

STUDY ON SOCIAL POWER AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING BEHAVIOR

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Abstract

Knowledge sharing behavior is subjective to an individual. An individual willing to share rely on their decision either to share or not to share with others. One of the factor that influence individual decision is social power. There are four basis of social power which are legitimate, coercive, referent and expertise power. This study aimed to investigate significant relationship between social power and willingness to share knowledge. A survey was conducted among 150 of knowledge workers as in ICT industries which mainly located in Cyberjaya, Malaysia. The data further analysed using Partial Least Square. The attention of this paper concentrated to the finding that social power did not support on an individual decision as to share knowledge. This implies to a leaders practice in organization in order to create and promote knowledge sharing culture.

Keywords: Knowledge Sharing Behaviour, Legitimate power, Coercive Power, Expert Power, Referent Power

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Knowledge sharing behavior defined as willingness of individual in an organization to share whatever they have or create. It is difficult for people to share their knowledge (Davenport & Prusak, 1998) and they may not share the knowledge if it is beneficial and valuable to them (Ryu, Hee & Han, 2003). In most organizational practices, knowledge sharing is unenforceable in an organization. Most of the people are willing to serve their organization, but they are not willing to share their knowledge and expertise (Ismail & Yusof, 2008) and some of them prefer to share minimal or no knowledge at all (Lin & Joe, 2012). As far as concern in this study is related to power. A power is an individual's capacity to move others, to influence, to persuade, to encourage and to engage in a specific behaviour (Yulk, 2002). With the power, they can control and change knowledge sharing behavior.

A power may direct and influence others behavior particularly in making decision to share knowledge. Boer, Berends & Baalen (2011) conducted a study of social power and willingness to share knowledge. The studied claimed who has higher rank have better access to knowledge and will share knowledge with someone in lower in rank and they are expecting to acknowledge or return with others commitment who at a lower rank. Whilst, people who at lower rank willing to share knowledge with their superior and expect a kind of care or recognition as returned from the supervisor. In these two differences context; either formal or informal power most of researchers predict social power possibility to influence a knowledge sharing behavior. Hence, this study aims to investigate the four basis of power (coercive, legitimate, expert and referent) significance influence on knowledge sharing behavior.

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3.0 LITERATURE STUDY

3.1 Coercive Power

According to French and Raven (1959), the most practiced of coercive power is threat and punishment. Raven (2008) stated that coercive power is the act of threatening others negatively and resulted in undesirable consequences such as demotion, termination, hatred, and ill feelings towards the undesirable work. In a recent study, Lunenburg (2012) claimed that an individual who has coercive power tend to use sarcasm and force to ensure that the team members obey the rules besides controlling others. Generally, an individual might have the power in a different context, and another individual might have a higher power in another dimension (Boer, 2005). The hypotheses of this studied were followed:

H1: Coercive power significant influence willingness to share knowledge.

3.2 Legitimate Power

Legitimate power is the position of power in an organisation such as being the boss or a key member of the leadership team. This power is recognised when the employees in the organisation recognise the authority. According to French, Raven and Cartwright, (1959), legitimate power is based on the target's perception that the source has the right to influence others and they should also obey the source. In a similar study, legitimate power has a status or formal job authority. A status or formal job authority refers to a person who has the right to demand and expect compliance and obedience from others. Furthermore, legitimate power is the authority of a particular position that has the right to influence or direct others (Lunenburg, 2012). Overall, this study defined legitimate power as the right to ask others to do things that are within the scope of the authority. The hypotheses of this studied were followed:

H2: Legitimate power significant influence willingness to share knowledge

3.3 Expect Power

Expert power can be obtained from one's experiences, skills, or knowledge. Expert power defined as perception that an individual has some specialised knowledge. Lunenburg (2012) defined expert power as a person's ability to influence others' behaviour due to his or her knowledge, skills, or abilities. Some of the examples of expert power are the doctors, computer specialists, tax accountants, and economists; usually, the expert power is represented by a subject matter expert. Luthans (2011) mentioned that an individual who has expert power must be credible, trustworthy, and significant in their expertise. The hypotheses of this studied were followed:

H3: Expert power significant influence willingness to share knowledge

3.4 Reference Power

Referent power is based on the identification that the individuals like, admire, and respect another individual (Lunenburg, 2012). The individuals develop the admiration of others and aspire to be like the person. In other words, an individual who has a good reputation, attractive personal characteristics, or a certain level of charisma can influence others (Kudisch, Poteet, Dobbins, Rush, & Russell, 1995). In general, referent power is the result of admiration in which the admirer could be easily influenced by the influencer such as a celebrity or a charismatic person. As a result, a person who has referent power can influence others to be loyal, respect each other's and have a good relationship with members of the organization. The hypotheses of this studied were followed:

H4: Referent power significant influence willingness to share knowledge

3.5 Social Power and Knowledge Sharing Behaviour

Study of social power principal to authority which is an indicator of power when one person has a formal right to give a command, while another person has the formal obligation to obey. Authority is not only earned by a person's leadership capabilities but also through their knowledge, experience, and expertise. Relates to knowledge sharing behavior, Fiske (1992) mentioned people who have higher rank or authority obtain privileges, prestige, and better access to knowledge compared to others who are lower in rank. Whilst, Boer, Baalen, and Kumar (2004) suggested that authority rank is categorized into formal authority (ARf) and expertise bases (ARe). The authors explained that an individual who has high personal power could regulate the relationship between the people. People are differentiated based on their formal position and level of knowledge. Assumption have been made based on the finding of Boer Berends, & Baalen, (2011). People with higher ranking have better access to knowledge and will share their knowledge with others from the lower rank. They expect to be given some acknowledgement or commitment from the people at the lower rank. On the other hand, people who have lower rank share their knowledge with the superiors and expect to be given recognition or appreciation by the supervisor.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

The target population of this study was the knowledge workers from the information and technology (IT) industry. The population of the knowledge worker was obtained from the MSC Malaysia Talent Supply-Demand Study from year 2013 – 2017. MSC Company is the leading company in the IT industry in Malaysia. There are three clusters in IT: InfoTech, Creative Content and Technology, and Global Business Services. A survey was conducted as the data collection with a total of 150 questionnaires were distributed to selected companies. In this study, all variables were measured using the 5 likert scale, ranging from 1

(strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). There are five variables in this study, as regard to legitimate, coercive, expert, referent and knowledge sharing behavior with a total of sixteen items adopted from Hinkin and Schriesheim (1989) and Raven, Schwarzwald, and Koslowsk (1998). Furthermore, seven items of knowledge sharing behavior was adopted from Hooff and Hendrix (2004).

5.0 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Demographic Factor Analysis

It was found that the number of female respondents was greater than the male respondents with the following distribution: 79 female respondents and 71 male respondents. Most of the respondents were in the age range between 26 to 30 years old with a total of 56 respondents followed by 20 to 25 years old with 43 respondents, and 24 respondents from a group of 36 to 40 years old. Additional, For the respondents' qualification, most of the respondents have a degree in multimedia or information and communication technology (ICT) with a total of 83 respondents and 47 were graduated from Master degree. Moreover, the highest respondents participated in this study have working experience from five years and above. From the analysis, the data found the selected knowledge workers appropriately identified as meet certain criteria.

5.2 Measurement Model

According to Hair, Sarstedt, Hopkins, Kuppelwieser, (2014), the loading must higher than 0.7 and this indicates the items result to high internal consistency to the constructs. For the loading lower than the threshold values, the item recommended to delete from the construct until the average variance extracted values meet the minimum values of 0.50 and higher than 0.7. Second, the values of average variance extracted (AVE) estimate by the ratio of construct variance to the total variance among indicators and the recommended values should be above the threshold of .50 (Barclay, Higgins &Thompson, 1995). As in Table 2, the result indicates that all the loading was all higher than 0.7, the composite reliabilities were all higher than 0.7 and AVE were also higher than 0.5 as suggested in the literature. For the assessment of discriminant validity, a traditional Fornell and Larcker criterion assessment used to calculate the cross-loadings between others construct (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). In addition, the result confirmed the constructs were not having discriminant issues.

Table 1. Convergent Validity

Constructs	Items	Factors Loading	(CR)	(AVE)
Legitimate Power (LEGP)	LP1	0.845	0.925	0.756
	LP2	0.924		
	LP3	0.917		
	LP4	0.785		
Coercive Power (COP)	COP5	0.811	0.891	0.672
	COP6	0.816		
	COP7	0.82		
	COP8	0.832		
Referent Power (REFP)	RP9	0.886	0.956	0.844
	RP10	0.936		
	RP11	0.93		
	RP12	0.922		
Expert Power (EXP)	EP13	0.925	0.94	0.798
	EP14	0.923		
	EP15	0.849		
	EP16	0.874		

5.3 Structural Model

The significant of the relationship requires a bootstrapping which involved a process of repeated a total of 300 samples for each dataset. To confirm the significance of the relationship, the significant values should be less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$) which meaning to the t-value exceeds 1.96, then hypotheses of the relationship been accepted. The R^2 values of 0.149 suggested that 14.9 per cent of the variance in willingness to share knowledge was explained by four types of social power. As depicted in table 3, there were positive relationship between coercive power, expert power and referent power except for legitimate power. Among the four finding above, the result indicates none of the types of power discussed statistically significant to a willingness to share knowledge as the p values were greater than 0.05 by estimate the t-values is less than 1.964. Therefore, all hypotheses of this study were not supported.

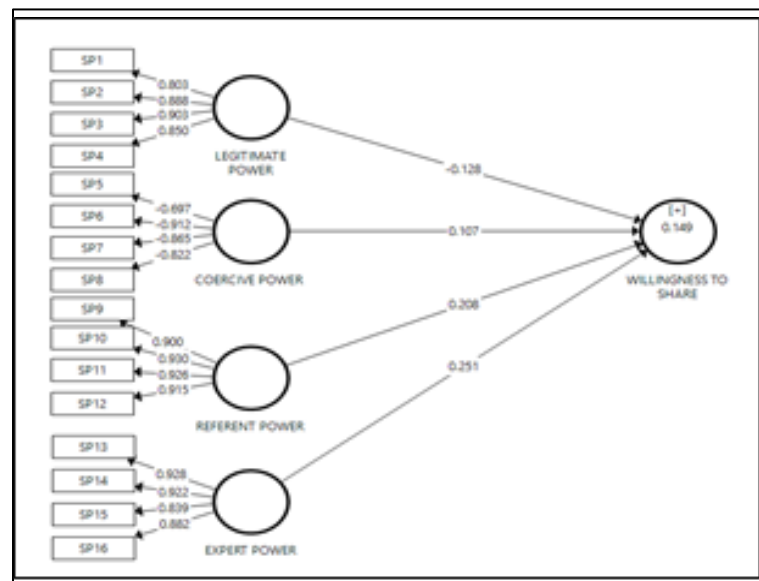


Figure 1. Structural Model

Several studies support the finding as the practice of legitimate power was not significant to promote and encourage the willingness to share knowledge as an individual feels insecure if they share their knowledge with others which result to lower their position and authority (Riege, 2005). On the other hand, the power held by people at the top rank understand to practice coercive power is not all the time. It also depends on employee contingency, for example, the skill and experience of the employees. Added, some people may be respected by others, but are incapable of completing the task, thus, they are not able to influence others to share knowledge. Hershcovisa, Reich, Parker, and Bozeman (2012) claimed the identification and personality or seniority are not strong determinants to influence the willingness to share knowledge. It is more to bond and employed with the informal relationship rather than to the formal relationship. In final discussion, the loss of the originality, fade of their power and talent in the organization limit people to share knowledge. Furthermore, they might feel threatened on their career development and promotion as people might replace their position in the organization (Boer et.al, 2011). For this reason, expert people always decide to hide their knowledge and let others learn independently in the organization.

Table 3: Structural Model Analysis

Relationship	β	SE	T-value	F ²	LL	UL	Decisions
COP →WTSK	0.107	0.186	1.306	0.012	-0.402	0.247	Not Support
EXP →WTSK	0.251	0.193	1.306	0.043	-0.473	0.307	Not Support
LEGP→WTSK	-0.128	0.182	0.705	0.013	-0.455	0.449	Not Support
REFP →WTS	0.208	0.186	1.114	0.027	-0.465	0.305	Not Support

6.0 EDUCATION AND KNOWLEDGE LEVEL AMONG AC MEMBERS

This study attempted to investigate the significance of the relationship between the social power and knowledge sharing behavior. This study has proposed social power elements such as legitimate power, coercive power, referent power and expert power. Overall, in this study the power practices in ICT industry did not support knowledge sharing behavior. The different practices of power in the organization may influence knowledge sharing behavior such as willingness to help, taking accountability and responsibility to share knowledge, and enjoying sharing and providing an opportunity for others to learn and gain new knowledge. Employees are concerned about others' problems, need of knowledge, and solution to the difficulties, so that people strongly ties to each other. Hence as a leader should play significance roles to influence, encourage and engage employees' willing to share knowledge. Employee need support, recognition and appreciation as they share their knowledge with organization. When they feel satisfy and happy to share, employee willing to give his or her commitment and effort to participate in knowledge sharing. So that leader should aware and responsible to create culture, support and opportunity for employees to share knowledge. A further study recommends to further explore on strategy and approach for effective employee engagement and willingness to share knowledge.

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