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Measuring the Impact of Learning Organization on Job Satisfaction and Individual Performance in Greek Advertising Sector

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Abstract

Fierce competition, rapid evolution of information technology, economic uncertainty and ceaselessly shifting consumer trends, have brought about for contemporary business world a new era where the major source of competitiveness lies in a company's ability to transform into a learning organization, an organization which constantly generates, diffuses and integrates new knowledge. This assertion is even more critical for advertising companies, typical examples of Knowledge Intensive Firms (KIFs), for which ideas and knowledge constitute the key production resources. Due to dramatic decline in Greek firms' profitability in the last seven years, these companies are required to enhance both individual and organizational performance by promoting knowledge-based work and highly focusing on their workforce constant learning advancement.

This paper explores the pattern of learning organization in association with two principal work outcomes, job satisfaction and job performance. A questionnaire survey has been conducted, based on a sample of 251 staff members who are employed by 49 advertising agencies. Findings have brought to light that learning-oriented operation is a crucial predictor of both employee job satisfaction and individual performance, while job satisfaction proved to be a mediator of the relationship between learning organization and job performance. Conclusions have been drawn and practical implications have been suggested.

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Keywords: Learning Organization; DLOQ; Organizational Learning; Job Satisfaction; Job Performance; Work Outcomes; Media Management; Advertising; Competitiveness

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1. Introduction

Due to vicious global competition, continuous technological evolution, growing market complexity and financial instability, contemporary business world is undergoing consecutive changes (Davis & Daley, 2008; Weldy, 2009; Sakas et al, 2014). In order to deal with this business volatility, to achieve superior organizational performance and sustainable competitiveness, organizations imperatively need to base their action on regular creation and integration of new knowledge, and thus, to adopt the model of learning organization for their daily operation (Fang & Wang, 2006). This critical organizational capacity to systematically generate and utilize corporate knowledge, is even more critical in case of Knowledge Intensive Firms (KIFs), such as advertising agencies, for which knowledge constitutes the primary production resource (Storey, 2005). In order to cope with current adverse economic conditions, Greek advertising companies are required to highly focus on their staff learning advancement as a prescription for improved both individual and organizational performance (Chang & Lee, 2007). In pursuit of enhanced individual performance, these companies need to maintain the level of their employees' job satisfaction as elevated as possible, something which is strongly favoured by learning orientation (Dirani, 2009; Goh, 2003).

The aim of the present research project consists in exploring the relationship between learning organization and work outcomes (job satisfaction and job performance) in the Greek advertising sector.

Although the pattern of learning organization has already been examined in association with job satisfaction and individual performance, -to the authors' awareness- the specific impact exerted by each learning organization dimension on these two work outcomes, has not been studied yet. In addition, the interplay between learning organization, job satisfaction and employee performance has been investigated to a very limited extent. Moreover, given that Greek advertising companies have been facing a sharp decline in their profitability since the beginning of the global financial recession, this study turns out to be even more challenging as this complex relationship has not been studied in communication sector yet.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Learning Organization & Work Outcomes

The notion of learning organization has emerged in recent years, has inspired both academics and practitioners to produce a high volume of textbooks and studies, and has been widely indicated as a prescription for profitable organizational action and sustainable competitiveness (Jamali *et al*, 2009). Learning organization could be described as an organization that regularly creates, disseminates and integrates knowledge, transforms itself and modifies its action based on new knowledge, perceptions and experience in order to meet its strategic objectives (Lewis, 2002). Watkins & Marsick (1993) detect the following seven distinct learning organization dimensions: *Continuous Learning: Inquiry and Dialogue: Team Learning: Embedded Systems: Empowerment: System Connection: Strategic Leadership*.

Job satisfaction and job performance are considered as the most significant work outcomes lying at the core of individual and organizational welfare (Hart and Cooper, 2001) and crucial factors affecting organizational performance, success and competitiveness (Gould-Williams & Davies, 2005). Job satisfaction is the mental, physical and environmental pleasure that a staff member derives from her/his job; it can be described as an employee's affective and cognitive behavior towards certain aspects of her/his work (Pool & Pool, 2007). Job performance refers to the appraisal of a staff member's performance on job-related attitudes and outcomes in comparison with her/his colleagues; it can be measured in terms of each employee's level of proficiency and contribution to the attainment of organizational goals (Campbell *et al*, 1990).

A number of researchers underline that learning-oriented operation has a beneficial impact on work outcomes, such as job satisfaction and job performance (Dirani, 2009; Yang *et al*, 2004). Certain empirical studies indicate an intense positive correlation between major characteristics of learning organization and employee job satisfaction (Chang & Lee, 2007; Egan *et al*, 2004; Goh, 2003; Rose *et al*, 2009). Individuals employed by companies operating on the pattern of learning organization, are portrayed as strongly motivated and energized, and tend to experience positive psychological outcomes, such as increased commitment and work satisfaction. Organizations providing staff members with abundant resources and opportunities for learning, self-enhancement and professional advancement,

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