

## **Hearing Faculty Members' Voice: A Gendered View on Knowledge Sharing**

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## Abstract

### Purpose

The effects of gendered views on employee voice are of great importance for knowledge sharing within public universities. Yet, they are still neglected by current human resource management and entrepreneurship literature. While strengthening themselves by reinforcing the strengths and opportunities, public universities can generate entrepreneurial opportunities through various knowledge-sharing mechanisms, including social networks and employee voice. This became a crucial lever for public universities to leverage competitive advantages and to support entrepreneurial activities through network knowledge-based sharing. For this purpose, this study examines the various aspects of entrepreneurship via the voice of employees, emphasizing the moderating effect of gender and the mediating role of social networks on the link between employee voice and the entrepreneurial atmosphere of universities.

### Design/methodology/approach

We collected survey data from a cross-sectional sample of 335 employees engaged in entrepreneurship activities within public universities in an emerging economy context and analyzed the data using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) with the Smart-PLS software.

### Findings

The PLS-SEM analysis found that different dimensions of the university entrepreneurial climate (communication, knowledge sharing, and innovative climate) positively impact members' voices within public universities. This effect is amplified by social networks, which are crucial for spreading knowledge among faculty, thereby fostering a more open and collaborative academic environment.

### Research limitations/implications

When acting, the university top management team should encourage the generation and dissemination of entrepreneurial ideas to nurture a dynamic entrepreneurial atmosphere and social involvement, ultimately supporting sustainable competitive advantages through a culture of strategic knowledge sharing. The results have practical implications for university managers, entrepreneurship education actors, administrators, policy-makers, and entrepreneurial ecosystem actors, by demonstrating how social networks can amplify the dissemination of ideas and entrepreneurial spirit.

### Originality/value

This research explores how entrepreneurship and social networks can help faculty members have a stronger influence in academic settings. It also fills in the gaps in knowledge about how human resource management and entrepreneurship can work together to create a more communicative and innovative academic environment. Additionally, this study brings new ideas to existing literature by looking at how gender differences can affect employee voice, particularly emphasizing the importance of women in leadership roles at universities. This study is also the first to delve into how entrepreneurship and social networks, along with gender perceptions, play a role in shaping the voice of employees in a public university.

**Keywords:** Knowledge Sharing, Members' Voice, Gender, Entrepreneurship, Social Network, Competitive Advantage, Public University, Voice Behavior

## **1. Introduction**

In recent years, universities have integrated a third goal of knowledge transfer (Rothaermel et al, 2007; Centobelli et al, 2019; Kalar and Antoncic, 2015; Leon-Roa et al, 2024; Barra et al, 2024), which is critical for innovation and socioeconomic development as well as to their conventional roles of research and education. Collaboration between universities and industries, as well as academic entrepreneurship, have emerged as essential economic drivers, significantly boosting regional and national prosperity (Salomaa et al, 2023; Sánchez-Barrioluengo and Benneworth, 2019; Audretsch and Lehmann, 2005). This global trend emphasizes the relevance of universities' changing roles in economic contribution and entrepreneurship (Syed et al., 2023). To manage modern challenges, colleges must adopt their entrepreneurial strategies, thereby strengthening their impact on society and the economy (O'Reilly et al., 2019; Aldawod, 2022). In summary, it is increasingly clear that modern universities are considered major drivers of entrepreneurial innovations (Jongbloed, 2015; Guerrero and Urbano, 2012; Radko et al., 2023; Owen et al., 2023). Within the study of university entrepreneurship, universities play a significant role in delivering the latest technology and knowledge to meet society's needs and contribute to the entrepreneurial paradigm in harmony with international advancements and innovations (Rosak-Szyrocka et al., 2023). Therefore, through sharing ideas, one can gain the ability to innovate, identify opportunities, and take risks (Hormiga et al., 2017). Universities support members' ideas by reducing organizational constraints, educating talented personnel and entrepreneurs, and funding venture initiatives that foster an entrepreneurial environment and networking (Bischoff et al., 2018). At the same time, many governments have encouraged public universities to be more entrepreneurial by enrolling large numbers of fee-paying international students and relying on them as important resource providers (Parker, 2024). However, during this shift to an entrepreneurial university paradigm, the quality and effectiveness of public universities may depend on their faculty members (E'tesami et al., 2020), to achieve a dynamic environment for the creation and dissemination of new ideas within their structures (García-Morales et al., 2006). To this end, a preliminary step could involve developing opportunities for faculty members to share their ideas, which may pave the road for advantageous academic policy changes (Matthews and Dollinger, 2023). Therefore, effective management and sharing of knowledge among faculty members are critical for fostering educational quality and institutional development. Over several decades, considerable literature has identified significant research agendas in entrepreneurial

universities (Ribeiro et al., 2024; Correia et al., 2024), particularly within the domain of knowledge sharing (Mazzucato and Semieniuk 2018), university entrepreneurial paradigm shift (Parker, 2024), and gender diversity (Muscio and Vallanti, 2024; Carlson and Jennings, 2024; Laspita et al., 2024; Alhajri and Aloud, 2024). Although social media positively contributes to enhancing employee voice, the relevant literature is fundamentally fragmented (Grimshaw et al., 2023). Consequently, it is crucial to review existing studies and propose an integrated model for future research (Ghani and Malik, 2022). While previous studies indicated that the involvement of academics in less formal activities provides significant substantial economic and social academic scholars and industrial partners (Abreu and Grinevich, 2013), recent research suggests that management can facilitate informal direct employee voice in the workplace (Nyfoudi et al., 2024). Hence, some studies have suggested that more focus and more research is necessary on informal technology and knowledge transfer (Kalar and Antoncic, 2015; Khan et al., 2023).

Even though numerous studies have addressed the association between Employee voice and social media (Khan et al., 2023; Ghani, and Malik, 2022; Lee et al., 2023; Kremer et al., 2019), several unsolved questions are identified for leveraging social media tools in knowledge management practices to foster employee participation (Williams and Bland, 2020). For instance, they ignored the mediating role of social networks in the relationship between entrepreneurship and people's voices. Recent studies call for further research on how organizations can leverage social media to enhance employee voice behavior and coworker knowledge sharing (Lee et al., 2023; Shipton et al., 2024; Ding, 2024). Specifically, the potential impact of entrepreneurial focus on academic activities in universities is still not well understood (Kalar and Antoncic, 2015). Although previous studies have considered the effects of social media on the members' voice (Andersson et al., 2023; Miles and Mangold, 2014; Ghani, and Malik, 2022), most of these studies have focused on the shortcomings of social media and have not investigated its positive impact on members' voice.

This gap restricts the investigation of university research and entrepreneurship concerning the puzzle of knowledge transfer, especially in the emerging markets. Nonetheless, little study has been conducted on the influence of the discrepancy on employee voice via social networks through social networks in public universities, particularly from a gendered view on knowledge sharing (Zhang et al., 2023). Therefore, this study aims to investigate how does entrepreneurship (including communication, knowledge sharing, and innovative climate) impact members' voice through the facilitating role of social networks and gender? The majority of extant research has

examined employee voice in industrial societies and among nurses; however, no research has been done on academics, so this study is innovative in this sense. The present research aims to integrate perspectives from the fields of human resource management and entrepreneurship literature. Furthermore, it seeks to offer a more comprehensive understanding of employee voice and make a meaningful contribution to the existing literature by bridging these disciplines. Therefore, human resource management needs to make sure that everyone can talk to each other at work and share their thoughts and ideas. This helps employees feel like they have a say in decisions and can be creative. Encouraging employees to think creatively and take part in entrepreneurial activities can foster a culture of innovation and help close any existing gaps (Hosseini *et al.*, 2024). This culture should include supporting risk-taking and accepting failure as part of the learning process. The study will be grounded in the theory of resources and expectancy motivation.

Hence, this study intends to examine the causal relationships between entrepreneurship (communication, knowledge sharing, and innovative climate) on members' voice, mediated by social networks in Iran's public universities. Besides, this relationship is moderated by gender. Therefore, this study highlights the important prominence of entrepreneurship and social networks in facilitating employee voice and emphasizes that universities should create, share, and apply knowledge to make entrepreneurship opportunities more accessible. Knowledge sharing stands at the core of academic growth and innovation in universities, where faculty members are recognized as pivotal. As the primary academic resource, they are not only responsible for producing and applying knowledge but also for its dissemination across the academic community and beyond. The findings are relevant not only to Iran but also to other institutions worldwide with similar entrepreneurial climates, by demonstrating how social networks can amplify the dissemination of ideas and entrepreneurial spirit.

This research is applied in nature and uses a quantitative research design. The research population in this research included Faculty members with more than 5 years of work experience in February 2022. Besides, Software PLS3 is used to analyze the data. The article briefly elaborates on the theoretical principles underlying the study, presents the implemented methodology, and discusses the implications for both research and practice. Finally, we conclude by highlighting limitations of the present research and guidelines for forthcoming research inquiries.

## **2. Study Background and Hypotheses**

## 2.1.Theoretical Principles

In the realm of organizational dynamics, 'voice' refers to the critical practice of employees openly expressing their opinions and concerns regarding work-related issues, to influence decisions that impact both their interests and those of their organization (Della Torre *et al.*, 2022). This expression is a key indicator of the degree of freedom employees experience within their workplace, allowing them not only to influence issues directly impacting their roles but also to actively participate in the organizational decision-making process. The concept of 'voice' encompasses a broad range of aspects, from working conditions to operational processes (Sablok, 2014). From a resource-based perspective, the value of employee voice is particularly significant in strategic human resource management across various organizations, including academic institutions (Wright *et al.*, 2001). This perspective underscores the idea that by encouraging and utilizing employee voice, organizations can leverage this wealth of expertise to enhance decision-making processes and solve problems more effectively.

Voice is a distinct concept; it differs from intimate behaviors, such as assistance, and is typically associated with organizational citizenship behavior and situational performance. While intimacy behaviors aim to build and maintain relationships, voice involves taking action to assert one's rights and typically results in some level of relationship deterioration. Meanwhile, the initial goal is usually to improve the situation (Kök *et al.*, 2016). Organizational voice is also different from preventative actions, such as conscientious behavior or whistleblowing, because the goal of whistleblowing is to prevent the continuation of harmful practices, while organizational voice aims to recommend changes to improve the current work process (Zhao *et al.*, 2023; LePine and Van Dyne, 1998). It is also important to distinguish between organizational voice and individual complaints, as complaints indicate disapproval but do not necessarily suggest change (Matthews and Dollinger, 2023).

Voice behavior differs from the roles described in members' job descriptions because these roles are pre-defined and are expected of employees (LePine and Van Dyne, 1998). Therefore, voice can be challenging, especially in multicultural workplaces where individuals may have different values, beliefs, experiences, and attitudes (Afsar *et al.*, 2019). Employees can have crucial ideas or information; nonetheless, they may find it stressful or risky to share such information due to a lack of understanding of other people's cultures, priorities, and opinions related to change-oriented processes (Chou and Barron, 2016). Thus, it will be difficult to engage in effective

communication and collaboration, which are crucial for successful organizational change initiatives.

## **2.2. Hypothesis Development**

Technologies are essential to achieving development goals because they empower organizational stakeholders to make decisions to ensure effective outcomes. Focusing on technical advancements and the viewpoints of the scientists who created them is essential because science and technology facilitate the comprehension of natural phenomena and regulate world processes (Di Vaio *et al.*, 2023b). Web-based technology 2 (Web 2.0) refers to a set of technologies and principles that allow everyone to participate in the production, presentation and processing of information and better search for users to easily access the desired information and find practical experience (Han, 2012). A social network is a web-based technology that allows individuals to create private or semi-private pages in a virtual space, interact with others, and monitor their connections, disconnecting and forming new relationships as desired (Rooksby *et al.*, 2009). Social networks consist of three subsystems: technological, information, and social. The technological dimension supports social interactions, while the information dimension involves the production of digital content by individuals, and the social dimension refers to trust-based communication and collaboration (Rubin and Babbie, 2016). While social networks were initially used by individuals outside of organizations to communicate with friends and acquaintances, they are now widely used in the workplace by members (Schmidt *et al.*, 2016). However, employees' use of social networks at work has been considered a controversial topic (Moqbel and Kock, 2018), and some organizations prohibit their use (Ali-Hassan *et al.*, 2015). Studies have shown that social networks can lead to feelings of isolation, inadequacy, self-absorption, fear of missing out (FOMO), depression, apprehension, cyberbullying, and other adverse impressions (Papademetriou *et al.*, 2022). Managers often argue that employees' personal use of social networks wastes their time at work and reduces their job performance; they call it 'internet wandering' or 'virtual out-of-work' (Akbulut *et al.*, 2017).

In recent years, the rise in employee use of social networks at work has prompted some companies to consider purchasing or developing their own internal social networks. Social networks can be broadly categorized into two groups: public social networks (such as Facebook, MySpace, etc.) and organizational or internal social networks (such as Skype for Business, BiHio,

etc.). Public social networks are open to all and are often free to join, while organizational social networks are restricted to a limited number of individuals determined by the organization's policies (Moqbel and Kock, 2018). Organizational social networks are designed to support physical social networks within the organization (Leonardi *et al.*, 2013). Like public networks, they typically offer features such as commenting, posting updates, requesting communication with other members, searching for people, and visualizing physical social networks (Fulk and Yuan, 2013). Despite the potential impact of communicative practices on power imbalances within universities, they are often seen as representing the ideal civil society. For example, recent evidence recognizes the importance of developing an internal stakeholders' social network within the university community (Foroudi *et al.*, 2020).

### ***Communication***

Universities to survive, need communication. Communication is the act of sending and receiving information so that the recipient may understand it (Smith and Rupp, 2002). Communication and participation among members can lead to promoting loyalty, trust, and evaluation of the organization's reputation and brand (Foroudi, 2022). In other words, effective communication is considered a significant feature of human capital in organizations, and it can be said that a better understanding of communication increases the effectiveness of universities (Turaga, 2019). In contrast, the weakness in communication processes reduces the impact of well-documented information (Abbas *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, the critical step in knowledge sharing is the establishment of organizational interactions (Hao *et al.*, 2024; Mahajan *et al.*, 2024; Perotti *et al.*, 2024). Employee communication contributes to sharing ideas, and recommendations, but the shortage of empirical communication prevents this process and inhibits the transformation of individual knowledge into organizational knowledge (Nguyen *et al.*, 2022).

Communication has a positive impact on feelings of social network users users who, who are dedicated to sustaining ties with other members and are more socially motivated (Chai and Kim, 2012). Furthermore, communication is a structure that might shape loyalty through a robust and sustainable psychological association connotation along with shared experiences (Cartwright *et al.*, 2021). Consequently, individuals holding high positions in various academic institutions use social networks to connect with their stakeholders, communicate digitally, and promote themselves as a brand (Newaz *et al.*, 2023). Therefore, the current working paper

acknowledges that social networks enable university managers to disseminate information to the stakeholders at a minimum cost and time. This empowers university managers to overcome the inherent limitations of a conventional communication system and display digital resilience. According to communication theorists, emotionally invested or contented workers are more inclined to suggest ideas for change (Ng and Feldman, 2012). However, when mutual expectations are not met, individuals are less willing to cooperate and may even seek to punish the other party. Thus, respecting and maintaining reciprocal relationships in social exchange has significant implications for members' voice, such as the occurrence of vocal behavior (Chen *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, university managers can use social networks to veil critical concerns and protect the institution from an immediate trial, to conduct online debates to gain attention, to build brand image, and increase scalability. Hence, the first hypothesis of this study is formulated as follows:

**H1a:** *Communication has a substantial influence on members' voice.*

### ***Knowledge sharing***

Knowledge sharing, as an integral part of entrepreneurship, should be fostered within universities. Indeed, transferring knowledge within the organization is critical for the cultivation of entrepreneurial behaviors, the promotion of university performance, and the attainment of a competitive advantage (Solomon *et al.*, 2019). However, the effectiveness of this knowledge hinges on its dissemination among other individuals or groups to significantly influence organizational performance (Hormiga *et al.*, 2017). This pursuit is particularly emphasized in universities due to the availability of specialists with innovative knowledge at the right time (Mehmood *et al.*, 2021). Because, universities implement two primary goals: facilitating the sharing of internal staff knowledge and motivating the use of new technologies through social networks (Di Tullio *et al.*, 2021). Social networks lead to interaction among people, leading to innovative forms of dynamic communication (Van Den Hooff and De Ridder, 2004). Individuals are interested in processes of exchanging knowledge with others in shared spaces. Synergy emerges within a group when members share and transfer their knowledge, highlighting the importance of effective coordination, idea integration, and knowledge sharing in maximizing group performance. Therefore, promoting knowledge sharing and effective coordination within groups not only optimizes task performance but also fosters a deeper understanding of concepts

and enhances overall group dynamics and learning outcomes (Hormiga *et al.*, 2017). Consequently, this arrangement pertains to both the job and its context, potentially creating additional benefits for creativity and entrepreneurship (Bouncken *et al.*, 2020). Consequently, group members must impart their invaluable and varied knowledge in order to generate new information (Hormiga *et al.*, 2017). Knowledge sharing is an ongoing challenge for universities, as it promotes gaining original skills and leads to the evolution of tendencies (Durst *et al.*, 2012). Although people may find information and learning exchanges challenging and even unpleasant, they might become more satisfied at work when issues are resolved more effectively and quickly. Knowledge sharing, however, may need further supporting elements and is not always a guarantee of improvements (Bouncken and Kraus, 2016). Thus, knowledge sharing can be influential in improving individual and university performance by increasing creativity and promoting academic learning (Rahman *et al.*, 2018). In this context, employee voice behavior is a proactive behavior that can boost entrepreneurship by bringing out creativity and innovation to promote entrepreneurial leadership (Dua *et al.*, 2022). This can stimulate knowledge sharing and lead to improved university performance by encouraging members to share their expertise and ideas (Wang *et al.*, 2024).

Knowledge sharing is the process of identifying, distributing, and applying existing knowledge to solve problems better than in the past; it involves voluntary interactions between members based on ethical norms, habits, and distinctive behaviors. Despite its importance, knowledge sharing requires behavioral motivation to encourage participation (Kumi and Sabherwal, 2019). However, the intentional concealment of information from others in the university and a lack of willingness to share knowledge can hinder the process (Zhao *et al.*, 2019). In a broad perspective, it reflects how organizations access knowledge within their firm and other organizations. Besides, innovation happens as a result of knowledge sharing. An organization that and seeks knowledge sproduce may develop new ideas and enable innovative capabilities. It is of utmost importance that dialogue serves as the primary instrument for converting knowledge into innovation (Castaneda and Cuellar, 2020). The presence of a voice in the university is essential for members because commenting on important issues, concerns, opportunities, and facilities can reduce staff dissatisfaction and stress. On the other hand, people who find it difficult to voice their opinions could experience tension, worry, and discontent, which could make them less interested in their jobs and perhaps consider quitting. Therefore, the second hypothesis of this study is as follows:

**H2a:** *Knowledge sharing has a significant substantial influence on members' voice.*

### ***Innovative climate***

The innovative climate of companies refers to the general economic, technological, cultural, and social environment in which they operate (Lawal *et al.*, 2018). It reflects the team members and organizations' shared perception of practices, means, and behaviors that support generating innovative knowledge (Moolenaar *et al.*, 2010). Despite competition in various fields, managers strive to create an atmosphere that promotes creativity and productivity by recognizing the importance of innovation. From an innovative work perspective, giving members a voice in decision-making processes can help reestablish a sense of justice and trust (Lindell and Whitney, 2001). This can contribute to creating an innovative climate that encourages participation and promotes a culture of openness and trust in the organization (Tsai, 2011). Because it helps to better understand the strategies that enable long-term storage and retrieval of implicit and explicit knowledge and organizational memory (Anand *et al.*, 2021). Therefore, university management should be ready to listen to members' voices and not simply wait for novel ideas to emerge (Wong *et al.*, 2022).

Innovation requires the effective use of human capital through strategic actions in human resources, as it increases the willingness and motivation of members to innovate and allows universities to identify and apply knowledge and expertise in a dynamic environment (Scarbrough, 2003). Recent articles have observed the link between voice practices and organizational innovation in both the public and the private sector (Tsameti *et al.*, 2021). For example, promotive and prohibitive voice practices are positively associated with organizational innovation, and the engagement climate of organizations has a favorable and direct association with employee voice (Badru *et al.*, 2022). Therefore, universities equipped with tools that support innovation and entrepreneurship are more successful in fulfilling their mission by creating a favorable ground for the commercialization of ideas and technology transmission (Frank and Meyer, 2007). Such structural features can lead to innovative and unique management styles and make it easier to deal with novel ideas at lower levels of the university (Rohlfers *et al.*, 2022). Thus, encouraging members to use their voice can be an effective strategy for organizations to become more innovative.

The expectancy theory of motivation suggests that when individuals are motivated, they can achieve their goals. Managers can foster motivation in employees by providing conditions that enable them to express their voice; when members feel valued by management, it can result in increased motivation and high productivity in universities (Green and Tsitsianis, 2005). Conversely, when members' voice is discouraged and their voice rights are denied, it can lead to fear and a lack of trust in the management, which negatively affects motivation and performance (Sifatu *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, building trust among members and having trusted managers is crucial for creating a climate of participation that increases motivation, encourages creative proposals, and provides a welcoming context and infrastructure for members' voice to achieve the objectives of universities. The impact of members' voice practices is significant, as actions that (dis)enfranchise members' participation can affect their motivation, morale, and performance (Sayer, 2008). Thus, the third hypothesis of this study is as follows:

**H3a:** *An innovative climate has a substantial influence on members' voice.*

### ***Social network and employee voice***

Despite the universal nature of social networks such as LinkedIn and Twitter and their influence on the workplace, there is limited research on their application in the workplace, particularly as a means of employee voice (Martin *et al.*, 2015). Budd (2014, p. 485) argued that traditional approaches to voice have failed to highlight the role of social networks, which emphasizes the need to revisit these approaches. Studies on the impact of social networks on the workplace have reported mixed findings (Jung and Welch, 2022), with some suggesting that social network engagement at work may indicate personal dissatisfaction, while others report positive impacts on morale, productivity, retention, commitment, job performance, and job satisfaction (Khan *et al.*, 2023). Social network communications are complex and often occur without management control, potentially reorganizing the structure of workplace communications and employee voice (Jarle Gressgård *et al.*, 2014; Matthews and Dollinger, 2023). Moreover, social networks differ from traditional forms of workplace communication in their availability and immediacy, enabling the conveyance of 'real-time' information to individuals inside or outside the organization, with immediate responses possible. Hence, the fourth hypothesis is as follows:

**H4:** *Social network positively influence members' voice.*

### ***The mediating role of social network***

Social networks can foster partnerships that would not exist in the physical world, bringing together people from diverse backgrounds and addressing regional, class, and ethnic barriers (Bhatti *et al.*, 2020). Hence, social media is not confined to informing the people of the government's achievements, but is expanded as an information source for the government that enables decision support in the smart governance (Adamu *et al.*, 2021). However, social and class inequalities can create digital inequalities, with the cost of internet access acting as a deterrent for low-income individuals (Chen and Li, 2022). Digital inequality in the use of social networks refers to the disparities in access, skills, and types of uses of social media platforms, as well as the outcomes of these uses, which are influenced by an individual's societal position. This includes factors such as age, gender, income, education, and geographic location, which can impact the extent to which people can participate in online activities, access information, and engage with others through social networks (Ventrella and Cotnam-Kappel, 2024). Social networks therefore have stratificational rather than compensating effects because different levels of political information exposure are produced by network-based digital gaps (Barnidge and Xenos, 2024). Despite these challenges, research suggests that people use social networks to retain and support relationships with associates and friends and obtain information (Schmidt *et al.*, 2016). Hence, a strong sense of listening and responsiveness facilitated by effective communication can expand the spectrum of employee voice beyond entrepreneurial endeavors to include matters related to university decision-making and policy (Budd, 2014; Wilkinson and Fay, 2011). Therefore, social networks can play a strategic role in promoting employee voice and commitment, particularly in supporting entrepreneurial activities within universities. Additionally, social networks can encourage knowledge sharing and cooperation (Razmerita *et al.*, 2016), and the notion of social capital is critical for the success of entrepreneurial universities (Salamzadeh *et al.*, 2022).

Academic social networking can highlight dimensions of social capital, such as social interaction, shared language, and shared tendencies, making social networks conduits for knowledge transfer (Koranteng and Wiafe, 2019). Social networks play a vital role in facilitating interactions between firms and their clients, with modern technology enabling managers to interact with their customers and staff while sharing and exchanging information (Peng *et al.*, 2016). Using

public social networks, such as Facebook and LinkedIn, can promote a constructive voice in organizations (Martin *et al.*, 2015). Constructive voice is a type of communicative act that involves both employees and managers (Kim *et al.*, 2023). Besides, future generations of the workforce may use new systems of voice and participation that are unfamiliar to managers (Pyman *et al.*, 2006). The highly participatory nature of social networks can enhance communication and collaboration among members, including managers and employees. Therefore, we propose:

**H1b:** *Social networks influence the link between communication and members' voice.*

**H2b:** *Social networks influence the link between knowledge sharing and members' voice.*

**H3b:** *Social networks influence the link between innovative climate and members' voice.*

### ***The moderating effect of gender***

This study aims to observe the potential regulating influence of gender on the link between entrepreneurship and members' voice through the intervention of social networks. Thus, we tend to explore whether there is a significant difference between men and women concerning these relationships. Previous research has suggested that men might be better at capturing innovations than women, with women's ideas less frequently implemented in practice (Henry and Lewis, 2023). Female directors may exhibit a more profound sense of accountability than their male counterparts, which may result in their making more strategic decisions. Furthermore, female members may serve as catalysts for change and role models, motivating organizations to implement sustainable strategies and policies. Additionally, the presence of female directors within an organization can serve as a source of inspiration and role models for other female employees, nurturing a corporate culture that prioritizes ethical conduct and robust internal oversight (Ong *et al.*, 2023). Additionally, women may be more likely than men to express their moods and personal opinions, while men may be more likely to engage in innovative behaviors and share their mistakes (Fatemi *et al.*, 2021). Gender differences have been considered in previous research on entrepreneurship and employee voice behavior (Di Vaio *et al.*, 2023a). For example, Di Vaio *et al.* (2023a) suggested that gender plays a crucial role in fostering a favorable entrepreneurial environment. Pan *et al.* (2020) stated that female personnel enhance company efficiency and are not immediately influenced by their male counterparts' perceptions; nonetheless, Daminger (2019) discovered that women also tend to work harder to achieve better results. Tibiletti *et al.* (2021)

found that female members enhance the quality of the company's decision-making by analyzing exhaustive information and considering the interests of the entire group. Other research has demonstrated that the activities that men and women engage in when using the Internet are significantly different. According to Chai et al. (2011), women typically use the Internet to communicate and search for information about products and services, whereas men use it to perform Internet banking, read about the weather, sports, or news, and play games. As a result, gender equality is one of the most important factors in promoting responsible innovation. The establishment of a non-discriminatory workplace environment that guarantees equity across various positions, particularly those of authority, is a critical component of achieving gender equality in universities (Di Vaio et al., 2023b). Based on the previous literature, we propose the following hypotheses:

**H1c:** *Gender regulates the link between communications and members' voice.*

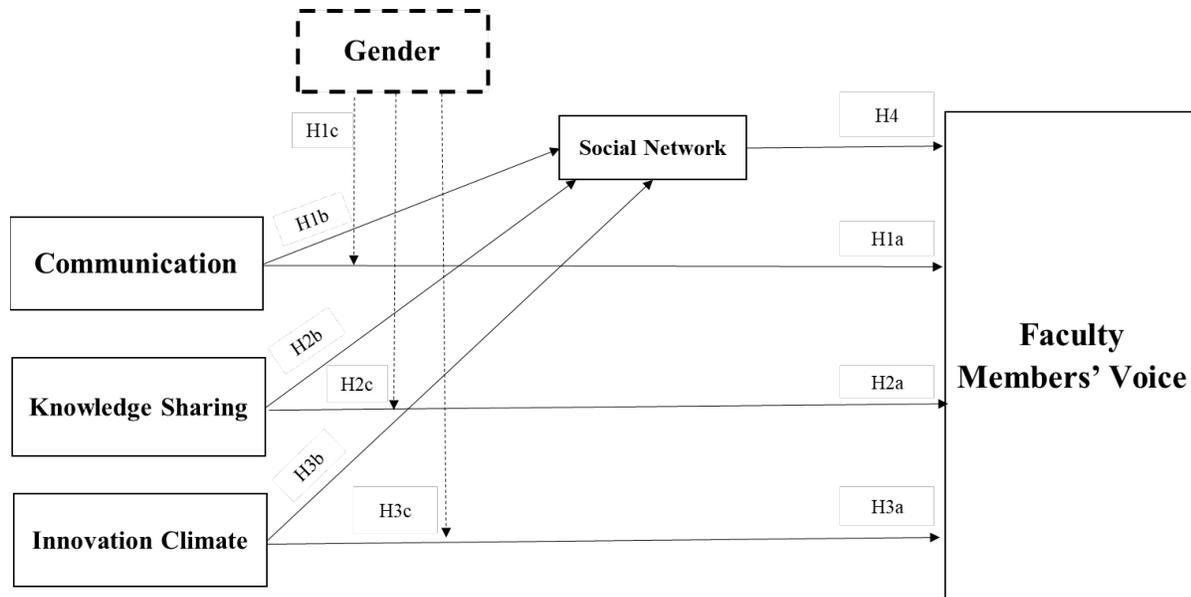
**H2c:** *Gender regulates the link between knowledge sharing and members' voice.*

**H3c:** *Gender regulates the link between innovative climate and members' voice.*

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Research setting**

Our review of existing research literature highlights a significant gap: while many studies have explored the outcomes of social networks and entrepreneurial activities, few have considered their impact on members' voices within organizations. This oversight forms the basis of our study, which aims to investigate the intricate relationships between social networks, entrepreneurship, and members' voice behavior. We propose a conceptual model that hypothesizes social networks not only enhance members' voice but also act as a crucial mediator between entrepreneurship and members' voice. This model serves as the foundation for our data collection and analysis strategy, designed to test these hypotheses comprehensively. By doing so, we anticipate uncovering valuable insights into how social networks and entrepreneurship collectively facilitate knowledge sharing and empower individual voices within organizational settings. This understanding is expected to contribute significantly to both theoretical perspectives and practical applications in organizational knowledge management.



**Figure 1.** Theoretical Framework (authors' compilation).

### 3.2. Sample

Our research aims to elucidate how these social networks within such a dynamic environment foster knowledge sharing among faculty, enhancing their entrepreneurial impact and amplifying their voices in academic and administrative discussions. By focusing on these relationships, we hope to uncover strategies that could further leverage social networks to boost knowledge dissemination and collaborative innovation in academics. Iran's public universities have a strong reputation for high-quality education, attracting many international students. In recent years, the government has shown its support for the entry of international professors and students, by changing university policies, to facilitate the integration of such universities into international markets. The reasons for selecting these universities are as follows: (a) They are among the most prestigious universities in Iran; (b) they have achieved success in international collaboration (e.g., participation in the Erasmus project); and (c) they have their own entrepreneurship and innovation centers and Science and Technology Parks, which include numerous active startups on their campus (Mobarki *et al.*, 2021). Data were collected from prestigious public universities in Iran that have international credibility according to QS and Leiden rankings, with a population of 2,613 faculty members. Based on Cochran's formula, the 5% error value, and the 95% level of confidence, the minimum sample size was determined to be 335. Since structural modeling was used in this study, the sample size should be 5 to 10 times larger than the number of questionnaire

items, and the obtained sample size is therefore sufficient (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). A 25-item researcher-made questionnaire was distributed online in February 2022 to collect data. The questionnaire was sent to members who have at least one research project at the international level, 3 years of work experience in entrepreneurial companies, and a short-term course in universities outside Iran. The questionnaire was created using the Pors Line website in Iran, and participants were emailed a link along with assurances of secrecy, instructions to fill out an informed consent form, and the knowledge that they might withdraw from the study at any time. The researcher-made questionnaire derived from standard questionnaires, spanning communication (5 items), knowledge sharing (5 items), innovative climate (5 items), social network (5 items), and members' voice (5 items) (See Table 1). The study used PLS3 software and structural equation modeling to examine the correlations among the variables. We employed PLS3 software because it can work properly irrespective of normal distribution, also, this method is a statistical model to investigate the relationship between current and changes (Kline, 2023). Principal work on techniques relevant to multivariate data analysis, including SEM, suggests the minimum sample size needed to reach model robustness (Hooper *et al.*, 2008). Hair *et al.* (2010) stated that model robustness can lead to final results, provided that 300 observations are performed when dealing with a hypothetical model with seven or fewer constructs. Considering that this study entails seven constructs, a sample size of over 300 respondents is required to obtain the strength of the hypothesized model (Hair *et al.*, 2010). The sample size includes 335 respondents, slightly higher than that Hair *et al.* (2010) recommended.

**Table 1. Measurement model evaluation for constructs**

<b>Variables and items</b>	<b>Factor Loadings</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Std. Dev.</b>
<b><i>Communications</i></b> (Garcia-Esteban and Jahnke, 2020; Azim and Al-Kahtani, 2014; Burnett, 1993)				
To what extent do you use warm personal relationships in your behavior.	0.863	4.04	4	0.64
To what extent do you use good business communication in your work.	0.602	4.19	4	0.59
How much do you welcome diverse working relationships with colleagues.	0.627	4.23	4	0.51
Employees will be able to solve issues and problems if they empathize and cooperate.	0.767	4.06	4	0.59
Does the mutual cooperation of colleagues cause better results.	0.460	3.12	2	0.75

<b>Knowledge Sharing</b> (Wang and Wang, 2012; Sedera and Gable, 2010; Zheng et al., 2010; Marvel and Lumpkin, 2007)				
Employees share their knowledge and experiences.	0.632	4.25	4	0.52
The right and reliable decision is made according to the knowledge available in the work environment.	0.553	4.25	4	0.52
People's knowledge is used in decisions.	0.874	4.17	4	0.51
The slogan "Knowledge exchange is power" has a special place in the workplace.	0.883	4.10	4	0.59
Creative and critical thinking is considered a high value in the culture that governs the work environment.	0.812	4.00	4	0.61
<b>Innovative Climate</b> (Chen et al., 2020; Dubey and Ghai, 2011; Subramaniam and Youndt, 2005)				
By attending meetings, to what extent have you used new methods to solve problems.	0.878	3.42	4	0.89
By attending the meetings, to what extent you can solve the problems in different ways.	0.675	3.50	4	0.76
By attending the meetings, how flexible have you been to changes.	0.882	3.27	3	0.84
By attending the meetings, to what extent were you able to pursue your creative ideas within a certain time.	0.908	3.54	4	0.71
By attending the meetings, to what extent you can create changes in your work environment.	0.801	3.48	3	0.65
<b>Social Networks</b> (Yoo et al., 2017; Kankanhalli et al., 2005; Zeithaml et al., 1985)				
I learn many things on a daily basis from social networks.	0.858	3.65	4	0.66
Social networks widen the scope of communication.	0.883	3.40	3	0.73
Social networks increase the amount and quality of social participation in different societies.	0.902	3.33	3	0.75
Social networks allow us to communicate with our favorite people around the world in the least time and cost.	0.856	3.46	4	0.82
Activity in social networks can change the style and identity of people's general actions in relation to others.	0.846	3.29	3	0.79
<b>Members' Voice</b> (Detert and Burris, 2007; Van Dyne and LePine, 1998)				
I discuss new ideas for projects or changing procedures with the supervisor.	0.844	3.60	4	0.70
I speak with my supervisor to eliminate redundant or unnecessary procedures.	0.853	3.56	4	0.73
I communicate my opinions about work issues to the supervisor even if my opinion is different and the supervisor disagrees with me.	0.852	3.29	3	0.79
I talk to my colleagues about new ideas for projects or changing procedures.	0.894	3.29	3	0.91
I speak up and encourage my colleagues to get involved in issues that affect the workplace.	0.813	3.40	3	0.78

**Extraction Method:** Principal component analysis. **Source:** authors' own compilation

### 3.3. Assessment, reliability, and validity

To measure the relationships among the variables in the conceptual model, we developed a 25-item researcher-made questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale (from 1- severely disagree to 5- severely agree). The Likert scale is a commonly used tool to gauge attitudes, with standard scales ranging from five to nine degrees. We used this scale to measure the subject under study and provide a measure of positive or negative tendencies. Entrepreneurship (Communication, Knowledge Sharing, and Innovative Climate), members' voice, and social networks were considered the independent variable, dependent variable, and mediating variable, respectively. To ensure the accuracy of the findings, we assessed the technical characteristics of the questionnaire through content and structure validity. Content validity was evaluated by collecting expert opinions from individuals with knowledge of the subject matter. Structural validity was assessed using structural equation modeling to assess convergent and divergent validity.

Divergent validity was measured by calculating the root mean square of the obtained variance, whereas convergent validity was assessed using the average variance extracted (AVE). The obtained mean standard deviation in this study is greater than 0.5, indicating high validity. Cronbach's alpha coefficient and composite reliability were calculated to assess the reliability. Based on Table 1, these coefficients are appropriate, indicating that the instrument has acceptable validity and reliability. Additionally, all structure values obtained in the study exceed the minimum acceptable value of 0.7, indicating optimum reliability for the structures in this study. Table 2 shows that all indicators demonstrated acceptable validity and reliability.

**Table 2. Summary of Confirmatory factor analysis results**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>items</b>	<b>Cronbach's alpha</b>	<b>Communality</b>	<b>C.R.</b>	<b>AVE</b>	<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Q<sup>2</sup></b>
Communications	1-5	0.708	0.745	0.781	0.560	—	—
Knowledge Sharing	6-10	0.834	0.871	0.896	0.582	—	—
Innovative Climate	11-15	0.887	0.902	0.918	0.694	—	—
Social Network	16-20	0.919	0.920	0.939	0.756	0.810	0.745
Members' Voice	21-25	0.905	0.906	0.929	0.725	0.915	0.829
Gender	—	0.753	0.707	0.779	0.558	—	—

**Source:** authors' own compilation

As shown in Table 3, the root mean of the obtained variance for each variable exceeds the acceptable minimum of 0.5 for divergent validity. To further confirm this, it is imperative to ensure

that the root mean of the obtained variance exceeds the correlation between the variable and other variables, as suggested by Kline (2023). Based on this criterion, if the values in the diagonal line of the original matrix are more significant than their corresponding lower values, divergent validity is considered acceptable. Therefore, we conclude that the divergent validity of the variables in this study is confirmed.

**Table 3. Divergent validity**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Communications</b>	0.700					
<b>Gender</b>	0.597	0.778				
<b>Innovative Climate</b>	0.404	0.728	0.895			
<b>Knowledge Sharing</b>	0.678	0.650	0.552	0.763		
<b>Social Network</b>	0.449	0.747	0.410	0.524	0.869	
<b>Members' Voice</b>	0.359	0.723	0.833	0.465	0.852	0.916

**Source:** authors' own compilation

Smart PLS3 software findings, as presented in Tables 2 and 3, confirmed the validity and reliability of the model. The variance inflation factor (VIF) is a measure used to evaluate the extent of multiple collinearities in ordinary least squares regression analysis. In simpler terms, the VIF index highlights the changes in a variable's behavior in association with other variables. A high VIF value indicates a high level of collinearity, which can lead to problems in testing the variables' effects on the dependent variable in a multiple-regression model. The extent of multiple collinearities is assessed using the VIF value, representing the ratio of the overall variance to the variance with an independent variable (Kock, 2015). Kock (2015) suggested that all VIFs on account of a full collinearity test should be similar to or below 3.3 to ensure that common method bias was not observed in the research. In this study, the VIF values for Communications (VIF=1.788), Knowledge Sharing (VIF=2.241), Innovative Climate (VIF=2.574), Social Networks (VIF=2.949), and Members' Voice (VIF=2.765) were less than 3.3, indicating that the model is free of common method bias.

#### **4. Results**

The demographic profile of the respondents revealed that 89% of the participants were male, and 11% were female. In terms of education, 90% held a Ph.D., and 10% held a degree higher than a

Ph.D. Regarding job experience, 23% of the participants had 5 to 10 years of experience, 63% had 10 to 20 years, and 14% had more than 20 years of experience.

**Table 4. Descriptive statistics of demographic characteristics**

Parameter	Frequency	Percent	
<b>Gender</b>	Male	297	89%
	Female	38	11%
<b>Education</b>	Ph.D.	301	90%
	Higher than Ph.D.	34	10%
<b>Job Experience</b>	5-10 Year	76	23%
	10 to 20 Years	211	63%
	More Than 20 Years	48	14%

**Source:** authors' own compilation

We examined the measurement, structural, and overall levels of the model fitness. Several criteria, such as the significance coefficients or the values of t-statistics, were used to assess the fitness of the structural model using the partial least squares method. The structural model's fitness will be considered acceptable at the 95% confidence level if the obtained t-coefficient is over 1.96 (Kline, 2023). The study findings are presented in Table 2.

**Coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) -  $R^2$**  was also calculated in this study to measure the fitness of the structural model.  $R^2$  values below 0.19, 0.33, and 0.67 signpost weak, average, and robust values, respectively. In this study,  $R^2$  was used to assess Members' Voice (0.915) and Social Networks (0.810). According to Table 2, the structural model used in this study is considered optimally and strongly fit.

**Criterion  $Q^2$  -  $Q^2$**  values were calculated to examine the predictive validity of dependent variables.  $Q^2$  values below 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 signpost weak, average, and robust effects, respectively (Kline, 2023). In this study,  $Q^2$  was used to assess Members' Voice (0.829) and Social Networks (0.745). Based on the results presented in Table 2, the appropriateness of the research model structure is confirmed.

**Examining the Moderating Effect of Gender** - After ensuring the validity and reliability of the measurement models, the significance of the factor loadings was checked to examine the moderating effect of gender. All factor loadings were found to be significant. The t-statistic related

to the moderating paths was also examined. According to Table 2, the obtained value was lower than 1.96. Therefore, the moderating effect of gender was rejected in this study ( $t > 1.96$ ).

**Overall Fit of the Model** - The general model encompasses the structural and measurement models. According to Formula (1), its goodness-of-fit (GOF) values can be weak (0.1), average (0.25), or robust (0.36). Based on the obtained value of 0.854 for this criterion, we can conclude that the overall research model demonstrates an acceptable fit.

$$GOF = \sqrt{\text{average (Commonality)} \times \text{average (R}^2\text{)}} \quad (1)$$

To evaluate the fit of the model, we calculated the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) values. However, scholars have varying views regarding this measure, with some considering values below 0.05 as necessary, while others accept values below 0.08 as adequate. Commonly, values less than 0.1 indicate an acceptable fit. Additionally, we used the Normed Fit Index (NFI) to assess the model's fit, given that the acceptance range lies between 0 and 1, and acceptable values should be over 0.9 (Kline, 2023). Based on Table 5, the obtained value is 0.916, which is also within an acceptable range.

**Table 5. Fitness indices**

	SRMR	NFI
Acceptable values	.10 $\leq$	.9 $\geq$
Calculate values	.012	.916

**Source:** authors' own compilation

The Sobel test was used to investigate the intervening influence of social networks on the relationship between employee voice and organizational innovation in Iranian public universities. The obtained value of 3.799 exceeds the base value of 1.96, which confirms the intervening role of social networks. The coefficients of the intervening and independent variables were 0.350 and 0.461, respectively, while the coefficient of the dependent and intervening variables was 0.307 ( $a = 0.350$ ;  $b = 0.461$ ;  $c = 0.307$ ). The standard error for the dependent and mediating variables was 0.063 ( $S_a = 0.078$ ,  $S_b = 0.063$ ), and for the path relating the independent and mediating variables it was 0.078. The mediating role of social networks was evaluated using the Variance Accounted For (VAF) statistic, which shows the percentage of indirect effects relative to the total effects. A VAF value below 20% indicates that mediation has not occurred, while any values above 80% suggest complete mediation., and a VAF value between 20% and 80% indicates partial mediation

(Formula 2). In this study, the VAF value was found to be 0.344, indicating a partial intervening influence of social networks in the link between employee voice and organizational innovation.

$$VAF = (a \times b) / (a \times b) + c \quad (2)$$

#### 4.1. Testing the Hypotheses

T-tests were performed to examine the hypothetical associations between variables. The results presented in Table 6 indicate that the t-coefficients were confirmed for six out of nine hypotheses.

The standardized factor load coefficients were also evaluated to determine the impact of predictor variables on dependent variables. However, independent variables can only account for a minor portion of the changes in the dependent variables, indicating that other factors may also influence the dependent variables.

**Table 6. Hypotheses testing.**

Path		T-test	$\beta$	P-Value	Decision			
H1a	<i>Communication</i> →	2.238	0.222	0.051	Supported			
H2a	<i>Knowledge sharing</i> →	2.287	0.111	0.020	Supported			
H3a	<i>Innovative climate</i> →	3.897	0.588	0.044	Supported			
H4	<i>Social networks</i> →	2.639	0.461	0.014	Supported			
<b>The mediating role of social networks</b>								
H1b	<i>Communication</i> → →	2.890	0.173	0.027	Supported			
H2b	<i>Knowledge sharing</i> → <i>Social network</i> →	2.560	0.148	0.013	Supported			
H3b	<i>Innovative climate</i> → →	10.061	0.588	0.039	Supported			
<b>The moderating effect of gender</b>								
		<b>Female sample</b>			<b>Male sample</b>			
		T-test	$\beta$	p-Value	T-test	$\beta$	P-Value	Decision
H1c	<i>Communication</i> → →	1.524	0.184	0.037	1.905	0.170	0.050	Not Supported
H2c	<i>Knowledge sharing</i> → gender →	1.409	0.126	0.019	1.409	0.172	0.009	Not Supported
H3c	<i>Innovative climate</i> → →	1.513	0.114	0.023	1.513	0.059	0.025	Not Supported

**Source:** authors' own compilation

The innovative climate variable was found to have the most significant effect among the predictor variables. This suggests that a more innovative climate within and outside the university is

associated with the formation of more members' voice. However, it is essential to note that while the results indicate a significant impact of the predictor variables on the dependent variable, other factors may also be influencing members' voice in Iranian public universities.

## **5. Discussion**

Our research findings underscore the growing importance of 'voice' in organizational behavior studies, especially as global competition intensifies and organizational environments rapidly evolve. In the realm of human resource management, the concept of employee voice is increasingly linked to participatory decision-making processes, which are crucial for improving job satisfaction and fostering organizational commitment. Moreover, entrepreneurship has emerged as a pivotal force in bolstering employment, particularly in emerging economies, while simultaneously enhancing the competitive edge and sustainability of organizations, including universities. Within these contexts, members' contributions through constructive feedback and innovative ideas are vital for driving creative and innovative activities. Additionally, social networks play a crucial role in reshaping behaviors, primarily by facilitating access to valuable information and enabling knowledge sharing across organizational boundaries. Thus, our study focuses on the impact of entrepreneurship on members' voice, with social networks serving as a mediating factor, in the dynamic setting of Iranian public universities. This approach aims to unveil how enhanced knowledge sharing through social networks can amplify members' influence on organizational innovation and decision-making processes.

The first hypothesis, which highlights the positive impact of communication on members' voice, was confirmed, along with the sub-hypothesis emphasizing the direct impact of communication mediated by social networks. Universities cannot develop their collective wisdom without voluntary contributions. However, research shows that complementary abilities can be brought together through interactions created by social networks. Consequently, they can create a synergy that leads to constructive changes in the organization (Kim *et al.*, 2023; Papademetriou *et al.*, 2022; Cartwright *et al.*, 2021; Wilkinson and Fay, 2011). In voluntary cooperation, individuals express their effort, energy, and insight to allow their talents to flourish and benefit the organization. People usually prioritize responsibility for the interests of others over their interests. Strengthening a culture of loyalty, obedience, task participation, and social participation can build friendship, trust, and identity among employees. According to researchers, managers must

encourage the employees' intention to prioritize organizational interests over their personal preferences to foster loyalty (Newaz *et al.*, 2023; Korante and Wiafe, 2019; Moqbel and Kock, 2018; Rubin and Babbie, 2016).

Hence, employees and co-workers should strive to improve their emotional intelligence skills in communication. Mohiuddin *et al.* (2022) found that the lack of logical interaction between managers and members in drafting laws and executive regulations reduces individuals' motivation to perform. Therefore, it is recommended to facilitate the sharing of a wide range of information between employees, which can help generate constructive ideas to deal with problems in universities (Salamzadeh *et al.*, 2022; Chen *et al.*, 2018). By joining social networks, people can meet their belonging and communication needs with those who share similar norms, values, and interests. Social networks provide a platform for mass communication, enabling people to cooperate and form a community.

The second hypothesis, which highlights the positive impact of knowledge sharing on members' voices, was confirmed, along with the sub-hypothesis emphasizing the positive impact of knowledge sharing mediated by social networks. Universities' most valuable asset is their knowledge capital. As organizations increasingly use social networks for knowledge sharing, employee engagement, and communication, it is critical to understand how these networks can foster the use of employee voice (Khan *et al.*, 2023; Dua *et al.*, 2022; Di Tullio *et al.*, 2021; Kumi and Sabherwal, 2019; Razmerita *et al.*, 2016; Solomon *et al.*, 2019). The competitive advantage of universities is attained through knowledge and its operational use, and universities strive to promote learning so that employees, students, and members' voice can enhance their knowledge production capabilities as a group and individually. They consider information to be a rare and precious resource. It allows faculty members to share and build on their knowledge in a competitive environment, where they focus on the strategic direction of the organization (Paolone *et al.*, 2024). Universities also seek to establish and strengthen relationships based on cooperation in pursuit of organizational excellence (Mehmood *et al.*, 2021). According to researchers, employees who express their voice constructively use effective strategies to moderate their emotions (Soomro *et al.*, 2021; Zhao *et al.*, 2019). These distinguishing characteristics enable individuals to apply their knowledge to problem solving and decision-making. Furthermore, they serve as valuable, high-performing, and impactful resources for both organizations and communities (Joseph-Williams *et al.*, 2014). Employees who gain respect and recognition have a

good opportunity to promote their status or career progression; hence, they are more likely to express vocal behaviors (Chen *et al.*, 2018). When members cannot comment on issues and remain silent, they may participate in some form of protest, such as active silence (Di Tullio *et al.*, 2021). The findings demonstrate the importance of knowledge exchange among group members in encouraging innovation, taking calculated risks, and being proactive in order to improve performance. Effects without this sharing are sometimes detrimental, but not always. A collaborative environment of cooperation and communication is essential for productivity (Hormiga *et al.* 2017), and synergy and feedback can help discover strategy flaws and improve ideas for wider acceptability in the academic community. Social networks, however, provide a platform to convey experiences and knowledge sharing through informal channels. In other words, knowledge sharing in virtual networks goes beyond the overall knowledge of each person and creates synergy in knowledge.

The third hypothesis, which highlights the positive impact of an innovative atmosphere on members' voices, was confirmed, along with the sub-hypothesis emphasizing the positive impact of an innovative atmosphere mediated by social networks. An atmosphere of innovation created through social networks in universities can increase the expression of constructive opinions, leading to more creative problem-solving (Khan *et al.*, 2023; Wong *et al.*, 2022; Lawal *et al.*, 2018; Tsai, 2011; Lindell and Whitney, 2001). Members' voice is considered a voluntary exchange of opinions about work issues to improve organizational performance. This conduct entails talking to managers about problems, coming up with solutions for HR, recommending modifications to the rules, or seeking advice from an organizational professional (Badru *et al.*, 2022; Tsameti *et al.*, 2021; Moolenaar *et al.*, 2010).

Members, on the other hand, may find it difficult or risky to share significant ideas due to misunderstandings about others' cultures, priorities, opinions, or change processes. Therefore, managers should promote experimentation, consider the significance of new experiences, reward successes, deal with failures, learn from mistakes, and respond to environmental challenges in a timely and effective manner to encourage innovation (Scarborough, 2003). Since social networks provide opportunities to comment on new ideas, people can engage with problems in groups, create more effective solutions, and strengthen scientific, creative, and critical thinking. Thus, establishing an innovative atmosphere in universities allows individuals to apply new ideas and knowledge for development.

Based on the results, it is clear that creating a culture of respect and encouraging employees to share their ideas can lead to better job satisfaction and higher performance at an international level. This is crucial in universities, as it helps identify the needs of members and students, which can ultimately lead to increased enrollment of international students. Therefore, managers are advised to highlight the organizational culture and create an environment where people feel comfortable sharing their opinions. Different strategies, like pioneering learning, problem-solving, self-reliance, and creativity development, can be implemented to promote a pioneering atmosphere. Establishing a calm and informal workplace, rewarding innovators appropriately, and supporting work bias can help establish an innovative atmosphere in universities. Social networks, particularly specialized social networks, can also be used as supplements to the educational system. Overall, managers must recognize the prominence of employee participation and innovation in maintaining a competitive advantage in today's dynamic and challenging environment. Consequently, universities can attract and retain top talents and maintain their position as leaders in the education sector by promoting a supportive and innovative culture.

### **5.1 Theoretical Implications**

The concept of members' voice contributes to decision-making, office discussions, and sharing knowledge and ideas without fear of repercussions. It serves as a significant empowerment mechanism, facilitating bottom-up participatory design (Liu *et al.*, 2022). Employee voice has been conceptualized as the presentation of shared opinions, contributions to management decisions, a reflection of the mutual nature of employee-employer interactions, and individual expressions of dissatisfaction with procedures (Abdulgalimov *et al.*, 2023). In a similar vein, practitioners have proposed the concept of workplace democracy, which is a component of participatory design (PD). Workplace democracy allows employees to exert influence over the organizational environment by contributing to decision-making processes. Therefore, if effectively captured and acted upon by higher education institutions, employee voice can also benefit managers and members alike. For managers, members' voices are influential in collective decision-making (Rubbab *et al.*, 2022). It also facilitates the prompt identification and resolution of organizational issues. Active member participation is recognized for its capacity to boost job satisfaction and positively impact mental well-being. Furthermore, it emphasizes the importance of respecting employees' feelings, which can enhance employee retention. Consequently, higher

education institutions are implementing social media to facilitate communication with and among their members and to remain competitive in this digitalized world (Walker, 2020). Previous research has argued that weak connections, which provide access to new information and individuals otherwise isolated from the knowledge-seeking group, are effective for knowledge sharing. This theory was typically supported by subsequent research, which underscored the strong connections between affective personality (Naif Marouf, 2007). Consequently, employees who engage in communication with one another exhibit strong emotional attachments and prioritize knowledge sharing. Consequently, the sharing of private knowledge, or expertise, will not only have pragmatic implications but also have implications for the expression and consistency of the possessor's identity and value.

According to Ghani and Malik (2022), social media can enhance the global reach, strategic orientation, and social responsibility of organizations. Social media platforms facilitate interpersonal connections, content generation, and dissemination, fostering communication driven by individuals and encouraging genuine dialogues rooted in the innate human inclination to share knowledge. The evolution of social media over time has empowered individuals to express their viewpoints more effectively, heightening the expectations of members regarding their voice within organizational contexts and the management of personal and professional relationships. Social networks can facilitate the implementation of new procedures, learning from mistakes, communication, and the exchange of ideas related to employees' personal interests and organizational objectives. Overall, social networks play a crucial role in employee voice at work, and organizations should recognize their impact on enhancing workplace interactions.

## **5.2 Managerial Implications**

This article underscores the managerial implications of effectively harnessing faculty members' voices within higher education institutions via social networks. It provides a thorough analysis of how entrepreneurship influences members' voices and the role of social networks in this dynamic. While the impact of entrepreneurship on members' voices and their connectivity through social networks has been explored in various organizational contexts, our study brings unique insights into the academic realm. We highlight how these social networks act not just as communication tools but as pivotal platforms for knowledge sharing, facilitating a more engaged and informed faculty body. The results of this study imply that institutions can promote detrimental behaviors

like knowledge concealment if they hypocritically distort ethical principles in order to accomplish short-term objectives. Through direct interactions between members and management, social media reshapes university communication and facilitates informed decision-making that is in line with community requirements (Arrigo et al., 2022). Furthermore, companies that support good deeds draw in additional supporters who feel emboldened to expose wrongdoing via easily available internet platforms (Latan et al., 2021). Universities can interact with members through social media platforms, intercepting emotions and feelings expressed through the comment, share, and like tools (Vrontis *et al.*, 2021). This enhanced flow of knowledge not only empowers faculty members but also enriches the institutional environment, fostering a more collaborative and innovative academic culture. Our findings offer valuable contributions to both academic research and practical applications in educational management, demonstrating how strategic knowledge sharing can significantly amplify the impact of entrepreneurial activities on faculty engagement and institutional development.

This study notably advances the research on entrepreneurship, members' voice, and social networks within the realm of higher education literature. Our results reinforce existing findings that effective communication, robust knowledge sharing, and the cultivation of an innovative climate are crucial for fostering active participation among faculty and staff. Furthermore, we underline the critical role of integrating organizational social networks in the generation of ideas and creating a supportive environment that encourages members to express their opinions freely, ultimately enhancing entrepreneurial initiatives. This interconnection underscores the pivotal role of managers in fostering an entrepreneurial mindset, by actively promoting the organization's entrepreneurial vision and facilitating an atmosphere where all members are encouraged to think creatively and innovatively. Managers are instrumental in inspiring employees to align with the organizational vision, granting them the autonomy to tackle significant challenges while bypassing trivial concerns. By doing so, managers not only foster a culture of critical and innovative thinking but also drive positive changes in entrepreneurial activities within the institution. Such leadership is recognized as an effective organizational mechanism to motivate employees to exceed their standard roles, thus contributing to a dynamic, knowledge-sharing academic ecosystem (Khorshid *et al.*, 2023).

Thirdly, fostering a culture where faculty members in higher education institutions freely express their opinions and concerns is essential. Such a culture not only cultivates open dialogue and active

listening between faculty and administrators but also encourages the exchange and application of knowledge across academic disciplines. Managers play a critical role in this environment by identifying and addressing any gender biases, supporting the principles of academic freedom, and ensuring that faculty members can voice their opinions without fear of sanction. This supportive atmosphere allows for transparent communication and fearlessness in sharing knowledge, which is vital for nurturing an innovative academic environment. Moreover, by valuing diverse perspectives and involving faculty members from various backgrounds in decision-making processes, institutions can enhance opportunities for professional development and foster a richer, more inclusive academic community. The findings of this study suggest that administrators should demonstrate personal integrity, create an atmosphere of trust, actively seek and value members' ideas and suggestions, and treat all employees objectively to maximize the benefits for their personnel. By doing so, they can significantly enhance the efficacy of knowledge-sharing processes and improve organizational outcomes.

Fourth, our findings highlight that active managerial collaboration in promoting employee voice is key to stimulating creativity among staff members. When employees speak up, it can shake things up and highlight areas where processes or procedures could use some tweaking. This might have been put in place by team members or a leader and could impact how others work. Speaking out comes with risks, but having supportive relationships with coworkers and leaders can make it easier to share concerns and ideas (Venkataramani *et al.*,2016). Aligning with the research conducted by Hoch *et al.* (2018) and Islam *et al.* (2019), we conclude that managers should cultivate an impartial and motivating work environment, characterized by open communication, mutual respect, and trust. Such an environment not only encourages employees to share their knowledge freely but also invites them to contribute their perspectives on specific organizational issues. This proactive engagement in knowledge sharing can lead to innovative problem-solving and significantly enhance employees' perceptions of their role in the creative processes within the organization. Therefore, we recommend that higher education institutions create conditions that foster employee creativity and autonomy, thereby further encouraging a culture where knowledge sharing is seen as a valuable behavior integral to organizational success. In order to improve the universities, it is important to create systems where members can share their ideas and feedback on university processes. By showing, that their opinions are valued and can make a difference, employees will feel more connected to the university. Use the feedback collected to make changes

to policies and strategies, showing members that their input matters. Keep members updated on how their feedback is being used and encourage them to take ownership of their ideas. By doing this, universities can reduce the gaps between human resource management and entrepreneurship and make employee voice a key factor in decision-making processes. In addition, holding training courses and workshops for the development of entrepreneurial skills and human resource management can help employees to strengthen their abilities in various fields and thus give more power to their voice in the organization. Providing training courses and training workshops with a focus entrepreneurship and human resource management skills can empower employees by increasing their competencies. This, in turn, strengthens their ability to participate meaningfully in organizational discussions. The use of digital technologies and social platforms can help facilitate the exchange of knowledge and information between members and management. These tools can allow members to express their feelings and opinions easily, and as a result, their voices are heard in management processes. By implementing these approaches, organizations can effectively reduce the gaps between human resource management and entrepreneurship. Making members voice a central element in decision-making processes not only enhances engagement but also drives innovation and growth within the organization. Ultimately, when members feel empowered to share their thoughts and ideas, it leads to a more dynamic, responsive, and successful organizational culture.

## **6. Conclusion**

The study's findings reveal that entrepreneurship significantly enhances the way members use their social networks to express their opinions in public universities in Iran. This active engagement in entrepreneurial activities encourages members not only to share their insights more freely but also to leverage their networks for broader communication. Studies have shown that when employees feel supported in their communication, they are more likely to share their knowledge. This can then lead to more innovative ideas and behaviors within a company. Open communication and a culture of psychological safety in organizations can inspire employees to work together, share ideas, and ultimately drive innovation (Razmerita *et al.*, 2016; Turaga, 2019). This process enhances knowledge dissemination within the university, leading to several positive outcomes such as gaining a competitive edge, enhancing organizational cohesion, and increasing operational efficiency. Furthermore, the study underscores the pivotal role of state universities in

achieving both intra-organizational and extra-organizational objectives. Intra-organizational objectives such as motivating employees, developing their knowledge and skills, and fostering trust are essential for the university's success. Concurrently, extra-organizational objectives—such as promoting long-term societal welfare, preparing a committed and fair workforce, and enhancing community health—contribute significantly to the sustainability of the university. By facilitating an environment where knowledge sharing is actively promoted and valued, universities can more effectively meet these objectives, thereby enhancing their strategic impact both internally and within the wider community. The way men and women communicate and share knowledge can affect how innovative a workplace is. Studies show that considering gender can improve collaboration and help generate new ideas. By valuing different viewpoints and being inclusive, organizations can boost their ability to innovate (Fatemi *et al.*, 2021). Therefore, universities need to think about gender when they are trying to encourage knowledge-sharing, and creativity.

State universities play a pivotal role in promoting sustainability through dedicated research, education, and active engagement with stakeholders. By creating an impartial and viable system, these institutions can nurture diverse opinions and provide integrated solutions for sustainable living. This involves raising awareness and developing the necessary knowledge, capabilities, and standards to support a sustainable lifestyle. Moreover, the study provides insightful observations on how entrepreneurship and members' voice contribute to achieving both intra and extra-organizational objectives, offering strategic direction for future research and the development of initiatives that enhance both entrepreneurship and sustainability in public universities. An innovative atmosphere is all about fostering creativity and trying new things. Research indicates that this kind of environment can boost knowledge sharing, which is key for coming up with new ideas. Businesses and schools that focus on promoting innovation tend to be more sustainable and competitive, especially in fast-paced settings like universities (Charkhkar *et al.*, 2022).

The advent of the digital age has revolutionized knowledge sharing, leading to significant shifts in organizational attitudes towards this practice and innovation. In this dynamic environment, managers are key in fostering a culture of knowledge sharing and encouraging employee participation. By embodying and promoting positive behaviors and values, managers facilitate a communication-rich environment that is conducive to innovation. Additionally, empowering employee voice is critical in cultivating a climate conducive to open communication, knowledge exchange, and creativity. This involvement enables managers to identify and address

critical issues, such as workplace bullying, thereby establishing a supportive environment that encourages employees to freely express their opinions. The quality of relationships between supervisors and subordinates is also crucial, as a positive dynamic can foster mutual commitment, inspiring employees to share their ideas and views more openly.

In managing these dynamics, university directors should balance the individual needs of employees for autonomy and flexibility with the necessity for control and efficiency. By effectively managing these aspects, universities will not only attract top talent but also maintain their leadership in the education sector. Ultimately, the study underscores the significance of enhancing employee voice and knowledge sharing within organizations. By creating a supportive workplace and promoting a culture of communication and innovation, organizations can secure a competitive advantage and achieve their strategic goals.

The study's findings underscore the pivotal role that social networks play in enhancing the flow of information exchange, thus significantly accelerating the dissemination of knowledge among members. Social networks help connect employees and promote sharing of ideas and resources, which can boost innovation within a university. By using social media platforms, organizations can improve communication and enhance collaboration among employees to further drive innovation efforts (Di Tullio *et al.*, 2021). These networks are instrumental in providing essential information about various opportunities and options, effectively reducing the cost and barriers associated with social interactions. This ease of connection facilitates more frequent and deeper information sharing among individuals. Additionally, social networks are vital in strengthening social ties and accumulating social power, which in turn can significantly influence members' decisions. By reinforcing an individual's identity and cognition, these networks empower members to enhance their competencies and skills through enriched social connections.

Moreover, the importance of social networks extends to facilitating communication, fostering knowledge sharing, and promoting innovation, thereby creating a supportive and innovative environment that encourages members to share ideas. This leads to a competitive advantage and enhanced organizational outcomes. The ability of social networks to generate symbolic capital and creative ideas also presents a significant opportunity for the sectors of culture and education. Through effective policy-making and the promotion of a culture of innovation, social networks can serve as complementary educational mediums and sources of creative thought. By leveraging these networks to promote knowledge sharing, facilitate communication, and

encourage collaboration, organizations can significantly enhance creativity and innovation within the cultural and educational fields. Countries that manage their social networks effectively can harness this potential to drive growth and development in their educational and cultural sectors, thus creating an ecosystem that supports continuous learning and innovative thinking. This strategic use of social networks not only bolsters internal organizational processes but also contributes to broader societal advancements in education and culture. In summary, to create an atmosphere that is conducive to innovation, organizations need to improve communication, share knowledge, and encourage creativity. By building strong communication networks, using social connections, and addressing gender issues, companies can boost their ability to come up with new ideas. These approaches can help businesses perform better and stay competitive in today's fast-paced world.

## **7. Limitations and Future Research**

It is crucial to acknowledge the limitations of a study to pave the way for future research that might extend the boundaries of current findings. Expanding the scope of this study to include members from private universities or different industries within Iran could offer a more diversified sample, potentially leading to varied insights. Moreover, replicating this study in other countries would help determine whether the observed impacts of entrepreneurship on voice are unique to the Iranian context or if they can be generalized across different cultural and economic environments. Utilizing longitudinal data could also enrich our understanding by providing insights into how the relationship between entrepreneurship and voice evolves. Such data would allow researchers to trace the developmental trajectories of voice as individuals gain more experience in entrepreneurial activities. Additionally, focusing on gender diversity and the roles of decision-makers and organizational support systems in fostering voice could yield critical insights into the dynamics of entrepreneurship and voice in various settings. Overall, identifying these limitations and proposing potential areas for future research are essential steps in advancing our knowledge and understanding of the complex interplay between entrepreneurship and voice. By doing so, we can better design studies that address these gaps, enhance knowledge sharing, and contribute to more effective and inclusive organizational practices.

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