



ORIGINAL ARTICLE

# The Mediating Role of Organizational Learning in the Relationship of Organizational Intelligence and Organizational Agility

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**Abstract**

**Objectives:** Organizational learning is defined as creating, absorbing, retaining, transferring, and application of knowledge within an organization. This article aims to examine the mediating role of organizational learning in the relationship of organizational intelligence and organizational agility.

**Methods:** This analytical and cross-sectional study was conducted in 2015 at four teaching hospitals of Yazd city, Iran. A total of 370 administrative and medical staff contributed to the study. We used stratified-random method for sampling. Required data were gathered using three valid questionnaires including Alberkht (2003) organizational intelligence, Neefe (2001) organizational learning, and Sharifi and Zhang (1999) organizational agility questionnaires. Data analysis was done through R and SPSS 18 statistical software.

**Results:** The results showed that organizational learning acts as a mediator in the relationship of organizational intelligence and organizational agility (path coefficient = 0.943). Also, organizational learning has a statistical relationship with organizational agility (path coefficient = 0.382).

**Conclusion:** Our findings suggest that the improvement of organizational learning abilities can affect an organization's agility which is crucial for its survival.

## 1. Introduction

Nowadays, evolution of healthcare organization is very important for the growth and development of

organizations and any defects have irreversible consequences for them [1]. Also, technological changes demand management changes [2]. Organizations increasingly involve three words: customers, competition, and change, and they look for ways to overcome these issues [3]. The increased rate of innovation and technological expansions, fragmentation of markets, and

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elevated customer expectations toward customized harvests have led to the especially turbulent and rapid changes in the business environment [4]. Most researchers predict that the workplace is changing constantly and rapidly [5]. Hospitals are not separate from this issue and without change will not be able to achieve health policy goals [6]. Organizational intelligence that consist of human intelligence and machine intelligence can increase the power of competitiveness.

Albrecht [7] believed that organizational intelligence is the mental capacity and ability to perform a task or important activities. In his opinion, organizational intelligence has seven components that include: (1) strategic vision; (2) shared fate; (3) desire to change; (4) heart; (5) alignment; (6) knowledge application; and (7) performance pressure. Lefter et al [28] in an article named "The dimensions of organizational intelligence of human prospects in Romanian companies" indicated that only 30% of the staff of medium and large companies were familiar with the concept of organizational intelligence and the staff of small companies were not familiar with this concept at all. Healthcare organizations are looking for better ways to carry out their affairs and to learn how to implement them [8]. Hospitals are organizations that have interactions between nurses and patients, nurses and doctors, and doctors and patients, and they can use these interactions to experiment and learn [9]. Organizational learning was used for the first time in 1963 by Cyert and March in their first study on the behavioral aspects of organizational decision making [10]. As Argote [11] believed, service organizations such as hospitals are increasingly expanding and these organizations have different degrees of learning that will have an influence on productivity, performance, and strategic and management decisions. Cyert and March believe that learning is as an effective strategy to increase the efficiency of an organization [12] and occurs when behaviors change [13]. Learning can increase the effectiveness of management in order to attract opportunities [14]. Argyris defines organizational learning as a process of detecting and correcting errors that conclude from sharing knowledge, beliefs, and assumptions between individuals and teams [15]. Two factors that seem to have considerably created organizational learning are: (1) the rate of change; and (2) an increase in competitive pressures. Neefe [16] suggests that organizational learning is derived from five dimensions that include individual skills, mental models, vision, team learning or team work, and systems thinking.

Agility is a term used since 1991. Agility is a matter that business organizations chose in the 21<sup>st</sup> century [17]. Public health and the promotion of healthcare is a fundamental issue in the world. One of the most important factors for organizations is agility that is used in variable environments. Organizational agility is the ability to respond to changes in their environment

quickly and successfully. The main characteristics of this environment are change and uncertainty [18]. Hospitals are the most important organization in the field of healthcare services that require skilled manpower, equipment, and suitable facilities. Therefore, agile hospitals can reduce production costs, increase market shares and patient satisfaction, introduce new services, and enhance the competitiveness of the hospital. Grol et al [19] suggested that healthcare systems need different factors that use strategy, activities, and that combines various scales. Organizational agility identifies four dimensions [20]: (1) ability to respond; (2) the competition; (3) flexibility; and (4) speed or power to accept. Organizational intelligence, organizational learning, and organizational agility have been used in industry over and over but in hospitals they are less used. In Simic's [21] research he pointed out that individuals and organizations that have higher organizational intelligence are superior in the fields of understanding problems, understanding knowledge, and performance improvement compared with other organizations. Samokadas and Sauni (2004) developed a hierarchical and theoretical model and tested it empirically. This model shows how human resources management activities help the agility of human resources [22]. For organizations, communities, and those who are planning for their future, understanding the nature of change seems essential but unfortunately few researches pay attention to organization spiritual assets such as organizational intelligence, organizational learning, and organizational agility. Thus, this article aims to examine the mediating role of organizational learning in the relationship of organizational intelligence and organizational agility.

### 1.1. Research hypotheses

- (1) Observable variables (strategic vision, shared fate, tendency to change, heart, alignment, expanding knowledge, performance, interpersonal skills, mental models, com vision, team learning, systems thinking, ability to respond, aptitude, flexibility, and speed or power to accept) and latent variables (organizational intelligence, organizational learning, organizational agility)
- (2) There is a significant relationship between organizational intelligence and organizational agility in the teaching hospitals of Yazd city
- (3) There is a significant relationship between organizational intelligence and organizational learning in the teaching hospitals of Yazd city
- (4) There is a significant relationship between organizational learning and organizational agility in the teaching hospitals of Yazd city

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