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LINKING ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE, STRUCTURE, AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the mediating role of knowledge management in the relationship between organizational culture, structure, and organizational effectiveness. A survey was conducted of 600 organizations. The results suggest that knowledge management mediates the impact of organizational culture on organizational effectiveness, and partly mediates the impact of organizational structure on organizational effectiveness. The findings carry theoretical implications for knowledge management as they extend the opportunity of research on knowledge management from examining a set of independent management practices to examining a system-wide mechanism that connects internal resources and competitive advantage.

KEYWORDS

Knowledge management, Organizational culture, Organizational structure, Organizational effectiveness.

INTRODUCTION

Internal organizational context focuses widely and relatively stable categories of organizational characteristics such as structure, culture, and power and political characteristics (Pettigrew, 1979). They constitute an environment where organizational activities take place. There has been a large number of studies that examine how the fit organizational context and explains variances in organizational performance (Daft, 1995; Robbins, 1990). Knowledge management plays a mediating role in connecting organizational context with organizational effectiveness. Skyrme and Arnindon (1997) state that knowledge management enhancing an organization's competitive advantage, customer focus, employee relations and development, innovation. In turn, knowledge management is context, because context determines who participate and how they participate in the knowledge management process (Nonaka et al., 2000). Knowledge management could work as one of the circumstances mechanisms through which organizational context influences organizational effectiveness. However, the mediating role of knowledge management has not been satisfactory investigated. Exploring of its role as a mediating factor would provide better understanding of how to achieve desirable organizational goals. This study sets out to do that. The purpose of this study is to examine the mediating effect of knowledge management on the relationship between organizational culture, structure, and organizational effectiveness. This study try to discover and explain one of the mechanisms through which organizational contextual are used to achieve higher levels of organizational effectiveness.

1. RATIONALE

Knowledge management is "an integrative process of a wide coordinating organization to follow a major of organizational goals" (Rastogi, 2000, p. 40). Researcher found that knowledge management practices need to fit with organizational context in order to create a competitive edge (Davenport and Prusak, 1998). The literature on the mediating role knowledge management plays several important missing pieces. First, existing studies cover some ground of the contextual preceding events of knowledge management (Gold et al., 2001; Lee and Choi, 2003). However, these studies investigate that knowledge-related environment rather than the general contextual environment of the whole organization. They focus on exploring the preceding events of knowledge management rather than examining knowledge management as a mediating mechanism between organizational context and organizational effectiveness. But Gold et al. (2001) and Lee and Choi (2003) examine the aspects of organizational culture, structure, and technology that are directly related to knowledge management. They did not investigate the cultural, structural, and technological characteristics of the whole organization. The restriction of knowledge problem structural and contextual factors allows the assumption that knowledge management is a set of relatively independent managerial practices rather than a central mechanism through which organizational factors are using a lever to achieve organizational goals. This assumption may have low estimation and the actual influence of knowledge management. This study takes a new perspective on knowledge management in its capacity to transmit contextual influence onto organizational effectiveness. It is time to construct a more complex picture of how organizational structural, cultural, and characteristics using a combined effect on knowledge management and organizational effectiveness. Second, the link between knowledge management and organizational level performance has not been sufficiently established. But measuring knowledge management is difficult (Lee and Choi, 2003), and the relationship between knowledge management processes and organizational effectiveness has not been satisfactory studied (Davenport and Prusak, 1998; Shin, 2004). This study tries to address the abovementioned missing pieces in literature.

2. THEORETICAL AND HYPOTHESES**2.1. KNOWLEDGE-BASED VIEW AND RESOURCE-BASED VIEW**

The knowledge based view of the firm state that the firm's capability to create and utilize knowledge is the important source of a firm's sustainable competitive advantage (Grant, 1996; Nonaka, 1991). Nonaka (1991) suggest that, in the current economy, where "the only certainty is uncertainty, the source of lasting competitive advantage is knowledge" (p. 96). The resource-based view assumption is that firm competitiveness comes from unique number of tangible and intangible assets that are valuable, rare, and sustainable (Barney, 1991). The resources a firm possesses include management skills, organizational processes, and the information and knowledge it controls (Barney, 1991). Firm resources include all assets, capabilities, organizational processes, firm attributes, knowledge, and others, as controlled by a firm (Daft, 1995). Organizational structure and culture are two key organizational assets that have been studied extensively in their association with organizational effectiveness. The knowledge-based view of the firm is at the center of the resource-based view (Conner and Prahalad, 1996).

2.2. ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Organizational effectiveness is "the degree to which an organization realizes its goals" (Daft, 1995, p. 98). In this study, measures assessing organizational effectiveness were adopted from Lee and Choi (2003) which consist of organizational members' processes of the degree of the overall success, market share, profitability, and growth rate of the organization in comparison with competitors. Therefore knowledge is managed contributes to organizational effectiveness. Knowledge management consist of the managerial efforts in facilitating activities of ability creating, storing, sharing, developing, and deploying knowledge by individuals and groups (Rowley, 2001; Soliman and Spooner, 2000). This study examines three processes: knowledge generation, sharing, and utilization (Davenport and Prusak, 1998). Knowledge generation refers to the process in which knowledge is acquired by an organization from external sources and those created from within (Davenport and Prusak, 1998). Knowledge sharing, called knowledge transfer refers to the process by which knowledge is transferred from one person to another, from individuals to groups, or from one group to another group (Davenport and Prusak, 1998). Knowledge utilization, also called knowledge implementation, refers to the process that is oriented toward the actual use of knowledge (Gold et al., 2001). Some empirical studies show a significant linkage between knowledge management and organizational effectiveness. Knowledge integration could lead to product development effectiveness, reduced density, lowered warranty, and increased software development efficiency (Tiwana, 2004). According to these studies, it is hypothesized that knowledge management positively contributes to organizational effectiveness.

H1. Knowledge management relates positively to organizational effectiveness.

2.3. MEDIATING ROLE OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Organizational knowledge reflective of cultural, structural, and characteristics of the organization is utilized to help produce new products and services, improve efficiency, and enhance effectiveness. In turn, Knowledge resources are an outcome of organizational culture and structure, because knowledge is created, a sense, and utilized in accordance with a set of cultural values and norms, embedded in structural relationships (Nonaka et al., 2000). Grant (1996) state that the challenge of the knowledge-based view of the organization is effective coordination among organizational members as their knowledge and needs to be integrated. The division of tasks between individuals and the specification of the interface between them lie within the dimension of organizational design (Grant, 1996). Organizational culture and structure constitute critical dimensions of organizational design. Their influence on organizational effectiveness may be channeled through their interface with knowledge management.

2.3.1. Organizational culture-knowledge management-organizational effectiveness

Organizational culture is a source of sustained competitive advantage (Barney, 1991) and empirical research shows that it is a key factor to organizational effectiveness (Gordon and Di Tomaso, 1992; Peters and Waterman, 1982; Wilkins and Ouchi, 1983). Organizational culture does not directly lend its influence on organizational effectiveness; rather, it exerts its influence through shaping the behavior of organizational members. In an uncertain environment, the important part of decision-making is to change the information from the environment to structure (Waterman, 1990). Denison and Mishra, 1995; Denison and Neale, 1996; Fey and Denison, 2003 identified three dimensions of organizational culture that are helping to produce to organizational effectiveness: adaptability, involvement, and mission. Adaptability refers to the degree to which an organization has the ability to alter behavior, structures, and systems in order to survive in the wake of environmental changes. Involvement refers to the level of participation by an organization's members in decision making. Mission refers to the existence of a shared definition of the organization's purpose. This study uses this framework. Existing literature implies a positive relationship between organizational culture and knowledge management. Brockman and Morgan's (2003) find the positive relationship between entrepreneurship and innovation; Young et al.'s (1999) study of the favorable influence of flexibility on knowledge transfer ability; O'Reilly's (1989) identifying the significant role of involvement in facilitating innovation; and Davenport and Prusak's (1998) focus on clarity of vision in knowledge management. Therefore, organizational culture is positively associated with knowledge management. Knowledge management practices make the process of how new external and internal information is absorbed, changed, and integrated into an organizational memory. The whole process is conditioned by organizational culture, because the values and behavioral norms held by organizational members serve as a filter in the sense-making and meaning-construction processes (De Long and Fahey, 2000). Further, the sense-making mechanisms entailed in knowledge management also serve as preceding events to other outcomes of culture such as ethical behavior, job stress, and self-confidence (Posner et al., 1985) that have a bearing on organizational effectiveness.

H2. Organizational culture (adaptability, mission, and involvement) relates positively with organizational effectiveness.

H3. Organizational culture (adaptability, mission, and involvement) relates positively with knowledge management.

H4. Knowledge management mediates the relationship between organizational culture and organizational effectiveness.

2.3.2. Organizational structure-knowledge management-organizational effectiveness

Organizational structure indicates configuration of tasks and activities (Skivington and Daft, 1991). A most studied dimension is centralization (Rapert and Wren, 1998). Centralization refers to extent the decision-making power is concentrated at the top levels of the organization" (Caruana et al., 1998, p. 18). A minority studies shows a positive impact of high centralization on organizational effectiveness (Ruekert et al., 1985), the majority of scholars have agreed that a decentralized organizational structure is helping to produce to organizational effectiveness (Burns and Stalker, 1961; Dewar and Werbel, 1979; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992; Rapert and Wren, 1998; Schminke et al., 2000). It is found that a decentralized structure encourages communication (Burns and Stalker, 1961) and increases employee motivation and satisfaction (Dewar and Werbel, 1979), because in less centralized environments, free flow of the side and vertical communication is encouraged, expert on the subject had greater say in decision-making than the designated authority (Burns and Stalker, 1961), and responsiveness to market conditions is enhanced (Schminke et al., 2000). In a similar way, regarding the relationship between organizational structure and knowledge management (Tsai, 2002), a decentralized structure has often been seen as facilitative to knowledge management success (Damanpour, 1991; Deal and Kennedy, 1982; Gold et al., 2001). High centralization unwilling to express interactions among organizational members (Gold et al., 2001), reduce the opportunity for individual growth (Kennedy, 1983), and prevents using solutions to problems (Deal and Kennedy, 1982). On the contrary, decentralization facilitates internal communication (Bennett and Gabriel, 1999), adoption of innovation (Miller, 1971), and higher levels of creativity (Khandwalla, 1977). The knowledge-based view emphasizes the importance in understanding the processes through which organizations access and utilizes knowledge possessed by its individual members (Grant, 1996). Structure can influence knowledge management processes through shaping patterns and number of communication among organizational members, locations of decision-making and affecting efficiency and effectiveness in implementing new ideas. Knowledge management can transfer the structural impact onto organizational effectiveness, because the way knowledge is organized, knowledge management activities are coordinated, and the extent of knowledge management practices are embedded in the daily work processes influence the effectiveness and efficiency of organizational performance. At the same time, structure influences organizational effectiveness through channels other than knowledge management. It influences organizational effectiveness through no knowledge-related functions, especially through regular processes, tasks, and systems, because of their smallest in degree of involvement of active knowledge management.

H5. Organizational structure relates negatively to organizational effectiveness.

H6. Organizational structure relates negatively to knowledge management.

H7. Knowledge management partially mediates the relationship between organizational structure and organizational effectiveness.

METHOD

In this study we collect data on organizational members' process of the four constructs: organizational culture, structure, knowledge management, and organizational effectiveness. The data were collected from two HR organizations members in a west of Iran constituted which target response group. HR organizations were chosen as the respondents because they usually have good knowledge of organizational members (Gilley and Maycunich, 2000) and a realistic view of what the organizational characteristics are rather than what they should be. The member base of the two organizations totaled 3200. A total of 700 responses were received, that constitutes a response rate of 24%. Among the respondents, 38.6% were at the middle management level, 22.9% at the senior management level, 29.2% at the non-management level, and 9.3% at the supervisory level. A MANOVA test was conducted on the mail-based survey results (Wilks' lambda=0.79, p=0.71). To assess nonresponse bias (Armstrong and Overton, 1977), all responses received within the first five weeks were treated as early responses and the rest as late respondents. No statistical differences were detected between the samples (Wilks' lambda=0.77, p=0.45). The unit of analysis in

this study is the organization as each organization has unique sets of cultural, structural, and knowledge management characteristics. A total of 600 organizations were represented by the respondents. Seventy-one percent of them were in the service sector, 28.7% in manufacturing, and 0.3% in the agricultural sector (Fig. 1). Average scores were used for those organizations with multiple respondents. Among the 600 organizations, 72 of them had multiple respondents (ranging from two to five), and the rest with single informants. Responses from the same organization were averaged to derive the organizational scores on the variables. In order to assess the interrater reliability of the multiple respondents on the variables, interclass correlation tests were used. The average Cronbach's alpha was 0.60, indicating that there is a generally acceptable inter-rater among the multiple respondents.

In this research we used the existing instruments which were available in past research. Measures assessing organizational culture were adapted from Denison and Mishra, 1995; Denison and Neale, 1996; Fey and Denison, 2003; that consist of three functional dimensions: adaptability, involvement, and mission. The scale measures on organization are extended to display the three dimensions of characteristics. Organizational structure was measured by centralization. A scale measuring centralization was taken and used from Ferrell and Skinner (1988). The scale measures how to centralize on an organization is based on respondents' questioner. A sample item is "my organization which tries to develop thorough analysis with a major decision is confronted". Organizational effectiveness is "the degree to which an organization realizes its goals" (Daft, 1995, p. 98). In this study, measures assessing organizational effectiveness were adopted from Lee and Choi (2003) and the items measuring knowledge management were modified from Gold et al. (2001), assessing respondents' process of the existence of the three knowledge management processes. A sample item is "matching sources of knowledge to problems and challenges". As this study utilized we have to collect data on all of the variables, common method. In order to assess the possible common method bias, Harman's one-factor test was used on the variables, following Konrad and Linnehan (1995) and Simonin (1997). The results of the principal component factor analysis given 8 factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0, which accounted for 70% of the variance. In addition, the first factor did not account for the majority of the variance (37%). It seems that common method bias is not a serious problem (Podsakoff and Organ, 1986). Structural equation modeling (SEM) and the LISREL program was used for assessing confirmatory measurement models (factor analysis) and confirmatory structural models (path analysis) (Jöreskog and Sörbom, 1989).

4. RESULTS

Results from the confirmatory factor analysis showed that all of the scales used satisfactory and thus provided evidences for the construct validity of the measures. Table 1, show the measurement models and table 2 shows the descriptive of the constructs. The hypothesized model was compared to the structural model (Alternative Model 1 where all paths relating to the constructs were to be estimated), as well as one alternative models, one fixing the path from organizational structure to organizational effectiveness to zero (Alternative Model 2). The two alternative models are shown in Figs. 2. The hypothesized model shows a better model fit than the two alternative models because (1) it contains no insignificant paths while other models do; and (2) chi-square/df ratios in the alternative models (4.92, 4.91) are slightly larger than that of the hypothesized model (4.90), indicating that the hypothesized model fits the data slightly better than the rest. Table 3 shows all the structural models. Fig. 4 shows the hypothesized model with parameter estimates and model fit indices. As Hypotheses 1, 2, and 5 predict, are all significantly related to organizational effectiveness, judging from the results of bivariate correlations (Table 2). Knowledge management ($r=0.50, p<0.01$), and culture ($r=0.50, p<0.01$), showed a positive relationship with organizational effectiveness, and structure ($r=-0.22, p<0.01$) had a negative relationship with organizational effectiveness. As hypotheses three, and six, predict, organizational culture ($r=0.86, p<0.01$) were positively related to knowledge management, and structure ($r=-0.20, p<0.01$) was negatively associated with knowledge management. Hypothesis 4 predicts that knowledge management fully mediates the relationship between organizational culture and organizational effectiveness. Our structural model analyses showed that organizational culture shows a significant direct impact on knowledge management ($\gamma=0.71, p<0.05$). There was also a significant relationship between knowledge management and organizational effectiveness ($\beta=0.26, p<0.05$). The condition for total mediation was supported by the fact that in Alternative Model 1, the direct path between organizational culture and organizational effectiveness was close to zero ($\gamma=0.07, p>0.05$) when knowledge management was modeled as the mediator. Hypothesis 7 predicted that knowledge management partially mediates the relationship between organizational structure and organizational effectiveness. The findings supported this hypothesis. Organizational structure had a small and positive influence on knowledge management ($\gamma=0.12, p<0.05$), and a small and negative influence on organizational effectiveness ($\gamma=-0.14, p<0.05$), while knowledge management had a positive influence on organizational effectiveness ($\beta=0.26, p<0.05$). The direction of structure's influence on organizational effectiveness and knowledge management is different. However, the bivariate relationship between structure and organizational effectiveness and that between structure and knowledge management were both negative. Therefore culture may have fully expected for structure's negative influence on knowledge management but only liking for organizational effectiveness. Therefore, this is consistent with the hypothesis that there are other channels for structure to influence organizational effectiveness other than knowledge management.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The study findings showed several unresolved issues in the literature as stated in the Rationale section. First, this study provides integrating the resource-based view and knowledge-based view. It displays that the resources in an organization may be hierarchical. Knowledge may be closer to organizational effectiveness in the paths leading from organizational resources to organizational effectiveness. Second, this study suggests that knowledge management could be an interfering mechanism between organizational context and organizational effectiveness. The result supports the knowledge-based view of the firm in that knowledge management is not only an independent managerial practice, but also a central mechanism that using organizational cultural and structural. It also shows the usefulness of organizational resources varies with changes in organizational knowledge (Penrose's 1959). Knowledge management serves as key using points in organizations. Finally, knowledge management was found to mediate organizational culture's influence on organizational effectiveness. This finding suggests that knowledge is managed and largely associated with how well cultural values are translated into value to the organization. Further, culture has a greater contribution to knowledge management than other factors examined. This may be due to that culture determines the basic beliefs, values, and norms regarding the why and how of knowledge generation, sharing, and utilization in an organization. This finding strong for attention to creating an organizational culture that is helping to produce to learning and knowledge management (Davenport and Prusak, 1998; De Long and Fahey, 2000; Watkins and Marsick, 1996). Many studies have focused on the direct relationship between organizational culture and organizational effectiveness. In this study, however, it has been shown that organizational culture's influence on organizational effectiveness is not importance when a mediator (in this case, knowledge management) is considered. The results of this study shows satisfactory examining the direct linkage between organizational culture and organizational effectiveness. It seems that a research on culture and effectiveness could proceed to a deeper level by examining the specific mechanism(s) through which organizational culture influences organizational performance. Although this study presents considerable answers to some unresolved issues in literature, the results should be interpreted in its limitations. A major limitation is that the respondents were mostly the only informant from their organizations. Only 72 companies of the 600 companies had multiple respondents (12%). The single informants may not represent the reality of their organizations as well as multiple informants because single informants may over-report certain phenomena (Gold et al., 2001). Among the two organizational factors, culture has the strongest positive influence on knowledge management. This implies that knowledge management practices need to center on making culture-building activities to growth an environment that is knowledge-friendly. The three dimensions of organizational culture—adaptability, involvement, and mission—when combined positively contribute to knowledge management. Grover and Davenport (2001) suggest that most firms with knowledge management practices have reached the initial plateau because no importance change has occurred in how the organization does business. In order to have long-term, complete success at using knowledge for business advantage, changes need to take place in the aspects of the business such as process, culture, and behavior (Grover and Davenport, 2001). This study shows that organizational culture, and structure, has close interrelationships. Organizations that are adaptive, consistent in their values, engaging to employees, and accept common missions in their cultures have a higher turning to investigate into issues, to seek methods to reduce costs, to look into the future. Such organizations are likely to make a decentralized structure. The implication these correlations carry is that the two organizational factors create an interdependent system in which changes in one of the factors may little move through to another factor(s). Designing knowledge management projects usually involves organizational changes. Many organizations still view knowledge management as send some software programs without satisfactory consideration of their organizational characteristics to ensure the success of their knowledge management introductory steps. Through analyzing the relevance of organizational

characteristics to knowledge management success, this study brings to attention the importance of focusing on creating a knowledge-friendly environment that is made up of appropriate cultural, and structural, features. The study findings show that knowledge management can influence organizational effectiveness when it is arranged with organizational culture, and structure. Focus on knowledge management practices, such as providing knowledge management tools, and supporting knowledge management introductory steps, would help transfer the impact of organizational contextual resources to the bottom line.

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7. TABLES

TABLE 1: EVALUATION OF MEASUREMENT MODELS FOR THE CONSTRUCTS USED IN THE STUDY

Variables	X2	df	p	NNFI	CFI	GFI	AGFI	RMR
Organizational culture	159.25	48	<0.01	0.93	0.95	0.90	0.83	0.033
Organizational structure (centralization)	32.03	4	<0.01	0.91	0.95	0.93	0.82	0.031
KM effectiveness	397.23	82	<0.01	0.92	0.94	0.82	0.75	0.039
Organizational effectiveness	34.78	4	<0.01	0.90	0.94	0.91	0.82	0.030

TABLE 2: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR THE CONSTRUCTS USED IN THE STUDY (N=600).

Constructs	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
Organizational effectiveness	4.0	1.03	(0.86)				
Knowledge management effectiveness	4.9	0.84	0.50**	(0.90)			
Organizational culture	4.18	0.95	0.50**	0.86**	(0.85)		
Organizational structure	3.15	1.18	-0.22**	-0.20**	-0.41**	(0.85)	

Reliability coefficient alphas are presented in diagonal in parentheses.

** p<0.01.

TABLE 3: FIT INDICES FOR STRUCTURAL MODELS

Structural models	χ^2	df	p	χ^2/df	NNFI	CFI	GFI	AGFI	RMR
Hypothesized model	789.75	160	<0.01	4.90	0.90	0.91	0.78	0.72	0.09
Alternative Model 1	790.65	159	<0.01	4.92	0.90	0.91	0.78	0.71	0.09
Alternative Model 2	793.50	160	<0.01	4.91	0.90	0.91	0.78	0.72	0.09

8. FIGURES

FIG. 1: HYPOTHEZED MODEL

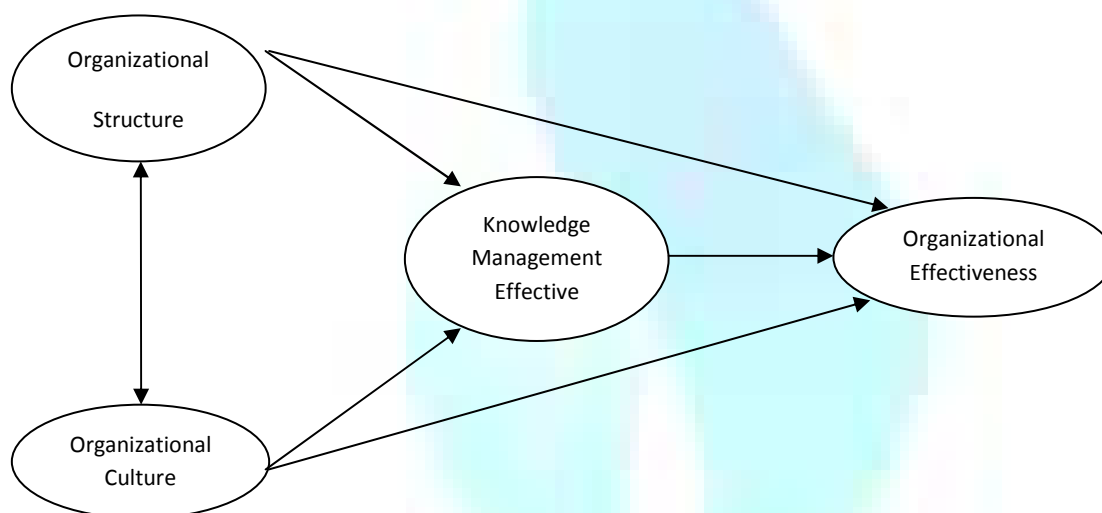
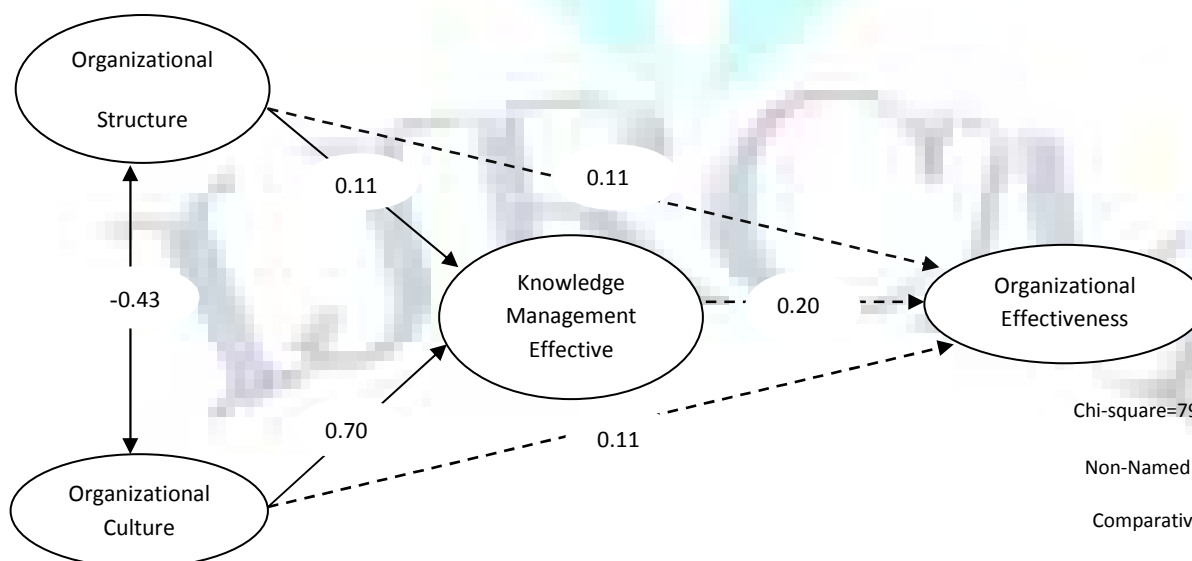


FIG. 2: ALTERNATIVE STRUCTURAL MODEL 1(SATURATED MODEL)



Chi-square=790.65 (df=159.P<0.01)

Non-Named fit Index (NNFI)= 0.90

Comparative Fit Index (CFI)= 0.91

Goodness of Fit Index (Gfi)= 0.78

Adjusted Goodness of Fit (AGFI)= 0.71

Root Mean Square Residual (RMR)= 0.09

FIG. 3: ALTERNATIVE STRUCTURAL MODEL 2 (NO DIRECT PATH BETWEEN STRUCTURAL AND OE)

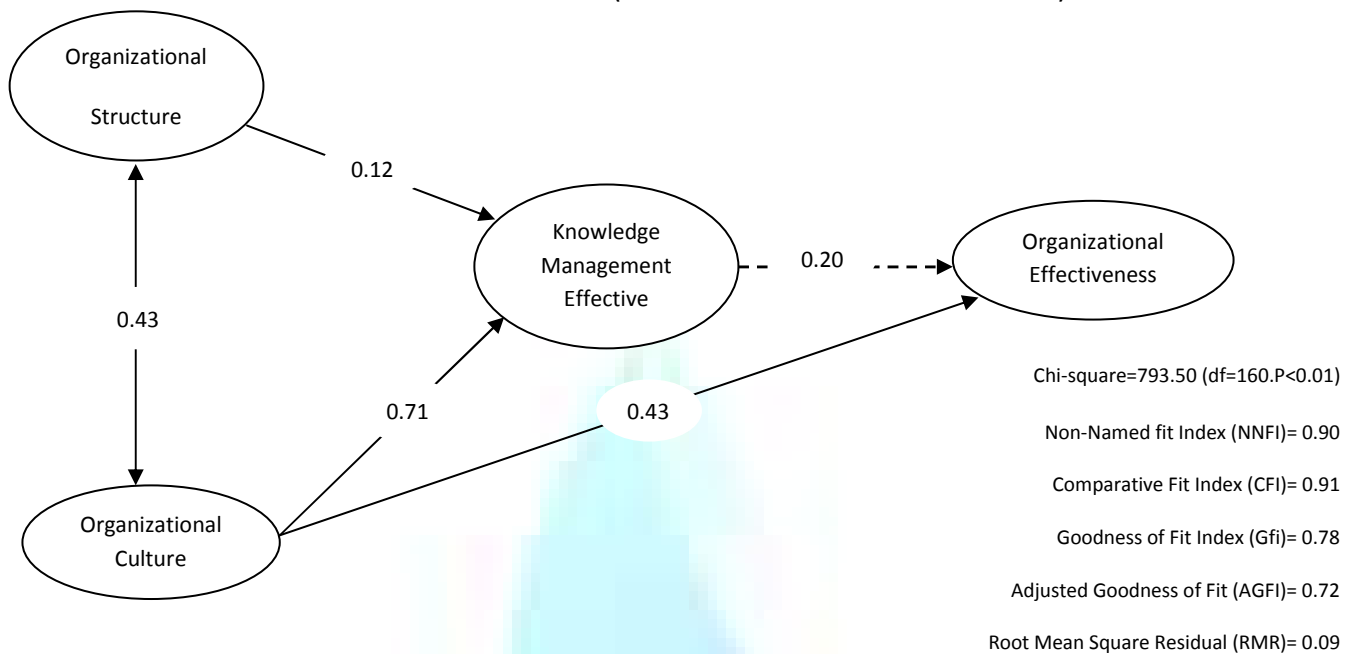
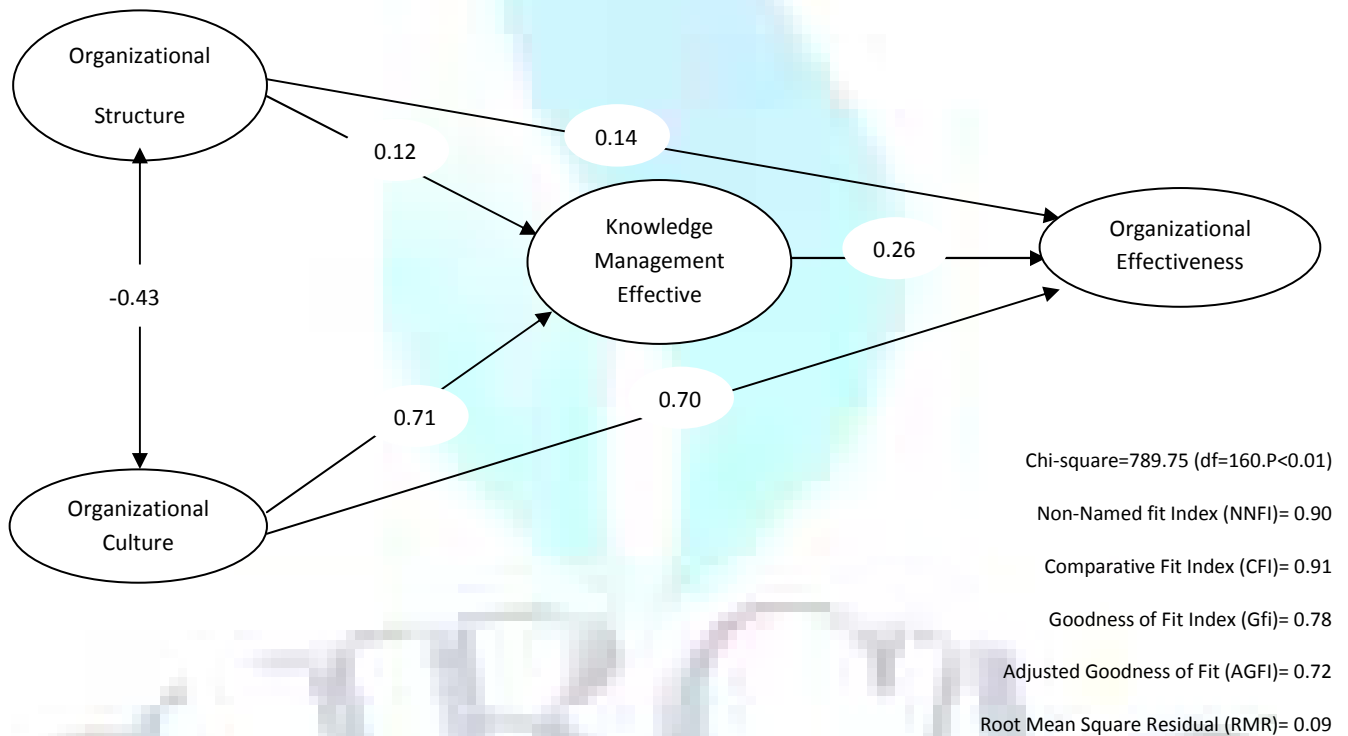


FIG. 4: HYPOTHESIZED MODEL WITH PATH COEFFICIENTS



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