

# Knowledge Sharing Behaviour in Libraries: A Case Study of Raja Tun Uda Library Selangor, Malaysia

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## ABSTRACT

Knowledge management is adopted by many organizations in order to improve their performance and gain competitive advantage. Knowledge sharing has become a crucial activity in knowledge management. Being at the core of information management, librarians should demonstrate considerable level of knowledge management practice. This study investigates factors affecting knowledge sharing behavior in a state library namely, Raja Tun Uda Library, Selangor. It aims to identify relationships between individual, organizational and technological factors with knowledge sharing behavior in the organization. Data were collected using questionnaires and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science version 16. The findings show that individual and technological factors have significant relationships with knowledge sharing behavior. However, there is no significant relationship between organizational factors and knowledge sharing behavior.

**Keywords:** knowledge management, knowledge sharing behaviour, library.

## I INTRODUCTION

In the recent years, knowledge management has become prevalent in organizations to help boosting their performance. Nonaka & Takeuchi (1995) describe knowledge management as the ability of a firm to create new knowledge, spread the knowledge throughout the organization and reflect the result in its product, services and system. Knowledge management is the identification, optimization, and active management of intellectual assets, which is in the form of explicit knowledge held in artifacts or as tacit knowledge possessed by individuals or communities (Alrawi, 2008).

Knowledge management, which traditionally for profit-making organization, is meant for enhancing and improving performance in order to gain competitive advantage and increase profit of the organization. However, knowledge management can also be applied in non-profitable organizations such as government bodies in achieving their own goals (Teng & Hwamdeh, 2002). In the context of this study, the implementation of knowledge

management in non-profit organizations is still rare especially in libraries (Anna and Puspitasari, 2013).

Library is a place where information and knowledge resided. Libraries should be the best place to implement and demonstrate knowledge management, though it is easier said than done. Practicing knowledge sharing is essential for strategic planning and cultivation of knowledge management in libraries (Kumaresan, 2010). Unfortunately, not everyone is willing to share knowledge particularly when they believed the knowledge is privileged and an advantage for them. Hence, keeping it exclusively to themselves would make them remain valuable in the organization (Mobashar et al., 2011). A study by Sirajuddin, Ahmad and Rose (2006) involving 17 public universities in Malaysia found that only 29.4% of employees practiced knowledge sharing.

This finding in turn instigates an investigation on knowledge sharing in libraries as a center of information and knowledge. Therefore, libraries must demonstrate knowledge sharing in order to be exemplary in knowledge management. This study aims to investigate relationship between individual factors and knowledge sharing behavior; to identify the relationship between organizational factors and knowledge sharing behavior and; determine the relationship between technology factors and knowledge sharing behavior. This study was conducted in the Selangor Public Library Corporation, Malaysia, which is the most advanced public library in the nation.

## II LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge is an important asset that can bring the organization to be success and ease to achieve organization goal and objective. Davenport and Prusak, 1998) describe knowledge as a fluid mix of framed experience, values, contextual information, and expert insight that provides a framework for evaluating and incorporating new experiences and information. It originates and applies in the mind of the knower's. In organizations, it often embedded not only in documents or repositories but also in organizational routines, processes, practices and norms.

Knowledge sharing is a social interaction in a culture that involves the exchange of knowledge,

experience, and skills among employees throughout the whole organization (Lin, 2007). It is an activity through which knowledge such as information, skills or expertise are exchanged among people, friends, or members of a family, a community or an organization (Wang and Noe, 2010; Noorazah and Juhana, 2011). Moreover, Wang and Noe (2010) stated that knowledge sharing refers to the 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.

Unfortunately, knowledge sharing occurs at the individual and organizational levels in which the individual aspect assumes the knowledge sharing is merely conversing with their colleagues to help them perform their tasks accordingly. Meanwhile, organizational aspects of knowledge sharing is capturing, organizing, reusing, and transferring experience-based knowledge that resides in the organization and making that available to others (Lin, 2007).

Hence, knowledge sharing can be defined as a process of communication between two or more peoples involved in the provision and acquisition of knowledge in which communication can take up many forms, either using both verbal and non-verbal mechanisms, with or without the use of technology. Knowledge can be shared not only through face-to-face interactions but also through various channels such as email, telephone, videoconference and other media. People often share knowledge unconsciously through informal interactions (Swap et al., 2001; Taminiiau, Smit and de Lange, 2009). Knowledge sharing can also occur in a conversation over a cup of coffee in which people exchanges their knowledge with the purpose of helping colleagues to get something done better and in a more efficient manner Amayah (2013).

Knowledge sharing improves the quality of service delivery of an organization particularly the public ones and these organizations are more service-oriented rather than producing product for profit (Bakhari & Zawiyah, 2010). Unfortunately, most of libraries still adopting traditional orientation concept (Anna and Puspitasari, 2013) but some of the libraries that already have more advanced vision by applying knowledge management and promoting knowledge sharing with various purposes, especially for knowledge creation among their staff, are able to produce both products and services innovation in libraries

## **B. Knowledge Sharing Behavior**

Knowledge sharing is a key enabler of knowledge management (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Knowledge possessed by individuals and of incorporating individuals' knowledge into organizational knowledge depending on employees' knowledge sharing behavior. Knowledge sharing is a behavior when an individual disseminates their acquired knowledge to other members within an organization. It is the action of individuals in sharing their existing knowledge with others.

Knowledge sharing depends on individuals and is derived from the personal consideration such as beliefs, experiences, values, and motivation. Individuals that have enough confidence in their ability to share valuable knowledge have more chances to articulate intentions to share their knowledge as well as to give account of their higher levels of engagement in knowledge sharing (Wang and Noe, 2010). Practically, knowledge sharing cannot be forced when it is related to "people's willingness" since organizational knowledge largely resides within individuals, it remains unexposed to others until knowledge owners want to make it available (Kuo, 2013)

Numerous studies revealed knowledge sharing behavior by adapting the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and Theory of Reason Action (TRA) in measured knowledge sharing behavior. Both theories are applicable in knowledge sharing researches (Bock et al., 2005).

## **C. Factors Influencing Knowledge Sharing**

Based on the previous studies, there are three factors influencing knowledge sharing namely individual, organizational and technology. Individual factor has three dimensions, which are awareness, trust and personality. Awareness of the importance of knowledge sharing is considered as an attitude that every employee should possess, including the top management (Van de Brink, 2003). On the contrary, lack of awareness is one of the factors that affect knowledge sharing and innovation in organizations (Lee and Hong, 2014). Organizations with low awareness show that members do not understand the importance of knowledge in organization (Zaid & Chen, 2014). Trust among the member in organizations is essential as it facilitates knowledge sharing (Scarbought & Swan, 2001). Personality refers to the employee's attitude towards knowledge sharing in organization. Individual's personality can be categorized through their value, attitude, mood and emotion (Van den Brink, 2003).

Organizational factor has two dimensions namely organizational culture and, reward and recognition.

Organizational culture is one of the biggest challenges to overcome as it involves feedback, valuable contributions and participation from employees and the level of collaboration in and across organizational units, while managerial implications covers the responsibility of providing sufficient training, valuing contributions, giving affirmative feedback, participation and organizational guidelines in knowledge sharing activities for their employees (Wahlroos, 2010). Meanwhile, organizational rewards indicate organization values that shape employee behaviors to share their knowledge (Cabrera and Bonache, 1999).



Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

The third factor, technological has three dimensions namely technology infrastructure, ICT tools and ICT know-how. ICT infrastructures serve as facilitators that encourage and support knowledge sharing because they are related to the knowledge management technology used in knowledge sharing activities (Volady, 2013), and they make knowledge sharing easier and more effective. Next, ICT tools refer to the application that is available in organizations that can facilitate knowledge sharing in organizations. Then, ICT know how that can defined as the computer literacy of worker in doing their daily works. Syed Omar and Rowland (2004) mentioned that sufficient and appropriate ICT trainings to all employees have positive relationships with knowledge creation and knowledge transfer.

### III METHODOLOGY

#### A. Instrument and Method

This study adopts a quantitative method. The instrument used for collecting data was a questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed based on an adaptation from the Theory of Reason Action (TRA) scale. There were four sections namely, demographic data; factors affecting knowledge sharing; knowledge sharing behavior and; opinion by respondents. The second and third sections are assessed using the 5-point Likert Scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (neutral), 4 (agree) and 5 (strongly agree).

#### B. Population and Sampling

This study was conducted in Selangor Public Library Corporation. Population of the study is employees of the library headquarters. It was a purposive sampling involving head of departments, librarians, assistant librarians and library officers.

#### C. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS version 16. All hypotheses were tested using correlation and linear regression analysis.

#### D. Limitation of the Study

This study limited to the headquarters of Selangor Public Library Corporation, i.e. Raja Tun Uda Library in Shah Alam due to its key functions and reputation as the most advanced public library in Malaysia.

## IV RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### A. Findings and Discussion

Research finding shows there was a strong between individual factors and knowledge sharing behavior among employees in Raja Tun Uda Library, Selangor. It is evident that employees of Raja Tun Uda Library shared their knowledge depending on individuals, deriving from awareness, trust and personality. The results of this finding is consistent with the findings from previous studies by Lin (2007); Ain (2013); and Bakhari and Zawiyah (2010). This means that respondents possessed high level of awareness on the importance of knowledge sharing for the performance of the organization. There is also a significant relationship between the level of trust among respondents that motivates them to share their knowledge with others. Another dimension of individual factor is personality, which reveals that extrovert personality is significantly related to knowledge sharing behavior.

The second factor of knowledge sharing behavior is organizational which, dimensions include organizational culture, reward and recognition. Finding shows that culture is significantly related to knowledge sharing behavior. In other words,

respondents actively participated in knowledge sharing activities in Raja Tun Uda Library. This is consistent with research finding by Hoof and Huysman (2009) and Hall and Goody (2007) that organizational culture did affect knowledge sharing.

However, finding also shows that there is no relationship between reward and recognition and knowledge sharing behavior. This negative relationship is also supported by previous studies such as Bock and Kim (2002); and Watson and Hewett (2006). Bock and Kim (2002) argue that reward might be a trigger for knowledge sharing, but it was not a fundamental force in forming a person's attitude.

Hence, the management of Raja Tun Uda Library might prefer rewarding their staff through other incentives since this study found that although the management did not reward their staff with monetary incentives for their knowledge sharing practice, they did recognize their staff in other ways. It was proven by this study, based on the descriptive analysis it was found that most of the employees of Raja Tun Uda Library agreed that the management recognized their contributions and expressed gratitude for their participation in knowledge sharing activities by mentioning them in organizational annual reports, the Internet, advertisement boards and others.

The third factor of knowledge sharing behavior is technology. There are three dimensions of technology namely ICT infrastructure, ICT tools and ICT know-how. Finding shows that ICT infrastructure is significantly related to knowledge sharing behavior was accepted. In other words, this meant that the availability of ICT infrastructures at Raja Tun Uda Library influenced their knowledge-sharing activities. This is consistent with finding of research by Bakhari and Zawiyah (2010). It was impossible for organizations to embark on knowledge sharing without proper ICT infrastructures (Hasanali, 2002) as its presence particularly in the form of new technology and systems could increase technological motivation to share knowledge (Hendriks, 1999).

Research finding also shows that ICT tools is not significantly related to knowledge behavior. Raja Tun Uda Library also might not have enough ICT tools that could facilitate knowledge sharing among their staf. However, the result in this finding differed from the previous studies since Usman and Oyefolahan (2014); and Bakhari and Zawiyah (2010) found that ICT tools had a significant relationship with knowledge sharing since ICT tools that existed in organizations could help and facilitate employees to share knowledge (Syed

Omar & Rowland, 2004). Nevertheless, several of previous studies mentioned that without denying the significances of tools and technologies in supporting knowledge sharing, practical implementation proved that the mere technology did not guarantee knowledge-sharing behavior will be occurred (Ruggles, 1998; McDermott, 1999; Cross and Baird, 2000). Thus, this study concluded that ICT tools did not influence knowledge sharing behavior among employees of Raja Tun Uda Library. Possibly, staff might prefer to use offline methods in sharing their knowledge with their colleagues.

This study also discovers there is a significant relationship between ICT know-how and knowledge sharing behavior. The ability to utilize ICT influences knowledge sharing behavior among respondents in Raja Tun Uda Library. This finding is consistent with Bakhari and Zawiyah (2010) and Syed Omar & Rowland (2004) who also found a positive relationship between the two elements. This can be understood as there are various medium of communication today to facilitate sharing of knowledge. The ability to utilize ICT facilitates knowledge sharing in the organization. It is also more efficient and cost saving.

## **B. Suggestions**

Based on the findings, few suggestions proposed to enhance knowledge sharing in Raja Tun Uda Library, namely:

### **i. Improve Reward and Incentive System**

A more attractive rewarding and incentive system would foster knowledge sharing among employees of Raja Tun Uda Library as lacked of reward had been a major barrier to knowledge sharing across cultures (Yao, Kam & Chan, 2007). Currently, the management of Raja Tun Uda Library recognized their staff who participated and contributed to knowledge sharing by mentioning them in the annual reports and advertisement boards. Arguably, a public recognition would be the least reward, which motivates one who shared his knowledge. However, a more meaningful yet not costly reward is by considering their commitment as a key performance indicator. Their annual achievement will be an evident of their commitment in sharing their knowledge for the benefit of the organization. Definitely monetary reward would be the most meaningful incentive, but this can only be implemented if Raja Tun Uda Library generates steady profit annually, which would be unlikely for a public library.

### **ii. Changing the Culture**

It is evident that the management of Raja Tun Uda Library encourages knowledge sharing among employees. This is a positive indicator that the management is committed to develop a culture of knowledge sharing. Management support for knowledge sharing was shown to be positively associated with employees' perceptions of a knowledge sharing culture, which included employees' trust, willingness of experts to help others and willingness to share knowledge (Connelly & Kelloway, 2003; Lin, 2007). Although it is challenging to change a culture, the commitment from the management will speed up the process which can be seen a different as early as twelve months. The process will take much longer time if it begins from lower level. In the context of Raja Tun Uda Library, it is a desirable situation as the Director of Raja Tun Uda Library is keen to implement knowledge sharing in the organization. Hence, it just a matter of time for this knowledge sharing to be a culture in Raja Tun Uda Library.

### iii. Develop and Implement Knowledge Management System

Respondents admitted they usually shared their knowledge during certain event and training sessions. Previous research by Ain Zuraini (2013); Bakhari and Zawiyah (2010) and Syed Omar and Rowland (2004) proved that adoption of information systems encouraged knowledge sharing behavior among employees such as through portals and organization's website. This, however, requires careful attention as the main function of Raja Tun Uda Library is to provide services to users. Hence, striking a balance between serving users and developing a knowledge management system is essential.

## V CONCLUSION

Knowledge sharing behavior is getting more apparent in Raja Tun Uda Library. This is a meaningful indicator that library should be exemplary for knowledge sharing besides providing meaningful and professional services to the society. The commitment by the management is key to ensure knowledge sharing behavior will eventually become a culture in Raja Tun Uda Library.

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library and information management professionals at large.

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