

ORGANIZATIONAL TRUST IN THE INDIAN KNOWLEDGE ORGANIZATIONS

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PURPOSE
THE primary purpose of this paper is to investigate the prevalence of Trust in the six Knowledge organizations and how the Trust varies across six Knowledge Organizations on sectoral lines and gender of Knowledge workers from the sample of 204 employees.

Design/Methodology/Approach: *A questionnaire, containing basic demographic variables and Trust items, has been provided to respondents i.e., to workers and managers spread across various functional groups, and managerial levels from six selected Knowledge organizations operating in different sectors of the Indian economy. A total of 204 fully-filled questionnaires have been received both personally and through emails and digital forms. Data, regarding different aspects of Knowledge Worker and their Trust level, were collected using OCTAPACE questionnaire. Data were statistically treated and analyzed using SPSS software package to obtain results for the stated purpose of the study. Instead of ANOVA, multiple regression analysis was used to cover for unequal sample sizes by using dummy variables.*

Findings: *This research study explores the subjective nature of Organizational Trust as perceived by the Knowledge Workers. The Organizational Trust variable is at middle level and equivalently prevalent in all the selected six Knowledge Organizations. This paper tries to emphasize the prevalence of middle level of Trust and the requirement to improve it further. There is no sectoral difference in the level of Organizational Trust in the six Knowledge Organizations. It seems that there is a characteristic of national level of Trust that is engrained in all the organizations in India. Apart from that, there is a gender difference in the perception of level of Organizational Trust in the Knowledge organizations and female employees perceive more Trust in organizations than their male counterpart.*

Research Limitations: *This research study was conducted in only six Indian Knowledge Organizations with a sample of 204 Knowledge workers. Hence, its generalizability is limited to other similar contexts. The usual limitations of questionnaires survey method also apply.*

Practical Implications: *This paper points out the prevalence of Organizational Trust is at the middle level in the knowledge organization and discusses the sectoral and gender variations. It recommends that efforts needs to be immediately initiated to improve the Trust factor in the organization because of its linkages across the organizational performances as shown in various literature.*

Originality/Value: *There is a dearth of literature and especially empirical research regarding Trust variable in Indian context in general as well as Trust variable in the Knowledge organizations in*

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particular. This gap is being filled by this empirical study about the Organizational Trust in Knowledge Organizations in India and their variation across gender and different sectors of the economy in India.

Key Words: *Trust, Knowledge Organization, Knowledge Worker.*

Trust plays a central role in the functioning of an organization. Arrow (1974) has suggested that Trust is an important lubricant of a social system. It is extremely efficient; it saves a lot of trouble to have a fair degree of reliance on other people's word. Unfortunately, this is not a commodity which can be bought very easily. If you have to buy it, you already have some doubts about what you have bought. Trust and similar values, loyalty or truth-telling, are examples of what the economist would call 'externalities'. They are goods, they are commodities; they have real, practical, economic value; they increase the efficiency of the system, enable you to produce more goods or more of whatever values you hold in high esteem. But they are not commodities for which trade in open market is technically possible or even meaningful.

There are various Indian research studies on Knowledge (Tomblin & Maheshwari, 2004), Leadership (Singh & Kumar, 2013), Organizational Culture (Kumar, 2012), Technology (Kumar, 2012), Knowledge management (Singh, 2001; Grover & Banerjee, 2005; Sharma, 2008; Singh & Sharma, 2008a; Singh and Sharma, 2008b; Singh and Sharma, 2008c; Singh & Sharma, 2008d) per se and the factors affecting Knowledge Management, for example, technology (Kumar, 2012), Organizational Culture (Sharma, 2005; Singh & Sharma, 2011a; Singh & Sharma, 2011b; Kumar, 2014), leadership (Kumar, 2013), Knowledge Manager (Dutt, 2006), and how Knowledge Management results into higher employees satisfaction (Singh & Sharma, 2011b).

Review of Literature

There is a dearth of research and consequent research papers on Trust in the Indian context. However, we cannot say same thing about international context, especially, United States of America and Europe. A lot of research at the international level under the various theoretical perspectives has been done on the various dimensions of Trust, its antecedents and consequences. Especially, the Trust has been found to be linked to the following outcome variables, viz., promotes cooperative behavior (Gambetta, 1988); enhances employee satisfaction (Edwards & Cable, 2009; Gulati & Sytch, 2007); improves efforts and performance (Aryee et al., 2002; Colquitt et al., 2007); promotes adaptive organizational forms, such as network relations (Miles & Snow, 1992); develops citizenship behavior (Mayer & Gavin, 2005; Walumbwa et al., 2011); reduces harmful conflict; decreases transaction costs; facilitates rapid formulation of ad hoc work groups (Meyerson et al., 1996); negotiation success (Lee et al., 2006; Olekalns & Smith, 2007); enhances leadership effectiveness (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Gillespie & Mann, 2004); improves human resource management perception (Graham & Tarbell, 2006); reduces transaction costs (Chiles & McMackin, 1996); helps collaboration and teamwork (Sargent & Waters, 2004; Simons & Peterson, 2000); promotes effective responses to crisis (Rousseau et al., 1998); organizational change and survival (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004; Sonpar et al., 2009); entrepreneurship (Blatt, 2009); strategic alliances (Fryxell et al., 2002; Ireland et al., 2002); mergers and acquisitions (Maguire & Phillips, 2008; Stahl & Sitkin, 2005), and even national-level economic health (Fukuyama, 1995).

The Trust has been found to be very important in communication (Giffin, 1967), leadership (Atwater, 1988), management by objectives (Scott, 1980), negotiation (Bazerman, 1994), game theory (Milgrom & Roberts, 1992), performance appraisal (Cummings, 1983), labor-management relations (Taylor, 1989), and implementation of self-managed work teams (Lawler, 1992). The emergence of self-directed teams and a reliance on empowered workers greatly increase the importance of the concept of Trust (Golembiewski & McConkie, 1975; Larson & LaFasto, 1989) as control mechanisms are reduced and interaction increases (Mayer et al., 1995).

The need for Trust only arises in a risky situation but Trust is not involved in all risk-taking behavior

where there is no identifiable “other party” (Mayer et al., 1995). The importance of the Trust can be judged from the simple fact that Trust can be a cause (an independent variable), an effect (a dependent variable) or interaction variable (a moderating condition for causal relationship) (Rousseau et al., 1998).

However, different disciplines approach Trust quite differently. Psychologists study Trust as personality trait (Rotter, 1971). The economists focused on the calculative process behind decision-making of Trust (Dasgupta, 1988; Williamson, 1993). The sociologists emphasized on the social relations behind Trust feature of the social organizations including a firm or company (Granovetter, 1985).

Trust has been famously defined by Mayer et al. (1995) as the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party. This definition, recently, has been accepted as the benchmark of Trust definition. Rousseau et al. (1998) defined Trust, after reviewing several studies from economics, psychology, and sociology as a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another.

Adler (2001) defined Trust as the subjective probability with which an actor assesses that another actor or group of actors will perform a particular action, both before she or he can monitor such action (or independently of his or her capacity ever to be able to monitor it) in a context in which it affects his or her own action.

Mayer et al. (1995) distinguished Trust from cooperation, confidence, and predictability and identified main features of the Trust as existence of risky conditions and willingness to be vulnerable. Mayer et al. (1995) also argued that there are several antecedent and consequent factors of Trust and specific consequences of Trust will be determined by contextual factors.

Rousseau et al. (1998) integrated concepts of Trust as per multiple discipline and pointed out that Trust can take three basic form viz., calculative, relational, and institutional.

Organizations are inherently multilevel systems, and Trust, like many other constructs, operate at the individual, team, and organizational levels of analysis, making attention to different levels a theoretical and empirical imperative (Klein et al., 1994). Rousseau et al. (1998) pointed out that Trust is not a behavior (e.g., cooperation), or choice (e.g., taking risk), but a psychological condition that can cause or result from such actions and Trust is psychological and important to organizational life.

Fulmer & Gelfand (2012) argued that Trust at the individual level denotes an individual’s degree of Trust and Trust at the higher levels refers to the degree of Trust collectively shared by individuals within a unit. Mayer et al. (1995) provided a definition of Trust and presented a model of its antecedents and outcomes after integrating research from multiple disciplines. Schoorman, Mayer, & Davis (2007) suggested that same model developed in Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman (1995) is robust across all levels of analysis including organizational level.

Trust and Knowledge Organization

Adler (2001) pointed out that compared to Trust, price, and authority are relatively ineffective means of dealing with knowledge-based assets and suggested that the effect of growing knowledge-intensity may indeed be a trend toward greater reliance on Trust. The production and allocation of knowledge cannot be optimized by the price-mechanisms alone (Arrow, 1962; Stiglitz, 1996). Adler (2001) argued that Trust has uniquely effective properties for the coordination of knowledge-intensive activities within and between organizations.

Becerra et al. (2008) proved that the transfer of tacit versus explicit knowledge have very different Trust and risk profiles as explicit knowledge is closely associated with the firm’s willingness to take

risk and tacit knowledge is intimately related to high Trustworthiness. It is the cultural conditions within a knowledge-intensive firm that primarily promote responsible autonomy (Friedman, 1977) and a workforce that can be Trusted to work in the interests of the firm, that is, working autonomously but working very hard and to the best of their abilities (Newell et al., 2002). Rousseau et al. (1998) suggested that in a knowledge-based economy, a Trustee's competence, ability, and expertise become increasingly important as an indicator of his or her ability to act as anticipated.

Research Model

This particular study is basically non-experimental research design having exploratory, descriptive, and diagnostic elements. The questionnaire based primary data has been randomly collected keeping in mind the research objectives, and experiences of the similar studies for proper analysis, effective conclusion, and generalization. A self-administered questionnaire has been provided to respondents i.e., to workers and managers spread across various functional groups, and managerial levels from different selected organizations. Several organizations were contacted for data collection including Most Admired Knowledge Enterprise (MAKE) top 10 awardees. A very few of them were really interested for this kind of study and only after "Non-Disclosure Agreement" were signed. The "Non-Disclosure Agreement" specifically suggests that the company or the organization will not be disclosed anywhere written or orally.

Sampling Design

All those organizations that claim to practice knowledge management form universe or population of the knowledge management practitioners. The sample selection for this research is basically simple random sampling. First of all, organizations were selected as per their eligibility to be part of universe of the knowledge management. These organizations need to be discussed in the descending order of the number of filled-questionnaire got from them.

Organization A: It is India's one of the largest power company. It was set up to accelerate power development in India. It is emerging as an 'Integrated Power Major', with a significant presence in the entire value chain of power generation business. It is also ranked in the '2010, Forbes Global 2000' ranking of the World's biggest companies. The company, with a rich experience of engineering, construction, and operation of thermal generating capacity, is the largest and one of the most efficient power companies in India, having operations that match the global standards.

Organization B: It is a Fortune 100 diversified technology and manufacturing leader, serving customers worldwide with aerospace products and services; control technologies for buildings, homes and industry; automotive products; turbochargers; and specialty materials. This organization is very diverse, ingenious, committed, and integrated. Headquartered in Bangalore, it is an integral corporate arm of International organization providing value to its businesses and customers by providing technology, product, and business solutions meeting global standards of quality, innovation, and lifetime performance. It has offices in Madurai & Hyderabad, India; Shanghai & Beijing, China; Phoenix & Minneapolis, USA; and Brno, Czech Republic. All the data regarding this research have been collected through e-mail from the Bangalore office employees.

Organization C: It is a global consulting, technology, training, and outsourcing company. Committed to delivering innovation, it collaborates with its clients to help them become high performance organizations. With deep industry and business process expertise, broad global resources and a proven track record, it can mobilize the right people, skills, and technologies to help clients improve their performance. It focuses exclusively in providing IT services and products. It works extensively with clients in many major industries and services. It emphasizes on acquiring an in-depth knowledge of the customer's context and needs, and designs solutions fine-tuned to these needs. Its ideas and products have resulted in technology-intensive transformations that have met the most stringent international quality standards. Simultaneously, its teams proactively work on turning new ideas into products that answer global market needs.

Organization D: It is a top ten global steel maker and the world's second most geographically diversified steel producer, with operations in 26 countries and a commercial presence in over 50 countries. It believed that the principle of mutual benefit - between countries, corporations, customers, employees, and communities - is the most effective route to profitable and sustainable growth. Its larger production facilities include those in India, the UK, the Netherlands, Thailand, Singapore, China, and Australia. It endeavors to improve the quality of life in the communities in which the company operates.

It has recently been recognized as Indian Most Admired Knowledge Enterprise (MAKE) winner for the year 2010 for sustained excellence in field of Knowledge Management. A panel of Indian-based fortune 500 senior executives and internationally recognized Knowledge Management and intellectual capital experts selected the winners. It has been six-time Indian MAKE Winner ever since the inception of the award in 2005 (2005-2010), including 2006 overall Indian MAKE Winner. It is the only manufacturing company to achieve this feat in 2010. With this it now has unique distinction of being awarded MAKE 2010 at Global, Asian as well as Indian level. APQC, USA recognized it for "Leveraging Knowledge across Value Chain" especially across key processes like Customer Value Management (CVM), Supplier Value Management (SVM), and Knowledge Manthan. Manthan Ab Shop Floor Se (MASS) - an in-house designed process to involve shop floor employees in transferring best practices from one department to another was introduced in 2005.

Organization E: It is India's flagship government owned, public sector, listed oil company with business interests straddling the entire hydrocarbon value chain – from refining, pipeline transportation, and marketing of petroleum products to exploration & production of crude oil & gas, marketing of natural gas and petrochemicals. It is the leading Indian corporate in the Fortune 'Global 500' listing. Its operations are strategically structured along business verticals - Refineries, Pipelines, Marketing, R&D Centre, and Business Development – E&P, Petrochemicals, and Natural Gas. To achieve the next level of growth, it is currently forging ahead on a well laid-out road map through vertical integration – upstream into oil exploration & production (E&P) and downstream into petrochemicals – and diversification into natural gas marketing and alternative energy, besides globalization of its downstream operations. Having set up subsidiaries in Sri Lanka, Mauritius, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), it is simultaneously scouting for new business opportunities in the energy markets of Asia and Africa.

Organization F: It is a global technology and innovation company that stands for progress. With operations in over 170 countries around the world, it invents and integrates hardware, software, and services to help forward-thinking enterprises, institutions, and people everywhere succeed in building a smarter planet. The diversity and breadth of this includes the entire portfolio of research, consulting, solutions, services, systems, and software, uniquely distinguishes it from other companies in the industry. Its India's solutions and services span cover all major industries including financial services, healthcare, government, automotive, telecommunications, and education, among others. It has been expanding its footprint in India - and has a presence in over 200 cities and towns across the country - either directly or through its strong business partner network. It has clearly established itself as one of the leaders in the Indian Information Technology (IT) Industry - and continues to transform itself to align with global markets and geographies to grow this leadership position. Widely recognized as an employer of choice, it holds numerous awards for its industry leading employment practices and policies.

Data Collection

The data from a sample of 204 employees, from the 6 different Knowledge Organizations operating in India, have been collected through a self-administered questionnaire with following distribution in the Table No. 1. For the calculation of sectoral differences, two dummy variables named "dum var sec 1" and "dum var sec 2" were created. The variable named "dum var sec 1" stands for the IT sector organizations and the variable "dum var sec 2" stands for infrastructure sector organizations except power. The base organization operates in the power sector.

Table No. 1: Dummy variables for Sector-wise distribution of organizations

Sample	dum var sec 1-	dum var sec 2- Infra. IT Sector	No. of Sector except power responses	Remarks
Organization- A	0	0	100	Base- Power
Organization- B	1	0	38	IT Organization
Organization- C	1	0	30	IT Organization
Organization- D	0	1	25	Infrastructure
Organization- E	0	1	8	Infrastructure
Organization- F	1	0	3	IT Organization
Total	71	33	204	

For calculation of gender differences, a dummy variable named “dum var gender” was created which has two values of “0” and “1”. “0” stands for male and “1” stands for female.

Table No. 2: Dummy variable for gender

Model	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 0-Male	171	83.8	83.8
1-Female	33	16.2	100.0
Total	204	100.0	

Measures

The primary data have been randomly collected using self-administered questionnaire which are relevant for research objectives, and some background information from the workers belonging to various functional areas working at the different managerial levels. The questionnaire begins with a brief introduction of researcher and the topic of the research. The respondents are requested to give their frank answers, which are best answers for this research. The questionnaire has been used to collect data using OCTAPACE instrument (Pareek, 1997) and information regarding demographic information, education related, job-related, and position related to the respondents. There are 5 items of Trust variable which have been culled out of organizational cultural ethos viz. – OCTAPACE questionnaire by Pareek (1997).

Trust is not used in the moral sense. It is reflected in maintaining the confidentiality of information shared by others, and in not misusing it. It is also reflected in a sense of assurance that others will help, when such help is needed and will honor mutual commitments and obligations. Trust is also reflected in accepting what another person says at face value, and not searching for ulterior motives. Trust is an extremely important ingredient in the institution building processes (Pareek, 1997). The outcome of Trust includes higher empathy, timely support, reduced stress, and reduction and simplification of forms and procedures. Such simplification is an indicator of Trust and of reduced paper work, effective delegation, and higher productivity (Pareek, 1997).

Once the data regarding Trust variable has been culled out and its descriptive have been shown in table no. 3, it has been further analyzed using multiple regression equation with dummy variable to find out the sectoral and gender differences in the six Knowledge Organizations.

Data Analysis, Results, and Discussion

Table No. 3: The Descriptive Analysis of Trust Variable

Particulars	Trust
Valid	204
Missing	0
Mean	13.78
Std. Error of Mean	0.155
Median	14.00
Mode	15
Std. Deviation	2.218
Variance	4.922
Skewness	-0.484
Std. Error of Skewness	0.170
Kurtosis	0.479
Std. Error of Kurtosis	0.339
Range	12
Minimum	8
Maximum	20

The variable Trust (mean score=13.78 for all Knowledge Organizations) stands just right side of the middle. Lying in the middle suggests that this variable which indicates several institution building characteristics like confidentiality of information, honoring mutual commitment and obligations, empathy, timely support, reduced stress, reduction, and simplification of forms and procedures are in the range of middle level. All of the above institution building indicators are needed at the top of the quartile for that corporate to move ahead. The middle level range of this variable does not augur well for Knowledge Organizations. Kumar (2012) argued that mid level of confrontation and Trust values provides a basic ingredient for effective team functioning. Davenport & Prusak (1998) argued that Trust can trump the other factors that positively affect the efficiency of knowledge markets. Without Trust, knowledge initiative will fail, regardless of how thoroughly they are supported by technology and even if the survival of the organization depends on effective knowledge transfer (Fukayama, 1995). Davenport & Prusak (1998) argued that personal contact and Trust are intimately related. Trust is an essential condition of a functioning knowledge market. For the knowledge market to operate in an organization, Trust must be established in the following three ways:

1. Trust must be visible.
2. Trust must be ubiquitous.
3. Trustworthiness must start at the top.

Since, the Trust is the basic ingredient for institution building and its middle level of prevalence in the

Knowledge Workers of the selected organizations, which operate in the highly competitive corporate environment; it shows a lot of head room for these Knowledge Organizations to grow up and get counted in the top 100 organizations in the world.

The dummy variables were introduced in the multiple regression analysis to find out any sectoral difference among the organizations belonging to different sectors and gender differences. The 't' values of "dum var sec 1" and "dum var sec 2" (shown in table no. 4) are not significant. This suggests that organizations belonging to Power sector, IT sector, and 'Infrastructure sector other than Power sector' work on the almost similar level of Organizational Trust, regardless of higher requirement of Organizational Trust in the IT sector and especially Knowledge Organizations.

Table No. 4: Coefficients of Dummy variable for Sectoral Differences

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for B	
	B		Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
(Constant)	13.680	0.221		61.778	0.000	13.243	14.117
dum var sec 1	-3.211E-02	0.344	-0.007	-0.093	0.926	-0.710	0.646
dum var sec 2	0.684	0.445	0.114	1.538	0.126	-0.193	1.560

a Dependent Variable: Trust.

Similarly, the 't' value of "dum var gender" (shown in table no. 5), which stands for gender, is positive and significant at 10% level of significance. This suggests that female employees perceive higher levels of Organizational Trust than their male counterpart. This is quite an interesting phenomenon.

Table No. 5: Coefficients of Dummy variable for Gender Differences

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for B	
	B		Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1(Constant)	13.667	0.169		0.905	0.000	13.334	14.000
dum var sec 1	0.697	0.420	0.116	0.659	0.099	-0.131	1.525

a Dependent Variable: Trust.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The review of literature show the importance of Trust in the organization and its benefits. The requirement of higher level of Trust is more in the Knowledge Organizations. However, the Trust variable is in the middle level and equivalently prevalent in all the selected six Knowledge Organizations. The present study explores the subjective nature of Organizational Trust as perceived by the Knowledge Workers. This paper tries to emphasize the prevalence of middle level of Organizational Trust and the requirement to improve it further in the six selected Knowledge Organizations.

Apart from that, there is a gender difference in the perception of level of Trust in the organizations and female employees perceive more of Trust in organizations than their male counterpart.

Lastly, there is no sectoral differences in the level of organizational Trust in the six Knowledge Organizations. It seems there is a characteristic of national level of Trust that is engrained in all the organizations in India.

Regardless of the importance of Trust, it is very difficult to build Trust in the organization. And, there is a scarce empirical research about how Trust can be built within organizations (Mayer & Davis, 1999). However, one can try to bring about organizational change that ensue development and improvement in the level of the Organizational Trust in Knowledge Organizations to garner maximum benefits of high level of Trust using technique given by Becerra & Gupta (2003). The study suggest that an attempt needs to be made to change the Knowledge workers' attitude towards others, particularly in a low-communication context, and if the communication is high, it may be more appropriate to try and change the context within the organization, so that their behavior will be observed by their colleagues for Trust to grow.

Limitations of the Study

There is a dearth of literature and especially empirical research regarding Trust variable in Indian context as well as Trust variable in the Knowledge Organizations. This gap is being filled by this empirical study about the Trust in knowledge organizations in India and their variance across gender and different sectors of the economy in India. However, the findings of this paper can be relevant to similar organizations in the Indian Cultural settings. It cannot be easily extrapolated to outside India because of cultural nature of the Trust variable. The questionnaire survey method has its own lacuna. Regardless of its limitations, this paper tries to initiate the research in Trust factor in India and fill the research gap.

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