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Designing an Organizational Transparency Model for Strategic Decision-Making Senior of Managers of the Health System: A Case Study in Ilam University of Medical Sciences

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A B S T R A C T

Introduction: Despite the importance of organizational transparency in improving strategic decision-making, Ilam University of Medical Sciences lacks a comprehensive and operational model to enhance organizational transparency. This gap has led to inefficiency in strategic decision-making by senior managers, reduced trust between employees and stakeholders, and poor use of resources. The aim of this study is to design an organizational transparency model in relation to strategic decision-making by senior managers of Ilam University of Medical Sciences.

Materials & Methods: This research is applied in terms of its purpose, and an exploratory (qualitative-quantitative) research in terms of its nature and method of Non-numeric data collection. The research approach in the qualitative part is data-based and the systematic method of Strauss and Corbin, and in the quantitative part, it is a survey. The statistical population of this research in the qualitative part includes faculty members of Ilam University of Medical Sciences, vice-chancellors, deans of faculties, group managers, especially the management group, and senior staff managers. 21 people were selected as a sample using purposive sampling, and theoretical saturation was achieved. The statistical population of the quantitative part of the study included all the staff of Ilam University of Medical Sciences, who were selected using cluster sampling method and to determine the sample size according to the Cochran formula, 192 people were selected. The data collection method in the qualitative part is semi-structured interviews. The collection tools in the quantitative part are researcher-made questionnaires.

Results: The results of the interview coding showed that 129 secondary codes, 46 concepts, 13 subcategories and 6 main categories were finally formed, and finally organizational transparency in strategic decision-making of senior managers was selected as the central phenomenon. Causal factors include information and communication management and organizational values; strategies include performance evaluation and information analysis and organizational process management, and the consequences are specified in the form of individual and organizational consequences; According to the results of quantitative analysis, the overall outcome of the model will be to achieve a productive organization. Also, the highest path coefficient in the paradigm model belongs to the impact of organizational transparency on strategies (0.87=), intervening factors hurt strategies, and the path coefficient of causal factors on outcomes is 0.32

Conclusion: According to the research findings, it can be said that the managers of the health system of Ilam University of Medical Sciences should pay special attention to causal factors and strategies for promoting organizational transparency in their strategic decisions to achieve desired individual and organizational outcomes Doing so will enhance trust, decision-making quality, and overall organizational performance.

Keywords: Decision-Making, Organizational Transparency, Health system, Top Managers, medical university

➢ **Cite this paper**
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Introduction

Today's complex and dynamic business world, strategic decision-making is one of the most

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important tasks of senior managers of organizations; the quality of these decisions strongly affects the success or failure of organizations in achieving long-term goals (1, 2). Meanwhile, organizational transparency is recognized as one of the key components for improving the strategic decision-making process (3). Organizational transparency includes access to reliable, timely, and accurate information about organizational activities, management decisions, and their consequence (4, 5). However, many organizations face serious challenges in strategic decision-making due to weaknesses in transparency (6, 7). Lack of organizational transparency reduces intra-organizational cooperation and participation, reduces stakeholder trust, and increases the likelihood of internal conflicts (8). On the other hand, organizations with a high level of transparency can benefit from several advantages. These organizations are not only able to improve the accuracy and quality of strategic decision-making, but they can also strengthen an organizational culture based on trust and collaboration (9). Organizational transparency makes information available to internal and external stakeholders and decision-making processes fair and accountable (3, 10). As one of the vital institutions in the field of healthcare in a border region, Ilam University of Medical Sciences has extensive responsibilities in providing health services, medical education, and managing health resources. The university faces numerous challenges, including resource shortages, complexity in managing healthcare services, and the need for strategic decision-making in rapidly changing and critical conditions. Meanwhile, organizational transparency can play a significant role as a key factor in improving the strategic decision-making processes of senior managers (11, 12). However, evidence shows that weaknesses in organizational transparency in some management areas of Ilam University of Medical Sciences have led to problems such as inefficient decision-making, misallocation of resources, reduced trust among employees and stakeholders, and increased internal conflicts. The lack of access to accurate, timely, and reliable information at various management levels has limited senior managers' ability to analyze the environment, identify priorities, and make strategic decisions. These issues have created additional challenges, especially in sensitive situations such as health crises (such as the COVID-19 pandemic) or limited budget allocation. At the same time, organizational transparency can help improve university performance, and improving university transparency can lead to optimal allocation of healthcare resources, increased staff and patient satisfaction, and enhanced accountability to society (13).

Despite the importance of organizational transparency, there is still a lack of a clear understanding of how it impacts senior managers' strategic decision-making. Existing research has often addressed transparency as a general concept, and applied models that can explain the relationship between organizational transparency and strategic decision-making are less developed. Also, organizational, cultural, and environmental differences in the implementation of transparency have not been well studied (14). It should be noted that despite the emphasis of previous theories and studies on the importance of transparency, it is still unclear which aspects of transparency (such as information transparency, financial transparency, or transparency of management processes) are more important in the specific context of Ilam University of Medical Sciences (1) and how these aspects can best be applied in strategic decision-making. Also, despite the importance of organizational transparency in improving strategic decision-making, Ilam University of Medical Sciences lacks a comprehensive and operational model to enhance organizational transparency. This gap has led to inefficiency in strategic decision-making by senior managers, reduced trust among employees and stakeholders, and poor utilization of resources. The main goal of this study is to fill the gaps in this area and provide an operational model for Iranian

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organizations that can improve strategic decision-making by senior managers and enhance organizational performance. Given that Ilam University of Medical Sciences is being examined as a case study in this study, and given that this organization has an educational, therapeutic, and service role, the fundamental question is what model is appropriate for organizational transparency in relation to strategic decision-making that can explain its positive effects on strategic decision-making by senior managers at Ilam University of Medical Sciences operationally and practically?.

Materials and methods

Study Design

The research method of the present study is a mixed exploratory type; in the qualitative part, grounded theory was used to identify the effective elements or dimensions in organizational transparency about the strategic decision-making of senior managers, and the central and subordinate factors were identified using the open and axial coding method derived from the Strauss and Corben method(coding). In the quantitative part, the structural-interpretive equation model (ISM) method was used to determine the classification of the identified effective elements. The following are the research layers according to the research onion of (15).

Setting and Participants

The statistical population in the qualitative section consisted of 21 experts, including faculty members of Ilam University of Medical Sciences, vice-chancellors, deans of faculties, heads of groups, especially the management group, senior and staff managers. The sampling was judgmental and purposeful with snowball sampling; the criteria for selecting interviewees included being key, being identified and introduced by others, diversity of individuals, and having motivation and enthusiasm for companionship and cooperation (Table 1).

Table 1. Experts in the qualitative part of the research.

Row	Position Title	Education Level	Activity Field	Specialization Area	Years of Management Experience
1	Senior Manager	PhD	Ilam University of Medical Sciences	Business Management	16 years
2	Faculty Member	PhD	Ilam University of Medical Sciences	Health Policy Management	5 years
3	Senior Manager	PhD	Ilam University of Medical Sciences	Organizational Behavior Management	28 years
4	Faculty Member	PhD	Ilam University of Medical Sciences	Health Policy Management	8 years
5	Chief of Staff	MSc	Ilam University of Medical Sciences	Human Resources Management	14 years
6	Faculty Member	PhD	Ilam University of Medical Sciences	Clinical Psychology	2 years
7	Faculty Member	PhD	Ilam University of Medical Sciences	Biostatistics	2 years
8	Faculty Member	PhD	Ilam University of Medical Sciences	Health Economics	5 years
9	Senior Manager	PhD	Ilam University of Medical Sciences	Business Management	15 years
10	Chief of Staff	MSc	Ilam University of Medical Sciences	Business Management	6 years

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11	Faculty Member	PhD	Ilam University of Medical Sciences	Health Technology Management	2 years
12	Senior Manager	MSc	Ilam University of Medical Sciences	Human Resources Management	5 years
13	Faculty Member	PhD	Ilam University of Medical Sciences	Health Services Management	8 years
14	Senior Manager	MSc	Ilam University of Medical Sciences	Organizational Behavior Management	14 years
15	Faculty Member	PhD	Ilam University of Medical Sciences	Health Policy Management	2 years
16	Faculty Member	PhD	Ilam University of Medical Sciences	Health Economics	9 years
17	Faculty Member	PhD	Ilam University of Medical Sciences	Health Technology Management	5 years
18	Chief of Staff	PhD	Ilam University of Medical Sciences	Business Management	8 years
19	Chief of Staff	MSc	Ilam University of Medical Sciences	Human Resources Management	14 years
20	Faculty Member	PhD	Ilam University of Medical Sciences	Health Services Management	12 years
21	Faculty Member	PhD	Ilam University of Medical Sciences	Health Services Management	9 years

Sample Size

The statistical population of the quantitative section includes all employees of Ilam University of Medical Sciences (N=383). With the help of the cluster sampling method and using Cochran formula, 192 people were selected; also, in the present study, semi-structured interviews were used to identify the effective elements or dimensions in organizational transparency about the strategic decision-making of senior managers. The research approach in the quantitative part is a survey and the data collection tool is a questionnaire. The questionnaire of the present study was made using a researcher-made questionnaire and derived from the opinions of experts, which included 40 items. Also, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to measure the normality of the data distribution. The structural equation test was used to measure the questions.

Measurements & Validity and Reliability

To ensure the validity of the research, peer review and member (participant) review methods were used; TO determine the validity in the quantitative part, face-content validity and expert opinion were used.

Reliability mainly refers to the accuracy of the results obtained. According to Kaplan and Saccozawa (16), "Reliability refers to the accuracy, trustworthiness, stability, and repeatability of the test results. "The main philosophy of test-retest reliability is to ensure the similarity of the extracted codes at repeated times; test-retest reliability helps the researcher to extract stable and stable concepts and categories. In this study, to calculate the test-retest reliability, 4 interviews were selected from the interviews conducted and each interview was recorded by the researcher at an interval of one month. And using the formula related to test-retest reliability, the calculated reliability is 92%, considering that this reliability rate is more than 60%), the reliability of the interview coding in this study is confirmed. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to measure the reliability in a quantitative part. Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the present

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questionnaire was obtained as 0.86, which shows that this questionnaire has appropriate reliability. In this study, descriptive statistics were used to display demographic information. For this purpose, demographic information was shown using a frequency table. Statistical inference techniques have also been used in this research. Because in this research we are looking to test research questions, testing questions and related statistical techniques have been used (Table 2).

Table 2. Test-retest reliability calculations.

Row	Interview Code	Total Codes by Coder	Codes in Agreement	Disagreed Codes	Agreement Percentage	Inter-rater Reliability
1	Interview 14	145	66	25	%91	%91
2	Interview 44	159	73	12	%91	%91
3	Interview 64	80	39	4	%97	%97
4	Interview 94	106	48	23	%90	%90
Total		490	226	64	%92	%92

Statistical and Data Analysis

The overall fit of the research structural model was examined with the help of LISREL software, and according to the final model, the path coefficients and the influence of the variables on each other were determined: It should be noted that the above-mentioned tests were performed using SPSS software version 21 and LISREL software version 8.5.

Results

The principles of increasing organizational transparency are to pay attention to the free flow of information and determine the levels of access to users to use information. Decision-making with transparency requires correct and free information management and communication. Regarding the background conditions, 10 concepts and 3 main categories were identified, which show that creating organizational transparency depends on the organization's senior managers because most political behaviors and organizational decisions are made at the top levels of the organization, and organizational transparency should be considered at these levels; intervening conditions included 7 concepts and 3 main categories, and according to these concepts, it can be stated that organizing employees and the work environment plays an important role in forming organizational transparency and will create organizational trust and an integrated information system for managers to make strategic decisions; strategies and actions included 32 concepts and 4 main categories, most of which focus on manager training, paying attention to internal and external environmental assessments, implementing strategies, and receiving feedback, which can increase organizational transparency for managers when making strategic decisions; outcomes include visible and invisible influential outputs that are created as a result of designing an organizational transparency model in the organization and are the outputs resulting from applying strategies. In this regard, 9 concepts and 2 main categories were identified for the category of consequences, which often focus on creating organizational trust, organizational performance, job and organizational satisfaction, organizational participation, etc. Ultimately, by applying this model, organizational transparency can be achieved

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in relation to the strategic decision-making of senior managers (Table 3).

Table 3. Identified concepts and categories related to the research questions.

Selective coding	(Axial coding (category	Open coding (concepts)
Causal conditios	Information and Communication Management	Review of organizational processes
		Free flow of information
		Organizational structure
		Organizational communications
		Knowledge of the Organizational Environment
	Organizational values	Managers' ethical commitment
		Managers' faith and belief
		Awareness of ethical rules
		Individual ethics
Background conditions	New technologies	Electronic systems
		Using artificial intelligence
		Access to information
		Organizational intelligence
	Organizational knowledge management	Creativity and innovation
		Specialized knowledge
		Management knowledge
	Structural factors	Organizational bureaucracy
		Organizational adhocracy
		Flexible organizational structure
Intervening conditions	Lack of strategic thinking	Strategic Monitoring System
	Dominance and organizational disorder	Influential people
		Lack of regulations and standards
		management laws Review of administrative and
	Organizational inefficiency	Lack of organizational support
		Organizational secrecy and oversight
		organizational powers-The influence of supra
Strategies	Performance evaluation and organizational information analysis	Performance control evaluation
		Formation of strategic committees
		Organizational Transparency Annex
		Organizational feedback
	Organizational Process Management	Using electronic systems
		Reforming traditional structures
Consequences	Individual consequences	Loyalty to the organization
		Individual motivation of managers
		confidence-Increasing managers' self
		Improving work conscience
		Job and organizational satisfaction
	Organizational implications	Organizational transformation
		interaction and collaboration Increased
		Reducing organizational costs
		Improving management capabilities
		Reducing organizational tension and controversy
		Transparent organization

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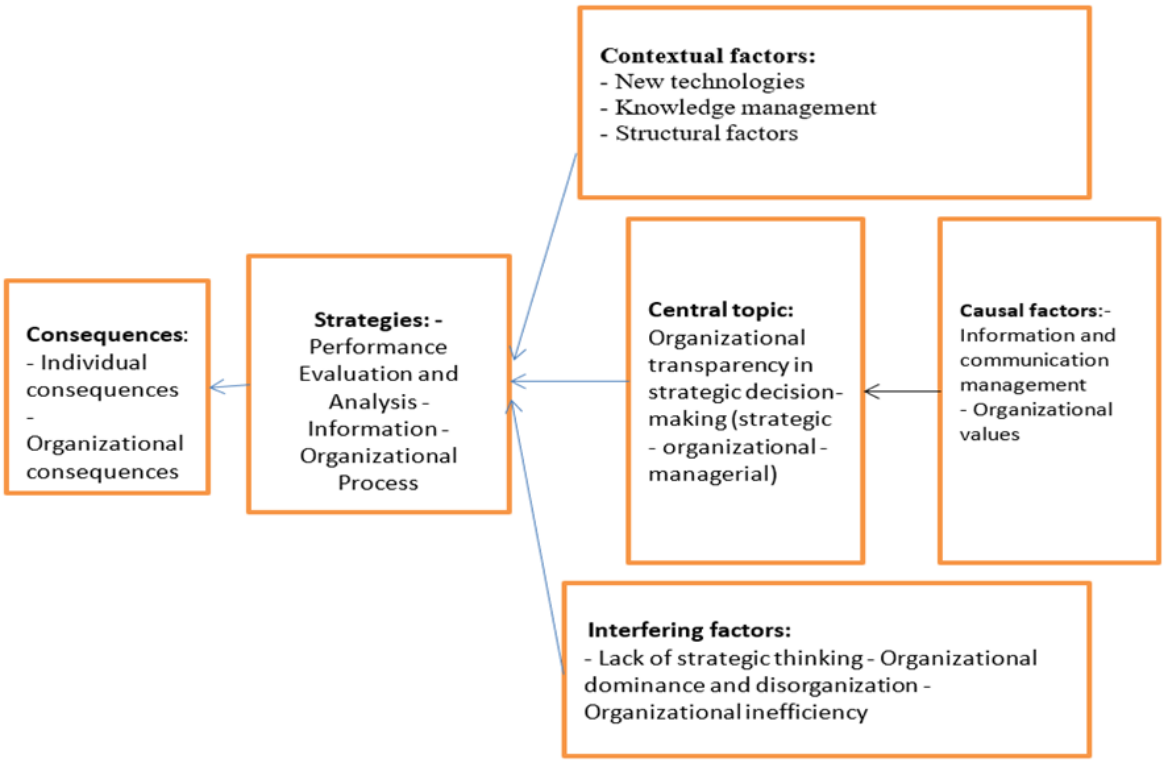

Figure 1. Paradigmatic model of the role of organizational transparency in relation to strategic decision-making of senior managers at Ilam University of Medical Sciences.

After analyzing the information collected from organizational experts and obtaining the main elements and categories through coding, in this stage, the identified concepts were presented to another group of organizational experts who were not present in the previous stage for validation and to increase the richness of the research, and it was analyzed using the Structural Equation Analysis (ISM) method. The Structural Equation Analysis method, based on the concepts presented to the experts, has the following steps (Table 4)

Table 4. Resistance profiling of Gram-negative bacteria isolated from patients with UTIs.

		Causal conditions	-Category oriented	Substrates and contexts	Strategies	Interveners	sequencesCon
First step: In this step, a structural interaction -self matrix is formed using the opinions of four organizational is experts, which given in the table :below	Causal conditions		A	A	A	A	A
	-Category oriented			A	X	A	A
	Substrates and contexts				X	A	A
	Strategies					X	A
	Interveners						A
	Consequences						
Step 2: In this step, the initial access	Causal conditions	1	0	0	0	0	0

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matrix must be formed by converting the -structural self interaction matrix into the numbers :zero and one	-Category oriented	1	1	0	1	0	0
	Substrates and contexts	1	1	1	1	0	0
	Strategies	1	1	1	1	1	0
	Interveners	1	1	1	1	1	0
	Consequences	1	1	1	1	1	0
Step 3: In this step, the initial access matrix must be adapted. This adaptation is done by adding secondary relationships that may not exist to the initial access matrix.	Causal conditions	1	0	0	0	0	0
	-Category oriented	1	1	1	1	1	0
	Substrates and contexts	1	1	1	1	1	0
	Strategies	1	1	1	1	1	0
	Interveners	1	1	1	1	1	0
	Consequences	1	1	1	1	1	1
Step 4:	In the fourth step, the levels of each variable should be obtained based on the adapted access matrix. The sum of the input and output variables and the contribution were calculated						

ISM interaction network was drawn using the levels obtained from the criteria

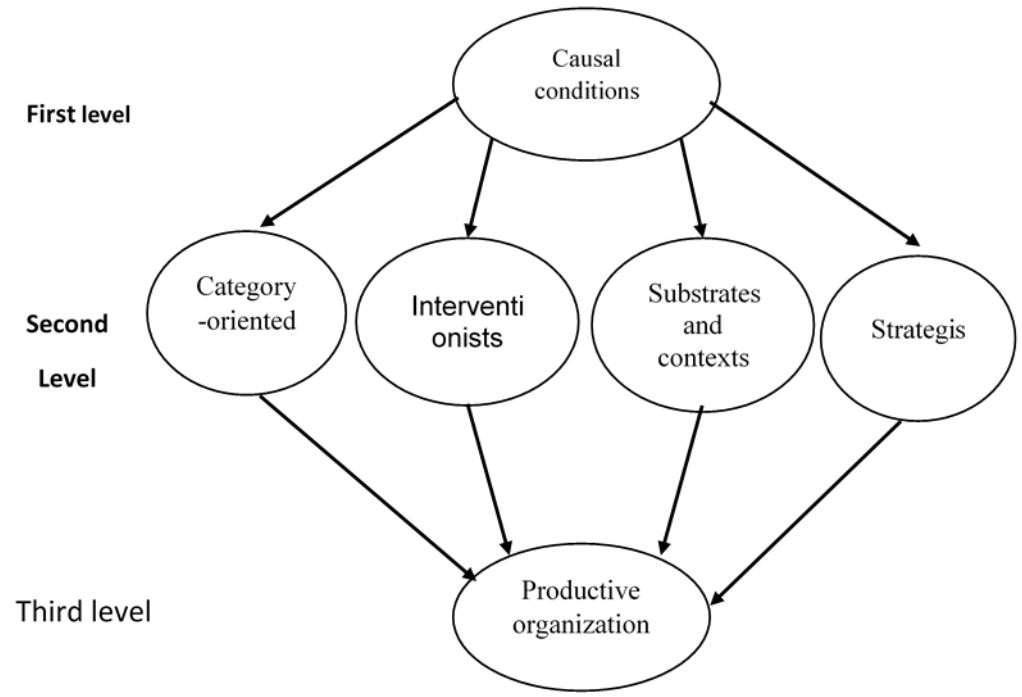

Figure 2. Comprehensive model of the components affecting the implementation pattern of organizational transparency in relation to strategic decision-making in Ilam Medical Sciences using the interpretive structural modeling method.

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Before testing the relationships between variables, the normality of the distribution of the data of the variables was examined using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test; according to the results of the normality test, since the significance level of all variables is greater than 0.05, for example, the significance level of the causal conditions is equal to 0.082, therefore, at a confidence level of 95%, it can be said that all research variables have a normal distribution (Table 5).

Table 5. Normal distribution of variables related to research variables.

Components	Kolmogorov Smirnov	Significant value
Causal conditions	1.52	0.082
Central category	1.72	0.067
Intervening conditions	1.94	0.055
Contextual conditions	1.357	0.110
Strategy (action and reaction)	1.415	0.091
Consequences	1.37	0.109

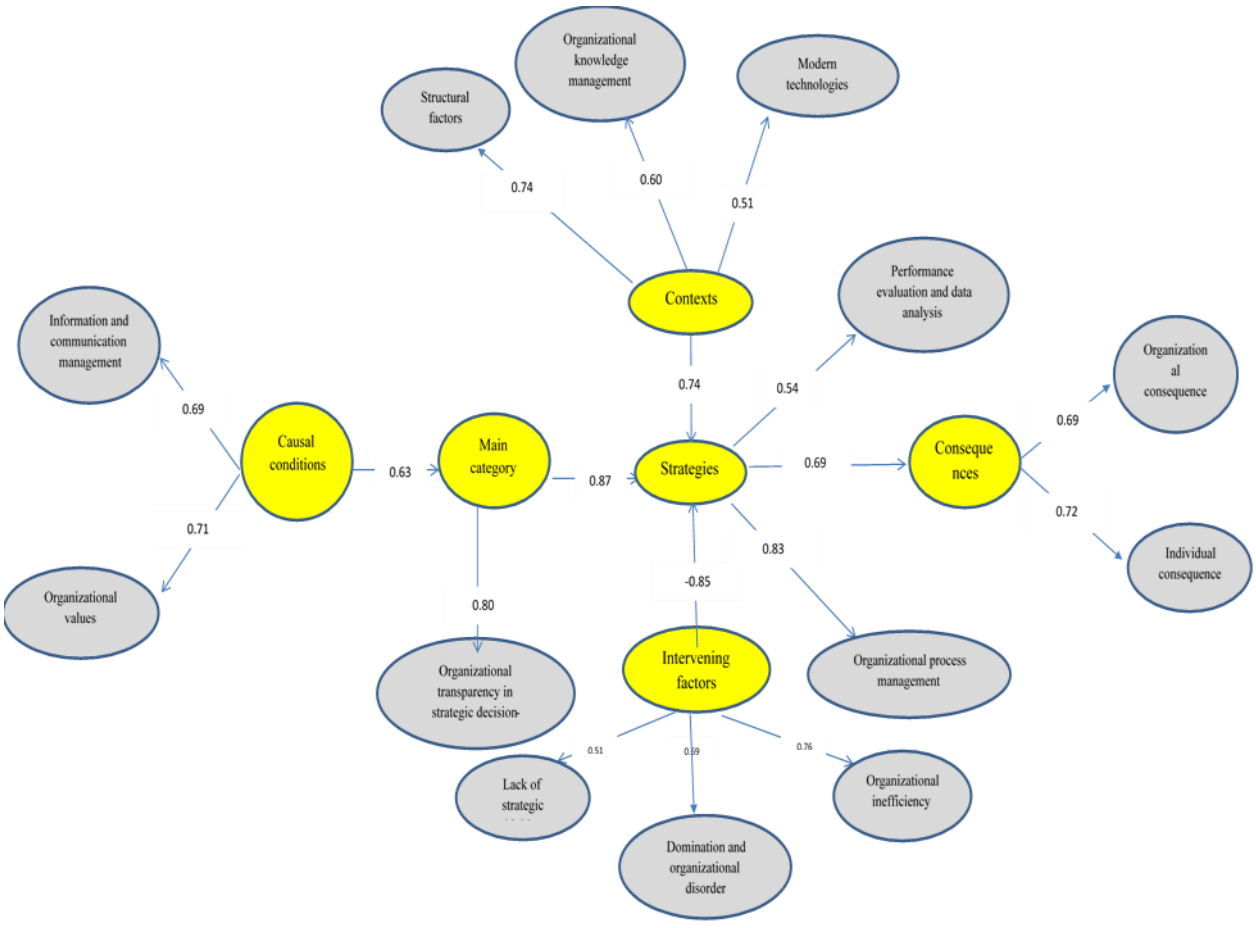

Figure 3. The significance model of the main research hypothesis in the standard estimation mode.

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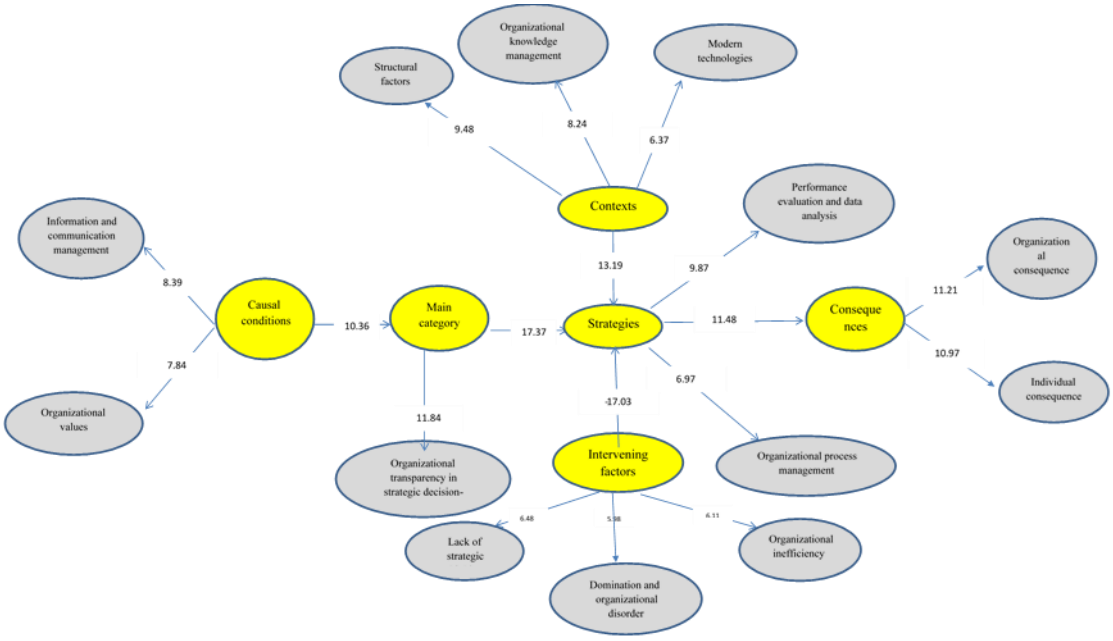

Figure 4. The significance model of the main research hypothesis in the case of significant coefficients.

Considering that the significance level (T-value) between the two variables of causal factors and the pivotal phenomenon is equal to 10.36 and greater than 1.96, then the causal factors have a significant effect on the pivotal phenomenon. Also, since the path coefficient between the two variables is equal to 0.63, then it can be concluded that the causal factors have a direct, positive and significant effect on the pivotal phenomenon and the intensity of this effect is relatively strong (0.63). Hence, the first hypothesis of the research is accepted at a confidence level of 95%; according to the table below, all paths of the paradigm model are accepted (Table 6).

Table 6. Results of hypothesis testing in accordance with the paradigm model of organizational transparency.

(Path (hypothesis	Standard coefficient	T-value	Test result
Causal conditions of the central←-phenomenon -organizational transparency in strategic decision) (making	0.63	10.36	RejectH $_0$ (the accept hypothesis)
transparency in strategic organizational)phenomenon (making-decision←Strategies	0.87	17.37	RejectH $_0$ (the accept hypothesis)
Strategies←Consequences	0.69	11.48	RejectH $_0$ (the accept hypothesis)
Background←Strategies conditions	0.74	13.19	RejectH $_0$ (the accept hypothesis)
Intervening←Strategies factors	-0.85	-17.03	RejectH $_0$ (the accept hypothesis)
Causal conditions of←the central phenomenon -strategic decisionorganizational transparency in)	0.54	13.86	RejectH $_0$ (the accept

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(making←Strategies			hypothesis)
Causal conditions of←the central phenomenon -strategic decisionorganizational transparency in) (making←Strategies ←Consequences	0.32	14.14	RejectH_0 (the accept hypothesis)
Background←Strategies conditions	0.74	13.19	RejectH_0 (the accept hypothesis)

Discussion

Discussion

Transparency is one of the categories that has a very strong relationship with the government and the nation and is considered a two-way matter; information transparency can be considered a common factor that establishes the bond between the government and the nation in a stronger and more unified way. This research was conducted with the aim of designing an organizational transparency model in the strategic decision-making of senior managers. This research consists of two qualitative parts (grounded data theory) and quantitative (structural-interpretive modeling). To design an organizational transparency model in relation to the strategic decision-making of senior managers, the interview method and then the grounded data method were used in the qualitative part of the research; first, 21 experts and specialists from Ilam University of Medical Sciences were selected and semi-structured interviews were conducted with them. The highest percentage of respondents belonged to the age group of 30 to 40 years with 47.7 percent. The lowest frequency belongs to the age group under 30 years with 4.8%. 28.5% of the experts have a master's degree and 71.5% of them have a doctorate degree. The statistical population of the quantitative section includes 192 employees of Ilam University of Medical Sciences who were selected using the cluster sampling method to distribute the questionnaire. The category of causal factors includes information and communication management and organizational values, which have a significant impact on organizational transparency in strategic decision-making. Improving the quality and accuracy of information and establishing effective intra-organizational communication play a fundamental role in improving the transparency of managers' decision-making; also, creating and promoting organizational values such as trust, honesty, and ethics in decision-making processes will pave the way for more transparent and sustainable decisions. These findings specifically indicate that senior managers and organizational decision-makers need to pay special attention to strengthening these factors to, as a result, promote organizational transparency at different levels. The results of this study are consistent with previous studies; for example, in the study of (17), it was stated that effective intra-organizational communications and an organizational culture based on ethical values have a significant impact on transparency in decision-making. Also, in the study of (18), it was stated that proper information management increases the transparency of decisions and better accountability in organizations. These findings are consistent with the results Of (19) research on the components of reviewing and creating new organizational processes, free flow of information, organizational structure and organizational communication flow of (20) and the results of (10) research on the components of observing organizational justice and honesty, organizational loyalty, values that govern society, culture building and beliefs of senior managers.

The central phenomenon of organizational transparency and organizational values has a significant impact on strategies, including performance evaluation, information analysis, and organizational process management. In other words, transparency in organizational decision-making processes and strong organizational values can

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improve the quality of performance appraisal, data analysis, and management processes. These findings indicate that organizations that have greater transparency in their internal communications and information can make more accurate strategic decisions and can carry out their management processes more efficiently; these results are generally in line with the findings of previous studies such as (1), which showed a positive relationship between organizational transparency and improved performance appraisal and information analysis processes, and research by (8, 10) which examined the effect of organizational values on the management of organizational processes.

The strategies implemented in organizations not only affect the overall performance of the organization, but also directly affect the individual satisfaction of employees and their motivation. In other words, the effective implementation of management strategies improves organizational efficiency, increases productivity, and enhances the overall performance of the organization. On the other hand, these strategies also have positive effects on individual outcomes. As noted in the study by (21), management strategies and organizational culture directly impact the improvement of organizational performance and increase employee satisfaction. Also, in the study Of (10), the effect of management strategies on individual and organizational outcomes was examined, and the results showed that effective strategies can help increase transparency and organizational performance.

Finally, to improve the impact of organizational transparency on strategic decision-making by senior managers of Ilam University of Medical Sciences, the following practical suggestions are presented to university officials:

• Strengthening information technology infrastructure: Developing and implementing integrated information systems for data collection, analysis, and sharing.

• Improving organizational communications: Creating effective communication channels between departments and different levels of the organization and holding regular meetings to share information and coordinate between managers and employees.

• Making the decision-making process transparent: Documenting decision-making processes and informing all stakeholders of the results, using tools such as management dashboards to display information in real time to managers and decision-makers.

• Increasing the analytical capacity of managers: Using advanced information analysis models to support strategic decision-making.

• Improving the connection between categories and strategies: Creating coordination between information transparency processes and strategic actions and using digital tools to integrate data and analyze them in strategic processes.

• Developing efficient organizational processes and identifying and eliminating bottlenecks and inefficiencies in organizational processes.

• Enhancing individual motivation to improve outcomes: Designing reward and incentive systems based on individual and group performance and providing professional development opportunities, such as training and skills development.

• Supporting structural changes to improve strategies: Implementing organizational change programs to improve and review current structures and continuously assessing the impact of structural changes on the efficiency and effectiveness of strategies and providing rapid feedback for necessary corrections.

• Increasing employee participation in decision-making: Providing opportunities for employees to

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participate in strategic planning and decision-making processes.

• Increasing the organization's strategic capacity: Training and developing the skills of managers and employees to use new technologies and knowledge management methods.

Limitations and Strengths

One limitation of this study is the complexities of mixed research methods (qualitative and quantitative), which may require specialized skills and additional resources.

Conclusion

The results of the present study show that designing an organizational transparency model in senior management strategic decision-making can influence outcomes when implemented through the categories of transparency and information analysis, as well as strategies such as performance evaluation and process management. Improving information technology infrastructure by creating integrated communication and network infrastructures that enable access to information and data for all organizational levels. These offer emphasize the importance of developing information infrastructure, strengthening organizational values, and utilizing environmental data in strategic processes. This not only sheds light on the impact of causal conditions on outcomes, but also emphasizes the importance of effectively using categories and strategies in creating a comprehensive management model. It is suggested that future studies use other research and investigations, including: identifying key components of organizational transparency, examining transparency on organizational efficiency and effectiveness, examining the factors that create and influence organizational transparency, the role of transparency in decision-making, comprehensive design for organizational transparency at Ilam University of Medical Sciences, and examining the role of transparency in academic crisis management. Implementing these suggestions and removing restriction can become a comprehensive, indigenous model for organizational transparency at Ilam University of Medical Sciences and contribute to improving the performance of senior managers at this university..

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Ethical Considerations

Ethical concerns included acquiring the ethics code (IR.IAU.SDJ.REC.1400.067), ensuring integrity in library collection and data reporting, and getting writing information permission from all participants in concordance.

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Competing Interests' Disclosure

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Authors' contributions

Conceptualization, Methodology, Validation, Formal Analysis, Investigation, Resources, Software, Data Curation, Writing–Original Draft Preparation, Writing–Review & Editing, Visualization, Supervision, Project Administration: EK, RS, AS.

Writing Disclosure

The authors affirm that the composition and preparation of this document were executed independently, without the assistance of any professional writing services. The material only

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represents the unique work and efforts of the writers.

Data Availability Statement

The datasets generated and analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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