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The Impact of Knowledge Management Processes on Project Success in Yemeni SMEs: A Knowledge-Based View Paper

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Organizations of Small and Medium Size Enterprises (SMEs) require Knowledge Management Processes (KMP) to succeed in challenging environments including Yemen.

Objectives: The research investigates the effect of KMP on Project Success (PS) within Yemeni manufacturing SMEs. The specific context of Yemeni manufacturing SMEs has insufficient research exploring the combined and separate influence of KMP dimensions Acquisition (AC), Application (AP), Sharing (SH), and Storing (ST) on PS.

Methods: Using the Knowledge-Based View (KBV) as a framework, this research conducted a study based on 355 surveys of managers who work in Yemeni manufacturing SMEs for a cross-sectional analysis. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) served as the tool to evaluate the data collected from this research. This study demonstrates that KMP, as a whole, has a positive influence on PS.

Results: The survey results established that key performance success improves by knowledge AC and knowledge SH while knowledge AP and ST generate no significant effect on performance success. The study demonstrates that Yemeni SMEs need proactive knowledge sharing with proactive expertise gathering to succeed during political instability and resource limitations.

Conclusions: Managers should emphasize knowledge acquisition and dissemination activities because study findings show these elements strongly boost PS. This leads to the recommendation of creating a knowledge sharing environment to enhance project outcomes. The study generates original findings about PS within the research gap concerning Yemeni SMEs.

Keywords: Project Success, Knowledge Management Processes, knowledge sharing, knowledge acquisition, SMEs, Yemen.

INTRODUCTION

Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) create most of Yemen's economic activity through strong employment creation while they develop the overall economy [1]. The achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through developing economies depends on the sustainable success of these SMEs. The mentioned enterprises make up 90% of all employment in the country and collectively employ 73% of Yemeni workers [2]. Yemeni SMEs experienced success through operating under difficult business conditions which include both economic and political instabilities [1]. The present conflict, poor infrastructure, and minimal resource availability erect several substantial obstacles [3, 4].

The academic field of Yemen studies has seen enhancement [5, 6]. However, there remains limited research on Knowledge Management Processes (KMP) interactions with Project Success (PS) in Yemeni SMEs. Most scholarly works find knowledge management important for general purposes [7, 8], though single KMP elements dominate the research while authors overlook combined KMP effects on PS. The majority of studies omit direct research and investigation of PS as their end result. This research gap exceeds Yemen since multiple studies fail to address it, as noted in [9]. Several research experts stress that project management and performance need more comprehensive

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studies related to KM [10, 11]. This research analyzes both the single and combined effects of KMP components on PS in Yemeni SMEs to fill the existing research gap of under-examined relationships in this field.

Research on this topic holds essential value for academic and real-world implementation purposes. This research investigates how Yemeni small and medium enterprises can utilize knowledge to achieve better PS by studying the connection between KMP and PS. The study's conclusions will benefit both pragmatic managers of SMEs along with officials who make policy decisions and project management specialists who want to elevate PS levels in Yemen's demanding business setting.

The objectives of this study are:

1. To assess the collective influence of a holistic KMP approach on PS.
2. To evaluate the relationship that exists between individual KMP dimensions (knowledge Acquisition (AC), Sharing (SH), Storing (ST), and Application (AP)) and PS.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK & HYPOTHESES

The research draws its foundation from the Knowledge-Based View (KBV) of the firm, which states organizational success stems from knowledge acting as a vital intangible resource [12, 13]. The strategic value of effective KMP becomes paramount as per KBV since it includes knowledge Acquisition (AC), Application (AP) Sharing (SH) and Storage (ST) which boost organizational performance [14, 15]. Furthermore, by effectively managing knowledge, organizations can gain a competitive advantage, particularly in dynamic and resource-constrained environments such as the one faced by Yemeni manufacturing SMEs [16]. While a substantial body of research confirms the positive influence of KMP on various organizational outcomes, including aspects of project management [17-19], direct investigation of KMP's comprehensive impact on PS, especially within Yemeni manufacturing SMEs, remains notably limited [11, 20]. Thus, this study examines how KMP contributes to PS, considering Yemen's unique challenges.

H1: There is a significant positive effect of KMP on PS among SMEs in Yemen.

Knowledge AC

The deliberate gathering and integration of new information and expertise [21]. Effective AC enables proactive risk identification, exploration of alternative approaches, and refinement of project plans, improving project outcomes [22, 23]. By enabling knowledge attainment about market trends and competitive dynamics, AC empowers SMEs to align projects with business goals [24], supporting strategic alignment [25]. Nonetheless, research on AC's direct link to PS in Yemeni SMEs is limited due to scarce KM research in developing countries [20] and few studies on AC's impact on PS [11].

H2: There is a significant positive effect of knowledge AC on PS a

Knowledge AP

Utilizing acquired and stored knowledge for problem-solving and informed decision-making. While effective, AP contributes to PS by reducing costs [26], improving time management [27], and enhancing quality [28], direct research on AP's impact on PS within Yemeni SMEs remains limited [20]. Although research in other contexts suggests AP's potential [29, 30], emphasizing experience and strategic AP [31, 32], the Yemeni context needs exploration.

H3: There is a significant positive effect of knowledge AP on PS among SMEs in Yemen.

Knowledge SH

The exchange of expertise and information [33] is crucial for enhancing project performance through improved communication and decision-making [34]. This aligns with research on knowledge transfer and project outcomes [10, 23] and highlights the negative effects of communication breakdowns [35, 36]. While SH's broader significance is known [37, 38], and it positively impacts project aspects [39], its direct empirical investigation within Yemeni SMEs is limited [11, 20].

H4: There is a significant positive effect of knowledge SH on PS among SMEs in Yemen.

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Knowledge ST

The systematic capture, organization, and preservation of knowledge [40]. ST assists project managers by providing access to documentation [28] and enables leveraging past experiences [41]. While research affirms ST's positive impact [31, 41], a gap exists regarding its direct influence on PS, particularly in developing countries like Yemen [11, 42]. Note that traditional ST may not suit all SMEs [43, 44], and less formal structures observed in Yemeni SMEs suggest limited adoption.

H5: There is a significant positive effect of knowledge ST on PS among SMEs in Yemen.

METHODOLOGY

This study assesses a proposed structural model using a positivist paradigm and a cross-sectional survey design appropriate for analyzing the relationships between variables at a particular moment in time [45].

Sample and Data Collection

The target population was Yemeni manufacturing SMEs. Using random sampling, structured questionnaires were distributed offline to managers/project leaders across four governorates. Following [46] guidelines, 700 questionnaires were distributed. After screening (non-responses, missing data, size criteria, outliers), 355 valid responses were analyzed (51% effective response rate).

Constructs Measured

KMP: Measured using a multidimensional scale covering AC, SH, AP (adapted from [47], and ST (adapted from [48].

PS: Measured using items for Cost, Time, and Quality (adapted from [49], and Business Impact (adapted from [50].

All items used a 5-point Likert scale.

Validation and Pilot Study

A pilot study (n = 55) confirmed instrument validity and reliability. Accordingly, reliability (Cronbach's Alpha > 0.70, CR > 0.70) and validity (Convergent: loadings > 0.70, AVE > 0.50; Discriminant: Fornell-Larcker criterion, HTMT < 0.90) were established.

Data Analysis

Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for descriptive statistics, and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was used for structural equation modeling, which is suitable for complex models and non-normal data [51].

RESULTS

Measurement Model

The final measurement model, after excluding four items (PS1, PS12, PS13, PS14) following guidelines (Henseler et al., 2017), demonstrated strong reliability (Cronbach's Alpha > 0.70, CR 0.786-0.895) and validity (AVE > 0.50; HTMT < 0.90). Discriminant validity was confirmed using Fornell-Larcker and HTMT criteria.

Structural Model and Hypotheses Testing

PLS-SEM path modeling (Hair et al., 2011; Henseler et al., 2017) with bootstrapping (5000 subsamples, 355 cases) was used. At the same time, significance was assessed via path coefficients (β), t-values (> 1.64), and p-values (< 0.05) (Hair et al., 2011).

H1 (KMP -> PS): Supported. Significant positive effect (β = 0.560, t = 13.72, p < .001).

H2 (AC -> PS): Supported. Significant positive effect (β = 0.277, t = 3.90, p < .001).

H3 (AP -> PS): Not Supported. No significant effect (β = 0.101, t = 1.46, p = .073).

H4 (SH -> PS): Supported. Significant positive effect (β = 0.150, t = 1.91, p = .028).

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H5 (ST -> PS): Not Supported. No significant effect (β = 0.136, t = 1.54, p = .062).

The model explained 32.5% of the variance in PS (R^2 = 0.325), considered substantial [52]. Predictive relevance was confirmed (Q^2 = 0.298 > 0) [53, 54].

DISCUSSION

The study confirms a significant positive impact of overall KMP on PS in Yemeni manufacturing SMEs (H1 supported), aligning with prior research [9, 17, 34]. It also highlights KMP's strategic importance even in challenging environments characterized by instability and resource constraints [55], supporting the KBV.

Knowledge AC significantly boosts PS (H2 supported), consistent with studies demonstrating its role in improving decision-making and risk management [22, 23]. This is crucial in Yemen, where resource scarcity makes active knowledge AC essential [56].

Knowledge SH also significantly improves PS (H4 supported), aligning with research on its role in enhancing problem-solving and project execution [10, 57]. In Yemeni SMEs, SH is often facilitated through methods like meetings and training [17, 58].

Conversely, knowledge AP demonstrated no significant impact (H3 not supported), contrasting with studies highlighting its positive influence [29, 59]. This may stem from contextual factors in Yemeni SMEs, such as infrastructure limits, financial constraints, and high turnover [60, 61], suggesting AP may require integration with robust project management strategies [62].

Similarly, knowledge ST had no significant effect (H5 not supported), contradicting studies emphasizing its significance [29, 30]. This may be due to Yemen's instability, limited resources, and low KM awareness hindering effective implementation [63]. Meanwhile, accessibility and integration, not just storage, are critical [55].

These findings provide empirical evidence of KMP's significance in Yemen and identify AC and SH as most relevant to PS. Practically, Yemeni SMEs should prioritize these areas while addressing barriers to AP and ST.

CONCLUSIONS

This study investigated the impact of KMP on PS within the challenging context of Yemeni manufacturing SMEs. The findings confirm that a holistic KMP approach significantly enhances PS, yet not all KMP dimensions contribute equally. Correspondingly, knowledge AC and knowledge SH emerged as significant positive drivers of PS, while knowledge AP and knowledge ST did not demonstrate a statistically significant impact in this specific setting.

Theoretical Implications

This research contributes to the KBV by providing crucial context-specific empirical evidence from an under-researched, unstable developing economy. It highlights that in environments characterized by high uncertainty, political instability, and severe resource constraints, the foundational processes of actively seeking external knowledge AC and disseminating internal knowledge SH are paramount for PS. Simultaneously, the non-significant findings for AP and ST challenge the universal applicability assumptions of some KM models. It suggests that the value derived from knowledge AP and storage is heavily contingent upon enabling contextual factors (e.g., technological infrastructure, employee skill levels, organizational stability), which may be lacking or underdeveloped in Yemeni SMEs. This implies that KBV should consider environmental turbulence and resource scarcity as critical boundary conditions that moderate the effectiveness of different KMP dimensions. Nevertheless, the study underscores the need for KM theories to incorporate contextual adaptability. This is particularly true in recognizing the potentially heightened significance of informal knowledge flows and external knowledge AC when formal systems for AP and storage are less effective or feasible.

Practical and Managerial Implications

The findings offer clear guidance for managers in Yemeni SMEs and similar challenging contexts. Notably, the primary managerial focus should be on strategically enhancing AC and SH. This involves actively investing in mechanisms for acquiring relevant external knowledge (e.g., market intelligence, competitor analysis, partnerships, targeted training). This also includes fostering a robust internal SH culture (e.g., promoting open communication,

establishing communities of practice, leveraging existing social and informal networks, and implementing simple collaborative tools). Crucially, managers should exercise caution before investing heavily in sophisticated knowledge-ST repositories or complex knowledge AP tools. The lack of significant impact suggests these investments may yield low returns unless foundational capabilities in AC, SH, basic project management, and employee skills are first established and critical contextual barriers (like infrastructure and stability) are mitigated. Hence, the immediate priority should be embedding acquired and shared knowledge directly into project workflows and decision-making processes rather than relying solely on formal storage systems or assuming knowledge will be effectively applied without supportive infrastructure and skills. Building on this, by focusing on AC and SH, SMEs can build resilience and enhance project outcomes despite the prevailing environmental difficulties.

Limitations and Future Research

While offering valuable insights, this study is cross-sectional, capturing a single point in time. Thus, future longitudinal research could track the evolution of KMP effectiveness and PS over time. Further studies could also explore potential moderating variables (e.g., specific types of instability, firm size, technology adoption levels, and leadership styles) and employ qualitative methods to gain deeper insights into the nuances of KM practices within this unique context. Furthermore, investigating the specific mechanisms through which AC and SH translate into PS would also be a fruitful avenue for future research.

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