

SERVICE QUALITY BY KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT CAPABILITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS: MEDIATING EFFECT OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

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ABSTRACT

In this aggressive competition taking place around the world, knowledge management is recognized as the main vehicle for organizations to achieve a competitive advantage: to compete and provide higher quality and better services that satisfy customers. Linking knowledge management to service quality could make a strong contribution in convincing managers of organizations about the need to adopt knowledge management strategies. Taking these issues into account, this study introduces the pathway to service quality (SQ) with the role of knowledge management capabilities (KMC) (knowledge infrastructure capability KIC and knowledge process capability KPC) and organizational commitment (OC). This paper aims at investigating the role of KMC in enhancing the quality of service in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) through the mediating effect of OC. Based on the analysis conducted on 352 responses from academic middle managers and teaching staff selected from HEIs of Palestine- Gaza Strip. The results exhibit significant positive influence of knowledge management capabilities on enhancing service quality, and organizational commitment partially mediates the relationship between knowledge management

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capabilities and SQ. These results provide new avenues for managers to enhance service quality of Education institutions using KMC at prime level; with updated technology, sufficient structure, and supportive culture, in addition to ensuring effective implementation of knowledge processes. Additionally, these capabilities will help to increase the level of commitment in organizations, which will lead to quality of service, innovation, competitive advantage and enhanced overall performance.

KEY WORDS

Knowledge Management Capabilities; Knowledge Process Capability; Knowledge Infrastructure Capability; Service Quality; Organizational Commitment.

JEL CLASSIFICATION : M53

**QUALITÉ DE SERVICE PAR CAPACITÉ DE GESTION DES
CONNAISSANCES DANS LES ÉTABLISSEMENTS D'ENSEIGNEMENT
SUPÉRIEUR : EFFET MÉDIATEUR DE L'ENGAGEMENT
ORGANISATIONNEL**

RÉSUMÉ

Vu la grande concurrence que connaît le monde, la gestion des connaissances est l'outil principal des établissements qui leur permet d'obtenir un avantage concurrentiel et de les rendre compétitifs et de fournir des services de qualité, pour la satisfaction des clients . Lier la gestion des connaissances à la qualité de service peut contribuer à convaincre les gestionnaires d'établissements de la nécessité d'adopter de nouvelles stratégies de gestion des connaissances et à prendre en compte tous ces enjeux. Cette étude vise à vérifier le rôle des capacités de gestion des connaissances y compris (l'infrastructure des connaissances et les processus de gestion des connaissances) dans l'amélioration de l'image du service dans les établissements d'enseignement supérieur grâce au rôle de médiateur de l'engagement organisationnel. D'après l'analyse menée sur 352

universitaires, d'administrateurs et de professeurs travaillant dans un échantillon d'établissements en Palestine, bande de Gaza, les résultats ont montré un impact positif et clair des capacités de gestion des connaissances à l'amélioration de la qualité de service. Les résultats montrent également un effet partiel de l'engagement organisationnel en tant que variable intermédiaire dans la relation entre les capacités de gestion des connaissances et la qualité de service car ces résultats offrent aux gestionnaires de nouvelles perspectives pour améliorer la qualité des services d'établissements d'enseignement supérieur, grâce à l'application de stratégies qui dépendent principalement des capacités de gestion des connaissances en plus d'exploiter la technologie moderne. En adoptant une structure efficace et en diffusant une culture de soutien pour le partage et l'échange de connaissances en plus d'assurer une mise en œuvre efficace des processus de gestion des connaissances ce qui va aider à augmenter le niveau d'engagement or

ganisationnel dans les établissements ce qui a son tour conduira à un service de haute qualité et créativité en améliorant les performances générales des établissements

MOTS CLÉS

Capacités de gestion des connaissances ; Capacité du processus de connaissances; Capacité d'infrastructure de connaissances; Qualité du service; L'engagement organisationnel.

JEL CLASSIFICATION : M53

دور إمكانات إدارة المعرفة في تحقيق جودة الخدمة في مؤسسات التعليم العالي: الدور الوسيط للالتزام التنظيمي

ملخص

في ظل المنافسة الكبيرة التي يعيشها العالم، تعد إدارة المعرفة الأداة الرئيسية للمؤسسات والتي تمكنها من تحقيق ميزة تنافسية؛ وتجعلها قادرة على المنافسة وتقديم خدمات ذات جودة أفضل من اجل إرضاء العملاء. إن ربط إدارة المعرفة بجودة الخدمة يمكن أن يسهم في إقناع مديري المؤسسات حول ضرورة اعتماد استراتيجيات جديدة لإدارة المعرفة. ومع الأخذ بعين الاعتبار كل هذه القضايا، تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التحقق من دور إمكانات إدارة المعرفة وتشمل (البنية التحتية للمعرفة وعمليات إدارة المعرفة) في تحسين جودة الخدمة في مؤسسات التعليم العالي من خلال الدور الوسيط للالتزام التنظيمي. وبناءً على التحليل الذي أجري على 352 أكاديمياً من الإداريين وأعضاء هيئة التدريس العاملين في عينة من مؤسسات التعليم العالي في فلسطين -قطاع غزة، أظهرت النتائج وجود تأثيراً إيجابياً واضحاً لإمكانات إدارة المعرفة في تحسين جودة الخدمة، كما أظهرت النتائج وجود تأثيراً جزئياً للالتزام التنظيمي كمتغير وسيط في العلاقة بين إمكانات إدارة المعرفة وجودة الخدمة. وبذلك، تقدم هذه النتائج آفاقاً جديدة للمديرين لتحسين جودة خدمات مؤسسات التعليم العالي من خلال تطبيق استراتيجيات تعتمد على إمكانات إدارة المعرفة بشكل أساسي إلى جانب تسخير التكنولوجيا الحديثة، واعتماد هيكلية فعالة، ونشر ثقافة داعمة لمشاركة وتبادل المعرفة، بالإضافة إلى ضمان تنفيذ عمليات إدارة المعرفة بشكل فعال. كما سيساعد تطبيق إمكانات إدارة المعرفة على زيادة مستوى الالتزام التنظيمي في المؤسسات، مما سيؤدي بدوره إلى تقديم خدمة ذات جودة عالية وتحقيق الابداع وتحسين الأداء العام للمؤسسات.

كلمات مفتاحية

امكانات إدارة المعرفة، عمليات إدارة المعرفة، البنية التحتية لإدارة المعرفة، جودة الخدمة، الالتزام التنظيمي.
تصنيف جال M53 :

INTRODUCTION

Knowledge is considered a main competitive factor in this world of economy (Torbaty et al., 2014). Consequently, different organizations have recognized the significance of knowledge management (KM) and they are doing their best to invest severely in KM (Jamil & Saeed Lodhi, 2015). Higher Education Institutions (HEI) play a vital role in this knowledge-based economy. Being learning organizations, they are able to produce high quality graduates, extend the knowledge skills, prompt innovation and creativity, and effectively contribute to the production of knowledge and the development of intellectual property (Pinto, 2014). Many recent studies support the idea that the effective KM allows HEIs to achieve a competitive advantage among competitors in the market (Adhikari, 2010; Al-Husseini & Elbeltagi, 2015; Li et al., 2014; Y. M. C. Yeh, 2011; Zheng et al., 2010). The history of the universities located in Palestine is considered recent; nevertheless, the impact they have on the special case of Palestine and the well-being of its people cannot be denied. Nowadays, the Palestinian universities as other HEIs in the same region or worldwide work hard in order to fulfil the needs and demands of students on education, and at the same time they are struggling to maintain a high quality and significant education (Koni et al., 2013). A research investigating the application of KM in universities by (Loh et al., 2010) indicates that there are many factors that benefit HEIs such as the creation and conservation of good knowledge sources, enhancing the access of knowledge, improving the environment, and giving better value to knowledge. Literature also stressed that the effective utilization of KM will result in better decision making and will cause

an improvement in the academic and administrative services. As well as leading to decrease in administrative costs, improving organizational learning, in addition to achieving a maintainable competitive advantage (Surat Chumjit, 2012). On the other hand, providing quality in an organization affects positively the organization's profit, efficiency and will help maintain more faithful customers (Davis et al., 2012). Service quality is very significant in retaining customers, so it is better for organizations to understand the factors that significantly enhance service quality. Moreover, organizations should perform in a better way in implementing knowledge processes to obtain the needed knowledge for offering subsequent services and thus satisfying their customers (Bull, 2010). It is also indicated that by equipping the employees of an organization with the needed knowledge and skills, the organization will be able to deliver services with high quality services for its customers (Downes, 2014). The value of KM practices is well recognized around the world, however, there are limited empirical studies on the relationships between KMC and SQ and very little has been done to explore knowledge management on enhancing service delivery (Kangogo, 2015). Most studies on KMC with SQ are generally conducted in banking sector, insurance companies and business enterprises, and have never been accomplished any empirical studies in education sector. However, improvement of the KMC of HEIs is recommended in order to improve their effectiveness (Shih & Tsai, 2016). This gap leads to the first research motivation of this study, which is to consider whether these relationships can be applied to HEIs. Next, prior research sheds light on relationships between KMC and SQ has been inconclusive, as most of the studies only investigated the role of one element of KMC and neglected the other. (Rashidi et al., 2015a) assessed only KPC with SQ, while (Haraisa, 2016; Reza & Javadein, 2013) evaluated KIC alone with SQ. However, successful knowledge management requires both capabilities; KIC and KPC. Investing only in either knowledge management infrastructures or process is unsatisfactory to improve organizational outcomes (Cho, 2011; Gold & Arvind Malhotra, 2001). This gap leads to the second research

motivation, which is to investigate the effect of both elements of KMC on improving service quality. On the other hand, considering that managing knowledge workers would be a difficult task, as most of the knowledge workers in organizations need some level of autonomy and do not like to be overseen or managed (Chiu & Chen, 2016a) consequently, managers need to be carefully targeted before being assigned to a knowledge worker, because their interests and goals will influence the quality of work. Research on this topic should take into consideration concepts of willingness and motivation. This gap leads to the third research motivation, which is proposing the effect of “organizational commitment” to fill this gap. In this regard, the aim of this study is to bridge these gaps of literature by examining the relationships between KMC (infrastructure and process) and Service Quality through the mediating role of organizational commitment by choosing HEIs as its research object in order to expand the scope of related studies and stand as a reference for future scholars working in this area. As understanding the current situation and the real needs of employees will help organizations, (especially HEIs) implement key success factors, perfectly manage their knowledge strategies, and improve their overall competitiveness and service quality.

1- THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

1.1- Knowledge Management Capability

Based on Organizational capability theory introduced by (Gold & Arvind Malhotra, 2001) which advanced knowledge management effectiveness from the organizational capability perspective, it is argued that an organization’s predisposition to KM effectiveness lies in the KM infrastructure and process capabilities of this organization. The infrastructure capabilities include three main capabilities (i.e. cultural, structural and technological) while the process capabilities include (knowledge acquisition, conversion, application and protection). KMC mainly include all the existing capabilities in an organization which possibly may influence the way this organization manages its knowledge (Gold & Arvind Malhotra, 2001; Y.-C. Lee & Lee, 2007). It can also be defined as ‘the ability to mobilize and

deploy KM-based resources in combination with other resources and capabilities', resulting in a sustainable competitive advantage as well as achieving different organizational outcomes (Chuang, 2004). However, the definition of (Chang & Chuang, 2011) is considered general, as they defined KMC by "the ability to use the existing resources and capabilities by the organization in order to create and benefit from the existing knowledge within the organization". (Gold & Arvind Malhotra, 2001) proposed knowledge management (KM) infrastructure capabilities (Technology, culture, and structure) and process capabilities (Acquisition, conversion, application, protection) as direct determining factors of organizational effectiveness (Gold & Arvind Malhotra, 2001; Smith et al., 2010). This paper applies the model by (Gold & Arvind Malhotra, 2001) which will be discussed thoroughly in the following sections.

1.1.1. Knowledge infrastructure capabilities

(KIC) are mandatory to construct and maintain standard capabilities which are shared with different organizational activities and tasks (Chiu & Chen, 2016a). According to (Gold & Arvind Malhotra, 2001), KIC is assessed by three main constructs: structural infrastructure, technical infrastructure, and cultural infrastructure.

1.1.1.1. Technology Infrastructure

It means the mechanism that facilitates an effective transfer of information and knowledge within and outside the organization (Nonaka, 1994). According to (Zaied, 2012b) technology helps to ease condensing the time of response to customers specially in service sector. (Gold & Arvind Malhotra, 2001) confirmed that technology is a crucial element needed to manage social capital to create knowledge. It can help organizations to quickly obtain, store, and share knowledge, it also enables mapping internal or external resources of knowledge, integrating knowledge flows, and applying existing knowledge in order to create new knowledge (Gold & Arvind Malhotra, 2001; Ra'ed Masa'deh et al., 2016a).

1.1.1.2. Culture Infrastructure

(Gold & Arvind Malhotra, 2001) argued that culture is “the supportive capability for the valuation of organizational knowledge and builds an interactive, collaborative atmosphere among the organization’s members”. For (Ho, 2009), culture includes a complicated group of values, beliefs, norms, behaviours, and symbols which affect managing knowledge in organizations. Researchers have reported that trust and commitment are the most significant elements of culture for promoting knowledge sharing. As high levels of commitment can reduce the unwillingness of individuals to share their knowledge (Kushwaha & Rao, 2015; Ra’ed Masa’deh et al., 2016b). Therefore, establishing a culture which allows easy access of knowledge should be at the top priorities of management (Y.-J. Yeh et al., 2006).

1.1.1.3. Structural Infrastructure

It refers to the physical layout of an organization and its hierarchy (Armbrecht et al., 2001). An appropriate physical structure, including offices design and locations, is good for knowledge sharing. Flexible hierarchical structures, as matrix teams or flattened organizations, also increase communication among individuals and sharing their behavior in the organization (Armbrecht et al., 2001; Gold & Arvind Malhotra, 2001). KM literature indicated that changes in the structure of an organization is important for effective transfer and creation of knowledge in any organization (Gold & Arvind Malhotra, 2001; Grant, 1996).

1.1.2. Knowledge Process Capabilities

(Alaarj et al., 2016) defined KPC as being systematic processes which helps organizations in acquiring, sharing and using the organizational knowledge effectively. (Nonaka, 1994) points out that KPC are about implementing the different knowledge activities to increase knowledge effectiveness and transform this knowledge from implicit form of knowledge to the explicit one. There are various processes in literature, the model of (Gold & Arvind Malhotra, 2001)

for KPC includes “acquisition, conversion, application, and protection”. These abilities can be used to influence KIC. Therefore, they will be adopted for this study as follows:

1.1.2.1. Knowledge Acquisition

It is considered as the most important element of KPC and refers to the organization’s ability to acquire new knowledge from inside and outside an organization in order to address existing and new problems, as well as achieve innovation and competitive advantage (Gold & Arvind Malhotra, 2001; Nonaka, 1994). It is also related to the ability of an organization to identify, access, then collect internal and external sources of knowledge which are crucial for performing the activities of the organization (Chiu & Chen, 2016; Zahra & George, 2002). New knowledge generation is the most important outcome of knowledge acquisition. Being a vital resource for organizations, it positively influences innovation and results in reaching a competitive edge (Tseng, 2014; Zaied, 2012a).

1.1.2.2. Knowledge Conversion

Knowledge that is captured from the various internal and external environments needs to be converted to organizational knowledge, so as to be effectively used (Fattahiyan et al., 2013). Operationally, conversion exists when “employees are able to achieve, through formal or informal channels, knowledge conversions during conversations and meetings in everyday life. The knowledge internalized/externalized between employees and the organization enables a company to transfer knowledge to the database, so the organization’s IT may remain updated with the business administration process, punctuality and efficiency in organizing knowledge improved all at once.” (Huang, 2011).

1.1.2.3. Knowledge Application

It is defined as the form knowledge is utilized within the organization (Carrillo et al. 2004). Applying Knowledge involves using knowledge in performing different tasks as; problem solving,

decision making, generation of new ideas, as well as learning (Mohammad et al., 2014). For (Bhatt, 2001) knowledge application means “making knowledge more active and relevant for the organization in creating value”. It also refers to the response of knowledge and organization makes, reflecting its ability to respond to the various types of information the organization can access (V.-H. Lee et al., 2013). Through effective application of knowledge, an organization can efficiently improve and utilize existing knowledge (Liao & Wu, 2009; Zwain et al., 2012) which in turn affects the development of a valuable knowledge (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Gold, 2001).

1.1.2.4. Knowledge Protection

It plays a vital role in the performing functions and control effectively within the organization. It means to ensure that there are security-oriented knowledge processes which can be “designed to protect the knowledge within an organization from illegal or inappropriate use or theft” (Gold & Arvind Malhotra, 2001). The definition by (Tseng, 2016b) presents the process of protection as the ability of the organization to protect knowledge from any illegal or inappropriate use or from theft. (M. R. Lee & Lan, 2011). Thus, security of management’s information systems of organizations is at all times a major concern. Protecting knowledge within organizations requires adopting strict, clear and accurate policies to ensure that knowledge assets are secured at all times (M. R. Lee & Lan, 2011).

1.2- Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment (OC) has been a subject of substantial concern in previous studies for its significant influence on work attitudes, employees’ behaviors and performance effectiveness. OC is considered multidimensional in nature, as it “involves an employee’s loyalty to the organization, willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organization, degree of goal and value congruency with the organization, and desire to maintain membership” (Bateman & Strasser, 1984). (Mathis & Jackson, 2004) defined OC as “the level of

trust and acceptance of employees on the organization's goals and desires owned to remain in the organization". The organizations that invest to develop committed employees have more customer satisfaction. On the other hand, employees who fail to perform their assigned tasks willingly, will influence negatively the service quality (Zeithaml et al., 1996) . Different scholars have defined organizational commitment depending on their back grounds. The most significant ones belong to (Meyer et al., 2002) they suggested different kinds of commitment as follows:

1.2.1. Affective commitment

It refers to emotional concern of employees about their organizations, with a sense of solidarity, and showing active presence in it. Affective commitment is stressed when employees feel that their organizations respect and support them.

1.2.2. Normative commitment

It refers to employees feeling obliged to remain in an organization. Therefore, they will remain in their organizations unless they feel that staying in the organization is inappropriate and inaccurate based on their opinion.

1.2.3. Continuous commitment

This kind of commitment is related to costs and benefits upon which an employee decides to remain in or quit the organization. Actually, this commitment depends on some calculations which so it is considered as rational commitment and reflects that leaving the organization will cause exorbitant expenditures to employees.

Researchers interested in Organizational commitment have paid attention to identifying predictors of organizational commitment and studied these predictors, not merely to achieve commitment at the end, but as a means to link commitment to necessary organizational outcomes as achieving improved attendance as well as improved performance (Oluseye, 2011). Moreover, organizations seeking to retain knowledge workers and motivating them to improve strong

organizational commitment have to encourage employees to share their knowledge in different ways, through offering organizational support, creating policies that establish a supportive climate for knowledge sharing, encouraging teamwork, and building close relationships among members of management team and employees (Benson & Brown, 2007; Govindasamy, 2009). Accordingly, it has been recognized that organizations find it necessary to engage in organizational commitments as a result of the competition in the service organization, in order to enhance the effectiveness of service quality.

In this regard, this study aims to assess the mediating effect of organizational commitment on the relationship between KIC, KPC and service quality.

1.3- Service Quality

Service quality is considered as one of the most significant research fields during the last few decades (Gallifa & Batallé, 2010). Enhancing service quality is of great importance for organizations in order to compete and survive in the market and to attain customer's satisfaction. Hence, it is obvious that poor quality of the services offered to customers and the dissatisfaction of those customers are major concerns of organizations (Habidin et al., 2015). Higher education institutions are no exception, as service quality in education sector is not only essential and significant, but also it is seen as an important parameter for educational excellence. In educational institutions, the positive perceptions of service quality make students more satisfied with the service, and they would attract other students by word-of-mouth communications (Alves & Raposo, 2010). (Ahmed et al., 2010) indicated that service quality is a key strategic variable for universities which enables them to create a strong perception in their consumers' mind. Many research works have already attempted to give a definition to quality, where most of the researchers agree that it is impossible to reach a correct and unambiguous definition for the concept of quality (MaCukow, 2000). For instance; (Anantharanthan Parasuraman et al., 1985) defined service quality as "the ability of an organization to meet or exceed customer expectations". Whereas,

(Athiyaman, 1997) defined perceived service quality as “an overall evaluation of the goodness or badness of a product or service” that is delivered to customers.

(A. Parasuraman et al., 1988) have developed a model to measure SQ called SERVQUAL which is considered as the most important of all models. SERVQUAL has achieved high popularity and wide application in the last decades, and considered a principal instrument in the service literature for assessing quality. In order to improve quality, service providers need to identify the main determinants of service quality. SERVQUAL includes five dimensions (tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy). Tangibles indicates the existence of physical facilities, communication materials, personnel, and equipment (Kotler et al., 2012). Reliability refers to the employees’ ability to act consistently and correctly (Al-Alak et al., 2012). Responsiveness means the desire of employees to assist customers and provide quick service (Kotler et al., 2012). Assurance refers to the realization and courtesy of employees and their ability to show confidence and trust (Kotler et al., 2012). Empathy is the caring and individualized attention of employees towards customers (Kotler et al., 2012). All of the previously mentioned dimensions are applied in educational sector as well in various set ups.

In this regard, it is indicated that institutions are able to improve the quality of their service if they listen to and take into consideration the experiences of stakeholders (Berry & Parasuraman, 1997). The majority of studies in higher education service quality have paid attention to student’s view of quality, while little attention has been given to the perceptions of academic and administration staff (Khodayari & Khodayari, 2011). Thus, this study aims at measuring SQ from the perception of academic middle managers and teaching staff.

2- THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT CAPABILITY AND SERVICE QUALITY

Services are very for the life and survival of communities and exist in the heart of them, in this competitive and challenging environment, organizations need to improve the quality of their

services constantly to sustain their survival through knowledge management (KM) (Rashidi et al., 2015b). knowledge management is considered as a resource for organizations, however, it has a significant effect on the quality of services achieved through the organizational resources (Jafari et al., 2011). In order to enhance the quality of services provided to customers, organizations need to increase the knowledge of its staff. In other words, organizations need to use and implement knowledge management effectively, in order to improve their quality of services (Rashidi et al., 2015b). The quality of services are better provided by organizations when employees are more familiar with knowledge, they are able to adapt themselves quickly to technology of today, able to communicate with customers, and are accountable for their needs much better by using this knowledge. It is indicated by (Zaied, 2012b), that KM provides organizations with sustainable competitive advantage through adopting advanced technologies, performing better processes, having strong and good collaborative structure, sharing information knowledge and attitudes, and obtaining protection system as well as problem solving tools.

3- THE MEDIATING ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

Nowadays, it is totally acknowledged that human resource is the key factor in knowledge management (KM) productivity (Zahedi & Tejari, 2008). Literature has indicated that KM has great effect on organizational outcomes such as innovation, quality, and improvements on employee's morale (Alzoubi & Alnajjar, 2010). However, KM requires a great shift and commitment of all members of organizations in effectively implementing KM to make it work (Gupta et al., 2000). In order to facilitate employees commitment; organizations need to ensure smooth and clear information flow from higher managerial levels to employees without any sophisticated technical details (King & Grace, 2010). On the other hand, when there is an increase in knowledge sharing inside organizations, there will be an increase in the level of commitment by employees to their

organizations, which in turn will make them do their best to achieve organizational objectives (Seyed Mehdi Mousavi Davoudi, 2012).

Organizational commitment is of great importance in organizations in improving organization performance and ensuring competitive advantage (Bashir & Long, 2015). One of the important outcome of organizational commitment is its close relation to the quality of the service (Bai, Billy, 2014). Literature indicated that it is necessary for organization to pay attention to organizational commitment to increase the effectiveness of service quality (Ogunnaike & Olaleke, 2011), as employees who are really committed show higher job performance. When employees fail to perform the given duties willingly, service quality will suffer damages (Zeithaml et al., 1996). It is stated by (Vandenberghe & Tremblay, 2008) that a effective organizational commitment helps the organization to provide service quality. Additionally, commitment of employee to their organization is a good incentive which encourages them to work for organizational goals and achieve their targets (Hafiz, 2017).

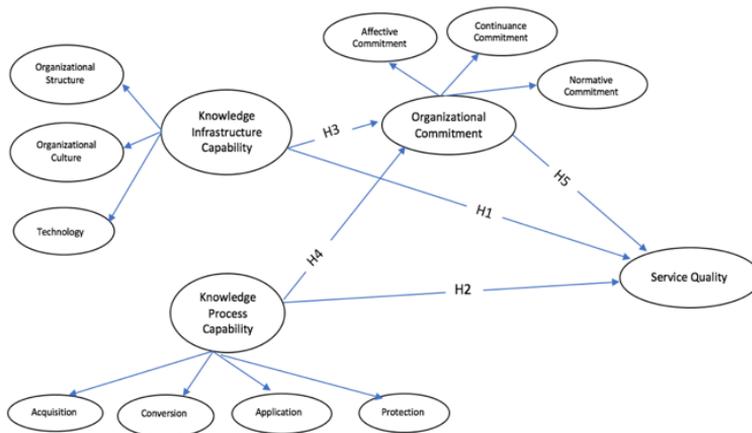
Organizational commitment has mediated the relationship between different variables such as; Organizational Culture and Job Satisfaction (Iriqat, 2016), perceived organizational support and turnover intentions (Tumwesigye, 2010), Work Motivation , Leadership Style and Learning Organization to the Employees Performance (Trang et al., 2013), knowledge management capability and organizational effectiveness (Chiu & Chen, 2016b), work behavior and organizational culture (Ramshida & Manikandan, 2013). Thus, this study aims at investigating the mediating effect of organizational commitment in the relationship between KMC and SQ.

4- PROPOSED MODEL DEVELOPMENT AND HYPOTHESES

As shown in Figure 1, the conceptual model of this study was developed based on a review of the related literature. The model is consisted of four constructs. The independent constructs are knowledge infrastructure capabilities (KIC) and knowledge process capabilities (KPC). In this study, Service quality is the dependent construct, while organizational commitment is expected to play a

mediating role in the relationship between the independent constructs and the dependent construct.

Fig 1. The proposed research model



Source: elaborated by authors

Based on the literature review previously discussed, it can be hypothesized that:

H1: Knowledge infrastructure capabilities have significant effect on service quality.

H2: Knowledge process capabilities affect positively the service quality.

H3: Knowledge infrastructure capabilities have significant effect on organizational commitment.

H4: Knowledge process capabilities affect positively the organizational commitment.

H5: organizational commitment has significant effect on service quality.

H5a: organizational commitment mediates the relationship between knowledge infrastructure capabilities and service quality.

H5b: organizational commitment mediates the relationship between knowledge process capabilities and service quality.

5- .METHODOLOGY

5.1- Research Design

Although the SEM technique includes several statistical methods enabling scholars to modify and test models and theories (Anderson & Gerbing, 1982), a preferable technique is definitely hypothesis testing and parameter evaluation (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; J F Hair et al., 2010) (Joe F Hair et al., 2011). In SEM and according to (Henseler et al., 2009), both VB-SEM and convenience-based SEM (CB-SEM) begin with a theory. (Joe F Hair et al., 2011) argued that CB-SEM focuses on measurement errors or a set of model parameters whereas PLS-SEM delegates scholars to assess the causal relationship of latent constructs and the causal relationship between items (Ahmadi et al., 2015). To add on, if the purpose of the study is to extend the existing structural theory, PLS-SEM is a preferred technique over CB-SEM (Joe F Hair et al., 2011). Furthermore, (Henseler et al., 2014) and (Joe F Hair et al., 2011) suggested that PLS-SEM is a preferred technique when the main purpose of the study is the accuracy of prediction in a complex model with many indicators and constructs. Therefore, this study considers PLS-SEM method as the most suitable approach for analysis based on the aforesaid justifications, as well as because of the complexity of the proposed model (many indicators and construct's) (J F Hair et al., 2011).

PLS-SEM analysis includes two processes which are to assess the inner model (measurement model) and to assess the outer model (structural model) (Henseler, 2010). The measurement model evaluates the relationship between the indicators and the validation of constructs, whereas the structural model assesses the relationship between constructs (hypothesis testing) (Anderson & Gerbing, 1982). In the present study, PLS-SEM analysis is evaluated by SmartPLS software.

The tool for data collection is a self-directed questionnaire with closed-ended questions based on the Likert-5 coding technique and developed based on the prior research. These elements provided a valued source for data gathering and measurement as their reliability

and validity have been verified through previous research and peer reviews.

5.2- Sampling and data collection procedures

The targeted study population is higher education institutions (HEIs) in Palestine specially located in Gaza Strip, which are selected from the 2018 Ministry of Higher Education MOHE' official website (www.mohe.pna.ps). This study covers nine of Palestinian HEIs on the basis of category as follows; (3 Universities, 3 University Colleges, and 3 Community Colleges). The population of this study consists of all academic middle managers (Dean, Deputy Dean, and Head of Academic Departments) and teaching staff working in the target institutions due to their significant role in the implementation of knowledge management activities (Cho, 2011; Siam, 2015).

The potential participants invited to complete the survey were 455, whereas the actual participants who agreed to fill in the questionnaire were 389. After filtering incomplete questionnaires, the valid samples for proceeding are 352. The data was collected during the months of March and April 2018. The sample size of this study was determined based on the rules of thumb for using SEM in order to obtain reliable and valid results. According to (Joe F Hair et al., 2011), sample size can be considered effective when the size ranges between 30 to 500. Identifying the sample size through power analysis before applying SEM models was suggested by (Hair Jr et al., 2016). This current study used the prior-sample size calculator for Structural Equation Models (SEM). This study calculated the sample size with information such as the number of all measurement items and the number of exogenous variables and endogenous variables as input data. First, given the number of latent constructs (11), observed variables (27), anticipated effect size (0.3), desired probability (0.05), and statistical power levels (0.8), the result implies that 195 responses/cases are required as the minimum sample size to detect the effect and 297 responses/cases are required as the minimum sample size for the model structure.

Likewise, the recommended minimum sample size required by “A-priori sample size calculator for Structural Equation Models” was 297 responses/cases. This implies that the model is statistically strong to detect any significant effects. Based on the aforementioned justifications, the sample size required for this study is an adequate data to run the PLS-SEM analysis.

5.3- Questionnaire

The survey instrument used in this study is developed by the researcher based on the literature reviewed the in relation to the KMC, OC and SQ and was adapted to fit the Palestinian higher education context. The questionnaire includes four parts: The first part involves the demographic profile of respondents. The second part includes 15 items measuring KIC (Technology, culture, and structure) and 18 items to measure KPC (Acquisition, conversion, application and protection) both are adapted from (Gold & Arvind Malhotra, 2001; Tseng, 2016a). The third part consists of 10 items measuring OC (Affective commitment, Normative commitment, Continuous commitment) adapted from (Meyer & Allen, 1991). The final part of the questionnaire includes 8 items to measure SQ, adapted from SERVQUAL instrument by (A. Parasuraman et al., 1988). All constructs of the survey questionnaire were measured based on a five-point Likert Scale.

5.4-Validity & Reliability of the Instrument

The face validity of the questionnaire was checked. The adequacy and appropriateness of a questionnaire’s items were assessed by presenting them to a set of academicians and experts and applied statistics. Additionally, the reliability of the questionnaire was checked through using Cronbach Alpha to measure the questionnaire’s items’ internal consistency. The values of Cronbach Alpha which ranged from (0.82) to (0.88) are accepted once to adopt the questionnaire as a tool of measurement (Joseph F. Hair et al., 2014).

6- FINDINGS

6.1- Analysis on Respondents’ Profile

Data screening was conducted to check for incomplete responses, missing data, and outliers. For this study, (455) questionnaires were distributed and out of them (389) were returned. Non completed answers counted (23) and the first draft of data set was (366) where only (352) responses were valid for proceeding with analysis. The majority of respondents are 78.1% males, 40.3% of their age ranges between 41 and 50 years, 45.2% have an experience up to 10 years, 49.4% possess a master degree, 83.8% are faculty members, and 67.6% are working in universities.

6.2- Results for Measurement Model

In order to analyze the data, this study used SmartPLS to perform tests on the measurement model and check the reliability and validity of the items (Figure 2). Outer loadings of each item, average variance extracted (AVE), and composite reliability (CR) were all checked for each construct. Items with loadings that is 0.708 and above are considered acceptable (Joseph F. Hair et al., 2014; Hulland, 1999) values less than 0.5 were removed to make sure the AVE values achieved 0.5 and above, and CR values should be 0.7 or higher to consider them acceptable (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Joseph F. Hair et al., 2014).

Two items from the construct of KIC, four items from KPC, and two items from SQ were deleted. Results as shown in Tables (1), (2) and (3) indicated that the measurement model achieved acceptable convergent validity and discriminant validity.

Table 1. Reliability and Validity of Independent Variables

| Construct | Item | Loading | AVE | Composite Reliability |
|---|-------|---------|-------|-----------------------|
| Knowledge Infrastructure Capability – Structure | KIS2 | 0.767 | 0.573 | 0.75 |
| | KIS3 | 0.773 | | |
| | KIS4 | 0.730 | | |
| | KIS5 | 0.756 | | |
| Knowledge Infrastructure Capability – Culture | KICC1 | 0.793 | 0.617 | 0.84 |
| | KICC2 | 0.746 | | |

| | | | | |
|---|-------|--------|--------|------|
| | KICC3 | 0.829 | | |
| | KICC4 | 0.817 | | |
| | KICC5 | 0.737 | | |
| Knowledge Infrastructure Capability – Technology | KIT1 | 0.8307 | | |
| | KIT2 | 0.879 | 0.699 | 0.86 |
| | KIT3 | 0.847 | | |
| | KIT4 | 0.786 | | |
| Knowledge Process Capability – Acquisition | KPA3 | 0.753 | | |
| | KPA4 | 0.7420 | 0.582 | 0.64 |
| | KPA5 | 0.794 | | |
| Knowledge Process– Conversion | KPCC1 | 0.707 | | |
| | KPCC2 | 0.783 | 0.583 | 0.64 |
| | KPCC4 | 0.797 | | |
| Knowledge Process Capability – Application | KPN1 | 0.796 | | |
| | KPN3 | 0.704 | 0.6408 | 0.72 |
| | KPN4 | 0.889 | | |
| Knowledge Process Capability – Protection | KPP1 | 0.787 | | |
| | KPP2 | 0.896 | | |
| | KPP3 | 0.896 | 0.707 | 0.89 |
| | KPP4 | 0.889 | | |
| | KPP5 | 0.722 | | |

Source: elaborated by

Table 2. Construct Reliability and Validity of mediator

| Construct | Item | Loading | AVE | Composite Reliability |
|---|------|---------|-------|-----------------------|
| Affective of Organizational Commitment | AC1 | 0.813 | 0.652 | 0.85 |
| | AC2 | 0.800 | | |
| | AC3 | 0.809 | | |
| Continuance of Organizational Commitment | CC1 | 0.727 | 0.586 | 0.81 |
| | CC2 | 0.803 | | |
| | CC3 | 0.763 | | |
| | NC1 | 0.812 | | |
| Normative of Organizational Commitment | NC2 | 0.819 | 0.660 | 0.83 |
| | NC3 | 0.841 | | |
| | NC4 | 0.774 | | |
| | | | | |

Table 3. Construct Reliability and Validity of Dependent Variable

| Construct | Item | Loading | AVE | Composite Reliability |
|-----------------|------|---------|-------|-----------------------|
| Service Quality | SQ2 | 0.777 | 0.612 | 0.90 |
| | SQ4 | 0.748 | | |
| | SQ5 | 0.714 | | |
| | SQ6 | 0.808 | | |
| | SQ7 | 0.889 | | |
| | SQ8 | 0.743 | | |

Source: elaborated by

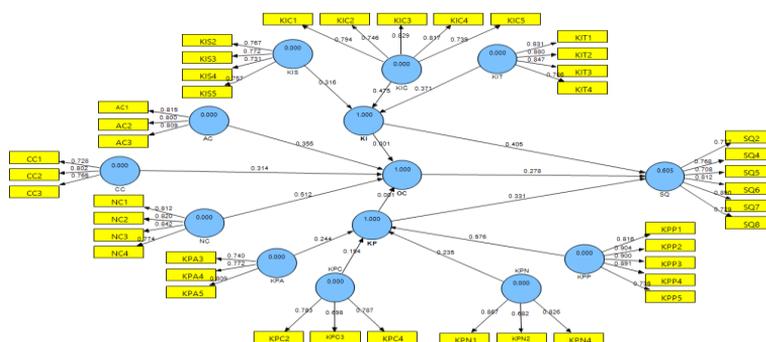
Table 4. Discriminant Validity Assessment of Research Variables

| | AC | CC | KIC | KIS | KIT | KPA | KPC | KPN | KPP | NC | SQ |
|-----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| AC | 0.81 | | | | | | | | | | |
| CC | 0.61 | 0.77 | | | | | | | | | |
| KICC | 0.45 | 0.51 | 0.79 | | | | | | | | |
| KIS | 0.54 | 0.58 | 0.69 | 0.76 | | | | | | | |
| KIT | 0.36 | 0.44 | 0.65 | 0.44 | 0.84 | | | | | | |
| KPA | 0.43 | 0.54 | 0.45 | 0.56 | 0.37 | 0.76 | | | | | |
| KPCC | 0.42 | 0.47 | 0.47 | 0.49 | 0.32 | 0.49 | 0.76 | | | | |
| KPN | 0.36 | 0.46 | 0.49 | 0.51 | 0.27 | 0.52 | 0.41 | 0.80 | | | |
| KPP | 0.39 | 0.48 | 0.52 | 0.53 | 0.39 | 0.43 | 0.38 | 0.52 | 0.84 | | |
| NC | 0.54 | 0.56 | 0.39 | 0.52 | 0.36 | 0.63 | 0.54 | 0.39 | 0.30 | 0.81 | |
| SQ | 0.58 | 0.48 | 0.43 | 0.47 | 0.36 | 0.42 | 0.41 | 0.27 | 0.39 | 0.50 | 0.78 |

Notes: (1) Diagonal numbers in bold represent the square root of the AVE

Source: elaborated by

Fig 2. PLS-path model



Source: elaborated by

6.3- Structural Model

Consequently, a bootstrapping technique was performed by SmartPLS in order to test the structural model and find out the path coefficients and path significance. In Table (7), results of bootstrapping are shown. Next, the predictive relevance and predictive power were checked for the proposed model. The results as shown in Table (5), indicated that the exogenous variables (KIC, KPC, and OC) have a moderate predictive power and large predictive relevance on the endogenous latent variable SQ, while the exogenous variables (KIC and KPC) have satisfactory predictive power and medium predictive relevance on the endogenous latent variable OC.

Table 5. Predictive Power and Predictive Relevance Assessment of Proposed Model

| | Predictive Power | | Predictive Relevance | |
|----|------------------|--------------|----------------------|--------|
| | R Square | Status | Q Square | Status |
| SQ | 0.604503 | Moderate | 0.603429 | Large |
| OC | 0.211796 | Satisfactory | 0.208237 | Medium |

Table 6. Structural Relationships and Hypothesis Testing

| | Original Sample (O) | T Statistics | Sig (1tailed) | Status |
|------------|---------------------|--------------|---------------|----------|
| H1 KIC->SQ | 0.404914 | 14.021259 | 0.00001 | Accepted |
| H2 KPC->SQ | 0.330909 | 9.203874 | 0.00001 | Accepted |
| H3 KIC->OC | 0.329764 | 7.185958 | 0.00001 | Accepted |
| H4 KPC->OC | 0.222396 | 4.505745 | 0.00001 | Accepted |
| H5 OC->SQ | 0.278208 | 8.701227 | 0.00001 | Accepted |

Source: elaborated by

As shown in Table (6), referring to the significance of each path coefficient. All path coefficients are recognized to be significant (t-values for all path coefficients are statistically significant at the $\alpha=0.05$ level), providing support for all hypotheses. H1 and H2 indicate that the degree of KMC (KIC and KPC) will have a positive significant effect on service quality. H3 and H4 state that KMC (KIC and KPC) both will have a positive effect on organizational commitment, while H5 indicates the degree of OC will have a significant positive effect on service quality.

Table 7. Structural Relationships of the Proposed Model

| | Direct Effect | Indirect Effect | Total Effect | T Statistics of Mediation | Status |
|----------------|---------------|-----------------|--------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| KI -> OC -> SQ | 0.404 | 0.09173 | 0.4966 | 5.5407 | Approved (Partial) |
| KP -> OC -> SQ | 0.330 | 0.06186 | 0.3927 | 4.0011 | Approved (Partial) |

Source: elaborated by

For mediation analysis, it is very important to assess the direct effect, the indirect effect, and the total effect. All these effects were calculated on basis of the actual path coefficient values of the model (Darlington & Hayes, 2016). The significance of the mediations is based on Sobel mediation procedure. Organizational commitment was suggested to mediate the relationship between KIC and KPC and service quality. As shown in Table 7, once organizational commitment entered the relationship between KIC and SQ, and between KPC and SQ, the direct effect decreased. This drop shows that there is a mediating effect of organizational commitment on the relationships. However, this mediation is partial as the direct effect is still significant. Thus, H5a and H5b are both supported and OC has a partial mediating effect on the relationships between KMC (KIC, KPC) and SQ.

CONCLUSION

First of all, this research contributes to the growing body of knowledge related to the applicability of theories by providing more evidence from a developing a country. It also contributes in expanding the area of the field of study in different environment than other studies had been conducted where very limited studies have been done to explore these relationships. Furthermore, this is the first study that examines the role of organizational commitment as a mediator in these relationships.

In terms of the practical implications, the results of this study will assist managers of HEIs by stressing strength points and emphasizing the perception of service quality and organizational commitment. On the light of these findings, managers will be able to enhance service quality of their institutions, through ensuring effective

implementation of KIC and KPC strategies. As this paper mentioned previously, (Alavi & Leidner, 2001) indicated that KM plays a vital role at building competencies and creating intellectual capital especially when knowledge is considered from the capability perspective.

KIC was indicated to have effect on enhancing service quality of HEIs, hence, management of these institutions should pay special attention to technology infrastructure for its special role in encouraging knowledge sharing, providing the employees with the necessary knowledge to perform their tasks and ensures effective protection and storage of organizational knowledge. In term of culture, the HEIs management should support positive culture of cooperation, trust and commitment.

Based on the proved significant positive relationship between KPC and OC and SQ, HEIs need to encourage employees to participate and perform activities related to knowledge acquisition, conversion, application and protection, so as to achieve higher levels of OC and enhance their service quality. HEIs should equip their employees with the ability to apply their knowledge which will help them develop new services, solve their own problems and organizational problems, and improve work efficiency. In addition, institutions will be able to face challenges and competition. Employees should be encouraged to transfer organizational knowledge to individuals and acquire new knowledge from the different resources either external or internal. HEIs should create an incentive system to encourage employees to share their knowledge and protect organizational knowledge in addition to establishing policies and rules that protect knowledge from any inappropriate access or theft.

In addition, this study highlighted the importance of organizational commitment for HEIs. It is believed that it is very crucial to manage this concept accordingly, because implementing the process of knowledge conversion requires the desire of individuals or groups to work with others and share their knowledge and skills. Without sharing knowledge, it will be difficult for knowledge to be transferred. This also indicates that knowledge transfer will not take place in an organization

unless employees and teams show high levels of cooperation (Goh, 2002). Organizational development concentrates on supporting a change in the culture, attitudes, values, and beliefs of an organization. If all the concepts of (KIC, KPC, and organizational commitment) are managed effectively, knowledge is easily created, converted and applied in the organization.

On the other hand, the results of this study could stand as point of reference for all operations of knowledge-based HEIs. As this paper mentioned before, (Loh et al., 2010) state that the creation and conservation of good knowledge sources, enhancing the access of knowledge, improving the environment, and giving better value to knowledge are all considered important factors that can benefit HEIs. Through effective utilization of KM organizations will improve better decision-making process and will achieve an improvement in the academic and administrative services. Thus, this study assists managers in understanding the interrelationship between KMC and OC as being vital factors for enhancing service quality of HEIs. By understanding the current circumstances and actual needs of their employees, organization will achieve key success factors, improve their overall competitiveness and operational performance, and achieve a competitive advantage.

STUDY LIMITATION

This study targeted only HEIs in Gaza Strip; Palestine because people living in Gaza are not allowed to enter the other part of the State of Palestine (West Bank). It is advised that the same study should be conducted to include education institutions in West Bank in order to establish a more precise opinion about the quality of service in Higher Education institutions in all parts of Palestine. For further validity, the model could be examined in other cities, countries, and sectors around the world, for this may lead to different findings. In addition, future research would investigate the mediating role of other factors such as trust on the relationship between KMC and SQ, or investigate the moderating role of OC in order to contribute to the body of knowledge regarding these concepts.

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