

# Relationship between Social Capital and Teachers' Creativity Considering the Mediator Role of Knowledge Management Case Study: High School Teachers of Saveh County

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## ABSTRACT

This study has been applied with the objective of investigating the relationship between social capital and teachers' creativity considering the mediator role of knowledge management for high school teachers of Saveh County, in 1391. The population consisted of 600 teachers employed in high schools of Saveh County, 234 teachers out of which were considered as sample size, by means of Cochran formula and stratified random sampling. The data was collected by questionnaire and analyzed according to structural equations modeling method aiding AMOS in two measurement model and structural section. In the first section, technical characteristics of questionnaire were analyzed and required modifications were applied, and in the second section, t coefficient was used to consider the hypotheses. The summary of results indicated a significant association between social capital and its factors and employees' creativity. As well as, the findings indicated that in the relationship between social capital and employees' creativity, knowledge management is mediator.

**KEYWORDS:** Social Capital, Creativity, knowledge Management, Knowledge Creation

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## 1- BACKGROUND

The modern world is full of complexities that encountered the organizations to a lot of problems about growth and excellence and took the managers as the planners, organizers and leaders of humanity convoy into the frequent challenges (Ofir et al, 2008). On the other hand, our current industry shows the low ability of organizations in facing the organizational issues and problems. In the meanwhile, the role of social capital and creativity as two important factors affecting the productivity and effectiveness are significant and effective on the organizational prosperity, increasing the quality of products and services, success in competition, increasing the employees' motivation, job satisfaction, reduction of costs, wastes and resources loss, diversity of products, reduction of administrative bureaucracy and deskman jobs and persuade the pragmatism and require further consideration and study (Shoghi & Mortazavi, 2012). In the current competitive world, the new thoughts and original ideas are assumed as vital tools for survival of organizations so that these original ideas works as a motive engine for the organization and rescues it from inaction and doom (Song et al, 2008). In order to continue the life in the modern turbulent and variable world, the creativity and innovation shall be referred to as organizations' survival key, because the organizations managers to adapt to the changes and developments of environment have no option but to test the original strategies (Marion et al, 2007). On the other side, the customer faces various suppliers, and has more options at the disposal, consequently will have a different and varied demand and taste and the organizations to meet these demands should have a high flexibility (Heirman, A and Clarysse, 2007). Different authors have presented a lot of strategies for releasing from this crisis created for the organizations, but the creativity of organizations' employees is a strategy which is almost common in all of them (Amabile, 1998; Gilson et al., 2005; Kleijnen et al., 2007; Madjar, 2005). Traditionally, the presence of three natural, physical and human capitals beside each other has been assumed as a basis for economic development and function (Ambrose, 2002), but today they have understood that the development of each society is dependent to the increase of social capital of organizations and institutions active therein (Zhang & Hung, 2006). Today, the trained and educated employees require an environment to give them the motive of growth and development as well as a motivation to seek for new and creative ideas. Such an environment will be achieved only through investment on the social capital (Brooks & Nafukho, 2006). Florida et al (2002) explain: "When the people belong to a society with high level in social capital, they have an intensive tendency to interact with each other and become more risk-taker and this rich social capital promotes the innovative activities among the individuals". When the competition conditions become more turbulent, the significance of establishing and protecting the stable competitive advantages is increased potentially. For this purpose, the intellectual capitals of companies are assumed as one of the real resources of future competitiveness.

On the other hand, the companies' search to the modern knowledge may be supposed as a part of organization's adaption to external environment process, this adaption to be occurred for survival and more

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competitive status of organization. In fact, the companies to increase the competitiveness capability require the creativity and innovation and those organizations will be successful in this regard that produce the knowledge continuously, organize it and promote in the whole organization (Fugate et al, 2009). So, for finding the opportunities and utilization thereof, in the companies the knowledge management to develop and grow its facilities should focus on the promotion and optimal use of all organizational capitals such as social capital. Therefore, in this study we attempted to take the opinions of high school teachers of Saveh County and so consider the effect of social capital on the individuals' creativity according to the mediator role of knowledge management in the organization.

## 2- LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2-1 Social capital

The social capital is a relatively modern concept which has been newly entered into the economics literature and could find a suitable position in the development discussion and achieve a considerable role in expression of development issues, within a short time that shows the importance of applying this context in the human science equations (Alguezaui & Filieri, 2010). Social capital that as a social phenomenon causes the emergence of creativity, idealization, facilitation of innovative behaviors and risk-taking (Coleman, 1998) is something more than a group of social organization or social value and this capital often upgrades the output through increasing the productivity of other resources such as physical and human capital (Chou, 2006). Social capital includes all real or virtual resources that is created in an individual or group by means of a prolonged network of somewhat organized relationships (Bourdieu, 1986). In general, as Putnam (1996), the social capital includes the characteristics of social life, norms and trust that enables the participators to cooperate with each other and realize their goals more effective and efficient (Chou, 2006). Social capital is an essential and basic concept of understanding the creativity, innovation and creation of entrepreneurial behaviors, as well as the dynamics of organizations, because affects the creativity, innovation and team learning process and facilitate it (Goyal & Akhilesh, 2007). A lot of researches have been applied on the social capital such as Nahapit & Gooshal (1988) who introduced the social capital factors including structural, cognitive and relational factors and categorized each one of these factors in subgroups as per figure 1. These factors are as follows:

- 1- Structural factor: a. Bonds available in the network including the extent and intensity of communications available in the network, b. network form and configuration including the network hierarchy, communicability and density, c. organizational fitness: to which extent the network established for a specific purpose may be used for other purposes.
- 2- Cognitive factor: a. common language and signs, b. common narratives.
- 3- Relational factor: a. trust, b. norms, c. mutual obligations and relations and d. determination of common identity

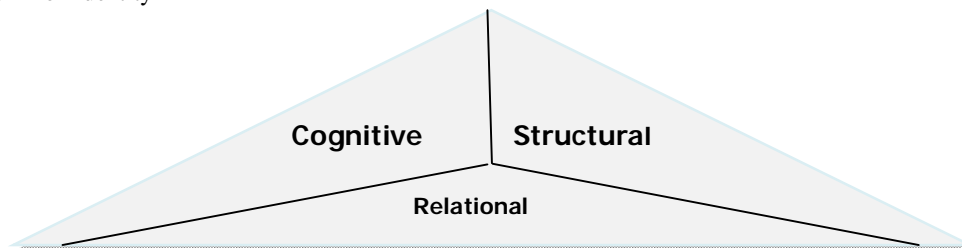


Figure 1: Different factors of social capital (Nahapit & Gooshal, 1988)

### 2-2- Creativity

The creativity is one of the hottest words in the business world particularly in the globalization trend and rapid development of modern technology, it has been changed to the most effective method of companies for survival and competing in the world market (Pablo & Pelayo, 2009 Zheng). As Santrock (2004), the creativity is the capability of thinking about the affairs in new and uncommon ways and achieving the unique solutions for problems (Shoghi & Mortazavi, 2012). In fact, the creativity is the interaction between talent, process and environment by means of which the individual or group produces the perceivable product that is new as well as useful, as a defined social context (Makel & Plucker, 2008). Stenberg & Lobart (1999) define the creativity as capability in creating the activities which are new (such as innovative, unexpected) as well as appropriate (such as profitability, adaptability to the duty restrictions). The words relating to this definition include idea, invention and advancement. In another definition, the creativity is the interaction between talent, process and environment by means of which the individual or group produces a product that is new as well as useful (Makel & Plucker, 2008). Different factors are effective in creation of creative products in both individual and organizational levels. In individual level, Amabil (1983) suggests three key elements which support the creative production including skills, processes related to creativity and activity motive. The skills refer to knowledge and

experience. The processes related to creativity include cognitive styles, cognitive strategies and personality variables and activity motive includes the attitudes and motivations. In the organizational level, the features of working environment are considered (Reiter et al, 2004). Leadership style, reward system, organizational resources, organizational social capital (Chen et al., 2008), organizational atmosphere (Shin, 2009), organizational structure (Pandey, 2009) are assumed as organizational factors affecting the creativity.

As Torrance (1989), the creativity is comprised of four following factors:

- Fluency: Capability of establishing a significant communication between thought and expression that is measured based on the number of thoughts or solutions in a specified time.
- Originality: Capability of thinking in an uncommon style that is along with the unusual, strange and subtle answers.
- Flexibility: Capability of thinking through different ways to solve a new problem.
- Elaboration: Capability of paying attention to the details while performing an activity (Shoghi & Mortazavi, 2012).

### **2-3- Knowledge management**

Today, the success of economic enterprises in a competitive market such as discovering the new opportunities is dependent to their success in achieving the knowledge in relation to the customers and the present and future potential trading competitors, academic advancements and technologies replacing their goods and services. Today, the organizations have concluded to pay attention to what they know (intellectual capital) more than they have (material capital) (Walczak, 2005). Human capitals knowledge is one of the most important organizational capabilities and competences and it may be assumed as the basis for all competitive advantages (Hitt et al., 2005; Daud & Yusoff, 2010). In the modern variable world, the organizations require a modern tool for survival. The knowledge management is one of these tools that may help the organizations in realizing these goals. Knowledge management is a process that helps the organizations to find the important information, select, organize and disseminate them, and is a specialty that is required for activities such as problem solving, dynamic learning and conclusion (Davenport and Prusak, 1998). The knowledge management through enabling the organization to “more intelligent performance” may improve a range of organizational performance features. The knowledge management has been considered as the vital strategy for achieving the competitive advantage within the recent years (Yang, 2010). The knowledge management is referred to the process of identification, selection, organization, summarization and categorization of information required for company’s business, so that improves the employees’ performance and competitive advantage of company (Dilek & Ars, 2008). In another definition, the knowledge management includes the value-increasing strategic efforts for the improvement of organization effectiveness on the business and social environment changes (Joo & Lee, 2009). Perhaps, the best definition that includes a lot of common point with the other definitions is the definition presented by NASA as “providing the relative knowledge at the proper time for who need it” (Jafari, et al, 2007). The researchers have focused on the various factors of knowledge management and defined it as the different viewpoints, but the important point is to understand this subject that the major goal of knowledge management is the improvement of organizational performance by the explicit design, implementation tools, processes, systems, structures and culture for the improvement of creation, sharing and using the knowledge required for making decision (Holt et al., 2007). The knowledge management means acquiring and storing the knowledge for employees and making it accessible to for the others inside an organization (Nonaka, 1995). Carl Wiig believes that the knowledge management means creation of processes required for identification and attraction of data, information and knowledge required for organization from external and internal environment and transfer thereof to the decisions and actions of organization and individuals (Wiig, 2002).

Knowledge management includes the human resources, attitudes and capabilities, business philosophy, patterns, operation, procedures and complex technologies (Wiig, 2002). Knowledge management may be used as creation, acquisition, sharing and operating the knowledge for promotion of organizational performance (Dilek and Ars, 2008; Wen, 2009; Rehman et al., 2010). Knowledge management emphasizes on the identification of knowledge and its presentation to a manner that may be shared formally and consequently to be reused. Plenty of researchers believe that the knowledge management means transformation of data to information and then information to knowledge (Vaccaro et al., 2010; Gottschalk, 2007). The knowledge management its relative contexts emphasize on this fact that in the modern world economic environment, accessing to stable competitive advantage is dependent to the organization’s capacity and capability in development and correct use of resources based on organization knowledge. Indeed, the knowledge management includes the value-increasing strategic efforts for the improvement of organization effectiveness on the business and social environment changes (Joo and Lee, 2009).

Newman & Conrad (2000) explain that the knowledge are flowed through processes in the organization, during these processes, the data are transformed to information, information to preliminary knowledge and ultimately preliminary knowledge to ultra-knowledge. They resembled this process to a life cycle and introduce four stages for this cycle (figure 2).

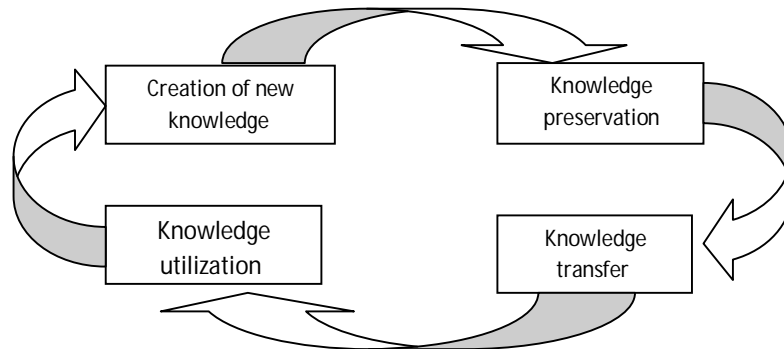


Figure 2: General model of knowledge management (Newman & Conrad, 2000)

- 1- Knowledge creation: This stage includes the activities in relation to entering the new knowledge into system including development, discovery and capture thereof.
- 2- Knowledge preservation and maintenance: activities that stabilizes the knowledge in the system. For this purpose, the experts refer to the organizational memory as the most important factor including the organization capability for knowledge preservation and maintenance.
- 3- Knowledge transformation and transfer: activities in relation to the knowledge flow from one section or person to another section and person and include the communications, translation, transformation, interpretation and filtration of knowledge.
- 4- Knowledge utilization: activities in relation to the knowledge implementation in the organizational processes.

Darroch (2003) presented one of integrated and applicable categorizations regarding the organizational culture aspects. He revised the Newman & Conrad model and summarized four factors of knowledge management in three factors including knowledge acquisition, knowledge dissemination and responsiveness to knowledge. The factors raised by Darroch from one side include the integration of organizational behavior in cultural management context and on the other side has considerable attention to the customer in cultural studies context (Darroch, 2003). Also, his questionnaire presented for assessment of organizational culture was extensively applicable for social science studies and hence has been used in the extant paper. In general, knowledge management provides some advantages for the organization as per figure 3.

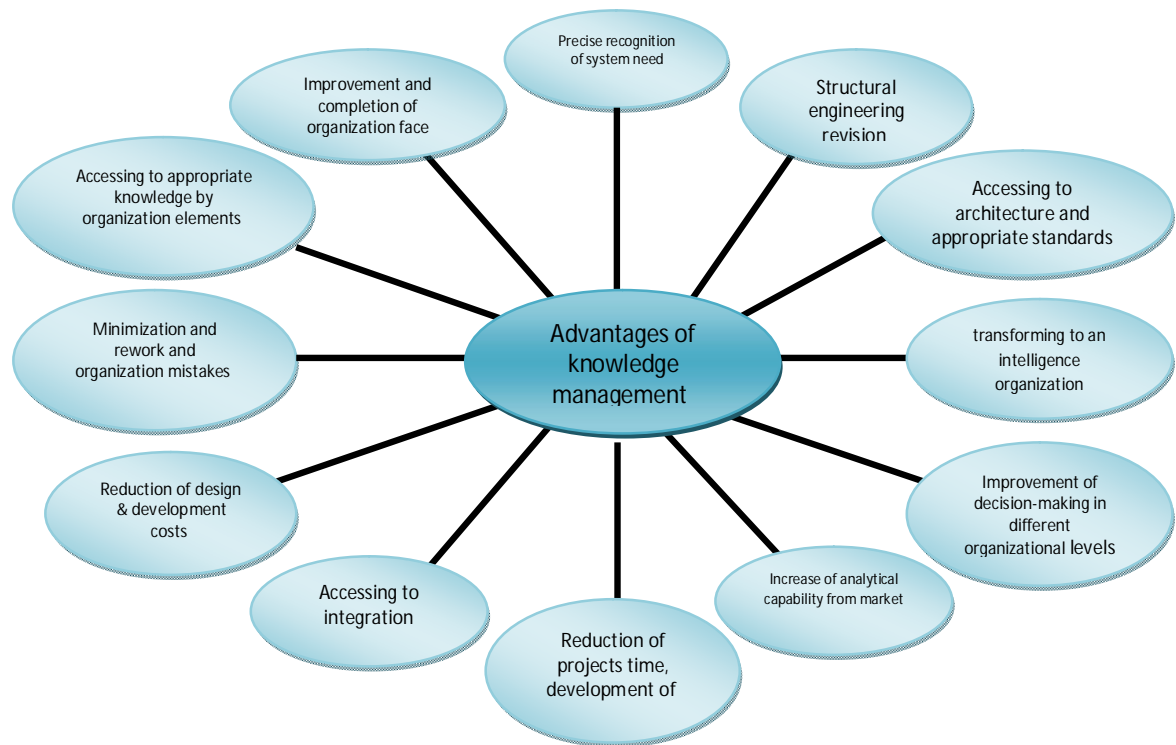


Figure 3: Advantages of knowledge management (Abbaszadeh & Rajablou, 2009, quoted by Shoghi & Khoshghiam, 2012)

#### 2-4- Effect of social capital on the creativity

The social capital is deemed as an essential and basic concept in understanding the creativity, innovation and creation of entrepreneurial behaviors as well as organizational dynamics, because it affects the creativity, innovation and team learning process and facilitates them (Goyal & Akhilesh, 2007). The social capital as a social phenomenon causes the emergence of creativity, idealization, facilitation of innovative behaviors and risk-taking (Coleman, 1998). Various researches explained that the rich social capital among the individuals is effective on their creativity in organization (Chen et al., 2008; Pishghadam & Zabihi, 2011). On the other hand, these effects enhance the organization performance as a result of increasing the creativity among the individuals (Lazarova & Taylor, 2009; Moran, 2005). Merlo et al (2006) in their study titled "social capital, tendency to customer services and creativity therein" explained that cognitive, relational and structural aspects of social capital creates a insight in the customers' creativity and these factors cause the increase of knowledge sharing, establishment of relational channels and facilitation of collaborative behavior among the employees and consequently increase their creativity. Hence, in consideration of the foregoing, first hypothesis is as follows:

**Hypothesis 1: Social capital of organization has positive and significant effect on the individuals in the organization.**

#### 2-5 -Effect of social capital on knowledge management

Various and countless factors are effective on the success of knowledge management applying in the organization; one of these factors is social capital (Chang & Chuang, 2011). The studies applied by Cohen & Prusak (2001) indicate that the social capital leads to better knowledge sharing, retention of organizational knowledge, establishment of relations based on trust, creation of spirit of cooperation (in the organization, between organization and customers and partners), training the increase of activities related to organization stability and common perception. Sturbuck (1995) assumes the importance of social norms including honesty and teamwork as the key characteristics of knowledge-oriented companies. Nahapit & Gooshal (1998) deem the social capital necessary for promotion of knowledge in the organization and believe that social capital is an important resource that causes the individuals to work with each other, trust each other and feel closeness, and as a result to be more efficient and effective. They believe that the organizations of high level in social capital are probably more successful than the competitors who have lower level of social capital. Chang et al (2010) in

their study explain that the trust is the important factor of facilitating the knowledge transfer as well as knowledge creation in the companies. Here, the second hypothesis may be raised as follows:

**Hypothesis 2: Social capital of organization has positive and significant effect on knowledge management in the organization.**

## 2-6 - Effect of knowledge management on creativity

The emergence of knowledge innovation not only enables the organizations to acquire competitive advantage to the competitors but provides the profitability tools for promotion of organizational performance. The knowledge as a major resource of organizational innovation, creativity and productivity has a substantial importance. The major purpose of knowledge management is to establish and organize an environment therein the individuals can develop their knowledge, exchange it to each other, combine the others knowledge to their own knowledge and finally use it. Application of knowledge will lead to innovation in organization; hence knowledge management has been often identified as the main resource and reference of innovation and creativity (Chen & Huang, 2009; Lopez & Merono, 2011). Also, Cheng (2012) in his study explains that the social capital significantly affects the teams creativity through combining the knowledge. Thus, third hypothesis is described as below:

**Hypothesis 3: Knowledge management of organization has positive and significant effect on the creativity of individuals in the organization.**

## Theoretical framework

Considering the theoretical fundamentals and hypotheses, theoretical framework of research is observed in figure 4:

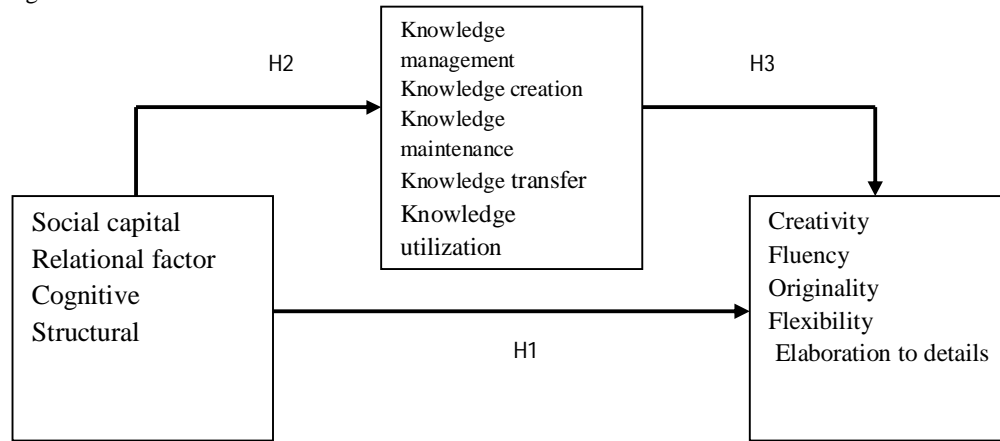


Figure 4: Theoretical framework of study

## 3- METHODOLOGY

The extant paper is an applied study in regard to the objective and descriptive-survey method has been applied for data collection so that to prove the hypotheses and realize the findings, the opinions of people involved in the problem (high school teachers of Saveh County were taken. Also, based on the type of collected data, it is a quantitative research. For this purpose, questionnaires were distributed for taking the teachers' opinions and the results were inserted. Structural equation model used in this study for analyzing the data includes two measurement model and structural model and its variables are divided in latent and clear variables. In this study, social capital, knowledge management and creativity are latent variables which have been shown in figure 4 along with its factors.

### 3-1 Population, sampling method and sample size

The population consists of high school teachers of Saveh County equal to 600 persons. In this survey, the sample size was calculated by means of Cochran formula as follows:

$$n = \frac{z^2 pqN}{Nd^2 + z^2 pq}$$

The assumptions of Cochran formula are as follows:

P=q=50% (based on the probable method); z standard indication of normal distribution that in confidence level of 95% equals to 1.96; d maximum acceptable error equal to 5% and N number of population (600). Therefore, based on the Cochran formula, the sample size (n) was calculated equal to 234. In this study, the sampling

method is stratified sampling. So, Saveh County districts were selected as stratifies and some schools are selected out of each stratify (district) calculating the number of schools existing in that district therein the teachers are selected randomly for poll.

### 3-2- Data collection tools

The questionnaire of the extant paper includes three parts: first part includes the questions related to the social capital. The standard scale of Chang & Chuang (2011) has been used for assessment of this variable. This part includes 19 items. The second part of questionnaire related to the knowledge management contains 59 questions which has been designed based on the standard scale of Darroch (2003), and ultimately third part includes 60 questions for assessment of employees creativity in accordance with the standard scale of Torrance (1959).

#### 3-2-1- Reliability

To measure the reliability of questionnaire, AMOS v20 has been used. Aiding this software, the factor loadings are assessed through calculating the correlation between a structure's indices and that structure, the reliability is measured; if this value equals or exceeds 0.4 (Hulland, 1999), the reliability of that measurement model is acceptable. In the extant paper, the summary of index reliability indicated that all questions have factor loading over 0.4 and consequently no question required to be omitted.

#### 3-2-2- Convergent and divergent validity

The validity of questionnaire was assessed by two convergent and divergent validity factors that are pertained to structural equations modeling. To assess the convergent validity, AVE (average variance extracted) factor has been used, the summary of this factor for the variables has been provided in table 1.

Table 1: Summary of convergent validity of study structures

Elaboration	Flexibility	Originality	Fluency	Knowledge utilization	Knowledge transfer	Knowledge maintenance	Knowledge creation	Structural factor	Cognitive factor	Relational factor	Variable
0.711	0.687	0.755	0.596	0.720	0.702	0.521	0.665	0.609	0.663	0.591	AVE

The standard value for AVE acceptance level is 0.5 (Hulland, 1999). As it is obvious in the above table, all AVE values related to the structures are more than 0.5 and it indicates that the convergent validity of the extant questionnaire is acceptable in s range. In the divergent validity range, the difference between indices of a structure and indices of other structures is compared in the model. It is calculated through comparing the AVE square of each structure with the values of coefficients of correlation between structures. The results of AMOS output indicated that AVE square of each structure is more than coefficients of correlation between that structure and other structures that shows acceptable divergent validity of structures.

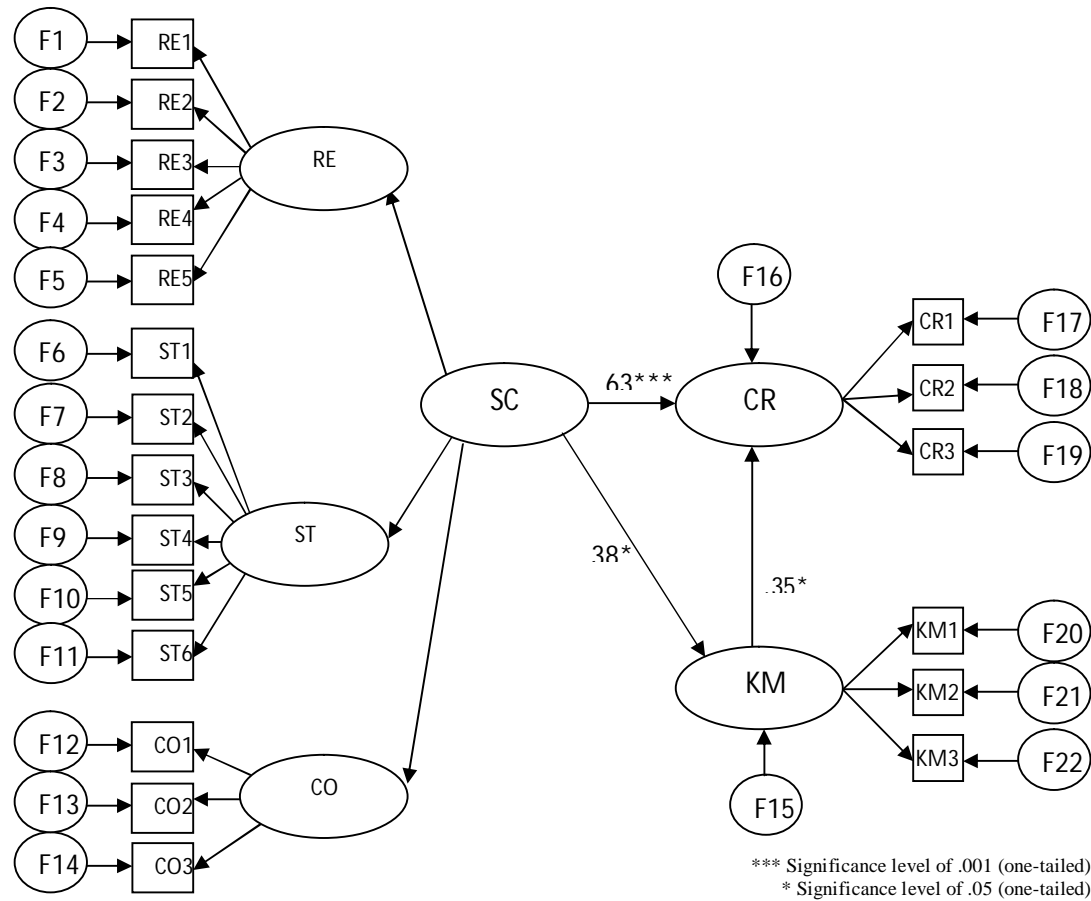
### 4- Data analysis and results

In the next stage, confirmatory factor analysis has been used for assessment of measurement models aiding AMOS v20 and investigation of causal path coefficients for assessment of model structural part. If the following conditions are met, the model will have a good fitness:

- The significance level obtained from Chi-square test (P-value) exceeds 0.05;
- The ratio of chi-square to the degree of freedom is less than 3;
- Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSA) is less than 0.05;
- Comparative fitness index (GFI), good of fitness index (GFI), adjusted good of fitness index (AGFI) and non-norm fitness index (NNFI) is more than 0.9 (Jorsgok & Sorbom, 1996).

As it is observed in figure (3), P-value equals 0.061, RMSA equals 0.051 and ratio of chi-square to degree of freedom (42) equals 2.71 that is lower than 3. Also, the summary of other output of AMOS indicated that CFI value equaled 0.921, Z exceeded 1.96 and GFI and AGFI equaled 0.944 and 0.918. Therefore, the measurement models related to three main structures of this study have acceptable fitness. On the other side, output of AMOS software (figure 5) shows that the relationship between the structures is significant and hypotheses are accepted.





Chi-Square = 113.64, df=42, P-value=0.06100, RMSEA=0.051

Figure 5: Structural equations model in AMOS output  
SC=Social Capital, KM=Knowledge Management, CR=Creativity, RE=Relational, ST=Structural, CO=Cognitive

In the above figure of AMOS output (figure 5), the relationship between social capital along with its dimensions and employees' creativity is direct and significant means that social capital has positive and significant effect on the employees' creativity that according to the standard coefficients of AMOS output, 63% of creativity variations is predicted by social capital. As well as the effect of social capital on the knowledge management and knowledge management on the creativity is significant and positive. Acceptance of the foregoing certifies the mediator role of knowledge management in the relationship between social capital and employees' creativity. Table (2) shows these coefficients. When t values vary within -1.96 and +1.96, it demonstrates the significance of relative parameter (Byrne, 2001). T values inserted in table 4 show the significance of relations mentioned in hypotheses.

Table 2: Result of hypotheses test

Hypotheses	Standardized coefficients	t value	Result
Social capital→creativity	0.63	14.33	Accepted
$\chi^2 = 113.64$ df=42 RMSEA= 0.061 GFI= 0.92 AGFI= 0.92			
Social capital→knowledge management	0.38	15.96	Accepted
Knowledge management→creativity	0.35	17.19	Accepted
$\chi^2 = 113.64$ df=42 RMSEA= 0.016 GFI= 0.92 AGFI= 0.92			

## 5- DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Considering the changes in the current organizational environments, the traditional forms of capital such as buildings, equipments and financial resources have been altered and new capitals have been raised. These



intangible capitals have a great effect on the creativity of individuals in organization and consequently higher performance of organization. One of these capitals is social capital that against the human capital or physical capital is a concept that is beyond the properties at the disposal of a person. The effects of social capital studied in this paper showed that this capital has positive and significant effect on the knowledge management in the organization and on the other side positive and significant effect on the individuals' creativity in the organization. Upon proving the study hypotheses, it is concluded that the social capital has an important role in knowledge transfer and facilitation in the organization, because when the social capital of organization employees has a high level, the mutual trust between them will be increased and they can work with each other more convenient. This trust causes the people without any problem to transfer and facilitate the knowledge in their organizational team and consequently can disseminate the knowledge throughout the organization to be accessible for the organization members. The knowledge provided to the employees prepares the requirements to increase their skills and transmit among the members, at the meantime considering the cooperation of members with each other, their creative and innovative ideas may be formed among them as well as entrepreneurial opportunities for discovery and ultimately utilization thereof that finally leads to the growth and productivity in the organization. The findings of the extant paper is in compliance with the findings of (Goyal & Akhilesh, 2007; Chen et al., 2008; Lazarova & Taylor, 2009, Pishghadam & Zabihi, 2011) in the first assumption; almost they explained that the rich social capital in the individuals affects their creativity in the organization, on the other hand these effects increase the organization performance as a result of increasing creativity among the employees. Also, in regard to the second hypothesis, the summary of study applied by (Chang & Chuang, 2011; Nahaphit & Gushal, 1998; Chang et al., 2010) confirms the findings of the extant paper. They showed that the social capital is necessary for development and distribution of knowledge in the organizations and is the substantial factor for facilitating the knowledge transfer as well as establishment of creativity in the companies. The impact of knowledge management on the creativity of organization members has been confirmed in the third hypothesis as well. The results obtained in researches of (Cheng, 2012; Chen & Huang, 2009; Lopez & Merono, 2011) show that the application of knowledge will lead to the creativity and innovation in the organization, hence knowledge management has been identified often as the main resource and reference of innovation and creativity and are consistent to the results of this study.

Therefore, considering the fact that social capital leads to creativity and knowledge sharing between the organization employees, the managers of organizations particularly the educational organizations must be conscious and aware of the social capital management of organization through assessment, measurement and improvement of its level in order to benefit from competitive advantage as well as to upraise the effectiveness and efficiency of organization performance. One of the other important strategies is training and promoting the required skills towards enabling the organization members for more than ever utilization of social capital due to its high significance. Since, the trust in the organizations flows from up to down, and the senior managers determine the norms and values of organization, if the managers are trustable, the feeling of trust permeates to the lower levels and surrounds all over the organization, thus the trust that is the requirement for knowledge exchange may be the product of knowledge exchange. Accordingly, it is recommended to pay more attention to the social topics in the organization and even hold the training courses for strengthening the spirits and trust of employees.

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