

A Study of Knowledge Sharing Practices of Civil Society Organizations in Sri Lanka

Ajantha S. Dharmasiri
Sutheshna Kodeeswaran

Abstract

The problem focused in this study is the unsatisfactory level of intra-organizational knowledge sharing practices of Sri Lankan civil society organizations (CSOs). It fills a knowledge gap through a systematic approach to Sri Lankan CSOs and an extension of knowledge management exploration to a relatively new area. The objectives of the study were to identify factors contributing to knowledge-sharing practices in CSOs, empirically establish such relationships and to propose recommendations for CSOs to enhance their intra-organizational knowledge sharing. Through a detailed literature review, organizational culture, structure, and presence of Information Technology (IT) were identified as causal factors. Based on the conceptual model it was hypothesized that the degree of presence of a conducive culture positively influences the knowledge-sharing practices of CSOs (H1), the degree of presence of a hierarchical structure negatively influences the above (H2) and the degree of presence of IT positively influences the above (H3). A predominantly quantitative approach was adopted with a convenience sample of 92 respondents from 42 CSOs. In-depth interviews with seven respondents were also used as a supportive qualitative approach. The validity and reliability of the questionnaire were appropriately established. Hypotheses H1 and H3 were supported but not H2, indicating that the degree of presence of a hierarchical structure has no significant influence. The in-depth interviews revealed, individual and organizational capabilities and the nature of knowledge as other factors that influence the intra-organizational knowledge sharing practices of CSOs. Based on the findings it is recommended that CSOs should have knowledge sharing practices embedded in the system and linked to their work and the organizational objectives, inclusive of proper planning and systematic execution. Assigning the required capable people in a conducive culture with an adequate IT infrastructure is essential for fulfilling their mandate.

Dr. Ajantha S Dharmasiri, is Senior Faculty Member, Postgraduate Institute of Management (PIM), Colombo, Sri Lanka, Visiting Fulbright Post-doctoral Fellow, Price College of Business, University of Oklahoma, USA. Tel: +94 112689639 (office), +94 777766687 (mobile), +94 312222689 (residence), Fax: +94 112689643

Sutheshna Kodeeswaran, Programme Officer, FLICT sutheshna@gmail.com