



Knowledge Sharing and Barriers in Organizations: A Conceptual Paper on Knowledge-Management Strategy

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Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to understand the barriers that give impact towards the knowledge sharing between individuals in organizations. Knowledge sharing became the significant part of many organizations' knowledge-management strategy. Even though the knowledge sharing is signifying practice for organizations' competitiveness directly and market performance indirectly, several barriers make it difficult for knowledge management to achieve the goals and deliver a positive return on investment (ROI). The barriers were identified through few literature reviews. The findings of previous studies revealed that there are so many factors that are affecting the knowledge sharing in organizations. This paper provides the review of major factors that influence knowledge sharing in organizations which are the individuals, culture, technology and organizational barriers.

Keywords: Knowledge Sharing, Knowledge Barriers, Knowledge Management, Knowledge-Management Strategy

JEL Classification: D83, M12, M54

Paper Type: Research Paper

1. INTRODUCTION

Knowledge sharing is a process of interchanging knowledge, skills, information, expertise, experience, intelligence and understanding (Janus, 2016; Wang & Noe, 2010). Knowledge sharing in an organization is essential as it will create awareness, acceptance of new ideas increases coordination and improves response time as well as offers a fast solution (Bulchandani, 2015; Amayah, 2013; Jain, Sandhu & Goh, 2015). The substantive ingredient of knowledge management is knowledge sharing (Jackson, Chuang, Harden, & Jiang, 2006; Mansoori, Taheridemne, & Konjkave Monfared, 2012; Stenius, Hankonen,

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Ravaja & Haukkala, 2016). One of the fundamental elements that contribute towards organizational effectiveness, innovation and improve the organization's performance is the ability of the organizations and individuals to share knowledge among everyone, mainly organizational knowledge (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Holste & Fields, 2010; Pangil & Nasurddin, 2013; Thornhill, 2006).

Aljuwaiber (2016) clarified further that knowledge could be categorized into two, which are explicit knowledge and tacit knowledge. The knowledge that can be transferred in figures and words as well as can be conveyed or transferred easily between individuals is known as explicit knowledge. On the other hand, skills, intelligence and experiences that someone has in person, known as tacit knowledge (Razmerita, Kirchner & Nielsen, 2016). As mentioned earlier, explicit knowledge is easy to share or to transfer, but tacit knowledge is difficult to share. According to Joia and Lemos (2010), for it to become an effective foundation of sustainable competitive advantage, it is essential that tacit knowledge is shared within the organization. However, the greater the tacit knowledge element, the harder it will be to transfer or to share. Panahi, Watson & Partridge (2013) reiterated that this kind of knowledge could only be attained via personal experience at the workplace.

Knowledge sharing in an organization is essential because, those employed in an organization may not possess all the occupational related knowledge that they need and they have to depend on others (Anand & Walsh, 2016). For instance, fresh graduates who step into the working atmosphere may not have any occupationally related knowledge. Consequently, they have to depend on others to guide or train them to execute their duties. However, this process can be effective only if the knowledge is shared on a reciprocal basis. In order to improve the organization's working environment and the effectiveness as a whole, it is crucial to share knowledge among individual (Alam, Abdullah, Ishak & Zain, 2009).

However, not everyone is willing to share their knowledge in every situation, and there are so many barriers regarding sharing the knowledge in organizations. The primary factor that affecting the enthusiasm to share knowledge is individual, culture, technology and organizational (Cheng, Ho & Lau, 2009; Jain, Sandhu & Sindhu, 2007; Khalil & Shea, 2012; Santos, Soares & Carvalho 2012).

This paper is divided into four sections. Section two reviews the previous study which focused on barriers related to Individuals, Culture, Technology and Organizational. Section three discusses the recommendation, and the concluding remarks are provided in section four.

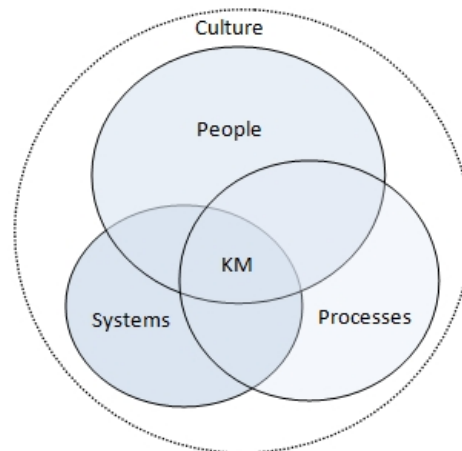


Figure 1. Knowledge Management Framework (Adapted from Gorelick (2005))

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The premium aim of this review is to sight the four major variables that become as barriers towards the knowledge sharing. The barriers are (1) Individuals, (2) Culture, (3) Technology and (4) Organizational. An investigation done by Disterer (2001) revealed that individual, culture and organizational are the barriers towards knowledge sharing. The researcher further classified the individual barriers into four categories, which are a loss of power, revelation, uncertainty and motivation. Individuals who possess knowledge have some influence towards the organization feel that they might lose their privilege, advantage, respect and job security that they had if they share the knowledge. The well-known line "Knowledge is power" is the best to explain this scenario. Besides, specific knowledge that has value and exclusivity might be proclaimed by others to highlight their proficiency. Uncertainty feelings among individuals are norm especially those who are young and less experienced people. The inferior feeling blocks them from sharing the knowledge as they cannot estimate their knowledge level. Individuals are misery from lack of motivation as they felt there are no benefits while the natural question rose 'what is it for me'. Besides, Disterer also classified the language, conflict avoidance, incoherent paradigms, bureaucracy and hierarchy as social or cultural barriers. As far as organizational is concerned, the author focused on leadership and rewards as the barriers. Constructive communication from top management can build the trust and convince towards mutual knowledge sharing. Besides, rewards will encourage the individuals to share knowledge willingly.

On the other hand, Riege (2005) focused on individuals, organizational and technology as limitations on knowledge sharing. The individual barriers that Riege highlighted were lack of time, fear, low level of awareness, differences in experience level, poor communication skills, lack of interpersonal skills, education, age and gender differences. As far as organizational barriers are concerned, the researcher list down few such as lack of leadership, lack of rewards, corporate culture, shortage of infrastructure, deficiency of company resources and communication. Besides, lack of technical support, lack of integration of IT system, reluctance to use IT system and lack of training regards to IT becomes as technology barrier.

Individual and cultural barriers become the main concentration for Bures (2003). The findings for individual and cultural barriers were similar to Disterer (2001) and Riege (2005) study respectively. It was recommended by Bures to detect and remove the greatest number of these barriers. Even though some of the barriers are unresolvable, it would give batter condition if it can be minimized. There are few tools and methods that can be used to overcome the individual and social barriers such as managing people, communication, teamwork, expressive trust, design and organization of workplaces.

Although the organizational and technology plays a vital role regarding knowledge management, the majority of barriers are concerned with people issues (Barson et al., 2000). Fear became a significant barrier for individuals to share knowledge. The author recommended that it would be better to think about how to ensure people are encouraged and take part in knowledge sharing? How to overcome cultural barriers and establish trust between collaborating organizations? How to replace anxiety or fear with enthusiasm? Rather than emphasize the condition of the technology itself.

Daud and Abdul Hamid (2006) are in line with Barson et al. (2000), as they conclude that individuals and organizational play the important role to ensure the successfulness of knowledge sharing. The researchers elaborated that factors such as motivation, encouragement and stimulation of individuals are vital to capture, distribute, transfer and apply useful knowledge. On the organizational part, it must ensure to have a proper infrastructure which can facilitate the knowledge flows, processes and resources which

can provide continuous learning culture. As far as technology is concerned, it is just an instrument to offer knowledge sharing platform so that knowledge could be accessed by everybody from internal or external sources in need of it.

Individuals are affected regarding motivation, fear and trust which hoarding them from sharing knowledge (Razmerita, Kirchner & Nielsen, 2016). Organizations should encourage, motivate and reward individuals to ensure knowledge transfer is materialized. As for the technological factors, the usability of the platform, lack of training for using it, overloaded information and low level of understanding towards social media are the barriers.

McLaughlin, Paton and Macbeth (2008) found that individual, culture, technology and organizational are inter-related to ensure knowledge sharing is established successfully. Organizations should consider and understand the procedure of their supply chain processes to efficiently manage it. Thereafter, they should then look in detail to understand how individuals create and share knowledge along this process. After this achievement then only the organization can effectively fine-tune the performance by support from the technology perspective and create knowledge sharing culture.

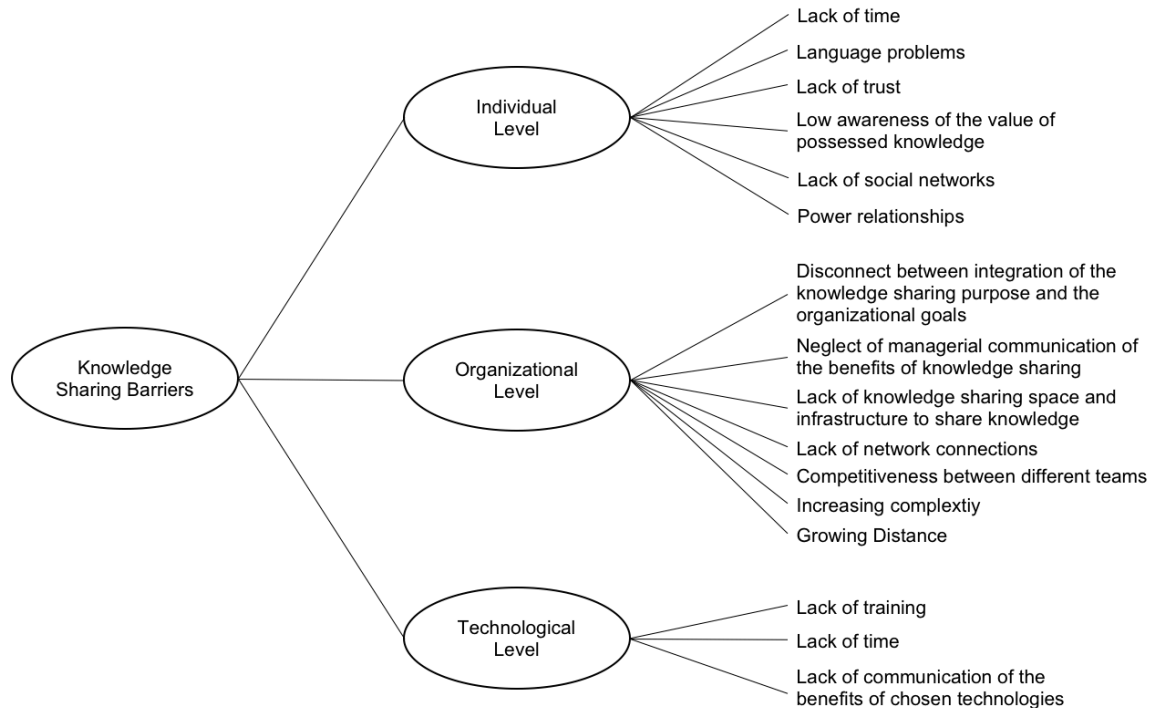


Figure 2. Knowledge Sharing Barriers (Adapted from Kukko (2013))

Table 1. Summary of few Selected Studies on Barriers that affecting Knowledge Sharing in Organizations

S/No.	Author	Individual / People	Culture / Social	Technology	Organizational
1	Disterer (2001)	*	*		*
2	Riege (2005)	*		*	*
3	Bures (2003)	*	*		
4	Barson et al. (2000)	*		*	*
5	Daud & Abdul Hamid (2006)	*		*	*
6	Razmerita at al. (2016)	*		*	*
7	McLaughlin (2008)	*	*	*	*

2.1 Individuals

Chilton and Bloodgood (2010) shed light on the organizations that possess superior knowledge capitals will have a better prospect to achieve a competitive advantage compared to their competitors who did not. It was proposed by the researchers that one aspects that significantly affects the use of knowledge resources are the individuals who access those resources to accomplish an organizational obligations as well as used in decision making and other job functions.

Nakano, Muniz and Batista (2013) emphasized that individuals are important asset for organizations as far as knowledge resources are concerned. This is because to retain and transfer the tacit knowledge individuals are the primary resources. Therefore, individuals are playing a vital role in terms of sharing the tacit knowledge. An investigation done by Harlow (2008) revealed that explicit knowledge sharing and organizational performances have a significant relationship. However, the author also emphasized that it is vital to understand why and how the tacit knowledge is crucial and necessary in current organizations to measure the invention and economic results of the firm.

Wang and Wang (2012) highlighted the relationship between knowledge sharing, innovation and performance. The study revealed that apart of having a positive relationship with performance, knowledge sharing also affect the innovation which directly contributes to organization's performance as a result. Even though explicit knowledge sharing has more effects on innovation speed and financial performance, but tacit knowledge sharing gives impact on innovation quality and operational performance. However, it is agreed by the authors that both explicit and tacit knowledge sharing practices facilitate innovation and performance.

Table 2. Few Studies on Individuals Behavior towards Knowledge Sharing

S/No.	Author(s)	Title
1	Chilton & Bloodgood (2010)	Adaption-innovation theory and knowledge use in organizations
2	Nakano, Muniz and Batista (2013)	Engaging environments: tacit knowledge sharing on the shop floor
3	Harlow (2008)	The effect of tacit knowledge on firm performance
4	Wang & Wang (2012)	Knowledge sharing, innovation and firm performance

2.2 Culture

Jarnagin and Slocum (2007) found that organizational behavior depends on its culture rather than the senior management directions and many organizations strategies implementation are affected as they are against the organization's culture. The authors emphasized that daily practices of an organization are accumulated into the culture, and the strong culture is the key towards high performance.

According to Al-Alawi, Al-Marzooqi and Mohammed (2007), the organization's knowledge sharing culture depends on the interpersonal trust, communication between

staff, information systems, rewards and organization structure. This plays a vital role in describing the relationships between staff as well as providing potentials to overcome the obstacles towards knowledge sharing.

Frequently culture becomes the main obstacle to effective knowledge sharing (McDermott & O'Dell, 2001). The authors argue that firms which knowledge sharing is embedded into their culture did not change their culture to tie their knowledge management initiatives. In fact, they modified their approach to knowledge management to match their culture. These have been done by networking sharing knowledge to problem-solving, binding sharing knowledge to core values, presenting the knowledge management by matching the organization's style, and boosting peers and supervisors to exercise pressure to share.

Table 3. Few Studies on Culture Behavior towards Knowledge Sharing

S/No.	Author(s)	Title
1	Jarnagin and Slocum (2007)	Creating Corporate Cultures Through Mythopoetic Leadership
2	Al-Alawi, Al-Marzooqi & Mohammed (2007)	Organizational culture and knowledge sharing: critical success factors
3	McDermott & O'Dell (2001)	Overcoming cultural barriers to sharing knowledge

2.3 Technology

In this current era technology becomes a major tool regarding sharing. Social media became a platform to share knowledge. However, it would not be effective if individuals have lack of knowledge in technology and do not know how to apply the technology in an organization setting (Paulin & Suneson, 2012). The authors further emphasize that it would be hard to use a system if do not know how to control and use it.

Damodaran and Olphert (2000) criticized that lack of user-friendliness and inadequacy technology also may resulting in low usability and become a strong barrier. The researchers commented that failure to provide training and user support is one of the reasons that lead to low usage of technology.

On top of that Ardichvili (2008) claimed that lack of technological expertise and possible averse to using technology could be a major obstacle to knowledge sharing. The author suggested the organization's Human Resource Development professionals should play a crucial role by providing proper initial training and user support in the use of technology specifically.

Table 4. Few Studies on Technology Behavior towards Knowledge Sharing

S/No.	Author(s)	Title
1	Damodaran & Olphert (2000)	Barriers and facilitators to the use of knowledge management systems
2	Paulin & Suneson (2012)	Knowledge transfer, knowledge sharing and knowledge barriers - Three blurry terms in KM
3	Ardichvili (2008).	Learning and knowledge sharing in virtual communities of practice: Motivators, barriers, and enablers.
4	Hansen & von Oetinger (2001)	Introducing T-shaped managers: knowledge management's next generation

Individuals may use their social network to gain knowledge and reluctant to depend on provided technology, and this creates the discrepancy regarding the effectiveness of technology in knowledge sharing within the organization (Hansen & von Oetinger, 2001). This argument was supported by Wenger (2004), who contends that most of the organizations do not use knowledge management unless the process needs knowledge activities.

2.4 Organizational

Regularly, needed change is obstructed by organizational conflicts, power dynamics, administrative practices, and evaluation as well as reward systems that discourage knowledge sharing (Zhang & Dawes, 2006). The organization's identity is reflected based on their exclusive values and culture. The organizational or corporate culture always refers to their values, beliefs and systems that either boost or obstruct knowledge creation and sharing within organizations (Michailova & Minbaeva, 2012).

Organizational culture is known to be an important aspect of the formation of a learning organization. Good relationship among workers and best organizational culture may also form their motivation to contribute their knowledge (Hung, Lai & Chang, 2011). There are so many factors that encourage knowledge sharing and provide motivation to adopt new ways of communicating. However, the most important is training and reward systems, management provision, guidelines for contributions and an assigned responsible person (Paroutis & Al Saleh, 2009; Holsapple & Joshi, 2000).

Table 5. Few Studies on Organizational Behavior towards Knowledge Sharing

S/No.	Author(s)	Title
1	Zhang & Dawes (2006)	Expectations and perceptions of benefits, barriers, and success in public sector knowledge networks
2	Holsapple & Joshi (2000)	An investigation of factors that influence the management of knowledge in organizations
3	Michailova & Minbaeva (2012)	Organizational values and knowledge sharing in multinational corporations: the Danisco case
4	Hung, Lai & Chang (2011)	Knowledge-sharing motivations affecting R&D employees' acceptance of electronic knowledge repository
5	Paroutis & Al Saleh (2009)	Determinants of knowledge sharing using Web 2.0 Technologies

3. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In the 21st century and knowledge-based society, the knowledge is considered as the main source of competitive advantage and strategic firm's resource for business success (Jelenic, 2011; Jasimuddin, 2005; Omotayo, 2015). Therefore, organizations must always ensure that their employees are well trained and gained proper knowledge to carry out the designated job excellently and securely (Cadman, 2013). Upon the gained knowledge is efficiently used in decision making, problem-solving and to improve performance, it will indirectly lead to the organizational value (Liyanage, Elhag, Ballal & Li, 2009). Knowledge-based organizations always have certain brand in the market.

Based on the literature review, it is suggested that organization must pay attention to all four aspects of an organization to be successful. However, by building its competitive advantages alone will not have much value. The organization's strategic management tool is by having the relevant knowledge as well as can leverage and manage the knowledge. Therefore it is essential for the management in organizations to look for the capitals to gain, uphold and leverage knowledge to attain a lead to higher levels of success for the organizations.

4. CONCLUSION

Knowledge properties in organizations can be managed more efficiently if employees are enthusiastic to share their knowledge with co-workers. Organizations can overcome all these challenges by identifying the structural and cultural influences that discouraging the

knowledge sharing as well as solving the issue by working within the context of the existing culture.

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