

Knowledge Sharing and Organizational Learning Success in Malaysia: A Case of Private Sectors in State of Johor

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to share the results of research done on several private companies in the southern region part of Malaysia regarding perceptual knowledge sharing and organizational learning success among private sector employees. This study revealed the real fact of how private employees put their effort to support organization goal and objectives. Previous studies done in one of European nation revealed that the importance of knowledge sharing can be recognized more among the public service employees as compared to private employees. The researchers had selected 7 establish companies as the population in conducting this study. About 291 out of 1290 employees were taken as samples. The researchers identified four important variables which are trust, communication and organizational culture. The finding was found that there is a significant relationship between trust, communication and organizational culture with organizational learning success (OLS). It is also empirically tested that companies, higher educational level and gender have significant differences with OLS.

KEYWORDS: Trust, Communication, Organizational Culture, Organizational Learning Success

INTRODUCTION

Recently, the topic of organizational learning is continuously breaking the attention among bigger and small industries toward gaining the competitive advantage in business market opportunities. Journalist in most countries of the world also significantly taking initiatives to explore the interaction of organizational success and influences of knowledge sharing that occur internally. Actually, the concept of organizational learning has been discussed not only in academic and managerial literature since the early 1980s, but constantly being debated among the industrial practitioners until today. This concept found to be relevant as it attempts to describe the internal capacity of organizations to remain relevant within the environment. It is through this concept an organization learn from the experience, continually examine threats and opportunities, proposed changes and adopt new ideas and eventually transform them into policy and strategies so that they can sustain their competitive advantage in the industry [18, 22, 24].

Business player in each industry tries to develop the best step and formula to justify the relevance of this issue. Organizational learning is explained by [12] in terms of undertaking the process of making necessary adjustment within the organization so that it can match the current reality and needs. In the new process, knowledge will be upgraded and used offensively for the purpose of improving the milestone of the organizations and their environments. In [9] explained organizational learning as a process that involved assessment of inquiries at all levels so that members of the organizations scrutinized and agreed to a common values and diversified knowledge. With this acceptance and further added past experiences, the organization move on setting the mission and strategies. They believe that organizational learning is start-up for improving the individual performance and organizational achievement.

Besides that, the higher the adaptation of the learning process by employees will eventually encourage the positive development of economy and market strength. Top management of each organization is aware of this issue should be encountered as fast as possible to ensure that they can absorb any changes within the business rotation and technology which had been used by competitors.

Table 1: Participated companies selected for study

Companies	Business Industry
Company A	One of leading building materials providers operated by several ready-mix plants throughout the state of Johor.
Company B	Had sustained 40 years in the flour milling business in Malaysia and Vietnam.
Company C	Produces and markets a wide range of products to cater the daily needs of households across the world. The company cultivates plantations and manage milling to produce palm oil by having a partnership with farmers.
Company D	Initiates to arrange palm oil exports and provides ample tank space solutions for international vegetable oil traders to conduct effective worldwide business.
Company E	It is one of leading refiner and manufacturer of specialty fats and vegetable oils for the food industries worldwide.
Company F	Provides offshore engineering for oil and gas industry to support offshore testing and supervision during installation and hookup using flexible pipe to connect the deep sea to the oil rig.
Company G	Focused on a wide spectrum of engineering and construction, as well as marine conversion and marine repair services for bulk shipment and oil rig construction.

Objectives

- 1) To examine the relationship between trust, communication and organizational culture with organizational learning success.
- 2) To investigate the difference between working experience towards organizational learning success.
- 3) To investigate the difference between different companies towards organizational learning success.
- 4) To investigate the difference between education level towards organizational learning success.
- 5) To investigate the difference between gender towards organizational learning success.

Hypothesis

H1: There is a significant relationship between trust, communication and organizational culture with organizational learning success.

H2: There is a significant difference between working experience and organizational learning success.

H3: There is a significant difference between different companies with organizational learning success.

H4: There is a significant difference between education level among employees and organizational learning success.

H5: There is a significant difference between gender and organizational learning success.

Problem Statement of Study

The need to compete with businesses is always crucial. There are no businesses that can survive by themselves if the culture of knowledge sharing does not take place. Therefore, it is essential for every organizational member practices, sharing organization-related information, ideas, suggestions and expertise with each other [1]. Researchers used three elements of knowledge sharing as independent variable such as trust, organizational culture and communication to explore the concept of organizational learning success (OLS) in private company. It is assumed to be understood and accepted practices in most organizations, whereby employees are expected to communicate with each other to achieve the same goal. Yet, the concentration of delivering the right information has been sceptical within the organizations as the element of respect and trust are not transparent enough to support the achievement of the business success. Evidence from previous study revealed an interesting comparison between employees of the public and private sector in Ireland. The result of the study found that employees working in the public sector were more positive in expressing their views on the strength of knowledge sharing in making an organization relevant [19]. Knowing the stiff competition amongst private sectors due to the fact of survival in business, we therefore attempted to explore the phenomena in the private sector at Pasir Gudang in Malaysia. It is being continuously reported by the Ministry of Trade and Industries that the process of knowledge transfer within most industries in Malaysia failed to completely achieve the desired target among the participating members in most organizations. As such as being reviewed by a recent study, it shows that the unwillingness to share the information continuously reduces the effectiveness in managing the organization. Among the consequences that may happen due to the lack of knowledge sharing in any OLS could be such as miscommunication, less opportunity captured, less competitive spirit with rivals and the most important of all. It will lead to unhappy working culture among members in the organization. This study focused on identifying the relationship of knowledge sharing element and OLS, and to compare the demographic properties with OLS. Hopefully, this study will be able to explain the private sector environment in exercising the knowledge sharing and OLS.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizational Learning Success

Adaptation of knowledge by employees will increase the organization's ability to innovate and compete [4]. On the other hand, learning new knowledge spearhead the innovative process while strengthening the competitiveness of the organization that contribute towards enhancing performance as well as sustaining a competitive edge within the industry. OLS is very much associated with knowledge management. It is therefore very essential that the understanding of knowledge management dimensions such as, acquisition, formulation, and transferring of knowledge need to be strategically executed so that it can further strengthen the firm's position [10]. Due to the complexity of the learning process, the management of a given institution need to constantly review the different approach of learning holistically [7-8]. With such consideration on the encouragement of OLS, it will strengthen the added value activities in promoting sustainable business competitive advantage.

The enculturation of learning organization act as enablers for the institution members to postulate positive valued outcome in term of innovativeness, efficiencies of resource utilization, and sustaining competitive advantage. In fact, according to [15], since organizational learning involved every institution member. With this concept, it acts as shared values that needed to be supported in achieving organizational goals such as increasing productivity, high team spirit, and good governance practices [8].

The success of organizational learning need to be closely monitored as it is being executed at different levels, such as individually, in a group, and at the organizational level. At the individual level, each employee is

responsible to ensure learning takes place. At the group level, all group members are supposed to capitalize their strength for ensuring the benefit of all. Everyone in the team needs to tolerate, assist, and support each other so that the success will be commonly shared [31]. With these initiatives, individual learning symmetrically act as organizational learning when information is transferred across all units which eventually been understood by all organizational members [11]. Members of the organization should realize that the success of an institution was due to the fact that the organization learned from its members [21].

Trust

Trust becomes more complex in business competition in providing better service to customer and supplier [30]. Awareness of the importance of trust and motivation as among the popular predictors of knowledge sharing has been widely debated in most organizations and further highlighted in the research literatures [20, 23, 28, 32]. The increasing strength of employee-supervisor relationships which has been supported by mutual trust, loyalty, respect, commitment, and obligation strongly provide evidence for the increase of knowledge sharing. With this positive reaction, it will ultimately act as a pushing factor for enhancing organizational human capital deployment [27]. They believe that knowledge sharing ability to provide efficient connections to deliver any kind of information to ensure learning success in the organization. The initiative of cultivating trust through professional relationships is relatively essential as it will demonstrate constructive consensus, acceptance and acknowledgement of other ideas, more matured problem solving as well reducing conflicts [17]. Thus, employees are able to manage their work with more comprehensive and effective.

Communication

The idea of having effective and active communication involved the interaction that emphasizes on the flow and ease of communication, the positive workplace atmosphere of problem solving, the accessibility and accuracy of information, and the degree of cooperativeness among team members [31, 33]. This becomes the key factor among staff's interaction, including continued communication and cooperation to promote learning. In [13] suggested that information and communication technology (ICT) is becoming one of the tools that found to be useful to be exploited for promoting knowledge sharing between employees which will eventually enhance accessibility for knowledge acquisition.

Organizational Culture

Leaders are supposedly responsible for establishing the culture of continuous learning by propelling courage, assisting to evaluate risk taking, empowerment, collaboration, listening, feedback, sensing threat and opportunities and setting up reasonable performance target [34]. Most people agreed that knowledge sharing, the delivery and obtaining feedback from the utilization of internal resources can be observed among the organization with high cohesiveness of its members. With this scenario, it is useful for an organization to promote knowledge sharing by facilitating individual-group connection through the interaction of the company-member modes [17]. These results in the changing of traditional ideas about working style and process by providing new ideas, approaches, disciplines and cultures, will eventually generate more innovation within the organization [6]. As mentioned by [14], with the adoption of positive knowledge sharing culture, it will further spearhead for innovation improvement. Thus, creating the sharing cultures and habits among internal staff is very important to ensure that the organization will compete and gain profit during the competitive challenge. Knowledge cultures influence the extent and nature of knowledge sharing [3] and knowledge creation [2]. A succeed achieving by organization starts from a creative and innovative ideas as well as a skillful employee which later contribute to a higher performance in the organization. If no attempt taken to rectify for any given weak knowledge sharing culture, most probably it may result in a decrease in endeavoring this concept. Thus, less emphasis will be given toward apprehension, exercising formal controls, and further neglecting on individual performance [5].

METHOD AND MATERIAL

Researchers used quantitative data by using questionnaires as the instrument in collecting the data. The objective of this study is to investigate the relationships between trust, communication and culture with OLS. Further analysis of differences was conducted for the purpose of understanding several major differences that are expected to exist within the profiles of the samples.

Data Collection Method

The questionnaires were distributed using the convenience sampling technique. A survey based methodology was employed through questionnaires to elicit the views of private sector employees towards knowledge sharing and OLS. With the sampling method strategized in this study, we are expecting the adequacy of generalization will be attainable. In ensuring the efficiency of data collection procedures, the self-administered questionnaire was carefully executed by visiting employees among the private companies in Pasir Gudang.

Research Instrument

Based on following variables which be suggested in the framework, all measurable concepts were divided into 6 sections whereby items were measured using Likert Scale. The scale item was made up of 10 response rating from “1” (strongly disagree) or “10” (strongly agree). All respondents were instructed to indicate a degree of agreement or disagreement for each. Related information about the respondents’ gender, age, marital status, race, highest education level, company, working experiences, monthly income and basic understanding towards OLS from different companies were listed in section A of the questionnaire. In section B, the questions relate to dependent variable that is OLS. In section C to section E, questions were developed based on the independent variable covering knowledge sharing such as trust, communication and organizational culture.

Research Framework

The main theme of the analysis is focused on the OLS. Revisiting back the past literatures, three independent variables were selected for the purpose of describing their relationship and contribution towards OLS. The research framework is shown in Figure 1.

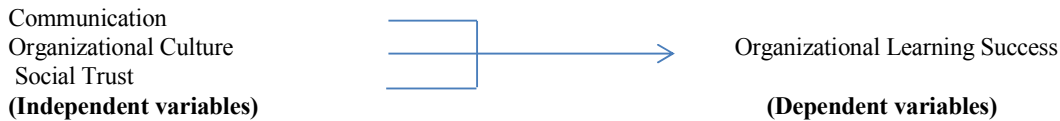


Figure 1: The research framework indicating relationship between selected independent variables with organizational learning success

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2: Reliability results

Variables	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Organizational learning success	7	0.885
Trust	8	0.915
Organizational culture	7	0.885
Communication	8	0.891

Table 2 shows that the Cronbach's Alpha for all variables is between 0.885-0.915. These results indicated that the developed questions successfully measured the intended concept. As suggested by [29], the reliability values less than 0.60 are considered to be poor. Those in range in the 0.70 range are acceptable, and those over 0.80 are considered good. It reflects the correlation between items which measuring each construct is consistent and stable. As this paper only attempted to discuss the perceptual differences between several demographic profiles with OLS, no in depth analysis will be discussed in terms of the association between all selected independent variables with OLS (see Table 3).

Table 3: Respondent's profile

Items	Frequency	(%)	Items	Frequency	(%)
Gender			Working experience		
Male	258	88.7	< 5 years	76	26.1
Female	33	11.3	6-10 years	167	57.4
Marital status			11-15 years	28	9.6
Single	61	21	15 years and above	20	6.9
Married	213	71.3			
Others	17	5.8	Higher educational level		
Age			SPM/STPM/Certificate	167	57.4
< 20 years old	10	3.4	Diploma	79	27.1
21-30 years old	75	25.8	Bachelor degree	28	9.6
31-40 years old	125	43	Master degree	15	5.2
41-50 years old	64	22	PhD	2	7
50 years old and above	17	5.8	Monthly income		
Company			< RM 2000	42	14
Holcim Malaysia	40	13.7	RM 2001-RM 4000	202	69.4
Malayan Floor Mill	40	13.7	RM 4001-RM 6000	31	10.7
Felda Johore Bulkens	40	13.7	RM 6001-RM 8000	14	4.8
Felda Iffco Oils	40	13.7	RM 8001 and above	2	0.7
Asia Flex Production	40	13.7	Race		
MMHE	54	18.6	Malay	234	80.4
Sime Darby Kempas	37	12.7	Chinese	34	11.7
			Indian	19	6.5
			Others	4	1.4
Higher educational level			Position		
SPM/STPM/Certificate	167	57.4	Driver	31	10.7
Diploma	79	27.1	Operator	-	-
Bachelor degree	28	9.6	Clerk	17	5.8
Master degree	15	5.2	Technician or supervisor	173	59.5
PhD	2	7	Management level	49	16.8
			Others	21	7.2

Table 3 shows that up to 88.7% of respondents are male and another 11.3% are female. Most of the respondents are married with 71.3% (213 respondents), followed by single of 21% (61) and another is 5.8% (17 respondents). Majority of respondents (43%) is between the ages of 31 to 40 years old, followed by the age category of 21 to 30 years old which is 25.8%, those between 41 to 50 years old make the 22% representation, while those above 50 years old are 5.8% and the lowest number being taken from those under 20 years old is 3.4%. The nature of the industry and working population provide a clear distribution of the working group in terms of race. As such, most of the respondents were Malay (80.4%), followed by Chinese (11.7%), Indian (6.5%) and other race which were 1.4%. More than half (about 57.4%) of respondents were SPM, STPM and certificate holder with respondent having PhD qualification made up the lowest samples at only 7%. About 40 employees from 7 companies were selected to involve in this study. The distribution of the sample is based on working experience, displayed that the respondent that had been working within 6 to 10 years is the highest total sample at 57.4%, while those who had been working for more than 16 years made up the lowest sample which is at 6.9%. Majority of respondents which earned an income of RM 2001 to RM 4000 is the highest percentage of 69.4% (202 respondents), and the lowest income category with more than RM 8001 above were equally represented at only 0.7% (2 respondents). Those earning more than RM 6000 were mostly at the managerial levels. In terms of work position, the highest samples were mostly from the technician and supervisor which contribute a percentage of 59.5%, and other position represented at the lowest which only 7.2%.

Table 4: Analysis of relationship between trust, communication and culture with OLS

Organizational learning success		Trust	Communication	Culture
	Pearson Correlation	0.592	0.377	0.344
	Sig. 2 tailed	0.000	0.000	0.000
	Pearson Correlation	1	0.492	0.023
	Sig. 2 tailed		0.000	0.000
	Pearson Correlation		1	-0.057
	Sig. 2 tailed			0.000
	Pearson Correlation			1
	Sig. 2 tailed			

Table 4 indicates the moderate relationship exists among trust and OLS ($r = 0.592$), whereas weak relationships exist among both communication and culture towards OLS with $r = 0.377$ and 0.344 respectively. All relationships are significant ($p < 0.05$, $p = 0.000$). Therefore, hypothesis 1 is supported.

The main idea of performing several analyses of differences is to provide new evidence about the need to address demographic issues that can promote the achievement of OLS within the industries.

Table 5: Descriptives analysis difference between working experience and OLS

Category	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig. Value (ANOVA)
Less than 5 years	76	7.8590	1.17583	0.571
5-10 years	167	7.9932	1.20851	
10-15 years	28	8.2296	1.39123	
15 years and above	20	7.9071	1.21065	
Total	291	7.9750	1.21659	

Table 5 shows the group of employees in different working experience. The category of working experience shows that 76 employees have less than 5 years experience, 167 respondents were working around 6 to 10 years, 28 of the workers around 11 to 15 years and 20 respondents works more than 16 years. The mean values are slightly different where the higher mean is 8.2296, and the lowest is 7.8590. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) in Table 5 shows that there is no significant different between different working experience and OLS, $p = 0.571$ ($F = 0.670$, $P > 0.05$). Thus, working experience is similar to all companies and did not contribute in explaining OLS. So, hypothesis 2 are not supported.

Table 6: Descriptive analysis of differences between companies and OLS

Company	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig. Value (ANOVA)
Holcim	40	7.4357	1.15965	0.00
Malayan Floor Mill	40	7.6964	0.98028	
Felda Johore Bulkers	40	7.8536	1.26230	
Asia Flex	40	7.7286	1.39026	
Felda Iffco Oil	40	8.2714	1.14688	
MMHE	54	8.1878	1.19001	
Sime Darby Kempas	37	8.6255	1.00077	
Total	291	7.9750	1.21659	

Table 6 displays the differences among participating companies that has been surveyed regards to OLS. Five companies contributed 40 respondents each, 54 respondents from Malaysian Marine and Heavy Engineering Sdn. Bhd. (MMHE) and 37 respondents from Sime Darby Kempas. The highest rank of mean values is 8.6255 and the lowest mean is 7.4357. The slightly mean different were identified by comparing the private companies and OLS. The one-way ANOVA result shows that there is a significant difference amongst private companies and OLS with $p = 0.000$ ($F = 4.780$, $P > 0.05$). So, hypothesis 3 is supported. From the cross tabulation result, it can be concluded that each organization has different courses to educate their employees in increasing the knowledge sharing and learning success.

Table 7: Descriptive analysis of differences between highest education level and OLS

Education Level	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig. Value
SPM/STPM/Certificate	167	7.8862	1.20451	0.029
Diploma	79	8.0542	1.29672	
Bachelor degree	28	8.4796	0.98301	
Master degree	15	7.4476	0.99396	
PhD	2	9.1429	1.21218	
Total	291	7.9750	1.21659	

The descriptive in Table 7 shows the different higher education level among employee identified from data gathered. SPM/STPM/certificate shows the highest frequency of 167 respondents, and a group of PhD is the lowest with 2 respondents. The highest mean value is 9.1429 and the lowest is 7.4476. Slightly mean differences were identified by comparing the highest educational level and OLS. The last column shows that there is a different amongst highest educational level category and OLS with $p = 0.029$ ($F = 2.740$, $P > 0.05$). So, hypothesis 4 is supported. This shows that the willingness of knowledge sharing would deviate amongst the categories. It also due to the employee's perception toward the importance of knowledge sharing, which might vary upon their education level category.

Table 8: Analysis of differences among male and female respondent with OLS

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig. Value
Male	258	7.9241	1.22814	0.046
Female	33	8.3723	1.05641	

Table 8 indicates that the male is the largest proportion of the sample distribution while females only been represented by 11%. It is found to be less inclination toward OLS with the mean value of 7.9241 and for female is 8.3723. The standard deviations are 1.22814 and 1.05641 respectively. Such a difference can be further observed with the significant value of 0.046. Meaning that, there is a difference between male and female regards to OLS. Thus, hypothesis 5 is supported. It reflects that the knowledge sharing behavior might differ by gender. This behavior will lead to different levels of information delivering and learning success in a different organization.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This investigation provides the relative importance of trust that can positively contribute to the favorable outcome of organizational learning success. It is similar with many conceptual studies as highlighted in the literature. The analysis strongly suggests that this factor has a role and impact on the OLS. Not all impacts of this knowledge sharing characteristic on learning outcome can be determined from the OLS. The need to conceptualize broader management implication obviously need to seriously consider the result of this research work as it will promote the organization into the next greater height. For an organization to deliberately adhere organizational learning, the most important effort of giving full commitment to gaining employees' trust is therefore highly essential. From this commitment, good communication, personal attitudes and organization cultures will justify their roles. Following that, it will further create a situation in which knowledge acquisition, sharing of knowledge and utilization of knowledge contents will be facilitated. The organizational environment and process of human interaction should also be designed in such a way of capitalizing and maximizing the good working relationship among employees at all levels through the culture of knowledge and learning.

Strengthen Coaching Programs

Our findings suggested that regardless of how long someone served the institution, it is unclear about its ability to influence the organizational learning success. This evidence demonstrated that there is a need to understand the success of an organization. It does not merely based on the age and experiences which are believed to support the sharing of ideas that are crucial in making an organization steadily progress as well as stable. The implementation of programs such as mentor mentee whereby knowledge sharing among employees are encouraging will enhanced the spirit of cooperation among the working staff. In fact the process will stimulate

confidence, respect and trust which will further increase the work performance and encourage junior worker to be more interested in the new work environment. Preaching the philosophy of teaching everyone in the organization, how things work and make the information as transparent as possible will lubricate trust that makes it possible for organizations to work better. Thus, the use of mentor mentee program is expected to strengthen the respect and trust [30] among staff. It will further enhance to work together in enhancing the OLS within the organization as well as the industry. Not only that, but it may also avoidance of frustration among members in the organization. Employees in high-trust organizations believed that they are treated fairly regardless of their position within the organization [16].

A Leader Must Lead the Trust

Researcher strongly believes that the most important role for any leader in the organization is to inspire trust. Trust is a state of confidence that born from two dimensions either from the character or competence. Character includes leader integrity, motive and intent with people that he or she faces it. Competence includes leader capabilities, skills, results and track records that can be considered in analyzing the personal. It is through the culture of preaching organizational learning that eventually enhanced the competency of the employees at the workplace [26]. Both dimensions are crucial to be identified. But, with the increasing focus on ethics in organized society, the character side of trust is fast becoming the price of entry in the new global economy. The leader should not punish, but educate their subordinates to be more innovative in doing a job. People are feeling proud to have this kind of leader and will contribute to good performances among staff. The best leaders begin by seriously able to establish vision, provide meaning, forming an altruistic love [25] and framing trust in economic terms for their companies. As a leader, they must acknowledge what are the contributions from their employees. Basically, some reward will inspire trust among the members. These rewards will come in many different forms such as money, vacation, insurance and others. So, employees who get the benefits of these kinds will start to be loyal and increase their contribution for the betterment of the organization. Therefore, the manager can also provide bonus to those employees that achieve key performance indicator (KPI) based on individual or department. Concerning on this matter will ensure that the employee and employer have better communication and working environment to enhance the organizational performance. Thus, based on the good performance achievement, it can be concluded that employees in the organization have good knowledge sharing with each other. The availability of trust will ensure that employer will gain the benefit because there is a good OLS in that organization. So, trust should be gain from the upper level and supported by the lower level within the organization.

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