

# The Role of Innovative Organizational Culture on the Relationship Between Transformational Leadership and Work Performance

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## ABSTRACT

Considering globalization and digital transformation, Dili University (UNDIL) is necessary to improve the quality of service through the synergy of this study. This will affect transformational management's work at university institutions, and an innovative organizational culture serves as a mediator. With the help of research data from 12 lecturers and academic and administrative employees, when conducting these analyses via PLS-SEM, the results show that transformation management significantly improves performance, particularly when promoting a culture that evaluates innovation. The results highlight the importance of leadership in the design of institutional cultures, which improves service quality, lecturers, academic employees and adaptability. This study provides practical insights to university leaders and proposes directions for future research.

Keywords: Transformational Leadership, Innovative Organizational Culture, Work Performance, University, Timor-Leste.

## 1. Introduction

In the middle of the acceleration of Globalization and Digital Transformation, the University Device (HEI) navigates increasingly complex and competitive situations. The excellence of services, the agility of institutions and increased stakeholder accountability have increased the pressure on universities, developing traditional structures and adopting performance-oriented innovation LED models (Mareci *et al.*, 2023; Hair, Ringle and Sarstedt, 2020). In this dynamic environment of, transformational leadership and innovative organizational culture, strategic reform and continued institutional success were critical (Abualigah *et al.*, 2021; Azila-Gbettor *et al.*, 2022).

Transformation management is generally recognized in its ability to encourage and mobilize change by promoting a common vision, intellectual engagement, and personal growth of fans. managers practicing this style are associated with increased creativity, commitment, and work at levels in the organizational environment (Aboramadan, Dahleez and Hamad, 2020; Li, Taris and Peeters, 2022). At the same time, cultivation of innovative organizational cultures presents a constructive view of obstacles essential to new ideas, collaborative learning, and the promotion of resilience and continuous improvement of institutions (Awashreh, 2025; France, Shi and Kazandjian, 2021). In integration, the forms these two configurations as a complementary foundation for the, transforming university facilities into an agile, responsive, powerful system.

Despite a growing body of empirical evidence, Despite a growing body of empirical evidence supporting these dynamics, important contextual gaps remain in the literature regarding their applicability and interplay within higher education institutions in developing economies. Many studies on transformational leadership have focused on corporate environments or universities in developed nations, limiting the applicability of their findings to institutions operating in emerging economies or resource-constrained settings. (Ughulu, 2024; Noor Faedah *et al.*, 2024) In such contexts, the interplay

between leadership and organizational culture becomes especially salient. Misalignment between visionary leadership and an institution's cultural readiness can create friction that impedes innovation and undermines performance. Specifically, there is a lack of empirical research that comprehensively examines the mediating role of innovative organizational culture in the relationship between transformational leadership and work performance within the unique socio-economic and educational landscape of Timor-Leste. This gap is important because the challenges and opportunities in developing countries often differ significantly from the challenges of developed contexts that require context-specific knowledge.

This study focused on mediating the innovative organizational culture in Timor-Leste, and attempts to examine these important gaps at to investigate the impact of transformation on academic and administrative employee work. The study aims to use to take over quantitative measurement methods and to create empirical insights into manager behavior. Special attention is paid to the realities of the development and transitional education system, where the structural limitations of the lie in reform ambitions.

This study contributes from a theoretical perspective. From a theoretical perspective, this research contributes to the evolving discourse at the intersection of leadership theory, organizational behavior, and higher education reform. It responds to increasing scholarly calls for context-sensitive leadership studies that account for cultural contingencies in performance outcomes (Samodien *et al.*, 2024). By focusing on Timor-Leste, this study offers novel empirical evidence that enriches the global understanding of organizational dynamics in under-researched contexts, providing a more nuanced view of how transformational leadership fosters innovation and performance beyond Western-centric models.

On a practical level, the findings are intended to support university leaders and policymakers in designing informed strategies that align leadership development with cultural capacity building, ultimately enhancing institutional effectiveness, staff engagement, and service quality. The

insights derived will be particularly valuable for HEIs in similar developing nations striving for excellence amidst limited resources, offering actionable recommendations for cultivating a high performing and adaptive academic environment.

## 2. Theoretical Frameworks and Hypotheses

### 2.1. Conceptual Approach

#### 2.1.1. Innovative Organizational Culture

In recent years, innovative organisational culture has gained increasing attention in discussions of higher education reform. As institutions face intensifying pressures from globalisation, digital transformation, changing student expectations, and heightened demands for accountability, the need for strategic adaptability has become critical. Within this context, cultivating a culture of innovation is widely viewed as essential for developing dynamic, agile, and future-ready academic institutions (Fernández *et al.*, 2023; Korapin Jirapong, 2024).

The innovative culture in the formation of universities is usually, which promotes general values, codes of conduct, and institutional thinking of, openness to change, risk of responsibility, and proactive problem-solving. This is operated by mechanisms that promote cooperation, creative thinking, and experimentation (Turyahikayo *et al.*, 2024).

Innovation is not limited to the technical assumptions of technology, but it is important that there is a need for a broader cultural change in which employees and students can question standards, generate solutions, and align their actions with institutional goals (Sihite *et al.*, 2024).

Empirical findings confirm that embedding innovation into institutional culture improves adaptability and resilience (Huynh *et al.*, 2024) showed that strong innovation universities are better positioned to treat shifts related to external disabilities, funding or guidelines. Curriculum design and lessons, and management processes including quality assurance and service derifs (Dellova & Tian, 2024).

Several indicators signal the presence of an innovative culture, including institutional support for creativity, alignment with mission and vision, open communication, and psychological safety where individuals feel secure expressing new ideas without fear of judgment (Gerçek, 2023); (Peña & Caruajulca, 2024). Emphasises that sustainable innovation depends on a tolerance for failure, which should be viewed as part of an iterative learning process that fosters continuous improvement and reflective practice (Peña & Caruajulca, 2024)

Osei *et al.*, (2024) further argue that innovation enhances institutional effectiveness through three mechanisms: cultivating organisational learning, strengthening employee engagement, and reinforcing value-driven leadership. To be effective, innovation strategies must be embedded at all organisational levels, not merely discussed at the leadership level. This integration requires concrete policies, aligned incentives, and supportive daily practices (Ismail *et al.*, 2024; Boussaidi and Korbi, 2025).

Despite broad agreement on the value of innovation, scholarly debate persists on its implementation. One key issue

is the directionality of innovation: should it be led top down through institutional mandates, or bottom up starting from the bottom level faculty initiatives. Recent literature suggests a hybrid approach, combining strategic leadership with decentralised, context-specific implementation (Peña and Caruajulca, 2024; Raha, Mahanta and Clarke, 2014).

Another ongoing challenge is balancing innovation with academic tradition. As custodians of scholarly values, HEIs must ensure that innovation serves as a strategic enhancement rather than a disruptive force. Reforms should align with the core academic mission, maintaining integrity, disciplinary

Identity, and intellectual rigour while fostering forward-looking change (Sihite, 2024; Gerçek, 2023; Dellova and Tian, 2024).

#### 2.1.2. Transformational Leadership

In today's rapidly evolving higher education landscape, transformational leadership has emerged as a highly influential leadership model. It is particularly valued for its emphasis on empowering individuals and steering institutions through change with vision and purpose. Rather than relying solely on authority or transactional exchanges, transformational leaders aim to motivate and inspire their teams to look beyond individual interests and work collectively toward shared institutional goals. This approach has verified in particular powerful in fostering cultures of innovation, adaptability, and long-time period improvement in universities and colleges (Al-Husseini, El Beltagi and Moizer, 2021; Al-Husseini, El Beltagi and Moizer, 2021).

What units' transformational management aside is its multidimensional nature. As mentioned through by Kiswanto and Yulianti, (2024), 5 key factors outline this management style: organizing a clean and significant organizational identity, encouraging lively engagement and enthusiasm amongst staff, selling obvious and open communication, putting behavioral requirements rooted in institutional values, and developing area for innovation and optimistic change. These dimensions aren't summary beliefs they directly make a contribution to better stages of trust, collaboration, productivity, and inclusiveness throughout the academic community (Bohari *et al.*, 2024; Bohari *et al.*, 2024; Njaramba, 2024). When those features are present, establishments are better prepared to deal with inner transformation and external disruptions alike.

Beyond formal leadership responsibilities, Transformational leaders additionally function mentors and visionaries. Their capacity to attach private values with institutional missions allows create a feel of emotional funding and shared cause amongst body of workers. This alignment now no longer best strengthens dedication however additionally allows to lessen resistance to extrude a not unusual place venture in instructional settings. When body of workers feel without a doubt concerned and trust their paintings subjects to the institution's future, they're much more likely to embody innovation and make contributions to significant extrude. In turn, this deep engagement strengthens organizational gaining knowledge of and allows build resilient, forward- searching instructional environments (Dawson, 2023; Gusau, Nee and Ibrahim, 2023).

### 2.1.3. Work Performance

Work performance at university institution (HEIS) is a central measure of institutional effectiveness. IT reflects both individual professionalism and ability to function adaptively in knowledge driven context (Lai and Jung, 2024; Leite *et al.*, 2023). Hadi Hadi Mousavi, (2020) describes it as, a result of individual attributes such as motivation and capabilities and organizational support systems. The impact of this double is supported by a wider range of trials showing that both personal and context-related factors of form performance outcomes (Ndudi *et al.*, 2023).

The service assessment includes both quantitative metrics (publications, apprenticeships, qualifications, etc.) and qualitative factors such as cooperation, adaptability, and professional growth of (Bowden, Tickle and Naumann, 2021; Nazari-Shirkouhi *et al.*, 2020). Continuous learning and collaboration are increasingly recognised as drivers of productivity and satisfaction in HEIs, especially in the post-pandemic context of digitalisation and flexible work (Alenezi, 2023). Nonetheless, reliance on output- based metrics risks overlooking the relational and developmental nature of academic work (Winstone & Boud, 2022). Scholars advocate for integrated performance frameworks that combine quantitative data with narrative feedback and peer review to offer a more comprehensive view of contributions (Q. Yu & Schunn, 2023).

## 2.2. Theoretical Frameworks and Hypotheses

### Development

#### 2.2.1. Transformational Leadership and Innovative Organizational Culture

The link between transformational leadership and innovative organizational culture has been well-documented in contemporary organizational research, particularly within the context of higher education. Transformational leaders influence not just outcomes but also the deeper values, beliefs, and behaviors that shape how institutions respond to change and pursue innovation. Through visionary communication, highbrow stimulation, and the empowerment of followers, those leaders foster an surroundings wherein experimentation and innovative problem-fixing are actively encouraged (Al-Husseini *et al.*, 2021)

Transformational management is specifically powerful in shaping a subculture of innovation as it encourages autonomy, collaboration, and a proactive orientation toward non-stop improvement. Leaders who undertake this fashion often assignment current norms, sell mastering from failure, and aid the improvement of latest thoughts all of which are foundational factors of an innovation-orientated subculture (Nguyen Van *et al.*, 2024). Within better schooling, wherein inflexible bureaucratic cultures can stifle responsiveness, such management presents the ability and imaginative and prescient wanted to stimulate cultural change (Owusu-Agyeman, 2021).

Recent empirical findings similarly underscore this courting Zhang and Mazni, (2025), in a have a look at of better schooling establishments in Southeast Asia, located that transformational

management drastically anticipated the presence of an revolutionary organizational subculture, which subsequently superior institutional innovation overall performance. Likewise, Hamadneh, Alqarni and Al Fahade, (2023), discovered that management patterns grounded in idea and highbrow engagement had been instrumental in embedding innovation related values and behaviors in college settings. These findings are supported through different research emphasizing that transformational leaders are instrumental in cultivating shared cultural norms that Priorities creativity, adaptability, and risk-tolerance (Owusu-Agyeman, 2021).

Taken together, the literature affirms that transformational management now no longer simplest drives character overall performance however additionally sets the cultural basis important for sustained institutional innovation. Based in this theoretical and empirical grounding, the subsequent speculation is proposed:

H1: Transformational management has a advantageous impact on revolutionary organizational subculture.

#### 2.2.2. Innovative Organizational Culture and Work Performance

An innovative organizational culture plays the crucial role of to the innovative organizational culture. This plays a critical role in the designing employees, behavior and ultimately the performance. Creativity and Accountability (Gorzalany *et al.*, 2021). Such a culture promotes the psychological safety of the, promotes knowledge exchange, and functional cooperation that contributes all to improve the outcomes of work in the academic and administrative fields of the.

Recent empirical studies highlight the positive relationship between And employee benefits. For example, Gorzalany *et al.*, (2021) found that university institutions develop innovation-oriented norms and practices, increase job satisfaction, improve autonomy and improve education effectiveness. Well employee presence, task performance, and organizational commitment. These results correspond to the broad evidence of that demonstrate that serves performance work systems that are likely to be important as an innovation culture. This relationship is particularly relevant to an academic environment in which daily tasks performance is completed to include intellectual contributions, curriculum development, student commitment, and collaborative research. Institutions that promote innovation at the cultural level allow academic staff to increase flexibility in, problem-solving ability and motivation to exceed service expectations (Dellova & Tian, 2024). Based on the theoretical framework and empirical evidence, the hypothesis has been proposed:

H2: An innovative organizational culture has a positive effect on the work performance of academic staff

### 2.2.3. Transformational Leadership and Work Performance

Transformational management has been extensively recognised as a critical predictor of worker overall performance throughout various organizational contexts, together with better education. Defined with the aid of using behaviors inclusive of articulating a clear vision, fostering highbrow stimulation, and presenting individualized consideration, transformational leaders encourage fans to exceed expectancies and align their non-public dreams with institutional objectives (Naseem *et al.*, 2025; Hamid, Zahra and Ahmad, 2024). In the educational environment, this management style is especially applicable because it helps each the motivational and developmental desires of body of workers, at once improving their job overall performance. Empirical proof continually demonstrates a advantageous courting among transformational management and paintings overall performance. Hendrastuti and Setiawan, (2021) located that transformational management improves revolutionary paintings behaviour amongst college body of workers, which in flip mediates the courting among management and man or woman overall performance. Similarly, Kang, Abdul Aziz and Hassan, (2023) spotlight that transformational leaders domesticate trust, autonomy, and a shared feel of mission, thereby growing productiveness and fostering dedication throughout teaching, studies, and administrative domains. Recent findings with the aid of using Mobeena Kosar, Mahreen Riaz and Zunaira Arshad, (2024) additionally verify that transformational management definitely influences job pleasure and overall performance with the aid of using growing psychologically empowering and participative paintings climates. Furthermore, transformational management has been proven to beautify institutional agility and responsiveness in rapidly converting environments. This is especially critical in better education, wherein body of workers overall performance isn't always handiest measured with the aid of using quantifiable outcomes, inclusive of studies output and teaching quality, however additionally with the aid of using their cappotential to conform to new pedagogical models, virtual tools, and stakeholder expectancies (Sraruch *et al.*, 2023). Based on those theoretical and empirical foundations, the following speculation is proposed:

H3: Transformational management has a advantageous impact on the paintings overall performance of instructional body of workers.

Transformational leaders with the aid of using selling values such as highbrow stimulation, risk-taking, and collaboration play a crucial position in cultivating a tradition that helps innovation and adaptability throughout all institutional levels (Sihite, 2024; Al-Husseini, El Beltagi and Moizer, 2021). This tradition, in turn, creates conducive surroundings for personnel to interact in trouble solving, know-how sharing, and continuous improvement, all of which beautify person and collective performance.

Empirical research assist the view that transformational management exerts its most powerful consequences whilst mediated through organizational tradition. For instance Wibisono *et al.*, (2022) determined that transformational management fosters a learning oriented weather that promotes innovation, which subsequently drives Performance

consequences in better training institutions. Similarly, Bomm, De Montreuil Carmona and Gomes, (2023) argue that a tradition anchored in innovation amplifies the behavioral and attitudinal shifts initiated with the aid of using transformational management, allowing personnel to align extra correctly with institutional goals.

Furthermore, this mediating role is particularly salient in dynamic and complex environments such as those faced by higher education institutions navigating digitalization, accountability pressures, and evolving student needs. In such contexts, an innovative culture not only channels the vision of transformational leaders but also sustains employee engagement and commitment, thus reinforcing performance improvements over time (Adeoye *et al.*, 2025). Based on this theoretical and empirical foundation, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Innovative organizational culture mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and work performance

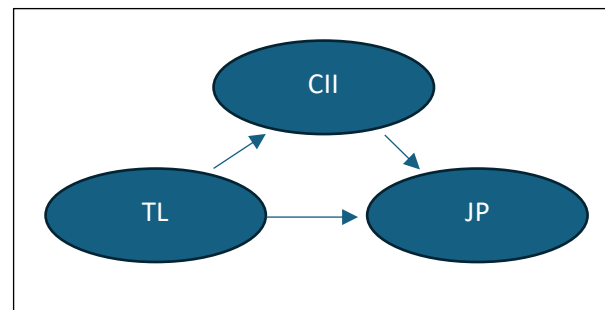


Figure 1. Hypothesis Model

Novelty of the Hypothesized Model: The hypothesized model in this study offers significant novelty compared to previous models in the literature, particularly in two key aspects. First, this model explicitly tests the full mediating role of innovative organizational culture within the context of higher education in a developing nation, specifically Timor-Leste. While prior studies have identified relationships between transformational leadership, innovative culture, and performance, few have systematically examined how innovative culture serves as the primary transmission mechanism in resource-constrained and unique environmental settings. This model argues that transformational leadership does not merely directly influence performance, but its impact is substantially amplified when leaders successfully instill a culture that fosters experimentation, collaboration, and continuous learning.

Second, the research specifically focuses on the context of higher education institutions in Timor-Leste, a region relatively underrepresented in management and organizational literature. Most existing research on these topics originates from developed countries or corporate sectors. By testing this model in Timor-Leste, this study provides invaluable contextual insights, highlighting how leadership and cultural dynamics interact within an environment that may face distinct structural and cultural constraints. This enriches existing theory by demonstrating the generalizability and boundaries of the model

beyond commonly studied contexts, thereby making a unique contribution to the literature on leadership and innovation in developing nations.

### 3. Research Method

#### 3.1. Research Design

This study employs a quantitative approach with data collection techniques through structured questionnaires and interviews with lecturers and staff at the university to examine the relationship between transformational leadership, innovative organizational culture, and work performance. The research instrument was developed based on the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory and adapted from previous validated studies. Data were analyzed using SmartPLS 3.0 to evaluate the measurement model (Outer) and structural model (Inner), by assessing constraints, validity, and relationships between variables through statistical parameters such as Composite Reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and R-squared (R<sup>2</sup>). This research was conducted from mid-May to mid-August 2023 for data collection, and the analysis stage took place from December 2024 to July 2025. The research results are presented systematically, starting with respondent demographic data, descriptive analysis, and hypothesis testing, in order to provide an in-depth empirical picture of the dynamics of campus organizations and become the basis for recommendations for future strategies.

#### 3.2. Population and sampling

There are a total of 12 people at Dili University. The census was used and the entire population was accepted as respondents. The decision to include the entire population eliminates the need for complex sample size calculations, and directly addresses concerns about the expressivity of the sample, as each member of the target group is interviewed. This approach improves the validity of the results by acquiring insights from across the entire cohort for academic employees. The counts were essentially reduced, but rehearsal meals were reduced due to direct distribution and follow-up efforts of, people and follow-up efforts of, people to participate in all, instructors identified.

#### 3.3. Variable Measurement

To ensure accurate measurements, the variables in this study are operated by carefully selected indicators. Each records the construct investigated in the theoretical dimensions of Transformation Management: As an independent variable, transformation management is measured by an indicator that reflects four main aspects: idealized influence, stimulating motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual considerations. These indicators reflect the leadership style that reinforces the creation and team as an inspiring vision through communication and participatory decision-making. These dimensions theoretically agree that the conversion leaders play an important role in the design of the innovative organizational values (Z. Zhang & Mazni, 2025).

**Innovative Organization Culture:** As a mediation variable, Innovative Organization Culture is assessed by indicators such as creativity support, open communication, cooperation, and risk and experimental risk. These indicators document key elements of the adaptive and pro-chas work culture, such as openness to new ideas, tolerances for failure, and ongoing efforts in the development of ideas. Three aspects of these represent the environment that supports organizational productivity and innovation for the. This has an empirically positive effect on the performance of task (Hasan Al Khajeh, 2019).

**Working Performance:** As a dependent variable, performance is measured based on two main dimensions:

Ability assignment and context-related performance. The assignment of ability reflects the ability of a person to perform core tasks effectively and efficiently, while context-related performance is related to the contribution of a person beyond the formal tasks of, such as teamwork and positive behavior. These indicators explain the lecturer's commitment and contributions to achieving the objectives of the system, and aim to agree with the outcomes that lead and innovative culture of affect performance outcomes (X. Yu & Jang, 2024).

#### 3.4. Data collection techniques

Data from this study were collected in questionnaires distributed to lecturers and employees at DILI University. The survey consists of closed questions that measure respondents' perceptions of transformative management, innovative organizational culture, and lecturer's work performance. The measurement scale used is a 5-point Likert scale of 5-point, and the level of consent for respondent is measured with the specified explanation.

#### 3.5. Data Analysis Techniques

This study uses a quantitative approach with two main stages, namely descriptive and inference analysis. Description analysis aims to explain respondents' perceptions. The technology is based on a 5-point Riker scale based on the frequency distribution, percentage, and the average value of each instruction element. Descriptive statistics help identify general trends and recognition patterns for respondents in the dataset. These results provide the first photo of. Here, respondents' perceptions are found in each of the, research components. This approach is important in the study of Social. Particularly when trying to understand behavioral or settings quantitatively and measurably (Goniwada, 2023).

SMARTPLS 3.0 Further analysis was performed using the software. The selection of SMARTPLS 3.0 in this study is particularly suitable for this study. This study is consistent with research goals and data features. Suitable for complex models and small samples. In contrast to covariance-based SEM (CB-SEM), PLS-SEM does not require to accept multivariate normality, so data does not correspond to the strict sales assumptions (Sarstedt & Cheah, 2019).

Focusing on prediction and explanation: PLS-SEM is a variance-based approach for variance in prioritized target

structures, prediction, and explanation of. Efficient evaluation of reflection and formation models: SMARTPLS supports efficient evaluation of both reflectometric and formation measurement models, providing flexibility in the operational structure. Mediation Effect: The software's bootstrap technology is ideal for testing direct and indirect (mediation) effects, allowing for a robust assessment of virtual relationships between, including key mediation roles of innovative organizational culture. Evaluation of the measurement model (external model) runs a to test the reliability and validity of the instrument. The reliability of the is tested using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability at  $<0>0.70$  and  $Ave>0.50$ , with thresholds, while the differential validity uses the Fornell-Larker criteria and the HTMT ratio of the., which is ideally below 0.90 (Hair *et al.*, 2021;Roemer, Schubert and Henseler, 2021). After the measurement model is fulfilled, structural model analysis (inner model) is carried out to test the relationship between latent variables through bootstrapping techniques. Hypothesis testing is declared significant if the T-statistic value  $> 1.96$  and the P value  $< 0.05$ . This process allows researchers to assess the strength and direction of the influence of transformational leadership on organizational culture and work performance, both directly and through the mediating role of innovative organizational culture (Tan, 2023).

#### 4. Results and Discussion

##### 4.1. Result of Reliability and Validity Test

There are two primary types of validity tests: convergent validity and discriminant validity. Convergent validity is assessed using two parameters, namely outer loading and average variance extracted (AVE) (Lea-Charris *et al.*, 2021). A construct is considered valid if the outer loading value exceeds 0.70 and the AVE value exceeds 0.50. Based on the outer

loading results presented in Figure 1, all item values are greater than 0.70, except for FKS 1 and FKS 4, which are below this threshold. However, as argued by (Lea-Charris *et al.*, 2021), such outer loading values are acceptable in exploratory research, given their influence on content validity and reliability. Similarly, de Rozari *et al.*, (2021) highlight that in exploratory studies, slightly lower loadings may still be retained if supported by other validity measures. In terms of AVE, the items in this model have values exceeding 0.50 (Table I), thereby confirming that, with respect to convergent validity, all items are valid according to the inner model measurement assessment.

**Table I.** Results of the reliability test

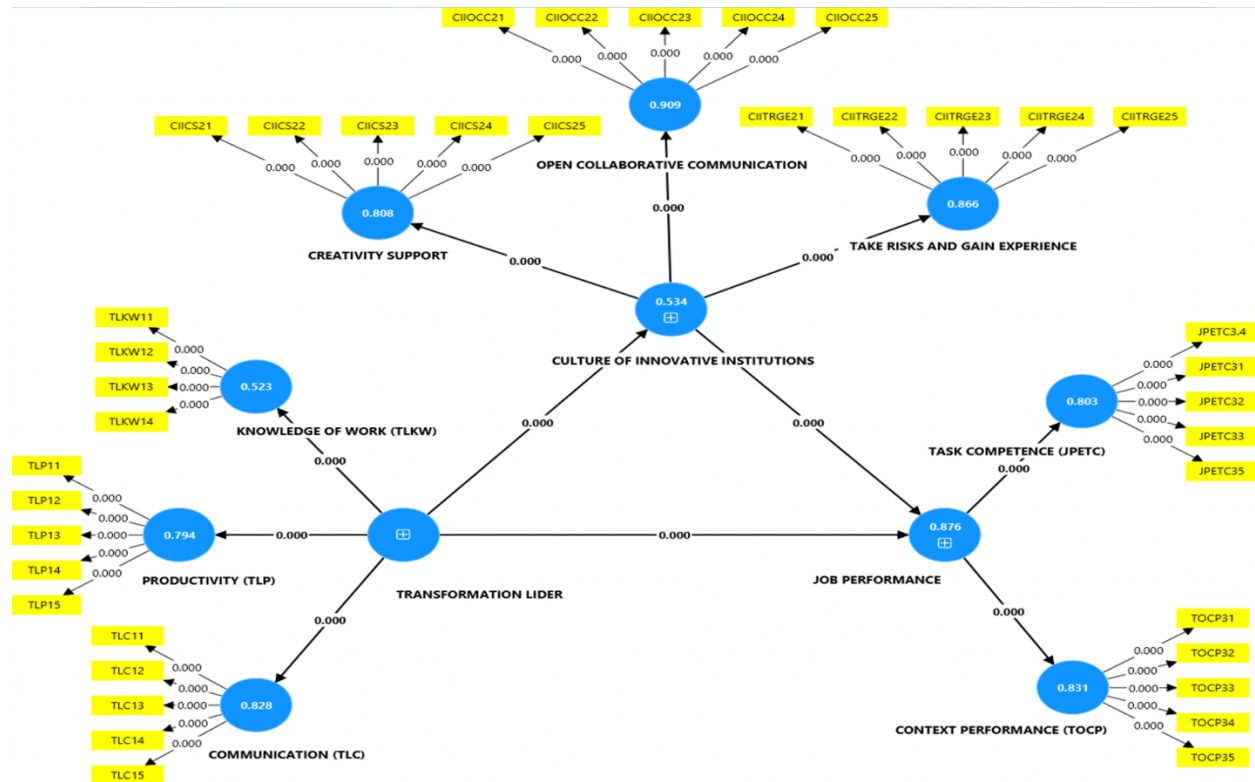
ITEM	CA	CR	AVE
TLC	0.895	0.900	0.708
TOCP	0.933	0.933	0.789
CIICS	0.894	0.901	0.708
TLKW	0.822	0.883	0.653
CIOCC	0.916	0.918	0.748
TLP	0.892	0.898	0.701
CIITRGE	0.938	0.940	0.801
JPETC	0.917	0.931	0.751

In terms of discriminant validity, the AVE value of the indicator for the indicator itself (e.g., CP1 for CP1) is greater than the AVE value of other indicators. Table II shows that the AVE value of the indicator for the indicator itself is the largest by the standard (J. Hair *et al.*, 2017). Thus, all indicators are valid using the Criteria Fornell-Larcker.

**Table II.** Fornell-Larcker Criterion Value

	TLC	TOCP	CIICS	TLKW	CIOCC	TLP	CIITRGE	JPETC
TLC	0.841							
TOCP	0.773	0.888						
CIICS	0.577	0.612	0.841					
TLKW	0.550	0.448	0.279	0.807				
CIOCC	0.545	0.737	0.911	0.278	0.865			
TLP	0.795	0.715	0.350	0.563	0.435	0.837		
CIITRGE	0.534	0.660	0.767	0.310	0.838	0.529	0.895	
JPETC	0.574	0.650	0.532	0.545	0.662	0.641	0.755	0.867





**Figure 2.** Results of the SMART-PLS Algorithm for outer measurement test.

After ensuring that the research instruments used are valid and reliable, the next step is to conduct a path analysis to test each hypothesis in the model. At this stage, the relationship between transformational leadership, innovative organizational culture, and work performance is analyzed one by one. The

results are analyzed in depth to see whether the relationship is statistically significant, and compared with the results of previous studies to see whether they are consistent or show differences.

**Table III.** Testing and Discussion

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standarddeviation (STDEV)	T statistics (IO/STDEV)	P Values
TL -> JP	0.522	0.509	0.096	5.414	0.000
CH -> JP	0.484	0.497	0.079	6.155	0.000
TL -> CH	0.731	0.753	0.096	7.630	0.000
TL ->CH -> JP	0.354	0.378	0.095	3.719	0.000

#### 4.1.1. The Influence of Transformational Leaders on Work Performance

The results of this study demonstrate that transformational leadership has a moderate and statistically significant influence on employee work performance, with a path coefficient of 0.522 (t-statistic = 5.414,  $p < 0.001$ ). This finding strongly supports Hypothesis 3 (H3), indicating that leaders who exhibit transformational behaviors significantly contribute to the

enhanced performance of academic and administrative staff at Dili University. This aligns with a growing body of literature that positions transformational leadership as a key determinant of individual and organizational outcomes across sectors, including higher education (Malik, Jabbar and Nawaz, 2022;Zhang, 2025).

The moderate strength of this relationship ( $\beta = 0.522$ ) suggests that while leadership is not the sole driver of

performance, it plays a critical enabling role in shaping a motivated, engaged, and productive workforce. Transformational leadership, through dimensions such as inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, idealized influence, and individualized consideration, supports the development of a performance-oriented culture (Dellova and Tian, 2024; Nguon, Sadangharn and Sanglimsuwan, 2025). Leaders who articulate a clear vision, foster trust, and provide tailored support are more likely to elicit discretionary effort from staff, enhance task performance, and contribute to organizational resilience.

This influence extends to both academic and administrative domains, encompassing activities such as teaching effectiveness, timely service provision, interdepartmental coordination, and student support (Weerakkody et al., 2024). Leaders who promote autonomy and continuous learning can stimulate innovation, accountability, and responsiveness in employees (Gerçek, 2023; Peña and Caruajulca, 2024). Furthermore, transformational leadership contributes to employee development by fostering environments conducive to skill enhancement, reflective practice, and knowledge sharing. Leaders who consistently provide feedback, encourage experimentation, and model ethical behavior contribute to the cultivation of professional identity and institutional commitment (Ali & Ahmad, 2022). This leadership style also reinforces intrinsic motivation, which is critical for sustaining performance in contexts where external incentives may be limited or delayed.

Critically, this finding is consistent with previous research in diverse contexts (Mobeena Kosar et al., 2024) but provides specific empirical validation within the unique higher education landscape of Timor-Leste. The transformation management principle emphasizes that even developing countries with different structures and resources of institutions can be applied to the performance of performance. However, it is important to recognize that leadership effectiveness according to can vary in terms of organizational culture, structure, and willingness to change.

Thus, the moderate effects observed in this study reflect the need for complementary organizational factors such as resource availability, communication systems, and innovation-related guidelines, to fully utilize the benefits of transformation management (Xu et al., 2024).

#### **4.1.2. The Influence of Transformational Leadership on Innovative Organizational Culture**

The results of this study show that transformation leadership has a strong and statistically significant effect on the development of innovative organizational cultures. This is because reflects a path coefficient of 0.731 (T-statistics = 7.630,  $P < 0.001$ ). This finding provides robust support for Hypothesis 1(H1) and demonstrates the strategic role of leadership in the design of creativity, experimentation, continuous environment learning Transformational leaders play a central role in fostering this culture by articulating a clear and inspiring vision, demonstrating openness to change, and empowering employees to contribute creatively. In the context of higher education

institutions (HEIs), this often translates into the encouragement of pedagogical innovation, interdisciplinary collaboration, and inclusive participation in decision-making processes (Gerçek, 2023; Dellova and Tian, 2024). Rather than innovation being a top-down initiative, such leadership helps embed it as a shared value across all organizational levels.

The strength of the observed relationship ( $\beta = 0.731$ ) suggests that leadership is not merely a supportive function but a driving force in embedding innovation into institutional practices. Leaders who communicate shared objectives, support creative risk-taking, and recognize new contributions help nurture a psychologically safe environment where staff are more willing to challenge the status quo and propose original ideas (Barua et al., 2024; Peña and Caruajulca, 2024). Psychological safety, in particular, has been identified as a foundational condition for sustained innovation in educational organizations (GERÇEK, 2023).

From a broader institutional development perspective, a culture of innovation supported by strong leadership enhances the university's responsiveness to change whether driven by technology, shifting student needs, or global academic trends. Transformational leaders facilitate continuous learning and capacity-building among academic and administrative personnel, equipping them to meet evolving challenges while preserving institutional relevance and integrity (Ali & Ahmad, 2022).

This finding is highly consistent with prior empirical research across various sectors, including education (Chís-Manolache, 2022; Dellova and Tian, 2024), which consistently shows that transformational leadership is a powerful antecedent of innovative organizational culture. The particularly strong coefficient observed in this study (0.731) suggests that in the context of Dili University, transformational leadership is exceptionally effective in cultivating an innovation-oriented environment. This is especially important for development and for resource-limiting university systems of. In such contexts, the ability to foster innovation internally becomes a key determinant of sustainability and relevance. When transformational leaders create inclusive environments that value contributions from both academic and non-academic personnel, they help cultivate organizational resilience and unlock untapped creative potential (Nguon, Sadangharn and Sanglimsuwan, 2025; Peña and Caruajulca, 2024).

It turns out that an organizational environment open to such leadership style changes can create new solutions. (Dellova & Tian, 202) highlights the importance of intersecting communication between and collaborative learning environments. Furthermore, transformation management contributes to the organizational adaptability and resilience of, allowing navigation of the complexity of modern education. Dedication (Weerakkody et al., 2024).

This is especially vital in developing and resource-limited higher education systems, such as those in parts of Southeast Asia. In such contexts, the ability to foster innovation internally becomes a key determinant of sustainability and relevance. When transformational leaders create inclusive environments that value contributions from both academic and non-academic personnel, they help



cultivate organizational resilience and unlock untapped creative potential (Nguon, Sadangharn and Sanglimsuwan, 2025; Peña and Caruajulca, 2024).

#### 4.1.3. The Influence of Innovative Institutional Culture on Work Performance

The results of this study demonstrate that innovative organizational culture significantly enhances work performance in higher education institutions, as reflected by a path coefficient of 0.484 ( $t$ -statistic = 6.155,  $p < 0.001$ ). This finding provides strong support for Hypothesis 2 (H2), indicating that cultivating a culture that values innovation positively influences both task competence and contextual performance among academic and non-academic staff at Dili University. While the effect size is moderate compared to other variables, it nonetheless provides compelling evidence that fostering an innovative culture is crucial for improving staff performance.

In line with the broader literature, innovative organizational culture refers to shared values and behavioral norms that promote creativity, experimentation, open communication, and risk-taking (Peña and Caruajulca, 2024; Dellova and Tian, 2024). These cultural attributes are vital in enabling staff to develop novel approaches to their work, solve complex problems, and adapt to dynamic institutional and societal needs. For academic employees, this means that includes new educational instruments and assessment methods, but administrative staff may take on the Agility Lusile Services model and digital solutions. This finding is supported by Ali and Ahmad, (2022), Institutions with a strong innovation culture are likely to increase workers motivation, productivity and job satisfaction, which is an important factor for across the system.

Innovation Culture promotes continuous improvement and promotes the kind of organizational learning for continuous performance in a competitive university organization environment.

Moreover, the significance of the relationship reflected in the high  $t$ -value suggests not only correlation but also a causal link between innovative culture and work performance. As noted by Gerçek, (2023; Zhang and Mazni, 2025), innovation thrives in environments where psychological safety, collaborative learning, and institutional trust are prioritized. These factors reduce the fear of failure and empower staff to engage in reflective experimentation, which in turn enhances performance outcomes across teaching, research, and administrative domains.

This result is in compliance with existing study (Starostina *et al.*, 2023; Aghel, Azam and Kassim, 2024) In particular, institutions that embedded innovations in their core practices are in changes that respond to feedback and provide services directed at stakeholder expectations. For example, the adaptive curriculum, integrated digital platforms, and interdisciplinary collaboration are all the results that are often linked to an innovation-driven organizational culture. Such practices improve not only internal efficiency but also the perceived value and reputation of the institution among

students, partners, and the public. In the context of developing or resource-constrained educational systems, this finding carries special significance. Financial or infrastructural limitations regularly limit the capacity of establishments to spend money on outside solutions. As argued through Weerakkody, Agarwal and Perera, (2024), inner cultural transformation represents a cost-effective and sustainable method to decorate institutional responsiveness and resilience. By leveraging organizational tradition as a strategic asset, better schooling establishments can construct long-time period talents with out relying totally on outside investment or infrastructure.

#### 4.1.4. The Mediation Effect of Innovative Institutional Culture (CII) on the Relationship Between Transformational Leadership (TL) and Work Performance (JP)

The findings of this study highlight the important mediation functions of the innovative institutional culture (CII). The relationship between transformation management (TL) and work (JP) is a statistically significant indirect path coefficient of  $0.35 = 3.719$ ,  $P < 0.001$ . This result supports strong support for Hypothesis (H). This shows a robust indirect effect that transform primarily improves work performance by designing an innovation-enforced cultural environment.

This mediation relationship corresponds to an increasing number of literature. This considers organizational culture to be vehicle. This translates leadership into institutional outcomes. of the organization. Dellova and Tian, (2024), continue to argue that such cultural characteristics are essential to promoting dynamic learning environments, particularly within university facilities.

Critically, innovative culture serves as a behavioral and cognitive framework that facilitates risk-tolerant experimentation, intellectual curiosity, and interdisciplinary cooperation all of which are foundational to sustained performance gains. This cultural framework enhances both task performance (e.g., quality teaching and research delivery) and contextual performance (e.g., teamwork, adaptability, and proactive service behavior), especially in knowledge-intensive environments like universities (Gerçek, 2023; Peña and Caruajulca, 2024).

Moreover, as Starostina *et al.*, (2023) have shown, institutions that embed innovation as a shared norm experience higher staff engagement and better alignment between institutional goals and individual motivation. In this light, transformational leadership alone may not suffice unless it is supported by a receptive cultural infrastructure—one that encourages creativity and buffers against resistance to change.

This finding is consistent with and extends previous mediation studies (Chabullah *et al.*, 2022; Bomm, De Montreuil Carmona and Gomes, 2023) by specifically validating this mechanism in the context of a developing nation's higher education system. In resource-constrained or transitional educational settings, such as those in many parts of

Asia, Latin America, and sub-Saharan Africa, the strategic value of culture becomes even more pronounced. Nguon, Sadangharn and Sanglimsuwan, (2025) argue that where financial, technological, and policy resources are limited, innovative organizational culture functions as an intangible but high-leverage asset that enables universities to pivot effectively and respond to external shocks or reform imperatives. In these contexts, the ability of leaders to instill a culture of continuous improvement becomes a defining factor of institutional resilience and competitive positioning.

This study's findings echo and extend these insights by offering empirical evidence of a causal pathway linking transformational leadership to performance through cultural mediation. Specifically, transformational leaders inspire a shared vision and stimulate intellectual engagement, while the culture of innovation nurtures the behavioral conditions necessary to actualize that vision in day-to-day academic and administrative work (Weerakkody et al., 2024). Such synergistic interplay between leadership and culture enhances collective efficacy, promotes organizational citizenship behaviors, and builds the adaptive capacity essential in the rapidly evolving higher education landscape. Furthermore, Ali and Ahmad, (2022) found that, an external reputation of facilities and stakeholders trust, not only a strong culture of innovation that does not improve internal operational efficiency, but also a very important importance for sustainable growth. If employees find that innovative efforts are supported and rewards, it promotes essential motivation, which leads to greater accountability, positive action, and the delivery of high-quality services.

## 5. Conclusions and Implications

This study confirms that innovative institutional culture plays an important mediation role in transforming transformation management into improved work for higher educational institutions. The results show that the effectiveness of leadership is most effective when promoting a culture that promotes creativity, experimentation, and collective learning. Instead of affecting performance directly on funding, transformational leadership achieves more results by shaping the values and actions that underpin a strong academic environment.

The findings highlight that innovative culture is not a passive byproduct of leadership but a strategic resource that enables institutions to navigate change, build staff engagement, and enhance academic and administrative service delivery. In environments where resources are constrained and expectations are rising, such a culture offers a pathway to resilience and operational excellence.

### 5.1. Theoretical Contributions

This research makes several significant theoretical contributions to the fields of leadership, organizational behavior, and higher education management.

**Validation of Mediation in Under-Researched Contexts:** The most prominent contribution is the empirical validation of the mediating role of innovative organizational culture in the relationship between transformational leadership and work performance within the unique socio-economic and educational landscape of Timor-Leste. This extends existing theoretical models, which often originate from developed economies, by demonstrating their applicability and nuances in a developing nation. It provides crucial evidence that the mechanisms through which leadership influences performance are culturally mediated, emphasizing the importance of context-specific research.

**Refining the Leadership-Performance Nexus:** The study refines the understanding of how transformational leadership impacts performance. While a direct effect was found, the significant indirect effect through innovative culture suggests that leaders' ability to cultivate a supportive and experimental environment is paramount. This implies that the "how" of leadership (i.e., fostering culture) is as critical as the "what" (i.e., direct influence), offering a more nuanced theoretical pathway. **Reinforcing RBV in HEIs:** By demonstrating that innovative organizational culture acts as a valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN) resource that enhances work performance, the study reinforces the applicability of the Resource-Based View (RBV) in the context of higher education institutions. It highlights that intangible assets like culture, when strategically nurtured by leadership, can be a source of sustainable competitive advantage for universities.

### 5.2. Practical Implications

The findings of this study offer actionable insights for university leaders, policymakers, and human resource managers in higher education institutions, particularly those in developing nations. **Strategic Leadership Development:** University leaders should prioritize the development of transformational leadership capabilities among their academic and administrative staff. This goes beyond traditional management training to, encouraging visionary thinking, communication, inviting intellectual stimulation, and includes individual considerations of. In particular, training programs should emphasize.

**Innovation-Oriented Culture Cultivation:** Institutions must cultivate an innovative organization culture. This includes Openness and Promotion of Cooperation Cross-Collaboration and Open Communications Channel promotions to make ideas easy to exchange.

**Experimental Support:** Creating formal and informal mechanisms for that allow employees to test new ideas, even if provides the risk of failure and resources for such initiatives. **Innovation Awareness and Rewarding Innovation:** Implementing the system that acknowledges and rewards creative efforts, and successful innovations thereby reinforce the desired behavior. or **Guidelines and Practice Orientation:** Make sure your agency guidelines, performance assessment systems, and resource allocation support innovation.

**Use of Culture as Strategic Capital:** For HEI in a resource-related environment, promotion of innovative culture is a cheap and sustainable strategy to improve the institutional

effectiveness and resistance of employees and improve performance from within. This is particularly relevant to the university in Timor Leste and similar contexts that strive for limited resources. Overall Approach to Improve Performance:

Research highlights that the synergistic interaction between transformation management and innovative culture is the most effective driver of institutional performance. Therefore, effort should pursue a holistic approach to improving the work. At the same time, it focuses on the development of

with strong managers to promote a lively and innovative culture. Ultimately, the synergy between's leadership and innovative culture is an innovative culture as a key driver of 's institutional performance. Institutions that successfully integrate these elements are in a better position to adapt.

## 6. Limitations and Future Research

This study provides valuable insight into the placement role of innovative organizational culture in the relationship between transformational management and work within the university facility. However, several limitations should be noted, which also point to promising directions for future research.

### 6.1. Limitations

**Cross-Sectional Design:** The use of a cross-sectional survey design limits the ability to capture dynamic or causal relationships over time. While the analysis reveals significant associations, it cannot definitively determine how these relationships evolve or whether changes in leadership behavior or culture lead to long-term improvements in performance. This design captures a snapshot in time, making it challenging to infer causality or the long-term impact of the observed relationships.

- **Single Institutional Setting and Generalizability:** The study focused on a single institutional setting (Dili University in Timor-Leste), which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Organizational structures, leadership practices, and cultural norms can differ significantly across universities, especially in different national, public-private, or regional contexts. While providing deep contextual insights for Timor-Leste, the findings may not be directly transferable to HEIs in vastly different cultural, economic, or political environments without further validation.
- **Self-Reported Data and Potential Bias:** All data were gathered through self-reported questionnaires, which may be subject to common method bias and social desirability bias. Perceptions of leadership and culture may be influenced by individual expectations or institutional positioning. Respondents might have provided answers they perceived as socially desirable or aligned with organizational expectations, potentially inflating the observed relationships.
- **Limited Scope of Mediators/Moderators:** The study examined innovative organizational culture as a single mediator. While this yielded meaningful results, other contextual or psychological variables—such as

organizational trust, leadership communication style, institutional support systems, or digital readiness may also influence the relationship between leadership and performance. The model, while robust, does not account for other potential pathways or boundary conditions that might influence the observed relationships.

- **Homogeneous Sample Representation:** The study focused exclusively on full-time lecturers at Dili University. While a census approach was used for this specific population, it did not account for potential differences in departmental functions, academic disciplines, or the roles of administrative staff. Academic and administrative staff may respond differently to leadership styles or cultural cues, and their performance metrics might vary significantly, which was not disaggregated in this study.

### 6.2. Recommendations for Future Research

Building upon the findings and limitations of this study, the following concrete directions are recommended for future research:

**Longitudinal Studies:** Future research should adopt longitudinal designs to capture the dynamic evolution of relationships between transformational leadership, innovative organizational culture, and work performance. Tracking these variables over several years would provide stronger evidence of causality and allow for the assessment of long-term impacts and sustainability of interventions.

**Multi-Institutional and Cross-Cultural Comparative Studies:** To enhance external validity and generalizability, future studies should expand research across multiple institutional and geographical boundaries. Conducting comparative studies between HEIs in developing nations and developed nations, or across different types of universities (e.g., public vs. private, research-intensive vs. teaching-focused), would provide valuable insights into contextual variations and universal principles.

**Mixed-Methods Approach:** To mitigate potential self-report bias and gain richer insights, future research could employ a mixed-methods approach. Incorporating qualitative interviews, focus groups, or observational data alongside quantitative surveys would provide a more nuanced understanding of the underlying mechanisms and lived experiences of staff. This could also help triangulate findings and provide deeper contextual explanations.

**Exploration of Additional Mediators and Moderators:** Future studies could explore other potential mediating or moderating variables that might influence the leadership-performance relationship. Investigating the roles of organizational trust, employee psychological capital, or specific digital transformation initiatives could provide a more comprehensive understanding of institutional dynamics.

**Disaggregated Analysis by Role/Function:** Researchers should consider disaggregating the analysis across different units, academic disciplines, or staff roles (e.g., academic vs. administrative staff). This would allow for the identification of important variations in how leadership and innovation interact

within different functional areas of a university, leading to more tailored and effective interventions.

**Impact of Specific Leadership Behaviors:** Future research could delve deeper into the specific transformational leadership behaviors (e.g., idealized influence, intellectual stimulation) and their differential impact on various aspects of innovative culture and work performance. This would provide more granular insights for leadership training and development programs. By addressing these limitations and pursuing these concrete research avenues, scholars can deepen our understanding of how leadership and culture together shape the performance and adaptability of universities in an increasingly complex and competitive educational landscape

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