

Knowledge Sharing and Dynamic Capabilities: Does Gender Matter?

Elżbieta Karwowska and Wioleta Kucharska

Department of Management, Faculty of Management and Economics, Gdańsk University of Technology, Gdańsk, Poland

elzbieta.karwowska@pg.edu.pl

wioleta.kucharska@pg.edu.pl

Abstract: Knowledge sharing in organizations is a focal process leading to organizational adaptability and sustainable growth. Dynamic capabilities development is critical for this. Diversity, inclusive culture, and gender balance are seen as factors that also support organizations' development. The question of the role of gender in sharing and using knowledge to initiate change in organizations remains open. This study aims to fill this gap. Based on a survey targeted to Polish knowledge workers (495 cases), our data was analyzed using OLS regression (SPSS PROCESS software ver. 3.4). Our research shows that for a manager position, gender matters for the reconfiguring dynamic capability (DCR) building in the organization, thanks to tacit knowledge sharing (TKS). The results show that female managers support DCR in the organization even if TKS does not support their efforts. If supported, their positive influence on DCR grows but not as fast as observed for men with lower starting skills. So, when holding managerial positions, women lose motivation to support changes. The question that arises is "why"? There are some hypothetical assumptions: it might be that since women worked so hard to earn their managerial positions, they want to secure them and avoid any risks connected to changes. In the particular case presented, women managers' lower willingness to support changes may be also caused by their lower level of self-confidence. However, it might be that the reasons are quite different, thus solving this issue requires further studies. The critical value of the presented research is that it delivers one more proof, this time from the knowledge management (TKS) and change implementation (DCR) perspective, that gender inequality in workplaces has negative consequences for organizations.

Keywords: Gender, Tacit Knowledge Sharing, Explicit Knowledge Sharing, Dynamic Capabilities, Reconfiguring Dynamic Capability (DCR)

1. Introduction

Organizations operate in unpredictable environments and face various internal and external conditions that often force them to change, and the best of them can reshape quickly. Challenging conditions act as stimuli, making an unexpectedly good environment for companies to gain or maintain an advantage over competitors through constant learning and innovativeness (Kucharska and Rebelo, 2022). That is possible due to the agility and reconfiguring aspect of dynamic capabilities. Both agility and dynamic capabilities are supported by knowledge management, especially while selecting the best approaches, suitable to particular circumstances (Zięba et al., 2022).

Teece et al. (1997) defined dynamic capabilities as "the firm's ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competencies to address rapidly changing environments." (Teece, et al., 1997, p. 516). In other words, dynamic capabilities are the organizations' abilities to sense and shape external factors, seize opportunities, and improve, merge, protect, and reconfigure assets when necessary to sustain competitiveness. To do so, unique processes of learning about market conditions and customer's needs are applied (Teece, 2014). Reconfiguring dynamic capability (DRC) directly impacts innovation and organizational development. The capabilities of acquiring and creating knowledge contribute to the reconfiguring capability; therefore, they contribute to innovation indirectly (Zheng et al., 2011). It is evident in the incorporation of existing knowledge to create new frameworks. Those processes are especially the implementation of open innovation, cooperation, application of market needs (Ince and Hahn, 2020), development of technology, rearrangement of the workplace (Khan et al., 2020) decentralization of power (Bhardwaj et al., 2021), flexible connecting structures, and cost-cutting (Vallaster et al., 2021), to name a few. Knowledge management systematically implements techniques and tools to identify, analyze, and respond to any knowledge-related issues in an organization (Durst et al., 2016), and this way support dynamic capabilities.

Knowledge may be labeled as explicit or tacit (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995) and those categories significantly differ. The more formalizable, manageable, and transferable knowledge pieces belong to the category of explicit ones (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Faccin et al., 2019). On the contrary, tacit knowledge is often stored in people's minds as experiences, personal beliefs, values, and ways of looking at things (Saint-Onge, 1996). Both types are crucial for innovation (Henri, 2016) and change adaptability (Park and Kim, 2015) when distributed across structures and systems. However, tacit knowledge awareness and sharing through 'learning by doing' or 'social interactions' are widely acknowledged to be an important component of organizational innovations in

particular (Kucharska and Erickson, 2023). So, knowledge sharing is a focal process for the constant transformation of the tacit kind to explicit and the creation of new tacit thanks to grounded explicit.

Wang and Noe (2010) defined knowledge sharing as a set of behaviors regarding information exchange or assistance. It goes beyond passing the information since the information must be internalized and integrated into the knowledge base of the individual first (Heisig and Kannan, 2020). When knowledge is well distributed and used in processes like task completion, decision-making, and problem-solving it has an impact on organizational innovation and performance (Heisig and Kannan, 2020). Reportedly, knowledge sharing increases team effectiveness (Yoo et al., 2022), making it critical for achieving, sustaining, and improving team effectiveness in environments characterized by unpredictability (Edmondson et al., 2007; Mesmer-Magnus and Dechurch, 2009). Also, it is linked to employee satisfaction (Wang and Noe, 2010; Zheng et al., 2010). The better knowledge-sharing practices among the team members, the more learning opportunities, and individual sense of achievement (Yoo et al., 2022). The learning climate, psychological safety, trust, collaboration (Kucharska and Kowalczyk, 2016; Andersson et al., 2020), social interactions (Ryan and O'Connor, 2013), mentoring (Olaisen and Revang, 2018) and stakeholder engagement (Easterby-Smith and Prieto, 2008) facilitate knowledge sharing, in its both explicit and tacit forms. Thus, knowledge sharing in organizations is a focal process leading to organizational adaptability and sustainable growth. Dynamic capabilities development is critical for this. Diversity, inclusive culture, and gender balance are perceived as factors that also support organizations' development. The question of the role of gender in sharing and using knowledge to initiate change in organizations remains open. This study aims to fill this gap.

2. Conceptual Framework

Recently, some researchers have argued that gender must be included in knowledge-sharing research since it influences organizational structure and behavior (Paoloni and Lombardi, 2018; Scuotto et al., 2022). At the same time, others note that this issue has not been properly investigated, and there are still too few studies analyzing the link between knowledge sharing and gender (Heisig and Kannan, 2020; Yoo et al., 2022). Existing studies show that this research area is an interesting topic to take a closer look at (Paoloni et al., 2022). For instance, it has been shown that women are more prone to knowledge-sharing than men in certain circumstances (Nguyen et al., 2019). They generally spend more time on socialization which fosters knowledge sharing (Denise and Byosiére, 2007). It indicates that gender diversity positively influences knowledge-sharing (Jayasingam et al., 2016), possibly because diversity makes internal communication more open (Lee et al., 2020). So, gender factor studied in the context of knowledge sharing can bring interesting implications. This study focuses then on the role of gender in sharing and using knowledge to initiate change in organizations.

Analyzing the 'state of the art', in many research papers on knowledge management, gender is being used as a moderating factor to analyze the relationships between practices, culture, and engagement. Some of them prove that gender moderates the influence of knowledge-sharing (along with unfair promotion) on affective commitment (Jayasingam et al., 2016), and the relationship between knowledge-sharing intention and knowledge-sharing behavior is stronger for females (Amin et al., 2011; Grubic-Nesic et al., 2015). Contrary to the above statements, some other works prove a lack of a significant relationship between gender and knowledge sharing (Killingsworth et al., 2016; Makela et al., 2012; Al Muzaffar and Alshare, 2015). Instead, Marouf (2015) showed that the combination of gender with other factors had a significant effect on knowledge sharing, precisely sector factor (public vs private), and Heisig and Kannan (2020) noticed gender differences when different levels of education were considered. Among aspects impacting knowledge sharing among individuals, may be gender, personality, role, KM activity, behavior, and cognition (Heisig and Kannan, 2020). It shows that gender does not impact the system individually, but rather in coexistence with other factors.

One such factors is the role (or position) in an organizational structure. There is interesting evidence on how women managers are more motivated to share knowledge among internal and external stakeholders (Sheerin et al., 2020), and how their stronger (than men's) social connections impact their engagement in external knowledge management (Tonnessen et al., 2021). Paoloni and Lombardi (2022) state that greater diversity on the board of directors could improve the knowledge-sharing system. For this reason, we are especially interested in researching the moderating effect of gender and position on knowledge-sharing and reconfiguring dynamic capability (fig. 1). Recently, Kucharska and Karwowska (2024) proved that explicit and tacit knowledge-sharing impacts the 'reconfiguring' component of dynamic capability (Jantunen et al., 2018; Teece, 2007). Kucharska (2024) and Kucharska and Kopytko (2024) showed that gender factors that influence power are often related to position. Therefore, taking into consideration all the above, the following hypotheses were developed:

H1: Gender moderated by position does moderate the relationship between explicit knowledge sharing and reconfiguring dynamic capability (moderated moderation is expected).

H2: Gender moderated by position does moderate the relationship between tacit knowledge sharing and reconfiguring dynamic capability (moderated moderation is expected).

Figure 1 below visualizes the explored relations.

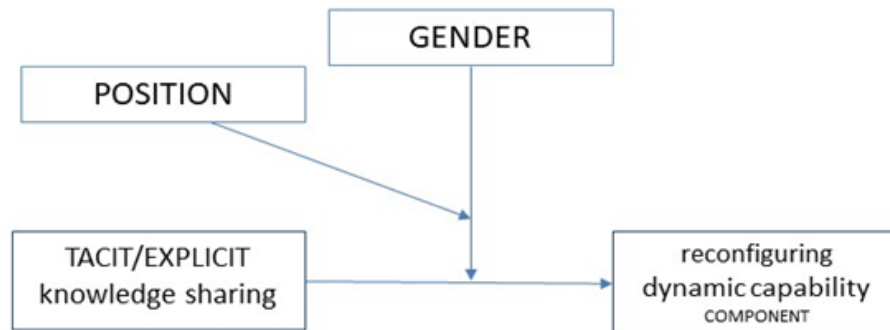


Figure 1: The moderating effect of gender and position on knowledge sharing and reconfiguring dynamic capability

3. Method

This study is based on a survey targeted at Polish knowledge workers (495 cases). Data collection took place in March 2023 using the computer-assisted web interviewing method. Classified respondents declared their 'knowledge worker' status as persons whose work input and output is knowledge. Next, they referred to statements measuring constructs of the interest using a 7-point Likert scale, which was transformed to composite variables for this particular study and method of data analysis purpose. Collected data were next analyzed using OLS regression (SPSS PROCESS software ver. 3.4; Hayes, 2018). Scales measuring particular constructs were adapted from the following sources: tacit and explicit knowledge sharing (Kucharska and Erickson) and dynamic capability 'reconfiguration' component (Jantunen et al., 2018, after Teece, 2007).

The sample structure included 247 specialists and 249 managers, 251 women and 249 men working mostly in private (77%) companies in different sectors. Micro (14%), small (28%), medium (31%), and large companies (26%) were almost equally represented. Measures quality was conducted based on implemented construct measurement consistency tests: the average of variance extracted (AVE), composite reliability (CR), and Cronbach's alpha. AVE exceeded 0.57 for all constructs, which was acceptable (Hair et al., 2017). Cronbach's alpha test was used to confirm the consistency of the construct measurement model. The alpha coefficient was greater than 0.89 for all constructs, which was adequate (Hair et al., 2017, p.112). The CR was greater than 0.80 for all loadings, which was more than the required minimum of 0.7 (Hair et al., 2017).

4. Results

Explicit knowledge sharing and reconfiguring dynamic capability analyzed per gender and position based on this sample did not expose a significant result (H1). The tacit knowledge sharing and reconfiguring dynamic capability analyzed per gender and position based on this sample – opposite (H2). Figure 2 and 'model summary' expose the details of the results obtained.

The results showed that gender does not moderate the relationship between tacit knowledge sharing and dynamic capability – reconfiguring as long as the 'position' factor is not included in the analysis. After the 'position' factor inclusion (moderated moderation analysis), it is visible that for specialist women and men, the explored relation is equally insignificant. But, for a manager position, gender matters for the reconfiguring dynamic capability (DCR) building in the organization, thanks to tacit knowledge sharing (TKS). The results show that female managers support DCR in the organization even if TKS does not support their efforts. If supported, their positive influence on DCR grows but not as fast as observed for men with lower starting skills. In other words, male managers better support organizational DCR if others support them.

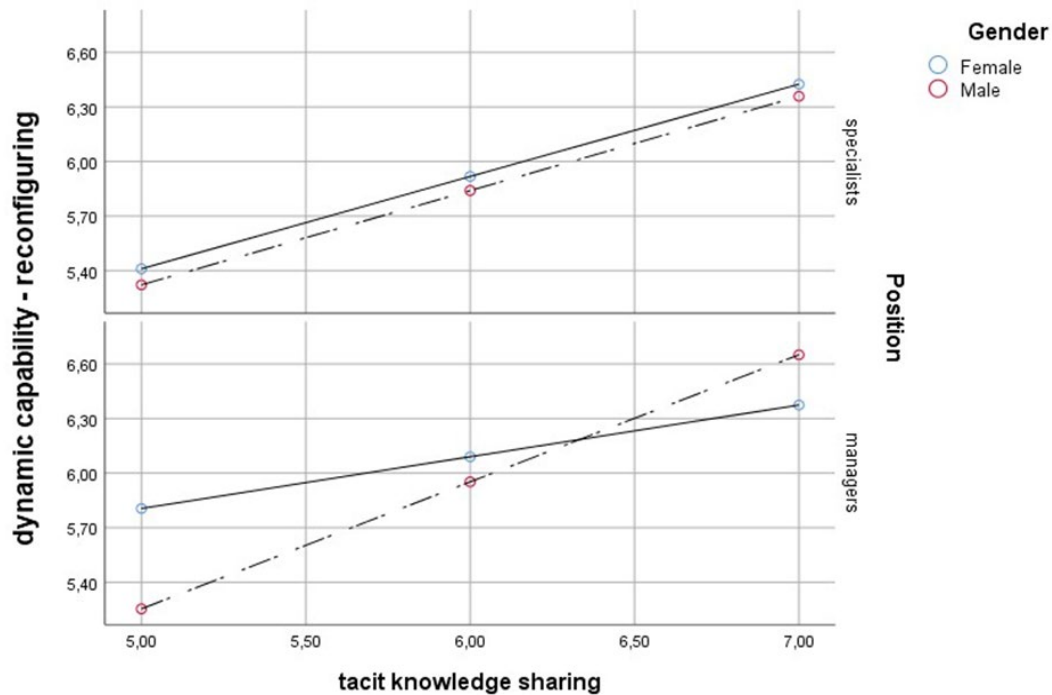


Figure 2: Tacit knowledge sharing and reconfiguring dynamic capability analyzed per gender and position

4.1 Model Summary

Sample Size: 495, OUTCOME VARIABLE: DCR						
	R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2
	,5552	,3082	,8709	30,9935	7,0000	487,0000
p						
						,0000
Model	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	-,9770	2,1086	-,4633	,6433	-5,1201	3,1661
TKS	1,1232	,3583	3,1348	,0018	,4192	1,8273
Gender	2,1378	1,1405	1,5441	,0518	-,2960	4,9716
Int_1	-,3925	,2293	-1,7120	,0875	-,8430	,0580
Position	3,9917	1,3938	2,8639	,0044	1,2531	6,7303
Int_2	-,6265	,2329	-2,6901	,0074	-1,0841	-,1689
Int_3	-2,4805	,8788	-2,8226	,0050	-4,2072	-,7538
Int_4	,4034	,1482	2,7214	,0067	,1121	,6946
Product terms key:						
Int_1 :	TKS	x	Gender			
Int_2 :	TKS	x	Position			
Int_3 :	Gender	x	Position			
Int_4 :	TKS	x	Gender x	Position		
Test(s) of highest order unconditional interaction(s):						
	R2-chng	F	df1	df2	p	
X*W*Z	,0105	7,4060	1,0000	487,0000	,0067	

Focal predict: TKS (X)						
Mod var: Gender (W)						
Mod var: Position (Z)						
Test of conditional X*W interaction at value(s) of Z:						
Position	Effect	F	df1	df2	p	
1,0000	,0109	,0116	1,0000	487,0000	,9144	
2,0000	,4142	14,5758	1,0000	487,0000	,0002	
Conditional effects of the focal predictor at values of the moderator(s):						
Gender	Position	Effect	se	t	p	LLCI ULCI
1,0000	1,0000	,5076	,0696	7,2966	,0000	,3709 ,6443
1,0000	2,0000	,2845	,0769	3,6982	,0002	,1333 ,4356
2,0000	1,0000	,5185	,0732	7,0828	,0000	,3746 ,6623
2,0000	2,0000	,6987	,0765	9,1308	,0000	,5483 ,8490
***** ANALYSIS NOTES AND ERRORS *****						
Level of confidence for all confidence intervals in output:						
95,0000						

Figure 3

Note: 1-female 2- male 1- specialist 2-manager; insignificant results are bolded

5. Discussion

Our research findings indicate that women who are supported better support others regarding knowledge sharing. Those results enrich previous research findings as an important voice in the discussion on the role of gender and position in KS and DCR processes.

Till today, some researchers have not found a link between gender diversity and knowledge sharing, rather indicating the moderating effect of age or regional diversity (Li et al., 2022). Others show that the biological sex of employees moderates the impact of managers' inclusive leadership on knowledge-sharing behavior (Morinaga et al., 2023). Inclusive leadership impacts knowledge-donating practices in groups with higher biological-sex diversity and does not affect groups with lower biological-sex diversity (Morinaga et al. 2023). Our findings support the latter part.

Still, one may ask a question: how do organizations support women so they can support others and facilitate the KS and DCR practices? Taking into consideration our research findings, inclusive leadership is one of the key concepts to apply in organizations. Nembhard and Edmondson (2006) characterized inclusive leaders as those who demonstrate openness, accessibility, and willingness to interact with subordinates (Carmeli et al., 2010). This idea was conceptualized by Randel et al. (2018) as a combination of leadership behaviors that make the team members feel they belong to their team and foster their creativity (Mansoor et al., 2021; Ye et al., 2019). Those behaviors include providing support, ensuring justice and equal opportunities, encouraging diverse contributions and participation in decision-making (Al-Atwi and Al-Hassani, 2021; Randel et al., 2018), while promoting team members' uniqueness without changing their key identities (Randel et al., 2018; Nguyen et al., 2022). It suggests that welcoming and supporting women on higher organizational levels and celebrating their uniqueness is beneficial for the companies.

Randel et al. (2018) argued that inclusive leadership trickles down: the supervisor's behavior encourages similar behavior among team members, so they support and include their colleagues. Similarly, other researchers observed that "when a leader shows inclusiveness, team members who feel psychologically attached to a team are more likely to exchange their knowledge with each other, which further influences team performance" (Yoo et al., 2022). It is also evident in our research findings.

6. Limitation, Implications and Further Studies Suggestions

The key limitation of this research is that it is based on data collected in only one country. Still, more studies is needed to understand the role of gender and position in KS and DCR. Experts gather that the gender aspect is a relevant topic of study in the future (Heisig, 2015). Our findings as well as other recent works in the majority show that gender does matter regarding knowledge sharing but more research is needed to contribute more substantial evidence to these first initial results and avoid "the risk of replicating or overemphasizing the influence of gender" (Heisig and Kannan, 2020). One of the interesting research directions inspired by the results of this study is why women lose the motivation to support changes when become managers. There are some hypothetical assumptions: it might be that since women worked so hard to earn their managerial positions, they want to secure them and avoid any risks connected to changes. Women managers' lower willingness to support changes may be also caused by their lower level of self-confidence. However, the reasons may be quite different thus solving this issue requires further studies. In this study we also have not considered how stereotypes and expectations related to gender affect the knowledge-sharing experiences in organizations, which may be another interesting research focus (Miralles-Vazquez and McGaughey, 2015). Researchers warn that expertise is often regarded as gendered (Azocar and Marx Ferree, 2015), meaning that stereotypes and gendered expectations about role behavior affect how knowledge is created and distributed across the organization (Heisig and Kannan, 2020). Consequently, managers, leaders, and all employees should be aware that gender stereotypes are deeply rooted in society till these times (Haines et al., 2016) so they can self-reflect on their performance. While supporting women leaders in the workplace, organizations may then support their uniqueness and cease the prejudices, rather than nourishing general roles assigned to their gender. It will benefit both organizations and their women employees.

7. Conclusion

The results showed that gender does not moderate the relationship between tacit knowledge sharing and dynamic capability – reconfiguring as long as the 'position' factor is not included in the analysis. After the 'position' factor inclusion (moderated moderation analysis), it is visible that for a manager position, gender

matters for reconfiguring dynamic capability (DCR) building in the organization, thanks to tacit knowledge sharing (TKS). Results showed that the more intensive tacit knowledge sharing in the organization, the more intensively managers support organizational changes. However, this relationship is more robust for male managers than females. This relationship is as strong as that of male managers for male and female specialists. So, when holding managerial positions, women lose motivation to support changes. The question that arises is "why"? There are some hypothetical assumptions: it might be that since women worked so hard to earn their managerial positions, they want to secure them and avoid any risks connected to changes. Women managers' lower willingness to support changes may be also caused by their lower level of self-confidence. However, the reasons may be quite different thus and solving this issue requires further studies.

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