An Empirical Investigation into the Influence of Knowledge Sharing Barriers on Knowledge Sharing and Individual Innovation Behaviour

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ABSTRACT

Knowledge sharing barriers reduce the propensity of individuals to share knowledge and produce innovation behaviour. Thus, identifying barriers and their impact on knowledge sharing and individual innovation behaviour is a potential research area to study. Considering lack of studies in the literature, this study provides further evidence regarding the implications of knowledge sharing barriers in the workplace. Data was collected from eighty three academic staff in a higher education institution and analysed with Smart PLS. The results showed that organisation related knowledge sharing barriers are negatively related to knowledge collecting and knowledge donating. The result also indicates that individual knowledge sharing barriers have negative effect on individual innovation behaviours. There was no link found in this study between knowledge sharing and individual innovation behaviour. These findings provide empirical evidence to the further development of knowledge management and innovation research, and insights regarding how to better implement knowledge sharing and foster innovation behaviour in organisations.

Keywords: Higher Education, Individual Innovation Behaviour, Knowledge Collecting, Knowledge Donating, Knowledge Sharing, Knowledge Sharing Barriers

INTRODUCTION

Under increasing competitive pressures along with changing market conditions (pressure for efficiency, growth and cycle time reduction, and flexibility), organisations have become interested in knowledge management (Ryan et al., 2012). Particularly knowledge sharing, an important part of knowledge management, has been regarded as an important way of increasing competitiveness and performance of the organisations (Bircham-Connolly et al., 2005;
Filieri, 2010; Kaps, 2011; Liao et al., 2007; Martensson, 2000; Mura et al., 2013; Pangil, & Nasurdirn, 2009; Riege, 2005). However, realising such benefits is not easy due to several knowledge sharing barriers that prevent knowledge management to produce expected outcomes (Riege, 2005; Wang & Noe, 2010). Elaborating on this, Riege (2005) argued that large diversity of knowledge sharing barriers prevent organisation to capitalise on their knowledge assets and skills.

Before organizations implement knowledge management initiatives, they need to specifically identify knowledge sharing barriers and try to remove them (Kim & Joh, 2005; Riege, 2005). The literature on knowledge management identifies individual, organization and technology related barriers that inhibit knowledge sharing and management initiatives and implementations (Barson et al., 2009; Keyes, 2008; Huang & Davison, 2008; Kaps, 2010; Khalil & Shea, 2012; Riege, 2005). Therefore, identifying and understanding these knowledge sharing barriers in organizations and their immediate influence on knowledge sharing as well as dealing with them are necessary for effective knowledge sharing. Individual, organization and technology related several knowledge sharing barriers can also diminish innovative capability of the individuals in the workplace (Patterson et al., 2009). Thus, these barriers need to be identified and removed in order to increase the potential for individual innovation behaviour in organisations.

Many theoretical and empirical studies indicate that knowledge sharing improves the potential for individual innovation behaviour (Aulawi et al., 2009; Jackson et al., 2006; Mura et al., 2013; Rebernik & Širec, 2007), teams (Maccurtain et al., 2008; Weber et al., 2011) and organisations (Kamaşak & Bulutlar, 2009; Lin, 2007; Mehrabani & Mohamad, 2011; Wangpipatwong, 2009). Individual innovation behaviour is defined as “exploration of opportunities and the generation of new ideas (creativity related behaviour), but could also include behaviours directed towards implementing change, applying new knowledge or improving processes to enhance personal and/or business performance (implementation oriented behaviour)” (De Jong & Hartog, 2008:5). Many arguments are proposed for the possible link between knowledge sharing and individual innovations. For instance, Mura et al. (2013) argued that knowledge sharing improve the propensity and capacity of individuals in terms of promoting and implementing new ideas (Mura et al., 2013). Despite the theoretical association between these two constructs, only few studies (Hu et al., 2009; Yeşil & Meltem, 2013; Mura et al., 2013) have attempted to look at the proposed link through empirical studies.

This study concentrates on the knowledge sharing barriers and their impact on knowledge sharing and individual innovation behaviour. The study also explores the role of knowledge sharing on individual innovation behaviour. Data is collected from a higher education institution in Turkey. Our study can be a great contribution to the literature in many ways. Considering relatively little studies of knowledge management coming from public organisations and from developing countries (Monavvarian & Kasaei, 2007; Syed-Ikhsan & Rowland, 2004), this study may provide important insights regarding the knowledge management in different cultural and organisational settings. Relatively little studies on knowledge sharing barriers and their implications on individuals and organisations are available in the literature (Huang & Davison, 2008), thus showing the importance of undertaking this type of research. The fact that this study is conducted in higher education institution is also important because most of the innovation related studies are conducted on large and established organisational context (Vincent et al., 2004). Higher education institutions are knowledge-driven organisations (Duderstadt, 2000) through knowledge creating, sharing and dissemination (Foollwood et al., 2013). Knowledge sharing is integral for the success of knowledge management in higher education institutions (Cheng et al., 2009; Khalil & She, 2012) yet, presence of different barriers undermine knowledge sharing (Cheng et al., 2009; Khalil & She, 2012) and
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