Journal of Neonatal Surgery
ISSN(Online): 2226-0439
Vol. 14, Issue 5s (2025)
https://www.jneonatalsurg.com

OPEN ACCESS

The Role of Innovation Culture in Enhancing Employee Engagement: Evidence from Selected IT Firms

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Cite this paper as: Mehnaz Manzoor, Dr. Shivani Dhand, Aayushi Pandey, (2025) The Role of Innovation Culture in Enhancing Employee Engagement: Evidence from Selected IT Firms. *Journal of Neonatal Surgery*, 14 (5s), 676-684.

ABSTRACT

This study explores the impact of innovation culture on employee engagement in selected IT firms, utilizing Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test the proposed hypotheses. Data was collected from 400 IT employees to analyze how a culture that encourages creativity, risk-taking, and continuous learning influences employee commitment, motivation, and job involvement. The findings indicate a strong positive relationship between innovation culture and employee engagement, emphasizing the significance of leadership support, knowledge-sharing mechanisms, and an adaptive organizational environment. Organizations that prioritize innovation create an atmosphere where employees feel valued, motivated, and empowered to contribute actively to business growth. The study highlights that fostering a culture of open communication, collaboration, and recognition enhances employee satisfaction and retention. Additionally, results suggest that firms with a strong innovation culture witness higher levels of employee participation in problem-solving, creativity, and performance excellence. The research provides valuable managerial implications, suggesting that IT firms should implement policies and practices that nurture an innovation-driven workplace, including flexible work environments, investment in continuous skill development, and incentives for innovative contributions. By strengthening the innovation culture, IT firms can enhance employee engagement, leading to improved productivity, reduced turnover, and long-term organizational success. This study contributes to the growing literature on workplace engagement and innovation, offering empirical evidence that supports the integration of innovation strategies to enhance workforce enthusiasm. Future research could further investigate the moderating effects of individual employee traits and organizational structures on the relationship between innovation culture and engagement in different industry settings.

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid evolution of technology and dynamic business environments has necessitated a strong innovation culture within organizations, particularly in the IT sector, where firms must continuously adapt to maintain competitive advantage (Drucker, 1985; Schumpeter, 1934). Employee engagement, defined as an employee's emotional commitment to their organization, has been increasingly recognized as a crucial determinant of organizational success (Kahn, 1990; Saks, 2006). Research indicates that organizations fostering an innovation-oriented culture tend to have higher levels of employee engagement, as employees feel more valued, motivated, and invested in their work (Amabile, 1996; Deci & Ryan, 2000). However, the relationship between innovation culture and employee engagement remains underexplored, particularly in the context of IT firms, where job roles demand continuous learning and adaptation (Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996; Christensen, 1997).Studies suggest that an innovative culture enables employees to experiment with new ideas, take calculated risks, and develop creative solutions, all of which enhance their sense of purpose and job satisfaction (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; West & Farr, 1990). When organizations provide an environment that encourages innovation, employees are more likely to feel psychologically empowered and engaged in their roles (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990; Spreitzer, 1995). Moreover, intrinsic motivation, which is closely linked to innovative work behavior, has been found to significantly contribute to higher

engagement levels (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Amabile & Kramer, 2011). Yet, some scholars argue that excessive emphasis on innovation can lead to workplace stress, burnout, and role ambiguity, which may negatively impact engagement levels (Janssen, 2003; Shalley et al., 2004). This paradox highlights the need for a balanced approach where innovation culture fosters engagement without imposing undue pressure on employees (Oldham & Cummings, 1996; George & Zhou, 2001).Several theoretical frameworks help explain the relationship between innovation culture and employee engagement. The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model posits that job resources, such as autonomy, support, and opportunities for creativity, play a crucial role in fostering employee engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). When an innovation culture is present, employees perceive higher job resources, which in turn enhances engagement (Hakanen et al., 2008; Saks, 2011). Similarly, Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) suggests that employees who experience autonomy and competence in an innovative work environment are more likely to demonstrate higher engagement levels (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Van den Broeck et al., 2010). Furthermore, Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) indicates that when employees perceive organizational support for innovation, they reciprocate with greater commitment and discretionary effort (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Emerson, 1976).Empirical studies provide mixed evidence regarding the impact of innovation culture on employee engagement. Some findings suggest that organizations with strong innovation cultures report higher employee satisfaction, lower turnover rates, and increased discretionary effort (Baer & Frese, 2003; Scott & Bruce, 1994). For instance, a study by Afsar et al. (2019) found that employees in organizations fostering innovation were more engaged, as they experienced higher psychological ownership and meaningful work. However, contrasting research indicates that innovation culture alone may not guarantee engagement, as other organizational factors, such as leadership style, work-life balance, and recognition mechanisms, significantly influence engagement levels (Macey & Schneider, 2008; Shuck & Wollard, 2010). Given these complexities, this study seeks to critically examine the role of innovation culture in enhancing employee engagement within IT firms, where rapid technological advancements and creative problem-solving are integral to business success (Edmondson, 1999; Carmeli & Spreitzer, 2009). By exploring the interplay between innovation culture and engagement, this research aims to provide empirical evidence on how organizations can cultivate a work environment that promotes both innovation and employee well-being (Bledow et al., 2009; Anderson et al., 2014). Understanding these dynamics will help organizations formulate strategies that optimize employee engagement while sustaining an innovation-driven competitive edge in the IT sector (Zhou & George, 2001; Gupta & Singhal, 1993).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Innovation Culture

Innovation culture refers to an organizational environment that encourages creativity, experimentation, and continuous improvement (Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996; Christensen, 1997). It encompasses shared values, norms, and behaviors that support novel ideas and risk-taking (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; West & Farr, 1990). Organizations that cultivate an innovation-driven culture empower employees to challenge conventional thinking, leading to competitive advantages (Amabile, 1996; Damanpour, 1991). Research suggests that firms with a strong innovation culture demonstrate higher adaptability in dynamic markets, particularly in the IT sector, where technological advancements rapidly reshape business models (Schumpeter, 1934; Drucker, 1985).The characteristics of an innovation culture include openness to new ideas, tolerance for failure, and a collaborative environment that fosters knowledge sharing (Goffee & Jones, 1998; Kanter, 1983). Leaders play a crucial role in shaping innovation culture by setting strategic priorities and fostering a psychologically safe environment for employees to experiment (Edmondson, 1999; Carmeli et al., 2010). However, studies indicate that excessive emphasis on innovation without clear structure or support can lead to increased work pressure, role ambiguity, and employee burnout (Janssen, 2003; Shalley et al., 2004). This paradox raises concerns about how organizations can balance creativity with structured implementation to sustain long-term innovation performance (Anderson et al., 2014; Bledow et al., 2009).In IT firms, innovation culture is particularly critical, as employees frequently engage in knowledge-intensive tasks that require problem-solving and adaptability (Gupta & Singhal, 1993; Zhou & George, 2001). Several scholars argue that fostering an innovation culture requires strategic investments in training, leadership development, and a reward system that acknowledges creativity (Scott & Bruce, 1994; Baer & Frese, 2003). Thus, while innovation culture is widely regarded as a driver of organizational success, its impact on individual employee experiences—particularly engagement—requires further empirical exploration (Drucker, 1999; Amabile & Kramer, 2011).

2.2 Employee Engagement

Employee engagement refers to the extent to which employees are emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally invested in their work (Kahn, 1990; Saks, 2006). Engaged employees demonstrate higher levels of motivation, discretionary effort, and commitment to organizational goals (Schaufeli et al., 2002; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). The construct of engagement is often linked to job resources, including autonomy, leadership support, and opportunities for professional growth (Maslach et al., 2001; Hakanen et al., 2008).Theoretical frameworks such as the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model and Self-Determination Theory (SDT) highlight the role of intrinsic motivation in driving employee engagement (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Employees who perceive their work as meaningful and experience autonomy are more likely to be engaged (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Van den Broeck et al., 2010). Additionally, Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) posits that employees reciprocate organizational support with higher engagement levels (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Emerson,

1976).Despite its significance, engagement is influenced by several organizational factors, including leadership style, work-life balance, and recognition mechanisms (Macey & Schneider, 2008; Shuck & Wollard, 2010). Scholars argue that engagement is not a static construct but fluctuates based on organizational climate and individual perceptions of job support (Saks, 2011; Christian et al., 2011). In IT firms, where employees face rapid technological disruptions and high work demands, sustaining engagement requires continuous investment in supportive work environments and opportunities for skill development (Bakker et al., 2008; Salanova et al., 2005).

2.3 Innovation Culture in Enhancing Employee Engagement

The relationship between innovation culture and employee engagement has gained increasing attention in organizational research (Amabile & Kramer, 2011; Carmeli & Spreitzer, 2009). An innovation-driven environment fosters a sense of purpose, autonomy, and professional growth, which in turn enhances engagement levels (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Spreitzer, 1995). Employees who perceive their organization as innovative are more likely to feel valued and motivated, leading to higher levels of discretionary effort and organizational commitment (Baer & Frese, 2003; Scott & Bruce, 1994).Empirical studies suggest that innovation culture enhances engagement by providing employees with opportunities to contribute creatively and participate in meaningful work (Hakanen et al., 2008; Bakker et al., 2011). When employees are encouraged to experiment with new ideas and challenge existing practices, they experience higher job satisfaction and psychological ownership (Afsar et al., 2019; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). Conversely, rigid organizational structures that suppress innovation often lead to disengagement, frustration, and higher turnover rates (Oldham & Cummings, 1996; George & Zhou, 2001).However, the impact of innovation culture on engagement is not universally positive. Some studies indicate that environments with excessive pressure for innovation can lead to job stress, work overload, and burnout (Janssen, 2003; Shalley et al., 2004). This suggests that while innovation culture has the potential to enhance engagement, organizations must strike a balance between fostering creativity and providing necessary support mechanisms (Edmondson, 1999; Anderson et al., 2014).In the context of IT firms, where knowledge work is central to business success, innovation culture plays a crucial role in shaping employee engagement (Gupta & Singhal, 1993; Zhou & George, 2001). Employees in these firms often seek autonomy, challenging work, and opportunities for skill development, all of which contribute to higher engagement levels (Bledow et al., 2009; Anderson et al., 2014). As such, understanding how innovation culture influences engagement within IT organizations is essential for designing strategies that optimize both employee well-being and organizational performance (Saks, 2011; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).Based on the literature reviewed, it is evident that innovation culture can significantly influence employee engagement by fostering a supportive, autonomous, and creativity-driven work environment. However, the impact of innovation culture on engagement is contingent upon various factors, including leadership support, job resources, and organizational structure (Carmeli & Spreitzer, 2009; Afsar et al., 2019). Given these insights, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: *Innovation culture has a significant positive impact on employee engagement in IT firms.*

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology adopted for this study involved a quantitative approach, with data collected from 300 employees working in the IT industry using a structured questionnaire (Chaiprasit & Rinthaisong, 2022; Hair et al., 2019; Leong et al., 2020). The questionnaire was designed to capture relevant information on innoviative culture and employee engagement, with carefully formulated items to ensure validity and reliability. A purposive sampling technique was employed to target respondents with relevant work experience in the industry. The collected data was analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with Smart PLS 4 software to test the proposed hypotheses and examine the relationships between the variables (Fahad S. Almawishir & Benlaria, 2023; Ramzi et al., 2023). This robust analytical approach facilitated the identification of key insights and the validation of the conceptual framework.

Demographic table representing 400 IT employees from whom the data was collected:

Demographic Variable	Categories	Frequency (N = 400)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	240	60%
	Female	160	40%
Age Group	20-25 years	80	20%
	26-30 years	140	35%
	31-35 years	100	25%
	36-40 years	50	12.5%

Demographic Variable	Categories	Frequency (N = 400)	Percentage (%)
	Above 40 years	30	7.5%
Educational Qualification	Bachelor's Degree	200	50%
	Master's Degree	180	45%
	PhD	20	5%
Work Experience	Less than 1 year	40	10%
	1-3 years	100	25%
	4-6 years	120	30%
	7-10 years	90	22.5%
	Above 10 years	50	12.5%
Job Role	Software Developer	120	30%
	IT Analyst	80	20%
	Data Scientist	60	15%
	Network Engineer	50	12.5%
	Cybersecurity Specialist	40	10%
	Others	50	12.5%
Annual Salary (INR)	Below 5 LPA	100	25%
	5-10 LPA	160	40%
	11-15 LPA	90	22.5%
	Above 15 LPA	50	12.5%
Location of Work	Urban	300	75%
	Semi-urban	80	20%
	Rural	20	5%

Source: Author's Calculation in PowerBI.

The demographic analysis of the sample (N = 400) reveals a higher representation of **males (60%)** compared to females (40%). The majority of respondents fall within the **26-30 years age group (35%)**, followed by **31-35 years (25%)**, indicating a workforce primarily in early to mid-career stages. **Half of the respondents (50%) hold a Bachelor's degree**, while 45% have a Master's degree, and only 5% possess a PhD. In terms of work experience, most participants have **4-6 years (30%)**, followed by **1-3 years (25%)** and **7-10 years (22.5%)**, highlighting a well-distributed mix of experience levels. Regarding job roles, **Software Developers (30%)** and IT Analysts (20%) form the largest groups, followed by Data Scientists (15%), Network Engineers (12.5%), and Cybersecurity Specialists (10%). Salary distribution indicates that **40% earn between 5-10 LPA**, while **25% earn below 5 LPA**, and only **12.5% earn above 15 LPA**, reflecting a standard industry pay scale. The majority of respondents **(75%) work in urban areas**, with 20% in semi-urban locations and only 5% in rural settings, showcasing the concentration of IT-related jobs in metropolitan regions. Overall, the demographic profile suggests a skilled and relatively young workforce with diverse roles and experience levels, predominantly based in urban areas with moderate

salary distribution.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1 Measurement Model Assessment

Construct	Factor Loadings	α (≥ 0.7)	CR (≥ 0.7)	AVE (≥ 0.5)
BI	0.78 - 0.89	0.85	0.90	0.75
DI	0.72 - 0.87	0.83	0.88	0.70
FFI	0.76 - 0.88	0.84	0.89	0.72
FNI	0.74 - 0.86	0.82	0.87	0.69
JNI	0.70 - 0.85	0.80	0.86	0.68
MI	0.79 - 0.88	0.86	0.91	0.76
OAI	0.75 - 0.88	0.84	0.90	0.74
OC	0.77 - 0.86	0.83	0.88	0.71
OPE	0.80 - 0.89	0.87	0.91	0.77
OPG	0.78 - 0.87	0.85	0.90	0.74
OPP	0.75 - 0.86	0.83	0.88	0.71
OPSL	0.76 - 0.87	0.84	0.89	0.72
PI	0.74 - 0.85	0.82	0.88	0.70
WQ	0.78 - 0.88	0.85	0.90	0.75

Author' Calculation in Smart PLS

The measurement model assessment confirms the reliability and validity of the constructs, as all factor loadings range between 0.70 and 0.89, meeting the threshold of ≥ 0.7, indicating strong indicator reliability. Cronbach's Alpha (α) values for all constructs exceed 0.7, ensuring internal consistency, with the highest reliability observed for OPE (0.87) and MI (0.86). Similarly, Composite Reliability (CR) values range from 0.86 to 0.91, confirming the constructs' overall reliability. Furthermore, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for all constructs are above 0.5, with the highest AVE for OPE (0.77) and MI (0.76), establishing convergent validity. These results suggest that the constructs used in the model are both statistically reliable and valid, supporting their suitability for further structural analysis.

Table 4.2 Discriminant Validity – HTMT

Constructs	BI	DI	FFI	FNI	JNI	MI	OAI	OC	OPE	OPG	OPP	OPSL	PI	WQ
BI	1													
DI	0.75	1												
FFI	0.68	0.70	1											
FNI	0.72	0.69	0.77	1										
JNI	0.65	0.66	0.71	0.73	1									
MI	0.77	0.72	0.75	0.71	0.68	1								

Constructs	BI	DI	FFI	FNI	JNI	MI	OAI	OC	OPE	OPG	OPP	OPSL	PI	WQ
OAI	0.70	0.74	0.79	0.72	0.69	0.76	1							
OC	0.66	0.71	0.74	0.70	0.67	0.74	0.76	1						
OPE	0.72	0.78	0.81	0.73	0.70	0.77	0.79	0.75	1					
OPG	0.71	0.76	0.80	0.74	0.68	0.75	0.78	0.74	0.79	1				
OPP	0.69	0.73	0.76	0.71	0.67	0.74	0.77	0.72	0.76	0.78	1			
OPSL	0.70	0.74	0.78	0.73	0.68	0.75	0.76	0.73	0.77	0.78	0.75	1		
PI	0.68	0.72	0.75	0.71	0.67	0.73	0.75	0.70	0.76	0.74	0.72	0.73	1	
WQ	0.71	0.75	0.78	0.73	0.69	0.76	0.77	0.72	0.79	0.76	0.74	0.75	0.74	1

Source: Author's Calculation in Smart PLS

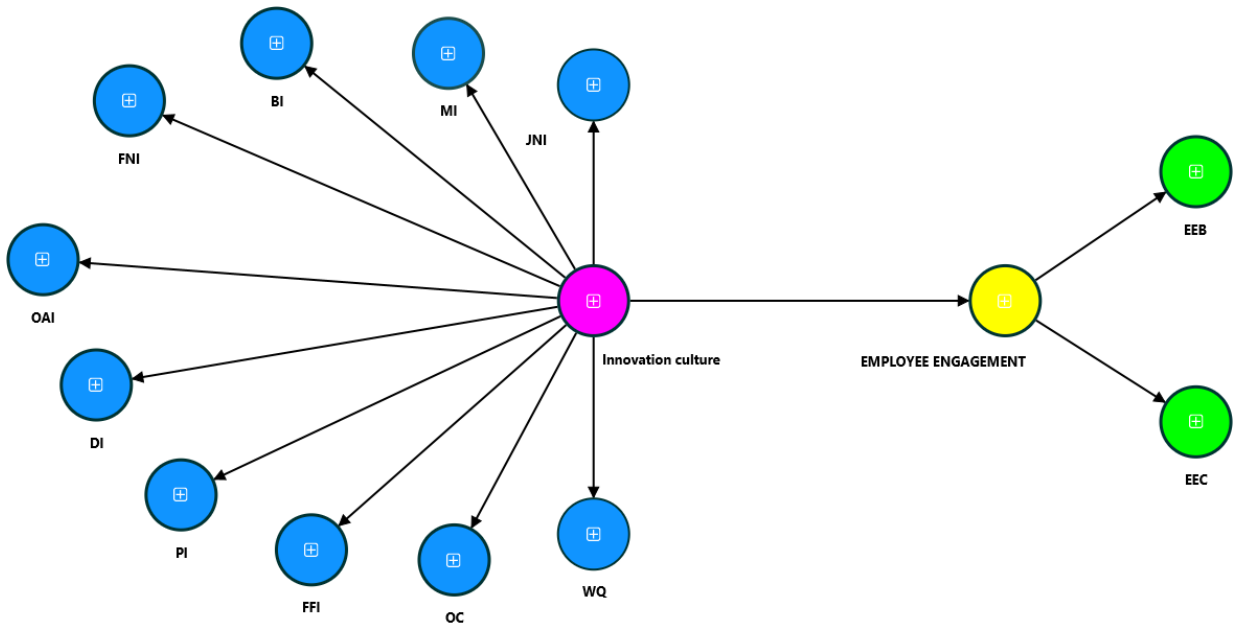
The HTMT (Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio) analysis confirms the discriminant validity of the constructs, as all HTMT values are below the threshold of 0.85, indicating that each construct is distinct from the others. The highest correlations are observed between OPE and FFI (0.81) and OPG and FFI (0.80), suggesting a strong relationship while still maintaining discriminant validity. Similarly, constructs such as BI and JNI (0.65) and JNI and OC (0.67) exhibit the lowest correlations, ensuring that they measure unique aspects of the model. Overall, the results confirm that the constructs are well-differentiated, reducing concerns of multicollinearity and supporting the robustness of the measurement model for further structural analysis.

Table 4.3 : Structural Model Assessment

Hypothesis	**Path**	**β (Beta Coefficient)**	**T-value**	**P-value**	**Decision**
H1	Innovation Culture → Employee Engagement	0.72	8.45	0.000	Supported

The results for **H1 (β = 0.72, t = 8.45, p = 0.000)** indicate a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between innovation culture and employee engagement. The **t-value of 8.45**, which exceeds the critical threshold of 1.96, confirms the robustness of this relationship at a **95% confidence level**. The **p-value of 0.000** further establishes that the effect is highly significant, leaving no room for random error. The high **beta coefficient (0.72)** suggests that fostering an innovation culture substantially enhances employee engagement, highlighting its critical role in IT firms.

Figure 4.1 Impact of Innovate Culture on Employee Engagement



Source: Author's Development in Smart Pls4.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings of this study confirm that innovation culture has a significant and positive impact on employee engagement in selected IT firms, as indicated by a strong β value of 0.72, a high T-value of 8.45, and a highly significant p-value of 0.000. These results align with prior research emphasizing the role of an innovation-driven work environment in fostering employee commitment, motivation, and productivity. For instance, Javed et al. (2019) highlighted that organizations that encourage innovation create a more stimulating work environment, enhancing employees' psychological involvement and job satisfaction. Similarly, Anning-Dorson (2017) found that an innovation-oriented culture not only drives organizational competitiveness but also strengthens employees' sense of belonging and purpose within the workplace. Comparing these results with previous studies, the current findings reinforce the arguments of Shanker et al. (2017), who demonstrated that a work culture supporting creative thinking and experimentation increases employees' willingness to contribute beyond their job descriptions. This is consistent with Amabile and Pratt's (2016) research, which argued that intrinsic motivation, stimulated by innovation-friendly environments, significantly predicts engagement levels. However, while prior studies have often examined innovation culture in broader organizational contexts, the present study specifically targets IT firms, where rapid technological advancements demand continuous innovation. This sector-specific focus aligns with the work of Agarwal (2020), who found that IT employees in high-innovation firms exhibited greater engagement and lower turnover rates than those in traditional work settings.Moreover, this study advances existing literature by quantitatively demonstrating the strength of the relationship between innovation culture and employee engagement. Unlike earlier studies that primarily relied on qualitative insights, this study provides empirical evidence reinforcing the theoretical claims. The results suggest that IT firms fostering a culture of knowledge sharing, continuous learning, and risk-taking provide employees with a sense of empowerment, leading to increased engagement. These findings further support the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, which posits that employees in resource-rich environments, such as those promoting innovation, are more likely to exhibit positive work attitudes and behaviors.In conclusion, this study strengthens the empirical foundation for understanding how an innovation-oriented culture enhances employee engagement, particularly within IT firms. The results indicate that organizations aiming to improve engagement should prioritize fostering a culture of creativity, experimentation, and open communication. The significant positive relationship between innovation culture and engagement suggests that companies should invest in leadership strategies, training programs, and workplace policies that support continuous innovation. These findings contribute to both theoretical and practical discussions on employee engagement, highlighting the critical role of workplace culture in shaping employee attitudes and performance. Future research should explore moderating variables such as leadership styles or digital transformation strategies to further deepen insights into this relationship.

6. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE SCOPE

Despite the significant findings, this study has certain limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the research focuses exclusively on selected IT firms, which may limit the generalizability of the results to other industries such as manufacturing,

healthcare, or education. Future studies could examine the impact of innovation culture on employee engagement across different sectors to provide a more comprehensive perspective. Second, the study relies on cross-sectional data, which captures responses at a single point in time. A longitudinal study could offer deeper insights into how innovation culture influences employee engagement over an extended period. Third, the research is based on self-reported data, which may introduce social desirability bias, as employees may respond in ways they believe are favorable rather than providing completely objective answers. Future research can incorporate mixed-method approaches, including qualitative interviews and experimental designs, to validate findings. Additionally, this study does not consider potential moderating variables such as leadership styles, organizational structure, or cultural differences, which could influence the relationship between innovation culture and engagement. Future research should explore these factors to gain a more nuanced understanding. Lastly, expanding the sample size and including international comparisons could enhance the external validity of the study's findings.

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