



The impact of knowledge sharing on performance: Evidence from Sri Lankan public sector employees

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Abstract

The importance of the way toward getting to and assessing knowledge, has been expanded with the use of new technology. Knowledge sharing has become a vital factor at the individual level as much as at the organizational level. Useful knowledge sharing in the case of an organization's employees makes a positive impact on accomplishing goals set by the organization. Knowledge sharing positively affects the employee's performance in order to achieve organizational goals. This study concentrates on the impact of knowledge sharing on employee performance in government organizations. The study's overall objectives are to recognize the impact of knowledge sharing on employee performance and identify the connection between knowledge sharing and employee performance in the state sector. This study uses individual (knowledge self-efficacy, enjoyment in helping others), organizational (management support, organization rewards, organizational culture) and technological (use of information and communication technology) factors as enablers of knowledge sharing process. As per the findings, Individual factors, Organizational factors and Technological factors relate positively to employee performance in government establishments.

Keywords: employee performance, knowledge self-efficacy, management support, organizational rewards and organizational culture

Introduction

Knowledge is being considered one of the most critical drivers of the economy. Knowledge is continuously generated throughout an organization. Firms must ensure that knowledge is managed most effectively to be successful and remain competitive (Sandhu et al., 2010). By knowledge sharing, organizations can enhance their efficiency, effectiveness and decrease the cost of training. From different researchers' points of view, the vital factor in developing and sustaining competition is knowledge (Fang, et al., 2007). Therefore, knowledge sharing is crucial and engaging people for knowledge sharing is useful for knowledge sharing (Alavi et al., 2002). Many researchers agreed regarding the dependency of knowledge sharing on the individual's different characteristics like his expertise, values, intentions, views, and motivational factors. From knowledge sharing perspective, it refers to the culture and environment of an organization vital to foster



knowledge sharing like different rewards which an organization connected with knowledge sharing (Bartol et al., 2002) support, motivation and encouragement from upper management for knowledge sharing (Mary MacNeil, 2004) and supportive leadership style (Taylor et al., 2004). The knowledge sharing process may be outlined as “a process that assists employees in exchanging knowledge and creating knowledge” (van den Hooff et al., 2004). Knowledge sharing includes on demand and supply of new knowledge (Ardichvili, et al., 2003). Van den Hooff et al., (2004) also suggested that the knowledge sharing process consists of the subsequent dimensions: Donation of knowledge and knowledge collection. Sharing of personal knowledge, skills, ideas, intellectual capital by individuals with others is called knowledge donating, whereas consulting with other employees and collecting their skills, ideas, intellectual capital to support one’s work is called knowledge collecting.

In current situations, management of the organizations believes that they have not enough knowledge about their job role and according to management perspective, there can be seen a massive lack of knowledge among junior level more than trained employees. During this regard, special practices for knowledge sharing are developed in several Organizations to help them achieve employee performance. The public sector organizations are supposed to develop strengths and overcome barriers in making the participative environment of knowledge sharing to extend their efficiency and be more proactive in delivering quality and superior services to the clients (Azhar, 2012). Public sector organizations offered various facilities in order to improve employees’ knowledge to ensure their continuous performance. Sharing knowledge increases organizational performance. Nevertheless, if there are no supportive organizational cultural elements for sharing individual knowledge, organizations have to face many difficulties such as new employees would take a long time to adapt to the existing system, employees would repeat the same mistakes many times and employees’ knowledge would exit with them once they leave the organization. These all result to delay in work, time consumption and finally, inefficiency and low productivity in the organizations. Therefore, it would be interesting to investigate the existing organizational culture of knowledge sharing in the Public sector. there is a little study on knowledge management and knowledge sharing in public sector organizations (McAdam et al., 2000). This could be due to the public sector’s status as non-profit organizations (Syed Ikhsan et al., 2004). Hence this study will investigate the impact of knowledge sharing on employee performance in public sector organizations. Besides, this study will provide information for any organizations to learn about knowledge sharing, factors affecting knowledge sharing, and strategies of



knowledge sharing. Further, this study's findings will be beneficial for the management to make effective decisions to make strong and valuable human assets in the organization.

Literature Review

There is no universally accepted definition of Knowledge (Russ, 2010). Knowledge is more than just information; additionally, it contains experiences, skills and insights (Huysman, et al., 2002). According to Al-Hawamdeh (2003), there are five necessary dimensions in knowledge management activities: knowledge capture, Knowledge creation, Knowledge use (leverage), knowledge sharing and knowledge retention. In the case of knowledge management, knowledge sharing is a vital factor (Al-Hawamdeh, 2003). Sharing knowledge is one of the processes in Knowledge management. It is “the process of transferring knowledge from a person to another in an organization” (Park et al., 2003). This transfer could be between individuals, from an individual to a group, within a group, between groups, sections, or departments to help each other accomplish different tasks and functions in organizations.

Knowledge sharing is fundamental to generate new ideas and develop new business opportunities through socialization and the learning process of knowledge workers. As a result, Knowledge sharing can affect the organization's long-term performance and competitiveness (Du et al., 2007). Knowledge sharing presumes a relation between a minimum of two parties, one with knowledge and the other that acquires knowledge. The first party should communicate its knowledge, consciously and willingly or not, in some kind or other. The opposite party should perceive these expressions of knowledge and make sense of them (Hendriks, 1999). The benefits of knowledge sharing typically derive from two levels: individual and organizational. At the individual level, knowledge management provides the opportunity for workers to enhance their skills by working together and sharing knowledge while improving their performance. At the organizational level, knowledge management provides two vital benefits: (1) Improves organizational performance through increased efficiency, productivity, quality and innovation, and (2) Better decision making, improving processes, data integration and broad collaboration. Reychav and Weisberg (2009) suggest that an individual in an organization involved in knowledge sharing can gain advantages, such as indirect performance increases, salary improvements, and a diminished intention to leave the organization. Bock, Kim and Lee (2005) worked on the factors that affect individual knowledge sharing objectives. They took the theory of reasoned action and supported



their argument that extrinsic motivators, social psychological-factors and organizational factors affect the individuals' knowledge sharing intentions. To perform well on the job, people are assumed to accumulate, adopt and share knowledge (Du. et al., 2007). According to Lee et al., (2005), there are five functions of knowledge management performance: knowledge circulation process: knowledge creation, knowledge accumulation, knowledge sharing, knowledge utilization and knowledge internalization. The main objective of the knowledge-sharing is to transfer knowledge from one person to another. For this purpose, individuals have to share their experiences with and from their colleagues and team members (Madsen et al., 2003). Social Network theory declares that networks across people are associated with performance-related results. People linked across groups are more familiar with alternative ways of thinking and behaving. (Burt, 2004). From information search viewpoint, unified and integrated networks encourage individuals to share their knowledge as they promote cooperation values, faith and norm (Coleman, 1988; Reagans et al., 2003). Job performance is directly related to obtaining the right information because actions for communicating and transferring conceptual and operational knowledge, experiences, and skills in an organization can speed up knowledge sharing (Ingram et al., 2002). As different opportunities rise, the people or groups of people who are mindful and able to get information and handle the new challenges can better perform at work (Gargiulo et al., 2000). Hence, the ability to work well with peers also improves individual performance. R and D projects have been also used to lighten knowledge sharing. The process of R and D can be considered as an important aspect in measuring knowledge sharing of a company (Du et al., 2007).

Methodology

The researcher used the quantitative research approach in the case of achieving objectives of this study. The conceptual framework, operationalization and hypothesis were developed based on prior studies. Primary data has been collected through an online survey questionnaire & correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis have been used as the main statistical tools in analyzing data.

The researcher used three independent variables: Individual factors (Knowledge self-efficacy, Enjoyment in helping others), Organizational factors (Management support, Organizational rewards, Organizational culture) & Technological factors (ICT use) and employee performances as the dependent variable based on prior studies. Variables were measured using Likert scale questions.



Table 1. Identification of variables and Operationalization

Variables	Indicators	Question No.
Individual Factors (Nguyen et al., 2016; Atif.M,2015)	Knowledge Self Efficacy Bandura, 1986; Bock & Kim, 2002)	2.1, 2.2,2.3, 2.4
	Enjoyment in helping others (Davenport et al., 1998; Ryan et al, 2000)	3.1, 3.2,3.3, 3.4
Organizational Factors (Nguyen et al., 2016; Atif.,2015)	Management Support (Connelly and Kelloway, 2003; Lee et al., 2005)	4.1, 4.2,4.3, 4.4
	Organizational Rewards (Bartol et al., 2002; Bock et al, 2005)	5.1, 5.2,5.3, 5.4
	Organizational Culture (Bock et al., 2005)	6.1, 6.2,6.3, 6.4
Technological Factor (Nguyen et al., 2016; Atif.,2015)	ICT use (Hendriks,1999; Ashrafi, R.et al 2008; Farooq, R. 2018)	7.1, 7.2,7.3, 7.4
	Employee Performance Working confidence (Nguyen et al, 2016 ; Atif.,2015).	1.1, 1.2,1.3, 1.4

Table 2. Hypotheses Development

H ₁ :	There is a significant relationship between employee performance and individual factors
H _{1a}	There is a significant relationship between employee performance and Knowledge self-efficacy. (Nguyen et al., 2016; Atif, 2015)
H _{1b}	There is a significant relationship between employee performance and Enjoyment in helping others. (Nguyen et al., 2016; Atif, 2015)
H ₂	There is a significant relationship between employee performance and Organizational factors
H _{2a}	There is a significant relationship between employee performance and management support. (Nguyen et al., 2016; Atif, 2015)
H _{2b}	There is a significant relationship between employee performance and Organizational rewards. (Al-Hawamdeh, 2002; Bock et al., 2005; Nguyen et al., 2016; Atif,2015)
H _{2c}	There is a significant relationship between employee performance and Organizational culture. (Syed Ikhsan & Rowland, 2004; Nguyen et al., 2016; Atif, 2015)
H ₃ :	There is a significant relationship between employee performance and Technological Factors
H _{3a}	There is a significant relationship between employee performance and ICT usage. (Nguyen et al., 2016; Atif, 2015)

According to the Department of Census and Statistics, the total state sector employees in Sri Lanka are 485,471. The researcher has selected 1000 employees (Covering the whole country) using a random sampling method and issued 1000 questionnaires, but just received 620 responses. The respondents were informed about the purpose of the research and how the data were to be used, right at the beginning of the study.

Results and Discussions

According to the profiles of respondents, the majority of respondents are females. Moreover, 21.21% of respondents are single employees and 78.79% of them are Married employees. In the case of educational qualifications of these respondents, 3.03% were passed only O/L, 22.73% employees were passed only A/L, 62.12% employees have a degree only, 6.06% employees



have only professional qualifications and also 6.06% employees have any higher qualifications such as Master's Degree. The most representative group of the respondents is workers who have worked 0-5 years (50%). 46.97% of employees have worked between 5 and 10 years, 3.03% of employees have worked between 10 and 15 years.

According to correlation analysis results, there is a significant relationship between Employee performance and knowledge self-efficacy at 0.01 significant level (confidence level- 99%) and there is a significant relationship between Employee performance and Enjoyment in helping others ($r = 0.615$, $p < 0.01$). The correlational matrix shows that there is a significant relationship between Employee performance and Management support ($r = 0.406$, $p < 0.01$), a significant relationship between Employee performance and Organizational Culture ($r = 0.451$, $p < 0.01$), and there is a significant relationship between Employee performance and Information and communication technology at 0.05 significant level. Based on these figures, all the hypotheses other than H2b have enough statistical evidence to accept.

Multiple regression analysis has been used by the researcher to identify the impact of independent variables to the dependent variable and the following models were tested (Table 4). According to the model 01 ($R^2 = 0.372$), the Impact of Knowledge self-efficacy towards Employee performance is 37.2%. The R^2 value of model 02 is 0.378, which means Enjoyment in helping others impact employee performance by 37.8%. Management support impacts employee performance by 16.5%. According to model 04 ($R^2 = 0.026$), the Impact of Organizational rewards towards Employee performance is 2.6%. R^2 value of model 05 is 0.203. That means Organizational culture impacts employee performance by 20.3%. R^2 value of model 06 is 0.040, which means Information and communication technology impact employee performance by 4%. Model 07 shows the impact of all six independent variables on employee performance statistically. The R^2 value of model 07 is 0.530, which discloses that the impact of knowledge self-efficacy, enjoyment in helping others, management support, organizational rewards, Organizational culture and Information and communication technology towards employee performance is 53%. On the other hand, the impact of other factors that have not been considered in this study towards employee performance in an organization is 47%.

Table 3. Regression Analysis, Model testing summary

Model	Predictors	R	R square	Adjusted square	R	Estimated error
1	Knowledge self-efficacy (KSE)	.610 ^a	.372	.367		.48928
2	Enjoyment in helping others (EHO)	.615 ^a	.378	.373		.48690



3	Management support (MS)	.406 ^a	.165	.158	.56436
4	Organizational rewards (ORS)	.161 ^a	.026	.018	.60943
5	Organizational culture (OC)	.451 ^a	.203	.197	.55118
6	Information and communication technology (ICT)	.200 ^a	.040	.033	.60501
7	KSE, EHO, MS, OR, OC, ICT	.728 ^a	.530	.507	.43181

a. Dependent variable – Employee performance

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study concluded a positive relationship between knowledge sharing and employee performance in public sector employees. The researcher Nguyen et al., 2016 also found that knowledge sharing links with employee performance. This study conducted based on individual, organizational and technological factors and study investigates the relationship among Knowledge self-efficacy, Enjoyment in helping others, Management support, Organizational rewards, Organizational culture, Information and communication technology and employee performance. Findings of this study disclosed that the people who possess knowledge, self-efficacy, Enjoyment in helping others, Management support, Organizational culture and Information and communication facilities enable them to have good performance at the organization. This study's findings will help develop knowledge sharing culture in organizations to achieve good employee performance. The present study was conducted only referring to the public sector organization, but these findings will be useful for the private sector organizations. Organizations should create forums where workers can engage in a friendly environment to share their knowledge, experiences, ideas, opinions, and useful information that will help personal development and benefit the organization. : The administration should support their employees for knowledge self-efficacy by providing proper feedback and recruiting staff who is more proactive, self-confident, and intrinsically motivated. This study showed that rewards (like bonuses, increment in salary, promotion and job security) have no significant impact on employee performance. Management should be aware of investing in different information technologies for quick interaction and communication and enable these technological investments to be available at every employment level or to every employee in the organization.

The study will satisfy the existing research gap in knowledge sharing in the Sri Lankan context up to some extent. Since knowledge sharing is vital for the public and private sector organizations, future studies could conduct research considering that sector. Furthermore, the study has been tested from a wide view, which is one of the main limitations of this study and future researchers could be tested the same phenomenon in a much narrower view, such as considering different sectors, different segments.



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