



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Management

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND INTERNAL MARKETING IN UAE HEALTHCARE: ENHANCING ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE THROUGH INTEGRATION

KEY WORDS: Knowledge Management, Internal Marketing, Organizational Performance, Healthcare Organizations, UAE.

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ABSTRACT

This research focuses on exploring the theoretical foundations of knowledge management (KM) and internal marketing (IM) and their relationship, to enhance organisational performance. The study investigates the impact of effective KM practices and IM efforts on organizational performance in healthcare organizations. The research adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, to collect data from healthcare professionals in two hospitals in the United Arab Emirates. The findings aim to contribute to the existing body of knowledge in healthcare management, providing insights into how organizations can effectively manage knowledge resources, motivate employees, and achieve superior performance. The study offers practical recommendations for healthcare organizations to optimize their knowledge management, internal marketing, and overall organizational had performed.

INTRODUCTION

Knowledge management (KM) and internal marketing (IM) have become increasingly important in the past few decades as organizational practices, that are essential for optimal performance and stakeholder satisfaction (Hume & Hume, 2015). To effectively acquire and utilize knowledge, organizations must integrate their KM approaches with IM processes, which motivate and engage employees in achieving organizational goals and maintaining high performance.

KM encompasses the processes and practices that organizations employ to create, share, and utilize knowledge. (Alavi & Leidner, 2001). It is a critical factor in enhancing organizational performance and competitiveness by leveraging knowledge assets and facilitating informed decision-making (Nonaka&Takeuchi,1995). In the healthcare sector, where knowledge and expertise are vital for delivering quality care, KM plays a crucial role in improving skills, upgrading knowledge, and impacting patient outcomes

IM is a concept closely linked to human resource management, aiming to align organizational processes with employee needs and expectations (Rafiq & Ahmed, 2000). It treats employees as internal customers and seeks to enhance their satisfaction and commitment, which ultimately improves customer experiences and overall organizational success (Berry,1981).

In the healthcare sector, where employee performance directly impacts patient care quality, IM plays a crucial role in cultivating a learning culture, motivating employees, and fostering a positive work environment.

This study aims to bridge the research gap in the healthcare industry, specifically in the UAE, regarding the relationship between knowledge management (KM) and internal marketing (IM).

Literature Review

KM is defined as the way to extract knowledge resources by undertaking the needed tasks and activities (Becerra-Fernandez & Sabherwal, 2010). It is also defined as the process to identify and analyze the needed knowledge, and different activities required to create knowledge assets, that are needed for fulfilling the goals of the organization. Creating knowledge is essential for survival, growth, and success of any organization. KM is further defined by Sokoh and Okolie

(2021) as the process to discover and create, disseminate and utilize knowledge. Knowledge within any organizational setting takes place at all times.

The success of any healthcare system is largely dependent on data. The healthcare sector requires a plethora of information and data to cure, provide care and health outcomes as well as patients satisfaction. Moreover, the healthcare facilities and systems in today's times are largely guided by the performance measures for delivering, coordinating, and utilizing superior healthcare services. These motives, thereby, foster the healthcare facilities and clinics to operate on deriving and using essential information from the available data and the principles of KM, to positively influence healthcare outcomes (Guptill, 2005). Hujala & Laihonen (2021) also highlighted the key benefits of implementing KM in healthcare., which include better understanding of customer (patients') needs, improved performance of healthcare organization, enhanced decision-making capabilities, a better quality of care service outcome and delivery, positive cultural and behavioral change and better management of risk.

With the rise in competition, businesses are required to come up with innovative business solutions and strategies. To become innovative, businesses must invest in enhancing the intangible asset of organizational talent and human capital (Olson et al., 2018). Therefore, the organization must be equipped with all resources, as well as motivated towards meeting the needs of the consumers. On the other side, the employees must also be able to develop, grow and possess the feeling of personal fulfillment from their work (Ahmed and Rafiq, 2000). Thus, the employees are considered an important aspect of organizational performance, and must be productive and efficient, which is possible by different mechanisms; and one such process is IM. It plays a vital role in affecting the internal customers, who become motivated and are inclined towards fulfilling the needs of the external customers.

IM in healthcare establishments is defined as the ways and tools developed by the management, like education, training, communication of organizational perspectives, and performance reward mechanisms. (Tsai, 2014). The study further found that IM can be executed by different managerial activities, including human resource management activities and vision and development at the healthcare establishment. Healthcare institutions possess high knowledge but need continuous learning and measures for learning so that their

internal capabilities can be improved. (Wilkinson et al., 2004). IM is one of the useful management tools that must be used to facilitate the learning environment within organizations, including the nursing and healthcare sectors (Tsai & Wu, 2011). It will not only help the hospital personnel to gain higher competency but also be able to provide consistently improved delivery and outcomes of care. The study by Davies and Nutley (2000) also claims that healthcare organizations must look to continuously enhance the education of their staff, which will enhance their much-needed problem-solving capabilities and augment the caliber to provide timely and efficient response to the needs of the patients. Thus, to enhance the existing knowledge, as well as facilitate knowledge and learning creation, the healthcare establishments must invest in IM.

The relationship between KM and IM in healthcare ensures that the staff gains a better understanding of the healthcare facility's aims and mission. The study further shows that IM clarifies the organizational vision and fosters the culture of training and creates service-oriented behavior among the healthcare staff.

Research Methodology

The study employed a mixed-methods approach, comprising both quantitative and qualitative analyses, to explore these relationships in depth. In this research, the researcher utilizes a survey to collect the data from nurses, doctors, and health practitioners, in which the representative sample is drawn to gauge the perceptions about KM and IM, and their relationship. Moreover, to gain in-depth perceptions about the concepts, as well as to validate the findings of the survey, a one-to-one interview is conducted with two respondents from the administrative staff of the two hospitals.

Building upon the literature review conducted earlier, this study explored the individual constructs that constitute KM, namely leadership, culture, and strategy. These constructs were considered essential in understanding the prevailing KM practices within the specific hospital facility under examination. To gather insights into the participants' perceptions, the survey questionnaire included items related to these three variables. By assessing the respondents' perspectives on leadership, culture, and strategy, the study aimed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the KM practices employed within the hospital setting.

The second important variable examined is IM within hospital facilities. The survey participants were presented with a set of 16 questions to assess their perceptions of the IM initiatives implemented by the hospital facilities. A five-point Likert scale was utilized to capture their responses.

Organizational performance was examined as a dependent variable in the study. The survey respondents were asked a set of 06 questions to gather their perceptions of organizational performance.

The quantitative analysis focused on examining the statistical associations between KM, IM, and performance variables. Through regression analysis, it was determined that leadership, strategy, and culture collectively explained a significant proportion of the variation in hospital performance. Particularly, management strategy and organizational culture exhibited positive and significant relationships with performance, emphasizing their importance in driving organizational success. Furthermore, the analysis revealed the significant impact of IM on performance, highlighting the effectiveness of IM practices in enhancing organizational outcomes. The findings underscored the critical role of strategic alignment in driving performance outcomes within hospitals.

In the qualitative analysis, the focus shifted to exploring the

underlying mechanisms and contextual factors associated with KM, IM, and performance. Through interviews, surveys, and observations, the study revealed valuable insights into the experiences and perceptions of healthcare professionals regarding KM and IM practices.

Findings

The qualitative findings emphasized the importance of KM in facilitating learning, sharing best practices, and enhancing expertise within the organization. They also highlighted the role of IM in creating a supportive culture, fostering trust, and providing access to timely information. The combined findings from the quantitative and qualitative analyses provided a comprehensive understanding of the relationships between KM, IM, and performance in the hospital context. Business strategy drives knowledge management through practices like meetings, staying updated, and facilitating information access. Organizational culture supports knowledge sharing and decision-making. Internal marketing, including rewards and employee development, enhances satisfaction and performance, improving healthcare facility outcomes.

Recommendations

To improve efficiency and competitiveness in healthcare organizations, it is recommended to prioritize the development of effective leadership, strategies, and a supportive culture. This includes fostering trust, openness, and innovation within the organization. Strategies should be implemented to promote knowledge sharing, such as regular meetings and the creation of best practices. Investing in training and development as a means to generate new knowledge and improve healthcare services is also essential. By implementing these recommendations, healthcare organizations can enhance their knowledge management practices, foster a culture of continuous learning, and ultimately improve their overall efficiency and competitiveness.

Limitations

While this research provides valuable insights into knowledge management in the healthcare sector, there are limitations to consider. The findings are based on a limited number of hospital facilities, so they may not be representative of all healthcare organizations. The challenges faced by smaller healthcare facilities and the potential cost implications of implementing internal marketing initiatives need to be considered. The use of different respondents for surveys and interviews may introduce variations in the interpretations of the findings. It is important to acknowledge the subjective nature of the collected data and potential biases. To address these limitations, future research should involve larger and more diverse samples and consider additional dimensions of knowledge management while being mindful of the specific context and resources of different healthcare settings.

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