



## **PROFESSIONAL AND WORK BASE KNOWLEDGE SHARING HABITS AMONG THE LIBRARY STAFF: A CASE STUDY OF THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF SRI LANKA (OUSL)**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

In early decades land, labour and the capital were considered as the significant source of value. With time the significant source of value creation is considered as knowledge. Therefore, in today's context knowledge management is considered as the important factor which can affect organization culture, development, procedures etc...

Davenport & Prusak (1998) states that "better knowledge can lead, for example, to measurable efficiencies in product development and production. We can use it to make wiser decisions about strategy, competitors, customers, distribution channels, and product and service life cycles." Therefore, capturing knowledge for organization existence is a vital part of the current organizations.

According to the Omotayo (2015) "Knowledge Management is viewed as a process, where many activities are formed to carry out key elements of an organization's KM strategy and operations." Further he explains that "organizations must organize their knowledge so it is retrievable by the appropriate individuals. In other words, the fundamental objective of organizing knowledge is to allow for its retrieval. The consequences of not organizing knowledge in a manner that leads to retrieval and use can be severe. It is therefore important for organizations to spend resources and efforts in managing and organizing the knowledge that exists within the boundaries of the organization."

Roger (2001) states his view as why knowledge sharing is important in decision making. He states that "managers need knowledge to make decisions; they cannot make good decisions based on information alone, no matter how accurate or comprehensive that information is." He also cited that the individual knowledge holder may reduce the power of the organization.

Rosen et al (2007) also confirmed that lack of trust among team members, time constraints and competing deadline pressures, technology constraints on knowledge sharing, team leader constraints, failure to develop a trans active memory system and cultural constraints are affected in knowledge sharing.

OUSL library is forwarding towards to satisfy its Mother University aims through distance learning. Therefore, currently more than 53 staff members work in the Open University library including regional center staff members. These include Professional staff, Para-professional staff and Minor staff categories. In the past few years the library recruited new staff after the retirement of senior staff. Due to the changes incurred in the staff the entire tacit and implicit knowledge of the senior staff when handling library issues were not transferred to the new employers which the library has recruited. Since the library services such as lending facilities, document delivery services etc... are totally based on the automation system, some of the issues arose with the users and staff when providing those services.



This study would, therefore, identify these tacit and implicit knowledge sharing habits among the staff is a crucial factor to consider with respect to the workflow of the library. Accordingly, the objectives of the research are as follows;

1. To find out knowledge sharing habits among the staff at OUSL Library
2. Identify the barriers that affect the knowledge sharing habits among the staff at OUSL
3. To assess their opinion about the consequences of KS

## METHODOLOGY

The target population of the study was Professional and Para-Professional Staff of the main library and regional centre libraries at the Open University of Sri Lanka. There was a limitation that the minor staffs do not use computer facilities and the questionnaire was not distributed among the minor staff as planned.

Due to the small size of the population in this case study, the total population is taken as the sample (n=53). The study was conducted as descriptive survey using self-administered questionnaire distributed as a google form. The data collected through the questionnaire were analysed using frequency analysis and data presented in percentage wise using pie charts, bar charts and tables.

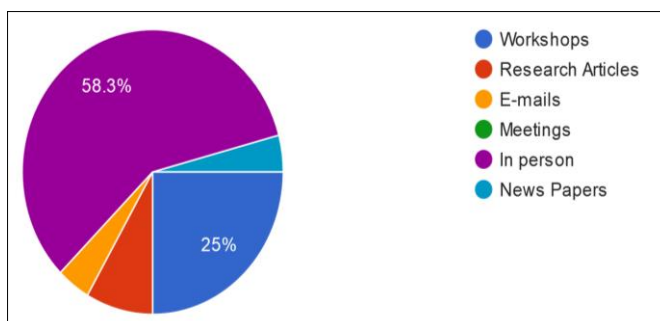
## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The response rate of the study was 64% (34). It includes 13 numbers of Professional staff and 21 members of Para-professional staff employed at main library and regional centre libraries.

### 3.1 Knowledge sharing habits

With the objectives and questions derived from the objective we can conclude the findings as follows.

In related to professional knowledge sharing habits; it was found out that most of the staff shares their professional knowledge often as habit and 58.3% share their professional knowledge person to person. It was also found out that as a habit 58.3% of them also share knowledge in workshops.



**Figure 1 - Ways of sharing professional knowledge**

Cabrera & Cabrera (2005) also suggest that “extensive collaborative training programmes geared towards increasing participant self-efficacy and developing teamwork skills and the



capacity to articulate and communicate knowledge.” Jolae, et al (2014) also agreed that “self-efficacy has a positive effect on attitude toward knowledge sharing.”

As a habit, staff always willing to listen other opinions in the work environment and most of them always and sometimes compares the work based knowledge with others. Therefore, it shows the staff intension towards of learning. It was revealed that majority of the staff thinks that knowledge they have as value and therefore, more than 80% always shares work based knowledge. It is bright side of which shows that staff is not willing to keep tacit knowledge.

**Table 1: Way of circulating the information and most suitable way of circulating the information**

Available factors	Way of circulating the information%	Most suitable way of circulating the information %
Verbal	36	13.8
Via Documents	24	13.8
E-mail	16	10.3
Telephone	4	3.4
Meetings	16	27.6
Workshops	4	17.2

### 3.2 Barriers of knowledge sharing

Though, more than 70% satisfied with that right knowledge is delivered in right time nevertheless 24.1% were unsatisfied that rewards given for knowledge sharing is not enough. Therefore, lack of rewarding procedures made them unsatisfied regarding the knowledge they shared. Unsatisfied level of the rewards given to the library staff is higher. Oye, et al (2011) also found that “the fundamental assumption is that workers can be motivated with an economic threat/reward system and would increase their output according to incremental financial incentives.”

With the higher satisfaction which they have about the communication skills they have. Majority of them are comfortable when sharing their knowledge. More than 90% thinks agreed that trust is important in sharing knowledge. Therefore, library should build the mutual trust among the staff. Cummings (2003) reviewed that levels of trust between the source and recipient will be greater to the degree that the units interact through defined, structured organizational arrangements, rather than through ad hoc processes.” Therefore, in order to share the knowledge employers are based on the mutual trust which they have with each other.

Respondents are highlighted following matters to identify related to the knowledge sharing culture in the library.

- Need specific knowledge Management and Knowledge sharing based workshops to gain the benefit not through traditional other workshops. They suggest to have Regular more formal sessions for knowledge sharing.
- Library staff highlight that they need a proper way of knowledge sharing techniques to learn. Arranging workshops or CPD sessions monthly to express seniors/professionals ideas and share knowledge.
- Use social media groups to share the knowledge and provide online chat facilities- Other than the formal methods like meetings, workshops etc... staff suggest having social media groups to share the knowledge.



- Library is the treasure place giving information for all who are seeking information so the staff must be helpful and knowledgeable to give that service in a good manner. Therefore, library staff must be motivated from the seniors and management in a better way.
- Each employee should be given the opportunity to express their views related to their duties and the best possible solution should be decided upon after discussion at managerial level.
- Management should consider that every person in each service point should be valued. Insecurity of the job can be decreased as a consequence of this.

### **3.3 Opinions & consequences about KS**

Opinions and consequences regarding the knowledge sharing are very much important. Staff members totally agreed that workplace unity with the knowledge sharing help in library to improve the more effective day to day works. Since they are agreed that library is in the higher place of knowledge sharing platform, they are totally agreed that knowledge sharing tools such as workshops, gatherings, storytelling etc...are improving the services and performance of the library.

## **CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS**

With the results found out from the research will be an evidence of the professional and work based knowledge sharing habits of the library staff and confirmed that sharing of knowledge is important in improving the services provided by the library.

1. It is strongly recommended that OUSL library must extend employee awareness and training programmes in knowledge sharing. Well planned monthly meetings will transfer trustworthy knowledge to others. Group discussions, storytelling sessions workshops should be arranged monthly or whenever possible to share new knowledge and new ideas.
2. Prepare rewarding policies as much as possible. However, this is not a financially beneficial rewarding procedure. A proper motivation method should be identified and applied.
3. In management level every employee should be appreciated. Every employee should get time to express themselves. Therefore, library management should understand the capabilities of each employer and prepare procedures to get employees into the teams.
4. Library management should plant how to extract the knowledge from senior staff. Assigning group wise targets with experienced staff is a better way to harvest the knowledge from experienced staff and it is a better way to transfer the knowledge of the new comers. Arranging storytelling events is a better idea to reward people and extract knowledge from them. This will help in other ways to gather the knowledge of the retiring staff.
5. Preparing progress manuals and updating those from time to time should practice annually.
6. Encouraging staff in education is another good aspect to practice. It will help staff in better communications and improve better service.
7. Future study should do in this area since the selected population is too small.

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