

Designing a Model for Developing Intra-Organizational Social Capital Based on Improving Communication Structures in the Ministry of Sport and Youth

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Extended Abstract

Intra-organizational social capital, as one of the most important intangible resources of organizations in today's competitive environment, plays a crucial role in their success. This concept, which refers to human connections, trust, cooperation, and solidarity among organizational members, can significantly enhance organizational effectiveness, efficiency, and productivity. Unlike physical and financial capital, intra-organizational social capital is inherently formed through human interactions and communication networks among employees, providing a foundation for fostering a culture of participation, knowledge exchange, innovation, and improved internal communication. Despite its undeniable importance, many organizations have not yet systematically and purposefully pursued the development of this type of capital. Understanding the factors that influence the development of intra-organizational social capital and designing practical models to enhance it can help organizations improve internal cooperation and cohesion, thereby optimizing the use of human resources and achieving strategic goals. In this regard, intra-organizational communication structures play a fundamental role in creating and developing social capital. Appropriate communication structures can facilitate effective interactions and collaborations, improving the quality and scope of communication and guiding members toward greater cohesion and the achievement of shared objectives. Improving organizational communication structures not only fosters informal and participatory communication but also strengthens employee trust and satisfaction, shaping both horizontal and vertical communications to enhance empathy and cooperation across all organizational levels. Therefore, designing and implementing appropriate models for improving communication structures as a strategy for developing intra-organizational social capital is essential. Based on this, the main question of the present research is: What is the model for developing intra-organizational social capital based on improving communication structures in the Ministry of Sport and Youth?

Research Method

This study employed a qualitative approach using thematic analysis. The statistical population consisted of all experts in human resource management, sports management, and

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public administration who specialize in the research topic and have conducted at least two related studies, as well as senior managers of the Ministry of Sport and Youth and elite employees with over ten years of experience and a doctoral degree (totaling 20 participants). A purposeful sampling method was used and continued until theoretical saturation was achieved. The main data collection tool was exploratory (semi-structured) interviews. The validity of the instrument was confirmed through sample credibility, expert judgment, and inter-rater agreement. For data analysis, the Attride-Stirling (2001) thematic network analysis method was employed.

Research Findings

The first stage of the thematic analysis process, known as descriptive coding, was carried out by transcribing the interviews and examining them line by line. Each interview was read several times, key sentences were highlighted in different colors, and the identified concepts were recorded as basic themes. In this stage, 68 basic themes were extracted. In the next stage, by combining the basic themes and comparing and merging similar concepts, four overarching themes were identified. This categorization was conducted based on the approach of Attride-Stirling (2001) and according to the hierarchy of themes (basic, organizing, and global). Ultimately, four overarching themes—organizational factors, human resource factors, managerial factors, and infrastructural factors—were identified as the main components of the model for developing intra-organizational social capital based on improving communication structures in the Ministry of Sport and Youth. Finally, the research model was drawn based on these findings.

Conclusion

Intra-organizational social capital in the Ministry of Sport and Youth can be developed through the improvement and strengthening of communication structures, particularly across four key dimensions: organizational factors, human resources, managerial factors, and infrastructure. However, it is recommended that the Ministry review and reform its organizational structure and enhance its communication processes, especially horizontal and vertical communication. Establishing a flexible structure that is responsive to organizational changes can facilitate effective communication among employees and promote greater collaboration. Moreover, fostering an organizational culture based on the values of cooperation and trust can significantly contribute to the growth of social capital within the organization. Enhancing employees' communication skills, commitment, and sense of responsibility through educational and human resource development programs can further promote intra-organizational interactions.

Limitations

The findings of this study were collected solely within the context of the Ministry of Sport and Youth and its affiliated organizations during a specific time period. Therefore, the generalizability of the results to other ministries or non-governmental sports institutions may be limited. Consequently, conducting similar studies in other sports organizations—such as the National Olympic Committee, sports federations, and provincial departments—could help enhance the validity and generalizability of the findings.

Practical Concept

The practical concept of designing a model for the development of intra-organizational social capital based on improving communication structures in the Ministry of Sport and Youth refers to a process in which human relations, communication patterns, and

collaborative networks among employees and managers are redesigned to enhance the levels of trust, solidarity, and organizational participation. In this context, social capital functions not only as an intangible asset but also as a soft infrastructure that fosters organizational efficiency, cohesion, and innovation. Improving communication structures involves creating transparent, two-way, and multi-level communication channels, strengthening feedback systems, expanding cross-departmental interactions, and developing digital platforms for employee participation. Within such an environment, members of the organization can experience a stronger sense of belonging through mutual trust, knowledge exchange, and shared understanding of the ministry's strategic goals, thereby taking a more active role in decision-making processes.

Social Implications

The design of a model for developing intra-organizational social capital based on improving communication structures in the Ministry of Sport and Youth carries significant social implications. This model, by strengthening trust, solidarity, and effective communication among employees and managers, promotes a culture of participation, transparency, and organizational justice. Furthermore, by enhancing internal interactions, it improves the quality of decision-making and increases the satisfaction of sports stakeholders (including coaches, athletes, and associations). At a broader level, strengthening internal communication networks contributes to greater knowledge and experience sharing, the advancement of social capital within the sports community, and the reconstruction of a positive public image of sports institutions in society.

Originality

The originality and innovation of this study lie in the fact that, for the first time, it systematically designs a model for developing intra-organizational social capital based on improving communication structures within the Ministry of Sport and Youth. Unlike previous research that has primarily examined social capital as a byproduct of human relationships or a cultural factor, this study adopts a structural-communicative approach, presenting organizational communication as the driving force behind the formation and enhancement of social capital. Another innovative aspect of the research is its integration of perspectives from organizational sociology, human communication, and sports management to propose a localized and practical model that can serve as a foundation for policymaking and improving communication systems within sports institutions. Moreover, the application of combined network analysis methods and qualitative approaches in identifying intra-organizational communication links has provided the study with strong analytical depth and high empirical validity.

Keywords: Social Capital, Development, Communication Structures, Ministry of Sport and Youth