AL KUT JOURNAL OF ECONOMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE SCIENCES
Publisher: College of Economics and Management - Wasit University

Exploring the Direct and Indirect Pathways from Positive Emotional Behavior to Sustainable Growth: The Moderating Role of Cultural Readiness in Private Universities in Iraq

Ibraheem Ali Saadi

Private Higher Education Directorate, Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Baghdad, Iraq.

Mobile No: **009647800199820**

Email Address: ibraheemalli1985@gmail.com

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8163-1888

Abstract:

The study seeks to investigate the direct and indirect pathways from positive emotional behavior (PEB) to sustainable growth (SG), within private universities in Iraq. This study draws upon the broaden-and-build theory and the dynamic capabilities theory to understand how the two intrinsic forces (emotion and culture) interact to drive organizational sustainability. A quantitative approach was employed, targeting academic staff. A total of 298 valid questionnaires were obtained and analyzed using structural equation modelling (SEM). Results show that PEB conceptualized through optimism, enthusiasm, and empathy positively influences employees' innovation behavior (EIB), reflected in idea generation, idea promotion, and idea implementations, which in turn significantly promotes SG across its economic, social and environmental aspects. The direct path from PEB to SG was non-significant, suggesting that the effect of positive emotionality on sustainability ambitions is primarily mediated by innovation-driven effects. Additionally, it was established that cultural readiness captured through adaptability, involvement, and mission positively influences the paths from PEB to EIB and from EIB to SG. Theoretically, the study enhances knowledge of the emotional and cultural forces of institutional sustainability. Practically, it advises university leaders and policymakers to establish emotionally-driven and culturally adaptive systems that support sustainable innovation growth.

Keywords: Positive Emotional Behavior, Employees' Innovation Behavior, Cultural Readiness, Sustainable Growth, Higher Education.

1. Introduction

In recent times, sustainable growth has emerged as a central agenda for higher education institutions, necessitating a balance between economic sustainability, social accountability, and environmental conservation. Universities are now supposed to not only generate knowledge but also embody the sustainability principles in the form of innovation and adaptive culture. Within this context, the emotional and behavioral aspects of academic personnel have received more interest as a key determinant of institutional performance and long-term sustainability. Behaviour based on optimism, enthusiasm, and empathy is a very important aspect of how an individual reacts to challenges, work with colleagues, and how can generate innovative ideas that can make an organization innovative (Tian et al., 2025). Based on the latest studies, the more positive emotions are expressed by the employees, the more innovative thinking they are likely to engage in and the more they are likely to promote new ideas and contribute to the development of effective problem-solving in their respective organizations (Tian et al., 2025). In developing countries such as Iraq, the contribution of private universities is becoming an important part of educational and economic growth. Nevertheless, they still have significant challenges associated with the flexibility of the organization, the leadership support, and cultural change preparedness (Saadi, 2025a). Even though some Iraqi universities have recently risen in terms of their sustainability rating, the corresponding institutes continue to find it difficult to incorporate the principles of sustainable development in their operational and academic frameworks (Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, 2024). The gap between policy ambitions and institutional reality creates a need to investigate internal behavioral and cultural processes that promote sustainability. As the main actors in knowledge creation and innovation, academic personnel is a determining factor in allowing universities to pursue sustainable growth by their attitudes, feelings, and innovative behavior.

Positive emotional behavior promotes the innovation behavior of the employees through its ability to increase cognitive flexibility, interpersonal trust, and intrinsic motivation that subsequently lead to idea generation, promotion, and implementation, which are important dimensions of innovation behavior. According to previous research, employees experiencing positive emotions tend to be more open to experimentation and less resistant to change, enabling them to play a superior role in continuous improvement and sustainability

efforts (Çelik and Esen, 2024; Tian et al., 2025). Nevertheless, contextual factors, in particular, cultural readiness tend to affect the correlation between emotional behavior and innovation. Cultural readiness, in the form of adaptability, involvement, and mission, reflect the extent to which an organization is prepared to welcome change, engage people collectively, and work towards a common goal. With high levels of such readiness, employees tend to transform their positive emotions into innovative outcomes that contribute to improving sustainable development. Although there is a growing global concern about the intersection of emotional behavior, innovation, and sustainability, empirical studies have not been conducted in the realm of the higher education sector of the Middle East, particularly in the context of the Iraqi private universities. The American University/Baghdad, Al-Byan University, Uruk University, Shatt Al-Arab University, Alkunooze University, Cihan University, and Knowledge University are all varying organizational environments where emotional, cultural and innovative variables interact in order to create sustainable results. However, the processes by which positive emotional behavior influences innovation behavior and sustainable development especially under the different degrees of cultural readiness have not yet been explored thoroughly. Addressing this research gap is crucial for understanding how such emotional and cultural factors may be used strategically to enhance the innovation and sustainability of Iraqi's private higher education sector. Consequently, the proposed study seeks to test the direct and indirect relationships between positive emotional behavior, employees' innovation behaviour, and sustainable growth, while evaluating how cultural readiness moderates these relationships. Therefore, the study aims at bringing new empirical results on the role of emotional and cultural dynamics in the achievement of innovation and sustainability in higher education by concentrating on academic staff across seven private Iraqi universities. The results will be beneficial in developing theoretical knowledge in the field of organizational behavior and sustainability research, as well as provide practical data to university leaders who seek to develop emotionally intelligent, innovative, and culturally adaptive organizational structures that support sustainable institutional growth.

2. Literature Review

The relationship between employees' emotions, innovativeness, cultural preparedness and sustainable expansion has become a central concern in modern organizational research (Alqatan et al., 2025; Çelik and Esen, 2024). Emotional and behavioral dynamics in the institutions of higher learning are decisive in determining performance, collaboration and sustainability of the institution, particularly in the emerging economies (Mostafa, 2017).

The motivation, creativity and engagement of the academic personnel play a crucial role in ensuring competitive advantage and providing value in the educational, social and environmental aspects of sustainability (Alqatan et al., 2025). The study concentrates on positive emotional behavior and innovation behavior of the employees as psychological and behavioral mechanisms that enable sustainable increase among the academic staff in the Iraqi higher education industry that is privately owned. These institutions constitute diverse academic environments that are being digitally, structurally and culturally redesigned and, therefore, the best places to research the place of emotions and innovation in enhancing sustainability. Additionally, this study shows the cultural readiness as the situational circumstance that can facilitate or inhibit these relations. The emotional, behavioural, as well as cultural understanding, offers a more holistic explanation as to how human-based capabilities of positive emotions and innovative behaviour lead to sustainable performance within the academic organisations.

2.1 Positive Emotional Behavior and Employees Innovation Behavior

Positive emotional behavior is increasingly becoming a fundamental factor that affects creativity, motivation as well as innovation in higher educational institutions. The academic staff experiencing positive emotions of optimism, enthusiasm and empathy are likely to be more active in problem solving, sharing knowledge and collaboration. These actions are critical in creating and implementing new ideas that enhance the quality of teaching, productivity of research, and effectiveness of the institutions. Positive emotional behavior in the university setting is considered to have three aspects optimism (taking a positive attitude towards academic and institutional achievements), enthusiasm (being energetic and passionate about academic activities), and empathy (being understanding and sensitive to colleagues and students). Such emotional behaviors create an enabling environment where the faculty can feel psychologically secure enough to express new ideas, explore teaching innovations, and work together on research projects. Innovation behaviour, on the other hand, is deliberate action of creating, marking, and applying new ideas to improve the performance of the individual and the organization (Scott and Bruce, 1994). These behaviors are all reinforced by positive emotions using cognitive flexibility, intrinsic motivation, and interpersonal trust in cooperation, which are all success factors in a successful innovation. The high correlation between emotional behavior and innovation is always supported by empirical studies. Indicatively, Mostafa (2017) determined that positive affect can significantly influence the creativity of employees as it enhances the psychological empowerment. In its turn, Wang et al. (2024) observed that positive

emotional expressions by leaders produce a feeling of psychological safety and, subsequently, innovative behavior in subordinates. The implication of this finding within the academic setting is that faculty members reporting the existence of positive emotions together with expressing the same are highly probable to engage in creative pedagogical practices and research undertakings. Elfenbein (2023) has also included in the verge of information that does not only positive emotions enhances cognitive flexibility but also relational harmony, which is required to keep innovation alive in the collaborative environment such as universities. Collectively, these insights suggest that academic staff members with frequent positive affective experiences have a greater likelihood of being involved in innovation-related practices since they have the cognitive receptiveness, incentive, and connections with the community that they can convert ideas into practical outputs. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Positive emotional behavior has a significant positive effect on employees' innovation behavior.

2.2 Employees Innovation Behavior and Sustainable Growth

Innovation behavior among employees is a well-known factor that is considered to be the key to organizational performance and long-term sustainability. Academic staff in institutions of higher learning, especially privately managed universities, are venturing into innovation by coming up with new teaching practices, interdisciplinary research, and administrative enhancement. Such activities not only promote institutional efficiency and flexibility, but also support a wider array of sustainable development outcomes, such as economic, social, and environmental performance. The idea of sustainable growth in universities can be perceived as the capacity of the institution to be viable in the long term and at the same time respond to the needs of the society and the environment requirements (Alqatan et al., 2025). The innovative behavior of employees is generally modeled as a multistage process and includes the idea generation, idea promotion, and idea implementation (Scott and Bruce, 1994). Idea generation entails coming up with new and practical ideas, idea promotion entails promoting and gaining support for the ideas, and idea implementation entails a translating of ideas into real results. These actions may take the form of implementing new curricula, integrating digital technologies into teaching, conducting joint research projects, and improving organizational processes in the context of higher education. All these innovative acts can make universities competitive, respond to emerging needs in the society, and improve their overall sustainability performance. The empirical evidence supports the positive role of employees' innovation behavior in

sustainable growth. For instance, organizational research indicates that employee-led innovation initiatives enhance operational efficiency, optimize resource use, and create adaptive capacity in dynamic settings (Çelik and Esen, 2024; Alqatan et al., 2025).

In the context of higher education, faculty innovation has been associated with increased research output, better student learning results, and augmented recognition of the institution, which are aspects of sustainable improvement. In addition, the active encouragement and execution of new ideas by the academic staff would enable the university to adjust to the changes of the policies, technological progress, and the demands of society, thereby guaranteeing the sustainability in the institution over the long term. The cognitive and social processes through which innovation behavior is connected with sustainable growth can be understood. Mentally, innovation promotes problem solving and the ability to think ahead and thus the academic staff can think of ways to implement efficiency and effectiveness. Innovation socially optimizes collaboration, sharing of knowledge and stakeholder engagement which are crucial in meeting the sustainability goals (saadi, 2025b). In the case of the private Iraqi university, where resources might be limited and competition is rising, the innovation behavior of the academic staff is of special importance to the maintenance of institutional development in economic, social, and environmental aspects. As per the theoretical and empirical data, it can be argued that academic staff members, who practice more of the innovation behavior, are more likely to be involved in the sustainable growth of their universities. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Employees innovation behavior has a significant positive effect on sustainable growth.

2.3 Positive Emotional Behavior and Sustainable Growth

Positive emotional behavior is now considered to be one of the major antecedents of sustainable organizational results. Within the scope of higher education, academic personnel who consistently exhibit positive emotions such as optimism, enthusiasm, and empathy can make a difference not only in their immediate context (i.e. workplace) but also in the organization, in terms of sustainable growth. Sustainable growth in universities implies economic effectiveness, social contribution, and environmental responsibility by enabling the institution to sustain its viability over an extended period of time and fulfill the expectations of stakeholders and society (Alqatan et al., 2025; Aithal and Aithal 2023). Positive emotional behavior can help to achieve sustainable growth in several ways. Firstly, it enhances enthusiasm and involvement that allows faculty to perform teaching, research,

and administrative projects with energy and commitment. Optimistic and enthusiastic employees will be more willing to come up with new solutions to enhance themselves, complement the activities of integration and encourage institutional innovation that will make it more effective and sustainable. Second, empathy enhances interpersonal relations between academic workers and students, knowledge sharing and cooperative problem solving all of which play an important role in achievement of sustainable outcomes. Third, positive emotional behavior offers a psychological safe area, where experimentation and innovation can succeed, which consequently promotes sustainable practices across the organization.

Empirical studies indicate that positive emotional behavior is directly related to sustainable organizational performance. As an illustration, it has been proved that the higher the degree of the positive affect the more innovative solution, pro-social behavior, and other initiatives that are aligned with the long-term sustainability goals (Tian et al., 2025; Çelik and Esen, 2024). Faculty members who have positive emotional dispositions in the academic field not only augment their own performance but also influence departmental and institutional processes that lead to quality of resource management, better education and social impact, which are key elements of sustainable growth. Moreover, positive emotional behavior aligns with contemporary organizational development ideas that emphasize human-oriented sustainability mechanisms. Emotionally positive employees will serve as agents of change which will bring about resilience, adaptability and innovativeness in universities. This is particularly relevant in private Iraqi universities, where the drive to compete, scarcity of resources, and the on-going institutional reforms require a labor force that is able to maintain long term growth in highly dynamic situations. Universities can utilize the potential of faculty members to promote sustainability agendas by developing an environment that supports employees emotionally. Based on the theoretical rationale and empirical evidence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Positive emotional behavior has a significant positive effect on sustainable growth.

2.4 Cultural Readiness, Employees Innovation Behavior, and Sustainable Growth

Organizational culture is an important aspect in identifying the efficacy of innovation programs and attaining long-term growth. Cultural readiness, which is the degree to which the culture of an organization contributes to flexibility, employee engagement, and consistency with its purpose, has become a crucial component shaping how employees transform the innovative behavior into practical result (Denison and Mishra, 1995; Jabeen et

al., 2023). Moreover, cultural readiness in institutions of higher learning influences the extent to which academic staffs are empowered to adopt new ideas, work together, and participate in actions that would make the institution sustainable in the long-term. Innovation behavior among the employees entails the generation, promotion and implementation of new ideas, which may enhance teaching practices, research productivity and the way the administrative processes are conducted. Nevertheless, the success of these actions is not guaranteed across all organizations. In case culture readiness is high, then universities offer favorable frameworks, promote participative decision-making, and communicate organizational goals clearly. Such environment increases the chances of faculty innovation to have a positive effect on sustainable growth, because innovative ideas have a better probability of adoption, scaling, and being aligned with the institutional goals (Alqatan et al., 2025; Sirmon et al., 2011).

On the other hand, in organizations where the cultural readiness is low, even highly innovative employees can be opposed, hindered, or overlooked, so that the effect of their innovation on sustainable results is constrained. Empirical research indicates that one of the factors that considerably moderate the relationship between the organizational performance and employee behavior is culture. For instance, existing studies in the field of higher education and business show that supportive and adaptive cultures enhance the positive effect of innovation, as they encourage knowledge sharing, teamwork, and long-term orientation (Jabeen et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2024). Therefore, cultural readiness is particularly applicable in the Iraqi case of the private universities since they face competitive demands, scarce resource bases, and reform initiatives. A culture that encourages involvement, adapts to change, and aligns with the university mission enables academic staff to make better use of their innovation behavior, which in turn facilitates sustainable development at the economic, social and environmental levels. Based on this argument, cultural readiness is expected to enhance the positive correlation between employees' innovation behavior and sustainable growth, which lead to the following hypothesis:

H4: Cultural readiness significantly moderates the relation between employees' innovation behavior and sustainable growth.

2.5 Cultural Readiness, Positive Emotional Behavior, and Employees Innovation Behavior

Positive emotional behavior is not only effective in promoting the innovation behavior of employees, but its impact also varies depends on organizational context. Cultural readiness, which is the degree of organizational support of adaptability, employee engagement, and

alignment with the mission, is an essential moderating variable in this relationship (Denison and Mishra, 1995; Jabeen et al., 2023). Cultural preparedness in a higher education institution determines the degree to which faculty channel positive emotions like optimism, enthusiasm and empathy into novel actions that can have an impact on teaching, research, and institutional activities. Though positive emotional behavior can enhance creativity, cognitive flexibility, and intrinsic motivation, the extent to which it enhances innovation varies according to the cultural environment around. In universities with high cultural readiness, the enabling environment formed through policies, leadership support, and participative practices makes faculty members more receptive to suggesting, endorsing, and implementing new ideas. The influence of positive emotional behavior can be even stronger in such a culture, since positive and enthusiastic employees feel that their work is supported, risk-taking is encouraged, and teamwork is appreciated. (Alqatan et al., 2025; Çelik and Esen, 2024).

Conversely, in universities with low cultural readiness, faculty may experience bureaucracy, limited autonomy, or a lack of institutional support, which dilutes the relationship between positive emotions and innovative behavior. Empirical studies underscore the moderating effect of cultural readiness on the relationship between positive affect and innovation. It is noted that adaptive and inclusive organizational cultures strengthen the translation of positive emotional state into innovative outcomes, hence increase problem-solving, knowledge sharing, and proactive behaviors (Jabeen et al., 2023; Aithal and Aithal 2023). Thus, the concept of cultural readiness is significant with references to the Iraqi privately-owned universities, because the institutions must address the competitiveness, the alteration of regulations, and the lack of resources. A culture that proactively promotes adaptability, involvement, and mission alignment will enable academic employees to more effectively use their positive affective dispositions, generating innovation and contributing to sustainable development. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H5: Cultural readiness significantly moderates the relation between positive emotional behavior and Employees Innovation Behavior

3. Theories of the Study

The conceptual framework of this research is grounded in two theories that are complementary to each other as they explain the processes involved in the relationship between positive emotional behavior, employees' innovation behavior, cultural readiness, and sustainable growth in institutions of higher learning. The Broaden-and-Build Theory of

Positive Emotions is the first theory that offers a basis of explanation about how positive emotional behavior supports individual innovation. The second, the Dynamic Capabilities Theory, provides insight into the role played by innovativeness and cultural preparedness in sustaining organizational growth.

3.1 Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions

The Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions by Fredrickson (2001) postulates that positive emotions broaden thought action repertoires, thereby increasing cognitive flexibility, creativity, and the development of social resources. Positive emotional reactions like optimism, enthusiasm and empathy help a person experiment with novel ideas, engage in problem-solving, and form positive relationships, all of which are crucial to innovation. Regarding the academic staff at private universities in Iraq, positive emotional behavior can expand the cognitive and social resources of faculty members, which in turn increase their chances of producing, advancing, and implementing new teaching practices, research projects, and administrative enhancements. The theory describes how positively emotional employees are in a better position to indulge in behavior related to innovation because they are better placed to meet the challenge due to their high level of creativity and openness to experience, which enable them to exploit opportunities to improve the institution. Universities can indirectly influence innovative behavior by promoting a positive emotional climate, which is an important channel for achieving sustainable growth.

3.2 Dynamic Capabilities Theory

The Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT) is based on the resource based view of the firm but focuses on the capacity of organizations to integrate, develop and restructure internal and external capabilities in line with the rapidly changing environments (Teece, 2022). Dynamic capabilities help organizations to feel opportunities, exploit them through innovation, and reconfigure resources in order to sustain their competitive edge and survivability. This research discusses how employees' innovation behavior and cultural readiness convert into sustainable growth in private Iraqi universities, using the Dynamic Capabilities Theory. Innovation behavior signifies the ability of the organization to produce and put new ideas into practice, whereas cultural readiness signifies the adaptive and participatory atmosphere of the institution that encourages new idea. Collectively, these abilities enable universities to react to external pressures, enhance operational efficiency, as well as, improve social and environmental performance, guaranteeing long-term sustainability. Following the Dynamic Capabilities approach, this study highlights the

critical interplay between human-focused innovation behavior and a facilitative cultural framework in fostering sustainable growth in the context of higher education.

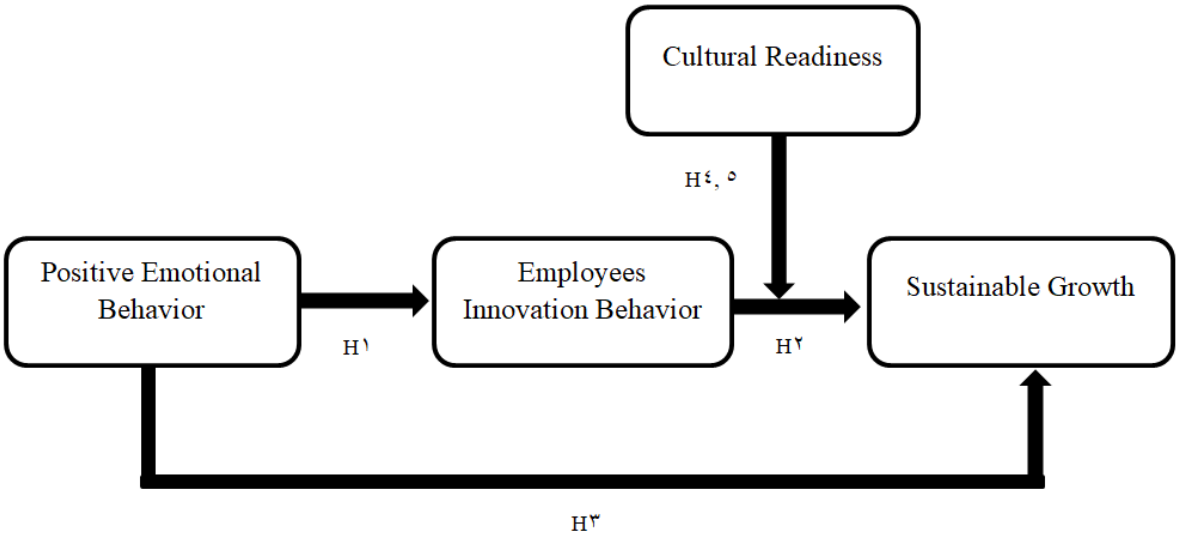

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

4. Methodology

The proposed study adopts a quantitative, explanatory survey research design to examine the direct and indirect relationships between positive emotional behavior and sustainable growth through employee innovation behavior, as well as how these relationships are moderated by cultural readiness. The quantitative approach allows systematic measurement of latent constructs and the statistical testing of hypothesized structural relationships. It is consistent with previous studies that focus on empirical, model-driven studies in the organisational behaviour and strategic management field (Pilcher and Cortazzi,, 2024; Saadi, 2023). In doing so, this study adds to the theoretical contributions of the Broaden and Build Theory of Positive Emotions and the Dynamic Capabilities Theory by operationalizing positive emotional behavior as an antecedent of innovation and sustainable growth and by examining contextual moderation through the lens of cultural readiness.

4.1 Research Design

The study is cross-sectional and non-experimental, with a self-administered structured questionnaire to derive primary data among academic staff of seven private Iraqi universities. A stratified random sampling method is used to ensure that all institutions, faculty ranks and years of experience are represented. The reason behind the use of this method is that it reduces sampling bias and enhances representativeness (Saunders et al., 2019). Since the hypotheses have directional and relational claims (H1-H5) and not manipulating independent variables. The correlational survey design should be suitable for

testing the direct, mediating and moderating effects in one model (Creswell and Creswell, 2018; Archer, 2023). The design complies with the best practices in quantitative studies: theory-based hypotheses, latent variables measurement, statistical controls, and multivariate statistics (Pilcher and Cortazzi,, 2024). Considering both practical considerations (time, access) the cross-sectional snapshot is deemed sufficient for the conceptual model, but it has the restriction of temporal inferences. The questionnaire was piloted (n = 40) in two institutions not contained in the final sample to enhance internal validity. The survey was issued through hybrid means (online and paper) to reach respondents with limited access to the internet, thus enhancing coverage of the response. The stratified random sampling will provide equitable representation of each stratum and enhance the generalizability of the findings of the selected context. Structural equation modelling (SEM) will be used to analyze the data to test the measurement model (confirmatory factor analysis) and structural relationships, including moderation effects (Hu and Bentler, 1999).

4.2 Research Population and Sampling

The population of the study includes academic staff of seven private Iraqi universities, which are the American University of Iraq (Baghdad), Al-Bayan University (Baghdad), Uruk University (Baghdad), Shatt Al-Arab University (Basrah), Al-Kunooze University (Basrah), Cihan University (Erbil), and Knowledge University (Erbil). These institutions have been chosen intentionally because they represent different geographical area and different organizational cultures, which contributes to the contextual generalizability and applicability of the results. In addition, this kind of institution was deliberately selected in this study due to the complex organizational structures and high degree of knowledge based interaction. Academic settings offer a good research field to investigate the constructs of leadership, behavior, and sustainability since faculty and administrative employees often support each other when making decisions, being innovative, and sharing knowledge. Furthermore, the current higher education system in Iraq is largely competitive and rapidly changing therefore, improved organizational practices are important in keeping an institution sustainable. This renders them an appropriate and nurturing background to investigate the interactions between the study variables.

According to the population estimates indicated in the university records, 477 questionnaires were administered across seven universities. The total number of received responses was 334, and 298 of were considered valid and usable after screening for completeness, consistency, and reliability checks. This provided a practical response rate of around 62%, which is deemed adequate for organizational behavior studies carried out in

higher education settings (Hair et al., 2023; Taherdoost, 2022). To further make the survey instrument clear and valid, a pilot test was done on 40 academic staff from two universities that were not part of the final sample. Items were slightly changed as a result of feedback from the pilot study to enhance clarity, contextual relevance and understanding by the respondents.

4.3 Measurement of Variables

All constructs were measured using validated scales adapted from previous research, to ensure content validity and conceptual alignment with existing literature. The respondents rated their concurrence on each item using a five-point Likert scale, which ranged from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Positive emotional behavior was measured using optimism, enthusiasm, and empathy based on the conceptualizations of Fredrickson (2001) of positive emotions and confirmed in the workplace by Avey et al. (2008). Employees' innovation behavior included idea generation, idea promotion, and idea implementations which were derived from the innovation framework of Janssen (2000). Sustainable growth was measured by economic, social, and environmental dimensions in line with the triple-bottom-line framework (Jeurissen, 2000; Dyllick and Muff, 2016). Adaptability, involvement, and mission were documented as parts of cultural readiness as an extension of the Denison et al. (2014) model of organizational culture. Items in each construct ranged from 4 to 7 and were modified and contextualized to the higher education setting.

4.4 Data Collection Instrument

The structured questionnaire was used to collect data and was based on a two-section questionnaire. The first part consisted of demographic data in terms of gender, academic rank, years of experience, and faculty affiliation. The second part contained questions that assessed the study variables as outlined in the conceptual model. A hybrid approach to data collection was adopted in order to achieve high response rates and this involved both online distribution through institutional email and hard-copy distribution via faculty offices. This two-fold method made it easier to include participants who are not highly internet connected and ensured a more balanced response rate across universities. The process was voluntary and responses were guaranteed to remain confidential.

4.5 Data Analysis Techniques

The Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was employed to analyze data with the assistance of Smart-PLS 4.0 program. The selection of SEM is appropriate due to the ability to estimate various relationships, both direct and indirect and moderating effects (Hair et al., 2021). This analysis was done in two steps. The measurement model was initially assessed

in order to test the reliability and validity of the constructs based on Cronbach alpha, composite reliability, average variance extracted (AVE), and the Fornell Larcker measure of discriminant validity. Second, the structural model was also tested to evaluate the hypothesized relationships (H1-H5) along with their moderating effects through bootstrapping procedures to establish the significance of the path coefficients. The overall model was tested using model-fit indicators such as SRMR, and R^2. VIF values and Harman's single-factor test were used to check multicollinearity and common method bias respectively and these tests helped ensure the strength of results.

4.6 Ethical Considerations

This research followed the ethical standards of the university research committee and the North Technical University ethics code. The participants were made aware of the goals of the study, were assured confidentiality, and had the right to withdraw at any point in time without facing any penalty. All the information obtained was anonymized and exclusively used to conduct research. None of the personal identifiers were recorded. Participation was voluntary, and all the procedures were conducted in accordance with the ethical aspects of the Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Association, 2013).

5. Empirical Results and Analysis

5.1 Reliability and validity of the measurement model

The measurement model was validated before testing the hypothesized structural relationships to determine the construct reliability and validity. The analysis examined indicator loadings, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity following the recommendations of Hair et al. (2021). The reflective indicators all showed high factor loadings, which surpassed the minimum value of 0.70 confirming satisfactory indicator reliability. Table 1 indicates that the alpha coefficients of all constructs fell within the range of 0.87 to 0.91 thus these coefficients are high in terms of internal consistency reliability. Similarly, composite reliability (CR) scores were higher than the suggested cut-off of 0.70 (0.87-0.94), which indicated that all constructs had good internal consistency (Hair et al., 2021). The convergent validity was determined by the test of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The values of AVE of all constructs were above the minimum of 0.50, indicating that the constructs explained more than half of the variance of their respective indicators. Particularly, the AVE scores included 0.68 with positive emotional behavior, 0.71 with employees innovation behavior, 0.66 with sustainable growth, and 0.69 with cultural readiness. Such findings are quite indicative of the

convergent validity of the constructs (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). The results of reliability and validity indicate that the measurement items that were applied to assess each latent construct were internally consistent and theoretically sound. The model was therefore considered to be acceptable to continue with the evaluation of discriminant validity and structural relationships.

Table 1: Construct Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Indicator Loadings	AVE	CR	CB alpha
Positive Emotional Behavior	073-087	0.68	0.91	0.89
Employees' Innovation Behavior	075-090	0.71	0.93	0.91
Sustainable Growth	0.72-0.85	0.66	0.87	0.87
Cultural Readiness	0.76-088	0.69	0.94	0.90

Source: (Prepared by the Researcher Based on the Analysis Results)

5.2 Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was conducted to confirm that each latent construct was empirically different from the others, ensuring the constructs reflected different dimensions of the conceptual model (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Henseler et al., 2015). This evaluation was based on three complementary criteria: the Fornell-Larcker criterion, the analysis of cross-loadings, and the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of the correlations. Based on the Fornell-Larker criterion, the square root of the AVE of each of the constructs should be greater than its correlations with other constructs. As shown in Table 2, the diagonal values (including the square root of the AVE values) were larger than the inter-construct correlations, which mean that each construct had more variance with its indicators than with other constructs, thereby confirming the existence of discriminant validity.

Table 2: Fornell–Larcker Criterion Results

Construct	PEB	EIB	SG	CR
Positive Emotional Behavior (PEB)	**0.82**			
Employees' Innovation Behavior (EIB)	0.64	**0.84**		
Sustainable Growth (SG)	0.59	067	**0.81**	
Cultural Readiness (CR)	0.48	0.55	0.51	**0.83**

Source: (Prepared by the Researcher Based on the Analysis Results)

The HTMT ratio was also tested to give a more rigorous evaluation of the discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015). All the HTMT values were less than the conservative value of 0.85 indicating that the constructs were empirically different (see Table 3). Particularly, the largest HTMT value was (0.78) between employee innovation behavior and sustainable growth, which is still significantly lower than the threshold, supporting the discriminant validity of the model.

Table 3: Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) Ratios

Construct Pair	HTMT Value
PEB – EIB	0.73
PEB - SG	0.69
PEB – CR	0.61
EIB – SG	0.78
EIB – CR	0.70
SG – CR	0.65

Source: (Prepared by the Researcher Based on the Analysis Results)

The findings derived from the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the HTMT analysis indicates strong evidence that the constructs adopted in this study are strongly differentiated. This makes the measurement model possess good discriminant validity, and allow for confident interpretation of the following structural relationships between positive emotional behavior, employee innovation behavior, sustainable growth, and cultural readiness.

5.3 Collinearity Assessment and Predictive Power

Prior to testing the hypothesized relationships, a multicollinearity test was conducted among the predictor constructs to ensure that the model estimates were not affected by the overly high inter-correlations. All constructs were tested on Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values. It has been stated by Hair et al. (2021), the values of VIF less than 5.0 are regarded as the generally acceptable level of collinearity, while the values less than 3.0 are preferable for models using PLS-SEM. As presented in Table 4, all VIF values were between 1.42 and 2.76, which is well below the suggested rate. This implies that the issue of multicollinearity did not arise and the predictor constructs contributed unique variance to the endogenous variables.

Table 4: Collinearity Assessment (VIF Values)

Endogenous construct	Predictor	R^2	Q^2	VIF
EIB	PEB	0.52	0.36	1.86
	CR			1.42
SG	EIB	0.64	0.41	2.34
	PEB			2.15
	CR			2.76

Source: (Prepared by the Researcher Based on the Analysis Results)

To assess the model's predictive accuracy, the values of the coefficients of determination (R^2) for the endogenous variables were examined. The R^2 value of the employees' innovation behavior was 0.52, which implied that the combination of positive emotional behavior and cultural readiness predicted 52% of the variation of the employees' innovative behavior. In the meantime, the R^2 of sustainable growth was 0.64, indicating that

employees' innovation behavior and positive emotional behavior together with cultural readiness explained 64% of the outcome of sustainable growth. These R^2 values can be regarded as considerable in the context of behavioral and organizational studies (Cohen, 2013; Hair et al., 2021). In addition, the predictive relevance of the model was evaluated on the basis of the Stone-Geisser Q^2 statistic, which was obtained through the blindfolding test in Smart-PLS. The Q^2 values were all greater than zero, and this shows that the model is predictively relevant to the endogenous constructs. The Q^2 of employees' innovation behavior was 0.36, whereas sustainable growth was 0.41, which indicated a good predictive power (Hair et al., 2021). Lastly, the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) was analyzed as a measure of model fit. The SRMR value of 0.047 was below the cut-off value of 0.08 (Henseler et al., 2016), which shows that the observed and predicted correlations are well fitted. Overall, the collinearity, predictive accuracy, and model fit collectively indicate that the structural model is statistically well and has the capacity to predict significant variance on the dependent constructs. As such, the model can be appropriately used to test the hypotheses in the following section.

5.4 Hypotheses testing

After the reliability and validity of the measurement model were established, the structural model was analyzed to test the postulated relationships between positive emotional behavior, employees' innovation behavior, sustainable growth, and cultural readiness. To determine the path significance, bootstrapping was performed using 5,000 subsamples and a two-tailed test at a 95% confidence level (Hair et al., 2021). Path coefficients, t-values, p-values, f^2, and hypothesis decisions are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Relationship	β - value	t-value	p-value	f^2	Results
H1	PEB → EIB	0.64	12.03	< 0.001	0.42	Supported
H2	EIB → SG	0.53	10.14	< 0.001	0.37	Supported

H3	PEB → SG	0.09	1.42	0.157	0.02	Not Supported
H4	CR × EIB → SG	0.14	2.67	0.008	0.07	Supported
H5	CR × PEB → EIB	0.11	2.34	0.020	0.05	Supported

Source: (Prepared by the Researcher Based on the Analysis Results)

The result shows that positive emotional behavior has a great impact on employees' innovation behavior ($\beta = 0.64$, $t = 12.03$, $p < 0.001$), which supports H1. The large effect size ($f^2 = 0.42$) of this strong path indicates that employees with high scores on optimism, enthusiasm, and emotional positivity are more likely to engage in innovative behaviors which include idea generation and experimentation. Similarly, employees' innovation behavior has a meaningful positive effect on sustainable growth ($\beta = 0.53$, $t = 10.14$, $p < 0.001$), hence validating H2. The effect size ($f^2 = 0.37$) is large which means that innovative employees play a significant role in the economic, social, and environmental sustainability of their organizations. Consequently, H3 was not supported by a significant positive relationship between positive emotional behavior and sustainable growth ($\beta = 0.09$, $t = 1.42$, $p > 0.157$). This result clarifies that positive emotions do not directly convert into sustainable outcomes, unless they are directed through innovative actions. Regarding the moderating role, cultural readiness has a positive moderating effect on the correlation between employees' innovation behavior and sustainable growth ($\beta = 0.14$, $t = 2.67$, $p = 0.008$) to support H4. This represents the fact that under the organization's culture where adaptability, involvement, and shared mission are valued, the innovative actions of the employees become more effective in driving the sustainable growth. Furthermore, cultural readiness played a critically important role in moderating the association between positive emotional behavior and employees' innovation behavior ($\beta = 0.11$, $t = 2.34$, $p = 0.020$) and was found to support H5. This implies that a positive, supportive, and participative working environment enhances the effects of positive emotions on innovation. On the whole, these results indicate that the combination of emotional and cultural factors is dynamic and determines the outcomes of innovation and sustainability outcomes. Although positive emotions alone might not lead to sustainable growth, their role becomes significant through innovation character as well as cultural readiness. However, these findings are consistent

with the Broaden-and-Build Theory (Fredrickson, 2001), which presupposes the expansion of thought-action repertoires through positive emotions, and the Dynamic Capabilities Theory (Teece, 2018), which proposes the conversion of internal resources into sustainable performance as possible through adaptive culture.

6. Discussion

The current research investigated the direct and indirect relationships between positive emotional behavior, employees' innovation behaviour, and sustainable growth, as well as assessed the moderating role of cultural readiness among the academic staff of private Iraqi universities. Based on Smart-PLS 4.0 and a sample of 298 valid responses, the results showed substantial empirical evidence to support most hypothesized relationships and demonstrated significant interactions of emotional, behavioral, and cultural dynamics in supporting sustainable organizational outcomes.

6.1 Positive Emotional Behavior and Employees Innovation Behavior

The results prove that positive emotional behavior has a strong and significant impact on employees' innovation behavior. This observation is in line with the Broaden-and-Build Theory (Fredrickson, 2001) which states that positive emotions increase cognitive and behavioral repertoires of individuals, and hence their creativity and problem-solving abilities. Academic employees in the context of higher education who are optimistic, enthusiastic, and empathetic have a higher chance of being involved in innovative processes like generating ideas, promoting, and implementing them. Recent research has also determined that positively affect-oriented employees are more inclined to cope with change and seek new methods of dealing with complex tasks (Mostafa, 2017; Liu et al., 2023). Applying to the situation in the Iraqi sphere of higher education, where innovation and flexibility are increasingly key, positive emotional states appear to be a psychological resource that can result in proactive and innovative actions. Thus, this research extends existing studies by confirming that emotional positivity is an inherent driving force of innovation, even under conditions of resource scarcity and periods of organizational transition.

6.2 Employees Innovation Behavior and Sustainable Growth

Employees' innovation behavior has become an important predictor of sustainable growth, showing a large path coefficient and effect size in the structural model. This relationship highlights the importance of innovative behavior in the achievement of economic, social, and environmental sustainability. The given finding is consistent with the Dynamic

Capabilities Theory (Teece, 2018) which assumes that the ability of organizations to become sustainable is based on the establishment and renewal of innovative capabilities that allow organizations to manage the changing environment. By motivating employees to create and deploy emerging concepts, organizations are able to increase their operational productivity by minimizing waste and reinforcing social interactions, all of which are fundamental to long-term sustainability (Kumar, 2022; Ghosh and Dutta, 2024). Thus, innovation should not be considered strictly as a technical process but as a human driven force that converts emotional energy and creativity into long term institutional results.

6.3 Positive Emotional Behavior and Sustainable Growth

Positive emotional behavior and sustainable growth were determined to be not significantly related to each other, meaning that employees' positive emotions alone will not necessarily cause the sustainable results. This implies that, although positive emotions promote enthusiasm, optimism, and cooperation, their effects on sustainability become significant only when these emotions are translated into innovative behaviors. This result is in contrast with some previous findings (e.g., Carmeli et al., 2017; Pansini et al., 2024) which reported a positive relationship between emotional positivity and sustainability, however, it is in line with the Broaden-and-Build Theory (Fredrickson, 2001), which states that positive emotions enhance the cognitive and behavioral capacities of individuals and, as such, contribute to the development of long-term outcome. This suggests that positive emotional conditions in the context of higher education foster an environment that facilitates innovation and adaptability, thereby enabling sustainable performance. Based on this, positive emotional behavior indirectly leads to sustainable growth through employees' innovative behavior, since innovation emphasized the relationship between emotional resources and institutional sustainability.

6.4 Moderating Role of Cultural Readiness

The moderating effect of cultural readiness was significant in two key relationships: positive emotional behavior and employees' innovation behavior on the one hand, and employees' innovation behavior and sustainable growth on the other hand. The findings suggest that a culture exhibited in the form of adaptability, involvement, and mission clarity is more effective in translating emotional positivity into innovative action and transforming innovation into sustainable outcome. These two moderating roles highlight the fact that culture is viewed as a contextual amplifier and enabler of capabilities. When organizational

culture is more inclined to flexibility and shared values, employees' innovative ideas have higher chances of success, ultimately enhancing sustainable growth. This complies with recent findings, which indicate that adaptive cultures may promote organizations learn, remain agile, and sustainable (Denison et al., 2014; Nguyen et al., 2022). In such a way, cultural readiness is one of the crucial demands in the context of Iraqi higher education, and allows transforming emotional and innovative forces into the sustainable changes. Organizations that lack flexibility in their culture may miss potential innovation opportunities, even with enthusiastic and positive employees. Thus, culture is applied as a moderator between emotional engagement, innovative effort, and long-term growth.

6.5 Theoretical Implications

This study develops theory in several important respects. Firstly, it expands the Broaden-and-Build Theory (Fredrickson, 2001) by empirically evaluating the impact of positive emotional behavior on employees' innovation behavior within a non-Western higher education environment. The findings confirm that emotional resources such as optimism and enthusiasm are universal antecedents of creative and innovative behavior, irrespective of resource constrained settings. Second, the work contributes to the Dynamic Capabilities Theory (Teece, 2018), as it discloses the fact that innovation is a major dynamic capability through which emotional and cultural resources are converted into sustainable performance results. Nevertheless, although the direct relationship between positive emotions and sustainable growth was not supported, the results, however, show that positive emotional behavior contributes indirectly to sustainability through innovation, thereby enhancing the theoretical insights of the emotional-behavioral relationship in organizational development. Third, by identifying the moderating role of cultural readiness, the research provides value to the organizational behavior literature by showing that culture is not a situational factor, but a moderating variable that affects how emotional and innovative processes can be transformed into long-term outcomes. This integrated framework helps explain how psychological, behavioral, and cultural factors work together to support sustainable development in higher education institutions.

6.6 Practical Implications

From a managerial perspective, the findings offer a few practical recommendations to academic leaders and policymakers, particularly when dealing with developing country contexts. To begin with, the administrators at the university must foster positive emotions among academic members through recognition, participative leadership, and effective

communication, as these feelings motivate innovative behavior among employees, which in turn translates into sustainable performance. Second, organizations should proactively develop cultural readiness by fostering flexibility, participation, and a shared mission. A culturally prepared institution would not only grow the innovative capacity of the staff but also ensure that the innovative practices can be effectively transformed into both educational and operational sustainability over the long term. Third, the incorporation of emotional intelligence and innovation management initiative into training programs may help academic staff to direct their positive emotions into constructive, creative, and sustainable actions. Finally, at the policy level, these insights suggest that national higher education policies should promote emotional well-being, innovative thought, and cultural adaptability to ensure that universities become both resilient and sustainable in dynamic and competitive environments.

7. Conclusions and Limitations

7.1 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to analyze the direct and indirect relationships between positive emotional behavior (PEB) and sustainable growth (SG), with the key roles of employees' innovation behavior (EIB) and the moderating influence of cultural readiness (CR) in the context of Iraqi private universities. Based on the Broaden-and-Build Theory and Dynamic Capabilities Theory, the study derives robust empirical evidence that emotional, behavioral and cultural factors cooperatively produce sustainable organizational outcomes. The findings indicate that PEB with its optimism, enthusiasm, and empathy has a significant effect on EIB, which subsequently contributes to SG in terms of economic, social, and environmental. However, there was no significant direct relationship between PEB and SG, which suggests that positive emotions do not necessarily lead to sustainable results. Rather, their influence can be fully realized when directed through innovative actions. In addition, it was revealed that CR considerably reinforced two important pathways: the relationship between PEB and EIB, and between EIB and SG. This implies that a culture that is adaptive, involved, and whose mission aligns is more effective in amplifying the transfer of emotional positivity into innovation and the transformation of innovation into sustainability. Theoretically, this research contributes to expanding the organizational sustainability literature by integrating emotional and cultural dimensions into models of innovation-driven growth. It also enhances the existing theories by showing that the role of emotional

positivity is mainly an indirect contributor to sustainability through innovation. Practically, the findings demonstrate that university leaders and policymakers should develop emotionally supportive and culturally adaptive environments that enable academic staff to be innovative and to sustain long-term institutional development.

7.2 Limitations and Future Research Directions

Although this study has made several contributions, it also has its limitations. First, academic employees in private Iraqi universities were the only sample used to gather data, which might restrict the generalizability of the results to public universities or other organizations in other sectors. This framework needs to be replicated in various institutional and national settings in future studies, to strengthen its external validity. Second, the research design was cross-sectional, which limits causal relationships among variables. A longitudinal or experimental research design would give a better insight into how emotions, innovation, and sustainability interact over time. Third, despite the fact that the study has made some attempts to reduce the chances of common method bias, self-reported data are prone to bias related to perceptions and social desirability. In future research, multi-source or objective performance indicators may be taken into consideration to more effectively validate the findings. Fourth, the moderating variable in this study was cultural readiness. The emotional factors, innovation, and sustainability, can however be influenced by other organizational variables, such as leadership style, knowledge sharing, and even digital transformation. These additional variables should be included in future models, because they would give a more comprehensive representation of sustainable organization behavior. Finally, due to the growing interest in sustainable higher education at the global level, comparative regional approaches can be applied to future studies, exploring the differences in institutional cultures and emotional environments across the Middle East, Asia, and Western academic contexts. These intercultural comparisons would provide highly beneficial insight into the relationship between emotions and innovation to foster organizational development.

References

1. Aithal, P. S., & Aithal, S. (2023). How to increase emotional infrastructure of higher education institutions. *International Journal of Management, Technology, and Social Sciences, 8* (3), 356–394.

2. Archer, L. (2023). Research methodology: A step-by-step guide for beginners by R. Kumar. *Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.*
3. Alqatan, A., Simmou, W., Shehadeh, M., AlReshaid, F., Elmarzouky, M., & Shohaieb, D. (2025). Strategic pathways to corporate sustainability: The roles of transformational leadership, knowledge sharing, and innovation. *Sustainability, 17*(12), 5547.
4. Avey, J. B., Wernsing, T. S., & Luthans, F. (2008). Can positive employees help positive organizational change? Impact of psychological capital and emotions on relevant attitudes and behaviors. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 44*(1), 48–70.
5. Carmeli, A., Brammer, S., Gomes, E., & Tarba, S. Y. (2017). An organizational ethic of care and employee involvement in sustainability-related behaviors: A social identity perspective. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 38*(9), 1380–1395.
6. Çelik, Ç., Polat, S., & Esen, E. (2024). The relationship between inclusive leadership and innovative work behavior: The mediating role of inclusive climate and emotional commitment. *Research in Educational Administration and Leadership, 9*(3), 417–482.
7. Cohen, J. (2013). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences*. Routledge.
8. Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage Publications.
9. Denison, D. R., & Mishra, A. K. (1995). Toward a theory of organizational culture and effectiveness. *Organization Science, 6*(2), 204–223.
10. Denison, D., Nieminen, L., & Kotrba, L. (2014). Diagnosing organizational cultures: A conceptual and empirical review of culture effectiveness surveys. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, 23*(1), 145–161.
11. Dyllick, T., & Muff, K. (2016). Clarifying the meaning of sustainable business: Introducing a typology from business-as-usual to true business sustainability. *Organization & Environment, 29*(2), 156–174.
12. Elfenbein, H. A. (2023). Emotion in organizations: Theory and research. *Annual Review of Psychology, 74*(1), 489–517.
13. Fornell, C., & Larcker, D. F. (1981). Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *Journal of Marketing Research, 18*(1), 39–50.
14. Fredrickson, B. L. (2001). The role of positive emotions in positive psychology: The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. *American Psychologist, 56*(3), 218–226.
15. Ghosh, S., & Dutta, S. (2024). Employee innovation and sustainable organizational growth: A resource-based perspective. *Journal of Cleaner Production, 440*, 141832.

16. Hair, J. F., Hult, G. T. M., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2021). *A primer on partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM)* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.
17. Henseler, J., Hubona, G., & Ray, P. A. (2016). Using PLS path modeling in new technology research: Updated guidelines. *Industrial Management & Data Systems, 116*(1), 2–20.
18. Henseler, J., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2015). A new criterion for assessing discriminant validity in variance-based structural equation modeling. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 43*(1), 115–135.
19. Hu, L. T., & Bentler, P. M. (1999). Cutoff criteria for fit indexes in covariance structure analysis: Conventional criteria versus new alternatives. *Structural Equation Modeling: A Multidisciplinary Journal, 6*(1), 1–55.
20. Jabeen, F., Liu, Y., & Khan, M. A. (2023). Cultural readiness as a moderator of innovation and sustainable performance in higher education. *Journal of Organizational Change Management, 36*(5), 611–629.
21. Janssen, O. (2000). Job demands, perceptions of effort–reward fairness and innovative work behaviour. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, *73*(3), 287–302.
22. Jeurissen, R. (2000). *Cannibals with forks: The triple bottom line of 21st century business.*
23. Kumar, R., Singh, R. K., & Chand, P. (2022). Linking innovation behavior and sustainable development: Evidence from developing economies. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change, 180*, 121709.
24. Liu, J., Li, W., & Zhang, X. (2023). Positive affect and innovative behavior: The role of psychological empowerment. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *14*, 1140521.
25. Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. (2024). *Iraqi Private Universities in QS Sustainable Development Rankings 2025*. Retrieved from https://mohesr.gov.iq/en/post/higher-education-announces-on-eight-iraqi-universities-in-qs-sustainable-development-rankings-2025
26. Mostafa, A. M. S. (2017). The mediating role of positive affect on the relationship between psychological empowerment and employee outcomes: A longitudinal study. *Evidence-based HRM: A Global Forum for Empirical Scholarship, 5*(3), 266–282. Emerald Publishing Limited.
27. Nguyen, P. T., Tran, Q. T., & Pham, N. V. (2022). Cultural adaptability and sustainable organizational performance: Evidence from higher education institutions. *Sustainability*, *14*(9), 5503.

28. Pansini, M., Buonomo, I., & Benevene, P. (2024). Fostering sustainable workplace through leaders' compassionate behaviors: Understanding the role of employee well-being and work engagement. *Sustainability, 16*(23), 10697.
29. Pilcher, N., & Cortazzi, M. (2024). 'Qualitative' and 'quantitative' methods and approaches across subject fields: Implications for research values, assumptions, and practices. *Quality & Quantity, 58*(3), 2357–2387.
30. Saadi, I. A. (2023). *Effect of organisational strategy on sustainable competitive advantage of manufacturing SMEs: Mediating role of managerial creativity.*
31. Saadi, I. A. (2025a). Crisis leadership and organizational resilience for sustainable healthcare: The moderating role of agile leadership in Iraq's private hospitals. *Kerbala International Journal of Management and Economics, 13*(48), 27–43.
32. Saadi, I. A. (2025b). The role of organizational behavior dimensions in achieving organizational sustainability: The moderating impact of human resource development in the Iraqi construction sector. *Journal of Economics and Administrative Sciences, 31*(149), 37–57.
33. Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2019). *Research methods for business students* (8th ed.). Pearson Education.
34. Scott, S. G., & Bruce, R. A. (1994). Determinants of innovative behavior: A path model of individual innovation in the workplace. *Academy of Management Journal, 37*(3), 580–607.
35. Sirmon, D. G., Hitt, M. A., & Ireland, R. D. (2011). Managing firm resources in dynamic environments to create value: Looking inside the black box. *Academy of Management Review, 32*(1), 273–292.
36. Teece, D. J. (2018). Business models and dynamic capabilities. *Long Range Planning, 51*(1), 40–49.
37. Teece, D. J. (2022). The evolution of the dynamic capabilities. In *Artificiality and sustainability in entrepreneurship: Exploring the unforeseen, and paving the way to a sustainable future* (p. 113).
38. Tian, G., Yang, Y., Zhang, X., Zhao, M., & Tian, Y. (2025). From defensive reasoning to innovation: How digital tools foster positive emotions in organizations. *BMC Psychology, 13*(1), 146.
39. Wang, C., Yao, J., & Gao, L. (2024). How do leaders' positive emotions improve employees' psychological safety in China? The moderating effect of leader–member exchange. *Heliyon, 10*(3).

40. World Medical Association. (2013). Declaration of Helsinki: Ethical principles for medical research involving human subjects. *JAMA*, *310*(20), 2191–2194.