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KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT BEHAVIOR AMONG PRACTITIONERS IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT. The main aim of this study is to examine the role of specific organizational climate and individual acceptance factors on knowledge management behavior within an organizational context. A hypothetical conceptual research framework was developed based on knowledge creation theory and previous studies. Data were collected from 74 corporate practitioners in Malaysia using a self-administered online questionnaire. Though the linear regression analysis supports all proposed hypotheses, according to stepwise multiple regressions analysis decentralized decision making structure and Information Technology support emerged as the significant predictors of KM behavior.

Keywords: Knowledge Management, Knowledge Creation Theory, Malaysia, SECI, KM Behavior

INTRODUCTION

Knowledge management (KM) is considered as one of the most important strategic challenges on the route to enduring organizational success and competitiveness (Behringer & Sassenberg, 2015) even in the global context (Pawlowski & Bick, 2015). As a result, KM is a well-established discipline in the academic field and the business world as well (Donate & de Pablo, 2015). Consequently, a variety of topics, from focusing on foundational issues such as KM implementation and adoption processes (Pawlowski & Bick, 2015) to empirical examination of the link between KM and firm performance (Cohen & Olsen, 2015), has come up in the field to understand KM.

Though the significance and use of KM for organizational success is unquestionable, recent reports reveal low satisfaction rates among managers in relation to both the use of KM tools and the results of its application (Donate & de Pablo, 2015), thus, still a lot of KM projects fail and not all influencing factors are clearly understood (Pawlowski & Bick, 2015). With the aim of addressing this research gap, the focus area of this study is KM implementation and the adoption processes. Therefore, the main aim of this study is to examine the role of specific organizational climate and individual acceptance factors on knowledge management (KM) behavior within an organizational context.

Though the KM has been defined from different perspectives, we follow the KM process view and consider only knowledge creation (KC) and knowledge sharing (KS) as the KM process for this study. Accordingly, we define KM behavior as the involvement in the KM process (KC & KS) by the organizational individuals within the prevailing organizational

climate (Razi & Karim, 2010). For this purpose, a research framework was developed as described in the following section.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The concept of KM behavior has been operationalized based on knowledge creation theory by tailoring the indicators of SECI (socialization, externalization, combination, and internalization) (Nonaka, Byosiere, Borucki, & Konno, 1994) as SECI represent both knowledge creation and sharing (Becerra-Fernandez, Gonzalez, & Sabherwal, 2004; Lee & Choi, 2003; Teerajetgul & Charoenngam, 2006). Therefore, the involvement in the SECI process can be considered as an indication of exhibiting KM behavior. Applicability of SECI to measure intention to be involved in KM has been verified (Karim, Razi, & Mohamed, 2012).

The socialization process refers to conversion of tacit knowledge to new tacit knowledge through social interactions and shared experience among organizational members (Alavi & Leidner, 2001) while externalization means the expression of tacit knowledge and its conversion into comprehensible forms that is easier to understand (Becerra-Fernandez & Sabherwal, 2001). Similarly the combination process collects explicit knowledge from inside or outside the organization and then combined, edited, or processed to form more complex and systematic explicit knowledge and the internalization can be understood as praxis, where knowledge is applied and used in practical situations and becomes the base for new routines (Nonaka & Toyama, 2003).

Trust refers to the degree of reciprocal faith among the colleagues in terms of intention and behavior within the organization (Choi, Kang, & Lee, 2008). The positive relationship between trust and KM has been established (Chen & Hung, 2010; Lee & Lan, 2011).

H1: Trust will positively influence KM behavior

Management support means the degree of support from top managers for KM through providing guidance and necessary resources (Lin, 2007). The effect of management support and KM oriented leadership towards KM behavior has been elaborated (Donate & de Pablo, 2015; Pawlowski & Bick, 2015).

H2: Management Support will positively influence KM behavior

Decentralization refers to a management structure that emphasizes employee autonomy and participation in decision making (Meirovich, Brender-Ilan, & Meirovich, 2007). The positive effects of decentralization on KM behavior recognized (Chen & Huang, 2007; Willem & Buelens, 2009).

H3: Decentralization will positively influence KM behavior

IT Support denotes to the degree of availability of IT support for KM process initiatives within the organization (Lee & Choi, 2003). The relationship of IT and KM behavior well explained (Cohen & Olsen, 2015; Teerajetgul & Charoenngam, 2006).

H4: IT Support will positively influence KM behavior

Performance Expectancy (PE) of KM means the degree to which an individual believes that involvement in KM processes will help him/her to attain gains in job performance (Venkatesh, Morris, Davis, & Davis, 2003). The works of Behringer and Sassenberg (2015) and Li (2010) suggest the following relationship.

H5: PE of KM will positively influence KM behavior

Effort Expectancy (EE) of KM explains the degree of ease associated with the involvement in KM process (Venkatesh et al., 2003). The influence of effort expectancy on behavior is obvious (Razi, 2013; Venkatesh et al., 2003)

H6: EE of KM will positively influence KM behavior

Figure 1 depicts the hypothetical research model

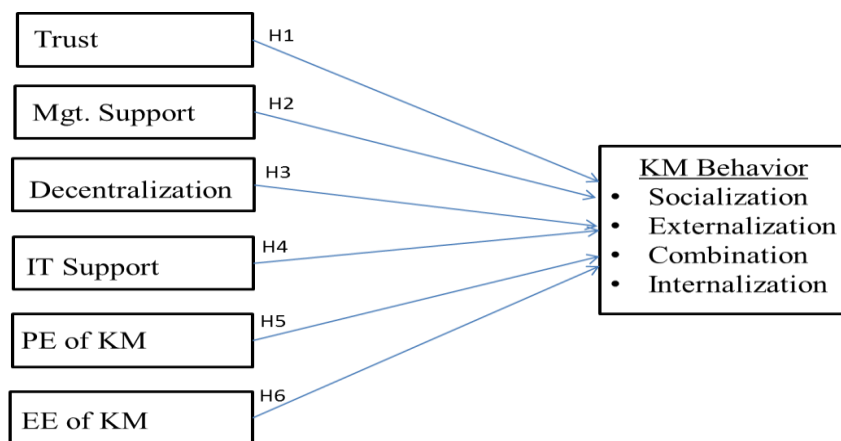


Figure 1. Research Model.

METHODOLOGY AND FINDINGS

A self-administered online questionnaire was used to collect data from 74 different levels of executives working in the corporate sector in Malaysia. The questionnaire items were adapted from previous studies (Choi et al., 2008; Lee & Choi, 2003; Lin, 2007; Meirovich et al., 2007; Venkatesh et al., 2003). Respondents were asked to indicate (on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”) their level of agreements on statements. Principal components factor analysis and Cronbach's alpha test were performed to examine the validity and reliability. The results are shown in table 1. Factor loadings are well above the threshold value of 0.5 and the Cronbach's alpha values are also above 0.7.

Findings of descriptive analysis, as shown in Table 1, reveals that the respondents on average agree that they trust ($\mu = 5.5$, $\sigma = 0.98$) their colleagues in the organization and agree their top level managers are very supportive ($\mu = 5.61$, $\sigma = 1.06$) for KM behavior. Furthermore, they believe their respective organizations follow decentralized ($\mu = 5.01$, $\sigma = 1.05$) decision making structure and provide enough IT support ($\mu = 5.36$, $\sigma = 1.14$) for KM activities. The respondents realized the importance of KM for their performance improvement ($\mu = 5.80$, $\sigma = 1.16$) and believe it needs less effort ($\mu = 5.64$, $\sigma = 1.19$) to involve in KM practices. Moreover, the important finding of descriptive analysis is that the respondents practice KM behavior ($\mu = 5.38$, $\sigma = 1.03$) in their respective organization.

The results of linear regression analysis support all hypotheses proposed in this study (shown in Table 2). However, the findings of stepwise multiple regressions (shown in Table 2), which shows the simultaneous effect of independent variables on dependent variable, support only selected hypotheses; H3: Decentralization will positively influence KM behavior and H4: IT Support will positively influence KM behavior. The modern day working culture, which is more team and collaboration oriented and collaborative, might have influenced the rejection of other hypotheses.

Table 1. Results of Factor Analysis, Reliability Test, and Descriptive Analysis

Item	Mean (μ)	Std. Dev (σ)	Factor Loadings	Alpha (α)
Trust				0.913
Trust1, Trust2, Trust3, Trust4			0.894, 0.912, 0.865, 0.894	
Average ‘Trust’ Score	5.51	0.98		

Mgt. Support				0.933
MGT1,MGT2,MGT3			0.805,0.806,0.808	
Average 'Mgt. Support' Score	5.61	1.06		
Decentralization				0.820
Dec.1,Dec.2,Dec.3,Dec.4			0.903,0.785,0.785,0.757	
Average 'Decentralization' Score	5.01	1.05		
IT Support				0.885
ITS1,ITS2,ITS3,ITS4			0.876,0.811,0.860,0.902	
Average 'IT Support' Score	5.36	1.14		
PE of KM				0.863
PE1,PE2,PE3,PE4			0.933,0.960,0.595,0.953	
Average 'PE of KM' Score	5.80	1.16		
EE of KM				0.940
EE1,EE2,EE3,EE4			0.925,0.860,0.953,0.947	
Average 'EE of KM' Score	5.64	1.19		
KM Behavior				0.956
SOC1B,SOC2B,SOC3B,SOC4B			0.772,0.840,0.768,0.811,	
EXT1B,EXT2B,EXT3B,EXT4B			0.842,0.745,0.850,0.846	
COM1B,COM2B,COM3B,COM4B			0.679,0.721,0.798,0.781	
INT1B,INT2B,INT3B,INT4B			0.689,0.698,0.810,0.876	
Average 'KM Behavior' Score	5.38	1.03		

Though factors such as trust, management support, performance expectancy and effort expectancy are individually (linear regression) important for organizational members to be involved in KM behavior, comparatively the IT support and decentralized decision making procedures are more important for them to be involved in KM behavior. The summaries of hypothesis tests are shown in Table 3.

Table 2. Results of Regression Analysis

Independent Variable	Based on Linear Regression			Based on Stepwise Regression		
	Beta	t	Sig.	Beta	t	Sig.
Trust	0.314	2.801	0.007	-0.099	-0.975	0.333

Mgt. Support	0.468	4.497	0.000	-0.018	-0.149	0.882
Decentralization	0.654	7.331	0.000	0.461	4.333	0.000
IT Support	0.597	6.315	0.000	0.317	2.978	0.004
PE of KM	0.511	5.046	0.000	0.139	1.283	0.204
EE of KM	0.468	4.492	0.000	0.116	1.118	0.267

Dependent Variable: KM Behavior

Table 3. Summary of Hypotheses Tests

Hypotheses	Based on Linear Regression	Based on Stepwise Regression
H1	Supported	Not Supported
H2	Supported	Not Supported
H3	Supported	Supported
H4	Supported	Supported
H5	Supported	Not Supported
H6	Supported	Not Supported

CONCLUSION

The findings reveal that the respondents believe, trust among the peers, top management support, decentralized structure, and IT support exist in their respective organization and they believe involvement in KM behavior is easy and useful in their career. However, they believe decentralized decision making structure and IT support for KM are the main predictors of KM behavior. Therefore, the organizations that are willing to see their executives involve in KM behavior, have to make sure an organizational climate with these elements.

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