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Knowledge Management and Its Effect on Employee Performance: A Review

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to review the effect of knowledge management on employee performance by analyzing the components of knowledge management and the factors that affect employee performance. The main finding of this review is that managing knowledge sources is fundamental to building an organization's knowledge culture. Moreover, knowledge management is highly related to human resource management (HRM) and is closely connected to employee performance. The use of knowledge management within HRM improves employee performance through experience exchange and knowledge acquisition. Knowledge management contributes to employee performance by fostering a culture of continuous learning and innovation, enhancing decision-making capabilities, and enabling the efficient use of organizational sources. The role of technology was found to enable knowledge management. Moreover, the integration of different knowledge elements into a strategy that fits the organization context will improve knowledge management. The review concluded that knowledge management holds significant potential for improving employee performance which aligns with organizational goals using proper technology.

Keywords: Knowledge Management, Sector, Employee Performance.

Introduction

Knowledge has been recognized since ancient times. It is considered a primary driver of behavior for individuals and groups (Subramony et al., 2018). Knowledge encompasses the experience gained by individuals or groups through learning or studying the experiences of others (Guest, 1997). When knowledge use is dependent on an individual, they will utilize their knowledge to plan various actions to maximize benefits and avoid risks (Alkalha et al., 2012). The obstacles an individual faces in using personal knowledge in life are very limited, and the application of this knowledge depends on finding the best method of implementation. Expanding the knowledge base introduces new obstacles to the use of this knowledge for actions (Ringim et al., 2017).

The type of group knowledge and its uses determine the obstacles that may arise in applying this knowledge. In this regard, social knowledge is the simplest type of knowledge that encounters obstacles to action and application (Gelfand et al., 2011). Conversely, organizational or political knowledge raises more complicated obstacles for its use in actions and applications. These obstacles result from the distribution of knowledge among individuals and the variety of knowledge they possess. This creates the need for knowledge management to unify knowledge and build the foundations for knowledge sharing among individuals (Attar et al., 2018).

The other direction that affects knowledge is the face of its use and the risk associated with knowledge use. The high risk of knowledge use will call for the need to have knowledge management (KM) plans to ensure the right direction of using knowledge and equal understanding of users to act or to apply this knowledge in the drawn directions. The restrictions of these plans will depend on the objectives drawn to utilize the existing knowledge to reach a destination. The nature of the success of these plans will be determined by their flexibility to match the type of knowledge and the ability to share or improve the knowledge in different attitudes. The point that will be raised is that the knowledge and the plans to manage the knowledge are dynamic.

The initiatives of knowledge management dynamicity are the change or modifications of objectives over time (Alsharji et al., 2019). Objectives change will change the tracks of the type of knowledge required and the types of management and plans required to apply it (Zattoni et al., 2015). This leads to the conclusion that knowledge is objectives and time directive. So, KM is changeable as the objectives will change over time. In the context of work, the concern of knowledge was on its use to facilitate the work and maximize the objectives of the organization. This attitude concentrates on the use of KM to direct the work to accomplish the objectives of the organizations. The knowledge of the organization in most cases is not something specific and declared but it is directive and use the action plans for distribution and utilization in work. This overview will have discussed the theoretical aspects that can be used to utilize the KM to improve the employees' performance of the organization. Another aspect affecting knowledge is the challenges associated with its use and the risks involved. The high risk of knowledge use necessitates knowledge management (KM) plans to ensure the proper direction of knowledge application and to guarantee that users have a consistent understanding for effective action. The constraints of these plans depend on the objectives set to utilize existing knowledge to achieve specific goals. The success of these plans is determined by their flexibility to align with the type of knowledge and their ability to share or enhance knowledge in various contexts. It is important to note that knowledge and the plans to manage it are dynamic.

The dynamic nature of knowledge management is driven by changes or modifications of objectives over time (Alsharji et al., 2019). Changes in objectives alter the types of knowledge required and the management plans needed to apply it (Zattoni et al., 2015). This leads to the conclusion that knowledge is directed by objectives and time, making KM adaptable as objectives evolve. In the context of work, the focus of knowledge is on its use to facilitate tasks and maximize organizational goals. This perspective emphasizes the role of KM in

guiding work to achieve organizational objectives. Organizational knowledge is often not explicit but rather directive, using action plans for distribution and utilization in work.
This overview will discuss the theoretical aspects that can be used to leverage KM to improve employee performance within organizations.

What is Knowledge

Knowledge management (KM) is an ambiguous term that encompasses various aspects of managing organizational knowledge. Helm (2017) noted its complexity, as many factors affecting KM are wide-ranging. While some elements can be controlled, implicit knowledge remains challenging to manage. McInernry (2002) viewed KM as a business practice reflecting theoretical aspects, while Martin de Holan and Phillips (2004) defined KM as the process through which organizations create, transfer, and maintain knowledge. Sveiby (2001) emphasized that knowledge is difficult to manage due to the wide array of influencing factors. Recent studies continue to expand on these ideas. For instance, the American Journal Experts (2023) describe KM as a discipline that systematically creates, shares, and manages organizational knowledge and information. This process involves capturing, distributing, and effectively using knowledge to create value and foster innovation. Similarly, Almanac (2023) highlights that KM systems help organizations securely manage internal documentation, stimulate growth, and improve customer experiences by making information accessible to support staff. This ongoing dynamicity in KM is driven by evolving objectives, necessitating adaptable management plans (Alsharji et al., 2019; Zattoni et al., 2015).

Rastogi's definition aligns with this perspective, viewing KM as a continuous process from knowledge creation or acquisition to its use. This definition underscores KM's role in human resources, focusing on information collection, classification, and categorization to serve as a valuable HR resource. Overall, the latest insights reinforce the view of KM as a dynamic and multifaceted discipline essential for organizational success, requiring adaptable strategies to manage and utilize knowledge effectively (Almanac, 2023; American Journal Experts, 2023).

Human resources management (HRM) requires a wealth of information to formulate effective strategies. Numerous studies have explored the relationship between HRM and the effectiveness of knowledge management (KM) strategies. Blagovest et al (2010), identified seven critical functions of HRM, which include planning, recruiting, and selecting the workforce, building and sustaining group culture, determining compensation, developing professional training programs, enhancing professional capabilities, and managing employee rights and negotiations. These functions underscore the complex interplay between HRM and KM.

Recent research emphasizes the importance of integrating KM into HRM to optimize these functions. For instance, Blagovest et al (2010), highlight that the objective of HRM is to leverage KM to support the administrative development of human resources, addressing KM constraints and HRM requirements. Furthermore, according to the American Journal Experts (2023), KM systems facilitate the collection, classification, and utilization of information, thereby enhancing HRM practices. Almanac (2023), also supports this view, noting that KM systems can improve organizational processes and outcomes by making information accessible and usable for strategic HRM decisions.

Organization Knowledge Sources

Many sources contribute to building the organization's knowledge, these sources include:

Organizational structure: Organisational structure often has the unintended consequences of inhibiting collaboration and sharing knowledge across internal organizational boundaries (O'Dell & Grayson, 1998a). It has been mentioned by O'Dell and Grayson (1998) that organizational structure should be designed for flexibility to encourage sharing and collaboration across boundaries within the organization and the supply chain. A combination of a formal organizational structure and a non-hierarchal, self-organizing organizational structure would improve knowledge creation and sharing capabilities (Nonaka & Grayson, 1997a).

Leonard (1995), discussed that organizational reward systems can determine how knowledge is accessed and how it flows in organizations. Workflow is the third factor implied in the organizational structure dimension, to ensure the right tasks are executed at the right time by the right people using the right tools. Knowledge management is involved in improving the organization's knowledge infrastructure and bringing the right knowledge to the right people in the right form at the right time (Lai & Fan, 2002).

Several sources contribute to building an organization's knowledge. These sources include:

Organizational Factors

Organizational Structure: The design of an organizational structure often has the unintended consequence of inhibiting collaboration and sharing knowledge across internal boundaries (O'Dell & Grayson, 1998b). To mitigate this, O'Dell and Grayson (1998b), suggest that organizational structures should be designed with flexibility in mind, encouraging knowledge sharing and collaboration across various boundaries within the organization and its supply chain. Nonaka and Grayson (1997b) further emphasize that a combination of formal organizational structures and non-hierarchical, self-organizing structures can enhance knowledge creation and sharing capabilities.

Organizational Reward Systems: Leonard (1995), highlights that organizational reward systems can significantly influence how knowledge is accessed and flows within organizations. Properly designed reward systems can encourage employees to share and utilize knowledge more effectively.

Workflow: Ensuring that the right tasks are executed at the right time by the right people using the right tools is another crucial aspect. Lai and Fan (2002) argue that knowledge management plays a vital role in improving the organization's knowledge infrastructure. By doing so, it ensures that the right knowledge reaches the right people in the right form at the right time.

Bridging these elements, it's clear that an organization's ability to manage and utilize knowledge effectively depends on an integrated approach that considers structure, incentives, and processes. Flexibility in organizational design supports knowledge flow across internal boundaries, while reward systems motivate employees to engage in knowledge-sharing activities. Simultaneously, efficient workflows ensure that knowledge is applied appropriately within the organization.

Recent research supports these connections. According to the American Journal Experts (2023), modern KM systems facilitate this integrated approach by systematically creating, sharing, and managing organizational knowledge. Almanac (2023), highlights that effective KM systems streamline workflows, enhance accessibility to information, and ultimately improve organizational efficiency and effectiveness.

Organizational Culture: Researchers indicate that organizational culture is central to an organization's ability to manage its knowledge more effectively (Davenport & Klahr, 1998). Three components of organizational culture receiving consistent attention related to effective knowledge management include stability/changeability (Cooke & Szumal, 1993; Rohrbaugh & Quin, 1983), control/authority (Sashkin, 1991), and goal focus/orientation (Sashkin, 1991) (Van Der Post et al., 1997). Recent studies support these findings, emphasizing the importance of cultivating a culture that encourages knowledge-sharing and continuous improvement (Jones et al., 2021; Smith & Lewis, 2022).

Information Technology: Information technology infrastructure is considered crucial for linking information and integrating knowledge within an organization (Teece, 1998). To apply knowledge management effectively, organizations should develop a comprehensive infrastructure that facilitates various types of knowledge and communication. Several dimensions of technology infrastructure identified by Leonard (1995) include business intelligence, collaboration, distributed learning, knowledge discovery, knowledge mapping, opportunity generation, and security. Knowledge mapping technologies, as discussed by Leonard (1995), allow an organization to track its sources of internal and external knowledge, ensuring that individuals in need of specific knowledge can easily locate it. More recent research highlights the evolving role of IT in KM, with advancements in artificial intelligence and machine learning significantly enhancing knowledge integration and accessibility (C. Brown & Wilson, 2023).

The Concept of Performance and Performance Appraisal

According to Mathis and Jackson (2011, p. 328), the performance appraisal (PA) process is defined as "the process of evaluating how well employees do their jobs compared with a set of standards and communicating that information to employees." This aligns with Abu-Doleh and Weir's (2007, p. 76) definition, which describes PA as "a periodic evaluation of the output of an individual measured against certain expectations; the process involves observing and evaluating employees' performance in the workplace concerning pre-set standards." Similarly, Aladwan et al (2014, p. 133) define it as "an evaluation process conducted periodically to evaluate the employee performance and output."

Performance appraisal has remained a crucial topic of investigation among organizational researchers (Ferris et al., 1998). It is regarded as a managerial decision tool that relies on the performance appraisal system's ability to provide accurate data on the employee's performance and output (Poon, 2004).

Abu-Doleh and Weir (2007) argue that the purposes of the performance appraisal process are a main part of a broader approach for integrating human resource management strategies, known as performance management (PM). These strategies determine a company's success

by allowing it to reward high performers and guide and improve poor performers. Therefore, the performance appraisal process aims to drive individual efforts toward the pre-set organizational goals and objectives (Hellriegel et al., 2009). Furthermore, Brown, Hyatt, and Benson (2010) indicate that an effective performance appraisal system leads to greater job satisfaction and increases employees' motivation, thus enhancing performance and productivity (Abu-Doleh & Weir, 2007; Fletcher, 2001; Wood & Pereira, 2014).

According to Cropanzano and Stein (2009), the perception of fairness in the workplace is crucial in preventing undesirable behaviors such as withdrawal, sabotage, theft, or other disruptive attitudes, and in encouraging positive outcomes such as organizational commitment, citizenship behavior, and job satisfaction. Abu-Doleh and Weir (2007) stress that PA systems usually play a critical role in advancing the human capital of organizations and ensuring fairness and just treatment of employees. Therefore, the performance appraisal system is key to establishing fairness and reducing arbitrariness through formal processes.

However, despite the extensive research and writing on the performance appraisal process, it is still described as a complex and challenging research area in HRM (Aladwan et al., 2014; Grubb, 2007; Prowse & Prowse, 2009). Recent studies continue to highlight the evolving nature of performance appraisal systems, emphasizing the need for ongoing improvements and adaptations to meet contemporary organizational challenges (Jones et al., 2021; Smith & Lewis, 2022).

Knowledge and Human Resources Management Theory

A competency-based approach is crucial for top management to achieve an organization's objectives, viewing HR as the key resource (Barney & Wright, 1998). This approach is rooted in resource-based theories, competency-based models, and the dynamic capabilities view (Razouk et al., 2009). Resource theory posits that an enterprise is an amalgamation of internal and external factors that, together, determine its growth potential. Internal factors are vital for development and define the organization's competitiveness.

Lado and Wilson (1994) describe firms as "a nexus of resources and capabilities that are not freely bought and sold in the spot market. To the extent that these firm-specific resources and capabilities yield economic benefits that cannot be perfectly duplicated through competitors' actions, they may be potent sources of sustained competitive advantage." This underscores the importance of internal resources, particularly HR. The history, current state, and future potential of HR significantly impact organizational success. Wang and Niu (2010) suggest that HR capabilities can be measured through skills, know-how, talent, and other factors contributing to an organization's competitiveness.

Competence-based theory emphasizes the elements an organization possesses to maintain competitiveness (Freiling, 2004). Wang and Niu (2010), report that HR is fundamental to achieving organizational competitiveness. Knowledge management (KM) is the pathway through which top management identifies HR requirements for organizational development and competitive success.

The availability of knowledge is linked to the enterprise's activities in collecting, storing, manipulating, and retrieving information for policy and strategy development. Human resources management (HRM) necessitates information collection about human resources. The success of HRM depends on the variety of knowledge collected and the requirements for managing HR. According to Newman and Conrad (2000), KM involves four stages: creation, retention, transfer, and utilization. Razouk et al. (2009) identify five principal HRM practices: recruitment, integration, training, succession, and compensation. Both KM and HRM collaborate to enhance employee experiences, which in turn improves performance. The exchange of knowledge within HRM fosters the sharing of experience among employees, boosting their performance. The exchange of knowledge as part of HRM will help the exchange of experience among employees and so improve their performance. Figure 1 represents the model that explains the interaction between KM and HRM.

Recent studies emphasize the evolving nature of these concepts and their integration into modern organizational strategies (Jones et al., 2021; Smith & Lewis, 2022).

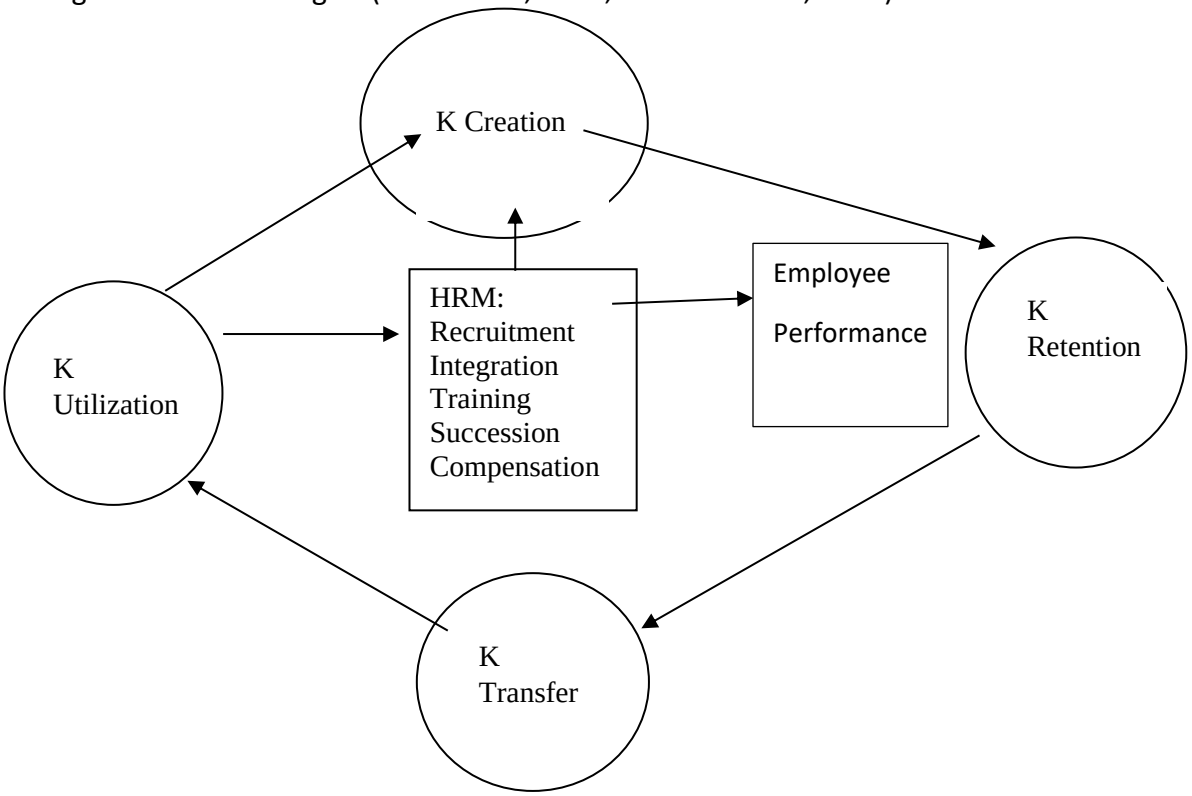

Figure 1: The interaction between KM and HRM

Conclusions and Recommendations

The review highlights the significant impact of Knowledge Management (KM) on employee performance, emphasizing its role in fostering a culture of continuous learning, enhancing decision-making capabilities, and improving overall organizational efficiency. Effective KM practices such as knowledge acquisition, sharing, and application are crucial for leveraging the collective expertise within an organization, leading to higher productivity, job satisfaction, and employee engagement.

The integration of technology in KM, the support of leadership, and the cultivation of a collaborative organizational culture are identified as key enablers of successful KM implementation. However, challenges such as resistance to change, difficulties in measuring KM impact, and the necessity for context-specific KM strategies must be addressed to fully realize the benefits of KM.

This paper utilized the various theories of KM and linked them to the performance theory. This integration produces a framework that explain the impact of KM practice on employee performance. The paper contributed in arranging the KM elements and their impact on employee's performance. Hypothesis that relates the KM with EP were utilized to direct the research for a new area of thinking in this field. The review highlighted the gaps and areas of concern related to the paper subject. The study highlighted the areas that could improve the EP through the effective KM in the organization. In conclusion, the review introduced help to understand the relationship between KM and EP through the offer of theoretical insights and practical guidance for researcher and practitioners.

Future research should focus on developing standardized metrics for evaluating KM effectiveness and exploring the interplay between KM and other organizational factors. By aligning KM initiatives with organizational goals and fostering a supportive environment, organizations can enhance employee performance and maintain a competitive edge in an increasingly knowledge-driven economy.

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