Analysis of Knowledge Sharing Barriers in Sri Lankan Software Companies

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ABSTRACT

Knowledge sharing is a vital factor for the success of organizations, mainly for the knowledge-intensive organizations such as software companies. This study aims to investigate the status of the knowledge sharing attitude and the existing knowledge sharing barriers in Sri Lankan software companies. The Theory of Planned Behaviour is applied as the basis of this study and assessed ten hypothesized associations among dependent variable; attitude for knowledge sharing (AT); and independent variables; motivation and willingness (MW), trust among individuals (TR), time (T), power relationship (PR), expected reciprocity (ER), communication skills (CS), organizational culture and structure (OS), leadership (LD), reward systems (RS), and technological infrastructure (TI). Measurement model analysis, correlation analysis, and regression analysis were used to analyse the data. The seven factors, which have been identified to have a potentially high significance with knowledge sharing attitude were then considered as the barrier factors, which indicate a high possibility to influence a negative impact on the knowledge-sharing attitude. Meanwhile, acquisition growth was identified to have the highest knowledge-sharing attitude, and the network growth was identified to have the least favourable attitude for knowledge sharing. Findings provide convincing evidence of lack of time, improper organizational structures, PR, language and ER as the main barriers associated with knowledge sharing in software companies. The study suggests some solutions to overcome these barriers and directions for future researchers to conduct their studies.

KEYWORDS

Knowledge Sharing Attitude, Measurement Model Analysis, Quantitative Method, Survey, Theory of Planned Behaviour

1. INTRODUCTION

Knowledge is considered as a critical organizational resource which leads to long-term sustainability and success of organizations. Achieving this sustainability and success requires a better management of the existing knowledge. For an effective and efficient knowledge management, it should have a sound focus on knowledge identification, knowledge acquisition, knowledge creation, knowledge sharing, knowledge storage and knowledge application (Vasanthapriyan et al., 2017). Hence, efficient management of knowledge is not possible without a proper process of knowledge sharing (Paulin & Sunneson, 2012; Andreasian & Andreasian, 2013). Knowledge sharing is the process which integrates and merges knowledge among each individual and teams in an organization by exchanging each other’s tacit knowledge, and explicit knowledge (Paulin & Sunneson, 2012; Andreasian & Andreasian, 2013).
Andreasian, 2013). The firm that wants to create a knowledge sharing culture should encourage and motivate its employees to work together to generate new knowledge in organizations (Farooq, 2018). Software companies require a good basement of knowledge to stay competitive and growth due to rapid changes in technology (Kukko, 2013), which makes knowledge sharing a cornerstone for their growth and sustainability. Many researchers have identified issues that arise in software companies as of inefficient knowledge sharing (Ranasinghe & Jayawardana, 2011; Kharabsheh et al., 2016). Therefore, in order to improve organizational performance, knowledge should be shared in a structured way that the right knowledge is conveyed to the right person at the right time.

Knowledge sharing in software companies has been attained a considerable attention of researchers. Unfortunately, it is hard to find studies focused directly on Sri Lankan software companies and presently, there is a gap in the literature concerning knowledge sharing in software companies in the context of Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka is one of the most differed countries from other countries due to its immense cultural difference. Ibrahim and Irfan (2016) clearly specify Sri Lanka as a culture, which is completely different from other countries, mostly from European countries. According to Hofstede’s (Hofstede, 2011) cultural dimensions; power distance, individualism – collectivism, masculinity – femininity etc. are the difference in Sri Lanka. In addition, this difference affects the organizational performance in Sri Lanka. Even though some cultural factors are somewhat similar to South Asian Region, previous studies (Hofstede, 2011; Ibrahim & Irfan, 2016) prove a huge inequality among people in Sri Lanka even when compare with South Asian Region due to a hierarchical division based on ethnicity, religion, language, cast etc.

According to Hofstede (2011), in highly power distanced countries; subordinates always depend on their bosses. Ibrahim and Irfan (2016) state that this power distance takes place in the Sri Lankan private sector, which software companies are mainly categorized. Not only that but also Sri Lanka has a multi-linguistic society where people use different native and classical languages. It is not like using one common language, there are lots of difficulties in communicating with others in most of the situations. Those studies (Hofstede, 2011; Ibrahim & Irfan, 2016) deeply describe and ensure the difference between Sri Lankan culture and how it differently influences over Sri Lankan organizations. Twum-Darko and Harker (2017) also state that applicability of barriers in knowledge sharing is varied from organization types and sizes, and countries. So according to all these facts, it is clear, that Sri Lanka is a country far more different than other countries. So even some of the variables discussed in past studies which conducted focusing on software companies outside Sri Lanka are aligned with Sri Lankan culture, most of the variables and their findings may show a considerable deviation from Sri Lankan companies. So, the barriers and solutions discussed in previous studies may not be applicable in Sri Lanka. Therefore, it is difficult to conduct an analysis or review of knowledge sharing behavior in software companies in Sri Lanka. Therefore, the main objective of this study is to evaluate the status of knowledge sharing behavior and existing barriers of knowledge sharing in Sri Lankan software companies using an empirical investigation. Furthermore, this study focuses on proposing some solutions to overcome these barriers and to fill the existing research gap.

Previous research studies which focused on knowledge sharing, have identified different dimensions that affect knowledge sharing in organizations. However, a majority of previous empirical studies includes a limited number of dimensions in a single study and focused mostly on the qualitative perspective of the subject. Therefore, it is reasonable in the current study to analyze several dimensions that may influence the sharing of knowledge within an extended framework focusing on Sri Lankan software companies. Along with these key dimensions, based on previous studies, more importantly, this research is able to recommend solutions to eliminate these barriers. Moreover, this study focuses on the concept, “Theory of Planned Behavior” (TPB); an extended concept of predicting behavior in any social situation; and applies this theory as the basement of this research work (Stavros, 2015). It is expected that the findings derived through this study will provide useful information for both academics and practitioners to better understand knowledge sharing behavior in software companies in the context of Sri Lanka. The rest of this paper presents a description to the literature study that
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