

Linking organizational culture, structure, Leadership Style, strategy, and organizational effectiveness: Mediating role of knowledge management

Azar Kafashpoor¹

Faculty member at the, Ferdowsi University, Mashhad, Iran

Neda Shakoori, M.A²

Business Management, Ferdowsi University, Mashhad, Iran

Samaneh Sadeghian, M.A³

Business Management, Ferdowsi University, Mashhad, Iran

Abstract- One of the issues that always have been of great concern in organizational debates is organizational effectiveness. When an organization makes attempts to fulfill its goals, internal instability and external threats are considered as impediments which may either delay or sabotage the whole process. Several studies have investigated the impacts of contextual factors on organizational effectiveness. As we live in the age of knowledge, knowledge management has become a substantial source for achieving competitive advantages. In order to do so, organizations need to identify organizational factors influential to knowledge management. When in an environment knowledge creation, sharing, learning, upgrading, restructuring and the use of knowledge as an asset to organization and its customers are both supported and encouraged, it can be administrated through the implementation of knowledge management. In other words, knowledge management acts as a tool to deal with degradation factors. This research primarily aims to investigate the relationship between context variables (including strategy, leadership, organizational culture and organizational structure) and organizational effectiveness, with taking into consideration the impact of knowledge management as a mediating variable. To this end, 224 questionnaires consisting of 64 statements (with Cronbach's alpha of .913) were distributed among employees of 14 Organization of Mashhad Municipality. Chi-square test and linear regression were used to test the hypotheses. Results indicate that all context variables are significantly associated with organizational effectiveness. Moreover, there is a significant relationship between context variables and knowledge management and also knowledge management plays a mediating role in relationship between context variables and organizational effectiveness.

Keyword: organizational culture, organizational structure, Leadership Style , strategy, organizational effectiveness, knowledge management

Introduction

Traditionally, organizational effectiveness has been discussed as a major issue in the organizational studies and theories and has been considered major in organizational analysis (Goodman and Pennigs, 1999).

1. akafashpor@yahoo.com

2. shakoori.neda@gmail.com

3. samane.aram@yahoo.com

In this respect, this study focuses on identifying the underlying sources or factors leading to business competitive advantage. Mostly identified variables including leadership style, organizational structure, strategy and culture, known as contextual variables, are studied directly or indirectly. On the other hand, due to knowledge driven organizations, the importance of effective knowledge management in organizational effectiveness cannot be ignored. Strong social revolution of the late twentieth century has had grounded on information and knowledge (Serna, 2012).

Knowledge succors organizations to anticipate environmental changes and to take more preferable decisions to deal with those changes. The ability of organizations to gain, organize, and distribute knowledge, ameliorates the quality of decision-making processes and makes processes more efficient (Lin et al, 2012). Knowledge underpins subtle measures for organizations (Lindner and Wald, 2011), hence, organizations are investing more increasingly on systems of knowledge management (Lin et al, 2012), and since they are of the opinion that it leads to an opposite competitive advantage (Edvardson and Oskarson, 2011). Several studies surveyed the role of knowledge management on the effectiveness of the organization independently. Many corporations implement knowledge management for their success, nevertheless the desired level of performance is not met. A solution to this problem is to link knowledge management practices with the contextual factors (Smith et al, 2010). Evaluation the influence of these factors on the organizational effectiveness through knowledge management is the purpose of this study.

Literature Review

Knowledge management and organizational effectiveness: Gao et al (2008) argues that the concept of knowledge management is much more profound than a simple amalgamation of two words "knowledge" and "management". Most definitions of knowledge management include actions such as identification, acquisition, creation, storage, sharing and use of knowledge by individuals and groups in organizations (Sun 2010; Alavi and Leidner,2001).

According to Gao et al (2008), knowledge management can be scrutinized from both hardware and software point of view. In the latter, methodologies, approaches and tools of knowledge management are under centralization; however, in the former the focus is on the software being used, databases and information. Serena (2012) believes knowledge management includes applying technology in order to make the knowledge accessible throughout the organization. He is also of the view that knowledge management incorporates an integration of systematic process to select, organize and represent the information, so that the employees' perception and the proper use of company's assets could enhance.

According to Gold et al (2001), knowledge management includes four processes: Acquisition, conversation, application and protection. Knowledge Acquisition refers to the process that the organization absorbs latest knowledge through external sources (Gold et al, 2001; Sun, 2010). Conversation includes activities and practices which makes current knowledge more useful. Application comprises processes that cause the actual use of knowledge. Finally, protection encompasses all the actions done by the organization to protect its internal knowledge and to prevent its illegal and improper utilization. This element is crucial to the stability of competitive advantage (Gold et al, 2001).

Effectiveness is the degree and the extent that to which an organization's main tasks are completed or its goals are met. The notion of effectiveness is densely associated with organizational performance. In this study in order to assess the effectiveness, a criteria proposed by Lee and Choi (2003) is applied, which includes the overall success, market share, profitability, growth rate and innovative. Managing effective knowledge is analogous to beating heart of an organization (Gray and Densten, 2009).

Consolidation of internal and external knowledge and maintaining and managing effective knowledge management has positive effects on company's performance (Liua et al, 2005). According to Gold et al (2001), knowledge management capabilities including infrastructures and processes of knowledge, exerts direct and indirect impacts on organizational effectiveness. Organizational performance can be categorized in to two groups: tangible and intangible. Sharing knowledge and communication between this shared knowledge will result in achieving both groups (Lee and Choi, 2003). Integration of knowledge causes improved organizational effectiveness, lessened costs and reduced institutional failures' costs (Tiwana, 2004).

Yang (2007) reports that knowledge sharing facilitates the conversion of individual knowledge to organizational knowledge, improves organizational learning and contributes to organizational effectiveness.

Based on these findings, the first research hypothesis is formed:

H1: Knowledge management has a positive relation with organizational effectiveness .

Mediating role of Knowledge management: In most studies, culture, structure, strategy, leadership style and knowledge management has been evaluated as an independent variable that influences the effectiveness.

Furthermore, it has been stated that knowledge and information are product of contextual factors, or in another words, company's structure, culture, strategy and leadership style are underlying factors that have an impact on nature, creation and use of knowledge. Therefore, it can be argued that knowledge management can have a Mediating role on the impact of contextual factors on effectiveness.

There are very few studies regarding this issue. Zheng et al (2010) concluded that knowledge management has a strong impact on the relationship between organizational culture and effectiveness; while, in the relationship between structure and strategy is relative. The following hypotheses are presented pursuant to afore-mentioned content:

H1: Knowledge management has a mediating role in the relationship between organizational culture and effectiveness.

H2: Knowledge management has a mediating role in the relationship between organizational structure and effectiveness.

H3: Knowledge management has a mediating role in the relationship between strategy and effectiveness.

H4: Knowledge management has a mediating role in the relationship between leadership style and effectiveness.

Organizational structure, knowledge management, organizational effectiveness: Structure has a significant impact on the information flow and the nature of human relations. Structure defines the control mechanism (Martínez-León and Martínez-García, 2011) and it can lead to a sustainable competitive advantage for organizations, since the special skills of individuals get transmuted to apparent capabilities through structure (Daugherty et al, 2011). It also reveals the way knowledge is distributed within the organization (Martínez-León and Martínez-García, 2011). Perrow (1967) defined structure as an agreement within individuals to perform tasks. Mintzberg (1979) accounts it as the results of a combination of all the methods through which duties are assigned to people in different tasks and are then synchronized.

scholars in different disciplines such as economics, management, physics, political sciences, psychology, management science and social sciences have a role in the description of the organizational structure and each of them has considered different aspects, however in most of them centralization and formality are included, because they believe that these aspects are more influential to organizational performance rather than others (Tsai, 2002).

Formality refers to the degree to which decisions, work relationships and norms are established through formal regulations, policies, and standard procedures and centralization refers to the degree to which decision-making by a few people in the organization who are generally top-leveled (Tse et al, 1991; Anderson, 2002; Tsai, 2002; Paswan et al, 2012; Daugherty et al, 2011). Standardization in this concept is closely associated with the formality and hierarchical decision-making is closely associated with the centralization (Tse et al, 1991). Jaworski and Kohli (1993) define centralization through reverse definition of delegating decisions. The higher concentration, the higher level of management decisions are taken at (Anderson, 2002).

Many studies have reported a significant relationship between organic structure and high performance (Burn and stalker, 1961; Covin and Slevin, 1990; Maffei and Meredith, 1995; Enz, 2008). Tse et al (1991) believe that structure has a significant relationship with successful strategy implementation and financial performance. Smith et al (2010) state that structure and knowledge application are both positively related to organizational performance. However, technology and knowledge conversion are not directly associated with organizational performance.

Coherent organizational structure will improve performance of the employees (Cortes et al, 2012). Organizations that utilize flexible structures to engage their employees are more successful in identifying problems and are able to improve their performance and quality (Maffei and Meredith, 1995). According to Enz (2008), Decentralized structure facilitates decision making process, reduces expenditures, improve communication with suppliers and provide better trainings for employees. Although, some believe mechanical structure exerts a positive impact on performance while organic structure does a negative one (e.g. Jogaratnam and Tse, 2004; 2006). Claver-Cortés et al (2012) demonstrates that existence of formality, complexity and decentralization has a positive impact on company's performance and competitive strategy.

In other hand some studies conducted that Organization structure influences both of on effectiveness and knowledge management. Choo and Neto (2010) reveal that implementing a successful knowledge management depends entirely on providing conditions under which knowledge creation and sharing are possible. Organizational structure can be described as an

exceptionally influential element in creating, combining, grouping and integration of knowledge produced by members of the organization (Martínez-León and Martínez-García, 2011).

Without a formal structure, members' attempts in order to improve the flow of knowledge may remain disperse or inert (Okhuysen, 2002). If a structure is flexible and flat and encourages and facilitates communication and team work, it will facilitate successful implementation of knowledge management (Cortes et al, 2007). Rusly et al, (2012) present change management as a pre-stage for knowledge management, emphasize organizational structure and assert that organizational structure is influential on three processes: knowledge acquisition, knowledge creation and knowledge sharing. Furthermore, they proved that some aspects of the structure will affect the knowledge creation process.

Nonaka and Takeuchi (1994), Lee and Choi (2003) and Gold et al (2001), in separate studies, acknowledged the fact that the structure has an impact on the success of knowledge management. Considering the mentioned literature, following hypothesis is formed:

H5: Organizational structure is associated with knowledge management.

H6: Organizational structure is associated with Effectiveness Organizational.

Organizational culture, knowledge management and organizational effectiveness: Huang (2012) refers to organizational culture as a pattern of basic assumptions that a community develops in order to coincide externally and integrate internally. Schein (1985) argues that organizational culture comprises from implicit and unwritten rules and is a method which individuals apply to operate in organizations. Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) define culture as a shared cognitive framework which functions as a guide for perceptions, thoughts and language of members of a group. Given that individuals rely on these core guides for making decisions, these values affect the behavior of members of the organization and the organization itself (Schein, 1985).

Organizations need to develop a culture to overcome environmental challenges and changes, which encourages people to knowledge management. Organizational culture is the foundation of Knowledge management, as it teaches members how to learn and how to share their knowledge (Gray and Densten, 2009). Al-Alavi et al, (2007) examined the relationship between organizational culture and knowledge sharing success and suggest that elements of culture such as trust, communication, information systems and rewards are positively and significantly associated with knowledge sharing in organizations. According to Shao et al (2012), hierarchical culture of sharing explicit knowledge and group and rational culture of sharing tacit knowledge are associated significantly. Positive culture can lead to increased employee productivity and efficiency (Limjy, 2001; Hsu, 2002). Cultural values effects individuals' tendency to have a high performance (Kabasakal et al, 2012). This relationship has been appraised by many researchers and has been studied from different aspects, both directly (Quinn and Spreitzer, 1991; Cameron and freeman, 1991; Denison, 1990 and Fey and Denison, 2003) and indirectly through mediating variables (Gregory et al, 2008).

Cameron and freeman (1991) in a study conducted at a University concluded that group culture is related to academic satisfaction, students' personal development and organizational healthiness. Quinn and Spreitzer (1991) argues that individuals in unbalanced cultures, especially the ones that have more hierarchical tendencies, experience lower quality of life and individuals

in balanced cultures experience higher quality of life. Fey and Denison(2003) surveyed 179 international companies in Russia and concluded that organizations with involvement and consistency cultures, are better anticipators for employees' life quality and work satisfaction. Deshpande and Farley (2003) appraised impacts of organizational culture, market directions and innovativeness on performance in twelve countries and suggested that open cultures and strong market directions and innovativeness Influence Company's performance positively. According to Gregory et al, (2008), conducted on 99 American healthcare centers, organizational culture impacts effectiveness and employees' attitudes play a mediating role in this relationship.

H7: Organizational culture has a significant relationship with knowledge management.

H8: Organizational culture has a significant relationship with organizational effectiveness.

Leadership style, knowledge management and organizational effectiveness: Leadership is the use of non-coercive influence to direct and coordinate activities of members of an organization in order to achieve established goals. The notion of style refers to the way directors use their power. Leadership style is fairly repetitive patterns of behaviors that distinguish a leader from others. The study of leadership styles includes understanding the behaviors and attitudes of managers (Dubrin, 2010).

In Bass's theory, introduced in 1985, he identifies three styles of leadership in organizations: transactional leadership, transformational leadership and Laisses-faire leadership. In the latter, leader's presence and role in the organization are intangible, making this the most inactive and the most passive leadership style. In Transactional leadership, leader's ideas get moderated with subordinates and they compromise to reach pre-established objectives. Finally, transformational leadership can increase self-confidence and motivation in followers leading to further more than expected improvement in organization's performance (Politis, 2001).

Choosing a competent and skilled leader is the most critical step in the establishment of effective knowledge management in organizations, because the leader's role in providing support and funding from higher-level executive is highly required for the implementation of knowledge management (Anantatmula, 2008). Kumar Singh (2008), argue that a leadership style that delegates an appropriate level of power, authority and responsibility to staff to enable experience gaining and creativity, best fit for knowledge management.

Rangnekar and Dalpati (2011) with probing the role of transformational leadership style and its impact on human capital benefits from knowledge management perspective, concludes that leaders adopting this style, exert potential impact on cognition of human capital benefits' influence on their employees. These leaders involve employees effectively in the process of establishing knowledge management and organizational culture and encourage them to perform better communication among themselves. According to Shao et al (2012), all four types of competitive values cultures, have direct relationships with transformational leadership, while knowledge sharing has an indirect one.

Elenkov (2002) in a study conducted on Russian companies concluded that leadership styles may anticipate organizational performance. Bass et al, (2003) reveals that transformational and Transactional leadership style either directly or through a mediator variable such as potency, have a positive and significant relationship with performance; however, Laisses-faire style is

negatively related through both practices. Yilmaz and Ergun (2008) state that if project managers adopt a management style that tends to increase employees' engagement, it will improve business performance and will initiate positive environment in the organization. Referring to a report from Ogbonna and harriss (2000), transformational leadership impacts organizational performance indirectly through a mediation variable of culture.

Lee et al, (2010) surveyed 34 teams including 166 members and 30 leaders and expressed that leaders influences the process of knowledge sharing through establishing confidence to disclose information, which will ultimately lead to improved team performance.

H9: leadership style is related to knowledge management.

H10: leadership style impacts organizational effectiveness.

Strategy, Knowledge management and organizational effectiveness: Strategy is organization's general statement regarding its main objectives which includes organization's tools and techniques to accomplish objectives (Scholz, 1987). Some refers to strategy as a weapon for achieving pre-determined goals. A lucid strategy plays an important role in the success of the organization. Many corporations although have implemented a knowledge management system, still do not gain the desired level of performance. A proper solution to resolve such difficulty lies in maintaining a nexus with knowledge management practices and corporate strategy (Smith et al, 2010).

According to Smith et al (2010), although many companies have implemented KM, they mostly do not reach the desired level of performance. One way to resolve such problem, is to establish an effective link between the organization's knowledge management practices and corporate strategy. Slater et al (2010) , concluded that there is a positive relationship between performance and strategy and according to Noble and Mokwa (1999), implementing a successful marketing strategy is to improve strategic performance. The relationship between construction strategy and business performance is positive and significant (Williams et al, 1994). Furthermore, they evaluated the sales rate and suggested that both dimensions of construction strategy, technological orientation and market orientation have a positive and significant relationship with return on sales (ROS). Yamin et al (1999) , report that organizations adopting cost and centralization strategy had better financial performance, while organizations with differentiation strategy have a meaningful relationship with all performance factors including financial. Prajogo and Sohal (2006) demonstrated that distinction strategy, innovative performance and quality performance are positively related; however, there is no significant relationship between cost strategy and quality performance. Tavitiyaman et al, (2012) assessed the effect of competitive strategy and organizational structure on organizational performance. Their findings suggest that the company's strategy in human resources exerts a direct effect on financial performance and organizational structure plays a mediating role in the relationship between IT strategies, human resource strategy with financial performance.

H11: Strategy is significantly related to Knowledge management.

H12: Strategy is significantly related to organizational effectiveness.

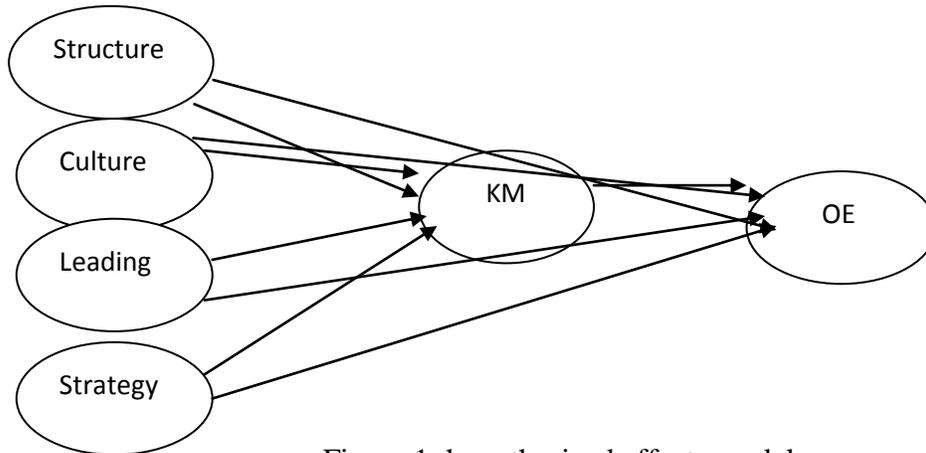


Figure 1: hypothesized affects model

Methodology and Findings

Data is collected through 224 questionnaires completed by employees of 14 Organization of Mashhad Municipality, With 0.913 Chronbach's Alpha indicating that research questionnaire is statistically reliable . Mean scores and descriptive statistics are calculated are tested through t-student test (figure 2).

Figure 2
One-Sample Statistics and t-test

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Test value = 3		
				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Organizational Effectiveness	224	2. 24	.56	-19.814	223	.000
Knowledge Management	224	2. 39	.58	-15.568	223	.000
Strategy	224	2. 40	.50	-17.599	223	.000
Organizational Structure	224	2. 37	.67	-13.960	223	.000
Organizational Culture	224	2.47	.67	-11.707	223	.000
Leadership Style	224	2.37	.72	-13.004	223	.000

Figure 3
Model results for direct and mediating effects

Hypotheses	Coefficients			Sobel Test
	B	Std.	Sig.	Z
H1 OC to OS				4.834**
	Constant	.995	.113	.000
	OC	.565	.044	.000
KM on (OC to OS))				
	Constant	.988	.144	.000
	OC	.096	.064	.133
	KM	.428	.074	.000

H2	OS to OE	Constant	2.332	.143	.000	7.844**
		OE	.026	.058	.657	
	KM on (OS to OE)	Constant	.966	.177	.000	
		OE	.038	.048	.439	
		OS	.499	.056	.000	
H3	S to OE	Constant	1.244	.172	.000	5.011**
		OE	.478	.070	.000	
	KM on (S to OE)	Constant	.698	.172	.000	
		OE	.230	.069	.001	
		S	.417	.060	.000	
H4	LS to OE	Constant	.9774	.142	.000	4.614**
		OE	.478	.070	.000	
	KM on (LS to OE)	Constant	.977	.142	.000	
		OE	.109	.055	.047	
		LS	.423	.068	.000	

* Significant at the 0.05 level, ** Significant at the 0.01 level

KM=Knowledge Management / OC=organizational Culture / OE=Organizational Effectiveness / OS=Organizational Structure
LS=Leadership Style / S=Strategy

In order to evaluate whether knowledge management plays a mediating role in the relationship between organizational culture and organizational effectiveness, at first a linear regression analysis is applied. As you can see in Figure 3, regression coefficients are shown. We name constant coefficient's unstandardized B and Std. Error for direct effect by a and S_a and those of mediating effect by b and S_b . Considering these variables an Interactive Mediation, Sobel Test is applied to survey presumed mediating role (through comparing it with corresponding Z). Sobel test statistic is computed as following:

$$z = \frac{a * b}{\sqrt{b^2 * s_a^2 + a^2 * s_b^2}}$$

As can be noticed, Sobel statistic exceeds Z (1.96), indicating that hypothesized mediating role is significant, thus H1 is to be accepted. Applying same procedure in order to test remaining roles concluded that presumed mediating effects in H2, H3 and H4 is to be accepted (results shown in Figure 3). In regard to hypotheses H5, H6, H7 and H8, Pearson Chi-Square Test along with Linear Regression analysis is utilized (Figure 4).

Figure 4

Pearson Chi-Square Test and Linear Regression Analysis results

Hypotheses	Chi-Square Test			Linear Regression		
	Value	Df	Sig. (2-sided)	ANOVA Sig.	Coefficients	
					beta	Sig.
H5 OS ⇔ KM	24.74**	12	.016	.657	.030	.657
H6 OC ⇔ KM	97.10**	12	.000	.000	.653**	.000
H7 OC ⇔ OE	47.72**	12	.000	.000	.401**	.000
H8 LS ⇔ KM	57.80**	9	.000	.000	.569**	.000
H9 LS ⇔ OE	29.71**	9	.000	.000	.387**	.000
H10 S ⇔ KM	56.26**	9	.000	.000	.416**	.000
H11 S ⇔ OE	35.56**	9	.000	.000	.384**	.000

* Significant at the 0.05 level, ** Significant at the 0.01 level

KM=Knowledge Management / OC=organizational Culture / OE=Organizational Effectiveness / OS=Organizational Structure

LS=Leadership Style / S=Strategy

As can be seen, chi-square test results for H1 concludes a significant relationship between organizational structure and knowledge managements (sig. less than .05); while, linear regression results do not support presumed impact (regression sig. exceeds .05), suggesting a non-linear association between afore-mentioned factors. Despite this, results of other hypotheses (H6 to H11) all support research assumed impacts.

Conclusion

The overall objective of this study was to investigate the organizational effectiveness and parameters have impacts on it. Effectiveness has been a crucial theme in organizational theories as organizations evaluate their performance through monitoring their organizational effectiveness. Today's organizations are constantly faced with the complex situations in competitive conditions, where internal and external circumstances keep unceasingly and rapidly changing. Thus, the need for financial and spiritual security and social interactions and communications are more than ever felt in organizations. Making organizational goals and employees' visions as well as management perspectives and strategies fit in order to adapt with ever-altering and multi-facet needs of stakeholders are of most duties assigned to executive managers. Although, quite difficult, but is essential to the success of the organization.

Therefore, for organizations which tend to secure optimal positions, elevating the effectiveness seems inevitable. Achieving this greatly depends on manager's ability to identify effectiveness's influential factors. Keeping these factors under control, the desired purpose can be achieved. The results of this study indicate that factors such as organizational structure, organizational culture, organizational strategy and leadership can significantly affect organizational effectiveness, through both directly and with intervening mediating variable of knowledge management.

As Choo and Neto (2010) argued, the success of knowledge management depends on providing appropriate infrastructures and circumstances under which knowledge creation and sharing can be effective. Poor understanding and managing of factors affecting organizational effectiveness not only makes the enterprise's effort futile, but also brings about other negative consequences including undesirable organizational culture, reduced collaboration spirit among staff, Improper

implementation of organizational strategies and knowledge deployment at different organizational levels.

When an organization acts successful consistently, a proper organizational is to be established through repeating of effective business practices, but when it fails to meet the expectations of stakeholders with whom to engage, changing the culture becomes crucial which is complex and time consuming. According to Peter and Waterman (1982), excellent organizations own strong cultures, because a strong culture leads to increased employee participation and consensus on strategic matters as well as organizational commitment, which later provide aligned perspectives between organizational and individual objectives. This is considered as an important factor in improving efficiency and productivity. A healthy culture provides an open, confident, creative, collaborative, practical, scientific, rational, logical and free-standing environment, potentially effective in making individual and organizational abilities useful (shahboghadian, 2005).

A strong organizational culture can significantly affect employees' commitment, increase the rigidity of their behavior and be a Successor to official regulations. Furthermore, strong culture makes individuals feel better about what they do, which finally leads to better performance and higher efficiency. Increased effectiveness might also result in improved living standards and enhanced well-being. In addition to culture, other variables including strategy, structure and leadership play substantial roles in relation to the effectiveness. Because when organizational strategies are aligned with long-term corporate goals, efficient use of resources and achieving the desired status and effectiveness is more conceivable.

Moreover, the communication between members through organizational structure greatly impacts effectiveness. Also, in a few studies the relationships between the variables of this research and control variables has been investigated. For instance, Kark et al (2012) concludes that leadership styles are significantly related to gender, as while masculine style is more powerful and decisive, feminine leadership style is more participative and democratic. Also, there are significant positive correlations between both masculine and feminine factors and transformational leadership. This demonstrates that an effective leader must be comprised from a balance between masculine and feminine characteristics.

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