ABSTRACT
The present paper aims to investigate the role of knowledge management components in empowerment of Sistan and Baluchistan Governorate Organization. The research population consists of 350 employees of the central headquarters and deputies of Sistan and Baluchistan Governorate. The sample size was determined to be 180 people based on Morgan’s estimation table. The research data have been collected using the two standardized questionnaires of knowledge management and empowerment. Also, the SPSS19 software has been used to analyze the research data based on appropriate statistical methods such as the single-sample t-test and multiple regression analysis. The results of this research show that knowledge management and its dimensions positively and significantly affect empowerment of organization.

KEY WORDS: knowledge management, knowledge acquisition, knowledge transfer, empowerment

INTRODUCTION

Today, knowledge is known as the only strategic source of competitive advantage in the international economics arena (Zack, 2002). Investigation of the theoretical literature and ideas of experts indicates the importance and necessity of applying knowledge management in organizations. Factors such as globalization, governments and organizations downsizing, citizen centering, and necessity of citizen participation shows the importance of special attention to knowledge management. Today organizations should focus on the management of their knowledge capitals to achieve their objectives (Abtahi and Salavati, 2006). Knowledge management is a controversial process, because the optimum use of it could create a competitive advantage for organizations. Using knowledge management, managers are seeking to extract and share knowledge accumulated in the minds of members of the organization. In this case, the knowledge stored in the system becomes a source of constant use and provides a sustainable competitive advantage for the organization (Huisman and Walf, 2006). On the other hand, one of the important factors for survival and life of organizations is the empowerment of employees and members of the organization; in other words, human resources and capitals should be considered more important than physical and financial capitals and technology (Abdollahi, 2006). Empowerment increases the organization’s ability to make effective use of human resources. Empowerment allows individuals to act creatively and innovatively and try to maintain and enhance their positions along with advancing organizational goals. To implement knowledge management in organizations, it is necessary to provide knowledge management enablers including organizational culture, structure, manpower, and information technology. Manpower is one of the essential factors for successful implementation of knowledge management in organizations. Empowerment of human resources causes the development of individuals’ talents in the organization (Salajegheh et al., 2013). Due to the importance of human power in knowledge management, the issue of empowering employees in organizations has been significantly taken into consideration by researchers; hence, the present research is aimed at investigating the role of knowledge management components in empowering the employees of Sistan and Baluchistan Governorate Organization.
2- The research theoretical framework:

2-1- Knowledge management:

Knowledge management is a concerted effort to capture the critical knowledge of the organization, share the knowledge within the organization, and highlight the knowledge in the collective memory of the organization to improve decision making and increase productivity and innovation (Spreitzer et al., 1997). Knowledge management involves capturing the valuable knowledge, wisdom, and experiences of employees and facilitating the retrieval and maintenance of knowledge as an asset of the organization. Knowledge management is an effort to convert the knowledge of employees (human capital) to the common organizational asset (structural intellectual capital) (Alvani, 1998). Knowledge management is a set of processes that convert data within the organization into valuable knowledge. The processes include the creation, acquisition, share, application, and internalization of knowledge (Lee and Hung, 2002). Pat Rish has provided a more acceptable and comprehensive definition for knowledge management that is: gaining right knowledge for proper people in proper time and place so that they can achieve organizational objectives by making the best use of knowledge (Quality and Productivity Center of America, 1999). Newman and Conrad (1999) proposed a framework model for knowledge management that is one of the two prevalent models offered by international co-operative forum of knowledge management (ICFOKM) [Haghighat & Houshiar, 1389].

![Knowledge Management Diagram](image-url)

Fig. 1: Newman & Conrad knowledge management framework model.

A) Knowledge Creation: Knowledge creation refers to the ability of an organization to create new and useful ideas and solutions [Marakas, 1999]. Knowledge creation is an important procedure in which, motivation, inspiration, experience, and chance play a significant role [Linn et al., 1996]. The criterion for evaluation of new knowledge is its effectiveness in solving current problems and innovation in the market. There are different ways to re-evaluate experiences. For example any organization can restore a part of existing knowledge by the use of imitation, repetition, and replacement strategies. In some cases an organization can improve its capabilities by relying on its own merits and reducing the inefficiencies. By further development of research section and application of modern technology, an organization can strengthen foundations of its knowledge [Butt, 2000].

B) Knowledge Retention: It includes storing, maintenance, and updating the knowledge and prevents it from destruction and waste, and enables exploitation of that knowledge [Litras et al., 2008]. It includes all activities that preserve knowledge and allow it to remain in the system once introduced. For that purpose, organizational memory is an issue that is most emphasized by experts. It is the organization’s ability to store and maintain the knowledge. If organizations seek effective management of knowledge, developing and use of organizational memory by itself is not going to be enough. Experts also emphasize on individual memory. It is the most important source of implicit knowledge. Knowledge management will be useful and effective, only if these two types of memory work together and reinforce each other.

C) Knowledge Sharing (dissemination): Dissemination and sharing knowledge is the most basic function of knowledge management [Nadjafi, 2011]. The purpose of knowledge sharing can be creation of new knowledge by incorporation and combination of the existing knowledge or by making better use of it. In order to develop an effective knowledge sharing process the individuals need to be willing and highly capable. The studies indicate that when employees are willing to share their knowledge, the process starts and spreads automatically. People share their knowledge because the want their experiences to be appreciated and practiced by others. Yet they need to be completely convinced that knowledge sharing is an essential matter [Mousakhani et al., 2013]
D) **Knowledge Utilization:** It includes the activities connected with the application of knowledge by the organization. Incorporating the ideas of employees into organizational procedures or selling organizational knowledge, are among such activities [Salehi Sedghiani & Kheirandish, 2004; Abtahi & Salavati 2006:48]. Mere knowledge is worthless. It will be valuable if only it can be put to use. No one appreciates a scientist who does not use his knowledge. Organizational knowledge in general must be applied for use in services, procedures, and production. If an organization fails to recognize appropriate knowledge in appropriate position, it will have problems in keeping up with the competition. In a time and era when innovation and creation in the means to victory, organizations must make haste in their endeavor to find true knowledge in its proper form [Haghighat Monfared & Houshiar, 2010].

2-2- **Knowledge management success factors:**

The main factors for the success of knowledge management can be classified into four groups including people, processes, technology and continuous strategic commitment. Some researchers believe that these factors can be classified in two categories; in this way that “Technology” and “Processes” are placed in a group and “People” and “Continuous strategic commitment” in another group [Heidari et al., 2009]. According to Heizring, knowledge management success factors include gaining experience, promoting Email culture, the support of senior managers, and combining knowledge tasks with daily tasks [Poor Sadegh, 2007].

2-3- **Empowerment:**

Conger and Kanungo (1988) believed that the root of empowerment concept, namely, the power of control should be analyzed (Abtahi, 2006). There is a comprehensive definition of empowerment where the empowerment consists of seven basic dimensions including authority, decision-making, information, independence, creativity and innovation, knowledge and skills, and responsibility [Peter et al., 2002]. Empowerment is also defined as instilling power in employees; hence, organizations should strengthen employees’ sense of personal power (Geisler, 2005). Empowerment is associated with factors such as delegating, job enrichment, and participation of employees. Empowered employees fulfill the work that has been entrusted to them in an effective manner without the supervision of others (Harley, 2006). In fact, to be empowered means the tendency to experience feelings of self-control, self-importance and freedom. Empowerment reduces absenteeism, job transfer and tensions (Avolio, 2007). The above definitions reveal the fact that if the concept of empowerment is correctly understood and associated with the idea of continuous improvement in the overall performance of the organization, it will make maximum utilization of intellectual resources.

2-4- **The dimensions empowerment:**

Spreitzer (1995), an expert in management science, in one of the best theoretical studies ever done on empowerment has identified the following dimensions as the psychological aspects of empowerment. These dimensions form the basis of this research. The dimensions are as follows:

1- **Sense of competence (self-effectiveness):** when people are empowered they feel self-effective or feel that they are qualified and talented enough to do a job successfully. Empowered people not only feel competent but also are certain to do an activity well enough. They feel personal superiority and believe they can learn and develop to face new challenges [Brenda, 2005; Conger and Kanungo, 1988]. When individuals feel empowered, they are involved in activities and deserve themselves for the job and feel sure that they can do it successfully (Shiper and Manz, 1992).

2- **Sense of having the right to choose (self-organizing):** this aspect refers to the fact that empowered people feel they are independence in performing their tasks and can decide about their job duties and have the authority to determine the time and speed of doing their tasks. Self-organizing means to experience the sense of selection in performing and organizing personal activities. Empowered people feel a sense of ownership of their work, because they themselves can determine how to do things. Among the consequences of having the right to choose, it can be pointed to less self-alienation in the workplace and lower work pressure as well as higher job satisfaction, performance, entrepreneurship, creativity, and job involvement [Hancer and George, 2003].

3- **Sense of efficacy (personal acceptance of the outcome):** empowered people feel they play an important role in realizing objectives and missions of the organization. They also have control over their job outcomes, affect what happens and control barriers and constraints. In fact, the sense of efficacy means to influence management strategies and approaches and job consequences [Green Berger et al., 1989]. Empowered people believe that outside barriers cannot control their activities, but they have control over the barriers. Actually, they have a sense of active control on their activities [Abtahi, 2006].

4- **Sense of being important (being valuable):** It means the conformity of job necessities with personal beliefs, ideals, standards, and values. If individuals give value to what they perform, they will feel to be important. In fact, empowered people have a sense of being important and valuable. They give value to objectives or activities in which they are engaged and there is homogeneity between their ideals and standards and whatever they do.
Actually, activities are deemed to be important in their value system and they are careful about and believe in what they produce. Activities that induce the sense of being important create excitement and the sense of having a goal for them (Thomas and Valgus, 1990).

5- Accountability: it means to be responsive to the outcomes of one’s own work; accordingly, the members of an organization will be able to track their performance in the organization. Empowering members of a group can be affected by accountability for work results and the members are equally responsible for results and organizational successes. Responsible persons consider themselves accountable to the control and supervision of the management or external demands of clients regarding the work process. However, people are expected to be legally held accountable for their performance based on the delegated authority and their working conditions (Konczak et al., 2005).

6- Information sharing: It means the exchange of knowledge and experience in the field of work among employees. Information should be easily provided for employees, because people cannot act responsibly without information. Information may include appropriate knowledge and skills of the job which are necessary and valuable for the performance of employees in the organization. Employees are interested in having both necessary skills and tools and if they lack them, they will probably fail to achieve their goals (Konczak et al., 2005).

7- Skills: It means to have job knowledge to do the work, which is trained in appropriate environments and considered one of the key factors for empowerment of employees. Skills are the structured form of empirical knowledge which can be acquired and learned. According to Amabil, technical skills (as a dimension of employees’ empowerment) are necessary and important for creativity; in other words, people should have the ability to apply the knowledge gained from training and experience for performing their duties. These skills can help to generate new ideas and innovative products through the application of knowledge (Ford and Gioia, 1997).

2-5- The research literature:

The results of a study conducted by Bowen and Lawler (1995) showed that empowerment occurs when the power, information, knowledge, and rewards are distributed in the organization and if one of these elements becomes zero, the capability will be zero as well.

Another study conducted on managers of Hajj caravans in Iran indicated that the managers can be empowered through a change in beliefs, values, and apparent symbols as well as changing technical, human and conceptual skills (Ghorbanizadeh et al., 2011).

Brunch (1997) in a study titled “Factors affecting knowledge management” has enumerated the factors of selection, competence, and meaningfulness of work as effective factors in knowledge management (Douglas, 2008).

Asasdi Gh. (2012) in a study as “measurement criteria of knowledge management functional outputs in organizations” investigated the functional outputs of knowledge management proposed by different researchers and academicians. After integrating all these elements, the author offered a more comprehensive set of functional outputs which were grouped in five dimensions. The results showed that all functional outputs explained by companies under study are based on these five dimensions. This supports the relation and proportionality of the proposed dimensions.

Another research aimed at investigating the maturity level of knowledge management in organizations (using a knowledge management maturity model) was conducted by Moosakhani et al. (2013). The results of this study showed that understanding the current situation of knowledge management in an organization (each organization, considering its activities in the field of knowledge management, has a level of maturity that represents the current state of knowledge management in the organization) and identifying the factors affecting decision making are critical for organizing the knowledge management development, application and improvement stages.

Based on the research literature, the research conceptual model was developed through the combination of two models of knowledge management by Newman and Kenrad (1999) and Nonaka and Takeuchi (1997).

2-6- The research hypotheses:

The main hypothesis: Knowledge management significantly affects the empowerment of Sistan and Baluchistan Governorate Organization.

The sub-hypothesis: Knowledge management components significantly affect the empowerment of Sistan and Baluchistan Governorate Organization.

3- The research methodology:

The present study is an applied research based on its purpose while it is considered a descriptive-survey study in terms of the research design. The research population consists of 350 employees of the central
headquarters and deputies of Sistan and Baluchistan Governorate. The sample size was determined to be 180 people based on Morgan’s estimation table.

Fig. 2: The research conceptual model.

3. The data collection tools:
Here, two questionnaires including 37 items have been used to measure the research hypotheses. The questionnaires are as follows:
1- The knowledge management questionnaire: since the research conceptual model is a combination of two models of knowledge management developed by Newman and Kenrad (1999) and Nonaka and Takeuchi (1997), the research questionnaire was formed based on the combination of components used in both models.
2- The empowerment questionnaire: the empowerment questionnaire developed by Spreitzer (1995) has been used to examine the impact of knowledge management components on empowerment of Sistan and Baluchistan Governorate Organization.

The analysis of these two questionnaires is presented in the table below.

At the beginning of the questionnaire, respondents have been also asked to identify their descriptive information such as age, gender, education level, and work experience. The questionnaire reliability has been calculated using the Cronbach’s alpha. The Cronbach’s alphas for both questionnaires have been presented separately in table 1.

Table 1: The Cronbach’s alphas of the research variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Knowledge Management</th>
<th>Empowerment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach’s Alpha Value</td>
<td>0.917</td>
<td>0.879</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Testing the research hypotheses:

The main hypothesis: Knowledge management significantly affects the empowerment of Sistan and Baluchistan Governorate Organization.

Table 2: A summary of the model and regression coefficients relating to the impact of knowledge management on empowerment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model Summary</th>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Common factors (Beta)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R</td>
<td>R²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.841</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>63.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>KM</td>
<td>0.528</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to table 2, it can be said that the overall correlation between the independent variable “knowledge management” and the dependent variable “empowerment” is reported equal to 0.528 (R=0.528), which reflects the intensity of a positive correlation between the variables. Also, the value of F and the significance level of the model indicate the effectiveness of knowledge management on the empowerment of Sistan and Baluchistan Governorate Organization.

The sub-hypothesis: Knowledge management components significantly affect the empowerment of Sistan and Baluchistan Governorate Organization.
According to table 3, it can be concluded that there is a positive correlation between the research variables, which indicates a significant relationship between the variables. Also, considering the significance level of ANOVA (Sig=0.000) which is lower than 0.05, it can be concluded that the model is significant to write the regression equation of empowerment; thus, based on the common factors (betas), the regression equation of the dependent variable “empowerment” can be written as follows:

Empowerment = Knowledge Creation (0.54) + Knowledge Absorption (0.53) + Knowledge Organization (0.615) + Knowledge Storage (0.22) + Knowledge Dissemination (0.432)

5. The discussion and conclusion:

According to table 3 which shows the findings of the regression test conducted to examine the impact of knowledge management components on the empowerment of Sistan and Baluchistan Governorate Organization, it can be concluded that 70 percent of changes in the variable of empowerment is explained by knowledge management, which shows the high impact of knowledge management on organization empowerment; namely, the development and improvement of knowledge management helps to enhance the organization empowerment. Thus, the research hypothesis is confirmed. Accordingly, it should be said that if organizations do not provide infrastructures necessary for the implementation of knowledge management, they will face many new challenges. The findings of this study are consistent with the results of studies conducted by Heidari et al. (2009) and Moosakhani et al. (2013).


