

MINOR RESEARCH PROJECT REPORT

**ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING PERCEPTION AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING
ATTITUDE IN RELATION TO POWER AMONG THE TEACHING STAFF, IN
INSTITUTES OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

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Introduction

Organizations need to continuously learn for long-term survival in this complex, uncertain and rapidly changing world (Bennet, A. & Bennet, D., 2003). In the current knowledge economy, learning is the key to competitive advantage. The essence of organizational success is learning. The core of learning is augmentation of knowledge leading to change in either behaviour, or cognition, or process or all the three. This accumulation of knowledge which occurs over time (Argote&Miron-Spektor, 2011), is first at the individual level and then it moves to the organizational level. Thus learning takes place at the individual level and only when it is incorporated at the organizational level, it will lead to organizational learning. However, not all individual level learning transforms into organizational level learning. Only those learning which are found to be useful by the collective view of the organization get stored in the organizational memory for further reference or are incorporated into the present organizational system. For individual level learning to result in organizational learning it is essential that knowledge gained at personal level is shared with others. Thus for an organization to learn, knowledge sharing becomes essential. Power relations within an organization affect knowledge sharing. Fierce competition in an era where possessing knowledge is equated to being powerful, sharing of knowledge is restricted as it might lead to losing power. Hales (1993), has identified knowledge as one of the four power resources which can be used to influence others. Access and control over certain knowledge can result in monopoly and provide indispensable status to individuals. Sharing such vital knowledge will risk losing the status. Hence power relations influence knowledge sharing.

Exploring power relations in organizational learning has been ignored in organizational learning literatures (Jørgensen, K. M., 2001; Coopey, J., 1995). This has further been overlooked in the education sector. Knowing how power affects organizational learning and knowledge sharing, would provide a deeper and compressive understanding of the whole organizational dynamics in general and in the field of education in particular.

This research focused on the relationship between organizational learning perception of teachers in higher education, their knowledge sharing attitude and power base. Organizational learning is important for any organization or institute if it has to survive in the knowledge era. Knowledge sharing is an important aspect of organizational learning. Since organization is made of people, power plays an important role in organizational relations.

This research was correlational survey where relationship between organizational learning perception, knowledge sharing attitude and power base was ascertained. The study also compared the difference of these variables among the teaching staff in institutes of higher education on the basis of their academic position. Knowledge sharing was dependent variable and organizational learning perception and power base were independent variables.

Sampling and data collection

Using stratified random sampling technique, data was collected from 128 teachers. There were 30 professors, 32 associate professors and 66 assistant professors. Data for perceived organizational learning perception was collected using 'Learning Assessment Map' designed by Nemeth, L.S., (1997). The questionnaire used a five point scale ranging from (1) Strongly Agree to (5) Strongly Disagree. Rahim Leader Power Inventory (RLPI) was used to measure power base which is based on the five French-Raven bases of power. The tool had 29-items and used a 5-point Likert scale to measure the perceptions of subordinates regarding the supervisor's base of power. A higher score indicated a greater base of a superior's power. To assess knowledge sharing attitude, 'Knowledge Sharing Behavior Scale' prepared by T. Ramayah (2014) was used. This tool measured knowledge sharing through 28 items represented by four dimensions namely Written Contributions, Organizational Communications, Personal Interactions, and Communities of Practice. The tool used 5-point Likert-type response scale ranging from 1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often to 5 = always.

Data analysis and Result

Hypotheses related to relationship between the three variables were tested using Pearson's product moment coefficient. Based on the result of the study, organizational learning perception and use of power base were moderately negatively correlated, $r = -0.392$, $p < 0.01$. There was a nonsignificant correlation between organizational learning perception and knowledge sharing attitude [$r = -0.146$, p (n. s)] and between knowledge sharing attitude and use of power base [$r = 0.016$, p (n. s)].

ANOVA was used to test the hypotheses for differences in three variables between professors, associate professors and assistant professors. An analysis of variance showed that use of power base amongst professors, associate professors and assistant professors was significant, $F(2, 125)$

= 3.97, $p = 0.02$. Post hoc analysis using t Test with Bonferroni correction indicated that use of power was significantly greater in associate professor ($M = 112.03$, $SD = 153.19$), ($t(128) = 3.24$, $p < 0.01$) as compared to professors ($M = 105.45$, $SD = 317.63$) and assistant professors ($M = 102.15$, $SD = 295.33$).

Discussion

It was found that knowledge sharing attitude was not related to either perceived organizational learning or power base. The plausible reason could be that knowledge sharing in higher education is standardized with Academic Performance Indicator (API) scores. However, power base was found to be moderately negatively correlated to organizational learning. This result confirms that power base inhibits the perceived organizational learning process. French and Raven's (1959) power base emphasizes the existence of power as a top-down approach where subordinate is under the influence of the superior. It was also seen that there was no significant difference in both perceived organizational learning and knowledge sharing attitude among professors, associate professors and assistant professors. However, a significant difference was found in power base between associate professors and assistant professors.

Recommendations

On the basis of the obtained results following are the recommendations:

Any important resource which is unequally distributed and is scarce and non-substitutable can become a source of power. Hence knowledge should be easily available. Knowledge sharing did not have any relationship with organizational learning, which proves that knowledge generated and shared is not utilized. Institutes of higher education are generating and sharing knowledge but it does not result in any learning within the organization, which is a sad affair. Therefore provisions should be made for incorporating the organizational learning system and higher education institutes should aim at being learning organizations. Power should be made an enabling factor in organizational learning where leaders exercise mostly expert power.

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