

TACIT KNOWLEDGE SHARING AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS IN KENYA

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ABSTRACT

According to Choi & Lee 2003, tacit knowledge is what is rooted in the mind and can be transferred in form of learning by doing and learning by watching. It can be completely tacit, semiconscious, or unconscious knowledge held in people's heads and bodies (Leonard & Sensiper, 1998). Tacit knowledge can be classified into two dimensions: technical and cognitive (Pathirage et al., 2007). Technical encompasses information and expertise in relation to "know-how" while cognitive consists of mental models, beliefs, and values. Tacit knowing embodied in physical skills resides in the body's muscles, nerves, and reflexes and is learned through practice. Tacit knowledge is also embodied in cognitive skills (Leonard & Sensiper, 1998). While explicit knowledge is easily exploitable, tacit knowledge is difficult to be extracted without the consent of the knowledge owner. Tacit knowledge is one of the strengths that an organization has that is more difficult to transfer or copy (Nonaka, 1993). In the resource-based theory, Hisrich et al. (2008) further highlight that in order for organizations to create unique resources which are rare, valuable, and non-imitable; it has to exploit their internal knowledge. Many organizations in Kenya make use of intelligent solutions and business analytics to find new insights into their business processes and performance. Such insights are extracted through creativity and innovative methods to generate and gather large amounts of information about their clients, service providers, competitors, processes, procedures practices, and measures to produce substantial value. This has created a need for finding a suitable approach to tacit Knowledge sharing. This paper critically analyzes the deterrents of tacit knowledge sharing on Organization competitiveness. The study will also establish an understanding of how organizations can more easily share knowledge that will increase its performance, driven by an understanding of leveraging tacit knowledge.

Keywords: Tacit Knowledge, Explicit Knowledge, knowledge sharing, Organizational Competitiveness.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

It is important that organizations concentrate more on encouraging the sharing of tacit knowledge. Knowledge sharing is a costly intangible resource that makes organizations more competitive in the market. The sharing, which can be done directly and through different technological systems, has resulted in organizations now having to rethink the way they manage their business. Studies have shown that many organization performance deficiencies are due to a lack of communicated knowledge (Peroune, 2007). As a result, knowledge sharing which is a readiness to learn from others is accepted as having a considerable impact on organization performance (Chow, 2012). Most of the knowledge that is required to sustain

corporate competitiveness is tacit in nature meaning it is entrenched in people and is not obvious to others. Tacit knowledge is unspoken knowledge; it cannot be easily codified and is not readily transferable from one person to another. However, studies have indicated that the sharing of tacit knowledge is an important attribute of team-based learning organizations. Additionally, organizations that engage in continuous learning are more likely to achieve superior performance. One of the factors that distinguish the successful organization from the other is its management; who may lack tacit knowledge (Randeree, 2006). In agreement, Peroune (2007) maintained that much of the knowledge on which the real-world setting is based is tacit knowledge. She further asserted that ninety percent of the knowledge in any organization is entrenched in and synthesized in people's heads. Therefore, a trusting environment has to be established to obtain knowledge. Since the success or failure of an organization's knowledge management system is dependent on its ability to manage and motivate its employees; trust and collaboration are critical factors (Wang, Ashleigh & Meyers, 2006).

2.0 TACIT KNOWLEDGE SHARING IN AN ORGANISATION

Radwanska (2013) points out that knowledge sharing creates organizational knowledge is needed for competitive advantage. The organizational learning process facilitates knowledge development and preserves new knowledge in organizational operations. Tacit knowledge sharing has the potential to lead to the success of the business (Argote, 2013). Overall, findings have shown that organizational learning demonstrates an important channel to performance, success, and competitive advantage for companies (Noruzy, et al., 2013).

3.0 DETERRENTS TACIT KNOWLEDGE TO ORGANISATION COMPETITIVENESS

Lack of confidence: Tacit knowledge sharing is considered a form of intellectual capital that is preceded by the formation of trust (Lin, 2007). In order to create an organizational culture that fosters tacit knowledge sharing, trust must be built. Trust is much more than an emotional expression of confidence in another. It consists of behavior ethics, competence, reliability, and integrity (Lin, 2007). Many businesses in Kenya struggle to improve workplace relationships because of broken trust and rebuilding it can be challenging (Reina, 2006).

Teamwork, time, and commitment are vital in rebuilding trust within any organization. Essentially, trust can increase organizational commitment and expertise. In fact, high levels of trust are closely related to increased employee engagement, customer satisfaction, and business success. Trust plays a major role in teamwork and the effective completion of tasks. Trust builds confidence and encourages honest feedback which enhances the quality of information. By integrating the dynamic of trust into the core values of the organizational culture, a company sets the precedent for interactions between not only coworkers but also management and their employees (Nešić& Lalić, 2016)

Trust is considered a major factor in knowledge sharing (Wang, Ashleigh & Meyers, 2006). As a result, the creation of a trusting environment is important. Employee loyalty is built through the formation of trust which increases the willingness to share tacit knowledge. In order to comprehend the nature of trust in the workplace, the personal perspective of the employee must be valued. The degree to which an employee identifies with their particular

organization is referred to as organizational commitment. This bond is understood through interactions between coworkers in the workplace (Lin, 2007).

Teamwork and achievement of organizational goals hold special meaning for employees who are committed to their role and organization. When receiving recognition, employees are proud of their accomplishments and strive to reach performance goals set by management. Feeling valued by one's company is vital to the improvement of job performance. When employee is loyal to their organization, they go to the lengths of introducing the organization to others with pride. Job pride and brand loyalty eventually incite a sense of self-awareness and increases confidence (Hosein & Seyed, 2017). When an employee feels valued, heard, and supported, they flourish in a workplace environment. By assessing the role self-image and mental health play in work ethic, the dynamic of trust along with the influence of management and organizational culture is better understood. Together, these factors impact willingness to share mental knowledge and in turn, improve job performance. Organizations need to remain competitive in the global marketplace and therefore there is a demand for effective knowledge management to ensure a successful organization.

Lack of motivation: Unmotivated employees can't embrace job responsibilities, adapt to changes, and contributes to the effort employees put into their work. In other words, motivation in the workplace helps organizations achieve quality job performance which through tacit knowledge sharing can increase employee expertise as well as the quality of information. Evidence shows the correlation between positive coworker relationships and improvement in job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and communication (Glaman, Jones & Rozelle, 2002). Trust plays a pivotal role in creating a collaborative culture and is a prerequisite to tacit knowledge sharing. Collaboration occurs when everyone learns to confide in and respect one another (Kucharska, 2017). Once a person learns that working as a team can generate better results than working individually, teamwork becomes a natural aspect of the organizational culture

Unhealthy Competition: In terms of sharing tacit knowledge, competition can lead employees to withhold critical information for their individual gain. For example, one worker driven to succeed at the expense of other workers can ultimately destroy relationships within the business as well as the ethics of an organization. According to Ford and Hakansson (2013), there is great potential for businesses to profit in a competitive market. However, the pressure to increase sales could cause employees to use unethical tactics. In addition, competition can lead to challenges that directly impact tacit knowledge sharing, such as mistrust, different learning styles, and inaccurate information.

4.0 TACIT KNOWLEDGE SHARING STRATEGIES FOR ORGANIZATIONS COMPETITIVENESS

Healthy competition: organizations today have developed to gain competitive advantage and success. Competition is an essential element of the concept of business because workplace behaviors are affected by competition. While competition between businesses could often be beneficial by promoting, growth, revenue, and innovation. Businesses should reduce uncertainties related to competition through the sharing of tacit knowledge (Ford & Hakansson, 2013). Preventative measures can be taken to avoid competition and jealousy by promoting collaboration between coworkers. This can be accomplished by placing an emphasis on

teamwork. Research suggests that positive coworker relationships formed early on have an effect in the long run.

Organization Knowledge as an asset: Organizations are embarking on strategies that will increase the sharing of tacit knowledge. The literature strongly supports the fact that a company's knowledge gives them an advantage over its competitor. Clearly, it shows that it is important that management organizes and promotes the sharing and exchange of information because it normally results in beneficial organizational outcomes, such as higher performance assessment and more effective teams.

Interaction between people, technologies, and techniques: allows an organization to accomplish difficult and innovative tasks. However, it is important to note that securing tacit knowledge may be a significant challenge to the organization's management. Existing literature consistently shows that tacit knowledge sharing plays a critical role in job performance by allowing for an efficient distribution of knowledge and better productivity

5.0 CONCLUSION

Overall tacit knowledge has a significant influence on organizational Competitiveness. It indicates that knowledge creation, sharing, and retention should be given priority in order to optimize organizational competitiveness. An understanding of the tacit knowledge-sharing techniques and further the deterrents have a significant influence on organizational performance. Among the main reasons identified for not having a significant influence on organizational competitiveness is the fundamental managerial understanding of deterrents to tacit knowledge and strategies to ensure competitiveness. It can be noticed that many organizations operating in developing countries like Kenya Included focus mainly on skills needed to meet the volume and profit targeted by the organizations instead of quality and knowledge management which could easily help in identifying such deterrents and capitalizing on tacit Knowledge sharing strategy. In Summary, tacit knowledge is the software of People-human. Tacit knowledge has a significant influence on an organization's competitiveness. It is critical for optimizing the organizational competitiveness that in turn will optimize the return on investment which is crucial for business sustainability. The paper thus confirms that understanding tacit knowledge-sharing strategies by managers increases the organizational body of knowledge.

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