



SUSTAINABILITY OF ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE COMPETITIVENESS ACROSS THE KNOWLEDGE SHARING ENVIRONMENT IN UAE

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The aims of this paper are to analyze the organizational performance of competitiveness sustainability through knowledge sharing, and the organizational barriers to implementation in the business environment.

Design/methodology/approach: This study was accomplished through questionnaires that surveyed 125 companies located in Abu Dhabi Emirate/United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Findings: Findings revealed that organizational culture and management perceptions that are based

on individual perception and managerial style have a negative relationship with the perceived benefits of knowledge. Analyses show that management initiatives highlight the fact that not all of them are necessarily successful.

Originality/value: The value of this paper is to shed light on organizational performance improvements to increase business effectiveness and efficiency through a knowledge sharing environment, with particular regard to the UAE. Within a business, an area sometimes targeted for improvement is organizational efficacy, which involves the process of setting organizational goals and objectives: performance is a measure of the results achieved. Performance efficiency is the ratio between effort expended and results achieved. It offers suggestions to manage these organizations effectively and profitably.

Keywords: Organizational Performance, Knowledge Management, Knowledge Sharing, Performance, Organization

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INTRODUCTION

Performance improvement in organizational development is the concept of organizational change in which the managers and governing body of an organization put into place and manage a programme that measures the current level of performance of the organization. It then generates ideas for modifying organizational behaviour and infrastructure that are put into place to achieve higher output (Alireza, et al., 2010).

The development of an organization's performance begins with the recognition and assessment of challenges and opportunities facing the organization, as well as a realistic assessment of the organization's current and potential capacity for effectively addressing or capitalizing on them. This includes an assessment of environmental forces and factors that are currently impacting and/or will continue to have significant implications for the organization in the future, competitive analysis, SWOT analysis, and framing of key strategic issues (Finkl and Ploder, 2009). The ultimate goal of such analyses is to develop strategic goals and thrusts that will enable the organization to build a sustainable, competitive and high quality performance.

Lifelong learning, training and development, and corporate education all make claims that they contribute to both individual and organizational performance improvements. Achieving that accepted organizational performance improvement, and then the field of Human

Resource Development (HRD) provides some insights and should strive to contribute directly to the organization's goals (Benson, 2006). What is needed then is to focus on systems and processes that ensure that individuals in the organization have the knowledge, expertise, and attitudes to produce quality and deliver on the organization's goals.

From the above discussion we have to understand that performance improvement for the sake of meeting an organization's goals should not be the only focus for HRD. There is value in defining a balance between organizational and individual goals, and human values may be the starting point when considering workplace learning. In fact there should be a balance between the employees in HRD and the commitment of improved organizational performance (and profits). Workforce engagement and the workforce environment addresses key workforce practices, those directed toward creating and maintaining a high-performance workplace and those toward engaging your workforce to enable it and your organization to adapt to change and succeed (Casselmann and Samson, 2007).

Therefore, a number of techniques and programmes are considered to ensure a positive and supportive work environment as workforce engagements are the aspects of a positive/supportive work environment, compensation and recognition linked to organizational goals, or in fact the reward for performance. Performance is a measure of the results achieved. Performance

efficiency is the ratio between effort expended and results achieved.

The difference between current performance and the theoretical performance limit is the performance improvement zone (Darroch, 2005). Additionally, workforce environment includes different methods for supporting the workforce, such as learning and training development opportunities that are not strictly focused on employees' job responsibilities. In this respect management may propose some challenges for its employees to produce excellence in their operations; to exhibit positive energy, well-being, and self-control; to make the right decision at the right time; and to be dedicated to continuous learning, development and growth. In this respect the organizational cultural characteristics may be a blending of many concepts such as organizational learning, employee development, and continual improvement (Zaim et al., 2007). Therefore a number of techniques and programmes to ensure a positive and supportive work environment are needed.

In the design and development of an organization to achieve a positive performance, the management or the leadership team should annually assess the organization's logistical needs. This has resulted in the creation of a variety of activities modules designed to meet business needs. This logistic focuses on developing a visual reference to verify product quality and usability. Operational procedures, service standards, and in-process control measures for all core processes, each product, and support services are carefully designed and documented in the organization's operations procedures. Such efforts provide an abundance of immediate, public, non-monetary recognition for staff contributions in support of employee development, customer satisfaction, continual improvement, and organizational learning (Valkokari and Helander, 2007).

The majority of organizations strive to prepare their employees not only for their job, but beyond. They acknowledge that most of their employees' ultimate careers are with other companies. Therefore, management strive to provide skills, knowledge, a principle-based mindset, and work habits required for producing excellence and practicing life-long learning within their organizations. Managers are urged to promote teamwork through reward systems and new

organization forms, to pay for performance, and to derive and use customer-driven performance measures. On the other hand and to make matters worse, conscientious managers had little objective information to enable them to choose from an array of rapidly promulgated ideas. Therefore, most new methods adopted for performance improvement were promoted without attacking other strategies, but with a dogmatism that implied the superiority of new theories over their antecedents and competing models (Singh, 2008).

Staff performance and productivity should improve, reflecting the effectiveness of their selection, hiring, training, and work designs, and skills and knowledge sharing.

Specifically, cross-knowledge sharing is used so that employees within the organization have a complete understanding of all production and service procedures and quality standards to allow the smooth transition from work-station to work-station, and cooperative, flexible responses to volume cycles and unplanned reassignments (Yeh et al., 2006).

The conclusion is that management needs to expand beyond just performativity and help contribute to social and political change. Therefore, performance takes place and can be measured at the organizational, process, and individual levels. The primary goals of this paper are to analyse organizational performance competitiveness sustainability through knowledge sharing, and organizational barriers implementation in the business environment. Findings revealed that organizational culture and top management attitudes based on individual perception and a managerial style, have a negative relationship with the perceived benefits of knowledge. Analyses show that management initiatives highlight the fact that not all of them are necessarily successful.

THE EMPLOYEE AND THE ORGANIZATIONAL PROCESS

Most organizations today rely on clearly stated policies that operations staff and management use for all hiring, compensation, training, etc., decisions. In this respect operational procedures, service standards, and in-process control measures for all core processes, each product, and support services are carefully designed and documented

to obtain objectives, to achieve organizational and personal success and performance (Swanson and Arnold, 1996).

When looking at the organizational efforts of workforce engagement, an organization may utilize a number of techniques and programmes to ensure a positive and supportive work environment. These techniques and programmes are linked to organizational goals, seen as a measurement of workforce satisfaction, and are established and acquired for all employees at all levels to ensure that the knowledge and skills required are achieved for defined responsibilities at each position. Therefore, the performance improvement plan should be designed to facilitate constructive discussion between a staff member and his or her supervisor, and to clarify the work performance to be improved (Helms et al., 2010).

Considered an important part of their communication and the feedback process, organizational learning knowledge is a key tool for a prompt deployment and sharing of information throughout the organization's operations at all managerial levels. This process of communication and feedback should be designed to take the output of the process's inputs, analysis, and rapid prototyping, and share them across the stores. This process is also credited with encouraging organizational agility and organizational and employee learning (Iftikhar et al., 2010).

Such types of communication often produces rapid learning and decision-making that is shared company-wide without delays or difficulties. It also contributes to building good customer relationships. Coupled with the developmental aspects of peer reviews and the organization's training processes, it effectively supports employees in developing and utilizing their full potential (Lehner and Haas, 2010).

Organizational learning opportunities mainly cover not only the skills needed to support operations, but also listening, health and safety, and organizational culture.

Organizations are very keen to extend its contributions to their communities, believing that a major responsibility to their local communities is the shaping of its employees into positive citizens. By helping its people grow, develop, and become better citizens, they attempt to help and make their business more successful

while also making their communities a better place to live and work. The different activities of the organization's programme should focus and include intense instruction on effective listening and learning skills (Wong and Aspinwall, 2005).

These skills are not only critical for high performance in specific industries or preparation lines, but are also beneficial for gathering valuable customer information about needs, expectations, and satisfaction. The management, with input from the affected employee, may be able to develop an improvement plan; the purpose of the activities outlined is to help the employee to attain the desired level of performance. The difference between current performance and the expected performance limit is the performance improvement zone.

Another way to think of performance improvement is to see it as improvement in the following potential areas. First, improvement in the resource requirements needed, such as a reduction in working capital or materials. Second, in the current process requirement, this is often viewed as a process efficiency; this is measured in terms of time, and resource utilization. Third, the output requirements, often viewed from a cost/price, and quality. Fourth, if the requirements were met, improvements would be seen (Cascio, 2006). Therefore, the performance platform is the infrastructure or devices used in the performance act.

Some management change models are precise and detailed about process redesign methods, but vague and conceptual about behavioural dynamics. Many process improvement systems rely heavily on some managerial concepts or perceptions such as "teamwork", "empowerment", "new paradigms", and "accountability", but lack insight into workplace belief systems, values, motivations, and disincentives that underlie the behaviours targeted for change (Ho, 2008).

Looking to the future, and continuing to ensure sustained results and high performance, management may also utilize benchmarking to determine best practice authority, responsibility and performance. They would then set goals to reach and exceed best performance level expectations as much as possible from their benchmarking partner's processes and performance data (Omerzel and Antoncic, 2008).

Achieving extraordinary performance in an organization's operations, irrespective of the type of business, requires the implementation of a process that recognizes the components of a performance improvement culture. Industry has achieved improved performance in safety by applying similar principles (Zeynep and Huckman, 2008).

In most organizations, organizational efforts at performance improvement have included human resource development, quality improvement programmes, reengineering and performance technology. These programmes are used to identify an organization's major business processes and how they connect to basic inputs and outputs. Assuming that the organization's employees are already participating in the performance improvement plan process, the format and expectation of such action should enable the management and staff member to communicate with a higher degree of clarity about specific expectations (Pillania, 2006), as a means of achieving a desired level of performance. In any business, people in management and supervision play a key role in improving the level of performance and that the organization as a whole must be fully aligned strategically in these objectives.

Although some organizations have reached a respectable level of performance in doing their businesses, this level did not come without much learning and adjustment to their approach and perceptions. At the same time, however, the fact that organizations have learned that business and regulatory requirements may not be enough to achieve a superior level of performance (Nonaka and Toyama, 2005). Managers knew that process was important, but what they needed was that structure in the form of regulatory requirements and standards to monitor and measure performance in their organizations. Thus, managers need to know whether they have a proper balance between people and process through the implementation of technology, equipment, procedures and policies, and training in the workplace. However, the greatest improvement comes as a result of the employees.

The organization may attempt to improve the working process by motivating its employees, by creating a new working culture that promotes performance improvement from within the

individual, team and organization. After all, the working culture the management seeks is simply a set of these shared values and goals, and the desired capabilities, attitudes, behaviours organization need to achieve them. Creating this new culture is the key to sustained success.

In general, employees who are performing their jobs effectively, and meeting the expectations of the improvement process, may help in achieving objectives. In fact, there is no valid programme model for performance improvement. They may sound sensible and appear to yield measurable effects, but limited evidence links in terms of systematic cause and effect. Therefore, management actions were believed to be effective with desired group behaviours (such as teamwork, collaboration, and information sharing) or with overall organizational performance (Somaya and Williamson, 2008). In fact what was needed were management improvement programmes that advocated simplification, streamlining, clarity, and accountability, avoiding rigidity, even bureaucracy, and without violating management's own fundamental precepts: the goal is to add value.

From the above discussion we may conclude that performance should be improved either by improving the measured attribute by using the performance platform more effectively, or by improving the measured attribute by modifying the performance platform. In turn, this allows a given level of use to be more effective in producing the desired output (Shaw et al., 2005).

THE APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND PERFORMANCE CULTURE

A performance improvement culture has to be created, beginning at the highest level and reaching down to the lowest level in the organization. In other words this means that the managers must lead their teams and the organization to make beneficial changes, encourage team members to change their perceptions and attitudes, and reinforce changes in behaviour that deliver improved performance throughout the organization.

Within their organization, managers should ensure that capturing knowledge and identifying lessons is paramount, and everything that is learned contributes to improving the process for the greatest improvement of performance.

Encouraging and reinforcing such proper behaviour in the workplace may allow managers to reach new levels of performance in their organizations. Thus, what is needed is a structure in the form of regulatory requirements and standards (OECD, 2000). Organizations have to be aware that a proper balance between employees and process and the creation of a performance improvement culture with a clear performance improvement plan are critical inputs in achieving extraordinary performance.

As organizations continue to learn, acquire knowledge and sharing, management's desire is to be proactive rather than reactive to potential problems, and no longer seek to meet regulatory requirements. This will allow management to reach new levels of performance, perhaps saving time and costs in the process. Recent experience shows that a relatively high standard has been achieved by most organizations in creating a process of knowledge sharing and developing tools where opportunities are identified or where gaps exist in the workplace (Wong, 2005). Therefore employees need to understand why the change is taking place and what is expected within a culture of welcoming the adoption of change for performance improvement.

Management must realize at an individual, team, and organization level that there are more than functional roles to be played to support performance improvement. In this respect, in a performance improvement culture, the role of the manager also includes supporting several key elements for creating and sustaining this type of working culture, beginning at the highest level and reaching down to the lowest level within the organizational hierarchy, and departments (Quinn, 1999).

Learning knowledge is the core of performance improvement, and it requires a working culture to be in place that understands how learning affects performance. In this respect management should ensure the communication of how lessons learned have impacted the organization and improved performance. Although some organizations already have plenty of tools, plenty of processes and sufficient structure, the focus must shift to provide a proper balance between employees and the working tasks (Holtom et al., 2006). In addition to this shift, there must be the sustainability of a work culture that improves the performance of these tasks. Therefore,

management must practice the leadership skills that support this culture and embed it at all levels of the organization. In this way, the manager can approach any task to improve performance.

It is unlikely that the delivery of the organizations' products and services will be improved without true involvement of employees who are motivated, willing to share knowledge, to apply new ideas, and take the responsibility of reducing calculated risks. The role of supporting performance improvement must be clearly assigned to all levels within the organizational structure. The purpose and employees' behaviours to achieve performance improvement must be consistently applied (Garud and Kumaraswamy, 2005). Thus, it is important that all the departments of an organization understand each another through the consistency of doing the tasks assigned, and what should be expected concerning performance improvement. It is the duty of management to ensure that a clear vision, goals, roles and responsibilities, standards and expectations of creating a performance improvement culture have been communicated. In this respect, performance improvement is achieved when an organization's employees realize that knowledge sharing, inventing new ideas, suggestions, and ensuring employees' full participation are expected and recognized as part of the working environment.

METHODOLOGY AND ANALYSIS

The present study employed a survey type methodology and involved the managers of these firms in the sample. The population of the study was selected through stratified sampling. Questionnaires were sent to the managers of 125 firms (representing more than 45% of industrial firms, according to the Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce, 2010 Annual Report) with significant responsibility for measuring the level of knowledge-oriented management. From the 125 questionnaires distributed, 112 managers completed and returned their questionnaires, a 89% response rate. Measures were adopted and used to weigh each of the five constructs, namely, Management Perceptions, Organizational Culture, Firm's Competitive Strategy, Workforce Environment (Environmental adaptation), and Workforce Engagement. The study used a five-point rating scale, i.e. from 1 (strongly disagree)

to 5 (strongly agree). This research aims to investigate the status of these constructed variables as barriers for knowledge sharing in the industrial sector (Table 1).

From Table 1, the correlation between barriers of knowledge sharing within the firms surveyed in the sample was high and significant at 0.01. The rank of indicators' correlation for Workforce Environment, Workforce Engagement, Organizational Culture, Firm's Competitive Strategy, Management Perceptions were 0.625, 0.590, 0.797, 0.643, and 0.597 respectively. Organizational Culture was first, followed by (in order) Firm's Competitive Strategy, Workforce Environment, Management Perceptions and Workforce Engagement. Using the Cronbach alpha method, Management Perceptions was found at 0.75, and Firm's Competitive Strategy was the least at 0.66. However such alpha value has a rather high value. The alpha value of 0.81 indicates that the research instrument enjoys a rather high validity.

The mean values on a five-point scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree) of the five indicators concerning knowledge sharing were 13.32, 14.25, 15.53, 8.92 and 32.54 for Workforce Environment, Workforce Engagement, Organizational Culture, Firm's Competitive Strategy, and Management Perceptions respectively. The mean value of Management Perceptions is 32.54 in the high ranking, indicating that management in the firms surveyed is using the closed door system, low participation for employees in the decision making process, and is not aware that knowledge plays a significant role in the success of the organization. Organizational Culture is in second place with 15.53, indicating that solving organizational problems through teamwork was low. This indicator is compatible with the third ranking elements, the Workforce Engagement at 14.25. In fact, the respondents believe managers and employees in these firms are not judged enough by what they do, and the knowledge of departing employees is not passed on to successors.

In fact, such issues show that these firms do not have a suitable network of knowledge workers, furthermore they believe there is not an active programme for developing ideas. The Workforce Environment element is in fourth place with a value of 13.32. From this score the clear interpretation for such a situation is that

the employees and their firms have been acting rather poorly in the areas of regular and wide exchange of knowledge; also, using information systems and communication have been lower than average.

A firm's Competitive Strategy is in last place with a mean value 8.92. The lower level indicated that employees have no knowledge about the missions and objectives of their firms. The mean of knowledge sharing was 112.620, which indicated that respondents in the sample believed that management efforts for the firms in the sample for sharing knowledge between employees according to the present criteria, together with the firms' internal environment was lower than average (Table 2).

Through the discussion with those managers in the firms surveyed, the researchers asked respondents to elaborate on their answers. Respondents mentioned other barriers for knowledge sharing in their firms. The researchers believe that managers' education was probably behind such revelations. Barriers mentioned by those managers may be specified, such as a relatively low level of awareness and understanding, quality of information overall, face-to-face interaction, assistance in the development of data and information (Klein, 2008), relatively undeveloped database, effective means of transmitting knowledge, language barrier, and the 'context' in which the knowledge has been shared. To assess if the education element is behind such problems' we used the Kruscal-Wallis techniques. These results are shown in Table 3.

It can be seen from Table 3 that the results revealed that there is a relationship between Organizational Culture, Workforce Environment, Workforce Engagement, and total knowledge sharing with both employees' and managers' education level. With [$K\hat{\theta}f=2.000$, $P< .01$], the value of the construct variables are: [$K\hat{\theta}f = 10.901$], [$K\hat{\theta}f = 15.234$], [$K\hat{\theta}f = 30.327$], [$K\hat{\theta}f = 13.991$]. There were no significant differences between education and the other two barriers variables (i.e., Management Perceptions and Firm's Competitive Strategy).

CONCLUSIONS

This study is important for all companies in the economy, especially in the industrial sector where

managing knowledge is a way of doing business and improving organizational performance in the UAE economy. This paper contributes to the research in organizational learning and knowledge sharing practices by trying to identify barriers to knowledge sharing and transference within the organizations.

The results of this study suggest that the employees and their firms have been acting rather poorly in the exchange of knowledge; participants showed a rather low knowledge of their firms' strategic vision. In addition, management roles may be more efficient as a way of communication, responsibility and trust within the organization. Respondents also believe that both managers and employees in these firms are not judged enough by what they do, and the knowledge of departing employees is not, in general, passed on to successors.

These obstacles, such as Workforce Environment (Environmental Adaptation), Workforce Engagement, Organizational Culture, Firm's Competitive Strategy, and Management Perceptions, raise problems that transcend our research. However, there was a significant relationship between knowledge sharing with the employees' experience in the sample. Therefore researchers believe that organizational structure and operational process should be improved or be re-designed to improve performance.

Management should measure the effectiveness and outcomes of common indicators of workforce engagement and satisfaction through different actions, such as increased retention, promotions, turnover, satisfaction, and training opportunities. Through a focus on workforce engagement and environment, organizational culture, competitive strategy, and the efficiency and reliability in knowledge sharing, the organization may experience significant positive and measurable workforce-focused performance results.

The organization must view performance improvement as a process that requires a clear plan to improve performance and address resource requirements to enable this process to be successful. This process requires a change in the working culture, and full commitment from the top of the organization to the lowest levels to execute this plan for improving performance.

BIOGRAPHIES

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Table 1: Data Information

The Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Mean	Correlations	Sig
Workforce Environment (Environmental adaptation)	0.73	15.14	0.625	.000
Workforce Engagement	0.75	16.23	0.590	.000
Organizational Culture	0.78	17.51	0.797	.000
Firm's Competitive Strategy	0.66	12.21	0.643	.000
Management Perceptions	0.75	43.52	0.597	.000
Alpha Value	0.81			

Table 2: Statistics Analysis

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	Kurtosis	Skewness
Workforce Environment (Environmental adaptation)	13.32	4.4	-0.066	-0.5.24
Workforce Engagement	14.25	5.4	-0.204	-0.652
Organizational Culture	15.53	5.7	-0.273	-0.752
Firm's Competitive Strategy	8.92	3.7	-0.314	-0.434
Management Perceptions	32.54	7.7	-0.080	-0.018
Knowledge sharing Total	112.620			

Table 3: Kruscal-Wallis Test

	Workforce Environment (Environmental adaptation)	Workforce Engagement	Organizational Culture	Firm's Competitive Strategy	Management Perceptions	Total Knowledge sharing
Chi-Square	15.234	30.327	10.901	2.971	1.173	13.991
Asymp. Sig.	0.000	0.000	0.008	0.215	0.691	0.002
∂f	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000

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