

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**EXAMINING THE DRIVERS OF
INNOVATIVE WORK BEHAVIOUR
AMONG ACADEMICS OF HIGHER
EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN
MALAYSIA: THE MEDIATING
ROLE OF INDIVIDUAL
INNOVATION CAPABILITY**

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ABSTRACT

As innovative work behaviour (IWB) becomes increasingly vital for maintaining academic excellence, there is a pressing need to understand its determinants within higher education institutions (HEIs), especially in Malaysia. Existing studies often examine predictors in isolation and rarely consider how individual innovation capability (IIC) functions as a psychological mechanism linking organisational and personal factors to IWB. To address this gap, this study develops an integrated model grounded in Social Exchange Theory (SET), Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), and Self-Determination Theory (SDT), to investigate how psychological empowerment (PE), flexible work arrangements (FWAs), perceived organisational support (POS), knowledge sharing (KS), and transformational leadership (TL) shape IWB among academics. Data were gathered from 389 permanent academics across Malaysian universities featured in the QS World University Rankings 2023 through purposive sampling. A disjoint two-stage methodology in Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) 4.0 was employed to investigate sixteen hypotheses. The analysis produced three key findings. First, PE, KS, TL, and IIC significantly influence IWB, whereas FWAs and POS do not. Second, PE, FWAs, and KS have a positive influence on IIC, whereas POS and TL demonstrate no significant effect. Third, mediation analysis reveals that IIC only mediates the relationships between PE, FWAs, and KS on IWB, while POS and TL do not. This study advances theory by integrating three major theories into a single explanatory model, positioning IIC as a novel mediator and demonstrating that POS can negatively influence IWB in Malaysian HEIs while offering practical guidance for HEIs and policymakers to foster academic innovation.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
CONFIRMATION BY PANEL OF EXAMINERS	ii
AUTHOR'S DECLARATION	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
LIST OF TABLES	xii
LIST OF FIGURES	xiv
LIST OF SYMBOLS	xv
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xvi
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Preamble	1
1.2 Background of Study	1
1.3 Problem Statement	5
1.4 Research Objectives	11
1.5 Research Questions	13
1.6 Scope of the Study	15
1.7 Significance of the Study	16
1.7.1 Theoretical Significance	17
1.7.2 Practical Significance	18
1.8 Definition of Terms and Operationalization	19
1.9 Structure of the Thesis	21
1.10 Chapter Summary	22
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW	23
2.1 Introduction	23
2.2 Overview of Theoretical Underpinning	23
2.2.1 Social Exchange Theory	23
2.2.2 Social Cognitive Theory	27

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Preamble

The study focuses on the drivers of innovative work behaviour among academics at higher education institutions in Malaysia. This chapter provides an overview of the research, including the problem statement, research objectives, research questions, the significance of the study, definitions of key terms, and the organisation of the study.

1.2 Background of Study

In today's volatile global environment, where technological breakthroughs, digital convergence and intensifying competition are continually reshaping industries, an organisation's ability to foster innovation is crucial for sustainable growth and survival (Blomkvist et al., 2025; Khahan et al., 2024; Berber, 2024; Ranihusna et al., 2021). Additionally, the ongoing diffusion of Industrial Revolution 4.0 (IR 4.0) has further amplified this need by transforming business and requiring the workforce to possess more innovative competencies and skills (Abdul Rahim, 2022; Johari et al., 2021; Qatyan & Baharuddin et al., 2019). As a result, modern organisations face mounting pressure to innovate, which has a significant influence on their original management approach (Fan et al., 2022).

Despite this global demand, Malaysia has faced challenges in its innovation performance, as evidenced by recent worldwide rankings. According to the Global Competitiveness Index (GCI) 2024, Malaysia ranked 34th among 67 nations, trailing behind its neighbours, Thailand and Indonesia, for the first time, and dropping seven places from the previous year (Purushotman, 2024). Similarly, Malaysia's ranking in the Global Innovation Index (GII) 2023 falls between ranks 30 and 46, indicating that the country generates relatively low innovation outputs compared to its investment levels in innovation (WIPO, 2023). Taken together, this decline suggests a downturn in Malaysia's creative and innovative capabilities and highlights the urgent need for policy intervention. In response, the Malaysian Institute of Economic Research (MIER)