

AN ANALYSIS OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES & NON-FINANCIAL ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE IN HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY IN PAKISTAN ON EMPIRICAL BASES

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Abstract

With the passage of time, due to awareness and research in different sectors of organizations, the concept of knowledge management practices have become an asset for organizations and organizations are aware now about the importance of this phenomenon. Knowledge management practices now have become hot button for researchers in different sectors. This study comprises on the concept of knowledge management practices (knowledge sharing and knowledge application) as there is a lack of awareness in hospitality sector in Pakistan about this phenomenon and employees are facing problems in accessing knowledge sharing systems. This research study is the unique one in researches in hospitality sector in Pakistan to analyze the impact of knowledge management practices to organizational performance with perceptual measures (operational excellence, customer intimacy & product/service leadership) for five star, four star and three star hotels separately. For the purpose of survey 300 research instruments were administered to management employees at top level and middle level management up to first line managers in different departments in five star, four star and three star hotels. Sampling was based on multi levels. To select three strata out of five, random sampling technique was used and then to select respondent's proportionate sampling technique was used. The findings exhibits the positive, highly significant (though weak) relationship between the variables. The results also highlighted that the absent of knowledge management practices will highly affect the performance of organizations in hospitality sector in Pakistan. The results of current research will be helpful for managers, executives and policy makers to maintain such a system which would be helpful for employees to facilitate them in terms of knowledge sharing and its application throughout the organizations so that ultimately leads to organizational performance and to attain competitive edge.

Keywords: Knowledge management practices, knowledge sharing, knowledge application, organizational performance, operational excellence, customer intimacy, product/ service leadership.

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1. INTRODUCTION

It is an era of knowledge and awareness. With the passage of time increase in competition have made the organizations more intricate as compare to the past. To fight for survival in this complex rivalry, knowledge and skills of employees are the prerequisite of all organizations (Marimuthu et al., 2009). Only those organizations will survive which possess up to date/ latest information in all regards (Marimuthu et al., 2009). Recent studies and researches highlight this fact that now business environment totally have become knowledge based. They have emphasized on to conquer competitive advantage; brain power is the most important and actual among all assets (Perez and Pablos, 2003). The phenomenon of knowledge management is growing rapidly as the results of advancement in information processing system but hospitality industry is far away from this concept, practically (Cooper, 2006; Ruhanen & Cooper, 2004; Yun, 2004; Grizelj, 2003). According to researchers (Ruhanen & Cooper, 2004) with the changing demands of customers' preferences for the best from the market, executives are facing issues regarding knowledge management at strategic level to prevail in industry wise intense competition and to attain competitive edge. Organizations have become aware of the importance of knowledge as key strategic asset and become able to revise their strategies to not only achieve competitive advantage but also to maintain it to utilize intangible asset effectively that would ultimately leads to organizational performance (Bhatti et al.; (2011). Previous researchers (Cooper, 2006; Ruhanen & Cooper, 2004; Grizelj, 2003) have already identified the reasons for why there is a lack of research and practical implication about knowledge management practices in

hotel industry. They considered knowledge management as only a concept limited for manufacturing and corporate businesses (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995) and they neglected the requirement for inter organizational approach and different aspects of tourism industry which was totally based on organizational networks (Grizelj, 2003).

Knowledge management is basically a process of acquiring, sharing, & applying knowledge in such a way that would become an effective part for organizations as competitive advantage .It is all about managing the knowledge inside and outside the organization (Alavi and Leinder, 2001). According to Milton et al (1999) knowledge management refers to as, to set strategies to get exact knowledge with right format at accurate time to right person. Alavi & Leidner (2001) explained that the most emphasized knowledge management practices in literature are knowledge creation, documentation, sharing / transfer and application of knowledge.

2. Problem Recognition

In hospitality industry knowledge sharing and its application is a main challenge. According to researchers, information sharing is, in inadequate manners to employees throughout the organization. There is a difference in accessing knowledge management system for employees (Irin, & Sarawak, 2013). According to Arif (2013) knowledge management practices have significant effect (87%) on organizational performance .This means that level of organizational performance is not good in the absence of knowledge management practices. In the absence of knowledge management practices, Organization cannot survive and not remain in competition in long run. Knowledge

management practices effects the organizational performance positively in unpredictable environment (Raja, Suzana, 2004; 2005; 2008).

3. Research Objectives

According to Gupta & McDaniel (2002) hospitality and tourism industry is being slow to adopt the knowledge management techniques in comparison to other industries.

The primary objective of this research study is to explore

“The impact of knowledge management practices on organizational performance in hotel industry (in five star, four star & three star hotels separately) in Pakistan”

4. Literature Review

4.1 Concept of knowledge

Knowledge is a multi-dimensional and complex phenomenon that's why from centuries it has been a hot button for researchers (Nonaka, 1994). According to Nonaka, knowledge become a dynamic procedure when human pass through a journey of personal belief to exact reality (Nonaka, 2007). Spek & Spijkervet (2005) explain knowledge as a set of practices & processes contained accuracy which direct the opinions, activities, communication of individuals and can be applied to many conditions for a longer period of time. Previously, researchers emphasized on the importance of knowledge in any organization (Buckley & Carter, 2002) that when knowledge combine with human practices, it results in improvement in activities (Long, 1997). The combination of knowledge with practical implementation make it priceless (Jennex & Olfman, 2006). Tywonaik (2007) described that there

remain a lack of universally acceptable classification of knowledge which leads to many debates and controversies about the concept. This leads to significant research gap about knowledge (Foss, 2007).

4.2 Definition of knowledge.

Some definitions are as under:

- According to Brauner & Becker (2006), knowledge is the stored results in mind from experiences and observations through perception, thinking and reasoning.
- According to Roos et al (2005) in knowledge based economy, business resources comprises on 20% of tangible and 80 % of intangible resources. Resultantly, for attaining and sustaining competitive edge, knowledge is the main element (Grande, 2006).

Knowledge refers to as a link between information in human minds with its expression in specific context. As specific context is highly significant that's why knowledge implementation varies with its context (Dixon, 2000).

4.3 Knowledge management practices / processes:

Researchers define knowledge management practices in their own ways as there is a lack of universally accepted specified definition. Literature reveals that there are different views about classification and number of knowledge management practices (Alavi & Leidner, 2001). In literature, knowledge management practices and processes have been used interchangeably. In this research study, both terms are referred as knowledge management practices. Ruggles (1998) explain eight knowledge management

practices: generate access, facilitate, present, embed, use, transfer and measure. According to Zack et al (2009) knowledge management practices can be define as “knowledge management related observable organizational activities”. They have identified four practices related to organizational performance: 1). the ability to locate and share existing knowledge, 2).the ability to experiment and create new knowledge, 3). A culture that encourages knowledge creation and sharing, 4). Lastly, a regard for the strategic value of knowledge and learning. There are five knowledge management practices: knowledge acquisition, creation, documentation, transfer and application (Seleim and Khalil, 2011).

Most of the researchers have recognized four major KM practices knowledge creation, knowledge documentation /storing, knowledge sharing / transfer & knowledge application (Alavi & Leidner, 2001) which are discussed below;

4.4 Knowledge Creation:

There are different theories regarding knowledge creation with two different perspective one is from technology perspective (relates to knowledge discovery in data bases, data mining) & the other is people perspective including Nonaka’s knowledge spiral (Wickramasinghe, 2006).Technology perspective revealed knowledge discovery in database (KDD) or data mining refers that the way through which data is transformed in to knowledge. It is a way to identify novel, useful, logical and appropriate pattern in data (Wickramasinghe, 2006). People perspective revealed that there is only one way to create knowledge that is through people and in organizations knowledge can be created through embedded knowledge in groups and . According to Nonaka and Konno, (1998) there

are four basic pattern of knowledge creation (SECI model), namely socialization, externalization, combination and internalization (Dixon, 2000; Tywoniak, 2007).

4.5 Knowledge Documentation:

Literatures have identified knowledge documentation as another KM processes. Organizations pay utmost attention to knowledge documentation to not to loose and forget any knowledge. “Organizational memory” is the general term used for storing knowledge in an organization (Stein and Zwass, 1995). Physical sources which includes documentation, electronic data bases etc. and non-physical sources i.e. Employee’s embedded knowledge are included (Alavi & Leidner, 2001). External sources include consultants firms, suppliers, and other service providing firms (Helleoid and Simon, 1994). Due to global interaction of organizations, knowledge documentation have gained much importance (Kraijenbrink and Wijnhoven, 2006).According to Seleim & Khalil, (2011, p.595). Knowledge documentation are the activities through which organization save knowledge in the form of organizational memory for further sharing and reuse purposes.

4.6 Knowledge Sharing/ Transfer:

Knowledge sharing is a part of knowledge management practices. Knowledge sharing means sharing knowledge in all units of organization. It involves the transfer of information inside. Argote & Ingram (2000) have found that the embedded knowledge through the communication of employees, tools and responsibilities provide the bases for competitive advantage for the firms. With the advancement in technology. Knowledge

sharing is most critical and complex as it is a big challenge for organizations that in which manners information and useful knowledge is being transferred. As human knowledge cannot be share but it is the most valuable asset for a firm. It is an art and challenge for organizations that how these can organizations bind, collect, compose precarious information into valuable knowledge that will lead to competitive edge. Researchers suggested that organizations must emphasis on knowledge distribution culture as part of knowledge management (Harris, 2006).

According to researchers (Hansen et al., 1999 and King, 2006) there are two perspectives of knowledge sharing. One is codification (getting knowledge from electronic databases/repositories, detached of individual that generate it) other one is personalization (knowledge sharing through group interaction, network)

In this study operationally, knowledge sharing is defined as

“It involves all those activities which allow exchange of knowledge at individual, group and organizational level” (Mahmood, 2015).

4.7 Knowledge Application

A big challenge now a days organizations are facing is “application of knowledge” (Matin, Sabagh, 2015). Knowledge application means utilization of knowledge for best decision making. Researchers have identified that only sharing, acquiring and documentation of knowledge is not enough to achieve goals towards high organizational performance but it’s actually application of knowledge in efficient and effective way which leads to best in Organizational Performance (Alavi, Leidner, 2001). Operationally knowledge

application can be defined as *“the usage of available knowledge in all procedures, services & products as well as in organizational performance”* (Mahmood, 2015).

4.8 Knowledge management practices in Hospitality Sector:

Researchers (Erickson & McCall, 2012) describe human capital and knowledge management practices as interrelated concepts which are based on the idea that the knowledge embedded in minds of employees positively impact on organization’s competitiveness and according to them hospitality industry is an enthralling area for research in terms of intangible assets.

Erickson & McCall, (2012) stated that which organizations more invest in their peoples in terms of training, operation manuals, job aids techniques and knowledge management practices will get more in shape of increase in operational as well as financial performance as compare to competitors.

4.9 Knowledge management practices & Organizational performance on the bases of non-financial factors:

Literature evident two dimensions of organizational performance, financial and non-financial. Both dimensions have different factors (Thomas & Ramaswamy, 1996; Gimenez, 2000). Zack et al, (2009) described operational excellence, customer intimacy and product/ services leadership as non-financial factor to measure organizational performance which play a mediating role between knowledge management practices and organizational financial performance. Treacy & Wiersema, (1993) recommended three value terms as value discipline, one related to

organization (operational excellence), second related to customers (customer intimacy) and third one is related to product and services (product/services leadership). Accordingly, these factors lead as competitive advantages for organization.

5. Theoretical Framework

Theoretical framework always hidden in literature review. Previous research studies on diverse phenomenon with dissimilar perspectives provides root cause of research problems so literature provides ground work of the research study. Literature evident that knowledge management has significant impact on organizational performance but the presence of research work on knowledge management practices and organizational performance in hospitality sector in Pakistan is very rare even do not exist.

This study comprises

- Two dimensions of knowledge management practices, knowledge sharing and knowledge application from Ahmad (2012).
- Three value discipline factors operational excellence, customer intimacy and product/services leadership from Zack et al (2009) for non-financial organizational performance.

Researcher have researched a lot on the concept of knowledge management and organizational performance involving financial measures, but no study found with the best of researchers knowledge about knowledge management practices and organizational performance with non-financial terms especially in hotel industry in Pakistan. Quirk, (2008) suggested that as knowledge management practices and human capital are intangible assets so these should be measured

on non-financial bases to assess organizational performance.

According to above grounds, this study is going to explore and contribute in a unique way in the area of knowledge management practices and organizational performance in hospitality sector in Pakistan.

5.1 Proposed Conceptual Model

In hospitality sector, knowledge sharing and its application always remain a hurdle in performing best from employees in work area due to inadequate knowledge sharing system (Irin & Sarawak, 2013). Keeping in view above discussion, following conceptual model is being proposed.

6.1 KM Practices:

According to Rivera-Vazquez et al (2009) in today's economy, knowledge has become the most valuable and competitive asset for the organizations. Literature have identified four dimensions of knowledge management these are knowledge acquisition, sharing/transfer, documentation and application (Seleim and Khalil, 2011). Being more relevant to hospitality industry, this study involves two KM practices, knowledge sharing and knowledge application. The operationalization of these are as follows

6.2 Knowledge sharing:

According to Liao et al, (2005) knowledge sharing involves all activities and networks which are the part of a system to spread and transfer knowledge at individual as well as group & organizational level.

6.3 Knowledge Application:

Knowledge application consist of all activities and processes to utilize available knowledge and information in all units & at all level of organizations. (Seleim and Khalil, 2007).

6.4 Organizational Performance

Perceptual measures are the best way to assess organizational performance involving intangible assets (Kannan & Aulbur, 2004). In this study, organizational performance involve customer intimacy. Operational excellence and product/ services leadership.

6.5 Operational excellence

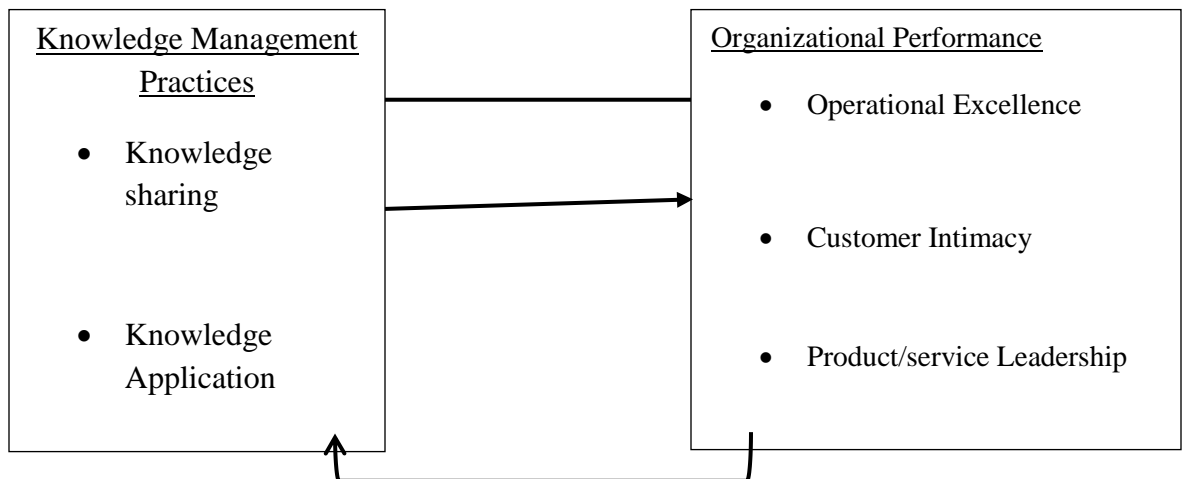
Zack et al, (2009) introduced operational excellence as a leadership philosophy involving tools and methods, procedures and

approaches which facilitate employees to perform their best. Operational excellence means minimum input resulted in maximum yield.

6.6 Customer intimacy

Treacy & Wiersema, (1993) explained customer intimacy as meeting the exact demand of customers through market segmentation and targeting customers. Main focus of organization is fulfilling customers' demands. Hospitality industry involve both terms, products and services according to the characteristics of this sector. Product and services leadership refers as producing services and products as well through a continuous process which involve innovation and creativity with fast problem solving features.

Hypothesized Research Model



6. Hypotheses

On the bases of discussion about relationship of variables and theoretical grounds, following are the proposed hypotheses

H1. There exist positive and significant relationship between knowledge management practices and organizational performance in five star hotels in Pakistan.

H2. There exist positive and significant relationship between knowledge management practices and organizational performance in four star hotels in Pakistan.

H3. There exist positive and significant relationship between knowledge management practices and organizational performance in three star hotels in Pakistan.

7. Research Methodology

This research study is concerned with the relationship between knowledge management practices and organizational performance in hotels in Pakistan. This research comprises on descriptive and explanatory approach. Nature of the study define cross-sectional study design with the technique of survey questionnaires for collecting data.

Management employees in all departments in hotels in Lahore were the population for this research study. For selection of hotels, stratified random sampling techniques was used and select three strata, five star, four star and three star hotels. Sample size through proportionate random sampling was 300 suitable for the study.

8. Research Instrument

Questionnaire adopted for survey was structured comprising 21 items involving 14

items for knowledge management practices (Ahmed et al, 2011) and 7 items for organizational performance (Rehman et al, 2015) were used. Pilot study was also conducted to check the reliability and consistency of the instrument. Five point likert scale was used as assessment tool starting from 1, strongly agree to point 5, and strongly disagree.

9. Findings

10.1 Reliability Analysis

To check the reliability and consistency of research instrument which has been previously tested by the researchers from where it was adopted, Cronbach's Alpha was used through SPSS 16 software. In this study, the value of Cronbach's Alpha is 0.908.

10.2 Descriptive Analysis

Top level, middle level and first line managers in five star, four star and three star hotels in Lahore were target population in this study. In different hotels in Lahore 300 questionnaires were administered out of them, 275 (91%) were received and 250 (83%) were able for further statistical assessments. Questionnaire contain demographics about gender, qualification, total work experience and their work experience in recent hotel and respondents have to response accordingly. The covering letter of instrument make sure the respondents complete confidentiality of their response.

Following table represents the demographics characteristics.

Table 1

Demographics	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	215	86
	Female	35	14
	Total	250	100.0
Qualification	Bachelors	118	47.2
	Masters	113	45.2
	M. Phil.	8	3.2
	Ph.D.	2	.8
	Others	9	3.6
	Total	250	100.0
Managerial Level	Top	68	27.2
	Middle	182	72.8
	Total	100.0	100.0
Total Work Experience	Less than 1 year	35	14.0
	1-5 years	109	43.6
	6-10 years	53	21.2
	Above 10 years	53	21.2
	Total	250	100.0
Name Of Hotel	Five star	48	19.2
	Four star	83	33.2
	Three star	119	47.6
	Total	250	100.0
Stay In Current Hotel	Less than 1 year	81	32.4
	1-5 years	138	55.2
	6-10 years	22	8.8
	Above 10 years	9	3.6
	Total	250	100.0

The descriptive statistics briefly explained demographic statistics of respondents. According to the results majority of respondents were male (86 %). Majority were bachelor's qualified (47.2%) and then 45.2% respondents were masters qualified. This also represents that there is a lack of professional qualified employees in hotels. Accordingly, majority of respondents were at middle level management employees (72.8%) up to first line managers. Most of the employees (43.6%) have 1-5 years total work experience throughout their career. Major response from three star hotels (47.6%), and generally, employee's work experience in their current hotel was 1-5 years (55.2%) which reflect higher turnover rate in hotels in Lahore.

10.3 Establishing relationship between Variables.

In establishing a relationship between variables in quantitative measure, correlation coefficient (r) provide the value which show the existence and strength of relationship. If the value lie at 0, it represents no correlation. The value of correlation coefficient must be between -1 and +1 for existence of relationship. Negative value depict negative

relationship (Increase in x resulted in decrease of y) whereas positive relationship indicate positive relationship (increase in x, increase in y). In this study, the correlation coefficient value is .356** with P-value 0.000 (** correlation is significant at the level of 0.01(two tailed)). The statistical result clearly define positive, moderate and significant relationship between knowledge management practices and organizational performance.

10.4 Hypotheses Analysis

This part of the study comprises on testing hypotheses statistically to accept or reject for this study.

H1. There exist positive and significant relationship between knowledge management practices and organizational performance in five star hotels in Pakistan.

To check and analyze the relationship between knowledge management practices and organizational performance in five star hotels in Lahore, regression analysis is:

Table 2

Regression statistics

	Model Summary					Coefficients		
	R	R2	Adjusted R2	F	P-value	Standardized β	T	P-value
KMP	.316	.100	.080	5.094	0.02	.316	2.257	0.02

- a. Predictor: (constant): KMP
- b. Dependent variable: OP

In above table, value of R square (coefficient of determination, ranged from 0 to 1) refers as explanatory power of the model which (.100) indicate that the 10% change in OP predicted by independent variable KMP. This value show positive, significant but weak relationship between KMP and OP. According to Frost (2014), if the value of coefficient of determination is weak (below 50%) that is normal to have that value. The reason is, the subjects which involve human behavior are unpredictable and that is just fine to have low R square values. Value of F (5.094) which should be 0 to any arbitrary value, with significant level (0.02, here $P < 0.05$) shows model good fit with significance. The value of β (standardized coefficient) reflect the unit change in dependent variable due to change in

KMP. The relationship between KMP and OP is 0.316. The value of significance is 0.02 means higher significant relationship. These above mentioned statistical values depicts that the hypothesis 1 is accepted and show positive, significant but weak relationship between knowledge management practices and organizational performance in five star hotels in Pakistan.

H2. There exist positive and significant relationship between knowledge management practices and organizational performance in four star hotels in Pakistan.

To check the hypothesis is accepted or rejected, regression analysis is as follows:

Table 3

Regression Statistics

	Model Summary					Coefficients		
	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F	P-value	Standardized β	T	P-value
KMP	.426	.182	.172	18.002	0.000	.426	4.243	.000

- a. Predictor: (constant): KMP
- b. Dependent variable: OP

In above mentioned regression analysis, the value of R square is 0.182 which means 18.2% variation in dependent variable due to independent variable. F value is 18.002 describe fitness of model with P- value (0.000) means model is good fitted. Standardized coefficient value β is 0.426 which reflect the proportion of OP from KMP with significant value 0.000 which indicate significant relationship. These above mentioned values clearly indicate a positive,

moderate and significant relationship between KMP and OP so the hypothesis 2 is accepted.

H3. There exist positive and significant relationship between knowledge management practices and organizational performance in three star hotels in Pakistan.

To analyze the nature of relationship between KMP and OP following is the regression statistics.

Table 4: Regression Statistics

	Model Summary					Coefficients		
	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F	P-value	Standardized β	T	P-value
KMP	.408	.166	.159	23.370	0.000	.408	4.834	.000

- a. Predictor: (constant): KMP
- b. Dependent variable: OP

Above mentioned statistical analysis represents value of R square indicate explanatory power of the model. R square value (.166), 16.6% explanatory power of independent variable KMP to dependent variable OP. F value 23.370 indicate adequately significant relationship between KMP and OP along with P-value 0.000 which shows higher significance. The value of standardized coefficient β indicate the proportion of OP from KMP. This reflect the impact of KMP is 0.408 on OP with higher significant value 0.000. The results indicate existence of positive, moderate and significant relationship between KMP and OP in three

star hotels which perfectly evident enough for acceptance of hypothesis.

10. Conclusion

Previous researchers have already analyzed the impact of knowledge management practices on organizational performance in different corporate sectors with financial elements but according to the best of researchers' knowledge, no evidence was found of KMP in hospitality sector (a service provider industry) in Pakistan in respect of non-financial contributors. As far as this study is concerned, this study comprises knowledge

management practices (knowledge sharing & knowledge application) and organizational performance in non-financial terms and used perceptual measures (operational excellence, customer intimacy & product/ services leadership) for organizational performance as these measures are best for analyzing OP with intangible assets (KMP). This study is the first effort to analyze hospitality sector in three strata (five star, four star and three star) separately in Pakistan where there is a lack of research especially in this sector (most ignored area for research in Pakistan). The findings and results indicate an adequately significant, positive but weak relationship in all three strata. The values of significance shows the higher level of significance in all three strata. This reveals that the presence of knowledge sharing and its application strongly influence the organizational performance in non-financial terms which ultimately leads to financial performance. This results matched with the findings of the previous researcher (Zack et al, 2009). The results also explained that to attain higher financial output, organizations should enhance their intangible assets and must not ignore non- financial measures. Although the impact of KMP to OP is weak in terms of percentage as KMP is not only one intangible asset which influence organizational performance but there are other intangible assets too like intellectual capital. KMP is just a part of intangible assets of organizations. That's why the impact of KMP to OP is weak but highly significant and matched with previous study (Valmohammad & Ahmadi, 2015).

11. Limitation & Future Research

The scope of the study limited the research. This study involved hospitality sector with only three strata, rest of the hotels (two star) can enhance the impact of the study. Only

management personnel have been taken as respondents due to lack of understanding of questionnaires.

Only one influential intangible asset has been studied, other intangible assets like intellectual capital can be added to enhance the impact on organizational performance.

In future, this phenomenon would be helpful to understand the impact of intangible assets to performance of organizations in other sector like, insurance industry (another service provider industry) and real estate industry which are already ignored research areas in Pakistan.

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