

# TRUST FACTOR ON KNOWLEDGE-SHARING BEHAVIOUR AMONG LAWYERS IN KUALA LUMPUR: AN ANALYSIS

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**Abstract:** *Legal firms are probably the place where knowledge is freely and openly shared among the lawyers. Although, knowledge sharing is hardly presented within the legal firm these days in reality. The legal profession, particularly law firms, is currently dealing with an increase in the number of individuals prosecuted in court, as well as the passage of new legislation and modifications by Parliament, all of which necessitate the pooling of quality expertise and resources. The goal of the study was to determine the elements that influence information sharing among lawyers in Kuala Lumpur. The study looked at the idea of information-sharing behavior from the perspective of a lawyer, looking at the aspects of expected benefits, expected affiliation, and expected contribution, as well as tacit knowledge sharing of knowing how. The relationship between trust and knowledge sharing behavior has also been examined using the social exchange theory. The study identified trust as a critical component that motivates a business to invest in valued resources. Knowledge, on the other hand, is regarded as a source of strength and an indisputable feature. Humans and knowledge-sharing behavior are the two fundamental components of knowledge. The theoretical appraisal of how lawyers are disposed positively toward knowledge exchange inside the legal firm and contribute to the legal profession is presented in this study. It is critical to aid lawyers in developing and promoting a knowledge-sharing environment, particularly within the legal community in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.*

**Keywords:** *Trust, Knowledge, Knowledge-Sharing Behaviour, Lawyers, Malaysia.*

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## Introduction

When knowledge is shared with other employees, it becomes more valuable (Renzl, 2008). Knowledge is a fundamental source of strategic competitive advantages in firms, according to O'Neill and Adya (2007), especially in today's changing corporate environment. Individual achievement is regarded as more valuable in society than organizational accomplishment, which is focused on attaining the organization's goals and objectives. As a result, there is a low propensity among individuals to share their knowledge, which is considered as a personal advantage. A law firm, according to Petter Gottschalk and Jan Terjekarsen (2009), is a social society that specializes in the generation and transfer of legal information with speed and efficiency. Universities, according to Fullwood, Rowley, and Delbridge (2012), play a role in supporting knowledge generation through research, which can then be disseminated through publication. Similarly, it also founds that legal information management and sharing among lawyers helps law firms gain and keep clients. As a result, attorneys can help to increase the need for innovation by studying and teaching, particularly in the areas of business and communication. Despite the existence of large quantities of research, the issue continues to receive insufficient attention in Malaysia BAR.

Trust is a key factor of knowledge exchange among academicians in educational institutions, which wants communication, performance, virtual space, physical space, and google-setting. Previously, a lawyer's attitude toward knowledge sharing was determined by how he or she shared knowledge. It's because most people aren't born with the ability to communicate what they know or are unwilling to share what they know with their peers. Aside from these reasons, there is a lack of social trust between the parties. As a result, trust is built on an understanding, nonjudgmental, and encouraging character that emerges when both parties' desires are agreed upon, understood, accepted, and acknowledged. In the same way, trust helps legal professionals promote active knowledge sharing.

Similarly, trust is essential in a social exchange relationship since it facilitates reciprocal transaction and social involvement. The social exchange relationship will be strengthened when people have more trust in one another (Mallasi & Ainin, 2015). Furthermore, with strong management assistance, the legal fraternity's social atmosphere and trust are important factors that influence information sharing. Interpersonal trust will serve as a firm foundation for knowledge and learning (Tangaraja et. al., 2015). Affection-based trust is promoted by available knowledge, responsibility, and lawyers. Integrity, compassion, and competence are thus included in the component of trust. It is underlined that in the legal community, collaboration through social networking and trust is critical, as lawyers cannot effectively share knowledge without confidence. If the information is secret and personal, lawyers will only disclose it with persons they trust. To avoid misuse of information and to encourage trust among lawyers, trust should be prevalent in the legal fraternity. As a result, top management should devise techniques and strategies to encourage lawyers to integrate trustworthiness into their practices, as lawyers prefer to sell their information rather than share it. Fundamentally, lawyers are in the business of selling their expertise (Gottschalk, Brekke & Pedersen, 2005). It is critical that lawyers have access to trust so that their intentions to share knowledge are improved as opposed to forcing them to give knowledge. When we know we'll get support when we need it, we're willing to offer our knowledge.

According to Sohail and Daud (2009), who symbolised higher education institutions as a knowledge reservoir, these institutions enable the management, blending, sharing, and development of knowledge, whereas it is stated that lawyers are knowledge professionals

engaged in various types of knowledge-intensive tasks. Knowledge process capabilities, according to Kuzu and Ozilhan (2014), can help organizations operate better. Even if the benefits of information sharing are undeniable, the process is hampered by people's unwillingness to contribute. Organizations that have valuable and critical knowledge profit tremendously. However, if businesses share their valuable expertise, they would lose all of their advantages. As a result, the most important questions are: why should people share their valuable information with others? Does the presence of trust among lawyers' traits or encounters aid to sharing? Individuals may opt to hoard knowledge and information if new and useful knowledge is difficult to tap into and obtain unless an incentive element emerges (Mansor, Mustaffa & Salled, 2015).

As a result, the goal of this research was to learn more about the role of trust in lawyers' knowledge-sharing behavior. This research will help lawyers understand the importance of knowledge sharing and trust. The classification of knowledge sharing indicates the usage of behavior, incentive, and obstacle. Lawyers are recognized as knowledge workers who are learning new skills in the legal profession, practicing law, and maintaining order in the legal community in order to become more professional knowledge workers. The goal of knowledge sharing among lawyers in the legal profession is to provide dependable, easy access, and efficient knowledge, as well as to facilitate collaboration in order to improve performance and develop the legal profession. der in the legal profession to become better knowledgeable professionals.

## Methodology

The study employed a review-based theoretical analysis to examine the impact of trust and knowledge-sharing behavior among lawyers in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Various works of literature have been analyzed based on lawyers' perceptions of information sharing behavior, which has aided in determining the importance of knowledge sharing as well as the impact of trust on knowledge sharing among lawyers. The primary sources of data for this study were scholarly articles, books, and reports related to trust, knowledge sharing, and the legal profession. The review-based theoretical analysis approach was deemed appropriate for this study as it allowed for a comprehensive examination of the trust factor on knowledge-sharing behavior among lawyers in Kuala Lumpur. This is because it allowed for a comprehensive examination of existing literature, enabling the researchers to synthesize findings from multiple studies and theories. This approach facilitated the exploration of complex relationships between trust and knowledge-sharing behavior among lawyers, drawing on diverse theoretical perspectives such as social exchange theory and knowledge management theory. Theoretical analysis also provided a structured framework for examining the factors influencing knowledge-sharing behavior, including the role of trust in shaping lawyers' perceptions of expected rewards, contributions, and associations. As a result, this research has contributed to the researchers' theoretical understanding of why lawyers are or are not disposed to knowledge-sharing behavior in the firm and legal fraternity, which includes the integration of trust in the social exchange theory in relation to knowledge-sharing behavior. The goal of this study was to understand knowledge management, particularly in the context of lawyers' knowledge-sharing behavior. There is a limited amount of previous research that focuses on the relationship between trust and knowledge-sharing behavior. Furthermore, past research may not have taken into account all of the factors that influence this particular behavior. That is, particularly in these three (3) dimensions: (1) expected reward; (2) expected contribution; and (3) expected association.

## Result and Discussion

### Knowledge-Sharing Behaviour Concept from The Lawyers Perspective

Knowledge-sharing behavior is a process that entails the communication of information with other individuals or groups of people. The knowledge owner (sender) and the party who receives the knowledge are both involved in the process (receiver). The tacit knowledge sharing behaviour can be categorized into three aspects; knowledge sharing through organisational communication (across teams or work units during workshops and meetings), and knowledge sharing through personal interaction (outside constituents), and also knowledge in communities of practice. According to Olatokun, W.M., and Elueza, N.I. (2012), the most significant components that influence knowledge-sharing behavior among lawyers are expected reward, expected association, and expected contribution.

#### Expected Reward

An interesting finding in the study by Olatokun, W.M. & Elueze N.I. (2012) is the expected rewards variable, as this is the factor that affects knowledge sharing amongst lawyers in the surveyed legal firms. The study discovered that expected rewards was not one of the factors that motivated lawyers in Ibadan to share their knowledge within their law firms. King and Iyoha (2008) emphasised that there had to be something that motivated the employees willingness to share their knowledge for the benefit of the organisation, stating that if the employee were not motivated, their knowledge may never be shared with others.

Davenport and Prusak (1998) argued that the factors that could influence a person's willingness to share knowledge, have been identified including trust, promotion, incentives, rewards, motivation, relationship, incentives systems, culture, top management support, senior leadership, contribution, associations and other factors. It is also noted that some respondents as well might have preferred to hoard knowledge to secure their jobs rather than to receive rewards and risk losing their jobs. In contrast to the researchers' expectations, the regression model did not support the contribution of rewards to the prediction of knowledge sharing whereas the hypothesis (H7a: Rewards will encourage employees to share knowledge) was not supported. This result could be due to the fact that rewards for knowledge sharing are not that common in Lebanese organizations. Reward systems in Lebanon are mostly based on individual and group performance, and are usually measured by tangible quantities or qualities. The respondents probably thought of knowledge sharing as an abstract concept, making it hard to fit in the reward system they are used to. King and Iyoha noted that workers willingly share knowledge with the hope of getting rewards either from the person they are sharing their knowledge with or from the organisation. Olatokun, W.M. & Elueze N.I. (2012) in the study observed no significant relationship between expected rewards and attitude towards knowledge sharing behaviour of the lawyers.

Gottschalks et al., (2005) established that rewards had a significant impact on knowledge sharing behaviour of the lawyers. The frameworks of Sanghani (2009) also emphasised providing incentives and rewards for knowledge sharing, while Ipe (2003) acknowledged the effect of rewards and incentives as a contributing factor that may influence employees' attitude to share knowledge within the organization. He also noted that a way to motivate people to capture knowledge is to reward them for doing so, by providing the knowledge sharers with some compensation for sharing their knowledge. Bock and Kim (2002) in their study found out that employees' beliefs about expected rewards were negatively related to their attitudes to

knowledge sharing. They have tried to find a reasonable explanation for this by insisting that rewards have punitive effects on relations and undermine intrinsic motivation.

### **Expected Association**

Gottschalk et al. (2005) observed that lawyers' attitude towards associations were of less importance to their knowledge sharing behaviour in the law firm. This study however showed a positive and strong relationship between expected associations of lawyers in Kuala Lumpur High Court and their attitude to sharing knowledge. Knowledge as power is demonstrated in the increasing value attributed to individuals who possess the right kind of knowledge. If individuals perceive that power comes from knowledge they possess, it is likely to lead to knowledge hoarding instead of knowledge sharing (Hendrik 2005). One of the external factors that influenced the motivation to share knowledge, as identified by (Ipe 2003), was the relationship between the sender and the recipient. It was noted that the lawyers in Kuala Lumpur High Court have a positive attitude towards knowledge sharing, who considered that it may strengthen the relationship between themselves and other lawyers, thus supporting Ipe's 2003 proposition.

### **Expected Contribution**

The lawyers' attitude towards their own contribution were factors that most predicted their knowledge sharing behaviour (Gottschalk et al. 2005). In their study of the *Incentives for knowledge sharing through Information Technology*, Gottschalk et al. (2005) confirmed that on the average, a lawyer's willingness to share their knowledge with others in a law firm was influenced by their perception of their ability to contribute to the organisation by sharing their knowledge. Their finding is corroborated with the result of the study by Olatokun, W.M. & Elueze N.I. (2012) which established that the expected contribution was significantly related with the attitude of lawyers in Ibadan metropolis, towards their knowledge sharing. This finding also corresponds to the definition of knowledge sharing within the organisation given by many researchers. For instance, knowledge sharing between individuals is the process by which knowledge held by an individual is converted into form that could be understood, absorbed, and used by other individuals and organisation learning (Ipe 2003).

Knowledge sharing is important because it provides a link between the individual and the organisation by moving knowledge that resides with the individual to the organisation level, where it is converted into economic and competitive value for the organisation (Hendriks 1999). The voluntary act of sharing knowledge by an individual contributes to the knowledge distribution and the process of sharing may result in knowledge acquisition by another individual within the organisation (Ipe 2003). Knowledge sharing between individuals, thus results in individual learning, which in turn may contribute to organisation learning (Turner & Minonne 2010), The ability to share knowledge between organisational units and departments, contributes immensely to the performance of the organisation (Hendriks 2005). Thus the motivation of workers for knowledge sharing is to exchange ideas, information and consequently knowledge to enable organisations to increase their knowledge base, improve work processes, increase productivity and help them achieve their objectives.

### **Trust Based on Social Exchange Theory**

According to Kramer and Tyler (1996), trust is a divisive term. Trust can be defined in a variety of ways. Mayer et al., (1995) on the other hand, are supported by Simons (2002). Trust is defined as a collection of core ideas involving the affiliation of honesty, compassion, and another party's readiness to help. Blau's (1964) social exchange theory proposed that trust is

crucial in antisocial trading processes. In order to build an exchange in which relationships may be maintained that contribute to high-quality information sharing, trust is required. Apart from that, cooperative engagement is far more likely when two people have trust in each other rather than when they don't. According to Homans (1958), social exchange theory (SET) is one of the most well-known sociology and psychology literature frameworks, and it is the oldest theory of social behavior. The social exchange entails the engagement of two persons, one of whom may provide some benefit, important information, or a function to the other in exchange for benefits. Gambetta (2000) and Riegelsberger et al. (2003) define trust as “the act of submitting to vulnerability and believing in favorable outcomes from one's activities.” Trust is also important in any connection and interpersonal interaction, according to Leonidou, Talias, and Leonidou (2008).

People's social connections have a big impact on their trust. Many academics, including Blau (1964), argued that social trading requires confidence. Economic development, result promotion by legitimate government institutions, and trust-based relationships are all aimed at serving society's best interests (Gilson, 2003). In a scenario of uncertainty and risk, trust is described as “expectation that an exchange partner will behave benignly, based on the attribution of positive disposition and intention to the partner” (Molm et. al, 2000). Actors in social interactions, according to Lou (2002), are more concerned with long-term gains than with short-term inequities. As a result, building long-term partnerships requires trust. In comparison to a long-term engagement between society and the tourism sector, a one-time transaction with the market has a lesser impact and requires less trust. When it comes to a legal framework, however, trust is highly subjective.

### **Trust and Commitment in Legal Fraternity**

One of the most powerful factors that affects learning in organizations is trust (Davenport & Prusak, 1998). Knowledge-sharing behavior, as well as trust, are important in closing generational gaps (Samadi, Wei, & Wan Yusoff, 2015). Colquitt, Scott, and LePine (2007) showed that trust plays a circumstantial role in employee performance (Samadi, Wei & Wan Yusoff, 2005). Furthermore, Lorenz (2008) claimed that trust facilitates knowledge sharing by allowing employees to feel at ease and safe when learning and sharing information. When people are willing to disseminate and share knowledge with others, mutual trust relationships grow and build (Mooradian et. at., 2006; Becerra & Gupta, 2003). The degree to which the information disseminator (sender) is trusted has a significant impact on how beneficial the knowledge is judged (Abrams et. at., 2003).

The existence of trust between an organization's major stakeholders and its sub-units and members has a significant impact on communication (Abili, Thani & Afarinandehbin, 2012). As a result, trust plays a significant impact in the amount of information shared across organizational components. Employees have been shown to encounter one of the most significant challenges in instilling positive knowledge-sharing behavior: a lack of trust. In addition, higher levels of trust lead to stronger social interaction and relationships. As a result, it can be argued that the existence of trust is critical in knowledge-sharing in any form of mutual exchange process.

Maintaining trading relationships among legal practitioners, likewise, necessitates trust and commitment. When there is trust among lawyers, they are more willing to participate in the contact and share or trade expertise. In this context, trust is defined as the belief in the trade partner's reliability and honesty. In contrast to a contract of employment, lawyers' commitment

to the sharing or exchange of knowledge is expanded by social obligation. As a result, trust is seen as a necessary component of improving knowledge sharing. It is suggested that social exchange relationships determine when lawyers' demands and needs are met, allowing for the development of strong relationships across the legal profession. It will also make the formation of exchange links and the establishment of a successful knowledge-sharing culture easier.

### Conclusion and Recommendation

Knowledge is ephemeral and applicable across all platforms, according to the present era of wisdom and knowledge. Organizations, in particular, seek for values, resources, and profit, all of which are impossible to achieve without trust. Knowledge is usually seen as a source of power. Knowledge, on the other hand, is only useful if it is spread and applied. It is at its most powerful when information is shared with others. Although it is not a simple effort to instill a desire to impart knowledge, it may be done. Therefore, it is proposed that knowledge is an individual's asset, and the decision to share or not share the asset is in the hands of the beholder. Furthermore, humans and knowledge sharing behavior are two of the most important components of knowledge. It is also apparent that an organization's value is determined by its ability to acquire vital knowledge. As a result, it is clear that the value of knowledge sharing should be recognized and promoted.

The main purpose of the study was to investigate the role of trust in legal practitioners' knowledge-sharing behavior. Trust is important and is regarded as the foundation of knowledge sharing behavior in every organization around the world. Many academics believe that in organizations, information sharing, and trust are both necessary. All organizations require trust to nurture and build skills, value, and competences, as well as to maintain competitive advantages. In the legal profession, knowledge is systematically shared, taught, and researched. It is often assumed that legal professionals are proactive in the development and dissemination of information and expertise. Furthermore, in order to promote knowledge-sharing behavior, trust is essential and must exist simultaneously.

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