Knowledge Sharing Pattern Among the Arts Faculty Students of Dhaka University

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to explore the Knowledge Sharing (KS) patterns among the students of the Arts faculty, University of Dhaka (DU). In order to investigate the KS patterns, a structured questionnaire was used which included different parameters such as background information of the respondents, their purpose, frequency, preferred channels, benefits and motivators for Knowledge Sharing. The data were collected from a total number of 372 students and later analysed using SPSS and Microsoft Excel. The study revealed that, majority of the students of the Arts faculty share their knowledge for self-satisfaction. Although, largest numbers of the students also believe knowledge sharing help them to create new knowledge and ideas, while, learning from each other is their prime motivator for KS.

Keywords: Knowledge sharing (KS), Knowledge sharing patterns, Information exchange, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh

1. INTRODUCTION

Knowledge Sharing (KS) amongst employees in organisations are widely recognised as an important aspect for its potential towards developing the performance of the organisations and its competitive advantages[1]. Therefore, the study of KS is dominated by those focusing on KS activity within the business organisations. Obviously, the ultimate goal of organisational knowledge sharing in these institutions is profit-motivated. However, the issue of KS is equally important for a knowledge-based institution, such as a University, where knowledge production, distribution and application are ingrained in the institution. It is also very import to mention different types of knowledge which can be shared[2]. Knowledge can be categorised in two ways, explicit and tacit. 'Explicit knowledge' is easily transferable and codified into knowledge repository or an instruction manual. In comparison, 'tacit knowledge' is integrated within the human brain and this type of knowledge is explained by Polyani[3] as; ''non-verbalised, intuitive and unarticulated''. It is apparent from the aforementioned explanation that the latter type of knowledge is not fully transferable. However, the latter is considered as more valuable[4]. In the perspective of KS, another factor that is leadership or managers have vital roles. Especially the attitudes, behaviours and actions of the leaders or managers are important. Bircham-Connelly[5], *et al*. suggested that leadership plays a pivotal role in promoting and cultivating KS behaviour, through contributing to employee's experiential learning, and through providing opportunities for and managing the processes whereby their staff share or transfer their knowledge. Managers also have a hand in the development of Information Technology Systems, reward systems, opportunities for interaction, and the availability of time for KS[6]. Organisational structures are also seen as impacting significantly on KS[7]. On the other hand, University structures invariably differ from those of most public and commercial institutions. Tippins[8] points out that the functional organisational structure of higher education institutions can be a significant barrier to KS, as can physical and psychological barriers. However, academic world has recognised the KS among university students as a necessary and interesting area of study. As the organisations are emphasising on collaborative work increased, the curriculum of universities is also structured in such a way to engage students in collaborative learning which lead them to reflect and learn more effectively. From the view of positive learning outcomes and cognitive gain, it is proven that the students are getting benefitted by the collaborative learning. Organisational structures are also seen as impacting significantly on KS, University structures invariably differ from those of most public and commercial institutions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Researches relating to the Universities and KS mostly emphasise on the matter that the working atmosphere of the Universities is different from other Institutes in various ways and the picture of different aspects resulting out of knowledge management (KM) and KS. Towards designing the KM strategies or more precisely in pursuing to promote and facilitate the provision of KS, accommodating the positive environment and culture in the organisation has been identified as the main important subject matter by many commentators[9,10]. Mostofa[11]

revealed that, initial overall benefits from the early stage of KS among female students of Khulna University in Bangladesh, were encouraging. The findings of that study also showed that, the existing culture of KS and factors of KS, do not depend on technology alone. In addition to that, that educational qualification is closely connected with the purposes of KS. In another study Liebowitz,[12] revealed that, existing trend of the organisation should be appreciated and accommodated for every initiated KM plan. Specific characteristic of sharing of knowledge has been discussed by plenty of commentators in their range of research articles. However, a relatively small number of researches have been performed in the field of knowledge sharing itself and other effective factors of knowledge sharing. This article intends to make a contribution towards making clear understanding of KS in present day's Universities from student's point of view and discussing affecting factors of KS.

KS has been explained by Hansen[13] as a process of receiving and providing information, giving feedback after experiencing the use of technology and product by the staff. KS is the most influential factors comparable to other knowledge related behaviours. KS is so important in academia as knowledge creation, integration and other related issues are directly influenced by it. Tsai[14] contented that; KS should be identified as an important premise condition of knowledge creation. Issues concerning individual factors, behavioural conditions, KS performance and organisational routines came into the recent researches done by various researchers. It is believed that, students may achieve better learning capacity and more improved thinking skills, when they work in groups with fellows[15,16]. Previous researches emphasised on intention, willingness or propensity of an individual towards sharing knowledge with fellows. This is because, KS is still assumed as voluntary or volitional.

The ideal way of describing the KS may include a broad range of characteristics which are complex and multi-faceted. According to a significant number of research papers, the most important factors of knowledge sharing are individual's values and attitudes towards KM, trend of the institution and characteristic of the technology that shape the KS[17-19]. However, now the students can take part in KS activities by using the most modern and fastest growing Web 2.0 technologies; features like Wikipedia, blogs, shared notes, etc., are widely available. Through the use of these technologies, students are able to publish digital contents by exchanging, collecting and seeking various ideas[20-22]. In order to have the best result out of this latest technology, the willingness of sharing Knowledge with other community and groups is very vital.

Sometimes students tend to get confused by Knowledge and Information Sharing. There is a clear distinction between knowledge and information sharing, because the KS carries idea, principle and purpose beyond the sphere of mere sharing. The ideas of working together,

collaborating with others and helping each other fall in KS. Whereas, information sharing mostly demonstrates the idea of giving and taking something from one to another person. KS, therefore, creates a new process of learning. Another important factors of the category knowledge, which also influences the KS behaviour[3]. There are some differences between tacit and explicit knowledge. According to Nonaka & Takeuchi[23], tacit knowledge is seen to be hard to share or interact with others. The tacit knowledge includes intuitions, subjective insights and hunches kind of things. On the other hand, explicit knowledge is codified in a formal form through a systematic way through the use of symbols or might have a physical artifact and can be shared easily.

It is apparent from the previous studies purported on the area of social capital and social cognitive theory that individuals' willingness to share knowledge is influenced by several factors[25-30]. Chou[24] and Chiu[31], et al. argued that KS behaviour is generally guided by major cognitive forces like self-efficacy and outcome expectations. Therefore, previous studies proposed to take such approaches which increase the individual contribution through KS behaviour[32]. According to the social capital theory, individuals' intention to share knowledge might be greatly influenced by the perception of trust, in more clear term; they believe from the reliability point of view that sharing contexts are somehow worthy[28,25,29]. It can be said from the above mentioned assertion that, the students are only willing to share knowledge after giving due concern whether others will take benefit out of the content or misuse it. Moreover, some previous studies showed that the willingness of sharing knowledge depends upon that person's perception of information resources and the knowledge of different context rather than gaining any immediate reward or feedback[33]. Roknuzzaman[34] in his study found that, the users of the Dhaka university library possessed positive perception and attitude towards the concept of KS. They shared various knowledge related to their study, current issues, including social, political and cultural affairs.

3. OBJECTIVES

The main goals of the present research are to discover, investigate and determine the KS behaviour of the students of Arts faculty of Dhaka University (DU). Also the other specific objectives of this study are as follows:

(a) Identify the attitude towards KS of Arts faculty students

(b) Find out the frequency of KS and using IT to share knowledge for study-related tasks

(c) Discover different types of information and knowledge shared by the students

(d) Find out the preferred channels and factors influencing KS

(e) Reveal the motivators and the major problems for KS.

4. METHODOLOGY

The respondents in this study were both undergraduate (B.A. (Hons)) and postgraduate (M.A.) students at Arts Faculty, University of Dhaka. Currently there are 17 Departments under Arts faculty and all the department's students were brought under the survey. A total number of 400 printed questionnaires were distributed randomly among the students to reveal their knowledge sharing practices, of these, 372(93%) completed questionnaires were returned and later included for analysis. Finally, the data collected through the questionnaires were processed and analysed by using SPSS. The major limitation of this study is the sample of the population, which might not be representative, as only the Arts faculty student's participated in the study. Therefore, the findings would not be used for generalising the greater context of Dhaka University students. However the findings may still provide a thoughtful insight as an exploratory study. In addition to that, faculty and researcher were excluded from the study as the researchers wanted a deep insight from the students only regarding the topic and hopefully future researchers will include the faculty and researchers as well in their study. To make the study more suitable and understandable for the students, the researchers preferred to include more common variables in the questionnaire and avoided complex topics and variables.

5. ANALYSIS

5.1. Respondents Profile

Out of the 372 responses, it was found that 243(65.32%) were male and 129(34.67%) were female students. The largest group of students 308(83.9%) was comprised of those in the age group of 20-24 years. The smallest group of students 06(1.7%) was aged between 25-29 years. Out of 372 students, 69(18.8%) were in the first year, 106(28.3%) were in the second year, 89(24.3%) were in the third year and 108(28.6%) were in the fourth year of their studies (Table 1).

Table 1. Respondents profile

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	347	89.4
Female	25	10.6
Total	**372**	**100**
Age		
Under 20	58	14.4
20-24	308	83.9
25-29	6	1.7
Total	**372**	**100**
Year		
1st year	69	18.8
2nd year	106	28.3
3rd year	89	24.3
4th year	108	28.6
Total	**372**	**100**

5.2. Purpose of KS

The respondents were asked to point out the possible reason for sharing knowledge. In response to that, 11.8% replied that they share knowledge for their own sake, while, 8.1% for mentoring others and highest percent (80.10%) agreed that they share knowledge for self-satisfaction (Table 2).

5.3. KS Solving Students Problems

Respondents were asked to make comments about their thinking how KS can solve their problems. Among the respondents, 77.42% reported that KS can help to solve their problems. In contrast, more than 6.72% of them replied negatively. However, the rest of them (15.86%) reported that they have no idea regarding the matter (Table 3).

Table 2. Purpose of KS

KS usage purpose	Frequency (%)
For own sake	44 (11.8)
For mentoring others	30 (08.1)
Self-satisfaction	298 (80.1)
Total	**372**

Table 3. KS Solving Students problems

Response	Frequency (%)
Yes	288 (77.42)
No	25 (06.72)
I have no idea	59 (15.86)
Total	**372**

5.4. Preferred Channels of KS

It is clearly indicated from the Table 4 that, more than 24.7% respondents usesocial networks for sharing their knowledge, 53.2% share knowledge through group discussions and 18.3% share knowledge through the internet. The rest of them, i.e., 2.2% and 1.6% share their knowledge through seminar and workshop respectively (Table 4).

Table 4. Preferred channels of KS

Channel for KS	Frequency	Percentage
Internet	68	18.3
Social networking	92	24.7
Group discussions	198	53.2
Workshop	06	01.6
Seminar	08	02.2
Total	**372**	**100**

5.5. Frequency of Visiting Knowledge Sources

Table 5 revealed that, 54.03% of the respondents use of knowledge sources every day, while 31.18.% of them reported that they used the sources occasionally. Among the respondents 12.09% use the sources once in a week and only 2.70% use the knowledge sources once in a month.

Table 5. Frequency of visiting knowledge sources

Visiting resources	Frequency	Percentage
Every day	201	54.03
Once in a week	45	12.09
Once in as month	10	02.70
Occasionally	116	31.18
Total	**372**	**100**

5.6. Benefits of KS

Respondents were also asked to make comments about their thought show sharing of knowledge might benefit them. In that case, 71.5% believe that, KS help them create new knowledge and ideas. While, 26.3% of them were only satisfied to share knowledge with others on different subjects and very few respondents (2.2%) replied that it might improve their grades in the examinations (Table 6).

5.7. Motivators for KS

Table 7 indicates that 75.26% of the respondents asserted to learn from each other. While 13.98% of the

Table 6. Benefits of KS

S. No.	Benefits	Frequency (%)
1.	Helps in creating new knowledge and ideas	266 (71.5)
2.	Bring satisfaction to get knowledge on different subject	98 (26.3)
3.	Improves grades in the examination	08 (02.2)
	Total	**372**

Table 7. Motivators for KS

S. No.	Usability	Frequency (%)
1.	To learn from each other	280 (75.26)
2.	To help others	36 (09.68)
3.	Self-satisfaction	52 (13.98)
4.	To obtain rewards	04 (01.08)
	Total	**372**

students reported that self-satisfaction is their way of motivators. On the other hand, only 9.68% find their motivators by helping others.

5.8. Frequency of Using IT Facilities to Share Knowledge

There were seven statements given to measure the frequency of using IT facilities to share knowledge. For each statement responses was coded 1 for very rarely to 5 for more frequently. The findings suggest that, IT was used very rarely, i.e., 89.1- 90.1% of the respondents. While more than 5% used webpage rarely, 3.5% used the E-document management system, 5.9% used the Chat room more frequently. These responses are reflected in table 8.

5.9. Problems to Share Knowledge with Others

The respondents were asked to indicate possible reasons that leads to less sharing knowledge. Among the students, 43.27% replied that poor sharing of knowledge in the organisation is the major problem to share knowledge with others. While, 34.13% of the respondents exposed that, lack of information regarding KS; loss of crucial knowledge due to a key employee leaving the organisation was another reason to share knowledge with others, which was pointed out by 11.3% of the respondent. While only 5.1% and 6.2% reported that re-inventing the wheel and information overload is the reluctance to share knowledge.

Table 9. Problems to share knowledge with others

S. No.	Problem	Frequency (%)
1.	Lack of information	127 (34.13)
2.	Information overload	023 (06.2)
3.	Re-inventing the wheel	019 (05.1)
4.	Loss of crucial knowledge due to a key employee leaving the organisation	042 (11.3)
5.	Poor sharing of knowledge in the organisation	161 (43.27)
	Total	**372**

Table 8. Frequency of using IT facilities to share knowledge

S. No.	IT facilities	Frequency of using IT facilities to share knowledge				
		Very rarely (%)	Rarely (%)	Neither rarely nor frequently (%)	Frequently (%)	More frequently (%)
1.	Webpage	334 (89.8)	20 (5.4)	12 (3.2)	04 (1.1)	02 (0.5)
2.	Bulletin board system	336 (90.3)	12 (3.2)	09 (2.4)	08 (2.2)	07 (1.9)
3.	Chat-room	334 (89.8)	07 (1.9)	07 (1.9)	02 (0.5))	22 (5.9)
4.	Yahoo Messenger	334 (89.8)	09 (2.4)	06 (1.6)	04 (1.1)	19 (5.1)
5.	Electronic document management system	334 (89.8)	10 (2.7)	07 (1.9)	13 (3.5)	08 (2.2)
6.	Web-mail	335 (90.1)	06 (1.6)	07 (1.9)	03 (0.8)	21 (5.7)
7.	Knowledge repository	335 (90.1)	04 (1.1)	12 (3.2)	10 (2.7)	11 (3.0)

6. DISCUSSIONS

The results of the study revealed that the majority of the students share their knowledge for self-satisfaction. The study also showed that KS can help to solve their problems, though a few of them think otherwise. It is clearly visible from the study that almost a quarter of the respondents use social networks for sharing of their knowledge and more than half of them share knowledge through group discussions. In case of the frequency of using Knowledge sources, the highest number of the students' uses those knowledge sources every day, while, a significant percentage use those sources occasionally. Respondents were also asked to make comments about their thoughts regarding the potential benefits of Knowledge sharing. Among the respondents, near about one-third believe KS can help them to create new knowledge and ideas and almost the remaining portion only satisfy to share knowledge with others on different subjects. The present research found that to learn from each other is one of the prime motivators of KS. It is alarming that in the age of Information Technology (IT), the largest portion of the respondents use IT very rarely during information sharing. The study also pointed out that poor sharing of knowledge in the organisation is the major problems to share knowledge with others.

7. CONCLUSIONS

Positive attitude towards KS creates beneficial ambiance at tertiary education level and builds a strong basis for students to serve their organisations in a better way when they join the workforce after graduation. The barriers must be eradicated so that KS works in the organisations can be done easily. This is because obstacles can affect adversely the awareness towards KS. The university authority can promote KS by appreciating the benefits and motivators of KS. The university administrators should take attempt to inspire KS among the students. At the same time, the motivators identified in this study shall serve as a guide to the university administrators. The other important aspect is the students themselves. They must realise that KS activities bring many benefits to them. KS among students will significantly enhance group communications, problem-solving, and decision making skills, which support the students. They must realise that the university is increasingly becoming learning organisations, and thus increasing sharing habit adds value to the students as they join the workforce later.

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