Knowledge Sharing Among Business Service Professional in Malaysia: An Exploratory Study

*Mohd Misron Omar and Noor Raihan AB Hamid

Asia Graduate School of Business (AGSB), UNITAR International University, Kelana Jaya, Malaysia;

*Corresponding author: mohdmisronomar@gmail.com

Abstract

Knowledge sharing plays an important role in the domain of business services. It leads to knowledge creation and decision making among its business professional. Although Knowledge Sharing Behaviour (KSB) among other professionals is acknowledged as important by scholars, understanding of what influence this behaviour among the business professional remains limited especially from Malaysia's Business perspective. The Malaysian Government announced six Strategic Reform Initiatives (SRIs), the second critical component of the Economic Transformation Programme (ETP) in addition to the 12 National Key Economic Areas (NKEAs), to boost Malaysia's global competitiveness. The ETP was conceptualized with two key thrusts of focus, through the 12 NKEAs and competitiveness, to be delivered by the SRIs. The Human Capital Development (HCD) is one of the SRIs while Business Services are one of the 12 NKEAs. For this reason, the professional workings in business services of NKEAs were surveyed using the online web survey for this exploratory study. In this exploratory study, The Theory of Planned behaviour (TPB) was applied as the theoretical backbone of the conceptual framework. Understanding the determinants of this behaviour is important as it helps to encourage sharing of knowledge among business services professional community and should be an interest to academics and human capital development practitioners in this domain.

Keywords: Knowledge management, knowledge sharing behaviour, business services, Malaysia, exploratory study.

Introduction

The government of Malaysia has launched the Economic Transformation Programme (ETP) as part of Malaysia’s National Transformation Programme. The main objective is to elevate the country to developed-nation status by 2020. Other than targeting GNI per capita of US$15,000, it would also create million of new jobs (NEAC, 2009).

To achieve all the ETP targets, the implementation of 12 National Key Economic Areas (NKEAs) which representing economic sectors such as: Oil & Gas, Palm Oil & Rubber, Financial Services, Tourism, Electronics & Electrical, Wholesale & Retail, Education, Healthcare, Communications Content & Infrastructure, Agriculture, Greater Kuala Lumpur & Klang Valley and Business Services, were identified as significant contributions to GNI (MARC, 2010).

In addition to the 12 National Key Economic Areas (NKEAs), to boost Malaysia’s global competitiveness, the implementation of other six Strategic Reform Initiatives...
(SRIs) especially on human capital development is seen as a critical component to the ETP (PEMANDU, 2013).

Although, the Human Capital Development (HCD) SRI is a critical component of the Economic Transformation Programme (ETP) cutting across all NKEAs, for this study, the focus is on the Business Services sector. The goal of this SRI on the Business Services sector is to enhance human capital capabilities and address human capital needs to support the Business Services sector. One of the objectives is by upskilling human resource capabilities to enhance business performance in the sector (PEMANDU, 2013).

Upskilling the human resource capability can be done through Knowledge Management (KM) implementation in the organization. The KM effectiveness to organization’s performance (Borges, 2013) has also been recognized among scholars and human resource development (HRD) practitioners (Al-Alawi et al., 2007).

In other words, comparing with other KM associations, it was found that knowledge sharing is very significant to effective KM programs (Blankenship & Ruona, 2009, Wang & Noe, 2010, Yesil & Dereli, 2013). Understanding the determinants of knowledge sharing is important as it helps to encourage sharing of knowledge among business services professional. Thus, promoting knowledge sharing behaviour at the individual level in the organizations is been researched until today (Li, et al., 2017, Youssef et al., 2017, Ortiz, Chang, Chih, & Wang, 2017). The discussion of knowledge sharing is still open for researcher to understudy due to its uniqueness especially between eastern and western culture, organization and other factors (Mafabi et al, 2017).

This study is an exploratory study to understand knowledge sharing behaviour among professional working in business services in Malaysia. The Theory of Planned behaviour (TPB) was applied as the theoretical backbone of the conceptual framework.

**Literature Review**

**Definition of the Business Services NKEA**

According to PEMANDU (2012) “The business services sector encompasses a large number of industries and professions, including the accountants, lawyers and tax experts that facilitate and support growth of an economy”. Other than that, it also includes the architects, engineers and designers that spearhead the expansion of industries as diverse as construction, aerospace and automotive. It contains sizeable industries, including IT services and outsourcing, and future growth areas like green technology services (PEMANDU, 2014).

**Knowledge Sharing Behaviour**

Organizations should strategically facilitate knowledge sharing behaviour among employees (Gupta et al., 2012, Lin & Hwang, 2014, Tangaraja et al., 2015). This is why the role of human capital development is very important in adapting knowledge sharing in the organization (Blankenship and Ruona, 2009).

Knowledge sharing determinants can be considered when developing structured knowledge-sharing programs (Brooke, Mohd Rasdi, and Abu Samah, 2017) and the organizations accepted knowledge sharing as the most important ingredients to improve company’s performance (Ibrahim ans Heng, 2015).

Therefore, adapting knowledge sharing behaviour among business services professional leads to knowledge creation and decision making in the organization. Thus, the learning process is happening in organization which would contribute to up
skilling among people in the organization (Ibrahim and Heng, 2015, Kim and Ko, 2014).

Researches on knowledge sharing in the past were conducted in various industries in Malaysia (Abuazoum, Azizan, and Ahmad, 2013, Brooke et al., 2017, Eze et al., 2013, Jain, Sandhu, and Goh, 2015, Rahman and Mara, 2011, Yi and Jayasingam, 2012). Thus, there is a need to understand the determinants that drives individual professional to contribute their valuable knowledge with other professional in business organisations (Razak et al., 2014).

The Theory of Planned Behaviour
The theory of planned behaviour (TPB) of Ajzen (1991) is the underpinning theory for this study. It is used in explaining and predicting human behaviour in specific contexts (Ajzen, 2001). TPB is an extension of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980).

According to TPB, the main determinant of an individual’s behavioural action is intention. Intention indicates individual’s readiness to engage in behaviour (Baharim, 2008). Intention however, is a function of individual’s attitude towards a behaviour, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control with each determinant reflected for its significance in relation to the behaviour (Chennamaneni, 2006).

Research Method
Data Collection
The targeted population of this study comprises the professional working in the business services of NKEAs. The unit of analysis for this study is an individual working in business service. They were surveyed using the online web survey for this exploratory study. A cluster sampling was used to gather the data. 60 questionnaires were completed and deemed usable for data analyses. This study used the SPSS to analyse the data. Table 1 presents the respondents’ demographic profiles.

Measurement and Data Collection
Items of the constructs were adapted from past studies and measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Table 2 show all the constructs, sources and number of items used in this study.

Table 1. Respondents’ demographic profiles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profile</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>63.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>36.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (years)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-55</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 56</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPM</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STPM/Diploma/Metrics</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mohd Misron Omar and Noor Raihan AB Hamid

Table 2. The survey instruments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>α</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actual Knowledge Sharing</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>(Tohidinia and Mosakhani, 2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Donation)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual Knowledge Sharing</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>(Tohidinia and Mosakhani, 2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Collection)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intention To Share</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>(Chow and Chan, 2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude Toward</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>(Tohidinia and Mosakhani, 2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge Sharing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Chow and Chan, 2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective Norms About</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>(Tohidinia and Mosakhani, 2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge Sharing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Behavioural Control</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>(Tohidinia and Mosakhani, 2010)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results and Discussion
The study consisted of 60 professionals working in business services of NKEAs. Table 1 shows that 63.3 per cent of the respondents were male and 36.7 per cent were female. The majority of respondents are middle aged professionals (Age 41-50 years). Respondents from this study have various levels of education. The majority of them were bachelor’s holders (55 per cent). Most of the respondents have more than 6 years of working experience.

A reflective measurement model was assessed for its reliability and validity. As shown in Table 2, the composite reliability which was used to measure the internal consistency reliability of the constructs indicated that all six reflective latent variables exceed the recommended value of 0.7, showing good internal consistency (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011).

Based on the TPB, this research aimed to examine knowledge sharing behaviour and its determinants. In order to uncover the potential influences on knowledge sharing behaviour, a model was devised with a TPB framework. The analysis of research results showed the overall consistency of findings with the model and also the previous studies (Chow & Chan, 2008, Tohidinia & Mosakhani, 2010).

Conclusions
This study is to understand the determinants of knowledge sharing behaviour among business services professional in Malaysia. Knowledge sharing is important to be practiced in business service as sharing of knowledge among business services professional involves knowledge creation such as business strategy for organization to gain competitive advantages, increase productivity and develop human capital with innovation and creativity. Up skilling and personal development happens through knowledge sharing. Most of the studies related to knowledge sharing practices used common theory such as theory of planned behaviour and theory of
reasoned action to understand the knowledge sharing behaviour. Obviously, the attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control are main factors that contribute to the willingness of individual to share their knowledge and experience with other professionals. The HRD must seriously take consideration to encourage and educate the business service professional on the benefits of knowledge sharing. More than that, individual professional must have the knowledge sharing attitude and collaborate with other individual to successful implementation of knowledge sharing.

This study has several limitations. First, it is interesting to note that this study is limited to samples of 60 professionals working in business services of NKEAs context only. Consequently, the results are specific to the business services of NKEAs setting and unlikely to be generalized to other NKEAs such as Oil and Gas, Palm Oil and Rubber, Financial Services, Tourism, Electronics & Electrical, Wholesale & Retail, Education, Healthcare, Communications Content and Infrastructure, Agriculture, Greater Kuala Lumpur and Klang Valley. Apart from that, this study uses an individual’s perceptions for the knowledge sharing behaviour rating. Thus, some respondents may not be willing to admit their experience in the knowledge sharing behaviour. Moreover, this cross-sectional study might not be able to capture the perception of the knowledge sharing behaviour across time, and the majority of the relationship posited was based on the grounded findings from past research. It would be more interesting if researchers could consider doing qualitative research, as this kind of research may generate knowledge based on personal experiences related to knowledge sharing behaviour.

References


