Original Research

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Determinants of Knowledge Sharing: The Roles of Learning Organization Culture, Empowering Leadership, and Learning Goal Orientation

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Abstract

This study examined how knowledge sharing attitudes (KSAs) and knowledge sharing intentions (KSIs) are affected by perceived learning organization culture (LOC), empowering leadership (EL), and learning goal orientation (LGO). From the data collected, we discovered that KSA was a significant partial mediator between KSI and LGO. Furthermore, LOC and EL had moderating roles on the LGO and KSA relationship. Such moderation effects were insignificant for KSI, however. This study incorporated the knowledge sharing research fields of motivation research, leadership, and organizational culture. We comment that this study was centered on relatively highly educated management consultants, as human resource management and information management practitioners can support employees and their managers to enhance organizational knowledge sharing by offering relevant practices and services.

Keywords: *Knowledge sharing attitudes, knowledge sharing intentions, learning organization culture, empowering leadership, learning goal orientation, organizational culture*

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Introduction

Knowledge management was coined by McKinsey and was termed as the process of successfully gathering, disseminating, and utilizing knowledge (Koenig, 2018). Professionals and organizations immediately realized how crucial it was to spread the concepts and methods of this knowledge. Given that many knowledge management projects call for it, it has been hypothesized that information sharing is the most important part of this process (Prompreing & Hu, 2021; Kim & Oh, 2020). Since it is difficult to transform individual bits of information into integrated knowledge within an organization, without first sharing with others, knowledge

sharing has drawn a lot of attention during the past 20 years. Knowledge sharing is seen as an indicator of the evolution of social capital in a firm since it is easy and effective to share the knowledge of organization members when there is sufficient social capital (Collins & Hitt, 2006).

Within the relationships between individuals and organizations there exists social capital, which can aid organizations in their operational effectiveness (Prusak & Cohen, 2001). Individuals in an organization can gain and enhance social capital by building trust among one another in addition to perceived obligation; behavioral and operational norms; and group identity (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). According to Kramer et al. (1996), when individuals bond emotionally to an organization, it causes them to perceive similarities among other members; this is because such identification intensifies a feeling of oneness. This effect compounds with higher numbers of members who are psychologically attached to and identify with the organization: They trust and communicate with one another more, helping to create a knowledge-sharing environment in which members feel comfortable. Research suggests that, compared with extrinsic benefits, social factors hold a higher efficacy in facilitating knowledge-sharing behaviors (Bock et al., 2005; Rese et al., 2020).

This study examined how cultural and behavioral motives affect knowledge-sharing behaviors in an organization. Specifically, the primary research questions are as follows: What makes employees share knowledge in this knowledge society? How do organizational culture and learning goal orientation affect knowledge sharing in the organizational setting?

Literature Review

Knowledge Sharing

Several studies searched for significant factors that contribute to or hinder knowledge sharing. Broadly, the direction of these studies bifurcates. Research in the first direction argues for a number of primary, essential factors to aid knowledge sharing. These are individual motivation (Osterloh et al., 2002); shared knowledge properties (Wang & Noe, 2010); attitudes and beliefs (Kolekofski & Heminger, 2003); and culture (Barua et al., 1997).

The second group of research argued that the process of knowledge sharing is too complicated to derive solely from one or a few primary factors. Studies in this vein of thought, instead, tried to construct a conceptual model of the process, merging multiple factors and/or taking a comprehensive and integrative viewpoint to identify inter-factor relationships (Bock et al., 2005). Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998), for instance, proposed that social capital is tridimensional, comprising relational, structural, and cognitive aspects. This would mean that mutual trust among knowledge-sharing partners (relational), an effective communication system (structural), and shared organizational norms (cognitive) all accelerate knowledge diffusion.

Bock et al. (2005) used the theory of reasoned action to build and trial their structural framework. They discovered that people's attitudes and subjective norms, as well as organizational climate, influence their knowledge-sharing intentions. These then impact people's knowledge-sharing attitudes.

Learning Goal Orientation

According to research, it is possible to categorize goal orientation into two subsets. These subsets are learning and performance goal orientation (Yi & Hwang, 2003). Some research suggested six theoretical models of goal orientations (Kaplan & Maehr, 2007). Vandewalle et al. (2019) reassessed goal orientation more recently. They

considered moderator variables as a way to clarify what type of relationships exist between goal orientation and outcome variables.

When discussing the subset performance goal orientation, the definition is the desire for individuals to exhibit their competence to peers and obtain positive feedback from them. It necessarily follows, according to Button et al. (1996), that people identified as having high performance goal orientation wish to demonstrate task competence via receipt of positive feedback, while avoiding negative competency judgments. Joo and Park (2010) demonstrated that performance goal orientation link to career satisfaction while learning goal orientation has a connection to organizational commitment.

While performance goal orientation is connected to criticism and reactions, learning goal orientation relates to the knowledge enhancement by the adoption and development of new skills and the mastery of new situations. Those who score highly in this area tend to put effort into boosting their learning, looking for new missions, and overcoming obstacles (Dweck & Legget, 1988). Such people have adaptive response patterns, and this produces positive outcomes. Additionally, individuals with a learning orientation exhibit a strong desire to develop their competency and undertake difficult tasks which promote learning (Dweck & Legget, 1988). Some research linked this orientation to using obstacles as learning cues, which prompt the learner to analyze and vary strategies (Godshalk & Sosik, 2003).

Learning Organization Culture

Importantly, when an organization plans to incorporate a learning component, it is imperative for that organization to possess the qualities necessary that can facilitate organization-wide learning practices in a manner that supports a collective meaning and value. In addition, a learning organization must be able to create, acquire, and transfer knowledge, as well as rapidly and efficiently adapt to recent insights and discoveries (Garvin, 1993). This said, the theoretical basis of this study is rooted in the learning organization framework defined by Watkins and Marsick (1997). Thus, they created an instrument, called the Dimensions of Learning Organization Questionnaire (DLOQ), that measures the relationships of learning organization culture and other aspects of an organization.

There was an increasing interest in the link between learning organizations and organizational success (i.e., competitive advantage) within the field of human resource development (HRD) and management over the past decades (Ellinger & Ellinger, 2021). Accordingly, it has been suggested that organizational learning culture is closely related to organizational learning success.

Empowering Leadership

Empowering leadership is a set of behaviors that promotes a shared sense of power and ultimately raises the level of intrinsic motivation in all members of an organization (Srivastava et al., 2006). A number of studies showed the significant relationships between empowering leadership and task outcome (Srivastava et al., 2006; Vecchio et al., 2010). To date, studies have reviewed empowering leadership for potential predictors and negative outcomes (Sharma & Kirkman, 2015), and have analyzed its overall efficacy (Lee et al., 2018). Overall, the results of these studies indicated that empowering leadership is considered a positive leadership construct, but its effectiveness remains controversial. This said, the Lee et al. study involved an important caveat that is inherent to any meta-analysis, which tends to focus on variables in a highly controlled environment.

Nevertheless, a few studies have undertaken the effects of empowering leadership on employees' cognitive and behavioral changes. And, because the behavior of a team leader can greatly influence employee attitudes and actions, it is imperative to identify the mechanisms that facilitate how a leader can influence employee psychology and organizational behaviors.

Research Hypotheses

Based on the literature review laid out, we came up with the number of hypotheses as follows:

Hypothesis 1: LOC will have a positive effect on KSI.

Hypothesis 2: LOC will have a positive effect on KSA.

Hypothesis 3: KSA will have a positive effect on KSI.

Hypothesis 4: LOC will significantly affect the relationship between LGO and KSA.

Hypothesis 5: LOC will significantly affect the relationship between LGO and KSI.

Hypothesis 6: Empowering leadership will significantly affect the relationship between LGO and KSA.

Hypothesis 7: Empowering leadership will significantly affect the relationship between LGO and KSI.

Figure 1. *Research Model*
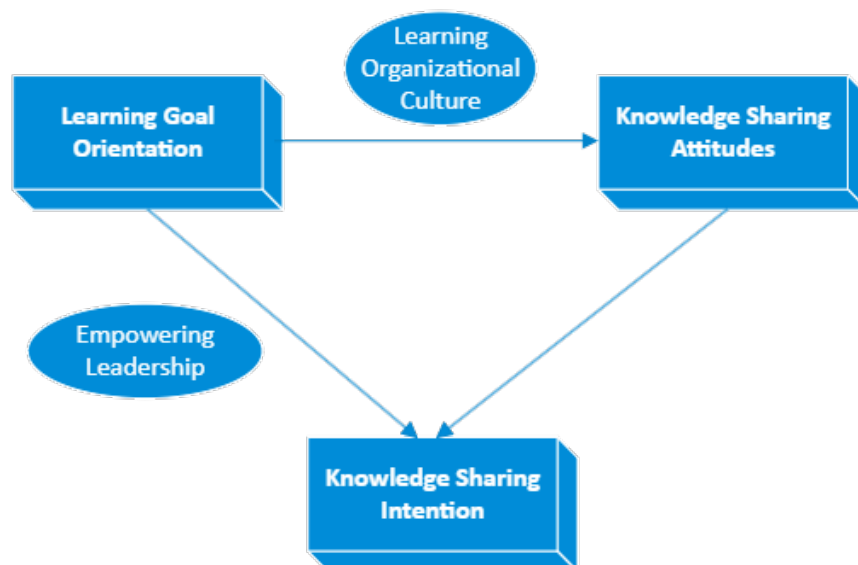
Methods

Data Collection

To get individual perceptions, this study used a cross-sectional survey. We chose nine companies in South Korea because we wished to include employees of representative for-profit Korean organizations. We distributed hardcopy survey questionnaires to 500 employees according to a convenience sampling method that HR managers administered. Overall, 325 surveys were returned, which equaled a 65% final response rate. The researchers received direct returns of completed questionnaires, and the data was kept secure and anonymous. Written informed permission was obtained as part of the data collection process in compliance with the applicable South Korean ethical regulations.

Demographic variables were gender, education, age, organizational rank, and tenure. The majority of those who responded were male (71%), between 30 and 39 years old (61%), and held the positions of either manager or

assistant manager (67%). Regarding education among the respondents, 72% were graduates of a 4-year college, while 23% had completed graduate school. Employment history was categorized as: less than 3 years (38%), 3–6 years (30%), 6–9 years (17%), 9–12 years (8%), and over 12 years (7%). It is possible to characterize most respondents as highly educated men in their 30s with the positions of manager or assistant manager.

Measures

We used the previously translated and validated questionnaires for knowledge sharing intention (Jo & Joo, 2011); learning organization culture (Joo & Lim, 2009); learning goal orientation (Joo & Park, 2010); and empowering leadership (Joo et al., 2016). In the measurement, a 6-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1–6 ("strongly disagree" to "strongly agree") was utilized.

Knowledge sharing intention
To measure knowledge sharing intention, we used the Bock et al. (2005) instrument, comprised of five items with two sub-constructs—explicit KSI and tacit KSI. The former is visible in work reports and documents, while the latter is work experience and know-how (Bock et al., 2005). Both categories' Cronbach's alphas range from 0.92 to 0.93 (Bock et al., 2005). This study measured the reliability with .91. A sample item for Knowledge sharing intention: "I will always provide my know-where or know-whom at the request of other organizational members."

Knowledge sharing attitude
We used the Bock et al. (2005) four-item knowledge sharing attitude scale. There was a four-step translation into Korean: forward translation (Step 1) followed by assessment (Step 2), and then backward translation (Step 3) followed by assessment (Step 4). The criteria considered were cultural adequacy, common language, and clarity (Presser et al., 2004). The study's four items received a reliability score of .94. This is one sample item: "My knowledge sharing with other organizational members is valuable to me."

Learning goal orientation
The study made use of a Korean version of an 8-item scale for learning goal orientation (Button et al., 1996). The reliability of learning goal orientation was .91 in this study. One of the items: "The opportunity to do challenging work is important to me."

Learning organizational culture
According to Yang, Watkins, & Marsick (2004), the study deployed a one-dimensional 7-item version of the dimensions of learning organization questionnaire (DLOQ) that stands for each sub-construct. The study's 7-item internal reliability was .84. A sample item: "In my organization, people are given open and honest feedback to each other."

Empowering leadership
The 12-item questions were adopted from Ahearne et al. (2005) and Zhang & Bartol, 2010) for empowering leadership, which in this study achieved reliability of .93. A sample item is: "My supervisor makes many decisions together with me."

Results

Measurement Model Assessment

Utilizing an estimation of maximum likelihood, the Exploratory Factor Analysis revealed that there were seven factors possessing eigenvalues of more than 1. The maximum variance inflation factor (VIF) was 2.28 and the average of VIFs was 1.70. In short, we found no serious multi-collinearity problem in this study.

To determine the measurement model's construct validity, we undertook a series of confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs). Our initial model had five factors (see Table 1), which were LGO, LOC, EL, KSA, and KSI. Then, the second model had 4 factors: LGO; LOC; EL; and KSA and KSI combined. Our final model had 1 factor equating all constructs. The comparison shows us that the 5-factor model was a superior model of measurement regarding all indices (χ^{22} [584] = 2,042; (χ^{22}/df = 3.5; SRMR = .060; RMSEA = .088; p = .00; CFI = .95; NNFI = .94). As shown in the CFA results, we have these additional validities for the models.

Table 1. *Measurement Model Assessment by CFA*

	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	RMSEA	NNFI	CFI	SRMR
5-factor model	**2,042.38*****	**584**	**3.50**	**.088**	**.94**	**.95**	**.060**
4-factor[a] model	2,562.16***	588	4.36	.100	.93	.93	.069
1-factor[b] model	7,151.59***	594	12.04	.190	.84	.85	.120

Note. n = 325; *** *p* < .001

[a] Equating KSA and KSI.

[b] Equating LOC, EL, LGO, KSA, and KSI.

Descriptive Statistics, Correlations, and Reliabilities

As shown in Table 2, we detected the correlations among the demographic variables and the five constructs. Descriptive statistics and the reliabilities were also presented. We found that the correlations are statistically significant (p < .01) and have moderate positive relationships among the constructs (r = .34 − .68). The measure's reliability showed in an acceptable range (α = .83 − .94). In terms of demographic variables, the older employees with higher tenure, as well as those with higher education, are likely to act positively to learning organization culture. Those who are in higher positions tended to perceive higher in KSA and empowering leadership. On the other hand, no significant gender differences were observed in this study. Based on the correlation analysis, we have evidence to support the first three hypotheses. H1 through H3 were supported.

Table 2: *Descriptive Statistics, Correlations, and Reliabilities*

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Knowledge sharing intention	3.73	.79	(.91)									
2. Knowledge sharing attitudes	3.89	.78	.68**	(.94)								
3. Learning goal orientation	3.88	.67	.56**	.51**	(.91)							
4. Empowering leadership	3.27	.78	.52**	.40**	.43**	(.92)						
5. Learning organization culture	3.05	.75	.40**	.35**	.34**	.57**	(.83)					
6. Gender	1.39	.86	.02	-.01	-.04	-.09	.07	-				
7. Age	1.97	.93	.03	.05	-.02	.05	.11*	.53**	-			
8. Education	3.21	.79	.04	-.01	.02	.06	.12*	.59**	.64**	-		
9. Organizational rank	3.15	.99	-.10	-.13*	-.06	-.26**	-.09	.54**	.07	.23**	-	
10. Tenure in organization	2.22	1.41	.08	.05	-.06	.14*	.18**	.34**	.68**	.40**	-.09	-

Note. n = 325; * p < .05; ** p < .01; internal reliabilities in the diagonal.

Multiple Regression Analysis

The results of multiple regressions for KSA and KSI are shown in Table 3. We entered the control variables, LGO, contextual variables, and the interactions at Steps 1, 2, 3, and 4. Thirty-five percent (35%) of the KSA variance was explained, overall, by the demographic variables, personality factor (LGO), contextual factors (LOC and empowering leadership), and the interactions. Fifty-six percent (56%) of the KSI variance was accounted for by the demographic variables, personality factor (LGO), contextual factors (LOC and empowering leadership), interactions, and KSA.

**Table 3.** *Multiple Regression Results for Knowledge Sharing*

|	Knowledge Sharing Attitudes				Knowledge Sharing Intention				
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Step 1: Control Variables									
- Gender	.09	.09	.08	.08	.08	.08	.08	.08	.04
- Age	.06	.05	.08	.08	-.10	-.11	-.07	-.07	-.11
- Education	-.05	-.09	-.11	-.11	.06	.02	-.02	-.01	.04
- Organizational rank	-.17*	-.13*	-.08	-.08	-.14*	-.09	-.02	-.02	.02
- Tenure in organization	-.01	.04	-.02	-.03	.09	.14*	.08	.07	.09
Step 2: Main effect									
- Learning goal orientation (LGO)		**.51****	.40**	.66**		**.56****	.41**	.65**	.34*
Step 3: Contextual factors									
- Learning organization culture (LOC)			**.13***	-.75*			**.08**	-.05	.31
- Empowering leadership (EL)			**.15***	1.48**			**.29****	.82**	.12
Step 4: Interactions									
- LGO * LOC				**1.19****				**.17**	-.39
- LGO * EL				**-1.85****				**-.74**	.14
Step 5: Knowledge sharing attitudes									**.47****
F-value	1.62	20.68**	18.99**	18.27**	1.45	26.81**	82.83**	23.98**	38.59**
Adjusted R²	.01	.27	.31	.35	.01	.32	.40	.41	.56
ΔR^2	-	**.26**	**.04**	**.04**	-	**.31**	**.08**	**.01**	**.15**

Note. $n = 325$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

In terms of the effect size (changes of R2), the individual factor LGO (ΔR2 = .26) explained the whole KSA variation. Also, the contextual factors and also the interactions between personal and contextual factors accounted for 4% (ΔR2 = .04) respectively. According to Table 3, H4 was supported but H5 was not. For the effect size of the regression analysis of KSI, LGO accounted for 31% of the variance in KSI. The contextual factor explained additional 8% of the variance (ΔR2 = .08). However, the interactions turned out to be non-significant. Thus, H6 was supported and H7 was not supported. The Korean sample clearly showed on the whole that LGO had a much greater impact on both KSA and KSI than the contextual factors.

Regarding the interactive effects among the three predictors (as shown in Figures 2 and 3), the study discovered that there was significant interaction (at the .05 level) for LGO and LOC in influencing KSA (Figure 2). As shown in Figure 3, it also revealed a significant interaction between LGO and empowering leadership in influencing KSA. Controlling for the demographic variables and the main effects, the study intended to discover if one variable influenced the outcomes more given higher levels of the other variable. This revealed that LGO and LOC have a significant interactive effect on KSA. LGO interacted with LOC in such a manner as to imply that the KSA levels of higher LGO individuals are enhanced by the positive perception of LOC. Our results suggest that, to both highly LGO and less LGO individuals, positive LOC is beneficial. They also suggest that LGO is positive in both high LOC and low LOC environments.

Figure 2. *Moderation Effect of Learning Organization Culture on the LGO–KSA Relationship*
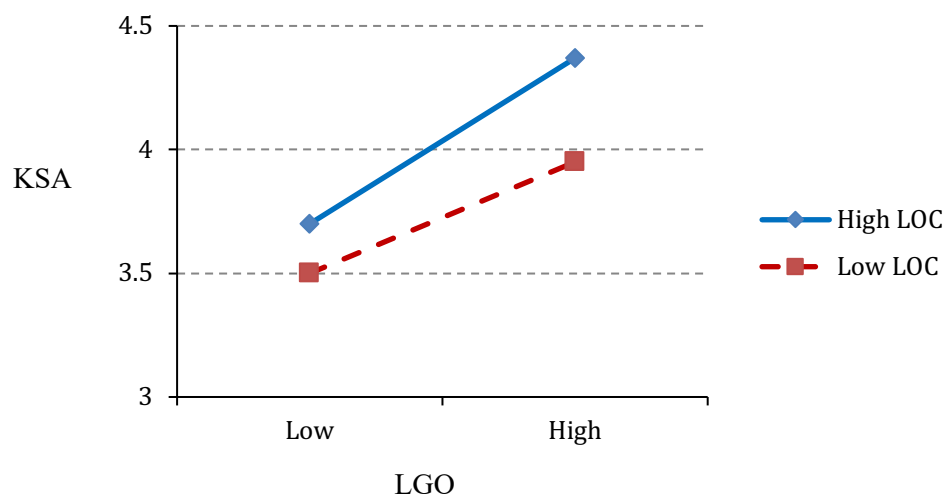
The study also found, as Figure 3 shows, that empowering leadership and LGO were interactive in their influence on KSA. It is of interest that LGO helped KSA far more in environments lacking quality EL. However, in a high quality EL environment, KSA was slightly lower among low LGO respondents. It is possible that LGO has a considerably more essential role in KSA absent high-quality EL, although KSA was lower across the LGO spectrum in a high EL environment.

Figure 3. *Moderation Effect of Empowering Leadership on the LGO–KSA Relationship*
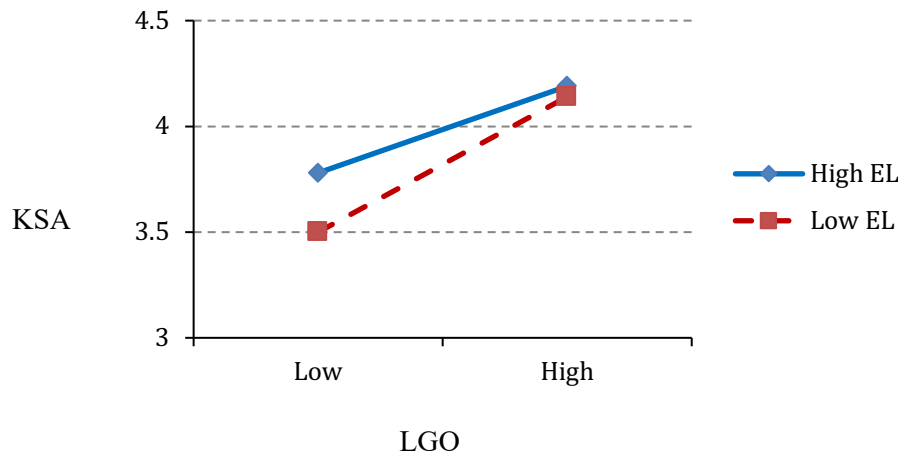
Discussion

We found that those who are in higher positions tended to perceive higher in KSA and empowering leadership. However, gender did not affect those constructs in this study. As shown in the correlation table, the first three hypotheses were supported in this study (p <.01). H1 through H3 showed significant relationships.

Based on the theory of reasoned action (TRA) and Bock et al. (2005), a user's behavior is determined by beliefs and attitudes in this knowledge sharing framework. As they discovered that people's attitudes influence their knowledge-sharing intentions, this study basically confirms the results. These then impact people's knowledge-sharing attitudes. In terms of KSA regression models, the personality factor (LGO) showed a stronger effect size (.26) than that of contextual factors (.04). This shows that learning minded employees are likely to show a higher level of knowledge sharing attitude. The same goes for KSI in terms of LGO and contextual factors, thus, the effect size produced was higher with .31 versus .08. Those employees with learning goal oriented would show a higher level of knowledge sharing intention.

The study results indicated that the effect size of the moderation effects was relatively large ($\Delta R2$ = .04). As research (McClelland & Judd, 1993) have argued, even a 1% increase in R2 is not negligible, especially when we assumed some degree of moderation effects. This would be another important result from the study considering the moderation effect. In relating to moderation effects, we found that the perception of learning organizational culture moderated the relationship between learning goal orientation and knowledge sharing attitude. In any level of LOC situation, low LGO group displayed low KSA and high LGO group responded to high KSA. In determining the moderation effect of empowering leadership on the relationship between learning goal orientation and knowledge sharing attitudes (see Figure 3), those with higher learning goal orientation showed higher knowledge sharing attitudes. Particularly those with low learning goal orientation displayed a higher impact of empowering leadership. The perception of high learning goal orientation scored higher in knowledge sharing attitudes even if the level of empowering leadership was low.

In order for organizations to have more knowledge sharing environment, employers are encouraged to focus on the development of employees' learning goal minds because the minds would promote knowledge sharing attitudes and knowledge sharing intention. Further, they need to develop organizational efforts to bring up the learning culture, such as providing new learning lessons and workshops and establishing more collaboration

opportunities. Moreover, the senior leaders should be advocates of supporting the expansion of new learning and team sharing.

Practical Implications

Human resources (HRs) and supporting staffs may help employees and their managers by offering pertinent HR practices and services in order to improve knowledge sharing among members. These efforts can involve hiring and training people with higher LGO, revamping job requirements so that workers feel more empowered and want to be trained as empowered leaders with good coaching abilities.

Limitations and Future Research

To understand the effect of learning organizational culture better, a further study should investigate that the older workers with higher tenure and those who had a higher educational level tend to respond positively to learning organization culture. Second, knowledge workers, who were highly educated managers in consulting companies, were the main subject of the current study. To reduce the potential restricted range, we can include disparate groups of samples in the study. Future studies should look at other personal traits and external factors, such as language, self-efficacy, knowledge distance, organizational distance, and work promotion, in terms of research mediators or moderators.

Conclusion

We postulate that those who are in higher positions tend to perceive higher KSA and empowering leadership. However, the effect of gender has not been established yet. Organizations learn that employing proactive personnel seemingly had a greater influence on creativity levels than leader–member exchange (LMX) and autonomy. Thus, significant relationships between LGO and KSA, and LGO and KSI, can be expected. In terms of empowering leadership and LGO, it is expected they would be interactive in their influence on KSA. It is of interest that LGO may help KSA far more in environments lacking quality EL.

The relationship between learning goal orientation and knowledge sharing attitude was found to be moderated by the perception of learning organizational culture. As a result, we can expect that even when leadership motivation is low in the company, employee learning goal orientation will encourage knowledge sharing attitudes.

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