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## **The Relationship between Organizational Knowledge and Alavi Meritocracy with the Mediating Role of Human Resource Management: Universities of the Eastern of Iran**

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### **Keywords:**

Alavi meritocracy, knowledge management, human resource management, academic employees

### **Abstract**

**Purpose:** This study aimed to investigate the mediating role of human resource management in the relationship Alavi meritocracy and organizational knowledge.

**Methodology:** This descriptive-correlational study was applied in terms of purpose. The statistical population consisted of 1050 employees of public, Payam-e-Noor and Islamic Azad universities in eastern Iran in academic year 2018-2019, of whom 275 were selected as a sample size by a multi-stage (cluster) sampling according to Krejcie and Morgan's table. Research instruments included Naghipurfar's (2013) Meritocracy Questionnaire and Knowledge Management Questionnaire, and Martin's (2011) Human Resource Management Questionnaire. The validity of the questionnaire was assessed by formal validity and its reliability was measured by Cronbach's alpha as 0.81. Also, Data were analyzed by correlation tests and structural equations using the SPSS 22 and Amos 20.

**Findings:** Data analysis showed that there was a significant relationship between organizational knowledge and human resource management with the Alavi meritocracy of the staff ( $r = 0.61$  and  $r = 0.5$ , respectively;  $P < 0.01$ ). The results of structural equations also revealed that the effect of organizational knowledge of the staff on Alavi meritocracy was indirectly significant. On the other hand, there was a positive and significant relationship between organizational knowledge and the mediating variable (human resource management) ( $r = 0.58$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ). Moreover, human resource management directly affected Alavi meritocracy ( $r = 0.57$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ).

**Conclusion:** Organizational knowledge and human resource management of the staff affect Alavi meritocracy and Alavi meritocracy can be improved by promoting organizational knowledge and human resource management.

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## 1. Introduction

The issue of meritocracy has always been one of the most important issues and challenges of organizations and societies, especially scientific and academic circles. Qualification in universities has a strategic role; because universities based on meritocracy on the one hand have the task of turning potential talents into creative, growing and developed, and on the other hand have the task of meeting the human resource needs of each society at different levels and in different cultural, economic and social sectors. Has it. Merit forms a worldview or ideology that broadly embraces the idea that there are equal opportunities and enables growing social mobility; in such a way that individuals can change their economic and social conditions (Madeira et al, 2019). Competence is a combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that provide a clear description of what a person is doing, or competency as a way to integrate different actions of human resources (Banu et al, 2019). The Holy Qur'an also says in verse 58 of Surah An-Nisa: Indeed, God commands you to entrust the trusts to its people. Trust here includes any material and spiritual capital, including positions and responsibilities (Ghahremani & Ossman Zadeh, 2019).

Competence is defined in different cultures and based on its beliefs. The issue of meritocracy is also very important in the school of Islam. In the socio-political thoughts of Islam and by analyzing the teachings of the transcendent Islam, the issue of Alawite meritocracy can be extracted. Justice, as the most basic religious principle, is meritocracy; because with the realization of Islamic justice, the principle of establishing everything in its place is realized. Referring to verse 105 of Surah Al-Anbiya ', God emphasizes that government and supremacy on earth is for the righteous servants. One of the most obvious characteristics of Imam Ali's (as) government is his principledness, uprightness and correctness in achieving his goals. Other characteristics of the government were its adherence to divine values in all movements and choices and the administration of justice among the people (Mazani 2012). Therefore, he considered Alawite meritocracy to be based on meritocracy and meritocracy. These competencies include knowledge, skills, abilities, along with structures such as values, motivation, innovation, and self-control. On the other hand, Alavi meritocracy is a system in which the best people in the best position with the highest productivity and in proportion to their efforts receive salaries and benefits (Nasr Esfahani & Nasr Esfahani, 2010). By exploring the Islamic teachings and the style of Alawite rule, the main components of meritocracy can be considered as faith and knowledge, orbital guardianship, central task, insight and revolutionary action and responsibility (Naghipurfar, Habibi Badrabad, Arazmjou 2013).

One of the factors that can affect meritocracy is knowledge management (Liao & Chuang, 2011; Banu et al, 2019). Knowledge management should be considered as a key factor at the organizational level (Rajabi Farjad & Motian Najar, 2018). Sida believes that organizations can enhance knowledge availability, knowledge availability, use of knowledge, and existing connections in employees by effectively managing the production of a new generation of ideas (Chibuzor et al, 2019). Collins and Clark believe that exploiting employee involvement through knowledge management is important for organizations and leads to strengthening employee knowledge and specializing the core needs of the organization (Rajabi Farjad & Motian Najar, 2018). Human resource management also provides knowledge management leadership by ensuring information flow, such as policies to guide the delivery of business processes, to ensure consistency in managing organizational risks. Human resource management functions can play an important role in providing leadership for data management (symbolic duplication), information (meaning assignment), and knowledge (doing through learning) (Coleman & Casely, 2018). Chuang (2004) pointed out that human resource management functions should be used to monitor, disseminate and create knowledge, so that the organization can achieve an appropriate level of knowledge, skills, experience and creativity in the light of it.

The background of the subject shows that although there are many studies on the competence of employees, but most of them have studied meritocracy from an individual and professional-organizational perspective, and on the other hand, few universities have studied it. Therefore, studies that have studied

different aspects of meritocracy from the perspective of Islamic and Alawite teachings are considered very few and empty research. Eydi et al (2019) have explained the effect of meritocracy on organizational effectiveness. The results showed that meritocracy increases organizational effectiveness. Sadeghi Darvazeh et al (2017) concluded in a study that knowledge management improves employee empowerment and thus their competency. Cheragh Birjandi et al (2018) concluded in a study that the competencies of physical education managers in Iranian universities include Islamic competence, personal characteristics, optimal performance, intellectual, communication, organizational and professional ability, among which the Islamic competence was the most important. Haji Bozorgi & Nikzad (2017) in a study concluded that there is a positive and significant relationship between human resource management and meritocracy. Heidari Tafreshi & Gholipur (2016) in a study concluded that all components of meritocracy including communication skills, participation in decision making, encouragement and innovation and change, work communication, leadership and professional skills, using their positive and others' capabilities affect human performance. . Kuppens et al (2018) concluded in a study that meritocracy has a significant relationship with literacy. In other words, people who have a higher level of knowledge are more likely to apply the principles of meritocracy in their work practice. Gundemir et al (2017) concluded in a study that multicultural meritocracy, while maintaining positive effects, prevents the creation of work and organizational challenges. Ahmadi et al (2014) in a study concluded that meritocracy leads to innovation and synergy of organizations.

Regarding the necessity of preparing and compiling a model of meritocracy of human resources based on Islamic teachings, it should be stated: 1) Based on the country's major documents, including the 1404 vision document and the country's scientific roadmap, as well as the vision document of the Ministry of Science and universities, priority with production It is a religious and indigenous science and we should try with the help of professors and elites in order to localize and extract sciences from the heart of religion and make more efforts to promote the atmosphere of study and critique of Western sciences in a scientific and logical way Scientifically expanded (Ahmadi et al, 2014). It can also lead to: 1- Achieving goals (effectiveness), 2- Achieving justice, 3- Increasing productivity in affairs, 4- Reducing corruption in society, 5 Not wasting talent, and 6- Growing an organization or society (Ganjali et al , 2013). Considering the issues, the main purpose of this study is to develop a causal model of Alavi meritocracy based on organizational knowledge and with the mediating role of human resource management in universities.

## 2. Methodology

The present study was applied in terms of purpose and descriptive-correlational in terms of research method. The statistical population of the study included all managers and staff of free and public universities in the east of the country, including the provinces of Khorasan Razavi, North and South, Sistan and Baluchestan and Kerman in 2018-19 (1050 people), of which 275 people by multi-cluster sampling method. Stage (first, several free and public universities from each province were randomly selected and then the staff of selected universities in each province were interviewed) were selected as the sample size. Research tools: a) Competence Questionnaire (2013): The questionnaire was prepared by Naghipour Far and has 5 main components (insight and revolutionary action, central task, central province, faith and knowledge and responsibility). This questionnaire has 20 questions that are measured based on the Likert options scale. In terms of validity, its reliability coefficient has been reported as 0.94. B) Knowledge Management Questionnaire (Naghipurfar, 2013): This questionnaire has been prepared by Naghipourfar to assess the knowledge management of employees that the researcher has used the standard questionnaire (KMAT) in its design. The 5 main dimensions of this questionnaire include knowledge objectives, knowledge acquisition, knowledge sharing, knowledge use and evaluation, which are measured on the Likert scale. C) Human Resource Management Questionnaire Martin (2011): The standard questionnaire

for measuring human resource management measures examines the dimensions of human resource management and human resources (including manpower recruitment, human resource training, human resource services compensation and human resource performance evaluation) of organizations. The questionnaire is measured on the Likert scale and its validity has been reported by domestic and foreign researchers (for example, Shah Mohammadi et al (2016); Rüzgar & genlgen (2017) and Wang (2019)). The validity of the whole questionnaire was 0.88 according to Cronbach's alpha test. Definitions of the main concepts of the research are presented in the following table.

**Table1.** Theoretical and practical definitions of research variables

Variable	Theoretical definition	Operational definition
Alavi meritocracy	Merit is based on meritocracy and meritocracy. These competencies include knowledge, skills, and abilities, along with structures such as values, motivation, innovation, and self-control. A meritocracy is a system in which the best people work in the best position with the highest productivity and receive salaries and benefits commensurate with their efforts (Nasr Esfahani & Nasr Esfahani, 2010).	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Faith and knowledge (theology, resurrection, sincerity of action, patience, diligence, prayer and recourse, forgiveness, religion and observance of the rights of others, familiarity with the rules of religion, self-control and self-care)</li> <li>2. Orbital guardianship (love for the Ahl al-Bayt, staying away from the enemies of the Ahl al-Bayt, promoting the culture of Mahdism, recognizing the principles of guardianship, defending the Supreme Leader, addressing the words of the Supreme Leader, following the instructions of the Supreme Leader)</li> <li>3. Central task (recognizing religious duties, work and effort with nearness to God, striving for enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil, simple living, striving for meritocracy, practicing duty)</li> <li>4. Insight and revolutionary action (recognizing the nature and achievements of the revolution, recognizing the supporters of the provincial and Islamic system, recognizing the political ideas of the Imam and the leadership, recognizing the enemies of the Velayat-e-Faqih, defending the values of the revolution)</li> <li>5. Responsibility (commitment to work, commitment to the Islamic community, commitment to the innocent and commitment to the martyrs)</li> </ol>
knowledge management	Knowledge management is an opportunity to increase the effectiveness of human resource management in the company as it meets the needs to achieve the talents and capabilities of employees. This means that employees are more motivated to work and as a result, hiring, selecting, training and improving members of organizations is better possible (Lendzion, 2015).	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The role of leadership in setting knowledge goals (pioneering in sharing knowledge processes, encouraging knowledge sharing and information)</li> <li>2. The role of leadership in identifying and acquiring knowledge</li> <li>3. The role of leadership in the development and sharing of knowledge</li> <li>4. The role of leadership in the maintenance and use of knowledge</li> <li>5. The role of leadership in evaluation and feedback</li> </ol>
Human resources management	Human resource actions refer to recognizing employees, developing their competencies and empowering them (Shirazi et al, 2014).	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Recruitment (optimistic view about Arak Kar, meeting the requirements during and before employment, job opportunities before employment)</li> </ol>

2. Training (in-service training, receiving a list of work requirements, sharing work experiences)
3. Service compensation (fairness in rewards, comparison of benefits with other organizations, implementation of life and work plans)
4. Performance appraisal (appreciation at work, understanding needs, success of feedback)

### 3. Findings

In the statistical sample, in terms of education, 115 people (equivalent to 0.42) had a bachelor's degree, 90 people (equivalent to 0.33) had a master's degree and 70 people had the equivalent of (0.25) a doctorate. 191 men were equal to 0.69 and 86 people were equal (0.31) to women. In terms of years of service, less than 5 years, 21 people equivalent (0.8), between 5 to 10 years, 41 people equivalent (0.15), between 10 to 15 years, 60 people equivalent (0.22), between 15 20 years, 88 people were equivalent (0.32), between 20 to 25 years of service, 51 people were equal (0.18) and more than 25 years of service, 14 people were equal (0.5). Table 2 also presents some descriptive indicators (mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum scores) of research variables.

**Table2.** Descriptive indicators of research variables by components

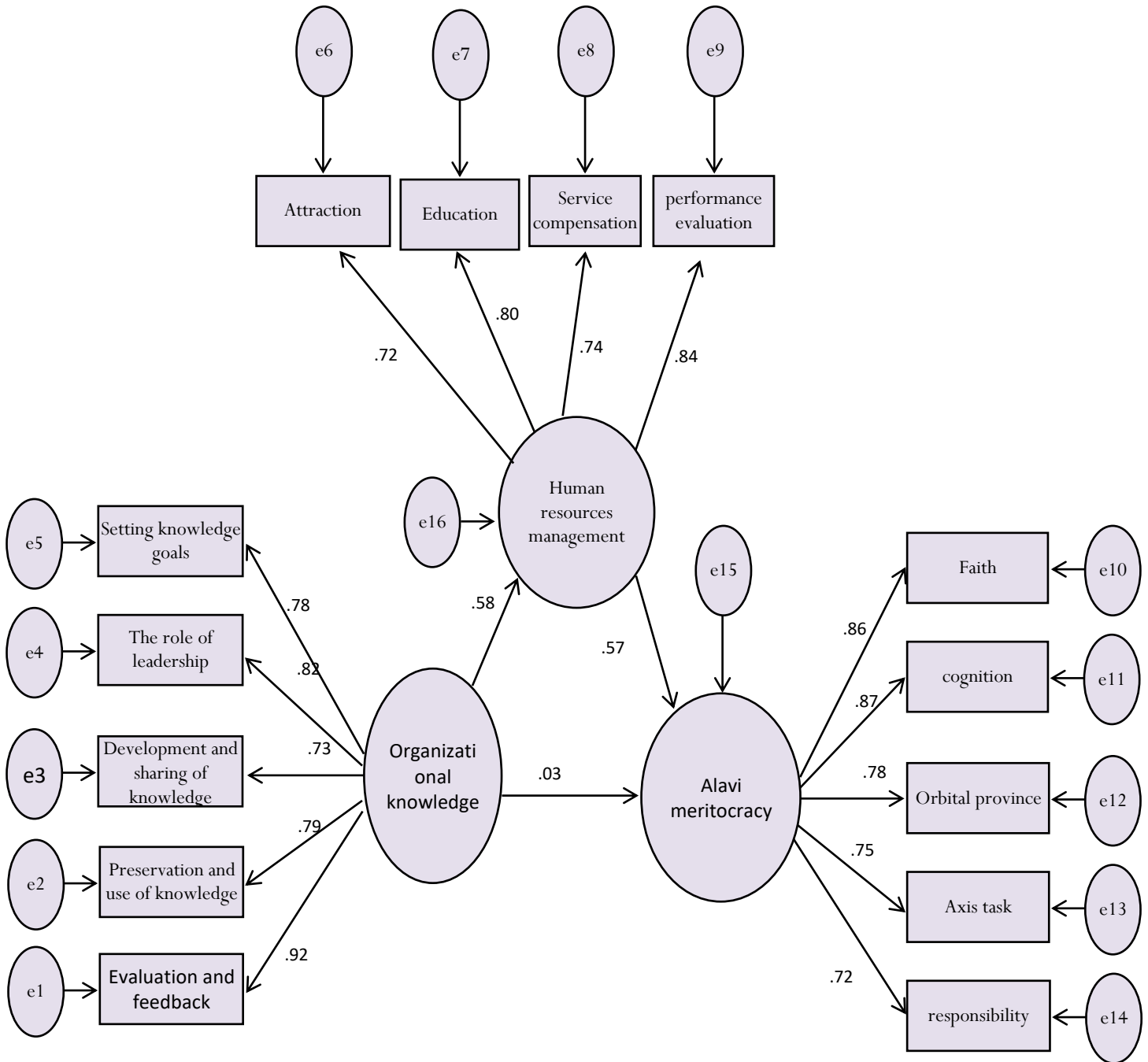
Dimensions and components	average score	Standard deviation	Minimum scores	Maximum scores
Alavi meritocracy	3/45	0/5	2/13	4/6
Faith and knowledge	3/67	0/76	1/5	4/80
Province of Alavi	3/64	0/8	1/67	3/33
Axis task	3/52	0/69	1/5	5
Revolutionary insight and action	3/07	0/9	2	5
responsibility	3/54	0/63	1/75	3/15
Human resources management	3/05	0/34	2/06	3/79
Absorption	3/07	0/68	2/4	4/8
Education	3/45	0/48	1/88	4/08
Service compensation	2/72	0/38	1/71	3/86
performance evaluation	2/95	0/55	1/5	4/5
Organizational knowledge	3/14	0/77	1/4	4/11
Setting knowledge goals	3/24	0/89	1/33	3/22
The role of leadership	3/08	1/04	2	3/80
Development and sharing of knowledge	3/13	0/99	2	4/33
Preservation and use of knowledge	3/15	0/82	2/5	4
Evaluation and feedback	3/09	0/93	2	3/88

Table 2 shows that in the Alawite meritocracy variable, the components of faith and knowledge (3.67) and pivotal province (3.54) have the highest average. In human resource management, the components of education (3.45) and recruitment (3.07) have achieved the highest average. In the organizational knowledge variable, the components of setting knowledge goals (3.24) and maintaining and using knowledge (3.15) have the highest average among other components. Among the main variables, Alavi meritocracy (3.45), organizational knowledge (3.14) and human resource management (3.55) have the highest to lowest mean, respectively. The correlation coefficients of Alavi meritocracy with human resource management and knowledge management are presented in Table 3.

**Table3.** Alavi meritocracy correlation matrix with human resource management and organizational knowledge

Variables	1	2	3
1- Alavi meritocracy	1		
2- Human resource management	0/601**	1	
3- Organizational knowledge	0/570**	0/540**	1

Table 3 shows that Alavi meritocracy has a positive and significant relationship with human resource management and organizational knowledge at the level of 99% confidence ( $p < 0.01$ ). Considering the confirmation of a significant relationship between research variables (Alavi meritocracy with the dimensions of human resource management and organizational knowledge), it is possible to model and study the impact of human resource management and organizational knowledge on Alavi meritocracy. Figure (1) shows the fitted structural model.



**Figure1.** Fitted structural model

To determine the accuracy of the model fit in Table 4, the suitability indicators of the research model have been reported.

**Table4.** Fitness indicators of the research model

Fitness indicators	( $\chi^2$ )	df	$\chi^2$ /df	RMSEA	CFI	IFI	GFI	AGFI
Reported value	150/89	74	2/03	0/034	0/956	0/914	0/947	0/932
Acceptable amount	Close to zero	-	Less than 3	< 0/08	> 0/9	> 0/9	> 0/9	> 0/8

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to evaluate and evaluate the measurement models. For this purpose, the factor load of each indicator (item) on each structure was estimated and analyzed using its significance level. Thus, if the significance level is less than 0.05, the factor loads are significant at the 5% level and the null hypothesis that the role of the marker in the formation of the studied structure is not significant is rejected and the significance of the relations in the form of analysis a confirmation factor is accepted. Also, for each structure, two indices of mean variance (AVE) and combined reliability (CR) are calculated to measure the validity (reliability) and reliability (reliability) of the structures, respectively. AVE index shows what percentage of the variance of the studied structure was affected by the markers of that structure. The AVE index is used to measure the validity of a structure and is also known as convergent validity. Researchers have set a value of 0.5 or higher for the appropriateness of this index. Therefore, according to the extracted mean variance (AVE) index, values higher than 0.5 indicate the appropriate validity of the structure under study. To determine the reliability of structures in this study, the combined reliability (CR) method was used. If the CR value for structures is greater than 0.6, they show acceptable reliability, and the closer this value is to a structure, the greater the reliability of that structure. In addition, in this section, Cronbach's alpha index ( $\alpha$ ) was used to evaluate the reliability of the structures. The results of confirmatory factor analysis and the validity and reliability indices of the measurement models are shown in Table (5).

**Table5.** Validity and reliability indices of structures

Dimensions	Factor load	p	AVE	CR	Cronbach's alpha
Alavi meritocracy	-	-	0.637	0.897	0.805
the faith	0.86	$P < 0.01$			
Knowledge	0.87	$P < 0.01$			
Orbital province	0.78	$P < 0.01$			
Axis task	0.75	$P < 0.01$			
responsibility	0.72	$P < 0.01$			
Human resources management	-	-	0.603	0.858	0.715
Absorption	0.72	$P < 0.01$			
Education	0.80	$P < 0.01$			
Service compensation	0.74	$P < 0.01$			
performance evaluation	0.84	$P < 0.01$			
Organizational knowledge	-	-	0.657	0.905	0.907
Setting knowledge goals	0.78	$P < 0.01$			
The role of leadership	0.82	$P < 0.01$			
Development and sharing of knowledge	0.73	$P < 0.01$			
Preservation and use of knowledge	0.79	$P < 0.01$			
Evaluation and feedback	0.92	$P < 0.01$			

Table 5 shows that the selected components for measuring the model structures have the necessary accuracy because the standardized coefficient is all more than 0.5 and are significant (significance level is less than 0.01). The value of the mean index of variance (AVE) for all structures is more than 0.5 and the composite reliability index is more than 0.6. Cronbach's alpha value of all four constructs is more than 0.7, so each of the model constructs has a convergent validity and a good composite reliability for measuring research variables. Table 8 reports the path coefficients between the independent and dependent variables along with the significance of each relationship.

**Table6.** Path coefficients between independent and dependent variables

From the structure	To the structure	Mediator	direct impact	Indirect effect	Statistical result	The result of the hypothesis
Organizational knowledge	Alavi meritocracy	Human resources management	0/03	0/57 0/58 × = 0/33**	Confirmation of the opposite hypothesis	Confirmation
Organizational knowledge	Human resources management	-	/58** 0	-	Confirmation of the opposite hypothesis	Confirmation
Human resources management	Alavi meritocracy	-	/57** 0	-	Confirmation of the opposite hypothesis	Confirmation

As can be seen in Table 6, the direct effect of organizational knowledge on Alavi meritocracy is not significant ( $P < 0.05$ ). On the other hand, the relationship between organizational knowledge and the mediating variable (human resource management) is positive and significant ( $r = 0.58$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ). The mediating variable with a coefficient of 0.57 has a significant effect on Alavi meritocracy, so the indirect effect of organizational knowledge on meritocracy obtained by multiplying 0.58 by 0.57 is equal to 0.33, which is significant at the error level of 0.01. The result of organizational knowledge indirectly affects meritocracy through the mediating variable (human resource management). Therefore, according to the results obtained in Table 8, the research hypotheses are confirmed.

#### 4. Discussion

The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between Alavi meritocracy and organizational knowledge with the mediating role of human resource management in universities in the east of the country. Data analysis showed that organizational knowledge has no direct effect on Alavi meritocracy and in other words was not significant ( $P < 0.05$ ). But on the other hand, the relationship between organizational knowledge and the mediating variable (human resource management) was positive and significant ( $r = 0.58$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ). The mediating variable with a coefficient of 0.57 has a significant effect on Alavi meritocracy, so the indirect effect of organizational knowledge on meritocracy obtained by multiplying 0.58 by 0.57 is equal to 0.33, which is significant at the error level of 0.01. As a result, organizational knowledge indirectly affects meritocracy through the mediating variable (human resource management).

Findings of the present study with research results such as Ghahremani & Ossman Zadeh (2019) concluded that there is a direct relationship between Iranian Islamic management and meritocracy, Iranian Islamic management and accountability and human resource development; According to Eydi et al (2019) who concluded that there is a relationship between meritocracy and the components of organizational knowledge (organizational innovation) and the more organizational knowledge has the greater impact on meritocracy; According to the research of Sadeghi Darvazeh et al (2017) who concluded that knowledge management has a significant effect on human resource empowerment; According to the research of Sadeghi Darvazeh et al (2017) who concluded that there is a significant relationship between the functions of human resource management and knowledge management; According to Haji Bozorgi & Nikzad (2017) who found that there is a positive and significant relationship between human resource management and meritocracy; According to the research of Heidari Tafreshi & Gholipur (2016) who concluded that there is a relationship between the components of meritocracy such as communication skills, participation in decision making, encouragement and innovation and change and performance of human resources; Mohammadi (2016) concluded that human resource management and development has a significant effect on the establishment of meritocracy and also knowledge management strategy has a positive and significant effect on meritocracy. According to Hassanzadeh et al (2014) who concluded that there is a relationship between knowledge management and human resource management improvement; According to



Gundemir et al (2017) who concluded that there is a significant relationship between knowledge management as a strategic tool and human resource management in higher education institutions; According to Coleman & Casely (2018), which found that there is a relationship between knowledge management and organizational culture and human resource performance expectations, and Ahmed et al (2018), who concluded that competency increases innovation in the activities of Pakistani corporate employees. Rüzgar & İlgün (2017) concluded that human resource management influences knowledge management in private companies.

Regarding the analysis of the results, it should be said that Alavi meritocracy emphasizes above all on observing the proportionality of competence and competence with capabilities. As it was stated, there are many narrations and teachings in the school of Islam. Knowledge management can increase a person's competencies by increasing his / her knowledge and experiences and knowledge of the work environment, and as a result, the person will be more competent, in the present study, although knowledge management was not directly significant with Alavi competence, but it was effective through human resource management. Human relations management can also play an important role in providing leadership for data management (symbolic duplication), information (meaning assignment) and knowledge (doing through learning) by emphasizing interpersonal relationships and improving the work environment. Work should be more transparent and provide the basis for the emergence of individual capabilities of employees can be witnessed the formation of components of Alawite competence. On the other hand, it can be said that human resource management is interrelated with organizational knowledge. The components of human resource management including performance appraisal, service compensation, training and recruitment can increase organizational knowledge and on the other hand, organizational knowledge can be expected to strengthen human resources. Therefore, the interaction of human resource management with organizational knowledge increases meritocracy.

The total findings of the study in this regard, which like other studies showed that knowledge management and human relations management have a significant relationship with competence, but in the present study, unlike previous studies, simultaneously examined knowledge management and human resource management on competency. Different as well as the competencies of the present study were derived from the elements and components of the Islamic school, which in the previous study was mainly based on the views and opinions of Western experts was also different. One of the limitations of the present study is the lack of study of the entire staff of universities in the country due to financial and time constraints of the researcher. Another limitation was the lack of study of the gender of the staff, which was mostly due to the much smaller population present in the sample, but it is suggested that future researchers do this in larger samples. Considering the relationship between knowledge management and Alavi competence, synergistic courses of knowledge management can be held through which one can hope to improve the attitude and work environment of employees and thus lead to increased competence. Another suggestion is that considering the significant relationship between human resource management and Alavi knowledge management and meritocracy, a transparent system of attracting university staff should be developed because attracting talented employees and evaluating their performance can lead to promoting Alavi competence and thus justice among employees.

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