadership is not just administrative instruction, but an intellectual stimulation process that triggers behavior change. The integration of these frameworks shows that improving academic performance cannot be achieved only through improving personal abilities (efficacy), but requires a managerial environment that supports the transformation of efficacy into concrete innovative actions.

The synthesis of the findings confirms that research excellence in private universities is an emergent property of the triadic reciprocal determinism inherent in Social Cognitive Theory (SCT). The synergy observed between transformational leadership, CSE, and IWB illustrates a dynamic loop where the environment, person, and behavior are inextricably linked. Transformational leadership, acting as the environmental catalyst, provides the necessary external validation and support that activates the lecturer’s internal CSE. This personal cognitive state, however, remains a latent asset until it is activated into tangible IWB. This study advances educational leadership discourse by demonstrating that high academic performance is achieved only when there is a seamless transition from belief

to action.

***Implications for College Management***

Based on the structural model evaluation, the $R^2$ value for the Innovative Work Behavior variable of 0.691 indicates high predictive power, showing that 69.1% of the variance in lecturers' innovative behaviors can be explained simultaneously by creative self-efficacy and transformational leadership. Meanwhile, the $R^2$ value for Research Performance of 0.492 sits in the moderate category, which means that almost half of the lecturers' research and publication performance achievements are driven by the integration of psychological factors, leadership styles, and innovative work behaviors in this model.

The data show that Innovative Work Behaviors function as a full mediator for creative self-efficacy ($H_6$) and a partial mediator for transformational leadership ($H_7$). This carries crucial managerial implications: lecturers' cognitive beliefs about their creative abilities will remain unproductive latent potentials unless managed through structured innovative work behaviors. Therefore, for administrators in private universities, strategic interventions must be shifted away from traditional administrative controls to strengthen intellectual stimulation from leaders to trigger innovative work behaviors. With a very dominant coefficient of leadership influence on innovative behavior (0.710), leaders have a central role in building an ecosystem where lecturers feel secure and supported to make research breakthroughs, accelerating the institution's publication performance according to international standards.

These findings provide practical implications for higher education institutions. Given that the influence of transformational leadership on innovative behavior is very dominant (f2 = 1.059), capacity development for study program leaders and deans should focus on the ability to inspire and support lecturer autonomy. In addition, since innovative behavior is key to improving performance, institutions need to provide incentive systems and facilities that support academic experimentation. Strategies that only focus on strengthening confidence (efficacy) without providing a structural forum for innovation will be less effective in boosting overall performance.

Strategically, these findings confirm that human resource development policies in universities must shift from traditional administrative control models to innovation-based empowerment models. Given the dominant role of transformational leadership, higher education institutions need to design leadership development programs that focus on *intellectual stimulation* to minimize bureaucratic rigidity that often hinders creativity. This is in line with the view of Bass and Avolio (1994) that the effectiveness of educational organizations is highly dependent on the ability of leaders to transform vision into collective innovative energy.

Furthermore, these implications emphasize the importance of creating an "innovation ecosystem" to avoid institutional capability traps, as described by Eliyana et al. (2019). Without a concrete incentive system and a safe space to conduct academic experiments, lecturers' motivation to innovate will dim. Therefore, university administrators must integrate innovative behavioral indicators into performance appraisal systems (SKPs) and provide internal funding schemes for experimental pilot projects. A holistic approach combining inspirational leadership, infrastructure support, and structural recognition of innovative initiatives is the only sustainable path to ensuring that the creative potential of lecturers is transformed into an institution's competitive advantage at a global level.

**CONCLUSION**

This study demonstrates that improving the research and publication performance of lecturers in Private Universities (PTS) cannot be achieved through partial strengthening of individual cognitive aspects alone, but requires integration between self-potential, actual behavior, and strategic leadership. The findings confirm the lack of a significant direct influence of creative self-efficacy on research performance, indicating that high self-confidence remains latent energy if not channeled through appropriate behavioral mechanisms. Innovative work behavior emerges as a central element acting as a full mediator for self-efficacy and a partial mediator for transformational leadership, affirming

that innovation is a mandatory bridge for lecturers to transform creative potential into competitive academic outputs. Furthermore, transformational leadership—especially through the dimension of intellectual stimulation—has proven to be the dominant catalyst in driving the research ecosystem, showing that governance challenges in private universities are often exacerbated by leadership styles that are trapped in rigid administrative-bureaucratic patterns that hinder innovation dynamics.

***Managerial Implications***

Based on these findings, this paper recommends a paradigm shift in HR governance in higher education:

- Work Culture Reform: Private Sector leaders must shift from mere "administrative supervisors" to "architects of innovation". Administrators need to provide a space for research autonomy and resource support that allows lecturers to experiment with new ideas without being hampered by rigid bureaucratic barriers.
- Behavior-Based Interventions: Training for lecturers should not only focus on motivation (self-efficacy), but should focus on training innovative work skills—such as international research collaborative management and publication strategies in reputable journals.
- Visionary Leadership Development: Foundations or university managers need to provide transformational leadership training for Deans and Heads of Study Programs so that they are able to provide individual attention and consistent intellectual stimulation to lecturers.

***Limitations and Future Research Suggestions***

This research is limited to the scope of private universities in East Java with a quantitative approach. Future research is suggested to use qualitative methods to explore the specific obstacles that lecturers feel in behaving innovatively in the midst of government policy pressure (LLDIKTI). In addition, testing in different organizational cultural contexts outside of East Java can provide a broader generalization of this research management model.

***Conflict of Interest***

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

***Declaration of AI in Scientific Writing***

During the preparation of this work, the authors used Grammarly for the purpose of language translation, grammatical correction, and enhancing the clarity of the manuscript. After using this tool, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the final content of the publication.

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