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Why Organisational Culture Drives Knowledge Sharing?

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Abstract

Knowledge management is an important factor that can influence the success of organizational operations. This makes it apparent as well that there is a need to establish knowledge sharing within an organization. This proposed study outlines a planned inquiry towards the investigation of how organizational culture can lead into knowledge sharing behavior, specific to the context of Malaysian organizations. Through the use of semi-structured interviews and empirical evidences from relevant literatures, the author expects to find the relationship between the different components of organizational culture and knowledge sharing behavior.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Knowledge is an important organizational asset and has a significant influence in business operations. Knowledge sharing within an organization has often been asserted as a necessary practice for success and sustainability of its performance. In this case, one of the major determinants that have been considered for knowledge sharing is organizational culture. In this case, the culture of an

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organization can be strong or weak, and in turn, such also has an implication that it can have positive or negative contributions in knowledge sharing within the work environment (Suppiah & Sandhu, 2011).

Many studies, such as the work of Rai (2011), Tong and Mitra (2009), and Ngueyn and Mohamed (2011) have been recently concluded placed emphasis on the assertion that knowledge creation and organizational learning – antecedents of knowledge sharing within an organization – is highly influenced by cultural dimensions. In addition, because there are differences in corporate and national culture from one organization to the other, it can also be expected that there are variances with regards to knowledge sharing behaviors, depending on the nature of the cultural dimension that is practiced within a firm (Ardichvili, Maurer, Li, Wentling, & Stuedemann, 2006).

The study that is being proposed in this paper will be directed towards investigating the influence of culture of knowledge sharing in Malaysia. This is on the basis of knowing how culture leads into the establishment of knowledge sharing and being able to fill the current gap.. The paper is structured as follows: an in depth literature reviews on culture and knowledge sharing, the proposed model and proposition, the expected findings and conclusion.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Some of the studies that have been completed to investigate the impacts of culture on knowledge sharing include the works of Vazquez, Fournier, and Flores (2009), Bures (2003), Riege (2005), Bock, Zmud, Kim, and Lee (2005) and Ardichvili, Page, and Wentling (2003). The authors have asserted that culture, through some of its dimensions serve as a barrier in the knowledge sharing capabilities within an organization. Some of the components of culture that have been identified as being influential towards the impeding of a knowledge sharing behavior include manager's commitment, emotional intelligence, fear, the presence of hierarchy in the organizational structure, lack of social network, age differences, gender differences, shortage of resources, conflict of motives, uncertainty, under-estimation of lower levels, conflict avoidance and the general environment at work, among others. It has also been noted that a major problem in knowledge sharing is that there are some employees who are confined in a culture that is characterized by unwillingness to transfer knowledge to other people, hence, making it impossible as well for the organization to be embedded with a knowledge sharing culture. In addition, another significant insight revealed is that extrinsic rewards, as part of an organizational culture, do not necessarily translate into influencing the employees to share knowledge.

There are different studies on culture which were explored on the basis of categorizing them as visible and invisible culture and finding their relationship with knowledge sharing in an organizational setting.(McDermott and O'Dell, 2001;Al-Alawi, Al-Marzooqi, and Mohammed,2007). Visible culture includes the philosophy, mission, and espoused values that guide the daily operations of an organization. On the other hand, the invisible culture basically deals with the perceptions of people who are working in an organization, and such kind of culture reflects the unspoken core values that guide their functioning (McDermott & O'Dell, 2001). Both the visible and invisible culture has been asserted as being influential in knowledge sharing was identified as having critical effects on culture as well. Communication, information systems, rewards, organization structure, and trust were also noted. Therefore, an improvement or favorable performance of the organization with regards to the earlier mentioned dimension will also correspond into the development of a better knowledge sharing behavior within the work environment.

There are different cultural components that can have an effect on knowledge sharing behavior, and such has also been the subject of various literatures completed in the past. This has been a common trend in the works of Sharrat and Usoro (2003), and Park, Ribiere and Schulte (2004). It has been given emphasis by the authors that some of the cultural components that influence knowledge sharing would be the way at which the organization is managed, or the organizational structure in itself, being withheld as highly influential in the development of knowledge sharing. Organizational culture that is

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