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Innovation Culture in the Public Sector: Determinants and Barriers for Promoting Organizational Innovation

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Abstrak

Di dunia yang terglobalisasi saat ini, organisasi sektor publik harus memprioritaskan penanganan masalah yang kompleks, meningkatkan produktivitas, dan menumbuhkan budaya inovatif. Inovasi sangat penting bagi kemampuan organisasi untuk bersaing dan beradaptasi, dan pertumbuhan di sektor publik memerlukan budaya perusahaan yang berpikiran maju, kepemimpinan yang cakap, dan kemampuan inovasi yang berkelanjutan. Namun, mempertahankan budaya inovatif menghadirkan tantangan seperti pengembangan keterampilan yang berkelanjutan dan hambatan organisasi. Meskipun minat terhadap inovasi dan budaya semakin meningkat, namun masih sedikit penelitian mendalam yang fokus pada konsep "budaya inovasi" itu sendiri dan perkembangannya. Upaya penelitian ini bertujuan untuk lebih memperluas pengetahuan kita tentang budaya inovasi dengan mempelajari variabel dan hambatan yang berkontribusi terhadap perkembangannya di sektor publik.

Kata Kunci: *Kamboja, hambatan, budaya inovasi, pengembangan organisasi, sektor publik*

Abstract

In today's globalized world, public sector organizations must prioritize tackling complex problems, enhancing productivity, and cultivating an innovative culture. Innovation is crucial for an organization's ability to compete and adapt, and growth in the public sector requires forward-thinking corporate cultures, capable leadership, and continuous innovation capabilities. However, maintaining an innovative culture presents challenges such as ongoing skill development and organizational barriers. Despite the increasing interest in innovation and culture, there are few in-depth studies that focus on the concept of "innovation culture" itself and its development. This research effort aims to further broaden our knowledge of innovation culture by studying the variables and barriers that contribute to its development within the public sector.

Keyword: *Cambodia, barriers, innovation culture, organizational development, public sector*

INTRODUCTION

What is 'innovation culture'? Why is this important for the public sector? To understand what 'innovation culture' is, we must first understand the term 'innovation'. This term is generally used to describe when unconventional concepts are developed into unique, concrete achievements—which includes not only technological advances but also the implementation of various problem-solving approaches, operational procedures, organizational practices, and business model changes intended to enhance efficiency and address unmet demands (Barbakadze, 2019). In today's complex economy, global competition has led to changing consumer demands and unstable markets, making innovation an essential element for any organization to succeed. Public institutions, regulatory bodies, state-owned firms, and public administration agencies play a significant role in advancing economic growth and overall welfare (Sharifirad & Ataei, 2012).

Maintaining a long-lasting culture of innovation within an organization is often a major challenge. To achieve sustainable and consistent value, organizations must develop and adopt a culture of innovation that facilitates them with the essential skills to continually compete effectively and successfully in the present and the future (Hijal-Moghrabi, 2020; Zhang et al., 2023). The importance of creating cultures is emphasized to help organizations stay competitive in their specific sectors and industries (Ceausu et al., 2017). To achieve organizational success and societal growth in the public sector, it is essential to understand the factors influencing and preventing the development of an innovative culture. Organizations that fail to enable their personnel to approach tasks creatively limit the level of innovation within the organization and risk falling behind their competitors (Walter, 2012).

Innovation Culture and Its Significance

Innovation culture refers to the collective values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors

adopted within an organization to promote creativity, experimentation, and continuous development (Sharifirad & Ataei, 2012). Organizations with a strong culture of innovation are better able to overcome market obstacles, capitalize on growth opportunities, and maintain a competitive advantage. This is often due to having an environment conducive to innovation that requires a change in the mindset of personnel to continually learn, adapt, and experiment. This includes a willingness to take risks, foster resilience, and embrace new perspectives (Hongdiyanto et al., 2022). Innovation can only thrive when we embrace new perspectives and challenge old beliefs, thereby paving the way for revolutionary ideas (Shayah & Zehou, 2019).

Applying this definition to the public sector, this definition covers a wide range of innovations, from small, incremental improvements to large, disruptive changes that completely modify or replace existing processes or services (Arundel et al., 2019). Actively regulating services and policies to meet the needs of a diverse population is essential for public institutions to respond effectively to people's demands. The success of the organization's innovation often depends on the leadership support and the creation of a culture that encourages it. Managers should promote innovation between personnel with good help and care, as excessive work pressure can hinder creativity (Caro, 2023).

Public Sector Innovation

Innovation comes in different forms in the public sector, such as governance reforms influenced by New Public Management, which introduce new approaches such as decentralization models, partnership projects, and campaigns to modernize public institutions (Klin, 2012). In public administration, innovation involves testing new concepts, implementing advanced procedures, creating start-up projects, and creating bureaucracies that promote professionalism for society's benefit (Bason, 2018).

According to Cinar et al. (2024), they have distinguished and classified innovation in the public sector into five categories: innovation in services, innovation in administrative procedures, innovation in technology, innovation in theories and concepts, and innovation in governance. Service innovation is crucial for expanding existing services to new user segments (Arundel et al., 2019); administrative procedure innovations focus on creating innovative techniques and strategies to enhance operational effectiveness (Sucupira et al., 2019); technological operation innovations optimize operational tasks and service delivery mechanisms (Barbakadze, 2019); conceptual innovation involves intellectual creativity; and governance innovation aims to solve governance problems by introducing new tools and methods to improve efficiency, speed, and accuracy of governance procedures (Aas & Breunig, 2017).

Determinants and Barriers to Innovation Culture

The new public administration is shifting from traditional bureaucratic methods to focusing on efficiency, efficacy, and productivity by embracing various factors to develop a culture of innovation (Li et al., 2017). Leadership support and commitment are crucial in shaping the innovation culture in the public sector (Vorobeva, 2023). Visionary leaders provide clear guidance, inspire personnel with a compelling vision of the future, emphasize the importance of innovation in public institutions, foster creativity, encourage thinking outside traditional boundaries, take measured risks, and explore inventive approaches to complex problems (Saher & Ayub, 2020). Transformational leaders foster an environment that nurtures innovation by inspiring personnel to achieve higher performance, encouraging creativity, and showing a strong commitment to organizational goals (Jun & Lee, 2023).

Personnel engagement and empowerment are also essential factors for organizational success and effectiveness (Modise, 2023). Engaged personnel demonstrate enthusiasm, motivation, and alignment with the organization's values, leading to increased productivity and creativity. Empowerment means giving personnel the power, autonomy, and resources to make decisions and take responsibility for their tasks (Chakraborty & Ganguly, 2019). Institutions that prioritize empowerment tend to achieve higher levels of personnel satisfaction, retention, and performance. When personnel feel empowered, they tend to be more proactive and committed to achieving institutional goals, fostering a culture of trust, collaboration, and accountability (Modise, 2023).

Providing learning and development opportunities is critical to fostering innovation (Arulsamy et al., 2023). Investment in these opportunities can have a transformative impact on the culture and performance on the institution by enabling personnel to acquire new knowledge, skills, and perspectives needed to develop innovative ideas and solutions to complex problems. Initiatives like training programs, workshops, mentoring opportunities, and other learning resources contribute to a culture of learning and continuous improvement through education and training (Gutterman, 2023). Effective cooperation and communication are also essential for the development of positive innovative behavior within institutions (Musheke & Phiri, 2021).

The relationship between organizational culture and innovation depends on creating a supportive atmosphere that promotes creativity, new ideas, and continued growth. The political environment plays a crucial role in shaping the culture of innovation within public organizations (Dost & Qatiti, 2023). A stable political environment characterized by clear policies and consistent leadership provides an optimal environment for cultivating a culture of innovation. However, political instability, frequent changes of leadership, or a lack of

transparency can create uncertainties and obstacles that hamper innovation efforts (Hughes et al., 2018).

Barriers to innovation and the successful introduction of innovative concepts and procedures include bureaucratic barriers, fear of failure, limited resources, hierarchical structures, resistance to change, and lack of innovative practices (OECD, 2017). Resistance to changes is one of the most important tasks that public sector organizations must overcome. Authorities often resist the application of unique technologies or creative solutions for various reasons, such as fear of unknown, concerns about employment safety, and preferences for monitoring established procedures (Hubbart, 2023). Bureaucratic rigidity makes it difficult for organizations to quickly adapt to changing conditions or introduce new ideas (Fuenzalida et al., 2024). Limited resource constraints also pose a major constraint for government agencies, making it difficult to secure funding for research and development initiatives, integrate new technologies, and implement employee training programs to foster creativity and innovation (Arulsamy et al., 2023).

However, traditional hierarchies with rigid reporting lines and centralized decision-making can hinder open communication, collaboration, and the flow of ideas between different levels within the institution (Widhiastuti, 2013). This organizational inertia, combined with a tendency to stick to the familiar, not only obstructs innovation but also leads to alienation, lack of motivation, and a lack of new perspectives (Hongdiyanto et al., 2022). The problem is further exacerbated by a consistent lack of inflexibility in resources and procedural routines, influenced by hierarchical structures, rigid policies, internal dynamics and a desire to maintain the status quo (Lazarevic & Mosurovic, 2023).

A Conceptual and Theoretical framework

Based on the theoretical conceptualization and foundation, the proposed innovation culture framework consists of five dimensions: *leadership support and commitment, personnel engagement and empowerment, learning and development opportunities, collaboration and communication, and the political environment*

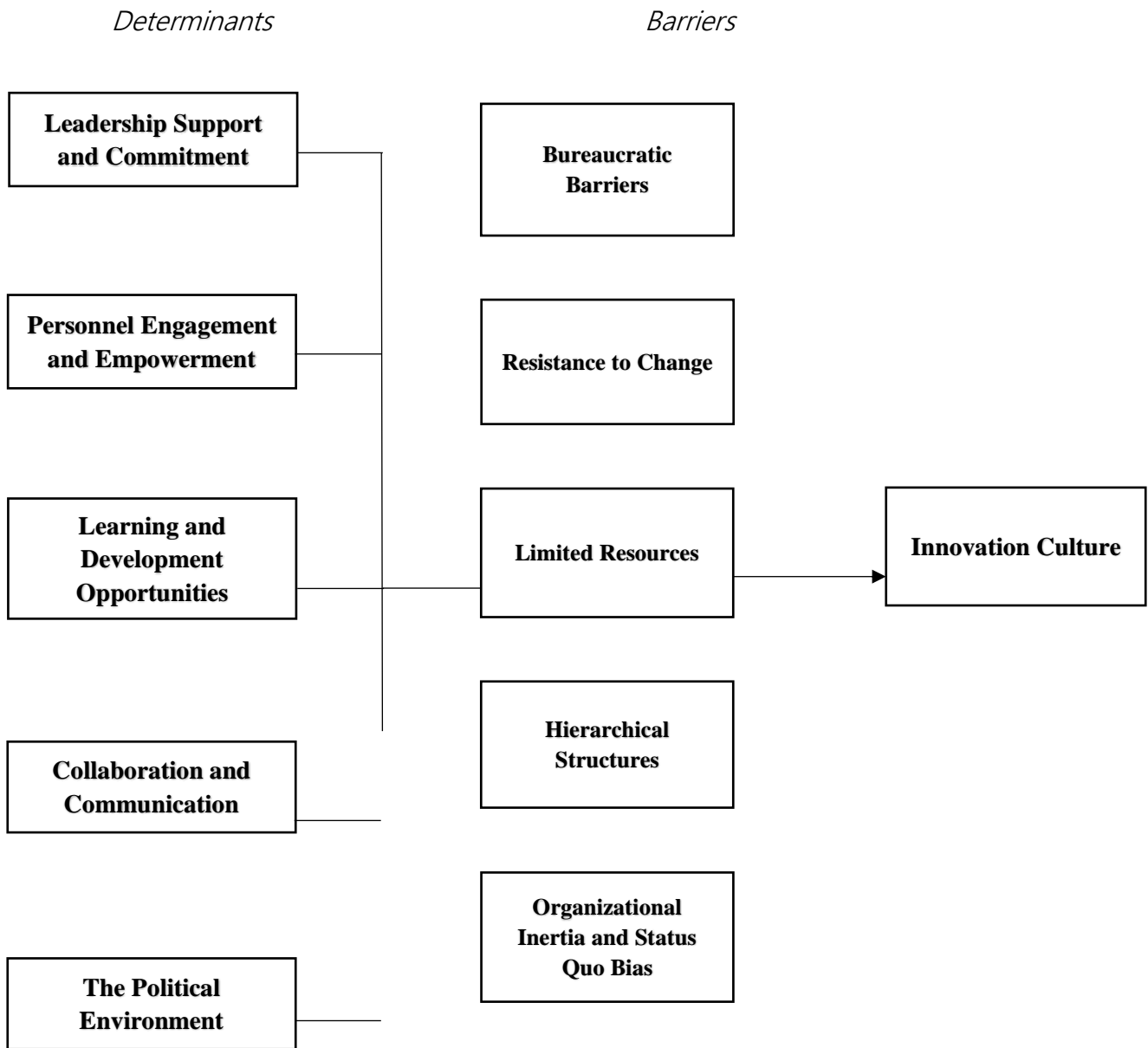


Figure 1: Determinants and Barriers to Innovation Culture

H1: Leadership support and commitment positively influences organizational innovation culture in the public sector.

H2: Personnels' engagement and empowerment have a favorable impact on innovative organizational culture.

H3: Learning and development opportunities for public servants would have a favorable impact on the organization's innovation culture.

H4: Encouraging collaboration and communication among staff members has a good impact on the organizational innovation culture.

H5: The political environment significantly influences the development of organizational innovation culture within public sector organizations.

H6: The presence of barriers (*bureaucratic barriers, resistance to change, limited resources, hierarchical structures, organizational inertia, and status quo bias*) will moderate the relationship between determining variables (*leadership support and commitment, personnel engagement and empowerment, learning opportunities, collaboration and communication, and the political environment*) with the development of an innovative culture within public sector organizations.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study explores the practical applications of organizational culture characteristics that promote innovation and identify barriers. It collects data from 30 participants through a literature review, interviews with managers and middle cadres in Cambodian public organizations, and a self-administered questionnaire. Variable measurement is used to measure latent variables such as leadership commitment, personnel empowerment, learning opportunities, collaboration, political environment, and organizational barriers to innovation.

The study uses Gioia et al.'s (2013) framework to organize concepts and develop grounded theories. Data is examined sentence by sentence and evaluated using categories or themes associated with each variable concept. Descriptive and inferential statistics are calculated using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 22.

The research model is tested using a structural equation model (SEM) and the partial least squares (PLS) regression approach. A reflexive causality direction is employed between constructs and their indicators, and a correlation matrix is used to show associations between measured variables. Multiple regression analysis is used to test hypotheses, resulting in b coefficients and t-values from regressing each independent and dependent variable with an expected positive relationship.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Synthesis of Key Findings

Leadership Support and Commitment

Interviewees emphasized the importance of role modeling in fostering innovation, as it encourages staff to improve performance and achieve better outcomes. They believe creative leaders inspire others by setting common goals and investing in their development. For instance, one person responded, *"As a leader, I believe in establishing a workplace atmosphere that motivates innovative behavior."* Other interviewees responded, *"I've observed that everyone on my team frequently acts in the same way as myself. The significance of setting a*

good example for my team members by encouraging them to strive for continuous improvement and better outcomes and providing a standard for them to follow."

Personnel Engagement and Empowerment

Employee empowerment and engagement are crucial for fostering an innovative culture within an organization. Interviewee statements included the following: *"We frequently had meetings with the team members." "I think it's important to give employees the freedom to take the initiative and decide for themselves within the framework of their jobs. Their ideas are greatly appreciated and taken into consideration, as they would counsel me in some capacity."*

Kim & Beehr (2018) emphasize the importance of leaders cultivating a work environment that prioritizes personnel engagement, fostering a sense of devotion and self-worth. Communication, supportive training, and delegation are essential for achieving organizational goals and promoting an innovative culture. Employee empowerment is a key tool for leaders to involve employees in the innovation process. Another respondent stated, *"In my opinion, staff members will be better able to understand why they work every day and why they are there if you make sure they feel involved and that they have some influence over the decisions made—we have so many smart people who want to be involved in the process."*

Learning and Development Opportunities

Phyrom et al. (2022) emphasize the importance of personnel mentorship programs in fostering an innovation culture within public institutions. They suggest that these programs help staff continuously learn, develop loyalty, and preserve institutional knowledge, thereby promoting the implementation of human capital theory and maintaining competitiveness. According to one of the participants during the interview, *"My main strategy has always been to provide staff members with possibilities for development if I think they have the capacity to do more in their current jobs. [...] I make an effort to learn more about them, provide professional development opportunities, and really customize such opportunities for the staff members."*

Collaboration and Communication

During an interview, one respondent stated, *"It is important to maintain complete transparency about the goals of the collaboration and the strategies you plan to use to achieve those goals. I always try to be quite open about the deadlines, the available financial and human resources, as well as the goals I set for myself. I usually collaborate with my teammates to make sure that everyone on the team is aware of all of this information."* Lemon & Sahota (2004) suggest that diverse firms are leading innovators through collaboration and communication practices. Transparency about goals, strategies, deadlines, and resources is

crucial for effective teamwork. Government institutions can foster collaboration by creating a welcoming environment, promoting cooperation, and eliminating institutional silos.

The Political Environment

Politics and the environment significantly influence innovation, as public officials can alter incentives through laws or regulations. A culture of innovation is essential for economic growth and development, and flexible regulatory frameworks encourage experimentation. However, rigid regulations can limit innovation and require complex compliance. The political environment influences the innovation culture in public sector organizations and their growth potential. One of the respondents mentioned, *"I believe a culture of innovation can only exist if the political environment is favorable to innovation. Absolutely! Because it is politics that sets the agenda for government agencies and determines where resources and attention are focused."*

Barriers

Cambodia's public sector has several obstacles in fostering an innovation culture, including bureaucratic barriers, resistance to change, limited resources, organizational inertia, and status quo biases. Lack of cooperation among government departments, inflexible hierarchical structures, and bureaucratic red tape stifle innovation. It was discovered that Cambodia's history of turbulence and instability has rendered it resistant to change, with individuals unable to adopt new ideas, particularly in the public sector. Cultural norms and values may influence resistance to change. As stated by an interviewee, they said, *"During meetings, it was brought to my attention that some staff members genuinely exhibit fear or hesitation in taking initiative, while others just prefer to focus solely on their assigned duties without participation."*

Limited resources also pose a significant barrier to innovation in Cambodia. Insufficient information on rural public institutions' requirements and inconsistent application of regulations make it difficult for the public sector to support rural institutions and promote innovation. The adoption of digital technology in rural areas is also in its infancy, making modernization difficult. Information provided by an interviewee stated, *"...Cambodia has a notable rural predominance since most of its population lives in rural areas. However, Research and development infrastructure is more frequently found in urban areas, where innovation tends to develop around it."*

Staff members may be wary of the potential consequences of introducing new standards or technological developments, leading to reluctance to leave their comfort zone and try new approaches. Biases toward the status quo and organizational inertia can also limit

innovation and creativity, making it more challenging to translate positive changes into action and adapt to changing circumstances (Jacobsen & Stuart-Fox, 2013).

Hypothesis Testing

The study used Spearman's rho to calculate correlation coefficients between variables defining innovation culture and its determinants. The results indicate that all factors influencing innovation culture have a positive relationship, as shown in the table as follows: 0.168 (16.8 percent) for the political environment, 0.59 (59 percent) for learning and development opportunities, 0.339 (33.9 percent) for leadership support and commitment, 0.140 (14 percent) for personnel engagement and empowerment, and 0.088 (8.8 percent) for communication and collaboration. Based on the data, all hypotheses positing that these determinant independent variables influence innovation culture were accepted.

Additionally, Hypothesis 1 suggested that leadership support and commitment would have a positive impact on organizational innovation culture within the public sector. The regression analysis of innovation culture on leadership support and commitment, as detailed in the table below, indicates a significant relationship with a specific coefficient of $b=0.9$, $t=1.953$, $p=0.13 < 0.05$, providing strong support for Hypothesis 1. Hypothesis 2 proposed that personnels' engagement and empowerment positively influence an innovative organizational culture. The regression analysis of innovation culture on personnels' engagement and empowerment reveals a significant relationship with a specific coefficient of $b=0.724$, $t=1.140$, $p=0.023 < 0.05$, strongly supporting Hypothesis 2.

Furthermore, Hypothesis 3 suggested that providing learning and development opportunities for public servants would positively impact the organization's innovation culture. The analysis of regressing innovation culture on learning and development opportunities shows a significant relationship with a specific coefficient of $b=0.317$, $t=1.075$, $p=0.039 < 0.05$, offering strong support for Hypothesis 3. Hypothesis 4 indicated that fostering collaboration and communication among staff members positively influences the organizational innovation culture. The regression analysis of innovation culture on collaboration and communication demonstrates a significant relationship with a specific coefficient of $b=0.678$, $t=1.357$, $p=0.028 < 0.05$, strongly supporting Hypothesis 4. Lastly, Hypothesis 5 emphasized the significant role of the political environment in influencing the development of organizational innovation culture within public sector organizations. The regression analysis of innovation culture on the political environment displays a notable relationship with a specific coefficient of $b=0.745$, $t=1.441$, $p=0.16 < 0.05$, providing robust support for Hypothesis 5.

The relationship between innovation culture and its determinants is influenced by "barriers," acting as the controlling variable. When analyzing innovation culture without

considering barriers, the R-squared value is 0.192, indicating that determinant variables account for 19.2 percent of the variance. The regression model's R-squared value increases to 0.198 when controlling variable "barriers" is introduced, accounting for 19.8 percent of variance. This adds 0.6 percent to the variance in the relationship between innovation culture and its determinants, suggesting that "barriers" doesn't significantly impact or regulate this relationship.

Therefore, Hypothesis 6, which proposed that the presence of barriers (such as bureaucratic barriers, resistance to change, limited resources, hierarchical structures, organizational inertia, and status quo bias) would moderate the relationship between determining variables (leadership support and commitment, personnel engagement and empowerment, learning opportunities, collaboration and communication, and the political environment) in developing an innovative culture within public sector organizations, is accepted, albeit with only a minor impact.

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	Change Statistics			Sig. F Change
						F Change	df1	df2	
1	.439 ^a	.192	.018	.60162	.192	1.144	5	24	.036
a. Predictors: (Constant), Communication_and_Collaboration, Learning_Dev_Opps, Employee_Eng_and_Emp, Political_Env, Leadershipsupport_and_Commitment									

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	Change Statistics			Sig. F Change
						F Change	df1	df2	
2	.444 ^a	.198	.012	.61263	.198	.944	6	23	.048
a. Predictors: (Constant), Communication_and_Collaboration, Barriers, Learning_Dev_Opps, Employee_Eng_and_Emp, Political_Env, Leadershipsupport_and_Commitment									

Correlations							
		Innovation_Culture	Political_Env	Learning_Dev_Opps	Leadershipsupport_and_Colaboration	Employee_Eng_and_Emp	Communication_and_Colaboration
Pearson Correlation	Innovation_Culture	1.000	.168	.059	.339	.140	.088
	Political_Env	.168	1.000	.147	.304	.020	.143
	Learning_Dev_Opps	.059	.147	1.000	.256	.123	.088
	Leadershipsupport_and_Colaboration	.339	.304	.256	1.000	.128	.362
	Employee_Eng_and_Emp	.140	.020	.123	.128	1.000	.106
	Communication_and_Colaboration	.088	.143	.088	.362	.106	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	Innovation_Culture		.016	.039	.013	.023	.028
	Political_Env	.016		.219	.051	.458	.226
	Learning_Dev_Opps	.039	.219		.086	.258	.322
	Leadershipsupport_and_Colaboration	.013	.051	.086		.249	.025
	Employee_Eng_and_Emp	.023	.458	.258	.249		.289
	Communication_and_Colaboration	.028	.226	.322	.025	.289	
N	Innovation_Culture	30	30	30	30	30	30
	Political_Env	30	30	30	30	30	30
	Learning_Dev_Opps	30	30	30	30	30	30
	Leadershipsupport_and_Colaboration	30	30	30	30	30	30
	Employee_Eng_and_Emp	30	30	30	30	30	30
	Communication_and_Colaboration	30	30	30	30	30	30

Coefficients ^a									
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Correlations		
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Zero-order	Partial	Part
1	(Constant)	7.886	3.249		2.427	.000			
	Political_Env	.745	.169	.852	1.441	.016	.168	.090	.081
	Learning_Dev_Opps	.317	.202	.211	1.075	.039	.059	.214	.197
	Leadershipsupport_and_Commitment	.900	.605	.820	1.953	.013	.339	.370	.358
	Employee_Eng_and_Emp	.724	.284	.514	1.140	.023	.140	.227	.209
	Communication_and_Collaboration	.678	.274	.719	1.357	.028	.088	.073	.065

a. Dependent Variable: Innovation_Culture

The public sector's success relies on an innovative culture that encourages experimentation, innovation, and new ideas. This culture boosts productivity and problem-solving skills, enabling businesses to streamline operations and meet unmet needs. To remain competitive, organizations must accept change, adjust regularly, and introduce new ideas. Promoting an innovative culture helps public institutions, regulators, and state-owned firms address social and economic issues, leading to improved services and faster economic growth. However, keeping a creative culture might be difficult owing to organizational structure, norms, and restrictions. Public-sector organizations should invest in training programs, establish clear innovation objectives, and offer incentives for new ideas. They should also promote cooperation, build communication channels, and foster an environment that supports experimentation and risk-taking.

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