

Role of organizational citizenship behavior in promoting knowledge sharing

Mohammad Reza Dehghani¹, Ali Asghar Hayat¹, Javad Kojuri^{1*}, Keramat Esmi²

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Organizational citizenship behavior has been linked to overall organizational effectiveness, thus these types of employee behaviors have important consequences in the workplace. One of the important consequences of these types of behaviors is knowledge sharing. Thus, the current study examined the role of organizational citizenship behavior in promoting knowledge sharing.

Method: A descriptive correlation design was employed in this study. We collected the data from Kharazmi University employees in city of Tehran in 2014. The statistical population consisted of 484 Kharazmi University employees from which 210 persons were selected randomly (using simple random sampling) by the Krejcie and Morgan (1978) sample size determination table. Data were collected through organizational citizenship behavior questionnaire and knowledge sharing questionnaire. To examine the reliability of the questionnaires, Cronbach alpha coefficient was used. These coefficients were 0.80 for attitude toward knowledge sharing and 0.77 for intention to share knowledge. Also, for organizational citizenship behavior it ranged from 0.71 (courtesy) to 0.82 (altruism). To determine the validity, content validity method was applied. All descriptive statistics, t-test, Pearson correlation and multiple regression were performed using SPSS 19.

Results: The results of t-test indicated that the means of organizational citizenship behavior (mean=2.50) and all its dimensions (altruism: 2.60, conscientiousness: 2.52, sportsmanship: 2.41, courtesy: 2.49, civic virtue: 2.45) among employees were at the moderate level. The results showed that the correlation between organizational citizenship behavior and knowledge sharing was significant ($r=0.50$, $P<0.001$). Other results showed that the correlations between knowledge sharing and organizational citizenship behavior dimensions - Altruism ($r=0.35$), Conscientiousness ($r=0.19$), Sportsmanship ($r=0.46$), Courtesy ($r=0.39$), Civic virtue ($r=0.18$) - were significant ($p<0.001$). Finally, results of multiple regression analysis showed that organizational citizenship behavior dimensions- Sportsmanship ($\beta= 0.53$) - could predict knowledge sharing.

Conclusion: According to the findings, it can be concluded that with improvement in each of the research variables, other variables will improve. For example, as the result of improvement in organizational citizenship behavior, knowledge sharing will increase and the organization could use its competitive advantage.

Keywords: Organizational citizenship behavior, Knowledge, Knowledge sharing

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Introduction

Knowledge is considered the most important and valuable resource for organizations working in dynamically-competitive environments (1-6). The knowledge is an asset which has to be valued, developed, and managed (7). If we believe that knowledge is a key organizational resource for creating a sustainable competitive advantage, so it is important to examine how firms manage knowledge (8). It entails how knowledge is acquired, processed, stored and shared amongst all constituent parts of the organization (9, 10). Knowledge management involves the processes of creating, modifying, using, storing, sharing, transferring, translating, accessing and disposing the

knowledge in the organizations (8, 11-14). KM has received much attention in the recent years although its existence can be traced back in the history (15).

One of the important processes of knowledge management is knowledge sharing. Because, it has been considered by researchers more than any other knowledge management processes. One of the main reasons for the matter is competitiveness advantage and successful implementing processes of knowledge sharing (16). In this regard, some researchers argued that, when knowledge is shared, it can become the most powerful tool for surplus value and produces more value (7). This fact has caused the "Knowledge is power". Aphorism of Bacon to be moved one step further as "Knowledge sharing is power" (17).

¹ Quality Improvement in Clinical Education Research Center, Shiraz University of Medical Sciences, Shiraz, Iran

² ShahidBahonar University, Kerman, Iran

*Corresponding Author: J Kojuri, Quality Improvement in Clinical Education Research Center, Shiraz University of Medical Sciences, Shiraz, Iran, Email: kojurij@yahoo.com.

Knowledge sharing is a process in which the individual exchanges his/her knowledge and ideas through discussions to create new knowledge or ideas (7). Knowledge sharing is a set of behaviors that involve the exchange of information or assistance to others (18).

Fournier and Flores (2009) define knowledge sharing as the process of mutually exchanging knowledge (tacit and explicit) with the intention of creating new knowledge (19). Knowledge sharing and management can have several benefits for the organization; for example, it improves human resources, directs market effects, uses the intellectual capital of the firm optimally (19), improves management-worker relations, increases the performances of the employees (20), creates innovation organization (18), helps employees to better understand their jobs, and brings about personal recognition within the department (7). Consequently, as long as knowledge is shared in an organization, that organization will gain competitive advantage (7, 19). Whereas knowledge sharing can improve an organization's competitiveness, lack of knowledge sharing can cause serious problems for an organization (17, 20). Predicting propensity to share knowledge should be seriously recognized as a major objective of organizational theory (20). Nevertheless, there are many employees who are unwilling to share the knowledge that they have. This phenomenon happens because the employees are scared of the loss of valuable knowledge and their jobs (7). However, it must be accepted that knowledge sharing is not a behavior that can easily be accomplished. Therefore, the ways of ensuring that the employees share knowledge must have been studied (17). In this regard, researchers cited organizational citizenship behavior as one of the factors that can increase the sharing of knowledge in the organization (7, 16, 17).

Batman and Organ (1983) used the term of organizational citizenship behavior for the first time. They considered it as a beneficial behavior that has not listed in job description, but employees show it to assist others to do their duties evidently (16, 21). The well accepted definition of OCB is attributed to Organ (17). According to him (1988), OCB is "the voluntary behavior of the individual that is not directly and clearly defined by the formal reward system of the organization, but helps the organization work effectively and efficiently as a whole" (22, 23).

Extra-role behavior involves behaviors that support the organization but do not exist in the job description of the employees, and also behaviors that are voluntary and different from the job role (17). Examples of these behaviors are cooperation among the employees, voluntarily undertaking extra responsibility, orientation of the new employees, willingness to help others succeed in their work, and doing more work than they are required by the job (14). Successful organizations have employees who go beyond their formal job responsibilities and freely give of their time and energy to succeed at the assigned job (23). Walz and Niehoff (1996) noted that OCB represents a set of desirable organizational behaviors, which demonstrate multi-dimensional relationships with positive organizational consequences. Indeed, an examination of the literature indicates that there is a growing interest

in the relationships between OCBs and their potential consequences (24).

One of the most important consequences of organizational citizenship behavior is knowledge sharing (7, 16, 17). Findings show that non-material factors but social and psychological factors and human relations are decisive in accomplishing knowledge sharing. OCB is a significant topic to be evaluated in this respect (17).

There are studies, though in limited numbers, that measure the relationship between the two terms. Mogotsi (2009) has reached the conclusion that there is a positive correlation between knowledge sharing and OCB. Lin (2008) has indicated that there is a positive correlation between knowledge sharing and the dimensions of OCB. Lin (2008) stated that knowledge sharing is affected by altruism, conscientiousness, courtesy, civic virtue and sportsmanship, which are the dimensions of OCB (20).

Taghvaei and Eynali (2015), in a study entitled "the relationship between knowledge sharing with social intelligence and organizational citizenship behavior of education office in Mahmud Abad", concluded that there was a significant relationship between knowledge sharing and magnanimity, altruism and work conscience (16).

Al-Zu'bi (2011) in his study entitled "organizational citizenship behavior and impacts on knowledge sharing: an empirical study" concluded that dimensions of organizational citizenship behavior (sportsmanship, conscientiousness and altruism) had more impact on the knowledge sharing (7).

This study focused on the organizational citizenship behavior and its impact on knowledge sharing in universities' employees. Also, it provides empirical evidence and discusses that the dimensions of organizational citizenship behavior influence the knowledge sharing behavior.

The aims of this study were to explore the levels of organizational citizenship behavior as perceived by employees of university and find out the impact of organizational citizenship behavior and its dimensions on knowledge sharing.

Methods

A descriptive correlation design was employed in this study. We collected data from Kharazmi University employees in city of Tehran in 2014. The statistical population consisted of 484 Kharazmi University employees from whom 210 persons were selected randomly (using simple random sampling) using the Krejcie and Morgan (1978) sample size determination table. Data were collected through organizational citizenship behavior questionnaire and knowledge sharing questionnaire.

The measurement scale applied was the organizational citizenship behavior questionnaire designed by Podsakoff et al. (1990) consisting of 24 items. There are five dimensions in the scale: altruism, conscientiousness, sportsmanship, courtesy and civic virtue (25). Although there are various dimensions in the literature suggested by researchers, Organ's five-dimensional classification is the fundamental one (17). Also, this scale has been extensively used in contemporary studies (17, 26, 27). The scale for conscientiousness, sportsmanship, courtesy, and altruism has five items, but civic virtue has four items. Responses to the items are based on a five-point Likert scale. High scores indicate high organizational

citizenship behavior and low scores indicate low organizational citizenship behavior. The minimum scores is 24 and the maximum is 120. For each dimension, a score will be obtained (the mean of the items in the scale) and the overall mean will be considered as overall score for general organizational citizenship behavior. Podsakoff et al. reported internal consistency reliabilities for each dimension that ranged from 0.70 for civic virtue to 0.85 for sportsmanship, courtesy, and altruism (25). The current study found that the internal consistency reliability ranged from 0.71 (courtesy) to 0.82 (altruism) (25).

The second measurement scale applied was the knowledge sharing questionnaire designed by Bock et al. (2005), consisting of 10 items (28). There are two dimensions in the scale: attitude toward knowledge sharing (five items) and intention to share knowledge (five items). Responses to the items are based on a five-point Likert scale. Also, this scale has been used in contemporary studies. For example, Chaw and Chan (2008) reported internal consistency reliabilities for each dimension as follows: attitude toward knowledge sharing (0.91) and intention to share knowledge (0.89) (29).

In addition, in our research a pilot study was conducted to measure internal consistency and Cronbach's alpha were 0.80 for attitude toward knowledge sharing and 0.77 for intention to share knowledge. To analyze the data, descriptive statistics, t-tests, Pearson correlation and multiple regression were used. All analyses were performed using SPSS 19.

Also, we ran one sample t-test to examine the status quo of the employees' organizational citizenship behavior. Hence, three classes including Low Status: 1–2.33, Moderate Status: 2.34–3.67 and High Status: 3.68–5 were distinguished by applying the following formula:

Highest possible score - Lowest possible score / Categories
 $= 5 - 1 / 3 = 1.33$ (30).

$$\text{status quo} = \frac{\text{Highest possible score}(5) - \text{Lowest possible score}(1)}{\text{Categories}(3)}$$

Results

In terms of demographic findings, (59%) of the respondents were males, and the remaining (41%) were females. Also in terms of age, 27.6% were between 20-30 years, 43.5% were between 31-40, 23.2% were between 41-50 years, and 5.7% were above 50 years. In terms of the years of experience, 29.4 % employees had job experience of 1 to 10 years, 43.2% from 11 to 20 years and 27.6% from 21 to 30 years. In terms of the level of education, 15.4% of the employees had associate degree, 61.1% bachelor's degree, and 23.5% of the staff had a master's degree.

The results of t-test indicated that the means of organizational citizenship behavior (mean=2.50) and all its dimensions (altruism: 2.60, conscientiousness: 2.52, sportsmanship: 2.41, courtesy: 2.49, civic virtue: 2.45) among employees were at moderate level (Table 1).

The results of t-test showed that the means of knowledge sharing (mean=3.18) and all its dimensions (attitude toward knowledge sharing: 3.29 and intention to share knowledge: 3.07) among the employees were at moderate level (Table 2).

The primary goal of this investigation was to assess the relationship between organizational citizenship behaviors and knowledge sharing. As shown in Table 2, there was a significant and positive relationship between organizational citizenship behaviors and knowledge sharing.

The findings showed a significant correlation coefficient of organizational citizenship behaviors and its components (altruism, conscientiousness, sportsmanship, courtesy, civic virtue) with knowledge sharing and its components (attitude toward knowledge sharing, intention to share knowledge) in university employees (Table 3).

Considering the highly significant correlations, a multiple regression analysis was performed to determine the contribution of each independent variable in predicting the dependent variable. The result of the regression test showed that among the organizational citizenship behavior dimensions, only dimension of sportsmanship ($\beta = 0.53$) could predict knowledge sharing (Tables 4 and 5).

Table 1. Organizational citizenship behavior and its dimensions among employees

Variable	Mean	Std. D	t	df	P value	Status
Organizational citizenship behavior	2.50	0.38	-18.7	209	<0.001	Moderate
Altruism	2.60	0.48	-13.5	209	<0.001	Moderate
Conscientiousness	2.52	0.65	-10.4	209	<0.001	Moderate
Sportsmanship	2.41	0.37	-22.8	209	<0.001	Moderate
Courtesy	2.49	0.56	-15.7	209	<0.001	Moderate
Civic virtue	2.45	0.60	-10.6	209	<0.001	Moderate

Table 2. Knowledge sharing and its dimensions among employees

Variable	Mean	Std. D	t	df	P value	Status
Knowledge sharing	3.18	0.49	5.742	209	<0.001	Moderate
Attitude toward knowledgesharing	3.29	0.66	6.30	209	<0.001	Moderate
Intention to share knowledge	3.07	0.52	2.10	209	<0.001	Moderate

Table 3. Correlation between organizational citizenship behaviors and knowledge sharing

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Knowledge sharing	1								
2. Attitude toward knowledge sharing	0.86	1							
3. Intention to share knowledge	0.69	0.34	1						
4. Organizational citizenship behavior	0.50**	0.40**	0.43**	1					
5. Altruism	0.47**	0.35**	0.44**	0.80	1				
6. Conscientiousness	0.16*	0.19**	0.05	0.63	0.20	1			
7. Sportsmanship	0.62**	0.46**	0.56**	0.73	0.64	0.19	1		
8. Courtesy	0.48**	0.39**	0.41**	0.87	0.65	0.48	0.73	1	
9. Civic virtue	0.28**	0.18**	0.29**	0.72	0.65	0.21	0.40	0.49	1

*p < .05 **p < .01

Table 4. Model Summary of multiple regression

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R	Std. Error	F	P value
1	0.63	0.39	0.38	0.38	27.13	<0.001

Table 5. Results of multiple regression to predict the contribution of organizational citizenship behavior in knowledge sharing

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	P value
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	1.10	0.194		5.69	0.000
1. Altruism	0.174	0.191	0.170	1.91	0.057
2. Conscientiousness	0.035	0.048	0.047	-0.71	0.474
3. Sportsmanship	0.707	0.115	0.534	6.13	<0.001
4. Courtesy	-0.019	0.107	-0.018	-0.17	0.862
5. Civic virtue	-0.043	0.060	-0.053	-0.72	0.467

Discussion

According to the findings, employees' organizational citizenship behavior and all its dimensions were at a moderate level. For the first goal, the results indicated that there was a moderate level of organizational citizenship behavior among employees in the university.

The results of Pearson correlation indicated that there was a significant and positive correlation between organizational citizenship behavior and knowledge sharing. These results are supportive of the findings of previous studies. These studies have related organizational citizenship behavior to knowledge sharing (7, 10, 13, 14). Also, the results indicated that different organizational citizenship behavior dimensions were significantly related to knowledge sharing. Altruism, conscientiousness, sportsmanship, courtesy, and civic virtue were significantly and positively related to knowledge sharing.

As psychometric characteristics of pro-social values, OCBs may be considered by the sociability and the propensity of individuals to relate to one another due to personal compatibility or linking, and they may volunteer to impart knowledge to help one another as a result of this compatibility. This strongly links both OCBs and knowledge sharing together. Similar studies of knowledge sharing in online communities have found that online knowledge sharing is motivated by good citizenship behavior (30). The different dimensions of OCBs that lead to knowledge sharing are explained as follows. While knowledge sharing emerges following the motivation of helping others, such as in the case of an employee introducing new personnel, altruism is characterized as a helping behavior that comprises all discretionary behavior that helps a specific person in performing an organizationally relevant task. Knowledge sharing, hence, is a practice that is synonymous with altruism,

as knowledge sharing can help new personnel fit into a new job and a new environment effectively, and it also benefits the entire organization by reducing costs. For that reason, altruism is hypothesized to have an influence on knowledge sharing (13).

Courtesy encompasses behaviors such as being mindful of how one's behavior affects others, and attempting to avoid creating problem for co-workers. Thus, knowledge sharing is also influenced by courtesy, as whether or not the knowledge which is shared affects how other employees perform. A second interpretation of courtesy views employees as engaging in reciprocal knowledge exchanges in which one values altruism or courtesy without a specific expectation of return, but with an expectation that similar knowledge exchanges will be provided by others when required.

While conscientiousness is a discretionary behavior beyond the minimum role requirements expected by an organization, intangible knowledge sharing also extends beyond formal role requirements and is not easily enforced by organizational regulations and codes. Due to such similarity on the spontaneity between conscientiousness and knowledge sharing, employees with a strong conscientiousness are likely to share knowledge with others even though they are not officially requested to practice knowledge sharing in organization. It means that the intrinsic quality of conscientiousness without considering personal benefit and concern suggests that knowledge sharing is influenced by conscientiousness.

Sportsmanship encompasses the behaviors that focus on what is right rather than wrong in an organization. Being a good sport implies that an employee is a good team member willing to share knowledge with others, thereby achieving team success. Sportsmanship reflects the willingness of the employee to tolerate the circumstances less than ideal without complaining (13).

On the other hand, for a better comprehension of the relationship between OCB and knowledge sharing, it needs to be probed in terms of the dimensions of OCB, because all behaviors performed as a part of OCB require putting knowledge sharing into practice. Voluntary behaviors representing examples of "altruism" such as contributing to overcoming hard work or taking part in group work cannot be performed without knowledge sharing. Behaviors in terms of "conscientiousness", such as making constructive suggestions in order to solve problems, will not be yielded without knowledge sharing. For behaviors representing "courtesy", such as informing the relevant people, cooperating with other employees to take place, knowledge sharing is essential. "Civic virtue", which involves behaviors intended for protecting the benefits of the organization at the highest level, also requires the highest participation in organizational life. Boosting knowledge sharing is the way to ensure them at the top level. Developing knowledge sharing among employees in order to ensure active participation for the benefit of the organization is one of the fundamental requirements. "Sportsmanship", on the other hand, involves the behaviors intended for being sensitive to the inconveniences, constraints and extra efforts that

may result from the professional processes, and avoiding organizational conflicts that may arise. In order to produce resolutions to these problems, employees need to make knowledge sharing common and functional.

The regression analysis provided strong evidence of the causal nature of the link between the two variables. The strong R squared value associated with the relationship suggests that a substantial amount of variance in knowledge sharing can account for organizational citizenship behavior.

Sportsmanship dimension was an important dimension that had a positive effect on knowledge sharing behavior. Referring to Table 4, the regression result (beta= 0.53) indicated that the effect of sportsmanship on the knowledge sharing was significant at 0.01 level. In terms of direction, the result showed that there was a positive direction between the two constructs.

Limitations and suggestions for future research

There are some limitations of this study. It should be noted that the generalizability of the research results may be limited to employee's university population. This study was conducted in Kharazmi University in the city of Tehran, so these results cannot be generalized to all universities in other cities. Second, the data collecting was self-reported; thus, a common method bias may be present. Third, due to the presence of restrictions by the university, the sample size was small.

Despite these limitations, the findings of this study will help to advance the literature by demonstrating that employees with greater OCBs perform knowledge sharing behavior. Also, the study can be strengthened by increasing the sample size and including participants in other geographical areas. With an increased sample size, a more detailed empirical analysis among the independent variables and the variables that have multiple categories can be performed.

This study suggests that potential correlations between some of the independent variables (e.g. gender, age, working experiences, educational level) will be examined in a future study. Also, more research is needed to examine the relationship between organizational citizenship behavior and other variables, such as organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Finally, the paper will be valuable to the practitioners because it provides a basis of understanding of issues in the field of organizational knowledge sharing.

We, at the end, offer some recommendation to enhance the status qua of the organization. At first, in order to get the knowledge shared, we recommend that top managers should make an attempt to get the staff to display altruism. Also, in order to promote sportsmanship, we recommend a friendly climate in which a mutual cooperation between managers and subordinates can be created. Further, we recommend that a climate based on positive trust among the staff should be created and developed. Finally, for sharing knowledge, the organizations should utilize modern communicative means like internet and intranet.

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