

Unlocking the Human Capital Paradox: Innovation Culture and Organizational Competence as Dual Mediators of Institutional Performance in Indonesian Private Business Colleges

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ABSTRAK

Perguruan tinggi swasta di Indonesia, khususnya Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi (STIE) di Jawa Timur, menghadapi paradoks modal manusia, yaitu tingginya proporsi dosen berkualifikasi doktor tidak secara otomatis meningkatkan kinerja institusi. Berlandaskan Resource Orchestration Theory dan Dynamic Capability View, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menguji apakah Budaya Inovasi memediasi hubungan antara Kesiapan Modal Manusia dan Kinerja Organisasi, serta apakah Kompetensi Organisasi memediasi hubungan antara Pembelajaran Organisasi dan Kinerja Organisasi. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain cross-sectional dan analisis Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Data dikumpulkan dari 312 dosen tetap dan pejabat struktural yang berasal dari 38 STIE terakreditasi di Jawa Timur. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Budaya Inovasi memediasi secara penuh hubungan antara Kesiapan Modal Manusia dan Kinerja Organisasi, sedangkan Kompetensi Organisasi memediasi secara parsial hubungan antara Pembelajaran Organisasi dan Kinerja Organisasi. Temuan ini mengonfirmasi Value-Activation Model dan menunjukkan bahwa sumber daya strategis hanya mampu menghasilkan kinerja yang terukur apabila diaktifkan melalui mekanisme berbasis budaya dan kompetensi. Penelitian ini memberikan implikasi praktis bagi pimpinan STIE dalam meningkatkan kinerja institusi, khususnya di tengah keterbatasan sumber daya.

ABSTRACT

Private higher education institutions in Indonesia, particularly Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi (STIE) in East Java, face a human capital paradox in which a high proportion of doctoral-qualified staff does not automatically improve institutional performance. Grounded in Resource Orchestration Theory and Dynamic Capability View, this study examines whether Innovation Culture mediates the relationship between Human Capital Readiness and Organizational Performance, and whether Organizational Competence mediates the relationship between Organizational Learning and Organizational Performance. Using a quantitative cross-sectional design and PLS-SEM, data were collected from 312 permanent lecturers and structural officials across 38 accredited STIEs in East Java. The findings show that Innovation Culture fully mediates the Human Capital Readiness–Organizational Performance relationship, while Organizational Competence partially mediates the Organizational Learning–Organizational Performance relationship. These results confirm the Value-Activation Model and show that strategic resources produce measurable performance only

when activated through cultural and competence-based mechanisms. The study offers practical direction for STIE leaders seeking to improve institutional performance under resource constraints.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The higher education sector is experiencing rapid transformation driven by technological acceleration, labor-market shifts, tighter accreditation standards, and increasing competitive pressure (Marginson, 2016). In this context, private higher education institutions are expected not only to comply administratively but also to demonstrate adaptive capacity and measurable organizational performance (Fariz, 2022b). These demands are especially challenging for smaller institutions operating with limited resources and uneven managerial capability.

Within Indonesia, Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi (STIE) in East Java represent a strategically important yet vulnerable group of institutions. Many STIEs operate in highly competitive regional education markets, face declining student enrollment, and remain under pressure to improve accreditation outcomes (Fariz, 2022a). At the same time, a substantial proportion of these institutions have invested in doctoral qualification upgrading among academic staff. However, stronger human capital endowment has not always been followed by comparable improvement in institutional performance (Fariz, 2019).

This condition is conceptualized in the present study as the human capital paradox, namely a situation in which abundant intellectual resources do not automatically generate superior organizational outcomes. The paradox suggests that the possession of strategic resources alone is insufficient (Sirmon et al., 2011). Performance depends on how those resources are mobilized, internalized, and translated into collective organizational capability. In other words, the path from human capital and learning resources to institutional performance is mediated by internal organizational mechanisms rather than operating as a direct linear relationship.

To explain this issue, the study integrates Resource-Based View, Resource Orchestration Theory, and Dynamic Capability View. Resource-Based View explains why human capital and learning capability are strategic assets, while Resource Orchestration Theory emphasizes that the value of these resources emerges through managerial structuring, bundling, and leveraging processes (Sirmon et al., 2011). Dynamic Capability View further clarifies that organizational learning supports sensing processes, whereas organizational competence reflects the institution's ability to seize and transform knowledge into embedded routines and effective performance (Teece, 2018).

Based on this logic, the study proposes the Value-Activation Model. The model positions Innovation Culture as the mediating mechanism that activates Human Capital Readiness into Organizational Performance, and Organizational Competence as the mediating mechanism that transforms Organizational Learning into Organizational Performance. Accordingly, this study addresses two research questions: whether Innovation Culture mediates the relationship between Human Capital Readiness and Organizational Performance, and whether Organizational Competence mediates the relationship between Organizational Learning and Organizational

Performance among STIEs in East Java.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Human Capital Readiness refers to the collective preparedness of academic staff to support institutional strategy through relevant knowledge, professional skills, adaptive mindset, and alignment with organizational values (Fariz, 2019). In higher education institutions, this construct is especially important because lecturers are central actors in teaching, research, community service, and academic governance. Nevertheless, the existence of highly qualified lecturers does not by itself guarantee high performance. The performance effect of human capital depends on whether the institution creates a climate that enables academic members to share ideas, take initiative, and transform knowledge into innovation (Fariz, 2019).

Innovation Culture is therefore positioned as the first mediating mechanism. It reflects shared norms and practices that encourage experimentation, knowledge sharing, psychological safety, and tolerance for constructive failure (Edmondson & Lei, 2014). A strong innovation culture enables individuals with high readiness to convert personal competence into collective innovative behavior. Prior literature consistently shows that innovative climates strengthen performance because they stimulate collaboration, responsiveness, and improvement in academic and administrative processes (Lin, 2007). In this sense, Innovation Culture is not merely a contextual factor but an activating mechanism through which Human Capital Readiness becomes institutionally productive (De Long & Fahey, 2000).

Organizational Learning is defined as the systematic process through which institutions acquire, distribute, interpret, and retain knowledge (Huber, 1991). In the STIE context, learning processes help organizations respond to accreditation requirements, curriculum changes, technological adoption, and stakeholder expectations. However, learning does not automatically create lasting advantage unless it is institutionalized (Teece, 2018). Knowledge that remains fragmented or person-dependent may improve short-term responsiveness, but it will not necessarily become an enduring organizational asset.

For that reason, Organizational Competence is positioned as the second mediating mechanism. It refers to the institution's embedded collective capability to sense change, seize opportunities, transform routines, and build collaboration networks (Teece, 2018). Dynamic Capability View suggests that learning processes are valuable when they crystallize into competence structures that support execution. Hence, Organizational Competence is expected to explain how Organizational Learning is translated into measurable Organizational Performance. At the same time, the possibility remains that Organizational Learning also affects performance directly through immediate adaptive responses, which makes partial mediation theoretically plausible (Tripathi, 2024).

Despite growing interest in innovation culture, organizational learning, and dynamic capabilities, previous studies have rarely tested these two mediating mechanisms simultaneously in one integrated structural model within the context of Indonesian private business colleges. This study addresses that gap by focusing on STIEs in East Java and by examining two theory-driven mediation paths in a single model. Based on the preceding arguments, the hypotheses are formulated as follows: H1: Innovation Culture significantly mediates the relationship between Human Capital Readiness and Organizational Performance among STIEs in East Java. H2: Organizational Competence significantly mediates the relationship between Organizational Learning and Organizational Performance among STIEs in East Java.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional survey design. The unit of analysis was the institutional actor represented by permanent lecturers and structural officials in

accredited STIEs in East Java. The research focused on institutions that had active academic operations and publicly identifiable accreditation status during the 2024–2025 academic period.

The sampling procedure used stratified proportional random sampling based on accreditation level in order to ensure representation across institutional quality clusters. The final valid sample consisted of 312 respondents from 38 STIEs in East Java. Respondents included lecturers, heads of study programs, vice-chairpersons, and quality assurance personnel who were assumed to have adequate knowledge of organizational learning processes, institutional culture, and performance conditions.

Table 1. Sample Distribution by BAN-PT Accreditation Stratum

Accreditation Stratum	STIEs (n)	Target Respondents	Valid Responses	Response Rate
<i>Baik Sekali</i> (Very Good)	3	30	28	93.3%
<i>Baik</i> (Good) — Grade B	26	208	216	103.8%*
<i>Cukup</i> / Active Re-accreditation	9	72	68	94.4%
Total	38	310	312	~100%

*Slight oversampling from the *Baik*-grade cluster due to higher institutional participation rate. Source: BAN-PT (2025). Accreditation status was cross-checked against PDDikti (2024). Researcher's compilation (2026).

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The instrument measured Human Capital Readiness, Organizational Learning, Innovation Culture, Organizational Competence, and Organizational Performance using reflective indicators adapted from established literature and contextualized to the STIE environment. Before the main survey, the instrument was reviewed through expert judgment and pilot testing to improve clarity and contextual relevance.

Table 2. Construct Operationalization — Dimensions and Item Distribution

Construct	Role	Dimensions	Items (n)	Primary Source
Human Capital Readiness (HCR)	Independent	Knowledge Readiness; Skill Proficiency; Growth Mindset; Value Alignment	12	Fariz (2019)
Organizational Learning (OL)	Independent	Knowledge Acquisition; Information Distribution; Information Interpretation; Organizational Memory	16	Huber (1991)
Innovation Culture (IC)	Mediator 1	Psychological Safety; Experimentation Orientation; Knowledge-Sharing Norms; Failure Tolerance	16	Edmondson (2018)
Organizational Competence (OC)	Mediator 2	Sensing; Seizing; Transforming; Collaboration Competence	16	Teece (2018)
Organizational Performance (OP)	Dependent	Academic Performance; Stakeholder Satisfaction; Operational Efficiency; Innovation Output	12	Fariz (2022a)

Total instrument items: 72 | Source: Researcher's compilation (2026)

Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The analysis followed two stages. First, the measurement model was evaluated through indicator loadings, composite reliability, Cronbach's alpha, average variance extracted, and discriminant validity. Second, the structural model was assessed using path coefficients, coefficient of determination, predictive relevance, and bootstrapping for direct and indirect effect significance. Mediation type was determined by evaluating the significance of indirect effects and the remaining direct effect after the mediator was included in the model (Henseler et al., 2016).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION RESULTS

4.1 Results

The measurement model evaluation indicated that all constructs met the required reliability and validity criteria. Composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha values for all latent variables exceeded the recommended threshold, while average variance extracted values were above the accepted minimum, confirming convergent validity (Hair et al., 2022). Discriminant validity was also supported, indicating that each construct captured a distinct conceptual domain within the model.

Table 3. Measurement Model Evaluation Results

Construct	Items (n)	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE	Outer Loadings Range
HCR	12	0.887	0.909	0.618	0.731–0.841
OL	16	0.891	0.913	0.624	0.738–0.852
IC	16	0.884	0.907	0.613	0.724–0.847
OC	16	0.896	0.917	0.631	0.744–0.851
OP	12	0.876	0.903	0.608	0.717–0.839

Note: All AVE ≥ 0.50 ; all CR ≥ 0.90 ; all HTMT < 0.85 , confirming discriminant validity across all construct pairs. Full collinearity VIF: 1.21–2.47 (all < 3.3) (Hair et al., 2022).

Source: Smart PLS 4.0 Output, Researcher's Analysis (2026)

The structural model showed substantial explanatory power for Organizational Performance as well as for both mediating variables. The path from Human Capital Readiness to Innovation Culture was positive and significant, and the path from Innovation Culture to Organizational Performance was also positive and significant. In contrast, the direct path from Human Capital Readiness to Organizational Performance became non-significant when Innovation Culture was included. The indirect effect remained significant, indicating full mediation. The model explained 63.4% of variance in OP ($R^2 = 0.634$), 43.8% in IC ($R^2 = 0.438$), and 46.1% in OC ($R^2 = 0.461$), indicating substantial explanatory power. Stone-Geisser Q^2 for OP = 0.401 (> 0), confirming predictive relevance. SRMR = 0.064 (< 0.08), confirming acceptable model fit (Henseler et al., 2016).

Table 4. Prerequisite Direct Effect Results

Path	β	t-value	p-value	95% BC CI	Decision
HCR $\rightarrow$ IC	0.487	6.234	0.000	[0.341, 0.631]	Significant $\checkmark$
HCR $\rightarrow$ OP (direct)	0.089	1.124	0.261	[-0.063, 0.241]	Not significant
OL $\rightarrow$ OC	0.521	6.891	0.000	[0.374, 0.669]	Significant $\checkmark$
OL $\rightarrow$ OP (direct)	0.185	2.763	0.006	[0.053, 0.317]	Significant $\checkmark$
IC $\rightarrow$ OP	0.398	5.112	0.000	[0.245, 0.551]	Significant $\checkmark$
OC $\rightarrow$ OP	0.412	5.438	0.000	[0.261, 0.564]	Significant $\checkmark$

Note: β = standardized path coefficient; t-values from 5,000 bootstrap resamples, two-tailed. Source: Smart PLS 4.0 Output, Researcher's Analysis (2026)

The path from Organizational Learning to Organizational Competence was positive and significant, and Organizational Competence also had a positive and significant effect on Organizational Performance. Unlike the first mediation chain, the direct effect of Organizational Learning on Organizational Performance remained significant after Organizational Competence was entered into the model. The indirect effect through Organizational Competence was also significant. This pattern indicates partial mediation.

Table 5. Mediation Results — H1 and H2

Hyp.	Path	Indirec t β	t- value	p- value	95% BC CI	Direct β	Direct p	VAF	Mediation Type
H1	HCR → IC → OP	0.312	4.218	0.000	[0.198, 0.431]	0.089	0.261 (ns)	—	Full Mediation ✓
H2	OL → OC → OP	0.287	3.941	0.000	[0.179, 0.403]	0.185	0.006 (sig)	60.8%	Partial Mediation ✓

Notes:

H1 — Full mediation: indirect effect significant ($p < 0.001$) + direct effect non-significant ($p = 0.261$) per Baron & Kenny (1986); 95% BC CI excludes zero.

H2 — Partial mediation: both indirect and direct effects significant; $VAF = 0.287 / (0.287 + 0.185) = 60.8\%$ (within 20–80% range); 95% BC CI excludes zero (Hair et al., 2022).

BC CI = Bias-Corrected Bootstrapped Confidence Interval; ns = non-significant. Source: Smart PLS 4.0 Output, Researcher's Analysis (2026)

These findings suggest that Human Capital Readiness contributes to performance only when it is activated through a supportive innovation culture, whereas Organizational Learning contributes to performance in two ways: directly through immediate adaptation and indirectly through the development of embedded organizational competence. The results support both hypotheses and validate the central logic of the Value-Activation Model. Both H1 and H2 are fully supported. The 95% bias-corrected bootstrapped confidence intervals for both indirect effects exclude zero, confirming statistical significance independently of t-statistics (Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

4.2 Discussion

The confirmation of full mediation of Innovation Culture in the HCR–OP relationship (H1 supported; indirect $\beta = 0.312$, $p < 0.001$; direct $\beta = 0.089$, $p = 0.261$) constitutes the most theoretically consequential finding of this study. It empirically resolves the Human Capital Paradox with structural precision: the reason that high concentrations of doctoral qualified academic staff in East Java STIEs fail to translate proportionally into institutional performance is precisely because Human Capital Readiness cannot independently generate organizational performance. Innovation Culture is not a supplementary enhancement or a moderating condition it is a *constitutive prerequisite*, a necessary orchestrating mechanism without which the performance value of human capital remains institutionally inert (Fariz, 2019).

This result directly validates ROT (Sirmon et al., 2011): performance superiority requires structured orchestration mechanisms, not merely resource possession. The full mediation implies a precise causal architecture: the performance pathway of HCR is exclusively channeled through IC in the STIE context, with no residual direct effect bypassing the cultural mechanism. An STIE that invests substantially in doctoral qualification programs for academic staff — without simultaneously developing the cultural infrastructure enabling collective knowledge activation will observe no measurable performance improvement. This is the operational definition of what (Ployhart & Moliterno, 2011) identified as "dormant asset accumulation": institutionally costly yet organizationally inert human capital investment.

The finding extends Lin (2007), who demonstrated that knowledge-sharing behavior is more strongly determined by institutional cultural norms than individual credentials. It corroborates Edmondson & Lei (2014), who showed that psychological safety IC's foundational sub-dimension enables translation of individual intellectual capacity into team innovative performance. And it contextualizes Frazier et al. (2017) finding within the specific regulatory and behavioural dynamics of Indonesian STIE governance. From a

managerial standpoint, STIE leaders must simultaneously develop cultural infrastructure alongside qualification investment: structured knowledge-sharing platforms, innovation incentive frameworks, psychologically safe governance practices, and collaborative peer learning programs that transform individual scholarly competence into collective institutional innovation capacity (Fariz, 2022b).

The confirmation of partial mediation of Organizational Competence in the OL–OP relationship (H2 supported; indirect $\beta = 0.287$, $p < 0.001$; direct $\beta = 0.185$, $p < 0.01$; VAF = 60.8%) reveals a structurally nuanced picture of how learning generates performance in STIEs. Two simultaneous, statistically significant performance pathways indicate that OL operates through **two distinct temporal mechanisms** that are complementary rather than competing.

The **direct pathway** (OL $\rightarrow$ OP, $\beta = 0.185$) captures *real-time learning effects*: when an STIE rapidly interprets and responds to environmental signals such as new BAN-PT accreditation criteria or emerging digital pedagogy standards performance improvements materialize before learning fully crystallizes into institutionalized organizational competence. This reflects what Tripathi (2024) described as learning agility: the rapid knowledge absorption and behavioural adjustment capacity that generates short-term performance gains in adaptive, regulatory-sensitive environments.

The **indirect pathway** (OL $\rightarrow$ OC $\rightarrow$ OP, $\beta = 0.287$) captures *deep competence-building effects*: when learning processes are systematically institutionalized through the four OC dimensions sensing, seizing, transforming, and collaboration competencies they generate a sustained, structurally durable form of performance advantage embedded in organizational routines and networks that are inherently difficult for competitors to imitate (Fainshmidt et al., 2019). The larger indirect effect coefficient ($\beta = 0.287$) relative to the direct effect ($\beta = 0.185$) indicates that while real-time learning effects are significant, long-term competitive performance requires institutionalization of learning into embedded organizational competence.

This dual-pathway architecture delivers a critical and frequently overlooked managerial message: the absence of immediate performance improvement following learning initiatives does not indicate program failure — it may indicate that organizational competence is still in the crystallization phase. The practical prescription is a two-horizon investment logic: optimize real-time learning responsiveness for short-term performance, while simultaneously investing in competence institutionalization for long-term competitive durability (Fariz, 2022a).

The empirical validation of H1 and H2 advances the strategic management literature through three distinct theoretical contributions.

First, this study provides the first simultaneous empirical demonstration that the HCR $\rightarrow$ IC $\rightarrow$ OP (full mediation) and OL $\rightarrow$ OC $\rightarrow$ OP (partial mediation) chains operate through fundamentally different orchestration logics within a single unified structural model. The distinction between full and partial mediation reflects the theoretically coherent difference between the behavioural-cultural dimension (ROT logic) and the capability-systems dimension (DCV logic), resolving a theoretical ambiguity regarding mediation type in human capital performance and learning–performance relationships across contexts (Tripathi, 2024).

Second, the study bridges the macro-level orchestration logic of ROT (Sirmon et al., 2011) with the micro-behavioural mechanism of psychological safety within a validated structural model providing a theoretically coherent link between strategic governance decisions and daily academic staff behavioural dynamics. This fills the conceptual gap between strategic management theory and organizational behavioural mechanisms identified in the psychological safety literature (Edmondson & Bransby, 2023).

Third, by grounding propositions within the specific institutional context of small-to-medium STIEs in East Java a population systematically underrepresented in mainstream international management literature (Marginson, 2016) this study contributes empirical evidence from a developing-country, resource-constrained environment that meaningfully expands the generalizability boundary conditions of both ROT and DCV beyond the large-university contexts that dominate the extant literature.

The novelty of this study lies in the simultaneous testing of two distinct mediation mechanisms within a single integrated model for the STIE context in East Java. The results show that the two pathways do not operate identically. Human Capital Readiness requires full activation through Innovation Culture, whereas Organizational Learning affects performance both directly and through Organizational Competence. This distinction offers a more precise explanation of how strategic resources are converted into performance in small and medium-sized higher education institutions.

5. CONCLUSION

This study addressed two focal research questions regarding the mediating roles of Innovation Culture (IC) and Organizational Competence (OC) in the performance pathways of STIEs in East Java, Indonesia. H1 is confirmed: IC fully mediates the HCR–OP relationship, establishing that human capital readiness generates institutional performance exclusively through the cultural mechanism of innovation directly and empirically resolving the Human Capital Paradox characterizing East Java's STIE landscape. H2 is confirmed: OC partially mediates the OL–OP relationship, revealing a dual-pathway architecture wherein organizational learning simultaneously generates real-time performance effects and deeper, competence-mediated performance effects. Together, these findings validate the Value-Activation Model as a theoretically coherent and empirically grounded framework explaining how strategic organizational resources are activated into institutional performance outcomes through distinct orchestrating mechanisms.

For STIE leaders and foundation boards, the full mediation result for H1 constitutes an evidence-based mandate to fundamentally reorient investment strategy from exclusive focus on staff qualification ratios toward simultaneous development of cultural infrastructure that activates qualified individuals into collectively innovative institutions. For national regulators “Kemendikisaintek” and “LLDIKTI Region VII” the study provides empirical justification for incorporating innovation climate and organizational competence assessments into accreditation frameworks, shifting evaluative focus from input compliance toward dynamic capability evidence.

The cross-sectional design remains the primary methodological limitation, constraining causal inference regarding the temporal development of IC and OC. Future longitudinal studies tracking the evolution of innovation culture following systematic HCR investment across multiple academic years would substantially strengthen the causal architecture of the Value-Activation Model. Future research may also productively explore cross-path interactions within the model, extend the framework to polytechnic and vocational higher education institutions, and test its applicability in comparable small-to-medium higher education contexts across Southeast Asia.

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