ความแตกต่างทางเพศที่มีผลต่อการรับรู้เนื้อหาและแหล่งข้อมูลข่าวสารในกระบวนการปรับตัวในองค์การ

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PERCEIVED CONTENTS AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION IN "LEARNING-THE-ROPE" PROCESS AMONG GENDERS OF EMPLOYEES IN ORGANIZATION

พรพรหม ชมงาม*

Pornprom Chomngam*

* ผู้ช่วยศาสตราจารย์และปริญญาเอก ประจำภาควิชาการประชาสัมพันธ์ คณะนิเทศศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยกรุงเทพ

* Assistant Professor, Ph.D., Public Relations Department, School of Communication Arts, Bangkok University

* Email: pornprom.c@bu.ac.th

บทคัดย่อ

       งานวิจัยชิ้นนี้ศึกษาความแตกต่างระหว่างการรับรู้เนื้อหาและแหล่งข้อมูลข่าวสารในกระบวนการเรียนรู้แบบเกลียวเชือก   ระหว่างเพศของพนักงานในองค์การ   โดยกำหนดกลุ่มตัวอย่างเป็นพนักงานประจำจากองค์การธุรกิจเอกชน เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการศึกษาครั้งนี้คือ แบบสอบถาม และใช้ Hotelling T^2 ในการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลทางสถิติ ผลการศึกษา พบว่า สมมติฐานได้รับการสนับสนุน เพศชายมีพฤติกรรมการเสาะแสวงหาเนื้อหาข้อมูลเกี่ยวกับการงาน กฎเกณฑ์และข้อมูลทางสังคมมากกว่าเพศหญิงในระดับสูงอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติ ทั้งเพศชายและเพศหญิงมีการรับรู้ข้อมูลที่เกี่ยวข้องกับองค์การ และการเมืองในองค์การไม่แตกต่างกันอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติ สำหรับแหล่งข้อมูลเพศชายเลือกที่จะปรึกษาหัวหน้างานและเพื่อนร่วมงานให้ได้มาซึ่งข้อมูล มากกว่าเพศหญิง และไม่มีความแตกต่างกันอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติระหว่างเพศกับสื่อและบุคคลภายนอก

คำสำคัญ: การสื่อสารในองค์การ กระบวนการเรียนรู้แบบเกลียวเชือก

Abstract

       This research examined the difference between perceived content and sources of information in "learning-the-rope" process among genders of employees in the business sector. Participants in the study were permanent employees at business organization. Questionnaires were administered to all the permanent employees to obtain the data for this study. Hotelling T^2 was used to analyze the data. Support was found for this hypothesis. Male reported significantly higher levels of information seeking behavior than female with respect to job, normative, and social information. No significant differences are observed with respect to organizational and political information. Male reported preferring to consult superiors and co-workers more than female, while no significant differences are observed with respect to outsiders and media.

Keywords: Organizational Communication, Learning-the-Rope Process

Introduction

There is usually very little understanding by either the organization or the employee of the need to learn the culture of the organization (Van Maanen, 1977a). An organization is more than a collection of roles positioned on an organization chart. Organizations have personalities of sorts, often referred to as the organizational culture. "How we do things and what matters around here" are conveyed by the organization's culture. When employees are "learning-the-rope" process, they are, in part, learning the culture. Employees need situation or culture-specific interpretation schemes in order to make sense of and appropriate actions. They need a map of territory, so to speak, that is sufficiently consonant with the maps that insiders carry and by which members enact the territory (Weick, 1979). Actually the employee lace of knowledge of information contents and they have any idea whom to consult the process.

During the past several years, there has been growing interest in how employees obtain information during "learning-the-rope" process. Research has found that effective information acquisition is related to "learning-the-rope" process outcomes such as satisfaction, commitment and retention. These findings notwithstanding, the existing research on employee information acquisition leaves many questions unanswered. This is because the issue of information acquisition has been approached from several different frameworks, such that there is not a generally accepted typology of the information that newcomers must acquire. Further, researchers have focused almost exclusively on employee information seeking and have paid relatively little attention to the unsolicited information that newcomer receive. Another issue that has been neglected is the perceived usefulness of various contents and sources of information.

This study tries to address the problem of "learning-the-rope" process in the private sector. There might be many problems that employees do not understand and they experience as they try to adjust themselves to an organization. "Learning-the-rope" process in an organization has a major influence on the performance of individuals, and thus effects group and organizational performance as well. Regardless of whether it is consciously planned and managed or whether it occurs informally, "learning-the-rope" process provides employees with considerable information about appropriate roles and behaviors. While few would deny that "learning-the-rope" process is part of organizational life, the specific relationship between the process activities and subsequent employee attitudes not well known. When employees enter an organization they are faced with learning a new culture. They must adjust themselves to the unofficial rules for sorting, labeling, and interpreting experience in the organization. These unwritten rules provide important clues for how to become an effective organizational member (Louis, 1980).

According to Hofstede, societies differ according to the extent to which they impose rigid differentiation in gender roles. When a society makes a sharp division between male and female activities, "the distribution is always such that men take more assertive and dominant roles and women the more service-oriented and caring roles" (Hofstede, 1983, p. 183). Therefore, by masculinity Hofstede refers to the extent to which the dominant societal values are characterized by assertiveness and acquisition of money and things, with a de-emphasis on caring for others. In contrast, femininity refers to societies that emphasize relationships, concern for others, and the overall quality of life. Where femininity dominates, members put human relationship before money and are concerned with the quality of life, presenting the environment, and helping others.

The Objectives of Study

This research examined the difference between perceived content and sources of information in "learning-the-rope" process among genders of employees in organization.

Significance of the study

This study will also provide organizations with more information concerning the effectiveness of contents and sources of information. This study should also provide a way to extend the knowledge of the communication field. Finally the readers of this study will understand more about the important role of information and information sources direct towards employees as part of "learning-the-rope" process.

Literature review

Organization encounter, the encounter or "breaking-in" period of learning-the-rope process is often a traumatic one for the employee. During this phase the recruit's assumption about work, often developed from past job experiences, can be brought into question, and old attitudinal and behavioral work patterns can require reformulation. In other words, the newcomer's cognitive scripts and schemas must be redefined or recalibrated and attribution models created to explain why people behave and think as they do in the new work environment. As Louis (1980) suggests, upon entering the unfamiliar organizational setting the recruit experiences "surprises" (discrepancies) which, in turn, stimulate cognitive "sense-making" processes within the individual. Essentially, in order for the newcomer to locate herself or himself in the time and space of the organization, he or she must "normalize the setting" (Van Maanen, 1975), that is, discover what normal and abnormal behaviors and thinking patterns in the organization are. Thus, during the encounter phrase of "learning-the-rope" process the employee is attempting to cope with an initial agitated state of "mindfulness" by beginning the process of normalizing the work setting (Langer, 1978).

The normalizing or sense-making process is essentially communicative in nature. The employee develops initial interpretation schemas for his or her new work environment primarily from formal and informal communication received from others. Formal role requirements are transmitted primarily by the employee's supervisor and via "official" downward communication source, whereas information or unofficial expectations are learned primarily through interactions with members of the workgroup. However, as has been noted by several researchers (e.g., Graen, 1976; Van Maanen, 1977a; Weiss, 1977), the creation of a particular reality can be "supported by a chorus of co-workers and subordinates, but it is usually defined for one by those in authority" (Van Maanen, 1977a, p. 27) since those sources have the sanction, more so than others, to upset reality.

The encounter phrase of "learning-the-rope" process is a time when employee begins to define, label, and socially map the new work environment. During this juncture the employees begins to realign existing scripts and schemas he or she has built to explain organizational life so that he or she is more congruent with the "reality" of organization. The employee's construction of organizational "reality" is a by-product of his and her personality, past job, experiences and information derived from supervisor, co-workers, and official (typically, media-related) organizational sources (Jablin, 1982).

"Learning-the-rope" Process

      Schein (1968) adds that "learning-the-rope" is the process of being indoctrinated and trained, the process of being taught what is important in an organization (p. 2). Moreover, it should be noted that "Learning-the-rope" is not a temporary process that concludes after the first few months an employee is on the job but, rather, is a continuous process that will "change and evolve as the individual remains longer with the organization" (Porter, Lawler, & Hackman, 1975, p. 161).

      The discussion of "learning-the-rope" process is organized three key themes: 1). Character of "learning-the-rope" process: is the process by which an individual comes to appreciate the value, abilities, expected behaviors, and social knowledge essential for assuming an organizational role and for participating as an organizational member (Brim, 1966, Van Maanen, 1976; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Regardless of an individual's previous experiences, each major passage (Glasser & Strauss, 1977) or role change involves "Learning-the-rope" into the new role and setting. In taking a new role, employee is typically given some time in which to ''get up speed," that is, to master the basics of the job and to perform at or above some minimum level (Becker & Strauss, 1956). The employee must also "learning-the-rope," as socialization is frequently termed by those going through it. "Learning-the-rope" is necessary in each new organizational culture since, by definition, cultures differ between organizations and even between roles within the same organization (Berger & Bradac, 1982; Van Maanen, 1977a). 2). Stage of "learning-the-rope": when beginning work, the individual passes from outsider to employee and enter "learning-the-rope" process. Experience during the process are critical in shaping the individual's long-term orientation to the organization differences between experiences and genders become apparent and contribute to reality shock. (Berlow & Hall, 1966; Van Maamen, 1976). Coping with such differences and "learning-the-rope" of the new setting typically occupy the employee for the encounter stage. 3). Content of "learning-the-rope": the first is role-related learning, and the second is more general appreciation of the organization culture. Ideally, during the process, the employee's role relevant abilities are identified, other's expectation are conveyed and negotiated, and incentives and sanctions are clarified, with the aim of enhancing the individual's motivation to perform.

The perceived usefulness contents and sources of information

      Driving the process is benefits about how useful the information will be for actually reducing uncertainty and anxiety. Therefore, to fully understand employee's information seeking. It is important to understand employee perceptions of the usefulness contents and sources of information. To date, this issue has not been investigated in any depth. A number various content of information have been suggested by theorist and researchers as critical to employees' development of role competencies and relationship with others. There are several existing content of "learning-the-rope" related information: 1). Technical information about how to execute required tasks (Comer, 1991; Morrison, 1993a, 1993b; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992, 2). Referent information about what is required and expected as part of one's job role (Miller & Jablin, 1991; Morrison, 1993a, 1993b; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992, 3). Appraisal information about how others are evaluating one's performance and behavior (Miller & Jablin, 1991; Morrison, 1993a, 1993b, 4). Normative information about the organization's culture (Chao, O'Leary-Kelly, Wolf, Kleing, Gardner, 1994;

Morrison, 1993a, 1993b, 5). Organizational information about the firm's structure, procedures, products/services, and performance (Chao, et al., 1994; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992, 6). Social information about other people's and one's relationships with those people (Comer, 1991; Miller & Jablin, 1991; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992). Political information about the distribution of power within the organization (Chao, et al., 1994; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992).

In the "learning-the-rope" process, employees attempt to seek information from a number of different sources (Jablin, 1987). Within the organization, employees typically turn to role set members (i.e. supervisor, co-workers, and subordinates) or other organization acquaintances (i.e. manager, same or lower level employees affiliated with other department) for information. Supervisors and co-workers have consistently been found to be the most helpful of these information targets (i.e., Falcoine & Wilson, 1988; Louis, Posner, & Powell, 1983; Morrison, 1991, 1993b). This target reliance pattern is expected under conditions of new hire uncertainty.

In an effort to make sense out of their entry experiences, newcomers turn to available information sources. Potential source include (1) official, downward, media related messages from management, (2) members of the new employees' role set (i.e. immediate supervisor, co-workers, and subordinates), (3) other organizational members (i.e. secretaries, acquaintances in different departments), (4) extra-organizational sources (i.e. clients), and (5) the other's reaction (Greller & Herold, 1975; Herold & Parsons, 1985; Jablin, 1982; Louis, Posner & Powell, 1983; Posner & Powell, 1985). According to Katz (1980, p. 95), the "new employees reduce" uncertainty primarily through interpersonal and feedback processes and interaction." As such, new employees' information seeking efforts are likely to be focused on their supervisors and co-workers because the other sources are usually neither equally available nor helpful to new employees. In addition, supervisors are often identified as an important source of socialization because new employees must ultimately gain their approval from role negotiation (Graen, 1976; Jablin, 1979). New employees are also likely to identify supervisors as the chief sources for determining job requirements and consider them more reliable than co-workers as a source for information (Hanser & Muchinsky, 1978).

Hypothesis: Male and female will differ in the content of information they seek and thee sources they consult.

Sample

The sample in this study was obtained through systematic random sampling procedures. The researcher obtained a list of employees from the Personal Department of a private sector and selected 300 employees who had worked no more than 18 months in each department. The private sector considered employees whose length of stay with the sector has been less than 18 months as new employees. The research asked for assistance from Deputy Director of Personal Department of a financial institution, to distribute the questionnaires. The respondents for this study were all considered permanent employees of this private sector.

Data Gathering Instrument

A total 247 usable questionnaires were obtained for a response rate of 82.0%. Questionnaires were administered to all of the permanent employees to collect the data for this research.

The first section of questionnaire is demographic part. The second section focused on information content that employees believe are useful to them in mastering their job and adjust themselves to "learning-the-rope" process into their organization. This section covered seven information contents: job information (technical, referent, and appraisal), normative information, organization information, social information, and political information. The scale ranges from 1 to 5, by which 1 means "not very useful", 2 means "not useful", 3 means "moderately useful", 4 means "useful", and 5 means "very useful." The third section focused on four sources of information: superiors, co-workers, outsider, and media. The scale ranges from 1 to 5, by which 1 means "never", 2 means "seldom", 3 means "sometimes", 4 means "often", and 5 means "always."

Hotelling T^2 were applied to examine two groups of subject on several dependent variables simultaneously, focusing on cases where the variables are correlated and share a common conceptual meaning (Stevens, 1996, p. 451). In this study, a Hotelling T^2 was performed in order to examine gender differences across eleven dependent variables concerning contents and sources of information. The minimum sample size needed for a two group MANOVA, with an estimated moderate effect size of .64 and an alpha level .05 is approximately 100 (Stevens, 1996).

The Results

Hypothesis predicted that male and female differ in the content of information they seek and the sources they consult. A Hotteling T^2 was conducted to test the difference between the two groups of respondents. The results of this analysis provide support for this hypothesis. Male and female reported acquiring different type of information from different sources. The analysis revealed a significant multivariate effect ($F_{(9,237)}$ = 3.751, $\underline{p}<$ .001). Result of the analysis are summarized in Table 1. A summary of means is provided in Table 2.

Table 1 Multivariate Test between Gender and Contents and Sources of Information

Effect		Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Observed Power[a]
INTERCEPT					
Pillai's Trace	2774.050	9.000	237.000	.000	1.000
Wilk's Lambda	2774.050	9.000	237.000	.000	1.000
Hotelling's Trace	2774.050	9.000	237.000	.000	1.000
Roy's Largest Root	2774.050	9.000	237.000	.000	1.000
GENDERS					
Pillai's Trace	3.751	9.000	237.000	.000	1.000
Wilk's Lambda	3.751	9.000	237.000	.000	1.000
Hotelling's Trace	3.751	9.000	237.000	.000	1.000
Roy's Largest Root	3.751	9.000	237.000	.000	1.000

[a]Computed using alpha = .05

Table 2 Means Tables of the difference between Gender and Perceived Contents and Sources of Information

Gender		Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Job	Male	4.2520	.5217	112
	Female	4.0863	.4902	135
	Total	4.1614	.5014	247
Normative	Male	4.0548	.5978	112
	Female	3.7672	.6128	135
	Total	3.8976	.6203	247
Organization	Male	3.9063	.5212	112
	Female	3.8593	.5163	135
	Total	3.8806	.5180	247
Social	Male	4.3010	.6599	112
	Female	4.1280	.6852	135
	Total	4.2065	.6780	247
Political	Male	4.0469	.5970	112
	Female	4.0685	.6315	135
	Total	4.0587	.6170	247
Superior	Male	3.5514	.7719	112
	Female	3.1975	.7213	135
	Total	3.3580	.7638	247
Coworker	Male	3.6048	.6243	112
	Female	3.3983	.6478	135
	Total	3.4920	.6443	247
Outsider	Male	2.6747	.7780	112
	Female	2.5164	.8885	135
	Total	2.5882	.8423	247
Media	Male	1.9139	.7315	112
	Female	1.8153	.6293	135
	Total	1.8600	.6779	247

Note: JOB = Technical, Referent, and Appraisal Information

Table 2 reveals that, with the single exception of political information, male reports seeking more information than female: job (technical, referent, appraisal) information ($\overline{X}_M$ = 4.2520 vs. $\overline{X}_F$ = 4.0863), normative information ($\overline{X}_M$ = 4.0548 vs. $\overline{X}_F$ = 3.7672), social information ($\overline{X}_M$ = 4.3010 vs. $\overline{X}_F$ = 4.1280), and organizational information ($\overline{X}_M$ = 3.9063 vs. $\overline{X}_F$ = 3.8593). With respect to political information female reports marginally more information seeking behavior than males ($\overline{X}_F$ = 4.0685 vs. $\overline{X}_M$ = 3.7672). Male reports acquiring information from all listed sources more than did female: co-workers ($\overline{X}_M$ = 3.6048 vs. $\overline{X}_F$= 3.3983), superiors ($\overline{X}_M$ = 3.35514 vs. $\overline{X}_F$ = 3.1975), outsiders ($\overline{X}_M$ = 2.6747 vs. $\overline{X}_F$ = 2.5164), and media ($\overline{X}_M$ = 1.9139 vs. $\overline{X}_F$ = 1.8153).

The univariate analyses are presented in table 3 indicate that male and female differ significantly in their acquisition of job (technical, referent, appraisal) information ($F_{(1,245)}$ = 6.539, $p < .05$), normative information ($F_{(1,245)}$ = 13.851, $p < .001$), and social information ($F_{(1,245)}$ = 4.034, $p < .05$). Male and female are not significantly different with respect to their acquisition of organizational information ($F_{(1,245)}$ = .503, $p > .05$), and political information ($F_{(1,245)}$ = .075, $p > .05$

For sources of information, male and female report significantly different levels of frequency in approaching superiors $F_{(1,245)}$ = 13.828, $p < .001$) and co-workers ($F_{(1,245)}$ = 6.430, $p < .05$) for information. However, they report similar levels of frequently in approaching media ($F_{(1,245)}$ = 1.295, $p > .05$) and outsiders (friends, customers, and family members) ($F_{(1,245)}$ = 2.174, $p > .05$).

Table 3 Tests of the differences between Gender and Perceived Contents and Sources of Information

Source	Dependent Variable	Df	F	Sig.	Observed Power[a]
Gender	Job	1	6.539	.011	.725
	Normative	1	13.851	.000	.960
	Organization	1	.503	.479	.109
	Social	1	4.034	.046	.516
	Political	1	.075	.784	.059
	Superior	1	13.828	.000	.959
	Coworker	1	6.430	.012	.714
	Outsider	1	2.174	.142	.312
	Media	1	1.295	.256	.205
Error	Job	245			
	Normative	245			
	Organization	245			
	Social	245			
	Political	245			
	Superior	245			
	Coworker	245			
	outsider	245			
	Media	245			

[a]Computed using alpha = .05

Note: JOB = Technical, Referent, and Appraisal Information

Findings and Discussion

This study examined the difference between perceived contents and sources of information in "learning-the-rope" process among genders of employees in organization. The hypothesis predicted that male and female differ in the contents of information they seek and the sources they consult. Support was found for this hypothesis.

Male reported higher levels of information seeking with respect to all topics from all sources than female did. Male reported significantly higher rates of information seeking behavior than females with respect to the following categories of information: job related information, normative information, and social information. No significant differences were observed with respect

to organizational information or political information. With respect to sources of information, male reported a greater likelihood than female to consult superiors and co-worker, while no significant differences were observed with respect to outsiders or media.

In general, male and female might have the same desire to become part of an information network involving superiors and co-workers. Male and female might very well be equally ambitious. (Comer, 1991) However, they might perceived the availability of information and openness of communication channels differently. Male might be more secure in approaching superiors or co-workers at least in part because the Thai culture enables a more open communication on their part. Thus, it is possible that male can approach others more easily than female. Thus, female might need to rely more on their powers of observation. In the Thai culture, female is more likely to be passive while male is encouraged to assume a more active role (Morrison and Jablin, 1991).

It is interesting to note that political information was found to be equally sought after by both male and female. Perhaps this is a reflection of a perceived need to survive as an organizational member during a period of general economic decline. Whatever the reason, political and organizational information that did not distinguish between male and female.

Male and female reported approaching different information sources. Male reported approaching superiors, co-workers, and outsider (friends, customers, and family members) more than female. Based on Thai culture, male usually assumes a more dominant role in jobs and achieve higher administrative position in the organization. Thus, male tends to be more ambitious and more motivated in searching information from every source. Besides, the seniority system in the Thai culture might constrain both male and female from approaching their superiors for information. Consequently, they might be more willing to ask question from co-workers instead (Hofstede, 1983)

Male and female report relatively little involvement with media as a source of employment relevant information. One possible explanation for this finding is that the nature of the organization system and employee job duties preclude having the time required for information search via the Internet or e-mail (Herold & Parsons, 1985). Instead, it might seem far easier and more effectives to turn to colleague or even to one's superior for an answer.

Suggestion

The results of this study might serve as a guide to the private sector for consideration of its approach to distribution contents and sources of information employed by employees during "learning-the-rope" process, including the formal orientation program. As on possible change, for example, this financial institution might want to consider creating a "Monday media activity" for all employees to encourage the employment of media sources as a site for information retrieval.

Future research

Recommendation for future research concerning employee information seeking might well benefit from attention to different professions and industries.

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