

# The Role of Knowledge Sharing on Individual Performance, Considering the Factor of Motivation- The Conceptual Framework

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**Abstract**– This paper explores the relationship between Motivation, knowledge sharing and individual performance. First, it is argued that Motivation should be associated with Knowledge Sharing, second that Knowledge Sharing and individual Performance are strongly associated to each other. Next, the conceptual relationship between Motivation, knowledge sharing and individual performance has been established. After that, corresponding prepositions on Motivation and knowledge sharing and its relationship on individual performance has been given. This study adds to the understanding of the effects of knowledge sharing on individual performance, and gives implications to the practice of knowledge sharing.

**Keywords**– Individual Performance, Knowledge Sharing and Motivation

## I. INTRODUCTION

Knowledge is measured as an enterprise priceless asset (Xu et al 2006). Today's highly competitive and expanding global economy requires knowledge management functions into their organizations (Wang et al 2006). Authors of the modern world have stressed a lot that sharing and utilization of knowledge are essential for organizational effectiveness (Kogut and Zander 1996, Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995, Tsai 2001). So knowledge sharing and utilization is one of the most important factors in contributing to the business success. In common, an enterprise has two types of assets, physical and knowledge (Drucker 1993).

The benefits of knowledge sharing for the organization are very prominent, when knowledge is shared, innovative product and services develop with higher quality, no duplication, customer will be better satisfied etc (Krogh, 1998). Studies of the Knowledge sharing reveals that knowledge sharing is a process of recombination and evolution of knowledge (Lee & Cole, 2003) and the globalization is favoring those organization that are able to create and share knowledge more effectively and efficiently than their competitors (Porter, 1990). So it can be said that Knowledge sharing is related to the long run performance and competitiveness. The Basic reason of knowledge sharing is to make easy knowledge shift from one person to another person, to take in the knowledge from outside and then adopt it. It is very necessary for the employees to learn

knowledge from experiences gathered by the colleagues in inter and intra departments, internal processes and even from the outside organizations (Madsen, Mosakowski, & Zaheer, 2003). But the question arises for the individuals, why should they share their knowledge? What benefit they get by sharing their knowledge? Everyone is not social and every one is not selfless, it is not practicality, which gives a big question mark for sharing the knowledge. People usually talk about their ideas and thoughts verbally rather to put them in database but even then sometimes they hide and hold back information in interpersonal interaction (Huysman & Wit, 2002). Many organizations have observed this that sophisticated and valuable information usually do not move from one part of the organization to another, so they have to motivate employees to share the information (Andriessen, E., 2006). Thus, it is the matter of the significant concern whether or not individual shares their knowledge with others.

This paper intends to discuss Motivation for Knowledge Sharing and its effect on Individual Performance. After discussing the relationship between Motivation and knowledge sharing, concerns related to the individual performance are discussed.

## II. KNOWLEDGE SHARING

Different authors have described knowledge differently. Davenport and Prusak (1998) view "knowledge as an evolving mix of framed experience, values, contextual information, and expert insight that provides a framework for evaluating and incorporating new experiences and information". Mostly, effectiveness is depends on how well knowledge is shared between teams, individuals or units (Goodman and Darr 1998, Pentland 1995). So author's main focus of studies now days are how knowledge and effectiveness are interlinked. It is well established fact that individuals and organizations and is more productive when the knowledge is shared (Argote et al. 2000).

Krogh et al., 2000 has paid attention on efficient knowledge sharing leads to the better business processes such as organizational creativity, operational effectiveness and value of products and service. Study of the literature shows that organizations who are well managing their knowledge are successful (Davenport and Prusak, 1998; Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995). Information technology plays a very important role in knowledge exchange (Alavi and Leidner 2001). Research also

shows that Knowledge Management is useful in organizations (Ash and Burn, 2003; Bendoly, 2003; Huin et al., 2003; Shaw et al., 2001; O'Leary, 2002). Huin et al. argue that incredible quantity of knowledge which enterprises can tap on its planning and management process (Huin et al., 2003). Many models are presented for describing the knowledge management (Va Stijin and Wensley, 2001). While Knowledge sharing is one of very important aspect in Knowledge Management. In the innovation process knowledge sharing has an important demeanor on performance (Lee, Lee, & Kang, 2005). In addition, properties of the circumstance within which knowledge sharing take place affect the performance (Rong Du et al 2007).

So knowledge sharing is most important processes of knowledge management, which slowly develop and pick up the building block of the system. It means, knowledge sharing has its relationship in long run performance and competitiveness (Rong Du et al 2007). Researchers have talked about necessities, benefits and content of knowledge sharing (Kanter, 1989) But these efforts have rarely point out the relationship between knowledge sharing and performance which creates problem for the researchers to build and the quantitative theory of knowledge sharing towards performance (R. Du et al. 2007) and has made it more difficult towards knowledge sharing and its effect of individual performance

### III. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual Model Shown in the Figure reflects the process of Individual Performance from the review of literature of Motivation and Knowledge Sharing. The review of the literature suggests that there are at least five motivational factors that are useful when considering knowledge sharing. There are many theories in the literature which have discussed below those talks about motivational factors from individual perspective which can be related to knowledge sharing. There are at least four factors in the literature that describes individual performance and it can also be related to the knowledge sharing.

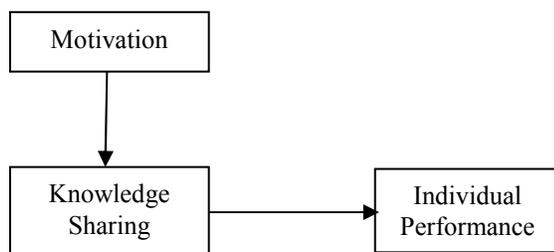


Fig. 1: A diagram of problem statements and key concepts

### IV. MOTIVATION FOR KNOWLEDGE SHARING

#### A. Motivational Theories

How does the motivation affect the knowledge sharing? To answer this question, a study of motivational theories is very necessary and their insinuation in part of knowledge sharing.

The literature has number of motivational theories, first of them is Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory. He proposed that every person has a hierarchy of five needs i.e. basic needs, safety needs, social needs, esteem needs and self actualization needs. His work was criticized widely because of the absence of behavior phenomenon during all the needs and its weak empirical foundation as well (Maccoby, 1988).

On the basis of extensive studies these five hierarchies have been folded into three by the (Alderfer, 1972 i.e. Existence, Relatedness and Growth. While need for achievement, need for power and need for affiliation most important motivating factors in working life McClelland (1987). All these motivational theories are not applied in the field of knowledge sharing but one can argue that a person might share his/he knowledge in order to support his status at job, reputation, to increase his power, to make good interpersonal relationships, to work well and to make his/her own knowledge and abilities more valuable.

Kelmen's theory of is also akin to the Alderfer theory but Kelmen's talks about value based motivation and Alderfer point of view was growth and achieve motivation. So basically there are two types of motivational theories in the literature i.e., content theories which talks about those factors that determine motivation e.g. maslow's theory and second type is Process theory that deals with how individuals identify their motivators and to attain goals related to those motivators. There are several content oriented motivational theories in the literature. Some motivational factors according to these theories are the wish to endure, fun, belong, play, appreciation and respect (Maccoby, 1988), accomplishment, association and power (McClelland, 1971) hard incentives, to increase psychological or physical energy, to put in to the making of goods or services, the need for interpersonal relationship (Vroom, 1964).

All these theories provides an overall scenario of individual motivational factors. Herzberg's Motivation Hygiene theory i.e., based on the hygiene factors and motivational factors. Herzberg describes motivational factors are Achievement, recognition, work itself, Responsibility, Advancement, and Growth. While Hygiene factors are salary, status, security, relationship with peers and supervisors etc. Many studies show that all these factors are prominent motivators (McClelland, Maccoby, 1988). So the focus moves on to those factors that may cause the motivation for knowledge sharing. Herzberg's Motivation Hygiene theory comes out mainly related when studying the factors influencing the motivation for knowledge sharing (Hendriks, P., 1999).

The reason for knowledge sharing are motivational factors according to the Herzberg not the hygiene factors (Hendriks, P., 1999) because if the reason for knowledge sharing is equivalent to status or salary (Hygiene factors, knowledge sharing will less likely to occur. So hygiene factors do not work as motivators for knowledge sharing. Their absence may disturb knowledge sharing but it can not enhance knowledge sharing. These declarations are also verified by empirical research that knowledge sharing occurs because of individual development, operational independence and job accomplishment and not by monetary rewards (Tampoe, 1996). It leads to

*Proposition 1: Motivation is positively related to knowledge sharing.*

### **B. Knowledge Sharing and Individual Performance**

Knowledge sharing is the universal strand in knowledge. There are certain consequences that arise from the knowledge integration cycle. Knowledge sharing one of the very impotent aspects of knowledge management. Usually knowledge is shared after understanding of the work so it can be said that communities are basics for sharing knowledge and its integration (Bechky, 2003). There are many factors that affect knowledge sharing that are at inter organizational level and interpersonal level. While the focus of this study is on inter personal level so inter organizational level knowledge sharing is out of the scope of this paper. Bock, Zmud, Kim, and Lee (2005) worked on the factors that affect individual knowledge sharing objectives.

They took the theory of reasoned action and supported their argument that extrinsic motivators, social psychological factors and organizational factors affect the individuals knowledge sharing intensions. From the literature above it can be concluded that knowledge sharing has strong influence on individual performance. Generally, some ways of doing things are rejected if they don't work well while others are accepted and entrenched as inner routine if they worked well. These inner factors and processes are the has strong effect and influence the effective knowledge sharing and on individual performance (R. Du et al. 2007). So, effective knowledge sharing is very necessary for performance. But required information in order to facilitate intentional knowledge sharing is very difficult to obtain (Dosi & Orsenigo, 1988), that's why knowledge sharing systems have been implemented in various organizations. For efficient and effective knowledge sharing, it's very necessary to identify its impact on individual performance.

### **C. Measures for Individual Performance on Knowledge Sharing**

When carrying out knowledge sharing and Individual Performance, people are assumed to accumulate, adopt and share knowledge in order to perform well on the job. Lee et al., 2005 provided five functions of knowledge management performance named as knowledge circulation process.

Firstly, the basic objective of the knowledge sharing is to transfer knowledge from person to person. For this purpose, individuals have to share their experiences to and from their colleagues and team members (Madsen, Mosakowski, & Zaheer, 2003) Social Network theory says that networks across people are associated with performance related outcomes (Burt, 1992). If people are more connected with each other, they like superior career mobility, enjoy getting high positions and adapt the environmental changes very quickly (Podolny & Baron, 1997; Gargiulo & Benassi, 2000; Podolny).

Secondly, In information search, unified and integrated networks motivate individuals to share their knowledge because

they promote co-operation values, faith and norm (Coleman, 1988; Reagans McEvily, 2003). job performance is directly related to obtain right information because actions for communicating and transferring conceptual and operational knowledge, experiences, and skills in an organization can speed up the procedure of knowledge sharing (Ingram & Simons, 2002). But if people share their knowledge in a comfortable and validating way sometimes unwanted consequences on job performance may occur (Erickson, 1988; Mizruchi & Steams, 2001).

So information networks improve problems in knowledge sharing because they provide more relevant information (Burt, 1992) and increases efficiency on job performance.

Thirdly, knowledge sharing takes place through the procedure of trial and experiments by the individuals (Carrillo & Gaimon, 2000). So it can be said that new ways of doing job and shared experiences leads to better and innovative way and to better performance (R. Du et al. 2007). So innovativeness also improves the performance of individuals.

Fourthly, in organization which supports knowledge sharing activity, information is very dynamic and they vary from individuals and projects. As different opportunities arise, the people or group of people who are aware and able to get ne information and cope up with the new challenges can better perform at work (Gargiulo and Benassi 2000). The individual who is more knowledgeable about his colleagues and co workers can perform well when any sort of problem occurs or he requires any type of information (Borgatti & Cross, 2003). So greater awareness about the colleagues' expertise and ability to get information out from them improves one's ability to perform well. So ability to work well with the peers also improves individual performance.

*Proposition 2: Knowledge sharing is positively related to individual performance.*

## **V. DISCUSSION**

The overcoming objective of this paper is to develop an integrated model that leads towards individual performance through individual motivational factors that help, explain and predict knowledge sharing between them. Critiques of the motivational theories say that there is no single theoretical perspective that explains the knowledge sharing process through motivational mechanism (Quigely et al, 2007, Pinder 1984, Landy and Becker 1987, Mitchell 1997). Many knowledge sharing motivational theories have been discussed which leads to a conceptual model towards motivational factors on knowledge sharing and its effect on individual performance but every motivational theory provides a specific aspect such as the ability of the people to share and receive knowledge to improve their performance. So the need of an integrated theoretical perspective is required that combine motivational theories and separate their individual factors that may lead towards knowledge sharing and relate them to the individual

Table 1: Dimensions of Individual Performance across studies

Researchers	Motivation	Knowledge Sharing	Individual Performance
Narda R. Quigley (2007)	√	√	
J.H. Erik Andriessen (2006)	√	√	
Rong Du et al (2007)		√	√
M.C. Jones et al. (2006)		√	
Paul Hendriks (1999)	√	√	
Rob Cross, Jonathan N. Cummings (2004)		√	√
M.H. Hsu et al. (2007)	√	√	
William R. King, Peter V. Marks (2008)	√	√	

performance measures. In this article, motivational theories have been classified in two distinct categories. First, content theories which talk about those factors that determine motivation e.g. Maslow's theory and second type is Process theory that deals with how individuals identify their motivators and to attain goals related to those motivators. What is novel about the perspective (1) we derived motivational factors related to knowledge sharing (2) we applied these factors (knowledge sharing) on the measures of individual performance. Our theory gives up many important points that provide a more complete and comprehensive explanation of knowledge sharing and its effect on individual performance.

#### A. Theoretical Implications of the Study

First contribution of this study is that, the knowledge sharing is better predicted by understanding how individual motivational factors i.e. sense of achievement, sense of responsibility, promotional opportunities, challenge of work, recognition of job done (P. Hendriks, 1999) interrelate. The theoretical support of the literature here provides knowledge management practitioners to motivate individuals for knowledge sharing. Second contribution of this study involves knowledge sharing and individual performance mechanism that ultimately impact improved performance through knowledge utilization. The third contribution of this study is that successful knowledge transfer requires high level of individual motivation so that knowledge seeker and knowledge provider openly share and accept it because both motivational factors and knowledge sharing has significant and major effect on performance (P. Hendriks, 1999). By bringing social network theory into individual performance, for the first time it theoretically proves that knowledge sharing interacts with motivational factors and effect individual performance. Fourth, a very important contribution of this research is the explicitly described nature of the variables. This contribution is very prominent because knowledge sharing literature has noticed the importance of individual performance in understanding motivation (Szulanski 1996; Goodman and Darr, 1996).

The approach of this study provides a way to help researchers to give further consideration to more variables that

may affect the understanding of the knowledge sharing issues in individual performance.

#### B. Practical Implication of the Study

This study has several practical implications. First, theoretical support suggests that better individual performance can be achieved by motivating for knowledge sharing through individual motivational factors that emphasize knowledge sharing. Such strengthening might be achieved through focusing on knowledge sharing on performance criteria and lightening up goals and objectives as reminder that open the ways for sharing knowledge.

Second, it is very important to know that organizations that encourage individuals to share their knowledge may not find it encouraging to freely receive it and put to use that knowledge. So motivating individuals on their ideas and objectives is one way to get it. To encourage individuals to develop and acquire existing and new knowledge is insufficient to achieve their goal (Gupta and Govindarajan 2000, Thompson et al. 1997). So organizations can generate conditions for higher performance by setting high performance principles through high goals and objectives (Quigley et al. 2007).

#### C. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This study has number of limitations that might be addressed with future research. First, it's a theoretical research with conceptual model. The need for an empirical research is very necessary on the variables and the instrument should be carefully constructed according to the defined measures.

Second limitation of the study is that the variables used in the study have dynamic relationship. Future studies might investigate with these variables under different conditions e.g. different personality perspective, conditions under which how motivational factors strongly interrelate.

## VI. CONCLUSION

This study adds to the growing literature on individual performance by providing the insight into motivational mechanism on knowledge sharing. Considering, several theories of motivation and extracting their individual factors

and then relating them to the knowledge sharing, it made a contribution on improved individual performance. We hope that future research will continue to a more comprehensive understanding of motivational complexities towards knowledge sharing underlying individual performance.

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