

**LINKING ORGANIZATIONAL SOCIAL CAPITAL AND
ENTREPRENEURIAL ORIENTATION FORMATION
THROUGH A MEDIATION OF KNOWLEDGE SHARING**

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ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurial Orientation is necessary for any firm to gain a competitive advantage in the market. Therefore, this research aims to determine that how determinants of organizational social capital enhance entrepreneurial orientation formation through mediation of internal knowledge sharing Convenience sampling is used the sake of selecting sample. Data is collected from 240 administrative employees of educational sector by using survey method. SPSS 22 was used for data analysis. Findings corroborates with the proposed hypothesis. Preacher and Hayes's mediation results depict that relationship between goal congruence and entrepreneurial orientation is significantly mediated by internal knowledge sharing, whereas the mediation between trust and EO is quite insignificant. The study focused only on the relational dimension of social capital, excluding the impact of structural and cognitive dimensions of social capital. Limited sample size makes the generalization of results difficult. The study suggests the significance of incorporating social capital at departmental level will lead to entrepreneurial orientation through knowledge sharing

KEY WORDS

Social Capital, Knowledge Sharing, Trust, Goal Congruence, Entrepreneurial Orientation, Innovativeness.

INTRODUCTION

The field of entrepreneurship research is comprised of well-defined constructs and psychometrically designed sound measures (Naderibeni et al., 2020). The term entrepreneurial orientation (EO) encapsulates several major disciplines it as strategic management, organizational behavior, operational management and marketing (Wales et al., 2020). Owing to globalization and technological advancements, organizations now a days are more prone toward being competitive, and have shifted their focus toward innovativeness, and risk taking. This attitude has led them to follow entrepreneurial opportunities. The idea entrepreneurial opportunities is reflected in the term entrepreneurial orientation which determines firm behavior by risk-taking, proactiveness, and

innovativeness (Hernández-Perlines et al., 2020). The notion entrepreneurial research was first generated by Henry Mintzberg in 1973, who stated that competitive growth in uncertain environment can be achieved through a thorough search of entrepreneurial opportunities (Mintzberg, 1973). The firms now a days are in search of such opportunities to progress and compete in such uncertain situations.

Further, despite growing studies in the field of entrepreneurial orientation, there is a paucity of research in identifying its antecedents. Some researchers have found the innovation, risk achievement, opportunity, self-esteem as antecedents of EO (Goktan, and Gupta, 2015). Various other researchers have identified the importance of studying the effect of social capital on EO (Chitsaz et al., 2019; Lang and Fink, 2019). However, while managing organizations, employees have identified the importance of social capital, because it largely depends upon societal and cultural factors. Employees after considering it as capital will comprehend the socio-economic system in a better way. Therefore, social capital is an essential rudiment that leads towards entrepreneurial orientation (Ha and Nguyen, 2020). However, the direct effect of social capital on EO has observed by various researchers, yet an underlying mechanism is still need to be explored. This study aims to address this gap by determining how social capital helps to create entrepreneurial orientation through an underlying mechanism of knowledge sharing, which is one of the contributions to the existing literature of entrepreneurship.

EO is a phenomenon which describes the methods, policies, procedure used by managers to act in an entrepreneurial manner (Goktan, and Gupta, 2015). Whereas social capital is combination of all resources available to company through established networks and relationships (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998). Moreover, Knowledge-based view, states that managers are responsible for shaping the entrepreneurial orientation of their colleagues and subordinates by sharing their knowledge, experience (Mullens, 2018). Although extensive research has been done in determining the role of social capital in entrepreneurship, those empirical researches have paid more consideration to determining the effect of external social capital on entrepreneurial behavior of firm (Chitsaz et al., 2019). However, little attention has been paid to identifying that how social capital acts as a determinant of entrepreneurial orientation. Moreover, previous studies on entrepreneurial orientation were conducted in the industrial sector, very few studies on the service sector, whereas hardly little or any study found on the educational sector (Hernández-Perlines et al., 2020). The current study aims to address this gap by examining the determinants of entrepreneurial orientation in the education sector.

Further, literature reveals that no study exists that deal with theory of social capital, knowledge sharing, and EO all together in a Pakistani context. The relationship between social capital and entrepreneurial orientation is further strengthened by determining an underlying mechanism through knowledge sharing.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO)

EO is conceptualized by two dimensions, the composite dimension approach is given by Miller (1983), that EO dimension works parallel; that a firm is said to be entrepreneurial if it values all these dimensions mutually; the second approach is the multidimensional approach by which Lumpkin and Dess, (1996), states that EO dimensions are independent of each other and these are separate constructs. It has been observed that neither research

is superior to one another nor both dimensions are fruitful for organizations (Covin and Lumpkin, 2011). This study opted earlier approach and define EO as “an organizational level characteristic, represented by particular quality that proactive behaviors, innovativeness and risk taking have in common.” (Wales et al., 2020). It elaborates that EO is a behavior or action, not an orientation of making a decision. Thus, EO is a composition of three behaviors, risk-taking (depends on how many firms tolerate and reward uncertain projects, and their dependency on novel methods and procedures); proactiveness (accepting a wide range of strategic actions rather than responding to competitor’s actions); and innovation (introduction of new products and investment in long term R and D projects) (Naderibeni et al., 2020). As stated earlier, that plenty of researches has focused on determining the relationship between EO and organizational performance (Covin, 2011), yet little work has been done in identifying EO antecedents such as strategic processes (Green et al., 2008), and external environmental influences. This research focuses on how social relationships and knowledge sharing, among managers of different functional departments affect EO formation. Hence, it can be stated that EO is a universal organizational phenomenon, in which knowledge sharing irrespective of particular levels take place throughout an entire organization (Wlaes et al., 2011). In this context, this study focused on the collective impact of determinants of organizational social capital, knowledge sharing and organizational learning in formation of EO.

Organizational Social Capital and Internal Knowledge Sharing

Kogut and Zander (1992), were of the knowledge-based view and opined those entrepreneurial activities are owed to knowledge, as these are the only source of creating new knowledge. Floyd and Wooldridge (1999), stated that basic rudiments of firm-level entrepreneurship are knowledge combination, selection, and retention that allow managers to convert individual knowledge into organizational knowledge. Hence, knowledge sharing among different units of a firm is necessary as it enables organizations to extend their existing activities (Spender, 1996). Despite it, knowledge sharing among managers of different units of a firm is quite a challenging task. It may include fear of surrendering power to colleagues (Kim, 1998), particularly, managers who consider their function-specific knowledge as an asset, hence needed to be protected from outsiders (Grant, 1996). This activity of hiding function-specific knowledge can be unlocked by social capital. Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998), opined that knowledge among partners can be exchanged through social capital. It acts as a catalyst. By following Leana and Buren (1999), social capital is considered as an organizational phenomenon, comprehended through leaders of organizations who have trust in each other and the degree to which they have similar goals for their organizations.”

Zaheer, McEvily, and Perrone (1998), stated that trust is managers' positive expectations about others. Some researchers Sitkin and Roth, (1993) define trust as “exchange partner’s beliefs and expectations about the trustworthiness and expectedness of other’s deeds.” Trust and trustworthiness are different concepts. In this study, trust is conceived as a will of managers to render themselves vulnerable to other’s actions. (Rousseau, Sitkin, 1998)”. Such trust is not based on individual or occasional transactions, rather belief is the basis of this trust (Laana and Van Buren, 1999). Tsai and Ghoshal (1998), opined that goal congruence is a degree to which goals of managers of different functional areas are congruent. Pinto (1993), stated that the given dimension of social capital highlights that how managerial policies, strategies, and goals are well defined.

Floyd (1992) said that a high goal congruence level enables firms at different functional levels to coordinate their activities, to achieve organizational objectives. Further (Leana and Van Buren, 1999), were of an opinion that a goal congruence allows managers of organizations to surrender their personal values for betterment of their organizations.

Organizational Social Capital (trust, goal congruence) and Internal Knowledge sharing

As detailed earlier, for this study two dimensions i.e., trust and goal congruence (GC) of organizational social capital are considered (Kroll and Tantardini, 2019). As stated by Zaheer et al., (1998) trust is a “manager’s beliefs that colleagues in other functional areas will not engage in optimistic behavior even if the opportunity to do so arises.” Hence, employees of different functional departments having trust in each other will prefer to share their expertise and knowledge with one another. Therefore, the existence of the positive and significant relationship between the firm’s level of trust and internal knowledge sharing is hypothesized based on the findings (Phong et al., 2018). Further, it has been observed by various researchers that knowledge exchange increases if employees are free from fear of relinquishing power to peers (Park and Kim, 2018). Hence, it is proposed

H1: *Trust has a positive and significant association with knowledge sharing.*

Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998), define goal congruence (GC) as “it is exposure of manager’s goals coverage reflected by a firm’s vision of the current and future activities”. Kennedy and Widener, (2019) were of an opinion that managers will be more motivated for knowledge sharing if they share similar ideas about the future and current directions of their organizations. Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998), elaborated that aligned goals, make managers more loyal to their organizations, hence they will prefer knowledge sharing with others. Similar goals enable managers to foresee the benefits of knowledge sharing across different functional areas of the organization. Hence, it can be proposed:

H2: *Goal congruence has a positive and significant association with knowledge sharing.*

Internal Knowledge Sharing (IKS) and Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO)

Dyer (1998), stated that Knowledge sharing among partners enables them to gain plenty of benefits across different functional areas. Bantel and Jackson (1989), found that the firms who concurrently share knowledge are more creative and innovative in performing tasks effectively as they pool cognitive resources by extensive knowledge sharing. Grant (1996), in his study, found that extensive knowledge combination enables firms to solve their complex and non-routine problems effectively and efficiently. Hence, it can be proposed that a high level of knowledge sharing increases firms' EO. Floyd and Wooldridge (1999), were a pioneer in determining the direct relationship between knowledge sharing and entrepreneurship at the firm level. To obtain an entrepreneurial stance, individual knowledge must be converted to organizational knowledge through a combination of existing cognitive resources. Further Floyd and Wooldridge (1999), found that entrepreneurial actions can't be obtained through individual knowledge until and unless it is exchanged through sharing routines. These are in line with a knowledge-based view, which determines that increased knowledge depth (Cohen and Levinthal, 1990), is obtained through knowledge sharing routines, and thus new knowledge applications.

Katila and Ahuja (2002) can be identified. Thus more will be knowledge sharing, more will be entrepreneurial opportunities to be equipped with. Floyd and Lane (2000), identified that intensive knowledge sharing opens more pathways for entrepreneurial activities. Eisenhardt, (1989), if knowledge sharing on different decisions and tasks take place in a firm, then they can do entrepreneurial activities more confidently. Hence, it can be proposed that

H3: *Internal knowledge sharing is positively and significantly associated with entrepreneurial orientation.*

It has been observed that employees having high level of trust in their organization and goal congruence i.e. alignment of goals make managers more loyal toward their organization (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998). Hence, they will prefer to share knowledge in an effective manner which eventually will leads toward formation of entrepreneurial orientation. Therefore, it is assumed that the relationship between trust, goal congruence and entrepreneurial orientation is mediated by internal knowledge sharing.

H4: *The relationship between trust and entrepreneurial orientation is mediated by internal knowledge sharing.*

H5: *The relationship between goal congruence and entrepreneurial orientation is mediated by internal knowledge sharing.*

RESEARCH DESIGN

Population, Sample Size and Sampling Technique of the Study

This study was designed to determine the entrepreneurial orientation of the administrative staff in the service sector of Pakistan's economy i.e. education sector. As educational sector provide an environment where extensive knowledge sharing occurs. Further, it has been observed that this sector can give true amount information needed for this study. So the target population was administrative staff of educational sector of Pakistan. The researcher selected six universities randomly and used convenience sampling to collect data from those universities. The sample size of the study was unknown, hence use of sampling technique is justified. Further, the sample size was determined by using item –response theory i.e. 10 samples per item ($10 * 24 = 240$) thus 240 questionnaires circulated using online tool (google forms). Only 219 useful responses were received, out of the 13 responses were filled by academic staff, thus they were not considered for data analysis. Therefore, only 206 responses were used for analysis.

Description of Instrument

Seven-item scale developed by Miller (1983) was used to measure EO with the sample item “My institution shows a great deal of tolerance for high risk projects”. Cronbach alpha for this scale was 0.87. For internal knowledge sharing (IKS) seven item scale developed by Mohr and Nevin, (1990) was used with sample item “There is an open communication between two people in two departments”, having Cronbach alpha 0.95. Trust was measured by using six item scale developed by Rousseau et al., (1998). Sample item includes “People from the other departments are perfectly honest and truthful with u. The Cronbach alpha for this scale was 0.88. The scale was designed by using five point Likert Scale where (1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= can't decide, 4= agree and 5= strongly agree). The items of goal congruence were adapted from the scale of De Clercq and Sapienza, (2006),

with sample item “Most of our objectives are fully aligned with those of the other departments”, having Cronbach alpha of 0.84.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data was collected from administrative staff working in universities. The universities were located in Lahore. The majority of the respondents were male (64.5%), having above master degree (82%), with total work experience of < 5 years (62%).

Before testing hypothesis, the data were analyzed for correlation, descriptive and reliability analysis. All the measures were reliable having values greater than the threshold values ($0.766 - 0.902 > 0.70$). Results are depicted in Table 1. Furthermore, all measures were operationalized using five point Liker scale, hence the mean vales were near to the average score. The result of correlation between trust and internal knowledge sharing ($r = 0.0.673, p < 0.1$); and between goal congruence and IKO ($r = 0.512, p < 0.1$) provide support to H1 and H2. The correlational value depicts that internal knowledge sharing is positively associated with entrepreneurial orientation ($r = 0.511, p < 0.1$). This result depict that H3 is supported. Based on these results, I performed regression analysis for hypothesis testing.

Table 1: Descriptive, Reliability and Correlation analysis

Variables	Descriptive	Cronbach alpha	Trust	GC	IKS	EO
Trust	3.72(0.623)	0.88	1			
GC	3.63(0.621)	0.84	0.530**	1		
IKS	3.71(0.598)	0.95	0.673**	0.512**	1	
EO	3.61(0.705)	0.87	0.608**	0.570**	0.511**	1

Table 2 depicts the results of trust, goal congruence, and internal knowledge sharing and entrepreneurial orientation; where it is evident that trust and IKO has direct and positive associations ($\beta = , p < .$); whereas GC and IKS are also positively related ($\beta = , p < .$). Thus, H1 and H2 are also supported. Whereas, it is also obvious that IKS is positively associated with EO ($\beta = 0.511 p < 0.01$), hence supporting H3.

Table 2: Trust, GC, IKS, and EO

	Coefficients	t	p (sig.)
Trust-IKS (H1)	0.646	5.285	0.000
GC-IKS (H2)	0.493	6.822	0.000
IKS-EO (H3)	0.603	6.456	0.000

To test the hypothesis of mediation between trust and EO through internal knowledge sharing, multiple mediation analysis by Preacher and Hayes (2008) with 10000 bootstraps at 95% CI was employed. The results are detailed in Table 3, where it is evident that direct effect of trust on EO is significant at $p = < 0.05$, $ULCI = 0.0532$ and $LLCI = 0.0354$. It is also clear that indirect effect is also significant at $p = < 0.05$, $ULCI = 0.0341$ and $LLCI = 0.1903$, hence supporting H4. Where direct effect of GC on EO is significant at $p = < 0.05$, $ULCI = 0.062$ and $LLCI = 0.223$. It is also clear that indirect effect is also significant at $p = < 0.05$, $ULCI = 0.040$ and $LLCI = 0.032$, hence supporting H5.

Table 3: Mediation Analysis

Direct and Indirect	Co-eff	ULCI	LLCI	p (sig.)
Trust-EO	0.463	0.0354	0.0532	0.000
GC-EO	0.143	0.062	0.223	0.000
Trust-IKS-EO (H4)	0.0378	0.0341	0.1903	0.021
GC-IKS-EO (H5)	0.042	0.040	0.032	0.000

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of dimensions of organizational social capital (trust and goal congruence) on EO through internal knowledge sharing. The results of the study are aligned to proposed hypothesis. It was observed that social capital helps to increase entrepreneurial orientation formation of employees working in different departments. The results supported the findings of Wlaes et al. (2011) who observed that Entrepreneurial orientation is a universal phenomenon, which take place in an entire organization through social capital. Further the study observed that employees having trust in each other will prefer to share their expertise, knowledge with their colleagues and peers. The findings are aligned to the result of Omar (2021), who also observed that trust and internal knowledge sharing have direct and positive association. Hence, the results depicts that educational staff is inclined toward knowledge sharing and they have strong, trustworthy relationships with their peers and subordinates. Open communication between two departments allows staff to invest more in long-term R and D projects. Educational institutes are mostly risk-takers, not risk avengers. They take initiatives in devising new policies and products to markets.

Thus, entrepreneurial research has extended from its traditional focus on entrepreneurship and performance related to entrepreneurial orientation formation. The study findings reveal that employees working in educational institutes have no fear of relinquishing their powers to peers due to extensive knowledge sharing as people of other departments are highly honest and trustworthy. It has been observed in this study that the objectives of most departments are aligned and they share similar visions and objectives. The results of mediation analysis also supports the proposed hypothesis. It is the first study to determine the quantitative association between social capital and entrepreneurial orientation through a mediation of knowledge sharing. It has been observed that employees who have trustworthy relationships with their peers, colleagues, have shared goals, values prefer to share their expertise and knowledge with each other, which eventually will allow them to innovate, welcome risks and show proactiveness in their behaviors.

Limitations and Future Direction

Organizational social capital is treated as an organizational-level construct, according to Leana and Van Buren (1999), due to which perception of individual staff members about collective trust and goal congruence has been conceptualized, thus inhibiting the determination of Internal relationship building as a whole. Future research is directed to explore means which connect individuals with organizations (Whetteh et al., 2009). Further research is directed to identify multiple approaches in determining the impact of social capital at a departmental, individual and organizational level. This study only focuses on the relational dimension of social capital trust and goal congruence, excluding the impact of structural and cognitive dimensions of social capital on knowledge sharing and EO.

Additional research should determine how the cognitive and structural dimensions of social capital help in knowledge sharing and enhancing EO. This study is also devoid of other variables impacting EO, like top management characteristics and performance. Moreover, the level of knowledge sharing is considered in general form, whereas types of knowledge such as tacit versus explicit are omitted. Future research is directed toward identify other variables which inhibit the process of EO by the trust through internal knowledge sharing. Furthermore, a limited sample size makes the generalizability of the study difficult. The study collected data in one point in time. Further study is directed to have data at multiple times to have a holistic picture of theoretical model. Moreover, the study used only one mediator i.e. knowledge sharing. Future researchers can perform multiple mediation-moderation analyses. Last but not the least, the study is contextual in nature. However, the results may differ if future studies, can be conducted in different settings, contexts and cultures.

Practical Implications

Owing to practical implications, this study reveals that educational institutes become more entrepreneurial if there is intensive knowledge sharing among different departments. The analysis of this study suggests that internal knowledge sharing can be increased by the development of social capital across different departments. Deans, principals of educational Institutes must consider those areas where EO is inhibited by the trust through internal knowledge sharing. Second, to keep an organization on a progressive paths, managers must promote a trustworthy culture at their workplaces, and they must devise such strategies which help their employees to have shared means, values and beliefs. This healthy environment eventually enable employees to become innovative and develop an attitude of innovativeness. In today's busy arena, instead of focusing on contextual performance measures, organizations have shifted their focus toward being more entrepreneurial. This led them to provide their employees with such work environment which will nurture their entrepreneurial traits such as innovativeness, risk taking and proactiveness.

It is expected that this study will provide greater insight to the organization in determining that how social capital through internal knowledge sharing enhances EO formation and how the level of trust can be enhanced through internal knowledge sharing. Institute can acquire greater competitive advantage by translating their social capital through knowledge sharing into EO.

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