

# Assessing the Relationship between Organizational Forgetting and Organizational Performance

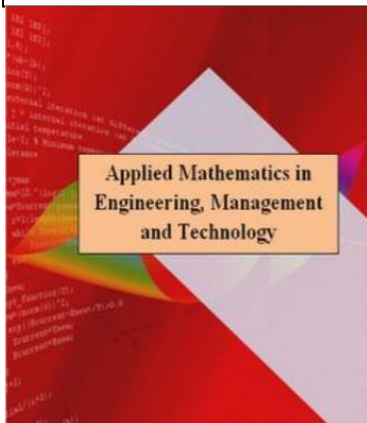
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## Abstract

**Introduction:** Companies not only learn, but also forget. In fact, knowledge management seeks to create processes useful not only to learn and protect the useful knowledge, but also for the lack of learning and avoidance of what is not useful. Thus, the aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between purposeful organizational forgetting and the performance of organizations.

**Methods:** The present study is considered applied based on its nature and purpose. The descriptive and correlation statistical methods were used to test hypotheses. The population of the study included experts, administrators, supervisors and middle and high level managers with at least 7 years experience who were an official member of Golestan gas company. Accordingly, a total of 54 people participated in the study. A questionnaire was used in order to collect the data. Additionally, SPSS software was used to analyze the descriptive data, and SMART PLS was also used for inferential

data analysis.

**Results:** This study shows that there is a significant positive relationship between organizational forgetting and knowledge management and organizational performance, but no significant relationship was detected between organizational forgetting and the capacity of knowledge management and organizational agility. And at 95 percent confidence level, organizational learning showed direct relationship with knowledge management capacity, organizational agility and organizational performance. Moreover, there is a direct correlation between knowledge management capacity and organizational performance and agility. But the no positive and significant relationship was found between organizational agility and performance of the sample.

**Conclusion:** The findings suggest that managers should improve the organization's knowledge management capacity in order to increase the organization's performance. This occurs when the process of organizational learning is implemented through the purposeful organizational forgetting effectively.

**Keywords:** organizational agility, organizational learning, knowledge management capacity, purposeful organizational forgetting

## 1 . Introduction

In today's competitive world that change is one of its most important characteristic, it is necessary for the preservation and conservation of organizations, they try to create and develop skills in order to produce a variety of products and various services according to the changing needs and expectations of customers in the shortest time and with the least cost, and improve quality and innovation in their products and services [1].

One of the best ways that organizations can transform changes into opportunities is to focus on agility and knowledge of the staff. Organization's agility means maximum flexibility, so that not only the organization can response to a change in the product, market and needs of customers, but also provide opportunities to be known as superior by making changes between competitors. So, agility is a comprehensive strategy for basic and irreversible changes that creates organizational excellence [2].

Ability to respond to environmental incidents is the most important issue for agile organization [3].

In agile organizations, human resources are the main sources of productivity. The fact that customers pay for a product or service depends on the staffs' knowledge, information and technology provided by the organizations that enables them to satisfy customers' needs [4].

These days, knowledge is the most valuable to the organization [5]. Knowledge is the only source in the organization that not only its value does not diminish by usage, but it has also added value [6].

Organizations that have a high degree of creativity and business performance manage their knowledge effectively. [7] On the other hand, high-speed development of new technologies and digital communications led to the growing importance of knowledge management as a critical resource for competitive advantages [8].

Today, conditions and competitive environment of the organizations are more complex and variable. This environment is changing so quickly that for most organizations, these changes are far quicker than the speed of response and the ability to implement them. Continuing changes in knowledge has created new situation of imbalance for organizations. Endless stream of knowledge changes the markets continuously and this makes the organizations change continuously [9].

Organizational learning is often depended on processes of organizational forgetting (purposeful forgetting). This means that companies which wish to have a change, not only need not to learn new skills, but often have to forget the old knowledge that limited them in the past [10].

Companies not only learn, but also forget. In fact, knowledge management seeks to create processes useful not only to learn and protect the useful knowledge, but also for the lack of learning and avoidance of what is not useful. forgetting is not as simple as learning and may be harmful or beneficial. However, it would be effective significantly in positive and purposeful aspects and in negative in competitiveness of a company [11].

in an article entitled the effects of agile abilities on production performance of car instruments manufacturers with a Bayesian network approach, Saremi and Ajdari showed the relationship between agility capabilities and measures of production performance and used it in the development of agile production theory and implementation of agile production in the organization [12].

Ruzdar (1382) investigated the impact of knowledge management on the performance of managers. The researcher concluded that there is relationships between knowledge management and innovation increase in the workplace, between productivity and performance, and also between knowledge management and each indicators of the performance [13].

Gold et al. (2001) examined the effect of knowledge on organizational performance. They tried to confirm experimentally the effects of knowledge management ability on improving organizational performance. The results showed that collection and sharing of new knowledge can provide a competitive advantage for the organization and ultimately lead to organizational performance [14].

Li-Ann HO (2008) in an article entitled "What impacts on the organization's performance? The relationship between learning and knowledge management" indicated that self-learning has positive effect on organizational learning and knowledge management capabilities, but it has no direct and significant effect on the organization's performance, thus its effects is significant indirectly and through organizational learning of knowledge management capabilities [15].

Lee & Choi (2003) in an article entitled "Experimental investigation of integrating the empowerments of knowledge management, processes, and organizational performance" showed that knowledge management empowerment affects on the process of knowledge management, and they, in turn, impact on organizational performance by virtue of mediated effects [16].

Sadeghian, and colleagues in an article entitled "Investigating the relationship between purposeful organizational forgetting and organizational agility" achieved the following results:

There exists a significant relationship between purposeful organizational forgetting and learning organizational agility. As well, components of de-learning the aspects of organizational forgetting have positive significant relationship with all the components of organizational agility. There also exists a significant positive correlation between the components of bad habits avoidance and technology components and market as a component of organizational agility. But there is no significant relationship between components of bad habits avoidance and other components of agility such as integration, teaming, quality, change, development and welfare of employees. The purposeful organizational forgetting showed good prediction of organizational agility and among the components of organizational forgetting, component of de-learning revealed as the uppermost predictor of organizational agility [17].

Chenari et al. in their paper showed that the organizational forgetting and organizational agility have significant relationship with organizational performance. Also, component of purposeful organizational forgetting among the components of organizational forgetting, and component of performance management among the components of organizational agility were the most important predictor of organizational performance [18].

In an article, Moshabaki et al. showed that purposeful forgetting and organizational learning affect on organizational performance by improving the capacity of knowledge management [19].

Accordingly, the present study tries to examine the effect of organizational forgetting on organizational agility, organizational learning, knowledge management capacity, and organization's performance.

## Research hypotheses

1. There is a relationship between purposeful organizational forgetting and organizational learning.
2. There is a relationship between purposeful organizational forgetting and organizational performance.
3. There is a relationship between purposeful organizational forgetting and organizational agility.
4. There is a relationship between purposeful organizational forgetting and knowledge management capacity.
5. There is a relationship between organizational learning and organizational performance.
6. There is a relationship between organizational learning and organizational agility.
7. There is a relationship between organizational learning and knowledge management capacity.
8. There is a relationship between knowledge management capacity and organizational performance.
9. There is a relationship between knowledge management capacity and organizational agility.
10. There is a relationship between organizational agility and organizational performance.

## Provided Model for the Research

According to the literature review, the researchers sought to examine the relationships among organizational forgetting, organizational learning, knowledge management capacity, organizational performance and organizational agility.

## 2. Review of the Theoretical Foundations

Here's an overview of organizational agility, knowledge management, knowledge management capacity and purposeful organizational forgetting are presented separately.

### 1.2. Organizational Agility:

Agility means a set of capabilities and competencies which help organizations survive and thrive in business environments. In fact agility, as the new paradigm, is based on the increase in change coefficient in an environment where makes businesses and organizations respond to changes thoughtfully and reasonably. On the other hand, markets and customers want cheap products in line with their tastes and quick access to them. Thus, agility can bring success in gaining profits, market share and attracting customers in competitive markets [20].

Organizational agility means maximum flexibility, so that it can not only respond to a change in the product, market, and the needs of customers, but also provide opportunities to make changes among competitors in order to be recognized as the top organization. So, agility is a comprehensive strategy for irreversible changes that leads to organizational superiority [2].

Agile institutions and organizations distressed change, uncertainty and lack of predictability in their business. Thus, the institutions need a number of distinct capabilities in order to deal with change, uncertainty and lack of predictability in their own environment. These capabilities include four main elements that are considered as the basis for maintaining and developing agility:

1. Responding ability which refers to the ability of recognizing rapid changes and reacting rapidly and making profit from them.
2. Competence which implies the ability to achieve the aims and objectives of the organization.
3. Flexibility and adaptability such as the following: the ability to process various procedures and achieving various goals, using the same facilities.
4. Speed that is referred to as the ability to perform the tasks in the shortest possible time [21].

To achieve agility in the public sector, three principles should be focused on:

- To predict events, understand the necessary changes, and the restructuring services based on those changes, the public sector must make the best use of the network.
- The public sector should prove its capability of learning better methods of carrying out its activities and dealing with challenges.
- Public sector should increase efficiency and effectiveness of its available resources.

Based on these principles, fourteen signs of agility components in the public sector are described below. However, these signs are not indicators of performance, but are the mechanisms of public organizations motions to various aspects of agility.

- Predicting and understanding the changing demands of citizens
- Redesigning operations in line with the changes in laws and citizens demand
- Having extensive interaction with staff and citizens
- Reducing the number of steps of a process
- Providing more and better communication channels for citizens
- Solidarity with the citizens in personal, local and national crisis
- Making the information necessary for citizens accessible
- Reflecting on progress, taking lessons from the experiences, and institutionalizing gained insights
- Better services to citizens in all parts of the country
- Following up status and value of all resources and converting more information to assets
- Outsourcing and procurement of goods and services in order to increase preparedness and economies of scale with minimal dependence on suppliers of resources
- Maintaining core competencies, developing skills and abilities for use in special times
- Adopting and implementing collective appropriate decisions by the use of information technologies and developing and announcing of information through proper communication channels
- Encouraging citizens to do public activities using the most efficient methods available [20].

## 2.2. Knowledge Management

Success of the companies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with regard to the increasing competitiveness of the markets, relies on the knowledge that companies need in their key processes. Knowledge management means finding new ways to create, identify, detect, share, and distribute organizational knowledge to people who need them [22]. Knowledge management can be defined as that part of the management process which focuses on a systematic analysis, planning, storage, creation, development, storage, and application of organization's knowledge, and tries to a large extent to convert human capital to structural capital in order to create competitive advantage and to help realize other main objectives in the appropriate way. Also, knowledge management, as an intra-task activity, is and should be a component of senior (strategic) management competence of a company [23].

Table 1. Knowledge management indicator

Component	indicator
<b>Infrastructure</b>	
Feasibility, priorities, attitude of senior managers, competencies, organizational values	Mission and values of the organization
knowledge Instruction, the physical structure of the workplace, leadership, culture, process and data management	organizational
Digital documentation, communication networks	Information Technology
, human resources Finance, tasks classification	Learning and instructing
<b>Process</b>	
Knowledge production, knowledge acquisition	Creating knowledge
Capture and storage of knowledge, knowledge maintaining, knowledge classification, knowledge support, sorting of knowledge, knowledge analysis	Saving and organizing knowledge
conversion knowledge, knowledge distribution, development and transfer of knowledge, socializing knowledge, creating added value, partnership and cooperation in the field of knowledge	Sharing knowledge and added value
Problem solving, predicting, competitive advantage tool	Implementation and use of knowledge

## 2.3. Knowledge management capacity

Zack thinks that a company's management capacity includes knowledge acquisition, knowledge refining, storage and retrieval of knowledge and presentation of knowledge. Recently, he has introduced the main factors in the implementation of knowledge management in organizations as the ability to create, store, marketing, transmission and application of knowledge [24].

According to this and to the existing literature on knowledge management, knowledge management capacity can be measured through three indices as the following:

1. The creation and acquisition of knowledge (Creating and Capturing knowledge): enabling organization's members in acquiring and understanding of existing knowledge from outside sources, domestic sources, and both formal and informal sources.
2. Sharing knowledge (Sharing knowledge): enabling organization's members in using various communication tools (formal or informal) to help share knowledge in the organization.
3. Learning and improvement (Learning and Improving): enabling organization's members in creating new knowledge and promoting working behavior [19].

#### **2-4. Purposeful Organizational Forgetting**

In recent years, organizational forgetting has attracted attention of many researchers. Hulon, Lawrence, and Phillips conducted a targeted research on the organizational forgetting, and divided it into four categories: memory loss, inability to understand, de-learning, avoiding bad habits, with regard to two dimensions including knowledge of organization's forgetting and differences between new knowledge and established knowledge [25].

Although the concept organizational forgetting is easily understood, the mechanism of its occurrence in the organization is not well-known. Since organizational forgetting can affect the competitiveness of the company or organization, organizations need some processes in order to ensure that the knowledge that should be discarded is forgotten and the knowledge that is useful is not forgotten. Organizational forgetting is not the inability of the organization in learning; sometimes it is necessary for the organization to consciously abandon the existing knowledge (Othman, & Hashim, 2002) and sometimes knowledge is forgotten unconsciously and through time (Tham, 2008) [26].

Hulon and Phillips stated that learning is affected by forgetting because it helps the organization remove outdated knowledge which is no longer needed and acquire new knowledge. As organizational learning requires new measures and the standard operating procedures in order to replace the old ones, forgetting processes can also contribute to their success. Also, forgetting plays an important role in the dynamics of knowledge [27].

#### **Dehulon's Classification of Organizational Forgetting:**

**Memory loss:** In this mode of organizational forgetting, organization forgets the old and available knowledge unconsciously and accidentally. Destruction of memory causes loss of significant competitive advantages and makes lots of costs for reproduction of the lost knowledge for the organization.

**Inability to acquire knowledge:** inability to acquire knowledge occurs in the case when the organization fails to keep the recent knowledge and loses it without planning. In this case, the organization neglects in making the new valuable information accessible to others. Sometimes, outstanding employees transfer important information outside the organization when leaving it.

**De-learning:** de-learning can be as important as learning for the organization. A company can put aside the information and knowledge that may harm its success.

**Avoidance of bad habits:** organizations, just like people, can learn inappropriate habits, guidelines, practices, beliefs and values that are harmful for production. Successful organizations are able to forget such as knowledge purposefully before they become institutionalized in organizational memory [10].

#### **2-5. Research Methodology**

The present study is considered applied based on its nature and purpose. Descriptive and correlation statistical methods were used to test hypotheses.

**The population:** The population of the study included experts, administrators, supervisors and middle and high level managers with at least 7 years experience who were an official member of Golestan gas company.

**Sample:** simple random sampling method was used to select the sample and to determine sample size, Morgan table was used. According to Morgan table, 52 samples is sufficient for a population of 60. To achieve confidentiality, 60 questionnaires were distributed among the staff. After removing the flawed questionnaires from the collected ones, 54 questionnaires were analyzed.

### Research tools

Moshabaki's et al. (2012) questionnaire was used to assess variables including purposeful organizational forgetting, organizational learning, knowledge management capacity and organizational performance. The mentioned questionnaire includes 40 questions out of which five questions are related to the purposeful organizational forgetting (to measure the dimensions of de-learning, and bad habits avoidance), 13 questions about the organizational learning (to measure the dimensions of knowledge acquisition, information distribution, information interpretation and organizational memory), 10 questions about the knowledge management capacity (to measure the dimensions of knowledge creation, knowledge sharing, learning and improvement) and 12 questions related to the organizational performance (to measure the dimensions of financial, customer, internal processes, learning and growth). Validity of the questionnaire was assessed under the supervision of professional professors and reliability was calculated using Cronbach's alpha (.852).

To collect the data for agility organizational variable, silvay's (1389) questionnaire of organizational agility was used. It consists of 16 questions, three questions on leadership, four on organizational change, three questions related to culture and values, three questions related to customer service and three questions on the management performance. Validity of the questionnaire was assessed under the supervision of professional professors, and reliability was calculated using the Cronbach alpha (.92).

In order to analyze the descriptive data, SPSS software was used and SMART PLS software was used to analyze inferential statistics.

### Reliability

To ensure the fit of the measurement model, factor loadings coefficients, Cronbach's alpha coefficient, combined reliability coefficient and divergent and convergent validity were used.

### Factor Loadings Coefficients

To assess the suitability of the factor loadings, the criterion for was 0.4 factor loadings coefficients (Hollande, 1999). As it is depicted in the following figure, factor loadings were higher than 0.4 which shows the appropriateness of the criteria for assessing the reliability.

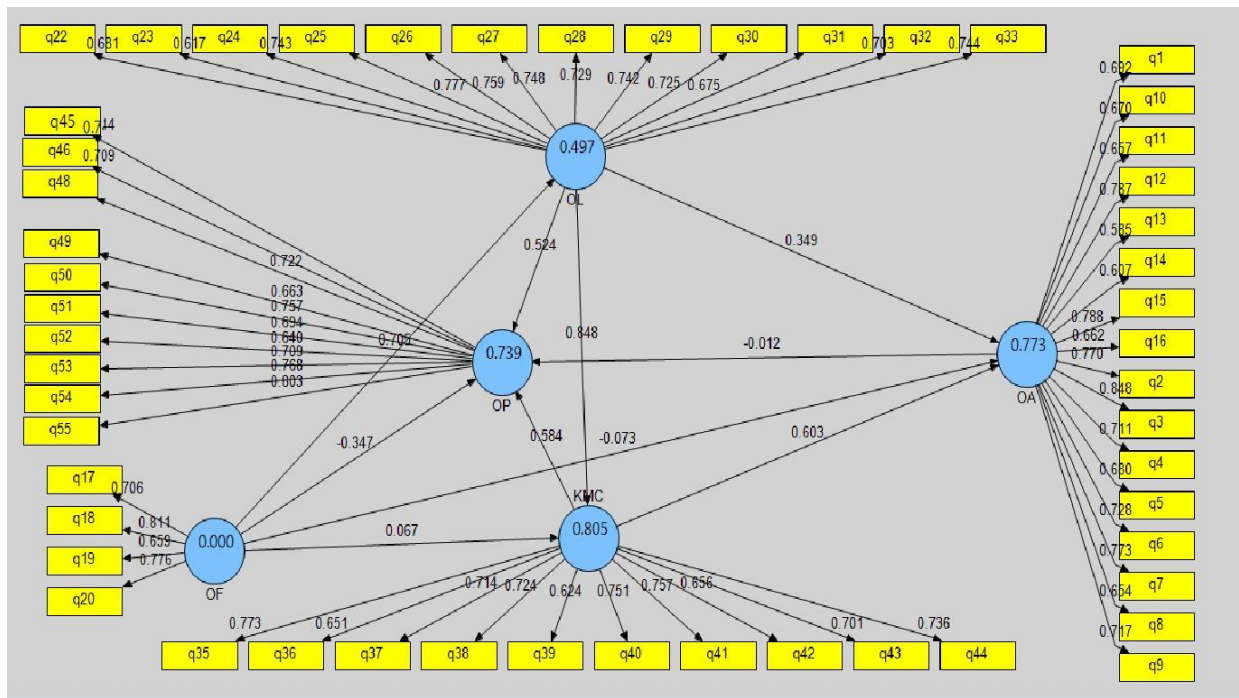


Figure 2. factor loading coefficient of the research model

### Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient, Combined Reliability Coefficient and Convergent Validity

Internal reliability indicates the correlation between a structure and its indicators. Cronbach's alpha values greater than 0.7 indicates acceptable reliability. In the current study, as presented in Table 2, Cronbach's alpha values for all variables is greater than 0.7, and it shows high reliability of the questionnaire used. Since Cronbach's alpha is a traditional criteria for determining the reliability of a measure, PLS method is more modern standard than alpha reliability and it is called combined reliability (CR). If the combined reliability value of a construct is over 0.7, it shows the appropriate internal consistency for the measurement model [28]. Combined reliability coefficient greater for all variables is more than 0.7.

### Convergent Validity

Convergent validity is the second criterion used for fit of the measurement models in PLS method. AVE benchmark represents the mean-variance shared between the construct and its indicator. The more the solidarity, the higher the fit (Barclay et al., 1995). Furnel and locker (1981) considered the average variance extracted over 0.5 as appropriate [28]. Table 2 shows that the mean variance of all variables is greater than this which explains good convergent validity of the research model.

Table 2. Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient, Combined Reliability Coefficient and Convergent Validity

The average variance extracted AVE>0.5	Combining reliability coefficient Alpha>0.7	Cronbach's alpha coefficient Alpha>0.7	Latent variables	Title in the model
0.50444	0.910181	0.890003	Knowledge management capacity	KMC
0.505989	0.941974	0.933713	Organizational agility	OA
0.548144	0.828212	0.727227	Organizational forgetting	OF
0.520434	0.928454	0.915878	Organizational learning	OL
0.521891	0.915755	0.897798	Organizational performance	OP

### Divergent Validity

Another criterion to check the fit of the measurement model is divergent validity which shows the correlation of a construct with its indices in contrast to the correlation of the construct with other constructs. important criterion for assessing the validity of the method is Furnel and Locker, which is the relationship between a construct and its indices in comparison with its relationship with other constructs. Plausible divergent validity of the model suggests that one construct in the model has more interaction with its indices than other constructs [28]. In Table 4, the matrix of Furnel and Locker divergent validity method shows that the construct has more interactions with its indices than other constructs.

Table 3. Latent Variable Correlations

	KMC	OA	OF	OL	OP
KMC	1.00000				
OA	0.866798	1.00000			
OF	0.665237	0.57387	1.00000		
OL	0.895695	0.837367	0.705125	1.00000	
OP	0.811513	0.733314	0.403663	0.791798	1.00000

### Structural model fit (R Square or R<sup>2</sup>)

R<sup>2</sup> coefficients are employed to connect measurement parts and structural parts of structural equation modeling and are used to evaluate the fit of the structural model which are related to Endogenous variables of the model. R<sup>2</sup> coefficient is a measure showing the impact of an exogenous variable on an endogenous variable. Three values of .19, .33, .67 as the basis for weak, medium and strong values of R<sup>2</sup> are taken into account [28]. R<sup>2</sup> coefficients calculated for this model are illustrated in Table 5, that suggest the appropriateness of the fit of the structural model.

Table 4. Structural model fit (R Square or R<sup>2</sup>)

	R Square
KMC	0.804523
OA	0.772818
OF	
OL	0.497202



OP	0.739473
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**The overall fit of the model**

Benchmark GOF is the model including both structural and measurement parts and is completed by approval of its fit in a model. Vetzels et al. (2009, p. 187) introduced three values of .01, .25, .36 as weak, medium and strong values for GOF [28]. In this study, the value of .604 for the overall fit of the model indicates the strong overall fit of the model.

$$GOF = \frac{\sqrt{\overline{Communalities}} \times \overline{R^2}}{\overline{Communalities}}$$

$$= \frac{Communality(KMC) + Communality(OA) + Communality(OF) + Communality(OL) + Communality(OP)}{5}$$

$$\overline{R^2} = \frac{R^2(KMC) + R^2(OA) + R^2(OL) + R^2(OP)}{4}$$

Communality		R Square	
	communality		R Square
KMC	0.50444	KMC	0.804523
OA	0.505989	OA	0.772818
OF	0.548144	OF	
OL	0.520434	OL	0.497202
OP	0.521891	OP	0.739473

$\overline{Communalities} = 0.5201796$   
 $\overline{R^2} = 0.703504$   
 $GOF = .604$

**6. Results and Discussion**

A total of 54 people responded to the questionnaire. These people were selected randomly and their demographic information are presented in the following table.

Table 5: Descriptive information of education and age variable of the sample

		Education			Total
		B.S.	B.A.	M.A.	
Age	>30	0	4	1	5
	31-40	1	10	13	24
	41-50	0	8	7	15
	>51	3	6	1	10
Total		4	28	22	54

85% of participants were male (N=46) and 15% were female (N=8). Of the 54 patients, 9 percent were below thirty years old, 44.5% between 31 and 40 years old, 28% between 41 and 50 years old, and 18.5% over 50 years old. 7 percent had a B.S. degree, 52 percent had a bachelor's degree, and 41 percent had a master degree. Also, 50% had job experience of 6 to 15 years, 33% between 16 to 25 years, and 17% over 26 years.

**Analysis of the Research Hypotheses**

According to the data analysis algorithm by PLS method, Figure 3 shows significant coefficient of model pathways (z significant coefficient). If it is more than 1.96, it implies the significance of the assumptions in confidence level of 95 percent. In this study, as shown in Table 7, coefficients for each path are specified.

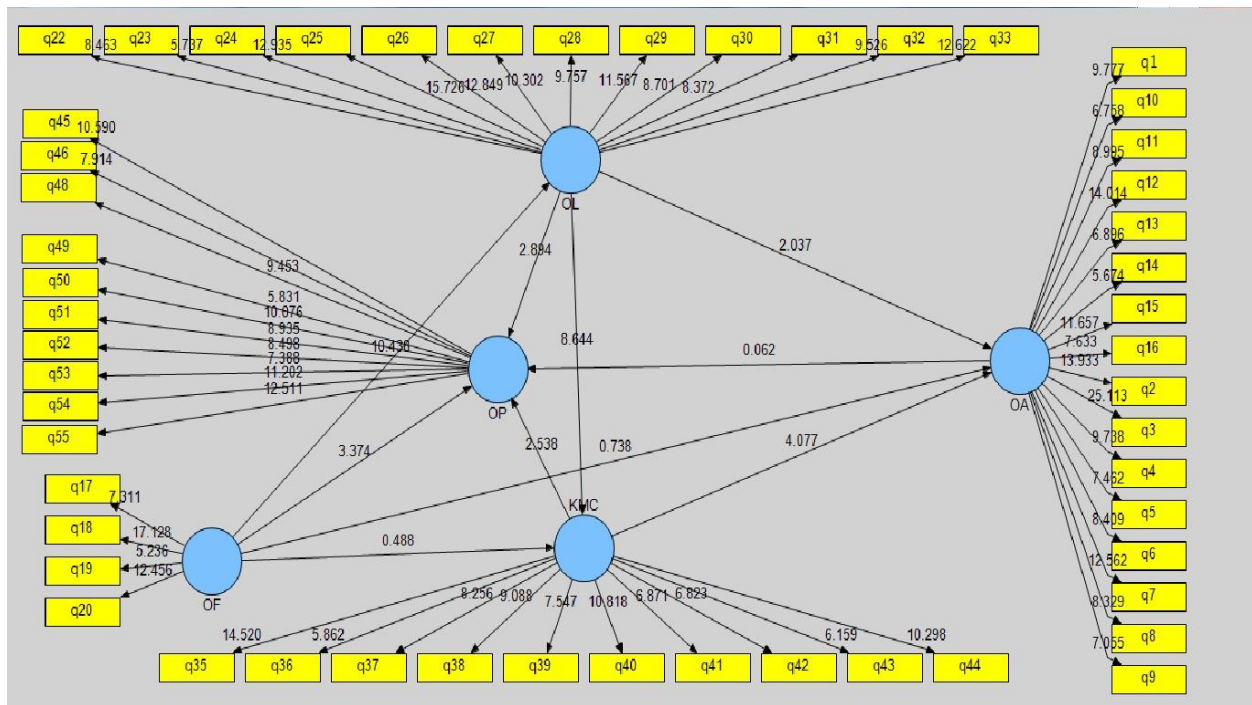


Figure 3. Data analysis algorithm by PLS method

The results, suggest that the purposeful organizational forgetting has direct effect on organizational learning that is in line with what have been proved previously by some researchers such as Chenari, et al (2014), Moshabaki et al. (2012) Sadeghian et al (2012).

The results of evaluating the model show that there is direct relationship between purposeful organizational forgetting and organizational performance which is supported by what is found by Chenari et al. (2014), Jalali et al. (2010), but not in line with Moshabaki's et al (2012) findings. Moreover, no direct relationships were found between purposeful organizational forgetting and knowledge management capacity as well as purposeful organizational forgetting and organizational agility.

Additionally, organizational learning revealed to have direct relationship with knowledge management capacity, and organizational performance also showed direct relationship with organizational agility that are in line with Chenari et al (2014), and Moshabaki et al (2012).

Knowledge management capacity has a direct impact on organizational performance which supports Moshabaki's et al (2012) findings. Also, knowledge management capacity has direct relationship with organizational agility.

There is no direct relationship between organizational agility and organizational performance, but an increase in organizational learning and knowledge management capacity can increase organizational agility which directly increases organizational performance.

The results of the present study suggest that to increase performance, the organization needs to strengthen and promote organizational learning as well as knowledge management capacity by creating a mechanism for collecting, preserving, and sharing the existing knowledge that help the employees develop their organization by sharing their knowledge among themselves.

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