






Fuelling innovation with love: Unravelling the role of companionate love culture and Confucian work values in employees' innovative behaviour



Authors:

Saichao Chang¹ Chen Qian² Baoming Chen¹ Chuanyan Qin³ Gang Chao¹ 

Affiliations:

¹School of Business Administration, South China University of Technology, Guangzhou, China

²School of Economics and Management, Tsinghua University, Beijing, China

³School of Medical Business, Guangdong Pharmaceutical University, Guangzhou, China

Corresponding author:

Chen Qian,
qianchen@sem.tsinghua.edu.cn

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Purpose: Following social information processing (SIP) theory, this study enriches existing research on emotional culture and innovative behaviour by introducing the chain mediating role of perspective-taking and knowledge-sharing intentions and the moderating role of Confucian work values.

Design/methodology/approach: We conducted a quantitative study using four-stage paired survey data. Data were collected from 392 employees and their corresponding supervisors in three Chinese manufacturing companies in November 2022. We chose these participants due to the significance of innovative behaviour in their roles. The surveys were anonymous and self-administered. We used SPSS20.2 and MPLUS 8.3 software to analyse the data and test our hypotheses.

Findings/results: The data analysis results indicated that: (1) the companionate love culture had a positive effect on innovative behaviour, (2) perspective-taking and knowledge-sharing intentions mediated the positive impact of the companionate love culture on innovative behaviour, and (3) Confucian work values moderated the chain mediation path by weakening the positive impact of the companionate love culture on perspective-taking.

Practical implications: To promote innovative behaviour in employees, a company could continuously manage the organisational companionate love culture.

Originality/value: Drawing on the SIP theory, this paper developed a model clarifying how and when love can fuel innovation in the workplace. It's interesting that employees with lower Confucian work values may benefit more from a companionate love culture, as they might need more external motivation to engage in perspective-taking and knowledge sharing.

Keywords: companionate love culture; perspective-taking; knowledge-sharing intentions; Confucian work values; innovative behaviour; social information processing theory.

Introduction

In the present-day fast-paced business environment, innovation has emerged as a key driver of success and competitiveness (Wu et al., 2022; Yuan & Woodman, 2010). In this context, employee innovative behaviour assumes paramount importance, as it pertains to the behaviour of employees who rely on existing knowledge at work to generate new ideas, as well as to facilitate the execution of novel concepts (Scott & Bruce, 1994). An increasing number of organisations consider promoting and cultivating innovative behaviour among employees as a top priority in their management strategies (Li et al., 2022; Liang et al., 2022; Wu et al., 2022).

Research in the field of innovative behaviour has highlighted the role of organisational culture as a crucial situational variable in inspiring employees' innovative behaviour (Büschgens et al., 2013; Hogan & Coote, 2014). Previous studies also have identified organisational learning culture (Hurley & Hult, 1998), error management culture (Van Dyck et al., 2005) and failure-tolerant innovation culture (Tian & Wang, 2014; Vomberg et al., 2020) as being closely linked to innovative behaviour within organisations. However, these elements all emphasise a cultural atmosphere that adopts a rational attitude towards innovation, neglecting the emotional aspect of individuals. Employees are not machines; they are emotional beings. Past research has already revealed the significant impact of human emotions on individual innovation motivation and behaviour.

For instance, tough love (Zhu et al., 2022) and altruistic love (Yang et al., 2020) both influence employee innovative behaviour. Moreover, a salient phenomenon has manifested in practical contexts wherein, within select highly innovative and prosperous enterprises, a novel paradigm leveraging the motivational impetus of 'love' has surfaced to propel employee innovation. Therefore, the discussion on the relationship between emotional organisational culture and innovation is not exhaustive, warranting the heightened attention and further exploration by researchers and managers.

Barsade and O'Neill (2014) proposed the combination of companionate love and culture, defining it as an emotional culture that involves compassion, feelings of affection, caring and tenderness for colleagues within organisations (Barsade & O'Neill, 2014; Ozcelik & Barsade, 2018). This paper posits that the companionate love culture may potentially promote innovative behaviour among employees, and further research is necessary to investigate the underlying mechanisms.

Previous research has investigated the correlation between organisational 'tough love' or 'care' and employees' innovative behaviour, based on the foundations of social exchange theory, work motivation theory or self-determination theory (Bammens, 2016; Zhu et al., 2022). However, this study posits that a companionate love culture, which creates an emotional culture within an organisation, provides rich emotional information (Barsade & O'Neill, 2014). Social information processing (SIP) theory posits that individuals actively encode and store information received from their work environment in ambiguous or uncertain situations, making cognitive judgements that influence their subsequent attitudes and behaviours (Bateman et al., 1987).

Therefore, this study aims to shift the focus from the reciprocal exchange or prosocial motivation to employees' cognitive processes. A companionate love culture fosters other-centredness, encouraging co-workers to care about each other's feelings and status (Barsade & O'Neill, 2014). Such messages or clues frequently appear in the workplace, conveying friendly messages from colleagues and prompting employees to think from others' perspectives, i.e., perspective-taking. When employees empathise with others and try to understand their perspectives, attitudes and emotions, it can reduce conflict among team members (Williams et al., 2007) and foster trust and knowledge-sharing intentions among colleagues (Wang & Noe, 2010).

Knowledge-sharing intentions refer to employees' intentions to exchange skills, experience and knowledge throughout the department or organisation (Lin, 2007), which correlates closely with employees' innovative behaviour (Huang et al., 2014). This paper thus develops a chain mediating pathway to answer the key question: what is the mechanism between the companionate love culture and employees' innovative behaviour?

To understand the theoretical boundaries of the cognitive pathway through which organisational compassion influences employee innovative behaviour, this study incorporates employees' cultural values, focusing specifically on Confucian work values. Social cognitive theory emphasises that the analytical framework for human activities is shaped by the collaborative determination of environmental factors, observable behaviour, and the interplay of individual psychology and cognitive processes (Bandura, 2001).

Prior research has shown that Confucian values, which emphasise the principle 'do unto others as you would have them do unto you', encourage individuals to engage in automatic, other-centred forms of moral thinking and action (Allinson, 1985; Tiwald, 2011). These values, deeply rooted in many Asian cultures, particularly affect how individuals process information and make decisions in social environments, including the workplace. This study investigates whether individuals with Confucian values are more inclined to embrace and actively engage in a compassionate work environment, thereby enhancing their innovative thinking and actions. By examining this relationship, the research provides a nuanced understanding of how cultural values interact with organisational culture to shape innovative behaviours, offering insights that are both culturally contextual and broadly applicable across diverse organisational settings. Therefore, we hypothesise that Confucian work values may also influence individuals' choices in perspective-taking, which should be considered in this study. Specifically, we aim to investigate how Confucian work values moderate the relationship between the companionate love culture and innovative behaviour.

In sum, this paper develops a model of the mediating effect of a companionate love culture on employees' innovative behaviour through perspective-taking and knowledge-sharing intentions in light of SIP theory, and explores the moderating role of Confucian work values in this model. Data were collected from three organisations in China using a multi-temporal, multi-source paired questionnaire and analysed through structural equation modelling. The study contributes theoretically by emphasising the significance of emotional information and cognitive processes in fostering innovative behaviour, while also proposing a new approach for organisations to promote it. The practical implications of the study suggest strategies for organisations to effectively foster and promote employees' innovative behaviour.

Theoretical backgrounds and hypotheses

Theoretical underpinnings

The SIP theory was initially formulated by Gerald Salancik and Jeffrey Pfeffer, who laid its foundational groundwork in 1978 with their seminal article titled 'A Social Information Processing Approach to Job Attitudes and Task Design'. According to SIP theory, individual activities and behaviours do not occur in isolation but are typically influenced by

intricate and ambiguous social contexts (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). As biological organisms, individuals, situated within a social environment, are exposed to diverse information that shapes their attitudes and behaviours. Individuals, in turn, adjust their subsequent attitudes and behaviours based on their interpretation of this information. For employees, the information acquired and interpreted within the work environment significantly influences their attitudes and behaviours within the organisation (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). We employ this theoretical perspective to investigate how the companionate love culture influences employees' innovative behaviour.

The fundamental premise of social cognitive theory is that human activities are determined through the interactive influences of individual behaviour, individual cognition and the environment in which an individual operates. In contrast to behaviourism, which tends to disregard human subjective agency, social cognitive theory underscores the joint determination of human activities by the triadic relationship among environment, behaviour, and individual psychology and cognition (Bandura, 2001). This theory is not in conflict with SIP theory; rather, it simply emphasises different focal points. We leverage this theoretical framework to elucidate the moderating role of Confucian work values on chain mediation.

Companionate love culture and innovative behaviour

The concept of a companionate love culture was first introduced by Barsade and O'Neill in 2014. It is defined as a set of norms of behaviour, tangible elements, and foundational values and assumptions are indicative of the manifestation or restraint of emotions, care, compassion and tenderness. Additionally, they encompass the perceived suitability of these emotions, which is conveyed through sensory and normative mechanisms within a social group (Barsade & O'Neill, 2014; Ozcelik & Barsade, 2018). In simpler terms, a workplace with a strong companionate emotional culture is characterised by colleagues actively sharing their feelings, regularly supporting each other and caring for one another (O'Neill et al., 2023). Innovative behaviour refers to the behaviour of employees who rely on existing knowledge at work to generate new ideas, as well as to facilitate the implementation of new ideas (Kim & Koo, 2017). More specifically, innovative behaviour is a behaviour that involves multiple stages, from identifying a problem and generating a new idea to implementing the new idea, and any combination of these stages can be referred to as innovative behaviour (Scott & Bruce, 1994). Based on SIP theory, we argue that a companionate love culture in the organisation can promote employee innovative behaviour by conveying information about a supportive, inclusive, higher tolerance for failure, and harmonious relationship environment.

Social information processing theory suggests that individual behaviour is influenced by social situations. In the workplace, employees perceive and interpret work context clues or

information to adjust their attitudes and behaviours (Bateman et al., 1987; Bhave et al., 2010). In a strong companionate love culture, employees can often feel emotionally cared for by the organisation. These friendly messages and cues from the organisation, leaders and co-workers can lead employees to perceive a friendly, safe or supportive environment (O'Neill et al., 2023). Such a supportive environment has been demonstrated to be effective in promoting proactive exploration among employees, which next can lead to the generation of more creative ideas and the implementation of innovative behaviours by employees (Omri, 2015). Additionally, an organisation with a strong companionate love culture can be considered an employee-friendly organisation with a higher tolerance for failure, which has been found to foster an inclusive organisational climate that can encourage employees to reduce their concerns about innovation failure, resulting in increased courage to propose and implement innovative behaviours. Lastly, a strong companionate love culture promotes harmonious relationships and a sense of community, allowing employees to perceive their colleagues' willingness to connect with them (Barsade & O'Neill, 2014). This fosters good colleague relationships and provides employees with greater access to information, which can facilitate the diffusion of their thinking and help advance innovative behaviour and innovation (Che et al., 2019). As a result, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: *The companionate love culture is positively related to innovative behaviour.*

Mediating role of perspective-taking

In this study, we propose that a companionate love culture may have a positive influence on employees' innovative behaviour by prompting them to be involved in a cognitive process of perspective-taking. Perspective-taking refers to the cognitive process of adopting others' perspectives to comprehend their values, preferences and requirements (Grant & Berry, 2011; Parker & Axtell, 2001). Based on SIP theory, the social environment can attract the attention of individuals by highlighting certain aspects of social information, which in turn can shape their work attitudes and behaviours in the workplace (Bateman et al., 1987). The environment of the companionate love culture promotes other-centredness (Barsade & O'Neill, 2014) and encourages employees to pay attention to the feelings and emotions of other colleagues. Trying to comprehend the emotions and states of emotion of others requires employees to take an extra step and empathise with their colleagues, putting themselves in their shoes, which at the same time could help employees understand their positions and perspectives. In addition, when employees experience being cared for and respected in the companionate love culture, they are inclined to engage in understanding and considering the perspectives of others. Specifically, a companionate love culture fosters empathy and compassion among employees and creates a sense of emotional connection and closeness among team members. When employees genuinely care for each other, they are more inclined to understand and empathise with each other's emotions, experiences and needs. This emotional

connection facilitates a willingness to step into the shoes of their colleagues and consider their viewpoints. Therefore, the companionate love culture that highlights concern for others may guide the cognitive tendency of employee perspective-taking.

Perspective-taking emphasises imagining or speculating about others' perspectives and attitudes from the perspective of others or their situations (Sassenrath et al., 2022). On the one hand, when employees engage in perspective-taking, they are encouraged to think outside of their own fixed mindset and are free from the limitations of their perspectives (Grant & Berry, 2011). By adopting others' viewpoints, employees can gain a deeper understanding of the challenges and experiences faced by their co-workers, fostering empathy and emotional connection. This understanding can spark new insights and ideas for addressing problems or improving processes. On the other hand, perspective-taking facilitates the exchange of information and generates a comprehensive assessment and integration of different perspectives (Hoever et al., 2012). Different perspectives help employees anticipate potential barriers or objections that others may have towards innovative ideas. By considering different perspectives and addressing potential concerns proactively, employees can refine their proposals and discard ideas that may not be feasible, and develop ideas that are grounded and applicable to projects or products; finally, such innovative ideas based on holistic thinking and multiple perspectives are more likely to be transformed into real innovative behaviour and increase the likelihood of successful implementation.

Hypothesis 2: *Perspective-taking mediates the relationship between a companionate love culture and employee innovative behaviour.*

The mediating role of knowledge-sharing intentions

Knowledge-sharing intention is defined as an intention to exchange skills, experience and knowledge throughout the department or organisation (Lin, 2007). We anticipated that a companionate love culture could promote employees' knowledge-sharing intentions, which in turn could promote innovative behaviour. According to SIP theory, people are inclined to look at the social environment for work-related information in high-uncertainty situations (Bateman et al., 1987). In organisations with a strong companionate love culture, employees determine their willingness to act through the information and cues released by their leaders and co-workers. When employees feel emotionally cared for by their leaders and colleagues (Barsade & O'Neill, 2014; O'Neill et al., 2023; Ozcelik & Barsade, 2018), these external messages of kindness prompt employees to perceive a certain, safe and inclusive work environment, which in turn encourages individuals to be more proactive in communicating with their colleagues. Interactive communication is a prerequisite for knowledge sharing. Frequent interactive communication makes employees more willing to share their insights and thoughts with others (Chiu et al., 2006). Moreover, an inclusive atmosphere makes employees feel comfortable sharing their knowledge without fear of judgement or

negative consequences and more inclined to openly share their different views and ideas (Li et al., 2022).

Lastly, when colleagues genuinely care for each other's success and well-being, they are more inclined to help and support one another. This support extends to knowledge sharing, as individuals are more willing to offer their expertise, provide guidance and contribute to the learning and development of their colleagues. Therefore, we believe that a companionate love culture may promote employees' knowledge-sharing intentions.

In most cases, the generation of ideas relies more on the interaction of information and ideas between people rather than thinking alone (Baldwin & Von Hippel, 2011). A positive correlation exists between the exchange of information, ideas and innovative behaviour of employees (Wang et al., 2015). The flow of knowledge between individuals is a crucial process for the generation of employee innovative behaviour (Monica Hu et al., 2009). Employees with strong intentions to share knowledge actively share information with their colleagues and expand the boundaries of their own knowledge acquisition. This process not only helps other colleagues understand their own views or ideas but may also inspire new ideas of their own.

Moreover, the feasibility of innovative ideas is more fully discussed during the sharing process, which provides opportunities for feedback and learning in innovative behaviour. When employees share their innovative practices and experiences, others can learn from them and provide feedback, further improving and developing innovative behaviour. This cyclical process fosters continuous innovation and learning. Hence, this study posits the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: *Knowledge-sharing intentions act as a mediator in the relationship between a companionate love culture and employee innovative behaviour.*

The chain mediating role of perspective-taking and knowledge-sharing intentions

Perspective-taking is a crucial mechanism of information processing that influences people behaviour by enabling individuals to empathise with others and understand their perspectives and emotions (Sassenrath et al., 2022), which may boost employees' knowledge-sharing intentions. Firstly, perspective-taking involves adopting the perspective of others and understanding their experiences, thoughts and emotions. When individuals engage in perspective-taking, they develop a deeper sense of empathy and understanding towards their colleagues. The awareness of others may drive employees more willing to disseminate their knowledge to assist their colleagues. Secondly, employees' ability to think from the standpoint of their colleagues and superiors is a manifestation of perspective-taking. This helps employees to reduce egocentric bias and process decision information with an integrated mindset (Parker & Axtell, 2001). Consequently, they are more inclined to share knowledge based on a

consideration of overall organisational interests. Thirdly, transpersonal thinking promotes mutual understanding, reduces conflict among team members (Williams et al., 2007), encourages cooperative behaviour (Hoever et al., 2012) and drives proactive knowledge sharing.

Based on the above discussion, a companionate love culture fosters employees' attentiveness to others' emotions and situations, and encourages them to think from others' perspectives. When employees consider multiple viewpoints through perspective-taking, they gain access to diverse ideas and approaches. This broader perspective may inspire stronger knowledge-sharing intentions, which can broaden their knowledge base, expand their innovative thinking, stimulate new ideas and ultimately promote innovative behaviour. Thus, we put forth the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: *Perspective-taking has a positive effect on knowledge-sharing intentions/perspective-taking and knowledge-sharing intentions play serially mediating roles in the positive effect of a companionate love culture on employee innovative behaviour.*

The moderating role of Confucian work values

According to social cognitive theory, values also play a role in shaping human behaviour, in addition to the influence of the environment (Bandura, 2001). Confucian values have been shown to place great emphasis on the importance of considering others' perspectives (Tiwald, 2011). Specifically, Confucian work values, such as benevolence, righteousness, loyalty, forgiveness and harmony, encourage individuals to embrace these values in the workplace (Lin et al., 2013). For example, 'benevolence' and 'righteousness' emphasise the importance of treating everyone fairly and with love, while 'loyalty' and 'forgiveness' promote consideration of others and treating them as one would like to be treated (Benn, 1996; Lin et al., 2013). Confucian work values, therefore, encourage individuals to love others as they love themselves, to put themselves in the shoes of others and to empathise with their situations and conditions.

Moreover, the Confucian value of 'harmony' places great importance on fostering peaceful relationships among people, which could motivate individuals to consider others' perspectives, understand them better and avoid conflicts (Kim et al., 2013; Spreitzer et al., 2005; Yan & Sorenson, 2004). Hence, we hypothesise that employees with higher Confucian work values are likely to engage in perspective-taking, as they value harmony and are more inclined to think from their colleagues' standpoint. However, these employees may have a weaker relationship with a companionate love culture, which could hinder their ability to promote perspective-taking. Conversely, employees with low Confucian work values may be more influenced by a companionate love culture, as they require more extrinsic motivation to think proactively from their colleagues' perspective and share knowledge. This motivation may come from friendly interactions among colleagues, which could enhance their intentions to engage in perspective-taking and knowledge sharing. Based on these assumptions, we propose that Confucian work values act as moderators in the

relationship between a companionate love culture and perspective-taking, such that higher Confucian work values weaken the positive effect of a companionate love culture on perspective-taking.

After analysing the theoretical derivation above, we put forward a hypothesis that suggests a correlation between employees' Confucian work values and the impact of companionate love culture on their perspective-taking and knowledge-sharing intentions. We postulate that employees with low Confucian work values are more likely to be affected positively by companionate love culture, which, in turn, enhances their perspective-taking and knowledge-sharing intentions. Conversely, high Confucian work values among employees considerably diminish the influence of companionate love culture on individuals, leading to reduced perspective-taking and, subsequently, lower knowledge-sharing intentions. Based on these observations, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 5: *Employee's Confucian work values negatively moderate the relationship between a companionate love culture and perspective-taking.*

Hypothesis 6: *Employee's Confucian work values negatively moderate the chain mediation effect of perspective-taking and knowledge-sharing intentions between companionate love culture and the enactment of employee innovative behaviour.*

The hypothesised model is shown in Figure 1.

Methods

Participants and data collection procedures

This study was conducted with the assistance of the project 'corporate family-like atmosphere; Chinese traditional culture embedded firms; quasi-family practices; work-family balance; positive psychological capital'. Data were collected from three Chinese manufacturing companies that provide traditional Chinese cultural training and caring activities for their employees. The study commenced in November 2022 when the human resources managers of these companies were contacted, and employees with high creativity requirements were invited to participate in the voluntary survey. A dedicated WeChat group was established to facilitate the distribution of questionnaires and survey incentives. With the help of the human resources department,

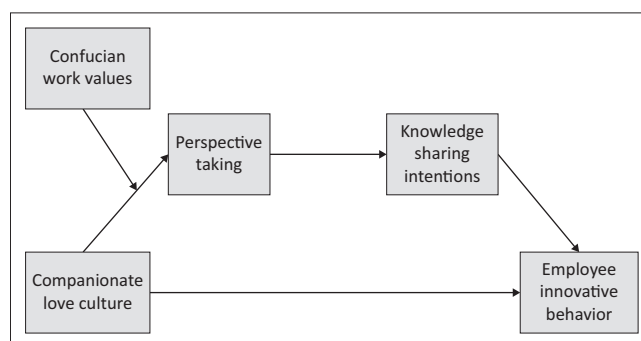


FIGURE 1: Conceptual model.

a total of 460 participants were recruited, and all were informed that the data would be used solely for academic research purposes. The electronic questionnaire was created and distributed using the Sojump platform, which consisted of four stages. The first stage (T1) occurred on 01 November 2022, where employees were asked to report their perceived companionate love culture within their respective teams, personal Confucian values in the workplace, and demographic characteristics such as age and gender. A total of 443 questionnaires were collected. Two weeks later, employees were invited to report on their perspective-taking, and 4 weeks later, they were asked about their knowledge-sharing intentions within their current team. A total of 435 and 419 questionnaires were collected for stages T2 and T3, respectively. The fourth stage (T4) was conducted in mid-December 2022, where direct team leaders were invited to evaluate their employees' innovative behaviour over the previous period. In the end, 403 pairs of data were obtained. Invalid questionnaires were eliminated by measuring the duration of questionnaire completion and conducting attention check items, resulting in 392 paired questionnaires (85% valid response rate). The final sample comprised 67.10% male and 32.90% female participants, with an average age of 38.09 years ($SD = 8.98$). Additionally, 67.8% of the participants held a college degree or higher, and their average work experience in the organisation was 3.61 years ($SD = 1.19$).

Measures

The scales used in this study are all mature scales from English literature, and their translation accuracy has been ensured through a 'translation-back-translation' procedure (Brislin, 1980). In addition to demographic variables, all items in the questionnaire were evaluated using a 5-point Likert scale. Organisational support perception was rated on a scale from '1' to '5', with 'never' to 'very common' indicating the frequency of organisational support within the team, while for the other scales, '1' to '5' represented 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'.

Companionate love culture: A 4-item scale (including affection, caring, compassion and tenderness) developed by Ozcelik and Barsade (2018) was used to measure employees' perceived companionate love in their teams and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.934.

Confucian work values: A 6-item Confucian work values scale developed by Lin et al. (2013) was used in this study,

and the sample question such as 'the six-item Confucian work values scale' developed by Lin et al. (2013) was used in this study. Items include statements 'I never forget my goals even in the face of adversity', 'I avoid offending others', 'I think that harmony should be highly valued in workplace, in other words, conflict should be avoided', 'I am loyal to the organisation', 'I am always kind to my colleagues' and 'I will forgive others who make mistakes'. The scale has a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.868 in this study.

Perspective-taking: Participants completed a 4-item perspective-taking scale adapted from Davis et al. (1996). The survey items solicited respondents to quantify the degree to which they endeavoured to comprehend the viewpoints of their team members: 'I made an effort to see the world through team members' eyes', 'I imagined how team members were feeling', 'I sought to understand team members' viewpoints' and 'I tried to take the team members' perspectives'. The Cronbach's alpha is 0.855.

Knowledge-sharing intentions: A 4-item scale developed by Lin (2007) was used to measure employees' knowledge-sharing intentions with their colleagues, which include 'I intend to share knowledge with my colleagues more frequently in the future', 'I will try to share knowledge with my colleagues', 'I will always make an effort to share knowledge with my colleagues' and 'I intend to share knowledge with colleagues who ask'. The Cronbach's alpha is 0.943.

Employee innovative behaviour: This study used a 6-item measurement developed by Scott and Bruce (1994) in which the employee's supervisor rated his or her innovative behaviour performance, e.g., 'The employee often out new technologies, processes, techniques, and/or product ideas'. The Cronbach's alpha is 0.913.

Control variables: In each analysis conducted, the subsequent control variables were integrated, and Table 1 displays the respective means and standard deviations for all variables. Concerning the previously outlined demographic variables, we implemented control measures for both age and gender, as empirical evidence indicates their relevance to the phenomenon of perspective-taking (Christov-Moore et al., 2014; Wieck et al., 2021). Furthermore, we incorporated control for employees' organisational tenure, acknowledging its potential negative correlation with their intentions to share knowledge with colleagues, as evidenced by prior

TABLE 1: Confirmatory factor analyses results.

Models	χ^2	<i>df</i>	χ^2/df	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR
Five-factor model: CCL; CWV; PT; KSI; EIB	451.093	242	1.864	0.965	0.960	0.047	0.035
Four-factor model: CCL; CWV; PT+KSI; EIB	1046.573	246	4.254	0.866	0.849	0.091	0.078
Three-factor model: CCL; CWV+PT+KSI; EIB	1818.586	249	7.303	0.737	0.708	0.127	0.106
Two-factor model: CCL+CWV+PT+KSI; EIB	2746.725	251	10.943	0.581	0.540	0.159	0.139
Single-factor model: CCL+CWV+PT+KSI+EIB	3210.733	252	12.741	0.504	0.457	0.173	0.131

CCL, companionate love culture; CWV, Confucian work values; PT, perspective-taking; KSI, knowledge-sharing intentions; EIB, employee innovative behaviour; RMSEA, root mean square error of approximation; CFI, comparative fit index; TLI, Tucker-Lewis index; SRMR, standardized root mean square residual; TLI, Tucker-Lewis Index; RMSEA, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; SRMR, Standardized Root Mean Square Residual; *df*, degree of freedom.

N = 392.

research (Sarti, 2018); employee education was also controlled for, as it serves as an indicator of task domain expertise or knowledge, thereby potentially influencing creative performance (Amabile, 1988).

Results

Testing of common method bias

To mitigate the impact of common method bias, this study specifically controlled for both measurement procedures and statistical methods. We used a multi-temporal approach in which data were collected at four separate time points (each approximately 2 weeks apart) and measurement items in the questionnaire were randomly ordered. In addition, the measurement of employees' innovative behaviour was evaluated by their team leaders to obtain paired data. For statistical methods, the method of Harman's (Harman & Harman, 1976) single-factor test was adopted. Results showed that there were five factors whose eigenvalues were larger than 1. The first factor referring to autonomy explains 36.957%, which is significantly lower than 50%. No factors with disproportionately large percentages were identified. Consequently, the presence of common method bias did not appear to pose a significant threat to the interpretation of our results (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Validity of the measurement

To further test the validity of the measurement, we examined the convergent validity of the scale using the average variance extracted (AVE) value. We found that the AVE values of the five variables, namely companionate love culture, Confucian work values, perspective-taking, knowledge-sharing intentions and employee innovative behaviour, were 0.740, 0.600, 0.575, 0.806 and 0.558, respectively. All of these values were higher than the critical value of 0.5, indicating good convergent validity. Next, we conducted confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) using Mplus 8.3 software to test the discriminant validity of the scale. The results, as shown in Table 1, demonstrated that the proposed five-factor model fit the data well ($\chi^2 = 451.093$, $df = 242$, $\chi^2/df = 1.864$, comparative

fit index [CFI] = 0.965, GFI = 0.960, root mean square error of approximation [RMSEA] = 0.047 and SRMR = 0.035) compared to the one-factor model, two-factor model, three-factor model and four-factor model. These results suggest that the discriminant validity of all variables in this study is good.

Descriptive statistics

Table 2 displays the means, standard deviations (SD) and correlations for all variables. As shown in the table, the mean value of employee innovative behaviour is 3.745 with an SD of 0.564, indicating a relatively high level of innovation behaviour in the sample. The examination of correlations reveals that a companionate love culture is positively related to perspective-taking ($\gamma = 0.489$, $p < 0.001$), knowledge-sharing intentions ($\gamma = 0.361$, $p < 0.001$) and employee innovative behaviour ($\gamma = 0.470$, $p < 0.001$). Moreover, perspective-taking ($\gamma = 0.555$, $p < 0.001$) and knowledge-sharing intentions ($\gamma = 0.489$, $p < 0.001$) are positively correlated with employee innovative behaviour. In addition, there is also a significant positive correlation between perspective-taking and knowledge-sharing intentions ($\gamma = 0.392$, $p < 0.001$). Hence, the outcomes of the correlation analysis align with our theoretical expectations, providing a foundation for conducting subsequent hierarchical regression analysis.

Hypothesis testing

Mediated model test

We conducted four serial mediation analyses (Hayes & Scharkow, 2013) by PROCESS in SPSS. We entered the companionate love culture as the independent variable; employee innovative behaviour as the dependent variable; perspective-taking and knowledge-sharing intentions as the serial mediators; and age, gender, education and tenure as covariates. Regression coefficients are provided in Figure 2 and Table 3.

The path coefficient of companionate love culture \rightarrow employee innovative behaviour (c) was 0.354, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.288$, $F(5, 386) = 24.743$, $p < 0.001$. The results show that companionate

TABLE 2: Descriptive statistics and correlations.

No.	Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	Age	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	Gender	0.079	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3	Education	-0.025	-0.199**	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
4	Tenure	0.696**	0.023	0.112*	1	-	-	-	-	-
5	CCL	-0.264**	-0.011	-0.148**	-0.190**	1	-	-	-	-
6	PT	-0.063	-0.002	0	0.100*	0.489**	1	-	-	-
7	KSI	-0.028	0.044	-0.002	-0.019	0.361**	0.392**	1	-	-
8	EIB	-0.09	-0.052	0.045	0.002	0.470**	0.555**	0.489**	1	-
9	CWV	-0.002	-0.002	0.026	0.079	0.233**	0.339**	0.320**	0.343**	1
	Mean	38.390	1.330	4.780	3.610	3.668	3.904	3.996	3.745	4.012
	SD	9.443	0.470	1.377	1.194	0.813	0.520	0.622	0.564	0.611

CCL, companionate love culture; CWV, Confucian work values; PT, perspective-taking; KSI, knowledge-sharing intentions; EIB, employee innovative behaviour; SD, standard deviation. $N = 392$.

Values shown in parentheses are Cronbach's alpha values of the latent variables.

*, $p < 0.05$; **, $p < 0.01$.

love culture can significantly and positively predict employee innovative behaviour, and hypothesis 1 was supported.

The path coefficient of companionate love culture → perspective-taking (a1) was 0.330, $p < 0.001$, indicating that companionate love culture significantly and positively predicted employees' perspective-taking level; the path coefficient of perspective-taking → employees' innovative behaviour (b1) was 0.3767, $p < 0.001$, indicating that employees' perspective-taking significantly and positively predicted employees' innovative behaviour. Moreover, the mediating effect of perspective-taking in companionate love culture on employee innovative behaviour was significant ($\beta = 0.121$, $p < 0.05$) with a 95% CI = [0.071, 0.173] for Bootstrap = 5000. Hypothesis 2 is tested.

The path coefficient of companionate love culture → knowledge-sharing intentions (a2) was 0.184, $p < 0.001$, indicating that companionate love culture significantly and positively predicted employees' knowledge-sharing intentions; the path coefficient of knowledge-sharing intentions → employees' innovative behaviour (b2) was 0.255, $p < 0.001$, indicating that employees' knowledge-sharing intentions significantly and positively predicted employees' innovative behaviour. Moreover, the mediating effect of knowledge-sharing intentions between companionate love culture and employee innovative

behaviour was significant ($\beta = 0.047$, $p < 0.05$) with a 95% CI = [0.020, 0.077] for Bootstrap = 5000. Hypothesis 3 was supported.

The path coefficient of perspective-taking → knowledge-sharing intentions (d1) was 0.348, $p < 0.001$, indicating that perspective-taking significantly and positively predicted employees' knowledge-sharing intentions. Besides, the serially mediating effect of both perspective-taking and knowledge-sharing intentions in the effect of companionate love culture on employee innovative behaviour was significant ($\beta = 0.029$, $p < 0.01$) with a 95% CI = [0.013, 0.048]. Hypothesis 4 was supported.

Moderating effect test

Employing a structural equation model to analyse moderated mediation effects offers the advantage of the utilisation of latent variables and proves advantageous in mitigating measurement errors, thereby enhancing the precision in estimating the values of both mediation and moderation effects, which is a relatively good method. Therefore, to test the moderating effect of Confucian work values, this study used the latent moderate structural equations (LMS) and the moderated chain mediation model algorithm proposed by Klein and Moosbrugger (2000) for testing. The results showed the following:

Firstly, for the baseline SEM model without latent moderating (interactive) effect, the goodness-of-fit statistics were as follows: $\chi^2 = 469.821$, $df = 244$, Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = 0.962, Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) = 0.957, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = 0.049, standardised root mean square residual (SRMR) = 0.051 indicating that the baseline SEM model fit well.

Secondly, the interactive effect between companionate love culture and Confucian work values had a significant effect on the path (a3) of perspective-taking ($\beta = -0.164$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that an individual's Confucian work values negatively moderated the relationship between companionate love culture and perspective-taking. To further explain the moderation effect, a simple slope analysis was conducted

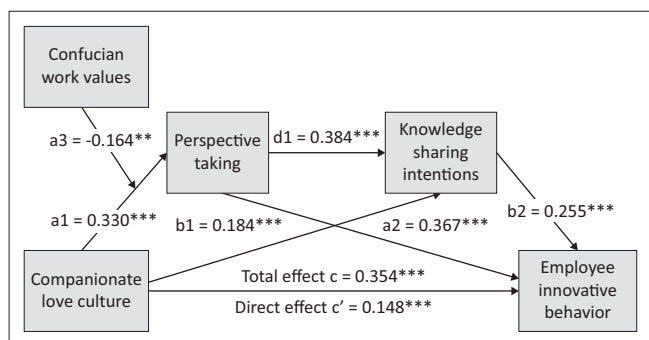


FIGURE 2: The serially mediating roles of perspective-taking and knowledge-sharing intentions in the effect of the companionate love culture on employee innovative behaviour.

Non-standardised coefficients, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

TABLE 3: Perspective-taking and knowledge-sharing intentions played serially mediating roles in the positive effect of companionate love culture on employee innovative behaviour.

Independent variables	Dependent variable					
	PT	95% CI	KSI	95% CI	EIB	95% CI
Age	-0.006	0.274, 0.387	0.007	-0.001, 0.016	-0.001	-0.007, 0.006
Gender	0.018	-0.078, 0.113	0.068	-0.054, 0.189	-0.058	-0.151, 0.035
Education	0.017	-0.016, 0.051	0.025	-0.017, 0.068	0.027	-0.006, 0.060
Tenure	0.119	0.067, 0.171	-0.046	-0.114, 0.022	0.007	-0.045, 0.059
CLL	0.330	0.274, 0.387	0.184	0.101, 0.268	0.148	0.083, 0.213
PT	-	-	0.348	0.221, 0.475	0.367	0.266, 0.469
KSI	-	-	-	-	0.255	0.178, 0.332
Mediated model						
Ind1: CLL > PT > EIB	-	-	-	-	0.121	0.071, 0.173
Ind2: CLL > KSI > EIB	-	-	-	-	0.047	0.020, 0.077
Ind3: CLL > PT > KSI > EIB	-	-	-	-	0.029	0.013, 0.048
The total indirect effect	-	-	-	-	0.198	0.143, 0.249

CLL, companionate love culture; CWV, Confucian work values; PT, perspective-taking; KSI, knowledge-sharing intentions; EIB, employee innovative behaviour.



FIGURE 3: Moderation effect analysis.

according to the procedure recommended by Aiken et al. (1991), and the moderation effect analysis graph was plotted as shown in Figure 3. The results showed that when employees had lower Confucian work values, companionate love culture had a stronger positive effect on perspective-taking ($\beta = 0.336, p < 0.001$), whereas when Confucian work values were higher, the positive effect of companionate love culture on perspective-taking weakened but still reached a significant level ($\beta = 0.160, p < 0.05$). This indicates that when employees have higher Confucian work values, the positive effect of companionate love culture on perspective-taking is weakened. Therefore, hypothesis 5 was confirmed.

Next, this study used the coefficient product method proposed by Hayes (Hayes & Scharkow, 2013) to conduct moderated mediation analysis, which tests the significance of the interaction between the moderator and the mediator on the product of the path coefficients. Furthermore, the difference analysis method proposed by Edwards and Lambert (2007) was used to verify the moderated mediation effect by directly testing the significance of the difference between the two indirect effects, thus simultaneously testing the moderating effect of Confucian work values on the chain mediation effects of perspective-taking and knowledge-sharing intentions between the companionate love culture and employee innovative behaviour. The results of the analysis are as follows: in the chain mediation model from the companionate love culture through perspective-taking and knowledge-sharing intentions to employee innovative behaviour, the product of the path coefficients between the interaction term and the mediator ($a_3 \times d_1 \times b_2$) was -0.016 ($p < 0.01$), indicating that the chain mediation effect was moderated by Confucian work values.

In Table 4, when the Confucian work values are low (one standard deviation below the mean), the mediated effect of a companionate love culture through perspective-taking and knowledge-sharing intentions on employee innovative

TABLE 4: Moderated mediation analysis.

Path: companionate love culture → perspective-taking → knowledge-sharing intentions → innovative behaviour			
Moderator variable	Indirect effect	Lower 95% CI	Upper 95% CI
Low Confucian work values	0.033**	0.016	0.065
High Confucian work values	0.016*	0.006	0.036
Difference	-0.017*	-0.040	-0.006

Low Confucian work values represent the mean minus 1 standard deviation, and high Confucian work values represent the mean plus 1 standard deviation.

*, Significance at the 0.05 level (two-tailed); **, Significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

behaviour is 0.033 ($p < 0.01$), with a 95% bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval of [0.016, 0.065], indicating a significant chain-mediated effect. When the Confucian work values are high (one standard deviation above the mean), the mediated effect is 0.016 ($p < 0.05$), with a 95% bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval of [0.006, 0.036], also indicating a significant chain-mediated effect. The difference between the mediated effects for low and high Confucian work values is significant at -0.017 ($p < 0.05$, CI = [-0.040, -0.006]), indicating that when employees have stronger Confucian work values, the chain-mediated effect of perspective-taking and knowledge-sharing intentions between culture of companionate and employee innovative behaviour is significantly weakened.

Based on the above, as the Confucian work values increase, the positive impact of the companionate love culture on perspective-taking gradually weakens. As a result, the chain mediating effect of perspective-taking and knowledge-sharing intentions between the culture of companionate and employee innovative behaviour also gradually weakens. This indicates that the Confucian work values significantly moderate the chain mediating effect by mitigating the positive influence of the companionate love culture on perspective-taking. Therefore, hypothesis 6 is supported.

Discussion

Theoretical implications

Our findings make a threefold contribution. Firstly, our study contributes to the companionate love culture literature by providing a framework to understand how and when a companionate love culture can improve employees' innovative behaviour. Prior studies have mainly explored the effects of a companionate love culture in reducing negative employee outcomes such as anxiety and loneliness (O'Neill et al., 2023; Ozcelik & Barsade, 2018). Companionate love culture plays a crucial role in fulfilling employees' needs for belonging, recognition and emotional support (Rego et al., 2011), fostering positive employee experiences, enhancing their well-being, and creating a supportive and nurturing work environment. Extensive research has consistently shown that a companionate love culture can reduce levels of anxiety and loneliness among employees (O'Neill et al., 2023; Ozcelik & Barsade, 2018), predict higher levels of job satisfaction (Barsade & O'Neill, 2014) and increase engagement in prosocial behaviours (Yitshaki et al., 2021).

Although research has found that organisational compassion can promote innovation in certain situations (Bammens, 2016), the relationship between a companionate love culture and innovative behaviour is not yet fully understood. It is plausible that in a strong companionate love culture, employees may be less inclined to challenge existing norms and avoid conflict, including constructive conflict; therefore, the inclination to maintain harmony and stability can potentially hinder the exploration of innovative ideas (Song et al., 2006). By applying SIP theory, our study explains the mechanisms and boundary conditions of how organisational companionate love culture promotes innovative behaviour.

Secondly, our study breaks new ground by adopting a SIP theory perspective to examine the connection between emotional culture and innovative behaviour. Unlike previous research that has primarily relied on social exchange theory and self-determination theory to explain the connection between emotional culture and innovative behaviour (Bammens, 2016; Zhu et al., 2022), our study illuminates the influence of cognitive and motivational dual processes, specifically perspective-taking and knowledge-sharing intentions. By delving into the cognitive processes of perspective-taking, our study uncovers the profound impact of employees' ability to empathise and understand others' viewpoints. It becomes evident that this ability extends far beyond enhancing relationship-building and effective communication. Instead, it empowers employees to broaden their perspective beyond their own experiences and viewpoints, enabling them to tackle problems from multiple angles and explore alternative solutions. This, in turn, significantly contributes to fostering innovative behaviour within organisations. We offer a unique pathway that enhances our understanding of how a companionate love culture can fuel employee innovative behaviour.

Thirdly, our study reveals the negative moderating role of Confucian work values in the chain mediation model of a companionate love culture and employee innovative behaviour. Contrary to some previous studies that suggest Confucian values inhibit employees' innovative behaviour (Feng et al., 2021; Kim, 2009), our findings expand the research on the possible positive role of Confucian work values in promoting innovative behaviour in the workplace. Employees with higher Confucian work values are more likely to consider others' perspectives due to the principles of benevolence, righteousness and respect for others inherent in these values. This implies a substitutive effect between employees' Confucian work values and the companionate love culture. Employees with high Confucian work values can promote innovative behaviour by enhancing their perspective-taking and knowledge-sharing intentions. Conversely, employees with lower Confucian work values may benefit more from a companionate love culture, as they might need more external motivation to engage in perspective-taking and knowledge sharing.

Practical implications

The results of this study hold significant implications for managers in promoting employee innovative behaviour. Firstly, it is crucial for organisations to establish a conducive working environment and pay attention to employees' emotions by cultivating a culture centred around emotional companionate love. Employees who feel supported and loved are inclined to think proactively, exchange information and knowledge, and engage in innovative behaviours.

Secondly, in addition to creating an emotional companionate love culture, organisations can adopt complementary measures such as incorporating perspective-taking and knowledge sharing into their organisational culture. This can encourage employees to think from the perspective of others and share information more actively, leading to increased innovative behaviour within the organisation.

Thirdly, organisations can proactively assess employee values in the recruitment and selection process. By selecting employees with Confucian work values, who prioritise caring for their colleagues and thinking from their perspective, organisations can foster a companionate love culture and promote innovative behaviours among employees. This will not only benefit the innovative behaviour of selected employees but also contribute to promoting the innovative behaviours of others within the organisation.

Limitations and future directions

Although this study has shed light on the correlation between the companionate love culture and employees' innovative behaviour, several limitations necessitate attention in future research. Firstly, the Confucian work values scale used in this study only captures the positive aspects of Confucian culture and may not fully represent the broader cultural context in which these values operate. Future studies should explore the negative impact of Confucian values on innovative behaviour, as well as the specific aspects of these values that may promote or hinder innovation. Secondly, the current study only examined a partial mediation model, and there may be other factors that influence the correlation between the companionate love culture and innovative behaviour. Researchers could further investigate these other mechanisms at the team and organisational level, and incorporate additional factors to provide a more comprehensive understanding of this complex process. In conclusion, this study provides important insights into the relationship between emotional culture and innovative behaviour, but further research is needed to fully explore the complex interplay between culture, values and behaviour in organisations.

Conclusion

This paper explores the mechanisms by which the companionate love culture affects innovative behaviour. There

is a chain mediating role of perspective-taking and knowledge-sharing intention in the positive influence of the companionate love culture on innovation behaviour. Confucian work values moderate the chain mediating path of 'the companionate love culture–perspective-taking–knowledge-sharing intentions–innovative behaviour'. Employees with high Confucian work values were significantly less likely to be influenced by a companionate love culture and thus to perspective-taking, thereby reducing the indirect influence of a companionate love culture on innovative behaviour through perspective-taking and knowledge-sharing intentions. Overall, our results shed light on the mechanisms underlying how a companionate love culture can play a positive role in an organisation.

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Competing interests

The authors have declared that no competing interest exists.

Authors' contributions

S.C. and C.Q. devised the project, the main conceptual ideas and proof outline. B.C. and C.Q. performed the data curation. G.C. supervised the project. All authors provided critical feedback and helped shape the research, analysis and manuscript.

Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

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Data availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the authors.

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