

Scrutinizing The Cultural Orientation of Students in Higher Learning Institution Towards Knowledge Sharing Behaviour : UiTM Kedah, Malaysia

Mohd Zool Hilmie Mohamed Sawal ¹⁺, Ahmad Sufi Alawi Idris ², Nor Azlina Azmi ³ and
Syed Mohammed Alhady Syed Ahmad Alhady ⁴

¹ Faculty of Information Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Kedah

² Faculty of Information Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Kedah

³ Faculty of Information Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Kedah

⁴ Faculty of Information Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Kedah

Abstract. Knowledge era has put the field of Knowledge Sharing Behaviour into the driver's seat as the drive force of today's economy. Knowledge Sharing Behaviour approaches are fast becoming the backbone and driving force behind the organizations' work processes in order to ensure full utilization of the knowledge assets that resides within an organization. The aim of this study is to explore and determine the cultural orientation as well as the status of the knowledge sharing behaviour among the students from the UiTM Kedah, Malaysia and how does it inflict on their knowledge sharing behaviour. For the purpose of this study, the research measurement/instrument that would be utilized to collect data is individually delivered questionnaires. Fractions of the measurement were adopted from Triandis and his I-C scale. Combining the two dimensions of individualism and collectivism with vertical and horizontal relationship orientations leads researchers to distinguish between four different types of culture. The findings revealed that from the Triandis I-C scale, there were two main variables that related to the study; Horizontal Collectivism and Vertical Individualism which showed strong relationship with the knowledge sharing behaviour among the students.

Keywords: Knowledge management, knowledge sharing behaviour, cultural orientation

1. Introduction

Knowledge management approaches are fast becoming the backbone and driving force behind the organizations' work processes in order to ensure full utilization of the knowledge assets that resides within an organization. In the Knowledge era, the basic economic resource would be knowledge, which seemed to include an ability to manipulate ideas and innovate. One of the challenges of knowledge management is that of getting people to share their knowledge. People are typically inflexible in giving up their hard-won knowledge, because to them it is one of their key sources for personal advantage over others. In some organizations, sharing is natural. In others the old saying "knowledge is power" reigns.

Therefore this study would attempt to scrutinize the cultural orientation and attitude of the students from the Universiti Teknologi Mara Kedah and how does it inflict on their knowledge sharing behaviour. To create a knowledge sharing culture the people would need to be encouraged to work together more effectively, to collaborate and to share - ultimately to make organizational knowledge more productive. Therefore the study will explore and determine the cultural orientation as well as the status of the knowledge sharing behaviour among the students from the UiTM Kedah. Consequently, the study would enable

⁺ Corresponding author. Tel.: + 604-4562519; fax: +604-4562234.
E-mail address: zoolhilmie@kedah.uitm.edu.my.

relationship between both variables to be investigated and studied in order to determine the actual relationship between them. Furthermore, this study would enhance clearer understanding which would contribute towards amplifying the knowledge on the field that is being investigated. For the purpose of this study, the research measurement/instrument that would be utilized to collect data is individually delivered questionnaires. Fractions of the measurement were adopted from Triandis and his I-C scale. Combining the two dimensions of individualism and collectivism with vertical and horizontal relationship orientations leads researchers to distinguish between four different types of culture (Singelis et al, 1995; Triandis, 1995; Triandis & Gelfand, 1998):

- Horizontal Individualism (HI),
- Horizontal Collectivism (H2),
- Vertical Individualism (H3),
- Vertical Collectivism (H4).

2. Methodology

3.1. I – C Scale

Based on the idea that individualism and collectivism may be different constructs but share something in common, Triandis and his colleagues (Triandis & Gelfand, 1998) proposed that individualism and collectivism can be categorized either vertical or horizontal. Among the different propositions set out to improve the understanding of these cultural dimensions, Triandis (1995, 2001) suggested that individualism and collectivism may be horizontal where equality is emphasized or vertical where hierarchy is emphasized.

First, horizontal individualism (HI) reflects an independent/same self construal (people view themselves as equal but independent of one another). Second, vertical individualism (VI) is purported to reflect an independent/different self construal (people view themselves as unequal but independent. Similarly, horizontal collectivism (HC) reflects an interdependent/same self construal whereas vertical collectivism (VC) reflects an interdependent/different self construal

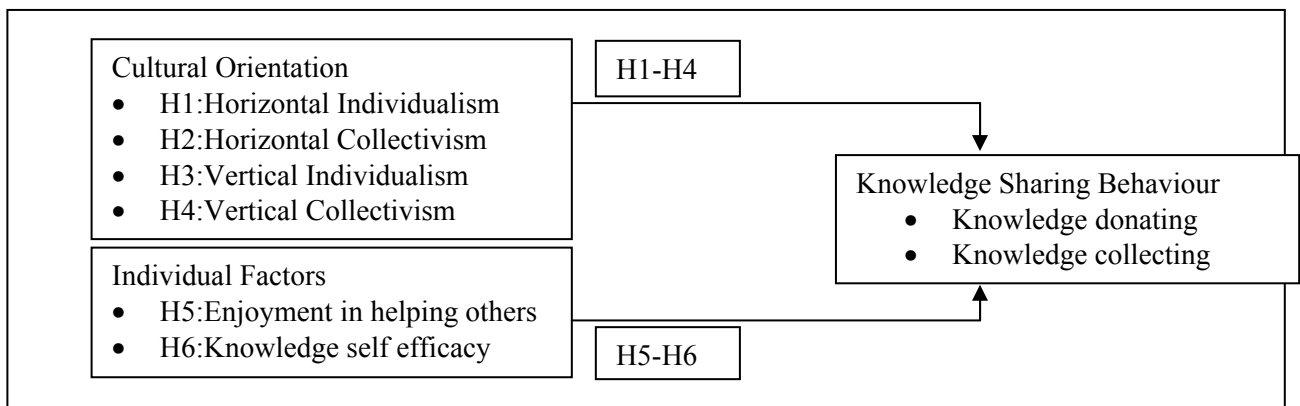


Fig. 1: relationship between variables

3.2. 2.2 Research Hypothesis

Table 1 summarizes the hypotheses that have been generated based on the discussion from the previous sections. Fig.1 displays the relationship between variables that will be investigated in the study.

TABLE I. SUMMARY OF THE HYPOTHESES

No.	Statement of hypotheses
H1a	Horizontal Individualism is significantly related to knowledge donating.
H1b	Horizontal Individualism is significantly related to knowledge collecting.
H2a	Horizontal Collectivism is significantly related to knowledge donating.
H2b	Horizontal Collectivism is significantly related to knowledge collecting.
H3a	Vertical Individualism is significantly related to knowledge donating.
H3b	Vertical Individualism is significantly related to knowledge collecting.
H4a	Vertical Collectivism is significantly related to knowledge donating.
H4b	Vertical Collectivism is significantly related to knowledge collecting.
H5a	Enjoyment in helping others is significantly related to knowledge donating.

H5b	Enjoyment in helping others is significantly related to knowledge collecting.
H6a	Knowledge self-efficacy positively is significantly related to knowledge donating
H6b	Knowledge self-efficacy positively is significantly related to knowledge collecting.

3. Findings

3.1. Descriptive Analysis

The survey conducted at UiTM, Kedah Malaysia which involved 400 questionnaires were distributed but only 390 respondents returned the questionnaires. Among them are 167 male students and 223 are female students. The ages of the 390 respondents were: a) 18-21 years, 267 (68.5 percent); b) 22-25 years, 118 (30.3 percent), c) 26-29 years, 4 (1.0 percent); and d) > 30, 1 (0.3 percent). The program levels of the respondents were Diploma, 246 (63.1 percent) and Degree, 144 (36.9 percent).

3.2. Cultural Orientation

The cultural orientation investigated in this study consists of 4 variables namely horizontal individualism, vertical individualism, horizontal collectivism, and vertical collectivism. Table 2 shows the rotated component matrix which is a matrix of the factor loadings for each variable onto each factor. To summarize based on the finding below: Factor 1 = Horizontal collectivism, Factor 2 = Horizontal individualism, Factor 3 = Vertical collectivism, Factor 4 = Vertical individualism.

TABLE II. CULTURAL ORIENTATION ROTATED COMPONENT MATRIX

Items	Component			
	1	2	3	4
Horizontal Individualism				
I'd rather depend on myself than others		.778		
I rely on myself most of the time; I rarely rely on others		.818		
I often do "my own thing."		.698		
My personal identity, independent of others, is very important to me.		.630		
Vertical Individualism				
It is important that I do my job better than others				.491
Winning is everything				.775
Competition is the law of nature				.717
When another person does better than I do, I get tense and aroused				.722
Horizontal Collectivism				
If a coworker gets a prize, I would feel proud.	.629			
The well-being of my coworkers is important to me	.774			
To me, pleasure is spending time with others	.753			
I feel good when I cooperate with others	.702			
Vertical Collectivism				
Parents and children must stay together as much as possible			.800	
It is my duty to take care of my family, even when I have to sacrifice what I want			.811	
Family members should stick together, no matter what sacrifices are required			.762	
It is important to me that I respect the decisions made by my groups	.562			

3.3. Reliability Analysis

TABLE III. RELIABILITY OF INSTRUMENT MEASURES

	Measures	No of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Cultural Orientation	Horizontal Individualism	4	.751
	Horizontal Collectivism	4	.668
	Vertical Individualism	4	.741
	Vertical Collectivism	4	.751

Individual Factors	Enjoyment in helping others	4	.889
	Knowledge self efficacy	3	.694
Knowledge Sharing Behavior	Knowledge donating	3	.748
	Knowledge collecting	4	.641

3.4. Correlation Analysis

3.4.1 The Relationship between Cultural Orientation and Knowledge Sharing Behaviour

The results of the correlation analyses are displayed in the table 1.0. The table indicates the correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). From the correlation matrix it could be observed that the overall relationship between the cultural orientation and knowledge sharing behaviour is fairly healthy.

TABLE IV. CORRELATION MATRIX BETWEEN CULTURAL ORIENTATION AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING BEHAVIOUR

	Knowledge Donating	Knowledge Collecting
Horizontal Individualism	.108*	.272**
Vertical Individualism	.198**	.202**
Horizontal Collectivism	.417**	.302**
Vertical Collectivism	.127*	.074

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

3.4.2 The Relationship between Individual Factors and Knowledge Sharing Behaviour

Apart from investigating cultural orientation characteristics on knowledge sharing behaviour, this study also seek to examine the influence of individual factors on the knowledge sharing behaviour. The individual factors that were examined consisted of enjoyment in helping others as well as knowledge efficacy.

As shown in the table 5, the correlation analysis between individual factors and knowledge sharing behaviour has shown a stronger and more significant relationship. Both of the items measuring individual factors has significant relationship with knowledge sharing behaviour.

TABLE V. CORRELATION MATRIX BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL FACTORS AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING BEHAVIOUR

	Knowledge Donating	Knowledge Collecting
Enjoyment in helping others	.422**	.312**
Knowledge Efficacy	.350**	.689**

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

4. Conclusion

	Statement of hypotheses	Results
H1a	Horizontal Individualism is significantly related to knowledge donating.	Not supported
H1b	Horizontal Individualism is significantly related to knowledge collecting.	Supported
H2a	Horizontal Collectivism is significantly related to knowledge donating.	Supported
H2b	Horizontal Collectivism is significantly related to knowledge collecting.	Supported
H3a	Vertical Individualism is significantly related to knowledge donating.	Supported
H3b	Vertical Individualism is significantly related to knowledge collecting.	Supported
H4a	Vertical Collectivism is significantly related to knowledge donating.	Not supported
H4b	Vertical Collectivism is significantly related to knowledge collecting.	Not supported
H5a	Enjoyment in helping others is significantly related to knowledge donating.	Supported
H5b	Enjoyment in helping others is significantly related to knowledge collecting.	Supported
H6a	Knowledge self-efficacy positively is significantly related to knowledge donating	Supported
H6b	Knowledge self-efficacy positively is significantly related to knowledge collecting.	Supported

The general conclusions derived from this study were, the first result of the correlation showed that there was partial relationship between horizontal individualism and knowledge sharing behaviour; horizontal collectivism was found significantly related to knowledge sharing behaviour; while vertical individualism was also extensively associated to knowledge sharing behaviour. On the other hand, the result for correlation analysis between vertical collectivism and knowledge sharing behaviour had shown no relationship.

In addition, from the correlation analysis, it was found that there was also major correlation between enjoyments in helping others with knowledge sharing behaviour. Furthermore, it has been derived that there was also significant correlation between knowledge self-efficacy and knowledge sharing behaviour.

From the Triandis I-C scale the two main variables that were related to the study were Horizontal Collectivism and Vertical Individualism which showed strong relationship with the knowledge sharing behaviour among the students.

5. Acknowledgements

It is a pleasure to thank the various people who made this paper possible. Our utmost gratitude goes to Prof. Dr. Zaliha Hj. Hussin, Campus director UiTM Kedah, Dr. Laili Hj Hashim, Dean of Faculty of Information Management UiTM Malaysia for their expertise, continuous support, and most of all, for their trust in us and providing us with this opportunity to show our knowledge and expertise in order to contribute to the support of the UiTM Kedah, Malaysia. Our sincere thanks goes to our colleagues in the Department of Information Management, UiTM Kedah, Malaysia for whom we have great regard, and we wish to extend our warmest thanks to all those who have helped us with the creation of this paper.

6. References

- [1] Singelis, T. M., Triandis, H. C., Bhawuk, D., & Gelfand, M. J. (1995). Horizontal and vertical dimensions of individualism and collectivism: A theoretical and measurement refinement. *Cross-Cultural Research*, 29, 240-275
- [2] Triandis, H. C., & Gelfand, M. J. (1998). Converging measurements of horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 74, 118-128
- [3] Triandis, H. C. (2001). Individualism-collectivism and personality. *Journal of Personality*, 69, 907-924