

Investigating the Mediating Role of Organizational Citizenship Behavior Between Organizational Learning Culture and Knowledge Sharing

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Abstract: This study highlights the behavioral (organizational citizenship) and Cultural (organizational learning culture) predictors of knowledge sharing are discussed in the present study. Data was collected from 402 employees of Malaysia. Structural equation model confirms that OLC was positively related to OCB and knowledge sharing. OCB was also found to perform the role of mediator between OLC and knowledge sharing.

Key words: OLC • OCB • Knowledge Sharing • Mediating effect • LOC

INTRODUCTION

Knowledge management is a major source of competitive advantage in the organizations [1]. In past two decades knowledge sharing has received greater attention based on the assumption that it is hard to convert the personal knowledge of an individual into organizational knowledge until unless it is shared with others.

In a study [2] illustrates that knowledge sharing is an accumulation of social capital for an organization as if there is an adequate social capital is available then the knowledge possessed by an individual can be shared efficiently and effectively in the organization. However the willingness of the members to share their knowledge with other members based on the organizational structure and social relations in the organization [3]. According to [4], the accumulated social capital makes it easy to swap over the knowledge of one member to another member within the organization by providing them anticipation, access and motivation to transfer the knowledge. This also positively contributes to the organizational capability. Another study by [5] Demonstrate that social capital helps to create a mechanism or set of organizing principle through which the knowledge of an individual in a common language is accessible to other individual or a group. Social capital helps to increase the efficiency of the action of both the recipients and the sources. On the

other side, this may positively contribute towards the optimistic behavior and ultimately reduce the transactional costs [5].

Social capital (SC) is inherent in relation to individuals and their organizations. A study states that, it is perceived obligation, trust identification and norms among individuals of the organization that accumulate social capital [4]. Emotional bonding with the organization increases the perceived similarities among those individuals who share membership as identification built up the sense of oneness [6]. It is obvious that, employees when identified and psychologically attached to their organization, not only started trusting their organization but also like to interact with their colleagues and start sharing the information they have learnt (i.e. knowledge sharing). Therefore, it may be assume that extrinsic benefits are less important comparing social factors in promoting sharing of knowledge [7].

Theoretical Background

Knowledge Sharing: Ample research work has been done to find out the major factors that can facilitate or obstruct the knowledge sharing. Generally, these studies have been done in two directions. Initially, a number of studies have recommended some primary critical factors to facilitate knowledge sharing: the properties of shared knowledge [2], beliefs and attitudes [8], individual motivation [9] and culture [10].

Nonetheless, knowledge sharing cannot be explained through few or single factors. As a result, another school of thought made an attempt to combine various factors by identifying its interactional associations with one another to explain and develop the conceptual model of knowledge from various perspectives [7, 11]. For example, [4] suggested cognitive, relational and structural aspects as dimensions of knowledge sharing. In addition, knowledge may be shared among individuals of an organization through sharing of dialogues among the peers and colleagues, organizational shared norms and effective communication.

A structural framework was constructed and tested by [7] following the reasoned action theory. They further argued that, it is an individual's subjective norms (including climate of the organization) and attitudes that influence their behavior of sharing the knowledge. This ultimately urged individuals to participate in sharing of knowledge.

A study by [11] critically evaluates the process through which knowledge is being shared among the organizational employees. She argued about the four important aspects that may affect the sharing of knowledge i.e. motivation, opportunities, nature of the knowledge and organizational culture.

Organizational Learning Culture: As per [12], culture is "a pattern of basic assumptions, invented, discovered, or developed by a given group" (p. 7). In a similar fashion, organizational culture positive influence on the employees behavioral consistency through cognitive models, social norms and shared values [13].

The organization whose motive is to become a learning organization (LO) needs to develop appropriate characteristics that are required for the organization-wide learning practices. LO refers to "an organization skilled at creating, acquiring and transferring knowledge and at modifying its behavior to reflect new knowledge and insights" [14, p. 80]. Similarly, "A learning organization involves an environment in which organizational learning in an organization is structured so that teamwork, collaboration, creativity and knowledge processes have a collective meaning and value" [15, 16] Framework for an organizational learning culture (OLC) has served as a theoretical base for this study.

Organizational Citizenship Behavior: "OCB refers to employee behaviors that are discretionary, beyond the call of duty and not rewarded in the context of an organization's formal reward structure" [17].

"Discretionary behavior, according to [17], is not an enforceable requirement of the role or the job description, that is, the clearly specifiable terms of the person's employment contract with the organization; the behavior is rather a matter of personal choice, such that its omission is not generally understood as punishable (p. 4)". [18, 17] categories OCB in the following five dimensions "i.e. (1) Altruism, (2) civic virtue, (3) conscientiousness, (4) courtesy and (5) sportsmanship".

A researcher [19] argued about the positive contribution of OCB in developing an organizational social capital. The conceptual framework of [19] operationalizes OCB as participation, obedience and loyalty, which positively influence on cognitive, relational and structural aspects of social capital [4]. It is also evident that, employees' emotional attachment towards their organization is critical in developing citizenship behaviors.

As [20] is of the view that, cooperative behaviors and frequency of cooperation is enhanced through significant identification. Similarly, others have also confirmed that identified employees are more likely to engage in citizenship behaviors, altruistic and cooperative behaviors [21, 22].

Hypothesis Development: Previous researchers have found positive association between OCB and organizational culture. [23, 24] Describes "contextual performance as the efforts of employees not directly related to their main tasks but is important because they benefit the organization". This contextual performance influenced by the organizational culture. Employee's perception of supportive culture enhances their OCB [23]. Social exchange theory also suggests the same that when employees perceive that their organization supports them they show citizenship behaviors.

In the presence of learning culture employee's focus on long term (continuance) improvement rather than immediate outcomes [12].

H1: OLC is positively related to OCB.

The importance of cultural aspect in the field of knowledge management cannot be ignored. That is the reason; some of the past studies have noticed an association between culture and sharing of knowledge. Thus, organizational culture is one of those important constructs which use, create and share knowledge [1] and create such environment which motivates individuals to share their knowledge with others [25].

H2: OLC is positively related to KS.

According to [26] knowledge sharing is a form of OCB and automatic, discretionary, altruistic behaviors continue the process of sharing of knowledge. In addition, along with these aspects, effective environment is equally important as it positively contribute in sharing of knowledge through OCB.. Another researcher [27] suggests that knowledge sharing is the outcome of citizenship behaviors.

H3: OCB positively related to KS.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Sample and Procedure: The present study was based on the survey on banking employees of Malaysia. A total of 500 questionnaires were distributed among employees of banking sector on the basis of simple random sampling technique. Out of questionnaires 424 responded back (response rate = 84.8%). On final evaluation 22 questionnaires were found to be incomplete and excluded from the data (effective response rate = 80.4%). Respondents were evaluated on the basis of their age, gender, qualification, income and marital status. Average age of the respondents was 31 years. 76.8% of the respondents were married and 71% of them were females. While 72.4% of them were holding master's degree and their average income was 1800 ringgits/month. Measures

Knowledge Sharing Intentions: To measure the knowledge sharing intentions [7] scale was used. This scale contains five items ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Furthermore [7] reported 0.93 as the reliability of the scale. While in the present study reliability was measured at 0.89. A sample item included "I frequently share my experience or know-how from work with other members in my organization."

Organizational Citizenship Behavior: To measure OCB scale was developed by [28] focusing on the [17] five dimensions. The present study excluded 6 items regarding altruism form that scale because altruism is related to helping behaviors towards some specific persons and not for organization. The reliability of 16 items was found to be 0.85 in the present study.

Organizational Learning Culture: Scale regarding OLC was developed by [16]. Using the same scale the construct was considered as valid by [29]. Later on the scale was reduced up to seven items by [30] containing

one item for each dimension and reported its reliability ranging from 0.68 to 0.83. Using the same scale in the present study 0.84 reliability was founded. A sample item included "In my organization, whenever people state their view, they also ask what others think."

RESULTS

Table 1 illustrated standard deviation, mean and correlation among the variables. The mean score of OLC (M=3.40), OCB (M=3.37) and knowledge sharing intentions (M=3.61) were slightly above neutral. This showed that employees were slightly agreed regarding these variables.

OLC and OCB were found to be highly correlated with each other ($r=0.58$, $P<0.01$). This shows that learning support from the organization increases employee's citizenship behaviors. OLC and employee's intentions to share knowledge were also found to be positively and significantly related ($r=0.42$, $P<0.01$). In addition, OCB was also found to enhance intentions to share knowledge among employees ($r=0.39$, $P<0.01$).

Structure Model Assessment: In order to determine the support between conceptual explanation and data, structure model should be conducted. Strength of the relationship, overall model fit and path coefficient are shown in the Figure 1. The hypothesized model showed a good fit, $\chi^2(204)=526.07$, $p=.001$, "non-normed fit index (NNFI)"=.96, "root mean square of approximation (RMSEA)"=.061, "standardized root mean square residual (SRMR)"=.057, "comparative fit index (CFI)"=.97. The entire hypothesis was significant.

In addition to this an alternative model was also tested. The alternative model almost showed the same results with a non significant path between OCB and Knowledge sharing intentions i.e. $\chi^2(203)=526.17$, $p=.001$, NNFI=.96, RMSEA=.060, SRMR=.057 and CFI=.97. Thus the hypothesized model was accepted and alternative model was rejected.

Findings of the Study: The study was conducted to explore the relationship among OLC, OCB and knowledge sharing intentions of employees. Researchers were able to obtain the following: The respondent exhibits their intentions to share knowledge in the presence of learning culture and citizenship behaviors. Literature also supports the same results [27, 31]. Indirect impact of OLC on knowledge sharing was found to be greater via OCB. Thus OCB perform the role of mediation between OLC and knowledge sharing.

Table 1: Mean, Standard Deviation and Correlation

Variables	Mean	S.D	1	2
1. OLC	3.40	0.63		
2. OCB	3.37	0.66	0.58**	
3. KS	3.61	0.74	0.42**	0.39**

Note: all the values are significant at ** $p < 0.01$

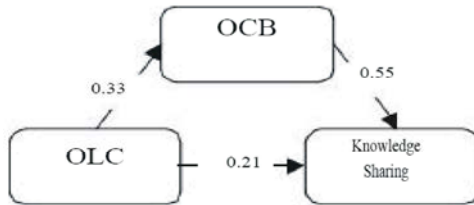


Fig. 1: Path Coefficient of hypothesized model

Practical and Theoretical Implication: According to [4] citizenship behaviors are the result of organizational accord. In the presence of group unity employees are ready to sacrifice personal interest for the organization. Thus, the present study evident the notion that employee's psychological attachment is promoted by learning culture and this effect on solidarity of organization.

[1] Suggested that organizational culture influence on the employee's intentions to share knowledge. The current study retreated the same result with the addition that learning culture by organization encourages employees to share their knowledge. The study also revealed that in the presence of citizenship behaviors employees exhibits more to share knowledge voluntarily.

The study also observed the social aspects of knowledge sharing. HR managers should encourage and promote social factors for sharing of knowledge. As knowledge sharing is social in nature, so, implementation of policies and improvement of technology might not be successful to share knowledge unless the managers built healthy relationship among peers [32]. HR managers could enhance knowledge sharing by promoting mutual trust in such environment where employees could learn.

Limitations and Future Directions: The present study was based on voluntary participation. This might weaken its generalizability. Secondly participation of female respondents was more as compare to male ones. This uneven distribution might produce feminist biased results. Thirdly, cross sectional survey was used in the present study. To overcome the limitations future researchers should conduct longitudinal study. In addition the study should be conducted on other demographical to strengthen its generalizability. There is also need to study OLC with several other behavioral outcomes.

CONCLUSION

In today's economy knowledge is vital source of competitive advantage. The construct knowledge sharing is significant because when individuals share their knowledge it becomes organizational knowledge. Knowledge sharing requires such culture where individuals can continuous learn. It is very important for the organizations to facilitate OCB to enhance sharing of knowledge. It is also hoped that the present study will encourage researchers to discuss cognitive factors of knowledge sharing.

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