

Multiple stakeholder approach to inter-generation knowledge continuity

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Abstract

Despite the understanding that loss of knowledge resulting from demographic changes in the workforce, in particular, the massive retirement of baby-boomers, constitutes a high potential risk in advanced economies, research on knowledge continuity (KC) is scant. In particular, empirical research of the antecedents that determine inter-generation KC behavior (KCB) is limited mainly to qualitative studies emphasizing the departing employees' perceptions. The study presented in this dissertation addressed this gap in the literature by adopting a broader perspective to investigate the antecedents of effective inter-generation KC behavior among knowledge workers, incorporating personal and organizational factors before their retirement and the effectiveness of KC behavior after their retirement. Furthermore, we offer a first-of-its-kind multiple-stakeholder approach to the investigation of inter-generation KC, considering the perceptions of various stakeholders that may affect and be affected by knowledge continuity.

The study comprised three phases. First, we identified dyads of soon-to- retire employees and their successors in a large technology-intensive firm. In the second and third phases, to test the study hypotheses, we used a longitudinal design to collect data at two time points, before and after the workers' retirement (six months after retirement). Data were collected from 87 dyads and their relevant supervisors and colleagues.

The findings suggest that the interaction between soon-to retire employees and their successors embedded in trust relations is positively related to KC behavior, but does not indirectly influence KC effectiveness (KCE) as mediated by KC behavior. Moreover, the workers' perceptions of task interdependence do not moderate these relationships. In addition,

transformational leadership does not affect KC behavior directly and does not indirectly influence KC effectiveness. However, the effects of successors and supervisors' perceptions of task interdependence were found to moderate these relationships. Transformational leadership is positively associated with KC behavior, but only among successors who perceive low task interdependence. Furthermore, KC behavior is positively associated with KC effectiveness only among supervisors who perceive high task interdependence. Finally, a moderated-mediation effect of transformational leadership style and task interdependence on KC effectiveness via KC behavior is found. The analysis results demonstrate differences in stakeholders' perceptions. We identified that the supervisors' demonstrated a "blind spot," which, given their role in enabling KC, may have crucial implications in terms of their willingness to act and invest in KC processes.

In summary, considering the growing senior population that will be ageing and exiting the workforce in the coming years, the current study sheds light on the influence of different characteristics and needs among different generations and their implications for KC behavior and KC effectiveness. We discuss the important role of managers' behaviors and stakeholders' perceptions in KC among knowledge workers and how human resources practices can help facilitate inter-generation KC and harness its effectiveness.