Information and Knowledge Management
ISSN 2224-5758 (Paper) ISSN 2224-896X (Online)
Vol.4, No.11, 2014

Assessment of Knowledge Sharing Behaviours of Postgraduate Students in Selected Nigerian Universities

Opeke O. Rosaline
Department of Information Resources Management, Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo, Ogun state

Opele Jacob Kehinde*
Department of Planning, Documentation and Statistics ,National Centre for Technology Management (NACETEM),P.M.B.012, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria
Email:jacob.opele@nacetem.org

Abstract
This study assessed the knowledge sharing behaviours of postgraduate students in selected Nigerian Universities. The study focused of knowledge sharing practices of postgraduate students, media of knowledge sharing, commonly shared knowledge and factors that influences postgraduate students' knowledge sharing behaviours. The study employed a descriptive survey design which involved the design of questionnaire which was validated by means of Cronbach's coefficient alpha of (0.70). The questionnaires were administered on (503) postgraduate students who were either on course work or thesis as at the time of the study. The analysis of data revealed that (55.6%) of the postgraduate students' preferred face-to-face knowledge sharing to other media. The analysis further showed that knowledge in the areas of individual studies was the most commonly shared knowledge among the majority (92.8%). The study further revealed that of the three identified factors (individual, institution and technology factors) influencing knowledge sharing among the postgraduate students, only individual factor ($\beta = .085$, $p < 0.05$) was shown to significantly influenced students' knowledge sharing bahaviours. The results of the study suggested that the university policy makers have a duty to encourage a culture of knowledge sharing and collaboration among her students particularly Masters (MSc) and Doctorate (PhD) students for sustainable postgraduate training and development.
Keywords: Knowledge Sharing, media, Postgraduate Students, learning, University, Nigeria, .

1. Introduction

Knowledge sharing (KS) has become an important strength in today's information and knowledge-based economy, this is because it is commonly seen as contributing significantly to organisational, group and individual performance. Knowledge sharing is the most commonly discussed knowledge management activities. It is the process where individuals mutually exchange their knowledge and jointly create new knowledge. Knowledge sharing is defined as the shared practices and activities, the sharing of information and exchanges of best practices (Hendriks, 1999; Goh, 2002; Ashok, 2005).

As discussed in the literature, to share knowledge means to learn, understand, extend and repeat the information, the ideas, the views and the resources with each other, connected with on a specific ground (Rashmi, 2009). At the students' level, knowledge sharing involves talking to colleagues in getting things done better, more quickly or more efficiently. At institutional level, knowledge sharing involves capturing, organising and transferring experience-based knowledge that resides within the organisation and making it available to others not only as business strategies, but also in changing employees' attitudes and behaviours to promote willingness and consistent knowledge sharing (Cordoba and Isabel, 2004). Knowledge sharing encompasses face-to-face discussion with colleagues at bar, coffee shops, and classroom, use of sign language, coaching, instruction in the form of teaching, by listening, email exchange, e-learning platform, phone-mail system, discussion groups and interactions in the form of conversations, dialogues and chats that provide opportunities to maintain social relationships thereby enabling a wider reach for knowledge shared among colleagues (Van den-Hoof and Huysman, 2009).

The knowledge-based view of the universities emphasised that there is substantial knowledge sharing in terms of academic knowledge and expertise in the form of journal publications and teaching among its members, these forms of knowledge sharing are paradoxically induced more by peer-competition than altruistic sharing. This has potential implications on the formation of knowledge sharing groups such as communities of practice or interest groups where members are informally bound by a common interest (e.g. engaging in lunchtime discussions to solve difficult problems e.g class work) and by what they have learned through their mutual engagement in these activities. Valuing knowledge is concerned with viewing knowledge as an asset. This study investigated knowledge sharing bahaviours of postgraduate students in selected Nigerian universities with a view to answering the question below.

1.1 Research Questions

1. What are the common knowledge sharing practices among postgraduate students in Nigerian Universities?
2. What is the commonest medium for sharing knowledge among postgraduate students in Nigerian Universities?
3. What types of knowledge do postgraduate students commonly share in Nigerian Universities?
4. What are the factors influencing knowledge sharing among postgraduate students in Obafemi Awolowo University?

2. Review of Related Studies

According to Heng-Li et al (2006) knowledge sharing is 'an activity through which knowledge from one person, group or organisation transfers or spreads to another person, group or organisation'. To Chua (2003), knowledge sharing is the process by which individuals collectively and socially refine a thought, an idea or a suggestion in the light of experience. Bircham-Connoly *et al*., (2005) similarly described knowledge sharing as 'the process of capturing knowledge or moving knowledge from a source unit to a recipient unit'- implying that knowledge-sharing presumes at least two kinds of people to engage in, one who possesses knowledge and the other who requests for acquired knowledge (Hendriks, 1999).

Nonaka and Teece (2001) hypothesised that 'knowledge sharing formed a collaborative synergy, which predicted higher performance and stakeholder satisfaction.' Scholars such as (Ormrod, 1995) Jennifer (2001), (Valle and Avella 2003) and (lleris, 2004) reported that 'learning and knowledge are closely linked and that effective knowledge sharing needs to embrace and develop the achievements that have been associated with the implementation of the concept of learning. Heng-Li et al (2006) defined knowledge sharing as 'an activity through which knowledge from one person, group or organisation transfers or spreads to another person, group or organisation'. To Chua (2003), knowledge sharing is the process by which individuals collectively and socially refine a thought, an idea or a suggestion in the light of experience. Bircham-Connoly *et al*., (2005) similarly described knowledge sharing as 'the process of capturing knowledge or moving knowledge from a source unit to a recipient unit'- implying that knowledge-sharing presumes at least two kinds of people to engage in, one who possesses knowledge and the other who requests for acquired knowledge (Hendriks, 1999).

Christensen (2007), as cited in Fawwas *et al*., (2009), documented that the goal of knowledge sharing is either to create new knowledge in another way or to become better at exploiting the existing knowledge. Knowledge sharing is part of humans' uniqueness and attitude. Hidding and Catterall (1998) stressed that knowledge has no value unless it is shared and used in some way. In other words, sharing knowledge is the natural way to increase its value. Khe and Noriko (2007) and Marylene (2009) submitted that the value of knowledge sharing is the function of reciprocity. That is, 'knowledge value implies that individual can use it to obtain status, power and rewards'. Reciprocity also implies that ' individuals must see knowledge sharing as personally worthwhile or important for reaching a valued collective goal in order to be willing and eager to share' (van den Hooff and Ridder, de Vries, 2004). To Shapira *et al*., (2005), knowledge sharing is embedded in the knowledge-processing scope, that is, effective KMis anchored on the level of knowledge shared.

Riege (2005), and Chen, et *al., (*2007) identified factors that influence knowledge sharing to include individual, classroom and technological factors. They stressed that, individual factor is dependent on willingness and ability to share; classroom factor could be justified based on instructor's support and the degree of competition among students, while technological factor is dependent on the technological availability and support. Nonaka and Konno (1998) explained that the knowledge sharing process includes socialisation (sharing experiences), externalisation (articulating implicit knowledge into explicit concepts), combination (synthesising and systematising fragments of explicit knowledge) and internalisation (turning explicit knowledge into tacit knowledge by applying it in real situations). Scholars such as (Riege, 2005) identified series of knowledge sharing obstacles which includes; lack of time, fear of lost job security, lack of social network, education, fear of loss of ownership etc. Sharratt and Usoro (2003) cited in Farhondeh and Vimala (2011) identified factors such as the university structure and culture, technical aspect, sense of community, rewards motivation, attitudes, and intention to share knowledge, trust, lecturer's computer skill, benefit and privacy to have direct links with knowledge sharing. Ojha (2005) documented that knowledge sharing can be impacted by the mother tongue of individuals or groups. This was further argued by Putnam (2007) who noted that, in ethnically diverse neighborhoods, residents of all races tended to *hunker down*. There is also ease of technology, cultural, individual, social barriers, reciprocity, personal gain, altruism, commitment to group and external goals (Khe and Noriko, 2007).

3 Sample and Procedure

The research design was basically case study that involved the design and administration of structured questionnaire and personal observation. The questionnaires which comprised of six main sections were administered to five hundred and three (503) Masters (MSc) and Doctorate (PhD) students. This technique was

considered appropriate since it allowed research questions to be addressed in a logical order (Yin, 1994; Peter *et al*, 2005). The questionnaires were validated using Cronbach's coefficient alpha of (0.70). Before interview, respondents were acquainted with the overall objective of the study and this put them in a relaxed atmosphere for them to contribute meaningfully to the study. Data analysis was done using frequency counts, percentage distribution, mean, standard deviation and regression analysis.

4. Results and Discussion

The analysis of knowledge sharing practices of the postgraduate students as shown in **Table 2**revealed that the top knowledge sharing practice was willingness to discuss new ideas with colleagues with the highest means of (3.23) out of 4 points scale. This implies that majority (89.9) of the PG students often and very often willing to to discuss new ideas with their colleagues. Besides, as shown in **Table 3,** this research also established that the most commonly shared knowledge among the postgraduate students is knowledge in their areas of studies (92.8%) with a mean of (3.26). Other commonly shared knowledge include sport news (32.6%) with mean of (2.07), social news (63.6%) with mean of (2.61), campus news (61.6%) with mean of (2.59), library experience (68.9%) with mean of (2.65), religious news (68.8%) with mean of (2.72) and political news (72.2%) with mean of (2.80) respectively. The study identified three broad factors influencing knowledge sharing practices as shown in **Table 4**, of the three identified factors, only individual factor ($\beta = .085$, $p < 0.05$) was shown to significantly influenced students' knowledge sharing bahaviours. Lastly, **figure 1** revealed that majority (55.6%) of the postgraduate students' preferred face-to-face knowledge sharing to other media. This is expected following the wise saying that face-to-face is better than a thousand letters. This agrees with the findings of (Riege, 2005) who had earlier documented the significant of face-to-face knowledge sharing.

TABLE 1
RELIABILITY STATISTICS OF THE INTERNAL CONSISTENCY OF THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Parameters	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items
Knowledge Sharing Practice of PG students	10	.674	.698
Media of Knowledge Sharing among PG students	8	.586	.497
Knowledge Commonly Shared among PG students	7	.734	.733
Factors influencing Knowledge Sharing behaviours of PG students	7	.577	.723

TABLE 2
KNOWLEDGE SHARING PRACTICE OF POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

Parameters	**N**	**Rarely**	**Occasionally**	**Often**	**Very often**	**Mean**	**SD**
Willing to discuss new ideas with my colleagues	493	15(3.0)	35(7.1)	267(54.2)	176(35.7)	3.23	.707
Freely sharing information and knowledge with colleagues	497	7(1.4)	61(12.1)	289(57.5)	140(27.8)	3.13	.667
Sharing of information and knowledge that will improve my academics performance and others	493	10(2.0)	52(10.5)	299(60.6)	132(26.8)	3.12	.664
Exchange course materials with my classmates	491	5(1.0)	25(5.1)	379(77.2)	82(16.7)	3.10	.500
Freely sharing information and knowledge in class groups	488	20(4.1)	58(11.9)	306(62.7)	104(21.3)	3.01	.705
I cooperate with other students in teams or groups for sharing knowledge	495	11(2.2)	57(11.5)	348(70.3)	79(16.0)	3.00	.604
Sharing of lecture notes, power point slides and other resources with my colleagues.	488	13(2.7)	65(13.3)	346(70.9)	64(13.1)	2.94	.607
Ask other students for assistance	494	13(2.6)	118(23.5)	298(59.2)	65(12.9)	2.84	.672
Discussing my academic problems with other PG students rather than struggling with it all alone	491	42(8.6)	214(43.6)	185(37.7)	50(10.2)	2.49	.791
Exchange of ideas at sport and TV show centers	468	101(21.6)	165(35.3)	171(36.5)	31(6.6)	2.28	.876

TABLE 3
KNOWLEDGE COMMONLY SHARED AMONG POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

Types of knowledge	N	Not important	Somewhat important	Important	Crucial	Mean	SD
Knowledge in area of my studies	496	10(2.0)	26(5.2)	285(57.5)	175(35.3)	3.26	.647
sport news	441	129(29.3)	168(38.1)	128(29.0)	16(3.6)	2.07	.851
Social news	489	36(7.4)	142(29.1)	289(59.1)	22(4.5)	2.61	.690
Campus News	482	33(6.8)	152(31.5)	279(57.9)	18(3.7)	2.59	.675
library experience	483	61(12.6)	89(18.4)	290(60.0)	43(8.9)	2.65	.812
Religious news	477	38(8.0)	111(23.3)	276(57.9)	52(10.9)	2.72	.763
Political news	482	35(7.3)	99(20.5)	276(57.3)	72(14.9)	2.80	.778

TABLE 4
FACTORS INFLUENCING KNOWLEDGE SHARING BAHAVIOURS OF POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

Parameters	(β)	Std. Error (β)	Beta in	t	Sig (p)
(Constant)	2.812	.103		27.199	.000
Individual factors	.085	.039	.129	2.160	.031
Institution factors	-.013	.047	-.020	-.268	.789
Technology factors	-.036	.045	-.056	-.790	.430

Summary Statistics
R Square = .010
Adjusted R Square = .004
Std. Error of the Estimate = .48617
Durbin-Watson = 1.933
At 0.05 level of significant

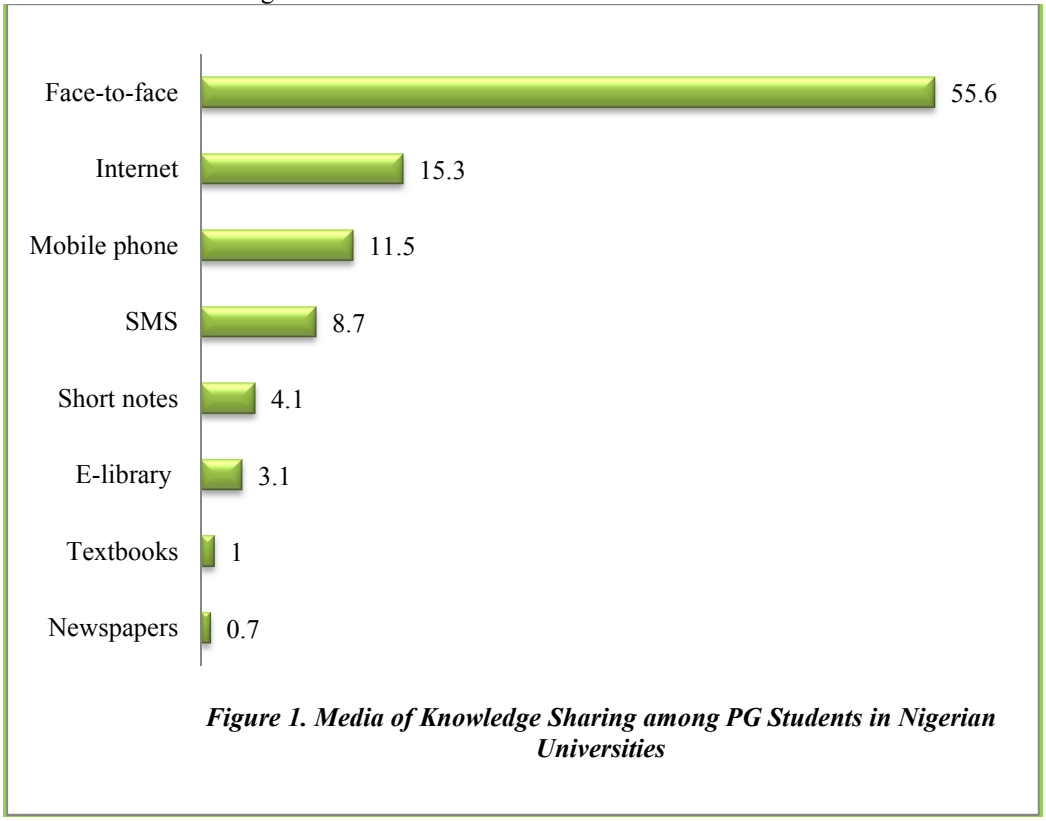

Figure 1. Media of Knowledge Sharing among PG Students in Nigerian Universities

5. Conclusion and Practical Implications

Knowledge sharing remains a central focus in knowledge management debates. This is because it has been recognised as the key element of performance and productivity both in commerce and industry as well as in the academics. The outcomes of this study revealed the need to encourage knowledge sharing practices among postgraduate students in Nigerian universities. This is because it has the potentials to influence students' academic performance and improved learning outcomes.

6. Direction for Further Research

A number of further questions beyond the scope of the present study remain to be examined. The very important one is the assessment of the role of knowledge sharing in the formulation and implementation of educational policies for postgraduate studies in Nigeria. Recent studies in the field of knowledge management suggests that effective knowledge sharing behaviour among educationist and policy makers contribute significant role to sustainable growth and development

REFERENCES

Bircham-Connolly, H., Corner, J., & Bowden, S. (2005). An empirical study of the impact of question structure on recipient attitude during knowledge sharing', *Electronic Journal of Knowledge Management,* Vol 32, Issue 1, pp 1-10.

Cordoba, T. and Isabel, G. (2004). Learning culture and information technology learning mechanisms in disaster management organisations in Central America Ph.D. Dissertation, Tulane University.

Elliot, A. and McGregor, H. (2001), ''A 2 £ 2 achievement goal framework'', Journal of Engineering Approaches. *Information and Management, 46(1),1-8.* Environment. London:

Goh, S.C. (2002). Managing effective knowledge transfer: an integrative framework and some practice implications. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 6(1), 23–30.

Hendriks, P. (1999). Why Share Knowledge? The influence of ICT on the motivation for knowledge sharing. *Knowledge and Process Management*, 6 (2), 91-100.

Heng-Li, & Ted, C.T., Wu. (2006). Knowledge Sharing in an organisation share or not. *International Conference on Computing and Informatics*, 1-7.

Jashapara, A. (2004) Knowledge *Management: An Integrated Approach* (Prentice Hall, Harlow).

Kumar, N. (2005). Assessing the Learning Culture and Performance of Educational Personality and Social Psychology, Vol. 80 No. 3, pp. 501-19.

Perter, E.D.L, Patric, S.W.F and Zahir, I. (2005). Management of Knowledge in Project

Rashmi, A.P. (2009). Knowledge Sharing : collaboration between universities and industrial organisations. *Strategic Roles of Academic Libraries Educational – Rashmi Anantray Parekh.*

Riege, A. (2005). Three-dozen knowledge sharing factors managers must consider. *Journal of Knowledge Management, 9*(3), 18-35.

Sharratt, M., & Usoro, A. (2003). Understanding knowledge sharing in online communities of practice. *Electronic Journal on Knowledge Management, 1*(2), 187-196.

Swift, M., David B.B., & Matusik, S.F. (2010). Goal orientations and the motivation to share knowledge vol. 14 No. 3 2010, pp. 378-393, *Q* Emerald Group Publishing Limited, ISSN 1367-3270.

Van den Hoof, B., and Huysman, (2009). Managing knowledge sharing: Emergent and Engineering Approaches. *Information and Management, 46(1),1-8.*

Yin, R (1994). Case Study Research: Design and Methods. London

The IISTE is a pioneer in the Open-Access hosting service and academic event management. The aim of the firm is Accelerating Global Knowledge Sharing.

More information about the firm can be found on the homepage:
http://www.iiste.org

CALL FOR JOURNAL PAPERS

There are more than 30 peer-reviewed academic journals hosted under the hosting platform.

Prospective authors of journals can find the submission instruction on the following page: http://www.iiste.org/journals/ All the journals articles are available online to the readers all over the world without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. Paper version of the journals is also available upon request of readers and authors.

MORE RESOURCES

Book publication information: http://www.iiste.org/book/

IISTE Knowledge Sharing Partners

EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, JournalTOCS, PKP Open Archives Harvester, Bielefeld Academic Search Engine, Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek EZB, Open J-Gate, OCLC WorldCat, Universe Digtial Library , NewJour, Google Scholar