The Effects of Basic Psychological Needs (BPNs) on Sharing Intention of Knowledge Providers: A Conceptual Framework Based on the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)

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Abstract: From the knowledge-based view (KBV), knowledge is a crucial resource of firm's competitive advantage and the primate driver of firm's value. However, knowledge is embedded in employees' brain in general. Hence, knowledge objects remain useless or valueless unless individual knowledge is shared with other individual and make it available and realizable. Accordingly, it is necessary that to exploring which factors influence (promote or impede) knowledge providers' intention to engage in knowledge sharing behavior. This study aimed at examines the influences of the basic psychological needs on the sharing intention of knowledge providers and to develop a conceptual framework based on the theory of reasoned action (TRA).

Keywords: Knowledge Sharing, Knowledge Providers, Basic Psychological Needs, Theory of Reasoned Action

I. Introduction

Since organizations can strengthen its competitive advantages and developing new business opportunities through extensive knowledge sharing among inter-organization and intra-organization. Therefore, the issue of knowledge sharing has been capturing considerable attention of both academic research and practitioners. In knowledge-intensive economy, organizational available knowledge is becoming an important resource increasingly. From the resource-based view (RBV), knowledge has considered as the most strategically important resource for organizations [18] [61]. An attempted was made in the present study to assess some of the exogenous variables that may be related to the knowledge sharing behavior for knowledge providers based on TRA. Previously researches have found the TRA has powerful predictive ability for behavior, and has applied to a wide variety to predict and explain intention and actual behavior in social psychology, for example, consumer behavior [28] [33] [79] [84], moral behavior [83], unethical intention [50] and behavior [14], knowledge sharing [10] [11] [56] [71], organizational commitment and citizenship behavior [8], health care area [14] [34] [72] [90], and education [17] [37] [41] [59], and so forth. In addition, [10] also demonstrated that TRA has suitable applicability in the knowledge-sharing territory. In addition, most notably is the definition of knowledge providers in this study. In light of [45] contentions, knowledge sharing is the process by which knowledge held by an individual is converted into a form that can be realizable, absorbable, and available by other individuals. [85] distinguishes between a "knowledge source" and a "knowledge receiver" in knowledge sharing processes, and [62] discusses how knowledge sharing involves both a "knowledge carrier" and a "knowledge requester". To simplify, whatever knowledge supplier, carrier and knowledge source are we so-called "knowledge provider" in this study.

II. Theoretical Background

Knowledge sharing

Knowledge sharing is the process where individuals mutually exchange their knowledge (implicit and explicit) and jointly create new knowledge [44]. It may be an miraculous cure to encourage knowledge exchange and creation in the organizations in order strengthen their competitive advantages [54] and developing new business opportunities through socialization and the learning process of knowledge workers [55]. Variety of different variables that may be affecting knowledge sharing have identified in numerous studies, form "hard" issues such as technologies and tools [43] to "soft" issues such as motivations [3] [40] [42], organizational climate [60] and culture [43]. Previous papers have explored knowledge sharing using technological approaches. For example, knowledge grid model and platform based Internet [92], the web-based distributed environment of engineering design [52], and the web-based knowledge management system [91]. As [19] argues, sharing knowledge sharing is often unnatural. That is to say, hoarding knowledge and looking guardedly upon knowledge from others are the natural tendency [20]. It is important to remember, this natural tendency is difficult to change. [64] has attested to the biggest difficulty in knowledge sharing is "changing people's behavior", and it has considered to be the most severe challenge facing organizations in knowledge management activity. What is more, [11] argued that knowledge sharing within organizations still appears to be the exception rather than the rule. As [10] argue, rather than just encouraging or mandating knowledge sharing, fostering the motivation to share knowledge must precede.

Theory of Reasoned Action

According to TRA [29] [1] [31], an individual's behavior is under total volitional control of the performer and it was

determined by her/his behavioral intention (BI), then, behavioral intention is determined by her/his attitude toward the behavior (ATB) and subjective norms (SN). Attitude toward the behavior is the target person's favorable (positive) or unfavorable (negative) evaluation of her/his performing the behavior (i.e., an evaluative reaction toward performing the behavior), it is a function of the salient behavioral beliefs about the perceived consequences of performing the behavior and the individual's evaluation of these consequences. Subjective norm is the target person's perceptions about that most others who are important to her/his think she/he should or should not perform the behavior (i.e., perceptions of general social pressures to perform the behavior), it is a function of the individual's normative beliefs regarding what each referent thinks she/he should do and the motivation to comply with these referents. Subjective norms can considered the result of the integration of one's own expectations and feelings with significant others' perceived expectations and feelings with respect to the shared moral or social meaning of performing a prospective act [6].

In addition, within an organization, the variation of influence on behavioral intention and behavior from attitude and subjective norm seemed to relate to organization culture (e.g., individualism or collectivism) and the degree of self-monitor for individual. For example, [22] suggests that high self-monitors' behavioral intentions may be primarily related to their subjective norm, whereas the low self-monitors' may be primarily related to attitude toward the act. That is, the former were related both to their attitude and subjective norm, and the latter were related to their attitude only.

Self-Determination Theory

The focus of SDT was specifying the factors that can nurture the innate human potentials entailed in growth, integration, and well-being [67]. It highlights the importance of humans' evolved inner resources for personality development and behavioral self-regulation [68]. SDT has identified three such needs–the needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness as the human basic psychological needs (BPNs). [63] found that the BPNs were positively associated with positive mood and psychological vitality. In summary, it appears that BPNs satisfaction is positively associated with well-being, positive mood, and psychological vitality. Conversely, BPNs satisfaction is negatively associated with negative mood and anxiety symptoms. [67] found that, BPNs not only can facilitate optimal function of the natural propensities for growth and integration, but also for constructive social development and personal well-being. Thus, they maintained that organizations would contribute to alienation and ill-being, unless it can provide supports of competence, autonomy, and relatedness. [4] also showed that, employees' experiences of satisfaction of BPNs in the workplace were positively associated with their performance and well-being at work.

Competence

In an experimental study of animal behavior, [86] found that many organisms engage in some activities appear to simply for the positive experiences associated with extending ones capacities. [25] described competence as the "propensity to have an effect on the environment as well as to attain valued outcomes within it". Competence can regarded as a significant feature of human nature that affects performance, persistence, and well-being across life's epochs. For this reason, it seems reasonable to hypothesize that the degree to which one's circumstances satisfy the need for competence partly determines the degree to which one's life story portrays a sense of personal impact and achievement.

Autonomy

According to cognitive evaluation theory (CET) a subtheory within SDT, one's feelings of competence will not enhance intrinsic motivation unless accompanied by a sense of autonomy [23]. It implied that people must not only experience competence, but must experience their behavior as self-determined for intrinsic motivation also [67]. Autonomy reflects the ability of person can choose, set, and pursue their goals and then choose an action consistent with their values according to free will [12]. Respect for autonomy is an essential component in any pluralistic society. Perceived autonomy support was operationally defined as participants' perceptions about whether significant others (e.g., friends, family members, etc.) provided choice and rationale about physical activity as well as acknowledged personal perspectives and conveyed confidence in personal ability to exercise [15].

Relatedness

Countless researchers documented the importance of relatedness and provided evidence that as supportive of the notion that relatedness is a basic psychological need. [25] portray relatedness as "the desire to feel connected to others---to love and care, and to be loved and cared for". [67] asserted that when there are ambient supports for feeling of relatedness then that internalization is more likely to be in evidence. Indeed, relatedness is a primary need and an important motivator across the life span [69]. People's levels of the need for intimacy have been empirically related to the prevalence of communion themes in their life stories. Thus it seems reasonable to hypothesize that the degree to which one's circumstances satisfy the need for relatedness partly determines the degree to which one's life story portrays a sense of connection to others and caring for others [70]. The evidence is manifold that secure attachments and feelings of relatedness are associated with psychological well-being [51] [70].

III. The Conceptual Framework and Proposition

Inasmuch as TRA is assumed that all exogenous factors influence behavior only indirectly by influencing attitude, subjective norms, or their relative weights [21] therefore, it is rational to believe the TRA can be a useful model for explaining the knowledge sharing behavior about knowledge providers in organizations. In present study, we aim at the psychology-based factors affecting knowledge providers' sharing behavior. In sum, the objective of this study is to empirically examine the psychological factors "BPNs" affecting the knowledge providers' sharing behavior by adopting the TRA. Figure 1 depicts our conceptual framework. It is important to note that the framework deviates in two major ways from standard TRA formulation: one is the subjective norm of an individual is posited to influence intention to sharing knowledge directly and through attitude indirectly, other one is autonomy of an individual is posited influence through subjective norm indirectly. Both are recognizing that knowledge sharing involves collective action at its core inherently.
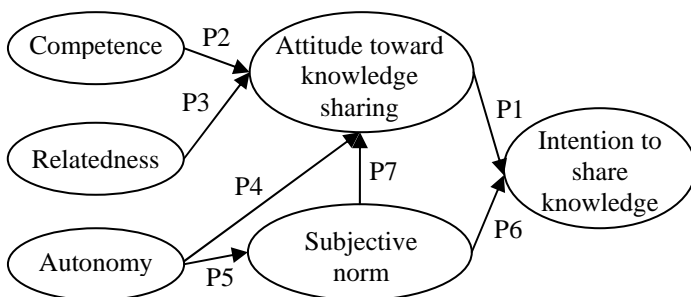

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Within TRA, an attitude reflects a summary evaluation of a given behavior captured in evaluative dimensions such as good-bad, harmful-beneficial, pleasant-unpleasant [1]. An attitude provides a reason for forming an intention to act in the sense that the perceived consequences of acting based on one's intentions are believed to lead to valued outcomes [6]. [10] have speculated that attitude toward knowledge sharing has a positive effect on the knowledge-sharing intentions. In addition, Many researchers have found that attitude exert more influence on behavioral intention than subjective norm. For example, in the research of fast food outlets by [13], the regression weights of attitude and subjective norm were respectively 0.64 and 0.03. [83] reported that the normative beliefs appear to be more remote than attitudes in predicting the behavioral intention and behavior. In their study, [81] also discovered that the American student participants' behavioral intentions are more controlled by attitudes than subjective norms in 29 out of 30 behavioral intentions. From these above inferences, the foregoing arguments suggest the following.

Proposition 1: The more favorable the attitude toward knowledge sharing is, the stronger intention to share knowledge will be. That is, attitude toward knowledge sharing will have a positive effect on the intention to share knowledge for knowledge providers.

The need for competence taps a person's feelings of curiosity and desire for efficacy [25]. A person's attitude and behavior are influenced by both the self-produced and external agent's stimulation. [76] suggested that none is more central than the employees' judgment of their capabilities to deal with different environmental realities. This capability is so-called "self-efficacy" [7]. Bandura (1986) defined self-efficacy as "people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performance effectively. [9] suggest that source competence can be an important factor affecting the SIPA and the formation of worker attitudes. Therefore, it seems reasonable that individuals will more likely adopt and internalized a goal if they understand it and have relevant skills to succeed at it. Based on above arguments, we assume that when employees have confidence in their competence for contributions to the organization's performance or benefit, they would develop a more positive attitude toward knowledge sharing. From these above inferences, the proposition 2 is stated as follow.

Proposition 2: When knowledge providers have confidence in their competence for knowledge sharing more, they would develop a more favorable attitude toward knowledge sharing. That is, competence will have a positive effect on the attitude toward knowledge sharing.

The need for relatedness concerns the tendency toward closeness to others and the desire for a feeling of connection with others [25] [66]. Interpersonal relationships often influence information sharing. [49] suggested that friendships and personal contacts heavily influence communication between individuals, when these exist; the likelihood of information sharing is increased. In harmony with this perspective, some employees preferred to share knowledge via their own interpersonal networks rather than use the technical systems in hand [39]. [36] observed lower intrinsic motivation in students who experienced their teachers as cold and uncaring. [67] also observed that with intrinsic motivation more likely to flourish in contexts characterized by a sense of security and relatedness. Consequence, it is rational for we assume that when employees perceived that knowledge sharing could improve relationships with other employees, they would offer their knowledge voluntarily and unconditionally, that is, they would develop a positive attitude toward knowledge sharing. From these above inferences, thus, we suggest the following.

Proposition 3: When knowledge providers have received relatedness from other organizational members more, they would develop a more favorable attitude toward knowledge sharing. That is, relatedness will have a positive effect on the attitude toward knowledge sharing.

The need for autonomy involves the desire for a sense of self-direction and feeling of volition, vitality, and initiative [25]. [35] contended that prosocial behavior (e.g., volunteering or giving blood) seems to affect negatively,

when people feel obligated or controlled by external contingencies. Autonomy support has been shown to lead to greater engagement in an initially uninteresting activity and increased positive feelings toward the activity [24]. [5] and [26] found support for a framework where management autonomy support was related to the engagement in one's work and well-being. Williams & colleagues have found that greater perceived autonomy support from one's health care provider facilitates the development of more autonomous regulations for smoking cessation [89]. Some studies in education have demonstrated that autonomous has a significant and positive effect on engagement [17], performance [59], quality of learning [37], and teacher ratings [41], among other outcomes. [32] observed that teachers who are autonomy supportive catalyze in their students greater intrinsic motivation, curiosity, and desire for challenge. From these above inferences, the proposition 4 is stated as follow:

Proposition 4: When knowledge providers have perceived autonomy support to share knowledge more, they would develop a more favorable attitude toward knowledge sharing. That is, autonomy will have a positive effect on the attitude toward knowledge sharing.

An autonomous agent is one who can make moral judgements according to certain standards of reasonableness [75]. [27] argues that it is not necessary to allow individual liberty to trump community but autonomy can coexist with mutual tolerance, respect, charity, and cooperation. That implied that autonomy does not exclude responsibility and duties to others when it is understood as moral responsibility [12]. [75] asserted that personal norms can be justified on the basis of the moral autonomy of an individual who accepts such norms as standard for her/his behavior. The concept of autonomy has often been portrayed as being antagonistic to relatedness. In fact, within SDT, the synonym or equivalent of autonomy is neither independence nor individualism, but rather "heteronomy". Similarly, [65] argued that one can experienced volitional and autonomous if she/he concurs with and endorsed group norms fully. For instance, the teens are likely to internalize parental norms, when they rely on them autonomously more [36]. [48] claimed that persons high in reflective autonomy were willing to follow expert advice, whereas those high in reactive autonomy moved away from others' influence. However, one can also experience heteronomous when she/he obeys group norms merely to obtain externally controlled inducement or out of fear of punishment [47]. Some researchers have found that greater perceived autonomy support from one's health care provider facilitates the development of more autonomous regulations for smoking cessation [89], sustained participation in weight-loss programs [87], and adherence to medical prescriptions [88]. From these above inferences, the proposition 5 is stated as follow:

Proposition 5: When knowledge providers have perceived autonomy support to share knowledge more, the greater subjective norm to share knowledge will be. That is, autonomy will have a positive effect on the subjective norm.

[77] proposed that the subjective norm is an important antecedent to behavioral intention, and this argument has received considerable empirical support [57] [80]. Previous researches had found that people with a strong sense of group identity or social identity are more likely to base their behavioral intentions on subjective norms than people who with a weak sense of group or social identity [46, 78]. Especially, individuals who are highly fearful of social disapproval are more likely to base their intentions on subjective norms than people who are not as concerned that others will disapprove of them [53]. Many studies have found subjective norm has a significant effect on behavioral intention [14] [56]. For example, [14] claimed that subjective norm has a significant indirect effect on moral behavioral intention through attitude. [56] proposed that subjective norms significantly impact in predicting knowledge-sharing intention for senior managers. [71] indicated that subjective norm was having strongest total effects on behavioral intentions to share knowledge of physicians through direct and indirect path by attitude. Previous research also pointed out that descriptive norms, a construct that indicates perceived social pressure [30], predicted intentions [38]. From these above inferences, the proposition 6 is stated as follow:

Proposition 6: When knowledge providers have greater subjective norm to share knowledge, the stronger intention to share knowledge will be. That is, attitude toward knowledge sharing will have a positive effect on the intention to share knowledge for knowledge providers.

Subjective norm reflect the perceived social pressure that individuals may feel to perform or not to perform to a given behavior [2]. Thus, people who are highly concerned that others will disapprove of them might be more influenced by subjective norm than those who are less concerned with what others think of them [53]. For subjective norm, the normative belief pertaining to individual perception of how referent groups view the behavior and evaluations generally were expressed as the individual motivation to comply with these referent groups [56]. Based on the perspective, they concluded that subjective norm have an important influence on attitude through social influence processes. [58] suggested that adding a direct path between normative beliefs to attitudes would increase the behavior prediction. Numerous studies have shown that subjective norm can influence attitude [14] [73] [71] [74] [82]. [11] have confirmed that subjective norms regarding knowledge sharing can influence organizational members' attitudes toward knowledge sharing. [16] pointed out, some referents are important irrespective of the behavior under consideration. For example, police becomes a salient

referent if one is considering speeding or not wearing a seat belt. From these above inferences, the proposition 7 is stated as follow:

Proposition 7: When knowledge providers have greater subjective norm to share knowledge, they would develop a more favorable attitude toward knowledge sharing. That is, subjective norm will have a positive effect on the attitude toward knowledge sharing.

IV. Conclusion and Contribution

The developed conceptual framework is based on comprehensive analysis of recent and current human basic psychological needs (BPNs) in the knowledge sharing intention. This article considered categories can have significant impacts toward BPNs effectiveness separately. In addition, this research tries to establish a new framework between BPNs, TRA and the factors influencing it. The framework is propose practicable and can be conducted to individual knowledge sharing intention. Beside, the framework can also be used as the basis for the future study on human BPNs or employees' knowledge sharing framework. Further, this study argued a process framework to verify the three antecedent variables include competence, relatedness and autonomy. Hence, the original model has been constructed. Future study aspects include (1) via empirical research to validate the conceptual framework, (2) the framework could be further applied to explore between different industries and employees' knowledge sharing intentions.

References

References are available upon request from Kun-Shiang Chen, yco168@gmail.com