Chapter 8

Organizational Learning Through Knowledge Sharing in Virtual Communities Thru Learner Readiness and Their Social Capital

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ABSTRACT

Past scholars propose knowledge management (KM) frameworks, but few bare deployable KM strategies, particularly for the Gulf Corporation Council (GCC) public sector. The GCC invests heavily in the KM infrastructure for its healthcare, banking, education, and now in the Ministry of Interior (MoI). A literature review revealed the need to cognize the effect of employees learning readiness (LR) and social capital (SC) on knowledge sharing (KS) in virtual communities. This study assesses these three constructs in a proposed model and tests the model using an online survey distributed to 400 Kingdom of Bahrain’s (KoB)’s MoI employees. Multiple regression analysis revealed a fit proposed model of this study which articulates that organizational learning is possible thru VC KS when facilitated by LR and SC: equipping organizations to bank its social capital of employee resources in knowledge bases for future knowledge acquisition, and re-use. Theoretical and practical implications are also part of this chapter.

INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Scholars complain about lack of interaction since learners shy away from sharing knowledge. Though past research stressed on the fact that social capital (SC) and on Learner Readiness (LR) facilitate Knowledge Sharing Quality (KS), holistically integration of these two disciplines is scant in past research. This to so scholars can understand how employees’ SC of resources and their LR influences their KS behavior while participating in virtual communities (VCs). There is particularly the case for scant research in

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this area within the case of the Kingdom of Bahrain (KoB), a developing country. There seems a lack of organizational direction or strategy to support KS. The expatriate workforce that tends to form most of the expertise in professional jobs in the Gulf region is a challenge. As the threat of expatriate turnover can lead to the loss of knowledge, many of them believe that their knowledge is their power and prefer not to share such knowledge with others. Such behavior negatively affects KS. This study assessed whether employees’ KS behavior is valued throughout organizations, and if employees’ KS behavior drives decision making, productivity, and innovation. The findings of this research could be used to boost the current local researches and trigger an initiative for further and more comprehensive research in the future. In the KoB, it is a common belief that knowledge mainly exists at a formal organizational level and team levels, and that individual initiatives drive knowledge. The existence of SC in VCs is somewhat limited though a previous research topic, but not in the context of the Middle Eastern public sector. E.g., Chiu et al., 2006; Chang & Chuang, 2011).

The next section, Section 2, is a critique of the reviewed literature. Section 3 discusses how the designed and developed, online survey instrument reflecting a proposed model, depicted in Figure 1. This section elaborates on the research methodology followed by Section 4 debating on the performed data analysis and discusses the empirical findings. Section 5 concludes a summary of this study while highlighting its limitations, and theoretical and practical implications with few suggestions for future research.

Social Capital

As stated by (McGrath & Sparks, 2005-2006) SC can be described as the human element, such as learning, trust, and innovation, which is created and further enhanced during interpersonal interaction in SC concept (Connelly & Kelloway, 2003). SC is “the stock of active connections among people: the trust, mutual understanding and shared values and behaviors that bind the members of human networks and communities and makes cooperative action possible” [12, 22]. The importance of networks plays a role in active connections among people is obvious within organizations or companies (Connelly & Kelloway, 2003). As stated by McGrath & Sparks the basis that forms intellectual capital can be viewed as being created through two general processes: combination and exchange. The combination is combin-

Figure 1. Conceptual framework