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Driving Indonesian public sector innovation with strength-based leadership, psychological safety, and ambidextrous organizational culture

Mendorong inovasi sektor publik di Indonesia dengan kepemimpinan berbasis kekuatan, keamanan psikologis, dan budaya organisasi *ambidextrous*

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ABSTRACT

Innovation is essential for achieving organizational excellence. Civil servants need to embrace this demand, as reflected in the core values of Ber-AKHLAK. This underscores the urgent need to investigate the factors that drive innovative work behavior (IWB) in the public sector. This study highlights strength-based leadership (SBL) as a key factor influencing IWB. Using Social Exchange Theory, the research investigates the mediating role of psychological safety (PS) and the moderating effect of an ambidextrous organizational culture (AOC). A quantitative self-report survey was distributed via social media, collecting responses from 354 civil servants in Indonesia. The adapted measurement scale demonstrated reliability. Analysis with PROCESS Macro Model 14 in SPSS version 29 indicated that SBL significantly generated IWB directly and through PS, but AOC did not significantly moderate this relationship. These findings imply that although civil servants positively perceive the ambidextrous culture in their organization, it does not automatically boost their innovative work behavior. Leadership focusing on workers' strengths is more meaningful for activating the psychological safety necessary for innovation.

Kata Kunci:
ambidextrous organizational culture; innovative work behavior; psychological safety; sektor publik*; strength-based leadership*

ABSTRACT

Inovasi memegang peran penting untuk mencapai keunggulan organisasi. Abdi negara tidak luput dari tuntutan untuk terus berinovasi sebagaimana tertuang dalam nilai dasar Ber-AKHLAK. Hal itu meneguhkan urgensi mendalami pembentuk *innovative work behavior* (IWB) sektor publik. Penelitian ini bertujuan menyoroti *strength-based leadership* (SBL) sebagai pendorong IWB. *Social Exchange Theory* menjadi kerangka untuk mengeksplorasi peran mediasi *psychological safety* (PS) dan moderasi *ambidextrous organizational culture* (AOC). Metode *convenience sampling* dengan survei kuantitatif *self-report* yang didistribusikan melalui media sosial berhasil mengumpulkan 354 data Pegawai Negeri Sipil (PNS) di Indonesia. Skala pengukuran diadaptasi pada konteks Indonesia yang telah teruji reliabilitasnya. Analisis hasil dengan PROCESS Macro Model 14 pada SPSS versi 29 menunjukkan SBL berperan penting dalam memunculkan IWB secara langsung maupun melalui PS. Namun, pengaruh moderasi AOC pada hubungan ini tidak signifikan. Hasil ini mengimplikasikan bahwa meskipun PNS mempersepsikan secara positif budaya *ambidextrous* di organisasinya, hal itu tidak otomatis meningkatkan perilaku kerja inovatif mereka. Pada konteks ini, kepemimpinan yang berfokus pada kekuatan pekerja lebih bermakna karena menumbuhkan keamanan psikologis yang bermuara pada perilaku kerja inovatif.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The current world of work challenge, described by the BANI framework (Brittle, Anxious, Non-linear, Incomprehensible) (Kraaijenbrink, 2022), urges organizations including those in the public sector to innovate continuously to stay ahead. In Indonesia, a critical challenge is the public's demand for improved public services (KemenPAN RB, 2024). This is evident in the reported 26,461 cases of public service issues in 2023, representing a 19.2% increase from the previous year (Ombudsman RI, 2024). On various occasions, the president of the Republic of Indonesia has emphasized that bureaucracy must have a meaningful impact rather than merely producing paperwork that offers minimal benefits to the community (KemenPAN RB, 2023).

Following up, the government encourages all agencies to enhance the quality of their services to achieve transformative, inclusive, and innovative public services (KemenPAN RB, 2024). This effort is supported by the core values of ASN Ber-AKHLAK, which include "*berorientasi pada pelayanan*", emphasizing a commitment to providing excellent service to ensure public satisfaction, and "*adaptif*", highlighting the importance of continuous innovation and enthusiasm in adapting to and driving change (UU Nomor 20, 2023). A study by Jankelová and Joniaková (2021) further emphasizes individuals' critical role in successful innovation by advocating for a bottom-up approach to implementing innovative practices (AlMunthiri et al., 2023).

Researchers studying innovation in the public sector have found that innovative work behaviors are often constrained by strict bureaucracy and hierarchical rules (Bos-Nehles et al., 2016). Additionally, public sector organizations have a mission to meet the needs of stakeholders, which means they are not profit-oriented and do not operate competitively (Knies et al., 2018). Moreover, Bysted and Hansen (2015) noted that public sector workers view innovation as an extra responsibility that should be compensated, rather than an effort contributing to career advancement. Given these observations, innovative work behavior in the public sector has unique characteristics that warrant further exploration. However, much of the existing research has focused on the private sector, such as studies conducted on manufacturing companies in Pakistan (Afsar & Umrani, 2020), companies in Slovakia (Jankelová & Joniaková, 2021), and companies in China (Ding & Yu, 2020). Studies examining innovative work behavior specifically in the public sector, especially in Indonesia, remain limited.

Scott and Bruce (1994) were the first researchers to mention innovation at the individual level. They emphasized that innovation is viewed as a multistage process in which each stage requires different individual behaviors.Based on Scott and Bruce (1994), who followed West and Farr (1989), innovative work behavior is defined as the intentional creation, introduction, and implementation of new ideas that are useful in a work role, group, or organization (Janssen, 2000). Innovative behavior goes beyond mere creativity; it not only involves generating ideas but also focuses on turning them into reality. The outcomes of innovation can take many forms, including the renewal and development of processes and products, as well as the

progression of management systems (Crossan & Apaydin, 2010). Furthermore, the innovation process is complex, dynamic, and nonlinear; the behaviors involved are interdependent and do not necessarily follow a fixed sequence (Messmann & Mulder, 2012). Such innovations can have a systemic impact, benefiting workers, groups, and organizations alike (Jankelová & Joniaková, 2021; Janssen, 2000).

This study utilizes Social Exchange Theory (SET) to formulate hypotheses. SET, pioneered by Homans in 1961, views social exchange as a mutually beneficial interaction involving the exchange of tangible or intangible benefits between at least two parties. According to SET, individual behavior is shaped and sustained by the consequences of their actions, which can include both material and non-material rewards received from the environment or other individuals (Cook et al., 2013). People tend to choose actions that they believe will yield the maximum potential benefits in the future (Blau, 1964).

The relationship between strength-based leadership and innovative work behavior

Scott and Bruce (1994) demonstrated in their study that innovative work behavior is closely linked to the quality of relationships between supervisors and subordinates. Additionally, a study by the State Administration Institute of the Republic of Indonesia (LAN, 2020) identified the lack of support and commitment from leaders as a significant barrier to implementing bureaucratic reform in Indonesia. From the workers' perspective, Engel (2014) noted that most workers do not feel they are performing at their best in the workplace. Whereas those who engage in tasks that align with their strengths tend to show greater loyalty and enjoy a higher quality of life.

Various leadership styles have been studied as factors influencing innovative work behavior, such as servant leadership (Iqbal et al., 2020; Ekmekcioglu & Oner, 2023), transactional leadership, and transformational leadership (Khan et al., 2020; Contreras et al., 2020), inclusive leadership (Javed et al., 2019; Seung & Seo, 2024), and distributed leadership (Evers et al., 2024). In Indonesia, Etikariena (2020) explored the influence of leadership styles including benevolent leadership, ethical leadership, empowerment leadership, and authentic leadership. However, research on leadership styles that specifically focus on enhancing positive workers' experiences, such as strengths-based leadership, remains limited. Strengths-based leadership is a positive leadership approach that emphasizes the importance of positive and subjective workers' experiences by identifying, developing, and utilizing their strengths, ultimately contributing to the organization's competitive advantage (Ding & Yu, 2020).

Strengths-based leadership is an essential approach for public sector organizations, especially as they face increasing levels of complexity (Linley et al., 2007). Du et al. (2016) highlighted that innovation can be both time-consuming and risky. Therefore, leaders need to recognize the right timing and procedures to provide the necessary support that enhances the innovative performance of their subordinates. Ding and Yu (2020) found a positive correlation between strengths-based leadership and innovative behavior among followers. According to Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), leaders who pay attention to their subordinates'

strengths by helping them identify and develop these abilities can trigger subordinates' feelings to contribute more in return for the leader's actions. Subordinates become more aware and motivated to use their strengths to find creative solutions, which in turn leads to more innovative work behavior.

H_1: Strength-based leadership has a direct positive relationship with innovative work behavior.

The mediating role of psychological safety

Psychological safety is increasingly recognized as a factor in shaping innovative work behavior (Durrah, 2023; Seung & Seo, 2024; Xu & Suntrayuth, 2022). It refers to a condition when workers can express themselves, act, or carry out job functions without worrying about negative impacts or bad consequences for their image, status, or career (Khan, 1990). According to Durrah's study (2023), when psychological safety is present in the workplace, workers are more likely to take calculated risks, enabling them to pursue innovation without fearing being marginalized, embarrassed, or punished.

This is makes sense because innovative work behavior is often viewed as risky, challenging, uncertain, prone to failure, and complex (Afsar & Umrani, 2020; Caniëls et al., 2022). As a result, workers may be hesitant to participate in such activities unless they feel that any potential failures will not have negative repercussions. In these situations, strength-based leadership can significantly generate workers' psychological safety, encouraging them to engage in innovative work behavior. According to Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), when leaders adopt an approach that emphasizes positive and subjective experiences for workers, by recognizing their strengths and encouraging their participation, workers feel safe to share their ideas and experiment with new concepts. In return, workers voluntarily demonstrate efforts to contribute more courageously to voice new ideas and make them happen.

H_2: Psychological safety mediates the relationship between strength-based leadership and innovative work behavior.

The moderating role of ambidextrous organizational culture

The government is enhancing the business processes of its agencies to improve service quality. This includes moving away from hierarchical systems, which are seen as outdated considering the current digital landscape (BKN, 2023). Research conducted in India by Priyanka et al. (2022) indicated that an organization's long-term sustainability relies on its ability to balance the exploitation of existing solutions with the exploration of future opportunities, a concept known as organizational ambidexterity. Furthermore, research by Kandoth and Shekhar (2024) identified that one key influence on innovative work behavior is an ambidextrous organizational culture. According to Lee et al. (2019), an ambidextrous organizational culture consists of a set of shared implicit assumptions that are widely accepted within an organization regarding its capacity to succeed in both exploitation and exploration activities.

However, research on the role of ambidextrous organizational culture in fostering innovative work behavior, particularly through the lens of psychological safety in the Indonesian public sector, remains limited. According to Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), an ambidextrous organizational culture can enhance the effect of psychological safety by creating an environment that encourages innovation while maintaining stability. The positive emotions generated by leaders who recognize their subordinates' strengths, combined with a culture that supports innovation, can instill a sense of security and a commitment to making valuable contributions through innovative work behavior.

H_3: Ambidextrous organizational culture acts as a moderator that strengthens the indirect relationship between strength-based leadership and innovative work behavior through psychological safety.

This study aims to explore the mechanism behind the relationship between strength-based leadership and innovative work behavior, specifically examining the roles of psychological safety as a mediator and ambidextrous organizational culture as a moderator among civil servants in Indonesia. The study offers three main contributions. First, it provides empirical evidence in the leadership literature regarding the relationship between strength-based leadership and innovative work behavior. Second, it considers individual factors—in particular, psychological safety—to investigate their mediating effect on the connection between leadership style and innovative work behavior. Third, it examines the moderating impact of contextual factors, specifically ambidextrous organizational culture, to provide a thorough understanding of the boundary conditions affecting innovative work behavior in the public sector in Indonesia.

This research is poised to be meaningful for government human resource management by designing programs and policies that encourage innovative work behavior. Moreover, the theoretical framework presented can offer new perspectives in understanding how the reciprocal relationship between individuals and the work environment influences the development of innovative work behavior, which can encourage further research. The following research questions will guide our investigation: (1) Does strength-based leadership have a direct positive ~~impact on~~ relationship with innovative work behavior? (2) Does psychological safety act as a mediator in the indirect relationship between strength-based leadership and innovative work behavior? and (3) Does ambidextrous organizational culture act as a moderator that strengthens the indirect relationship between strength-based leadership and innovative work behavior through psychological safety?

2. METHOD

Design

This study employs a quantitative approach with a non-experimental design, conducted cross-sectionally (Gravetter & Forzano, 2018). Data were collected using a self-report

questionnaire, as individuals are generally better at providing insights into their cognitive representations, mindsets, and behaviors than others (Janssen, 2000).

Procedure

This study involved several key procedures: (1) Adapting the psychological scale to ensure its relevance to the research context (Beaton et al., 2020); (2) Conducting a pilot study with 81 participants, which yielded a high to excellent reliability value for the measuring instrument (Tahrdoost, 2016). The overall CrIT score for the items met the requirement of being above 0.30, as suggested by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994); (3) Submitting a research ethics review to the Ethics Review Committee of the Faculty of Psychology at Universitas Indonesia, which received approval (No. 169/FPsi.Ethics Committee/PDP.04.00/2024); and (4) Collecting research data online via Google Forms, with participants taking approximately 5 minutes to complete the survey. The data collection period lasted from October 29 to November 7, 2024. Participants were provided with information about the study's purpose and consented to participate before completing the survey. Additionally, this study offered reward to 20 lucky compensation to 20 lucky participants who completed the questionnaire according to the instructions. A separate completion link was provided to maintain anonymity.

Participants

The minimum target participants in this study were 119 participants calculated based on G*Power (Memon et al., 2020). Convenience sampling was used, which involved selecting participants based on ease of access (Cohen et al., 2022). Information related to the study was shared through digital posters distributed on various social media platforms, including WhatsApp, Instagram, X, and LinkedIn. The selection criteria used were as follows: (1) each participant must have a minimum of 2 years of work experience (PermenPAN RB No. 6 of 2024); and (2) they must have worked under the same direct supervisor for at least 6 months (Asrar-ul-Haq & Kuchinke, 2016). From the data collection, 469 civil servants in Indonesia were obtained. The number of participants was adjusted to exclude 45 participants who failed the attention checker and 70 participants who did not meet the criteria. Therefore, the final number of participants whose data was processed was 354 civil servants.

The measuring instruments used in the study comprised four scales with a total of 26 items. The details are as follows: (1) Innovative Work Behavior: This is measured using a scale developed by Janssen (2000) and adapted into Indonesian by Etikariena and Muluk (2014). It is unidimensional and consists of 9 items. The scale uses a 6-point Likert format ranging from "never at all" to "always," with a Cronbach's α of 0.95. An example item is: "Introducing innovative ideas in a systematic way."; (2) Strength-Based Leadership: This is measured using a scale from Ding and Yu (2020), which has been adapted into Indonesian by the authors. It is unidimensional and consists of 5 items, using a 6-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree," with a Cronbach's α of 0.93. An example item is: "My leader gives me more autonomy to use my strengths at work."; (3) Psychological Safety: This is measured

using a scale from Edmondson (1999) as referenced by Carmeli, Reiter-Palmon, and Ziv (2010), adapted into Indonesian by the authors. It is unidimensional and includes 5 items, using a 6-point Likert scale that ranges from "very inaccurate" to "very accurate," with a Cronbach's α of 0.79. An example item is: "My leader gives me more autonomy to use my strengths at work."; and (4) Ambidextrous Organizational Culture: This is measured using a scale by Wang and Rafiq (2014), adapted into Indonesian by Lukitasari and Etikariena (2024). It is unidimensional and consists of 7 items. The scale utilizes a 6-point Likert format that ranges from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree," with a Cronbach's α of 0.922. An example item is: "We respect everyone's different viewpoints."

Common Method Bias

To address the weaknesses of online surveys and ensure that participants pay attention to the instructions and items presented in the questionnaire (Crano et al., 2024), this study included an attention checker item that stated, "Semarang is the capital city of Indonesia. Please choose 'strongly disagree' with this statement." However, the use of the same method at one time can allow for common method bias. To mitigate this risk, this study followed the procedural recommendations outlined by Podsakoff et al. (2024). These included employing a diverse response set on the scale used, placing demographic questions in the middle of the survey to create a psychological separation, emphasizing data confidentiality and anonymity, and instructing participants to respond based on actual conditions rather than ideal ones to reduce social desirability bias. Additionally, this study arranged the scale items so that variables suspected to be related were not placed next to each other, combined items within constructs that used the same response set, and randomized the order of items within each construct. This study then conducted Harman's single-factor test to evaluate the potential presence of common method bias. The first factor was found to explain only 40.52% of the total variance. A variance percentage of less than 50% indicates that common method bias is not a significant issue in this study (Podsakoff et al., 2024). Thus, the procedural efforts made were sufficiently effective in preventing this bias.

Data analysis

The collected data were analyzed using the PROCESS Model 14 statistical method developed by Hayes, implemented through SPSS version 29. Additionally, the Jamovi application was used to support data analysis. A descriptive analysis was conducted to understand the basic characteristics of the data, followed by regression analysis to investigate the roles of mediation and moderation in the relationships between the variables.

3. RESULTS

Descriptive Analysis

This study included 354 participants, aged between 23 and 62 years, with an average age of 37 (M = 36.9; SD = 7.65). There was a higher percentage of female participants (59.90%)

than male participants. Most participants held a bachelor's degree or Diploma IV (48%), and a majority had more than 10 years of work experience (53.70%). Almost all participants earned above the regional minimum wage (93.80%). Most participants were located on the island of Java (64.40%), and the central government was the predominant type of agency represented (71.80%). Additionally, most participants were functional officials (81.10%). These varied characteristics paint a comprehensive picture of the study population, which was dominated by highly educated, experienced female workers in functional positions within the central government, residing on the island of Java and earning above the average regional minimum wage. Descriptive data for participant's characteristics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 *Demographic Profile (N = 354)*

Profiles	Types	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	142	40.10
	Female	212	59.90
Education	Diploma I/II/III	42	11.90
	Bachelor/Diploma IV	170	48.00
	Master/Doctoral	142	40.10
Job Tenure	<3 years	38	10.70
	3-10 years	126	35.60
	>10 years	190	53.70
Income	Above regional minimum wage	332	93.80
	Same as the regional minimum wage	22	6.20
	Below regional minimum wage	0	0
Location	Sumatera	39	11.00
	Jawa	228	64.40
	Kalimantan	22	6.20
	Sulawesi	29	8.20
	Bali & Nusa Tenggara	16	4.50
	Maluku	11	3.10
	Papua	9	2.50
Agency	Central government	254	71.80
	Local government	100	28.20
Position	Structural	18	5.10
	Functional	287	81.10
	Staff	49	13.80

Table 2 Categorization of Variables

Variables	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD	Categorization (%)	
					High	Low
Innovative Work Behavior	1.00	6.00	3.94	1.09	58.80	41.20
Strength-based Leadership	1.20	6.00	4.41	0.98	52.80	47.20
Psychological Safety	1.40	6.00	4.35	0.78	57.30	42.70
Ambidextrous Organizational Culture	1.86	6.00	4.61	0.87	55.10	44.90

Table 2 presents an overview of participants' perceptions regarding the research variables. More than half of the participants categorized all variables as "High," indicating a generally positive perception. The variable with the highest perception was ambidextrous organizational culture (M = 4.61, SD = 0.87). This suggests that most participants believed their organization effectively balanced resource exploration and exploitation. In contrast, innovative work behavior received the lowest mean (M = 3.94, SD = 1.09), indicating that there is still potential for improvement in fostering innovation in the workplace. Next are strength-based leadership (M = 4.41, SD = 0.98) and psychological safety (M = 4.35, SD = 0.78). These scores are relatively close, suggesting that most participants viewed their direct supervisor's leadership style as one that emphasizes potential and strengths. Additionally, participants reported feeling sufficiently psychologically safe to act and express themselves at work.

Table 3 Correlation Matrix

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1	**IWB**	1											
2	**SBL**	.358***	1										
3	**PS**	.323***	.593***	1									
4	**AOC**	.316***	.771***	.662***	1								
5	**Gender**	-.119*	-.120*	-.129*	-.082	1							
6	**Age**	.068	.141**	.196***	.255***	.098	1						
7	**Educ.**	-.095	.050	-.074	-.019	-.166**	-.538***	1					
8	**Tenure**	.010	.072	.140**	.159**	-.009	.658***	-.377***	1				
9	**Income**	-.007	-.010	-.045	.005	.091	-.023	.039	-.042	1			
10	**Location**	-.014	.055	-.054	-.042	.-24***	-.215***	.237***	-.114*	.008	1		
11	**Agency**	.009	.007	-.028	.003	.091	.075	-.149**	-.129*	.020	.027	1	
12	**Position**	-.031	-.043	-.137**	-.045	-.008	-.262***	.177***	-.169**	.002	.062	-.085	1

Notes: N = 354; *p<.05; **p<.01, ***p<.001; IWB = Innovative Work Behavior; SBL = Strength-based Leadership; PS = Psychological Safety; AOC = Ambidextrous Organizational Culture; Gender: 1 (male), 2 (female); Education: 1 (Master/Doctoral), 2 (Bachelor/Diploma IV), 3 (Diploma I/II/III); Tenure: 1 (<3 years), 2 (3-10 years), 3 (>10 years); Income: 1 (Above regional minimum wage), 2 (same as the regional minimum wage), 3 (Below regional minimum wage); Location: 1 (Sumatera); 2 (Java); 3 (Kalimantan), 4 (Sulawesi), 5 (Bali & Nusa Tenggara), 6 (Maluku), 7 (Papua); Agency: 1 (Central government), 2 (Local government); Position: 1 (Structural), 2 (Functional), 3 (Staff).

Based on the correlation matrix presented in Table 3, all research variables are significantly related to one another. The matrix also illustrates the relationship between the research variables and demographic factors. Notably, only gender ($r = -0.119$, $p < 0.05$) shows a significant relationship with the variable of innovative work behavior. Although this relationship is very weak, gender will be controlled in the hypothesis test.

Table 4 illustrates the results of the research hypothesis test which shows that strength-based leadership has a significant direct positive relationship with innovative work behavior ($\beta = 0.258$, $p < 0.01$). This means that the higher the worker's perception of the strength-based leadership style of their supervisor, the higher the innovative behavior shown by the worker. Thus, **H_1 is accepted**. Furthermore, the hypothesis test also proves that psychological safety significantly plays a role in mediating the indirect effect of strength-based leadership on

innovative work behavior with a value of β = 0.107 and a confidence interval (CI) ranging from 0.019 to 0.204. The confidence interval that does not include zero confirms the significance of this mediation effect. This shows that psychological safety plays a crucial role in translating strength-based leadership into innovative work behavior. Thus, **H_2 is accepted**.

Table 4 *PROCESS Macro Result*

Hypothesis		Condition	Coeff	SE	p-value	CI 95%		Notes
						LL	UL	
H1	SBL -> IWB	-	0.258	0.088	0.004**	0.085	0.430	**H_1 Accepted**
H2	SBL -> PS	-	0.470	0.034	<0.001***	0.402	0.538	Significant
	PS -> IWB		0.227	0.093	0.015*	0.044	0.410	Significant
	SBL -> PS -> IWB		0.107	0.047	-	0.019	0.204	**H_2 Accepted**
H3	SBL -> PS*AOC -> IWB	Low AOC (M = -0.866)	0.066	0.051	-	-0.029	0.172	Not significant
		Medium AOC (M = 0)	0.107	0.047	-	0.019	0.204	Significant
		High AOC (M = 0.866)	0.147	0.057	-	0.040	0.264	Significant
		PS*AOC	0.099	0.065	0.128	-0.029	0.228	Not significant
		Interaction	0.047	0.031	-	-0.017	0.106	**H_3 Rejected**

Notes: N = 354; *p<.05; **p<.01, ***p<.001; IWB = Innovative Work Behavior; SBL = Strength-based Leadership; PS = Psychological Safety; AOC = Ambidextrous Organizational Culture.

Next, the hypothesis test shows that the indirect effect of strength-based leadership through psychological safety varies depending on the level of workers' perception of ambidextrous culture in their organization. In the condition of low perceived ambidextrous organizational culture (M = -0.866), the indirect effect is 0.066 (BootLLCI = -0.029, BootULCI = 0.172). This effect is not statistically significant because the confidence interval includes zero. In the condition of medium perceived ambidextrous organizational culture (M = 0), the indirect effect is 0.107 (BootLLCI = 0.019, BootULCI = 0.204) which is significant because the confidence interval does not include zero.

Likewise, in the condition of ambidextrous organizational culture perceived as high (M = 0.866), the indirect effect is 0.147 (BootLLCI = 0.040, BootULCI = 0.264) which means significant. This means that ambidextrous organizational culture acts as a moderator that strengthens the relationship between strength-based leadership and innovative work behavior through psychological safety only at moderate and high levels. However, when viewed from the index of moderated mediation, it shows a value of 0.047 (BootLLCI = -0.017, BootULCI = 0.106) meaning that ambidextrous organizational culture in general is not significant in moderating the indirect effect of strength-based leadership on innovative work behavior through psychological safety. Thus, **H_3 is rejected**.

According to the results of the correlation test, it was found that gender was significantly related to the innovative work behavior variable (r = -0.119, p <0.05) so it was included as a

covariate in the hypothesis test. Testing with PROCESS Model 14 showed that gender was not significantly related to innovative work behavior (r = -0.145, p = 0.19). This means that in this study there are no demographics that interfere with the influence on innovative work behavior.

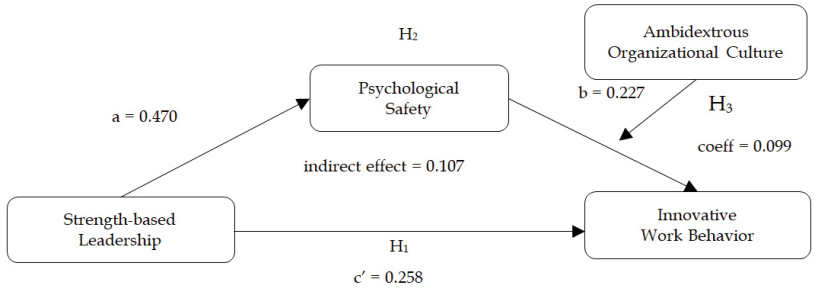

Figure 1. Research Model

4. DISCUSSION

The study's results indicate that strength-based leadership has a significant direct positive relationship with the formation of innovative work behavior. This suggests that as leaders in government organizations adopt this style of leadership, the motivation of workers to engage in innovative activities increases. These findings support the research conducted by Ding and Yu (2020), which shows that strength-based leadership is positively correlated with innovative work behavior. The underlying reason is that leaders who focus on their subordinates' strengths are better equipped to recognize, utilize, and develop those strengths (Ding et al., 2020).

In addition, the leader can also make subordinates aware of their prominent side and encourage them to use it in the work realm. Furthermore, it will direct them to find and apply new ways and creative solutions that are manifestations of innovative work behavior. This is because this leadership assumes that strength gives individuals the greatest possibility to develop (Burkus, 2011). According to research by van Woerkom et al. (2016), workers who are actively encouraged to utilize personal strengths in their work can help them cope with demands in their work, including those related to innovation. Based on Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), by using a strength-based leadership style, leaders signal expected behavior. Identification, utilization, and development, which are forms of leader support for the potential and strengths of subordinates, are then interpreted by subordinates as an obligation to reciprocate with something that can support the organization to successfully reach its goals, such as innovation (Bos-Nehles & Venendal, 2019).

This study's findings also indicate that psychological safety significantly mediates the relationship between strength-based leadership and innovative work behavior. This supports the research of Ekmekcioglu and Oner (2023) which shows that leadership style is positively related to innovative work behavior through the role of personal variables. The reason may be

that working on aspects that are strengths can create a sense of comfort about oneself (Meyers & van Woerkom, 2017). These results underline the importance of individual factors, in this case, the perception felt by workers regarding whether they feel safe expressing themselves and acting in the realm of work, in generating innovation in the organization.

On the other hand, strength-based leadership practices can make a significant difference in activating workers' psychological safety to voice ideas and work in different ways that can ultimately drive innovation. This idea is supported by Javed et al. (2019), who found that workers are more likely to engage in innovative activities when they have positive relationships with their leaders. Such relationships motivate them to take interpersonal risks in generating and implementing new ideas (Kyambade et al., 2024). According to Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), one party reciprocates the kindness of another through a give-and-take process. Psychological safety arises from positive interactions between leaders and their subordinates, which encourages innovative work behavior as a response to the actions taken by leadership (Cook et al., 2013; Mitterer & Mitterer, 2023).

Interestingly, this study reveals that ambidextrous organizational culture plays a unique role in moderating the indirect relationship between strength-based leadership on innovative work behavior through psychological safety. While the moderated mediation index is positive, the confidence interval suggests that the moderation effect is not very strong and may be considered insignificant in some contexts. This indicates that the impact of strength-based leadership on innovative work behavior is stronger in work environments that foster a higher level of ambidextrous organizational culture. Therefore, organizations should prioritize cultivating ambidexterity within their work environments to encourage innovative behavior, even if the interaction with psychological safety is not prominent. According to Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), an ambidextrous organizational culture creates an environment where innovation is valued and supported. This signals to workers the expected behaviors in such a culture. Therefore, when workers perceive a high level of ambidextrous culture, they feel compelled to reciprocate by engaging in innovative behavior.

The results of this study align with the findings of Lukitasari and Etikariena (2024), which examined civil servants at Agency X in Indonesia. Their research revealed that an ambidextrous organizational culture can strengthen the relationship between transformational leadership (the independent variable) and innovative work behavior (the dependent variable) when it acts as a moderator. However, this moderating role is not significant in indirect relationships. Additionally, these findings complement prior research, such as that by Liu et al. (2019) and Kandoth and Shekhar (2024), which established a significant positive relationship between ambidextrous organizational culture and the fostering of innovative behavior when treated as an independent variable. This suggests an inconsistent role of organizational culture in promoting innovative behavior, indicating a need for further investigation.

The statistics from this study indicate that the ambidextrous organizational culture is perceived to be the strongest among other variables examined. This suggests that the public

sector in Indonesia is beginning to develop a work culture that balances exploration and exploitation activities. Research by Gieske et al. (2020) on civil servants in the Netherlands shows that when an organization has an ambidextrous culture, workers are more likely to enhance innovation. However, in this study, the presence of such a culture did not appear to strengthen innovative behavior. It is possible that while civil servants recognize an ambidextrous culture, it may not translate effectively into everyday practice, limiting the innovation potential. This limitation can be attributed to several factors: strict bureaucratic procedures and hierarchical management (Bos-Nehles et al., 2016), a lack of urgency to innovate due to the non-competitive nature of public sector work (Knies et al., 2018), and insufficient intrinsic motivation to innovate, as this often requires significant effort (Bysted & Hansen, 2015).

In addition, the perceived ambidextrous culture within organizations may be more demanding than the fundamental assumptions shared among workers (Schein & Schein, 2017). This culture might not effectively foster psychological safety, which is crucial for promoting innovative behavior. According to AlMunthiri et al. (2023), public sector organizations are forced to develop new service delivery methods due to rapidly changing socio-economic conditions, increasing societal demands, and heightened pressure to meet public expectations. Additionally, other factors, such as leadership, may have a more significant impact on innovative behavior in this research model. Zuberi and Khattak (2021) assert that leadership is the most influential predictor of innovative behavior across all types of organizations. This suggests that even if civil servants perceive an ambidextrous culture, they may not feel encouraged to be innovative, as other factors could be more impactful.

Although this study offers valuable insights, it has several limitations that future research could address. First, the cross-sectional approach may introduce issues such as reverse causality. To mitigate these concerns, future research could adopt a longitudinal design or gather time-lagged data. Additionally, employing mixed research methods could be beneficial. Second, this study examines public sector workers without delving into specific subsectors. Future research could enhance its relevance by controlling subsectors that are particularly required to innovate in their work. Third, this study treats innovative work behavior as a unidimensional construct, leaving unclear which aspects are most significant and which are lacking. Future research could utilize a multidimensional scale to capture these nuances.

Fourth, this study considers strength-based leadership, psychological safety, and ambidextrous organizational culture as antecedents of innovative work behavior. Subsequent studies could explore additional leadership variables such as diversity-based leadership and collaborative leadership. It would also be worthwhile to investigate other personal variables like growth mindset and risk-taking personality, as well as cultural variables such as collaborative culture and inclusive culture. Researchers could also examine the positioning of these variables within the research model. Finally, this study focuses exclusively on Indonesian public sector workers. Future research should aim to replicate these findings in different population contexts to validate or challenge the conclusions drawn here.

5. CONCLUSION

This study examines the mechanisms behind the relationship between strength-based leadership and innovative work behavior, focusing on the roles of psychological safety and ambidextrous organizational culture among civil servants in Indonesia. The findings indicate that strength-based leadership has a direct positive relationship with innovative work behavior. Additionally, psychological safety partially mediates the relationship between strength-based leadership and innovative work behavior, while ambidextrous organizational culture does not significantly moderate the relationship.

Valuable insights into fostering innovative work behavior are offered through this research, particularly for Indonesian policymakers. Leaders in government organizations are essential to identify, utilize, and nurture their subordinates' strengths by providing constructive feedback. This enables workers to recognize their strengths, supporting personal and organizational development and fostering a sense of psychological safety that encourages innovative behaviors. Future research could investigate the role of ambidextrous organizational culture in promoting innovative work behavior in other research models considering the positive impacts on workers and organizations.

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