



ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Factors Affecting Hospital Employees' Knowledge Sharing Intention and Behavior, and Innovation Behavior

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Abstract

Objectives: To investigate the factors affecting employees' knowledge sharing intention, knowledge sharing behavior, and innovation behavior of the four top-ranked university hospitals in South Korea.

Methods: Data were collected from employees at three university hospitals in Seoul, Korea and one university hospital in Gyeonggi-Do, Korea through self-administered questionnaires. The survey was conducted from May 29, 2013 to July 17, 2013. A total of 779 questionnaires were analyzed by SPSS version 18.0 and AMOS version 18.0.

Results: Factors affecting hospital employees' knowledge sharing intention, knowledge sharing behavior, and innovation behavior are reciprocity, behavioral control, and trust.

Conclusion: It is important to select employees who have a propensity for innovation and continuously educate them about knowledge management based on trust.

1. Introduction

In our knowledge–information society, organizations regard knowledge as a core resource to identify their competitiveness. Furthermore, organizations try to create added value through sustainable knowledge sharing and innovation.

Recently, the opening of the medical market, the development of medical technology and information, and the introduction of new high-tech medical

equipment has intensified competition in both the domestic and international medical markets. Dalkir [1] pointed out that the more uncertain and dynamic the environment is, the more important innovation becomes. Therefore, innovation behavior is a key factor in the survival and growth of hospital organizations in the long run. The public health and health care fields are well positioned to leverage knowledge throughout the world [1]. Organizations that differentiate their processes or products and services have been shown regularly to

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outperform their competitors in terms of profitability, market share, and growth [2]. Hospital organizations can promote knowledge sharing culture, not only by directly incorporating knowledge in their business strategy, but also by changing employees' attitudes and behavior by promoting consistent knowledge sharing [3]. Hospital organizations attempt to set up knowledge management to implement their knowledge more effectively. In particular, knowledge sharing in hospital organizations is for the management of intellectual resources and employee's hospital work styles by providing new ideas, tools, services and processes, which results in innovative behavior in the organization.

Beginning in industrialized nations in the 1990s, knowledge management began by considering knowledge as the intellectual assets of organization. Recently, it has been adopted as the main management technique or strategy within certain companies. Knowledge management is the process of attaining intellectual and social capital. This process will lead to core competencies and higher levels of organizational performance unique to the organization [4]. In particular, hospital organizations realize that knowledge management can help them to use their current competencies or develop new and innovative ideas, services, products, processes, and solutions. Hospital organizations should take knowledge management in order to enhance knowledge creation, knowledge sharing, and application. In this way, effective knowledge management will turn hospitals into fast-learning organizations with sustained and competitive advantages [5]. The Mayo Clinic established an Innovation Center to identify and share examples of innovative patient-centered services in 2008. It is now regarded as a global innovator in medical services. Lee and Choi [6] stressed that hospitals in South Korea ask for innovation behavior from their employees. To do this, hospital organizations must build and develop knowledge by stimulating the

employees' knowledge sharing and continually fostering innovation in their organizations. However, culture and systems of hospital organizations have not been set up for successful knowledge management.

One of the reasons is that hospital organizations consist of professional groups such as medical specialists, nursing specialists, clinical technicians, and administrative staff who have differing roles and skills. Therefore, the different departments within a hospital organization need to obtain new knowledge and various techniques to encourage employees in several ways. Moreover, unlike other organizations, hospital organizations are the most complex organizations in our society. They have a lot of information, skills, knowledge, and complicated decision-making processes and networks. This causes hospital organizations to require the rapid, accurate, systematic and long-term sharing of technology, information and knowledge. Furthermore, those systems also require immediate feedback mechanisms [7].

Overall, in order to have successful knowledge sharing, hospital organizations need to understand organizational factors such as systems, organizational structure, and organizational culture. Also, it is necessary to identify individual factors such as the characteristics of the employee's knowledge sharing intention and behavior. However, the studies about the relationships between knowledge sharing and innovation behavior are still rare in the medical field.

The purpose of this study was to provide a better understanding of the phenomenon. The focus was to test whether employees' knowledge sharing influences innovation behavior through the knowledge sharing process. We investigated how employees' knowledge sharing affected knowledge sharing behavior and innovation behavior. A further purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of individual factors (incentives, reciprocity, subjective norms, and behavioral control)

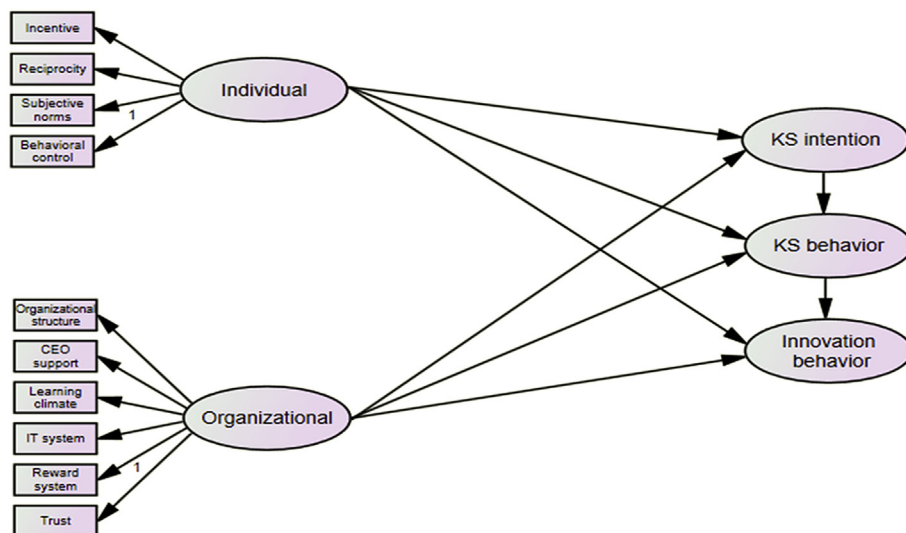


Figure 1. Research model.

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