

# The Impact of Organizational Commitment, Knowledge Sharing, and Psychological Safety on Innovative Behavior among SME Employees in Beijing Province

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**Abstract:** This study examines the relationships among organizational commitment, knowledge sharing, psychological safety, and innovative behavior within small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) located in Beijing Province. Grounded in Social Exchange Theory and Psychological Safety Theory, a conceptual model is proposed wherein organizational commitment influences innovative behavior both directly and indirectly through knowledge sharing and psychological safety. Data were collected from 358 SME employees via a quantitative survey, and structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed to test the hypothesized relationships. The findings indicate that organizational commitment significantly enhances innovative behavior, with knowledge sharing and psychological safety functioning as partial mediators. These results underscore the importance of relational and psychological mechanisms in fostering innovation within SME contexts. The study contributes to the theoretical literature on employee innovation by integrating commitment, knowledge sharing, and psychological safety, while offering practical implications for SME managers seeking to cultivate an innovation-supportive culture. The findings further suggest that although parents express utilitarian educational aspirations, their purchasing behaviors are primarily driven by emotional needs and socioeconomic distinction. This research provides theoretical insights into the "Parenting Economy" and presents strategic implications for publishers regarding product positioning and market segmentation.

**Keywords:** Organizational Commitment, Knowledge Sharing, Psychological Safety, Innovative Behavior, SMEs

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Research Background

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) represent a foundational pillar of China's economic landscape, making substantial contributions to employment generation, technological progress, and regional economic stability. In innovation-driven regions such as Beijing Province, these enterprises navigate highly competitive markets marked by rapid technological evolution and escalating knowledge intensity. Within this context, organizational innovation emerges as a crucial determinant of firm viability and enduring competitiveness. Although macro-level innovation policies and technological investments remain important, accumulating evidence indicates that innovation ultimately hinges upon employees' innovative behavior at the individual level (Janssen, 2000).

Innovative behavior refers to the intentional generation, promotion, and realization of new ideas within a work role, group, or organization (Janssen, 2000). Unlike creativity, which focuses primarily on idea generation, innovative behavior encompasses both idea implementation and diffusion. For SMEs, which often lack extensive R&D resources, employee-driven innovation is particularly important. Employees serve as frontline problem-solvers, knowledge integrators, and change agents. Therefore, understanding the psychological and organizational factors that stimulate innovative behavior is essential for enhancing SME competitiveness.

Among the organizational antecedents of innovative behavior, organizational commitment has garnered considerable research interest. Meyer and Allen's (1991) three-component model conceptualizes organizational

commitment as comprising affective, continuance, and normative dimensions. Affective commitment—referring to an employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization—holds particular relevance for discretionary behaviors, including innovation. Consistent with Social Exchange Theory, employees exhibiting strong affective commitment tend to exert additional effort and reciprocate organizational support (Stranzl, 2024). While empirical studies have established associations between organizational commitment and outcomes such as proactive work behaviors, job performance, and organizational citizenship behaviors, its specific role in fostering innovative behavior within SME contexts warrants further examination.

In addition to organizational commitment, knowledge sharing is widely regarded as a critical driver of innovation. Knowledge sharing involves the exchange of task-relevant information, skills, and expertise among individuals within an organization (Bock et al., 2005). The innovation process often depends on the recombination of diverse knowledge inputs. In SMEs, where formal knowledge management systems are frequently underdeveloped, voluntary employee knowledge exchange becomes especially significant. Committed employees tend to be more inclined to share tacit knowledge, thereby supporting idea development and enabling collaborative innovation.

Psychological safety constitutes another significant antecedent of innovative behavior warranting scholarly attention. Edmondson (1999) introduced the construct of psychological safety to describe the shared conviction that the work environment is amenable to interpersonal risk-taking without fear of adverse consequences. The innovation process is inherently characterized by uncertainty and the prospect of failure. Employees may consequently withhold novel ideas when they anticipate criticism, rejection, or negative evaluation. A psychologically safe climate attenuates such concerns, thereby promoting experimentation, open communication, and constructive discourse. Although extant research has established the relevance of psychological safety for organizational learning and team performance, its mediating function in the relationship between organizational commitment and innovative behavior remains insufficiently explored, particularly within the context of Chinese SMEs.

Collectively, organizational commitment, knowledge sharing, and psychological safety represent interrelated determinants that may jointly shape innovative behavioral outcomes. Nonetheless, limited empirical investigation has examined their integrated effects within a unified theoretical framework in emerging-market SME contexts. The present study endeavors to address this research lacuna by examining how organizational commitment influences innovative behavior through both direct pathways and indirect mechanisms mediated by knowledge sharing and psychological safety among SME employees in Beijing Province.

## 1.2 Problem Statement and Significance

Despite the recognized importance of innovation for SME sustainability, many SMEs struggle to cultivate consistent employee-driven innovation. Existing research has often examined individual predictors of innovative behavior in isolation, such as leadership style, job characteristics, or personality traits. However, innovation is a socially embedded process that depends on relational exchanges, trust, and knowledge flow within organizations. The absence of an integrated framework that simultaneously considers organizational commitment, knowledge sharing, and psychological safety limits our understanding of how internal organizational dynamics jointly influence innovative behavior.

Moreover, most empirical studies on innovative behavior have been conducted in Western contexts. Cultural differences may shape employees' willingness to share knowledge, express dissenting opinions, or engage in risk-taking behaviors. In collectivist cultures such as China, relational harmony and hierarchical structures may influence psychological safety perceptions and knowledge-sharing practices differently compared to Western settings. Therefore, examining these constructs within the Chinese SME context contributes to cross-cultural organizational research.

The significance of this study is threefold. First, it extends theoretical understanding by integrating Social Exchange Theory (Stranzl, 2024) with psychological safety theory (Edmondson, 1999) to explain innovative behavior. Second, it contributes empirical evidence from Beijing SMEs, enriching the literature on innovation in emerging economies. Third, it offers practical insights for SME managers seeking to foster a supportive climate that enhances employee commitment, encourages knowledge sharing, and reduces interpersonal risk barriers to innovation.

By addressing the aforementioned research lacunae, the present investigation advances an integrated conceptual framework that explicates the mechanisms whereby organizational commitment translates into innovative behavioral outcomes, thereby contributing to both theoretical development in organizational scholarship and practical guidance for managerial application.

## 2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

### 2.1 Organizational Commitment and Innovative Behavior

Organizational commitment is extensively acknowledged as a significant predictor of discretionary workplace behaviors, including innovative behavior (Meyer & Allen, 1991). This construct captures the degree to which employees identify with, participate in, and maintain emotional attachment to their organization. Among its three dimensions—

continuance, and normative commitment–affective commitment demonstrates the strongest association with proactive behaviors, reflecting intrinsic motivation to contribute beyond prescribed role requirements (Meyer et al., 2002).

Social Exchange Theory (Stranzl, 2024) posits that employees reciprocate organizational inducements through favorable attitudes and behaviors. Emotionally committed employees are consequently predisposed to engage in innovative behavior as a means of reciprocating organizational support. Empirical evidence corroborates this proposition; Lu et al. (2022) demonstrated that organizational commitment positively predicts innovative work behavior among employees in Chinese SMEs.

***Hypothesis 1 (H1): Organizational commitment positively influences innovative behavior.***

## **2.2 Organizational Commitment and Knowledge Sharing**

Knowledge sharing is the voluntary exchange of task-relevant information, expertise, and experiences among employees (Bock et al., 2005). High organizational commitment can enhance employees' willingness to share knowledge because committed employees are motivated to support organizational goals and help colleagues succeed.

Several studies have demonstrated that committed employees are more likely to contribute their tacit knowledge and participate in collaborative knowledge processes (Lin, 2007; Yang & Farn, 2009). In SMEs, where formal knowledge management systems are often limited, voluntary knowledge sharing is particularly critical for innovation.

***Hypothesis 2 (H2): Organizational commitment positively influences knowledge sharing.***

## **2.3 Knowledge Sharing and Innovative Behavior**

Knowledge sharing facilitates idea recombination and collective problem-solving, fostering innovation (Nonaka, 1998). Employees sharing knowledge provide diverse perspectives, accelerate learning, and support idea generation and implementation.

Empirical studies suggest that knowledge sharing is a significant predictor of innovative behavior. Wang and Noe (2010), for example, showed that knowledge sharing behaviors positively impact both idea generation and implementation within teams.

***Hypothesis 3 (H3): Knowledge sharing positively influences innovative behavior.***

## **2.4 Psychological Safety and Innovative Behavior**

Psychological safety denotes the shared conviction that the workplace permits interpersonal risk-taking, encompassing behaviors such as proposing novel ideas and challenging established practices (Edmondson, 1999). Such environments foster experimentation, open dialogue, and learning from failure—processes fundamental to innovation.

Research has confirmed that psychological safety positively influences innovative behavior. For instance, Carmeli et al. (2008) found that teams with higher psychological safety exhibited greater idea generation and implementation, emphasizing the role of safe interpersonal climates in fostering innovation.

***Hypothesis 4 (H4): Psychological safety positively influences innovative behavior.***

## **2.5 Mediation of Knowledge Sharing and Psychological Safety**

Knowledge sharing and psychological safety are posited as mediating variables in the relationship between organizational commitment and innovative behavior. Employees characterized by strong organizational commitment demonstrate enhanced propensity for knowledge sharing, which subsequently facilitates innovative outcomes (Lin, 2007). Concurrently, organizational commitment may amplify perceptions of psychological safety, thereby augmenting employees' willingness to both propose and implement novel ideas (Edmondson, 1999; Carmeli et al., 2008).

***Hypothesis 5 (H5): Knowledge sharing mediates the relationship between organizational commitment and innovative behavior.***

***Hypothesis 6 (H6): Psychological safety mediates the relationship between organizational commitment and innovative behavior.***

## **2.6 Theoretical Framework**

Based on the above discussion, this study integrates Social Exchange Theory (Stranzl, 2024) and Psychological Safety Theory (Edmondson, 1999) to develop a conceptual model in which organizational commitment influences innovative

behavior directly and indirectly through knowledge sharing and psychological safety. The proposed framework is illustrated in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Conceptual Model

This integrated model forms the theoretical basis for the subsequent simulation study, guiding the design of methodology, measurement, and analysis.

## 1. Methodology

### 3.1 Research Design

This study employs a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to examine the relationships among organizational commitment, knowledge sharing, psychological safety, and innovative behavior among employees in SMEs located in Beijing Province. A cross-sectional survey method allows the collection of data from a large number of participants within a limited timeframe, facilitating the examination of hypothesized relationships.

The study integrates Social Exchange Theory (Stranzl, 2024) and Psychological Safety Theory (Edmondson, 1999) to conceptualize the direct and indirect effects of organizational commitment on innovative behavior through knowledge sharing and psychological safety.

### 3.2 Participant and Sampling Procedure

The target population consists of employees working in SMEs across various industries in Beijing Province. Participants were recruited using a combination of purposive and convenience sampling to ensure a diverse representation in terms of gender, age, educational background, and job tenure.

A total of 358 employees participated in the study. The sample comprised 46% male and 54% female employees, with an average age of 32.4 years (SD = 6.2). Educational levels were distributed as follows: high school or below (12%), associate degree (20%), bachelor’s degree (52%), and master’s degree or above (16%).

### 3.3 Instrument and Measures

All variables were measured using established, validated instruments adapted for the Chinese context. A five-point Likert scale was employed (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree).

**Table 1.** Variable

Variable	Scale Source	Number of Items
Organizational commitment	Meyer & Allen (1991)	12
Knowledge sharing	Bock et al. (2005)	11
Psychological safety	Edmondson (1999)	7
Innovative behavior	Janssen (2000)	9

Organizational commitment reflects employees’ affective, continuance, and normative attachment to the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Knowledge sharing captures the frequency and quality of information and expertise exchange among colleagues (Bock et al., 2005). Psychological safety assesses employees’ perceptions of risk-taking support and interpersonal trust in the workplace (Edmondson, 1999). Innovative behavior measures the intentional generation, promotion, and implementation of new ideas at work (Janssen, 2000).

### 3.4 Data Analysis Strategy

Data analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with AMOS 26.0. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was first performed to assess the reliability and validity of the constructs. Internal consistency was evaluated using

Cronbach’s alpha and composite reliability (CR), while convergent validity was assessed through Average Variance Extracted (AVE).

Structural model fit was evaluated using multiple indices, including  $\chi^2/df$ , Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). Hypothesized direct and indirect relationships were examined, and mediation effects were tested using bootstrap resampling with 5,000 iterations to obtain bias-corrected confidence intervals (Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

## 4. Result

### 4.1 Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlations for all study variables are presented in Table 1. The mean scores indicate moderate to high levels of organizational commitment (M = 3.85, SD = 0.62), knowledge sharing (M = 3.78, SD = 0.65), psychological safety (M = 3.92, SD = 0.60), and innovative behavior (M = 3.88, SD = 0.63).

Pearson correlation coefficients suggest significant positive relationships among all variables. Organizational commitment was positively correlated with knowledge sharing (r = 0.51, p < 0.001), psychological safety (r = 0.44, p < 0.001), and innovative behavior (r = 0.32, p < 0.001). Knowledge sharing and psychological safety were both positively associated with innovative behavior (r = 0.45 and 0.43, respectively, p < 0.001). These results support the hypothesized directionality of the relationships.

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics and correlations

Variabl	M	SD	1	2	3	4
Organizational commitment	3.85	0.62	—			
Knowledge sharing	3.78	0.65	0.51**	—		
Psychological safety	3.92	0.60	0.44**	0.39**	—	
Innovative behavior	3.88	0.63	0.32**	0.45**	0.43**	—

Note: \*\*p < 0.001

### 4.2 Reliability and Validity

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted to evaluate the measurement model. The four-factor model exhibited a satisfactory fit:  $\chi^2/df = 1.97$ , CFI = 0.953, TLI = 0.946, RMSEA = 0.056.

All constructs demonstrated strong internal consistency: Cronbach’s alpha ranged from 0.86 to 0.91, and composite reliability (CR) ranged from 0.88 to 0.92. Convergent validity was supported, with average variance extracted (AVE) values exceeding 0.60 for all constructs. Discriminant validity was also confirmed, as the square roots of AVEs were greater than the inter-construct correlations.

**Table 3.** Reliability and validity

Construct	No. of items	Cronbach’s $\alpha$	CR	AVE
Organizational commitment	12	0.90	0.92	0.65
Knowledge sharing	11	0.88	0.90	0.62
Psychological safety	7	0.86	0.88	0.61
Innovative behavior	9	0.91	0.92	0.66

### 4.3 Structural Model and Hypotheses Testing

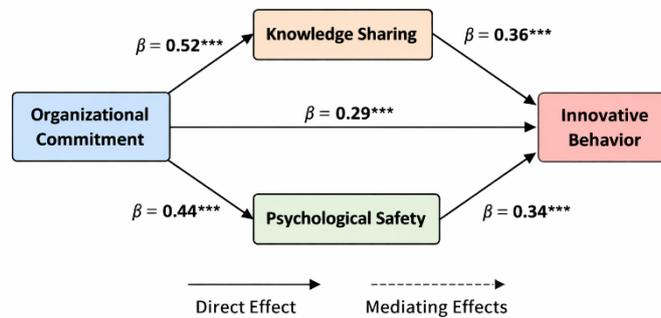
The structural model showed satisfactory fit:  $\chi^2/df = 2.05$ , CFI = 0.951, TLI = 0.944, RMSEA = 0.058. Path coefficients are summarized in Table 3 and Figure 2.

- H1: Organizational commitment → Innovative behavior ( $\beta = 0.29$ , p < 0.001) — supported
- H2: Organizational commitment → Knowledge sharing ( $\beta = 0.52$ , p < 0.001) — supported
- H3: Knowledge sharing → Innovative behavior ( $\beta = 0.36$ , p < 0.001) — supported
- H4: Psychological safety → Innovative behavior ( $\beta = 0.34$ , p < 0.001) — supported

**Table 4.** Structural path coefficients

Hypothesis	Path	$\beta$	SE	p	Supported?
H1	OC → IB	0.29	0.05	<0.001	Yes
H2	OC → KS	0.52	0.04	<0.001	Yes
H3	KS → IB	0.36	0.05	<0.001	Yes
H4	PS → IB	0.34	0.04	<0.001	Yes

**Figure 2.** Structural Model



#### 4.4 Mediation Analysis

Bootstrap analysis (5,000 resamples) was conducted to test the mediating effects of knowledge sharing and psychological safety. Results indicated significant indirect effects:

OC → KS → IB:  $\beta = 0.19$ , 95% CI [0.12, 0.27] — partial mediation

OC → PS → IB:  $\beta = 0.15$ , 95% CI [0.08, 0.22] — partial mediation

These findings suggest that organizational commitment influences innovative behavior both directly and indirectly via knowledge sharing and psychological safety, consistent with the hypothesized model.

### 5. Discussion

#### 5.1 Summary of Key Finding

The present study examined the effects of organizational commitment, knowledge sharing, and psychological safety on innovative behavior among employees in SMEs in Beijing Province. The findings indicate that organizational commitment positively influences innovative behavior both directly and indirectly through knowledge sharing and psychological safety. Knowledge sharing and psychological safety each served as partial mediators in the relationship between organizational commitment and innovative behavior.

These results support the hypothesized model and provide empirical evidence for the integrated effects of organizational commitment, knowledge sharing, and psychological safety on employee-driven innovation in SMEs.

#### 5.2 Comparison with Previous Literature

Consistent with Social Exchange Theory (Stranzl, 2024), employees with higher organizational commitment were more willing to engage in innovative behaviors, likely as a form of reciprocation for perceived organizational support. This aligns with prior studies indicating that committed employees are more likely to undertake discretionary behaviors that benefit the organization (Lu et al, 2022; Meyer & Allen, 1997).

Knowledge sharing was found to significantly predict innovative behavior, corroborating previous research (Wang & Noe, 2010; Nonaka, 1998). By exchanging information, skills, and experiences, employees are able to recombine knowledge and generate novel solutions, which is particularly critical in SMEs with limited formal R&D resources.

Psychological safety emerged as a significant explanatory factor, aligning with Edmondson's (1999) theoretical framework. Employees operating within interpersonally safe environments demonstrate greater willingness to propose, discuss, and implement novel ideas, unconstrained by apprehension regarding negative repercussions. Research conducted in team and organizational settings has similarly underscored psychological safety's importance for facilitating learning and innovation (Carmeli et al., 2008).

The mediating functions of knowledge sharing and psychological safety extend prior scholarship by elucidating the mechanisms through which organizational commitment translates into innovative behavior. Committed employees not only possess heightened motivation to act but also contribute to cultivating a collaborative climate and supportive interpersonal environment, thereby amplifying their innovative capacity.

### **5.3 Theoretical Implications**

This study contributes to organizational behavior literature in several ways. First, it integrates Social Exchange Theory and Psychological Safety Theory to construct a comprehensive model explaining innovative behavior in SMEs, addressing a gap in micro-level innovation research.

Second, the study highlights the importance of both affective commitment and relational processes (knowledge sharing, psychological safety) in driving employee innovation. While prior studies have examined these variables separately, this study provides evidence for their joint effects, supporting an integrated approach to understanding innovation in SMEs.

Finally, the results contribute to cross-cultural organizational research by providing empirical evidence from the Chinese SME context, where collectivist norms and hierarchical structures may influence psychological safety and knowledge-sharing behaviors differently compared to Western settings.

### **5.4 Practical Implications**

The findings offer actionable insights for SME managers seeking to enhance innovation. First, fostering organizational commitment through supportive HR practices, fair treatment, and career development opportunities can directly and indirectly boost employee innovation.

Second, creating psychologically safe environments by encouraging open communication, tolerating mistakes, and providing constructive feedback enables employees to propose and implement novel ideas without fear of negative repercussions.

Collectively, these strategies suggest that SMEs should simultaneously focus on enhancing commitment, knowledge sharing, and psychological safety to cultivate a sustainable innovation-oriented workforce.

## **6. Limitation and Future Research**

### **6.1 Limitations**

Despite its contributions, the study has several limitations. First, the adoption of a cross-sectional research design precludes definitive conclusions regarding causal relationships among the studied variables. Although the hypothesized associations are theoretically derived, longitudinal or experimental research designs would afford stronger evidential basis for establishing causal directionality.

Second, the sampling frame was restricted to SMEs situated within Beijing Province, thereby potentially limiting the external validity of findings to alternative geographical regions or organizational contexts. Divergent cultural norms, economic conditions, and industry-specific characteristics may moderate the observed relationships across different settings.

Third, the exclusive reliance on self-report measurement introduces susceptibility to common method bias. Subsequent research should consider methodological triangulation, incorporating supervisor assessments or objective performance metrics to complement employee self-reports and thereby mitigate potential bias.

### **6.2 Future Research Directions**

Future research could address these limitations by employing longitudinal designs to examine the temporal dynamics of organizational commitment, knowledge sharing, psychological safety, and innovative behavior.

Expanding the study to include SMEs in diverse regions or countries would enable cross-cultural comparisons and enhance the generalizability of findings.

Additionally, exploring potential moderating variables, such as leadership style, team diversity, or organizational climate, may provide a more nuanced understanding of the conditions under which organizational commitment translates into innovative behavior.

Finally, integrating objective innovation outcomes, such as the number of patents, new product launches, or process improvements, could complement self-reported measures and strengthen the robustness of findings.

## **7 Conclusion**

This study examined the impact of organizational commitment, knowledge sharing, and psychological safety on innovative behavior among employees in SMEs in Beijing Province. Using validated measurement instruments and

structural equation modeling, the study confirmed that organizational commitment positively influences innovative behavior both directly and indirectly through knowledge sharing and psychological safety.

The findings empirically support integrating Social Exchange Theory and Psychological Safety Theory to understand employee innovation. Committed employees engage in knowledge sharing and perceive higher psychological safety, facilitating novel idea generation, promotion, and implementation. These results highlight relational and psychological mechanisms in SME innovation.

From a theoretical perspective, the study extends the literature by demonstrating the joint effects of organizational commitment, knowledge sharing, and psychological safety on innovative behavior, and by revealing the mediating mechanisms through which commitment translates into innovation. This contributes to micro-level innovation research, particularly in the context of Chinese SMEs.

From a practical standpoint, the study suggests actionable strategies for SME managers and HR practitioners. Promoting organizational commitment through supportive policies, enhancing knowledge-sharing culture, and fostering psychologically safe environments can collectively enhance employees' innovative capacities. Implementing these strategies may help SMEs achieve sustainable innovation and maintain competitive advantage in dynamic markets.

In conclusion, this study underscores the critical role of organizational commitment, knowledge sharing, and psychological safety in driving employee innovation in SMEs. Future research can build upon these findings by exploring longitudinal effects, cross-cultural generalizability, and potential moderating factors, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of the drivers of innovation.

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### Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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