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Knowledge Sharing Behaviour of Academics in The Polytechnic Ibadan

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KNOWLEDGE SHARING BEHAVIOUR OF ACADEMICS IN THE POLYTECHNIC, IBADAN

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ABSTRACT

The study was designed to investigate the factors driving the academics to engage in work-related knowledge sharing activity using a conceptual model adapted from Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) of Ajzen (1991) and the two affective components (affective commitment and affect-based trust). A descriptive survey research design covering academics in all departments of the five faculties in The Polytechnic, Ibadan was employed. The literature review covered knowledge management KM, knowledge sharing KS and knowledge sharing behaviour KSB. Self-structured questionnaire based on the adapted model were administered as data collection instrument. Complete enumeration survey study was carried out because the total study population was about 346 lecturers and the same copies of questionnaire were distributed to the academics across the five faculties of the polytechnic of which 235 copies were returned. The data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Academics of The Polytechnic, Ibadan will be willing to share their work-related knowledge if both the factors encouraging and inhibiting sharing of knowledge with their colleagues are adequately addressed. The result shows, on one hand, that perceived behavioural control (.000) and affective commitment (.000) were significant predictors of intention to share knowledge while attitude (.066), subjective norm (.308) and affect-based trust (.694) are not. On the other hand, academics' intention to share knowledge (.000) significantly

predicted academics' knowledge sharing behaviour. The study further concludes and recommends that more group activities should be encouraged and collaborative teaching and research should be emphasized to further promote knowledge sharing among academics. Further studies could focus on a comparative study between or across two or more federal, state and/or private polytechnics.

Key words: Knowledge, Polytechnics, Academics, Intention, Knowledge Sharing Behaviour.

INTRODUCTION

Recent development has witnessed the emergence of new economy where knowledge has become a valuable resource and asset (Jessica, Cheng and Lau, 2008). Also, the emergence of this knowledge-based economy has given rise to placing emphasis on knowledge management processes. Despite the increasing emphasis on knowledge management processes, knowledge sharing (KS) is considered the most crucial aspect (Bock and Kim, 2002). In the context of higher education, universities are considered as knowledge based organisations due to their role as the epitome of knowledge development and management. A clear example would be the sharing of knowledge among academic staff, which would enhance the capability and quality of research undertaken by the universities. It is a norm and culture in an academic institution that senior academic staff share knowledge and expertise with junior academics to improve the symbiotic processes of learning and teaching respectively (Goh and Sandhu, 2013). Like universities, polytechnics are regarded as knowledge based organizations because they engage in more or less similar activities to the former. This view is supported by Owolabi, Jimoh and Okpeh (2010), noting that polytechnics were established in Nigeria in the late 1970s as a way of providing Nigerians with another level of tertiary institutions besides the university system since the technical

education helps produce middle-level human resources for the nation's economy (Tella, Owolabi, and Attama, 2008). In this way, polytechnics help in the quest for technological and economic growth (Attama, 2005). Hence, polytechnics which form another tier of higher education were therefore considered as knowledge based organisations in this study. Studies exist that have helped to buttress that any human activity can be explained by examining the effect of human behaviour on such activities. This is because individual behaviour can either encourage or inhibit certain actions in human beings. Therefore, knowledge sharing (KS) is one such activity that can be explained by looking at how behaviour affects it (Elogie, 2010). Thus, this study was based on the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) of Ajzen (1991) to investigate knowledge sharing behaviour (KSB) of academics in The Polytechnic, Ibadan. That was in order to investigate the factors driving the academics to engage in knowledge sharing activity. The studies that had being carried out on KS among academics focused on universities and thereby providing inconclusive information about academics in knowledge based organizations. The flaw of those studies is that they present universities as the only knowledge based institutions where academics are found leaving out other educational institutions like polytechnics, mono-technics and colleges of higher education. To this end, this research work was set to carry out a study on the knowledge sharing of academics in a polytechnic - The Polytechnic, Ibadan.

Aim of the Study

The major aim of this study was to investigate the knowledge sharing behaviour (KSB) of academics in The Polytechnic, Ibadan.

Methodology

The primary data were collected through the administered questionnaires, responses were

collected, and the results were analysed.

Research Design

This study utilized a survey research design. It involved the systematic collection of information from the academics in all departments of the five faculties of The Polytechnic, Ibadan. Their opinions are expected to provide an understanding of the factors influencing knowledge sharing activities among the lecturers.

Sampling Technique

This study adopted complete enumeration survey also known as population survey or census survey because information was required for each and every unit in the domain of the study. Complete enumeration was considered the best for this study because the population under study was only a few number of unit which was approximately three hundred and forty-six (346) academics in The Polytechnic, Ibadan. This form of sampling had been selected for this study because every subject in all departments of the five faculties of The Polytechnic, Ibadan was targeted. The five faculties are Business and Communication Studies, Engineering, Faculty Environment Studies (FES), Financial Management Studies and Sciences. The researcher proposed to collect data from 100% of the targeted population.

Research Instrument

The questionnaire was carefully designed and the questions were structured in sections based on the variables the study intended to measure. The questionnaire was segmented into two parts. The questionnaire was carefully designed and the questions were structured in sections based on the variables the study intended to measure. The questionnaire was segmented into two parts.

Part A:This captured the demographic information of the respondents

Part B:This part captured measures of attitude, subjective norms, perceive behavioural control, academics' intention to share knowledge, emotional factors and knowledge sharing behaviour.

Validity of the instrument

The questionnaire designed for data collection underwent face and content validation. That was done in order to make sure that it was subjected to thorough scrutiny and necessary modifications were made based on some critical assessments.

Reliability of the instrument

The variables for each of the construct used in the study instrument were subjected to a reliability test using the Cronbach alpha scale, the resulting Cronbach alpha coefficient values were higher than the 0.6 threshold with affective commitment construct been the highest, this further ascertain the reliability of the measuring instrument.

Method of Data Collection

Copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the total population of the academics in all departments of the five faculties of The Polytechnic, Ibadan. The researcher and three of his assistants helped in the administration of the questionnaires.

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the new era of the knowledge economy, knowledge-based work has replaced regular, sequential work with its characteristics of flexibility, complexity, and high uncertainty (Shieh-Cheih, Fu-Sheng and Kuo-Chien, 2005). It is well recognised today that knowledge is

one of the most competitive resources for the dynamic global business environment (Sharif, Zakaria, Ching and Low, 2005). Within this context, an organisation's ability to effectively implement knowledge-based activities becomes increasingly vital for the development and sustenance of competitive advantage (De Carolis, 2003; Grant, 1996; cited in Kharabsheh, 2007). Jessica, *et al.* (2008) explain that one distinguished characteristic that has made the new economy unique is that it deals with a unique resource called "knowledge". Unlike other traditional resources, that is, land, labour and capital, to a certain extent, once it is distributed and shared, knowledge becomes a public good. Giving and receiving knowledge is at the heart of academic life (Antal and Richebe, 2009). It has always been a practice in almost all higher educational institutions to store all relevant documents contributed by in-house resources in the knowledge repository or the database. Storing information is not new in educational institutions but what is new is to share the available knowledge and to allow members to utilize the information generated within the community. In addition, knowledge repository is used as a diagnostic tool to allow universities (and other higher institutions) to map the existing skills and experience with current needs in order to fill any gaps or deficiencies in the institution's knowledge base (Keramati and Azadeh, 2007).

Table 1 Regression result of Independent variables and Dependent variable

Dependent Factor: Knowledge Sharing Intention			Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
Independent Factors:	B	Std Error	Beta		
Attitude Towards Intention	-0.091	0.049	-0.128	-1.845	0.066
Subjective Norms	0.049	0.048	0.062	1.023	0.308
Perceived Behavioural Control	0.168	0.047	0.210	3.543	0.000
Affect-based Trust	0.018	0.046	0.024	0.394	0.694
Affective Commitment	0.272	0.049	0.395	5.544	0.000

Table 2 Regression result of Knowledge Sharing Intention and KSB

Dependent Factor: Knowledge Sharing Behaviour			Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
Independent Factor:	B	Std Error	Beta		
Knowledge Sharing Intention	0.627	0.079	0.461	7.928	0.000

Tables 1 and 2 present the results of the study based on the adopted research model. From table 1 the beta values show the strength of independent variables (perceived behavioural control 0.210, affective commitment 0.395) showing good level of significance at 0.000 Levels. While attitude towards intention (-0.128), subjective norms (0.062) and affect-based trust (0.024) influence on knowledge sharing intention does not show a good level of significance. The result shows that affective commitment has the highest impact on academics' knowledge sharing intentions, while attitude towards intention is the least factor in predicting academics' knowledge sharing intentions. On the other Hand, academics' knowledge sharing intentions showed a strong relationship in Predicting academics' knowledge sharing behaviour as shown by the values in table 2.

Research Findings

Based on the data gathered from the respondents, the following were the findings:

1. Intention of academics to share knowledge with their colleagues is relatively low since their attitude does not significantly predict their knowledge sharing intention. Thus the institution needs to work on promoting work-related knowledge sharing among academics.
2. The academics are not willing to conform to the surrounding social pressure (which is the views of people in their work environment) that would sequentially form their intention to share knowledge. This implies that they have a low tendency to share their work-related knowledge with their colleagues. Therefore, the management

should create a work environment where every lecturer perceives that conforming to the social norm of the institution is crucial.

3. Academics of The Polytechnic, Ibadan perceive knowledge sharing as an easy task due to the fact that their perceived behavioural control has a predictive relationship with their intention to share knowledge. So the management of the polytechnic device further means of facilitating knowledge sharing among the academics.
4. The emotional bonding among the academics is relatively low. This is based on the fact that there is no predictive relationship between the academics' affect-based trust and their intention to share knowledge. This implies that academics of The Polytechnic, Ibadan may not be willing to exchange personal work-related knowledge with their colleagues. In that case, the management of the polytechnic have to build a positive interpersonal trust among academics of the Polytechnic, Ibadan by encouraging more collaborative activities among academics.
5. Since affective commitment significantly predicts academics' intention to share knowledge in The Polytechnic, Ibadan, the academics are emotionally committed to the institution. Therefore, they may share their knowledge if surrounding situation is favourable.

Discussion of the Findings

Attitude towards Intention and Knowledge Sharing Intention

Results obtained indicated that attitude has a negative and insignificant correlation with intention to share knowledge ($\beta = -0.128$). This implies that for intention to share knowledge to be enhanced, an increase in attitude toward intention is not necessary. Results also showed that attitude does not have a predictive relationship with intention to share knowledge among academics of The Polytechnic, Ibadan ($p = 0.066 > 0.05$). Findings is not consistent with the

study of Goh and Sandhu, (2013), which is one of the studies guiding this research work, where attitude carried positive significant influence in predicting intention to share knowledge among academics. This is supported by Babalhavaeji et al (2011) who researched to determine the factors that influence knowledge sharing amongst Library and Information Science (LIS) faculties in Iran and found a significant relationship (0.000) between attitude of educators toward knowledge sharing and their intention to share knowledge.

Variation in findings from these studies might be as a result of the fact that attitude is an individual's feelings or dispositions regarding knowledge sharing and it reflects one's readiness to involve in the process of knowledge sharing. In the context of knowledge sharing, attitude is looked upon as the evaluation measure of behavioural belief, within the context of knowledge sharing as being either favourable or harmful (Goh and Sandhu, 2013). Individuals in an organisation will of course have higher intention to share their knowledge if they perceive knowledge sharing is favourable (So and Bolloju, 2005 cited in Goh and Sandhu, 2013). Since attitude does not significantly predict academics' intention to share knowledge, it is therefore opined that intention of academics in the Polytechnic, Ibadan to share knowledge with their colleagues is relatively low.

Subjective Norm and Knowledge Sharing Intention

Results showed that subjective norm has a positive and insignificant correlation with intention to share knowledge ($\beta = 0.062$). This implies that for intention to share knowledge to be enhanced, an increase in subjective norm is not necessary. Findings also showed that subjective norm does not significantly predict intention to share knowledge ($p = 0.308 > 0.05$). Finding is not consistent with that of the study of Elogie (2010) where the scale for measuring subjective norm was adopted. In that study, subjective norm was found to influence intentions to share knowledge. This form of inconsistency in findings is supported

by the findings of the study of Omojowolo (2014) who researched to determine the influence of cultural, individual and classroom factors on knowledge sharing among students in the University of Ibadan. Her study found that willingness to share significantly influenced knowledge sharing among students of the University of Ibadan in contrary to the findings of the study of Wangpipatwong (2009) where the scale for measuring willingness to share was adopted. Variations in findings from these studies might be as a result of the fact that subjective norm is actually the views of people in their work environment (Iqbal et al., 2011). It evaluates and assesses whether an individual is willing to conform to the surrounding social pressure in its existence to sequentially perform a distinct behaviour. This implies that one will have a higher tendency to share his or her knowledge if the individual perceives that conforming to the social norm is crucial (Goh and Sandhu, 2013). Based on the findings, it was observed that academics in The Polytechnic, Ibadan are not willing to conform to the surrounding social pressure in its existence (if any) which would sequentially form intention to share knowledge. This implies that they have a low tendency to share their knowledge.

Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC) and Knowledge Sharing Intention

Results showed that perceived behavioural control has a positive and significant correlation with intention to share knowledge ($\beta = 0.210$). This implies that for intention to share knowledge to be enhanced, an increase in perceived behavioural control is necessary. Findings also showed that perceived behavioural control has a predictive relationship with intention to share knowledge ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Findings is consistent with that of the study of Elogie (2010) where the scale for measuring perceived behavioural control was adopted, perceived behavioural control was found to influence intentions to share knowledge. According to Ajzen (1991), perceived behavioural control is the perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behaviour and it is assumed to reflect past experience as well as anticipated

impediments and obstacles. Going by the fact that perceived behavioural control of academics of The Polytechnic, Ibadan has a predictive relationship with their intention to share knowledge, it is opined that the academics of The Polytechnic, Ibadan perceive knowledge sharing as an easy task.

Affect-based Trust and Knowledge Sharing Intention

Results showed that affect-based trust is positively and insignificantly correlated with academics' intention to share knowledge ($\beta = 0.024$). This implies that for intention to share knowledge to be enhanced, an increase in affect-based trust is not necessary. Findings further revealed that affect-based trust does not significantly predict academics' intention to share knowledge ($p = 0.694 > 0.05$). This result corroborates the finding of the study of Goh and Sandhu (2013) whereby the mean score for affect based trust was the lowest. The result indicated that the emotional bonding among academics in Malaysia was relatively low. In conclusion, they claimed that the major contribution to that phenomenon might be due to the fact that academics are self-governed and tend to work independently. On the same note, this study opines that there is negative interpersonal trust among academics of the Polytechnic, Ibadan and that the emotional bonding among the academics is relatively low. This implies that academics of The Polytechnic, Ibadan may not be willing to exchange personal knowledge with their colleagues.

Affective Commitment and Knowledge Sharing Intention

Results showed that affective commitment has a positive and significant correlation with intention to share knowledge ($\beta = 0.395$). This implies that for intention to share knowledge to be enhanced, an increase in affective commitment is necessary. Also, finding revealed that

affective commitment has a predictive relationship with academics' intention to share knowledge ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$). This finding corroborates the study of Goh and Sandhu (2013) on Knowledge Sharing among Malaysian Academics: Influence of Affective Commitment and Trust, which revealed that affective commitment carried significant influence in predicting one's intention to share knowledge among academics. According to Allen and Meyer (1990) cited in Goh and Sandhu (2013), affective commitment denotes the identification and involvement of an individual based on emotional feeling towards the organisation. Lin (2007) emphasized that when employees adopt a stronger affective commitment, they are more willing to share their knowledge. Since affective commitment significantly predicts academics' intention to share knowledge in The Polytechnic, Ibadan, it is opined that the academics are emotionally committed to the institution and that they have stronger affective commitment. Therefore, they may share their knowledge if surrounding situation is favourable.

Knowledge Sharing Intention and Knowledge Sharing Behaviour

Result shows that intention has positive and significant correlation with knowledge sharing behaviour ($\beta = 0.461$). This means that for knowledge sharing behaviour to be enhanced, an increase in intention to share knowledge is necessary. Finding also revealed that intention has predictive relationship with knowledge sharing behaviour among academics of The Polytechnic, Ibadan ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Finding supports the positions in literature where intentions to share knowledge have been often used to predict knowledge sharing behaviour. For instance, Pavlou and Fygenson (2006) explained that behavioural intention is the most influential predictor of behaviour. They surveyed an online behaviour between get-

information intention and get-information behaviour and found out that there was a significant relationship between behavioural intention and actual behaviour.

Based on the findings from the current study, it is opined that despite the presence of other factors which may be encouraging or inhibiting academics' knowledge sharing with their colleagues, academics of The Polytechnic, Ibadan still have intention to share their knowledge.

Conclusion

The knowledge sharing behaviour (KSB) of lecturers of The Polytechnic Ibadan was examined based on TPB and two emotional factors. The study found that intention to share knowledge is dominant among academics of The Polytechnic, Ibadan with respect to knowledge sharing behaviour; lecturers believe that they belong to an organisation where knowledge sharing is necessary. However, it was obtained from the result of the study that only perceived behavioural control and affective commitment significantly predict academics' knowledge sharing intention while attitude, subjective norm, and affect-based trust do not. On the other hand, academics' knowledge sharing intention significantly predicts their knowledge sharing behaviour. Based on the findings from this study the following recommendations were made:

1. Since perceived behavioural control and affective commitment were significant to academics' knowledge sharing intentions; the management of the Polytechnic, Ibadan should reward not only those who share knowledge by writing for journal publications but also those who engage in interpersonal work-related knowledge sharing activities.
2. And since the study observed that attitude toward intention, subjective norm, and affect-based trust do not significantly predict academics' knowledge sharing intention,

the management of the Polytechnic, Ibadan needs to promote knowledge sharing among the academics as a social norm which they have to conform to. The management should also take some measures in order to motivate the academics so that they will continue to feel emotionally committed to the institution so as to further encourage knowledge sharing among them.

3. Finally, more group activities should be encouraged and collaborative teaching and research should be emphasized as this can help to reduce competition among the lecturers and enhance academics' intention to share knowledge and thereby further promote knowledge sharing among academics.

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