



# Workplace participation and learning behaviour: Does organisational democracy make a difference to knowledge acquisition?

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## Abstract

This study explores how organisational democracy (OD) affects employees' attitudes toward knowledge acquisition (KA), focusing on private universities and colleges. In today's competitive environment, knowledge is a key resource for innovation and long-term success. Organisations therefore need to create cultures that encourage continuous learning and knowledge sharing. OD, which involves participatory decision-making, fair power distribution, and transparent communication, may play an important role in shaping how employees seek and use knowledge. To test this, we collected survey data from 254 employees and analysed it using structural equation modelling (SEM). The survey measured perceptions of democratic practices in the workplace and attitudes toward acquiring knowledge. The results show that OD has a strong positive impact on KA. Practices such as inclusive decision-making, open communication, and equal participation increase employees' motivation to learn and share knowledge. These practices also help foster trust, empowerment, and autonomy, making employees more willing to engage in knowledge-seeking behaviours. The analysis also shows that some dimensions of OD are essential for supporting KA. This research contributes to the literature in three ways. First, it introduces OD as a multidimensional concept within knowledge management research. Second, it uses SEM to provide robust evidence of how OD influences KA. Third, it studies a non-Western, knowledge-intensive context, offering insights beyond the settings usually analysed in previous studies. The findings suggest that OD is a powerful tool for improving organisational learning and innovation. For managers, embedding democratic values in workplace practices can help build more participatory and knowledge-driven organisations.

**Keywords** Knowledge acquisition · Workplace democracy · Organisational democracy · Knowledge management · Learning behaviour · Structural equation modelling (SEM)

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## 1 Introduction

The significance of knowledge as a strategic resource has been firmly established in organisational research over the past two decades. Scholars and practitioners alike recognise its pivotal role in driving sustainable competitive advantage and long-term organisational success (Del Giudice and Maggioni 2014; Rezaei et al. 2023). Knowledge Management (KM), as a systematic approach to acquiring, creating, sharing, and leveraging knowledge, has been shown to deliver profound benefits, ranging from enhancing operational efficiency and fostering innovation to supporting value creation and sustainable development (Rezaei 2025a, b; Mojtaba 2022; Wuytens et al. 2025). Within this domain, knowledge acquisition (KA), the process by which individuals and organisations identify, absorb, and internalise new knowledge, emerges as a critical capability, enabling organisations to adapt to dynamic market environments and respond proactively to technological and social shifts (Kremer et al. 2019; Singh et al. 2021; Magni et al. 2022).

Despite technological advancements that streamline KA processes, its effectiveness remains fundamentally tied to socio-human factors, underscoring the importance of workplace dynamics in shaping knowledge-related outcomes (Zhang and Jasimuddin 2012; Del Giudice and Maggioni 2014). Among these dynamics, OD has garnered increasing scholarly interest as a socio-political construct capable of transforming traditional governance structures into participative, transparent, and trust-enabling systems (Clifton et al. 2010). Traditionally viewed through a political and social lens, democracy in the workplace is conceptualised as the redistribution of decision-making authority, enabling employees at all levels to actively participate in shaping organisational strategies and policies (Nadesan and Cheney 2017; Hendriks 2009). Beyond decision-making, OD fosters a culture of engagement, inclusivity, and openness by institutionalising mechanisms for employee participation, transparent communication, and collaborative problem-solving (Timming and Summers 2020).

Recent studies have highlighted the transformative potential of OD in fostering employee commitment (Sappasert and Clausen 2012; Safari et al. 2018), enhancing trust, and improving information flows (Holtzhausen 2002). These attributes collectively align with the foundational enablers of effective KA, including trust-based interactions, transparent systems, and collaborative environments. However, despite these overlaps, OD's role in facilitating KA has been largely examined in a fragmented manner, focusing on isolated principles such as trust and participation. What is missing is a comprehensive, multidimensional understanding of OD as an integrated construct and its joint influence on KA processes. Recent contributions have similarly highlighted the fragmentation of research on organisational capabilities and knowledge-related processes, calling for more integrative and theory-driven approaches. For example, D'Angelo et al. (2024) emphasise the need to understand how organisational structures and processes jointly enable the development and recombination of knowledge-based capabilities, while Kraus et al. (2024) stress the importance of consolidating dispersed theoretical insights to advance cumulative

knowledge in management research. Responding to these calls, the present study advances a multidimensional perspective on OD and examines its combined effects on KA. This study seeks to bridge this gap by explicitly positioning OD as a multi-dimensional construct within the KM domain and investigating how its subdimensions, decentralised decision-making, participative governance, and transparent communication, serve as enablers of KA. In doing so, the paper advances existing scholarship in three ways. First, it moves beyond prior work that examined single aspects of OD in isolation, offering an integrated perspective that disentangles how different democratic principles jointly and differentially shape KA. Second, methodologically, it employs structural equation modelling (SEM) on primary data from private universities and colleges, providing a more rigorous empirical test compared to the conceptual and case-based studies that dominate the field. Third, by focusing on knowledge-intensive organisations in a non-Western setting, the paper introduces a novel contextual contribution, extending debates that are primarily grounded in Western corporate environments.

From a theoretical perspective, this study extends existing KM literature by incorporating OD as a central construct, thereby addressing calls for integrative research on socio-human enablers of knowledge processes (Freeman 2010). In doing so, the study directly engages with recent debates on how socio-organisational mechanisms shape knowledge creation and utilisation in contemporary organisations (e.g., D'Angelo et al., 2024; Kraus et al. 2024; Naeem et al. 2024). It also identifies the differential impacts of OD subdimensions, providing granular insights into how specific democratic principles shape KA behaviours (Razmerita et al. 2016). From a managerial standpoint, the findings offer actionable recommendations for fostering workplace environments that prioritise democratic governance to optimise KA. By highlighting the role of participative systems, trust-building mechanisms, and transparency, the study provides a roadmap for managers seeking to design democratic organisational architectures that enhance knowledge-driven outcomes. Moreover, it positions OD as a critical lever for aligning organisational objectives with individual motivations, thereby fostering a culture of innovation and resilience.

## 2 Literature review

### 2.1 Organisational democracy

In today's increasingly complex and dynamic business landscape, knowledge has emerged as a vital asset for fostering learning, driving innovation, and sustaining competitiveness within organisations. Within this context, OD, which strongly emphasises employee participation, inclusive decision-making, and empowerment, has garnered significant attention as a potential catalyst for enhancing KM and KA in the workplace.

The conceptualisation of OD is a multifaceted endeavour shaped by a myriad of perspectives within the scholarly community. Consequently, the recognition of a workplace as a democratic organisation is accompanied by a diverse array of principles, values, and characteristics. At its core, OD represents an organisational

manifestation of democracy, serving as a potent instrument for policymaking and management (Weber et al. 2009). While the literature provides multiple definitions and principles of OD, it remains fragmented and contested. Some scholars emphasise OD primarily as institutionalised participation (Weber et al. 2020), whereas others stress its normative dimension, seeing it as an organisational reflection of societal democracy (Fine 2017). These perspectives reveal unresolved tensions: should OD be understood as a set of formalised practices, or as a broader cultural orientation?

Furthermore, while early studies highlighted OD's potential to enhance employee satisfaction and trust (Scott-Ladd et al. 2006), more recent work points to its operational challenges, such as slower decision-making and the risk of managerial resistance (Harrison & Freeman 2004; Nadesan and Cheney 2017). These contrasting viewpoints highlight both the promise and the practical limitations of OD, underscoring the need for empirical studies that move beyond conceptual debates and examine OD's mechanisms in action. Recent work has increasingly stressed the importance of empirically unpacking organisational mechanisms that operate across multiple dimensions rather than in isolation. In this vein, Naeem et al. (2024) demonstrate how complex organisational capabilities emerge from the interaction of structural, technological, and human elements, reinforcing the relevance of examining OD as a multidimensional construct. In a similar vein, Kallmuenzer et al. (2025) show that the strategic interplay of organisational and digital elements drives performance outcomes in SMEs, highlighting the value of integrated capability configurations.

Furthermore, Fernandes et al. (2025) find that dynamic capabilities operate as moderators that shape international performance in ways that cannot be captured by single-factor explanations. Frega (2021) asserts that OD embodies a form of participation that immerses employees in organisational structuring. They define it as any action, structure, or process that strengthens the collective power of groups to influence organisational decisions and activities. In essence, workplace democracy is a unique form of participatory management that enables lower-level employees to contribute their insights to upper-level management. Beyond mere participation, some studies acknowledge that OD encompasses the assimilation and enforcement of democratic societal standards within organisational contexts (Fine 2017). Hatcher (2007) characterises workplace democracy as a multidimensional international concept encompassing political, economic, sociological, psychological, and historical dimensions. Wegge et al. (2011) underscore the necessity of employee participation being continuous, broad-based, and institutionalised, with a pervasive and uninterrupted nature rather than an ad hoc and sporadic occurrence. They posit that a singular institutionalised form of participation cannot fully embody the essence of OD. In reality, employees must experience and practice OD, demonstrating their practical influence by participating, either directly or indirectly, in making significant decisions regarding strategic organisational matters (Weber et al. 2020).

Despite the multiplicity of frameworks, most converge around five recurring dimensions: transparency, communication, decentralisation, vision and meaning, and participation. These dimensions are not exhaustive, but they represent the most consistently theorised and empirically validated elements across different taxonomies (Hamel and Breen 2008; Peterson 2012; Fenton 2012). By consolidating overlapping contributions into these five dimensions, this study adopts a parsimonious yet theo-

retically grounded framework. This synthesis reduces redundancy and allows for a clearer analytical lens through which to examine OD's impact on KA.

The decision to focus on these five dimensions rests on both theoretical and empirical grounds. Theoretically, they capture the core of democratic functioning as repeatedly emphasised across decades of OD scholarship. Empirically, they are the dimensions most frequently operationalised in studies linking OD with employee behaviours and organisational outcomes (e.g., Wegge et al. 2011; Weber et al. 2020). While alternative scales exist, such as Peterson's 14 categories, these five dimensions provide a balanced framework: broad enough to capture OD's complexity yet concise enough to be operationalised empirically. This choice enhances the model's conceptual rigour and ensures alignment with the study's research question.

## 2.2 Knowledge acquisition

KA is a foundational element of KM and represents the process through which organisations and individuals obtain, assimilate, and internalise information to enhance their knowledge base. KA plays a critical role in enabling organisations to adapt to rapidly changing environments, innovate, and sustain competitive advantage. It has been defined and examined from multiple perspectives, with its relevance and implications resonating across fields such as organisational learning, strategic management, and innovation studies.

The literature on KA is not without contention. Some scholars stress its technical and procedural aspects, viewing it largely as information processing (Huber 1991), while others foreground socio-human enablers such as trust, motivation, and cultural openness (Zhang and Jasimuddin 2012; Singh et al. 2021). These contrasting lenses raise important unresolved questions: Is KA best understood as a structural process enabled by systems, or as a socially embedded practice shaped by workplace dynamics? This tension is particularly relevant when exploring how OD, as a socio-political construct, may directly influence KA beyond technological or structural factors. This perspective underscores KA's dynamic nature, highlighting its reliance on organisational systems, human interactions, and external stimuli. The importance of KA cannot be overstated, particularly in today's knowledge-intensive economy. At its core, KA enables organisations to address critical challenges, adapt to external changes, and foster innovation. By acquiring new knowledge, firms enhance their ability to respond to emerging opportunities and threats, thereby ensuring their long-term viability. Moreover, KA is integral to organisational learning, serving as the foundation upon which firms build capabilities, refine strategies, and develop innovative solutions. The capacity to acquire and apply knowledge has been shown to correlate positively with improved decision-making, operational efficiency, and overall performance.

Organisations employ various mechanisms to facilitate KA, which can broadly be categorised into internal and external strategies. Internally, organisations may focus on leveraging their existing resources, such as employee expertise, research and development (R&D) efforts, and internal databases. These activities not only generate new knowledge but also refine and repurpose existing knowledge to meet evolving needs. Externally, firms engage in alliances, partnerships, acquisitions, and

collaborations with universities and research institutions to access complementary knowledge. These external relationships are particularly valuable for gaining insights into new markets, technologies, and customer needs. One of the key enablers of successful KA is absorptive capacity, defined as an organisation's ability to recognise the value of new knowledge, assimilate it, and apply it effectively. Absorptive capacity is a function of the firm's prior knowledge and its processes and culture that facilitate learning and integration. Zahra and George (2002) argue that firms with high absorptive capacity are better equipped to transform acquired knowledge into innovative outcomes, thereby gaining a competitive edge.

The benefits of effective KA extend beyond operational improvements. Firms that excel in KA are better positioned to foster a culture of continuous learning and adaptability, which are essential for navigating complex and uncertain environments. KA also promotes cross-functional collaboration and KS, enabling the integration of diverse perspectives and expertise. This, in turn, enhances the organisation's capacity to address multifaceted challenges and capitalise on opportunities holistically.

### 3 Hypotheses development

At the heart of OD lies the creation of an inclusive environment in which employees feel valued and empowered to contribute their expertise. Such inclusivity strengthens knowledge-sharing networks, evident in collaborative projects, brainstorming sessions, and informal exchanges, and has been shown to enhance knowledge flows across functional boundaries (Rezaei et al. 2024). This openness accelerates KA by exposing employees to diverse perspectives.

OD also influences KA through its effect on employee engagement. Participation in decision-making fosters ownership and commitment, motivating individuals to seek new knowledge and skills that advance organisational goals (Wegge et al. 2011). By granting greater autonomy and opportunities for participation, OD deepens employees' sense of belonging to the organisational community (Verdorfer et al. 2013), thereby increasing their willingness to contribute novel ideas (Pircher Verdorfer and Weber 2016; Ahmed et al. 2019). Yet without authentic managerial support, participation risks being merely symbolic, underscoring the need to examine not only positive pathways but also the conditions shaping the OD–KA relationship.

Democratic workplaces also prioritise continuous learning, encouraging employees to pursue training and skill development. This aligns closely with KA, as individuals are incentivised to acquire and apply new knowledge within their work. Moreover, OD fosters a culture of innovation by empowering experimentation and valuing employee input, which in turn stimulates exploration of emerging trends and technologies.

In this sense, OD serves as a powerful mechanism for strengthening KM and innovation in complex and dynamic environments. However, its effects are not uniformly positive: democratic structures may empower, but they may also slow decision-making or generate ambiguity. This study, therefore, adopts a nuanced view, considering both the mechanisms by which OD supports KA and the contextual conditions that determine their effectiveness.

In light of these insights, we posit the following as our primary hypothesis:

**H1** *Organisational democracy positively influences knowledge acquisition within an organisation.*

### **3.1 Decentralisation and knowledge acquisition**

Decentralisation, a central dimension of OD, represents a shift from hierarchical control to more dispersed and participatory decision-making. By redistributing authority, employees gain greater autonomy over decisions in their areas of expertise, fostering ownership and motivating proactive KA (Rezaei 2022). Such empowerment encourages individuals to seek and apply relevant knowledge, aligning learning directly with decision-making needs.

Decentralisation also facilitates cross-functional collaboration, breaking down silos and enabling knowledge to flow across diverse organisational units (Ceptureanu et al. 2025; Einhorn et al. 2024; Rezaei et al. 2020). These interactions enrich the KA process by integrating varied perspectives and expertise. Moreover, positioning decision-making closer to operational frontlines enhances responsiveness to market shifts, customer feedback, and technological change, ensuring that new knowledge is recognised and assimilated in real time. Transparency in decision processes further cultivates trust, strengthening communication and the exchange of insights.

Yet, decentralisation is not unambiguously beneficial. Without effective integrative mechanisms, it risks producing coordination challenges, duplication of effort, or decision-making inefficiencies. Its value for KA, therefore, depends on organisational context, managerial support, and the ability to balance autonomy with coherence. In this sense, decentralisation emerges not as a universal solution but as a contingent mechanism whose impact on KA varies across settings. This highlights the need to consider decentralisation not as an unqualified positive, but as a principle whose effectiveness depends on managerial support and structural balance.

**H2** *Decentralisation positively influences KA through cross-functional collaboration and responsiveness to external changes.*

### **3.2 Transparency and knowledge acquisition**

Transparency, understood as the open and accurate sharing of information, is widely regarded as a cornerstone of effective organisational management (Brun-Martos and Lapsley 2020). Scholars emphasise that it is not a unidimensional construct but rather a composite of disclosure, clarity, and accuracy (Schnackenberg and Tomlinson 2016). Within organisations, transparency is often equated with access to information (Flyverbom and Albu 2017), yet it also entails a willingness to disclose and an orientation towards openness (Fenton 2012; Peterson 2012).

Transparency facilitates KA by reducing organisational silence and fostering psychological safety, employees' belief that they can express themselves without fear of reprisal (Rezaei et al. 2022a). In transparent environments, individuals are more likely to share expertise and engage in learning activities, while the absence of trans-

parency fuels silence and disengagement (Shojaie et al. 2011; Zehir and Erdogan 2011). By signalling respect and accountability, transparency also cultivates trust, a critical mediator linking information disclosure to effective knowledge flows (Jiang and Luo 2018; Leistner 2010).

At the same time, transparency is not unambiguously beneficial. Excessive disclosure can overwhelm employees with information or be perceived as surveillance rather than empowerment, potentially undermining trust. Its impact on KA, therefore, depends on the balance between openness and restraint and on managerial intent.

Overall, transparency supports a learning-oriented culture in which employees seek new knowledge, reflect on experiences, and improve skills (Fard and Karimi 2015). It has also been shown to enhance job satisfaction, which further stimulates engagement and collaboration (Rezaei et al. 2022b). Thus, transparency emerges as a critical dimension of OD, shaping employees' motivation and ability to acquire knowledge.

**H3** *Transparency enhances KA by fostering trust and psychological safety and by reducing organisational silence.*

### 3.3 Vision and meaning, and knowledge acquisition

Vision represents the aspirational future state toward which an organisation directs its efforts, serving both as a unifying force and a guide for collective action (James and Lahti 2011; Aithal 2016; Lattuch and Dankert 2018). Meaning, by contrast, speaks to the “raison d’être” of the firm, addressing the question of why the organisation exists (Iedema 1999). Together, vision and meaning extend beyond material and economic dimensions, anchoring organisations in a broader psychological and spiritual framework. Their alignment provides not only strategic direction but also the motivational grounding for sustained organisational performance (Friedman and Lipshitz 1994).

As principles of OD, vision and meaning shape the degree to which employees identify with the organisation's trajectory and values (Deetz and Simpson 2004). When employees perceive their work as both meaningful and aligned with a collective vision, they are more likely to experience intrinsic motivation, heightened engagement, and a willingness to participate in KS and KA. Such alignment strengthens organisational affiliation and creates conditions where employees invest cognitive and emotional resources in advancing shared aspirations. Conversely, when identification is weak, even a compelling vision may have a limited impact on KA. This conditionality highlights the importance of contextual and cultural factors in shaping the OD–KA relationship.

Vision and meaning also lay the foundation for a learning-oriented culture. A compelling vision acts as a North Star, guiding employees towards continuous development, experimentation, and reflection (Cartwright and Holmes 2006). By framing individual effort within a larger purpose, vision-driven learning encourages proactive KA, as employees seek out new information and apply it to pursue organisational goals. Moreover, research suggests that vision and meaning strengthen relational networks, trust, and participation, factors closely linked to knowledge processes (Li 2005; Men et al. 2020).

In sum, vision and meaning operate as critical levers within OD, aligning organisational purpose with employee motivation to foster both engagement and KA.

**H4** *Vision and meaning positively influence KA by strengthening employees' intrinsic motivation and alignment with organisational goals.*

### **3.4 Involvement and participation, and knowledge acquisition**

Involvement and participation constitute the most visible and widely recognised dimensions of workplace democracy, often used interchangeably with the very concept of “worker participation” (Gardell 1982). Rooted in the democratic principle of equality (Ljungholm 2017), participation extends beyond routine tasks to include meaningful engagement in organisational decision-making and activities (Holtzhausen 2002). Scholars consistently identify participation as central to workplace democracy, alongside equality and co-decision-making.

In the KM literature, employee involvement is considered indispensable for knowledge flows. Davenport and Völpe (2001) and Rezaei (2025c) argued that participation underpins robust knowledge-sharing systems, while Sallis and Jones (2013) contended that KM initiatives cannot succeed without it. Similarly, involvement fosters employee commitment (Marchington and Wilkinson 2005), ownership, and accountability, factors that motivate active engagement in KA processes.

Participation, however, is not inherently effective. Without authentic managerial support, it risks becoming symbolic, undermining its potential to foster empowerment and learning. Organisational culture and leadership thus mediate the extent to which participation translates into meaningful KA (Han et al. 2010). When effectively supported, participatory decision-making creates space for diverse perspectives, facilitates cross-level knowledge exchange, and promotes collaborative learning (Flinchbaugh et al. 2016). Employees who feel empowered through participation are more likely to seek new knowledge, share expertise, and contribute to collective problem-solving, reinforcing a culture of continuous learning and innovation.

In this sense, involvement and participation not only nurture individual empowerment and intrinsic motivation but also embed KA within collective processes of collaboration and co-creation. Their impact, however, remains contingent on the organisational context and the authenticity of the participatory practices adopted.

**H5** *Employee involvement and participation positively influence KA by fostering empowerment and a sense of ownership.*

### **3.5 Communication and knowledge acquisition**

Organisational agility in volatile environments depends fundamentally on the capacity to acquire, disseminate, and apply knowledge. Communication sits at the core of that capacity: it is an interactive process through which information is transmitted and shared understanding is constructed (Keyton 2017; Rezaei et al. 2024; Spencer 2020). Empirical work shows that continuous, high-quality communicative networks are indispensable for coordination and execution; without them, managerial functions

and routine task performance break down (Stohl and Cheney 2001; Rajhans 2012; Muscalu et al. 2013). From the viewpoint of OD, communication is both an indicator and a mechanism of participation: more democratic workplaces exhibit denser, more reciprocal communication, which in turn sustains participation and accountability (Stohl and Cheney 2001; Nadesan and Cheney 2017; Deetz and Simpson 2004).

Communication advances KA through several interrelated mechanisms. First, it breaks down silos by enabling cross-unit dialogue and the integration of diverse perspectives, thereby increasing the visibility and uptake of distributed expertise (Golden and Veiga 2008). Second, communication builds trust by rendering reasoning and intent more transparent, which lowers the social and psychological barriers to sharing personal experiences and tacit know-how (Holtzhausen 2002; Flinchbaugh et al. 2016; Rezaei et al., 2022a, b). Third, effective channels transmit lessons learned, best practices, and emergent insights that seed a learning orientation across the organisation; such a culture predisposes employees to seek, apply, and circulate new knowledge (Taylor and Kent 2014; Walden et al. 2017).

These benefits, however, are contingent on the quality and context of the communication. Clarity, timeliness, reciprocity and perceived openness determine whether exchanges become catalysts for KA or remain superficial information transfers. Highly formalised or one-way channels, a lack of managerial support, or excessive information flow can impede sense-making, reduce reciprocity, and even discourage contribution. Thus, communication is necessary but not sufficient: its capacity to promote KA depends on surrounding cultural conditions, trust, openness, and mechanisms that prioritise relevance over mere volume.

In sum, open, reciprocal, and well-structured communication is a central OD mechanism for promoting KA: it connects participation, trust and learning, and converts dispersed experience into shared organisational knowledge.

**H6** *Open communication positively influences KA by breaking down silos, building trust, and supporting a learning-oriented culture.*

Figure 1 presents the conceptual model summarising the hypothesised relationships between OD subdimensions (including communication) and KA.

*Source* Authors' Design.

## 4 Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative research design, employing survey-based data collection and structural equation modelling (SEM) to test the proposed hypotheses. The investigative process commenced with a comprehensive literature review to identify pertinent variables and indicators. Subsequently, a two-part questionnaire was developed utilising a five-point Likert scale for evaluation. The face validity of the questionnaire was confirmed through expert consultations, ensuring the reliability and normality of the collected data, which were analysed using SPSS software.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was employed to validate both latent and observable variables. Additionally, SEM was utilised for hypothesis testing and to

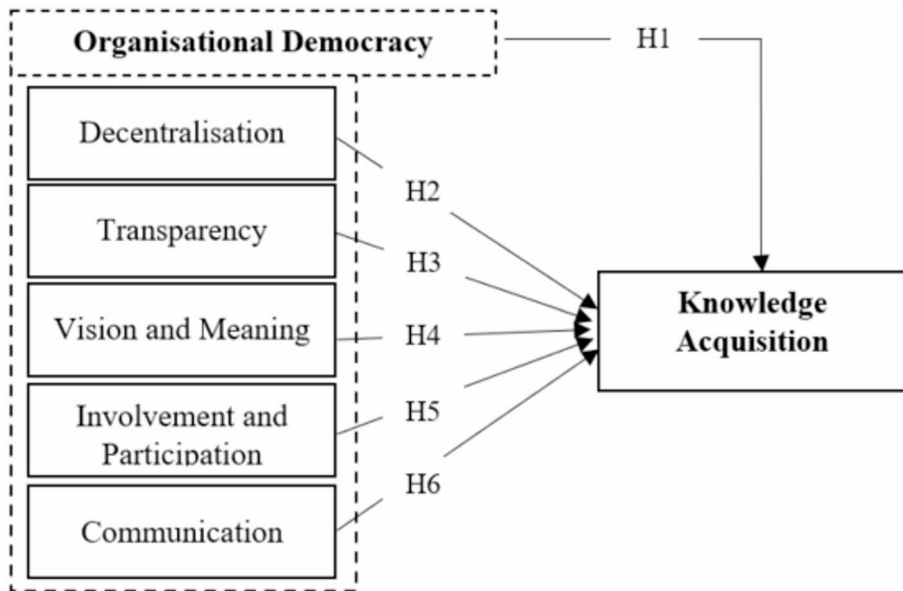


Fig. 1 conceptual model

gauge the alignment between the research data and the conceptual model. Various goodness of fit indices, such as the Chi-square test ( $\chi^2/df$ ), Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI), Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), were employed to assess the model fit.

#### 4.1 Sample size determination

Universities, as central pillars of economic competitiveness and sustainability in today's "knowledge society", are at the core of our sample selection (Ardito et al. 2019; Frank and Meyer 2020). Their pivotal role in driving economic growth and labour market dynamics is well-established and meticulously documented (Gyimah-Brempong et al. 2006; Benos and Zotou 2014; Agasisti and Bertolotti 2022). Indeed, the success of the world's top 10 most developed nations can be traced back to their robust higher education systems, underscoring the pivotal importance of high-quality tertiary education.

However, universities' significance extends far beyond mere economic metrics. They play a crucial role in nurturing democracy, fostering citizenship, and upholding social values (Suspitsyna 2012; Smith et al. 2008). As bastions of intellectual achievement and innovation, universities are perceived as symbols of national pride and have sparked global initiatives to create elite institutions of higher learning. In the specific context of Iran, universities' strategic position in the Middle East magnifies their influence on economic and social outcomes (Habibi and Zabardast 2020). This underscores the critical role of academic institutions in shaping the economic landscape and the broader societal context in which they operate. To scrutinise the

impacts of OD, we focused on academic institutions in Khorasan Province, Iran. The 12 universities included in the final sample were selected because they reflect the diversity of Iran's higher education system, encompassing both public and private institutions with varying sizes and academic profiles. Several of these universities are regionally accredited and appear in national rankings, ensuring that the sample captures representative characteristics of Iranian higher education while allowing sufficient heterogeneity in OD practices. We initially compiled a list of 50 universities and colleges within this region, subsequently refining it based on factors such as institution type (public or private), student body size, and staff strength. We sampled personnel without middle- or senior-management roles to mitigate hierarchical interference and senior management sway. This exclusion was deliberate, as managers typically design or implement OD policies rather than experience them as employees. Excluding managerial staff provided a more accurate assessment of how OD principles are perceived and enacted at the operational level, aligning with the study's focus on employee-driven KA.

Determining the appropriate sample size is pivotal in research design. While a definitive consensus on the requisite minimum for factor analysis and structural modelling is elusive, a baseline of 200 participants is often deemed satisfactory (Kock and Hadaya 2018). Principles guiding sample size determination in multivariate regression analysis, suggesting a range of 5 to 15 participants per independent variable, can be applied to SEM (Mueller and Hancock 2018). Furthermore, Kline (2023) recommends 10 to 20 samples per variable for exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and posits that a minimum of 200 is justifiable. In CFA, the sample size requirement depends on the number of factors (latent variables), with an approximate need of 20 per factor.

In this research, a focal group of 850 employees from 12 universities and higher education institutions, selected after initial screening, was earmarked as potential respondents. The questionnaire, using a five-point Likert scale, consists of two parts: the first assesses OD scales and principles through 21 questions, while the second focuses on evaluating KA. To enhance transparency and replicability, measurement items are reported in Appendix 1, along with their respective sources, while descriptive statistics, factor loadings, and reliability and validity indicators are presented in Appendix 2. All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

Following preliminary refinement and evaluation of 545 distributed questionnaires, 254 (representing a 47% response rate) were deemed suitable for analysis. Table 1 summarises the sample demographics, including age, gender, and tenure categories.

## 4.2 Normality and multicollinearity evaluation

Before proceeding with the analysis, data normality was confirmed using the skewness and kurtosis tests, which were deemed suitable for Likert-scale data. The criterion for normal distribution lies within the range of  $-2$  to  $+2$ . As presented in Appendix 2, our data exhibited satisfactory normality. Furthermore, multicollinearity was assessed to determine the independence of predictor variables by examining variance inflation

**Table 1** Demographic characteristics

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	135	53.15
	Female	119	46.85
Age	+30	134	52.76
	30–40	73	28.74
	41–50	32	12.60
	+50	15	05.90
	Job experience (Years)	1–3	118
	4–8	102	40.16
	9–14	19	07.48
	+15	15	05.90

Source Authors' calculation

factors (VIFs). Maintaining VIF values below 5 and with  $R^2$  values below 0.8 (Field 2013) ensured that multicollinearity did not pose a concern in our study.

### 4.3 Common method bias examination

Harman's Single-Factor Test was employed to evaluate common method bias (CMB), a potential source of systematic error in questionnaire-based studies. This method is pivotal for identifying biases that contaminate results by influencing the relationships between structures when gauging participants' perceptions. A CMB becomes problematic if a single factor accounts for over 50% of the variance of all variables (Kock et al. 2021). Our findings revealed that approximately 37% of the variance was explained by a single factor, indicating that CMB did not significantly impact this research.

## 5 Results

### 5.1 Reliability and validity analysis

A reliability test was conducted to ensure the questionnaire consistently reflected the construct under investigation. Cronbach's Alpha was used to assess internal reliability, with values exceeding 0.7 considered confirmatory. Furthermore, composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) were used to determine the internal consistency of the latent constructs and the average variance explained by the measurement items, respectively. Acceptable values for both CR and AVE exceed 0.5 (Field 2013) (refer to Table 2).

Validity analysis, encompassing convergent, discriminant, and content validity, was undertaken to evaluate internal correlation and item alignment. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed, utilising its outcomes to scrutinise the validity of dimensions. Convergent validity, as assessed through CR and AVE values, necessitated CR to surpass AVE, with both values exceeding 0.7 and 0.5, respectively (refer to Table 2).

Discriminant validity is another pivotal test used to confirm and discern the theoretical distinction between the items of one factor and those of another. To achieve

**Table 2** Reliability and validity results for the measurement model

Construct	CR	AVE	Construct reliability	Convergent validity
Decentralisation	0.86	0.60	Yes	Yes
Transparency	0.83	0.50	Yes	Yes
Vision and Meaning	0.87	0.69	Yes	Yes
Involvement and Participation	0.90	0.64	Yes	Yes
Communication	0.81	0.52	Yes	Yes
Knowledge Acquisition	0.87	0.58	Yes	Yes

**Table 3** Discriminant validity results

Constructs	Decent.	Transp.	Vision & meaning	Involve. & Partic.	Comm.	KA
Decentralisation	0.7769	0.65	0.60	0.55	0.50	0.40
Transparency	0.65	0.7080	0.70	0.60	0.55	0.45
Vision & Meaning	0.60	0.70	0.8306	0.65	0.60	0.50
Involvement and Participation	0.55	0.60	0.65	0.7977	0.65	0.55
Communication	0.50	0.55	0.60	0.65	0.7234	0.60
Knowledge Acquisition	0.40	0.45	0.50	0.55	0.60	0.7638

Source Authors' calculation

this objective, we adopted the results of the Fornell-Larcker Criterion to confirm the discriminant validity of the constructs. For each construct, the square root of the AVE is greater than the highest correlation with any other construct. This indicates that each construct shares more variance with its own items than with items of other constructs, fulfilling the condition for acceptable discriminant validity. However, a borderline case was observed between Transparency and Vision and Meaning, where the correlation (0.70) was close to the square root of Transparency's AVE (0.708). Despite this proximity, discriminant validity remains acceptable, as the square roots of the AVEs are still marginally higher. The results support the constructs' uniqueness and confirm that they measure distinct latent variables, providing a solid foundation for subsequent structural model analysis.

Finally, all constructs in the model are specified as reflective. This specification is appropriate because the indicators are conceptualised as manifestations of the underlying latent constructs, are expected to covary, and are theoretically interchangeable. Accordingly, the measurement model is assessed using standard reliability and validity criteria, including indicator loadings, composite reliability, and AVE (Table 3).

## 5.2 Structural model fit

The fitness indices thoroughly assess how well the hypothesised structural model fits the observed data. These indices evaluate various dimensions of model fit, including error approximation, comparative fit, and residual discrepancies. Collectively, they determine whether the model is appropriate for explaining the relationships among

**Table 4** Fitness indices

Fitness index	Value	Threshold	Conclusion
Chi-square/df ( $\chi^2/df$ )	2.45	$\leq 3.00$	Acceptable Fit
RMSEA	0.058	$\leq 0.08$	Good Fit
GFI	0.92	$\geq 0.90$	Good Fit
AGFI	0.9	$\geq 0.90$	Acceptable Fit
CFI	0.93	$\geq 0.90$	Good Fit
SRMR	0.057	$\leq 0.08$	Good Fit

Source Authors' calculation

**Table 5** Results summary

Description of path	Coefficient	t-value	<i>p</i> -value	Conclusion
OD → KA	0.68	13.2	0.0000	H1 is accepted
Decentralisation → KA	0.55	6.1	0.0000	H2 is accepted
Transparency → KA	0.58	5.98	0.0000	H3 is accepted
Vision & Meaning → KA	0.46	5.62	0.0000	H4 is accepted
Involvement & Participation → KA	0.49	5.71	0.0000	H5 is accepted
Communication → KA	0.52	5.88	0.0000	H6 is accepted

Exact *p*-values ( $p < 0.001$ ) for all paths are non-zero and so smaller than 0.001; therefore, *p*-values are reported in rounded form. Source Authors' calculation

the constructs. As such, before analysing the hypotheses, it is essential to establish the adequacy of these fit indices.

The results indicate that the model achieves an overall satisfactory fit. The Chi-square/df ratio of 2.45 falls below the acceptable threshold of 3.0, suggesting that the model adequately represents the data concerning the degrees of freedom. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is 0.058, well within the threshold of 0.08, reflecting a good model fit with minimal approximation error. The Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) and Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) are 0.92 and 0.90, respectively, exceeding the recommended minimum of 0.90, demonstrating an acceptable absolute model fit. Taken together, these indices provide strong support for the adequacy of the measurement and structural models, validating the subsequent hypothesis testing (see Table 4).

### 5.3 Model results

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between OD and KA, focusing on five key dimensions of OD: decentralisation, transparency, vision and meaning, involvement and participation, and communication. The findings (refer to Table 5) revealed that OD significantly enhances KA, providing empirical support for the hypothesised relationships.

As shown in Table 5, all hypothesised paths are statistically significant. The results show a strong, significant positive relationship between OD and KA ( $\beta=0.68$ ,  $t=13.2$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). This finding aligns with prior studies highlighting the role of democratic practices in fostering environments conducive to learning and knowledge exchange (Jameson et al. 2006).

Universities, as knowledge-intensive organisations, particularly benefit from OD by enabling employees to feel more engaged, autonomous, and empowered, thereby facilitating greater openness to acquiring and sharing knowledge (Clifton et al. 2010). The results underscore that OD provides the structural and cultural groundwork for effective KA.

Among the dimensions of OD, Transparency showed the strongest association with KA ( $\beta=0.58$ ). Transparency ensures open access to information, fostering trust and encouraging employees to acquire knowledge actively. This result aligns with Holtzhausen's (2002) findings that transparency improves organisational communication and information sharing, both of which are critical for KA. In academic institutions, transparency enables employees to access strategic and operational information, facilitating KA and strengthening their role as knowledge workers. By increasing transparency, employees are empowered to participate in information-acquisition processes, leading to greater knowledge. The relationship between Decentralisation and KA ( $\beta=0.55$ ) underscores the importance of empowering employees with decision-making authority. Decentralised structures reduce bureaucratic barriers and encourage employees to take ownership of their roles, enhancing their ability and willingness to acquire knowledge. This result aligns with previous studies showing that decentralisation improves organisational adaptability and supports knowledge flow (Sapprasert and Clausen 2012; Safari et al. 2018). In universities, decentralised decision-making fosters innovation and creativity, enabling academic and administrative staff to engage in KA processes. This effect size demonstrates a substantial organisational impact: universities adopting more democratic structures can expect employees to be considerably more proactive in seeking and sharing knowledge. Similarly, transparency ( $\beta=0.58$ ) indicates that open access to information strongly encourages knowledge-related engagement, while decentralisation ( $\beta=0.55$ ) highlights the tangible benefits of empowering employees with decision authority.

Communication also strongly impacted KA ( $\beta=0.52$ ), underscoring the importance of open and effective communication channels. Frequent and open communication facilitates the exchange of ideas and insights, which are critical for acquiring knowledge. In academic institutions, consistent communication between faculty and administrative staff ensures that knowledge flows freely across departments, enabling employees to stay informed and learn from each other's experiences. These findings are consistent with Kremer et al. (2019), who highlighted that communication enhances both knowledge sharing and acquisition. The results also indicate a positive relationship between Involvement and Participation and KA ( $\beta=0.49$ ). Employees who feel a sense of belonging are more likely to engage in knowledge-related activities actively. Participation fosters a sense of ownership and accountability, motivating employees to seek knowledge that contributes to organisational success. These findings align with Razmerita et al. (2016), who noted that participatory practices enhance employees' intrinsic motivation to engage in learning. In universities,

encouraging active participation in decision-making processes promotes a culture of continuous learning and collaboration.

Finally, the results indicate the positive impact of Vision and Meaning on KA ( $\beta=0.46$ ), highlighting the importance of shared goals and organisational purpose in driving knowledge-related behaviours. A compelling vision gives employees a clear sense of purpose, motivating them to align their efforts with organisational objectives and actively seek knowledge to fulfil those goals. This result is consistent with studies by Timming and Summers (2020), who emphasised that a compelling vision motivates employees to align their efforts with the organisation's objectives and actively seek the knowledge required to achieve these goals.

The findings align with and extend existing literature. For instance, Harrison and Freeman (2004) and Verdorfer et al. (2013) highlighted the broader implications of OD in fostering organisational learning. Similarly, Razmerita et al. (2016) and Rezaei et al. (2022a, b) provided evidence for the role of decentralisation, transparency, and participatory decision-making in knowledge-related processes. This study confirms these relationships while comprehensively analysing the direct and indirect pathways through which OD influences KA.

## 6 Discussion

Although the results provide strong empirical support for the positive influence of OD on KA, it is essential to approach these findings with a degree of caution and critical reflection. Democratic practices in organisations are rarely unproblematic or universally effective. For instance, participatory mechanisms may sometimes operate more as symbolic gestures than substantive reforms, offering employees a voice without significantly altering decision-making outcomes. This risk of “token participation” has been widely discussed in the literature, as it may undermine trust and engagement when participation is perceived as superficial rather than consequential (Scott-Ladd et al. 2006; Nadesan and Cheney 2017). Similarly, decentralisation, while often praised for empowering employees and stimulating innovation, may introduce coordination inefficiencies or exacerbate fragmentation, particularly in large and complex organisations (Harrison and Freeman 2004). Transparency, too, while strongly associated with KA in our results, can carry unintended consequences: excessive disclosure or poorly managed communication flows may overwhelm employees with information or increase perceived accountability pressures, potentially weakening knowledge-related behaviours (Holtzhausen 2002; Timming and Summers 2020). These reflections highlight that OD should be understood not as a universally positive recipe, but as a contingent set of practices whose effectiveness depends heavily on context. Organisational culture, leadership style, and institutional traditions play a central role in shaping whether democratic principles translate into meaningful behavioural change or remain rhetorical (Hendriks 2009; Fine 2017). In contexts characterised by uncertainty and institutional constraints, participatory and transparent practices may act as important triggers for deeper cognitive and strategic learning, enabling individuals to reflect on existing practices and reconfigure how knowledge is acquired and shared (Saidi et al. 2025).

In the case of Iranian universities, the strong effects of transparency and decentralisation may, in part, reflect the historically hierarchical environment, in which even limited democratic reforms can generate substantial behavioural shifts. By engaging with these tensions and paradoxes, this study aims to move beyond a celebratory view of OD, positioning it instead as a powerful but context-dependent enabler of KA. Recognising its limitations does not diminish its potential; rather, it opens space for a more nuanced debate about how democratic practices can be tailored, balanced, and institutionalised to maximise their impact. Such a perspective provides the foundation for the following discussion of this study's theoretical and practical implications.

## 6.1 Theoretical implications

This study makes several theoretical contributions.

First, this study establishes a clear empirical link between OD and KA, demonstrating that democratic principles such as decentralisation, transparency, communication, and employee participation are critical enablers of knowledge-related processes. This finding extends prior KM research by integrating the socio-political construct of OD into the study of KA, which has traditionally emphasised technological or cognitive mechanisms (Zhang and Jasimuddin 2012; Razmerita et al. 2016).

Second, the differentiated strength of predictors contributes to refining OD theory. Transparency's dominant role reinforces arguments that openness and information access constitute foundational mechanisms for trust and psychological safety in democratic organisations (Fard and Karimi 2015; Wegge et al. 2011), while the weaker influence of Vision and Meaning raises questions about when and under what conditions organisational purpose translates into actual knowledge behaviours. This provides fertile ground for future theory-building, especially regarding how cultural values and institutional norms shape the relative salience of OD principles.

Third, this research highlights the importance of contextualising OD in non-Western environments. Much of the existing literature on OD and KM is rooted in Western democratic traditions; by demonstrating significant effects in Iran, this study contributes to a more global understanding while also pointing to potential cultural contingencies.

Finally, by linking OD principles to intrinsic motivators such as trust, engagement, and psychological safety, this study highlights OD's potential to serve as a lever for fostering a culture of continuous learning. These insights are particularly relevant for scholars exploring the intersection of KM, organisational behaviour, and innovation.

## 6.2 Empirical implications

From an empirical perspective, this study offers a validated model that organisations can use to assess the impact of OD on KA, responding to recent calls for empirically grounded analyses of multidimensional organisational mechanisms (Weber et al. 2020). The SEM approach employed here provides a robust framework for examining the relationships between democratic principles and knowledge-related

outcomes, offering researchers a replicable methodology for future investigations in different organisational contexts.

On the managerial front, the findings offer actionable insights for leaders seeking to enhance their organisations' KA capacity. Managers should prioritise implementing OD practices, particularly those related to transparency, decentralisation, and communication. By fostering open access to information and ensuring employees have a voice in decision-making processes, organisations can create an environment conducive to active learning and knowledge-sharing. For instance, managers can institutionalise transparent communication channels to build trust and reduce organisational silos. This includes regularly sharing strategic updates, encouraging feedback loops, and creating forums for cross-departmental collaboration. Similarly, decentralisation can be operationalised by empowering employees to take ownership of decisions within their domains, fostering autonomy and enhancing their engagement with knowledge processes.

The practical meaning of the coefficients is also noteworthy. For example, the overall  $\beta=0.68$  suggests that strengthening OD practices produces a substantial increase in KA, implying that even incremental improvements in transparency or decentralisation can significantly enhance employees' willingness to seek and share knowledge. This provides leaders with a quantifiable rationale for investing in democratic practices.

In the Iranian university context, initiatives such as institutionalising transparent communication channels (e.g., regular strategic updates, open forums for staff input) and empowering faculty through decentralised decision-making (e.g., devolving curriculum or resource-related decisions) appear particularly impactful. However, the weaker association of Vision and Meaning suggests that simply articulating mission statements is insufficient; leaders must translate vision into daily practices and incentives that resonate with employees.

Moreover, involving employees in participatory decision-making processes and aligning organisational vision with individual goals can significantly enhance motivation and commitment to KA. Managers should work to articulate a compelling organisational vision that resonates with employees, fostering a sense of purpose and direction. Training programs, workshops, and opportunities for cross-functional collaboration can further reinforce the principles of OD, driving both individual and collective KA.

Lastly, organisations should focus on cultivating a learning-oriented culture by integrating democratic practices into their daily operations. This includes providing platforms for continuous learning, celebrating successes in KA, and embedding OD principles into organisational policies and leadership practices. By doing so, organisations can enhance their KM capabilities and build a resilient, innovative workforce capable of navigating complex, rapidly changing environments (Cerchione et al. 2023).

At the same time, managers should remain attentive to potential drawbacks. Excessive decentralisation may lead to coordination inefficiencies, while transparency without safeguards may risk information overload. Recognising these trade-offs ensures that OD practices are implemented in ways that balance inclusivity with organisational effectiveness.

## 7 Conclusion

This study explored the intricate relationship between OD and KA, highlighting the transformative potential of democratic workplace practices in fostering an environment conducive to continuous learning and innovation. By examining five critical dimensions of OD, decentralisation, transparency, vision and meaning, involvement and participation, and communication, this research sheds light on their distinct yet interconnected roles in shaping employees' attitudes and behaviours toward KA.

The original contribution of this study lies in demonstrating that OD should not be treated as a uniform construct. By disaggregating its dimensions, we show that transparency exerts the most decisive influence on KA, while vision and meaning play a weaker yet meaningful role. This differentiation advances existing research by highlighting that distinct democratic practices contribute to KA through different mechanisms. The findings thus move beyond generic assertions about participatory governance and provide a more nuanced framework for theorising and managing knowledge processes.

From a theoretical standpoint, this research extends KM scholarship by integrating OD into the study of KA, an area previously dominated by technological or cognitive perspectives. From a practical perspective, it offers managers actionable insights for designing participatory governance structures, transparent communication systems, and inclusive decision-making processes to foster continuous learning and innovation.

### 7.1 Limitations and directions for future exploration

This study has several limitations, which open avenues for future research.

First, the geographic scope was limited to universities in one Iranian province, which limits the generalizability of the findings. While this context highlights the salience of OD in hierarchical and centralised settings, future studies should investigate other industries, regions, and organisational forms to test the transferability of results.

Second, this research primarily analysed direct effects. Potential indirect or moderating mechanisms (e.g., transparency amplifying the role of participation in KA) were not tested but represent a promising direction for future inquiry.

Third, reliance on self-reported survey data, though validated, raises risks of social desirability bias. Future studies could complement surveys with longitudinal, experimental, or mixed methods designs. Qualitative methods, such as case studies or interviews, would also enrich the understanding of employees' lived experiences of OD.

Fourth, although five core OD dimensions were examined, other principles, such as fairness, accountability, or digital democracy, could be incorporated in future frameworks. Likewise, while this study focused on KA, further research should extend the analysis to other KM processes (e.g., sharing, retention, and application) that are equally vital for sustainable performance.

Finally, external environmental factors remain underexplored. Future research could investigate how technological change, market dynamics, and digital transformation interact with OD to shape KA. This is particularly relevant as virtual com-

munication and participatory digital tools increasingly redefine how democracy is practised in the workplace.

## Appendix 1

### Measurement items for each construct

Construct	Item	Measurement item	Key references
<b>Organisational Democracy (OD)</b>			
Decentralisation	OD1	People in our team decide on most of what they do on their own.	Rezaei et al. (2022a, b); Hamel and Breen (2008); Peterson (2012); Fenton (2012)
	OD2	In our workplace, information and power are spread out, rather than concentrated in one place.	
	OD3	If I choose to, I can connect directly with a higher-ranked manager, bypassing the middleman.	
	OD4	If the management of our organisation received a “blow to the head”, the organisation would continue to operate.	
Transparency	OD5	All the people in our organisation have access to the information they need to make independent decisions.	Jiang and Luo (2018); Rezaei et al. (2022a, b); Shojaie et al. (2011); Zehir and Erdogan (2011)
	OD6	All the people in our organisation have access to information about the organisation’s financial results.	
	OD7	All the people in our organisation have access to information about the organisation’s strategy.	
	OD8	People in our organisation understand information about our organisation (its strategy, the results of procedures, etc.) and can deal with it.	
	OD9	The operation of our organisation is transparent to our customers.	
Vision and Meaning	OD10	The mission of our organisation (why it exists) is really attractive to people in our organisation.	James and Lahti (2011); Aithal (2016); Lattuch and Dankert (2018); Deetz and Simpson (2004)
	OD11	The defined vision (what we want to achieve in our organisation) gives our organisation direction.	
	OD12	The defined purposes are settled for every section in our organisation, and employees know them.	
Involvement and Participation	OD13	In our organisation, there is a sense of belonging that motivates people with high energy to work together.	Gardell (1982); Ljungholm (2017); Holtzhausen (2002); Davenport & Völpele (2001)
	OD14	The emphasis on unity is balanced with the recognition of each person’s individual identity.	
	OD15	People in our organisation are willing to work even beyond the scope of their duties.	
	OD16	People in our organisation come up with ideas by themselves and are willing to implement them.	

## Measurement items for each construct

Construct	Item	Measurement item	Key references
Communication	OD17	Dialogue and listening are the most important parts of employees' communication.	Holtzhausen (2002); Key-ton (2017); Rezaei et al. (2024); Spencer (2020); Stohl and Cheney (2001); Rajhans (2012); Muscalu et al. (2013)
	OD18	Our organisation actively fosters open communication among all employees.	
	OD19	Through open communication, most people in our organisation actively listen to others with the intention of reaching an agreement.	
	OD20	Our organisation actively creates opportunities for dialogue with customers, suppliers, and others.	
	OD21	People in our organisation can present any idea (suggestion, problem, solution, or disapproval), and others will listen.	
Knowledge Acquisition	KA1	People in my organisation frequently acquire existing reports and official documents that are already available within the organisation.	
	KA2	People in my organisation frequently obtain newly prepared reports and official documents created by other members.	
	KA3	People in my organisation are frequently supported by mechanisms that encourage knowledge acquisition.	
	KA4	People in my organisation frequently gain knowledge of know-where or know-whom from others.	
	KA5	People in my organisation frequently acquire knowledge based on the expertise of others.	

Standardised factor loadings, reliability, and validity statistics for all measurement items are reported in Appendix 2.

## Appendix 2

### Descriptive Statistics, Reliability, and Validity of Measurement Items.

Factors/Items	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	VIF	CR	AVE*	Factor Loading**	Cronbach's Alpha
Organisational Democracy (OD)									
<i>Decentralisation</i>						0.86	0.60		0.87
OD1	3.87	0.88	0.44	-0.28	1.08			0.87	
OD2	4.45	1.01	0.39	-0.77	1.09			0.67	
OD3	4.23	1.04	0.1	0.73	1.10			0.72	
OD4	4.1	0.82	0.42	0.25	1.11			0.83	
<i>Transparency</i>						0.83	0.50		0.85
OD5	3.66	1.04	-0.41	-0.34	1.10			0.67	
OD6	3.66	0.87	-0.3	-0.87	1.12			0.62	
OD7	3.56	0.83	-0.45	-0.38	1.12			0.69	
OD8	4.37	1.18	-0.17	-0.35	1.09			0.65	
OD9	4.1	1.19	-0.11	0.46	1.14			0.88	
<i>Vision &amp; meaning</i>						0.87	0.69		0.8

## Descriptive Statistics, Reliability, and Validity of Measurement Items.

Factors/Items	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	VIF	CR	AVE*	Factor Loading**	Cronbach's Alpha
OD10	4.21	1.12	-0.23	0.28	1.13			0.84	
OD11	3.52	0.92	0.33	0.77	1.12			0.79	
OD12	4.47	0.84	-0.14	-0.06	1.17			0.86	
<i>Involvement and Participation</i>						0.90	0.64		0.83
OD13	4.33	1.07	-0.22	-0.76	1.06			0.84	
OD14	3.71	0.98	0.04	0.43	1.14			0.66	
OD15	3.68	0.85	-0.36	0.52	1.12			0.87	
OD16	3.68	1	0.3	0.12	1.06			0.76	
OD17	3.8	0.81	-0.43	0.54	1.11			0.84	
<i>Communication</i>						0.81	0.52		0.81
OD18	4.02	1.16	0.49	-0.01	1.12			0.87	
OD19	3.93	0.9	0.27	0.05	1.13			0.7	
OD20	3.79	1.07	-0.3	-0.14	1.17			0.63	
OD21	4.11	0.92	-0.49	-0.95	1.11			0.67	
<i>Knowledge Acquisition (KA)</i>						0.87	0.58		0.86
KA1	3.64	1.01	0.32	-0.78	1.13			0.73	
KA2	3.79	1.02	0.21	-0.94	1.13			0.85	
KA3	3.87	0.87	0.23	0.27	1.11			0.86	
KA4	3.96	1.19	0.27	-0.37	1.09			0.6	
KA5	4.29	1.11	-0.43	0.02	1.16			0.75	

Variance Inflation Factors (VIFs) are reported at the item level to assess potential multicollinearity among indicators. Consistent with the reflective specification of the measurement model, these diagnostics are provided for completeness and do not imply a formative measurement approach.

\*Composite reliability

\*\*Average variance extracted

Source Authors' calculation.

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