

Impacts of COVID-19 crisis on innovative work behaviour in Vietnam

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Abstract: Adapted from current literature, this study develops the model of the relationship between knowledge sharing and innovative work behaviour with the promotion of trust, Organizational Rewards system, Management Support in Vietnam. The author builds hypotheses based on the literature review and presents an integrated research framework. This study focuses on how innovative work behaviour can help firms survive during the COVID-19 crisis. We take insights into previous crises through evaluating popular articles and identifying fundamental innovation management mechanisms that could be efficient in the open-ended COVID-19 crisis to achieve this objective. In addition, our review of a large body of literature highlights several knowledge sharing mechanisms that may support small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to cope with the COVID-19 crisis. The consulted empirical studies demonstrated that trust, reward, and management support positively impact explicit knowledge sharing and tacit knowledge sharing. At the same time, innovative work behaviour is driven by knowledge sharing and tacit knowledge sharing. Our research results have produced some practical significance and contribute to stimulating the power of knowledge sharing and innovative work for sustainable development in Vietnam. The widespread crisis activated unprecedented changes in how firms are administered and managed. Therefore, firms can adjust them to form the business sustainable and resilient using the suggestions made by considering our findings. To the best of the authors' knowledge, this is the first study to explore the impact of the pandemic and analyse firms' responses to the crisis in management innovation in a Vietnamese context.

Keywords: knowledge sharing; trust; reward; management support; innovative work behaviour; COVID-19

1. Introduction

Innovation has long been thought of as a way for institutions to build or support their competitive advantages (Amit & Schoemaker, 1993; Prahalad & Hamel, 1990). Moreover, practically all organizations advocate innovation nowadays (Bessant & Tidd, 2007). Nonetheless, it is not unusual that companies fail to develop or adopt and implement innovations. The dissatisfaction rate in executing advancement can be as high as 70% in a few businesses (Gómez & Carnero, 2011). At the employees' level, this paper will concentrate on management innovation, which is favourably associated with organizational performance, and other classes of innovation such as trust, reward and management support (Damanpour & Aravind, 2012; Hollen et al., 2013; Walker et al., 2011). Management exercise, operation, network, or state-of-the-art techniques, or adopting organization is intended to accomplish organizational goals (Birkinshaw, Hamel, & Mol, 2008; Vaccaro et al., 2012). In the following sections, I will explain the paradox of management innovation research, particularly in the developing economy of Vietnam, and then I will formulate research questions and hypotheses and present an approach to dealing with those questions.

In this paper, we first present the country's background, followed by the operational definitions and theoretical underpinnings of this paper. Following this, our literature review will cover the main areas of innovative work behaviour mentioned earlier and the factors that affect its processes. Next, we build hypotheses based on the literature review and present an integrated research framework. The paper then discusses these findings and provides both practical and research implications. To capture these complex aspects, studies have generated some indicators to evaluate corporate innovation as shown in Figure 1.

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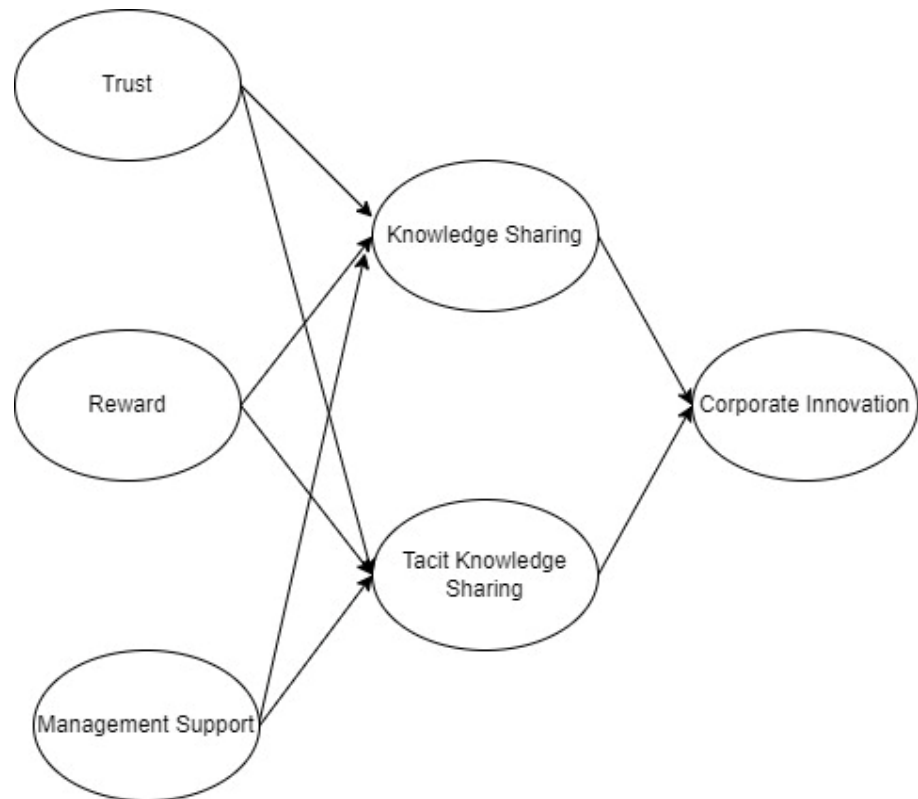


Figure 1. Proposed integrative research model. *Source: author's own construction*

1.1. Knowledge sharing in Vietnam

Knowledge is an organization's essential resource and value creation, which is a function of its ability to accumulate and use knowledge (Hsu & Sabherwal, 2012; Zhou & Li, 2012). Sharing and transferring knowledge will form a source of knowledge related to competence, thereby contributing to asset creation and improving organizational performance (Z. Wang, Wang, & Liang, 2014). In a highly competitive environment, knowledge sharing is essential for business success (Grant, 1996). Encouraging employees to share helpful knowledge within an organization can maintain and increase an organization's competitive advantage (Barney, 1991; Grant, 1996; Liu & Phillips, 2011). For small and medium enterprises (SMEs), employee knowledge is essential to retaining and attracting new customers, meeting increasing demands, and improving services. For example, to create new and unique customer experiences, managers in SMEs have recently become interested in knowledge sharing practices (Hu, Horng, & Sun, 2009).

It can be seen that the big challenge in promoting innovative behaviour at work is the willingness of individuals to share knowledge with colleagues. However, there are two problems related to this aspect. One is a personal perception based on self-efficacy and outcome expectations (Hsu, Ju, Yen, & Chang, 2007; S. Wang & Noe, 2010). The second is social impact based on beliefs and subjective norms (Bock et al., 2005; Hsu et al., 2007; S. Wang & Noe, 2010). Therefore, investigating individual perceptions and the impact of the social environment on innovative work behaviour through knowledge sharing will help managers promote knowledge sharing within units or organizations to promote creativity innovation of employees (Bock et al., 2005; Radaelli, Lettieri, Mura, & Spiller, 2014).

1.2. Research gap

Small and medium enterprises that want to succeed need to deliver new, high-quality and innovative services to create a unique customer experience. To achieve this goal, managers need policies to ensure that their employees regularly share knowledge with others to create value-added services. In addition to organizational learning and innovation performance, sharing your own experiences helps everyone in the organization understand

customers' needs, expectations, wants, and preferences so that they can contribute actively involved in new service development and innovative work behaviour (Afsar et al., 2017).

In recent years, Vietnamese small and medium enterprises have implemented many programmes and policies to improve innovation capacity and create competitive advantages, thereby promoting economic and cultural development, developing the society of the country, and improving the quality of companies. Nevertheless, due to the impact of the Covid-19 epidemic, domestic and international business activities will face many difficulties and challenges. Therefore, studying the factors that promote innovation and improve employees' working efficiency in small and medium enterprises is necessary. Furthermore, the impact of organizational trust, rewards, and management support of employee knowledge sharing and innovative work behaviour through empirical investigation is a research gap. This study fills that gap by analysing the premises and outcomes of knowledge sharing in the context of a small Vietnamese enterprise. This study will help leaders and managers develop policies to promote knowledge sharing behaviour and improve innovation quality.

2. Theoretical background

This study is concerned with innovative work behaviour, which refers to adopting new management ideas, practices, tools, or structures. This section will provide an integrated perspective drawing from academic and practice-oriented literature in management innovation to lay the theoretical foundations of the study.

2.1. Definition of innovative work behaviour

Innovation theory frequently emphasizes that innovation is broader than just creating and containing ideas (e.g., King & Anderson, 2002). Accordingly, innovative work behaviour (IWB) covers the ideation and behaviours necessary to implement the ideas and achieve improvements that will improve the performance of individuals and businesses. According to Farr and Ford (1990), we define innovative work behaviour as an individual's behaviour (in a job, group, or organizational role) to initiate and intentionally introduce ideas of new and valuable processes, products, or procedures. Thus, the IWB metric developed here captures both the initiation and execution of innovative ideas.

IWB is defined as employee behaviour of purposefully generating, introducing, and applying new ideas in the workplace, in a team, or within an organization that increases productivity (Janssen, 2000). This behaviour is the intentional behaviour of individuals to generate and implement new and valuable ideas to benefit the individual, group or organization (Bos-Nehles & Veenendaal, 2017). It is also a process to create new problem-solving applications that begin with problem identification, solution finding, and implementation of organizational solutions (Turgut & Beğenirbaş, 2013). Åmo and Kolvereid (2005) defined innovative work behaviour as the ability to work actively to create new products and find new markets, processes, and combinations.

Innovative work behaviour is divided into two phases by Dorenbosch et al. (2005): invention and implementation of ideas. Meanwhile, Scott and Bruce (1994) divided IWB into three stages: forming new and valid ideas, seeking support, and implementing ideas that have already been conceived and developed. The first stage is idea generation: employees identify problems and opportunities, and look for new ideas to act as solutions to the problem. The second stage is called idea protection: ideas are promoted throughout the organization to seek support for further development or to build a team consisting of competent individuals necessary to practice ideas. The third stage is idea practice: implementing the idea in the day-to-day work of the business or organization concerned.

2.2. Dimensions

More recent IWB measures distinguish between different aspects, often related to different stages of the innovation process. For example, Scott and Bruce (1994) operate IWB as a multistage process. De Jong and Den Hartog (2010) outline the three phases involved in the IWB, namely ideation, coalition building, and implementation. Personal innovation begins with looking at problems and generating ideas or solutions, let them be new or approved. Next,

a creative individual seeks support for an idea and tries to win support for that idea through coalition building. Finally, the innovator contributes to the realization of the idea, for example, by creating a prototype or model of the innovation or working to implement the idea in other ways.

2.3. Measurement of IWB

Most research on and measuring innovation behaviour at the level of the individual has focused on the formation of new (creative) ideas rather than the behaviours involved in championing or implementing these creative ideas. Regarding to Kleysen and Street (2001), there are only a few measures of broader conceptualisations of IWB, including all of those behaviours that are available (self-ratings, single source). Most measures focus on a single element of the IWB. Even when different behaviours are included, they are generally considered to be one-way in the measurement. Furthermore, previous work provided little information on measures' efficacy and psychometric properties. Scale development and validation have not been fully implemented; most studies report only exploratory factor analyses or reliability of scales without providing any information on validity. Another downside is that about half of the measurements are self-reported rather than collecting data from other reviewers. Here, we aim to develop a multidimensional IWB measure, test its convergent and discriminant validity, and begin to develop an initial nomination network that will help determine the validity of the building.

As said, most IWB measures are one-way. For example, Scott and Bruce (1994) formed a six-item IWB scale covering idea generation, alliance building, and idea reality, but they did not attempt to separate these dimensions. In fact, Scott and Bruce (1998) also presented a shorter, four-item version of their measure in their later work. Other authors have also operated IWB on such a short scale. Bunce and West (1995) used five items to measure 'innovation propensity': a measure that essentially fits our definition of IWB. Spreitzer (1995) and Basu and Green (1997) also used a four-item scale. The short measures in these studies tend to ask supervisors to rate employee innovation and originality without discriminating against specific types of behaviour. Many of these studies are not validated but are used as outcome measures in studies where other structures (e.g., empowerment) are the focus of research and receive more attention.

Janssen (2000) attempted to develop a genuinely multidimensional measure, using one's own IWB and other employee ratings. He built specific categories that explore idea generation, idea promotion, and idea execution. He found a strong correlation between these three behaviours and concluded that his items could be integrated and utilized as a single additive scale at best. This also applies to the self-report measure of Kleysen and Street (2001). Krause (2004) and Dorenbosch et al. (2005) presented IWB measures exploiting two aspects: idea generation and implementation of ideas. This distinction is based on the two-stage expression (initiation and implementation) widely used in the innovation process (e.g., Zaltman et al., 1973; King and Anderson, 2002). Variables are measured using a Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

3. Methodology

We used a systematic literature review to construct our theoretical model. The result is the basis for the manager to take appropriate actions to promote management innovation in the future.

The literature review is drawn from relevant literature on management innovation, and follows the four steps of content analysis (Mayring, 2015). The steps include material collection, descriptive analysis, category selection, and material evaluation. The method provides a strict process that helped the development of a conceptual framework (Seuring & Müller, 2008). In the first step, the material to be contained is determined and delimited. Next, multiple online databases (EBSCO, ERIC, JSTOR, and Google Scholar) were explored using the most relevant keywords to the paper, including 'management innovation' and 'organizational innovation'. Once the initial set of relevant documents had been determined, the initial thought was to specify other keywords and subject terms that were not raised initially. This technique is named "pearl growing" (Ramer, 2005). Through this, added keywords were

set such as “process innovation”, “innovation processes”, “managerial innovation”, and “business innovation”. Overall, the search yielded thousands of relevant publications.

In the second step, the descriptive analysis in which collected materials are considered, the author scanned abstracts to narrow the list of papers and disregard irrelevant studies. An additional search for keywords “management innovation”, “managerial innovation”, and “organizational innovation” in the abstract was used to eliminate studies that are out of the content of this topic. There were 142 papers contained in the final round of the literature review.

The third and fourth steps are “category selection” and “material evaluation”, in which classifications are developed and studied. The organized studies covered broad topics in innovation management, including elements to adopt a management innovation (Vaccaro et al., 2012; Volberda et al., 2013; Peeters, Massini, & Lewin, 2014), its connection with different managerial constructs, and with other kinds of innovation (Damanpour & Aravind, 2012; Cock & Hipkin, 1997; Alexy, George, & Salter, 2013; Bezdrob & Sunje, 2014; Büschgens et al., 2013; Černe, Jaklič, & Škerlavaj, 2015), and studies in the management innovation procedure (Pfeffer, 2007; Qin, Li, & Yu, 2015; Basile & Faraci, 2015). The sequences of the studies reflect how researchers consider management innovation. Three significant classifications of management innovation conceptualisation are summarized through the literature review: trust, reward, and management support.

4. Literature review

4.1. Trust

The factor that improves interactive relationships and promotes successful knowledge sharing among employees is trust (Chow & Chan, 2008). Knowledge sharing initiatives depend on trust. Once trust is established, employees are willing to allow others to access their resources (their intellectual, physical, and emotional assets). In other words, individuals who engage in trust-based interactions are more willing to share their resources or expertise because the feeling of trust reduces their fear (Tsai & Ghoshal, 1998). Trust will improve the quality of knowledge sharing (Zaqout & Abbas, 2012) and is the foundation for the cohesion of relationships between parties, thereby preventing opportunistic behaviours and contributing to the free exchange of knowledge (Inkpen & Tsang, 2005). The willingness to share knowledge with others increases when employees believe this will strengthen relationships, broaden the range of connections, and foster cooperation and collaboration for future work (Javaid, Soroya, & Mahmood, 2020). In addition, Foos, Schum, and Rothenberg (2006) suggest that trust between individuals will promote the sharing of tacit knowledge. Based on these arguments, the study proposes the following hypotheses (H1 and H2):

- H1: Trust has a positive effect on knowledge sharing.
- H2: Trust has a positive effect on tacit knowledge sharing.

4.2. Reward

Rewards can be monetary or non-monetary. Monetary rewards can be bonuses or incentives. Non-monetary rewards can be certificates, public recognition and appreciation. Many scholars have recognized the importance of rewards in knowledge sharing (Javaid et al., 2020). Organizational rewards positively motivate employees to perform different job behaviours, and if employees get more rewards for knowledge sharing, their willingness to share knowledge will increase their awareness (Cabrera, Collins, & Salgado, 2006; Huang, Davison, & Gu, 2011).

Furthermore, when employees receive economic rewards for their knowledge exchange, they feel more motivated to share knowledge (Hau, Kim, Lee, & Kim, 2013). Cheng et al.'s (2009) research results have shown the importance of establishing adequate incentive systems and understanding expectations for an individual's knowledge sharing. Based on the above arguments, this study proposes the following hypotheses (H3 and H4):

- H3: Organizational rewards have a positive effect on knowledge sharing.
- H4: Organizational rewards have a positive effect on tacit knowledge sharing.

4.3. Management support

Management support plays an essential role in encouraging knowledge sharing behaviours (S. Wang & Noe, 2010). Management support refers to senior and middle management's support to strengthen knowledge sharing behaviours and processes throughout the organization. Management support is defined as the way managers inspire employees to share knowledge and support activities that encourage knowledge sharing (Lee, Shiue, & Chen, 2016; Z. Wang & Wang, 2012). Mishra and Pandey (2019) suggest that different leadership styles positively influence knowledge sharing. Effective leadership can improve knowledge sharing by creating a knowledge-friendly culture, providing shared goals and a clear vision, improving relationships based on trust, using incentives, and removing barriers such as lack of communication or mutual misunderstanding (Amayah, 2013).

Anantatmula (2008) argues that leadership and management play an important role in knowledge sharing culture in an organization because, in knowledge sharing, the responsibility lies with the employees and the employees of senior managers, who need to establish an environment that promotes knowledge sharing. Furthermore, management support is a precondition for knowledge sharing in different research contexts, as management support can influence employee commitment, thereby improving the quality and practical level of knowledge sharing (Ali, Paris, & Gunasekaran, 2019).

Based on current theories, the study proposes the following hypotheses (H5 and H6):

- **H5: Management support has a positive effect on knowledge sharing.**
- **H6: Management support has a positive effect on tacit knowledge sharing.**

4.4. Knowledge sharing and innovative work behaviour of employees

Innovation is the process by which economic or social value is created from knowledge through the creation, dissemination, and transformation of knowledge in order to create new or improved innovative products and processes extensively used by society (Raykov, 2014). Hence, innovation is an essential competitive strategy and advantage for any organization's existence and sets it apart. Moreover, innovation attracts more customers since new things are always attractive. In particular, the service industry needs continuous innovation to retain customers (Akram, Lei, Haider, & Hussain, 2018). Therefore, knowledge is the most critical organizational resource, enabling the creation of new organizational outcomes, including innovation (Kamasak & Bulutlar, 2010).

Furthermore, knowledge sharing helps people quickly expand the scope of personal knowledge and increase problem-solving and workload such as improving work performance, among which innovation is apparently one of the most important parts (Hu et al., 2009). Current theories support the relationship between knowledge sharing and innovation (Akram et al., 2018). Alhady et al. (2011) argue that organizations support their employees to contribute knowledge to generate new, better ideas and foster new opportunities, thereby enabling organizational innovation activities. When individuals acquire knowledge from others, they improve their capacity to innovate (Radaelli et al., 2014). Employees can effectively solve problems through creative and innovative ideas by sharing knowledge with colleagues (K. J. Lee, 2016). The premise for combining and transferring knowledge to new understanding is knowledge sharing. The result will promote the implementation of creative ideas that positively impact work efficiency (Yun & Lee, 2017). Sharing knowledge will improve learning efficiency by changing the knowledge structure of employees. In addition, employees in the organization can acquire special skills, experiences, and methods to work better through cognitive innovation and sharing tacit knowledge (Z. Wang et al. al., 2014). Therefore, the author proposes that there is a positive relationship between the sharing of explicit knowledge and the sharing of tacit knowledge and the innovative work behaviour of individuals and thus the author proposes the following hypotheses:

- **H7: Existing knowledge sharing has a positive effect on innovative work behaviour.**
- **H8: Tacit knowledge sharing has a positive effect on innovative work behaviour.**

5. Empirical results and discussion

The impact of knowledge sharing on innovation behaviour at work is mentioned in the theoretical part, and many studies have described that relationship in practice. In the context of Covid-19, this article has identified the preconditions of knowledge sharing to motivate employees to work in innovation. The research results show that all hypotheses about the influence of 03 factors of trust, organizational reward, and management support on the behaviour of sharing explicit and implicit knowledge is accepted and valid. Statistical significance: among employees the most substantial effect belongs to trust. Trust is the driving force behind sharing explicit knowledge and the sharing tacit knowledge. Amayah (2013), Ali et al. (2019), and Javaid et al. (2020) also found that trust among employees will increase knowledge sharing behaviour.

Furthermore, organizational rewards positively affect knowledge sharing (visible and implicit). This demonstrates that individual expectations of rewards play a role in promoting knowledge sharing. By empirical research, Hau et al. (2013) demonstrate that rewards have a positive effect on tacit knowledge sharing, while Amayah (2013), Ali et al. (2019), Javaid et al. (2020) also show that rewards play an essential role in promoting knowledge sharing. In addition, management support within the organization enhances the sharing of explicit and tacit knowledge. This finding is similar to the findings of Ali et al. (2019), who demonstrate that the spiritual role of management support is necessary to encourage employees to share knowledge.

The empirical results of this study also support the positive relationship between the practice of sharing explicit and tacit knowledge and the innovative working behaviour of employees of SMEs in Vietnam. The author's results reinforce the findings described in Yun and Lee's (2017) study: when employees actively share knowledge, they are more informed and more willing to innovate. Hu et al. (2009), Radaelli et al. (2014) also found a correlation between innovative work behaviour outcomes and knowledge sharing. Moreover, Afsar et al. (2017) examined the role of knowledge sharing in motivating employees at SMEs to innovate.

5.1. Trust

The study shows that all hypotheses about the influence of 03 factors of trust, organizational reward, and management support on the behaviour of sharing explicit and tacit knowledge are accepted and meaningful. Based on antecedent statistics, it is shown that the most significant impact belongs to trust among employees. Trust is the driving force behind sharing explicit knowledge and the sharing of tacit knowledge. Amayah (2013), Ali et al. (2019), and Javaid et al. (2020) also found that trust among employees increases knowledge sharing behaviour.

The Covid 19 pandemic has helped us understand how innovativeness leads to a firm competitive advantage by examining the role of trust in product development in the Vietnamese context. This has been confirmed by integrating social capital theory and the contingency approach (Pratono, 2021).

5.2. Reward

Organizational rewards positively affect knowledge sharing (visible and implicit). This demonstrates that individual expectations of rewards play a role in promoting knowledge sharing. By empirical research, Hau et al. (2013) demonstrate that rewards have a positive effect on tacit knowledge sharing, while Amayah (2013), Ali et al. (2019), Javaid et al. (2020) also show that rewards play an essential role in promoting knowledge sharing.

During the pandemic, reward and incentive systems positively affect company performance and employee performance. Motivation mediates influence on innovation management (Meilani et al, 2021). This suggests that for managers who provide input into managing a more effective reward system a healthy organizational culture with reward-mediated motivation can provide meaningful corporate performance.

5.3. Management support

In addition, the support of management within the organization facilitates the sharing of explicit and tacit knowledge. This finding is consistent with Ali et al.' studies (2019), and demonstrates that the spiritual role of management support is necessary to encourage employees to share knowledge.

5.4. Knowledge sharing and tacit knowledge sharing

The empirical results of this study also support the existence of a positive relationship between the practice of sharing existing and tacit knowledge on the innovative work behaviour of employees in the context of Vietnam.

The author's results support the findings of Yun and Lee's (2017) study: when employees actively share positive knowledge, they are more informed and more willing to innovate. Hu et al. (2009) and Radaelli et al. (2014) also found a correlation between innovative work behaviour outcomes and knowledge sharing. Furthermore, Afsar et al. (2017) examined the role of knowledge sharing in motivating employees to do innovative work.

6. Summary and conclusions

Based on current literature, this study developed a model of the relationship between knowledge sharing and employees' Innovative Work Behaviour (IWB) in the aviation industry with the promoting of trust (TRU), Organizational Rewards system (REW), and Management Support (MAS). The author tested the research hypotheses using a Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), with survey data from 280 respondents working at Tan Son Nhat International Airport. Structured questionnaires were designed to collect data using convenience sampling. The empirical studies demonstrated that TRU, REW and MAS positively impact explicit knowledge sharing (KNO) and tacit knowledge sharing (TKNO). At the same time, IWB is driven by KNO and TKNO. Research results contribute some practical implications to stimulate the strength of knowledge sharing and innovative work in the small and medium enterprises.

This study emphasizes that managers of airline companies need to be concerned with knowledge sharing practices and view them as an essential tool for delivering innovative results. Based on the experimental results of this article, the author proposes some implications to encourage employees to share knowledge at work. Consequently, the authors have proposed the following suggestions for SME managers to influence employee innovation behaviour.

Firstly, managers should encourage employees to develop new ideas and proposals through suggestion boxes, software systems and social networks. After that, each new idea and proposal should be evaluated effectively to choose new ideas and feasible proposals for application in work practices. The Kaizen method is successfully applied when both managers and employees of Vietnamese enterprises have innovative and modern thinking and do not accept traditional methods.

Second, periodic seminars should be organized with the participation of all levels of management and employees in each department. At the seminar, each employee has to self-reflect on their current work and discuss plans, development strategies, work processes, new products/services. After the workshop, possible ideas will be assigned to proponents of the given ideas and to some colleagues to implement.

Third, time and resources should be dedicated to the testing and implementation of new ideas. Most of the work of Vietnamese small and medium enterprises employees does not follow standard procedures, so in many cases, they are forced to use traditional methods to execute their jobs. New ideas do not always work for the first time, so we need to plan, delegate, and take the time to experiment.

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