

Employee's motivation to share knowledge: A theoretical perspective on the existing literature

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Abstract: With the advent of knowledge economy, knowledge has become the most important component in determining the status of businesses today. In this era of knowledge and information, knowledge has become the most crucial asset. Knowledge sharing plays a vital role to innovation. Current study is an attempt to look into the various theoretical concepts/theories that help to understand what motivates employees to share knowledge in the organisation. The impetus behind this examination is to explore the factors advancing knowledge sharing in the organisations. The study draws its base from literature associated with knowledge management and knowledge sharing. The literature review was extensively carried out and articles published in the field of knowledge management, knowledge sharing and other related areas were identified and reviewed. The findings include various characteristics of organization and employees that encourage sharing of knowledge between organisation and the practices which influence the behaviour emphasized for sharing knowledge are and provide useful information to increase understanding to motivate employees to share knowledge. The main limitation of the study is that the research has been carried out in view of the existing literature and empirical evidence could not be addressed. Also, an in-depth analysis of various knowledge sharing processes carried out in organisations can also be extended further.

Keywords: Knowledge, Knowledge management, Knowledge sharing, Motivation, Organization.

I. INTRODUCTION

With the growing complexity in business, escalating consumer demands and technology upgradation occurring every day, organisations are under gigantic pressure. The competitive environment has intensified and managers are on tenterhooks to develop new strategies for sustainable competitive advantage. So as to achieve and sustain a competitive edge in the market, firms have to be innovative and create new knowledge. According to Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), knowledge sharing is essential for converting common ideas and concepts and create new knowledge. Knowledge is shared in work so that new knowledge and new way of doing tasks can be created. In an organization with a knowledge-sharing culture, knowledge accumulation is favoured, which become a stimulus to knowledge creation [16]. Hence a firm has a competitive advantage when it cultivates knowledge sharing strategies [6].

Over a period of last two decades, there has been an increase in the importance of knowledge. The literature has also highlighted the fact that intangible assets hold more prominent place than the tangible assets and unlike traditional factors of production, knowledge is intangible, residing within individuals. Knowledge is one of the most important resources to an organization [29] and maybe “the only meaningful resource” [11]. In order to compete in knowledge-intensive industries, an organization must continuously create, utilize and disseminate new knowledge [10]. Knowledge management has penetrated into almost all the sectors. In context of knowledge management, knowledge sharing and knowledge creation hold utmost significance. Knowledge sharing is ahead of knowledge creation. Knowledge sharing is basically the act of making knowledge available to others within the organization. Knowledge sharing is crucial to the success of knowledge management activities and is the key to knowledge creation. Lack of knowledge sharing can be one of the obstacles in the successful implementation of knowledge management [25].

Employees can share both tacit and explicit knowledge. The fact that explicit knowledge exists in documented form, however, makes it easier to share. Tacit knowledge, on the other hand is difficult to articulate and is therefore difficult to

share. Knowledge sharing is the basic component of knowledge management and hence there is need to evaluate the factors that motivate employees to share knowledge. It is essential to understand different factors which affect the sharing of knowledge in the organizational context. Motivation is required to encourage employees to share their knowledge freely. Organisations are under immense pressure as an aftermath of globalization. With the advent of technology and increasing competition, expectations and demand of consumers have profounded, increasing the complexity of business models. Competition is tough and margins are being squeezed, and new business models are threatening the established providers. The firms which grow and prosper will be those, that can profitably develop new products, services, and channels to market. Hoarding of knowledge leads to negative consequences [7].

The main objectives of the study are:

- (i) Theoretical understanding of knowledge and knowledge sharing.
- (ii) To investigate the factors that promote knowledge sharing in organisations.
- (iii) To highlight the importance of knowledge sharing
- (iv) To provide recommendations on how knowledge sharing can be improved

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Knowledge and knowledge sharing

Knowledge is a key asset in today’s economy for organisations. Successful organizations need dynamic capabilities to create, acquire, integrate and use knowledge [18]. The concept was first introduced by Plato. Nonaka and Takeuchi define knowledge as “a dynamic human process of justifying personal belief towards the truth “in their pioneering book “The Knowledge-creating company” [26]. Various definitions of knowledge as per the literature has been compiled in table 1. There are different types of knowledge. Scholars generally categorize “knowledge” into two types – tacit and explicit knowledge. The typology of knowledge as explicit and tacit was first introduced by Polanyi in 1967. Tacit knowledge is described as highly personal [27] and context-specific information, which is therefore hard to formalize and communicate [30]. On the other hand, explicit knowledge can be codified in numbers and words, easily shared in manuals and easily distributed [32]. Explicit knowledge is formal and systematic and can be easily shared in the form of and communicated [27].

Table 1: Definitions of knowledge

Author (s)	Definition
Nonaka et al., 2000	Knowledge is ‘justified true belief’.
Turban & Frenzel, 1992	“as information that has been organized and analyzed in such a way as to become understandable and applicable to problem solving or decision making.”
Davenport et al., 1998	“a fluid mix of framed experiences, values, contextual information and expert insight.”
Nonaka, 1994	Knowledge as a set of commitments and beliefs held by their holders that enable them to undertake certain actions.
Pourzolfaghar et al., 2014	Knowledge as a fluid mix of experience, values and contextual information includes both tacit and explicit knowledge.
Wiig, 1993	Knowledge consists of facts and data organized to describe a particular situation or condition.

Knowledge sharing is found in knowledge – management activities [12]. Knowledge sharing is essential for converting common ideas and concepts [29]. Knowledge Sharing among folks often not only improves their capability [9] new knowledge is also generated during this process [20]. KS approaches can be classified as formal or informal. Formal approaches are instituted by management. It includes formal mentorship programs and meetings. Informal approaches, on the other hand, often stem from social networks [24]. Wise managers should always encourage their employees to share knowledge [3]. Knowledge creation usually relies on team-oriented communication of information via brainstorming and workshops, learning, experience accumulation, research and development, and learning by doing [21]. Identification of whom to share the tacit knowledge with is critical to the creation of any knowledge. Socialization is the process of creating new tacit knowledge through the shared experiences [34]. Organisations are starting to understand the relevance and importance of sharing knowledge and are beginning to appreciate knowledge as the most significant and valued asset that leads to organizational performance. As a result, it has been anticipated that promising factors would help in

encouraging the need for employees to share not only crucial knowledge but new knowledge to further ensure that the industry possess the competitive edge that they are looking for [2]. In an organization with a knowledge-sharing culture, knowledge accumulation is favoured, which become a stimulus to knowledge creation [16]. The output of knowledge shared would become the input for the creation of new knowledge [33].

The sharing of knowledge takes place at the individual and organizational levels. For individual employees, knowledge sharing is talking to colleagues to help them get something done better, more quickly or more efficiently. For an organization knowledge sharing is capturing, organizing, reusing and transferring experience-based knowledge that resides within the organization and making the knowledge available to others in the business [22]. Knowledge sharing is the way people collectively improve their understanding through the articulation and demonstration of personal knowledge [21].

Table 2: Taxonomies of Knowledge Sharing

Author (s)	Definition
Ahmadia et al., 2012	Knowledge sharing between individuals is the process by which knowledge held by an individual is converted into a form that can be understood, absorbed and used by other individuals.
Lin et al., 2009	“Knowledge sharing can be defined as a social interaction culture, involving the exchange of employee knowledge, experience, and skills through the whole department or organization.”
Harder, 2008	Knowledge sharing can be defined as the voluntary social process to transfer, absorb and reuse the existing knowledge in order to serve an organizational end.”
Sethumadhavan, 2007	“It is a systematic process to create, acquire, synthesize, learn, share and use knowledge and experience to achieve organizational goal.
Hogel et al., 2003	Knowledge sharing comprises a set of shared understandings related to providing employees access to relevant information and building and using knowledge networks within organizations.
Cummings, 2004 and Pulakos et al., 2003	Knowledge sharing can occur via written correspondence or face-to-face communications through networking with other experts, or documenting, organizing and capturing knowledge for others.
Jiacheng et al., 2010 and McKenzie, 2003	Knowledge sharing can be conceptualized as an activity through which knowledge in various forms can be transferred or exchanged between different actors in organizations.
Li Man Yi Rita, 2012	Knowledge sharing refers to the process where individuals refine an idea or thought in light of experiences. The idea is then modified or rejected gradually.
Kim & Nelson, 2000	Knowledge sharing is seen as occurring through a dynamic learning process where organizations continually interact with customers and suppliers to innovate or creatively imitate.

III. UNDERSTANDING EMPLOYEE’S MOTIVATIONS

The knowledge sharing process can be viewed as something connected with communication, but different also [21]. The “knowledge sharing processes” dimension refers to the way in which the organization’s staff share experience and expertise with other colleagues on a work-related basis [22]. The process of sharing knowledge involves the willingness of employees to actively communicate with their colleagues (i.e. donating knowledge) and to actively consult their colleagues (i.e. gathering knowledge). Knowledge workers who enjoy helping others could be more favourable to the sharing of knowledge, both in donation and in the collection. Knowledge sharing among people not only improves their capacity but also generates new knowledge during this process [20]. The sharing of knowledge was seen as an integral part of knowledge management systems and a major element of creative behaviour in any company [4]. Due to the potential benefits of knowledge sharing, many organisations have invested considerable time and money in knowledge management initiatives including developing knowledge management systems which use advanced technology to facilitate the collection, storage and dissemination of knowledge [42]. Motivating factors are important in order to encourage staff to share their knowledge. As per literature, various factors that affect the knowledge sharing can be categorised in two heads: employee- oriented and organisation oriented.

The factors influencing the sharing of knowledge including employee factors are trust, power and leadership and organizational factors include social networks, the system of rewards and opportunities for the sharing of knowledge and technological factors (for example information systems and training for member groups) [37]. In line with this argument,

[31] suggested that the organizational culture teamwork and autonomy encourages & improves the sharing of knowledge. Organisational culture is the most important factor of the organisational knowledge sharing. Faith is the medium by which knowledge is appropriately shared, and therefore trust building is the key element for knowledge sharing in the place of work. Trust is regarded as a facilitator of effective knowledge sharing [2]. Motivation enhances the enthusiasm. Every human being needs the dose of motivation at various interval when things do not work smoothly. An organization can successfully promote a knowledge-sharing culture through the change of attitudes and conduct of employees to encourage a willing and consistent sharing of knowledge [23]. The organizational cultural factor is based on a suitable culture that encourages people to share knowledge [1]. Employees are encouraged to believe that behaviour of sharing knowledge is worth the effort and can help others [22].

To develop and maintain a positive knowledge – sharing culture in an organization, the perception of top management encouragement is needed for knowledge- sharing purposes [23]. Initiatives to share knowledge should aim to create an environment that encourages several cultural factors, including professional independence, cohesion and communication structure [21]. If employees believe that they can receive organizational rewards by sharing their knowledge, they would develop greater positive willingness to both donate and receive knowledge [22]. Organizational benefits may include monetary incentives like pay- hikes and bonuses, as well as non- monetary awards like promotions and security at work [8]. In addition to the importance of helping individuals to communicate and share knowledge, communication technology is also a way of collecting, saving and retrieving knowledge [1]. ICT is closely related to the use and sharing of knowledge, as ICT can enable quick information on search, access and retrieval, as well as facilitate communication and collaboration between organizational employees [15]. The most important factors for sharing knowledge from a social perspective are: organizational culture, structure and people, whereas communication technology and support encompass the technical perspective [1]. Knowledge sharing occurs at the individual and organizational levels [22].

IV. DISCUSSION

The sharing of knowledge, means that an organization has access to knowledge from its own organizations and other organizations. For this study knowledge sharing within the organization is discussed. It has become a major field of research from a wide range of research of researchers. In the modern business world, knowledge is essential and therefore knowledge management is a decisive factor for the survival of almost all organisations and the study of knowledge sharing has its roots within the knowledge management, intellectual capital and innovation literature. The paper begins with a discussion of taxonomies of knowledge and knowledge sharing and discussion of why knowledge and knowledge sharing are important.

Knowledge sharing has tremendous benefits. Sharing knowledge can facilitate the process of knowledge creation [28] and help an organization maintain its advantage over other organizations [36]. The successful sharing of knowledge leads to businesses mastering and implementing new products, production processes and organizational designs [26]. Knowledge sharing has the benefits of cost effectiveness, time saving, quality, innovation and motivation [4]. “Knowledge is one of the few assets that grows- also usually exponentially- when shared” [35]. Although KS has these advantages, the implementation of KS practices is confronted by several obstacles like organizational culture, the loss of knowledge power, avoidance of exposure due to lack of confidence in knowledge [14]. The main purpose of knowledge sharing is to help organizations as a whole to meet their business objectives [25]. The process of the creation of organizational is initiated by the extension of an individual knowledge into organizational knowledge. The more the information is shared, the more opportunities for knowledge creation occur [7]. To be able to apply to the organization, the individual and teams must share what you know with other colleagues to ensure that the crated knowledge is available. This brings us to the fact that knowledge sharing is both pre and post to the knowledge creation process. Tacit knowledge shared leads to new knowledge and explicit knowledge which is further transferred and shared to be made available to be used in the organisation further.

Knowledge sharing can be both through formal and informal channels. Formal channels are used for explicit knowledge and informal channels are more successful for sharing of tacit knowledge. Various ways of sharing knowledge can be storytelling, questioning, mentoring. Good workplace design can encourage people to create, share and use knowledge to the benefit of the organization [25]. First, sharing of knowledge means effective transfer, for the recipient to understand sufficiently well to be involved. Secondly, knowledge is shared rather than knowledge – based recommendations. Third, the sharing of knowledge between people, groups, departments and organizations take place [38]. Besides knowledge sharing is important for geographical dispersed organisations and also if the turnover of employees in the organization is increasing [25]. Knowledge sharing is carried out by social and technical communication channels [13].

Different factors influence knowledge sharing, in particular when tacit knowledge is shared [40]. The first and foremost factor from employee's perspective is willingness to share knowledge. Knowledge sharing is not just about providing access to data and documents, they are about interconnecting the social network of people [7]. Higher levels of learning orientation and an effective communication system results in higher levels of KS [17]. Workspace related atmosphere/organisational culture or organizational climate is one of the critical factors. Culture refers to an evolved context within which specific situations are embedded [5]. The organizations that have a knowledge sharing climate in which individual are highly trusting of others and of the organization and is tolerant of well-reasoned failure is one of the salient aspects of organizational climate [5]. An organization culture that encourages discovery and innovation will help knowledge sharing. Without a receptive knowledge-sharing culture, effective knowledge exchange cannot occur. [7]. A caring organization culture brings out the sense of belongingness in the employees [39]. Fairness, which reflects the perception that organizational practices are equitable and neither arbitrary nor capricious, both builds trust between members and serves to overcome the public good dilemma associated with knowledge sharing [5]. Organization's reward and recognition systems is the best way to avoid knowledge hoarding and start providing incentives for knowledge sharing [7]. The expectation of personal benefits can motivate individuals to contribute knowledge [43]. Based on the research streams, five primary motivational factors identified that affect knowledge sharing in organization are trust, attitude, IT and IS infrastructure, organizational culture, and reward system.

V. CONCLUSION

In a highly dynamic and competitive environment organisations have identified knowledge as the crucial, significant and valued asset required to achieve competitiveness and excellence. Facilitating knowledge sharing, rather than just knowledge transmission is the need of the hour. In order to make knowledge sharing a success, it is important to know the various factors that influence knowledge sharing. Factors of motivation can be intrinsic or extrinsic. Organisations are required to strengthen the organisational culture that fosters a culture of collaborative teamwork, network and virtual organization and culture of learning, research and discovery. It is also concluded from the studies that owing to negative environment, and lack of recognition and benefits, employees also leave their jobs. On the other hand, feeling of being appreciated and listened to has a positive impact. The firm's attitude to cooperation and the exchange of information within the organisation should be encouraged by management. Consequently, promising motivational drivers have been predicted to encourage employees not only to share important knowledge, but also new knowledge, so as to ensure that they have a competitive edge. The study can be further put to empirical test so as to find out which factor of knowledge sharing is on the top.

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