Australian Journal of Basic and Applied Sciences, 9(27) August 2015, Pages: 564-572

ISSN:1991-8178

Australian Journal of Basic and Applied Sciences

Journal home page: www.ajbasweb.com

Knowledge Sharing: An Investigation of Expanded Theory of Planned Behavior

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received 18 August 2015
Accepted 28 September 2015
Available online 25 October 2015

Keywords:
Knowledge, knowledge sharing, Islamic values and theory of planned behavior.

ABSTRACT

This paper aims at extending and applying the theory of plan behavior to examine the concept of knowledge sharing. The study established moderating effect of Islamic values on the relationship between subjective norms and intention to share knowledge towards knowledge sharing; the study also employed other components of TPB in studying knowledge sharing. This paper provides a literature review on the theory of planned behavior, and its appropriateness for studying knowledge sharing. It also offers suggestion on development of TPB by attaching Islamic values as moderating variable. In this study, propositions present insights for developing the theory of planned behavior in investigating knowledge sharing. The paper gives suggestions for examining the propositions and provides heading for additional studies in knowledge sharing. The study might enhance identification of individual beliefs and values towards knowledge sharing that will be the cornerstone for instigating knowledge sharing among individuals to achieve company objectives and goals.

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To Cite This Article: Mohamedi Abbasi Balozi, Siti Zubaidah bt. Othman and Mohd Faisal Mohd Isa, Knowledge Sharing: An Investigation of Expanded Theory of Planned Behavior. ***Aust. J. Basic & Appl. Sci.,*** *9(27): 564-572, 2015*

INTRODUCTION

Many organizations have identified organizational knowledge as a great and critical tool for gaining competitive advantage (Long & Fahey, 2000). And knowledge sharing is considered a significant mechanism for converting individual knowledge to organizational knowledge (Jo & Joo, 2011). Knowledge sharing is regarded as an organizational sign of possessing social capital whereby individual knowledge can be disseminated to other members and become organizational knowledge based on availability of social capital (Collins & Hitt, 2006). In fact, social capital makes organizational principles, which are considered as the tools for enhancing individual knowledge, to be available to all organizational members (Makino & Inkpen, 2003). Knowledge sharing is the fundamental instrument for managing knowledge in most of the organizations that is why practitioners and researchers have paid more attention to it in recent years (Riege, 2005). Knowledge sharing is very crucial, as it enhances competitive advantage and organizational commercial achievements and a large part of organizational activities depend on utilization of knowledge. Thus, knowledge sharing practices help in realizing maximum organizational goals (Riege, 2005). Moreover, knowledge sharing practices act as major components of knowledge management programs which facilitate both individual and organizational learning (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Ikujiro Nonaka & Lewin, 1994).

In recent years, there are increasing numbers of researches that rely on the factors that influence or enhance knowledge sharing (Davenport, Prusak, & Webber, 1998; Lu, Leung, & Koch, 2006). However, little is known on the moderating effect of Islamic values on the relationship between subjective norms and knowledge sharing intention. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to extend the theory of planed behavior by establishing the moderating effect of Islamic values on the relationship between subjective norms and knowledge sharing. This paper started with back ground of the study, followed by literature review that focused on the concepts of knowledge, knowledge sharing, values and Islamic values as well as potentiality of moderating effect of Islamic values, theoretical framework for studying knowledge sharing, modification of TPB in studying knowledge sharing, propositions, implication of the study and finally the summary and conclusion of the study.

Literature Review:

Knowledge:

Knowledge is the rationalization of true belief which comprises of information and understanding of individual intention, mentality and correlation which are organized in terms of objectives and

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interpersonal themes, role themes and life themes (Plato, 1953). In terms of objectives, these include enjoyment, satisfaction, achievement, instrumental, crisis and preservation (Schank & Abelson, 1977). Knowledge is also conceptualized as codified information which contains context, interpretation, experience, wisdom and insight (Davenport &Vo, 2001). In fact, knowledge helps an organization to realize its goals, objectives, vision and mission (Kakabadse, Kouzmin, & Kakabadse, 2001). In organizational perspective, knowledge which is related to job is very important in establishing career achievement as well as identifying skills and capabilities of an individual.

Knowledge is classified into two major categories, which are tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge (Ikujiro Nonaka & Lewin, 1994). According to Hau, Kim, Lee, & Kim (2013), tacit knowledge is a type of knowledge which is resided in an individual mind and it is very complex to be documented. This knowledge is disseminated to other members through social interaction. On other hand, explicit knowledge is the knowledge which is the objective and can be articulated in the formal and systematic language (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). This form of knowledge is considered to be public good and can be found in computer information systems, documents and books (Ikujiro Nonaka & Lewin, 1994).

Knowledge application in an organization has got various benefits. First and foremost, knowledge is considered as the best resource of a firm's strategy (Jafari, Fathian, Jahani, & Akhavan, 2008). Knowledge improves customer services and goods, cuts costs, prompts organizational changes and suppleness, instigates an environment for learning and enhances efficiency and productivity (Skyrme, 2000). Moreover, knowledge is regarded as the fundamental instrument for enabling employee creativity, and competences for solving problems in an organization (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Wang &Noe, 2010). Furthermore, knowledge has become the main driving key of firms' sustainability (Amboina & Bowman, 2001; Felin & Hesterly, 2007; Grant, 1996). Previous studies stressed that knowledge is applied regularly in organizational activities (Cohen & Bacdayan, 1994; Nelson & Winter, 2002), latest research escalates emphasis on the function of personal knowledge (Felin & Hesterly, 2007), as well as the significance of knowledge sharing and transfer (Kane,Argote,&Levine,2005)among organizational members in order to increase knowledge assets (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

Knowledge sharing:

Knowledge sharing is defined as a tendency whereby an individual disseminate knowledge to other organizational members (Bartol, Park, & Srivastava, 2002). Knowledge sharing is the willingness and social process of donating, gaining, reutilizing the available knowledge in order to achieve the goals of an organization (Akhavan, Rahimi, & Mehralian, 2013). It is crucial to understand that these two terms that is information sharing and knowledge sharing have been employed interchangeably in past studies (Wang & Noe, 2010). However, the emphasis has been laid on tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge that have been shared and substituted among organizational members.

It is considered that knowledge sharing is the most significant aspect of knowledge management (Bock & Kim, 2002). For that case, most previous studies have considered knowledge sharing as the main activity of knowledge management (Bose & Sugumaran, 2003; Riege, 2005). Since the consequences of knowledge sharing is transmission of knowledge to organizational capitals and assets (Dawson, 2000), knowledge management is there to assist knowledge sharing in an organization (Wang, 2004).

In fact, knowledge sharing is characterized to be an individual willingness to donate knowledge to the other employees (Ka¨ser & Miles, 2002). Thus, in order to enhance effective knowledge sharing, it is the role of an organization to create an environment in which sharing outcomes should benefit both sharing parties (Roth, 2003).

Knowledge sharing can be carried out through the following methods; firstly is documenting knowledge. This refers to the paper form documenting, as well as recording in databases and repositories (Nonaka & Lewin, 1994). Also there are contact methods which include telling the stories, community of practice, peer supports, seminar, coaching, mentoring, meeting action review and interviews (Huang, Lin, & Chuang, 2006). In addition, conference, on job training, job rotation, teamwork, information technology contacts (MacNeil, 2003; Nonaka & Lewin, 1994). Nonaka, when propounded knowledge sharing through interaction, included video conferencing, internet sites, blogs, e-mail, chat, training through virtual, networks, software for managing knowledge as well as interaction of the society (Akhavan *et al*., 2013).

Majority of researchers have propounded importance of knowledge sharing among organizational employees and external organizational members (Chowdhury, 2005). Knowledge sharing is declared as the first step in tracking learning organization, since a person's learning relies on sharing (Kakabadse, & Kouzmin, 2003). It is also knowledge sharing that helps an organization to have the ability to innovate and enhance better decision making which in return leads quality of products and services, since, it reduces the time spent on designing and manufacturing of new services and products (Bock, Lee, Zmud, & Kim, 2005). It overcomes the death of knowledge (Wasko & Faraj, 2000).

Generally, it is a critical key for gaining competitive advantages (Akhavan *et al*., 2013).

Contrariwise, if there no knowledge sharing, it reduces effective exploitation of expertise and experiences (Lu *et al*., 2006). Due to the importance of knowledge sharing in an organization, practitioners and academics came with emphasis on the factors that facilitate cohesive knowledge sharing among organization members. Thus, some researchers postulated technological usage, organizational culture and structure as factors that promptly influence knowledge sharing (Akhavan *et al*., 2013).

Values and Islamic Values:

The term values have been defined by majority of scholars. According to Rokeach (1973), defined values as the forms of beliefs on do and don't. The concept of value has been taken into consideration in human life since it has significance in all facets of human life (Rokeach, 1973). In fact, the values portray how the society is organized. And they are important components for directing the goal of the society (Beatty, Homer, & Kahle, 1988).

Chan (2009) portrayed five significant characteristics of values as follows; values are considered to be needed goals and beliefs, values anticipate précised actions and situations, values are prioritized in accordance to the significances among individuals, and values are principles which determine choosing and appraising of behavior.

Islam sets its standards which are to be followed by those believe on it. These standards are termed as Islamic values. There are tremendous numbers of Islamic values. Rusyana (2012) propounded five Islamic values which are mercy, subjection of passion, unity, supreme love of creator, and accountability for all deeds. In fact, these Islamic values are espoused by number of Qur'an verses (Rusyana, 2012).Moreover, Umam (2013) postulated the fundamental Islamic values such as simplicity, self-reliance, sincerity, freedom and Islamic brotherhood. Therefore, when a person equipped with these values, he will be willing to share knowledge with his core organizational members.

On other hand, Halstead (2007) framed out the three major categories of Islamic values, including akhlaq (ethics), adab (discipline), and good Muslim characters. Akhlaq is interpreted as moral values and defined by IbnSadr al-Din al-Shirwani (d. 1036 AH, 1626/7 CE) as virtual science which stipulate mechanisms of acquiring and guarding them. They are considered to be inborn personalities which are obtained when the soul is inspired by them (Walzer, 1960). Al-Qardawi, (1981)ranked akhla¯q into six types, illustrating the variety of moral values anticipated in the Muslim life, which are self akhlaq, family akhlaq, society akhlaq, animal world akhlaq, physical environmental akhlaq and akhlaq connected to the creator. In addition, the term akhlaq has multipurpose usage as it can be used in both plural and singular forms. And when it is used as singular brands, it (khuluq) portrays character, and inborn personalities, which is considered as the degree to which soul executes behaviour or action without pondering or discussion (Miskawih, 1968; Omar, 1994).

Majority of Muslim scholars -l-Kindi, al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, Ibn Miskawayh, Nizam al-Mulk, al-Ghazali, al-Razi and al-Tusi- have conducted studies on akhlaq as key constituent in Islamic studies of entire levels of Islamic education and knowledge. They included other elements of Islamic values including adab (discipline) which is defined as conduct related with good upbringing, while good Muslim characters refers to the qualities of character owned by a humble Muslim which enhances distributing knowledge to the members of community about the do and don't as well as encouraging them to behave in harmony with the knowledge and applying the knowledge in real life(Halstead, 2007). Thus, in this essence, Islamic values can act as fundamental mechanism for instigating knowledge sharing among organizational members.

In this study, Islamic values are treated as moderator in moderating the relationship between subjective norms and intention towards knowledge sharing. There are some reasons which lead Islamic values to be deployed as moderator. First reason is that value is considered as supreme abstract of the social cognition (Beatty *et al*., 1988) and this study has employed particular values that are Islamic values which must influence the daily life of Islamic worshipers. Secondly, value is determined as one of the variables that can intervene with other variables to influence individual behavior (Sihombing, 2010).Thirdly, it is also indicated empirically that values can be considered as moderating factor (Ismail & Alli, 2009).

Theoretical framework for investigating knowledge sharing:

The evidence from past studies indicated that TPB (Ajzen, 1991) is considered by researchers as significant for designing, predicting and describing different personal behaviors, including knowledge sharing behavior(Conner & Abraham, 2001). This theory is drawn from expansion of the theory of reasoned action (TRA; (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). TRA was found to be limited in explaining ranges of human behaviors who have inadequate volitional control (Ajzen, 1991). It is due to this reason that led to the invention of TPB by introducing perceived behavioral control as a new extended variable in TRA.

The theory suggests that personal behavior or action is instigated by intention. And intention is influenced by attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 2001;

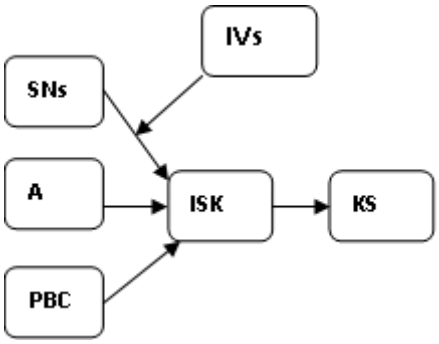
Sihombing, 2010). Attitude, which refers to the attitude toward behavior or action, is described as the degree to which an individual has positive or negative judgment or evaluation of an action or behavior. In fact, the more positive attitude towards action or behavior, the more powerful the person's intention must be to execute the behavior or action. Thus, attitude signifies a brief appraisal of a psychological purpose taken in. It includes harmful and beneficial, good and bad, pleasant and unpleasant as well as likeable and dislikeable (Ajzen, 2001; Petty & Wegner, 1998).

Subjective norm is defined as person's perceptions of social pressure to execute or not to execute an action or behavior. On other hand, perceived behavioral control refers to the individual perceptions of easiness or difficultness on performing particular behavior or action. It is considered that the higher positive attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioral control, the more an individual intends to execute an action or behavior (Ajzen, 1991). However, there is variation across behavior and situation in which attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control can predict individuals' intention (Armitage & Conner, 2001). Therefore, in some situations, it can be dictated that only subjective norms or attitudes as well as only subjective has positive impact on intention. For this case, it proposes that each variable has independent contribution on intention (Ajzen, 1991).

The theory of planned behavior, in principle, allows the enclosure of supplementary predictors if they have ability to capture a significant influence on intention or actual behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Based on this principle, this study is going to include Islamic values as additional variable on the current theory of planned behavior for investing knowledge sharing.

Amending TPB for Examining Knowledge sharing:

The theory of planned behavior is considered to be a propositional theory, as it comprises peculiar variables which have ability to prompt intention and actual behavior (Whetten, 2009). Thus, this study intends to adapt TPB because of its ability to influence knowledge sharing (May & Jr, 2013; Whetten, 2009). However, TPB also is regarded as a theory that can be modified and complemented with additional variables to explain intention and behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Consistence with this principle, the study is introducing Islamic values as moderator in moderating the relationship between subjective norms and intention to share knowledge towards knowledge sharing. The moderator factor has been established based on mixed findings on the relationship between subjective norms and intention to share knowledge as indicated in the previous studies (S U. Aktharsha, Ali, & Anisa, 2012; G.-W. Bock *et al*., 2005; Q. Huang, Davison, & Gu, 2008; Jiacheng, Lu, & Francesco, 2010; Sihombing, 2010; Zhikun & Fungfai, 2009). And relying on what Baron & Kenny (1986) propounded that if the variable or variables in the studies reveal mixed findings, there is a need of introducing moderating factor to examine how there are mixed results. It is indicated in figure 1 below.



SNs=Subjective Norms, A=Attitude, PC=Perceived Behavioral Control, IVs= Islamic Values, ISK=Intention to Share Knowledge, KS= Knowledge Sharing

Fig. 1: Research Model.

Propositions:

In this study, TPB is portrayed as the propositional theory, because, it is made of peculiar variables that can influence behavioral intention and actual behavior (Balozi, Othman, & Isa, 2014; Whetten, 2009). In fact, the theory of planned behavior is a development of TRA which has ability to examine verities of human behaviors and actions, including knowledge sharing behavior (Balozi *et al*., 2014; May & Jr, 2013; Whetten, 2009). However, the theory of planned behaviour includes some additional variables, if they have capability to influence intention or actual behavior (Icek Ajzen, 1991; Trivedi, Shehata, & Mestelman, 2005). Therefore, in this study, TPB was adapted for examining knowledge sharing by including Islamic values as moderating supplementary variable. For the sake of providing conceptualization, the study developed propositions on each component of the theory

Attitudes and intention to share knowledge:

Knowledge sharing intention is an individual willingness to disseminate and acquire knowledge to and from other organizational members (Bock *et al*., 2005). In fact, it is the intention to share knowledge based on personal willingness to share created and acquired knowledge with other employees (Huang & Huang, 2007). Empirically, it is indicated that attitudes are the most important supplementary precursor of knowledge (Aktharsha *et al*., 2012;Bock & Kim, 2002;Bock *et al*., 2005; Jiacheng *et al*., 2010; Kuo & Young, 2008). It is considered that attitudes are critical components in influencing intention to share knowledge and develop knowledge sharing than subjective norms (Zhikun & Fungfai, 2009), since, attitudes are structured from behavioral beliefs which develop either positive or negative feelings towards intention to share knowledge (Aktharsha *et al*., 2012). Therefore, the higher positive attitudes towards knowledge sharing, instigates more the intention to share the knowledge. Based on that argument, the following is proposed.

P1: There is positive significant relationship between attitudes and intention to share knowledge.

Subjective norms and intention to share knowledge:

Subjective norms are described as the manner that a person thinks perceives other members expect him to act (Wei, Stankosky, Calabrese, & Lu, 2008). Subjective norms are regarded as social pressure perceptions that comfort expectations of other people about execution of a specific action (George, 2005). Subjective norms as one component of TPB has been portrayed to have positive significant relationship with intention to share knowledge (Bock *et al*., 2005; Jiacheng *et al*., 2010; Zhikun & Fungfai, 2009). However, there are few studies that indicated the relationship between subjective norms and intention to share knowledge. Based on above descriptions, the following is established proposition.

P2: There is positive significant relationship between subjective norms and intention to share knowledge.

Perceived behavioral control and intention to share knowledge and knowledge sharing:

Perceived behavioral control (PBC) is an individual perception on intricateness or easiness in performing a specific action or behavior (Ajzen, 1991). PBC has been utilized exhaustively in social cognition models to predict health behavior (Armitage & Conner, 2000). Therefore, it is regarded affect intention and behaviour (Armitage & Conner, 2001). Empirically, it is portrayed that PBC has significant influence on intention to share knowledge (Aktharsha & Anisa, 2012; Jeon, Kim, & Koh, 2011; Lin & Lee, 2004; Shirani, 2012; Tohidinia & Mosakhani, 2010). Moreover, PBC has significant effect on knowledge sharing among employees (Aktharsha *et al*., 2012). Thus, following these explanations, the following propositions are made:

P3: There is positive significant relationship between perceived behavioral control and intention to share knowledge.

P4: There is significant relationship between perceived behavioral control and knowledge sharing.

Intention to share knowledge and knowledge sharing:

Intention is important component of TPB and determinant of individual behavior or action (Albarracín, Johnson, Fishbein, & Muellerleile, 2001; Armitage & Conner, 2001; Kwok & Gao, 2005; Reychav & Weisberg, 2010). Thus, it can influence knowledge sharing as one individual practice. Empirically, it is revealed that intention to share knowledge has significant correlation with knowledge sharing (Bock & Kim, 2002; Chang, Huang, Chiang, Hsu, & Chang, 2012; Ford & Staples, 2010; Huang *et al*., 2008). Therefore, the following proposition is proposed:

P5: There is positive significant relationship between intention to share knowledge and knowledge sharing.

Islamic values moderate the relationship between subjective norms and intention to share knowledge:

Islamic values refer to the standards or principles which are followed by Islamic believers in large extent (Rusyana, 2012). Rusyana (2012) propounded five Islamic values which are mercy, subjection of passion, unity, supreme love of creator, and accountability for all deeds. In fact, these Islamic values are advocated by a number of Qur'an verses (Rusyana, 2012). Consistent with TPB (Ajzen, 1991), Islamic values can be explained as individual attitudes that facilitate positive perception on a specific behavior or action. However, empirically, there are previous studies that used TPB (Ajzen, 1991) as underpin theory in studying knowledge sharing. It has been discovered that subjective norms displayed weak significance and no significant relationship with the intention to share knowledge (Aktharsha *et al*., 2012;Huang *et al*., 2008). Generally , the results reveal mixed findings (Aktharsha *et al*., 2012; Bock *et al*., 2005; Huang *et al*., 2008; Jiacheng *et al*., 2010; Sihombing, 2010; Zhikun & Fungfai, 2009). Thus, Islamic values will show how subjective norms reveal mixed results on intention to share knowledge and it is expected that, Islamic values as component of model of this study is expected to moderate the relationship between subjective norms and intention to share knowledge. Thus, the following proposition is proposed.

P5: There is a positive significance of moderating effect of Islamic values on the relationship between subjective norms and intention to share knowledge.

Implication of the study Suggestion for Further Studies:

Theoretical implication:

Islamic values are important factors that can be regarded to moderate the relationship between subjective norms and intention to share knowledge among employees. Therefore, theoretically, it is developed to study knowledge sharing and it offers very significant contribution to the extension of theory of planned behavior. Most studies that employed TPB paid little attention to religious factors. Thus, this study is introducing Islamic values as additional factors towards expansion of TPB in studying intention to share knowledge and knowledge sharing. This idea is drawn from Ajzen (1991) who propounded the addition of new belief and other factors in TPB in order to show the ability of the theory in elucidating intention and behavior or action. However, Islamic values, in this study, have been employed to moderate the relationship between subjective norms and intention to share knowledge in order to explain knowledge sharing consequences. Thus, we hope that Islamic values as moderator variable might strengthen TPB in instigating knowledge sharing.

The theory of planned behavior is portrayed as the appropriate theoretical framework to assist this exploration and the inclusion of Islamic values as additional moderating variable to TPB has not been studied extensively in contemporary studies. Hence, the current study intends to establish moderating effect of Islamic values on the relationship between subjective norms and intention to share knowledge towards knowledge sharing as contribution to the development of TPB and to the body of knowledge.

Practical Implication of the study:

Once propositions review that the TPB model and Islamic values as additional variable will yield significant findings, they will be both having important implication on public and private organizations in realization of goals. Generally, the propositions of this study have important implication on world organizations which demand further knowledge under knowledge sharing. Since propositions will enhance recognition of individual beliefs and cornerstone for prompting knowledge sharing among individuals to achieve company objectives and goals.

Summary and Conclusion:

The intention of this study is to broaden and employ the theory of planned behavior in studying knowledge sharing. In fact, knowledge sharing is the most significant practice for an organization to realize its goals. It is major method whereby individual knowledge can be disseminated to other organizational members to increase their knowledge, skills and competencies which in return lead to organizational prosperities. By providing propositions of new additional moderating factor and components of TPB, we hope we have contributed a lot to what might be consequences on intention to share knowledge and actual knowledge sharing.

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