KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND SOCIAL CAPITAL AT ISLAMIC AZAD UNIVERSITY
CASE STUDY: GERMI BRANCH

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study is surveying of knowledge management on social capital of employees at Islamic Azad University. Data has collected from 121 employees of IAU in Germi city of Iran by two researcher-made questionnaires with study of variables and all the reliability and validity of measures has examined. In order to analyze the data resulted from collected questionnaires deductive and descriptive statistical methods are used, and to display some statistical data we used column diagram and in deductive level to test the hypothesis of the research we used T-test has performed to compare means of the constructs between variables and Pearson correlation coefficients. The results provide some evidences to support links between knowledge management and social capital. Furthermore, it shows employee, who have higher knowledge management dimensions in organization, probably have more social capital dimensions than the others. Findings show that, that there is a positive relationship between knowledge management and social capital of Islamic Azad University in Germi Branch.

Key words: Knowledge Management, Social Capital, Islamic Azad University

1- INTRODUCTION

Since the creation, human being has always tried, having time and place limits, to make utmost use of accessible resources. In no time or under no circumstances, have there been unlimited facilities available. The world is experiencing an era which has been termed the “knowledge age” or the “knowledge economy”. In this new context, knowledge is the primary commodity, and knowledge flows are regarded as the most important factors in the economy [1]. Knowledge Management as the word implies, the ability to manage "knowledge". Knowledge is the full utilization of information and data, coupled with the potential of people’s skills, competencies, ideas, intuitions, commitments and motivations. Knowledge management is an audit of "intellectual assets" that highlights unique sources, critical functions and potential bottlenecks which hinder knowledge flows to the point of use. It protects intellectual assets from decay, seeks opportunities to enhance decisions, services and products through adding intelligence, increasing value and providing flexibility. Both theoreticians and practitioners of management are on the lookout for answers to perennial questions of how to determine factors which affect effectiveness of business organizations. In that quest so called ‘soft aspects of management,’
such as organizational culture, knowledge management, social capital and productivity, are increasingly credited for their role in the way business is done [2].

The concepts of knowledge management and social capital are used here to describe how organizations use and develop their knowledge and human capital. We expect that the organizational processes behind these concepts are strongly connected to the dynamic capabilities of the organization. The study aims to understand how knowledge management is related to social capital at Islamic Azad University. The research questions are:

- What is the knowledge management, for knowledge at Islamic Azad University?
- What are the connections between knowledge management and social capital and the dimensions of knowledge management and social capital?

This paper presents a theoretical framework on the relationship between knowledge management, social capital at Islamic Azad University Pars Abad Branch. Therefore, the focus of this study is Surveying of Knowledge Management on Social Capital of Employees at Islamic Azad University Pars Abad Branch.

2- LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1- Knowledge Management

Karl Wiig (1996) defines knowledge as “the insights, understandings, and practical know-how that we all possess – is the fundamental resource that allows us to function intelligently.” There are two types of knowledge: tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge, as supported by Duffy (1999), Nonaka (1998), Tiwana (2000), Zack (1999b) [1]. Early research suggested that a successful KM effort needs to convert internalized tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge in order to share it, but the same effort must also permit individuals to internalize and make personally meaningful any codified knowledge retrieved from the KM effort. Subsequent research into KM suggested that a distinction between tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge represented an oversimplification and that the notion of explicit knowledge is self-contradictory. Specifically, for knowledge to be made explicit, it must be translated into information (i.e., symbols outside of our heads) [3]. Later on, Ikujiro Nonaka proposed a model (SECI for Socialization, Externalization, Combination, Internalization) which considers a spiraling knowledge process interaction between explicit knowledge and tacit knowledge [4]. In this model, knowledge follows a cycle in which implicit knowledge is 'extracted' to become explicit knowledge, and explicit knowledge is 're-internalized' into implicit knowledge. More recently, together with Georg von Krogh, Nonaka returned to his earlier work in an attempt to move the debate about knowledge conversion forwards [5].

Knowledge Management (KM) owes much to disciplines such as philosophy, psychology, social sciences, management sciences, economics and computing. Indeed, researchers rely on the variety disciplines to advance concepts and models for KM, while practitioners use them to progress methods for developing Knowledge Management Systems (KMS). However, neither researchers nor practitioners seem to look beyond their influences to others relevant to KM and KMS, and indeed often full proposed by fellow KM scholars. As a result, a wide variety of ideas – philosophies, theories, concepts, models etc. – are used to conceptualize KM. A multitude of KM models with a wide range of approaches are apparent in the literature and praxis. Recently, there have been different attempts to classify them. Whereas some scholars e.g. Earl (2001); Kakabadse et al. (2003), provide a classification of KM models into different schools and
approaches according to their ‘orientation’, others e.g. Gebert et al. (2003); Herder et al.(2003) perceive different dichotomies in KM models [6].

According to Bhatt (2001) KM is a process of knowledge creation, validation, presentation, distribution and application (Bhatt, 2001). KM embodies organizational processes that seek synergetic combination of data and information processing capacity of information technologies, and the creative and innovative capacity of human beings. Malhotra (2000) also mentions that KM requires re-consideration of everything in the organization and caters to the critical issues of organizational adaptation, survival and competence in the face of increasing discontinuous environmental change [7].

2.1.1- Knowledge Management of the People

At the Knowledge Management of the People level, the focus is on managing people, their behavior, their expectations, and their potential to contribute to the success of the knowledge management effort. There should also be a concerted effort to encourage employees to share and use knowledge in the workplace, and to reward people who do so. The framework proposes the following activities to achieve this:

1. Manage people as individuals
2. Encourage Sharing and Use of Knowledge
3. Encourage Individual Learning and Innovative Thinking
4. Implement reward plans and incentives to promote above [6].

2.2- Social Capital

The first thing of importance in a theory capable of informing practice would be a clear definition and understanding of the subject of the theory. Put differently, being able to formulate clearly and consistently what one is speaking about is important. However, over the last 10 years reviewers of social capital research and theories have observed no emerging agreement on a precise definition of social capital [8];[9];[10]. Mondak even saw a risk of the concept becoming muddled and deprived of any distinct meaning [11].

Social capital theory and research point clearly to the importance of networks, relationships, trust, norms and identity as potential explananda for the creation and sharing of knowledge. Nahapiet and Ghoshal’s (1998) paper theorizes how, and in which ways, social capital is important. However, while the demonstration of the importance of social capital is essential, it may not be sufficient to meet the criterion of a good theory in Lewin’s terms. Gaining a more practical understanding of how the dimensions of social capital evolve and interact is of particular importance in this respect [10].

They identified three such clusters of facets, which they call: the structural, the cognitive and the relational dimension of social capital. A further specification in terms of operationalization into facets is presented as follows:

- The structural dimension: Network ties, network configuration and appropriable organization,
- The cognitive dimension: Shared codes and language, shared narratives,
- The relational dimension: Trust, norms, obligations and identification [12].

3- RESEARCH OBJECTIVES
The Main purpose of this study is understand and determines the effect of Knowledge Management on Social Capital of Employees at Islamic Azad University Germi Branch.

To achieve the above objective we determine under Secondary objectives:
- Understanding and determine the effect of knowledge management on social capital at Islamic Azad University.
- Understanding and determine the effect of Knowledge validation on social capital at Islamic Azad University.
- Understanding and determine the effect of knowledge distribution on social capital at Islamic Azad University.
- Understanding and determine the effect of Knowledge Application on social capital at Islamic Azad University.
- Understanding and determine the effect of Knowledge creation on social capital at Islamic Azad University.
- Understanding and determine the effect of Knowledge presentation on social capital at Islamic Azad University.

4- RESEARCH HYPOTHESES
In this paper have one main hypothesis and nine secondary hypotheses. The statistical way of analysis of hypotheses is two ways, H₁ is acceptance of hypothesis and H₀ is rejecting of hypothesis. In other words, it means that H₁ has positive meaning and H₀ has negative meaning.

1- There is a relationship between knowledge management and social capital in 13region of Islamic Azad University
   1-1- There is a significant relationship between Knowledge validation and social capital in 13region of Islamic Azad University.
   1-2- There is a significant relationship between knowledge distribution and social capital in 13region of Islamic Azad University.
   1-3- There is a significant relationship between Knowledge presentation and social capital in 13region of Islamic Azad University.
   1-4- There is a significant relationship between Knowledge creation and social capital in 13region of Islamic Azad University.
   1-5- There is a significant relationship between Knowledge Application and social capital in 13region of Islamic Azad University.

5- METHODOLOGY
This study focuses on Knowledge Management and Social Capital of Iranian Islamic Azad University (IAU). Data has collected from 91 employees of IAU in Germi city by two researcher-made questionnaires with study of variables. Knowledge Management Questionnaire, a 15 item scale according to Bhatt (2000) theory, and Social Capital questionnaire, a 10 item according to Nahapiet and Ghoshal’s (1998) theory all the reliability and validity of measures
has examined. Questionnaires reliability was estimated by calculating Cronbach’s Alpha via SPSS software that is shown in the table 1.

Table 1. Results of questionnaires reliability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Cronbach's Alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge Management</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Capital</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to analyze the data resulted from collected questionnaires deductive and descriptive statistical methods are used, and to display some statistical data we used column diagram and in deductive level to test the hypothesis of the research we used T-test has performed to compare means of the constructs between variables and Pearson correlation coefficients. The analysis has performed with SPSS.

6- ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

6.1- Descriptive Analysis

Almost Eighty-five percent of the participants work full time. Seventy-nine percent are male and twenty one are female. Sixty-seven percent are married. The responder’s degree is 13 percent PHD, 17 percent MA, 44 percent BA, 15 percent DA, and 10 percent Under DA have degree. It means that the most of the employees have university degree. (Table 2)

Table 2- Responders degree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Valid</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.A</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>25.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.A</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>69.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.A</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>86.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 shows work experience of the responders. According to table 3, from the precedence point of view about 18 percent of responders have less than 2 years’ work experience, and 26 percent have between 3-5, 27 percent 6-9 and finally 8 percent have 10-13 years of experience. It shows that People with more experience are less than 9 years.

Table 3- Work Experience of the responders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Valid</th>
<th>Frequent</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;2</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>55.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4 reports descriptive statistics including means and standard deviation for samples.

Table 4: Means and standard deviations for variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge validation</td>
<td>6.12</td>
<td>0.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge distribution</td>
<td>5.26</td>
<td>0.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge presentation</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge creation</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>0.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge Application</td>
<td>5.92</td>
<td>0.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge management</td>
<td>5.79</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social capital</td>
<td>5.98</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.2- Hypothetical Analysis

Table 5, which present the correlations and t-test of each of the eleven items of first main hypothesis “There is a relationship between knowledge management and social capital in Islamic Azad University Germi Barnch. The results show that knowledge management and their dimensions are all significantly and highly related with social capital. Strong positive correlation was found between Knowledge validation and social capital ($r=0.492$ and $t=10.04$). Also was found Strong positive relationship between all dimensions of knowledge management and social capital.

Table 5- Pearson’s correlation coefficients and t-test of variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>dépendent Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Pearson Correlation</th>
<th>t-test</th>
<th>Level of sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge validation</td>
<td>social capital</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>0.492</td>
<td>10.04</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge distribution</td>
<td>social capital</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>0.358</td>
<td>6.81</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge presentation</td>
<td>social capital</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>8.45</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge creation</td>
<td>social capital</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>0.476</td>
<td>9.71</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge Application</td>
<td>social capital</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>0.428</td>
<td>8.42</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results provide some evidences to support links between knowledge management and social capital. Furthermore, it shows employee, who have higher knowledge management dimensions in organization, probably have more social capital than the others.

Findings show that, that there is a positive relationship between knowledge management and social capital of Iran’s Islamic Azad University in Germi branch.

**REFERENCE**


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