

Factors Affecting Knowledge Sharing Practices among Personnel in Private University Libraries in Osun State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Purpose: This study focused on identifying positive and negative factors that can affect knowledge sharing (KS) in seven private university libraries in Osun State, Nigeria.

Methodology: The study adopted a survey design. Data were collected through questionnaire from 74 library personnel across the seven libraries through a total enumeration method. 62 sets of questionnaire were duly completed and used for analysis. Frequency counts and percentage calculation were used to analyse the collected data.

Findings: The study revealed that organisational factors namely: organisational commitment (100%); staff motivations/ welfare (98.4%); and leadership/management style (98.4%) adopted by the libraries were the three most important positive factors influencing KS practices among the respondents. The findings also revealed that individual factors were the major negative factors that inhibit KS practices: fear of stealing one's ideas (100%); unwillingness to share knowledge; fear of other employees taking credit for one's idea (98.4%); and lack of trust among employees (96.8%).

Recommendations: The study recommended that library management should create an enabling and healthy work environment where employees feel safe and can trust each other; encourage KS activities by rewarding or motivating such practices; and library personnel should be trained on the use of contemporary KS tools.

Originality: The findings of the study are imperative for stakeholders to know what to do, in term of formulating policies that can promote knowledge sharing practices for enhancing library development.

Keywords: Knowledge; knowledge sharing; knowledge management; private university libraries; university library personnel

Introduction

Every organisation, library inclusive, craves for organizational achievement. This can be achieved, partly, by creating, sharing and using knowledge and information that can assist the planning and decision making roles of library managers, as well as activities of other employees. Sharing of knowledge is central to the overall knowledge management process. Knowledge sharing (KS) is a formal

or informal transference, dissemination or exchange of information, ideas, skills or experiences that are valuable from one person to the other, in an organization (Sajeva, 2014). A shared knowledge is functional to engendering personal or organization development. Sharing of knowledge within an organization can be influenced by a number of factors, which can either promote or hinder such practices. These factors are categorized into personal, organizational and technological factors

which are germane the development of the library (Islam and Khan, 2014; Mafabi, Nasiima, Muhimbise, Kaekende, and Nakiyonga, 2017). Also, knowledge sharing (KS) varies from one individual and organization to the other.

Many organisations, including libraries, have noticed the importance and benefits of sharing knowledge (Islam & Khan, 2014). Knowledge has power to influence our societies, therefore a successful society or organization is the one that shares and uses knowledge (Dereje, Worku, & Chala, 2016). To this end, knowledge sharing among library employees will not only enhance individual's performance but also lead to effective service delivery; hence, the need to investigate factors that can improve or inhibit KS among library personnel in private university libraries in Osun State.

Statement of the problem

Knowledge sharing (KS) is *sine qua non* to organizational achievement. However, previous studies have observed that there are certain factors that affect sharing of knowledge in an organization. Studies by Paroutis and Al-Saleh (2009); Islam and Khan (2014); and Jabbar and Madhoshi (2014) identified personal/ individual/ human factors; organizational/ environmental factors; and technological factors that can affect KS practices in organizations. While these factors may, generally be categorized as positive and negative factors, they can affect staff productivity and even result into poor library service delivery and affect general development of the library. This situation can play out if knowledge that can lead to key decision making and planning are not shared by and among the employees. To this end, this study investigates the factors that can influence KS practices among the staff in seven private university libraries in Osun State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the study

The study aims to:

1. Identify positive factors affecting knowledge sharing among personnel in private University Libraries in Osun State.
2. Identify negative factors affecting knowledge sharing among personnel in private University Libraries in Osun State.

Research Questions

The study provides answers to the following questions:

1. What positive factors affect knowledge sharing among personnel in private University Libraries in Osun State?
2. What negative factors affect knowledge sharing among personnel in private University Libraries in Osun State?

Literature review

Knowledge sharing (KS) can be described as the process of sharing knowledge that is useful, from one person or group to the other. KS involves transferring or sharing of valuable knowledge or information within an organization to enhance organizational performance (Sajeve, 2014; Salah, Rabiaha and Salina, 2018). Abzari, Shahin and Abasaltian (2016) underscore the importance of KS by stating that KS is an essential ingredient necessary for engendering a successful organizational performance. Lee and Hong (2014) corroborate this by stating that KS is beneficial to organizations by giving them a competitive advantage. This largely points to the significance of information as a major factor for planning and decision making which can assist organizations to perform better than their competitors.

KS is an aspect of knowledge management. According to Salah, Rabiha and Salina (2018), knowledge management is an umbrella term for actions that facilitate creation, capturing, transformation, sharing, and use of knowledge in a way that aid employees to use their creativity to deliver business value. Ra'ed (2016) considers KS to be the most important aspect of knowledge management methods, as sharing of knowledge can give rise to other aspects of the knowledge management process.

KS is highly beneficial to organizational performance as it can improve quality of service delivery (Ismail and Yusuf, 2010); increase organizational efficiency (Ritala, Olander, Michailova and Husted, 2015); assist in organizational learning and self-development (Meri, Hasan and Safie, 2017); and also help to reduce training costs (Ali and Dominic, 2016). Service quality can be improved upon if employees are encouraged to share knowledge that are useful to add value to their services. Also, organizational efficiency can be achieved by sharing knowledge that can assist the organization in taking informed decision. Organizations, as well as employees, can learn new things that can give them competitive advantage over others. Similarly, knowledge sharing can reduce cost of training employees, as they can freely learn among themselves and improve their skills, rather than going for external training that may not be cost effective for the organization.

Studies have shown that there are several factors that influence or determine knowledge sharing practices in organizations. These factors, according to Salah, Rabiha and Salina (2018) are capable of supporting and increasing knowledge sharing through various approaches. However, this position is viewed from the positivity prism, as there are negative factors that can decrease or inhibit knowledge

sharing activities. For instance, fear of losing one's original idea to another person, due to lack of trust, may not allow one to share such knowledge. Thus, lack of trust becomes a negative factor decreasing knowledge sharing. Studies like Paroutis and Al-Saleh, 2009; Islam and Khan, 2014; Jabbary and Madhoshi, 2014; and Mafabi et al (2017) identified personal factors, organizational factors and technological factors that can affect knowledge sharing within an organization. However, these factors can either be positive or negative.

According to Noor and Hashim (2012), personal or individual factors include employee's perceptions, ability, willingness, attitude, emotions, reputation, trust, self-efficacy among others. Organizational factors are those factors (conditions, approaches, styles or environment) that centers on the organization where the employee works. Such factors include: organizational culture, staff motivation/reward, work environment, managerial styles etc. (Michailova and Minbaeva, 2012; and Imam, Dewie, Soedjarwo, Setiyo, and Tunik, 2020). Technological factors refer to the role of tools or machines in aiding knowledge sharing practices. According to Hashim, Hairulliza, Tengku, and Wook, (2016) and Imam et al, (2020), technology and ICT infrastructure, such as the social media are great enablers of knowledge sharing in an organization.

There are various factors that contribute positively and negatively to the knowledge sharing practices among personnel in organisations, libraries inclusive. These factors can be categorized into three segments:

- ❖ Managerial (Employer)
- ❖ Labour Force (Employee)
- ❖ Workforce Environment Both (Employer & Employee), on the positive factors are as follows:

Managerial (Employer)	Workforce Environment	Labour Force (Employee)
Positive factors		
Staff motivation	Good working environment	Organisational Commitment
Effective leadership/management style		
Willingness to share knowledge		Willingness to share knowledge
Job security		Cooperation among employees
Recognition for Teamwork		Organizational support
Using KS as part of employees annual performance rating		Trusting your colleagues
Effective feedback mechanism		Needs for personal growth & development
Availability of common platform		
NEGATIVE FACTORS		
Fear of stealing	Lack of common platform for sharing knowledge	Fear of stealing
Unwillingness to share knowledge	Lack of Information	Unwillingness to share knowledge
Fear of others taking credits for your ideas	Too much information to share	Fear of others taking credits for your ideas
Lack of participation in KS activities		Lack of participation in KS activities
		Lack of trust among employees
Lack of knowledge resulting from employers absence/death		Lack of knowledge resulting from employees absence/death
		Unhealthy competition among the employees
Lack of KS tools		
Poor leadership styles		
Not rewarding/motivating KS practices		
Lack of training/required KS skill		
Poor knowledge management		
Technological knowhow problem		Technological knowhow problem

It should be noted that it behooves of the managerial team (Librarians) and the employees (Higher/Library officers) in the organisation to together in unison in order to improve and make use of the available knowledge for the growth of the organisation- library.

Methodology

This study adopted a survey research design. Data were collected from library personnel in seven private university libraries in Osun material resources) across the seven libraries. Total enumeration of all the population was used. Table 1 presented the list of the libraries and the population. Data for the study were collected through a structured questionnaire.

State. The study's population consisted of a total of 74 personnel (Library officers, Higher Library officers and Librarians as the major stakeholders to manage human and

From the 74 sets of questionnaire that were administered, 62 (representing 82.7%) were completed and returned. Data were analysed using frequency counts and percentage calculation.

Table 1: Population of the study

	Libraries	Population/ Number of questionnaire administered	Number of questionnaire returned
1	Timothy Olagbemi Library, BOWEN University, Iwo	14	13
2	Adeleke University Library, Ede	13	13
3	Fountain University Library, Osogbo	04	03
4	Oduduwa University Library, Ile-Ife	12	10
5	Joseph Ayo Babalola University Library, Ikeji-Arakeji	12	9
6	Redeemers University Library, Ede	13	11
7	Kings University Library, Ode-Omu	06	03
	TOTAL	74	62

Data Analysis

Data collected for the study are presented below.

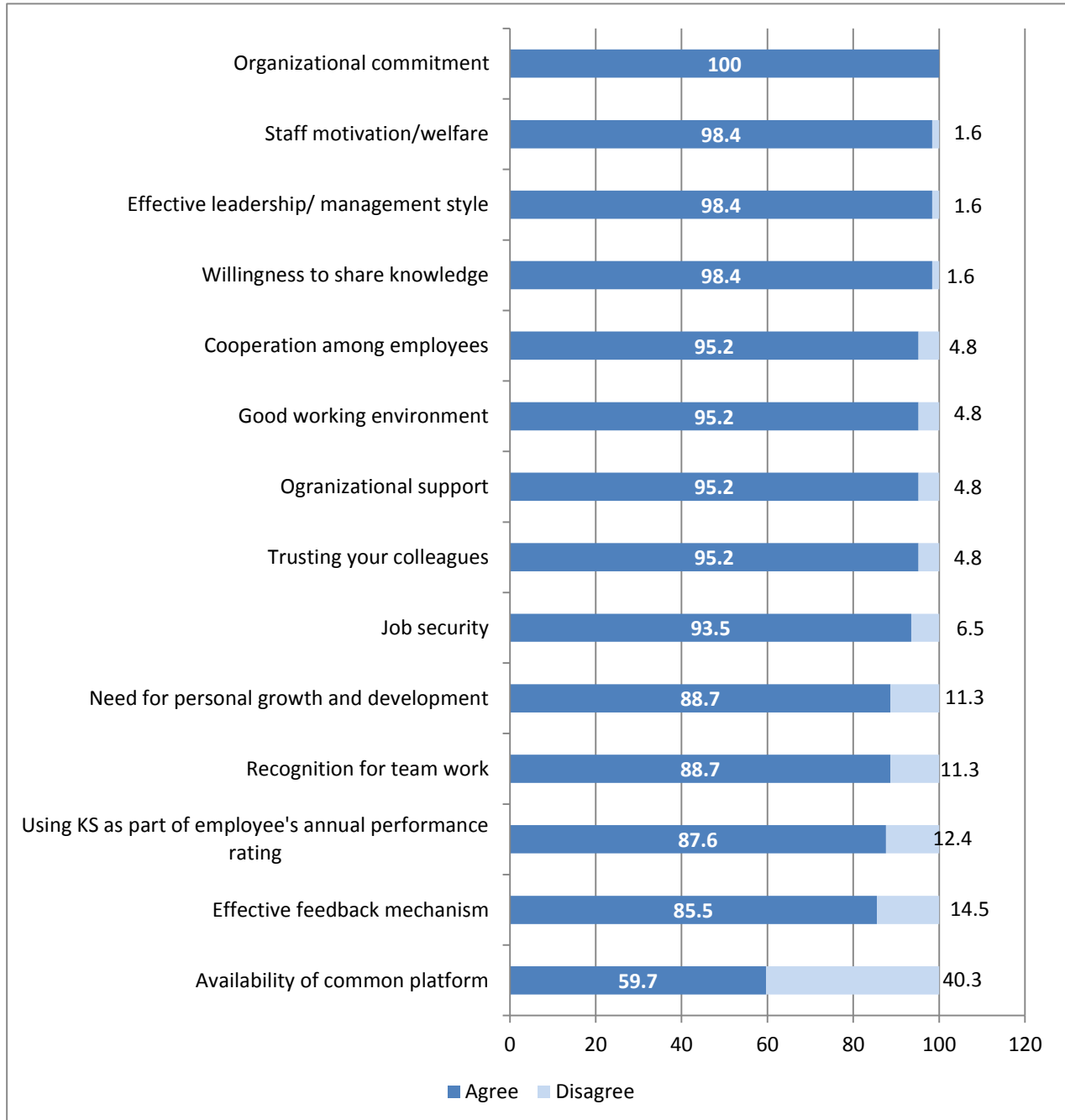
Table 2: Demographic variables

Demographic variables		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	39	62.9
	Female	23	37.1
	TOTAL	62	100
Educational Qualifications	SSCE	0	0
	ND	11	17.7
	HND	3	4.8
	BLIS/ BSC/ BA	22	35.5
	PGD	3	4.8
	MLIS	19	30.6
	PhD	4	6.5
	TOTAL	62	100
Status	Library Officer	11	17.7
	Higher Library Officer	3	4.8
	Librarians	48	77.4
	TOTAL	62	100
Years of working experience	1-5 years	30	48.4
	6-10 years	22	35.5
	11-15 years	6	9.7
	16 years +	4	6.5
	TOTAL	62	100

Table 2 shows the demographic distribution of the respondents. 62.9% were male, while the remaining 37.1% were female. Also, the respondents have varying educational qualifications and years of working experience. While 35.5% claimed to have BLIS/ B.Sc., 30.6% claimed to have MLIS, 17.7% have National; Diploma (ND) and 4.8% have HND and PGD respectively. The remaining 6.5% have PhD. Also, majority of 48.4% have between 1-5 years of working experience, while 35.5% have from 6-10 years working experience. Only 6.5% of the respondents have worked from 16 years and above.

Figure 1: Positive factors that stimulate knowledge sharing practices among personnel in private University Libraries in Osun State

Figure 1 shows positive factors that affect knowledge sharing practices among the respondents. It is evident from the Figure that majority of the respondents agreed that all the positive factors itemized enhanced



n = 62

knowledge sharing activities. All the respondents (100%) agreed that commitment to the library where they work

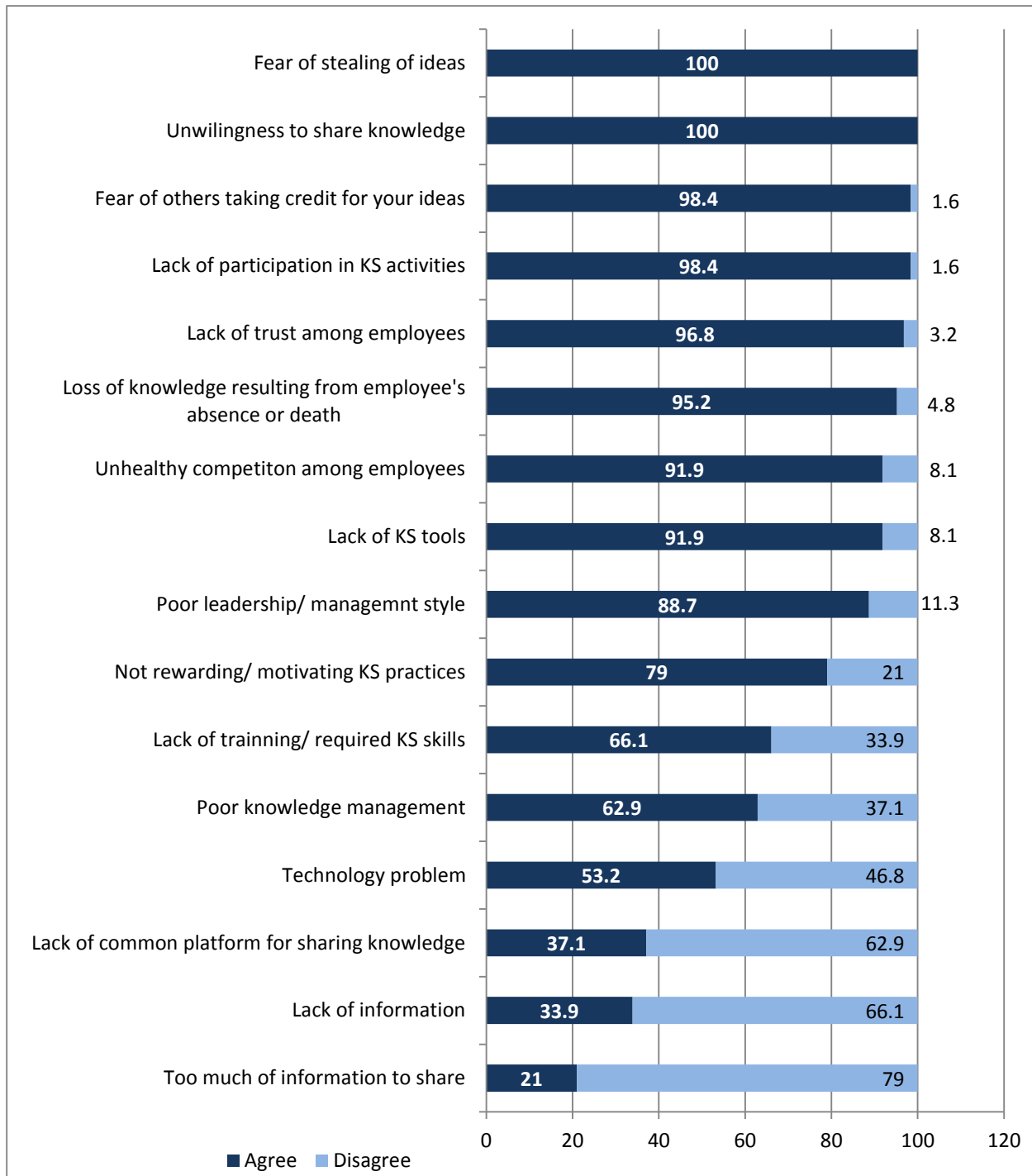
(organizational commitment) is a major factor that contributed to sharing of knowledge. This is closely followed by availability of motivation/ good welfare packages for employees; effective management style; and employees' willingness to share knowledge (98.4% respectively). Also, majority of 95.2%, respectively, agreed that cooperation among employees; good working environment; organizational support; and trusting fellow colleagues were positive factors promoting KS. While 93.5% of the respondents agreed that job security is a factor, some 88.7% equally agreed that the need for personal growth and development is a contributory factor enhancing KS practices. Also, 87.6% claimed that using KS as part of employee's annual performance rating could encourage KS practices. However, some 40.3% of the respondents disagreed that availability of a common platform (such as Office WhatsApp group) can enhance KS practices. Also, 14.5% of the respondents equally disagreed that having an effective feedback mechanism (where employees can get feedbacks on their performance) can enhance KS practices.

From Figure 2, negative factors that can inhibit KS were revealed. It is worthy of note that all the respondents (100%) agreed that fear of stealing one's ideas; and unwillingness to share knowledge were the two major negative factors that inhibit KS practices. This is closely followed by fear of others taking credit for one's idea; and not participating in KS activities (98.4% respectively). Also, majority of 96.8% and 95.2% agreed that lack of trust among employees and loss of knowledge due to

employee's absence or death can inhibit KS practices. Similarly, a majority of 91.9% claimed that unhealthy competition among employees and lack of knowledge sharing tools (91.9%) were negative factors influencing KS activities. Other negative factors include: poor leadership style (88.7%); not rewarding KS practices (79%); lack of required KS skills (66.1%); and technology problem (53.2%). However, majority of 79% disagreed that too much of information to share can inhibit KS practices; just as 66.1% equally disagreed that lack of information could constitute as a negative factor to KS practices. Also, 62.9% of the disagreed that lack of a common platform to share knowledge can serve as a negative factor that inhibits the practice.

Figure 2: Negative factors that inhibit knowledge sharing practices among personnel in private University Libraries in Osun State

n = 62



Discussion of Findings

The findings revealed that there are both positive and negative factors that affected KS practices in private university libraries in Osun State, Nigeria. The finding revealed that organizational/institutional factors, namely: organizational commitment; staff motivations/welfare; and leadership/management style adopted by the libraries were the three most important positive factors influencing KS practices among the respondents. This is in line with Imam et al, (2020) discovery that organizational factor has a significant and positive influence on KS in Aviation Polytechnic of Surabaya. This finding is also supported by Areekkuzhiyil (2016) and Pramono and Susanty (2019) where they discovered that organizational factors significantly influence KS. The finding, however, contradicts Ismail and Yusuf (2010) findings that personal/individual factors, rather than organizational factors, had a major positive influence on KS.

According to the finding, major negative factors that inhibit KS practices were mostly individual/personal factors, namely: fear of stealing one's ideas 100; unwillingness to share knowledge 100; fear of other employees taking credit for one's idea; and lack of trust among employees. This is corroborated by Salah et al (2018) that individual factors were the major factor that influenced KS across various organizations, with evidence from empirical literature. This is also corroborated by Lee and Hong (2014) and Faizuniah and Joon (2014). However, this contradicts Ismail and Yusuf (2010) who discovered that individual factors had significant positive influence on KS.

According to the finding, another negative factor is not rewarding or motivating KS practices among the employees. This is in accordance with Dereje, Worku and Chala (2016) and Mohammad, Alajmi and Ahmed (2018) findings that not rewarding/motivating KS activities was discovered to be an inhibitor to KS activities.

Also the type of leadership styles adopted by the library management can also influence KS activities. Majority of the respondents are of the belief that effective management styles will encourage KS practices, while poor or bad leadership styles will discourage KS activities, in accordance with Farooqi, Gohar, Nazish and Ahmad (2017) findings.

The study's finding equally revealed that technological factors also have positive and negative influence on KS. The finding revealed that lack of KS tools and skills in using the tools were part of negative factors that inhibit KS among the respondents. Majority of the respondents believed that non availability of technologies or resources for sharing KS can constitute as an inhibitor; so also inability of the employees to use the KS tools (where they are available) due to lack of required skills. The finding on technological factors is similar to Islam and Khan (2014) who discovered that increased use and application of ICTs to various library operations has a major influence on KS practices among personnel in Dhaka university library.

Conclusion

The study established that there were both positive and negative factors that affected KS practices in private universities in Osun State, Nigeria. The positive factors were mostly organizational based, while the negative factors were mostly individual based. The positive factors were identified to stimulate KS practices among the personnel in private university libraries; while the negative factors served as inhibitors. Therefore there is the need to eliminate the negative factors and reinforced the positive ones to enhance KS practices – a major ingredient in achieving organizational achievement.

Recommendations

- The library management should create an enabling and healthy work environment where employees feel safe and can trust each other and also maintain personal and organizational integrity, where stealing of other people's ideas or taking credit for other people's ideas is totally discouraged.
- Libraries should encourage KS activities by rewarding or motivating such practices; for instance, by integrating KS as part of the employees' annual performance and evaluation rating. Also, instant reward may be given to any shared knowledge that contributes to organizational growth or achievement.
- Library personnel should be trained on the use of contemporary KS tools. Technologies evolve on regular basis,

hence, the need to keep staff training alight so they can be abreast of new developments in KS tools that can enhance organizational growth.

- There is also the need for further investigation by researchers to empirically identify how the negative factors identified by this current study affect KS practices. This will further provide insight as to how to promote KS practices in organizations.

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