Knowledge Champions and Their Role in Building Behavioral Repertoire
An Analytical Study of Faculty Members' Perceptions at the University of Kufa

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Abstract: This analytical study explores the role played by knowledge champions in enhancing the behavioral repertoire of faculty members at the University of Kufa, amid the growing need for behavioral flexibility within complex academic environments. The study adopts a quantitative methodology, with data collected from a random sample of 232 faculty members using: (1) the updated Duffy (1998) scale as revised by Jones et al. (2003) for measuring knowledge champion behaviors comprising three dimensions: advocacy, support, and brokerage; and (2) Nonaka et al. (2021)'s scale for behavioral repertoire encompassing four dimensions: cooperation, assertiveness, self-regulation, and cheerfulness. Findings indicate a statistically significant positive impact of knowledge champion behaviors on the expansion of behavioral repertoire, suggesting that such individuals, acting as cognitive and behavioral role models, facilitate organizational learning and enhance others' capacity to perform multiple roles effectively.

Keywords: Knowledge Champions, Behavioral Repertoire, University of Kufa.

1. INTRODUCTION

In light of the accelerating transformations shaping the modern business world, and the emergence of the knowledge economy as a primary driver of organizational performance and strategic competitiveness, knowledge rather than solely material resources—has become the most valuable asset in contemporary organizations (*Cepeda-Carrion et al., 2016*). Consequently, the concept of *knowledge champions* has emerged as a pivotal construct within knowledge management literature. These individuals are regarded as possessing strategic vision and exceptional capabilities that enable them to drive change, foster a culture of knowledge sharing, and empower others to innovate and interact effectively within the organization (*Skyrme & Amidon, 1997; Soo, 2010; Jones et al., 2003*). According to *Howell & Shea (2006)*, knowledge champions are not merely activists or promoters; rather, they undertake complex roles that integrate advocacy and implementation, facilitating change through both formal and informal networks within the organizational structure.

Parallel to this cognitive shift, the importance of *behavioral repertoire* has risen as a core behavioral variable in leadership and organizational effectiveness research. It is defined as "the diverse set of verbal and nonverbal behaviors an individual possesses and employs in interaction with others to achieve specific communicative or functional objectives" (*Chen & Huang, 2009*). The concept has evolved to become a strategic element in human resource development not merely as a behavioral inventory, but as a generator of adaptive flexibility, innovation, and sustainable competitive advantage (*Alawamleh et al., 2020*). Literature suggests that behavioral repertoire is not acquired spontaneously; rather, it is cultivated through experience, social interaction, role modeling, and supportive organizational environments (*Lawrence et al., 2009; van der Hoek et al., 2021*).

This study gains significance from the theoretical and empirical gap in linking these two central constructs. While prior studies have examined the role of knowledge champions in knowledge transfer and fostering organizational learning (*Duffy, 1998; Jones et al., 2013*), and other research has focused on behavioral repertoire as a determinant of

leader and managerial performance (*Lindshield, 2016; Speckhart, 2013*), relatively little attention has been devoted to exploring *how* knowledge champions through their daily behaviors, role modeling, and interpersonal interactions contribute to expanding and deepening individuals' behavioral repertoires, particularly within complex organizational settings such as the banking and financial sector, where demands for precise functional performance intersect with the need for leadership flexibility and behavioral intelligence (*Al-Zu'bi & Alkharabsheh, 2020*).

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the role of knowledge champions in strengthening components of behavioral repertoire namely cooperation, assertiveness, self-regulation, and cheerfulness (*Nonaka et al., 2021*) through mechanisms such as supporting a culture of sharing, enabling individuals to assume multiple leadership roles, and offering replicable behavioral models. The study also seeks to address the central research question: *What role can knowledge champions play in expanding individuals' behavioral repertoire to better equip them for adapting to contemporary organizational challenges?*

The study adopts a critical analytical methodology, grounded in a review of theoretical and empirical literature including dissertations by *Soo (2010)*, *Alawamleh et al. (2020)*, and *Van der Hoek et al. (2021)* with emphasis on explanatory theories for both constructs: *Behavioral Complexity Theory* and *Role Theory* (for behavioral repertoire), and *Social Exchange Theory* and *Theory of Planned Behavior* (for knowledge champions). Furthermore, the study proposes an initial conceptual framework linking the three dimensions of knowledge champions *advocacy, support, and knowledge brokerage* (*Duffy, 1998; Jones et al., 2013*) to the four dimensions of behavioral repertoire. This framework represents an academic contribution toward deepening the understanding of cognitive–behavioral influence mechanisms within contemporary organizations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Knowledge Champions

The notion of *knowledge champions* is a central concept that emerged within the context of the transition toward the knowledge economy. In this paradigm, material resources alone are no longer sufficient to ensure competitive sustainability; instead, knowledge as embodied in individuals' expertise and innovative capacity has become the most strategic organizational asset (*Cepeda-Carrion et al., 2016; Stuller, 1998*). Within this framework, knowledge champions are perceived as individuals who "make a difference" (*Skyrme & Amidon, 1997*) or as "high-level activists who strategically promote knowledge management" (*Jones et al., 2003*). They do not limit themselves to knowledge transmission; rather, they assume deeply influential roles encompassing cultural advocacy, knowledge bridging, and empowerment through role modeling and interaction (*Soo, 2010; Howell & Shea, 2006*). Collectively, they are individuals endowed with compelling vision, the ability to advance knowledge agendas, and skills enabling them to transcend functional and structural boundaries to facilitate knowledge flow across organizational levels (*Jones et al., 2003; Yelsky, 2017*). Studies indicate these champions often emerge informally without formal appointment due to their credibility, internal relationship networks, and capacity to influence through a mix of soft tactics (e.g., persuasion, awareness-raising) and hard tactics (e.g., direction, implementation) (*Markham & Smith, 2001; Gelard et al., 2014*). Functionally, knowledge champions fulfill diverse roles such as coaching, brokering, reviewing, and representing, thereby becoming vital links between strategy and execution (*Jones et al., 2003*). To understand their motivational drivers, literature draws upon several theoretical perspectives, notably: *Theory of Planned Behavior*, which explains their intention to promote knowledge through positive attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (*Parsaei et al., 2014*); *Social Exchange Theory*, highlighting how mutual support and recognition generate trust and loyalty, translating into deeper organizational commitment (*Oliver & Lievens, 2014*); and the *Self-Determination Perspective*, linking their intrinsic motivation such as task identification or desire to contribute to their perseverance in the face of resistance to change (*Wang & Hou, 2015*). Thus, knowledge champions constitute not transient catalysts but unique organizational resources that help embed a knowledge culture, enhance collective learning, and enable dynamic responses to external challenges (*Sarkar et al., 2015; Kok, 2007*).

Dimensions of Knowledge Champions

Scholars view the concept of knowledge champions not as a static personal trait, but as a set of interrelated functional behaviors individuals enact to advance cognitive change within organizations. A body of research notably *Duffy (1998)* and *Jones et al. (2013)* converge on three core dimensions that dynamically interact to produce coherent organizational impact: *knowledge advocacy*, *knowledge support*, and *knowledge brokerage*. Together, these dimensions form the operational structure enabling champions to transform knowledge from an abstract concept into daily practice, yielding measurable performance and added value whether through persuasion, empowerment, or contextual knowledge linkage. This structure assumes that champions do not merely fulfill predefined functional roles; rather, they redefine roles themselves by adopting behaviors that transcend formal job boundaries, relying on credibility, networks, and forward-looking vision.

1. Knowledge Advocacy

The advocacy dimension manifests in the champion's ability to construct and promote a compelling vision of knowledge as a strategic imperative within the organization. This role includes deploying diverse promotional tactics such as awareness campaigns, persuasion, and defending knowledge initiatives against opposition to mobilize institutional support and elevate knowledge from a technical domain to a unifying organizational mission (*Soo, 2010; Gordin & Matetskaya, 2012*). *Skyrme & Amidon (1997)* emphasize that knowledge champions often gain prominence through individual efforts that evolve into formal initiatives, where they "ignite the spark" by developing visions that redefine the relationship between knowledge and performance. Advocacy extends beyond motivational rhetoric to include educating colleagues, encouraging innovation culture, and defending initiatives during critical phases rendering the champion a cultural driver, not merely a temporary promoter (*Howell & Shea, 2006; Jones et al., 2003*).

2. Knowledge Support

Knowledge support refers to the champion's role as a bridge between senior management and operational teams, representing stakeholders' interests and facilitating initiative implementation through staff enablement and effort coordination. This dimension encompasses diverse tasks: formally representing knowledge initiatives, training colleagues, providing constructive feedback, delegating responsibilities, and empowering subordinates to assume effective knowledge-related roles (*Soo, 2010*). This role is anchored in the principle of social exchange, wherein reciprocal support between champion and subordinates fosters trust, loyalty, and commitment to change (*Oliver & Lievens, 2014*). *Yelsky (2017)* further notes that effective support requires managerial provision of a conducive environment: clearly defined champion responsibilities, autonomy, and formal recognition mechanisms—ensuring sustainability and institutionalization of influence beyond individual initiative.

3. Knowledge Brokerage

The *knowledge brokerage* represents the most interactive facet of knowledge champion roles, highlighting their ability to cross organizational boundaries (functional, cultural, hierarchical) and connect individuals with internal and external knowledge sources inaccessible through formal channels. *Jones et al. (2003)* observe that knowledge brokers do not merely disseminate ready-made knowledge; they alert others to latent knowledge needs and assist in translating tacit knowledge into actionable practices. *Howell & Shea (2006)* stress that this role correlates with behaviors such as expressing enthusiasm, confidence in success, and sustained engagement amid challenges making the champion a stabilizing force in rapidly changing environments. Moreover, building positive relationships with internal and external stakeholders as *Soo (2010)* clarifies is pivotal to success, transforming knowledge from individual ownership into a dynamic network of exchange and co-innovation.

Behavioral Repertoire

The concept of behavioral repertoire constitutes a cornerstone in contemporary organizational behavior and leadership studies. It has evolved from a descriptive notion of individual communication skills in the 1990s (*Lawrence et al., 2009*) to a strategic pillar for building sustainable competitive advantage, where it is now viewed as an invaluable organizational resource reflecting individuals' capacity to respond flexibly and effectively to the complexities of internal and external contexts (*Alawamleh et al., 2020*). Literature indicates that behavioral repertoire is not a static inventory of behaviors, but a dynamic set of behavioral options verbal and nonverbal,

overt and covert that individuals possess and selectively activate according to situational demands to achieve specific communicative or functional goals (*Chen & Huang, 2009; van der Hoek et al., 2021*). As various definitions suggest, this repertoire forms the foundation enabling individuals to perform diverse even seemingly contradictory leadership roles without compromising consistency or effectiveness, thus constituting the essence of *behavioral complexity* that distinguishes outstanding leaders (*Alawamleh et al., 2020*).

Behavioral Complexity Theory has helped solidify this understanding by linking the breadth of behavioral repertoire to an individual's capacity to adapt to conflicting work demands, while *Role Theory* provides an explanatory framework for how contextual and functional expectations shape behavior and how a rich behavioral repertoire permits individuals to transcend formal role constraints toward more flexible and creative role enactment (*Dobni et al., 1997*). Furthermore, *Activity Theory* with its early Russian roots (*Nardi, 1996*) has deepened comprehension by connecting individual behavior to sociocultural context, affirming that behavioral deployment depends not only on skill but also on individual goals, relationships, and interaction dynamics (*Chen & Huang, 2009*). Functionally, behavioral repertoire contributes to enhancing cooperation, improving individual and collective competitiveness, supporting strategic capabilities, fostering self-regulation, and reducing workplace stress and anxiety (*Al-Zu'bi & Alkharabsheh, 2020; Orth et al., 2018; Key, 2018*). Organizations possessing a narrow behavioral repertoire tend to adopt simple, limited strategies, whereas ambitious organizations actively seek to expand this repertoire as a pathway to building expertise, increasing efficiency, and fostering innovation (*Orth et al., 2018*). Hence, behavioral repertoire is no longer assessed solely by quantity, but by *behavioral differentiation quality* that is, an individual's ability to select the most appropriate behavior from multiple alternatives, achieving balance among task requirements, relational needs, and organizational values. This renders its study both theoretically and practically essential in dynamic work environments demanding leaders capable of integrating assertiveness with cooperation, self-regulation with cheerfulness, and innovation with stability.

Dimensions of Behavioral Repertoire

Based on contemporary literature, the operational structure of behavioral repertoire comprises a set of interrelated dimensions forming a dynamic inventory of behaviors deployable across diverse organizational contexts. A review of prior studies reveals a scarcity of validated measurement instruments for this construct, prompting the researcher to adopt *Nonaka et al. (2021)*'s scale as a valid and reliable tool, consisting of four core dimensions: *cooperation*, *assertiveness*, *self-regulation*, and *cheerfulness*. Collectively, these dimensions constitute the behavioral framework enabling individuals to confront the complexities of modern work, interact effectively with internal and external variables, and strike a balance among task demands, organizational relationships, and institutional values. While activation intensity varies by situation, their integration generates *behavioral complexity* a foundational element of distinguished leadership and organizational performance.

1. Cooperation

The cooperation dimension entails fostering team spirit and cultivating a collegial work environment characterized by mutual understanding and respect thereby reducing monotony, enhancing administrative harmony, and stimulating innovation and creativity. According to *Tarody (2016)*, cooperative behavioral repertoire supports organizational vision by encouraging participation, facilitating performance processes, and mobilizing available capacities and expertise. It also establishes strategic commitment through shared timelines for task execution and participatory decision-making to ensure proper workflow. The researcher notes that cooperation extends beyond daily interaction to form an organizational culture that streamlines communication processes and nurtures collective problem-solving capabilities particularly when leadership provides a fertile environment conducive to the growth and distinction of this organizational value.

2. Assertiveness

Assertiveness is defined as the honest and appropriate expression of thoughts, feelings, and beliefs, and the defense of legitimate rights without infringing on others' rights. It is a crucial behavior for effective response to individual and organizational conflicts and is highly associated with job performance. Studies such as *Baciu et al. (2020)* link assertiveness closely to techniques including organizational promotion, representation, solicitation, and even calculated intimidation, considering it essential for attaining cognitive legitimacy and leadership trust. *Fajri et*

al. (2019) further emphasize that this dimension is culturally contextual manifestations of assertiveness vary across societies according to prevailing values thus requiring leaders to consider cultural differences to be assertive without appearing aggressive or condescending.

3. Self-Regulation

Self-regulation is understood as a socio-psychological phenomenon reflecting an individual's ability to monitor behavior, regulate emotions, set personal standards and goals, and follow a self-directed methodology for goal attainment without external supervision. According to *Bar-Tal (2017)*, this capacity rests on three pillars: the innate need to share knowledge, functional compatibility with society, and personal experience in confronting dilemmas involving information withholding. *Hameiri et al. (2017)* indicate that self-regulation can impede transparency when it turns into voluntary information concealment for group protection; however, in its positive form, it serves as an essential internal mechanism for controlling behaviors and emotions, shaping professional trajectory, and managing time making it a pivotal skill for individual and organizational success alike.

4. Cheerfulness

Cheerfulness represents a state of satisfaction and positive vitality that enhances motivation, reinforces commitment, and reduces withdrawal and burnout rates. Studies such as *Boehm (2008)* and *Iverson et al. (1998)* indicate that cheerful individuals tend to perform better, receive greater social support from peers and supervisors, and foster collaborative environments conducive to creativity. Teams led by cheerful managers exhibit less conflict, greater cooperation, and higher satisfaction with group relations. The researcher contends that cheerfulness is not measured merely by smiling or superficial optimism but as a mood dimension encompassing feelings such as excitement, self-confidence, and joy, while excluding negative affect constructs such as tension, anxiety, and lethargy—rendering it a trainable strategic behavior, not merely a transitory personality trait.

HYPOTHETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

Figure (1) illustrates the study's hypothetical framework, depicting a direct causal relationship between two core variables: *knowledge champions* as the independent variable and *behavioral repertoire* as the dependent variable. This conceptualization rests upon *Social Exchange Theory* and *Behavioral Complexity Theory*, positing that daily interaction with knowledge champions generates a cognitively and behaviorally rich organizational environment that motivates individuals to expand their behavioral inventory and select more diverse, context-appropriate responses. Given that the study is conducted in *higher education*, specifically at the *University of Kufa* an environment characterized by role multiplicity (teaching, research, supervision, community service) and relational complexity (among faculty, administrators, and students) the proposed relationship gains particular relevance. It is anticipated that knowledge champions among faculty play a pivotal role in enhancing behavioral repertoire by supporting a sharing culture, offering flexible behavioral models, and empowering colleagues to perform multiple roles effectively thus constituting both a theoretical and practical contribution to the advancement of Iraqi universities.
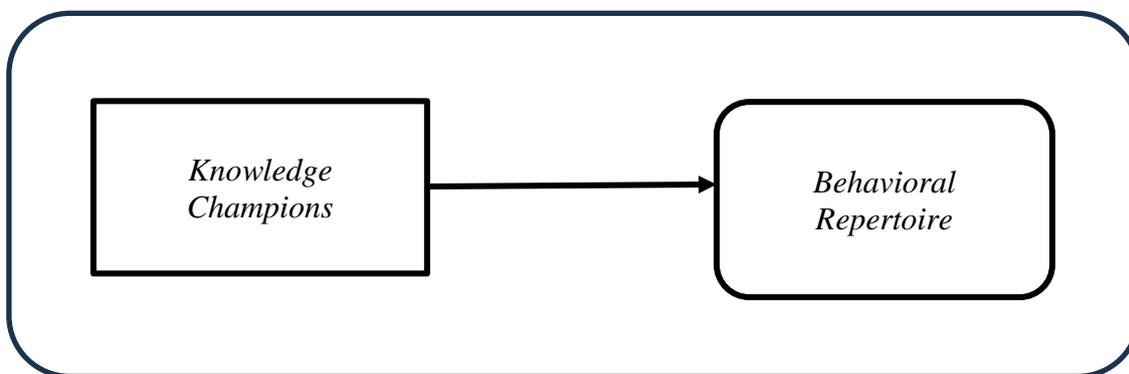

Figure (1): Hypothetical Framework of the Study

DEVELOPMENT OF THE STUDY HYPOTHESIS

Drawing on the theoretical integration of *Social Exchange Theory* (explaining how knowledge sharing, support, and recognition generate trust and loyalty, reflected in cooperative and self-regulated behaviors), *Behavioral Complexity Theory* (linking breadth of cognitive inputs to individuals' capacity to enact diverse, coherent roles), and the *Self-Determination Perspective* (connecting supportive knowledge environments to enhanced self-efficacy, thereby fostering assertiveness, cheerfulness, and self-regulation) and supported by empirical evidence cited, such as *Howell & Shea (2006)*'s observation that knowledge champions, through expressions of enthusiasm, confidence, and innovation, create facilitating behavioral dynamics for adaptation, and *Al-Zu'bi & Alkharabsheh (2020)*'s assertion that behavioral repertoire is built through interaction with positive behavioral models (exactly what knowledge champions offer as daily role models) these combined foundations provide a robust theoretical basis for the causal relationship between the two variables. Accordingly, the study's main hypothesis is formulated as follows: **"The enactment of knowledge champion behaviors exerts a significant positive effect on enhancing the behavioral repertoire of faculty and administrative staff at the University of Kufa."**

METHODOLOGY

Measurement Instruments

The researcher employed validated, literature-based scales to ensure accuracy and validity in measuring the two key variables. For the independent variable *knowledge champions* the *Duffy (1998)* scale, as updated by *Jones et al. (2003)*, was adopted. This instrument comprises 15 items distributed across three dimensions: *knowledge advocacy* (5 items), *knowledge support* (5 items), and *knowledge brokerage* (5 items). For the dependent variable *behavioral repertoire,* the contemporary scale by *Nonaka et al. (2021)* was used, consisting of 24 items across four dimensions: *cooperation* (11 items), *assertiveness* (5 items), *self-regulation* (5 items), and *cheerfulness* (3 items). All items were formulated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 5 = *Strongly Agree*). The instrument underwent assessments of face and construct validity by expert judges, and internal consistency reliability testing (Cronbach's alpha), yielding coefficients ranging from 0.82 to 0.91 indicating high reliability and strong capacity to detect individual differences.

Study Population and Sample

The study population consisted of faculty members at the University of Kufa, selected as the target group due to their multifaceted cognitive and leadership roles (teaching, research, supervision, community service) and the dynamic nature of their work, which demands flexible knowledge engagement and behavioral adaptation making them an appropriate context for testing the relationship between knowledge champions and behavioral repertoire. To ensure fair and comprehensive representation, a random sample of faculty members across various colleges of the university was selected. A total of *265 questionnaires* were distributed *in person* during the period from *November 5, 2025* to *November 12, 2025*. Upon completion of data collection, *232 valid questionnaires* were retrieved, representing a response rate of *87.5%* a high rate by research standards, reflecting participants' seriousness and data reliability.

ANALYSIS

Figure 2 illustrates a structural equation modeling (SEM) framework developed using SmartPLS v.4, designed to explore the relationship between *Knowledge Champions* as the exogenous (independent) variable and *Behavioral Repertoire* as the endogenous (dependent) variable.
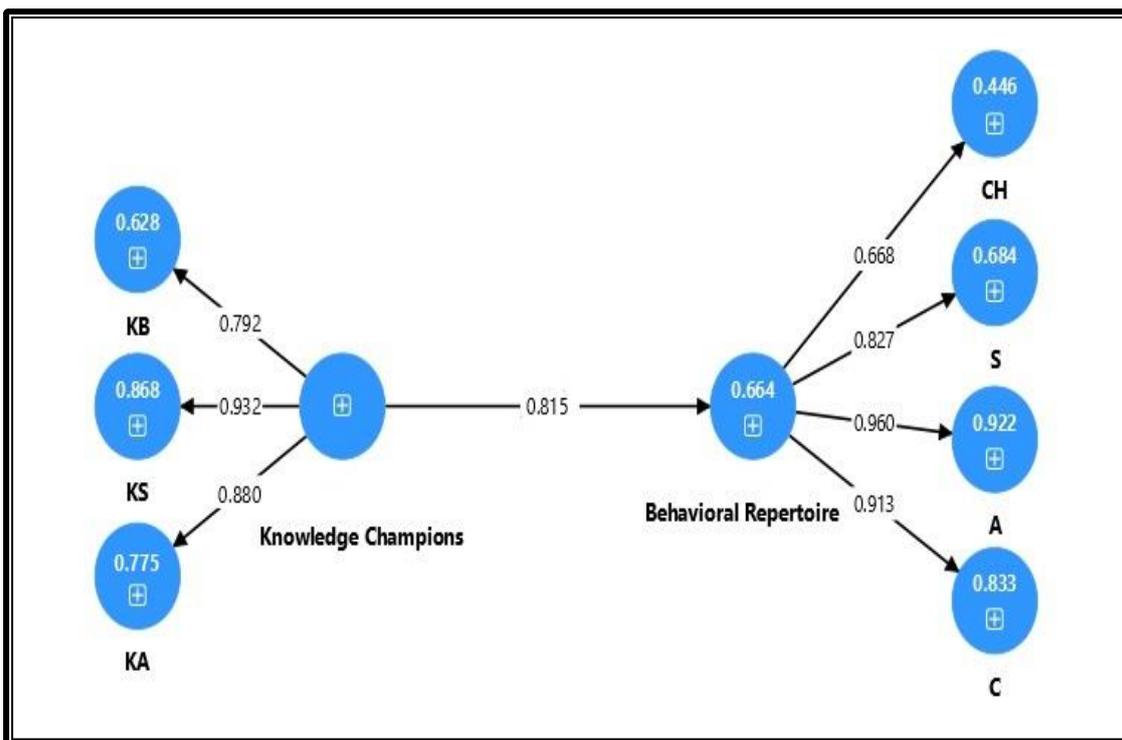
Figure 2. Structural Model of Effect Path
Source: SmartPLS V.4.

Figure 2 presents a path model aimed at testing hypotheses regarding causal relationship among latent variables. In this model, a direct and strong relationship is highlighted between two latent constructs: Knowledge Champions as the exogenous (independent) variable and Behavioral Repertoire as the endogenous (dependent) variable. The results reveal a path coefficient of 0.815 a high value indicating a statistically significant, strong positive relationship. This implies that higher presence or effectiveness of *Knowledge Champions* within an organizational or professional setting is directly and substantially associated with an expansion or enhancement of individuals' *Behavioral Repertoire* i.e., the range of behaviors, skills, and capabilities they can draw upon to address challenges or perform tasks effectively. This robust coefficient strongly supports the theoretical premise that *Knowledge Champions* are not merely information transmitters, but active agents in shaping individual behavior, fostering adaptability, and enhancing resilience. Furthermore, the strong loadings of the observed indicators (KB, KS, KA for *Knowledge Champions*; CH, S, A, C for *Behavioral Repertoire*) attest to the model's construct validity and internal consistency, thereby reinforcing the reliability and practical applicability of the findings particularly in contexts related to human resource development and organizational knowledge management.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on statistical analysis results revealing a significant positive effect of knowledge champion behaviors on enhancing the behavioral repertoire of faculty members at the University of Kufa, it can be concluded that knowledge champions through their three roles (knowledge advocacy, knowledge support, and knowledge brokerage) contribute not only to activating knowledge management processes but also play a central role in constructing and expanding behavioral repertoire. This occurs as they provide a supportive environment that encourages the adoption of diverse and flexible behaviors such as cooperation, assertiveness, self-regulation, and cheerfulness. This positive influence indicates that the presence of individuals actively fulfilling knowledge champion roles contributes to forming replicable behavioral models and enhances individuals' capacity to adapt to multifaceted tasks and complex relational dynamics within academic environments. Moreover, the results confirm the validity of the theoretical framework grounded in Social Exchange Theory and Behavioral Complexity Theory in explaining cognitive–behavioral influence mechanisms within educational organizations. They also open avenues for practical recommendations concerning the formal empowerment and support of knowledge champions, and the integration of behavioral repertoire skills into professional development programs particularly

in settings requiring a delicate balance among leadership, cooperation, and innovation.

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