



**KNOWLEDGE SHARING INTENTION AT THE
WORKPLACE: A CASE STUDY IN A SELECTED BANK
IN MALAYSIA**

BY

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ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of the financial industry is putting a demand on banks to look for better ways to manage its corporate strategies. One of the ways to achieve that aim is through knowledge management. This mix-method research investigated knowledge sharing (KS) intention and behaviour as part of the corporate strategies in a prominent Malaysian government-linked financial institution, Bank Co. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches were utilised during the data collection process, which consisted of questionnaire survey, focus group discussions, and a review of the organisation's documents on knowledge management. In-depth perceptions among Bank Co. staffs were explored that covered four main areas, namely knowledge sharing intention, workplace emotions, attitudes and Islamic Work Ethic (IWE). The questionnaire survey was used to identify pertinent categories related to the phenomenon of interest while focus group discussions and document review provided the in-depth analysis of the actual knowledge sharing intention and behaviour within Bank Co. The research involved 308 respondents in the survey and 27 participants in the focus group discussions. The quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistical analysis while the qualitative data was analysed using content analysis. Two main theories were used as the framework for this research. The main theory, Knowledge Creation Theory (KCT), highlighted the main concern of this current research, which is the knowledge creation processes in the organisation which includes the employees' KS intention. Meanwhile, the Affective Event Theory (AET) was used to identify the themes related to workplace emotions, which influenced the attitudes towards KS intention at the workplace. In this research, the established preposition was Islamic Work Ethic (IWE) can encourage the knowledge sharing intention and behaviour of the Muslim workers regardless of the workplace associated emotions. The conclusions based on the findings of this research indicated that the staffs' perceived KS behaviours in Bank Co. were influenced by emotions and attitudes assessments of the individual. Bad events at the workplace resulted in a more negative assessment of the KS behaviours. However, observing the Islamic faith and ethics could potentially promote positive KS behaviours in Bank Co. regardless of the individual's emotions and attitudes assessment of the conditions. In term of methodology, this research added new perspectives to theories related to KS at the workplace as well as provided a foundation for discussing government agencies' treatment of KS. This discussion may encourage reforms of the existing knowledge management structures and practices. In addition, this research could serve as a basis for future research in this area, not just within the government-linked banks but other industries as well. From the practical perspective, this research provided Bank Co. with the opportunity to better understand to what extent their KS initiatives have succeeded. This can assist Bank Co. in designing programmes that can encourage productive KS behaviours within the organisation.

نبذة مختصرة

إن النمو السريع للصناعة المالية يزيد الطلب على البنوك للبحث عن طرق أفضل لإدارة إستراتيجياتها المؤسسية. ويتمثل أحد الطرق لتحقيق هذا الهدف في إدارة المعرفة. قام هذا البحث المعتمد على نهج مختلط بالتحقيق في نية مشاركة المعرفة والسلوكيات المتبعة كجزء من الإستراتيجيات المؤسسية في مؤسسة مالية ماليزية مرموقة مرتبطة بالحكومة، مثل Bank Co. وقد تم استخدام كل من النهج الكمي والنوعي خلال عملية جمع البيانات، والتي تتألف من استبيان استقصائي ومناقشات مجموعة الدراسة ومراجعة وثائق المنظمة بشأن إدارة المعرفة. تم استكشاف المفاهيم المتعمقة بين موظفي Bank Co. والتي غطت أربعة مجالات رئيسية، وهي نية مشاركة المعرفة، والعواطف في مكان العمل، والمواقف، وأخلاقيات العمل الإسلامية (IWE). وقد تم استخدام الاستبيان الاستقصائي لتحديد الفئات ذات الصلة المرتبطة بهذه الظاهرة التي تحظى بالاهتمام، بينما قدمت مناقشات مجموعة الدراسة واستعراض الوثائق التحليل المتعمق للنية الفعلية للمشاركة والسلوكيات المتبعة داخل Bank Co. وقد شمل البحث 308 مجيبين على الاستبيان و27 مشاركاً في مناقشات مجموعة الدراسة. تم تحليل البيانات الكمية باستخدام التحليل الإحصائي الوصفي بينما تم تحليل البيانات النوعية باستخدام تحليل المحتوى. كما تم استخدام نظريتين رئيسيتين كإطار لهذا البحث. سلطت النظرية الرئيسية، وهي نظرية خلق المعرفة (KCT)، الضوء على الشاغل الرئيسي لهذا البحث الحالي، وهو عمليات خلق المعرفة في المنظمة والتي تتضمن نية الموظفين في مشاركة المعرفة. وفي الوقت نفسه، تم استخدام نظرية الأحداث المؤثرة (AET) لتحديد المواضيع المتعلقة بالعواطف في مكان العمل، والتي أثرت على المواقف تجاه نية مشاركة المعرفة في مكان العمل. في هذا البحث، كان المنظور القائم هو أن أخلاقيات العمل الإسلامية يمكن أن تشجع على نية مشاركة المعرفة والسلوكيات لدى العمال المسلمين بغض النظر عن العواطف المرتبطة بمكان العمل. وتشير الاستنتاجات المعتمدة على نتائج هذا البحث إلى أن سلوكيات مشاركة المعرفة المدركة لدى الموظفين في Bank Co. تأثرت بتقييمات العواطف والمواقف للفرد. فقد أسفرت الأحداث السيئة في مكان العمل عن تقييم أكثر سلبية لسلوكيات مشاركة المعرفة. ومع ذلك، فإن مراعاة العقيدة والأخلاقيات الإسلامية يمكن أن يعزز سلوكيات مشاركة المعرفة الإيجابية في Bank Co. بغض النظر عن تقييم عواطف الفرد ومواقفه تجاه الظروف. من حيث المنهجية، أضاف هذا البحث منظوراً جديداً للنظريات المتعلقة بمشاركة المعرفة في مكان العمل بالإضافة إلى توفير أساس لمناقشة معالجة الوكالات الحكومية لمشاركة المعرفة. وقد تشجع هذه المناقشة على إصلاح هياكل وممارسات إدارة المعرفة الحالية. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، يمكن استخدام هذا البحث كأساس للبحث المستقبلي في هذا المجال، ليس فقط داخل البنوك المرتبطة بالحكومة ولكن بالصناعات الأخرى أيضاً. ومن المنظور العملي، زود هذا البحث Bank Co. بالفرصة لفهم أفضل لمدى نجاح مبادرات مشاركة المعرفة. وهذا يمكن أن يساعد Bank Co. في تصميم البرامج التي يمكن أن تشجع سلوكيات مشاركة المعرفة المثمرة داخل المنظمة.

APPROVAL PAGE

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

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List of Abbreviations

AET	Affective Event Theory
BAFIA	Bank and Financial Institution Act
BNM	The Central Bank of Malaysia (<i>Bank Negara Malaysia</i>)
DFIA	Development and Financial Institution Act
IWE	Islamic Work Ethic
KCT	Knowledge Creation Theory
KM	Knowledge Management
KMP	Knowledge Management Program
KS	Knowledge Sharing
SECI Model	Model: Socialisation – Externalisation – Combination – Internalisation

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The rapid growth of the financial industry is putting a demand on banks to look for better ways to manage its corporate strategies (Barney, 1991; Ng & Jee, 2012) as a means of ensuring organisational survival, competitiveness, and success (Millar & Choi, 2010; Mårtensson, 2000; Nonaka & Toyama, 1995; Penrose, 1959). In today's world, designing and managing corporate strategies is increasingly challenging since financial institutions, like other organisations, operate in the information era. Managing knowledge, therefore, has become an important organisational agenda. Many discussions and seminars were held on this matter since the 1950s, leading to the concept of management of knowledge.

Although these knowledge strategies and processes were posited to be important to the organisation, McDermott and O'Dell (2001) and Switzer (2008) found that hitherto, many organisations have failed to adopt the knowledge process and knowledge strategy especially the knowledge sharing (KS) components into their business model. Two of the main factors identified as barriers to KS are the individual attributes of the KS process component itself (Abraham, 1997; Bock & Kim, 2002; Yang, 2008) such as the implementation of individual performance appraisal in company and the employee's individualistic behaviour (de Vries, Van den Hooff, de Ridder, 2006; Riege, 2005; Van den Hooff, Schouten & Simonovski, 2012). Employees also question why they should share their tacit knowledge of the workplace with members of the same

organisation by doing so would cause them to lose power (Muqadas, Ilyas, Aslam & Ur Rehman, 2016; Riege, 2005). In addition, Riege (2005) had also identified several other factors that form the individualistic KS barrier in an organisation, such as knowledge revelation, knowledge uncertainty, and motivation to share knowledge. These individual barriers to knowledge sharing (Muqadas, Ilyas, Aslam & Ur Rehman, 2016; Riege, 2005) might explain the implication of employees' attitudes and emotions towards KS intention (Van den Hooff et al., 2012).

In the case of the banking industry, helping the employee to increase their awareness and participation in sharing their knowledge can actually benefit both the employee and the organisation as a whole (Holland, 2010). Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) noted that the creation of new organisation knowledge could only be benefited by the organisation when the employees use their newly gained knowledge to hone their skills and, with the right attitudes, share the knowledge with members of the organisation. Evidently, some of the critical challenges for the organisation include providing encouragements and suitable environment that promotes the KS intention among its employees.

1.2 Knowledge Sharing

It is commonly understood that the more competent team members within an organisation are, the more competitive the team and organisation will be (Francis J. Gouillart, 2014; Ma, 2004). This can infer to the workplace knowledge sharing concept in which knowledge assets, such as the subject matter expert employees or managers share their knowledge or insights on issue or problem at the workplace in order to gain a better comprehension of the matter (Randall, Nowicki, Deshpande, & Lusch, 2014). Thus, knowledge in this research's context refers to organisation strategic assets which

involving an individual mental process of understanding that originates from information and its ability to interact with the world (Bollinger & Smith, 2001; Drucker, 1999; Dunford, 2000; Nonaka, 1994; Wilson, 2002).

To guide this work, the researcher adapted one of the pertinent models to explain KS processes at the workplace, the Knowledge Conversion Theory (KCT) advocated by Nonaka and Takeuchi in 1995. According to the authors, KCT involves the process of knowledge conversion through the dynamic interactions of tacit and explicit knowledge within organisations (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). The enhanced version of KCT lead to the creation of new organisation knowledge using the existing knowledge assets in a shared context and the new knowledge created in turn becomes the basis for a new spiral of knowledge conversion (Nonaka, Toyama & Konno, 2000). It is important to note that the KCT is better known as the Socialisation-Externalisation-Combination-Internalisation (SECI) model has been posited as one of the comprehensive theories to explain the various processes of KM as it covers knowledge creation, knowledge transfer (sharing) and knowledge integration (Chou, 2005). Nonetheless, this current research is only focused on the knowledge sharing process because it has been identified as one of the most important catalysts for a successful KM organisation (Bernius, 2010; Liyanage, Elhag, Ballal & Li, 2009). KS is especially important at the socialisation phase of the model, where most of the knowledge interaction activities occur (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Nonaka, Toyama & Byosière 1998; Nonaka, Toyama & Konno 2000; Fischer, 2000; Spender, 2008).

In recent years, researchers have recommended that more in-depth approaches should be used to explore and understand concepts such as the employee's internal values towards KS intentions at the workplace (de Vries, et al., 2006; Kumar & Che Rose, 2010, 2012; Van den Hooff et al., 2012). Other researchers (see de Vries et al.,

2006; Van den Hooff et al., 2012) have also empirically demonstrated that one of the central aspects of knowledge sharing intentions at the workplace is the relationship between employee and the team members in the organisation.

1.3 Attitudes, Workplace Emotions and Islamic Work Ethic

In general, organisations consist of individuals, structures, and shared objectives. Meanwhile, structures and objectives are usually clear to the management of the organisation, individuals remain an obscure aspect. Behaviours of the employees at the workplace can become a challenge especially when the organisation decides to implement a knowledge management strategy.

Recently, many research in knowledge management has highlighted the criticality of having a holistic understanding of the individual's behaviours in the organisation. Individuals differ in many ways, such as in their attitudes towards intention to do something, and the affective response to certain environments or events (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1975; Ashkanasy & Daus, 2002; de Vries et al., 2006; Van den Hooff et al., 2012; Yang, 2008). According to Ajzen and Fishbein (1975), these behaviours can be determined by the individual's intention influenced by the individual's attitudes and affected by the affective response such as how they feel at the workplace (Van den Hooff et al., 2012). Attitudes, according to Ajzen and Fishbein (1975), involves the subjective norms of the social pressures (external factors) and expected outcomes (internal value). These will be explored in-depth in the current study in order to obtain a better understanding of the employees' perception of the individual inclined attitude and the socially disposed of attitude.

Most of the literature research has been done on workplace attitudes revealed that the positive workplace attitudes promote positive behaviours towards the

organisation's performance via workplace leadership styles (Asrar-ul-Haq & Kuchinke, 2016), job satisfaction (Farzeen, Ahmad & Anwar, 2015), organisation culture and work happiness (Williams, Kern & Waters, 2017). In addition, it was found that intrinsic and extrinsic rewards affect employees' attitude in a positive manner (Ajmal, Bashir, Abrar, Mahroof Khan & Saqib, 2015) and this workplace attitude was found to affect intention of employees (Tan, Johari & Mohd. Sukery, 2015; Van den Hooff *et al.*, 2012).

To further understand the employee's attitudes in the organisation, it is important that the workplace emotion is explored as emotion can also affect job satisfaction and performance (Krishnan & Kasinathan, 2016). Most of the early research on the workplace emotion has investigated this notion from two viewpoints: one, causes of emotion (ego focus – individual and internal driven emotion) and (other focus – social and external motivated emotion); and two, effects of emotion (positive and negative) (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Van den Hooff *et al.* (2012), for example, had investigated *pride* (individually motivated, internal emotion) and *empathy* (socially driven, external emotion).

In the case of KS, the scope of this research will be defined using one of the pertinent models to explain the workplace emotion, the Affective Event Theory (AET) that was postulated by Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) and further improved by Ashkanasy and Daus (2002). This model explains the affective response (workplace emotion) by investigating work environments (job characteristic and job demand) and daily work events (daily hassles and daily uplifts) effects on workplace emotion. For this research, mixed-method research was conducted to investigate how the employees' perception of the workplace emotion can influence the employees' attitudes and behaviours to share their knowledge.

Thus, it has been established that there is a connection between organisation success with KS intentions and the antecedents such as the right attitudes and emotions of the employee. Based on this understanding, employee's emotion can be considered as one of the critical organisation success factors. In this regard, it is important to explore the employees' perception of the influential factors of employee's emotion such as religiosity (Borstorff & Arlington, 2011; Hassan, 2011; Hussin, 2009; Kodi, 2013; Krishnakumar & Neck, 2002) because it can influence culture, act as guideline to govern society, and affect behaviours (Kim, Waller, & Erdogan, 2004). Apart from religiosity, work ethics is also noted as important because they reinforce the employee and employer's practices and conducts in the organisation (Kumar & Che Rose, 2010; Wan Husin, 2012).

As the guiding framework, this study adapted the Islamic Work Ethic (IWE) proposed by Ali (1988). According to Wan Husin (2012), IWE consists of five facets that can enhance the KS intentions at the workplace. The five facets are: (1) Working as a way of devoting to Allah SWT by stressing on the concept of *tawhid*; (2) Sincere, honest, noble and trustworthy employees; (3) Working diligently and professionally; (4) Disciplined and punctual employees; and (5) Cooperative and collaborative work. Furthermore, the obligation for an individual to share knowledge is stressed heavily in Islam as an individual must behave for the benefits of the society and not for mere personal gain (Hassan, 2011; Hussin, 2009; Kumar & Che Rose, 2010; Wan Husin, 2012). In this research, IWE (Ali, 1988; Ali & Al-Owaihian, 2008; Kumar & Che Rose, 2010, 2012) was used to explore in-depth the perception of an employee in an organisation in order to get a better understanding of the phenomenon of interest, which is the workplace KS intentions.

1.4 Background of Study

This current research explored the workplace KS intentions on the implication of IWE on the employee's behaviours that can encourage KS intention at the workplace. Malaysia can be considered as one of the countries that are suitable for this research because religion still plays a vital role in the lives of Malaysians. According to statistics, 61.3% of Malaysia's 28.3 million population in the year 2010 are Muslims (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2011).

To set the research's delimitations, this study focused on one government-linked financial institution. Malaysia in 2011 has 317,600 employees in the Financial and insurance/takaful activities from 12,284,400 employed labour force (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2013).

This research was interested in exploring the perception of employees regarding KS intentions within a specific context, i.e. the financial institutions in Malaysia. The Malaysian financial institutions or banking industry can be broadly classified according to the Acts such as: (1) the commercial banks, governed under the Bank and Financial Institution Acts (BAFIA); (2) the government-linked or development financial institutions, administered according to the Development Financial Institution Acts (DFIA) and; (3) the Islamic banks, controlled under the Islamic Banking Acts (IBA) (Central Bank of Malaysia, 2013).

1.4.1 Knowledge Management Progress in the Malaysian Banking Industry

KM initiative in the Malaysian banking industry started almost 30 years ago, initially with the automation of some of the previously manual processes (Muhammad Ali & Ahmad, 2006). Over the years, the Central Bank of Malaysia was seen to have recognised the importance of managing knowledge as one of the banking industry's

strategic assets by implementing in the year 2000, a framework called the Knowledge Management Progress (KMP).

The KMP acts as the framework for the Malaysian banking industry to follow the implementations of KM initiative. Some of the highlights of the KMP are valuing the individual knowledge and sharing the knowledge, internally. Furthermore, under this KMPs, banks are encouraged to revisit their policies and practices to embrace and implement knowledge strategies and processes as to survive in the globalisation era. Therefore, this was set as the directive to all the banks in Malaysia to strengthen their KM initiative. In line with the KMPs, the current research assessed the knowledge sharing process in one of the development and government-linked banks in Malaysia.

1.5 Research Problem

de Vries et al. (2006) and Van den Hooff, et al. (2012) highlighted that one of the central aspects of knowledge sharing intentions at the workplace is the relationship between employee and other members of the organisation. They also argued that the relationship is further influenced by the employee's attitudes and what they feel (emotions) at the workplace (de Vries et al., 2006; Van den Hooff et al., 2012). Relatively, Riege (2005) suggested that barriers to knowledge sharing (KS) could also be influenced by the employee's attitudes and workplace emotions. Some of the KS barriers forms in the workplace are listed in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 KS Barriers at Workplace

Factors	Descriptions
Knowledge power	Employee fear of losing power at workplace to their colleagues due to KS
Knowledge revelation	Employee might feel shame or angry due to their ideas are objected or corrected in public (meeting)
Knowledge uncertainty	New staff might not have sufficient knowledge of workplace to argue, challenge or correct senior staff
Motivation to share knowledge	The motivation for senior staff to share their knowledge with the new staff

Source: Riege (2005)

As illustrated that emotions and attitudes can influence KS intentions in one way or another, it is of this research interest to explore the in-depth perception of Bank Co.'s employees with regards to KS intentions at the workplace. Each employee of Bank Co. has the responsibility to share knowledge at the workplace as this act is important to organisation survival, competitiveness and success (de Vries, et al., 2006; Nonaka, et al., 2000; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Van den Hooff, et al., 2012). Therefore, the central focus of this research was the reasons for employee sharing their workplace knowledge with members of the organisation and subsequently, how Islamic value can enhance this behaviour.

1.6 Research Objectives

The aims this research is to study the in-depth perception of the employees within a government agency in a financial sector regarding workplace KS intentions by exploring the general issues regarding the relationship between KS intention and employee's attitudes as well as the specific concerns of Bank Co.'s employees. Based

on literature review, the following themes have been identified as the main basis of this research:

1. KS intentions as perceived by the employees
2. Intention of sharing knowledge as perceived by employees
3. KS attitudes (willingness and eagerness) as perceived by employees
4. Workplace emotion and the implication of emotion towards KS as perceived by employees
5. The implication of Islamic Work Ethic (IWE) toward KS intentions as perceived by employees

In this current study, the main research objective is to explore the workplace KS intentions in a government-linked financial institution especially in regards to workplace emotion, employees' attitudes towards KS intentions and the implication of Islamic value and work ethic. Thus, the specific research objectives are:

1. To explore the Muslim employee's perception of KS intentions in Bank Co.
2. To study the Muslim employee's perception of the different attitudes towards their KS intentions in Bank Co.
3. To explore the Muslim employee's perception of the different workplace emotion towards their KS intentions in Bank Co.
4. To ascertain the Muslim employee's perception of the effect of the different workplace emotion on their attitudes towards KS intentions in Bank Co.
5. To explore the Muslim employee's perception of the effect of IWE on KS intentions in Bank Co.