

WHAT EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENT TRAITS ENABLE MANAGERS TO SHARE KNOWLEDGE FOR WORK-RELATED QUALITY OF LIFE?

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Abstract:

Over the past decades, it is seen that among all intangibles, knowledge - as one of the core competencies - constitutes competitive advantage for the organizations. In the era of knowledge economy, knowledge overshadows tangible assets and there is an intense demand for accumulating, utilizing and sharing knowledge. Individuals' knowledge sharing behaviours in the workplace are divergent, highly dependent on their willingness. Due to the importance of that, an understanding of how to foster employees' knowledge sharing has become critical. This paper presents a theoretical framework and research proposal to carry out a research which examines the relationship between emotional intelligence traits and knowledge sharing and its influence on work related quality of life. The main intention of the future research is to identify emotional intelligence traits that can enable or prevent knowledge sharing. After providing a literature review and results of previous studies the authors introduce their model and hypotheses which is the base of their presently running research.

Keywords: knowledge sharing, emotional intelligence, work-related quality of life

1. INTRODUCTION

Work-related studies have always been popular and the reason is undoubtedly lies in the basic assumption that the workplace is our second home. It is a major issue for both employees and academics as present workforce are getting more conscious about working in pleasant and satisfactory surroundings. We spend most of our time in the workplace so it is evident that the organisational atmosphere influences our whole quality of life. Rethinam and Ismail (2008) call the attention to the fact that working systems and living standards have changed our attitude even towards the basic needs. Kashani (2012, p.9523) determines quality of work life as “a set of principles” among which there are trustworthiness, respect, responsibility and value creation that contributes both to the individual and the organisation. Employees quality of work life is influenced by individual work-life balance, social and physical work and organisation environment, performance related requirements (task and contextual performance factors) and the traits and behaviour of colleagues (Che Rose et al, 2006). According to the outcomes of Che Rose and colleagues’ empirical study (2006) the most important quality of work life predictors seem to be the organisational climate, career achievement, carrier satisfaction and career balance.

Chitra and Mahalakshmi’s (2012) study also supports that “work life variables such as salary, perceived support of colleagues, satisfaction with the administration, work and non work conflict have been proven to directly affects or are predictive of job satisfaction” (2012, p. 181). Institutional procedures, bureaucracy, meaningless meetings, lack of competences and opportunity to perform meaningful work prevent quality life at the workplace (Kashani, 2012; Chitra & Mahalakshmi, 2012). Should employers realise the importance of quality of work-related life than their focus must shift to employees’ involvement in organisational operation system, communication and open knowledge sharing in order to reduce stress, turnover and absenteeism (Masomi et al, 2014). In an organisational climate where employees feel respected and safe to express their opinion as well as are actively involved in decision-making effective knowledge sharing will inevitable be present which further results in high quality of work life (Masomi et al, 2014).

Knowledge, knowledge management, knowledge economy, intellectual capital, intangible asset; all of these concepts are very popular and ‘trendy’ words in today’s business life. “We now live in the intangible economy. Knowledge economics is the new reality.” (Edvinsson, 2004, p.19).

The pressure of the emergence of the knowledge economy and the recognition of knowledge as a key to competitive advantage are making effective knowledge management a priority. Organizations around the world are very concerned about the concept of knowledge management and have already attempted knowledge management initiatives or programs in order to improve their performance varying degrees of success (Gaál et al, 2008). “Success in the knowledge economy comes to those who know themselves—their strengths, their values, and how they best perform.” (Drucker, 2005, p.2).

In the era of knowledge economy, intellectual resources are key organizational assets that enable sustainable competitive advantage (Drucker, 1998; Wenger & Snyder, 2000). The relevant literature shows that in the past several years knowledge management has received wide attention in practice and research. After having primarily focused efforts on information technology, the single focus has been eclipsed by an increasing awareness of the importance of “soft” - organizational and social - aspects of knowledge management (Gaál et al. 2007). As the employees are the most valuable knowledge resources for the organizations, their willingness to share knowledge can be influenced by not only organizational factors but also individual factors like people behaviours, motives and characteristics.

Sociability is one of the main characteristics of human beings, organizing their life around their relations with others. Individual factors - a unique set of emotions (Zeidner et al., 2004; Cote et al., 2006; O’Boyle et al., 2010; Komlósi, 2012; 2014), ideas and perspectives - and demographical factors (e.g. age, generation) all influence employees’ performance, motives and willingness to share knowledge. Employees’ knowledge sharing endeavours are one of the strong peculiarities of employees’ knowledge sharing behaviour (Hau, et al., 2013). Prior knowledge management studies, however, seem to be limited in that they did not address employees’ abilities to practice effective control over their emotional lives. Such individual differences are now thought of as difference in emotional intelligence (Mayer & Salovey, 1990).

1.1. Problem statement

Knowledge sharing consists of social interactions between employees and these are influenced by the relationships between individuals. Individual's emotional intelligence can play an important role in forming their knowledge sharing endeavours. Whether someone has high emotional intelligence, does she/he manage her/his own emotions and understand others' emotions and motivate to share the knowledge easier? The objective of our study is to examine this relationship between knowledge sharing and emotional intelligence.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This section presents the review of the relevant literature for our study's major constructs.

2.1. Concept of Knowledge sharing

Knowledge and knowledge management

Nowadays, in a knowledge economy knowledge is becoming a strategically important resource, a core competence and performance driver for the organizations (Yesil & Dereli, 2013). Either located in the minds of the individuals (tacit or "personal" knowledge) (Polanyi, 1966), embedded in organizational routines and norms, codified in technological devices (explicit or "codified" knowledge) (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995), knowledge enables the development of new competences (Choo, 1998). Successful companies are those that consistently create new knowledge, disseminate throughout the organization, and embody it in technologies, products, and services (Gottschalk, 2007; Gaál et al, 2009). However there is no universal approach to knowledge management there are four primary dimensions of knowledge management evidenced in literature (e.g. Davenport et al, 1998; Cummings & Worley, 2005; Pearlson & Saunders, 2006): 1) new knowledge creation, 2) knowledge storage, 3) knowledge sharing among organization members (knowledge transfer), and 4) knowledge reuse (knowledge application). Our study looks particularly at the third aspect, the knowledge sharing.

Knowledge sharing

In the turn of the Millennium knowledge sharing was considered to be one of most important aspects of knowledge management (Gupta et al, 2000), 10 years later it was proved that the success of knowledge management initiatives depends on knowledge sharing (Wang & Noe, 2010). Knowledge sharing represents the key knowledge management processes in organisations and is necessary for generating new ideas and developing new business opportunities (Lin, 2007). Knowledge sharing eventuates through written or personal communications via networking with other experts, or documenting, organizing and capturing knowledge for others (Wang & Noe, 2010). Knowledge-sharing activities will provide the members of any group with opportunities to exchange ideas and take part in cooperative activities, so that the effectiveness of members' performance in contributing to the success of their organization will be maximized (Dokhtesmatia & Ghorbani, 2013). In the process of knowledge sharing, individuals have two roles, knowledge generator and receptor. As a generator, individuals create knowledge by exchanging their ideas and experience through socialisation. As a receptor individuals perform the knowledge before it is transferred to any repository. This process indicates that creating and sharing of knowledge depends on the conscious effort of an individual who motivate for knowledge to be shared or hoarded. Knowledge sharing will not be successful within an organisation without the involvement of humans. Therefore, it is essential to understand individual factors of peoples' knowledge sharing behaviour (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

Knowledge sharing behaviour

Knowledge sharing is an important tool. One of its most remarkable tasks is to form people's behaviour and put knowledge sharing in the centre of their personal interest. Since an individual cannot possess all knowledge and knowledge cannot be hoarded like gold, people should recognize that the old paradigm 'knowledge is power' cannot exist any more. If people understand that knowledge sharing can support them to do their jobs more effectively and can help them in their personal development, then knowledge sharing will become realistic (Obermayer-Kovács & Csepregi 2007). Knowledge sharing behaviour is "by which an individual voluntarily provides other members of the organization with access to his or her knowledge and experiences" (Cyr & Choo, 2010, p. 825)

Davenport (1998) categorized the knowledge sharing behaviour as pure altruism, reciprocity, and reputation. Altruism can be referred to as a behaviour that costs an individual and benefit the other person. People donate something to other people without thinking of any returns when showing altruistic behaviour (Chattopadhyay, 1999). Reciprocity is a positive or negative response for the actions which one should treat others as one would like others to treat oneself. In general, people suffer from limited time, energy, and other resources and not willing to share their knowledge unless they can get reward from them. Reputation is a kind of recognition and increased by information sharing among other users. People who share more knowledge receive a higher reputation (Davenport & Prusak 1998).

Gupta and Govindarajan (2000) state that knowledge sharing can be conceptualized in terms of five elements: 1) perceived value of the source's knowledge, 2) willingness of the source to share knowledge, 3) existence and richness of transmission channels, 4) willingness of receiver to acquire knowledge from the source, and 5) the absorptive capacity of the receiver.

This research looks particularly at the second aspect. As individuals' willingness to share knowledge can be influenced by individual traits and behaviour patterns and this is why our research aims to explore the relationship between knowledge sharing and emotional intelligence.

2.2. Emotional intelligence

The origin of emotional intelligence perception can be traced back to the Thorndike (1920) concept of "social intelligence" by which the ability to understand and manage individuals and take sensible actions in human relations are signified (Thorndike, 1920). More than thirty years later Eysenck (1958, p.175) raised the question whether personality can be measured and said *"the answer depends on what we mean by personality, what we mean by measurement, and, indeed, one might even maintain that it depends on the meaning of the term 'can'"*. Around the 90's the theory of multiply intelligence was developed and the research outcome of Garden and Hatch (1989) indicated that IQ can unquestionably be separated from other intelligences. The contemporary forms of emotional intelligence only appeared in the early 90's when various terms have started to emerge (Goleman, 1996; Cooper & Sawaf, 1997; Petrides & Furnham, 2001; Dulewicz & Higgs, 2000; Bar-On, 2006) Undoubtedly Salovey & Mayer were the first who gave a definition by stating that emotional intelligence is "the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and action" (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, p.189) which later was modified to *"the ability to perceive emotion, integrate emotion to facilitate thought, understand emotions and to regulate emotions to promote personal growth"* (Mayer & Salovey, 1997, p.10).

Higgs and Dulewicz (1999) differentiate three basic but interlinking questions concerning emotional intelligence: what is emotional intelligence; can it be measured and can it be developed? Emotional intelligence (EI) is a concept of collection that combines social, personal and interpersonal intelligence including capabilities, competences and non-cognitive skills which influence the ability and technique to manage external (environmental) and internal (stress) circumstances. When it comes to measurement, they suggest to use the term emotional quotient (EQ) which resembles the method IQ is measured. Emotional Literacy (EL) refers to the process emotional intelligence is developed though it is often used as a synonym for emotional intelligence. They concluded that emotional intelligence is *"achieving one's goal through the ability to manage one's own feelings and emotions, to be sensitive to, and influence other key people, and to balance one's motives and drives with conscientious and ethical behaviour"* (1999, p.20). Bar-On (2000; 2006) combined previous approaches and used the concept of emotional-social intelligence to define skills, competencies, and facilitators and verify human behaviour. Emotional intelligence also bonds numerous fields of psychological science, such as human cognitive abilities, self regulation theory, or neuroscience of emotion (Zeidner et al, 2004). According to Pérez-González et al. (2005), there is a clear conceptual distinction between ability emotional intelligence (or cognitive-emotional ability) and trait emotional intelligence (or emotional self-efficacy). The former concerns emotion-related cognitive abilities, and is measured with the aid of maximum-performance tests. The latter concerns emotion-related behavioural characteristics, and is measured with the aid of self-reports (Petrides, 2009). *"Trait emotional intelligence is a distinct,*

compound trait located at the lower levels of personality hierarchies” (Petrides et al 2007, p.26) which is a collection of emotion-related self-perceptions. It is people’s confidence of capabilities to perform various tasks, and it correlates negatively with IQ (Mikolajczak et al, 2007).

2.3. Knowledge sharing and emotional intelligence

While the number of literature and studies on knowledge sharing and emotional intelligence is increasing there are still few empirical studies that explore and determine the emotional intelligence role in knowledge sharing (Esfahani et al, 2013).

To elicit or prevent knowledge sharing depends mainly on the person. Sveiby define individual knowledge as a competence that enables to act (2001). Competence is basically a cognitive feature in which motivation, ability and emotional facets play essential roles (Vajda, 1992). On the other hand competence is viewed as the capability to evoke knowledge, cognitive and practical abilities in a given circumstances through individual values, emotions and attitudes (Mihály, 2002). Personal knowledge is gained through individual traits and competencies, personal knowledge, abilities and skills, social roles and motivation (Spencer et al, 1994). When it comes to knowledge sharing there are conscious and unconscious influencing factors. Naturally knowledge retention can be unconscious as tacit knowledge is sometimes intangible, hard to express and be converted into explicit knowledge (Lee, 2001). On the other hand consciously individual, organisational or social attitude can cause knowledge prevention due to the following reasons: knowledge is power; “selfish” happiness to be an expert in a field; lack of trust; lack of time or people do not think that what is “not an important knowledge” for us can be important to others. An emotionally intelligent employees’ attitude to share however are different.

According to Karkoulian et al. (2010) employees with high emotional intelligence show more willingness to share knowledge. The study of Gurbuz and Araci (2012) has found that self-motivation, empathy, self-awareness are those emotional intelligence traits that facilitate knowledge sharing. Furthermore, the research concluded that individuals’ uncertainty of environment also influence knowledge sharing. One ability to show empathy and help emotional management when perceiving other colleagues being stressed can stimulate knowledge sharing (Gurbuz & Araci, 2012) Chen (2011) states emotional intelligence can have a positive impact on the practice of knowledge sharing as problem solving becomes faster and smoother.

Esfahani et al (2013) research found high emotional intelligence managers have a positive influence on staff commitment, satisfaction and efficiency. Consequently these emotional intelligence managers inspire and trigger inner motivation in employees to believe in knowledge sharing. As Esfahani et al concluded: «the more success the organization obtains, it can be seen that the attempts of managers with high emotional intelligence leads to development of knowledge and information management in the organization and between the staffs” (2013, p.2105).

Previous research applied ability emotional intelligence measurements. The authors are convinced that a personality trait-based emotional intelligence measuring device may contribute to find deeper connections to what emotional intelligence factors facilitate and / or impede individual collegial, group or organizational knowledge sharing.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research purpose

The aim of the ongoing research is to define which emotional intelligence factors (well-being, emotionality, self-control and sociability) influence knowledge sharing. The research is carried out among managers in telecommunication companies in Hungary.

3.2. Research questions

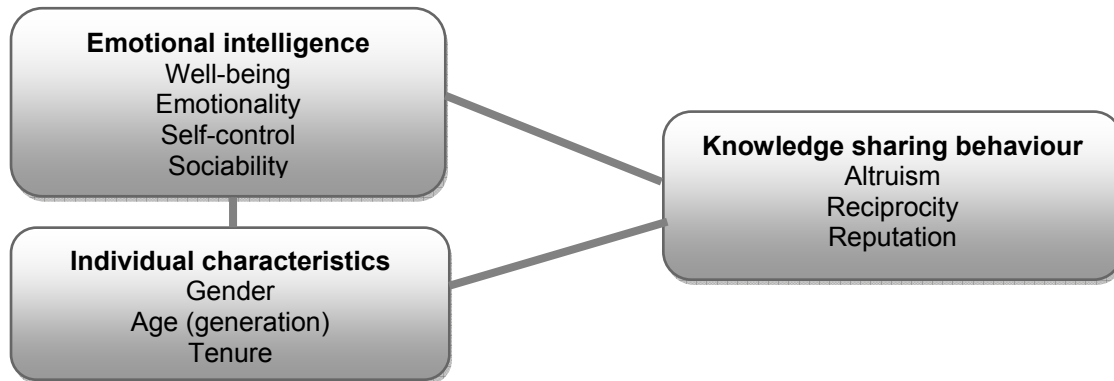
- Is there any correlation between the categories of knowledge sharing behaviours and the emotional intelligence factors?

- Is gender, age or tenure of the managers influence knowledge sharing and level of emotional intelligence?

3.3. Research model

The research model is based on the research questions

Figure 1: Model of the our research proposal



Source: Self-edit.

3.4. Research method

Knowledge sharing measurement

In the first part of our descriptive survey, which is based on a questionnaire is about to determine individuals' knowledge sharing behaviour. All definitions are adapted from the literature of Davenport and Prusak (1998). *Altruism* is adapted to refer to the degree to which an individual is willing to share knowledge in order to help others without expecting a reward. *Reciprocity* is adapted to refer to an individual sharing knowledge expecting to get useful knowledge from others in the future. *Reputation* is adapted to refer to the perception of increasing respect and to be known as expertise because of sharing knowledge. For each category we define 5 statements which will be scored on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The survey will be conducted after determining the content validity of the questionnaire. The measurement model is evaluated by the criteria of reliability, convergent validity, and discriminate validity.

Emotional intelligence measurement

TEIQue, Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire is going to be applied in this research based on its psychological theory and the ensuing nearly ten years of programmatic research. It has high validity and reliability (Cronbach's alpha =0.85). The long form (153 items) of the adult test (TEIQue 1.5) started to be developed in 1998 and underwent several revisions until finalised in 2001. The short form (30 out of 153 items, methodologically selected) of the adult test (TEIQue 1.5SF) was validated in 2010. The model covers 15 facets ('optimism', 'happiness', 'self-esteem', 'emotional management', 'assertiveness', 'social awareness', 'relationships', 'emotional expression', 'emotional perception', 'empathy', 'stress management', 'impulsiveness', 'emotional regulation', 'self-motivation', and 'adaptability') in the construct's sampling domain, each item belonging to one facet only (Petrides, 2009). The positive and negative items counterbalance one another within and among the 15 facets, as well as within and among the four factors ('wellbeing', 'self-control', 'emotionality', and 'sociability') plus one (containing two auxiliary facets, 'self motivation' and 'adaptability', which add up to the Global TEIQue scores) and within and among global traits. Although it is a self-report it is not self-evaluated. The test is designed to be factor analysed at the facet level on a 7-point Likert scale. Assessment and score calculation is carried out by expert and test developers.

By 2012, TEIQue had been translated into 17 languages. Its Hungarian adaptation (Kömölösi & Göndör 2011; 2013) and validation process started in 2011, on university students. The test has been already

applied in Hungarian with managers in production firms, hospitality and info-telecommunication sectors (Komlósi & Göndör, 2013; Kovács & Komlósi, 2013).

The present ongoing research

The present ongoing research is in the stage of compiling the questionnaire of the survey and collecting the list of telecommunication companies' availability. The questionnaire will be sent out in spring and allow two months to gather the data. After data analyses the aim to report the results late summer.

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