

Organizational Commitment as Predictor of Knowledge Sharing Behaviour in Organizations

¹ARUOREN, Emmanuel Ejiroghene (PhD)

¹Department of Business Administration,
Faculty of the Social Sciences, Delta State University, Abraka.
E-mail: aruorenenmanuel@gmail.com

Abstract

Knowledge is an essential resource in an organization, thus sharing it across organizational members is a *sine qua non* for success in an environment that is competitive. The study adopted a descriptive survey design to explore the relation between knowledge sharing behaviour and organizational commitment. Participants were employees of the Petroleum Training Institute, Effurun, Delta State, Nigeria. Data collection instrument was a structured questionnaire, which was administered on one hundred and eighty-two respondents in their place of work. Multiple regression was used in testing hypotheses using STATA 13.0 software. Results revealed that organizational commitment explained 12.4% variance in knowledge sharing behaviour, indicating a positive and significant relationship between organizational commitment and knowledge sharing behaviour. Furthermore, affective commitment was positive and significantly related to knowledge sharing behaviour, whereas a negative but insignificant relationship existed between normative commitment and knowledge sharing behaviour. In addition, continuance commitment was found to be positively and insignificantly related to knowledge sharing behaviour. The study, therefore recommended that organizations should place emphasis on developing affective commitment among employees as this will enhance knowledge sharing behaviour.

Keywords: Affective commitment, Continuance commitment, Knowledge sharing behaviour, Normative commitment, and Organizational commitment.

Introduction

The knowledge economy of today's global business world highlights the emphasis on knowledge as an essential resource for actualizing the objectives of organizations (Daland, 2016). Hence, using these knowledge assets effectively would lead to improved performance. Knowledge as described by several scholars connotes a mixture of experiences, insights, imagination, and information (Ikenwe & Igbinovia, 2015). It also represents the manner that individuals in a social setting comprehend how they act (Swan, 2008). Within the literature, knowledge and information have been used interchangeably. Wang and Noe (2010) noted that knowledge includes: thoughts, reality, skill and discernment applicable to individual, group, and business performance. By its nature, employees' knowledge is personal and if employees leave an organization (either by retirement, death, or dismissal), they go with the vast knowledge acquired overtime. This

can make organization loose valuable resources. It is therefore necessary for knowledge to be shared among organizational members. Thus, converting personal ownership of knowledge by employees to organizational ownership.

Although knowledge sharing is important for organizational survival, employees are inclined to hoard knowledge because of the competitiveness within organizations (Olatokun & Nwafor, 2012). While several factors may affect the willingness of employees to share their knowledge, Hislop (2003) noted that the degree of commitment among employees can influence their behaviour towards knowledge sharing. Thus, this study investigated the extent to which organizational commitment can predict the knowledge sharing behaviour of employees. Furthermore, the study examined the effects of affective, continuance and normative commitments on knowledge sharing behaviour.

Literature Review

Knowledge Sharing Behaviour

The availability of knowledge to every organizational member is the main objective of sharing knowledge (Krongh, Nonaka & Rechsteiner, 2012). Thus, spreading knowledge throughout the organization is described as knowledge sharing (Hamidizadeh & Meibodi, 2017). Alaaraj, Mohamed and Bustamam (2016) described knowledge sharing as a social-cultural dissemination of ideas, skills and experiences throughout the various organizational units. Chen (2011) suggested that knowledge sharing is voluntary, and an activity involving the transmission of vital knowledge from an employee to another. Knowledge sharing behaviour can therefore be described as an individual's willingness to share his or her knowledge about organizational activities with other people in that organization. The voluntary nature of knowledge sharing makes it a type of citizenship behaviour, as it is discretionary and may not attract sanctioning if not performed.

According to Al-Shawabkeh (2018), knowledge sharing involves three aspects: the recipient of the transferred knowledge must recognize it; the receiver must exploit the transferred knowledge and finally, knowledge sharing can exist at the team, individual and organizational levels. Knowledge sharing usually takes place between all organizational stakeholders, including employees, customers, suppliers, government agencies and strategic partners. Thus, several benefits accrue to organizations: reducing error and increasing organizational learning (Ford & Chan, 2003); increasing team innovation abilities (Wang & Noe, 2010); new product development quality (Yang, 2008); and decreasing cost of production (Abzari, Shahin & Abasaltian, 2014). In organizations, knowledge sharing can take place through meetings, internet sites, blogs, e-mail, video-conferencing, chat, mentoring and seminar presentation. It is pertinent to encourage individuals' sharing of knowledge rather than hoarding it, which is prevalent in organizations (Lam & Lambermont-Ford, 2010). However, Andolsek and Andolsek (2015) observed that the process by which employees share their knowledge within organizations was still poorly understood.

Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment is an important factor to understand and explain the behaviour of individuals within organizations (Bakhshi, Kuldeep & Ekta, 2009). Its study is of utmost importance to managers in organizations, hence the 21st century has witnessed an increased attention being paid to it by scholars (Memari, Mahdieh & Marnani, 2013). Commitment according to Allen and Meyer (1990), is a person's desire to continue to work for an organization. Khan and Jan (2015) defined organizational commitment as the extent of faithfulness of employees to their organization. It is a psychologically constructed responsibility towards the purpose of setting up an organization by its employees (Chelliah, Sundarapandiyam & Vinoth, 2015). Fu and Deshpande (2014) noted that organizational commitment is an estimation of an individual's rapport with his or her organization. Furthermore, Armstrong (2012) described organizational commitment as the loyalty, bond, or attachment a person has towards their organization. Additionally, Egriboyun (2015) identified the following as features of organizational commitment:

- i. An individual's adopting and accepting an organizations mission and purpose;
- ii. An individual's desire to put in extraordinary effort or sacrifice for his/or her organization;
- iii. An individual's strong desire to retain membership of an organization;
- iv. An individual internalizing the values of his/or her organization; and
- v. When an individual strongly identifies with an organization.

Organizational commitment is, therefore, an employees' strong bonding relationship and emotional connection with his/ or her organization, such that organizational activities takes a prominent place in his/ or her life.

Although organizational commitment takes various forms, most researchers adopt Allen and Meyer (1990) conceptualization of three forms of organizational commitment: affective, continuance and normative commitment. The emotional closeness which any employee has towards his/her organization is known as affective commitment (Price, 2011). Employees who are affectively committed have a robust perception of affinity and identification with their organization, thus increasing their collaboration in the undertakings of such an organization (Rhoades, Eisenberger & Armeli, 2001). Also, affective commitment enables members of an organization to have the disposition to meet targets and remain in their organization (Korir & Kipkebut, 2016).

Continuance commitment results from employee's comparison of the cost of leaving versus that of remaining with their organization (Cetin, 2004). Thus, it refers to the realization of the value associated with pulling out of the organization. Furthermore, Coetzee (2005) has noted that continuance commitment is calculative by its very nature as it is hinged on employee's judgment of considering the risks and costs incidental with leaving an organization. Price (2011) suggested that continuance commitment occurs if employees believe they cannot get a better job or that their success is as a result of organizational

activities. They therefore remain with their organization because of their accumulated investment. When employees are committed to their organization because of a sense of obligation, it is called normative commitment (Cetin, 2004). Price (2011) argued that normative commitment occurs when rewards are given to employees in advance, thus making them reciprocate by devoting themselves to their organization. They believe it is morally right for them to remain with their organization because of what such an organization has done for them (Allen & Meyer, 1990).

After a review of the literature, Meyer and Maltin (2010) highlighted the following as benefits to organizations having a strongly committed workforce: lower turnover intention and absenteeism, higher job satisfaction and performance, good citizenship behaviour and commitment to supervisors, occupations, work teams and customers. Conclusively, organizations with highly committed employees outperform those with low levels of commitment.

Organizational Commitment and Knowledge Sharing Behaviour: The Nexus

Highly committed employees have the tendency to add value to organizational activities by sharing their knowledge, which today is a source of competitive power for organizations (Lin, Zhang, Zhang & Zhou, 2017). Hence, research has shown that organizational commitment can predict the knowledge sharing behaviour of employees in any organization (Zaitouni, 2013). Empirically, Batainel and Alfalah (2015) established that employees' brand commitment positively influenced knowledge sharing in Jordan's Banks. Drawing a sample from Iranian manufacturing companies, Davoudi and Fartash (2012) analyzed the effect of organizational commitment on knowledge sharing. Their results revealed a significant positive relationship between these variables. Salleh, Ismail, Hamzah, Zahari, Mohammed, and Abdullal (2017) studied knowledge sharing behaviour of employees in Malaysian organizations, and observed that organizational commitment explained 58.9% variance in knowledge sharing. Several other researchers note the effective role played by organizational commitment in enhancing employees' knowledge sharing behaviour in Iran, Taiwan, and Pakistan (Abili, Thani, Mokhtarian & Rashidi, 2011; Han, Chiang & Chang, 2010; Saleem, Adnan & Ambreen, 2011). However, Mogotsi, Boon, and Fletcher (2011) reported that organizational commitment was not related to knowledge sharing behaviour in Botswana.

Sow, Anthony, and Berete (2016) argued that it was imperative to study the effects of the three component model of organizational commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990) on knowledge sharing as these effects may vary. Casimir, Lee, and Loon (2012) noted that affective commitment was related to knowledge sharing of employees. Saleem *et al* (2011) reported that all the three dimensions of organizational commitment (affective, continuance and normative) were strong predictors of knowledge sharing attitude. Demirel and Goc (2013) study in Turkey revealed that although organizational commitment was strongly related to knowledge sharing, only emotional (that is, affective commitment) was

significantly associated with knowledge sharing. Furthermore, they found that continuance commitment was negatively and in-significantly related to knowledge sharing, while normative commitment was positively, but in-significantly related to knowledge sharing. The above contradictory findings motivated this study to re-examine the relationship between organizational commitment and knowledge sharing in Nigeria.

Research Hypotheses

The following propositions were tested in this study:

H1: There is a positive and significant relationship between organizational commitment and knowledge sharing behaviour.

H2: Affective commitment is positive and significantly related to knowledge sharing behaviour.

H3: Continuance commitment is positive and significantly related to knowledge sharing behaviour.

H4: Normative commitment is positive and significantly related to knowledge sharing behaviour.

Model Specification

$$ksb = f(ac, cc, nc) \dots\dots\dots 1$$

$$ksb = \Omega_0 + \Omega_1ac + \Omega_2cc + \Omega_3nc + \epsilon \dots\dots\dots 2$$

Where,

ksb = Knowledge Sharing Behaviour; ac = Affective Commitment; cc = Continuance Commitment; nc = Normative Commitment; $\Omega_0, \Omega_1, \Omega_2, \Omega_3$ are coefficients; ϵ = Error terms

Research Methodology

Participants and Procedure

The study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional design, since data were collected at a point in time. Participants were the employees of the Petroleum Training Institute, Effurun, Delta State, Nigeria. Data collection was carried out in the month of July, 2020, at a time the novel corona virus pandemic prevented most employees from going to work. Thus, a convenience sample was used in the study. One hundred and ninety copies of the questionnaires were distributed to employees present in their offices. However, only one hundred and eighty-two copies of the questionnaire, representing 96% were retrieved. Data analysis was therefore based on the collected number of questionnaires.

Measures

This study adopted scales used in previous studies. Knowledge sharing behaviour questionnaire items came from van den Hooff and de Ridder (2004) and consisted of eight items, using a five point Likert scale (1 = ‘Strongly Disagree’ and 5 = ‘Strongly Agree’). Organizational commitment scale came from Allen and Meyer (1990), which consisted of three dimensions (affective, continuance and normative commitment). Each dimension was measured by eight items each, using a seven point Likert scale (1 = ‘Strongly Disagree’

and 7 = ‘Strongly Agree’). However, reverse coded items ranged from 1 = ‘Strongly Agree’ and 7 = ‘Strongly Disagree’.

Result of the Findings

The demographic characteristics of respondents are presented in Table1. Majority of respondents were males (58.2%), while most were in the age group of 20 – 29 years (54.4%). Majority of the participants were single (53.3%), while most of them have been working in the Petroleum Institute for between one year to ten years. Furthermore, most of the respondents were educated with only 3.8% holding primary or secondary certificates, 39.6% had OND/NCE/DIPLOMA, 38.5% held HND or Degrees, while 18.1% represented those with postgraduate certificates. In all, 64.8% were non-academic staff.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Gender	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Male	58.2	58.2
Female	41.8	100.0
Total	100.0	
Age		
20 – 29 years	54.4	54.4
30 – 39 years	24.2	78.6
40 – 49 years	12.6	91.2
Above 50 years	8.8	100.0
Total	100.0	
Marital Status		
Single	53.3	53.3
Married	41.2	94.5
Divorced	1.7	96.2
Separated	2.1	98.3
Widowed	1.7	100.0
Total	100.0	
Educational Level		
Primary/Secondary School	3.8	3.8
OND/NCE/Diploma		
Degree(HND/BSC)	39.6	43.4
Postgraduate (Masters or	38.5	81.9
PhD	18.1	100.0
Total	100.0	
Tenure		
1 – 10 years	75.8	75.8
11 – 20 years	13.7	89.5
21 – 30 years	6.6	96.1
31 and above	3.9	100.0
Total	100.0	
Nature of Work		
Non Academic Staff	64.8	64.8
Academic Staff	35.2	100.0
Total	100.0	

Source: Fieldwork, 2020

Table 2 indicates the mean (M), standard deviation (SD), cronbach alpha (α), minimum and maximum values for each scale. The mean for knowledge sharing behaviour (ksb) was 3.72 (which was above the mid-point of 2.50), while organizational commitment dimensions have mean which ranged from 4.32 (continuance commitment, cc) to 4.43 (normative commitment, nc) and 4.65 (affective commitment, ac) respectively. These values exceeded the mid-point of 3.50 for each sub-scale. The standard deviation (SD) for each scale ranged from 0.72 (ksb) to 0.81 (nc), 0.83 (cc) and 0.99 (ac) respectively. As shown in Table 2, the cronbach alpha for the variables exceeded the 0.70 cut-off (Cronbach, 2004). These figures shows that the items for each scale were good measures for assessing the association between knowledge sharing behaviour (ksb) and organizational commitment dimensions (ac, cc, nc).

Table 2: Observation (N), Mean (M), Standard Deviation (SD) and Cronbach Alpha (α) of Variables

Variables	N	M	SD	α	Min	Max
ac	182	4.65	0.99	0.78	1	7
cc	182	4.32	0.83	0.72	1	7
nc	182	4.43	0.81	0.79	1	7
ksb	182	3.72	0.72	0.82	1	5

Source: Fieldwork, 2020; ksb = Knowledge Sharing Behaviour; ac = Affective Commitment; cc = Continuance Commitment; nc = Normative Commitment

Table 3 shows the correlations between the dependent variable (ksb) and independent variables (ac, cc, nc). The correlation coefficients ranged from low to moderate, but significant at $p < 0.05$. Furthermore, the correlation coefficients between pairs of independent variables did not exceed 0.8, indicating the absence of multicollinearity (Senavirata & Cooray, 2019). The variance inflation factor (VIF) was also computed as shown in Table 4. The mean VIF did not exceed the cut-off ($1.29 < 10.00$). This further confirms the absence of multicollinearity among the independent variables (Senavirata & Cooray, 2019).

Table 3: Correlations among the study variables

Variables	Ac	Cc	nc	ksb
ac	1.000			
cc	0.257	1.000		
nc	0.459	0.393	1.000	
ksb	0.435	0.135	0.009	1.000

Source: Fieldwork, 2020; ksb = Knowledge Sharing Behaviour; ac = Affective Commitment; cc = Continuance Commitment; nc = Normative Commitment

Table 4: Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)

Variables	VIF	1/VIF
ac	1.28	0.78
cc	1.19	0.84
nc	1.41	0.71
Mean VIF	1.29	

Source: Fieldwork, 2020; ksb = Knowledge Sharing Behaviour; ac = Affective Commitment; cc = Continuance Commitment; nc = Normative Commitment

Hypotheses Testing

The multiple regression analysis results are shown in Table 5. As shown in the table, 12.39% variance in knowledge sharing behaviour was accounted for by organizational commitment [F(3,178) = 8.39, $p = 0.00 < 0.05$]. Therefore, H1 was accepted. Thus, organizational commitment was positive and strongly related to knowledge sharing behaviour of employees. Affective commitment was also positive and significantly related to knowledge sharing behaviour of employees ($\beta = 0.26$; $t = 4.60$; $p = 0.00 < 0.05$). Therefore, H2 was accepted. This indicated that a strong and positive association existed between affective commitment and knowledge sharing behaviour. Although, the association between continuance commitment and knowledge sharing behaviour was positive, it was not significant ($\beta = 0.07$; $t = 1.13$; $p = 0.26 > 0.05$). Therefore, H3 was rejected. This showed that a weak and positive relationship existed between continuance commitment and knowledge sharing behaviour. Furthermore, the association between normative commitment and knowledge sharing behaviour was negative and in-significant ($\beta = -0.10$; $t = -1.38$; $p = 0.17 > 0.05$). Therefore, H4 was rejected. This indicated a weak and negative relationship between normative commitment and knowledge sharing behaviour.

Table 5: Result of Multiple Regression Analysis

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. regress ksb ac cc nc
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Source	SS	df	MS	Number of obs = 182		
Model	11.5308978	3	3.84363259	F(3, 178) =	8.39	
Residual	81.5426771	178	.458104928	Prob > F =	0.0000	
Total	93.0735749	181	.514218646	R-squared =	0.1239	
				Adj R-squared =	0.1091	
				Root MSE =	.67683	

ksb	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P> t	[95% Conf. Interval]	
ac	.2626906	.0570706	4.60	0.000	.1500686	.3753126
cc	.0744306	.0661032	1.13	0.262	-.0560162	.2048774
nc	-.101801	.0739479	-1.38	0.170	-.2477284	.0441264
_cons	2.623137	.342979	7.65	0.000	1.946308	3.299965

Source: Fieldwork, 2020

Discussion of Findings

Employee knowledge plays an important role in the effective functioning of organizations. Sharing the knowledge is crucial because of employees' mobility (in terms of retirement, dismissal, death or voluntary turnover) in today's organizations. Thus, sharing employees' knowledge enhances organizational success. This study empirically investigated the association between organizational commitment and knowledge sharing behaviour of employees at the Petroleum Training Institute, Effurun, Delta State, Nigeria. Findings of the study revealed that organizational commitment explained 12.4% in knowledge sharing behaviour of employees. This finding indicated that for employees to share their knowledge with organizational members, their level of commitment plays a vital role. Thus, highly committed employees may share their individual knowledge with colleagues at work. The significant association between organizational commitment and knowledge sharing behaviour found in this study is in agreement with the findings of previous scholars (Zaitouni, 2013; Davoudi & Fartash, 2012; Salleh et al, 2017), but deviates from the results of Mogotsi *et al* (2011).

When employees are emotionally attached to their organization, they are usually involved in activities that led to being good citizens. Affective commitment of employees to organizations results in positive actions taken by such employees, which results in improved organizational performance. The study found that affective commitment of employees was significantly related to employees' knowledge sharing behaviour. This finding concurred with the results of Casimir *et al* (2012); Demirel and Goc (2013). However, continuance and normative commitment of employees showed a weak association with knowledge sharing behaviour. Moreover, continuance commitment was positively related to knowledge sharing, while normative commitment was associated with knowledge sharing negatively. The reverse of these relationships were reported by Salleh *et al* (2017). This calls for additional research in the future.

This study was subject to some limitations, which should be considered when interpreting results. First, results were affected by common method variance as the data for all variables were collected from the same source. Secondly, a convenience sample from a single organization was studied. This might affect the generalization of findings. However, the study extended the literature by increasing understanding of how these variables are related in the Nigerian context.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions were made:

- i. Organizational commitment of employees in an organization strongly influences the behaviour of employees towards sharing their knowledge with members of their organization.

- ii. Employees with affective commitment towards their organizations are more likely to share their knowledge with colleagues.
- iii. Continuance and normative commitment of employees have little influence over their behaviour to share knowledge.

Thus, when employees display a high quality of commitment toward their organization, there is the tendency for them to share their knowledge rather than hoarding it.

Recommendations

Knowledge which resides in employees need to be converted to organizational knowledge by sharing it, as this will improve organizational growth and performance. It is therefore recommended that:

- i. Managers of organizations, especially at the Petroleum Training Institute, Effurun, Nigeria should be trained on the nature and methods of ensuring high commitment level among employees.
- ii. Organizations should encourage and reward employees with affective commitment.
- iii. Future research should examine the relationships between continuance commitment, normative commitment and knowledge sharing behaviour.

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