

# The Impact of Servant Leadership on Innovative Work Behavior through the Mediating of Knowledge Sharing: An Empirical Study from Aviation Companies in Ho Chi Minh City

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## ABSTRACT

Innovation is essential for aviation enterprises to recover and return through boosting business performance after the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in Vietnam. Therefore, organizations strive to motivate their employees' innovative work behavior. This current research investigates the impact of servant leadership on innovative work behavior and the mediating role of knowledge sharing in the process. Data was collected using the convenience sampling method with a sample of 122 participants from organizations in the perspective of aviation setting in Vietnam. The results reveal that servant leadership positively affected on innovative work behavior. Besides, the indirect path also provides evidence for mediating effect of knowledge sharing on this linkage. In addition, both theoretical and managerial implications have been presented. Finally, directions for future research are also addressed.

**KEYWORDS:** Innovative work behavior, knowledge sharing, servant leadership, aviation companies, Vietnam.

## 1. Introduction

Along with the advancement of science and technology, and the change of society, organizations also face many opportunities and challenges. Therefore, it is essential for every organization to innovate to adapt to the environment. Organizations need to constantly update and enhance their services to ensure long-term existence, profitability, and development (Jong, 2007). Because sustaining the established order seems to be now not a realistic choice for enterprises (Faraz et al., 2019), organizations continually looking for new ways to become more creative, since innovation is required to establish and have an advantage over the organization's competitors and attain organizational success (Zhu and Zhang, 2020). It is undeniable that no organization can reach innovation without the participation of its followers (Abstein and Spieth, 2014; Faraz et al., 2019). This is the reason why organizations strive to stimulate and motivate innovative work behavior among employees.

The impact of the leader is a decisive factor in the success of the organization. Each leader embraces their leadership style and the right leadership style may help the leader lead the business effectively. Moreover, leaders are an important part in shaping the workplace and influencing their followers' innovative behaviors in a variety of ways (Hammond et al., 2011). So, leadership is magnitude in creative and innovative endeavors (Stenmark et al., 2011).

First introduced by Robert K. Greenleaf in 1991, the well-known essay on servant leadership sparked a movement that is still gaining traction today (Hunter et al., 2013). Servant leadership theory has the core content related to putting the benefits of others first, demonstrating integrity, the spirit of organizational stewardship; willing to step back to serve the larger goal of the organization by supporting and promoting the personal development of employees by empowering and trusting them (Dierendonck, 2011; Dierendonck and Nuijten, 2010). Similarly, Cai et al. (2018) reveal that in comparison to these traditional leadership techniques, servant leadership alters the hierarchical pyramid's functioning by focusing on serving people via caring and putting them first.

The Vietnamese aviation industry is a highly specialized industry, which has been contributing a lot to promoting economic development, increasing foreign currency revenue, expanding the exchange of goods, cultural exchange, and promoting the image of Vietnam to the world (Phạm and Hoàng, 2018). However, after 2 years of being affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, most airlines have been severely affected. Thus, the solution for enterprises to recover and return to the original state is very important and innovation in the organization is an important key to help organizations adapt to the new era. According to Rast and Tourani (2012), employees have a significant effect on the organization's performance, especially in airlines. Several practitioners and scientists now endorse the view that individual employees' innovation can boost corporate

performance (Jong, 2007). So, innovative work behavior plays a critical role to help aviation companies recover after COVID-19.

The impact of servant leadership on innovative work behavior through motivational factors have been found (Cai et al., 2018; Faraz et al., 2019; Opoku et al., 2019). Moreover, knowledge sharing has also been recognized as a possible mediator in the link between servant leadership and innovative work behavior (Zhu and Zhang, 2020). However, this leadership is founded on the premise that leaders should first want to help, and so deliver leadership with the aim of serving the needs of the group; nevertheless, civilizations with diverse value systems may interpret it differently (Alafeshat and Tanova, 2019). Thus, it is necessary to determine whether the impact of servant leadership may vary from one culture to another (Al-Mahdy et al., 2016; Wallace, 2006) by exploring empirical studies. Therefore, investigating the association between servant leadership and innovative work behavior in the presence of different mediation models is highly justified (Faraz et al., 2019).

With these above purposes, we capture the context of aviation companies in Ho Chi Minh City for testing the model. The next part will reveal the theoretical underpinning for the variables under consideration. Then, discussions and implications are presented.

## 2. Literature Review and Hypotheses

### 2.1. Theoretical foundation

#### 2.1.1. Social Exchange Theory (SET)

As the originator of social exchange theory, Homans (1958) defined that social exchange is defined as the interchange of activity, material or intangible, rewarding or expensive, between at least two people. According to Cook and Rice (2006), this theoretical perspective is based on previous philosophical and psychological orientations developed from utilitarianism and behaviorism, respectively.

Social exchange theory holds that actors do a behavior with expectation of receiving rewards, and they could choose alternate behaviors that optimize rewards while minimizing expenses (Blau, 1964; Cook and Rice, 2006). In other words, before conducting a behavior, people would weigh the prospective advantages and disadvantages (Peyman et al., 2015). The most well-known transaction rule is certainly reciprocity (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). Therefore, if one is not rewarded for doing a favor, they may relinquish the favor; yet, new trade cycles can be started if the other party reciprocates (Peyman et al., 2015). As a result of reciprocal dependency, social exchange theory is defined by one party's action being dependent on the behavior of the other (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). Blau (1964) viewed social exchange as a crucial function in social life that underlies both group and individual interactions (Cook and Rice, 2006).

#### 2.1.2. Social Learning Theory (SLT)

Bandura's Social Learning Theory gives us a deeper insight into behaviorism in comparison with earlier theories by choosing an entirely cognitive-behavioral approach and clarifying the correlation between our way of thinking and

acting (Sternberg, 1995). Although behavioral theories have substantially contributed to our knowledge of behavior, he believed that prior models of development were limited by mechanical methods (Bahn, 2001).

Social learning theory emphasizes both antecedent and consequential learning (Decker, 1986). Decker (1986) illustrated that one of the most essential aspects of the strength of this theory is that it actively emphasizes the function of cognitive processes as an essential component of behavior modification. The theory of social learning (Bandura, 1977) holds that most human behavior is learned through observation and modeling. An individual gains a grasp of how activities are carried out and the impacts they cause through observing others (Decker, 1986). Cognitive processes play a critical role in how environmental events influence the acquisition and regulation of behavior (Price and Archbold, 1995). Besides, according to social learning theory, people do not merely react to external influences, as if they were unthinking organisms, but rather choose, organize, and alter the stimuli that they encounter (Wexley and Latham, 1981).

## 2.2. Hypotheses

### 2.2.1. Servant leadership and innovative work behavior

Close communication, encouragement, and guidance from leaders enhance employee innovation (Sheikh et al., 2019). Servant leaders show empathy and concern for their staff and act in their best interests (Dierendonck, 2011), then motivate employees to do self-development (Nurbaety and Rojuaniah, 2022). Thus, innovative work behavior can be enhanced by servant leaders when servant leaders offer their followers empowerment and courage to take risks (Faraz et al., 2019).

Through the guide of social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), the association between servant leadership and innovative work behavior can also be viewed. Servant leaders are believed to prioritize their subordinates first, and help them grow and succeed. Therefore, the subordinates will reciprocate the same in their jobs by demonstrating innovative work behavior. There are still a few studies that have examined the impact of this leadership style on innovative work behavior in Vietnam, especially in the aviation sector. Thus, the following hypothesis was developed:

*H1: Servant leadership has a positive impact on innovative work behavior.*

### 2.2.2. Servant leadership and knowledge sharing

In the light of social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) and social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), it is possible to investigate the connection between servant leadership and knowledge sharing. Based on the social exchange theory, an individual tries to give in return favors when someone has acted in his/her interest. Thus, employee behavior represents a behavioral interchange with leader behavior (Blau, 1964; as cited by Luu, 2016). Luu (2016) stated that the more concerned the leader is about the company's followers, the more employees will reciprocate. Further, Sial et al. (2014) revealed that the empowering and developing behaviors of servant leadership, together with the proper balance of autonomy and

direction, are likely to result in a high-quality dyadic relationship, which is connected with increased involvement in difficult tasks. Likewise, servant leaders also motivate their employees to engage in sharing their expertise with subordinates (Shafi et al., 2020). Employees engage in sharing more of what they know with co-workers based on the reciprocity rule (Shafi et al., 2020).

Servant leadership's employees tend to be satisfied with their leaders and eager to pay back to them for their kind guidance (Ehrhart, 2004). According to the social learning theory given by Bandura (1977), subordinates learn when they perceive the attraction of the leader with whom they are working (Luu, 2016), further emphasizes the fact that servant leaders can act as role models for their subordinates and assist endorse the knowledge sharing among employees (Shafi et al., 2020). Employees are encouraged to follow how to be like the servant leader when they view the servant leader to have serving attributes (Mayer et al., 2012). Therefore, employees learn and practice additional servant qualities, such as sharing expertise to assist and grow coworkers, as well as contributing to their team and organization after being inspired by their servant leader (Luu, 2016). Based on this logic, we, therefore, formulated the following hypotheses about servant leadership's influence on knowledge sharing:

*H2: Servant leadership has a positive impact on knowledge sharing.*

### 2.2.3. Knowledge sharing and innovative work behavior

Knowledge is important to the innovation process (Spender, 1996) and knowledge sharing is an essential factor that impacts on company's innovation (Qammach, 2016). According to Alhady et al. (2011), inside groups and organizations that encourage workers to share knowledge are anticipated to generate new and better ideas, as well as new commercial prospects, allowing for organizational innovation. Moreover, Holub (2003) noted that rapid knowledge transmission through engagement improves the growth of thinking and creativity, and this workplace stimulates employee creativity.

Whilst employees share their knowledge with their colleagues, not only do individuals provide them with information but they also integrate, elaborate, and transform it in a clear and relevant manner (Hansen et al., 2006). In the line with this, when individual receives knowledge from others, their potential to innovate improves (Radaelli et al., 2014). Nguyen et al. (2019) indicated that the link between knowledge sharing and innovative work behavior is based on human contact to develop new knowledge. Many scholars highlighted the link between knowledge sharing and innovative work behavior (Akram et al., 2018; Nguyen et al., 2019; Radaelli et al., 2014; Usmanova et al., 2020). We therefore propose that knowledge sharing has a positive impact on innovative work behavior:

*H3: Knowledge sharing has a positive impact on innovative work behavior.*

### 2.2.4. The mediating role of knowledge sharing

Leadership plays an essential role in promoting knowledge

sharing (Asrar-ul-Haq and Anwar, 2016). Besides, innovation is cultivated when people share and combine their knowledge with others. Knowledge sharing can be a bridge for the association between servant leadership and innovative work behavior, such that employees respond to servant leaders by sharing their expertise, which leads to more innovative work behavior. Because when an employee comes up with a solution for any problems; however, if he or she decides to share this concept with coworkers rather than keeping it to themselves, new information will definitely emerge through his or her tacit and explicit knowledge sharing cycle. (Nonaka, 1994). Furthermore, earlier studies have illustrated knowledge sharing may play a mediating role in the link between servant leadership and innovative work behavior (e.g. Zhu and Zhang, 2020). Hence, we hypothesize that:

*H4: The relationship between servant leadership and innovative work behavior is mediated by knowledge sharing.*

### 2.2.5. The proposed model

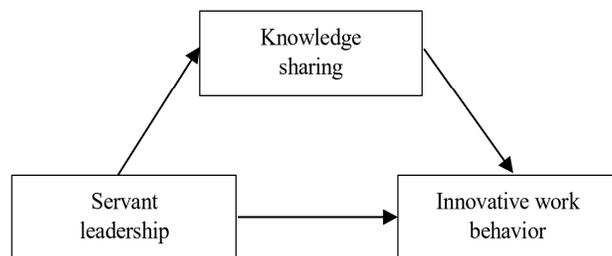


Figure 1. The proposed model

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Research design

The empirical setting for the current study is organizations from the perspective of the aviation sector in Vietnam. The researcher contacted aviation employees who had prior relationships with the researcher to collect the responses. Besides that, we contacted employees who work in aviation companies in Ho Chi Minh City via Viber, Messenger, and face-to-face requests for their participation in this survey. All respondents were ensured that they showed interest in participating in the survey. When contacting the respondents, we explained the purpose of the study to them to ensure that respondents could understand and connect it to their reality.

The research is conducted by quantitative study through the PLS-SEM software and data which is completed from a survey. Based on the hypotheses and previous research (Ehrhart, 2004; Liden et al., 2008; Monica Hu et al., 2009; Scott and Bruce, 1994), the questionnaires were drafted by the researcher. The author translated English questionnaires into Vietnamese because the author conducted the research in Vietnam. The translation was examined by the instructor and respondents from aviation companies in Ho Chi Minh City. The Vietnamese questionnaire back translated into English to ensure instrument equivalence. When the author changed the original translation and continued the reverse translation procedure until the meanings of the initial translation question and the reverse translation question matched.

All items were scored by five-point Likert scale from “totally disagree” (= 1) to “totally agree” (=5). The sampling technique used was convenience sampling. The self-administered quantitative survey is employed to obtain data from the respondents. The survey was uploaded on Google Forms and delivered to respondents to collect the data.

### 3.2. Measurement scale

Servant leadership was assessed by using the short version of servant leadership of Ehrhart, 2004 and Liden et al., 2008 with eight items (e.g. “My leader does what she or he promises to do”; “My manager can tell if something is going wrong”)

5 items from the short version of Monica Hu et al. (2009) were utilized to measure knowledge sharing. A sample is “I am willing to help other team members”.

Innovative work behavior was measured using Scott and Bruce (1994) 9-item subscales. Sample items encompass “Creativity is encouraged here”; “Our ability to function creatively is respected by the leadership”.

### 3.3. Sampling

According to Hair et al. (2019), the sample size for exploratory factor analysis (EFA) must be at least  $N \geq 5 * x$  ( $x$  is the total number of observed variables), and the sample size must not be fewer than 100. There are 22 factors that have been observed. Thus, for factor analysis and multiple regression analysis, the minimum sample is  $5 * 22 = 110$  variables. Therefore, to meet the above conditions and ensure the quality of the results after removing invalid responses while doing clean data, the author decided to increase the sample size. The aim is to collect 120 valid observations.

Google Form is utilized to create an online survey, then post it on social networking sites. Additionally, QR Code is also used to access Google Forms and delivered to participants. As a result, 128 people took the survey. After screening the invalid answer results, 122 valid answer sheets were obtained.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Demographic characteristics

Demographic data was collected during this study through Google Forms, including gender, marital status, experience in aviation enterprises, education level, and current position. The sample profile of this investigation is shown in Table 1 below.

The fundamental demographic factors are gender and marital status. The gender of the survey is balanced, with 50% of respondents ( $n=61$ ) being female and 50% of respondents ( $n=61$ ) being male. In this sample, there is no significant gender difference between men and women. By contrast, marital status is imbalanced. The marital status distribution reveals that the largest group of respondents is single (90.98%), followed by married status (9.02%).

The statistics regarding experience in the aviation industry show that the majority of the participants have less than 1 year of experience (53.28%). While 36.89% of participants have 01 to 05 years of experience and 9.84% of participants have above 5 years of experience in the aviation industry which is the lowest percentage in the dataset.

The discovery shows that the education level is significantly

different. The data of respondents having at least Colleges or University’s degree occupied 91.80% of the data. 6.56% of respondents, however, have Master’s degree or above, whereas 1.64% of samples have high school diploma.

The majority of the respondents’ current positions are front-line staff accounting for 53.28%, while 43.44% of the sample are officers or executive staff. The rate of Head of Department is very low (2.5%) followed by highest level (0.8%).

**Table 1.** Respondent’s demographic characteristics

Valid	Frequency	Percent
Male	61	50.0
Female	61	50.0
Married	11	9.0
Single	111	91.0
Under 1 year	65	53.3
From 1 to 5 years	45	36.9
Above 5 years	12	9.8
High school	2	1.6
College or University	112	91.8
Master’s degree or above	8	6.6
Front-line staff	65	53.3
Officer or Executive Officer	53	43.4
Head of Department	3	2.5
Highest level (BOM)	1	.8

### 4.2. Reliability

**Table 2.** Construct reliability

Construct	Cronbach’s Alpha	rho_A	CR	AVE
SL	0.864	0.950	0.895	0.525
KS	0.841	0.852	0.887	0.610
IWB	0.947	0.882	0.955	0.705

According to the conceptual model, there are three concepts that need to be measured and evaluated. All 22 observed variables of three concepts are calculated by Cronbach’s Alpha coefficients, rho\_A, Composite Reliability (CR), and AVE coefficients. The results show that the scales are reliable.

The figures of Cronbach’s Alpha and CR varied from 0.84 to 0.94, beyond the 0.6 acceptable level (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Furthermore, AVE is greater than 0.5 (Hair et al., 2019). According to the recommendation of Hair et al. (2019), the value of rho\_A should be above 0.7. As a result, all scales meet the standards for reliability.

### 4.3. Validity

According to the suggestions of Hair et al. (2019), convergent validity is appropriate when the factor loadings and AVE both equal or exceed 0.5. Convergent validity has been established by employing factor loadings and average variance extracted (AVE) tests to validate the appropriateness of outer measurement models. The findings show that SL6 must be deleted in order to achieve convergent validity.

**Table 3.** Construct outer loading

Construct	Items	Outer Loading
Servant leadership	SL1	0.723
	SL2	0.796
	SL3	0.647
	SL4	0.804
	SL5	0.805
	SL6	<b>0.393</b>
	SL7	0.762
	SL8	0.771
Knowledge sharing	KS1	0.759
	KS2	0.790
	KS3	0.735
	KS4	0.844
	KS5	0.774
Innovative work behavior	IWB1	0.757
	IWB2	0.896
	IWB3	0.855
	IWB4	0.912
	IWB5	0.816
	IWB6	0.855
	IWB7	0.760
	IWB8	0.871
	IWB9	0.820

The findings show that one of eight items of servant leadership has fewer factor loadings than the 0.50 criterion (i.e., SL6 has a factor loading of 0.393). Thus, this item should not be retained. After deleting SL6, the outcomes determine that factor loadings of all items surpassed the recommended level of 0.5. Besides, AVE coefficients also are larger than 0.5. Hence, convergent validity has been achieved.

This research used the criteria of Fornell and Larcker (1981) to find discriminant validity. Discriminant validity can be obtained when the correlation coefficients are smaller than the square root of the AVE (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Additionally, the cross loadings for each item relative to corresponding latent variables are all stronger than those of other constructs. Moreover, these constructions have a Heterotrait - Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) of less than 0.85 (Henseler et al., 2015).

**Table 4.** Interconstruct correlations

	IWB	KS	SL
IWB	0.840		
KS	0.450	0.781	
SL	0.773	0.361	0.762

**Table 7.** The results of path analysis

Hypothesis	Relationship	Original Sample (O)	T Statistics	P values	f Square	Results
H1	SL -> IWB	0.702	11.556	0.000	1.159	Supported
H2	SL -> KS	0.361	3.887	0.000	0.150	Supported
H3	KS -> IWB	0.197	2.681	0.008	0.091	Supported

*H1: Servant leadership has a positive impact on innovative work behavior.*

Hypothesis 1 presented the impact of servant leadership as an independent variable on the dependent variable of innovative work behavior. As shown in Table 7, servant leadership has the strongest effect on innovative work behavior ( $\beta = 0.702$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Hence, this hypothesis is supported. Faraz et al. (2019) found the connection between servant leadership and innovative work behavior. This result has demonstrated that

Table 4 shows that all corresponding correlations are consistently smaller than the square roots of every latent construct's AVE values. The AVE value for IWB is 0.705, with a square root of 0.840. The AVE value of KS is 0.610, and the AVE's square root is 0.781. SL's square root of AVE is 0.762, which is considerably larger than the AVE values of SL (AVE values for SL = 0.581).

In statistical terms, the cross loadings for observation variables relative to corresponding latent variables are all greater than those of other items. Moreover, all of these constructions' HTMT values are below the threshold of 0.85 (Table 5). The results indicate that the observed variables satisfy the requirement of discriminant validity.

**Table 5.** HTMT values

	IWB	KS	SL
IWB			
KS	0.492		
SL	0.843	0.409	

#### 4.4. Multicollinearity testing

Multicollinearity, according to Hair et al. (2019), is an issue when the variance inflation factor (VIF) is greater than five. The constructions' maximum VIF value is 1.150, as shown in Table 6. Hence, the constructions' collinearity was not an issue.

**Table 6.** Inner VIF values

	IWB	KS	SL
IWB			
KS	1.150		
SL	1.150	1.000	

#### 4.5. Hypothesis testing

The final step of analysis is hypothesis testing. The conceptual framework was designed to examine the four routes described in the hypotheses. SEM is utilized to conduct the hypothesis process. SmartPLS can provide T-statistics for both inner and outer model significance testing. Four hypotheses were explored in all. Table 7 and Table 8 show the outcomes of the testing hypotheses testing.

servant leadership has a positive effect on innovative work behavior in the context of the aviation sector in Vietnam.

*H2: Servant leadership has a positive impact on knowledge sharing.*

Hypothesis 2 evaluates the significance of the direct association between servant leadership and knowledge sharing. The hypothesis is supported ( $\beta = 0.361$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) (Table 7) stating that servant leadership has a large effect on knowledge

sharing. This finding represents significant addition to current research in the context of Vietnamese aviation companies.

*H3: Knowledge sharing has a positive impact on innovative work behavior.*

Hypothesis 3 presented the relationship between knowledge sharing and innovative work behavior. The hypothesis is supported because estimates of parameter are

**Table 8.** The result of mediating effect

Hypothesis	Relationship	Indirect effect	T Statistics	P value	Mediating effect	Results
H4	SL ->KS -> IWB	0.071	2.401	0.017	Partial Mediation	Supported

*H4: The relationship between servant leadership and innovative work behavior is mediated by knowledge sharing.*

In terms of the outcome of the mediation analysis from servant leadership to innovative work behavior through knowledge sharing, the discovery indicates that knowledge sharing is positively mediated the association between servant leadership and innovative work behavior. Results, as shown in Table 7, all of the theorized direct pathways have been proven to be positive and substantial. The straight paths for SL -> IWB, SL -> KS, KS -> IWB have p-values less than 0.05, with their values being 0.000; 0.000 and 0.008, respectively, which is significant. Moreover, the indirect path is also statistically significant and positive with p-value weaker than 0.05 ( $p = 0.017$ ) (Table 8). Thus, knowledge sharing partially mediates the link between servant leadership and innovative work behavior.

According to the recommendation of Hair et al. (2019), the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) is made use to assess the predictive power of a model. Hair et al. (2019) indicated that  $R^2$  values vary from 0 to 1. Additionally, the greater the  $R^2$  number, the stronger the exogenous construct in the structural model is described by the endogenous constructions (Hair et al., 2019).

Hair et al. (2019) also stated that in behavioral science,  $R^2$  values and the influence latent variables are evaluated as 0.26 (large effect), 0.13 (moderate effect), and 0.02 respectively (weak effect). Table 9 shows that IWB is an endogenous construct in the relationship with a substantial  $R^2$  value of 63.1% being considered the large effect. This suggests that two latent factors (SL and KS) predicted 63.1% of the variance in the innovative work behavior of aviation staff. On the other hand, servant leadership explained 13.1% (Table 9) variance of KS, which is considered as a moderate effect in the guidelines.

**Table 9.** The coefficient of determination

Construct	R Square
IWB	0.631
KS	0.131

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1. Discussion of the results

The purpose of the research is to investigate the impact of servant leadership on innovative work behavior through mediating role of knowledge sharing. The result indicates that

significant ( $\beta = 0.197$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) (Table 7). This is a similar finding to Zhu and Zhang (2020). In the context of the Vietnamese aviation sector, this empirical study makes a significant contribution by proving the strong and positive association between knowledge sharing and innovative work behavior.

servant leadership has a positive impact on innovative work behavior. This finding is in line with the previous research (Faraz et al., 2019; Jan et al., 2021; Zhu & Zhang, 2020). The result shows that servant leadership and knowledge sharing explained 63,1% of the variance in the creative work behavior of employees who work in aviation organizations. Moreover, servant leadership also has a positive impact on knowledge sharing. The result illustrates that servant leadership explained 13,1% of the variance of knowledge sharing. The importance of mediation through knowledge sharing is concerned, it is discovered as a partial mediator, indicating that despite the main positive mediating role of knowledge exchange, the route from servant leadership to innovative work behavior remains significant.

### 5.2. Theoretical implications

Although it has been said that servant leadership should be assessed across cultures (Al-Mahdy et al., 2016; Wallace, 2006), there are not many empirical studies on servant leadership in Vietnam. This study addresses that need by evaluating servant leadership from the viewpoint of Vietnam's aviation sector. As a result, this paper contributes to the existing research on knowledge sharing and servant leadership in the aviation context.

This study also contributes to the advancement of leadership theory by showing the underlying social exchange mechanisms via which servant leaders in Vietnamese aviation enterprises promote workers' creative work behavior. Besides, knowledge sharing served as a mediator in the association between servant leadership and innovative work behavior. This finding makes the theoretical model of this research a unique model that has never been explored in Vietnam before.

It is clearly shown that servant leadership positively affects innovative work behavior. Moreover, knowledge sharing is also essential to the performance and development of organizations, especially when followers share their tactic knowledge to develop solutions to problems. The implications of knowledge sharing are necessary to understand in today's dynamic competition in order to design effective solutions to increase, impact, and modify the perception of sharing their knowledge, at the individual level, to boost innovative work behavior of subordinates.

Taken together, all of the following contributions are theoretically necessary for academics to have a better grasp of the knowledge stream on servant leadership and innovative work behavior.

### 5.3. Managerial implications

These findings around the association between servant leadership and innovative work behavior are a step forward in the Vietnamese aviation industry. These findings have significant implications for leaders looking to develop successful servant leadership. The study will also help leaders understand civil servants' perspectives so that they may modify their present leadership to be the most successful for the organization.

The aviation industry is highly specialized in Vietnam, so the employees' job is full of pressure. The knowledge of servant leadership and the development of this leadership style are important. Because when leaders put their subordinates first, they will have a feeling of care and return in favor. In addition, employee innovation is unquestionably important for company success and recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic. Investigating the function of the servant leader in encouraging employee innovative work behavior reveals a far more efficient and successful method of inducing employees' innovative work behavior.

Moreover, leaders should play a key role in creating serving culture. Followers will learn through observation and their actions will be guided through the lens of social learning theory. When leaders help their subordinates to grow and succeed, then followers are willing to help others by sharing their knowledge.

There are two ways to apply servant leadership in aviation companies, which can motivate staff to share their expertise and foster innovation. Firstly, servant leadership can be developed not only for the highest level of managers but also for all levels of leaders in companies. It can be achieved by educating and training through seminars, courses, and conferences. Secondly, a serving culture should be formed. Serving culture will make employees feel less pressured and more likely to share their expertise.

### 5.4. Limitations and future research directions

Despite our efforts, there are several limitations in this research. This study investigates the association between servant leadership and innovative work behavior using one mediator (knowledge sharing). Future studies should incorporate more mediators and moderators to construct a thorough and complete framework. Besides, convenience sampling is also an issue, since it does not allow for the generalization and representativeness of the results. Future research should address this problem. Finally, only personnel from the aviation business were included in this study. The inclusion of numerous sectors and contexts will improve the findings' generalizability.

## 6. Conclusion

The research is carried out in accordance with the procedure and model outlined in the hypotheses through quantitative research. With 122 samples of observations that have been screened, the necessary methods of testing and analysis are also conducted to accomplish the aims of the topic set out in the methodology. From the results, the author concludes that the research is as follows.

A literature review was done to discover servant leadership that might directly affect knowledge sharing and innovative work behavior in Vietnamese aviation setting. Two possible hypotheses emerged from the literature review: social exchange theory and social learning theory. Each of these hypotheses was related to a hypothesis. The PLS-SEM approach outlined above was used to investigate each of these hypotheses, with differing findings depending on the impact.

All direct paths are positive and significant. This research further proved that servant leadership is the motivator that fosters employees' innovative work behavior. This finding is similar to prior other studies on the association between servant leadership and innovative work behavior (Faraz et al., 2019; Jan et al., 2021; Zhu and Zhang, 2020). Moreover, knowledge sharing has a significant effect on innovative work behavior. The importance of the mediation through knowledge sharing is concerned, it is discovered as a partial mediator, implying that even after the major positive mediating function of knowledge sharing, the route from servant leadership to innovative work behavior remains significant.

Furthermore, four hypotheses proposed were derived directly from the social exchange theory, and social learning theory and all were supported. However, there is still an observation item that is not adapted to the current trend, as can be seen in the validity test. A survey variable of servant leadership that is not suitable and optimal for the model has been removed. Overall, this offers qualified support for the theories.

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