KNOWLEDGE SHARING AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER EXPERIENCES AMONG MANAGEMENT STAFF IN AN OIL PALM COMPANY IN MALAYSIA

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To my beloved wife, father and mother

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ABSTRACT

Knowledge management is considered a vital resource for organizations. This study was carried out to explore knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer experiences among management staff in an oil palm plantation company in Malaysia. This study also explored the impact of cultural factors on knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer practises. A review on literature shows many studies were conducted in knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer but less study was done in oil palm plantation in Malaysia. This study was done qualitatively via in-depth interviews and focus group discussion to explore and highlight the experience of the management staff in an oil palm plantation company in Malaysia. Purposive sampling technique were employed in the in-depth interviews and triangulated via focus group discussion. Data was analysed manually using thematic analysis. The result of the findings reveal that the awareness of knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer among the management staff in the oil palm company is high. The activities embraced by the management staff was categorised into formal activities and technology. Four cultural factors (leadership, trust, collaboration and organization structure) act as enablers for knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer initiatives.

ABSTRAK

Pengurusan pengetahuan dianggap sebagai sumber penting bagi organisasi. Kajian ini dijalankan untuk meneroka pengalaman perkongsian pengetahuan dan pemindahan pengetahuan di kalangan kakitangan pengurusan dalam sebuah syarikat perladangan kelapa sawit di Malaysia. Kajian ini juga meninjau kesan faktor budaya kepada amalan perkongsian pengetahuan dan pemindahan pengetahuan. Literatur menunjukkan banyak kajian telah dijalankan dalam perkongsian pengetahuan dan pemindahan pengetahuan tetapi kurang kajian yang telah dilakukan di ladang kelapa sawit di Malaysia. Kajian ini dilakukan secara kualitatif melalui temu bual secara mendalam (*in-depth interview)* dan perbincangan kumpulan fokus (*focus group discussion*) untuk meneroka dan mengetengahkan pengalaman yang diperoleh daripada kakitangan pengurusan dalam sebuah syarikat perladangan kelapa sawit di Malaysia. Teknik persampelan bertujuan telah digunakan dalam temu bual degan kakitangan perngurusan dan ditriangulasi melalui perbincangan kumpulan fokus. Data yang dikumpul dianalisis secara manual melalui analisis tematik. Dapatan daripada kajian menunjukkan bahawa kesedaran perkongsian pengetahuan dan pemindahan pengetahuan di kalangan kakitangan pengurusan dalam syarikat kelapa sawit adalah tinggi. Aktiviti-aktiviti yang dijalankan oleh kakitangan pengurusan dikategorikan berasaskan aktiviti formal dan teknologi. Empat faktor budaya (kepimpinan, kepercayaan, kerjasama dan struktur organisasi) bertindak sebagai katalis bagi inisiatif perkongsian pengetahuan dan pemindahan pengetahuan.

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MPOB   Malaysian Palm Oil Board

R&D   Research and Development

ICT   Information and Communication Technology

ISP   Incorporated Society of Planters

MAPA   Malayan Agricultural Producers Association

MPOA   Malaysian Palm Oil Association

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Introduction

As a field of study, knowledge management has existed for more than 30 years and it has moved to an essential component of organizational life from an academic theory (Girard and Girard, 2015). Knowledge management is the process of applying a systematic approach to the capture, structuring, management, and dissemination of knowledge (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995) and according to them the process work faster, reuse best practices and reduce costly rework from project to project throughout organization. Davenport and Prusak (2000) defined knowledge management as managing the corporation's knowledge through a systematically and organizationally specified process. This process of acquiring, organizing, sustaining, applying, sharing and renewing knowledge both tacit and explicit is to enhance organizational performance and to create value. As such, organizations are not just managing their existing knowledge, but also making initiatives in the creation and gaining of new knowledge. In this era of globalization, organizations are facing many challenges in the business environment; therefore, it is vital for organizations to manage knowledge activity vigorously and systematically.

Knowledge management efforts are fast gaining momentum and can be seen in many organizations in the world. Prusak (1997) posit that the significance of

managing knowledge also arises due to the impact of globalization and the awareness on the value of knowledge. Although there are many documented cases of organizations achieving remarkable success from knowledge management effort, there are still many more reluctant to undertake this approach due to distinct reasons. Knowledge management has become an important facet of an organization to focus on to be successful in current business world with increased use of technology especially in the usage of internet.

Knowledge management activities such as creation, sharing and transfer of knowledge are very important for organization to establish and sustain competitive advantage. It is often said that knowledge management activities encourage innovation and competitiveness. According to Avdimiotis *et al*. (2012), knowledge sharing and transfer are key factors influencing the processes of innovation and competitiveness. Therefore, it is vital to create a knowledge sharing culture in the organization and to increase the need for transferring knowledge within organization members.

This study focuses on the awareness, understanding and experiences of the management staff in practicing the knowledge management processes in an oil palm company in Malaysia. It is pertinent to acknowledge the magnitude of knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer in organization especially in a developing country such as Malaysia. This study will also illuminate the impact of cultural factors on knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer practises. This chapter consist the background of the study, background of the organization, problem statement, purpose of the study, research questions, objectives, scope and the limitation of the study.

1.2 **Background of Study**

Early research suggested that knowledge management efforts have long been recorded and many researches and writings on knowledge management were dated way back in the 90's. Tian *et al.* (2009) posit that the growth of research in knowledge management dates all the way back to the early 1990's. Similarly, Alavi and Leidner (1999) said knowledge management is an established discipline since 1991 and taught in courses such as management, business administration and information systems.

Holm (2001) posit that knowledge management is a process of helping people to create and share knowledge and acting on information. He also said knowledge management is the process of getting the correct information at the right time to the right people. Therefore, for organizations, the competitive advantage relies on the knowledge that resides in it, how it is used and how fast it can react proactively on something new (Prusak, 1997). Jelenic (2011) on the other hand, posit that knowledge management is the process through which organizations produce value from their intellectual capital and knowledge-based assets. Typically, the value is gained from employees, partners and customers and sharing the information with employees, departments or even other companies to find the best practices.

Proliferation in the field of knowledge management can be seen in the field of agriculture. A study by Sharma and Mehta (2012) concluded that more research in the field of agriculture is expected to grow in the future. In their study on knowledge management system in agriculture which closely related to this study, they categorized knowledge into three which is knowledge evaluation, knowledge processing and knowledge implementation. Sharma and Mehta (2012) said knowledge evaluation involves assessing the worth of information. Knowledge processing on the other hand involves the identification of techniques as it is a process to acquire, store, process and distribute information and sometimes to

document how certain decisions were reached while knowledge implementation refers to commitment to change, learn and innovate by organization.

Sharing of knowledge is a significant dimension in the knowledge management processes. In this regard, many researches and writing has been growing in the field of knowledge sharing. Some of the definition is presented here to illuminate knowledge sharing from the organizational background. Gibbert and Krause (2002) posit knowledge sharing as the willingness of individuals in the organization to share the knowledge they have and created. In a wider perspective, knowledge sharing refers to the communication of all types of knowledge including tacit and explicit knowledge (Al-Hawamdeh, 2003) while Lee and Al-Hawamded (2002) defined knowledge sharing as an act that done intentionally that be able to use by other people.

Another significant dimension in knowledge management is knowledge transfer. Some of the definition is illustrated here to illuminate the meaning of knowledge transfer which is one of the important aspects of this study. Knowledge transfer is process that is used send information from one to another entity. The sender will initiate the transfer and the receiver will receive it (Yahya *et al*., 2015). According to Fong and Lee (2009) knowledge transfer is an important stage of knowledge management processes. They said knowledge transfer activities is a fundamental component in the knowledge management approach as it is one of the activities that constitute knowledge work in knowledge management assessment. They also said knowledge creation and transfer of knowledge in an organization could largely contribute to the success of organization.

Szulanski (1996) on the other hand said successful transfer is not easy to attain as knowledge transfer is a complex phenomenon. The effectiveness and outcome of the transfer can be affected by several factors even for a simple act of transferring knowledge from one part of the organization to another part within the same organization. The definitions by the several authors above has helped

researcher to comprehend the meaning of knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer which is useful for this study. Researcher trust greater awareness in knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer is needed in Malaysia particularly in the agriculture sector

In investigating the agricultural position in Malaysia, it has always been an important sector of Malaysian economy. Malaysia is one of the largest producers and exporters of oil palm in the world. Oil palm originated from the tropical rain forest of West Africa (Tiku and Bullem, 2013). This perennial crop is known as Elaeis guineensis is the principal source of palm oil. Palm oil is an edible vegetable oil derived from the mesocarp (reddish pulp) of the fruit of the oil palm. Oil palm tree which only grows in tropical areas are mainly cultivated in Malaysia and other South East Asian countries such as Indonesia and Thailand and as well Africa and South America.

Oil palm cultivation has seen considerable progress in Malaysia since British brought the African oil palm to Malaysia as an ornament plant (Alam *et al*., 2015). Oil palm has high oil content and the highest potential of oil yield per acre when compared to other vegetable oils. The foundation for the vast oil palm plantations and the growth of oil palm industry in Malaysia started in Tennamaram Estate in Selangor for the first commercial planting of oil palm tree in 1917. In the 1960s, under the government's agricultural diversification program, the cultivation of oil palm was significantly increased so that the country can reduce its dependency on rubber.

Oil palm plantations in Malaysia are largely based on smallholder scheme and estate management system and have since grown to be largest producers and exporters of oil palm in the world. Oil palm estates in Malaysia have diversified from once only own by the government to private companies and small holders. The development of oil palm in Malaysia has been significant from a mere 400 hectares planted in 1920 to 54,000 hectares in year 1960. Since then, countless

areas were opened for oil palm cultivation from virgin jungles to the conversion of plantations that originally supported rubber or other crops. This increase is a direct consequence of the government's policy on crop diversification after the Malaysian government recognized the economic potential of oil palm as complementary to rubber.

Awalludin *et al.* (2015) said statistics on oil palm cultivation shows that in year 1960s, Malaysia has had only 54,000 hectares of oil palm plantations. Since then, the oil palm cultivation area has increased dramatically. In the new millennium, oil palm plantations have occupied 3.38 million hectares of Malaysian soils. By 2014, Malaysia has recorded a staggering 5.39 million hectares of oil palm plantations. The growth of oil palm planting is rapid due to the crop diversification programme. Not only that, the Malaysia government encouraged the growth of oil palm planting by giving incentives to make full use of the country's rich agro-based resources. Awalludin *et al.* (2015) posit that the cultivation oil palm was moving at a fast pace and was impelled by the augmentation in independent smallholders and private estates nationwide through a continuous support by the Malaysian government.

Malaysia is one of the two largest countries in the world that produce oil palm. According to Alam *et al*. (2015), oil palm is the fourth largest contributor to the Malaysia's economy and one of the major driving forces for the country's agro-industry and contributed substantially to the national agricultural land bank. The Malaysian government sets many initiatives to propel the oil palm sector. Replanting subsidies, regulation and incentives on palm oil refineries and biodiesel plants were some of the initiatives implemented by the government including research and development (R&D) collaboration which was given in the form of grants for universities to conduct research work.

The palm oil industry in Malaysia saw consistent growth in the milling and refining sectors and this achievement largely due to the country's political and economic stability. According to Tiku and Bullem (2013) there was political

stability and no changes in the ruling government of Malaysia for more than 50 years. This lead to the growth of oil palm as the ruling government encouraged the growth of oil palm as oil palm industry is the backbone of the Malaysia's economic growth (Awalludin *et al.,* 2015).

Oil palm which is one of the most speedily expanding crops in the world has been a significantly contributor to not only Malaysian's economy but also other countries around the world. Alam *et al.* (2015) said around 85 percent of the production of oil palm is concentrated in Indonesia and Malaysia and its use is rapidly spreading in the whole world. According to a study by Susila (2004), palm oil industry contributes to economic growth, helps to alleviate poverty and assists with income distribution. She added that crude palm oil (CPO) industry is estimated to continuously contribute to the economic growth. This could relate to what Bhullar and Kaur (2014) said about knowledge and economic growth. According to them, knowledge and ideas have been emerged as key drivers for the economic growth as knowledge has been considered as the third major factor of production after labour and capital. Therefore, it is it important to study the effect of knowledge management on the growth of oil palm industry.

In order to further promote and develop the palm oil industry in Malaysia, the government formed Malaysian Palm Oil Board (MPOB) which officially began its operations in May 2000 as one of the agencies under the Ministry of Plantation Industries and Commodities. MPOB is funded by palm oil industry taxes and through government grant for research. The organization's activities include and not limited to research, promotion of palm oil industry, developing and implementing regulation related to palm oil activities and publication of journals. One of the activities conducted by MPOB which was published in their official web page is the full life cycle assessment of the palm oil from the nursery to palm biodiesel. The process stars from the seedling to production and ends at the use of palm biodiesel. The total greenhouse gas saving captured with biogas were 76 percent (*MPOB official website*).

The importance placed on palm oil by the Malaysian government on oil palm is evident in the Tenth Malaysia Plan (2011 to 2015) which is a comprehensive blueprint prepared by the Economic Planning Unit of the Prime Minister's Department and Finance Ministry of Malaysia to allocate the national budget. During the plan period, the target is to increase the oil palm industry's output GDP to RM 21.9 billion with export earnings of RM 69.3 billion. To achieve this target, the following initiatives will be undertaken:

(i)   Promoting Malaysia as a global hub for palm oil and preferred destination for foreign investments in areas such as oleo-chemical based products, bulking facilities and R&D;

(ii) Developing Palm Oil Industrial Clusters into integrated sites for promoting downstream activities such as biofuel, oleochemicals, biofertilizers, specialty food products, biomass products, nutraceuticals and pharmaceuticals;

(iii) Encouraging good agriculture practices, agronomic management and mechanisation especially among smallholders; and

(iv) Centralising procurement of agricultural inputs such as fertilisers and pesticides to lower input costs for smallholders.

The significance of oil palm can be seen from the commitment and the economic transformation advances of oil palm industry in Malaysia. Economic transformation simply not achievable without knowledge as knowledge has long been a crucial factor in economic growth. One of the many challenges faced by organizations these days is to remain relevant and to ensure a successful implementation of knowledge management activities in the organization especially knowledge sharing and transfer activities. However, the implementation of knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer not easy task for organization as they

faced with challenges. One such challenges faced by organization is the area of organizational cultural.

Organizational culture can be defined as the shared, basic assumptions that an organization learnt while coping with the environment and solving problems of external adaptation and internal integration that are taught to new members as the correct way to solve those problems (Park *et al*., 2004). Every organization has its own culture that contributes to the unique social and psychological environment of an organization. This unique personality is referred to as its culture.

According to Woszczyna (2015), organizational culture is the element which bonds the aims of employee to achieve the subsequent levels of excellence while reflecting the image of the organization. According to her, innovation fails to thrive in organizations (and individuals) if the environment and organizational culture are not conducive to nurturing these capabilities. Hence, this will greatly influence the behaviour of the individual and lead to the practices of the organization which eventually influence the processes of knowledge management. Therefore, culture plays a primary role in the knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer practices in an organization.

As cultural aspect is an important aspects of knowledge management, in this study researcher will also explore the role of organizational culture in the knowledge management processes specifically on knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer. Therefore, for the purpose of this qualitative study, researcher has chosen an oil palm company (group of companies) in Malaysia to explore in depth on knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer experiences among management staff and the impact of cultural factors on knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer practices.

1.3 Background of Organization

The principal activities of the organization (group of companies) selected to carry out this research divided into plantation and milling activities. The holding company of the Group commenced business with 1,000-acre rubber plantation in Johor (West Malaysia) in late 1960s. The Group commenced the construction of their first palm oil mill in year 1980. The Group expanded into Sabah (East Malaysia) by acquiring 1,000 acres of land and subsequently enters a joint venture with a local state company in 1997 to develop 4,000 acres of land in Sandakan, Sabah into an oil palm plantation. The Group enters a joint venture with another local company in 1998 to develop 17,731 acres of land in Keningau, Sabah into an oil palm plantation and erected a palm oil mill in Sook, Keningau. The group expended its business to Sarawak (East Malaysia) in year 2010.

1.4 Problem Statement

In recent years, knowledge management is being widely gaining acceptance in many organizations around the world. According to Yap *et al.* (2010) knowledge management emerged as a new discipline in managing organization and plays a significant role in establishing long term internal strength and supporting external competitive advantage. Gupta *et al.* (2000) posit that knowledge management occurred for the need to be cost efficient and managerially effective in problem solving, decision making, innovation and all other elements needed to maintain and develop a competitive edge. It also occurred more specially, to capture, catalogue, preserve, disseminate the expertise and knowledge that are part of organizational memory that typically resides within the organization in an unstructured way.

Knowledge management is still a relatively young topic in Malaysia compared to developed countries. A study by Gerald Goh *et al.* (2006), a decade

ago said knowledge management practices in Malaysia are less published and need thorough research to full understand the actual phenomenon in local organizations. Similarly, Salleh Yahya *et al.* (2001) also said the uptake of knowledge management in Malaysian organizations is relatively low and still in the early stage of development. However, in recent years, researcher and academicians are conducting more studies on knowledge management in Malaysia.

Malaysia like many other developed country is a fast growing in terms of economy and technology and striving to become a developed nation (Moshari, 2013). Chong *et al.,* (2007) said to achieve sustainable economic growth and to remain competitive globally, Malaysian government cannot disregard knowledge economy. According to these authors, to become a fully developed nation and rich in knowledge by year 2020, the country must move towards knowledge economy.

Tan (2004) said there is a greater awareness on the need and importance of knowledge management in Malaysian organizations. This is evident in the study of Chong *et al.,* (2007) which says continuous efforts such as increase in R&D programs have been undertaken by the Malaysian government to support transformation in knowledge management. A recent study by Moshar (2013) on knowledge management in Malaysian organizations said not only Bank Negara Malaysia (the Central Bank of Malaysia) implemented knowledge management, private renowned organization such as Nokia Malaysia and Siemens also implemented knowledge management in their organization.

In considering the above, researcher see the need to explore the knowledge management practices as there are many issues to be highlighted in this area. Therefore, researcher decided to carry out a study on the processes of knowledge management primarily focusing on knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer. This study is significant in filling up the research gap in inquiring the knowledge management practices especially on knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer processes in organizations in Malaysia.

Agriculture is an important sector in Malaysia and has been the backbone of Malaysian economy. Oil palm is one of the largest agricultural products produced for domestic and export market. Oil palm industry has been an important agriculture sector in the economy of Malaysia (Alang Mahat, 2012). Malaysia has been fully committed to expand the palm oil industry and encouraged global expansion of palm oil production and agricultural produce. Oil palm especially has always been an important part and contributor to their economy (Kamarulzaman and Mohayidin, 2011). As a palm oil producers in the world, Malaysia is experiencing a robust development in new oil palm plantations and palm oil mills as this commodity plays a significant role in the economic growth of the country (Awalludin *et al.*,2015). According to Kamarulzaman and Mohayidin (2011), R&D has contributed to the success of palm oil industry in Malaysia.

In this regard, increasing attention should be given to studies related to oil palm. This research is focused on knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer in oil palm company as researcher in the opinion that these knowledge management processes are very important for an organization's success and it is an interesting subject for readers and other researchers. In organizations such as oil palm plantation and milling companies, there are many departments and sections to manage. Some group of companies may even have many subsidiaries to manage. It takes a lot of effort and resources to organize a good and steady work flow between sections, departments and companies. Hence, this research could help companies with similar circumstantial to improve their business processes from the findings of this study. The findings also could help similar companies to organize their knowledge flow between employees.

Since this study is focused on knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer among management staff, researcher decided to use qualitative approach as to illuminate the real-life context of the respondents of the study. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), qualitative research is done by researchers in the social and behavioural science, as well as by practitioners in fields that concern themselves

with issues related to human behaviour and functioning. This style of research can be used to study organizations, groups, and individuals. Researcher decided to conduct qualitative study as knowledge management can only be explicated via personal voice so that one's own thought can be captured.

In conclusion, Malaysia today has become a leading palm oil hub of trade and knowledge therefore it is important to study about knowledge management and the best practices in the plantation setting. As one of leading palm oil producer in the world, it is necessary to conduct more studies on knowledge management in the agricultural setting to encourage the growth of the oil palm industry as well as the economy of the country. Due to little empirical research in knowledge management practices agricultural environment in Malaysia, this study is done to full up the gap on knowledge management experiences especially in this field of knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer.

1.5 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore in depth on knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer experiences among management staff in an oil palm plantation company using qualitative approach. The research problems identified in the study motivated the researcher to carry out the study. This study shall focus on the awareness, understanding and experiences of the management staff in practicing the knowledge management processes. This study shall also explore the impact of cultural factors on knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer practises.

Qualitative approach and in-depth interview was chosen is to gain the actual experiences of the management staff in their own words which is not possible via quantitative approach. This study will include focus group discussion to re-examine the transcribed data from the interviews so that the essence of the interview is

captured and the experience, values and beliefs of the respondents could be further enhanced. Due to less empirical evidence is found on knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer practices in agricultural sector in Malaysia, this study is conducted to contribute to the study in that area as knowledge management have become increasingly important and widely accepted. Many organizations have begun to adopt knowledge management as a part of their overall business strategy.

1.6 Research Questions

The following research questions framed the study:

(i)   How is the awareness of knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer among the management staff in the organization?

(ii)   How do the management staff embrace knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer?

(iii) How do cultural factors affect knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer among management staff in the organization?

1.7 Objectives of the Study

The research questions lead to the following set of research objectives:

(i)   To assess the awareness of knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer among management staff in the organization.

(ii)   To analyze the knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer practises that are being embraced by the management staff in the organization.

(iii) To identify the impact of cultural factors on knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer practises.

1.8 Scope of the Study

This study is based on a group of companies primarily focused on oil palm plantation in Malaysia. The study does not cover other organization in the same or other industries. The participants of this study are grouped as the management level employees who have been working for at least five years in the same organization. This study is based on qualitative approach so that the awareness and understanding of knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer can only be explicated via personal voice so that one's own thought can be captured and not influence by the researcher deliberation. This study discusses on two important knowledge management processes which are knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer.

1.9 Limitations

This study has some limitations. This study was bounded by a single group of companies in Malaysia thus the findings of this study is specific to one group of companies and do not represent other plantation companies. The participants of the study are restricted to management level employees only therefore this study does not cover all level of employees in gathering of data. Finally, due to time and cost constraints, it will not be possible for researcher to study all oil palm companies in Malaysia.

1.10 Research Significance

As workplace is changing, the study on knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer among the organization members is becoming more important. Many researchers have carried out studies on knowledge management predominantly on knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer as it is the most important factors that can optimize organizational performance in the current dynamic and complex environment.

Organizations nowadays need the capability not only to create but also to share and transfer knowledge and the best practices to sustain in the business world. This research study could provide information on the embracement of knowledge management processes especially on knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer experiences among management staff and the cultural factors that affect the knowledge management practises.

From an academic point of view, this study gain to benefit from the experiences of the management staff in managing knowledge in work place. The findings of this study will encourage more individual in the organization to identify best practices in knowledge management. Although many studies were conducted on knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer, not much has been explored on the senior management staff of the organization. Management staff plays a very significant and important role in an organization and the success of business depends heavily on the effectiveness of their management. Moreover, this category of people has been acknowledged as one of the important group in an organization. Therefore, the findings of this study shall benefit other organizations to recognize the importance of knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer in the organization from the management staff's point of view.

Qualitative research is very important to organisations (Roshan and Deeptee, 2009). According to them qualitative research is more likely to take place in a natural setting and can be used to explore several areas such as human

behaviour which cannot be quantified yet important to organization. Therefore, the exploration on knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer experiences among management staff is essential tool for organization to learn about human behaviour and interaction in the organization and can give the company a competitive edge.

Moreover, in this study, researcher illuminates the real-life events via qualitative case study. This allows researcher to get better insights of the behavior of the subjects of interest to answer the research questions. For that reason, the findings of this study may benefit other organizations from the same industry and the findings and recommendations of this study may help to improve their existing practices. The recommendations from this study may change the way people do their jobs in the oil palm companies. Therefore, case study can benefit both organizations that being studied and the researcher as well.

1.11 Conceptual and Operational Definitions

For better understanding of this study, some of important terms have been defined based on definitions given by other authors.

(i) Knowledge Management

Knowledge management is a process that helps organizations find, select, organize, disseminate, and transfer important information and expertise necessary for activities (Gupta *et al*., 2000). For this study, knowledge management from the oil palm company's context is defined as the process of finding, selecting, organizing, disseminating and transferring details and expert skills for organizational activities.

(ii) Knowledge Sharing

Sharing is a central aspect of the knowledge-based theory of the firm because it suggests that the primary reason for the existence of the firm is its superior ability to transfer and integrate multiple knowledge streams and to apply existing knowledge to task (Grant, 1996). The operational definition of knowledge sharing is the superior ability of the members of the organization to give a portion of their knowledge for others to apply it in their work.

(iii) Knowledge Transfer

Knowledge transfer is the process of one unit is affected by the experience of another in an organization (Argote and Ingram, 2000). The operational definition of knowledge transfer is to influence or to have an effect on other department or section to manage their organizational activities.

(iv) Leadership

Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal (Northouse, 2007). For this study, leadership is defined as the action to influence others into the direction of the company's goals and objectives.

(v) Trust

Trust is something or someone you believe is reliable and honest. Trust can trump the other factors that positively affect the efficiency of knowledge market. Without trust, knowledge initiatives will fail, regardless of how thoroughly they are supported by technology and rhetoric (Davenport and Prusak, 1997). For this study, trust is defined as the belief or confidence

placed in the members of the organization for knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer activities to take place.

(vi) Collaboration

Collaboration is the process of more than one person working together towards a common shared goal. From the learning perspective, collaboration can be referred to an instruction method in which students at various performance levels work together in small groups towards a common goal. Active exchange of ideas within small groups not only increases interest among the participants but also promote critical thinking (Gokhale, 1995). For this study, collaboration is defined as working together with other members of the organization in oil palm company to produce or create something.

(vii) Organization Culture

Mayfield (2008) in Park *et al.* (2004) said organization culture refers to the shared, basic assumptions that an organization learned while coping with the environment and solving problems of external adaptation and internal integration that are taught to new member as the correct way to solve those problems. For this study, organization culture in an oil palm company is defined as shared values and beliefs of the members of the organization to govern new member to behave in the organization.

(viii) Management staff

Management staff refers to a group of top-level staff responsible for managing, controlling and supervising the entire organization. Omotayo (2015) define managers as someone who plays a critical role in shaping the future of every organisation because the decisions, action and inaction taken

by managers can often result in the successful execution of operations for the organisation. In this study, management staff refers to top and middle level management staff such as General Manager, Senior Estate Manager, Estate Manager, Assistant Manager, Heads of Section or Division responsible for managing the day-to-day activities of the company.

1.12   Conclusion

This chapter provided a brief over view of the knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer experiences among management staff in an oil palm company in Malaysia which formed the background of this research. Background of the study along with the problem statement, research purpose, research questions, research objectives, significance of study and limitations of the study has been presented. All this helped the researcher to explore the knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer experiences in the selected organization together with the in-depth interviews along with the focus group discussion by the researcher to answer the research questions.

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