

Knowledge Sharing Among Peers: An Essay

Danielle Janney

School of Information, College of Arts & Sciences, University of South Florida

LIS 5937: Knowledge Management

Dr. William Edgar

February 27, 2023

Introduction

Knowledge sharing is all but one activity of knowledge management that involves making knowledge available to individuals, groups or organizations. Muhammed and Zaim (2020) focused on individuals within organizations and “conceptualized peer knowledge sharing as knowledge sharing that occurs between individuals at about the same levels of the organizational hierarchy” (p. 2466); the researchers studied how peer knowledge sharing impacted an organization’s financial and innovative performance, knowledge management success, and the role of leadership support. The outcome of this study announces the importance of peer knowledge sharing as an integral activity for the overall success of an organization that should have the support of leadership. A full embrace of proficient peer knowledge sharing could revolutionize the landscape of library leadership.

Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge management can be defined as “doing what is needed to get the most out of knowledge resources” (Becerra-Fernandez and Sabherwal, 2015, p. 4) and it is comprised of systems of discovery, capture, sharing, and application. A knowledge sharing system, within a knowledge management system, “enable[s] members of an organization to acquire tacit and explicit knowledge from each other” (Becerra-Fernandez and Sabherwal, 2015, p. 155). Knowledge sharing can occur vertically between superiors and subordinates, or horizontally among colleagues. Vertical knowledge sharing supports an organization’s operational efficiency and performance (Christensen and Pedersen, 2018; Gottschalk, 2005; Kogut and Zander, 1992, as cited in Muhammed and Zain, 2020), while horizontal knowledge sharing contributes to innovation and dynamism (Gonzalez and Melo, 2017; Kumar et al., 2019; Rosing and Zacher, 2017, as cited in Muhammed and Zaim, 2020).

Peer Knowledge Sharing

The conceptualization of peer knowledge sharing surfaced to differentiate from intra-organization knowledge sharing and distinguish a more individual-level of knowledge sharing. Peer knowledge sharing is an aspect of knowledge management with fewer studies than its intra-organization and individual counterparts. Intra-organizational knowledge exchange has the ability to create social and intellectual capital, which increases knowledge management success (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Wang et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2016, as cited in Muhammed and Zaim, 2020), and individual-level knowledge sharing can have a vertical or horizontal direction. Peer knowledge sharing is intra-organizational and horizontal; the context of knowledge sharing is critical for understanding circumstances of knowledge management success.

Muhammed and Zaim's Study

Hypotheses

Muhammed and Zaim (2020) proposed six hypotheses to test: (1) leadership support is positively related to peer knowledge sharing, (2) leadership support is positively related to knowledge management success, (3) peer knowledge sharing is positively related to knowledge management success, (4) knowledge management success is positively related to the organization's innovation performance, (5) knowledge management success is positively related to the organization's financial performance, and (6) organization's innovation performance is positively related to its financial performance.

Methodology

The researchers conducted a cross-sectional survey of the convenience sampling method to collect data and test their hypotheses. The survey contained three items for each of five factors: leadership support, peer knowledge sharing, knowledge management success, innovation performance, and financial performance. The questions were worded in

such a way that any person in an organization, regardless of hierarchical status, could apply their experiences. Since the study was conducted in Turkey and originally written in English, multiple back-translations and a pilot study transpired before the final surveys were dispatched. Within an allotted three-month period, 900 paper surveys were sent out, 338 were returned, completeness was examined, and 330 of them met standards for use in the study. Banks and hospitals made up the majority of the service-based organizations surveyed (57% and 25%, respectively) with 76% male and 24% female respondents. The accepted surveys represented front-level employees (66%), supervisors (16%), mid-level managers (16%), and senior management (2%). Covariance-based structural equation modeling in LISREL was used to construct the multiple measurements and test the relationships of the hypotheses. (Muhammed and Zaim, 2020)

Results

The results from the structural model fit the data model with significance. Five of the six hypotheses were supported based on the structural model; the hypothesis of knowledge management success being positively related to financial performance was not supported. The small sample size and gender perception of knowledge management success was considered to effect the less significant relationship between peer knowledge sharing and knowledge management success. (Muhammed and Zaim, 2020)

Discussion

As seen in the results, all hypotheses were supported except knowledge management success being related to financial performance. However, financial performance is impacted by innovative performance that is positively related to knowledge management success. (Muhammed and Zaim, 2020)

Peer knowledge sharing was found to be a significant factor in knowledge management success, but it was noted not to be significant among the female respondents. Though there were fewer females in the sample, Muhammed and Zaim (2020) postulated the women may contribute to knowledge management differently--in creation, capture, or application--and take a more conservative approach to knowledge sharing. Since the data were collected from Turkey, the cultural attitudes of women engaging with men was considered in the low association of peer knowledge sharing and knowledge management success.

The relationship between leadership support and peer knowledge sharing highlights the influence good leadership can have on organizational outcomes, knowledge management success, and innovation performance. Future research is recommended to investigate the support of leaders and positive behavior related to organizational and innovative performances.

From Peer to Leader

Knowledge management success is evolving to be more inclusive in knowledge work: peers are sharing knowledge with one another and not just depending on managers to provide them with solutions. The evidence of Muhammed and Zaim's (2020) study reinforces the benefits of a team mentality in knowledge-based workplaces and creates potential for future leaders to emerge within a peer group.

If leadership support within an organization is positively related to a level of peer knowledge sharing and knowledge management success, then the leader has done good for knowledge work. This positive leadership will likely have good followership, and good followers make good leaders. When a leader defines what is important, they give meaning to the work being done and project their vision onto their followers. In a service-based

organization--such as a public library--where knowledge is constantly applied to daily routines and challenges, peers of all levels share their knowledge and some will emerge more as leaders than others. (Martin, 2019)

The American Library Association's Core: Leadership, Infrastructure, Futures' Continuing Education division has significantly agreed communication, change management, and team building to be crucial competencies for successful library leaders. Applying these three competencies to peer knowledge sharing would serve any knowledge-based workplace immensely, so long as a leader sees the benefits and does not feel threatened. Peer knowledge sharing puts these competencies into practice. (ALA, 2020)

"A key issue for the profession now and in the coming years is building capacities to identify and develop current and next generation library leaders" (Stewart, 2017, p. 12). For the organizational success of a public library, a strong leader will encourage peer knowledge sharing on all hierarchical levels to further increase innovative knowledge work, knowledge management success, and the manifestation of future library leaders.

References

- American Library Association. (2020, August 30). *Leadership and management competencies*.
<http://www.ala.org/core/continuing%20education/leadership-and-management-competencies>
- Becerra- Fernandez, I. & Sabherwal, R. (2015). *Knowledge management: Systems and processes* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Christensen, P.H. & Pedersen, T. (2018). The dual influences of proximity on knowledge sharing. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 22(8), 1782-1802.
- Gonzalez, R.V.D. & Melo, T.M. (2017). Linkage between dynamics capability and knowledge management factors. *Management Decision*, 55(10), 2256-2276.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/MD-03-2017-0180>
- Gottschalk, P. (2005). *Strategic knowledge management technology*. Idea Group Publishing.
- Kogut, B. & Zander, U. (1992). Knowledge of the firm, combinative capabilities, and the replication of technology. *Organization Science*, 3(3). 383-397.
- Kumar, N., Yakhlef, A. & Nordin, F. (2019). Validation of organizational innovation as a creative learning process. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, 34(3), 643-650.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/JBIM-02-2017-0026>
- Martin, J. (2019). The leadership/followership process: A different understanding of library leadership. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 45(1), 15–21.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2018.11.004>
- Muhammed, S. & Zaim, H. (2020). Peer knowledge sharing and organizational performance: The role of leadership support and knowledge management success. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 24(10), 2455-2489. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JKM-03-2020-0227>

- Nahapiet, J. & Ghoshal, S. (1998). Social capital, intellectual capital, and the organizational advantage. *Academy of Management Review*, 23(2), 242-266.
- Nonaka, I. & Takeuchi, H. (1995). *The knowledge-creating company: How Japanese companies create the dynamics of innovation*. Oxford University Press.
- Rosing, K. & Zacher, H. (2017). Individual ambidexterity: the duality of exploration and exploitation and its relationship with innovative performance. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 26(5), 694-709.
- Stewart, C. (2017). What we talk about when we talk about leadership: A review of research on library leadership in the 21st century. *Library Leadership & Management*, 32(1), 1–30.
- Wang, Z., Sharma, N. & Cao, J. (2016). From knowledge sharing to firm performance: a predictive model comparison. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(10), 4650-4658.
- Wang, Z., Wang, N. & Liang, H. (2014). Knowledge sharing, intellectual capital and firm performance. *Management Decision*, 52(2), 230-258.