


Chapter 7

The Impact of the Work Environment on Innovation and Business Sustainability in SMEs: The Case of San José de Cúcuta, Colombia

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ABSTRACT

Innovation is a process, where the interpersonal relationships of employees are key to the creation of ideas that will contribute to the generation of value for organizations in the face of disruptive environments. This chapter analyzes the relationship between the work environment as a key factor and its impact on the development of innovation processes and business sustainability, taking as a sample 182 SMEs, from commercial, footwear, and textile sectors from the city of Cúcuta. The results showed an interrelation between the organizational climate and the culture of innovation as an agent that generates change that contributes to business sustainability.

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INTRODUCTION

Global and disruptive environments have influenced the development of tools that allow quick answers to market fluctuations. Hernández-Fuentes & Sánchez-Mojica (2017) state that the world is in constant evolution, and that globalization and disruption are factors that influence decision-making of countries and enterprises. Then, product innovation becomes an essential factor for the development of organizational activities. It is important to highlight that innovation is an attitude of all employees, environment or culture that result in innovative practices that spread throughout the organization (Pérez-Urbe, 2007; Bahcall, 2019). Therefore, innovation starts with the generation of ideas of people who want to provide solutions to daily problems.

Innovation is an opportunity for growth, an answer to the economic dynamics of the organizational context. In this process, technology becomes an important factor that can be used in a variety of combinations, starting from the existing relation among technology-product-market (López González & Robledo Velásquez, 2014; Chen, Yin and Mei, 2018); thus, to have successful innovation processes, it is necessary that capabilities of people who participate in the process of creation of ideas (...) consider the attitudes of individuals towards (...) learning processes (...) [that] along with the understanding of the environment transform knowledge into new products (Morales, Ortiz Riaga, & Arias Cante, 2012; Cunha and Benneworth, 2020).

However, that is not enough since innovation starts from the generation of creative ideas, being necessary to analyze why the number of innovations created in enterprises is not enough. It is then when organizational environment and the attitude of workers towards the Enterprise may become a key factor to develop soft skills, in order to generate processes of organizational innovation that contribute to business sustainability in disruptive environments.

According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development OECD (2005) innovation is to be considered one of the strategic factors of the enterprise or one of the elements of a series of investment decisions aimed at creating products development capabilities. Therefore, innovation became a concept that enterprises use to change their products as an answer to their interaction with the environment. The concept of innovation is subjective in everyone, being able to accept it or reject it (Alvarado-Ramírez & Pumisacho-Álvaro, 2015; Dziallas and Blind, 2019).

Organizational structure and culture are related to the development of innovation, knowledge and strategy in the enterprise (Pérez-Urbe, 2007). Besides, other authors such as Camio (2014) relate business creativity to innovation. So, in order to boost creativity, it is necessary to have a culture and working environment that facilitates innovation, being it a social phenomenon in which human development flourishes, thus enhancing the ability to transform organizations into intelligent companies in the way they influence their internal and external environments and how they react to changes (Mejia-Giraldo, Mendieta-Cardona, & Bravo-Castillo, 2015). In such sense, an organizational forward-looking culture is necessary to apply innovation, being that an essential element of the intangible capital of organizations (Acosta Guzman, 2015; González and García, 2011).

Regardless the forward, managers and directors nowadays spent most of their time dealing with operational and controlling activities, not formulating strategies, neither evaluating the possibilities of future scenarios (Pérez-Urbe, Garzón-Gaitán, & Nieto-Potes, 2013). Therefore, enterprises must try to

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