

Presenting a Model for Innovative Organizational Culture in the Islamic Azad University of Mazandaran Region based on Transformational Leadership Style, Professional Ethics, and Quality of Work Life

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Purpose: Evaluating innovative organizational culture in higher education is crucial because it creates a competitive advantage. Therefore, this research aimed to provide a model for innovative organizational culture in the Islamic Azad University of Mazandaran region based on transformative leadership style, professional ethics, and quality of work life.

Methodology: In terms of purpose, this research was practical; it was cross-partial in terms of time, and its methodology was mixed (qualitative and quantitative). The research population was the professors and managers of the Islamic Azad University of Mazandaran region in 2021, and according to the principle of theoretical saturation, 20 of them were selected as a sample using targeted and snowball sampling methods. The quantitative population was the employees of the Islamic Azad University of Mazandaran region in 2021, and according to the table of Karajesi and Morgan, 291 of them were selected as a sample by cluster sampling method. The current research tools were semi-structured interviews in the qualitative part and questionnaires created by the researcher in the quantitative part of innovative organizational culture, transformational leadership style, professional ethics, and quality of work life, whose psychometric indicators were confirmed. The qualitative data were analyzed with the thematic analysis method in MAXQDA software, and the quantitative part with exploratory factor analysis and path analysis methods in SPSS and Smart PLS software.

Findings: The findings of the qualitative part showed that 25 components were identified for innovative organizational culture in 4 dimensions of innovation effects (6 components) and for the quality of working life, 13 components in 3 dimensions of the nature of the job, organizational learning (7 components), individual development of employees (7 components) and the desire and tendency to innovate (5 components), for the transformational leadership style, 10 components in 2 dimensions of individual considerations (4 components) and mental motivation (6 components), for professional ethics 17 components in 3 dimensions of organizational ethics (5 components), occupational ethics (5 components) and personal ethics (7 components). Finally, the model of innovative organizational culture, transformational leadership style, professional ethics, and quality of work life was designed in the Islamic Azad University of Mazandaran region. Also, the findings of the quantitative part showed that the factor load, average variance extracted, and Cronbach's alpha of all components were higher than 0.70. The model of innovative organizational culture based on transformational leadership style, professional ethics, and quality of work life had a good fit. Professional ethics and quality of work life directly and significantly affected innovative organizational culture ($P < 0.001$). Still, the transformational leadership style did not directly and significantly affect innovative organizational culture ($P < 0.05$).

Conclusion: Considering the importance of innovative organizational culture in Islamic Azad University and the present research findings, it is possible to provide the basis for promoting innovative organizational culture by improving the dimensions and components identified for transformational leadership style, professional ethics, and quality of work life.

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1. Introduction

Innovation is vital in economic, social, political, and cultural development. If individuals and organizations cannot keep pace with rapid changes and transformations with the help of innovation, they will eventually be destroyed (Ali and Park, 2016). Organizations cannot meet their new environmental needs without innovative activities. Because innovations are a tool to maintain and improve organizational performance, and innovative culture can be understood and developed through perspectives on innovation, technology, knowledge exchange, and business and entrepreneurial activities (Colovic and Williams, 2020). Today, the survival of organizations largely depends on organizational efficiency and innovative capabilities, and culture is one of the most essential factors in innovative organizational management (Tendencia, Bosma, and Sorio, 2012). An innovative culture is one of the ways of thinking and behavior that shapes the values and tendencies of the organization and improves its efficiency and performance (Skerlavaj, Song, and Lee, 2010). Innovative culture refers to a set of common assumptions, values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of organizational members that can help create and develop innovation in producing new products and services (Hussein, Omar, Noordin, and Ishak, 2016). Organizational innovative culture includes the decision to be innovative at all levels of the organization and to create and strengthen the necessary infrastructure for innovation. Investing in activities that affect market-oriented and value-added creates an environment for implementing innovation (Zhang and Zhou, 2012). Organizational innovative culture should seek more competitive advantage and internal focus.

Since this culture seeks new ideas through cultivating internal capabilities, it leads to new ideas in processes, products, and services (Cramm, Strating, BAL, and Nieboer, 2013). One of the factors influencing innovative organizational culture is the transformational leadership style (Zafar and Mehmood, 2019). To succeed in the changing world, many of today's organizations focus on leadership to create fundamental organizational changes and transformations with special effort (Nguyen, Turner, Barling, Axtell, and Davies, 2023). Leadership is an activity that influences people to work enthusiastically toward the realization of group goals, and this requires guiding the group toward the goal and accomplishing tasks (Li and Yuan, 2017). Leadership and its implementation style are considered a facilitating and motivating factor or a limiting and hindering factor for employee and organization productivity (Eberly, Bluhm, Guarana, Avolio and Hannah, 2017). Leadership is a potential force for individuals and organizations to achieve group goals, cooperation, and support for colleagues, and accordingly, traditional leadership styles to coordinate with changes and transformations and have optimal performance have lost their effectiveness. Today's organizations are looking for inspiring and transformational leaders. (Banks, McCauley, Gardner, and Guler, 2016). Transformational leaders are looking for change and transformation in line with the organization's goals and mission according to the environmental conditions to allow subordinates to strive for and achieve the organization's lofty goals (Jones, Michelfelder, and Nair, 2017). Transformational leaders direct the followers' attention to collective goals and seek to encourage the pursuit of organizational activities and goals through the stimulation of high-level motivation of employees. The four main behaviors of these leaders include idealized influence (leaders with idealized influence pay attention to the needs of others before paying attention to their own needs), inspirational motivation (inspirational leaders influence and motivate employees' minds by using symbols and presenting ideas), mental encouragement (in mental encouragement, leaders help their colleagues and followers to think about old problems in a new way and offer solutions) and individual considerations (leaders with individual considerations seek to empower all their employees and pay special attention to all of them as independent identities) (Khan, Khan, Soomro and Khan, 2020). Professional ethics is another factor affecting the innovative organizational culture, whose application in workplaces has become a serious necessity today (Loach, 2019). Morality is a set of spiritual characteristics that appear in the form of actions and behavior that arise from the inner feelings of humans (Fino, Alsayed, Basheti, Saini, Moles, and Chaar, 2022). As a branch of ethics, professional ethics examines ethical duties in a profession and includes a set of principles and criteria for the behavior of individuals and groups (Fuchs and Schalljo, 2016). In fact, professional ethics is a rational thinking process whose purpose is to determine the organization's values, and

the organization's inattention to it and weakness in observing ethical principles in dealing with the organization's human resources and external stakeholders can create many problems for the organization and question the organization's legitimacy (Convery and Outslay, 2012). The governance of professional ethics provides many benefits for the organization in terms of improving relationships, improving the atmosphere of understanding and reducing conflicts, increasing the commitment and responsibility of employees, reducing costs due to control, increasing the legitimacy of the organization, ethical commitment in considering the importance of stakeholders, increasing income, profitability and organizational success, and creating a competitive advantage (Hersh, 2017).

Another factor affecting the innovative organizational culture is the quality of work life, which refers to a set of results for employees, such as job satisfaction, growth opportunities, job security, human relations between the employer and employees, and a low rate of accidents (Remegio, Rivera, Griffin, and Fitzpatrick, 2021). The quality of work life as a motivational strategy plays a vital role in improving employees' performance, productivity, and competitiveness. It reduces absenteeism and employee turnover without increasing management costs, providing a healthy environment, increasing organizational commitment, and improving employee job satisfaction (Jin, 2022). This is a multidimensional conceptual construct that not only includes job-related factors such as job satisfaction, pay satisfaction, and relationships with colleagues but also includes more general factors, including life satisfaction, well-being, and more general feelings (Hemsworth, Baregheh, Khorakian, Muterera, Plow, Garcia-Rivera and et al., 2020). Quality of work life is the extent of employees' ability to satisfy important personal needs using the experiences they gained in the organization (Howie-Esquivel, Byon, Lewis, Travis, and Cavanagh, 2022). Research has been conducted on transformational leadership style, professional ethics, and quality of work life with innovative organizational culture. For example, the research results of Zafar and Mehmood (2019) showed a positive and significant relationship between transformational leadership and innovative culture. Muchtar and Lubis (2014) concluded that transformational leadership style, innovation, and organizational culture had a positive and significant relationship. In another study, Sadeghi Niaraki, Naderi Nasab, and Ramazani Nejad (2019) reported a positive and significant relationship between transformational leadership style and organizational creativity and innovation. Hakimi (2020) concluded that there was a positive and significant correlation between organizational culture and transformational leadership. Also, the research results of Pucetaite, Novelskaite, Lamsa, and Riivari (2016) showed a positive and significant relationship between ethical organizational culture and organizational innovation. Shaeri and Rezghi (2018) concluded that professional ethics had a positive and meaningful relationship with organizational culture. In another study, Gharibzadeh, Gharibzadeh, Jahedi, and Kazemi (2017) reported that managers' professional ethics, psychological empowerment, and organizational innovation had a positive and significant correlation. In addition, the research results of Muhammed, Salma, and Wirya (2021) indicated a positive and significant relationship between the quality of work life and innovative culture. Mashhadi, Faghiharam, and Saadate Shamir (2018) concluded that there was a positive and significant relationship between the quality of work life and organizational innovation.

Examining innovative organizational culture in the higher education system is very important because of creating a competitive advantage. One of the gaps was the lack of research on innovative organizational culture in Islamic Azad University. The other gap was the lack of research on innovative organizational culture based on transformational leadership style, professional ethics, and quality of work life. The results of this research can help specialists and planners of Islamic Azad University provide solutions to improve the state of innovative organizational culture and create a competitive advantage. Therefore, conducting research is both important and necessary, and it can have many practical implications for the officials and practitioners of Islamic Azad University. According to the mentioned materials, this research aimed to provide a model for innovative organizational culture in the Islamic Azad University of Mazandaran region based on transformative leadership style, professional ethics, and quality of work life.

2. Methodology

In terms of purpose, this research was practical; it was cross-partial in terms of time, and its methodology was mixed (qualitative and quantitative). The research population was the professors and managers of the Islamic Azad University of Mazandaran region in 2021, and according to the principle of theoretical saturation, 20 of them were selected as a sample using targeted and snowball sampling methods. In the purposeful sampling method, the samples are selected according to the criteria, which include having at least 5 years of work experience, having sufficient information on the subject of the research, being interested in participating in the research, and signing the consent form to participate. In the next stage, the selected samples were asked to introduce other expert managers in the field of research to the researchers, which is called snowball sampling. Also, the quantitative part of the population was the employees of the Islamic Azad University of Mazandaran region in 2021, and according to Karjesi and Morgan's table, 291 of them were selected as a sample by cluster sampling method. In the cluster sampling method, some academic units were selected from Islamic Azad Universities in the eastern, middle, and western parts of Mazandaran, and all the employees of some of their departments were selected as samples.

The tool of the present research was a semi-structured interview in the qualitative part. The researchers of the present study designed the interview questions based on theoretical principles. Interviews were conducted individually, and their duration varied between 40 and 70 minutes. During the interview, the interviewer wrote down the important and key concepts and materials and recorded the interviews to check again and ensure that some materials were not accidentally lost. The validity of the interviews was confirmed by the triangulation method, and its reliability was obtained by the agreement coefficient method between two coders at 0.83. Also, the tools of the present research in the quantitative part were researcher-made questionnaires of innovative organizational culture, transformational leadership style, professional ethics, and quality of work life. The questionnaires above had 65 items, so the innovative organizational culture took 25 items, transformational leadership style 10 items, professional ethics 13 items, and quality of work life 17 items. To respond to each item, there was a seven-point Likert scale from completely poor or completely unimportant with a score of one to completely good or completely important with a score of seven. The score of each variable was calculated with the total score of the constituent items of that variable, and a higher score indicated more possession of the desired variable or characteristic. The validity of each researcher-made questionnaire of innovative organizational culture, transformational leadership style, professional ethics, and quality of work life was confirmed by the opinion of 20 experts, and their reliability was higher than 0.70.

The implementation stages of the current research were as follows: first, the researchers studied the theoretical foundations and, based on them, designed questions for interviewing the professors and managers of Islamic Azad University; So, 24 questions were designed for the four variables of innovative organizational culture, transformational leadership style, professional ethics and quality of work life, and 6 questions for each of them. In the next stage, the samples of the qualitative part were identified, and the importance and necessity of the research were explained to them. They were assured about observing ethical points and asked to express their consent to participate in the research and record the interview. Then they were interviewed, and the questions were asked individually, and the interviewer recorded the interviews in addition to taking notes. Based on the interviews, questionnaires were designed for the current research, the samples of the quantitative part were identified, and the importance and necessity of the research were explained to them. They were assured about the observance of ethical points. They were also asked to express their consent to participate in the research and complete the tools. Then the research tools were completed by them. It should be noted that the samples of the qualitative part were thanked for participating in the research and conducting interviews. The samples of the quantitative part were thanked for participating in the research and completing the self-report instruments.

Finally, the data of the qualitative part were analyzed with the thematic analysis method in MAXQDA software and the quantitative part with exploratory factor analysis and path analysis methods in SPSS and Smart PLS software.

3. Findings

Since Covid-19 was widespread at the time of the research, there was a large drop in the samples, and analyses were performed for 192 people. The results of the number and percentage of demographic information of both qualitative (20 people) and quantitative (192 people) samples based on gender, education level, and age in Islamic Azad University were presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The results of the number and percentage of demographic information of samples in Islamic Azad University

| Variable | Level | Qualitative part | | Quantitative part | |
|-----------------|----------------|------------------|------------|-------------------|------------|
| | | Number | Percentage | Number | Percentage |
| Gender | Man | 15 | 75 | 119 | 98.61 |
| | Woman | 5 | 25 | 73 | 02.38 |
| Education level | B.Sc | 0 | 0 | 45 | 44.23 |
| | MSc | 2 | 10 | 73 | 02.38 |
| | Ph.D | 18 | 90 | 74 | 54.38 |
| Age | 21-30 years | 0 | 0 | 8 | 17.4 |
| | 31-40 years | 8 | 40 | 52 | 08.27 |
| | 41-50 years | 9 | 45 | 104 | 17.54 |
| | Above 50 years | 3 | 15 | 28 | 58.14 |

As can be seen in Table 1, most of the samples in the present study in the qualitative part were male (75%) and had a doctorate (90%), and were 41-50 years old (45%), and in the quantitative part, they were male (61.98%) and had doctorate education (38.54%) and age 41-50 years (54.17%). The results of the theme analysis of the innovative organizational culture model, transformational leadership style, professional ethics, and quality of work life in Islamic Azad University are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The results of the theme analysis of innovative organizational culture model, transformational leadership style, professional ethics, and quality of work life in Islamic Azad University

| Variable | Dimension | Component |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Innovative organizational culture | Innovation effects | 1. Market-oriented orientation, 2. Commercialization of ideas, 3. Acceptance of innovative approaches, 4. Willingness to progress, 5. Achieving realistic goals, and 6. Valuing people. |
| | Organisational Learning | 1. High-quality studies, 2. Changes in the organization's activities, 3. The habit of careful thinking, 4. Promoting teamwork, 5. Promoting the spirit of searching for opportunities, 6. The ability to solve problems in a new way, and 7. Transforming the need into a new service. |
| | Individual development of employees | 1. Flexibility, 2. Independence, 3. Risk-taking, 4. Adapting to changes, 5. Creativity, 6. Innovation, and 7. Using the experiences of others. |
| | Desire and tendency to innovate | 1. Knowledge exchange, 2. Technological training, 3. Encouraging new ideas, 4. Not resisting changes, and 5. Creating the necessary infrastructure for innovation. |
| Transformational leadership style | Individual considerations | 1. Friendly behavior with employees, 2. Helping to improve the ability of employees, 3. A comprehensive examination of employee problems, and 4. Giving hope to employees. |

| | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|--|
| Professional ethics | mental stimulation | 1. Setting an example, 2. Paying attention to employees' opinions, 3. Creating a sense of purpose, 4. Instilling a sense of pride in employees, 5. Creating working values, and 6. Proposing a new solution. |
| | Organizational ethics | 1. Clarifying and documenting, 2. Improving and modifying service delivery methods, 3. Speed in responding, 4. Preferring national interests over personal interests, and 5. Respecting citizens' rights. |
| | job ethics | 1. Attachment and interest in work, 2. Perseverance and seriousness in work, 3. Emphasis on the quality of work, 4. Discipline and discipline in work, and 5. Responsibility. |
| | Personal ethics | 1. Conscience, 2. Commitment, 3. Honesty, 4. Pleasantness, 5. Criticism, 6. Secrecy and trustworthiness, and 7. Patience |
| Quality of working life | The nature of the job | 1. Being meaningful and challenging of the job, 2. The importance of the job from the society's point of view, 3. Having the opportunity to grow in the job, and 4. Flexibility in doing the job |
| | Security and job relations | 1. Not having stress at work, 2. Health and safety conditions in the work environment, 3. Having positive managers, and 4. Not being afraid of being fired. |
| | salary and benefits | 1. Paying fair salaries and benefits, 2. Paying adequate salaries and benefits, 3. Having medical benefits, 4. Having welfare and travel benefits, and 5. Sharing in the university's profits. |

As can be seen in Table 2, for innovative organizational culture, 25 components were identified in 4 dimensions of innovation effects (6 components), organizational learning (7 components), personal development of employees (7 components), and desire and tendency to innovate (5 components), for transformational leadership style 10 components in 2 dimensions of individual considerations (4 components) and mental persuasion (6 components), for Professional ethics has 17 components in 3 dimensions of organizational ethics (5 components), job ethics (5 components) and personal ethics (7 components) and for the quality of working life 13 components in 3 dimensions of job nature (4 components), security and job relations (4 component) and rights and benefits (5 components). The results of the innovative organizational culture model, transformational leadership style, professional ethics, and quality of work life at Islamic Azad University are presented in Figure 1.

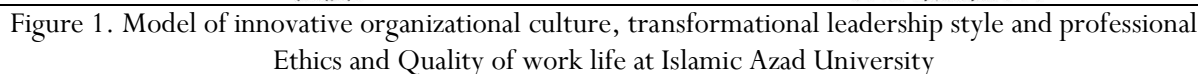


Table 3. Results of exploratory factor analysis of innovative organizational culture, transformational leadership style, professional ethics, and quality of work life at Islamic Azad University

| Variable | Component | Number of items | Factor load | Mean-variance extracted | Cronbach's alpha |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| Innovative organizational culture | Effects of innovation | 6 | 83.0 | 72.0 | 89.0 |
| | Organizational Learning | 6 | 79.0 | 90.0 | 87.0 |
| | Individual development of employees | 7 | 82.0 | 89.0 | 85.0 |
| | Desire and tendency to innovate | 5 | 77.0 | 85.0 | 79.0 |

| | | | | | |
|--|----------------------------|---|------|------|------|
| Transformational leadership style | Individual considerations | 4 | 75.0 | 85.0 | 78.0 |
| | mental stimulation | 5 | 86.0 | 87.0 | 82.0 |
| Ethics | Organizational ethics | 3 | 82.0 | 79.0 | 90.0 |
| | job ethics | 5 | 87.0 | 86.0 | 80.0 |
| | Personal ethics | 5 | 88.0 | .890 | 84.0 |
| Quality of working life | The nature of the job | 3 | 83.0 | 84.0 | 72.0 |
| Variable Innovative organizational culture | Security and job relations | 3 | 77.0 | 83.0 | 71.0 |
| | salary and benefits | 4 | 80.0 | 85.0 | 78.0 |

As can be seen in Table 3, the factor loading, average variance extracted, and Cronbach's alpha of all components were higher than 0.70. It should be noted that 1 item was removed from the variables of innovative organizational culture and transformational leadership style, 3 from professional ethics, and 4 from the quality of work life due to factor loading less than 0.40. As a result, the number of 9 items was removed from the final form due to the factor load being less than 0.40, and this form was reduced from 65 items to 56 items. The results of examining the fit indices of the organizational innovative culture model based on the transformational leadership style with the mediation of professional ethics and quality of work life in the Islamic Azad University of Mazandaran region indicate the appropriate fit of the model due to the R2 index equal to 0.45 and the GOF index equal to 0.40 due to being higher than 0.36. Therefore, the results of analyzing the path of innovative organizational culture based on transformational leadership style, professional ethics, and quality of work life in Islamic Azad University, along with path coefficients and t-statistics, were presented in Figure 2, and the results of its effects are in Table 4.

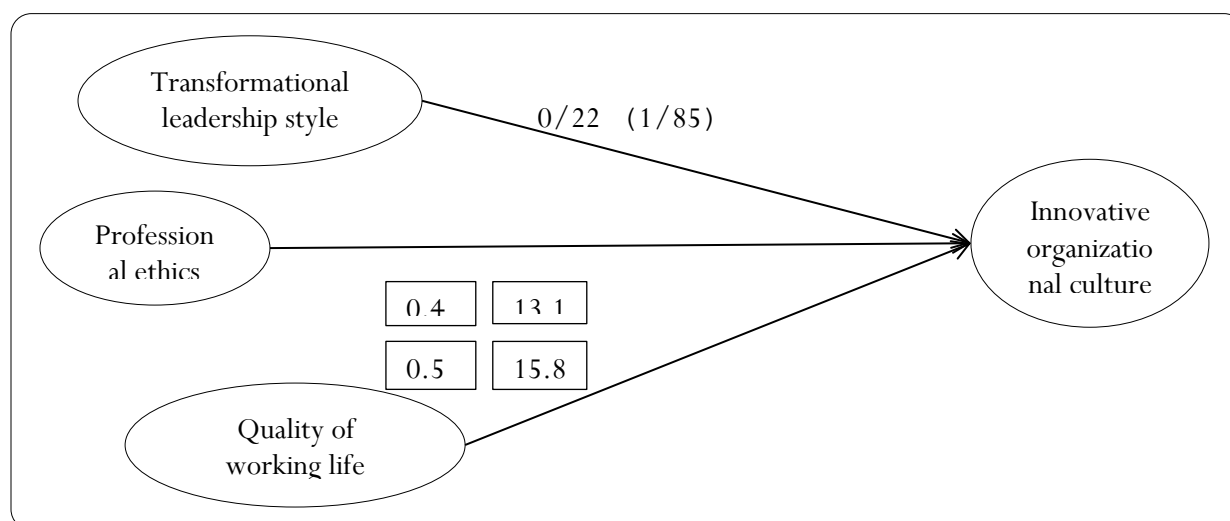


Figure 2. The results of analyzing the path of innovative organizational culture based on transformational leadership style, professional ethics, and quality of work life in Islamic Azad University, along with standardized coefficients and t-statistics

Table 4. Results of the effects of innovative organizational culture based on transformational leadership style, professional ethics, and quality of work life at Islamic Azad University

| Effect | Path coefficient | t statistic | Meaningful |
|--|------------------|-------------|------------|
| Transformational leadership style on innovative organizational culture | 22.0 | 85.1 | 111.0 |
| Professional Ethics on innovative organizational culture | 44.0 | 19.13 | 001.0 |
| Quality of work life in innovative organizational culture | 51.0 | 88.15 | 001.0 |

As seen in Figure 1 and Table 4, professional ethics and quality of work life directly and significantly affected innovative organizational culture ($P < 0.001$). Still, the transformational leadership style did not directly and significantly affect innovative organizational culture ($P < 0.05$).

4. Discussion

This research aimed to provide a model for innovative organizational culture in the Islamic Azad University of Mazandaran region based on transformational leadership style, professional ethics, and quality of work life. The findings of the qualitative section showed that for innovative organizational culture, 25 components were identified in 4 dimensions of innovation effects, organizational learning, individual development of employees, and the desire and tendency to innovate, for the transformational leadership style, 10 components in 2 dimensions of individual considerations and mental persuasion, for professional ethics, 17 components in 3 dimensions of organizational ethics, job ethics, and personal ethics, and the quality of work life, 13 components were identified in 3 dimensions of job nature, security and job relations, and rights and benefits. The findings of the quantitative section showed that the factor load, the average variance extracted, and Cronbach's alpha of all components were higher than 0.70. The model of innovative organizational culture based on transformational leadership style, professional ethics, and quality of work life had a good fit, and professional ethics and quality of work life had a direct and significant effect on innovative organizational culture. Still, the transformational leadership style did not directly and significantly affect innovative organizational culture. In the following, the qualitative section's findings and then the quantitative section's findings are interpreted and explained.

In the interpretation of the innovative organizational culture with four dimensions of the effects of innovation, organizational learning, individual development of employees, and the desire and tendency to innovate, it can be said that identifying the necessary infrastructure for effective knowledge management and creating innovation in universities is of great importance. The importance of creativity and innovation in the success of organizations is not limited to the country's manufacturing sectors. Still, this issue is also true and even more important in the service sectors, including universities and higher education institutions that cultivate future human resources. Today, higher education has undergone many changes. Universities and higher education institutions must be innovative to adapt to the changing external environment to create an innovative culture in the environment. Innovation is a means through which organizations respond to various environmental changes. Transformational leadership has two dimensions of individual considerations and mental encouragement, which can be explained that transformational leaders strengthen organizational social capital through friendly behavior with employees, helping to improve employees' capabilities, creating a sense of purpose in the university, performance-based reward system, techniques for adapting to organizational changes and developments, holding training workshops for excellence in organizational behavior and character, work conscience, conscientiousness, improving horizontal and vertical interactions between employees, building trust, attracting participation and cooperation of employees in decisions and the spirit of accountability and by empowering human resources and their participation in organizational decisions, they

encourage employees towards innovation to adapt to changes. Also, in describing professional ethics with three dimensions of organizational ethics, job ethics, and personal ethics, it can be said that the governance of professional ethics can help the organization to a significant extent to reduce organizational tensions and achieve success in achieving goals. University faculty members, managers, and employees, as role models and examples for students, play a sensitive ethical role in addition to their scientific and executive roles.

For this reason, in many universities and institutions of higher education, regulations with the title of code of conduct or code of ethics have been compiled. In addition to that, in the interpretation of the quality of working life with three dimensions of job nature, security and job relations, and salaries and benefits, it can be said that the quality of working life is considered a comprehensive concept in the field of human resource management and organizational development, and its provision and promotion is considered the main key to the success of any organization's management. The quality of work life as one of the organizational improvement techniques is of interest to senior managers. During recent years, the quality of work life programs has played an essential role in increasing the productivity of human resources and, as a result, the efficiency and effectiveness of organizations and large companies. Strategic plans to improve the quality of work life of human resources in organizations is a far-sighted and extensive approach, which means that efficient human resources play a central role in the organization's transformation. In the past, only non-working life was emphasized, but in today's society, improving the quality of working life is one of organizations' priorities. The Quality of work life is a comprehensive program designed to gain employees' satisfaction and attention, help them manage changes, and retain employees. Dissatisfaction with the quality of work life is a fundamental problem that affects all employees regardless of their position and position, and identifying all aspects that affect the quality of work life is a very complex activity. Also, an organization that pays attention to the quality of working life of its employees will enjoy the benefits of having a more committed workforce.

The quality of work life directly and significantly affected the innovative organizational culture. In some ways, this finding was consistent with the findings of Muhammed et al. (2021) and Mashhadi et al. (2018). In the explanation and interpretation of these findings, it can be said that the quality of work life is a set of organizational conditions. It occurs when the organization's manager and leader are democratic, treat employees with respect, and provide a safe work environment. As a result, job satisfaction, job motivation, professional commitment, and work engagement increase. Another important point is that the quality of work life is a key factor that determines the outcomes related to employees and the organization, including job satisfaction, organizational commitment, reduction of leaving service, and the willingness of employees to participate in the organization's profitability through creative and innovative behaviors. As a result, it seems reasonable that professional ethics have a direct and meaningful effect on innovative organizational culture.

Also, professional ethics directly and significantly affect innovative organizational culture. In some ways, this finding was consistent with the findings of Pucetaite et al. (2016), Shaeri and Rezghi (2018), and Gharibzadeh et al. (2017). In explaining and interpreting these findings, it can be said that professional ethics are ethical principles and criteria developed by organizations based on ethical models, and all organization members are required to follow these principles that guide their behavior. Compliance with professional ethics requires honesty, impartiality, competence and professional care, confidentiality, professional behavior, and professional principles and rules that all of them cause the employees in the organization to show appropriate and appropriate behaviors for the organization they are working in and cause the organization to improve compared to other organizations and create a competitive advantage for it. Another important point is that professional ethics is not just using specific philosophical methods in professional work. Because all the beliefs and beliefs are incompatible, a person chooses his career and decides based on the ethical principles and standards of his organization and according to the conditions. As a result, it can be expected that professional ethics have a direct and meaningful effect on innovative organizational culture and can increase it.

In addition, the transformational leadership style did not directly and significantly affect the innovative organizational culture. Although no research was found on the effect of transformational leadership style on

innovative organizational culture, this finding was inconsistent with the findings of Zafar and Mehmood (2019), Muchtar and Lubis (2014), Sadeghi Niaraki et al. (2019) and Hakimi (2020). In the explanation and interpretation of these findings and the discrepancy with previous research findings, it can be said that this research, unlike other researches that investigated the simple relationship and correlation, investigates the complex relationship and cause and effect. When the cause-and-effect relationship is investigated compared to when the correlation relationship is investigated, the effects are significant when the degree of correlation is higher. For this reason, it is logical that in this study, unlike previous studies that examined the relationship between transformational leadership style and innovative organizational culture, and the results indicated a significant relationship between them, the variable of transformational leadership style cannot have a significant effect on innovative organizational culture.

Every research is faced with limitations during its implementation, and one of the important limitations of this research is the large drop in quantitative samples due to the spread of Covid-19. Even after several follow-ups, there was a significant drop in samples. Another limitation of this research was the cooperation of face-to-face and online samples, and to avoid this limitation, obtaining a letter of cooperation from the relevant authorities with the researcher is suggested. This research was conducted during the Covid-19 epidemic, so this important limitation should be considered when generalizing its results. One of the vital research suggestions regarding the importance of innovative organizational culture is to examine the effect of other variables on it so that, based on all the research done about the organizational innovative culture model, a suitable training program can be designed to improve and promote it and implement it with the help of experts. The findings of the present study have many practical implications for specialists, officials, and planners of Islamic Azad University, and based on the results of this research, they can take action to improve the innovative organizational culture by improving the transformational leadership style, professional ethics and quality of work life. Among other practical suggestions based on the present research findings, the following can be mentioned. In line with the development of innovative organizational culture, university managers should encourage employees to carry out innovative activities. For this purpose, a performance-based reward system can be useful. Among other practical suggestions, we can mention the policy to develop and optimize the use of financial and economic resources to increase the sustainability and competitiveness of the university, the need to encourage faculty members and graduates to create knowledge-based companies in growth and innovation centers, to lay the groundwork for the possibility of students and graduates to establish companies, the need to plan, manage and monitor the cooperation between universities, industry, and the market, delegate authority to employees to empower them, The need to instill a sense of pride in employees to create and increase the sense of responsibility, attachment, and interest in the job among employees, and to modify and improve the methods of service delivery.

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