International Journal of Knowledge Management and Practices
7 (2) 2019, 11-16
http://publishingindia.com/ijkmp/

Submitted: 19 December, 2018
Revised: 31 May, 2019
Accepted: 06 June, 2019

EMPIRICAL EXPLORATION OF PREFERRED COLLABORATIVE KNOWLEDGE-SHARING PRACTICES IN INDIAN PRIVATE ACADEMIA

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Abstract *The purpose of this study is to empirically explore the best performance indicator pair of collaborative knowledge sharing practices which are segregated on the basis of gender and which are more concerned with organizational effectiveness. These performance indicators are Work culture, Interaction, Willingness to share, Recognition and Information technology.*

Methodology/approach/design - This research used a sample of 206 management and technical academicians employed in private technical colleges and universities in NCR (National Capital Region) with the help of simple random sampling. Almost 68% of the respondents were males and 32% of respondents were females with an average tenure of 5.25 years in the present organization. Simple t-test and Levene's test were used to identify variance and paired Z test was used to find the best performance indicator between the male and female academicians which encouraged collaborative knowledge sharing among them.

Findings - From the analysis, it was observed that out of the five performance indicators, male academicians believed that Recognition indicator was the most appropriate, i.e., they believed that academic institute should symbolically recognize, i.e., either through their websites or various media platforms those academicians who significantly contribute towards collaborative knowledge sharing. In the case of female academicians, Interaction performance indicator was the most significant implying that open and healthy work culture supported a healthy Interaction among the colleagues which promoted innovative ideas for enhancing organizational learning.

Research implications/limitations - The findings were based on data from one country's specific region. Further exploration of the impact of these performance indicators can be assessed in other set-ups for better understanding.

Practical implications - Utilization of knowledge gained through various collaborative knowledge sharing practices can be fruitfully used for increasing organizational effectiveness, which are reflected by the given performance indicators.

Originality/value - In this study, the author tried to bring an original empirical work for better understanding and valuable help to the body of knowledge, which can be further beneficial for organizational effectiveness.

Keywords: *Collaborative Knowledge Sharing, Work Culture, Interaction, Willingness to Share, Information Technology, Recognition*

Introduction

The most unique yet intangible property possessed by humans is knowledge. In contrast to other capitals like land, labour or capital, knowledge increases infinitely with more and more usage (Dodgson, 1993). In the twenty-first century, knowledge is being considered to be primary production resource instead of capital and labour and managing knowledge resource is the main focus of modern organizations. Knowledge that is not well managed and shared corrodes easily. The tacit knowledge present in the people's minds which they have collected over time must be shared. Among other processes of knowledge management, knowledge sharing has been identified as the most vital one (Witherspoon et al., 2013). For attaining organizational success, knowledge sharing is considered to play a vital role. Collaborative knowledge-sharing practices are built within organization - from communication and leadership perspective rather than from a technological perspective. In this, participants have opportunities to network and receive feedback on current practices, and the participant is highly encouraged to share and test different ideas. Participants discussed the types and uses of collaboration, how to overcome the obstacles and capitalize on collaboration opportunities, and how to foster a collaborative culture. They also asked to develop a collaboration plan for their organization and to execute this plan to the greatest extent possible.

Several factors affect knowledge-sharing behaviour which includes personal attributes of the knowledge-sharing individual, organizational and group characteristics, etc. Many studies have suggested numerous antecedents to

knowledge-sharing behavior like the demographic variables of age, gender, qualifications and so on, which have a significant impact on the knowledge-sharing behaviour of individuals (Constant et. al., 1994). Besides these intrinsic characteristics of the individuals and most importantly their attitude towards knowledge sharing were identified as an important precursors of behaviors regarding knowledge sharing (Cabrera et al., 2006; Bock & Kim, 2002). According to Connelly et al. (2003), support from the top management and other group characteristics, their beliefs, values, norms and organizational culture are some of the significant building blocks of the knowledge-sharing attitudes present among people (Bock et al., 2005; David & Fahey, 2000; McKinnon et al., 2003; Sawng et al., 2006). This article tries to focus on the best performance indicator pair of collaborative knowledge sharing segregated on the basis of gender and which are more concerned with organizational effectiveness.

Theoretical Background & Hypothesis

Collaborative knowledge creation in higher education has gone with core possible of the twenty-first-century workforce. Theoretical background and hypothesis: Thus, the now requirement of collaboration is to reshape the academic library of higher education to produce capable future workforce. Jones (2014) in his research describes that learning also engages the conclusion to change future action and the tools used are share documents, make comments, connect in discussion, and social network symbolize some kind of relationships like friendship, supervisor and social knowledge networks play encouraging role for collaborative knowledge management. The organization now-a-days seems to focus on the technological aspect for the success of knowledge contributing projects giving no heed to knowledge sharing behaviours of the employees using the various social media platforms and technological tools, which may result into the failure for such projects. The behavior of acquiring and sharing knowledge ultimately connects people together (Chai et al., 2011). Researchers (Kumaraswamy & Chitale, 2012) highlight factors like successful work culture, willingness to share knowledge, industry-institute interface, recognition of faculty members efforts & IT and practices of collaborative knowledge sharing such as FDPs, COP & Industry-institute dealings facilitates knowledge sharing and organizational learning as an important measure to enhance organizational learning. Moreover, learning is the outcome of the process of exploration, change, exploitation & sharing of human knowledge (Cranfield & Taylor, 2008). Men and women perceive social factors such as trust, reciprocity, and information privacy differently and, therefore, behave differently when using information systems. We argue that these differences extend to their behaviour when sharing knowledge on social networks (Kumaraswamy & Chitale, 2012).

H1. There is no significant difference between the opinions of male and female academicians on various performance indicators that have an impact on Collaborative Knowledge Sharing.

Methodology

Data and Sample

This research is focused in particular on academic institutions where knowledge sharing is essential for enhancing the quality of knowledge dissemination to the students. Data was collected from the academicians teaching in management and technical Universities located in NCR (National Capital Region), India by distributing a self-administered questionnaire. Along with the questionnaire a cover letter was attached to inform the respondents about the survey objectives and an assurance was made to preserve the confidentiality of their response. Around 250 questionnaires were distributed through e-mails and face to face interaction, out of which 219 responses were received. Twelve questionnaires were discarded during the process of data cleaning because of duplication as well as non-response to certain questions. Finally, 207 questionnaires were included for the purpose of the final analysis. 68% of the respondents were males and 32% of respondents were females with an average tenure of 5.25 years in the present organization. The internal consistency and reliability of the instrument were tested through Cronbach alpha value, which was found out to be above 0.60. All responses were collected in five-point Likert scales ranging from (1) representing strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree and (3) as the midpoint.

Results

To assess the best performance indicator which encouraged preferred collaborative knowledge sharing in males and females, Simple t-test and Levene's test were used to identify variance and paired sample Z test was used to identify the best performance indicator. Group statistics for the variables under study (WC, I, WTS, R & IT) for male and female are presented in Table 1. It is evident from Table 1 that the difference of mean between all the five performance indicator of male and females indicate that male academicians think that performance indicator is best while for the females also recognition is identified as the best performance indicator.

Table 1

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
WC	male	140	4.0893	.47137	.03984
	female	67	4.1754	.50192	.06132
I	male	140	4.0696	.60726	.05132
	female	66	4.1364	.53202	.06549
WTS	male	140	4.2018	.43239	.03654
	female	66	4.1932	.51290	.06313
R	male	140	4.3179	.55282	.04672
	female	66	4.2727	.52390	.06449
IT	male	140	4.1911	.50324	.04253
	female	66	4.1553	.54201	.06672

Further hypothesis testing was conducted using paired sample Z as is evident from Table 2 and Table 3. These tables clearly indicate the preferred indicator of both the genders highlighting the differences in their preferences.

Table 2: Paired Samples Stations

Gender			Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
male	Pair 1	WC	4.0893	140	.47137	.03984
		I	4.0696	140	.60726	.05132
	Pair 2	WC	4.0893	140	.47137	.03984
		WTS	4.2018	140	.43239	.03654
	Pair 3	WC	4.0893	140	.47137	.03984
		R	4.3179	140	.55282	.04672
	Pair 4	WC	4.0893	140	.47137	.03984
		IT	4.1911	140	.50324	.04253
	Pair 5	I	4.0696	140	.60726	.05132
		WTS	4.2018	140	.43239	.03654
female	Pair 1	WC	4.1742	66	.50568	.06224
		I	4.1364	66	.53202	.06549
	Pair 2	WC	4.1742	66	.50568	.06224
		WTS	4.1932	66	.51290	.06313
	Pair 3	WC	4.1742	66	.50568	.06224
		R	4.2727	66	.52390	.06449
	Pair 4	WC	4.1742	66	.50568	.06224
		IT	4.1553	66	.54201	.06672
	Pair 5	I	4.1364	66	.53202	.06549
		WTS	4.1932	66	.51290	.06313

Table 3

			Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
						95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
Gender			Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper			
male	Pair 1	WC - I	.01964	.58616	.04954	-.07831	.11759	.397	139	.692
	Pair 2	WC - WTS	-.11250	.41911	.03542	-.18253	-.04247	-3.176	139	.002
	Pair 3	WC - R	-.22857	.53517	.04523	-.31800	-.13914	-5.054	139	.000
	Pair 4	WC - IT	-.10179	.59138	.04998	-.20061	-.00297	-2.037	139	.044
	Pair 5	I - WTS	-.13214	.50219	.04244	-.21606	-.04823	-3.113	139	.002
female	Pair 1	WC - I	.03788	.48683	.05992	-.08180	.15756	.632	65	.530
	Pair 2	WC - WTS	-.01894	.46680	.05746	-.13369	.09582	-.330	65	.743
	Pair 3	WC - R	-.09848	.50360	.06199	-.22229	.02532	-1.589	65	.117
	Pair 4	WC - IT	.01894	.64497	.07939	-.13961	.17749	.239	65	.812
	Pair 5	I - WTS	-.05682	.43145	.05311	-.16288	.04924	-1.070	65	.289

The Tables 4 and 5 indicates that out of the ten pairs of five performance indicators, for male academicians 'recognition' from their organization for the knowledge sharing ranks the best performance indicator followed by 'willingness to share', 'Information technology', 'Interaction' and 'work culture'.

But female academicians are of the views that open and healthy 'work culture' supports a healthy interaction among the colleagues, which promotes innovative ideas for enhancing organizational learning.

Table 4: Paired Samples Statistics

Gender			Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
male	Pair 1	I	4.0696	140	.60726	.05132
		R	4.3179	140	.55282	.04672
	Pair 2	I	4.0696	140	.60726	.05132
		IT	4.1911	140	.50324	.04253
	Pair 3	WTS	4.2018	140	.43239	.03654
		R	4.3179	140	.55282	.04672
	Pair 4	WTS	4.2018	140	.43239	.03654
		IT	4.1911	140	.50324	.04253
	Pair 5	R	4.3179	140	.55282	.04672
		IT	4.1911	140	.50324	.04253
female	Pair 1	I	4.1364	66	.53202	.06549
		R	4.2727	66	.52390	.06449
	Pair 2	I	4.1364	66	.53202	.06549
		IT	4.1553	66	.54201	.06672
	Pair 3	WTS	4.1932	66	.51290	.06313
		R	4.2727	66	.52390	.06449
	Pair 4	WTS	4.1932	66	.51290	.06313
		IT	4.1553	66	.54201	.06672
	Pair 5	R	4.2727	66	.52390	.06449
		IT	4.1553	66	.54201	.06672

Table 5: Paired Samples Test

			Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
						95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
Gender			Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper			
male	Pair 1	I - R	-.24821	.50134	.04237	-.33199	-.16444	-5.858	139	.000
	Pair 2	I - IT	-.12143	.59787	.05053	-.22133	-.02152	-2.403	139	.018
	Pair 3	WTS - R	-.11607	.49767	.04206	-.19923	-.03291	-2.760	139	.007
	Pair 4	WTS - IT	.01071	.51756	.04374	-.07577	.09720	.245	139	.807
	Pair 5	R - IT	.12679	.64001	.05409	.01984	.23373	2.344	139	.020
female	Pair 1	I - R	-.13636	.40946	.05040	-.23702	-.03571	-2.706	65	.009
	Pair 2	I - IT	-.01894	.52680	.06484	-.14844	.11056	-.292	65	.771
	Pair 3	WTS - R	-.07955	.47060	.05793	-.19523	.03614	-1.373	65	.174
	Pair 4	WTS - IT	.03788	.62210	.07657	-.11505	.19081	.495	65	.623
	Pair 5	R - IT	.11742	.57549	.07084	-.02405	.25890	1.658	65	.102

Discussion

Based on the above analysis, it was observed that for the male and female academicians, the performance indicators are ranked as below:

Recognition: This performance indicator is ranked the best according to male academicians. Recognition in the form of any awards or rewards, which are bestowed upon the employee for the knowledge which he had learned during any workshops or conferences, acts the greatest motivator for

the males whereas for the female academicians, recognition occupies the third rank among the five performance indicators.

Information Technology: This performance indicator was ranked second by both male and female academicians and implies that the organizations where there is proper technological support in the form of customized software to facilitate the process of knowledge sharing.

Willingness to Share: In the opinion of the male academicians this was ranked third but the female academicians differed in their opinion and ranked it fourth. This is an interesting aspect where knowledge is dependent on an individual. Collaborative knowledge sharing can only be effective if the person who has gained knowledge is agreeable to share it with others.

Interaction: This variable is solely based on how one prefers to share their knowledge with others. If the work culture of the organization is flexible and friendly, the level of interaction among the academicians would be high. Thus, this is the reason that it has being ranked as best performance indicator as per the female academicians. The female respondents felt that by healthy interaction there is great extent of knowledge sharing enhancing organizational learning but as per male academicians its fourth best performance indicator.

Work Culture: The work culture is also one of the indicators of knowledge sharing and both male and female academicians consider it as the fifth best performance indicator of knowledge sharing. As per the views of respondents of both the genders, organizational culture plays a vital role but even if the work culture is good but the workforce is rigid in their approach towards working style then organizational learning cannot take place effectively.

Path Ahead…

In developing countries like India, knowledge management is an emerging concept. Still, a lot needs to be discovered in this field. In this fierce, globally competitive environment, proper management of knowledge sharing in the organization is very critical for the successful existence of the organization. The result of this study has tried to identify the important performance indicators that can be used to predict smooth sharing of knowledge in the organization, which can facilitate to enhance organizational learning. Although the literature points out, that despite the numerous contributions done by several researchers, still lots need to be discovered in this domain. The studies in this field have mostly being conducted and focused in the developed economies of the world which have sufficient facilities for knowledge sharing so the need of the hour is to divert the attention towards underdeveloped nations of the world like Bhutan, Bangladesh, Nepal etc. Similarly, there is no significant contributions in this context of knowledge sharing are reported in the sectors like hospitality, telecom, banking etc. Moreover, this study can be further extended to global cultures besides Indian contexts and several cultural dimensions can also be added to widen its horizon. The emerging technological tools and techniques like social media handles and digital platforms can also be extensively used as a subject of study for knowledge sharing. Organizational politics which has a strong undercurrent in all organizations, its impact on knowledge sharing can also be studied in the future.

Conclusion

The area of knowledge management and knowledge sharing is now gaining importance among researchers worldwide and its significance for organizational success has been strongly understood. This paper tries to throw light on the prevalent knowledge practices in private academic settings in the context of male and female genders. There has been an obvious difference in the preferences towards the knowledge sharing practices among males and females which indicate somewhere their gender-specific attributes too. But the results of the studies cannot be generalized across all sectors and there is a need for customization in the knowledge sharing practices from one organization to another in order to meet their potential challenges, Therefore, detailed and considerable research needs to be done in this direction. Continuous and significant efforts need to be done to foster the development of good interpersonal relationships among the workforce which in turn will promote employee learning process and techniques, which in turn would result in improving the innovations and performance of the organization as a whole. The organizations should pay considerable attention to develop strategies for developing and implanting knowledge-based activities, especially keeping in mind the varying preferences across gender. From the perspective of academic research the study identifies the current state of both theory and practice in this area, but crucially also provides insights into how various performance indicators play a crucial role on knowledge dissemination within organizations. The importance of paying attention to managing unknowns as well as known is also an important implication for both practitioners and KM professionals alike.

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