





# Mediating role of gender on the impact of human resource strategies on knowledge-based employees: a study on human strategies affecting organizational health

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## Abstract

**Background:** Rapid growth of the organization depends on capable and efficient human resources that provide the conditions for producing more diverse, better, and more products in global markets by using any technology.

**Methods:** The present study was applied-developmental in terms of purpose and descriptive-correlational method. All 86750 employees of public organizations in Kerman province in 2019 were considered the study's statistical population. Using Cochran's formula, the sample size was estimated at 384 people. The selection was done by the stratified sampling method. Data collection included a 98-item questionnaire of knowledge-based staff with a 0.87 validity and a 0.74 reliability and a 50-item questionnaire of human resources strategies with a 0.85 validity and a 0.87 reliability. Data analysis was performed using Amos and SPSS software.

**Results:** The results revealed a significant difference effect of secondary, a free agent, committed strategies on knowledge-based employees in public organizations in Kerman province considering the mediating role of gender. However, the effect of paternalistic strategy on knowledge-based employees in Kerman public organizations considering the mediating role of gender was not significant.

**Conclusion:** Managers and policymakers could apply the findings of this study in determining the position and level of employees as designers and key actors of the organization and in the appointment, recruitment, retention and evaluation system.

**Keywords:** Occupational Groups; Organizations; Workforce; Motivation; Public Health.

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## Introduction

There is a high association between the performance of an organization's economic tasks and responsibilities and the performance of human resource management. Most managers believe that

human resources are considered the institution's assets, and much capital is used in their recruitment, training and retention (1).

Faster growth depends on a capable and efficient workforce that provides the conditions for producing more diverse, better products to participate in global markets using any technology. In the light of human resource training and the scientific capacity of the workforce, it increases the possibility of using new resources and new methods. Since human capital is more adaptable to transformative opportunities, investment in human capital promises a longer return and a brighter horizon (2).

Today, in the business world, human resource development and management are no longer just about spending but also about creating added value for their capital following the organization's business to maximize profits and reduce costs by taking advantage of the talent management approach, employees diversity and training diversity (3).

The increasing globalization of businesses, reengineering, downsizing of organizations, and outsourcing of activities, services, and major technological development suggest that knowledge property's efficient and effective utilization as a strategic and valuable "resource" is very important. The key to the new economy's success is "knowledge," which creates a competitive and strategic advantage for organizations (4).

Considering organizations as dynamic and learning phenomena, it is necessary to use a strategic approach in human resource management (5).

Thus, human resource strategies create sustainable competitive advantages in each organizational unit based on the strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats of human resources. There is no necessary association between training, performance appraisal, recruitment, etc., resulting in the inefficiency of human resource systems. One of the best and most appropriate approaches is applying scientific

competencies in human resource management (6).

Hence, the optimal use of human resource strategies is very effective in the organization's success. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to answer the question of the effect of human resource strategies on knowledge-based employees, considering the mediating role of gender in public organizations in Kerman province.

## Methods

### *Conceptual model and research hypotheses*

The present study was applied in terms of aim and descriptive, correlational and structural equation modeling type in terms of method. This study aimed to design the effect of the human resource strategies model on knowledge-based employees in public organizations in Kerman province. All 86750 employees of public organizations in Kerman province in 2019 were considered the study's statistical population. Cochran's formula was used to estimate the study's sample size, and the statistical sample size was estimated at 384 people. Thus, using the stratified random sampling method, 384 public organizations in Kerman province employees were selected as a sample and surveyed. In the present study, a questionnaire was used to collect data. Cronbach's alpha method and confirmatory factor analysis were applied to determine the validity and reliability of the research tool. The results showed that the validity and reliability of the tool were appropriate. The research data were analyzed at the level of descriptive and inferential statistics using SPSS 23 software. Also, model comparison in AMOS23 software were used to test the mediating effects in the proposed model and their significance.

Since the reliability coefficients of the research tool are in the range of 0.91 to 0.99, it can be stated that the tool has good reliability. Based on the results obtained from the fit indices in the measurement models of confirmatory factor analysis of

research variables, it can be stated that the resulting Chi-square value in all measurement models of tools is not significant at the level of 0.05. It indicates that the conceptual model fits the experimental model of the tool. In addition to the chi-square indices and the sample size critical value (CMIN / DF, P, CMIN), fit indices were also used. As shown in Table 1, the comparative fit index (CFI), the goodness of fit index (GFI), normed fit index (NFI), and adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI) indicate the appropriate fit of the model, especially the CFI value should be above 0.90 from the of Muller, point of view (7). Also, based on Weston & Goreje, it should be above 0.95 to fit the data model appropriately. Also, RMSEA should be less than 0.08 (8), which was less than 0.08 in the present study. Therefore, based on the results of tools measurement models, it can be stated that all research tools have an appropriate and acceptable fit (validity).

*Conceptual model and research hypotheses*

Given what was stated in the theoretical and experimental background of the research and based on the possibility of relationships between the variables of the present study,

a hypothetical conceptual model was presented in Figure 1.

In this model, HR strategies are the predictor variable, knowledge-based employees are the criterion variable, and gender is the mediator variable. In addition, the main hypothesis and four sub-hypotheses of the research are as follows:

**Main Hypothesis:** There is a significant difference between the effects of human resource strategies on knowledge-based employees in public organizations in Kerman province, considering the mediating role of gender.

**Sub-hypothesis 1:** There is a significant difference between the effects of secondary strategies on knowledge-based employees in public organizations in Kerman province, considering the mediating role of gender.

**Sub-hypothesis 2:** There is a significant difference between the effects of paternalistic strategies on knowledge-based employees in public organizations

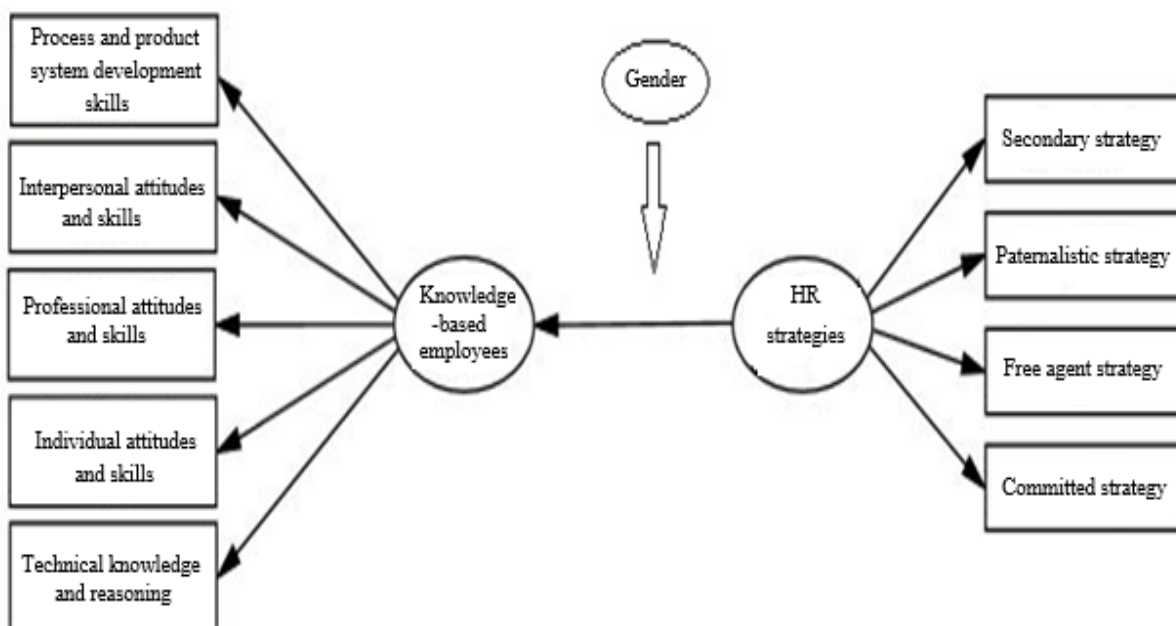


Figure 1. Conceptual model of research

Table 1. Frequency and respondents' frequency in terms of demographic variables

Variable	Options	Frequency	Percentage of frequency
Gender	Male	177	46.1%
	Female	207	53.9%
Age	30 years and younger	84	21.9%
	31-40 years	99	25.8%
	41-50 years	106	27.6%
	51 years and older	95	24.7%
Education level	Associate	19	4.9%
	Bachelor	162	42.20%
	Master	148	38.5%
	PhD	55	14.4%

in Kerman province, considering the mediating role of gender.

Sub-hypothesis 3: There is a significant difference between the effects of free agent strategies on knowledge-based employees in public organizations in Kerman province, considering the mediating role of gender.

Sub-hypothesis 4: There is a significant difference between the effects of committed strategies on knowledge-based employees in public organizations in Kerman province, considering the mediating role of gender.

**Results**

The data were first analyzed descriptively. According to the findings of this study, the frequency and frequency of respondents in each of the demographic variables are presented in Table 1. As shown in Table 1,

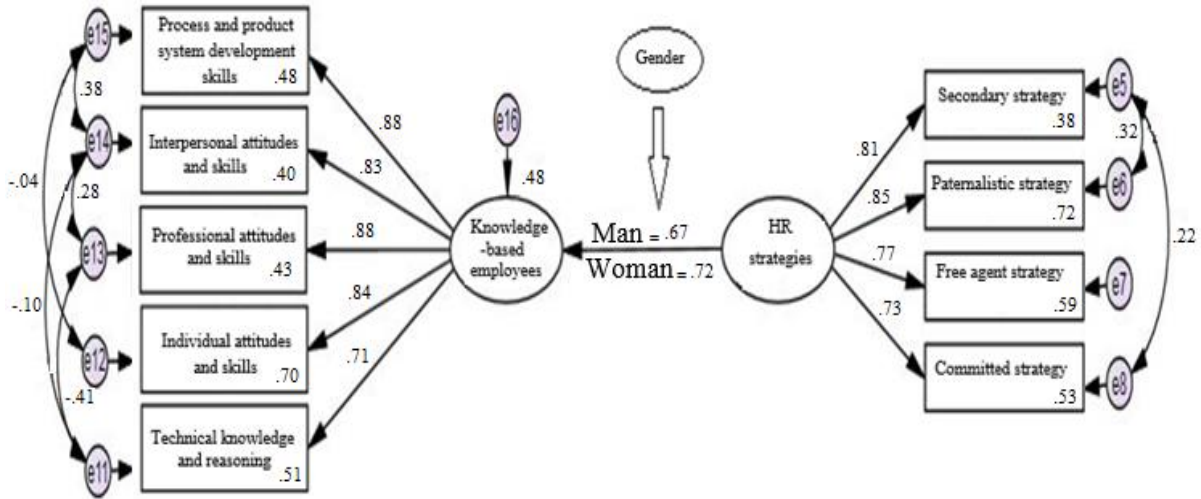
based on the demographic variables ' frequency, out of 384 people, according to the gender of women with 207 people (53.9%) and in terms of age, the age group of 41-50 years with 106 people (27.6%) and in the educational group, people with a bachelor's degree with 162 people (42.2%) had the highest frequency

Table 2 provides descriptive statistics, including standard deviation and mean for each study variable and their dimensions to assess desirability levels.

Based on the general level table findings, two variables (model of knowledge-based employees and human resource strategies) and all their dimensions in the study population are at the desired level. Since structural equation modeling was applied in this research to test the research hypotheses and proposed model, first, the assumptions of using structural equation modeling for

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of study variables and the findings of examining their desirability

Variable (dimension)	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Human resource strategies	3.38	0.95	-0.09	-0.42
Secondary strategy	3.21	0.81	-0.52	0.30
Paternalistic strategy	3.44	0.89	-0.33	0.25
Free agent strategy	3.47	0.92	0.18	-0.57
Committed strategy	3.37	0.94	-0.15	-0.05
Knowledge-based employees	3.58	0.63	-0.55	-0.28
Technical knowledge and reasoning	3.92	0.65	-0.87	-0.29
Individual skills and attitudes	3.22	1.14	-0.73	0.28
Professional skills and attitudes	3.42	1.09	-0.78	1.01
Interpersonal skills and attitudes	3.62	0.61	-0.73	0.37
System, product and process development skills	3.73	0.44	-0.88	0.90



CMIN =29.50 ,P = 0.21 ,CMIN/DF = 1.84 ,RMSEA= 0.078

Figure 2. Initial structural model of research

each research variable was examined. The first assumption in structural equation modeling is the distance measurement scale of research variables. Given the Likert scale used, this assumption is valid. The second hypothesis is to correct the lost data and remove the outliers that were not found in the research data analysis.

The Watson camera test was performed for error independence for the third hypothesis. This assumption is valid since the Durbin-Watson statistic was calculated at 1.78 for the model of human resource strategies and 1.89 for knowledge-based employees and is in the acceptable range between 1.5 and 2.5. The fourth assumption is that the data is normal. One way to study data distribution is to use the kurtosis coefficients and skewness of study variables. The critical ratio of kurtosis and skewness was calculated for the study variable and its components, all of which were within the

acceptable range of 2%. Therefore, the data distribution for both variables is normal.

Since these assumptions were valid and the validity of the measurement tool was at an appropriate level, the conceptual model of the research was tested using structural equation modeling. The statistical model implemented is shown in Figure 2. The fit indices presented in Table 3 show that the predicted model fits well for the relationship between the research variables.

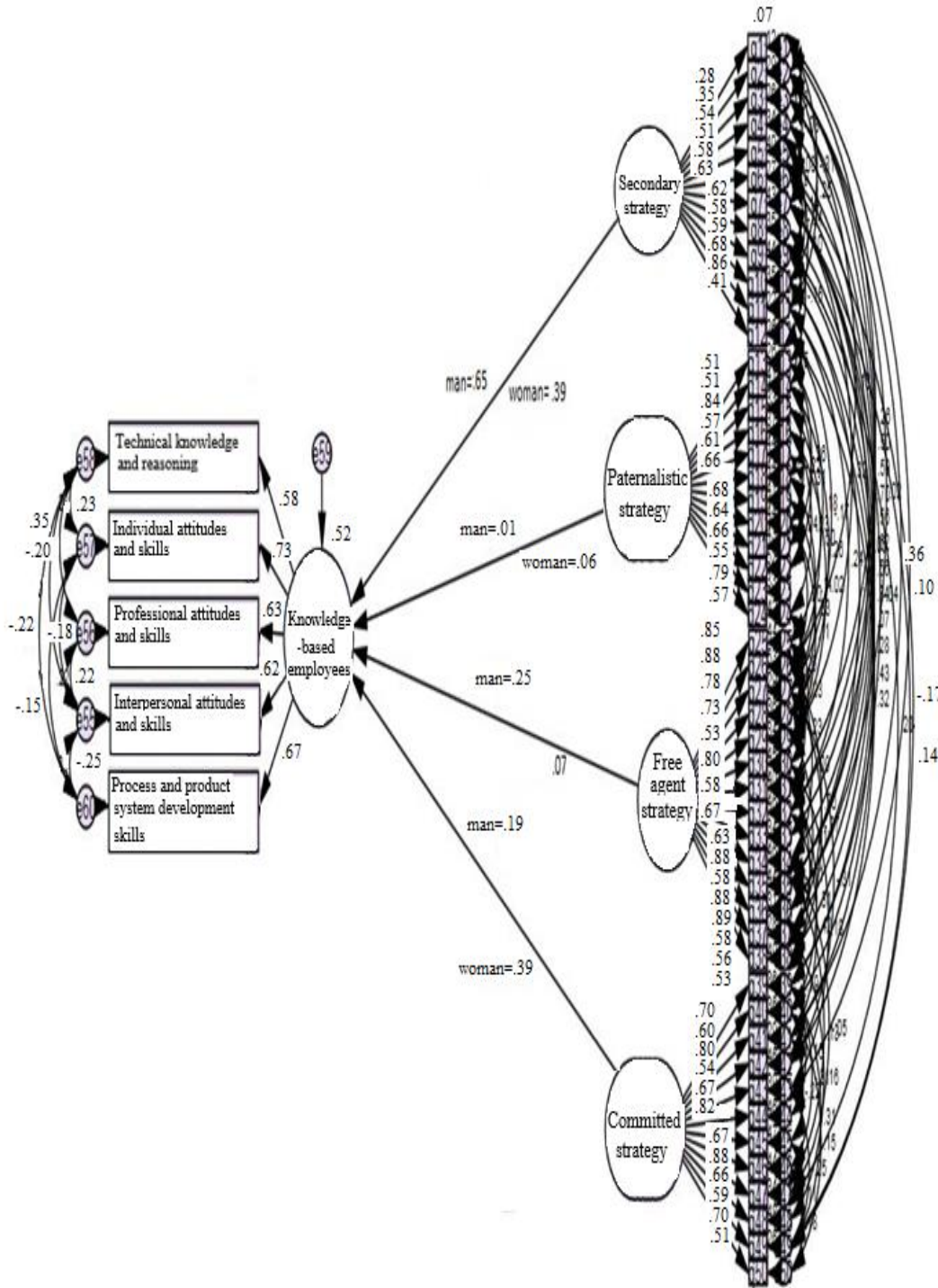
Since the significance level of the model comparison test is acceptable up to 0.08 in comparing the relationship between several groups (9) and considering the significance level of this test (p = 0.720), the effect of human resource strategies on knowledge-based employees in public organizations in Kerman province considering the mediating role of gender was not significant. The study's main hypothesis is rejected (Table 4).

Table 3. The goodness of fit indices of the structural model of study variables

0	CMIN	DF	CMIN/DF	NPAR	P	GFI	AGFI	IFI	TLI	CFI	NFI	RMSEA
Fitted model	29.50	16	1.84	29	0.021	0.95	0.88	0.98	0.95	0.98	0.95	0.078
Desirable values	-df	-	<3	-	>0.05	>0.90	>0.90	>0.90	>0.90	>0.90	>0.90	<0.08

Table 4. Significant estimation of the effect of human resource strategies on knowledge-based employees in public organizations in Kerman province considering the mediating role of gender

Indirect effect of level	Standardized parameter	Non-standardized parameter	p-value	Ch-square	df	p-value
Male	0.67	0.66	0.001	0.128	1	0.720
Female	0.72	0.70	0.001			



CMIN =2416.24 •P = 0.001 •CMIN/DF = 1.86 •RMSEA= 0.047

Figure 3. The second structural model of study

Table 5. Path coefficient and importance of research hypotheses

Gender	Relationships	Path coefficient	Statistic t	p-value
Male	knowledge-based employees → HR strategies	0.67	8.08	0.001
Female	knowledge-based employees → HR strategies	0.72	8.92	0.001

The findings from testing the above model (Table 5) show that the direct effect of the human resource strategies on male knowledge-based employees ( $P < 0.05$ ,  $t = 8.08$ ,  $\beta = 0.67$ ) is significant and positive. Also, the direct effect of the human resource strategies model on female knowledge-based employees ( $P < 0.05$ ,  $t = 8.92$ ,  $\beta = 0.72$ ) is significant and positive.

Then, to test the four sub-hypotheses of the study (The relationship between the components of human resource strategies, secondary strategy, free agent strategies, committed strategies, and paternalistic strategies) and the variable of knowledge-based employees in Kerman public organizations, another case was tested. The model is presented in Figure 3.

Since the significance level of the model comparison test is acceptable up to 0.08 in comparing the relationship between several groups (9) and considering the significance level of this test ( $p = 0.030$ ), the effects of secondary strategies on knowledge-based employees in public organizations in Kerman province considering the mediating role of gender is significant. It suggests that the main hypothesis of the study is accepted. A significance level of this test is  $p = 0.114$  in Table 6.

Considering that in comparing the relationship between several groups, the significance level of the model comparison test is acceptable up to 0.08 (9) and

considering the significance level of this test ( $p = 0.030$ ), between the effect of secondary strategies and basic knowledge staff There is a significant difference in government organizations in Kerman province in terms of gender moderator variable, which indicates the confirmation of the first sub-hypothesis of the research. There is no significant difference between gender moderators, which indicates the rejection of the second sub-hypothesis of the study. The significance level of this test ( $p = 0.071$ ), there is a significant difference between the effect of contracting strategies and knowledge-based employees in government organizations in Kerman province. This indicates the confirmation of the third sub-hypothesis of the research. The level of significance of this test ( $p = 0.054$ ), there is a significant difference between the effect of committed strategies and knowledge-based employees in government organizations in Kerman province in terms of the gender moderator variable (Table 7).

The results obtained from testing the above model revealed that the direct effect of the second strategy variable model on male knowledge-based employees ( $P < 0.05$ ,  $t = 3.10$ ,  $\beta = 0.65$ ) is significant and positive (Table 8). Also, the direct effect of the secondary strategies variable model on female knowledge-based employees ( $P < 0.05$ ,  $t = 2.44$ ,  $\beta = 0.39$ ) is significant and positive. The direct effect of paternalistic

Table 6. The goodness of fit indices of the structural model of study variables

indices	CMIN	DF	CMIN/DF	NPAR	P	GFI	AGFI	IFI	TLI	CFI	NFI	RMSEA
Fitted model	2416.24	129	1.86	241	0.001	0.83	0.80	0.91	0.89	0.91	0.82	0.047
Desirable values	-df	_	<3	_	>.05	>.09	>.09	>.09	>.09	>.09	>.09	>.08

Table 7. Estimation of the effect of human resource strategies on knowledge-based employees in public organizations in Kerman province considering the mediating role of gender

Indirect effect of level	Relationships	Standardized parameter	Non-standardized parameter	p-value	Ch-square	df	P-value
Male	Secondary strategies → knowledge-based employees	0.65	0.72	0.015	4.478	1	0.030
Female	Secondary strategies → knowledge-based employees	0.39	0.36	0.002			
Male	Paternalistic strategies → knowledge-based employees	-0.01	-0.01	0.919	0.263	1	0.114
Female	Paternalistic strategies → knowledge-based employees	-0.04	-0.04	0.341			
Male	free agent strategies → knowledge-based employees	0.25	0.26	0.044	3.291	1	0.071
Female	free agent strategies → knowledge-based employees	0.07	0.05	0.412			
Male	Committed strategies → knowledge-based employees	0.19	0.10	0.104	3.897	1	0.054
Female	Committed strategies → knowledge-based employees	0.39	0.24	0.001			

strategies variable model on male knowledge-based employees ( $P < 0.05$ ,  $t = -0.01$ ,  $\beta = 0.65$ ) is not significant. Also, the direct effect of the paternalistic strategies model on female knowledge-based employees ( $P < 0.05$ ,  $t = -0.95$ ,  $\beta = -0.06$ ) is not significant. The direct effect of the free-agent strategies model variable on male knowledge-based employees ( $P < 0.05$ ,  $t = 2.08$ ,  $\beta = 0.25$ ) is significant and positive. Also, the direct effect of the free-agent strategies model variable on female knowledge-based employees ( $P < 0.05$ ,  $t = 0.92$ ,  $\beta = 0.07$ ) is not significant. The direct effect of the committed strategies model on male knowledge-based employees ( $P < 0.05$ ,  $t = 1.63$ ,  $\beta = 0.19$ ) is not significant. Also, the direct effect of the committed strategies model on female knowledge-based employees ( $P < 0.05$ ,  $t = 4.97$ ,  $\beta = 0.39$ ) is significant and positive.

## Discussion

According to the study results, structural equations modeling knowledge-based employees on the effectiveness of human

resource strategies in public organizations in Kerman province, considering the mediating role of gender, had an appropriate fit. Accordingly, knowledge-based employees, which include components of reasoning and technical knowledge, individual skills and attitudes, professional skills and attitudes, interpersonal attitudes and skills, and system-product and process development skills that are significantly related to human resource strategies, including paternalistic strategy, committed strategy, free-agent strategy, and secondary strategy.

Given the research background and studies and actions taken by the researcher in this area, it was found that some studies have been conducted on knowledge-based employees and their relationship with other variables in Iran and foreign countries. However, no study has been conducted to examine the relationship and impact of human resource strategies on knowledge-based employees with the mediating role of

Table 8. Path coefficients of and significance of study hypotheses

Row	Relationships	Path coefficients	statistic T	p-value
Male	secondary strategies → knowledge-based employees	0.65	3.10	0.015
Female	secondary strategies → knowledge-based employees	0.39	2.44	0.002
Male	Paternalistic strategies → knowledge-based employees	-0.101	-0.01	0.919
Female	Paternalistic → knowledge-based employees	-0.06	-0.95	0.341
Male	free agent strategies → knowledge-based employees	0.25	2.08	0.044
Female	free agent strategies → knowledge-based employees	0.07	0.92	0.412
Male	committed strategies → knowledge-based employees	0.19	1.63	0.104
Female	committed strategies → knowledge-based employees	0.19	4.97	0.001

gender in human resource development, especially in Iran and in Iranian public organizations.

Human resource strategies are a set of human resource functions that are internally coordinated (10) and provide a framework for fundamental tools and goals (11).

Human resource strategies will focus on the organization's specific goals regarding what needs to be done and the change that needs to be applied. Ensuring that the organization has the employees it needs, training, motivation, rewards, flexibility, teamwork and stable relationship with employees are the issues that ensure the achievement of company strategies to their goals (11).

Based on the results, human resource strategies affect knowledge-based employees by considering the mediating role of gender. Consistent with these results, the research conducted by Christensen Hughes & Rog, suggests that the presence of specialized and knowledge-based employees and special training for these employees have a determining role in human resource management and talent management (12).

Mirzaee et al. concluded that factors such as providing relevant and reliable information at the time of hiring, assigning jobs based on employees' competence and merit, defining a clear job path, evaluation system, and effective payment system affect retaining human resources (13).

Also, the results of studies carried out by Grisham & Misko Zachary (14) and Shams Zare et al. (15) confirm these results. Therefore, it is critical to have an effective approach to developing and training company experts and strengthening their commitment and loyalty to the organization. It causes these experts to ignore higher salaries and benefits in the labor market outside the organization due to having a dynamic and secure job.

Organizations use various policies, methods and techniques in dealing with different groups of its employees. This difference exists in the major human resource processes, so the organization may not even consider implementing some of them cost-effective for some groups (16).

Moradi conducted a study to examine the relationship between individual knowledge management and accountants' job performance. Their study revealed a significant and positive relationship between individual knowledge management skills and the accountants' task and contextual dimensions of job performance (17).

Rezvani Chaman Zamin & Moafi Haradasht examined the relationship between strategic human resource planning and organizational performance in the western governorates of Gilan province. The mentioned study was used in terms of aim and descriptive-correlational data collection method. Results revealed a significant relationship between strategic human resource planning, including the recruitment and employment of human resources strategy, retention of human resources strategy, human resources training strategy, and job performance (18).

Golamzadeh & Jalali, conducted a study entitled "Human Resources Strategy Formulation by Strategic Reference Points Theory (Case Study: RPK Company)." Using a survey model with the statistical population of managers and senior experts of the mentioned company, they measured the size of strategic reference points for each of its jobs. Then, they identified the appropriate strategic model for each job (19).

Yang & Wan, conducted a study to examine the relationship between knowledge leadership, individual knowledge management, project performance, and organizational performance. Results revealed that knowledge leadership was correlated with individual knowledge

management. Also, the implementation of individual knowledge management affected organizational performance through project performance, and a positive relationship was found between individual knowledge improvement and organizational performance (20).

Nowadays, due to the complex global economic systems, organizations have realized that they need the best talents and thus attract, promote, manage and retain them to succeed and survive in the business environment. Organizations have found that talent is a vital resource for achieving superior results, and it requires effective management and planning (21). Accordingly, it can be stated that when employees' knowledge of the job's basic concepts and principles is high, they can solve job problems, adapt to technological changes, and have new and scientific information retrieval methods. Also, they can be creative and innovative, pay more attention to their intellectual development, think rationally, plan for their career path, and participate in the company's sustainable development. Accordingly, they also avoid duplication and waste of time in the organization and acquire management and leadership skills, can work in multidisciplinary teams and thus organization can use the knowledge and skill of the employees and manage their talent well.

### **Recommendations**

1- Given the high learning capability of the talented workforce, it is recommended to develop talent, assess needs, and design and implement development and training programs for these forces following their characteristics and learning styles. Applying new methods, addressing approaches such as coaching and mentoring, and designing a personal development program for talented forces will be more effective for their growth and development.

2- Given employees' personal and interpersonal communication skills, managers should make more efforts to promote employees' green organizational citizenship behavior.

3- The strategy of the organization should be based on the fact that human resources are an important issue for the organization, and the organization should try to satisfy the human resources and maintain specialized and experienced human resources and try to retain skilled and specialized personnel by training the human resources of the organization.

4- The organization should not rely solely on the existing human resources in the organization. It should pay attention to the expertise or non-expertise of the person recruited for the new organizational position.

5- The organization should give special privileges to people with high skills and expertise and use attractive incentive policies to maintain a skilled and capable workforce. In other words, the organization should try to temporarily hire skilled and skilled labor with special privileges and hire special labor for complex and special positions and jobs.

6- Having specialized people for the organization should be considered the main policy for any organizational position. If necessary, consult with experienced and specialized people, temporarily attract skilled and experienced people with high economic motivations, and use a special and specialized workforce to perform important projects.

7- The organization should pay special attention to the development of the skills and knowledge of the employees and use professional specialists to improve the knowledge of its employees.

8- It is recommended that one of the goals of human resource strategy planning is to increase the ability of risk-taking, flexibility and creativity, and critical

thinking among the organization's employees.

9- It is recommended that the development of management and leadership skills and the ability to work in multidisciplinary teams through employee training be one of the policies in human resources.

10- It is recommended to develop policies to enhance employees' ability to understand society and the global environment and their impact on them, understand organizations and companies, and work effectively.

11- It is recommended that employees give training in reasoning, problem-solving, doing experiments, and discovering knowledge and systemic thinking.

12- It is recommended that employees gain the ability to plan for their career path, remain an expert, innovate and entrepreneurship, and apply new ideas effectively.

13- Employees can strengthen their skills in communicating effectively with others (oral, written, graphic and electronic) and communicating in foreign languages.

14- Given the skills and ability to participate in the sustainable development of employees, it is recommended for managers to involve them in planning to highlight social responsibility and improve human resource management standards, including paying attention to the environment.

15- Considering employees' management skills and leadership, it is recommended to manage employees' jobs, organization, thinking, belief, and anthropological attitudes to help the organization achieve its goals.

16- Considering the skills and abilities of understanding the community and the global environment of employees, it is recommended for managers to pay more attention to their efforts in encouraging employees and guiding them to the green

performance considered nowadays by communities in the recruitment process.

17- It is recommended to objectively define the competencies and advantages considered by the managers, inform them to others, evaluate employees based on the basic competence for the employee development plan, and publish the evaluation results.

### **Conclusion**

The present study can expand the scope of human knowledge about the studied variables and enhance the knowledge of managers and policymakers of Iranian public organizations about the status of the studied variables and the relationships between them in the study population. Also, since one of the adaptation strategies and management interventions is the human resources strategies of organizations, this knowledge can be the basis for proper planning and decision-making in the area of human resources strategies to enhance and make optimal use of skills and knowledge of Iranian government employees. We hope that managers and policymakers apply the findings of this study in developing the position and role of employees as designers and key actors of the organization and in the appointment, recruitment, retention and evaluation systems.

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