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ATTITUDES TOWARDS KNOWLEDGE SHARING AMONG QUANTITY SURVEYORS

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this paper is to identify factors that influence knowledge sharing and determine the attitudes of quantity surveyors towards knowledge sharing based on the factors. The analysis was based on an online questionnaire survey of Registered Quantity Surveyors from Selangor and Kuala Lumpur. Individualism and collectivism were identified as two major factors that influence attitude towards knowledge sharing. Indicators of individualism include individual attitude, competitiveness, care, incentives and rewards; while the indicators of collectivism are trust, social behaviors and motivation. The findings show that the level of attitudes towards knowledge sharing among quantity surveyors is generally high under enabling organizational environment. However, this is a cautious conclusion as the valid sample on which the analysis is based is relatively small. Willingness to share was found to be highest when incentives and rewards are involved as well as when there is a knowledge management system to promote continuous learning and sharing of knowledge.

Keywords: Attitudes; Knowledge sharing; Quantity Surveyors

1. INTRODUCTION

The mantra within the knowledge management community is that 80% of knowledge management is people and culture, and 20% is technology [1]. A component of the people and culture factors deals with encouraging a knowledge sharing environment within an organisation. "Sharing" is the highest level of knowledge management. To create and share knowledge, people must have access to each other and be able to exchange their ideas [2].

In Malaysia, knowledge management is a critical concern for creating and sustaining the organisation in the construction industry. However, knowledge is not always easily captured or effectively shared among industry parties. There is much "knowledge wastage" and difficulties in accessing important information. The industry is also large and complex and the many different parties in the industry do not share a common education base [3]. The lessons learned on many construction projects are often lost when the project team is disbanded at the end of the project [4]. Besides, the fragmentation of the project team into different professional disciplines can make the effective codification and diffusion of knowledge even more problematic [5].

As one of the consultants in a construction project, the Quantity Surveyors use his or her knowledge to analyse cost elements of a project and apply the results of his analysis to financial and economic problems confronting the developer and the designer [6]. Quantity Surveyors are well placed to be the major information handlers on construction projects as the majority of information flow revolves around quantities and cost. Realistically though, no profession can legitimately lay claim to being best suited to take control of information and knowledge management [7].

A survey was undertaken by Davis[8] among fifty Quantity Surveyor professional companies. One of his observations is that the common current practices that Quantity Surveyors use to acquire or share knowledge are not enough to enhance employees' knowledge levels. Nearly half of the Quantity Surveyors cannot acquire all the knowledge they need from work. New knowledge or other specialist knowledge is less likely to be acquired. This can be explained by the lack of emphasis on creating knowledge, so there must be an improvement in knowledge management methods to enhance their knowledge levels.

2. ATTITUDES THAT INFLUENCE KNOWLEDGE SHARING BEHAVIOUR

The knowledge sharing appears to be moulded by two different influences, namely individualism and collectivism [9][10].

2.1 Individualism

Individualism is defined as a focus on rights above duties, a concern for oneself and immediate family, an emphasis on personal autonomy and self-fulfillment,

and basing identity on one's personal accomplishments [11]. It is the extent to which a person values independence and personal uniqueness [12]. The focus is more on the personals goal, hard work and individual achievement purpose rather than the groups [13]. Individualism pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: tendency of people to place their personal goals ahead of the goals of the organization [14]. Wolfe and Loraas [15] in their research proposed that people with a strong individualist orientation cooperate less within their groups. Individualism is negatively related to the intention to share knowledge. It can be divided into four subtopics which are individual attitude, competitive, care; and incentives and rewards. Table 1 summarises the propositions in each of these subtopics.

2.1.1 Individual Attitude

The decisions we make are based on assumptions and the beliefs we hold to be our truths. The personal system we create that we rely on is our paradigm [16]. A paradigm is a way of thinking, perceiving, communicating or viewing the world. It is often called a worldview or a mindset [17]. If someone or something tries to change these paradigms, we resist. Changing an individual belief system is very difficult. Consequently, we live our paradigms until we are forced to re-examine what we know, our assumptions and beliefs, and life experience. Those who are open to change develop new insights; often create new ways of thinking and behaving in knowledge sharing [18].

Negative individual behaviour and attitude cannot support effective knowledge sharing [19]. Where norms and practices that advocate and reinforce the supremacy of individual attitude, activities of knowledge transfer and sharing are limited [20]. Yet, one of the critical success factors for knowledge creation, transfer and sharing was that employees willingly contribute their knowledge or expertise to the company [21].

2.1.2 Competitive

The realization of organisational knowledge depends on people who interpret, organise, plan, develop and execute those socially constructed templates. Organisational knowledge are related to the subtle, implicit, embedded, sometimes invisible knowledge, presumptions, values and ways of thinking that permeate an employee's behavior, decisions and his or her actions [22].

Moreover, perceived position differences among individuals lead to adoption of defensive measures to protect knowledge assets of individual units, therefore impeding the sharing and transfer of knowledge within the organisation [23]. Wang [24] noted that workers who felt threatened by competition from colleagues might reduce their knowledge sharing, essentially hoarding knowledge. Long term employees might feel threatened by those they consider to be possible replacements for their positions or they might feel a level of discomfort in dealing with newer and often younger arrivals [25]. Thus, knowledge sharing is greater when competition is minimized in the organisation [26].

2.1.3 Care

Effective knowledge sharing puts demands on the way people relate to each other in an organisation. Untrustworthy behaviour, constant competition, imbalances in giving and receiving information and a 'that is not my job' attitude endanger effective knowledge sharing. Care is something most human beings can relate to through their personal histories. To care for someone is to help them to learn, to increase awareness of events, and consequences, and to help nurture personal knowledge creation, while sharing insights. Genuine care gives rise to empathy, making it possible to assess and understand people's need. When care is low in organisations, individuals will try to hoard knowledge rather than share it voluntarily [26].

2.1.4 Incentives and Rewards

In nurturing knowledge sharing, an organisation must have rewards and incentive systems in place. Such measures are necessary to motivate knowledge sharing and reward knowledge contribution [27].

Therefore, the way an organisation rewards its employees contributes heavily to their satisfaction and retention. This is because individuals understand that in exchange for their effort and commitment, the organisation helps to develop their potential. Subsequently, rewarding people for their work is an important aspect of attracting, retaining and tapping knowledge workers [28].

Knowledge sharing is greater when there are incentives for collaboration [29]. Knowledge sharing incentives are necessary for consistent sharing of knowledge. Incentives represent an optimal solution for motivating knowledge sharing [30]. Besides, organisations shall also ensure the knowledge shared is accurate in order to encourage knowledge sharing. Based on these perceived significant reward, employees shall exert higher levels of effort to learn and share. This way shall encourage all employees to perform their best in their jobs [31].

Table 1. Individualism: The propositions of Individual Attitude, Competitive, Care; and Incentives and Rewards

Individual Attitude	• Negative individual behaviour and attitude cannot support effective knowledge sharing. • Where norms and practices that advocate and reinforce the supremacy of individual attitude, activities of knowledge transfer and sharing are limited. • Critical success factors for knowledge creation, transfer and sharing was that employees willingly contribute their knowledge or expertise to the company.
Competitive	• Knowledge sharing is greater when competition is minimized in the organisation. • Perceived position differences among individuals lead to adoption of defensive measures to protect knowledge assets of individual units, therefore impeding the sharing and transfer of knowledge within the organisation. • Workers who felt threatened by competition from colleagues might reduce their knowledge sharing, essentially hoarding knowledge.
Care	• When care is low in organisations, individuals will try to hoard knowledge rather than share it voluntarily.
Incentives and Rewards	• Knowledge sharing is greater when there are incentives for collaboration. • Knowledge sharing incentives are necessary for consistent sharing of knowledge. Incentives represent an optimal solution for motivating knowledge sharing.

2.2 Collectivism

Collectivism is the extent to which people value duty to groups that they belong [32]. Individuals from collectivist cultures tend to give priority to the goals of the larger collective, group or company to which they belong [33].

Wolfe and Loraas [34] propose that people with a strong collectivist orientation cooperate more within their groups. Collectivism is positively related to the intention to share knowledge. Oyserman et al. [35] argued that collectivism implies that (a) group membership is a central aspect of identity; (b) valued personal traits reflect the goals of collectivism, such as sacrifice for the common good; (c) life satisfaction derives from successfully carrying out social roles and obligations and (d) restraint in emotional expression is valued to ensure in-group harmony. Collectivism is divided into three subtopics which are trust, social behaviours and motivation. Table 2 summarises the propositions in each of these subtopics

2.2.1 Trust

Chowdury [36] suggests that trust is crucial and that trust must be developed between every member of a team for knowledge sharing to happen. When people trust each other, they also help one another because they feel it is morally right. Team members here appeared willing to engage in exchanging knowledge in a co-operative manner, possibly reassured by the sentiment of trust [37]. Trust and integrity on the part of leaders will help to unlock employee's resistance to share. Once trust is established, knowledge sharing needs to be part of everything in the organisation's culture [38].

Furthermore, the level of trust that exists between the organisation and its employees greatly influences the amount of knowledge that flows both between individuals and from individuals into the organistation [39]. The development of trust enables the successful sharing of knowledge [40].

2.2.2 Social Behaviours

Social behaviours include acts such as helping, sharing, donating, cooperating and volunteering. The ease or difficulty of sharing knowledge is a reflection of its social context. To support the flow of knowledge, within or between communities and organisations, this focus must expand to encompass communities and the full richness of communication. This calls for the social networks either formal or informal [41]. Social network and sharing resources can support greater knowledge sharing [42].

As explained by social network theory, a social network, consisting of interconnected individuals who are linked by patterned communication flows, provides ways for individual members in the social network to gather information and seek opportunities for innovation [43]. They are known to one another through long term dependent relationships [44].

2.2.3 Motivation

Motivation as defined by Robbins as the willingness to exert high levels of effort toward organisational goals, conditioned by the effort's ability to satisfy some individual need. By inspiring employees to increase their feelings of belonging to an organization, motivation for knowledge sharing increased [46]. If people understand that sharing their knowledge helps them do their jobs more effectively; helps them retain their jobs; helps them in their personal development and career progression; and brings more personal recognition, then knowledge sharing will become a reality [47].

Thus, greater motivation can lead to effective knowledge sharing [48]. In organisational where

commitment and loyalty are non-existent, knowledge sharing hardly happens [49].

Table 2. Collectivism: The propositions of Trust, Social Behaviours and Motivation

Trust	• The development of trust enables the successful sharing of knowledge. • The level of trust that exists between the organisation and its employees greatly influences the amount of knowledge that flows both between individuals and from individuals into the organistation.
Social Behaviours	• Social network and sharing resources can support greater knowledge sharing. • The ease or difficulty of sharing knowledge is a reflection of its social context. To support the flow of knowledge, the focus must be expanded to encompass social networks.
Motivation	• Greater motivation can lead to effective knowledge sharing. • In organisational where commitment and loyalty are non-existent, knowledge sharing hardly happens.

3. METHODOLOGY

The respondents were drawn from a population of 576 Registered Quantity Surveyors in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur under Board of Quantity Surveyors Malaysia (BQSM). The analysis was based on an online questionnaire survey where a total of 318 emails were sent out and 34 responses were received, giving a response rate of approximately 11 percent.

In order to determine the attitudes towards knowledge sharing among Quantity Surveyors, the factors that influence the attitudes were identified which are individualism and collectivism. Individualism factor was analyzed through individual attitude, competitive, care as well as incentives and rewards. Collectivism was examined from the perspective of trust, social behaviours and motivation. Respondents were requested to indicate on a Likert scale of 1 to 5, the extent they agreed with each of the statements in the questionnaire.

All the statements regarding to attitudes in the questionnaire are analysed using mean. The mean obtained from the research is then categorized into 3 levels which are low, medium and high (Table 3).

After that, the results collected from the questionnaire were compared and discussed with the propositions that identified in the literature review.

Table 3. Mean Interpretation of Quantity Surveyors' Attitude

Level	Mean
Low	1.00-2.33
Medium	2.34-3.66
High	3.67-5.00

4. DISCUSSION

Table 4 to Table 7 below shows the findings and discussion of individualism factor while the Table 8 to Table 10 shows the findings and discussion of collectivism factor that influence the attitude of Quantity Surveyors towards knowledge sharing.

Table 4. Individualism: Summary of analysis for Individual Attitude

Attitude	Mean	Level
What happens to me is my own doing	2.47	Medium
I do not like to rely on other organisational members	1.79	Low
I like to act independently and take matters into my own hands	2.15	Low
I try to live my life independent of other organisational members as much as possible	1.88	Low
I mainly depend on myself, rarely on other organisational members	2.15	Low
Average mean	*2.09*	*Low*

According to literature, negative individual behaviour and attitude cannot support effective knowledge sharing. Knowledge transfer and sharing are limited when norms and practices reinforce the supremacy of individual attitude. Table 4 shows that the Quantity Surveyors level of individual attitude can be grouped in low level. Quantity Surveyors have good individual attitude that support knowledge sharing. This finding

also shows that the attitude of Quantity Surveyors towards knowledge sharing is high.

Table 5. Individualism: Summary of analysis for Competitive

Attitude	Mean	Level
I want to be the best every time I compete against other organisational members	3.44	Medium
I feel that I have to be better than other organisational members	3.50	Medium
I enjoy competing against other organisational members	3.00	Medium
I get tense and anxious when other organisational members do better than I do	2.41	Medium
I feel gratified when I excel and other organisational members do not	2.32	Low
I would never allow other organisational members to take the credit for something I accomplished	2.59	Medium
I hate to lose	2.88	Medium
Average mean	*2.88*	*Medium*

Table 1 indicates that knowledge sharing is greater when competition is minimized in the organisation. Perceived position differences among individuals lead to adoption of defensive measures to protect knowledge assets of individual, therefore impeding the sharing knowledge within the organization. Medium level of competitive attitude explains that Quantity Surveyors have competitive attitude in the organisation. Competitive attitude will impede the sharing knowledge within the organisation. When competitive attitude is high, attitude of Quantity Surveyors towards knowledge sharing is low.

Table 6. Individualism: Summary of analysis for Care

Attitude	Mean	Level
I will not give a hand to other organisational members since I know that is not my job	1.44	Low
I will not advise to other organisational members although I realise that they have done something incorrectly	1.32	Low
I will not share my knowledge with other organisational members although they face problems and difficulties	1.24	Low
I will not share my knowledge with other organisational members even if they need the knowledge	1.35	Low
Average mean	*1.34*	*Low*

Table 6 above shows that all the negative attitudes in care can be categorised at low level. When care is low in organisation, individuals will try to hoard knowledge rather than share it voluntarily (Table 1). The results show that Quantity Surveyors share their knowledge voluntarily with other members in the organisation. The negative attitude of care is low level showing that the attitude towards knowledge sharing among Quantity Surveyors is high.

Table 7. Individualism: Summary of analysis for Incentives and Rewards

Attitude	Mean	Level
I am willing to share knowledge if I can obtain a sense of achievement and growth	3.85	High
I am willing to share knowledge if it can lower my workload	3.76	High
I am willing to share knowledge if knowledge sharing can be evaluated for continuous learning	4.12	High
I am willing to share knowledge if knowledge sharing can be considered for hiring and evaluation	3.88	High
I am willing to share knowledge if knowledge sharing can increase salary	3.53	Medium
I am willing to share knowledge when better environments are provided such as network platform and related equipment	3.65	High
I am willing to share knowledge when seeking support from leaders and colleague	3.74	High
I am willing to share knowledge if I can obtain the chance to study aboard	3.18	Medium
I am willing to share knowledge if I can obtain public praise	3.03	Medium
Average mean	*3.64*	*Medium*

Knowledge sharing incentives are necessary for consistent sharing and it represents an optimal solution for motivating knowledge sharing (Table 1). Knowledge sharing is greater when there are incentives for collaboration. The results for incentives and rewards attitude as shown in Table 7 can be considered as high level though the average mean is medium. This implies that Quantity Surveyors agreed that when there are incentives and rewards, knowledge sharing level among Quantity Surveyors are greater.

Table 8. Collectivism: Summary of analysis for Trust

Attitude	Mean	Level
I know my organisational members will try and help me out if I get into difficulties	4.03	High
I can always trust my organisational members and willing to share knowledge and confidential documents with them	4.00	High
I can always rely on my organisational members to make my job easier	3.82	High
Average mean	*3.95*	*High*

The level of trust that exists between the organisation and its employees greatly influences the amount of knowledge that flows both between individuals and from individuals into the organistation (Table 2). Table 8 shows the average means at high level implies that the attitude of Quantity Surveyors towards knowledge sharing is also high. Thus, this development of trust enables the successful sharing of knowledge.

Table 9. Collectivism: Summary of analysis for Social Behaviours

Attitude	Mean	Level
I have a very good relationship with my organisational members and I am willing to share my knowledge with them	4.41	High
My organisational members and I are always agreed on what is important at work	4.26	High
My organisational members and I are always shared the same ambitions and vision at work	3.97	High
My organisational members and I are always enthusiastic about pursuing the collective goals and missions of the whole organisations	4.18	High
I am willing to sacrifice my time and energy to help other organisational members	4.12	High
Average mean	*4.19*	*High*

Social network and sharing resources can support greater knowledge sharing (Table 2). The average mean of social behaviours indicates a high level attitude towards knowledge sharing among Quantity Surveyors as shown in Table 9. This also implies that Quantity Surveyors have a very good social relationship with other members in the organisation.

Table 10. Collectivism: Summary of analysis for Motivation

Attitude	Mean	Level
I am willing to share knowledge with other organisational members in order to support the organisational's goal and vision	4.50	High
Formal award programme will motivate me to share knowledge with other organisational members	3.82	High
I enjoy to work and feel rewarded simply by sharing my knowledge with other organisational members and performing work task together	4.35	High
I work towards organisational successfulness through knowledge sharing to show my identity in being a member of the organisation	4.12	High
I will always try to share my expertise obtained from education and training with my organisational members to improve organisation's efficiency	4.50	High
Average mean	*4.26*	*High*

Greater motivation can lead to effective knowledge sharing (Table 2). The findings in Table 10 above show that the average mean is at high level. Quantity Surveyors are willing to share knowledge in order to support organisation’s goal and vision. When there are greater motivations such as clear goal and vision as well as to improve organisation’s efficiency, the attitude of Quantity Surveyors towards knowledge sharing is also greater.

5. CONCLUSION

One of the critical factors to knowledge management is sharing knowledge. Knowledge is regarded as the most important asset for sustainable success in the organization. In general, the result of the survey shows that either within the context individualism or collectivism, Quantity Surveyors have attitude that indicates high level of knowledge sharing with other members in the organization. Thus, in organizations that provide the factors that enhance knowledge sharing, Quantity Surveyors will be much willing to share the knowledge. This, however, is a cautious statement as the valid sample used in the analysis is somewhat small. The existing characteristic willingness to share knowledge among Quantity Surveyors combined with the organization efforts to nurture the knowledge sharing will encourage all members to perform their best in the organization. The tendency to share was found to be highest when incentives and rewards are involved as well as when there is a knowledge management system to promote continuous learning and sharing of knowledge.

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