

Transformational leadership and knowledge-sharing intention among sales employees in Vietnamese enterprises

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of transformational leadership and affective commitment on the knowledge-sharing intention among sales employees in enterprises in Hanoi. Using online structured questionnaires, data was gathered from 318 voluntary respondents employed as salespersons or in sales departments in enterprises based in Hanoi, Vietnam. The collected data was analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with the support of Smart PLS 4 to assess the measurement and structural model and examine the proposed hypotheses. The research findings revealed positive associations between transformational leadership, affective commitment, and employees' willingness to share knowledge. In particular, transformational leadership explained 56% and 40.5% of the variance in affective commitment and knowledge-sharing intention, respectively. Furthermore, the study emphasized the mediating role of affective commitment in the favorable effects of transformational leadership on employees' knowledge-sharing intention. The research findings offer practical recommendations for corporate leaders and managers to adopt the transformational leadership style and promote affective commitment among employees to foster knowledge sharing among colleagues.

1. Introduction

The long-term growth of organizations depends on their human resource base. Apart from recruiting talented employees, organizations should also focus on developing and enhancing employees' competencies and personal abilities to boost productivity and long-term growth. A valuable intangible asset, collective knowledge encompasses individual contributions such as materials, working tips, methods, opinions, and creative ideas. It is what the organization gains when employees voluntarily share their knowledge and assist one another in learning new ways to work more efficiently (Laycock, 2005). This shared knowledge can drive innovation and efficiency within enterprises (Ipe, 2003). Through their leadership style, corporate leaders are responsible for motivating employees to share their expertise with colleagues (Lee et al., 2010). In addition, corporate leaders can foster a sense of fulfillment and motivation among staff members to contribute to the company by embracing an inspiring and empowering leadership style. This is crucial in fostering an emotional bond between employees and the organization (Yiing & Ahmad, 2009).

The concept of transformational leadership was initially introduced by Burn (1978) and further developed by Bass (1985). Transformational leadership is becoming increasingly popular and recognized for its effectiveness in the increasingly multicultural and globalized business environment (Bonsu & Twum-Danso, 2018). This leadership style emphasizes building strong relationships between leaders and followers, acknowledging the personal development and well-being of the followers. By nurturing these relationships, transformational leaders serve as mentors, providing guidance and support to help their followers excel. This, in turn, fosters trust and respect among the team, boosts their confidence, and creates a positive and supportive work environment. Through empowering and inspiring leadership, organizational leaders can cultivate a sense of purpose and happiness among employees, leading to emotional engagement with the organization (Yiing & Ahmad, 2009).

Affective commitment, known as one of three distinguished types of organizational commitment, namely normative, affective, and continuance commitment, is the term used to describe people's feelings of attachment to their companies (Meyer & Allen, 1991). However, compared to normative or continuous commitment, affective commitment substantially affects employees' dedication to their organizations (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Numerous empirical studies (Cooper-Hakim & Viswesvaran, 2005; Riketta, 2005; Solinger et al., 2008) have demonstrated a strong correlation between emotional commitment and job performance and other factors affecting employees in their organizations. As a result, this study will focus only on affective commitment, referring to the state where a worker feels vital to the business, finds fulfillment in their work, and has positive feelings toward the company (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Employees are more inclined to share their personal opinions and ideas with their colleagues when they have a strong sense of emotional connection and belonging to the organization and feel empowered to tackle organizational challenges (van den Hooff & de Ridder, 2004).

Due to the demanding nature of sales roles, sales employees must continually update their product and service knowledge through company-provided training and learning courses. Additionally, collaborating within teams to develop innovative and effective strategies for reaching potential customers is crucial. In today's highly competitive business environment, incentivizing sales employees to engage in continuous learning and knowledge sharing can provide a competitive edge for companies seeking to boost their sales performance. As a result, there is an increasing necessity for organizations to encourage and facilitate the sharing of knowledge among employees. Leaders who embody transformational leadership can play a pivotal role in motivating employees to participate in knowledge-sharing initiatives within the company.

Nevertheless, employees' emotional bond with the organization is also critical. Several studies have explored the impact of transformational leadership on employees' affective commitment and its influence on knowledge-sharing processes. For instance, research in Vietnamese enterprises demonstrated that shared and transformational leadership significantly influences subordinates' knowledge-sharing behavior (Tran et al., 2018). However, empirical studies have not examined the relationship between transformational leadership, affective commitment, and employees' knowledge-sharing intention. The specific role of affective commitment in the relationship between transformational leadership and knowledge-sharing intention, especially in Vietnamese sales, remains under-researched.

Based on the above arguments, the study aims to explore this gap by examining how transformational leadership affects employees' affective commitment to the organizations and how this, in turn, influences their willingness to share knowledge among salespersons working in enterprises located in Hanoi, Vietnam. Particularly, this study utilizes the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) to explore the underlying mechanisms of the positive relationship between transformational leadership and knowledge-sharing intention by examining the mediating role of affective commitment. By doing this, the study adds to the body of knowledge on knowledge-sharing intention by providing empirical evidence for transformational leadership and affective commitment as crucial antecedents of knowledge-sharing intention in the Vietnamese cultural context. Next, while earlier studies have only examined affective organizational commitment as one facet of organizational commitment about transformational leadership and knowledge-sharing intention, this study extends prior research by investigating the mediating role of affective commitment in the social exchange process between transformational leadership and knowledge-sharing intention. This study contributes to the global understanding of transformational leadership and knowledge management in emerging economies. It fills an essential gap in the literature on Southeast Asia, offering insights into how transformational leadership practices can be optimized for knowledge-sharing behaviors among salespersons in culturally distinct environments. Sales managers may be better able to cultivate a culture of cooperation, trust, and knowledge-sharing among their sales employees if they embrace transformational leadership. Transformational leaders can encourage salespeople to share knowledge by improving practical commitment, team performance, customer satisfaction, and overall sales effectiveness.

2. Theoretical background and hypothesis development

2.1. Transformational leadership and employee's knowledge sharing intention

Organizational leaders are suggested to play a pivotal role in fostering a culture of shared learning among employees and building a strong knowledge base within the organization (Stonehouse & Pemberton, 1999). By nurturing subordinates' trust, empowering them to express their opinions freely, and highlighting the significance of individual knowledge for organizational success, leaders can cultivate an organizational learning culture that encourages employees to share knowledge. Previous studies (Crawford, 2005; Han, Seo, Yoon, et al., 2016; Liu & DeFrank, 2013) have confirmed that transformational leadership significantly impacts organizational knowledge management.

Transformational leaders foster a nurturing work environment to encourage their team members to recognize the value of sharing knowledge within the organization and to take pleasure in sharing what they have learned with others (Han, Seo, Yoon, et al., 2016; Lin, 2007; Liu & DeFrank, 2013; Zhu et al., 2005). Moreover, transformational leadership motivates followers to act in the organization's best interests, making them more willing to share knowledge without worrying about being disadvantaged (Liu & DeFrank, 2013). The support and guidance provided by transformational leaders can increase employees' willingness to share their expertise (Lin, 2007). Leaders who demonstrate consideration for their employees and provide coaching can effectively encourage a positive and open work environment, leading to increased participation in knowledge sharing (Xue et al., 2011). Transformational leaders facilitate employees' willingness to share expertise by strengthening their commitment to the organization and enhancing their mental well-being. They do this by

addressing employees' work-related concerns, supporting their personal needs, and building their self-confidence to tackle challenges (Han, Seo, Yoon, et al., 2016). Therefore, the following hypothesis can be proposed:

H1: Transformational leadership is positively related to employees' knowledge-sharing intention

2.2. Transformational leadership and affective commitment

Previous studies show leadership style is closely linked to employees' feelings about their organization (Mowday et al., 1982). Leaders should prioritize styles such as transformational leadership to foster employee engagement and encourage them to stay longer in the organization. Transformational leaders demonstrate empathy and care for their followers' personal needs, which helps improve their well-being and self-confidence. This, in turn, strengthens employees' connection to the organization (Bono & Judge, 2003). The close and harmonious relationship between a transformational leader and their followers motivates employees to feel more emotionally connected to the organizations (Sahu et al., 2018).

Previous research has indicated that the more transformational a leader is, the stronger the emotional connection employees have with the organization (Allen et al., 2017; Chi et al., 2007; Top et al., 2015). By promoting good practices related to corporate social responsibility, transformational leaders make subordinates feel the organization values all its stakeholders and is committed to sustainable development. This helps employees feel more emotionally attached and dedicated to the organization. Transformational leaders also build strong emotional bonds between employees and organizations by addressing employees' concerns, presenting a positive vision for the future, instilling belief in overcoming challenges, and fostering enthusiasm for organizational success (Allen et al., 2017). By motivating employees and offering personal attention, these leaders increase self-confidence, self-worth, and motivation, strengthening their commitment to the organization and encouraging them to stay longer. Consequently, it is hypothesized that transformational leadership positively affects employee's affective commitment.

H2: Transformational leadership has a positive effect on employee's affective commitment

2.3. Affective commitment and employees' knowledge-sharing intention

Organizational commitment is crucial in persuading employees to share their expertise and knowledge without additional incentives (Cabrera et al., 2006). It is suggested that leaders should foster a strong emotional connection between employees and their organization to encourage knowledge-sharing among team members (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

Social exchange theory can be used to explain the positive relationship between affective commitment and an employee's inclination to share knowledge with others (Blau, 1964). According to this theory, individuals tend to respond in kind to how others behave. When individuals believe someone will react positively, they are more likely to share valuable information or resources. This willingness to share valuable assets and resources is based on trust, gratitude, and shared beliefs and norms. Therefore, when employees perceive their colleagues as individuals who value knowledge exchange and are willing to reciprocate by sharing their insights, they are more inclined to actively participate in frequently sharing knowledge. The affection, love, and pride individuals feel towards their work significantly influence their willingness to share expertise in the workplace. When employees have a solid emotional attachment to their organization, they are more likely to believe that their

colleagues share similar beliefs and values, leading to increased knowledge exchange. A strong emotional bond with the organization boosts job satisfaction, trust, and motivation to share knowledge.

Prior research (Hislop, 2003; Jo & Joo, 2011; van den Hooff & de Ridder, 2004) has established that employees are likelier to share knowledge with others when they feel emotionally connected to their organization. Affective commitment encourages employees to communicate and collaborate with their colleagues. As employees engage in conversations and teamwork, they develop a sense of intimacy that fosters a comfortable environment for sharing knowledge, experiences, and work-related insights. Consequently, promoting a strong emotional connection between employees and the organization can increase their willingness to share knowledge (Camelo-Ordaz et al., 2011). In essence, a solid affective commitment of employees to the organization is expected to reduce their reluctance to share knowledge and alleviate their concerns about losing exclusive ownership of valuable resources, such as work-related tips and information. Therefore, the following hypothesis can be inferred:

H3: Affective commitment positively impacts employees' knowledge-sharing intention

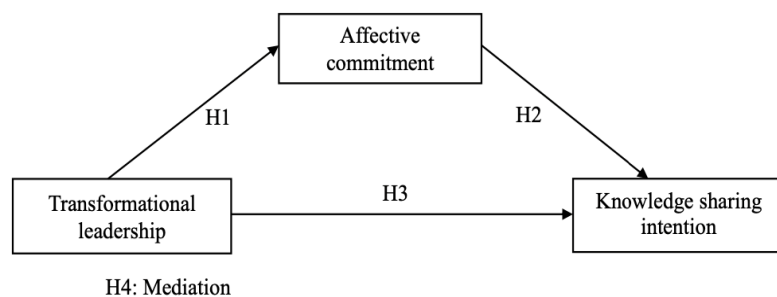
2.4. Affective commitment mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and employees' knowledge-sharing intention

In a previous study, researchers investigated how organizational commitment mediates the positive effect of transformational leadership on knowledge-sharing intention (Han, Seo, Li, et al., 2016). Transformational leadership encourages employees to think creatively and shows empathy for their concerns, creating an environment where employees feel motivated to come up with solutions to work challenges. This, in turn, motivates followers to work effectively and fosters a strong sense of attachment to the organization (Bono & Judge, 2003; Jackson et al., 2013; Walumbwa & Lawler, 2003). Transformational leaders inspire a positive outlook on the organization's future and build strong employee connections. As a result, employees become more emotionally attached and committed to the organizations. Employees with this strong connection are likelier to take on additional responsibilities and work diligently. Sharing knowledge and innovative ideas to address work-related challenges is one of the extra duties that emotionally connected employees may feel compelled to undertake (van den Hooff & de Ridder, 2004). By providing inspirational motivation and personalized attention to each employee, transformational leaders can boost their self-confidence, sense of self-worth, and work motivation, ultimately increasing their affective commitment to the organization and prolonging their tenure with the company.

Furthermore, employees with a high affective commitment to their organizations feel willing to reciprocate by sharing their insights, and they are more likely to engage in frequent knowledge sharing (Cabrera et al., 2006; Jo & Joo, 2011). Therefore, transformational leadership enhances employees' affective commitment to their organizations. In turn, the more psychologically attached employees are to their enterprises, the more voluntarily they tend to share their knowledge. Therefore, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

H4: Affective commitment mediates the positive relationship between transformational leadership and employees' knowledge-sharing intention

Figure 1 presents the conceptual research framework.

Figure 1*Conceptual Research Framework*

Source. Authors' work

3. Methodology**3.1. Sample and procedure**

In this study, non-probability sampling was applied with the convenience sampling technique to reach the target population due to the advantages of low cost, accessibility, and efficiency (Etikan et al., 2016; Stratton, 2021). The online survey uses Google Forms and features multiple-choice questions related to observational variables. It is then distributed to potential participants via online channels such as emails, Messengers, and Zalo. The online form allowed receivers to survey with their consent, and they can stop anytime. Furthermore, conducting the survey online enables the researchers to efficiently gather data from participants, as they can easily complete the survey using their smartphones or laptops. Comrey and Lee (2013) suggested that when employing Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), researchers should aim for a recommended sample size of around 300. This study distributed a survey questionnaire to 367 individuals employed as salespersons or in sales departments at enterprises in Hanoi. This survey had a response rate of 93.18% with 342 responses. Of the initial reactions, 24 were invalid due to missing data or incomplete information and were removed from the analysis. After excluding these inappropriate responses, a final sample of 318 was used for data analysis.

Most respondents were women, comprising approximately 65.7% of the total, with 209 individuals. In contrast, men accounted for only about 34%, with 100 respondents. About 39% of the total respondents, equivalent to 124 individuals, fell into the 18 - 25 age group. Seventy-three respondents aged 26 - 35 and 83 in the 36 - 45 age group comprised 23% and 26% of the total number, respectively. The predominant group among the survey participants were salespeople holding college degrees, making up 77.7%, with 247 out of 318 individuals. Approximately 15% of the respondents held master's degrees, totaling 45 individuals. Additionally, there were approximately 12 high school graduates, accounting for 3.8%. The survey results indicate a high number of new sales members with less than 1 year of working experience or 01 to less than 03 years of working experience, comprising 95 and 75 individuals, representing 29.2% and 23.6% of the total respondents, respectively. Conversely, the lowest number of respondents belongs to the category of 07 to less than 10 years of working experience, with only 25 individuals. Most survey participants are employed in the retail industry, totaling 96 individuals, accounting for 30.2% of the respondents. The largest groups of respondents work in the pharmacy and insurance sectors, with 43 individuals (16%) and 51 individuals (13.5%), respectively. Additionally, out of 318 respondents, 82 individuals work in enterprises with a small-scale workforce of 10 to 50, representing 25.8%. This is

followed by 22.3% of respondents working in companies with over 300 employees. Notably, 71 respondents are employed by large enterprises with more than 300 employees, while 65 respondents work in companies with 50 to 100 employees. Following closely are 22.3% of survey participants working in organizations with over 300 employees. Notably, 71 respondents are employed by large enterprises with more than 300 employees, while 65 respondents work in companies with 50 to 100 employees.

3.2. Measurement

Transformational leadership, knowledge-sharing intention, and affective commitment are measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

A transformational leadership measure was developed from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (Form 5X) introduced by Bass and Avolio (1995), which has 17 items and five sub-constructs: “Idealized Influence by Attributes,” “Idealized Influence by Behaviors,” “Inspirational Motivation,” “Intellectual Stimulation,” and “Individual Consideration.” The sample item is “Leaders emphasize a collective sense of mission and values amongst employees.”

Affective commitment was adopted from Meyer and Allen’s (1997) measurement, which has nine items. The sample item is “I feel that problems faced by my organization are also my problems to be solved”.

The knowledge-sharing intention was evaluated with seven items from Bock et al. (2005) and Reychav and Weisberg (2010), including two dimensions, such as “intention to share explicit knowledge” and “intention to share implicit knowledge.” The sample items are “I will share my work reports and official documents with members of my organization more frequently in the future” and “People in my organization will be willing to share knowledge based on their personal working experience more frequently”.

3.3. Analysis method

This research utilized PLS-SEM with the assistance of SmartPLS 4 to analyze the data and validate the proposed hypothesis. PLS-SEM was chosen due to its ability to handle small sample sizes and non-normal data for complex model sources (Hair et al., 2017). SmartPLS 4 is preferred over other statistical tools for PLS-SEM due to its user-friendly interface, faster data estimation processing, and advanced model assessment features (Cheah et al., 2024). The SmartPLS 4 software program has enabled numerous researchers to analyze the intricate relationships between latent variables, which are measured through sets of observed variables (Cheah et al., 2024). Its comprehensive features, intuitive design, and strong support for academic and practical applications position it as a top choice for researchers aiming to implement PLS-SEM. The study followed a two-stage analytical process, including the measurement model evaluation using the PLS algorithm and the structural model assessment using the PLS bootstrapping technique to test the proposed hypothesis (Hair et al., 2019).

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Results

4.1.1. Measurement model assessment

The research model comprised two higher-order reflective constructs: transformational leadership and knowledge-sharing intention. As a result, the first-order (lower-order) measurement model was initially assessed, followed by the second-order (higher-order) constructs.

4.1.1.1. Evaluation of first-order measurement model

This study employed internal consistency, construct reliability, and validity criteria to scrutinize the measurement model of first-order reflective constructs. Firstly, reflective indicator loadings above 0.5 were retained to ensure adequate convergent validity in the PLS-SEM model (Hair et al., 2017). Convergent validity was further substantiated by the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values, representing the proportion of variance accounted for by factors. All latent variables in the assessed model exhibited acceptable convergent reliability, with AVE values exceeding 0.5 (Hair et al., 2019) (see Table 1). The Cronbach's Alpha values for the first-order constructs ranged from 0.734 (idealized influence by attributes) to 0.912 (intention to share implicit knowledge) (see Table 1), all surpassing the threshold of 0.7. Indicator reliability was assessed using Composite Reliability (CR), where a value exceeding 0.7 indicates satisfactory internal consistency of constructs (see Table 1) (Hair et al., 2019).

Table 1

First-Order Construct Validity and Reliability

Constructs	Cronbach's Alpha (> 0.70)	Composite reliability (> 0.70)	AVE (> 0.50)
Idealized influence by Attributes (IA)	0.734	0.752	0.653
Idealized influence by Behaviors (IB)	0.876	0.877	0.729
Inspirational Motivation (IM)	0.867	0.869	0.715
Intellectual Consideration (IC)	0.821	0.831	0.737
Intellectual Stimulation (IS)	0.856	0.856	0.777
Intention to share Explicit Knowledge (IEK)	0.889	0.889	0.819
Intention to share Implicit Knowledge (IIK)	0.912	0.912	0.791

Source. Authors' work

4.1.1.2. Evaluation of second-order measurement model

This study used a two-step process to evaluate the second-order measurement model. Initially, latent variable scores were computed using the first-order model, which was then utilized to build a subsequent model. The scores for these latent variables were then used as weights for the corresponding individual items of the second-order constructs.

Table 2 indicated that all constructs achieved CR values greater than 0.7, AVE values exceeding the threshold of 0.5, and Cronbach's Alpha coefficients above 0.7. Additionally, all item factor loadings surpassed the recommended cutoff point of 0.7, confirming convergent validity for the entire sample (Hair et al., 2019). Moreover, the Heterotrait–monotrait (HTMT) ratio applied to all datasets was more appropriate for assessing discriminant validity than the Fornell and Lacker criterion (Henseler et al., 2016). It is suggested that the HTMT matrix values should not exceed 0.90, especially when comparing different constructs (Kline, 2011). The results presented in Table 2 did not surpass this threshold in any sample datasets, demonstrating sufficient discriminant validity for the model.

Table 2

Second-order construct Reliability, Construct and Discriminant Validity

Constructs	Cronbach's Alpha (> 0.70)	Compositer eliability (> 0.70)	AVE (> 0.50)	Inner VIF	Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT)		
					TTL	AAOC	KKSI
Transformational leadership	0.920	0.922	0.757	2.274			
Affective commitment	0.923	0.924	0.722	11.000	00.810		
Knowledge-sharing Intention	0.929	0.932	0.934	NN/A	00.589	00.673	

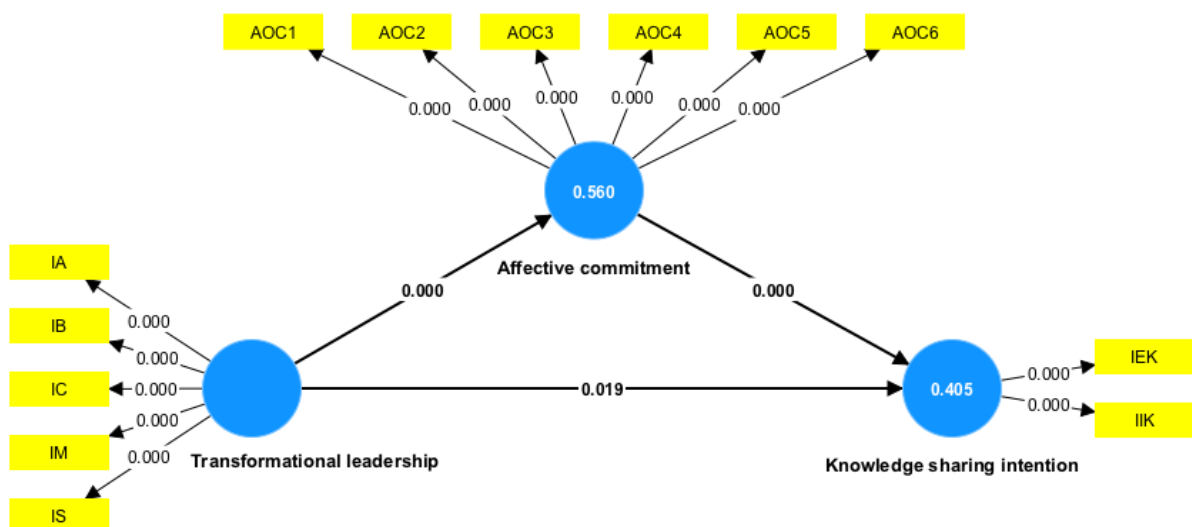
Source. Authors' work

4.1.2. Structural model assessment

In this phase, this study analyzed the structural model to validate the proposed relationships. Two common approaches to evaluate the model's predictive accuracy involve assessing R^2 and Q^2 . R^2 gauges the extent to which variance predictions account for the exogenous variables. The research findings revealed that the structural model accounted for 56% of the variance in affective organizational commitment ($R^2 = 56\%$) and 40.5% intention of knowledge sharing ($R^2 = 40.5\%$). This study also employed a blindfolding approach to calculate the Q^2 values, which measure predictive significance. The results validated the predictive importance of the model, with Q^2 values for both affective commitment ($Q^2 = 0.399$) and knowledge-sharing intention ($Q^2 = 0.373$) surpassing zero. Moreover, the effect size (f^2) is classified as small (0.02), medium (0.15), and large (0.35). A f^2 value of < 0.02 indicates no significant effect. The effect size of transformational leadership on affective commitment ($f^2 = 1.274$) was huge. In contrast, the effect size of affective commitment about the knowledge-sharing intention was medium ($f^2 = 0.176$). Additionally, the effect size of transformational leadership on the knowledge-sharing intention was small ($f^2 = 0.024$).

Figure 2

Structural Equation Model Result



Source. Authors' work

Figure 2 describes the results of structural model evaluation and hypothesis testing.

This study utilized the bootstrapping technique with 5,000 re-samplings to assess the proposed hypotheses. The initial hypothesis focused on the positive effect of transformational leadership on the knowledge-sharing intention. The results demonstrated a significant positive impact of transformational leadership on the knowledge-sharing intention ($\beta = 0.547$; $p < 0.01$), thus confirming H1.

In support of the second hypothesis, which examines the relationship between transformational leadership and affective commitment, the findings revealed a significant positive influence of transformational leadership on affective commitment ($\beta = 0.749$; $p < 0.01$), thus confirming H2. Additionally, hypothesis 3 was also accepted, as affective commitment significantly positively impacted the knowledge-sharing intention ($\beta = 0.489$; $p < 0.01$).

The final hypothesis suggests that affective commitment mediates the positive effect of transformational leadership on knowledge-sharing intention. The indirect effect was examined to assess the mediating effect of affective commitment on the positive impact of transformational leadership on knowledge-sharing intention. The findings, as detailed in Table 3, confirmed the significance of the indirect effect of affective commitment ($\beta = 0.366$; $p < 0.01$), with the 95% confidence intervals (0.243; 0.487) excluding zero. Moreover, when transformational leadership was introduced simultaneously with affective commitment as a predictors of the knowledge-sharing intention, the direct effect of transformational leadership on the knowledge-sharing intention decreased from 0.547 to 0.181. Still, it remained significant, indicating partial mediation by affective commitment. Therefore, hypothesis 4 was substantiated.

Table 3

Results of Hypothesis Testing

Relationship	Path coeff.	SD	T-value	p-values	95% CI		
					2.5%	97.5%	
Total effect							
H1 TL ->KSI	0.547	0.053	10.369	0.000	0.441	0.646	Supported
Direct effect							
TL -> KSI	0.181	0.077	2.349	0.019	0.032	0.333	
HH2 TL -> AOC	0.749	0.037	20.199	0.000	0.667	0.815	Supported
HH3 AOC -> KSI	0.489	0.077	6.322	0.000	0.333	0.632	Supported
Indirect effect							
HH4 TL -> AOC -> KSI	0.366	0.062	5.932	0.000	0.243	0.487	Supported

Source. Authors' work

4.2. Discussion

This study underscores the significant impact of transformational leaders on employees' affective commitment and knowledge-sharing intention among sales employees in Hanoi-based enterprises. Additionally, it investigates the mediating role of affective commitment in the positive relationship between transformational leadership and employees' knowledge-sharing intention.

The research findings indicate that transformational leaders can influence sales employees' inclination to knowledge sharing at work. These results align with previous studies (Crawford, 2005; Lee et al., 2010; Lin & Hsiao, 2014), yet they offer additional insights into the specific cultural and organizational context of Vietnam, an emerging economy with distinct leadership dynamics. Transformational leaders with intelligence stimulation motivate employees to consider multiple perspectives and consistently seek further insights on work-related matters, thereby fostering knowledge sharing amongst employees (Lee et al., 2010). Furthermore, the harmonious relationship between leaders and subordinates and the inspirational motivation provided by leaders can promote subordinates' willingness to share knowledge with colleagues (Crawford, 2005). Additionally, transformational leadership cultivates a supportive climate that motivates followers to act in the organization's best interests, fostering a willingness to share valuable knowledge without fear of being disadvantaged. Leaders who show genuine care for their followers and offer coaching can promote a positive and open atmosphere in the workplace, leading to greater engagement in knowledge sharing among employees (Liu & DeFrank, 2013; Xue et al., 2011).

This study confirms the strong link between transformational leadership and the practical commitment of sales employees in Hanoi-based enterprises. This connection aligns with the findings of other researchers worldwide (Allen et al., 2017; Bono & Judge, 2003; Nazir & Islam, 2017; Sahu et al., 2018). Transformational leaders offer personalized support and foster a nurturing environment for their subordinates, leading to a deep emotional connection and satisfaction among employees (Nazir & Islam, 2017). By demonstrating empathy and addressing personal needs, transformational leaders contribute to their employees' mental well-being and boost their self-confidence, strengthening their emotional attachment to the organization (Bono & Judge, 2003; Cabrera & Cabrera, 2002). Furthermore, through promoting corporate social responsibility and providing individualized care for employees, transformational leaders convey a sense of appreciation for all stakeholders, fostering a commitment to the organization and its sustainable development (Allen et al., 2017).

Third, similar to the conclusion drawn by Matzler et al. (2011) that just as emotional identification with an organization can boost employees' inclination to engage in knowledge-sharing activities. Our results indicate that employees who establish solid emotional connections with their organizations are more inclined to share and communicate knowledge from education and training with other organization members (Organ et al., 2005).

Moreover, our results also suggest that affective organizational commitment mediates the positive relationship between transformational leadership and employees' intention to share knowledge. Employees' strong emotional connection to their organizations increases their willingness to share acquired knowledge. Therefore, by enhancing employees' emotional commitment to the organization, transformational leaders can positively influence employees' knowledge-sharing intention.

Finally, these findings contribute to the broader body of research on transformational leadership and knowledge-sharing intention in emerging economies and offer valuable insights for organizations in similar cultural and organizational settings. Many Southeast Asian nations, such as Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand, share cultural and economic contexts identical to Vietnam's. The role of transformational leadership in fostering affective commitment and knowledge-sharing intention could be applicable across various sectors in

these countries. The study's findings suggest that transformational leaders can drive knowledge-based economies by cultivating environments where employees feel safe and supported in sharing valuable insights without fear of competition or negative consequences. The study also extends beyond the sales sector. In industries like manufacturing, services, and technology, where knowledge transfer and innovation are essential, transformational leadership can similarly influence employees' willingness to share and exchange information. As emerging economies shift towards knowledge-based sectors, the role of transformational leadership in fostering an open, collaborative environment becomes increasingly important. Therefore, private and public sector organizations may benefit from adopting transformational leadership practices to enhance employees' affective commitment and knowledge-sharing intention, leading to improved performance and innovation.

5. Conclusions & recommendations

This study makes significant theoretical contributions to the current understanding of transformational leadership and its influence on affective commitment and employees' knowledge-sharing intention. It introduces two vital factors, transformational leadership, and affective commitment, to the existing antecedents of knowledge-sharing intention among Vietnamese sales employees. In Vietnam, organizational culture is often characterized by a blend of hierarchical structures and strong relational dynamics, where respect for authority and loyalty to the organization are paramount. Transformational leaders in this context play a critical role in bridging the gap between traditional hierarchical norms and the need for knowledge sharing and collaboration in modern business environments. The harmonious relationships between leaders and subordinates, a key aspect of transformational leadership, are particularly significant in the Vietnamese context, where trust and respect are essential to employee engagement and organizational loyalty. Consequently, this study highlights how transformational leaders can inspire employees to consider multiple perspectives, foster emotional commitment, and promote knowledge sharing within Vietnam's collectivist culture framework.

The study is unique in its comprehensive exploration of the underlying mechanisms in the effect of transformational leadership on employees' intention of knowledge sharing. Previous studies have thoroughly investigated how transformational leadership impacts knowledge-sharing through organizational commitment. This research stands out for examining the indirect influence of transformational leadership on knowledge-sharing intention, specifically through the mediating role of affective organizational commitment. While previous studies have considered affective organizational commitment as just one aspect of managerial commitment to transformational leadership and knowledge-sharing intention, this study delves into the singular mediating effect of affective commitment on the positive impact of transformational leadership on knowledge-sharing intention in great detail. Consequently, this study provides additional empirical evidence on the role of transformational leadership in encouraging employees to share knowledge, particularly in a developing country like Vietnam.

The research also provides practical implications for human resource practitioners to encourage knowledge-sharing among employees in Vietnamese enterprises. The findings suggest that Vietnamese practitioners should prioritize the selection of transformational leaders when appointing and recruiting managers. In addition, training programs should be introduced to familiarize managers and leaders with transformational leadership, equipping

them with the necessary skills and understanding. Particularly, leaders should be encouraged to adopt the transformational leadership approach that promotes group cohesion, empathy, and collective success, aligning with Vietnamese cultural values. Training programs should emphasize fostering a shared sense of purpose rather than focusing exclusively on individual accomplishments. In this regard, Vietnamese organizations should design leadership development initiatives incorporating simulations and role-playing exercises. These activities allow leaders to practice transformational leadership skills in realistic contexts, such as decision-making, conflict resolution, and team motivation. A central aspect of transformational leadership is individualized consideration. Therefore, it is essential to train leaders in active coaching and mentoring, enabling them to offer consistent feedback and guidance that supports the professional growth of team members.

Furthermore, transformational leaders must be capable of articulating a clear and compelling vision. Leadership programs should equip leaders with the skills to develop and communicate a vision consistent with the organization's values and long-term objectives. Moreover, fair assessment and recognition of their work can motivate managers and leaders to adopt transformational organizational behaviors.

Finally, this study admits several limitations. First, the data's cross-sectional design and self-reported nature limit the potential for causal inferences. Future research, therefore, employs a longitudinal approach for a more in-depth exploration that considers the passing of time. Secondly, while the findings from this study are situated in the context of Hanoi-based sales employees, the generalizability of these results to other regions of Vietnam or different industries warrants careful consideration. Future work is therefore needed to assess whether this study's findings can be replicated in various regional and organizational contexts. Besides, we fully acknowledge that demographic imbalances, particularly gender overrepresentation, could limit the generalization of our findings to other demographic groups. Therefore, to improve generalizability and better understand the influence of demographic factors, this study recommends that future research replicate the study with more diverse samples, including balanced gender representation and other key demographics such as age and education level. This would help further validate the findings and assess whether our observed relationship holds across different demographic groups. Fourth, the convenience sampling method may lead to demographic imbalances, such as overrepresenting specific demographics like women, which can distort findings and limit the generalizability of the results. Future research should use other sampling methods or extend the sampling process to different settings or contexts to increase the variety of participants and further validate this study's findings. Finally, this study concentrated on the impact of transformational leadership alone rather than on other leadership styles. Additional research may integrate other leadership styles (e.g., transactional leadership, inclusive leadership, or ethical leadership) into the framework employed to explore potential variations in the impact of different forms of leadership on knowledge-sharing intention.

SCIENTIFIC CONTRIBUTION

The manuscript clearly identifies a research gap; the manuscript extends or refines existing theories; the manuscript provides new datasets or empirical evidence; the manuscript presents statistically and practically significant findings; the manuscript offers policy/managerial/technological implications; the manuscript opens new directions for further

research.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

CRedit: [**Vu Thi Huong Giang**]: Conceptualization, Methodology, Software, Validation, Formal Analysis, Writing - Original Draft, Writing - Review & Editing, Visualization, Supervision, Project Administration; [**Hoang Phuong Linh**]: Conceptualization, Investigation, Resources, Data Curation, Project Administration.

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NO CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

All authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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