

HRM Practices and Knowledge Sharing: Employees' Perception Study

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Abstract: *The aim of this study is to examine the empirical effects of Human Resource Management (HRM) practices and reciprocity on knowledge sharing behaviour. In an organisation, employees play key role for the effective performance of the organisation by communicating their knowledge with management and co-workers to perform their task in a better way. This is possible only when knowledge is successfully shared. Despite various studies on this topic, little research has been carried out on knowledge sharing and HRM practices in developing countries, such as Pakistan. A survey based approach was used for data collection from different employees in banking sector of Pakistan. The hypotheses were formulated based on the four HRM practices and reciprocity. Data were analysed using a structural equation modelling (SEM) technique. The study's findings demonstrated that reciprocity, recruitment and selection, and performance appraisals have significant relationship with knowledge sharing behaviour. Furthermore, knowledge sharing is independent of employees' training and development along with incentive systems in organisations. The value of this paper lies in the understanding gained on the interactive effects of HRM practices and knowledge sharing with the help of SEM technique. This paper assists employers, employees, policy makers, and scholars to understand the factors that can promote knowledge sharing. This study also highlights the significant role of human resource practices.*

Keywords: Employees' Recruitment, Reciprocity, Employees Training, Performance Appraisal, Knowledge Sharing, Pakistan.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the current dynamic business environment, most organisations desire to achieve competitive advantage through people because current knowledge economy has shifted from tangible resources to intangible resources, such as, individual knowledge, skills, and capabilities (Wong & Aspinwall, 2005). This shift highlights the need of individual's knowledge and making knowledge management (KM) vital in the organisations (Abbas, Rasheed, Habiba, & Shahzad, 2013). From the last decade, individual knowledge is considered a highly contributing factor to the organisational success (Stewart, 1998) to differentiate people on the base of what they recognise (Davenport & Prusak, 1998). Hence, employees' perception is very important in knowledge sharing context. This is because in organisations, tasks are interdependent and one individual does not possess adequate knowledge to solve all issues in the

organisation. For this purpose, KS is considered as a significant process in organisations (Liu & Liu, 2011).

Although knowledge sharing is important, most individuals are however reluctant to share their knowledge owing to anxiety of criticism, panic of losing authority, losing ownership of knowledge, unfair rewards, and time constraints (Szulanski, 1996). As a result, people tend to store their knowledge and if there is knowledge hoarding then knowledge got expired. Precious human and knowledge resources will be exhausted unless management recognises the efforts to collect, transform, record, and share knowledge (Smith, 2001). Therefore, organisations need to find ways on how to engage employees in knowledge sharing (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

This study aims to explore antecedents of knowledge sharing behaviour of employees. In developing countries like Pakistan, most

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people do not consider their employees and their knowledge as assets for the organisation. This is because human resource is considered a cornerstone in organisations and does not properly measured, thereby leading to mismanagement. Although HR measurement is beyond the scope of our study, however there is a gap in considering the suggestions of Human Resource Management (HRM) practices for the growing concern of KM (Scarborough & Carter, 2000). Hence, this study fills the gap by covering employee's perception of knowledge sharing behaviour by incorporating HRM practices and reciprocity in the light of the social exchange theory. Reciprocity is considered as one of the strongest and pervasive social forces that drives knowledge sharing behaviour. Most possibly in our culture individuals will not share their knowledge until they get something in return. Accordingly, the following research questions should be answered.

1. Do HRM practices influence employees' perception about their knowledge sharing behavior?
2. Does reciprocity influence employees' perception about their knowledge sharing behavior?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge is theorised as codified information containing perception, interpretation, context, experience, and insight that increases a firm's value and helps to achievement of its objectives, mission, and vision effectively (Davenport & Volpel, 2001, p. 213). Research suggested that knowledge in organisational settings is closely attached to the individuals because it resides in human heads where all learning activities take place (Lam, 2000). Although in today's dynamic corporate world, it is not possible that knowledge is influenced at the individual level because different trends and competition demand knowledge to be shared and developed at organisational level if a company wants to persist (Chinowsky & Carrillo, 2007). Accordingly, Hoof and Ridder (2004) defined knowledge sharing as the process of mutually switching knowledge and creating new knowledge; and segregation of this knowledge into tacit and explicit knowledge makes sense for its transfer and communication to others (Polanyi,

1966). Explicit knowledge refers to knowledge that is generally shared and transferred by employees' willingness, such as products' technical details, tools, and resources. In contrast, tacit knowledge is knowledge that is unwillingly shared between employees. This includes perceptions, belief, and experience. The aim of this study is tacit knowledge as it is hard to quantify and is only transferred by the individuals' willingness (Ipe, 2003).

2.2. Reciprocity and Knowledge Sharing Behaviour

According to Gouldner (1960), reciprocity is the social norm of obligating people to treat others as they have been treated or to repay for what they have received from others. It is an important social force that influences a person to return the favour against receiving favourable treatment from others (Gouldner, 1960). Hence, reciprocity can act as an influencing factor for people to display discretionary behaviours (Connolly & Thorn 1990; Lin, 2007) like knowledge sharing behaviour. According to Blau (1964), reciprocity is an individual's benefit to get involved in social exchange. For instance, reciprocity benefits people who share their knowledge and they look forward for forthcoming help from others in return of sharing the knowledge (Connolly & Thorn, 1990).

Davenport and Prusak (1998) identified several benefits of knowledge sharing behaviour, such as promotion, status, and job security. From this point of view, knowledge sharing behaviour will be positively affected by the future benefits (Cabrera & Cabrera, 2005). Several researchers (see, for example, Bock, Lee, Zmud, & Kim, 2005; Javernick-Will, 2012; Wasko & Faraj, 2005) suggested positive influence of reciprocity on knowledge sharing behaviour. The following hypothesis is, therefore, postulated:

H1 : Reciprocity positively influences knowledge sharing behaviour of individuals.

2.3. HRM Practices in the Context of Knowledge Sharing

Prior literature suggested associations between HRM and knowledge sharing in organisations because primary concern of HRM is to manage human resources as basic knowledge asset of organisations. Properly managed human resources can achieve competitive advantage by contributing to basic organisational objectives like quality, profits, and customer satisfaction (Collins & Clark, 2003). Academic research conducted at organisational level suggested that HRM practices are the primary source used by organisation to shape and influence individuals' skills, attitudes, and behaviours for performing their tasks and achieving organisational objectives (Collins & Clark, 2003; Martinsons, 1995). Kuvaas (2008) showed that career development, training opportunities, and performance appraisal appeared as investments in employee development and fulfil employee need of career by initiating knowledge sharing behaviour in reciprocity. This study chooses four HRM practices (i.e., incentive systems, performance appraisal, employee's training and development, and employee's recruitment and selection) as they are highly suggested in the knowledge management literature (Cabrera & Cabrera, 2005; Fong, Ooi, Tan, & Lee, 2011; Gulati & Khera, 2003).

2.4. Incentive Systems

Incentives, such as compensation, reward, and recognition, are the primary HRM practices that organisations use to strengthen employees to fulfil organisational goals (Collins & Clark, 2003; Muller, Spiliopoulou, & Lenz, 2005). From the study of organisations that implement incentive systems, these practices were found to be used in organisations as tools to obtain, boost, and maintain employees' desired knowledge sharing behaviour (Fong et al., 2011). Reward, for instance, identifies organisational values that are considered as standards of conduct and these values are important for guiding and shaping the desired behaviour in the organisation (Nelson & Gardent, 2011). Several organisations use reward and recognition to boost employees' positive behaviour to share their knowledge and increase their knowledge sharing vision (Gulati & Khera, 2003). Hence, incentive systems encourage employees to share their knowledge and contribute to organisational benefit (Yong-Hui & Jing-Wen, 2008).

According to the social exchange theory, employee's knowledge sharing is valued by rewarding and recognising them and, in turn, employees perceive a supported work environment that increases employees' obligation to reciprocate with beneficial behaviours for their organisation (Kim & Ko, 2014). Empirical evidence supports the argument that compensation and reward are essential to enhance employees' knowledge sharing behaviour (Bartol & Srivastava, 2002; Ooi, Teh, & Chong, 2009). Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2 : Incentive systems positively influence knowledge sharing behaviour.

2.5. Performance appraisal

Performance appraisal could be known as a formal system of assessment and assessment of individual or group presentation (Mondy, 2010). Research indicated that performance appraisal is an essential step for the performance and development of human resources (Khoury & Analoui, 2004). Cabrera and Cabrera (2005) suggested that a well-planned performance appraisal system supports knowledge management activities and recognises these activities by creating employees' perception for the valuation of knowledge-sharing activities by organisation. In addition, performance appraisals' most important part is feedback that could give employees more exact information about how they are meeting up anticipations (e.g., regarding knowledge sharing behaviour) (Liu & Liu, 2011). Prior research showed that when employees in an organisation perceived that the performance appraisal is fair and unbiased, the social exchange theory suggested that they will subsequently get a positive viewpoint about their organisation, and that would boost their intention to involve in knowledge sharing (Konovsky & Cropanzano, 1991). This argument leads to the following hypothesis:

H3 : Performance appraisals positively influence knowledge sharing behaviour.

2.5. Training and Development

Existing literature of training and development showed that knowledge workers need continuous professional development. This is due to the fact that for leading top position in their professional fields, they need continuous awareness of developments within their specific disciplines. Different authors explain training and development differently. Tannenbaum and Yukl (1992), for instance, defined training in a way that it is a strategic procedure to change attitude and behaviour with learning skill to get efficient enactment in any activity. Whereas development was explained as formal education, increasing job experience, evaluating personality, and capabilities that help employees to get ready for the forthcoming jobs (Gerhart, Wright, Neo, & Hollenbeck, 2008). For knowledge sharing, training involves teaching communication skills, what knowledge is, and how to share the knowledge (Gagne, 2009). The rationale for knowledge sharing behaviour in teams stems from Blau's (1964) social exchange theory which argued that a member would share his or her knowledge with the team because he or she expects reciprocity from fellow members. On the basis of previous literature, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4 : Training and development positively influence knowledge sharing behaviour.

2.5. Recruitment and Selection

Acquiring, developing, and utilising employees' knowledge, skills, and abilities are essential for the organisations to develop knowledge management activities. For that purpose, individuals having suitable skills and attitudes are selected to support organisations for incorporating knowledge from different sources and encouraging innovative idea generation (Martinsons, 1995). HRM introduces a significant staffing function that includes recruitment and selection practices to attain accurate employees having particular knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA) to achieve superior working performance (Baptiste, 2008). The organisation will focus on getting a match between the KSAs of the applicant with the job requirements of the organisations (Goodman & Svyantek, 1999). However, selection of the exact candidate having knowledge sharing perception is highly valuable and the recruitment methods facilitate organisation to attract candidates having knowledge sharing tendency (Fong et al., 2011).

H5 : Recruitment and selection practices positively influence knowledge sharing behaviour.

3. CONCEPTUAL MODEL

The conceptual model of this study (Fig. 1) is constructed based on prior literature (Fong et al., 2011).

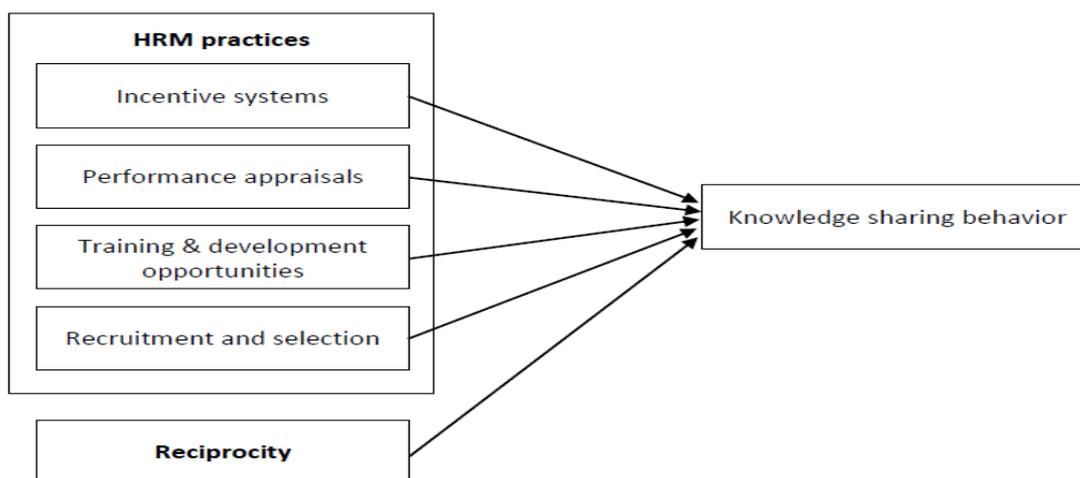


Fig. 1. Conceptual model

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1. Data collection

The research design is cross-sectional, where questionnaire survey based research method was used (see Table 1 for the item source). The population was banking sector in Pakistan. The samples of this study are banks located in Lahore and Sialkot. Convenient sampling was used for sample selection (i.e., banks' employees). Data collection took place between mid-January and March 2016 where 300 questionnaires were distributed. Out of 300, only 216 questionnaires were completed by the respondents (response rate of 72%). These data were used for data analysis. Data were analysed using the IBM statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) and IBM AMOS software by applying structural equation modelling (SEM) technique.

Table 1. Item source

Concept	Dimensions	Items	Sources
Human resource practices	Incentive systems	Item 1-4	(Davenport & Prusak. 1998; Hargadon. 1998)
		Item 5	(Lau & Idris.2001; Edgar & Geare, 2005; Lopez. Peon. & Ordas, 2006)
	Performance Appraisal	Item 1-2	(Delery & Doty, 1996)
		Item 3	(Lau & Idris,2001;Edgar & Geare, 2005; Lopez. Peon. & Ordas. 2006)
Training and Development	Item 1-2	Item 3	(Lau & Idris.2001;Edgar & Geare. 2005; Lopez. Peon. & Ordas,2006)
		Item 4	(Kim & Ko,2014)
	Item 5-6	(Boselie,Dietz, & Boon, 2005)	
Recruitment and Selection	Item 1-2	Item 3	(Lau & Idris,2001;Edgar & Geare. 2005; Lopez, Peon, & Ordas, 2006)
		Item 4*	(Delery & Doty, 1996)
	Item 5	Item 6-7	Designed by researcher (Kim & Ko.2014)
		Item 6-7	(Ghosha & Gurunathanb, 2015)
Reciprocity	Reciprocity	Item 1-6	(Kankanhalli,Tan.& Wei, 2005)
Knowledge sharing behavior	Knowledge sharing behavior	Item 1-4	(Bock, Lee, Zmud, & Kim, 2005; Davenport & Prusak. 1998)
		Item 5-9	(Ameleh,Gazor, IKoohkan,& Kiarazm,2012;Kim & Lee. 2004; LinW., 2008)

4.2. Data Analysis

Descriptive results of this study show that 65.7% of the respondents were male and 34.3% were female. Majority of the respondents (72.7%) fall between the age limit of 20-30 years, and mostly having masters and bachelor's degree (88.4%). More than half of them (53.2%) have between 1 to 3 years' experience.

The Cronbach's alpha of this study ranges from .76 to .83, thereby falling under an acceptable rule of thumb suggested by Nunnally (1994) (see Table 2). In applying the statistical treatment of the hypotheses in the proposed model, several researchers suggested a two-stage model-building process for applying SEM (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2005; Lin & Lee, 2004). First of all, we developed a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) based measurement model. This is followed by the structural model.

Table 2. Reliability test.

Constructs	Cronbach's alpha
Incentive Systems	.83
Performance Appraisals	.81
Training and Development	.79
Recruitment and Selection	.81
Knowledge Sharing Behaviour	.79
Reciprocity	.76

5. FINDINGS

5.1. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

There are two tests for taking decision about factor analysis. Firstly, using Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test with value of .80, which is greater than the cut-off value of .50. Secondly, using the Bartlett's test (Hair et al., 2005). In this study, Bartlett's test is significant (i.e., .000), suggesting that factor analysis can be applied. Six factors were extracted from the Scree-Plot, and EFA with promax rotation was performed (Hair et al., 2005). Throughout this process, of the HRM practices, the third item of training and development(Train15) and the sixth item of knowledge sharing behaviour (KSB32) were removed due to poor factor loadings which were less than .50(Lee, Oui, Tan, & Chong, 2010).

5.2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) Measures Goodness of Fit Indices

According to the CFA goodness fit of measurement model, the result shows fit indices that are suggested by Lin and Lee (2004), and Ryu, Ho, and Han (2003). The measurement of absolute fit includes the ratio of χ^2 statistics to the df, goodness-of-fit index (GFI), and root mean square residual (RMR) value. Likewise, incremental fit measures include the values of relative fit index, familiar goodness-of-fit index, normed fit index (NFI), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA).

Table 3. Overall fit indices of CFA model.

Fit index	Scores	Recommended cut-off values
Measures of Absolute Fit		
X ² /d.f	1.468**	<2; < 3 or 5
GFI	.845*	> .90; >.8
RMR	.059**	<.05 or .08
Incremental Fit Measures		
AGFI	.817**	> .90; >.8
CFI	.924**	>.90
RMSEA	.04**	<.08
Parsimonious Fit Measures		
PGFI	.714**	The higher, the better
PNFI	.717**	.60 - .90

Acceptability: **acceptable; *marginal

Table 3 displays that all goodness of fit indices fall under the acceptable threshold, indicating that the structural model depicting the relationship among HRM practices, reciprocity, and knowledge sharing behaviour has a good fit (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Browne & Cudeck, 1993).

5.3. Hypothesis testing

For path validity of this model, the statistical implications of all essential parameter values

were observed. The outcomes suggest that the relationship between performance appraisal (ρ -value = .045), recruitment and selection (ρ -value = .020), reciprocity (ρ -value = .000), and knowledge sharing behaviour are significant (see Table 4 and Fig. 2 for details). On the other hand, there is no significant relationship between incentive systems (ρ -value = .227), training and development (ρ -value = .76), and knowledge sharing behaviour. H2, H4, and H5 are, therefore, supported. H1 and H3 are, however, not supported.

Table 4. Hypotheses Testing Results

Hypothesis	Path	Path coefficient	Std. error	Critical ratio	ρ -value	Remarks
H1	IS → KSB	.101	.63	-1.209	.227	Not supported
H2	PA → KSB	.541	.123	2.005	.045	*Supported
H3	T&D → KSB	.010	.101	-.305	.760	Not supported
H4	R&S → KSB	.589	.138	2.326	.020	*Supported
H5	R → KSB	.637	.83	5.452	.000	**Supported

Note: IS – incentive system; PA – performance appraisal; T&D – training & development; R&S – recruitment & selection; R – reciprocity; KSB – knowledge sharing behaviour. ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

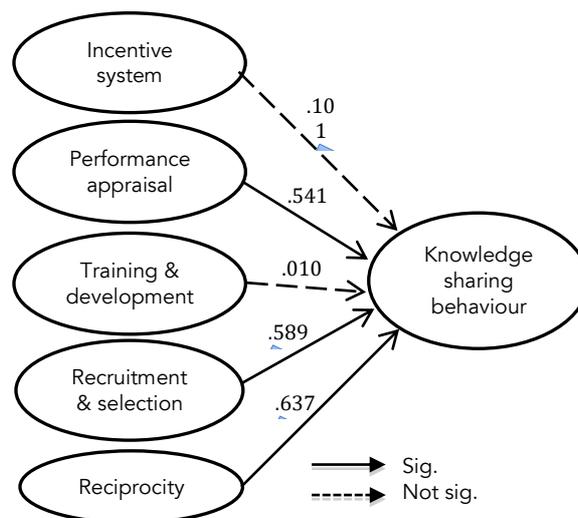


Fig. 2. Structural model with standardised coefficient weights

6. DISCUSSION

The results suggest that reciprocity, performance appraisal, and recruitment and selection have a positive relationship with knowledge sharing behaviour. Incentives and training and development are, however, not found significant to knowledge sharing behaviour.

The significant relationship of performance appraisal to knowledge sharing behaviour is consistent with numerous studies conducted in the past (see, for example, Cabrera & Cabrera, 2005; Collins & Clark, 2003; Fong et al., 2011; Yong-Hui & Jing-Wen, 2008). The result indicates that it is important to have knowledge sharing criteria in the Key Performance Index (KPI) to extend employees work performance that might result in effective knowledge sharing behaviour in organisations.

Consistent with Cabrera and Cabrera (2005), employees' recruitment and selection is significant to enhance employees' knowledge sharing behaviour in organisations. Alike, the relationship between knowledge sharing behaviour and reciprocity is strongly supported. This result is consistent with the findings of Bock and Kim (2001), Cabrera and Cabrera (2005), and Javernick-Will (2012). The finding indicates feeling of obligation in reciprocity as an influencing factor for employees to involve in discretionary behaviour like knowledge sharing for the organisation. Wasko and Faraj (2005) also confirmed a positive influence of reciprocity on knowledge sharing. In contrast, Scott (2000) found that knowledge sharing will not happen without reciprocity.

Moreover, the finding shows that the relationship between incentive and knowledge sharing behaviour relationship is not supported. With reference to Collins and Clark (2003) and Muller et al. (2005), incentives include compensation, rewards, and recognition that organisations use to strengthen and influence employees' knowledge sharing behaviour. Rewarding and recognising knowledge sharing behaviour give positive perception to the employees for valuation of their knowledge sharing behaviour (Cabrera & Cabrera, 2005). Nonetheless, our study proposes that employees' knowledge sharing behaviour is independent of incentives. This surprising finding is consistent with other

studies conducted in Asian countries, such as Iqbal, Toulson, and Tweed (2012). Alike, Bock and Kim (2001) suggested that rewards (routine annual monetary rewards) have a negative impact on employees' knowledge sharing behaviour as everyone will focus on how to gain the rewards and will subsequently ignore other works (Gulati & Khera, 2003).

The relationship between training and development opportunities and knowledge sharing behaviour (H3) is also not supported. In essence, formal and informal trainings are important because they encourage employees to share knowledge during formal and informal interactions between individuals, so that they can exchange information and ideas that are beneficial for the organisation (Ipe, 2003). Prior research showed that training opportunities are investments in employee development and career enhancement by the organisation that obligate employees to reciprocate by initiating knowledge sharing behaviour (Kuvaas, 2008). A plausible reason to this finding is that the training sessions may not be properly organised. Poorly organised training is not effective to change employees' attitudes or behaviours (Tschosi, 2014). Consequently, training programs are not meeting their standards. Fleming (2009) reported that 95% of the training reached to a liking level, 37% reached to a learning level, 13% to a level where learning is applicable in the workplace, while only 3% reached to a level where learning impacts the organisation.

6. THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

This study contributes to theory by building a theoretical based model validated using a structural equation modelling. Specifically, this study sheds light on the relationship between reciprocity, HRM practices, and knowledge sharing behaviour from the social exchange theory perspective. This study gives an easy approach to new researchers in working with Knowledge Management domain. In addition, the study's findings may be useful for employers, employees, policy makers, and scholars to understand the factors that could promote knowledge sharing.

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