

ABSTRACT

In today's competitive world, organizations need to effectively manage the knowledge existing within. To do this, organizations may choose to focus on creating knowledge repository based Knowledge Management Systems, whose primary goal is to increase knowledge sharing in an organization. Through an impersonal medium of repository based KMS, knowledge contributing and knowledge seeking activities tend to be separated in time and space. In this scenario, an individual's knowledge contributing and knowledge seeking behaviors also tend to be different and distinct. Thus, the factors affecting an individual's knowledge sharing behavior in general may affect her knowledge contributing and knowledge seeking behaviors differently.

This study has developed two different research models for assessing and predicting an individual's knowledge contributing and knowledge seeking behaviors. In these models, some of the factors, like knowledge culture, knowledge repository characteristics, generalized reciprocity and organizational knowledge ownership, affect an individual's knowledge contributing as well as knowledge seeking behaviors. Some other factors, like personal benefits, personal costs and propensity to share, imply different things in the context of these two types of behaviors. However, knowledge characteristics affect only knowledge seeking behavior and not knowledge contributing behavior.

This study tested and validated the research models empirically in a field setting, using survey research methodology. Data were collected from individuals, having access to and experience of using repository based knowledge management systems (KMS), using structured questionnaires. The collected data was analyzed using two different statistical techniques, multiple regressions and partial least squares (PLS).

The results of the study suggest that indeed the variables, which affect knowledge sharing behavior in general, affect knowledge contributing and knowledge seeking behavior in different ways. One of the significant findings of this study is the affect of a supportive knowledge culture on knowledge contributing and knowledge seeking behaviors. Whilst a supportive knowledge culture was found to be positively associated with knowledge contributing behavior, it was found to be negatively associated with knowledge seeking behavior. Similarly, personal benefits were found

to be negatively associated with knowledge seeking behavior. Personal benefits were found to be negatively associated with both knowledge contributing and knowledge seeking behaviors. Generalized reciprocity and personal costs were found to be negatively associated with knowledge contributing behavior, whereas they were found to be positively associated with knowledge seeking behavior. All the other variables were found to be positively associated with both knowledge contributing and knowledge seeking behaviors. Except the association of generalized reciprocity with knowledge contributing behavior, all associations were found to be statistically significant.

This study has provided an empirical support for treating knowledge contributing and knowledge seeking activities of an individual's knowledge sharing behavior as two distinct activities, at least in the context of an impersonal medium of repository based KMS. The concurrent examination of the factors affecting an individual's knowledge contributing and knowledge seeking behaviors provides a better understanding of hitherto unitary concept of knowledge sharing.

The differentiated affects of these factors on knowledge contributing and knowledge seeking behavior in the repository based KMS have implications for the design of repository based KMS. The practitioners need to adopt a diverse approach to enhance knowledge sharing by individuals in the organizations and should not rely solely on repository based KMS for the same. The negative association of personal benefits with knowledge sharing behavior implies that both researchers and practitioners need to look beyond incentives and improved current performance to realize that knowledge sharing could also mean self-expression and learning.