EFFECT OF KNOWLEDGE INFRASTRUCTURE CAPABILITY ON ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE: MEDIATING ROLE OF KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

Khin Marlar Maung

ABSTRACT

The objectives to the study are to analyze the effect of knowledge infrastructure capability on knowledge transfer and organizational performance and to test the mediating effect of knowledge transfer between knowledge infrastructure capability and organizational performance. Acquiring, building and sharing knowledge is strongly demanded in knowledge-based organizations. The fulfillment of knowledge infrastructure capability is a mean to transfer knowledge which is the area to be focused. Organizational culture, organizational structure and technology are regarded as knowledge infrastructure capability. To prove the objectives of the study, primary data is collected from 107 managerial and supervisory level employees from Yangon Electricity Supply Corporation which is under Ministry of Electricity and Energy of Myanmar. The respondents are selected by using simple random sampling method. Structured questionnaire is used to collect data. Data collection period was in January, 2021. Structure Equation Modeling (SEM) with Linear Structural Relationships (LISREL) 8.72 is applied as the main analytical tool. According to the results, organizational culture and organizational structure have direct effect on knowledge transfer and indirect effect on organizational performance. Technology has direct effect on organizational performance but no effect on knowledge transfer. Additionally, knowledge transfer has direct effect on organizational performance. Knowledge transfer is a full mediator between organizational culture, organizational structure and organizational performance but is not a mediator for technology. Without knowledge transfer, organizational culture and organizational structure cannot create organizational performance. Yangon Electricity Supply Corporation needs to review the use of advanced technology which can provide knowledge acquisition and knowledge sharing of employees to upgrade organizational performance.

Keywords: knowledge infrastructure capability, knowledge transfer, organizational performance, Myanmar

INTRODUCTION

In the knowledge-based era, organizations compete based on knowledge and they emphasize their efforts on the ways to manage and transfer knowledge across the organizations. Knowledge is described as dynamic, since it is created in social interactions amongst individuals and organizations (Nonaka et al., 2000). There are four main interrelated processes in knowledge management such as creation, storage, transfer and application. Knowledge transfer is a "process through which one organization learns from the experience and knowledge of another for gaining or sustaining a competitive advantage" (Martinkenaite, 2011, p. 54). Knowledge sharing or knowledge transfer is widely emphasized as a strategic issue to gain competitive advantage. In the strong competitive business environment, knowledge is the key success factor. The transfer of knowledge leads to the advancement of capabilities and gains competitive advantage which is the expected outcome in knowledge management (Bhagat et al., 2002).

The capability to manage knowledge is becoming progressively more crucial in today's knowledge economy (Agbim et al., 2013). The significant role of knowledge infrastructure capability, knowledge transfer and organizational performance are highlighted in several studies. Kiessling et al. (2009) proved that knowledge management practices in organizations have positive impact on organizational performance. Moreover, organizations face strong competition and try to overcome challenges related to knowledge of employees. Thus, organizations find the most possible way to create and transfer knowledge among employees. Previous studies pointed out the knowledge infrastructure capability to support sharing knowledge in organizations. The organizational culture, organizational structure and technology are focused as knowledge infrastructure capability and they shaped the knowledge transfer in organizations. Organizational performance cannot be expected without knowledge transfer. The present study strongly focused on knowledge infrastructure capability that can create a successful knowledge transfer. In the present study, as knowledge infrastructure capability, organizational culture, organizational structure and technology are focused to have the significant effects on knowledge transfer and organizational performance.

In this study, managerial and supervisory level employees from Yangon Electricity Supply Corporation which is under Ministry of Electricity and Energy of Myanmar were selected as the respondents of the study. There are 150 managerial and supervisory level employees. Among them, 107 employees were selected. The results provided the new inside related to knowledge infrastructure capability to create knowledge transfer and organizational performance of this corporation. Additionally, the corporation totally accepted the significant role of knowledge infrastructure capability to transfer the knowledge and to promote organizational performance.

The research questions of the study are: (1) is there any effect of knowledge infrastructure capability on knowledge transfer and organizational performance? (2) what is the effect of knowledge transfer on organizational performance? and (3) does knowledge transfer mediate the relationship between knowledge infrastructure capability and organizational performance? The main objectives of the study are to analyze the effect of knowledge infrastructure capability on knowledge transfer and organizational performance, to analyze the effect of knowledge transfer on organizational performance and to examine the mediating effect of knowledge transfer in the relationship between knowledge infrastructure capability and organizational performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Knowledge is the most important source to acquire competitive advantage for any organization. By infusing new organizational knowledge, a firm can improve and innovate, thus obtaining competitive advantage in the market (Teece, 1998). However, a firm must acquire new knowledge before transferring and utilizing that acquired knowledge. The capabilities of any organization are based on knowledge acquiring and utilizing. Thus, knowledge is a resource that forms the foundation of the company's capabilities. Capabilities are core competencies when they represent a domain in which the organization excels (Prahalad and Hamel, 1990). According to the results of previous studies, knowledge infrastructure capability and knowledge transfer are explored as essential factors to create organizational performance. The present study mainly focused on knowledge infrastructure capability (organizational culture, organizational structure and technology) and tested their effect on knowledge transfer and organizational performance and the mediating effect of knowledge transfer.

KNOWLEDGE INFRASTRUCTURE CAPABILITY

Askarian and Abdollahi (2016) referred knowledge management as "timely giving correct knowledge to members in needs to help the members adopt correct actions to enhance the continuity of organizational performance". Knowledge infrastructure capabilities include cultural, structural, and technological abilities (Gold et al., 2001). However, other studies have pointed out human resources as part of the infrastructures to provide knowledge management initiatives (Lee and Choi, 2003). In this study, as knowledge infrastructure capabilities, organizational culture, organizational structure and technology were selected to test the effect on knowledge transfer and organizational performance.

Organizational culture is used to transfer knowledge among people in organizations. The success of knowledge management in an organization are mainly related to organizational culture (Wang et al., 2018). The culture of organization consists of the practices, symbols, values, and assumptions that the members of the organization share and believe in practicing their behavior related to job (Schein, 2000). According to Denison (1990), the culture of organization serves as a foundation for its management system and practices. The organization's culture provides norms that can determine the "right" and "wrong" ways of operation. Organizational culture creates the ethical manner of organizations especially in their operation. A proper awareness of the organization's culture involves the identification and recognition of the tacit assumptions and beliefs that are firmly practiced in the organization (Schein, 2000).

H1(a): Organizational culture has direct effect on knowledge transfer.
H1(b): Organizational culture has direct effect on organizational performance.

Organization structure in an organization could induce or hinder knowledge management (Wang et al., 2018). Organizational structure indicates the tasks and activities implemented by each department or unit. Centralize organizational structure refers to the extent to which decision-making power is concentrated at the top levels of the organization (Caruana et al., 1998, p. 18). A decentralized structure encourages communication and increases employee satisfaction through effective sharing of knowledge and experiences. The effective structure can influence knowledge management processes through shaping patterns and frequencies of communication among organizational members, the involvement in decision-making and affecting efficiency and effectiveness in implementing new ideas.

H2(a): Organizational structure has direct effect on knowledge transfer.
H2(b): Organizational structure has direct effect on organizational performance.

The importance of using advanced technology cannot be ignored by organizations. "Advances in technology have effect on the growth and importance of services and as components of product and service packages" (Zeithaml and Bitner, 1996, p. 10). The value of services depends on technology related activities. Technology has augmented the knowledge required in almost every type of labor (Kandampully, 2002). Technology could help knowledge organization and even induce new knowledge (Zaied et al., 2015). Moreover, the increasing use of technology has created the new knowledge and has required firms to seek employees who are willing and able to learn knowledge on an ongoing basis. Thus, the technology is essential in upgrading the knowledge and in applying it in the workplace to improve the performance of whole organization.

H3(a): Technology has direct effect on knowledge transfer.
H3(b): Technology has direct effect on organizational performance.

KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

Knowledge transfer means knowledge sharing within an enterprise between individuals and groups. Organizations pay special attention on knowledge transfer because knowledge as an asset increases in value with use (Quinn et al., 1996). Because of the importance of knowledge and knowledge sharing to the competitive advantage of a firm in today's business environment, many firms have attempted to emphasize knowledge management systems through which they can more effectively expand their existing knowledge through knowledge transfer of employees (Watson and Hewett, 2006). According to Szulanski (1996), knowledge transfer is a process and it may lead to some changes in behavior of employees and the development of some new idea that leads to new behavior (Davenport and Prusak, 1998). Knowledge transfer will not occur in an organization unless its employees and work groups display a high level of co-operative behavior (Goh, 2002, p.25). An effective and open communication, building trust in communication and knowledge sharing practices in organization culture and structure are sure to achieve knowledge transfer. These contributions have been reviewed to identify approaches to understanding the knowledge transfer process and classify its determinants (Minbaeva, 2007).

The objectives of this study are to analyze the effect of knowledge infrastructure capability (organizational culture, organizational structure and technology) on organizational performance and to test the mediating effect of knowledge transfer between knowledge infrastructure capability and organizational performance of Yangon Electricity Supply Corporation. The results are expected to explore the significant role of knowledge infrastructure capability of this corporation to provide benefits related to knowledge transfer and organizational performance.

ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

Ngah and Ibrahim (2010) defined organizational performance as "comparing the expected results with the actual ones, investigating deviations from plans, assessing individual performance and examining progress made towards meeting the targeted objectives" (p. 503). Organizational performance has different definitions, measurement methods, and indicators to prove the advancement (Hume & Hume, 2015). According to Simoni (1997), performance was divided into tangible (financial benefits) and intangible (learning or knowledge based benefits). Firms put more emphasis on their intangible performance which is difficult to imitate. It is difficult to measure organizational performance based on the intangible results such as knowledge transfer because knowledge is intangible in nature. The employees with different knowledge have different performance level and contribution. Organizational performance is measured based on financial measure, intellectual capital, balanced scorecard and tangible and intangible benefits (Choi, 2002). The ultimate benefits of knowledge management will improve competitive advantage (Dahiyat, 2015). The impact of knowledge transfer on organizational performance and the mediating effect of knowledge transfer were tested by the following hypotheses.

H4: Knowledge transfer has direct effect on organizational performance.
H5: Knowledge transfer mediates the relationship between knowledge infrastructure capability and organizational performance.

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT AND KEY RESPONDENTS

To collect primary data, structured questionnaire with five-point Likert scale was used. The questionnaire has three main parts. As the first part, the demographic factors of respondents (age, gender, educational level, work experiences, etc.) were asked. As the second part, the study explored respondent perception on knowledge infrastructure capability, knowledge transfer and organizational performance by using structured questuinnaire with five-point Likert scale items (1= strongly disagreed from 5= strongly agree). The questionnaire is personally and directly distributed to the respondents. There are 150 managerial and supervisory level employees who are the target population of this study. The reasons of selecting managerial and supervisor level employees are that they are strongly demanded to share knowledge with subordinates based on the nature of their job and they understand the performance improvement of the whole corporation. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), the required sample size is 108. Among them, 108 managerial and supervisory level employees from Yangon Electricity Supply Corporation were selected as respondents by using simple random sampling method. 107 complete set of questionnaires were included in the final analysis.

ANALYTICAL TOOLS AND PROCEDURE

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with LISREL was used to test the proposed model. Before the main analysis, descriptive statistics was used to explore the demographic factors of the respondents and their perception on variables with the mean values. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was carried out for factor analysis. CFA is an inseparable part of the SEM technique because it provides a way to test a measurement model or the relationship of observed variables to understanding constructs (Yamkovenko and Holton, 2010, p.396). The reliability or the internal consistency among the variables was checked with the Cronbach's alpha. Cronbach's alpha value with the minimum acceptable level of at least 0.70 (Cronbach, 1951) was tested to sure the internal consistency among the variables. The structural equation modeling (SEM) with LISREL was used to check the statistical significance of proposed hypotheses.

RESULTS

According to the demographic factors of the respondents, male respondents were more than female respondents because of the nature of the job. More than 80 percent of respondents were the age below 40 years. Most of the respondents gained bachelor degree and some gained master degree. About 60 percent of respondents had the working experience of 6 years and more. More than 85 percent of respondents had 3 to 4 times training experiences and all respondents attended at least one training program. Some have more than 4 times of training experiences. The results of the respondent perception on latent variables (mean values), reliability and correlation of variables are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Means, reliability and correlations of variables

Variables	Mean	OC	OS	TECH	KT	OP	Alpha	Items
OC	4.21	-					.746	6
OS	4.11	.764**	-				.771	5
TECH	4.08	.784**	.846**	-			.817	6
KT	4.04	.819**	.888**	.849**	-		.878	5
OP	4.19	.836**	.813**	.819**	.841**	-	.729	7

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
OC = Organizational culture, OS = Organizational structure, TECH = Technology, KT = Knowledge transfer, OP = Organizational performance

According to Table 1, the alpha values showed the acceptable reliability of more than 0.70. The respondent perception on knowledge infrastructure capability showed the agree level of employees because the mean values are more than 3.40 (Best, 1977). Among them, organizational culture gained the maximum mean value. It means that the respondents accepted the importance of organizational culture as a tool for knowledge transfer and organizational performance. The correlation results showed that knowledge infrastructure capability has positive relationship with knowledge transfer and organizational performance. The more the knowledge infrastructure capability is created by the corporation, the more the knowledge transfer and the better the organizational performance can be yielded by the corporation. Additionally, the positive relationship between knowledge transfer and organizational performance was explored in this study. Because of knowledge transfer, the corporation gained the better organizational performance. The next step is to test the fitness of the model. The multiple fit indexes were used to check the fitness of the model. χ^2/df; comparative fit index (CFI); incremental fit index (IFI); normed fit index (NFI); Non-normed fit index (NNFI); root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) (Bentler, 1990; Williams et al., 2009, Hair et al., 2010) were tested in this study. The results of model fit statistics are presented in Table 2 and the direct, indirect and total effects of the variables are shown in Table 3.

Table 2 Models and fit statistics

Models fit	χ^2	df	CFI	IFI	NFI	NNFI	SRMR	RMSEA
Final model	100.08	92	1.00	1.00	0.99	0.98	0.03	0.01
Suggested values	χ^2/df < 2		≥ 0.95	≥ 0.95	≥ 0.95	≥ 0.95	≤ 0.08	≤ 0.05

All χ^2 values are significant at $p < 0.05$. df = degree of freedom, CFI = comparative fit index; IFI = incremental fit index; NFI = normed fit index; NNFI = non-normed fit index; SRMR = standardized root-mean-square residual; RMSEA = root-mean-square error of approximation.

The results in Table 2 showed that the model fit statistics are acceptable. It means that all values supported the acceptable levels and then the revised final model was the acceptable model to do the final analysis.

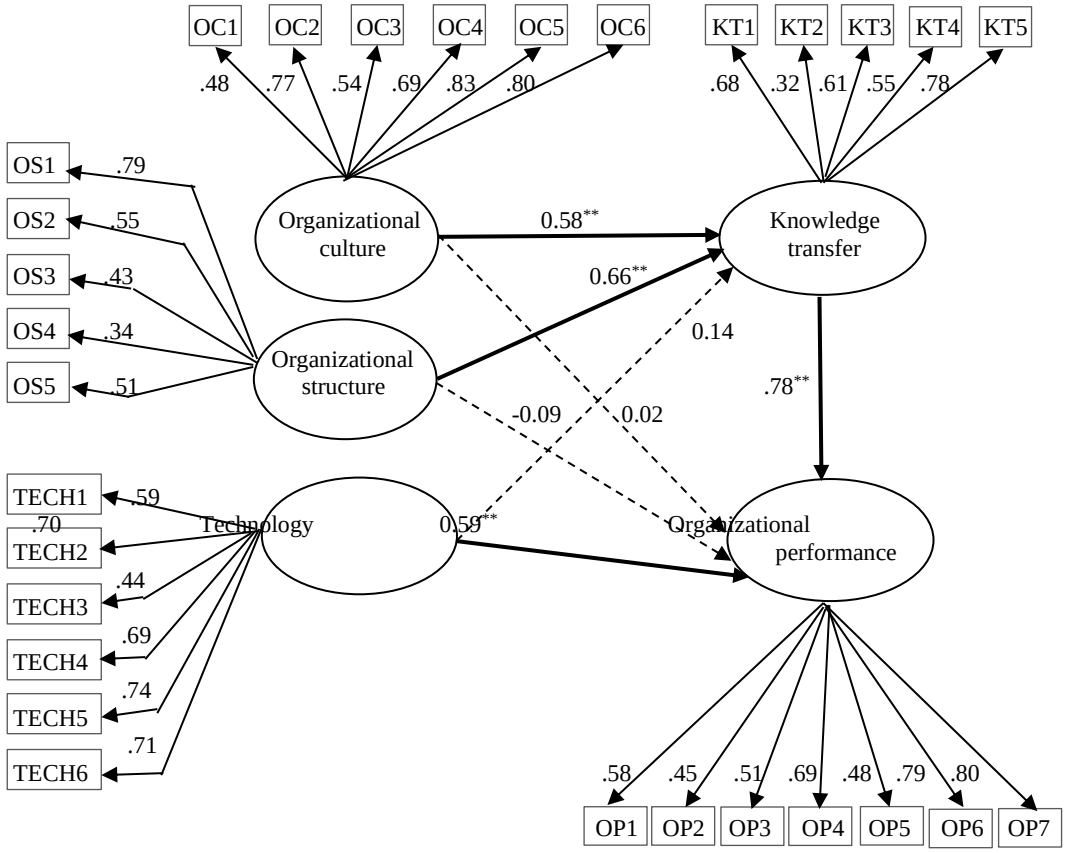
Table 3 Summary of effects

Variables	Knowledge transfer			Organizational performance		
	DE	IE	TE	DE	IE	TE
Organizational culture	0.58**	-	0.58**	0.02	0.42**	0.44**
Organizational structure	0.66**	-	0.66**	-0.09	0.58**	0.49**
Technology	0.14	-	0.14	0.59**	0.08	0.67**
Knowledge transfer	-	-	-	0.78**	-	0.78**

**p < .01; DE = Direct effect; IE = Indirect effect; TE = Total effect

The direct, indirect and total effects of the variables were describes in Table 3 and the explanations are under Figure 1. The results of structural model are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Results of structural model



**p< .01

According to the results, organizational culture had significant direct effect on knowledge transfer (γ = 0.58). Organizational structure had significant direct effect on knowledge transfer (γ = 0.66). Technology had no significant direct effect on knowledge transfer (γ = 0.14). Hypotheses 1(a) and 2(a) were accepted but hypothesis 3(a) was rejected. On the other hand, there was no significant direct effect of organizational culture and organizational structure on organizational performance. Hypothesis 1(b) and 2(b) were rejected. Technology had significant direct effect on organizational performance and thus, hypothesis 3(b) was accepted. Knowledge transfer had significant direct effect on organizational performance and thus, hypothesis 4 was accepted. According to the results of hypotheses, knowledge transfer fully mediated the relationship between organizational culture, organizational structure and organizational performance but knowledge transfer is not a mediator for the relationship between technology and organizational performance. Thus, hypothesis 5 was not fully accepted.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The objectives of the study are to analyze the effect of knowledge infrastructure capability on knowledge transfer and organizational performance and the mediating effect of knowledge transfer between knowledge infrastructure capability and organizational performance. The study explored the important role of organizational culture, organizational structure and technology to shape knowledge transfer and organizational performance. According to the perception of respondents, they accepted the importance of knowledge infrastructure capability for knowledge transfer and organizational performance. Among the organizational culture factors, the knowledge sharing among employees and the chances for employees in applying knowledge were important to direct knowledge transfer. The open communication and the flow of information among employees were essential for employees to view the organizational structure as a tool for knowledge transfer. The respondents agreed that the corporation used technology which can upgrade the performance of whole organization. According to the findings, the culture of implementing knowledge sharing activities among employees is essential for knowledge transfer and performance of the whole organization.

The correlation results revealed that knowledge infrastructure capability had strong correlation with knowledge transfer and also organizational performance. The more the corporation creates knowledge infrastructure capability, the more the knowledge transfer of employees and the high organizational performance can be gained by the corporation. Among the capabilities, organizational structure had the strongest correlation with knowledge transfer. Furthermore, the strong correlation between knowledge transfer and organizational performance was also explored. Because of knowledge transfer, the better organizational performance is seen

as a result by the corporation. According to correlation results, it can be concluded that knowledge infrastructure capability is a key for corporation to share or transfer knowledge among employees and to upgrade organizational performance.

According to LISREL results, the significant direct effect of organizational culture and organizational structure on knowledge transfer revealed that these two knowledge infrastructure capabilities are the sources for employees to transfer their knowledge. These two capabilities cannot directly create organizational performance because the study did not find the direct effect of organizational culture and organizational structure on organizational performance. For these two factors, the achievement of organizational performance depended on the amount of knowledge transfer. Technology had significant direct effect on organizational performance. The technology played an essential role in upgrading organizational performance. The employees preferred to use the advanced technology to upgrade their individual performance and the performance of the corporation. The result did not explore the direct effect of technology on knowledge transfer. Technology was not a tool to support knowledge transfer. The corporation that used technology can directly expect the performance improvement of organization.

Additionally, the study also investigated the effect of knowledge transfer on organizational performance. The significant direct effect proved that the knowledge transfer in organization is a mean to gain expected performance of the corporation. One of the major concerns of this study was to find the mediating effect of knowledge transfer. The findings of this study provided significant empirical insight into the indirect effect of organizational culture and organizational structure on organizational performance through the mediating effect of knowledge transfer. The results show that organizational culture and organizational structure had significant positive effect on knowledge transfer that in turn enhanced performance of the corporation. It can be concluded that these two factors alone cannot directly create organizational performance without knowledge transfer. On the other hand, technology directly created organizational performance. The emphasis on technology is demanded to see better performance and to gain competitive advantage of the corporation. In the strong competitive environment, the creation of knowledge infrastructure capability in organization is sure to have results of knowledge transfer and organizational performance improvement. The findings can solve the issues related to knowledge based competition faced by the corporation. Additionally, the corporation understands the role of knowledge infrastructure capability which is a force or influencing factor to have more knowledge transfer and organizational performance. The results proved the objectives of the study except the mediating effect of knowledge transfer. Knowledge transfer cannot fully mediated between knowledge infrastructure capability and organizational performance because knowledge transfer is not a mediator for technology, one of the knowledge infrastructure capabilities of this study.

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the study, the corporation should create attractive and effective knowledge infrastructure capability in the workplace. The results of the direct and significant effect of organizational culture and organizational structure on knowledge transfer revealed that the responsible persons or decision makers should focus on these two factors to promote fruitful knowledge of employees. Especially, organizational structure is more attractive factor for knowledge transfer of employees. The corporation should review the structure that creates good communication for sharing knowledge and a condition to remove any block in applying knowledge. The organizational culture should not be ignored by the corporation because it also has ability to create knowledge transfer. The culture is difficult to build but the corporation should try to build the knowledge sharing culture for employees. The clear organizational structure is a demand for knowledge transfer. The chain of command, the flow of information and the ways of communication among employees should be reviewed by the corporation to be an effective organization structure.

On the other hand, technology had no effect on knowledge transfer but had significant direct effect on organizational performance. The high organizational performance is the expectation of any organization. The use of advanced technology in corporation is a mean for performance improvement of the corporation. The corporation should review the present technology applied by employees to gain more organizational performance. Additionally, the study explored the significant direct effect of knowledge transfer on organizational performance. The more the knowledge transfer among employees, the more the organizational performance will be the outcome for the corporation. Thus, knowledge infrastructure capability and knowledge transfer should be emphasized by the corporation because knowledge infrastructure capability directly and indirectly create organizational performance with the help of knowledge transfer. The results of the study fulfilled the research gap of knowledge transfer in the scope of Yangon Electricity Supply Corporation, Myanmar.

There are some limitations in this study which are expected to be fulfilled by further research. As one limitation, the study focused on the perception of managerial and supervisory level employees of Yangon Electricity Supply Corporation, Myanmar. The results cannot represent other corporations in the whole country of Myanmar. Another limitation was that the knowledge infrastructure capability was the only variable to test the effect on knowledge transfer and organizational performance. Other variables such as knowledge management enablers, motives for knowledge transfer, knowledge process capability should be studied.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

As the first contribution of the study, the significant role of knowledge infrastructure capability (organizational culture, organizational structure and technology) was explored in the selected corporation. A study that focused on knowledge infrastructure capability in this scope was not proved by previous studies. Because of this study, the corporation can put emphasis on knowledge infrastructure capability to gain benefits as knowledge transfer and organizational performance.

The second contribution is that the study explored the effect of knowledge infrastructure capability on knowledge transfer and organizational performance. By exploring the direct effect of (a) organizational culture and organizational structure on knowledge transfer and (b) knowledge transfer on organizational performance, the corporation knows the importance of knowledge transfer

which can actually create organizational performance. Thus, the corporation has the ideas to focus on organizational culture, organizational structure and knowledge transfer to promote the performance improvement of corporation and to accept that the expected performance cannot be obtained without the successful knowledge transfer of employees.

The third contribution of the study is the direct effect of technology on organizational performance proved by the study. The corporation understands the role of technology to shape organizational performance. The corporation gained knowledge that the use of advanced technology should not be ignored by the corporation to create high performance and to stand successfully.

The fourth contribution is that these was no previous studies that tested the proposed conceptual framework in the present scope of the study, Yangon Electricity Supply Corporation in Myanmar. The research gap is fulfilled by testing and exploring the effect of knowledge infrastructure capability on knowledge transfer and organizational performance.

The final contribution was that the study used LISREL as the main analytical tool. There was no study that applied LISREL to analyze the importance of proposed latent variables in the selected corporation. This analytical tool produced more specific results for organizational performance. The specific results guided the corporation to understand knowledge infrastructure capability for knowledge transfer of employees and the organizational performance. The results are not only for this corporation but also for other organizations to understand the ways to create knowledge infrastructure capability to upgrade the performance of whole organization. The study expected to test the variables in other areas including manufacturing and service organizations to gain better knowledge related to knowledge infrastructure capability, knowledge transfer and organizational performance.

CONCLUSION

The study explored several findings to gain benefits for Yangon Electricity Supply Corporation. By exploring the significant direct effects of organizational culture and organizational structure on knowledge transfer, the corporation can understand that these two factors essential to transfer the knowledge among employees. In the strong competitive condition, the skillful and talented employees are needed to be retained by organizations. The activities to upgrade the knowledge and skills of employees are the area to be implemented by organizations. As knowledge management, knowledge acquisition and knowledge transfer are the key to bring success. Without knowledge transfer, the application of skills and knowledge of employees in the real work environment cannot be expected. Additionally, according to findings of the study, knowledge transfer creates organizational performance. On the other hand, technology directly create organizational performance without knowledge transfer. The importance of organizational culture, organizational structure, technology and knowledge transfer is sure for this corporation to gain organizational performance.

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Khin Marlar Maung
Ph.D, Professor, Department of Commerce
Meiktila University of Economics, Myanmar
Email: khinmarlarmaung78@gmail.com