Guest editorial

Investigating multi-level sociological, psychological and managerial challenges in the context of intellectual capital from and within emerging markets

Introduction

Economies in the Global South, including emerging markets, have in recent years emerged as the fastest developing countries. This development has surged ahead, driven by the human capital base that evolved through deliberate and strategic investments made by these countries. However, key determinants of explosive growth, such as the intellectual and social capital, are areas that are underresearched. More specifically, insufficient attention has been paid to the sociological, psychological and managerial challenges in the context of intellectual capital (IC) from and within emerging markets. This special issue aims to utilize a multi-disciplinary approach by investigating the key sociological, psychological and managerial challenges in the development of forms of IC at macro- (nations, regions or economies), meso- (organizations, industries or communities) and micro- (teams, families or individuals) levels. Contextually and of particular interest are countries considered fastest-developing such as BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa), MINT (Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria and Turkey), Next Eleven (Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, South Korea, Turkey and Vietnam), and CIVETS (Colombia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Egypt, Turkey and South Africa). In recent times, the *Journal of Intellectual Capital* has published work on emerging countries (see e.g. recent work on "changes in the productivity of insurance companies in Ghana" by Oppong *et al.* (2019) and "intellectual capital efficiency and organizational performance: in the context of the pharmaceutical industry in Bangladesh" by Chowdhury *et al.* (2019)), and this call for papers solicits further such contextual work following the topical areas of research appended below.

Sociological factors associated with IC in emerging markets that need further examination include the effects on class (caste/tribe/ethnic groups where applicable) conflict and social policies. For example, it is unclear whether the development of intangible forms of capital in the Global South complements or undermines social welfare systems (Doh *et al.*, 2017). Moreover, it is also unclear whether the development of IC has led to greater accumulation of capital (in various forms) or to the decentralization of capital (Tomé, 2005). Relatedly, are forms of IC in developing markets leading to greater exploitation of human and natural resources or to more sustainable practices (Crane, 2013). Finally, how has corporate social responsibility developed in rapidly developing societies (Devinney, 2011) and what challenges and opportunities are presented by these dynamics?

Psychological factors related to IC similarly need further scrutiny, especially the idea of intangible property forms (Babie, 2010), which diverges from structural notions of intellectual property. There is a notion that liberal conceptions of private property – and in particular, intellectual property – are leading to challenges with regards to climate change, economic insecurity and a rise in violence and civil unrest in emerging markets. For example, are such emerging notions of IC part of the problem, or are such challenges emergent from micro-level traits or strategies observed in newly developed settings (e.g. mental states, cognitive schemes or behavioral phenomena)?

Managerial challenges in the context of IC in emerging markets can also be identified at macro-, meso- and micro-levels. At the macro-level, for example, there have been the long discussed challenges of "brain drain," a phenomenon wherein key human capital of an emerging country emigrates to developed countries in search of greater professional and

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financial opportunities, and in the process, these countries lose their IC (Docquier and Rapoport, 2012; Baruch *et al.*, 2007). In contrast, a more recent phenomenon wherein these highly educated, experienced and globally sought experts move back to their country of origin has led to what is termed as "reverse brain drain" (Varma and Tung, 2020; Wadhwa, 2009). At the meso- and micro-levels, there are issues of transition when it comes to managerial approaches, especially within certain high-tech industries in these emerging economies, which move up the value chain, mainly driven by a knowledge-based economy, as compared to a previously more traditional economy reliant and dependent on foreign IC. A classic example here is that of the Indian business process industry and its allied organizations (Pereira and Malik, 2015), which have moved up the value chain, over time, from being a destination of cheap call centers to hubs of research and development, engaging key knowledge workers possessing tacit IC.

Based on the above focus, we sent out a call for papers identifying a list of indicative topics with the potential to form research questions, and we encouraged both conceptual and empirical submissions. We received several submissions, and after following due process, seven papers were finalized to be included in this special issue. These papers included macro-, meso- and micro- sociological, psychological and managerial challenges in the context of IC from and within emerging markets.

Contributions to special issue

The first paper titled "The contribution of human capital to foreign direct investment inflows in developing countries", by Ali Abbas, Imad Moosa and Vikash Ramiah is about the effect of human capital on foreign direct investment (FDI). This paper attempts to find out if developing countries with high levels of human capital (educated people and well-trained labor force) are more successful in attracting FDI. The authors claim that the underlying hypothesis has been tested repeatedly without reaching a consensus view or providing an answer to the basic question. They further posit that this is to be expected because FDI is determined by a large number of factors, making the results sensitive to the selected set of explanatory variables, which forms the basis of the Leamer (1983) critique of the use of multiple regression to derive inference. Furthermore, they argue that confirmation bias and publication bias entice researchers to be selective in choosing the set of results they report. The technique of extreme bounds analysis, as originally suggested by Leamer (1983) and modified by Sala-i-Martin (1997), is used to determine the importance of human capital for the ability of developing countries to attract FDI. The authors use a cross-sectional sample covering 103 developing and transition countries. Interestingly, the results show no contradiction between firms seeking human capital and cheap labor. Further, no matter what proxy is used to represent human capital, it turns out that the most important factor for attracting FDI is the variable "employee compensation," which is the wage bill, implying that multinational firms look for cheap and also skilled labor in the host country.

The second paper titled "Green talent management and turnover intention: the roles of leader STARA competence and digital task interdependence," by Samuel Ogbeibu, Charbel Jose Chiappetta Jabbour, John Burgess, James Gaskin and Douglas W.S. Renwick, is a timely paper in the context of emerging countries. The authors make a case that congruent with the world-wide call to combat global warming concerns within the context of advancements in smart technology, artificial intelligence, robotics, algorithms (STARA) and digitalization, organizational leaders are being pressured to ensure that talented employees are effectively managed (nurtured and retained) to curb the potential risk of staff turnover. They further posit that by managing such talent(s), organizations may be able to not only retain them, but consequently foster environmental sustainability too. Equally, they argue that recent debates encourage the need for teams to work digitally and interdependently on set tasks and for leaders to cultivate competencies fundamental to STARA, as this may further help reduce staff turnover intention and catalyze green initiatives. However, they posit that it is unclear how such turnover intention may be impacted by these actions. Their paper, therefore, seeks to investigate the predictive roles of green hard and soft talent management (TM), leader STARA competence (LSC) and digital task interdependence (DTI) on turnover intention. The authors used a cross-sectional data collection technique to obtain 372 useable samples from 49 manufacturing organizations in a representative emerging country, Nigeria. Findings from their paper interestingly indicate that green hard and soft TM and LSC positively predict turnover intention. While LSC amplifies the negative influence of green soft TM on turnover intention, LSC and DTI dampen the positive influence of green hard TM on turnover intention. Overall, their study offers novel insights into how emerging concepts, like LSC, DTI and green hard, and soft TM simultaneously act to predict turnover intention.

The third paper in this special issue is titled “Effect of social capital on agribusiness diversification intention in the emerging market”, authored by Le Dang Lang, Abhishek Behl, Nguyen Trung Dong, Yama Temouri and Nguyen Hong Thu. Set in the context of the ongoing coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), which has seriously affected the global economy, this piece too is timely. The paper concentrates on investigating how agribusinessmen are overcoming this crisis in emerging markets, represented by Vietnam. The authors argue that using social capital to diversify agribusiness for getting more customers is a useful solution for the growth of agribusiness. However, they posit that there is a lack of evidence on the aggregate measurement scale of social capital and the influence of behavioral goals on the intention toward agribusiness diversification. Therefore, this study aims to develop an integrated measurement of social capital and investigate its effect on agribusiness diversification intention using the expanded theory of planned behavior (TPB). A mixed-methods approach is used, including four in-depth interviews, three focus group discussions and two surveys. Structural equation modeling is applied to a sample of 484 respondents to test the proposed hypotheses. The study shows the role of social capital in influencing the intention to diversify agribusiness under the premises of the resource-based view (RBV). The scale of social capital is also developed, which is the first integrated measurement of this asset. The findings contribute significantly to the existing knowledge of social capital, the TPB and diversifying agribusiness. The authors claim that this is the first study to explore the comprehensive effect of the facets of social capital on behavioral intention through behavioral goals and determinants of the TPB under the premises of the RBV. The findings will help emerging economies, for example, Vietnam, where most farmers are family business owners or microscaled entrepreneurs in agriculture.

The fourth paper included in this special issue is titled “Managerial challenges to promoting competency-based intellectual capital in emerging market economies – developing a framework for implications”, authored by Sateesh V. Shet, Manlio Del Giudice and Hussain G. Rammal. The principle objective of this paper is to explore the challenges experienced by managers in adopting competency modeling (CM) and recommends an approach to overcome these challenges in promoting competency-based IC in organizations. Using in-depth interviews with organizational practitioners in an emerging country, India, this study identifies the challenges of CM in emerging market economies. This study identified nine contextual and eight noncontextual challenges in implementing CM practices in organizations. The framework addresses the CM challenges using direction setting, negotiation and selling, and monitoring and control dimension of implementation with behavioral, operational and change alignment aspects of CM. The framework proposes a checklist for stakeholders to help them diagnose and analyze the gaps in effective CM implementation. This article contributes in the concept of competency-based IC and adoption of CM practices. This framework will assist the change management practitioners, human resources leaders, organizational development consultants and practitioners as a toolkit to address the challenges in the people management intervention. The framework suggests a checklist for stakeholders to help diagnose and analyze the gaps in effective CM adoption.

The fifth paper titled "Impact of firm's intellectual capital on firm performance: a study of Indian firms and the moderating effects of age and gender" is authored by Sheshadri Chatterjee, Ranjan Chaudhuri, Alkis Thrassou and Georgia Sakka. The principal objective of this study is to empirically examine the impact of an emerging country Indian firms' IC on firm performance, as well as the moderating effects of age and gender therein. The research initially develops a theoretical model, through extant works and theories, which is subsequently empirically, validated using the partial least square structural equation modeling technique with 328 respondents from 12 Indian firms. The study concludes that specific dimensions of firms' IC, including structural capital, human capital and customer capital, positively and significantly impact firm performance, which in turn provides the firm competitive advantages. The study also finds that there are significant moderating effects of age and gender on the relationship between a firm's IC and firm performance. Further to its evident contribution to scholarly knowledge and its provision of a validated model, which could be used in other emerging and developed markets as well, the research provides valuable practicable directions to firm executives regarding the importance and utilization of the structural, human and customer capital in improving firm performance and strengthening its competitive edge. The study adds valuable knowledge to the body of literature on IC, through its explicit empirical findings, as well as through its focus on the significant emerging market of India.

The sixth paper in this special issue is titled "Intellectual capital and dividend policy: the effect of CEO characteristics," authored by Enrico Battisti, Niccolò Nirino, Michael Christofi and Demetris Vrontis. The paper interestingly aims to empirically test the impact of IC on a firm's dividend policy. Further, the authors investigate the moderator effect of chief executive officer's (CEO) characteristics (gender, age and education) on this relationship. The research was carried out on the main leading emerging country, i.e. China, through listed companies reported on the CSI 100 Index from 2016 to 2018. To assess the impact of IC on the dividend policy and then the moderating effect of the characteristics of the CEOs, the authors used a fixed effects panel data analysis. The results suggest a positive impact of IC on dividend policies. In addition, this relationship is enhanced when the CEO is a woman, and the lower the age, the higher the effect is. The authors' claim that, to the best of their knowledge, this is the first empirical study that explores the effect of IC on a firm's dividend policy in an emerging country. Specifically, this paper demonstrates the impact that IC has on the creation of shareholder value. Furthermore, considering the characteristics of the CEOs, this study tests new moderating effects in the relationship between IC and value creation and highlights how IC, dividends and CEO characteristics can be useful in aligning interests between ownership and management, enriching the debate on agency theory.

The last, seventh, contribution to this special issue is titled "The challenge of skilled expatriates from the Indian subcontinent losing intellectual capital in Australia: resolving the crisis of habitus," authored by Syed Mohyuddin, Santoshi Sengupta, Parth Patel, Verma Prikshat and Arup Varma. The main aim of this article is to examine the challenges faced by highly skilled expatriates (i.e. professionals and managers) from the Indian subcontinent (i.e. India and neighboring countries, representative of emerging countries) as they attempt to advance their careers in Australia. The authors claim that the extant literature has revealed significant gaps between policies for skilled migration proposed by governments in developed countries and the response to policies by organizations in those countries. By employing the theories of habitus, disembedding sensemaking and acculturation as frameworks for analysis, the authors explore and explain how these expatriates settle and integrate into their new lives and careers as they resolve their experience of habitus. This study employed phenomenology and narrative research techniques using 21 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with expatriate professionals from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh to explore and examine their expatriation experiences and their occupational progress in Australia. The findings reveal that on migrating to Australia, expatriate professionals are uprooted from their home country habitus and thrust into new conditions that cause them to lose their cultural, economic, intellectual and social capital, which further leads them into a state of "disembeddedness." These highly skilled expatriates then rely on sensemaking and acculturation to resolve their crisis of habitus. The authors also found that gender is a significant factor in this process, as female expatriates faced more career-related barriers compared to their male counterparts. This article brings into focus previously unexamined avenues of expatriation research and proposes a novel theoretical framework that is instrumental in explaining the settlement and integration process of highly skilled professionals from emerging nations.

Conclusion

In this special issue, we set out to examine key sociological, psychological and managerial challenges in the development of IC at macro-, meso- and micro-levels in emerging economies through employing an interdisciplinary approach. Given the pace of economic development in emerging economies, it is critical that scholars examine the antecedents and consequences of IC in these nations, as it is this capital that is the foundation of the economic growth of nations. Indeed, the recent education policy developed and implemented by the government of India, as an emerging country, underscores the importance of harnessing IC for economic growth that also addresses and incorporates social and cultural issues (see Varma *et al.*, 2021, for a detailed analysis).

The papers included in this issue address a wide array of subjects related to the evolution and development of IC in emerging economies in the Global South. As an example, while the first study reveals that multinationals investing in the region are primarily guided by the availability of cheap and skilled labor, another study identified nine contextual and eight noncontextual challenges in implementing competency modeling practices in organizations. Yet another study finds that firms' IC has a significant impact on firm performance, leading to competitive advantages, while a separate study establishes the critical impact of IC on creation of shareholder value. As we see above, emerging countries have been widely represented and include 103 developing and transition countries, at a macro-level, in the first paper, followed by 49 manufacturing organisations, at the meso-level in a representative emerging African country, Nigeria. This was followed by empirical evidence from Vietnam, India and China, at macro-, meso- and micro-levels.

Put together, these studies emphasize the critical role played by IC in the growth and development of the economies of these emerging nations and point to the importance of proactively managing IC to harness the benefits. Further, the finding that gender plays a critical role in how IC is viewed and harnessed reminds governments and corporations to consciously develop and implement gender-neutral policies so that nations can draw the bets from all of their citizens. Overall, the studies included here offer several clear and critical suggestions for emerging nations, which can help them utilize their IC to create successful economies that extend the benefits to all segments of their societies. As we collectively move towards a post-COVID era, these emerging markets are set to take a lead in a global recovery, and we envisage findings from the papers in this special issue will be a motivation for scholars and practitioners to pick key learnings for the future.

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