Original Paper

Enhancing Organizational Performance by Knowledge Sharing

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Abstract

Knowledge management can be regarded as one of the key processes of organizational learning. It is well accepted that learning organizations can enhance their capability and hence competitiveness and performance through learning. Recognizing the importance of knowledge management, researchers are interested in exploring knowledge sharing activities because such activities are the cornerstone of other knowledge management activities. It is argued that a fundamental purpose of managing knowledge is to establish a shared context in organizations. As such, what factors affect interpersonal knowledge sharing and how they affect interpersonal knowledge sharing in organizations are critical and worth noting. A preliminary model from an organizational behavior perspective is proposed which will serve as the framework for further study.

Keywords

organizational performance, organizational learning, knowledge sharing

1. Introduction

It is widely supported that successful Organizational Learning (OL) enhances organizational effectiveness and competitiveness (e.g., Anderson & Boocock, 2002; Chen & Kuo, 2011; Englehardt & Simmons, 2002; Mills & Smith, 2011; Pemberton, Stonehouse, & Yarrow, 2001). Therefore, in order to remain competitive in today's global knowledge-based economy, organizations are increasingly moving towards management policies or practices that promote OL (Flores et al., 2012; Gomez et al., 2004; Hwang, 2003). Appreciating the strategic role of OL and its contribution to the development of organizational competence, the topic has been gaining considerable scholarly attention. Particular emphasis has been placed on the role of Knowledge Management (KM) that supports a learning organization.

Earlier literature such as Garvin (1998) drew a summary of literature on various disciplines that OL is important to organizational survival, robustness and renewal, which involves the creation and acquisition of new knowledge. As such, it is argued that KM has an intimate relationship with OL (Huber, 1991; Nag & Gioia, 2012; Sharma, 2003; Vera & Crossan, 2004; Zhang & Faerman, 2003). How strategic KM practices can be employed to facilitate OL and how this learning capability is eventually related to organizational performance is critical to the success of an organization.

Among the KM practices such as knowledge acquisition, knowledge documentation and knowledge application, Knowledge Sharing (KS) is an integral part of the KM process. According to studies such

as Dasi et al. (2017); Fahey and Prusak (1998) and Holste and Fields (2010), knowledge needs to be shared and that a shared context needs to be created as it is a core element of the KM process. This paper is expected to bring both theoretical and practical insights. Theoretically, this paper discusses the antecedents of interpersonal KS in organizations. It also attempts to identify factors affecting interpersonal KS from the organizational behaviour perspective which may stimulate researchers' interest in studying this phenomenon of sharing activities from a new perspective. For managers who need to implement KM in their organizations, particularly if they want to facilitate KS among individuals, which factors should receive more attention can be determined with the insights from the model proposed in this paper. The model can also serve as a guide for managers to strengthen the more important factors when it comes to encourage or facilitate KS in their organizations.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Knowledge and Knowledge Management

Knowledge has been recognized as one of the most important strategic resources and intangible asset (Blumerntritt & Johnston, 1999; Drucker, 1993; Harlow, 2008; Ling, 2011). Effective management of knowledge is a priority facing the pressures resulted from the emergence of the knowledge-based global economy. To cope with this challenge, many organizations are then focusing their attention on managing knowledge and realizing it as a key capability for competing successfully in the global environment (Grant, 1996; Harlow, 2008; Kermally, 2001; de Pablos, 2002; Wang, Sharma, & Cao, 2016). As also echoed by Hwang (2003), an organization's most valuable asset is its intellectual capital that makes KM an important issue.

Drucker is a guru in the field of KM who posited the concept of knowledge-based society and raised the awareness of knowledge being a key and meaningful critical resource for an organization (Andreeva & Kianto, 2012; Gao et al., 2002; Massa & Testa, 2009; Sharma, 2003). As organizations enter the knowledge-based economy, knowledge can be viewed as one of the most important strategic resources and thus knowledge production is critical to sustaining competitive advantage and organizational success (Wang & Ahmed, 2003). Therefore, the literature holds a view that both KM and OL have strategic implications to organizations.

Comparing with OL, the subject of KM is more recent. With the rapid advancement of information communication technologies and social media revolution, the discipline has been gaining an upsurge of interest over the past two decades. There has been no lack of literature discussing knowledge and KM because contemporary economies are increasingly based on knowledge. However, there is no universal definition for this discipline as knowledge is an elusive concept that has been classified and defined in a variety of ways and from multi-perspective views (Blumentritt & Johnston, 1999; Newell et al., 2002; Stonehouse & Pemberton, 1999).

Although there exists no agreed definition of KM in literature, it is widely accepted that KM is supposed to be critical to sustainable competitive advantage and continued success. Despite the multifaceted nature of KM, there is no refutation on its close relationship with learning. Among those definitions on KM from the literature, the following one quoted from Xerox Corporation (Kermally, 2001, p. 16) can clearly present the underlying thought of KM for this paper:

> *"Knowledge management is responsible for creating a thriving work and learning environment that fosters the continuous creation, aggregation, use and re-use of both organizational and personal knowledge in the pursuit of new business or organizational value."*

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Following the frame of mind underlying the above description, organizations will be more able to cope with the driving forces for KM that continuously emerge from the dynamic global environment. A strive for good KM would bring organizations some benefits such as enhancing employees' competencies, generating innovation, reducing costs and bringing about business transformation (Joaquuin et al., 2013; Kermally, 2001; Leonardi, 2017; Mousavizadeh et al., 2015; Young, 2012).

For this paper, it is therefore argued that KM is treated as a strategic process that enhances learning and performance within organizations. Effective KM can also be conducive to learning/knowledge synergy (Lam & Lambermont-Ford, 2010; Loermans, 2002). According to Carlucci and Schiuma (2004), KM practices are suggested as a strategic management activity in the learning and growth domain. KM practices will be oriented to improving value-generating capability of the firm. In this vein of thought, some researchers (e.g., Llopis & Foss, 2015; Stonehouse & Pemberton, 1999) proposed transformative leadership, organic structure, strong commitment to human resources development, learning culture or cooperative organizational climate, effective information systems, etc., as facilitators of OL to increase the value added to organizations.

KM can involve a number of processes and among which KS is one of them (Achterbergh & Vriens, 2002; Wilderman, 1999). KS has been regarded as a critical KM process in organizations (Bartol & Srivastava, 2002; Bock & Kim, 2002; Cabrera & Cabrera, 2002; Hendriks, 1999). Moreover, many researchers realise that it is people in organizations who have knowledge that moves to the group and organizational levels so that organizational goals can be achieved (Nonaka, 1994) as well as economic and competitive value can be attained (Hendriks, 1999). If people in organizations hoard their knowledge, both goals and competitive value cannot be attained. Hence, an understanding of factors impacting their intention and willingness to share knowledge in the KM process is important.

2.2 Role of Knowledge Sharing

2.2.1 Defining Knowledge Sharing

As the cases for knowledge and KM, there is no universal definition of KS. This is partly due to the different contexts to which KS refers in different studies. It is found that KS can occur at individual, group or team, and organizational levels (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Boles, 1999; Grover & Davenport, 2001; Lam & Lambermont-Ford, 2010). For example, some studies focus on KS between individuals (e.g., Connelly & Kelloway, 2003; Dasi et al., 2017) while some focus on KS between groups or units (e.g., Hansen, 2002). Yet, some others focus on KS between organizations (e.g., Bell et al., 2002). Another reason for the difference in definition is due to the different explanation attached to the term of knowledge (Bartol & Srivastava, 2002; Ipe, 2003). As previously mentioned, some researchers regarded information and knowledge as distinct while others regarded information and knowledge as interchangeable in practice. Therefore, some authors defined KS as sharing of both information and knowledge while others define it as sharing of knowledge only.

In a theoretical study, Bartol and Srivastava (2002, p. 65) defined KS as "individuals sharing organizationally relevant information, ideas, and suggestions, and expertise with one another. The knowledge shared by individuals could be explicit as well as tacit". They explicitly stated that they followed some previous researchers' ideas that the terms information and knowledge were interchangeable (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Earl, 2001) and thus they did not attempt to distinguish between sharing of information and knowledge. Similarly, Connelly and Kelloway's (2003) definition of KS also seems to include sharing of information as well. They defined KS as "a set of behaviors that involve the exchange of information or assistance to others" (p. 294).

On the contrary, some authors do not seem to view sharing of information and knowledge as identical.

For example, Ipe (2003) defined KS between individuals as "the process by which knowledge held by an individual is converted into a form that can be understood, absorbed, and used by other individuals" (p. 341). Similarly, Chua (2003) put forth that KS is a process by which individuals collectively and iteratively refine a thought, an idea or a suggestion in the light of their experiences. In a study by Jarvenpaa and Staples (2001), the authors distinguished clearly between the sharing of information and expertise (i.e., knowledge) though they had not given definitions for them. In the study by Ryu et al. (2003, p. 113), KS was defined as "the behavior of disseminating one's acquired knowledge with other members within one's organization". Their study also seems to regard information and knowledge as different. Yet, it is difficult to distinguish between information and knowledge in practice, this paper does not attempt to make a rigid distinction between the sharing of information and knowledge.

Some authors used the term knowledge transfer to denote the KS process or regarded the two terms as interchangeable (e.g., Achterbergh & Vriens, 2002; Ford, 2001; Goh, 2002; Reagans & McEvily, 2003; Sveiby, 2001; Swap et al., 2001). However, some authors regarded KS as knowledge transfer in a different way (e.g., Argote & Ingram, 2000; Ipe, 2003). They regarded KS as an act between individuals while knowledge transfer refers to the movement of knowledge between larger entities, e.g., departments, divisions, or even organizations. Based on this premise, this paper focuses KS at the individual level, i.e., interpersonal KS.

When sharing knowledge, strategies used are often different with respect to different types of knowledge. In the case of sharing of explicit knowledge, knowledge can be codified and stored in documents, manuals, or databases for reuse by other members of an organization (Davenport & Prusak, 1998). That is, codification strategy can be used (Haas & Hansen, 2007; Hansen et al., 1999). This can avoid reinventing the wheel when handling same or similar tasks and loss of organizational knowledge due to staff turnover. This KS strategy has been adopted by some organizations such as McDonald's and Ernst & Young.

On the contrary, tacit knowledge is difficult to be codified. Thus, it is less appropriate to use the codification strategy for sharing it. Instead, it should be shared through personal interactions (Davenport & Prusak, 1998; Holste & Fields, 2010) and thus a personalisation strategy is recommended (Hansen et al., 1999). Socialization is one usual way to share tacit knowledge (Nonaka, 1991, 1994; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). McKinsey & Company has been relying very much on the socialization strategy to allow staff to share tacit knowledge (Hansen et al., 1999). This socialization activities and knowledge networks such as "communities of practices" are increasingly seen as essential means to enhance learning and knowledge sharing (Zboralski, 2009). Iaquinto et al. (2010) echoed the view that "communities of practice" is useful for collaborating and sharing expertise across disciplinary and divisional boundaries.

2.2.2 Importance of Knowledge Sharing

It has been argued that an organization's success, today more than ever, depends very much on its ability to share and create knowledge efficiently and effectively (Davenport & Prusak, 1998; Drucker, 1993; Holste & Fields, 2010; Llopis & Foss, 2015; Ozlen, 2015; Wang et al., 2017). KS is important as many academics and practitioners agree that knowledge often resides in individuals' minds (Davenport & Prusak, 1997; Nonaka, 1991, 1994; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Martiny, 1998). It is posited that organizational knowledge will only grow when individuals within organizations are willing to share their insights, experiences, and wisdom with others in their work group, organization, and across organizations (Davenport & Prusak, 1998; Kim & Mauborgne, 1998; Yahya & Goh, 2002). This further explains interpersonal KS, the focus of this paper, serves as the cornerstone of other levels of

KS activities.

As the foundation of other levels of KS activities, KS can lead to knowledge creation and higher innovation capability (von Krogh, 1998; Moon & Park, 2002; Nonaka, 1991, 1994; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Saenz et al., 2012) which can impact organizational effectiveness. It is often through KS that new knowledge can be created in organizations. KS can stimulate organizational creativity and innovation as it offers a means through which innovative ideas can be shared, captured, or tested (Armbrecht et al., 2001; Saenz, Aramburu et al., 2012). Only when individual knowledge is shared, can an organization be facilitated to create new knowledge that helps to develop a sustainable competitive advantage. On the other hand, new knowledge created is of limited value if it is not shared between individuals or units in organizations (Janz & Prasarnphanich, 2003).

How KS may bring significant benefits such as shortening the response time; better staff deployment, continued accomplishment of new products to organizations, etc. may best be exemplified by the case of Buckman Labs (1998) and Kluge et al. (2001). In addition, Husted and Michailova (2002) argued that an organization with KS culture can secure diffusion of best practices and avoid redundancy in knowledge production by systematically sharing knowledge among its employees. It can also assist problem solving by making relevant individual knowledge available to the problem-solving process. A study by Hansen (2002) shows that new product development teams that obtained more existing knowledge from other divisions were able to complete their projects faster than those that did not. A more recent study by Ozer and Vogel (2015) empirically indicates that the performance of the knowledge receiving software developers is positively related to more knowledge sharing and transfer from other software developers.

All the previous discussions indicate that KS is important to organizations. It enables organizations to get strategic, tactical, and operational benefits. Most importantly, it facilitates knowledge creation that makes organizational knowledge become a source of sustainable competitive advantage when the knowledge is valuable, rare, imperfectly imitable, and non-substitutable (Barney, 1991).

2.2.3 Antecedents of Knowledge Sharing

A review of the literature shows that studies on KS focused on KS at (1) individual level, i.e., KS between individuals (e.g., Connelly & Kelloway, 2003; Laupase, 2003; Rowley & Fullwood, 2017; Zarraga & Bonache, 2003), (2) group/team/unit level, i.e., KS between groups/teams/units (e.g., Hansen, 2002; Tsai, 2002), and (3) organizational level, i.e., KS between organizations (e.g., Bell et al., 2002; Dyer & Nobeoka, 2000; Lee, 2001; Rowley & Fullwood, 2017; Spencer, 2003). These studies come from a variety of disciplines such as information systems, organization theory, sociology, psychology and social psychology. In addition to studies that explicitly focus on KS, other studies on social dilemmas, cooperative behaviour, and organizational citizenship behaviour are regarded as relevant to this paper. However, as a starting point for exploring KS in an organization, this paper focuses more on factors related to individual level, as mentioned earlier that KS originates from individual organizational member. Drawing on the summary of literature, four major factors at individual level are identified as important to KS in organizations, namely self-efficacy, organization commitment, interpersonal trust and attitude.

a. Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy refers to "people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce effects" (Bandura, 1994, p. 71). In the context of the proposed model, its meaning can be confined to people's belief about the contribution or value of their personal knowledge when engaging in KS with others. It is generally believed that people of high self-efficacy are more likely to attempt new activities, expend greater

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effort on those activities, and persevere even when faced with difficulties. Since they believe they have the capabilities to bring about contribution when engaging in KS, they are more likely to engage in interpersonal KS in organizations. Conversely, people who are of low self-efficacy do not tend to think they can make contribution when engaging in KS. Hence, they are less likely to engage in interpersonal KS.

In Cabrera and Cabrera's (2002) theoretical study of knowledge as a public good and KS as a public good dilemma, it is believed that people will not engage in KS if they think that their participation will not make significant contribution. Therefore, the authors recommended increasing the self-efficacy of people to promote KS among individuals. In fact, in all situations of public goods dilemma, it was suggested to increase individuals' self-efficacy so as to make them more willing to cooperate and contribute (Komorita, 1995; Kollock, 1998). Bock and Kim's (2002) empirical study on factors affecting people's mentality of KS shows support of the importance of self-efficacy in positively influencing one's attitude towards KS.

To sum up, self-efficacy is a significant factor affecting people's willingness and ability in engaging in interpersonal KS. It is expected that the higher the level of self-efficacy, the higher the extent of participation in KS.

b. Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment can be defined as "the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization" (Mowday & Steers, 1979, p. 226). According to Meyer and Allen (1991, p. 67), organizational commitment is multidimensional, represented by three components: affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. Affective commitment is an employee's "emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization' whereas continuance commitment refers to 'an awareness of the costs associated with leaving the organization'". The last type of commitment, normative commitment, is concerned with "a feeling of obligation to continue employment".

Some studies pointed out that commitment to an organization is an important factor affecting knowledge work (e.g., Muneer et al., 2014). In van den Hooff, Vijvers, and de Ridder's (2003) study, they asserted that employees' level of organizational commitment can affect an organization's effectiveness in knowledge processes, including the KS process. Likewise, Kelloway and Barling (2000) and Rosen et al. (2007) also argued that employees' willingness to use and share their knowledge for organizational ends depends on the extent of their organizational commitment.

In view of the above theoretical argument, van den Hooff and de Leeuw van Weenen (2004) conducted an empirical study examining the impacts of organizational commitment and computer-mediated communication on KS behaviour such as donating knowledge and collecting knowledge in organizations. It was found that the higher the level of affective commitment to an organization, the higher the level of interpersonal KS.

KS behaviour is comparable to Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) or pro-social organizational behaviour (Connelly & Kelloway, 2003). OCB has been viewed as a discretionary individual behaviour, not explicitly or directly recognised by the formal reward system, which in total promotes the effective functioning of an organization (Organ, 1988). Pro-social behaviour is a similar concept. As KS behaviour is viewed as discretionary (Connelly & Kelloway, 2003; Kelloway & Barling, 2000) and often without explicit or direct formal reward, it can be regarded as a kind of OCB. Hence, factors leading to OCB and pro-social organizational behaviour may potentially lead to KS behaviour as well.

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Past studies indicated that organizational commitment is an antecedent to OCB. Therefore, it can be put forward that organizational commitment can lead to KS in organizations. As concluded from Meyer and Allen's (1997) review of the literature, significant relationships between affective commitment and OCB have been found in many empirical studies involving both self-reports of behaviour and independent assessment of behaviour. The impacts of the other two forms of commitment on OCB have been less researched. The authors reported another study that normative commitment was significant in affecting OCB but its effect was lower than that of affective commitment. Lastly, the impact of continuance commitment on OCB is less conclusive based on some research results.

Hence, both theoretical and empirical studies point out the positive effect of organizational commitment on interpersonal KS in organizations. It is expected that the higher the level of affective commitment to an organization, the higher the level of interpersonal KS in organizations.

c. Interpersonal Trust

Interpersonal trust may be defined as "the extent to which one is willing to ascribe good intentions to and have confidence in the words and actions of other people" (Cook & Wall, 1980, p. 39). It consists of faith in the trustworthy intentions of peers and confidence in the ability of peers (Cook & Wall, 1980). Trust can exist at individual, group, intra-organizational and inter-organizational levels (Rousseau et al., 1998). For the purpose of the proposed model, the focus will be on trust between individuals. Lots of theoretical and empirical studies have pointed out the importance of trust for KS (e.g., Abrahams et al., 2003; Al-Alawi et al., 2007; Holste & Fields, 2010; von Krogh, 1998; Roberts, 2000; Rosen et al., 2007; Muneer et al., 2014; Zarraga & Bonache, 2003).

De Long and Fahey (2000) and Ling (2011) argued that the level of trust among employees in an organization significantly influences the amount of knowledge flow between individuals and from individuals to organizational databases, best practices and other records. The higher the level of trust, the more the amount of knowledge flows between individuals and from individuals to organizations. Similarly, Roberts (2000) also argued that interpersonal trust reduces the need to monitor others' cooperative behaviours and enables informal cooperation. According to the knowledge worker interview results of Standing and Benson (2000, cited in Huber, 2001), interpersonal trust is very important for KS. People cannot share their knowledge with others if there is no trust. People are scared of sharing as they do not trust each other.

In Zarraga and Bonache's (2003) quantitative study of impacts of organizational initiatives on "high care" which in turn impacts knowledge transfer and knowledge creation in self-managed teams, it was found that "mutual trust and access to help" among self-managed team members positively affected knowledge transfer and knowledge creation in self-managed work teams. In their study, "high care" refers to the organizational climate conducive to knowledge transfer and knowledge creation and "mutual trust and access to help" is one of the dimensions of "high care". This finding confirms the significance of interpersonal trust for interpersonal KS within organizations. The laboratory experiment conducted by Wang and Rubenstein-Montano (2003) found that as the level of trust increased among experimental subjects, KS increased which led to a decrease in task completion time. This experimental study also supports the significance of trust for KS.

There is no doubt that interpersonal trust is extremely important for facilitating interpersonal KS in organizations. If there is low level of or even no trust, individual knowledge may not be shared and thus it is difficult for organizations to build up their knowledge to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage. In short, there should be more KS if there is a higher level of interpersonal trust.

d. Attitude

Individual members in organizations are differ and having different value systems. Such a value system can provide insights into one's attitude. According to Schermerhorn (2008, p. 379), an attitude is "a predisposition to act in a certain way toward people and things in one's environment". A similar definition can be found from Robbins and Coulter (2009) that attitudes are evaluative statements—either favourable or unfavourable concerning objects, people, or events. They reflect how one feels about something. There are three components in understanding attitude, namely, cognitive, affective or emotional and behavioural (Robbins & Coulter, 2009; Schermerhorn, 2008). In this paper, the behavioural component is the focus since cognitive and affective components are related to belief, opinions and feelings which are less observable and more subjective.

From an organizational behaviour perspective, attitude influence people's behaviour and influence how they interact with other organizational members. A study by Olatokun and Elueze (2012) about lawyers' attitude towards KS argues that a positive attitude to KS by workers of a law organization would help the law organizations identify its weaknesses and strengths. This is particularly important to knowledge workers and knowledge-intensive industries like law firms. By adopting the Theory of Reasoned Action model, their study demonstrated that if an organizational member has a favourable attitude towards sharing one's knowledge with other members, there is a high possibility that one will share available knowledge and thus confirmed that attitude was a determinant of the member's intention to share knowledge.

Likewise, Lavanya (2012) also posited attitude as one of the individual determinants in the study on antecedents of KS. Support is also gained from other literature such as Zhang and Ng's (2012) study on KS in construction teams and Thanos et al.'s (2013) study on KS in employee weblogs. Both studies reveal that attitude towards KS significantly determined the intention to share knowledge, which then determines KS behaviour. Therefore, it is expected that the higher the level of favourable attitude towards KS, the higher the level of interpersonal KS in organizations.

3. Theoretical Framework and Propositions

This section presents a theoretical framework based on the preceding literature review and discussion. Sources of competitive advantage generated through OL remain a major area of research in strategic management. It is argued in this paper that the level of OL from the capability perspective depends on how knowledge is managed in organizations. Hence, this paper discusses the role of KS played in building, or at least, enhancing learning capability and thereby improves organizational performance. It is justified by the assumption that learning involves a change in cognition and an increase in knowledge but knowledge starts with individuals. It is the organization's KM practices that provide a "platform" for organizational members to transfer and share knowledge (Lopez et al., 2004; Nonaka, 1994; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995) and become drivers of knowledge sharing (Dasi et al., 2017). OL induced and generated by effective KM will create organizational knowledge and such knowledge accumulation plays a key role in sustaining an organization's competitive advantage (Gao et al., 2002; Mills & Smith, 2011). As such, effective KS that facilitates the development of learning capability will positively contribute to organizational performance (Chen & Kuo, 2011; Gold et al., 2001; Vera & Crossan, 2004).

While there have been empirical studies examining factors affecting interpersonal KS in organizations, there seems to be little if any such empirical research focusing on the individual level determinants. Based on this framework, the proposed model will explore how individual factors affect interpersonal

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KS since individuals are the pillars for sharing knowledge. It should be emphasized that identifying all factors affecting interpersonal KS in organizations is beyond the scope of the proposed model and hence group level and organizational level factors are excluded in this paper. Instead, the model should be seen as a preliminary effort to understand some of the factors. As such, the above identified factors will be used to construct the theoretical framework. The 4 identified factors will be the independent variables, i.e., individual-level antecedents of KS: self-efficacy, organizational commitment, interpersonal trust and attitude.

The hypothesized relationships between the independent and dependent variables are shown in Figure 1. As mentioned previously, KS is just one of the processes in KM and its impact may be mediated by other KM activities such as knowledge acquisition, documentation and application. In order to address the research problem stated at the beginning of this paper, the following research questions and propositions are developed:

1) What is the impact of each of the individual-level factors on interpersonal KS in organizations? These will lead to proposition 1 to 4.

2) What is the impact of interpersonal KS on other KM activities? This will lead to proposition 5.

3) What is the impact of other KM activities on OL and performance? This will lead to proposition 6.

4) Do other KM activities mediate the impact of interpersonal KS on OL and performance? This will lead to proposition 7.

Proposition 1: The level of self-efficacy will be positively related to the level of interpersonal KS in organizations.

Proposition 2: The level of organizational commitment will be positively related to the level of interpersonal KS in organizations.

Proposition 3: The level of interpersonal trust will be positively related to the level of interpersonal KS in organizations.

Proposition 4: The level of favourable attitude will be positively related to the level of interpersonal KS in organizations.

Proposition 5: The level of interpersonal KS will be positively related to the level of other KM activities.

Proposition 6: The level of other KM activities will be positively related to the level of OL and performance.

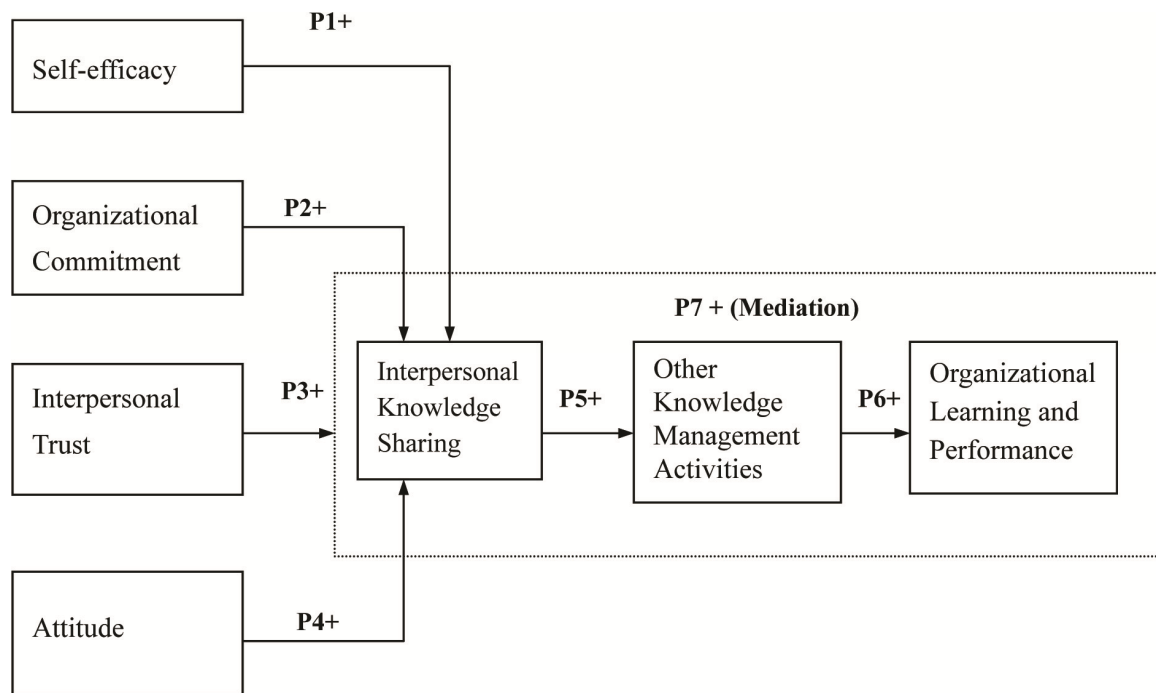*Proposition 7*: Other KM activities mediate the impact of interpersonal KS on the level of OL and performance.

Figure 1. Proposed Model of Factors Affecting Interpersonal Knowledge Sharing and Its Impact on Organization

4. Contribution and Limitation

The literature shows that studies on KS have come from a variety of disciplines and have been conducted in different countries. However, it appears that few if any such studies have regarded KM and KS as Organizational Behaviour (OB) issues. Many studies on information or KS come from the information systems and management literature (e.g., Constant et al., 1994; Huber, 2001; Jarvenpaa & Staples, 2001; Bock & Kim, 2002; Ryu et al., 2003). Also, the focus of most of these publications is also on the design of information technologies. There are few studies that have explicitly treated KM and KS as OB issues.

Hence, the proposed model attempts to fill such a research gap by adopting an OB perspective. The model investigates factors affecting human behaviour in organizations from an OB point of view. The previously identified potential antecedents of interpersonal KS in organizations and their possible impact are also incorporated into the theoretical framework. In order to have more focused discussion, only factors at the individual level affecting interpersonal KS in organizations are examined in this paper. The group level and organizational factors may become future research agenda.

Since KM is not a mature and fully independent discipline (Ponzi, 2004; Wiig, 2000), full-grown theories, well-established models, and measurement instruments seem to be inadequate. Most of the theories in this field are exploratory in nature. Thus, further validation of the proposed theoretical model is required in the future. Second, the proposed model have not yet covered KS antecedents at the group and organizational levels in organizations, and only limited antecedents of interpersonal KS at individual level is explored. Discussion will be less focused if other factors at the organizational and group level that may affect interpersonal KS in organizations are also included. Third, factors other than the three levels which may affect interpersonal KS will not be studied here for parsimony. They include, for example, the tacitness and value of knowledge itself.

KS is only part of the KM process, other processes such as knowledge acquisition, knowledge

documentation and knowledge application are important too. These activities are collectively proposed as a mediator only. Since the paper focuses on KS among individuals within organizations, the findings might not be generalizable to KS at a more macro-level, such as between departments, divisions, and even organizations.

Methodologically, if a survey is to be taken that relies on self-reports of target respondents such as knowledge workers, this method may lead to the problem of common method variance. In addition, the use of cross-sectional data collected from a survey makes inference of causal relationship difficult. For example, is increased organizational commitment the cause or the effect of increased KS behaviour? Longitudinal study is more preferable to help draw conclusion for causal relationship between the variables in examination, but it obviously involve more time and effort.

5. Conclusion

Owing to the importance of OL, knowledge and its management in developing sustainable competitive advantages for organizations, KM has received rising attention in recent years. The literature shows that organizational knowledge depends very much on knowledge of individuals in organizations. KS is one of the essential ways to make individual knowledge become organizational knowledge. However, what factors and how they contribute to interpersonal KS need to be explored. Limited literature on empirical research investigating factors affecting interpersonal KS has been found. Moreover, there appears to be a lack of research that explicitly uses the OB framework to analyze individual factors impacting interpersonal KS in organizations. This provides an opportunity for undertaking this proposed model as a start.

From the literature, a number of individual factors have been identified as potential antecedents of interpersonal KS in organizations. A theoretical framework along with research hypotheses have been developed to be later tested by using the survey design. Although there exist limitations, it is expected that by applying the proposed model in this paper, contributions can be made to the KM discipline both theoretically and practically.

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