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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

The Impact of Explicit and Tacit Knowledge Sharing on the Performance of the General Directorate of Sports and Youth of Yazd Province with the Mediating Role of Service Innovation

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EXTENDED A B S T R A C T

Introduction

In today's intensely competitive environment, the focus on organizational performance is critical, as the survival and sustainability of organizations are fundamentally tied to their performance levels (Kermashahi et al., 2024). Scholars and practitioners alike agree that performance is a core subject in virtually all organizational analyses, to the extent that it is difficult to conceive of an organization that is not subject to performance evaluation and measurement. Organizations rely heavily on performance assessment to provide managers with feedback regarding their progress towards strategic objectives (Crawns et al., 2010). In contemporary competitive settings, marked by the scarcity of resources, performance management and evaluation have become indispensable for organizations. This has led to an increased focus on reviewing internal organizational performance among many entities (Piatkowska et al., 2025; Trog et al., 2024; Azimzadeh et al., 2020). Performance essentially reflects the activities that an organization carries out over a given time frame, and by assessing performance, organizations can measure their efficiency and effectiveness (Rezaei & Ghaybdost, 2016). One of the most significant features of 21st-century organizations is the emphasis on knowledge and information. Unlike organizations of the past, modern organizations utilize advanced technologies and require the acquisition, management, and exploitation of knowledge and information to enhance their operational efficiency (Fereidoni et al., 2017). In the contemporary global landscape, knowledge is considered the most strategic resource available to organizations, and interest in knowledge management has grown substantially (Faryabi et al., 2025).

A fundamental element of knowledge management is the sharing of explicit and tacit knowledge both within organizations and with external partners, particularly allied organizations. Knowledge sharing provides several benefits, including access to competitive knowledge, enhancing competitive advantage, value creation, and synergy generation. Failure to leverage knowledge sharing can lead to wasted capital, increased overhead costs, and reduced productivity (Kermashahi et al., 2024). Moreover, the long-term success of organizations depends heavily on acquiring, storing, and sharing knowledge. Strategies based on the accumulation of human resource knowledge serve as key competitive advantages, and successful knowledge management is a critical determinant of organizational survival (Razavi et al., 2017). Organizations that discover efficient ways to extract, use, and share knowledge-and that regard knowledge as a valuable asset-have unlocked the secret to their current and future success (Trog et al., 2024).

Inter-organizational knowledge sharing is defined as the deliberate activity of

making knowledge accessible to others. This process is conscious and voluntary, and trust plays a pivotal role in sustaining ongoing knowledge sharing in organizational relationships. To enable continuous knowledge sharing, organizations require trust and effective risk management mechanisms that prevent knowledge leakage (Soltani Zadeh et al., 2024).

Another important dimension that can strengthen the relationship between explicit and tacit knowledge sharing and organizational performance is service innovation. Service innovation involves the introduction of new and creative services to customers by employing new or improved methods. These services should not only satisfy current customer demands but also proactively address potential future challenges and needs (Hosseini et al., 2023).

Methodology

Given the nature and objectives of the study, the research was conducted as an applied study using a survey methodology. Data necessary for the research were collected through questionnaires distributed among the employees of the General Directorate of Sports and Youth in Yazd Province. According to personnel records in 2024, the population consisted of 186 employees. Using Krejcie and Morgan's table, a sample size of 120 individuals was selected for this study. The research instruments comprised standardized questionnaires measuring explicit knowledge sharing (7 items), tacit knowledge sharing (6 items) (Yasini & Ardeshtir, 2014), service innovation (5 items) (Mohammad Shafiei et al., 2018), and organizational performance (4 items) (Babayi & Ashraf, 2024). The face and content validity of the questionnaires were confirmed by 10 management professors. The reliability of the instruments was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, yielding coefficients of 0.88 for explicit knowledge sharing, 0.89 for tacit knowledge sharing, and 0.85 for organizational performance, which indicate acceptable internal consistency and reliability. For data analysis, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was employed using Smart PLS software. SEM is particularly suitable for testing direct and indirect relationships between latent variables, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the relationships among knowledge sharing, service innovation, and organizational performance.

Findings

Descriptive analysis of the findings from Table 1 showed that among the 120 research participants, based on education level, 38% of the employees held a bachelor's degree or lower, 60% held a master's degree, and 2% had a doctoral degree. Regarding age, the smallest group was those under 25 years old, and the largest group was those over 40 years old. In terms of gender, 67% were male and 33% were female. Finally, based on marital status, the majority of employees were married at 82%, while 18% were single. The results of the Structural Equation Modeling indicated significant direct effects between the latent variables in the proposed model. Both tacit and explicit knowledge sharing were found to have positive and statistically significant impacts on service innovation and organizational performance. This suggests that sharing both forms of knowledge among employees enhances innovative service development, which in turn improves overall organizational outcomes. Furthermore, service innovation demonstrated a significant positive influence on organizational performance. Importantly, service innovation also functioned as a mediating variable between tacit and explicit knowledge sharing and organizational performance. This mediating role indicates that knowledge sharing alone may not be sufficient to enhance performance unless it translates into innovative services.

Discussion and Conclusion

Knowledge sharing refers to the transfer of knowledge—that is, information, skills, or expertise—between individuals within organizations. This process can occur either personally or electronically and offers numerous benefits for enhancing innovation, competitiveness, and organizational performance. Moreover, as challenges increase and the competitive environment becomes more complex, the need for better, knowledge-based solutions to improve organizational performance becomes increasingly critical. Therefore, in the present study, the researcher aimed to develop a comprehensive model examining the impact of both tacit and explicit knowledge sharing, emphasizing the role of service innovation among employees on

organizational performance, from the perspective of the employees at the General Directorate of Sports and Youth of Yazd Province. The research findings based on structural equation modeling indicated that both tacit and explicit knowledge sharing had a positive and significant effect on service innovation. In other words, if factors influencing the development of knowledge sharing among employees at the General Directorate of Sports and Youth of Yazd Province are addressed, service innovation will increase.

This result is consistent with the findings of studies by Faryabi et al. (2025) and Trog et al. (2024). For instance, Faryabi et al. (2025) demonstrated that digital innovation has a positive and direct effect on startup performance. It seems that equipping employees with professional knowledge, the ability to acquire and share knowledge, the classification of organizational knowledge, leveraging knowledge to solve organizational problems, and the transfer of organizational knowledge among employees play a crucial role in employee development, which in turn enhances the organization's service innovation. Another finding showed that tacit and explicit knowledge sharing positively and significantly affected organizational performance. That is, if managers and officials at the General Directorate of Sports and Youth of Yazd Province pay attention to the dimensions of tacit and explicit knowledge sharing, organizational performance will improve. According to previous studies, this finding aligns with research by Kermashahi et al. (2024) and Soltani Zadeh et al. (2024). Kermashahi et al. (2024) found that knowledge management processes have a positive and significant impact on sustainable organizational performance. Furthermore, human, organizational, and technological factors also positively and significantly affect knowledge management processes. Hence, it seems that enhancing tacit and explicit knowledge sharing among employees and creating conditions and opportunities for their further learning constitute foundational factors in improving and developing organizational performance. On the other hand, the present study's results showed that explicit knowledge sharing did not have a significant positive effect on operational performance, nor did tacit knowledge sharing have a significant positive effect on financial performance. This finding is consistent with the research of Wang et al. (2014), who also found that the two dimensions of knowledge sharing-explicit and tacit-did not significantly impact operational and financial performance, respectively. The results also showed that service innovation had a positive and significant effect on organizational performance, consistent with findings by Razavi et al. (2025) and Papayno et al. (2025).

Since the current study's findings indicate that service innovation directly improves organizational performance, it appears this is due to increased productivity, creation of new services, strengthened competitiveness, and the creation of new growth opportunities at the General Directorate of Sports and Youth of Yazd Province. In conclusion, given a holistic view of the current study's results, designing a knowledge-based structure at all levels of the General Directorate of Sports and Youth of Yazd Province will be effective in improving organizational performance. In this regard, managers at the General Directorate, as providers of sports services, play a significant role. Therefore, it is necessary for the various managerial departments at the Directorate to place greater emphasis on training and knowledge sharing among their employees. One of the primary actions that managers should consider and emphasize across different departments is conducting educational needs assessments with an emphasis on knowledge sharing as a key component of knowledge management. They should also develop continuous training programs tailored to the various divisions of the General Directorate of Sports and Youth of Yazd Province. Through these measures, alongside promoting service innovation, organizational performance at the Directorate will improve and develop.

KEYWORDS

Explicit Knowledge, Tacit Knowledge, Service Innovation, Organizational Performance, General Directorate of Sports and Youth.

