



# THE ROLE OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT PROCESSES IN ACHIEVING AND ENHANCING SUSTAINABLE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE (A FIELD STUDY ON PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN AL-MUTHANNA GOVERNORATE)

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| Article history:  |                             | Abstract:  |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| <b>Received:</b>  | March 21 <sup>st</sup> 2023 | This study aims to identify the role of knowledge management processes in achieving, enhancing and sustaining the competitive advantage in private universities in Al-Muthanna Governorate from the point of view of a sample of teachers and employees at Imam Al-Sadiq University Al-Muthanna Branch, and Sawa private University, where (120) questionnaires were distributed. The study model was developed to take into account the relationship between the independent variables represented in knowledge management processes (acquisition, generation, application, distribution) and the dependent variable represented in the sustainable competitive advantage, which includes its various dimension.<br><br>The researchers reached the most important conclusion, which is Improve internal and external communications: Knowledge management can improve the internal and external communications of the organization .The researchers reached the most important recommendation, which is( The need to invest in promoting a culture of innovation and development within the educational institution, by providing an environment that encourages creativity. |
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**Keywords:** knowledge management processes, sustainable competitive advantage, private universities, Al-Muthanna Governorate).

## INTRODUCTION

The competitive advantage in any educational institution is the introduction of the goals it seeks to achieve, in order to support more excellence, innovation and creativity as one of the basic pillars for the development of any institution or organization, so the aim of this research is to study the impact of applying knowledge management processes as an important and effective weapon to achieve sustainable competitive advantage by application Al-Sadiq Universities must have Al-Muthanna and Sawa branches, as the competitive advantage is linked to and affected by many variables, where knowledge management has a major role in it being one of the effective administrative tools in the field of improving organizational performance and achieving the required success. Since the two mentioned universities are considered knowledge societies and are considered a suitable environment for the application of operations Knowledge management and its principles. And since knowledge management is considered one of the modern approaches that help improve institutional

performance by linking it to the effectiveness of the institution and its ability to keep pace with environmental changes resulting from the many challenges it faces, such as globalization, technological and informational development, and the great acceleration in other means of communication, and from here all educational institutions seek to achieve and possess a competitive advantage capable of Keeping up with competitors and outperforming them, and managing knowledge is one of the best practices by which universities achieve a competitive advantage, especially in light of the large and increasing numbers of public and private universities, and also in light of the great disparity between material and human capabilities between these universities. The sustainable competitive advantage here is the unique advantage that distinguishes the university from other universities, regardless of the disparity in capabilities, whether material or human. The researcher hopes that this study will come out with results and recommendations that will help those in charge of the two universities in developing the use of knowledge



management processes in an optimal manner in achieving sustainable competitive advantage.

#### **Study problem:**

The problem of the study can be identified by asking the following question (How do knowledge management processes contribute to achieving sustainable competitive advantage)? Under this main question there are several sub-questions, as follows:

1. What is the concept of sustainable competitive advantage, and what are the basic factors for building it?
2. What is the concept of knowledge management, and what are its operations?
3. Do the teaching and staff (Imam Al-Sadiq University, PBUH, and Sawa private University) have a clear vision of knowledge management processes and their role in achieving sustainable competitive advantage?
4. What is the nature of the correlation and impact relationship between knowledge management processes and sustainable competitive advantage at Imam Al-Sadiq University and Sawa Private University?

#### **Study aims and importance**

1. Highlighting the role of knowledge management processes in promoting sustainable competitive advantage in private universities (Imam Al-Sadiq University, Sawa Private University)
2. Identifying the nature of the relationship between knowledge management processes and sustainable competitive advantage in (Imam Al-Sadiq University, and Sawa Private University) and knowing the point of view of the teaching and staff of these two universities.

3. Identify the type of moral effect that exists between knowledge management processes and sustainable competitive advantage.

4. Provide the necessary recommendations to enhance the role of knowledge management operations in achieving sustainable competitive advantage in these two universities.

#### **Study hypotheses**

1. There is a significant correlation and influence between knowledge acquisition and sustainable competitive advantage.
2. There is a significant correlation and impact between knowledge generation and sustainable competitive advantage.
3. There is a significant correlation and impact between the application of knowledge and the sustainable competitive advantage.
4. There is a significant correlation and impact between knowledge sharing and sustainable competitive advantage.

#### **Data collection methods:**

1. Arab and foreign books and periodicals related to research variables, in addition to previous studies.
2. The questionnaire form: This form was mainly relied upon, and the five-point Likert scale was used.
- 3- Statistical analysis methods: A set of statistical methods were used in order to test the research hypotheses, which are: percentages, frequencies, arithmetic mean, standard deviations, and the simple correlation coefficient, and the use of the spss program to find results.



Source: The hypothetical outline of the study prepared by the researcher

#### **Knowledge management**

##### **The concept of knowledge management:**

From the perspective of operations, it is "critical knowledge management that depends on the knowledge base, which aims to add value to the business and is carried out through organized operations represented in diagnosing, acquiring,

generating, storing, developing, distributing and applying knowledge in the organization (Al-Omari, 2010, 198). From the perspective of information technology: They are the practices and technologies that facilitate the generation and efficient exchange of knowledge at the level of the organization. (Alayan, 2012,145) ,From the social perspective: it is an



attempt to find a way to obtain the wisdom and knowledge of workers within the organization in order to raise that knowledge to the maximum extent possible and retain it (Hamshari, 2013 , p:104), from the perspective of learning "they are the processes that enable the organization to manage its intellectual assets through its management of information and organizational learning to reach its goals (Buffalo, 2013, 198), from the previous definitions it is concluded that knowledge management is the attraction of knowledge from its internal and external sources And work to create and generate new knowledge, disseminate it or participate in it, sustain it and apply it through several factors represented in creativity, organizational learning, information technology, and intellectual capital, and invest it to achieve added value and gain a sustainable competitive advantage.

#### **Knowledge management aims:**

Knowledge management aims to achieve sustainable competitive advantage through the following purposes: (Hamshari, 2013, p: (113).

1- Upgrading and improving organizational performance based on experience by supporting best knowledge-centered business practices.

2-Providing knowledge to the organization on a permanent basis and translating it into practical behavior that serves its objectives, to achieve efficiency and effectiveness, and work to continuously renew and develop knowledge.

3-Finding creative solutions to the problems facing the organization, through creating new knowledge and attracting expert individuals from outside the organization.

4- Raising the degree of customer satisfaction, through the renewal and development of products and services provided to them.

#### **Dimensions of knowledge management processes**

1- Acquisition of knowledge;- Knowledge is seen as socially constructed and context-specific, whereby social relationships and interaction create a pathway for new knowledge creation and a platform for knowledge sharing among the members of the organization (Van den Hooff and Huysman, 2009), Knowledge sharing is described as one of the most important and critical processes in knowledge management (Reychav & Weisberg, 2009: 187).

2- Knowledge generation: It is defined as "the formation or development of new explicit and implicit knowledge from the available data and

information, or from the synthesis or assembly of previous and new knowledge (solution and technologies, 2004, p: 33).

3- Knowledge application: This process is defined as: "Utilizing knowledge in an effective way that ensures the achievement of the organization's goals efficiently and effectively. This means using available knowledge, reusing and applying it, and linking it to practical reality to benefit from it in solving problems and making decisions." (Al-Hamshari, 2013, 140).

4- And (Drucker, 1993: p2-3) specified the availability of four conditions for the transfer of knowledge:

a- There must be a means of transferring knowledge, and this means may be a person or something else.

b- This medium must be fully aware and understand this knowledge and its content and also be able to transfer it.

c- The medium must have the incentive to do so.

d- There should be no obstacles that prevent this transfer of knowledge.

5- The process of sustaining knowledge: it is defined as "the process that includes the processes of revising, examining, reviewing, developing, adding to, feeding and modifying knowledge." (Al-Hamshari, 2013, 131: p). Which is represented in today's world by knowledge, individuals become the most important organizational resource and the best value that enables it to achieve and sustain competitive advantage.

#### **Sustainable competitive advantage**

##### **Definition of competitive advantage:-**

Competitive strategies adopted by the company, which are: comprehensive cost leadership, differentiation and focus leadership, and are adopted on the basis of the target market, whether it is a wide market or a narrow market. (Al-Bakri, 2014: 170), competitive advantage is defined as the set of skills, technologies, and capabilities that management can coordinate and invest in order to produce values and benefits for customers that are higher than what competitors achieve, and to confirm a state of distinction and difference between the organization and its competitors. (Aisha, Qawia, 2017: 163 Competitive advantage is also defined as the skill, technology, or distinguished resource that allows the organization to produce values and benefits for



customers that exceed what competitors offer, and confirms its distinction from competitors from the point of view of customers in terms of difference and distinction, as it achieves for them benefits and values that are superior to what other competitors offer. (Al-Sayer, 2017: 434).

**The importance of sustainable competitive advantage:**

1- It is considered a weapon to face the challenges of the market and the corresponding organizations through the organization's development of its competitive knowledge.

2- It is considered a criterion for determining successful organizations over others, as they are characterized by finding new and available models that are difficult to imitate.

3- It is considered a basic and necessary goal pursued by all organizations that aim to excel and excel by exploiting resources and capabilities, satisfying customers, and identifying their needs and desires in a way that is difficult for others to imitate.

4- It determines the availability of the basic elements of success compared to competitors, by adopting strategies that have the strengths available in the organization.

**The basic factors for building sustainable competitive advantage**

1- Outstanding quality: in order to stay in the market and develop a competitive position, the organization must adopt a system that ensures the continuity of high quality in goods, services, jobs and processes, and for the purpose of competitive cost, practical ways must be found to improve the quality of the product without increasing its costs (Charles and Jarrett, 2001; 196).

2- Distinguished efficiency: Distinctive efficiency refers to the good use of the organization's various resources in providing outputs that exceed the value of the inputs used in producing those outputs. The organization's efficiency is measured by the low amount of inputs required to produce specific outputs. (Al-Bakri, 2005: 114).

3- Distinctive response to customer needs: Responding to customer needs is one of the most important indicators for measuring the performance of organizations, given that obtaining customers and maintaining their loyalty is the goal of competing organizations. (Charles Hill, and Garrett Jones, 2001: p-201)

4- Creativity: Creativity is considered the success and superiority of organizations, as it refers to everything that is new or modern and related to the management of the organization or its products, and therefore it is every development achieved in the types of products, production processes, management inclusion, and organizational structures (Talib, 2012 p: 108).

**First: Testing standards and building models**

Stability of the scale: In order to verify the stability of the research tool, the Cronbach Alpha coefficient was calculated to ensure the stability of the scale tool, to ensure that the questionnaire measures what it was set to measure and to ensure its validity through the stability coefficient using the method of internal consistency, although there is no A basic rule through which appropriate values are actually determined for alpha, but (Sekaran, 2003:20) indicates that there is almost agreement that applied research requires that the coefficient (Cronbach Alpha) be greater or equal to 0.60. Hence, Table (1) Indicates that this condition is met for all paragraphs.

**Schedule (1)**

**Description and coding of search variables**

| dimension                         | variable          | Scale source | The number of paragraphs | alpha value |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|--------------|--------------------------|-------------|
| Knowledge management processes    | Multi-dimensional |              | 20                       | .867        |
| sustainable competitive advantage | Multi-dimensional |              | 20                       | .745        |
| The questionnaire in general      |                   |              |                          | .819        |

Source: prepared by the researcher based on the questionnaire and the SPSS v.25 program.

**Schedule (2)**

**The arithmetic mean and standard deviation of the research variables**

| NO | PARTICULAR | arithmetic mean | standard deviation |
|----|------------|-----------------|--------------------|
|----|------------|-----------------|--------------------|



|    |  |       |      |
|----|--|-------|------|
| 1  | The university notices its knowledge needs and works to provide them in a timely manner.   | 3.89  | 0.57 |
| 2  | The university tries to acquire knowledge from the surrounding governmental and private educational institutions.  | 4.08  | 0.87 |
| 3  | The individual acquires knowledge through the practical practice of his job duties.  | 3.94  | 1.37 |
| 4  | The university acquires knowledge by looking at the experiences of competing universities and scientific and academic institutes.  | 4.125 | 0.82 |
| 5  | University employees acquire knowledge by using university databases.  | 4.408 | 0.47 |
|    | <b>knowledge generation process</b>  |       |      |
| 6  | The university allocates a large financial budget to introduce modern technologies and advanced educational devices in its classrooms and scientific laboratories.   | 4.36  | 0.50 |
| 7  | The university provides an opportunity for its employees to attend scientific conferences and seminars inside and outside the university.  | 4.15  | 0.42 |
| 8  | The university seeks the assistance of knowledge experts from centers of expertise and advisory and specialized offices to benefit from them in the development of the university.                             | 3.66  | 1.07 |
| 9  | The university creates new knowledge (not acquired or reproduced) in the minds of creators.  | 3.57  | 0.47 |
| 10 | The university allocates sums of money in order to obtain knowledge from competitors and from the external environment of the university.  | 4.21  | 0.74 |
|    | <b>The process of applying knowledge</b>   |       |      |
| 11 | The university provides a clear vision and strategy for the implementation of knowledge management.  | 4.55  | 0.47 |
| 12 | The university conducts continuous training on the correct application of knowledge, relying on experts and professors specialized in knowledge management from inside and outside the university,             | 3.60  | 0.50 |
| 13 | The university applies knowledge to one of the university's departments before the total application of the university's departments.  | 4.38  | 0.50 |
| 14 | Everyone in the university participates in using knowledge to improve scientific sobriety in constantly developing curricula to meet the conditions of competition with other public and private universities. | 3.79  | 0.74 |
| 15 | The university is keen to provide its employees with all new information that will develop the university.   | 4.18  | 0.79 |
| 16 | The university uses legal protection systems for knowledge, scientific and research secrets, and patents.  | 3.23  | 1.10 |
| 17 | The university provides protection for knowledge from theft and inappropriate use inside and outside the university.   | 3.64  | 0.50 |
| 18 | The university provides electronic storage means such as databases and a data warehouse.   | 4.55  | 0.47 |
| 19 | The university is interested in organizing knowledge by describing data and its topics using special symbols and representing them by modeling methods and knowledge maps.                                     | 3.45  | 0.68 |
| 20 | The university is interested in renewing, creating and   | 3.04  | 1.10 |



|    |   |       |      |
|----|---|-------|------|
|    | <b>developing knowledge so that it is not vulnerable</b>  |       |      |
|    | <b>knowledge distribution process</b>   |       |      |
| 21 | The university has a flexible administrative system that facilitates the distribution of knowledge to the two workers in the university from the top of the pyramid (the presidency of the university) to its base. | 4.675 | 0.42 |
| 22 | The university provides official channels of communication for the distribution, sharing and sharing of knowledge to all employees of the university.   | 4.141 | 0.74 |
| 23 | The university transfers the knowledge, expertise and experiences of (professors and employees) at the university for the benefit of others in the university.  | 4.308 | 0.50 |
| 24 | The university is keen to provide its employees with all new information and knowledge.   | 4.325 | 0.92 |
| 25 | The university has ways to communicate knowledge to its employees and make it available to everyone in the form of (notes, reports and e-mail).   | 3.99  | 0.57 |
|    | <b>Leadership</b>   |       |      |
| 26 | The university's senior management sets the mission, vision, values and principles, and they represent a role model.  | 4.31  | 1.23 |
| 27 | The senior management of the university encourages employees to work in a team spirit and encourages them to be creative and continuous improvement.  | 3.56  | 0.68 |
| 28 | The senior management is keen to motivate its teachers and employees in order to be able to provide distinguished educational services.   | 3.62  | 0.63 |
| 29 | The university's senior management adopts strategic goals based on the needs and desires of students and follows them up on an ongoing basis.   | 4.3   | 0.57 |
| 30 | The university's senior management is committed to promoting a culture of continuous excellence.  | 4.18  | 0.87 |
|    | <b>Quality</b>  |       |      |
| 31 | The educational services provided by the university are characterized by high quality and distinctive compared to its competitors from other universities.  | 4.11  | 1.37 |
| 32 | It is constantly working on creating and developing new and distinct higher education curricula   | 4.033 | 0.82 |
| 33 | The university is constantly striving to obtain new knowledge that supports university education and is of high quality, rare and difficult to replace.   | 4.066 | 0.47 |
| 34 | The university provides distinguished skills and knowledge to students so that they have good opportunities after graduation in work and employment compared to others.   | 4.308 | 0.50 |
| 35 | The university is constantly developing its educational programs to suit the labor market.  | 3.991 | 0.42 |
|    | <b>HR</b>   |       |      |
| 36 | The university is keen to develop the competencies and skills of its teachers and staff to achieve continuous innovation and excellence.  | 4.258 | 1.07 |
| 37 | The university is keen to attract the best elements with teaching competencies and staff to work in it.   | 4.266 | 0.47 |
| 38 | The university is keen to provide financial and moral incentives  | 3.583 | 0.74 |



|           |   |              |             |
|-----------|---|--------------|-------------|
|           | <b>to its distinguished employees.</b>  |              |             |
| <b>39</b> | <b>The university provides its employees with modern tools and devices that help them to complete their work in the best way.</b> | <b>3.791</b> | <b>0.47</b> |
| <b>40</b> | <b>The university is keen on the employees' belonging to it and the degree of their job satisfaction.</b>                         | <b>3.425</b> | <b>0.50</b> |

Table (2) presents a statistical description represented by the arithmetic averages and standard deviations of the research variables, as it is noted from the table that all the paragraphs obtained arithmetic means greater than (3) and a low standard deviation. The study sample is directed towards knowledge management processes and sustainable competitive advantage.

**Second: hypothesis testing**

Correlations :- As a preliminary step to test the main research hypotheses, the research relied on the simple correlation coefficient (Pearson) to test the correlations between the research variables. Table (5) shows the matrix of simple correlation coefficients (Pearson) between these search variables. The abbreviation (Sig.) in the table refers to the test of significance of the correlation coefficient by comparing the calculated (t) value with the tabular one without showing its values. If a sign (\* or \*\*) appears on the correlation coefficient, this means that the calculated (t) value is greater than the tabulation. The strength of the

correlation coefficient is judged in light of (Cohen & Cohen, 1983) as follows:

Correlation is low: if the value of the correlation coefficient is less than (0.10).

The correlation is moderate: if the correlation coefficient is between (0.30 - 0.10).

The correlation is strong: if the value of the correlation coefficient is higher than (0.30).

The results of Table (6) indicate that there is a moderate correlation between the search variables according to the rule (Cohen & Cohen, 1983). The correlation coefficient between knowledge management processes and sustainable competitive advantage was (.592).

Schedule (3)  
Correlation between variables

| <b>Correlations</b>                      |                            | <b>Knowledge management processes</b> | <b>sustainable competitive advantage</b> |
|--|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Knowledge management processes</b>    | <b>Pearson Correlation</b> | <b>1</b>                              | <b>.592**</b>                            |
|  | <b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>     |                                       | <b>.000</b>                              |
|  | <b>N</b>                   | <b>77</b>                             | <b>77</b>                                |
| <b>sustainable competitive advantage</b> | <b>Pearson Correlation</b> | <b>.592**</b>                         | <b>1</b>                                 |
|  | <b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>     | <b>.000</b>                           |  |
|  | <b>N</b>                   | <b>77</b>                             | <b>77</b>                                |
| <b>Mean</b>                              | <b>3.9155</b>              | <b>4.2449</b>                         |  |
| <b>Std. Deviation</b>                    | <b>.74930</b>              | <b>.47945</b>                         |  |

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the output of the SPSS v.24 program.

Testing the main research hypothesis: which indicates that knowledge management processes exert a direct negative impact on the sustainable competitive advantage, that is, (the feeling of perceived organizational support among employees will increase their proactive behavior at work) and to test this hypothesis, tables (1-2) were formulated that illustrate the effect Positive direct perceived organizational support in sustainable competitive advantage.

Schedule 4

Examine the effect between knowledge management processes and sustainable competitive advantage

| <b>Model Summary</b> |   |   |            |               |
|----------------------|---|---|------------|---------------|
| Mod                  | R | R | Adjusted R | Std. Error of |



|  |            |                   |        |              |        |                   |
|--|------------|-------------------|--------|--------------|--------|-------------------|
| ANOVA <sup>a</sup> Volume-22, May -2023                          |            |                   |        |              |        |                   |
| ISSN: 2749-3601  |            |                   |        |              |        |                   |
|  | Model      | Sum of Squares    | df     | Mean Square  | F      | Sig.              |
| 1  | Regression | 19.146            | 1      | 19.146       | 57.436 | .000 <sup>b</sup> |
|  | Residual   | 49.335            | 148    | .333         |        |                   |
|  | Total      | 68.481            | 149    |              |        |                   |
| a. Dependent Variable: knowledge management processes            |            |                   |        |              |        |                   |
| b. Predictors: (Constant), sustainable competitive advantage     |            |                   |        |              |        |                   |
|  | el         | Square            | Square | the Estimate |        |                   |
|  | 1          | .529 <sup>a</sup> | .280   | .275         | .57736 |                   |
| a. Predictors: (Constant), <b>Knowledge management processes</b> |            |                   |        |              |        |                   |

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the output of the SPSS v.25 program.

Schedule 5

ANOVA analysis of knowledge management processes and sustainable competitive advantage

It is observed from tables (4-5), a group of results that indicate the validity of the main hypothesis of the research regarding the direct impact, as the direct impact coefficient of perceived organizational support in sustainable competitive advantage reached (.28) and at a significant level of 0.001, and this indicates

**FIRST: CONCLUSIONS**

1. Knowledge management is a process that increases the productivity and effectiveness of the institution, thanks to providing the employees of the two universities with the information and knowledge required to improve work processes, which helps to enhance the sustainable competitive advantage of the educational institution.
2. Knowledge management helps to improve the quality of services provided by the two universities and thus enhance the sustainable competitive advantage of the institution.
3. 3- Institutions can stimulate innovation and development by providing an environment that encourages creativity and helps to employ the available knowledge and expertise, and this helps to enhance the sustainable competitive advantage of the institution.
4. 4- Improve internal and external communications: Knowledge management can

that Knowledge management processes increase by 28% of the sustainable competitive advantage, and the rest of the percentage is due to other variables outside the model, and therefore the main hypothesis of the research is accepted.

improve the internal and external communications of the organization.

5. Knowledge management can help to better employ human and material resources.

**SECOND: RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1- The need to invest in promoting a culture of innovation and development within the educational institution, by providing an environment that encourages creativity.
- 2- Organizing training courses and workshops aimed at developing the skills of the organization's employees and updating their knowledge, in order to improve job performance.
- 3- Encouraging cooperation and interaction between the various departments in the institution and exchanging knowledge and information between them.
- 4- Adopting a knowledge management strategy aimed at identifying, documenting and





exchanging knowledge, information and expertise available within the institution.

- 5- The use of modern technologies such as artificial intelligence and data analysis to analyze and organize available information and knowledge, in order to achieve the best results and improve enterprise performance and sustainable competitive advantage.

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