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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Explaining the Effect of Team Building on Organizational Culture and Effectiveness in Start-up Knowledge-Based Companies

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Introduction

Knowledge-based companies, as the main drivers of innovation, economic growth and added value creation, play a decisive role in the development of societies (Kapotzis, 2024). By focusing on emerging technologies and utilizing creative ideas, these organizations not only contribute to job creation and enhance national competitiveness, but also demonstrate high agility and flexibility in conditions of environmental uncertainty. However, the emerging nature of these companies, their small scale and limited human and financial resources, which have been repeatedly mentioned in various studies, have presented them with numerous challenges in the areas of organizational culture and effectiveness. A weak organizational culture can lead to reduced team collaboration, decreased employee motivation, increased internal conflicts and even failure to achieve organizational goals. On the other hand, low effectiveness threatens the ability of these companies to achieve sustainable goals and compete in dynamic markets (Boschgens, 2021).

Organizational culture, as a set of shared values, beliefs, and norms that shape the path of employee behavior and decision-making (Shayne, 2010; Cameron and Quinn, 2011), forms the foundation of organizational behavior, decision-making, and performance. This concept is doubly important in knowledge-based companies, which are often composed of young, dynamic, and diverse teams. Organizational culture not only affects the way in which intra-organizational interactions occur, but also determines the organization's strategic direction and ability to innovate and adapt to environmental changes. Research shows that different types of organizational cultures have different effects on the performance and effectiveness of companies and economic and organizational institutions. For example, group and innovative organizational cultures that emphasize collaboration, creativity, and continuous learning have the greatest positive impact on the performance of economic-administrative institutions and enterprises; In contrast, market or hierarchical cultures that focus on competition or excessive control may have negative or weaker effects on organizational performance (Hartnell et al., 2011). In this regard, strengthening a culture that promotes values such as trust, commitment, and collaboration is crucial for the success and effectiveness of knowledge-based start-ups. Despite the high potential of coaching, and especially team building in institutions, a recent literature review (Grant, 2017; Farahani, 1400) shows that most of the research conducted in this area has focused on large and established organizations and has less addressed the specific context of knowledge-based and start-ups. This is while the dynamic nature, resource constraints, and the need for rapid learning in these companies require that mechanisms such as team building be examined more carefully. Especially in the context of Iran and in provinces such as Kurdistan, where knowledge-based companies are growing and developing, examining the effect of coaching-based team building on organizational culture and effectiveness can provide valuable

findings for managers, policymakers, and activists in this field. In Iran, it is only in recent years that the importance and role of team building and coaching in general in facilitating and strengthening organizational processes and bureaucratic and associational relations has been emphasized, and today it is mentioned as an important issue and factor in strengthening organizational effectiveness. In Kurdistan, however, this issue still does not have a special place in analyses and research as it should, and there is not much focus on it.

Team building, by strengthening interactions and synergies between members, can help transform and diversify the organizational culture and performance of various companies and institutions. This is particularly important in start-up knowledge-based companies that often work with small, multidisciplinary teams. Accordingly, this study aimed to explain the effect of team building as a subset of coaching on organizational culture and effectiveness in knowledge-based companies in Kurdistan and to examine the mediating role of team building. The main research question is: How does team building affect the organizational culture and effectiveness of these companies and what is the role of team building in these relationships?

Methodology

This study was designed and implemented with a qualitative approach based on the grounded theory method. The statistical population of the study included experts and elites in the fields of management, human resources, and knowledge-based businesses in Kurdistan Province. These individuals were selected based on criteria such as at least five years of management experience in knowledge-based companies, a history of relevant research activity, or a prominent executive role in this field to ensure that their perspectives were based on in-depth knowledge and practical experiences. Sampling was purposive and non-probability and continued until theoretical saturation was achieved, at which point new data did not add new information. Finally, 12 in-depth interviews were conducted with these experts, which was determined to be sufficient depth and data saturation based on qualitative methodological standards (such as those proposed by Creswell, 2013). The main data collection tool was in-depth semi-structured interviews. Data analysis was conducted according to Strauss and Corbin's (1998) three-step process: in the open coding stage, the interview transcripts were reviewed line by line and primary key concepts (such as "job commitment" or "organizational learning") were extracted; in the axial coding stage, the relationships between these concepts were identified and grouped into main categories (such as causal, contextual, and intervening conditions); and in the selective coding stage, the central phenomenon ("teambuilding as a basis for sustainable transformation through culture") was determined and a paradigmatic model of the relationships between the categories was drawn. To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, several strategies were adopted: internal validity was strengthened through data triangulation (by comparing interviews and literature) and peer review (review of coding by a second researcher); reliability was ensured by careful documentation of the process (such as recording initial codes and changes); and transferability was provided through a rich description of the research context (start-up knowledge-based companies in Kurdistan). Also, researcher reflexivity (recording assumptions and their impact on the analysis) was applied to reduce bias.

Findings

This section presents the results of the findings extracted from interviews with experts, including managers and specialists in this field, on the subject of team building, organizational culture, and effectiveness in start-up knowledge-based companies. The analysis of this situation is based on the analysis of field data collected based on the provisions of grounded theory. Thematic analysis of the collected data led to the extraction of 20 primary categories, 9 secondary categories, and one core category. Analysis of the data obtained from interviews with 12 managers and experts of start-up knowledge-based companies in Sanandaj showed that team building coaching is not simply an educational intervention, but a transformative process that leads to the improvement of organizational effectiveness by changing and redefining organizational culture. In other words, the central category of the research was identified as "Team Building as the Basis of Sustainable Transformation in Knowledge-Based Companies through Culture".

Central Phenomenon: Team Building as the Basis of Sustainable Transformation in Knowledge-Based Companies through Culture

The analysis of interview data showed that "team building" in new knowledge-based companies acts not simply as an educational intervention or a tool for improving individual

skills, but as a central and comprehensive phenomenon that links other categories in the data-based theory model. This central category encompasses the idea that team building provides the necessary context for enhancing organizational effectiveness by shaping shared organizational values, norms, and beliefs. Based on the findings, team building can function at three levels: the individual level, by strengthening communication skills and self-awareness; the group level, by increasing synergy, empathy, and social learning; and the organizational level, by institutionalizing new cultural values and creating sustainability in organizational behavior. From this perspective, team building, in the eyes of the interviewees, is a pivotal phenomenon, a connecting link between organizational culture strategies and organizational effectiveness outcomes.

Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to identify, discover, and analyze the relationships between team building as one of the main components of the coaching process in organizations and institutions on organizational culture and, through it, on effectiveness in new knowledge-based companies in Kurdistan Province. The findings indicate the pivotal role of team building as a transformative process in redefining organizational culture and enhancing organizational effectiveness in knowledge-based companies. The central theme of the research, "Team Building as the Basis of Sustainable Transformation Through Culture," emphasizes that coaching leads to the sustainability and growth of knowledge-based start-ups by changing shared organizational values, beliefs, and norms. The findings of this study showed that team building within the scope of coaching, beyond a training or personal development tool, acts as a transformative process that enhances the effectiveness of knowledge-based start-ups by redefining organizational culture. The findings of the present study, based on the opinions and themes extracted from the interviews, show that team building, by strengthening the dimensions of organizational culture (such as trust, commitment, and learning), can lead to increased effectiveness in knowledge-based companies, especially new and emerging types, as previously stated by Grant (2017) and Theobaum et al. (2014) by stating that "team building is a mechanism for promoting human and social capital.

KEY WORDS

Organizational Culture, Coaching, Team Building, Effectiveness, Knowledge-Based.

