




# The Mediating Effect of Knowledge Sharing and Usage on Human Resource Practices and Innovative Behavior: Developing vs. Countries of Crisis

Nadeen Sayegh  
*Lebanese American University, Lebanon*

Niveen Sayegh  
 <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-3296-989X>  
*King's College London, UK*

Samar Aad  
 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9493-4899>  
*Lebanese American University, Lebanon*

Silva Karkoulian  
 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6513-3483>  
*Lebanese American University, Lebanon*

## ABSTRACT

As work contexts dynamically evolve, enhancing managerial human resource practices (HRP) becomes crucial to foster employee innovative behavior (IB) while promoting positive knowledge usage (KU) and sharing (KS). This paper examines their latent ambidexterity resulting from HRP and strategies. After a thorough literature review, evidence of the relationship between HRP and IB is revealed, mediated by KS and KU. A quantitative questionnaire is designed, and data from Lebanon and the GCC region are analyzed using SPSS. Findings reveal a direct HRP-IB link with partial sequential mediation by KS and KU in the GCC. The effects of HRP and IB are significant with sequential mediations. This study offers insight into the HRP-IB correlation, emphasizing the mediating roles of KS and KU. It highlights the importance of effective HRP and the utilization of KS and KU in the organizational macroenvironment. Focusing on Lebanon's crisis and the GCC's prosperity, the study uniquely examines these variables' relationship, providing a comprehensive understanding of their dynamics in the workplace.

## KEYWORDS

Crisis, HRM Practices, Innovation, Knowledge Sharing, Knowledge Usage

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In today's dynamic epoch, the world has experienced a surge in globalization, with many countries' economies intertwining to encourage international commerce through technical, practical, and connectivity advances (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020). This amplified the demand for organizations and institutions worldwide to engage in effective human resource practices (HRPs) in order to create employee innovative behavior (Alqudah et al., 2022). In fact, utilizing HRP strategies can

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play a vital and a critical role in enhancing necessary employee knowledge, skills, abilities, and behavioral habits (Anwar & Abdullah, 2021). HRP has garnered considerable attention and are now regarded as an essential component of successful and expedient HR strategies (Islam et al., 2022). In a way that, companies face the task of creating, improving, and managing novel knowledge assets and transforming them into societal and economic worth (Al Ahabbi et al., 2019). One of the main primary drivers behind HRP is the need to monitor employees and their expertise within the company (Karim & Majid, 2022). Hereafter, significant progress has been made in the research of human resource (HR) methods and managerial systems over the past decade (Easa & Orra, 2021). Indeed, it has been shown that various HR methods are essential to hiring, inspiring, retaining, and involving employees (Hooi, 2021).

There is an identifiable correlation between HRP and innovation in firms, which has expanded the continuing goal of achieving and examining the link across in distinct settings (Menaouer & Nada, 2020; Son & Kim, 2021). In fact, the successful implementation of HRP in various companies is the primary foundation for developing a competitive advantage, while having a favorable relationship with corporate performance while adjusting to any national situation at hand (Brintha, 2022). As stated by HR approaches that classify people as valuable assets while acknowledging their accomplishments, aid in enhancing employee retention and IB (Krammer, 2022; Mehmood et al., 2022). Similarly, innovative behavior (IB) has been identified as an essential variable as it has been linked to corporate prosperity and longevity (Rafique et al., 2022). Employees are urged to produce and develop novel ideas that are needed for innovation, which in turn generates the noting of IB, which has a clear beneficial association to organizational success (Bhatti et al., 2023). In today's dynamic age, organizations face significant pressure from their external environment to engage in IB (Vlados, 2019). Innovation is generally recognized as an instrument for maintaining and improving performance, particularly in a volatile environment. Nevertheless, organizational innovation cannot occur without the participation of employees.

Employees play a crucial part in enhancing the degree of creativity in the company, in fact they are the basis of an organization's innovative endeavors (Susanti & Syahlani, 2022). IB refers to an employees' conduct in the workplace that emphasizes on developing and executing innovative ideas (Z. Wang et al., 2022). Nevertheless, even if the link between HRP and IB is stout, yet there are mediators that have an effect on the relationship this includes knowledge sharing (KS) and knowledge usage (KU). Knowledge is considered to be an essential resource that has a direct effect on firms (Brahami et al., 2020; Caputo et al., 2019). In fact, KS is a crucial element in HR strategies that has the potential to improve performance, promote employee creativity, and motivate IB in the workplace (Karkoulian et al., 2020). Knowledge sharing refers to the dissemination and use of knowledge possessed by a person or a group in order to enhance activities and operations while producing new goods and services (Bani-Melhem et al., 2020; Batool et al., 2022). Henceforth, KS and usage are examined as comparable ideas that serve as a moderating role in the linkage between HRP and IB. While taking into account that numerous subscales were averaged to HRP to help better examine the hypotheses at hand.

In spite of the wealth of research regarding the correlation between HRP and IB, there is a scarcity of specific results on the significance of the relationship between the aforementioned variables and KU and KS as mediators. Particularly in countries of crisis and in developing countries, which are in our case Lebanon and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region. Lebanon confronts an immaculate crisis following a drop in its economic, political, and sociocultural systems, which has caused a revolutionary crisis. In contrary, the GCC region includes wealthy and prosperous countries, that surpass numerous developed nations. Given this, in the age of deregulations and globalization, businesses have been seeking methods to maintain and enhance their competitiveness and sustaining in the market (Al-Khatib et al., 2022). Due to the fact that a nation's current setting has a great impact on induced stress restricting IB and KS (Montani & Stagliandò, 2022). Nevertheless, the connection between these mediators and employee innovation is still unclear and has several gaps. Henceforth, as

stated by (Cook & Gregory, 2018), countries are on the hunt seeking suitable methods and systems for HRM to play a contributing role in enhancing IB, combined with a conducive corporate atmosphere for KS and KU.

In today's dynamic business environment, fostering employee innovative behavior (IB) is essential for organizational success. Human resource practices (HRP) play a critical role in shaping this innovative spirit by creating conditions that encourage employees to contribute creatively. However, the mechanisms through which HRP influences IB—particularly the roles of knowledge sharing (KS) and knowledge utilization (KU)—are still underexplored, especially in contexts such as developing countries and nations facing crises.

This study applies Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Blau, 1964), which posits that workplace relationships are built on reciprocal exchanges of resources and rewards. In this context, employees engage in knowledge sharing and utilization when they perceive HR practices as supportive, expecting reciprocal benefits such as recognition, growth opportunities, and a positive work environment. The mutual exchange of these resources fosters a climate of innovation. By investigating this relationship across Lebanon and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region, this study seeks to fill the gap in understanding how HR practices influence IB through KS and KU in contrasting economic and political contexts

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT**

### **2.1 Social Exchange Theory**

When regarded as an exchange, the work relationship consists of social and/or economic interactions. As mentioned by Blau (1964) social exchanges are “voluntary activities” that may be established by a firm's treatment of its personnel, with the intention that such treatment would be returned in the future. The precise kind and magnitude of future returns are at the disposal of the individual who made them and are regarded to be a result of individual duty, gratitude, and faith in the institution, in a way that human interactions and social behavior are encompassed in an exchange process (Ahmad et al., 2023; Brahami et al., 2022). Taking into account that the process of social exchange produces long-lasting social patterns, where people evaluate the risks and rewards of their relationship with their managers and take decisions according to the value or potential drawbacks they might face (Xuecheng et al., 2022). In which people who receive vital resources, whether natural, societal, or psychological resources, recompense with good attitudes and actions - the altruism norm (Gouldner, 1960). HRP strengthens employee-employer social exchange interaction by equipping employees with essential tools and characteristics to help bridge the gap between the company and its employees (Khan et al., 2021); hence, employees are obligated to reimburse the organization under this concept. In fact, it was drawn that employees have capacity, incentive, and chance stemming from HRP to accomplish their tasks in an innovative manner (Yasir & Majid, 2020). Similarly, employees respond favorably to HRP resulting in higher IB with increased work effort under the effect of social exchange theory (Zhang et al., 2020). Building on the SEM analysis, we hypothesize that HRP practices may account for the positive relationship between HRP and IB, with KS and KU playing a mediating role. This hypothesis will be explored in the subsequent sections, where we delve into the literature and define our hypotheses in detail.

### **2.2 HRP's Positive Influence on Innovative Behavior**

Innovation is a vital outcome for firms to achieve a sustainable success and prosperity for the company's future. In fact, this is highly effective when employees demonstrate innovation at their workplace (Kutieshat & Farmanesh, 2022). Over the past years, researchers have paid close attention to IB, particularly on the elements that influence employee IB. IB is defined as an employee's purposeful action in a personal, collective, or institutional work, positioned to generate and execute new ideas,

intended and oriented at an overall firm's effectiveness, corporate success, and long-term sustainability in the market (Kwon & Kim, 2020). Workplace innovation is a multistage approach that starts with the identification of a problem and the incorporation of issue-solving ideas from both external and internal sources (Tajeddini et al., 2020). An imaginative employee then advocates their ideas to other individuals in the firm. Ultimately, the innovation process entails timetables for planning and implementing novel ideas that might be utilized prolifically (Newman et al., 2018). Simultaneously in the setting of institutional transformation and shift, innovation is required to create alternative solutions that allow companies to adjust to changes swiftly. Numerous research has contributed to comprehending how diverse HR strategies, including innovation, may promote favorable organizational results (Farrukh et al., 2022; Mehmood et al., 2022; Z. Wang et al., 2022). Taking into account that there has been an amplified interest to the attitudinal aspects that assist in generating IB, presuming that IB derives not only from an employee's innate characteristic (Choi et al., 2021). However, from a highly-committed HR practices in attempt to increase employee commitment to the optimum attainment of business goals. In turn, employees that are highly committed will be more devoted and reliable, function effectively, and exhibit a stronger proclivity for inventive activity (Waheed et al., 2018). This study validates the idea that HRP processes and efforts influences employee IB. As a result, the below-mentioned hypothesis will be critically evaluated and analyzed in the following study. Knowing that, the subscales were averaged to HRP (see 3.1; methods).

Henceforth, we commend investigating the following hypothesis:

*H1a. HR practices positively influence employee innovative behavior in Lebanon (Figure 1).*

*H1b. HR practices positively influence employee innovative behavior in GCC region (Figure 1).*

### **2.3 HR Practices and Their Effect on Country of Crisis**

An individual's degree of creativity in the workplace can be increased by enhancing their innovative behaviour (IB) (Miao et al., 2018). HR practices have a direct effect on employee IB by fostering supportive environments that encourage creativity and problem-solving (Renkema et al., 2021). However, social and psychological difficulties brought on by crises also significantly impact the work environment and individual performance (Rafique et al., 2022). Crisis-induced stress has been linked to decreased job dedication and employee satisfaction (Probst et al., 2020), which, in turn, alters behaviour and negatively influences organizational performance and sustainability (Bani-Melhem et al., 2020).

Amidst volatile external conditions, employee creativity emerges as an essential driver of corporate sustainability and improved performance (H. Wang et al., 2022). Unfortunately, stress and negative attitudes resulting from crises negatively impact work performance, job involvement, and participation (Jung et al., 2021; Vo-Thanh et al., 2022). Given this, KS, the process by which individuals exchange knowledge, skills, and expertise with their colleagues—and KU, the effective application of shared knowledge to solve problems and innovate—are crucial in mitigating the effects of stress on employee creativity and IB. KS and KU play mediating roles in converting supportive HR practices into tangible innovation by facilitating the flow and use of knowledge, which becomes particularly vital in crisis contexts (Jiang et al., 2020). As a result, promoting KS and KU through HR practices becomes essential for maintaining and improving IB during periods of crisis.

Congruently, according to the aforesaid we recommend investigating the following hypothesis:

*H2: Knowledge sharing and knowledge usage mediates the relationship between the HR practices and innovative behavior in countries facing crisis (Figure 2).*

## 2.4 Knowledge Usage and Sharing in Developing Countries

As previously mentioned, HRP is critical for encouraging IB (Vlados, 2019), yet KS plays an additional role for influencing innovative acts (Cao et al., 2023). Individual knowledge offers a vital ingredient needed for an organization to develop information, expertise, and innovation (Castaneda & Cuellar, 2020). Nevertheless, individuals seeking a give-and-take equilibrium in the exchange bonds amongst employees are more prone to acquire a hostile perception toward interchange in an uncomfortable and non-supportive work environment (Afshar-Jalili et al., 2021). Henceforth, as HRP plays a crucial role in eliminating worries and fear that might arise from KS amongst employees due to trust issues (Zhang et al., 2020). Hereupon, KS is linked and attributed with a greater and more beneficial impact on creative and innovative initiatives (Khassawneh & Abaker, 2022). KS not only expresses trust, but also functions as a forerunner to IB, that in turn fosters trust and IB amongst employees (Singh et al., 2019).

On the other hand, KU has evolved as one of the most significant matters, which has been identified as a business process that pertains to developing new information and assuring utilization of knowledge inside a firm whenever it is needed and relevant (Ouakouak & Ouedraogo, 2019). As a matter of fact, it has been a key subject that every firm should seriously examine (Zhao et al., 2022). A company's competitiveness and success are heavily reliant on the efficacy of its knowledge management and usage progression (Tiwari, 2022). As a result, many businesses have spent much in developing various structured KU systems to stimulate and enable knowledge production, exchange, and usage (Nguyen & Malik, 2022). As a result, there is a significant correlation between KU and HR practices (Kokkaew et al., 2022). This statement is established given that human are the primary carriers of information, and the development of KU ideas is dependent on a set of actions and practices this includes knowledge acquisitions, knowledge preservation, KS, and KU (Alsoud & Harasis, 2021)

Effective HRP is observed in developing countries, where it positively influences KU and KS. Through knowledge generation and sharing, well-implemented HR practices foster IB among employees in firms (Mahmood et al., 2019). Structured knowledge-sharing practices can lead to better organizational outcomes. For instance, KS decision models enhanced by computer aided systems can improve educational outcomes as it fosters effective KS and proper use of students management platform (Qiu & Fang, 2024).

Additionally, Adeyemi et al.(2022) explore how KS followed with training can enhance performance and deepen KM practices while also another research explored how developing knowledge-sharing capabilities during onboarding can enhance competency development among employees, directly contributing to improved performance and innovative behaviors(Cheikh-Ammar et al., 2024). This aligns with the notion that HR practices designed to support KS and KU can directly influence IB in organizational settings.

To gain competitive advantage and achieve a long-term sustainability in the market, HR Practices are crucial in order to develop knowledge, innovation, and employee dedication (Iqbal et al., 2021). HR practices are linked to innovative and are utilized to connect skilled labor knowledge to generate additional value for the company (Waheed et al., 2018). The surge of interest in HR practices, KU, innovation, and KS has resulted in a scarcity of research that disseminate the strategic outcomes of business level innovation, and this is notable in developing countries (Ode & Ayavoo, 2020). Ultimately, since effective HRP are emphasized in developing countries, taking into account its effect on the correlation between IB, KS, and KU. Thus, we hypothesize based on the aforementioned the following hypothesis:

H3: Knowledge sharing and knowledge usage partially mediates the relationship between the HR practices and innovative behavior in developing countries (Figure 3).

Figure 1. Conceptual model of the direct linear regression of HRP and IB in Lebanon and GCC

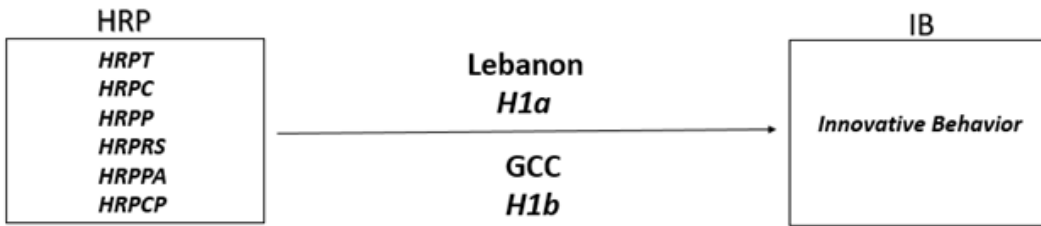
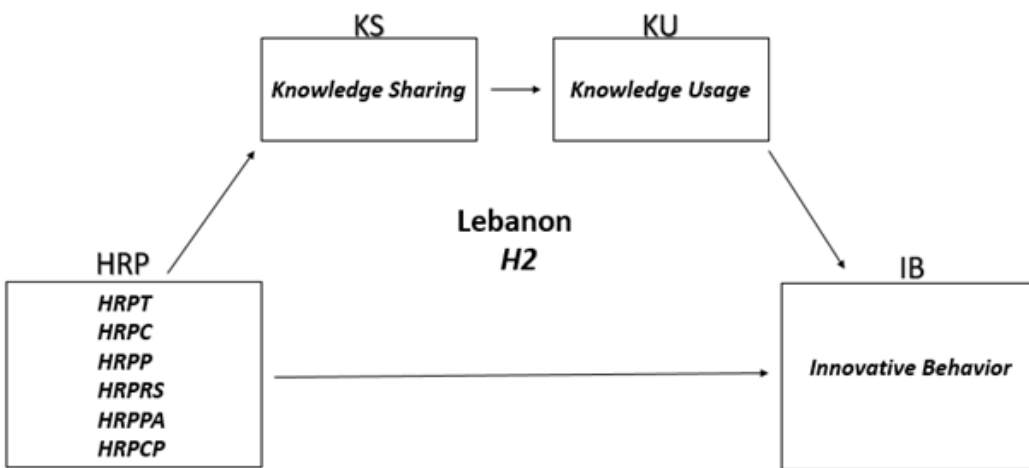
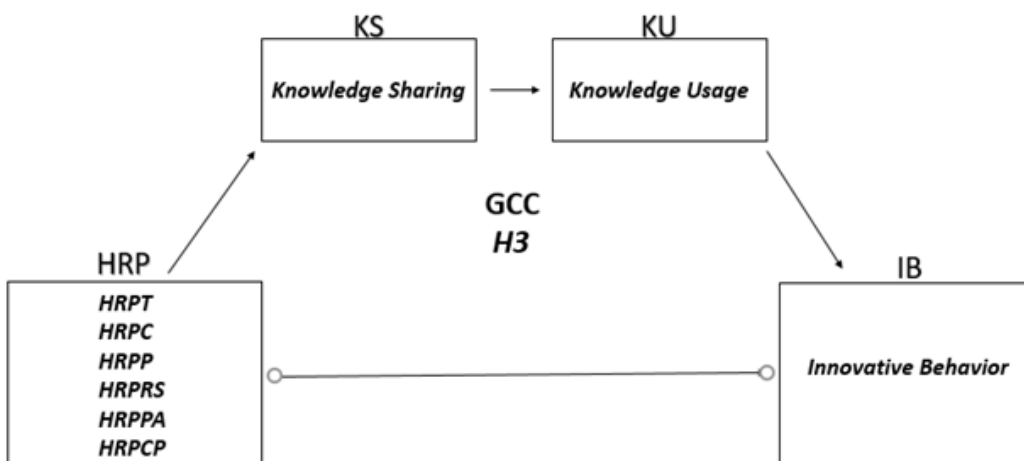


Figure 2. Conceptual model of the sequential mediation of KS and KU on HRP and IB in Lebanon



Henceforward, the conceptual figure represents the proposed hypotheses illustrating the relationship between HRP and IB under the mediating effect of KU and KS contrasting between

Figure 3. Conceptual model of the sequential mediation of KS and KU on HRP and IB in GCC



developing countries and countries facing crisis.

### 3. METHODS

A questionnaire was sent out to collect information and data regarding HRP and IB and the perceptions of KS and KU within the workplace in Lebanon (country undergoing crisis) and GCC region (wealthy and developing countries).

#### 3.1 Measures

*Human Resource Practices.* To measure the HR practices a 32-item scale was implemented from Singh et al. (2021) work. Of which, 6 statements were taken into account to show if training (HRPT) is offered by organizations; 6 statements to test compensation (HRPC); 3 statements to test the extent of participation (HRPP) and 4 statements to measure the adequacy of the selection and recruitment (HRPRS) process; 6 and 7 statements were used to measure performance appraisal (HRPPA) and career and planning (HRPCP) respectively. These subscales were averaged to HRP that reflects the independent variable in our study. Participants of the study are required to rate each of the 32 statements (Q1- Q32) on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Cronbach's coefficient  $\alpha = 0.947$  was applied to the Lebanon sample and  $\alpha = 0.931$  was applied to the GCC's sample. Where the values of Cronbach's coefficient are consistent with (Sarstedt et al., 2021) across different cultures.

*Innovative Behavior.* Regarding IB, 6-item scale were averaged to one and utilized as a dependent variable, as examined by Bani-Melhem et al.(2020), was used. Participants of the study are required to rate each of the 6 statements (Q33- Q38) on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Cronbach's coefficient  $\alpha = 0.912$  was applied to the Lebanon sample and  $\alpha = 0.915$  was applied to the GCC's sample. It has been identified that, Cronbach's coefficient is consistent with that of Hair (2009).

Regarding KS, a 6-item scale was averaged into one mediator, as developed by Zaim et al.(2018). The 6 statements (Q39–Q44) were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.942 for the Lebanon sample and 0.935 for the GCC sample, both of which are consistent with Chudhery et al. (2021) reported values across different cultural settings.

Regarding KU, an 8-item scale was averaged into one mediator, as established by Zaim et al. (2018). Participants were asked to rate each of the 8 statements (Q45–Q52) on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.925 for the Lebanon sample and 0.946 for the GCC sample.

#### 3.2 Sample and Procedures

To test the hypotheses of this study, an online survey questionnaire was designed and distributed to employees working across various sectors in different parts of the world, with a primary focus on Lebanon and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region. SPSS software was employed to analyze the data collected on the research variables: Human Resource Practices (HRP), Innovative Behavior (IB), Knowledge Sharing (KS), and Knowledge Utilization (KU). The study utilized a snowball sampling technique, targeting both regions. Lebanon was specifically selected due to its ongoing economic and political crises, which have significantly impacted the effectiveness of HR managers and their practices. In contrast, the GCC region, characterized by its wealth and rapid development, provided a comparison in a context of prosperity.

In this study, we primarily recruited participants using social media platforms, specifically LinkedIn. LinkedIn, as a professional networking platform, enabled us to target participants who met the criteria of being employed in relevant industries or holding managerial positions. Recruitment posts outlining the purpose of the study were shared, emphasizing anonymity and confidentiality.

Additionally, direct messages were sent to potential participants who fit the desired profile, encouraging their participation.

The survey included structured questions to capture key variables like Knowledge Sharing (KS), Knowledge Utilization (KU), and Innovative Behavior (IB). Participants were asked to rate their responses on a 5-point Likert scale. Sample items include:

- **Knowledge Sharing:** 'To what extent do you share your expertise with colleagues?' (1 = Never, 5 = Always).
- **Knowledge Utilization:** 'How often do you apply knowledge gained from colleagues to solve work-related problems?' (1 = Never, 5 = Very Frequently).
- **Innovative Behavior:** 'How frequently do you propose new ideas or solutions to challenges at work?' (1 = Rarely, 5 = Frequently).

This approach ensured that the sample reflected real-world employee experiences across different organizational settings. LinkedIn proved to be an effective platform for reaching a professional audience that aligned with the study's objectives. Additionally, while managers and peers might observe only certain aspects of employee behaviour, resulting in observation bias (Gabas et al., 2023), self-report measures were deemed more appropriate for this study, as they capture employee perceptions more accurately than assessments by supervisors or peers (De Clerck et al., 2021).

### 3.3 Results

#### 3.3.1 Descriptive Statistics of Demographics

Data collection took place between September till December 2022, with a total of 552 participants. Nevertheless, after data cleaning, 102 respondents were removed due to incomplete surveys. Ultimately, the total number of the participants studied are 450. Based on the conceptual model of the mediating role of KS and KU on the relationship between HRP and IB. We received 234 (response rate 42.4%) and 216 (response rate 39.1%) complete questionnaires from Lebanon and the GCC respectively. English was used to conduct the questions, since in both Lebanon and the GCC region, English is a widely spoken language (Gabas et al., 2023). Demographic variables such as gender, year of birth, education level, work location, organization size and years of service were included in the questionnaire.

##### *Lebanese Sample*

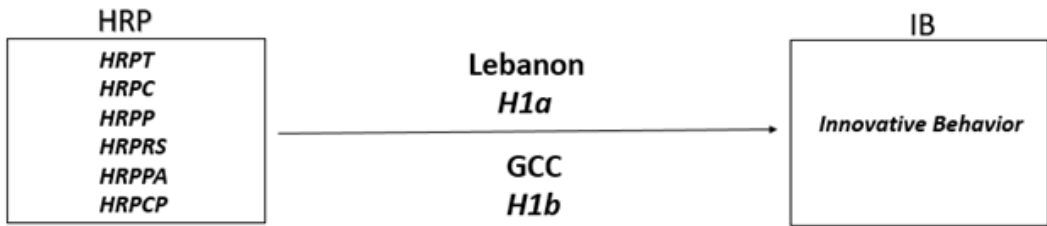
The participants totaled 234 working individuals, 60 (25.6%) of whom were men and 174 (74.4%) women. Most of the respondents were born between 1995 or later (59%), of whom 114 (48.7%) with a master's degree and 90 (38.5%) with BS/BA degree. The majority of the participants 102 (43.6%) worked in organizations that have more than 200 employees, with 162 (69.2%) of minimum zero to five years of working experience and 30 (12.8%) with six to ten years of working experience.

##### *Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Sample*

The participants totaled 216 working individuals, of whom 150 (69.4%) were men and 66 (30.6%) were women. Most of the respondents (55.6%) were born between 1977 and 1994, while (27.8%) of the employees were born between 1966 and 1976. The majority of respondents were having a BA/BS degree (52.8%), followed by (33.3%) with a master's degree. (33.1%) had between six to ten years of service, and (22.2%) had zero to five years of work experience. The majority of participants worked in organizations that have more than 200 employees 126 (58.3%), and 30 (13.9%) worked in organizations that size was between 151 and 200.



Figure 4. Concrete linear regression model



### 3.3.2 Reliability and Confirmatory Factor Analysis

In order to prevent typical technique bias procedural and statistical controls were utilized since the data was self-reported, which might have an effect on the empirical findings. Alongside, we made it obvious to respondents that there were no right or wrong responses to the survey's questions so they may react as honestly as possible in an effort to lessen assessment anxiety and minimize response distortion (De Clerck et al., 2021; Podsakoff et al., 2003). Procedurally, we followed Podsakoff et al. (2003) where we provided comprehensive information regarding the safety measures implemented in our consent in order to safeguard the respondents' confidentiality and anonymity. Furthermore, the measures we employed contained both 5-item Likert scales, which are expected to lessen certain typical scale characteristics issues (De Clerck et al., 2021). Thus, there is no concern for common method bias.

The Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) of the HR, IB, KS, and KU scales must be extracted in order to evaluate the reliability of a scale and maintain consistency. Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ), which is known to have acceptable values between 0.7 and 0.95, must be larger than or equal to 0.7 to affirm the reliability of a scale (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

Using the SPSS software, it can be concluded that all of the four scales of the Lebanese sample in this research are reliable since the four scales had a Cronbach's alpha greater than 0.9.

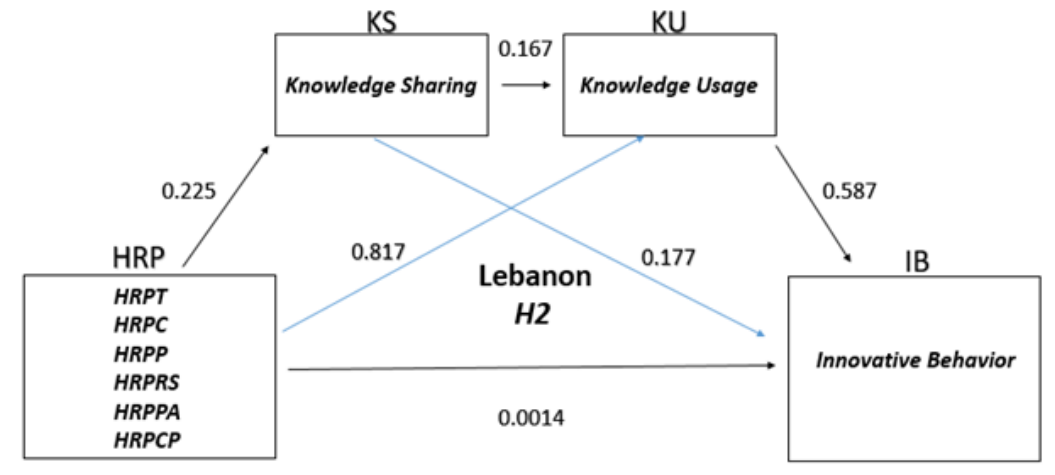
To determine whether the items actually represent the scale that is intended to be measured, and to combine values into one score, SPSS factor analysis must be performed before conducting additional analysis, such as linear regression and sequential mediation. All scales are significant and can be used since the results of the KMO and Bartlett test provided a KMO of 0.832 (HRP), 0.818 (IB), 0.854 (KS), 0.770 (KU) and a Bartlett's test chi-square value of 1507.68 (HRP), 1152.2 (IB), 1411.2 (KS), and 1859.6 (KU). Moreover, the average of all factor loadings of each scale is  $> 0.7$  which further indicate that the test is significant and all scales can be used.

As for the GCC sample, each of HRP, IB, KS and KS scales was found to be reliable with Cronbach's alpha = 0.931, 0.915, 0.935, and 0.946 respectively. Moreover, all scales were found significant to be used for further analysis since the results of the KMO provided a KMO of 0.856 (HRP), 0.838 (IB), 0.759 (KS), 0.859 (KU) and a Bartlett's test chi-square value of 1130.58 (HRP), 964.56 (IB), 1498.08 (KS), and 2171.8 (KU). All factor loadings of each scale were  $> 0.7$  which further indicate that the test is significant and all scales can be utilized.

### 3.3.3 Linear Regression

SPSS Linear regression was utilized to test the direct relationship between HRP and IB in both samples. Primarily, in the Lebanese sample, HRP was found to be a significant predictor of IB ( $\beta = 0.541, p \leq 0.005$ ), supporting *H1a*; 29.3% change in IB is being accounted for by the HRP variable. As for the GCC sample, HRP significantly affects IB ( $\beta = 0.641, p \leq 0.005$ ), supporting *H1b*; 41.1% change in innovative behavior is being accounted for by the HRP variable (Figure 4).

Figure 5. Structural model of the sequential mediation in Lebanon



### 3.3.4 Sequential Mediation

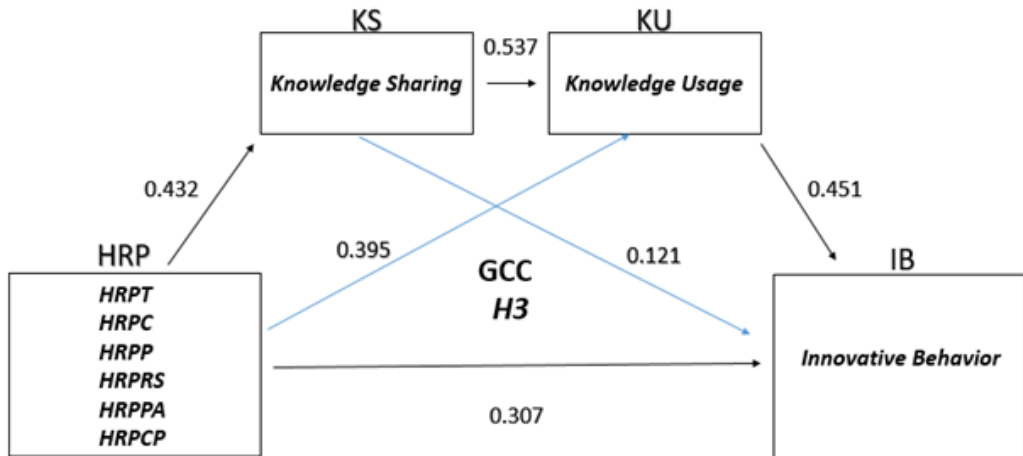
PROCESS v.4.1 of SPSS developed by (Hayes, 2018) was used to test hypothesis *H2* and *H3*. Preliminary, in the Lebanese sample we aimed to test whether KS and KU act jointly in order to sequentially mediate the relationship between HRP and IB. Using model 6 in SPSS and 5,000 bootstrapped samples, the findings suggest that each of KS and KU play a mediating role in the relationship between HRP and IB separately; with ( $\beta = 0.04$ ,  $LLCI = 0.0056$ ,  $ULCI = 0.102$ ) and ( $\beta = 0.480$ ,  $LLCI = 0.256$ ,  $ULCI = 0.684$ ) respectively. More importantly, a sequential mediation is found to be statistically significant with ( $\beta = 0.022$ ,  $LLCI = 0.0038$ ,  $ULCI = 0.045$ ), supporting *H2*. Ultimately, complete simple mediation and sequential mediation are present, as the results indicate that the direct effect of HRP on IB is no longer significant when KS and KU are introduced to the model (Figure 5).

On the other hand, regarding the GCC sample, the sequential mediation was tested using Model 6 in PROCESS Macro with 5,000 bootstrapped samples. The findings suggest that KU plays a mediating role in the relationship between HRP and IB with ( $\beta = 0.178$ ,  $LLCI = 0.105$ ,  $ULCI = 0.259$ ). However, in contrast to the Lebanese sample, KS does not play a mediating role due to the 0 lays between the  $LLCI$  ( $-0.0068$ ) and the  $ULCI$  ( $0.1156$ ). Consequently, the results indicate that the direct effect of HRP on IB in the presence of the mediators is statistically significant ( $\beta = 0.307$ ,  $p \leq 0.005$ ,  $LLCI = 0.196$ ,  $ULCI = 0.417$ ). Furthermore, a sequential mediation is found to be statistically significant with ( $\beta = 0.105$ ,  $LLCI = 0.0518$ ,  $ULCI = 0.1615$ ), supporting *H3*. Withal, the model confirms that there is a partial mediation present in the GCC sample (Figure 6).

## 4. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between HRP and IB, taking into account the mitigation role of perceived KS and KU under two contrasting countries. The preliminary findings indicated a favorable correlation between HRP and IB in both Lebanon (country of crisis) and GCC region. In fact, this is in accordance with the findings of several researchers (Iqbal et al., 2021; Kokkaew et al., 2022; Nguyen & Malik, 2022) that all discerned that there is a significant and definite relationship between HRP and IB. As a result, our research aligns with the findings of the previous researches and demonstrates the HRP and IB association in previously distinct contexts and nations.

Figure 6. Structural model of the sequential mediation in GCC



Bani-Melhem et al.(2020) explicitly states that, firms frequently keep track of and assess HRP and are highly eager to enhance employees' IB, while taking into account the roles of KS and KU and their effect on their correlations. In the sample of GCC, we found a positive and a direct link between HRP and IB in developing countries. The indicated results corroborate with other studies (Chen et al., 2019; Farrukh et al., 2022; Mashi et al., 2022; Singh et al., 2019; H. Wang et al., 2022). Accordingly, we tested the mediating role of KS and KU on HRP and employee IB in the GCC region. Building on, Singh et al.(2019) and Chen et al.(2019) that proposed the direct role of KS and KU on IB through effective HRP. In fact, almost every company presently acknowledges the significance of technology. As a result, the function of knowledge, which entails creating knowledge and sharing it amongst the employees across the firm is currently regarded as a critical component (Iqbal et al., 2021). Simultaneously, KS and KU is acknowledged in the presence of effective organizational HRP that are accentuated in developing countries (Ode & Ayavoo, 2020). Ultimately, our findings indicate that in developing countries, mainly in the GCC region, HRP have a significant effect on employee IB through the sequential mediation of KS and KU. In fact, Mehmood et al.(2022) have demonstrated the underlining conditions of developing countries including economic, social and political, has a direct positive effect on the HRP which in turn affects IB, KU, and KS. Which was witnessed in our study showing the direct link between HRP and IB, indicating a partial sequential mediation between the mediators.

On the other hand, as confirmed by Abasilim et al.(2019), there is a substantial proof that national crises have an immediate influence on leadership and HR styles and employee IB. This result was ultimately inveterate in our study, revealing that country facing crisis such as Lebanon greatly affects HRP which in turn will lead to insignificant employee IB. Due to the multiple of disparities in corporate, governmental, economic and social conditions of Lebanon (Islam et al., 2022) it has been identified in our study that there is a sequential mediation between KS and KU, while identifying an indirect relation between HRP and IB upon the inclusion of the mediators. This in turn is in line with other studies (Jiang et al., 2020; Stergiou & Farmaki, 2021; Vo-Thanh et al., 2022) which discovered a favorable relationship between HRP and IB, yet an indirect relationship, taking into account that their relationship is insignificant when there is a sequential mediation between the mediators at hand. Hereafter, according to preceding studies, this theory explains why perceived HRP did not moderate the connection between IB, KU, and KS, in the Lebanese setting. Unequivocally, this relationship was expected since crisis has a spiraling effect on corporate growth and sustainability in the market, which impacts HR strategies and systems within the workplace (Wisittigars & Siengthai, 2019). This

highlights the crucial role HR managers play, emphasizing the importance of promoting employee's overall wellbeing in times of crisis (Bader et al., 2020).

However, the fundamental idea of a correlation between HRP and employee IB stands in stark, yet its direct effect depends the country's condition. In a way that, developing countries witnessed a partial sequential mediation with direct link between the mediators. In contrast to, countries facing crisis that has been identified that the relationship between the variables are fragile depending on the exclusion of KS and KU. In the light of the previous studies and based on our findings, incorporating the mediators of KS and KU into the model, contributes in enhancing the theory through expanding the understanding of the mechanism between HRP and IB, while providing an opportunity for prospective research and investigation.

## **5. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS**

This study study contributes to the literature on HRP and its influence on employee innovative behavior (IB). It emphasizes the critical role of effectively utilizing HR practices to cultivate an innovative mindset among employees. It also highlights the mediating effects of knowledge sharing (KS) and knowledge utilization (KU) on the relationship between HRP and IB, underscoring the need for managers to assess their organization's macro environment. This assessment will help determine whether promoting KS and KU is beneficial, particularly when navigating crises, where limiting KS and KU may prevent negative impacts on IB. In contrast, in developing country contexts, promoting KS and KU becomes an essential strategy for fostering innovation among employees. Moreover, as Lythreathis et al. (2021) indicate, HR practices vary globally based on corporate, socio-economic, and cultural factors. Therefore, organizations must tailor their HR frameworks to align with the unique economic, social, and political structures of each country. This research extends our understanding of HRP's influence on IB, particularly in times of national crises, such as those experienced in Lebanon, and offers valuable insights for leveraging HRP to drive employee innovation.

## **6. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS**

From a managerial perspective, this study offers actionable insights for firms and HR managers. Organizations should focus on reinforcing the perceived effectiveness of HRP in driving employee IB, particularly through enhancing KS and KU. Managers need to regularly evaluate the socio-economic and political contexts of their operational environments, adjusting their HR practices accordingly to maximize employee innovation. For instance, during periods of crisis, reducing KS and KU may be necessary to safeguard IB. On the other hand, in developing economies, fostering KS and KU may significantly boost innovation. Additionally, as suggested by Son and Kim (2021), organizations should prepare employees to function autonomously in changing work environments, particularly in the aftermath of national crises. Managers are encouraged to implement HRP programs that not only motivate employees but also align with external conditions to enhance organizational outcomes. By prioritizing HR practices that nurture KS, KU, and IB, firms can gain a competitive edge. This study also opens new avenues for future research, encouraging further exploration of additional mediators and variables that may influence the HRP-IB relationship

## **7. LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

This study contributes significantly to the existing literature by addressing the gap related to the mediating role of knowledge sharing (KS) and knowledge utilization (KU) in the relationship between human resource practices (HRP) and innovative behavior (IB), particularly in developing countries

and countries facing crises. The findings provide practical insights and theoretical advancements. However, like all studies, it has some limitations that should be acknowledged.

First, the sample size, while sufficient for the purposes of this study, was relatively limited, particularly in its scope across both Lebanon and the GCC region. Future studies should aim to increase the sample size and gather data from a broader range of countries facing different types of crises. This would improve the generalizability of the findings and allow for cross-national comparisons. Additionally, while the heterogeneity of the sample may be seen as an asset, it may have introduced representational biases. Future research should strive to include more diverse sectors and managerial positions to ensure a more balanced representation.

Moreover, the sampling technique used in this study, while effective, could have introduced biases, as snowball sampling may not fully capture the diversity of the population. Thus, future studies should consider employing more randomized and stratified sampling methods to enhance the robustness of the findings. There is also a need for longitudinal studies to examine the long-term effects of HRP on IB, which may produce different results compared to the cross-sectional design employed here.

Finally, this research emphasizes perceptual factors, such as KS and KU, over behavioural and extrinsic motivators. Future studies should investigate how these factors interact with broader organizational contexts and employee motivation frameworks, potentially exploring new paradigms that mediate the relationship between HRP and IB.

## **CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

We wish to confirm that there are no known conflicts of interest associated with this publication and there has been no significant financial support for this work that could have influenced its outcome.

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## **CORRESPONDING AUTHOR**

Correspondence should be addressed to Silva Karkoulian (Lebanon, skarkoul@lau.edu.lb)

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