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Quantitative Research Article

Identity Leadership and Knowledge Sharing in University Administration: The Mediating Role of Team Identification and Ingroup Bias

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Abstract	Author Affiliation
Background/problem: In contemporary Chinese university management, fostering knowledge sharing is critical for achieving collaboration against reduced human resources. While leadership as an antecedent to facilitate knowledge sharing has been extensively studied, identity leadership has not yet been addressed. Objective/purpose: The study aimed to examine the mediating role of team identification between identity leadership and knowledge sharing behaviors. It also proposed to investigate the effect of team identification on ingroup bias and the potential influence on knowledge sharing. Design and Methodology: This quantitative study collected the data from 385 administrative staff members of Chinese universities using quota sampling. Data was analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). Results: The findings revealed a positive effect of identity leadership on team identification ($\beta = .65, p < .001$), of team identification on knowledge sharing behaviors ($\beta = .38, p < .001$), and on ingroup bias ($\beta = .39, p < .001$). Team identification mediated the effect of identity leadership and knowledge sharing behaviors ($\beta = .23, p < .001$), while the ingroup bias failed to show positive mediation between team identification and knowledge sharing behaviors ($\beta = -.02, p = .34$). Conclusion and Implications: The study highlights the role of identification on knowledge sharing and ingroup bias. The findings indicate that while advancement of team identification by engaging identity leadership benefits ingroup knowledge sharing, ingroup bias that has been introduced with overly strong identification should be balanced. It reflects the attitudinal degrading towards the outgroup but failed to promote knowledge sharing among the ingroup.	¹ International Exchange and Cooperation Division, Dali University, China. ² International College, National Institution of Development Administration, Thailand. *Corresponding author e-mail: binghang_lyu@163.com https://orcid.org/0009-0009-2573-4143 Article Information Received: 23.04.24 Revised: 27.06.24 Accepted: 27.06.24 Keywords Social identity theory, identity leadership, ingroup bias, Chinese university administration, knowledge sharing behaviors.

In the modern workplace, high job demands, such as high workloads and work stress, have been identified as a significant contributing factor to employee burnout, which in turn affects their performance (Bakker & De Vries, 2021). In the contemporary organizational setting of Chinese universities, burnout is a prevalent issue among administrative staff members due to the reduction of human resources and heavy workloads (Gao et al., 2022). It underscores the importance of fostering a culture of mutual team support and cooperation to alleviate work-related stress among employees (Ariza-Montes et al., 2018). Sharing knowledge is a critical aspect of team interaction that fosters a collaborative environment where members can provide mutual support and engage in cooperative teamwork (Bavik et al., 2018). Nevertheless, knowledge sharing is frequently challenging within organizations (Yin et al., 2020). As knowledge is regarded as a valuable resource and competitive advantage for an organization, it is also significant for employees who possess it in the organizations (Yang & Wu, 2008). A substantial body of research has therefore concentrated on the antecedent factors that facilitate knowledge sharing behaviors in

organizational contexts (Wang & Noe, 2010). This growing body of research has highlighted the impact of leadership on fostering knowledge sharing behaviors, including, but not limited to, empowering (Lee et al., 2014), transformational (Yin et al., 2020), and ethical leadership (Bavik et al., 2018).

However, to date, the impact of leadership on knowledge sharing has not been studied adequately through the social identity approaches to leadership (Krug et al., 2020), which drew from social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 2004) and self-categorization theory (Turner & Reynolds, 2012). The social identity approach to leadership offers a comprehensive framework for elucidating the mechanisms through which leadership exerts a positive influence on employees (Haslam et al., 2019). There is currently a paucity of empirical evidence linking identity leadership to the manifestation of positive employee behaviors (Krug et al., 2020), including knowledge sharing behaviors. This paper thus focuses on empirically examining the impact of identity leadership on knowledge sharing behaviors. Since team identification is sensitive to whether the leader is successful in shaping team identification among team members (Krug et al., 2020; van Dick et al., 2021), the mediation of team identification between identity leadership and knowledge sharing behaviors is also considered. The salience of a particular social identity is contingent upon self-categorization and social comparisons (Hogg, 2016). The awareness of the distinctiveness of one's team in relation to other teams is the foundation for the salience of the identity (Brown, 2000). Attitudinal differences towards the outgroup are created because of strong identification among the ingroup, which subsequently leads to a tendency to evaluate one's team (ingroup) or its members more favorably than the other team (outgroup) or its members (Hewstone et al., 2002). Previous research has demonstrated that ingroup bias can facilitate knowledge sharing intention within a team (Zhu, 2016), although further evidence is still needed to be considered in depth, given the potential gap between knowledge sharing intention and behaviors (Kuo & Young, 2008).

In the light of the aforementioned research gaps, this study aims to explore the effects of identity leadership on knowledge sharing behaviors directly and indirectly with the mediation of team identification. It also proposes to investigate the effect of team identification on ingroup bias and further explore the potential mediation of ingroup bias between team identification and ingroup knowledge sharing behaviors.

Literature Review

This section reviews extant literature, providing the research context of Chinese universities administration and examining the interactive effects among identity leadership, team identification, ingroup bias and knowledge sharing behaviors to develop the research hypotheses.

Administration of Chinese Universities

In the last two decades, the strategy of Chinese universities human resources has tended to shorten the proportion of administrative staff and focus more on academic staff. Data from the Chinese Ministry of Education (2023) shows that the proportion of administrators in Chinese universities declined from 35.87% in 1998 to 24.69% in 2022, despite a notable increase in student enrolment (2.61 million to 23.31 million). This huge change impacted the administrative department, as it showed a high prevalence of burnout among staff members because of a shortage of human resources and heavier workloads (Gao et al., 2022).

Knowledge Sharing Behaviors in Organizations

The administrative departments of Chinese universities currently need to enhance their collaboration with regard to efficiency in terms of human resource shortages and heavy workloads. This necessitates the facilitation of knowledge sharing and interactive behavior among its team members (Lin & Huang, 2020), because knowledge sharing has been widely proven to be beneficial with team collaboration in different ways, such as enhanced team effectiveness (Lin & Huang, 2020), closer collegiality (Kim et al., 2023), better interpersonal cooperation and collective effectiveness (Bavik et al., 2018).

Knowledge sharing within an organization refers to the sharing of skills, task-related information and know-how knowledge, which enables individuals to collaborate with others to address problems, develop

new ideas (Wang & Noe, 2010). Examining the role of leadership on facilitating knowledge sharing is not new, there is still a paucity of studies that has specifically focused on the role of identity leadership.

Social Identity Theory and Identity Leadership

Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 2004) was developed to explain the perception of individuals that they belong to a certain social group together with emotional and value significance to them of that membership. Regardless of size or composition, a social group provides members with a shared identity that influences how they approach cognitively, attitudinally and behaviorally the group prototype (Hogg, 2016). Identity leadership was theorized on prototype-based concepts with social identity theory. It asserts that leaders acquire influence over group members by representing and advancing a shared identity (Hogg 2001). Specifically, engaging in identity leadership promotes a shared identity among group members (Steffens et al., 2014).

Self-categorization Theory and Ingroup Bias

A sense of identity has been conceptualized as the ‘self’ that can be categorized and classified in relation to other social categories, which is defined as self-categorization (Turner & Reynolds, 2012). The process enables individuals who are similar to the ‘self’ to be categorized with other ‘selves’ and labeled as part of the ingroup. Conversely, individuals who vary from the self are categorized as part of the outgroup (Hogg, 2016). When individuals are strongly identified with a particular social group, they tend to value the ingroup and its members more favorably than outgroups and its members, which is defined as ingroup bias (Hewstone et al., 2002).

Hypotheses Development

Leaders are fundamental members of a team and represent the most prototypical members, thus gaining influence over team members who are influenced by a team prototype (Hogg, 2001). Identity Leadership in turn coordinates perceptions and actions of team members (Reicher et al., 2018). Team identification, which reflects individuals’ emotional attachment to being a part of their team (Breugh et al., 2022), can therefore be seen as a means of evaluating the efficacy of leaders in fostering a shared social identity (Krug et al., 2020). In other words, effective identity leadership is associated with the development of strong team identification among team members, which is proposed as Hypothesis 1.

H1: Identity leadership positively affects team identification.

When team identification is salient, team members conform to the prototype of the team and are consequently influenced by the depersonalization (Hogg, 2001). Specifically, the depersonalization may result in individuals exhibiting behaviors and motives that are at odds with their personal interests (Zhu, 2016). For example, it prompts a team member to relinquish the possession of certain knowledge to share with and benefit their social group (Zhu, 2016). The motivation for knowledge sharing in social identity perspective is no longer seen as an exchange for the reciprocity (Bavik et al., 2018), but in the interests of the team (Zhu, 2016). To be more specific, people share knowledge with others because they are from the same team that they have mutually identified with. Hypothesis 2 is thus developed.

H2: Team identification positively influences knowledge sharing behaviors

One potential mechanism by which identity leadership affects positive team behaviors is the shaping of shared identification among team members (Krug et al., 2020), as evidenced by previous studies. For instance, positive team-related outcomes are promoted indirectly by identity leadership through identification, including team confidence enhancement (Stevens et al., 2020), better job satisfaction (Krug et al., 2021), job performance (Stevens et al., 2020), and collective behaviors (Khumalo et al., 2022). Since positive links between identity leadership and identification (Krug et al., 2020; Krug et al., 2021; Stevens et al., 2020; Khumalo et al., 2022), team identification and knowledge sharing (Carmeli et al., 2011; Zhu, 2016) were evidenced by previous studies, this study hypothesizes that identity leadership positively affects knowledge sharing behaviors among team members, both directly and indirectly.

H3: Identity leadership positively influences knowledge sharing behaviors.

H4: Team Identification mediates the effect of identity leadership on knowledge sharing behaviors.

Ingroup bias is defined as the tendency of an individual to evaluate the ingroup more favorably than the outgroups (Hewstone et al., 2002). This can be illustrated in the form of ingroup favoritism and outgroup derogation (Kershaw et al., 2021). The salience of a certain social identity is contingent upon self-categorization and comparisons (Hogg, 2016). In particular, the perception of oneself and others as belonging to different groups enables individuals to affirm their self-concept, thereby promoting a sense of belonging (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). Conversely, the division of others into different groups enables individuals to make attributions about the outgroup (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). Stronger team identification therefore emphasizes the comparisons and results in ingroup bias (Dunne, 2018; Kershaw et al., 2021).

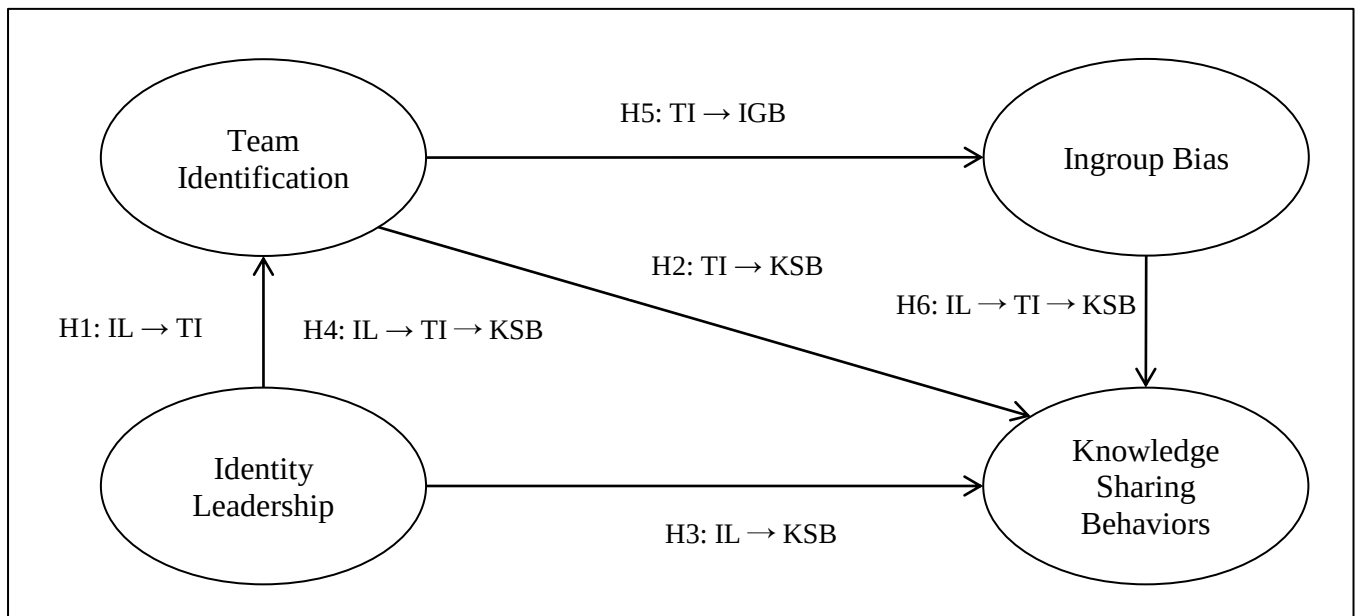
The experimental research conducted by Brewer (1979) initially theorized the tendency that favors one's own group more as ingroup favoritism. It contributes to the attitudinal disparity of individuals towards ingroup and outgroup, and then further causes behavioral preference (Kershaw et al., 2021). For instance, the more salient the team identification, the more cooperation and coordination with ingroup members that individuals show than with outgroups (Xu et al., 2020). Specially, ingroup bias positively influences the intention to share knowledge with their team (Zhu, 2016). The current study thus proposes to explore the mediating effect of ingroup bias on the relationship between team identification and knowledge sharing behaviors.

H5: Team Identification positively influences ingroup bias.

H6: Ingroup bias positively mediates the effect of team identification on knowledge sharing behaviors.

Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework of the study in accordance with the given hypotheses.

Figure 1
Proposed Conceptual Framework



Note. IL= identity leadership, TI = Team Identification, IGB = Ingroup Bias, KSB = Knowledge sharing behaviors.

Method

Research Design

Considering the lack of empirical studies examining the relationship between identity leadership and positive team behaviors (e.g., knowledge sharing) (Krug et al., 2020), a quantitative method employing structural equation modelling analysis for cross-sectional data is proposed to address this gap in the

literature. The conceptual model of this study, which incorporates latent variables, is exploratory in nature, partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was selected as the data analysis tool accordingly (Hair et al., 2021).

Participants and Samples

The participants were targeted as administrative staff members working in Chinese public universities in accordance with the research context. According to the national statistics for 2022, the total number of this group in Chinese public universities was about 488,000 over 31 provinces (Chinese Ministry of Education, 2023). The minimum sample size required for PLS-SEM analysis should meet the larger of the two: the largest number of construct indicators or the dependent variables of the largest number of independent variables impacting it (Hair et al., 2021). In the present study, team identification has the largest number of indicators with 7 items, and 3 linkages impacting the dependent variable of knowledge sharing behaviors, which means the minimum sample size should be greater than 70. However, to improve the representativeness of the sample, a sample size of 450 was necessary.

Sampling and Procedures

Since the number of administrative staff members working in each province was also available from the Chinese Ministry of Education, the study adopted quota sampling to collect the data. The quota was calculated on the proportion of administrative staff members working in 31 provinces across mainland China. A survey services provider, Wenjuanxing (<http://www.wjx.cn>) was commissioned to collect the data, because it has been developed as the largest provider in China with millions of respondents active every day (Shan et al., 2022). After filtering the data, 385 valid samples were collected out of 450 on April 9, 2024, including participants from all 31 provinces based on the quota.

Instruments

Self-reported questionnaires with a 7-point Likert scale (from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree) were applied as the instrument to measure each construct. All measurement items were adapted from prior research or techniques. Identity Leadership was from Steffens et al. (2014) with 4 items (e.g., ‘My main leader acts as a champion for my department’). Team identification was adapted from Ellemers et al. (1997) and Mael and Ashforth (1995) with 7 items (e.g., ‘I see myself as a member of my department’). Knowledge sharing behaviors contains 6 items (e.g., ‘I share my skills with colleagues of my department when they ask for it’) that were drawn from Lin (2007) and Yi (2009). Following previous studies (Dunne, 2018; Kershaw et al., 2021), ingroup bias was measured indirectly. Specifically, four traits with the same color (hardworking, competent, efficient, and pleasant) were selected, and participants were asked to evaluate their team (ingroup) and other teams (outgroup) respectively (e.g., ‘I feel that my department/other departments is/are hardworking’). Ingroup bias was measured by the differences between the ingroup and outgroup scores. A non-theoretically related marker variable, perceived product uncertainty with 3 items was included to test common methods bias. To ensure the reliability of the measurement, translation-back translation procedures (Brislin, 1980) were applied to guarantee the accuracy of the item translations in the Chinese context.

Results

The structural model was analyzed using PLS-SEM (version SmartPLS 4.0.9.5). Following the proposed quota, 385 valid data were collected after the screening. The final data set confirmed that the universities where the participants work were distributed across 31 provinces in mainland China. Among 385 respondents, 163 were male (42.34%), and 222 were female (57.66%). In terms of employment type, 87 were temporary staff (22.60%), and 298 were formally appointed staff (77.40%). 264 out of 385 (68.57%) were younger than the average age of 36.5, while 121 (31.43%) were older. Table 1 illustrates the descriptive characteristics of the sample. The two-step process including measurement model assessment and structural modelling estimation, mediation effect analysis, and multigroup analysis were proposed (Hair et al., 2021).

Table 1
Sample Demographic

Characteristics	Descriptive statistics		
	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age in years	< 36.5	264	68.57%
	>36.5	121	31.43%
Gender	Male	163	43.34%
	Female	222	57.66%
Type of Employment	Temporary	87	22.60%
	Formal	298	77.40%

Table 2
Construct Reliability, Validity and Factor Loadings

Construct	Factor Loading	CA	CR	AVE
Identity Leadership	.88 - .90	.91	.94	.79
Team Identification	.81 - .86	.93	.94	.90
Ingroup Bias	.87 - .90	.91	.94	.78
Team Identification	.78 - .86	.91	.93	.69

Note. IL = identity leadership, TI = Team Identification, IGB = Ingroup Bias, KSB = Knowledge sharing behaviors.

Table 3
Discriminant Validity

	IL	TI	IGB	KSB
IL	.89			
TI	.67 (.73)	.84		
IGB	.28 (.30)	.40 (.43)	.89	
KSB	.37 (.41)	.44 (.48)	.13(.14)	.83

Note. Square root of AVE is shown diagonally; HTMT is shown in the brackets.

Assessment of the Measurement

The adequacy of the measurement model was verified using several criteria of reliability and validity, namely, indicators factor loading, Cronbach's alpha (CA), composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE), discriminant validity and cross-loading, as shown in Tables 2 and 3. Factor loading was checked by using PLS-SEM algorithms, in which the loading of indicators ranged from .78 to .90 at the .05 significance level (Hair et al., 2021). The CA and CR both meet the minimum threshold of .7 (Hair et al., 2021). Furthermore, AVE was measured to assess the convergent validity, and the values of all constructs met the requirement of a minimum of .5 (Hair et al., 2021).

Cross-loading, the Fornell-Larcker criterion, and the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio were used to assess discriminant validity. No cross-loading issues were found in the research as the loading of an indicator to its corresponding construct was higher than its loading to any other construct (Hair et al., 2021). The Fornell-Larcker criterion requires that the square root of the construct AVE be greater than the correlation coefficients between it and the other constructs (Hair et al., 2021). The findings shown in Table 3 supported this. The study also employed the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio, by which the ratio of all constructs was below a threshold of .85 (Hair et al., 2021).

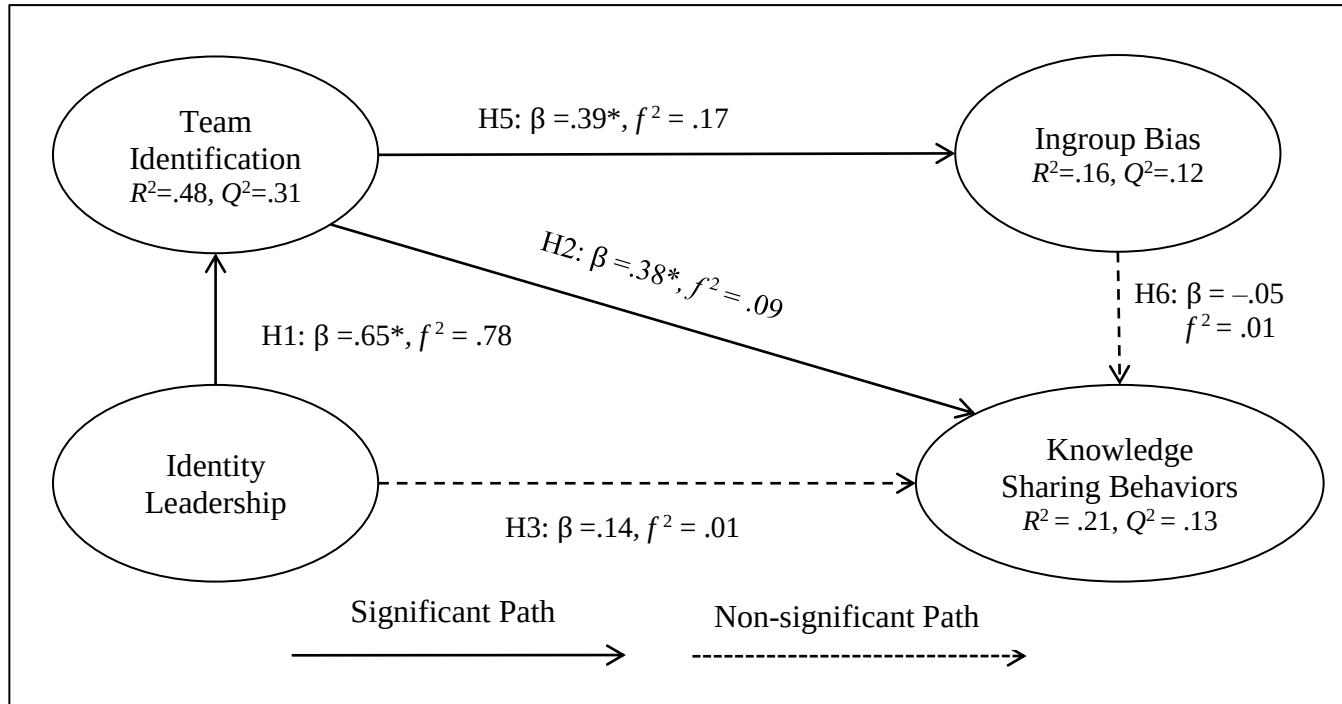
Multicollinearity and Common Method Bias Assessment (CMB)

Variance inflation factor (VIF) was used to assess whether multicollinearity matters in the present study. The findings show that VIF of all paths (ranging from 0.03 to 2.11) were lower than the threshold of 5, indicating that the current model had no concern regarding the multicollinearity problem. Common Method Bias (CMB) was checked by two techniques, Harman's single-factor and a marker technique called

partialling out a marker variable, by following the previous studies (Sun, 2022). The findings of Harman's single-factor test show that only 36.60% of the variance was extracted by the single-factor, lower than a maximum threshold of 50%. Partialling out a marker variable requires that the correlation among any latent variables and marker should be less than .3 to prove that CMB was not the concern (Lindell & Whitney, 2001). Findings show that the highest correlation between any variables and marker was .15. Both tests indicate CMB was not a concern in the present study.

Figure 2

The Structural Equation Model Analysis



Note. * $p < .001$.

Structural Model Analysis

All hypotheses raised in the present study were tested and analyzed through PLS-SEM (Figure 2). The value of SRMR of the proposed structural model was .07, which is below the maximum threshold of .08, indicating the acceptable fit of the model (Hair et al., 2021). The results (Figure 2) indicate that the model has a nearly moderate capacity to explain TI ($R^2 = .48$) and, a weak capacity to explain IGB ($R^2 = .16$) and KSB ($R^2 = .21$). In addition to testing the endogenous constructs' predictive accuracy. Stone-Geisser's Q^2 value was measured with omission distance $D = 10$ in terms of the predictive relevancy of the structural model (Hair et al., 2021). The results show three endogenous constructs were considerably above 0. Specifically, the structural model has the highest Q^2 value of .31 with TI, which indicates a nearly large predictive relevancy. It was followed by KSB ($Q^2 = .13$) and IGB ($Q^2 = .12$) with nearly medium predictive relevancy. PLS-SEM bootstrapping (5000 times) was adopted for hypothesis testing (Hair et al., 2021). The results indicate that IL positively impact on TI ($\beta = .65, f^2 = .78, p < .001$). TI positively influences KSB ($\beta = .38, f^2 = .09, p < .001$) and positively affects IGB ($\beta = .39, f^2 = .17, p < .001$). The paths between IL to KSB ($\beta = .14, f^2 = .01, p = .08$) and IGB to KSB ($\beta = -.05, f^2 = .01, p = .34$) were not significant.

Mediating Effects

Mediating effects were analyzed based on the principles outlined by Hair et al. (2021). This involves examining the path effects between mediators, independent variables, and dependent variables. The mediation is considered a partial mediator if all path effects between constructs are all significant, or a full mediator. if the path between independent and dependent variables is not significant while other paths are significant. Results (Table 4) illustrate that TI fully and positively mediates the effect between IL and KSB

(indirect effect = .23, $p < .001$), so IGB has no mediation on the relationship between TI and IGB (indirect effect = -.02, $p = .03$).

Table 4
Mediation Effects

Path	Effects	Estimate	Bootstrap 5000 times			Percentile 95%		Conclusion
			SD	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Low	Upper	
IL → TI → KSB	Direct	.14	.08	1.75	.08	-.01	.30	Full Mediation
	Indirect	.23	.05	4.57	.00	.14	.34	
	Total	.38	.06	6.46	.00	.26	.49	
TI → IGB → KSB	Direct	.37	.08	4.74	.00	.21	.52	Direct Only
	Indirect	-.02	.02	.95	.34	-.07	.03	Non-Mediation
	Total	.35	.08	4.68	.38	.20	.49	

Multigroup Analysis

By following the previous knowledge sharing studies (Yin et al., 2020), the present study conducted a multigroup analysis to examine whether age, gender, and employment type, would impact the structural model. Findings of bootstrap multigroup analysis (5000 times) show that gender and age have no effect on the model as the path coefficient differences between male and female, younger group (age < 36.5) and older group were not significant. Employment type significantly differentiated in the multigroup analysis on the effect of IL on TI (Differences = .31, $p = .03$), indicating temporary employees had less perception that their TI would be shaped by identity leadership (Table 5).

Table 5
The Results of Multigroup Analysis

Demographics	H1	H2	H3	H5
	IL→TI	TI→KSB	IL→TI→KSB	TI→IGB
Difference (Gender)	-.02	.09	.06	.05
Difference (Age)	-.05	-.12	-.10	-.16
Difference (Type of employment)	.31*	-.02	.11	.01

Note. * $p = .03$

Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion of Main Results

This study aimed to examine the role of team identification as a mediator in the relationship between identity leadership and knowledge sharing behaviors, while investigated the role of ingroup bias in the relationship between team identification and knowledge sharing behaviors. The results of the structural modeling were considerable as anticipated, supporting most of the proposed hypotheses. The findings demonstrated the mechanism of identity leadership on knowledge sharing behaviors and confirmed the existence of ingroup bias that introduced by team identification in the context of Chinese universities administration. However, no significant effect of ingroup bias on positive ingroup knowledge sharing behaviors was identified.

The results of the structural model support research Hypothesis 1, indicating that identity leadership has a significant influence on team identification. This finding is consistent with previous studies (Khumalo et al., 2022; Krug et al., 2020; Stevens et al., 2020). Therefore, the current research confirms the notion that team identification is sensitive to whether the team leader is considered a prototypical member (van Dick et al., 2021). Team identification is enhanced when members perceive that the leader is representing, advancing, and embedding the sense of ‘us’ within the team (Krug et al., 2020).

Research Hypothesis 2 is supported by the structural model which verified that team identification positively influenced knowledge sharing behaviors among members within the team. This finding is consistent with explanation of positive team behaviors from social identity theory (Hogg, 2016). Specifically, salient identification with a particular group/team leads members to a process of depersonalization in ways that are beneficial to the identified team (if sharing own knowledge is viewed as harming the individual) (Zhu, 2016). Furthermore, these results are in line with previous findings (Carmeli et al., 2011; Zhu, 2016) that showed identification with a certain group/team was positively associated with the knowledge sharing among employees.

The current study examined the role of identity leadership in facilitating knowledge sharing behaviors both directly and indirectly through team identification. The structural model analysis supported Hypothesis 4, but rejected Hypothesis 3, indicating that leadership identity indirectly contributes to positive knowledge sharing behaviors among team members through full mediation of team identification. This finding confirms the previous assertion that one of the underlying mechanisms of how identity leadership impacts on positive behaviors of members is to encourage one's identification with his or her team (Khumalo et al., 2022; Krug et al., 2020; Stevens et al., 2020). Although the impact of leadership style on knowledge sharing behaviors has been well documented (Wang & Noe, 2010), this paper not only updates the literature by adding identity leadership into leadership-knowledge sharing studies, but also provides empirical evidence to confirm the significant role of team identification between identity leadership and positive ingroup behaviors.

Theory suggests that strong identification with a social group may result in ingroup bias (Hewstone et al., 2002). Such an attitudinal difference may be eventually transformed into internal disparity (Zhu, 2016). The current findings confirm a bidirectional role for team identification. On the one hand, it promotes knowledge sharing among ingroup members as discussed earlier. On the other hand, Hypothesis 5 is supported, indicating that team identification positively influences ingroup bias, which is consistent with Zhu (2016). However, this study did not find a significant role of ingroup bias on knowledge sharing behaviors in the given samples and it rejected Hypothesis 6 accordingly. The findings indicated the unstable effect of ingroup bias on positive ingroup behaviors, echoing a previous study that attitude towards the ingroup will be even more negative than towards the outgroup if ingroup members failed to meet group expectations (Dunne, 2018). The discrepancy with Zhu (2016) may be also attributed to the potential gap between intentions and behaviors (Kuo & Young, 2008).

Limitations and Future Research Recommendations

There are several limitations in the current study., which can be further considered in the future. First, since identification and ingroup bias are sensitive over time (Hewstone et al., 2002; Stevens et al., 2020), the cross-sectional design in the current study was limited. It is suggested that future studies consider a longitudinal design. Second, the current study treated identity leadership as a unidimensional construct, but it is suggested that future research should also consider the specific effects of each sub-dimension on team identification shaping and positive team behaviors. Furthermore, the instrument of ingroup bias followed the previous studies (Dunne, 2018; Kershaw et al., 2021; Zhu, 2016) that measure the attitude differences of contextual traits (e.g., competent, pleasant, etc.) towards the ingroup and outgroup. Despite extensive use of this indirect measurement, future development on the measurement of ingroup bias is recommended.

Finally, considering ingroup favoritism does not significantly affect ingroup knowledge sharing behavior in the current samples, strong team identification seems to be harmful to inter-team management. Further investigation is therefore warranted to ascertain whether outgroup derogation leads to a negative effect on members' knowledge sharing behavior with an outgroup.

Implications for Behavioral Science

The current paper contributes to behavioral science literature and practical applications in several ways. Firstly, the current findings provide empirical evidence in the context of Chinese universities administration to support how identity leadership impacts positive behaviors among employees mediated

by team identification (Krug et al., 2020). Secondly, this paper is the first study that links identity leadership indirectly with knowledge sharing behaviors. It thus echoes the initiative to focus more on leadership characteristics as the antecedent factors influencing knowledge sharing behaviors (Wang et al., 2010). In addition to its theoretical contribution, this study offers new insight into how effective knowledge movement among employees could be achieved. Practically, team supervisors are recommended to see themselves, firstly, as part of a team, then to shape a sense of identity, and finally to promote the salience of that identity. This, in turn, promotes positive employee interactions and finally leads to positive knowledge sharing behaviors among team members.

It is also noteworthy that this paper has identified a discrepancy in perceptions of identification between informal and formal employees in Chinese public universities. This discrepancy may be attributed to a significant disparity in income levels and career development between the two, despite their similar convergence of job and demographic characteristics (Xu & Wu, 2022). It is therefore imperative for leaders to focus on the protection of the rights and interests of informal employees to enhance their development of team identification, which will maintain the workforce with a better interactive culture.

Furthermore, the study supports the notion that over-strong team identification acts like a double-edged sword (Zhu et al., 2016), as it may result in ingroup bias. Organizations should focus on buffering the ingroup bias within a sub-team, especially considering its non-significant effect on positive ingroup behaviors.

Conclusion

Based on social identity and self-categorization theories, the current study presents a model to examine the impact of identity leadership on knowledge sharing behaviors through the mediation of team identification. The study also considers the role of team identification on ingroup bias and its potential influence between team identification and knowledge sharing behaviors. The findings indicate that team identification acts significantly as the mediator between the relationship between identity leadership and knowledge sharing behaviors. Additionally, team identification is positively correlated with ingroup bias, whereas such preference for the ingroup is not found to be significant in leading positive knowledge sharing behaviors. This study enriches understanding of leadership characteristics as the antecedent factors in facilitating knowledge sharing behaviors and further confirms the two-sidedness of team identification in leading ingroup bias.

Declarations

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Ethical Approval Statement: The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki, and approved by the Ethics Committee, National Institute of Development Administration, Thailand (protocol code ECNIDA 2023/0167 and date of approval 9 November 2023).

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