

## **The Relationship between Cultural Barriers, Open Mindedness and Organizational Innovation**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this research was to study the influences of cultural barriers on open mindedness and organizational innovation. Open mindedness was considered as the independent variable and organizational innovation as the dependent one. This study was practical due to its objectives, and was descriptive due to its methodology. The statistical society included all 85 employees of Borujerd Educational Organization among whom the researchers selected 70 persons randomly and using Morgan and Talkman Table. In order to collect the data needed, the researchers used, in addition to library researches, a questionnaire. The questionnaire used in this research consisted of 18 questions. From question No. 1 to question No. 6 were dedicated to cultural barrier; from question No. 7 to question No. 11 were dedicated to open mindedness; and from question No. 12 to question No. 18 were dedicated to organizational innovation. The alpha coefficient for test reliability was 0.860. Moreover, the researchers used SPSS and LISREL software to analyse the data. Finally, the result showed that cultural barriers are effective in relation with open mine and organizational barriers and there is a significant and positive relationship between open mindedness and organizational innovation. Furthermore, cultural barriers affect both open mindedness and organizational innovation.

**KEYWORDS:** Culture, Cultural Barriers, Open mindedness, Innovation, Organization, Education.

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Establishing organizational innovation could be a very challenging task for small businesses, especially when their owners are not involved in working process in an active manner. In the recent era, in which societies are called informational or over-industrial, the speeds of changes and evolutions are in a marvellous manner. Working with hands is no longer useful and common, instead, it is machinery working, but there should be a kind of creativity and innovation. In such situation that the distinguishing faculty is thinking, those societies can progress and develop that use human resource in the best way.

Innovation has been defined in many ways. One of its accepted definitions refers to the use of ideas or behaviours that are considered new for organization. These ideas or behaviours could be a kind of system, policy, program, tool, procedure, product, or service. Organizational innovation, in this research, is considered as organization's capacity to change some activities in form of evolutions in products or services.

Regarding these issues mentioned, in all organizations – small or big – there is not a vast range of experiences. It may mean that something blocks the way of development. This is the limitation of cultural barriers. Some of these cultural barriers are related to a kind of old-fashioned knowledge that by itself could be considered as a progressive barrier.

Useful communication with people of diverse cultures is especially puzzling. Cultures offer people with methods of thinking—methods of seeing, hearing, and deducing the world. Accordingly, the same words can mean altered things to persons from dissimilar cultures, even when they dialog the same language. When the languages are diverse, and translation is for communication, the possibility of misunderstandings upsurges.

Stella Ting-Toomey defines three methods in which culture restricts the effective cross-cultural understanding.

First is what she calls "cognitive constraints." These are the frames of reference or world views that provide a backdrop that all new information is compared to or inserted into.

Second are "behaviour constraints." Each culture has its own rules about proper behaviour which affect verbal and nonverbal communication. Whether one looks the other person in the eye-or not; whether one says what one means overtly or talks around the issue; how close the people stand to each other when they are talking—all of these and many more are rules of politeness which differ from culture to culture.

Ting-Toomey's third factor is "emotional constraints." Different cultures regulate the display of emotion differently. Some cultures get very emotional when they are debating an issue. They yell, they cry, they exhibit their anger, fear, frustration, and other feelings openly. Other cultures try to keep their emotions hidden, exhibiting or sharing only the "rational" or factual aspects of the situation (*Conflict Research Consortium, University of Colorado, USA*).

All these diversities and differences lead to communication oriented problems. If the people who are involved in these differences in the working place are not conscious of the potential for such problems and difficulties, they fall to be the failure due to them. But the important point is that awareness alone cannot be very effective to win over such problems and solve the difficulties of cultural communication and therefore cultural barriers.

On the whole, when there exist such problems concerning cultural barriers, we cannot expect employees to have the characteristics of open mindedness and therefore organizational innovation. One way, perhaps the most effective one, to be innovative is to have the ability and possibility to think freely (openness). Nevertheless, when there is no (or a lack) cultural relationship and cultural communication, there would be no opportunity to think in an open minded way. Thus, having no chance for open mindedness is equal to the death of innovation. Moreover, we can apply such saying to the employees of an organization.

Therefore, the aim in this research is to study the effects and role of these cultural barriers on open mindedness and then organizational innovation.

## 1.1. LITERATURE REVIEW

**Open Mindedness:** In general form, open mindedness can be defined as "incorporate the beliefs that others should be free to express their views and that the value of others' knowledge should be recognized" (*Mitchell and Nicholas 2006*). But in the case of management and managerial discussions, it refers to an effort to "redirect organizational values, standards, and behaviors" (*Day, and Nedungadi 1994*) that is in company with "changing identifiable structures, mental models, existing logics, and main hypotheses" (*Shaw and Perkins 1991*).

**Organizational Innovation:** It refers to an idea to accept change and innovation which are the products of creativity. Organizational innovation is the first level for each organization to step into the business in a way that creates value directly for organization and indirectly for customers.

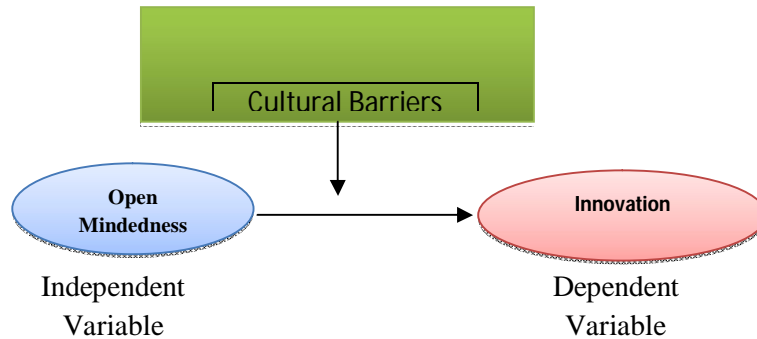
The definition of Ruth Kustoff may be the best one which can clearly explain and define the concept of organizational innovation which is considered in this study.

Organizational innovation refers to new ways work can be organized, and accomplished within an organization to encourage and promote competitive advantage. It encompasses how organizations and individuals specifically, manage work processes in such areas as customer relationships, employee performance and retention, and knowledge management.

At the core of organizational innovation is the need to improve or change a product, process or service. All innovation revolves around change - but not all change is innovative. Organizational innovation encourages individuals to think independently and creatively in applying personal knowledge to organizational challenges. Therefore, organizational innovation requires a culture of innovation that supports new ideas, processes and generally new ways of "doing business" (*Kustoff 2008, P.1*).

**Cultural Barriers:** Culture is defined as the existing values, beliefs, and members' actions in an organization. Culture, not only is visible in "actual concept" of organizations like objectives and values, but also it can be seen in the way the people "behave, expect from each other and become aware" of each other (*McDermott and O'Dell 2001*).

Although invention is the result of personal creativity, innovation is the result of creative working. It is a social activity which alike others needs a suitable framework. Having such a framework results in better organized activities and this process only needs investigating. There have been done very few researches regarding this issue and it seems that education, as the most important faculty of human growth, has been paid very few attentions.

**Fig. 1 (Conceptual Framework)**

Global economy is in a rapid change in terms of principles for organizations and industries around the world. These changes force the organizations to analyze their aims very carefully and choose the most frequent alternatives which result in success. The new age is the time of putting emphasis on innovation for organizations.

It seems that “people with low innovation and creativity are non-potential and unresponsive; and therefore, the knowledge oriented activities are reduced” (*Sinkula, Baker, and Noordewier 1997*). Therefore, it is necessary to identify majority of these barriers and then remove them, otherwise, individuals feel frustrated, feared, pressured, and uncertainty and feel confused in omitting old habit to be adapted to new habits. These mentioned results could also lead to innovation barriers.

Mac Demount Vadal, 2001, in his article wrote that existing of cultural barriers such as having no education, mind openness, tolerance, or taking the blame on culture usually lead to the death of motivation. Therefore, managers should overcome cultural barrier to increase the effects of open mindedness on innovation. Using such a method, managers not only create opportunities, but also replace old habits and procedures with new and innovative ones. In another research in 2004, it was deduced that cultural barriers blocks the effective sharing of wisdom. This leads to wrong presuppositions and remove the reality of information. These barriers have negative effects on innovation and directly influence an organization.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The aim of this research is to study the influences of cultural barriers on open mindedness and organizational innovation. Open mindedness is considered as independent variable and organizational innovation as dependent one. This study is practical due to its objectives, and is descriptive due to its methodology. The statistical society includes all 85 employees of Borujerd Educational Organization among whom the researchers select 70 persons randomly and using Morgan and Talkman Table.

In order to collect the data needed, the researchers use, in addition to library researches, a questionnaire. The questionnaire used in this research consists of 18 questions. From question No. 1 to question No. 6 are dedicated to cultural barrier; from question No. 7 to question No. 11 are dedicated to open mindedness; and from question No. 12 to question No. 18 are dedicated to organizational innovation. The alpha coefficient for test reliability is 0.860 (Table 1). Moreover, and the researchers use SPSS (version 19) and LISREL software to analyse the data.

**Table 1 (Alpha coefficient for all variables)**

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Open mindedness	0.851	Cultural Barrier	0.876	70
Innovation	0.869			
Alpha Coefficient	0.860	Number of Questionnaires	30	70

## 3. FINDINGS

In this research we used SPSS software (version 19) and LISREL (version 8).

**The hypotheses are as following:**

**The First Hypothesis**

**The null hypothesis:** There is no significant relationship between open mindedness and organizational innovation (i and j).

**The Alternative hypothesis:** There is a significant relationship between open mindedness and organizational innovation (i and j).

**Table 2 (Correlation Coefficient)**

Open mindedness	Innovation	N
	Sig = 0.000      r = 0.539	70

According to table 2, the significancy and correlation coefficient ( $r=0.539$ ), the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between open mindedness and organizational innovation.

**The Second Hypothesis:** The influence of cultural barriers on open mindedness and innovation.

For such a purpose, we used Split Data and then divided them into two groups. One in a time when we have less cultural barrier and the other when we have many cultural barriers. Afterward, we calculated Regression amount for both situations. If there was a significant difference between them, it means that cultural barriers had a negative effect on open mindedness and innovation.

**The null hypothesis:** There is no significant relationship between open mindedness and innovation.

**The Alternative hypothesis:** There is a significant relationship between open mindedness and innovation.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Regression for the first situation: } b_1 &= 0.275 \\ \text{Regression for the first situation: } b_2 &= 0.553 \end{aligned}$$

As it is calculated,  $\chi^2 = 48.87$ ; therefore the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative one is accepted.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In this research, the aim was to study the influences of cultural barriers on open mindedness and organizational innovation. Open mindedness was considered as independent variable and organizational innovation as dependent one. The statistical society included all 85 employees of Borujerd Educational Organization among whom the researchers selected 70 persons randomly and using Morgan and Talkman Table. In order to collect the data needed, the researchers used, in addition to library researches, a questionnaire. The questionnaire used in this research consisted of 18 questions and the questions were dedicated to cultural barrier, open mindedness, and organizational innovation. The alpha coefficient for test reliability was 0.860. According to the results obtained through SPSS and LISREL software and also other parts of the article, the result showed that cultural barriers had negative and blocking influence on open mindedness and organizational innovation; however there was a significant and positive relationship between open mindedness and organizational innovation.

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