Governing knowledge sharing behavior in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan.

Introduction:

It is commonly recognized that effective knowledge management is the key to sustained competitive advantage (Alavi and Leidner, 1999). In addition, knowledge sharing, as an important component of knowledge management, is a critical tool for knowledge creation, organizational learning, and performance achievement (Bartol and Srivastava, 2002). However, this behavior does not happen on its own, since it is dependent on the willingness of individuals to identify the knowledge they possess and to share it when required (Nonaka, 1994). In addition, particular unique features of knowledge (such as its largely personal and tacit nature) may impose some kind of barriers for this process (Kogut and Zander, 1993, Szulanski, 1996). In response to these challenges, scholars have made efforts to develop a range of governance mechanisms to promote knowledge-sharing behavior. Generally speaking, knowledge governance is an organizational mechanism through which knowledge-related practices may be encouraged (Foss and Mahoney, 2010). In particular, knowledge governance is the deployment of specific governance mechanisms (decision rights, routines, rewards, modes of communication and so on that can be combined in multiple ways across governance structure) that can influence the processes of exchange, transfer, and sharing of knowledge within organizations (Grandori, 1997, Pemsel et al., 2014).

However, there is still a lack of studies investigating the relationship between knowledge governance and knowledge sharing. Despite being critical to organizational effectiveness, this area remains under-researched (Chen and Fong, 2012, Müller et al., 2014, Andersson et al., 2015, Pemsel et al., 2016). Especially, how different governance mechanisms (decision rights, routines, rewards, modes of communication and so on that can be combined in multiple ways across governance structure) can influence knowledge related outcomes through facilitating individual knowledge sharing behavior is still a field of active exploration (Grandori, 2013, Mueller, 2015). More systematic research is needed to explore how micro- and macro-level processes are interrelated (Pemsel et al., 2014). It would be valuable to integrate the micro level with the macro level approach (Molina-Azorín, 2014).

A further point to be considered is the indirect effect of knowledge governance mechanisms (KGMs) on knowledge sharing through different variables. Particularly, how different variables may mediate this link. Several previous studies have analyzed how the guanxi effect (Cao and Xiang, 2013), opportunity and motivation (Huang et al., 2013), trust (Wang et al., 2012) and external motivation/intrinsic motivation (Wang et al., 2015) mediate these relationships. However, relatively less research has examined the relationship between KGMs and knowledge sharing through mediating effect of organizational commitment dimensions (Cao and Xiang, 2013, Hashim and Tan, 2015). Consequently, the purpose of this paper is to examine the mediating effect of affective commitment on the relationships of formal and informal KGMs and knowledge sharing behavior. The research results can contribute to a better understanding of governance practices, which may effectively facilitate intra-organizational knowledge sharing behavior of individuals in a post-Soviet
context, such as in Kazakhstan. From a practical point of view, detailed information about the governance mechanisms enables executives to establish more functional knowledge management strategies in organizations. Moreover, this study can be significant in terms of offering important implications for employees and organizations that in turn would improve the understanding of a firm’s best practices of knowledge governance.

Post-Soviet Kazakhstani: context

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, Kazakhstan entered a transitional period, which can be characterized as a range of radical socio-economic reforms. Recently, Kazakhstan has made considerable progress in transforming its planned economy to a market economy. Despite these economic changes, contemporary Kazakhstani organizations face many challenges in implementing good governance practices. In particular, such features of post-Soviet Kazakhstani organizational culture as rigid vertical structures, the dominance of a “no-trust” environment, a tendency to suspicion, large power distance, short-term orientation (Minbaeva and Muratbekova-Touron, 2013) and “knowledge sharing hostility” (Michailova and Husted, 2003) can be considered as obstacles to knowledge management. Furthermore, managers in emerging economies often experience strong employee resistance to acquiring and sharing knowledge within the firm (Hsu, 2006). Accordingly, there is a unique opportunity to examine how individuals share their knowledge with others within the post-Soviet Kazakhstani context. Consequently, identifying effective KGMs will help companies to create a facilitative work environment.

Literature Review

Knowledge governance mechanisms

According to Foss (2007) knowledge governance approach (KGA) can be characterized as a newly emerging approach that intersects with different disciplines such as knowledge management (Foss et al., 2010), organization studies (Huang et al., 2013), strategy (Molina-Azorin, 2014), human resource management (Minbaeva et al., 2012) and project management (Pemsel et al., 2014). KGA assumes that particular governance mechanisms should be used in order to realize the full potential of knowledge as a strategic resource (Foss and Minbaeva, 2009). For instance, KGA examines how a specific mix of governance mechanisms (e.g., decision rights, routines, rewards, modes of communication) can be combined in order to influence knowledge related processes within an organization. Therefore, the proposed knowledge governance mechanisms (KGMs) have been considered as an important antecedent of knowledge related processes (Foss, 2013). Moreover, different KGMs might range from group-based work structures (Sidorova and Michailova, 2010), commitment-based mechanisms (Husted et al., 2012), human resource practices (Foss et al., 2014), socialization mechanisms (Wang et al., 2014), coordination mechanisms
(Pezzillo Iacono et al., 2014), institutionalized socialization practices (de Araújo Burcharth and Fosfuri, 2015), hierarchical governance tools (Andersson et al., 2015), formal and informal practices (Mueller, 2015), and knowledge governance strategies in project based organizations (Pemsel et al., 2016), etc.

All of these mechanisms are being implemented to influence the “conditions of individual actions’ and by that affecting the corresponding ‘individual actions’” i.e., micro-to-micro (Foss, 2007). In applying the KGA, in Figure 1 we introduce KGM’s, and the employees’ perceptions of these mechanisms. Figure 1 propose that the aggregated perceptions of these KGMs presumed to constitute perceived affective commitment. Moreover, the figure depicts that perceived affective commitment facilitates knowledge sharing behavior (KSB) among employees.

**Figure 1. KGA derived theoretical logic**

In the knowledge management literature, researchers have exhaustively tried to define knowledge governance from various theoretical, conceptual and empirical perspectives. The majority of knowledge management research is mainly based on a knowledge-based view. However, knowledge governance is a new concept in the social field, which contributes to the better understanding of knowledge management process. A review of the recent progress in this field reveals that both formal and informal KGMs are efficient tools to encourage intra-firm knowledge sharing. In this study formal KGMs refer to a set of practices (e.g., cross-functional teams, co-location and regularly scheduled meetings) scheduled within the hierarchical structure of an organization in order to strengthen the communication among organizational members that may lead to achieving a common language and values, which in turn are expected to positively affect knowledge sharing behavior. Thus, it is sensible to argue that formal KGMs aim to facilitate intra-firm relational capital by eliminating the barriers to inter-personal communication and trust (Cousins et al., 2006).
Like formal KGMs, informal KGMs refer to managerial practices designed to empower interpersonal relationships (e.g., friendship, trust, and sense of community), but the difference between the two is that such practices are not implemented within the hierarchical structure of an organization in informal KGM’s. More specifically, informal KGMs are like stimulating tools (e.g., social events, workshops, off-site meetings, and communication guidelines), which facilitate social interactions among organizational members to promote knowledge sharing and skill building (Lawson et al., 2009). Management’s informal events aim to enhance mutual respect and trust by giving employees more time and opportunities to build relationships, social capital and thus enhance knowledge sharing (Cousins, 2002). Since management can use both formal and informal KGMs to intensify knowledge sharing behavior among the organizational members, we hypothesize the following:

**H1. Formal/Informal knowledge governance mechanisms have a positive impact on individual knowledge sharing.**

**Affective commitment and knowledge sharing behavior**

Organizational commitment is usually defined as a psychological state that binds an employee to his/her organization. Following a study by Meyer and Allen (1991), the organizational commitment can be divided into three groups; affective (wish), normative (obligation) and continuance (need). Individuals who are committed to their organizations are more motivated to express their willingness to do more than what is formally expected (Mowday et al., 1979) of them over time (Van Steenbergen and Ellemers, 2009).

In this sense, other studies indicated that organizational commitment is a key factor for in-role job performance and pro-social behaviors (Wong et al., 2002). As a result, highly committed employees are more likely to benefit the organization than less committed ones. In this paper, affective commitment was chosen because it has the most positive consequences for job-related performance (Meyer et al., 2002, Allen and Meyer, 2000). This attitude helps employees to overcome natural resistance to share their knowledge. Affective commitment is particularly important for knowledge-driven economies and knowledge-based companies. It may be explained by the fact that creating, utilizing and storing knowledge in an organization is to some degree dependent on commitment level of employees (Robertson and O’Malley Hammersley, 2000). Furthermore, when employees leave the company they take their knowledge and experience with them. Affective commitment refers to ‘an affective or emotional attachment to the organization such that the strongly committed individual identifies with, is involved in, and enjoys being a member of the organization’ (Allen and Meyer, 1990). Employees’ emotional bond to their organization is considered to be a key driving force of pro-social (O’Reilly and Chatman, 1986) extra-role (Meyer et al., 2002) and organizational citizenship behaviors (Yang, 2012).
A number of studies have reported that affective commitment is a critical determinant of KSB (Van den Hooff and de Leeuw van Weenen, 2004, Camelo-Ordaz et al., 2011, Matzler et al., 2011, Swart et al., 2014). Employees who have strong emotional attachment to their organization are more likely to share knowledge with others. Namely, employees who are strongly committed to their organization may attach substantial importance to their organizational membership and to their relationship with other members, which in turn increases the probability that employees will share their knowledge with others. In developing our hypothesis, we follow the same reasoning. Consequently, we propose that:

**H2. Affective commitment has positive effect on individual knowledge sharing**

**Governance mechanisms, affective commitment and knowledge sharing behavior**

In the knowledge governance literature, it has been argued that KGMs not only exert their influence directly on knowledge sharing (Foss et al., 2010, Gooderham et al., 2011), but also may affect those conditions, which are necessary for employees to be willing to share their knowledge. Several studies have emphasized the role of organizational commitment as a mechanism through which different organizational factors influence employees’ outcomes. According to Benkhoff (1997), organizational commitment mediates the relationship between HRM practices and such work outcomes as employee satisfaction and intention to quit. In a similar vein, research by Lee and Bruvold (2003) found that two components of organizational commitment mediate the link between investment in employee development and employees’ intention to leave. According to these authors, investment in employees’ development motivates employees to be more loyal to their organizations, which in turn decreases their intention to leave their jobs. Equally, high-involvement HR practices also have effect on pro-social behavior through promoting organizational commitment (Paré and Tremblay, 2004). More recent studies also support the notion that organizational commitment plays an important mediating role in the relationship between organizational mechanisms and knowledge sharing. (Yang, 2012, Hashim and Tan, 2015). Moreover, different researchers have also used this mediating link to examine human behavior within organizations (Huang et al., 2013).

One broad group of KGMs recognized to be effective in promoting knowledge sharing behavior involves socialization mechanisms (Lawson et al., 2009). Implementation of socialization mechanisms helps to build trust relationships between employee and employer. For instance, implementation of socialization mechanisms may signal to employees that they are valuable (Cousins et al., 2006), which in turn may lead to a higher sense of organizational belongingness. Such socialization mechanisms as team group meetings, cross-functional teams, and joint workshops are likely to be perceived by employees as a clear signal of organizational support, trust and commitment toward them (Lawson et al., 2009). These practices will help to establish a mutually beneficial employer-employee relationship, which may further motivate employees to display extra-role behaviors (Gooderham et al., 2011, Cao and Xiang, 2013, Zhang et al., 2014).
Previous studies have also proved that formal and informal KGMs can influence knowledge sharing behavior through different organizational variables such as social capital (Zhang et al., 2014, Gooderham et al., 2011), guanxi effect (Cao and Yang, 2012), motivation and opportunity (Huang et al., 2013), altruism (Wang and Hou, 2015), etc. Formal KGMs (mainly comprises such socialization practices as cross-functional teams, matrix structure reporting and joint-workshops) encourage the flow of knowledge among organizational members and help to develop a culture of cooperation and collaboration (Cousins et al., 2006). Similarly, informal KGMs call for the following socialization mechanisms as communication guidelines, regular meetings, and social events, both of which enhance mutual trust in the organization to facilitate knowledge transfer (Lawson et al., 2009). To sum up, informal/formal KGMs can be used to manage knowledge sharing behavior through creating a strong culture of interpersonal trust, collaboration, shared responsibility and openness to others’ ideas (Cao and Yang, 2012).

Based on the arguments mentioned above, it can be concluded that formal/informal KGMs do influence the affective commitment. Moreover, affective commitment is a key component of organizational identification which should be seen a link between KGMs and knowledge sharing. Therefore, we propose the following hypotheses:

**H3. Formal/Informal knowledge governance mechanisms have positive effect on affective commitment**

**H4. The affective commitment mediates the relationship between Formal/Informal knowledge governance mechanisms and knowledge sharing behavior.**

**Research methodology:**

In this study, survey method was used to test the research model. Survey data were collected using a single respondent approach which is based on the notion that quality of information from key informants is sufficiently rich for building theories that address complex organizational phenomena (Heide and John, 1990).

**Data Collection**

Employees of large industrial companies operating in Kazakhstan made up the target population of this study. The list of the firms was obtained from the *National Business Journal*, a journal which regularly publishes the “Top 500” business enterprises according to their market capitalization or turnover. Sampling framework consisted of those Top 500 business enterprises and then stratified random sampling method was conducted to identify the candidate firms. The stratified random sampling was applied in order to obtain a representative number of manufacturing and service firms in Kazakhstan. Selected
companies exhibit a wide range of sectors and they were located in different parts of Kazakhstan to avoid biased selection.

In the end, 200 companies are chosen to be included in the sample. The business enterprises were selected based on their contribution to gross domestic product (GDP). The total revenue of these companies is about 60% of the Kazakhstan's GDP.

The final version of the survey was sent to representatives of the companies via email as a hyperlink. In order to increase the response rate, the participants were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality. In addition, participants were reminded by follow-up emails and telephone calls. Of the 700 questionnaires that were sent out, 391 were returned, i.e. an almost 56% response rate. However, 25 of returned questionnaires were not usable because of incomplete data or invalid response. The respondents were from 61 companies operating in Kazakhstan, among them, 39% were local companies while the remaining, 61% were foreign owned or joint-ventures. Those 61 companies represented a wide range of industry groups: manufacturing, IT industry, commerce, education, tourism, entertainment, publishing, telecommunication, services, finance and banking, logistics and transportation. In general, the main respondents to this survey were employees and middle managers. As a whole, 54% of respondents were employees, 31% were middle managers and 15% were top managers. The working experience of participants ranged from less than one year to more than 20 years. The sample was comprised of 51% of females and 49% males; the majority of respondents were 20 – 29 years old, a further 26% were 30 – 40 years old, and while 13% were over 40. Of the sample, 67% had an undergraduate degree, 31% had a graduate degree, and 2% held a PhD.

Measurement

In this work, the items of the questionnaire were taken from previously validated instruments and adopted to the current study context. The back-translation technique as suggested by Brislin (1970) was used to translate the measures of the study into the Russian language, and then back-translated into English to ensure equivalence of meaning. Five-point Likert scales ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” were used to measure all variables, except demographic characteristics. Our research dimensions included formal KGMs, informal KGMs, affective commitment and knowledge sharing behavior. Knowledge governance mechanism scales included formal and informal KGM’s. Formal KGMs measures the strength of formal organizational mechanisms (e.g., cross-functional teams, co-location, and regularly scheduled meetings) used by the companies to facilitate knowledge sharing. Informal KGMs measure the strength of informal organizational mechanisms (e.g., social events, workshops, off-site meetings, and communication guidelines), designed and implemented by the firms to promote knowledge sharing. The formal/informal KGMs was measured using scale items developed by (Lawson et al., 2009, Cousins et al., 2006). Affective commitment refers to one’s emotional attachment to, and psychological identification with the organization.
Affective commitment was measured using items from Allen and Meyer (1990) scale. Knowledge sharing behavior refers to the degree to which an individual actually shares knowledge with others. The item scale of knowledge sharing behavior was adopted from previous studies (Bock et al., 2005, Bock and Kim, 2002), to the context of this investigation. While Bock et al. (2005) measured individuals' intention to share knowledge, we focused on their actual KSB. Therefore, slight modifications were made to the items in the scale so that they represented individuals' actual KSB. For this purpose, the words “I will” or “I intend” in the original items were replaced with “I often”. In order to evaluate the reliability of the questionnaire, a pilot study was administered to 30 volunteers from different companies spread across Kazakhstan. Among these five questionnaires were invalid, leaving a total of 25 valid questionnaires. The result of this pilot test was used to further refine the questionnaire and to develop the instrument for the final survey. Along with this, the reliability analysis was applied to identify how well the items grouped were positively correlated to one another. Several items were dropped from the initial instrument due to their negative contribution to coefficient alpha and low item-to-total correlations (Nunnally, 1978).

Control Variable

Previous research revealed that age, gender, and tenure are important determinants of knowledge sharing behavior (Bartol et al., 2009). We also consider these three demographic factors as control variables in order to consider the potential effects of demographic factors on employees’ knowledge sharing behaviors. The proposed research model is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Theoretical framework and conceptual model
Data Analysis and Results

The hypothesized model is shown in Figure 2 was tested using structural equation modelling (SEM) approach which was supported by AMOS 18.0. SEM is a multivariate approach that designed specifically for analyzing causal models. In our study, SEM was used to develop both the measurement model and the structural model. The measurement model was assessed using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to examine whether the constructs have satisfactory reliability and validity. The structural model was also utilized to examine the strength and direction of the relationship between the theoretical constructs.

To assess construct validity, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed. The discriminant validity is the degree to which measures of different concepts are distinct. It was analyzed by using confirmation factor analysis (CFA) via AMOS 18.0. To evaluate the discriminant validity, Fornell and Larcker (1981) recommended that the root of one construct’s AVE should be greater than the correlation coefficient in the corresponding columns and rows. In Table 1 the construct’s discriminant validity is satisfactory as well. In addition, in order to assess convergent validity of the measures, the average variance extracted (AVE) exceeded the variance due to measurement error for the construct (i.e., should exceed 0.5) (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). As shown in Table 1, all AVE were greater than the recommended level, thus supporting convergent validity. Finally, internal consistency was estimated by calculating Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for each scale. The Cronbach alphas of the four constructs are above 0.70, which is considered supportive of internal consistency (Hair et al., 2006). Table 3, reports means, standard deviation and correlations between variables. The order of the means, from high to low, was KGMs, knowledge sharing and affective commitment. Furthermore, the relationships of three variables are inter-correlated positively and significantly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1.</th>
<th>Cronbach Alpha</th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>AVE</th>
<th>MSV</th>
<th>ASV</th>
<th>KSB</th>
<th>Formal / Informal KGMs</th>
<th>AC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge Sharing Behavior</strong></td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.867</td>
<td>0.687</td>
<td>0.417</td>
<td>0.209</td>
<td>0.829</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Formal/Informal KGMs</strong></td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.863</td>
<td>0.557</td>
<td>0.417</td>
<td>0.209</td>
<td>0.646</td>
<td>0.746</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Affective Commitment</strong></td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.817</td>
<td>0.601</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>0.027</td>
<td>0.775</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Next, a second-order CFA was performed to investigate whether formal and informal KGMs represent one higher-order construct. Path weights and overall fit to the data was then assessed using AMOS-based structural equation modeling (SEM). Results reported in Figure 3 were promising, providing a good fit to the data $\chi^2/df = 2.37; p < 0.001; \text{CFI}= 0.95; \text{GFI} = 0.96; \text{AGFI} = 0.94; \text{NFI} = 0.92$ and $\text{RMSEA} = 0.06$. and provided adequate support for the existence of the ‘second-order construct’ of formal and informal KGM’s. Consequently, this higher order KGMs variable was included into the research model.

**Figure 3. Second Order CFA.**

The fitness measure for the measurement models are presented in Table 2. (the ratio between $\chi^2$ and the degree of freedom = $\chi^2$/d.f.), GFI (goodness-of-fit index), NFI (normalized fit index), AGFI (adjusted goodness-of-fit index), CFI (an incremental fit index of improved NFI) and RMSEA (root-mean-square error of approximation) were used to test the goodness of fit of the suggested model. For a good model fit, it is suggested that the chi-square value normalized by degrees of freedom ($\chi^2$/d.f.) should not exceed 3 (Bentler and Bonett, 1980). Due to sensitivity of chi-square to large sample size, we also rely on Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI) and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). TLI should be greater than 0.95 (Hu and Bentler, 1999) and RMSEA should not exceed 0.8 (Hair et al., 2006). In addition, NFI and CFI should exceed 0.9 to be acceptable (Bentler and Bonett, 1980). Lastly, Scott (1995) recommended that the values of GFI and AGFI should be greater than 0.8 the fit statistics in Table 2 shows that the research model provides a satisfactory fit to the data.
Table 2. Overall fit of models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall fit of models</th>
<th>Recommended Thresholds</th>
<th>Results</th>
<th>Suggested by authors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GFI</td>
<td>&gt;0.8</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>Seyal et al. (2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGFI</td>
<td>&gt;0.8</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>Scott (1995)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NFI</td>
<td>&gt;0.8</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>Bentler and Bonett (1980)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFI</td>
<td>&gt;0.9</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>Bentler and Bonett (1980)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>χ2/d.f.</td>
<td>&lt;3</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>Bentler and Bonett (1980)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMSEA</td>
<td>&lt;0.08</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>Hair et al. (2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TLI</td>
<td>&gt;0.95</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>Hu and Bentler (1999)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Means (M), standard deviation (SD), reliabilities and inter-correlations of study variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. KSB</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. AC</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.528*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Formal/Informal KGMs</td>
<td>4.73</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.392*</td>
<td>0.56*</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *p < 0.05.

Testing the structural model

The structural equation model was analyzed by testing the hypothesized relationships among various constructs, as illustrated in Figure 4. The findings from structural model displayed that KGMs has a positive impact on knowledge sharing behavior (H1, path coefficient of 0.18, p < 0.01). In addition, the results indicated that affective commitment has a direct positive influence on knowledge sharing behavior (H2, path coefficient of 0.44, p < 0.01). Finally, we found a strong positive relationship between KGMs and Affective Commitment (H3, path coefficient of 0.49, p < 0.01). Consequently, hypothesis 1, 2 and 3 were supported by the data. In addition, we found that none of the control variables (age, gender and tenure) were significantly related to knowledge sharing behavior.

Figure 4. Structural model, *p < 0.01.
Mediating role of Affective Commitment

To prove mediation, (Hypothesis 4) several conditions must be held (Baron and Kenny, 1986). First, the independent variable (KGM’s) must affect both mediator (AC) and dependent variable (KSB). Next, the mediator (AC) must affect the dependent variable (KSB). Lastly, when the mediator (AC) is included in the structural model the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable must be non-significant (for full mediation) or significantly diminish (for partial mediation). Based on these conditions, we found support for partial mediation as proposed in Hypothesis 4. Firstly, as seen in Figure 5, formal and informal KGMs have significance influence on AC (path coefficient of 0.49, p < 0.01) and KSB (path coefficient of 0.40, p < 0.01). Secondly, AC has a direct, positive effect on KSB (path coefficient of 0.53, p < 0.01) (Figure 6).

Finally, as seen in Figure 7, formal and informal KGMs had a positive influence on knowledge sharing (path coefficient of 0.18, p < 0.01) and affective commitment (path coefficient of 0.49, p < 0.01), while affective commitment had a positive influence on knowledge sharing behavior (path coefficient of 0.44, p < 0.01) and therefore hypothesis 4 is supported.

Figure 5. Direct effect of KGMs on KSB and AC, *p < 0.01.

Figure 6. Direct effect of AC on KSB, *p < 0.01.

Figure 7. Total effect of KGMs and AC on KSB, *p < 0.01.
Discussion of the findings

This study has examined the impact of KGMs on affective commitment through the data collected from employees of different sectors in Kazakhstan. The research findings showed that formal and informal KGMs do significantly influence knowledge sharing behavior (H1). Furthermore, this study shows that formal and informal KGMs promote employees loyalty, i.e., affective commitment (H3). In addition, it should be noted that affective commitment has a positive influence on knowledge sharing behavior (H2). The findings support the mediating effects of affective commitment in the relationship between formal and informal KGMs and knowledge sharing behavior (H4). In summary, the proposed model goes beyond previous work by providing alternative models of KGMs that might affect affective commitment. Thus, the proposed theoretical model is a useful tool for practitioners to facilitate knowledge sharing behavior among employees.

Theoretical Implications

The results of the study contribute to the knowledge governance literature by examining KGMs that can be deployed by management to facilitate organizational commitment. Identification of key antecedents of knowledge sharing will help top management to better promote this behavior. In addition, the lack of studies in the current literature imposes the necessity to do research at micro-level (Minbaeva et al., 2012). We view this micro-level approach as promising for other researchers, especially those who attempt to influence management practices. Finally, previous knowledge governance studies were mainly based on literature reviews and theoretical frameworks or conceptual models. Clearly, more empirical studies are required in this area Foss et al. (2010) and more recent studies explore this research direction as well (Pemsel et al., 2014, Müller et al., 2014). The findings found that KGMs do not only directly influence knowledge sharing, but that mechanisms also contribute to the creation of the affective commitment necessary in order for these individuals to be willing to overcome their natural resistance to share their knowledge. This paper is useful for bridging the gap between theories and research, by expanding the scope of knowledge governance research to post-Soviet countries. This is particularly so, in the post-Soviet context in which employees’ strong resistance to acquiring and sharing new knowledge has compromised organizational learning capabilities. Moreover, in many post-Soviet countries knowledge management has been considered unimportant, or, when valued, managed ineffectively (May and Stewart, 2013, Ruth C. May, 2011). Therefore, this research offers a good opportunity to extend knowledge management literature to a post-Soviet Kazakhstani context.

Managerial implications

Altogether, the research findings suggest that organizations cannot simply rule or pay for KSB; such behavior can only be encouraged and facilitated (Gibbert and Krause, 2002). Therefore, organizations which attempt to institutionalize KSB must create a
supportive climate (Bock et al., 2005). By identifying the effectiveness of KGMs, this research has contributed to understanding the strategic actions firms can take to build a supportive climate. Moreover, our research revealed that KGMs are effective in enhancing affective commitment and knowledge sharing. Organizations could use formal and informal KGMs in order to increase affective commitment and KSB among employees. KGMs indeed, the suggested knowledge governance model provides a systematic approach for top management to identify and manage employee commitment and KSB in different organizational settings. At the macro-level, through a combination of these formal and informal KGMs, Kazakhstani organizations can develop human capital to achieve their strategic goals.

Finally, building organizational commitment among employees is critical to motivating them to share their knowledge. As a matter of fact, employees’ intrinsic motivation to share knowledge and affective commitment should be facilitated by establishing an appropriate KGMs.

Limitations

This research has several limitations that should be mentioned. First, the scope of the research is limited to the Kazakhstani context. Future research could use longitudinal data to determine whether KGMs have a long-term impact on affective commitment. All surveys were based on a single respondent approach with a lack of multilevel or contextual organizational elements. Another potential limitation is the reliance on self-reported questionnaire data, might cause common method bias. Future studies may reduce the possibility of common method bias by collecting data from different sources.

Finally, the authors acknowledge the shortcomings of using perceptual instruments to measure all variables. Although the authors have argued for the suitability of perceptual data in studies of individual human behavior, it would be useful to combine perceptual data with more objective indicators in order to develop more elaborate and reliable measures in the future.

References:


