

Ambidextrous Organizational Culture and Psychological Safety: Encourage Innovative Work Behavior of Higher Education Lecturers in Indonesia

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
Submitted: 17-04-2025 Final Revised: 24-04-2025 Accepted: 28-04-2025 Published: 29-04-2025	Rapid global change requires organizations, including universities, to innovate in producing new ideas and adapting to a dynamic environment. Lecturer innovation in research, community service, and learning methods is the key to increasing competitiveness and will produce skilled lecturers. Lecturers are crucial in encouraging innovative behavior that supports academic and research progress. This research explores the influence of ambidextrous culture as an environmental factor on lecturers' innovative work behavior, with psychological safety as a mediating variable. This research uses a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional research design. The number of participants in this research was 107 PTN lecturers in Indonesia using a sampling technique, namely convenience sampling. Hypothesis testing using SPSS version 27 software with Hayes' process model 4. The results of the study found that ambidextrous organizational culture has a positive and significant influence on innovative work behavior with results ($\beta = 0.702$, $p < 0.001$), but the mediating role psychological safety does not play a role in the indirect relationship between ambidextrous organizational culture on innovative work behavior and results ($\beta = 0.088$, $p > 0.153$) with the confidence interval value (95% CI) (LL=-0.033, UL=0.209) including zero, indicating that this mediation effect is not proven.
	Keywords: Ambidextrous organizational culture, innovative work behavior, lecturers, psychological safety

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Introduction

The accelerating pace of global change forces organizations to innovate and generate new ideas and expertise in dealing with dynamically changing external and internal environments. The world of higher education, especially lecturers, has a crucial role in developing new knowledge, theories, practices, and technologies. This contribution can be achieved through innovative work behavior that can encourage academic and research progress (Salam & Senin, 2022). In the higher education sector, lecturers are not only responsible for imparting knowledge but also for carrying

out other tasks, such as research, community service, and developing curricula and teaching methods that are in line with the needs and developments of the times (Cremin & Chappell, 2021).

Innovative work behavior of lecturers is an important element in ensuring that universities can adapt to global changes and remain relevant in contributing new knowledge (Yean, 2016). Lecturers with innovative work behavior tend to be open to new findings and brave in taking risks, especially in applying and implementing new ideas in the learning process. Then research, which is the duty of lecturers in realizing the tridharma and providing solutions to contemporary challenges in the world of education, is also a form of work innovation behavior that lecturers do (Javed et al., 2020). In conducting research, lecturers are also always involved in collaboration between disciplines. Collaboration between disciplines can produce very diverse ideas in solving a problem, which can produce innovations (Hadi et al., 2023).

The inability of lecturers to innovate can significantly impact the quality of education and the development of institutions. Innovation in work is a key element in improving the quality of learning, producing relevant research, and creating innovative solutions to the challenges facing higher education. When lecturers are unable to provide new ideas, it will be difficult for institutions to adapt to rapid social, technological, and economic changes (Ainslie & Huffman, 2019; L. Da Xu, 2020). This can result in stagnation in curriculum development, limited contribution to the advancement of science, and a lack of collaboration with industry or society. Low innovation also impacts the institution's reputation, reducing competitiveness at the national and global levels (Jirek, 2020; Mierzwa & Mierzwa, 2020).

In Indonesia alone, lecturers face several challenges in behaving innovatively, such as the level of education. Lecturers in Indonesia are dominated by those with a master's degree rather than a doctorate. Based on research by the Ministry of Education and Culture, the number of lecturers in Indonesia in 2023 will be 299,674, of which only 14.29%, or 42,825, have a doctoral qualification. This impacts the nation's competitiveness compared to other countries, especially in the world of education. This challenge also affects the ability of lecturers to behave innovatively. This is also supported by research conducted by Kong et al. (2022) which found that education is one of the factors related to innovation. Their research found that the higher the level of education, the more innovative work behavior is demonstrated.

As proposed by West and Farr, innovative work behavior explains that innovation is an action taken by individuals in creating, introducing, and implementing new ideas in organizations that will benefit the organization. Furthermore, Scott and Bruce explain innovation at the individual level as a process consisting of several stages, starting from identifying problems and finding new or existing ideas previously adopted. This innovation at the individual level is referred to as innovative work behavior, proposed by Scott and Bruce. Innovative work behavior is a deliberate behavior in creating, promoting, and realizing new ideas at work that will benefit individuals, organizations, and groups.

Organizational culture is one of the factors that can influence innovative work behavior. Organizational culture is included in the external factors that can motivate employees to realize innovative ideas. One culture that can encourage innovation is ambidextrous. Ambidextrous culture

is a culture that can balance between exploration and exploitation activities (Riga Pratiwi & Salendu, 2021). Ambidextrous culture has been proven to influence employees' innovative behavior. Research by Kandoth & Shekhar (2025) found that ambidextrous culture influences employees' innovative behavior. Ambidextrous culture combines exploration (searching for new ideas) and exploitation (optimizing resources) to support innovation. When employees feel that the organization encourages innovation and flexibility, they are more likely to behave innovatively, generate new ideas, propose improvements, and implement them for the advancement and competitiveness of the organization.

In a university environment, an ambidextrous culture has a positive influence, such as increasing the capacity for innovation at universities, in terms of learning methods, research, and management. This helps universities adapt to global demands and the evolving needs of students (AlKhamees & Durugbo, 2024). Based on research conducted by Kandoth & Shekhar (2025) They found that ambidextrous organizational culture is mediated by intrinsic motivation and influences innovative behavior. Based on this research, the relationship between ambidextrous culture and innovative behavior can occur indirectly, so it requires a mediating variable that bridges the relationship between the two. In this research, the mediating variable comes from an internal factor, intrinsic motivation.

Referring to the *self-determination theory*, it explains that employees will be motivated and bring out innovative behavior when their psychological needs are met. The focus of this theory explains how contextual factors will support the fulfillment of a person's basic psychological needs. The three basic needs are autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Based on this explanation, the ambidextrous culture, which is included in the contextual factor, can support the fulfillment of individual psychological needs. The ambidextrous culture creates a work environment that encourages autonomy, competence, and connectedness where individuals can integrate exploration and exploitation, support continuous learning, and strengthen connectedness through collaboration. An environment that supports exploration and exploitation will create a sense of psychological security, ultimately increasing innovative work behavior.

Previous research has proven that there is a relationship between organizational culture and innovative work behavior, but the relationship between ambidextrous culture and innovative work behavior is still limited, so this study aims to identify the dynamics between these variables further. The benefit of this research is that it contributes to the development of knowledge and impacts organizations regarding the importance of ambidextrous culture in supporting innovative work behavior in lecturers. Research conducted by J. Y. Lee et al. (2019) shows that ambidextrous organizational culture is closely related to employee performance, even after considering various organizational and individual variables. Further research by Kandoth & Shekhar (2025) found that perceptions of ambidextrous organizational culture directly contribute to increased innovative behavior. This finding aligns with research by Junni et al., which shows that ambidextrous organizations consistently positively impact employee performance and innovation.

Ambidextrous culture encompasses various concepts, such as search, risk-taking, experimentation, flexibility, discovery, and innovation (J. Y. Lee et al., 2019). On the other hand,

exploitation facilitates learning by refining existing knowledge and producing moderate but definite rewards. The balance between exploration and exploitation is important because both are directly related to innovative work behavior. This behavior involves a series of processes, from exploring opportunities, creating ideas, promoting, to realizing new ideas (Lambriex-Schmitz et al., 2020). Thus, an ambidextrous organizational culture positively impacts innovative work behavior, developing existing ideas, and creating something new. Based on this explanation, the hypothesis in this study

Hypothesis 1: *Ambidextrous organizational culture* positively affects innovative work behavior.

Furthermore, research conducted by Z. Xu & Suntrayuth (2022) found that *psychological safety* can mediate the relationship between *organizational innovative climate* and *innovative behavior*. The results of this study indicate that the impact of the innovative climate on innovative behavior is strongly influenced by the level of psychological safety perceived by employees. When employees feel psychologically safe, they are more likely to take interpersonal risks, such as coming up with new ideas or criticizing existing procedures, without fear of rejection or punishment. Based on this, this study will identify the same thing, but the organizational climate will be replaced by organizational culture, namely, ambidextrous culture, because organizational climate and organizational culture have the same position, namely, being in the organizational environment.

Psychological safety is a shared belief among team members that they can take interpersonal risks, such as speaking up, asking questions, or admitting mistakes, without fear of negative consequences (S. E. Lee & Seo, 2024; X. Liu et al., 2023). Research by Z. Xu & Suntrayuth (2022) shows that psychological safety mediates an organization's innovative climate and innovative work behavior. In addition, S. Liu et al. (2014) found that workers' perceptions of an ambidextrous organizational culture indirectly affect innovative work behavior through the personal variable of *psychological empowerment*, which can be further explored with other variables such as psychological security.

Then, the research conducted by S. E. Lee & Seo (2024) found that psychological security is a mediating variable in the formation of innovative work behavior. Psychological security is an important factor that influences innovative work behavior, so increasing psychological security for workers can encourage them to take interpersonal risks and engage in innovative behavior (S. E. Lee & Seo, 2024; X. Liu et al., 2023). Innovative work behavior has high risks, and workers tend to be reluctant to participate if they feel that failure in the process will have negative consequences. In this context, an ambidextrous organizational culture can significantly increase workers' psychological safety, which in turn encourages them to engage in innovative behavior. Therefore, it can be assumed that psychological safety must emerge for an ambidextrous organizational culture to encourage innovative work behavior. Based on this explanation, the hypothesis of this study is

Hypothesis 2: *Psychological safety* significantly mediates the effect of *ambidextrous organizational culture* on innovative work behavior.

Materials and Methods

This study uses a quantitative approach with a correlational design to determine the relationship between the variables under study. This study uses a *cross-sectional* approach where data collection is only carried out at one time. This study focuses on educators, namely lecturers who teach at public universities in Indonesia. The sampling technique used is *convenience sampling*, which is used when the distribution and number of the population are unknown and the sampling is based on availability and ease of obtaining samples. The number of samples in this study was determined using *G*Power software* with a minimum of 107 participants.

Measurement

Innovative work behavior

Innovative work behavior is measured on a scale by Janssen (2000). The measuring instrument is unidimensional, consisting of 9 items with a Cronbach's α value 0.95. This study uses a scale that has been adapted into Indonesian by Etikariena & Muluk (2014) using a 6-point Likert scale (1 = never at all to 6 = always) with a Cronbach's α of 0.80. The researcher obtained a Cronbach's α value of 0.94 based on the tryout results. With example items such as: "Looking for new working methods in my job"

Psychological Safety

Edmondson (1999) and Carmel et al. (2010) measure psychological safety on a scale. The measuring instrument is unidimensional, consisting of 5 items using a 6-point Likert scale (1 = very inaccurate to 6 = very accurate) with a Cronbach's α value of 0.74. Based on the trial run results, the researcher obtained a Cronbach's α value of 0.77. Examples include: "I can raise difficult problems and issues."

Ambidextrous Organizational Culture

The ambidextrous organizational culture is measured on a scale by Wang & Rafiq (2014). The measuring instrument is unidimensional, consisting of 7 items with a Cronbach's α value of 0.88. This study uses a scale that has been adapted into Indonesian by Lukitasari & Etikariena (2024) using a 6-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree) with a Cronbach's α value of 0.84. Based on the trial run results, the researcher obtained a Cronbach's α value of 0.93. Examples of items include: "We value the different perspectives of each person."

Research Procedure

Before collecting data, the researcher *tests out* the measuring instruments that will be used to collect data from the participants. The researcher *tested three measuring instruments, namely innovative work behavior, psychological safety, and ambidextrous culture, and they were given to 30 participants who were lecturers at state universities in Indonesia. After trying out* the measuring instruments, the researcher processed the data on 30 participants to determine whether the instruments used were valid and reliable. After *trying out* the three measuring instruments, they were proven valid and reliable for this study. After that, the researcher conducted an ethics review with the University of Indonesia ethics committee to ensure that the research complied with ethical standards, especially regarding the confidentiality and privacy of participants. The ethics review

results determined that this research has met the research ethics standards of the Faculty of Psychology, University of Indonesia, with number 169/Fpsi.Komite Etik/PDP.04.00/2024.

Data collection was carried out using a *Google form* containing *self-reports*. The items used were arranged randomly to reduce the occurrence of *common method bias*. The data collection process began by creating a poster containing the research objectives and participant criteria to invite members of the public who met the participant criteria to fill out the questionnaire. The poster was distributed on social media such as Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, and other social media

Data Analysis

The collected data will be cleaned first before entering the data analysis stage. Data cleaning is carried out so that the results obtained are relevant and in accordance with the research and provide accurate evidence related to the research results. After *cleaning* the data, the researcher conducted a descriptive analysis and tested the hypothesis using SPSS version 27 *software* with Hayes (model 4).

Results and Discussions

This study's participants were lecturers at state universities in Indonesia. The researcher collected 157 participants, and after data cleaning, 142 participants were available for further analysis. The demographic data from the research results are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics

Characteristics	n	%
Gender		
Female	94	66,2%
Male	48	33,8%
Education Last		
Master's Degree	109	76,8%
Doctorate	33	23,2%
Age		
Young Adult (20-40 Years)	48	33,8%
Middle Adult (41-65 Years)	94	66,2%
Period of Service		
3-10 Year	110	77,5%
>10 Year	32	22,5%
Position		
Expert Assistant	14	9,9%
Lecturer	62	43,7%
Head Lecturer	52	36,6%
Professor	14	9,9%

Note. N=142

Based on Table 1, the demographic data from this study shows that the majority are female, with 94 participants (66.2%), with the highest level of education being dominated by S2 (Master's degree), with 109 participants (76.8%). Furthermore, in terms of age, the majority were middle-aged adults, i.e., 41-65 years old, with 94 participants (66.2%), with 110 participants (77.5%) having worked for 3-10 years, and 62 participants (43.7%) having the position of lecturer.

Table 2. Mean, Standard Deviation, and Correlation Between Variables

Variabel	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. IWB	43.8	5.23	-	-	-	-	-
2. AOC	34.6	3.88	.515**	-	-	-	-
3.PS	23.8	2.83	.121**	.121	-	-	-
4. Work Period	1.23	0.41	.219**	.165	.017	-	-
5. Position	2.46	0.80	.229**	.054	.008	.150	-

Note. N = 142. $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$. IWB = Innovative work behavior, AOC = Ambidextrous Organizational Culture, PS = Psychological Safety.

The demographic analysis results in this study are included in Table 2 and are related to the correlation between variables. Table 2 shows a relationship between ambidextrous organizational culture and innovative behavior ($r = 0.515$, $p > 0.00$). This proves that *ambidextrous organizational culture* is significant in explaining the relationship between innovative work behavior. With a coefficient value of 0.515, it can be interpreted that an increase of one value in ambidextrous organizational culture will increase the score by 0.515 in innovative work behavior. Then this study also examined the role of control variables, namely length of service and position. These control variables strengthened the relationship between ambidextrous organizational culture and innovative work behavior. The analysis showed that length of service ($r = 0.219$, $p = 0.00$) and position ($r = 0.229$, $p = 0.00$) strongly influence the relationship between *ambidextrous organizational culture* and innovative work behavior.

Table 3. Results of Mediation Model Analysis

Variable	95%CI			
	β	P	LL	UL
AOC→IWB	0.702	0.000	0.507	0.897
AOC→PS→IWB	0.088	0.153	-0.033	0.209

Note. N=142.

Based on the regression analysis results in Table 3, it shows that ambidextrous culture has a positive and significant effect on innovative work behavior in lecturers, with results ($\beta = 0.702$, $p < 0.001$). This shows that hypothesis 1, which states that an *ambidextrous culture* directly affects innovative work behavior, is accepted. An ambidextrous culture that allows flexibility in exploring new ideas and maintaining stability in educational institutions encourages innovative behavior among lecturers. Furthermore, the mediation test between ambidextrous organizational culture and innovative work behavior mediated by *psychological safety* shows results ($\beta = 0.088$, $p > 0.153$) with a confidence interval value (95% CI) (LL = -0.033, UL = 0.209) including the number zero, indicating that this mediation effect is not proven. This shows that hypothesis 2, which states that *psychological safety* is a mediating variable in the indirect relationship between ambidextrous culture and innovative work behavior, is rejected.

Discussion

The *ambidextrous organizational culture* towards innovative work behavior has an influence on lecturers at public universities in Indonesia. Ambidextrous culture in organizations supports exploitation that focuses on optimizing existing resources for efficiency, productivity, and innovation, as well as exploration that focuses on the creation of new knowledge and innovation (J. Y. Lee et al., 2019; S. Liu et al., 2014). These two aspects, exploration and efficiency in an ambidextrous culture, create an ideal work environment in which lecturers can balance academic tasks such as teaching and administration with innovative activities such as research and the creation of new learning approaches in accordance with the demands of the times.

In addition, an ambidextrous culture helps lecturers become more flexible and adaptive to changes in the dynamic world of education, such as advances in educational technology and the demands of digital-based learning (Varandas et al., 2024). This encourages lecturers to improve efficiency in their daily tasks and find new ways to solve academic challenges. Ultimately, this culture encourages innovative work behavior, where lecturers become more creative in creating innovative learning methods, dare to take risks in implementing new ideas, and actively collaborate across disciplines to produce solutions that have a positive impact on the world of education (Hadi et al., 2023; Sun & Zhao, 2023).

The application of ambidextrous culture in the educational environment, namely universities, supports the achievement of the three pillars of higher education: research, community service, and teaching. Based on an ambidextrous culture with a balanced approach between exploration and exploitation, lecturers' contributions to developing new theories, practices, and technologies that will impact educational institutions also increase the nation's competitiveness in a global context. Thus, an ambidextrous culture is very important in supporting sustainable innovation behavior in Indonesia's education sector.

Self-determination theory explains that an ambidextrous culture can create an environment that can fulfill the fulfillment of individuals' basic psychological needs, namely the need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Fulfillment of these psychological needs can increase individual motivation to engage in innovative activities. An ambidextrous culture that balances exploration and exploitation and creates a supportive environment and fulfillment of these three basic psychological needs. Lecturers are given the autonomy to explore new ideas to feel competent about their expertise, establish cooperation, and receive interpersonal support from the team. Collaboration, a form of fulfilling an individual's basic psychological needs, has also influenced innovative work behavior in lecturers. Collaboration can enable explicit and implicit knowledge transfer between individuals with different scientific backgrounds, ultimately creating new ideas and strengthening innovative behavior for individuals (Bos-Nehles et al., 2017). Fulfilling these psychological needs enables lecturers to develop innovative behavior in research, community service, and teaching activities, which constitute the three pillars of higher education that are the duty of a lecturer.

Psychological safety cannot mediate the relationship between ambidextrous culture and innovative work behavior in lecturers at public universities in Indonesia. This shows that for lecturer participants, ambidextrous culture alone is sufficient to meet the psychological needs of lecturers, so that it can encourage innovative work behavior without the need for psychological security. An ambidextrous culture where lecturers are given the freedom to explore and refine ideas without worrying about negative consequences, because an ambidextrous culture has created a conducive work environment and fulfills the basic psychological needs of lecturers, ultimately encouraging lecturers to behave innovatively at work. Then, in this situation, lecturers can immediately respond to an environment that supports innovation without relying on the perception of psychological security. As individuals with tridharma responsibilities, the drive for innovation also comes from professional demands and a sense of responsibility for the development of science and society (Cremin & Chappell, 2021).

The lecturers' academic freedom allows them to explore new ideas and teaching strategies relevant to the demands of the times. This is a form of innovation that lecturers engage in even without relying on psychological safety. In an academic environment supported by an ambidextrous culture, lecturers can try new approaches without fear of criticism or failure. This ambidextrous culture encourages lecturers to remain productive and learn from mistakes, ultimately replacing the need for psychological security in triggering innovative behavior. In other words, the drive to innovate in an ambidextrous culture is more dominant than the role of psychological security as a mediator in the innovation process (De Alencar et al., 2017).

Based on these findings, it is evident that without a sense of psychological security, a lecturer can also behave in an innovative way at work. Several factors can trigger innovative behavior in a lecturer at a public university in Indonesia, namely starting from professional demands, an organizational culture that supports innovative behavior, namely an ambidextrous culture, as well as the academic freedom that a lecturer has to explore new ideas and teaching strategies and collaboration between disciplines also contributes to lecturers continuing to innovate as educators.

The theoretical implications of this research can contribute to the development of science, especially related to ambidextrous culture, psychological safety, and innovative work behavior. Then, the finding of this research that the mediating role of psychological safety cannot bridge the relationship between ambidextrous culture variables and innovative work behavior is interesting and can be the subject of further research by considering other variables. Then the practical implications of the results of this study can provide insights for state universities to be able to create an environment that supports innovative work behavior and the development of an ambidextrous culture as one of the strategies to encourage lecturers to innovate in realizing the tridharma of higher education, namely research, community service, and teaching. Furthermore, universities can develop policies related to improving lecturer competencies, such as training to improve skills, professional certification, or opportunities for further study. Improving these competencies ensures lecturers adapt to new challenges and collaborate optimally in exploring and exploiting ideas.

The limitation of this research is that it was only conducted on participants who were lecturers at public universities, where the characteristics of the work environment, culture, and policies are

different from those of private universities. Then, the cross-sectional research method was used in this study, where data collection was only done once. Then it cannot prove the role of the mediating variable, namely psychological safety, in the relationship between ambidextrous organizational culture and innovative work behavior in lecturers at public universities in Indonesia. For further research, other variables that can mediate the relationship between ambidextrous organizational culture variables and innovative work behavior can be considered. Then, it can be considered when choosing a research design using a time-lagged approach.

Conclusion

Based on the results and discussion explained previously, it can be concluded that an *ambidextrous organizational culture* has a positive and significant relationship with innovative work behavior in lecturers at public universities in Indonesia. However, the results of this study do not prove the mediating role of *psychological safety* in the relationship between *ambidextrous organizational culture* and innovative work behavior in lecturers at public universities in Indonesia. In addition, position and length of service have also been proven to have a significant relationship that can influence innovative work behavior in lecturers at state universities in Indonesia.

Future research is encouraged to explore other possible mediators or moderators, such as intrinsic motivation, leadership style, or institutional support, that may bridge the relationship between organizational culture and innovation behavior. Moreover, comparative studies across different types of higher education institutions (e.g., private vs. public) or disciplines may provide deeper insight into how contextual factors shape innovation dynamics in academia. Longitudinal studies would also be valuable in capturing the evolving nature of organizational culture and its long-term effects on innovative performance.

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