

KNOWLEDGE-ORIENTED LEADERSHIP AND CHANGE MANAGEMENT: EXAMINING THE ROLES OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT BEHAVIOURS AND INNOVATION CULTURE

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Abstract

Change is an inherent aspect of organizational life; however, research has not fully explored the constructive leadership styles that promote effective change management within organizations. This empirical study examines the relationship between knowledge-oriented leadership and change management, focusing on the mediating roles of innovation culture and knowledge management behaviours. Cross-sectional data were obtained from 214 healthcare professionals employed in public healthcare organizations in Delta State, Nigeria. The partial least squares (PLS) method was used to analyze the data and test four hypotheses. Findings indicate that knowledge-oriented leadership has a positive influence on change management, and this effect is fully mediated by innovation culture and knowledge management behaviours, both independently and sequentially. These findings underscore the significance of knowledge-oriented leadership in managing change through the development of an innovation culture and the promotion knowledge management behaviours. This study contributes to the leadership and public sector management literature by presenting empirical evidence of the direct and indirect outcomes of knowledge-oriented leadership. Additionally, it provides practical guidance by illustrating effective strategies for managing change within public healthcare organizations.

Keywords: Change management; Culture; Innovation; Knowledge management; Knowledge-oriented leadership

1. INTRODUCTION

Organizations in dynamic and complex business environments must continually adapt their strategies and activities to remain competitive. The necessity to respond to uncontrollable external factors renders change a constant aspect of organisational life. As a result, effective change management is critical for organisations facing increasing levels of change. Managing change, however, is inherently risky and complex. Many organisations struggle with change initiatives and often fail to achieve the anticipated outcomes. It is estimated that 60-70% of organisational change initiatives fail (Errida & Lotfi, 2021). This high failure rate has intensified efforts to identify factors that mitigate failure and promote the success of change initiatives (Nilsen et al., 2020). Scholars suggest that unsuccessful change management can be attributed to ineffective leadership (Higgs et al., 2023; Ramos-Maçães & Román-Portas, 2022). Leadership styles play a pivotal role in organisational change by coordinating actions that foster commitment and engagement among organisational members (Kaur Bagga et al., 2023). Among these, knowledge-oriented leadership is particularly significant, as it encourages knowledge creation, sharing, and utilisation to inform and guide shifts in thinking and collective outcomes (Naqshbandi & Jasimuddin, 2018). This leadership style cultivates a learning environment that leverages collective expertise to build organisational capabilities for change. Furthermore, as competitive advantage increasingly depends on intellectual capabilities, knowledge has become essential for effective change and innovation.

Existing research has only minimally examined the relationship between leadership and change management (Kaur Bagga et al., 2023). Knowledge-oriented leadership, a contemporary style identified in the innovation literature (Ononye & Maduemezia, 2024), warrants further investigation as organisations face ongoing environmental pressures that challenge established strategies, structures, and practices. Understanding how this leadership style leverages organisational knowledge capabilities to drive transformation is essential. In particular, the contextual effects of knowledge management behaviours and innovation culture require closer

analysis. Evidence suggests that knowledge-oriented leadership supports key processes related to change, including knowledge management and innovation (Naqshbandi & Jasimuddin, 2018). Leaders who foster an innovative culture and promote knowledge management can facilitate organisational alignment and adaptability in dynamic environments. The most effective public sector leadership combines transformational and transactional qualities (Orazi et al., 2013). Knowledge-oriented leadership integrates these approaches, inspiring employees with a shared vision while establishing clear guidelines and rewards, thereby catalysing change through effective knowledge utilisation (Donate & Sánchez De Pablo, 2015).

Public healthcare organisations operate in a knowledge-intensive sector, relying heavily on the effective creation, sharing, and utilisation of diverse knowledge forms to drive innovation and deliver high-quality care. These organisations face significant challenges that affect healthcare standards, efficiency, and effectiveness, including an ageing population, workforce shortages, widening health disparities, changing disease patterns, infrastructure limitations, financial constraints, technological advancements, climate change, and evolving healthcare systems (Biçer & Isik, 2025; Nilsen et al., 2020). Existing processes may not fully address these challenges except they evolve, thereby making strategic change inevitable. Managers must also work within complex, often bureaucratic structures, making change management particularly demanding. By adopting knowledge-driven leadership, healthcare organisations can leverage knowledge to transform operations and enhance performance. Strategic processes oriented towards organizational change can consequently be linked to the effectiveness of knowledge management. This is especially true because, as changes occur, new knowledge is needed not only to harness the benefits of those changes but also to lead transformation in how health services provide value.

The healthcare industry is rapidly changing, and organizations that can keep pace with this change and even lead it through effective management gain a competitive advantage. Change management play an important role in enabling organizations to gain flexibility, exploit new opportunities, and achieve sustainable success in dynamic environments. However, it is important that top management exhibits consistent leadership behaviours during the process of change, and that these behaviours are spread across the organization. At this point, the relationship between leadership and change management constitutes one of the foundations of organizational success (Biçer & Isik, 2025). Ineffective leadership continues to impede organizational transformation in the public sector. Effective leadership styles are often underutilised during periods of change, highlighting the necessity for leaders to demonstrate behaviours that guide organisations toward desired outcomes. While previous research identifies leadership sustenance as a key factor in successful change management, the specific behaviours that incentivise change remain insufficiently defined. Although knowledge-oriented leadership is increasingly recognised in the academic literature, its impact on contextual and organisational factors within healthcare organisations remains underexplored (Farooq Sahibzada et al., 2021). This study addresses this gap by examining the effectiveness of contemporary leadership styles, specifically knowledge-oriented leadership, in supporting change management. Insights into this leadership style and outcomes can inform the selection and development of leaders, equipping healthcare organisations to manage change more effectively.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Knowledge-oriented leadership refers to attitudes or behaviours that facilitate knowledge creation, sharing, and utilisation to guide organizational change and collective outcomes (Naqshbandi & Jasimuddin, 2018). This leadership approach combines transformational leadership, which fosters intellectual stimulation and a compelling vision to encourage innovation, with transactional leadership, which uses rewards to reinforce engagement in knowledge-related processes. By emphasizing communication and motivation, knowledge-oriented leadership fosters a collaborative environment that strengthens teamwork and optimizes knowledge flow (Farooq Sahibzada et al., 2021). The joint intellectual effort fosters trust, shared responsibility, and effective coordination, all of which are critical for successful change implementation. Knowledge-oriented leadership also fosters a learning culture, enabling employees to demonstrate a deeper understanding of and commitment to change through open communication. Empowering employees to share and apply knowledge enhances organizational problem-solving and adaptability. Furthermore, knowledge-oriented leadership is well-positioned to develop mechanisms that convert employees' tacit insights into practical outcomes. By integrating transformational and transactional leadership styles, knowledge-oriented leadership can adapt to the diverse

and variable challenges of organizational change. Ultimately, effective leadership depends on managers' ability to combine these styles to support change initiatives. Change initiatives frequently lack sufficient knowledge resources for successful implementation (Engida et al., 2022). Consequently, knowledge-oriented leaders are well-positioned to leverage knowledge resources and address the challenges of change implementation.

Change management is an intricate, systematic process that involves active participation and communication to guide organisational transformation from the current state to the desired future state, thereby achieving organisational objectives (Picado Argüello & González-Prida, 2024; Ramos-Maçães & Román-Portas, 2022). In a study conducted by Phillips and Klein (2023), they identified clear communication about change and employee involvement as strategies often used by change managers to shape how employees understand, interpret, and support change. Collaborative practices are essential to the successful implementation of strategic change initiatives (Biçer & Isik, 2025). This means that successful change management depends on the collective, coordinated actions of many interdependent employees, each of whom contributes meaningfully to the change effort (Holt et al., 2010). The goal of change management is to enhance organisational performance and enable adaptation to dynamic environments. The process prioritizes the human aspect, as employees are essential in facilitating and supporting new approaches to thinking, acting, and operating. Organisations often face resistance from employees when changes are implemented without sufficient understanding. Limited knowledge hinders the alignment of employee efforts with the vision and strategy for change (Cheraghi et al., 2023). In an unstable business environment, organisational leaders should help employees assimilate necessary changes to ensure success and adaptability. Effective communication and employee involvement in the transformation process increase awareness of the potential effects of change, thereby reducing uncertainty, cynicism, and resistance (Kaur Bagga et al., 2023). Communication also enables knowledge integration and supports collective construction of meaning within a learning context. As a result, a positive outlook strengthens employee enthusiasm and commitment to change elements, thereby cultivating a supportive environment for attitudinal transformation within organizations.

Knowledge-oriented leadership is a suitable style for driving organizational change by emphasizing the strategic use of knowledge. Organizations depend on leaders who facilitate knowledge sharing, creation, and capture among employees to support change initiatives. These leaders integrate knowledge management into organizational processes, thereby improving communication and increasing employee participation during periods of change. Such knowledge-driven outcomes enable organizations to identify and capitalize on opportunities for innovation, supporting diverse knowledge behaviours that are essential for both knowledge exploitation and exploration. According to Shamim et al. (2019), this leadership style cultivates positive work attitudes, including employee commitment, self-efficacy, and work engagement. These attitudes are crucial for addressing the challenges of change management and enhancing satisfaction with change initiatives (Holt et al., 2010).

While previous research acknowledges the significance of leadership in effective change management, the specific influence of knowledge-oriented leadership on organizational change remains underexplored. Existing studies indicate that transformational and transactional leadership, which are integral to knowledge-oriented leadership, support sustainable organizational change (Kaur Bagga et al., 2023; Mouazen et al., 2023). Mekonnen and Bayissa (2023) further observed that these leadership styles enhance organizational readiness for change, a crucial precursor to implementing change initiatives. It can therefore be inferred that knowledge-oriented leadership is related to change management, as it incorporates both transformational and transactional qualities. Additionally, research (Chughtai & Khan, 2024; Zia, 2020) has established a strong association between knowledge-oriented leadership and innovation, with innovation catalyzing organizational change. Ultimately, knowledge-oriented leadership aims to leverage individual and organizational knowledge capabilities to generate value through change and innovation. Therefore, the first hypothesis was proposed.

H1: Knowledge-oriented leadership positively influences change management.

Knowledge management encompasses behaviours that support an organization's capacity to acquire, share, create, retain, and apply practical knowledge, thereby enhancing overall performance. Organizations frequently encounter evolving and unpredictable problems that are difficult to fully comprehend due to limited information. As a result, it is essential to convert and integrate employees' context-specific knowledge to address issues

that are not yet fully understood or explicitly defined, increasing the probability of success in the face of environmental challenges and changes (Ononye, 2025). Knowledge management also facilitates the transformation of individual (tacit) knowledge into organizational (explicit) knowledge, promoting a deeper understanding of problem contexts to sustain superior performance. The primary objective of knowledge management is to increase organisational awareness of both individual and collective knowledge, develop strategies for accessing and utilising it, and ensure its optimal application (Donate & Sánchez De Pablo, 2015).

Knowledge management enhances organizational innovation capability by promoting the sharing and utilization of knowledge resources (Ononye, 2025). According to resource-based theory, organizations can gain a competitive advantage by strategically leveraging their unique and valuable knowledge. This suggests that effective knowledge management enables organizations to gain a competitive advantage in implementing change initiatives (Harsono et al., 2025). Empirical studies (Lam et al., 2021; Naqshbandi & Jasimuddin, 2018; Shamim et al., 2019; Zia, 2020) have shown that knowledge-oriented leadership facilitates knowledge management processes. These studies further assert that the impact of knowledge-oriented leadership on valued outcomes, particularly innovation, is realized through effective knowledge management. Innovation is fundamental to organizational change, as it enables the adoption of new ideas that renew or transform strategies, processes, systems, and practices. Leadership styles characterized by transformational and transactional qualities contribute to the development of robust knowledge management systems (Ugwu & Okore, 2020).

Previous research has identified knowledge management as a key enabler of organizational change. Imran et al. (2016) demonstrated that knowledge management strategies enhance organizational learning and readiness for change, thereby facilitating the successful implementation of change. These strategies provide employees with the guidance they need to understand and accept change, thereby supporting inclusive integration and a smooth transition during change initiatives. The process of institutionalizing change is managed within a learning-oriented context to enhance its effectiveness. Mabunda and Du Plessis (2022) observed that employees often resist change when their existing knowledge and skills are challenged by new initiatives that do not align with their current competencies. Insufficient knowledge of post-change outcomes can further contribute to resistance, suggesting that knowledge management may be a practical solution. Adam (2022) emphasized that knowledge sharing among employees, through both personal and organizational communication channels, fosters creative behaviors that support change management. Knowledge sharing enables individuals to make sense of the trajectories and conditions of change. Consequently, the shared meaning derived from knowledge co-creation helps build commitment to new actions.

Studies have consistently found that knowledge management mediates the influence of this leadership style on various outcome variables, including innovation (Donate & Sánchez De Pablo, 2015; Naqshbandi & Jasimuddin, 2018; Zia, 2020), positive work attitudes (Shamim et al., 2019), and organizational effectiveness (Gürlek & Çemberci, 2020). However, no study has established effective change management as an outcome. Given the above, knowledge management is inextricably linked with knowledge-oriented leadership and change management. Thus, it can provide the mediating context through which this leadership style can to influence change management. The study hypothesizes that:

H2: Knowledge-oriented leadership positively influences change management through knowledge management behaviours.

Innovation culture is an organizational culture that supports the transformation of knowledge into practical benefits. Within such cultures, members imbibe a shared set of assumptions, beliefs, and values that guide their perceptions, thoughts, and actions toward innovation (Ekmekcioglu & Öner, 2024). Commitment to values such as continuous improvement, experimentation, flexibility, curiosity, creativity, openness, and an external focus is deemed essential for organizational effectiveness and success in dynamic environments. Thus, organizational members are more likely to embrace change and new challenges by prioritizing knowledge development that is critical to both external adaptation and internal integration. This environment fosters co-creation and collaboration to implement ideas that add value or benefit. Fostering an innovative culture enhances communication processes, facilitating greater knowledge sharing and organizational learning. This cultural orientation is focused on change, innovation, and adaptation. Organizations with externally oriented

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cultures tend to be highly responsive to change, while those with internally focused cultures may not prioritize environmental changes in managing organizational activities and outcomes.

Research consistently shows a positive link between organizational culture and successful change. Naveed et al. (2022) found that organizational culture enhances perceptions of innovation, thereby improving effectiveness during periods of change. Kaur Bagga et al. (2023) identified involvement and adaptability as key cultural traits that support change management. Olafsen et al. (2021) reported that a flexible culture fosters commitment to change by influencing personal attitudes and self-efficacy. Leadership also shapes the environment for change by driving cultural transformation. Kaur Bagga et al. (2023) suggested that transformational and change leadership styles influence organizational culture, which, in turn, mediates the relationship between leadership and change management. Organizational culture fosters commitment to change through high-quality communication and employee participation during implementation (Van Der Voet, 2016). A recent study (Rashwan & Ghaly, 2022) demonstrated that leadership styles, specifically transformational and transactional leadership, enhance innovation behaviours through organizational culture. The central argument drawn from these studies is that specific leadership behaviours require culture building for successful change management.

Although limited, research on knowledge-oriented leadership suggests that it strengthens innovation by influencing culture (Alzghoul et al., 2024; Naqshbandi & Jasimuddin, 2018). These findings highlight the positive association between knowledge-oriented leadership and innovation, underscoring the need to cultivate an innovation-focused culture to sustain effective leadership. Given that innovation is critical for change, it is vital to nurture an innovation culture that encourages the development of new ideas and demonstrates innovative work behaviours. Moreover, change management enhances the effectiveness and success of innovation by providing a framework that supports employees' commitment and engagement in creating and implementing new ideas. Knowledge-oriented leadership thrives in environments that leverage knowledge to embed change into organizational activities, a characteristic of an innovation culture. Consequently, this cultural orientation enables organizations to adapt, become more agile, be receptive to new opportunities, and perform more effectively. Therefore, the study proposes that:

H3: Knowledge-oriented leadership positively influences change management through an innovation culture.

Several studies have documented a close relationship between organizational culture and knowledge management activities, suggesting the possibility of serial mediation (Azeem et al., 2021; Rezaei et al., 2021). Additionally, research indicates that knowledge management mediates the relationship between organizational culture and various outcome variables (Rezaei et al., 2021). Lam et al. (2021) demonstrated that leadership styles have a positive influence on innovation capability through organizational culture and knowledge management. Based on these findings, it is reasonable to infer a serial mediation involving organizational culture and knowledge management behaviours in the relationship between knowledge-oriented leadership and change management. Furthermore, Gürlek and Çemberci (2020) suggested that knowledge management and innovation performance mediate the sequential influence of knowledge-oriented leadership on organizational performance. Therefore, knowledge management and innovation-related variables likely constitute the context through which this leadership style affects change management. Change management has been shown to enhance organizational performance (Ramezan et al., 2013). This mediation perspective is novel, as existing studies have not yet examined the interplay among these constructs or their roles in enhancing the impact of knowledge-oriented leadership. Drawing on knowledge-based theory, knowledge is a unique and strategic resource that must be effectively managed to achieve a competitive advantage. Leadership influences the direction, management, and effectiveness of knowledge work within organizations. The leaders' role involves creating a conducive environment that supports knowledge management behaviours, which enhances employees' commitment and engagement in knowledge work. Knowledge-oriented leadership can transform knowledge resources and capabilities into practical outcomes. Based on the review, the study hypothesizes that:

H4: Knowledge-oriented leadership positively influences change management through an innovation culture and knowledge management behaviours.

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The formulated hypotheses suggesting direct and indirect relationships between knowledge-oriented leadership and change management, mediated by innovation culture and knowledge management behaviours, are represented in Figure 1. The plain line depicts the main effect while the dashed lines depict the indirect effects.

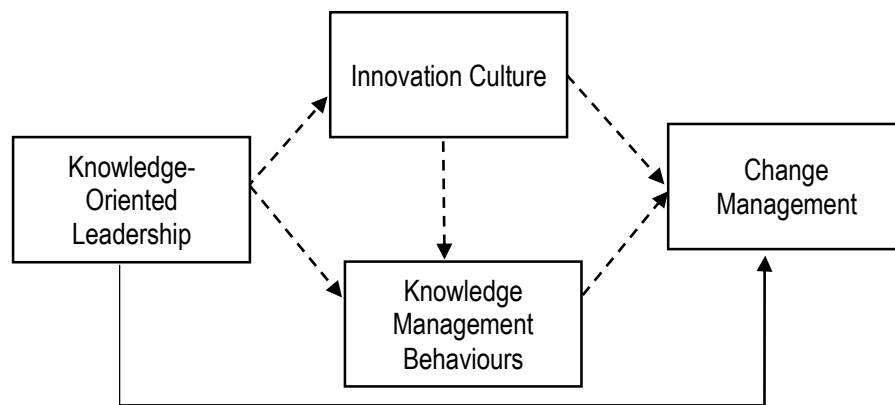


FIGURE 1 – RESEARCH MODEL

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A cross-sectional survey design was employed, utilizing a structured questionnaire administered at a single point in time. Due to limited resources and the need for proximate observation, the study focused on healthcare professionals in public hospitals in Asaba, Delta State, Nigeria. Primary data were collected, while secondary data from published journal articles supported the development of the theory and the discussion of the results. Based on the Taro Yamane formula, a sample of 214 participants was selected from a population of 461 healthcare professionals. Convenience sampling was used following management approval. The survey was conducted over a two-month period, from July to August 2025. The survey package included a cover letter, the questionnaire, and a pre-stamped envelope for returning the questionnaire. Informed consent was obtained before participation, and respondents were informed that participation was voluntary. Participants were instructed to read the cover letter, which outlined the research aims and assurances of anonymity. Of the 214 questionnaires distributed, 209 were returned fully completed. Among the participants, 121 (57.9%) were male, and 88 (42.1%) were female, with a mean age of 37.4 years. Most respondents held a bachelor's degree (113, 54.1%), followed by postgraduate degrees (64, 30.6%) and diplomas or other health-related certifications (32, 15.3%). The average tenure was 9.8 years. The participants' professional backgrounds included 73 nurses, 59 medical doctors, 10 medical laboratory scientists, 5 pharmacists, 4 dentists, and 58 individuals in allied health fields.

The researchers developed a 22-item questionnaire from previous research scales, with responses rated on a 5-point Likert scale from never (1) to regularly (5). The 6-item scale for knowledge-oriented leadership was sourced from Donate and Sánchez De Pablo (2015). The change management scale, also comprising six items, was adapted from Kaur Bagga et al. (2023) and Phillips and Klein (2023). The items that measured change management focused on change communications with employees and employee involvement in the change process. Knowledge management behaviours were assessed using a 6-item scale adapted from Abu-Shanab and Shehabat (2018), while innovation culture was measured with a 4-item scale from Naveed et al. (2022). The questionnaire underwent a pre-test to assess its validity and reliability. A professor of management and two senior management healthcare professionals confirmed face validity. The questionnaire was adjudged comprehensible and relevant to what it intends to measure. Reliability was determined using Cronbach's alpha, as facilitated by SPSS 20.0. The results indicated that knowledge-oriented leadership (0.783), innovation culture (0.812), knowledge management behaviours (0.757), and change management (0.766) all exceeded the 0.70 threshold, demonstrating adequate internal consistency among the constructs.

The SmartPLS 3 software was used to facilitate the partial least squares (PLS) approach to structural equation modelling. PLS is appropriate for complex research models that include multiple contextual constructs, such

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as mediators. It is also more flexible in sample size and multivariate normality requirements than the covariance-based method. Following the two-step analytical procedure, the researchers evaluated the measurement model using confirmatory factor analysis to assess its reliability and validity. The structural model was then estimated for hypothesis testing using the bootstrap method with 5000 subsamples. Interpretation of the results followed the guidelines established by Hair et al. (2021).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Preliminary analyses were conducted to assess factorability, normal distribution, and the presence of common method bias. The analyses were conducted using SPSS 20.0 and SmartPLS 3. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's test of sphericity were applied to evaluate factorability. KMO values for knowledge-oriented leadership (0.702), innovation culture (0.796), knowledge management behaviours (0.688), and change management (0.721) all exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.60. Significant Bartlett's test values ($p < 0.05$) indicated the suitability of the data for factor analysis. Although PLS does not follow a strict normality condition, skewness and kurtosis were within the acceptable range of -2 to +2 (Hahs-Vaughn & Lomax, 2020). Consequently, no significant deviation from normality was observed that could result in inflated estimates or unreliable inferences. Harman's single-factor test revealed that a single factor accounted for 38.46% of the variance, below the 50% threshold, indicating that common method bias was not a significant issue. Additionally, the study employed the variance inflation factor (VIF) to assess the potential impact of CMB on the findings. According to Kock (2015), the critical point of 3.30 indicates that the model is not significantly affected by CMB. As presented in Table 1, the VIF values of the constructs were all within the acceptable threshold. Therefore, the model achieves acceptable robustness, allowing for reliable and valid inferences to be drawn.

Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted prior to hypothesis testing to evaluate the reliability and validity of the measurement model, as presented in Table 1. Convergent validity was assessed by estimating factor loadings (FL) and average variance extracted (AVE). All constructs demonstrated FL above 0.70, and AVE values for all variables exceeded 0.50. Composite reliability values were also above the 0.70 threshold, indicating sufficient construct reliability. The Fornell-Larcker criterion results showed that the AVE for each construct (bolded value) was greater than its inter-construct correlations, supporting discriminant validity.

Table 1 - MEASUREMENT MODEL ESTIMATES

Items	Mean	SD	FL	CR	AVE	VIF	1	2	3	4
1. KoL	3.873	1.144	0.766 – 0.794	0.848	0.750	1.971	0.866			
2. KMB	4.055	0.982	0.822 – 0.873	0.795	0.649	1.255	0.184	0.806		
3. IC	4.160	0.857	0.795 – 0.828	0.722	0.771	1.958	0.361	0.203	0.878	
4. CM	3.907	1.076	0.780 – 0.811	0.767	0.703	1.044	0.247	0.491	0.366	0.838

Notes: KoL = knowledge-oriented leadership, KMB = knowledge management behaviours, IC = innovation culture, CM = change management

Table 2 - STRUCTURAL MODEL RESULTS - DIRECT

Paths	Std. β (p-value) Model 1	Std. β (p-value) Model 2	Remark
KoL \rightarrow CM	0.103 (0.048)	0.101 (0.061)	Accept H1
KMB \rightarrow CM		0.379 (0.000)	Positive and Significant
IC \rightarrow CM		0.425 (0.000)	Positive and Significant
KoL \rightarrow KMB		0.220 (0.000)	Positive and Significant
KoL \rightarrow IC		0.296 (0.000)	Positive and Significant
IC \rightarrow KMB		0.467(0.000)	Positive and Significant
R ²	0.121	0.682	Weak to Strong

Having demonstrated acceptable psychometric properties in the measurement model, the structural model was estimated using the bootstrap method with 5,000 iterations. The PLS analysis identified several significant effects, as shown in Table 2. Model 1 examined the direct influence of knowledge-oriented leadership on change management, finding a significant positive influence ($\beta = 0.103$; $p < 0.05$), which supports H1. This result is consistent with Shamim et al. (2019), who observed that this leadership style promotes positive work attitudes, such as employee commitment, engagement, and self-efficacy. These factors are essential for the successful implementation of change initiatives. The finding also aligns with research by Kaur Bagga et al.

(2023) and Mouazen et al. (2023), which demonstrates that transformational and transactional leadership qualities are relevant for facilitating work-related changes and enhancing organisational adaptability in dynamic environments. Furthermore, studies by Zia (2020) and Chughtai and Khan (2024) establish a strong connection between this leadership style and innovation, which is fundamental to organisational change. Leadership styles that integrate both transformational and transactional behaviours are particularly well-suited to bureaucratic organizations experiencing evolving conditions and challenges. Such organizations require mechanisms to maintain control and stability, such as contingent rewards, while also adapting organizational activities to dynamic environments. This duality underscores the importance of knowledge-oriented leadership in public healthcare organizations. On the other hand, because change involves uncertainties, a specific leadership style may not be effective in building capacity for change. This requires managers to consider a blended leadership behavioural approach to enhance their sense of control in different change situations for sustained organizational development.

In Model 2, the influence of knowledge-oriented leadership on change management became insignificant once knowledge management behaviours and innovation culture were included, forming alternative pathways. Both knowledge management behaviours ($\beta = 0.379$, $p < 0.05$) and innovation culture ($\beta = 0.425$, $p < 0.05$) showed significant impacts on change management. Their effects were stronger than that of knowledge-oriented leadership, suggesting they may play a more vital role in managing change. Nevertheless, knowledge-oriented leadership had a positive and significant influence on both knowledge management behaviours ($\beta = 0.220$; $p < 0.05$) and innovation culture ($\beta = 0.296$; $p < 0.05$). Additionally, innovation culture and knowledge management were significantly correlated ($\beta = 0.467$; $p < 0.05$).

Table 3 - STRUCTURAL MODEL RESULTS - INDIRECT

Paths	Std. β (p-value)	Remark
KoL \rightarrow KMB \rightarrow CM	0.103 (0.007)	Accept H2
KoL \rightarrow IC \rightarrow CM	0.109 (0.000)	Accept H3
KoL \rightarrow IC \rightarrow KMB \rightarrow CM	0.084 (0.023)	Accept H4

Table 3 presents the indirect influence of knowledge-oriented leadership on change management. The PLS analysis revealed that knowledge management behaviours ($\beta = 0.103$; $p < 0.05$) and innovation culture ($\beta = 0.109$; $p < 0.05$) mediated the influence of this leadership style on change management, supporting H2 and H3. The result on knowledge management behaviours corroborates previous research (Donate & Sánchez De Pablo, 2015; Gürlek & Çemberci, 2020; Naqshbandi & Jasimuddin, 2018; Shamim et al., 2019; Zia, 2020) that identified their mediating role, and further extends these findings by revealing additional outcomes indirectly influenced by knowledge-oriented leadership. Therefore, knowledge-oriented leadership fosters active communication and employee engagement, thereby guiding organisational change by creating conditions that support effective knowledge management behaviours. Regarding innovation culture, while Kaur Bagga et al. (2023) provided empirical evidence of transformational leadership's influence on change management through organizational culture, the present study advances this understanding by demonstrating that leaders who display a combination of leadership styles, including transformational qualities, can foster a positive organizational culture to change outdated elements in an organization through innovation. This finding is also consistent with Rashwan and Ghaly (2022), who reported that both transformational and transactional leadership styles foster important organizational outcomes, such as innovation, by adapting organizational culture. While transformational leadership qualities are essential for knowledge-oriented leaders, it is also important for these leaders to reinforce extrinsic motivation through transactional contingent rewards. This approach supports the development and maintenance of a high-quality work culture, thereby enhancing effort, involvement, and cooperation. Furthermore, the effectiveness of change management is improved when knowledge-oriented leaders promote organizational culture adjustments that prioritize innovation, as an innovation-oriented value system aligns with and supports this leadership approach.

Finally, they also acted sequentially to enhance the influence of this leadership style on change management ($\beta = 0.084$; $p < 0.05$), confirming H4. The indirect influence of this leadership style was considered fully mediated, as it became insignificant when contextual factors were introduced into the model. This result is consistent with Gürlek and Çemberci (2020), who argue that this leadership style sequentially influences desirable organizational outcomes through knowledge management and innovation-related variables. The

finding also supports knowledge-based theory, which posits that knowledge is a strategic resource that must be effectively managed to achieve unique advantages in executing specific organizational activities, such as change management. Knowledge-oriented leaders manage knowledge flows to facilitate knowledge work within organizations. This is achieved by fostering an innovative environment that supports knowledge management behaviours among employees. As a result, organizations are better equipped to navigate the complex and disruptive challenges associated with managing change. Summarily, the effectiveness of this leadership approach in managing change relies on its capacity to cultivate an innovative culture and to implement robust knowledge management

According to Chin et al. (2008), R^2 values below 0.33 are considered weak, and those above 0.66 are considered strong. Model 1 demonstrated a weak explanatory power, as knowledge-oriented leadership alone accounted for 12.1% of the variation in change management. The introduction of the contextual paths in Model 2 resulted in a notable increase in explanatory power by 56.1 points, which is considered strong. The changes in the interplay among knowledge-oriented leadership, knowledge management behaviours, and innovation culture explained 68.2% of the variance in change management success.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This study investigated the relationship between knowledge-oriented leadership and change management, focusing on the mediating roles of innovation culture and knowledge management behaviours. Four hypotheses were formulated, and data were obtained from 214 healthcare professionals in public healthcare organizations in Delta State, Nigeria. The partial least squares method was used to analyse the data and test the hypothesis. The findings demonstrated that knowledge-oriented leadership has a positive influence on change management. However, this influence is significant when both innovation culture and knowledge management are adequately developed and sustained. The interplay between these contextual factors delineates the mechanism through which this leadership style optimizes its impact on organizational change. Therefore, the study concludes that the innovation culture and knowledge management behaviours fully contextualize the influence of knowledge-oriented leadership on change management, both independently and sequentially.

The study advances the theoretical understanding of knowledge-oriented leadership by validating knowledge-based theory within public healthcare organizations in Nigeria. The findings confirmed that this leadership style facilitates organizational change, with its effectiveness fully attained through the development and maintenance of an innovation culture and knowledge management behaviours. While research on knowledge-oriented leadership remains limited, previous studies (Alzghoul et al., 2024; Donate & Sánchez De Pablo, 2015; Gürlek & Çemberci, 2020; Naqshbandi & Jasimuddin, 2018; Shamim et al., 2019; Zia, 2020) have identified its positive outcomes, including enhanced knowledge management, positive work attitudes, increased innovation behaviours and capabilities, and better organisational performance. The present study extends these outcomes to include effective change management. Gürlek and Çemberci (2020) investigated the sequential influence of this leadership style on organizational performance; similarly, the current study confirms this sequential effect on effective change management. Furthermore, existing research identifies innovation-related variables, such as creativity, innovation capability, and innovation performance, as outcomes of knowledge-oriented leadership. However, the enabling role of innovation culture has not been previously examined. Empirical evidence demonstrating how knowledge-oriented leadership promotes knowledge management practices remains limited. The findings indicate that knowledge-oriented leaders actively engage in culture building to support knowledge management behaviours, indicating that innovation culture serves as a significant antecedent.

The study offers practical insights for public managers in healthcare organizations in Nigeria, highlighting the importance of adopting a constructive leadership style that combines and leverages the strengths of transformational and transactional leadership to achieve coordinated transformation in highly dynamic and challenging environments. Knowledge-oriented leadership, a blended leadership approach, can be acquired through targeted leadership development and training programmes. Consequently, healthcare organizations should implement targeted interventions to cultivate leadership well-suited to knowledge-based organizations. Periodic psychometric leadership assessments may be used to evaluate managerial development following

such interventions. Knowledge-oriented leadership positions public healthcare organizations to respond more effectively to external changes by improving communication, motivation, and employee engagement in change initiatives. However, the success of this leadership style depends on the development and maintenance of an innovation culture and robust knowledge management practices. Without an environment that supports the productive use of knowledge, this leadership approach may not effectively facilitate organizational change. Therefore, public managers are encouraged to prioritize culture building to promote innovation within their organizations.

6. LIMITATIONS

This study has several limitations. First, it was conducted within a single state in Nigeria, which restricts the geographical scope and limits the generalizability of the findings. Future research should test the model in other contexts to further validate its findings. Second, the findings are based on a small sample of public healthcare organizations; subsequently, studies should consider larger samples for broader application of the results. Third, the study utilized cross-sectional data obtained through convenience sampling. Future research should employ alternative sampling methods that minimize bias and consider longitudinal data to enable stronger inferences about causal relationships. Fourth, this research identified knowledge-oriented leadership as a constructive leadership style that supports effective change management in public healthcare organizations. Further studies should examine how other constructive leadership styles, such as ambidextrous leadership, authentic leadership, or servant leadership, may influence change management. Fifth, the analysis focused on mediating variables, including innovation culture and knowledge management behaviours. Future research should investigate potential moderating variables, such as organizational learning or knowledge absorption, to determine the conditions under which this leadership style is most effective for institutionalizing change. Additionally, it is necessary to identify the specific knowledge management behaviours that facilitate organizational change, as this study did not differentiate among various behavioural activities.

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Appendix: Measurement Items

Knowledge-oriented Leadership

1. Managers create an environment for responsible employee behaviour and teamwork.
2. Managers act as knowledge leaders by demonstrating openness, accepting mistakes as part of the learning process, and mediating to achieve organizational objectives.
3. Managers encourage experiential learning and accept mistakes within reasonable limits.
4. Managers serve as advisers, while control mechanisms function primarily to assess the achievement of organizational objectives.
5. Managers facilitate the acquisition of knowledge from external sources.
6. Managers recognize and reward employees who share and apply their knowledge.

Change Management

1. The organization uses formal communication to keep employees informed about organizational changes.
2. Top management disseminates ideas and information about organizational change to relevant personnel within the organization.
3. Communications on organizational change allow for feedback.
4. Information related to organizational change is communicated transparently throughout the organization.
5. Multiple channels, including meetings, telephone calls, and written correspondence, are utilized to inform staff about organizational changes.
6. Employees are consistently informed of organizational changes on time.

Innovation culture

1. Individuals who demonstrate a willingness to pursue new initiatives or embrace challenges to achieve success are highly valued within the organization.
2. The organization's management style is characterized by positive values, including innovation, continuous learning, tolerance for failure, openness, and teamwork.
3. A shared commitment to innovation and development serves as the unifying principle within the organization.
4. A result-driven value orientation is essential to our organization.

Knowledge Management Behaviour

1. Employees share information, experience, and insights regardless of management level.
2. We generate new knowledge by sharing information, experience, and insights across the organization.
3. We systematically transform individual knowledge and experience into organizational knowledge.
4. We acquire important work-related information, experience, and insights from external sources.
5. We verify and refine information, experience, and insights to ensure coherence.
6. We store important work-related information, experience, and insights for future use.