

Relationship between organizational learning and organizational performance among employees in physical education organizations

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ABSTRACT

The Organizational Performance Initiative is designed to help organizations respond to the increased uncertainty that surrounds their missions. The Initiative focuses on helping all organizations in all sectors of the economy, government, charitable, and business. It also focuses on helping learning institutions such as colleges and universities, standard-setting agencies, Congress, and the presidency improve their policies on behalf of greater preparedness for the many futures ahead. Based on this, the purpose of this research was to investigate the relationship between organizational learning and organizational performance among employees in physical education organizations in Isfahan. For this purpose, a total of 190 employees participated in this research. There were 100 men and 90 women, and their ages ranged from 24-42 years-old. To data collection, all subjects filled in the Organizational Learning Questionnaire (OLQ) and Organizational Performance Questionnaire (OLQ). The results showed that the correlation between overall organizational learning and organizational performance was significant at the level of $P < 0.001$. Furthermore, the correlation between organizational learning sub-scales and organizational performance was significant at the level of $P < 0.001$. Thus, the strength of the correlations obtained in the present research suggests that the overall organizational learning and its sub-scales have a significant role in organizational performance.

Key words: Organizational learning, Organizational Performance, Organization, Physical Education

INTRODUCTION

Technological advancements, dynamic customer demands, increasing globalization, the blurring of organizational boundaries, and increasing competition are all combining to produce organizational environments 'more turbulent and volatile than ever before' [1]. Given the uncertain nature of organizational environments, it is not surprising that increasing attention in the human resource development and organizational development literature has been paid to learning organizations. A recurring theme in this literature is that the adoption of some or all of the features of the

learning organization enables organizations to develop more flexible and adaptable systems that improve long-term performance [2-5].

The concepts of organizational learning and learning organization did not emerge until the 1980s, but their scientific background and principles can be traced back into many perspectives of management [6]. The idea of organizational learning is accredited to the creation of the 'action learning' process [7], which uses small groups, rigorous collection of statistical data, and the tapping of the group's positive emotional energies [6]. A few works contributed positively to open up the debate of organizational learning and subsequently the popularity of the concept [8]. Based on this evidence, Argyris (1978) defines organizational learning as the process of "detection and correction of errors." In his view organizations learn through individuals acting as agents for them: "The individuals' learning activities, in turn, are facilitated or inhibited by an ecological system of factors that may be called an organizational learning system [9]. Huber (1991) considers four constructs as integrally linked to organizational learning: knowledge acquisition, information distribution, information interpretation, and organizational memory. He clarifies that learning need not be conscious or intentional [10].

Levitt and March (1988) defined organizational learning as an evolution of the routine processes in the organization over time. "The generic term "routines" includes the forms, rules, procedures, conventions, strategies and technologies around which organizations are constructed and through which they operate. It also includes the structure of beliefs, frameworks, paradigms, codes, cultures and knowledge that buttress, elaborate and contradict the formal routines [11].

In this rapid change economics volatility and uncertainty, many organizations are striving to survive and remain competitive. In order to develop and perform, organizational learning (OL) has been regarded as one of the strategic means of archiving long-term organizational success [12-13]. Therefore, the analysis of organizational learning has become an increasingly important area recently. Various works have dealt with the analysis of this construct from differing viewpoints. Jerez-Gómez et al. (2005) mention that there are many studies that focus on this construct using a psychological approach [14], a sociological approach or from the point of view of Organizational Theory. More recently, organizational learning has been considered, from a strategic perspective, as a source of heterogeneity among organizations, as well as a basis for a possible competitive advantage [15].

Performance is a recurrent theme in most branches of management, and it is of interest to both academic scholars and practicing managers. Although the importance of the performance concept (and the broader area, organizational effectiveness) is widely recognized, the treatment of performance in research setting is perhaps one of the thorniest issues confronting the academic researcher today. With the volume of literature on this topic continually increasing, there appears to be little hope of reaching any agreement on basic terminology and definitions. Some have expressed considerable frustration with this concept. Therefore, financial performance, operational performance, and organizational effectiveness should involve in performance [16-17].

From a traditional perspective, organizational performance is commonly referred to as financial performance where considerations of budgets, assets, operations, products, services, markets and human resources are crucial in influencing the over-all bottom-line of an organization [13, 18]. As such, the financial benefits of organizational performance are often associated with organizational success [13]. However, the notion of performance embraces a far wider dimension of interpretations. With the focus on organizational learning, the performance outcomes associated with it need to be more carefully dealt with. The importance of performance measurement system is manifold. Not only does it demonstrate how an organization does, how well it does it and how much progress it makes over time in archiving its goals, most importantly, it helps to manage organizational change [19]. Hence, qualitative measures are more appropriate in investigating these key objectives that dominate and direct decision-making and action-taking levels [13]. Based on this documents and evidences the purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between organizational learning and performance among employees in physical education organizations in Isfahan.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was the correlation study design. Participants included 190 employees in physical education organizations from Isfahan city. There were 100 men and 90 women, and their ages ranged from 24-42 years-old.

Instruments

To data collection, all subjects filled in the Organizational Learning Questionnaire (OLQ) and the Organizational performance Questionnaire (OPQ). The Organizational Learning Questionnaire (OLQ) asks about impact of various elements of organizational learning process and innovations on organizational performance. The questionnaire itself has three main parts. The first part assesses various elements of organizational learning process in organization. The second part addresses the issue of innovativeness. The third part aims to assess performance of organization. This questionnaire consist 85 questions in 5-point Likert scale. Also, the Organizational performance Questionnaire (OPQ) was used to determined performance in organization among participants. Also, the collected data was analyzed by descriptive (mean and standard deviation) and inferential (Pearson's correlation test) statistical tests at the $P < 0.05$ significant level with SPSS Version 15.

RESULTS

In this research, table 1 shows the mean (M) and standard deviations (SD) of organizational learning sub scales and observational performance among physical education teachers.

Table1. Means and Standard Deviations variables used in this research

Variables	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Organizational performance	21.4	2.6
Overall Organizational Learning	283.5	4.1
Elements Of Organizational Learning	135.5	2.6
Issue Of Innovativeness	77.1	2.1
Performance Of Organization	69.5	2.4

In addition, the matrix correlation among all variables that used in this research presented in table 2. Results showed that the correlation between overall organizational learning and organizational performance was significant at the level of $P < 0.05$. Furthermore, the correlation between organizational learning sub-scales and organizational performance was significant at the level of $P < 0.001$.

Table 2. Matrix correlation between knowledge management and organizational learning

Variables	Overall Organizational Learning	Elements Of Organizational Learning	Issue Of Innovativeness	Performance Of Organization
Organizational performance	0.93**	0.87**	0.89**	0.87**

*** Significant at the level of $P < 0.001$*

CONCLUSION

Results showed that the significant and meaningful correlations between overall organizational learning and its sub-scales with organizational performance (see table 2). Thus, the strength of the correlations obtained in the present research suggests that the overall organizational learning and its sub-scales have a significant role in organizational performance. These results were consistence with pervious results. In these field a few studies have emerged in recent times that have scrutinized the relationship between organizational learning process and organizational performance [20-23]. Previous studies that underline the positive effects that organizational learning has on business performance differ on what they understand by performance [24]. Although these outcomes are important, there may be more proximate outcomes that may mediate the relationship with financial results. For example, outcomes of organizational learning behaviors may include changes in values and assumptions [25], skills [26], systems and structures [11], core competencies, organizational innovativeness and competitiveness [27]. It has been established, on the base of credit union industry in Ohio and Slovenian companies with more than 100 employees in 2003 and 2004 [28] that better developed organizational learning contributes to improved organizational performance in financial as well as nonfinancial terms. Many authors consider organizational learning as the fundamental aspect of competitiveness and link it with knowledge acquisition and performance improvement. Although links between learning and business performance have often been assumed, there is a little empirical evidence to support this perspective, especially in terms of transitional economies. Positive changes in the way people act (behavioral changes) and perceive their internal and external environments (cognitive changes) are expected to have a positive impact on organizational performance [27-28]. Jones (2000) emphasizes the importance of organizational learning for organizational performance defining it as 'a process through which managers try to increase organizational

members' capabilities in order to understand better and manage an organization and its environment to accept decisions that increase organizational performance on a continuous basis' [29].

The most important finding of this study is the empirical evidence about existence of strong, statistically significant, positive relationship between organizational learning and organizational performance. In another words, organizations which develop their learning processes congruently will increase their performance. The study also revealed, and confirmed some earlier findings, that financial measures alone are not good predictors of organizational performance. Furthermore, it showed that employees' measures are the most strongly related with learning capability of an organization, while aforementioned financial measures are the weakest related. Also, we have determined that 'behavioral and cognitive changes' is the organizational learning construct variable which is the most important for enhancing organizational performance what is in accordance with the fact that information without action does not lead to true learning.

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