

The Impact of Organizational Learning on Organizational Innovation: A Field Study on Humanitarian Organizations in Northern Syria

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Abstract

The research aims to study the relationship between organizational learning with its levels (individual learning, group learning, learning at the organization level) and innovation in humanitarian organizations in northern Syria with its dimensions (administrative, technical, additional). The study showed that the relationship between organizational learning and innovation in humanitarian organizations is Good relationship and worth 0.813 at a significant level of 0.05, and it was the highest value for learning at the level of the organization, as it showed a strong relationship with the process of innovation within organizations compared to individual learning and group learning, and it amounted to 0.806 at a significant level of 0.05. The study recommended supporting the process of innovation and creativity within the organization by adopting organizational learning strategies at all levels in order to exchange ideas and knowledge between workers and its impact on the performance of organizations.

Keywords: *organizational learning, innovation.*

Introduction

With the global development, the needs and requests of the beneficiaries of services change, and the methods of providing services develop faster and with high efficiency. With this accelerated development, innovation was one of the weapons that organizations should give importance to as a competitive tool. Organizational learning is also one of the modern administrative topics that are developed to enhance the ability of organizations to Survival and continuity, organizations must seek to transform into a permanent learning organization at all levels (individual, collective, at the level of the organization), as organizational learning contributes to increasing the knowledge of workers in organizations, increasing their experience, and increasing the stock of knowledge in the entire organization, which helps to improve and enhance innovation in the organization .

Research problem:

The development of organizations, their superiority, and their ability to survive and compete can only be achieved through innovation. Innovation management researchers point out that there is a knowledge gap that may be associated with the structure and ideas that fuel innovation and provides a link between the learning components of innovation and the cognitive components of organizational learning that suffers from a gap in achieving an integrated step. In the process of providing managers and researchers with an insight into how innovation and organizational learning work together to influence

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innovation in production and services provided, and in light of these challenges, organizations operating in northern Syria are struggling to maintain the provision of services and projects efficiently and effectively to ensure their survival and continuity and improve their performance for the purpose of continuity. Therefore, the research problem is divided into the following questions:

- 1- What is the level of perception of workers in organizations in northern Syria of organizational learning at all levels?
- 2- What is the level of interest of employees in organizations to innovation and its elements?
- 3- What is the impact of organizational learning on innovation in organizations operating in northern Syria?

research aims:

The main purpose of the research is to clarify the impact of organizational learning at all levels on innovation in humanitarian organizations in northern Syria, by achieving the following objectives:

- 1- Determining the level of application of organizational learning in humanitarian organizations in northern Syria.
- 2- Determining the level of interest in organizational innovation and raising its level in humanitarian organizations in northern Syria.
- 3- Identify the impact of organizational learning on innovation in humanitarian organizations in northern Syria.

research assumes:

In light of the research problem and its objectives, the research hypotheses were formulated with the aim of presenting them for discussion and hoping to achieve them in the field, which can be presented as follows:

The Main hypothesis : There is no statistically significant relationship between learning at the organization level and innovation.

H1: There is no statistically significant relationship between organizational learning and innovation.

H2: There is no statistically significant relationship between individual learning and innovation.

H3: There is no statistically significant relationship between group learning and innovation.

Research community and sample:

The research community was represented in (humanitarian organizations in northern Syria), and the study sample was represented (workers in organizations within the administrative levels). The questionnaires were distributed to the workers in the organizations 142 questionnaires.

Conceptual model:

This study is grounded in a positivist philosophical framework and utilizes a descriptive analytical approach. The chosen research methodology is quantitative, aiming to provide a detailed description and analysis of phenomena and events within the study. In this research, organizations serve as the unit of measurement. The independent variable comprises three components: individual learning, group learning, and organization-level learning. The dependent variable encompasses three dimensions: management innovation, technical innovation, and further innovation.

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual model of the study, depicting the intricate interrelationships between organizational learning and innovation within organizations, as well as potential connections among their respective subcategories.

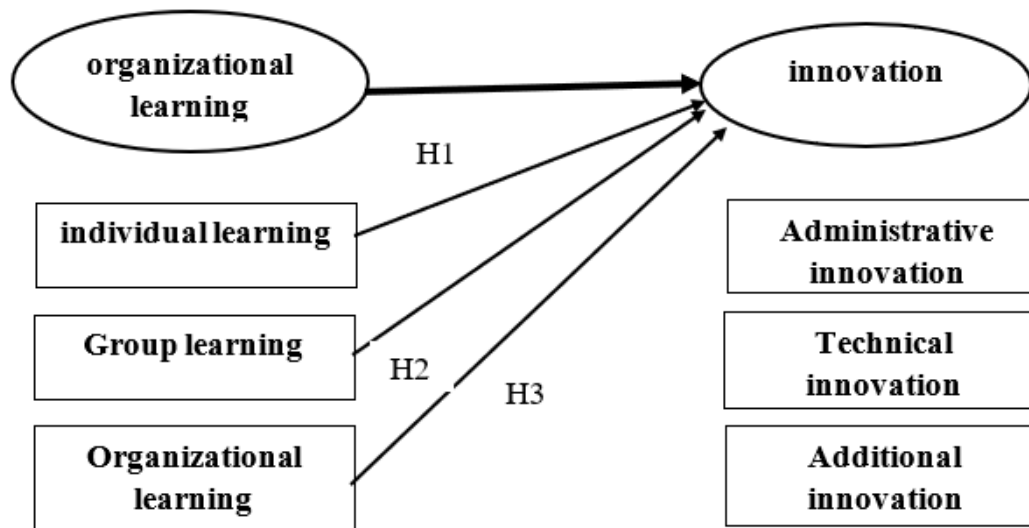


Figure.1: research model (source author)

Literature Review:

organizational learning:

see (Salam,2009) that organizational learning is characterized as a continuous process that occurs automatically as part of the activity and culture of the organization, as it is a complex and intertwined process that needs planning, organization and follow-up, as well as the product of the organization’s internal and external experience and experiences, and the workers must pay attention, learn and gain experience and develop mental and cognitive processes to direct their behavior.

And he knows it Lee et al. An organization's procedures for modifying its behavior and techniques by means of the knowledge gained. (Lee. YD., Chen. Sh-H, 2015)

individual learning

Organizational learning helps the individual to develop and change his ideas in a way that is consistent and compatible with the ideas of others and in a way that leads to change. As a whole, based on the fact that the external work environment is in constant change, and this change must be kept pace with.

According to Marquadt defines individual organizational learning as “the change in the skills, insights, knowledge, and attitudes that an individual possesses.(Mittleton, 2005).

Group learning:

Group learning is considered according to Senge is the bridge through which individual learning is transformed into organizational knowledge that can be shared with all individuals. Members of the single work team within the organization work collectively to put forward and innovate new ideas and work on their self-development (Senge, 1996).

Therefore, group learning is that learning that individuals do through work teams through actions carried out at the collective level and in a collaborative and participatory manner, so that it requires a number of capabilities such as problem-solving, experimentation with new approaches, learning through good practices and transferring knowledge efficiently across the organization. (gad Lord,2006)

Organizational learning:

Learning at this level represents the situation in which knowledge, information and experiences are exchanged between individuals regardless of their organizational levels, on the basis of which a change takes place in the organizational culture, strategies, policies, procedures and systems that impede the learning process and cause problems in daily work, and the success of the organization always depends on the extent of its ability to continuously acquire knowledge and experience and exchange it extensively, and work to discover, evaluate and benefit from the learning energies of all its members, in a way that serves the organizational interests in which the organization can learn. (Abu Khudair, 2007, p. 25)

Innovation:

The concept of innovation refers to the method of development, which in turn adds value to the performance capacity of the organization and companies, thus raising its capabilities and activities. Therefore, innovation is referred to as a way to develop benefit for beneficiaries by providing new options for their needs, or developing market requirements in new ways. (Bader, 2021)

Al-Sayyid defined innovation as the innovation of a person means his orientation to the future, and this orientation is in the present time, and when there is a creative subject, this means that it represents a new emergence, and there is no limit or end to creativity or innovation, and this is confirmed by what is happening in our time today when there is great interest. On the rapid development of all kinds of knowledge and modern technology, the drive for innovation has been present in man since the emergence of planet Earth. (Mr, 2011)

1- Administrative innovation:

It is defined as reaching new concepts and terminology that can be transferred into policies, regulations, rules and methods that contribute to the development of performance in the organization. Administrative innovation is concerned with interactive relationships in order to accomplish business in the organization, reach its goals, and work to find rules and procedures for communication and exchange between individuals working in the organization and the surrounding environment.

This confirms that administrative innovation expresses the extent of its contribution to the development of the innovation process, its organization, and methods of transferring innovative new ideas to products, and then creativity and innovation in establishing new markets. (Xu, 2020)

Administrative innovation is also an organized process for generating valuable ideas, or thinking about alternatives, capturing them, discussing them, improving them, organizing and evaluating them, and prioritizing these alternatives and ideas that do not appear through traditional management practices. (Sareen Babu, 2018)

2- Technical innovation:

It is innovation that focuses on technology and work on innovation in it. Technical innovation is also defined as the industrial, commercial and technical processes that seek to market new and manufactured commodities, and the commercial use of new technical processes and preparations.

Technical innovation works to make a change when introducing modern technology to the organization on the main work activity, which consists of basic elements such as new products, services, and new elements in operations. Technical innovation is also defined as introducing new ideas, methods, tools, or processes that are often form of a new technology.

Another definition of technical innovation is that it is new products and commodities or new methods and processes that are mainly associated with the initial work in the organization. ((2020, Alayoubi et al.)

3- Additional innovation:

The innovation that encompasses all the extra services is what determines the organization's competitive edge.

It increases its capital for the client, and incremental innovation is also known as innovation that is brought about by going beyond the typical organizational functions, allowing the marketing professionals to work on the program's development.

Marketing that prioritizes customer support and the promotion of standout public service initiatives might be seen as yet another innovation.

There is another definition of incremental innovation as a set of innovations that work to shape the boundaries of the organizational environment of the organization that are far from the traditional functions of the organization. Additional innovation relates to programs, applications, processes, and services that go beyond traditional, primary, or basic activities, businesses, and functions within the organization, such as: educational and office development programs, so you find that additional innovation works to bring about changes in the tasks, business, and goals of the organization.

The relationship between organizational learning and innovation:

Many researchers talked about the learning organization and explained the types of organizational learning in which it is, and also exposed the most important distinguishing characteristics of the learning organization, but the organization may not be able to transform into a learning organization because of the individual himself or because of the organization, so the efforts must be cooperative between the individual and the organization in order to Continuing to transform into a learning organization, the most important of which is organizational learning that supports the required innovation.(Al-Matrafi,2019)

Researchers who studied innovation have found a link between organizational learning and innovation in organizations. Tushman and Nadler hold that organizational learning fosters the generation of new ideas and knowledge, and Singh and Argiris note that generative learning is the most frequent form of learning.

Learning within the organization is crucial for fostering radical innovation in both processes and products. According to Stata, organizational learning is a crucial step in the innovation process because it involves the acquisition of new knowledge and skills along with a change in thinking patterns and behavior. This is because the process of individual and collective learning necessitates a change in leadership behavior, and a change in those patterns and forms results in innovation. (Aragon, 2005)

The practical side:

First: Hypotheses Analysis and Testing:

The researcher calculated Cronbach's alpha coefficient (Cronbach Alpha) in order to ensure the stability of the scales used in measuring the independent study variables represented by organizational learning (its levels) and the dependent variables represented by innovation :

Table 1. Reliability test results (Cronbach's alpha).

Variables	No. of Questions	Values of Cronbach's alpha
individual learning	5	0.871
group learning	5	0.828
Organizational learning	5	0.830
organizational learning	15	0.922
Administrative innovation	7	0.877
Technical innovation	5	0.851
Additional innovation	4	0.777
Innovation	16	0.932

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the results SPSS 25.

Before starting the analysis and testing of hypotheses, the characteristics of the study sample in the research community must be described, as the sample members differed in terms of gender, age, educational qualification, job specialization, and years of experience:

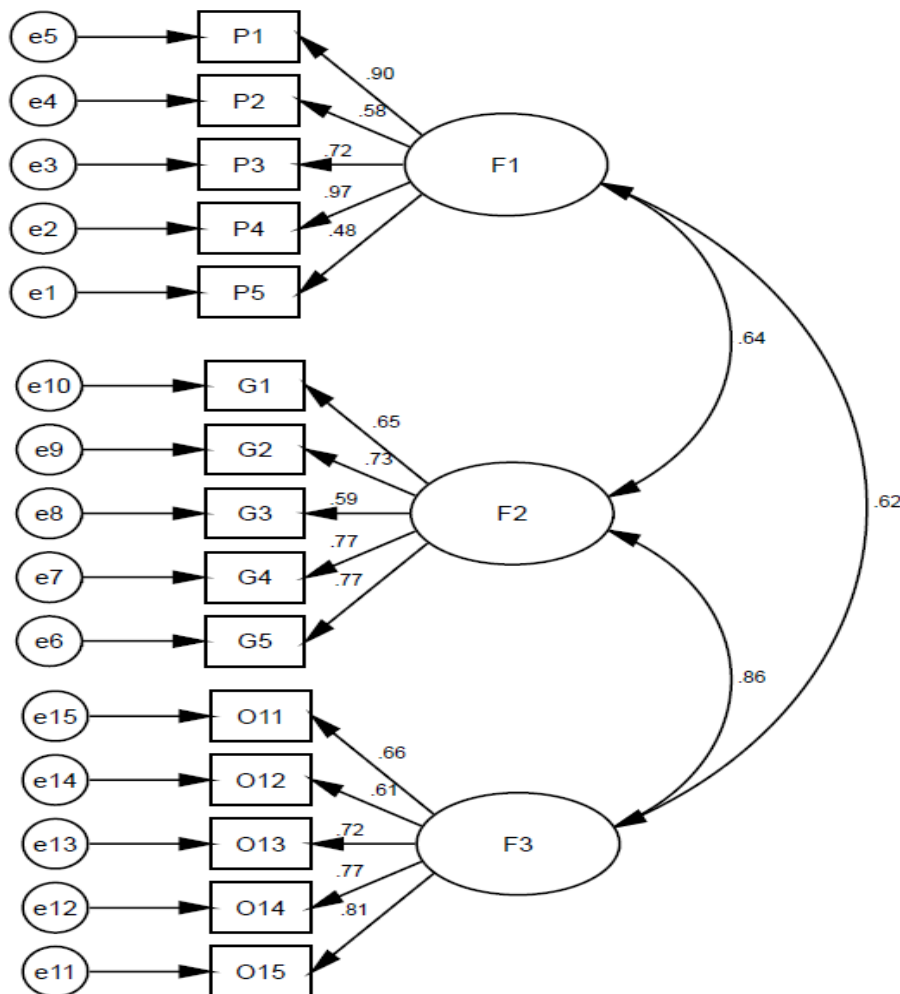
Table 2. Demographic analysis of the participants.

Variable	Description	Responses	percentage
Gender	Male	128	90.1
	Female	14	9.9
Age	20 to less than 30 years old	28	19.7
	30 to less than 40 years old	82	57.7
	40 years and over	32	22.5
Educational Qualification	Secondary education	4	2.8
	Diploma	18	12.7
	Bachelor	108	76.1
	Master's	12	8.5
Job Specialization	Director general	4	2.8
	Program manager	8	5.6
	Director of Operations	6	4.2
	Executive Director	2	1.4
	Project Administrator	18	12.7
	Project Coordinator	12	8.5

	District Administrator	4	2.8
	Team Administrator	88	62.0
Years of experience	less than 2 years	6	4.2
	from 2 to less than 4 years	36	25.4
	from 4 to less than 6 years	40	28.2
	6 years and over	60	42.3

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the results SPSS 25.

The researcher also modeled organizational learning with its levels and the relationship of questions with their dimensions, as shown in the following figure .2 :



Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the results Amos25.

The figure shows that there is a correlation between the questions and the dimensions they represent, in addition to the existence of relationships between the dimensions, especially the relationship between group learning and learning at the organization level.

The analysis shows the relationship between organizational learning at its levels and innovation and its elements as in the following table, where the following table shows the results of the correlation between the variables:

Table 3. Pearson’s Correlation Coefficient Test

	P L	G L	O L	AD IN	TE IN	ADD IN	L
GROUP	.639**						
ORGANIZATIONAL	.651**	.740**					
ADMINSRATIONAL	.620**	.731**	.784**				
TECHNICAL	.575**	.707**	.750**	.828**			
ADDITIONAL	.600**	.533**	.678**	.628**	.776**		
LEARNING	.874**	.900**	.881**	.797**	.758**	.675**	
INNOVATION	.656**	.716**	.806**	.888**	.953**	.890**	.813**

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the results SPSS 25.

The table indicates that correlations reveal the strongest association between individual learning and innovation elements was found in administrative innovation, with a value of 0.620 at a significance level of 0.05. Likewise, the most substantial relationship between group learning and innovation elements was also observed in administrative innovation, with a value of 0.731, significant at a level of 0.05. Furthermore, when examining organizational learning's impact on innovation elements, the highest correlation was identified with administrative innovation, registering a value of 0.784, still significant at a significance level of 0.05.

Notably, it becomes apparent that organizational learning at the organizational level exerts the most substantial influence on innovation, with a correlation value of 0.806, remaining significant at the 0.05 significance level. Additionally, the relationship between organizational learning and innovation elements demonstrated its strongest connection in the context of administrative innovation, with a correlation value of 0.797, signifying significance at the 0.05 significance level.

In order to test this hypothesis, the researcher used multiple linear regression analysis using the step-by-step or gradual regression method (Stepwise), which is distinguished by the fact that it introduces the independent variables, which are the organizational learning levels, into the regression equation one at a time and examines its impact on the dependent variable, organizational innovation. The outcomes are displayed in Table.4:

Table.4 : Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	std. Error of the Estimate
1	.806a	.650	.645	.31663
2	.826b	.682	.673	.30427

a. Predictors: (Constant), organizational

b. Predictors: (Constant), organizational, group

Table.4: Model Summary

Model		Coefficients				
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	std. Error	Beta		
1	(constant)	.468	.305		1,532	.130
	Organizational	.832	.073	.806	11,331	.000
2	(constant)	.490	.294		1,668	.100
	Organizational	.631	.105	.611	6,007	.000
	Group	.212	.082	.264	2,592	.012

a. Dependent Variable: innovation

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the results SPSS 25.

It is clear from the previous table that the regression model of organizational learning levels, after excluding the level of group learning on organizational innovation, indicates that the value of (t) reached (0.826) at the level of significant significance (0.000), which is less than the level of statistical significance (0.05), which indicates the existence of a strong direct relationship, after excluding group learning, and the coefficient of determination reached (68.2%), which indicates that 68% of the dependent variable (innovation) explains Through the levels of organizational learning and 32% explained by other variables and gives the highest explanatory value of 65% for learning at the level of the organization.

The previous table shows that there is a significant effect of the level of individual learning and learning at the level of the organization from the levels of organizational learning on organizational innovation at the level of 0.05, and the calculated F value was (72.56) and organizational learning processes explain 68% of the value of social capital.

And I used an analysis Amos (Analysis of Moment Structures) to draw a structural modeling of the relationship between the levels of organizational learning and organizational innovation as in the following model:

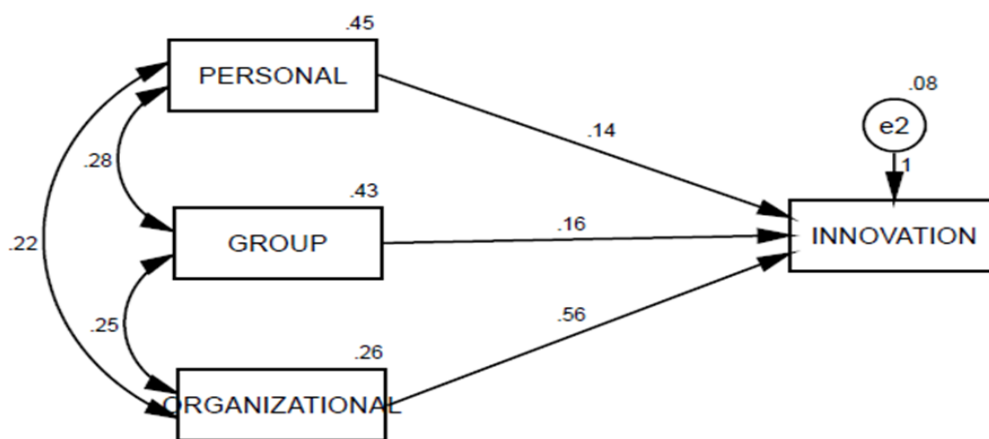


Figure.3: the model of the regression path coefficients between the levels of organizational learning and innovation

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the results Amos25.

Results :

- 1- A positive correlation exists between the dimensions of organizational learning and innovation, with the most pronounced correlation observed in the case of organizational-level learning, registering a correlation coefficient of 0.806 at a significant level of 0.05.
- 2- Individual learning exhibited a weaker association with innovation, with a value of 0.639 at a significance level of 0.05. The researcher attributes this finding to the influence of organizational policies set by senior management, which restricts substantial innovation opportunities for individuals within the organization.
- 3- The average interest of humanitarian organizations in northern Syria in the dimensions of organizational learning is a good interest, as it has a value 3.93 was the largest percentage of interest in learning at the level of the organization, reaching 4.12 The researcher attributes this to the fact that organizations seek to increase the balance of the organization as a whole, since most of its employees are not permanent.
- 4- The level of interest of humanitarian organizations in organizational innovation from the point of view of its employees was high, as it amounted to value 3.90 was the largest percentage for administrative innovation, with a value of 3.96. The researcher attributes this to the fact that humanitarian organizations in northern Syria are a newly established organization that focuses on the administrative aspect through restructuring and innovation in the administrative field.
- 5- There is a strong link between organizational learning and organizational innovation. Research suggests that organizations that prioritize continuous learning are more likely to be innovative compared to those that do not invest in developing their employees' skills and capabilities.

Recommendations:

- 1- Humanitarian organizations operating in northern Syria must provide continuous learning opportunities by preparing training programs for their workers in line with the needs of that organization.
- 2- Senior management in humanitarian organizations in northern Syria should work to encourage the exchange of experiences and knowledge among its employees, through brainstorming sessions, meetings, forming work teams, conducting training programs and other methods of learning and exchanging knowledge, and working to motivate workers to do so through material incentives and moral incentives such as promotion .
- 3- Organizations must provide an organizational climate that helps the exchange of ideas, knowledge, and freedom of opinion between the boss and subordinate, and work to develop a flexible organizational structure that helps in that.
- 4- The need for workers in humanitarian organizations to participate in policies and decisions at the level of the organization by presenting proposals, recommendations and perceptions, in appreciation of their skills and creative and intellectual capabilities.
- 5- Create a supportive learning environment: Encourage employees to take risks, experiment with new ideas, and learn from failures by creating psychological safety within the organization.
- 6- Develop effective knowledge management systems: Implement technology platforms that enable easy access to relevant information and encourage the sharing of best practices across departments.

- 7- Provide continuous learning opportunities: Offer regular training programs, workshops, or webinars to ensure employees have access to the latest industry trends and developments.
- 8- Foster collaboration and cross-functional teams: Promote collaboration between departments or teams through cross-functional projects that encourage knowledge sharing and diverse perspectives.

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