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## Knowledge Sharing in Sport Organizations: The Role of Social Capital

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### A B S T R A C T

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Knowledge management and its dimensions have an important role in the sustainable development of sport organizations; therefore, the main objective of this study was to investigate the effect of social capital components on knowledge sharing in sport and youth offices in Kerman. 193 staff in sport and youth offices in Kerman participated in this study through a total sampling approach, and completed a valid and reliable questionnaire. The findings of the research by applying structural equation modeling demonstrated that the social capital components (mutual respect and trust, participation and teamwork, social cohesion, openness to criticism, and relationship networks) had a positive and significant effect on the knowledge sharing in sport and youth offices in Kerman. According to the research findings, developing social capital and its components can play an important role in the process of knowledge sharing in sport and youth offices in Kerman.

### Introduction

Nowadays, in order to have an efficient and effective presence in various sport, economic and social fields, sport and sport organizations have no choice but to pay more attention to different fields of knowledge management. Specialization in sports and the influence of sports and sports organizations in different layers of societies have made adaptation to different and currently changing conditions inevitable. Attention to knowledge management in general, and knowledge sharing as one of the important dimensions of knowledge management in particular, can provide a dynamic presence and performance of sports organizations in various fields. In order to gain competitive advantages, organizations should look for experienced and skillful experts and educate their employees the

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required skills. But these strategies alone are not enough, and the importance of transferring experience and knowledge to others in the organization should also be considered. Accordingly, it is inevitable for sport organizations to have more emphasis on existing knowledge-based resources.

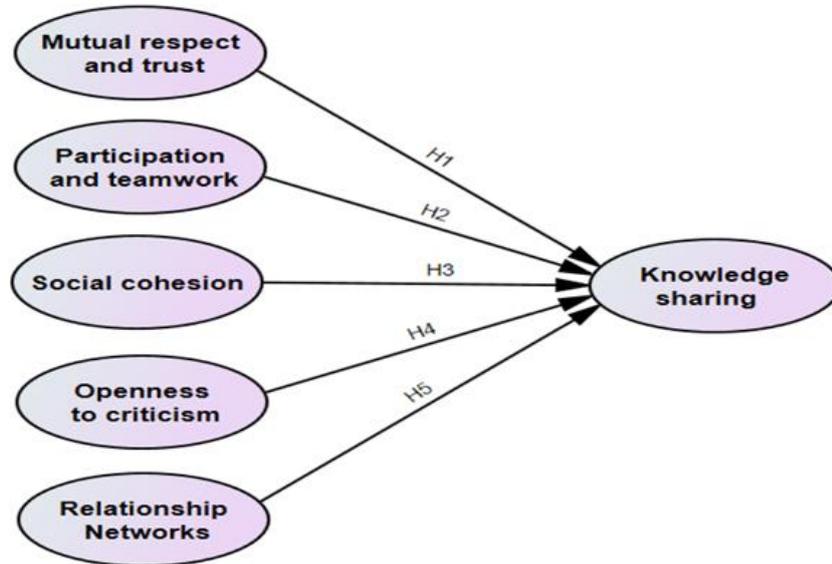
One of the most important challenges that organizations face today is the lack of knowledge transfer between employees. Failure to transfer or share the knowledge leads to Lack of efficient manpower, which will eventually lead to a decline in efficiency and failure of an organization. The non-transfer of knowledge by individuals is due to the dominance of individualism over the organization. Existence of trust, cooperation and culture of knowledge sharing among employees, increases knowledge creation and exchange (Allameh et al., 2016). Knowledge sharing help to create new knowledge through synthetizing of existing knowledge to make better use of it (Van-Woerkom & Sanders, 2010).

Knowledge sharing is a fundamental tool for receiving and distributing knowledge from inside or outside the organization to innovate and improve performance (Ho et al., 2009). Knowledge sharing activities are divided into two categories: explicit and tacit knowledge sharing. (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 2007). In explicit knowledge sharing, individuals distribute information obtained from different sources to others, and in tacit knowledge sharing, employees share knowledge through dialogue and their experiences (Ouakouak et al., 2019). Assuming that the most efficient way to participate in subjective knowledge is direct contact between the sender and the receiver of knowledge, then social capital has a key role in this transfer (Hassanzadeh et al., 2014). According to the literature, knowledge sharing will grow as the social capital in organizations increases.

Social capital is a concept that can play a more important role than intellectual and human capital in organizations and societies. Without social capital, employees will not be willing to share information and knowledge and knowledge management program will not be successful. To complete the process of knowledge management, social capital has a fundamental role (Dostar et al., 2012). Today, along with economic and human capital, social capital has been introduced as the spiritual dimension of society. By encouraging people to participate in social interactions, social capital can solve many social problems and lead society to more comprehensive development. Social capital is a historical heritage that, along with human and economic resources, is part of the national wealth that provides the most appropriate use of material and human capital. Social capital is a set of valuable resources that exists potentially in social relations of groups and social organizations. Some of these resources, sometimes referred to as social values, are: honesty, self-health, empathy, trust, solidarity and sacrifice. Through these resources, Social capital makes the work of individuals in society easy, fast, low cost, secure and thereby helps them achieve common social goals (Safarzadeh et al., 2010).

It should be noted that the development and expansion of knowledge sharing will be achieved if there is sufficient and appropriate communication between individuals and groups. People can strive to achieve goals more easily by efficient communications. This synergy occurs when individuals share common values with other members through a set of interconnected networks.

Office of sports and youth, as the main custodians and planners of sports in the provinces and cities, should take a step towards sustainable development with an approach of considering social capital and knowledge management process. Considering the necessity of studying these concepts in sports organizations, and according to this fact that limited research has been done in this field, similar research can be the basis for sustainable development in the field of sports and youth. Despite the importance of social capital and knowledge sharing in the development of sports organizations, limited research has been done in this area and this research is one of the few studies that can provide new insights in the effectiveness of sports organizations management and improving their performance in the field of sports and youth. In the present study, the effect of social capital components on knowledge sharing in sports and youth offices of Kerman province has been investigated and the researchers seeks to answer this question that to what extent social capital components can affect knowledge sharing in sports and youth offices in Kerman province?



**Figure1.** The research model

### Methodology

Due to the nature of the study, its review section has been done by using and reviewing relevant sources and in the other section, data collection has been done by survey through a questionnaire. Descriptive-correlational research method, which was cross-sectional in terms of time and practical in terms of purpose, was conducted in the field. The research population included the staff of sports and youth offices in Kerman province, Iran. The research sample was selected through total sampling. During the research period, the total number of sports and youth employees in the province was 193, who were working in the general office and 23 cities of the province. 193 questionnaires were prepared and sent to the research participants via email. Of 193 distributed questionnaires, 168 valid questionnaires were returned, and there were no incomplete questionnaires. The required data of the present study was collected using two questionnaires including the social capital questionnaire developed by Jaber et al. (2017) and the knowledge sharing questionnaire developed by Wang and Wang (2012). The questionnaire consisted of two parts, the first part included demographic questionnaire (8 questions). The second part, a questionnaire containing 35 items regarding the effect of social capital components on knowledge sharing of employees of sports organizations, including 6 subscales: participation and teamwork, relationship network, trust, cohesion, openness to criticism, and knowledge sharing. In this questionnaire, Likert Scale (Strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree) was used, in which 5 indicates the highest agreement degree (strongly agree), 1 indicates the lowest agreement degree (Strongly disagree). In this questionnaire, items 1 to 6 are related to the component of " participation and teamwork", items 7 to 11 are related to the component of "relationship network", items 12 to 17 are related to the component of "trust", items 18 to 23 are related to the "cohesion" component, items 24 to 29 are related to the "openness to criticism" component, and finally items 30 to 35 are related to "knowledge sharing".

content, face, and construct validity (confirmatory factor analysis) were conducted to determine the validity of the questionnaire, and to determine the reliability of the questionnaire, two Cronbach's alpha coefficient and composite reliability were used. To determine the content validity, Lavushi

model (1975) was used, in which the total content validity of the questionnaire (CVI = 0.89) was estimated. To determine the face validity of the initial questionnaire, which was presented to 10 sports management specialists, the experts were asked to consider the general structure of the questionnaire, spelling, writing and literary errors. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), convergent validity and divergent validity were used to determine the construct validity (Table 1). A summary of all the coefficients is given in Table 1.

**Table1.** Construct validity and reliability

Structure	Component	Items	Factor loading	Cronbach's alpha coefficients	Composite reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Social Capital	Mutual respect and trust	Q1	0.71	0.76	0.83	0.51
		Q2	0.80			
		Q3	0.65			
		Q4	0.68			
		Q5	0.73			
		Q6				
	Social cohesion	Q7	0.77	0.77	0.84	0.53
		Q8	0.72			
		Q9	0.80			
		Q10	0.72			
		Q11	0.60			
		Q12	0.63			
	Openness to criticism	Q13	0.65	0.82	0.86	0.52
		Q14	0.69			
		Q15	0.76			
		Q16	0.66			
		Q17	0.77			
		Q18	0.80			
	Relationship networks	Q19	0.58	0.85	0.89	0.58
		Q20	0.79			
		Q21	0.79			
		Q22	0.74			
		Q23	0.87			
		Q24	0.81			
	Participation and teamwork	Q25	0.85	0.86	0.90	0.60
		Q26	0.78			
		Q27	0.64			
		Q28	0.77			
Q29		0.75				
Knowledge Sharing	Q30	0.74	0.76	0.83	0.52	
	Q31	0.66				
	Q32	0.73				
	Q33	0.59				
	Q34	0.63				

The report in Table 1 showed that all factor loading coefficients of the research questions are higher than 0.4 (Chen et al., 2009) and only question number 5 of the social participation component was excluded from the concept of social capital due to negative changes in convergent validity (AVE). In

general, items with loads less than 0.4, should be omitted. Further, the convergent validity higher than 0.5 is desirable (Fernell and Larker, 1981). SPSS version 23 and PLS software were used to analyze the data. PLS software was used to test the research hypotheses and to assess the research model validity.

## Research Findings

In order to estimate the measurement model properties, all patterns must first be analyzed separately. Based on the adoption of such a method, first, six measurement models related to the six research variables were tested separately. Table 2 presents the general fitness indices for the measurement models.

**Table 2.** Fitness indices of measurement models

Structure	CMIN/Df	GFI	AGFI	NFI	CFI	RMSEA
Mutual respect and trust	2.36	0.91	0.91	0.92	0.91	0.038
Participation and teamwork	2.41	0.93	0.92	0.93	0.92	0.024
Social cohesion	2.35	0.92	0.91	0.92	0.93	0.033
Openness to criticism	1.99	0.96	0.94	0.94	0.95	0.021
Relationship networks	2.51	0.92	0.91	0.92	0.92	0.039
Knowledge sharing	2.86	0.92	0.91	0.92	0.93	0.048
Acceptable fitness	<3	>0.90	>0.90	>0.90	>0.90	<0.10

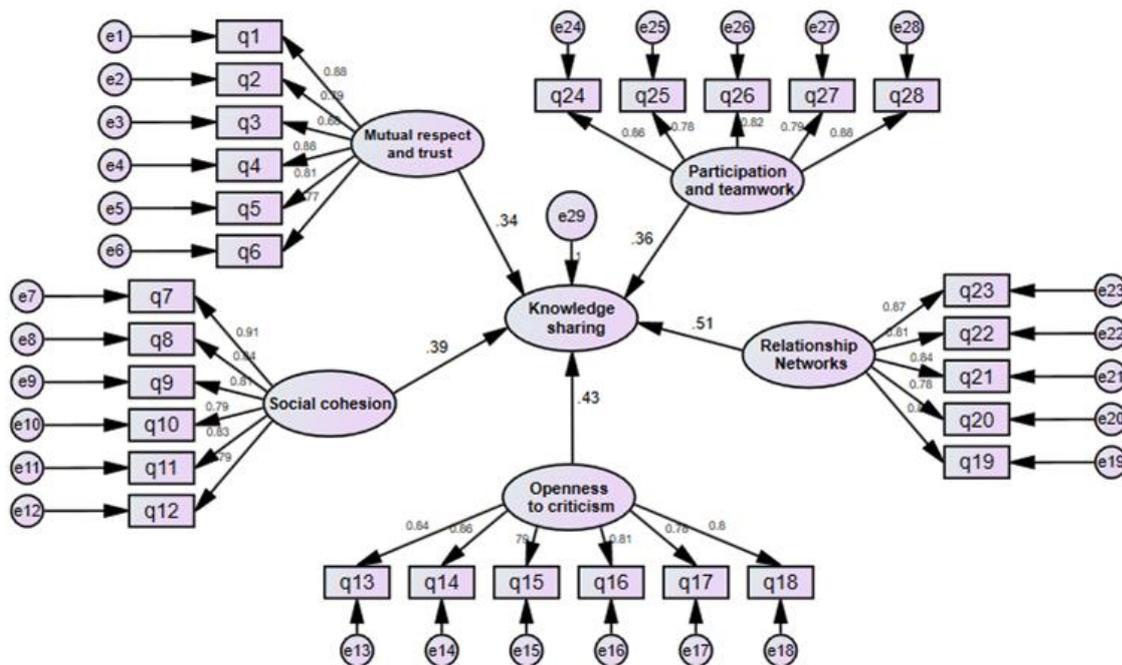
According to the results of Table 2, it can be concluded that the measurement models have a good fitness and, in other words, the general indices confirm that the data support the patterns well.

After reviewing and confirming the measurement models in the first step, structural equation modeling has been conducted in the second step to test the relationships.

**Table 3.** The general indices of model fitness

Indices	CMIN/Df	GFI	AGFI	NFI	CFI	RMSEA
Final model	2.40	0.93	0.92	0.91	0.93	0.068
Acceptable	<3	>0.90	>0.90	>0.90	>0.90	<0.10

According to Table 3, it can be concluded that the general indices indicate a good fitness of the model. In other words, it can be said that the collected data supports the model well. The structural equation model of the research along with the regression coefficients is presented in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** The research structural model

After reviewing and confirming the model, two partial indices of critical ratio and P value have been used to test the significance of the relationship. Based on the significance level of 0.05, the critical ratio should be greater than 1.96. Less than this value, the relevant parameter in the pattern is not considered significant. Also, values less than 0.05 for P value indicate a significant difference between the calculated value for regression weights with a value of zero at the confidence level of 0.95. Table 4 shows the relationships in the research model along with regression coefficients and the values of partial indices relevant to each relationship.

**Table 4.** Regression coefficients and the result of relationship test

Relationship number	Exogenous variable	path	Exogenous variable	Beta coefficient	Critical ratio	Significance	Result
1	Mutual respect and trust		Knowledge sharing	0.34	9.42	***	Accepted
2	Participation and teamwork		Knowledge sharing	0.36	12.63	***	Accepted
3	Social cohesion		Knowledge sharing	0.39	10.87	***	Accepted
4	Openness to criticism		Knowledge sharing	0.43	14.11	***	Accepted
5	Relationship networks		Knowledge sharing	0.51	15.89	***	Accepted

\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

According to the results and indices obtained in Table 4, the relationships drawn in the research model have been confirmed.

**Discussion and conclusion**

Findings showed that social capital had a positive and significant effect on knowledge sharing of

employees in sports and youth offices in Kerman province. The findings of the present study were consistent with the findings of Nodari et al. (2019) because the results of that study also indicated the relationship between social capital and knowledge sharing. Kim and Shim (2016) found that the components of social capital (structural, communicative and cognitive capital) have a positive and significant effect on knowledge sharing. The findings of the study were also consistent with the results of the research conducted by Rahbari (2013), and Taheri Qotb (2015). With the increase of social capital, knowledge sharing increases among the employees of sport and youth offices. This indicates that strengthening and increasing the amount of social capital by sports organizations such as the General office of Sports and Youth of Kerman Province, promotes the culture of knowledge sharing which can improve the quantity and quality of the organization's performance. According to the research findings, strengthening and developing social capital and its related components can play a role in the process of developing knowledge sharing as one of the key pillars of knowledge management in sports organizations.

Moreover, the research findings showed that mutual respect and trust has a positive and significant effect on the knowledge sharing of employees in sports and youth offices. Ouakouak and Ouedraogo (2017) also showed that emotional commitment and personal trust have a positive effect on knowledge sharing and application, which was consistent with the results of this study. Alimoghadam (2013) also found that all general components of social capital from the perspective of experts (including trust, norms, relationship networks, commitments and expectations and a sense of identity) have a great impact on soft knowledge management activities (knowledge sharing and knowledge creation). One of the most important components of social capital is "mutual respect and trust", which is necessary for the formation of social relationships and commitments, and help to create mutual cooperation. When there is mutual respect and trust in an organization, the relationship of employees with each other and with the management of the organization is based on honesty and employees and the manager as well as the organization are committed to each other and these trust- based relationships can provide effective knowledge sharing.

Research findings also showed that the capacity of openness to criticism has a positive and significant effect on the knowledge sharing of employees in sports and youth offices of Kerman province. Considering that issues such as performance evaluation, participation in work teams, customer service and quality control depend on the optimal use of openness to criticism and criticizing, senior sports managers in Kerman province should use criticism as a powerful tool to achieve sustainable development , and certainly paying attention to increasing the level of social capital and its components, including the capacity of openness to criticism in employees, leads to the expansion and development of knowledge, which is an important aspect of knowledge management. The capacity to accept criticism or openness to criticism is one of the components of social capital that plays a major role in the success of an organization and its employees.

Another part of the findings showed that social cohesion has a positive and significant effect on the knowledge sharing of employees in sports and youth offices. Today, organizational cohesion is recognized as one of the most important factors in the success of organizations and it has an undeniable impact on organizational performance. Organizational cohesion is in fact part of the social cohesion that has manifested at the different levels of an organization. Existence of cohesion in an organization increases coordination between units and members of the organization and causes the collective interests of the organization to take precedence over individual interests. Social cohesion as one of the components of social capital, always prepares society and all social units such as organizations, including sports organizations for change, and in fact organizations need cohesion to be changed. The findings of this study indicate that social cohesion as a part of social capital has a positive and significant effect on the knowledge sharing of employees of the Sports and Youth offices, and this issue as a powerful tool for planners and senior sports managers of sports in Kerman province can lead to the development and promotion of the organization's performance, as well as achievements in various fields of knowledge management.

Findings also showed that participation and teamwork have a positive and significant effect on knowledge sharing of employees in sports and youth offices. The greatest manifestation of

participation and teamwork can be seen in sports organizations, participation and teamwork make it easier to achieve a common goal and reduces costs and time and ultimately leads to greater productivity. Participation and teamwork can be considered as the culmination of social capital development. Teamwork is successful when trust reaches its peak. By providing trust atmosphere, the team becomes cohesive and integrated and everyone strives for a common goal. One of the basic needs of any team work in achieving the goals is knowledge sharing among group members and the ability to acquire shared knowledge. Senior managers and sports managers should plan in such a way as to make the most of the development of participation and teamwork to achieve sustainable development in organizational knowledge management.

Another part of the results showed that the relationship networks has a positive and significant effect on the knowledge sharing of employees in sports and youth offices. Certainly, developing and facilitating relationship between employees of an organization can lead to significant work-related relationships, and when a warm and cordial relationship prevails between members of the organization, the working relationship becomes more and leads to the development of personal knowledge. In today's world, all the problems and issues related to human beings and their lives can be solved through efficient relationships. Relationships based on mutual respect and trust are the needs of human societies today. Meanwhile, solving many problems of organizations is also possible in the shadow of organizational mutual relations. When the relationship between people begins, teams and groups are formed and formal and informal relationships also occur. Meanwhile, a successful organization is one that can make the most of these networks and through them improve the performance of the organization, and formal relationships are not the only one to help the organization. Developing informal and formal relationships in structure of sport organizations can be a critical factor in enhancing efficiency and effectiveness of sport organization in the process of knowledge sharing management.

According to the importance of social capital in developing knowledge sharing in sport organizations, focusing on different aspects of social capital and knowledge management can pave the way for efficient management of sport organizations. Conducting new studies to explore long term strategies for strengthening social capital dimensions in sport setting can be of great importance.

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