JORDANIAN STUDENT'S ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS KNOWLEDGE SHARING IN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The emergence of a new economy has been viewed by many for latest developments where knowledge has become a valuable asset and resource. Since things have changed rapidly in this new economy, the concern is not just what you learn, but also how you can apply what you learn quickly and capture what you have learned. The main aim of this research study is to better understand and measure the Jordanian student's attitudes and perceptions towards knowledge sharing in Institutions of Higher Education (IHE). This paper reports on the results of a survey of 255 undergraduate and master students at Jarash University. This descriptive research discovered that the students feel very powerfully about the signification of sharing of knowledge in IHE's. More efforts must be made and awareness must be created to guarantee that people understand the advantages of sharing of knowledge. The overall findings revealed that knowledge sharing is vital to the success of knowledge management practices in all organizations; inclusive of IHE's and effective knowledge sharing among students is essential for IHE's.

Key words: Knowledge sharing, Knowledge Management, Institutions of Higher Education

1. INTRODUCTION

It has become a norm to refer to today's economy as a knowledge-based economy. In many developed countries today, competition is not based so much on cost alone, but more on the production and development of knowledge-based products and services (Kamal et al., 2007). On the other hand, understanding the concept of knowledge has been a quandary because of the shortage of theories on the subject (Willem, 2003). Within the generally knowledge management area, an important area that requires more attention is knowledge sharing. Sharing of knowledge is entrenched in the knowledge-processing area where knowledge is generated and used (Shapira et al., 2005). *sful knowledge management approaches should emphasize the importanceSucces* of knowledge sharing to attain highest results for organizations. The literature thus far pointed evidence that the foundation of knowledge management is knowledge sharing. Knowledge sharing is very essential in knowledge-based organizations like IHE due to the fact that most of the employees are knowledge workers. This study aims to is to better understand and measure the Jordanian student's attitudes and perceptions towards knowledge sharing in IHE's.

2. KNOWLEDGE SHARING

Knowledge sharing is an important unit of the knowledge management system in an organization (Sohail & Daud, 2009). Holsapple and Joshi (2002) described the operational objective of KM as to "ensure that the right knowledge is available to the right processors, in the right representations and at the right times, for performing their knowledge activities (and to accomplish this for the right cost)". It is crucial to be highlighted here that knowledge sharing and knowledge management are not equivalent. Knowledge sharing ensures the knowledge is available and delivered in the nick of time. Furthermore, by providing dynamic solutions to customers, knowledge sharing may save time and improve the quality. It is difficult to define knowledge sharing. Many researchers defined it based on their opinions. According to Fengjie et al. (2004), sharing of knowledge is the main part in the subject of knowledge management. Choi and Lee (2003), pointed out that knowledge sharing becomes a factor to obtain and maintain a competitive advantage and improve business performance while Willet (2002) mentioned it as non-neutral exchanged of information but very influencing the distribution of power, working relationships, models of influence and changes how individual identify their responsibilities. Ultimately, Lee et al. (2000) defined knowledge sharing as activities of transferring or disseminating knowledge from one person, group or organization to another. Haas (2006) argued that even though researchers have increased awareness of knowledge sharing in organizations over the years, moderately little research has focused on the performance implications for task units within organizations.

Knowledge sharing is aimed to do something useful with knowledge. Improving knowledge sharing is made in two dimensions: One dimension is managing the existing knowledge including the development of knowledge repositories (memos, reports, articles and reports) and knowledge compilation. Another dimension is managing knowledge-specific activities, that is, knowledge acquisitions, creation, distribution, communication, sharing and application (Stenmark, 2001).

3.   KNOWLEDGE SHARING IN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

According to Kamal *et al.* (2007), sharing of knowledge is very essential in knowledge-based organizations like IHEs due to the fact that most of the employees are knowledge workers. Instead of creating new patterns of knowledge management, it is better to acknowledge the existing KM in Institutions of Higher Learning for further progress. IHEs and their staff also are required to recognize and respond to their changing role in a knowledge-based society (Yang & Ismail, 2008).

According to Maponya (2004), knowledge management as it included in the business sector is becoming more acceptable in the academic sector. After all, knowledge invented through research and teaching in universities should be relevant to the labor market. University is critically associated with the preservation of knowledge and ideas through these processes; teaching, research, publication, extension and services and interpretation (Ratcliffe-Martin et al., 2000). As a result, knowledge is ought to be promoted as a business in the university and should remain as the focus of higher education institutions. Gupta et al. (2000) pointed out that since many organizations are facing the increasing competition, they begin to realize that there is a huge and largely untapped asset diffused around in the organization-knowledge. In today's world, knowledge is the most crucial asset of any organization particularly for the IHEs and universities (Abdullah et al., 2008; Ruzaif & Shahizan, 2008, Sharimllah et al., 2007, Sharimllah et al., 2008, Sharimllah et al., 2009).

4.   MATERIALS AND METHODS

Both primary and secondary data were collected for this research. The primary data was collected by distributing questionnaires to the students in Jarash University (JU). JU is a private university located n the northern region of Jordan. The sample of this study was the students that come from students universities. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed to students in JU. The sampling was based on simple random sampling and 255 participants successfully responded, giving a response rate of 62.5 %. The analysis of the survey results is presented based on a valid response of 255 students of JU. Data collection for this study was undertaken during the month of February 2011. In gathering information pertaining to the study; a questionnaire was used as the main instrument for data collection in this study. A questionnaire was prepared divided into four sections as follows: Section 1 was not containing any personally identifiable questions. The demographic and background variables used in this study are gender, age, level, and faculty. Section 2 contains questions that are targeted at preferred channels for knowledge sharing. Section 3 contains questions that are targeted at general attitude towards knowledge sharing. The respondents were given a mix of positive and negative statements for understanding their general attitude towards knowledge sharing. Section 4 contains questions that are related to factors inhibiting knowledge sharing. All questions in this questionnaire used a five-point Likert-type scale (SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, N = Neutral, A = Agree and SA = Strongly Agree).

5.   RESULTS

5.1. Respondent's profile and background information

Based on the demographics and other personal background information obtained, out of 255 respondents 57.0% were males. 50% of the respondents were below 20 years and 27% were 21-25 years old. Most of the respondents were undergraduate 87%. In terms of student's Faculty, 31% of students from Economics and Admin faculty followed by Science faculty with 29%, Agriculture faculty 16%, Law faculty with 8%, Nursing faculty with 7%, Arts faculty with 6%, and Sharia faculty with 4%. Table 1 below gives respondents' demographic profile:
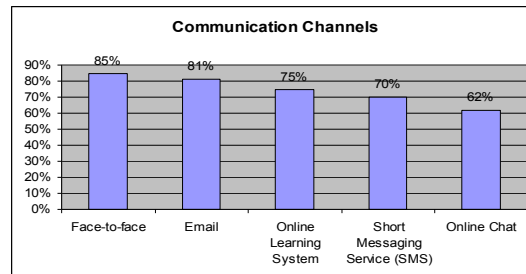
5.2. Preferred channels for knowledge sharing

As illustrated in table 2 and fig 1, it was found that face-to-face communication was the most preferred form of sharing knowledge with 85%, followed by email with 81%, Online Learning System with 75%, Short Messaging Service (SMS) with 70%, Online Chat with 62%. Table 3 shows the preferred channels for knowledge sharing for students by scoring form the highest intensity to the lowest intensity for to knowledge sharing.

Table 1. Respondents' demographic profile

Respondents' Profile	Classification	Frequency	(%)
Gender	Male	145	57
	Female	110	53
Age	Below 20 years	129	50
	21-25 years	69	27
	26-30 years	32	13
	Above 30	26	10
Level	Undergraduate	221	87
	Master degree	34	13
Faculty	Arts	15	6
	Sharia	9	4
	Nursing	19	7
	Law	20	8
	Agriculture	40	16
	Science	73	28
	Economics & Admin	79	31

Table 2. Preferred channels for knowledge sharing

Communication Channel	Score (%)
Face-to-face	85%
Email	81%
Online Learning System	75%
Short Messaging Service (SMS)	70%
Online Chat	62%

Fig. 1. Preferred channels for knowledge sharing

5.3. General attitude towards knowledge sharing

The respondents were given a mix of positive and negative statements for understanding their general attitude towards knowledge sharing. A big majority of the students 95.3 % rated "strongly agree" or "agree" for the statement that sharing knowledge with peers could benefit all students (Table 3). When asked to indicate their opinion on the statement that knowledge should only be shared when approached by peers, 14.5 % of the students rated "strongly agree" or "agree" to this stance, while 70.6 % of the respondents rated either "disagree" or "strongly disagree" with this viewpoint. Although a majority of the students (88.6 %) rated "strongly agree" or "agree" for the statement that students should voluntarily share information with their peers. The statement "sharing is caring" also yielded a somewhat similar trend where 79.2 % of the students said either "strongly agree" or "agree" with it. Some of the students (87.0 %) rated "disagree" or "strongly disagree" for the statement that knowledge sharing should be avoided whenever possible. Similarly, a big majority of the students (86.9 %) rejected the suggestion that information and knowledge sharing is a type of plagiarism. Almost a similar trend was recorded for the suggestion that many students do not share information and knowledge out of the fear that they might be penalized by their lecturers. This result could be understood that the majority of the respondents were willing to know and share and the majority believed that knowledge sharing would add positive values to Higher Education organizations. It was encouraging to note that the students generally possessed a positive attitude towards knowledge sharing and were aware of its importance in Institutions of higher learning. They also rejected some misperceptions associated with knowledge sharing which reflected their level of understanding and maturity.

### 5.4. Factors inhibiting knowledge sharing

Table 4 shows student's views on the barriers to the sharing knowledge. The barriers were arranged in ascending order of the mean value. One can see that lack of time to share knowledge, lack of depth in relationship, afraid that others would perform better, and lack of trust among students as the strongest barriers. In addition, Afraid to provide the wrong information, shy to provide own opinions, do not know what to share, and lack of knowledge-sharing culture were rated low in terms of barriers to knowledge sharing.

Table 3. General Attitude towards Knowledge Sharing (Percentage/ Frequency)

Perception	Number of responses (%)				
	SD	D	N	A	SA
I feel that it is important to share knowledge with other students for the benefit of all	5 (2.0)	4 (1.6)	3 (1.2)	26 (10.2)	217 (85.1)
Students should share knowledge with their peers only when approached	50 (19.6)	130 (51.0)	38 (14.9)	25 (9.8)	12 (4.7)
Students should voluntarily share their knowledge with peers	6 (2.4)	14 (5.5)	9 (3.5)	153 (60.0)	73 (28.6)
I feel that "sharing is caring"	13 (5.1)	14 (5.5)	26 (10.2)	94 (36.9)	108 (42.3)
It is better to avoid sharing information with peers whenever possible	187 (73.3)	35 (13.7)	4 (1.6)	10 (3.9)	19 (7.5)
Many students have the mindset that sharing knowledge is a type of plagiarism	175 (68.5)	47 (18.4)	5 (2.0)	16 (6.4)	12 (4.7)
Many students feel that they might be penalized by the lecturer for sharing information and knowledge	52 (20.4)	62 (24.3)	118 (46.3)	17 (6.7)	6 (2.4)

Table 4. Factors limiting knowledge sharing

No.	Factors inhibiting knowledge sharing	Mean
1	There is general lack of time to share knowledge	4.32
2	Lack of depth in relationship	4.22
3	Afraid that others would perform better	3.67
4	There is a general lack of trust among students	3.54
5	Afraid to provide the wrong information	3.21
6	Shy to provide own opinions	2.98
7	Do not know what to share	2.87
8	Lack of knowledge-sharing culture	2.77

Fig. 2. Factors limiting knowledge sharing

Factors inhibiting knowledge sharing
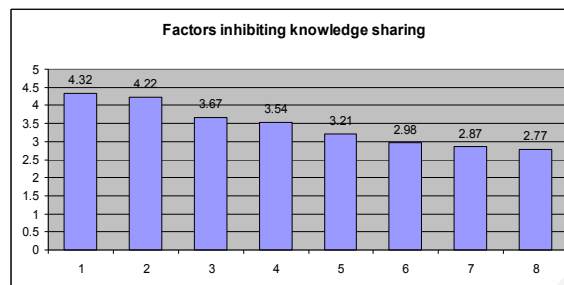
6. CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to explore the Jordanian student's attitudes and perceptions towards knowledge sharing in IHEs. Knowledge sharing is vital to the success of knowledge management practices in all organizations, inclusive of IHEs. Effective knowledge sharing among students is essential for IHEs. This descriptive research discovered that the students feel very powerfully about the signification of sharing of knowledge in IHEs. More efforts must be made and awareness must be created to guarantee that students understand the advantages of sharing of knowledge. On the whole, the students showed a positive attitude towards knowledge sharing. It is interesting to see that although people don't consider knowledge sharing as an additional responsibility and time consuming activity. Since the survey was limited to one IHE, the outcomes might not be appropriate to all the IHEs. Thus, future research should consider larger sample size from different IHEs. In addition, more studies need to be carried out using other methodology such as interviews.

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