

A STUDY OF THE KNOWLEDGE SHARING BEHAVIOUR AND ONLINE SOCIALIZATION IN THE i-CLASS ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract: *To ensure a full utilization of knowledge assets in an organization, Knowledge Sharing Behaviour methodology is basically the backbone and driving force behind the organizations' work processes. This study is to analyze the relationship between knowledge sharing behaviour and information exchange in the E-Learning Environment via i-Class from the ePJJ students of UiTM Kedah, Malaysia. Questionnaires were used to get information from the student such as Identification, online socialization, personal expectation. Correlation analysis used to find the relationship between variables.*

Keywords: *e-learning, knowledge sharing, online socialization.*

INTRODUCTION

Most universities in Malaysia have embarked on the e-learning which allows more study opportunities made available to all. In Universiti Teknologi MARA, i-Class Portal has been introduced as alternatives to the classroom attendance for ePJJ students. The objective of Distance Education Programmes (ePJJ), is to offer continuing education to upgrade the knowledge and career of Bumiputera and also to help increase productivity and contribute to national development. This study attempted to investigate the knowledge sharing behaviour and online socialization in the i-class environment.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The diagram below shows the relationship between independent variable which are Knowledge Sharing Behavior and Individual Factor and dependent variable which is the i-Class Online Socialization. For the independent variable, the first dimension is knowledge donating and Knowledge collecting under The Knowledge Sharing Behavior, and Enjoyment in helping others and Knowledge self efficiency which is classified under Individual Factor.

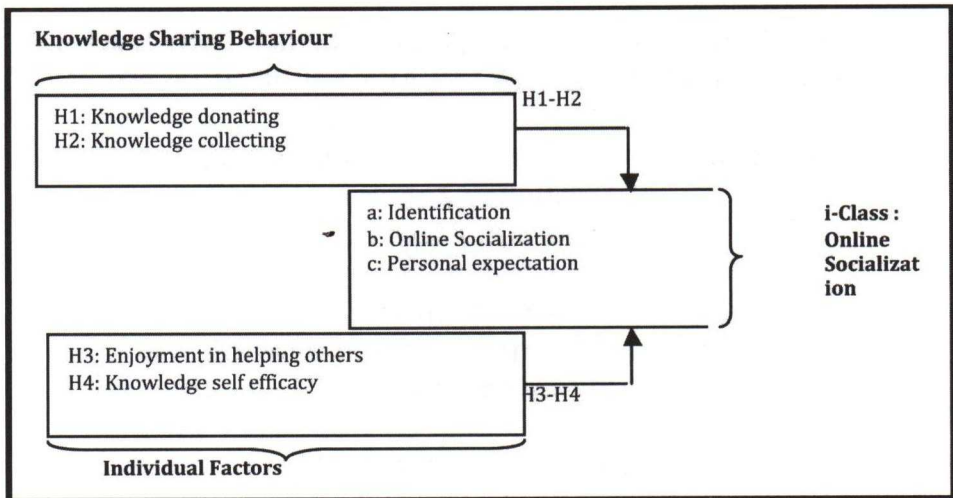


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Knowledge Donating and Knowledge Collecting

Knowledge sharing has two facets, which are collecting or receiving and disseminating or donating knowledge. Knowledge donating is also known as communication based upon an individual’s own wish to transfer intellectual capital” and knowledge collecting as “attempting to persuade others to share what they know”, Van Den Hoof and De Ridder (2004). Whereas knowledge collecting is known as an attempt to seek and persuade others to share what their knowledge is knowledge sharing and knowledge collecting would basically encourage individual knowledge be transform to organizational knowledge which later would lead improved business workflow as well as greater business opportunities available. (Darroch and McNaughton, 2002).

Enjoyment in Helping Others

Helping other people is an action with the intention of assisting other person regardless of the consequences whether the action is motivated by egotism or self-sacrifice. Batson, (1998); Dovidio, Piliavin, Schroedler, & Penner, (2006). Helping is also a behavior that requires time and space. In the virtual space, helping behavior is also an active positive behavior with the widespread activity in virtual spaces, such as web communities and Yahoo! Answers.

Self-Efficacy

Knowledge sharing self-efficacy is a person’s self evaluation and self assurance level in his or her own skills plus his abilities to answer to the questions given. Chih-Jou Chen and Shiu-Wan Hung (2010). By sharing useful knowledge, people feel more confident in what they can do. However, Bandura, (1982) [8]and Bandura, (1986) [9]; Igbaria and livari, (1995) [10], signifies that self-efficacy is a form of self-evaluation that manipulate decisions about what behaviors to agree too, the amount of effort and persistence to put forth if faced by challenges. In general, perceived self-efficacy do have a significant role in encouraging individuals’ motivation and behavior. Bock and Kim (2002) [11] propose that self-efficacy could be treated as a major factor of self-motivational source for knowledge sharing. From their study, it was noted that organization members do believe that their knowledge sharing attitude do have an effect on organization’s performance.

Identification

According to Johnson et al., (1999) identification is an identity, based on one's interests as individual's interests merge with organization's interests. As people encounter positive experiences through virtual communities, one would expect the same from the next community. However, according to Wasko and Faraj (2005) found that for a person who is an expert in a particular subject, knowledge sharing is basically something which is done without expecting any favor or assistance in return. Therefore, as identification is strong, the cost of sharing knowledge will not be of an interest as the interest of organizational outcomes may ascend the behavior of knowledge sharing.

Online Socialization

Zane L. Berge and Lin Y. Muilenburg (2005) mentioned that social interaction refers to the learning environment which was created for learning online. The learning environments need to be user friendly to stimulate learning. It would lead to human interaction and relationships assist in developing group cohesiveness, maintaining the group as a unit, and in other ways helping participants to work together for a mutual cause. According to Christopher Irwin and Zane Berge (2006) the term "socialization" is broad and this allow people to interpret the word differently based on a person's background. In the virtual scenario, socialization is about people being able to communicate, mingle and establish connections on one or more levels. People should be able to communicate, share ideas and information and confirm to the connections made through an agreed upon means.

Nowadays, technology is no longer being used mainly for technical means; technology has become the means for interaction which allows for collaborative creative interaction with specific access to the virtual environment. It was also noted by Rheingold (2003) that people who use online socialization has the advantage in gaining social power as well as the advantage to share and change ideas quickly.

Outcome Expectation and Personal Expectation

Outcome expectations refer to the predictable consequence of one's own behavior (Bandura, 1997[26]; Compeau and Higgins, 1995). Outcome expectations consist of three major forms: physical effects (e.g., pleasure, pain, and discomfort), social effects (e.g., social recognition, monetary rewards, power, and applause) and self-evaluation effects (e.g., self-satisfaction, self-devaluation). According to Bartol and Srivastava (2002) outcome expectations which are related to reward systems is another important factor which influence the decision to share knowledge. The economic exchange theory, indicates that individuals will behave by rational self-interest and, as discovered by Constant et al., (1994) knowledge sharing will occur should the outcomes exceed its costs or are as expected. As mentioned by Bandura, (1997), the positive expectations can be seen as incentives and as a result human behavior can be regulated by these different forms of effects and according to Bock and Kim (2002) an individual's behavior may lead to positive outcome, because individuals will behave with rational self-interest as asserted in the social economic exchange theory.

Table 1 summarizes the hypotheses that have been generated, based on the discussion from the conceptual framework.

Table 1: Research hypotheses

	Statement of hypotheses
H1a	Knowledge donating is significantly related to identification.
H1b	Knowledge donating is significantly related to online socialization.
H1c	Knowledge donating is significantly related to personal expectation.
H2a	Knowledge collecting is significantly related to identification.
H2b	Knowledge collecting is significantly related to online socialization.
H2c	Knowledge collecting is significantly related to personal expectation.
H3a	Enjoyment in helping others is significantly related to identification.
H3b	Enjoyment in helping others is significantly related to online socialization.
H3c	Enjoyment in helping others is significantly related to personal expectation.
H4a	Knowledge self efficacy is significantly related to identification.
H4b	Knowledge self efficacy is significantly related to online socialization.
H4c	Knowledge self efficacy is significantly related to personal expectation.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Analysis

Out of 150 questionnaires that were distributed to ePJJ Universiti Teknologi MARA Kedah students only 70 respondents returned the questionnaires. The 70 respondents comprised of 24 male students and 46 are female students. The age group between 18 – 21 years (5.7 percent), 22-25 years (44.3 percent), 26-29 years (22.9 percent), 30- 33 years (12.9 percent), 34-37 years (12.9 percent) and 42-45 years (1 percent).

Data Analysis

Table 2 and 3 shows the rotated component matrix (also called the rotated factor matrix in factor analysis) which is a matrix of the factor loadings for each variable onto each factor. A few factors need to be considered about the format of this matrix. First, factor loadings less than 0.5 have not been displayed because the loadings below the value 0.5 are automatically suppressed. The utilized extraction method was Principal Component Analysis and the rotation method using Varimax with Kaiser Normalization

Table 2: Knowledge sharing behaviour rotated component matrix

Items	Component	
	1	2
Knowledge Donating	1	2
When I have learned something new, I tell my colleagues about it	.865	
When they have learned something new, my colleagues tell me about it	.850	
Knowledge sharing amongst colleagues is considered normal in my learning environment	.691	
Knowledge Collecting		
I am confident in my ability to provide knowledge that others in my learning environment would consider valuable		.750
I have the expertise required to provide valuable knowledge for my learning environment		.866
Most other colleagues can provide more valuable knowledge than I can.		.774
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.		

Table 3: Individual factor rotated component matrix

Items	Component		
	1	2	3
Enjoyment in helping others...			
I enjoy sharing my knowledge with colleagues	.885		
I enjoy helping colleagues by sharing my knowledge	.880		
It feels good to help my colleagues by sharing my knowledge	.868		
Sharing my knowledge with colleagues is pleasurable	.692		
Your knowledge self efficacy...			
I am confident in my ability to provide knowledge that others in my learning environment would consider valuable		.772	
I have the expertise required to provide valuable knowledge for my learning environment		.858	
*It does not really make any difference whether I share my knowledge with my colleagues			.960
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.			

Reliability Analysis

Table 4 is the outcome of the factor analysis, reliability analyses were conducted to measure the reliability of the instrument employed in the research. The reliability analysis that was utilized named Cronbach’s alpha.

Table 4: Reliability of instrument measures

	Measures	No of items	Cronbach’s Alpha
Knowledge Sharing Behaviour	Knowledge donating	3	.748
	Knowledge collecting	3	.741
Individual Factors	Enjoyment in helping others	4	.859
	Knowledge self efficacy	2	.542
Online Socialization	Identification	4	.830
	Online Socialization	4	.814
	Personal expectation	4	.871

Relationship between knowledge sharing behaviour and online socialization

The results of the correlation analyses are displayed in the table 5 below. The table indicates the correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). From the correlation matrix it could be observed that the overall relationship between knowledge sharing behaviour and online socialization in the e-learning environment is very weak. The only valid items from the correlation analyses were the relationship between knowledge collecting towards identification and personal expectation.

Table 5: Correlation matrix between knowledge sharing behaviour and online socialization

	Knowledge Donating	Knowledge Collecting
Identification	.179	.425 **
Online Socialization	.042	.274 *
Personal expectation	.172	.470 **

**** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**

The table 6 below shows the correlation matrix between knowledge individual factor and online socialization; from the table it could be observed that the overall relationship between individual factor and online socialization is also very weak. The only valid items from the correlation analyses were the relationship between knowledge self efficacy towards identification and personal expectation.

Table 6: Correlation matrix between knowledge individual factor and online socialization

	Enjoyment in helping others	Knowledge self efficacy
Identification	.269*	.347**
Online Socialization	.058	.296*
Personal expectation	.058	.401**

**** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**

Hypotheses Testing

Table 7: Hypothesis testing

Statement of hypotheses	Results
Knowledge donating is significantly related to identification.	Not supported
Knowledge donating is significantly related to online socialization.	Not supported
Knowledge donating is significantly related to personal expectation.	Not supported
Knowledge collecting is significantly related to identification.	Not supported
Knowledge collecting is significantly related to online socialization.	Supported
Knowledge collecting is significantly related to personal expectation.	Not supported
Enjoyment in helping others is significantly related to identification.	Not supported
Enjoyment in helping others is significantly related to online socialization.	Not supported
Enjoyment in helping others is significantly related to personal expectation.	Not supported
Knowledge self efficacy is significantly related to identification.	Supported
Knowledge self efficacy is significantly related to online socialization.	Not supported
Knowledge self efficacy is significantly related to personal expectation.	Supported

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Knowledge sharing behaviour consists of two variables, knowledge collecting and knowledge donating, which communicate closely with each other in order to tap into the respondents' knowledge sharing behaviour status. Besides that, the individual factors which consist of two variables were also investigated. As a result, the measurement would enable knowledge sharing behaviour status to be examined in relation to online socialization within the e-learning environment.

It was noted that individuals who are involved and interacted in the e-learning community played the role of enjoying a benefit accruing from a collective effort but did not contribute back to the community. This may result in the community to subside and fade away. Therefore, to avoid such incident, knowledge sharing behaviour is the essence to ensure that e-learning is effective.

As defined by G.W. Bock et. al (2005), knowledge sharing is concerned with the individuals' willingness to share their knowledge which they have created and acquired. This study has come out with a framework which combined individual factor and knowledge sharing

behaviour in order to analyze its applicability towards e-learning environment. Therefore, this paper presents an empirical study that employed two different variables, to examine people's knowledge sharing behaviour within an electronic environment and the relationship towards online socialization.

Consequently, the data analysis had generated that the knowledge sharing behaviour and also individual factor have little or very weak relationship with online socialization, thus the measurement is not effective and the study has resulted in an understanding that knowledge sharing behaviour along with individual factor are not the favorable factors to be investigating into the online socialization in e-learning environment.

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