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Knowledge Management Among Palestinian Employees at Governmental And Non-Governmental Organizations

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Abstract

The study aimed at investigating the knowledge management among Palestinian employees at governmental and non-governmental organizations. Knowledge management was evaluated using an index of a 20-item scale that was administrated to three hundred and thirty-seven employees in governmental and non-governmental organizations in the southern part of West Bank, Palestine. The data were statistically analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The findings revealed that employees experienced a high level of knowledge management. The results demonstrated significant statistical differences in the knowledge management scores among the employees due to their gender and organizational authority. However, no statistical significant differences were found in the rest of the study variables. Practical implications were drawn based on the findings.

Keywords: Knowledge management, governmental and non-governmental organizations, Palestine.

Introduction

The world is going through many transitions and developments in all of life scopes. Also, organizations have been affected by these transitions because of pressure on these organizations to develop their product quality as well as quantity, and at the same time reduce their cost. In order to face these challenges and improve performance, applying knowledge management is one of the solutions that the organizations need (Hijazi, 2005). Knowledge management, considered as a modernistic concept in the management sciences, occupies a prominent and vital place in various administrative, technical, and commercial areas (Sawi, 2007).

The importance of knowledge management (KM) has emerged in research over the past decades as a new trend in management literature. At the same time, many governments have been exposed to a series of challenges that forced them to think about new approaches and practices, which can help in achieving competition. This situation has raised the need for

effective results from various initiatives involving knowledge management in various governmental and non-governmental programs in developing countries (Buheji, 2013).

Various knowledge management models have been developed in order to support knowledge management activities. However, existing knowledge management models and their tools may have problems in many circumstances, and as such cannot be used efficiently and effectively (Ahmad, 2010).

Thus, all administrative disciplines sought to contribute to the concept of knowledge management (KM) in a somewhat independent manner, because staff and their development are currently facing regulatory challenges (Turner & Minonne, 2010).

Knowledge management is defined as the process of directing and achieving knowledge in a company. It refers to knowledge of achieving goals efficiently and effectively such that competitors cannot imitate them (Najem, 2005).

From another perspective, knowledge management has been defined as a clear, structured, and systematic management of the vital knowledge associated with creation, creativity, innovation, and knowledge exploitation (Skyrme, 2015).

Background

The concept of knowledge has long emerged as a result of developments and complexities in learning. Hammurabi was the first ruler in history to recognize the importance of education. He founded the first school before 2000 BC. Then the Chinese philosopher, Confucius, called for spreading knowledge when he said, "Knowledge is the only way to succeed". The Greek scientist, Plato, emphasized the importance of knowledge in improving the lives of individuals and worked on the creation of the virtuous city book carried by the philosophers and the holders of knowledge. Plato said in knowledge that individuals can not prove themselves without knowledge (Kubaisse, 2004).

Many researchers in the field of management have contributed to the development of the concept of knowledge management, and some of them are: Donald Marchand, Peter Drucker, Peter Singh, and other management researchers (Barclay & Murray, 2000).

Knowledge management was defined as conscious discipline, and knowledge management evolved from the thinking of academicians such as Peter Drucker in the 1970s, Karl-Erik Sveiby in the late 1980s, Nonaka and Takeuchi in the 1990s. During that time, economic, social and technological changes were transforming the way companies operated, especially with the advent of globalization and the introduction of new opportunities and increased competition. Through downsizing, merging, acquiring, reengineering and outsourcing, companies wanted to streamline their workforce and increase their productivity and profits by using advanced techniques in computer and network technology (Brun, 2005).

Many researchers in the field of knowledge management explained that it emerged in 1985 when Hewlett Packard released its first knowledge management program, "The Role of Knowledge Management in Computer Channels", in 1990. Thus, 72% of US, Japanese and European companies adopted knowledge management programs. They appointed a manager at each level, and the concept of knowledge management became recognized in 2002 (King, 2009).

Wiig (1993) argues that knowledge management is the organization, planning, coordination, control, and generation of knowledge and assets associated with intellectual capital, personal, and organizational capabilities through which the greatest possible positive impact is achieved. According to King (2009), knowledge management involves the acquisition of knowledge, creativity, production, information refinement, and sharing so that it can be transferred and utilized.

To sum up, knowledge management is defined as "every effort or planned activity that contributes to the communication, and the direct connection between the cognitive assets and intellectual assets, whether explicit or implicit, in order to transform them into added results and values" (Kubaisi, 2004: 576).

Moreover, knowledge management has emerged as a result of many administrative practices and initiatives, which are shaped in the following areas:

1. Re-engineering the Administrative Process: Reengineering the administrative process is defined as a redesign of administrative processes to achieve improvements in cost, quality, speed, and service. Knowledge management and reengineering processes of the management

process correspond to the ability to move away from best practices and apply them in the organization.

2. Total Quality Management: It aims at continuously improving customer satisfaction through the development of high quality output care procedures.

3. Information Management: This is the process by which information is secured, kept confidential, and transmitted to others.

4. The Learning Organization: It works by spreading the concept of collective learning and changing the way people think in order to achieve the best results. An educated organization is an organization in which individuals identify problems and solve them, thereby making the organization able to continue, develop, and grow.

5. Innovation: This means the ability to exploit the new ideas available to be offered in the form of goods and services to the market.

6. Intellectual Capital and Intellectual Assets: These are a set of inventions, ideas, general knowledge, technology, databases and creativity, which are all thought of or conceived and could be converted into profit.

7. Intelligence: It is the ability to acquire and apply knowledge, to build and improve knowledge, and to transform knowledge from probabilistic to functional attainment.

8. Knowledge Base Systems: The organization employs many systems in order to enhance the organizational process, including office systems and knowledge systems, which encourage collective learning (Al Ali et al., 2006; Zatma, 2011).

Additionally, knowledge management has a number of requirements that can be summarized as follows:

1. Technological Infrastructure: This refers to the search engines, software, and all things related to ICT.

2. Human Resources: This is one of the most important components and tools of knowledge management. It is what is known as individuals of knowledge who generate, store, and transfer knowledge.

3. Organizational Structure: It is one of the most important requirements for success. It states that for individuals to know, to create, to discover and to generate knowledge, the organizational structure must be flexible, since it provides facilities, procedures, and processes for knowledge management.

4. Organization culture in or to create a positive culture, which works to produce and share knowledge, create a highly experienced society, build a network of individuals, and promote the organization's culture among individuals.

5. Organizational Climate: The existence of an organizational climate that is based on credibility and trust and the extent to which individual efforts are in the organization is an important factor in the spread of knowledge (Madi, 2011).

Furthermore, knowledge management process passes through five stages and works together in an integrative and sequential manner, each relying on the other. The stages are as follows: diagnosis of knowledge, identify knowledge objectives, generating knowledge, knowledge storage and distribution, application of knowledge (Shammari & Dori, 2004). However, some scholars divided knowledge management process into three main stages, which are: translation, integration, and institutionalization (Rasooli, 2006).

Further Related Studies

Several studies on the significance of knowledge management in the management sciences world have researched on this concept and have found it to be a multidimensional phenomenon, which addressed both theoretical and applied research. In a recent study, Mosala-Bryant & Hoskins (2017) revealed that the Provincial Human Resource Development Forum members were highly motivated to share knowledge during their meetings. However, the level of knowledge sharing was high, and is motivated by both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators such as diverse membership, experience and knowledge, increased reputation, the presence of a knowledge sharing culture, incentives and rewards, recognition of expertise, reciprocal benefits and trust. Waribugo et al. (2016) concluded that industrial companies must acquire qualified personnel or personnel in the field of knowledge in order to enhance the efficiency of product innovation.

The study of Abd al-Jawad (2016) indicated that the multiple channels of knowledge to facilitate the transfer of knowledge is one of the most important elements of the success of knowledge management. In a study conducted by Abu Odeh (2016), the results showed that leadership with its reciprocal and transformational dimensions greatly influences the process of knowledge management practice. Abdul Ghafoor (2015) argued that universities must provide knowledge management requirements for them to gain competitive advantage. However, the study of Chiu & Chen (2016) showed that there exists a significant relationship between knowledge process capability and organizational effectiveness, while knowledge infrastructure capability and organizational effectiveness are insignificant.

Moreover, Downes (2014) concluded that social interaction among staff is the main mode of knowledge transfer in Australian civil society organizations. However, there was a lack of knowledge management in Australian organizations. The results of Buheji (2013) study revealed strong and significant linkages between the five dominant regulatory development practices, and there was a positive impact of knowledge management on organizational development practices.

Additionally, Awamleh & Kloub (2013) indicated that the design of appropriate organizational structures can drive for greater production and application of knowledge as a precondition for survival and success. The empirical data of Rasula et al. (2013) study concluded that regulatory elements (eg, culture, climate and cooperation) have a positive impact on knowledge elements in the context of knowledge management. Through organizational change, a degree of knowledge sharing and application is effected, thus improving knowledge management practices.

Furthermore, Turyasingura (2011) emphasized the effective use of existing knowledge, and the importance of continuous learning to acquire new knowledge to meet the requirements of future organizational knowledge. In his study, Nguyen (2011) indicated that developing countries are countries that are lagging behind in the application of advanced tools to keep up with competition, and that knowledge management may be the appropriate strategic tool for companies in this case.

Aims And Scope

One of the main objectives of the institutions is to achieve growth, continuity (sustainability) and survival, through competitive advantage and institutional excellence at all levels. This growth and success is achieved through the availability of the necessary knowledge for managers and employees to manage the situations, problems, and crises that occur during the course of the institution and speed in making the right decisions to solve the problems facing the institution in its position, whether as a manager or an employee.

The objectives of the study is to investigate the knowledge management among Palestinian employees at governmental and non-governmental organizations, to explore the factors which can affect knowledge management among employees, and to open new prospects for further studies in the related field. The study considered being the first and leading of its kind, to the authors' knowledge, revealed that knowledge management, through empirical test of such assumptions, especially in the Palestinian occupied society remains unclear.

Hypotheses

Based on the reviewed literature, the set objectives, questions and variables of the study, the following hypothesis was proposed:

There are no statistical significant differences at $\alpha \leq 0.05$ in knowledge management among Palestinian employees at governmental and non-governmental organizations according to their gender, age, educational level, organization authority, experience, and governorate.

Delimiting variables for the scope of the study based on participants' demographic characteristics included gender, age, educational level, organization authority, experience, and governorate.

Methods And Design

The study is a descriptive research study using a questionnaire, which is appropriate with the exploratory nature of the research. The target population consists of governmental and non-governmental organizations in the southern part of West Bank, Palestine, which included two thousand seven hundred and ten organizations (2,710): 1,765 governmental to 945 non-governmental (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2016).

The overall sample comprised of three hundred and thirty-seven employees (197 males and 140 females). The sample size was calculated using the sampling web, http://www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm, sample size calculator, with a margin error of 0.05.

Knowledge management was evaluated using an index of a 20-item scale. A 5-point Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, neither, disagree and strongly disagree) was used to measure the responses. The participants were asked to complete the questionnaire in selected governmental and non-governmental organizations in the southern part of West Bank, Palestine. The sampling survey instrument sought background information such as gender, age, educational level, organization authority, experience, and governorate.

Validation of the instrument proceeded in two distinct phases. The initial phase involved a group of referees and expert arbitrators, who provided some comments on the tool. The second phase involved the implementation of a pilot study (N=30) to validate the survey using exploratory factor analysis. Factor loading for all items exceeded 0.55 (0.57 to 0.77), which implied that those items were suitable to measure each item of knowledge management among the sampled employees.

The reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha and Guttman split-half coefficients to ascertain reliability and consistency of the survey. Cronbach's Alpha and Guttman split-half for the survey instrument was 0.91 and 0.87, respectively, indicating excellent reliability and consistency.

The demographic breakdown of the participants is as follows: gender, age, educational level, organization authority, experience, and governorate. In total, the study was conducted in three hundred and thirty-seven organizations. Respondents were between 22 and 60 years of age (M 37.84 SD 9.49). Males represented 58.5% of the participants, while the remaining 41.5% were females. Hebron Governorate represented 68.5% of the organizations, while the remaining 31.5% were from Bethlehem Governorate; almost 65% of the respondents were from government organizations, while the remaining 35% were from non-governmental organizations. Experience among the respondents was between 1 and 40 years (M 12.90 SD 8.96); and the vast majority (89.6%) of the participants had either a college or undergraduate degree.

Data Analysis And Findings

Data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The questionnaire items were rated on a 1–5 Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neither, 4=agree and 5=strongly agree). The highest score indicated a high level of knowledge management. Descriptive statistics gauged knowledge management scores among the sampled population. The following statistical techniques were measured: Regression, T.test, One way analysis of variance, Tukey test, Cronbach's Alpha, Guttman Split-Half Coefficient and Factor Analysis.

The mean score of knowledge management scale as experienced by the sample of three hundred and thirty-seven participants was high (M 3.68 SD 0.58). The study observed that almost 73.6% of the employees had a high level of knowledge management.

Furthermore, findings revealed the indicators of knowledge management ranked in descending order as follows: I have multiple storage devices (electronic archiving, documentation, etc.) to save knowledge (M 4.15 SD 0.96); I share with my colleagues the knowledge needed to find solutions to work problems (M 4.06 SD 0.88). The employees indicated that they use technology to help them acquire knowledge (M 4.05 SD 0.88); and they can classify and document information in an accessible way (M 4.04 SD 0.88); believing that the technical devices they use to store knowledge are safe (M 3.95 SD 0.87).

Moreover, the study investigated demographic breakdown of knowledge management among Palestinian employees at governmental and non-governmental organizations with the aim of identifying differences.

The findings revealed that age, educational level, experience, and governorate do not signify any significant difference. However, it was found that gender and organization authority are significant variables.

In relation to gender, the differences favored females (M 3.75 SD 0.55) compared to (M 3.61 SD 0.59) for males: T.test value was (-2.188 P=0.029). Finally, differences were found in organization authority, which favored non-governmental organizations (M 3.75 SD 0.60): F-value was (-1.938 P=0.053).

Discussion

The findings of the study revealed that Palestinian employees had experienced a high level of knowledge management. The above results reflect the value of knowledge management in innovative job involvement and manager's strategies at the Palestinian governmental and non-governmental organizations that encourage employees to manage their information and knowledge sharing that are most conducive to creativity and job involvement. In addition, the high level of knowledge management among the employees is motivated by both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators such as diverse membership, experience and knowledge, increased reputation, the presence of a knowledge sharing culture, incentives and rewards, recognition of expertise, reciprocal benefits and trust.

According to the study's results, the females scored a higher level of knowledge management than the males. Although patriarchal ideology is deeply rooted in the Palestinian society, where the notions of father and brother are prevalent, the availability of female employees in the organizations; the fewer number of organization activities females have than males; the more positively lenient in nature they are than their male counterparts; the high participation of women in the labor market in recent years, along with their adhering to the rules and directions of the organizations instructions; and the fact that females take more responsibility for their organizations success and self-improvement throughout their job in a male patriarchal dominance and social upbringing, which is based on gender inequality all contributes significantly in increasing their knowledge management (Astin, 1993; Barakat, 1993; Adena et al., 2013; Banat & Rimawi, 2015).

The study also revealed that age, educational level, experience, and governorate do not show any significant difference in knowledge management among Palestinian employees at governmental and non-governmental organizations. This implies that knowledge management are not actually influenced by these variables and is more likely to be affected by other factors other than employee's age, educational level, experience, and governorate.

Finally, knowledge management increased among the employee of non-governmental organizations compared to the governmental organizations' employee. The question of differences and similarities between governmental and non-governmental organizations has long been a classic topic among fields like management and organizational theory. The United Nations Public Administration Network-UNPAN report (2003) concluded that

government organizations should definitely learn the attitude toward knowledge and knowledge management from their counterparts in private sectors. However, it is equally important to note that government should draw the appropriate conclusions of knowledge management not by simply seeking to "copy" the private sector, but by endeavoring to innovate in accordance with their own identity and specificity and in accordance with their own way of managing government operations. After all, government organizations have their unique characteristics and incomparable resources and responsibilities in the endeavors of promoting knowledge management and building the "knowledge society" compared with private organizations.

Conclusion And Recommendations

Knowledge management is the study of how firms manage the tacit and explicit knowledge and know how their employees have about its products, services, organizational systems, and intellectual property. It has been approved that organizations with efficient communication linkages have higher information flow, knowledge sharing, cooperation, problem-solving, creativity, efficiency, and productivity that leads to sustainable benefits for the employees and the organizations as well (Morrissey, 2005). Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Update the Palestinian employees with what is new in the field of knowledge management.
2. Developing strategies to encourage knowledge sharing in the Palestinian governmental and non-governmental organizations using modern technical methods.
3. Establishment of a knowledge unit in the Palestinian governmental and non-governmental organizations.
4. The need to increase research in the field of knowledge management using qualitative methods among the Palestinian employees is recommended.

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