

The Mediating Role of Social Intelligence in the Relationship between Organizational Agility and Organizational Excellence

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Received Date: 29/1/2025

Accepted Date: 29/5/2025

Pp: 90-104

Abstract

Introduction: The aim of this study was to examine the mediating role of social intelligence in the relationship between organizational agility and organizational excellence.

research methodology: This research is of an applied nature and is methodological, being descriptive-correlational. The statistical population included all employees of the Education Department in District 1 of Shiraz, totaling over 190 individuals. Based on Morgan's table and using simple random sampling, 123 individuals were selected as the sample for analysis. The data collection tools included three questionnaires: Organizational Excellence, Organizational Agility by Zhang, and Social Intelligence by Silva, Martinussen, and Dahl. Data were analyzed in two sections, descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. In the descriptive statistics section, the mean and standard deviations were calculated, while in the inferential statistics section, Pearson correlation coefficient and hypothesis testing were employed using path analysis and the Baron and Kenny method.

Findings: The results revealed that there is a direct and significant relationship between organizational agility and social intelligence. A direct and significant relationship was also observed between organizational agility and organizational excellence, as well as between social intelligence and organizational excellence. Furthermore, social intelligence acts as a significant mediating variable in the relationship between organizational agility and organizational excellence.

Conclusion: According to the research findings, it can be concluded that social intelligence plays a mediating role in the relationship between organizational agility and organizational excellence of employees. To achieve organizational excellence, an organization must focus on continuous improvement, customer focus, employee empowerment, data-driven decision-making, and collaboration. By focusing on these principles, an organization can create a culture of excellence that drives continuous improvement and leads to exceptional performance in all areas of its operations.

Key Words: Social Intelligence, Organizational Agility, Organizational Excellence.

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Introduction

In the third millennium, organizational excellence refers to key activities in managing an organization aimed at achieving effective results, based on fundamental principles that include organizational performance, customer focus, leadership and consensus, reality-based management, employee participation, continuous improvement and innovation, common interests of partners, and social responsibility. In other words, outstanding performance in organizational management and achieving results is grounded in key concepts such as result orientation, customer focus, leadership, stability in goals and realities, employee participation, continuous improvement and innovation, beneficial collaborations, and social responsibilities (Najmi & Hosseini, 2013).

One of the prominent models in the field of organizational excellence is the EFQM model, which emphasizes excellent and outstanding management practices and warns followers that traversing this path can be challenging even under the best conditions. As global competition increases, technological innovations occur rapidly, processes change, and continuous transformations happen in the economy, society, and customer environments, maintaining excellence becomes increasingly difficult (Salmani Nejad, Daneshvar, & Mirfakhraldini, 2014). Contemporary organizations, including educational institutions, must equip themselves with future knowledge to progress toward excellence. An organization that pays attention to quality at all its levels can experience sustainability and excellence. Therefore, it can be said that quality is the starting point for organizational excellence. Today, leading organizations, followed by others, utilize organizational excellence models to achieve sustainable results and meet stakeholder satisfaction. These models provide a framework for managing organizations—whether in production or service sectors—in all aspects of business (Zarei, 2009).

Organizational excellence contributes to performance evaluation, creating bilateral learning experiences, providing learning opportunities, assisting in the successful implementation of practical tools and actions in the organization, and identifying their achievements, helping the education sector achieve continuously higher levels of performance (Moqaddayi & Taji, 2017). On the other hand, considering the points raised regarding organizational excellence, it can be stated that every organization strives for superiority and excellence in its activities. One of the effective factors on this path is organizational agility. One of the best ways to cope with environmental changes within an organization is to steer it toward becoming agile. Rapid and continuous changes pose fundamental challenges for organizations, including the education sector. Organizations typically face common goals such as high-quality work, effective performance, and providing suitable services to customers in a stressful and variable environment.

Numerous studies have investigated the variables of social intelligence, organizational agility, and organizational excellence. Some notable examples in the context of both domestic and international research include:

Barbara and Kranokot (2003) investigated the "relationship between social intelligence, gender, and age," examining the variables of social intelligence in relation to gender and age. They conducted three tests on 416 men and women and found that the emotional excitement test showed a positive correlation with participants' age. Auditory analysis yielded similar results for both genders, and the image analysis presented similar outcomes as well. Stak and Nishida (2008) defined social intelligence as an essential ability for establishing effective communication and interaction with others. The components of this intelligence include social information processing (the ability to understand and predict the behavior and feelings of others), social awareness (understanding the feelings and concerns of others, which are crucial for success in social activities), and social skills (sensitivity to others' needs). Dahlgaard (2009) conducted a case study titled "Towards Human-Centric Metrics in Improvement and Change," aimed at understanding the importance of the human dimension in total quality management and organizational change using the EFQM excellence model. He concluded that attention to this human dimension can create new opportunities for achieving excellence. Tsai and Hiu (2009) studied the relationship between social intelligence and undesirable behavior in the tourism industry, examining three dimensions of social intelligence: social awareness, social skills, and information processing, demonstrating that social intelligence significantly impacts individuals' adaptation to their environment.

A study titled "Creating an Environment for Learning and Organizational Agility" was conducted by Algama (2011), revealing that leaders create environments for organizational learning and the development of future leaders. These leaders also provide environments for improving organizational performance, fulfilling missions, and achieving strategic objectives, emphasizing the characteristics of an agile organization—leadership, knowledge, and environmental awareness. Demishliz (2011) identified key factors transforming the current business environment: greater access to technology, competition in technology development, globalization of markets, rapid increases in technology accessibility, and rising customer expectations. He stated that organizations must be agile to respond to these changes.

Arter (2012) showed that leadership serves as a driving force in total quality management processes within higher education institutions, representing a key factor and a strategic source for developing policies and managing resources and processes. Gorgia et al. (2013) in their research titled "Application of the EFQM Model in Organizations" demonstrated that the use of the EFQM model can engage all employees in managing the organization, resulting in better outcomes in the improvement process. Karimi Shad (2014) provided structural equation modeling results in a study titled "Examining and Explaining Organizational Agility within the Ministry of Defense's Excellence Model, Case Study: Defense Industries." His findings indicated a positive and significant relationship between the defense industries' excellence model and organizational agility. In other words, the enablers of the excellence model positively affect the capabilities of agility, with a standardized coefficient showing that the excellence model explains 55% of the variations in

organizational agility capabilities. Overall, the excellence model has the most influence on competency capabilities, followed by responsiveness capabilities. Norouzi (2014) examined the relationship between organizational intelligence and organizational agility among staff at Shahroud University. The statistical population included 190 experts and managers from the university. Using simple random sampling, 130 questionnaires were distributed, of which 127 were returned completely and 3 were incomplete. The findings indicated a positive and significant relationship between organizational intelligence and organizational agility, showing that all dimensions of organizational intelligence positively correlate with organizational agility. Aghaei et al. (2015) found interesting results in a study titled "The Impact of Social Capital on Organizational Excellence in Advanced Product Organizations: A Case Study of Aviation Industries." This descriptive-correlational study surveyed 51 managers and experts in the aviation industry, revealing a direct relationship between social capital and organizational excellence; organizations with robust and sufficient social capital can significantly influence service quality and achieve a higher level of excellence compared to others.

Baqri et al. (2015) conducted research titled "The Relationship between Information Technology and Organizational Agility Capabilities Mediated by Enablers of Organizational Excellence," finding an inverse and significant relationship between organizational agility capabilities and information technology. Additionally, an inverse and significant relationship existed between the enablers of organizational excellence and information technology. The enablers of organizational excellence can predict information technology and the capabilities of organizational agility. Khalilvand (2015) indicated that there is a positive and significant relationship between emotional intelligence and most components of organizational excellence in a study titled "Investigating the Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Organizational Excellence Based on the EFQM Model in Ilam Cement Factory," though no significant relationship was found between emotional intelligence and the processes' component. Simultaneous regression testing showed that emotional intelligence components could explain 55% of the variance in organizational excellence with statistical significance ($p = 0.000$). The key factors predicting organizational excellence were self-motivation, self-awareness, and empathy, respectively. Based on these findings, it was recommended that managers give special consideration to emotional intelligence in hiring and promoting human resources.

Abbasi (2016), in a study titled "Investigating the Impact of Organizational Intelligence and Business Intelligence Elements on Organizational Excellence in the Organization for the Development and Modernization of Industries in Iran," concluded that organizational intelligence influences organizational excellence through elements like strategic insight, shared fate, willingness to change, performance pressure, and applying knowledge, while business intelligence affects organizational excellence significantly. Sarbland (2017) stated in a research titled "Examining the Relationship between Social Intelligence, Organizational Agility, and Organizational Accountability among

Employees of the Education Department in Parsabad Moghan" that a significant relationship exists between social intelligence, organizational agility, and organizational accountability. Moreover, results indicated that among the three components of social intelligence, the social skills component had the most substantial impact on organizational agility and accountability.

Exemplary organizations achieve superior levels of performance, meet or exceed stakeholder expectations, and strive for sustainable success (Najmi, 2010). Agility is a key strategy for quickly identifying customer needs and providing timely responses. This concept can become a fundamental factor in managing and coping with organizational environments that are continuously changing and uncertain, helping organizations reach their established objectives (Aghaei, 2013). Considering the indirect effect of social intelligence on organizational excellence, it is worth noting that evolutionary theorists believe social intelligence is, in fact, an inherent skill and capacity of the human brain that reflects in the cerebral cortex. What has been identified as intelligence thus far is rooted in our nervous systems, assisting in advancing tasks in complex groups. Goleman proposed a model of social intelligence, equating it with emotional intelligence, linking social awareness with self-awareness, and associating social skills with self-management. He also identified fundamental tasks of social intelligence, including coordinating interactions, various types of empathy, social cognition, collaborative skills, and concern for others, all of which define the path of social intelligence (Goleman, 2010, as cited in Agha Mohammadi, 2012).

By employing the model of organizational excellence in education, organizations can evaluate their success in executing improvement programs over time and compare their performance with other organizations, particularly the best ones. The excellence model enhances relations among employees and directs them toward common objectives, thus reinforcing the continuous improvement process and assisting strategic management optimization. A review of research indicates that no prior studies have examined the relationship between the variables analyzed in this research. Therefore, the present investigation, due to its novelty, focuses on exploring the relationship between social intelligence, organizational agility, and organizational excellence among employees of the Education Department in District 1 of Shiraz.

Research question

whether social intelligence mediates the relationship between organizational agility and organizational excellence among employees of the Education Department in District 1 of Shiraz?

Methodology

This research is applied in nature and is categorized as descriptive-correlational research. The study population consists of all employees of the Education Department in District 1 of Shiraz, totaling over 190 individuals. To determine the sample size, a simple random sampling method was utilized, resulting in 123 participants being selected for the study. A questionnaire was used to gather data for this research.

Organizational Excellence Questionnaire:

The Organizational Excellence Questionnaire is designed based on principles aimed at creating balance and satisfying all stakeholders. Exemplary organizations are agile, flexible, and responsive to changes in systems and stakeholder expectations (Riyahi, 2006). The score that each individual receives from this questionnaire reflects their assessment of organizational excellence. The EFQM model serves as a standard checklist for evaluating organizations (Table 1). Due to the researchers' interest in conducting questionnaire-based studies, this questionnaire utilizes a five-point Likert scale (ranging from Strongly Disagree = 1 to Strongly Agree = 5). The validity of this questionnaire was confirmed based on evaluations and feedback from supervising and advising professors. Additionally, the reliability of the questionnaire, as measured by Cronbach's alpha test using SPSS software, was calculated to be 0.92.

Table 1- Distribution of the Organizational Excellence Questionnaire Items

Main Construct	Dimensions	Latent Variable	Number of Items	Question Numbers	Score
Organizational Excellence	Enablers (500 points)	Leadership	5	1-5	100
		Policy and Strategy	4	6-9	90
		Employees	5	10-14	80
		Business Partnership	6	15-20	90
		Processes	4	21-24	140
	Results (500 points)	Customer Results	5	25-29	200
		Employee Results	6	30-35	90
		Community Results	6	36-41	60
		Key Performance Results	5	42-46	150

Organizational Agility Questionnaire:

Organizational agility can be defined as the ability to overcome unexpected challenges and cope with unprecedented threats in the work environment, allowing the organization to leverage changes to its advantage (Jafarzadeh & Shahai, 2007). Here, organizational agility refers to the score each individual receives from the 16-item Organizational Agility scale designed by Zhang (2004). This questionnaire employs a five-point Likert scale and encompasses 16 questions evaluating four dimensions: responsiveness, flexibility, competence, and speed (Table 2). To assess content validity, the opinions of experts, university professors, and qualified individuals were sought. Through various interviews and gathering feedback, necessary adjustments were made to ensure the questionnaire accurately measured the construct of interest. The overall reliability of the questionnaire was obtained through Cronbach's alpha, reported at 0.92 by Sharifi.

Table 2- Components and Items of Organizational Agility

Dimensions	Items
Responsiveness	2-3-1
Flexibility	11-12-13
Competence	4-5-6-7-8-9-10
Speed	14-15-16

Social Intelligence Questionnaire:

Social intelligence is defined as the ability to understand one's own internal states, emotions, and the behaviors of oneself and others, and to act constructively based on this information (Crown, 2007). The score that each individual receives from the 21-item Social Intelligence questionnaire by Silva, Martinussen, and Dahl (2001) reflects their level of social intelligence. This questionnaire includes 21 items aimed at measuring social intelligence and its related subscales: Social Information Processing (SIP), Social Awareness (SA), and Social Skills (SS). The response scale for this questionnaire is designed as a seven-point Likert scale (from Strongly Disagree = 1 to Strongly Agree = 7). It is noteworthy that for questions 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 18, 19, 20, and 21, scoring is done in reverse, where the scale is from Strongly Disagree = 7 to Strongly Agree = 1 (Table 3). In the research conducted by Rezaei (2010), after confirming the content validity of this scale, its reliability was calculated using Cronbach's alpha. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient ranges from zero (0), indicating instability, to one (1+), indicating complete reliability, with closer values to one enhancing the questionnaire's reliability. Specifically, Cronbach's alpha for the SIP subscale is reported at 0.73, for the SA subscale at 0.66, for the SS subscale at 0.64, and for the overall social intelligence variable at 0.81.

Table 3- Components of the Social Intelligence Questionnaire

Dimension	Corresponding Questions
Social Information Processing (SIP)	1-8
Social Awareness (SA)	9-15
Social Skills (SS)	16-21

To analyze the data, the information will first be transferred to a computer using SPSS software. Data analysis will be conducted in two sections: descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. In the descriptive statistics section, mean and standard deviation will be utilized; in the inferential statistics section, Pearson correlation coefficient and the proposed model test will be applied using path analysis based on the Baron and Kenny method. In this research, participants were encouraged to provide their responses stress-free and with a sense of responsibility. They were informed to refrain from mentioning their names, and it was assured that their responses would remain confidential.

Research Findings

The mean score and standard deviation for the research variables are reported in Table 4.

Table 4- Mean and Standard Deviation of Research Variables

Organizational Agility	Social Intelligence	Organizational Excellence
3.53	4.51	3.63
0.42	0.69	0.34

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant relationship between organizational agility and social intelligence.

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant relationship between organizational agility and organizational excellence.

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant relationship between social intelligence and organizational excellence.

To test these hypotheses, Pearson correlation coefficient was used, and the results are visible in Table 5.

Table 5- Pearson Correlation Test

Significance Level	Variable
0.47	Social Intelligence
0.32	Organizational Excellence
0.44	Social Intelligence
<i>Note: Significance at $p < 0.05^*$</i>	
	Significance at $p < 0.01$

From Table 5, it can be concluded that there is a direct significant relationship between organizational agility and social intelligence ($r = 0.47$, $p < 0.01$) at the significance level of less than 0.01. There is also a significant direct relationship between organizational agility and organizational excellence ($r = 0.32$, $p < 0.05$) at the significance level of less than 0.05. Additionally, there is a direct significant relationship between social intelligence and organizational excellence ($r = 0.44$, $p < 0.01$) at the significance level of less than 0.01.

Hypothesis 4: Social intelligence acts as a mediating variable in the relationship between organizational agility and organizational excellence. To examine the mediating role of social intelligence in the relationship between organizational agility and organizational excellence, hierarchical regression analysis was conducted following the Baron and Kenny method, and the results are reported in Table 6.

Table 6- Regression Analysis Results Using Baron and Kenny Method to Determine the Mediating Role of Social Intelligence in the Relationship Between Organizational Agility and Organizational Excellence

Step	Dependent Variable	Independent Variables	Beta	T	P	R	R ²	F	df	p
1	Organizational Excellence	Organizational Agility	0.32	2.53	0.01	0.3	0.10	6.41	1, 53	0.01
2	Organizational Excellence	Organizational Agility	0.15	1.09	0.28	0.46	0.21	7.19	2, 52	0.002
		Social Intelligence	0.37	2.68	0.01					

From the results of the first stage of ANOVA ($p < 0.01$, $F(1, 53) = 6.41$), it can be inferred that there is a significant linear relationship between the independent variable (organizational agility) and the dependent variable (organizational excellence), and the coefficient of determination shows that organizational agility alone predicts 10% of organizational excellence. Furthermore, from the results of the second stage of ANOVA ($p < 0.01$, $F(2, 52) = 7.19$), it can be inferred that there is a significant linear relationship between the independent variables (organizational agility and social intelligence) and the dependent variable (organizational excellence). In this stage, the multiple correlation coefficient squared is 0.21, indicating that approximately 21% of the variance in organizational excellence can be predicted by organizational agility and social intelligence. Additionally, with the inclusion of social intelligence as an independent variable, the ability to predict the dependent variables has increased by 11% compared to the first stage, demonstrating the significant mediating role of social intelligence in the relationship between organizational agility and organizational excellence.

The path diagram of the variables is as follows:

Table 7- Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects of the Variables

Effects	Direct Effects	Indirect Effects	Total Effects
From Organizational Agility to Social Intelligence	0.47	-----	0.47
From Social Intelligence to Organizational Excellence	0.44	-----	0.44
From Organizational Agility to Organizational Excellence	0.32	0.20	0.52

Discussion and conclusion

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant relationship between organizational agility and social intelligence.

Based on the results obtained from this study, it can be concluded that there is a direct and significant relationship between organizational agility and social intelligence. These findings align with the research conducted by Sarbakhsh (2017) and can lead to interesting interpretations. Organizational agility is recognized as a modern approach to responding to the challenges of change and transformation in organizational environments. This concept is framed as a new production paradigm that assists organizations in maintaining their competitive advantages during fluctuating and competitive periods. Agility serves as a comprehensive and flexible response to the business environment, founded on principles such as enriching customer experience, managing change and uncertainty, utilizing human resources, and emphasizing collaboration. Organizational agility comprises dimensions such as responsiveness, competence, flexibility, and speed. In this context, the concept of an agile workforce is recognized as a key factor that can create the necessary environment for establishing an agile organization.

In today's world, individuals who are successful and effective tend to have higher social intelligence, which enables them to overcome challenges and issues in their lives. This applies equally in the organizational realm, especially given advancements in science and technology and the emergence of new needs and challenges.

The importance of social intelligence is increasingly felt in contemporary society. Social intelligence refers to the level of skill needed to create, sustain, and expand interpersonal relationships and includes a variety of skills that facilitate effective communication and relationship management. In organizations known for their agility, attention to social intelligence can enhance capabilities, dynamism, and ultimately organizational excellence. As all these factors contribute to organizational advancement and success, investing in the enhancement of both social intelligence and agility should be considered a key strategy in human resources development programs. This approach will not only improve interpersonal relationships within the organization but will also have a positive impact on overall organizational performance, enhancing adaptability and innovation in the face of increasing business environment challenges.

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant relationship between organizational agility and organizational excellence.

Based on the results obtained from this study, it can be asserted that there is a direct and significant relationship between organizational agility and organizational excellence. These findings are consistent with the results of research conducted by Heydari (2014), emphasizing that organizational agility can effectively improve the level of organizational excellence. In today's world, organizations face rapid and frequent changes in their surroundings, which compel them to adapt and make strategic choices. Factors such as rapid technological advancements, increasing risks, globalization, and expectations resulting from privatization are environmental characteristics that contemporary organizations must adapt to. Under such conditions, various strategies such as reengineering, lean production, total quality management, and employee empowerment have emerged.

One method that has gained researchers' attention in recent years is the concept of organizational agility. Agility should be viewed as a key capability for organizations in achieving their goals. An agile organization possesses attributes such as innovation, flexibility, and readiness to respond to environmental changes while being resilient and durable in the face of challenges. This type of organization seeks to achieve these capabilities with lower costs and energy, thereby improving performance and productivity. In agile organizations, employees at all levels feel accountable for their work outcomes, rather than limiting themselves to the tasks of a fixed position. In this context, human resources are recognized as the main source of productivity, and the output and performance of agile organizations can be linked to organizational excellence. The model of organizational excellence is a managerial framework based on the principles and fundamental concepts of total quality management and self-assessment systems.

This model provides a basis for progress and improvement, serving as a tool to measure the level of system implementation and self-assessment within the organization. Additionally, this model helps identify and determine the path for managers' activities to enhance performance. The foundational proposition of the model of excellence answers two key questions: how does this model serve as a suitable and logical managerial structure, and who can play a key role in this chain of communications and interactions? At the first level of this model, overall objectives are established, and at subsequent levels, these goals are broken down into degrees and quantitative metrics. Thus, paying attention to existing changes in organizations and fostering agility can play a significant role in enhancing excellence and improving employee and organizational efficiency. Agility not only leads to more effective operational processes but also fosters a positive and continuous organizational culture oriented towards learning and innovation. This transformation in institutionalizing the principles of excellence within organizations can result in sustainable competitive success in today's markets.

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant relationship between social intelligence and organizational excellence.

Based on the results obtained from this study, it can be concluded that there is a direct and significant relationship between social intelligence and organizational excellence. These findings are in harmony with the results of studies conducted by Sarbakhsh (2017) and Heydari (2014), clearly demonstrating the importance of this relationship in various managerial and organizational contexts. In explaining this hypothesis, some theorists believe that social intelligence can play a key role in empowering organizations. Social intelligence is recognized as a vital asset in society and organizational environments, as it contributes to improving mental well-being and the quality of social interactions. Furthermore, social intelligence specifically emphasizes the assessment of leadership capabilities and is mainly focused on establishing and managing positive relationships among individuals. Individuals with high social intelligence typically possess social skills and specific competencies that can facilitate organizational growth and the attainment of organizational excellence.

Organizational excellence is a continuous process that begins with planning and goal-setting and continues through regular evaluations and the use of pre-determined objectives to identify shortcomings and improve them through necessary reforms, thereby eliminating barriers and strengthening strengths. In other words, the starting point for any change and improvement is a precise understanding of the current state of the organization and its issues. Moving towards excellence and progress and familiarizing oneself with contemporary models of excellence is considered an unavoidable necessity. In reality, organizational excellence implies growth and enhancement across all dimensions, which includes achieving satisfaction among clients, employees, and other stakeholders. In this regard, creating a balance between the needs and

expectations of all stakeholders and ensuring the long-term success of the organization is of utmost importance.

Therefore, focusing on social intelligence within organizations and examining its role in relation to organizational excellence is a highly defensible and significant subject. This focus can lead to improved social interactions, increased levels of trust and satisfaction within the organization, and ultimately contribute to achieving organizational goals and continuous advancement. Overall, in today's complex and changing world, fostering and enhancing social intelligence is a vital factor in achieving organizational excellence and should be considered a key strategy in organizational development programs.

Hypothesis 4: Social intelligence acts as a mediating variable in the relationship between organizational agility and organizational excellence.

Based on the results obtained from this study, it can be clearly stated that there is a significant linear relationship between the independent variable (organizational agility) and the dependent variable (organizational excellence). Conducted analyses indicate that organizational agility alone is capable of predicting 10% of the variance in organizational excellence. Furthermore, this research indicates that there is also a significant linear relationship between the independent variables (organizational agility and social intelligence) and the dependent variable (organizational excellence). In this stage, the squared multiple correlation coefficient is 0.21, meaning that approximately 21% of the variance in organizational excellence can be predicted by organizational agility and social intelligence. A significant point is that with the addition of the social intelligence variable to the independent variables, an additional 11% enhancement in the predictive capability of these variables has been achieved compared to the first stage.

This increase signifies the meaningful mediating role of social intelligence in the relationship between organizational agility and organizational excellence. In explaining this hypothesis, it is important to acknowledge the contemporary world, which is undergoing profound transformations and experiencing a crisis of instability that deeply affects organizations. As such, organizations are compelled to directly or indirectly adapt to changes that pose threats to their survival and position. In competitive environments, there is a clear need for developing and improving organizational flexibility and responsiveness.

Many organizations are facing increasing, persistent, and uncertain competition exacerbated by technological innovations, changes in market environments, and evolving customer needs. This critical situation prompts significant reforms in organizational strategic visions, business priorities, and the reevaluation of traditional—and even relatively contemporary—models. In this context, agility is introduced as a new paradigm for engineering competitive organizations. The need for this new paradigm arises from the increasing rate of changes in the environment, compelling institutions to proactively respond to these shifts. Agility, as an encompassing concept, embodies the ability to embrace changes and the need for transformation and movement towards growth and success within organizations. One of the

fundamental indicators of agility within organizations is social intelligence, and its alignment with agility can lead to organizational excellence. Employees who possess high social intelligence generally engage in better interactions and communications, and these interactions can play an essential role in the process of organizational excellence. Overall, it can be concluded that enhancing organizational agility and social intelligence, as two influential factors, not only assists in optimizing organizational performance but can also foster a strong and dynamic culture within the organization, ultimately elevating organizational excellence significantly. This synergy between agility and social intelligence enables organizations to effectively confront environmental challenges and achieve their objectives and visions more efficiently.

Based on the findings of this study, it is essential for managers to place special focus on the development and cultivation of social intelligence among their employees. Strengthening this trait in employees can lead to improved interpersonal relationships, increased motivation, and ultimately organizational excellence. Additionally, given the impact of agility on organizational development, especially in the face of rapid and continuous environmental changes, it is crucial for organizations to consistently strive to enhance their agile capabilities. This effort will help them to effectively meet contemporary challenges while simultaneously increasing their productivity and efficiency. Ultimately, implementing a model of organizational excellence within relevant organizations can serve as a structured approach to enhancing performance and achieving strategic objectives.

This research was conducted in a limited scope among the employees of the Education Department in District 1 of Shiraz; therefore, caution should be exercised when generalizing the results to other organizations. Moreover, due to the fact that the primary data collection tool was a questionnaire, this method may have overlooked some psychological or conceptual dimensions of the relationships between variables. Therefore, to increase the validity and accuracy of the obtained results, it is recommended that future studies employ multiple methods for data collection to yield more credible findings.

To broaden the scope of research in this area, it is suggested that the components of organizational agility be examined qualitatively. Additionally, studying the variables present in this research alongside other managerial variables could lead to a deeper understanding of their relationships. Finally, conducting qualitative studies on the factors influencing organizational excellence, particularly in terms of designing and delineating comprehensive models for achieving excellence within organizations, could be regarded as important topics for future research and contribute to the scientific and practical development of this field.

Conclusion

According to the research findings, it can be concluded that social intelligence plays a mediating role in the relationship between organizational agility and organizational excellence of employees. To achieve organizational excellence, an organization must focus on continuous improvement, customer

focus, employee empowerment, data-driven decision-making, and collaboration. By focusing on these principles, an organization can create a culture of excellence that drives continuous improvement and leads to exceptional performance in all areas of its operations.

Following the principles of research ethics

Informed consent forms were completed by all subjects in the present study.

Financial sponsor

The costs of the present study were provided by the authors of the article.

Conflicts of interest

According to the authors, the present article does not have any conflict of interest.

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