

THE IMPACT OF LEADERSHIP SUPPORT AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN THE KURDISTAN REGION OF IRAQ

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Abstract

In this study, the influence of supporting leadership and Knowledge sharing on academic performance has been analysed through investigating four main dimensions which include leadership support, reward system, knowledge sharing, and lecturer performance. To achieve this, a quantitative research method was implemented. The data used in this study consists of information gathered through questionnaire. The questionnaires were distributed purposively in both private and public sectors including both schools and universities. Cronbach's alpha was used in order to assess the reliability. For this study, 102 data was collected. For the purpose of analysing the data, SPSS was used. Regression analysis was used to test the relationships between the variables. The results revealed that leadership support has strongly affecting lecture performance. Also, knowledge sharing has positively affected on lecture performance. On the other hand, reward system has not affected lecture performance meaningfully. The findings recommend that enhancing leadership and encouraging knowledge sharing would help the academic performance within organization.

Keywords: Leadership, Reward System, Academic Performance, Knowledge Sharing.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Employees are widely recognized as the most valuable resource in any organization because their performance directly shapes institutional effectiveness and long-term outcomes. When employees work efficiently and effectively, both individual and organizational benefits increase (Hameed & Waheed, 2011). In higher education settings, this principle becomes even more critical because the performance of lecturers not only affects institutional success but also influences student engagement, learning outcomes, and the quality of knowledge creation. As

leadership behavior can significantly shape the work environment and academic culture, managers and academic leaders are increasingly expected to model positive and supportive behaviors that enhance performance (McConnell et al., 2004).

Contemporary research in knowledge management and higher education suggests that leadership is most effective when it builds systems that encourage learning, collaboration, and the exchange of expertise. For example, evidence from higher education institutions indicates that knowledge management processes contribute to sustainability outcomes, reinforcing the importance of managerial and leadership support in academic contexts. Similarly, knowledge sharing has been shown to enhance innovative behaviors among academicians through supportive organizational conditions such as innovative culture and quality of work life. These insights imply that leadership support is not only a motivational driver but also an enabling mechanism for knowledge sharing and innovation in academic workplaces.

In addition, recent studies emphasize that training and developmental practices strongly shape both individual and organizational innovativeness, particularly when learning is embedded into daily work routines (Budur, 2025a). Training may also encourage innovative behaviors by strengthening knowledge sharing and reducing knowledge hiding dynamics (Budur, 2025b). This suggests that supportive leadership could indirectly enhance lecturer performance by promoting a knowledge-friendly environment rather than relying solely on formal incentives. Related evidence from broader organizational research further confirms that knowledge resources—such as declarative and procedural knowledge—are closely linked to employee performance outcomes (Demir, Kiziloglu, Budur, & Heshmati, 2022).

While reward systems are often proposed as strategic tools for increasing performance, the effectiveness of rewards may vary by context. In academic settings, extrinsic incentives may not always yield strong performance effects unless they are fair, meaningful, and aligned with professional values. Considering emerging discussion on fairness perceptions in academic reward structures (e.g., Ammari & Howe-Walsh, 2025), the non-significant effect of rewards in some higher education environments remains an important empirical question. In Kurdistan's higher education context, these issues may be more pronounced due to concerns about transparency, institutional policy consistency, and the balance between intrinsic and extrinsic motivators.

Accordingly, this study examines the extent to which leadership support, knowledge sharing, and reward system influence lecturer performance in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. This focus addresses a practical and scholarly gap, as there remains limited localized evidence explaining which organizational drivers strongly shape academic performance in this setting.

The research questions are:

1. What is the relationship between supportive leadership and lecturer performance?
2. Does knowledge sharing contribute to better lecturer performance?
3. Does reward system have influence on lecturer performance?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Leadership

Leadership is generally understood as the capacity to guide, inspire, and influence individuals toward achieving shared goals through communication, decision-making, and motivation. Effective leaders create direction and raise the capability of their followers (Boseman, 2008; Winston, 2003). In higher education, this role is expanded to include mentoring academic staff, enabling research excellence, supporting teaching quality, and shaping institutional learning cultures (Anthony, 2017; Ball, 2007).

Recent regional scholarship also highlights the importance of leadership approaches that are value-driven and ethically grounded. For instance, virtue-based leadership rooted in Al-Ghazali's perspective is associated with stronger organizational commitment, suggesting that leadership effectiveness in contemporary institutions may be strengthened by moral and relational foundations alongside managerial competence (Budur, 2024). In academic contexts, such ethical and supportive leadership orientations may shape trust, belonging, and willingness to contribute to collective goals.

2.2 Leadership Support

Leadership support refers to leaders' behaviors aimed at meeting subordinates' professional needs, providing feedback, ensuring access to resources, and building confidence in roles (Hogan & Kaiser, 2005). Supportive academic leaders can strengthen lecturer motivation,

enhance coordination, and create healthier academic climates that enable knowledge exchange and performance improvement (Alemayehu, 2021).

From the knowledge management perspective, leadership support is also a structural facilitator of sustainability and learning in universities. Evidence suggests that when leaders strengthen knowledge management processes, institutions are more likely to achieve higher sustainability performance and organizational resilience. Such support may also help academics develop innovative work behaviors by creating environments where sharing expertise is valued and rewarded socially (Budur et al., 2024). Therefore, leadership support is expected to play a direct role in improving lecturer performance and an indirect role by enhancing knowledge sharing.

2.3. Rewarding

Reward systems include monetary and non-monetary mechanisms used to recognize contributions and stimulate higher performance. In academic settings, rewards may take the form of promotions, research funding, certificates, recognition, or salary-based incentives (O'Meara, 2011; Francis et al., 2020). Prior literature commonly reports that rewards can enhance performance when they are transparent, fair, and aligned with employee expectations (Noorazem et al., 2021).

However, recent evidence indicates that reward effectiveness is context-sensitive. Fairness perceptions between academic staff and senior decision-makers may differ, potentially weakening the motivational impact of institutional reward systems (Ammari & Howe-Walsh, 2025). Moreover, knowledge-oriented studies suggest that employee outcomes may require a balance of social, developmental, and structural support, not just incentive-based strategies. In this sense, training and development may offer a more sustainable path toward building innovativeness and performance than financial rewards alone (Budur, 2025a).

2.4. Lecturer Performance

Lecturer performance refers to the effectiveness with which academic staff fulfill teaching, research, and service responsibilities. High lecturer performance depends on subject mastery, communication ability, student engagement strategies, time management, and systematic commitment to professional development (Retnowati, 2021). Performance in academic contexts is multidimensional and is influenced by organizational culture, leadership, training, and motivational systems.

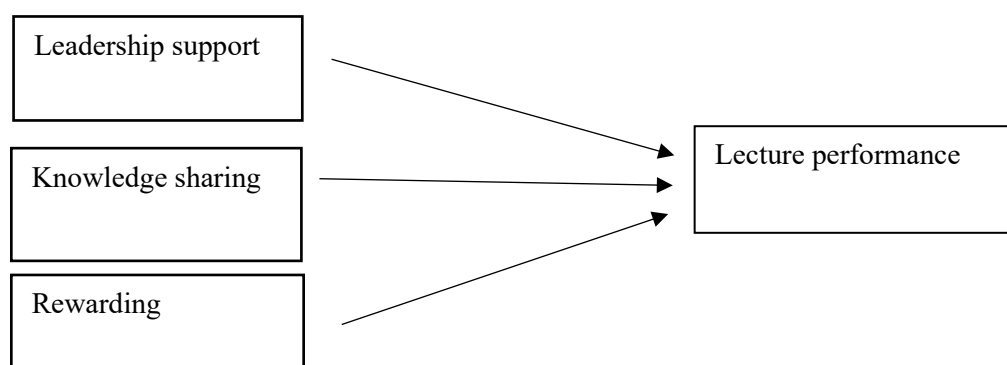
Knowledge-based frameworks further explain that performance improves when individuals possess and apply both declarative and procedural knowledge effectively (Demir et al., 2022). Additionally, organizational socialization and affective commitment have been linked to innovative work behavior, which may strengthen performance indirectly by improving adaptability and creativity in academic tasks (Torlak et al., 2024). Thus, lecturer performance may be best understood as an outcome of both psychological and organizational drivers.

2.5 Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge sharing involves the exchange of experience, skills, and explicit and tacit knowledge among employees to support problem-solving, decision-making, and innovation (Castaneda & Cuellar, 2020; Haas & Hansen, 2007). In academic institutions, knowledge sharing may occur through research communities, teaching circles, mentoring, seminars, and digital platforms. These practices help lecturers improve teaching practices, research performance, and collaboration.

Recent higher education evidence supports the argument that knowledge sharing positively influences innovative behaviors, particularly when organizational culture and quality of work life reinforce knowledge exchange norms. Furthermore, training research shows that knowledge sharing plays a mediating role between training and innovative outcomes, while knowledge hiding may suppress these benefits (Budur, 2025b). In public service and institutional contexts, knowledge sharing and hiding dynamics have also been shown to shape motivational outcomes depending on organizational structures. Collectively, these findings strengthen the expectation that knowledge sharing will positively influence lecturer performance within Kurdistan's academic environment.

2.6 The model



The model shows the dependent variables that includes lecture performance and independent variables includes leader support, knowledge sharing, and rewarding.

Hypothesis Development

H1. Leadership support and Lecture performance

In most cases, employee performance will increase due to the influence of an effective leader. As a result, leadership effectiveness will indicate how to inspire the employee effectively. According to Mulyadi (2021), a supporting leader must have some qualities, including physical strength, nervous system, appreciation of direction of organizational goals, hospitality, integrity, enthusiasm, decision making, the ability of decision-making, personality, social relationships, and have a strong desire. Reliable leadership is the main requirement for an organization including universities that need a high level of coordination Mulyadi (2021). Leadership can be seen like an art that a person has like some skills to motivate others, so that they desire to work effectively to achieve the goals and manage the human resources. Proving direction is expected to be given by a leader to achieve National Education goals because the lecture has also the same duties and tasks of transforming, distributing, and developing science, technology, and arts through education, research, and community service. As a result, the lecture has abilities to carry out their tasks of reaching national education, so that it has to be supported by good environmental work of coordination. A study done in Universiade National Timor Lorosae (UNTL) with the sample of 201 lecturers. The results revealed that supporting leadership. Especially transformational leadership has a significant effect on lecture performance. (Sarmiento et al., 2024) this study shows that in academia, there is also leaders who can influence the performance of the academic performance.

H1: leadership Support has a positive effect on lecture performance at the universities

H2. Knowledge Sharing and Lecturer Performance

Leadership is the collection of abilities to direct and guide others to achieve certain goal. Knowledge sharing is the process of giving and receiving information in the purpose of helping, developing, making decisions, and solving problems. In the study done in Universiade National Timor Lorosae (UNTL), it was found that knowledge sharing mediates the relationship between leadership and lecture performance. There are also many other studies done and proved knowledge sharing has positive and significant effect on individual performance. Kuzu

&ozilhamn, (2014) found that knowledge sharing has a significant role on employee performance. Based on these researches, we came to conclusion to have this hypothesis

H2: knowledge sharing has positive effect on lecture performance

H3. Reward System and Lecture performance

A reward system can be defined as a structured approach an organization utilizes to provide monetary and non-monetary incentives to employees. The purpose of this reward is to inspire performance and improve satisfaction. Research showed that both instinct and extrinsic rewards play an important role in improving employee performance. According to Murphy, 2015, he claimed that a well-managed reward system, like salaries, bonusses, recognition, and flexible working hours hare helpful in organizations in attracting, keeping, and motivating employees. (Murphy, 2015). A study done in Isfahan Regional Electric Company found that reward management system has influenced on both employee motivation and employee performance positively. As a result, we came to conclusion to this hypothesis.

H3: Reward system has positive effect on lecture performance.

3. METHODOLOGY

Research Design: This study used quantitative research approach by applying a descriptive design to evaluate the relationship between leadership and knowledge sharing on lecture performance. the aim was to collect numerical data and to know how is the relation among the variables.

Population and sample: The highlighted population for this study included academic lectures from public and private universities, and also high school teachers. They were the target population in the research. Majority of them were university lectures. The sample used was using convenience sampling that respondents were selected based on availability and willingness to respond the survey.

Data Collection Method: This study followed structured questionnaire that was distributes in two methods. First, it was shared through Google Forms (online). Secondly, it was delivered as printed copies (physical paper). The aim of using to ways was that participants from variety of institution had chance to be included.

Instrumentation: In this study, Likert- scale was used to design the questionnaire that the items were ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The items were adapted from previous research, and they were slightly modified to be suitable for the target context of this study. The questionnaire consists of dimensions that focused on leadership support, knowledge sharing, reward system, and lecture performance.

The research consists of eleven items including demographic questions. It covers four main dimensions. The questionnaire starts with asking about demographic questions that are seven. They are about academic ranks, years of experience, type of institutions, Ages, educations, yearly publications, teaching courses per semester. Moreover, all the options are measured from number 1 which is strongly disagree until 5 which is strongly agree.

The First dimension which was also the main variable is leadership support. It consisted of two questions. It indicated how leadership support can affect academic performance in the term of achieving professional goals, giving feedbacks to the academicians, and importance of academicians by their leaders. The questions were adapted and taken (Lani, 2012). The questions were “My institution's leadership supports me in achieving my professional goals.” The questions are including, “my institution's leadership supports me in achieving my professional goals and I receive regular feedback and guidance from my supervisors.”

The second dimension was about reward system. There were two questions about this dimension. It demonstrated how the institutions influenced the teaching performance fairly in the terms of rewarding, promotion feelings, and recognition programs. The questions were adopted (Ammari & Howe-Walsh, 2025). My institution has a fair system for rewarding excellent teaching performance, Monetary rewards are distributed equitably among academic staff.

Third dimension was about knowledge sharing. It includes three questions. The meaning of this dimension shows how much exchanging knowledge can impact academic performance. It measures the institutions encouragement of the research conducting and teaching performance. Also, it evaluates whether any tools are been used to share the ideas (Philips, 2001). The questions were including my institution encourages the sharing of teaching and research knowledge among staff, Collaborative knowledge sharing improves my teaching and research performance, there are structured platforms for lecturers to share ideas and resources at my institution.

Fourth dimension covered lecturer performance. This meaning of this dimension showed the personal lecture opinion about his/her self. For example, the satisfaction of teaching with student engagement, research publication targets, student feedback, and pursuing opportunities. The questions are adopted (John, Biggs 2011). The items that relate to this variable are including, I am satisfied with my teaching effectiveness and student engagement, I consistently meet or exceed my research publication targets, Student feedback indicates a positive impact of my teaching practices, and I actively pursue opportunities to enhance my teaching and research performance.

Data Analysis: SPSS software was used to analyse the collected. To understand the impact of leadership support and knowledge sharing on lecture performance, both descriptive statistics to summarize the data and regression analysis to test the relationships between variables were used.

Ethical considerations: from the beginning to the data and meet the respondents, they were told that the data only would be used for academic purpose. Participation was totally voluntary and taking part was not by force anyone. Alos, the participants were kept confidential, and the no personal or sensitive information was gathered.

4. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This section presents all the important findings from the data analysis. A total of 102 participants took part in this study. The data was analysed using google form and SPSS. Most of the participants occupied the position of lecturer (46%). In the term of experience, 31% of the respondents has less than years of experience, and another 31% had 11-20 years of experience. Regarding to the organization types, they worked in public university (55%), while (47%) worked in private universities. Also. The largest group which consists of (43%) was 30-40 years old, (%), followed by those who under 30 (30%). According to educational level, most of them held a master's degree (54%), followed by Bachelor's degree (29%) and PHD (19%). Majority of participants published 0-2 research papers yearly (53%) and (65%) of them taught 1-3 courses per semester.

Cronbach's Alpha was used to test the reliability of the questionnaire. All the variables present acceptable internal consistency, with the value of alpha ranging from 0.70 to 0.89. Validity test was assessed through expert review. The items were confirmed and relevant to the study main objectives.

Table1 Cronbach's Alpha for leadership dimension

Item-Total Statistics					
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Cronbach's Alpha
LS1	13.82	17.097	0.798	0.855	0.89
LS2	13.85	18.503	0.660	0.885	
LS3	13.84	17.500	0.717	0.873	
LS4	13.76	17.390	0.720	0.873	
LS5	13.70	16.867	0.789	0.857	

Table 1 represents the reliability levels of group questions related to leadership support in shaping academic performance. Given in the table, Cronbach's alpha represents the consistency level of the group of questions, while Cronbach's alpha if item deleted shows the new Cronbach's alpha in case any of these questions from the group is deleted. The results show that Cronbach's alpha value was 0.89 which is greater than the threshold value given by the literature (Kılıç1, 2016) as 0.7. Additionally, Cronbach's alpha if item deleted values reduced the reliability in case of any of them were deleted. In this result, it can be related that 5 questions of the dimension reliable enough to continue with the further analysis.

Table 2 Cronbach's Alpha of Knowledge Sharing

Item-Total Statistics					
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Cronbach's Alpha
KS1	6.75	4.088	0.661	0.653	0.78
KS2	6.50	4.569	0.587	0.735	
KS3	6.69	4.514	0.605	0.716	

Table 2 represents the reliability levels of group questions related knowledge sharing in shaping academic performance. Given in the table, Cronbach's alpha represents the consistency level of the group of questions, while Cronbach's alpha if item deleted shows the new Cronbach's alpha in case any of these questions from the group is deleted. The results show that Cronbach's alpha value was 0.78 which is greater than the threshold value given by the literature (Bernardi,1994) as 0.7. Additionally, Cronbach's alpha values reduced in the case of any of them being deleted. In this result, it can be related that 3 questions of the dimension reliable enough to continue with the further analysis1

Table 3: Cronbach's Alpha for Lecture Performance

Item-Total Statistics						
	Scale	Mean	Scale	Corrected	Cronbach's	
	if	Item	Variance	if	Alpha if Item	Cronbach's Alpha
	Deleted		Item Deleted	Item-Total	Deleted	
				Correlation		
Perf1	10.93		6.956	0.673	0.773	
Perf2	11.16		7.460	0.621	0.797	
Perf3	11.24		7.132	0.671	0.775	0.82
Perf4	10.91		7.131	0.650	0.784	

Table 3 represents the reliability levels of group questions related to Lecture performance. Given in the table, Cronbach's alpha represents the consistency level of the group of questions, while Cronbach's alpha if item deleted shows the new Cronbach's alpha in case any of these questions from the group is deleted. The results show that Cronbach's alpha value was 0.82 which is greater than the threshold value given by the literature (Bernardi, 1994) as 0.7. Additionally, Cronbach's alpha if item deleted values reduced the reliability in case of any of them were deleted. In this result, it can be related

Table 4 Cronbach's Alpha of Reward System

	Scale Mean if Deleted	Scale Variance Item Deleted	Corrected if Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Cronbach's Alpha
RS1	9.55	7.703	0.59	0.727	0.78
RS2	9.7	8.075	0.671	0.69	
RS3	9.46	7.786	0.623	0.709	
RS4	8.99	8.452	0.479	0.783	

Table 4 represents the reliability levels of group questions related to reward system in shaping academic performance. Given in the table, Cronbach's alpha represents the consistency level of the group of questions, while Cronbach's alpha if item deleted shows the new Cronbach's alpha in case any of these questions from the group is deleted. The results show that Cronbach's alpha value was 0.78 which is greater than the threshold value given by the literature (Bernardi, 1994) as 0.7. Additionally, Cronbach's alpha if item deleted values reduced the reliability in case of any of them were deleted. In this result, it can be related that 4 questions of the dimension reliable enough to continue with the further analysis

Table 5 Rotated Component varimax Rotaion

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
LP5	0.907			
LP1	0.847			
LP2	0.826			
LP4	0.735			
KS2		0.924		
KS1		0.917		
KS4		0.667		
RS2			0.906	
RS1			0.861	
LSup2				0.933
LdSup1				0.59

Table 5 shows factor analysis by using varimax rotation that identified four components with strong and clear loading above 0.5, indicating accepted construct validity.

Component 1 related to leadership support includes LP1, LP2, and LP4. Component 2 related to the group of KS2, KS1, and KS4, demonstrating the knowledge sharing dimension. Component 3 includes RS2 and RS1, that related to Reward system construct. Lastly, component 4 consists of LSup, LSup 2, showing leadership support. The results accept that the questionnaire items are grouped logically with their intended factors and they are quite suitable for further analysis.

Table 6 Explanation of Total Variance Explained by Rotated Factor by using varimax Rotation

Total Variance Explained									
Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	5.743	52.208	52.208	5.743	52.208	52.208	3.248	29.523	29.523
2	1.648	14.981	67.190	1.648	14.981	67.190	2.512	22.838	52.361
3	1.189	10.808	77.998	1.189	10.808	77.998	2.213	20.116	72.477
4	0.807	7.339	85.337	0.807	7.339	85.337	1.415	12.860	85.337

The table (6) presents the results of the factor extraction. The four components were identified with eigenvalues which grater than 1, following Kaiser's criterion. Those four components all together explain 85.34 % of the total variance, that shows a strong representation of structure of the data. Start with component 1, it explains the highest variance 29.52% after rotation. Component 2,3, and 4 explain 22.83 %, 20.12%, 12.86% of the variance respectively. After

rotation, cumulative variance is 85.34% that supports the adequacy of the extracted factors for later analysis.

Table 7 Regression Analysis Results of the Hypothesis Framework

Coefficients							
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Adjusted R square
		B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	2.083	0.269		7.731	0.000	0.338
	KSh	0.386	0.082	0.473	4.702	0.000	
	RS	-0.061	0.084	-0.072	-0.726	0.470	
	LS	0.187	0.089	0.228	2.107	0.038	
a. Dependent Variable: LP							

Table 7 represents that how the factors including, leadership support, knowledge sharing, and reward system effects on academic performance. In the model summary, the adjusted R square is 33% means that 0.33 (% 33) of the variation in academic performance) was explained by the three independent variables that includes (KSh, RS, and LS) First factor, Knowledge sharing (KS) is showing a strong positive impact which its B=0.47. It means that it has strongly affect the academic performance. P=0.0 which is highly significant. Second factor, Reward System is indicating that it is not significantly affecting Lecturer performance because the results show that (p= 0.47).Its Beta is (-0.072). Third Factor is about Leadership support (LS) has also a significant positive impact on Lecture Performance (B=0.228), and (P=0.0). In conclusion, the most important factor is Knowledge sharing (KS) that has strongest and most effect on Lecture performance. Leadership support also has a positive impact. Reward system (RS) does not have much effect on Lecture Performance.

5. DISCUSSION

The aim of the study was to examine how leadership support, knowledge sharing, and reward system influence lecturer performance in higher education settings. During exploratory factor analysis, two initially considered dimensions (training and environmental culture) were removed due to low factor loadings, resulting in a refined model centered on leadership support, knowledge sharing, and reward system as predictors of lecturer performance. This

refinement aligns with the view that performance in academic institutions is strongly shaped by leadership and knowledge processes that structure daily work practices and professional exchange.

The findings provide support for two of the proposed relationships and offer a clearer picture of how academic workplaces function. Knowledge sharing demonstrated the strongest positive association with lecturer performance ($\beta = 0.473$, $p < 0.001$), supporting the hypothesis that collaborative exchange of teaching methods, research insights, and professional experience enhances effectiveness. This result is consistent with evidence that knowledge sharing improves innovative behaviors among academicians and strengthens academic outcomes when embedded within supportive organizational conditions (Budur et al., 2024b). It also aligns with broader knowledge-based performance arguments indicating that both declarative and procedural knowledge contribute meaningfully to employee performance (Demir et al., 2022). Therefore, lecturer performance appears particularly sensitive to the extent that institutions normalize and facilitate knowledge exchange through formal and informal channels.

Leadership support also showed a significant positive relationship with lecturer performance ($\beta = 0.228$, $p = 0.038$). This indicates that when academic leaders provide guidance, constructive feedback, and access to resources, lecturers are more likely to feel valued, confident, and motivated to perform effectively. Such support resonates with research highlighting that leadership-driven knowledge management processes strengthen sustainability and long-term effectiveness in higher education institutions (Budur et al., 2024a). In addition, ethical and value-based leadership perspectives suggest that supportive leadership can foster stronger commitment and positive behavioral outcomes in professional environments (Budur, 2024), reinforcing the importance of relational and developmental leadership practices in universities.

In contrast, the reward system did not show a significant effect on lecturer performance ($\beta = -0.072$, $p = 0.470$). This finding suggests that extrinsic incentives may be insufficient in academic environments unless they are perceived as fair, meaningful, and clearly tied to performance. In many higher education settings, intrinsic factors—such as recognition, autonomy, professional growth, and opportunities for skill enhancement—may carry stronger motivational weight than symbolic or inconsistently applied rewards. This interpretation is consistent with recent evidence that training and job satisfaction are critical drivers of individual and organizational innovativeness (Budur, 2025a) and that training supports positive

outcomes partly through knowledge sharing and reduced knowledge hiding (Budur, 2025b). Accordingly, reward effectiveness may depend on whether incentives complement developmental systems rather than functioning as stand-alone motivational tools.

The regression model explained 33.8% of the variance in lecturer performance, indicating moderate explanatory power. This suggests that additional contextual variables—such as job satisfaction, organizational culture, workload balance, and institutional socialization—may further shape performance outcomes. Recent evidence linking organizational socialization and affective commitment with innovative work behavior supports the argument that psychological attachment and integration into the institution can enhance academic contribution beyond structural predictors alone (Torlak et al., 2024).

Overall, the findings imply that universities should prioritize building a culture of knowledge sharing and strengthening supportive leadership practices to improve lecturer performance. Reward systems may still play a role, but likely only when redesigned to ensure fairness, transparency, and alignment with lecturers' professional values and developmental needs. The study's limitations include a restricted geographic scope and cross-sectional design, which may limit generalizability and prevent strong causal claims. Future research should expand samples across multiple cities and incorporate additional predictors such as job satisfaction, intrinsic motivation, and innovative academic culture to provide a more comprehensive explanation of performance dynamics in Kurdistan's higher education context (Budur et al., 2024b; Budur, 2025a).

6. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research was to examine how leadership support, knowledge sharing, and reward system influence lecturer performance in higher education. Data were collected from 102 participants across public and private universities, and analyzed using SPSS. Reliability and validity were assessed through Cronbach's alpha and factor analysis, while regression analysis was used to test the proposed relationships.

The findings indicate that knowledge sharing and supportive leadership are key drivers of lecturer performance. When academic staff engage in open exchange of ideas, teaching practices, and professional experience, they feel more empowered and become more effective in fulfilling their responsibilities. Supportive leaders further strengthen this effect by providing guidance, feedback, and a work climate that encourages trust and professional growth.

In contrast, the reward system showed little to no significant impact on performance in this context. This suggests that, in educational environments, intrinsic motivators such as recognition, autonomy, and development opportunities may carry more influence than material incentives alone. Therefore, institutions aiming to improve lecturer performance should not rely primarily on reward-based strategies, but should prioritize leadership practices and policies that strengthen knowledge-sharing culture and meaningful academic support.

Overall, this study contributes to a clearer understanding of how organizational factors shape lecturer performance in the Kurdistan higher education context. However, the limited sample scope and cross-sectional design suggest the need for future research across broader educational settings, with additional variables such as job satisfaction, organizational culture, and intrinsic motivation to provide a more comprehensive explanation of academic performance outcomes.

Recommendations

Based on the research findings that conducted among the Kurdish universities, administration of the Universities in the region should prioritize supportive leadership and a robust knowledge-sharing culture to enhance lecturer performance. Department heads and academic managers may benefit from targeted professional development that emphasizes practical leadership competencies such as active listening, constructive feedback, and inclusive decision-making, complemented by regular one-to-one follow-ups to identify barriers and provide ongoing support. In parallel, institutions should institutionalize knowledge-sharing mechanisms through structured academic forums, peer-learning circles, and discipline-based seminars that encourage the exchange of teaching strategies and research practices. Although the reward system demonstrated limited direct effects, recognition and development-oriented incentives remain important when designed transparently and aligned with academic values, including teaching excellence awards, project support, and funded opportunities for training and conference participation, supported by continuous feedback and evaluation processes to sustain trust and engagement.

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