

IMPACT OF PUBLIC SERVICE MOTIVATION AND ORGANIZATIONAL SOCIAL CAPITAL ON KNOWLEDGE SHARING IN PUBLIC SECTOR

Raheela Zulfiqar

Institute of Administrative Sciences
University of the Punjab
Lahore, Pakistan
Email: raheelarauf@gmail.com

Sidra Irfan (Corresponding author)

Assistant Professor
Institute of Administrative Sciences
University of the Punjab
Lahore, Pakistan
Email: sidra.ias@pu.edu.pk

Sadia Iftikhar

Lecturer
Department of Management Sciences
National University of Modern Languages (NUML)
Lahore Campus, Pakistan
Email: sadiiaftikhar@numl.edu.pk

Abstract

Increasing interest in the idea of gaining synergistic benefits in public sector organizations has triggered the developing as well as developed nations to explore the concept of knowledge sharing (KS) and its relationship with other concepts. Among the most important ones are the concepts of public service motivation (PSM) and organizational social capital (OSC). Keeping in view the increasing interest in these concepts the current study investigates the impact of public service motivation (PSM) and organizational social capital (OSC) on knowledge sharing (KS) in public sector. Two hypotheses were developed in this respect that assumed positive relationships of PSM and OSC on KS. These hypotheses were tested through a proposed model by collecting and analyzing the quantitative data of 270 employees of University of the Punjab. Self-administered questionnaire was used to collect the data. Multiple linear regression through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to test the hypotheses. Both hypotheses were supported i.e. public service motivation and organizational social capital have a positive relationship with knowledge sharing. The study shows that the knowledge sharing can be encouraged in organizations by enhancing public service motivation and organizational social capital. It is also recommended that the individual dimensions of public service motivation (PSM) and organizational social capital (OSC) should be studied to have a deeper knowhow of these relationships.

Keywords: Public Service Motivation (PSM), Organizational Social Capital (OSC), Knowledge Sharing (KS), Public Sector

INTRODUCTION

Knowledge is considered as the most crucial resource for any organization and for achieving organizational success it is mandatory to manage it properly (Ipe, 2003). Public sector organizations are mainly knowledge intensive organizations and it is important to encourage knowledge sharing (KS) among employees and departments to achieve better results (Willem & Buelens, 2007). Knowledge sharing (KS) provides information (tacit or explicit) for helping people in the organizations (Q. Lin, Ye, & Bi, 2014; Wang & Noe, 2010). Knowledge sharing is often dependent on the willingness of employees to share useful information with their counterparts. In a closed competitive environment employees are reluctant to share knowledge due to the fear of competition and loss of prestige (Prusak & Davenport, 1998). So, it is very important to study the factors that are related to the tendency or behavior of public sector employees for KS. The present study aims to investigate the impact of public service motivation (PSM) and organization social capital (OSC) on knowledge sharing (KS) in public sector organizations of Pakistan. The research aims to find whether the synergistic combination of PSM and OSC facilitates in KS processes in the public sector organizations.

The factors behind the concept of KS are often linked with the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Lee & Al-Hawamdeh, 2002). As far as monetary incentives are concerned, they can provide temporary positive relationship with knowledge sharing but for a longer period of time, they can be detrimental to knowledge sharing (Gagné, 2009). In the presence of intrinsic motivational factors exist such as appreciation, sense of accomplishment and altruism, there is higher tendency for KS (Wu, 2013). Public sector employees are assumed to work for the noble reason which is public interest and it is gained through attraction to public service (APS), commitment to public values (CPV), self-sacrifice (SS) and compassion (COM) which are the most commonly used dimensions of PSM (Chen & Hsieh, 2015). Trust and social interaction can be encouraged through mechanism of formal coordination so that social interactions and trust create an environment conducive to knowledge sharing within an organization (Lefebvre, Sorenson, Henschion, & Gellynck, 2016).

KS often implies collective action and willingness of employees towards the achievement of shared goals (Boland Jr & Tenkasi, 1995). Organizational social capital is seen critical to KS (Cohen & Prusak, 2002) as it consists of mutual and cooperative actions which are only possible when there are shared values, understanding, networking, and trust (Chiu, Hsu, & Wang, 2006). OSC is deeply rooted in social relations and social networks and comprises three important aspects i.e. resources which are present in the social structure, individual accessibility towards these resources, and finally the usage of these resources into productive actions. Hence embeddedness, accessibility and use are important considerations in OSC (N. Lin, 2017). Some empirical studies have found the positive relationship between OSC and KS (Chiu et al., 2006) (Maurer, Bartsch, & Ebers, 2011).

The review of the existing literature shows that the relationship of knowledge sharing motivation and organizational social capital is largely dominated by the studies in the private sector and it remains very limited for public sector organizations. Hence, this study aims to contribute to this under-researched area and focuses on studying these relationships in public sector setting.

This article is structured as follows. In the next section the theoretical model of the study is explained. Then the literature on KS, PSM and OSC is outlined along with the hypotheses to be tested. Section three consists of the details on the research design adopted for the study. It also gives details of the sample and measures for KS, PSM and OSC. Fourth section entails the details of statistical analysis of the data for hypotheses testing. Finally, the discussion and

conclusion section discusses the main findings of the study and draws out the implications and limitations of the study.

Theoretical Framework

There are many theories which help to explain the concept of KS. Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is one of them. This theory was put forward by Icek Ajzen in 1991. The theory gives a clear indication of human behavior and it is based on a reasoned action. It talks about how humans react in different situations and the ways in which human attitudes and behaviors differ in different situations. TPB contains central concepts in behavioral sciences. Attitudes towards the behavior, its subjective norms which are with a point of view of the behavior and its perceived power over behavior are present to expect behavioral plans with great degree of precision (Ajzen, 1991). This theory was put forward to understand the intricacies of human behavior (Rainey & Steinbauer, 1999) and can be helpful in this study to understand the relationship between KS, PSM and OSC. It is argued that the relationship between the chosen variables keeps changing in different settings and hence TPB is used to explain the changing nature of these relationships.

This study investigates the relationships between KS, PSM and OSC in the public sector. The proposed relationships are envisaged in Figure 1 and has be adapted from Sangmook Kim (Kim, 2018) who has examined the relationships between these variables using online survey data from Korea. It is assumed that PSM and OSC are correlated in the study. PSM is formed by sociohistorical factors. It is also influenced by the internal environment of the organization (Bryson, Crosby, & Stone, 2006). OSC is dependent on the relationships and characteristics of employees (Leana III & Van Buren, 1999). PSM and OSC are supposed to influence KS. In this study PSM and OSC are considered as independent variables and KS is the dependent variable.

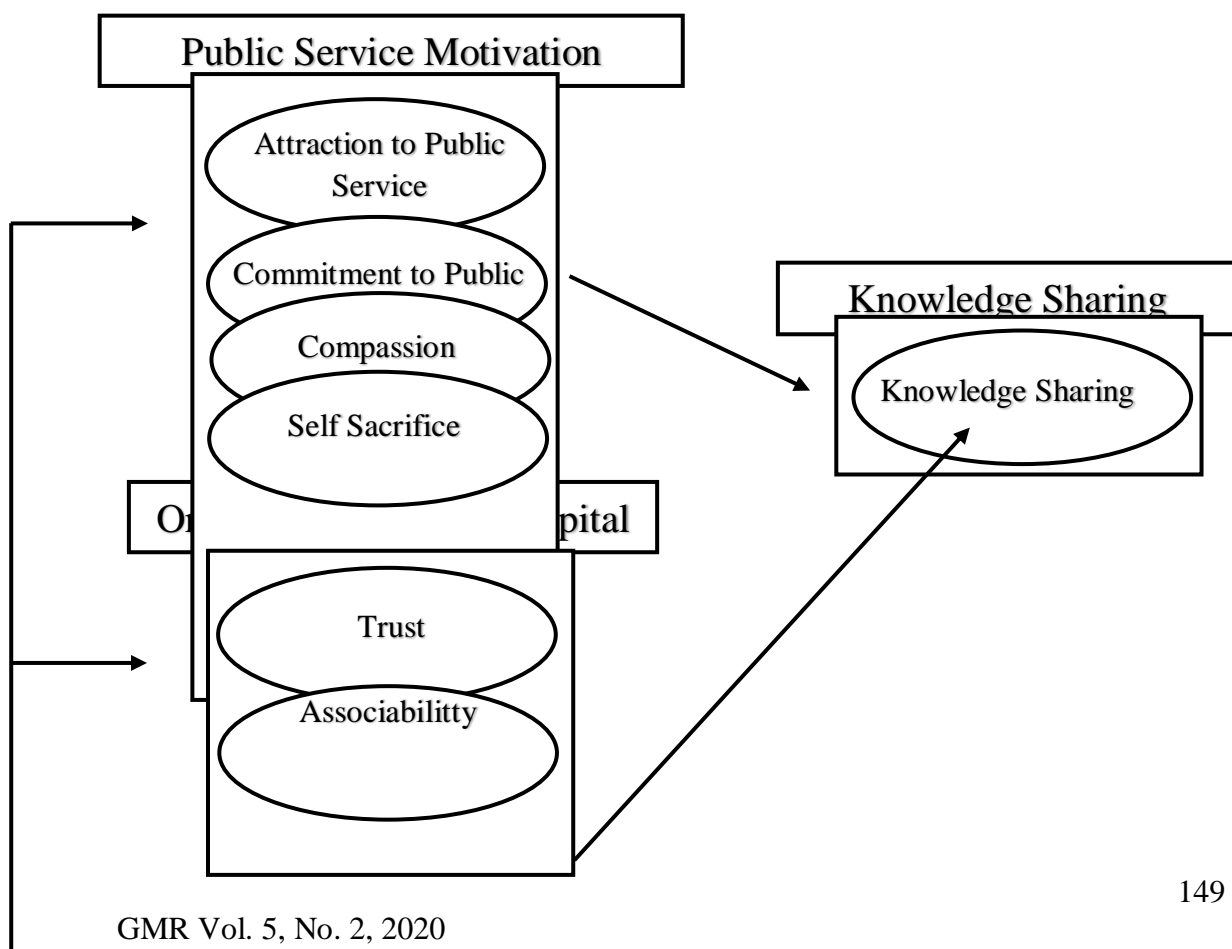


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework adapted from Kim (2018)

Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge is a crucial strategic resource in organizations. Hence, knowledge management is considered crucial for organizational success (Wah, Menkhoff, Loh, & Evers, 2007). If the organizations want to get benefit from the body of knowledge, they should be able to know about its creation, sharing and use (Kim, 2018). The field of knowledge creation has spread exponentially in organizations. The creation of knowledge is a capability that is helpful for achieving competitive advantage for the organization (Bratianu & Orzea, 2010). Literature on knowledge creation shows its dynamic processes. Here it is important to discuss tacit and explicit knowledge as both of them are significant for organizational success (Nonaka, 1994). Tacit knowledge is the knowledge that is understood without being expressed. It may be the knowledge that does not have words. Tacit knowledge can be cognitive or technical and it is composed of values, beliefs and mental models of the carriers. Explicit knowledge is usually technical, and it is present in the form of manuals and documents. Explicit knowledge requires a level of academic knowledge and qualification (Smith, 2001).

In order to make the organizations competitive it is not only important to create knowledge but also to create an environment that facilitates knowledge sharing (Q. Lin et al., 2014; Wang & Noe, 2010). It is evident that the greater degree of effectiveness can be achieved through better KS (Yang, 2004) and that KS helps to improve organizational performance and attain competitive advantage (Hsu, 2008). Hence, it is important to ensure that knowledge is shared at different levels of the organizations (Ipe, 2003).

Organizations that try to create a facilitative environment for KS need to be aware of the challenges and barriers that hinder effective KS (Riege, 2005). In this regard managers are suggested to have a closer look into the organizational core values and infrastructure and beware that there is no universal solution and different strategies have to be tried depending of the existing practices in the organization (Riege, 2005). It is worthwhile to consider that KS can be increased when communication is improved. Organizations should practice human resource activities in a way that the idea of KS is encouraged and the barriers are overcome. There should be such systems and mechanisms in the organizations that the employees who share knowledge are rewarded for that (Sita Nirmala Kumaraswamy & Chitale, 2012).

Public Service Motivation (PSM)

PSM is a vital area of study in public administration. The research on PSM has increased tremendously in the last three decades (van Loon, Vandenabeele, & Leisink, 2015). Motivated employees of any organization are the backbone of an organization because of its strong effects on the performance of the individuals (Anderfuhren-Biget, Varone, Giauque, & Ritz, 2010). Although there is an argument that public and private sectors are different in many respects the phenomenon that motivation has direct effects on employee performance is applicable to both public and private sectors (Zorn, Page, & Cheney, 2000).

PSM is defined as the motives that work behind the public service and it is related to serve the society in general (Vandenabeele, 2007). According to Perry, "public service motivation is defined as individual's predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions" (Perry, 1996). Perry and Wise (1990) proposed that there are three motives i.e. rational, affective and normative. Rational motives stand for individual utility maximization, affective motives describe human emotions and normative motives

state the drive to follow common good (Perry & Wise, 1990). These motives give a valuable scheme to understand the construct of PSM.

However, these motives have some limitations too. PSM relationship with rational motives is somewhat ambiguous and there is a significant overlap between affective and norm-based motives (Kim & Vandenabeele, 2010). Perry and Wise (1990) used these motives to develop four dimensions which measure PSM. These dimensions are attraction to public service (APS), commitment to public values (CPV), compassion (COM) and self-sacrifice (SS). These dimensions gained much popularity within the scholars studying PSM and are being used by many scholars since then (Christensen & Wright, 2011) (Alonso & Lewis, 2001). Some authors have identified some limitations in this scale. For example, there are some dimensions which are not well-suited to measure the construct. Moreover some researcher have utilized additional dimensions to describe the full construct of PSM (Kim & Vandenabeele, 2010).

Organizational Social Capital

The construct of organization social capital (OSC) was developed in 1999 (Leana III & Van Buren) and can be explained as social relations which are working in an organization. OSC is a concept about the merits of interactions among people of an organization. Social capital in organizations refers to the benefits which are enjoyed by the individuals from social networks. The second level of social capital in organization comes from interactions within and between the groups of people. Third level of social capital is related to a firm. It explains the relationship and networking of CEO with the stakeholders of the organization (Ben Hador, 2017). OSC is helpful for the long-term goal achievement and performance of the organization (Maurer et al., 2011). The main idea behind is to improve the communication among the employees of the organization. It benefits both the individual and the organization. Because of social cooperation overall positive environment is created which enhances performance management. Trust play an important role in OSC and helps to promote collective action (Tantardini & Kroll, 2015). Mutual trust and cooperation is established through the idea of social capital (Milana & Maldaon, 2015).

Social capital can be considered as societal networks and models of exchange; and dependability that comes from them (Putnam, 2000). OSC is consisted of networks among people. It comes from trust and mutual understanding as well as shared values and manners that binds human communities. More and more cooperative actions are possible like that (Cohen & Prusak, 2002). Social capital allows the individuals to take collective actions effectively exhibiting shared values and norms. Family business, entrepreneurship and strategic management are the domains where OSC is of highly important (Arregle, Hitt, Sirmon, & Very, 2007).

OSC met a substantial piece of research in the previous two decades (N. Lin, Cook, & Burt, 2001). Employees who show high performance in the organizations are less likely to share information with others if they consider that there are fewer rewards and their input will not be recognized in the organization. The results provide indication for OSC importance as the lubricant of KS and fetching systems of performance management in the organizations which are knowledge-intensive (Wah et al., 2007). Outcomes of organizational performance are related to OSC but the results are not conclusive yet (Maurer et al., 2011).

In the light of above, the following hypotheses are proposed for testing in this research:

H1: Public service motivation is positively associated with knowledge sharing.

H2: Organizational social capital is positively associated with knowledge sharing.

Research Design

This research has employed survey design which is a quantitative approach for data collection and analysis. It is a cross-sectional study using deductive approach. The constructs of the study were already well-developed so deductive approach was deemed appropriate to test the proposed hypotheses (Creswell, 2012). Data was collected using self-administered survey questionnaire. The questionnaire constituted three constructs: KS, PSM and OSC. The items measuring KS, PSM and OSC were arranged on a 5-point Likert Scale which was coded from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree).

The construct of knowledge sharing was measured using 8 items recommended by Sangmook Kim (2018). The items for the measurement of the concept of PSM were adopted from Perry (1996). Respondents were asked to express their perception with respect to four dimensions of PSM which are attraction to public service (APS), commitment to public values (CPV), self-sacrifice (SS) and compassion (COM). The construct of organizational comprised of associability (ASS) and trust (TRST) and the items to measure these were adopted from Leana III & Van Buren (1999). Seven demographic questions were added according to the target population.

Pilot-testing of the questionnaire was done before carrying out large scale data collection. The reliability of the questionnaire was established by testing Cronbach's Alpha of the constructs separately as well as collectively. The average of Cronbach's Alpha was 0.75 which establishes the reliability of the instrument.

Convenience sampling was used to collect data from the target population. Convenience sampling is a form of nonprobability sampling technique whereby sample is selected based on the ease of reaching out to the members of target population (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). University of the Punjab was chosen for this research because of multiple reasons. First of all, target population of any sample contains some specific characteristics which are of interest for the research. University of the Punjab is one of the largest public sector universities of Pakistan and we were especially interested to examine the relationship in the academic sector. It was noticed during the review of the existing literature that there is dearth of research that examines the relationship between the selected variables in the education sector. Keeping in view that universities are seat for learning and knowledge sharing, we were keen to find the relationship between KS, PSM and OSC in education sector. Moreover, there were some practical reasons for this choice as well. The target population of University of the Punjab is literate enough to respond to the questions contained in the questionnaire and it was easier for the researchers to access information from this university. Data was collected from the faculty members and the administrative officers of Grade-17 or above. It was assumed that these respondents are in a better position to understand the questionnaire and are in the positions involving significant knowledge sharing. 300 questionnaires were distributed out of which 290 were returned after reminders. Some questionnaires were discarded due to incomplete information and response set. Finally, 270 questionnaires were included in data analysis.

Ethical issues are important to be considered throughout the research process because they signify the integrity of the researcher and the research (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012). Concerns about quantitative research can be categorized as informed consent, collecting sensitive information and confidentiality (Clifton, 2012). Informed consent was dealt with by taking formal permission from different departments of the University of the Punjab. After that, respondents were told about research purpose and were assured that it is purely academic. On the spot help was provided if the respondents needed anything to be explained in the questionnaire. For confidentiality reasons the name of the respondent was not asked in the questionnaire.

Results

Multiple linear regression (MLR) is a statistical method that uses many explanatory variables to predict the outcome of a response variable. The aim of multiple linear regression is to produce the linear connection between the explanatory or independent variables and response or dependent variable. In this research multiple regression was conducted for the testing of research hypotheses. The aim was to find out whether and to what extent the independent variables predict dependent variable. In this situation the predictor variables were performing as independent variables and criterion variable was performing as dependent variable. The following regression equation was used:

$$Y=A+B1(X1) +B2(X2)$$

where Y = Predicted value of dependent variable

A = Constant

B1= Slope of variable 1

X1= Chosen value of variable 1

B2= Slope of variable 2

X2= Chosen value of variable 2

Normality test is applied to see whether the data of the sample has been taken from a normally dispersed population within some tolerance. According to the values of skewness and kurtosis, the data was slightly negatively skewed. Value of skewness of APS, CPV, COM, SS, associability (ASS), trust (TRST) and KS were -.284, -.016, -.136, -.666, .477, -.799, .042 respectively. Value of kurtosis of APS, CPV, COM, SS, ASS, TRST and KS were -.709, -.670, -.824, .116, -.416, .932 and -.429 respectively. If the value of skewness and kurtosis is between -2 to +2 then it would consider being normally distributed. Values of skewness and kurtosis in all variables were between ranges. Furthermore, according to Central Limit Theorem we can say that as our data is greater than 30 so we can consider that it is normally distributed, and certain tests can be run.

The data was also checked for multicollinearity (see Table 1). In regression multicollinearity is a measure of the extent to which predictors are linearly related with each other.

Multicollinearity happens when the model contains multiple factors which are correlated not only to the response variable but also to each other which undermines the significance of the explanatory variables.

Table 1: *Coefficients*

Model	Tolerance	VIF
TOTAL PSM	.903	1.108
TOTAL OSC	.903	1.108

a. Dependent Variable: **TOTAL KS**

From ANOVA, the F value is 51.609 which means that both the independent variables which are PSM and OSC are responsible for 51.6095 change in dependent variable which is KS. As discussed earlier that the theory behind this study is the theory of planned behavior (TPB) which talks about the behavioral changes in a particular setting. The results support this theory as a particular behavior which creates a specific change in KS.

Table 2: Regression Coefficients

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.430	.291		4.912	.000
TOTALPSM	.330	.068	.265	4.840	.000
TOTALOSC	.334	.048	.382	6.976	.000

a. Dependent Variable: KSAVE

The above table shows that hypothesis 1 is supported that PSM is positively associated with KS. The regression coefficient is .330 which is positive but weak. Hypothesis 2 is also supported as the regression coefficient is .334 which is positive but weak. So, it can be said that OSC is positively associated with KS. Adjusted R-Square describes the model strength. In this model, adjusted R-square can be explained instead of R-square because it is a multiple regression model. Here adjusted R-square is .273. It shows that 27.3% variation in KS can be attributed to variables i.e. PSM and SC. It means although PSM and OSC explain the variation in KS to some extent there are some other variables which exist and effect KS.

Discussion and conclusion

KS is an important process in public as well as private organizations. It creates organizational capability from individual learning (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). This study examined the impact of PSM and OSC on KS in University of the Punjab. The study hypothesized positive association between i) PSM and KS; and ii) OSC and KS. Data analysis confirmed the positive relationship between these variables. The total values of attraction to public service motivation (APS), commitment to public values (CPV), compassion (COM) and self-sacrifice (SS) have a positive impact on KS. Moreover, the dimensions of OSC i.e. associability and trust also effect KS positively. This implies that public employees having PSM and OSC are more likely to play their part in KS positively. But these relationships are weak relationships having regression coefficient of 0.330 between PSM and KS and 0.334 between OSC and KS. This finding offers insight into future research agenda that it is important to study the construct of KS in depth to find the other variables that effect knowledge sharing.

The findings of this study contribute to the theory and practice of knowledge sharing in public sector in three important ways. First, they confirm a positive association between KS, PSM and OSC and suggests that there is a need for more needed on the individual dimensions of PSM and OSC (Perry & Vandenabeele, 2015). Second, the weak relationships between the selected variables suggests that it is important to find the other variables that effect knowledge sharing. There are already some scholars who are contributing in this respect and have studied the relationship of variables such as nature of communication systems within organizations (Boland Jr & Tenkasi, 1995), role of organizational culture (Hendriks, 2004) and the ways in which innovation strategy and top management knowledge values affect knowledge sharing (Hsu, 2008). However, due to the multi-faceted and complex nature of the concept of knowledge sharing there is a need for a more comprehensive study that may involve the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods for a more in-depth understanding of the construct.

Third contribution of this research is more practical in nature. Keeping in view the positive relationship between KS, PSM and OSC, there is a need to consider PSM at the times of recruiting public sector employees. Moreover, organization should also provide necessary

education and training to its employees to enhance the level of PSM. In addition, the study implies the need for supportive organizational culture that facilitates to promote knowledge sharing behavior in employees. The culture of knowledge sharing can be facilitated through the appropriate recognition of the employees who share knowledge. As mentioned earlier knowledge sharing behavior is highly dependent on the relationship of employees with each other (Boland Jr & Tenkasi, 1995). The study of OSC as one of the variables in this research suggests the significance of trust in this regard. Trust is often considered as the most important challenge the employees face while sharing knowledge in organizations. People are not inclined to share their knowledge with the fellow employees unless they trust them. It is important that formal and informal collaboration is encouraged in organizations to enhance trust building within employees. Moreover, it is also important to explore counter-active constructs which can cause hindrance to knowledge sharing.

Lastly, it is important to mention some limitations of this study. This is a cross sectional study, so data can be changed if it will be taken in another setting or point in time. Moreover, the study also possesses the limitation of self-reported responses which may be a source of potential bias and as a result constrain the possibility of making causal relationship assumed in the hypotheses. The selection of sample also poses limitations towards the generalizability of this research. Given that the sample is collected from one public sector organization only offers useful insights into the relationships between KS, PSM and OSC but for a more generalizable findings it is suggested to conduct research involving diverse set of public sector organizations.

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