Synthesized Framework: Establishing a Causal Model of Organizational Learning, Knowledge Management, Knowledge-Sharing Behavior, and Organizational Performance

Kijpokin Kasemsap
Faculty of Management Sciences, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Bangkok, Thailand
kijpokinkasemsap@yahoo.com

Abstract: Research objectives were to determine a synthesized framework and to establish a causal model of organizational learning, knowledge management, knowledge-sharing behavior, and organizational performance of cement mill employees in Thailand. The study reported the responses of 587 operational employees from 11 cement mills operating in different parts of Thailand. Data were analyzed with descriptive statistics using SPSS (version 11.5) and assessed with confirmatory factor analysis to confirm the heterogeneity of all constructs and path analysis to test the cause and effect relationships among main constructs of the study using LISREL (version 8) on a structured questionnaire containing standard scales of organizational learning, knowledge management, knowledge-sharing behavior, and organizational performance to determine the relationships of organizational learning, knowledge management, knowledge-sharing behavior, and organizational performance. Research findings indicated that dimensions of organizational learning, knowledge management, and knowledge-sharing behavior have mediated the positive effect on organizational performance. Knowledge-sharing behavior fully mediates the relationships between organizational learning and organizational performance and between knowledge management and organizational performance. Furthermore, organizational learning is positively correlated with knowledge management.

Keywords: Knowledge Management, Knowledge-Sharing Behavior, Organizational Learning, Organizational Performance

I. INTRODUCTION

Organizational performance is commonly used as a dependent variable for business research and is considered to be one of the most important constructs in the field of management [1]. Measuring and analyzing organizational performance has an important role in turning goals into reality, which is paramount to the success and survival of an organization [2]. Knowledge sharing is regarded as the informal communication process involving the sharing of knowledge between co-workers [3]. Organizational members are better equipped with skills and knowledge when they engage in knowledge sharing [4]. Effectively communicated knowledge benefits all of the involved organizational factors by improving their performance and eventually improving financial, marketing, and general outcomes of the organization [5]. Knowledge is considered the most important resource in organizations [6]. Knowledge is posited in an organization as a strategic asset which can help the firm maintain its competitive ability in a turbulent environment [7]. Knowledge management has been shown to be a powerful ingredient in the success of organizations [8]. Knowledge management is a systematic and integrative process of coordinating organization-wide activities of acquiring, creating, storing, sharing, diffusing, developing, and deploying
knowledge by individuals and groups in the pursuit of major organizational goals [9]. Knowledge management is composed of knowledge adoption, knowledge coding, knowledge storage, knowledge sharing, and knowledge utilization [10]. Knowledge sharing is the most important aspect [10]. Knowledge management is aimed at getting people to innovate, collaborate, and make correct decisions efficiently; it is aimed at getting people to act by focusing on high-quality knowledge [11].

The characteristics and problems of knowledge do not differ because of different geographic locations [12]. Knowledge management is dependent on a well-functioning human resource management and the employees’ perceived behavior in knowledge creation, knowledge sharing, and knowledge application [13]. Learning is the power of growth, and individual is also the resource of business growth [14]. The capability of controlling information means a learning achievement [15]. Organizational learning means a procedure through which knowledge is obtained and created to improve behavior modes [16]. Organizational learning is a type of experience conclusion and process to explore and create new knowledge, together with the systematic infusion of knowledge of organizational input [17].

Organizational learning as the development of knowledge related to relationships among actions, consequences, and work environment [14]. If the general organizations are required to develop learning organizations, the administrators shall previously cultivate the learning capability of individuals and working teams [18]. In addition, it is more necessary to create the climate and culture of organizations’ learning [19]. Creating and sustaining knowledge sharing culture can be difficult because one of the challenges faced is that of getting people to be willing to share their knowledge with other colleagues [20]. As one of knowledge-centered activity, knowledge sharing is the fundamental means through which employees can contribute to knowledge application, innovation, and ultimately the competitive advantage of the organization [21]. Knowledge sharing between employees and teams allows organizations to exploit and capitalize on knowledge-based resources [22] [23].

Knowledge sharing refers to the provision of task information and know-how to help others and to collaborate with others to solve problems, develop new ideas, or implement policies or procedures [10]. Knowledge sharing can occur via written correspondence or face-to-face communications through networking with other experts, or documenting, organizing, and capturing knowledge for others [10]. Knowledge sharing contributes to the creation and utilization of knowledge, and therefore has an important role in the process of knowledge management [10]. Knowledge sharing causes organizational members to gather knowledge more conveniently and rapidly, organizational members recreate and use knowledge by sharing knowledge to enhance knowledge management performance [10].

Knowledge sharing can facilitate organizational innovation, core capability [24], and competitive advantage [25]. Knowledge creation typically occurs through the exchange and integration of knowledge elements [26]. The goal of knowledge transfer is to enhance organizational action power through shared vision and utilization of past experience, which is also perceived as the process of organizational learning [27]. Levels of organizational learning have a significant impact on knowledge integration, knowledge management capability, and firm innovation ability [28]. There is a positive relationship between organizational learning and knowledge management capability [29].

One of the organizational capabilities is the ability to learn to adapt to the fast-changing competitive global environment [30]. The goal of learning is to enhance employees’ knowledge application and ability in this information age [30]. Knowledge management and organizational learning play their own unique roles in creating organizational
capabilities, which lead to superior performance [31]. Learning capacity and knowledge capability factors are sources of an organization’s competitive advantage [32]. In order to improve the performance of cross-cultural enterprises, four principles of organizational learning can be applied (i.e., setting goal, adjusting flexibility with HR requirement, providing clear guidelines, and creating cross-cultural interactions or teams) [33].

Team learning positively influences both task performance and quality of interpersonal relations [34]. Organizational learning has the greatest positive relationship with process innovation in knowledge transfer to enhance organizational performance [35]. There is a positive link between organizational learning and organizational performance [36]. Their findings showed applying organizational learning influences corporate performance. Learning orientation and organizational memory are related to important organizational outcomes, not only when firms have different levels of environment turbulence but also when firms have the same level of environmental turbulence [37]. There are three components in the knowledge management systems that influence firm performance: the firm’s ability to produce new knowledge, its ability to build on that knowledge, and its effectiveness in capturing a high proportion of subsequent spin-offs [38].

Combining human resource management initiatives with those of knowledge management will help improve organizational performance [39]. Organizations must know how to transfer knowledge and expertise from experts to people [40]. Knowledge sharing among individuals has become one of the most important elements of effective knowledge processing [41]. Knowledge sharing is strongly related to team performance [10], reduction in production costs [42], firm innovation capacities [43], faster completion of new product development projects [44], and firm performance, including revenue and sales growth from new services and products [45].

II. MATERIAL AND METHODS

Data of this study were collected from 587 operational employees from 9,446 operational employees working in the 11 cement mills in Thailand by using Yamane’s formula [46] for a 96% confidence level with a 4% margin of error by the proportional random sampling method. All the constructs were operationalized based on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Data were analyzed with descriptive statistics using SPSS (version 11.5) and assessed with confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to confirm the heterogeneity of all constructs and path analysis [47] to detect the cause-effect relationships among various dimensions of main constructs of the study using LISREL (version 8) on a structured questionnaire containing standard scales of organizational learning, knowledge management, knowledge-sharing behavior, and organizational performance, besides some demographic details like age, education, and tenure with the organization.

Based on other recent studies [48], four factors have been analyzed and extracted, and consequently used in the present study to measure organizational learning with 15 items of four elements of information-sharing patterns, inquiry climate, learning practices, and achievement mindset. Knowledge management was measured using questionnaire developed by [49] comprising three elements of knowledge acquisition, knowledge dissemination, and responsive to knowledge. Knowledge sharing behavior was measured by the 13-item scale adapted from [50] comprising three factors, namely organizational knowledge, task knowledge, and interpersonal knowledge. Organizational performance was assessed using the questionnaire developed by [51] with 25 items measuring seven elements of product or service quality, product or service innovation, employee attraction, employee retention, customer satisfaction, management and employee relations, and employee relations.
III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A synthesized framework and causal model are established. Research findings indicated that dimensions of organizational learning, knowledge management, and knowledge-sharing behavior have mediated positive effect on organizational performance. Knowledge-sharing behavior fully mediates the relationships between organizational learning and organizational performance and between knowledge management and organizational performance. Furthermore, organizational learning is positively correlated with knowledge management.

According to the results, improving knowledge-sharing behavior and organizational performance requires the adoption of the appropriate organizational learning in order to enhance the level of knowledge management and in turn the levels of both knowledge-sharing behavior and organizational performance.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The purposes of this study were to determine a synthesized framework and to establish a causal model of organizational learning, knowledge management, knowledge-sharing behavior, and organizational performance for cement mill employees in Thailand. The findings showed that the organizational learning, knowledge management, and knowledge-sharing behavior have the strength to mediate positive effect on organizational performance. In relation to the synthesized framework, this result was the extent to which knowledge-sharing behavior fully mediates the relationships between organizational learning and organizational performance and between knowledge management and organizational performance. Furthermore, organizational learning is positively correlated with knowledge management.

Organizational learning and knowledge management help organizations move toward better organizational performance through knowledge-sharing behavior. Organizations aiming to increase organizational performance and achieve business goals should focus on developing organizational learning, knowledge management, and knowledge-sharing behavior. Future research can benefit from a larger sample to bring more statistical power and a higher degree of representation.

This study was done by empirically investigating Thai firms. Cultural limitation should be considered and it is suggested that future research should be done in other cultural contexts and other variables (i.e., organizational culture, leadership style, career commitment, empowerment, job involvement, and employee engagement) to increase
organizational performance and achieve business goals.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT
The author would like to express thanks for all the invaluable support obtained from the university lecturers at the Business Administration doctoral program in the Faculty of Management Sciences, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University.

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