Organizational Learning In Non-Profit Organizations: A Systematic Review And Future Research Directions

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ABSTRACT

Globalization, industry 4.0 trends and economic volatility have compelled several firms to learn and adapt to enhance performance and maintain competitiveness. Several studies on organizational learning highlight companies' need to support learning to increase their sustainability and effectiveness (OL). Numerous empirical studies have looked at the connection between organizational learning's (OL) characteristics and the performance of non-profit organizations, although the number of these studies is still relatively small. In order to identify prospects for future study development, studies on this topic must be developed after thoroughly examining the prior literature. Using systematic literature review, the study intends to close this gap by methodically analyzing the findings of earlier research on OL in non-profit organizations and recommending the course of its further development. According to the study's findings, OL is a vital skill for organizations if they want to endure and compete in the face of change. Although there has been very little research on this theory's use in non-profit organizations, some studies have examined the factors influencing OL. OL researchers have the chance to follow up on the proposed future research direction.

Keywords: learning organization; non-profit organization; NPO; organizational learning

1. Introduction

Trends in Industry 4.0, globalization and economic instability have compelled several firms to learn and adapt to enhance performance and maintain competitiveness. In an increasingly uncertain and competitive climate, leaders of enterprises seek strategies to assure their firms' success. In the current literature, it has been acknowledged that knowledge and learning are vital assets for businesses to retain performance and competitive advantage (Chandler, 1992; Friesen & Johnson, 1995; Weldy, 2009). Senge (1996) argues that "long-term improvement in performance relies on a robust learning process." Several recent studies indicate an increasing interest in organizational learning, organizational learning (OL), which highlights the necessity for companies to encourage learning in order to enhance their performance (Hooi , 2019; Ismail et al., 2019; Jain & Moreno, 2015; Oh, 2019; Zhou et al., 2015).

Organizational learning benefits organizations by increasing their capacity to adapt to environmental changes (Levinthal & March, 1993). Organizations acquire knowledge from each other 'through the transmission of experiences encoded in the form of similar technologies, codes, procedures, or routines' (Levitt & March, 1988). Easterby-Smith et al. (1998) reveal three reasons

for the increasing interest in OL studies: the rapid pace of change in technology and knowledge management, globalization and internationalization, and increasing competition between established and new companies. The dynamics of such an environment are experienced not only by business organizations but also by non-profit organizations.

Over the past four decades, non-profit organizations have grown in complexity, expanding their service offerings and increasing their influence significantly (Dees, 2012; Dees, 1998; Drucker, 1990). This group of organizations is in a different government, and the business sector is often referred to as the third sector. They carry out the task of meeting public demands that neither government nor business can meet (McHargue, 2003)

During this industry 4.0 dynamic, non-profit organizations are faced with the availability of increasingly competitive sources of funds. This condition encourages them to become more professional by increasing public accountability to stakeholders (Rainey et al., 2017; Straub et al., 2010) and is more adaptive in building financial resilience. So many non-profit organizations are currently struggling to maintain financial viability as a result of the turbulent climate and funding

volatility (Akingbola et al., 2019; Golensky & Mulder, 2006) by adopting business techniques such as commercial income, productivity and marketing activities (Mair & Noboa, 2006; Weerawardena et al., 2010).

Non-profit organizations must have robust organizational learning capabilities to meet accountability and financial resilience requirements. Accountability refers to "how people and organizations are accountable for their activities and report to recognized authority (or authorities)" (Edwards & Hulme, 1995). Accountability is a dynamic process defined by organizational learning (OL) and interaction between stakeholders (Benjamin, 2008; Ebrahim, 2005; Ma & Konrath, 2018). Meanwhile, the transition of non-profit organizations into social entrepreneurs involves crucial learning abilities and methods. Liu and Ko's (2012) research of a social enterprise on charity retail operations focus on the learning processes involved in creating marketing skills in which non-profit organizations could invest their resources to become more market-oriented and adaptable to business model changes.

Several empirical studies have explored the link between organizational learning (OL) and the performance of non-profit organizations, although the number of studies is still relatively rare (McHargue, 2003; Som et al., 2012). The creation of studies on this issue necessitates a comprehensive examination of the prior literature to identify potential avenues for future study development. In order to address this deficiency, the purpose of this study is to review the outcomes of prior research on OL in non-profit organizations and provide recommendations for its future growth.

The following stages are carried out following the objectives of the study. To begin, this paper summarises the basics of the definition of OL and a philosophical review of the theory of OL based on the pillars of the philosophy of management science. In addition, the authors briefly outline the developmental trends of OL research. Second, the authors analyzed and evaluated the findings in this area of research after synthesizing the information obtained. Third, the paper identifies a critical direction for future research based on these observations.

The paper is expected to contribute to a complete knowledge of OL practices and relationships in non-profit organizations that have never been systematically reviewed. Second, this comprehensive assessment assists academics and practitioners in developing knowledge of OL research strategies, particularly in non-profit development. Thirdly, this study helps the formation of a research roadmap by outlining theoretical and empirical advancements in the literature on OL in non-profit organizations.

2. Literature Review

Definition of Organizational Learning (OL)

Cangelosi and Dill (1965) conceptualized OL when they investigated the learning of individuals and organizations. Due to the contributions of Hedberg (1981), Fiol and Lyles (1985), Argote

and Epple (1990), March (1991), and Huber, OL rose to popularity in the 1980s and 1990s (1991). In 1990, Senge coined and popularised the term "learning organization." Despite the substantial debate around organizational learning and learning organizations (Easterby-Smith et al., 2000; A Ortenblad, 2001; Sun & Scott, 2003), misconceptions and prejudices about their use (Nevis et al., 1995; Wang & Ahmed, 2003). According to Easterby-Smith et al. (1999), organizational learning is the activity of individual and collective learning within organizations. To encourage learning, learning organizations propose a combination of disciplines and activities.

Scholars have exhaustively researched OL. Argyris and Schon (1978) characterized OL as single- and double-loop learning in the 1980s. The former considers changes in the organization's anticipated outcomes, while the latter opposes and redefines such changes and expectations. In addition, adaptive and generative terms are used to describe single-loop and multiple-loop learning, respectively (Senge, 1990). Previous research has shown that adaptive learning is suitable for organizations working in stable markets, but generative learning is required for firms operating in dynamic markets (Wijnhoven, 2001). March (1991) splits the learning process into two categories: applying previously acquired procedures and acquiring new procedures and information. Huber (1991) addressed the shortcomings of the previous OL strategy and provided four components for organizational information systems. Information is learned through knowledge from various sources, including internal organizational experience, external organizational experience, and other forms of external knowledge. The diffusion of information and knowledge within an organization is connected. Through the interpretation of collected and distributed data, organizations create meaning. The process of storing and retrieving information is called "organizational memory." In addition, recent research has revealed that OL occurs at several levels (individuals, groups, and organizations) and that feed-forward and feedback are two separate learning processes that improve learning outcomes (Crossan et al., 1999; in Milia & Birdi, 2010; Lloria & Moreno-Luzon, 2014).
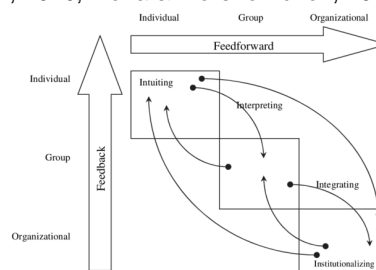

Figure 1. Crossan and colleagues (1999) introduced the OL Framework with the 4I subprocess.

Crossan et al. (1999) characterize organizational learning as a framework consisting of four interrelated subprocesses (intuiting, interpreting, integrating, and institutionalizing) that occur at three levels: individual, group, and organization. Organizational learning occurs within the framework of three stages of learning. Individual intui-

tion and interpretation occur at the individual level, group interpretation and integration at the team level, and organizational integration and institutionalization at the organizational level (see Figure 1).

An excellent organizational learning process might contribute to the success of a company. In order to achieve long-term success, a business must continuously learn to advance (apply) its acquired knowledge, put it into practice, and increase its innovative knowledge (Liedtka, 1999). An effective learning process will include a culture of information and knowledge sharing among members and efforts to grasp the working environment and interpret and react more appropriately (Jones et al., 2003). After involvement in learning and sharing, an individual's values, beliefs, and capacity for assimilation will affect how information is perceived. It decides if the information and knowledge gained through interpretation are advantageous and valuable (Veng Seng et al., 2002). In other words, the results and applications of newly generated knowledge will change after the information is accumulated via learning and sharing.

Philosophical Review of Organizational Learning (OL)

Individuals participate in contextual behaviors and discourses that replicate and extend the organization's knowledge as part of the OL process. OL processes integrate cognitive, social, and language elements (Gherardi, 1999). According to Popova-Nowak and Cseh (2015), OL involves procedures that develop new knowledge throughout the scientific paradigm, with functionalist scientists adjusting to the environment of OL forms (Kim, 2004; Walsh & Ungson, 1991). Nonaka (1994) views OL as the consequence of increasing personal knowledge via knowledge conversion and developing a common viewpoint through socializing and externalization. According to the model of knowledge creation, tacit and explicit knowledge interact at three levels of analysis (individual, team and organization). Postmodernists consider knowledge constrained by power relations and familiar narratives (Hatch, 1997). Critical theory, like postmodernism, views knowledge as a manifestation of repressive and hegemonic discourses (Grant et al., 2009).

All OL frameworks include the communal activity of generating, replicating and enhancing knowledge. This concept is influenced by the Marxian legacy of the perspective generated by the historical and social surroundings (as summarised by Gherardi, 2000). Functionalist tactics include reorganizing explicit organizational knowledge and work procedures based on job tasks. Coordination of social activities relating to the activity of organizations and people under certain conditions (Cook & Brown, 1999; Gherardi, 2000). Constructionists emphasize tacit knowledge acquired by practice, where OL is a social rather than cognitive activity (Gherardi, 1999, 2000).

They recognized the duality of exploitation and exploration in producing, replicating, and enhancing practical knowledge (March 1991).

Constructionists investigate how individuals learn, generate, replicate, and develop organizational knowledge via their actions. Constructionists, such as postmodernists, see ingrained language use, involvement in professional language games, and discursive activities as "trying" behaviors (E. P. Antonacopoulou, 2008; Gherardi, 2000). Participation in practice means contributing to critical theory's social transformation (Meyerson & Kolb, 2000).

Individual and organizational dialectics link several OL analysis levels. All paradigms acknowledge the interplay between various OL analysis levels while emphasizing different elements of this relationship. Thus, functionalists emphasize organizational structures, collective cognitive processes, and memory as "super-individual collectivity" (Walsh & Ungson, 1991). Functionalist scholars recognize the significance of people in information collection, interpretation, and dissemination (Fiol & Lyles, 1985; Hedberg, 1981; Walsh & Ungson, 1991). Overall, functionalists see organizations as molds that rely on the members' potential for learning (Hedberg, 1981).

OL is founded on an epistemological foundation inside and across organizations. Context is fundamental to OL, but its meaning varies among paradigms. The external environment, according to functionalists, shapes OL and leads to adaptation (Daft & Weick, 1984; Dyer & Hatch, 2006; Walsh & Ungson, 1991). In functionalist science, culture impacts the cognition and behavior of members, while strategy restricts decision-making, structure, and organizational processes (Fiol & Lyles, 1985; Nevis et al., 1995).

Constructionists investigate businesses to identify OL in certain activities, situations, and cultures. Brown et al. (1989) offer an epistemology of learning in which knowledge is encoded by and associated with the activity and environment that creates it. Activity and perception are superior to intellectual representation and theorization. According to Brown and Duguid (1991), knowledge resides in specific work environments and practitioner groups. Consequently, learning involves enculturation or adopting a set of behaviors prevalent in a community, such that the learner not only acquires knowledge but also performs it. Postmodernists include emergent micro-practices devoid of worth beyond human activity to escape the general and universal (Gabriel, 1995). While critical theories concentrate on the dominant social structures of dominance, they also regard micro communication as a context for meaning and comprehension development in general.

3. Research Methods

This study employs the systematic review method developed by Tranfield et al. (2003), which clearly outlines instructions for conducting systematic reviews in organizational studies and argues that conducting systematic reviews will improve the quality of the review process by employing a transparent, systematic, and reproducible literature review. Systematic reviews facilitate the discovery of scientific contributions to a particular study or investigation area (Becheikh et

al., 2006). This rigor is applied to a series of scientific papers to find new advancements related to the significant areas of interest and the potential for more OL-related research on non-profit organizations.

Systematic Review Procedures Implementation

According to Tranfield et al. (2003), the methodology for conducting a systematic review in management consists of three steps: preparation, execution, and documentation. The review methodology is adapted to the research requirements at each stage. This formula has been used and confirmed in previous management research (Khan et al., 2020). The sections that follow expand on these phases.

Developing and articulating research questions

This study systematically tries to synthesize and integrate current OL studies in non-profit organizations. It begins with two research questions:

RQ1. What does the literature say about the notion and study of OL in contemporary non-profit organizations?

RQ2. What future research possibilities exist to deepen further and extend the current body of knowledge in this field?

Keyword definition and the development of search methods

By examining the Scopus database, the author finds publications concerning OL and non-profits. (Daz-Garca et al., 2015) The author picked the Scopus database because it contains a broader range of data than the ISI database and has more stringent coverage methodology requirements. Scopus is a comprehensive electronic database including more than 18,000 articles from more than 5,000 international publishers, in addition to coverage of 16,500 peer-reviewed journals (Phillips et al., 2015). The search strategy was aimed to identify as many relevant studies as possible from the selected database.

This database is accessible to authors via their university's learning resource center. The author first looked for articles containing the keywords "organizational learning" AND non-profit OR non-profit OR NPO in the database's title and abstract. As preliminary samples, 102 articles were discovered with this search.

Selecting credible primary sources

Following the guidelines of Tranfield et al. (2003) and a systematic review of previous reviews in various management disciplines, articles were selected that met all of the following selection criteria: business management and accounting subject (50 articles); "organizational learning" or similar keywords (25 articles); and English-language articles (all in English). The author determines the relevance of the research after reading the title, abstract, and complete text. From a collection of 102 primary studies, 20 relevant publications were chosen for evaluation.

Table 1. Summary of the article identification process

No	Description	Total	Excluded	Included
1	All articles with the keyword "organizational learning." AND non-profit OR non-profit OR NPO	102		102
2	Included in *business management and accounting* subject	102	52	50
3	Has the keyword "Organizational Learning" or other derivative keywords	50	25	25
4	Abstracts and content have strong relevance to the purpose of *the review*	25	5	20

Source: Processed data, 2022

Quality evaluation

The quality evaluation procedure is used to establish the validity of chosen studies, explain their inclusion, and give readers the information required to judge if this review technique applies to their study (Christofi et al., 2017). However, high-quality research design and application is one of the most significant hurdles to building a systematic review technique (Tranfield et al., 2003). Currently, the author references Ahmad and Omar (2016) by referencing publications from journals indexed by Scopus. Scopus was selected because it contains several relevant and high-quality papers.

Data extraction

After assessing the quality of the research, the data were extracted and examined for errors and biases (Tranfield et al., 2003). The extracted data is then imported into an Excel spreadsheet, including information on the author, the year the study was performed, the research objectives, the study's design and data, the theory, and a summary of the study's results.

Reporting and dissemination of findings

This section discusses the author's answer to the first research question about the study's results (RQ1). These results reflect information discovered in prior research about the evolution of academic publications, the definition of online learning, theoretical perspectives, methodological and antecedent applications, and the effects of online learning. Several scientific articles in the previously determined research domain are mined for data. The first paper reviewed in this article was published in 1999. From 1999 to 2021, publications on OL in non-profit organizations were still few and fluctuated (Figure 2). Development and Learning in Organizations, International Journal of Organizational Analysis, and Learning Organization are the top three publications for sample papers.
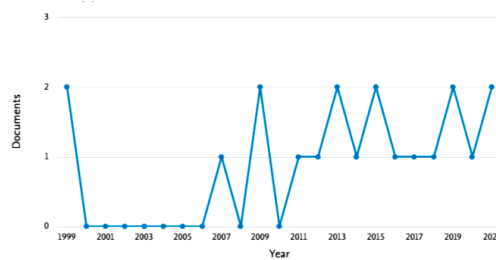
Figure 2. Fluctuations in the number of sample articles by year

4. Results and Discussion

Development of Empirical Research

Twelve of the sample papers of OL in Non-Profit organizations, or sixty percent of the whole sample, are designated as empirical research in this work. Fifty-eight percent (7 articles) of these use a quantitative method.

Relationship between OL, Innovation, and Organizational Performance

In the context of non-profit organizations, the relationship between OL, innovation, and organizational performance has been the subject of several research. One relates to how organizations support innovation (Arantes & Soares, 2021). In a competitive world, innovation is crucial to a company's existence, and an innovation strategy may sometimes benefit any kind of business. Multiple empirical studies have shown that an organization's simultaneous pursuit of exploitation and exploration results in organizational ambidexterity (OA), which boosts organizational effectiveness (Blindenbach-Driessen & Van Den Ende, 2014). As supported by past studies, the empirical results of Arantes and Soares (2021) highlighted the mediation effect of using MCS (Management Control System), which suggested a weakening relationship between OL and OA. In a sense, the OA is seen as an OL guideline (March, 1991), and the OL requires the organization's values and principles to be contested (Pacheco et al., 2010).

The amount non-profit organizations are committed to strategic learning has a higher effect on their mission-based success than on their economic performance. According to this research, learning orientation seems to be more essential than other strategic orientations among non-profit organizations, especially in the orientation market.

Not only are non-profit organizations equipped with learning skills to monitor and analyze the effects of initiatives, but a strong learning culture also "translates learning skills into respectable and effective service abilities to fulfill their objective," which is the raison d'être of non-profit organizations (McHargue, 2003). When viewed through the lens of relational exchange, non-profit organizations can "maintain their social legitimacy" (Liu and Ko, 2012, p. 603) when working to achieve their mission, primarily due to the satisfaction of stakeholders and funding entities with their behavior, which increases their fund-raising success.

Mahmoud and Yusif reported almost comparable outcomes (2012). They claimed that market

orientation's economic and non-economic effects on performance might be better understood if orientation mediation learning played a more prominent role. Moreover, non-economic performance is a method that allows the organization to realize the economic advantages of learning orientation.

Relationships between OL and External Organizations

Using fsQCA analysis, Bai and Wei (2019) propose that different configurations of AMC (Alliance Management Capability) elements include social impact realization, relationship coordination, power balance, and learning inter-organizational effects on the performance of cross-sectoral alliances. Inter-organizational learning is the capacity of non-profit organizations to explain, codify, communicate, and absorb partner knowledge (Schilke & Goerzen, 2010). Social engagement between alliance partners occurs in inter-organizational learning when they share information and learn from one another. In cross-sectoral relationships, non-profits communicate, absorb, and assimilate the knowledge entrenched in their partners (Schreiner et al., 2009).

Kong (2015) contends that social intelligence functions as a catalyst for the acquisition of external information, which may have a dynamic impact on the growth of human resource management practices and organizational learning for innovation in non-profit organizations. Phusavat et al. (2009) emphasize the relevance of information sources for the growth and development of organizations. Social intelligence is the capacity of an organization's members to comprehend and act judiciously on topics of external stakeholders following the context, timing, and proper approach (Kong, 2015).

OL and LO influencing variables

According to the results of Nugroho's (2018) research, knowledge-sharing and collaborative culture significantly impact organizational learning. This study successfully established the existence of a significant positive impact on the collaborative culture and learning of the business. This suggests that the bigger an organization's learning ability, its culture is more collaborative. This research supports Al-(2013) Adaileh's attempts to establish a link between collaborative culture and organizational learning.

In contrast, Umar and Hassan (2019) discovered, following the theory of organizational learning and organizational support, that non-profit organizations in which employees receive a greater incentive to learn and are rewarded for such behavior are more likely to collect performance data than those in which employees receive limited support for the activity. Long ago, performance management research recognized the significance of a learning-oriented organizational culture in fostering adaptive behavior in public organizations (Moynihan, 2005; Moynihan et al., 2012; Moynihan & Pandey, 2010). The management of non-profit organizations must also promote learning, offer opportunities for

workers to engage in learning activities, and encourage learning behaviors to create a learning-oriented workplace.

In addition, the previous research demonstrated that the perception of organizational support for employee learning and development positively influenced performance data gathering in non-profit organizations. This impact was also more pronounced in organizations with a more robust assessment capability. Governments and funding institutions may prioritize assessment capacity-building operations from the outset of a project to aid non-profits in collecting and using performance data efficiently. It is possible to allocate a part of the program's budget to capacity-building activities (Umar & Hassan, 2019).

Leadership is a different component that affects OL. Several studies published in influential journals have shown the connection between transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and organizational learning. For example, empirical research demonstrates a connection between transformational leadership and organizational learning (Amitay et al., 2005; Chang & Lee, 2007; Jansen et al., 2009; Kurland et al., 2010; Theodore, 2013). These studies present transformational leaders as catalysts, facilitating and accelerating the acquisition and distribution of information among members, enhancing the process of information interpretation, and fostering dialogue and communication among members, which is essential for organizational learning. Other studies have investigated the connection between transactional leadership and organizational learning. This study's results demonstrate that transactional leadership positively affects organizational learning (Jansen et al., 2009; Oluremi, 2008; Vera & Crossan, 2004).

Megheirkouni (2017) explored the direct association between leadership styles and organizational learning inside and across non-profit sectors. Not all transformational and transactional leadership characteristics substantially influence organizational learning. Even though several research with a broad scope has shown the effects of transformational and transactional leadership on organizational learning, the present study's findings demonstrate that both leadership style components impact organizational learning.

Development of Conceptual Research

This literature review's sample analysis yielded eight papers of conceptual research type (40 percent of the total sample articles). These eight articles present various variants of ideas and concepts in the development of the OL field in non-profit organizations, including the initial concept of organizational certification that meets organizational standards for learners (Ortenblad, 2021), examples of non-profit organization resilience models and their ability to change in the face of challenges (Spee, 2020), a four-dimensional model of organizational learning that was applied in the military world and a model of organizational learning that was applied in the corporate world (Visser, 2007)

5. Future Research

This literature evaluation may suggest future studies on developing OL studies in non-profit organizations. Given the current paucity of research in this field, future research development prospects are attractive for scientists.

Future research may study the parameters at which the link between MCS in OL and OA turns negative. Quantitative and qualitative techniques are advocated for this goal. In addition, it is proposed that the same structures are connected with other theoretical currents, particularly those concerning organizational adaptabilities, such as organizational knowledge and dynamic capacities (Arantes & Soares, 2021).

Future studies might investigate these AMC setups in other sectors. Thirdly, cross-sector alliance members may build their unique alliance management competencies since AMC is a distinct setting. It would be useful to conduct a systematic investigation on this aspect. It gives a corporate viewpoint that complements the non-profit perspective to provide a complete picture of alliance management skills. This will aid in our comprehension of the essence of operations involving cross-sector cooperation. (Bai & Wei, 2019).

Given a fuller awareness of the value of external knowledge to the learning and growth of organizations, future research should focus on the characteristics of the three knowledge categories. Given a fuller awareness of the value of external knowledge to the learning and growth of organizations, future research should focus on the characteristics of the three knowledge categories. Additionally, these characteristics must be compared to those of comparable private sector organizations. This is due to the need for commercial and governmental sectors to build advisory units differently. This comparison is also necessary for planning and preparing future advisory units for the public sector. In addition, knowledge sharing and transfer effectiveness between and within organizations must be evaluated, assessed, and analyzed. The usage of information and communication technologies, culture, and environmental arrangements should also be examined.

Existing research (e.g., Dess & Robinson R.B., 1984) indicates an essential link between a manager's intuitive measurements and those based on recorded facts. However, it is considered that duplicating research using a multi-informant study design (which collects data from several sources) might result in a more accurate portrayal of research components, namely performance. Second, as with the vast majority of fieldwork, the cross-sectional structure of the study restricts categorical generalizations about the route's causation. Given that learning organizations may have a more substantial effect after a delay, it would be exciting and advantageous to duplicate this study and related components using a longitudinal design in this context (Baba, 2015).

6. Conclusion

The study is a thorough and exhaustive literature analysis examining the notion of OL in non-profit organizations and their place in research to provide suggestions for future research. The study also explores the opportunities accessible to future researchers for developing and expanding the present body of literature in this field. The article suggests that OL is crucial for non-profits to survive and compete in a changing environment. Although the use of this theory in non-profit organizations is in its infancy and little research has been conducted on it, several studies have examined the factors that influence OL. Additionally, the methods and conditions that enable the development of OL capacities were analyzed. In addition, an additional study should be conducted on the need for empirical investigations, techniques, and theoretical underpinnings. The study is a thorough literature analysis examining the notion of OL in non-profit organizations and their place in research to provide suggestions for future research. The study also explores the opportunities accessible to future researchers for developing and expanding the present body of literature in this field. The article suggests that OL is crucial for non-profits to survive and compete in a changing environment. Although the use of this theory in non-profit organizations is in its infancy and little research has been conducted on it, several studies have examined the factors that influence OL. Additionally, the methods and conditions that enable the development of OL capacities were analyzed. In addition, an additional study should be conducted on the need for empirical investigations, techniques, and theoretical underpinnings. Besides, this study practically suggests that organizations need to develop a shared culture of organizational learning and change, set up a management team that is committed to learning, set up systems for creating and sharing knowledge across functional boundaries, encourage openness to the outside world, make it easier for people to take risks and get rid of barriers to change, and help people come to a common understanding of what is going on.

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