



Beyond Social Relationships: The Organisational Role of Workplace Friendship in Driving Knowledge Management Processes

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Abstract

Knowledge management (KM) has become a strategic capability for organisations seeking to enhance innovation, organisational learning, and long-term performance. However, the effectiveness of KM depends not only on technological infrastructure but also on the quality of interpersonal relationships within the workplace. This study investigates the influence of the organisational dimension of workplace friendship (WF), represented by friendship opportunity and friendship prevalence, on four KM processes: knowledge generation, knowledge storage, knowledge sharing, and knowledge application. Drawing upon Social Capital Theory and the Knowledge-Based View, a conceptual model was developed and empirically tested using data collected from 437 academic staff members employed at public universities in Nineveh Governorate, Iraq. A cross-sectional survey design and convenience sampling technique were adopted, and the proposed model was analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 3.9. The findings reveal that WF exerts positive and statistically significant effects on all four KM processes, indicating that supportive interpersonal relationships enhance the creation, preservation, dissemination, and utilisation of organisational knowledge. The study contributes to the organisational behaviour and KM literature by demonstrating that WF constitutes a strategic organisational capability rather than merely a social phenomenon. The findings also provide practical guidance for university administrators seeking to cultivate collaborative organisational environments that strengthen KM capabilities, promote innovation, and improve institutional performance.



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Appendix A. Measurement Instrument

Workplace Friendship (WF): Adapted from Nielsen et al. (2000).

WF1: I have sufficient opportunities to develop friendships with my colleagues. WF2: My workplace provides an environment that encourages informal interaction among colleagues. WF3: Many of my colleagues have developed genuine friendships with one another. WF4: Employees in my workplace maintain friendly relationships beyond formal work requirements. WF5: There is a high level of friendship among employees in my workplace. WF6: My workplace encourages positive social relationships among employees.

Knowledge Management Processes: Adapted from Abdulmuhsin, Al-Taie, et al. (2025), Al Yami et al. (2021), and Raudeliuniene et al. (2020).

Knowledge Generation (KG)

KG1: Our university continuously encourages the generation of new ideas and knowledge. KG2: Employees frequently develop new knowledge through collaboration and discussion. KG3: The university actively supports creating new knowledge to improve its activities.

Knowledge Storage (KSt)

KSt1: The university systematically stores important knowledge for future use. KSt2: Employees' knowledge and experiences are effectively documented and preserved. KSt3: Knowledge stored by the university is easily retrieved whenever required.

Knowledge Sharing (KSh)

KSh1: Employees willingly share their knowledge and expertise with colleagues. KSh2: Knowledge is exchanged freely among employees across different departments. KSh3: The university encourages employees to exchange knowledge and experiences regularly.

Knowledge Application (KA)

KA1: Knowledge gained by employees is effectively applied to solve work-related problems. KA2: Employees use organisational knowledge to improve their work performance. KA3: The university effectively utilises available knowledge in decision-making and daily operations.

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