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MODELLING A STRATEGIC USE OF RECORDS AS STRATEGIC RESOURCE IN THE MALAYSIAN PUBLIC SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

Record surely can be identified in most organizations but the practices of record management may be only some of the organizations are familiar with it. Hence, records ought to be overseen as a vital asset to encourage the daily function and operation of the organization. Record as a strategic resource is defined that records as a medium to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the organization, it becomes a strategic resource that provides for future use. The study aims at describing how public records are managed and used among officers in departments and ministries of the Malaysian government. The respondents and key informants engaged in this study are Diplomatic Administer Officer (PTD) from different position grades starting from grade M44 to JUSA because they are categorized as top management that acts as administer, policymaker, decision-maker, etc. in the organization. The respondents were randomly selected from twelve ministries and one department of the Malaysian public sector in Putrajaya. Findings show that all hypotheses are accepted. Records users as found to have a significant and positive relationship with strategic use of records. Records value was also found to have a significant and positive relationship with strategic use of records same as the relationship between records user and records value. Moreover, records value is hypothesized as a mediator between records user and strategic use of records also indicate the same result. The results of the study have contributed to the development of research model and theory in using records as a strategic resource especially, in the government sector. Government servants especially PTD officers must use records as one of the strategic resources in carrying out their daily affairs. Systematic record management needs to be further strengthened to ensure that the preserved memory of corporate enemies contributes to the development of a developed and rapid nation.

Keywords: Records management, Diplomatic administer officer, Malaysian government

1. INTRODUCTION

Records become an important resource nowadays especially in government sector and their absence will result in inefficiencies or failure in operating procedures (Kansas State Historical Society, 2007). Records are a key resource for organisations and should be used in accordance with the sound record management practises (Mutula and Wamukoya, 2009). Furthermore, Shepherd (2010) stated that individual and organizations create records of their current activities to support management, ensure accountability and culture to meet the needs of society for collective memory and to protect the identity of individuals and communities and their histories.

According to Mwaura (2013), Malaysia is regarded one of the countries that has accomplished a great measure of economic prosperity and has become a model of economic progress and development for developing countries. It was realized as early as in the 1960's that Records Management in Ministries and Departments should be improved upon to bring about efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of services, ensure integrity and accountability as well as eradicate or minimize corruption. Since then, Malaysia has been enjoying the positive impacts of managing its record efficiently and strategically. However, despite the crucial role of records described above, researchers agree that many organisations, including government departments, pay little attention to records management (Chinyemba & Ngulube, 2005). In Malaysia, for example, government departments and businesses sometimes treat recorded information carelessly, oblivious to the fact that records are essentially important as other resources of financial, people, money, and equipment (Zawiyah M. Yusof, 1999). In the light of the mentioned issue, it is therefore relevant for the researcher to explore the strategic use of records in the public sector of Malaysia.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Records are kept and preserved to ensure all activities and transaction are recorded and become a strategic resource in the future. Furthermore, the International Standards Organization [ISO 15489] (2001) defined a record as an information that is created, received, and kept as a source of reference for an organization and individuals in carrying out a business and purpose. Records are essential to all organizations. They improve the effectiveness of operations and document services in organizations by enhancing the delivery of services, supporting the administration, documenting rights and responsibilities of individuals, and capturing evidence of the work in public authorities. Implementation of proper records management leads to good public management since government activities are based on the access to information contained in records (Smith, 2008).

Wamukoya's theories on the importance of records management may be summarized with reference to the Northwest Territories (2002) which viewed the role of records in an organisation as assisting organisations in providing services in an orderly, efficient, consistent, and equitable manner, supporting policy and management decisions, supporting current and future research activities, assisting organisations in meeting legal obligations and defending themselves against lawsuits, and assisting organisations in protecting the public's right to information by keeping or destroying records. Records management goes beyond the traditional conceptualization of usage that involves several dimensions. Therefore, this study looks upon similar topics and field of study. Five theoretical perspectives were selected for consideration. The justification of selecting these theories is: (1) the theory applies to certain domain of work – motivational, process, job or task, (2) the theory explained work design and user engagement, (3) the theory includes technological (technical). Human (individual), and contextual (environment) to explain the work design and user engagement. The five theories selected are Records Life cycle Theory, Sociotechnical System Theory (STS), Flow Theory, Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) and Individual Differences Theory.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a combination of exploratory, descriptive, and hypothesis testing. First, it is exploratory because there is lack of research on strategic use of records, as well as and the lack of knowledge on the effect of contextual dimensions towards the strategic use of records. Second, this study used descriptive statistics. Third, it also involved hypothesis testing as a several hypotheses were formulated during the development of the theoretical framework. For the type of investigation, the focus of the study was to test the correlation between the variables. Even though there might be causal relationship between variables, the objective of the study did not focus on the causal relationship; instead focusing on determining the relationship between variables through correlation.

In terms of unit analysis, the study adopted individual analysis. For the sampling, the study adopted nonprobability sampling specifically purposively sampling. The respondents and key informants engaged in this study are Diplomatic Administer Officer (PTD) from different position grades starting from grade M44 to JUSA because they are categorized as top management that acts as administer, policymaker, decision-maker, etc. in the organization. The respondents were randomly selected from twelve ministries and one department of the Malaysian public sector in Putrajaya. The study conducted is quantitative method. A total of 271 questionnaires were collected and only 266 were analyzed using SPSS and Smart-PLS software.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Several techniques were conducted in order to assess the non-response bias. A total of 271 responses were returned; in which 5 responses were excluded due to empty dataset and not completed. As a result, 266 usable responses were used for further analysis. The Prime Minister Department recorded the highest respondent responses with 25.9% (or n=69), meanwhile the Ministry of Health had the second highest with 12% (or n=32). The third highest response rate was recorded by the Ministry of Education with 8.3% (or n=22). The fourth highest response rate was shared both by the Ministry of Rural Development and the Ministry of Agriculture & Agro Based Industry with 7.1% (or n=19). Ministry of Water, Land & Natural Resources and Ministry of Defense shared the same number of responses rate of 6.4% (or n=17). Next is the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Energy, Science, Technology, Environment & Climate Change with the same number of response rate of 6% (or n=16). This follows by the Ministry of Foreign Affair with 4.5% (or n=12) and 3.4% (or n=9) for the Ministry of Works, Ministry of Communication & Multimedia and Ministry of International Trade & Industry.

4.1. Level of Strategic Use of Records

Descriptive analysis shows that majority of the respondents leant towards positive responses. Therefore, it can be deduced that most of the respondents believed that good governance can be performed by using records strategically. Respondents were aware that the existence of records can assist their daily routine work smoothly. The finding of the study shows that most of the respondents at the ministries and department of Malaysia government use records to achieve accuracy in their task. Records have become as an important references source in their daily routine task.

4.2. The Impact Records User on Strategic Use of Records

Two variables were used to measure the impact of user attitude and user participation on the strategic use of records. Each variable consisted of fourteen items and eight items. A higher order construct was developed to simplify the relationship among variables. The result of hypothesis one (H1) shows that Records User (RU) (user attitude and user participation) positively and significantly affects the strategic use of records. (H1: Supported, $\beta = 0.6474$, $t = 12.0563^{**}$, $p < 0.05$). This indicates that the PTD officers' attitude and participation in the strategic use of records in terms of

GOG, EVI, DEM and SEF have significant impact. Looking into the descriptive analysis of user attitude and user participation, the overall mean score indicates that the PTD officers were able to realise the benefits used of records in their daily task.

4.3. The Impact of Records Value on Strategic Use of Records

Two variables were used to measure the impact of records value on strategic used of records. Ease of use (EOU) was measured using thirteen items and ease of usefulness (USE) was measured using fourteen items. A higher order construct was developed to simplify the relationship among variables. The result of hypothesis two (H2) shows that records value positively and significantly affects the strategic use of records. (H2: Supported, $\beta = 0.2975$, $t = 4.9287^{**}$, $p < 0.05$). This indicates that the combined effect of EOU and USE positively influences the PTD officers in using records. This implies that if users consider records are useful and improve their task in their organization, then they will be more likely to continue using the records. Therefore, the organization must consider the needs of users in managing records systematically. Thus, if records management program is effective and practical, this will strengthen the users' perceived ease of use of records.

4.4. The Impact of Records User on Records Value

Two variables were used to measure the impact of user attitude and user participation on records value. Each variable consisted of fourteen items and eight items. A higher order construct was developed to simplify the relationship among variables. The result of hypothesis three (H3) shows that Records User (RU) (user attitude and user participation) positively and significantly affects records value. (H3: Supported, $\beta = 0.681$, $t = 16.58^{**}$, $p < 0.05$). This indicates that PTD officers' attitude and participation in the records value have significant impact. The findings of the study revealed that there was a significant positive relationship between the use of the records and ease of usefulness as well as user attitudes. This means that users are likely to form a positive attitude towards using the records when it is proven as a useful tool to the practice and vice versa. The findings of the study revealed that there was a significant positive relationship between ease of use and user attitudes towards using the records. This implies that ease of use by the user influences the attitudes towards using the records significantly. In other words, users intend to use the records more frequently as the records become easy to use. The findings of the study also revealed that there was a significant positive relationship between user participation towards using the records and ease of use as well as ease of usefulness. This implies that the ease of use and ease of usefulness influence the user participation in using the records significantly.

4.5. Research Contribution

Based on the mentioned theories and models, this study developed a conceptual model based on empirical assessment describing the strategic use of records, its determinants, and impacts. The model consisted of 8 variables under three dimensions: Records user, records value and strategic use of records. Upon completion of the measurement model, two (2) items were removed due to low loading factors. Henceforth, the main theoretical contribution of this study is the development of empirically tested and validated model of Strategic use of records, its determinants, and impacts. Since the literature on the strategic use of records is sacred in numbers, this study will promote the concept of engagement among government servant and practitioners. Findings within other domain showed that strategic records do have significance relationship with records user and records value. However, the empirical evidence of this relationship is scarce and almost non-existent within the context of Records and Archives management. Therefore, this study provides empirical evidence of the relationship between strategic use of records, its determinants and impacts. One of the practical contributions of this study is the development of comprehensive instruments to measure the strategic use of records, its determinants, and impacts. In the context of this study, the instrument used was a

survey consisting of 69 items. The instrument was developed by adapting and adopting instruments from the previous research with the combination of new items especially in the context of strategic use of records. The conceptual framework was used as guidance for the development of the questionnaire.

5. CONCLUSION

The study shows that the PTD officers at the departments and ministries in the Malaysian government agreed that the engagement with records user and records value improves strategic use of records in organization. A higher level of engagement leads to a higher level of records usage. The level of engagement was predicted by two dimensions: records user and records value. The resulting conceptual framework introduced in this study benefits both researchers and practitioner. Researchers may use the conceptual framework to further extend the framework in different situations. Practitioner may also use the result of this study to assess the level of strategic use of records in their organization.

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