



The Role of Knowledge Management on Entrepreneurial Performance of Sports Organizations

Thamer Sami Abbas Ghanimi

MSc, Sports Management,
Arak University, Arak, Iran

Farnaz Fakhri*

Assistant Professor of Sport Management,
Arak University, Arak, Iran
[*Corresponding author]

Seyed Hossein Alavi

Associate Professor of Department of Physical Education,
Technical and Vocational University (TVU), Tehran, Iran

Abstract

The macro strategy of an organization should support the creation and expansion of knowledge reserves; therefore, the present study was designed to investigate the role of knowledge management on entrepreneurial performance in sports organizations. The method of the present study was quantitative, which was descriptive in terms of strategy, survey in terms of implementation, field in terms of data collection, and applied in terms of purpose. The statistical population of the present study consisted of all employees of the sports department of the Iraqi Ministry of Interior, numbering 300 people. In the present study, the statistical sample was considered randomly using the simple cluster-stratified method. It should also be noted that 170 people were considered to determine the statistical sample using the Cochran sampling method at the 0.05 level. Also, in order to calculate the internal reliability of the questionnaire questions, Cronbach's alpha method was used, which was 0.804 for the knowledge management questionnaire and 0.852 for the entrepreneurial performance questionnaire. To analyze the data, Pearson correlation test and structural equation model were used using SPSS26 and PLS3 software. According to the research findings, based on path analysis, it was determined that the knowledge management variable directly has a positive and significant effect on entrepreneurial performance with a value of ($\text{sig}=0.0001$; $\beta=0.768$). According to the results, it is suggested to the managers of the Iraqi Ministry of Interior to always support and support the innovative activities of employees and pay attention to cultivating their creativity. They should also promote the entrepreneurial knowledge of employees by holding training courses on information technology, social and internet marketing.

Keywords

sports organizations, entrepreneurial performance, knowledge management, Iraq

INTRODUCTION

In today's information and knowledge-based economy, the importance of knowledge and information management as organizational resources is rapidly increasing. This alteration in the system requirement and demands has led to a shift in organizational management from focusing on products to become knowledge and information-oriented centers (Sibbald et al., 2016). Knowledge management includes processes related to the identification, sharing, and production of knowledge. It requires a system to create and maintain knowledge resources, as well as to promote and facilitate knowledge sharing and organizational learning. The main goal of knowledge management is to encourage knowledge sharing among employees in order to increase the added value of knowledge in the organization. Knowledge management is essential for fostering creativity, innovation, productivity, and profitability in organizations (Gao et al., 2024). What distinguishes organizations today is their ability to effectively manage knowledge and other intangible assets, such as employees'

intellectual capital. Knowledge management is a process that enables organizations to find important information and then select, organize, and disseminate it (Buonomo et al., 2020). Meanwhile, Butt et al. (2019) argue that organizations are trying to find tools that support the knowledge resource workforce to meet the challenges of the organization in the competitive market as well as improve entrepreneurial and organizational performance. Previous researchers show that knowledge management practices have gradually become a topic of interest in all fields of business studies and play a significant role in entrepreneurial and organizational success due to its increasing awareness in society (Audretsch et al., 2020). Thus, Antunes & Pinheiro (2020) suggested that knowledge management practices help to develop organizational interests and their acquisition activities to become stronger and more effective for longer survival. Looking at previous literature, researchers examined the role of knowledge management practices on organizational performance and found that knowledge management is positively related to organizational and business performance (Serrat, 2017; Abuaddous et al., 2018).

Furthermore, knowledge-based theory explains that when knowledge management practices are managed effectively and efficiently, they create unique capabilities that help improve organizational performance with innovation, therefore, organizations with superior knowledge management practices are likely to achieve organizational performance (Li et al., 2020). Ma et al. (2023) state that knowledge management practices such as knowledge sharing, knowledge acquisition, and knowledge application contribute to innovation, which helps improve organizational performance. In today's markets, fostering innovation in organizations has become increasingly critical to enhance competitiveness and overall performance. Various studies have confirmed the direct correlation between innovation and organizational performance and highlighted the important role of innovation as a driving force for organizational improvement (Wang et al., 2021). Furthermore, effective knowledge management is recognized as a key factor in improving organizational performance, with knowledge process management strongly influencing organizational performance (Farnese et al., 2019).

Given the competitive environment of modern organizations, the pursuit of competitive advantages has become the main concern of managers. Adopting new management approaches and prioritizing organizational performance is crucial for success (Idrees et al., 2022). Since organizational environments change frequently, organizations must be innovative and adopt knowledge management to survive and thrive. Delshab et al. (2022) argue that knowledge management can contribute to the performance or effectiveness of the organization. Knowledge management is a means of change and moving towards innovation. Through knowledge management, organizations can adapt to the environment so that they can survive and thrive. Notably, performance evaluation is of considerable importance for sports organizations, prompting scholars and business managers in these fields to focus on assessing their current situation and developing strategies for improvement (Gabriel and Alina, 2014).

Knowledge management in sports organizations is very important to facilitate individual, team and organizational learning, this includes tools and methods that share and create knowledge for the survival and growth of these institutions. Given the limited resources and high turnover of employees, knowledge management can significantly improve performance and learning outcomes and enable sports organizations to better manage information and achieve their strategic goals in the development of amateur sports, it should be noted that sports organizations in Iraq, like other sports organizations around the world, have a critical need for effective management and organizational performance in entrepreneurship to be leaders in providing services to the sports community. Also, to improve entrepreneurial performance, it is necessary to first identify the influential factors, so by emphasizing these vital elements, the process of implementing the desired system can be simplified and resources can be prevented from being wasted. Also, regarding the importance of advancing this research, it should be stated that, this study covers the gap in the literature on knowledge management practices such as knowledge sharing, innovation capacity, and absorptive capacity on organizational performance and entrepreneurship. Furthermore, no research on this topic has been conducted at the level of sports organizations, which, given the necessity of identifying factors affecting the development and improvement of entrepreneurial performance, is itself a testament to the priority of advancing this research. Therefore, the focus of the main question of this research is: What is the role of knowledge management on the entrepreneurial performance of employees of sports organizations?

THEORETICAL BASES OF RESEARCH

Knowledge Management

Effective knowledge management in sports organizations is crucial to maximizing performance, fostering innovation, and achieving long-term success in a competitive environment (Al-Khaldi, 2022). Effective knowledge management not only enhances individual performance but also fosters a culture of continuous learning and adaptability within the organization, ensuring that all members are aligned with common goals. This alignment creates a cohesive environment where collaboration thrives, ultimately leading to enhanced team dynamics and superior outcomes in competitive scenarios (Morales-Sanchez et al., 2020). Effective knowledge management also enables organizations to leverage their collective expertise and foster an innovative environment where new ideas can flourish and be rapidly implemented. This innovative environment not only enhances problem-solving capabilities but also fosters a culture where continuous improvement is prioritized, leading to sustainable organizational growth and success (Azeem et al., 2021). This sustainable growth is essential for organizations to adapt to changing market conditions and remain competitive in an evolving landscape. This adaptability enables organizations not only to survive but also thrive, as they use their

innovative capabilities to anticipate trends and proactively respond to emerging challenges (Setyawan et al., 2024). This proactive approach fosters a culture of resilience and enables organizations to thrive in uncertainty while continuously adapting their strategies to meet the evolving demands of their customers and stakeholders (Pertheban et al., 2023). By fostering a culture of continuous improvement and adaptability, organizations can not only manage uncertainty but also take advantage of new opportunities that arise from changing market dynamics. This proactive stance enables organizations to anticipate changes and take advantage of emerging trends, ultimately remaining more flexible and adaptable in a turbulent environment (Hasim and Bakri, 2023).

Entrepreneurial practice

By analyzing entrepreneurial performance, sports organizations can gain insight into their overall performance and identify areas for improvement, which ultimately leads to greater success both internally and externally. This holistic approach not only strengthens the integrity of sports organizations but also fosters a culture of accountability and transparency (Hammerschmidt et al., 2024). This commitment to sustainability and inclusivity can ultimately change the landscape of sports and foster an environment where diverse opinions are heard and valued. These changes can help create a sustainable sports ecosystem where everyone, from employees to managers and stakeholders, plays a significant role and contributes to the development and growth of the industry (Khan et al., 2021). Such a collaborative effort fosters innovation and leads to a brighter future, not only helping to strengthen connections between stakeholders, but also increasing public trust and attracting more financial support from sponsors. Such a collaborative approach fosters an environment where sustainable practices are prioritized, ensuring that the benefits of sport go beyond immediate gains and create lasting positive impacts on communities and the environment (Dahri et al., 2021). This holistic approach fosters a culture of sustainability that also encourages future generations to participate in sport and various business sectors with a sense of responsibility towards their communities. Such a commitment to sustainability not only enhances the reputation of sporting events but also fosters a deeper connection between participants and sponsoring organizations, encouraging long-term engagement and support for environmental stewardship (Lagoudaki et al., 2024).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The proposed relationships between the study variables (independent, dependent) are accordingly shown in Figure 1.

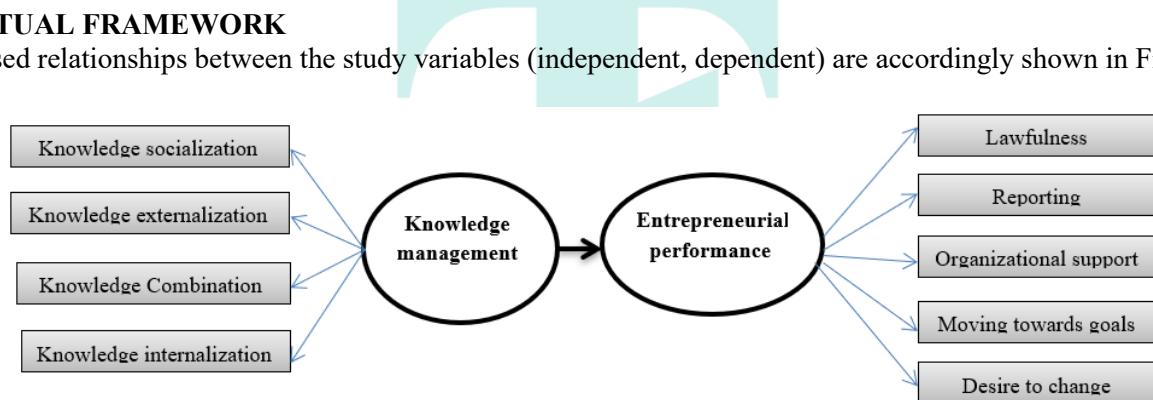


Fig. 1 Conceptual model of research

H_0 : Knowledge management has a significant effect on entrepreneurial performance in sports organizations.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this quantitative research with a practical purpose, the strategies are descriptive, and the research implementation path is survey type. Also, data collection was done by field method. The statistical population of the present research consisted of all employees of the Sports Department of the Ministry of Interior of Iraq, including 300 people. In the present research, the statistical sample will be considered randomly using the simple cluster-stratified method, and it should be noted that 170 people were considered to determine the statistical sample using the Cochran sampling method at a significance level of $P < 0.05$. Also, in order to achieve the objectives, questions, and hypotheses of the research, the field method (standard questionnaires) was used. In general, after determining the subjects, the research questionnaires were implemented through the online questionnaire maker in the summer of 2013 for the sample under investigation.

In the present study, the Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) questionnaire was used to examine the knowledge management variable. The questionnaire consists of 16 items and four dimensions: knowledge socialization (items 1-4), knowledge externalization (items 5-8), Knowledge Combination (items 9-12), and knowledge internalization (items 13-16). Bratianu et al. (2021) used content validity to determine the validity of the questionnaire, and obtained a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.89. The scale used in the questionnaire is based on the five-option Likert scale. Also, the Qader standard questionnaire (2022) was used for the entrepreneurial performance variable. This questionnaire has 11 items and 5 dimensions: compliance with rules (items 1-3), reporting (items 4-5), organizational support (items 6-7), moving towards goals (items 8-9), and willingness to change (items 10-11). The measurement scale of the items of this questionnaire is based on the five-point Likert scale. In the research of Qader (2022), the validity of this questionnaire was confirmed in the form of factor loading, and the reliability of this questionnaire was 0.939. In the present study, for

the content validity of the questionnaire and the accuracy and completeness of the questions, the aforementioned questionnaires were distributed among 10 experts and specialists and approved by them.

Finally, descriptive and inferential statistics were used to statistically analyze the research findings. Therefore, in order to examine the reliability of the research tool, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to analyze inferential data to examine the relationship between research variables and structural equation model to examine the research hypotheses. In this study, SPSS software version 26 and PLS software version 3 were employed to examine the research hypotheses (structural equation model).

RESULTS

Based on the results of the descriptive statistics section of the study, it was found that most people were in the age range of 30 to 36 years (44 people - 25.9%) and a smaller number of people were in the age range of 51 to 56 years (9 people - 5.3%). In addition, the results showed that 60.06 percent of the surveyed samples were male (103 people) and 39.4 percent of them were male (67 people), of which 37.6 percent of the surveyed samples were single (64 people) and 62.4 percent of them were married (106 people). The results also showed that most people had a bachelor's degree (68 people - 40%) and a smaller number of people had a post-graduate education (22 people - 12.9%). The following is a report on the inferential statistics of the study:

Table 1 Descriptive statistics of research variables and results of data normality testing

	Minimum	Maximum	Average	S.D	Sig	Z
Knowledge socialization	4	20	12.51	4.763	0.002	0.089
Knowledge externalization	4	20	13.41	4.613	0.0001	0.111
Knowledge Combination	4	20	13.34	4.810	0.0001	0.141
Knowledge internalization	4	20	14.30	3.593	0.003	0.087
Knowledge management	21	80	53.57	16.517	0.0001	0.103
lawfulness	3	15	10.31	3.430	0.0001	0.117
Reporting	2	10	7.04	1.907	0.0001	0.145
Organizational support	2	10	7.09	2.021	0.0001	0.112
Moving towards goals	2	10	6.13	1.887	0.0001	0.189
Desire to change	2	8	5.88	1.533	0.0001	0.189
Entrepreneurial practice	13	51	36.47	8.815	0.001	0.092

In Table (1), descriptive statistics including mean and standard deviation criteria for the variables of the questionnaires are given; the knowledge management factor showed an average of (53.57) and the entrepreneurial performance dimension showed an average of (36.47). Also, based on the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, the significance level of most components is less than $\alpha=0.05$, so the data distribution is non-normal. At the following, the assumptions for examining the structural model using PLS3 software to examine the statistical hypotheses are presented.

Table 2 Average Variance Extracted (AVE) variables

Dimensions	AVE
Entrepreneurial Performance	0.817
Knowledge Management	0.859

The criterion for the desirability of AVE is equal to or higher than 0.5. In Table (2), the output results of the model for the AVE index are shown. As can be seen, the results indicate the suitability of the convergent validity criterion (AVE).

Table 3 Fornell-Larcker divergent validity matrix

Fornell-Larcker	Entrepreneurial practice	Knowledge Management
Entrepreneurial practice	0.94	-
Knowledge Management	0.768	0.927

Based on Table (3) of the latent matrix, it is determined that the correlation of each construct with itself is greater than the correlation of that construct with other constructs. As a result, the divergent validity of the model is confirmed.

Table 4 Reliability coefficients of variables

Dimensions	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
Entrepreneurial practice	0.957	0.817
Knowledge Management	0.96	0.859

According to the Cronbach's alpha values and composite reliability reported in Table (4), as can be seen, all variables have Cronbach's alpha values above 0.70 and composite reliability above 0.8, which indicates that the model has appropriate reliability (both in terms of Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability).

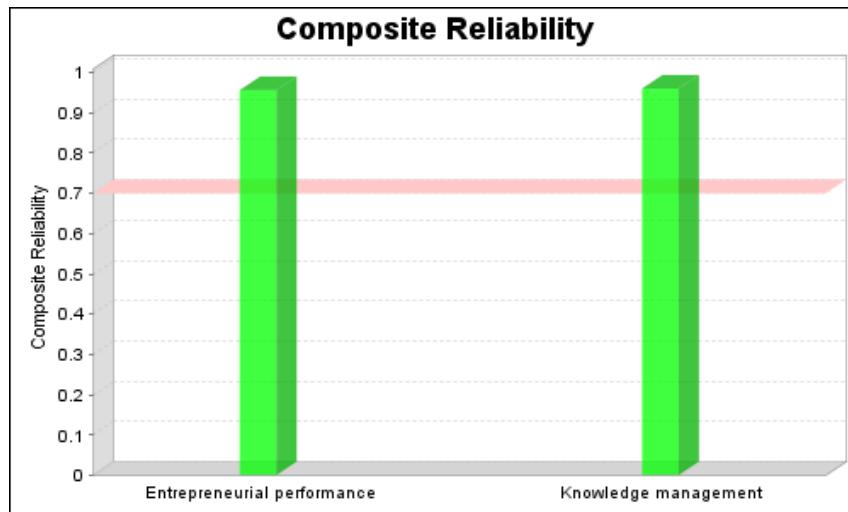


Fig. 2 Composite reliability of the research

After assessing the validity and reliability of the measurement model, the structural model is examined through the relationships between latent variables. In addition, the most widely used criteria for fitting the structural model have been used in the present study. These criteria include; significance coefficient (T-values), coefficient of determination (R²), and coefficient of predictive power (Q²).

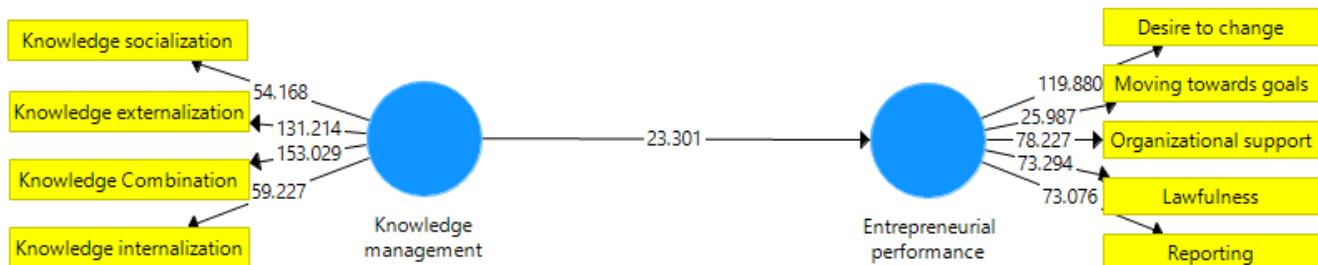


Fig. 3 Significance coefficient (T-values) of the relationships between each of the main factors with each other and with the sub-factors

According to the results of Figure (3), the effect of knowledge management on entrepreneurial performance is greater than 1.96 and significant. This significance indicates the correct prediction of the aforementioned relationships in the research model.

Table 5 Significance coefficient (T-values) of the relationships between each of the main factors with each other and with the sub-factors

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Desire to change <- Entrepreneurial performance	0.954	0.954	119.880	0.0001
Knowledge Combination <- Knowledge management	0.960	0.961	153.029	0.0001
Knowledge externalization <- Knowledge management	0.951	0.951	131.214	0.0001
Knowledge internalization <- Knowledge management	0.894	0.895	59.227	0.0001
Knowledge socialization <- Knowledge management	0.899	0.901	54.168	0.0001
Lawfulness <- Entrepreneurial performance	0.925	0.925	73.294	0.0001
Moving towards goals <- Entrepreneurial performance	0.769	0.772	25.987	0.0001
Organizational support <- Entrepreneurial performance	0.927	0.927	78.227	0.0001
Reporting <- Entrepreneurial performance	0.933	0.933	73.076	0.0001

The R² value varies from zero to one and indicates the structural model fit at three levels: weak (0.19), moderate (0.33), and strong (0.67). The results showed that the calculated R² level is at an acceptable and moderate level.

Table 6 R Square coefficients of the endogenous variables of the model

Dimensions	R Square	Interpretation
Entrepreneurial performance	0.59	Medium

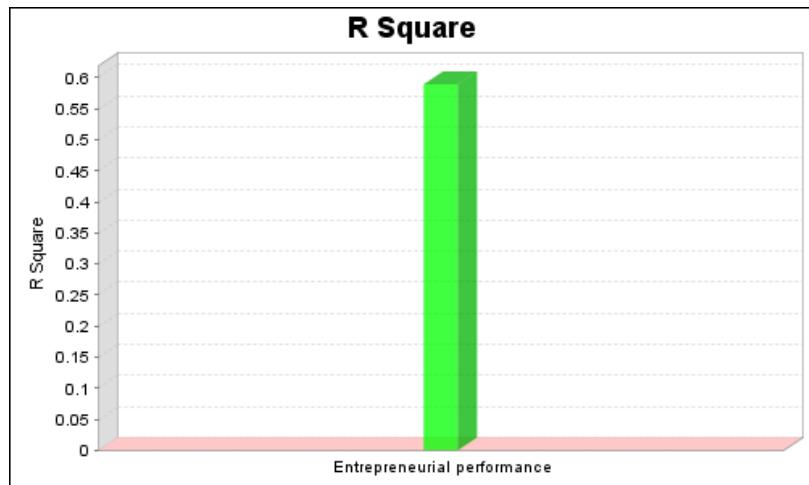


Fig. 4 R Square value of the model's endogenous variables

Next, the effect size was measured for other research constructs, as you can see in Table (6), in addition to the effect size of each factor with its own dimensions, which all have great effect sizes, which are helpful when interpreting the significance of each of the relationships.

Table 7 Effect sizes of research constructs

The relationships of each of the main factors with each other	F2 rate (effect size)	Effect size
Knowledge management → Entrepreneurial performance	1.436	Great effect

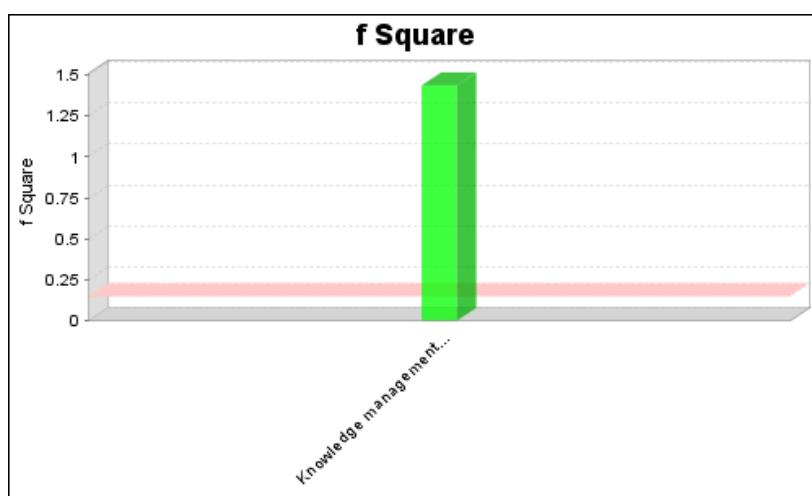


Fig. 5 Effect size measure (F2)

This Q2 criterion indicates that models with acceptable structural fit should be able to predict the indices related to the endogenous constructs of the model. If the Q2 value for an endogenous construct reaches three values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35, it indicates weak, moderate, and strong predictive power for the indices of that construct, respectively. According to Table 4-8, it is clear that the model has strong predictive power.

Table 8. Q2 index coefficient of model predictive power (Stone and Geisser)

	$Q^2 (=1-SSE/SSO)$	SSE	SSO
Entrepreneurial performance	0.443	473.328	850,000
Knowledge management		680,000	680,000

The following are the results of the analysis of the research hypothesis test:

H_0 : Knowledge management has a significant effect on entrepreneurial performance in sports organizations.

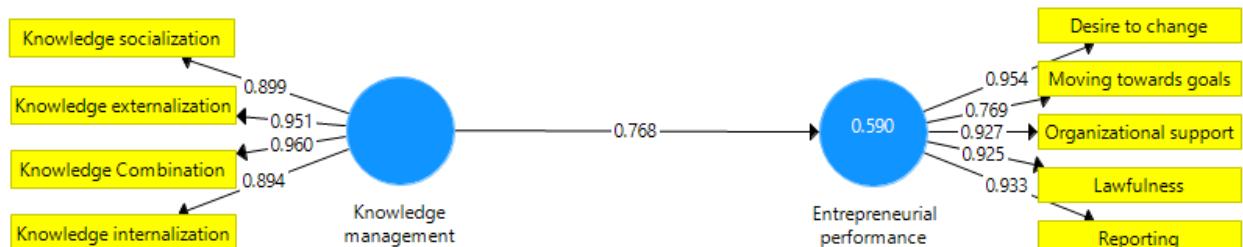


Fig. 6 Effect size and significance coefficient (P-values) of the final research model

Based on Table (9) and Figure 6, it is clear that in the context of entrepreneurial performance, all 5 components and in the context of knowledge management, all 4 components have a significant role in explaining this item. Also, based on path analysis, it was determined that the knowledge management variable has a direct positive and significant effect on entrepreneurial performance with a value of ($\text{sig}=0.0001$; $\beta=0.768$).

Table 9 Effect size and significance coefficient (P-values) of the final research model

	Original Sample	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values
Knowledge management → Entrepreneurial performance	0.768	0.772	0.033	23.301	0.0001

DISCUSSION

According to the research findings, all 5 components have a significant role in explaining entrepreneurial performance and all 4 components in the field of knowledge management. Also, based on path analysis, it was determined that the knowledge management variable has a direct positive and significant effect on entrepreneurial performance with a value of ($\text{sig}=0.0001$; $\beta=0.768$). The results are consistent with the findings of Kaupinen and Escamilla-Fajardo (2023), Delshab (2022), Karimi et al. (2025), Adinehlu et al. (2021), El-Charani and El-Abiad (2020), Seo and Ai (2020), Lee et al. (2020), and Sultan Ali al-Ahbabi et al. (2019); In this regard, Karimi et al. (1403) stated in a study that as a result of using positive leadership strategies and encouraging innovative behaviors among managers and employees, it can have a significant impact on the development and creation of sports entrepreneurship. Also, Lee et al. (2020) showed, according to the results of their research, that knowledge management practices have a positive and significant impact on dynamic capabilities and also have a significant impact on entrepreneurial and organizational performance. Today, it is not possible to manage organizations with traditional methods and practices; because managing people, who constitute the main assets of organizations, is not an easy task, and leaders of organizations, especially human resource managers, must acquire the necessary knowledge and skills for this important matter and apply them effectively. Adineh Lu et al. (1400) also showed in their research that knowledge management and organizational culture are effective in predicting the efficient management of employee performance. According to the research findings, it can be said that the correct application of knowledge management components and organizational culture in efficient performance management is very smart and paves the way for advancing goals and provides management with the tools for growth, success, and promotion of the organization. Also, Delshab et al. (2022) stated in their research that non-sports clubs should benefit from promoting knowledge management processes such as facilitating the development and sharing of new knowledge by relying on internal and external knowledge resources. By doing so, sports clubs can increase their capabilities to exploit external knowledge and cultivate a positive attitude towards novelty and innovation, which can help them create more innovation and better performance. In addition, Kaupinen and Escamilla-Fajardo (2023) showed in a study that entrepreneurial behaviors can encourage sports entrepreneurs to compete. This may be especially true for sports entrepreneurs who use skills acquired from sports that they teach or train alone. Also, El-Charani and El-Abyad (2020) showed in their research that knowledge acquisition, knowledge sharing, knowledge creation and knowledge retention have a positive effect on job performance, so knowledge management should be a mandatory condition in the workplace to create a high level of job performance. In addition, Seo and Ai (2020) showed in their study that the three dimensions of knowledge management practices, knowledge sharing, knowledge application and knowledge retention significantly affect employee work performance and job satisfaction to some extent on the relationships between knowledge management practices, except knowledge sharing, and employee work performance. Al-Ahbabi et al. (2019) showed in their research that all four knowledge management processes (knowledge creation, knowledge storage, knowledge sharing and knowledge application) had a positive and significant effect on operational performance, quality and innovation of the public sector.

In the continuation of the explanation of the research position, it should be stated that with the rapid development of the knowledge-based economy, knowledge is considered as an important measure for success in drawing goals and achieving the best performance, therefore knowledge is the best driving force for entrepreneurial and organizational performance and its success (Ahmed et al., 2017). Knowledge management as explicit and effective management enables effective methods in identifying and utilizing knowledge management, knowledge management resources enable knowledge sharing, knowledge creation, innovation and knowledge absorption among organizations, therefore, these resources were integrated (Lee et al., 2020). In the current competitive environment, the world is becoming a global village knowledge management processes and international entrepreneurial orientations have become the most attractive concept for better entrepreneurial performance of organizations, with these interpretations, Iraqi sports organizations must have the ability to acquire, store and share information to achieve competitive advantage. As various studies have shown, organizations that use knowledge management are able to provide superior performance, so the Ministry of Interior, federations and sports organizations should consider that in order to maintain interests and improve service provision to stakeholders; they should act on knowledge management as described in its components. In other words; initially, they should be interested and supportive of human resources for acquiring new knowledge, improving and promoting individuals, believing in communication and information technologies and taking advantage of them to communicate with

the target community and advance entrepreneurial programs, and also helping to create creativity, initiative and innovation in advancing current activities and decision-making of the organization.

Finally, according to the results of the research, it is recommended that the officials and trustees of the Ministry of Sports improve the specialized knowledge of employees by holding training courses on information technology, social and internet marketing. In addition, by consulting and cooperating with employees and sports veterans, knowledge is preserved and transferred to employees, and by creating a flat and flexible organizational structure, the opinions, creativity, and initiatives of employees and officials from different fields are used in advancing affairs and decisions in creating, producing, and providing entrepreneurial services. It should also be acknowledged regarding the limitations of the research; although the characteristics of the participants and the sample size in this study were considered appropriate from a research perspective, there is insufficient control over all employees of sports organizations and trustees, and also, given the limited spatial scope of the research to the sports department of the Iraqi Ministry of Interior, caution should be applied in generalizing to other sports organizations. Therefore, for better generalization, other employees of sports organizations such as sports federations who have been purposefully selected can be invited to cooperate. In addition, the innovation and creativity variables have been considered as mediating variables in entrepreneurship research, so future research can consider the present model by adding the aforementioned variables as mediating variables to further understand the impact of knowledge management on entrepreneurial performance in sports organizations.

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