

The Effect of Psychological Well-Being and Servant Leadership on Employee Performance with Innovative Work Behavior as a Mediating Variable: A Study on Employees of a Men's Grooming FMCG Company

Kevin Kantata Rahiba^{1*}, Riedel Paulus Jacobis², Eko Wahjudi³, Nurul Indawati⁴
Dapartment of Management, Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas
Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: Kevin Kantata Rahiba kevinkantata.22173@mhs.unesa.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the effect of psychological well-being and servant leadership on employee performance, with innovative work behavior as a mediating variable, in a men's grooming FMCG company in Surabaya. Data were collected from a saturated sample of 46 employees in early 2026 and analysed with partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). The results show that psychological well-being has a negative effect on performance, servant leadership has a positive effect on performance, and innovative work behavior has a positive and significant effect on performance. Both psychological well-being and servant leadership have a positive and significant effect on innovative work behavior. Innovative work behavior mediates the effect of psychological well-being positively and significantly, and the effect of servant leadership positively.

INTRODUCTION

The men's grooming and skincare industry has grown rapidly and become highly competitive, with the global men's skincare market projected to expand substantially through 2034 (GMI, 2025). In this environment, fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) firms increasingly depend on the quality and innovativeness of their human resources to sustain a competitive advantage. Therefore, employee performance, measured through quantity, quality, task execution, and responsibility becomes a central concern for management (Mangkunegara, 2017; Mathis & Jackson, 2011).

Two antecedents are widely believed to influence performance. Internally, psychological well-being (PWB), namely an individual's optimal psychological functioning across self-acceptance, positive relations, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth is theorised to drive performance (Ryff, 1989). Externally, servant leadership (SL), namely a leadership orientation that places followers' growth and needs above the leader's own interest is believed to foster commitment and performance (Greenleaf, 2002)

However, the empirical evidence for these two antecedents remains mixed. For psychological well-being, some studies report a positive effect on performance (Kundi et al., 2021; Lwin et al., 2025). Whereas others find a weak or even negative effect (Kalfaoğlu, 2024). For servant leadership, the findings are more consistently positive (Ludwikowska, 2023; Sarwar et al., 2021). although some studies indicate that its effect is not always strong and may depend on other factors (Wahjudi et al., 2024). These differing patterns of inconsistency suggest the possibility of an indirect mechanism linking both antecedents to performance.

Innovative work behavior (IWB), namely the generation, promotion, and implementation of new ideas at work (De Jong & Den Hartog, 2010; Scott & Bruce, 1994). This represents a plausible mechanism, particularly within creative and marketing-intensive FMCG environments, where novelty serves as a key driver of competitiveness. Ekmekcioglu & Oner (2023); Jacobis et al. (2026) prior research links psychological well-being and servant leadership to innovative work behavior and innovative work behavior to performance (Reza, 2024; Siregar & Suma, 2024). Nevertheless, few studies integrate an internal antecedent (PWB) and an external antecedent (SL) within a single mediation model.

To bridge this empirical lacuna, the present study advances existing IWB mediation research by integrating two theoretically distinct antecedent domains—an internal psychological resource (PWB) and an external social/leadership resource (SL)—within a single explanatory framework. While previous studies have largely examined IWB as a mediator of individual or leadership-related antecedents separately, this study proposes that innovative work behavior can function as a behavioral mechanism through which both employees' internal psychological resources and their external leadership environment are translated into higher employee performance. This integrated perspective extends the theoretical understanding of IWB by demonstrating that innovation-oriented behavior is not solely a consequence of individual psychological conditions or leadership practices in isolation, but may emerge

from the interaction of internal and external resources and subsequently contribute to performance outcomes. In this sense, the study contributes to the literature by providing a more comprehensive explanation of how employee performance can be developed through the sequential pathway from psychological well-being and servant leadership to innovative work behavior and, ultimately, employee performance. Empirically, this framework is examined within the specific context of a Surabaya-based men's grooming FMCG enterprise, thereby extending the applicability of IWB mediation theory to a highly competitive and innovation-intensive consumer market.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Psychological Well-Being

Workforce members who demonstrate resilience and easily navigate complex occupational imperatives usually possess an equilibrium in mental health. This robust psychological readiness stems from a structured combination of self-acceptance, constructive interpersonal alliances, autonomy, environmental proficiency, a calibrated purpose in life, and continuous personal growth. The integration of these six core operational dimensions identified by yff (1989) is what collectively establishes the broader framework of psychological well-being and eudaimonic flourishing in the organizational environment.

Servant Leadership

Executives who dedicate their daily efforts to active listening, capacity building, and the holistic advancement of their workforce actively foster an atmosphere of organizational growth. This hands-on supportive behavior manifests through an intricate matrix encompassing altruistic love, empowerment, strategic vision, humility, and mutual trust as measured (Dennis & Bocarnea, 2005). The consistent prioritization of these subordinate needs over the personal agendas of executives or immediate corporate targets is what ultimately defines the operational essence of the servant leadership paradigm.

Innovative Work Behavior

Workers who actively engage in opportunity exploration, idea generation, idea championing, and idea implementation follow the structured behavioral stages outlined (De Jong & Den Hartog, 2010). This systematic progression allows individuals to formulate and execute novel concepts that directly enhance the operational efficiency of their specific tasks, their immediate work groups, or the broader organization. The collective execution of these proactive, value-adding stages is what ultimately constitutes the core definition of innovative work behavior as established (Scott & Bruce, 1994).

Employee Performance

The tangible work output generated when individuals successfully execute their assigned occupational duties and fulfill their workplace responsibilities is what foundational literature defines as employee performance. It is commonly assessed through quantity, quality, task execution, and responsibility (Mangkunegara, 2017; Mathis & Jackson, 2011). In competitive FMCG firms,

sustaining performance requires not only completing tasks but also continuously renewing ideas and methods.

Psychological Well-Being and Employee Performance

Psychological well-being can influence employee performance by providing employees with psychological resources that support sustained attention, resilience, and effective functioning at work. Employees with higher psychological well-being are better positioned to cope with workplace demands, maintain positive functioning under pressure, and remain focused on completing their responsibilities. These psychological resources can subsequently enhance the quality and consistency of task execution, leading to better employee performance. Empirical evidence supports this positive relationship, with Kundi et al. (2021) and Lwin et al. (2025) reporting a positive influence of psychological well-being on employee performance. However, Kalfaoğlu (2024) found a weak or negative effect, indicating that the relationship may vary across contexts. Nevertheless, based on the dominant theoretical and empirical direction, this study hypothesises:

H1: Psychological well-being has a positive effect on employee performance.

Servant Leadership and Employee Performance

Servant leadership can enhance employee performance by creating a supportive work environment in which employees receive attention, empowerment, and developmental support from their leaders. When leaders prioritise employees' needs and growth, employees are more likely to perceive that their contributions are valued and reciprocate through stronger commitment and greater effort. This supportive exchange can improve employees' willingness to fulfil their responsibilities and achieve higher-quality work outcomes. Consistent with this mechanism, previous studies report a positive relationship between servant leadership and employee performance (Ludwikowska, 2023; Sarwar et al., 2021). Therefore:

H2: Servant leadership has a positive effect on employee performance.

Innovative Work Behavior and Employee Performance

Innovative work behavior can contribute to employee performance because it enables employees to identify problems, generate new solutions, and implement improvements in their work processes. Innovation-oriented employees do not merely propose new ideas but also seek to translate those ideas into practical changes that can improve efficiency, work quality, and task outcomes. Through this process, innovative work behavior can enhance employees' ability to respond to workplace challenges and produce better work results. Empirical findings support a positive relationship between innovative work behavior and employee performance (Hastari & Emilisa, 2023; Siregar & Suma, 2024). Thus:

H3: Innovative work behavior has a positive effect on employee performance.

Psychological Well-Being and Innovative Work Behavior

Psychological well-being may foster innovative work behavior by providing employees with the psychological resources necessary to explore alternatives, tolerate uncertainty, and engage with challenging tasks. Employees who experience positive psychological functioning are more likely to demonstrate cognitive flexibility and openness to new experiences, which can facilitate the generation of novel ideas. Moreover, greater psychological resilience may increase employees' willingness to persist in promoting and implementing ideas despite potential obstacles. Prior research provides empirical support for a positive relationship between psychological well-being and innovative work behavior (Emilisa et al., 2025; Fani & Nasution, 2024). Hence:

H4: Psychological well-being has a positive effect on innovative work behavior.

Servant Leadership and Innovative Work Behavior

Servant leadership can stimulate innovative work behavior by establishing social and psychological conditions that encourage employees to take initiative. By providing autonomy, support, empowerment, and psychological safety, servant leaders reduce employees' concerns about expressing unconventional ideas and create greater freedom to experiment with alternative approaches. These conditions are particularly important for innovation because generating and implementing new ideas often involves uncertainty and the possibility of failure. Accordingly, employees who perceive stronger servant leadership are more likely to engage in idea generation, promotion, and implementation. Previous studies support this relationship (Alajhar & Salam, 2022; Ekmekcioglu & Oner, 2023; Khan et al., 2023). Therefore:

H5: Servant leadership has a positive effect on innovative work behavior.

The Mediating Role of Innovative Work Behavior

Innovative work behavior may serve as a behavioral mechanism through which psychological well-being and servant leadership are translated into employee performance. Psychological well-being provides employees with internal psychological resources, while servant leadership provides external social and leadership resources. However, these resources may not automatically result in higher performance unless they are translated into work-related behaviors that improve how employees perform their tasks. Innovative work behavior provides such a behavioral pathway because employees can transform their psychological resources and supportive leadership experiences into the generation, promotion, and implementation of new ideas. These innovations can subsequently improve work processes, problem-solving, efficiency, and work outcomes, thereby enhancing employee performance.

This mechanism is consistent with previous research positioning innovative work behavior as a mediator between workplace antecedents and employee outcomes, including the mediating role of innovative work behavior in the relationship between the work environment and performance (Reza, 2024) and between work-related stress and performance (Oose et al., 2024). Extending this logic, the present study proposes that psychological well-being and servant

leadership influence employee performance not only through their direct effects but also through employees' engagement in innovative work behavior. Accordingly:

H6: Innovative work behavior mediates the effect of psychological well-being on employee performance.

H7: Innovative work behavior mediates the effect of servant leadership on employee performance.

The hypothesised relationships are summarised in the conceptual framework below.

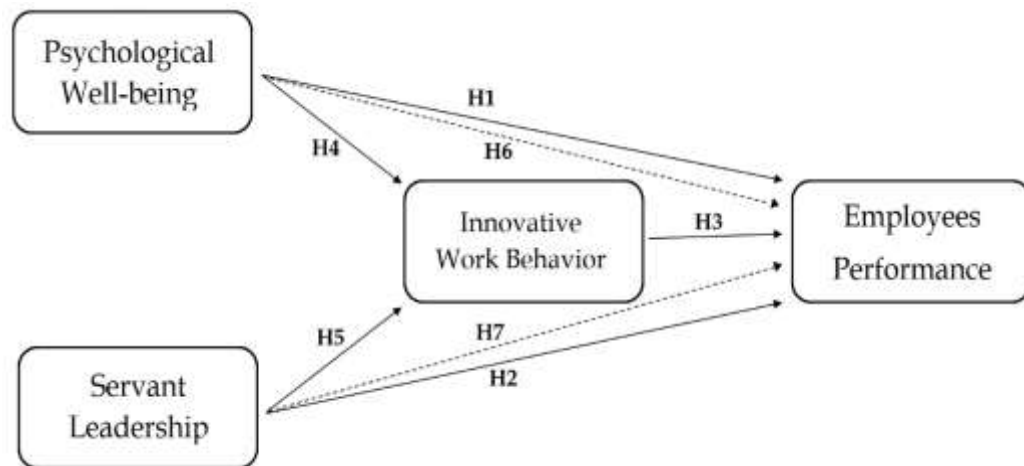


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

Gathering data from all 46 workforce members of a men's grooming FMCG enterprise (PT XYZ) in Surabaya through an online questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale required the total mobilization of the corporate population via a saturated census sampling technique. Utilizing every single available member of the organization as an active respondent directly underpins the overarching explanatory quantitative research design and its accompanying cross-sectional approach.

Evaluating structural relationships through R-square and bootstrap significance while simultaneously validating the measurement framework via outer loadings, average variance extracted (AVE), composite reliability, and the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) constitutes the core analytical procedure of this investigation. Executing these complex internal and external model assessments is made possible by deploying partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) within the SmartPLS 4.1.1.8 software environment, a methodology deliberately chosen for its prediction-oriented exploratory capacity, tolerance of non-normal data distribution, and absolute robustness when handling restrictive sample sizes (Ghozali & Kusumadewi, 2023; Hair et al., 2021).

RESEARCH RESULT

Respondent Characteristics

The 46 respondents were predominantly female (69.6%), aged 20–29 years (80.4%), holders of a bachelor's degree (65.2%), and single (71.7%). Most occupied staff positions (82.6%) and had a tenure of three years or less (63.0%), and the largest share worked in marketing and creative functions. This profile reflects a young, educated, early-career workforce concentrated in innovation-intensive roles, which is relevant for examining the study's variables.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	14	30.4%
	Female	32	69.6%
Age	20–29 years	37	80.4%
	30–39 years	8	17.4%
	40–49 years	1	2.2%
Education	Senior high school	11	23.9%
	Diploma III	5	10.9%
	Bachelor	30	65.2%
Marital status	Married	13	28.3%
	Single	33	71.7%
Position	Supervisor	8	17.4%
	Staff	38	82.6%
Tenure	≤ 3 years	29	63.0%
	> 3 years	17	37.0%

Measurement Model

Establishing convergent validity required every single indicator to register outer loadings beyond the 0.70 benchmark alongside average variance extracted (AVE) metrics spanning from 0.663 to 0.695 to successfully surpass the minimum 0.50 requirement. Securing robust internal consistency similarly depended on composite reliability parameters tracking between 0.928 and 0.958 to easily clear the traditional 0.70 baseline. The mathematical verification of discriminant validity was completed under identical statistical rigor because all heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) fractions remained strictly below the 0.90 ceiling while fully satisfying the analytical boundaries of the Fornell-Larcker criterion.

Table 2. Composite Reliability and Average Variance Extracted

Construct	Composite Reliability	AVE
Psychological Well-Being	0.958	0.695
Servant Leadership	0.946	0.663
Innovative Work Behavior	0.928	0.683
Employee Performance	0.934	0.668

Table 3 shows Cronbach's Alpha values exceeding the minimum threshold (0.70), ranging from 0.907 to 0.951 across the Psychological Well-being variables; this indicates that the instrument used possesses a good level of reliability and consistency in measuring the construct under study. Constructs that meet the criteria for good reliability can be used for further analysis.

Table 3. Cronbach's Alpha

Variabel	Cronbach's alpha
Psychological Well-being	0.951
Servant Leadership	0.936
Innovative Work Behavior	0.907
Kinerja Karyawan	0.917

Structural Model

The model explained 64.6% of the variance in innovative work behavior and 38.8% of the variance in employee performance, The model explained 38.8% of the variance in employee performance, indicating that the variables included in the model accounted for 38.8% of the variation in employee performance. The remaining 61.2% of the variance was attributable to other factors not included in the model and unexplained variation, as shown in Table 3. The structural relationships can be expressed as:

Table 4. R-Square

Endogenous Construct	R-Square	R-Square Adjusted
Innovative Work Behavior	0.646	0.630
Employee Performance	0.388	0.344

Demonstrating that psychological well-being exerts an inverse impact on performance led to the statistical rejection of H1 because its original formulation predicted a positive trajectory, whereas servant leadership conversely generated a positive influence on performance. The mathematical models further confirmed

that innovative work behavior yields a positive and significant impact on performance, mirroring the dynamics where both psychological well-being and servant leadership produce positive and significant changes in innovative work behavior. The structural paths also established that innovative work behavior serves as a positive and significant intervening mechanism for psychological well-being while providing a positive indirect channel for servant leadership toward performance. Documenting these intricate empirical paths within Table 4 ultimately demonstrates that a single-tailed bootstrap testing procedure provides robust empirical validation for six out of the seven proposed hypotheses. This approach is considered more appropriate because the proposed hypotheses specify directional relationships between the constructs, allowing the analysis to focus specifically on whether the observed effects occur in the hypothesized direction. Consequently, the one-tailed bootstrap procedure provides greater statistical power for detecting significant effects that are consistent with the theoretically predicted direction.

Table 5. Hypothesis Testing Results

H	Path	Coef. (O)	t-stat	P-value	Decision
H1	Psychological Well-being → Employee Performance	-0.307	1.528	0.063	Rejected
H2	Servant Leadership → Employee Performance	0.340	1.661	0.048	Supported
H3	Innovative Work Behavior → Employee Performance	0.542	2.676	0.004	Supported
H4	Psychological Well-being → Innovative Work Behavior	0.559	4.000	0.000	Supported
H5	Servant Leadership → Innovative Work Behavior	0.359	2.503	0.006	Supported
H6	Psychological Well-being → Innovative Work Behavior → Employee Performance	0.303	2.233	0.013	Supported
H7	Servant Leadership → Innovative Work Behavior → Employee Performance	0.195	1.672	0.047	Supported

DISCUSSION

The test results show that psychological well-being has a negative effect on employee performance, so H1, which hypothesised a positive effect, is rejected. This means that higher psychological well-being does not automatically raise performance. The finding can be explained through the inverted-U or overdose-happiness perspective, which holds that excessive psychological comfort can actually reduce alertness and achievement drive (Kalfaoğlu, 2024). The organisational efficiency phase underway during data collection may have

reinforced this pattern, since comfort did not automatically translate into measurable work output. This finding is also consistent with studies reporting a weak well-being and performance relationship (Wandra & Heliyani, 2025).

Servant leadership has a positive effect on employee performance (H2 supported). This indicates that leaders who show care, empower, and build trust encourage employees to perform better. The finding is consistent with previous research reporting a positive contribution of servant leadership to performance (Santoso & Azizah, 2025; Sarwar et al., 2021).

Innovative work behavior has a positive and significant effect on employee performance (H3 supported) and is in fact the strongest direct predictor in the model. Employees who actively generate and implement new ideas are shown to improve their work processes and outcomes (Reza, 2024; Sarwar et al., 2021). This underscores the importance of innovative behaviour as a driver of performance in the competitive FMCG industry.

Both antecedents have a positive and significant effect on innovative work behavior. Psychological well-being shows the strongest path to innovation (H4 supported); psychologically well employees possess greater openness and cognitive flexibility for generating new ideas. Servant leadership also fosters innovation (H5 supported) through the psychological safety, autonomy, and support that leaders provide (Ekmekcioglu & Oner, 2023; Khan et al., 2023).

The mediation results clarify the role of innovative work behavior. For psychological well-being, the direct effect is negative, but the indirect effect through innovative work behavior is positive and significant (H6 supported). This pattern is known as competitive mediation, meaning that psychological well-being benefits performance only when it is channelled into innovative behaviour; without that conversion, its contribution tends to be negligible or even negative. For servant leadership, the direct and indirect effects are both positive (H7 supported), forming complementary or partial mediation. In other words, servant leadership can improve performance directly while also strengthening it through innovative behaviour.

Overall, these findings help explain the inconsistencies in prior research. The relationship between psychological well-being and performance turns out to be conditional, depending heavily on whether that well-being is translated into innovative behaviour, whereas servant leadership contributes more directly to performance.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Reversing an initially detrimental path into a highly constructive outcome proves that innovative work behavior serves as an indispensable conversion engine capable of turning the otherwise negative consequences of psychological well-being into a positive contribution while simultaneously bolstering the reach of servant leadership toward performance. This structural shift occurs because innovative work behavior functions as a highly significant intervening pathway for psychological well-being and maintains a positive indirect channel for servant leadership. The foundational strength of this indirect mechanism relies on the reality that both psychological well-being and servant leadership exert positive

and significant pressures on innovative work behavior, which in turn acts as a direct, highly significant driver of employee performance. Evaluating these interconnected structural pathways ultimately allows this investigation to conclude that servant leadership yields a positive direct impact on employee performance whereas psychological well-being conversely produces a negative direct effect on employee performance.

Practically, the management of the studied company is advised to treat innovative behaviour as the key conversion mechanism, for example by providing servant-leadership training for line managers, establishing structured idea-generation forums that turn well-being and support into concrete innovation, and designing well-being initiatives paired with challenging goals and feedback to prevent complacency. Importance-performance map analysis (IPMA) could help prioritise these interventions.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

This study has several limitations. It relied on a single firm with a small, saturated sample ($n = 46$) collected during an organisational efficiency phase, which introduces possible survivorship bias and limits generalisability. Its cross-sectional, self-reported design also raises the possibility of common method bias and constrains causal inference. Future research should use larger, multi-firm samples, adopt longitudinal designs, incorporate common method bias diagnostics such as full collinearity VIF, and report additional predictive and fit measures such as SRMR and PLSpredict. Testing other mediators or moderators may also enrich the model.

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