

The Impact of Collaborative Work Climate on Knowledge Sharing Intention

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Abstract: The current study investigated the relationship between collaborative work climate and intention to share knowledge in Fars Regional Power Distribution Company (FRPDC), Iran. Using stratified random sampling method, a sample of 214 employees selected for further analysis. The analysis of the data showed that the relationship between the perception of collaborative work climate and intention to share knowledge is significant and positive. The results also indicated that there are significant relationships between dimensions of collaborative work climate (work group support, immediate supervisor support, business unit culture and employees attitude) and intention to share knowledge. The values of R square also indicated that workgroup support, business unit culture, immediate supervisor and employees' attitudes have moderate, moderate to high, low and moderate impact on intention to share knowledge respectively.

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1. Introduction:

Knowledge sharing is the activity of sharing components of knowledge (i.e. information, expertise and skills) amongst members of a community. It has been regarded mostly in the organizations for the making organizational competitiveness (as a competitive advantage) in today's turbulent business. While issues such as regarding knowledge as a personal property (Dalkir, 2005) reduce the propensity for sharing it amongst the organizational members, it is very useful to have an organizational climate that motivates the individuals for sharing knowledge.

Many researchers have emphasized on the perceptions of work climate on knowledge sharing intention amongst employees within the organization (Blackler, 1995; Bok and Kim, 2002; Davenport and Prusak, 1998) and amongst all, the impact of collaborative work climate is rarely investigated on knowledge sharing intention. Organizational climate refers to shared and agreed perceptions of employees of their work environment. In fact, organizational climate is an interpretation of organizational messages by the organization members. Climate emerges from what individuals perceive to be important and influential in their work so that studying climate is more appropriate to capture the aspects of the social environment consciously perceived by organizational members (Shim, 2010). How staff perceive the climate determines how they will behave with it based on a social exchange perspective. According to social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), if the staff perceive

the organization as a supportive organization, based on a reciprocity rule, they tend to be more effective in the organization.

Collaborative climate refers to shared elements of an organization's culture that inspires staff to share knowledge (Sveiby & Simons, 2002). According to Sveiby and Simons, the success of knowledge management practices depends on the incorporation of trust and collaboration in organizational culture. They confirmed that in the collaborative climate of a business unit, an immediate superior and coworkers in a workgroup play the most important roles in knowledge sharing.

In the electricity and power organizations (like FRPDC), it is very critical to share knowledge due to the human hazards and also delivering high quality services to the people. In this regard, developing an organizational climate that encourages knowledge sharing is very helpful. Thus, the main questions of the current study were; how is the perception of a collaborative work climate in FRPDC? How perceptions of collaborative climate impacts intention to knowledge sharing in FRPDC? For answering the above questions the following hypotheses were proposed:

H: The relationship between the collaborative work climate and intention to share knowledge is significant in FRPDC.

H1: the relationship between the work group support and intention to share knowledge is significant in FRPDC.

H2: the relationship between the support of immediate supervisor and intention to share knowledge is significant in FRPDC.

H3: the relationship between employee attitude and intention to share knowledge is significant in FRPDC.

H4: the relationship between the business unit culture and intention to share knowledge is significant in FRPDC.

2. Methodology:

Sample

A sample of 214 employees including (64%) males and (36%) females working in different branches of Fars Regional Power Distribution Company (FRPDC) were selected using stratified random sampling method. FRPDC is the state power distribution company of Fars Province in Iran.

Measures:

For assessing the collaborative work climate, the Collaborative Climate Survey (CCS) was used. This measure includes four dimensions for measuring collaborative work climate; work group support, immediate supervisor, employee attitude, and business unit culture. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient estimates calculated for this instrument showed internal reliability; its value was 0.82. Also knowledge sharing behavior was assessed by the instrument of Bock and Kim (2002). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient calculated for this instrument showed the internal consistency of the measure (0.082).

4. Statistical Analysis and Results:

Pearson Correlation coefficients were calculated for analyzing the data. For the first hypothesis, The Pearson correlation analysis resulted in an R value of 0.636 with a p-value of 0.0001. Based on these results, H1 was supported. These results indicated that collaborative work climate positively and significantly influence the intention to knowledge sharing in the organization. Further, the strength of the relationship was 0.404 as measured by R-square, hence indicating that collaborative work climate exerted a moderate to high influence on intention to knowledge sharing.

For the H1 hypothesis, The Pearson correlation analysis resulted in an R value of 0.582 with a p-value of 0.0001. Based on these results, H1 was supported. These results demonstrated that work group support positively and significantly influence the intention to knowledge sharing in the organization. Further, the strength of the relationship was 0.332 as measured by R-square, hence indicating

that work group support exerted a moderate influence on intention to share knowledge.

For the H2 hypothesis, The Pearson correlation analysis resulted in an R value of 0.43 with a p-value of 0.0001. Based on these results, H2 was supported. These results demonstrated that support of immediate supervisor positively and significantly influence the intention to knowledge sharing in the organization. Further, the strength of the relationship was 0.185 as measured by R-square, hence indicating that support of immediate supervisor exerted a low influence on intention to share knowledge.

For the H3 hypothesis, The Pearson correlation analysis resulted in an R value of 0.642 with a p-value of 0.0001. Based on these results, H3 was supported. These results demonstrated that employee attitude positively and significantly influence the intention to knowledge sharing in the organization. Further, the strength of the relationship was 0.413 as measured by R-square, hence indicating that employee attitude exerted a moderate to high influence on intention to share knowledge.

For the H4 hypothesis, The Pearson correlation analysis resulted in an R value of 0.58 with a p-value of 0.0001. Based on these results, H4 was supported. These results demonstrated that business unit culture positively and significantly influence the intention to share knowledge in the organization. Further, the strength of the relationship was 0.336 as measured by R-square, hence indicating that business unit culture exerted a moderate influence on intention for knowledge sharing.

5. Discussion and Conclusions:

The current study investigated the impact of collaborative work climate on intention to share knowledge amongst staff of Fars Regional Power Distribution Company (FRPDC). The results of hypotheses indicated that, the relationship between the perceptions of a collaborative climate has a significant and positive relationship with intention to share knowledge in the organization. These results can be a confirmation of Sveiby & Simons (2002). The result shows that when the employees perceive the organization more collaborative, they will tend to share knowledge more and more. Therefore for having a good rate of knowledge sharing in the organization, all managerial actions should be organized toward creation of a collaborative work climate. Managerial activities like open communication space, innovative friendly organization, reward system optimization, using transformational leadership styles, management by objective, and decentralization are advised.

Results showed that the dimensions of collaborative work climate have different effects on knowledge sharing intention. The immediate supervisor had a low impact on knowledge sharing intention and this is due to the fact that in the organization under the study the nature of work was very centralized bureaucratic. In fact, the organizational procedures, rules and obligations were very strict.

As a general conclusion, as it is pointed by Allahdadi (2011), It can be concluded a type of psychological empowerment can occur as a result of collaborative work climate and this will lead to better knowledge sharing capability amongst employees in the organizations.

The study examined the relationship between collaborative work climate and intention to share knowledge in a power and electricity company. Due to the fact that the power distribution needs very accuracy and making mistakes can lead to irreparable losses and damages, in the current organization we were faced with strict obligation reducing the authorities of middle managers and their role were low in the knowledge sharing intention. Therefore, the current study can be done in different organizations to gain a better understanding of the role of middle managers and immediate supervisors in knowledge sharing intention.

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