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Knowledge Management in Local Governments: A Boost or A Brake on Productivity?

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Abstract

This study analyzes the impact of knowledge management on the productivity of a local government, to determine whether it acts as a boost or a brake on institutional performance. Using a quantitative approach, a non-experimental design and an explanatory level, 119 municipal workers were evaluated using validated and reliable instruments. The dimensions of knowledge detection, capture and development were examined, applying Spearman correlation and ordinal regression. The results revealed a positive and significant correlation between knowledge management and productivity (Rho = 0.810, p = 0.000), indicating that effective management is associated with higher levels of productivity. The regression model showed that knowledge management explains 66.2% of the variability in productivity, reflecting an important influence. However, areas for improvement were identified, especially in knowledge detection, where significant levels of inefficiency and regularity were perceived. It was concluded that knowledge management in the local government studied acts both as a boost and a brake on productivity. It is recommended to implement strategies that strengthen detection, capture and knowledge development practices, in order to optimize operational efficiency and offer higher quality services to the population.

Keywords: *Knowledge Management, Productivity, Efficiency, Effectiveness, Local Governments*

Introduction

Knowledge management has emerged as an essential component for the success of organizations as it facilitates decision-making, improves the quality of services and optimizes administrative processes (Maione et al., 2024; Nawaz et al., 2024). In addition, it plays a fundamental role in different sectors, such as in banking, where it fosters internal entrepreneurship thanks to efficient systems and processes that facilitate knowledge sharing (Revuelto et al., 2023); in the construction sector, where the collection of lessons learned allows the use of accumulated experience to drive continuous improvements and prevent the repetition of errors (Debs & Hubbard, 2023); in the educational field, where it boosts academic achievements, fosters innovation and improves the performance of institutions (Ateeq, 2023; Muñoz et al., 2021). However, in the public sector, bureaucracy and rigid structures hinder knowledge management due to the lack of effective strategies and strong knowledge networks, which negatively affects institutional performance, hindering the potential for improvement and efficiency that this management could offer (Xanthopoulou et al., 2023; Ashok et al., 2021).

Managing knowledge within local governments goes beyond simply storing information; it is about sharing and putting it into practice to improve public services and effectively support decision-making (Alvarenga et al., 2020). Yet, it remains uncertain whether such management actually helps improve productivity or rather hinders it due to excessive bureaucracy, lack of trained staff, budget constraints, and rigid regulations, which make it difficult to implement new ways of working (Arongo & Backhouse, 2023).

In local governments, managing knowledge would not only help to optimize administrative processes, but would also foster collaboration and innovation, since by being in direct contact with the community, governments have a unique opportunity to take advantage of collective knowledge and better respond to

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the needs of the population (Cu et al., 2021). For these advantages to become a reality, it is essential to adopt appropriate practices that allow overcoming current barriers and improving operational efficiency, thus providing better quality public services (Osborne et al., 2022).

Implementing knowledge management in the public sector is no easy task, as it involves dealing with cultural barriers, resistance to change, and a lack of trained personnel, as well as insufficient technological infrastructure and the absence of clear strategies, factors that limit the adoption of effective practices (Galindo, 2020). Regulatory rigidity and budgetary restrictions further complicate the introduction of new ways of working, so a coordinated and determined effort is needed to overcome these obstacles, taking advantage of existing knowledge within organizations and transforming it into real improvements that positively impact local governments (Salvador & Sancho, 2023).

When talking about knowledge management, it is impossible not to think about productivity, especially in local governments, where it is essential to drive sustainable development and improve the lives of communities (Blank & Niaounakis, 2021). This productivity depends largely on the ability to obtain efficient results with the available resources, but to achieve this, knowledge management needs to focus on overcoming obstacles such as the lack of trained personnel and regulatory restrictions that often hinder progress (Callistus et al., 2023). If these barriers are properly addressed, institutions can be more agile and better prepared to respond effectively to the needs of citizens, thus fulfilling their purpose more effectively (Choi, 2021; Gencer et al., 2021).

Productivity in organizations, and therefore in local governments, depends largely on how knowledge is managed, since it must be converted into actions that generate real value for the community (Jacobson, 2021). Taking advantage of what has been learned involves translating it into tangible operational improvements that strengthen the response capacity and efficiency in the delivery of public services. Knowledge management is not just a technical process, but an engine that drives continuous improvement, favors the optimization of processes, encourages innovation and facilitates collaboration between people (Ferreira et al., 2020). Despite the challenges, it is crucial to identify and strengthen those areas where knowledge can be applied in a practical way to generate a positive impact and achieve concrete results that are reflected in better services and, ultimately, in a higher quality of life for citizens, making the accumulated knowledge truly useful on a daily basis (Colnar et al., 2022).

It is essential to ask whether knowledge management in local governments is really achieving its goals and, if not, to look for effective ways to improve its application to strengthen efficiency and responsiveness. It is key to make the most of opportunities for collaboration and knowledge exchange, generating advances that positively impact public services by promoting collaborative practices that make it possible to make the most of accumulated knowledge (Parnell & Gangwish, 2023). In this way, institutions will not only be able to promote continuous improvements, but also adapt quickly to the changing needs of the community, creating an environment that evolves by promoting innovation and allowing knowledge to be converted into concrete actions, thus achieving a real impact on the quality of public services.

In developing countries, local governments have the opportunity to leverage accumulated knowledge and prior experiences to improve the quality of the services they provide (Santhose & Noble, 2023; Malik & Al-Toubi, 2018). Despite the limitations they face, it is possible to implement innovative and collaborative initiatives that drive effective knowledge management strategies, optimizing available resources and encouraging citizen participation as an essential driver for continuous improvement (Areed et al., 2021). There are examples of local governments that, even with certain barriers, have managed to successfully implement strategies that leverage existing knowledge and demonstrate that it is possible to overcome obstacles to achieve real progress in the delivery of public services, highlighting the need to develop proactive and focused initiatives that transform potential into concrete improvements for communities (Barbier & Tengeh, 2022; Laihonen & Mäntylä, 2018).

Understanding both the potential and limitations of knowledge management is essential to recognizing its true impact on local governments and to discovering how to transform it into an engine that drives productivity and continuously improves the quality of public services. It is crucial to identify what concrete

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strategies can be implemented to not only overcome obstacles, but also to make the most of the opportunities for innovation and efficiency that it offers, making it translate into tangible benefits for the development and well-being of the population.

This study explores how knowledge management influences the productivity of local governments, focusing on the key dimensions of knowledge detection, capture and development, with the purpose of evaluating how these practices can enhance institutional capacities and contribute to strengthening local governments. Through this approach, opportunities were identified that will significantly improve the quality of public services, offering concrete solutions to address the challenges that arise in a local government.

This research is relevant because it may motivate future researchers to explore the variables analyzed in greater depth, which opens the possibility of hypothesizing that knowledge management directly influences the productivity of local governments, suggesting that as knowledge management is strengthened, productivity in local government tends to improve, thus providing a valuable approach to optimize its operation.

Research Method

Population and Sample

The study was carried out in a local government in the Ancash region of Peru, whose total population was made up of 500 workers distributed in different areas of the entity. For the sample, 119 administrative workers belonging to two specific areas were selected, because their role and responsibilities provided them with direct and relevant knowledge about the variables analyzed.

Research Approach, Level, and Design

A quantitative approach was adopted, as data were collected and processed using statistical measures to achieve the research objective and test the study hypothesis. The research had an explanatory correlational level. It is correlational because it focuses on identifying the degree of correlation between variables, analyzing them at a specific time point. It is explanatory because it seeks to unravel and understand the underlying causes and effects of a particular phenomenon, going beyond the simple description of characteristics or relationships. The research design was non-experimental, as the variables studied were not manipulated, and it was cross-sectional, given that data collection was carried out simultaneously at a specific time point.

Instrument

For data collection, two questionnaires of 24 questions each were used, using a Likert scale. These questionnaires went through an exhaustive validation process, evaluated by expert professionals, thus ensuring the solidity and validity of the measurement elements used in the study. After validating the instruments, a reliability test was carried out. A pilot test was carried out on a sample similar to that of the main research, where 21 workers from a municipal entity similar to the one studied participated. The results showed a Cronbach's alpha of 0.949 for the Knowledge Management questionnaire and 0.927 for the Productivity questionnaire, indicating a very high reliability, therefore, it was decided to use these instruments in the research.

Knowledge Management Scale

Knowledge management consists of a series of actions and strategies that seek to facilitate the exchange of information and skills within an organization, with the aim of optimizing its performance or the results of a project (Briceño, 2020). It involves capturing, developing, sharing and effectively applying collective knowledge to meet established goals (Hernández, 2016). Furthermore, managing knowledge involves not

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only managing it, but also making the most of it, organizing and disseminating the information necessary to maintain a competitive advantage (Mustafa & Rexhepi, 2024).

The scale used to measure this variable is composed of three dimensions proposed by Hernández (2016): knowledge detection, knowledge capture and knowledge development. Each of these dimensions included 8 questions, totaling 24 items in the instrument. When applying Cronbach's alpha to assess internal consistency, an overall reliability index of 0.949 was obtained. Furthermore, the results showed a maximum value of 0.920 in question 17 and a minimum value of 0.301 in question 5.

Regarding the scales for the variable "Knowledge management", a score between 24 and 48 indicates an inefficient level, while a score between 49 and 72 corresponds to a regular level. Finally, a score is considered efficient when the score is in the range of 73 to 96. Regarding the dimensions, for "Knowledge detection", a score of 8 to 16 is classified as inefficient, from 17 to 24 as regular, and from 25 to 32 as efficient. These same scales are applied to the dimensions of "Knowledge capture" and "Knowledge development", thus establishing a uniform criterion to evaluate each aspect of knowledge management.

Productivity Scale

Productivity is the result of activities and resources directed towards a transformation process that adds value. It includes efficiency and effectiveness in the optimization of inputs (Sánchez and Prada, 2017) and the ability to make decisions and execute tasks to achieve organizational objectives (Druker, 2006). Its key dimensions are: efficiency, effectiveness and efficacy.

The scale used to measure this variable is composed of three dimensions: efficiency, effectiveness and efficacy. Each of these dimensions included 8 questions, totaling 24 items in the instrument. When applying Cronbach's alpha to evaluate internal consistency, an overall reliability index of 0.927 was obtained. Furthermore, the results showed a maximum value of 0.834 in question 22 and a minimum value of 0.042 in question 9.

Regarding the scales for the variable "Productivity", a score of 24 to 48 is considered low, 49 to 72 corresponds to a medium level, and a score between 73 and 96 is classified as high. Regarding the dimensions, for "Efficiency", a score of 8 to 16 is classified as low, 17 to 24 is considered medium, and 25 to 32 corresponds to a high level. These same scales are applicable to the dimensions of "Effectiveness" and "Effectiveness", using the same ranges to evaluate each of these aspects of productivity.

Data Analysis

Para el análisis de datos, se empleó al software estadístico SPSS v29, el cual permitió realizar tanto el análisis descriptivos como el inferencial de manera eficiente. El análisis descriptivo inicial incluyó la creación de tablas que mostraron los niveles de cada variable y dimensión, presentando frecuencias y porcentajes. A continuación, se llevó a cabo un análisis inferencial para probar la hipótesis formulada, utilizando pruebas estadísticas pertinentes para identificar las relaciones entre las variables investigadas. Se realizó una prueba de normalidad a los datos, la cual evidenció que estos no seguían una distribución normal. Por ello, se optó por utilizar el coeficiente de correlación de Spearman. Para validar la hipótesis, se empleó el coeficiente de Nagelkerke, que permitió determinar el grado de influencia de una variable sobre otra.

Result

Descriptive results

Table 1. Levels of Variables and Their Dimensions

Variables / Dimensions	Inefficient		Regular		Efficient	
Knowledge management	13	10.9%	57	47.9%	49	41.2%
Knowledge detection	20	16.8%	67	56.3%	32	26.9%

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Knowledge capture	16	13.5%	53	44.5%	50	42.0%
Knowledge development	15	12.6%	54	45.4%	50	42.0%
	Low		**Medium**		**Hight**	
Productivity	4	3.4%	48	40.3%	67	56.3%
Efficiency	6	5.1%	58	48.7%	55	46.2%
Efficacy	6	5.1%	54	45.4%	59	49.5%
Effectiveness	5	4.2%	51	42.9%	63	52.9%

From Table 1, it can be observed that in knowledge management within local government, 10.9% of workers perceive this management as inefficient, while almost half, 47.9%, consider it average, and 41.2% rate it as efficient. When analyzing the dimensions, it is highlighted that knowledge detection is perceived as the weakest, with 16.8% rating it as inefficient and 56.3% as average, leaving only 26.9% who see it as efficient. In contrast, the dimensions of knowledge capture and development present more favorable perceptions, with 42.0% efficiency in both, although they still maintain significant percentages of regularity (44.5% and 45.4%, respectively).

Regarding productivity, the results are more encouraging: a majority of 56.3% of workers perceive high productivity, 40.3% consider it average and only 3.4% see it as low. The dimensions of efficiency, efficacy and effectiveness follow a similar trend, with perceptions of high productivity of 46.2%, 49.5% and 52.9%, respectively. Although there is a considerable proportion that evaluates them as average, the percentages of low productivity in these dimensions are minimal (between 4.2% and 5.1%).

These data indicate that, despite the fact that knowledge management is mostly perceived as average, especially in knowledge detection, the general productivity of local government is considered high by more than half of the workers. This suggests that, although there are areas for improvement in knowledge management, especially in its early stages, local government maintains a solid level of productivity, possibly supported by other organizational strengths.

Inferential Results

Table 2. Correlation Between Variables and Dimensions

	Productivity	
	Rho	**Sig.**
Knowledge management	0.810	0.000
Knowledge detection	0.768	0.000
Knowledge capture	0.714	0.000
Knowledge development	0.766	0.000

Table 2 reveals a positive and significant correlation between knowledge management and productivity in the local government analyzed. Specifically, knowledge management as a whole shows a Spearman correlation coefficient (Rho) of 0.810, indicating a very strong relationship with productivity. Specific dimensions also reflect significant correlations: knowledge detection presents a Rho of 0.768, knowledge capture a Rho of 0.714, and knowledge development a Rho of 0.766. All these coefficients have a significance level of 0.000, which means that the probability of these correlations being the result of chance is practically zero. This evidence suggests that effective knowledge management is closely associated with an increase in local government productivity.

Table 3. Ordinal Regression for Knowledge Management Vs Productivity

Model Fitting Information				
Model	**-2 Log Likelihood**	Chi-Square	**df**	Sig.
Intercept Only	697.792			

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Final	568.946	128.846	1	0.000
Pseudo R-Square				
Cox and Snell		0.66		
Nagelkerke		0.662		
McFadden		0.156		

In Table 3, the ordinal regression assessing the influence of knowledge management on productivity reveals statistical significance with a value of $p = 0.000$, confirming that the model is statistically significant. The Nagelkerke Pseudo R-square coefficient is 0.662, indicating that approximately 66.2% of the variability in productivity is explained by knowledge management. This high percentage suggests a moderate to strong fit of the model, evidencing a substantial influence of knowledge management on productivity in local government.

This points out that the way knowledge is managed within the organization has a significant impact on its productivity. A key value in the analysis shows that a large part of the changes in productivity can be explained by how knowledge is managed. This highlights the importance of implementing effective knowledge management practices to improve the performance and efficiency of local government management.

Discussion

The study showed a strong positive relationship between knowledge management and productivity, which is consistent with other authors who have observed notable improvements in aspects such as attitudes, perceptions, job performance and service quality when effective knowledge management is implemented in their respective contexts (Surco, 2023; Céspedes & Salas, 2023; López, 2021). Furthermore, the results coincide with other studies that have identified how knowledge management promotes innovation dynamics (Vélez, 2019) and highlight the key role of organizational culture in facilitating the exchange of knowledge (Wittke, 2020), evidencing a positive relationship between knowledge management and intellectual capital, confirming its significant impact on improving performance and innovation in various sectors (Jama, 2019).

The results also showed a strong positive correlation between knowledge detection and productivity, a finding that aligns with previous studies that examined the relationship between knowledge management and administrative management, finding a significant positive correlation (Kanno, 2022). A high and positive connection was also identified between knowledge management and service quality (López, 2021). In addition, a moderate positive relationship was observed between knowledge management and organizational development (Paredes, 2022). These studies demonstrate that knowledge detection and management are essential to improve productivity, administrative management, and service quality.

Likewise, a strong positive correlation was found between knowledge capture and productivity. This aligns with findings that identified a significant relationship between knowledge management and job performance in a local government (Céspedes & Salas, 2023). Similarly, effective knowledge management has been shown to significantly improve university students' learning (Surco, 2023). Furthermore, a moderate but significant relationship was found between knowledge management and organizational development (Paredes, 2022).

A strong and positive correlation between knowledge development and productivity was also found. This finding is supported by research that found a significant connection between knowledge management and service quality, highlighting the importance of knowledge management in improving services (López, 2021). Furthermore, it was found that an organizational culture favorable to knowledge sharing can increase efficiency and productivity (Wittke, 2020). It was also emphasized that comprehensive knowledge management within organizations promotes innovation and continuous development, differentiating successful organizations from those that are not (Pérez-Balbuena, 2022).

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A Nagelkerke value of 0.662 was found, showing that 66.2% of the variability in productivity can be explained by knowledge management practices, highlighting their relevance as a determining factor in improving productivity in local governments. This finding is supported by the study by Vélez (2019) who highlighted how effective management and transfer of knowledge drives innovation and improves productivity in the business sector. Wittke (2020) identified that organizational culture influences efficiency and productivity by facilitating or impeding the exchange of knowledge. Mendoza (2019) showed that knowledge management has a significant impact on educational quality, suggesting that effective practices in this area can improve institutional performance. Surco (2023) demonstrated that knowledge management significantly improves attitudes and perceptions in people, which translates into better academic performance. Based on the comparison made by these authors, it is concluded that knowledge management is an essential component for improving productivity and efficiency in various organizations and contexts, validating the general hypothesis of the research.

Conclusion

The results found allow us to conclude that knowledge management in local governments is a determining factor that can act as a boost or brake on productivity, depending on how it is implemented and managed. This study shows that, although it currently has a significant positive impact, there is ample room for improvement in its practices. Strengthening knowledge management, especially in the dimensions of detection, capture and development, could transform this tool into a true catalyst for productivity. Local authorities are recommended to invest in strategies that promote a knowledge-oriented organizational culture, with the aim of maximizing performance and offering higher quality services to the population.

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Declaration of Conflicts of Interests

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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