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Employee Social Skills as an antecedent to Knowledge Sharing Behavior in Kenyan Universities

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Abstract

Knowledge sharing behavior has become increasingly important in latest years, and is recognized as a critical asset for universities. The study aimed to examine whether social skills contributes to knowledge sharing behavior. This research paper deepens the understanding that social skills among academic staff at universities is an emotional intelligence drive for modern universities in Kenya in harnessing knowledge to explore intelligence-sharing behavioral dimension. Social skills are emotional social feelings according to their individual responses as they understand and know one another as Universities strive for improved knowledge. Explanatory study was used to target a population of 6,423 and a sample size of 376 academic staff was selected using simple random sampling academic staff at Kenyan universities in Nairobi County. The findings of the research revealed that social skills had a positive and significant effect on the connection between social skills and knowledge sharing behavior at ($\beta = 0.10, p < 0.05$) significance. The study concludes that Social skills enhances knowledge sharing behavior of academic staff in universities as confirmed by this study. The study findings will be useful to academicians and universities who want to harness knowledge for improved leaderships by understanding social relationships within the academic cycles in relation to knowledge management. This research offers logical information, especially for emerging dynamic social roles in influencing and harnessing knowledge sharing behavior.

Keywords: Social Skills, Knowledge Sharing Behavior, Universities, Employees, Kenya

INTRODUCTION

In most academic literature, very minimal attention has been given to social university workplaces in the situation of academic staff in universities (Grieve et al., 2013). Social skills are key elements of human behavior inside the organization. The more they know each other, the more they acknowledge each other's feelings emotions and behaviors and the more they can interact. Legitimate social groups came up with a very simple suggestion to recruit smart people and let them speak to each other about Davenport & Prusak (2000). Knowledge transfer takes place within the institution when workers interact with each other or work together in Kalling & Styhre (2003). Knowledge sharing is a socialization process performed by academic staff as conversations between individuals that facilitate imitations and inventions.

Drawing from the theory of social exchange the study point out that empathic features of feelings for others, and acknowledging their emotional content according to subsequent reactions. Bock, et al., (2005) explains that the sharing of knowledge between individuals and the organization relies significantly more on the sharing of knowledge between employees. Therefore, if the institution is not developed around a knowledge-friendly environment from the onset, the sharing of intelligence will not be nurtured by social skills.

Huysman & Wit, (2002). Burges (2005) explains the tendency of institutions to focus on collaborative knowledge sharing and awareness of individuals-to-people interactions and the attributes of knowledge sharing facilitators which they have not. Cabrera & Cabrera (2005) explains how individuals consider their knowledge to be of use to others and make an effort to share it. The level of knowledge shared increases when like-minded people with one believe in their contribution make a difference in an environment where workers interact and associate frequently and knowledgeable about the knowledge they can find in their colleagues.

Connelly & Kelloway, (2003), describes how individuals are enabled to share their knowledge, in supporting each other, hence increasing the importance of knowledge when achieving optimal results. The study is three fold: in identifying staff social awareness Horizon; evaluate the concept of Academic staff knowledge sharing behavior Horizon; and finally investigate relationship between Employee social awareness Horizon practices and outcomes on knowledge sharing behavior.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The study research was guided by Social exchange theory is a very important theory that attempts to explain the behavior of employees and employers at the workplaces Blau et al. (1964). The benefit is a relationship where the parties have to work and get a mutual benefit. An example of cost is the provision of knowledge by universities to an employee. This is because the employer must give up some of the employee's resources and time to work by providing academic self-awareness, self-regulation, social skills, interpersonal skills and humility in order to motivate the employee. Likewise, the advantages that the client enjoys are the products of knowledge sharing. It is a theory of social exchange that revolves around interpersonal relationships focused on the self-interest of each individual, which implies a motivation to improve oneself through a relationship extended to an employer who receives enhanced services through increased knowledge sharing. It requires effective equity, distribution and communication between the employer and workers. (Western & Turner, 2010).

Blau (1964) states how individuals control their interactions with other individuals on the basis of a self-interest analysis of the costs and benefits of such interaction. People optimize their advantages and minimize their costs by sharing capital with others. Individuals may build social relationships with others by sharing their knowledge and evaluating knowledge sharing actions with perceived benefits that can control such activity positively influencing individual expectations in order to obtain some future benefits through reciprocation (Cabrera *et al.*, 2005).

Employee social Skills perspective

Davenport & Prusak (2000) states how workers communicate with each other on a daily basis, share knowledge to complete their assignments, solve problems and learn. Better relationships between workers, improved communication and a higher level of trust are factors that promote knowledge sharing. The more they get to know each other, the more they understand each other's thoughts, emotions and actions, the more they will be able to communicate effectively. Different individuals come with a different set of unique ideas, experiences and styles of work. Possession of empathic traits does not necessarily involve

feeling compassion for others, but rather understanding their emotional conversations and responding to improved knowledge sharing.

Bock, et al (2005) explains that the sharing of knowledge among individuals and between individuals and organizations relies significantly more on the sharing of knowledge between workers than on the organizational context. If the system is not designed around an information-friendly environment from the start, then the exchange of knowledge will not be fostered by social skills. Huysman & Wit, 2002. Institutions should have specific collective knowledge sharing habits, such as organizational patterns and norms, and should take less account of interactions between people and their characteristics and motives as knowledge sharing facilitators Burges (2005). Because knowledge sharing is embodied in individuals, they are the ones who make decisions about sharing their knowledge.

Cabrera & Cabrera (2005) recognizes the willingness of individuals to be of use to others, through their different levels of communication, which increases when individuals believe that their input makes a difference and in an atmosphere where workers communicate frequently; with little regard about their institutional standing, they become acquainted with the tools they can find in their colleagues. Connelly & Kelloway, 2003); Discusses that this, in effect, encourages them to share their knowledge, to support each other, as a result of increasing the value of data redundancy when achieving optimal results. Redundant knowledge also provides new insights on problem-solving.

H₁: Social Skills does not significantly affect Knowledge Sharing Behavior

Knowledge Sharing Behavior

Information sharing activity is an individual behavior involving the sharing of one's work-related knowledge and expertise with others within the university (Ghojavand & Abdali, 2012). Expertise sharing activity includes the exchange of information, expertise, experience, skills, concepts, thoughts, opinions, perspectives, ideas between individuals through social interaction (Durmusoglu et al., 2014). Bartol and Srivastava (2002) explain how Knowledge Sharing Behavior has components in which individuals share knowledge; the contribution of knowledge to organizational databases; the sharing of knowledge in structured interactions; Sharing knowledge on informal encounters between individuals; and finally sharing knowledge within the community of practice, which is a collaborative network for workers in an organization.

METHODOLOGY

This study used explanatory research design with a positivist approach. This study employed an explanatory research design built around testing of the stated objective (Hair *et al.*, 2013) in order to investigate the cause-effect relationship between the variables of interest in relation to industry perspective. Sekeran *et al.*, (2013). This research design is a study that seeks to establish a relationship between variables by identifying the cause and effect relationship of one or more variables (Saunders *et al* 2007). The research focused solely on social skills and knowledge sharing behavior as the outcome variable in determining whether there is any indication of the interaction on the link amongst the study variables. The target population was 6423 and a sample size of 376 academic staff was selected using simple random sampling. Questionnaires were used to collect data for the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Descriptive Statistics for Social skill

Social skills indicated in Table 2 shows most of the universities employees are generally don't find life enjoyable mean (M=3.070, SD=1.399). Results also shows that most of universities employees think they can deal effectively with people mean (M = 4.110, SD = 0.939). Also from the results most of the employees tend to change their mind frequently mean (M = 3.620, SD = 1.236).

Also most employees have good understanding of their emotions results of mean (M = 4.010, SD = 0.927). Also it shows that employees are sensitive to the feelings and emotions of others mean (M = 3.820, SD = 1.090). Finally the overall mean of (M=3.726, SD=0.782) shows that university employees have good social skills traits. Also results shows that the data experienced no skewness and kurtosis problems (-0.543 & 0.091).

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Social skills

n=376	Mea n	Std. Deviation	Skewnes s	Kurtosi s
Do I find life enjoyable	3.070	1.399	-0.122	-1.337
Do I deal effectively with people	4.110	0.939	-1.561	2.901
I change my mind frequently.	3.620	1.236	-0.759	-0.541
I have good understanding of others emotions	4.010	0.927	-1.111	1.178
I am sensitive to others feelings and emotions	3.820	1.090	-0.654	-0.607
Social skill	3.726	0.782	-0.543	0.091

Source: Research data (2019)

Factor analysis results for social skills

The results of the social skills showed that the high factor loading scores indicated that all the items discussed social skills were above the minimum recommended level of 0.50. The EFA extracted 1 element with an own value of 2,459 which is above the agreed value of 1 (Yong & Pearce, 2013) and a total extracted variance of 49,188 per cent. The element was sufficient for the description of the function. Since the Bartlett Sphericity Test provided a significant Chi-Square (Δ^2) of 355.14 ($\alpha < 0.05$) and Kaiser – Meyer – Olkin sampling adequacy was 0.726 above the reasonable value of 0.50 (Field, 2005), it was shown that it was sufficient to submit data for factor analysis on this parameter of social skills.

Table 2: Social skills rotated component matrix

Scale Item	Factor Loading
	0.733
Do I find life enjoyable	0.705
Do I deal effectively with people	0.596
I change my mind frequently.	0.785
I have good understanding of others emotions	0.673
I am sensitive to others feelings and emotions	
Initial Eigenvalues	2.459
% of Variance	49.188
Cumulative %	49.188
KMO and Bartlett's Test	
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	0.726
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	
Approx. Chi-Square	355.14
Df	10
Sig.	0.000

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

A 1 components extracted.

Source: Research Data (2019)

Relationship between social skills and knowledge sharing behavior

The objective of the study stated that there is no significant impact of social skills on the behavior of knowledge sharing among academic staff in Kenyan universities. Nevertheless, the results in Table 3.2 showed that social skills had a positive and significant impact on the conduct of knowledge sharing ($\beta = 0.130$, $p < 0.05$). Imposing a likelihood of 0.130 information sharing activity will improve with an increase in social skills. The theory was therefore denied. Further results showed an impact of more than 3 times ($t = 2.963$) on information sharing activity related to social skills relative to the effect of the standard error associated with it.

Foss, et al. (2010) agreed that the sharing of information through social skills among staff is of great benefit to organizations, allowing for improved new knowledge. Furthermore, Cabrera & Cabrera (2005) states that if individuals find their expertise to be beneficial to others, they will be more likely to make an effort to share it.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The study concluded that it was clear that enhancing the social skills of workers in the company would lead to improved employee performance and knowledge sharing and, in general, improved organizational efficiency. As noted, social killings made it possible for workers to recognize emotional signs, enabling them to think, feel, feel emotions in fellow employees or groups and deal with them before they exploded, impacting knowledge sharing and performance.

Social skills have made it possible for workers to identify important social networks and to consider key power relationships and to know how to use them to enhance knowledge sharing. Social skills have also made it possible for employees to work with diverse backgrounds and abilities. Because of social skills, workers are in a good position to understand the needs of the consumer or the company and seek to fulfill such needs by constant contact with these beneficiaries, which contributes to the achievement of organizational goals. Social skills have had a strong and significant impact on the conduct of knowledge sharing ($\beta = 0.130, p < 0.05$). The idea is that good social skills improves the conduct of knowledge sharing among university staff. The findings of the study showed that social skills enable workers to understand the power of building useful and safe networks at work locations to improve the positive working environment that they use to boost their own success.

Social skills also provide workers with the necessary skills to connect and communicate with work colleagues from different settings, thereby strengthening teamwork and communication that will improve Knowledge sharing behavior in return. As a result of social skills, workers have a clear mind to help them to identify the needs of the customer and then develop strategies to ensure that these needs are met and fulfilled with their expectations. The majority of the staff who participated in the study agreed or strongly agreed that social skills would allow employees to understand a wide range of emotional signals and that would allow them to feel emotions in their work colleagues or groups, thereby promoting improved information sharing between employees. It makes it possible for staff to consider the good and bad times of their colleagues and to stop a lot of conflict at workplace.

The result agreed with McPheat (2010) that seeing things from a different point of view allows employees to take action and make decisions after they have learned their point of view, and that therefore rational decisions are taken without any prejudice, but rather consideration and sympathy which improves the quality of results. The research also agrees with Kalling & Styhre (2003) that the transfer of information takes place in an organization as a normal process, either when the members of the organization interact with each other or function together.

Implications for theory

The conceptual consequences of this study were based on the proposed paradigmatic shift from a social skills approach to a social exchange approach. The theoretical implications of the current study are that, although the theory of social exchange is useful in reconciling different interests, social issues can influence outcomes due to horizontal outcomes between social skills and the practice of knowledge sharing.

Implications for managerial practice and policy

Generally, social skills-oriented academic staff are apparently low at Kenyan universities. Nonetheless, lack of satisfaction with key social skills that may contribute to a direct association with negative outcomes of knowledge-sharing behavioral exchange. Awareness sharing among workers is likely to be the product of unique social influences in the sense of African universities. Horizon, this is unlikely to be sustainable as awareness and social interaction patterns and activities are rapidly gaining popularity in Africa.

Further, the research could have administrative consequences for the implementation of tactical SS in certain key areas of the universities. The research also established participatory approaches to managing academic knowledge with respect to employees. As knowledge sharing between employees is important in the context of instrumental social exchange, key issues affecting them need to be resolved through meaningful social exchange. A participatory, definitive, efficient and satisfactory methodology should be established. Organizations should follow industry-wide codes and standards that would increase the level of conformity with the globally accepted SS best practices of the University industry in Kenya.

This may be a cascade down to some other universities that have not even been selected for research. The government policy system must adopt a multi-stakeholder approach to policy formulation. Because competition in universities depends, in general, on social and human factors, this could only be effectively tackled by introducing a new approach focused on sustainability and competitiveness.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The research should be applied to other related industries in other contexts in Africa and linked with listed universities. Theoretical underpinnings of responsible competition and sustainable competitiveness continue to develop, and it may be appropriate to examine aspects of the topic using analytical methods for developing information and proposals. It is also possible to apply quantitative development to the theory of SS and competitiveness. Finally, some Social Skills Dimensions, which this study found to coexist with otherwise potentially contradictory employees' information sharing actions regarding universities, could be further explored.

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