

THE ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE IN ENCOURAGING EMPLOYEES TO SHARE KNOWLEDGE

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Abstract

Knowledge management is the most important task of leading organizations in knowledge-based era. One of the most important measures of knowledge management is to create the perfect context for knowledge sharing among members of the organization, especially implicit knowledge. One of the main prerequisites for this work is the presence of organizational culture which is facilitating and supporting type. Therefore in this study, the simultaneous impact of four dimensions of organizational culture (a culture of learning, cooperation culture, knowledge sharing culture and a culture of trust) on implicit knowledge sharing is investigated. The research method is descriptive and correlational. The population also includes 905 managers and experts of a private service company in Iran that 274 subjects were selected as sample by using random sampling. Results show that dimensions of organizational culture have significant impact on facilitating implicit knowledge sharing in the organization. These results support the

necessity to develop organizational culture in relation to knowledge to encourage employees to share knowledge. For this purpose, the executive recommendations are presented.

Keywords: Knowledge Management, Organizational Culture, Culture of Learning, Cooperation Culture, Culture of Knowledge Sharing and Culture of Trust

INTRODUCTION

Resources are necessary for the survival of any organization. Among the various organizational resources, knowledge is the only distinct resource (Drucker, 2000). And it is considered to be differentiator to maintain competitive advantage of organization (Halawi and McCarthy, 2006). Therefore, organizations have approached to develop their strategic assets to survive in today's competitive and dynamic world so they can gain competitive advantage with the help of their own intangible and inimitable resources and abilities (Alavi & Leidner, 2001). Knowledge management plays a central role in transforming organizations to learning organizations or knowledge creating organizations. Therefore, it has become one of the most important tasks of organizations that seek to exploit this valuable capital (Monavarian & Asgari, 2009: 190).

Knowledge management is a complex phenomenon that its implementation is not done overnight. Implementation and effective use of knowledge management requires a fully clear understanding of factors that influence knowledge management process (Yee et al, 2006). These factors are referred as knowledge management enablers in related literature (Shami Zanjani, 2009:22). Enablers of knowledge management include building blocks that their presence is essential to improve knowledge management activities (Ichijo et al., 1998). Thus researchers have introduced and discussed of various structural, cultural, technological, leadership, human resources and ... factors as appropriate and necessary infrastructure for the successful implementation of knowledge management.

Among the various infrastructure and enablers of knowledge management, present research emphasizes the determining the critical role of organizational culture in facilitating implicit knowledge sharing in the organization; For knowledge management is social-human process more than any other aspect (Chennemaneni, 2007) and social and cultural factors have a key impact on dynamics and the likelihood of success of knowledge management practices and these infrastructures will determine whether employees are willing to actively participate in knowledge management practices or not (Asgari, 2011: 224). If the organizational culture is not prepared to change, the best knowledge management programs also may be implemented unsuccessfully and no amount of technological skills or project management skills does not result in the success of a project (Davenport and Prusak, 1998).

This research tries to explain necessary cultural requirements to encourage employees to share their implicit knowledge with others in the organization and answers this question that "how and to what extent mentioned dimensions of organizational culture (culture of learning, cooperation culture, knowledge sharing culture and culture of trust) have facilitating impact on implicit knowledge sharing and how to provide empowerment infrastructures for improving knowledge sharing in the organization with the development of these cultural dimensions.

In the following section related to knowledge management, knowledge sharing, organizational culture and their relationship will be studied and then based on this background, the conceptual model and research hypotheses will be described. In the following sections, method of collecting data, number of samples, statistical population and sampling method, the reliability and validity of questionnaire and data analysis method will be discussed. And then results will be provided and finally, on the basis of results, conclusion and practical recommendations are expressed to develop organizational culture as a facilitating infrastructure of implicit knowledge sharing.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge sharing has been described by McDermott(1999) in a way that when we say someone shares his knowledge we mean that person guides another person with his knowledge, insight and thoughts to help him see his status better. Additionally, the ideal is that person who shares his knowledge, should be aware of the goal of shared knowledge and its application and also needs and informational gaps of the person who receives knowledge.

Hislop (2009) knows the potential benefit of knowledge sharing in the rewards or incentives. Incentives can be used as tools to extract, enhance and maintain knowledge sharing behavior among employees. However, a study by Wu and Zhu (2012), Zhang and Ng (2012); Anitha (2006) and Habiba (2010) showed that incentives do not influence behaviors of knowledge sharing. It is like a trigger for knowledge sharing and cannot be a force to keep it in forming the attitude of a person. In many situations, organizational factors such as job involvement and job satisfaction, performance evaluation and recognition act as stimuli for increasing knowledge sharing behavior among employees. In addition, organizational culture, top management support and organizational communication influence knowledge sharing behavior (Sizlivati and Heng, 2015: 233).

Importance of Knowledge Sharing

Many believe that effective knowledge sharing is one of the most reliable ways of applying core competencies and gaining competitive advantage. Knowledge sharing is of such importance that many have embraced knowledge management success depends on effective knowledge sharing, as Bock and Kim (2002) believe that knowledge sharing is the most important part of knowledge management. In fact, the means by which knowledge is shared and the factors that facilitate the sharing and transferring knowledge are among the basic issues for knowledge management (Renzel, 2008:212). Knowledge sharing can be seen as an organizational innovation through its fundamental role in the creation of ideas and new business opportunities via the process of socialization and learning of personnel.

Key Success Factors of Knowledge Sharing

Effective and efficient knowledge sharing creates sustainable competitive advantage for organizations that are not easily imitated by competitors. But knowledge sharing for employees and the organization itself is worthless, unless the people, who need special knowledge, receive it at the right time and apply it. One of the problems faced by the majority of research in the field of knowledge management, is the absence of a theory and general guidelines for knowledge sharing that is applicable to all organizations, and there is no shortcuts that guarantees success in the field of knowledge-sharing and every organization has to identify key factors that ensure their success in this field, and move toward creating the sustainable competitive advantage with the investment and attention to these factors (Mc Derkut and O'Dell 2001 : 80).

Table 1: Key Factors Influencing Knowledge Sharing

Author	Factors of knowledge sharing
The & Sun(2012)	Job satisfaction, job involvement, organizational commitment, organizational citizen behavior
Wu & Zhu (2012)	Incentives, mutual benefits, increasing the credibility, loss of knowledge strength, the joy of helping others, and organizational climate and technology
Hendriks(1999)	Gaining success, responsibilities, knowledge, operational strength, promotion opportunities, job challenge
Zhang & Ng (2012)	Perceived embarrassment, bonuses, reducing workload, student feedback, personal relationships, self- efficacy of knowledge
Eze et al (2013)	Knowledge technology, motivation, reward system, confidence, leadership abilities, formalization
Fathi et al (2011)	Individualism, collectivism, social networks, trust, common purpose, drive system, metaphor orientation, self-efficacy, attitudes
Chateroglio & Varmiki (2013)	Attitude, intention, method of use of personal technology

Anitha (2006)	Incentives, mutual benefit, enhancing reputation, loss of knowledge strength, enjoy helping others, technology, organizational climate
Yee (2010)	Loss of personal competition, trust, anticipation, cooperation, learning, ability, fairness, supportive leadership, openness and information and communication technology
Jolaei (2012)	Attitudes, self-efficacy, subjective norm, rewards, social networks, trust

Source: Sizlivati and Hong, 2015, 233-234

Organizational Culture

Organizational culture is a combination of values, fundamental beliefs and behavioral models. Literature review of organizational culture showed that there are various definitions of culture. Edgar Schein defines organizational culture as a pattern of basic assumptions, values, norms, beliefs and objective symbols that are common between members of the organization and allow them to have a common understanding of the meanings (Schein, 2004). According to many scholars, organizational culture has a very important impact on the success of knowledge management projects (Davenport et al., 1998; Gould et al., 2001; Zhang Ye et al., 2006). Features of knowledge organizations include: high performance, customer orientations, emphasis on improvement, high levels of learning, innovation, orientation to excellence, flexibility and adaptability, a high level of expertise and knowledge, self-control, being active, valuable expertise and shared knowledge (Marolias, 2003, Nortus, 2004). Such organizations have the culture that values knowledge and other factors such as learning, experience, expertise and innovation are (Davenport and Prusak, 2000). In Appropriate knowledge-based culture should have a positive attitude to the knowledge sharing and innovation (Davenport et al., 1998). To make the knowledge management system effective, knowledge sharing culture should exist. It should be noted that in the main technological innovation, this is the technology that must be compatible with the existing culture rather than vice versa (Groot and Bitsch, 1991, as quoted by Allen Pitchy, 2006).

Some of the most important features of facilitating organizational culture of knowledge management practices include:

Cooperation Culture

Employees' involvement explores this issue how all employees can contribute effectively in achieving the organization's objectives. Collaborative environment creates opportunities for people having knowledge to freely share their knowledge and implement knowledge management programs more successful (Alavi and Liedner, 2001).

Culture of Learning

Organizational learning appears in the complicated, continuous and dynamic process, and its result is organizational knowledge. There is encouraging culture of learning in the organization that increases the organization's ability to create new knowledge, its maintenance and transfer, and its application (Chennemaneni, 2006).

Culture of Knowledge Sharing

Most people believe the key knowledge as a source of power, leverage or guarantee of their jobs continuity and are reluctant to share it with other people (Gowe, 2002). Creating a culture that promotes knowledge sharing than its speculation is one of the requirements of knowledge management (Asgari, 2013).

Culture of Trust

Trust is the psychological state of individuals and is related to the subjective probability that a person assesses that another person or group will do a certain action (Ostrum and Ahen, 2003). When people have full trust in dealings with others, they will have more willing to exchange knowledge and social interactions (Lewin and Kraus, 2004).

Conceptual Model

Given the crucial role of social- cultural factors in implementing knowledge management measures (Hislop, 2012) and the impact of organizational culture on employee performance (Robbins, 2000) , organizational culture can have the considerable impact on implementing knowledge management measures . In this research, aspects of organizational culture that can facilitate the implicit knowledge sharing (culture of learning, cooperation culture, culture of trust and culture of knowledge sharing) were considered as independent variables. And sharing implicit knowledge also forms the dependent variable of this research. Accordingly and based on carried out theoretical studies, the conceptual framework has been provided as figure 1 (see page 7).

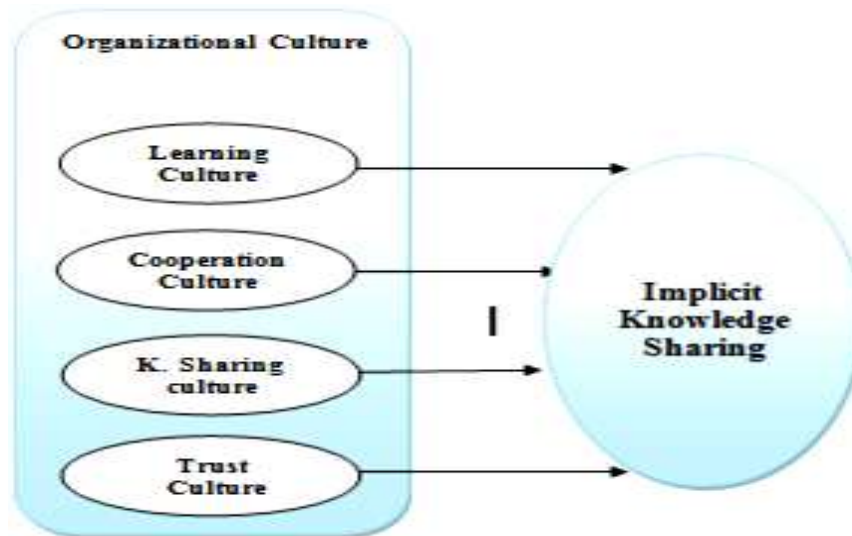
Research Hypotheses

Based on the objectives and research questions and reviewed research literature and theoretical model about the impact of organizational culture on implicit knowledge sharing, formulated hypotheses of this research are provided as follows:

1. Culture of learning has a positive and significant impact on implicit knowledge sharing.
2. Cooperation culture has a positive and significant impact on implicit knowledge sharing.

3. Knowledge sharing culture has a positive and significant impact on implicit knowledge sharing.
4. Culture of trust has a positive and significant impact on implicit knowledge sharing.

Figure 1: The Conceptual Framework



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study is applicable in terms of objectives because its findings can be used for enhancing the effectiveness of knowledge management. In terms of data collection method is descriptive survey because it tries to obtain required information of status quo of statistical sample using a questionnaire. Also it is cross-sectional based on concept of time, and quantitative in terms of data type.

Statistical Population and Sample

The study population consisted of 905 managers and staff of a private service company in Tehran. In this research, stratified sampling method was used. The number of samples based on a formula of population sampling includes 274 people. The number of strata and number of respondents in each stratum is mentioned in the table 2.

Table 2: The Number of Strata and Respondents in Each Stratum

Stratified Sampling	The Number of Strata	The Number of Respondents
Managers	90	28
Staff	815	246
Total	905	274

Data Collection Tools

In order to collect primary field data field, 22-item questionnaire was used based on Liker scale that 6 questions for measuring dependent variable and 4 questions to measure each of the independent variables were used. To assess the validity of the questionnaire , the views of academic experts used and to test the reliability of the questionnaire, a primary sample containing 30 questionnaire was pre-tested and then using the obtained data and with the help of SPSS statistical software ,the confidence coefficient was calculated by Cronbach's alpha as 91%, respectively.

The Method of Analyzing Information

In this study, to analyze the data obtained from the samples and the presence or absence of the relationship between variables, structural equation model was used.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

In order to investigate the relationship between indicators and concepts, confirmatory factor analysis was used in two stages. At first stage, the quality and extent of the impact of measuring indicators of each dimension were studied and at second stage, the quality and extent of each dimension impact and main concept have been studied. In other words, at first stage, it is studied that each indicator used in questionnaire can explain mentioned dimension to what extent and at second stage, it is studied that to what extent each dimension for each concept is related to that concept and can explain it. The results of the factor analysis of dimensions intended for the organizational culture are shown at table3.

Table 3: Factor Analysis Test for Organizational Culture

Factor	Dimensions	Standard rate	Significance	Result
Organizational culture	Culture of learning	.99	13.84	confirmed
	Cooperation culture	.99	13.70	confirmed
	Knowledge sharing culture	.96	11.75	confirmed
	Culture of Trust	.95	16.21	confirmed

In order to evaluate the status quo of the implicit knowledge sharing and its facilitating organizational culture in the statistical community, mean test of a society has been used. The results of this study are provided at table 4.

Table 4: Mean Test of the Status Quo of the Studied Variables

Factor	Dimension	Test numbers (cut point)=3					
		T-value	Freedom degree	Significance	Mean difference	Confidence interval %95	
						Low	High
Organizational culture	Knowledge sharing	-10.552	273	.000	-.55109	-.6539	-.4483
	Culture of learning	-10.862	273	.000	-.5644	-.666	-.5622
	Cooperation culture	-9.141	273	.000	-.4914	-.5973	.3856
	Knowledge sharing culture	-8.102	273	.000	-.4233	-.3025	-.3025
	Culture of trust	-2.743	273	.006	-.14325	-.0404	-.0404

On the basis of the test results and the fact that knowledge sharing between upper and lower limit are both negative ($3 = \mu$) the null hypothesis has accepted and the alternative hypothesis has been rejected; this means this variable is not in good condition. The same condition about status quo of culture of learning,, knowledge sharing culture and culture of trust also were studied in statistical population. But cooperation culture in this organization is in average condition because its lower and higher limits is positive one and negative the other.

Hypotheses Testing

To test hypotheses and to investigate the quality and relationship between each of the dimensions of organizational culture and knowledge management, Pearson correlation coefficient was used, which results are provided at Table 3. Since this study was performed in 95% confidence level, if a significant number is outside the scope of 1.96 and -1.96, the significance of the impact of dimensions of organizational culture on knowledge sharing is confirmed.

Figure 2: Effect Model of the Culture on Knowledge Sharing in Standard Mode

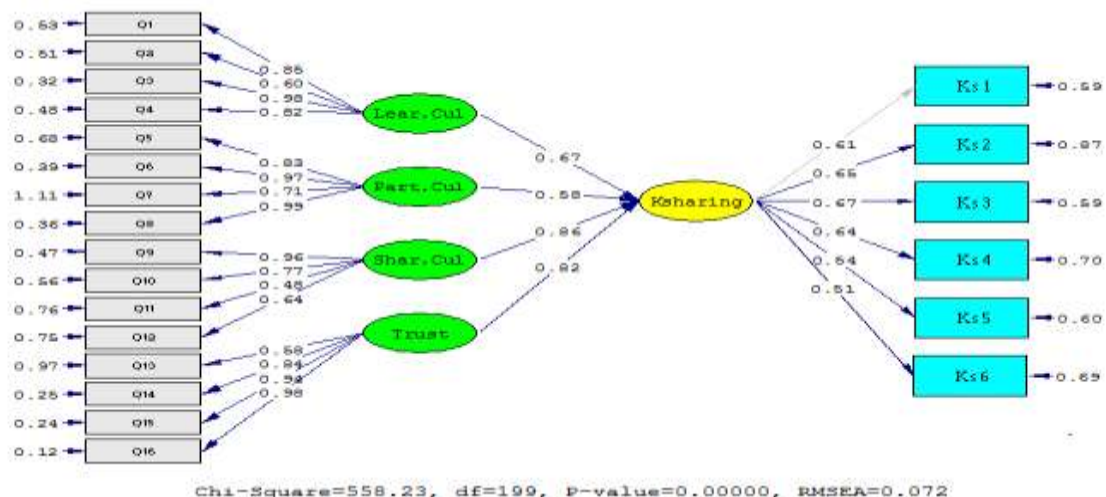


Figure 3: Effect Model of the Culture on Knowledge Sharing in the Meaningful mode

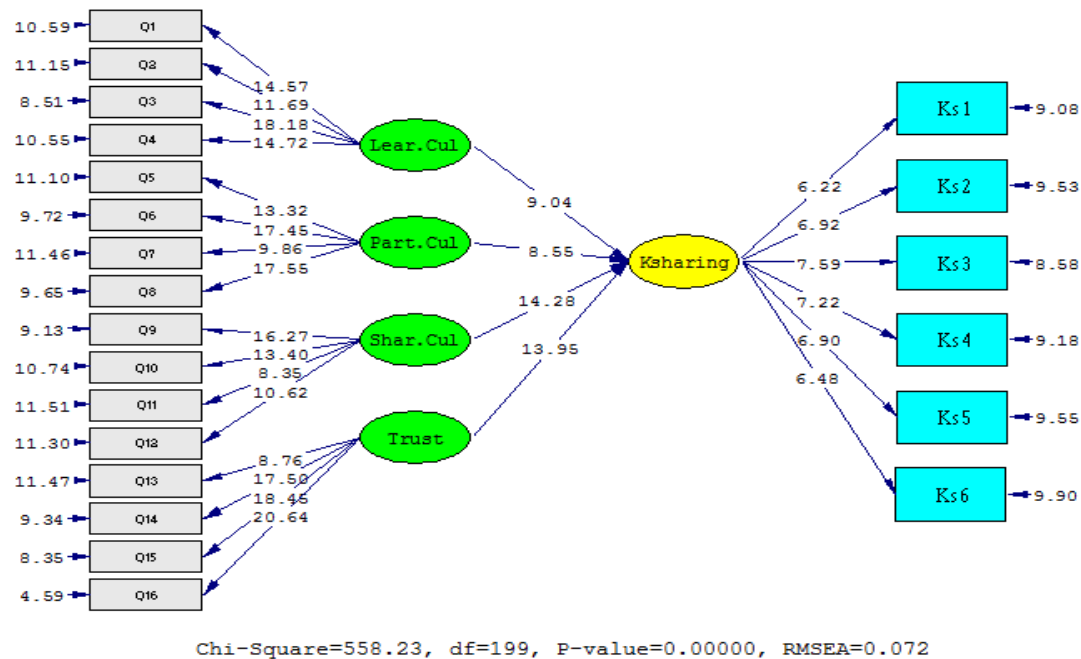


Table 5: The Positive and Significant Impact of Organizational Culture on Knowledge Sharing

Hypothesis	Path	Path Coefficient	Significance Number	Results
Main	Positive impact of organizational culture on KM measures	.89	9.53	confirmed
1	Positive impact of culture of learning on KM measures	.67	9.04	confirmed
2	Positive impact of cooperation culture on KM measures	.58	9.55	confirmed
3	Positive impact of knowledge sharing culture on KM measures	.86	14.25	confirmed
4	Positive impact of trust culture on KM measures	.82	13.95	Confirmed

As can be seen at table 3, each of five impacts studied in hypotheses have been important and significant; this means positive impact of organizational culture and also each of four dimensions on KM measures have been confirmed (Table 5). Meanwhile, knowledge sharing culture has had the most positive impact on KM measures (.86) respectively.

The confirmed positive impact of culture of learning on KM measures is consistent with results of study by Birasnav and Rangnekar (2010). The facilitating impact of knowledge management culture is also consistent with results of study by Alavi and Leidner (2001) and Linden (2003). The result of knowledge sharing culture is consistent with results of study by

Chennemaneni (2006) and Kheyrandish (2009). The confirmation of role of interpersonal trust in facilitating KM measures is the result which is consistent with results of study by Chennemaneni (2006), Allen Pi knowledge management efforts as a result of interpersonal trust that the results of research conducted by Chnamnany (2006), Allen Pichi (2006) and Shami Zanjani (2009). Using this research along with available background in this field, investigating the simultaneous impact of these cultural dimensions effect and in a form of cultural capital concept and developing solutions in order to extent this capital has been very important and value-adding.

CONCLUSION

This research has studied the simultaneous impact of four dimensions of organizational culture on implicit knowledge sharing. The conceptual framework has been developed for this research is that types of organizational culture influences KM measures. These results make the examination of relationship between organizational culture dimensions and knowledge sharing is justifiable. The reliability and validity of the theoretical framework also been confirmed.

The findings have confirmed the facilitating role of four dimensions of organizational culture (culture of learning, cooperation culture, knowledge sharing culture and culture of trust) on implicit knowledge sharing.. These findings add new awareness in the field of organizational culture in knowledge management.

Organizational culture supporting scientific activities can also play an important role in creating the necessary conditions for effective performance of knowledge management practices. In an organization that values and norms such as trust, cooperation, collaboration, learning and knowledge sharing are common and valuable, knowledge sharing will be more effective and easier. The more creative, team oriented, more interested in sharing of ideas are the employees, and knowledge sharing will be facilitated more. Knowledge sharing will be done if only culture of organization supports it.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Organizational culture is a soft bed in which knowledge management measures are performed. Therefore it plays an important role in shaping attitudes of employees about knowledge sharing and their readiness to participate actively in this work. Organizational culture can facilitate or hinder knowledge sharing. Development of organizational culture which is supporting and facilitating knowledge sharing is difficult and time consuming, although it is critically important. In the following there are recommendations provided for the development of each of the dimensions of organizational culture.

Cooperation Culture

To promote the cooperation culture , following measures will be effective: to create the perfect context for active cooperation of workers in decision-making , encouraging employees to the collective effort to improve organizational performance, creating an atmosphere of cooperation and mutual empathy between members of the organization, team building and working cooperatively, reinforcing the collaborative and informal interactions between employees, emphasis on the collective performance in the performance evaluation, teaching skills, communication and teamwork to employees.

Culture of Learning

Some of the most important strategies for the development of this culture in the organization include: encouraging creative efforts of people, using new ideas to modify working process, holding regular meetings to solve problems and learning from experiences, holding seminars, development of proposal system in the organization, increasing the possibility of peer interaction with each other, developing in-service training, creative skills development of employees.

Knowledge Sharing Culture

Measures that can be used to encourage employees to share and exchange their knowledge and experiences with each other include: encouraging employees to transfer their knowledge and expertise to others, documenting the knowledge and experience of employees who leave the organization or are promoted, holding meetings of transferring experiences, using instructional coaching methods and teacher-student and storytelling, development of seminars , valuing informal interaction and meeting of employees.

Culture of Trust

In order to improve trust between members of the organization , followings are recommended: development of friendly relations, encouraging employees to solve problems of each other, encouraging honest behavior, emphasizing the action of the promises and obligations, paying more attention to democracy in the organization, dealing with destructive political behaviors in the organization, effective management of organizational conflict.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

There might be unwanted factors in any research that make limitations to the research; hence, some of the unwanted variables are not under researcher`s control. These factors must be

determined and the researcher must show his knowledge about the influence of these factors on the research results. In the present study, there were some limitations such as:

- 1) To study the variables the survey (questionnaire tools) has been used; while it was better to use observation and/or interview for some factors. The questionnaire is a tool by which the understandings and attitude of any person is investigated; whereas, the reality might be different with respondent's answers.
- 2) There are two issues must be considered regarding the nature and generalization of the research: firstly, there might be some practical behaviors like other survey researches that are mostly dependent on environmental conditions. Furthermore, intervening variables might affect the supposed relations among variables that are considered in this study.
- 3) Some other important limitations to this research include: reluctance of some of the respondents to answer the questionnaires, not enough carefulness of some of the respondents in answering the questions, the possibility of bias in answering the questions by some of the respondents.

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