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Critical Success Factors of Knowledge Sharing: A Case Study in a University Library

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ABSTRACT

Background: Knowledge sharing is a process of transferring knowledge to other surrounding people both online and offline in order to increase the level of individual's knowledge. Knowledge sharing can occur via written correspondence or face-to-face communication through networking with other experts, documenting, organizing and capturing knowledge for others. The five factors that were highlighted in the study are trust, communication between staff, information system, and rewards system and organization structure. The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationships between trust, communication, information system, reward system and organization structure and knowledge sharing among staff in the library context. Those populations are the staff in Perpustakaan Hamzah Sendut (PHS) in Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) main campus. A total of 100 questionnaires distributed and only 80 questionnaires were answered and returned. The researchers used SPSS to analyze data. The findings showed that trust, communication between staff, information system and organization structure are positively related to knowledge sharing in library.

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INTRODUCTION

Knowledge can be defined as a combination of experience, value, contextual information and expert insight that help to evaluate and incorporate new experience and information. Knowledge, not only exists in documents and repositories, but it is embedded in people's mind overtime and it is demonstrated through their actions and behavior.

The process of knowledge management (KM) involves several activities. Mining the literatures had shown that the most commonly discussed activity in the process of knowledge management since the past decade is knowledge sharing (Ford, 2001). This is due to the fact that knowledge sharing is critical to a firm's success (Davenport ad Prusak, 1998) as it leads to faster knowledge deployment to portions of the organization that can greatly benefit from it (Syed-Ikhsan & Rowland, 2004).

Knowledge sharing currently is widely recognized (Ibrahim et al., 2012) as it becomes very significant to the organization as well as to the individual. It is congruent with Hendricks (1999) who said that knowledge sharing was important in a provision of a connection between the individual and the organization, whereby the knowledge from individual was moving to the organizational level, simultaneously converted into economic and competitive value for the organization. Interestingly to note, knowledge of individual would not give a big impact to the organization, unless it is being passed to other individuals (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995), thus, knowledge sharing had to be promote and practice commonly in all organizations.

Specifically in the context of the creation of new products and services, knowledge sharing acts as a key process in order to leveraging organizational knowledge assets and in achieving collective outcomes (Argote & Ingram, 2000; Hoegl & Schulze, 2005; Massa & Testa, 2009). Conceptually, Al-Hawamdeh (2003) also pointed out that knowledge sharing would produce the outcomes which tend to the improvement of the organizational performance. Knowledge sharing will also drive the staff towards the production of various strategies in maintaining and upgrading the competitive values of their organization as well.

Defining Knowledge Sharing:

Knowledge sharing is referred to as the process by which an individual imparts his or her experience, insight or understanding to another individual so that the recipient may potentially acquire and use the

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knowledge to perform his or her tasks better (Bock and Kim, 2002; Markus, 2001; Wasko and Faraj, 2005). On the other hand, it is also emphasized as a provision of task information and know-how to help others and to collaborate with others to solve problems, develop new ideas, or implement policies or procedures (Cummings, 2004; Pulakos, Dorsey and Borman, 2003). Knowledge sharing can occur via written correspondence or face-to-face communication through networking with other experts, documenting, organizing and capturing knowledge for others (Cummings, 2004; Pulakos, Dorsey and Borman, 2003).

A study by Darr and Kurtzberg (2000) has explained that knowledge sharing was a process of gaining experiences from others which would also encourage learning of organization (Levitt and March, 1988). According to Jackson et al. (2006), , knowledge sharing was basic revenue which means employees could contribute to knowledge application, innovation and ultimately the competitive advantage of the organization. By all means, knowledge sharing promotes trust and mutual respect as well as facilitating the flow of one's knowledge assets to be capitalized for performance improvements (Kamarudin et al., 2014) thus explains its consequences.

Knowledge Sharing in Libraries:

Libraries have a similarity with other organizations which need knowledge sharing in order to have advancement in producing quality resources, services and facilities to library users. Moreover, libraries too, play a vital role for communities' surroundings in disseminating accurate and up-to-date information and knowledge from time to time. It is proved by Mammo (2010) that responsibilities of university libraries are to provide relevant, comprehensive and up-to-date information to users. According to Robertson and Reese (1999), in communities and organizations, the social and intellectual interaction exists from the libraries which act as the gateways. In relation, Shazwani and Mazlina (2008) also supported by saying that public library act as a centre of knowledge for one community, so that, knowledge sharing among librarians is very important to facilitate the improvement of library services. This is proved by White (2004), from the result of her case study that knowledge management could benefit the whole process of library services. Interestingly, Parirokh et al. (2005) also reported that the improvement of a library as a learning organization could be achieved once there was knowledge sharing practices among librarians. Hence, each staff in libraries needs to enhance and upgrade themselves for provision of knowledge to library users by practicing knowledge sharing among each other.

On the other hand, Jantz (2001) proposed that the services provided in the library would be improved if the staff used and shared knowledge among each others. Moreover, Kumaresan (2010) also highlighted that practicing knowledge sharing in libraries was very important in strategic planning and the cultivation of this attitude is required within and between libraries. In order to ensure the knowledge sharing culture disperse in the library, chief librarian need to identify valuable tacit knowledge available in the library together with all various department staff of each level (Kumaresan, 2010). Consequently, they could know what exactly the kind of the knowledge that need to be shared among all the staff for the purpose of improvement and development of library management and services. A study by Shanhong (2000) suggested the ways that library could organize the knowledge sharing among their staff which by creating document information resources and ensure that library should make comprehensive utilization of expert systems and all media in sharing the knowledge.

The common activities of knowledge sharing in library normally occurred informally. This is supported by Maponya (2004) said that most of academic library had knowledge sharing which entirely were uncoordinated and occurred in informal and via conversation. The library should organize the knowledge sharing programme well; hence, staff could share their knowledge freely among each other as to improve the operation of library. According to Jantz (2001), there was no systematic approach in most libraries for organizing the knowledge, thus, all libraries need to pay attention to this problem in order to inculcate knowledge sharing culture for the benefits of the entire organization.

Objectives:

The study attempts to achieve the following objectives:

- To investigate the relationship between trust factor and knowledge sharing among staff in the studied university library.
- To investigate the relationship between communication between staff factor and knowledge sharing among staff in the library.
- To investigate the relationship between information systems factor and knowledge sharing among staff in the library.
- To investigate the relationship between rewards system factor and knowledge sharing among staff in the library.
- To investigate the relationship between organization structure factor and knowledge sharing among staff in the library.

Methodology:

For this study, the researchers decided to use the quantitative method after considering all related factors. Quantitative in this study refers to the data that will be collected from the distribution of surveys in the form of questionnaires. Since it is generally impossible to study the entire population of PHS which comprises of a total of six library branches, the researchers then relies on a sampling technique to acquire a section of the population that that would be the respondents. Those populations are the 287 staffs in Perpustakaan Hamzah Sendut in USM main campus. This study adopted the probability sampling which is simple random sampling method to obtain the number of respondents of the study. Only 100 staffs were selected as a representative. A total of 100 questionnaires distributed and only 80 questionnaires are answered and returned.

Results:

This study attempts to investigate the critical success factors of knowledge sharing among staffs in PHS. To have better understanding on this study, below is the theoretical framework adapted from research conducted by Al-Alawi *et al*. (2007) which illustrated trust, communication between staff, information systems, reward systems and organization structure as independent variables while knowledge sharing as dependent variables.

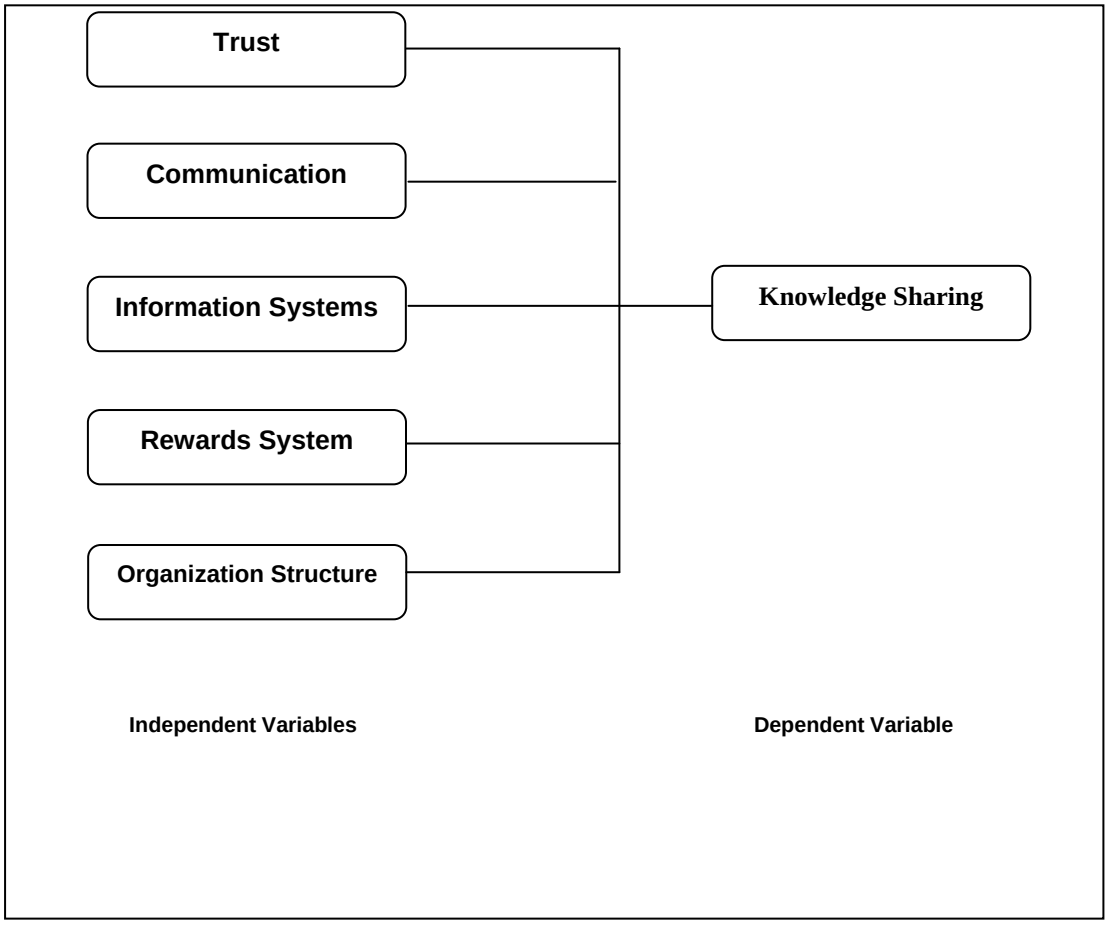

Fig. 1: Research Framework.
(Adapted from Al-Alawi *et al*., 2007).

Knowledge Sharing Techniques:

Table 1 Explains about the knowledge sharing techniques that are commonly being used for knowledge sharing practices in PHS, USM.

Reliability Analysis:

Table 2 shows the results of reliability analysis of research variables on six dimensions that measuring the variables in this study. Overall Cronbach's Alpha for these dimensions are acceptable value and showed that the items have relatively high internal consistency.

Table 1: Knowledge Sharing Techniques.

	Not Involved at all		Less Involved		Not Sure		Involved		Strongly Involved	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Collaboration and teamwork			3	3.8	7	8.8	50	62.5	20	25.0
Training (either new or existing staff)	1	1.3	7	8.8	15	18.8	37	46.3	20	25.0
Formal and Informal Discussion	1	1.3	6	7.5	6	7.5	40	50.0	27	33.8
Utilizing Knowledge Sharing Tools	3	3.8	6	7.5	26	32.5	26	32.5	19	23.8
Communication Networks	5	6.3	12	15.0	16	20.0	32	40.0	15	18.8
Chatting during break	1	1.3	5	6.3	8	10.0	39	48.8	27	33.8
Brainstorming	2	2.5	12	15.0	24	30.0	33	41.3	9	11.3
Workshops	1	1.3	7	8.8	15	18.8	39	48.8	18	22.5
Seminar	1	1.3	8	10.0	18	22.5	34	42.5	19	23.8
Conferences	5	6.3	21	26.3	18	22.5	23	28.8	13	16.3
Focus Groups	4	5.0	14	17.5	26	32.5	23	28.8	13	16.3
Quality Circles	2	2.5	14	17.5	30	37.5	28	35.0	6	7.5

Table 2: Reliability of Research Variables.

Dimension	Number of statement	Cronbach's Alpha
Knowledge Sharing Practices	3	0.705
Trust	7	0.765
Communication between staff	3	0.867
Information Systems	3	0.735
Rewards System	3	0.792
Organization Structure	3	0.750

Correlation Analysis:

Table 3 shows the results of hypothesis testing in this study. All the result shows a positive significant relationship between the trust, communication between staffs rewards system and organization structure factor and knowledge sharing among staff in PHS except for information systems factor and knowledge sharing which is not gave positive significant and totally not supported the hypothesis.

Table 3: Results for Hypothesis Testing.

No.	Hypothesis	Results
H1	There is a positive relationship between trust among co-workers and knowledge sharing in PHS.	Supported
H2	There is a positive relationship between communication (interaction between staff) and knowledge sharing in PHS.	Supported
H3	There is a positive relationship between the existence of knowledge sharing information systems/ technology and knowledge sharing in PHS.	Not Supported
H4	There is a positive relationship between the existence of a rewards system aligned with sharing knowledge and knowledge sharing in PHS.	Supported
H5	There is a positive relationship between certain aspects of organization structure and knowledge sharing in PHS.	Supported

This is possibly staff in PHS preferred to use offline method in disseminating or sharing information or knowledge, for instance formal and informal discussion, chatting during break, brainstorming, seminars and workshops. Besides that, there is a high level of face-to-face interaction among staff in PHS whereby they don't used information systems as their tools in sharing knowledge.

Recommendations:

Recommendations for This Study:

- *Enhance information systems use in knowledge sharing*

Technologies nowadays become most important tool in daily routines. PHS needs to provide and upgrade their capabilities in providing a better space for knowledge sharing practices. Information system can connect people, process as well as the technology. The information systems should be flexible especially to cater with the type of knowledge which might be captured, shared or created. In addition, PHS not only should provided the best information systems for knowledge sharing, but also should make sure the impact of the systems can contribute or encourage the staff towards knowledge sharing practices.

Recommendations for Future Research:

There are a few recommendations that the researcher would like to suggest as guidance for future research. The recommendations are as follow:

- Practicing job rotation to facilitate knowledge transfer and movement throughout the organization and increase motivation.

- Providing sufficient information systems to share knowledge in order to facilitate knowledge diffusion among departments.
- Accomplishing a strong relationship between top management and employees along with expressing the importance of knowledge sharing for the success of the organization as a whole.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the study has been conducted for the purpose of identifying the critical success factors of knowledge sharing in the library context. To accomplish this study, the researchers had adapted the framework from previous studies which consisted of trust, communication between staff, information systems, rewards systems and organization structure. Libraries have a similarity with other organizations which need knowledge sharing in order to have advancement in producing quality resources, services and facilities to library users. Moreover, libraries too, play a vital role for communities' surroundings in disseminating accurate and up-to-date information and knowledge from time to time. In order to cultivate and sustain the knowledge sharing practices among staff in library, there should be full participation from all members of the library regardless of any job functions, level and status. These will definitely increase the success of knowledge sharing in library.

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