Factors Influencing Knowledge Sharing Behavior (KSB) among Employees of Public Services in Malaysia

Sunita Rega Kathiravelu
University Technology Malaysia

Nur Naha Abu Mansor, PhD
University Technology Malaysia

Kamal Kenny, PhD
K & J Consultancy

Abstract

This paper reviews different facet that underlie the knowledge sharing behavior among employees of public services in Malaysia. Demographic profiles are indicated in the paper to identify if they have significant roles in seeking positive knowledge sharing. Likewise, the organizational influences that promote knowledge sharing are also taking a major part of the current paper.

The review informs that the role of demographic profiles do not impact knowledge sharing behavior to employees excluding working place which means, there is no significant relationship between demographic profiles of employees to their knowledge sharing behavior. Furthermore, it reveals that organizational influences have direct relationship with knowledge sharing behavior of the employees. Knowledge management is implemented with the aid of these organizational influences, that when controlled effectively, success in knowledge sharing among employees can promote good attitude and behavior in realizing also successful public services.

Introduction

Malaysia, a country that undergoes innovation in its economy – from agriculture based to industry based – so that it can adapt with numerous dares that the twenty first century provides. The most recent action conducted by the Malaysian government revolving on the industrial facet was during 1997 wherein firms are encouraged to be knowledge-intensive than being production-intensive, (Alam, Abdullah, Ishak, & Zain, 2009). With that, it is foreshown that Malaysia is transforming now into a knowledge-economy. In fact, in the milieu of Malaysian government agencies, Malaysian Administrative and Modernisation Planning Unit (MAMPU) have been prearranged the responsibility to administer the employment of knowledge management enterprises, (Mohamed & Egbu, n.d.).
Knowledge management has been playing vital functions in knowledge-intensive economy. Organizations are adapting knowledge management which is prevalent to every firm nowadays. Knowledge has been extensively recognized as the central foundation for generating an organization’s defensible economical benefit, (Teh & Yong, 2011). According to Cummings (2003) knowledge management includes different processes as well as methods in order to obtain tacit and codified know-how within the firm. Having been defined in numerous means, knowledge management can be described on the processes taken by the firms to produce, maintain and share knowledge,(Akashah, Rizal, & Hafiz, 2011).

Studying knowledge sharing among organizations has been the fore and most key facet in which technology transportation and innovation as well as different techniques in management is the blueprint of organizational learning procedure, (Cummings, 2003; Mohd, 2005; Nordin, Daud, & Osman, 2012). Likewise, knowledge is recognized as the main asset of any individuals that needs to be treasured, established and achieved,(Teh & Yong, 2011) and knowledge sharing must be evident among employees within the organization so that the operation of the firms will be triumphant, (Alipour, Idris, & Karimi, 2011). However, the process is very crucial.

Knowledge sharing is the procedure undertaken by people whenever they are exchanging ideas by means of discussion so that new knowledge or thoughts will be formed, (Alam, et al. 2009; Nordin, Daud, & Osman, 2012). The significance of organizational knowledge has reinforced numerous knowledge management undertakings that are planned to grasp knowledge creation, retention and distribution, (Teh & Yong, 2011). However, there is evidence proving the relationship of attitudes and behaviors to the workforce that affect the knowledge sharing of individuals, (Alam, et. al 2009). In addition, it has two reciprocal steps that includes the behavior and attitudes of the workforce related to their willingness to involve themselves to the sharing of knowledge, (Hassan & AL-Hakim, 2011). This procedure calls for a very critical awareness so that victory would be obtained by the organization.

As the world move to the new trends of business advancement, there are numerous firms that are attracted to adapt knowledge sharing among their employees, (Rasli, Madjid, Asmi, 2004). It doing it so, the aims and goals set by the organization are more expected to be achieved. Actually, there are firms’ improvements after the implementation of knowledge sharing, (Alam, et. al 2009; Mohd, 2005). For instance, corporations like Buckman Laboratories as well as Texas Instruments and Dow Chemical and Chevron obtained great profitable incomes because of knowledge sharing,

Alam, et. al 2009; as cited in Cheng (2002) posited that knowledge sharing support the labor force in becoming fully aware to their new jobs and responsibilities as well as carry out particular credit in the unit. Right after the knowledge has been created, the organizations are expected to have gained reasonable benefit, (Mohamed & Egbru, n.d.).

Unfortunately, some employees do not want to share their knowledge they obtained to others, (Wei, Teh, & Asmawi, 2012). This scenario brings another point to the crucial process of
knowledge sharing and management. It occurs due to the fear that these employees are having— to damage their valued information. The reality that numerous firms has been applying technological advancement among employees as sustenance to knowledge sharing behavior, dilemmas are always coming on their ways that hampers the success of knowledge sharing process, (Teh & Yong, 2011).

It’s been one serious problem among employees to reinforce them to perform knowledge sharing, (Akashah et al. 2011). Knowledge is within these employees; they are the one that control the decision, (Mohd, 2005). Because of this condition, managers in the organization are facing with challenges.

Before proceeding with our analysis, it is vital to delimit our scope. Focusing on the factors that influence KSB among employees of Public Services in Malaysia requires a depth of understanding on the culture of knowledge sharing and its management. The scaffold of evaluating the role of culture within organizations has been described through determining the features of an organization principles and organizing them to innate notion of knowledge sharing, (Henriks, n.d.). However, the broader context of organizational culture is not emphasized in the study. Likewise, it is important to have a deep awareness on the process knowledge sharing in the organization. The significant mechanism in transforming individual knowledge to organizational knowledge is depicted from knowledge sharing. Hendriks (n.d.) which was supported by Ajmal, Helo, Keka, (2010) posited that there are three facets under this. Initially, it is a process that entails chronological arrangement of events, actions and activities developing in time. Secondly, it looks for at least two clusters or functions that need to be performed by individuals or the group itself. It consists of the role of transporting (offering, showing and teaching) and the role of receiving (acquiring, learning) knowledge. Finally, it is illustrated by the character that knowledge is shared. The last aspect of knowledge sharing, call for a deeper examination to terms such knowledge and organizational knowledge. There is curiosity in the influence that the operative controlling of knowledge across structural and proficient frontiers can create an improvement to public services (Bate & Robert 2002; Hartley & Allison 2002; Rashman & Hartley 2002; Currie & Suhomlinova 2006; Currie, Waring & Finn 2007).

Convergent with the analysis of the factors influencing the knowledge sharing behavior among employees, there is a must that have involved the roles of the mangers in the sector of public services in Malaysia. We suggest that managers’ knowledge sharing management should reflect and promote innovation in the inhibition of knowledge sharing. Focusing in this facet can eventually assess the knowledge sharing among employees of public services in Malaysia.

The paper is structured as follows: It describes the study of knowledge sharing; highlights the demographic factors and knowledge sharing quality of employees; thorough discussions on the organizational influences are discussed; finally, based from the information gathered, conclusion has been made.
The study of knowledge sharing

Technology transfer and innovation literature ground the study of knowledge sharing. The success of knowledge sharing among organizations depends on their mastery and the different practices that they are designing to produce different merchandises, the procedures of manufacturing, and those novel standards in the firms and employees, (Rasli, Madjid, Asmi, 2004).

Hassan and AL-Hakim (2011) asserted that it is seen when it transpires a vibrant learning procedures in the organization which has immensely interaction to the clients as well as suppliers with the purpose of innovation and imitation.

The function of knowledge management as a field of research and practices is how to better operate the knowledge or ‘intellectual capital’ confined in a firm’s system (Cummings 2001; Stewart 1997; Teece 2000; Bate and Robert 2002).

In fact, Quintas (2002) asserted for numerous organizations, the precedence are ‘capture’ of employees’ knowledge, utilization of the current knowledge resources or assets, and enhanced access to expertise, (Bate & Robert 2002).

Knowledge Sharing Dynamics

Knowledge-sharing dynamics in a knowledge management system (KMS) can be pretend as a fountain model that highlights codification and packing of information so as to be reprocessed in the future (Kankanhalli, Tan, & Wei, 2005). The knowledge-sharing dynamics model is represented in Figure 1. Knowledge-sharing routes embrace individuals subsidizing knowledge to the sources and consuming the information from the knowledge management system (KMS). Each member makes two decisions when using a knowledge management system (KMS) related to: 1) contributing knowledge and 2) using knowledge (Goodman & Darr, 1998).
Demographic factors and knowledge sharing quality

One factor that impacted the knowledge sharing and transferring of knowledge among employees is their demography changes, (Teh & Yong, 2001). Likewise, only few studies support the proposition. Among the demographic facets include gender, age, organizational tenure, job position and ethnicity are being subjected in this area, (Ismail & Yusof, 2009). Figure 1 shows the relationship of demographic profiles to the knowledge sharing quality.

\[\text{Figure 1. The model of Knowledge – Sharing Dynamics in a Knowledge Management System (KMS)}\]

\[\text{Knowledge Sharing Quality}\
\quad \begin{align*}
\text{relevant} \\
\text{easy to understand} \\
\text{accurate} \\
\text{complete} \\
\text{reliable} \\
\text{timely}
\end{align*}\]

\[\text{Demographic Profile}\
\quad \begin{align*}
\text{gender} \\
\text{age} \\
\text{educational level} \\
\text{position grade} \\
\text{work place} \\
\text{tenure of service}
\end{align*}\]

\[\text{Figure 1. Relationship of Demographic Profile and Knowledge Sharing Quality}\]
Gender and age as per related to knowledge sharing, there are studies that asserted that gender has nothing to do with the impact of knowledge sharing, (Ismail & Yusof, 2009; Nordin, Daud, & Osman, 2012).

However, there are differences sought between men and women prior with their seeking of knowledge, (Ooi, 2009). It reveals that women are more willing to share whatever knowledge they have acquired to others, (Ismail & Yusof, 2009).

However, these are hypothesized. From the study undertaken by Ismail and Yusof (2009), it is concluded that these demographic factors do not impact knowledge sharing behavior in the knowledge sharing process, excluding the working place. Likewise, the data reveal that these factors have no significant relationship in the knowledge sharing behavior of the public officers in Malaysia.

**Organizational Influences**

![Diagram of Organizational Influences](image)

Figure 2. Organizational Influences of Knowledge Sharing Behavior among Employees of Public Services in Malaysia

1. **Organizational Culture**

Organizational culture is described as the encouragements that people shared as values within the organization that surrounds the thinking and behavior of the individuals, (Wei, The, & Asmawi, 2012). Culture plays important roles in handling the organizational changes within the organization. It can be a mimesis of glue that puts together the communal organization. Organizational culture has effects to the knowledge sharing among employees. It is foregrounded with three cultural facets which are trust, learning, and innovation.

Consequently, researchers have found out the essential role of culture within organizations. Actually, it is the key facet that creates knowledge management along
with knowledge sharing triumphantly in the firm, (Alam, et. al 2009). In addition, it is affirmed that having sturdy culture among firms along with positive attitudes among employers and employees can help the organization realize its success. Thus, it is really important to maintain strong culture of knowledge sharing. As a matter of fact, culture occurs when there is evident interaction between people and treating themselves as parties within the context of action. Alam, et. al 2009 as cited in McDermott and O’Dell (2001) stressed out that individuals are always interacting to each other as their leeway to share common values and core competencies. Based from that, it can be therefore concluded that in the culture where is knowledge sharing, individuals are more likely to share their thoughts and exchange information since they are looking into culture as a normal than forcing them to do things – sharing knowledge – against their will.

1.1 Trust

Trust is the anticipation which ascends in the community when there are honesty and positive attitudes. Any culture that promotes trust is believed to lessen any kind of detrimental effects in the apparent cost of knowledge sharing, (Wei, Teh, & Asmawi, 2012). The application of knowledge sharing in the organization can provide chances of knowledge carrying out in the public sector of Malaysia. As Alam, et. al (2009) reiterated, trust is the most operational and least expensive tool of reinforcing employees to share their information. If people feel that persons are trust worthy enough and trusted, they are reinforce to share their knowledge. It is one effective tool of motivating people to share knowledge. According to Alam, et. al (2009) as cited in Sharratt and Usoro (2003), if a person see his community with trusted citizens, there would be likely to have motivated employees in participating and sharing their knowledge. In the case of employees in the public services of Malaysia, the same principle is also applied.

1.2 Learning

Learning is claimed as the extent of different opportunities that develop the firm. It must be observed and evident in any organization. With that, it provides avenue any sort of informal and formal communication process in the organization, (Ismail & Yusof, 2009). It was found out that a firm that has a culture of encouraging ideas and more focus on having better and quality learning rather than to committing and repeating mistakes are completely relating to operative knowledge sharing, (Wei, Teh, & Asmawi, 2012). Having strong evidence of learning in the firms will aid in transferring knowledge. The failure to recognize any connection can bring detrimental effect to the knowledge sharing and learning process.

1.3 Innovation

Studies have shown that innovation in the organization can employ knowledge management scheme, (Wei, Teh, & Asmawi, 2012). Innovation is identified as the most essential task of managers with regards to knowledge sharing in diverse culture. Improving the employees is a pre-identified course within the organization. This provides a detailed outline of the program wherein all routines are foreseen
which allows the employees to maintain their attention in meeting the expected function of knowledge sharing (Ju, Li, & Lee, 2006). Talent and knowledge management strategies to facilitate innovation are included in organizational management and are mainly managed by the administrative parties, Hassan and AL-Hakim (2011). However, there are concerns which need to be addressed in order to sustain innovation. It includes: money, technology, performance improvement, feedback/appreciation, development planning, non-traditional training, work environment, and job satisfaction.

2. **Fellow Workers Support**

The interaction that exists between the workers and other employees can greatly impact knowledge sharing among them, (Wei, Teh, & Asmawi, 2012). However, it is vital that reinforcement comes along their way so that they are boost up to develop good attitude toward sharing of knowledge. The encouragement that they are acquiring is positively related with the notion of knowledge sharing culture and their sense of volunteerism to share knowledge, (Wei, Teh, & Asmawi, 2012). If employees realize that their co-worker are their partners, then will help one another in their task as well as their view to knowledge sharing will become favorable, (Ju, Li, & Lee, 2006).

3. **Rewards**

Rewards can boost one to work even tremendously. In trying to facilitate knowledge sharing, rewards are tools to support the culture, (Wei, et. al 2012). Everyone is looking into the return that individuals are investing in terms of their performance. Rewards may come into two forms. They are intrinsic rewards and extrinsic rewards. Either of the two must be needed in order to promote a good behavior of knowledge sharing behavior among employees of public services in Malaysia.

Likewise, Alam, et. al (2009) have posited that reward is one of the most effective method of encouraging employees to share their knowledge to other employees. In a study cited by Kugel & Schostek (2004), it found out that knowledge has been transported to others when there is monetary rewards, however, if for instance the system of reward has been withdrawn, it decreased also the status of knowledge sharing of the employees in the firm, (Alam, et. al 2009). Employees in the public service in Malaysia are always looking for reward as the only consolation they have to their performance, (Alam, et. al 2009).

3.1 **Extrinsic Rewards**

Extrinsic rewards may come into the form of money or non-monetary awards, (Wei, et. al 2012). Different studies claimed that extrinsic rewards have contributed to knowledge sharing among employees. However, others are not claiming the result; they believed that extrinsic reward has no significant effect to knowledge sharing, (Ooi, 2009). Likewise, different theoretical and experimental supporters asserted that extrinsic rewards have been impacting the increase of knowledge sharing among employees of public services in Malaysia, (Wei, et. al 2012).
3.2 Intrinsic Reward
When we speak of intrinsic rewards, these are awards like acknowledgment, position and commendations. It is believed to be self-maintaining which includes diversifies routinely practices that build fulfillment and satisfaction from within (Wei, et. al 2012).
When trying to evaluate which of the two is more effective, intrinsic rewards are sought to be more effectual in developing good knowledge sharing behavior among employees of public services in Malaysia, (Alam, et. al 2009; Kugel&Schostek, 2004).

4. Technology
More and more firms have been employing technological advancement to promote positive knowledge sharing culture among employees. By introducing technology, knowledge sharing is expected to increase among the labor force. As cited in Alam, et. al (2009) firms are creating their own data base or known as “knowledge repository” in which people in the organization can donate any expertise according to their forte and knowledge that can be accessed and retrieved by the others so handy. Having been applying technology in this aspect, employees are prone to share their knowledge in an internal basis only. However, they can even transport any knowledge to a wider geographic departure. This is a good point of integrating technology to knowledge sharing culture.

In a study conducted by Rasli, Madjid and Asmi (2004) utilization of information technology in the process of creating, organizing, locating, distributing and sharing knowledge, would more guarantee the achievement of the knowledge management (KM) goals. In the context of processing knowledge management (KM), it has been immensely used in the attempt to utilized knowledge input, processing, inputs and outputs,(Mohamed & Egbu, n.d.). In addition it is openly assumed that information technology (IT) and knowledge management (KM) have strong relationship. With the notion of knowledge management (KM) context, information technology (IT) has been incorporating wide variety of applications to new technologies in order to accelerate knowledge sharing, (Teh & Yong, 2011). By means of information technology (IT) knowledge has been enhanced and built.
Nonetheless, knowledge sharing technology can give a noticeable representation of administration’s sustenance intended for knowledge sharing. Technology can make the tasks of people easier to access and retrieved and sought a more reliable willingness to transport knowledge especially when they are busy in terms of their working conditions, (Alam, et. al 2009).

5. Commitment
The dedication of the employees to the firm’s work is the main issue in creating knowledge sharing among work force, (Hassan, & AL-Hakim, 2011). In realizing to meet the pedestal of success of the knowledge sharing, there must be a high level of commitment and the ability to attract others to promote sharing of knowledge.
According to Hislop (2002) the extent of the commitment will impact employees’ outlooks and deeds to distribution of their information intended for the advantage of the association. If the labor force’s level of commitment is seen as high, meaning, they are expected to have been eager and work professionally in the firms. Likewise, Hislop (2002) contended that pledge of loyalty is very essential since labor force with enormous level or structural promise are expected to not leave the business if they are stirred. In addition they are expected to give effective performance and unwavering effort to work efficiently and share knowledge to the firm, (The & Yong, 2011). Thus, commitment is seen as one essential facet in taking into consideration knowledge sharing behavior.

Exchange of knowledge among employees and other people is helping the Malaysian public service sector to have effective knowledge management. Knowledge sharing is evidently a tool for effective expansion of the sector. However, there have been facets that ground the context of knowledge sharing behavior among employees. These are influencing the behavior of employees to knowledge sharing. Thus, they are expected to have been addressed and considered for effective operation.

Conclusion

Based from the literature reviews, it has been found out that demographic profiles of the employees have no significant relationship to the knowledge sharing behavior of the employees. However, there are organizational influences that impacted the knowledge sharing among employees. These are: Organizational Culture, Fellow Workers Support, Rewards, Technology and Commitment. All these facets are playing important roles to promote and reinforce knowledge sharing in the public services in Malaysia.

Organizational influences are the factors that influence the knowledge sharing behavior among employees of Public Services in Malaysia. With that, the success of transferring of knowledge which needs to be evident in the sector has been achieved when these factors are met and managed accordingly.

Acknowledgement

This paper will not hold its success without the help of different people. I wish to express deepest gratitude to the Public Service Department for giving me this opportunity in undertaking this study. Likewise, I firmly believe that the information I have included in the paper can provide extra knowledge on how knowledge sharing behavior among employees in the Public Services in Malaysia operates and initiated.

References


