

## Fostering academic excellence: The synergy of self-leadership, knowledge exchange, and innovative practices in higher education

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**Abstract:** This concept paper presents a comprehensive systematic literature review examining the interconnected roles of self-leadership, knowledge exchange, and innovative practices in enhancing academic performance within higher education institutions. The review synthesizes existing research to identify key themes and relationships, proposing a conceptual framework that integrates these elements. Following a rigorous protocol, including a thorough search strategy and clear inclusion criteria, the review analyzes selected studies to reveal the pivotal role of self-leadership in boosting academic staff performance through enhanced self-motivation and self-regulation. Furthermore, knowledge exchange and innovative practices emerge as crucial mediators in the relationship between self-leadership and academic excellence. The resulting conceptual framework highlights the interplay between these variables, suggesting potential pathways for higher education institutions to cultivate a culture of continuous improvement and innovation. This paper concludes by discussing theoretical and practical implications, emphasizing the need for institutions to prioritize the development of self-leadership skills, create supportive environments for knowledge exchange, and encourage innovative practices to elevate academic performance. The systematic literature review and proposed framework provide a foundation for future empirical research and offer valuable insights for academic leaders and policymakers seeking to enhance institutional effectiveness in higher education

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**Keywords:** *Academic performance; Higher education, Innovative practices; Knowledge exchange; Self-leadership.*

### 1. Introduction

The changing nature of higher education has made staff effectiveness one of the most critical factors in determining institutional quality and competitiveness (Lim et al., 2020, Abiddin, 2007). With academic institutions all seeking to excel in terms of education, research and social contributions; the performance/productivity gains of their faculty or staff have become paramount (Hasan & Kalidas, 2021, Abiddin, 2007). This has catalyzed researchers and professionals to examine the determinants of academic staff performance (Razzaq et al., 2019).

Recently, a number of studies have been concerned with the impact of self-leadership (e.g., Park et al. 2021a), knowledge sharing behavior and innovative work behaviors on performing better academically among academic staff as seen below Fig. The construct of self-leadership-viewed as a form of influence over and management by individuals, themselves (Neck & Houghton, 2006)-is regarded in the literature on individual level performance within organizations to be an important factor (e.g., Stewart et al., 2019). In academic settings, self-leadership has been associated with increased motivation and satisfaction at work (Breevaart et al., 2016).

Knowledge sharing, referring to the dissemination of data or thoughts in an organization, Wang & Noe (2010) maintains has also become a crucial determinant on the scholarly effectiveness Fullwood and Rowley 2017. Kim & Ju (2008) has argued that higher education institutions can generate intellectual

capital and improve the performance of staff by protecting a collaborative culture based on knowledge share. Similarly, innovative work behavior which includes the generation of new ideas and solutions for problems (Janssen, 2000) has been significantly linked to increased individual proactivity as well as overall organizational effectiveness in academic settings more broadly (Thurlings et al., 2015).

Even though there has been an increasing recognition of the significance of self-leadership, knowledge sharing and innovative behaviour as determinants of academic effectiveness (Asrar-ul-Haq & Anwar, 2018), a comprehensive insight into how these factors are intertwined together influencing overall staff performance is lacking. In response, this concept paper is intended to advance the field by conducting a systematic literature review on factors other than productivity and measuring their effects on the academic effectiveness of employees. This paper aims to provide academicians, policy maker and research scholars interested in improving the productivity of employees working in higher education institutions with a tool by synthesizing extant literature and proposing an integrated conceptual framework.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Self-Leadership and Employee Effectiveness

Recent studies have highlighted the significant role of self-leadership in enhancing employee effectiveness in various organizational contexts, including academia. Bäcklander (2019) conducted a qualitative study exploring the experiences of academic staff in relation to self-leadership and found that individuals who engaged in self-leadership practices, such as self-goal setting and self-motivation, reported higher levels of job satisfaction and perceived effectiveness. Similarly, Ngatno and Arifin (2020) investigated the impact of self-leadership on the performance of university lecturers in Indonesia and discovered a positive and significant relationship between self-leadership and teaching effectiveness. The authors argued that self-leadership enables academic staff to take ownership of their professional development, leading to improved performance outcomes.

In a cross-sectional study, Kim and Park (2021) examined the mediating role of self-leadership in the relationship between organizational support and employee effectiveness among academic staff in South Korea. The findings revealed that self-leadership partially mediated the relationship, suggesting that organizational support can foster self-leadership, which in turn enhances employee effectiveness. Moreover, Susilowati et al. (2022) explored the impact of self-leadership on the innovative work behavior and job performance of university lecturers in Indonesia during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study found that self-leadership had a positive and significant effect on both innovative work behavior and job performance, highlighting the importance of self-leadership in enabling academic staff to adapt and thrive in challenging circumstances.

### 2.2. Knowledge Sharing and Employee Effectiveness

Knowledge sharing has been identified as a crucial factor influencing employee effectiveness in academia. García-Sánchez et al. (2019) investigated the relationship between knowledge sharing and research performance among academic staff in Spanish universities. The study found that knowledge sharing had a positive and significant impact on research performance, emphasizing the importance of fostering a culture of knowledge exchange in academia. Similarly, Mutonyi et al. (2020) explored the role of knowledge sharing in enhancing the teaching effectiveness of university lecturers in Uganda. The findings revealed that knowledge sharing, particularly through collaborative teaching and peer learning, significantly contributed to the improvement of teaching practices and student learning outcomes.

In a qualitative study, Zheng et al. (2021) examined the factors that influence knowledge sharing behavior among academic staff in Chinese universities. The authors identified several key factors, including organizational culture, leadership support, and individual motivation, that play a crucial role in promoting knowledge sharing in academia. Furthermore, Nguyen and Malik (2022) investigated the impact of knowledge sharing on the innovative work behavior and job performance of academic staff in

Vietnam. The study found that knowledge sharing had a positive and significant effect on both innovative work behavior and job performance, highlighting the importance of knowledge sharing in driving innovation and effectiveness in academia.

### *2.3. Innovative Work Behavior and Employee Effectiveness*

Innovative work behavior has been recognized as a key driver of employee effectiveness in academia. Javed et al. (2019) examined the relationship between transformational leadership, innovative work behavior, and job performance among academic staff in Pakistani universities. The study found that transformational leadership had a positive and significant impact on innovative work behavior, which in turn enhanced job performance. The authors argued that transformational leaders can create a supportive environment that encourages academic staff to engage in innovative practices, leading to improved effectiveness.

Waheed et al. (2020) investigated the antecedents and consequences of innovative work behavior among university teachers in China. The study identified several factors, including psychological empowerment, organizational support, and knowledge sharing, that positively influenced innovative work behavior. Moreover, the findings revealed that innovative work behavior had a positive and significant impact on teaching effectiveness and research performance, demonstrating the importance of fostering innovation in academia.

In a longitudinal study, Supriadi et al. (2023) explored the impact of innovative work behavior on the job performance and career success of academic staff in Indonesian universities over a three-year period. The findings showed that innovative work behavior had a positive and significant effect on both job performance and career success, highlighting the long-term benefits of engaging in innovative practices in academia. The authors suggested that universities should prioritize the development of innovative work behavior among academic staff to enhance their effectiveness and support their career growth.

### *2.4. Interrelationships and Conceptual Frameworks*

While the aforementioned studies have provided valuable insights into the impact of self-leadership, knowledge sharing, and innovative work behavior on employee effectiveness in academia, there is still a need for a comprehensive understanding of how these factors interrelate and contribute to overall performance. A few recent studies have attempted to address this gap by proposing conceptual frameworks that integrate these concepts.

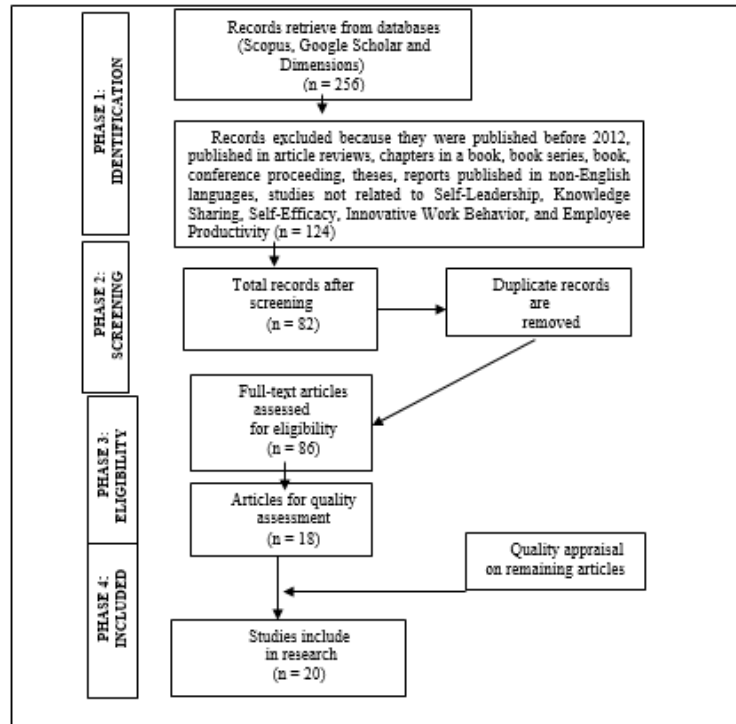
Amarulloh et al. (2021) developed a conceptual model that explored the relationships between self-leadership, knowledge sharing, innovative work behavior, and job performance among academic staff in Indonesian universities. The authors hypothesized that self-leadership would have a positive impact on knowledge sharing and innovative work behavior, which in turn would enhance job performance. They also proposed that knowledge sharing would mediate the relationship between self-leadership and innovative work behavior.

Similarly, Kusumawardani and Pratama (2024) proposed a conceptual framework that examined the interrelationships between transformational leadership, self-leadership, knowledge sharing, innovative work behavior, and employee effectiveness in the context of higher education in Indonesia. The authors suggested that transformational leadership would foster self-leadership and knowledge sharing, which would subsequently influence innovative work behavior and employee effectiveness. They also hypothesized that self-leadership and knowledge sharing would mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and innovative work behavior.

These conceptual frameworks provide a foundation for further empirical research to validate the proposed relationships and shed light on the complex dynamics between self-leadership, knowledge sharing, innovative work behavior, and employee effectiveness in academia. Future studies could test these frameworks in different cultural and institutional contexts, as well as explore potential moderating factors that may influence the relationships between these variables.

### 3. Methods

The Literature reviews play a crucial role in enhancing understanding and expertise within a specific area of study by comprehensively exploring existing knowledge and identifying trends that require further investigation. To ensure the reliability and excellence of a literature review, a systematic literature review (SLR) is considered the gold standard due to its meticulousness and rigor. Therefore, this research adopts the SLR approach to discuss key components such as the review process, search keywords, resources utilized, and study selection, showed in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.**  
Systematic literature review process steps.

A hallmark of a high-quality literature review is its ability to demonstrate the appropriate scope of the study, methodological robustness, and clarity in communicating findings (Levy and Ellis 2006). This is achieved through a structured and systematic review process that serves as the methodological framework for the literature review. In the study presented in this paper, a review process inspired by various sources has been utilized. The process details the systematic steps involved in conducting a thorough literature review or meta-analysis.

The initial phase involves identifying relevant records from databases such as Scopus, Google Scholar, and Dimensions, resulting in a total of 256 records. The pool is then refined through the application of exclusion criteria, leading to the exclusion of 124 records based on factors like publication date, language, and topic relevance. Following screening, 82 records are retained, and duplicate entries are removed. Subsequent eligibility assessment entails a comprehensive examination of full-text articles (86 in total), resulting in the selection of one article for further quality evaluation. The quality appraisal ensures that the selected studies meet specific inclusion criteria. Ultimately, 20 studies are included in the research. The final step involves a detailed quality appraisal of the remaining articles to ensure the reliability and validity of the included studies. This systematic and strategic approach guarantees a rigorous and transparent process, enhancing the robustness of the research findings.

### 3.1. Phase 1 Identification

The initial stage of the process involves conducting a thorough exploration for synonyms, related terms, and alternative phrases linked to the primary keywords of this study, namely LTO self-leadership, knowledge sharing, self-efficacy, innovative work behavior, and employee productivity. To enrich the main keywords, the researchers consulted two key resources: an online thesaurus and relevant keywords from prior studies. To minimize potential bias in retrieval, consistent with the recommendations of Durach et al. (2017), multiple databases were utilized. Specifically, two core databases (Scopus and Google Scholar) along with one supplementary database (Dimensions) were employed to identify pertinent literature. A primary reason for prioritizing Scopus as the main database is its comprehensive coverage of over 70 million records, encompassing journals from various fields. Notably, Scopus is lauded for its quality control processes, extensive full-text search capabilities, generous search string length limit, advanced search functionalities, and reproducibility of search outcomes across diverse settings. The selected sources included works by Gusenbauer and Haddaway (2020) and Martin-Martin et al. (2018). Google Scholar was designated as a primary database for several reasons. Firstly, it provides a vast array of documents, thereby expanding the scope of available sources for examination. Secondly, it offers a wealth of content related to social sciences, arts, and humanities. Thirdly, Google Scholar presents a diverse range of publication formats, encompassing proceedings, books, theses, book chapters, and unpublished materials, all easily accessible (Gusenbauer & Haddaway, 2020).

### 3.2. Phase 2 Screening Process

The 256 items identified were screened meticulously. Articles from Scopus and Dimensions databases underwent an automated screening process using the available 'limit to' feature. In contrast, articles from Google Scholar had a semi-automated screening due to the limited 'limit to' functionality restricted to publication year. Selection of papers was guided by the pre-defined research question (Kitchenham & Charters, 2007), ensuring relevance to the study. Filtering aided in narrowing down associated publications (Okoli, 2015). A publication timeline from 2000 to 2021, spanning 20 years, was chosen to capture a significant number of publications suitable for a systematic literature review. This timeframe aligns with the study's maturity concept proposed by Kraus et al. (2020) and Alexander (2020). The research focused on Self-Leadership, Knowledge Sharing, Self-Efficacy, Innovative Work Behavior, and Employee Productivity. Articles were selected based on publication in an indexed journal to maintain high quality. For Google Scholar and Dimensions databases, publications from journals listed in Scopus were manually examined for selection.

### 3.3. Phase 3: Eligibility Criteria

Conducting eligibility assessments involves a detailed evaluation of the full-text articles obtained following the initial screening. From the original pool of 86 articles, one piece is chosen for further assessment based on pre-established criteria. These criteria encompass aspects such as relevance to the research query, alignment with the study's emphasis on social sciences, self-leadership, knowledge sharing, work behavior, and staff productivity according to publication guidelines. The selected article undergoes a thorough evaluation to determine its appropriateness for inclusion in the research. This stage is crucial to verifying that the chosen articles satisfy the specific prerequisites outlined in the research protocol, thereby enhancing the overall quality and significance of the studies included in subsequent phases of the systematic review or meta-analysis.

### 3.4. Phase 4: Data Extraction and Analysis

An analysis will be performed to qualitatively synthesize the findings, identifying patterns, themes, and insights related to self-leadership, knowledge sharing, self-efficacy, innovative work behavior, and employee productivity in higher education settings. The analysis will elaborate on the implications of

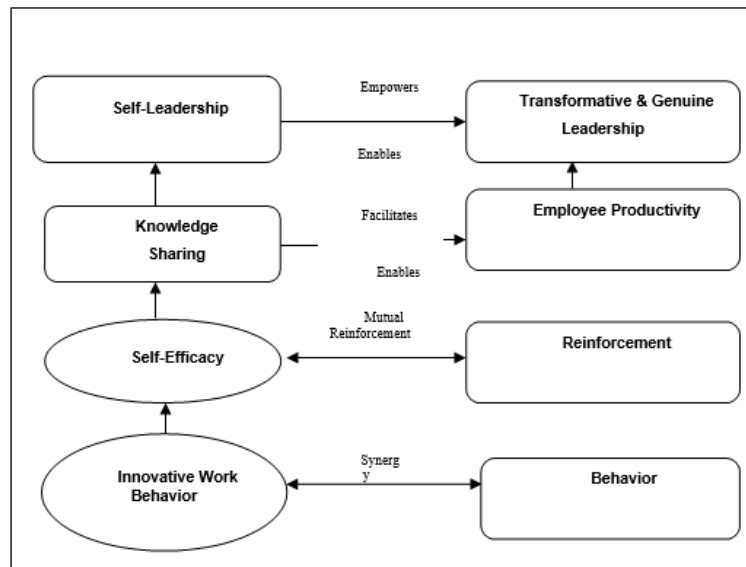
these relationships and their importance in cultivating a supportive environment for academic advancement and excellence. The systematic review of the literature will offer valuable insights supported by evidence for academic leaders, administrators, and educators, shedding light on the intricate dynamics of self-leadership and knowledge sharing and their impact on individual and institutional outcomes within the higher education domain. After completing the assessment of eligibility, the subsequent pivotal stages in the systematic review included data extraction and analysis as suggested by Okoli (2015). Data extraction was carried out from the 20 studies incorporated in the analysis, identified through a comprehensive search across databases like Scopus, Google Scholar, and Dimensions. The researchers diligently recorded essential particulars such as study attributes, research methodology, and key findings. The compiled data encompassed various criteria like publication year, sample size, study design, and outcome assessment measures, enabling a detailed and comprehensive overview of the selected studies. To ensure strict adherence to the study protocol, the retrieved data was then synthesized and organized for further scrutiny. The meta-analysis or synthesis employed statistical tools or qualitative approaches, depending on the study nature, aiming to identify patterns, trends, and recurring themes among the gathered papers, facilitating an in-depth understanding of the research landscape. This methodology supports the generation of significant insights and the formulation of evidence-based conclusions.

#### 4. Findings

The data analysis highlights the importance of various factors in fostering innovation within organizations, including leadership, self-leadership, self-efficacy, knowledge sharing, and innovative work behavior. The findings suggest positive relationships between these factors, with transformational leadership, self-leadership, creative self-efficacy, entrepreneurial leadership, and learning orientation positively influencing innovative behavior. Knowledge sharing is also identified as a critical factor in enhancing performance and promoting innovation, especially in academic institutions. Effective leadership and management practices are essential for creating dynamic and adaptable innovation ecosystems within organizations. These practices involve clear communication of the innovation agenda, resource allocation, and learning from failure. However, it is important to recognize that while leadership and management practices are crucial, other factors such as individual skills, motivation, organizational culture, and resources also contribute to innovative work behavior.

Overemphasizing leadership and management practices as the sole drivers of innovation may undermine the importance and autonomy of individual employees. Research suggests that adopting a bottom-up approach to innovation, which empowers employees at all levels to contribute ideas and solutions, can lead to more sustainable and comprehensive innovation within organizations. Organizations should balance top-down leadership strategies with creating a culture that encourages and facilitates bottom-up innovation. It is essential to acknowledge that not all leadership and management styles are conducive to fostering innovation. Authoritarian leadership styles or micromanagement can stifle creativity and discourage risk-taking, hindering the very innovation that organizations seek to promote. Therefore, a holistic perspective that considers multiple factors is necessary to fully understand and encourage innovative work behavior in organizations, rather than solely focusing on leadership and management practices.

As a conclusion, the systematic literature review conducted aimed to delve into the intricate relationships among self-leadership, knowledge sharing, self-efficacy, innovative work behavior, and employee productivity within the context of higher education institutions. By meticulously selecting and analyzing 20 pertinent studies, the research methodology ensured a robust and credible foundation for the conclusions drawn. The rigorous examination of these studies revealed consistent patterns, pointing towards a direct and significant association between self-leadership and self-efficacy. This finding suggests that individuals who exhibit strong self-leadership capabilities are more likely to possess higher levels of self-efficacy, implying a greater belief in their own ability to successfully navigate challenges and achieve desired outcomes.



**Figure 2.**  
Transformative and genuine leadership fosters a supportive environment.

Furthermore, the systematic review shed light on the crucial link between knowledge sharing and enhanced employee productivity. The analysis of the selected studies highlighted the paramount importance of cultivating a culture of knowledge sharing within higher education institutions. When employees actively engage in the exchange of information, insights, and best practices, it creates a fertile ground for collective growth and improvement. This collaborative approach to knowledge dissemination has been shown to have a direct and positive impact on the productivity levels of staff members. By fostering an environment that encourages and facilitates the free flow of knowledge, higher education institutions can unlock the potential of their workforce and drive organizational success.

## 5. Discussion

The proposed framework, as depicted in Figure 2, illustrates the intricate relationships between self-leadership, knowledge sharing, self-efficacy, innovative work behavior, employee productivity, and the development of transformative and genuine leadership within the context of higher education. The central component, represented by a rounded rectangle, is "Transformative & Genuine Leadership," which is the desired outcome – a leadership approach that inspires and empowers individuals to reach their full potential while maintaining authenticity and integrity. The framework emphasizes the importance of self-leadership on the left side, with a rectangular box labeled "Self-Leadership" pointing an arrow towards the central component, indicating that strong self-leadership qualities provide employees with the motivation, self-control, and ability to set goals necessary for success. An oval shape representing "Self-Efficacy" is connected to "Self-Leadership" by a double-headed arrow, highlighting the reciprocal relationship between these concepts.

On the right side of the framework, knowledge sharing is prioritized, with a rectangular box labeled "Knowledge Sharing" pointing an arrow towards the central component, signifying that fostering open communication and facilitating the exchange of information creates a collaborative environment where employees can learn from each other and enhance their existing skills. An oval shape representing "Innovative Work Behavior" is connected to "Knowledge Sharing" by a double-headed arrow, emphasizing the synergistic relationship between knowledge sharing and the demonstration of innovative work behavior. The element "Employee Productivity" is located at the bottom of the

framework, with arrows pointing upward from both the "Empowers" and "Facilitates" arrows, indicating that the implementation of self-leadership and knowledge sharing strategies ultimately leads to increased employee productivity.

Several notable studies have provided valuable insights into the relationships between leadership, self-efficacy, knowledge sharing, and innovative work behavior within higher education institutions. Peng et al. (2018) explored the indirect impact of professors' transformational leadership on students' employability, while Stewart et al. (2010) highlighted the significant influence of self-leadership on individuals' perceptions of their abilities. Ibus and Ismail (2018) presented a conceptual framework emphasizing the mediating role of self-efficacy in the relationships between self-leadership, knowledge sharing, and innovative work behavior. Asurakkody et al. (2020) investigated the effects of knowledge sharing behavior on innovative work behavior, considering the mediating role of self-leadership, while Vu and Yazdani (2021) examined the impact of transformational leadership on individual academic performance through the lens of knowledge sharing.

Javed et al. (2021) explored the role of affective commitment as a mediator in the relationship between creative self-efficacy, authentic leadership, and innovative behavior among academic staff, providing valuable insights into the complex interrelationships within higher education institutions. Various studies have specifically examined the relationship between knowledge sharing and innovative work behavior, with Rushud (2021) investigating the determinants of knowledge-sharing behavior among academics and Asurakkody et al. (2020) studying the impact of knowledge sharing on innovative work behavior in nursing students, introducing self-leadership as a mediating variable. These findings emphasized the importance of leadership, particularly transformational and authentic leadership, in influencing self-efficacy, knowledge sharing, and ultimately, innovative work behavior.

The role of self-leadership has been identified as crucial in facilitating knowledge sharing and promoting innovative work behavior, highlighting the importance of empowering individuals to take charge of their own leadership development. However, caution should be exercised when generalizing these findings to a broader context due to differences in research methods, criteria, and sample characteristics across various studies. Further research is recommended to enhance the study's findings by incorporating standardized measures and conducting a comprehensive examination of contextual factors that influence the complex relationships within higher education institutions. It is essential to carefully consider the evolving academic landscape between 2008 and 2023 to ensure its relevance and applicability.

In conclusion, the collective findings underscore the importance of adopting a comprehensive and leadership-focused approach to foster innovation and productivity in academic settings. By promoting self-leadership, facilitating knowledge sharing, and nurturing self-efficacy, higher education institutions can create an environment that enables transformative and genuine leadership, ultimately leading to increased employee productivity and organizational success. The framework presented in Figure 2 serves as a valuable guide for understanding the complex interplay between these key factors and provides a foundation for further research and practical applications in the field of higher education leadership and innovation.

## 6. Conclusion

The systematic literature review has provided valuable insights into the complex interplay between self-leadership, knowledge sharing, self-efficacy, innovative work behavior, and employee productivity within higher education institutions. The findings underscore the importance of fostering a supportive and innovative work environment that encourages personal growth, collaboration, and creativity. By promoting self-leadership, facilitating knowledge sharing, and nurturing self-efficacy, academic institutions can create a culture that enables transformative and genuine leadership, ultimately leading to increased employee productivity and organizational success.

The review highlights the need for a comprehensive approach to creating a thriving academic environment, one that recognizes the interdependence of these key factors. Higher education



institutions should prioritize the development of targeted interventions and programs that enhance self-leadership skills, encourage knowledge sharing practices, and promote innovative work behaviors among faculty and staff. By investing in the growth and empowerment of their human capital, academic institutions can unlock the full potential of their workforce, driving innovation, and achieving a competitive edge in an increasingly dynamic and challenging landscape. Further research exploring the contextual factors and moderating variables within higher education institutions will provide valuable insights for tailoring strategies to the unique needs and characteristics of each organization, ultimately contributing to the advancement of higher education and the success of its stakeholders.

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