How cultural impact on knowledge sharing contributes to organizational performance: Using the fsQCA approach

Oluwafemi Oyemomi⁎, Shaofeng Liu, Irina Neaga, Huilan Chen, Franklin Nakpodia

A R T I C L E   I N F O

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A B S T R A C T

Knowledge sharing is crucial for attaining a competitive edge in organizations. Knowledge and performance motivate organizations to launch new innovative products and services to sustain market advantages among competitors. Many factors have been shown to be determinants for supporting organizational performance growth, one of which is organizational culture. The objective of this paper is to analyze the organizational culture that supports knowledge sharing activities for organizational performance, innovation and strategy.

This paper uses a sample of 107 cases to examine the empirical data. The results demonstrate the role of organizational culture with an innovative strategy in knowledge sharing, which directly contributes to the improvement of organizational performance. Using fsQCA, this paper relates the impact of organizational culture on the business activities within an organization.

The main findings of this paper analyze and test the relation between organizational culture and knowledge sharing components for organizational strategies.

1. Introduction

Several major industrial reviews (Arpaci, 2017; Hashemi & Kohestani, 2016; Tsai, 2016) have identified that organizations need to improve their efficiency. A conducive, progressive and enduring culture is believed to be a foundation for efficiency (Chen, 2010; Flanagan, 2010). Therefore, developing organizational culture serves several important purposes. First, it conveys a sense of identity for organization members. Second, it facilitates the generation of commitment (Nelson, 2011). Third, culture enhances the stability of the organization (Liu, Moizer, Megicks, Kasturiratne, & Jayawickrama, 2014). Fourth, culture serves as a sense-making device that can guide and shape behavior (Wang & Rafiq, 2014).

This study attempts to identify the role of organizational culture and to expand knowledge sharing research through comparative analysis of these relationships to innovative strategy and organizational performance. This study emphasizes the significance of the inter-relationships of the components that support performance, and it investigates the indirect impact of organizational culture on organizational performance based on prior studies (Akgun, Keskin, & Byrne, 2009; Allen, Smith, Mael, O'Shea, & Eby, 2009; Child, 1974; Heisler, 1974; Herold, 1972; Pot & Koningsveld, 2009; Yazici, 2009). In Section 2, this paper reviews the related literature. Sections 3 and 4 present the conceptual model and empirical findings, respectively. Section 5 provides a discussion. Section 6 concludes and presents directions for future research.

2. Theoretical background

Based on past studies, factors influencing performance in an organization determine how successfully the organization thrives in terms of competition. (Chatzoglou & Soteriou, 1999; Collinson, 1999; DiBella, Nevis, & Gould, 1996; Ma, Du, Ma, & Zhang, 2009; Nor, Selamat, Abdullah, & Murad, 2009; Oyemomi, Liu, Neaga, & Alkhuraji, 2016; Priem, 1994; Ren, 2009; Wong & Davis, 2009). Factors such as leadership style, culture, structure and learning are significant to how management of resources within the organization sustains a competitive edge in an innovative market.

2.1. Organizational culture

One of the early influential studies on organizational culture was on

⁎ Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: oluwafemi.oyemomi@northumbria.ac.uk (O. Oyemomi), shaofeng.liu@plymouth.ac.uk (S. Liu), irina.neaga@sm.uwtsd.ac.uk (I. Neaga), huilan.chen@plymouth.ac.uk (H. Chen), f.nakpodia@northumbria.ac.uk (F. Nakpodia).

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its definition and implications for managers. Nelson (2011); Peterson (1982); Rasmussen and Hall (2016) advocated the organizational culture model and discuss culture as a pattern of basic assumptions invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration. Organizational culture thus serves the leader of an organization through nurturing the value system to serve incoming members. According to Ruppel and Harrington (2001), a strong culture is one where the implicit and explicit assumptions are in harmony.

Levels of culture can be analyzed by their degree of visibility to observers (Palermo, 2011). Artifacts are at the base level and include all the phenomena that one sees, hears and feels when one encounters a new group with an unfamiliar culture. Nonetheless, these artifacts reflect the beliefs and values shared by members of an organization. The innermost level of culture is the basic assumptions that members of an organization ascribe to when adapting to an environment. It represents a level of concordance in the basic assumptions that are believed to be non-confrontable and non-debatable.

Staadt (2015) found that organizational culture is the most prominent enabler in enhancing knowledge sharing in transnational projects. Atkins and Turner (2006) advocated that management of uncertainty is a necessary condition for effective project management. In this regard, it is suggested that organizations pay attention to their culture and develop appropriate infrastructure and capabilities to manage uncertainties. Langerak, Hultink, and Robben (2004) highlight the danger of cultural mismatch when the business model of an organization changes. Likewise, similar project management issues will arise when a project manager needs to manage a group of organizations displaying different cultural characteristics (Shockley-Zalabak & Morley, 1989). These studies also raise the need to consider contextual factors in organizational culture studies. Two interesting study gaps can be noted. First, the concept of organizational culture in project management has only been explored under specific contexts.

To accomplish this objective (Blair, 1997), a literature review was performed to long-list artifacts that identify organizational culture in organizations. The ranking of the relative importance of organizational culture factors were then assessed. Referring to the significance rankings, management will have a better understanding about the factors shaping the contracting organizations’ behavior. Efforts to foster an organizational culture conducive to the achievement of project goals can be more focused by setting a target and then directing resources and establishing benchmarks for the respective artifacts. In other words, monitoring the wellbeing of the artifacts will inform the status of organizational culture as well as management action.

2.2. Knowledge sharing components

Knowledge sharing can be achieved through people and technology once they are created, identified or captured; the next stage is to circulate knowledge around the organization (Lee, Liu, & Wu, 2011); Zhou and Li (2012) highlight that this is perhaps the single most important knowledge management practice because it embodies all the opportunities and challenges associated with managing intangible, invisible assets. While technology may help in the capture and distribution of knowledge, emphasis should be placed on the organization. Koh and Kim (2004) suggest that for an organization to succeed in knowledge management, it is imperative for it to have a supportive corporate environment, which is defined by Crane (2012) as the norms and values that bind an organization together. With regard to knowledge, Bandyopadhyay and Pathak (2007) propose that organizations create and share knowledge to remain competitive.

Despite the criticism of the SECI model (socialization, externalization, combination, internalization), it has a strong theoretical basis to be used in national, organizational, professional, and personal cultural levels. It has the potential to cover both knowledge creation and transfer at individual, group, and organizational levels. The culture and its impact on knowledge creation and the use of the SECI model will enhance the insights of organizations into the knowledge creation and processes involved in it (Ho, Hsu, & Oh, 2009). The use of the SECI model for measuring knowledge creation and sharing in different knowledge intensive firms in the USA and Spain is widely acknowledged. The SECI model in multinational projects is used to measure knowledge capture, sharing and value creation, while investigating its role in the IT sector.

In terms of the universal applicability of the SECI model in different cultural contexts, the applicability of this model for measuring knowledge creation in banks may be questionable (Oyemomi et al., 2016). Therefore, to determine

1. whether the SECI knowledge conversion process is supported within banks,
2. whether organizational culture in banks has any relationship with the knowledge creation process,
3. whether senior management is clear about knowledge management implementation in banks, and
4. whether the present banking knowledge management system facilitates knowledge dissemination and the smooth processing of information accessibility across the branches,

this study opted for the SECI model for knowledge creation in the context of organizational culture.

2.3. Organizational performance

Different philosophies about organizational performance (Reschka, Bagschik, Ulbrich, Nolte, & Maurer, 2015) exist. The ability of an organization to achieve set objectives of retaining profits, having a competitive edge, increasing market share, and maintaining long-term survival depends on using applicable organizational strategies and action plans. This study considers organizational performance as a measurement of productivity by considering the knowledge contributions of an organization’s employees. Many studies discuss the search for organizational peak performance (Combs & Ketchen, 1999; Vandenbergh, 1999; Zhao, Chen, & Xiong, 2016) as the ultimate goal of the organization. Therefore, organizations covering different domains constantly compete to improve these performances by developing an edge that differentiates each organization from competitors.

Organizations employ internal measuring criteria, that is, key performance indicators, as performance measurement units. Organizational investment in performance measurement systems is very important for performance evaluation, which directly influences the manner of assessing the level of achievement of performance objectives and the review of strategic plans. Researchers mostly evaluate organizational performance using broad categories known as performance elements, which is a system that receives inputs and adds value. These elements are effectiveness, efficiency, quality, profitability, quality of innovation, and productivity (Chen, Cook, Li, & Zhu, 2009). High-performing organizations actively and regularly assess individual performance and measure progress against established target values using these elements. These elements provide a mechanism for organizations to assess unit financial and nonfinancial performances. High-performing organizations not only aim to sustain a predefined level of performance but also constantly strive to optimize organizational performance by improving performance elements.

3. Conceptual model

In the knowledge creation theory, organizational culture as an antecedent is not assumed, although it is generally claimed that culture is a function of knowledge creation. Therefore, to assume that culture can be a primary antecedent of knowledge creation, this study needs to look at the nature of both culture and the knowledge creation process.
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