

Knowledge Management Capabilities and Organisational Performance in Facilities Management Firms: The Mediating Role of Organisational Trust in Abu Dhabi

Saeed Abdulla Salem Shantoof Alrashdi¹ and Dr.Norsamsinar Binti Samsudin²

¹PhD candidate in Business Management, Faculty of Business and Economics, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, Malaysia

²Lecturer, Faculty of Business and Economics, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the influence of Knowledge Management Capabilities (KMC) on organizational performance within facilities management companies operating in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. Additionally, the study aims to ascertain the mediating role of organizational trust in this relationship. Utilizing the Knowledge-Based View of the firm, KMC is conceptualized through process and infrastructure dimensions. Organizational performance is measured using both financial and non-financial indicators. Data were collected employing a multi-stage cluster sampling technique, resulting in 351 returned questionnaires. Of these, 350 were deemed valid and utilized for analysis. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed for data analysis using SmartPLS software.

The measurement model demonstrated satisfactory reliability and validity, with composite reliability values ranging from 0.884 to 0.930 and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.50. Structural model results indicate that KMC has a significant positive impact on organizational performance ($\beta = 0.359$, $t = 6.968$, $p < .001$) and organizational trust ($\beta = 0.467$, $t = 11.702$, $p < .001$). Furthermore, organizational trust was found to significantly influence organizational performance ($\beta = 0.184$, $t = 3.478$, $p = .001$). Mediation analysis revealed that organizational trust partially mediates the relationship between KMC and organizational performance, with a significant indirect effect ($\beta = 0.086$, $t = 3.322$, $p = .001$). The model explains 21.8% of the variance in organizational trust and 22.4% of the variance in organizational performance.

Keywords: Knowledge Management Capabilities, Organisational Trust, Organisational Performance, Facilities Management, UAE.

1. Introduction

Facilities management (FM) service companies play a pivotal role in supporting the operational efficiency, sustainability, and service quality of organizations across the public and private sectors. In Abu Dhabi, the FM sector has experienced rapid expansion due to substantial infrastructure development, urbanization, and the government's strategic emphasis on economic diversification and service excellence. Consequently, FM companies are increasingly mandated to enhance organizational performance not only in financial terms but also through non-financial outcomes such as service reliability, operational efficiency, compliance, and customer satisfaction.

In the realm of competitive and knowledge-intensive environments, knowledge management has emerged as a strategic mechanism for enhancing organizational effectiveness. The Knowledge-Based View (KBV) posits that knowledge constitutes the most strategically significant organizational resource and serves as the primary source of sustained competitive advantage (Grant, 1996). Organizations that develop robust knowledge management capabilities (KMC) are better positioned to enhance decision-making, optimize processes, and improve overall performance. KMC are commonly conceptualized as comprising two key dimensions: knowledge management processes and knowledge management infrastructure (Gold et al., 2001).

Despite the growing interest in Knowledge Management (KMC), empirical evidence on its direct influence on organizational performance remains fragmented, particularly in service-based industries and developing economies. Furthermore, the effectiveness of KMC is not solely dependent on technical systems or formal processes; it is also shaped by the organizational context in which knowledge is created, shared, and applied. Organizational trust has been identified as a critical contextual factor that influences employees' willingness to share knowledge, collaborate, and engage with organizational systems (Inkinen, 2016; Donate & de Pablo, 2015).

This study examines the correlation between knowledge management capabilities and organizational performance in facilities management firms in Abu Dhabi, with a specific emphasis on the mediating influence of organizational trust. By conducting this research, the study addresses the need for context-specific investigations into knowledge management and performance within service industries in developing economies.

2. Background of the Study

2.1 Knowledge Management Capabilities and Organisational Performance

The Knowledge-Based View (KBV) asserts that organisational performance is largely determined by a firm's ability to develop, integrate, and apply knowledge resources effectively (Grant, 1996). Building on this perspective, Gold et al. (2001) conceptualised knowledge management capabilities as a set of organisational processes and infrastructures that enable firms to manage knowledge systematically.

Knowledge management processes encompass knowledge creation, acquisition, sharing, storage, and application. These processes facilitate organizations in transforming individual expertise into collective organizational knowledge, thereby enhancing innovation, operational efficiency, and service quality (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Nonaka & von Krogh, 2009). In the field of FM (Facilities Management), where service delivery hinges on technical expertise, standardized operating procedures, and coordination across various functions, effective Knowledge Management (KMC) processes are paramount for ensuring consistency and performance excellence.

Knowledge management infrastructure refers to the technological, structural, and cultural foundations that support knowledge processes. This includes information systems, organisational structures, reward systems, and leadership support (Gold et al., 2001). Prior studies suggest that robust KM infrastructure enhances the effectiveness of knowledge processes and contributes positively to organisational outcomes (Kianto et al., 2017).

Although previous research has linked KMC to innovation and competitiveness (Ferraris et al., 2019; Iqbal et al., 2019; Santoro et al., 2019), fewer studies have directly examined their impact on organisational performance, particularly in service sectors and developing economies (Serenko, 2013; Obeidat et al., 2016). This gap is especially evident in the FM industry in the Gulf region.

2.2 Organizational Trust as a Mediating Mechanism

Organizational trust encompasses employees' confidence in their organization's integrity, competence, and fairness. Social exchange theory posits that trust facilitates cooperative behaviors, mitigates uncertainty, and augments employees' inclination to engage in discretionary behaviors, such as knowledge sharing (Kloutsiniotis & Mihail, 2018).

In the realm of knowledge management, trust emerges as a pivotal factor, as knowledge sharing inherently entails risks, particularly when the knowledge in question is tacit or personally

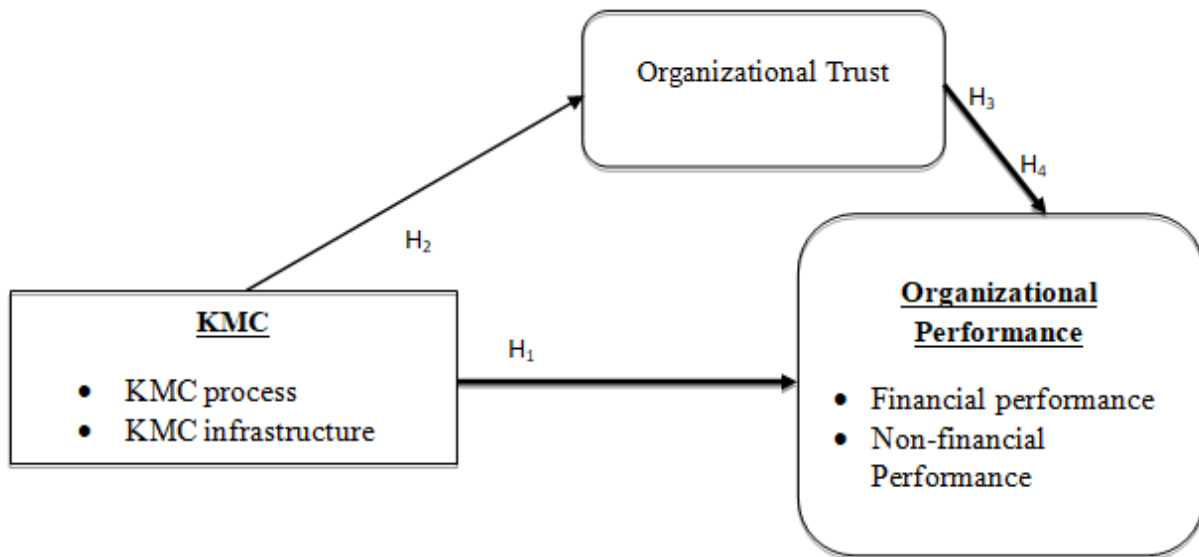
significant. Employees are more inclined to contribute their knowledge when they are confident that the organization will utilize it equitably and that sharing will not jeopardize their professional standing (Inkinen, 2016). Consequently, organisational trust may serve as a key mechanism through which KMC influence organisational performance.

Despite its theoretical importance, the mediating role of organisational trust in the relationship between KMC and organisational performance has received limited empirical attention, particularly in the facilities management sector (Zhou et al., 2022). This study addresses this gap by explicitly testing organisational trust as a mediating variable.

The conceptual framework of this study is based on the Knowledge-Based View (KBV) of the firm and posits that Knowledge Management Capabilities (KMC) are crucial strategic drivers of Organizational Performance, both directly and indirectly through Organizational Trust. In accordance with the organizational capabilities perspective, KMC are conceptualized as comprising knowledge management process capabilities (such as knowledge creation, sharing, and application) and knowledge management infrastructure capabilities (including technological, structural, and cultural support), which collectively enable organizations to effectively utilize knowledge resources for performance enhancement (Gold et al., 2001; Grant, 1996). The proposed framework posits a direct correlation between Knowledge Management Capabilities (KMC) and organizational performance. This aligns with the notion that firms possessing robust knowledge capabilities are better equipped to optimize efficiency, elevate service quality, and achieve superior outcomes. Concurrently, KMC are anticipated to positively impact organizational trust. Well-structured knowledge systems and transparent processes cultivate confidence, reliability, and fairness within the organization (Inkinen, 2016; Zhou et al., 2022).

Organisational trust, in turn, is hypothesised to have a direct positive effect on organisational performance, consistent with prior studies showing that trust facilitates cooperation, knowledge sharing, and coordinated action (Kloutsiniotis & Mihail, 2018). Importantly, the framework posits organizational trust as a mediating mechanism that elucidates the mechanisms and reasons behind the translation of knowledge management capabilities into superior organizational performance. This highlights the intricate interplay between technical knowledge capabilities and social-relational factors within facilities management firms in Abu Dhabi (Donate & de Pablo, 2015; Obeidat et al., 2016).

Fig. 1. The Conceptual Framework



3. Problem Statement

Although the significance of knowledge management capabilities for organizational success is widely recognized, empirical evidence regarding their impact on organizational performance remains inconclusive. Most existing studies concentrate on manufacturing firms or knowledge-intensive industries in developed economies, thereby neglecting service-based sectors such as facilities management (Serenko, 2013; Obeidat et al., 2016).

Furthermore, while KMCs are frequently perceived as technical or structural mechanisms, there has been a dearth of attention given to the social and relational conditions that facilitate their effective functioning. Organizational trust has been posited as a pivotal enabler of knowledge sharing and utilization; however, its mediating role between KMCs and organizational performance has not been adequately explored within the FM sector, particularly in the context of Abu Dhabi. (Kloutsiniotis & Mihail, 2018; Zhou et al., 2022).

Consequently, facilities management companies in Abu Dhabi may invest in knowledge management systems and processes without fully comprehending the impact of trust on their efficacy. This lack of empirical clarity restricts both theoretical advancement and managerial practice. Therefore, this study aims to address this issue by investigating the relationship between knowledge management capabilities and organizational performance, as well as the potential mediating role of organizational trust.

4. Research Questions

Based on the research problem and conceptual framework, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. What is the effect of Knowledge Management Capabilities (process dimension) on the organisational performance of facilities management firms in Abu Dhabi?
2. What is the effect of Knowledge Management Capabilities (infrastructure dimension) on the organisational performance of facilities management firms in Abu Dhabi?
3. What is the effect of Knowledge Management Capabilities on organisational trust in facilities management firms in Abu Dhabi?
4. Does organisational trust mediate the relationship between Knowledge Management Capabilities (process and infrastructure dimensions) and organisational performance in facilities management firms in Abu Dhabi?

5. Research Hypotheses

Based on the Knowledge-Based View and prior empirical studies, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H1: Knowledge Management Capabilities (process dimension) have a significant positive effect on organisational performance.
- H2: Knowledge Management Capabilities (infrastructure dimension) have a significant positive effect on organisational trust.
- H3: Organisational trust has a significant positive effect on organisational performance.
- H4: Organisational trust mediates the relationship between Knowledge Management Capabilities (process and infrastructure dimensions) and organisational performance.

6. Methodology

6.1 Research Design

This study employs a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to investigate the interrelationships between knowledge management capabilities, organizational trust, and

organizational performance within facilities management (FM) firms operating in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. A survey-based methodology was utilized due to its suitability for testing theoretically grounded relationships and enabling the efficient collection of data from a substantial number of respondents within a constrained timeframe.

6.2 Population and Sampling

The target population of this study comprises managerial and supervisory employees employed in facilities management service companies operating in Abu Dhabi. This group encompasses senior managers, middle managers, supervisors, and department heads who are directly involved in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of organizational practices pertaining to knowledge management, trust, and performance. These respondents were selected due to their possession of the requisite organizational knowledge and decision-making authority pertinent to the constructs under investigation.

Facilities management companies in Abu Dhabi operate across both public and private sectors and exhibit a range of sizes and service scopes. Given the absence of a comprehensive sampling frame that enumerates all managerial employees within the facilities management sector, a multi-stage cluster sampling technique was employed. In the initial stage, facilities management companies were categorized based on organizational type and operational scale. Subsequently, managerial and supervisory staff within the selected companies were randomly invited to participate in the survey.

The sample size was determined based on the requirements of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Following established PLS-SEM guidelines, the minimum required sample size was assessed using the ten-times rule, which considers the maximum number of structural paths directed at a latent construct in the research model. To enhance statistical power and ensure robust estimation of both direct and mediating effects, a sample size exceeding the minimum threshold was targeted. This sample size is considered adequate for testing the proposed structural model and mediation hypotheses.

6.3 Research Instrument

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire adapted from validated instruments employed in prior empirical studies, as outlined in the proposal. The questionnaire comprises four primary sections. The initial section solicits demographic and organizational information from the respondents. The subsequent section assesses Knowledge Management Capabilities (KMC) through two dimensions: knowledge management process capabilities and knowledge management infrastructure capabilities. These items were adapted from the extensively cited scale developed by Gold et al. (2001).

The third section evaluates organizational trust by utilizing items adapted from established organizational trust measures referenced in the proposal. These items assess employees' perceptions of trust in management, organizational integrity, and confidence in organizational systems. The fourth section assesses organizational performance, encompassing both financial and non-financial indicators, including service quality, operational efficiency, effectiveness, and overall organizational success.

All constructs were measured using multiple items rated on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The use of multiple indicators per construct enhances measurement accuracy and minimizes the likelihood of measurement error. Prior to the main data collection, the questionnaire was reviewed by academic experts to establish content validity. Minor modifications were made to enhance clarity and contextual relevance.

During the data analysis phase, construct validity and reliability were evaluated using PLS-SEM procedures. Convergent validity was assessed through indicator loadings and average variance extracted (AVE), while discriminant validity was examined using established criteria. Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability coefficients, which all met recommended threshold values, as outlined in the proposal.

6.4 Data Analysis Technique: PLS-SEM

Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed to analyze the data using SmartPLS software. PLS-SEM was selected due to its suitability for predictive research, its ability to handle complex models with multiple constructs and indicators, and its robustness when data normality assumptions are not strictly met.

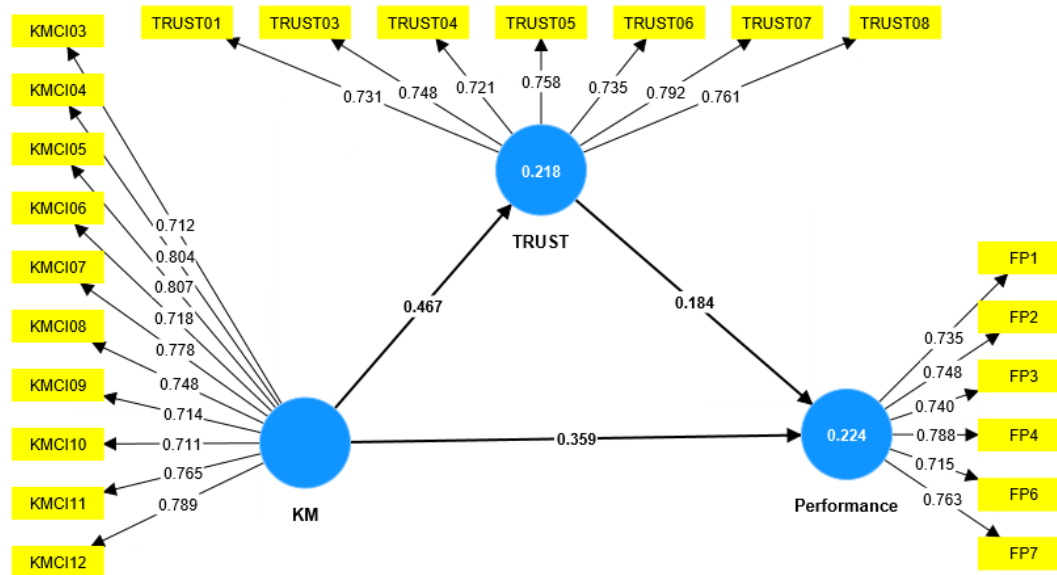
The analysis employed a two-stage methodology. Initially, the measurement model underwent evaluation to ascertain the reliability of indicators, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Subsequently, the structural model was assessed by analyzing path coefficients, coefficients of determination (R^2), and the statistical significance of hypothesized relationships. The mediating effect of organizational trust was investigated employing the bootstrapping procedure recommended for mediation analysis in PLS-SEM.

7. Findings

7.1 Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model was evaluated to assess the reliability of indicators, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM).

Fig.2. The Measurement Model



Indicator Reliability

All retained indicators exhibited satisfactory outer loadings, surpassing the recommended threshold of 0.70. Outer loadings for Knowledge Management Capabilities (KMC) indicators ranged from 0.711 to 0.807, organizational trust indicators ranged from 0.721 to 0.792, and organizational performance indicators ranged from 0.715 to 0.788, signifying robust indicator reliability.

Table 1. Indicator Loadings

Construct	Indicator	Loading
Performance	FP1	0.735
	FP2	0.748
	FP3	0.740
	FP4	0.788
	FP6	0.715
	FP7	0.763
	KMC	KMCI03
KMCI04		0.804
KMCI05		0.807
KMCI06		0.718
KMCI07		0.778

	KMCI08	0.748
	KMCI09	0.714
	KMCI10	0.711
	KMCI11	0.765
	KMCI12	0.789
Trust	TRUST01	0.731
	TRUST03	0.748
	TRUST04	0.721
	TRUST05	0.758
	TRUST06	0.735
	TRUST07	0.792
	TRUST08	0.761

Internal Consistency Reliability and Convergent Validity

Internal consistency reliability was confirmed for all constructs. Cronbach’s alpha values ranged from 0.843 to 0.916, composite reliability values ranged from 0.884 to 0.930, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.50 for all constructs, supporting convergent validity.

Table 2. Construct Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Cronbach’s α	Composite Reliability (ρ_c)	AVE
KMC	0.916	0.930	0.571
Performance	0.843	0.884	0.560
Trust	0.870	0.900	0.562

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was evaluated using the Fornell–Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratio. The square roots of Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct surpassed the inter-construct correlations, thereby fulfilling the Fornell–Larcker criterion. HTMT values ranged from 0.404 to 0.516, significantly below the conservative threshold of 0.85, which substantiates the presence of adequate discriminant validity.

Table 3. HTMT Ratio

Constructs	KMC	Performance	Trust
KMC	—		
Performance	0.505	—	
Trust	0.516	0.404	—

Table 4. Fornell–Larcker Criterion

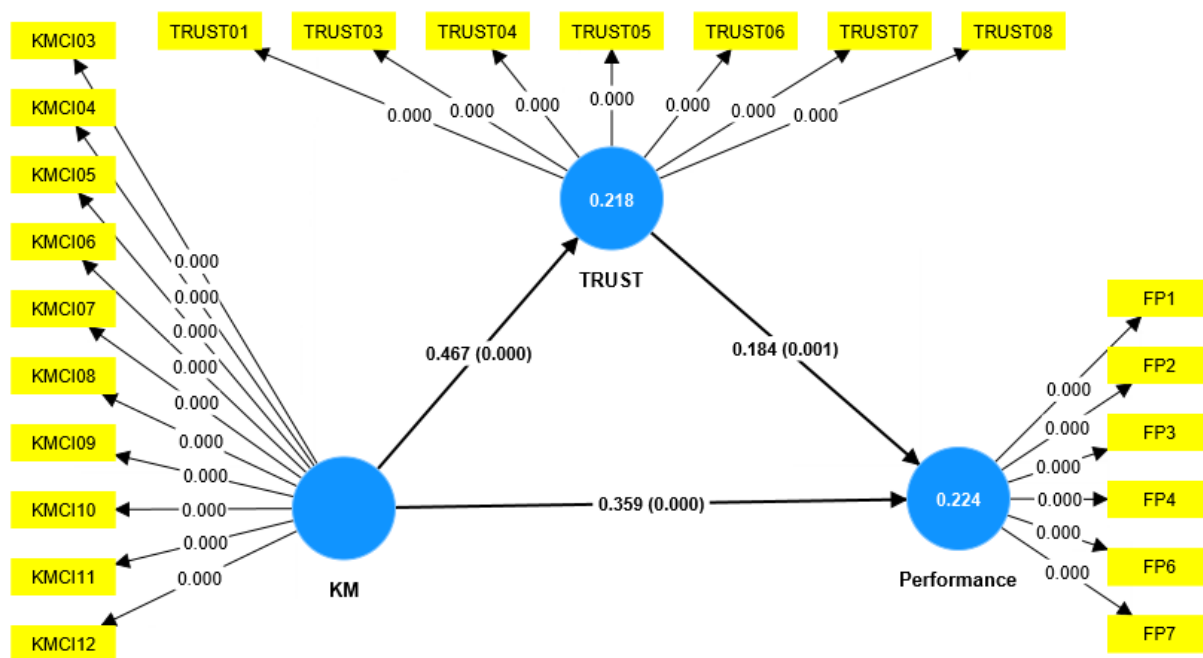
Construct	KMC	Performance	Trust
KMC	0.755		
Performance	0.445	0.748	
Trust	0.467	0.352	0.750

7.2 Structural Model Assessment

Collinearity Assessment

Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values for all indicators ranged between 1.528 and 2.326, well below the conservative threshold of 5.0, indicating that multicollinearity was not a concern.

Fig. 3. The Structural Model



Coefficient of Determination (R²)

The structural model explains a moderate proportion of variance in the endogenous constructs. Knowledge management capabilities explain 21.8% of the variance in organisational trust (R² = 0.218), while knowledge management capabilities and organisational trust jointly explain 22.4% of the variance in organisational performance (R² = 0.224) .

Table 5. Coefficient of Determination (R²)

Endogenous Construct	R ²	Adjusted R ²
Trust	0.218	0.216
Performance	0.224	0.220

Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing

Bootstrapping results show that all hypothesised direct relationships are statistically significant.

Table 6. Coefficient of Determination (R²)

Hypothesis	Path	β	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	KMC → Performance	0.359	6.968	< .001	Supported
H2	KMC → Trust	0.467	11.702	< .001	Supported
H3	Trust → Performance	0.184	3.478	.001	Supported

Mediation Analysis

The mediating role of organisational trust was assessed using bootstrapping. The indirect effect of KMC on organisational performance through organisational trust was positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.086$, $t = 3.322$, $p = .001$), indicating partial mediation.

Table 7. Indirect Effect (Mediation Test)

Hypothesis	Indirect Path	β	t-value	p-value	Decision
H4	KMC → Trust → Performance	0.086	3.322	.001	Supported

Predictive Relevance (Q²)

Predictive relevance was assessed using blindfolding and PLSpredict. Q² values for organizational performance (0.171) and organizational trust (0.118) indicate meaningful predictive relevance of the model.

8. Discussion

This study examined the effect of knowledge management capabilities on organisational performance in facilities management firms in Abu Dhabi, with organisational trust positioned as a mediating mechanism. The findings provide strong empirical support for the proposed framework and contribute to a deeper understanding of how knowledge-based resources translate into performance outcomes in service-intensive and operationally complex environments.

First, the results demonstrate that **knowledge management capabilities have a significant and positive direct effect on organizational performance**. This finding reinforces recent empirical evidence suggesting that organizations with well-developed knowledge management processes and infrastructure are better equipped to enhance both financial and non-financial performance outcomes (Kianto et al., 2020; Ferraris et al., 2021). In facilities management firms, where performance depends on technical expertise, procedural consistency, and timely decision-making, effective knowledge creation, sharing, and application are essential for service reliability and operational efficiency. The result provides contemporary empirical support for the Knowledge-Based View by confirming that knowledge capabilities remain a critical source of competitive advantage in service-based organisations (Bratianu & Bejinaru, 2021).

Second, knowledge management capabilities were found to have a **significant and positive effect on organisational trust**, indicating that KM initiatives extend beyond technical efficiency to shape the social and relational context of the organisation. Recent studies emphasise that transparent knowledge processes, reliable information systems, and supportive knowledge infrastructure foster perceptions of competence, fairness, and organisational integrity, which are central to trust formation (Inkinen et al., 2020; Zhou et al., 2022). In the facilities management context, where employees must rely on shared knowledge to ensure safety, service continuity, and compliance, structured KM practices signal organisational reliability and professionalism, thereby strengthening trust.

Third, the findings confirm that **organisational trust has a significant positive effect on organisational performance**. This result aligns with recent research conceptualising trust as a strategic organisational resource that enhances coordination, reduces uncertainty, and facilitates collective action (Fulmer & Gelfand, 2021; Xu et al., 2024). In FM firms, trust encourages employees to share operational knowledge, collaborate across functional boundaries, and respond proactively to service disruptions. Although trust alone does not guarantee high performance, its significant effect underscores its role as a critical enabling condition that amplifies the effectiveness of organisational systems and practices.

Most importantly, the mediation analysis demonstrates that organisational trust partially mediates the relationship between knowledge management capabilities and organisational performance. This finding advances contemporary knowledge management literature by empirically validating trust as a key mechanism through which KM capabilities generate performance outcomes. Recent studies increasingly argue that knowledge management systems produce limited value when implemented in low-trust environments, as employees may withhold knowledge or resist system use (Bratianu & Bejinaru, 2021; Zhou et al., 2022). The presence of partial mediation indicates that while KM capabilities directly enhance performance through improved processes and infrastructure, a substantial portion of their impact operates indirectly by fostering trust-based organisational climates that encourage knowledge sharing and utilisation.

From a model evaluation perspective, the explained variance in organisational trust and organisational performance is consistent with contemporary behavioural research standards. Recent knowledge management studies highlight that moderate explanatory power is expected in complex service environments, where performance outcomes are influenced by multiple organisational, technological, and contextual factors beyond KM alone (Ferraris et al., 2021; Kianto et al., 2020). The model's demonstrated predictive relevance further strengthens its practical applicability in real-world facilities management settings.

Contributions of the Study

This study makes several important contributions. **Theoretically**, it extends recent knowledge management research by empirically demonstrating the mediating role of organisational trust in the relationship between knowledge management capabilities and organisational performance, thereby moving beyond purely technical explanations of KM effectiveness. By integrating KM capabilities, trust, and performance into a single framework, the study offers a more holistic and socially grounded understanding of value creation in knowledge-based organisations.

Contextually, the study provides rare empirical evidence from the facilities management sector in Abu Dhabi, addressing a notable gap in knowledge management literature within service-based and Middle Eastern contexts. This enhances the external validity of recent KM theories and demonstrates their relevance beyond traditional manufacturing or Western organisational settings.

Practically, the findings suggest that facilities management firms seeking to improve organisational performance should complement investments in knowledge management systems and infrastructure with deliberate trust-building practices, such as transparent communication, fair knowledge governance, and supportive organisational cultures. For managers and policymakers, the study highlights that the performance benefits of knowledge management are

maximised when technical capabilities are embedded within high-trust organisational environments.

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