

Ascertaining Dimensions of Organizational Learning Capabilities (OLC) in Academic Library

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Abstract

Organizational learning capabilities (OLC) and knowledge performance are both very important in an organization. Not much study has been done on OLC and knowledge performance in the context of a library. Thus, this paper aims to examine the perceptions of organizational learning capabilities (OLC) and knowledge performance among librarians in an academic library. Based on the study, this paper presents OLC's dimensions (transfer of knowledge and leadership) and knowledge performance. From the findings, transfer of knowledge was ranked higher (mean=5.73) compared to leadership (mean=5.70). It also showed that transfer of knowledge was moderately and positively correlated with leadership ($p < 0.01$, $r=0.690$). Furthermore, transfer of knowledge was moderately correlated with knowledge performance ($p < 0.01$, $r=0.640$). However, there was a weak correlation between leadership and knowledge performance. The study is significant for librarians to improve and enhance their learning capabilities and knowledge in the academic library.

Keywords: transfer of knowledge, leadership, knowledge performance, academic library

Introduction

In order to become a learning organization, one organization needs to develop the characteristics of organization-wide learning practices. A learning organization constitutes an environment in which organizational learning in an organization is structured so that the teamwork, collaboration, inspiration and knowledge processes have a combined meaning and value (Garvin, 1993; Watkins and Marsick, 1997; Shoid et al., 2012).

Organizations are expected to motivate and train their society to constantly develop their competence for creating desired organizational property. Organizational learning should also involve individual learning rather than focus on organizational learning only (Tsuey-Ping, 2007). On the other hand, even though individual learning does not guarantee organizational learning but it is one of the requirements to organizational learning (Senge, 1990).

In addition, in the area of academic library studies, there is very little known research literature and study regarding OLC dimensions and knowledge performance that had been conducted (Kassim and Shoid, 2013).

This paper focuses on two dimensions of OLC which are transfer of knowledge and leadership, and knowledge performance. The objectives are:-

- a) To examine the perceptions of librarians on OLC's dimensions (transfer of knowledge and leadership) and knowledge performance.
- b) To determine the relationships between OLC's dimensions (transfer of knowledge and leadership) and knowledge performance.

Organizational Learning Capabilities (OLC)

According to Hayes (2002) organizational learning is viewed as a vital component for effective organizations and it is related to the whole organization; from top management to each level of organization. Hence, organizational learning is a medium to enhance organization's productivity and performance. More organizations are now adopting strategies such as developing learning organization in order to improve performance. A number of limitations related to the development of learning organizations should be recognized (Muhammad Imran et al., 2011).

In this study, there are two dimensions of organizational learning capabilities that are identified as to determine the knowledge performance of librarians. Each of the dimensions of the organizational learning capabilities has been cited by previous researchers (Goh and Richards, 1997; Neefe, 2001). These dimensions are:

Transfer of Knowledge

According to Muhammad Karim et al. (2012) employees are advised to learn more in order to provide better situation and rapid growth of organization. Besides that, employees are able to upgrade their service level by providing better capabilities in organizational learning. Knowledge transfer and integration capability play an important role in producing the wide humanistic environment in one organization.

Organizational learning capability encourages the process of generating ideas in an organization, and somehow it generalizes ideas with impact. It provides the precise opinion regarding organizational learning environment. According to Malikeh et al. (2012) learning is a process of transferring knowledge from individual to other units and functions.

Knowledge transfer is one of the fundamental aspects in organizational learning process. It requires an environment that is willing to accept all types of opinions and experiences (McGill and Slocum, 1993). Besides, knowledge transfer is the internal spreading of knowledge that has been gathered at individual level, basically through; debate, dialogue, communication and interaction between individuals (Gomez, 2005). Ability of one organization in gathering and transferring knowledge and information is one of the vital factors of the organizational learning capability (Artwood and Mora, 2010).

Leadership

Managers should create the environments that may stimulate the risk-taking attitude among the employees and besides that is to produce employees that can accept mistakes. This may help individuals and organization to be more alert and aggressive to try new ideas. Hence, this can improve working process and help the organization to learn from mistakes. The problem solving is the key to help the business (Chung-Hsiung, 2011).

Leadership is important in one organization. The existence of leadership may encourage the organizational culture which also enables the workforce to understand and believe their organization's vision, mission and value. A constant and powerful leadership will encourage employees to do their job because they want to enhance and develop learning culture. Besides, organization's leadership also encourages learning culture with future and an external orientation. This may foster the free flow of information between customers and staff to improve the quality service and products (Malek Shah, 2005).

Knowledge Performance

According to Lin (1999) it is vital for organization to consistently foster the development and exchange of knowledge within and among organization. Higher management should persuade knowledge sharing culture among their employees. This may lead to improve organizational performance. Knowledge sharing or transfer of knowledge is the main element in the organization in order to generate competitive advantages and improve organizational performance when employees vigorously substitute their knowledge.

Methodology

In this pilot study, questionnaires were personally distributed to fifty selected librarians in different departments who worked in an academic library. The questionnaire was designed on a 1 (strongly disagree) through 7 (strongly agree) Likert scale. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used in analyzing the data. The data were analyzed by using frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation as descriptive part of the analysis, and the Pearson coefficient correlation was used to analyze the inferential part of the analysis.

Results and Discussions

Reliability Test

Table 1 shows the results of the reliability tests. It can be summarized that Cronbach's alpha value of transfer of knowledge (0.963), leadership (0.963) and knowledge performance (0.964) exceed 0.7. The value of this coefficient was considered high and acceptable thus satisfying the validity assumption of the items in the respective dimensions.

Table 1: Results of Reliability Test

No.	Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
1	Transfer of Knowledge	0.963	7
2	Leadership	0.963	7
3	Knowledge Performance	0.964	14

Profile of Respondents

All demographic items were cross-tabulated to describe the profiles of the respondents. The sample was made up of two thirds females (66.7%) and one-third males (33.3%), a large proportion of middle management staff (88.9%) compared with senior management staff (11.1%), and a slightly higher proportion of a bachelor degree holders (58.3%) compared with a master's degree holders (41.7%). Besides that, among the females, 12.5% were senior management staff and 87.5% were middle management staff. Among the males, only 8.3% was in senior management and others (91.7%) were in middle management staff. There was also a relatively higher proportion of females with a master's degree (45.8%) compared with their male counterparts (33.3%).

Perceptions of OLC's and Knowledge Performance

The results show that on the average, the perceptions of the respondents on the three dimensions are very similar and moderately positive as they fall within a very short range of between 5.70 and 5.73. Transfer of knowledge has the highest score (5.73), followed by knowledge performance (5.72) and leadership (5.70).

Table 2: Ranking of the Level of Perception

No.	Dimension	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
1	Transfer of Knowledge	5.73*	0.579
2	Knowledge Performance	5.72	0.457
3	Leadership	5.70	0.737

* The higher the mean score, the more positive is the perception

Perceptions on Transfer of Knowledge

Table 3 shows the mean scores of perceptions on transfer of knowledge statements. On the average, the respondents were moderately positive towards their organization's transfer of knowledge. The mean scores of the seven individual items are quite similar, ranging from 5.61 (*employees are informed of organization's recent and future activities*) to 5.94 (*new ideas from staff is mostly welcome as to practice the sharing of knowledge among organization's community*), hence, also indicating a moderate positive perception towards their transfer of knowledge in organization.

Table 3: Results of Mean Score by Transfer of Knowledge

Transfer of knowledge : <i>In my library</i>	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
1. New ideas from staff is mostly welcome as to practice the sharing of knowledge among organization's community	5.94	0.860
2. Staff share new work process with all employees	5.78	0.866
3. There is no boundaries in sharing knowledge or skills learned from training with other employees	5.76	0.806
4. Employees are informed of how their role contributes to the whole of organizational process	5.72	0.779
5. New skills or new work process that is valuable and benefit the organization is frequently shared with all employees	5.67	0.632
6. Higher management and employees are encouraged to discuss and share knowledge as to reflect on action of success and failures	5.67	0.765
7. Employees are informed of organization's recent and future activities	5.61	0.767
Overall	5.73	0.579

Perceptions on Leadership

Table 4 indicates the mean scores of perceptions on leadership statements. On the average, the respondents were moderately positive towards their leadership. The mean scores of the seven individual items are quite similar, ranging from 5.52 (*leaders are always involved with the training and activities with other employees*) to 5.80 (*leaders are open to change and new ideas*), hence, also indicating a moderate positive perception towards their leadership.

Table 4: Results of Mean Score by Leadership

Leadership : <i>In my library</i>	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
1. Leaders are open to change and new ideas	5.80	0.821
2. Innovative ideas that works are often rewarded by leadership	5.78	1.046
3. Leaders always involve employees in making important decision	5.76	0.968
4. Leaders are used to criticism and accept it without overly defensive	5.76	0.938
5. Leaders always provide fast feedback in order to identify the potential problems, overcoming problems and oppurtunities	5.67	0.792
6. Leaders have the skills of sharing knowledge	5.63	0.867
7. Leaders are always involved with the training and activities with other employees	5.52	0.697
Overall	5.70	0.737

Perceptions on Knowledge Performance

Table 5 shows the mean scores of perceptions by respondents on knowledge performance. On the average, the respondents were more positive towards knowledge performance (5.72) .The mean scores of the seven individual items are quite similar, ranging from 5.56 (*knowledge about external clients is acquired*) to 5.94 (*feedback from clients helps to improve services*), hence, also indicating a moderate positive perception towards their knowledge performance.

Table 5: Results of Mean Score by Knowledge Performance

Knowledge Performance: <i>In my library</i>	Mean Score	Std Deviation
1. Feedback from clients helps to improve services	5.94	0.630
2. Information skills program helps to determine user satisfaction	5.89	0.708
3. Librarians exchanged knowledge inside and outside the organization	5.86	0.639
4. Specific skills are needed for future tasks	5.75	0.692
5. Knowledge is improved and skills are updated in order to achieve organization's vision and mission	5.75	0.649

6. Knowledge on new materials is acquired	5.72	0.615
7. Embedding knowledge such as planning, design and service are practised	5.72	0.513
8. Information about external clients is gathered	5.70	0.577
9. Enhancement of knowledge and skills give benefits to the organization	5.69	0.525
10. Existing knowledge helps to generate new information	5.67	0.632
11. Effective knowledge is acquire and been sharing with others	5.64	0.723
12. Employees' competencies in solving problems are needed	5.61	0.688
13. The number of users learning new skills is increasing	5.61	0.599
14. Knowledge about internal clients is acquired	5.56	0.939
Overall	5.72	0.457

Relationships between OLC dimensions (Transfer of Knowledge and Leadership) and Knowledge Performance

The results of the Pearson's coefficient correlation test (Table 6) shows that transfer of knowledge was moderately correlated with leadership and is significant ($p < 0.01$, $r = 0.690$). The interpretation of this relationship is that on the average, a respondent who has a moderate perception on transfer of knowledge is fairly likely to have a moderate perception on leadership as well. Likewise, a respondent who has a low perception on the transfer of knowledge is fairly likely to have a low perception on leadership. Besides, transfer of knowledge was moderately correlated with knowledge performance ($p < 0.01$, $r = 0.640$). The interpretation of this relationship is that on the average, a respondent who has a moderate perception on transfer of knowledge is fairly likely to have a moderate perception on knowledge performance as well. Likewise, a respondent who has a low perception on the transfer of knowledge is fairly likely to have a low perception on knowledge performance. However, there is a weak correlation between leadership and knowledge performance.

Table 6: Relationship between OLC Dimensions and Knowledge Performance

Correlations		Pearson r value	Significant Correlation
Transfer of knowledge	Leadership	0.690**	YES
Transfer of knowledge	Knowledge performance	0.640**	YES
Leadership	Knowledge performance	0.477*	NO

Conclusion

The results indicated that the perceptions of the respondents on the three dimensions were very similar and moderately positive. Also, the results showed a moderate and positive relationship between transfer of knowledge and leadership, and between transfer of knowledge and knowledge performance. Nevertheless, there was a weak correlation between leadership and knowledge performance. Therefore these positive results of librarian's perceptions on OLC were indications of the right path towards a better performance in library. Besides, the results were the outcome from a limited of two research objectives. Future study should expand more on other OLC dimensions and targeted respondents. The output of the study is expected to improve the skills of acquiring knowledge and enhance the learning capabilities of librarians and library staff management in academic libraries. It is also expected that organizational learning capability will assist library in making improvement on knowledge performance.

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