

A Conceptual Framework of the Individual and Organizational Antecedents to Knowledge Sharing

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Abstract : The importance of organizational knowledge sharing and knowledge management has been documented in numerous research studies in available literature, since knowledge sharing has been recognized as a founding pillar for superior organizational performance and a source of gaining competitive advantage. Built on this, most of the successful organizations perceive knowledge management and knowledge sharing as a concern of high strategic importance and spend huge amounts on the effective management and sharing of organizational knowledge. However, despite some very serious endeavors, many firms fail to capitalize on the benefits of knowledge sharing because of being unaware of the individual characteristics, interpersonal, organizational and contextual factors that influence knowledge sharing; simply the antecedent to knowledge sharing. The extant literature on antecedents to knowledge sharing, offers a range of antecedents mentioned in a number of research articles and research studies. Some of the previous studies about antecedents to knowledge sharing, studied antecedents to knowledge sharing regarding inter-organizational knowledge transfer; others focused on inter and intra organizational knowledge sharing and still others investigated organizational factors. Some of the organizational antecedents to KS can relate to the characteristics and underlying aspects of knowledge being shared e.g., specificity and complexity of the underlying knowledge to be transferred; others relate to specific organizational characteristics e.g., age and size of the organization, decentralization and absorptive capacity of the firm and still others relate to the social relations and networks of organizations such as social ties, trusting relationships, and value systems. In the same way some researchers have highlighted on only one aspect like organizational commitment, transformational leadership, knowledge-centred culture, learning and performance orientation and social network-based relationships in the organizations. A bulk of the existing research articles on antecedents to knowledge sharing has mainly discussed organizational or environmental factors affecting knowledge sharing. However, the focus, later on, shifted towards the analysis of individuals or personal determinants as antecedents for the individual's engagement in knowledge sharing activities, like personality traits, attitude and self efficacy etc. For example, employees' goal orientations (i.e. learning orientation or performance orientation is an important individual antecedent of knowledge sharing behaviour. While being consistent with the existing literature therefore, the antecedents to knowledge sharing can be classified as being individual and organizational. This paper is an endeavor to discuss a conceptual framework of the individual and organizational antecedents to knowledge sharing in the light of the available literature and empirical evidence. This model not only can help in getting familiarity and comprehension on the subject matter by presenting a holistic view of the antecedents to knowledge sharing as discussed in the literature, but can also help the business managers and especially human resource managers to find insights about the salient features of organizational knowledge sharing. Moreover, this paper can help provide a ground for research students and academicians to conduct both qualitative as well and quantitative research and design an instrument for conducting survey on the topic of individual and organizational antecedents to knowledge sharing.

Keywords : antecedents to knowledge sharing, knowledge management, individual and organizational, organizational knowledge sharing

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