

Assessing Impacts of Organizational Factors on Knowledge Sharing Behavior in Iraqi Textile Industry

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Abstract

This study aims investigating the theory of knowledge based view (KBV) how organizational factors (organizational culture, organizational trust and incentives) affect knowledge sharing behavior in the textile industry in Iraq. Based on KBV, the study employed quantitative approach in analyzing the hypotheses using Pearson Correlation and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The study proposes that there are positive effects of organizational factors in the context of knowledge sharing. A total of 399 questionnaires were distributed among the managers in the Iraqi textile industry. The response rate was about 91% corresponding to 361. The findings show that knowledge sharing behaviors in Iraqi textile industry are positively affected by organizational culture, organizational trust and incentives. Therefore, the result suggests that within public sector organizations such as the Iraqi textile manufactories, can affect knowledge sharing behavior. The study empirically contributes considerable theoretically on knowledge sharing in the public sector, especially in developing countries like Iraq.

Key Words: *Organizational Culture, Organizational Trust, Incentives, and Knowledge Sharing Behavior.*

Introduction

Knowledge is posited as the fundamental determining factor of sustainable organizational growth and competitive advantage in knowledge-based theory of the firm. It is the individuals who primarily own knowledge. This renders the organizational processes unable to achieve it for knowledge sharing (KS) and so the individual knowledge perishes in the organization (Bennet & Bennet, 2003). Thus for good results, creation, harvesting and sustaining organizational procedures for (KS) are necessary. The investigation of knowledge sharing as an organizational control process is encouraged by the growing recognition of the dependence on intangible assets (Witherspoon, Bergner, Cockrell & Stone, 2013). Owing to this, knowledge sharing becomes critical to an organization's success. So, this explicates the antecedents of organizational knowledge sharing impacts which are required for organizational success in addition to the design of managerial control systems.

Leveraging knowledge is possible only when knowledge sharing is done on inter-personal levels (Amayah, 2013). This is for knowledge is created by individuals. It thus becomes a challenge for the contemporary organizations to motivate their individuals with success regarding sharing their knowledge with other team

members and also in cross-organizational units (Choi, Kang, & Lee, 2008; Hansen & Avital, 2005). The benefits of knowledge sharing include increased personal capabilities, greater work efficiency, improved decision making, and etcetera (Fong & Chu, 2006). This aims at meeting the essentials of “innovation, improved business performance and client satisfaction” (Zhang & Fai Ng, 2012, p. 1327).

It is note-worthy that significant research has been done on factors influencing knowledge sharing in organizations though most of it has been conducted in private sector organizations (e.g. Hara & Hew, 2007; Li, Zhu, & Luo, 2010) or among students (e.g. Kwok & Gao, 2005). There are only a few studies concentrating on knowledge sharing in the public sector (Sandhu, Jain, & Ahmad, 2011; Yusof, Bakhari, Kamsuriah, & Yusof, 2012). In the case of Iraq, the country is under the redeveloping stage. It has encountered many crises and hard conditions, such as the first and second Gulf War, economic sanction and lastly the U.S. occupation from 2003 to 2011. These conditions have considerably contributed to the collapse of the infrastructure in various sectors, such as industry, education, electricity (UNESCO, 2004; Al-Hamdani, 2006), in the textile industry, which is comprised of 6 government-owned manufacturers running 20 textile factories. Due to an underdeveloped knowledge sharing mechanism and dearth of infrastructure, there is no wide-spread knowledge among Iraqi public sector organizations. It thus becomes difficult to attain information and knowledge for those who seek it. The most effective solution is therefore to encourage knowledge sharing throughout the organization by establishing appropriate infrastructure. Mutual trust and interaction among employees can also be enhanced through a well-established organizational culture which in return promotes knowledge sharing (Mohammed, 2006; Marane, 2012). Unfortunately, the present-day textile industry does not promote any such trends (Mohammed, 2006).

Therefore, this study aims investigating the theory of knowledge based view (KBV) how organizational factors (organizational culture, organizational trust and incentives) affect knowledge sharing behavior in the textile industry in Iraq. This explains why there is growing interest in further research on knowledge sharing in the public sector such as Iraqi textile industry which consists of 20 public textile factories.

Literature Review

According to Lee and Yu (2011), knowledge sharing enables individuals to transfer knowledge to others and this subsequently benefits an entire organization. Nevertheless, it is difficult to understand the phenomenon of knowledge sharing within an organization. This owes to the intricacies that characterize the interaction between individuals and organizations (Mohamed & Egbu, 2010). Ipe (2003) is of the view that it is the relationship amongst individuals and the organizational culture that feature the phenomenon of knowledge sharing thus making it cumbersome. Certainly, the phenomenon is at the mercy of individuals' willingness to share and integrate their knowledge. Knowledge sharing entails decision making. It may be taken as an exchange of employees' knowledge, skills and compatibility of experiences among an entire department or within attaining organizational objects. This reveals great standards on the part of an organization with a social interactional culture (Danish, Munir, & Butt, 2012). Dyer and Nobeoka (2000), on the other hand, established that knowledge amounts to activities in which communities of people work together. It adds to facilitating the exchange of their knowledge, enhancement of organizational learning capacity, and increase in their ability to achieve individual and organizational goals. To Wang and Noe (2010), knowledge sharing is about the availability of task information and know-how on assisting and collaborating with others in terms of problem solving, development of ideas and implementation of policies and procedures.

Knowledge sharing has been defined by Sohail and Daud (2009) as exchanging experience, thoughts or understanding on anything (in general) with an expectation to gain more insights and understanding about something and events for temporary curiosity. King (2006, p. 498) suggest that knowledge sharing is “the exchange of knowledge between and among individuals, and within and among teams, organizational units, and organizations”. Ipe (2003) asserts that one of several influencing factors in terms of knowledge sharing is organizational culture. Employees are encouraged by organizations to both share and implement

knowledge in the performance of important tasks for obtaining definite competitive edge (Grant, 1996; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Lack of incentives has additionally been indicated as a major barrier to knowledge sharing across the cultures (Yao, Kam & Chan, 2007). Recognitions and rewards, as incentives, act as interventions for facilitating knowledge sharing thus giving birth to a supportive culture. It has been discovered by Holste and Fields (2010) that the willingness of employees to share tacit knowledge is largely influenced by affect-based trust. Meanwhile, a greater role is played by cognition-based trust in employees' inclination of using tacit knowledge. In communication, Sharratt and Usoro (2003, p.190), trust is an important facilitator in communication since it keeps our mind open to all evidence, and also secures communication, and dialogue.

Knowledge Sharing In Public Sector Organizations

Liebowitz and Chen (2003) realize the difficulty of knowledge sharing in public sector since knowledge is believed to be closely linked to power and material prosperity. There are several explanations why people believe in hoarding knowledge in multi-dimensional contexts. Riege (2005) proposed 36 types of knowledge sharing barriers, and categorized them into three groups: a) potential individual barriers such as differences in experience, adverse communication skills, dearth of trust among people, absence of trust in the accuracy and credibility of knowledge, and difference in culture; b) potential organizational barriers such as absence of leadership, lack of support from corporate culture, little knowledge retention priority, and large volume of business; and c) potential technology barriers, such as lack of integration of IT systems, lack of compatibility, hesitation in the usage of IT systems, and lack of communicating advantages of new systems. Some more factors affecting knowledge sharing are shown by a number of other studies. To illustrate, Seba, Rowley, and Lambert (2012) observed that knowledge sharing in Dubai police force is impeded by organizational structure, leadership, time allocation. It was found by Lin (2007) in the course of a study of 50 private organizations that there is a significant effect of motivational factors like reciprocal benefits, knowledge self-efficacy, and enjoyment in assisting others on employee knowledge sharing attitudes and intentions. Nevertheless, it is the private sector where most of the studies on knowledge sharing are done.

Organizational Culture

Organizational culture can be defined as "a complex set of values, beliefs, assumptions, and symbols" (Wang, Su & Yang, 2011, p.64), through which the behaviors of organizational members are guided. Culture alludes to the collective programming of the mind that keeps distinction among groups of humans (Hofstede, 2001, p. 260) through norms and shared values that give rise to a style of living of the specific group (Hassandoust, Logeswaran, & Farzaneh Kazerouni, 2011). It is the beliefs, meanings and values shared by individuals in an organization that constitute its culture (Hodges & Hernandez, 1999). Haque and Anwar (2012) are of the view that the context of organizational cultural entailed shared values, assumptions, thoughts, beliefs and codes of conduct. Organizational culture is the shared value about human relationships within in an organization (Hassandoust et al, 2011). Tseng (2010) argued that the day-to-day working relationships of the employees of an organization guiding them on how to interact and behave within the organization is what we know as organizational culture. Moreover, it also throws light on the building and maintenance of the organizational hierarchy. It is further established that the staff is encouraged towards creation, innovation, entrepreneurship and enhanced performance if the organizational culture is improved and empowered (Mobarakeha, 2011). Haque and Anwar (2012) assert that there is a significantly positive effect of organizational culture on both knowledge creation and its sharing.

Martinsons and Davison (2007) hold the view that with regards to internal information, there are different methods with which organizational culture deals with. Zheng, Yang and McLean (2010) constructed in another study identified three dimensions of organizational culture leading to organizational effectiveness: adaptability, consistency, and sharing the mission. Adaptability alludes to the degree of ability on the part of an organization to alter behaviors, structures, and systems for the purpose of surviving and adapting to

environmental changes. For consistency, it refers to the extent at which the members of an organization conform to the expectations, beliefs and values. Participation means the participation of employees in decision-making processes of significance in the context of organization's overall. Kim and Lee (2005) established that employees' knowledge-sharing attitudes and behaviors are affected by organizational culture. This may be extended to the role played by managers in the creation of environment of an organization which provides opportunities of knowledge sharing for the employees and directors of each department (Rivera-Vazquez, Ortiz-Fournier & Flores, 2009). Ruggles (1998) studied 431 organizations in the U.S. and European discovering that the factors that significantly impede the process of knowledge sharing include culture (54%) and incentives (19%). It is thus posited that:

H1: Organizational culture will have a significant positive effect on knowledge sharing.

Organizational Trust

Lau (2010) and Maguire and Phillips (2008) put forth that for superior individual performance, trust stands as a key element. It acts as the most effective mechanism of governance and a critical factor in the context of dynamic success in today's business environment of ultimate competition. Trust is also recognized as a crucial element in the growth of business performance besides its being a source of sustainable competitive advantage (Barney & Hansen, 1994). Vanhala and Ahteela (2011) are of the view that these are acts, especially those pertaining to trustworthy behaviors that give birth to trust within an organization. Through the virtue of knowledge sharing, the trust that develops amongst co-workers is what stands significant in the achievement of tasks. (Al-Alawi, Al-Marzooqi, & Mohammed, 2007).

Abrams Cross, Lesser and Levin (2003) believe that in terms of promoting knowledge sharing, the trust of an organization plays an important role. Knowledge sharing through commitment of employees is improved when there exists mutual trust between employees and organization employees (Mcevily, Das & McCabe, 2000). The employees, on account of good level of trust amongst each other, feel obliged to share their experiences, something bound to lead to increased (Yang, Moon & Rowley, 2009). To Kankanhalli, Tan and Wei (2005) however, trust is a phenomenon which is both problematic and complex since its antecedents and outcomes are intricate to define. To illustrate, employees more readily use knowledge management systems (KMS) for sharing knowledge with an increase in trust level. This is how they facilitate the creation of an environment which is supportive thus adding to the exchange of knowledge (Adler, 2001). People are more inclined to listen to each other and absorb the knowledge imparted to them if there exists trust among (Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, 1995; Tsai & Ghoshal, 1998).

In the context of knowledge sharing, there are several factors that stand significant. Trust among employees is nevertheless the most important among all (Ardichivili, Page & Wentling, 2003). This is for the phenomenon primarily calls for interaction which in return demands trust in the absence of which it is not possible to share and exchange (Bartol & Srivastava, 2002). Akgun, Keskin, and Gungel (2007) asserted that trust is what fundamentally initiates knowledge sharing. Additionally, it has been affirmed by research in sociology that trust entails both an individuals' beliefs in those around him, as well as their consent and willingness to use their obtained knowledge for taking actions for future outcomes. One may thus establish that:

H2: Organizational trust will have a significant positive effect on knowledge sharing.

Incentives

For the successful accomplishment of a task or goal, incentives act as stimuli (Lin, 2007). In order to make individuals perform desired tasks, organizational incentives are considered useful (Bartol & Locke, 2000). Some of the examples may be monetary incentives such as increased salary and bonuses to non-monetary incentives such as promotion, recognition, and acknowledgement from colleagues, improved reputation,

performance feedback, possibilities of professional or personal development and job security (Hall, 2001). The studies conducted earlier testify that employees feel encouraged to share knowledge on account of real or perceived incentives (Al-Alawi et al., 2007; Gupta & Govindarajan, 2000; Ipe, 2003; Lin, 2007). Bartol and Srivastava (2002) suggest that knowledge sharing is encouraged by monetary incentives. This is achieved through individual contribution to database, inter and intra-team interactions, and exchange of information across work units. To Bartol and Srivastava (2002) however, intangible incentives like recognitions must be there to reward knowledge sharing through informal interactions.

Wolfe and Loraas (2008) discovered that individuals consider the incentives for knowledge sharing sufficient only if these address individuals' self-determined incentive sufficiency. It is thus suggested that the incentives should be designed keeping in view the need of monitoring individuals' perceived incentive sufficiency. This is likely to encourage knowledge sharing regardless of its type (e.g. monetary or nonmonetary). It has been suggested by some previous studies that there is a high probability of knowledge sharing when the incentives received by individuals exceed their perceived costs (see Bock, Zmud, Kim, & Lee, 2005). Recently, there is a range of incentives proposed by scholars which drives individual knowledge creation behaviors (Gottschalg & Zollo, 2007; Nickerson & Zenger, 2008). Evidently, people are motivated to perform when given (Ho & Kuo, 2013). Liu (2012) are of the view that mainly, knowledge-based (value-creation perspective) and incentives-based (value-appropriation perspective) perspectives complement each other and thus justify individual knowledge creation behaviors. It is thus posited that:

H3: Incentives will have a significant positive effect on knowledge sharing.

Research Framework

Ryan, Windsor, Ibragimova, and Prybutok (2010) established knowledge sharing is primordial to knowledge-based theory. This is for a firm primarily proclaims transference and integration of multiple knowledge paths besides the application of existing knowledge to the tasks. With reference to the knowledge-based view (KBV), there has been considerable attention given to incentives in the realization of innovation-related activities; effort and learning here enjoy a high degree of complementarity (Bridoux, Coeurderoy & Durand, 2011; Coff, 2003; Kapoor & Lim, 2007; Liu, 2012). Managers generally come across a public dilemma when it comes to fostering knowledge creation behavior's among employees. There is conflict between the maximization of individual employees' material payoffs and the attainment creation of knowledge for the firm as its collective goal. There are multiple entities incorporating and implementing knowledge theory. These include organizational culture and identity, policies, routines, documents, systems, and employees (Grant, 1996). It is argued by knowledge-based view that knowledge functions as the basis of a firm's competitive advantage, and resultantly, the primary driver of a firm's value (Shao, Feng & Liu, 2012). Focusing on the intangible resources owned by a firm, KBV suggests that such resources should be regularly renewed, reconfigured and redeployed for sustaining the competitive advantage (Belkahl & Triki, 2011). Based on the above literature, the following research model was developed with three hypotheses:

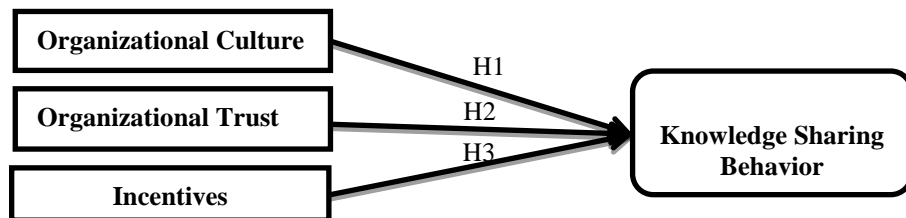


Figure 1: Proposed Research Hypotheses

Methodology

Population and Sample

A total of 399 questionnaires were distributed personally to participants (middle managers) within twenty factories of public sector in the Iraqi textile industries. The response rate was about 91% corresponding to 361. Research was done by the questionnaire method among the middle managers of Iraqi textile industry. There was an adaptation of survey items from the existing instruments that had been used in the past research. The following four sections consisted of a 5-point Likert-type agreement scale with 1 being “Strongly disagree” and 5 being “strongly agree”.

For measuring responses, there were 38 items on a five- point Likert scale were used. The items of the organizational adapted from (Gold, Malhotra, & Segars, 2001), the items of incentives measurement adapted from (Cho, 2011). This study measures organizational trust adapted from (Seba, Rowley & Lambert, 2012; Ho, Kuo & Lin, 2012; Casimir, Lee & Loon, 2012).

Findings

Measurement Model

Tests for Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

The CFA was conducted on the using four factors indices Normed Chi-Square and Root mean squer error of approximation (RMSEA) are to be less than 5 and .080 respectively, while incremental fit index (CFI) values and absolute fit index (GFI) are to be above .90 (Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson, 2010). The process of evaluating the measurement model resulted in deleting terms based on the factor loadings of less than .40 (Field, 2009). Based on the CFA tests, all four dimensions had adequate model-to-data fit: normed Relative Chi-square (χ^2/df) below 5; CFI value above .93; and RMSEA value less than .080. This test also evaluated the reliability and construct validity. Cronbach’s Alpha measures the reliability coefficient, which indicates the consistency of the entire scale (Hair, *et al.*, 2010), or the overall reliability of the questionnaire (Field, 2009). The results from this study showed all four dimensions had reliability values above .70 which indicated that the questionnaire was reliable and consistent (see Table 3 below). According to Hair *et al.* (2010), a standardized factor loading should be .40 or higher, ideally .70 or higher, and provides strong evidence of convergent validity. In this study, all the items had significant factor loadings, most of them greater than 0.60, which indicates adequate convergent validity.

It is demonstrated by the result from the confirmatory factor analysis that adequate measurement models are obtained from all the scales used in this study. This provides evidence for the construct validity of the measures. The fit indices of the measurement models are given in Table 1 while Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of the constructs.

Table 1. Evaluation of Measurement Models

Variables	df	P	CFI	GFI	CMIN/df	RMSEA
Organizational Culture (OC)	26	.001	.968	.964	2.155	.057
Organizational Trust (OT)	17	.000	.978	.967	2.721	.07
Incentives (IN)	4	.27	.999	.994	1.29	.03
Knowledge Sharing (KS)	17	.001	.967	.973	2.458	.065
Overall Measure Model	163	.000	.928	.904	2.312	.061

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics (N=361)

Variables	Std. Deviation	OC	OT	IN	KS	Composite Reliability	AVE
OC	5.74	1				.78	.69
OT	7.06	.475**	1			.89	.78
IN	4.2	.510**	.310**	1		.93	.87
KS	5.65	.602**	.647**	.545**	1	.88	.77

** . Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Test for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

Structural equation modeling (SEM) is used to test the causal effect among the main constructs of a hypothesized model (Kline, 2011). For testing the hypothesis that organizational trust, organizational culture, and incentives are positively related to knowledge sharing behaviour, we employed SEM with maximum likelihood estimation. Figure 2 shows sstandardized path coefficients from the analysis. On the basis of results in Table 3, organizational trust, organizational culture, and incentives cast an impact in the knowledge sharing behavior. The model had an adequate fit to the data: chi square per degree of freedom = 2.240, less than 3; CFI = .94, greater than .90; p = .000, less than p ≥ .001; and RMSEA = .060, less than 0.080 (Hair et al., 2010). On the basis of results in Table 3, organizational trust, organizational culture, and incentives cast an impact in the knowledge sharing behavior; indicate that organizational trust (p≤.001). Important implications can be drawn from the research results in the context of public sector organizations such as the Iraqi textile factories for the promotion of knowledge sharing behavior. It is required that a certain organizational culture be fostered and incentives given to employees for the exertion of maximal effort. This will facilitate them in handling situations that are unfamiliar besides expressing their opinions.

Table 3: Hypothesised Path Coefficients

Path	Standard Path Coefficients (β)	CR	P-value (sig)	Goodness-of-fit	Remarks
OT→KS	.468	6.606	***	p =.000 DF= 128	Supported
OC→KS	.264	3.154	.002	CFI = .936	Supported
IN→KS	.163	2.481	.013	GFI = .918 CMIN/df = 2.240 x ² = 286.673 RMSEA=.060	Supported

β: Standardized Regression Weights; CR.: Critical Ratio *: p ≤ .05, ***: p ≤ .001.

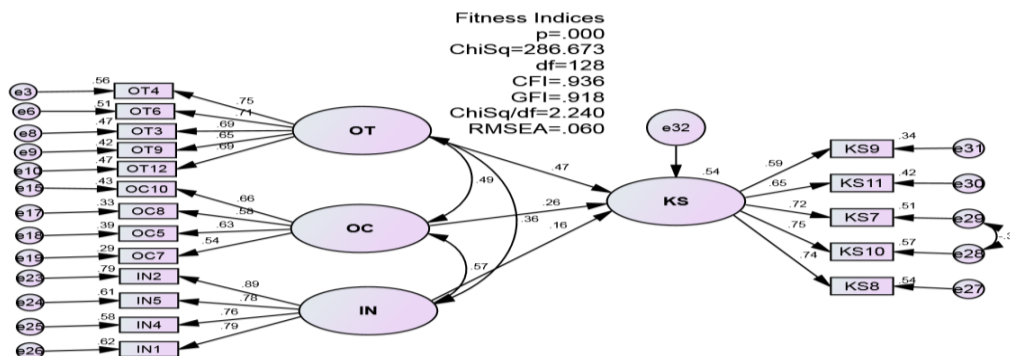


Figure 2: Structural equation modeling of assessing impacts of organizational factors on knowledge sharing behavior

Discussion and Conclusion

This study examines knowledge-sharing behavior in Iraqi public sector organizations based on theory of knowledge-based view (KBV). The results show that significant organizational factors (OC, OT, IN) that affect the attitude of managers towards knowledge sharing. The study gives out evidence for the positive impact that exists between organizational factors and behavior pertaining to knowledge sharing in the textile industry. Out of these results, one draws certain managerial implications for middle management regarding the promotion of knowledge sharing in Iraqi public sector. There should be open support from the side of the management in this connection. They should make sure that their employees realize the importance of the issue of knowledge sharing.

More importantly, they should be compelled to take part in on-the-job training and learning which also entails transference and capturing of knowledge. With respect to human skills, there must be an emphasis by the managers on employees' understanding of their own and that of others job. They must focus on the development of employees' expertise which includes healthy interaction among the organizational members. All these factors in combination with the issues related to trust among employees helps firms in developing a strong organizational factor.

Some implications directing to future endeavors in this connection can be drawn from the study. Within an acceptable level of reliability and validity, numerous new scales have been developed. These have not been examined in other contexts. For the application of these scales, it is suggested that researchers should validate and refine these. The study however looks into only some of the potentially influential factors of behavior towards knowledge sharing. Research model with additional factors may be brought to light in future studies. This study only considers organizational trust, organizational culture, and incentives toward knowledge sharing behavior. With reference to KBV, organizational trust, organizational culture, and incentives are influenced by subjective norm knowledge sharing behavior. Lastly, response bias features the data that is self-reported. A research model with subjective norm and normative beliefs can be incorporated in future studies which may potentially add to the model's explanatory power. Moreover, only employees of Iraqi textile industry are focused in this research. The results therefore lack universality on account of varying construction practices and cultural practices. Therefore, other domains too should be considered. In conclusion, this study shows organization factors such as (OC, OT, IN) play an important role in knowledge sharing behavior in Iraqi public sector organizations.

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