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Relationship between Workgroup Emotional Climate (WEC) and Knowledge Sharing in the Knowledge-Based Companies of Iran

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ABSTRACT

This research was conducted to investigate the effect of workgroup emotional climate (WEC) on knowledge sharing in the knowledge-based companies of Iran. The research ahead is applied and its approach is descriptive-survey. In this research, senior and middle managers of the knowledge-based companies of north Khorasan province in Iran were considered as statistical population, the number of whom was 250 people. Based on the Cochran's formula, 148 statistical samples were required for this population. In the present research, the available stratified sampling method has been used to select statistical samples. The research data collection tool was a researcher-made questionnaire consisting of two standard questionnaires containing 20 items in themselves. The validity of this questionnaire was investigated and confirmed through face validity and confirmatory factor analysis methods. The reliability of the questionnaire was also investigated and confirmed by Cronbach's alpha method. The data obtained from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive and inferential methods and through SPSS and LISREL software. At the end, the research results showed that in the population under study, WEC has a significant impact on knowledge sharing.

INTRODUCTION

Undoubtedly knowledge is one of the most significant organizational resources that would create a sustainable competitive advantage in the knowledge economy (Gelard et al., 2014; Philsoophian et al., 2016). It is accounted as a valuable asset that should be managed by knowledge processes- such as acquiring, developing, storing, sharing and reusing systematically to improve organizational performance. One of the

crucial and most challenging processes of knowledge management is knowledge sharing (Dehghani et al., 2015). The main reason is that knowledge sharing is a multifaceted construct that lots of factors influence its occurrence, such as the nature of shared knowledge, people motivation to share their knowledge, attitudes and intentions, opportunities to share, culture, psychological aspects, behavioral aspects, and etc. Knowledge sharing has drawn significant attention from researchers in the managerial field; however, there is no consensus on the definition of knowledge sharing. In most research knowledge sharing has described as the informal communication process involving the flow of knowledge among individuals (Afshar Jalili and Salempour, 2019).

Emotion, as a complex and structured phenomenon, is an affective response to what happens in the environment. It is a cognitive representation of the event's meaning for an individual. Emotion is the outcome of assessing situations, and thus, that is the result of individual emotional characteristics interacting with environmental characteristics (Liu and Härtel, 2013). According to the cognitive appraisal theories of emotion, emotional work events influence occupational attitudes and behaviors (Härtel et al., 2008).

According to Liu et al. (2014), two dimensions were deployed to define WEC. The first one is valence, which often referred to in classification as pleasure and displeasure or positive and negative, is an essential dimension of subjective experience. Next is the interpersonal dimension. While emotions are not only just personal bodily states but also social phenomena, they can be differentiated as other-focused (emotions associated with interpersonal engagement) and ego-focused (emotions associated with individual states and interpersonal disengagement). Combining two dimensions, we would have four different types of WEC including ego-focused positive climate (EP), ego-focused negative climate (EN), other-focused positive climate (OP) and other-focused negative climate (ON) (Liu et al., 2014).

There is some research reveal that knowledge sharing and organizational citizenship behaviors are affected by WEC. Veitch and Griffitt (1976) depicted that there is a positive relationship between positive affect and cooperativeness. The other research illustrated the relationship between positive affect and helping behavior, which it could be called as altruism in OCB literature. Another WEC study found that workgroup emotional climate is a predictor of organizational citizenship behavior (Liu et al., 2014; Teng et al, 2020). On the other hand, there is a relationship between positive affect and prosocial behaviors, such as knowledge sharing. The findings of a study shown that the team members have more tendency to share their knowledge in case they are happier with their colleagues, which accents the importance of people emotional situation on knowledge sharing (Afshar Jalili and Salempour, 2019).

With this explanation, it should be noted that the initial studies showed a study gap on how the WEC affects knowledge sharing in knowledge-based companies in Iran. Therefore, the present study aimed to answer the following main question by designing a scientific and systematic research: "What effect does WEC have on knowledge sharing in Iranian

knowledge-based companies?" To answer this question, based on the study of research background, the following research model was designed (fig 1):

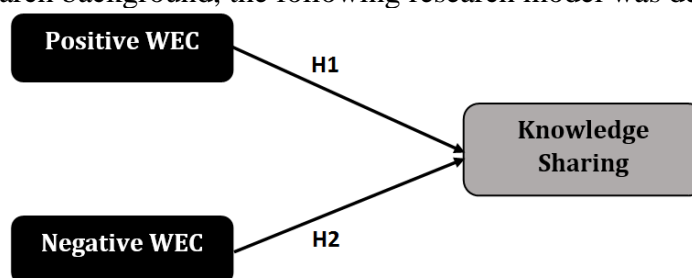


Figure 1: Research Model

Also, the research hypotheses were considered as follows:

H1: Positive WEC has a positive effect on knowledge sharing.

H2: Negative WEC has a negative effect on knowledge sharing.

METHODOLOGY

This research is applied in terms of purpose, it is descriptive-survey in terms of approach and it is of causal studies type.

Statistical Sample and Population:

The statistical population of this research was the senior and middle managers of knowledge-based companies of north Khorasan province in Iran, that according to the estimation their number was 250 people. Based on the Cochran's formula, it was specified that at least 148 statistical samples were needed in this research. It should be mentioned that in this research, statistical samples were selected according to the available stratified sampling method.

Data Collection Tool:

The main tool used in this research was a researcher-made questionnaire consisting of two standard questionnaires that totally included 20 items in themselves. In this questionnaire, the answers were designed based on the Likert's five-point spectrum (from I completely disagree to I completely agree). In the table below, the structure of this questionnaire can be observed:

Table 1: Questionnaire Structure

Variable	Relevant Items	Source
Workgroup Emotional Climate (WEC)	1 to 16	Liu et al. (2014)
Knowledge Sharing	17 to 20	Lin (2007)

In the present research, face validity was used to investigate the validity of the questionnaire; in the way that at first the questions of the questionnaire were prepared and made available to some of the experts, specialists and professors in the field of management, and after investigating and commenting by the experts and professors and editing the questions, the final questionnaire was compiled. In addition, the validity of the research questionnaire was investigated through confirmatory factor analysis. The Cronbach's alpha method was also used to investigate the

reliability of the questionnaire. Considering that Cronbach's alpha of all variables and the total questionnaire was obtained higher than 0.7, hence the reliability of the dimensions and the whole questionnaire were confirmed.

Data Analysis Tool and Method:

According to the type of research and the type of variables, descriptive statistics and inferential tests appropriate to the type of data and variables were used to analyze the statistical data and investigate the research questions using SPSS and LISREL software.

Data Analysis Results

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (Statistical Sample):

The following table presents descriptive statistics (frequency) regarding 148 statistical samples included in the research:

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage	
Gender	Male	91	0.62
	Female	57	0.38
Age	Lower than 30 years	17	0.11
	30 to 45 years	43	0.29
	45 to 60 years	49	0.33
Education level	Higher than 60 years	39	0.26
	Associate	11	0.07
	Bachelor	46	0.31
	Master	64	0.43
Activity Experience in knowledge-based companies	Ph.D.	27	0.18
	Lower than 10 years	38	0.26
	10 to 20 years	79	0.53
	20 to 30 years	19	0.13
	Higher than 30 years	12	0.08

Testing Hypotheses Using Linear Structured Relationships:

After determining the measurement models in order to evaluate the research conceptual model and also to ensure the presence or absence of a causal relationship between the research variables and to examine the appropriateness of the observed data with the research conceptual model, research hypotheses were also tested using structural equation model. The results of testing the hypotheses have been reflected in the diagram.

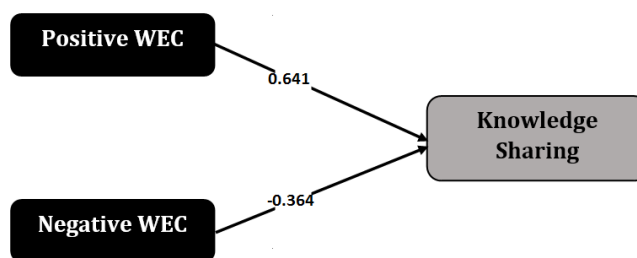


Figure 2: General Model of the Research in Standard Mode

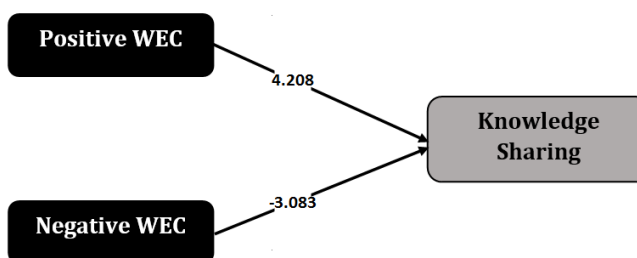


Figure 3: General Model of the Research in Significance Mode

According to Figures (2 and 3), Table (3) shows the significance coefficient and the results of testing the research hypotheses briefly:

Table 3: Test Result of Direct Hypothesis

Hypotheses	Path		Standard	Significance	Result
	from	to			
H1	PWEC	KS	0.641	4.208	Confirmed
H2	NWEC	KS	-0.364	-3.083	Confirmed

Conclusions and suggestions

The test of research hypotheses presented two very definite and definite results. Testing the first hypothesis showed that a positive emotional atmosphere in the working groups of knowledge-based companies can have a positive effect on knowledge sharing among employees. This means that if managers of knowledge-based companies can create a more positive emotional atmosphere in their organization, they can expect that knowledge sharing among employees will also increase. Testing the second hypothesis showed that a negative emotional atmosphere in the working groups of knowledge-based companies can negatively affect the sharing of knowledge among employees. This means that the negative emotional atmosphere in knowledge-based companies is one of the factors reducing knowledge sharing behavior among employees. Accordingly, the managers of such companies are suggested to try to create a positive emotional atmosphere in companies by using appropriate strategies such as coaching, collective decision making, reducing conflict, team building, promoting creativity and innovation, and so on. Create under their management to strengthen knowledge sharing among employees and achieve better organizational results.

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