

The Effect of Empowering Leadership on Innovation Behavior Mediated by Organizational Commitment in Six Basic Service Government Agencies Within the Provincial Government of North Maluku

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the influence of empowering leadership on innovation behavior mediated by organizational commitment in six basic service OPDs within the scope of the North Maluku Provincial Government. The research method uses a quantitative approach with Structural Equation Modeling analysis techniques based on Partial Least Square (SEM-PLS) using the SmartPLS 4.0 application. The research sample consisted of 137 ASN respondents in six basic service OPDs, including the Social Service, the Health Service, the Education and Culture Service, the Public Works and Spatial Planning Office, the Housing and Settlement Area Service, and the Pamong Praja Police Unit. The results showed that empowering leadership had a positive and significant effect on innovation behavior (t-statistic 2.805; p-value 0.005). Empowering leadership also has a positive and significant effect on organizational commitment (t-statistic 3.897; p-value 0.000). Organizational commitment has been proven to have a positive and significant effect on innovation behavior (t-statistic 5.517; p-value 0.000). Furthermore, organizational commitment significantly mediated the relationship between empowering leadership and innovation behavior (t-statistic 4.172; p-value 0.000). These findings make a theoretical and practical contribution to the development of leadership strategies in the public sector to improve the innovative behavior of employees through strengthening organizational commitment.

KEYWORDS



basic service OPD, empowering leadership, innovation behavior, North Maluku, organizational commitment

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INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization and rapid technological advancement, public sector organizations worldwide face unprecedented pressure to transform their service delivery models and governance approaches. The global shift toward digital governance has fundamentally altered the landscape of public administration, demanding not only technological adoption but also a cultural transformation that prioritizes innovation, agility, and citizen-centric services (Mergel et al., 2019; Twizeyimana & Andersson, 2019). Public organizations across developed and developing nations are grappling with complex challenges including resource constraints, increasing citizen expectations, demographic changes, and the need to deliver more efficient and effective services in an increasingly competitive environment (De Vries et al., 2016). Innovation has emerged as a critical imperative for public sector survival and legitimacy, with governments worldwide implementing various initiatives to foster innovative capacity within their bureaucratic structures (Borins, 2021; Demircioglu & Audretsch, 2020).

The transition to digital governance paradigms has particularly highlighted the importance of human capital and leadership in driving organizational innovation. Unlike the private sector where market forces naturally incentivize innovation, public sector innovation requires intentional leadership interventions that can overcome institutional inertia, risk-averse cultures, and hierarchical structures that often characterize government organizations (Meijer

& Thaens, 2021). International evidence suggests that empowering leadership approaches—which emphasize employee autonomy, participative decision-making, and psychological empowerment—have become increasingly relevant in navigating these transformation challenges (Fernandez & Cho, 2022; Van Wart, 2020).

Innovation is a strategic element in strengthening competitiveness and improving the quality of public services in the modern government era. The Government of Indonesia through Law Number 23 of 2014 concerning Regional Government explicitly encourages the implementation of innovation as an effort to improve the performance of local governments. The implementation of innovative policies at the regional level still faces complex challenges, especially related to the low level of innovation behavior of employees in public sector organizations.

North Maluku Province Regional Innovation Index data shows significant performance dynamics in the last five years. In 2019 and 2020, the index values were recorded at 200 and 205, respectively, with the 20th and 26th national rankings, both with the predicate of Less Innovative. In 2021, there was a decline with an index of 24.44 and a 33rd position, followed in 2022 by an index of 33.11 and 34th position. A significant increase only occurred in 2023 with an index value of 56.75 and ranked 12th nationally, achieving the title of Innovative for the first time.

These fluctuations reflect fundamental challenges in sustaining innovation momentum within provincial government agencies. The decline from 2020 to 2022 may be attributed to several interconnected factors including leadership transitions, limited empowerment practices among middle management, and weak organizational commitment during the COVID-19 pandemic period which disrupted normal organizational functioning and employee engagement (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020). The dramatic improvement in 2023 suggests a potential shift in organizational climate and leadership approaches, though the sustainability of this improvement remains uncertain without institutionalized mechanisms for empowerment and commitment building. The relationship between these innovation index fluctuations and empowering leadership or organizational commitment has not been systematically examined in the North Maluku context, creating a critical gap in understanding the drivers of innovation performance volatility in this provincial government.

The six Regional Apparatus Organizations (OPD) of basic services that are the focus of this research include the Social Service, the Health Office, the Education and Culture Office, the Public Works and Spatial Planning Office, the Housing and Residential Area Office, and the Pamong Praja Police Unit. Based on data from the Ministry of Home Affairs (2023), the level of innovation in the OPD environment is still relatively low with only three out of six OPDs reporting innovation.

Innovation behavior is a series of individual actions in generating, introducing, and implementing new ideas aimed at increasing effectiveness and efficiency in the workplace. In the context of public organizations, innovative behavior is essential to create effective solutions in providing services to communities facing dynamic and complex challenges.

One of the factors that can encourage the emergence of innovative behaviors is the leadership style applied by leaders in OPDs. Empowering leadership that emphasizes employee empowerment, trust, and autonomy is believed to be able to create a work environment that supports creativity and innovation (Erdavit et al., 2023). Research by Jabid et al. (2023) shows

that empowering leadership significantly increases knowledge sharing and innovation behavior.

In addition to empowering leadership, organizational commitment also plays an important role in shaping employee innovative behavior. Employees who have a high level of commitment to the organization will be more motivated to contribute to the maximum, including in terms of innovation. A strong organizational commitment can encourage employees to be more proactive, responsible, and oriented towards continuous improvement in their work.

Previous research has shown a positive relationship between empowering leadership and innovation behavior. Düger (2021) found that empowering leadership contributes to innovative behavior through psychological empowerment with affective commitment as a moderator. Wang and Tang (2023) also confirmed the positive influence of empowering leadership on innovation behavior through perceived organizational support.

In the context of mediation, some research has identified the role of organizational commitment in bridging the relationship between leadership and innovative behavior. Torlak et al. (2024) found that affective commitment mediates the relationship between organizational socialization strategies and innovative work behavior. Arsawan et al. (2022) also show that organizational commitment plays a mediator role in the relationship between transformational leadership and innovation behavior.

Despite existing contributions, significant research gaps persist, including the lack of studies focused on public sector organizations where hierarchical structures and political pressures may moderate leadership-innovation relationships (Demircioglu & Audretsch, 2021), the absence of integrated models simultaneously testing direct and indirect pathways between empowering leadership and innovation in regional governments of developing countries (Schuckert et al., 2021), and insufficient attention to basic service delivery agencies that interface directly with citizens (Walker et al., 2019). Furthermore, existing research on Indonesian regional governments is disproportionately focused on Java, neglecting peripheral regions like North Maluku with distinct socio-institutional characteristics (Kurniawan et al., 2020), while the temporal volatility of innovation performance suggests cross-sectional studies may miss critical dynamics over time (Hughes et al., 2018).

To address these gaps, this research offers novelty through four key contributions: providing one of the first empirical examinations of the empowering leadership-innovation relationship within Indonesian regional basic service agencies; developing and testing an integrated mediation model that captures both direct and indirect pathways via organizational commitment; focusing on six frontline service OPDs where innovation impacts public welfare most directly; and investigating whether empowering leadership and commitment can stabilize innovation performance in North Maluku, thereby offering practical insights for sustaining innovation momentum and advancing theoretical understanding in public sector contexts.

Based on this description, this study aims to empirically examine the influence of empowering leadership on innovation behavior with organizational commitment as a mediating variable in six basic service OPDs in North Maluku Province. This research is expected to make a positive contribution to improving organizational performance and the quality of public services.

METHOD

This study used a quantitative approach with the type of explanatory research which aims to examine the relationship between variables and test the hypotheses that have been determined. The research location was carried out in six basic service OPDs within the scope of the North Maluku Provincial Government located in Sofifi, Tidore Islands City, during the period of April to May 2025.

The research population is State Civil Apparatus (ASN) in six basic service OPDs with a total of 972 employees. The number of samples was determined using the formula Hair for the analysis of the Structural Equation Model (SEM), namely the number of indicators multiplied by 10, so that a sample of 150 respondents (15 indicators x 10) was obtained. The sampling technique uses purposive sampling with the criteria of structural, functional and staff officials in each OPD.

Data collection was conducted using a questionnaire with a Likert scale of 5 points (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree). The empowering leadership variables are measured using 7 indicators based on the dimensions of Jabid et al. (2023) including decision-making participation, concern for employees, coaching, information sharing, and role models. Innovation behavior variables are measured by 7 indicators based on the concept of Janssen including the generation, promotion, and realization of ideas. The organizational commitment variable was measured with 5 valid indicators based on the dimensions of Busro (2018) after the elimination of 2 indicators whose loading value was below 0.7.

Data analysis uses Structural Equation Modeling based on Partial Least Square (SEM-PLS) with the SmartPLS 4.0 application. The analysis stages include: (1) measurement model analysis (outer model) to test the validity and reliability of constructs; (2) structural model analysis (inner model) to test the relationship between latent variables; and (3) hypothesis testing through bootstrapping procedures to evaluate the significance of direct and indirect influences.

The convergent validity test used an outer loading value of > 0.7 and an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value of > 0.5 . The discriminatory validity test used cross-loadings and the Fornell-Larcker Criterion. The reliability test used Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha > 0.7 . Hypothesis testing used a t-statistical value of > 1.96 and a p-value of < 0.05 at a significance level of 5%.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Respondent Characteristics

Of the 150 questionnaires distributed, 137 questionnaires (91.33%) were returned and qualified for analysis. The characteristics of the respondents showed the dominance of men (57.66%), the majority of S1 education (66.42%), the age range of 41-50 years (45.99%), the working period > 20 years (44.52%), and group III (72.99%).

Table 1. Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristic	Category	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	79	57.66
	Female	58	42.34
Education	High School	12	8.76

Characteristic	Category	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Age	Diploma	18	13.14
	Bachelor (S1)	91	66.42
	Master (S2)	16	11.68
	20-30 years	18	13.14
	31-40 years	35	25.55
	41-50 years	63	45.99
Working Period	>50 years	21	15.33
	<5 years	22	16.06
	5-10 years	28	20.44
	11-20 years	26	18.98
Employment Group	>20 years	61	44.52
	Group II	15	10.95
	Group III	100	72.99
Total	Group IV	22	16.06
		137	100.00

Source: Primary Data Processed, 2025

Table 1 shows that the majority of respondents are male (57.66%), have a bachelor's degree (66.42%), are in the age range of 41-50 years (45.99%), have worked for more than 20 years (44.52%), and belong to employment group III (72.99%). This demographic profile indicates that respondents have sufficient maturity and work experience to provide reliable assessments of empowering leadership, organizational commitment, and innovation behavior in their respective agencies.

2. Descriptive Analysis

The results of the descriptive analysis showed that the respondents' perception of empowering leadership was in the good category with an average score of 4.22. Innovation behavior also showed a high category with an average score of 4.17. Meanwhile, organizational commitment has an average score of 4.21 which indicates a high level of commitment from employees.

Table 2. Frequency Distribution of Respondent Responses of Empowering Leadership Variables

Category/ Frequency	VD		D		N		A		VA		Mean
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
X.1	2	1,5	0	0,0	7	5,1	71	51,8	57	41,6	4,32
X.2	5	3,6	2	1,5	14	10,2	78	56,9	38	27,7	4,04
X.3	2	1,5	1	0,7	4	2,9	72	52,6	58	42,3	4,34
X.4	2	1,5	1	0,7	9	6,6	85	62,0	40	29,2	4,17
X.5	2	1,5	1	0,7	2	1,5	81	59,1	51	37,2	4,30
X.6	3	2,2	3	2,2	15	10,9	76	55,5	40	29,2	4,07
X.7	2	1,5	1	0,7	3	2,2	80	58,4	51	37,2	4,29
Average X Score											4,22

Source: Primary Data Processed, 2025.

3. Test Measurement Model (Outer Model)

The results of the convergent validity test showed that all indicators had an outer loading value of > 0.7 after the elimination of two indicators of organizational commitment (Z.1 and

Z.2). The AVE value for all constructs > 0.5 : empowering leadership (0.699), innovation behavior (0.672), and organizational commitment (0.719).

The discriminant validity test through cross-loadings shows that the loading value of each indicator against the construct is higher than that of other constructs. The Fornell-Larcker Criterion is also met with the square root value of each construct being higher than the correlation with the other constructs.

The reliability test showed a Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha $>$ values of 0.7 for all constructs: empowering leadership (0.939; 0.928), innovation behavior (0.920; 0.918), and organizational commitment (0.907; 0.902).

4. Structural Model Test (Inner Model)

The R-Square value for innovation behavior of 0.716 indicates that 71.6% of the variability can be explained by empowering leadership and organizational commitment. The R-Square value for organizational commitment of 0.334 indicates that 33.4% of the variability can be explained by empowering leadership.

Table 3. R-Square and Adjusted R-Square Values

	R-square	Adjusted R-square
Innovation Behavior (Y)	0.716	0.712
Organizational Commitment (Z)	0.334	0.329

Source: Smart PLS 4.0 Output 2025

5. Hypothesis Test

The results of the hypothesis testing are presented in the following Table 1:

Table 4. Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Path Coefficient	T-Statistics	P-Value	Result
H1: EL $\rightarrow$ IB	0,308	2,805	0,005	Accepted
H2: MY $\rightarrow$	0,578	3,897	0,000	Accepted
H3: KO $\rightarrow$ IB	0,630	5,517	0,000	Accepted
H4: THE $\rightarrow$ KO $\rightarrow$ IB	0,364	4,172	0,000	Accepted

Description: EL = Empowering Leadership; IB = Innovation Behavior; KO = Organizational Commitment

Discussion

1. The Influence of Empowering Leadership on Innovation Behavior

The results of the study showed that empowering leadership had a positive and significant effect on innovation behavior (H1 accepted). These findings support Zhang and Bartol's theory that empowering leadership provides autonomy, trust, and support that encourages the exploration of new ideas. These results are consistent with the research of Jabid et al. (2023) and Erdavit et al. (2023) who found the positive influence of empowering leadership on innovative behaviors.

Field data shows that the majority of employees feel that leaders support the development of new ideas, provide information transparently, and encourage participation in the delivery of

ideas. However, in the aspect of providing decision-making opportunities and tolerance for mistakes, there are still variations in perceptions that show that the implementation of empowering leadership is not completely evenly distributed.

2. The Influence of Empowering Leadership on Organizational Commitment

Empowering leadership has been proven to have a positive and significant effect on organizational commitment (H2 accepted). These results are in line with the research of Wang et al. (2022) and Ghassani & Indriati (2024) which showed that employee empowerment strengthens emotional loyalty to the organization. Employees who feel empowered through involvement in decision-making and initiative support show a high level of attachment to the organization.

3. The Influence of Organizational Commitment on Innovation Behavior

Organizational commitment has a positive and significant effect on innovation behavior (H3 accepted). These findings support the research of Arsawan et al. (2022) and Malik (2022) which shows that highly committed employees are more motivated to innovate. Employees who have a strong emotional attachment to the organization tend to show proactive behavior, dare to come up with new ideas, and actively engage in innovative processes.

4. The Role of Organizational Commitment Mediation

The test results showed that the organization's commitment significantly mediated the influence of empowering leadership on innovation behavior (H4 accepted). These findings confirm that empowering leadership not only has a direct impact on innovative behavior, but also through increased organizational commitment. When employees feel empowered, they develop a strong attachment to the organization which in turn strengthens the motivation to innovate.

These results are consistent with the research of Abdirabbirasul & Fatih (2022) which emphasizes the importance of emotional attachment in encouraging innovative behaviors. Organizational commitment acts as a psychological bridge between leadership and innovation, creating a work climate that supports active participation and the courage to try new things.

CONCLUSION

Empowering leadership positively influences innovation behavior in six basic service OPDs in North Maluku Province, both directly and via organizational commitment, which strengthens employees' loyalty and emotional attachment to the organization and, in turn, drives innovative work practices that enhance performance. Organizational commitment serves as a significant mediator in this relationship, underscoring its role in translating leadership into innovation. The findings offer theoretical and practical guidance for public-sector leadership, suggesting that governments should promote participatory leadership, bolster employee commitment through recognition and engagement, and create formal forums for idea sharing to advance bureaucratic reform and public-service quality. Future research could compare these dynamics across different regional contexts or explore longitudinal effects of empowerment and commitment on sustained innovation in public organizations.

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