

## Studying the Role of Cultural Barriers in Relationship between Organizational learning and Open Mindedness

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### ABSTRACT

This paper aims at studying the role of cultural barriers in relationship between organizational learning (seven dimensions including continuous learning, team learning, empowerment, embedded system, system connection, inquiry and dialogue, and strategic leadership) and open mindedness. This is an applied survey study. Statistical population consists of 382 workers and, a sample of 191 workers of Exir pharmaceutical factory in Borujerd were selected based on Morgan table. In this study, simple random sampling has been applied and standard organizational learning questionnaire involving 66 questions (Watskins & Marsick, 1996) have been utilized to collect data, with Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.823 that shows high reliability of questionnaire. Data and questions have been analyzed using linear regression method and with SPSS software. Data analysis presents the results as follows. All seven dimensions influence the open mindedness and cultural barriers serve as effective variables in the interaction of organizational learning and open mindedness.

**KEYWORDS:** Cultural Barrier, Open Mindedness, Organizational Learning, Marsick and Watskins Model

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### INTRODUCTION

Culture is very important in each level of life. When this culture which defines the most important concepts in life enters into an organization, the importance becomes doubled. The culture in all organizations must be well defined. It is the barriers that define the limitation for an organization. Therefore, cultural barriers can design the structure for the organization.

Global economy is fundamentally changing the organizations and industries worldwide. These changes require the business companies to accurately investigate their own goals and considerably pay attention to select and follow strategies leading to high levels of success possibility for beneficiaries. New century witnesses the companies which focus on innovation. Cross and Baird (2000) claim that most of management ideas should be based on necessary information and approaches which result in creating a coordinated environment, but managers do not usually assist the workers in their abilities and skills (individual learning). As a result, in the research management effects involve the need that the influence of cultural barriers on open mindedness and organizational innovation is evident.

Open mindedness as an independent variable is an attempt to redirect the organizational values, norms and behaviors which will direct behaviors through changing the recognition structures, mental models, dominant logic and main hypotheses (Shaw & Perkins, 1991).

Organizational learning as a dependent variable: De Geus (1997) states that "the ability to learn faster than your competitors may be the only sustainable competitive advantage." (Fisser and Browaeys, 2010, p. 58). Organizational learning enhances an organization's abilities in order to propagate and apply knowledge to be adapted with changes of external environment (Loon Hoe & McShane, 2010, p364).

Cultural barriers as the moderating variable: culture is defined as a set of dominant values, individual beliefs and practices in the organization (Sheen, 19850). Culture is observed not only in tangible aspects of organizations such as goals and values but also in the ways people behave, expect each other and become aware of their practices (McDermott & O'Dell, 2001).

### RESEARCH BACKGROUND

The term "organizational learning" was first used by Siret and March in studying behavioral aspects of organizational decision making in 1963, however regardless the starting date of organizational learning discussion,

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this subject did not attract scholars' attention until late 1970s. Then, some theorists including Argyris focused their investigations on organizational learning. In 1990s, organizational learning was discussed just in various management fields such as strategic and production management. Afterwards, the discussion was influenced by new management discussions including learning organizations. According to Argyris (1996), organization learning is the product of inquiries and investigations in the organization meaning that if expected consequences of work process are contrary to real results, an individual or group will be appointed to study and find the reasons of these contradictions and if necessary, take actions to solve problems.

There is a relationship between knowledge sharing and open mindedness (Sources). The most prevalent barriers of knowledge sharing are lack of certainty, cultural differences, lack of education, bureaucratic focus, hierarchy and inconsistent and important paradigms. Analyzing the cultural barriers and open mindedness in service companies shows a relationship between them (Fiss, 1999; Armstrong & Overton, 1997). Comparing the companies responding and not responding to the questions shows no significant difference about financial flow, total capital and number of workers and it suggests that not-response bias is not a problem. Cultural barriers have a relationship with knowledge sharing (McDermott & O'Dell, 2001).

Cultural barriers in knowledge sharing are among the key inhibitors of open mindedness effects on organizational innovation and managers' awareness of cultural barriers regarding business, clients, workers and groups. If these barriers are not recognized, strategic potentials of managers including open mindedness which needs a spread relationship among organization individuals may not be completely identified to improve the organizational innovations.

**Culture:** A psychologist, Margaret Mead has defined culture as a common behavioral pattern for human beings and society (Mamizade, 2008, p. 208). According to Samuel King, it is a set of more attempts to comply with the environment and improve life affairs. Brand Rondon introduces culture as a combination of learned behaviors for thinking, feeling and acting which is transferred from one generation to next one and assurance of the visualization of these patterns are in material discussions (*ibid*, p. 208).

**Organizational culture:** Stephen Robbins defines organizational culture as a system of common understandings that members have towards the organization and recognizes the organizations from each other (Robbins, 1999, p372). According to Quin, it is combined of major values, assumptions and interpretations of approaches determining an organization's characteristics which appear in four types of organizational culture: ethnical, particularism, market and hierarchical cultures (Yazdi, 2007, p. 2)

There is a variety of reasons for cultural barriers encompassing lack of education or training, lack of motivation, lack of main abilities, and other shortages (Grgvlyvs&Boyet, 2006). Accordingly, many educational programs have relied on training the organizational members to overcome barriers (McDermott & O'Dell, 2001). For example, knowing more about barriers to suggest new behavioral patterns is a strategy to judge individuals' hypotheses and views (Sinkula, 2002). Another important factor in determining success is to change the company for active cooperation in creating social wisdom and common practices (Ardichvili *et al.*, 2003).

As Sinkula (2002) points out, in the organization with no motivation, individuals should enjoy new behavioral patterns in a manner that the idea of "how world is working now" is created within them to have high levels of situation understanding (Beckere, 2008). Applying the impacts of these barriers' for organizational network, shared symbols and languages creates global views and outlooks into the organization network which in turn have potential effects on open mindedness and innovation (Sinkula *et al.*, 1997; Sinkula, 2002).

Open mindedness is an attempt to redirect the organizational values, norms and behaviors through changing the recognition structures (Naystrum & Astarbak, 1984), mental models (Divand & Ngady, 1994), dominant logics (Bettis & Prahalad, 1995), and core hypotheses (Shaw & Perkins, 1991). The research indicates that when individuals are not under time pressure, they intend to have an open minded (Speda & Sgara, 2008). Besides, when people want to make crucial decisions, they are willing to have an open minded. Some studies argue that we try to keep our opinions through selecting information which support our attitudes (Kgan & Lahy, 2001).

**Organizational learning:** it presents the learning at organizational levels, common values and assumptions at group levels, acceptable systems, methods and instructions, expected behavioral patterns and changing them into databases for all people to have easy access (Amirkabiri, 2011, pp. 369-370). Simon (1991) has defined organizational learning as the growth of thought, structure renewal and successful review of organization problems that their results are reflected in structural factors and organization consequences. Learning is a social process which provides opportunities for the organizations to repeat their past success (Trim & Lee, 2007, p335). In fact, organizational learning is a way to achieve a competitive advantage (Hong, 1999, p. 173).

Organizational learning model of Marsick and Wattkins emphasizes three key components:

- Organizational learning at system level leads to
- Create and manage knowledge consequences which result in

- Improvement of organization performance and finally, market value

Both of them are measured by computing financial properties and mental capitals (Jyothibabu et al., 2010, p305).

Seven components of learning organizations' features are as follows:

1. Continuous learning: an organization attempts to provide opportunities of continuous learning for all its members.
2. Inquiry and dialogue: it refers to organization measures to create culture of questioning, answering and testing (ibid, p. 305).
3. Team learning: it is the idea of effective cooperating and enjoying team work (Weldy& Gillis, 2010, p. 461) and a process to expand and coordinate the capacities of group members so that the resultant consequences are those that all want them (Bui & Baruch, 2010, p. 214).
4. Empowerment: it indicates the organization process in order to create and share collective attitudes and receiving feedback from members on the existing gap between current situation and new views.
5. Embedded system: it involves the practices done for creating new systems to attract and share the learning.
6. System connection: it reflects general thought and practices so as to connect internal and external environments of organization.
7. Strategic leadership: it shows the extent to which leaders strategically think on how to use learning to change and move organization in new directions or new markets (Jyothibabu et al., 2010, p. 305). Strategic leadership acts as the catalyst which accelerates the learning process (Bontis, Fitz-enz, 2002, p. 226).

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is of applied survey type. To complete the theoretical and research literature, library research and to collect necessary data on statistical population, field research has been applied. Closed questionnaire has been administered to collect field information. Questionnaire validity has been confirmed by some management scholars and professors. In the paper, statistical population consists of 382 people and based on Morgan table, the sample are 191 workers of Exir pharmaceutical factory in Borujerd selecting through simple random sampling. Standard organizational learning questionnaire with 66 items and Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.823 was utilized to collect information. Data and questions were analyzed and examined using linear regression method and with SPSS software.

### DATA ANALYSIS

**First hypothesis:** Continuous learning dimension of organizational learning has a relationship with open mindedness.

**Table 1: Studying the effects of continuous learning on open mindedness**

Dimensions of organizational learning	Correlation coefficient	Coefficient of Determination	Calculated F	B	Significance level
Continuous learning	0.478	0.229	47.447	1.916 0.497	0.000

According to table1, there is a positive and significant relationship between continuous learning and open mindedness with correlation coefficient of 0.478 which shows their interaction and effects.

**Second hypothesis:** There is a relationship between inquiry and dialogue and open mindedness.

**Table 2: Studying the effects of inquiry and discussion on open mindedness**

Dimensions of organizational learning	Correlation coefficient	Coefficient of Determination	Calculated F	B	Significance level
Inquiry & dialogue	0.467	0.219	44.749	2.323 0.412	0.000

Table 2 demonstrates a relationship between inquiry and dialogue and open mindedness with correlation coefficient calculated of 0.467 which confirms their relationship and effects.

**Third hypothesis:** There is a relationship between team learning and open mind.

**Table 3: Studying the effects of team learning on open mindedness**

Dimensions of organizational learning	Correlation coefficient	Coefficient of Determination	Calculated F	B	Significance level
<b>Team learning</b>	0.584	0.341	82.616	1.885 0.530	0.000

As table3 shows, a positive and significant relationship can be seen between team learning and open mindedness with correlation coefficient of 0.584 referring to their interaction and effects.

**Fourth hypothesis:** There is a relationship between empowerment and open mindedness.

**Table4: Studying the effects of empowerment on open mindedness**

Dimensions of organizational learning	Correlation coefficient	Coefficient of Determination	Calculated F	B	Significance level
<b>Empowerment</b>	0.740	0.584	193.753	1.489 0.638	0.000

Based on the results presented in table4, a positive significant relationship is found between empowerment and open mindedness with correlation coefficient of 0.740 confirming their interaction and effects.

**Fifth hypothesis:** There is a relationship between embedded system and open mind.

**Table5: Studying the effects of embedded system on open mindedness**

Dimensions of organizational learning	Correlation coefficient	Coefficient of Determination	Calculated F	B	Significance level
<b>Embedded system</b>	0.457	0.208	42.146	2.136 0.504	0.000

A positive significant relationship exists between embedded system and open mindedness with correlation coefficient calculated as 0.457 demonstrating their interaction and effects (table5).

**Sixth hypothesis:** There is a relationship between system connections and open mindedness.

**Table6: Studying the effects of system connections on open mindedness**

Dimensions of organizational learning	Correlation coefficient	Coefficient of Determination	Calculated F	B	Significance level
<b>System connections</b>	0.943	0.890	1.552	0.351 0.939	0.000

Table 6 presents a positive significant relationship between system connections and open mindedness with correlation coefficient of 0.943.

**Seventh hypothesis:** There is a relationship between strategic leadership and open mindedness.

**Table7: Studying the effects of strategic leadership on open mindedness**

Dimensions of organizational learning	Correlation coefficient	Coefficient of Determination	Calculated F	B	Significance level
<b>Strategic leadership</b>	0.491	0.241	50.904	1.965 0.413	0.000

Based on results of table7, strategic leadership has a positive significant relationship with open mindedness with correlation coefficient of 0.491 which confirms their interaction and effects.

**Main hypothesis:** cultural barriers affect the relationship between organizational learning and open mindedness.

**Table 8: Predicting the effects of cultural barriers on the relationship between organizational learning and open mindedness**

Correlation coefficient	Coefficient of Determination	Calculated F	Significance level	Regression coefficient B	Regression coefficient β
0.229	0.052	10.412	0.001	3.636	0.229

Linear regression expression is presented here.

$$Y = \frac{3}{636} + \frac{0}{203}$$

According to table 8, significant level of 0.001 is lower that error level of 0.05.  $H_0$  hypothesis is rejected and  $H_1$  is accepted. Therefore, at certainty level of 95%, it can be confirmed that changes of cultural barriers influence the relationship between organizational learning and open mindedness.

### CONCLUSION

Although Senge’s conceptual works provide ideal scenery for the management, putting concepts into action is not so easy. Senge believes that all companies should possess the characteristic of a learning organization in order to achieve continuous success. According to Senge, a learning organization can be achieved by practicing five disciplines: a shared vision, personal mastery, strong mental models, group learning, and system thinking (Senge, 1990; 1991).

This paper aims at studying the role of cultural barriers in relationship between organizational learning (seven dimensions including continuous learning, team learning, empowerment, embedded system, system connection, inquiry and dialogue, and strategic leadership) and open mindedness. This is an applied survey study. Statistical population consists of 382 workers and, a sample of 191 workers of Exir pharmaceutical factory in Borujerd were selected based on Morgan table. Data analysis presents the results as follows: All seven dimensions influence the open mindedness and cultural barriers serve as effective variables in the interaction of organizational learning and open mindedness.

Based on the analyses and results revealed in current research, it can be found that seven dimensions of continuous learning ( $r=0.478$ ), team learning ( $r=0.467$ ), empowerment ( $r=0.584$ ), embedded system ( $r=0.740$ ), system connections ( $r=0.457$ ), inquiry and dialogue ( $r=0.943$ ), and strategic leadership ( $r=0.491$ ) affect the open mindedness.

Cultural barriers are considered as an effective variable influencing the relationship between organizational learning and open mind.

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