



The Effect of Organizational Factors on Strategic Unlearning through the mediating role of Knowledge Sharing in Iran's State-Owned Banks

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the impact of organizational factors on strategic unlearning through the mediating role of knowledge sharing in Iran's state-owned banks. The aim is to develop human resource capabilities based on organizational learning and strategic unlearning patterns to effectively attain the objectives of Iran's state banks. The research population includes 412 managers and deputies of Iran's state-owned banks, and the sample size is 199 participants. A researcher-made questionnaire was applied to collect data, and SmartPLS3 software was used for statistical analysis. The results indicate that organizational factors positively impact strategic unlearning through the mediating role of knowledge sharing. Strategic unlearning leads to greater motivation for talent development in creative environments, causing constructive changes that improve individual and organizational performance, leading to innovation and creativity. The study highlights the importance of strategic unlearning in Iran's state-owned banks and its positive impact on progress toward a better future.

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Introduction

Technological advances have changed the shape of the competitive environment in organizations, caused challenges, and created new opportunities. Thus, companies and organizations must develop new strategies (Dana et al., 2021). Accordingly, focusing on intellectual capital and people's knowledge is regarded as a highly appropriate strategy (Hosseini & Sabokro, 2021). strategy approach to managing Suppose organizations do not have an effective strategy to manage obsolete knowledge. In that case, they will have lower readiness and agility necessary to accept new technology, slower technology transfer, and limited ability to learn and adapt to new technology (Karamati, Khairandish, & Khodayi, 2014). Organizations can pursue influential strategies and mostly believe that strategic performance significantly affects the success of the organization (Wang et al., 2018). Therefore, organizations should be prepared to compete with the possibility of future development. Nonetheless, these unique competencies may impose such a heavy burden and concentrated efforts to develop and defend them that they may prevent any fundamental organizations organizational changes (Mohiuddin et al., 2022). Thus, it is difficult for any organization to seek crucial strategic unlearning to change its primary strength; it may also act as a fundamental stabilizing force for many leading organizations (Rajabipoormeybodi et al., 2019). However, Hamadani (2016) argued that such learnings may cause resistance in organizations and their perspectives because of this tense and competitive world. Therefore, leaders must prepare the ground for everyone to unlearn outdated knowledge and learn new knowledge. Managers must analyze the learning power of their fellow employees and inspire them to express new ideas and actions against any institutional constraints. They can encourage everyone to develop and use their learning capabilities (Morasis-Storz & Nguyen, 2017). Therefore, implementingimplementing knowledge sharing requires a certain amount of employees, time, and other resources (Islami et al., 2018). Thus, knowledge integration enables organizations to use newly acquired knowledge to bring new product concepts to the market earlier(Tajpour & Razavi,2023). Internal knowledge sharing also employees to develop a joint base of experience and language, improve the efficiency of intra-organizational communication, and exchange information directly. As a result, employees can clarify the requirements and specifications of new products under development (Morgan et al., 2019).

Transitional economies moving towards market capitalism face challenges, and the regulatory, cognitive, and normative dimensions can influence government policies and business environments. The regulatory dimension comprises formal rules, laws, regulations, and government policies enforcing mechanisms. The cognitive dimension consists of shared social knowledge and skills in setting up and maintaining businesses. The normative dimension emphasizes entrepreneurial activity and creative and innovative thinking. Organizations in transitional economies deal with a regulatory business environment and national characteristics towards entrepreneurship, learning, and innovation. In such economies, innovation and learning orientation transformation become critical factors to make state-owned industries competitive in a new global market economy (Tajeddini & Trueman,2016). On the other hand, the banking industry setting is based on innovation and competition. Banks can improve their competitiveness implementing creativity and strategic management, respecting customers' value, and providing innovative services. Given that developing countries often focus on a bank-oriented financial system, providing they will be necessary to pursue an influential market-orientation economy because of the highly competitive process of internationalization of service-providing organizations, such as banks. Banks are among the influential organizations in society, constantly exposed to environmental changes. It can, in turn, cause alterations in banks (including their employees) and impose problems (Cepeda-Carrión et al., 2015). Hence, banks should also deal with two significant issues to be able to adapt to these changes: 1- how to improve the organization to optimally adjust to such changes and developments, and 2- how to direct and lead the organization's human resources to achieve organizational goals and meet the employees' needs (Abul Qasimi & Soltani, 2018). As a result, majority most of the employees' skills will not be practical in the future, so people's skills should also improve in line with the developments (Lee Yu et al., 2020). Therefore, unlearning is regarded as the main problem of organizational learning that needs to be addressed strategically. In addition, state-owned banks have recruited their human resources from other departments and fields during the last two decades; hence, these new employees' non-banking attitudes can influence related interactions. For this reason, it is essential to highlight the impact of organizational factors on strategic unlearning among state-owned

banks. Meanwhile, the review of local and international literature indicates that most of the previous research have examined the results of organizational unlearning and strategy separately, and strategic unlearning has not been highlighted so far. Furthermore, no study has investigated the integrated influence of organizational factors on strategic unlearning in Iran's state-owned banks. Therefore, the present research aims to examine the impact of organizational factors on strategic unlearning in Iranian government-owned banks. This research is the pioneering study in this field; on the other hand, the related research is minimal and fails to highlight the significant role of banks and other monetary and financial institutions in micro and macro economy, enhancement of production, and job creation in the country. Hence, it is essential to focus on individual and organizational enhancement of human resources and institutionalization of the learning process to reduce the gap between the status quo and the perspective of state-owned banks in Iran.

Theoretical background

Strategic Unlearning

Unlearning refers to letting go of old habits, assumptions, or beliefs that are no longer relevant or effective. It involves challenging existing knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors to make room for new learning and growth (van Oers et al., 2023). Unlearning is letting go of old ways of thinking or behaving that no longer serve us well (Sharma & Lenka, 2023). Unlearning involves recognizing and challenging our assumptions, biases, and mental models replacing them with new and more, and replacing them with new, more accurate information (Mull et al., 2023). Unlearning is identifying and questioning our deeply ingrained beliefs and assumptions and replacing them with new perspectives and behaviors (Hislop et al., 2014). Unlearning is deliberately challenging and discarding old ideas, habits, and behaviors, replacing them with new ones that better align with our goals and values (Manu, 2022). Therefore, unlearning refers to the intermediary stage between forgetting old knowledge and applying new environmental knowledge (Yildiz & Feai, 2010). Thus, unlearning is the abandonment of outdated procedures to create new procedures in which knowledge is shared purposefully (Sadeghian et al., 2012). Organizational unlearning prepares the ground for people to effectively continue their activities and increase their efficiency in line with organizational and environmental changes (Yildiz & Feai, 2010). Since obsolete and old knowledge in the organization can impede the development of employees and their competencies, researchers have always sought new approaches to help intentionally forget the outdated knowledge. Consequently, it can be argued that unlearning improves employees' competency levels and organizational performance (Rajabipoormeybodi et al., 2019). Moreover, the unlearning process can moderate the mindset of the organization to recognize that errors can stimulate learning and knowledge sharing (P. E, J, 2018).

Unlearning helps the management team realize that outdated assumptions may no longer work. They can also limit the management's ability to obtain and implement sales information, which can affect their productivity (Burta & Karath Nairb, 2020). As a result, learning and unlearning are regarded as necessary for strategic changes. Besides, the statement of responsibilities identifies strategic goals; accordingly, deviation from these goals is considered a strategic issue, which causes several signs highlighting the need for change (Tajpour et al., 2023). A shared understanding of the pressure from intense competition enables employees to engage more effectively and actively in their knowledge integration work (Werr & Runsten, 2013). Internal knowledge integration is mainly based on frequent encounters, knowledge transfer, and knowledge sharing among employees (Salunke et al., 2019). As a result, employees enhance communication with each other, strengthen their mutual understanding, and help them develop a shared vision to facilitate internal knowledge integration (Rauniar et al., 2019). Therefore, knowledge owners' reluctance to share their knowledge is considered an obstacle to integrating internal knowledge (Ramsey et al., 2019). In this case, the intensity of competition can successfully stimulate internal knowledge integration by creating a tense atmosphere. Competitive intensity can promote the integration of external knowledge. Therefore, it can be argued that a high degree of competition in a market generally indicates more competitors (Eldor, 2020). As a result, organizations have more opportunities to acquire specialized and complementary knowledge from others (Wang et al., 2018). Access to diverse foreign knowledge increases the possibility of foreign knowledge integration for organizations (Tajpour et al., 2023). Additionally, competitors in the same market tend to have more compatible knowledge than non -

competitors (Chiambaretto et al., 2020), which may reduce and accelerate barriers to acquiring external knowledge (such as difficult access to a compatible knowledge base). Thus, it is crucial to provide strategic unlearning for individuals as a part of a cognitive learning system. This process can explain why new competitors typically replace experienced industry employees when seeking significant structural changes (e.g., the personal computer revolution). Hence, given various organizational factors that affect strategic unlearning, the researchers aimed to examine three aspects of agility, entrepreneurial orientation, and transformational leadership.

Organizational Agility

The purpose of unlearning is to create an agile organization and achieve a sustainable competitive advantage to reach optimal performance in the organization (Mohammadimoghadam et al., 2017). Accordingly, organizations may be able to survive in the business environment if they are more flexible and can adapt to the environment (Holbeche, 2023). For the past decades, most organizations have implemented reconstruction and reengineering strategies in response to environmental challenges in order to endure in such an environment (Ramos et al., 2023); nonetheless, outdated solutions are no longer effective in dealing with organizational challenges and the external environment. Hence, it is recommended to be replaced them with new perspectives (Sharifi & Zhang, 2001). Organizational agility is considered one of these new perspectives. Initially, it was believed that agility can only be obtained through complex technologies. However, recent research findings revealed that flexible production is more dependent on agile people rather than technology (Sherehiy et al., 2007). Employees' skill and their wide-ranging knowledge is regarded as a crucial component of organizational agility (Walter, 2021). Knowledge management seeks to find an appropriate answer for the challenge about the integration and implementation of such knowledge within the organization, especially in environments with competition over advanced technologies as well as uncertainty (Zhang et al., 2023). Moreover, organizational learning, as a subcategory of knowledge management, is considered an indicator of survival (Easterby-Smith & Lyles, 2011). In the meantime, the organization will face an enormous amount of practical and useless information that has been stored in the organization's memory. This extra information sometimes hinders quick movement and slows down the organization's agility; thus, the majority of such useless knowledge should be deleted deliberately from the organization's memory (Ganapathy et al., 2023). In other words, organizations should use unlearning to prepare the organization's memory to learn new knowledge and develop agility of the organization (Mohammadimoghadam et al., 2017). Digital agility will not only help banks to deal with today's challenges but will also put them on the path of future growth (Grover, 2022). Therefore, banks are highly dependent on new technologies regarding performance-related achievements and must respond quickly to environmental changes (Arabiun et al., 2023). In other words, the organization must be agile and flexible. Consequently, the first research hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H_{1a}: Organizational agility has a substantial impact on strategic unlearning.

H_{1b}: Organizational agility substantially impacts strategic unlearning through the mediating role of knowledge sharing.

Entrepreneurial Orientation

Entrepreneurship research identifies two primary sources of entrepreneurial activity: individuals who exploit previously unnoticed opportunities and create new ventures and established companies that engage in corporate entrepreneurship to improve profitability and competitiveness (Tajeddini & Mueller, 2012; 2009). Therefore, entrepreneurial orientation, entrepreneur-oriented activities (e.g., generating new market opportunities (exploration)), and optimization of available resources in organizations are performed to maintain existing opportunities (productivity). In other words, the organization's CEO helps establish a balance between the behaviors seeking opportunities (exploration) and the behaviors seeking benefits (productivity). This process can, in turn, create practical innovation (Nikraftar et al., 2021). Therefore, companies with a solid entrepreneurial orientation aim to adapt to both exploration and productivity innovation and shape the market environment. If exploration is emphasized over productivity, it may lead to costly and risky innovation activities, reducing the benefits of exploiting available capabilities (Anwar et al., 2020). In contrast, an

exclusive focus on productivity may provide short-term benefits. However, it might jeopardize or disregard future development opportunities (Zhang et al., 2003).

Organizations with higher entrepreneurial orientation can easily maintain changes in the external environment (Dubey et al., 2020). Besides, they are more likely to establish new opportunities because of their strongly innovative and risk-taking capabilities (Hosseini et al., 2021). These companies would also emphasize experiential learning so that it leads to the integration of existing knowledge into the company's internal database and the attainment of competitive advantage (Sahi et al., 2019). Entrepreneurial orientation is an intrinsic characteristic for entrepreneurs, which contains five dimensions: independence, reputation, risk-taking, innovation, and leadership. In addition, some researchers, including Al Mamun and Fazal (2018) and Rauch et al. (2009), have extensively investigated risk-taking, innovation, and leadership dimensions in different studies. Regarding knowledge improvement and implementing unlearning, managers should determine the individual and organizational level of the old and outdated knowledge and take appropriate measures accordingly (Chen & Pang, 2010). Since individuals' general attitudes originate from their intrinsic motivations, it is recommended to focus on the individual level in the early stages of the unlearning process (Kim & Park, 2022). Besides, excessive implementation of such measures at the organizational level, which may lead to high costs and failure to change if there is improper preparation (Eslami et al., 2018). Therefore, organizational innovation capacities are influenced by organizations' ability to transfer technology-based knowledge and skills and gain greater experiences (Haile & Tüzüner, 2022). Moreover, knowledge is considered the basis of innovation. Consequently, knowledge sharing is regarded as a crucial step of knowledge management, leading to the innovation process in the organization. Innovative capabilities can help an organization deal with the unsettled external environment and cope with the rapidly growing complexity and changes (Vuong et al., 2022). As a result, companies with innovation capacity are more likely to provide timely responses to potential challenges, extract new products, and gain better market opportunities. Knowledge sharing refers to the fundamental tool through which employees can exchange their knowledge mutually and contribute to the organization's competitive advantage. Thus, the second research hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H_{2a}: Entrepreneurial orientation has a substantial impact on strategic unlearning.

H_{2b}: Entrepreneurial orientation has a substantial impact on strategic unlearning through the mediating role of knowledge sharing.

Transformational Leadership

Uncertainty, complexity, globalization, and increasingly technological changes are regarded as significant features of this era. Thus, successful organizations need attentive leaders who can determine an appropriate perspective, guide people toward that objective, and motivate employees to pursue substantial changes (Tajpour & Hosseini, 2021). Transformational leaders are more likely to establish a new path of growth and prosperity for organizations by proposing new ideas and perspectives. Accordingly, they can promise to improve the performance of organizations and obtain a competitive advantage (Hosseini et al., 2021). Transformational leaders have a , profound, and extraordinary influence on their fellow employees. They will direct and motivate these employees toward particular specific objectives by defining roles and requirements and assigning tasks. Such leaders emphasize inspiration, and respective employees will demonstrate higher levels of performance (Heidari et al., 2022).

Furthermore, transformational leaders encourage employees to adopt novel approaches and problems solve organizational problems creatively. Given the influences, encouragements, and mental stimulations proposed by transformational leaders, employees will challenge the status quo and shift to novel and advanced methods to fulfill the objectives as well as to fulfill the goals and improve and rebuild the organization. (Zhang et al., 2003). Therefore, removing barriers created by misleading knowledge and obsolete routines is the most important critical crucial role of learning, leading to strategic flexibility and further learning education (Tajpour et al., 2017). Consequently, leaders and managers must prepare the ground for everyone to unlearn outdated and learn new knowledge to promote a learning-oriented organization. Therefore, by sharing knowledge and information with their employees, managers lead to acceptance of changes in the ways of doing work and thus strengthen

their communication with employees (Bolaji & Taiwo-Ogunnesan, 2022). Managers should also evaluate the learning power of their fellow employees and inspire them to express new ideas and actions, irrespective of any institutional constraints. They can encourage people to establish and implement their learning capabilities (Prentice et al., 2023). Therefore, unlearning is necessary to acknowledge newer and more appropriate knowledge. Consequently, the third research hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H_{3a}: Transformational leadership has a substantial impact on strategic unlearning.

H_{3b}: Transformational leadership substantially impacts strategic unlearning through the mediating role of knowledge sharing.

As a result, the conceptual model of the present research is revealed in Figure (1), according to the research literature.

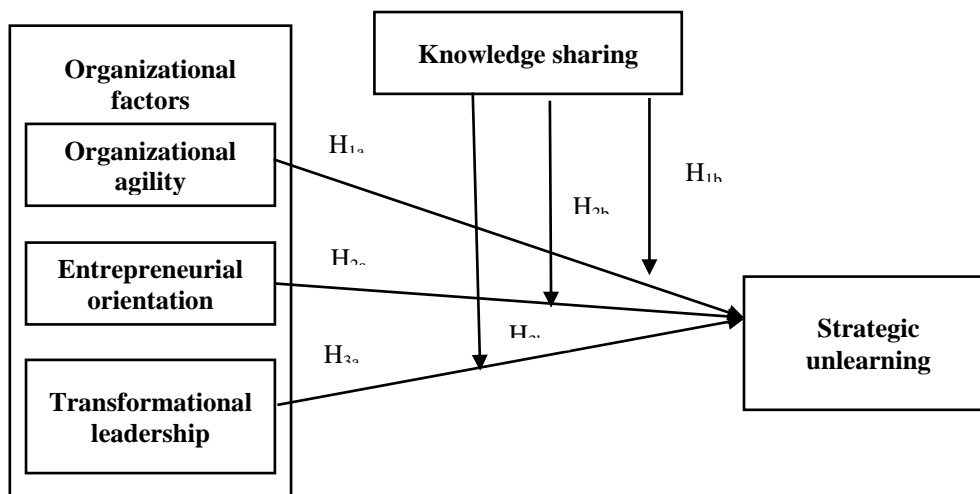


Fig. 1. Research conceptual model (based on the findings of theoretical background)

Research Methodology

The present applied research is descriptive-correlational in terms of method. The statistical population of this study includes 412 managers and deputies working at Iranian state-owned banks, who were available in the spring of 2022. They were selected based on the following inclusion criteria: managers of the banking system and state-owned banks in Iran, having related scientific and research records and having at least seven years of executive experience in various managerial positions. Besides, the sample size determined as determined using Cochran's formula. Thus, 199 participants were selected as the appropriate statistical sample size. The data were collected using a questionnaire, which includes 25 closed questions, five items related to organizational agility (Sharifi & Zhang, 2001), five items related to entrepreneurial orientation (Parvan, 2010), five items related to transformational leadership (Yas and Avilio, 2010), and five items related to strategic unlearning (extracted from the proposed concept by Nazari & Becker (2008)). A 5-point Likert scale (from very little to very much) was employed to measure the variables of the conceptual model. The questionnaire was compiled through the Porsline website, and the questionnaire link was sent to the sample people. Moreover, the relationships between the variables were investigated using the structural equation modeling method in PLS3 software. PLS3 was used because it does not require the normal data distribution (Kline, 2015).

Research findings

The Fit of the Measurement Model

regarded as independent variables, knowledge sharing as the mediating variable, and strategic unlearning as the dependent variable. The technical characteristics of the questionnaire were evaluated in terms of validity and reliability to ensure the accuracy of the research findings. The validity of the questionnaire was assessed through content and construct validity. Accordingly, professors' and experts' opinions were used to measure the instrument content validity, and the construct validity was

assessed using structural equations modeling (convergent and divergent validity). In addition, the convergent validity was determined through the average variance extracted (AVE) index. In contrast, the divergent validity was measured through the squared root average variance extracted index (Tajpour & Hosseini, 2021). The obtained AVE index is higher than 0.5 for the variables in this study, indicating an acceptable validity. Furthermore, the reliability of the questionnaire was measured using Cronbach's alpha coefficient and composite reliability (CR). Besides, the obtained Cronbach's alpha was higher than 0.7 for all variables, and the overall Cronbach's alpha of the questionnaire was equal to 0.85. Thus, it can be concluded that the research instrument has an acceptable level of reliability (Table 1).

Table 1. Variables, items, and reliability

Variables	Items	Loading factor	Cronbach's alpha	Credibility	Composite reliability	AVE
Organizational agility	To what extent does the creation of special working groups affect strategic unlearning?	0.904	0.905	0.931	0.912	0.730
	To what extent does your learning power increase when you work together as a group and team?	0.707				
	To what extent do customers and employees of the organization interact and cooperate well?	0.883				
	To what extent are you able to respond to changes in the business environment and customer needs?	0.849				
	To what extent does the organization have strategies and logical strategies to deal with environmental and peripheral changes?	0.912				
Entrepreneurial orientation	To what extent does the updating of systems and services by managers have an effect on strategic unlearning?	0.877	0.919	0.941	0.926	0.757
	To what extent does information flow freely from outside the organization among the most important units and groups?	0.913				
	To what extent in the bank, the managers share the employees in the plan, important issues and the results of the affairs?	0.811				
	To what extent are employees at different levels allowed to question and criticize accepted procedures?	0.873				
	To what extent, in dealing with changes and possible mistakes, managers are willing to accept their mistakes and stop wrong activities?	0.873				
Transformational leadership	To what extent does the creation of visual working groups have an effect on strategic unlearning?	0.861	0.919	0.939	0.924	0.755
	To what extent does holding coordinated meetings between management and employees have an effect on strategic unlearning?	0.888				
	To what extent does asking employees' opinions for holding courses affect strategic unlearning?	0.900				
	To what extent does the bank have acceptable capabilities in taking measures to prevent competitors from copying services and plans?	0.846				
		0.849				

Table 1.

Variables	Items	Loading factor	Cronbach's alpha	Credibility	Composite reliability	AVE
Knowledge sharing	To what extent does stopping the use of obsolete knowledge affect strategic unlearning?	0.661	0.756	0.785	0.766	0.560
	To what extent does updating knowledge and information have an effect on strategic unlearning?	0.743				
	To what extent does the transformation of old methods through new methods have an effect on strategic unlearning?	0.823				
	To what extent has the bank been successful in adopting new knowledge instead of familiar knowledge?	0.678				
	To what extent has updating knowledge and information been successful for bank performance?	0.717				
Strategic unlearning	To what extent does the acquisition of new knowledge lead to strategic unlearning?	0.641	0.834	0.878	0.898	0.595
	To what extent do new thoughts and ideas lead to strategic unlearning?	0.625				
	To what extent does cultivating strategic foresight lead to strategic unlearning?	0.871				
	To what extent has the transformation of old methods through new methods been effective for the bank?	0.894				
	To what extent has the use of system suggestions been successful in the bank's performance?	0.785				

According to Table (2), the squared root AVE indexes are above the acceptable value of 0.5. Therefore, the divergent validity of the research variables is confirmed.

Table 2. Divergent Validity

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
Strategic unlearning	0.771				
Transformational leadership	0.506	0.869			
Knowledge sharing	0.639	0.802	0.878		
Organizational agility	0.426	0.863	0.774	0.854	
Entrepreneurial orientation	0.530	0.841	0.812	0.846	0.870

According to the results of SmartPLS3 software in Tables (1) and (2), the measurement models have acceptable validity (convergent and divergent) and reliability (credibility, composite reliability, and Cronbach's alpha). Since all scales were investigated by the self-report method to make sure no common method bias existed in the research, Kock(2015) proposed that the proposed model could be considered bi-asfree if all VIFs, on account of a full collinearity test, were similar to or below 3.3(Kock,2015) According-ly, the VIF values for Organizational agility (VIF = 3.174), Entrepreneurial orientation (VIF = 2.917), Transformational leadership (VIF = 3.241), knowledge sharing (VIF = 2.135), and strategic unlearning (VIF = 3.036) were less than 3.3, showing that the model was free of common method bias.

The Fit of the Structural Model

The model fit was evaluated at measurement, structural, and overall levels. Moreover, the significant coefficients or t-statistic values were employed to assess the fitness of the structural model of the research using the partial least squares method. According to Thomas (2003), the t-coefficients for the structural model fit should be greater than 1.96 to confirm their significance at the 95% confidence

level. The results indicated that the obtained values for the impact path of organizational agility on strategic unlearning, the impact path of organizational agility on strategic unlearning through the mediating role of knowledge sharing, the impact path of entrepreneurial orientation on strategic unlearning, the impact path of entrepreneurial orientation on strategic unlearning through the mediating role of knowledge sharing, the impact path of transformational leadership on strategic unlearning, the impact path of transformational leadership on strategic unlearning through the mediating role of knowledge sharing equal to 2.022, 2.714, 2.255, 2.215, and 2.918, respectively. Since the critical value of each path is over the standard value (1.96) at the confidence level of 95%, the significance of all the paths is confirmed. Therefore, the results highlight the appropriateness of the structural model and the confirmation of the six research hypotheses (Figure 2).

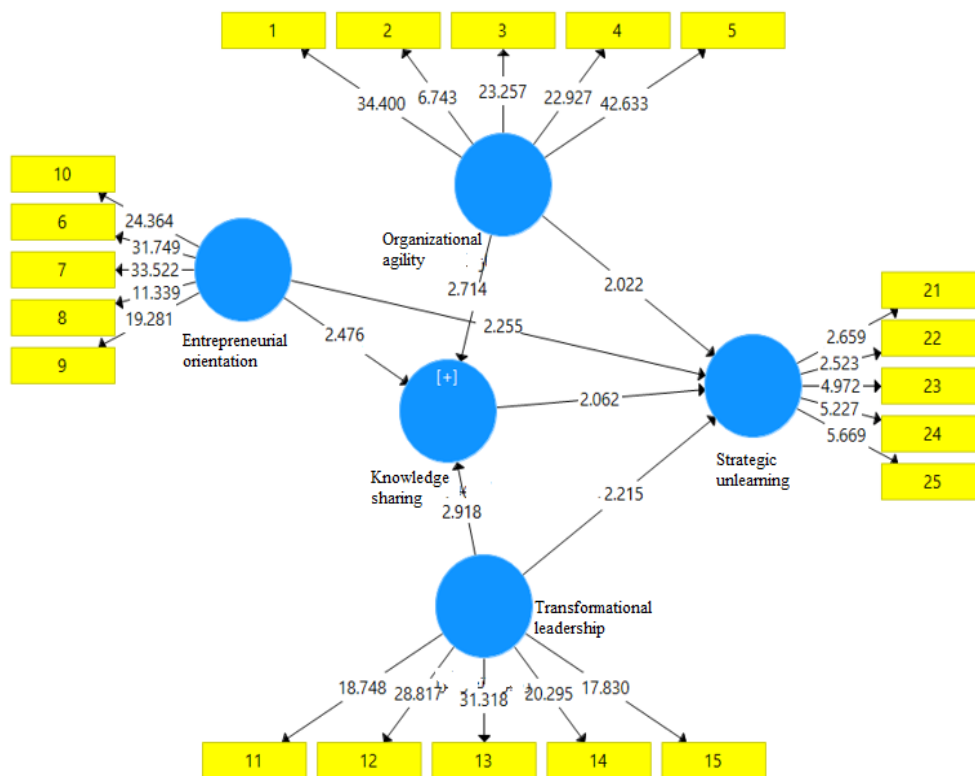


Fig. 2. T-statistic values

In addition, the R^2 coefficients related to the endogenous latent variables of the model were examined to observe the fit of the structural model. This criterion is employed to assess the extent of relationships between structures, which is only applicable to dependent variables. R^2 reflects the impact of exogenous variables on an endogenous variable; the obtained values of 0.19, 0.33, and 0.67 are considered weak, average, and strong values of R^2 , respectively (Salamzadeh et al., 2020). Given that the obtained coefficient of determination equal to 0.432 for strategic unlearning and 0.697 for knowledge sharing in this research, the structural model has an acceptable level of fitness (Figure 3).

The Q^2 criterion is calculated for all the dependent constructs and represents the multiplication of the composite values of the research constructs and their corresponding coefficient of determination. This criterion is associated with the predictive power of dependent variables of the model. According to Klein (2015), the obtained values of 0.2, 0.15, and 0.35 for all the endogenous constructs indicate low, average, and strong predictive power. Since the obtained values for strategic unlearning equals 0.388 and for knowledge sharing equals 0.534, it indicates a high and acceptable fit of the structural model of the study.

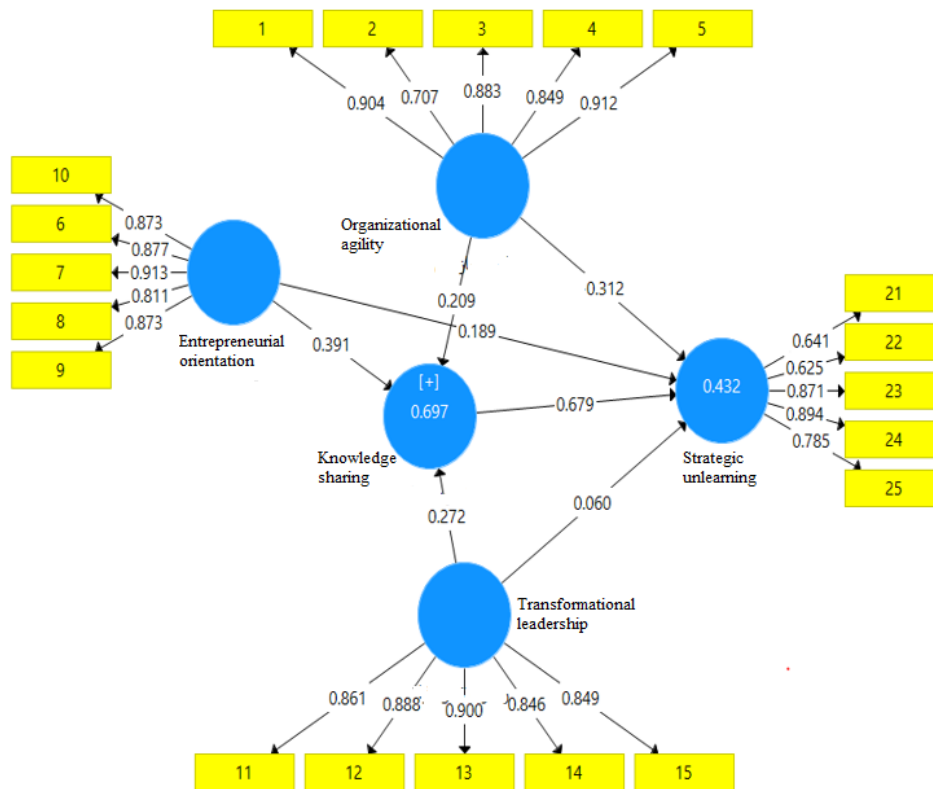


Fig. 3. The model with standard factor loading coefficients

Goodness of Fit (GOF)

The fit of the overall model includes the measurement and structural concepts of the model. If the overall fit of a model is acknowledged, the evaluation of the model fit is considered complete. The model's overall fit is measured using the goodness of fit (GOF) criterion. Moreover, the obtained values of 0.01, 0.25, and 0.36 are regarded as weak, average, and strong for GOF. Therefore, the obtained GOF value of 0.707 in this study reveals the firm fit of the overall research model.

$$GOF = \sqrt{(\text{average}(\text{Commonality}) \times \text{average}(R^2))} \tag{1}$$

Furthermore, the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) index was employed in this study. The obtained SRMR values of 0.05, 0.08, and <0.1 are considered acceptable by Biron (1998), Moghadamzadeh et al. (2020), and some other researchers. As Table (3) indicates, this index is also acceptable. Hence, it can be claimed that the current research model is a perfect fit. The researchers also examined the normed fit index (NFI). According to Kline (2015), the acceptance range of the SRMR index is between 0 and 1, and the acceptable NFI value is greater than 0.9. As shown in (Table 3), the obtained value is calculated at 0.901, which is acceptable.

Table 3. Fit indexes

	SRMR	NFI
Acceptable values	≤ 0.10	≥ 0.9
Obtained values	0.017	0.901

Moreover, Sobel test was used to investigate the mediating role of knowledge sharing.

$$VAF = (a \times b) / (a \times b) + c \tag{2}$$

The obtained value of 3.299 for this measure, which is greater than the standard value of 1.96, confirms the intermediating role of the knowledge sharing structure. The VAF statistic reveals that the effect size of the mediating role of knowledge sharing is equal to 0.513, which is regarded as a partial impact. Based on the findings, the model fit is confirmed at measurement and structure levels.

Finally, t-statistic has been used to assess the potential relationships between the variables. The central hypothesis was evaluated through six sub-hypotheses; Table (4) confirmed the t-statistic of all the six existing relationships. The standardized factor loading coefficients related to the paths of each research hypothesis were also investigated to determine the effect size of the predictor variables on the dependent variables. These coefficients indicate the percentile impact of independent variables on the dependent variables.

Table 4. T-statistic and effect size

No	Paths	T-statistic	Effect size	Result
1	Organizational agility – strategic unlearning	2.022	0.312	Approved
2	Organizational agility – knowledge sharing – strategic unlearning	2.714	0.209	Approved
3	Entrepreneurial orientation – strategic unlearning	2.255	0.189	Approved
4	Entrepreneurial orientation – knowledge sharing – strategic unlearning	2.476	0.391	Approved
5	Transformational leadership – strategic unlearning	2.215	0.060	Approved
6	Transformational leadership – knowledge sharing – strategic unlearning	2.918	0.272	Approved

Discussion

Strategic planning in organizations can help keep pace with rapid technological developments. Knowledge will become outdated quickly; hence, managers of digital startups must constantly update their knowledge to adapt to continuous changes in the environment. Therefore, strategic unlearning in state-owned banks refers to undergoing changes and constant adaptation to the environment, which creates new learning contexts. Thus, Iran's state-owned banks are recommended to promote human resource capabilities based on the organizational learning and strategic unlearning framework.

The first research hypothesis, highlighting the positive impact of organizational agility on strategic unlearning, and the corresponding sub-hypothesis that investigates the mediating role of knowledge sharing in this relationship were confirmed. The results of this research are consistent with the findings of other studies by Mohammadimoghadam et al. (2015) and Sherehiy (2007). Consequently, it can be stated that extensive changes have been made in the context of society, which might lead to significant differences in people's needs. As a result, this process also affects the organizational conditions, including banks that must seek novel approaches to achieve their goals and provide high-quality services to different parts of the society. That is because the outdated and traditional methods may no longer be efficient in the current situation. It is recommended that managers and employees be aware of the significance of customers' needs for new digital services for effective implementation of agile methods, like technology-oriented companies. Since agility is directly associated with employees and can facilitate understanding customers' demands and provision of efficient banking services, employees need to receive the necessary training in this field. Managers should pay attention to different groups of users' values and needs by classifying these users and providing the required measures to match such diverse values and demands.

The second research hypothesis confirmed, highlighting the positive impact of entrepreneurial orientation on strategic unlearning and the corresponding sub-hypothesis that investigates the mediating role of knowledge sharing in this relationship. Hence, it indicates that state-owned banks should use knowledge management systems as the database and information systems to save daily reports of employees' performance. Accordingly, the best employees' experiences should be stored in a database to help other bank employees. Moreover, employees with a solid entrepreneurial orientation should implement digitalization because it can transform financial services firms by highlighting ambitious ideas and real value statements. A strong entrepreneurial orientation can lead to more innovative, proactive and risk-taking employee. In this regard, it is necessary to review the measures implemented in different departments of an organization and institutionalize an innovative culture and approach in that organization. For this purpose, entrepreneurial behaviors should be supported by bank managers as an integral principle. Besides, all employees should be involved in this crucial procedure so that they can provide services tailored at the customers' new demands. The results of this hypothesis are in line with the findings of other studies by Salamzadeh et al. (2020), Hosseini et al (2022), and Nikraftar et al. (2021).

The third research hypothesis, highlighting the positive impact of transformational leadership on strategic unlearning, and the corresponding sub-hypothesis that investigates the mediating role of

knowledge sharing in this relationship were confirmed. In this regard, the findings of the present study are consistent with the results of other seminal studies by Tajpour and Hosseini (2021), Hosseini et al. (2021), and Heidari et al. (2022). Therefore, it can be argued that the implementation of the transformational leadership style will lead to the maximum knowledge capacity of available human resources and share it in the organization to conduct organizational improvement and innovation and gain a competitive advantage. Based on the results of this research and other related studies, it can be concluded that transformational leadership in an organization will promote a greater desire to present new ideas and move toward strategic unlearning. Therefore, successful implementation of changes in the organization requires bank managers to consider employees' feelings. Respective managers should also eliminate employees' fear of potential troubles after any changes in the organization and decrease their resistance against changes. Leaders are recommended to make structural changes, develop individual and team relationships, and establish new communication networks among employees. The latter can facilitate knowledge sharing between employees, teams, and the entire organization. Consequently, employees in digital startups can share their knowledge, experiences, and skills with their colleagues. They can also resolve their work problems using coworkers' experiences and opinions, and implement new methods to perform their duties. It will ultimately improve their job performance and development.

Conclusion

Not only does unlearning prevent resistance and inflexibility in the organization, but it also facilitates the adaptation process and the development of methods to improve competitiveness and succeed resistance and inflexibility in the organization, but it also facilitates the adaptation process and the development of methods to improve competitiveness and success. For this reason, organizations are recommended to resort to new methods by allocating financial and non-financial benefits. It will act as a motivational factor that encourages employees to abandon old knowledge and accept new knowledge because employees will attempt to perform optimally if and motivated by the company. Finally, many employees believe that financial incentives will work most efficiently. State banks, because they are among the efforts. The country's most important centers and economic bases should do their best to implement the knowledge management system best. For this, they must remove the integral obstacles to knowledge sharing and management. First, the organization should try to select a person as a manager who is familiar with all aspects of knowledge and can manage the people of the organization well. The organization should try to make employees feel job security. The organization's people should be made to feel that they are the crucial factor for knowledge sharing and knowledge management in the best way. Technology alone is not the answer to such a need, and employees should reduce their unrealistic expectations of technology. This culture should be created in the organization where people share their knowledge, have a good relationship with the organization's manager and are eager to work in a group. These are the factors that previous research has shown the weakness of these cultural factors in the organization.

Practical suggestions

This study aimed to investigate the impact of organizational factors on strategic unlearning, with a focus on knowledge sharing as a mediating variable, in Iran's state-owned banks. To achieve this goal, managers of state-owned banks in Iran need to pay close attention to the key components of strategic unlearning and work towards implementing them in order to develop human capital and increase profitability. To facilitate the institutionalization of strategic unlearning within the organization, it is recommended that managers utilize various techniques such as problem-solving, suggestion systems, collaborative management, positive organizational behavior, and brainstorming meetings. Additionally, executive managers of state-owned banks should allocate the necessary resources and create opportunities for knowledge employees to attend scientific conferences and seminars. Furthermore, managers can encourage employees to contribute to discussions on strategic unlearning and support the implementation of strategic unlearning initiatives within the organization. By doing so, the organization can enhance its capability to adapt to changing circumstances and remain competitive in the bank.

Limitations and future research

This study also has some limitations. The greatest challenge was the lack of proper data about strategic unlearning among managers and experts in government-owned banks in Iran. In addition, researchers were dealing with limitations in data collection and the lack of adequate participation of government-owned bank employees in responding to the questionnaires. The research process was also considerably time-consuming.

It is recommended to examine the potential barriers of the implementation of strategic unlearning in the state-owned organizations, especially state-owned banks, because special attention should be paid to the high-order strategies. Given that the structure of Iran's state-owned banks is considered large-scale and there is less flexibility in such organizations, unlearning is implemented either occasionally or in different forms that can provide a basis for investigation in other industries in future researches. Since unlearning is considered a new topic, state-owned banks are recommended to conduct self-evaluation measures with regards to assessment of strategic unlearning practices. It is also suggested to replicate this research in other industrial, educational, and economic environments in order to compare the obtained results to generalize and develop the research model.

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