Determinants of Knowledge Sharing Behaviour among Academics in United Arab Emirates

Huda Alami Skaik, International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Roslina Othman, International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

The main objectives of this research are to (i) investigate the practice of knowledge sharing among academics, and (ii) examine the relationship between knowledge sharing behaviour and its predictors based on the Theory of Planned Behaviour. Data were collected through an online survey using a questionnaire from academics in public universities. Using SPSS and PLS-SEM, data analysis process involved (i) analysis of descriptive statistics to evaluate knowledge sharing practice, (ii) assessment of the measurement model to evaluate items reliability and validity, and (iii) assessment of the structural model to evaluate its validity, path coefficients, and test the hypotheses. The results showed a great extent of knowledge sharing practice. They proved that academics' knowledge sharing behaviour is significantly influenced by intention, which is influenced by attitude, subjective norms, and self-efficacy. Contrary to the theory, the results showed that controllability does not influence intention.

Keywords: *Academics, Higher Education, Knowledge Sharing Behaviour, Knowledge Sharing Practice, Theory Of Planned Behaviour, UAE*

INTRODUCTION

Knowledge sharing is one of the major processes of knowledge management (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995) and its strategies are keys to organizational and individual development (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Earl, 2001). It is defined as the process of exchanging and transferring existing knowledge and ideas among people in order to create new knowledge and ideas (Syed, Zaini, Noormala & Zahairah, 2009).

The benefits of knowledge sharing for organizations and individuals are numerous. On the organizational level, the benefits include facilitating knowledge creation (Akhavan, Ghojavand & Abdali, 2012), achieving continuous organizational growth, survival, and development (Durmusoglu, Jacobs, Nayir, Khilji &

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Wang, 2014), meeting organizational goals and objectives (Wang & Noe, 2010), solving business problems (McDermott & O'Dell, 2001), enhancing performance, maintaining competitiveness and profitability (Hsu, 2008), gaining better understanding of customer needs and identifying new business opportunities (Sandhawalia & Dalcher, 2011), enhancing process efficiency (Chugh, 2012), and improving the knowledge base for decision-making and more balanced policy decisions (Egger, 2013).

On the individual level, the benefits include getting the information easier and faster (Badaracco, 2010), promoting individuals' learning and innovation (Ling, Sandhu & Jain, 2009), transferring knowledge among workers in the same unit or from one unit to another (Burgess, 2005), strengthening capabilities (Egger, 2013), enhancing performance (Xiao & Jin, 2010), improving efficiency (Cummings, 2004), empowering team effectiveness (Pangil & Chan, 2014), developing strategies to encourage organizational knowledge base (Reychav & Weisberg, 2009), reducing loss of individuals' knowledge and expertise (Gurbuz, 2008), and transmitting knowledge and expertise to new generations (Badaracco, 2010).

Recognizing the importance of knowledge sharing is creating a demand for applying it in higher education institutions, which are seen as knowledge-intensive environments. The role of knowledge sharing is significant to achieve the maximum results for higher education institutions considering the important role they play in creating, managing, and disseminating knowledge in society (Babalhavaeji & Kermani, 2011).

Moreover, academics are seen as expert knowledge workers engaged in teaching, writing, and research from which their academic institutions generate value. Bearing in mind that higher education institutions grow and prosper from the knowledge of their academics, it is quite necessary to encourage and promote knowledge sharing among academics considering their role in enhancing education, research, and scholarly work (Babalhavaeji & Kermani, 2011).

Universities are science centers established to generate and provide knowledge, and to equip people with the best education in order to serve their societies and uplift the well-being of mankind. They grow and prosper from the knowledge of their human capital, particularly the academics (Singer & Hurley, 2005). In the knowledge-based age, universities seek to ensure success and permanence, achieve organizational goals (Sharma, 2010), and have constant performance improvements. In the academic environment, the role of knowledge sharing is becoming quite significant to achieve maximum results for academic institutions (Babalhaveji & Kermani, 2011) due to the important role academics play in providing education, conducting research, and publishing scholarly works. Therefore, universities should promote knowledge sharing among their academics.

Knowledge Sharing in UAE

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has experienced significant local and foreign investments in various fields such as business, construction, infrastructure, financial services, telecommunications, media, information technology, hospitality and tourism as well as education (Ahmad & Daghfous, 2010). Nonetheless, some organizations have been very conservative in terms of integrating knowledge management initiatives and knowledge sharing strategies into their operational processes (Al-Shammari, 2008). This could be attributed to the difficulty in locating the knowledge residing within people. Therefore, there is inability in some organizations to locate, store, and share knowledge that could help in innovation, development and meeting planned objectives (Ahmad & Daghfous, 2010).

The government has been working consistently and strongly to establish a knowledge-based society with a knowledge-based economy (Al-Nahyan, 2012a). Therefore, the government strategy has recently been focusing on human capital (Al-Nahyan, 2012a, 2012b). As a step to achieve this, it has allocated more than 1/3 of

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