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IT Usage, Perceived Knowledge Usefulness, Learning Culture and Intention to Share Knowledge among Business Students in a Malaysian Public University

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Abstract

This research investigates the factors that influence the intention to share knowledge among students of a public institution of higher education. Data were collected from 169 students of a business faculty in a public university in Malaysia. The research findings showed that two factors, which are learning culture and perceived knowledge usefulness, have significant relationship with the intention to share knowledge. The study is significant in providing guidance of the factors that influence knowledge sharing intention among students. Specifically, the findings will assist institutions of higher education to have better knowledge in understanding the learning culture and promoting its value so that academics could establish supportive and conducive environment in promoting the right attitude towards knowledge sharing.

Keywords: intention to share knowledge; IT usage; learning culture; perceived knowledge usefulness; public institution of higher education

1. Introduction

Knowledge sharing behaviour can be defined sharing related information and experiences with other individuals (Lin, 2007). With the retirement of Baby Boomers in near future, it is pertinent for organizations to start looking ways to understand the need of knowledge sharing. Knowledge sharing is beneficial as it provides new views   and

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perspectives on not only at the conceptual level but on the practical implementation as well. This will lead to better learning and expertise improvement for individuals. In a context of tertiary students, sharing knowledge is consider as a major contributor for shared learning and in the development of their intellectual thinking (Eid &Nuhu, 2011). In fact previous studies highlighted that active knowledge sharing leads to improved achievements in academic, soft skills and communication, open acceptance of new ideas and perspective, positive interdependence, and better satisfaction in learning.

The increase investment of educational institutions on information technology (IT) lead to an expectation that knowledge is better disseminated among individuals (Eid &Nuhu, 2011). To share or not to share knowledge can be highly influenced by the perceived benefits and costs associated with each option. For example, perceived usefulness in the context of knowledge sharing behaviour is "the sharer's belief of the likelihood with which the knowledge sharing behaviour can improve work efficiency and economic benefits of the individual" (Kankanhalli, Tan & Wei, 2005). The fact that we live in a different cultural society, it is also worth considering learning culture of the students as it involves social and cultural elements (Eid & Nuhu, 2011).

Having said all that, there is a still limited study on knowledge sharing among tertiary students and very little is known about knowledge sharing practices among them. Previous studies summarized that students were less inclined to share knowledge for academic activities (Majid & Chitra, 2013). This may be due to 'hoarding knowledge mentality' which prevent them from sharing scared that it will provide them with better competitive advantage (Chong, Chong, Gan & Yuen, 2012). If their unwillingness to share knowledge with peers continues, there is a tendency that this will turn into their personality and later develop the same mindset during their tertiary education, and later to the workplace (Chong et al., 2012).

Therefore this study intends to: (1) determine the relationship between IT usage and intention to share knowledge; (2) determine the relationship between perceived usefulness and intention to share knowledge; and (3) determine the relationship between learning culture and intention to share knowledge.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Knowledge Sharing

The act of making knowledge accessible to individuals within the organization is what knowledge sharing is always been referred to. Specifically, it is a process where knowledge is been transferred to other individuals in a shape that can be easily understand, absorb and used by other individuals (Ipe, 2003). Indeed, the term 'sharing' is referred to a process providing knowledge which can be used by other individuals. Ipe (2003) elaborated that it is a conscious action done by the individual possessing the knowledge. In fact, knowledge sharing is actually one of the knowledge management processes together with knowledge creation/generation and knowledge acquisition and knowledge codification (Alavi & Leidner, 2001). The knowledge sharing session may be beneficial if the recipient successfully acquire and make use of the knowledge to carry out their tasks better. If this happened, then the knowledge sharing is effective (Bock & Kim, 2002; Wasko & Faraj, 2005).

2.2 IT Usage

The usage of IT not only enhance knowledge sharing in higher learning education but also enable the process of teaching and learning to be flexible for the educators and students. The fact that IT has been advancing to be more capable and affordable, it has been recognized to manage knowledge effectively through the process of capturing, storing, processing, retrieving and communication (Reychav & Weisberg, 2009). Students able to receive formative feedback, have better access to learning materials and widen their network, which contribute to the success rate of the students if they use IT in learning. Hence, it is expected that those with a favourable perception of IT may display more knowledge-sharing behaviour (Kumar, 2005). Past studies also revealed that the usage of IT facilitated the sharing of knowledge among teams members (Wheeler & Valacich, 1996) and contributed to an effective knowledge application among teams (Alavi & Leidner, 2001). Thus, it is hypothesized that:

H1: There is a positive significant relationship between IT usage and intention to share knowledge