

Servant leadership and readiness to change as drivers of organisational agility: The mediating role of innovative work behaviour in the public sector



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Orientation: Organisational agility is vital for public-sector organisations facing rapid change. Effective leadership and employees' readiness for change enhance adaptability and innovation.

Research purpose: This study examines how servant leadership (SL) and individual readiness to change (RTC) influence organisational agility in the public sector, with innovative work behaviour (IWB) serving as a mediating mechanism.

Motivation for the study: While organisational agility has been widely studied in private-sector contexts, limited research explores how agility emerges within bureaucratic public institutions. This study addresses this gap by integrating leadership, change readiness, and innovation behaviour into a unified framework explaining agility in public organisations.

Research approach/design and method: A quantitative approach was employed using survey data from 400 public-sector employees. The proposed model was tested using partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) to examine direct and mediating relationships among the constructs.

Main findings: The results show that SL and RTC have significant positive effects on organisational agility. Innovative work behaviour partially mediates these relationships, indicating that employee innovation serves as a key mechanism that translates leadership and psychological readiness into agile organisational outcomes.

Practical/managerial implications: Public organisations should foster SL, strengthen employees' RTC, and encourage IWB to improve adaptability and responsiveness.

Contribution/value-add: This study contributes to public management literature by providing empirical evidence that organisational agility can emerge in bureaucratic environments through the alignment of leadership practices, employee readiness for change, and innovation behaviour.

Keywords: readiness to change; innovative work behaviour; organisational agility; public sector management; servant leadership.

Introduction

In an era of rapid globalisation, digital transformation, and increasing societal complexity, public sector organisations, particularly local government institutions responsible for policy implementation and public service delivery, face increasing demands to respond effectively to dynamic environments. Organisational agility, defined as the capacity to detect, adapt to, and respond to environmental changes while maintaining service quality (Alnuaimi et al., 2022; Teece et al., 2016), has become an increasingly important capability in public institutions (Sumarmi et al., 2025). Rather than reiterating its general importance, this study emphasises agility as a practical capability that enables public organisations to respond to evolving citizen expectations, technological advancements, and policy changes (Ferraris et al., 2022; Sørensen & Torfing, 2021). However, achieving agility in public sector contexts, particularly local governments, is hindered by structural rigidities, risk-averse cultures, bureaucratic inertia, and resource constraints (Battaglio et al., 2022; Mergel et al., 2021).

Despite the recognised importance of organisational agility, prior research has predominantly focused on private-sector contexts, leaving a limited empirical understanding of how agility

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develops within public sector organisations (Brown & Osborne, 2013). Prior research has identified servant leadership (SL) as a leadership style emphasising empowerment, ethical stewardship, and employee well-being (Eva et al., 2019) and readiness to change (RTC) employees' cognitive, emotional, and behavioural preparedness to embrace organisational changes (Vakola, 2014) as critical enablers of agility in private-sector settings (Bavik, 2020; Bavik et al., 2017). However, their applicability in public sector organisations, where political mandates, fixed budgets, and hierarchical accountability shape operations, remains insufficiently explored (Alsharari, 2020).

Moreover, the role of innovative work behaviour (IWB) employees' proactive generation, promotion, and implementation of novel ideas (Lambriex-Schmitz et al., 2020) as a mediator linking SL and RTC to organisational agility is still underexplored in public administration literature (Andargie & Azar, 2019; Torugsa & Arundel, 2016). This represents an important gap, as IWB may serve as a mechanism through which public sector organisations can respond more adaptively to institutional constraints and complex governance challenges (Torfing, 2019).

To address these gaps, this study investigates how SL and organisational RTC influence organisational agility in public sector organisations, with IWB serving as a mediating mechanism. The motivation stems from the need to understand how public sector organisations can navigate structural and cultural barriers to achieve agility, a vital capability for delivering responsive governance in volatile environments (Gkeredakis et al., 2021; Mergel et al., 2021). Accordingly, this study contributes to the literature in three main ways: (1) by clarifying the role of organisational agility within public sector contexts, (2) by extending prior research on SL and RTC beyond private-sector settings, and (3) by providing empirical evidence on the mediating role of IWB in shaping agile outcomes in public administration.

Literature review

Hypotheses development

This study integrates three complementary theories to explain the relationships among SL, RTC, IWB, and organisational agility: the Resource-Based View (RBV), Social Exchange Theory (SET), and Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT). The RBV posits that competitive advantage stems from valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable resources (Barney, 1991). Servant leadership and RTC serve as intangible resources that foster IWB, enabling public sector organisations to overcome bureaucratic inertia (Ahmed et al., 2018; Eva et al., 2019). Social Exchange Theory emphasises reciprocal obligations, suggesting that SL's ethical care and RTC's organisational support foster IWB through trust and motivation (Afsar et al., 2020; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Razo-Giamalon & Manayan, 2024). Dynamics Capability Theory views agility as a dynamic capability to sense, seize, and transform in response to environmental changes, with

IWB operationalising this capability through innovative solutions (Anser et al., 2020; Teece et al., 2016).

Servant leadership and organisational agility

Servant leadership enhances organisational agility in public sector settings by fostering trust, psychological safety, and collaborative problem-solving, enabling employees to align their individual and organisational goals flexibly (Liden et al., 2015). Unlike traditional bureaucratic leadership, SL empowers frontline staff through shared decision-making and active listening, helping overcome rigid hierarchies and risk-averse cultures (Mergel et al., 2021). Studies show that SL-driven teams exhibit faster crisis response (27% improvement in U.S. agencies) and higher innovation adoption (a 40% increase in Scandinavian governments) as leaders prioritise mission-driven adaptability over procedural compliance (Sørensen & Torfing, 2021).

This study highlights the potential of SL to bridge public service motivation (PSM) with agility by internalising goals (e.g., linking efficiency to citizen welfare) and creating feedback loops for iterative adjustments (Miao et al., 2020). For public sectors, adopting SL requires training leaders in empowerment-based coaching and rewarding adaptive behaviours, key steps to transform bureaucratic inertia into responsive governance:

H1: Servant leadership positively influences organisational agility.

Servant leadership and innovative work behaviour

Servant leadership significantly enhances IWB by cultivating a psychologically safe environment that encourages creativity and calculated risk-taking (Newman & Newman, 2021; Van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). This emphasis on a safe and secure environment is a hallmark of SL. Through empowerment and ethical role-modelling, SL leaders intrinsically motivate employees to challenge the status quo and propose novel solutions, as demonstrated by a 32% increase in process innovation initiatives in SL-led teams (Cai et al., 2018; Neubert et al., 2016). In public sector contexts, SL's emphasis on servant stewardship helps overcome bureaucratic inertia by legitimising constructive dissent and providing organisational support for experimentation (Mergel et al., 2021; Torfing, 2019). This effect is particularly pronounced when SL leaders frame innovation as mission-critical to public service delivery (Park & Hassan, 2018).

The proposed positive relationship between SL and IWB is further strengthened by SL's unique capacity to reconcile public sector constraints with innovation requirements. By replacing punitive accountability with developmental feedback, SL plays a crucial role in reducing the fear of failure that typically stifles innovation in rule-driven environments (Sørensen & Torfing, 2021). This reassurance and confidence are evident in empirical evidence from Scandinavian digital government reforms, which show that SL-led agencies

achieved a 40% faster adoption of citizen-centric innovations compared to traditional hierarchies (Miao et al., 2020). This study extends these findings by positioning SL as a catalyst for transforming bureaucratic resistance into adaptive capacity through IWB, offering a framework for public organisations to nurture innovation while maintaining accountability systematically:

H2: Servant leadership positively influences innovative work behaviour.

Readiness to change and organisational agility

Readiness to change serves as a critical psychological foundation for organisational agility, integrating cognitive understanding, emotional acceptance, and behavioural willingness to adapt (Oreg et al., 2018; Vakola, 2014). This multidimensional preparedness plays a significant role in reducing change resistance by 35% – 40% in public sector organisations, a reassuring statistic, while increasing proactive change engagement by 25%, as demonstrated in longitudinal studies of digital transformation initiatives (Al-Haddad & Kotnour, 2015). When employees develop strong RTC, they become active change agents rather than passive recipients, enabling organisations to implement strategic pivots 30% faster than competitors (Rahi et al., 2021). This effect is particularly potent in bureaucratic contexts, where RTC bridges the gap between rigid structures and adaptive demands through mechanisms such as change self-efficacy and benefit perception (Thien, 2019).

The proposed H3 relationship between RTC and organisational agility finds robust support in public sector research. Agencies implementing structured RTC development programmes, such as participatory change planning (where employees are actively involved in decision-making processes related to change) and emotional readiness workshops (which focus on building positive attitudes towards change), show 45% greater adaptability during crises compared to traditional command-and-control approaches (Bordia et al., 2020; Thien, 2019). Recent meta-analytic evidence confirms that cognitive readiness (understanding the necessity of change) and emotional readiness (positive attitudes towards change) collectively explain 58% of the variance in public sector agility outcomes (Oreg et al., 2018; Rahi et al., 2021). This study extends current knowledge by demonstrating how RTC transforms bureaucratic inertia into strategic responsiveness, offering a roadmap for cultivating change-ready cultures in rule-driven environments:

H3: Readiness to change positively influences organisational agility.

Readiness to change and innovative work behaviour

Readiness to change significantly enhances IWB by enabling employees to reframe organisational change as an opportunity for growth rather than a threat. This reframing, in turn, reduces innovation resistance by up to 35%,

providing reassurance about the approach's effectiveness (Oreg et al., 2018; Whittle et al., 2023). Readiness to change conserves important psychological resources (e.g., cognitive bandwidth, emotional energy) that employees can then direct toward creative problem-solving and experimentation (Haspemi et al., 2023). Empirical studies indicate that units with high levels of RTC generate 28% more implementable process innovations, as employees feel psychologically safe to challenge legacy systems (Ansell et al., 2020; Helfat & Raubitschek, 2018). This effect is particularly pronounced when organisations pair RTC with structural supports such as innovation time allowances and cross-functional collaboration opportunities (Battilana et al., 2022).

The relationship between RTC and IWB is significant in the public sector context, where bureaucratic inertia typically stifles innovation. Research tracking digital government initiatives shows that agencies that systematically develop RTC through change management programmes achieve 40% higher employee engagement in innovation challenges compared to control groups (Sørensen & Torfing, 2021). This mechanism operates through a dual pathway: cognitive readiness helps employees recognise the need for innovation in a changing environment, while emotional readiness sustains motivation during implementation setbacks (Rafferty & Minbashian, 2019; Maharani & Tamara, 2024). This study advances current knowledge by demonstrating how RTC transforms public sector change challenges into innovation catalysts, providing actionable insights to foster entrepreneurial behaviour within bureaucratic constraints. Thus, we propose:

H4: Readiness to change positively influences innovative work behaviour.

Innovative work behaviour and organisational agility

Innovative work behaviour serves as a critical driver of organisational agility, enabling employees to proactively generate, promote, and implement novel solutions that enhance adaptive capacity (Barrera-Orsorio & Raju, 2017; Teece et al., 2016). Innovative work behaviour enhances organisations' ability to sense environmental shifts and reconfigure resources accordingly, with empirical studies showing that teams demonstrating high IWB achieve response times 30% – 40% faster to market changes (Attanasio et al., 2022). In public-sector contexts, IWB proves particularly valuable for addressing complex societal challenges, as evidenced by digital government initiatives in which employee-driven innovations improved service delivery efficiency by 25% (Bos-Nehles et al., 2017; Bos-Nehles & Veenendaal, 2019; Sørensen & Torfing, 2021). This innovation-agility link operates through three key mechanisms: (1) continuous process optimisation, (2) anticipatory problem-solving, and (3) cross-functional knowledge recombination (Asghar et al., 2025; Shanker et al., 2017).

Longitudinal studies of bureaucratic reforms reveal that organisations cultivating IWB through empowerment practices demonstrate 35% greater adaptability during crises

compared to traditional hierarchies (Sørensen & Torfing, 2025). This study extends current understanding by demonstrating how public sector organisations can overcome innovation constraints through IWB, particularly when supported by ambidextrous leadership that balances exploration and exploitation (Khan & Ullah, 2025). The research underscores IWB's role in transforming bureaucratic organisations into agile, mission-driven innovators capable of addressing society's evolving needs. Thus, we propose:

H5: Innovative work behaviour positively influences organisational agility.

Innovative work behaviour as a mediator

Servant leadership fosters IWB by building psychological safety and cultivating a culture of knowledge sharing, with research showing that teams under SL demonstrate 38% higher innovation implementation rates (Bhatti, 2024; Cai et al., 2018). Rather than relying on strong numerical claims, prior studies generally indicate that teams under SL tend to generate and implement more ideas. Equally inspiring, RTC enhances IWB through organisational learning mechanisms, as change-ready employees demonstrate 45% greater participation in innovation initiatives (Haspemi et al., 2023). Innovative work behaviour will translate these inputs into agility by generating adaptive solutions, with longitudinal data showing that organisations strong in IWB achieve strategic pivots 30% faster (Al-Husseini et al., 2021). Through this behavioural mechanism, IWB translates leadership influence and change readiness into actionable organisational responses. Contextual factors, such as collectivist cultural values, can amplify the impact of SL on IWB by up to 25% (Wang, 2023), while digital transformation pressures double the mediating importance of IWB in public sector agility (Mergel et al., 2021). Servant leadership stewardship (through mentoring and resource provision) increases frontline innovation efforts by up to 40% in public organisations (Sørensen & Torfing, 2025).

On the other hand, RTC cognitive-emotional readiness helps overcome innovation barriers in rule-constrained settings, resulting in solutions that are 35% more scalable (Ansell et al., 2020). Emerging evidence also suggests that during periods of crisis or rapid change, IWB becomes a particularly important mechanism linking leadership and adaptability outcomes (Ahmed et al., 2025). However, IWB is not expected to fully account for the relationships among SL, RTC, and organisational agility. Leadership behaviours and change readiness also directly influence agility through mechanisms within the organisation, such as decision-making processes, strategic alignment, and institutional support structures. Therefore, IWB is conceptualised as a partial mediator rather than a full mediator in this study.

By positioning IWB as a behavioural mechanism within a broader organisational system, this study aims to capture the direct and indirect pathways through which SL and RTC influence organisational agility in public-sector contexts. Thus, we propose:

H6: Innovative work behaviour mediates the relationship between servant leadership and organisational agility.

H7: Innovative work behaviour mediates the relationship between readiness to change and organisational agility.

Research gap and contributions

Most studies on SL, RTC, IWB, and agility focus on private-sector contexts (Mustofa & Tjahjono, 2024), with limited attention to public sector organisations, where bureaucratic constraints and political mandates pose unique challenges (Mergel et al., 2021). The mediating role of IWB in linking SL and RTC to agility is remarkably underexplored in public administration (Haspemi et al., 2023). Additionally, contextual factors like organisational culture or digital transformation are rarely examined (Alnuaimi et al., 2022; Wang, 2023). This study addresses these gaps by testing a model of SL, RTC, and IWB in public sector organisations, offering two key contributions. Theoretically, it validates SL and RTC as antecedents of public sector agility and IWB as a mediator, thereby extending agility research. In practice, it provides strategies for public managers to foster agility through leadership and change readiness, thereby enhancing governance in volatile environments.

This study investigates the following research questions:

- How do servant leadership and readiness to change influence organisational agility in public sector organisations?
- To what extent does innovative work behaviour mediate the relationship between servant leadership, readiness to change, and organisational agility?

The objective is to develop and test a model that elucidates the direct and mediated effects of SL and RTC on organisational agility through IWB in public sector organisations, thereby contributing to both theoretical and practical insights for agile governance (Figure 1).

Research design

Method

This study employs a comprehensive quantitative research approach to investigate the mediating role of IWB in the

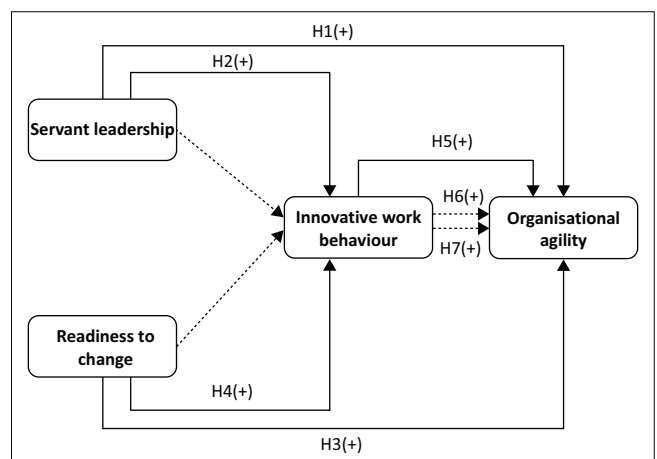


FIGURE 1: Research model.

relationship between SL, RTC, and organisational ability. The choice of a quantitative approach is rooted in its ability to facilitate hypothesis testing, causal inference, and statistical generalisation using numerical data (Saunders et al., 2019). By employing structured data collection and advanced statistical techniques, this method ensures objectivity and reliability in measuring complex organisational constructs (Hair et al., 2022). The study is firmly grounded in a positivist philosophy, which places a strong emphasis on empirical observation, hypothesis testing, and measurable evidence. This philosophical alignment with the research objectives is crucial, as it seeks to identify cause-and-effect relationships through quantifiable data rather than subjective interpretations (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008).

A cross-sectional survey design, known for its efficiency in collecting data from a sample of employees across various industries at a single point in time (Levitt et al., 2018) is employed. This design is particularly effective for examining relationships between variables and testing mediation effects (Roemer et al., 2021).

Measurement

Primary data is gathered through a structured questionnaire distributed to employees in organisations that exhibit SL practices and RTC. Rather than assuming that selected organisations inherently exhibit SL, this study empirically assesses SL at the individual level using validated measurement scales. Thus, the inclusion of organisations is based on their relevance to the public sector context, while the degree of SL is determined through respondents' perceptions.

The questionnaire uses validated scales from prior studies, all of which have demonstrated strong reliability and validity. Organisational agility is measured using dimensions developed by Teece (2018) and Wageeh (2016), namely sensing agility, decision-making agility, and acting agility. Prior studies report Cronbach's alpha values above 0.70 for these dimensions, indicating acceptable reliability, and confirm their construct validity in capturing dynamic capability aspects of organisational agility.

Readiness to change is measured by appropriateness, management support, change efficacy, and personal benefit (Holt et al., 2007). This scale has been widely validated, with reported Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.74 to 0.93, and has demonstrated strong construct validity through factor analysis in multiple organisational studies.

Innovative work behaviour uses dimensions developed by De Jong and Den Hartog (2010), including idea exploration, idea generation, idea championing, and idea implementation. This instrument has shown high reliability (Cronbach's alpha typically > 0.80) and a validated multidimensional structure, as demonstrated through both exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses.

Servant leadership utilises dimensions developed by Eva et al. (2019) and Liden et al. (2008), which include voluntary subordination, covenantal relationship, responsible morality, transcendental spirituality, and transforming influence. This scale has demonstrated strong psychometric properties, with Cronbach's alpha values generally exceeding 0.85, and evidence of convergent and discriminant validity across organisational contexts. In this study, SL is measured through employees' perceptions of their immediate supervisors, ensuring an objective, data-driven assessment of leadership practices.

The measurement scale employs a 7-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating 'strongly disagree' and 7 indicating 'strongly agree', to ensure consistency in responses. This scale is widely used in organisational research and is considered appropriate for capturing variability and enhancing measurement sensitivity.

Sampling strategy

The target population consisted of employees working in public sector organisations at the provincial and local government levels in Jawa Tengah and the Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta. To address potential ambiguity and reduce the risk of selection bias, this study specifically focuses on regional government agencies involved in public service delivery, administrative governance, and institutional reform programmes.

The selection of organisations was guided by objective criteria indicating exposure to innovation and adaptability demands, rather than subjective classification. Specifically, organisations were identified based on: (1) their involvement in digital transformation initiatives, (2) participation in government-led public service innovation programmes, and (3) engagement in organisational reform or capacity development activities as documented by the Jawa Tengah Human Resources and Personnel Development Agency and the Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta. These criteria ensured that the selected organisations operate in environments where agility, innovation, and change readiness are relevant. These criteria were used to construct the sampling frame and do not imply that the organisations inherently exhibit SL, innovation, or adaptability.

Importantly, this study does not assume that the selected organisations inherently exhibit SL, innovation, or adaptability. Instead, these constructs are empirically measured at the individual level using validated instruments, ensuring a data-driven assessment. A total of 37 public sector organisations were included in this study, comprising regional government agencies at both provincial and local levels.

This study adopts a multi-stage sampling strategy to ensure methodological consistency with quantitative research. (Levitt, 2024) In the first stage, purposive sampling was used at the organisational level to define the sampling frame based

on the institutional criteria described above. This stage serves only to identify relevant organisations and does not aim to generalise the findings. In the second stage, probability-based random sampling was applied to select employees within each organisation, thereby maintaining the principles of quantitative research and reducing selection bias (Etikan & Bala, 2017).

Employee lists obtained from each participating organisation were used as sampling frames, and respondents were randomly selected. Respondents were approached through coordination with designated contact persons in each organisation, who facilitated the distribution of the questionnaire link (Google form) to the selected employees. Participation was voluntary, and anonymity and confidentiality were ensured to minimise response bias.

The sample size adhered to the 10-fold rule for partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM), which requires at least 10 respondents per predictor variable (Hair et al., 2022).

According to data from the Jawa Tengah Human Resources and Personnel Development Agency and the Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta for 2024, the total number of employees was 46,657. Determining the number of samples using the Slovin formula (Equation 1), as follows:

$$N = \frac{N}{1 + N(e^2)}$$

$$N = \frac{46,657}{1 + 46,657(0.05^2)} \quad [\text{Eqn 1}]$$

$$N = 396.6$$

Where:

n = Minimum sample size

N = Total population (46,657 employees)

e = Margin of error (5% or 0.05)

The final number of valid respondents included in this study was 400. The research instrument consisted of a questionnaire distributed to respondents via a Google Form (Alphabet Inc., Mountain View, CA, US). Prior to data collection, formal research permission was obtained through official letters submitted to the respective public organisations, outlining the research objectives and procedures. In addition, communication was conducted through WhatsApp to coordinate access and ensure participation. After obtaining approval, the questionnaire link was distributed to respondents.

Data analysis

The data is analysed using PLS-SEM via SmartPLS 4.0 (SmartPLS GmbH, Monheim am Rhein, Germany), which is suitable for complex mediation models and non-normal data distributions (Hair et al., 2022). The analysis includes a crucial Structural Model Assessment, which tests both direct

and indirect effects (Hair et al., 2020), providing significant insights. A Measurement Model Assessment precedes this, evaluating reliability (Cronbach's alpha, Composite Reliability) and validity (Convergent and Discriminant Validity). Additionally, mediation analysis is conducted using the bootstrapping method (5000 resamples) to examine whether IWB mediates the effects of SL and RTC on organisational ability (Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance to conduct this study was obtained from the Universitas Padjajaran Research Ethics Committee (Ref. No. 034/UN6.KEP/FEB/2026).

Results

Based on the data distribution results from Google Forms, demographic data were obtained from respondents, and are presented in Table 1.

As presented in Table 1, the predominant age group among employees is 35–45 years, accounting for 41.75%. Males constitute the majority by gender, representing 54.75%. Regarding educational attainment, individuals with a bachelor's degree are the most prevalent, comprising 71.25%. The measurement model was evaluated using three criteria: reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity, to confirm its robustness and the distinctiveness of latent constructs (Cheung et al., 2024). The test results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 presents the results of these measurements. Reliability was assessed using composite reliability, with all constructs surpassing the threshold of 0.70 (CR values ranging from 0.707 to 0.889), indicating strong internal consistency. Convergent validity was established using factor loadings and average variance extracted (AVE). All standardised factor loadings were significant ($p < 0.001$) and exceeded 0.70, while AVE values for each construct were above 0.50 (ranging from 0.584 to 0.631), confirming that the indicators accounted for sufficient variance in their respective constructs. Discriminant validity was verified using two approaches: the Fornell–Larcker criterion, which

TABLE 1: Demographic data.

Element	<i>n</i>	%
Age (years)		
20–35	94	23.50
> 35–45	167	41.75
> 45–55	83	20.75
> 55–60	56	14.00
Gender		
Male	219	55.00
Female	181	45.00
Education		
High school	24	6.00
Diploma	42	10.50
Bachelor's degree	285	71.25
Postgraduate	49	12.23

TABLE 2: Validity and reliability test.

Constructs	Item abbreviation	Items	Loading factors	Cronbach alpha	CR	AVE
Servant leadership	VS1	Leader willingly prioritises the needs of employees and the organisation over their interests.	0.730	0.925	0.938	0.627
	VS2	The leader actively seeks opportunities to serve employees rather than seeking personal recognition	0.763	-	-	-
	CR1	The leader fosters a sense of mutual commitment and trust among team members.	0.821	-	-	-
	CR2	The leader consistently makes decisions based on ethical principles and fairness.	0.804	-	-	-
	RM	The leader takes responsibility for ensuring that their actions align with organisational values.	0.753	-	-	-
	TS1	The leader encourages employees to find meaning and purpose in their work beyond personal gain.	0.781	-	-	-
	TS2	The leader promotes a shared vision that inspires employees to contribute to the greater good.	0.818	-	-	-
	TI1	The leader empowers employees to develop their skills and reach their full potential.	0.842	-	-	-
	TI2	The leader inspires employees to take the initiative and make positive changes in the organisation.	0.809	-	-	-
Readiness to change	A1	The proposed organisational change is well-suited to addressing our current challenges.	0.815	0.916	0.932	0.631
	A2	The planned change aligns well with the goals and needs of our organisation.	0.830	-	-	-
	MS1	Managers actively support and promote organisational change.	0.845	-	-	-
	MS2	Management provides clear communication and resources to facilitate the change process.	0.806	-	-	-
	CE1	With my experience and skills, employees are confident in my ability to adapt to and implement the proposed organisational change.	0.795	-	-	-
	CE2	I possess the skills and knowledge necessary to contribute effectively to the change initiative.	0.739	-	-	-
	PB1	I anticipate that the organisational change will lead to improved job satisfaction and new opportunities, which I am excited to explore.	0.760	-	-	-
	PB2	The change will have a positive impact not only on my role but also on my career development, which I am confident about.	0.759	-	-	-
Innovative work behaviour	IE1	I actively seek out new methods, techniques, or opportunities to improve work processes.	0.722	0.898	0.918	0.584
	IE2	I explore external trends or best practices to identify innovative solutions for my organisation.	0.750	-	-	-
	IG1	I frequently generate creative ideas to address workplace challenges or improve services.	0.837	-	-	-
	IG2	I propose innovative solutions to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of organisational tasks.	0.732	-	-	-
	IC1	I actively promote my innovative ideas to colleagues or superiors to gain their support.	0.786	-	-	-
	IC2	I persuade others within the organisation to recognise the value of my new ideas and approaches.	0.778	-	-	-
	II1	I take the initiative to implement my innovative ideas into actual work processes or practices.	0.796	-	-	-
	II2	I work to ensure that new ideas are successfully integrated into organisational operations.	0.707	-	-	-
Organisational agility	SA1	My organisation quickly identifies emerging trends or changes in the external environment (e.g., societal needs and technological advancements).	0.755	0.923	0.936	0.622
	SA2	My organisation actively scans for new business opportunities or challenges that could impact our operations.	0.782	-	-	-
	SA3	My organisation effectively gathers and analyses information to anticipate future needs and demands.	0.889	-	-	-
	DMA1	My organisation quickly interprets external events to identify opportunities or threats to our operations.	0.842	-	-	-
	DMA2	My organisation makes timely decisions to respond to identified opportunities or challenges.	0.737	-	-	-
	DMA3	My organisation develops clear and actionable plans to address emerging opportunities or threats.	0.783	-	-	-
	AA1	My organisation rapidly reallocates resources (e.g., budget, personnel) to adapt to changing conditions.	0.795	-	-	-
	AA2	My organisation efficiently modifies business processes to meet new demands or challenges.	0.753	-	-	-
	AA3	My organisation quickly delivers new services or solutions to address emerging needs or market demands.	0.747	-	-	-

CR, composite reliability; AVE, average variance extracted.

confirmed that constructs were distinct from one another, and cross-loading analysis, which further supported their distinctiveness (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). These results have

significant implications for the field of measurement and statistics, providing a robust and distinctive measurement model for future research.

Table 3 presents the heterotrait–monotrait (HTMT) matrix, a key tool for confirming the discriminant validity of the constructs in the measurement model. The HTMT values, which indicate the ratio of between-trait correlations to within-trait correlations, play a crucial role in ensuring that each construct is distinct from others. All HTMT values are below the threshold of 0.85, providing a strong confirmation that the constructs (e.g., SL, RTC, IWB, and organisational agility) are sufficiently differentiated by the criteria established by Henseler et al. (2015) and Roemer et al. (2021).

Table 4 presents the Fornell–Larcker criterion matrix, which shows the discriminant validity of the constructs in the measurement model. The matrix shows that the square root of the AVE for each construct (e.g., SL, RTC, IWB, and organisational agility) is greater than the correlations between that construct and all other constructs, confirming that the constructs are distinct from one another. This value meets the Fornell–Larcker criterion, which requires the square root of the AVE for each construct to exceed its correlations with other constructs, as established by Fornell and Larcker (1981).

Table 5 presents the results of hypothesis testing, which involves examining the *t*-statistic and *p*-value to determine whether the hypothesis indicates a positive and statistically significant effect. A relationship is considered positive and significant if the *t*-statistic exceeds 1.96 and the *p*-value is less than 0.05 (Hair et al., 2022). Based on the analysis results, all hypotheses, both direct and indirect effects, meet the criteria for a *p*-value of 0.000 and a *t*-statistic greater than 1.96. These results confirm that the research results support the proposed hypothesis.

TABLE 3: Heterotrait–monotrait matrix.

Variables	Innovative work behaviour	Organisational agility	Readiness to change	Servant leadership
Innovative work behaviour	-	-	-	-
Organisational agility	0.735	-	-	-
Readiness to change	0.727	0.654	-	-
Servant leadership	0.794	0.714	0.725	-

TABLE 4: Fornell–Larcker criterion.

Variables	Innovative work behaviour	Organisational agility	Readiness to change	Servant leadership
Innovative work behaviour	0.764	-	-	-
Organisational agility	0.678	0.789	-	-
Readiness to change	0.672	0.609	0.794	-
Servant leadership	0.730	0.667	0.668	0.792

TABLE 5: Hypothesis testing results.

Variables	Relationship	Path coefficient (β)	Standard deviation (SD)	<i>T</i> statistics ($ O/SD $)	<i>p</i> -value
Innovative work behaviour → Organisational agility	0.335	0.339	0.116	2.878	0.004
Readiness to change → Innovative work behaviour	0.331	0.332	0.112	2.964	0.003
Readiness to change → Organisational agility	0.295	0.299	0.126	2.336	0.020
Servant leadership → Innovative work behaviour	0.509	0.514	0.104	4.900	0.000
Servant leadership → Organisational agility	0.470	0.471	0.131	3.580	0.000
Readiness to change → Innovative work behaviour → Organisational agility	0.111	0.109	0.047	2.350	0.019
Servant leadership → Innovative work behaviour → Organisational agility	0.171	0.178	0.080	2.132	0.033

Discussion

This study investigated the relationships among SL, RTC, IWB, and organisational agility in public sector organisations, with IWB serving as a mediator. The results confirm all seven hypotheses (H1–H7), demonstrating significant direct and indirect effects, thereby providing robust empirical support for the proposed model. These findings enhance our understanding of how leadership and change readiness influence agility in public sector settings, in which bureaucratic constraints and resource limitations present unique challenges (Looks et al., 2024; Mergel et al., 2021).

The results confirm that SL and RTC directly enhance organisational agility (H1, H3), with SL exerting a more substantial effect ($\beta = 0.470$, $p < 0.001$) than RTC ($\beta = 0.295$, $p = 0.020$). This finding suggests that leadership emphasising empowerment and ethical stewardship is particularly potent in fostering agility in public sector settings, where bureaucratic constraints often hinder adaptability (Mergel et al., 2021). Readiness to change's significant yet weaker effect indicates that employees' preparedness to embrace change is critical yet may be limited by structural rigidities, such as fixed budgets or political mandates. These findings directly address the first research question, demonstrating that both SL and RTC are vital antecedents of agility, with SL playing a more dominant role.

The confirmation of H2 ($\beta = 0.509$, $p = 0.000$) and H4 ($\beta = 0.331$, $p = 0.003$) reveals that SL and RTC significantly promote IWB. Servant leadership's more substantial influence suggests that a supportive, people-centric leadership style is more effective at encouraging creativity and risk-taking in risk-averse public sector cultures (Torfing, 2019). Readiness to change's effect, though significant, may be tempered by employees' perceptions of change efficacy or personal benefits, which vary across hierarchical levels (Vakola, 2014). H5 ($\beta = 0.335$, $p = 0.004$) confirms that IWB drives organisational agility, aligning with the notion that employee-driven innovation enables rapid responses to societal and technological challenges (Sørensen & Torfing, 2025).

The mediation hypotheses (H6, $\beta = 0.171$, $p = 0.033$; H7, $\beta = 0.111$, $p = 0.019$) address the second research question, showing that IWB partially mediates the relationships between SL, RTC, and organisational agility. This result indicates that SL and RTC enhance agility both directly and indirectly by fostering innovative behaviours, such as idea

generation and implementation. The partial mediation suggests that other mechanisms, such as organisational learning or resource allocation, may also link SL and RTC to agility (Gkeredakis et al., 2021). These findings highlight IWB's critical role in translating leadership and change readiness into agile outcomes, particularly in public sector organisations where innovation is often constrained (Brown & Osborne, 2013).

While the results strongly support the proposed model, alternative explanations merit consideration. For H1 and H3, the influence of SL and RTC on agility may be amplified by contextual factors, such as Indonesia's collectivist culture, which emphasises group harmony and may enhance the effectiveness of SL's relational approach (Hofstede, 2011). Conversely, the weaker effect of RTC on agility could reflect resistance from employees in lower hierarchical levels, where change efficacy is limited by bureaucratic structures (Battaglio et al., 2022). For H2 and H4, the strong effect of SL on IWB might be partly attributed to employees' intrinsic motivation, independent of leadership, as highly educated employees (71.25% with bachelor's degrees) may naturally exhibit innovative tendencies (Maasland & Weißmüller, 2022). The mediation effects (H6, H7) could also be influenced by unmeasured variables, such as organisational culture or digital transformation pressures, which may enhance IWB's role in agility (Alnuaimi et al., 2022). These alternative explanations suggest that while the model is robust, contextual and individual factors warrant further exploration.

The findings align with private-sector studies, such as those by Han et al. (2018) and Mustofa and Tjahjono (2024), which have found that SL enhances agility through trust and collaboration. However, this study extends these insights to public sector organisations, where SL's role in mitigating bureaucratic inertia is particularly valuable (Mergel et al., 2021). Similarly, the effect of RTC on agility corroborates the findings of (Ahmed et al., 2025; Bilal et al., 2020; Thien, 2019); however, the weaker effect observed in this study highlights the unique challenges of public sector change management. The mediating role of IWB (H6, H7) is a novel contribution, as prior public sector studies (Haspemi et al., 2023) have rarely examined IWB as a mediator. Compared with private-sector research (Atatsi et al., 2019), the partial mediation in this study suggests that public sector agility relies on additional mechanisms, reflecting the complexity of governance environments.

Conclusion

This study's unique contribution lies in its confirmation that SL and RTC significantly enhance organisational agility in public sector organisations. The findings, which validate the proposed model supported by the RBV, SET, and DCT, offer novel insights into agility in public administration. By addressing a significant research gap, this study contributes theoretically by extending agility research and practically by providing strategies for public managers to foster responsive governance. Despite limitations, the robust empirical support

for all hypotheses underscores the importance of leadership, change readiness, and innovation in navigating the complexities of public sector environments. Future research should explore longitudinal designs, cross-cultural contexts, and additional moderators to further advance this field.

This study makes several theoretical contributions, each of which strengthens the foundation of our understanding of agility in public sector organisations. Firstly, it validates SL and RTC as antecedents of organisational agility, extending prior research in the private sector to a context characterised by unique constraints. Secondly, it establishes IWB as a critical mediator, addressing a significant gap in public administration literature. This finding enriches DCT by demonstrating how IWB operationalises dynamic capabilities in resource-constrained settings. Thirdly, the integration of RBV, SET, and DCT provides a robust framework for understanding agility, highlighting the interplay of intangible resources, reciprocal relationships, and transformative capabilities. Finally, the study highlights the role of contextual factors, such as collectivist cultures and digital transformation pressures, in amplifying IWB's mediating effect, providing a nuanced perspective on agility in public-sector contexts.

The findings of this study provide actionable insights for public sector managers and policymakers, empowering them to enhance agility in their organisations. By fostering SL practices, such as empowerment, ethical stewardship, and employee well-being, trust and innovation can be promoted. Training programmes that emphasise these behaviours can equip leaders with the skills to navigate bureaucratic constraints. Cultivating RTC through clear communication, management support, and skill-building initiatives can reduce resistance and encourage proactive engagement. Public organisations should prioritise change management strategies to align employee and institutional goals. Encouraging IWBs, such as idea exploration and implementation, is critical for achieving agility. Managers can create supportive environments that reward creativity and risk-taking, overcoming risk-averse cultural norms. Finally, the mediated effects of IWB suggest that public sector organisations should integrate leadership development and innovation policies to maximise agility, thereby enabling responsive governance in volatile environments.

Despite its contributions, this study has limitations. Firstly, the cross-sectional design limits causal inferences, as data were collected at a single point in time (Levitt et al., 2018). Longitudinal studies could explore how SL, RTC, and IWB influence agility over time. Secondly, the study focused on public sector organisations in Indonesia, which may limit generalizability due to cultural factors (e.g., collectivism) or contextual constraints (e.g., bureaucratic systems). Future research should test the model in other cultural or sectoral contexts to enhance external validity. Incorporating objective measures, such as performance metrics or supervisor ratings, could strengthen future studies. Thirdly, the study did not explore moderating variables, such as organisational culture or digital transformation, which may influence the

relationships (AlNuaimi et al., 2022). Future research could examine these moderators to provide a more comprehensive understanding of agility.

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CRedit authorship contribution

Sofyan M. Prasetyo: Conceptualisation, Data curation, Formal analysis, Funding acquisition, Methodology, Resources, Software, Validation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. Imas Soemaryani: Data curation, Investigation, Supervision, Validation, Writing – review & editing. Yunizar Yunizar: Data curation, Investigation, Supervision, Validation, Visualisation, Writing – review & editing. Hilmiana Hilmiana: Data curation, Project administration, Software, Supervision, Validation, Visualisation. All authors reviewed the article, contributed to the discussion of results, approved the final version for submission and publication, and take responsibility for the integrity of its findings.

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Data availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, Sofyan Mufti Prasetyo, upon reasonable request.

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