




# Developing a Qualitative Framework for Sharing Managerial Experiences Using a Phenomenological Approach (Case Study: Islamic Azad University)

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** The present study was conducted with the aim of explaining a conceptual model for sharing managerial experiences based on the lived experiences of middle managers at Islamic Azad Universities in Semnan Province.

**Methods and Materials:** In terms of purpose, this research is applied, and in terms of nature, it is qualitative with an exploratory approach, employing a phenomenological method. The participants consisted of middle managers from Islamic Azad Universities in Semnan Province, who were selected through purposive sampling. Data saturation was achieved after conducting 17 semi-structured interviews. The data were analyzed using Colaizzi's seven-step phenomenological method.

**Findings:** The results of the data analysis led to the extraction of 128 initial codes (indicators), which, after processes of comparison and integration, were organized into 27 sub-themes and 7 main themes. The main themes included: the nature and characteristics of managerial experience (4 sub-themes, 20 indicators), managers' perceptions and attitudes toward experience sharing (4 sub-themes, 20 indicators), individual factors influencing the sharing of managerial experiences (3 sub-themes, 12 indicators), organizational contexts and requirements (4 sub-themes, 20 indicators), operational mechanisms for sharing managerial experiences (4 sub-themes, 17 indicators), challenges and barriers to sharing managerial experiences (4 sub-themes, 19 indicators), and the outcomes of sharing managerial experiences (4 sub-themes, 20 indicators).

**Conclusion:** The findings indicated that sharing managerial experiences is a multidimensional and context-dependent phenomenon influenced by the interaction of individual, organizational, and cultural factors. Its effective realization requires the provision of appropriate structural contexts, the strengthening of managers' motivation and professional trust, and the design of both formal and informal mechanisms for experience transfer. The results of this study can serve as a scientific basis for policymaking, improving organizational learning systems, and enhancing managerial effectiveness in Islamic Azad Universities.

**Keywords:** managerial experiences, experience sharing, phenomenology, middle managers, Islamic Azad University.

## 1 Introduction

The growing complexity of contemporary organizations, particularly in higher education systems, has intensified the need for effective knowledge management practices that go beyond formal procedures and documented information toward the utilization of experiential knowledge embedded in managerial practice. Universities, as knowledge-intensive institutions, are not only producers of formal knowledge but also environments in which tacit, experience-based knowledge plays a critical role in decision-making, problem-solving, and organizational adaptation. In this context, managerial experience constitutes a valuable yet often underutilized source of organizational learning, especially when it remains unarticulated or is not systematically shared among organizational members (Moradi et al., 2022; Mousavi & Heidari, 2023).

Managerial experience is inherently situated, context-dependent, and deeply intertwined with real-world decision-making processes. Unlike codified knowledge, which can be easily documented and transferred, experiential knowledge is often tacit, emerging through direct engagement with complex, uncertain, and dynamic situations. Studies have shown that such experiences shape managerial cognition, judgment, and behavioral responses over time, forming the basis of professional expertise (Ahmadi & Hosseini, 2022; Kazemi, 2022). Consequently, the ability to capture, articulate, and share these experiences becomes essential for enhancing organizational learning and ensuring the continuity of managerial knowledge within institutions.

The importance of sharing managerial experiences has been increasingly emphasized in the literature on knowledge management and organizational learning. Experience sharing facilitates the transfer of tacit knowledge, reduces the repetition of costly errors, and enhances collective understanding among managers. It also contributes to the development of a shared cognitive framework that supports coordinated action and strategic alignment within organizations (Moradi & Rezaei, 2023; Rezaei & Ahmadi, 2023). Moreover, in academic environments characterized by rapid change and institutional pressures, such as digital transformation and globalization, the need for effective mechanisms of knowledge exchange becomes even more critical (Odai et al., 2025; Teixeira & Shin, 2020).

Despite its recognized importance, the process of sharing managerial experiences remains complex and multifaceted. It is influenced by a range of individual, organizational, and

cultural factors that can either facilitate or hinder knowledge exchange. On the individual level, factors such as motivation, professional identity, and willingness to engage in reflective practice play a significant role in determining whether managers share their experiences. On the organizational level, the presence of supportive structures, leadership styles, and knowledge-sharing cultures significantly affects the extent to which experiential knowledge is disseminated (Ahmadi et al., 2025; Kazemi et al., 2024). Additionally, cultural norms related to trust, openness, and error tolerance can either encourage or discourage the sharing of experiences, particularly those involving failure or uncertainty (Mokhchy et al., 2025; Yıldız et al., 2025).

Recent studies have highlighted that one of the primary challenges in sharing managerial experience lies in the tacit nature of such knowledge. Tacit knowledge is difficult to formalize and often requires interactive, relational, and narrative-based approaches for effective transfer. Storytelling, mentoring, and informal communication have been identified as key mechanisms through which managers can convey their experiences in meaningful ways (Jafari & Norouzi, 2022; Rahimi & Akbari, 2023). Furthermore, phenomenological research has demonstrated that lived experience is not merely a source of knowledge but also a process of meaning-making that shapes how individuals interpret and respond to organizational realities (Rodriguez et al., 2024; Srivastava et al., 2024).

In the context of higher education institutions, and particularly in universities such as Islamic Azad University, the sharing of managerial experiences assumes strategic importance. As one of the largest higher education systems, Islamic Azad University operates in a complex and dynamic environment that requires continuous adaptation and innovation. The transformation and excellence agenda of the university explicitly emphasizes the need for organizational learning, knowledge sharing, and the development of managerial capabilities (Islamic Azad, 2021). However, empirical evidence suggests that despite these strategic priorities, the mechanisms for sharing managerial experiences remain underdeveloped and fragmented, often relying on informal and ad hoc practices rather than structured and institutionalized processes (Ahmadi et al., 2025; Karimi & Beheshti, 2024).

The role of middle managers in this context is particularly significant. As key actors in translating strategic directives into operational practices, middle managers are positioned at the intersection of policy and implementation. Their

experiences reflect both the challenges and opportunities of organizational functioning, making them a valuable source of insight for improving managerial effectiveness. Research indicates that middle managers' lived experiences are shaped by their interactions with organizational structures, leadership expectations, and environmental constraints, highlighting the need for approaches that capture and analyze these experiences in depth (Soleimani & Ghorbani, 2025; Teng-Calleja, 2024).

Furthermore, the emergence of digital technologies and new forms of organizational communication has introduced additional dimensions to the process of knowledge sharing. Digital platforms, social media, and knowledge management systems have the potential to facilitate the dissemination of experiential knowledge across organizational boundaries. However, their effectiveness depends on factors such as user engagement, organizational culture, and technological infrastructure (Shahhoseini et al., 2025; Singh, 2025). At the same time, the increasing complexity of organizational environments requires more sophisticated approaches to knowledge sharing that integrate both technological and human dimensions (Mumtaz et al., 2025; Ranjan & Kadam, 2025).

Despite the growing body of research on knowledge sharing and organizational learning, there remains a gap in understanding how managerial experiences are shared in practice, particularly from a qualitative and phenomenological perspective. Most existing studies have focused on quantitative measures of knowledge sharing or have examined specific aspects such as barriers or facilitators in isolation. There is a need for comprehensive frameworks that integrate the multiple dimensions of experience sharing, including its underlying meanings, contextual factors, and practical implications (Nouri & Sharifi, 2025; Shahhoseini et al., 2025).

Moreover, the complexity of managerial experience sharing requires an approach that captures the richness and depth of lived experience. Phenomenology, as a qualitative research methodology, provides a suitable framework for exploring how individuals perceive, interpret, and communicate their experiences. By focusing on the subjective meanings and interpretations of participants, phenomenological studies can reveal the underlying structures of experience and provide insights into the processes through which knowledge is constructed and shared (Rodriguez et al., 2024; Soleimani & Ghorbani, 2025).

In addition, previous studies have identified significant barriers to the sharing of managerial experiences, including fear of judgment, lack of trust, organizational constraints, and the absence of formal mechanisms. These barriers not only limit the flow of knowledge but also hinder the development of a learning-oriented organizational culture. Addressing these challenges requires a holistic understanding of the factors that influence experience sharing and the development of strategies that promote openness, collaboration, and continuous learning (Kazemi et al., 2024; Rezaei & Ahmadi, 2023).

At the same time, the potential benefits of effective experience sharing are substantial. Organizations that successfully leverage managerial experience can enhance their adaptive capacity, improve decision-making processes, and foster innovation. Experience-based learning contributes to the development of managerial competencies and supports the creation of a knowledge-rich organizational environment in which individuals can learn from both successes and failures (Moradi & Rezaei, 2023; Mousavi & Heidari, 2023). This is particularly relevant in higher education institutions, where the complexity of organizational processes and the diversity of stakeholders require a high level of managerial expertise and flexibility.

Given these considerations, there is a clear need for research that systematically explores the phenomenon of managerial experience sharing and develops a comprehensive framework that can guide both theory and practice. Such a framework should account for the multidimensional nature of experience sharing, including its individual, organizational, and contextual aspects, as well as its outcomes and implications for organizational performance and learning. By adopting a phenomenological approach, it is possible to capture the lived experiences of managers and to develop a deeper understanding of how these experiences are shared, interpreted, and utilized within organizational settings (Nouri & Sharifi, 2025; Teng-Calleja, 2024).

Therefore, the aim of the present study is to develop a qualitative framework for sharing managerial experiences based on the lived experiences of middle managers at Islamic Azad University using a phenomenological approach.

## 2 Methods and Materials

The present study is applied in terms of purpose and exploratory qualitative in nature, conducted using a

phenomenological approach. The research field comprised Islamic Azad Universities in Semnan Province, and the participants included middle managers such as deans, vice-chancellors, department heads, and executive managers who possessed effective managerial experience and active involvement in decision-making processes. Sampling was conducted purposively and based on specific criteria, including having at least five years of university management experience, direct engagement with managerial issues and executive decision-making, and willingness and ability to articulate lived managerial experiences. This process continued until theoretical saturation was achieved, and data were ultimately collected through semi-structured interviews with 17 participants.

The primary data collection instrument was a semi-structured interview. The interview questions were designed in an open-ended format to allow participants to freely express their lived experiences regarding the sharing or non-sharing of managerial experiences. The interview domains included managers' individual experiences of learning and sharing experiences, methods and contexts of experience transfer within the university, barriers and facilitating factors, and the individual and organizational consequences of experience sharing. Interviews were conducted with informed consent from participants, audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and prepared for analysis. The duration of each interview ranged from 30 to 90 minutes.

Data analysis was conducted using Colaizzi's seven-step method. Initially, interview transcripts were read multiple times, and portions of the audio files were reviewed to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the data. In the next stage, significant statements were extracted, and fundamental meanings were formulated for each statement while examining their relationship with the original text. Subsequently, the formulated meanings were organized based on conceptual similarities and categorized into codes and themes. These themes were then integrated to produce a comprehensive description of the phenomenon. In the sixth step, the fundamental structure of the phenomenon was developed through a clear and concise narrative, which was finalized after review by the researcher and a research collaborator. Finally, the results were returned to the participants, and their feedback was incorporated to validate the findings.

To ensure the trustworthiness and quality of the study, the four criteria proposed by Yvonna S. Lincoln and Egon G. Guba were applied. Credibility was enhanced through member checking, prolonged engagement with the data, and

continuous comparison of codes, with summaries of findings shared with selected participants for feedback. Transferability was ensured by providing a rich description of the research context, study setting, participant characteristics, and managerial conditions within the university. Dependability was achieved through detailed documentation of all stages of data collection and analysis, including the interview process, transcription procedures, analytical steps based on Colaizzi's method, and analytical decisions. Confirmability was strengthened by continuously examining the relationships between codes, themes, and original statements, supporting findings with textual evidence, and conducting peer debriefing with a research collaborator to minimize bias.

All ethical considerations were observed, including voluntary participation, full awareness of the research objectives, confidentiality, and assurance of anonymity. Participants retained the right to withdraw from the study at any stage. Finally, data coding was performed using MAXQDA software, version 24.4.

### 3 Findings and Results

The analysis of data obtained from semi-structured interviews, using Colaizzi's seven-step method, resulted in the extraction of 128 initial codes (indicators), 27 sub-themes (components), and ultimately 7 main themes (dimensions). These themes represent various aspects of the lived experiences of managers regarding the sharing of managerial experiences. The process of deriving these themes is explained below.

#### **Step 1: Familiarization with the Data (Comprehensive Review)**

In the first step, all conducted interviews were fully transcribed. The interview texts were then carefully read multiple times to enable the researcher to gain a general understanding of the content of managers' lived experiences regarding the sharing of managerial experiences. This process was accompanied by repeated listening to segments of the interview audio files to ensure accurate transfer of meaning and tone of participants' expressions.

#### **Step 2: Extraction of Significant Statements**

Following familiarization with the data, the interview texts were examined in detail, and phrases, sentences, and segments of participants' discourse that were directly or indirectly related to the phenomenon of sharing managerial experiences were identified and highlighted. These statements reflected the perceptions, emotions, attitudes, and

lived experiences of managers concerning the research topic. At this stage, the focus was solely on extracting significant statements without any conceptual interpretation. These statements constituted the foundation for deeper analysis in subsequent stages and provided the basis for formulating underlying meanings. Table (1) presents a selection of significant statements extracted from the interviews.

### Step 3: Formulation of Meanings from Significant Statements

At this stage, formulated meanings or underlying concepts were derived from each significant statement.

These meanings represent the essence of participants' perspectives and constitute the first level of abstraction from raw data. These concepts correspond to initial codes in qualitative data analysis. After formulating meanings, the relationship between each extracted meaning and its original statement was re-examined to ensure consistency and interpretive accuracy. This verification process was conducted iteratively between the raw data and the formulated meanings.

**Table 1**

*Relationship Between Significant Statements and Formulated Meanings (Initial Codes)*

Formulated Meanings (Initial Codes)	Quotations (Significant Statements)	Interview Code
Experience as the outcome of decision-making under conditions of ambiguity	"If everything is clear, no experience is formed; experience belongs to the moment when the manager is left alone with their decision."	P12
Experience as the lived consequence of a decision, not the decision itself	"Everyone makes decisions; experience begins when you live with the consequences."	P3
Experience as knowledge intertwined with personal cost	"If you have not paid a cost, it is not experience; it is just an event."	P8
Experience as a gradual and cumulative process	"No experience is formed overnight; it accumulates gradually." "When you look back, you realize this understanding emerged from several mistakes and corrections."	P15 / P5
Experience as situational understanding rather than a general rule	"Experience does not tell you what to do in all cases; it tells you when not to act."	P1
Predominance of the tacit nature of managerial experience	"Many of the things we do are unconscious; even we cannot precisely explain why."	P9
Difficulty in articulating tacit experience explicitly	"Transferring managerial experience is not just writing a report; many aspects are embedded in practice."	P7
Possibility of partial articulation of experience through narration	"By giving examples, part of that hidden experience can be transferred."	P2
Rootedness of tacit experience in personal judgments and managerial intuition	"The reality is that many of the decisions I made initially had no formal justification. I understood from the situation that if I did not act, things would worsen. Later, when I reflected, I realized that initial intuition was correct, but at that moment it could not be formally justified."	P6
Dependence of tacit experience on lived background and professional trajectory	"Many of the things I know now did not come from formal training or regulations; they came from the error-filled path I went through. These experiences become internalized and part of one's managerial identity."	P17
Transferability of experience under similar conditions	"These experiences are not a universal prescription; their applicability depends on the context."	P5
Need for contextual adaptation of experience by the recipient	"You receive the experience, then you must adapt it to your own context."	P14
Reproduction of experience through interactive learning	"In dialogues, experience becomes alive again." "Interactive sessions help reconstruct experience."	P8 / P1
Dependence of experience transfer on the recipient's readiness and learning capacity	"I share my experience, but the outcome is not always the same. Some listen just to hear, others listen to understand. The latter truly acquire the experience."	P5
Reproduction of experience as an interpretive rather than imitative process	"I never said to do exactly what I did; what matters is understanding why I made that decision. The decision itself must be constructed for one's own context."	P16
Meaningfulness of experience through direct confrontation with real consequences	"Until the effects of your decision impact people, it is not yet experience. When I saw my decision affecting my colleagues' motivation, that is when it became imprinted in my mind."	P1
Meaningful experience as a turning point in managerial practice	"I made a wrong decision that had a very heavy cost. After that, whenever I make an important decision, I subconsciously return to that experience; it has become a filter for my decision-making."	P9

Accordingly, for each quotation or significant statement, an initial code (formulated meaning) was generated to preserve its connection with the raw text while enabling the data to be organized, categorized, and moved toward theme development. Based on this process, in the third step, the researcher formulated meanings (initial codes) grounded in the extracted significant statements, thereby providing the foundation for organizing these meanings into themes in the fourth step; in total, 128 initial codes were identified.

#### Step 4: Organizing Formulated Meanings into Themes

In this step, the formulated meanings were carefully examined and compared with one another. Subsequently, based on conceptual similarities, they were categorized into sub-themes and main themes. Each theme comprises a set of related meanings that explain a specific aspect of the phenomenon of sharing managerial experiences. The outcome of this step involved classifying 128 initial codes under 27 sub-themes, which were further organized under 7 main themes. Table (3) presents the extracted codes (indicators), sub-themes, and main themes.

**Table 2**

*Thematic Clustering Resulting from the Organization of Initial Codes*

Main Themes	Sub-Themes	Initial Codes
Nature and Characteristics of Managerial Experience	Shareable Nature of Managerial Experience	1) Experience as the outcome of decision-making under ambiguity 2) Experience as the lived consequence of a decision, not the decision itself 3) Experience as knowledge intertwined with personal cost 4) Experience as a gradual and cumulative process 5) Experience as situational understanding rather than a general rule
	Tacit or Explicit Nature of Managerial Experience	1) Predominance of the tacit nature of managerial experience 2) Difficulty in articulating tacit experience explicitly 3) Possibility of partial articulation through narration 4) Rootedness of tacit experience in personal judgment and managerial intuition 5) Dependence of tacit experience on lived background and professional trajectory
	Transferability and Reproduction of Experience	1) Transferability of experience under similar conditions 2) Need for contextual adaptation by the recipient 3) Reproduction through interactive learning 4) Dependence on recipient readiness and learning capacity 5) Reproduction as an interpretive rather than imitative process
	Meaningfulness and Applicability of Managerial Experience	1) Meaningfulness through direct confrontation with real consequences 2) Experience as a turning point in managerial practice 3) Meaning emerging from suffering, error, or failure 4) Experience as a source of subsequent intuitive judgment 5) Linkage of meaningful experiences with managerial identity
Managers' Perceptions and Attitudes Toward Experience Sharing	Managers' Understanding and Meaning-Making of Experience Sharing	1) Experience sharing as explaining decision logic 2) Experience as narration of a real situation 3) Experience sharing as relearning 4) Distinction between experience and instruction 5) Experience sharing as reconstruction of meaning
	Managers' Attitudes and Beliefs Toward Experience Sharing	1) Belief in error reduction through experience sharing 2) Dual attitude toward disclosing errors 3) Belief in context-dependence of experience 4) Cautious attitude toward misinterpretation 5) Experience as a perishable asset
	Professional Identity and Managerial Role	1) Experience sharing as a sign of maturity 2) Tension between authority and transparency 3) Experience as a role-modeling tool 4) Experience sharing as a leadership responsibility 5) Preservation of identity boundaries
Individual Factors Affecting Managerial Experience Sharing	Professional Trust and Psychological Safety	1) Fear of judgment and misuse 2) Role of informal spaces in ensuring safety 3) Trust as a gradual process 4) Organizational support and courage to speak 5) Negative experience leading to subsequent silence
	Individual Motivation for Experience Sharing	1) Intrinsic motivation for usefulness of experience 2) Motivation derived from hardship and difficulty 3) Reduced motivation due to audience indifference 4) Context-dependent motivation
	Willingness to Learn and Teach Managerially	1) Learning through sharing experience 2) Interest in teaching role in management 3) Continuous learning as part of individual identity 4) Reduced willingness in closed environments
Organizational Contexts and Requirements	Professional Responsibility in Experience Transfer	1) Experience transfer as a professional duty 2) Commitment toward novice managers 3) Conflict between professional responsibility and personal considerations 4) Responsibility dependent on organizational support
	Organizational Culture Supporting Experience Sharing	1) Normalization or abnormality of sharing experience 2) Error-tolerant culture 3) Collective learning as a value 4) Implicit cultural judgment 5) Role-modeling by senior managers
	Managerial Support and Organizational Policies	1) Symbolic support 2) Practical support in critical situations 3) Policy ambiguity 4) Inconsistency between policy and practice 5) Role of direct supervisor
	Formal Structures and Procedures for Experience Transfer	1) Absence of clear structures 2) Inefficiency of formal meetings 3) Mentoring and informal relationships 4) Organizational forgetting 5) Bureaucratization of experience

	Organizational Evaluation, Incentive, and Reward Systems	1) Ineffectiveness of experience in evaluation 2) Priority of scoring over honesty 3) Superficial incentives 4) Fear of evaluative consequences 5) Non-material rewards
Operational Mechanisms for Sharing Managerial Experiences	Formal Mechanisms for Experience Sharing	1) Formal experience-sharing meetings 2) Experience-based training workshops 3) Deriving guidelines from successful experiences 4) Formal succession planning programs
	Informal and Interactive Mechanisms for Experience Transfer	1) Informal individual dialogues 2) Informal managerial networks 3) Open-door culture 4) Learning through observation and accompaniment
	Technological Platforms and Tools for Experience Sharing	1) Knowledge management systems 2) Virtual groups and managerial spaces 3) Webinars and recorded interviews 4) Technological limitations in transferring lived experience
Challenges and Barriers to Sharing Managerial Experiences	Documentation and Narrative Processes of Managerial Experience	1) Difficulty in converting oral experience into text 2) Role of storytelling and narration 3) Informal and personal documentation 4) Lack of a structured model for experience narration 5) Fear of permanent documentation of errors
	Individual Barriers	1) Fear of judgment and weakening professional position 2) Fear of recounting errors and failures 3) Instrumental view of experience as personal capital 4) Inability to articulate managerial experience 5) Reduced motivation due to perceived ineffectiveness
	Organizational and Structural Barriers	1) Lack of formal and sustainable mechanisms 2) Disconnection from evaluation systems 3) Work pressure and lack of time for reflection 4) Episodic and symbolic learning programs 5) Underutilization of experience in decision-making
	Cultural, Political, and Managerial Challenges	1) Dominance of secrecy and caution culture 2) Lack of tolerance for error and learning from failure 3) Politicization of managerial experiences 4) Lack of role-modeling by senior managers
Outcomes of Sharing Managerial Experiences	Technical and Implementation Challenges of the Model	1) Weak technological infrastructure 2) Ambiguity regarding responsible authority 3) Resistance to change and experiential pessimism 4) Lack of training and empowerment 5) Model instability and dependence on specific individuals
	Individual Outcomes	1) Increased self-awareness and reflection 2) Strengthened professional self-confidence 3) Reduced managerial isolation 4) Increased courage in critical situations 5) Sense of meaning and professional continuity
	Learning and Managerial Development Outcomes	1) Deep learning based on real experience 2) Accelerated learning of novice managers 3) Transfer of tacit and situational knowledge 4) Strengthened interactive and collective learning
	Organizational Outcomes	1) Preservation of organizational knowledge amid managerial turnover 2) Reduction of costly error repetition 3) Increased managerial alignment and shared understanding 4) Strengthened trust across managerial levels 5) Development of a dialogue and learning culture 6) Increased coherence of managerial practices
	Strategic and Decision-Making Improvement Outcomes	1) More realistic macro-level decisions 2) Reduction of hidden strategic risks 3) Creation of continuity and decision-making memory 4) Increased organizational readiness for uncertainty 5) Facilitation of strategic change implementation

These themes represent the various dimensions of managers' lived experiences of sharing managerial experience, which are defined and analyzed as follows.

1. Nature and characteristics of managerial experience: The findings indicate that managerial experience, from the perspective of participants, is not static knowledge or limited to formal training, but rather a processual, situational, and context-dependent phenomenon that is formed within the context of difficult decisions, crises, and continuous reflection. This experience gradually evolves into a form of practical wisdom and, due to its tacit layers, can only be transferred through lived and context-bound narratives.
2. Managers' perceptions and attitudes toward experience sharing: Managers' attitudes toward sharing experience are influenced by their perceptions of power, learning, and professional position. Some managers consider this process as

an ethical and responsible act aimed at individual and organizational development, whereas others perceive it as a risky action that may lead to judgment or the weakening of authority. This duality indicates that experience sharing is rooted in the subjective meanings and interpretations that managers assign to the organizational environment.

3. Individual factors affecting experience sharing: Individual characteristics of managers play a significant role in their willingness to share experience. Self-efficacy, professional confidence, and psychological safety encourage managers to transfer their experiences, whereas fear of judgment, prior negative experiences, and uncertainty regarding audience acceptance lead to self-censorship. Therefore, experience sharing, before being an organizational act, is a decision based on the manager's internal evaluation.

4. Organizational contexts and requirements: The organization, as the context in which experience is formed, plays a decisive role in facilitating or inhibiting experience sharing. A learning-oriented culture, support from senior management, and mutual trust provide the conditions for the flow of experience; in contrast, judgment-oriented environments, rigid hierarchical structures, and intolerance of error restrict the expression of authentic experiences.
5. Operational mechanisms of experience sharing: The findings indicate that managerial experience sharing primarily occurs within informal interactions, experiential storytelling, face-to-face dialogues, and mentoring. Managers believe that experience gains meaning when expressed through narratives and real-life situations. However, the absence of systematic mechanisms results in this process remaining unstable and dependent on specific individuals.
6. Challenges and barriers to experience sharing: Time constraints, workload pressure, fear of misinterpretation, and the consequences of disclosing errors are among the most significant barriers to experience sharing. In addition, power structures and intra-organizational competition reduce experiential transparency and prevent the transformation of individual knowledge into organizational capital.
7. Outcomes of experience sharing: From the participants' perspective, sharing managerial experience has positive consequences at both individual and organizational levels, including improved decision-making quality, reduced repetition of errors, accelerated learning, and strengthened professional identity. At the organizational level, this process leads to the accumulation of tacit knowledge and the formation of organizational memory, thereby creating an effective link between individual experience and collective learning.

#### **Step 5: Comprehensive Description of Themes**

At this stage, the extracted main themes were integrated into a unified framework to provide a comprehensive representation of the phenomenon of sharing managerial experiences among managers of Islamic Azad University. The results indicate that this phenomenon, from the perspective of managers, is a dynamic, interactive, and

context-dependent process that acquires meaning within a specific cultural, relational, and organizational environment and is perceived as a deliberate and purposeful behavior aimed at learning and improving management.

The findings suggest that managerial experience, within the lifeworld of managers, constitutes deep and predominantly tacit knowledge that is formed through engagement with real decision-making situations, and its value becomes evident in the process of sharing and transferring it to others. Managers perceive experience sharing as a tool for mutual learning, refining decisions, and developing managerial competencies; a process that leads to the transfer of tacit knowledge and the formation of collective wisdom within the organization.

The comprehensive description of the phenomenon indicates that experience sharing encompasses an interweaving of three fundamental levels: at the individual level, recounting and reflecting on experience leads to professional growth and increased self-awareness; at the interpersonal and group level, trust, psychological safety, and a dialogical environment form the foundation of learning interactions; and at the organizational level, the sharing of experiences becomes part of organizational learning and decision-making mechanisms. At the same time, participants pointed to the existence of multilayered barriers to the realization of this process, extending from individuals' internal and psychological factors to bureaucratic structures, power-oriented cultures, and technological limitations. From their perspective, experience sharing becomes a sustainable organizational behavior only when evaluation systems, reward mechanisms, and organizational cultural values are aligned with this behavior and recognize it as a professional value. When appropriate conditions are provided, sharing managerial experiences yields meaningful outcomes for both individuals and organizations, including increased managerial maturity, learning from errors, improved decision-making quality, and strengthened organizational cohesion. Overall, this phenomenon reflects a transition from fragmented individual knowledge to collective organizational wisdom, and its effective realization requires synergy among a learning-oriented culture, managerial support, mutual trust, and technological infrastructure.

#### **Step 6: Formulation of the Fundamental Structure of the Phenomenon**

At this stage, based on the comprehensive description of the themes, the fundamental and abstract structure of the phenomenon of "sharing managerial experiences" was derived. The purpose of this step was to condense the

essence of the phenomenon into a coherent conceptual framework grounded in managers' lived experiences and capable of explaining the internal logic of relationships among its various dimensions. The integrative analysis of themes showed that sharing managerial experience is a dynamic and processual phenomenon that begins at the level of individual perception and culminates in organizational and strategic outcomes.

Based on the findings, the fundamental structure of the phenomenon can be explained in terms of seven main dimensions. These dimensions function in an interconnected and cyclical manner and collectively form the conceptual core of experience sharing. The first to third dimensions relate to the human drivers of the phenomenon and include the nature of managerial experience, managers' perceptions and attitudes, and individual factors influencing experience sharing. These dimensions indicate that experience sharing is primarily rooted in meaning, motivation, and professional identity. The fourth dimension refers to the organizational context and highlights the role of organizational culture, managerial support, and formal structures in facilitating or constraining experience sharing. The fifth dimension encompasses the operational mechanisms of experience sharing and addresses the methods and tools through which managerial experience is transferred. In contrast, the sixth dimension focuses on the multilayered challenges and barriers (individual, organizational, cultural, and technical) that may disrupt this process. Finally, the seventh dimension explains the individual, organizational, and strategic outcomes of experience sharing, which manifest in enhanced learning, improved decision-making, and strengthened organizational wisdom.

Overall, the fundamental structure of the phenomenon of sharing managerial experiences depicts a dynamic system of perception, motivation, context, action, and outcome. This structure demonstrates that experience sharing results from the continuous interaction among human, organizational, and processual layers and can serve as a qualitative conceptual model for developing quantitative measurement instruments or designing practical interventions in organizations. The final outcome of the data analysis includes 128 initial codes, 27 sub-themes, and 7 main themes, whose overall logic begins with human drivers and culminates in final organizational outcomes. The developed framework is illustrated in Figure 1.

### **Step 7: Evaluation of the Results**

In the seventh step of Colaizzi's phenomenological method, in order to ensure the credibility and authenticity of

the findings, the final results of the study were evaluated through participant review. At this stage, a summary of the fundamental structure of the phenomenon of sharing managerial experiences, including the main dimensions and the final narrative of the phenomenon, was provided to 6 participating managers so that the degree of its alignment with their lived experiences could be examined.

The feedback received indicated that the participants regarded the findings and the presented structure as consistent with their actual experiences and evaluated them as a valid representation of the process of sharing managerial experiences. The limited suggestions offered mainly concerned conceptual clarification and lexical revisions, which were incorporated into the final version and contributed to enhancing the precision and conceptual richness of the results.

a) Confirmatory feedback: The feedback received initially showed that most participants considered the extracted dimensions and themes to be an accurate representation of their real experiences in the process of sharing managerial experiences. In particular, the dimensions related to "individual factors," "organizational contexts," and "strategic outcomes of experience sharing" were evaluated by the managers as consistent with the lived realities of the university's managerial environment. Some participants explicitly stated that the order and continuity of the model dimensions reflected the path that managers actually follow, from individual understanding and interpretation of experience to its influence on organizational decisions and practices.

b) Corrective feedback: Alongside this confirmatory feedback, some participants offered corrective suggestions to increase conceptual precision. For example, it was suggested that the analytical boundary between "attitudes toward experience sharing" and "individual motivation for experience transfer" should be clarified more explicitly, because although these two concepts are related, they perform different functions in managerial behavior. Accordingly, in the final version, these two themes were explained separately and rewritten on the basis of more precise empirical evidence. In addition, the feedback highlighted the need for a clearer explanation of the concept of "professional trust"; as a result, this concept was redefined in relation to such components as psychological safety, the history of managerial interactions, and informal relationships among managers.

Supplementary feedback: In addition, some of the feedback had a supplementary and enriching character. For

example, two participants emphasized the role of unsuccessful experiences, managerial errors, and organizational failures as important sources of managerial learning and believed that this type of experience had been less prominently highlighted in the initial version. Following this feedback, this component was strengthened within the dimension of “learning and managerial development outcomes” and was reflected in the final narrative of the phenomenon. It was also suggested that the role of time, tenure, and managerial maturity in the willingness to share experience should be given greater emphasis in the final analysis, and this point was likewise incorporated into the final interpretation of the findings.

The feedback received indicated that the participants regarded the findings and the presented structure as consistent with their actual experiences and evaluated them as a valid representation of the process of sharing managerial experiences. The limited suggestions offered mainly concerned conceptual clarification and lexical revisions, which were incorporated into the final version and contributed to enhancing the precision and conceptual richness of the results. Overall, carrying out this step confirmed that the study findings constitute a valid reflection of the shared meaning of participants’ experiences and possess the necessary credibility for use in the design of measurement instruments, quantitative modeling, and managerial applications.

The outcome of the seven steps of Colaizzi’s phenomenological method led to the identification of and response to the research questions as follows:

#### **What are the dimensions, components, and indicators of the framework for sharing managerial experiences at Islamic Azad University?**

The results indicate that the framework for sharing managerial experiences at Islamic Azad Universities in Semnan Province consists of 3 dimensions, 11 components, and 52 indicators, as follows:

- Nature and characteristics of managerial experience, with 4 sub-themes: the shareable nature of managerial experience (5 indicators), the tacit or explicit level of managerial experiences (5 indicators), the transferability and reproduction of experience (5 indicators), and the meaningfulness and applicability of managerial experiences (5 indicators), totaling 20 indicators;
- Managers’ perceptions and attitudes toward experience sharing, with 4 sub-themes: managers’ understanding and meaning-making of experience

sharing (5 indicators), managers’ attitudes and beliefs toward experience sharing (5 indicators), professional identity and managerial role (5 indicators), and professional trust and psychological safety (5 indicators), totaling 20 indicators;

- Individual factors affecting the sharing of managerial experiences, with 3 sub-themes: individual motivation for experience sharing (4 indicators), willingness to learn and teach managerially (4 indicators), and professional responsibility in experience transfer (4 indicators), totaling 12 indicators.

#### **What are the operational mechanisms for implementing the framework for sharing managerial experiences at Islamic Azad University?**

The results indicate that the operational mechanisms for implementing the framework for sharing managerial experiences at Islamic Azad Universities in Semnan Province consist of 2 dimensions, 8 components, and 37 indicators, as follows:

- Organizational contexts and requirements, with 4 sub-themes: organizational culture supporting experience sharing (5 indicators), managerial support and organizational policies (5 indicators), formal structures and procedures for experience transfer (5 indicators), and organizational evaluation, incentive, and reward systems (5 indicators), totaling 20 indicators;
- Operational mechanisms for sharing managerial experiences, with 4 sub-themes: formal mechanisms for sharing managerial experiences (4 indicators), informal and interactive mechanisms for experience transfer (4 indicators), technological platforms and tools for experience sharing (4 indicators), and the process of documentation and narration of managerial experiences (5 indicators), totaling 17 indicators.

#### **What are the challenges of sharing managerial experiences at Islamic Azad University?**

The results indicate that the challenges and barriers to sharing managerial experiences at Islamic Azad Universities in Semnan Province consist of 1 dimension, 4 components, and 19 indicators, as follows:

- Challenges and barriers to sharing managerial experiences, with 4 sub-themes: individual barriers to sharing managerial experiences (5 indicators), organizational and structural barriers to experience

sharing (5 indicators), cultural, political, and managerial challenges (4 indicators), and technical and implementation challenges of model deployment (5 indicators), totaling 19 indicators.

#### **What are the outcomes of implementing the framework for sharing managerial experiences at Islamic Azad University?**

The results indicate that the outcomes of implementing the framework for sharing managerial experiences at Islamic Azad Universities in Semnan Province consist of 1 dimension, 4 components, and 20 indicators, as follows:

- Outcomes of sharing managerial experiences, with 4 sub-themes: individual outcomes of experience sharing (5 indicators), learning and managerial development outcomes (4 indicators), organizational outcomes of sharing managerial experiences (6 indicators), and strategic outcomes and decision-making improvement (5 indicators), totaling 20 indicators.

#### **What is the qualitative framework for sharing managerial experiences at Islamic Azad University?**

Based on the findings derived from the phenomenological analysis of the data using Colaizzi's method, the qualitative framework for sharing managerial experiences at Islamic Azad University is explained as a comprehensive and process-based model formed through the systematic interaction among the nature of managerial experience, managers' perceptions and attitudes, individual factors, organizational contexts, operational mechanisms, challenges, and outcomes. This framework shows that experience sharing is neither a purely individual nor a purely structural process; rather, it is a meaning-centered phenomenon that is realized within the real context of university management.

Within this framework, the nature and characteristics of managerial experience are first presented as the foundation of sharing. The findings indicate that only those experiences that are real, problem-centered, meaningful, and capable of being explained and transferred in terms of their tacit or explicit level are shareable. Furthermore, the transferability, reproducibility, and applicability of experience constitute the main condition for transforming individual experience into shared managerial knowledge. This dimension, with four components and 20 indicators, specifies the intrinsic quality of shareable experience. In the next step, managers' perceptions and attitudes toward experience sharing play a determining role. The findings indicate that the way managers make meaning of the concept of experience

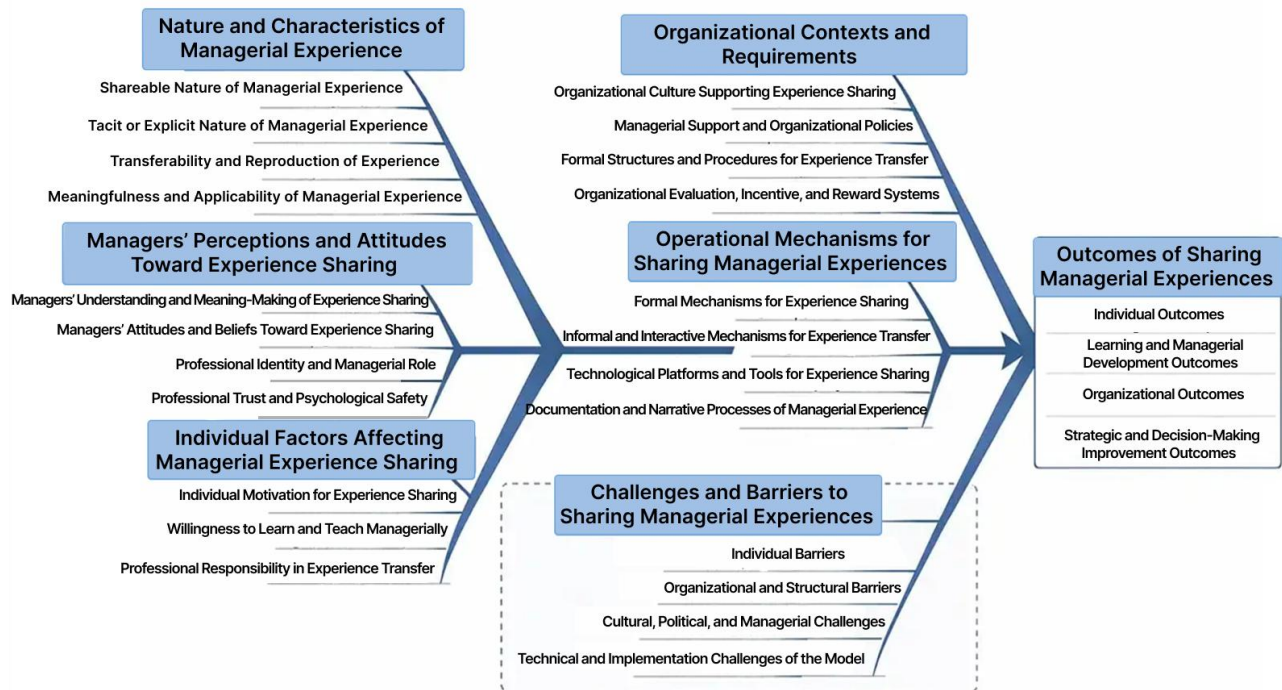
sharing, their professional beliefs, managerial identity, and the level of professional trust and psychological safety shape their behavioral orientation toward experience transfer. This dimension, with four components and 20 indicators, explains the cognitive-attitudinal foundation of the framework. Individual factors affecting the sharing of managerial experiences form the third dimension of the framework. Based on managers' lived experiences, individual motivation, willingness to learn and teach managerially, and a sense of professional responsibility in experience transfer can lead to different experience-sharing behaviors even under similar organizational conditions. This dimension, with three components and 12 indicators, highlights the role of the human factor. The fourth dimension is organizational contexts and requirements. The findings indicate that without a supportive organizational culture, managerial support, formal structures, and systems of incentive and reward, experience sharing remains episodic and individual-centered. This dimension, with four components and 20 indicators, identifies the institutional conditions required for institutionalizing experience sharing. This is followed by the operational mechanisms for sharing managerial experiences, which connect attitude and practice. The findings reveal four operational pathways, including formal mechanisms, informal and interactive mechanisms, technological tools, and the process of documenting and narrating experience. This dimension, with 17 indicators, shows that experience sharing is a process that can be designed, implemented, and managed. The challenges and barriers to sharing managerial experiences constitute the sixth dimension of the framework. The findings indicate that individual, organizational, cultural-political, and technical barriers can limit the effective realization of this process. Identifying these barriers in the form of four components and 19 indicators strengthens the realism and contextual grounding of the framework. Finally, the outcomes of sharing managerial experiences are presented as the ultimate output of the framework. The findings indicate that this process has outcomes at the individual, learning and managerial development, organizational, and strategic levels and can lead to improved decision-making, reduced repetition of errors, and strengthening of the university's knowledge capital. This dimension, with four components and 20 indicators, explains the strategic added value of the framework.

Overall, the presented qualitative framework can serve as a valid basis for analyzing managerial behavior, designing operational mechanisms, and policymaking within the

university management system. The framework is illustrated in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

*Qualitative Framework for Sharing Managerial Experiences*



#### 4 Discussion

The findings of the present study revealed that sharing managerial experiences in Islamic Azad University is a multidimensional, context-dependent, and meaning-centered phenomenon shaped through the interaction of individual, organizational, and structural factors. The results demonstrated that the qualitative framework of experience sharing is organized around core dimensions including the nature of managerial experience, managers' perceptions and attitudes, individual factors, organizational contexts, operational mechanisms, challenges, and outcomes. This integrated structure indicates that experience sharing is not a linear or isolated activity, but rather a dynamic process embedded in the lived realities of managerial practice. These findings are consistent with prior research emphasizing that experiential knowledge is inherently situated and socially constructed, emerging through interaction and reflection within organizational contexts (Rodriguez et al., 2024; Soleimani & Ghorbani, 2025).

At the level of the nature and characteristics of managerial experience, the findings showed that only

experiences that are meaningful, problem-centered, and derived from real decision-making situations are considered shareable. The emphasis on ambiguity, personal cost, and the gradual accumulation of experience highlights the depth and complexity of experiential knowledge. This result aligns with studies indicating that managerial learning is rooted in lived experience and reflective practice, rather than formal instruction alone (Ahmadi & Hosseini, 2022; Kazemi, 2022). Furthermore, the identification of tacit dimensions of experience and the difficulty of articulating them confirms the theoretical distinction between tacit and explicit knowledge and underscores the importance of interpretive and narrative-based approaches to knowledge transfer (Mousavi & Heidari, 2023; Rahimi & Akbari, 2023).

The findings also revealed that the transferability of experience is not absolute but contingent upon contextual similarity and the interpretive capacity of the recipient. Experience is reconstructed rather than replicated, requiring adaptation to specific organizational conditions. This supports the argument that knowledge sharing is an active, interpretive process rather than a passive transmission of information (Jafari & Norouzi, 2022; Nouri & Sharifi, 2025). Additionally, the role of meaningful experiences as

turning points in managerial practice highlights the importance of critical incidents and reflective learning in shaping managerial behavior, which is consistent with experiential learning theories (Srivastava et al., 2024).

In relation to managers' perceptions and attitudes, the findings indicated that the way managers conceptualize experience sharing significantly influences their willingness to engage in it. Experience sharing was perceived not merely as information transfer but as the communication of the underlying logic of decisions and the reconstruction of meaning. This finding aligns with previous studies that emphasize the cognitive and interpretive dimensions of knowledge sharing and the role of narrative in conveying complex experiences (Nouri & Sharifi, 2025; Rahimi & Akbari, 2023). Moreover, the presence of ambivalent attitudes toward sharing errors reflects the tension between professional vulnerability and organizational expectations, a phenomenon also reported in studies on organizational culture and psychological safety (Kazemi et al., 2024; Yildiz et al., 2025).

The role of professional identity and trust was another significant aspect highlighted in the findings. Managers perceived experience sharing as both a sign of professional maturity and a potential threat to their authority or reputation. The importance of psychological safety and trust in facilitating open communication underscores the relational nature of knowledge sharing. This is consistent with research demonstrating that trust and supportive organizational climates are critical enablers of knowledge-sharing behavior (Mokhchy et al., 2025; Mumtaz et al., 2025). The findings further suggest that without a sense of safety and mutual respect, managers may refrain from sharing valuable experiences, particularly those involving failure or uncertainty.

At the level of individual factors, the findings highlighted the importance of intrinsic motivation, willingness to learn and teach, and a sense of professional responsibility in shaping experience-sharing behavior. Even under similar organizational conditions, managers exhibited different levels of engagement in sharing experiences, indicating the central role of personal dispositions. This result is consistent with studies showing that individual motivation and self-efficacy significantly influence knowledge-sharing practices (Ahmadi et al., 2025; Mumtaz et al., 2025). The identification of experience sharing as a professional responsibility also reflects the ethical and developmental dimensions of managerial roles, as emphasized in the

literature on leadership and organizational learning (Moradi & Rezaei, 2023).

The findings related to organizational contexts and requirements demonstrated that experience sharing is highly dependent on the presence of a supportive organizational environment. Elements such as organizational culture, managerial support, formal structures, and reward systems were identified as critical enablers. The absence or weakness of these elements leads to fragmented and inconsistent knowledge-sharing practices. This finding corroborates previous research indicating that organizational culture and structural support are essential for fostering knowledge-sharing behaviors (Kazemi et al., 2024; Mokhchy et al., 2025). Moreover, the role of policy-practice inconsistency highlights the gap between formal organizational intentions and actual practices, a challenge frequently reported in higher education institutions (Islamic Azad, 2021; Rezaei & Ahmadi, 2023).

The identification of both formal and informal mechanisms for sharing managerial experiences further enriches the understanding of this phenomenon. Formal mechanisms such as training workshops and structured meetings provide opportunities for systematic knowledge exchange, while informal interactions and networks facilitate the transfer of tacit knowledge through socialization. The complementary role of these mechanisms supports the view that effective knowledge sharing requires a combination of structured and emergent processes (Jafari & Norouzi, 2022; Singh, 2025). Additionally, the incorporation of technological tools and platforms highlights the growing importance of digitalization in knowledge management, although the findings also point to limitations in capturing the richness of lived experience through digital means alone (Odai et al., 2025; Shahhoseini et al., 2025).

The challenges and barriers identified in the study provide important insights into the obstacles that hinder effective experience sharing. Individual barriers such as fear of judgment, organizational constraints such as lack of formal mechanisms, and cultural factors such as secrecy and intolerance of failure all contribute to limiting the flow of experiential knowledge. These findings are consistent with prior research highlighting the multifaceted nature of barriers to knowledge sharing in academic institutions (Kazemi et al., 2024; Rezaei & Ahmadi, 2023). The identification of technical and implementation challenges further underscores the need for integrated approaches that address both human and technological dimensions of knowledge management.

Finally, the outcomes of sharing managerial experiences highlight the significant value of this process at multiple levels. At the individual level, experience sharing enhances self-awareness, confidence, and professional growth. At the organizational level, it contributes to knowledge retention, improved coordination, and the development of a learning-oriented culture. At the strategic level, it supports better decision-making and organizational adaptability. These findings align with studies demonstrating the positive impact of knowledge sharing on organizational performance, innovation, and learning capabilities (Ranjan & Kadam, 2025; Yıldız et al., 2025). The results also reinforce the argument that experience sharing can serve as a strategic resource for achieving organizational excellence in higher education institutions (Moradi et al., 2022; Teixeira & Shin, 2020).

## 5 Conclusion

Overall, the findings of this study contribute to the literature by providing a comprehensive and contextually grounded framework for understanding the sharing of managerial experiences. By integrating multiple dimensions and highlighting the interplay between individual and organizational factors, the study offers a nuanced perspective on how experiential knowledge can be effectively leveraged to enhance organizational learning and performance.

The present study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the research was conducted within a specific organizational context, namely Islamic Azad Universities in Semnan Province, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other higher education institutions or organizational settings. Second, the use of a qualitative phenomenological approach, while providing in-depth insights into participants' lived experiences, may be subject to researcher interpretation and potential bias. Third, the reliance on self-reported data from managers may have influenced the findings due to social desirability or selective recall. Finally, the study focused primarily on middle managers, and the perspectives of other organizational actors such as senior leaders or administrative staff were not included.

Future research can build on the findings of this study by exploring the phenomenon of managerial experience sharing in different organizational and cultural contexts to enhance the generalizability of the proposed framework. Quantitative studies could be conducted to test the relationships between

the identified dimensions and organizational outcomes, thereby providing empirical validation of the model. Additionally, longitudinal research could examine how experience-sharing practices evolve over time and their impact on organizational performance. Further studies may also investigate the role of digital technologies and platforms in facilitating or hindering the sharing of experiential knowledge, as well as the interplay between formal and informal mechanisms of knowledge transfer.

From a practical perspective, the findings of this study suggest that organizations, particularly higher education institutions, should adopt a holistic approach to promoting the sharing of managerial experiences. This includes fostering a supportive organizational culture that values openness and learning, providing formal structures and incentives for knowledge sharing, and creating opportunities for informal interaction and dialogue among managers. Organizations should also invest in training programs that enhance managers' ability to articulate and communicate their experiences effectively. Furthermore, the integration of technological tools with human-centered approaches can facilitate the dissemination of experiential knowledge while preserving its contextual richness. By addressing both individual and organizational factors, institutions can create an environment in which managerial experiences are systematically shared and leveraged to improve decision-making and organizational performance.

## Authors' Contributions

All authors have contributed significantly to the research process and the development of the manuscript.

## Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

## Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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## Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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## Ethical Considerations

In this research, ethical standards including obtaining informed consent, ensuring privacy and confidentiality were observed.

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