

**Research Article**

## **Investigating the Impact of Agility Capabilities on Employee Performance in Yasuj University of Medical Sciences**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of agility capabilities on staff performance in Yasuj University of Medical Sciences. This is an applied research in terms of purpose and a correlational research in terms of nature method. The statistical population of this research includes the managers and staff of Yasuj University of Medical Sciences, with a total number of 961 people. The researchers have used Morgan table in this study to determine the sample size and selected 275 people as the sample size. The main measurement tools used in this study were the standard agility questionnaire adapted from Torang Lin et al. (2005) and the standard employee performance questionnaire derived from Goodarzi (2006), the Cronbach's alphas of which are 0.83 and 0.88 respectively. The non-random (convenience) sampling method was used in this study. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was also used to test the normality of the distribution of variables. Descriptive and inferential statistics (Pearson correlation coefficient and regression) were used for data analysis by use of SPSS software. The results of this study showed that there is a significant relationship between agility capabilities and employee performance in Yasuj University of Medical Sciences, and all components of agility have a significant relationship with employee performance. The results of the regression test also showed that flexibility variable has the greatest role in improving employee performance, and the next important variables are competency, accountability and the speed of activities respectively.

**Keywords:** agility, accountability, competency, flexibility, speed of activities, Performance.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Industrial conditions have changed fundamentally over the past 15 to 20 years. In this era of technology, the market conditions and customer demands have changed in different directions, which has made today's organizations face rapid and unpredictable changes. Organizations are faced with the increasing competition resulting from technological innovations, turbulent environments and changes in customer demands. Therefore, organizations have taken different forms in order to survive the competitions and maintain their achievements. One of the newest organizational forms is agility. Agile think beyond conformity and coordination to the changes and tend to use potential opportunities in a turbulent environment (Esmailian et al., 2014; Sağ et al.,

2017). Today, the word "change" in organizations and businesses is used in different senses, sometimes meaning the external changes of technology, customers, competitors, structures, markets, or social and political environments. Richard Beckhard, one of the pioneers in the field of organizational change, states: "People do not resist against change; rather they resist against the application of change" (Sange et al., 2007; Sargin et al., 2017). The notion of an ever-increasing trend in the business environment has paved the way for the emergence of a new business beyond the traditional era such as mass production. This new production paradigm, called agility, is proposed as a strategy for activating the manufacturing companies to maintain their

competitive advantage in this new era by use of competitive advantage (Sharifi, Zhang, 2000; Tas et al., 2017).

The term "agility" literally means fast and agile movement and the ability to think fast and intelligently. Organizational agility is rooted from agile production, which has been introduced to respond to changes in the business environment and to exploit those changes as opportunities (Rezaeian et al., 2016; Al-Jiffri, 2016). Yusuf et al. (1999) define agility as the ability to make successful use of competitive bases (speed, flexibility, innovation, quality and profitability) by integrating the renewable resources and best functions in an environment with rich knowledge to provide shared products and services in a changing market environment. Sharifi and Zhang (1999) define agility as the ability to overcome unexpected challenges to address the unprecedented workplace threats and to benefit from the changes as opportunities. Institutions need a number of distinctive capabilities in order to address the changes and uncertainties in their workplaces. These capabilities include four main elements that serve as a basis for the preservation and development of agility. These four elements are: accountability, flexibility, speed, and competency (Dehmoreh et al., 2011). On the other hand, the success of organizations is reflected in their performance (Saleh Olia et al., 2010). The performance quality in an organization depends on the performance of each individual in the organization. It is necessary for the organization to strive to maintain and support human resources in order to have a better spiritual force in the organization and achieve the goals of the organization. (Aziz Zadeh Foruzi et al., 2005; Alptekin et al., 2016).

Maleki (2015) investigated the role of the agility capabilities of human resources on organizational performance (case study: Arvand Petrochemical Company). The results of the research showed that the human resource agility capabilities and its dimensions (intelligence and awareness, competency, knowledge management, culture and information system) are effective on the

performance of Arvand Petrochemical Company. Marco (2012) conducted a study entitled "Forecasting *project performance considering the influence of leadership style on organizational agility*", concluding that agility can be achieved by factors such as sustained improvement, communication, group development and flexibility. They investigated the impact of leadership style and factors associated with the organized agility on the project's performance and concluded that imagination can lead to the highest performance of the project under the influence of leadership style, agility and organizational factors. Efficient and agile manpower is a major indicator of the superiority of an organization to other organizations, because human resources are regarded as the most important source of any organization. This research has used scientific criteria, aiming to investigate the role of the agility skills of managers and staff members of Yasuj University of Medical Sciences in the employees' performance and analyze the strengths and weaknesses in order to achieve the higher goals of the organization, increase the resources and reduce the expenditures, and provide optimum services to the target community in the environment, because Yasuj University of Medical Sciences, as one of the biggest and most active universities in Iran, considers high-quality services and transparent accountability to students as its duty, believing that any negligence in this respect will lead to considerable effects on achievement of the organizational goals and strategies. The major question of this research is that, considering the increasing expenditures and costs, the reduced resources, the expanded commitments of the organization to the target community and the increased service provision, the increasing number of clients, and the further need to resolve their problems and demands, how can the university use agility capabilities in such a way that it can respond the present and future needs of the target community and take steps towards their further satisfaction? We seek in this study to find an appropriate answer to the question: is there a significant relationship

between agility capabilities and the performance of the staff members in Yasuj University of Medical Sciences?

**RESEARCH METHOD**

This is an applied research in terms of purpose and a correlational research in terms of nature and method. It is also a cross sectional research in terms of time. The main measurement instrument used in this research is the standard agility questionnaire (Torang Lin et al., 2005), which examines 4 dimensions with 29 items, and the employee performance questionnaire with Achieve Model derived from Goodarzi (2006) including 42 items measured with very high to very low scales. The Cronbach's alphas of the questionnaires are 0.83 and 0.88, respectively. The statistical population of this research consists of the managers and staff members of Yasuj Medical University of Medical Sciences with a total

number of 961 people, among whom 275 people were selected as the sample size using the Morgan table. The non-random (convenience) sampling method has been used in this study. Descriptive and inferential statistics (Pearson correlation coefficient and regression) and SPSS software were used in this research.

**FINDINGS**

**The main hypothesis:** There is a significant relationship between agility capabilities and employee performance in Yasuj University of Medical Sciences.

The results of the Pearson correlation test (1) show that the correlation coefficient is 0.816, which is significant at the 0.001 level. Therefore, it can be stated that there is a significant relationship between the agility capabilities and employee performance in Yasuj University of Medical Sciences at 95% confidence level.

**Table (1):** The results of the correlation test between agility capabilities and employee performance

variable	Employee performance		frequency
	Pearson		
Agility capabilities	Correlation coefficient	Level of significance	181
	0.816**	0.001	

\*\* . Significance at the 95% level; \* significance at the 99% significance

**Sub-hypotheses:** The results of the Pearson correlation test (Table 2) show that the correlation coefficient is significant at the level of 0.001. Therefore, it can be stated that there is a significant relationship between the capabilities of agility (accountability, flexibility, competency and speed of activities) and employee performance in Yasuj University of Medical Sciences at the confidence level of 95%.

**Table (2):** The results of the correlation test between the dimensions of agility capabilities and employee performance

variable	Employee performance		frequency
	Pearson		
accountability	Correlation coefficient	Level of significance	181
	0.632	0.004	
flexibility	0.690	0.001	
competency	0.667	0.001	
speed of activities	0.715	0.002	

Significant at the 95% level

**REGRESSION ANALYSIS**

According to Table 3, the calculated F (136.051) is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level; therefore, it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between agility capabilities and employee performance.

**Table (3).** A summary of the model

	Sum of squares	Degree of freedom	Mean square	f	Level of significance
regression	12819.934	4	3204.984	136.051	0.001
remainder	5747.945	176	23.557		
total	18567.879	180			

As Table (4) and the T-statistics and levels of significance show, all dimensions of agility capabilities and employee performance in Yasuj University of Medical Sciences have a significant correlation. Based on the calculated beta value that determines the effect of the variables without considering the index, the flexibility variable, with the beta coefficient of (0.456), has the highest role in improving the performance of the employees, and the next influential variables include competency, accountability and speed of activities with the beta coefficients of 0.290, 0.255, and 0.123 respectively.

**Table (4)** Regression coefficients

variable	Non-standardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Level of significance
	B	Standard error	BETA		
Fixed value	9.090	1.84	**	4.93	0.001
accountability	0.428	0.073	0.255	5.82	0.001
flexibility	0.630	0.057	0.456	11.07	0.001
competency	0.425	0.06	0.290	7.07	0.001
speed of activities	0.218	0.068	0.123	3.2	0.002

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The analysis of the findings of the main hypothesis showed that there is a significant correlation between the agility capabilities and performance of the staff members of Yasuj University of Medical Sciences at 95% confidence level, and it can be concluded that there is a positive significant relationship between agility capabilities and employee performance. Therefore, according to the results of this hypothesis, the development and enhancement of agility capabilities can improve employee performance. Moreover, the analysis of the findings of the sub-hypotheses of the present study showed that all dimensions of agility capabilities are significantly correlated with employee performance. Based on the calculated beta value which determines the effect of the variables in question regardless of the index, the flexibility variable has the most important role in improving the performance of the staff members of Yasuj University of Medical Sciences and the next important and influential variables are competency, accountability, and speed of activities respectively. The business environment, as a source of turmoil, uncertainty and change, imposes a lot of pressure on the organization's business activities. These uncertainties and unpredictable changes force organizations to resort to appropriate strategies to create a stable and secure position for them. The environmental changes and pressures mentioned are considered

as agility factors in the organization. The first step in achieving organizational agility is identifying the changes and pressures imposed from the business environment which act as a driving force and lead the organization to adopt an agility strategy. Hence, work processes should be expanded through job enrichment or vertical development in order to improve the organization's performance, and holding the in-service training courses can help accelerate accountability and improve the performance in the university. Moreover, measures need to be taken to improve the employees' performance through their involvement in the decisions made about their work domain.

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