

THE RELATIONSHIP OF PERSONALITY AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING

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To my beloved parents and siblings

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ABSTRACT

Knowledge sharing is a fundamental process of knowledge management. Knowledge sharing may be seen as a set of behaviour by which individuals in an organization voluntarily provide access to their knowledge and experiences. Knowledge sharing of individuals could be influenced by their personality characteristics. Therefore, the aim of this research is to study and enhance the understanding of the relationship of personality traits (namely agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion and openness to experience) and knowledge sharing. Questionnaire was used to collect data from the management staff of Engro Fertilizers Limited, Pakistan. The data collected were empirically tested using Pearson's Correlation via SPSS software. The results of the study show that the personality traits are important individual characteristics that influence knowledge sharing. In this study, agreeableness and openness to experience have been found to have a positive significant relationship with knowledge sharing.

ABSTRAK

Perkongsian pengetahuan adalah proses asas pengurusan pengetahuan. Perkongsian pengetahuan boleh dilihat sebagai satu set tingkah laku yang mana individu dalam organisasi secara sukarela menyediakan akses kepada pengetahuan dan pengalaman mereka. Perkongsian pengetahuan individu boleh dipengaruhi oleh ciri-ciri personaliti mereka. Oleh itu, tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji dan meningkatkan pemahaman tentang hubungan personaliti (iaitu bersetuju, sifat berhati-hati, *extraversion*, dan keterbukaan kepada pengalaman) dan perkongsian pengetahuan. Soal selidik telah digunakan untuk mengumpul data daripada kakitangan pengurusan Engro Fertilizers Limited, Pakistan. Data yang dikumpul telah diuji secara empirikal menggunakan Korelasi Pearson melalui perisian SPSS. Keputusan kajian menunjukkan bahawa personaliti adalah ciri-ciri individu penting yang mempengaruhi perkongsian pengetahuan. Dalam kajian ini bersetuju dan keterbukaan kepada pengalaman menunjukkan mempunyai hubungan yang signifikan positif dengan perkongsian pengetahuan.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-----|----------------------|
| KM | Knowledge Management |
| KS | Knowledge Sharing |
| FFM | Five-Factor Model |
| BFI | Big Five Inventory |

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Knowledge is multi-dimensional concept with multi-layered meanings. It is a significant connection between information and its application in action in a specific setting (Dixon 2000). In this era where economy is based on knowledge, organizations have to face the issues such as shorter product life cycles, products and processes life cycle, more emphasis on the core competencies and increased relevant technical and non-technical knowledge base. These issues are related to the development of knowledge-based economy and can be overcome by better managing of knowledge (Anantatmula & Kanungo, 2006; Uit Beijerse, 1999).

Over the past years, knowledge management is considered to play a very fundamental role in the success of organizations (Jayasingam, 2012). To improve the performance and competitive advantage of an organization, knowledge management practices are strongly encouraged by the researchers (Davenport & Prusak, 2000; Ming Yu, 2002; Syed-Ikhsan & Rowland, 2004; Zack et al, 2009). One of the fundamental elements of knowledge management is knowledge sharing (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Earl, 2001). Knowledge sharing is a process through which knowledge that might be explicit or tacit is transferred to others (Becerra Fernandez,

2004). Through knowledge sharing information is given to individuals working together to work out problems, generate new ideas and execute strategies and techniques (Khosravi and Ahmad, 2013; Wang and Noe 2010).

1.2 Problem Background

In today's business world, numerous organizations consider knowledge as one of the primary source of competitive advantage and have realized its important role in the long term sustainability and success of organizations (Davenport and Prusak, 1998). Researchers (Davenport and Prusak, 1998; Wang and Noe, 2010; Bollinger and Smith, 2001) have identified managing organizational knowledge as a strategic means for organizations to improve their performance, become more innovative, gain new markets and sustain competitive advantage. Through implementing knowledge management strategies, it becomes possible for all the members of an organization to utilise captured knowledge in conducting their job tasks.

Among all processes of knowledge management, knowledge sharing is considered as the most essential process (Gupta and Govindrajan, 2000). The principal agent of knowledge sharing and the main source of knowledge in the organizations are the individuals (Jarvenpaa and Staples, 2001). In an organization, individuals play an important role in knowledge sharing process through collectively sharing experiences and insights to create new knowledge. To enhance firm performance, intellectual capital and competitive advantages, knowledge exchange and creativity in organizations are encouraged by knowledge sharing activities (Liebowitz and Chen, 2001; Bollinger and Smith, 2001).

However, there are some difficulties and barriers faced by organizations in knowledge sharing (Chennamanani, 2006; Riege, 2005). These barriers include perceived benefits of individuals who may expect some benefits for sharing their knowledge, time consumption, intensive efforts and workloads, distrust and so on (Bock et al., 2005; Gibbert and Krause, 2002). To internalize knowledge sharing in organizations, not only directing knowledge sharing strategies are enough, but it is also necessary to change the attitude of organizational towards knowledge sharing (Lin, 2007). According to some researchers (Davenport and Prusak, 1998; Hansen and Hansen, 2001), individuals could be reluctant to share knowledge with each other and this could lead to decline of the firm's performance and the organizational members' intellectual capacity.

In many organizations, it is one of the challenging issues to make employees to share their experience and knowledge. Hiring talented individuals and making use of their expertise to gain organizational competitive advantage is still very important but is not enough. It is also important that people should have personality that supports knowledge sharing and collaboration. To examine the relationship of personality traits and knowledge sharing, various studies have been conducted. Ismail and Yusuf (2010) studied the significance of personality in general. The relationship of personality traits, innovation and mediating role of knowledge management in the biotechnology sector has been studied by Hsieh et al. (2011). Teh et al. (2011) developed an integrative understanding of the big five personality traits with knowledge sharing behaviour. Chong et al. (2013) examined the influence of personality traits, class room and technological factors on knowledge sharing patterns. According to Ismail and Yusuf (2010), personality factor seems to be the most important and correlated with knowledge sharing quality among other factors. Matzler et al. (2008) examined personality traits such as agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness to experience as individual factors that influence knowledge sharing.

Although, enormous study has been conducted to examine the relationship of personality traits and knowledge sharing but according to Moorandian et al. (2006),

the effects of individual factors like personality on knowledge sharing still have not been adequately described empirically. Therefore, the researcher found an opportunity to contribute empirically to the study of relationship between personality and knowledge sharing.

1.3 Problem Statement

Knowledge sharing has been identified as the fundamental element within organisations in this 21st century. Knowledge management provides a sustainable competitive advantage (Nonaka and Takeuchi; 1995; Polanyi, 1998; Becerra-Fernandez et al., 2004). Knowledge sharing is perceived as one of the critical factors for the effectiveness of an organisation. Unfortunately, it has been revealed that most of the employees share knowledge with one another reluctantly because of which the intellectual capacity of the organization and its productivity may be reduced (Miller and Karakowsky, 2005; Hansen and Haas, 2001). Organizational environment is likened as a knowledge society where individuals share and capture knowledge.

An enormous amount of knowledge is possessed and stored in individual instead of organization (Chen Kim and Mauborgne, 1998). Individuals differ in knowledge sharing behaviour (Teh et al., 2011) and it is also seen knowledge sharing of individuals depends upon their willingness and consent to share their important assets including experience, information and lessons learned through interpersonal interactions and work processes. According to Amayah (2011), it is necessary to investigate the factors that may influence the individuals' level of knowledge sharing to successfully implement knowledge management initiatives. Further, Al-Hawamdah (2003) suggested that researchers should also emphasise on individual perspectives of knowledge sharing other than on technological or organizational level factors.

In view of the individual level of knowledge sharing, personality traits have significant importance and have been studied with respect to knowledge management. According to Hsu et al. (2001), individual's behaviours and personality characteristics have important roles in outcome and efficiency of knowledge sharing. Teh et al. (2011) developed an integrative understanding of the Big Five Personality (BFP) factors supporting or inhibiting individuals' online entertainment knowledge sharing behaviours among universities students. Gupta (2008) examined the impact of Big Five personality characteristics on knowledge sharing and knowledge acquisition behaviour among postgraduate students. Chong et al. (2013) examined the influence of personality traits, class room and technological factors on knowledge sharing patterns among university students. Ismail and Yusuf (2010) explored the relationship of individual factors such as awareness, trust and personality, and knowledge sharing quality in Malaysian public agencies. Matzler et al. (2011) studied two elements of personality traits, agreeableness and conscientiousness to knowledge sharing via affective commitment and documentation of knowledge in a medium-sized company in Austria. Matzler et al. (2008) examined the relationship of three personality traits (agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness) and knowledge sharing in engineering consulting firms.

As highlighted above, most studies on personality and knowledge sharing were conducted in universities, public agencies and engineering consulting firms. To the researcher's knowledge, research in verifying the big five personality traits and knowledge sharing in manufacturing companies is still limited. The aim of this research is to explore the relationship of personality (agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, neuroticism and openness) and knowledge sharing in a manufacturing company.

1.4 Research Questions

Focusing on the core subjects concerning this study, the following questions are raised.

1. What is the relationship between agreeableness and knowledge sharing?
2. What is the relationship between conscientiousness and knowledge sharing?
3. What is the relationship between extroversion and knowledge sharing?
4. What is the relationship between neuroticism and knowledge sharing?
5. What is the relationship between openness to experience and knowledge sharing?

1.5 Objectives

Based on the research questions mentioned above, the main aim of this research is to investigate the relationship of personality of an individual and knowledge sharing. The aim of the research may be achieved through the following objectives:

1. To study whether agreeableness has a positive relationship with knowledge sharing.
2. To study whether conscientiousness has a positive relationship with knowledge sharing.

3. To study whether extroversion has a positive relationship with knowledge sharing.
4. To study whether neuroticism has a negative relationship with knowledge sharing.
5. To study whether openness to experience has a positive relationship with knowledge sharing.

Based on literature support, the following hypotheses are formulated and are discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

H1: There is a positive relationship between agreeableness and knowledge sharing.

H2: There is a positive relationship between conscientiousness and knowledge sharing.

H3: There is a positive relationship between extraversion and knowledge sharing.

H4: There is a negative relationship between neuroticism and knowledge sharing.

H5: There is a positive relationship between openness to experience and knowledge sharing.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on examining the relationship between personality traits and knowledge sharing of individuals. The Big Five personality traits are used in this

study. The big five personality traits include agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, neuroticism and openness to experience.

To study the relationship between the personality traits and knowledge sharing of individuals, the respondents are the management staff of Engro Fertilizers Limited, the largest urea producer in Pakistan. The respondents will be selected randomly.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study would contribute empirically to the body of knowledge by identifying the relationship between the personality traits i.e., agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, neuroticism and openness, and knowledge sharing of members of management staff in a manufacturing company, Engro Fertilizers Limited.

This study is an exploratory effort to observe and analyse the influence of personality traits and knowledge sharing of individuals at workplace which will help top management to understand the influence of personality on knowledge sharing. Understanding of the issues will help the management to provide interventions that improve knowledge sharing, which will help to enhance organizational success, its intellectual capacity and productivity.

1.8 Definitions of Key Terms

The definitions of key terms and concepts used in this study are provided as follows:

1.8.1 Knowledge Sharing

1.8.1.1 Conceptual Definition

Knowledge sharing is defined as a set of behaviours that involve the exchange of information or assistance to others (Connelly and Kelloway, 2003). It may be seen as a behaviour by which individuals in an organization voluntarily provide access to their knowledge and experiences (Gupta et al., 2012).

1.8.1.2 Operational Definition

For this study, knowledge sharing is referred to as the degree to which an individual involves in donating and collecting the work related knowledge and expertise.

1.8.2 Personality

Lefton and Brannon (2007) defined personality as a pattern of relatively permanent traits, dispositions or characteristics that give some consistency to an individual's behaviour. Personality is an individual's typical way of feeling, thinking, and acting (Allport, 1961). People tend to describe themselves and others in terms of personality characteristics or traits. These personality traits are defined below.

1.8.3 Agreeableness

1.8.3.1 Conceptual Definition

Agreeableness is a personality trait that includes the attributes such as trust, straightforwardness, altruism, compliance, modesty and tender-mindedness (Matthews et. al. 2009). People possessing this trait are likely to show trust in others and also show great tendency to be amiable with others (Betts, 2012).

1.8.3.2 Operational Definition

In this study, agreeableness contrasts a prosocial and communal orientation toward others with antagonism and includes traits such as altruism, tender-mindedness, trust, and modesty.

1.8.4 Conscientiousness

1.8.4.1 Conceptual Definition

Conscientiousness is a personality trait that includes the attributes such as competence, order, dutifulness, achievement striving, self-discipline and deliberation (Matthews et. al. 2009). People with conscientious temperament are hardworking, strong-willed and naturally push themselves to achieve their target (Deveraj et. al., 2008).

1.8.4.2 Operational Definition

In this study, conscientiousness describes socially prescribed impulse control that facilitates task- and goal-directed behaviour, such as thinking before acting, delaying gratification, following norms and rules, and planning organising and prioritizing tasks.

1.8.5 Extraversion

1.8.5.1 Conceptual Definition

Extraversion is a personality trait that includes attributes such as warmth, gregariousness, assertiveness, activity, excitement-seeking and positive emotions

(Matthews et al., 2009). These individuals, whenever have favourable conditions, capture the attention of others to themselves. Extrovert people reveal their social behaviour by being active and affectionate (Devaraj et al., 2008).

1.8.5.2 Operational Definition

In this study, extraversion implies an energetic approach toward the social and material world and includes traits such as sociability, activity, assertiveness, and positive emotionality.

1.8.6 Neuroticism

1.8.6.1 Conceptual Definition

Neuroticism is a personality trait that includes attributes such as anxiety, angry hostility, depression, self-consciousness, impulsiveness and vulnerability (Matthews et al., 2009). Generally, neurotic people are distinguished by how they react emotionally to situations and how intense their reactions are (Korzaan & Boswell, 2008).

1.8.6.2 Operational Definition

In this study, neuroticism contrasts emotional stability and even-temperedness with negative emotionality, such as feeling anxious, nervous, sad, and tense.

1.8.7 Openness to Experience

1.8.7.1 Conceptual Definition

Openness is a personality trait that includes attributes such as fantasy, aesthetics, feelings, actions, ideas and values (Matthews et al., 2009). These people are innovative and interested in the things happening in their surroundings (John & Srivasta, 1999).

1.8.7.2 Operational Definition

In this study, openness to experience (vs. closed-mindedness) describes the breadth, depth, originality, and complexity of an individual's mental and experiential life.

1.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter presents a briefing to the study by providing an overview on the problem background that directs to the problem statement. The research questions and objectives are developed on the basis of the problem statement. The significance and scope of the study are also stated with concise discussions.

1.10 Thesis Organization

This research comprises of three chapters. Chapter one introduces the topic and gives the background of the study, which is the relationship between the personality and knowledge sharing of individuals. Additionally, it explores the problem statement, research questions and scope of the research. Chapter two discusses the previous studies related to this study, and chapter three discusses the methodology, the sampling and the instruments used to research.

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